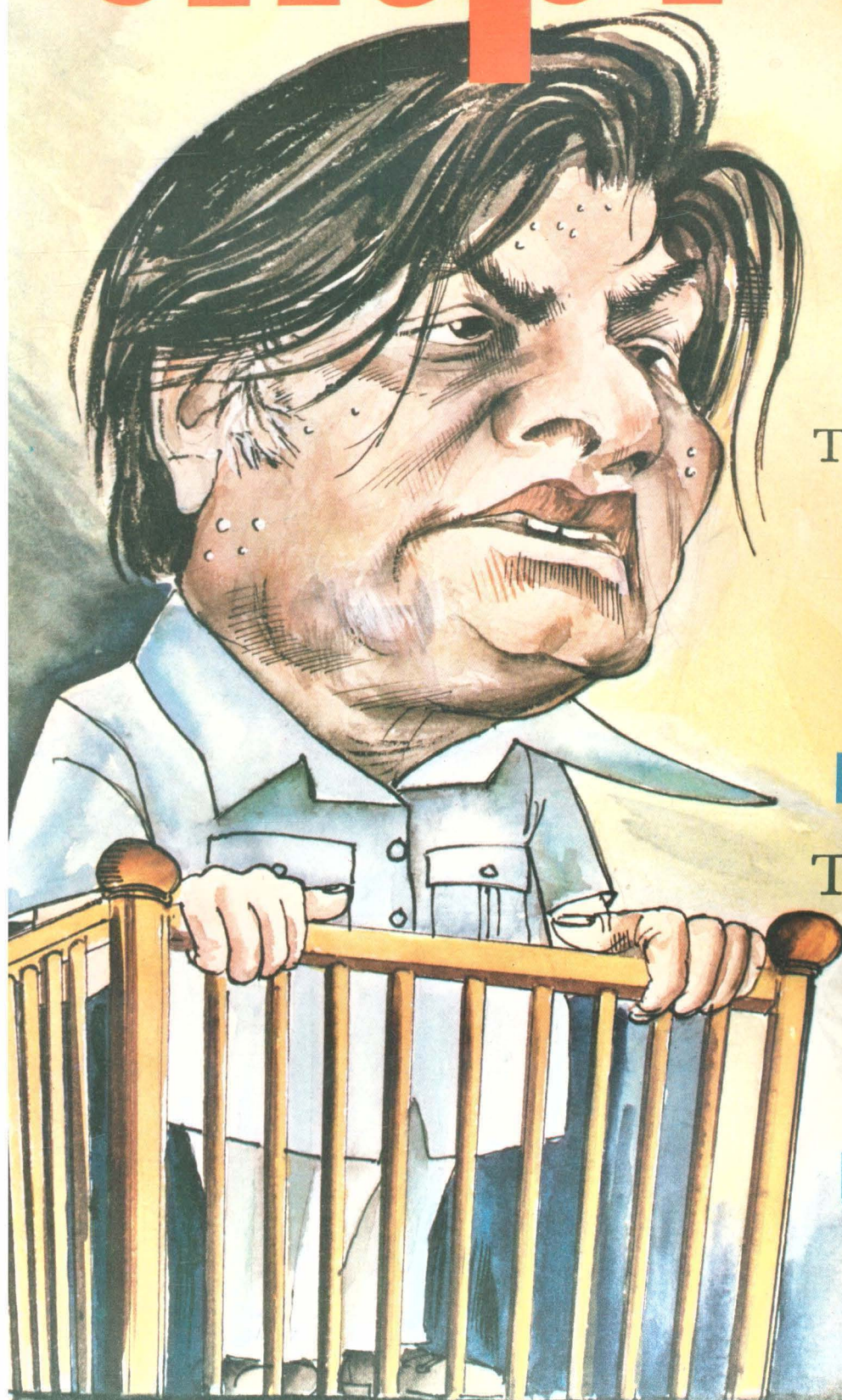


Arun Shourie On Babu Arun Gandhi On The Gandhi Babu

● Dhiren Bhagat On Arun Shourie ●

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JULY 1983 ● Rs 4



The Case Against Antulay

The Secret Documents
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MV Kamath Inside Story His Weekly

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CABLES: IMPRINTMAG in each city
For editorial, circulation and accounts
correspondence:

IMPRINT
Business Press Private Limited
Surya Mahal, 5 Burjorji Bharucha Marg
Bombay 400 023
Tel: 272018/270310

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ON THE MARQUEE

THE ALLEGATION, in a book just published in America, against Mr Morarji Desai, the former Prime Minister of India, that he was a paid CIA agent while a senior member, and the Deputy Prime Minister of the central government, 15 years ago, is the first and most grievous allegation of treason against a politician in India since Independence.

Mr Seymour H Hersh, the American reporter, in whose book *The Price of Power: Kissinger in Nixon White House* the CIA agent-allegation is made is known in America for his incredible scoops. His revelation of the My Lai massacre in the Vietnam war was disbelieved at the time but later almost changed the American perception of their war in Vietnam. Mr Hersh has thousands of influential admirers in the communication media, and the journalists around the world, as well as contemporary historians, are bound to refer to and quote from his book in future. The book will also be read in the chancellories of the world, not because it refers to Mr Desai, whose mention is only incidental in a short chapter on the India-Pakistan war of 1971, but because the book deals with the foreign policies of Henry Kissinger during the later years of the Nixon Presidency, and it has been anxiously awaited almost as a sequel to Kissinger's own account of his years as the National Security Advisor and later, as the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

Mr Morarji Desai, in over 50 years of service for India in capacities ranging from an Assistant Collector to Prime Minister of India, has earned a durable reputation as an ascetic Gandhian, an upright man, an able, if stubborn administrator. The friends he has made over the years are few; the detractors many. His obstinate persistence with the impracticable policy of Prohibition from 1947 is directly responsible for petty police corruption, bribery, and contempt for law which is now so widespread. His refusal to send his son Kanti out of the Prime Minister's house in 1977-78 despite all-round pressure and pleading was in no mean way responsible for the collapse of the Janata administration. All through his life, he has almost deliberately shed friends.

In a political area which is totally grey, Mr Desai is considered personally clean, and has never been accused of wrongdoing for personal gain. He is counted as one of our tallest patriots.

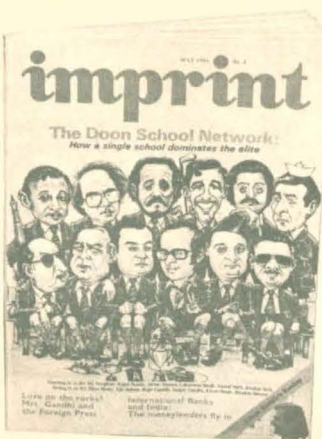
In the event, this allegation that Mr Desai was a paid CIA agent is a slur not only on the reputation and integrity of Morarji Desai but a slur on the whole country. It reduces our Republic, in the eyes of those reading and believing the book, to a banana republic in America's backyard. Worse still, it makes our highest and mightiest purchaseable on the cheap.

In the circumstances, our reaction and response so far are totally inadequate. Mrs Gandhi's "I am the last to know. I hope it's not true" is shocking, graceless, almost an endorsement of what Hersh has alleged. Ignoring the whole thing, letting it run its course through law courts in distant USA is also not enough. What is required, in the interest of our national honour, is an unanimous demand, by a resolution in Parliament, that the US government officially tell us what the truth is. If the secrecy surrounding the CIA in Washington does not permit this, then we ought to request the Americans to get a Congressional committee to go into this—there are precedents in America for investigations aimed at establishing the truth. We ought to point out to the Americans that what is challenged is India's national honour—not an allegation about Mr Desai.

We all moan the levels of conduct to which we have fallen. If we dare to examine why we have so fallen, we will find that our tendency of not pursuing even the gravest matters to conclusion is one of the main reasons. If we fail to resolve this matter properly and honourably, generations to come will pay the price. History books will carry as truth the allegation that at a crucial time of India's history, the tallest of our Gandhians was bought for the proverbial 30 pieces of silver.

Then, if Morarji Desai, 88 now, is even remotely guilty as alleged, his own magistral pronouncements have dictated what punishment he should get.

R.V. Pandit



The New Imprint

I applaud the new *Imprint*. Although it is not as trim as the old, smaller edition, it has energy and flavour. To read it is to enjoy it. Congratulations.

Perin Nicholson
Bombay -5

RV Pandit's editorial, Vir Sanghvi's and Rauf Ahmed's articles made interesting reading. But you have drastically cut down the size of *Imprint* from 100 pages to 67 pages.

Prabha Padmanabhan
Bombay -31

I read the first two issues of the new *Imprint* from cover to cover. A once great name has now been revived. *Imprint* must be the only magazine to have relaunched so successfully.

Ashok Kapoor
New Delhi -11

The new *Imprint* is attractive in form and rich in substance. RV Pandit speaks volumes in his *Marquee*. However, the letters page is missing.

PC Nanavaty
Junagadh

Is there no place for fiction in the new *Imprint*?

DK Dhingra
Amritsar

The Doon Network

As an old boy, I was delighted to read Malavika Sanghvi's article on the Doon School network (May 1983). Seldom have I enjoyed an article so much. I shall place this issue of your magazine alongside my copy of the Doon School Book, The Old Boy's

Register, and other memorabilia in my library. However, an error has crept in and I cannot leave it uncorrected. Piloo Mody was at Hyderabad House and PK Tagore at Jaipur—they were not Kashmir House men.

Aminuddin Khan
Hyderabad -34

I enjoyed the article. But it could have mentioned old boys who were doing valuable work outside of politics!

JTM Gibson
Norfolk, England

Prominent among those missing are Amarinder Singh, the Maharaja of Patiala, and his brother Malvinder Singh. So too Gurbir Singh Grewal, son of the former Punjab Chief Minister.

While I appreciate your writer's single-mindedness of purpose it is a pity she has not mentioned other schools—BCS, Sanawar, Nabha, YPS—who have produced as many world beaters.

Malvinder Grewal
Bombay -26

Who says Doon has more distinguished alumni than Mayo? What rubbish!

Doon has only produced *box-wallahs, goondas, and babus*.

Mayo has produced gentlemen.

AV Singh
New Delhi -14

The Russian Line

Ram Jethmalani has boldly exposed the double standard and hypocrisy of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as well as India's foreign policy (May 1983).

Mrs Gandhi's strategy at NAM was to deflect attack from the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan. The elaborate preparations—including a whirlwind tour by Soviet tout Narasimha Rao all over the world was designed to keep precisely those topics away from discussion in which the Soviet position was indefensible.

BM Mondal
24-Parganas

Ram Jethmalani's article exposes the hypocrisy and danger involved in our subservience to the Soviet Union

in foreign policy. It must be admitted that even our domestic policy is dictated by the Soviets.

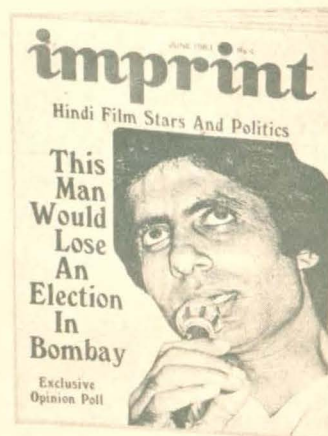
Sujash Mie
Calcutta -5

Love On The Rocks

Vir Sanghvi has aptly described (May 1983) Mrs Gandhi's love-hate relationship with the Western press. Lenin, Khomeini and others have eaten out of the West's hand till they have been out of the danger. Then they turned around and attacked the West.

Mrs Gandhi should remember that now even the Arab press has turned against her. Recently Farouk Luqman, Managing Editor of *Arab News* asked her deliberately provocative questions that pushed her into making damaging statements.

RD Sinha
Calcutta -46



Films And Politics

Your article (June 1983) on the films and politics connection managed the impossible. It took a subject that had been flogged to death and unearthed new information. It was fascinating to read about Sunil Dutt, Dilip Kumar, Krishna Menon and the National Party.

JP Sahni
New Delhi -5

Come, come, who says Bachchan would lose? An opinion research agency? Sure. It was another opinion research agency (Indian Market Research Bureau) that told us that NT Rama Rao would be wiped out, remember?

RS Shah
Bombay -31

imprint

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Indians are no longer welcome in Bangladesh.

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by Raj Raghavan

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MR ANTULAY GOES TO COURT

The case against the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra is now ready. An exclusive review of the new evidence. Plus, an account of the rise and fall of Antulay, an analysis of the role played by the Taj Group's Ajit Kerkar and an interview with Antulay.

Cover illustration: Bhatlekar.

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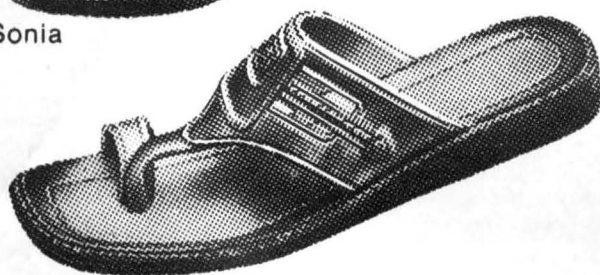
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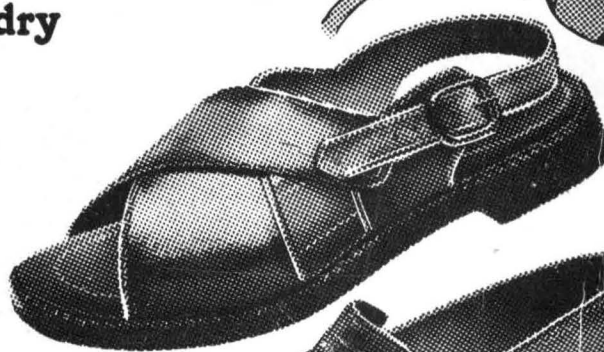
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BY ARUN CHACKO

THE UGLY INDIAN

Bangladesh has forgotten India's role in its liberation.

WHAT IS IT like to be an Ugly American? Indian visitors to neighbouring countries can get to know very quickly. That Indians are universally disliked is established. But the reasons range from our personal to national characteristics.

Unfortunately, our neighbours share these traits with us. They dislike us because they see us as an expansionist, imperialist, regional leviathan bent on subverting both their political and economic independence.

So it comes to pass that just like our Government blames the Central Intelligence Agency for everything from its own corruption and ineptitude to the failure of the monsoon, India is the favourite whipping boy for our subcontinental neighbours.

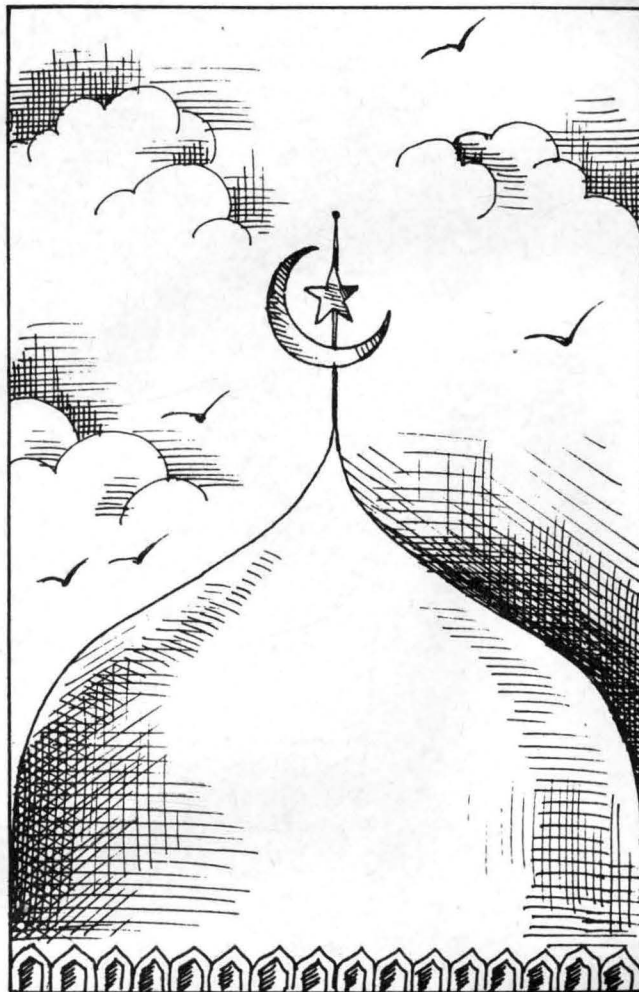
This might be poetic justice. But it certainly leaves the Indian visitor a little bemused. And if the allegations are to be believed, slightly overawed by his government's ability to intentionally wreak havoc abroad with such clinical efficiency. Admittedly it seems to be doing exactly the same thing at home but hopefully without intending to.

* * *

GIVEN THE FURY with which the people in general and the ruling Bangladesh Government in particular, have turned against India in a decade after liberation, the uninitiated visitor could perhaps be excused for wondering what all those wasted Indian lives, efforts and money poured into the 1971 war were for.

There seems little recollection in

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



Bangladesh of the Indian role in its liberation. However, the looting of the Indian soldiers, and their carrying away imported luxury goods by the truckload, remains a vivid memory.

As Shakespeare said,
*"The evil that men do lives after them,
 The good is oft interred with their bones."*

* * *

OF COURSE, THE river waters dispute is a problem which predates Bangladesh. Flying from Dacca to Chittagong over rich green landscape irrigated literally, by several hundred snaking rivers, one tends to wonder what the fuss is all about.

But the fact remains, roughly 30

per cent of the country does suffer considerably in the summer months, when some of the reduced Ganges flow is diverted in India by the Farakka Barrage.

However, the way the issue is currently being raked up in Bangladesh, where village public meetings demand the retaliatory boycott of Indian goods, reflects more intentionally organised anti-Indian activity than any sinister step on our part.

Ominously, General Ershad, who thus far remained moderate, recently accused India of denying Bangladesh its fair share of water. The allegation simply isn't true, even according to his own Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, Obaidullah Khan.

A former civil servant, Obaidullah Khan has a mind, efficiency and professionalism which would command instant respect anywhere. In an exclusive interview, he never for a moment hinted that India had not honoured its commitment. And he should

know since he heads the Bangladesh delegation for the River Waters talks.

On the other hand, he was very positive about both the atmosphere and direction of bilateral talks on the issue and deprecated its politicisation which merely delayed settlement. Unfortunately, the following day General Ershad made his surprising and somewhat premature allegation, which undoubtedly further vitiated Indo-Bangladesh relations.

This brings us to another widespread malady—accusing neighbours and external forces of real or imagined actions, simply because the domestic situation has got too hot for the political leadership. The damage done to crucial bilateral relations is far-reach-

A retired military dictator is a contradiction in terms—he is either a dictator or a dead man.

ing. But there seems little hope where fortunes of political leaders inevitably take priority over national good.

* * *

THE ZIA INTERNATIONAL Airport at Dacca stands head and shoulders above any in the subcontinent in facilities, cleanliness, efficiency and courtesy. However, the man after whom it is named has already met the kind of oblivion he ensured for his predecessor, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The second anniversary of his assassination came and went recently but General Ziaur Rahman who arguably provided Bangladesh with its best administration, might never have existed. Political and social circles still buzz with rumours about the connivance in the killing of some influential people in the current military government. But the fact remains that the powers to be have not got to the bottom of the story. Nor for that matter have they shown any desire to.

General Ershad's recent interview to *Sunday* is indicative. He is quoted as saying, "We tried them (the killers) for mutiny; we didn't try them for the killing of General Zia They went to the TV station, they captured it; it is a clear case of mutiny and they were tried for it. The killing of General Zia was a civil offence. Murder, rape etc are civil offences, we don't try them. But mutiny."

Interestingly, the Chittagong Circuit House, where General Zia met his bloody end, was perhaps the worst place to stay from the security point of view. A remarkable colonial building, built on a mound surrounded by public open space, a sniper with a high powered rifle could hit anyone entering the place from half a mile in all directions.

General Ziaur Rahman's death merely reinforced the rule that once a dictator takes control, the only kind of politics inevitable is the politics of assassination. In the absence of any established, peaceful method of replac-

ing discredited governments, takeovers through coups and bloodshed become a recurring theme. A retired military dictator is a contradiction in terms. He is either a dictator, or a dead man.

* * *

AND SO ON the subcontinent we see religion being used to whip up support, for Governments which otherwise have precious little justification for being where they are. The politics of religion has been its curse and continues to be so. Islamicisation is obviously a hypocritical attempt to prop up regimes that do not have proven popular support or even a clean administration to fall back on. Of course, General Zia and his friends will have us believe that they really are good Muslims but why have they suddenly started displaying their religiosity only now?

While Pakistan's General Zia seems to have reduced the exercise to a fine art, his former colleagues on our eastern flank are trying to pull the same stunt off. Whether they meet with similar success remains to be seen. But the odds remain even.

On the one hand, while considerable numbers ostensibly practise religion, the level of corruption at all levels would, as in Pakistan, seem to indicate it's for the pharisaical variety. But who can openly criticise Islamicisation in a society which wears religion on its sleeve?

On the other hand, with the standing army rapidly increasing—it has doubled since 1975—the number of families with a vested interest in continuing military rule has also snowballed.

Military men control all the key jobs—in administration and commerce—handing out all the lucrative contracts. Their subordinates and families are insulated from the overwhelming surrounding poverty through subsidised rations and other benefits. Can they extricate themselves from a system which so obviously benefits ever increasing numbers? ♦

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BY DHIREN BHAGAT

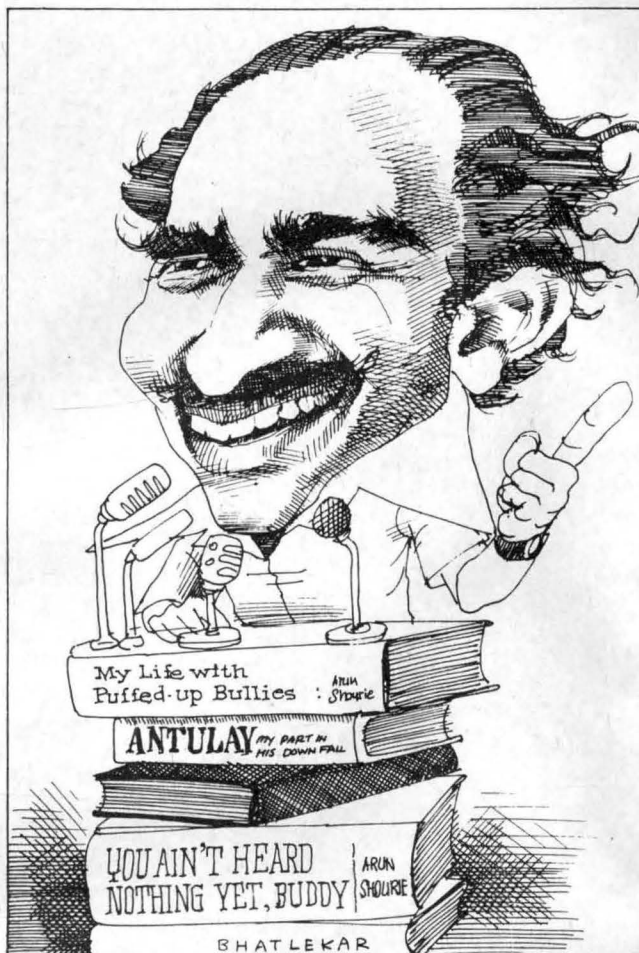
ONE MAN OPPOSITION

Are Arun Shourie's analyses as good as his exposés?

DURING THE RECENT parliamentary debates on the Assam massacres, occasioned by Shourie's own sensational story in *India Today* (May 15), the crusader from the World Bank operated from the Press Gallery of Parliament. Frequently he would be seen signalling to opposition members below, beckoning them out of the chamber, advising Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) heavies like LK Advani on the next move. It was a superb job of orchestration: breaking the story, spoon-feeding for members of Parliament, ensuring the correct attack on Government.

This has always been Shourie's great strength: his ability to coordinate with every possible ally—the lawyer, the parliamentarian and the civil servant—so as to conduct what is easily the most efficient campaign against misgovernment in Independent India. Whenever Shourie spills the beans—and its been a major story every summer so far—50 or 60 parliamentarians receive cyclostyled copies of the story the day before, questions are asked in Parliament on the day, the rest of the (privately owned) media follows the story and the Government is invariably embarrassed. Shourie, victorious, moves on.

What makes Shourie run? It has often been suggested that a deep hatred of the reigning Durga and her politics fuels the Shourie machine, that he is only interested in those issues and stories where the line of blame, if followed to its absolute end, comes to rest at 1 Safdarjang Road. Certainly the important Shourie stories—Antulay, Kuo and Nellie—have this feature, sometimes at the cost of considerable distortion and imbalance. (Read



Kewal Varma's *Why Has Arun Shourie Spared The RSS?* in *The Telegraph* of May 10 to see the distortion and imbalance in the Nellie story.) Perhaps sensitive to such a reaction, Shourie tries to explain away this coincidence in the Introduction to this book, a collection of his journalism for the past three years "...given her preeminence, she is the most visible symbol in the political arena of the state of affairs. Nothing, for instance, better illustrates how its nemesis has caught up with the type of politics that our leaders have been practising for 20 years than the predicament to which Mrs Gandhi's unrivalled practice of that type of politics has brought her. She figures therefore merely as a teacher's aid: she isn't the solution of course, but she

isn't the problem either."

One must be thankful for the simplicity of the last sentence. 'She isn't the problem either'; the admission is significant for it is doubtful if Shourie would have made it before the disastrous experience of the Janata government. It was an instructive phase for all of us and for those who placed such faith in it as Shourie initially did, it was a real eye-opener. What it taught us was that it wasn't just a matter of a few fascist individuals like Mrs Gandhi, the system of politics in this country was *designed to produce corruption, and worse, misgovernment*. Towards the end of his last collection of journalism, *Institutions in the Janata Phase*, Shourie has begun to despair of his avaricious Janata friends, whose vision stopped short of the warts on their protuberant noses. Consequently in this collection, when he isn't investigating, uncovering or merely following up stories (contrary to what *Indian Ex-*

press advertisements say, Shourie did not break the Bhagalpur blindings story) Shourie is busy theorizing about the nature of the system that cripples any possibility of decency in public life.

This theorizing must be examined carefully, especially in a country such as ours where the deserved appreciation of a man's courage and tenacity at baring misdeeds tends to spill over into an uncritical appreciation of his philosophy. It is a peculiar (but common enough) state of affairs in which a very good investigative journalist is hailed as a philosopher of the new politics.

What does Shourie say? In an essay that also appeared as the introduction to his last volume, *The State as Private Property*, Shourie characterises the

Why should an investigative journalist claim the right to be taken seriously as a political philosopher?

populace as 'atomised' and inured to outrage, with each man in the game for himself. All public offices have been occupied by mercenaries, 'not just selfish mercenaries. . . . desperate mercenaries'. "These freebooters have only two objectives—plunder and power, power not in the sense of the ability to transform societies but the power that a bully wants, the power to patronise one person, to terrorise another."

But Shourie's vision—I will not dignify it by calling it an analysis—is far too nihilistic, it razes whatever it turns its attention to. In consequence there is much rhetoric and with the rhetoric much exaggeration and distortion. "The cadre of such a regime consists solely of the lumpen, of small-time freebooters dying to become big-time freebooters, of small bullies dying to become big bullies." Cliché is not accidental to such writing: it is the essence of it.

Shourie's vision of contemporary India is that of a state of nature within which individuals and groups form defensive alliances from time to time. *El Supremo* (Shourie's emotive label) rules from above; layers of lieutenants insulate him from the ravaged public. The State is treated as the private property of each man in public life, it is the *nagar vadhu*, the village prostitute: "An officer of state raping an officer of state who in turn is laying the *nagar vadhu*. . . multi tier rape. . ."

Thus the State becomes 'an instrument for crimes against society. . . and the rulers are 'just the nominal rulers'. "True, ministers sign the files," Shourie exclaims with much justice, "but who finances their elections?"

The thing about such generalised pictures painted in emotive colours is that they do contain an element of the truth: very generally and to quite an extent, they describe what is going on.

But that is their virtue and their vice. Because they capture *some* of the truth they appeal to the vulgar mind which is content with crude generalisation; and because they fail to capture *all* the truth the crude generalisation invariably falsifies. As first hypotheses, to be contradicted and tinkered with, Shourie's models may have some value: as definitive epitaphs of the Indian State they are gibberish.

Often the emotive exaggeration is plain wrong. But seduced by Shourie's cocksure flow his readers are unlikely to notice the errors unless they make an extra effort to stay awake. To take an example of Shourie at the height of nihilistic error, consider this paragraph which comes at the end of the second part of his Assam story in *India Today*: "The killings were the Hobbesian war of all against all. They testified not so much to 'communalism' as to the total breakdown of governance: in Nellie Lalung tribals killed Bengali Muslims; in Kokrajhar subdivision Boro Khachris fought Bengali Hindus and Muslims; in Goreswar and Khairabari Sarani Boro Khachris fought Bengali Hindus; in Gohpur Boros fought Assamese Hindus; in Dhemaji and Jonai Mishings tribals fought Bengali Hindus and Muslims etc etc."

This Hobbesian war of all against all is pure nonsense, a caper to distract the ordinary reader from appreciating the true communal nature of the Assam tragedy. Hobbes' notion of a war of all against all was a very different matter. Part I Chapter 13 of the *Leviathan* deals with it. In the state of nature, as Hobbes envisaged it, *each man wars with the other* ('where every man is enemy to every man'). But in Assam there were well established alignments, older battles fed afresh by the political greed of the parties, planned attacks on certain communities. What evidence do we have of an all for all when almost all, the victims were Bengalis? Or when, Shourie himself tells us, armed mobs (armed by whom? Shourie does not ask) of as

many as 12,000 had assembled days before the massacres, waiting for the kill? Either Shourie has not read Hobbes (and so doesn't know what he is talking about) or else he is plain dishonest.

But many readers get taken in by this arrant generalising, this emotionally charged attack, this travesty of analysis. Shourie should stick to doing what he is best at: marshalling obscure but vital facts about corruption, organising them into telling patterns, hitting the government and keeping it on its toes. If this volume has any value it is as a record of some of the most brilliant investigative stories any journalist has attempted in this country. They may read with an unfortunate turgidity some years after they were first published but as examples of insurgency journalism at its *desi* best they are worth a place on the shelf.

What will Shourie do next? The clues are in the book, particularly in the latter pieces. On Independence Day 1981 Shourie published his testament of despair in the *Indian Express*, a page long wail and heartsearching, *From An Athetoid State To An Absolutist One*. A year later Shourie exhibited the flip side of his pessimism, publishing an equally long sermon on the nation's birthday. But there was a difference. Called *Reasons For Hope* this piece revealed Shourie's faith in the marginal men upon whom, Shourie feels, we are condemned to rely. He quoted Brecht's exchange:

Andrea (loudly) : Unhappy the land that has no heroes !

Galileo : No. Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes.

The land may be unhappy but the martyr will grow to become one of his marginal heroes: a Solzhenitsyn, a Gandhi perhaps? A one man opposition, that's what Shourie is.

Dhiren Bhagat is a columnist for Bombay's The Sunday Observer. His last article for Imprint was Assam Journal in April 1983.

Mrs Gandhi's Second Reign: by Arun Shourie. Published by Vikas. Price: Rs 150.

BY RAJ RAGHAVAN

IN DEFENCE OF SAI BABA

A reply to PC Sorcar's exposé.

SAI BABA-KNOCKING seems to be the order of the day. On the whole, the attacks follow a predictable pattern. Some two-bit magician or bright young journalist visits Baba, misses the philosophy and godliness that draw people to him and spends all his time staring at the little magic tricks Baba performs to entertain the crowds. Then having decided that the key to this great saint is the magic, he sits down and tries to work out whether the 'miracles' were 'tricks'.

Some years ago, *Imprint* carried an attack on Baba, which it must be admitted, took a slightly different tack. Its author was a mixed-up, former hippie called Tal Brooke. According to this sex-starved American, Sai Baba was a *hijra*. Moreover, he had summoned Brooke to his presence, had unzipped his (Brooke's) trousers and had fondled his genitals. Did Brooke cry rape? Did he call the cops? Not at all. He called his publisher. He was, after all, an American.

Now, in the May issue of *Imprint*, yet another attack on Baba has appeared. Its author is PC Sorcar, an oily stage magician who has been telling anti-Baba stories for a long time (*Sunday* carried a similar attack five years ago—though it was not as well-written as this one). Sorcar claims that when he went to see Baba, he was disappointed to get no *vibhuti*. After being repeatedly entreated, Baba finally gave him a *sandesh*, to make him happy. This proves, according to Sorcar that Baba is a fraud. The argument runs as follows: I can palm a *sandesh* and produce it on stage. Baba gave me a *sandesh*. So I can do whatever he does. I am not God, but am a magician. So, Baba is also not God but is a magician



as well.

You don't need a great grasp of logic to see how fallacious the argument is. Equally I could say: I go to the bathroom. Baba also goes to the bathroom. I am not God but am a journalist. Therefore, Baba is not God but is a journalist. Just because you can do the same sort of things as a holy man, does not mean that the holy man is like you.

Unfortunately, some people don't realize this. They go to see Baba expecting to find themselves in him. Tal Brooke being a sex-starved American, decided that Baba was a sex-starved Godman. PC Sorcar, being a second-rate conjurer came away thinking that Baba was also a second-rate conjurer. Even Baba's own followers fall victim

to this tendency. When Russy Karanjia, master of hyperbole and king of the cliché, went to see Baba, he claimed that the Swami was lead player 'in the cosmic drama' (ugh!).

I have never been sure if this proves that human beings are all too fallible or if Baba is God. After all, we are all supposed to see ourselves in God. In our deepest fantasies we imagine that his is a reassuring presence, similar to our own. And so, the God of criminals is a lovable crook, the God of Marwaris is the moneyed Lakshmi, and so on.

