Graham Greene On His Double • Fiction By RK Narayan

Vijay Tendulkar On New York

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AG Noorani On The Morarji Papers

Journalists And Ethics
Bribing And Bitchin

Shobha Kilachand

Welcome to the Cool Cool Experience

on the marquee

THE DEBATE OVER NEW NUCLEAR MISSILES in Europe continues furiously in Europe and in America. The peoples of Europe are divided; the Americans are also divided.

A new tally shows 252 mobile Soviet SS-20s targeted on Europe carrying 756 nuclear warheads. Another 108 SS-20s with 324 nuclear warheads are targeted on Asia. All Soviet SS-20s deployed against Europe and Asia have reload mechanisms bearing 1080 additional nuclear warheads.

The first batch of Cruise missiles from the US has already arrived in the United Kingdom. In a few years, the Western arsenal targeted against the Soviet Union will total 108 Pershing-II medium range missiles and 464 Cruise missiles.

An American television network, ABC, screened a few days ago a two and a half hour movie called *The Day After*. It depicts the harrowing experience of a town called Lawrence, Kansas, USA after the nuclear destruction of Kansas. The National Education Association of America issued the first ever advisory warning on television telling parents not to let children watch the movie. After the movie, 20,000 doctors belonging to Physicians for Social Responsibility were asked to stand by for treating the affected viewers. Until that movie arrives here and is shown to Indians, we can only speculate as to what will happen in case of a nuclear war. Perhaps, what *Newsweek* wrote in its issue of November 7, 1983, on the consequence of a nuclear war according to American scientists, which I quote extensively here below, will help sharpen our perception of the calamity ahead.

Sombre predictions are being made this week at a scientific conference in Washington on The World After Nuclear War. *The outgrowth of two years of work with input from 100 physicists, biologists and atmospheric scientists from around the world, the conference addresses what climatic changes might be wrought by nuclear war and how they would affect plant and animal life. The scenarios, generated by computer models of nuclear exchanges ranging from 100 megatons (250 Pershing missiles) to 5,000 megatons (less than half the world's nuclear arsenal) are not pretty: the lingering consequences of a nuclear war might be even more disastrous for the life of the planet than the immediate explosions, firestorms and radioactivity.*

In the 5,000-megaton scenario being presented by Cornell's Carl Sagan, the intense heat from the blasts would set off firestorms, in which the very air is so hot that everything flammable ignites. Sweeping over large areas of the world, the storms would burn both stored chemicals and those used in construction and manufactured products. The air would fill with the poison fumes of carbon monoxide, dioxins and cyanides, threatening survivors and producing an acidic rain that would make today's look distilled. The holocaust could also heat soils enough to kill dormant seeds, says biologist Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University and with them one of the few hopes for making the earth bloom again soon. Furthermore, with air around a nuclear fireball heated to more than 3,000 degrees Fahrenheit, photochemical smog would form. Once in the stratosphere, it would destroy some 50 per cent of the ozone layer, the thin band of gas that absorbs the ultraviolet light capable of inducing mutations and cancer.

Then would come darkness. Within a week after the war, some 200 million tonnes of sooty smoke would create what Stephen Schneider of the National Centre for Atmospheric Research calls 'a blacktop highway three miles up'. The smoke would absorb so much of the sun's rays that less than five per cent of the normal amount of light would reach the ground, causing a constant gloom that would choke off even photosynthesis, the process by which green plants convert sunshine to food. If the war broke out in spring or summer, when plants are most vulnerable to cold snaps, virtually all land plants in the Northern Hemisphere would be damaged or killed, says Ehrlich. Without this first link in the food chain, every higher organism would risk starvation. The smoke would also make temperatures plummet for several months, freezing surface waters to a depth of three feet in what Schneider dubs 'nuclear winter'. This effect, says Sagan, is much more severe than predictions by previous studies that failed to take into account the smoke emitted from burning cities.

A merry Christmas and a happy New Year to you.

R. V. Pandit

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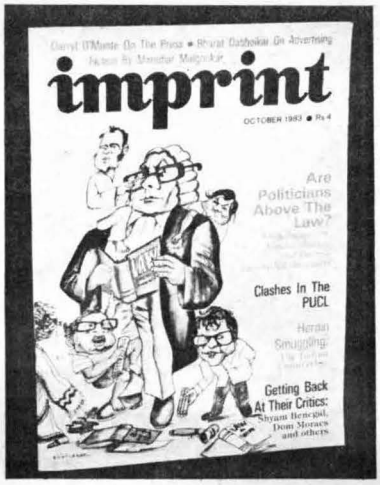
Letters



Insolence Before Justice

AG Noorani's *Insolence Before Justice* (October 1983) is timely. Public memory is short and we have to be constantly reminded about the crimes politicians commit and get away with. Our politicians who wax eloquent on the virtues of democracy and on law and order have either practised dictatorship and tyranny in the past or have violated the law.

TK Narain
Bangalore

AG Noorani's exposure on the blatant causes of violation of the law by the politicians will demoralise ordinary citizens.

It is sad to recall that in independent India, our own police have shot nearly 5000 people. We have followed the Soviet model of justice where no official can be punished unless the Party Secretary (and in our case, the Prime Minister) so wishes.

CC Ganguly
West Bengal

AG Noorani's article is thought-provoking. If the Congress (I) takes the side of its party members it is understandable, but when the Janata party tries to protect a person when he has been blamed by the Congress, it deserves to be seriously thought over. Noorani has left out an important incident which I give below.

A one-man tribunal consisting of the Hon'ble Mr Justice MC Chagla was appointed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister, to inquire into the irregular purchases of shares of Mundhra Concerns worth rupees one crore, by the Life Insurance Corporation.

The tribunal found that these purchases had caused heavy losses to the LIC, as the Mundhra companies were unsound and the purchases of the shares were made without following the proper procedure in order to favour Mundhra.

Mr Justice Chagla in his report, dated February 10, 1958, found Mr HM Patel, ICS, the then Secretary of the Finance Department, guilty of the irregularity and the latter was advised to resign from the Civil Service. As a result of the report, Mr TT Krishnamachari who was then Finance Minister, also resigned.

The Prime Minister, who was close to Mr Krishnamachari did not blame him. Instead he blamed the Hon'ble Mr Justice Chagla. It was only Dr Humayun Kabir, also a Cabinet Minister, who praised Mr Chagla for his impartial judgement, despite the fact that Mr HM Patel had been a classmate of Mr MC Chagla.

In 1978, when the Janata Government came to power, Mr HM Patel, the Ex-Secretary of the Finance Department who had to resign from the Civil Service was promoted as Finance Minister, thus ignoring the Chagla Report.

It is worth remembering that the MP's and MLA's who were successful in bringing down Antulay for his corrupt practices overlooked the Mundhra scandal, as they were eager to form a government against Indira Gandhi.

Manohar R Pai
Bombay

Love Thy Neighbour?

Ashok Gopal's exposé of the disproportionate Indian reaction to Sri Lanka's ethnic riots (September 1983) was both perceptive and honest.

It is no hidden fact that Assam's government-rigged election resulted in the death of almost 5000 people, mainly Muslims and that the government attempted to hide the reality. Of course Sri Lanka is equally guilty of attacking innocent Tamil businessmen.

Mr Gopal has not mentioned the open demand by Subramaniam Swamy about sending the Indian army to Sri Lanka. After this can we blame our smaller neighbours of an anti-Indian phobia?

MD Salaudin
West Bengal

Nepal's Powder Keg

As a long-time resident of Nepal, I feel Mr Arun Chacko's views (October 1983) on this northern neighbour of ours are correct. Maintaining Indo-Nepal friendship is absolutely essential for both countries. The recent border trouble seems to be the work of some foreign country that is jealous of its exclusive ties with us and wants to foul our relations with all our neighbours. There is no other explanation of the sudden, strange behaviour of our border officials at Kakarvitta.

Any visitor to Kathmandu will notice that the Soviet embassy occupies the most commanding position and is Asia's largest embassy with a staff strength exceeding 500. Though the Communist Party is minuscule in Nepal, there are as many as four leftist papers published. Obviously the Soviets have a good stake in isolating both India and China by engineering a pro-Soviet government of Nepal.

It will be in India's utmost interest to promote Indo-Nepal friendship and isolate the disruptive forces. Unfortunately India herself is deeply enmeshed in the Soviet game in the sub-continent.

KB Kamdar
Calcutta

VOICES OF DISSENT

According to Dhiren Bhagat's caricature (September 1983) of his interview with me last August concerning *Voices of Emergency, An All India Anthology Of Protest Poetry Of The 1975-77 Emergency*, I ought now to accuse him of lying, since he fulfilled his threat to quote me as saying:

"YOU'RE DOING A POLITICAL NUMBER ON ME, BUDDY."

Perhaps he is merely wrong-headed in his way of being political and crudely personal in his attacks. Clearly his words reveal a selective inattention to the obvious.

The basic issue on which we conflicted was, as I said, 'the nature of the project'. The title and dust cover—not to mention the overlay and long preface—obviously indicate the international cooperative effort required for our extensive anthology of protest poems translated from 14 languages and in English. Thus I said to Bhagat:

"In each area there were coordinators, selectors and translators. . . . I'm the organiser more than anything else."

Bhagat's following paragraph is, however, quite obviously misleading, as **Imprint**'s accompanying photo of the dust-covered book clearly reads: 'Edited by John Oliver Perry'.

"Such honesty would have been endearing had it not given the lie to the publisher's blurb on the dust cover: Selected and edited by John Oliver Perry. . . If only we had a Trade Descriptions Act in India. . ." (end para).

So Bhagat bases his charge on a single, admittedly misleading phrase from the *inside flap* of the dust cover. Of course, as the principal organiser I am responsible finally for this product of five years work involving hundreds of persons listed in the book making a collective effort. We all participated in the process that produced the final selection.

His heat, however, and the problems of honesty aside, the politics of the interviewer are evidently anti-democratic, narrowly individualistic, authoritarian elitist. From the political perspective of an alienated, Oxford-educated snob he snidely pronounces Bombay's 'Tulsiwadi, a lane as wholesome as any in Tardeo' and my university, where the July 1983 **Imprint** announced its own Sunaina Lowe is now 'on a scholarship to read International Relations', "Tufts, as far as I knew, were clumps of hair strewn on the floors of seedy barbershops"—rather than signs of a Hindu believer? Bhagat concludes:

". . . Perry's vulgar voice of Emergency is but the hurrahing of such a tourist. Thank you, Professor Perry. We can do without your loud hurrahs."

Again putting my work aside, the 'vulgar voice' that Bhagat has objected to makes no 'readable anthology of *poems*' (his emphasis indicating *he* knows what a poem *must* be) most emphatically belongs to the people of India. Even in this English book their message remains loud—yes—and clear: We will not be silenced—by imprisonment, oppression, fear and threats—and will protest authoritarian measures in whatever way we can. Thus, this anthology has given the lie, to use Bhagat's debating phrase, to the establishment cynicism that "The Emergency has been hailed universally within the country and abroad by all well-wishers of democracy." (Indira Gandhi to Rajya Sabha, April 1, 1976, qu. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*).

Our anthology also challenges the inhumane notions that poetry speaks only in the accents of high-technology art, that what people speak from their hearts is not culturally significant to us all, that organising an anthology of protest poems from all over India 'perpetuates intellectual and aesthetic confusion here'. Thanks to that diversity Bhagat would eliminate as confusion, India has withstood many authoritarian oppressors from within as well as foreign imperialists. Though that diversity be sometimes muffled by lack of 'art' and by often prosaic translation, all English educated readers can hear now the wide range of protest during the Emergency. The elections of March 1977 proved that those voices spoke in a historically and culturally important way for the people of India. It will surely be foolish to do without or ignore these voices warning us all of the continuous struggle required in every human sphere seeking democratic ideals.

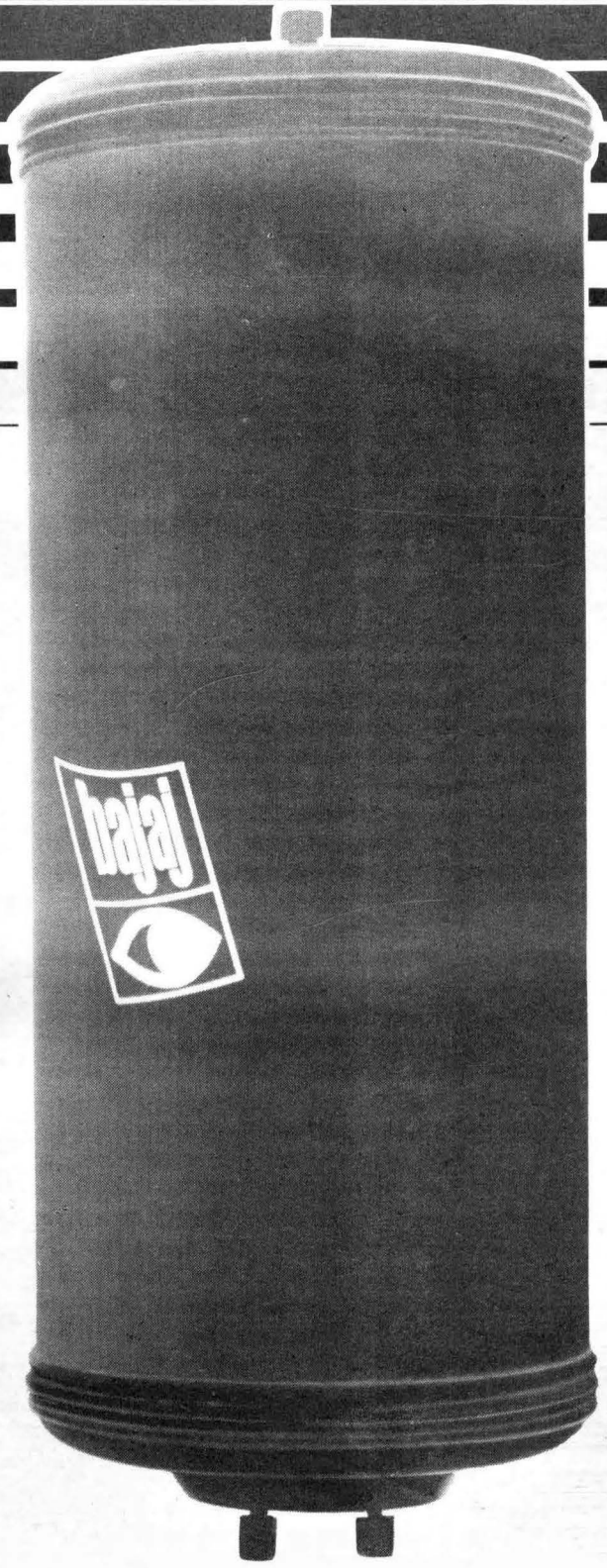
I am grateful for the example of the Indian people and for the opportunity to cooperate with like-minded persons in our necessarily collective and world-wide work for common human goals. I am indeed appreciative of the chance Dhiren Bhagat and **Imprint** have given me to extend that effort here.

John Oliver Perry
Massachusetts, USA

imprint

VOLUME XXIII NO 9 CONTENTS DECEMBER 1983

When water is kept on the boil for hours on end, can you really take a water heater's circuitry for granted?



You have our word on it.

A lot of things can happen when steaming hot water is stored indefinitely. Explosions can take place. Thermostats can burn out. Electrical shocks may be transmitted. The only way to prevent mishaps from happening is to look for a reliable brand name before you even begin looking around for a water heater.

A name such as Bajaj.

One of the few names in India today with over a quarter of a century's experience behind it. Infused into every Bajaj product. As well as our entire range of appliances, the widest in the country. And backed by the largest network of 3500 dealers. For swift after-sales service, not that you'll ever need it.

When it comes to appliances, there are no certificates that cover quality, durability and safety. Except the name Bajaj.

bajaj

BUY BEST. BUY BAJAJ.

AJ MIXERS, BAJAJ PRESSURE COOKERS, BAJAJ IRONS, BAJAJ HEATERS, BAJAJ FANS, BAJAJ OVENS, BAJAJ GAS STOVES, BAJAJ WATER FILTERS

Helios BE 741

BY PRANAY GUPTE

INDIAN GO HOME

Nearly everywhere in the world they hate Indians more than anybody else.

IT HAPPENED IN Amman, the hilly capital of Jordan. I was on my way from Kuwait to Beirut to cover yet another outbreak of hostilities in that wretched Lebanese city and the quickest way to get there was to make a plane connection through Amman. I had no visa for Jordan but the Jordanians traditionally would grant visas at their airport to journalists, even if those journalists happened to be Indians. Besides, I was no stranger to Jordan. I had interviewed King Hussein many times for my newspaper, *The New York Times* and my dispatches had been generally received favourably by the Jordanians. It turned out that the plane connection in Amman was non-existent, which is to say that the intrepid correspondent had been won again. (Journalists, who often run into such frustrating situations in the Middle East, have their own jargon and when a correspondent says he's been *mewa*-ed, everyone knows exactly what he means and offers him another beer to help him recover from the trauma.) I had flown first-class from Kuwait into Amman and so the logical thing was to ask my airline, the Jordanian carrier Alia, to help me with onward arrangements and perhaps a room for the night before the next flight into Beirut the next day. The Alia station manager flared up at me. "Ridiculous," he said, "Why should we do anything for you? You don't even have a visa. You will have to stay at the airport overnight."

Now I have spent nights at many airports waiting for planes but the Amman International Airport of those days wasn't one of those facilities with any appeal or amenities. I told the Alia man that I thought he was overreacting. Obtaining a visa would be no problem, I assured him and all I was asking for was a courtesy that any stranded passenger would at once receive, especially a first-class passenger.

"Watch what you say," the Alia man roared. "I know what you want. You are an Indian and you want to sneak into our country. You are all like that. You all want jobs here. We don't want you."

The outburst was uncalled for, but I was not surprised. The underlying hostility, nay, racism, of the Alia man is typical of many Arabs in the region, particularly Arabs of the Gulf region. I had encountered such attitudes concerning Indians before, although not in such virulence. (The Amman incident had, what for me was a sweet, vengeful ending. I managed to obtain a visa and booked a hotel room at my own expense and later telephoned the Alia Chairman, a personal friend of mine, at home and told him about the incident. The station manager was fired that same evening. I thought to myself: at least I was in a position to reach higher authorities because of my own contacts and position as an international correspondent. How many similarly maligned Indians could exact the same revenge?)

Let me say this outright: no one likes Indians in most parts of the world. We are the 'ugly ones' and, for the most part, we bring the sobriquet upon ourselves. We are arrogant and excessively assertive in dealing with other Indians but when anyone else yells at us, we quietly fold up inside and genuflect outside. I think we have lost the respect of the world and we'd better do something about the situation. If this sounds jingoistic, so be it. But we have salaamed and compromised and prostrated ourselves before others too long. Now everybody expects us to be doormats and treats us like that, too.

I am 35 years old and have spent the years since 1967 living abroad, mostly in the United States. It never occurred to me that I, too, was an 'ugly Indian' until *The New York Times*—for whom I have worked since my college days—made me a foreign correspondent and packed me off to Nairobi. Africa and especially East Africa with its wild game and vast game parks, had seemed an alluring fantasy but when my wife, infant son

Pranay Gupte, a New York Times *correspondent, is currently writing a book on population, excerpts from which will appear in a forthcoming issue of* **Imprint.**

ILLUSTRATION BY ESKAY

In three years in Kenya, we never encountered a black guest in an Indian house.

and I got to Kenya we discovered that the reception committee of 15 million Kenyans had already decided what our role was going to be in Nairobi: we would be, as the 70,000 East Africans of Indian origin already were, the 'ugly Indians'. There was a discernible undercurrent of racial tension between Kenyan blacks and the Indians, who were perceived to be exploiters. In our three years in Kenya, we never once encountered a black guest in an Asian home and only a handful of Indians at black homes (these blacks were mainly foreign diplomats stationed in Nairobi).

During the time we were based in Kenya, the High Commissioner of India was a particularly astute man named Vinod Grover.

He was not particularly liked by the resident Asian community and when I first came to Kenya I was cautioned against excessive dealings with him. It turned out that Vinod Grover was right about most things he and I discussed and one of the things that saddened him was that some in the Nairobi Indian community brought on the epithet of 'ugly Indian' upon themselves by their rude, crude behaviour. Grover, unlike a lot of other diplomats, did not fear to say so aloud—which is why, I suspect, he was not an overwhelming favourite of *babujis* in East Africa.

There was one incident that brought home to me an unpleasant aspect of Indian behaviour abroad. One evening in Nairobi, a friend of mine named Inge Lippmann—who is an accomplished photographer, with *Time* magazine and others as her clients—was driving in the suburbs of the Kenyan capital city. A Sikh at the wheel of a pick-up truck slammed into her car, injuring her severely. He was not drunk, just a man in a hurry. But he did not even stop to assist her. Miss Lippmann managed to get his license plate number and later the police tracked the Sikh down. He did not deny there had been an accident involving his truck. But he said that his black assistant and not he, had been at the wheel. Miss Lippmann's recollection was that the only person in the pick-up truck had been the Sikh and maybe she was wrong. But I don't think so.

It is astonishing how many places we are the 'ugly Indians'. And in so many parts of the world, I keep hearing the following refrain: "India had so much moral credibility during the time of Jawaharlal Nehru. But your people, particularly the politicians, have frittered away everything. You are sneaky, unreliable and arrogant."

There is a paradox about all this. On the one hand, Indian professionals, such as scientists and technicians, have carved out formidable reputations for themselves in many parts of the world, especially in Western countries. On the other hand, the overall image of us Indians is steadily and noticeably on the decline.

What then are we to do? Is there any way for us to change the image of Indians abroad? Or are we to reconcile ourselves to being the 'ugly Indians' everywhere in the world?

I have no prescriptions for the malaise and the maladies.

I had once thought that perhaps the way to rehaul and refurbish our image abroad would be for local Indian communities to be more assertive. But in my experience, such assertiveness has only added to the problem.

I had also thought once that the way to get others to see us in a better light would be for non-Indians to extol Indian culture. What happens far too frequently is that these non-Indians become dilettantes, armchair advocates of India, wearers of *kurtas* and not much else.

Unless Indians all over the world change their behaviour, there seems to be little hope of changing our image. The solutions I had once suggested, have not worked.

So I don't know. Or, to put it another way, as we Indians often say when in a quandary, "What to do?"

♦

BY ARUN CHACKO

LETTER FROM CAIRO

Egypt's problems are even worse than India's.

ONE THING YOU have to hand the Egyptians. They crack spectacular self-deprecating jokes. The country's problems sometimes are even worse than India's and Calcutta could claim to be clean and orderly compared to Cairo. But, unlike us, the Egyptians still manage to laugh about themselves.

The latest joke making the rounds is an appropriate comment, especially since the country is afflicted with a muzzled press. Apparently President Hosni Mubarak was being driven around Cairo after coming to power by the same chauffeur who had earlier served Presidents Nasser and Sadat. They came to a crossroad.

"Which way do we turn, Your Excellency?" the driver asked.

"Which way would Nasser have gone?" Mubarak countered.

"Left, Your Excellency."

"And Sadat?"

"Right, Your Excellency."

"Then you had better park."

That Egypt is solidly parked is evident even to the most casual visitor. Nothing seems to work, least of all the people. Efficiency levels among the well-educated are appalling, even by Indian standards. And it's impossible to do anything either quickly, in a straightforward manner, or for that matter even get an honest answer.

Baksheesh is a word they gave the world and they certainly don't let anyone forget it. Absolutely nothing can be done at any level without greasing palms. Bihar seems to be the closest Indian approximation. One hates to think where the country might be without the enormous revenues from tourism, manpower export, the Suez Canal and Sinai oil.

* * *

A CLOSE LOOK at Egypt tells you quite a lot about the future of the Arab world. Egyptians, along with the Lebanese and Palestinians, are among the best educated and skilled in the area.

Like India, they have had over a century's exposure to modern education. In fact, the European presence and influences have always been great. But that seems to have done little to equip the Egyptians to develop the country. Like us, they'd rather just talk about their glorious ancient past.

Admittedly, a good deal of the cream, along with many unskilled labourers, has left for more affluent parts of the Arab world to work for people with even fewer educational skills and less inclination to work. But despite remitting foreign exchange they are unlikely to contribute to the future political or economic stability of either their own country or the region.

Torrents of oil have kept the Arab world afloat economically and, as one or two countries have shown, there is little evidence of continued economic stability once that begins to taper off. Thus far the locals have yet to reveal they are capable of living on anything but unearned income.

The other imponderable is Islamic fundamentalism, revivalism, orthodoxy or whatever else it might be called. Not only does it institutionalise hypocrisy as the brothel and bar owners of London, Bombay, Bangkok, or formerly Beirut will undoubtedly testify, but it also alienates a good deal of the population especially women.

The political implications are even more serious. The shadow of Islamic fundamentalism spreads unbroken westward from Pakistan, through West Asia and North Africa. None of these countries has shown an ability or inclination to evolve a stable political system which might ensure, for instance, smooth political succession.

On the other hand, many use religion merely to protect the stranglehold of the ruling elite. But they could soon be hoist by their own petard, swept away by the fundamentalist wave. The Saudi royal family has already summoned Pakistani troops for its protection.

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

ILLUSTRATION BY FATIMA AHMED

Nubile Egyptian women set the Nile on fire with the most brazen displays.

Egypt is no exception. Despite ostensible superficial Westernisation, one radical section still managed to assassinate President Anwar Sadat. While, for the moment things seem quiet, there is a perceptible sense of foreboding which is chilling.

* * *

PRESUMABLY, ONE MANIFESTAtion of creeping fundamentalism is intolerance of minorities. Coming under fire are the Coptic Christians, whose origins go back to Biblical times. Over ten per cent of Egypt's population, they have long been the best educated and skilled. In fact they still are, as anyone who, like me, first got acquainted with the country through the Alexandria Quartet would know But they are now being systematically discriminated against especially in the matter of jobs. The discrimination is widespread and far-reaching.

Part of the problem is that the Copts can hardly get enthused about Pan Arabism, for what its worth or for that matter, any kind of Islamic orthodoxy. They refuse to call themselves Arabs, preferring to simply remain Egyptians–heirs to the great ancient civilisation which flowered in their native Upper Egypt. Perhaps because they are under siege, they tend to be clannish and communal, which has created more problems than it has solved.

* * *

ORTHODOXY OR NOT, or perhaps because of it, the famed belly dancers are doing a roaring business as the locals and planeloads of Arabs from more Islamic regimes, come to gawk, paw and booze.

Lissom, with skin like milk, lovely 52-year-old Ms Nagwa Fouad, who was dancing through the closing stages of King Farouk's ill-fated regime, is still bringing Arab millionaires to their and her feet, in a spectacular show at a classy rooftop nightclub overlooking the wondrous Nile.

Connoisseurs would undoubtedly sigh that her silky smooth belly doesn't quiver like in the old days. But what she now lacks in skill she certainly makes up with style, not to mention her sultry look and hip and shoulder movements. How she manages to do all that at her age having (so gossip in the *souk* goes) gone through eight husbands, is something which rivals the pyramids.

While Ms Fouad would probably give the average Indian a restless night and earn the undying hatred of his wife, what she does is positively respectable compared to what goes on in the several thousand other nightclubs patronised by the less well-heeled. There, thousands of nubile Egyptian women set the Nile and their Arab clientele on fire with the most brazen displays. There'll be a lot more unemployment when the Islamic revolution comes.

* * *

ONE LOCAL CUSTOM seemed particularly unusual. Straight after the wedding reception, with the bride still in her white Western wedding gown, the just married couple, along with near and dear, head for a nightclub. At least four had ringside seats for Ms Fouad's show on a weekday. And at least as many were there every night.

Ms Fouad is capable of showing considerable warmth to most of her male clientele. But she truly surpassed herself when she began showering her attention on the just married men, to everyone's great amusement barring presumably the brides'. Why these young women expose themselves to so much risk that early in the game is a matter of some mystery.

* * *

MEANWHILE, HOSNI MUBARAK continues to rule the country with a profile so low that it verges on obscurity. Jihan Sadat, widow of the late Anwar Sadat told *Newsweek* recently: "Sadat left Egypt stable. He left it with institutions and did not leave us lost." Whether Mubarak's reign lives up to these expectations seems extremely doubtful. ♦

BY AG NOORANI

SELF-SEEKERS BOTH

Arun Gandhi's book raises more questions than it answers.

THIS BOOK SHOULD serve as an excellent case-study of the hazards of commissioned writing. (*The Morarji Papers*: by Arun Gandhi; Vision Books; Rs 80; 256 pp.) Fortunately, both, the author and the task setter, Morarji Desai, have given their versions of the deal in their correspondence appended to the book and in public statements.

The author claims he had set out 'to make the book an objective work' and Morarji had agreed to give him a free hand.

Morarji handed over to the author in April 1982 around 200 files but the author admits, he 'did not intend those documents to be used *in toto*'. It was on this 'explicit understanding' that the papers were given. Not only has he broken the condition but has changed radically the avowed object of the book, 'an objective work'. Instead, the preface says, he 'chose to view the problem through the eyes of Morarji Desai alone and invite rejoinders and rebuttals'.

This is as disingenuous as the plea that 'the alternative before me was to embark veritably on a history of the period'. This 'alternative' did not worry him when he accepted the assignment.

Why did he change its character? No less important is the question: "And when?" Later, he gave an additional reason for the change, "Besides, it would take much longer since I had also to work for a living." Also, the book had to be out before Sanjiva Reddy's memoirs.

Yet, only a month earlier (September 24) Arun Gandhi reminded Morarji Desai, "I had made it very clear that I would like to make the book an objective analysis of the period based on your correspondence" and proceeded to complain, "I was in despair when I found you were even objecting to my own conclusions and observations. How would my book be objective if I was to submit to everything that you said? As it is, the book has turned out in your favour. . ."

Why complain of the interference if he has decided 'to treat this book wholly as Morarji Desai's point of view'? Obviously this is an afterthought, prompted by the rift between the two in the wake of the publication in **Imprint** in August of the texts of the Desai-Reddy letters.

It is fairly evident that before that Morarji's qualms about publication of the texts were all but overcome. On this point the author's version rings true.

"On the question of using the text of the letters you had expressed your unwillingness primarily because you felt it would infringe the Official Secrets Act. At your behest I had met Mr Palkhivala who had said there was only a 'moral binding' not to use letters marked 'Secret' but there was no legal hitch. When I reported this to you, you had agreed to the suggestion that if I removed the DO numbers and the dates from the letters you would withdraw your objections. Once again I relented though I was convinced that this would only detract from the authenticity of the book. Later you insisted that I remove all quotations altogether. This I was not prepared to do because there was no point in writing a book on hearsay. I had clearly refused to do this. When I had said that I would like to use the facsimiles of some letters in the book to prove its authenticity you had agreed that I could use them. Thus when the revised chapters were sent to the publishers they were accompanied by photostat copies of the letters selected for publication."

To these specific assertions Mr Desai rejoins only by this bland denial: "I objected from the very beginning to your quotations (sometimes wholesale) from the correspondence which was made available to you only as background information from which you could have written objectively without quoting the papers which I would not divulge to the public." Is it for this that he handed over the 200 files? Morarji Desai himself admitted in Nasik on September 2 that he had permitted

Because of **Imprint's** *own involvement with* The Morarji Papers, *we asked a distinguished writer to do an objective review of the book. The views expressed are his own.*

ILLUSTRATION BY BHATLEKAR

Morarji broke his assurance of a free hand to the author who likewise broke the understanding not to reproduce the full correspondence. Neither emerges with credit. . .

Arun Gandhi to make references to these letters. In his book, *Succession India* (1966), Michael Brecher thanks "Morarji Desai, who kindly made available his personal correspondence with Nehru for research purposes and allowed me to work through it with care for a week at his home." All care was abandoned in Arun Gandhi's case. He was allowed to rummage freely through official documents.

Even under the Radcliffe guidelines Mr Desai had no right to take away as many as 200 files, still less to hand them over to anyone else. They were not his 'personal correspondence'. They were State papers. State property. Moreover Mr Desai kept them not in his custody but in that of the Research Bureau of a weekly, *Commerce*.

Reproduced extensively in the book are intelligence reports about financial and sexual scandals. There is an IB report on some of Rajni Patel's funds and associates; a report on George Fernandes' 'dubious deals', excerpts from Shibban Lal Saxena's '101 charges against HN Bahuguna', a police report on Nandini Satpathy and entries from a diary kept by her 19-year-old son, Tathagata.

Arun Gandhi writes, "Tathagata's diary is a chronicle of a depraved mind" yet selects juicy extracts from it and highlights its use of the four letter word and the like. Of course this exposes the utter falsity of his claim that his book is not "meant for those who revel in cheap sensationalism. It is more for the serious student of politics."

But what was Morarji Desai's purpose in taking out such documents from official custody? What use had he in mind for them, then?

Mr Chandrashekhar's comment on October 13 that it was unfortunate that such irresponsible people (as Arun Gandhi) got access to such important papers (as the Desai-Reddy correspondence) is the mildest he could have made. The access, in fact, extended to far more sensitive material and of the kind which contains unsubstantiated allegations as police and intelligence reports tend to do.

