

MV Kamath On The Commonwealth • Fiction By Dina Mehta

AG Noorani On Kissinger

# imprint

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## Swraj Paul Comes Clean

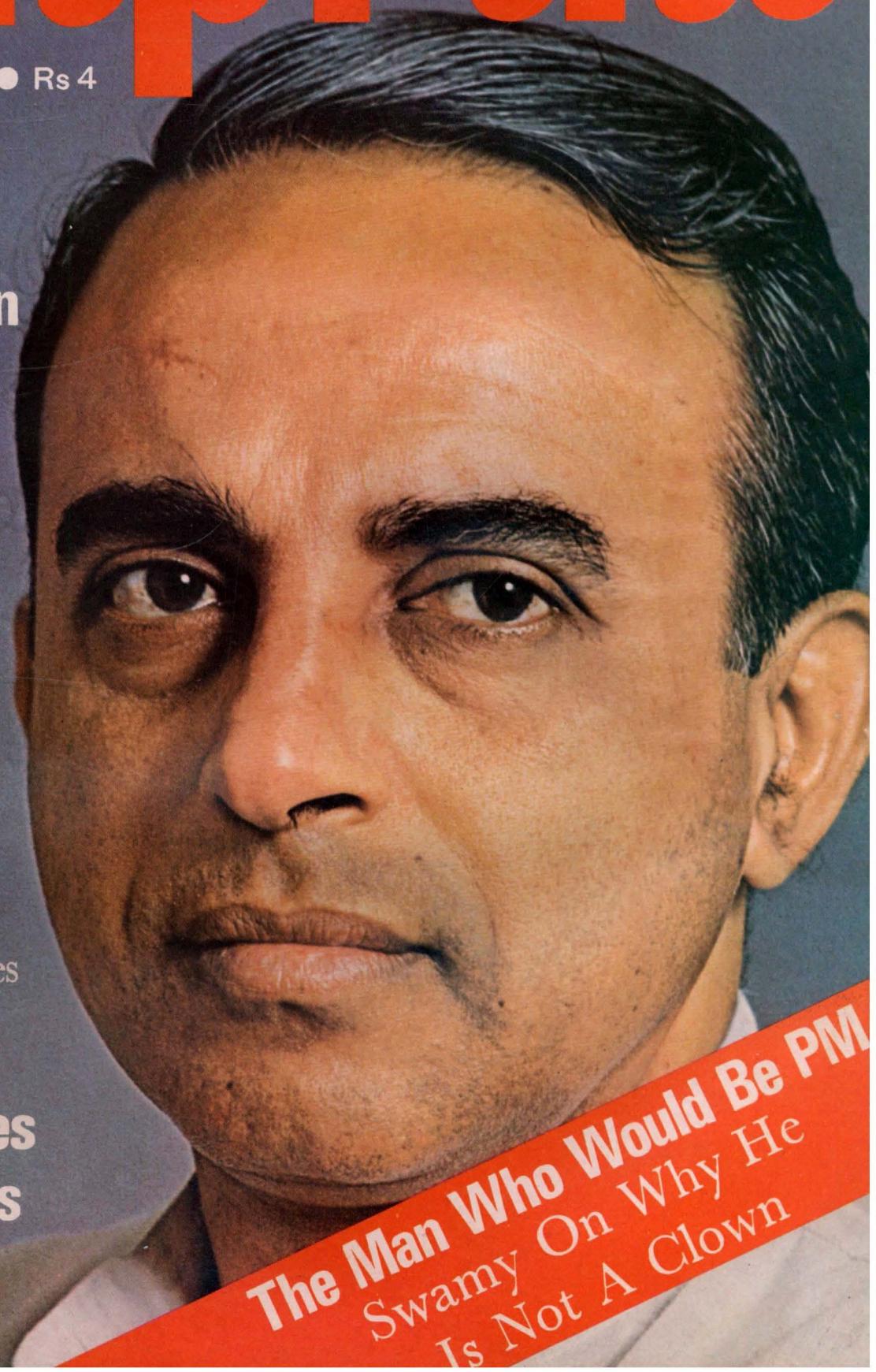
On Location  
For Kim With  
Peter O'Toole