This is perhaps the most convincing evidence to support the view that Baba is God. He can be different things to different people. His philosophy is so universal that each person can take what he likes from it. Sorcar sees him as a magician, Karanjia as a cliché-spewing celebrity and so on.

Similarly, the fact that people see themselves in Baba suggests that subconsciously, they want to be one with him.

They want his reassuring presence for themselves.

I could refute Sorcar. There are miracles that Baba has performed that no magician could reproduce, but I shall not go into them. Firstly, because a magician can do what Baba does, is no argument at all. And secondly, I think that Sorcar's subconscious desire to believe that Baba is a magician, is probably evidence that Baba is God.

But there is something that needs to be said. Sai Baba has never claimed that his miracles are proof of his Godliness. He has never canvassed for devotees. If people want to believe in him and enjoy his miracles, then why should anyone else care? Leave us alone with our God.



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MR ANTULAY GOES TO COURT

*The case against
Antulay could be
dynamite.*



AFTER OVER A YEAR OF preparation, the case against Abdul Rehman Antulay, the mercurial, controversial former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, is finally ready. Sometime this month, it will at last be heard in Court. If Antulay's lawyers succeed in getting a postponement, then it may be pushed back a month or two. But now, there can be no getting away from the evidence and the charges. All the allegations—of Tata involvement, of corrupt personal trusts, and of large-scale bribery—will be heard in court and evidence will be out in the open.

Imprint has succeeded in obtaining details of the prosecution's case against Antulay. The complainant is Ramdas Nayak but spearheading the prosecution is lawyer-MP Ram Jethmalani. After a long battle to obtain the Governor of Maharashtra's sanction to prosecute Antulay, Jethmalani has narrowed his case to four major areas. They are :

a) The NCPA Matter: The prosecution hopes to show that Antulay agreed to grant the Taj group of hotels permission to build a hotel on land belonging to the Tata-controlled National Centre for the Performing

Arts (NCPA) in return for donations to his Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan. They have documents, one with a notation allegedly in Antulay's own handwriting to back up this allegation.

b) The Cement Allocations: Justice Lentin found in his celebrated judgement that there appeared to be a nexus between the allocation of cement and builders' donations to the Antulay trusts. The prosecution hopes to go even further. It hopes to show how there was a direct correlation between the sum of money donated and the bags of cement allocated—so that a under-the-counter price of Rs 40 per bag emerges.

c) The Alcohol Affair: In spite of the fact that Maharashtra faced a grave shortage of industrial alcohol, Antulay allocated 35 lakh litres from Maharashtra's quota to two companies from outside the state—McDowells and Herbertsons, both controlled by the Mallia group. The prosecution alleges that money changed hands in this deal.

d) The Sugar Donations: Several sugar mills and co-operatives were asked to donate money to the Antulay trusts which they were told were government trusts, claims the prosecution. There are documents and copies of telegrams that suggest (to the prosecution) that the trusts were referred to (quite inaccurately) as government affairs.

To the prosecution, this amounts to cheating because, they argue, the sugar co-operatives would not have given the money if they had realized that they were 'private' trusts.

The prosecution intends to argue that Antulay violated Sections 161 and 165 of the Indian Penal Code, as well as the Prevention of Corruption Act. If the Court upholds its complaint then Antulay faces the prospect of a jail sentence.

THE NCPA AFFAIR

PERHAPS THE MOST startling of the allegations concern the NCPA. The government of Maharashtra had leased an eight acre plot to the NCPA at a token rent of Rs 2 per year. The Centre was permitted in 1971 to construct a commercial building 'of high grade shops and offices', on the condition that the income (after pay-

ing rates, taxes and interest) would be split in equal halves between the state government and the NCPA.

In April 1981, the NCPA went to the Maharashtra government with a new proposal. It wanted now, to construct a five star hotel instead. Though this was not spelled out in the correspondence, it was understood that the Indian Hotels Company (the Taj Group), a Tata company, would manage the new hotel. Moreover, the NCPA wanted the Floor Space Index (FSI) for the building to be increased to cover the Centre's entire eight acre space and not just the three acres that would be used for the hotel.

Accordingly, Jamshed Bhabha, Vice Chairman and trustee-in-charge of the NCPA (and a director of Indian Hotels) wrote to PG Gavai, the Chief Secretary, outlining details of the proposal in a letter dated April 1, 1981. At this stage, Ajit Kerkar the Managing Director of Indian Hotels, and a trustee of

The handwritten notation contains details of the 'understanding' between the NCPA and Antulay's trust.

the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan, entered the picture. The prosecution has a letter signed by GB Pingulkar,

Deputy Secretary in the Revenue and Forests Department, stating that the detailed note that came with Bhabha's letter was not sent on April 1, at all, but that it was 'handed over by Shri Ajit Kerkar on behalf of the NCPA to the Chief Secretary on March 24, 1981'.

Why Kerkar should have personally delivered it seems unclear. He was not a trustee of the NCPA and had no official connection with the organisation. Further, Pingulkar's letter adds, "In pursuance of the note, the matter was discussed and the result of the discussion as noted in para seven of the base note was informed to the CM by the Chief Secretary and Shri Ajit Kerkar. As mentioned in para eight of the base note, CM found the agreement acceptable and directed that Dept concerned should initiate action on the basis of the understanding."

What was the base note and what was the understanding?

The prosecution has a photo-copy of what purports to be Bhabha's letter and the detailed proposal that came with it. At the bottom of the proposal, there appears, a handwritten notation. This presumably is the base note, and it contains the understanding:

"The NCPA by itself and through others will arrange to make the following donations to the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan, an allied organisation involved in giving similar support to the performing and non-performing arts:

"One-time (within, six months of Govt's confirmation) Rs one crore.

"Three years, after, ie on completion

Building was to make it possible to cover its operating expenses, it is earnestly requested that the Government should permit the FSI for this purpose to be calculated on the Centre's total plot of 8 acres so as to cover the commercial building as well as all other structures to be constructed on the total area of 33,000 square metres.

The NCPA, by itself or through others, will arrange to make the following donations to the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan, an allied organisation involved in giving similar support to the performing and non-performing arts:

one-time (within six months of Govt's confirmation) Rs 10 lakhs

three years after the completion of the commercial building

Rs 25 lakhs per year

eight years after the completion of the commercial building

Rs 50 lakhs per year

The above donations may be deducted from NCPA's expenses, with a maximum of NCPA's income.

The handwritten notation on Bhabha's letter.

and commissioning the commercial complex, Rs 25 lakhs per year.

"Eight years after five years after the completion of the commercial complex—Rs 50 lakhs per year. The above donations may be considered as NCPA's expenses while computing NCPA's net income."

The note is unsigned but the prosecution claims that the handwriting is Antulay's. It points to a statement in Pingulkar's letter: "As mentioned in para eight of the base note CM found the agreement acceptable."

The prosecution argues that taken together, Bhabha's letter, the detailed proposal and the handwritten note read like a contract. They say that the correspondence more or less spells out what the NCPA wants and how much it will pay in return. In Ramdas Nayak's original complaint, written before this correspondence was discovered, he drew attention to the Rs 26 lakhs that Indian Hotels and its subsidiaries had already contributed to Antulay's trusts, and said, "It is obvious that the accused has committed an offence under Sections 161 and 165 of the Indian Penal Code and Section S(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, in that he has granted the permission to build a hotel to the NCPA in consideration of the donation of the said amount of Rs 26 lakhs to the aforementioned trusts." Twenty-six lakhs is a small sum compared to the crores mentioned in the new evidence. Obviously, the prosecution feels that this handwritten note is potentially explosive.

It also has in its possession, the rest of the inter-departmental correspondence relating to the government's attitude to the NCPA-Taj scheme. It suggests that initially secretaries were reluctant to increase the FSI granted to the hotel, to merge the NCPA's two plots into one (another NCPA demand) or to deduct the donations to the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan before calculating the Government of Maharashtra's half of the profits.

It also shows that negotiations on behalf of the NCPA were conducted by Kerkar, Sarvashri Sengupta and Shakoor Khan (all Taj executives), who have no locus standi at the NCPA. At each stage, departmental reluctance was overcome by either the Chief Minister or the Chief Secretary.

It is expected that the prosecution will draw attention to all these documents and to the connections between



Antulay with his leader: Indira Gandhi as commerce?

The document mentions the crores that the NCPA was going to give the Indira Gandhi Pratisthan.

Kerkar and Antulay. Not only was Kerkar a trustee of the Indira Pratisthan, but he also headed a government committee on FSI and was given an office in Mantralaya. According to one hypothesis, had the deal gone through, Indian Hotels would have received a management fee from the NCPA. Of the remaining profits, the NCPA would have deducted its donations to the trusts and finally a small amount would have been left to be split in equal portions between the NCPA and the Maharashtra government.

THE CEMENT ALLOCATIONS

THE PROSECUTION IS CONFIDENT of its position on cement because of the success of Ashok Desai's case (which forced Antulay's resignation).

Ashok Desai had fought a civil suit

against the existing system of allocating bags of scarce cement. He had claimed that there was a nexus between the allocation of cement and donations to the Antulay trusts. Justice Lentin had held in his favour. Though the Appeals judges were less enthusiastic, they had let the judgement stand.

This time the case is going to be a little more difficult to prove because Antulay is being prosecuted on criminal grounds and the burden of proof is that much greater. Nevertheless, much of the old evidence seems to have stood the test of time.

There is the case of the Raheja group of builders who made contributions to the Konkan Unnati Mitra Mandal, one of the Antulay trusts. All the donations were in the names of various corporations controlled by the Rahejas and in the names of various members of the Raheja family, Shanti Raheja, BS Raheja, Deepak Raheja, Vijay Raheja, Ratan Raheja, DS Raheja and Geeta Raheja. Such companies as Pearl Corporation, Orchids Corporation, Cool Breeze Corporation, Lotus Corporation and Manila Corporation, made small donations of under a lakh. On their own, the donations seemed small and appeared to have little connection with Raheja Builders. Taken together, they represented a considerable sum.

Now there is more evidence, that the prosecution is unwilling to divulge at this stage, linking donations to the

ANTULAY AND THE TAJ

UNTIL THE ANTULAY scandal broke the Taj Group of Hotels had an image that most companies envied. The group's flagship—the Bombay Taj—was regarded as one of the best hotels in the world and the entire chain suggested elegance and class. In Ajit Kerkar, it had a Vice-Chairman and Managing Director who was widely credited with having created one of India's most successful companies out of a sloppy, old, hotel and whose management skills were said to have marked him for great things within the House of Tatas. Despite his spectacular success, Kerkar shunned publicity and was admired for his hard-working, low-key style.

In the aftermath of the Antulay affair, all that has changed. Kerkar himself has been the worst affected. He was Secretary of the controversial Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan, headed the High Power Steering Group for Slums & Dilapidated Houses appointed by the Government of Maharashtra and sat on another committee to consider building a bridge to link Bombay to the mainland. In the course of his involvement with Antulay and the State Government, he shed his reluctance to give interviews and agreed to meet the press—only to end up featuring in a series of hatchet jobs. And after Antulay resigned, both Kerkar and the Taj became fair game for the media. The company began to be portrayed as a wheeling-dealing organization—the unacceptable face of the Tatas. Stories, often without foundation about its alleged land-grabbing activities started appearing and generally, the Taj was not given an opportunity to reply.

The company seems surprised that the proposal to build a hotel at the NCPA has generated so much criticism. The scheme was not a new one: it had been discussed earlier with Hashu Advani, Urban Development Minister in Sharad Pawar's government and known to be a clean politician. It seemed then to be the ideal solution to the NCPA's financial problem. In 1971 the NCPA had been given permission to construct a commercial structure on its land. It was hoped that the income from this structure (to be split in equal halves between the NCPA and the



Kerkar: "at least I tried."

state government) would be enough to finance the NCPA's cultural activities. Originally, it had been intended to build an office building. But then the law changed, making it impossible to construct offices on the land. Moreover, there was a fear that office rents could not be index-linked to keep with inflation. And it was difficult to control the quality of the environment in an office block—there would be hawkers, drivers hanging around, huge queues outside the lifts—that sort of thing. A hotel seemed to be the perfect answer to the NCPA's needs. Not only could the environment be controlled, but room rents could go up ensuring an inflation-proof income to both the NCPA and the Maharashtra Government.

It was for this scheme that Kerkar and Jamshed Bhabha of the NCPA were trying to secure governmental approval. With the matter still before the Courts, Kerkar would not comment on specific prosecution allegations, but his colleagues are distressed that they should all be so bitterly attacked for what was essentially a public-spirited venture.

The Kerkar-Antulay contact began when the Chief Minister looked around for a dynamic entrepreneur to help implement his two pet schemes—a solution to the slum and dilapidated houses problem and a Bombay-mainland

bridge. Kerkar with his record at the Taj and his background (he was once Chairman of CIDCO, the New Bombay development organization), seemed an obvious choice.

Nevertheless, Kerkar had been in two minds about getting involved. The Taj Group had been engaged in an expansion programme that required much of his time and some of his senior executives felt that he should say 'no' to Antulay. But others pointed out that it was in everybody's interests for him to accept. "Bombay is our bread and butter," Kerkar explains. "Tourist traffic here has been reduced to a trickle because of the squalor. If Bombay goes down the drain, so does the world famous Taj Mahal Hotel. So I was interested, not just as a citizen, but also as Chief Executive of the Taj Group of Hotels."

Accordingly, he accepted the invitation from Antulay. The two men hit it off. Antulay was looking for professionals who could get things done faster than slow-moving bureaucrats. Kerkar must have been surprised to find a minister who was genuinely interested in getting results. To this day, despite all the trouble that Antulay has got him into, Kerkar refuses to criticize the former Chief Minister. "I don't believe he made any money for himself, he was for the poor and the have-nots," he says with baffling sincerity.

Sadly, Kerkar's brief foray into city affairs has been a disaster. The report of his housing committee has been ignored, he resigned his Secretaryship of the Indira Pratisthan after the famous quid pro quo judgement of the Bombay High Court Bench and the Taj's image has taken a severe knocking.

Has it all been worth it? Does he have any regrets? "Well, it didn't do anybody any good," he says now, "but tell me, what could I have done differently? If I had been given a chance to provide a solution to Bombay's housing problems, or to have made the NCPA financially stable—should I have just turned it down because the publicity could have rebounded on me? Naturally I am sorry that it did not work. But I'm glad that I tried." ♦

trusts to the allocation of cement. The exact sums paid and the bags of cement received yield, according to the prosecution, a more or less exact correlation of Rs 40 a bag of cement.

THE SUGAR DONATIONS

THE EXACT NATURE OF Antulay's trusts will be keenly debated in Court. The prosecution claims that Antulay gave the impression that they were government trusts whereas they were actually private trusts. He suggested that he headed them as Chief Minister of Maharashtra, whereas in reality, he was a trustee in his private capacity. So, were he to cease to be Chief Minister, he would still control the funds that he had collected, using the name of the government of Maharashtra.

The defence will probably argue that the distinction between 'government' and 'private' trusts is an illusory one and that all of Antulay's trusts were subject to the control of the Charities Commissioner and that Antulay would not have had unbridled powers over them, even after he ceased to be Chief Minister.

However, the prosecution will claim that money was solicited on the grounds that these were government trusts and that one of them—the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan was, in some way connected to the Prime Minister.

"Both assertions," says Ramdas Nayak's complaint "are admittedly false. The accused has therefore cheated all these persons and committed offences under Section 420 of the Indian Penal Code."

After Arun Shourie's *Indira Gandhi As Commerce* article appeared Finance Minister, R Venkatraman denied in parliament that Mrs Gandhi had ever given her consent to letting her name be used. However, the Maharashtra government's own magazine, *Lok Rajya*, printed on October 16, 1980, a picture of Antulay and Mrs Gandhi captioned "Prime Minister Indira Gandhi affixing her signatures on the documents giving her consent to the name of the Maharashtra Government's Trust for promoting talent and literature and fine arts as 'Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan'."

After Venkatraman's denial,

(TELEGRAM)

(TO)

(18/7/81)

REF REGARDING INDIRA GANDHI PRATIBHA PRATISTHAN
DONATION (.) GOVT OF MAHARASHTRA REQUIRES YOUR
CHEQUE POSITIVELY BY TWENTYFIRST INSTANT (.) WIRE
ACTION TAKEN (.)

SAKARSANGH

MANAGING DIRECTOR
MAHARASHTRA RATYA SAHAKARI SAKHAR
KARKHANA SANGH LTD: BALLARD HOUSE,
MANGALORE ST: BOMBAY-400 038.

No. A/Pratisthan/354

18th July 1981.

Post copy in confirmation of the above
telegram f.w.cs. to:

The Managing Director,
SSK Ltd.
Sankar

MANAGING DIRECTOR. 6927

cc to:

1. P.A. to Chief Minister,
Maharashtra State,
Mantralaya, Bombay-400 032.

Received on 23.7.1981

2. P.A. to Minister for Co-operation,
Maharashtra State,
Mantralaya, Bombay-400 032.

Sent To

mem:go

28
5/19/81

Managing Director

A telegram asking for donations in the name of the Maharashtra government.

Antulay told a press conference on September 5, 1981, "Mrs Gandhi had never given her consent. " He repeated his denial in the Maharashtra Legislature on September 9.

Apart from the claim that Antulay's Trusts got money through false pretences by wrongly using Mrs Gandhi's name, the prosecution also argues that passing the trusts off as government trusts represented cheating.

In *Maharashtra Marches Ahead*, a government publication (December

1980), the following assertion appears:

"Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan: To give recognition to and encourage the talented people in the fields of literature and fine art, the Government of Maharashtra has set the foundation for Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan."

Similar assertions were made elsewhere. This claim says Nayak's complaint, 'was not only false and dishonest, but the accused knew it to be such'.

However, a case of cheating can only be established if the prosecution can prove that some people, who would not otherwise have contributed to the trusts, did so because they believed that they were state government trusts.

High up on the list of prosecution witnesses is Shalinitai Patil, who is expected to provide exactly this sort of evidence. This has to do with a donation of Rs 21 lakhs, which was handed over to Antulay on July 23, 1981 by the Sahakari Sakhar Karkhana Sangh Ltd of Sangli. When the money was solicited, the Sangh says it was given the impression that it was for a government trust. Accordingly, it collected the money from its member sugar factories telling them that it was for the government (the prosecution has copies of telegrams proving this).

When the receipt arrived and proved that it was for a private trust, one of the directors of a sugar factory took objection. He alleged that money belonging to farmers had been paid out without permission and under false pretences. Others echoed the objection. Finally Shalinitai, then a Minister in Antulay's cabinet, attempted to discuss the matter with him. Antulay refused to give her an appointment, she says. Finally when allegations of cheating were made in public and Shalinitai appeared to support them, Antulay dismissed her from the cabinet.

In her testimony, Shalinitai is expected to recount this story. If the Court accepts the claim that the donors only gave the money because of a non-existent government connection, then the prosecution's case seems strong.

THE ALCOHOL DEAL

THIS IS PERHAPS THE weakest element of the prosecution's case. When two companies (of which Vijay Mallya was Chairman) McDowells and Co and Herbertsons, were granted 35 lakh litres of alcohol, eyebrows were raised. First of all, there was a shortage of alcohol in Maharashtra and the chemical industries in the State were starved of their legal quotas of industrial alcohol. Moreover, it was the policy of the Government of India's Central Molasses Board to allocate alcohol only for the purpose of meet-

ing industrial requirements. Rarely was the alcohol supposed to go to a liquor manufacturer.

In the case of the allocation to Herbertsons and to McDowells, both restrictions applied. Both companies operated from outside Maharashtra, and neither needed the alcohol for industrial purposes. The prosecution will claim that the flouting of these restrictions suggest that other factors were at work. "In view of the circumstantial evidence and the accused's *modus operandi* with respect to the other commodities and in the absence of complete information about the donors to all the Trusts floated by the accused, the accused has received moneys from the liquor manufacturing units in return for the allocation of alcohol to them," says Ramdas Nayak in his complaint.

The argument is that once the Charities Commissioner is called to Court and made to submit accounts for all of

If Mrs Gandhi had consented to the use of her name, Antulay could finally spill the beans.

Antulay's trusts, it may emerge that one of the Mallya companies had donated money to a trust in return for the alcohol. It may be, but there is no proof of this as yet.

Alternately, the prosecution could claim the money was paid to Antulay himself and not to a trust. Once again, the proof is lacking.

LIKELY DEFENCE

THE MOST IMPORTANT obstacle to the emergence of a coherent defence strategy has been Antulay's own inability to keep his mouth shut. When the uproar over the issue of 'no objection' certificates in return for donations to his trust, was at its height, Antulay stated in the Assembly (on April 23, 1981) that he had received

Rs 8 lakhs and issued such certificates and that moreover, he would issue 200 more such certificates. Now, this admission is being held against him.

Last year, when the cases against him were being prepared, he boasted in an interview that it would take years for them to reach the trial stage. At this, the prosecution promptly went to Court and accused him of using 'delaying tactics'.

Now however, he seems to have learnt his lesson. These days he is unwilling to discuss the cases and has wisely remained abroad for much of the last two months (according to a newspaper report, he was studying British electoral practices in London).

His lawyers are expected to concentrate on the legal definition of trusts. Before Vasantrao Naik changed the law, the Chief Minister held office in trusts in a personal rather than official capacity. Antulay, it may be argued, was only going back to the old system. It could be said that a trust supported by government through donations and maintained for certain objectives that may be scrutinised by the Charities Commissioner cannot be called 'private trusts'. The defence could say that there is no evidence to suggest that money was going to be used for anything other than the highly laudable objectives stated. In other words, there is no evidence to suggest deceit was the intention.

As the matter is now before the Courts, it is not right to speculate any further. However it seems clear that by the time the case is through, several other matters will also receive wide publicity. The entire NCPA saga may adversely affect the reputations of the House of Tatas and of the Taj group. The sugar donations will lead to the spectacle of the established Maratha sugar lobby (represented by Shalinitai Patil) attacking the man who took the Chief Ministership they regarded as rightfully their's. And the issue of whether or not Indira Gandhi consented to the use of her name will finally be solved. If she did first agree, and then changed her mind, then Antulay will have to choose between facing a charge of cheating or spilling the beans.

All in all, it promises to be a case to watch. That a man who was the all-powerful Chief Minister of India's richest state only two years ago now risks going to jail is unprecedented. It suggests, if nothing else, that Indian democracy works. ♦

THE RISE AND FALL OF AR ANTULAY

THE RISE AND fall of Abdul Rehman Antulay must be one of the most extraordinary sagas in Indian politics. The chubby, aggressive, diminutive Antulay was a junior member of the Maharashtra ministry when he came under the influence of Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee President Rajni Patel in the early '70s.

Patel had him appointed Law Minister in Vasant Rao Naik's cabinet and together, the two men frequently overruled Naik on such matters as the appointment of Ram Rao Adik as Advocate-General. In 1975, when the All India Congress Committee (AICC) needed a General Secretary, Patel had Antulay appointed.

Antulay's tenure as General Secretary in Delhi saw the beginning of his rift with his mentor. During the Emergency, Patel fell from favour with Sanjay Gandhi and Antulay decided to throw in his lot with the junior Gandhi. When the Congress lost the 1977 elections, Antulay remained loyal to Sanjay though people like Patel openly criticized Mrs Gandhi. When the Congress (I) was formed, Antulay was one of its principal organisers. In the 1979 elections, he handled the allocation of tickets in Maharashtra and emerged as a powerful force in state politics.

In 1980, when the Congress (I) won the Assembly elections in Maharashtra, there were several claimants for the Chief Ministership. Vasant Sathe staked a claim on behalf of Vidharbha, Pratibha Patel said she had been 'loyal' all along, and Vasantdada Patil, representing the powerful Maratha sugar lobby, seemed determined to get the job. Sanjay Gandhi overruled all their claims and despatched Sitaram Kesari to Bombay to manufacture a 'consensus' among MLA's in favour of Antulay.

Antulay had several firsts to his credit. He was the first Konkani to become Chief Minister, the first Muslim to get so far in state politics and the first Chief Minister without any links with the Maratha sugar lobby that has always dominated Congress (I) politics in the state. He represented a new breed of safari-suited politicians who, like Karnataka's Gundu Rao, made



Antulay as CM: "grand gestures and fiery rhetoric."

no secret of his love for foreign cars and five star hotels.

So strong was his backing in Delhi that the Marathas decided that they had to live with him. Vasantdada agreed to become AICC General Secretary in Delhi while his wife Shalinitai became Revenue Minister in Antulay's cabinet. Even after Sanjay Gandhi died, Antulay's position seemed secure. Mrs Gandhi appeared to be entirely behind him.

Antulay's tenure was distinguished by grand gestures, fiery rhetoric and a neurotic aversion to criticism. Invited to inaugurate a function, he would in-

variably announce donations of Rs 40,000 or 50,000, from the Chief Minister's Fund to the body sponsoring the function. At press conferences, he would get carried away with his speech and make indiscreet statements. Journalists who criticised him were either summoned for a dressing down, or refused interviews in future. Finally, he even talked of starting his own paper.

Though it is unfashionable to admit this, there can be no denying that Antulay took quick decisions and made sure that they were implemented. Not for him, the bureaucratic tangle of files

"I WOULD DO IT ALL AGAIN"

After this issue of Imprint went to press, AR Antulay returned to Bombay. To get his side of the story, the magazine interrupted its printing schedules and obtained an exclusive interview.

Reports Vir Sanghvi who met him: "Adversity has mellowed Antulay. He is, he admits, more tactful and less impulsive. Throughout the interview, he refrained from naming personalities, spoke only in metaphors and periodically inserted references to his loyalty to Mrs Gandhi. It was almost as though he expected to be rehabilitated."

Q. Would you like to respond to the allegations made by the prosecution?

A. My observations last year to one magazine in reply to the specific question about the case probably taking four to five years were made by Shri Jethmalani the subject matter of a complaint before the Special Judge. Though, as you are aware, my reply was merely a matter of pure arithmetical calculation: since I was advised by my lawyers that matters of 1976-77 have not yet reached hearing before Special Judges. Hence this case, filed only in 1982, won't come up for another five years. I simply repeated this advice to the magazine and yet this was brought to the notice of the Honourable Court. This question of yours has an undoubted bearing on the facts of the case which is sub-judice. I would rather refrain from making any comment.

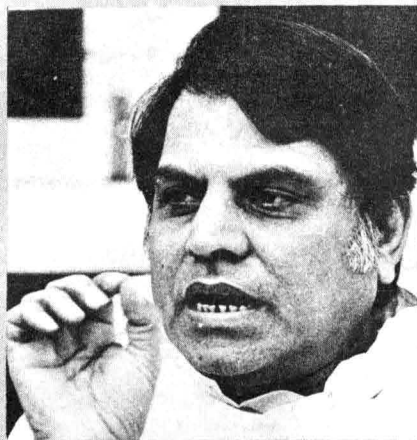
If you like, we can generally talk about any other thing.

Q. How does it feel to be without any office in the government?

A. It makes no difference to me whether I am in or out. I have been an active political worker of the Congress for more than 35 years out of which I have hardly been in office for seven. Barring these seven, I have worked out of office for almost 28 years of my life.

Q. As one of the architects of the Congress (I) Party in Maharashtra, it must be frustrating to be sidelined.

A. Firstly, the party is built around the personality of our leader Smt Indira Gandhi—at least since 1969, more particularly since 1978. I can claim to be only a humble soldier in this crusade. It would therefore be a tall talk on my part if I believed as true what you



Antulay: "I regret nothing."

allege—that the party was built up in Maharashtra by me.

Q. Do you regret your angry outburst against the two AICC observers during the election for Chief Minister?

A. I regret nothing; because I am not guilty of anything. It goes without saying that I was convinced that what I was doing was right.

The observers gave vent to their feelings and thoughts before pressmen in my regard. I did so too, the subsequent day, in reply. Ask them if they regret, first.

Q. What do you regard as the major achievements of your Chief Ministership?

A. That the common man all over Maharashtra, generously and magnanimously, still remembers me with warmth and affection. This is my only achievement! The rest is waste.

Q. And do you think you made any mistakes?

A. I said earlier that I have no regrets. I would do the same things all over again, given an opportunity to function in a similar position. Of course, I don't claim to be infallible, none, indeed, can. But mistakes, if any, are such which any person can commit. Not the

kind which you probably mean.

Q. Is it true that Mrs Gandhi has admonished you for your behaviour as Chief Minister?

A. What transpires between me and Mrs Gandhi has never been witnessed by any pressmen of any hue or colour. When I am privileged to call on my leader—and I enjoy this privilege quite often—the only third being, besides madam and me, who is present is God Almighty who does not take the press into confidence.

Q. That doesn't answer the question.

A. You can read between the lines.

Q. Can we then dismiss reports that you plan to form your own party?

A. It is customary for those who invent such reports to dismiss them.

Q. Do you think you can be elected Chief Minister of Maharashtra by the legislature party again?

A. Firstly, I don't want to offer myself any more as candidate for the office of CM. I am no longer interested. Secondly, as to the preference of MLAs today, you yourself can contact them and ascertain who they support.

Q. Has the Maratha lobby once more regained control of Maharashtra politics?

A. Do not mistake sugar lobby for Maratha lobby. There is no such thing in Maharashtra as a Maratha lobby. Eighty to 90 per cent of Marathas are small and poor; and poor people do not build lobbies.

It is altogether a different thing that the remaining 10 to 20 per cent thrive on the numerical strength of the majority of poor and forgotten Marathas who unfortunately become merely cannon-fodder and do not count for much, economically and politically.

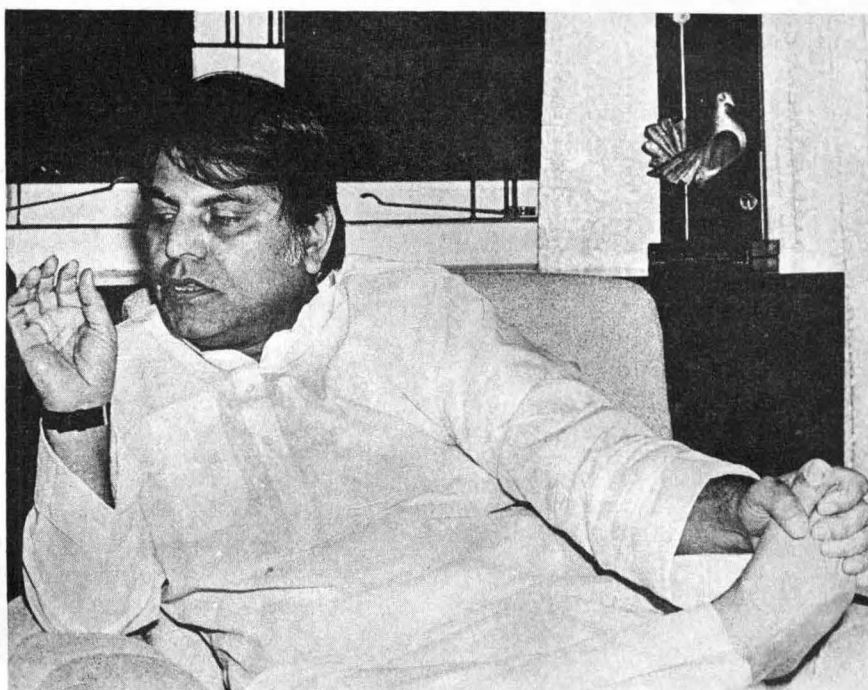
and copies in triplicate. He appointed a committee under Ajit Kerkar of the Taj to examine the housing problem in Bombay (an underrated but valuable report came out of this exercise), and considered building a bridge to connect Uran to mainland Bombay. He vastly increased the budget of the state police force, announced several new projects in the Konkan area and gave poor farmers relief from their debts to state institutions. His style was characterized by an unwillingness to rely on ministers or civil servants. The cabinet was either ignored or belittled while Indian Administrative Service (IAS) secretaries were regularly shuffled around.

It was the lavishness of Antulay's gestures that finally made people look closely at his style of functioning. Along with London-based trader Nirmal Sethia, he announced a scheme to set up India's most advanced hospital in the Konkan. After writer Kishan Chander's wife visited him to complain about her financial status, he announced at a press conference in 1981 that he was setting up the Indira Gandhi Pratibha Pratisthan to help the arts. More trusts followed in quick succession.

At the time, people assumed that they were really government-run trusts an impression the state publicity machine did nothing to dispel. When reports began filtering through that Antulay was asking for donations to the trusts in return for the issue of no objection certificates, nobody was particularly shocked. The feeling was that at least he was asking for cheque payments that would be utilized for a good cause—most other Chief Ministers simply took the money in cash for themselves.

It was only after Arun Shourie and Govind Talwalkar's exposes in the *Indian Express* and the *Maharashtra Times*, that the outrage began. Ramnath Goenka has claimed that he gave Shourie the story and Shourie has confirmed that Goenka did refer him to a London and Geneva-based family of Sindhi businessmen, who it is said, had objected to contributing to the Konkan Hospital Trust. While Shourie did get most of his story from other sources, it seems clear that by then, businessmen had begun to balk at the sums that were being demanded and were complaining to the press.

Shourie's article suggested that



Antulay: "no denying his dynamism and ability to take quick decisions."

firstly, the trusts were not government ones, and that secondly, there seemed to be a clear correlation between people who contributed to them and those that received no objection certificates, cement and other favours. Charges of corruption have been made periodically against several Chief Ministers, but now for the first time, there was evidence—Antulay had taken the money by cheque.

As the controversy raged, Antulay tried, first to brazen it out and argued that there was nothing wrong with accepting money for the trusts (even if no objection certificates were part of the arrangement), and that, the private-public dispute over his trusts was a technical one. Later, he became less cocky, particularly when it seemed that Mrs Gandhi was wavering. Shourie had charged that Antulay had used Mrs Gandhi's name 'as commerce' and Finance Minister Venkatraman promptly denied that Mrs Gandhi had agreed to the use of her name for the Indira Gandhi Pratisthan. Later, Antulay went along with this denial.