Mr Desai has not contradicted the author's claim thrice made—on August 22, 30 and on October 12—that he was given the manuscript for perusal and kept close tabs on the book as it was written. Did Morarji object to the salacious stuff? There is intrinsic evidence to show that the two poured over muck which has no relevance to the central theme of the book. In his talk with the author Morarji accused one cabinet colleague of 'moral turpitude', another, that he 'drank alcohol and probably did occasionally consort with women'. The depths to which Morarji can sink in his spiteful attacks on people's morals were reached in his comments on Jayaprakash Narayan. "When he returned to India as a healthy, virile young man he found that his childhood wife, Prabhavati Devi, influenced by Gandhian ideology, had taken the vow of celibacy. According to Morarji Desai, he protested and they both went to Mahatma Gandhi for his advice, but Gandhiji said this was a personal matter and he could not intervene nor could Jayaprakash convince his wife to change her mind. This understandably led to greater frustration and, says Morarji, to waywardness, but it was Prabhavati Devi's patience and understanding and platonic love that brought sanity back into his life." In the context and having regard to the kind of English Morarji and Gandhi used, the meaning of the word 'waywardness' cannot be much in doubt.

Nor is Jawaharlal Nehru spared: "We often had arguments on this score and Nehru would say, 'Don't speak to me about morality because I don't believe in it'." It is unthinkable that Nehru would have said that and to Morarji of all persons. Morarji enthusiastically backed the trio who were indicted by Commissions of Inquiry—Bakshi, Kairon and Patnaik. The spitefulness provides a clue to the origin of the book.

The third volume of Morarji Desai's memoirs, *The Story Of My Life*, published in 1979, ended with his experience in jail during the Emergency. None but the likes of PC Sethi could have faulted him for recording his version of the fall of the Janata Government and even using, for this purpose, the texts of the letters exchanged between him and Sanjiva Reddy to expose Reddy's perfidy. The rules outlined in the Radcliffe Report would have justified his conduct.

Why, then, did he appoint another to perform the task? Because like Pope's Atticus, Morarji was "Willing to wound and yet afraid to strike. . .A tim'rous foe and a suspicious friend." Eager he was that the 'book should not appear to be inspired', but determined it should project his line.

Evidently Morarji Desai wanted Arun Gandhi to do a hatchet job in which he acquiesced readily. The thought of interviewing anyone else never crossed his mind. When Morarji Desai developed cold feet in the wake of the **Imprint** article, Arun Gandhi simply went ahead and published the documents to make a 'book'. Morarji broke his assurance of a free hand to the author and Arun Gandhi likewise broke the understanding not to reproduce the full text of the correspondence. Neither emerges with credit from the affair. Arun Gandhi's own comments are few and puerile.

As for Gandhi's 'memory' he gives a very detailed and exciting account of his talk with JP in December 1975 'at his Kadam Kuan house in Patna' braving the CID et al by skilful subterfuge. Arun Gandhi has drawn on his imagination rather than his memory. JP was released on November 12, 1975 and went to Delhi. After a brief stay he was brought to Bombay on November 22 and admitted to the Jaslok Hospital. He remained in Bombay for the better part of 1976.

Even on the story of the 'emissary' who offered a bribe of Rs 50,000 to

Morarji has only himself to blame. . . not for trusting Arun Gandhi, but for not distrusting his hates and prejudices.

suppress the book the author is unable to make up his mind whether he was sent by Morarji or Chandrashekhar. Contrast the Morarji suggestion in the *Weekly* article with the charge at the press conference about the latter.

The job was just beyond him. He does not ask Morarji some obvious questions; for instance on 'the fiasco of Mrs Gandhi's arrest'. Had Morarji approved of it? There are terrible mistakes. All told, it is a disgraceful performance by Arun Gandhi.

As for Morarji, he has only himself to blame for the mess in which he has landed himself; not for trusting Arun Gandhi, but for not distrusting his own base feelings, his hates and prejudices.

The book reeks of hatred for Nehru and JP. A recent disclosure by the former Canadian High Commissioner to India, Escott Reid, in his memoirs, *Envoy to Nehru*, is most revealing. "Much of our conversation was directly or indirectly about Nehru. I thought at the time (February 1955) that some of his remarks about Nehru were strangely indiscreet. He was hoping to be Prime Minister, realising presumably that Nehru's support for his ambitions would be helpful, but nevertheless in his first serious conversation with me making remarks about Nehru which if Nehru heard of them would annoy if not anger him." The impropriety of a Chief Minister running down the Prime Minister to a foreign diplomat, apart, was it not hypocritical to complain that Nehru did not help him to become his successor?

Morarji is at pains to establish that it was his Janata *morcha* in Gujarat which 'helped in the setting up of the Janata Party on the all-India level in 1977' and "JP was not present at the time of the deliberations which led to the formation of the Janata Party." To Morarji, JP "always was somewhat of an egoist who loved being in the limelight and sought publicity for this purpose. This is why when he returned from the US as a Marxist he couldn't accept being an ordinary member of the Communist Party. He wanted to be the leader straightaway."

The statement is false and the characterisation of JP is malicious. Small wonder that all the senior Cabinet colleagues are derided. Let alone Charan Singh and Jagjivan Ram, ambition 'also consumed men like HN Bahuguna, George Fernandes, AB Vajpayee and others'.

It spared Morarji alone. On July 18, 1979, JP wrote to Morarji counselling him to resign as Party leader after he had quit as PM on July 15. So did Acharya Kripalani. That would have saved the Janata Government. Morarji refused. Incredibly, he cites the precedent of Ramsay MacDonald who resigned as PM and formed a government on his own. It took the Labour Party years to recover from this, while MacDonald's name still stinks to Labour nostrils. But he had a national crisis to face.

Morarji had to face only the lack of general confidence in his leadership. There were none around to support him because his performance was inept. On the last Thursday before his departure from Bombay for Patna in July 1979, JP told this writer, "I never had high hopes for him. But I never thought he would be such a flop."

Morarji quit as a party leader only after he had accomplished sheer ruin, swearing, "I shall not hereafter take part in any political activity." This was on July 27, 1979 and the pledge has been broken, as we all know. "When you talk of giving up politics, or anything for that matter, it should be total." That was meant for JP, not for himself.

It is not 'destiny' which brought down the Janata Government as Morarji says: nor Moscow, as he hints. The failings of its leaders, foremost among them its Chief, Morarji, brought about the fall. One cannot but lament that at a great moment in our history a small man was all we could find to lead us. ♦

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THE RULES OF THE MEDIA GAME

Indian journalism needs to examine the ethics of its own behaviour. Honesty, accuracy, fairness and integrity are in short supply.

JOURNALISTS CLAIM FOR themselves the right to question everyone else's ethics. And yet, rarely are their own ethics questioned. It is assumed that journalism is above corruption, blackmail and misuse of power. In reality, this is far from true. While doctors, lawyers and the like have their own code of ethics, journalists are bound by no rules and accept no code. Their ethics are of their own invention and frequently, they make them up as they go along.

Despite their claim that they are incorruptible, journalists are routinely bought up by politicians and industrial houses. They openly accept expensive gifts at press conferences, go on foreign trips at other people's expense and enjoy subsidised housing. Further, they then write favourable articles about their benefactors in return for the favours. Such practices are not secret. They are regarded as entirely ethical, though they would be considered scandalous in any American paper.

Journalistic misuse of power is legendary. In small towns, local editors play favourites among politicians and business houses. And gossip magazines cheerfully print scandal and innuendo on the convenient grounds that their subjects have no right to privacy. It is a measure of journalistic smugness that few people regard these practices as unethical.

Worst of all, the Indian press is not even particularly good at its job. Newspapers are riddled with inaccuracies, facts are never double-checked and major, front page stories often have no basis in reality. In most Western countries, newspapers have stringent procedures for checking the authenticity of their stories; Indian journalism has no such procedures. A few months ago, even Arun Shourie was moved by press inaccuracies to suggest that it was time journalists evolved a code of ethics for themselves.

What is most shocking about this state of affairs is that everyone is aware of it; and yet, nobody seems to care. Indian journalism is so smug that the fact that ours is the only free press that operates without any ethical guidelines, worries few journalists. It is, in a sense, an exercise of the traditional prerogative of the harlot through the ages: power without responsibility.

Personal Honesty

THOUGH THE AVERAGE READER probably does not realise this, journalists are open to all kinds of bribes, blandishments and inducements. Because a few lines in a newspaper or a magazine can make so much difference to their sales, commercial organisations are forever trying to bribe journalists, offer them gifts, send them on free trips, give them discounts or influence them in other ways. Often politicians try the same tactics.

While it is difficult to establish that any journalist has actually accepted money in return for editorial publicity, the press conference syndrome is common enough. Generally, press conferences are called when politicians or companies have something they wish to get into print. Years of experience have taught them that to induce journalists to file the desired stories, they must first make them happy. So, press conferences are generally held in the banquet halls of five star hotels. At the very least cocktails are served, though dinner is also provided, if a large write-up is being sought. As if all

This article was researched by Shirin Mehta, Assistant Editor and Amrita Shah, a staffer.

The box on Sunday *is by SNM Abdi, a former correspondent on that magazine.*

this were not blatant enough, journalists now expect to receive gifts at the end of each press conference.

For the most part, such gifts are the company's own products. Thus a textile company might gift suit pieces to every journalist who attends its conference. Or a plastics manufacturer might hand out buckets. Rare is the journalist who refuses to accept such gifts. Often, the inducements are less subtle. When the Ruias were attempting to take over Killick Nixon, they held a huge press conference at Bombay's Oberoi Towers hotel. Because they had no product to hand out, they gave each journalist who attended, Akbarally's gift coupons. The Ruias had no connection with Akbarally's and the coupons were clearly intended as bribes—yet, few journalists turned them down. Similarly, journalists have no compunctions about accepting fruit, liquor, clothing material, watches and

Khushwant Singh is the king of the junkets. After each journey, he has written sycophantic pieces about those who paid for his trip.

the like, when business houses send them around as 'Diwali gifts'. Sometimes though, the companies do go too far. After the Ruia press conference, a company of butchers held their own conference. As it was impossible to hand out legs of mutton to the assembled journalists and they had neglected to purchase gift vouchers, they simply passed out envelopes full of money. Whether they went to Akbarally's and bought Rs 50 worth of gift coupons or just gave out the cash, seemed to them to be the same. The journalists however saw it differently. "You are trying to bribe us," they told the bewildered butchers who were naturally, unable to appreciate the fine ethical distinction between cash and gift vouchers.

Another grey area is the junket or free trip. In most cases, the journalist is taken on an all-expenses paid vacation

Khushwant Singh: credibility destroyed.

and writes a laudatory article about his sponsors on his return. Hotels, airlines, foreign governments and the like periodically arrange such trips. There is no agreement among journalists about the ethics of accepting such a trip. Most hide behind the fact that rarely is the sponsoring organisation crude enough to insist that they write a laudatory article to pay for the trip; nevertheless, most journalists feel obliged to write such articles anyway. Recalls MV Kamath, "I once ran into a News Editor of *The Times Of India* at the most expensive hotel in Paris. God knows what he had to do for the French government in return!"Earlier this year, Nirmal Goswami went on a Singapore Airlines junket and wrote a laudatory article in the *Sunday Observer*. His defence is: "There is no obligation to write anything in particular. They do not put any pressure. You can write what you want." But isn't any free holiday, where you are fussed over, going to result in a laudatory article? "It is a well-established principle that the press should be shown around. And it is possible to enjoy someone's hospitality and still be objective." Well, may be. Certainly, Goswami's is not an isolated case. Khushwant Singh has seen the world at other people's expense and always written sycophantic pieces about those who paid for his holiday on his return. Often, this has worked out cheaper than buying advertising space. Nevertheless, most newspaper organisations have no rules about accepting junkets.

The Indian government also offers journalists various 'good deals' in the hope of securing their co-operation. There are special quotas for them on planes, trains, at telephone exchanges and in the allocation of most scarce commodities. Sometimes, they

Arun Shourie: need for a code of ethics.

are even given subsidised housing. The Gulmohar Park Colony in New Delhi was created to house journalists cheaply, as was Bombay's Patrakar Nagar. When he was Chief Minister of Maharashtra, AR Antulay used to routinely reward those who supported him with cheap accommodation. In one celebrated case, a noted RSS-leaning journalist switched sides after Antulay found him a flat. The usual defence is that the government expects nothing in return from journalists. This is nonsense. During the Emergency, RA Ramanujam of *Newsweek* was thrown out of his government flat for opposing the regime.

Journalists seem to believe that as long as they do not accept cash in their individual capacities, they are being ethical. Politicians and industrialists are encouraged to pour lakhs into press clubs, and this blatant bribery is regarded as ethical.

During AR Antulay's term as Maharashtra Chief Minister, he would routinely announce donations of Rs 50,000 to press clubs in each district. Recently, Vasantdada Patil won over the Nagpur press club with another large donation. Swraj Paul tried a similar tack with the Delhi press club which not only accepted one lakh rupees but also considered holding a seminar on non-resident investment.

Does this open corruption achieve anything? Indeed, it does. Most of the journalists who attended the Ruia press conference came away and filed extremely favourable stories. On the other hand, organisations that cannot afford to host parties at five star hotels often find it difficult to get any publicity. No American or British newspaper would tolerate such a state of affairs. In India, it is regarded as perfectly normal.

Dalmia: the proprietor's right to interfere.

Mankekar: asked to clear a Mercedes.

Management Stances

ALL OVER THE WORLD, journalists risk losing their jobs if they disagree with their proprietors. Harold Evans resigned as Editor of *The Times* (London) in 1982, because he disagreed with owner Rupert Murdoch. In India, BG Verghese was forced out of the *Hindustan Times* because KK Birla knew that he had incurred Mrs Gandhi's wrath. Often journalists have to promote their proprietor's interests. DR Mankekar remembers how *The Times Of India* became a mouthpiece for Dalmia's views: "He would issue his editorial instructions to his editors in Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta over the phone and by teleprinter which minced no words and exhorted them to make their criticism of Nehru more trenchant."

Sometimes journalist and publisher may fall out over individual stories. Praful Bidwai left *Business India* after the management seemed reluctant to carry a critical story about drug companies, apparently on the grounds that the magazine was supposed to support business. More recently Masoodul Huq left *Sunday* because of a dispute over a story about Gwalior Rayon. Later, the magazine was embroiled in another dispute over an article supporting Swraj Paul that was written by an associate of Paul himself. (See SNM Abdi's box.)

Managements are reluctant to antagonise large advertisers. Asked if it is ethical to protect advertisers' interests, Vishwanathan Nair of *The Daily* is candid: "To some extent I will justify it. Every newspaper is a commercial enterprise as well. Both are interlinked. If a man gives five to ten lakh rupees worth of advertising and if something happens in his establishment, then in the interests of the paper, you don't write about it. You can't shut it off but there should be some sort of understanding."

What the 'understanding' should be, is open to interpretation. The glossy magazines have established the 'ad-backed' fashion feature. In such cases, magazines carry articles and pictorial spreads, about say, the blue jean industry and the manufacturers then cough up several pages of colour advertising. This seems innocuous even if slightly unethical, but it has deeper implications. Datta Samant claims that the bad press coverage he received during the textile strike was determined by the large advertising budgets of the textile companies.

Large advertisers may even take over small publications. Several Delhi-based newsmagazines operate on the largesse of five star hotels and other big companies. Major publications are also open to advertisers' influence. After Air India resumed advertising in a big way two years ago, the negative stories dried up. And it may be a pure co-incidence but *Blitz* and *Current*, both publications that support Swraj Paul, now carry large Caparo ads.

Influence

THE POWER OF THE PRESS IS sometimes used to settle personal scores and advance the influence of individual journalists. In a small town, a top journalist enjoys great influence. Bragged Bikram Vohra, Editor of Goa's *Nav Hind Times* to *Celebrity* magazine: "I have a durbar every morning at the *Nav Hind Times* and that kind of impact is literal impact—when about 25,000 people respond. I don't wait in line for anything there, not for gas, not for cinema tickets . . ."

In February 1982, when two Bombay-based journalists were visiting Bastar they ran into one of the district's most powerful journalists, notorious for his partisan politics and influence. The jounalist was a correspondent for a Raipur daily where he had been employed for several years. Amongst the many 'deals' he was rumoured to have been involved in, a personal case implicating his brother clearly illustrates his mode of operating. His brother had been living with a tribal woman who had borne his child. When the time came for his brother's marriage, the correspondent 'fixed' the match with a 'respectable, high caste girl' and conveniently turned out the tribal girl. So strong was this correspondent's power in the area that he legitimised his brother's stand and harassed the girl continually by thwarting all her attempts at seeking employment and by threatening her family. Everyone in the district knows the facts of this story but nobody has really taken a stand against the journalist who continues his bullying tactics and his attempts to malign anyone who comes in his way.

Datta Samant claimed that the bad publicity he received during the textile strike was determined by the ad budgets of the textile mills.

Even in the big cities, journalists often try to misuse their influence. DR Mankekar recalls how when he was Editor of *The Times of India*, JC Jain, the General Manager attempted to use the paper's clout: "When JC visited West Germany on behalf of Bennett Coleman, I received a cable from him asking me to use my influence with the Ministries of Finance and Com-

SUNDAY AND SWRAJ PAUL

Who is Ralph Buultjens and why does he like Mr Paul?

IN ITS JUNE 19-25, 1983 issue, *Sunday*, published by the Calcutta-based Ananda Bazar group and edited by MJ Akbar carried an intriguing report entitled *Corporate Casteism In India* by Ralph Buultjens. This feature presented every conceivable argument in favour of investment by non-resident Indians like Swraj Paul and accused the managements of DCM and Escorts of causing 'a sense of unease that goes far beyond the financial and legal dimensions–into the area of moral accountability'. Moral accountability! In a moment I will tell readers how Akbar and Buultjens conspired to take unsuspecting readers for a ride.

Sunday described the author as 'an international authority on finance and investment'. "Professor Buultjens," wrote *Sunday*, "has been a perceptive observer of the Indian political economy for 30 years. Born in Sri Lanka, he now lives in the United States and teaches international politics and economics at *several* universities around the world."

The professor's first name has a ring of innocence. It was his surname, Buultjens, which attracted this correspondent's attention. Preliminary enquiries revealed that the Buultjens report was brought by editor MJ Akbar himself from London earlier in June. When I contacted Akbar for confirmation, he said: "Write whatever you feel like. But please don't bother me with such silly things." I also asked several economists in Calcutta whether they were aware of the existence of Professor Buultjens. Each enquiry evoked the same response: "I haven't heard his name, ever." Ultimately this correspondent asked Dr Ashok Mitra, well-known economist and West Bengal Minister for Finance and Jayanta Sarkar, Resident Editor of *The Hindustan Times* here whether they had perchance heard of Professor Buultjens. Both replied in the negative.

Naturally I turned to other sources for enlightenment. According to the Ananda Bazar's contribution statement sheet for *Sunday* dated June 19-25, 1983, Professor Buultjens is serially pegged at number 14. A cheque

13	19-6-83	Mr Pran Chopra Visiting Professor Centre for Policy Researog Dharma Marg,Chanakyapuri NEW DELHI 110021 BY BANK DRAFT	Feature /S	PUNJAB CAN STILL BE SAVED (RUPEES THREE HUNDRED ONLY)	300 00	
14	19-6-83	Prof Ralph Buultjens C/o. Mr Swaraj Paul APEEJAY HOUSE Park Street Calcutta 700016	Feature /s	CORPORATE CASTEISM IN INDIA (RUPEES THREE HUNDRED ONLY)	300 00	

Detail of payment sheet showing Buultjens' address.

SPECIAL REPORT

CORPORATE CASTEISM IN INDIA

By RALPH BUULTJENS

An intense controversy surrounds the recent purchases of shares in Indian public companies by expatriates. Because of the international nature of this controversy, SUNDAY asked Prof. Ralph Buultjens, an international authority on finance and investment, to give his views. Professor Buultjens has been a perceptive observer of the Indian political economy for thirty years. Born in Sri Lanka, he now lives in the United States and teaches international politics and economics at several universities around the world.

Recent events in the world of high finance in India give extraordinary insights into the behaviour and attitudes of the Indian business establishment. The actions of leaders of commerce and industry, strangely different from the norms they generally claim to espouse, also raise some disturbing financial, legal and moral questions, which, above all, concern the character and capacity of the highest level of business management in India.

For a considerable time, successive Indian governments and Indian businessmen have been urging expatriates to invest in local enterprises. The response has been modest, until, within the past year, the government offered certain tax concessions to encourage this flow of foreign earned capital into India. This tax policy then met with almost universal approval by the Indian business community. Following the law, and in no way contravening either its intent or its provisions, a London based Indian businessman, Swraj Paul, purchased significant blocks of shares in India's fourth and tenth largest companies—Delhi Cloth & General Mills Company (DCM) and Escorts Limited.

And then, the floodgates of criticisms opened. The chairman of DCM and Escorts, whose families (the Shrirams and Nandas) were presumed by the public to own large shareholdings in their own companies, reacted hysterically. They assailed Swraj Paul and maligned his motives in language bordering on the abusive. A collective panic seemed to have afflicted the higher echelons of Indian corporate executives. As the establishment closed ranks behind the Nandas and Shrirams, a phalanx of the most powerful industrialists issued statements of concern.

48

J.R.D. Tata, K.N. Modi, Ashok Jain, Hari Shankar Singhania, L.M. Thapar, H.C. Kothari and others of similar eminence attacked Swraj Paul's purchases. Delegations of powerful industrialists rushed to demand government protection from this type of investment. Chambers of Commerce made denunciations. Company lobbyists, who lurk near the centre of power, worked overtime to obtain reassurances and protection for their masters. Elements of the press and even politicians were mobilized in their support.

These are uncharacteristic of the Indian business hierarchy. This elite is normally cautious, anxious not to discuss corporate affairs too freely in public, discreet in revealing their ties with high government and political figures, and incessant in their complaints about government interventions in business. For the establishment to violate all of these norms in a period of a few weeks suggests the distraction to which they are driven. A bemused public is beginning to ask questions—and these deserve examination.

Underlying the whole establishment response is an apparent concern with expatriate acquisition of blocks of shares in local companies. Expatriate investment, the public is now told, represents a force for instability and brings a dangerous element of speculation. It is difficult to understand these charges for two reasons.

First, expatriate investment was frequently solicited by those who now denounce it. They made no charges when enabling legislation was considered by the government.

Second, any stock market is largely based on speculation. Since the shares of DCM and Escorts were traded on stock exchanges long before expatriates became interested in them, allegations of speculation seem spurious. In addition, whatever speculation there has been recently has added to the market value of DCM and Escort shares, surely a matter of joy for those who own them.

Why, then, this concern about expatriates? Perhaps there is a deeper and more subtle explanation than that which is publicly proclaimed.

The whole expatriate issue could well be a smokescreen to disguise a more fundamental issue: the matter of who actually owns many Indian businesses and who exercises operating control of them. It is these areas, and the linkage between the two, that are the heart of corporate darkness in the world of Indian high finance. More specifically, then, it is the position of the defenders of the status quo that deserves careful examination, rather than the motives of the invaders.

There are three critical financial questions that are basic criteria for evaluating the performance of corporate management, especially in India.

First, what is the relationship of ownership to management?

Second, what are the sources of capital employed by companies?

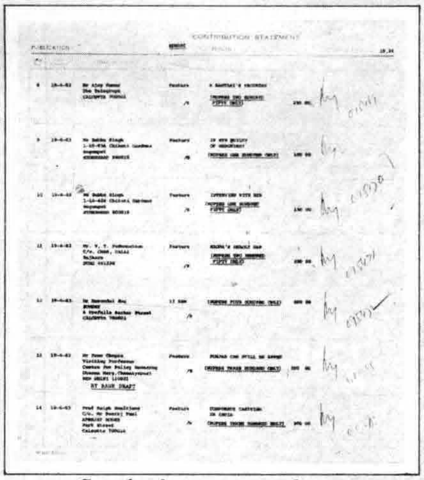
Third, what is the return which management provides to shareholders? Each of these questions are particularly valid in the context of the DCM-Escorts situation.

The recent controversy has exposed a surprising fact. Most observers of Indian business assumed that families who controlled management also controlled large shareholdings. Apparently, they once did. This is no longer so. Shriram family holdings do not amount to more than ten per cent of DCM stock and the Nandas own about the same proportion of Escorts. Evidently, over the years, both families have converted many of their shares into cash by selling them to the public. Now, they are essentially minority shareholders.

Yet, this liquification of their holdings has not reduced their control of these companies. Both Shrirams and Nandas are in complete charge of management, enjoy all the considerable perquisites of office, and employ an assortment of relatives as highly paid executives. This is the best of all possible worlds—cash in hand and jobs in hand, corporate comforts and family plantings. As this situation becomes exposed, so does the vulnerability of management and a different perception of their tenacity for office begins to emerge. One also begins to ask whether this condition is reflected in other major Indian companies.

If so little of equity capital now belongs to the erstwhile owners (who

The article that caused a stir.



Sunday's *payment sheet.*

(drawn on the United Bank of India, College Street Branch, Calcutta, number 095473 for Rs 300 only) has been despatched to him as honorarium. Buultjens' address is also neatly typed out on the contribution statement sheet: Ralph Buultjens, c/o Swraj Paul, Apeejay House, Park Street, Calcutta. The entry bears Akbar's signature in the appropriate column. I can only guess that the cheque has been encashed since then.

What do we deduce from this? I can only draw an analogy. Imagine the cheque for a pro-Mrs Gandhi piece penned by an unknown writer being sent c/o Mrs Indira Gandhi, 1 Safdarjang Road, Delhi! Against this background, are we not entitled to suspect that the Buultjens report was planted, as several journalists, including some *Sunday* staffers have suspected in their hearts? *Sunday* described Buultjens as a foreign national. Then, why wasn't he paid through the Reserve Bank of India? Besides this incongruity, *Sunday* is far too generous to pay 'an international authority on finance and investment' a paltry sum of Rs 300 for a 2500-word story. However, all things considered, I failed to establish Professor Buultjens' real identity.

Last month, I eventually discovered him in the columns of *Indian Express* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. I will share my discovery with readers.

In his despatch on Mrs Gandhi's visit to the Nehru exhibition at the Indian Consulate in New York, Pranay Gupte wrote in the *Indian Express* dated September 29, 1983: "Before she (Mrs Gandhi) spoke, however, there was a welcome speech by Ralph Buultjens, an energetic and amiable Sri Lankan who is active in Indian affairs in New York and who reportedly is now a close associate of Mrs Gandhi. And before he formally welcomed Mrs Gandhi, Mr Buultjens, a political scientist, said this of Jawaharlal Nehru: 'His greatness was not

merce to let him import a Mercedes Benz car from Germany." Ashok Row Kavi remembers a similar incident when he was a reporter at *The Daily*: "One of my superiors had gone on a junket to Germany. When he returned he called me up to say that he had brought back a new electric typewriter and I should prevail upon customs to have it cleared. I had to work under him so I did it."

Politicians can sense how keen journalists are to be perceived as influential. The simplest way to neutralise them is to appear to take them into confidence, or to 'consult' them. Most journalists then cease to view the politician in question objectively and begin to identify with him. The classic case is, of course, Sanjay Gandhi and Khushwant Singh. At the time, Singh edited India's largest circulated magazine and wielded immense power. By pandering to his vanity, Gandhi turned him into a sycophantic buffoon and

You'd search in vain for mentions of SAVAK in Blitz during the Shah's heyday.

at a stroke, destroyed his credibility. So complete was Singh's identification with the junior Gandhi that he churned out passages like this one: "Sanjay has taken a heavy load on his young shoulders ... Help him to reach his goal of a prosperous and happy India." Singh's credibility has never recovered. He is now a pathetic figure of fun.

Of course, some journalists claim to be immune to such influences. Rusi Karanjia of *Blitz* claims that his association with the Shah of Iran did not influence his paper's favourable coverage of the Shah's repressive regime. "In fact," says Karanjia, "I had been consistently warning him against the despotic features of his passion for the industrial development of his country; and my last interviews provide proof of this fact." You'd search in vain for mentions of SAVAK in *Blitz*, though, during the Shah's heyday.

Ayub Syed of *Current* claims that friendships do not affect his judgement: "In Gaddafi, I thought I had a friend but now I disagree with him."

Individuals And Privacy

THE ETHICS OF FILM JOURNALISM would require a full story. But now,

(Continued on page 25)

only in what he did but what he was.' It was an assessment echoed later by Swraj Paul, the controversial Indian magnate who lives in London..."

Professor Ralph Buultjens is evidently deeply in love with Swraj Paul and the Nehrus. His fondness for Mr Paul comes out clearly in the piece he wrote for *Sunday* and for which he was paid Rs 300 care of Swraj Paul. His overwhelming affection for the Nehrus finds evidence in a letter to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* dated September 29, 1983. Buultjens wrote in to dispute Salman Rushdie's claim that Sanjay held Mrs Gandhi responsible for Nehru's death. Buultjens knew this was wrong because Sanjay 'mentioned this personally to me on more than one occasion'.

Magazine editors also have an obligation to truth. I have still not been able to figure out why MJ Akbar printed a story to boost Swraj Paul's prospects in India. My respect for Mr Akbar has, of course, considerably diminished in the process. Readers who were totally unaware of the cordial relationship between Swraj Paul, Ralph Buultjens and Mrs Gandhi were taken for a ride. I hope that my disclosures will compel *Sunday* readers to revise their assessment of the magazine and its editor. The reader, after all, deserves to be informed about how his favourite periodical is run.

— SNM Abdi

SUNDAY REPLIES

'An Irresponsible Allegation'

DURING THE HEIGHT of the controversy over the NRI investment in Indian companies, *Sunday* had interviewed Mr Vinay Bharat Ram and Mr HP Nanda. When *Sunday* asked Mr Swraj Paul for his comments, he said that an article written by Mr Ralph Buultjens expressed his point of view. We found the article to have a certain rationale, even if we did not always agree with it (in fact, it has always been *Sunday's* policy to provide the widest range of opinion and viewpoint) and therefore we published it. The payment was consequently sent to the author care of Mr Paul, and sent very openly.

What we do not understand is why this hysterical piece by Mr Abdi, a journalist who left our organisation and wanted desperately to return but was not found fit to do so, is being published at all. Indeed, *Sunday* would have been even happier if instead of Mr Buultjens Mr Paul himself had written a piece explaining his actions. Just as we are happy to give Mr Ram or Mr Nanda the space to accuse Mr Paul of being less than honourable, we should, logically, give space to other viewpoints. What is so controversial about this? It is most extraordinary the manner in which some immature gentlemen are trying to 'discredit' *Sunday* by such crude methods.

We would of course have ignored this sort of scurrilousness except that it is appearing in a decent publication like **Imprint.**

To what absurd lengths can Mr SNM Abdi go? What a foolish suggestion that Ralph Buultjens, does not exist! For your and Mr Abdi's information, Dr Buultjens is Chairman of the U Thant International Awards Committee and teaches international politics and philosophy in New York. Dr Buultjens is currently the Chairman of the International Development Forum, a world-wide group of eminent social scientists and scholars. Among his publications is the prize-winning work, *Rebuilding The Temple: Tradition And Change In Modern Asia.* His other works include: *The Decline Of Democracy* and *China After Mao– Death Of A Revolution?*

— Tooshar Pandit

"I DON'T PEDDLE PRETENSIONS"

Shobha Kilachand, the Editor of* Celebrity *(and our cover subject this month) was reluctant to be interviewed. She did, however, consent to send written replies to a few general questions.

Q: Do film stars have any right to privacy? Or have they declared themselves 'fair game' by entering films?

A: I don't know what exactly you mean by 'fair game', but I do believe that showbiz is showbiz and that there is a price tag attached to being a celebrity in every field, films included. The concept of 'privacy' for film stars is open to interpretation. Who decides where the line should be drawn? From my own experience as an ex-editor of a film magazine I can tell you that more often than not, it's the film stars themselves who feed the press with juicy items on either their own private lives or those of their colleagues. It's ridiculous to pass the buck on to the journalists, for indirectly it is the film stars who encourage and propagate this type of writing—with an eye on the box-office, naturally. The more a star gets written about, the bigger the image and better the commercial returns. In any case, all of them without an exception prefer to be gossiped about than ignored. Of course, the standard hypocrisy exists in filmdom (as it does outside it) where the stars fly into a mock rage and 'ban the press' when an anti-article appears—suddenly, they become acutely aware of the 'ethics' involved.

By analogy, is the same true of public figures outside of filmdom?

Yes, public figures (especially in Bombay) do forego their right to privacy when they opt for a public life. A hue and cry is made only when something even mildly controversial about them appears in print. So long as they are kept in the news with public relations write-ups they are only too happy to co-operate with the press. I can name any number of socialites, industrialists, politicians and assorted media-hounds, who chase journalists and court publicity, provided what appears is sugar-coated and enhances their public image. Lavish parties and gifts to willing writers are not new in media circles and all the so-called bigname

columnists have sold out to these kind of seductions at some point or the other. The cliques within cliques that exist are known to everybody and it isn't a secret that glowing write-ups can be bought for the price of an airline ticket or even an invitation to a swanky 'do'. There are magazines in the city through which you can easily recognise the editor's social engagements over the previous fortnight, from the number of 'friends' who have been obliged in their pages, with glossy write-ups on their parties and outings. This holds true for journalists as well, who play the 'scratch, scratch me back' number so blatantly and use their pens and pages to heap praise on their friends and contacts in the media and damn the rivals.