## Gang Wars On The Streets Of Bombay

Rajmohan  
Gandhi Replies  
To Koestler

## Lonely Times On The Rigs

The Man Who Would Be PM  
Swamy On Why He  
Is Not A Clown





Happy and unforgettable  
memories are  
woven around –



**Khatau**  
VOILES

# on the marquee

**WE ARE A NATION OF 650,000,000.** The Chinese number 800,000,000 at least. Between Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and our other neighbours, there is a population of over 300,000,000 people. This area, thus, accounts for more than half of the inhabitants of the world today.

For many, many years, until the early '50s, most vital decisions affecting the peoples of these countries were taken in capitals outside this area. Even the Far East end of World War II against the Japanese, in which more than a million Asians perished, was planned and prosecuted from London, from Washington, from The Hague and from Paris. No Asian was consulted when atomic bombs were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Then, when freedom came to one Asian country after another, more as a consequence of the dismantling of the Empires than as clear cut victories for freedom movements, the peoples, long suppressed, regarded their new situation as an end in itself – not many responding to the responsibilities it entailed, even on their own behalf. Subsequent experiences by way of curtailed freedoms, economic and social deprivations and even tyranny of local dictatorships have not changed these attitudes significantly. And the consequences of this neglect are all around us to see.

In the next few weeks, the nuclear arms race between the United States of America and the Soviet Union will be escalated to a mind-boggling level: 108 Pershing II medium range missiles and 464 Cruise missiles (translation: a million times more destructive capability than the first Hiroshima bomb) will begin to be deployed in West Germany, in Belgium, in the UK, in Italy and in Holland to achieve what leaders of NATO nations consider a correction of the present imbalance. Of course, the USSR says this will give the Western world an unacceptable advantage in nuclear weapons deployed against them, and of course, they will increase their arsenal to match the new Pershing and the Cruise missiles. The SS 20s already deployed by the Russians are no firecrackers.

A nuclear war will almost mean the end of our world. The world scene today is far more complex than ever before. The issues which divide Washington and Moscow are in sharper focus. The animosities have acquired almost fanatical fervour. Millions of Americans find President Reagan echoing them when he brands the Soviet Union evil. More menacingly, the danger of an accidental war has become real.

There is no escaping for Asia in the event of a nuclear accident or a nuclear war in Europe. The damage the radiation will cause in our region will be worse than death – the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki envy their dead. Yet, where life itself is at stake, we Asians do nothing. We say nothing. Perhaps, we understand nothing.

In the long and tortuous negotiations on arms control going on in Geneva for years, and in the decision the Americans, and the Western Europeans and the Russians have taken to dramatically increase the nuclear arsenal in Europe, half of the world population has not been consulted. We have not mattered a bit in Western or Russian thinking.

This is more our fault than Washington's and Moscow's. Millions of Europeans and Americans are presently protesting (the ordinary Russians are not, only because they are not allowed to protest, and also because they are not told the truth about what arsenal the USSR is threatening the West with), and raising their anguished voices against the latest escalation even though their popularly elected leaders are claiming that the escalation is for their own safety. The least we can do in India, in Bangladesh, in Indonesia, in Pakistan and in other nations of Asia – if we are to matter – is raise our voices too against this nuclear threat posed by Moscow and by Washington, by London and by Paris to our existence. The price of neglect this time could be death of all that lives. Here in India too.

*R.V. Pandit*

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## LETTERS

**imprint**

## New Imprint

As a painter I would like to comment on the sketches in your September issue by Bhatlekar. You should consider yourself very fortunate. His caricatures reflect his talent and skill. Very few caricaturists match his style.

Vijay Chitnis  
Nasik

I always read Ruskin Bond's articles with interest as I happen to belong to Dehra Dun. *The Tale Of A River* (August 1983) made interesting reading and Ruskin Bond has his own qualities in describing topographical details beautifully. His prose is poetry.