Finally, a civil case arguing that Antulay's ad-hoc system of cement allocation was contrary to law was heard by Justice Lentin at the High Court. When the judge ruled that there seemed to be a nexus between contributions to the trusts and allocations of cement, Antulay handed in his resignation.

Later, he fell out with Babasaheb

Bhosale, the new Chief Minister and appeared startled when the Governor of Maharashtra sanctioned his prosecution on criminal charges, in response to a request by Ramdas Nayak. It is this criminal case, accusing him of cheating and corruption that will probably be heard this month.

When Bhosale resigned, Antulay stood once again for election as Chief Minister. He was defeated but not before he lost his temper with Shiv Shankar and Buta Singh, the two Central Observers ("You Shiv Shankar! Who are you! I admitted you to the party!" he shouted) and publicly denounced the election as a farce.

Now, there seems little chance that he will ever be important in Congress (I) politics again. The criminal case will take up much of his time and Mrs Gandhi seems to have disowned him. Predictably, there is talk of him launching a party of his own.

Still, Antulay has not yet lost his taste for the good things of life. When *Imprint* tried to contact him in May and June, to get his response to the charges, he was unavailable. Later we learned that the whole Antulay family had flown off to London to visit the former Chief Minister's young son who is at school in England. Antulay then extended his stay. He wanted, he said, to study the performance of parties in the British elections.

Could the sudden interest in electoral performances be ominous? ♦

ADVENTURES AT THE WEEKLY

By M V Kamath

Editing India's most popular magazine can be tough—particularly when you have to cope with Khushwant Singh, irate regular readers and an unsympathetic management—says the Weekly's former editor.

SOME TIME IN MID-JANUARY 1978 I returned to India from Washington DC where I had been stationed as *The Times of India* correspondent, on home leave. I called on my friends and colleagues in office during the time I was in Bombay and flew back to the US capital in mid-March, to resume the last leg of my career as a foreign correspondent. I was then 57 years old and due to retire three years later. I looked forward to my last three years of service with a certain sense of accomplishment—and detachment. The Washington post was a prized job. I had got it against stiff competition. By 1978 I had put in nine years. My fellow-professionals had given me their mead of praise for a job well done. I had presided over the founding meeting of the Washington Foreign Press Association and had I stayed on, would no doubt have become its first president. It would have given me the greatest pleasure to be the first president of the prestigious body as a happy culmination of my career that spanned three decades.

I had hardly been back at my job a fortnight when fate, in the portly shape of Dr Ram Tarneja took a hand. On the night of April 1, when I was busy drafting a story, the phone started ringing, firmly, determinedly and insistently. I did not expect any calls at that time of

the night; it was a little after midnight. I ignored it at first. But something told me to pick up the receiver. "Is that Mr Kamath?" asked the disembodied voice at the other end. I identified myself. "There is an overseas call for you from Bombay, sir," the voice continued. I literally jumped out of my skin. During all the 20 years I was abroad, I dreaded the thought of getting a call from Bombay intimating death or terminal illness from a member of my family. And my mother was then 84 and getting weaker day by day.

But it was not my family calling me. It was Dr Ram Tarneja, General Manager (now Managing Director) of Bennett Coleman & Co. "Did I wake you up?" politely inquired Dr Tarneja.

"Goodness, no, I am working on my story."

"Have you a moment to spare?" And this, when he was calling me from Bombay.

"Yes, what is it?"

"Can you return to Bombay and take up the editorship of the *Illustrated Weekly*?"

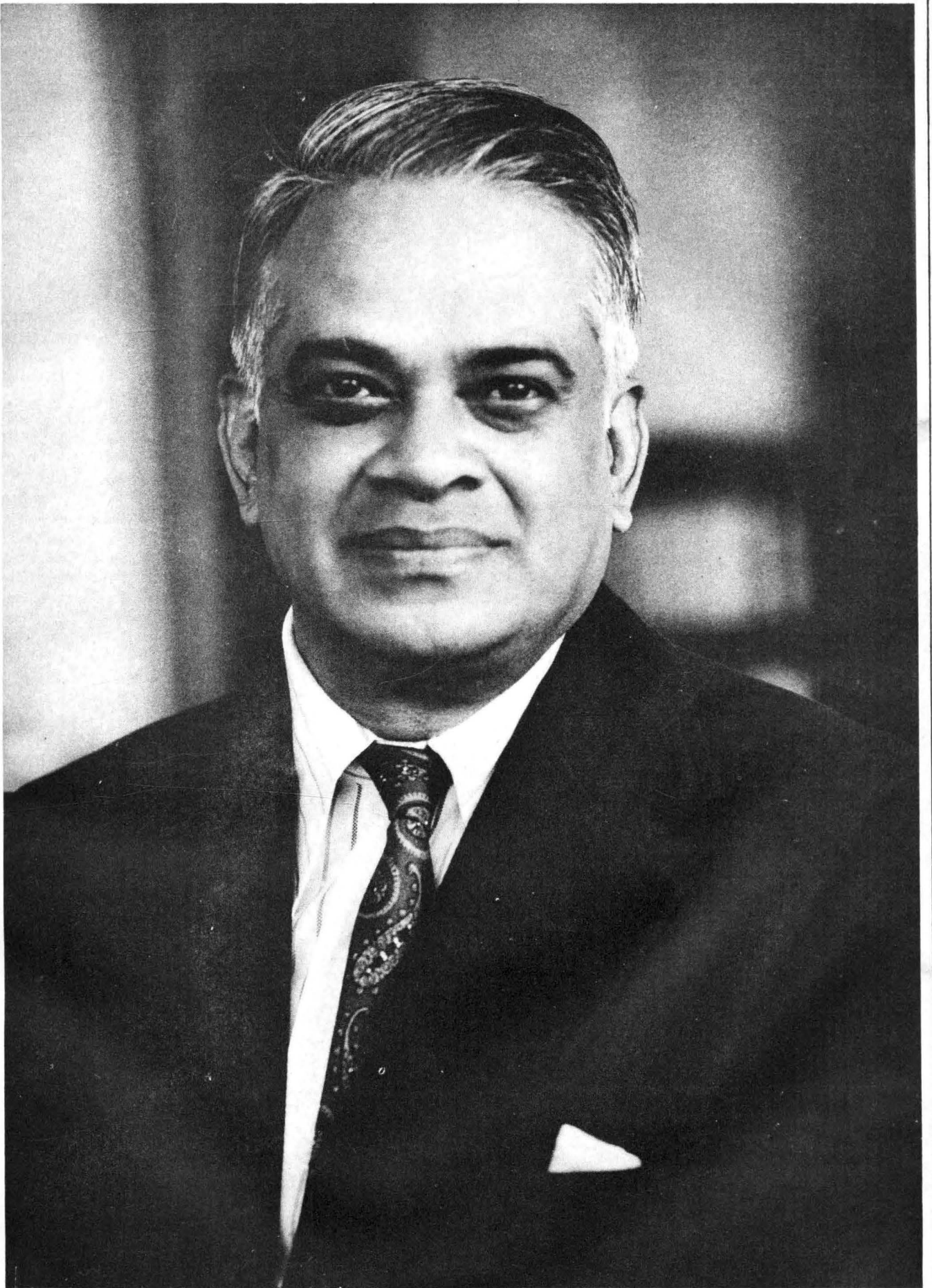
"*Weekly*?" I asked, "why the *Weekly*?"

Dr Tarneja said, "Because Khushwant Singh is retiring."

"Well," I said, "I was in India for two months and I have just returned to my job. Why didn't you ask me when I was in Bombay?"

"It didn't occur to us," replied Dr Tarneja.

MV Kamath was Editor of the Illustrated Weekly of India from 1978 to 1981. He is currently a columnist for several newspapers. His memoirs will be published later this year.



PHOTOGRAPH BY BALKRISHAN

This was puzzling. I persisted with my line of inquiry. "Why didn't you send me a telexed message? You gave me a fright by putting a telephone call through!"

"And let the whole world know that we have offered you the job?" said Dr Tarneja.

It was obviously a very hush-hush affair and nobody was to know. The three minutes were over and Dr Tarneja asked for an extension. "Well," he said, "are you accepting the offer or not? I want a quick reply!" I told Dr Tarneja that it was April 1 in Washington and I did not think he should pull an April Fool joke on me.

"But it is April 2 in Bombay already!" he said, missing my point, "we think you'll make a good editor." I thanked Dr Tarneja for the compliment and said I needed time to think. "How long do you need to think?" asked Dr Tarneja, a little impatience entering into his voice.

"Forty eight hours," I replied.

"Try to make it sooner," he said, "But call me at my home and not at the office." And he gave me his residential number. Then he hung up.

I had never considered editorship of the *Weekly* a particularly prestigious job. There had been some talk of offering it to me in 1968-69 but I was dead set on the Washington assignment which I thought was the height of ambition any journalist could aspire to. I hold that view even today. For 20 years I had literally dined and wined with presidents and prime ministers, foreign ministers and ambassadors, covered every important international gathering in three continents, travelled widely and become something of an expert on international affairs. There was nothing that the editorship of the *Weekly* could offer me either in terms of money, fame, prestige—or even professional satisfaction.

But after 20 years of living abroad, I was feeling jaded and used up and a change of scenery was not to be scoffed at. The *Weekly* editorship was not something that I had asked for but had been offered on a platter. Months later Dr Tarneja was to tell me that he was

somewhat annoyed at my not snapping it up at once and for wanting time to think it over. He evidently thought that I would be bowled over by his offer. Nothing of the sort happened. I finished my story, telexed it to Bombay and went contentedly to sleep. The next day I called on our Ambassador, Nani Palkhivala. What did he think I should do?

Nani was all for my accepting the *Weekly* editorship. "Take it," he advised. "You'll like it." I thanked him, still unconvinced. I took my full 48 hours to go over all the arguments pro and con; there was no way I could



"Nani was all for my accepting the *Weekly* editorship. 'Take it,' he advised. 'You'll like it.' I thanked him still unconvinced."

consult any of my friends for I had been asked to keep the offer a top secret. In the end I thought I might as well return home. I had given all I could in 20 years as a foreign correspondent. The editorship of the *Weekly* was icing on the cake.

WHEN I RETURNED to Bombay in mid-July, after covering Prime Minister Morarji Desai's visit to the United States in early June and doing a bit of travel in the United States and Europe myself to visit the offices of such great journals as *Time-Life*, *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Stern* in Hamburg and *Paris-Match* in Paris, not to say other journals of repute, I was asked to cool my heels in a cabin on the third floor of the *Times* office and await the return of Mr Khushwant Singh who was away. The understanding was that I would work with him for a couple of months as an understudy to learn the mechanics of the job, before taking over. But since he was away, I whiled away my time, going through back issues of the *Weekly* to see what sort of job Mr Singh was doing. I had never taken Mr Singh seriously. For a time I had followed the series he ran on various castes and sub-castes but after a while that had begun to pall. Bennett Coleman used to send me copies of all the journals by sea mail which I promptly distributed to the wives of my Indian friends who seemed more interested in *Femina* and *Filmfare* than in the *Weekly*.

My own primary interests were in the United States and its foreign policy. I was not attracted to the bare breasts and buttocks journalism that distinguished the *Weekly*. I had done a couple of articles for it at the editor's behest, but my relation with the journal was purely professional. I seldom felt the need to look into it.

Going through the back issues of the *Weekly* at leisure, I found to my dismay that I had made the mistake of accepting the magazine's editorship. It had no character or reputation that I could be proud of. I had been brought up in the tradition of Syed Abdulla Brelvi, BG Horniman, S Sadanand,

S Natarajan, Shawn Mandy and Stalin Srinivasan—men, one might say, who were committed journalists, but committed to causes and not to themselves. Except for Mandy, a good Irishman, I don't think any of them either drank or socialised or made exhibitions of themselves. They were strictly private men and if they were known and admired, it was because of the values they upheld and not because their favourite drink was Chivas Regal. The *Weekly* I paged through had no values that I could discover and I was aghast at the thought of having to run it.

At that point I should have run for my life, and asked to be sent back to Washington or seconded to the *Times of India*. But I had burnt my boats and it was a case of sink or swim. The choice was stark; as it happened, I had no time even to think. The day Mr Singh returned from his trip and came to office, he was informed that his resignation had been accepted with immediate effect and that he should hand over charge to me. Mr Singh gathered his papers without a word, called for a taxi and left and I was asked to fill in at short notice. It was as painful for me to enter the editor's office as it must have been for Mr Singh to leave it.

The next few weeks were pure comic opera. I had three Assistant Editors, whom I inherited. The seniormost in point of service was R Gopalakrishna, a scholar par excellence who had literally grown with the *Weekly* and had worked under four editors. In all fairness, he should have been appointed the editor. An intense, sensitive man, it is possible that he felt slighted at the manner in which Mr Singh was eased out and the manner in which I was inducted. Unable to face what he must have assessed as an unpleasant situation, he went on leave.

The next in seniority was Raju Bharatan, a magazine-man to his finger tips and an acknowledged expert on cinema and sports. His talents, however were not availed of except when a cricket issue was called for when his presence seems to have been reluctantly noticed. For all practical purposes he had been treated as a supernumer-

ary, barely tolerated and never consulted. A first class mind was left untapped. He was considered unfit to do political stories when he was probably the best man suited for the purpose, as I was to discover subsequently.

The staffer who really mattered was Mrs Fatma Zakaria. It was Mrs Zakaria who practically ran the show with tact and skill during the editor's frequent absences. A capable lady, she had the unsought advantage of being a Minister's wife.

I knew none of my senior colleagues. R Gopalakrishna (RGK to most readers) I had met casually in the

'40s or early '50s. I knew Raju Bharatan's respected father, the late AS Bharatan, who was the first Indian General Manager of the *Press Trust of India*. I had met Mr and Mrs Zakaria when they came to Washington DC while I was still there and whom I had taken out for dinner. But that was the extent of my understanding of my colleagues of whose talents, personal problems and inter-personal relationships I had yet to make an assessment. I knew none of my junior staff except one and that acquaintanceship, too, was over three decades old.

With RGK on leave, Mrs Zakaria took charge of initiating me in the mysteries of bringing out the *Weekly*. There were many technical and procedural details to be mastered. The *Weekly* is a complex organisation and I needed time to study it. Quite early, Mrs Zakaria told me how my predecessor had let the staff run the show for the first three or four months before taking over editorial guidance. She meant well and was never obtrusive and when a friend asked me how I was doing, I said jokingly, that instead of my running the *Weekly*, I was letting Mrs Zakaria run me. It was a silly remark to make and I did not realise then that word of what I said would go back to her. Stung by what she thought was a reflection on her, she now decided to leave me to my own devices. With two senior colleagues on leave and another with whom I had yet to establish an equation, I felt like the husband whose newly married wife

had left him soon after he set up home. It was not, I might say, the most auspicious way of starting my new career.

Till I entered the *Weekly* office, I had no idea how it had been run. The *Weekly* has always been an editor's magazine. That was so when Stanley Jepson was the editor. That was so when Shawn Mandy succeeded Jepson. And that remained so when AS Raman took over. It was no different when my predecessor found himself in Jepson's chair. Overnight I became aware of my predecessor's shadow over my new existence. There had been some continuity in the *Weekly*'s style of presentation till my predeces-



"The Weekly must be the only journal to which a sitting US President (Jimmy Carter) contributed an article."

sor took over. Unhappily for me, he had his own ideas of what the *Weekly* should be. It was going to be an adult magazine and an adult magazine it had become: loud, vulgar, scabrous and unbelievably disreputable. Its staple was politics, religion and sex and not necessarily in that order. One did not know—as one normally does in such a situation—where sex began and politics ended. The mix-up was hilarious and brought the *Weekly* an enthusiastic and equally vulgar readership that I inherited and which I was quickly to lose. And this was to give me many sleepless nights.

My predecessor had turned himself into a performer—of sorts. He had become a celebrity in Bombay with a devoted band of followers—a kind of IS Johar in journalism. He obviously enjoyed his role. Unfortunately for me, I detested clubs, hated parties and liked nothing better than to get into my ivory tower with my books and music. For 20 years I had had a surfeit of parties, private and diplomatic, formal and informal and my major ambition when I returned to Bombay was to moth-ball my tuxedo and stay away from celebrities.

A whole generation of readers had been hooked on to the bare breasts and buttocks brand of journalism and it had to be slowly weaned away from it. The process was painful both to the editor and the reader. The reader reacted understandably like a drug addict at the very first sign of denial of his regular fare, that is to say, violently. I do not know how I survived my first six months as 'Acting' Editor, a title generously bestowed on me by the management. The mail I received was vicious, vitriolic and highly abusive and gave demonstrable evidence of concerted action. Among the charges levelled against me was that I was too 'Americanised' to edit an Indian weekly.

Week by week, the circulation began to show an inclination to drop. The trend had begun in the last months of my predecessor's stewardship but now everyone blamed me for it. There was no help from the management which would not confirm me in my post, having brought me to Bombay on clearly false promises. I was getting no excess-

ive help from the staff either which, in any case, I did not know. I was being hauled over the coals by an angry and frustrated readership which felt cheated of its weekly fare of general piffle. The only one, it seemed, who believed in me was the advertising firm of ARMS whose representative, Mrs Usha Puri, kept telling me that I was doing well and not to worry.

But I worried. Every time I received a copy of the week's print order, my heart would sink a couple of inches. Every time I opened the mail, I would steel myself to being unfavourably compared to my predecessor and to a fresh bout of abuse. I published all the angry letters, suitably abridged and laundered, if only to tell a certain seg-

ment of readers that here was one editor who could take it on his chin. I was determined to prove two things: that decency in journalism could have a place under the sun and that one did not have to stoop low in order to gather encomia. Almost one of the first issues I put out was on Excellence. I asked the US Ambassador in Delhi, the former President of Princeton, whether he could get President Carter to write for me. He readily obliged and the *Weekly* must be the only journal to which a sitting US President contributed an article. I matched it with an article from the then Prime Minister of India, Morarji Desai. My other contributors included Swami Ranganathanandji of the Ramkrishna Order, Mr MC Chagla, an old friend, Vijay Merchant and Norman Cousins, editor of the prestigious *Saturday Review*. It was a star-studded issue and was plainly intended to tell my readers that a new editor with a new approach had taken over.

Not long after, the Jnanpith Award to K Shivarama Karanth, the distinguished writer in Kannada was announced and I put Mr Karanth on the cover. Never before had a literary figure featured on the cover and certainly not a Jnanpith Award winner. The literary world was pleased, if not thrilled that one of them got the recognition he deserved. I gave eight pages to Mr Karanth and his work—something never done in the past.

I started giving Art its due. For years artists had been ignored on the grounds that art was passe—and not adult enough fare. I thought it was time to bring them back. Only the *Weekly* could give artists a break—and the necessary all-India exposure. Several artists wrote to thank me for putting Art—and the *Weekly*—back on the rails. Some called on me personally to convey their appreciation.

I lost about ten per cent of the readership and I was beginning to lose my nerve. But then the miracle happened. I gained about 12 per cent. What I lost in the swing, I gained in the round-about. Thousands of families must have been silently watching me from the sidelines to see how I would shape up



"I put Mr Karanth on the cover. Never before had a literary figure featured on the cover and certainly not a Jnanpith Award winner."

and whether I had the courage to be my own man. Convinced at last that I was striking out on my own, these people now flocked to me. Just before I completed my first year as Acting Editor, I was invited to a home for dinner. I did not know the host or hostess but it turned out that I had been invited at the special behest of Mrs Rukmini Arundale who said she wanted to see me personally and to tell me what a joy it was to read the *Weekly* under my editorship. She had given up reading the *Weekly*, she said, years ago. She had started reading it once again.

The *Weekly's* readership is essentially conservative; it is read in the back of the beyond and for years was the only family fare. My predecessor, however, had his own ideas of what to offer and couldn't care less for his readers' sensibilities. The late '60s and early '70s were the years of India's decadence. Successive Five Year Plans had placed money into the hands of a new class of *nouveau riche* to whose unrefined and questionable tastes the *Weekly* had cleverly pandered. The conservatives could take it or leave it. Many left it. But the editor had found a new class of clientele—and he had no competition.

By the time my predecessor's term was over, however, he had come to discover that his sure-fire formula was backfiring. Readers were getting sick of sex and titillation and were leaving in sizeable numbers. This was when I came in.

But the thought of another man doing better than him must have riled my predecessor who started a ridiculous campaign against the *Weekly* and its new editor. When I went to Punjab to do a special issue on the state, an old friend of mine came over to me and whispered, "Is it true that you have lost in circulation?" I said truthfully, that I did experience some initial setbacks but that I had more than caught up and was cruising beautifully with an additional two percentage points than when I began. "Well, Khushwant has been here and telling everybody that the *Weekly's* circulation has been down from a 3,50,000 high in his time to a low 75,000 now," came the reply.

After I returned to Bombay I sent my friend a copy of the latest print order.

On an appropriate occasion we brought out a cricket issue which sold a record 4,56,000 copies (and could have done even better had not the management decided that enough was enough)—the highest *Weekly* sales ever. And to stress that it was the work of the much-maligned Raju Bharatan, I wrote an editorial note publicly praising his services. I was surprised that this did not meet with the approval of the management which it seemed, did not like Raju either. Giving praise where it is due, obviously, was not considered good management.



"Khushwant had turned himself into a performer—of sorts. He had become a celebrity in Bombay—a kind of I S Johar in journalism."

THERE WAS ONE aspect of the *Weekly* that bothered me greatly when I took over its Acting Editorship. It had lost its credibility. My predecessor had decided that the Emergency was good for the country, that Sanjay Gandhi was God's answer to all our ills, social, economic and political and that the Indira Gandhi regime needed to be supported. I might add here that during the early days of the Emergency I myself had supported it in Washington DC and earned the opprobrium of my colleagues—I am afraid, very rightly. But by the time I returned home, I had seen the error of my political ways and had come to regard the protagonists of the Emergency with horror. It was my hope that

the Janata would do better, but the Party quickly disillusioned me. I had many friends in it like Madhu Limaye and that was a time when I admired George Fernandes but within weeks of my return I came to realise that this party was hardly equipped to rule the country.

I went on the offensive and while we gave access to the *Weekly's* pages to those whose policies I abhorred, that was done as a matter of principle, and to establish, once again, the *Weekly's* credibility which now soared. Mr MC Chagla had refused point blank to write for my predecessor who had the bad taste to bait the distinguished jurist with the highest payment in his power to give. Mr Chagla told me this himself. When I called him to write for me, he said, "I was hoping you would ask me. I had refused to write for your predecessor." He wrote for me on two or three different occasions.

In fact, I don't remember anyone refusing to write for me. I did not think it was part of my job to support the Establishment—any Establishment—and I criticised the Janata Party freely. In fact, when it fell I wrote a two-page editorial and called it: *The Jokers and the Fools Depart*. I subsequently learnt that it was discussed in high Congress (I) quarters.

We gave no quarters to Congress (I) either. I had burnt my fingers once by supporting Mrs Gandhi. I was not going to repeat that mistake again. I asked

the late TA Pai to do me a cover story on Maruti, since he had been implicated in it. Pai wrote for me with absolute truthfulness and I understand his friends berated him for it. But he did not retract a word.

Our even treatment of Janata and Congress (I) put the *Weekly* back in favour of the reader. Nobody ever called me a *chamcha* whether of Morarji Desai or Indira Gandhi. I had been very critical of George Fernandes, but not even George found fault with me. Only once he wrote, more, I imagine in sorrow than in anger, "Madhav, did it take you so long to discover the true nature of Mrs Gandhi?" I gave him credit for being so decent. I had never spared him, as I did not spare Mrs Gandhi.

It took me the best part of 12 months to be an editor on my own, but I made it. Print orders were comfortable. I had not been told that during the time of my predecessor, print orders had been artificially inflated to show high figures and that returns were as many as 30,000 copies. I suggested to Circulation that I needed no such aids to boost my ego. Print orders were suitably amended.

I had cut out soft porno from both text and pictures. I declined to be Exhibit No 1 at parties. In fact, I started to refuse dinner invitations. I concentrated on attacking the Establishment. I brought out special issues on various states, starting with Punjab and including Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Assam and the north eastern states, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh and finally, Madhya Pradesh. I took my readers on a *Bharat Darshan*. We also had special issues on Birds of India, on Indian Wild Life, and on Olympics and kept the Circulation Department reasonably humming and happy. We had an issue on Indian Music and Musicologists and another on Astrology. We became the first magazine to raise the issue of neglected Assam—where our stock went high.

Quite early as editor of the *Weekly* I decided that the only thing I was good at, was being me. I decided to be just me. It was reflected in my column *All Things Considered*, a title that I had hastily picked up, but which was

in tune with my character and thinking. It gave a focus to the *Weekly*. Soon many friends were saying that the first thing they did when they opened the *Weekly's* pages was to turn to my column. It was then that I began to realise the importance of being myself.

As in the column, so in whatever else I did or commissioned others to do, I kept this in mind: that no matter what, I would see things only through my eyes. I discarded much well-meant advice. I placed myself in the shoes of the man in the small town. This came easy because I myself am a small-townner and have always felt like a small-townner. Most of the time, of course, I was second-guessing. The *Weekly's* readership is heterogenous.



"Once George wrote, 'Madhav, did it take you so long to discover the true nature of Mrs Gandhi?' I gave him credit for being decent."

There really is no way of pleasing all the people all the time. But I came to feel that there was something everyone, without exception, appreciated and would appreciate: sincerity.

LETTERS NOW BEGAN to pour in praising the new *Weekly* and its editor. I was finally coming into my own.

I was just beginning to get settled and feel comfortable when Bennett Coleman was afflicted with a series of go-slows and strikes that started to cripple the great organisation. There was nothing that I could do but sit back and watch the *Weekly* — along with other *Times of India* publications being bludgeoned to death by a

thoughtless and criminal union membership. Issues would not go to the press in time; if the printers completed their work, the binders would not. Copies would pile up and there would be no one to move them. It was pathetic. Complaints would come to my desk saying that the *Weekly* was reaching outposts sometimes as much as three weeks late. One irate reader wrote in to ask, "Do we have to read your weekly astrological forecast for what happened a fortnight ago, instead of what is going to happen next week?" Cover stories and lead articles started losing their edge with events overtaking them.

What my detractors could not do, the unions were doing for me: destroying the credibility of the *Weekly* as a journal one could depend to

get over the weekend. At one stage the *Weekly* along with its stable mates was closed down for over two months. We sat back and grit our teeth. During the latter part of my editorship, the appearance of the *Weekly* on the news stands had become too chancy for circulation to hold on. But there was nothing that I could do.

During my editorship the *Weekly* celebrated its centenary and we brought out four special issues covering the entire period, which have now become collectors' items. But the event did not bring the staff and management together. Discontent drove some of the old staff to resign and find employment elsewhere. A compact organ-

isation started slowly to crumble. It was a painful thing to watch the process. Meanwhile, the country was witnessing a new—and on the whole a desirable—phenomenon: the burgeoning of a new crop of magazines, slickly produced like *India Today* and *Sunday*. There were reports that they were cutting into our circulation. I doubted it and called for a readership survey at considerable cost. Pattabhiraman, one of the finest circulation men the *Times* group ever had, warned me against it. "Suppose," he argued (and he had a point there), "the survey goes against you and your handling of the *Weekly*? Won't you feel compelled to resign?" I told him I would risk that. If the survey went against me, I would either have to change my entire approach or get out. But if it supported me, it would only strengthen my hands. In either eventuality, I said I was willing to take the consequences.

We entrusted the survey to an expert organisation and we went through the questionnaire with a sieve. Then I waited for the results. I had never any doubts that my editorial approach was a sound one but the results were beyond even my expectations. The

Weekly stood head and shoulders above magazines in reader approval, content quality, editorial credibility and family acceptance. I had at last been vindicated.

For reasons I do not, to this day know, the management had refused to confirm me in my post for months. I was becoming a joke among my friends. It was strange to be an Acting Editor and never sure for whom I was acting.

"Then I put the letters away.... and cried."

"When would you stop acting and be real?" I would frequently be asked. I could not say. Every three months I would dash off a letter to Dr Ram Tarneja who had no explanation but a wan smile to give for keeping me on ice.

Toward the end it did not matter any more. When the confirmation finally and reluctantly came, with total lack of grace, it had ceased to have any

meaning. Had I been confirmed during those first six hot months when I was being skinned alive, I would have been grateful. To throw a lifebelt to a man who had finally managed to swim ashore on his own after battling it out in the turbulent sea with no help, was no matter for gratitude. When the time came for me to retire, Dr Ram Tarneja offered to give me a party as a farewell gesture. I declined the honour.

But the small staff that had stood by me gave me a terrific send-off and a going-away gift which I relish and is more meaningful to me for the affection it conveyed. I wrote a farewell editorial in the last issue I edited and thought that was the end of the matter. It wasn't. Letters bidding me farewell came from a wide cross-section of readers who had never written to me before, letters of thanks, of praise, of goodwill, of regret that I'll be gone, touching in their solicitude and my faithful secretary Bhalekar sent them to me in a bundle. I read one letter and then another and then still another. . .

Then I put the bundle aside and did the silliest thing one can think of. I cried. ♦

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Imprint, July 1983 : 29

International Intelligence

A Monthly Look at the Events and Personalities Behind the News

UK ASIANS Going The Thatcher Way



Premila Le Hunte campaigning.

THE CONSERVATIVE landslide in last month's British elections is at least partly attributable to the fact that many Indian and Pakistani immigrants to UK voted for Mrs Thatcher's party. In many marginal constituencies where the Labour party had counted on black and Asian support, this was simply not forthcoming. While West Indians and Africans (the 'black' immigrants) were unwilling to actually go out and vote, many Indians and Pakistanis switched their votes from Labour to the Conservatives.

This sudden surge of support for Mrs Thatcher is astonishing in view of her background. In 1978, when she was in Opposition, she claimed that whites were frightened of being 'swamped' by immigrants and promised stricter immigra-

tion controls. After her party won the 1979 election, her government introduced the now notorious Nationality Act that sought to introduce categories of citizenship with the effect that black and brown Britons came pretty low down on the scale. Her unsympathetic handling of race relations problems led to the worst riots in Britain's history between police and black youths in Liverpool and Brixton.

How then did she make such substantial inroads into the ethnic vote? As far as the blacks are concerned, many of them have been so disillusioned by the British political system that they saw no point in participating in the electoral process. Their apathy let the Conservative candidate get elected in many constituencies. In

the case of the Asians however, the situation is more complicated.

DOMESTIC CONSIDERATIONS

The Pakistani vote split because of domestic considerations. Many of Mr Bhutto's supporters recalled his friendship with members of the Conservative Party and believed that they were helping the People's Party back home by electing Mrs Thatcher. Ironically, many fans of the present military regime voted Conservative because they felt that Britain approved of General Zia's stewardship of Pakistan. Thus, Mrs Thatcher had it both ways.

The Indians were also moved by domestic considerations. In recent months, the pro-Khalistan lobby has been growing. Many Sikhs regard Britain as a natural ally in their struggle to establish an independent state (after all, the Sikhs supported the British in 1857 on similar grounds). While the Labour government ignored their claims in 1947, they feel that the



Keith Joseph.



Thatcher victorious.

Conservatives will be more sympathetic this time around.

Apart from the domestic considerations, there was also the fact that the UK Asian community is finally emerging as an ethnic group in its right and is resentful of being classed along with the blacks. Many Indians feel that the Brixton and Liverpool riots had nothing to do with them. It was the West Indians who took on the police—not the Asians. Privately, many of them are as racially prejudiced about the blacks as are the white Britons. They see Mrs Thatcher's firm (if not ruthless) handling of the West Indian problem as being in their own interests. Ironically, the black-bashing rhetoric that appeals so much to British racists, also strikes a responsive chord among UK Indians.

GOD SAVE SWAROOP

Among the leading Indian Conservatives is a strange man called Narinder Swaroop. Major Swaroop (as he calls himself) would,

if you closed your eyes, be typical of a certain kind of British Conservative—he sings *God Save The Queen* with gusto, thinks that the Falklands adventure was a jolly good thing, believes that hanging should be re-introduced and feels that immigration controls are absolutely marvellous. That the kind of British Conservative he apes would probably regard him as a funny little wog has not dulled the Major's enthusiasm. He was active in collecting funds for Mrs Thatcher's campaign this year and has appeared on Conservative Central Office's list of approved candidates for some years now.

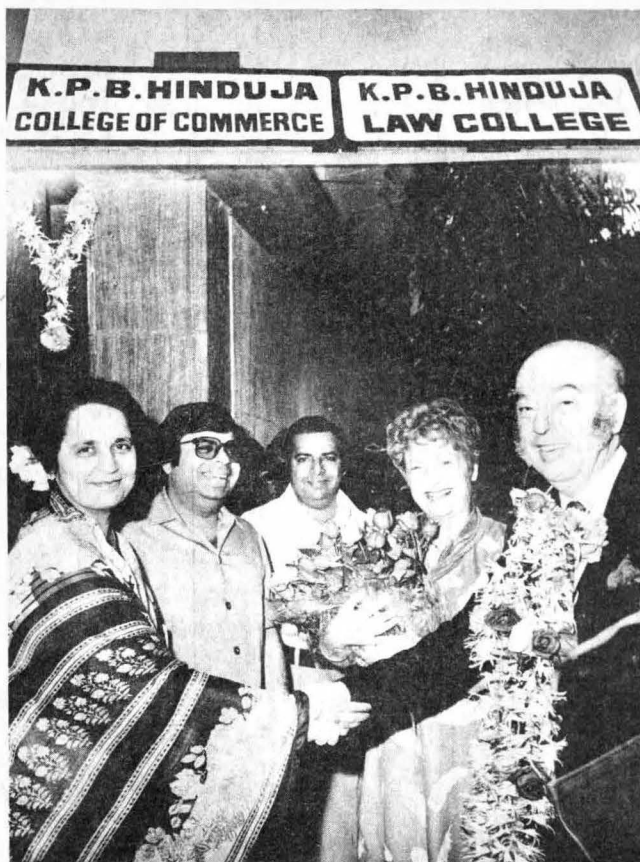
Not all Indian Conservatives fit into the Subedar Blimp category, though there are a fair number of these (Premila Le Hunte, an Asian who the Conservatives put up in a safe Labour seat in Birmingham, is pretty much Major Swaroop's cup of tea). There are others who feel that UK Asians are on the verge of making the jump into the establishment just as the Jews did some decades ago. (Keith Joseph, Mrs Thatcher's intellectual mentor and ministers Leon Brittan and Nigel Lawson are all Jewish.) They see their economic interests as lying with the Conservatives

and not the working class oriented Labour party.