Do you regret your recent column in* The Weekly, *which was plainly about a couple who most journalists and artists in Bombay could easily recognise?

Yes, I do regret that particular column and have apologised to the people concerned. There are things a writer may write at some point in life, which seem futile and worthless in retrospection. I'm sure every journalist in this city has written at least one piece in his or her career that has been regretted later. What I object to is the reaction of the so-called friends of this particular couple, who instead of trying to protect them from the hurt caused by my writing, only added to their agony by rubbing it in and calling them up to express their 'sympathy'. The backbiting and viciousness within the media crowd in this city is something that has to be seen to be believed. It's easy to jump on to a self-righteous bandwagon and attack 'outsiders', but when a journalist friend is 'attacked' (according to them) suddenly they discover a convenient word called 'ethics'. According to their rules it's fair and square to take pot-shots at the rest of the world. But 'the gang' is scared. Would any of them have shown the same fervour, had I written an identical column on say, Khushwant Singh's ways or MV Kamath's habits? No way! Why not? Because they (KS and MVK) don't belong to this 'in club', and they are not a part of this coterie of back-scratchers. If it's the *principle* they are defending and not the individual, there ought to be some uniformity about the whole thing. I'd like them to distinguish between 'personal' attacks and 'impersonal' ones. An attack is an attack. In any case, I believe this whole thing is a 'Get Shobha' campaign engineered by a bunch of frustrated, unsuccessful men. At least I don't peddle cheap pretensions under the guise of 'commitment'. It was the ugly mudslinging in a column war that was encouraged by *The Sunday Observer*, that started off this whole trend in the first place. And now I find these same people riding the high horse, signing nonsensical petitions and going on a moralistic rampage. It's ironical, but not at all surprising to hear these hypocrites shout themselves hoarse about 'unhealthy trends' in journalism. Surely, there ought to be other, far more important national issues of social relevance to deal with than some stray column about an anonymous couple? ♦

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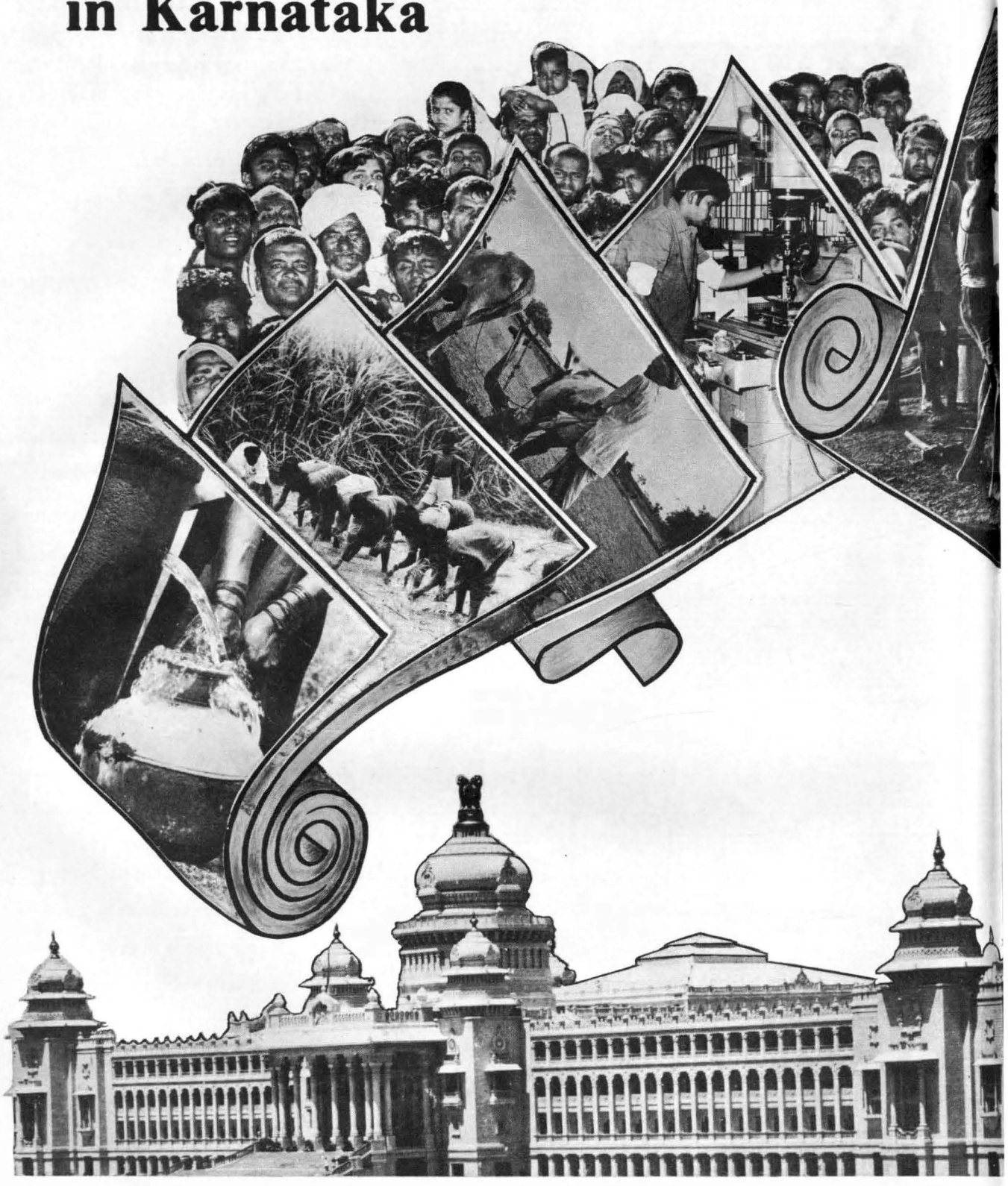

HORIZONS

In step with the people of Karnataka in their march towards a brighter tomorrow the State Government has initiated far-reaching reforms and is implementing purposeful projects for early realisation of the people's aspirations. Strengthened by the complete trust placed in their policies and programmes by the people, the Government has launched a series of comprehensive measures:

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Firm step to eradicate corruption; formation of 'Lok Ayuktha'.

Exclusive ministry for redressing public grievances.

Use of Kannada at all levels of administration — a watchdog committee for its implementation.

Learning Kannada made compulsory in schools.

Action to decentralise powers — A radical reform to form Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishats.

One more assurance implemented: Elections held for Corporations and Municipalities.

The Age of the electorate to these bodies lowered to 18 years; 20 per cent of seats reserved for women.

Welfare of the minorities: Formation of the first ever Minorities Commission; Taluk level committees formed to ensure communal peace.

Another commission for the upliftment of Backward classes.

A unique opportunity for talented Harijan & Girijan youth—direct recruitment to the higher levels of Government service.

An emerging pattern of a better educational system — a comprehensive reforms bill on the anvil.

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Imparting and incorporating new ideas in administration; Constitution of Economic and Planning Commission.

New Industrial policy: Fillip to labour intensive industries; single window approach for starting industries at district level. One thousand new small industries a month.

'Antyodaya' — amelioration of the poorest classes; Welfare of five selected poor families in every village taken up.

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Setting styles in tiles

with the growth of people journalism many of the dilemmas of film journalism have spilled into the mainstream. Do public figures have a right to privacy? How far can the press go? Is an inaccurate story defensible merely because it's complimentary?

Magazines today are full of extravagant claims made on behalf of various socialites who have entertained journalists. Concedes Binoy Thomas, the Editor of *Society*: "I don't see any real investigation being done in 'people journalism'. People journalism is at its best when it comes to politics and stars. But fringe society often gets unwarranted publicity."

When it comes to negative articles, the ethical questions run deeper. Was it right to print that the daughter-in-law of former Chief Minister Babasaheb Bhosale claimed that he had tried to rape her? Or was this a purely private matter? Most journalists decided that it was newsworthy. But they came to the opposite conclusion about a minister in Bhosale's cabinet who was a well-known homosexual and about another minister who was not only a drunk but also favoured (heterosexual) liaisons in his Mantralaya office.

On what basis are these decisions taken? No clear guidelines exist and it is usually left to the journalist's individual discretion. Predictably, such a situation leads to abuses and innocent individuals often have their names dragged through the gutter simply because a columnist wishes to appear controversial or to dash off a sensational article.

It is the former film journalists who have introduced such practices into the profession. Former model (and our current cover-girl) Shobha Kilachand began the trend with a bitchy, brittle column in *Onlooker* in which she tore into all those who had made the mistake of inviting her to their houses. When the *grandes dames* of Bombay high society, enraged by this upwardly mobile bitchiness, reacted by cutting her dead, Kilachand turned to lesser mortals.

Despite her 'public-figures-have-no-right-to-a-private-life' stance (she defined who a 'public figure' was) the journalistic fraternity treated her with indulgence, pacifying outraged film stars and hostesses who demanded to know why Kilachand's own private life rarely got into print. Their tolerance was, however, sorely strained by a recent column in the *Weekly*. Ostensibly about turning 40, it was really a shrill, needlessly hysterical attack on a particular individual who those in the know could easily recognise. It was more than unfair; it was pointless.

It is former film journalists like Kilachand who have encouraged gossip journalism.

Most outrageous was Kilachand's needless abuse. She described her subject as 'a walking corpse' who resembled a 'lice-infested, concentration camp escapee'. And she ended by suggesting that she 'go ahead and slash her wrists'. As the only point the otherwise turgid column made was the banal one that it was difficult to be middle-aged and married to a famous person, the viciousness of the personal attack seemed indefensible.

While there has been widespread outrage over that particular column (Kilachand finally apologised, but as our interview shows, paranoia has been added to the shrillness) the incident raises a wider question. Is it fair to attack private individuals who have never sought the limelight? No guidelines exist and in the circumstances, gossip journalists have followed the golden rule of self-survival; tear into those who can't hit back and promote those who can be useful.

Authenticity

IF THE PRESS IS TO HAVE ANY influence, then it must be seen to be accurate. But all too often, Indian papers trample over accuracy in their quest for sensational headlines.

The most notorious instance of this is perhaps the *Rape Most Foul* story that appeared in the *Indian Express* in April 1980. According to the front page report, four men had abducted a woman before her husband's eyes at the Drive-In cinema. The husband had gone home and waited for his wife who had finally returned the next morning. Before he could stop her, she had gone to the toilet, doused herself with kerosene and committed suicide. "No names please . . . " ran the story and no details were offered.

Predictably, it caused an enormous uproar and the Bombay police tried to locate the widower. In Delhi, LK Advani called for the resignation of the Home Minister and Bombay was gripped by a wave of fear. When the police found no record of any suicide and could not trace the family in question, they challenged the *Express* to come up with the details.

The paper, unfortunately did not have the details. The story had been brought in by a veteran Marathi journalist at 6.15 pm on Saturday, the fifth of April. The Resident Editor and the News Editor were both out but the news desk had decided to run it anyhow without any double-checking. When Police Commissioner MS Kasbekar finally confronted this Marathi journalist, he denied all knowledge of the incident and blamed the *Express*. Eventually, the paper apologised for a story that should never have got into print.

Earlier this year, another Bombay paper, the *Free Press Bulletin* was involved in a similar controversy. A reporter was at the Mayor's office when the Mayor got a call that several people had died at the intensive care unit of Nanavaty Hospital because of negligence. The reporter phoned in the story to his paper. The desk-man tried to contact Nanavaty Hospital but could not get the number. So, he called up the Fire Brigade who told him that they had received the same news. With literally minutes to go before the paper was put to bed, the *Bulletin* decided to carry the story.

Unfortunately it was a hoax. There had been no deaths. According to one account, the hospital trustees were due to meet the next day and a disgruntled trustee who wished to embarrass them had spread this story. It was the *Bulletin*'s ill-fortune that it was the only paper that got caught up in his hoax.

The *Bulletin*'s parent, the *Free Press Journal* was involved in an even more sensational hoax. Its Editor Virendra Kapoor was in New Delhi when he received a message that NF Santook, a senior official of the Research and Analysis Wing had defected. Kapoor had no reason to distrust his source, but nevertheless he assigned a reporter to double-check. All the reporter could

A Code Of Ethics

IT IS PROBABLY FAIR TO SAY that the Indian press has never before had as much impact as it has today. Arun Shourie's exposés, the growth in newspaper readership and the magazine boom have all contributed to this new influence. It is for this reason that the press needs to legislate a code of ethics for itself. If journalists are to have any credibility as upholders of the nation's ethical standards, then they must first decide what their own standards are.

This is not as revolutionary as it may sound. Every major American newspaper has a printed code of ethics, copies of which are handed to every reporter. It would not take much physical effort for Indian journalists to set guidelines for the following areas: the acceptance of bribes, gifts, junkets, donations, assistance and the like; the relationship between advertisers and publications and between journalists and managements; the individual right to privacy; and the need to maintain high standards of accuracy.

The press conference syndrome would outrage most Western journalists. The *Washington Post*'s code of ethics reads: "We pay our own way. We accept no gifts from news sources." The Associated Press's code reads likewise: "Gifts and free or reduced rate travel, entertainment, products and lodging should not be accepted. Special favours and special treatment for members of the press should be avoided." As a rule, not one major US paper allows its reporters to accept a junket.

And yet here, Indian journalists pretend that this is a universal practice and that they are not behaving unethically. There is no reason why the Indian press should not follow the lead of the rest of the world in this regard; after all, Indian journalists are forever aspiring to the heights of American investigative journalism. So, why should ethics be any different?

The same applies to the relationship between editorial and advertising. The Associated Press's code reads: "The newspaper should not give favoured news treatment to advertisers or special interest groups. Concern for business interests should not cause a newspaper to distort or misrepresent the facts." The *Washington Post*'s code reads: "In the pursuit of truth, the newspaper shall be prepared to make sacrifice of its material fortunes if such course be necessary for the public good."

The ethical standards of Indian journalism are scandalously low. Most US papers would fire reporters for less.

In India, journalists not only disregard such basic principles but talk in terms of 'compromise' as though this was a perfectly ethical course of action. What is offensive is not just that the press should be unethical—and in this case, corrupt—but that it should be so smug and self-righteous about it.

Management-journalist conflicts are a feature of the media scene everywhere but rarely do managements treat journalists as badly as they do in India. Arun Shourie is not the only person the *Indian Express* forced out. The paper did the same to its Resident Editor in Bombay, Darryl D'Monte in 1981 and has a notorious record in this regard. No journalists complained about Shourie's ouster and after KK Birla forced out BG Verghese, several of his colleagues tried to get jobs with *The Hindustan Times*. Not only do journalists not seek to impose ethical standards, but it is every man for himself.

"The newspaper should respect the individual's right to privacy," reads the Associated Press's code and American papers bend over backwards to be fair. In India, with defamation suits taking years to come to trial, papers have no compunctions about trampling on individual privacy. The situation is further complicated by the emergence of the glossy magazines which take the stand that if people are willing to let their homes be photographed, then it is entirely fair to write viciously about their private lives. Despite Shobha Kilachand's hysterical shrillness, such a view is unique to her brand of Indian journalism. Even if the American magazine, *People*, were to mention a journalist's wife in passing, it is unlikely that they would follow it up by saying that she looked like a concentration camp victim and should slash her wrists. Gutter journalism remains gutter journalism, whatever rationalisations it employs.

Finally, though, Indian journalism needs to pay the most attention to the standards of accuracy it employs. If a paper prints lies, then it has no moral right to criticise anybody else. Most American papers insist on a two-source rule: that is, nothing can be printed unless two different sources swear that it is true or documentary proof can be found. While this does not prevent the odd mistake (such as Janet Cooke's Pulitzer-winning story which was shown to be false) it does mean that most sensational stories are fully authenticated before they appear. The Nanavaty Hospital 'deaths', or the *Rape Most Foul* story would never get into print.

In a major article in *India Today* (September 30, 1983) Arun Shourie says that the press 'is more cavalier, more inaccurate than we can afford'. He lists several instances of misreporting: On August 10, *The Hindustan Times* reported the death of Mrs Nirmala Nithianadam; on August 12, it conceded that she was alive. On May 25, *The Hindustan Times* announced on its front page that Soviet uranium had arrived; the next day the government pointed out that no uranium had arrived—the paper did not even attempt to stand by its story. Says Shourie: "Examples of this kind can be multiplied many times over. And you'd be hard put to find an instance in which the reporter, the editor or the paper were any the worse for the blatant error."

His conclusion is that the press desperately needs a code of ethics to guard against such distortions and lies. It is a conclusion that no sensible person can disagree with. The average Indian journalist is still far more ethical and honest than the average Indian politician. But if he is to retain the moral right to criticise politicians and to comment on society's injustices, then he must put his own house in order.

Power without responsibility may otherwise well make harlots of us all. ♦

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Who Really Makes Money In The Film World?

The golden rules of film financing.

by Travesh Sinha

FOR MOST OF THE YEAR, THE BOMBAY FILM industry manages to conceal the frenetic and disorganised nature of its financial workings behind a facade of conspicuous consumption and spray-on glamour. But each year, one major flop comes along and reveals how primitive and dishonest the film world's financial structure is. This year's flop is *Razia Sultan*, a film so obviously uncommercial that it should never have been released. But because of the way things are done in the film industry, *Razia* took six years to make, cost Rs 60 million to produce—and all of three and a half hours to flop. Hardly was its first show over when the word was out—*Razia* was a disaster.

The project got underway in 1974. At the time, writer-director Kamal Amrohi was one of the film world's lesser gods—the man who had made the international blockbuster *Pakeezah*. Among those who had profited from *Pakeezah* was AK Mishra, its Delhi distributor. As Amrohi tells it, Mishra begged to be granted the privilege of producing his next extravaganza. Amrohi put up a token resistance before unveiling the details of his next project. He had planned, he said, a costume epic about Razia, the only woman to rule the Delhi Sultanate. Mishra was enthusiastic about the venture and went about looking for the Rs 30 million or so that would be needed to make the film. About 40 per cent would come from distributors' advances but the rest had to be found elsewhere.

Travesh Sinha, a frequent **Imprint** *contributor, wrote our profile of Dilip Kumar (January 1983). He would like to thank Prakash Pange, Rajni Bakshi and Rauf Ahmed for their help in researching this article.*

Fortunately, Mishra was well connected. He had been secretary to the late LN Mishra and had links with the managers of the millions the former Railway Minister had stashed away. Though he does not say where the money came from it is believed that Jagannath Mishra and other members of the late minister's family allowed him access to their coffers. Thus, Mishra found his finance.

Then, Dharmendra and Hema Malini, at the time a popular star pair, were approached. They had the opportunity to become part of a venture that would surpass the success of *Pakeezah*. Wouldn't they like to sign up? The catch, of course, was that they wouldn't get their full prices—but then the film was a sure-fire hit and that's more important to stars in the long run than just money. They saw the point and signed their contracts.

As filming progressed, certain aspects of Amrohi's style became apparent. He was not interested in making the film in Hindi, he much preferred Persian. He did not see the need to hurry. *Pakeezah* had taken 20 years and *Razia* was going to be even better. And he had contempt for cost-cut-

ILLUSTRATION BY BHATLEKAR

Razia Sultan: *overblown, overbudgeted, overpublicised and overdone.*

ters—if a scene that required a hundred extras could be shot with a thousand, then Amrohi hired a thousand.

Predictably, Mishra ran out of money halfway into the filming. Rather than tell Amrohi to pare his budget, he summoned his distributors. He had originally contracted to sell them the release rights at a certain price. Now, he was upping that price. Thus the Bombay distributor who had been promised rights for Rs 40 lakh and had paid an advance was now told that the new rate was Rs 60 lakh. So could he please shell out a larger advance? Later Mishra was to enforce another such rise.

Finally, six years later, *Razia* was ready. It had gone nearly 100 per cent over budget but at least Amrohi thought it was a masterpiece. Unfortunately, nobody else shared this opinion. Audiences complained about the high-flown Persian dialogue (one producer asked if he could remake the film in Hindi), people walked out halfway through and all but two critics were disparaging. The distributors blamed the producer who blamed Amrohi who blamed Dharmendra who blamed the script and so on.

* * *

The Golden Rules

The sad story of the *Razia* debacle clearly illustrates the five golden rules of film finance:

*1. **Get suckers to invest.*** Film people try not to put their own money into their movies. They are always looking for rich investors from outside the film industry (ie suckers).

*2. **The producer pays out as little as possible.*** The higher the budget of a film, the lower the remuneration to the stars and other artistes. This attitude was summed up by Raj Kapoor: "To act in an RK film, they should pay me; why should I pay them?"

*3. **Producers and distributors try and con each other.*** Most producers of big-budget films contract to sell release rights at a relatively low price and then hike it during filming. Alternatively, distributors get sceptical about a film and refuse to release it unless the price is lowered.

*4. **Always remake last year's hit.*** Nobody knows anything in the film industry. All innovative scripts are turned down and old hits are always remade with disastrous consequences (ie *Pakeezah* and *Razia, Love Story* and *Lovers, Sholay* and *Shaan* etc).

*5. **Blame everybody else.*** When a film flops, the producer blames the star who blames the director who blames the music director and so on.

The trick is to extract lakhs from suckers attracted by glamour.

Rule No 1— Sucker Finance

"There's one born every minute."

Nobody in the film industry ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the non-filmi investor—and a lot of producers became very rich doing just that! It is probably safe to say that no film industry person would have poured so much money into *Razia*. But there is no shortage of suckers, of rich businessmen, 'reformed' smugglers and corrupt politicians who are attracted to the film industry by the aura of sex and glamour that surrounds it.

As Gul Anand, the Bombay distributor of *Razia* told *Sunday*: "In the film industry, there is a sucker born every minute. He comes here with his money and leaves his pants behind."

It is the big-time investors who usually end up losing the most. They finance big-budget extravaganzas made by reputed producers and while the filming is on, imagine that they've hit the big-time. Producers make the most of such investors. Dev Anand who hasn't had a real hit for a decade turns on the crinkly charm long enough for the money to

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHYAM AURANGABADKAR

The Khan family with Shatrughan Sinha at the launch of Feroz's next film.

come in—from jewellers and the like. During BR Chopra's worst phase, assorted diamond merchants saw their money go up in smoke along with *The Burning Train*. Shashi Kapoor's *Vijeyta* was financed by an expatriate Kenyan-asian who has still to get his money back. The Gujarati business house of Ramon and Demm poured millions into Krishna Shah's *Shalimar* and lost an equal amount in paying to support Feroz Khan's lifestyle while he made the likes of *Dharmatma*. Khan's next film (again with the Ramon Gujaratis coughing up) will be shot almost entirely in Dubai and the first-class compartments of Air India's Gulf-bound Jumbos are full of producers flying to see the munificent sheikhs. Often, it helps if they take a few starlets along.

Rule No 2—
Stars Always Lose Out

"All that glitters is not Amitabh Bachchan."

In the minds of people, Amitabh Bachchan is the richest man in India today. Popular belief has it that film stars are fabulously wealthy individuals whose fortunes increase with each passing day.

But as anyone who understands the film industry will tell you, this is a myth. Yes, Bachchan is rich and stars are very well paid but they are not nearly as rich as is made out. A successful medium-sized industrialist probably makes as much as Bachchan and a top industrialist could buy out Bombay's top stars—before breakfast.

Popular estimates of star wealth are based on inflated stories about star prices in film magazines. While many are extremely well paid (see box) few get their top price for every film. Generally, a star is caught in a catch-22 situation. He or she becomes a star because of two or three films (in Bachchan's case: Prakash Mehra's *Zanjeer*, Yash Chopra's *Deewar* and Ramesh Sippy's *Sholay*). Now, to maintain that position, he or she must get at least three major hits a year. However, the producer-directors of these films are most likely to be the industry's top moghuls (like Chopra, Sippy and Mehra). They are usually unwilling to pay their stars too much because they know that the stars need hits more than they need money. Most times, the stars sign up with them at low rates (Bachchan has never taken his full price from Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Prakash Mehra and the others) either out of a sense of obligation or in the expectation that a hit will result.

> *A top industrialist could buy out Amitabh Bachchan—before breakfast.*

A star like Bachchan has about five releases a year. At least three of them are films he has done at half-price or less. This means that he has to make his money from the other two. Usually, these are films made by relatively unsuccessful directors who hope that an Amitabh Bachchan film will change their luck. Nine times out of ten, they are wrong and their films flop. For instance, Bachchan received a huge sum for *Mahaan* (reportedly in excess of Rs 30 lakh) but the film was a box-office disaster.

After two or three such disasters (which the star has signed only for money) the rumour goes around that he is 'finished', and the offers begin to dry up. So, the star is in trouble whatever he does. If he signs up with established directors, he takes a salary cut. On the other hand, if he takes his full price from others, his career is endangered and he loses money in the long run.

There are of course, other problems as well. So chaotic is the financial structure of the film industry that a number of producers routinely run out of money halfway through filming. Then, stars don't get paid. These days, most stars are declaring around 40 per cent of their income for tax purposes. This makes a sizeable dent in their earnings. Even if a major star earns Rs 60 lakh, he stands to lose nearly Rs 15-20 lakh in tax. And finally, it must be remembered that most actors and actresses have about five years at the

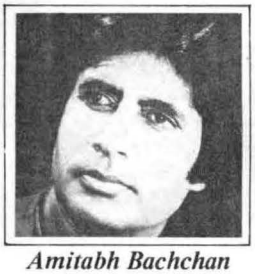
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHYAM AURANGABADKAR

. . . AND THE MONEY KEEPS ROLLING IN

CONTRARY TO POPULAR belief, there is no such thing as a 'star price'. Rates of remuneration are utterly flexible and vary from month to month. Moreover, major producers rarely pay their stars too much. They know that actors will compromise on payment simply to be part of a big-budget venture that is likely to be a success.

The prices we quote are approximations and generally, reflect the most a star is paid rather than his or her average payment. For example, Amitabh Bachchan has recently signed several films in the South for Rs 35 lakh each and so, we quote Rs 35 lakh as his price. On the other hand, it is unlikely that Manmohan Desai or Prakash Mehra would pay him anything like that figure.

Needless to say, most payments are in cash.

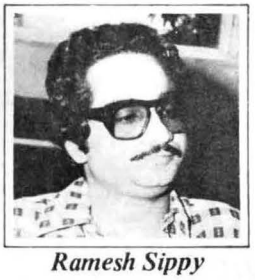


Amitabh Bachchan

Rajesh Khanna

Rekha

Rati Agnihotri



Ramesh Sippy

ACTORS

Amitabh Bachchan	Rs 35 lakh
Dilip Kumar	Rs 25 lakh
Jeetendra	Rs 20 lakh
Rajesh Khanna	Rs 18 lakh
Shatrughan Sinha	Rs 14 lakh
Dharmendra	Rs 12 lakh
Rishi Kapoor	Rs 11 lakh
Sunny Deol and Sunjay Dutt	Rs 9 lakh
Mithun Chakraborty	Rs 8 lakh
Shashi Kapoor	Rs 6 lakh
Amjad Khan	Rs 6 lakh

ACTRESSES

Rekha	Rs 10 lakh
Hema Malini	Rs 9 lakh
Rati Agnihotri	Rs 7 lakh
Zeenat Aman	Rs 6 lakh
Sridevi, Jayaprada, Poonam, Dimple	Rs 6 lakh

DIRECTORS

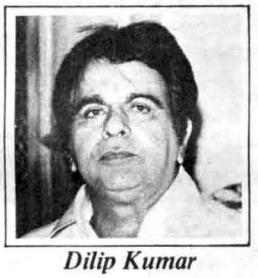
MOST DIRECTORS TEND to produce their own films so it becomes difficult to estimate their 'prices'. However, some indications are available. Manmohan Desai was offered the figure we quote and Ramesh Sippy's price was set by the fee he took from Mushir-Riaz for *Shakti*.

Manmohan Desai	Rs 25 lakh + 25 per cent of overflow
Prakash Mehra	Rs 20 lakh
Ramesh Sippy	Rs 20 lakh
Subhash Ghai	Rs 18 lakh

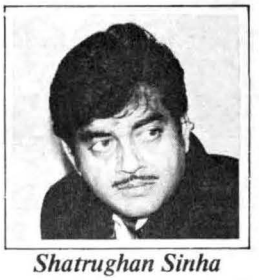
Were they to make films for other producers, then the following directors would certainly earn as much as Prakash Mehra: Raj Kapoor, Yash Chopra and Manoj Kumar.

MUSIC

Lakshmikant Pyarelal	Rs 6 lakh
RD Burman	Rs 4 lakh
Bappi Lahiri	Rs 3.5 lakh
All others	Between Rs 2 and 4 lakh
Lata Mangeshkar	Rs 30,000 per song
Asha Bhonsle and Kishore Kumar	Rs 25,000 per song

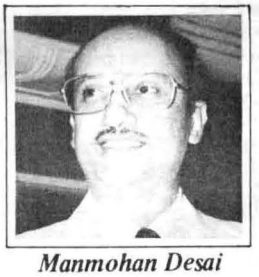


Dilip Kumar



Shatrughan Sinha

Hema Malini



Manmohan Desai

Lakshmikant

Mazdoor: ***Every producer needs one big-budget film to keep his establishment going.***

top. It is the money they make in that period that has to last them for the rest of their lives: and being stars they are always expected to live in style.

The richest stars in the Bombay film industry are those who have not depended on their income from films, but have instead, invested their money outside the industry. Rajendra Kumar put his earnings into beer and the like—today he is secure for life. Ashok Kumar invested in a poultry farm that now earns more than he does. Jeetendra invested in construction and video games and is now one of the richest men in the business. Those that put their money back into films lost out—*Reshma Aur Shera* bankrupted Sunil Dutt; Raj Kapoor saw hard times after *Mera Naam Joker*; and Dilip Kumar was down to his last lakh when friends like Rajni Patel and Sagar Suri bailed him out. Even Hema Malini would be broke if she stopped acting.

While the stars do very well by the standards of most salaried people, they are not in the Dhirubhai Ambani class. Whoever it is who makes money from films, it is not the stars.

* * *

Jeetendra and Rajendra Kumar made money from investments.

Rule No 3—
Producers And Distributors

"You can only steal a million from a picture that costs ten million."

All a producer needs is an ability to make otherwise sensible people give him their money. The producer is the entrepreneur of the film industry. It is he who signs the director, finds the script, hires the technicians and puts together the package. The key to his role is finance. If he can't find the money to bankroll the production, then he is out of business. Generally, a producer has two sources of financing: financiers and investors (often, the aforementioned suckers) and advances from distributors. The distributor is the film industry's market-wing. He buys the rights to a film for a particular area and then releases it in cinema halls. These days most films are at least partly financed through distributors' advances (in return for distribution rights after release).

In theory, the financing of a production goes something like this: the producer budgets his film at a certain sum, say Rs one crore. He then sells rights to distributors for a total of say, Rs one crore and ten lakh. Around half the money (Rs 60 lakh) comes in as advances and he finds the other Rs 40 lakh from other sources. When the film is ready, he delivers it to the distributors who pay him the rest of his money. Because he has sold it for ten lakh rupees more than its cost, that ten lakh is his profit.

In practice, it goes something like this: the producer works out that his film will cost Rs one crore but announces a budget of Rs. 1.5 crore. He sells it to distributors for Rs 1.75 crore. Halfway through the filming, he announces that he is overbudget and ups his price to Rs 2.5 crore. Given that the film is still going to cost only Rs one crore, the excess (Rs 1.5 crore) is profit. So, in fact, is a chunk of the Rs one crore budget. A producer always lives off the budget of his film. His petrol bills, his entertainment, his foreign jaunts, his household expenses—all of these are included in the budget of the film.

This is why every major producer always has one big-budget film under production—you can only steal one million from a ten million rupee budget! This explains why the industry keeps churning out absurdly expensive big-budget extravaganzas that, it is now established, nobody wants to see.

As long as the producer has a film under production,

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Romance: ***Kept up Ramanand Sagar's unbroken record of disasters.***

nothing else matters. Ramanand Sagar hasn't had a hit in living memory. Still, he keeps churning them out—*Romance*, his latest, flopped last month. BR Chopra's big films have all been disasters—*Dastaan, The Burning Train, Zameer* etc—still he produced the big-budget *Mazdoor,* another of last month's flops.

This is why the richest people in the film industry tend to be the producers—not the stars.

The distributors are the other wealthy sector: men like Gulshan Rai and Tarachand Barjatya are phenomenally rich. While they are often conned by producers, most of them are no dummies. It is not uncommon for distributors to refuse to take delivery (and pay the full price) of a film they are contracted to buy. The producer usually has no alternative but to lower his price and make a loss.

Till about a year ago, producer-distributor deals were based on an 'overflow' arrangement. Once a distributor had recovered what he paid for a film, he split the rest (the 'overflow') with the producer. Except of course, as time went on, distributors took to claiming that there was no overflow and because it was impossible to check the ticket sales at every cinema hall, producers had to lump it. To this day, Manmohan Desai hasn't collected the overflow from *Naseeb*, his super-hit of two years ago. Now Desai and other producers sell their films 'outright'—that is, they charge a higher price and renounce all rights to an overflow.

Despite their big flops, Sagar and BR Chopra keep going.