However, I may point out that the Siwaliks are much younger than the Himalayas and not 'much older' as mentioned by the author.

GS Tewari  
Allahabad

## Morarji-Sanjeeva Feud

Do you really think you have made some points in your article

## Rushdie's Clarification

May I clear one confusion in your interview with me (*Salman Rushdie: Learning To Live With Fame And Shame*, *Imprint* September 1983).

You quote me as saying, "Originally I wanted to write a high tragedy about Pakistan. But . . . the people involved didn't deserve high tragedy." Then you comment: "Rushdie's solution has been to write a high tragedy, based on the Zia-Bhutto clash, but because history did not provide the tragic figures, he has created his own." This is not, I'm afraid, Rushdie's view of his solution.

I do not think that Iskander Harappa

entitled *Morarji-Sanjeeva Feud* (August 1983)? Does the constitution really debar the President from keeping himself informed of happenings behind the scenes?

Why couldn't Morarji send a correct appraisal of situations to the President and save the latter from a lot of irritation, as also the Janata from a fall?

Chiranjeeva Sharma  
Bhilai-1

Thanks to the Desai-Reddy controversy, I stumbled across your magazine. I must thank you for your lucid article *The People Have A Right To Know* (August 1983).

Equally remarkable for its independent and correct approach is the article *Love Thy Neighbour* (September 1983) by Ashok Gopal on the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka.

U Mishra  
Bombay-58

## Slip Disc

Apropos *Disco Sweeps The Heartland* (August 1983). The caption below Nandu Bhende's picture is incorrect. The songs are sung by Ashok Khare, a new playback singer and not by Nandu Bhende.

Prof (Mrs) PM Saraph  
Bombay

## Love Thy Neighbour

Apropos Ashok Gopal's article *Love Thy Neighbour* (September 1983). The author appears to be anti-Tamilian and lacks knowledge on the

and Raza Hyder are genuinely tragic figures. My response to history was to try and invent figures who might be seen as clowns who had somehow strayed into the leading parts of a tragedy. The situation is tragic; the protagonists are not.

Most reviewers of the book, fortunately, appear to have grasped this point. I was amazed that the *Sunday Observer*'s Iqbal Masud, to whom you make reference, did not; and since I evidently failed to make my meaning clear to you when we spoke, I felt I should write to set the record straight.

Salman Rushdie  
London

## EXPLOSIVE LETTERS AND SANITISED 'HISTORY'

In your September 1983 issue the Executive Editor Shri Vir Sanghvi has made an outstanding and tall—if not preposterous—claim about **Imprint** getting possession of the 'explosive' correspondence between Morarji Desai and Sanjeeva Reddy. In the third paragraph of the article Shri Sanghvi mentions that **Imprint** would retain the rights to print the extracts and Arun Gandhi could find a publisher for the hardcover and paperback editions. This understanding is nothing short of underhand dealing between Arun Gandhi and your magazine as you can find from the facts of the matter given below, which are quite contrary to the claims made by Shri Sanghvi.

When Shri Arun Gandhi was Editor of **Imprint** he had written to me that he would like to serialise the extracts from the fourth volume of Shri Morarji Desai's autobiography, when completed. Shri Desai at that time was contemplating finishing the sequence for which I had volunteered to arrange and classify his papers, correspondence etc. However, after some time Shri Desai decided not to write the fourth volume—on the period corresponding

to the Janata regime—as he could write nothing but the truth and the truth as he saw it would hurt his erstwhile colleagues and create bitterness. After months of discussion, Shri Desai finally agreed to my suggestion to convert his autobiography into a simple biography. I then suggested a panel of prominent writers from which he selected a leading educationist. But this gentleman withdrew from the assignment. Then I thought of Shri Arun Gandhi who had once wanted to serialise the autobiography. Shri Arun agreed to my suggestion provided Shri Desai would entrust the work to him. I then arranged a meeting between Shri Desai and Shri Gandhi. Eventually Shri Desai entrusted the task to Shri Arun under some specific conditions, one of which was that the papers entrusted to him were only for reference as source material and he should not divulge the confidential papers or quote directly from the correspondence. These were the strict injunctions. So you can see that the claims made by your Editor are untenable and unauthorised. If Shri Arun bargained with you it was a clear

breach of trust between him and Shri Desai.