Many Gujarati shop keepers and merchants approve of Mrs Thatcher's pruning of the welfare state and applaud her ability to make the unemployment figures go up at will. Among those Indians who have hit the top in the UK, such feelings are more pronounced. Swraj Paul is reported to have contributed several thousand pounds to the Conservative campaign chest this year and the two older Hinduja brothers—Srichand and Gopichand—are trusted allies of the Conservative leadership. Srichand Hinduja, for instance, has hosted parties for such luminaries as Education Minister, Rhodes Boyson and former Prime Minister, Edward Heath on their trips to India.

COURTING THE VOTE

Some Conservatives have also tried to court the Asian vote. Boyson, for instance, went on a tour of Gujrat solely because his constituency—Brent—has a high proportion of Gujaratis. Nevertheless, Mrs Thatcher seems to see no need to alter her unsympathetic immigration policy. She has refused to strengthen the Race Relations Act and the Joint Council for the Welfare of



Rhodes Boyson with the Hindujas.

Immigrants has been ignored.

The point is that Asians have stopped minding. They are less concerned with bringing their relatives in, both because the UK economy is in such poor shape and because emigrants from India would make much more money in the Gulf than in Britain, these days. They are beginning to move out of 'immigrant' areas and trying to integrate themselves with the British middle classes. Like the Jews before them, they are trying to keep a low-profile and pretending that racism does not exist.

The election results show that a majority of Asians still couldn't bring themselves to vote Conservative. But a fair number did and there is every chance that at the next election, there will be more Asian Conservatives. Should this happen, then Britain will stand less of a chance of electing its first black or

Asian member of Parliament in the postwar period. This year, 17 'ethnic' candidates stood, but none of them was given a 'safe' constituency by his or her party. Only the Labour Party risked putting up black rabble-rouser Paul Boateng in a marginal seat and even he lost. If it becomes clear that the ethnic vote is in danger of going Conservative, then Labour will probably lose interest. And the Conservatives have made it clear that they are only prepared to put up black or Asian candidates in seats where the Labour man is certain to get in.

In political terms, Asians who turn Conservative are clearly making a big mistake. But in sociological terms, they could be doing the right thing. The Jews, for instance, have become one with the establishment by using a similar strategy. In 1975, when Keith Joseph spoke about the reproduc-



SP Hinduja and Edward Heath.

tive habits of the lower classes destroying Britain's 'national stock', a few comparisons with Goebbels were made. But nobody seemed to think it odd that a Jew

should be using Nazi terminology.

Perhaps by 1990, even Major Swaroop will seem normal.

JOHN F KENNEDY

The Girls Keep Coming

WERE HE ALIVE, John F Kennedy would be 66. He was assassinated, however, on November 22, 1963. That anniversary—20 years since his death—is a major reason for the spate of Kennedy books, articles and TV programmes to be offered this year.

On the basis of achievement, historians rate Kennedy's Presidency as 'average'. His private life was not. It was hectic and sex-ridden, though its racy aspect lay unexposed while he occupied the White House. Now, however, his biographers—on TV and elsewhere—are sure to reveal his liaisons with at least two women he may have loved, one before he married, the other after.

The first was Inga Arvad, a tall, blonde Danish journalist whom Kennedy met early in World War II, when she was 28 and he was a 24-year-old ensign stationed in the Office of Naval Intelligence in Washington.

Inga was a truly fascinating female. Born in Copenhagen in 1913 and reared in several European countries, she at 19 had married a young Egyptian diplomat. The marriage lasted two years. She then settled in Berlin, where her sexuality attracted the Nazi brass—Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and von Ribbentrop. Inga interviewed these bigwigs for the *Berlingske Tidende*,

a Copenhagen newspaper.

HITLER'S ADMIRATION

Adolf Hitler was particularly drawn to Inga. Describ-



Inga Arvad.

ing her as 'the perfect example of Nordic beauty', he escorted her to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. Soon Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop suggested that she work for him as an undercover agent in Paris. Refusing to be enmeshed in the Nazi spy web, Inga returned to Copenhagen, where she fell in love with and wed Paul Fejos, a Hungarian film director.

When that marriage foundered, Inga became the mistress of Axel Wennergren, a Swedish industrialist with high Nazi connections. She

left him in 1939, came to New York and studied journalism at Columbia University. Inga next landed a job on *The Washington Times-Herald*, where one of her colleagues was Kathleen Kennedy. It was she who enthusiastically introduced Inga to her witty, good-looking brother.

Smitten by her beauty, impressed by her worldliness and finding her sexually irresistible, Jack Kennedy promptly moved in with the young lady. Tipped off about Inga's background, FBI agents placed her and Kennedy under surveillance, reporting to J Edgar Hoover. (Hoover kept the file on Kennedy in his private office for 20 years.)

SEX SPY

According to Inga Arvad, whom he lovingly called 'Inga-Binga', Jack Kennedy sincerely wanted to marry her. His father Joseph P Kennedy, however, wouldn't hear of it. The old man conceded that she was a sexy stalk of Scandinavian loveliness (in fact, Inga said, Joseph P himself tried to seduce her) but pointed out that Inga was a Lutheran and still married; his son was a Catholic. Moreover, she was suspected of being an enemy spy trading sex for secrets.

Joe Kennedy was a man of influence. A few phone calls to Washington, and his son was transferred out of the arms of the temptress and subsequently into a PT boat squadron in the Pacific.

Jack Kennedy wrote to Inga-Binga from the Solomon Islands and at war's end returned to her, this time in Los Angeles. But by then their romance had cooled and Jack began seriously courting screen actress Gene Tierney.

In 1947, Inga married Tim McCoy, 64, a star of cowboy films. The McCoy's moved to a ranch near



Mary Pinchot Meyer.

Nogales, Ariz, where Inga died of cancer in 1973, a *femme fatale* of yesteryear and Jack Kennedy's first great love.

His last great love reportedly was Mary Pinchot Meyer, who was murdered by an unknown assailant on October 12, 1964, two days before her 44th birthday. An attractive blonde, she was the victim of a sexually motivated attack on the C&O towpath in Washington, DC.

CIA HUSBAND

Mary was the socially prominent niece of Gifford Pinchot, a two-term governor of Pennsylvania. She met Jack Kennedy when he was a student at Choate, a prep school in Wallingford, Conn. She subsequently attended Vassar and in 1945 married Cord Meyer Jr, a young World War II veteran who founded the United World Federalist organization and later became a top CIA official. Mary divorced him in 1957, then renewed a lapsed interest in art and developed into a painter of some note.

After Kennedy was elected President, Mary saw him from time to time in the White House, her studio or the homes of mutual friends.

Their entente apparently endured until Kennedy's assassination, but little of it came to public light until the '70s.

Although Jack Kennedy was sickly during much of his adulthood—he suffered from bilateral adrenal atrophy, a form of Addison's disease, in addition to a painfully bad back—he managed

to lead an intensive sex life. He was partial to actresses—among them Marilyn Monroe, Jayne Mansfield, Judith Campbell Exner and Angie Dickinson—in addition to models, secretaries and stewardesses. How much more of his private world will be revealed by the year's end remains to be seen. ♦

WASHINGTON LETTER

Cocaine And The Kennedys

The big question in Washington is about Senator Edward Kennedy. If he were to be found sitting on top of the Washington Monument with a bag of cocaine in one hand, and a marijuana joint in his other hand, would the story get into the *Washington Post*? Probably not.

The second question, arising out of the first, is this: Is the Democratic Party so paralysed with boredom,

and apprehension, over its six lack lustre candidates for the Presidency that its chiefs still nurse the hope that the awful Kennedy will accept an 11th-hour draft and come back to save them?

There is now evidence of a concerted effort here to keep the sheer awfulness of Kennedy, and his habits, away from Americans who still brood about Chappaquiddick. The nation's big-

gest papers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, are co-conspirators in this matter.

The other week the Mormon muck-raker, columnist Jack Anderson, produced a sensational column which named Kennedy and his daughter Kara Ann as part of a Capitol Hill drug customers' ring.

Anderson's column, carried by hundreds of papers—including the *New York Post*—was mysteriously dropped by the *Washington Post* in favour of another rather boring piece about Medicare. The *Post* has since been inundated with complaints that, in order to protect Kennedy, it censored Anderson.

Kennedy's spokeswoman, Melody Millar, announced that Anderson's charges were 'an outrage—and they are absolutely false'. Anderson retorted that he was sitting on a pile of proof, which might explain the lack of legal action against him by Kennedy.

It was not as if the *Post* was against the Capitol Hill

drug ring story as such. Indeed, it had published reams about another politician alleged to have been a customer—Representative Charles Wilson of Texas.

But Kennedy—and, incidentally, his 22-year-old daughter Kara Ann, who was also named by Anderson as a customer—got off the hook. This time.

While Kennedy, bloated of body and beetroot of face, lurks in McClean, Virginia, awaiting the call, the Democrats, in their floundering attempts to 'get a handle' on Ronnie, the Great Communicator, have come up with a figure who rivals the Senator for Massachusetts in ineptitude and shady social habits.

He is Senator Christopher Dodd, a David Owen look-alike who was chosen to respond on television to Reagan's Central America speech at the joint session of Congress.

Dodd's rambling, halting peroration about revolutions being born out of oppression was a disaster and completed Reagan's triumph.

This Kennedy clone is now likely to come under the gaze of Jack Anderson over his friendship with one Angela Saballos, an 'employee' of the Nicaraguan Embassy who has been named by the *New York Post* as an intelligence agent of the Communist regime.

Once again, the *Washington Post* is involved in what appears to be a cover-up. Shortly after the *New York Post* named Angela—and has yet to see the colour of her writ—its DC namesake came out with a 'soft' feature on the Nicaraguan cracker, written by a friend of hers.

With the Democrats, and their supporters here, in such a condition, is it any wonder that the old loonie at 1600 Penn Avenue is now off and running for his second term? ♦



Things go better with coke and Kennedy.

MOHAMMED AL-TAJIR

The Crooked Billions

AN ENORMOUS ROW has broken out in London over Mohammed Mahdi Al-Tajir, the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the United Kingdom. Al-Tajir is the doyen of the London Diplomatic Corps, having been there for ten years. He is also one of the world's richest men and estimates his personal wealth at \$3,300 million (around Rs 3,500 crores). By some accounts, he is even richer than Adnan Khashoggi, the Saudi Arabian fixer and his wealth is said to rival the fortune of Daniel K Ludwig.

Like Khashoggi (the model for Harold Robbins' *The Pirate*), Al-Tajir, 51 is a self-made man who has amassed his billions by a variety of means, fair and foul. He was a Customs official in Dubai, then a small, smuggling centre, when he became the protégé of the ruler, Sheikh Rashid. As Dubai developed into a modern industrialized mini state Al-Tajir's fortune grew with it.

ILLEGAL PAYMENTS

His shady business activities have now become so blatant that the British Foreign Office is considering complaining to the UAE about them. It has recently been revealed by the Boeing aircraft company that it paid Al-Tajir over \$6 million (just under Rs 6 crores) to 'facilitate' the purchase of five Boeing passenger jets by Syria in 1975. Sheikh Zayid, the ruler of Abu Dhabi and the President of the UAE had financed the purchase as a favour to the Syrians. The payments to Al-Tajir were probably illegal under

US law. The British government is understood to be upset over the disclosure because it feels that it is unseemly for an Ambassador to receive bribes while posted within its shores. There is also the question of the US Justice Department's investigations into the affair. Could US investigators be allowed to question a diplomat in the UK?

Al-Tajir is no stranger to controversy. By his own admission he is "a businessman in the first place. I am not a very good diplomat." He has proved this by being involved in two major controversies even before the Boeing scandal broke. Earlier this year, it was disclosed that false documents had been issued by the UAE's London embassy to facilitate a proposed \$200 million (just under Rs 200 crores) tanks for Iran arms deal. Al-Tajir's embassy provided an end-user certificate falsely stating that the American tanks were being bought by a British arms dealer for the UAE. In fact, they were to go to Iran, in defiance of US law. The deal fell through when the arms dealer was arrested by the American authorities.

8 DAY WONDER

Al-Tajir also owned a substantial stake in *8 Days*, a slick *Time*-style Arab news-magazine brought out from London. The magazine's editorial policy could best be described as neo-Islamic, which meant that the UK was regularly attacked in its columns. Finally, the British Foreign Office indicated that it regarded Al-Tajir's ownership of *8 Days* as highly improper for a serv-

ing Ambassador. Al-Tajir sold out and the magazine closed down.

There is talk now that the UAE may reconsider Al-Tajir's appointment. His clout stems from his friendship with Dubai ruler Sheikh Rashid (a man of strong, if indiscriminate likes—Abdul Wahab Galadari, is another

of his 'business'-protégés). But the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayid is President of the UAE and he is said to be tiring of Sheikh Rashid's protégés. A strong anti-Al-Tajir lobby exists within the UAE government and after the latest disclosures, the knives are said to be out for him. ♦

RANDOM NOTES

Odds And Trends

THE MUSSOLINI DIARIES

I BET YOU ALL think you know what this story is about. Last May, an eminent historian was sent abroad by *The Times*, (London). His task was dramatic: to look at the war-time diaries of a fascist leader. He studied them carefully and was rather optimistic that history may have to be rewritten.

Well, you're all wrong. It's got nothing to do with Trevor-Roper or Hitler. It's Denis Mack Smith and the diaries of Mussolini. The eminent historian was sent to Switzerland to examine the latest bundle of pages, exercise books and doodles purporting to belong to Mussolini. Ironically (or hilariously, depending on how you look at it), he went out, at Rupert Murdoch's expense, on the same weekend as Trevor-Roper went to Germany (at Rupert Murdoch's expense) to unauthenticate some other

diaries.

Even though the *Sunday Times* has got its ego all over its face after the Hitler fiasco, don't think it's lost interest in the everyday story of demonic folk. It is still chasing Mussolini's diaries, despite having bought a forged version some years ago and has now joined forces with *The Times*.

When Charles Douglas-Home, Editor *Times*, heard about a new Mussolini find he asked Mr Mack Smith to look them over. Mr Mack Smith confirmed that he'd seen some papers, said 'they looked promising' but added he was no expert on calligraphy, so they could be 'brilliant forgeries'.

What next? The diaries of Attila the Hun? The last Will and Testament of Napoleon? Or the final contract of Rupert Murdoch? ♦

FRIENDLY FOOT

• Michael Foot the Leader of the defeated British Labour Party has had to resign. Despite Foot's inept leadership, he is widely regarded as being a man with genuine liberal beliefs

and a strong, caring streak.

The only unexplained aspect of his behaviour must remain his vociferous support for Mrs Gandhi's Emergency. While the rest of the Western world spoke



Michael Foot.

out for human rights, Foot went on record as approving of the Emergency, with no qualifiers about sterilizations, mass arrests and the like added.

His downfall follows a pattern. Friends of Mrs Gandhi have never lasted long at the top of the British political heap. Peter Shore who added his voice to Foot's never quite achieved his ambition of being a top rank Labour leader, while



Peter Shore.

James Callaghan who made a point of meeting Mrs Gandhi during the Janata period went on to lose the next election, the following year. Sadder still was the plight of former Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe, a great friend of India, who ended up being tried for the attempted murder of his homosexual lover. Mrs Thatcher, it is said, did not take a great liking to Mrs Gandhi. And now, she has been elected by a landslide!



Jeremy Thorpe.

THE SHEIKA'S SHARE

• It's curtains for the fun pair of Saudi Sheikh Mohammad al-Fassi, 28 and his Belgian-born wife Dena, 24. This odd couple sprang to international fame when they bought a \$5 million Hollywood home with classical statues in the garden. They got even more famous when they painted pubic hair on each statue and arranged them so that they were visible from the main road. Now, they've topped their own publicity by participating in a messy divorce

suit. Sheika Dena has claimed (and been granted by a Californian court), a half share of her husband's property. His assets include: \$70 million worth of jewellery, a \$13 million yacht, a \$1 million house in London, the \$5 million Hollywood home, 110 cars (including 12 Rolls Royces, though Dena may get only 20 cars altogether), two Boeing 707 jet airliners (one for the luggage and servants) and an entire zoo.

THE FAMOUS SMILE

• What's in a smile? Plenty, if you're Jimmy Carter. In his recent account of his years as Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, offers this analysis of the once and the future peanut farmer's smile.

"Carter was famous for his smile. I soon learned that he in fact had several smiles. There was first of all the genial smile for public consumption. I was initially deceived by it because it seemed so warm and so forthcoming and yet once you got to know him you

knew that this was an outward smile, one with little individual affection in it, a 'political' smile, as it were.

"Then there was the smile which he used to mask anger. More often than not, when angry, he would smile while expressing displeasure, but only if one knew him well did one sense that behind the mask was unadulterated fury. Then there was a shy, relaxed smile, the expression of the individual at ease, which Carter revealed only occasionally to his intimates."



Z Brzezinski.

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US PAY-OFFS



The late Shah of Iran.

• Morarji Desai may or may not have accepted \$20,000 from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), but there is a long list of major politicians all over the world who have benefitted from the US government's largesse. King Hussein, the diminutive Hashemite ruler of Jordan for example accepted an annual fee of \$1 million from the Americans for many years. Then, an American journalist (not Seymour Hersh) found out

and printed the story despite being specifically requested not to do so by Henry Kissinger. Hussein stopped accepting the money and his reputation among the Arabs, sank a few notches.

The US also allegedly paid off Cambodia's Norodom Sihanouk, while Mohammed Heikal has suggested that Sadat received some financial assistance. In the '50s, when Mossadegh forced the late Shah of Iran into premature exile in



Morarji Desai.

Switzerland, the Americans picked up the tab for the Shah's expenses. Later, of course, a coup organised by Kim Roosevelt of the CIA succeeded in returning the young king to his throne.

Of late, however, the US has not found it necessary

to pay off its protégés for the simple reason that it tends to support the kind of dictator who has already enriched himself by milking the state or by accepting large kickbacks from multinationals.

ILLEGAL REMUNERATION



Nixon: illegal contributions.

• The US seems to understand the value of bribing heads of state because so many of its own politicians have accepted illegal remuneration. The Abscam scandal during which Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents posing as Arabs managed to bribe a dozen Congressmen is well known. But there are other instances as well. Spiro Agnew used to accept envelopes stuffed with money for 'grocery expenses' in the Vice President's office. And many members of the Nixon White House accepted what were termed 'illegal campaign contributions' from the likes of shady financier Robert Vesco and multinational

giant ITT.

Strangest of all was the case of Frank Rizzo, a semi-literate policeman who became Mayor of Philadelphia in the '70s. Accused of taking bribes, Rizzo growled: "Let'em gimme a lie detector test. I ain't got nuttin to hide." He then proclaimed his faith in lie detector technology.

Accordingly, he was tested and much to everybody's surprise, the test showed that he was lying through his teeth. Later more evidence of his corrupt ways turned up but nobody has been able to explain why he dug his own grave by insisting on a lie detector test.

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HIKING IN THE HILLS

The joys of life in Mussoorie.

TRAMPING IN THE hills is a delight at any time of the year, except in the monsoon, when it is not so much the rain as the leeches that make walking through the lush grass rather unpleasant. Otherwise, come snow or the sun at high noon, there is nothing to equal the exhilaration of climbing windswept hilltops or lingering in the shade of deodar forests.

The glory that comes from conquering Himalayan peaks is not for most of us. My greatest pleasure consists in taking a path—any old path will do—and following it until it leads me to forest-glade or mountain-stream.

This sort of tramping—it does not even qualify as trekking—is a compulsive thing. To be out on the open road, the wind in your hair, the sun warm on your back, is a joy that city-dwellers must of necessity be without, although, compulsive walker that I am, I have walked the streets of Delhi and Bombay with fascination if not exhilaration!

Whenever I walk in the hills around Mussoorie, I come across gangs of road-workers breaking stones, cutting into the rocky hillsides, building retaining walls. New roads are needed in the Himalayas, where the people have remained impoverished largely due to the inaccessibility of their villages. Besides, a new road is one more route for me to explore, and in the interests of progress, (both mine and the world's), I am prepared to put up with the dust raised by the occasional bus or truck. And if the walk becomes too dusty, one can always leave the main road. There is no dearth of paths leading off into the valleys.

On one such diversionary walk I reached a village where I was given a drink of curds and a meal of rice and beans. That is another of the attractions of tramping to nowhere in particular—the finding of *somewhere* in particular! There is the striking up of friendships; the discovery of new springs and waterfalls, unusual plants, rare flowers, strange birds. In the



mountains, a new vista opens up at every bend in the road.

That is what makes me a compulsive walker—new vistas, and the charm of the unexpected.

* * *
PUBLIC AND PRIVATE schools of the English-medium variety proliferate in Mussoorie; there are more of them here than in Simla, Darjeeling or Nainital. But most of them are some distance from the town, and for the few day-scholars who attend them, there is a long walk to and from school every day.

I live right on top of a hill and my nephew's school is right at the bottom; so I thought it would be a good idea if I walked the two miles to school with him every morning. It would be some company for Rakesh.

"Tell me a story," he said, the first time we set off together. And so I told him one. And the next day I told him another. A story a day, told on the long walk through the deodars, became routine until I discovered that in this way I was writing myself out—that, story invented and told, I would return home to the realisation that the day's creative work was done and that I could not face my desk or typewriter.

So I decided it had to be a serial story. And I found that the best way to keep it going was to invent a man-eating leopard who carried off a

different victim every day. An expanding population, I felt, should be able to sustain his depredations over the months and even the years.

Small boys usually love blood-thirsty tales of vampires and man-eaters, and my nephew Rakesh was no exception. Every day, in the story, one of the townsfolk disappeared, a victim to my leopard's craving for human flesh. He started with the town gossip and then worked his way through the clerk who'd lost my file, the barber who'd cut my hair too short, and the shopkeeper who'd sold me the previous year's damp fireworks, and—well, there's no end to the people who can be visualised as suitable victims!

I must confess that I was now getting as much fun out of the tale as my nephew: I think Freud might have had something to say about my attitude.

"When is it going to be shot?" asked Rakesh one morning.

"Not yet," I said, "not yet."

But towards the end of the school term I was beginning to have qualms of conscience. Who was I, a mere mortal, to decide on who should be eaten and who should survive? Although the population had been reduced, the accommodation problem remained the same.

Well, things came to a crisis when a real leopard visited the hillside and made off with a former Rani's pet Pekinese.

Had I, through my fevered imaginings, brought into being an actual leopard? Only a dog-eater, true; but one never knew when it might start on people. And I was still well-fleshed, in spite of the long walks.

So the serial story had to end.

"The man-eater is dead," I announced last week.

"Who shot it?"

"It wasn't shot. It just died."

"Of old age?"

"No of ulcerative colitis."

"What's that?" asked Rakesh.

"Acute indigestion," I said.

—*Ruskin Bond*

SNAKES, RATS AND MORE

Don't look for haute cuisine on the high seas.

FOOD IS A very important part of a sailor's life. The days of salted pork and maggots and dry crusty bread are of course, far behind us but modern days are no less exciting with a band of colourful cooks and their 'fit for the King's table' brand of cuisine. The question always is: Which King?

One of the earliest cooks that I remember was Mustafa. He was at least 70 years old and had a most charming toothless smile, which he proudly flashed at all and sundry. But, his charm ended there. It took a great deal of determination to swallow something cooked by him. He had the uncanny knack of transforming a simple fried egg into something that defies description.

The problem was Mustafa was an Arab. And Arab men consider cooking as an exclusively feminine pursuit, extremely demeaning for men who were supposed to be fighters and this is exactly what Mustafa strove to be. Our ship was a patrol vessel and we were frequently called upon to fire our guns. Whenever we did so, Mustafa was at the fore handling the ammunition with

the gusto and enthusiasm of a 16-year-old! Mustafa's maritime sojourn ended suddenly one day when he served us Carp-a-la-fire-water—boiled fish in steaming hot water laced with an overdose of chilli powder!

I am sure that one of Mustafa's kith and kin was Cyclops, an Egyptian cook. Cyclops' fare was famed to bring alive even the mummies from the Cairo Museum! Poor Cyclops, with his solitary eye, was filthy and insisted on sampling all his 'delicacies' with the same ladle that he used to stir the curry. His dishes were therefore, liberally flavoured with his own drooling saliva. After I saw this happen I resolved to eat canned food for the rest of my stay on board. Cyclops, however, was an excellent baker, that is whenever he was in the mood for baking. His buns turned out as soft as those used by MacDonalds for their famous hamburgers. One afternoon a mouth-watering baking aroma emanated from the galley (kitchen in nautical language). All of us looked forward to eating freshly baked bread with our supper. However, that was not to be for we were served the same two-month-old crusty bread. Cyclops had gone ashore that evening and there was no sign of the freshly baked bread in the galley. When questioned the next day, he coolly replied that he had taken the bread home to feed the guests at his daughter's wedding feast.

Then there was Hassan, the expert cook from the Laccadive Islands. Hassan was very proud of his *Shah-jehani pulao* and mutton *kurma*. He claimed he had learnt to make these from a friend who worked at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay. On the first day I joined the ship Hassan's speciality was served for lunch. It was absolutely fabulous—richly spiced, greasy and 'finger-licking tasty'. I attacked the food with rare appetite and was most surprised to find that everyone else at the table was eating most frugally. I presumed that they had all obviously tucked in to very heavy breakfasts. It



took me only another day to realise the truth. These were the only two dishes Hassan knew how to cook!

The Chinese ship that I sailed on was a veritable floating Chinese restaurant. We began the day with rice gruel or stewed noodles and vegetables for breakfast with the most exotic Chinese dishes served as the day progressed. Dinner was served in candlelight and ended with wine. This blissful state of affairs continued till the Captain decided to inspect the galley. He found Lee our chief cook, chopping up rats tails, cockroaches and dried snakes to put into the soup pot. The Captain turned beetroot red and ran to throw up over the side. From that day onwards, we had corned beef and salami sandwiches for all meals until the ship touched port and the Chinese cooks were paid off!

It is surprising but inspite of all these misadventures no one suffered ill-health. In fact all of us put on weight and had to exercise rigorously to keep from getting fat.

—Arvind Dhurandhar



FROM BLANC TO PLONK

A guide to drinking wine in India.

LET'S FACE IT. Wine is never likely to form an integral part of the lives of most of us. We have no tradition of drinking it with Indian food, import duties make the cost of a bottle prohibitive and the domestic product is largely uninspiring.

On the other hand, most of us are probably going to drink it at some time or the other. A goblet of French plonk at a posh party, a celebratory glass of bubbly at a birthday or on New Year's Eve or a bottle of Indian wine on a lazy evening. And while most of the booze we consume requires no introduction—whiskey, gin, beer, vodka and rum are drunk according to simple rules—wine drinking is complicated enough to make a little background information quite essential.

At the top of the list of course, there's champagne, the sparkling, pale yellow fluid associated with celebrations and inaugurations. It is safe to say that nearly half the 'champagne' served in India isn't champagne at all. Technically, the term can only be applied to sparkling wine from the Champagne region of France. Sparkling wine from elsewhere, no matter how good, is not champagne. And on the whole, most of the pretenders are to be avoided. Italian Spumante tastes like a lemon popsicle melted in a glass of Eno's fruit salt and much of the French non-champagne bubbly is pretty dire.

Most champagne served here is 'brut' or dry, though occasionally one runs into the sweeter incarnation that is really a dessert wine. It seems obligatory these days for the host to pop the cork on his bottle but if possible, this macho tradition should be dispensed with. Twist the cork out gently and you'll avoid having the contents of the bottle end up on your sleeve or your carpet. Champagne should never be kept for more than an hour after it is opened and should be served pleasantly chilled—not ice-cold, unless you have no intention of tasting the wine. The traditional champagne glass



is the wide goblet that is said to have been patterned on Marie Antoinette's breast. The shape doesn't say much for the breast and does even less for the champagne. Its bubbles disappear sooner and it goes cold quickly. Tulips, those long thin glasses, are always to be preferred.

The most popular up-market party wine in Bombay is probably the Italian Chianti. Now there's a lot to be said for Chianti. The name is easy to remember and often it comes in pretty bottles encased in attractive wicker baskets. But frankly, it's not much of a wine. Far better is Chianti Classico but sadly, that is never seen here.

Otherwise, one runs into French table wine at most posh parties. Such wines bear only the name of the shipper and a line pointing out whether they are white or red. To the wine

snob, they would come pretty near the bottom of his pecking order, below wines from a single region of France, below those from a single district and below those bottled at a single *domaine* or chateau. Even so, some of them (depending on what the smugglers have available that month) are drinkable, but as for the rest, you are safer sticking to Bosca.

Which brings us, of course, to Indian wine. If one is to be honest, then it must be said, upfront, that most Indian wine is so bad that they should never have bothered bottling it. The Shaw Wallace group does three Golconda wines: Ruby, Rose and Riesling. All of them are undrinkable. (Four years ago, when I wrote this in another magazine, Shaw Wallace wrote to say that I'd forgotten to chill them before tasting. So I followed their instructions to the letter and tried again. . . . They were still undrinkable.)

Far better is the stuff bottled by Bosca. A good bottle of Cabernet (the red) could probably compare quite favourable with similar Italian table wine. Unfortunately, standards are far from consistent and I've tasted some bottles that are more like vinegar than wine. The same is true of the Bosca white, but less so. Which means that though standards do vary, with the bad much worse than the good, even the best is not very good.

For good, Portuguese-style, sweet wine, Goa is hard to beat. The wine is not to everyone's taste but as a ladies' drink in the sherry category, it has its uses. There are several other wineries scattered all over India but few produce wine that is widely distributed.

If there is a lesson in all this, it is that standards vary so wildly that drinking Indian wine is like playing Russian roulette. On the other hand, if you like diluting your wine with soda to make a sangria, the local produce will do. You can use it for punches and once in a while, find a bottle good enough to serve to your guests.

— Vikram Sinha

THE SKI IS THE LIMIT

Water-skiing in Kashmir is both easy and enjoyable.

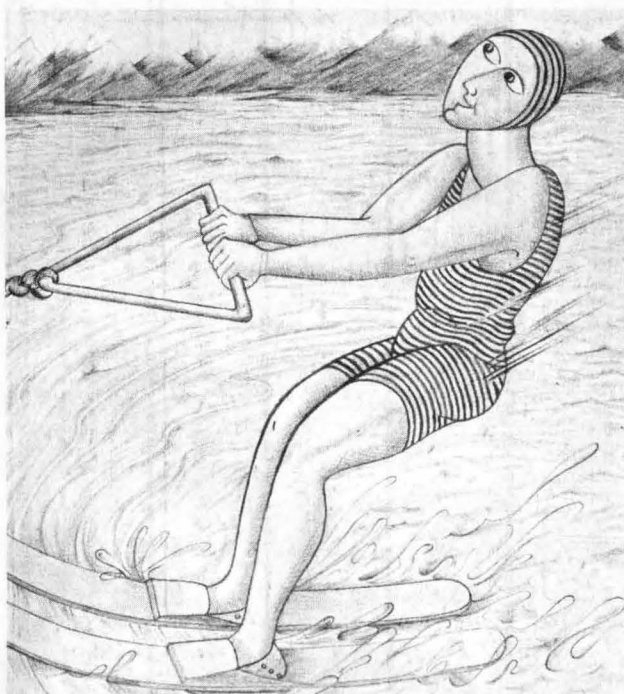
IT'S FUN, EXHILARATING and a little risky if you aren't too perfect a swimmer. But the joys of water-skiing far outweigh the hazards. As you skim over the water, arms extended, knees bent, spray flying, you will feel the tremendous surge of power that every water-skier is familiar with. And although few people know about it, water-skiing can be done in Srinagar from June to October.

During the Raj all skiing activity was confined to a handful of Britishers who used to transport wives and children up to Tangmarg to enjoy the pleasures of the sport. There was no access road—often braving the slippery, snow-covered slopes on the way to Tangmarg was more dangerous than the skiing itself. When the Ski Club of India was formed in the '40s skiing became an organised sport.

After Independence however, the Club became defunct and skiing received a set-back. It was not practised anywhere except in the Army which ran its own ski club and school. Only during the '60s did the Tourism department wake up to the possibilities of a ski school for civilians. In 1966 experts were flown down from the United Nations Organisation to advise the department on how the sport could be developed.

Gulmarg, the main ski centre was given a face-lift. Advertisements for instructors in the daily newspapers attracted about 1,400 applications—of which 22 were selected. By 1972 the instructors had passed the international test. In 1973 the Indian Institute of Skiing and Mountaineering was ready.

Water-skiing however, did not feature till much later. Ski instructors who taught at the Institute from November to April, found themselves at a loose end in summer. Even the



joys of individual skiing—risking the higher slopes as the snow line receded—could only last till the end of May. Water-skiing was a feasible option. It required little initial investment, could attract tourists the year around, did not need expensive equipment and was indeed, more attractive to people who abhorred the cold. Four years ago, water-skiing courses were started by the Institute and continue till today.