Rule No 4—Remaking Last Year's Hits

"Nobody knows anything."

In ***Adventures In*** *The Screenwriting Trade,* Oscar-winning script-writer William Goldman postulates his First Law of Hollywood: nobody knows anything. 'Sure-fire successes' end up flopping, 'certain disasters' become huge money-spinners and so on.

Everything Goldman says applies to the Bombay film industry—only more so. The principle behind all filmmaking here is to 'play it safe' as a result of which, the opposite tends to happen. Unlike most other industries, the film business is entirely speculative. Crores of rupees may end up as nothing more than a few thousand feet of worthless celluloid. Three out of four films flop and most of the box-office takings go to the government—60 per cent of the price of a ticket is entertainment tax. As a result, no bank financing is available, no subsidies or incentives are provided and the government regularly turns down delegations of corpulent producers who beg to be taken seriously, as industrialists of sorts.

The conventional wisdom is that it is always best to remake last year's hit. Once a film succeeds, tens of similar ventures are instantly launched. By the time they are ready, public taste has changed and the films die pathetic box-office deaths. *Razia*—an attempt to capitalise on *Pakeezah*'s success—is just one example. Ramesh Sippy tried to rework the success of *Sholay* into *Shaan* and ended up with a pachydermal flop; Ramanand Sagar and Rajendra Kumar both tried to jump on to the *Love Story* bandwagon, but both *Romance* and *Lovers* flopped; *Ram Balram* attempted to reunite the *Sholay* team of Amitabh and Dharmendra, but recaptured none of that film's box-office magic; and *Joshila* and *Chhupa Rustom* were both *Johny Mera Naam* clones that didn't make the grade.

The films that have succeeded have always taken the industry by surprise. Shekhar Kapoor's *Masoom,* Sai Paranjape's *Chasme-Buddoor,* Basu Chatterjee's *Rajnigandha* and Gobind Nihalani's *Aakrosh* were all small films that the big producers regarded with scorn. Yet, all of them made healthy profits. The same is true of bigger favourites. *Jai Santoshi Maa* was a joke till it turned into a gold mine; the

Nobody accepts the blame: Amitabh blames Ramesh Sippy for the flop of Shakti.

recent *Be-Abroo* was kicked around by distributors for three years till it finally got released and was a hit; and Rajendra Kumar's *Love Story* was just another home movie till it became the year's biggest hit.

Even big films don't have it easy. Prakash Mehra nearly went bust trying to produce *Zanjeer* and Dev Anand, Raaj Kumar, Rajesh Khanna and nearly everybody else turned down the lead role before Amitabh took it. The film created the angry young man. Producers are always trying to hedge their bets. During the four years it took to make *Naastik,* director Pramod Chakravarty kept switching the script around. If Amitabh, his star, had a hit, then he increased his role. When he had a flop, he shortened his role and tried to hire Dharmendra to shore up the film. Earlier this year, it was finally released and flopped ingloriously.

Rule No 5—
The Final Fall-Out

"It's always somebody else's fault."

What all of this may suggest is that the film industry is long on greed and short on honour. This seems unfair and unkind, but is not far from the truth.

In the old days, the film business worked on word of mouth. Nothing had to be put down on paper. This was not only because the producers and distributors were wonderful people, but also because so many transactions involved black money and could not be recorded. Now, the word of mouth tradition endures, out of necessity, but the people involved are less than wonderful. It is common for distributors to slap law suits on a film on the day of its premiere and by the end of a production, most of the people involved are not on talking terms with each other.

When a film flops nobody accepts the blame. Everybody blames the other person. In the case of *Razia,* the air is still thick with recriminations, but there are other instances. Amitabh blames Ramesh Sippy for the flop of *Shakti*; Rekha blames Jaya for the flop of *Silsila*; Salim-Javed blame Yash Chopra for the flop of *Kaala Pathar*; and so on. If either party needs the other again, the dispute is quietly buried. BR Chopra had blamed the flop of *Dastaan* entirely on Dilip Kumar, but when Dilip became a major star again, he signed him for *Mazdoor* at once. Now that *Mazdoor* has flopped, he'll probably resurrect his old complaints.

Should a film succeed, the situation is not very different. Salim-Javed take credit for *Zanjeer,* though both Amitabh and Prakash Mehra hotly dispute this; Rahul Rawail takes credit for *Love Story,* so too does Rajendra Kumar; Rati Agnihotri thinks that *Ek Duje Ke Liye* succeeded because of her, Kamalahasan insists that it was him; etc.

> *The film industry is long on greed and short on honour.*

Can't Pay, Won't Pay

"In God we trust; rest strictly cash."

All film industries are chaotic and frenetic. This is in the nature of the business. There is never any guarantee that there will be a market for the product and all filmmaking is essentially a speculative affair.

The Bombay film industry always tries to pretend that its disorganised nature reflects only this natural freneticism. "We are in a speculative business and cannot be expected to be as well organised as, say, the ball-bearing industry."

Such glibness obscures the real financial scandals of the Bombay film industry. Comparisons with Hollywood are far-fetched. Certain business practices popular in Bombay are not to be found anywhere else.

For instance, it is not uncommon for small-timers to announce films which they clearly cannot finance. Their *modus operandi* is to con stars into agreeing to star in such films in return for advances (called 'signing amounts'). Arm-

A still from Rai's Vidhaata: *1982's biggest hit.*

ed with these contracts, they raise a couple of lakhs from distributors and investors. They use this money to shoot a song sequence or a fight scene. This footage is then shown to the distributors who are induced to part with more money on the basis of these sequences. These funds pay for another reel of footage and the process is repeated as often as is possible. Obviously, this can't go on forever, so many such films remain incomplete and the money sunk in them goes waste. The stars usually know that nothing will come of such projects but sign up anyhow because they want the 'signing amounts'. In 1976-77, Shashi Kapoor had signed over a hundred films, the majority of which were such doomed projects.

There is a long and respectable film industry tradition of not paying bills. While the stars can usually extract their money, it is the smaller people who lose out. Set decorators, costume designers, transport contractors and the like, face an uphill struggle in collecting their dues. As a result, merchants are loathe to extend credit to anybody connected with films. The big hotels demand payment in advance or on the spot and shop-keepers are wary of filmi big-spenders. But sometimes, they are charmed into giving credit, with predictable consequences. A recent hit film was shot in Mauritius and the producer has still to pay his hotel bills. Sunil Dutt charmed all of Rajasthan while making *Reshma Aur Shera*. He also left without paying his bills. And there are *paanwallahs* in the Bombay suburb of Juhu who claim that Sanjay Khan owes them money.

Finally, nothing matters except luck, as Gulshan Rai found.

The Bottom Line

"So, Who Does Make the Money?"

TO make real money from films you've got to be very lucky, or remain at the top for very long. Or both. Lata Mangeshkar charges Rs 30,000 per recording (a matter of three hours work) and has been a lead singer for so long that she has amassed a tidy sum. Further, she has displayed a remarkable unwillingness to spend her money and continues to live modestly. (Her detractors claim she blows up millions on gambling sprees in Las Vegas.)

Everybody else is not so fortunate. GP Sippy made a fortune on *Sholay*, the most profitable Hindi film ever, but came a cropper on *Shaan*, which he was reckless enough to distribute himself in two major territories. Amjad Khan put his money in *Chor Police* and lost a large sum.

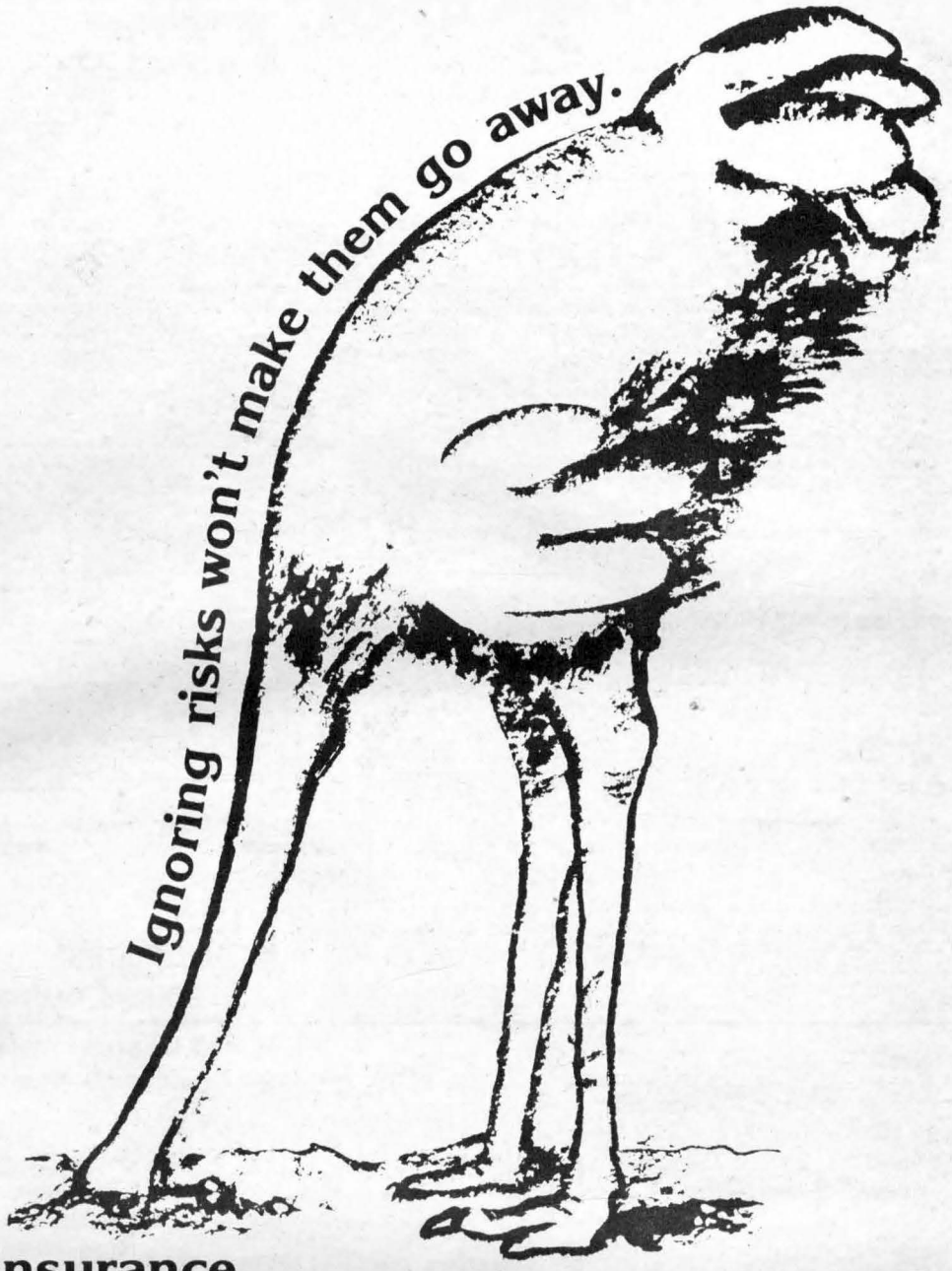
There is however, one exception—a man so fortunate that the Gods must love him dearly.

Gulshan Rai was all but broke when he journeyed to Hoshiarpur in the late '60s and sought the advice of a *brighu* or holy man. The *brighu* told him to go back to Bombay and make a film with a title beginning with 'J'. Rai managed to sign an aging star and a new actress and made his movie. The film was *Johny Mera Naam* and it became a super hit.

Next, he backed Yash Chopra who had just left his brother Baldev. Rai and Chopra churned out such blockbusters as *Deewar, Trishul* and *Kabhi Kabhi* before he got word from his *brighu* to change his operation. Nevertheless, Rai backed *Kaala Pathar*, which flopped as predicted.

Taking the *brighu* at his word now, Rai dropped Chopra. Even when Chopra announced *Silsila*—a 'sure-fire' venture—Rai refused to budge. Sure enough, *Silsila* flopped. Then he appears to have received word to steer clear of his favourite hero, Amitabh Bachchan. So, Rai picked Dilip Kumar for his next film. When Bachchan had his accident, Rai was the only major producer who was not affected by the consequent delay. Meanwhile, his Dilip Kumar movie, *Vidhaata*, became 1982's biggest hit.

Perhaps in films, as in life, the only route to super success is plain, old, good luck. ♦



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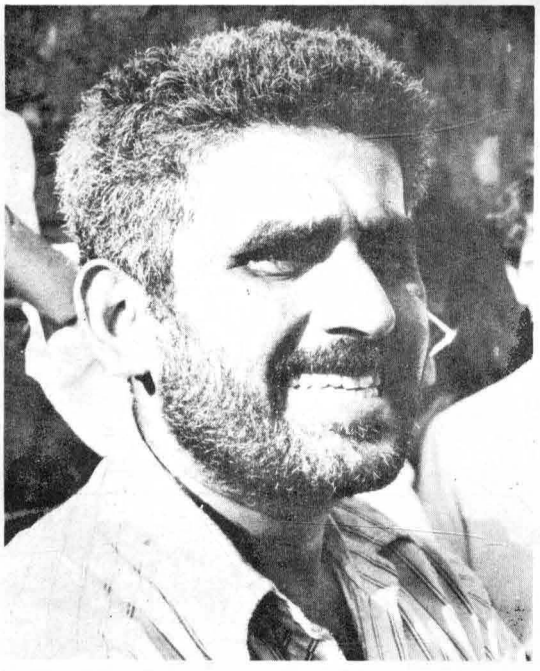
FROM MISSIONARY TO MARXIST



When Peter D'Mello, a Jesuit priest, turned Marxist and started organising the adivasis, he didn't foresee who his fiercest opponents would be.

By Ashok Gopal

MRS EMILIA D'MELLO was telling me her son's problems. "You know Peter is living alone. Of course, he now has this boy, Rakesh, with him. But he is still new, he doesn't know the language. . . The local people also take care of him. But still. . ." Her speech is slow and unsteady as her worries tumble out.

". . .He has not been keeping well. He eats what the people give him, sometimes they eat even roots and leaves. Then he was imprisoned. . . you know he was in prison, don't you? That is when he started falling ill." Consumed in her own thoughts, she shifts her hand on the low settee absentmindedly, then suddenly conscious of her damp eyes, she turns her head away from me, to the ceiling.

The D'Mellos' flat is in an old building in a quiet lane behind the Taj Hotel in Bombay, that has the aura of an old worldly charm slipping fast into decrepitude—the wooden stairs leading to the first floor flat are dark and rickety, the D'Mellos' doorbell doesn't seem to work and in their narrow living room, crude bamboo poles hold up the ceiling, almost drowning the homely prettiness of the small white windows, the grand old piano and the batik painting of Christ above it. The D'Mellos are obviously good Christian souls (all that is, except Pradeep) and Mrs Emilia D'Mello's worry-worn and aging face exudes so much warmth that you begin to wonder how a firebrand Marxist could ever emerge from a house so womb-like cosy. Probably even the D'Mellos haven't figured it out.

* * *

"I HAVE NEVER TRIED TO EXplain what I am doing to my parents," Pradeep told me the next day on the train to Dahanu (120 kilometres from Bombay). "I don't think they would understand."

I told him that I had myself sensed an enormous distance between his mother's conceptions of his work and his beliefs and the reality. Shishne, the adivasi village, 40 kilometres from Dahanu off the Bombay-Gujarat highway, where Pradeep has been living

Ashok Gopal is on the staff of **Imprint.** *His last article,* Dreamers Of The Air, *appeared in the November issue.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY GAUTAM PATOLE

help Warlis develop a self-image, to understand and analyse the nature of their exploitative environment and visualise a new and equal society and the role they must play in it'. Aiding him was Nicholas ('Nickybhau') Cardozo, another 'rebel' priest and a 170-page manual detailing games (developed from management role-playing techniques) through which the Warlis 'could objectify real life and understand their situation'. The response to these camps was enthusiastic and after several rounds of discussion, readings of Marx and analyses this document emerged:

"We are a group of young, poor, adivasi men and women in search of a better future for ourselves and for our people. . .

"We have heard our fathers narrating the struggle initiated by Godutai (Godavari Parulekar). . .

"We decided to seek signs of that struggle. . .the struggle looked dead, smoothened by the morass of inaction and decay. . .our forests are still plundered, our labour still sold for a song, we still lived in fear of the police and government officials, we still lived a hand to mouth existence.

"We stand committed to the struggle of the poor for justice and equality. We will struggle for a just society based on freedom, equality and dignity. . .

"We searched for a name. Of the many that occurred we chose KASHTAKARI SANGATHANA, the organisation of the toiling masses. . ."

Soon after, Pradeep, (then Father Peter D'Mello) was thrown out of the Church.

* * *

"I DID NOT THEN FORESEE ANY kind of opposition from Godutai," Pradeep tells me as we get down at the highway and hitch a ride on a jeep. "In retrospect it was sheer political naivety."

We are heading towards Amboli, the village on the highway, from where Shishne is about an hour's walk through lush, undulating fields. Suddenly emerging out of the trees, we see a large horde of young adivasis scampering down to the highway, in threes, *lathis* in hand, holding aloft the unmistakable *lal bawta* (the CPM's red flag).

"Slow down," Pradeep tells the driver. "They are going for a meeting. Look at their *lathis*. They use them to drive people out of their homes to the meeting. They do the same thing during elections." He counts their numbers hurriedly then looks at me, worried. "I think we may have trouble today. It's the usual thing—first they have a meeting, make wild threatening speeches, then they attack the nearest Kashtakari Sangathana village."

The attackers break into huts, beat up anybody in sight and grab everything they can.

Someone in the procession recognises him but before the word spreads around, he asks the driver to speed up. "No point in you getting bashed up."

* * *

THE FIRST ORGANISED ATTACK on a 'Kashtakari Sangathana village' came on October 18, 1980 when 500 men tore into the villages of Shishne and Gangangaon with stones and *lathis*. Earlier, on January 28, 1979, Sanghathana activists who had organised a morcha against a moneylender were beaten up by a counter-morcha. The Sanghathana claims the attackers included the moneylenders' hired *goondas* as well as CPM workers. On August 15, Nickybhau and other activists were beaten up, allegedly by CPM workers, when they were returning from a meeting held to condemn an attempted rape on an adivasi woman who had just delivered a child.

Since then 'Sangathana villages' and activists have been attacked with incredible frequency—between May and November 1982 police FIRs have records of eight such incidents and the Sangathana claims these pertain only to 'major' attacks.

The pattern in all the attacks is common. Hordes of young men armed with *lathis*, spears, stones, and sometimes firearms descend on a 'Kashtakari Sangathana village'. The inhabitants flee to the jungles at the sound of their war cries and their leaders' whistle signals. The attackers break into houses, beat up anybody in sight and grab everything they can—chickens, goats, money, clothes—break up tiles, cooking utensils and retreat. Then they gang around the village's approach road for days preventing anyone from reaching the nearest police station.

But even when the victims do manage to reach a police station, they are, the Sangathana alleges, intimidated and abused. In a writ petition filed to the Supreme Court (Pradeep Prabhu versus the State of Maharashtra) Pradeep alleges that FIRs are deliberately mis-recorded by the police, or there is an 'inordinate delay in the police investigation in utter disregard to the statutory provisions'.

Despite repeated memorandums to police authorities, the State Home and Chief Ministers and even the Prime Minister, he says, 'no action was taken by the authorities'.

The Supreme Court directed NS Madhudhane, the District and Sessions Judge, Thane, to inquire into the police's alleged 'collusion with the criminal elements'. The inquiry was completed this month and the Judge is expected to submit his report to the Supreme Court shortly.

Meanwhile, the attacks continue. . .

SHISHNE AND THE NEIGHbouring village of Karanjivira form one panchayat block. About 3,500 Warlis live here in a land area encompassing about 2,500 acres. Of these, nearly 1,100 acres are owned by three Marwari landlords, who have carefully divided their lands amongst family members to bypass

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ASHOK GOPAL

ceiling laws.

Thus, on an average, the adivasis own about half an acre of land each, which they got back as their own after the Abolition of Tenancy Act, 1957. But nearly a third of the villagers do not own any land at all—they could not recover the lands cultivated by them for generations as tenants because they do not have documents to 'prove' their tenancy.

On the few scraps of land they own, the Warlis grow low quality rice and cheap cereals, which can feed a family, for at most three months. To survive the rest of the year the adivasis, especially the landless, have long 'encroached' on government recognised 'forest lands'. (The proposed Forest Bill seeks to destroy all encroachments that took place before 1970 and after 1978.)

After the monsoons they get employment in the landlord's grasslands for about a month. Then most of them seek employment as daily labourers or migrate to the brick kilns and salt-pans outlying Thane and Bombay. Those who remain often survive the summer on roots and leaves.

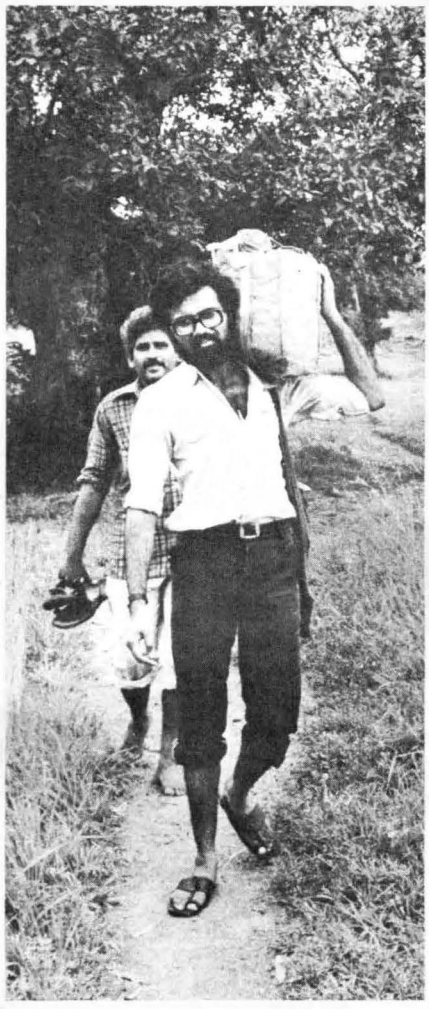
There is no evidence of government welfare programmes or the much-talked about tribal development plans—Shishne does not even have electricity (unlike Karanjivira, a known Congress (I) stronghold). A Zilla Parishad-run primary school is said to have been in shambles since 1960—it is now used as a cattle-pen, though the schoolmaster continues to draw his salary.

* * *

THE KASHTAKARI SANGAthana's 'head office' at Shishne is a large, bare hut. On one end, etched on metal is the organisation's emblem: a bare fist raising the scales of justice. This is where most of the Sangathana's major 'council' meetings are held. The 'council' is formed of two representatives from each village and their election as well as all decisions, are taken by voice vote.

Today is a meeting of women activists. The women of Shishne are already present; dressed in half sarees and blouses, some of them have brought their babies along. They greet the full-time activists (all male)—Gopal Bodhle, 35, Kaluram Dhangad, 37, Jairam Bhonar, 25, Barkhya Varkhandya, 30—with raised fists and cries of "*Zindabad*!"

Also present is Rakesh Shukla (the 'boy' Mrs D'Mello talked about). Bearded and taciturn, Rakesh, 26, the son of a Delhi doctor left home 'to join an authentic leftist mass movement'. With a law degree he now helps Pradeep in fighting the cases filed against Kashtakari Sangathana activists and supporters.



Rakesh Shukla, the son of a Delhi doctor, left home to join an 'authentic leftist mass movement'.

Rakesh, apart from Pradeep, is now the only 'outsider' in the Sangathana. Nicky Cardozo and Cecilia D'Souza (Sushila to the adivasis), a church worker who switched over from a non-formal adivasi education programme to the Sangathana in 1980, have left for 'personal' reasons. Nickybhau is now doing a doctorate in the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, but Sushila still keeps in touch with the Sangathana.

While they await their 'comrades' from the other villages, the women relate the accounts of their various *ladais* (struggles) against landlords who have grabbed lands, or refused to pass ownership rights to tenants, the *bhaiyyas* they employ to terrorise adivasis, the moneylenders who refuse to return their mortgages, the officials who illegally hack wood, shopkeepers who sell black jaggery (used to make alcohol) despite a government ban, the plantation owners who pay miserable daily wages, the proposed Forest Bill, the policemen and forest officials who rape their girls. . .

From all these accounts I observed a common significant note—the Kashtakari Sangathana is not perturbed by violence. The women spoke nonchalantly about occasions they had been beaten by the police or the landlords' *bhaiyyas*. (But when it comes to the *'lal bawta* attacks' they say, "We are scared. We are not scared of being beaten up—we are scared of our homes and all our belongings being destroyed.")

Moreover one of the Sangathana's tactics is deliberate transgression of the law—when a moneylender refuses to give back mortgages even after the loan is repaid, he is warned, then his house is broken in and the goods recovered; when landlords refuse to give back lands to tenants, exploiting the lack of documentary evidence, the lands are forcefully 'trespassed' upon Now, the *landlord has to prove* that the land is indeed, his.

By midday the meeting shows no signs of materialising; the women from the other villages are yet to come. Rain pelts outside and looking through the foggy stretches of fresh paddy, Gopal, his face, firm and authoritative, says: "Pradeepbhau, the streams may be flooded and the women may have gone back. Or they must have seen some *lal bawta* people and turned back."

Pradeep decides to take over. He stands in the midst of the group and addresses the women in fluent Warli: "We are going to play a little game of *panja*. Divide yourself into two teams. . ."

"NOW THIS LITTLE GAME WE played, what was it?"

"A fight between two groups."

"Yes. Who won?"

"That group."

"Yes. Why did they win?"

"We were laughing. . ."

"They were strong. . ."

"Were they really strong or was it just that you did not take the fight seriously?"

"We did not take the fight seriously."

"Yes. Now do you see the same happening to the poor people. They are also strong but they lose because they don't fight. They can't think of fighting seriously. . .But when we have fought seriously haven't we won, haven't we got our self-respect, our rights? Don't the landlords and moneylenders fear us now?. . . We have even fought against the *sarkar* and its anti-people Forest Bill. We have gone to the (Supreme) Court in Delhi and stopped the destruction of the crops on the encroached lands. . ."

The dialogue goes on; Pradeep, his eyes blazing, lurches back and forth to the crescendo of his speech, like a pugilist in a ring. The women listen spellbound; some of them are on the brink of tears. The men sit back impassively, like battle-scarred veterans listening to the general's first address to fresh recruits.

* * *

THE 'LITTLE GAME' OVER, KALU-ram, a Congress worker till he attended the 1979 camps, explains to me the 'CPM-police-ruling party nexus'. "You have to first realise the CPM has become part of the vested interest here. For example last January when our women led a strike for higher wages at a stone quarry in Haladpada they told the labourers to go back to work. We demanded daily wages of Rs ten. They compromised for Rs 7.50. In Kainad village, where we are fighting to get the lands back from the landlords, the CPM sarpanch himself threatens the villagers to sit quiet. Now the sarpanch and his men are threatening to attack our people. They are surely hired by the landlord.

"So you see, the reaction of the CPM is really the reaction of the entire vested interest class. The Congress (I) tackles the law and order problem by telling the police to be indifferent to attacks on us; the CPM does the actual beating."

***Jairam Bhonar says that to become a member of the CPM all you need are strong muscles and the ability to use a* lathi.**

"It is the only way they can keep themselves strong here," Jairam, a former CPM activist adds. "Ever since Godutai left, the CPM's only activity here has been to lead people to the poll booths and their meetings and break the tiles given to important villagers by the Congress before each election. They have no programme, nor do they undertake any struggles; even the struggles for higher wages in plantations, they undertook only after we took the lead.

"You don't have to understand anything about capitalism or exploitation to become a member of the CPM. All you need are strong muscles, the ability to use a *lathi* and you should not have flat feet—so that you can run fast."

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL years Godavari Parulekar (now 76) has been living in Juhu and her direct involvement with the adivasis has been limited to addressing occasional meetings, but she obviously still considers the region a part of her own backyard; all CPM statements on the Kashtakari Sangathana have been issued by her.

Her media attacks on the Sangathana have been uni-directional: 'Pradeep Prabhu' and his aides are CIA agents, missionaries in disguise, secessionists. "They have nothing to do with the local churches but they are linked with the World Council of Churches," she explained in an interview to the *Economic And Political Weekly* in November 1980 (which also carried an interview of Pradeep alongside). "We don't have any quarrels with the normal missionary organisations. But these new missionaries, the Kashtakari Sangathana, they want to divide the progressive and democratic left from within, they want to create another Nagaland." The 'new missionaries,' she claimed, 'stayed in Bombay in churches and in Pune at the Jesuit College'. (The Sangathana calls this a 'stupid lie'.)

As further proof that the Sangathana was 'funded' she countered, "All their activists are paid Rs 300 a month. Who pays for that, tell me?" (The Sangathana claims that its ten fulltime activists' salaries and their travelling expenses are paid from annual, voluntary contributions of rupees one to five from 3,000 odd adivasis and more substantial contributions from sympathisers in Bombay, New Delhi, Pune and a few other cities.)

In the original, signed transcript of the interview, Godavari Parulekar also claimed that the Jesuit Education Institute, New Delhi, was serving as a conduit to CIA funds to the Sangathana as well as other independent Maharashtra left parties like the Bhoomi Sena, Dalit Yuva Aghadi and Shramik Sangathana. (When publishing the interview, *EPW* neatly deleted these sentences apparently at the instance of CPM sympathisers on its staff.)

As leader of the first 'Marxist revolt' in Maharashtra, Godavari Parulekar obviously occupies a certain 'historical figure' status in the CPM—a sort of Indian Che Guevara—but how far her views on the Sangathana are endorsed by the rest of the party is debatable. For instance, though she told *EPW*

that she would 'never have a dialogue with priests masquerading as part of the left', CPM politburo members (as Central Committee member, she is one rank below) EMS Namboodripad and PT Ranadive met Pradeep last year. Pradeep claims they privately assured him the 'attacks' would stop but the CPM has not made any public statement on the meeting.

Moreover, the Maharashtra State unit of the CPM asked—and received—the Sangathana's support for its Thane district candidate, Lahanu Komb in the 1980 State assembly elections and Komb won by 7,000 votes. (Interestingly, in the general elections held a few months earlier, when Komb contested without the Sangathana's support, he not only lost out badly to the Congress (I) but to a lightweight Janata party candidate as well.)

The CPM's stand on the 'attacks' is not clear.* But one ingenious explanation was offered by Komb when two priests were attacked in July 1982. According to the Sangathana the priests, both bearded, were attacked by the CPM in the belief that one of them was Nickybhau (also bearded).

The attackers were 'dacoits', Komb told the *Daily*, adding, "Probably the dacoits must have mistaken the two priests for Kashtakaris before attacking them"(!)

* * *

"ONE DAY I AM JUST GOING TO sit back and contemplate what exactly Marx meant when he used the term 'dictatorship of the proletariat'."

We are sitting in the Centre for Documentation and Education's office in a ground floor flat in Colaba where Pradeep and other Sangathana activists usually spend the night, on their way to or from the district court at Thane. Pradeep is waiting for Rambhau Gairat, leader of the 1969 Dapchary strike and the Sangathana's most militant Warli.

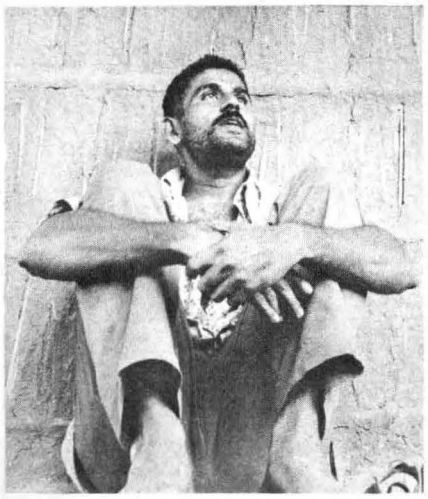
"What really frustrates me about traditional Marxist parties," he continues, "is their style of functioning: the party bureaucracy, the obsession for ideological purity—it's almost a bloody paranoia; the fact that they expect you to sacrifice the freedom of independent appraisal and evolution. For these reasons I can never see myself in a traditional Marxist party, say, the CPM. After all, Marxism as dogma, defeats itself as a scientific system, which is what it is. When you deny an antithesis, you are denying Marxism. . ."

Curt, loud rasps on the door cut him short. He gets up to open it. Rambhau walks in. He looks haggard. Pradeep pulls him aside. They talk hurriedly. When he turns back to me, I see his face writhing in agony.

"They have attacked Ganjad. . . they have attacked the katkaris. . ." His voice is a rasping whisper, rising slowly. ". . .The poorest of the poor. . what do they get by looting them. . . you know the katkaris are absolutely landless. . .they were helpers in the landlord's mansion. They have no land. . .not an inch. . ." His voice is now almost a scream. "Why the hell did they attack them. . .DON'T THEY HAVE EVEN *SOME* BASIC HUMAN QUALITIES. . .?"

His voice trails off. He sinks to the chair, head bowed down, like a lump of clay. Rambhau watches silently.

The seconds tick loudly and quite suddenly and strangely, I am reminded of Mrs D'Mello's own justification for the attacks, which now seemed to grow, frighteningly, into a truism: "When you are working for the poor, such things are *bound* to happen. . ." ♦



"I can never see myself in a traditional Marxist party, say the CPM," says Pradeep Prabhu.