I have clarified the position as far as it touches me. I'm sure Arun Gandhi will himself agree to this. The entire sad episode has generated a sensitive atmosphere and your article will only add fuel to the raging fire.

The impact of these premature and unauthorised disclosures is not likely to help the great debate on the future of Indian democracy. Petty and cheap sensationalism created by such stunts are short-lived and have no lasting influence. Rational and right-thinking people separate the wheat from the chaff so that the public, mostly guileless, can weigh the truth and accept the essence.

Is it too much to hope that you will publish this clarification for the sake of truth and decency in our public life?

*Kantilal A Trivedi  
Bombay-19*

**Imprint** stands by its story. Arun Gandhi has already explained why he printed the original documents and not a sanitised 'history'.

issue of Sri Lanka's Tamils.

The present Sri Lanka crisis is in no way similar to the Assam or Punjab issues. The Sri Lanka tragedy was a 'genocide'. The Jayewardene government joined hands with Sinhalese fanatics and massacred the Tamils. Moreover, the Sinhalese treat the local Tamils as 'foreigners', though they are citizens of Sri Lanka. The question of treating Assamese or Sikhs as foreigners in the Indian situation does not arise.

If the author is of the opinion that the official figures put out by both the Indian and British press are an exaggeration then one wonders why we should believe the tragedy (the incident) at all.

*B Radha Krishna Rao  
Hyderabad-13*

### Koestler On Gandhi

Your reprint of *The Yogi And The Commissar* (August 1983) is not only untimely during what you unabashedly call the 'Gandhi Boom'—but also irrelevant because the author himself did not live up to the spirit of his writings and died if not a Gandhian,

a neo-Gandhian.

A few days before his death Koestler met Rusi Karanjia (editor of *Blitz*) in



London. He is believed to have told him that India can face the nuclear bomb by a mass chanting of the *Gayatri Mantra*!

*Dr Kaushal Dhingra  
New Delhi-5*

Arthur Koestler's article, which was first published by **Imprint** in 1969, tries to release the muddle-headedness

and sanctimonious evasion of vital issues indulged in by people in authority with the Gandhian heritage. The truth is that we cremated Gandhiji so completely that except for Rajghat, there is nothing to remind us of him in the country.

Gandhiji did not become great by his theories and views but because his life was an open book. Secondly, he did not preach what he did not practice and did not practice what he did not preach.

Gandhiji's decision to appoint Nehru Prime Minister was perhaps the most un-Gandhian act. Firstly, appointing a political heir is a negation of democracy. Secondly, Nehru was not a Gandhian by conviction. Thirdly, it is likely that he might have expected his political heir to play the role of a second Gandhi in the politics of independent India, not necessarily by clinging on to the Prime Minister's seat till death. Koestler has called him a Westernised progressive, but Frank Moraes had called him the last European who ruled India.

*PS Sridhara Murthy  
Bangalore-4*

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VOLUME XXIII NO 8

## CONTENTS

NOVEMBER 1983

### 7 POLITICS

The Colonial Club  
By MV Kamath

To begin with, India was reluctant to join the Commonwealth. Today she is ready to host a conference for it.

### 9 UP-FRONT

The Paris Of The East?  
By Arun Chacko

Just like the real Paris, Jagmohan's Delhi is falling apart.

### 11 FOLLOW-UP

Dreamers Of The Air?

By Ashok Gopal

HKL Bhagat's ambitious plans for the national TV network are merely dreams.

### 13 FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Of Masochism and Machismo

By AG Noorani

India has much to learn from America's foreign policy blunders.