Potential water-skiers must make their own arrangements to reach Srinagar. The railhead is Jammu: a small dusty town whose only claim to fame is as the doorway to Kashmir. At the lonely Jammu station, you can take your pick: depending on the time you have, you can either fly (for Rs 130) or take the longer, 12-hour bus route—cheaper but more wearing on the nerves. Bus fares vary from Rs 22 per head for a B-class coach to Rs 66 for a Super Deluxe one.

In Srinagar accommodation will be provided by the Institute (if booked in advance) or you can find your own houseboat with prices that vary from Rs 400 a day (super luxury) to Rs 50.

A lot depends on your bargaining skills. An enthusiastic tout offering you a houseboat for Rs 150 can usually be talked down to Rs 60 by the simple expedient of ignoring him!

Contrary to belief you don't have to be athletic to water-ski. Any person in averagely good shape can attempt it. Bearing in mind the unnatural strain on the legs (which are kept half-bent all through), a few simple exercises a month before the ski session would help. Usually, the exercises are listed in the Institute's hand-outs.

Each course is two to three weeks long (depending on whether you can swim) with only about four hours of water-skiing in the day-

time. One instructor handles up to ten students. For eager beginners who do not swim, a seven day crash course is provided. Skis, of course are rented out by the Institute for Rs 30 a day. You require to take along a costume and lotions to protect yourself against sunburn.

On the blue waters of Nagin Lake you will get into the skim of it. One of the first things taught is, grotesquely enough, how to fall. But the instructors keep a sharp lookout for the students and there is no risk of drowning.

As you settle into the routine and get the feel of it, you'll find there's a lot to learn. After the basic problems of balancing on water are overcome, you will be taught how to turn, stop and start. And if you've learnt to fall well and are not afraid of the water, you should have a marvellous time.

The evenings will be full of laughing camaraderie, and the pleasures of getting to know utter strangers. Add to all this the fact that you are in one of the loveliest states in India—and your holiday is made.

— Shirin Mehta

THE GANDHI BUBBLE

Arun Gandhi On The Gandhi Boom

THE BURDEN OF living with a name, especially one that is as sanctimonious as Gandhi, has always been somewhat of a responsibility which has been made all the more burdensome by Sir Richard Attenborough. Now it has become almost impossible for us to freak out once in a while, to release tensions built up with years of walking a straight line. Like the wife says: "If we don't have the capacity to bring further glory to the name of Gandhi we don't have the right to besmirch it either." This basically has been the guiding principle of our lives.

Over the years the image of Gandhi had dimmed and with it all of us gradually slipped into oblivion. I remember at least two editors who chided me for referring to the Mahatma in my articles while one even went to the extent of saying, I am too Gandhian in my approach to various problems. What exactly they meant by this I never did find out but to me it was indicative of the waning influence of the Mahatma. Except by the accident of birth I have never really been considered a 'Gandhian' by anyone. Analysing Gandhian philosophy or emulating his austere life style have never been my forte either, so if editors could dismiss my writings as 'too Gandhian' then it is only a measure of the depths of obscurity that the Mahatma had been consigned to until Attenborough came on to the scene.

Even then Indians made inadequate responses to the film until, as we are prone to do, the West went into ecstasy over the 'Man of Peace' and only then did we go into raptures. Gandhi was rediscovered. His stature is now being measured with new instruments. The realisation is dawning on everyone that he was not just a puritanical nitwit who spoke the mumbo jumbo of 'truth and non-violence'. The West



has found new substance in his philosophy and so, naturally, have we.

Not since his death in 1948 has Gandhi got so much world-wide publicity and adulation. Newspapers and periodicals, even those which once condemned anything Gandhian as so much offal, are now vying with each other to print article after article, day after day and, what is more interesting, much of these too originate in the West.

However, there is no denying that an awareness has been awakened and with it people have begun to realise that he had a family. What many journalists have found strange is that in a country where dynastic succession has become a tradition how is it that the 'real' Gandhi family has remained so obscure. But, this is another story.

The interest of the people in the family range from the absurd to the ethereal. Utter strangers have walked into our house either to prostrate before us or simply to breathe a little of the air that the descendants of Gandhi have been breathing.

A tour agency suggested they would like to place our modest home on their tour itinerary for foreign guests and wondered if I would throw in a talk on the Mahatma for good measure. They even offered to pay for the tea I was expected to serve. In fact one foreign

tour operator exploited our Gandhi connections very subtly until we got wise to his plan. Twice he invited the wife and me for lunch at the Taj 'to meet his friends' and were made to talk about Gandhi till we realised he was bringing tourists telling them 'a meeting with Gandhi's grandson' was an added attraction.

A double handshake has become quite common now. First upon introduction and then a second time when the party realises whose hand he or she is shaking. It always reminds me of a fan of Jack Dempsey, the world renowned boxer who recently died. By a rare coincidence when the fan managed to shake Dempsey's hand he held his right arm aloft all the way home proclaiming to all those interested, "This is the hand that shook the world." It's quite unlikely that anyone has been so moved after shaking my hand, but matters have gone so far that nothing will surprise me any more.

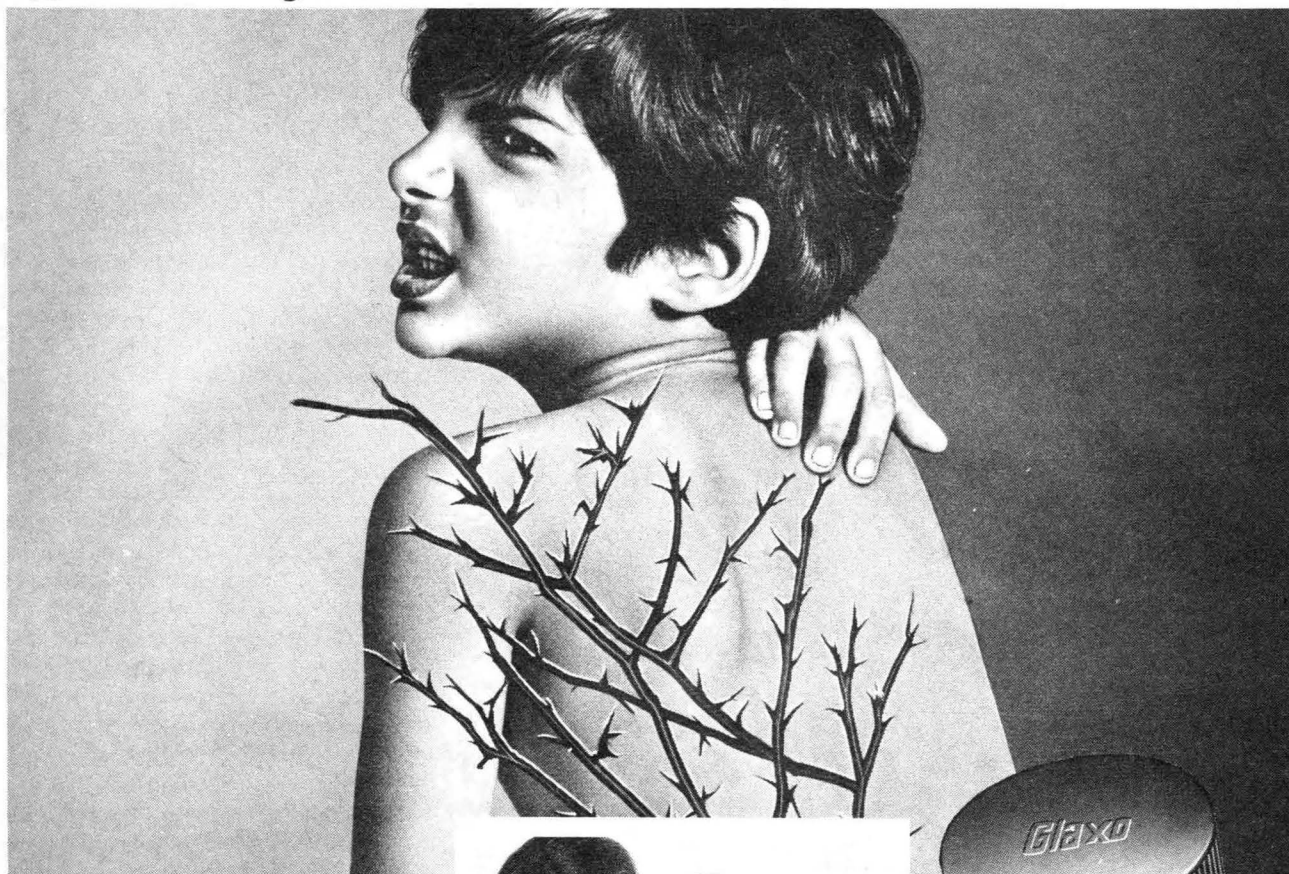
Indeed, I have been living in Bombay for 26 long years with an ever-expanding circle of friends and acquaintances but no one so far has ever been impressed by my antecedents.

Suddenly now everyone wants to invite me either to their home to meet their children who were 'so moved by Gandhi' or to their elite clubs so that they can show me off to their colleagues as a prized possession. Undoubtedly, the new awareness has given us a heightened stature. We are now worthy of many things which, only a short while ago, were considered beyond our capacity.

Basking in this glory is a euphoric experience, but it has its inherent dangers. When one attempts to reach for the sky on someone else's achievements the chances of one's crashing to the ground are ominously high. Clearly, the interest in Gandhi is a phase which is bound to fade and we, the members of his family, would be fools if we do not appreciate its transparent transitoriness. ♦

Arun Gandhi is Editor of Who's Who In India. He is a former editor of Imprint and has just been awarded a fellowship from the University of Mississippi.

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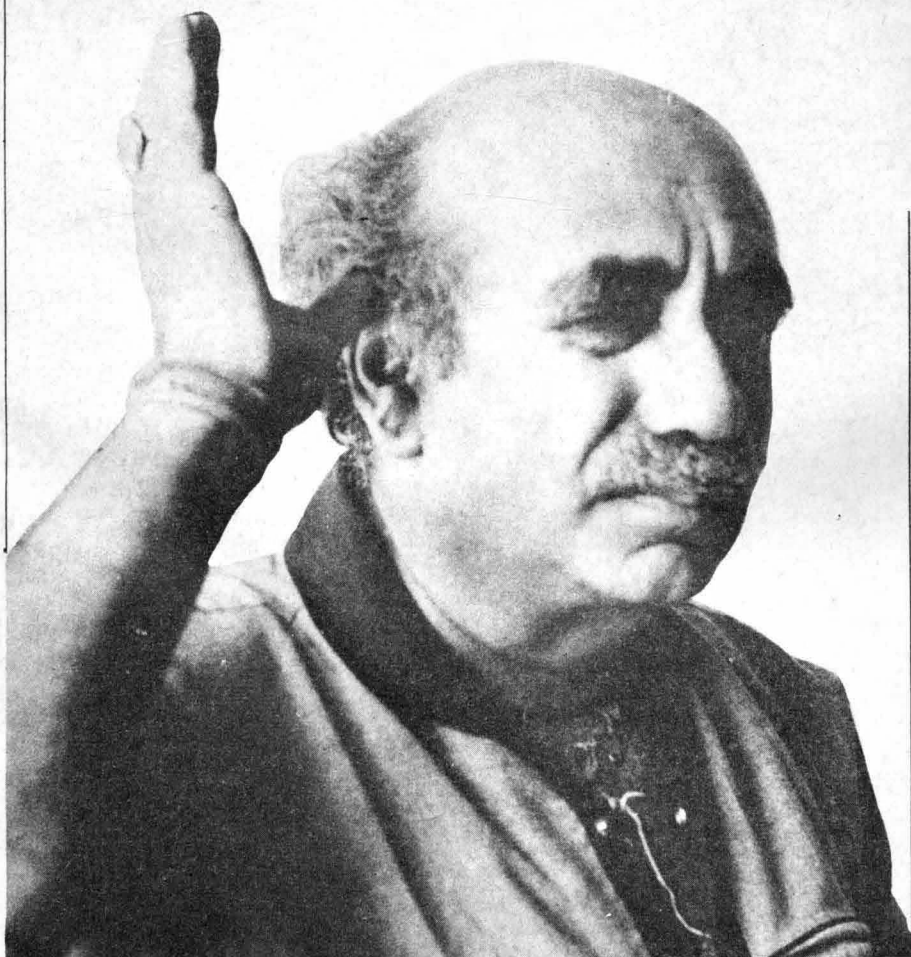
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THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BEJAN DARUWALLA

By Travesh Sinha

*He's sharp, he's famous and he's confident.
The canny astrologer offers his predictions
for the world and provides an
insight into his mind.*



BEJAN Daruwalla is happy. He is going to be written about. As the photographer starts clicking, he begins to make funny faces. In answer to questions, he throws back his balding head and laughs so loudly, that he can be heard in the next room. Required to make predictions, he goes into a jokey monologue full of raised eyebrows, extravagant gestures and, as always, that booming voice that travels for miles.

It has all been quite easy. At 51, he is probably India's best-known astrologer. Magazines and newspapers carry his predictions, film stars fight for his time, industrialists invite him to stay at their homes and his catch-phrase *Shree Ganesha Namah* is nearly as well known as *Arre-oh-Samba*.

A former professor of English, the

Travesh Sinha is a Bombay-based freelance writer. His last article for Imprint was a profile of Dilip Kumar in January 1983.

son of a Parsi weaving master in the Ahmedabad textile industry, a lover of publicity, a shameless extrovert and a serious poet—Daruwalla is all of these. Two years ago, he chucked up his teaching job and switched from being a full-time professor and part-time astrologer to being India's most entertaining astrological road-show. He went to Delhi for two months during the Asiad and became the toast of the town. While there, he finished *Bejan Daruwalla's Starscope* which has since become an all India bestseller. The editor of *Debonair* travelled to Ahmedabad to interview him for the magazine's special issue on astrology and both *Mid-day* and the *Hindustan Times* carry his column (contrary to the trend, *Imprint* threw it out at the end of last year). Each time he comes to Bombay, he announces his arrival in the newspapers and sits back and waits for the faithful to mob him. Everywhere he goes, his loud laughter enters the room five minutes before he does. With a seasoned pro's eye for the main chance, he engineers his own publicity and skillfully inveigles himself into the centre of every conversation, every fad and every controversy.

Yes, Bejan Daruwalla has never had it so good. Unlike other astrologers, he has never had it bad either. His father owned a large house in Ahmedabad's posh Shahibag district and was Weaving Superintendent at eight mills at the same time. The young Bejan grew up in comfort and never wanted for anything. Then, he found he had The Gift. "The swindle started at the age of five," he recalls cheerily. "My father put me in a girls' convent school so I was the only boy there. I told the girls that if they were my friends, I'd pray for them and they'd pass their exams. So, I had a lot of friends, though God knows if they passed their exams," he chortles.

When he got a little older, he noticed that he had an intuitive ability to predict events. "At the age of 10 or 11, I did a reading for Dr Jal Vakil at my uncle's place," he remembers. "Dr Vakil was very impressed and said that if I turned professional, I would make a name for myself."

Of course, his father wouldn't hear of it. He wanted the boy to join the textile business. Without his father's permission or knowledge, Bejan began to read such astrological masters as Alan Leo, Siphariyal and Robson. After a spell with the Brahud Astrol-

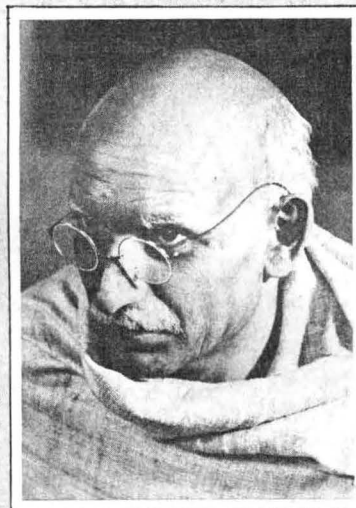
DARUWALLA'S GREATEST HITS

All astrologers claim great triumphs and successes. These are Bejan Daruwalla's most accurate predictions.

The Gandhi Film : He says he met Richard Attenborough in Bombay and told him, "You bastard, this picture will be a great hit," when *Gandhi* was still being filmed. Ramakrishan Bajaj who was present will, Daruwalla claims, vouch for this.

The Asian Games : According to Daruwalla, he met General Sethna in Delhi and told him that the Asiad would be a great success.

ZA Bhutto : He claims to have predicted that Bhutto would become President of Pakistan in Topic, Ahmedabad.



A still from Gandhi.

Morarji Desai : Ever since Morarji said that an astrologer had told him that he would be Prime Minister, every astrologer has claimed that it was him. Daruwalla's version is that he met him at Gujarat Vidyapeeth, Ahmedabad in the '60s and told him that he would first be Deputy Prime Minister and then, Prime Minister. The prediction later appeared in *Eve's Weekly*.

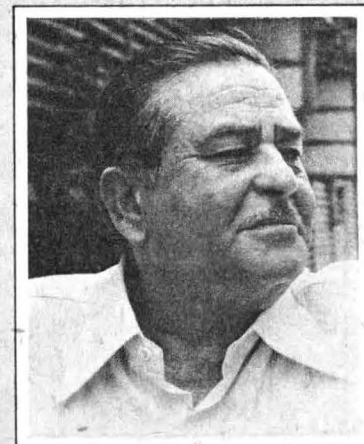
Sanjay Gandhi : Another popular claim. Daruwalla is among the many astrologers who claim to have predicted Sanjay's death. He made his predictions in *The Illustrated Weekly* where he referred to 'danger of accidents'.



Morarji Desai.

Raj Kapoor's Bobby : When Raj Kapoor was down and out after the flop of *Mera Naam Joker*, Daruwalla met Krishna Kapoor and assured her that her husband's next film would be a super-hit.

Manoj Kumar : Summoned to Bombay by *Star and Style*, to look at film stars' horoscopes, Daruwalla predicted that Manoj Kumar would become a big star after the release of *Upkaar*.



Raj Kapoor.

ogical Society of Gujarat, he was ready.

Against his father's wishes, he began professional astrological readings at the age of 25. But because it seemed an inadequate way of making a living, he also finished an MA in English ("English entire that is, don't forget to mention that! It includes Anglo-Saxon also"), and began to lecture at Ahmedabad colleges.

It was during his trips to Bombay that he made a name for himself. He would advise industrialists about their fortunes and when his predictions were vindicated, find that he had turned their entire families into clients for life. The editor of *Mirror*, a Jew, called him to Bombay when the 1967 Arab-Israeli War was about to break out. He predicted that it would take Israel just six days to thrash the Arabs. The prediction was reported and when it proved correct, his reputation soared. *Star and Style* invited him to make predictions about film stars. When he picked Manoj Kumar for stardom before the release of *Upkaar*, the film folk began to patronise him.

In no time at all, Daruwalla had arrived.

BEJAN Daruwalla is distressed. He has pompously refused to take money for a reading. "You give me a gift instead," he has announced. "We Brahmins take *dakshina*."

Just a minute! Brahmin? Who is this man fooling? With his bristly moustache, his characteristic accent and his typical complexion, he looks more Parsi than Adi Marazban. Brahmin? What is he talking about?

Daruwalla's distress begins to dissipate. His rounded face takes on an expression of infinite patience. The voice drops an octave or two as he explains: "See *baba*, we Parsis are really Agni-hotri Brahmins. That is the truth." He notes the incredulous expressions and decides to dispense with the patient look and shifts gears. Now he's booming again, arms flailing wildly: "You tell me!" he shouts. "What can be more Brahminical than drinking the urine of a bull? But, that is what we Parsis do."

The subject is dropped and Daruwalla insists that *Shree Ganesha Namah* is scrawled on the piece of paper in front of him. His Ganesh obsession is not unique, but his desire to publicize it probably is. What drew him to Ganesh? It was, it transpires, a process of elimination. He had tried Hanuman



Daruwalla: famous and confident.

and other deities before veering round to Ganesh around seven years ago.

Daruwalla's life has been full of such unlikely alliances. A decade or so ago, he met the eccentric film actor

Premnath. "Somebody took me to his house on a blind date," he recalls. "All night we gambled like lambs and ewes (that is spelt E-W-E-S, OK?), and then in the morning, Premnath pronounced me Court Astrologer and Court Jester. I stayed at his place whenever I came to Bombay for the next seven years. Now, I no longer stay with him, but we are friends."

Another long-standing admirer is industrialist Ramakrishan Bajaj. It was at Bajaj's house that Daruwalla made another of his famous predictions. "I was staying with him at Mount Unique on Peddar Road (in Bombay) when he threw a party. Now, though I was staying with him, he did not invite me so I did not go. Among the guests at this party were Sir Richard Attenborough and Rani Dube. Of course, because I did not attend, I could not meet them. But I did meet them by accident near the lift. I told Richard 'You bastard, this picture will be a grand hit.' At that time he was still making *Gandhi* and nobody knew how well it would do.

DARUWALLA'S BLUNDERS

All astrologers function on the principle that most people will forget their predictions. So, by the time that they have been proved wrong, nobody remembers what they really said.

Daruwalla has had his share of blunders. These are the ones he is prepared to admit to.

Mrs Thatcher's Shake-up: In 1982, Daruwalla predicted hard times for Mrs Thatcher. She would be in trouble after 'a major shake-up', he asserted. When the Falklands War began, he sat back, confident that he had been vindicated.

As it turned out, Britain won the war and Mrs Thatcher's position was strengthened by the affair. "I got it a little wrong," Daruwalla concedes.



Margaret Thatcher.

Asiad Hockey: During the Asian Games, Daruwalla camped in Delhi and made confident predictions about each event. Among his predictions was the claim that India would beat Pakistan at hockey and go on to win the Gold medal. Pakistan beat India 6-1.

The Ahmedabad Agitation: Two years ago, the students of Ahmedabad took their grievances to the streets. Daruwalla confidently predicted that the agitation would be over in nine days.

It lasted three months.



The Asiad hockey team.

DARUWALLA'S PREDICTIONS



Rajiv Gandhi.



Ramakrishan Bajaj.



Zeenat Aman.



Indira Gandhi.

SICK-LIST

Ayatullah Khomeini: Will die between August and November this year.

Ronald Reagan: A severe health hazard between 1983-84. Will not contest the next election.

Yuri Andropov: A stop-gap leader. No chance of sticking around for long. Could be in health trouble quite soon.

Amjad Khan: A very great future lies ahead of him, but he must be careful. There is a danger of an accident.

LOSERS

Margaret Thatcher: Winning the General Election will not help. A very bad time is beginning. She will not be able to complete her term.

Rajiv Gandhi: 1983 is his best year. He won't go much further than this.

WINNERS

Randhir Kapoor: Despite being written off by everybody, he will really come up, starting with 1983.

Amitabh Bachchan: Another two years of glory at the top. But it's bye-bye after that.

The House of Bajaj: Good times ahead for all of them—Rahul, Ramakrishan, everyone! The group will grow and grow.

Escorts and DCM: Despite his best efforts, Swraj Paul will not be able to take over their managements.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee: Power, fame and glory in the years ahead. A favourable period for the BJP, too.

WEDDING BELLS

Zeenat Aman: Will get married in 1984—probably to a foreigner.

Shabana Azmi: 1984 will bring her great fortune. She will also settle down and get married.

END OF THE BATTLE

The Textile Strike: Between June 21 and July 27, it will be over. By August, at the very latest, it will be officially withdrawn.

Mrs Indira Gandhi: India will undergo a change in leadership between November 1984 to 1985. It is not clear yet, who will succeed Mrs Indira Gandhi.

GENERAL PREDICTIONS

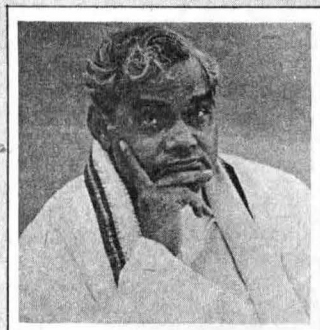
India: Great stability in 1984. But 1985 will be a tough year. However, in a few years' time, India will take its place among the world's great powers.

The World: In the next seven years, there will be a massive scientific explosion. Discoveries and inventions made in those years will radically alter the way we live.

The Parsis: There is a strong possibility that after August 1983, they will accept non-Parsis in their fold. ♦



Randhir Kapoor.



AB Vajpayee.



Shabana Azmi.



Samant and textile workers.

But I knew. Afterwards, Ramakrishan Bajaj said to me 'Why didn't you come to the party? You were living here. You didn't need an invitation!' But I am like that."

Daruwalla follows no standard technique for his predictions. Most astrologers will insist on ascertaining date and time of birth first, will then make out a proper chart and will only then venture to make any predictions. Clearly Daruwalla did not have the time to do all this when he bumped into Attenborough near the lift. What then, does he base his predictions on?

The answer seems to be intuition. He feels that while it is all very well to make charts and the like, a good astrologer must be blessed with an intuitive ability to predict events if he is to interpret his charts accurately. Sometimes Daruwalla will base his predictions entirely on intuition (he did not for example, know Yuri Andropov's birth date when he guessed that he would soon be ill. Yet, the next day, the *London Times* reported that Andropov was seriously ill), though usually, he will spread his risks by using one or two systems of prediction as well (see box).



An intuitive ability to predict events.

Because of his unorthodox methodology, some rivals dismiss him as a 'party astrologer', the sort of chap

DARUWALLA'S TOP-FIVE

This is Bejan Daruwalla's own immodest ranking of India's top five astrologers. He does not know the initials of Mr Bhasin (number three on the list) and says he would have included Raghuvir Vyas had he not died some months ago.

1. BV Raman—"Knows the technical stuff in great detail. I'm not sure how accurate he is, though."
2. Bejan Daruwalla—"Self-explanatory".
3. Bhasin—"Of Fate and Fortune fame. Very good indeed."
4. Mohan Patel—"A good synthesis of knowledge and accuracy."
5. Vashisht Patel—"He lives in Ahmedabad along with numbers two and four on the list."

DARUWALLA'S POEMS

Magic

*On the spin
Of time's ball
The flute skips
The magic of childhood.*

Ballerina

*Pirouetting on the palm of the night
You stun the sun
Unzip his heart
Slice in
And explode.*

Gravity

*Gravity takes wings
Should you
My dear
Shiver a tear.*

Untitled

*I wear you, woman,
Trunk, twigs, roots
No leaves
As a Rajah his regalia,
I shall invite an assail
Of all things
Slithering in shadows
Fangs in the vastness
Daring to defile you.
I shall not falter.
In bites and howls
And the clang of combat
We shall be bloodied to the earth;
A blade of grass
Splurging to the sky.*

Shadow

*In the sizzling slices of summer
The mockery of snowflakes and the
death-finality of the frost
The terror of the typhoon and the hit
of the hurricane
He sought his love.
His hands kissed him good-bye
The eyes had left long ago
Birds saw him and wheeled away.
The earth and he, at last,
Exchanged
Breath and being.
Somewhere
Her shadow crashed.*

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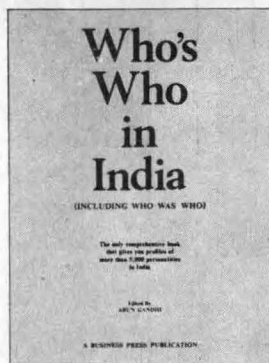
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who reads palms to win friends and influence people. "I've seen him at work," scoffs a rival. "At each party, he goes up to people and tries to guess their signs. Seven out of ten times he is wrong. But even if one of the three whose signs he guessed right agrees to a full reading and the party has about 40 people, that's four new clients for Bejan." Others point to what they see as his relentless courtship of editors and manipulation of media.

BEJAN Daruwalla is being philosophical. "Write down," he proclaims. "The Daruwallas are food-lovers. They are good at making money. And," here he pauses, "they are hounded and haunted by retarded children." He notes the shocked expressions and continues. "I have a retarded sister. And out of my three children, two are retarded. Yes, you could say that there is a touch of insanity about us . . ." he breaks off, his voice suddenly growing ponderous. "This *baba*, is what life has given us."

Suddenly, he is a little annoyed. "Haven't you noticed how my voice has changed?" he hisses. "Yesterday, I was gay, like a circus clown. Today, I am playing a different role." He stops and checks out two potential clients out of the corner of his eye. "I can't be objective," he resumes, "I do not do my own horoscope. Once my father asked me when he was going to die. I told him that the answer would shock him . . . But you should mention my son Nastur. Oh, he worships me. I have told him that I have feet of clay but he says I am like his God."

The curtain drops abruptly. The serious interlude is over. Daruwalla has switched roles and is back to playing the fool. Animatedly, he discusses his family's history of insanity. But this time, he takes a lighter view of it. "We are all delightfully crazy," he chuckles. "In fact, I am not sure I'm all there myself!"

As the afternoon wears on he gets even jokier. But about one subject, there can be no levity. He plugs his poetry with an earnest determination. "Will you print it?" "Will you say that it has great potential?" As if to forestall any criticism, he puts out this warning: "I am very sensitive about my poetry. It is my weakness." It is, in fact, not bad at all. In a sense it links Daruwalla with his English literature background. (*Imprint* readers have a chance to judge for themselves.)

ASTROLOGICAL TECHNIQUES



Daruwalla follows no standard technique for his predictions.

Most modern astrologers use a synthesis of four or five techniques. This not only guarantees a higher level of accuracy but also prevents them from being criticized because of the imperfections of any one technique. For instance, Indian astrology pretends that Pluto doesn't exist. Indian astrologers however, claim they use some other techniques as well, so this 'slight' problem doesn't really matter.

These are Daruwalla's techniques.

Indian Astrology — "But I've made allowances for Pluto."

Western Astrology — "The Western system is 23° ahead of the Indian one. It is also based on the position of the sun, while the Indian one is based on the moon. I use the Indian system for events, the Western one for character delineation."

Palmistry — "I find that it provides a great guide to mental make-up."

Tarot Cards — "A gypsy technique,

this gives me a broad perspective of the year or years ahead."

I Ching — "The Chinese technique of throwing sticks and referring to a book to determine their significance. I use coins instead of sticks and find that I can pin-point events easily."

Dice — "This is really my own invention. I make clients throw the dice and subject the numbers that come up to numerological analysis."

By the evening he is off. He leaves with a caution about astrology. "It can only be 70 per cent accurate, remember that!" To many people, even that claim may seem excessive, but Daruwalla insists that he is correct most of the time.

The next day, a photographer has to be despatched to take some more

pictures. As the call to fix the time is put through, Daruwalla's sincere, honeyed tones waft through the receiver. Halfway through his spiel he realizes that it's only about photographs.

"You bastards!" he shouts over the phone. "I thought it was a client."



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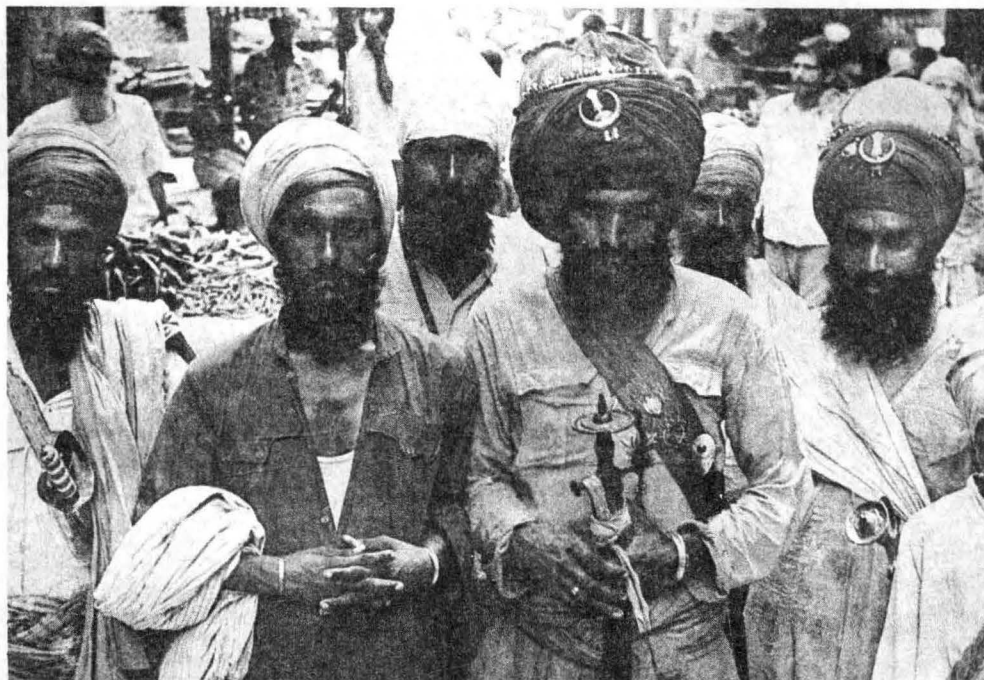
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PUNJAB: BEHIND THE AGITATION

What are the origins of the Punjab agitation? Who are its leaders? What do the Sikhs really want?

The start of a new feature—the Imprint BRIEF—which will explain the background to major issues. For this brief, Anand Khurana travelled extensively in Punjab.

THE GENESIS OF the problems afflicting contemporary Punjab goes back to the pre-Partition era when the British proposed a sort of a buffer state between Pakistan and India. It was to be inhabited by Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the ratio 40:40:20. Though the Sikh leaders turned down the proposal, it was revived by the Jinnah-led Muslim League which was willing to

give the Sikhs a sovereign 'Sikhistan' on the understanding that it would later confederate with Pakistan. Once again, the Sikhs refused—but the seed of a separate nation had been planted.

After the creation of Andhra Pradesh in 1953, following an agitation by Telugu speakers, Akali leader Master Tara Singh made a similar demand for a Punjabi *Suba*. When this was not conceded, he launched a peaceful

agitation during which 57,000 Akalis courted arrest. The agitation took a dramatic turn when Sant Fateh Singh and Master Tara Singh who had by now, become the *rehnumas* of the agitators, went on a fast-unto-death. A shaken Pandit Nehru announced the appointment of a three-member commission to look into the demands and the Sikh leaders broke their fasts by gulping down glasses of orange juice.