* *Godavari Parulekar refused* **Imprint** *an interview. CPM State Secretary SY Kolhatkar also refused to answer our questionnaire.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY BIMAL MASKARA

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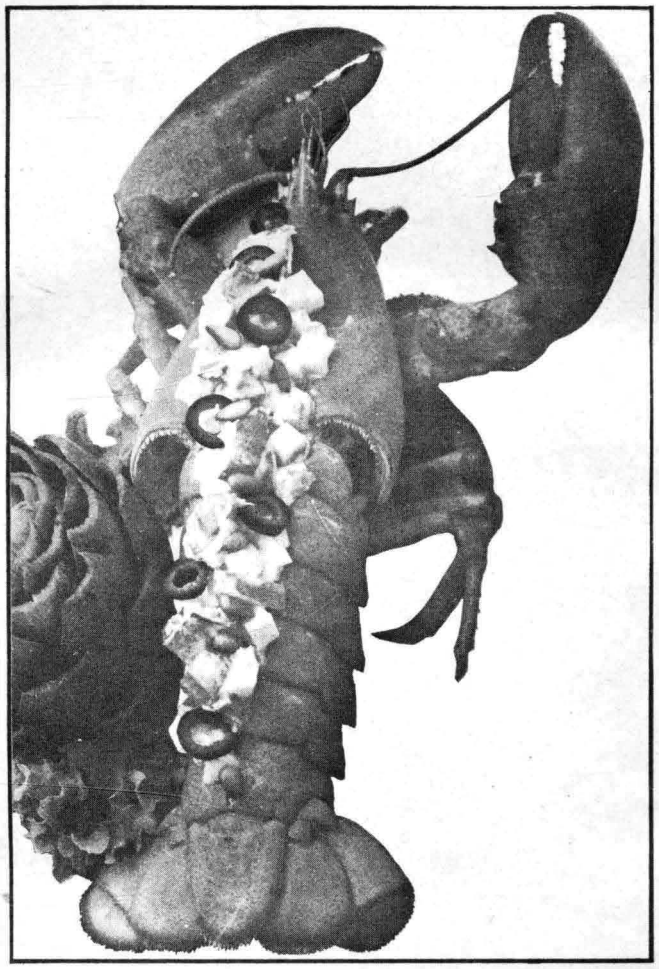
FIVE-STAR RIP OFFS

The lobster isn't a lobster and as for the caviar...



IT IS A plush, five-star restaurant. The obsequious maitre d'hôtel has just taken your drinks order when a dinner jacketed smoothie makes his way to your table. "Good evening," he simpers, handing over two outsize menus. "And what would you like to eat this evening? May I recommend the caviar? Or if you like, we have some fresh *homard* – that's lobster – which you can have for a starter. And to follow, I suggest a good sirloin steak in our chef's special sauce. We also have some tender veal and fresh salmon."

Most of us, faced with this recitation of gourmet delights give in at once and let the steward order the meal for us. Often we are too intimidated to even ask how much it is all going to cost. When the meal finally arrives we pretend not to notice that it seems somehow different from the feast we were promised. And rarely if ever are we gauche (or brave) enough to ask the steward if he knows what he's talking about.

In fact, were we to put on our most sceptical faces and interrupt the smoothie just as he started on his gourmet recitation, we would find that his bag of tricks was full of holes.

To take the caviar first. In my view you've got to be some kind of nut to pay Rs 600 for a thimbleful of Beluga or Sevruga at a restaurant. But even if you do have money to burn, there is no guarantee that you won't be conned. Properly, the term caviar can only be applied to the roe of the sturgeon. However, the Americans have encouraged the practice of referring to all roe as caviar ie salmon caviar. Even if one approves of this practice (and few do) there is an obligation to state that the caviar is not quite the real thing. Unfortunately at least one Indian hotel chain passes off the roe of the Danish lumpfish as caviar without any explanation. Not only does lumpfish roe not taste like caviar, it also has to be artificially pressed and coloured to resemble it. Moreover it is also a tenth of the price. Yet I have seen vulgarians paying upto Rs 600 for a minute quantity of this bogus caviar at five-star restaurants: No doubt this ill-gotten profit keeps the hotel chain going.

Smart ass stewards who refer to Indian *homard* may not be ripping you off, but they are certainly bending the truth. What we call 'lobster' in India is emphatically not the *homard* of France or the lobster of the US East Coast. It is admittedly a relative but nobody seems sure what the correct term for it is. Some chefs suggest 'spiny lobster' because it resembles the *langouste* of the French Mediterranean and others 'crayfish', though it has little in common with the *ecrevisse,* which is, in any case, a freshwater fish. Perhaps the American term crawfish best describes it. Whatever it is, it cannot be substituted for lobster in such classic dishes as Thermidor without a loss of taste. You won't find a restaurant admitting to this, though!

I have now got used to seeing red-faced American tourists in checked shirts turning to their wives and saying, "Say Martha, didn't the guy say this was sirloin?" Indian steak is a big rip off. It is not beef at all because we have hang-ups about slaughtering cows. Instead we use the water buffalo, a hippopotamus-like animal whose meat bears only a passing resemblance to the cow's. The only part of the buffalo that can pass off as steak is the fillet cut and even that has to be hung well to be edible. Yet, our restaurants rarely admit this and even offer 'sirloin' steaks though this cut is not found on a buffalo!

I could go on. There is no Indian salmon. Usually, our humble *rawas machhi* is dressed up in salmon trimmings and served under false pretences. Indian lamb is nearly always goat and when a chef is honest enough to insist on the real thing, all the butcher can give him is fatty sheep.

So the next time, a dinner jacketed smoothie approaches your table and talks knowledgeably of caviar and *homard*, don't fall for the old rip offs!

– *Vikram Sinha*

Vikram Sinha, our food columnist, is also the restaurant reviewer for Bombay's The Sunday Observer.

PAUNAR AFTER BHAVE

Vinoba's ashram is now run entirely by women.

I HAVE NEVER particularly liked Vinoba Bhave. In fact, I always thought him a cantankerous, old meddler. Sheer curiosity about the man who was a saint to so many thousands of Indians and about the ashram he had established prompted me to join a group of college students on a trip to his Paunar ashram.

Some background information is at this point necessary: Vinoba moved to Paunar in eastern Maharashtra in 1938. In 1959 he established there the Brahma Vidya Mandir, a commune where women could pursue a 'spiritual life'. The entire management of the institution was put into feminine hands. Vinoba himself did not interfere with its administration.

Fourteen hours on a train from Bombay brought us to Wardha and after a 20-minute drive we reached the ashram. The gate opened onto a driveway at the end of which was a cowshed. The ashram consisted of a series of low-lying whitewashed buildings running along two sides of a square shaped lawn-cum-vegetable patch. Jutting out at one corner was a temple and at the other end stood the houses of the ashramites.

We were received by a khadi-clad lady who took us to our room and informed us that 'prayers' would commence in ten minutes. We reminded her that we had not bathed as yet. "Never mind," she replied cheerfully, "I haven't bathed myself." To minds conditioned to rituals and customs, however condemnatory one was of them in public, this statement was quite a shock.

***Self-reliance through the* charkha.**

We found however, that this ashram seemed strangely unashramlike. The feeling was strengthened when we saw around us women in all kinds of apparel—saris, pyjamas and a variation on Bermuda shorts. The carefully packed *kurtas* and *chooridars* now seemed an enormous waste.

The pattern of our life for the next few days was hung next to the door on a dirty white board. The highlights of this routine were: 'Rousing Bell at 4 am, Lunch at 11 am, Dinner at 5 pm and the Bell for Silence at 8 pm'. The realisation of what we had let ourselves in for dawned slowly upon us. It was firmly nailed in when one of the group brought the news that everyone used buckets in the toilets as chamber pots. None of us had placed much credence before leaving, to the rumour that one was expected to clean the toilets after using them. Though I did have misgivings when I read somewhere that Vinoba aimed to abolish *bhangi*-ism and called for self reliance. Much to our relief we discovered a normal toilet close by.

Lunch was served in a large room. The food was simple—*chappatis*, rice, watery *dal* and pumpkin. It is not possible to describe adequately our reaction to the meals at the ashram. After a couple of days our morale was so low that the sight of an apple on the *thali* sent me scurrying to the others with the good news. The ashramites would constantly tease us about the food, however politely we insisted that we really liked it.

Nor were they unaware that we returned from our walks to the village with biscuits under our shawls. The rolling hills of Tintern Abbey could not have given Wordsworth as much pleasure as the sight of an idli-dosai stall at Wardha did to us starved city dwellers.

What never failed to astonish me was the radiance on the faces of the ashramites. They sang as they worked in the field and cleaned the vessels. They teased each other and giggled like little girls. There were all kinds of women—college educated, young girls from urban families; middle-aged women who had left their careers to live here; old women who had followed Vinoba's footsteps—educated, uneducated, from all over India, they had settled here.

A girl from Indonesia left Paunar recently to start an ashram in her own country. A French girl Ruta, spends a major part of the year at the ashram, returning home only to make enough

Amrita Shah works with **Imprint.** *Her last article,* The Avengers, *appeared in the November issue of this magazine.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AMRITA SHAH

Total contentment: no desire to leave the ashram.

money to finance her trips to and fro. Ruta, we were told, was passionately fond of music. She would switch on her tape recorder and dance to the music accompanied by a couple of other ashramites.

The inmates of the ashram are not allowed to marry though they have complete freedom to go where they wish and do what they like. Strangely enough none of them feel the slightest desire to leave the walls of the ashram. Visitors constantly flow in and out of their lives without materially affecting them.

Jyoti, the youngest ashramite has been living in Paunar for the past four years. An MSc student, she had since childhood felt the urge to renounce the world and spend her life in meditation. "I thought I would go to the Himalayas or Kailash Parbat till I discovered that this place existed." The oldest residents of the ashram, Lakshmibai and Akka had toured the country extensively during the Bhoodan movement. When Vinoba began the ashram he invited them to join it. Sonali, at 30, one of the younger inmates of the ashram has been there for the past ten years. Life at the ashram is perfectly suited to her fiercely independent nature and she has absolutely no urge to resume her hectic past life in Bombay.

For all these women, the walls of the ashram provide total security within which they are entirely free and self-sufficient. They grow their own vegetables, run a press and spin their own cloth. The serenity and peace of the ashram seems to induce a gentleness in their manner. It is a unique instance of women living together without rancour or pettiness.

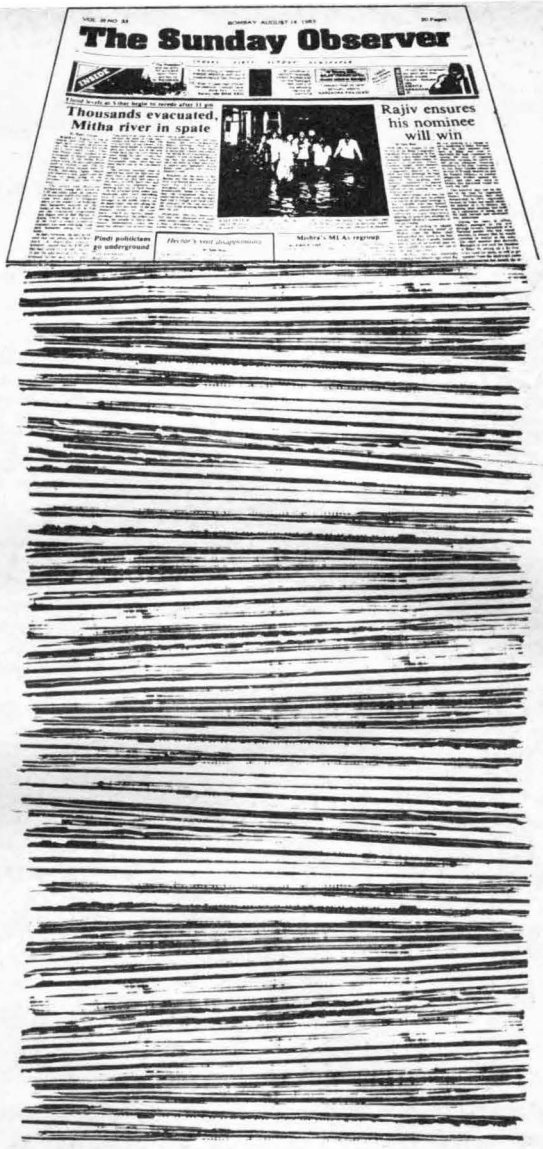
All of them share a reverence for Vinoba. He knew so many languages! He had studied so many religions! He walked thousands of miles during the Bhoodan movement and even here he worked like everyone else—is the answer all the ashramites give when asked about him. None of them thought much of Vinoba's renowned visitors. Similarly they defend all his actions. Only Akka, an old follower of the 'walking saint' admitted, "He was like a child towards the end." Sonali, speaks affectionately of him. "I used to talk to him as if he were my age. He used to tease me till I would get mad and shout at him. But he would not mind."

There was to be an international conference on women's problems soon after our departure at the ashram. Tents would be pitched all over and in the morning groups of women singing *bhajans* would replace the rousing bell.

Listening to the women harmoniously chanting the thousand names of Vishnu, with their hands working rhythmically on the *charkha*—it all seemed incredibly beautiful and satisfying.

It is a great pity that Vinoba is more often than not remembered in connection with the Bhoodan movement which yielded dubious results; or the agitation against cow slaughter, a cause whose importance is highly questionable. The Brahma Vidya Mandir, one of his greatest achievements, unfortunately remains unknown and unglorified.

— Amrita Shah



THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM AT THE TOP

What is needed is the drive to get there and the determination to carve a niche for oneself.

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The Sunday Observer

AT THE TOP AT TWO-THANKS TO YOU

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MUSIC IS IN MY BLOOD

Kishori Amonkar on her commitment to music.

Kishori Amonkar, a well-known classical singer, is the daughter of Moghubai Khurdikar, who is also her guru. Ms Amonkar likes singing in temples and prefers performances to recordings. She belongs to the Jaipur **gharana.**

Q: When did you realise that you have a penchant for music?
A: Singing runs in my blood. My mother, Moghubai Khurdikar, is a noted classical singer. She used to learn singing when I was in her womb so I guess it was but natural that I was born with both a liking and a talent for music.

What prompted you to take up singing as a full-fledged career?
Being a very emotional person I found music to be a healthy form of self expression. Besides, as I went along with life, it was destiny that kept me close to music. I also owe my success to Vithal Rao Pai, who taught me when I had just started learning music. He told my mother that I have a very inflexible voice, with absolutely no depth. This insulted me and I took up practising music in real earnest.

Who else trained you in this art?
My first and main guru was Moghubai Khurdikar, my mother. Then of course, I also learnt the basics of classical music from Anwar Hussain Khan Saheb, Nathan Khan Saheb, Vilayat Hussain Khan Saheb–all of the Agra *gharana.* Later, from Mohan Palekar Saheb I learnt the know how of *ragas.* From Husal Bhagatlalji I learnt about the technique involved in film songs. In fact, I had many teachers, some only for a few months.

Who were you influenced by?
I evolved my own style of singing. Shastriya Sangeet was given to me in the form of a craft not as an art. I am not concerned with the why and when of notes or *ragas*. I seek to communicate music through the heart.

Kishori Amonkar: 'Music is divine'.

Do you prefer recordings or programmes?
Programmes.

Why?
In programmes you are free to perform. There is no time limit and you can elaborate on the form of a *raga*. You also see so many people listening to you. It's a great honour you know, seeing a packed hall in front of you. In recordings, all that you see is a red light on and the person recording who keeps on reminding you of the time limit. Music is limitless, it is difficult to bind it in time.

In which part of India do you feel classical music to be more popular?
Classical music in the South has a religious tinge. There is also more sincerity to the art there. Classical singers in the North come out with various permutations and combinations to satiate the palate of the *hoi polloi*. They sing to entertain. Besides, people in the North have a very casual attitude towards classical music.

Why do Indian classical musicians rarely experiment in music forms?
The only reason I can think of is that they want to play safe. To remain popular they continue with what has suited their listeners so far. Maybe, they feel that if they change or experiment with new forms they might receive a set back professionally.

What are the differences between the Hindustani and Karnatak styles of music?
The Karnatak style of music lays more emphasis on rhythm whereas the Hindustani stresses more on *swars* or notes. And, of course there are many other differences but this you could say is the basic one.

What do you have to say about the recent **ghazal** ***craze?***
Ghazal fits into the genre of light music. Basically, classical music is a panorama of life with the focus on the arousal of emotions. *Ghazals* are getting popular because they arouse emotions through words, which a layman can understand and appreciate.

What are the differences that you find in the older, traditional artistes and those of today?
Today's artistes want to sprint to popularity. They want to shine as stars, they want quick material gains. They practise with this point in mind. The hard work and ingenuity that comprised our times is no longer evident.

Why didn't you go in for commercial music?
I believe classical music to be divine. I want to realise God through it.

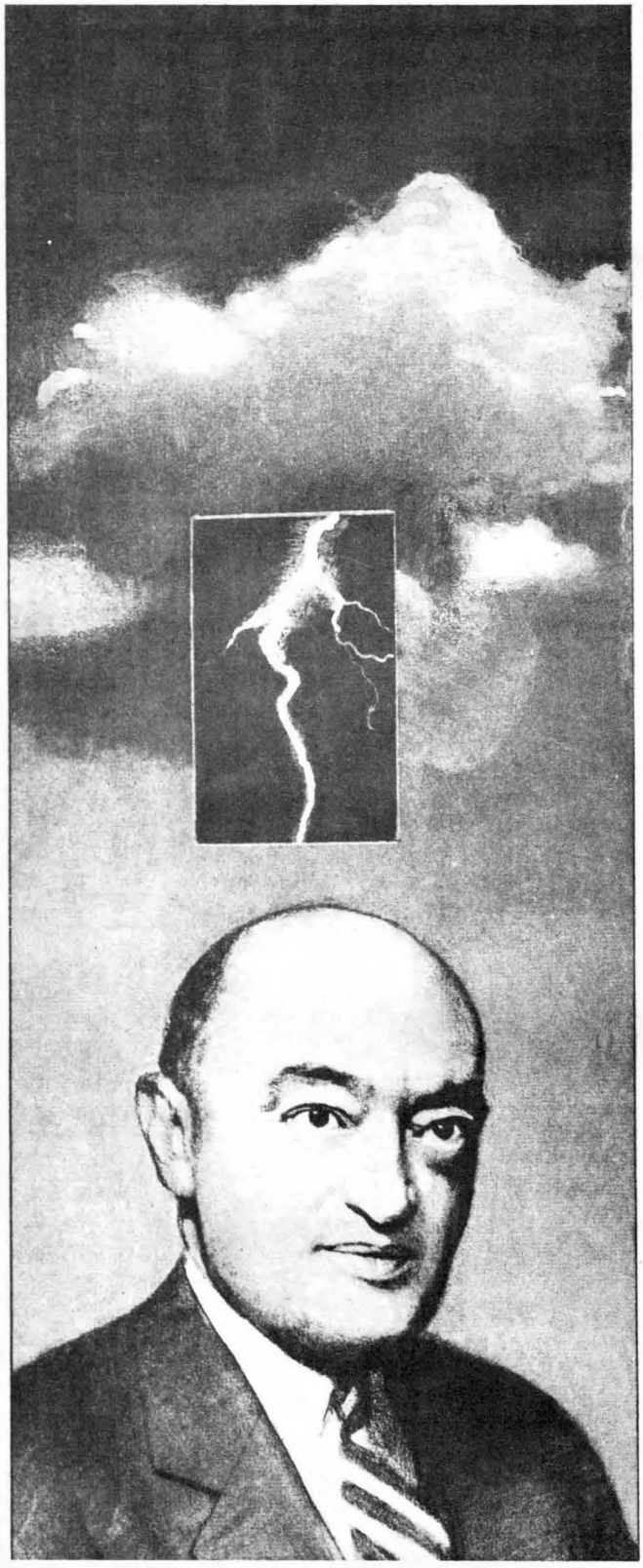
– Anju D Aggarwal

Anju D Aggarwal is a Bombay-based free-lance journalist. Her articles appear in Eve's Weekly *and* Mid-day.

PHOTOGRAPH BY KHANOLKAR

SCHUMPETER

In revering Keynes, says PETER DRUCKER,



THE TWO GREATEST economists of this century, Joseph A Schumpeter and John Maynard Keynes, were born, only a few months apart, a 100 years ago: Schumpeter on February 8, 1883 in a provincial Austrian town, Keynes on June 5, 1883 in Cambridge, England. (And they died only four years apart—Schumpeter in Connecticut on January 8, 1950, Keynes in southern England on April 21, 1946.) The centenary of Keynes' birth is being celebrated with a host of books, articles, conferences and speeches. If the centenary of Schumpeter's birth were noticed at all, it would be in a small doctoral seminar. And yet it is becoming increasingly clear that it is Schumpeter who will shape the thinking and inform the questions on economic theory and economic policy for the rest of this century, if not for the next 30 or 50 years.

THE TWO MEN were not antagonists. Both challenged long-standing assumptions. The opponents of Keynes were the very 'Austrians' Schumpeter himself had broken away from as a student, the neoclassical economists of the Austrian School. And while Schumpeter considered all of Keynes' answers wrong, or at least misleading, he was a sympathetic critic. Indeed, it was Schumpeter who established Keynes in America. When Keynes' *General Theory* came out, Schumpeter, by then the senior member of the Harvard economics faculty, told his students to read the book and told them also that Keynes' work had totally superseded his own earlier writings on money.

Keynes, in turn, considered Schumpeter one of the few contemporary economists worthy of his respect. In his lectures he again and again referred to the works Schumpeter had published during World War I and especially to Schumpeter's essay on the *Rechenpfennige* (ie, money of account) as the initial stimulus for his own thoughts on money. Keynes' most successful policy initiative, the proposal that Britain and the US finance World War II by taxes rather than by borrowing, came directly out of Schumpeter's 1918 warning of the disastrous consequences of the debt financing of World War I.

Schumpeter and Keynes are often contrasted politically, with Schumpeter being portrayed as the 'conservative' and Keynes as the 'radical'. The opposite is more nearly right. Politically Keynes' views were quite similar to what we now call 'neo-conservative'. His theory had its origins in his passionate attachment to the free market and in his desire to keep politicians and governments out of it. Schumpeter, by contrast, had serious doubts about the free market. He thought that an 'intelligent monopoly'—the American Bell Telephone system, for instance—had a great deal to recommend itself. It could afford to take the long view instead of being driven from transaction to transaction by short-term expediency. His closest friend for many years was the most radical and most doctrinaire of Europe's left-wing socialists, the Austrian Otto Bauer, who, though staunchly anti-communist, was even more anti-capitalist. And Schumpeter,

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AND KEYNES

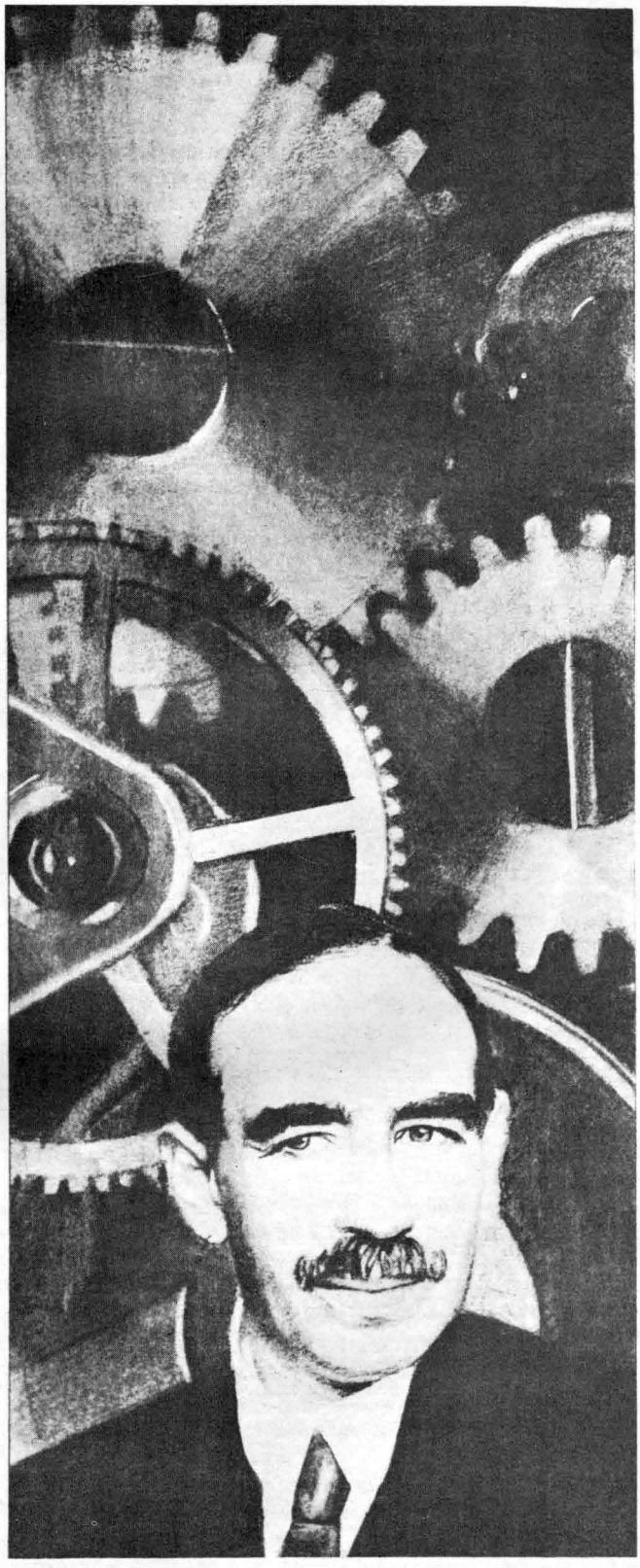
we're forgetting his brilliant contemporary.

while never even close to being a socialist himself, served during 1919 as minister of finance in Austria's only socialist government between the wars. Schumpeter always maintained that Marx had been dead wrong in every one of his answers. But he still considered himself a son of Marx and held him in greater esteem than any other economist. At least, so he argued, Marx asked the right questions—and to Schumpeter questions were always more important than answers.

The differences between Schumpeter and Keynes go much deeper than economic theorems or political views. The two saw a different economic reality, were concerned with different problems and defined 'economics' quite differently. These differences are highly important to an understanding of today's economic world.

Keynes, for all that he broke with classical economics, operated entirely within its framework. He was a 'heretic' rather than an 'infidel'. Economics, for Keynes, was the equilibrium economics of Ricardo's 1810 theories, which dominated the 19th century. This economics deals with a closed system and a static one. Keynes' key question was the same question the 19th-century economists had asked: "How can one maintain an economy in balance and stasis?"

For Keynes, the main problems of economics are the relationship between the 'real economy' of goods and services and the 'symbol economy' of money and credit; the relationship between individuals and businesses and the 'macro-economy' of the nation-state; and finally, whether production (that is, supply) or consumption (that is, demand) provides the driving force of the economy. In this sense Keynes was in a direct line with Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, the 'Austrians' and Alfred Marshall. However much they differed otherwise, most of these 19th-century economists, and that includes Marx, had given the same answers to these questions: the 'real economy' controls and money is only the 'veil of things'; the micro-economy of individuals and businesses determines and government can, at best, correct minor discrepancies and, at worst, create dislocations; and supply controls, with demand a function of it.



KEYNES ASKED THE same questions that Ricardo, Mill, Marx, the 'Austrians' and Marshall had asked but, with unprecedented audacity, turned every one of the answers upside down. In the Keynesian system, money and credit are 'real', and goods and services dependent on, and shadows of, the 'symbol economy'; the macro-economy, the economy of the nation-state, is everything, with individuals and firms having neither power to influence, let alone to direct, the economy nor the ability to make effective decisions counter to the forces of the 'macro-economy'; and economic phenomena, capital formation, productivity and employment are functions of demand.

By now we know, as Schumpeter knew 50 years ago, that every one of these Keynesian answers is the wrong

Keynesian economic policies have been defeated by the micro-economy of businesses and individuals, unpredictably and without warning.

answer. At least they are valid only for special cases and within fairly narrow ranges. Take, for instance, Keynes' key theorem: that monetary events—government deficits, interest rates, credit volume and volume of money in circulation—determine demand and with it economic conditions. This assumes—as Keynes himself stressed—that the turnover velocity of money is constant and not capable of being changed over the short term by individuals or firms. Schumpeter pointed out 50 years ago that all evidence negates this assumption. And indeed, whenever tried, Keynesian economic policies, whether in the original Keynesian or in the modified Friedman version, have been defeated by the 'micro-economy' of businesses and individuals, unpredictably and without warning, changing the turnover velocity of money almost overnight.

WHEN THE KEYNESIAN prescriptions were initially tried—in the US in the early New Deal days—they seemed at first to work. But then, around 1935 or so, consumers and businesses suddenly sharply reduced the turnover velocity of money within a few short months, which aborted a recovery based on government deficit spending and brought about a second collapse of the stock market in 1937. The best example, however, is what happened in this country in the last few years. The Federal Reserve's purposeful attempt to control the economy by controlling money supply has largely been defeated by consumers and businesses who suddenly and almost violently shifted deposits from thrifts into money market funds and from long-term investments into liquid assets—that is, from low-velocity into high-velocity money—to the point where no one can really tell any more what the 'money supply' is or even what the term means. Individuals and businesses seeking to optimise their self-interest and guided by their perception of economic reality will always find a way to beat the 'system'—whether, as in the Soviet bloc, through converting the entire economy into one gigantic black market or, as in the US in the last few years, through transforming the financial system overnight despite laws, regulations or economists.

This does not mean that economics is likely to return to pre-Keynesian neoclassicism. Keynes' critique of the neoclassic answers is as definitive as Schumpeter's critique of Keynes. But because we now know that individuals can and will defeat the system, we have lost the certainty that Keynes imposed on economics and that has made the Keynesian system the lodestar of economic theory and economic policy for 50 years. Both Friedman's monetarism and supply-side economics are desperate attempts to patch up the Keynesian system of equilibrium economics. But it is unlikely that either can restore the self-contained, self-confident equilibrium economics, let alone an economic theory or an economic policy in which one factor, whether government spending, interest rates, money supply or tax cuts, controls the economy predictably and with near-certainty.

That the Keynesian answers were not going to prove any more valid than the pre-Keynesian ones that they replaced was clear to Schumpeter from the beginning. But to him this was much less important than that the Keynesian questions—the questions of Keynes' predecessors as well—were not, Schumpeter thought, the important questions at all. To him the basic fallacy was the very assumption with which Keynes had started out: the assumption that the healthy, the 'normal', economy is an economy in static equilibrium. Schumpeter, from his student days on, held that a modern economy is always in dynamic disequilibrium. Schumpeter's economy is not a closed system like Newton's universe—or Keynes' 'macro-economy'. It is forever growing and changing and is biological rather than mechanistic in nature. If Keynes was a 'heretic' Schumpeter was an 'infidel'.

Schumpeter was himself a student of the great men of Austrian economics and at a time when Vienna was the world capital of economic theory. He held his teachers in lifelong affection. But his doctoral dissertation—it became the earliest of his great books, *The Theory of Economic Development* (which in its original German version came out in 1911, when Schumpeter was only 28 years old)—starts out with the assertion that the central problem of economics is not equilibrium but structural change. This then led to Schumpeter's famous theorem of the innovator as the true subject of economics.

CLASSICAL ECONOMICS CONSIDERED innovation to be outside the system, as Keynes did, too. Innovation belonged in the category of 'outside catastrophes' like earthquakes, climate or war, which everybody knew, have profound influence on the economy but are not part of economics. Schumpeter insisted that, on the contrary, innovation—that is, entrepreneurship that moves resources from old and obsolescent to new and more productive employments—is the very essence of economics and most certainly of a modern economy.

He derived this notion, as he was the first to admit, from Marx. But he used it to disprove Marx. Schumpeter's *Economic Development* does what neither the classical economists nor Marx nor Keynes was able to do: it makes profit fulfill an economic function. In the economy of change and innovation, profit, in contrast to Marx, is not a *Mehrwert*, a 'surplus value' stolen from the workers. On the contrary, it is the only source of jobs for workers and of labour income. The theory of economic development shows that no one except the innovator makes a genuine

Schumpeter gave no answers but asked what is clearly going to be the central question of economic theory and policy in the years to come.

'profit', and the innovator's profit is always quite short-lived. But innovation in Schumpeter's famous phrase is also 'creative destruction'. It makes obsolete yesterday's capital equipment and capital investment. The more an economy progresses, the more capital formation will it therefore need. Thus what the classical economist—or the accountant or the stock exchange—considers 'profit' is a genuine cost, the cost of staying in business, the cost of a future in which nothing is predictable except that today's profitable business will become tomorrow's white elephant. Thus, capital formation and productivity are needed to maintain the wealth-producing capacity of the economy and, above all, to maintain today's jobs and to create tomorrow's jobs.