### 16



THE MAN WHO  
WOULD BE  
PRIME MINISTER

By Vir Sanghvi

Subramaniam Swamy is no longer just the clown prince of Indian politics. A profile accompanied by a hard-hitting interview and Swamy's own answer to India's economic problems.

Cover Photo : Ashok Gupta

### 30 THE AVENGERS



By Amrita Shah

The full story behind Bombay's recent gang wars during which two persons have been murdered in the courts.

### 41

### THE EXPATRIATES

Swraj Paul

The controversial industrialist comes clean in an exclusive interview.

### 49

### KOESTLER'S PAPIER-MÂCHÉ GANDHI

By Rajmohan Gandhi

A reply to The Yogi And

The Commissar by the Mahatma's grandson.

### 56 OPTIONS

The Enterprise-ing Adman  
A conversation with Mohammed Khan.

Keeping Fit The Deboo Way



Dancer Astad Deboo on the danceexercise fad.

Hindi-Chini Bye-Bye  
Vikram Sinha on the murder of Chinese cuisine in India.

An Unmarried Woman  
Fatima Ahmed on living alone in Bombay.

### 62 HARD TIMES AT BOMBAY HIGH



By Ketaki Sheth

What is it like to live on an oil rig in the middle of the Arabian Sea? A special report with photographs by Sooni Taraporevala.

### 73 SPECIAL FICTION FOR DIWALI

The Lonely Vigil  
By Dina Mehta

This mistress only comes between her master and his mattress.

### 78 IN MY OWN ROOM

Mulk Raj Anand  
Photographed by Ayesha Soni  
Interviewed by Shirin Mehta

### 81 GUEST COLUMN



The Tele-visualising Of Kipling's Kim.

By Dhiren Bhagat

On location with Peter O'Toole and the cast of the Kim television series.

### 85 IMAGES

Kitsch As An Art Form  
By JP Singhal

Calendar art from a film version of David Hamilton.

### 90 ASTROLOGY

This month's forecasts by Bejan Daruwalla.

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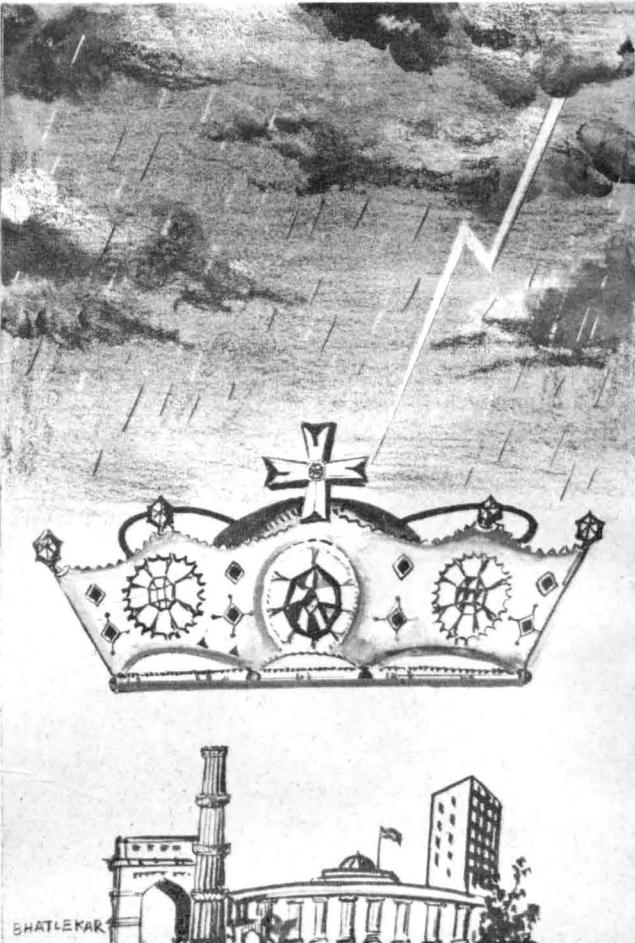
# THE COLONIAL CLUB

*To begin with, India was reluctant to join the Commonwealth...*

**AS PRIME MINISTER** Indira Gandhi steps forward to receive Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain as Head of the Commonwealth, does she, one wonders, realise and remember how India almost kept out of the organisation and became a member only after much hesitation?