The Chandigarh agitation • Bhindranwale's rhetoric • Longowal's relative moderation • The Atwal murder •

During the 1965 war with Pakistan, Punjab, being a border state, witnessed most of the action. The Punjabis ignored pleas by Radio Pakistan to fight their 'Hindu occupants' rather than their 'Pakistani brethren' and gave unqualified support to the Indian forces. The government reacted by giving them their state. One of the first actions of Mrs Gandhi, after she became Prime Minister was to concede the demand for a Punjabi *Suba*. On November 1, 1966, Punjab was formally inaugurated, along with the newly-created Hindi-speaking Haryana. However, some hot headed Akalis objected because Chandigarh was not awarded to Punjab but made the capital of both states and designated a Union Territory.

The Akalis resumed their pressure on the Central Government and once again resorted to a series of fasts-unto-death. When Jathdedar Darshan Singh Pheruman died of starvation after a 74-day fast, and Sant Fateh Singh threatened to undertake a similar *hartal*, the government again caved in and awarded Chandigarh to Punjab. (At the same time, it gave parts of the rich cotton growing areas of Fazilka and Abohar to Haryana). It is another matter that though the final takeover of Chandigarh was scheduled for 1975, the city still remains a Union Territory.

THE NEW LEADERS

With the '80s came the new brand of Sikh leaders with a new kind of politico-religious message. The Punjabi *Suba* was forgotten; now it was Khalistan. The sentiment was the same, but the slogans were more extreme.

Among the new leaders is Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, 53. His sharp eyes peering from craggy, earthy features, he sports a pointed beard, and wears a long robe held tight at the waist by a *kamar kasa* and a *kripan* dangling from it.

It is Bhindranwale who has whipped up political passions by spouting provocative statements. His name is

allegedly linked to the squads of hit-men who have wreaked havoc in Punjab, starting with the daylight murder of Lala Jagat Narain.

In recent months, Bhindranwale's name has become synonymous with all that is happening in Punjab. In an open letter to 'Indira Bibi', he queries, "Why did the police burn our holy *Guru Granth Sahib*? Why did the police not burn the *Gita*? Under what law has the Government burnt our buses? The Government has imposed a ban on *kripan*s on internal flights but has it banned the Hindus from wearing the sacred thread on aircrafts? Why were Sikhs from Punjab not allowed to go to Delhi during the Asiad? Why were the two Hindus who hijacked a plane later rewarded with Assembly seats and the Sikh youths who hijacked planes to protest against the burning of scriptures and police atrocities, shot dead? In India, is there one Constitution or two? Why is all this so?"

As *rehnuma* of the puritanical Bhindranwale sect with operational headquarters located at Mehta Chowk about 40 kms from Amritsar, the Sant's rhetoric is about par for the course. "We are ready to stay with India, but not as slaves," he told *Imprint*. "If the Centre wants to keep us we will stay, but if not then you can be sure that we will not make the mistake of 1947."



The agitators emphasize religion.

His critics call him the 'Khomeini of Khalistan', and the Sant revels in the role. "I want the Hindu to become a true Hindu; he should study the *Gita* and take holy water from the Ganga. Similarly, a Muslim should be a true Muslim; he should know the *Kalma* and be able to read the *Koran*. We are then prepared to consider them as our brothers. In the same way, a Sikh should be a true Sikh and sport a *pagri* (turban), have full-grown *kesh* (hair) and a beard, carry the *kripan*, wear *kaccha* (underwear), *kada* and should take *amrit* and read the *Gurbani* fluently." Despite a phalanx of automatic weapon-toting bodyguards, Bhindranwale's attitudes suggest that he would have been a great leader in the 18th century.

On the question of his alleged links with the extremists, he has this to say, "If to protect the honour of a daughter or sister, to urge the Sikhs to preach unity, to stop evil things, to ask the people to follow the *Guru Granth Sahib* is extremism, then I am an extremist."

Though he is not as charismatic or as belligerent as Bhindranwale, the silver-bearded, Harchand Longowal is not far behind in the popularity charts. But because he is a moderate, he is willing to negotiate peacefully with the Centre. However, with Punjab's towns being filled with policemen, he says, "We cannot hold someone's hand when that someone holds a rifle in it, can we?" He goes on to compare Chief Minister Darbara Singh's rule to that of Nadir Shah and alleges that suspected extremists are tortured by having their nails pulled out with pliers and cigarette stubs applied to their genitals to extort confessions! It is Longowal who is spearheading the current agitation.

The recent daylight murder of AS Atwal, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Jullundhur Range, at the threshold of the Golden Temple, led to speculation whether the police would storm the hallowed building to ferret out the killer who is believed to be

THE AKALI DEMANDS

THE WORKING COMMITTEE of the Shiromani Akali Dal constituted a 12-member sub-committee on December 11, 1972 to formulate comprehensive policies and programmes. The sub-committee comprised several 'hawks' and 'doves' such as Surjit Singh Barnala, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Jiwan Singh Umrangal, Major General Gurbaksh Singh and the late Gian Singh Rarewala.

After serious deliberations at a series of meetings, the sub-committee submitted a comprehensive report which was adopted by the Working Committee through a unanimous resolution at Shri Anandpur Sahib on October 17, 1973. However, it was after four years that the general house of the Dal endorsed the Resolution at Amritsar and another year later, it was finally approved by the party leaders at the 18th All-India Akali Conference at Ludhiana on October 29, 1978. The Akali Dal contested the 1977 General Elections and the State Vidhan Sabha elections on a manifesto based on the Shri Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

General Aims

The Akali Dal shall be active and committed to the realisation of the following aims:

- * Propagation of the Sikh way of life and removal of atheism and un-Sikh thinking.

- * Maintaining the feeling of a separate independent identity of the Sikh *Panth* and creation of an environment in which the 'national expression' of the Sikhs can be full and satisfactory.

- * Banishing illiteracy, untouchability, social inequities and caste-based discrimination which are contrary to the great teachings of the great Gurus.

Religious Aims

- * Bringing about a new All India *Gurudwara* law which will ensure a more efficient and meaningful management of places of worship and community centres than at present and helping in the achievement of integration of ancient Sikh preaching orders (such as Udasis and Niramalas)

into a dynamic Sikh society without encroaching upon their financial resources and property.

- * Bringing all the *gurudwaras* of the world under the banner of one organisation, to make the Sikh religious procedures and proceedings uniform throughout the world and pooling and making effective the aggregate resources of religious propagation.

- * Obtain free and self-regulated access to Shri Nankana Sahib and other Sikh sacred places from which Sikhs have been torn asunder in the recent past.

Political Aims

The political aims of the *Panth* are ingrained in the orders of the tenth Guru in the pages of Sikh history and in the perspective of the *Khalsa Panth*, the purpose of which is the pre-eminence of the *Khalsa*. To give this 'birthright' of the *Khalsa* a practical shape, creation of the necessary environment and achievement of a political constitution are necessary steps.

- * The areas which have deliberately and intentionally been kept out of Punjab (Dalhousie in Gurdaspur district, Chandigarh, Pinjore, Kalka, Ambala, Una *tehsil* of Hoshiarpur district, Nalagarh region, Shahbad and Guhla blocks of Karnal district, Sirsa *tehsil*, Tohana sub-*tehsil*, Ratia block of Hissar district, six *tehsils* of Ganganagar district and other contiguous Punjabi-speaking and Sikh areas) should be immediately included in Punjab and made into a single administrative unit wherein Sikhism and the interests of the Sikhs can be especially protected.

- * In this 'new' Punjab, the authority of the Centre should be confined only to the departments of defence, foreign relations, communications, railways and currency. All the residuary subjects or departments should be under the jurisdiction of Punjab which should have the right to frame its own constitution for these subjects. Punjab would contribute its share of the necessary finances for Central subjects in the ratio of its members in the Lok Sabha.

- * The Akali Dal will strive to make the Constitution of India federal in the real sense and ensure that the authority and representation of all the states are equal at the Centre.

- * The organisation considers the present foreign policy framed by the Congress (I) government as 'defective, ineffective and dangerous for the country and harmful for mankind'. The Akali Dal will support a foreign policy based on peace and helpfulness to the cause of promotion of national interests especially the cause of friendship with and goodwill for the neighbouring countries where Sikhs live and their sacred places are situated. The Dal is firmly of the view that its foreign policy should not be subservient to the foreign policy of any other country.

- * To obtain justice for Sikhs and other servants of the state and Central governments and to raise an effective voice and wage a struggle in the event of injustice done to any of them are special planks of the Akali Dal programme.

- * The Dal will specially work for the maintenance of the traditional position of the Sikhs in the three wings of the Defence Forces and try to ensure that the demands and requirements of the Sikhs in the Defence Forces get the required attention of the *Panth*. The Dal will also seek to make the *kripan* a part of the uniform of the Sikhs in all Defence establishments.

- * The organisation considers its primary duty to obtain proper facilities for the rehabilitation of the former members of the Defence Forces in civil life, to organise them for safeguarding their rights and self-respect and to make their voice effective.

- * The party is of the view that all men and women who have not been convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude by a court of law, should have the right to possess small arms such as revolvers, pistols, guns, rifles or carbines without a license.

- * The Akali Dal wants a total ban on drinking and smoking in and around specified areas in Punjab. ♦

Dr Chauhan's demands • Zia-ul-Haq's role • Hindu-Sikh tension • The economic issues •

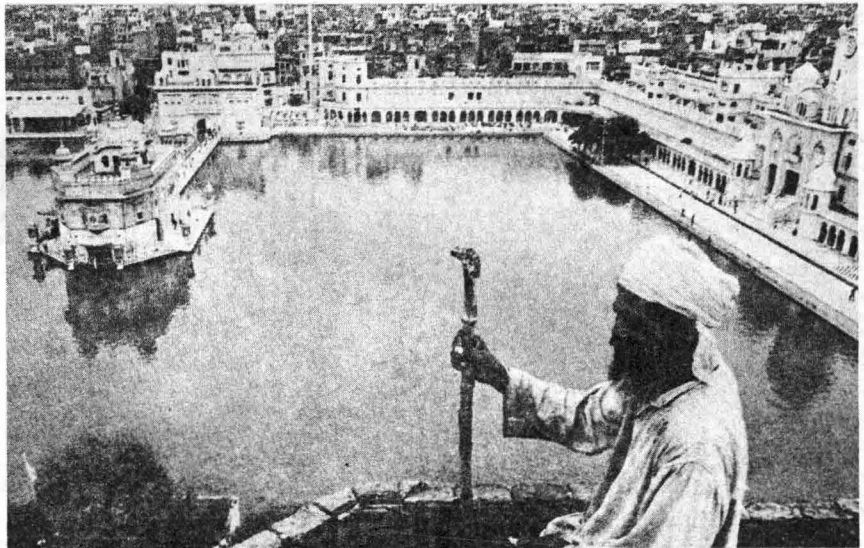
hiding there. According to Longowal, if the police do enter, it will be construed as provocation. "It's humanly impossible to exactly tell whether the assassin is there or not as 20,000 people come and go everyday at the Golden Temple," he says. Bhindranwale takes up in a typically bellicose vein, "The foundation of Khalistan will be laid the day the police enters the Golden Temple. . . this is the beginning of our struggle and it shall continue till we break the chains of slavery."

THE KHALISTAN LOBBY

Khalistan is, in fact, on everybody's lips. There are many versions of this most common demand. One calls for the creation of a separate land 'in which the rule of the *Khalsa* shall prevail'. The leading proponents of Khalistan include Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan, the Chairman or *Rashtrapati* of the National Council for Khalistan; Ganga Singh Dhillon, an expatriate Sikh and Balbir Singh Sandhu, the mysterious Secretary-General who is occupying a room in Guru Nanak Niwas.

Dr Chauhan, 55, who is currently residing in London and is also known as Doctor 'Tunda' as one of his arms is maimed, says "*Khalistan ladai to hogi— aaj nahi to kal hogi* (the fight for Khalistan is bound to take place, if not today then tomorrow)." He is now planning to buy a tiny island in the Arabian Sea and his statements make catchy copy. "Because of the brutal and heinous repression by the Central Reserve Police Force and other units," he announced at a press conference in New York, "the Sikhs will be forced to retaliate."

Another Khalistani is Ganga Singh Dhillon who is believed to be on backslapping terms with President Zia-ul-Haq. The Indian government believes Pakistan is putting Dhillon up to create trouble. Pakistan has been paying lavish attention to Indian delegations visiting Sikh shrines in that country, Sikh hijackers who have in-



The agitation: oil on troubled waters.

variably asked the pilots to head course for Pakistan, and Islamabad papers are full of special supplements on Khalistan.

"When a nation wants to establish its own sovereignty then only the battlefield can be the negotiating table. . . the physical fight is inevitable. The Sikhs will have to make a lot of sacrifices," says Secretary-General Balbir Singh Sandhu in Amritsar. It is believed that he functions from a poky little room within the premises of the Golden Temple with the name-plate of the National Council of Khalistan hanging over it. He is also believed to be abetted in his secessionist efforts by prominent Akali leaders.

The atmosphere at the Golden Temple has changed in recent years. In the old days Punjabi Hindus would rub shoulders with their Sikh brethren in the jostle to enter the Hari Mandir. Though several thousand Sikhs still congregate at the white marble pathway leading across the shimmering waters of the sacred pool to the interior of the Temple, the Punjabi Hindus are now conspicuous by their absence. Confesses a Hindu trader of Amritsar, "We do not like to go there. You never know when they might catch you."

THE AKALI GRUDGES

Though Punjab boasts India's highest per capita income and per capita domestic product, its economy has been badly hit by the agitation. The maintenance of the large number of Central forces has put a severe strain on the State's exchequer and its debt liability (on March 31, 1982) stood at Rs 523 crores. Since there are no mineral resources to act as the foundation for large manufacturing industries, the industrial scene is restricted to processing, light engineering and agriculture based industries. Some important towns however, do figure on the country's industrial chart: Mandi Gobindgarh is the second largest steel town next only to Jamshedpur; the biggest hosiery and knitwear centre is located in Ludhiana; thousands of fans, sewing machines and cycles are churned out in Jullundhur everyday. It is significant that while, in 1947 the total power requirement of undivided Punjab was 15 mw today, 36 years later, it has crossed 1150 mw. During the same period, power demand for the whole of India rose 16 times. In Punjab it shot up by 66 times!

One of the main grouses nursed by

Sikhs and the army • Punjab's prosperity • Nirankari-Akali clashes • New Delhi's response •

the Akalis concerns the stepmotherly treatment meted out by the Centre. Brandishing statistics, they point out that since Independence, Punjab has got only Rs 900 crores out of a total of Rs 40,000 crores invested in the public sector. They also allege that two-thirds of bank deposits in the state are invested in projects outside Punjab. They also complain that the Hindu Marriage Act has been 'forced' on the Sikhs; and that no Sikh has been appointed Chief of Army Staff despite the fact that about ten per cent of the Indian Army consists of Sikhs.

The Akalis have added a dangerous element to their agitation by calling upon retired Sikh army personnel to participate in the *dharamyudh*. A military committee of retired Sikh generals has been formed to guide the *appavaru jatha* or 'suicide squad' which now numbers over a lakh. The idea obviously is to turn the *jatha* into a sort of *Mukti Bahini* and wage an armed struggle against the 'tyrannies' of the Government. The volunteers were recently administered an 'oath of allegiance' by Sant Longowal and swore to protect the '*Panth, quom* and the oppressed against tyranny'.

The rest of India finds it a little difficult to see the Sikhs as an underprivileged community. They are the

most prosperous farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs and virtually control the entire road transport system of north India; and their standards of literacy and living are among the highest in the country. Every 16th Indian Administrative Service official is a Sikh as is every 19th Indian Police Service officer; every tenth Defence Service recruit is also a Sikh; remittances from the three million Sikhs settled abroad have made Punjab one of the most envied states.

BLOODY CLASHES

All is not well between the Sikhs. The periodic clashes between members of the 64-year-old Nirankari Mission and the Akalis have turned bloody. The Akalis allege that *Avtar Bani*, the holy book of the six million Nirankaris, contains disrespectful references to the *Guru Granth Sahib* and call them *pa-khandis*. There are also the Nihangs, a militant sect who trace their ancestry to the suicide squads created by Guru Govind Singh. Called the 'Beloved Army of the Guru', they are 'allowed' to carry unlicensed arms.

Just as the Sikhs have militant Akalis to wage the *dharamyudh*, the Hindus have also formed protection squads, called Hindu Suraksha Samitis. Recently, a procession was taken out

by Hindus in Amritsar in which slogans like '*kacch, kada, kripa, ennu bhejo Pakistan*' (all those wearing underwear, bracelets and daggers should be sent to Pakistan) were heard. The Akalis have retaliated by hanging the severed heads of cows in front of the entrances to temples while Hindus have tossed cigarettes or *bidi* bundles in the holy *sarovar*. The clashes are spurred by the fact that there may soon be more Hindus than Sikhs in Punjab. The 1981 Census shows that out of every 100 people living in Punjab, 53 were Sikhs and 47 Hindus. The narrowing of the gap is attributed to the steady influx of Hindu-Harijan migrant labour who come from neighbouring states during the harvest season. Large numbers of these labourers later settle down for good.

NEW DELHI'S RESPONSE

Though New Delhi has accepted certain religious demands—ranging from banning the sale of tobacco and liquor in the vicinity of Shri Harminder Sahib and Durgina Mandir to a direct relay of *kirtans* through the Jullundhur station of All India Radio—the Akalis are demanding more. Shuttle diplomacy by veteran leaders like Sardar Swaran Singh has yielded nothing more than persuading the Akali leaders to come to the negotiating table, where the talks have promptly broken down. "What a 100 Swaran Singhs shuttling between Delhi and Amritsar will not achieve in a 100 days," remarked elderly Sikh writer Khushwant Singh in his syndicated column, "could be achieved in a brief ten-minute prayer for peace and goodwill by the Prime Minister at the Hari Mandir."

"This nation is not going to break up. . . my party and other parties will never let this happen," said the Prime Minister at a press conference before going on to blame the inevitable 'foreign hand'. "The Sikhs occupy a place of honour in the country and are the nation's strength," she added. ♦



The Golden Temple: from worship to war.

A PUNJAB CHRONOLOGY

January 4, 1980: The Karnal District and Sessions Judge acquits Nirankari chief, Baba Gurbachan Singh and his 60 followers of charges arising out of a two-year-old clash at Amritsar between Nirankaris and the Bhindranwale sect of Akali Sikhs.

February 29, 1980: The Akali Dal decides to have collective leadership under an accord reached between 11 senior leaders of the party. All powers are to vest in a seven-member ad hoc committee from which former Dal president, Jagjit Singh Talwandi and Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC) chief, Gurcharan Singh Tohra are excluded.

July 11, 1980: The state budget for 1980-81 leaves an uncovered deficit of Rs 660 million.

August 9, 1980: The Punjab Cabinet rejects in full the report of the Gurdev Singh Inquiry Commission which had indicted Union Home Minister, Zail Singh. The Commission was appointed by the Akali government and had found substance in 35 out of the 50 cases in its three interim reports. On the same day, the Akali Dal splits with rival factions taking action against top leaders of the opposite groups. The faction headed by Sant Harcharan Singh Longowal expels JS Talwandi from primary membership; Talwandi in turn, suspends former Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal and four others for 'anti-party activities'; the Badal group in a resolution, regrets the 'breaking of oath of loyalty' by Talwandi.

August 20, 1980: The split in the Akali Dal is actualised with the election of Longowal as the new president replacing Talwandi.

October 24, 1980: The Talwandi faction of the Akali Dal demands an 'autonomous' region in northern India to protect Sikh interests. In another resolution, it calls upon GS Tohra to resign from the presidentship as he has 'violated the sanctity of the Akal Takht'. A day later, a peaceful 'Punjab Bandh' is organised by the Akali Dal

along with the two Communist parties to protest against the low support prices for paddy and sugarcane and the general rise in prices.

November 19, 1980: Akali Dal (Longowal) candidate GS Tohra, is re-elected president of SGPC for the eighth time in succession.

January 20, 1981: Chief Minister Darbara Singh quotes a government survey revealing that 50% of the families in the state live below the poverty line. A day later, almost the entire Opposition *gheraoes* the Assembly and boycotts the Governor's address at the start of the budget session. The demonstrators demand among other things, the withdrawal of the National Security Act.

February 2, 1981: The budget for 1981-82 shows a deficit of Rs 1,350 million which includes the carry-over debit balance of Rs 673 million of last year.

February 4, 1981: The state's Vidhan Sabha rejects an Opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion against the Darbara ministry.

February 21, 1981: Acute power shortages render 100,000 labourers jobless. Frequent power cuts badly affect work in hospitals and industries and paralyse water supply.

May 17, 1981: Sant Longowal is unanimously re-elected President of the Akali Dal (L).

May 31, 1981: Police use teargas to disperse a violent 'anti-smoking' rally organised by the All-India Students Federation in Amritsar.

June 8, 1981: Workers of the Akali Dal (Talwandi) stage *dharnas* all over Punjab to demand implementation of the Anandpur Sahib Resolution.

August 13, 1981: The Chief Minister announces that the state has given top priority to power generation in the Sixth Plan.

September 2, 1981: A new party, Panth Ekta Shiromani Dal, is formed with an aim to fight the Khalistan movement.

September 9, 1981: Veteran editor Lala Jagat Narain is shot dead in broad daylight by three extremists on a motor-cycle. The same day, 'currency' of the so-called 'Republic of Khalistan' is released in Amritsar by the National Council of Khalistan, Secretary-General Balbir Singh Sandhu.

September 17, 1981: The 'ban tobacco' stir is revived by some Dal Khalsa people who set fire to three *paan-bidi* shops in Amritsar.

September 20, 1981: Twelve people are killed when police open fire at Mehta Chowk, Amritsar to disperse a sword-wielding crowd of Nihangs who go on a rampage after Sant Bhindranwale surrendered to the police. Six battalions of Border Security Force are deployed to assist the police; over 700 people are taken into custody as a precautionary measure.

September 29, 1981: A group of Dal Khalsa activists hijack an Indian Airlines Boeing 737 with 117 passengers aboard, to Lahore. Next morning, Pakistan commandoes overpower the five terrorists.

October 17, 1981: More than 100 people belonging to Dal Khalsa and other extremist organisations are arrested in a state-wide swoop. Bomb explosions rock the state. Earlier, three 'hit-men' shoot down a Nirankari in Chandigarh.

November 17, 1981: JS Talwandi, along with 53 others, courts arrest by violating prohibitory orders near Parliament House in New Delhi.

November 22, 1981: The Centre decides to set up a task force for combining operations in Punjab to round up extremists. This comes in the wake of the gunning down of two police officers by extremists.

December 14, 1981: Punjab tops the list of per capita income among states with Rs 2,278.

January 12, 1982: Harsimran Singh, a key figure of the Dal Khalsa, is arrested near Chandigarh on charges of sedition and abetment in hijacking.

January 21, 1982: Iqbal Singh makes

an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Chief Minister when he hits him on the spinal cord in the neck with a karate-type chop. The state government decides to go in for a fleet of bullet-proof cars and jeeps for ministers and high officials.

February 5, 1982: Akali Dal (T) President, JS Talwandi, dissolves the party's working committee and delegates all powers to the acting *morcha* chief, Randhir Singh Cheema.

February 9, 1982: US immigration officials refuse to grant permission to Khalistan leader Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan as the Indian government has revoked his passport.

February 19, 1982: Hans Raj Sharma is appointed president of the PCC(I) in place of Mrs Sarla Prasher.

March 12, 1982: The 1982-83 state budget leaves an uncovered gap of Rs 166 million but proposes measures to net an additional Rs 394 million.

April 12, 1982: Dr M Chenna Reddy is appointed Governor of Punjab and succeeds Aminuddin Ahmed Khan.

April 21, 1982: Standing *rabi* crops in 60 villages are extensively damaged by a hailstorm.

April 24, 1982: The Election Commission grants ad hoc recognition to Shiromani Akali Dal (T) and the Longowal faction as state parties. The Chief Minister says that the *nahar roko* agitation is essentially a political problem and releases a white paper containing details of the Ravi-Beas waters dispute.

May 1, 1982: The Union Government overrules the Home Ministry and decides to ban the Dal Khalsa and the National Council of Khalistan. On the same day, violence spreads to Nabha in Patiala district, where curfew is imposed.

May 14, 1982: Members of Akali Dal (T) burn copies of *Indian Express* because of an article by Arun Shourie on Punjab. A day later, comes the news that 11.7 million tonnes of grain have been lost due to rain and hail which swept the northern belt. More than 75% of the total wheat crop, which is already harvested, is badly affected.

June 18, 1982: The latest report of the Punjab State Electricity Board says that it has lost Rs 550 million during 1980-81. The same day, police burst teargas shells in Patiala to disperse unruly Akali processionists. The Longo-

wal faction of the Akali Dal had given a call for *hartal* in protest against the alleged burning of copies of Guru Granth Sahib. A firing spree by a 'killer squad' at Patti in Amritsar claims 12 lives.

July 25, 1982: Giani Zail Singh is sworn in as the country's seventh President, having defeated the combined Opposition candidate, former Justice HR Khanna.

July 26, 1982: A three-member committee deputed by the Gandhi Peace Foundation to study and assess the situation in Punjab says that the state is at a 'critical' juncture and that things are 'explosive'.

July 28, 1982: London Police arrest Dr JS Chauhan, the 'President' of the 'Republic of Khalistan' and two aides when they try to burn the Indian flag outside India House.

August 4, 1982: Four additional battalions of the Central Reserve Police (CRP) are rushed to Punjab to help maintain law and order during the Akali agitation. Delhi Police register a case against Gurbax Singh, a 45-year-old Sikh, who made an unsuccessful attempt to hijack an Indian Airlines plane to Lahore.

August 19, 1982: A mid-term review of the state's financial position shows that the deficit is mounting unmanageably and is estimated at Rs 700 million.

August 20, 1982: Darbara Singh once again escapes an attempt on his life when hand-grenades are thrown at him near Rahon. The assailant is later shot dead by the police. Later, the same day, a young Sikh, Museebat Singh, who hijacked an Indian Airlines Boeing 737 on the Bombay-Delhi route at pistol-point, is shot dead in a macabre climax to a six-and-a-half hour ordeal for 63 passengers and a crew of six. One of the demands made by the hijacker is the replacement of Darbara Singh's government by an Akali Dal ministry.

October 11, 1982: Four Akalis are killed when police open fire on a violent mob outside Gurdwara Rakabganj near Parliament House. Teargas shells and *lathis* are used to disperse the agitators who have gathered to pray for the victims of the Taran Taran accident. About 80 people, including 50 policemen, are injured in the clash which lasts two and a half hours.

October 16, 1982: Violence erupts

when, responding to Sant Longowal's call, Akali *satyagrahis* lodged in jails, resist eviction from prison. The decision to release the Akalis is taken at the Prime Minister's behest.

October 19, 1982: Shoot-at-sight orders are issued in Amritsar city. Two days earlier, 6,000 Akali volunteers had vacated the jails and converged to Amritsar.

October 26, 1982: The Prime Minister's emissary, Sardar Swaran Singh, has meetings with Longowal and Bhindranwale. Longowal appoints a five-member committee to clarify their demands. While negotiations are going on, a powerful grenade explosion rips through the Ghanta Ghar Chowk in Amritsar leaving one dead and 50 injured.

November 5, 1982: Parliament adopts two Bills to award life imprisonment to hijackers. The next day, the Akali Dal produces its vision of an enlarged state of Punjab with territories from the adjoining states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana.

November 14, 1982: A number of Akalis are detained as a precautionary measure to ensure a peaceful dress rehearsal of the opening day celebrations of the Asian Games. Special noticeboards are erected at all border posts proclaiming that prohibitory orders under Section 144 would be in force till the Games are over.

November 18, 1982: The new formula which is being evolved to resolve the Akali agitation proposes that except for the demand concerning the territorial issues, the Centre should announce the acceptance of those demands on which an accord has reportedly been reached.

November 19, 1982: Delhi Police seal all border entry points to prevent pro-Khalistan extremists from entering the Capital and demonstrating during the Asian Games. A similar vigil is maintained at all railway stations and the airport. The Akali Dal directs its 37 Punjab Assembly members and four MPs to resign their seats.

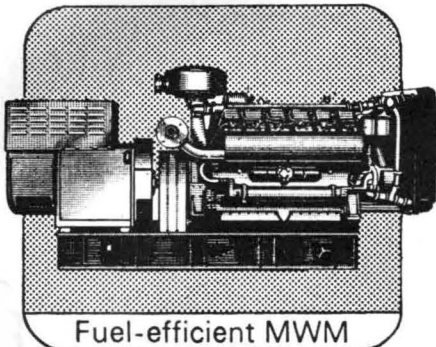
November 26, 1982: Mrs Gandhi says that *morchas* can 'never lead to the solutions of the Akali demands'.

November 30, 1982: GS Tohra is re-elected president of the SGPC for another term.

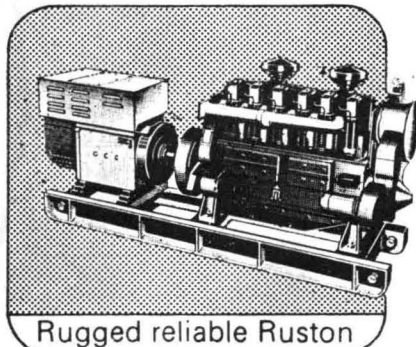
December 7, 1982: The state govern-

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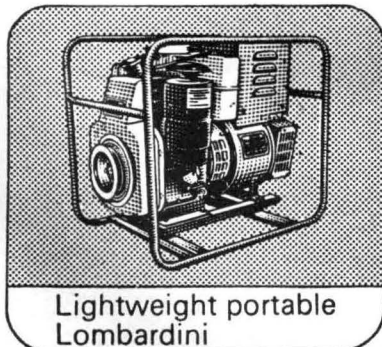
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ment issues orders for the release of all Akalis under preventive detention during the Asiad.

January 25, 1983: The Centre agrees to accept one of the major Akali demands for a review of the agreement between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan on sharing of the Ravi-Beas waters. The decision to review the dispute is taken at a five-hour tripartite meeting between the Centre, leaders of the Opposition and the Akali representatives in New Delhi.

February 2, 1983: Dr M Chenna Reddy resigns as Governor of Punjab. Some days later, AP Sharma takes over.

February 20, 1983: The tripartite negotiations end in a deadlock after the sixth round, with the Akalis walking away, promising 'never to return again to the talks'.

February 27, 1983: In a major bid to defuse the Punjab crisis, Mrs Gandhi announces the acceptance of most of the Akali religious demands such as carrying of *kirpans* aboard internal flights and radio broadcasts of *Gurbani* from Jullundhur. However, Bhindranwale and Longowal describe the concessions as 'eye-wash'.

March 2, 1983: President Giani Zail Singh rejects the Akali leaders' plea to relinquish office in view of the non-fulfilment of their demands.

March 10, 1983: The US Administration announces its decision to grant a visa to Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan.

March 17, 1983: Tension prevails in Amritsar after a 22-year-old Sikh youth is killed in a police encounter.

March 30, 1983: Differences among senior Akali leaders come to the surface at a conference organised by the Dal. PS Badal says that the PM was forced to accept the religious demands and to set up the Sarkaria Commission because of the *morcha* pressure. On the other hand, Talwandi says that the demands are 'meaningless'.

April 2, 1983: As a pre-emptive measure to foil a *rasta roko* plan of the Akali Dal, police arrest several important Akali functionaries and over 600 second-ring leaders throughout the state. The Delhi Akali Dal Chief, Jathedar Harcharan Singh, seeks the permission of Sant Longowal to commit self-immolation in support of the Dal demands.

April 4, 1983: Twenty people die in

police firings all over the state as violence erupts during the *rasta roko* campaign. Sant Longowal describes the agitation as the 'finest victory' of the people and thanks them for responding to the 'Panthic call'. However, he admits it is now difficult to keep the stir peaceful.

April 8, 1983: Longowal announces the formation of a volunteer corps whose members will be ready to sacrifice their lives for any cause.

April 9, 1983: The discovery of a cow with a docked tail in a colony of Chandigarh leads to tension. A day earlier, all 12 Nihangs standing trial for the alleged murder of Sant Fauja Singh are acquitted in Ferozepur. Sant Longowal dissolves the Delhi Akali Dal and appoints a 21-member *ad hoc* committee. The dissolution is considered a victory for the supporters of GS Tohra and a setback to the Badal group.

April 24, 1983: The Akal Takht issues orders banning the carrying of fire-arms within the Golden Temple. The next day, AS Atwal, Deputy Inspector-General (DIG) of Jullundhur Range is killed by six bullets fired by a sniper at the threshold of the Temple. The assassin takes refuge within the Temple. The Head Priest of the Takht denies that there is any ban on firearms within the Temple.

April 27, 1983: Tension grips Manji Sahib in Ambala when 30 armed Nihangs belonging to the Budha Dal take over a *gurdwara*.

May 8, 1983: A 50-member women's peace delegation led by Mrs Aruna Asaf Ali meets Longowal, who later expresses 'optimism' at finding a solution to the crisis. Dr Subramanian Swamy, Janata Party leader, also visits Amritsar and says that the situation in Punjab is 'very, very sensitive'. In an interview to a Saudi newspaper, Mrs Gandhi suspects 'considerable foreign interference' in Punjab.

May 11, 1983: For the first time in Sikh history, slogans of *Naara-e-Takveer* and *Allah-o-Akbar* are raised at the Golden Temple when 151 Muslim volunteers take a vow in front of the Akal Takht to protect the Sikh Panth.

May 12, 1983: Hardliners abort an unannounced meeting of the Akali Dal High Command which had gathered to discuss the new formula presented by

the Centre. The Prime Minister makes it clear to the Punjab Congress (I) dissident legislators that no change in the state's leadership is being contemplated.

May 20, 1983: Prithipal Singh, former Olympic hockey team captain, is shot dead by unidentified youths at the Punjab Agricultural University ground in Ludhiana.