SCHUMPETER'S 'INNOVATOR' WITH his 'creative destruction' is the only theory so far to explain why there is something we call 'profit'. The classical economists very well knew that their theory did not give any rationale for profit. Indeed, in the equilibrium economics of a closed economic system there is no place for profit, no justification for it, no explanation of it. If profit is, however, a genuine cost and especially if profit is the only way to maintain jobs and to create new ones, then 'capitalism' becomes again a moral system.

Morality and profits. The classical economists had pointed out that profit is needed as the incentive for the risk taker. But is this not really a bribe and thus impossible to justify morally? This dilemma had driven the most brilliant of 19th century economists, John Stuart Mill, to embrace socialism in his later years. It had made it easy for Marx to fuse dispassionate analysis of the 'system' with the moral revulsion of an Old Testament prophet against the 'exploiters'. The weakness on moral grounds of the profit incentive enabled Marx at once to condemn the 'capitalist' as wicked and immoral and assert 'scientifically' that he serves no function and that his speedy demise is 'inevitable'. As soon, however, as one shifts from the axiom of an unchanging, self-contained, closed economy to Schumpeter's dynamic, growing, moving, changing economy, what is called 'profit' is no longer immoral. It becomes a moral imperative. Indeed, the question then is no longer the question that agitated the classicists and still agitated Keynes: how can the economy be structured to minimise the bribe of the functionless surplus called 'profit' that has to be handed over to the 'capitalist' to keep the economy going. The question in Schumpeter's economics is always: is there sufficient profit? Is there adequate capital formation to provide for the costs of the future, the costs of staying in business, the costs of 'creative destruction'?

THIS ALONE MAKES Schumpeter's economic model the only one that can serve as the starting point for the economic policies we need. Clearly the Keynesian—or classicist—treatment of innovation as being 'outside' and in fact peripheral to the economy and with minimum impact on it, can no longer be maintained (if it ever could be). The basic question of economic theory and economic policy, especially in highly developed countries, is clearly: how can capital formation and productivity be maintained so that rapid technological change as well as employment can be sustained? What is the minimum profit needed to defray the costs of the future? What is the minimum profit needed, above all, to maintain jobs and to create new ones?

Schumpeter gave no answer—he did not much believe in answers. But 70 years ago, as a very young man, he asked what is clearly going to be the central question of economic theory and economic policy in the years to come.

And then, during World War I, Schumpeter realised, long before anyone else—and a good ten years before Keynes did—that economic reality was changing. He realised that World War I had brought about the monetarisation of the economies of all belligerents. Country after country, including his own still fairly backward Austria-Hungary, had succeeded during the war in mobilising the entire liquid wealth of the community, partly through taxation, but mainly through borrowing. Money and credit, rather than goods and services, had become the 'real economy'.

In a brilliant essay published in a German economic journal in July 1918—when the world Schumpeter had grown up in and had known was crashing down around his ears—he argued that from now on, money and credit would be the lever of control. What he argued was that neither supply of goods, as the classicists had argued, nor demand for goods, as some of the earlier dissenters had maintained, was going to be controlling anymore. Monetary factors—deficits, money, credit, taxes—were going to be the determinants of economic activity and of the allocation of resources.

This is, of course, the same insight on which Keynes later built his *General Theory*. But Schumpeter's conclusions were radically different from those Keynes reached. Keynes came to the conclusion that the emergence of the 'symbol economy' of money and credit made possible the 'economist-king', the scientific economist, who, by playing on a few simple monetary keys—government spending, the interest rate, the volume of credit or the amount of money in circulation—would maintain permanent equilibrium with full employment, prosperity and stability. But Schumpeter's conclusion was that the emergence of the 'symbol economy' as the dominant economy opened the door to tyranny and, in fact, invited tyranny. That the economist now proclaimed himself infallible, he considered pure hubris. But, above all, he saw that it was not going to be economists who would exercise the power, but politicians and generals.

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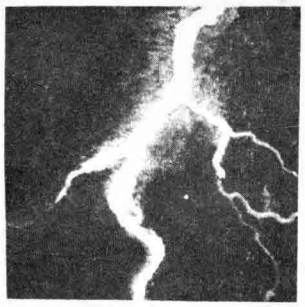


No one in the inter-war years was more brilliant than Keynes, but Schumpeter had wisdom. Cleverness carries the day but wisdom endureth.

And then, in the same year, just before World War I ended, Schumpeter published *The Tax State* ('The Fiscal State' would be a better translation). Again, the insight is the same Keynes reached 15 years later (and, as he often acknowledged, thanks to Schumpeter): the modern state, through the mechanisms of taxation and borrowing, has acquired the power to shift income and, through 'transfer payments' to control the distribution of the national product. To Keynes this power was a magic wand to achieve both social justice and economic progress, and both economic stability and fiscal responsibility. To Schumpeter—perhaps because he, unlike Keynes, was a student of both Marx and history—this power was an invitation to political irresponsibility, because it eliminated all economic safeguards against inflation. In the past the inability of the state to tax more than a very small proportion of the gross national product, or to borrow more than a very small part of the country's wealth, had made inflation self-limiting. Now the only safeguard against inflation would be political, that is, self-discipline. And Schumpeter was not very sanguine about the politician's capacity for self-discipline.

Schumpeter's work as an economist after World War I is of great importance to economic theory. He became one of the fathers of business cycle theory.

BUT SCHUMPETER'S REAL contribution during the 32 years between the end of World War I and his death in 1950 was as a political economist. In 1942, when everyone was scared of a worldwide deflationary depression, Schumpeter published his best-known book, *Capitalism Socialism and Deomcracy,* still, and deservedly, read widely. In this book he argued that capitalism would be destroyed by its own success. This would breed what we would now call the 'new class': bureaucrats, intellectuals, professors, lawyers, journalists, all of them beneficiaries of capitalism's economic fruits and, in fact, parasitical on them and yet all of them opposed to the ethos of wealth production, of saving and of allocating resources to economic productivity. The 40 years since this book appeared have surely proved Schumpeter to be a major prophet.

And then he proceeded to argue that capitalism would be destroyed by the very democracy it had helped create and made possible. For in a democracy, to be popular, government would increasingly become the 'tax state', would increasingly shift income from producer to non-producer, would increasingly move income from where it would be saved and become capital for tomorrow to where it would be consumed. Government in a democracy would thus be under increasing inflationary pressure. Eventually, he prophesied, inflation would destroy both democracy and capitalism.

When he wrote this in 1942, almost everybody laughed. Nothing seemed less likely than an inflation based on economic success. Now, 40 years later, this has emerged as the central problem of democracy and of a free-market economy alike, just as Schumpeter had prophesied.

The Keynesians in the '40s ushered in their 'promised land' in which the economist-king would guarantee the perfect equilibrium of an eternally stable economy through control of money, credit, spending and taxes. Schumpeter, however, increasingly concerned himself with the question of how the public sector could be controlled and limited so as to maintain political freedom and an economy capable of performance, growth and change. When death overtook him at his desk, he was revising the presidential address he had given to the American Economic Association only a few days earlier. The last sentence he wrote was: "The stagnationists are wrong in their diagnosis of the reason the capitalist process should stagnate; they may still turn out to be right in their prognosis that it will stagnate—with sufficient help from the public sector."

Keynes' best-known saying is surely, "In the long run we are all dead." This is one of the most fatuous remarks ever made. Of course, in the long run we are all dead. But Keynes in a wiser moment remarked that the deeds of today's politicians are usually based on the theorems of long-dead economists. And it is a total fallacy that, as Keynes implies, optimising the short term creates the right long-term future. Keynes is in large measure responsible for the extreme short-term focus of modern politics, of modern economics and modern business—the short-term focus that is now, with considerable justice, considered a major weakness of American policymakers, both in government and in business.

SCHUMPETER ALSO KNEW that today's short-term measures have long-term impacts. They irrevocably make the future. Not to think through the futurity of short-term decisions and their impact long after 'we are all dead' is irresponsible. It also leads to the wrong decisions. It is this constant emphasis in Schumpeter on thinking through the long-term consequences of the expedient, the popular, the clever and the brilliant, that makes him a great economist and the appropriate guide for today, when short-run, clever, brilliant economics—and short-run, clever, brilliant politics—have become bankrupt.

In some ways, Keynes and Schumpeter replayed the best-known confrontation of philosophers in the Western tradition—the Platonic dialogue between Parmenides, the brilliant, clever, irresistible sophist, and the slow-moving and ugly, but wise, Socrates. No one in the interwar years was more brilliant, more clever than Keynes. Schumpeter, by contrast, appeared pedestrian—but he had wisdom. Cleverness carries the day. But wisdom endureth. ♦

Dr BK Goyal

Photographed By Ashok Gupta

PROFESSOR DR BK Goyal's consulting rooms are rather a contrast to the high-flying, high-profile cardiovascular physician and Honorary Physician to the President of India.

For one, this six-foot former Sheriff in his three-piece suits and velvet bowties gives the impression of being jet set and flamboyant. Ironically however, these are the last adjectives one would use while describing his rooms. Dr Goyal is aware of the contrast, almost apologetic, though one gets the impression that interior decoration is not one of the uppermost concerns in his mind. "What can I do?" he says. "Whenever I want to re-do this room, I am told it will take two months at the minimum for the repairs so I can't get it done." Besides, there is another more well-thought of reason for the simplicity. "A long while ago I asked Dr Arthur de Sa why he didn't make his consulting room posh, and he said, 'If I do that poor people will be afraid to come in,' " says Dr Goyal.

The room is almost a square measuring eleven by ten feet, throughout which run heavy cables like arteries. Dr Goyal sits in the left-hand corner, almost at the heart of things, if one could be allowed a weak pun, surrounded by files, cardiograms, a nifty new machine that records a heart patient's condition over the phone, a life-size heart-model, X-ray plates and medical digests.

There is not much else in the room it seems that has been put there to please or amuse. Of course, there are a couple of paintings on the walls but these are displayed more for their sentimental value, than anything else.

There is a small canvas directly across from his chair of two fisherwomen and a larger one behind him, of a flower vase, done by his daughter Alka Jhunjhunwala in the realist tradition. A third slightly more modern painting, lies on his right over the X-ray displayer depicting a rather disturbing healthy looking heart in flesh hues.

Dr Goyal's desk itself is neatly cluttered in the way that most busy professionals' desks generally are, with heaps of files, stacks of papers and an assortment of letters. There is a life-size heart model, a paper-knife that doubles as a pointer, a single ball-pen on its stand (the doctor not being particular as to what brand of pen he uses) and a cardiologist's stethoscope. In the drawers below there is a happy disorder of visiting cards, prescription papers, tablets and paper clips. It is at this desk that the doctor's stenographer sits across from him taking dictation.

Dr Goyal spends hardly a third of his professional day here. Being as he is, connected in various capacities to the Bombay, Jagjivan, Breach Candy and JJ Hospitals, he spends the mornings on his rounds, or visits, arriving at his consulting room at 4 pm by which time a steady stream of patients arrive to be examined.

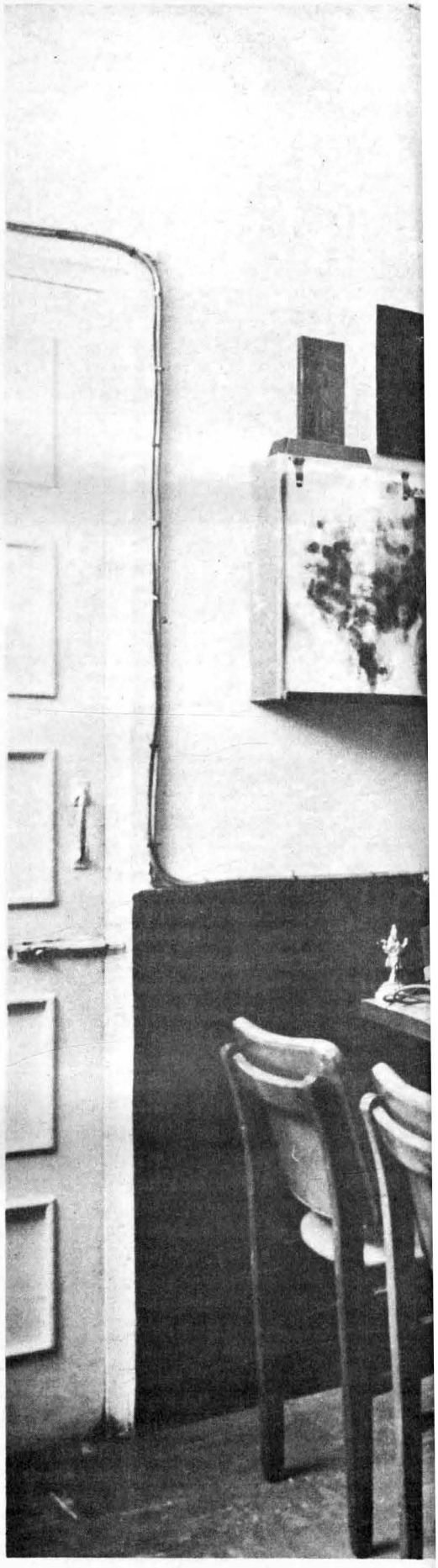
While seated facing the doctor, an observant patient whose eyes wander, will pick out three interesting objects in this otherwise functional office. The first two lie on the desk and are a gold-painted statuette of the Goddess Dhanvanti, traditionally known as the Goddess of Medicine. The second is a small portrait of Lord Krishna, and the third, on the wall, to the right, is a photograph of doctor's late father, to whom he was especially attached.

Dr Goyal admits to having learnt a lot from his father. "He taught me three things," he says. "Never to bring dishonour to the family name. To treat as many poor patients as possible for free and to be content with my lot, whatever it may be."

And is he content? "Yes, you can see for yourself that I am. Few professional people, other than doctors, have the unique opportunity for making such a direct impact on people's lives and alleviating their sufferings and being well-placed materially. It doesn't make a dent in my pocket when I forego my fees."

And Dr Goyal seems content enough, if one were to go by his attitude towards the ambience and functions of his simple consulting room.

– Interviewed By Malavika Sanghvi



India Without Tears

Trevor Fishlock's new book is essential reading.

THE INDIAN PRIME MINISter, Mrs Indira Gandhi, during her visit to London to inaugurate the Festival of India in March last year was asked at a press conference: "What sort of image of India would you prefer the media to project in this country?" She replied: "India, as it is." Trevor Fishlock has done just that with 84,000 words and 13 eyecatching pictures–in his *India File: Inside The Subcontinent.*

If UNESCO's debate on the Western media is anything to go by, most Third World nations barely tolerate the presence of Western correspondents in their capitals. But Trevor Fishlock, who went to India as a correspondent of the London *Times*, is one whom any Third World country would welcome. Unfortunately the Foreign Desk of *The Times* has now posted him to the United States where he took up a fellowship in 1977-78 before going to India.

Trevor came to India soon after Mrs Gandhi returned to power in 1980. He was a colleague. I was in Delhi editing *India Today*, India's answer to the American *Time* magazine. During our first meeting by the swimming pool of the Oberoi Hotel, he left me in no doubt that he was not a mere reporter who wanted to file his despatch at the end of the day before reaching for a bottle of Scotch.

Indian bureaucracy drives foreigners mad. Even returning Indians like myself. But, observes Trevor, reflecting his own rather indulgent attitude toward the Indian bureaucrats, 'humanity, however, can shine through'. He once had to leave India in a hurry, after receiving a message about his father's serious illness. Listen to his tale: "As luck would have it I was carrying a newly-issued passport which did not contain the stamp attesting to my earlier arrival in India. The airport official gave a withering look. 'You cannot leave the country. There is no entry stamp in your passport. Therefore, you have not arrived. As you have not arrived, you cannot be permitted to leave'." Trevor showed the official the cable with the message about his father's illness. The officer changed from a bloody-minded functionary into a human. He opened his passport and applied the appropriate exit stamp saying: "There is no problem. At such a time a son's place is with his father."

Trevor Fishlock: tales from India

Trevor reminds me of the late John Gunther who swallowed the world continents one by one to produce his *Inside* series of six volumes. Gunther was known for his attention to detail and simplicity. Trevor follows in Gunther's footsteps and provides graphic descriptions of the people and places he visited and simple and easy explanations of the rituals and ceremonies he attended. During my three years at *India Today* we never found out that Mrs Gandhi is five feet three inches and weighs seven stone, seven pounds. Trevor tells us that her desk in South Block is made of teak, that she wears no perfumes and no rings and except for a necklace of plain brown beads, she wears no ornaments.

With *India File* Trevor Fishlock has done international relations a favour. Anyone going to Chanakyapuri, Delhi's diplomatic enclave, should not land at Palam Airport without *India File.*

–Chhotu Karadia

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Asian Post *and* The Times.

A MUGHAL MINIATURE IN PRINT

NO OFFENCE MEANT, but the Editor of *The Times* is a chump. You do not remove a Trevor Fishlock from his post in New Delhi and transfer him to New York if you are wise. Any competent reporter can cover the United States adequately, but rare are the journalists who can even understand India, let alone write about events there felicitously. Fishlock could do both and is a lamentable loss to South Asia, as well as to his readers here. If need be, the editor should have doubled his salary and begged him to soldier on in the frustrations and the discomforts of the subcontinent. This book is a distillation of the wisdom he acquired and the relish he conveyed as he shuttled around the country from his base in the capital. The shuttling was crucial to his understanding of that preposterously complex land. Not for him the techniques of Washington and New York, based on the lobby and exhausting attention to the local media. Many reporters have tried the same thing in Delhi, and they have invariably been ill-informed. West Bengal is a different country from Rajasthan, as is Kerala from Uttar Pradesh. The politicians these states send to represent them in the Lok Sabha usually represent little more than self-advancement and a capacity to mouth bland distortions of the truth. India, says Fishlock generously, is 'a society where gestures rather than policies are practised'.

Fishlock's sketch of life in New Delhi is brilliant, a Mughal miniature among the artistic writings on modern India, and he is never less than very readable. He must not fail to write another book when his stint in New York is done. For that I would even forgive his editor.

– Geoffrey Moorehouse

INDIANS AND SEX

By Trevor Fishlock

AFTER MARRIAGE THERE is sex.

In India it is usually in this order. Early marriage, parental discipline and custom are the pillars of the sexual *status quo*. There is also a lack of opportunity. A survey on premarital sex in India would be as thin as a book on Indian cars (although Bombay boasts that it is in this, as in many other endeavours, an exception). Those liberated young men and women who have dates and go to discos, the sophisticates Mrs Gandhi disparagingly labels the 'hotel culture', are a very small section of Indian society; and as psychiatrists testify, some of these young women find themselves in turmoil, caught between opposing mores and their own sexuality.

Single Indian girls are, on the whole, chaste and dutiful. This is only partly because they do not have much opportunity for premarital sexual activity even if they wanted it. They tend to be respectful to their parents, with a strong sense of family and this applies throughout the social spectrum. In a joint family, a girl knows her place and is very much part of the female community within it, being the recipient of its comforts in an unequal world. She usually has a strong relationship with her mother, for her mother knows that she will soon leave home and the bond is sympathetic because her mother is well aware of a woman's lot. Even when girls remain unmarried because they are at college or are working, they generally live at home and are under the control of their parents; and Indian girls tend to be obedient. The teenager with emotions complicated by boyfriend problems, well-known to Western parents, is largely unknown in India. A middle class mother recently told me that her daughter was dating and said it in a way which indicated she thought it avant-garde. When I asked if she were anxious about this break with tradition, she said: "No. The ayah is with her all the time. The girl and the boy talk and play records and the ayah goes for tea in the servants' quarters, but she's never far away."

An Indian acquaintance was walking home past the university in Delhi one evening when he saw a girl, a student being molested by several young men. Delhi has a rather bad reputation for this kind of Eve-teasing, as it is known. The girl's clothing was being pulled and she was frightened. My friend drove her attackers off, being punched and injured for his pains. The incident had an interesting outcome. It was pursued with no vigour by the police because one of the attackers was a police officer's son; and it became clear that there was no chance of the girl giving evidence against the attackers if the matter had gone to court because a molested girl, however innocent, however good her back-

India File: Inside The Subcontinent, *by Trevor Fishlock, (John Murray, UK, pp189, £ 9.95) will be distributed in India by Allied Publishers Pvt Ltd by mid-January.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GAUTAM PATOLE

A Bombay film poster: cheap thrills.

ground and family, becomes damaged goods, her chastity questioned. In short, her prospects of marriage might easily have been narrowed.

Few girls, it seems, learn anything about sex from their mothers and there is very little literature of the kind available in the West. "It is a subject that never comes up, a taboo," a bright and young middle class woman said. "I was given a rough idea by my ayah but my mother never discussed it. Others might get a hint from their married friends, say, but many girls go into marriage without any idea of what happens."

It is not surprising that initiation can be traumatic, for the husband as well as the wife. In rural society, girls are sometimes locked in a room with their husbands for consummation. A girl recalled for a researcher that she was locked in a dark room and unknown to her, her husband was already hidden there. "He came out and grabbed hold of me. I let him do whatever he wanted to do. I just clenched my sari between my teeth so I wouldn't cry out."

Khushwant Singh, the distinguished journalist and acute observer of his countrymen, says that many young Indian boys get sexual knowledge from school chatter, occasionally from obliging female relatives in the joint family and also from prostitutes in the towns. To most Indian couples, he says, the concept of privacy is as alien as that of love and they rarely get a room to themselves, the wife sleeping with women members of her husband's family and the husband sleeping alongside the men.

"No Indian language has a word for orgasm. Frankly, most young men go into marriage for sex, children and companionship, in that order and most Indian men are not even aware that women can also have orgasm." Mr Singh regards this as 'a sad commentary on the people of a country which produced the most widely read treatise on the art of sex, *Kama Sutra* and elevated the act of sex to spiritual sublimity by explicit depictions on its temples'.

The charming and comical *Kama Sutra* (comical, in part, because it takes itself so seriously: all that assiduous

The cinema is a sexual frontier; it provides a release in a repressed society.

cataloguing) is better known in the West than in India where it belongs. The erotic has its place in Hindu mythology and this is all many Westerners know of Hinduism. But the existence of such works does not mean that there is some vast store of knowledge, some Indian secret, passed down the generations. Sexual ignorance is considerable and the problems are familiar, hence the growth of the advice and treatment clinics which advertise in newspapers and garishly on hoardings.

"A large number of men know nothing of sex when they marry," said a doctor who runs one of these clinics in Delhi and charges Rs 20 for a consultation. "Sometimes they are informed by married friends but many of those who come to see me want the basic facts of life, to know what to do.

"My clients are of all ages. A few come because they think they have VD, but the majority, about 80 per cent, consult me because they are impotent. Of course, impotence is mostly in the mind and so I talk to them and give them confidence. I explain the facts and you can say I wash their brains . . ."

This man treats patients with ayurvedic medicines, herbs and roots and minerals, for complaints which come under the general heading of lost vigour; and his treatments range from General, through Special, Super Special, Royal, Super Royal and Nawabi, from Rs 225 to more than Rs 5000.

Judging by the literature they distribute to hopeful clients Indian sexicians are careful to instruct men to be considerate to their wives, to fulfil them sexually, to respond if there is 'a twinkle in their eyes' and to be especially thoughtful when on honey-

Women still remain partly covered while taking ritual baths, but the men still peek.

Bathing by the Ganges: no nudity.

moon. "In case the man hurries to commence the job without first stirring the woman she remains dormant and the sport is only one-sided. The man is looked down upon as selfish." This is an echo of the boudoir chivalry illustrated in the *Kama Sutra* and in the carefully executed 18th-and 19th century paintings of tubby noblemen and their voluptuous ladies enjoying their *parties de jambes en l'air*.

The health and vigour clinics no doubt perform a useful service if they can relieve anxiety, spread sexual courtesy and banish ignorance, but the opportunities for quackery are boundless and the literature reveals that the sex instructors themselves are often superstitious and saddled with old beliefs.

Above all, youngmen (it is almost always one word in India) are impressed with the importance of the old tradition of retaining their semen, the 'gem of life, the treasure of life' as it is called and to avoid losing it through 'hand practice', too much love-making and what is picturesquely called 'nightfall'. Indeed, clinic literature warns of "the horrors of the waste of semen . . .the human machinery becomes defective; stomach, liver, heart and eyesight go weak. The very imagination of a woman causes waste of semen and youngmen look old at the age of 25. Many youngmen have sex many times at night and thus waste this essence of life recklessly. With small production and heavy drainage, supply will exhaust soon and critical consequences will have to be faced."

To avoid nightfall, men are advised not to drink milk at bedtime, not to eat spicy food, to 'boycott love thoughts and avoid excess of cycling, fast running and horse riding'. Similar beliefs about nocturnal emission persisted in Victorian Britain. A patent electric alarm could be purchased for attachment to the member,whose swelling during slumber would ring the bell, warning the owner to take appropriate action.

There are strong lectures from the clinics about the perils of masturbation, said to cause headaches, backache and amnesia. "The organ becomes small and thin, the man starts feeling giddy, weak and becomes impotent." The literature often carries a cautionary tale, of which the following is a typical example. A weeping man tells the sex expert of his decline and fall.

"I am the only son of a rich family and my parents fulfilled my every desire. Unluckily I fell in bad company, due to which I started masturbation. After some time, I felt myself very weak and decided to give up this bad habit, but when I suppressed it I suffered from night discharges. It ruined me. Due to overthinking I had gone mentally weak. I have gone lazy. I am worried because my parents have settled my marriage with a beautiful girl but I tremble because I know that I have lost the most important treasure of my life and I feel I am unable to satisfy my would-be wife."

The sex expert then recounts: "I told him to have faith in God and he would be all right. Then I examined him and his genitals in privacy. Indeed he had ruined his youth. My heart is filled with sympathy for these poor fellows . . ." Rather more luridly another expert writes: "His organ had gone black. There were other symptoms of ruin, too. I started treatment . . . and by the grace of the Almighty he regained his youth."

As a cure for impotence the clinics recommend a period during which men should avoid thinking of sex and have a course of alternative hot and cold baths, followed by herbal medicines to enrich and thicken semen,

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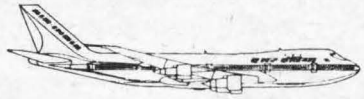

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Debonair's *Anil Dharkar: middle class models.*

enhanced by doses of calcium, tin and crushed pearls. To improve tumesence, arsenic, saffron and musk are recommended, as well as applications of lion and bear fat, castor oil and carbolic acid. Cantharides, mustard and oil of cloves are also prescribed; and a diet including eggs and the testicles of a goat is favoured; while tea and tobacco are frowned on.

Once normal service is resumed, men are enjoined to preserve the gem of life (an Indian researcher reported recently that semen contained gold) and to enjoy intercourse only once or twice a month, avoiding the act when they are constipated.

Sexual display in India is very restricted. The advertising of women's underclothing, so familiar to Westerners, is hardly ever seen. Even in women's magazines there is very little advertising of brassieres and what there is, is discreet. A picture of a shapely leg advertising stockings would be pointless because most Indian women do not wear them and do not display their legs, covering them in a sari or with narrow trousers or pantaloons. For winter warmth they wear socks. An Indian girl rarely wears a Western-style skirt and if she wants a Western accent in her appearance she will usually choose jeans or corduroy trousers. Bombay girls, however, may be more ready to adopt Western fashions.

The great majority of Indian women wear traditional costume, the artfully concealing and revealing sari with a tight blouse beneath. In the north they also wear the attractive trousers and long knee-length dress known as *salwar-kameez.* In the south, women, like men, wear long skirts, or lungis.

The sari is eternally in fashion, comfortable and right and while the changes are rung mainly in colours and patterns, there are varying ways of wearing it. For example, the skirt may be worn high or sometimes low on the hips, accentuating the belly-swell considered so attractive. Smart women in Bombay sometimes like to show some buttock-cleavage and the blouse or *choli*, may also be low-cut. The sari is a garment of languorous grace, not suited to rapid activity.

The wet sari, as seen clinging to film actresses, has in recent years come to represent an erotic ideal. In hundreds of films the director contrives ways of leading both the heroine and the bad girl to water. They fall in rivers and the sea. They get caught in the rain and sprayed by gardeners' hoses. They have large liquid eyes, bruised roses for mouths, slightly sulky and there they stand with their garments clinging. The cinema in India is a sexual frontier, gradually encroaching on conservatism and is partly devoted to stimulating and gratifying fantasies in a sexually unpermissive society. The giant film hoardings are remarkable, an industry and art form of their own, a colourful part of the city street scene, promising hours of thrusting bosoms, wet saris and gunfire for a few rupees. In blasé Bombay and Delhi, Calcutta and Madras, the strictly limited eroticism of the cinema has become accepted, although there are always newspaper controversies over films that have supposedly gone too far. But in the villages many find them too strong and men forbid women to go to the travelling cinemas.

Models are dutiful daughters of middle class parents—few pose for the Indian Playboy.

A kiss is rarely seen in an Indian film, being too daring and too offensive, in a society where such physical pleasures are enjoyed in private. Few Indian couples show affection in public. You hardly ever see boys and girls holding hands and you never see canoodling in the parks. Indeed, in parks you are more likely to see groups of boys and girls sitting in sexually segregated circles, some yards apart. Thus the question of 'to kiss or not to kiss' in films is a favourite and titillating subject in magazines and newspapers.

When the Prince of Wales visited a film studio in Bombay in 1981 a young actress was persuaded by Fleet Street photographers to kiss him on the cheek, which she did. An outraged citizen took out a summons against her for dishonouring Hindu womanhood, but as with so much else in this litigious country, nothing came of it. The photographers, incidentally, asked the girl if she would care to remove the pantaloons of her *salwar-kameez* outfit, for a glamour photograph, an invitation she declined. Indian girls are modest and many actresses would not only refuse to kiss in a film but would be outraged if asked to do a nude scene. Even partial nudity is rare. The camera usually stops short at a bare back or a generous thigh. Western films are heavily cut. Bosoms heave, but are not bared.

Nor, in the main, are they bared for artists and photographers. The life class in India has usually been a drab affair, lacking a suitable model, male or female. Artists have had to make do with beggars for male models and statues for female. Girls can sometimes be persuaded to pose, usually draped, but one Calcutta artist recalls that the models in his life class were ageing

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY: CELEBRITY MAGAZINE

prostitutes. Recently a few Indian girls have posed nude for photographers and the results have been published in what is considered a daring magazine, a sort of Indian *Playboy*, but the girls looked nervous. Many photographic models are dutiful daughters of middle class parents and would not dream of embarrassing them by doing something risque. With the one exception mentioned there are no magazines in India featuring the naked female form, although there are plenty with pictures of film stars with clothes on. Customs officials seize Western magazines with nude pictures and are meant to destroy them; but a copy of *Playboy* fetches up to £10 at a backstreet stall.

Indian girls who go to the beach or to a pool dress very modestly, hardly ever in a bikini. Women swim in saris on Goan beaches, or wear pantaloons or long skirts, like Victorian belles. They perform their daily ablutions in saris and, in the twinkling of an eye, change into a dry one. They usually remain partly covered when taking ritual baths, as they do in the sea at Puri, in the lake at Pushkar and in the numerous bathing places along the Ganges. "We object to Western television cameras lingering on our womenfolk while they are taking their ritual baths," an Indian said. "It is an intrusion into privacy, as if they were catching your own sister in the bath. Of course, we have a peek ourselves, but you see, we only peek. The camera stares!"

Newspapers reported in 1981: "A group of four well-educated girls were arrested recently while dancing in the nude on the beach at Vishakhapatnam (on the Bay of Bengal)." The titillation lay in the fact that the girls were educated as well as naked.