Officialdom in Britain was of divided mind. Clement Attlee, as Prime Minister, was clear in his mind that Britain should welcome India as a member of the Commonwealth and told Parliament so. Lord Louis Mountbatten, as Britain's last Viceroy to India was equally sure. So were the British Joint Chiefs of Staff. Indeed, Lord Ismay had proposed—and been authorised by the Joint Chiefs of Staff—to inform the British Prime Minister that 'from the military point of view...it was as nearly vital as anything could be, to ensure that India remained in the Commonwealth'.

But there were other voices, that doubted the wisdom of such a move. FF Turnbull, who had acted as secretary to Lord Pethick Lawrence sent to colleagues in the India Office and the Burma Office a *ballon d'essai* in the form of a draft letter which questioned 'whether it would be in the interests of the Commonwealth as a whole that India should remain within it'. Turnbull doubted whether, in view of India's 'lack of spiritual and racial kinship with the Dominions' it should be welcomed to the association. India, he felt, was likely to pursue an independent foreign policy, to oppose colonialism and to



espouse the cause of Indian residents abroad where their interests conflicted with those of a Dominion of Britain herself.

From the Burma Office Sir Gilbert Laithwaite agreed that India did not have the same 'natural link with the Empire' as the 'White Dominions' and that, as with Southern Ireland, the Commonwealth might provide only a 'paper relation' of little use in time of war. He questioned whether it would be worth allowing the link with the Crown to be jettisoned in order to retain a Republican India in the Commonwealth.

At the India Office, K Anderson saw 'no reason to suppose' that India would accept or carry out 'the broad unwritten obligations' of the Common-

wealth membership and added for good measure that India's membership was bound to weaken 'the cohesion of the Anglo-Saxon Club'.

The Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir David Monteath felt that it would be unwise to rely on India being willing to remain in the Commonwealth but that, even if she did remain, Britain could not count on the same cooperation from her as the four major Dominions provided. India had none of their ties of sentiment or allegiance.

The Colonial Office, too, thought that India would be an awkward partner over colonial issues. Only the Dominion Office and the Foreign Office thought Indian membership of the Commonwealth was worth it on the grounds that India's departure would weaken the club and could be universally interpreted as a blow to British authority and prestige and as 'a diminution in the political, military and economic strength of the Commonwealth as a whole'.

Opinion in India was equally divided. Sardar KM Pannikar was in favour of India being a Commonwealth member. But Nehru had felt that it would be impossible to think that India could remain in the Commonwealth; however, by the time Mountbatten left for London on May 18, 1947, he had seen to it that Congress opinion had more or less swung towards remaining in the Commonwealth. The prospect of a stronger Pakistan had become a compelling reason in the minds of the Congress High Command.

When India made it clear that it wanted to remain a 'sovereign democratic republic' there were British fears that this would make it impossible for India to be a Commonwealth member.

*The Conference will give Mrs Gandhi a chance to prove what a good hostess she can be.*

On March 2, 1949, Attlee discussed the matter with Sir Winston Churchill who thought that it should be possible to retain even a republican India in the Commonwealth. The view was conveyed to King George VI. But both Churchill and the King envisaged the King of England becoming the President of free India! That dream had to be shattered. And this was left to be done by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers meeting in London calling on the King. As Attlee gently put it, it became the first time 'a King ever had the collective advice of *all* his Prime Ministers' to tell him that his hope of becoming India's President was beyond practical realisation.

In their collective wisdom the Commonwealth Prime Ministers submitted that the King was no longer Emperor and that his proposed designation as President of India was out of the question. The best that could be done was for the King to be called the 'Head of the Commonwealth'.