May 22, 1983: Longowal says that peace will only descend on Punjab when Chief Minister Darbara Singh is dismissed. He also gives a call for a 'one-day action programme' on June 17.

May 25, 1983: Rajiv Gandhi alleges that Gen Zia-ul-Haq was invited to the Golden Temple during the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit but the invitation was later withdrawn.

May 31, 1983: Delhi Mayor Mohinder Singh Saathi starts on a 'peace march' to Amritsar from Delhi with a bunch of followers to create an 'atmosphere of amity and goodwill'. Longowal describes the march as 'instigated and politically motivated'.

June 2, 1983: The State Government shakes up the police department and transfers all senior officers. The next day, four bogies of the Himalayan Queen 'Shan-e-Punjab', a superfast train, are derailed on the outskirts of Amritsar on its maiden run. Four days later, three bogies catch fire as the train chugged on the Jullundhur-Ludhiana section.

June 6, 1983: Despite a heavy police *bandobust*, three leaders of the Hindu Suraksha Samiti who were wanted in riot cases, managed to surrender themselves in the court of Patiala. A Niran-kari primary schoolteacher is shot dead by unidentified youths in Jullundhur.

June 8, 1983: A bomb explodes in the Chandigarh residence of Balwant Singh, an Akali High Command member.

June 9, 1983: Union Home Minister, PC Sethi suggests to Sant Longowal that June 15 be fixed as the date for resumption of talks. A Government spokesman affirms that there is no ban in the Army for wearing of *kirpans* by Sikh personnel.

June 12, 1983: Longowal calls for a 'rail *roko*' stir on June 17 throughout the State and appeals to the people not to travel by train on that day. ♦

Habiba Miranda

Interviewed By Shirin Mehta

Photographed By Ashok Gupta

DRESSED IN A cool white kaftan, her granny glasses over her nose, reading *The Hundred Years Of Modern Art*, Habiba Miranda seems to fit the image of an art teacher-cum-connoisseur. Long ago, before she got married, she used to paint in oils. Now she expends her artistic fervour on impulsive acts such as whitewashing her entire flat within three days!

Married to cartoonist Mario, her life is steeped in art. Part-time art teacher at the Cathedral School, Habiba finds the work very absorbing. "Kids just love colour and paints. I often draw their shadows for them and let them draw out their fantasies." She takes a deep puff on her cigarette.

Her flat at Oyster Apartments, in Bombay's Navy Nagar, is in a quiet, lush locality overlooking the sea. The room in which she spends most of her time however, is certainly not one in which children can be let loose. Covered with bric-a-brac from all over the world, it is a sort of 'art museum'—a tribute to Habiba and Mario's love of new places and strange things.

"There are things from various places. Most of the statues are reminders of Mario's family altar—not that either of us are particularly religious. But we kept them because they are all made of ivory and wood and are very old. . . and very expensive." Not everything was chosen by Habiba. The boomerangs, for instance, in the right hand side corner were picked up by Mario during his trip to Australia, but the boxes on the shelf below are Habiba's favourites. Mixtures of ivory and silver, some made of brass, they come from such exotic places as Macao and Persia and reflect her taste.

"We both love to collect things. He loves plates and posters and I love to pick up anything that is made of ceramics." The paintings, which serve as a back drop to the room, are contributed by artists all over the world, most of them (like S Kotz Blume, Colberg and Dalgano) personal friends of the Mirandas. The long painting of flowers

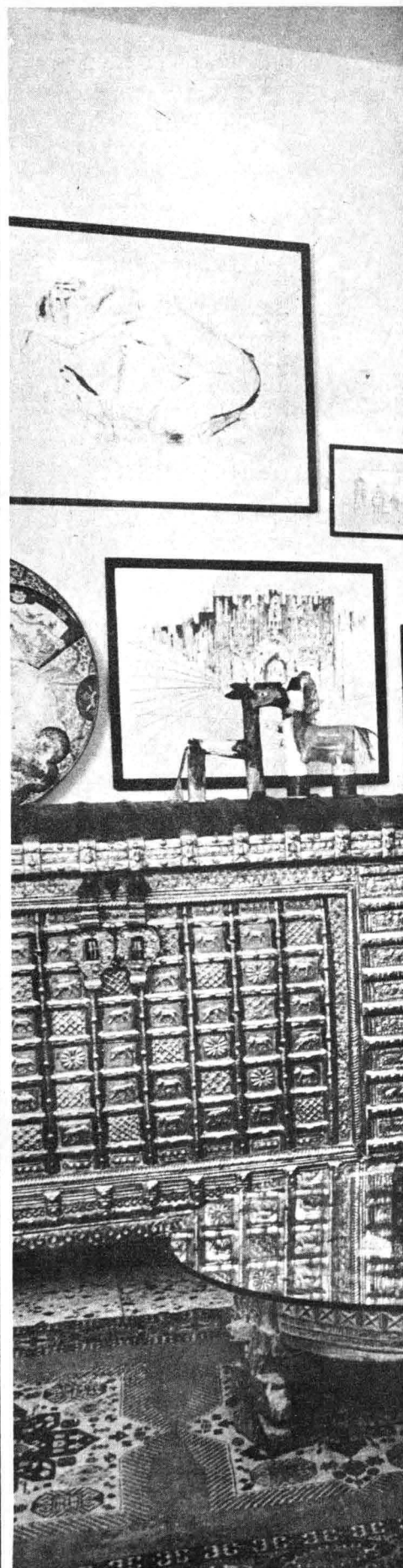
on the right was given by an aunt and beyond the range of the photograph are two bright pictures made by the two sons. "They are really very good," Habiba explains, "But they are very determined that they won't take it up as a profession."

But by far the most interesting part of the room, as far as Habiba is concerned, is the corner that stocks the art books. There is the Museum series—bought because Habiba has seen most of the museums. *Golden Goa* and *The Portugal I Love* sit complacently beside *The Best Of Sail* and *Favourite Tales From Shakespeare*. A small part of the shelf is reserved for the *Diario de Mario*—three volumes of beautifully illustrated diaries: things which happened to Mario when he was a boy and was put down irresistibly in sketch form.

"There are ten of them," Habiba announces with almost proprietorial pride. "His mother has the rest. I had them bound so that they can be preserved." The only catch is that the one line explanations—whenever they appear—are in Portuguese.

Habiba has two passions, which she plans to devote her time to someday. "I've always loved pottery. I intend to go to Bishuri in Goa and learn how to do it. Even set up a kiln there. The other thing I've always been fond of is restoring and polishing old furniture." An old gramophone, painted a bright orange with yellow flowers, bears mute testimony to this statement.

The one thing that Habiba has always loved doing is travelling. "I worked for BOAC for four and a half years and would take a week off in places like Damascus, Cairo and Istanbul." It is a passion that is shared by Mario and together they have travelled extensively. "You can say we've seen an equal amount of places. I know the east much better than he does and vice versa. It was my love for travel that hindered me from going deeper into art. But I have no regrets. . ."



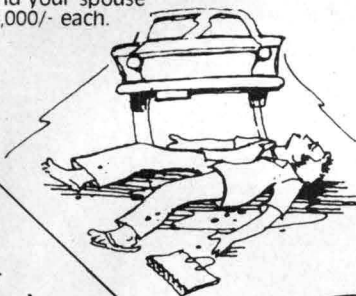


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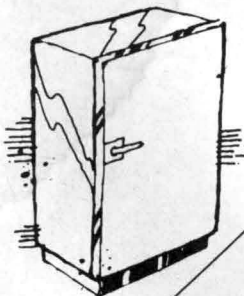
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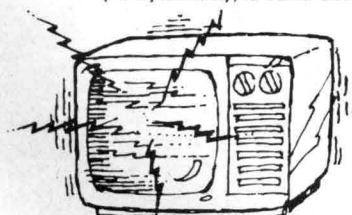
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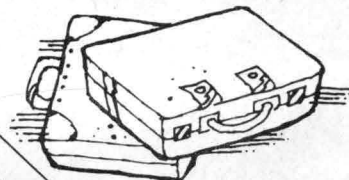
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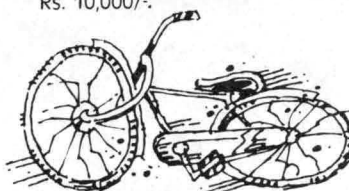
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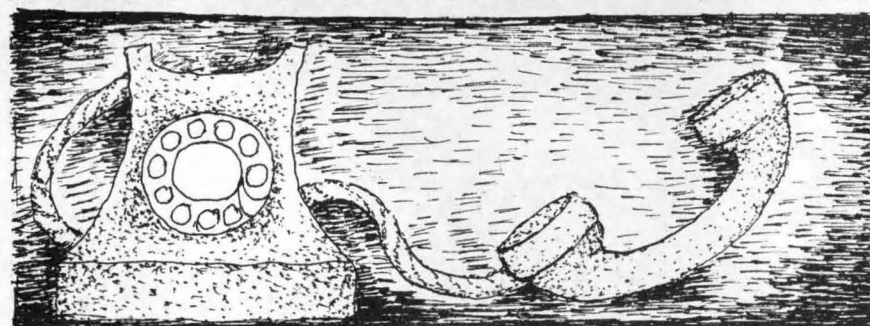
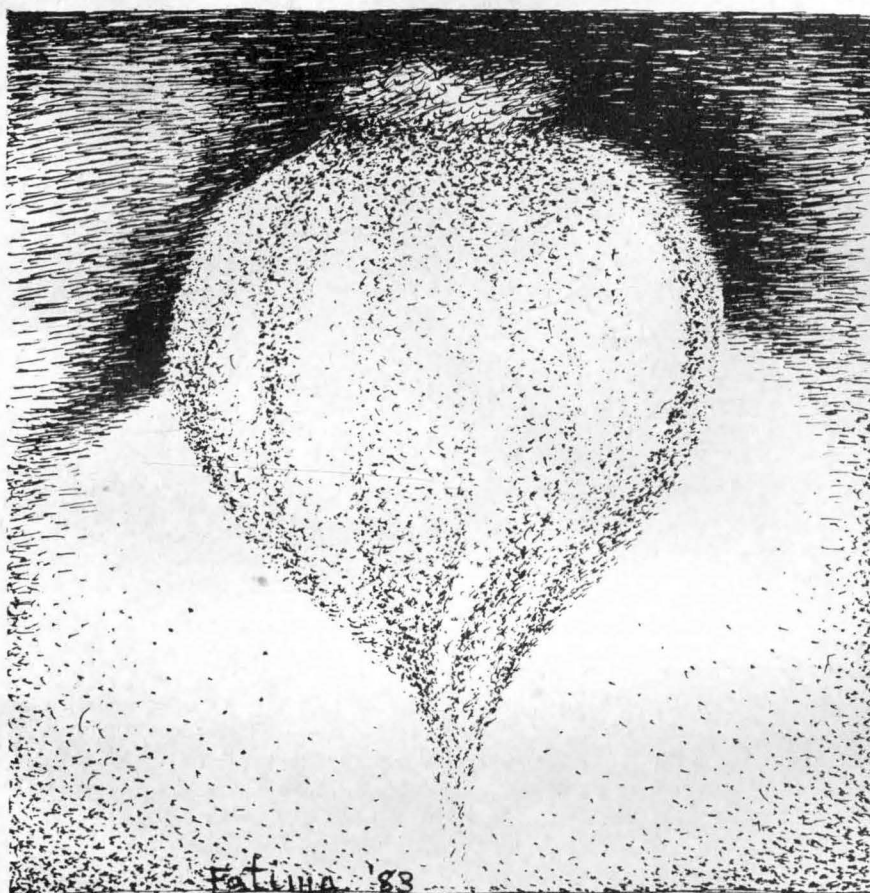
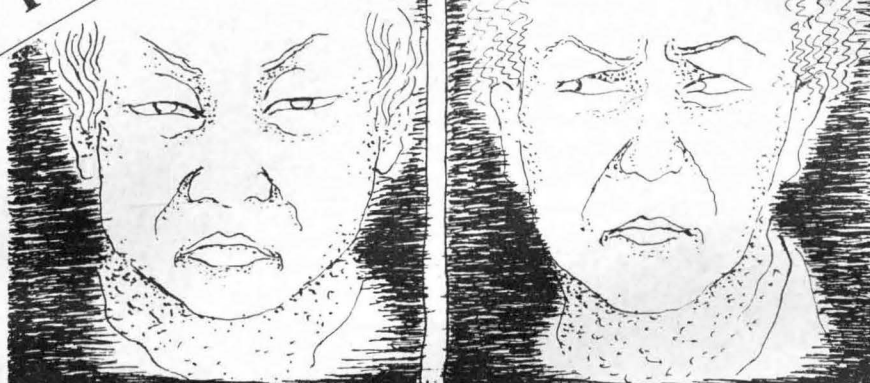
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ONE TOUCH OF GARLIC

By Ashokamitran

I OPENED THE refrigerator and the few lingering traces of sleep left me. I knocked on the door that opened into my friend's room. The third time it was not just a knock. The door opened and he stood in the gray flannel shirt I saw him in during all the mornings of our shared residence in the apartment. "What is it?" he asked, his eyes still heavy with rudely interrupted sleep.

"See here," I pointed to the refrigerator.

"What?"

"Garlic."

"What garlic?"

"Your garlic."

He put his nose to the open refrigerator shelves and drew back his face. He asked again, "What garlic?"

Nobody could miss the reek that filled every bit of space in the refrigerator.

"What garlic! Everything in the refrigerator is ruined by it!"

"There is no garlic. I didn't put any garlic inside."

"Then who put it? I don't use garlic at all."

"I don't either. There is no garlic smell."

He turned back, went into his room and slammed shut the door.

I felt I had been declared knocked out even before the fight started. How was I going to put up with this man and his garlic for the rest of my stay in Iowa City?

I poured out some milk from my day-old milk carton into the saucepan and boiled it. Added a glass of water and boiled it again. I poured the steaming milk into a large cup and dissolved a spoon of instant coffee and some sugar in it. I took a sip. It was still

Ashokamitran (J Thyagarajan) is a leading Tamil writer. In 1973, he attended the University of Iowa's International Writing Programme. This story was inspired then.

there, the garlic smell.

Now he also came into the kitchen and placed his skillet on the stove. The stove had four burners and we shared two each. I watched for him to react when he opened the refrigerator but he had the same wry look and took out his bacon block from the freezer. He peeled out a slice and laid it on the skillet. The oblong piece soon shriveled, crackled and oozed out fat. He had almost burnt a side when he turned it over. It made more crackling noises, and he took it out and laid it on a plate. He took slices of bread and toasted them in the bacon-fat still simmering in the hot skillet. Then he sat facing me to eat his breakfast.

I never ate anything that early in the morning. Usually I needed a cup of coffee soon after I woke, but suddenly even that was making me too conscious of an uncertain stomach.

A day later I noticed several people, not as thin as I, pick up a different kind of milk carton at the store. That was low-fat milk. Low-fat milk was my sustenance from then on.

He drank cups and cups of green tea with his bacon. He topped it with a large glass of cold milk. In those days when everything in the United States was a novelty for us and when every moment brought a new discovery, we had talked and laughed over the most trivial of things. His own bacon, for instance. He ate bacon for breakfast because that was the only thing he knew how to cook. Just as I drank coffee because that was the only thing I prepared with some degree of success. Now even that was out. Nobody drank garlic-flavoured coffee.

I threw away my coffee in the sink and left my saucepan and cup on the table unwashed. I realized later that I slammed the kitchen door when I went back to my part of the apartment.

* * *

Just two days after I had arrived in Iowa City in October of 1973, all the participants of the Writing Programme were taken to a place called McGregor for a boatride on the Mississippi. We were more than 20 men and women, and our introduction to one another was a recurring confusion. We did a lot of smiling, asked one another much too often the names and the countries we came from. Peru was mistaken for Chile, Brazil for Argentina, the Republic of China for the People's Republic of China. The Indonesian did a

lot of talking though few could understand him. At any given opportunity, some members sprang into a dance or burst into song, not as much to show off as out of a sense of desperation, to be able to communicate *something*. Nobody made a mistake about my country—I was very Indian, with very brown, very dark hair and a hundred pounds to my five feet six inches. But my name was a challenge to West and East alike. After one or two tries, I wrote out my name in capitals for them to read for themselves. That wasn't very successful either—never was a combination of English letters more mystifying. Tymoteusz wasn't difficult. Andrzej wasn't an impossibility. Everyone seemed to know Jacek was pronounced Yatsek. But Thyagarajan was *never* Thyagarajan.

The following week there was again a trip en masse to Des Moines. It was then that he and I became close to each other. He was from one end of

"My name was a challenge to East and West alike. Everyone seemed to know Jacek was pronounced Yatsek. But Thyagarajan was never Thyagarajan."

Asia and I from another; we were both prose writers. We sat together, ate together and when on an occasion the whole gang had to stay in a motel, we two shared a room. We entertained ourselves by manipulating the air conditioner and playing the multichannel music. We pushed all the keys and buttons but the TV wouldn't work. There must have been some kind of a master switch for the set but we couldn't find it and so returned to music. Country music, classical music, pop music, jazz. There was a bulky volume of the Bible. Gideon's. We read the Bible. Then talked. I agreed with everything he said and he agreed with everything I said.

A few days later the programme director had a problem. Another writer from Europe was coming with his wife and there was no accommodation for them in Iowa City. We were already 20 participants, each occupying a whole apartment. If only two could share an

apartment. I don't know whether anyone else was asked. But when I was asked, I said, why not? When he was asked, he said, why not? We were spending most of our time together anyway. And I moved into his apartment.

All the Mayflower apartments were designed for two residents. Though they seemed like equal halves, one was more equal than the other. One had three cupboards while the other had only two. Then the pantry. There were four shelves but two were directly above the refrigerator. Only a more-than-tall person could make full use of those shelves. But I didn't really mind. After all, one of us had to put up with the less equal half. And I was the taller of the two.

The refrigerator was a common one. I kept my milk and vegetables and butter in it. I threw that butter out in a few days. Too heavy. Some yogurt and cheese. Fruit juices. He had a number of suspicious-looking things in the freezer and in his half of the refrigerator. Varieties of meat. Eggs. Bottled stuff with strange labels. Maybe they were his native pickles. Or sausages. One he called gravy. Once upon a time the mere sight of meat would turn my stomach. But here I was, sharing a refrigerator, with more than half of it filled with different parts of different animals. But packed meat didn't smell, at least not as much as garlic did.

* * *

Hunger is a good discipline—Hemingway said that in 1956 of himself in 1926. I returned from the university to my apartment that afternoon and my discipline was very good. I hadn't discovered vegetable pizzas and hadn't known I could get sandwiches with just cheese and vegetables. Pies were too sweet and ice cream too cold. So again and again I struggled over rice. Rice that would be burnt at the bottom. Rice that would be too soft on the surface but hard and uncooked at the core. The right proportions of water and rice continued to elude me. I hadn't known that the stove flame could be adjusted to give the right amount of heat. So I had fruit juice for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Drank coffee at all times of the day and night. And fruit. And biscuits. (Called cookies there.) Today I did my cooking and sat down to eat with the sticky lump of rice and yogurt. The yogurt cup had an airtight lid. So the

yogurt was saved, but the cup and the lid smelt of garlic. I emptied all the contents on my plate and placed the cup and lid as far away as possible.

I had eaten my ascetic lunch but still sat on at the table. I was worried. I was unhappy. After all, he too was not used to keeping house and cooking his own food. He was as much a stranger to the United States as I was. I was sure he missed his own people and his own native food as much as I did. If he were to cook his lunch this afternoon, I was sure to see him fry bacon. In a flush of happiness at seeing several meat varieties in the shelves of the supermarket, he had bought a lot of them and stuffed them in the freezer. They must all have been frozen solid by this time. Probably gone bad.

He did come into the kitchen to cook his lunch. "Hullo," I said. He said, "Hullo." He took out his skillet. Then the bacon. Bread.

"Didn't see you at the English-Philosophy Department today," I said.

"I didn't come. I had an overseas call."

"From your family?"

"Yes."

I couldn't imagine my wife putting through even a local call. The nearest telephone to my home in Madras was a hundred yards away, in a shop. I didn't think she would ever think of the telephone to reach me. If she did—got the local exchange and from that to another exchange, from that to another, and from that to the Iowa City exchange and then finally to me—all we would exchange would be hullo. "Hullo, hullo, is that you?" "Yes, hullo, hullo, is that you?"

"You seemed angry in the morning," he said.

"Forget it."

"I haven't kept any garlic with my things."

"But what is in that plastic box?"

"Which one?"

"The one behind all your bottles."

"That? Jae gave it to me. He is the only fellow from my country I know here."

"Couldn't you have kept it closed? It seems like a garlic concentrate."

"There is no garlic in it."

I didn't argue with him further. No use, really.

But after he ate his bacon and toast he went to the refrigerator and took out the plastic container. Now he was a little hesitant.

"Don't you think I am right?" I

asked.

He threw the contents of the container violently into the sink. And opened both the hot and cold water taps as well as the mechanism in the sink which cuts up the solids thrown in it. The whole thing made a frightful noise.

"What are you doing?" I asked alarmingly.

"If this is the thing that makes you angry, I will never eat it."

"I didn't want you not to eat it."

But it was all gone down the sink. The whole kitchen was now filled with the smell of garlic. I opened a window and he another. Despite the tension we sat facing each other. We had eaten our sparse lunch, we were in the kitchen, but food was farthest from our minds. I thought I would never again be hungry. Not after what had happened today.

"Did you receive your ticket for the play?" I asked him.

"He was as much a stranger to the United States as I was. I was sure he missed his own people and his own native food as much as I did."

"Cabaret?"

"Yes."

"Yes, I got mine. You?"

"I got mine too."

"They have said find your own transport."

"You know where the theatre is?"

"No."

"Not far from here. We can easily walk the distance."

We seemed to have exhausted everything under the sun we had to say to each other. The kitchen was getting chilly and I got up and closed the window on my side. He rose and did likewise. Again we sat facing each other in silence.

I didn't want to start the conversation again myself. I didn't want to be the first to break up the meeting either. I waited for him to go to his room. He didn't. After a long while he said, "Some people have too many problems."

"Who doesn't have problems?"

"True, but some people have more problems than other people."

"Come on," I said. "You know all about the story of the woman who went weeping and wailing to the Buddha. 'Show me one human being who hasn't had a bereavement and I will bring your son back to life,' Buddha said, and the woman went away and never came back."

"It is not my son. It is my mother."

"Is she not well?"

"She has been admitted into a hospital."

So that was the overseas call.

"Is it very serious?"

Now he held his head in his hands and said, "I don't know. I don't know."

"Was she all right when you came here?"

"She was in very good health when I left my country. I have never known her to be ill. Now she is in a hospital."

I didn't tell him, don't worry yourself too much, it serves no purpose. He would know it, too.

"Very sorry," I said.

"That is all right."

He rose and went into his room. I got up and went to my room. We both closed our doors very gently this time.

A little while later he came to me. He was dressed to go out. "Sit down," I said.

"No, I've got to see Jae. Will you do me a favour?"

"Sure."

"I am leaving my door unlocked. If there is any call for me, will you take it? Or tell them I will be back at 5:30?"

I didn't say, why don't you tell the telephone people. I said, "I will. I am not going out anywhere this afternoon."

He seemed to have shrunk, to have grown shorter, smaller. He came from a short race but they said that even in those parts, the new generation had larger bones and were growing taller and bigger.

I stayed in my apartment all afternoon though the day outside was beautiful and inviting. I feared I might doze off, so went into the kitchen and made myself another cup of coffee. I felt I was getting used to uncommon, pungent flavours in coffee. Garlic had wonderful medicinal properties. They gave tons of garlic to women in India soon after confinement. Said to loosen up congestion of the chest and several other parts of the body. Improved

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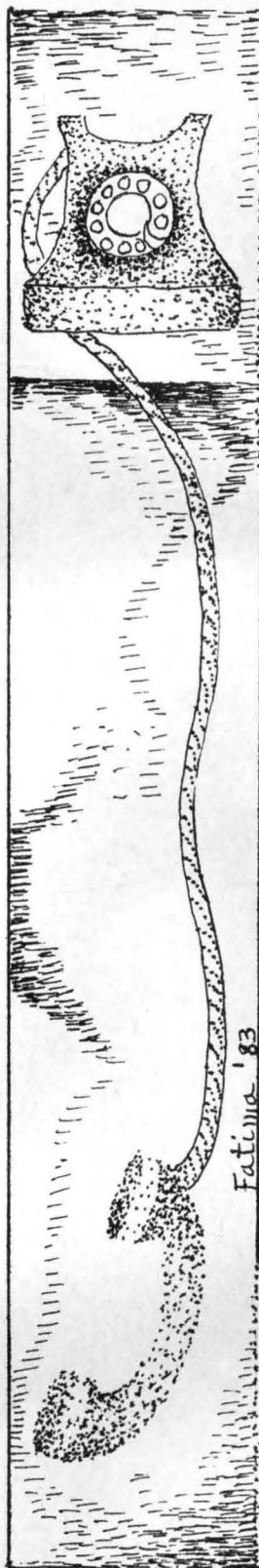
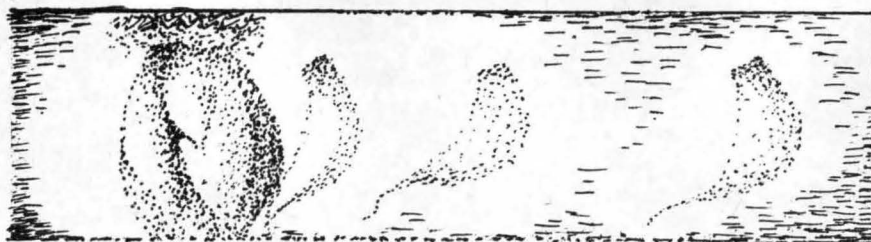
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your digestion. And, of course, anyone would keep a respectable distance from you.

There was no call for him, though I waited tensely for one. I took a peep into his room. It made me sad suddenly. He had taken out his suitcase and had packed up his things.

He came back earlier than 5:30. And he didn't mind my having opened his door. I shook my head to say there had been no call. He seemed a little relieved. But he could also have become more anxious. No news is *not* good news on such occasions.

Now the telephone rang and both of us sprang toward it. He unhooked the receiver and sat on the floor with it. Yes, it was again an overseas call. He talked fast and then listened grimly for a long while. Then talked. All in a language which seemed to abound in ha's and ah's. I couldn't even make out from the rhythm and cadence of it whether they were communicating happy news or unhappy news. I stood near him all through the conversation which neither side seemed willing to terminate. At last he held out the telephone in my direction and I placed it on the hook.

He sat still like a statue. I asked him. "Who is it from?"

He didn't answer.

"Who talked to you? Anything bad?"

Still he didn't answer.

I called out his name. I said, "Please tell me. You *can* tell me."

Now he spoke. He just said, "My family."

"What is it? How is your mother?"

"She died."

"When?"

"Three hours ago."

There was a vast continent and a wide open ocean between him and his mother's corpse.

I flung myself down and threw my arms around him. I held him very tight almost to the point of suffocating him. He broke down and wept. He wept aloud for several minutes and I did nothing to stop him. My shirt got wetter and wetter around my shoulders. After a long time he grew calm and I released him slowly. He said, "I will not forget you. I will not forget you."

I am sure he hasn't forgotten me. I haven't forgotten him. Nor that evening in his apartment in Iowa City when I held him so close. There was a faint whiff of garlic coming from him.



Mother And Child

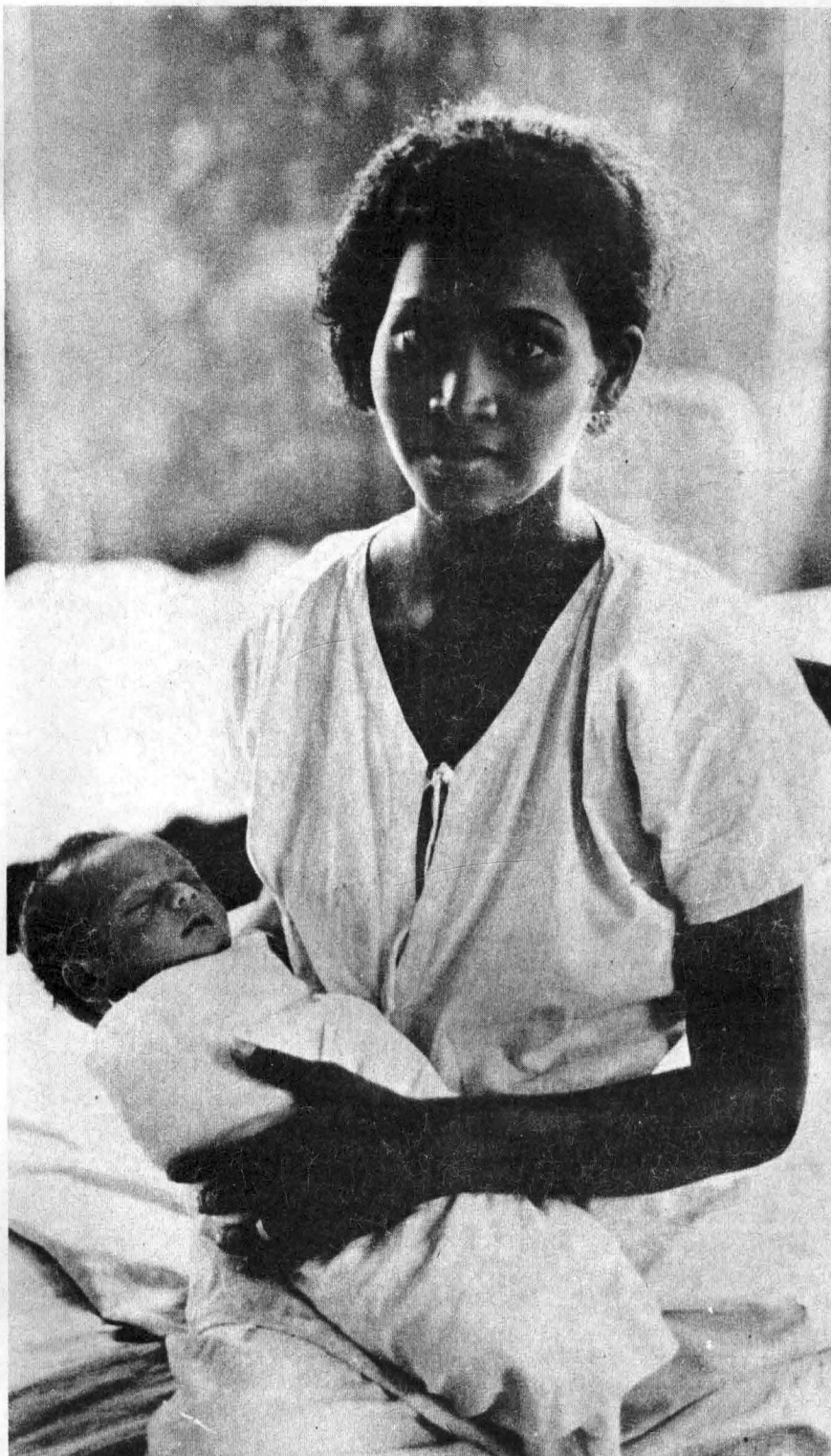
By Ketaki Sheth

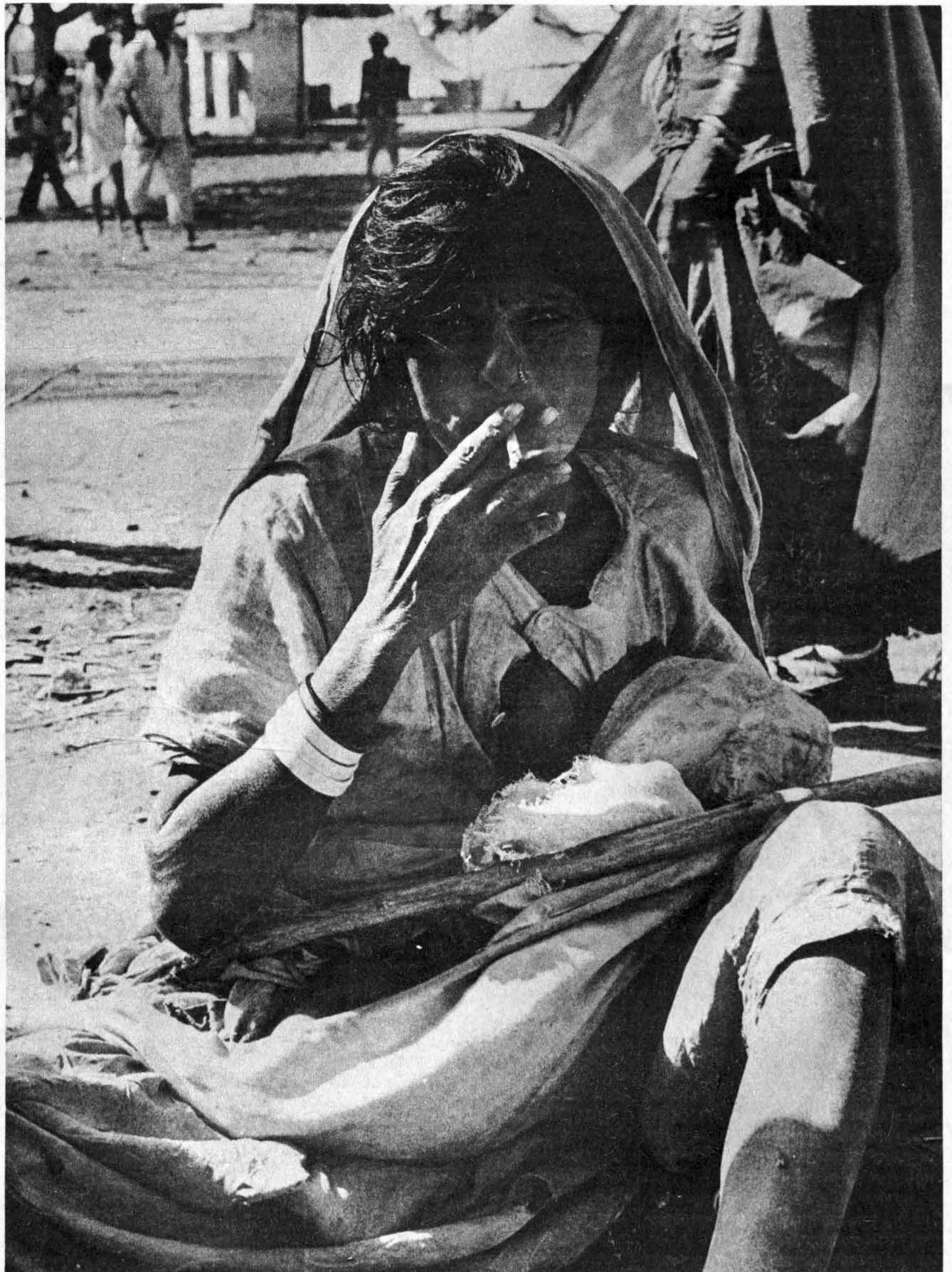
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GRAPHER AND
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KETAKI SHETH**

had gone to write about the Pushkar Fair when she came across the Rajasthani woman who defiantly breast-fed her daughter while puffing away at a *beedi*. The two faces staring out of the window of a second class railway compartment were spotted on another trip.