Given Indian reticence over sex, I was surprised to read the following verse in the *Times of India*, under the title *Holiday Notes:*

afternoons i hug my wife
full passion rules our life
bearer brings the tea at three
embarrassing her in lingerie
evening by the lakeside
we agree on a boatride
fingers pluck the guitar strings
somewhere near the church-bell rings
meal over, velvet curtains we drew
for the long-desired good night screw

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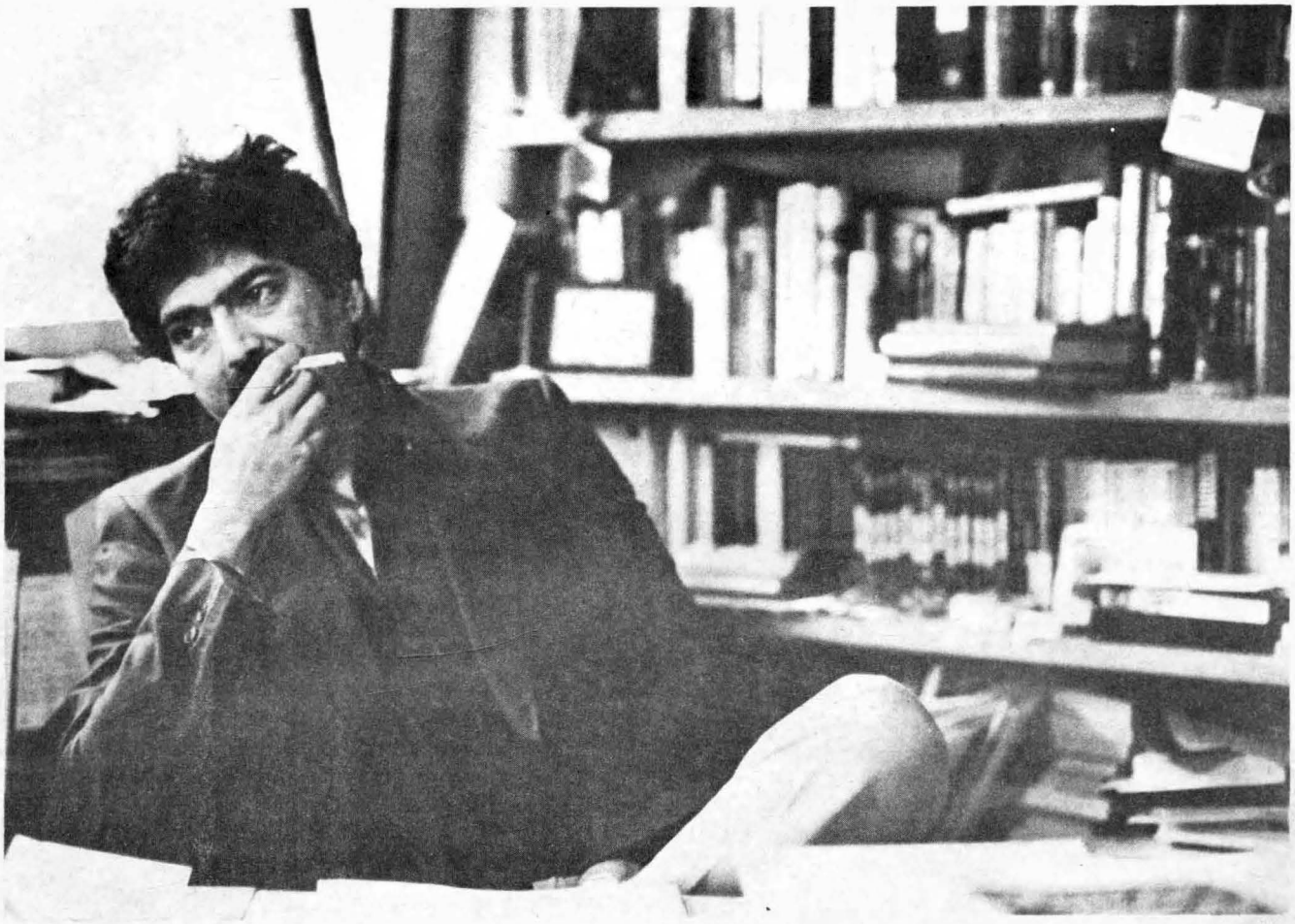


SONNY MEHTA:

London's 'Hottest' Publisher

EARLIER THIS YEAR, TWO books shot to the top of the bestseller lists on both sides of the Atlantic. *Hollywood Wives*, Jackie Collins' steamy, sexy novel of incest in Beverly Hills grabbed the top slot in the American lists only a few weeks after its publication; and *Shame*, Salman Rushdie's highly acclaimed follow-up to *Midnight's Children* became Britain's number one hard cover bestseller.

What these two seemingly unrelated developments have in common is Sonny Mehta, the Delhi-born Editorial Director of Pan Books, one of the UK's largest paperback publishing houses. Normally paperback publishers do not become closely involved with books before their hard cover publication, but Mehta has worked closely with both Collins and Rushdie almost from the time the books were conceived.

"Jackie came to us before she wrote *Lovers And Gamblers*. She wanted to write a bigger book than the kind of thing she had been doing. At the time, there was a slot just waiting to be filled: the sort of Jackie Susann kind of Hollywood bestseller. I remember going over to her place on Boxing Day and making her sign a contract with us." After that, Mehta helped alter her output from 100-page novellas of debauchery in London to 400-page potboilers set in the States. She was extensively promoted as a personality in her own right (the dust-jackets still carry suitably glamorous photographs of her) and the bestsellers came tumbling out: *Lovers And Gamblers, Chances* and now *Hollywood Wives.*

Mehta read the manuscript of *Midnight's Children* when it was still with Jonathan Cape and realised at once that he was dealing with a major talent. He bought the paperback rights immediately and then promoted the book till it became one of the largest selling 'serious' paperbacks of the year. Since then, Rushdie and he have become good friends and he was in on *Shame* even before the manuscript was ready.

Rushdie and Collins may seem a strange combination but Mehta has displayed an uncanny ability to mix commerce with literature. He has been called 'one of the hottest editors in the business' by the London *Evening Standard* and is known for his ability to spot a gem in the mountain of manuscripts and galley proofs that most publishers find themselves buried under. He bought Michael Herr's book about Vietnam, *Dispatches*, after six publishers had turned it down and

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY: PAN BOOKS

His authors include Sidney Sheldon, Arthur Hailey, Salman Rushdie, Susan Howatch and Jackie Collins.

Mehta with author colleagues Susan Howatch and Arthur Hailey.

watched it become an international bestseller. Earlier this year he picked up Edmund White's *A Boy's Own Story*, again after nearly everybody else had rejected it. Within weeks of publication, it was outselling such bestsellers as *The Prodigal Daughter* in parts of London.

Within British publishing, he is probably still best known as the man who commissioned Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* and created two of the world's most respected paperback imprints: Palladin and Picador. But he is also the publisher of such bestselling massmarket authors as Sidney Sheldon, Arthur Hailey, James Herriot and Jack Higgins. And he has acquired a formidable reputation for market wisdom. It is perhaps because he combines a literary bias with a sound commercial instinct that a list of his authors reads like a Who's Who of the British literary scene: Adam Mars-Jones, Emma Tennant, Bruce Chatwin, Clive James, Hugo Williams and of course, Salman Rushdie.

Mehta's whiz kid reputation is matched by a strongly individualistic personal style. Bearded and of medium height, he does not conform at all to the standard image of the top British publisher. He wears sneakers, blue jeans and tee-shirts to work and speaks in a lazy, mid-Atlantic drawl. In a profession full of hype and self-promotion, he is surprisingly relaxed and casual. As *Private Eye* said: "If he was any more laidback, he'd fall over."

He was born in Delhi and educated at the Lawrence School, Sanawar, (a boarding school in Himachal Pradesh) and at Sevenoaks in England. He won a scholarship to read English and History at Saint Catherine's College, Cambridge and spent his first year there working on various journals and magazines. Recalls his wife Gita, who was up at Cambridge at roughly the same time: "When I met Sonny, he'd already done all the things that people are supposed to do at Cambridge.

But by his second year, I think he got bored of it all. That's when he turned to drink," she laughs. Mehta does not dispute this assessment.

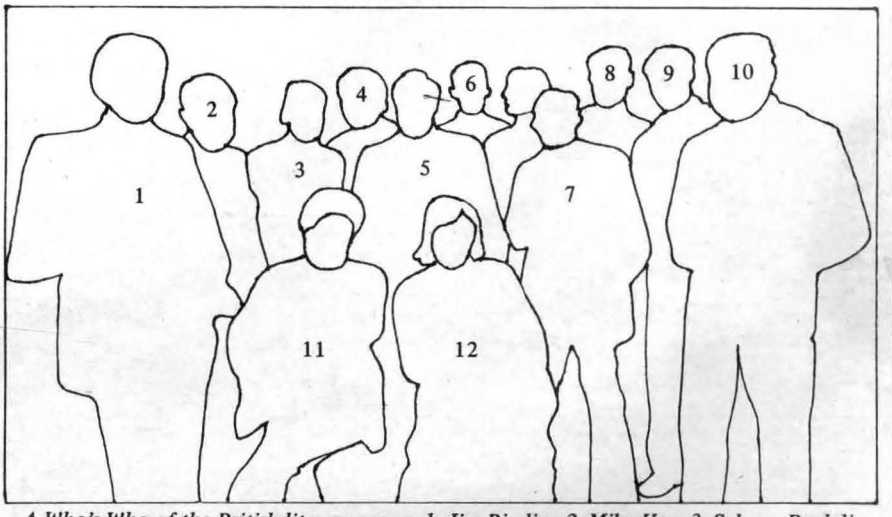
Sensing this, his college took away his scholarship in his third year, but by then it did not really matter. Mehta had made good friends at university (many of whom are now famous: Eric Idle of Monty Python; columnist Clive James; and Germaine Greer) and was having a wonderful time.

His father worked in the Foreign Service and was keen that Sonny do the same. "Frankly, I was not very keen. I think you could say I had attitudinal problems," says Mehta now. Nevertheless he put himself down for the Foreign Service exam and would drive down to London from Cambridge to sit his papers at India House.

Unfortunately, he overslept one morning and realised that he was going to be late for his history paper. Rousing a friend, he made him drive him to London and would have made it more or less on time, had they first, not run out of gas and then, got lost in the area around India House. Finally he arrived two hours late for a three-hour history paper and had to fight with the invigilator to be allowed to sit for it. Needless to say, he did not get accepted by the Foreign Service.

"I couldn't really face the thought of living in Delhi," he remembers with understandable horror. "And I couldn't see what I would do once I got back." So, he stayed on in England after he took his degree in 1965 and found a job with hardback publishers Rupert Hart-Davis.

In 1968, he moved to Granada and went about setting up Palladin. "The idea was to launch a quality paperback imprint that would not only publish books of quality but would do different things in terms of presentation, style and approach." It would be no exaggeration to say that Palladin revolutionised paperback publishing in Britain. Mehta commissioned such books as *The Female Eunuch*, and



A Who's Who of the British literary scene: 1. Jim Binding 2. Mike Herr 3. Salman Rushdie 4. Bruce Chatwin 5. Clive James 6. Adam Mars Jones 7. Russel Hoban 8. Hugo Williams 9. Tom Maschler 10. Oliver Sachs 11. Sonny Mehta 12. Emma Tennant.

Richard Neville's counter-culture handbook *Playpower* and showed that it was possible to produce original, non-fiction paperbacks of high quality. It is a tribute to his success that within a couple of years, most other paperback houses had set up similar high quality, upmarket imprints. By 1972, Mehta was Editorial Director of Granada Paperbacks and in charge of all three lines: Panther, Mayflower and Palladin.

He moved to Pan as Editorial Director in 1974, succeeding one of the old-style legends of British publishing and brought his own laidback style with him. His first major project was Guy Paellert's *Rock Dreams*, a collection of surrealistic portraits of rock stars. It was a fine book but hardly the sort of thing the British publishing establishment approved of. Nevertheless, after a stunning promotional campaign (involving *Biba* and *The Sunday Times Magazine*) Mehta turned *Rock Dreams* into a bestseller. Later, both David Bowie and The Rolling Stones asked Paellert to design album covers for them.

Mehta's greatest success at Pan—and certainly what he seems most proud of—has been the launch of the upmarket Picador imprint which has now even surpassed the success of Palladin. Again, the idea was to produce a quality line that would not appeal to the massmarket but would find acceptance with the more serious reader; except that unlike Palladin, Picador does fiction as well.

Mehta's coups at Picador have been sensational. He picked Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years Of Solitude* and repackaged it in the outsize, elegantly designed Picador format. The new edition re-awakened interest in Marquez and two years ago, he finally won the Nobel Prize for Fiction. Then he spent £30,000 (a large sum by the standards of British publishing) for the rights to Alex Haley's *Roots*. At the time, there was no talk of the TV serial and no indication that millions of people would be interested in the saga of an American Negro's search for his ancestors. After the TV serial though, the book went on to become a major international bestseller.

So staggering were Mehta's successes that Penguin Books, till then the leading publishers of quality fiction, found themselves losing sales and authors to Picador. Eventually, Penguin, under Peter Meyer, decided to adopt a more downmarket strategy.

The massmarket Pan imprint has been as successful. Apart from Jackie Collins, there have been James Herriot's animal-and-doctor tales, Sidney Sheldon's million-selling potboilers

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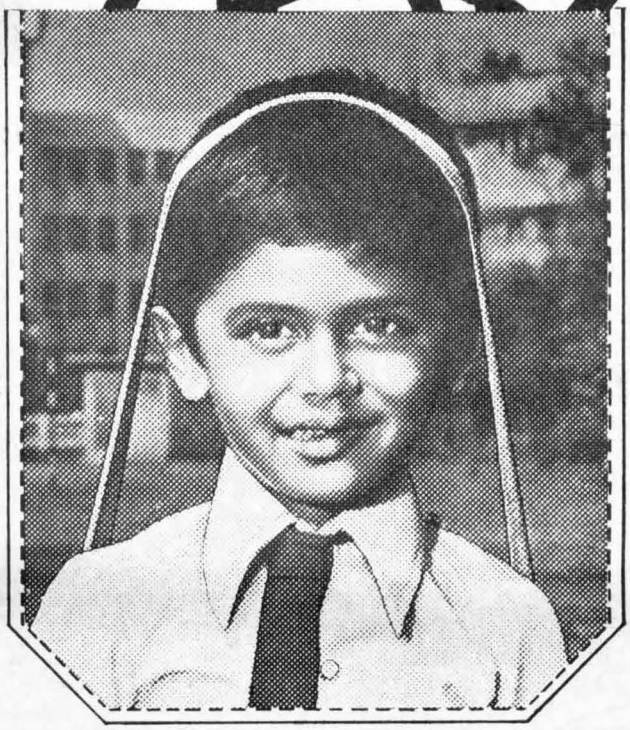

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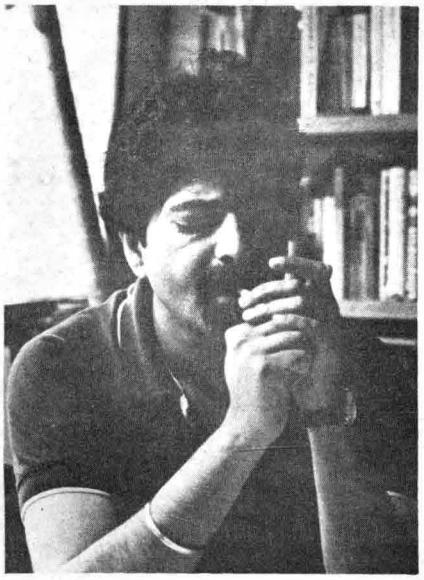


Of his personal style, it was said that if he was any more laidback, he'd fall over.

and George MacDonald Fraser's Flashman series. Moreover, Mehta has always looked for new talent. A year ago, famous yachtswoman Clare Francis came to him with a thriller called *Night Sky*. Ms Francis had never written before in her life but Mehta bought the book and paid out a sizeable advance. At the time, people thought he had erred. But he was confident: "There hasn't been a good woman writer of thrillers since Helen McInnes. Also, Clare was well-known. Her name meant something, even if it was in a different context. She is attractive and works very hard at promoting the book. It seemed to me that with the right kind of media exposure, the book could become a bestseller." Mehta's confidence was justified. *Night Sky* is selling phenomenally and is expected to be the UK's number one bestseller during the Christmas season.

He was in New York last year when an agent called him up and asked if he would see two people who wanted to write a book about the Beatles. "I thought that they were already in New York or in Long Island or in some place like that," he says. It turned out that they were in California but they took the first plane out to New York and submitted a proposal to him. One of them, Peter Brown, had been an insider in the Apple days and the other, Steve Gaines, was a professional writer. Despite the fact that the market was then flooded with Beatle books attempting to cash in on the Lennon assassination, Mehta sensed that this would be a significant book and commissioned it.

It appeared earlier this year as *The Love You Make–An Insider's Story Of The Beatles* and went on to make its home on the bestseller lists, outselling every other rock book.

"This is what makes the job so exciting," explains Mehta. "It is partly the fact that I'm dealing with books. But I find now that I'm actually beginning to enjoy the commerce as well!" He has several unusual projects lined up, among them biographies of Charlie Parker and Little Richard, Germaine Greer's new book on the family and Clive James' first novel.

Has the fact that he is so clearly Indian (as a *mona sardar*, he even wears a *kada*) made any difference in the very British world of publishers? Mehta says that it hasn't, that he's never come up against problems because of his ethnicity. It has perhaps helped that despite his *pucca* credentials (public school and Oxbridge) he hasn't fallen into the trap of being just another wog pretending that he's English. The slow, almost inaudible drawl, the Americanisms that pepper his speech and the deliberately informal mode of dress ensure that he is difficult to type or categorise.

India does feature in his plans. This winter he plans to register his own company and start a small publishing venture in India, handling five or six titles a year. His wife Gita is well-known here, partly because she is Biju Patnaik's daughter but mainly because of *Karma Cola*–her sharp, cynical assessment of the guru cult that has caused her tart, smart-ass style to be widely imitated by Indian new journalists. She is presently working on a novel about the maharajahs that should be ready next year.

Does Mehta think that he will end up settling in India? It is probably too early to say but there is no doubt that the Indian publishing scene will probably alter beyond recognition once he starts publishing his titles here. ♦

GRAHAM GREENE

The Other: Keeping Up With My Double

NEARLY 50 YEARS ago, when I bought Edward Thomas's *Collected Poems*, there was one poem called *The Other* which haunted me though I didn't know why. It was not one of his best poems. It told of a traveller who continually found along his road, at this inn or at that, a trace of one exactly like himself who had preceded him along the same route.

"I learnt his road, and, e'er they were
Sure I was I, left the dark wood
Behind, kestrel and woodpecker,
The inn and the sun, the happy mood
When first I tasted sunlight there.
I travelled fast, in hopes I should
Outrun that other, what to do
When caught, I planned not, I pursued
To prove the likeness, and if true
To watch until myself I knew."

The poem ends: "He goes: I follow: no release until he ceases. Then I also shall cease."

A quarter of a century after I first read the poem, I came myself on the Other's track, and few years pass now without signs of his passage: letters from strangers who remember me at a wedding I never attended or serving a mass I never served—once a telephone call from a woman in Rome, even photographs in a Geneva newspaper and a Jamaican. The Other calls himself Graham Greene, perhaps his name is Graham Greene—there's no copyright in names, though there are reasons to suppose in one of his appearances that he was a certain John Skinner, a notorious jailbreaker, or according to the Indian police someone with the improbable name of Meredith de Varg. He may be both—for there is no resemblance between the two blurred photographs I possess, both claiming to be me.

It was a little case of blackmail which brought the Other first to my attention. My friend Alexander Korda rang me up one afternoon in London. "Have you been in trouble?" he asked.

"Trouble?"

"The editor of a film magazine in Paris has telephoned me. He's very distressed because he's found that his employee has tried to blackmail you."

The Other calls himself Graham Greene —there's no copyright in names . . .

"But I haven't been in Paris and I haven't been blackmailed."

I remembered our conversation when I was next in Paris and my literary agent there said, apropos of nothing, "If anyone tried to blackmail you, you'd come to me, wouldn't you? You wouldn't pay up."

"Blackmail me about what?"

"Women's photographs—I don't know—there's a story going round. . ."

It was the year of 1955-1956. The Other was very active that year. Stray bits of his past gathered round me—they could so easily have been bits of my own past. The editor of *Mondanites* (*Revue de l'elite francaise*) wrote to me reminding me of our meeting at the Cannes Film Festival (which I had never attended) and praising my talent for tennis which I haven't played since I was a schoolboy. "*J'ai eu la joie de vous voir frequement sur les courts de tennis, car votre talent littéraire ne cede en rien a vos qualités sportives.*" A woman wrote to me from Montevideo: "You once took me to have coffee in a Belgian pastry shop on a corner of Oxford street (does it still exist?) and you introduced me to a girl from up North with whom you were very much in love. Did you marry her? You came to my wedding in November 1935 and I left for South America soon after." The Other certainly seemed to leave strong impressions behind, particularly on women.

IT WAS A woman's voice which spoke to me on the telephone at the Grand Hotel, Rome (I had gone to bed early after a long flight from Calcutta) "Hullo, Graham, this is Veronica."

"Oh yes, how are you?" Who the hell I wondered was Veronica?

"I rang up the George V in Paris and they said you had left for Rome. I know you always stay at the Grand"—which was true enough.

"Yes. I've just arrived. What are you doing?" I asked, to delay the conversation, hoping for a clue. I had forgotten the Other and thought it just possible that I had once known someone called Veronica.

"I am lying in bed and reading the *Odyssey* in the new Penguin translation."

"I'm in bed too. What about a drink tomorrow? I'm so sorry, but I'm fixed for meals," I added with caution.

Next evening I went with a friend and waited in the bar. He agreed to speak to her if she were unknown to me and not to my taste. A woman in her forties entered in a long evening dress, with the extended face of an upper class horse. I left her for my friend to deal with. He told me later that she was American and had met Graham Greene in Arabia.

It was that summer I think that the Other hit the headlines. I had been in Brighton for a few days and returning to London I found an enquiry from *Picture Post*. They had received a telegram, dated from Assam, asking for a hundred pounds because Graham Greene was in some kind of imbroglio with the Indian police as I had lost my

Graham Greene begins a regular column of non-fiction with this issue. These features first appeared in **Imprint** *in 1974.*

ILLUSTRATION BY FATIMA AHMED

Indian press stories percolated through—'Graham Greene convicted. Sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment'.

passport. The editor had sent someone to Albany, off Piccadilly, where I had an apartment, to enquire whether I was, in fact, in India. The porter replied with wise caution that he had not seen me for several days, so perhaps I was, and *Picture Post* telegraphed a hundred pounds to India. Then, of course, the news began to break. Indian press stories percolated through—'Graham Green convicted. Sentenced to Two Years RI (rigorous imprisonment)'—as well as the only authentic letter I have seen from the Other himself. With its quiet assumption that he was on a mission for *Picture Post* it must have been written to convince the police—he can never have expected it would convince *Picture Post*.

The Other wrote in a breezy Sapper style from Duklingia, Assam.

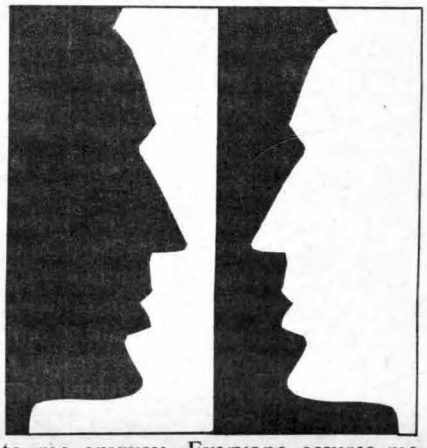
"Gentlemen,

Possibly by this time, swarms of flatfooted policemen, intelligence agents in false beards and other peculiar characters have been swarming over the building asking questions about me. Graham Greene has suddenly become news. A few days ago someone most unkindly pinched my bags, cash and passport. I accordingly as in duty bound telegraphed the information to UKREP, the High Commission in Calcutta, asking them to make arrangements for my passage to Calcutta. They, in turn, having nasty minds, asked the local police to check up, which was, under the circumstances, a most stupid thing to do. This is a disturbed area and finding they had in their midst an unidentifiable foreigner, they were delighted, classed me as an agent of a foreign power engaged in assisting and advising the hostile Nagas, and promptly locked me up. This, when I have recovered will make an excellent supplement to the article as yet unborn, on the Naga problem. Two local tea planters, with infinite kindness, came along to court this morning and bailed me out, otherwise I should have remained there for God-knows how long.

You have probably by this time received OIL and FLOOD. Father Christmas has gone up to Amritsar to snap the local temples and bearded Sikh gentlemen. He has missed the scoop of the century by failing to record for posterity—British correspondent behind bars. I don't intend to give him another opportunity!

I now, very desperately, need some money. Please forward to this address, forthwith (or sooner) a hundred or so. Make sure there are no snags as to exchange control, otherwise it might be possible to arrange something through Orient Longmans at Calcutta.

There doesn't seem to be much else. Jungle Reclamation will have to wait until I have taken a deep breath. The Naga problem is still a problem—



to me anyway. Everyone assures me that everything is now under control and that the bad boys are behaving themselves. I, being a born cynic, feel otherwise. It is extremely difficult to persuade the powers that be that I am simply a newsman after the truth. Much as I wish to write what promises to be the most fascinating article, the difficulties are stupendous. Perhaps after all, they do not wish the truth to be published."

I suggested to *Picture Post* that they might send me to interview the Other in his Assam prison, but I was deterred by the thought that it was the typhoon season and by a conversation I had on the telephone with an official at the High Commissioner's office in London. He warned me to give him advance notice of my leaving for Calcutta, otherwise I would be in danger of arrest on arrival as the Other had broken his bail. Not only had he broken his bail, but he had gone off with a typewriter, a wristwatch and some clothes of the tea-planters who had befriended him. An Indian friend wrote me further details: "It appears that he calls himself at times Graham Greene and at other times Graham Green—without the 'e'. He's supposed to be an Australian by birth, but this is only a conjecture (from his accent) for he has no identity papers with him. For a long time he has been moving about from one tea estate to another, living on charity, leading the life of a tramp and claiming to be a professional writer."

Rearrested, the Other disappeared for a time into an Indian prison, but even in these straits he had a woman to speak up for him, although she had not seen him for a dozen years. She wrote to me from Bournemouth asking me to help him. "Mr Graham Greene is a man of courage and is not indifferent to principles, and although he may have been in a forbidden place, due to his roving adventurous spirit, I do feel sure that the charge against him is without much foundation." Adventurous spirit indeed. 'The accused was wanted,' the *Statesman* of Calcutta reported, 'in a series of cases in Calcutta, Patna, Ranchi, Lucknow, Meerut, Poona, Bombay, Delhi and other places'. A lot for one man: perhaps he was both Skinner and Meredith de Varg.

FOR NEARLY TWO years I heard nothing more of the Other; he went out of my mind until one day I was booking a passage to New York in the BOAC office. "Are you staying only one night in New York?" the girl asked me with some surprise.

"No. I'm not sure how long. . ."

"But we have you booked next day on the return flight New York—London."

Could the other passenger be the Other returning from jail in India? One thing is certain that in December 1959 he had come back into circulation. My French agent wrote to me that month to tell me how an attractive young Frenchwoman had gone to apply for a job with an American businessman staying at the Hotel Prince de Galles.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BHATLEKAR

After lunch with Allende, a paper in Santiago announced that the President had been deceived by an imposter.

After being interviewed by him in the lobby and having failed to get the job because she didn't have English shorthand, she was stopped on the way out by another American who gave his name as Peters or something similar. He told her that he had overheard part of the conversation and understood she was looking for a job; he was on the lookout for a secretary for his friend and partner, the writer Graham Greene who was coming to Paris to work for two months before going on a trip of several months across the United States, where he would be renting a house here and there as he travelled around, a habit of his as he couldn't work in hotels. Would she like to be offered the post?

The girl was working part-time in a Paris bookshop and feeling that the job sounded too good to be true she called up my publisher, who put her on to my agent. In between she checked with the Prince de Galles and learnt that they had no one by the name of Peters staying there. My agent suggested it would be worth going to the appointment to try and lead the man on to volunteer a little more about himself and his partner, but the girl wouldn't go as she was convinced that Peters was a scout for a white slavery gang. He had said that if she had a nice friend who would like to come along as housekeeper for Graham Greene on his American tour it would be possible to arrange it as he was looking for someone to fill that post too.

It was the last big intrusion of the Other into my life—the rest have been only passing appearances: for example, a photograph in a Jamaican paper of 'Famed Novelist Graham Greene and Missus drink with the Scudders (centre) at Galleon Club.' Everyone is laughing, glass in hand; the Other with Pompidou eyebrows is very debonair in a white jacket, and Missus is an attractive woman. Neither correspond with a photograph in *La Tribune de Geneve* of Mr and Mrs Graham Greene at the airport of Cointrin—a man much older, a bit travel-worn and wearing an absurd little tweed hat, a smeared woman in a toque and dark glasses. 'Thick set, a pipe between his teeth, the British writer Graham Greene arrived yesterday afternoon (July 7, 1967) at Cointrin. Coming from Paris where he lives now, the author of *The Third Man* has begun his wandering holidays at Geneva'. Asked whether he was writing a new book, he said no, no he was taking a true holiday.

Was the lady with him Claudine, or was Claudine the more glamorous woman in Jamaica drinking with the Scudders? It was in 1970 that I first learned of Claudine in a letter addressed to her (as Mrs Graham Greene) from Capetown. "I called in at the club yesterday. . .By subtle steering I learned that you had forsaken the steamy parts of Africa and had married a really distinguished

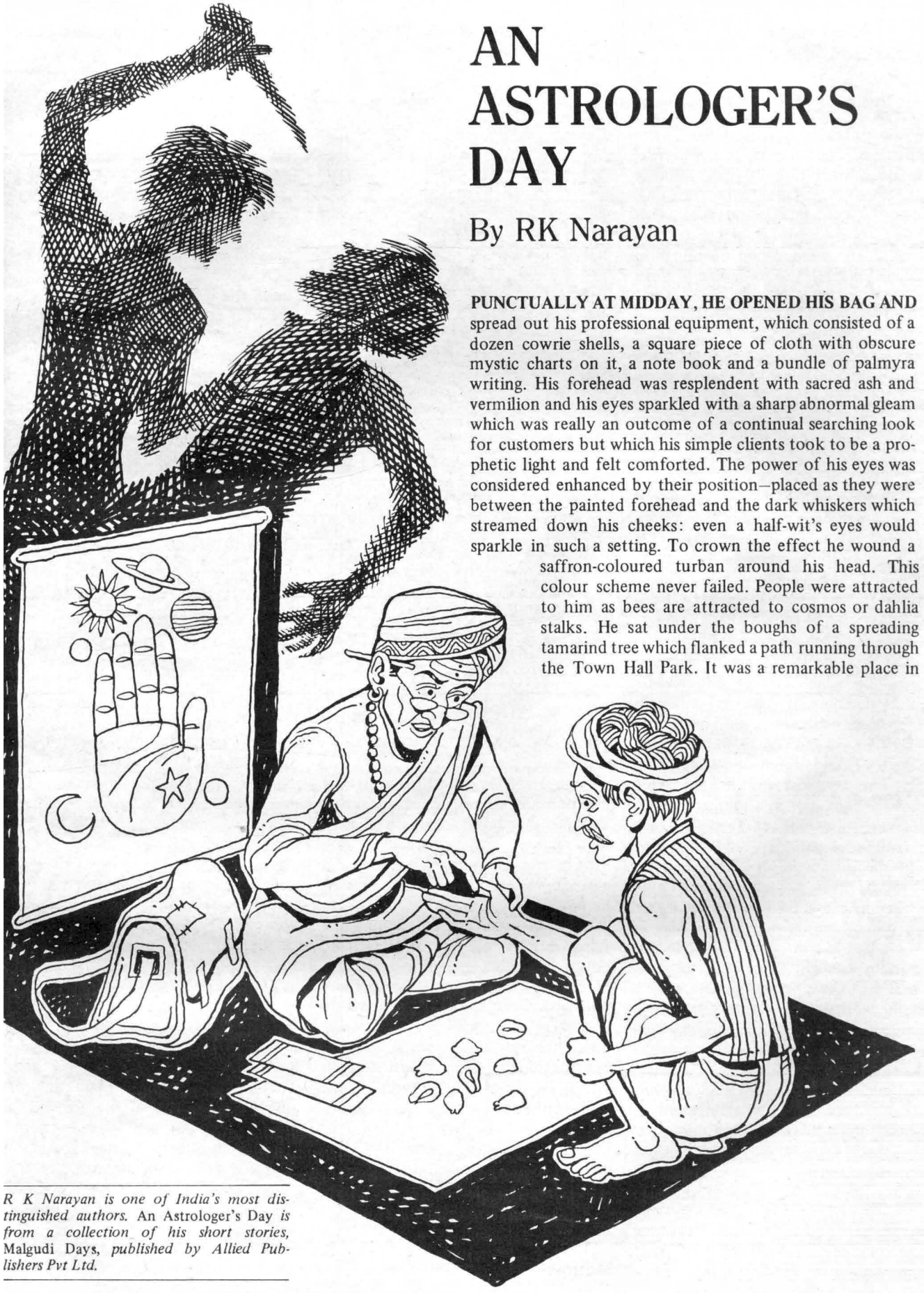
author. . . Being an author's wife will be right down your street and I am sure you must be of enormous assistance to your husband." Nearly 20 years had passed since the blackmailing in Paris: the Other seemed to be settling down.

"He goes: I follow: no release until he ceases. . . ."