George VI heard them in silence and later his Prime Minister, Clement Attlee noted with a touch of pathos: "George VI made not the slightest objection to removing the Imperial Crown from his head—the Chief Jewel of the British Empire. That is a remarkable fact. It shows the great advantage of having a King who was never static but who moved with the times."

So the King of England duly became Head of the Commonwealth and now his daughter, the Queen, has been welcomed to Imperial Delhi too as Head of the Commonwealth. Turnbull and Monteath's fears partly came true. India did oppose colonialism. India went on to have its own foreign policy. On some matters, as on Suez, India clashed directly with Britain—and was no help—except to pull her chestnuts out of the fire. But there were very few moments of India leaving the Commonwealth. The irony is that the Congress High Command had originally softened its stand of wanting to stay out from a genuine fear that

with Pakistan in, life may become difficult for India. Today it is India which is in and Pakistan which is out. And out Pakistan will probably remain. MA Jinnah did not want to be 'kicked out' of the Commonwealth and had taken Churchill's advice that as long as he stood firm, he could not be expelled because Britain 'would never stand for the expulsion of loyal members of the Empire'. Pakistan quit voluntarily. And though there has been talk of its rejoining for nearly a decade now, nothing has come of it so far. General Zia does not seem likely to re-apply for membership either.

Has membership of the Commonwealth brought India any gain? This may be arguable. But it certainly has brought India no loss. On the contrary, India is heard with respect in Commonwealth circles which, all told, is probably a gain of some sorts. Certainly it has given Indira Gandhi a chance to prove what a good hostess she can be. And who says that is a poor gain?

Mrs Gandhi, we may be sure, will draw the utmost mileage out of this august meet. She is capable of drawing blood out of stone. We will have a spate of resolutions to add to the impressive list passed at earlier meetings that were observed more in the breach than in the execution.

There will be the usual excitement that accompanies all such gatherings. The government-controlled broadcasting media will continue to project her as a world leader and she will be seen deep in conversation with various Heads of State. The photographers, will have a field day and later these pictures will be used to advance her image at home.

But this reflects more on Mrs Gandhi and the state of our country than it does on the Commonwealth! What good we can expect of this entire *tamasha* in Delhi, of course, remains to be seen. One answer is to paraphrase Old Kaspar: "Why, that I cannot tell, but t'was a famous gathering."

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Lutyens' structures, though equally impressive, have some time yet to really prove themselves. Though the more prominent ones have been around 50 years without showing much wear and tear, some of colonial New Delhi's residences have begun to come apart. Obviously recent government maintenance has been sorely lacking. But concerned contractors must have cut corners and fiddled a little.

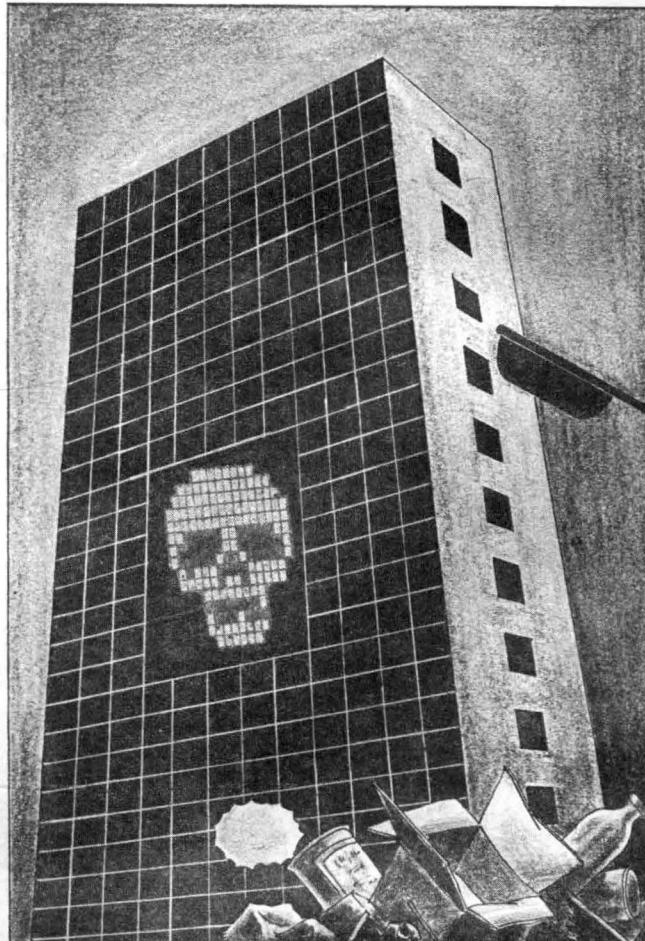
Delhi's Lieutenant Governor, Mr Jagmohan, will deservedly be remembered for building vast areas of monotonous, high-priced slums on land acquired from poor farmers at a rupee or two per square yard. Otherwise the acquired land was sold to commercial establishments at several thousand times the price paid.