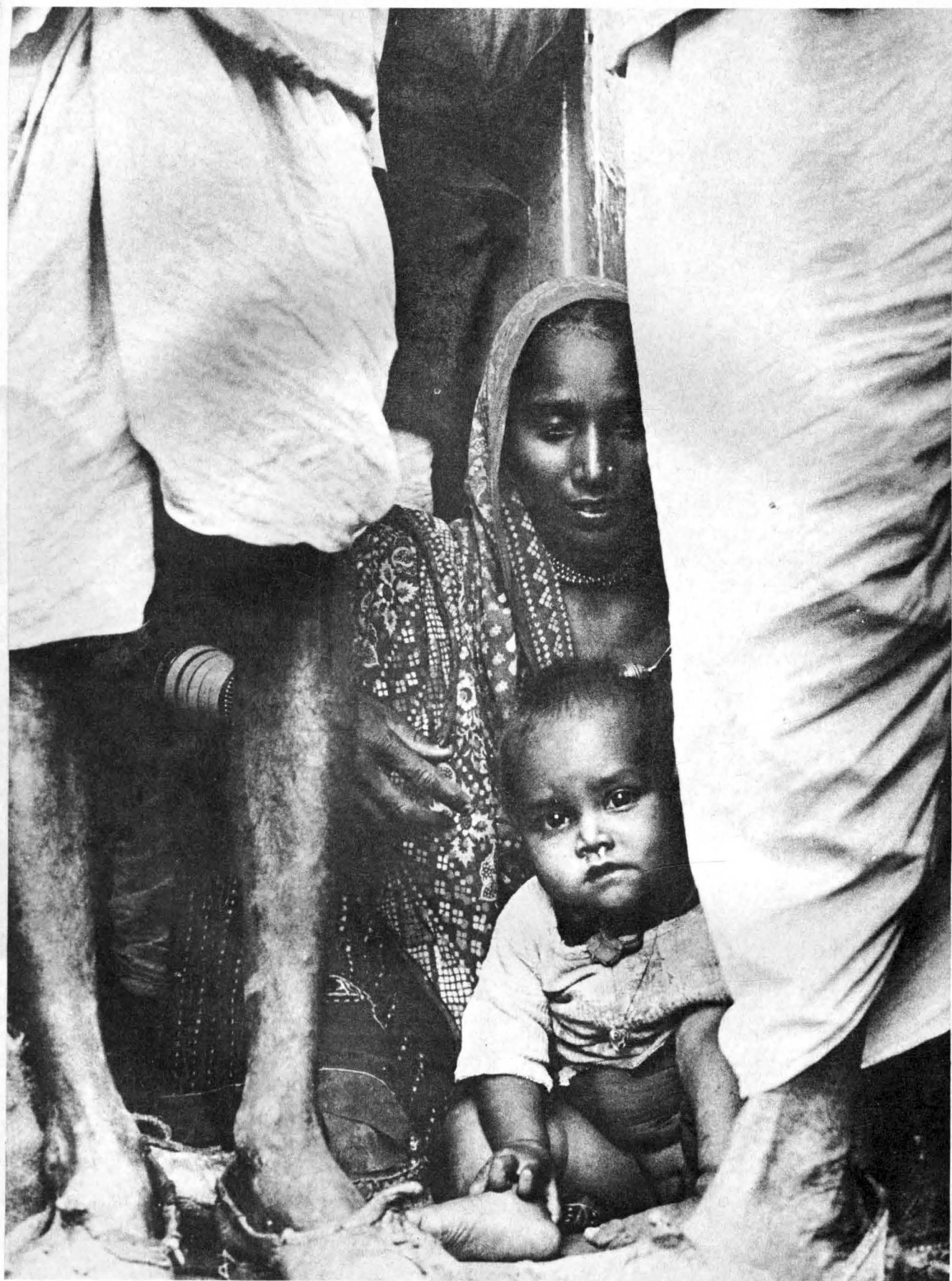
The four photographs that constitute this feature are selected from her collection of pictures of mothers with their children. The dark, proud mother in a hospital smock, displaying her newly born infant; and the shy peasant woman following her son through an undergrowth of other people's legs were all taken at different places at different times. They are united only by the strong mother and child bond, that each so clearly exhibits.

*Mother with new-born baby at a
Bombay hospital.* ►

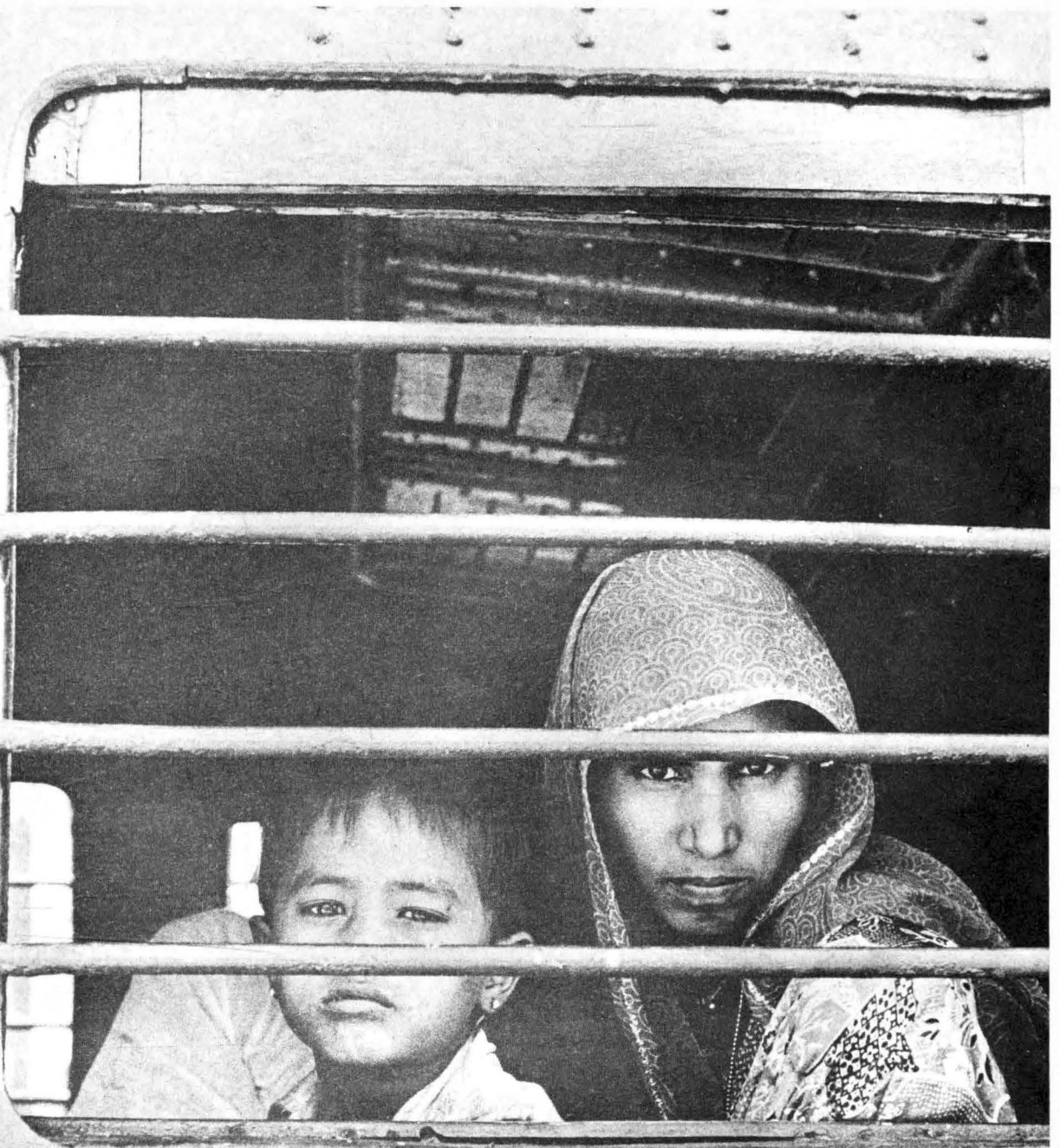




Breastfeeding at the Pushkar Fair.



Faces in a Rajasthani crowd.



Behind the bars of a train window.

Kung Fu Films Take Over

By Ashok Gopal

THEY HAVE SUCH FANCY NAMES AS *MAD MONKEY KUNG FU*, *ENTER THE NINJA* AND *CHAKKU MASTER*. THEY ARE ALL POORLY MADE FILMS WITH IMPLAUSIBLY WEAK PLOTS.

But they all have generous dollops of wild kung fu leaps, hoarse grunts and piercing screams. And with a few exceptions, they have all raked in huge profits.

Ever since the enormously successful *Enter The Dragon* triggered off the craze, over 25 kung fu films have been released in India and most have been 'hits'. Box office collection figures published in the film *Trade Guide* show that films like *Snake In The Monkey's Shadow* and *36th Chamber Of Shaolin* have done 'as well as top Hindi films all over the country. Kung fu films certainly make more money than other foreign films these days. In the first week of January 1983, *Kung Fu Of 7 Steps* grossed Rs 56,645 in one Bombay theatre. In the same week, *Superman II* running in another theatre, collected only Rs 18,589. And, the most successful film released in India last year was not a James Bond movie (as is customary) but *36th Chamber Of Shaolin*.

Films like *36th Chamber Of Shaolin* have completely changed the face of the foreign film market in India. While previously, foreign films catered only to relatively small audiences in metropolitan centres, the new breed of kung fu films have been released even in small towns like Junagadh and Sholapur.

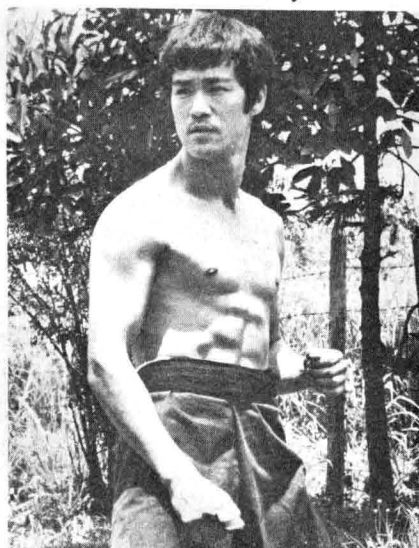
Until a few years ago, the term 'foreign film' was synonymous with 'Hollywood film'. This meant that the Indian market was completely monopolised by the Motion Pictures Export Association of America (MPEAA) whose members include Warner Brothers, Twentieth Century Fox, Paramount and others. But now the onslaught of kung fu films made in

Hong Kong has demolished this monopoly. Indeed kung fu films made by the Hong Kong mogul Run Run Shaw have fared better in India than those made by Hollywood. The Hong Kong production *Shogun's Ninja* was a hit but the Hollywood-produced *Enter the Ninja* was not. Likewise *Cleopatra Jones* and *Black Belt Jones* ran for only about five weeks—a poor show by normal martial arts film standards. Because Hong Kong kung fu films do not belong to the Hollywood's studios, the members of the MPEAA now face competition for the first time from our own National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) which has also turned to importing a few B-grade kung fu films though it is supposed to encourage only 'good' cinema. Says Stanley Menezes, Deputy General Manager, NFDC, "The success of films like *Snake In The Monkey's Shadow* helps us cover the losses we incur by releasing films like *Picnic At Hanging Rock* which are artistically acclaimed

but cater only to a limited audience."

Indian film distributors have not themselves joined the race for kung fu films primarily because the government's import policy does not allow any Indian agency other than the NFDC to import full length feature films. But according to sources at NFDC and the local distribution circuit one smart distributor from Madras has found a way out of this blanket ban. His method is simple. He purchases the rights of a kung fu film in Hong Kong or Singapore for a price that can be as low as \$5,000. He then brings the film into India where it is promptly confiscated by the customs authorities. Like all confiscated goods the film is sold off at a public auction, but since only the distributor has the rights to make duplicate prints and distribute them in theatres (under international copyright law) he is sure to be the only bidder. Last year, this distributor got in about half a dozen kung fu films like *Drunken Monk* and *Chakku Master* allegedly with the connivance of customs officials. (Now he has reportedly got in more films with an old import licence but they have not yet been officially cleared by the customs.) If the distributor arranges to get more films through such 'auctions' Bombay distributors are sure to follow suit.

Some of them may also try to get in films under the guise of 'predominantly educational' value. The import policy allows anyone to bring in such films with an open general licence (OGL). What exactly constitutes a 'predominantly educational' film is left to the discretion of the Censor Board. A few years ago some distributors made quick fortunes by importing several so-called sex education films with the help of a 'predominantly educational' (PE)



The Big Boss.

certificate from the censors. The definition of PE films has subsequently been narrowed down to 'non-fictional', 'instructional' films but local distributors say that it may not take too long for someone to find a kung fu film that fits that description as well.

Indian film distributors had an unusual opportunity to get their hands on kung fu films at the Ninth International Film Festival held in January 1983 at New Delhi. For the first time they were allowed to buy foreign films with foreign exchange sanctioned by the government. Though the Festival Committee had clearly spelt out that it would give preference to films from Third World countries and those entered in the competitive and information sections, most distributors were interested only in Hong Kong kung fu films (which fell in neither of the two preference categories). Some of them had even gone to Hong Kong before the festival to make their pick and though the stipulated maximum permissible price per film was Rs two lakhs the actual sums promised to the Hong Kong producers were said to be as high as Rs 15 lakhs. Scores of buyers came from all parts of the country and included such bigwigs as BR Chopra, Ramanand Sagar, Shreeram Bohra (president of the Indian Motion Pictures Producers' Association) and Raaj Kumar. However, much to their chagrin, the Festival Committee's final list of approved sales did not include



36th Chamber of Shaolin.

any of the Hong Kong kung fu films. Now some disgruntled producers are planning to challenge the committee's decision in court.

Indian distributors have reason to feel sore. Added to the ban on kung fu film imports is the fact that the indigenous kung fu film has simply failed to take off. Made on shoe-string budgets, films like *Morcha*, *Suraksha* and *Cobra* had reasonably well-execut-

ed kung fu sequences but audiences seem to prefer anonymous Chinamen to Mithun Chakravarty. Or perhaps they prefer the Hong Kong variety because the violence is louder and gorier. (It is a long-standing grouse of Indian film makers that the censors are more lenient when judging foreign films.)

Whatever the reason the Hong Kong kung fu film is an irresistible proposition for distributors today. Since the principal attractions of these films are the stunt sequences they go down well with even non-English speaking people in smaller towns and unlike other foreign films they also have good 're-run' value. (*Enter The Dragon* runs to packed houses even today.)

Of course, the fad cannot last forever. BK Adarsh, editor of the *Trade Guide* and a reliable distribution expert estimates that as more kung fu films hit the market, people will start losing interest. "So far about 25 kung fu films have been released and even amongst them not all have been successful. When that figure rises to 50 the market is sure to become saturated." But until that happens both the MPEAA and the NFDC are likely to bring in more and more films like *Dragon's Layer* and *Snake In The Monkey's Shadow*. And some smart Indian distributors are sure to discover ways of getting around the government's ban on feature film imports. ♦



Mad Monkey Kung Fu.

The Noble Art Of Rhyming And Maligning

By Sunaina Lowe

MORE PEOPLE HAVE HEARD OF KERSY KATRAK, NISSIM EZEKIEL AND SALEEM PEERADINA THAN WILL EVER READ THEIR POETRY. WHILE ENGLISH POETRY IN INDIA REMAINS A MINORITY INTEREST, THE POETS THEMSELVES HAVE BECOME EXTREMELY WELL-KNOWN.

One reason for this is the wide publicity accorded to their usually vicious disagreements. Nearly every major poet has been attacked in print at some stage or the other by another major poet and such epithets as 'plagiarist', 'fraud', 'dirty lecher' and 'incestuous little pseud' are tossed around with a startling regularity.

Perhaps because the poetry has yet to find a mass audience, the poets are in the strange situation of writing for each other. As a result, each reader is also a potential rival and therefore, an instant critic. In poetry journals, poets are criticised for their mode of dress, their lifestyles, their earnings and sometimes, their poetry.

The chief weapon in this war between the poets has been the anthology. With only a handful of less than prolific poets, the number of anthologies that abound seems excessive. Moreover most of them carry the same poets. However, within poetry circles, anthologies are status symbols. To edit an anthology, is to possess immense power. What is more important than who is included is, who is left out. And each anthology carries an introductory article by its editor which provides an opportunity to settle old scores, 'fix' rivals and lay down the law.

In 1969, P Lal of Calcutta's 'Writer's Workshop' produced an anthology called *Modern Indian Poetry In English: An Anthology And A Credo*.

Sunaina Lowe was on the staff of Imprint. She has now joined Tufts University on a scholarship to read International Relations.

If the title was impressive, the collection did not evoke the same sentiments. It carried 132 poets, many of dubious merit and several of whom had been previously unknown. The anthology was not regarded as being really representative of the Indian poetry scene and was dismissed by most poets.

The same could not be said of *Indian Poetry In English*, an anthology edited by Saleem Peeradina in 1972. While the collection was generally representative, the book was noted primarily for two attacks. The first was a vitriolic essay by Bombay University teacher Eunice DeSouza on Lal's anthology and another edited by VK Gokak. Ms DeSouza ripped Lal to shreds: "The Introduction to the anthology is an incompetent, incoherent and pretentious piece of writing, the selection of poems, except in the case of about 25 poets, defies rational explanation and lapses in some cases,

into sheer buffoonery."

This was at the back of the book. At the front was Peeradina's own attack. The target was Pritish Nandy, the well-known Calcutta poet who had been left out, though most other poets (Arun Kolatkar, Ezekiel, Gieve Patel, Kersy Katrak — even P Lal) had been included.

"Pritish Nandy, whose poetry is uninteresting even as gimmickry cashes in on the so-called 'experimental' trend (which is really a 100 years old) in the belief that he is treading virgin ground," railed Peeradina, "and doles out LARGE quantities (this is called being prolific) of worthless stuff ranging from the mythic to the electronic which baffles some innocents here and naturally in America."

Nandy, who says that he is unmoved by such omissions and is contented with his own considerable success, held his peace till his own anthology came out. In his introduction, he referred dismissively to several inconsequential anthologies including one compiled by some person called Peeradina.

The anthology war heated up in 1974 when Penguin published an anthology of new writing in India (both poetry and fiction) edited by Adil Jussawalla. The volume received much attention abroad because of the Penguin imprint. Some people though, noted that the R Parthasarathy, an established poet had been left out. The exclusion was justified on the grounds that firstly, in a prose and poetry anthology, everybody could not be included and secondly, Parthasarathy hadn't written anything new for a decade.

Predictably, Parthasarathy did not see it that way. He edited his own anthology (published by Oxford Univer-



Nissim Ezekiel:

Young poets seek his encouragement and then call him old-fashioned.

sity Press in its Three Crowns series) and pointedly excluded Jussawalla. In his introduction, he explained that he had only included those poets whom a broad consensus of readers would regard as 'significant'. Any such consensus would probably have included Jussawalla but Parthasarathy had made his point.

By the end of the decade, the anthology war had reached the general interest media. Now, the poets were slugging it out in the open and the public stood watching, fascinated. Keki Daruwalla, an Indian Police Service official, who is also a poet edited an anthology called *Two Decades of Indian Poetry 1960-80*. Pritish Nandy reviewed it for *Sunday* and began by criticising the selection of poets (to be fair, he admitted straight out that he had been left out of the collection). He then turned his attention to Daruwalla who he called 'a dishonest policeman'. The book itself was dismissed as being badly-compiled, wrongly-titled, motivated and utterly trite.

Daruwalla's reply was, if anything, even stronger. It was noted less for its defence of the anthology than for the personal version of its attack on Nandy. He was, said Daruwalla, a purveyor of mush and a man who played with words 'like a child plays with gee-gaws and tinsel'. Warming to the attack, he announced: "I would have included Pritish Nandy if he had written an honest poem

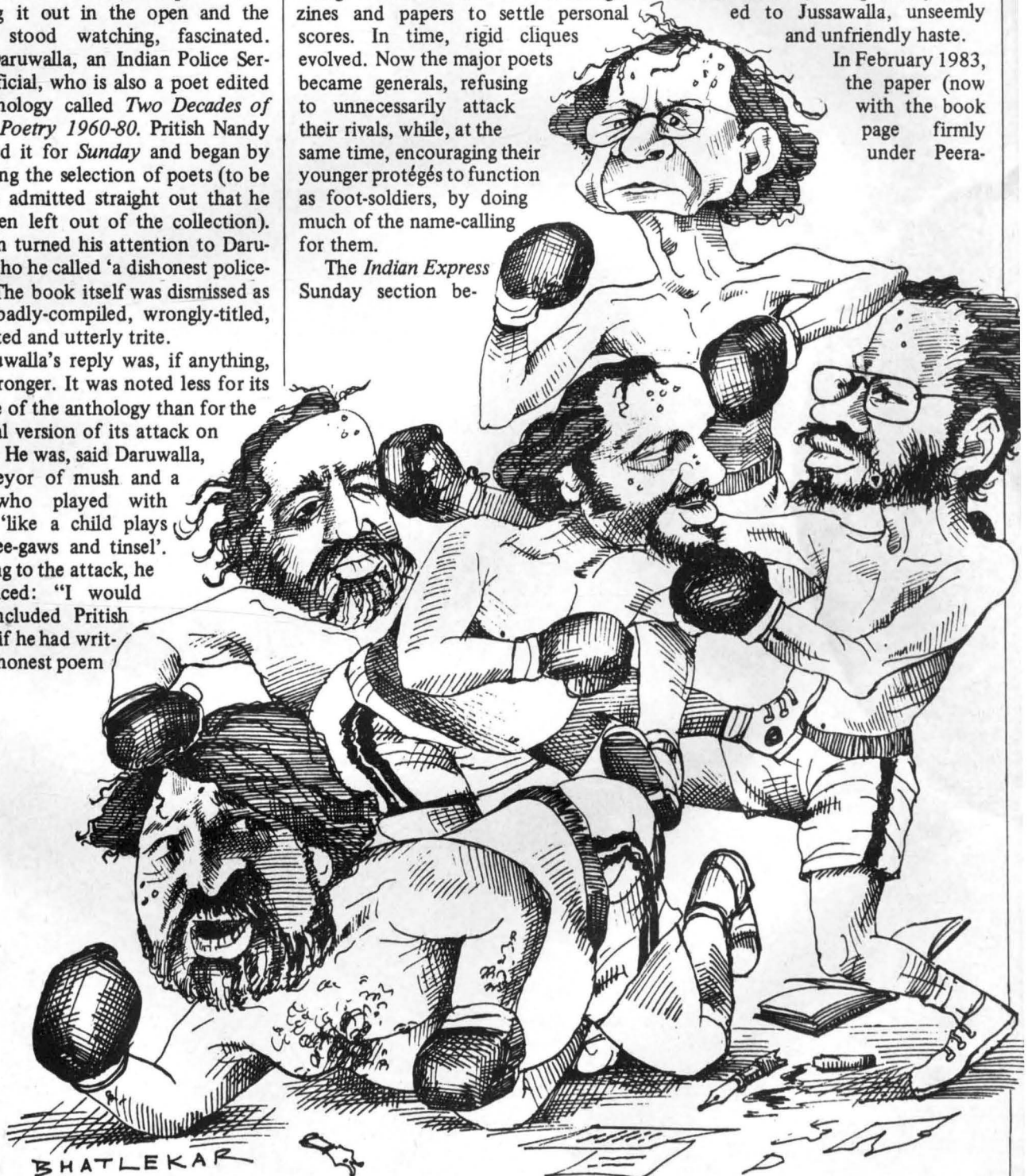
in his life. But the man is always attitudinizing, striking postures..." And so on.

By now, even people who had never read a poem in their lives were beginning to follow the rows. The verse had been long-forgotten and the new interest was unashamedly voyeuristic. Many poets professed disdain for the press's sensationalising of their craft (as though the bitchiness and venom were too elevated for media attention), but a large number continued to use magazines and papers to settle personal scores. In time, rigid cliques evolved. Now the major poets became generals, refusing to unnecessarily attack their rivals, while, at the same time, encouraging their younger protégés to function as foot-soldiers, by doing much of the name-calling for them.

The *Indian Express* Sunday section be-

came one of the battlegrounds of the war. In 1980, Saleem Peeradina's first book of poetry received a drubbing on the paper's book page, edited then by Adil Jussawalla. Peeradina wrote a letter to say that the reviewer had misunderstood the work. The matter seemed to blow over till 1981 when the *Express* found it had no further need for Jussawalla's services. Within a week, the job was offered to Peeradina who took it with, what probably seemed to Jussawalla, unseemly and unfriendly haste.

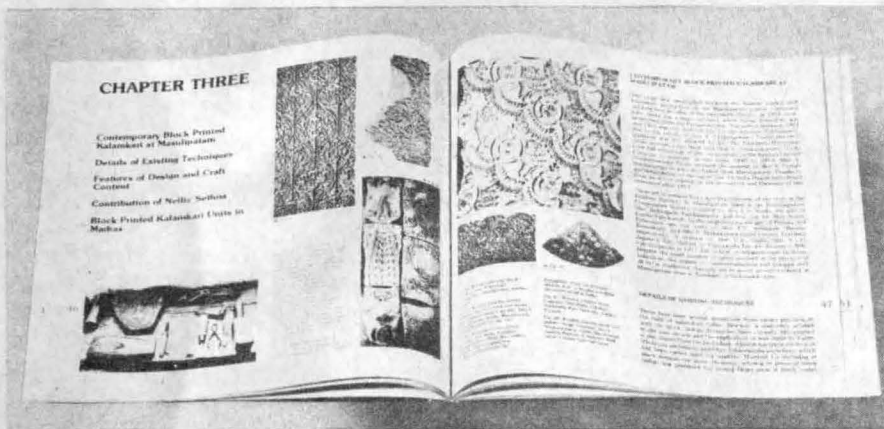
In February 1983, the paper (now with the book page firmly under Peera-



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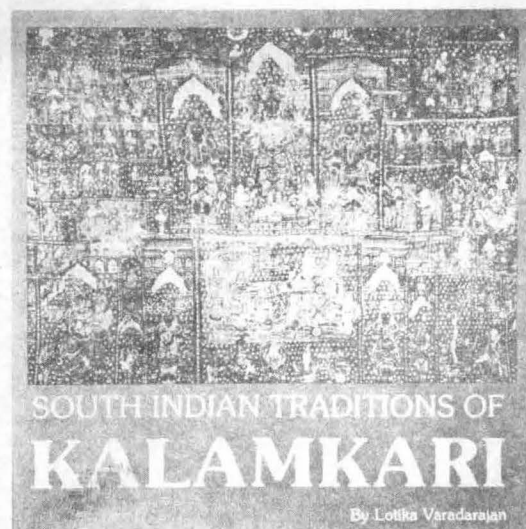
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Saleem Peeradina:
His anthology created a storm because of the attack on Nandy.

dina's control) reviewed poet Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's book *Distance In Statute Miles*. The review was a hatchet job and those poets who were friendly with Jussawalla reacted strongly. Protégés fired off angry letters and there was speculation that Mehrotra's links with Jussawalla (the book was published by Clearing House of which Jussawalla was a founder) had led to the attack. Mehrotra wrote a letter defending himself and there are still angry rumblings in Bombay poetry circles about the review. Peeradina himself seems to feel that if Jussawalla could carry similar criticism when he was editor, he was being unduly sensitive about the Mehrotra review.

At any rate, Mehrotra had probably worked out what was going on—he is no stranger to his game. He had previously written a snide article in



Prithvi Nandy:
He called Daruwalla a 'dishonest policeman' in Sunday.

Chandrabhaga, a poetry magazine run by Jayant Mahapatra in Cuttack. In July 1981, *Debonair* reproduced the first section of the article called *The Emperor Has No Clothes*. After asking for 'more responsible criticism', Mehrotra got down to the serious business of demolishing Keki Daruwalla. In his anthology (the same one that Nandy had hated), Daruwalla had said quite inaccurately that Indian literature in English had 'no schools, no gurus and no disciples'. It may have seemed like an innocuous remark but it provoked Mahapatra into firing off an angry diatribe in the course of which he also made unsavoury references to Vrinda Nabar, another poet.

In the second part of the article (which appeared only in *Chandrabhaga*), Mehrotra turned his attention to Parthasarathy. Apparently, Parthasarathy had threatened to withdraw his support from *Chandrabhaga* if it continued to print irresponsible attacks on poets. Such an attitude did not meet with Mehrotra's approval and he told his readers why. Predictably, he also told them what he thought of Parthasarathy.

By now, even film journalists were beginning to get a little envious of the actions. But nothing had prepared them for the re-emergence of Kersy Katrak, a former advertising whiz-kid who had retired to the hills. When he returned to writing, he began subjecting various poets to a barrage of abuse intermingled with scorn. In a pseudonymous piece (by-lined Sarosh Demavent), in the *Sunday Observer*, he attacked Nandy and later, in a by-lined article (in *Gentleman*), he railed against Nandy's 'essential falseness', Kamala Das' wallowing in public self-admiration and decided that while Arun Kolatkar's book *Jejuri* was probably an authentic voice, the same could not be said of Kolatkar himself.

By now, the public has learned what to expect. They were not surprised when Katrak's articles provoked angry replies. And they even suspended their disbelief when a host of Sarosh Demavents cropped up all over the country and began attacking Katrak. It was, it turned out, Katrak's enemies who had taken over his pen-name. Still there were some raised eyebrows when a Sarosh Demavent ripped Katrak's play *Nightbirds* to shreds in *Debonair*. Was Kersy attacking himself, his friends wanted to know? It is rumoured that this Demavent was



Adil Jussawalla:
He found that his place at the Express was taken by Peeradina.

Dhiren Bhagat, a friend of Nandy's who also wrote poetry.

Within the poetry scene, rivalries have turned bitter. Poetesses gossip about Nissim Ezekiel's roving fingers, while he complains about poets who seek his encouragement and then call him old-fashioned. Since only poets review poetry books and most poets have clearly defined loyalties, one can guess what a review will say simply by looking at the name of the reviewer.

To be fair it must be said that all the personal abuse and slander hasn't really harmed the cause of English poetry in India. As more than one poet says, when a poetry scene is emerging, such rivalries may well be inevitable. And the personal grudges have seen to it that new anthologies emerge every other month and that they get wide coverage in the media. ♦



Kersy Katrak:
'Sarosh Demavent' was his favoured pseudonym for his attacks.

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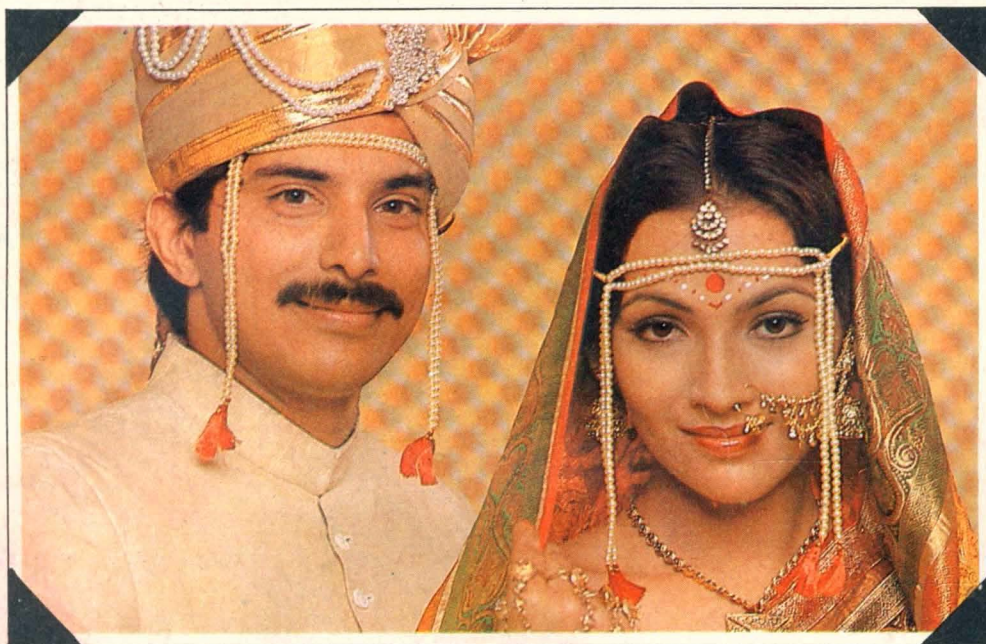


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