Three years ago in Chile, after I had been entertained to lunch by President Allende, a right-wing paper in Santiago announced to its readers that the President had been deceived by an impostor. I found myself momentarily shaken by a metaphysical doubt. Had I been the impostor all the time? Was I the Other? Was I Skinner? Was it possible that I might even be Meredith de Varg? ♦

AN ASTROLOGER'S DAY

By RK Narayan



PUNCTUALLY AT MIDDAY, HE OPENED HIS BAG AND spread out his professional equipment, which consisted of a dozen cowrie shells, a square piece of cloth with obscure mystic charts on it, a note book and a bundle of palmyra writing. His forehead was resplendent with sacred ash and vermilion and his eyes sparkled with a sharp abnormal gleam which was really an outcome of a continual searching look for customers but which his simple clients took to be a prophetic light and felt comforted. The power of his eyes was considered enhanced by their position—placed as they were between the painted forehead and the dark whiskers which streamed down his cheeks: even a half-wit's eyes would sparkle in such a setting. To crown the effect he wound a saffron-coloured turban around his head. This colour scheme never failed. People were attracted to him as bees are attracted to cosmos or dahlia stalks. He sat under the boughs of a spreading tamarind tree which flanked a path running through the Town Hall Park. It was a remarkable place in

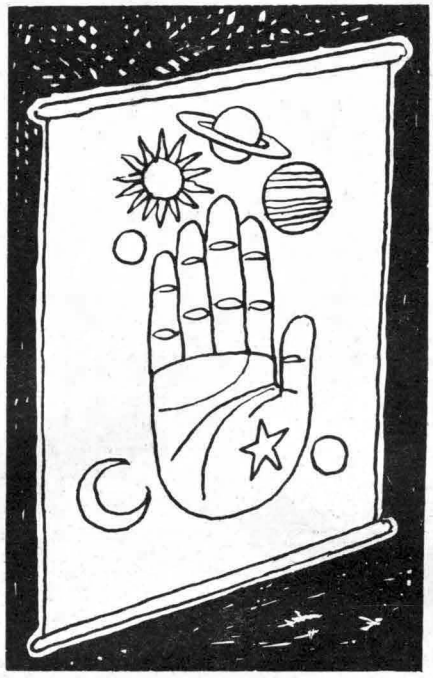
R K Narayan is one of India's most distinguished authors. An Astrologer's Day *is from a collection of his short stories,* Malgudi Days, *published by Allied Publishers Pvt Ltd.*

ILLUSTRATION BY PRADEEP SATHE

many ways: a surging crowd was always moving up and down this narrow road, morning till night. A variety of trades and occupations was represented all along its way: medicine-sellers, sellers of stolen hardware and junk, magicians and, above all, an auctioneer of cheap cloth, who created enough din all day to attract the whole town. Next to him in vociferousness came a vendor of fried groundnuts, who gave his ware a fancy name each day, calling it Bombay Ice-Cream one day and on the next Delhi Almond and on the third Raja's Delicacy and so on and so forth and people flocked to him. A considerable portion of this crowd dallied before the astrologer too. The astrologer transacted his business by the light of a flare which crackled and smoked up above the groundnut heap nearby. Half the enchantment of the place was due to the fact that it did not have the benefit of municipal lighting. The place was lit up by shop lights. One or two had hissing gaslights, some had naked flares stuck on poles, some were lit up by old cycle lamps and one or two, like the astrologer's, managed without lights of their own. It was a bewildering criss-cross of light rays and moving shadows. This suited the astrologer very well, for the simple reason that he had not in the least intended to be an astrologer when he began life; and he knew no more of what was going to happen to others than he knew what was going to happen to himself next minute. He was as much a stranger to the stars as were his innocent customers. Yet he said things which pleased and astonished everyone: that was more a matter of study, practise and shrewd guesswork. All the same, it was as much an honest man's labour as any other and he deserved the wages he carried home at the end of a day.

He had left his village without any previous thought or plan. If he had continued there he would have carried on the work of his forefathers—namely, tilling the land, living, marrying and ripening in his cornfield and ancestral home. But that was not to be. He had to leave home without telling anyone and he could not rest till he left it behind a couple of hundred miles. To a villager it is a great deal, as if an ocean flowed between.

He had a working analysis of mankind's troubles: marriage, money and the tangles of human ties. Long practise had sharpened his perception. Within five minutes he understood what was wrong. He charged three pies per question and never opened his mouth till the other had spoken for at least ten minutes, which provided him enough stuff for a dozen answers and advices. When he told the person before him, gazing at his palm, "In many ways you are not getting the fullest results for your efforts," nine out of ten were disposed to agree with him. Or he questioned: "Is there any woman in your family, maybe even a distant relative, who is not well-disposed towards you?" Or he gave an analysis of character: "Most of your troubles are due to your nature. How can you be otherwise with Saturn where he is? You have an impetuous nature and a rough exterior." This endeared him to their hearts immediately, for even the mildest of us loves to think that he has a forbidding exterior.



He was as much a stranger to the stars as his innocent customers. Yet he said things that pleased everyone.

The nuts-vendor blew out his flare and rose to go home. This was a signal for the astrologer to bundle up too, since it left him in darkness except for a little shaft of green light which strayed in from somewhere and touched the ground before him. He picked up his cowrie shells and paraphernalia and was putting them back into his bag when the green shaft of light was blotted out; he looked up and saw a man standing before him. He sensed a possible client and said: "You look so careworn. It will do you good to sit down for a while and chat with me." The other grumbled some vague reply. The astrologer pressed his invitation; whereupon the other thrust his palm under his nose, saying: "You call yourself an astrologer?" The astrologer felt challenged and said, tilting the other's palm towards the green shaft of light: "Yours is a nature . . ." "Oh, stop that," the other said. "Tell me something worthwhile. . . ."

Our friend felt piqued. "I charge only three pies per question, and what you get ought to be good enough for your money. . . ." At this the other withdrew his arm, took out an anna and flung it out to him, saying, "I have some questions to ask. If I prove you are bluffing, you must return that anna to me with interest."

"If you find my answers satisfactory, will you give me five rupees?"

"No."

"Or will you give me eight annas?"

"All right, provided you give me twice as much if you are wrong," said the stranger. This pact was accepted after a little further argument. The astrologer sent up a prayer to heaven as the other lit a cheroot. The astrologer caught a glimpse of his face by the matchlight. There was a pause as cars hooted on the road, *jutka* drivers swore at their horses and the babble of the crowd agitated the semi-darkness of the park. The other sat down, sucking his cheroot, puffing out, sat there ruthlessly. The astrologer felt very uncomfortable. "Here, take your anna back. I am not used to such challenges. It is late for me today. . . ." He made preparations to bundle up. The other held his wrist and said, "You can't get out of it now. You dragged me in while I was passing." The astrologer shivered in his grip; and his voice shook and became faint. "Leave me today. I will speak to you tomorrow." The other thrust his palm in his face and said, "Challenge is challenge. Go on." The astrologer proceeded with his throat drying up. "There is a

woman . . ."

"Stop," said the other. "I don't want all that. Shall I succeed in my present search or not? Answer this and go. Otherwise I will not let you go till you disgorge all your coins." The astrologer muttered a few incantations and replied, "All right. I will speak. But will you give me a rupee if what I say is convincing? Otherwise I will not open my mouth, and you may do what you like." After a good deal of haggling the other agreed. The astrologer said, "You were left for dead. Am I right?"

"Ah, tell me more."

"A knife has passed through you once?" said the astrologer.

"Good fellow!" He bared his chest to show the scar. "What else?"

"And then you were pushed into a well nearby in the field. You were left for dead."

"I should have been dead if some passer-by had not chanced to peep into the well," exclaimed the other, overwhelmed by enthusiasm. "When shall I get at him?" he asked, clenching his fist.

"In the next world," answered the astrologer. "He died four months ago in a far-off town. You will never see any more of him." The other groaned on hearing it. The astrologer proceeded.

"Guru Nayak—"

"You know my name!" the other said, taken aback.

"As I know all other things. Guru Nayak, listen carefully to what I have to say. Your village is two days journey due north of this town. Take the next train and be gone. I see once again great danger to your life if you go from home." He took out a pinch of sacred ash and held it out to him. "Rub it on your forehead and go home. Never travel southward again, and you will live to be a hundred."

"Why should I leave home again?" the other said reflectively. "I was only going away now and then to look for him and to choke out his life if I met him." He shook his head regretfully. "He has escaped my hands. I hope at least he died as he deserved." "Yes," said the astrologer. "He was crushed under a lorry." The other looked gratified to hear it.

The place was deserted by the time the astrologer picked up his articles and put them into his bag. The green shaft was also gone, leaving the place in darkness and silence. The stranger had gone off into the night, after giving the astrologer a handful of coins.

"I thought I had the blood of a man on my hands all these years. But he is alive. . ."

It was nearly midnight when the astrologer reached home. His wife was waiting for him at the door and demanded an explanation. He flung the coins at her and said, "Count them. One man gave all that."

"Twelve and a half annas," she said, counting. She was overjoyed.

"I can buy some jaggery and coconut tomorrow. The child has been asking for sweets for so many days now. I will prepare some nice stuff for her."

"The swine has cheated me! He promised me a rupee," said the astrologer. She looked up at him. "You look worried. What is wrong?"

"Nothing."

After dinner, sitting on the *pyol,* he told her, "Do you know a great load is gone from me today? I thought I had the blood of a man on my hands all these years. That was the reason why I ran away from home, settled here and married you. He is alive."

She gasped. "You tried to kill!"

"Yes, in our village, when I was a silly youngster. We drank, gambled and quarrelled badly one day—why think of it now? Time to sleep," he said, yawning, and stretched himself on the *pyol.* ♦

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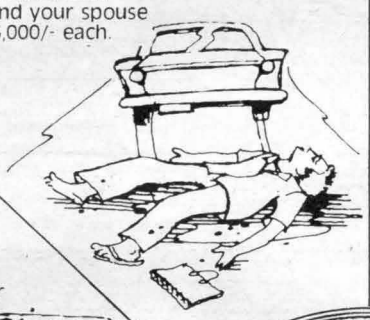

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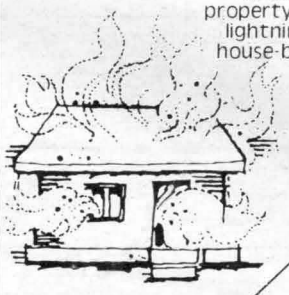

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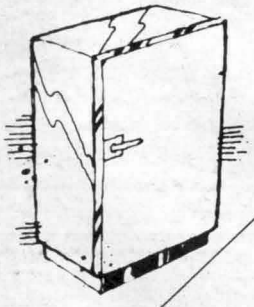

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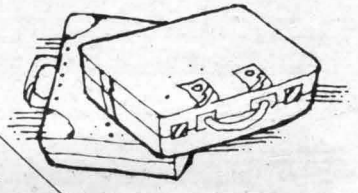

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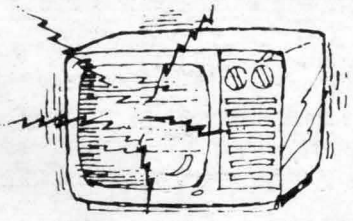

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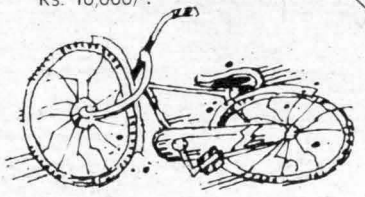

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Guest Column/by Vijay Tendulkar

AN INDIAN PLAYWRIGHT IN NEW YORK

AIN'T SUPPOSED TO Die A Natural Death. One of those productions of the Negro Stage, now a hit on Broadway. I'm eager to find out what exactly the Negro Stage (the Black Theatre) is—after all, there are blacks on, behind and in front of the stage in other American plays—and so I buy a ticket. A balcony seat, since the amount I had budgeted for stage shows is running out. In the lobby, in the auditorium, Negroes upon Negroes. Occasionally tawny-red or just fair faces. The latter, also Negroes in a sense, but one of the parents must have been white. So the difference in the colour of the skin and quite often of the eyes. But they make it a point to wear their hair like Negroes, to dress like them. Perhaps some of them are so genuinely sorry they're not completely black, that their speech and mannerisms tend to be a trifle more exaggerated than those of the blacks. Negro girls, like Negro boys—free and masculine. And prone to speak volubly in rough voices, to laugh all the while full-throatedly and to roam about with groups of boys quite uninhibitedly. Some of those reddish fair faces are here along with black faces. Long hair. Many of them sport moustaches, beards and colourful, patched-up garments. At rare intervals a cloth ribbon tied horizontally across the forehead. A sprinkling of primly suited American whites, alone or in twos. Engrossed in their own thoughts or sense of self-importance, which is what perhaps makes them seem in the midst of that black multitude either surly or forlorn. The auditorium, reeking as much of perfume as of cigarettes and cigar smoke and full of the rough clamour of that same full-throated Negro speech. You listen to those sounds, bringing home to you the truth that you've come to an auditorium, which is different from the usual one. Actually it's a visit to the Black Theatre, but you seem to have landed into the very hive of New York's black world.

The drop-curtain has already been raised. On the American stage (both professional and non-professional) there's no drop as such and if it's there, they hardly ever bring it down. On the stage there stands an exact replica of a squalid Negro quarter. Old wooden houses with their dilapidated storeys, rooms, galleries and stairs. A filthy alley below. Old bits of furniture lying about. And no sign of human beings. Unlighted and lifeless. Just a 'set'. And the play begins.

The American national anthem right at the beginning. What should come as the finale is heard at the start. And for no reason at all. This unexpected circumstance confounds those white faces; they rise in their seats in an orderly way. The black faces snigger and rail at them. Embarrassed, confused and not knowing what they ought to do, they drop into their seats again. The national anthem comes to a close. The lights illuminate different areas of the set. This play of shade and light lends a touch of authenticity to that flimsy structure. Human beings (naturally black) begin to stir and talk. . . .and in a matter of minutes they fill it with life. The road, the galleries, the stairs, those homes, all break out into speech, start humming with sounds.

Those stirrings of life on the stage could form part of any day in that squalid Negro locality. Impoverished blacks, leading a desperate hand-to-mouth existence. Wholly familiar with life's laws, each is, in his own way, clever and cautious, wary and resourceful, calculating and shrewd. You sense in each of them a zest for life. Each has his work to do, his own joys and sorrows, his own distinct portion of life which mingles in passing with that of others, grazes against it, and yet, remains separate and independent. Out of these moving patterns there now emerges and blooms forth the daily life of the black quarter.

Since one has to eat, everything is permissible. No one is in a mood to judge the other. In the rat race each one runs singly and gasps alone. Here are no signs of any mellow philosophising about poverty or want. No whining or complaints. A tough and dauntless spirit, (perhaps ingrained in them by life itself right from the time of their birth) enabling them to bare their chest and face the moment. One is sick and diseased; another is hefty. One is a strapping youth; the other is old and decrepit. One, a whore; another, a sweeper in the streets. A third lives by stealing. No profession as such. But

Vijay Tendulkar is one of India's leading playwrights. His plays include Sakharam Binder *and* Kamala *amongst others. He also writes scripts for films.*

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY: GENTLEMAN MAGAZINE

"His body is consumed by bullets. He dies like a rat or a mongoose. The silence of the graveyard."

you pour drink of any kind into the belly, and your hunger pangs tend to ease.

Negro speech is basically English, but still quite hard to grasp. But their life is easy enough to understand. The language spoken by famished, dust-stained and rugged lives in any slum on the face of this earth is exactly the same. The details differ; the core is identical. At least, that wretched life shown on the stage is not unintelligible.

Prose dialogue leading up to rhythmic passages. Someone starts to sing. All of which has a force of its own and is, at times, even strident in its own way. The spectators keep time. Occasionally they all join in. Black skins responding from their inmost being to blacks. Rising in a tremor to echo their call. If the call is in music, there's no stopping them. Innumerable voices pick up the strain. Those who remain quiet do not 'sh. . . .sh' them. For such is the custom here. This play is as much a prose discourse of the characters on the stage as a musical dialogue between the black actors and the blacks in the auditorium.

This 'life-song' is throughout accompanied by a savage pain. The sounds, the words betray an intolerable hurt, which breaks out into a howl or a scuffle. High-pitched, reminding you of famished, wounded animals. A few tender notes, bringing in their train a harsh din, and losing themselves in it.

You are aware, and yet not aware that those before you are Negroes. Their words are not that easy to grasp but they reach out to you and touch you.

Nothing much happens in the first part of the play. We watch the usual disasters, tensions, worries that are the lot of those ordinary people living in the quarter. We have a glimpse of their feelings and expectations. The monotony of this existence is broken by intermittent patches of rhythm and occasional outbursts of vigorous music and song. What binds the spectators to the stage are the regulated motions of every single entity in that large Negro quarter. The movements of a character, emerging in a sharp, disciplined and compact manner out of the details of that vast locality. The scenes on the stage manage to extract, even out of conflicting gestures, a sort of balance. A 'visual' symphony.

The first part draws to an end. Instead of the curtain coming down, the lights on the stage fade out. The characters vanish into nothingness. Once again a dry, lifeless 'scene'. A mere skeleton of a throbbing, living reality. Demanding nothing, suggesting nothing. Frozen.

Someone appears on the stage. Pink and fair. A white American. Silently he shifts the props about. It jars on you—the sight of that tranquil white astir in the life of the blacks. He seems like a lump of salt. Intolerable. Nobody in the auditorium even registers his presence. They're all celebrating the intermission. Once the light on the stage fades, it is rendered mute. It's as though a curtain has come down on it and no one wants to penetrate beyond that invisible screen. For the time being the play is on in the auditorium and in the bar, in the lobby. Not on the boards of the stage.

The pace increases in the second part of the play. The strands in the life of the main characters twist themselves to their logical end. A fine young Negro becomes the quarry. There's a murder and he's the suspect. He hides to save himself from the police who come and comb the whole district. As a result, the lives of the others move in their own independent fashion towards tragedy or towards nothingness. Total confusion. The police lie in ambush at different points. The Negro boy dashes out into the street, fleeing for dear life like a doe. His body is consumed by bullets. He dies like a rat or a mongoose. The silence of the graveyard. The young lifeless body, lying dead. A body that 'Ain't supposed to die a natural death'.

And while all this is taking place, the climax of the 'visual' symphony on the stage mingles with the climax of the play. Those different characters—in fact, those fragmented bits of various lives—are woven together into a patterned, yet diffuse whole, which in no way takes away from the essential atmosphere of the play. The weaving is loose, yet that whole Negro quarter is so arranged, so set in motion, that gradually it is unified round the invisible point which is the killing of the young Negro. The gaze of the spectator moves of its own accord to that point. Those swift and muffled sounds from the guns send a tremor down the spine at the moment of the killing. The convulsed young body. That terrifying and solemn music. Death.The silence of the graveyard. A frozen stage. The sprawling, lifeless body of the Negro youth.

The effects which a director manages to achieve on the screen through excellent editing or close-ups—which belong to the film medium alone—are

ILLUSTRATION BY FATIMA AHMED

achieved by the director of the play through the imaginative control which he wields over the movements of his characters. He succeeds in doing so in that large auditorium on a stage, cluttered with that somewhat drab setting of a huge Negro quarter. It stuns you—this! From my distant seat in the balcony I get a close-up of that boy, convulsed in the throes of death, writhing with pain. It seems so near to me.

In actual fact, this is where the play really ends, and it is an extraordinarily effective end. The title *Ain't Supposed To Die A Natural Death* is proved to be literally true. And what remains in a play after such an extraordinarily effective, logical and meaningful end?

But this play of the Negro Stage does not end at this climactic moment. It goes on. Undeterred by the presence of the police, a miserable old hag limps towards the boy's dead body. And with the corpse for testimony, she harangues the spectators in an angry and vehement strain. The speech is replete with curses and oaths. She asks the living world: What right have you to stay alive in peace and comfort? This prose vehemence takes on a rhythmic pace. Instruments begin to accompany the speech, which now soars to a strident level and beyond. It stays on a rhythmic pitch. At long last, it too, comes to an end. The play is over. The lights on the stage do not fade. All those Negro actors and actresses (including that dead Negro youth) stand in a row on the stage. Their faces are wreathed in smiles; their arms are linked. They acknowledge the applause of the audience. (The dead boy ought not to have risen and stood there smiling, right in front of us—this is what the spectator in me thinks.) The director stands surrounded by his cast, bowing to us. The show is over.

Nothing grates on you so much as a play that goes on after it's ended. I go backstage, urged by an irresistable impulse to speak to someone.

I meet the director. Before I can say anything, he asks me: What did you think of the play?

A prompt reply from me: Everything else was very effective. The play had a very powerful ending, when your boy died. What was the point of that old woman's vehement and boring rhetoric at the end? It bothered me.

Without the slightest trace of astonishment he turns to me calmly: You say you found it boring?

My reply is: Yes, I did.

And he goes on to say: Nothing to worry about in that, since the play is not for you.

The sentence is like a slap in the face. He continues: The play is for our Negro audiences. That last sermon is meant for them. We retain it because we think they need it in their present situation. Can't be helped if the rest find it boring.

His black face shows no sign of regret.

What can I say to that? I thank him and leave. I know what he means. What the likes of me think is of no consequence to the Negro Stage. Its concern is its Negro audiences. And yet there's that gnawing sensation in the mind.

That last sermon so inartistic, so crude, so word-ridden. . . .The play could do without it. Perhaps, it could do with it. ♦

(Translated from the Marathi by Kumud Mehta)

Courtesy: The National Centre for the Performing Arts, Bombay.

Book Covers: Where Has All The Imagination Gone?

By Ketaki Sheth

IN HIS POEM titled *Travelling in a Cage* from a collection of poems by the same name, Dilip Chitre writes:

> ". . .I have no country no
> continent to wear
> Travelling without legs or
> language
> Exposed and caged by my own
> condition
> What doors can I open in this fear
> What windows look out
> And will I ever find my own face
> out there. . ."

His work has been aptly illustrated by one striking symbolic image on the cover: a walking shoe trapped in a giant birdcage, the contours of the cage like the profile of a man's face. (Clearing House, 1980, Rs 20, illustrated by Arun Kolatkar.)

Unfortunately, arresting book covers like Kolatkar's are few and far apart. Fewer still can claim even an ounce of imagination. Most publishers confess that minimum time, thought and money has been attributed to this aspect of book production although all are agreeable that a good cover is an important means of communicating the subject to the potential customer and that the design must reflect the basic concept of the book. Booksellers too admit that an attractive book face can hold an enviable position in the display stands and that more often than not it is a pointer for the casual customer or book browser. Says TN Shanbhag, proprietor of Bombay's Strand Book Stall who's been in the trade 34 years: "Book covers make all the difference between sale and non-sale." Authors too are unhappy with the overall presentation of a manuscript over which they have spent much time, thought and creative energy. And artists are often not to blame. Laments Pradeep Sathe, ex-art director of India Book House (IBH) and illustrator of the fabled *Tinkle* children's comic fortnightly (sales : 1,25,000 in four languages) who left IBH owing to differences with the publishing house: "I found it difficult to express why I did what I did. The publishers thought I was too unconventional. There must be someone to understand my language."

Covering up for lack of creativity?

While established authors and bestsellers do not necessarily rely on arresting covers as a sales tack (Rushdie's *Shame* published recently by Rupa/Picador has sold 600 copies in one Bombay bookstore alone in the period of six weeks) there are lesser-known talents whose book sales could be triggered off by an appealing book face. In fact, publishers are quick to cash in on big names and thriller manuscripts and rarely give the final finish to the book–its cover– much thought. *Shame*, *Little Drummer Girl* (Rupa, 1983, Rs 15) and *Pakistan: The Gathering Storm* (Vikas, 1983, Rs 60) are classic examples of quickie covers with slapdash colour combinations, unimaginative typefaces and zero originality. Here, publishers have used the fact that Rushdie will sell regardless; Bhutto's thesis with its controversy will provoke and Le Carré's classic at such a cheap price is bound to be a money-spinner.

A cursory glance at any of the major city bookshops will reveal an assortment of international bestsellers, travel glossies, cook books and books on health fads prominently displayed. More often than not, foreign titles heavily outweigh their Indian counterparts–the mix is generally 70 per cent foreign and 30 per cent Indian in leading bookstores. Indian publications (particularly paperback titles) are often tucked away in musty corners of shops and have to be asked for when one is looking for them. "Would you honestly want us to display a book like this?" asks a manager of a prominent bookshop pointing to a paperback biography of Nehru shabbily produced with a washed-out cover reminiscent of street-side postcards. "People would think they've walked into a second-hand

Ketaki Sheth is on the staff of **Imprint.** *Her last feature,* Hard Times At Bombay High, *appeared in the November issue.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY AYESHA SONI

bookshop."

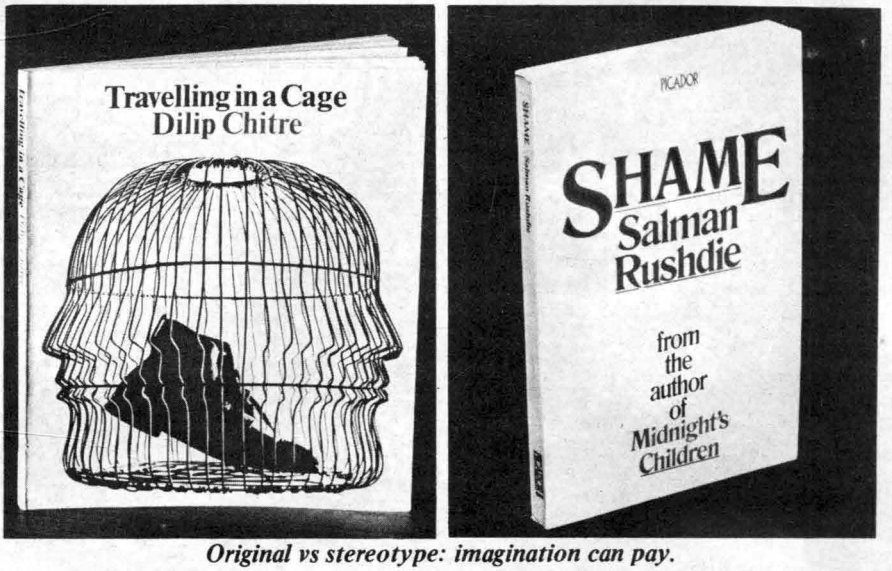
Ironically, even magazines and periodicals, whose life varies from one week to three months (depending on the frequency of their publication) spend more thought and money on their covers than do book publishers. There have been instances where magazines sport radically revamped layouts and covers and some like *India Today* even have a design consultant on their staff. The same cannot be said for the majority of publishing houses.

Most illustrators find that there is much more freedom in illustrating a magazine cover and that, financially and creatively, the exercise is more rewarding than doing book covers. Some established illustrators like Mario Miranda, RK Laxman and Manjula Padmanabhan can fetch anything upto Rs 1500 for a magazine cover. Book publishers rarely pay beyond the Rs 250-500 bracket. Says Raymond Sequeira, art director with RK Swamy Advertising Associates, who has designed several covers for art books brought out by the Taraporevala publishing house and gets paid an average of Rs 350 per book cover: "In designing book covers you are restricted to two or three flat colours. Also you are often limited to using a transparency from the book. In magazines you can be more imaginative." (Sequeira designed the January 1983 cover of *Gentleman* magazine for which he got Rs 600.)

The general practice is that authors get royalties on the sales of books but few cover artists even get a written credit leave alone royalty. Twenty-five-year-old artist Poonam Desai, who did a water-colour cover illustration for the Oxford University Press publication, *Trees*, got paid Rs 500 for the artwork *and* a promise of a two-and-a-half per cent royalty on the sales. But such cases are rare.

There are many reasons that can be attributed towards the although-improving-but-still-dull book faces in India. First, the market is geared towards school, university and technical subjects leaving little room for general fiction and little scope for aesthetics. Says Ananda Jaisingh of Jaisingh and Mehta Publishers Pvt Ltd (Asia Publishing House) which come out with 15 to 20 titles each year mainly on technical subjects: "It's a sick market restricted to cheap textbooks. So with technical matter what scope is there for an imaginative cover? It's just the bare essentials." Even Allied Publishers who publish novelists like Anita Desai and RK Narayan admit that little thought and money goes into actually designing covers. Moreover, it's the *New Radiant Reader* and the *Primer* (sales: 1,00,000 and 3,00,000 respectively) that bring in 'the bread and butter'.

Secondly, most publishing houses do not have an in-house artist whose job it is to specifically design original covers. In-house art departments mainly attend to routine matters like selection of typefaces and cut and paste jobs while certain art jobs are given out to free lance artists. "Good artists are difficult to find," says PC Manaktala, publisher, IBH. "They all go to advertising agencies. Moreover, some of the professional artists with big names are not open to suggestion. Sometimes an artist's brainwave may be a receding wave. This affects our sales."



Original vs stereotype: imagination can pay.

Thirdly, the economics of book production in India barely allow for original art works, excellent paper, a good reproduction of a transparency or the use of more than two colours on a cover. The selling price of a book is generally two-and-a-half to three times the cost of its production. On an average, a book priced at Rs 100 which would have cost the publisher Rs 40 to produce would spend three rupees on its cover. This would include cost of paper, typeface, art work and lamination. In some of the cheaper paperbacks such as the Jaico books which sell at ten rupees, the cost on cover design and reproduction would be even more negligible.

But despite these constraints, there are book covers which have a distinctive appeal of their own. Publishers are growing more aware of packaging their product. Says Manaktala of IBH: "The trend is gradually changing. Like other products that are beautifully packed and presented, books too must be presented well. Design has come to be regarded as an additional merit."

Design apart, some low-priced paperbacks have come out with original covers. Orient Longman's *Striker/Stopper* (Rs 7.50, pp 200) by Calcutta-based writer Moti Nandi on the life of a football player is an example of a clever and original cover within the constraints of a tight budget. A large football fills the frame of the cover with an inset of silhouetted players—all done in two colours! So also, Seagull Books, a Calcutta-based publisher has come out with five imaginative covers for their series on film and playscripts. Mrinal Sen's *In Search Of Famine* (Calcutta, 1983, Rs 35) has a gripping cover of a still from the film well-reproduced again, in just two colours.

Originality can pay. There have been instances when re-designing the cover has had a multiplier sales effect. Explains Kiran Tandon now with Jaisingh and Mehta and formerly with Macmillans: "The Tagore book covers were originally very dull and lacked lustre. Macmillans then decided to produce each Tagore title in the series with pastel coloured covers, each with semi-abstract illustrations. They were a total sell-out." In fact, Tandon finds conceptualising the cover design before briefing an artist, "the most fun part of book production. To get the cover to symbolise the content is a challenge." ♦

Bejan Daruwalla's Predictions

ARIES: March 21 to April 20: December is the month for journeys, ties, contacts, contracts and research. You will be forging ahead full steam. The last week is not for relaxation, though the New Year will be almost upon you, then. In personal relationships, a sea-change or at least a shift. Inspired moves and publicity boosts, make you happy with yourself. Lucky dates: 4, 5, 15, 28-31.

TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: Venus-Pluto in your sign indicates joint finance, loans, funds, and trust money (if facing retirement) religious rites, insurance. Health is suspect but you should go through without any major hazard. Journeys are possible on and after the 4th. Taxes will have to be paid. Legacy, windfall, a fatter pay packet are the other distinct possibilities awaiting Taureans. You will have time to relax and enjoy youself.

GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: The sun in your 7th angle means overseas connections and strong alliances. Journeys with a stop-over are certain, and these should give you a different perspective on things and events. Get set to take the world by storm. You will socialise with elan and rare grace. This is the time to push yourself in the limelight. The last nine days find you making plans for the next three years.

CANCER: June 22 to July 22: A month of pleasure and profit. The planets assure you of entertainment, happy rewards, travel and a change of scene. Your sources of income should multiply. A job-hop, a promotion is on its way. Explore its possibilities fully before committing yourself. Your decision will have a pretty long-range impact. Also, the last ten days find you exceptionally busy over a new project.

LEO: July 23 August 23: This is a good time for matters and affairs to do with children, sports, romance, entertainment, drama, films, writing and teaching. The superb positioning of Mars-Uranus suggests journeys and exceptionally strong link-ups and partnerships, both on the personal and professional levels. A marriage or engagement is very possible. For many Leons there will be birth of children and good luck through grandchildren.

VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: The stars emphasise home, property, renovation, decoration, installation of machinery and a transfer. Parents and in-laws will try to help, though you might take it as interference. Don't. The last ten days are particularly significant for romance. Lost things can be traced now. Elderly folks find quiet satisfaction. Buying and selling is in your destiny.

LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: The new moon in your third sector means feverish communication and happy correspondence. You will see more of your neighbours. If planning to go abroad, a pleasant welcome awaits you there. Important legal deeds and documents will be signed. Those interested in research, education, export-import, publicity, news coverage and philosophy, will do splendidly.

SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22: You will be in the money, make headway in your profession and fan out to people in a big way. Venus in your sign on the 7th indicates buying and selling. A major financial deal should come through. A family get-together is foretold. If there has been bad blood, a chance to resolve differences. The last ten days are for charting a blue-print for the next seven years.

SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21: Jupiter in your own sign gives you the courage and the luck to push ahead and pulverise your rivals. Financially, an upsurge, especially in the last ten days. Personal affairs will be unusually important, and a wish-fulfillment could be yours. Writers, teachers, salesmen, lawyers, astrologers, cine stars, film producers and directors will be in the news.

CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: Secret deals, furious moves, low energy levels and overvaulting ambition, are a strange mix. But that's how it will be in December for Capricornians. The Mercury-Saturn juxtaposition means collaborations, visits to hospitals, a foreign slant to affairs. On and after the 22nd you will in a burst of renewed confidence, take the opposition by storm.

AQUARIUS: January 27 to February 18: Start cracking and targets will be achieved: Friends and well-wishers will be willing to help you out. Take their counsel. You will socialise, circulate, join clubs and select groups, attend conferences and meetings, all with rare aplomb. The last nine days will be noteworthy for expenses, and perhaps poor health. Also journeys and ties appear certain. A good month for writers, lawyers and artists.

PISCES: February 19 to March 20: Status and prestige-wise, you move an inch or two up the ladder. Also, more power to your elbow, which means added responsibilities. As 1984 is a good year for you, the events will cast their shadow now. You should be ready by the month's close for a change in attitude and behaviour pattern. Laurels, honours and plaudits await you. A month of opportunity. ♦

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