Today the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is far and away the country's premier land racketeer. Its profiteering would shame the oil cartels. At least the oil companies give customers genuine oil, admittedly at a price which has no relation to production costs. The DDA gives flat-seekers death traps which sometimes collapse during construction and certainly begin to thereafter. And they have no option but to take it, since the organisation has ensured virtually nothing else

is available.

Mr Jagmohan, more than anyone else, is responsible for the organisation's undeserved monopolistic growth and systematic looting. He was its long-time head before and during the Emergency, acquiring considerable notoriety. The DDA stranglehold on land and building activity, combined with its arbitrary policies have led to acute shortage of adequate housing for one of the country's fastest growing cities. And real estate prices compare quite well with New York and Tokyo.

From time to time, the DDA puts out full-page newspaper advertisements highlighting its own achievements. But every second Delhiwala can tell you his own personal experience of its mind-boggling profiteering, corruption



and incompetence. Now an official enquiry has merely confirmed that.

A five-member Fact Finding Committee appointed by Lieutenant Governor Jagmohan, has described at least 10,000 houses built by the DDA in recent years as structurally unsound and very poor. These are a very large proportion of total constructions.

Since the Committee, set up after the collapse of nine partially built houses in January this year, consisted of two high DDA officials besides other government functionaries, the findings are particularly damning. One presumes the official would have at least tried to soften the blow.

"The general impression gathered by the Committee is that the quality of work in most of the houses is very poor," the report says. "There was no emphasis on quality of construction. . . . No one seemed to have bothered about the structural safety of the houses."

Elsewhere it adds, "The engineers in charge of supervision have also completely ignored the normal norms of sound construction of a building." And the Committee wasn't even talking about the 10,000 houses they found particularly dangerous.

It continued, "Strengthening measures have to be taken in almost all the houses, and special attention has to be given for the above mentioned poor quality work." But, it concedes, there is a lot of difference between an originally sound construction, and a reinforced one.

The report goes on to detail the substandard and often bogus construction material invariably used, which has undoubtedly resulted in a lot of

*Anun Chacko is Associate Editor of Boston's The World Paper. This is a regular column.*

officials and contractors getting rich quick. But it also reveals the differing standards in Shah Jehan's and Lutyens' Delhi, and that of Mr Jagmohan.

\* \* \* \* \*

WE HAVE, AS a nation, a penchant for coining descriptive names for our 'beauty spots' and our historically, culturally or politically significant cities based on what we think are their foreign (ie Western) counterparts; thus, we call Kashmir, the 'Switzerland of the East'.

For long the capital has, quite inappropriately, been occasionally labelled the 'Paris of the East'. Dr Karan Singh, when Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister, started it over a decade ago. And thereafter the title has been constantly repeated.

Quite apart from the fact anyone familiar with the increasingly scruffy Paris of the '80s would not want to draw comparisons, the only thing really similar is the rudeness of the people. Whereas Parisian rudeness comes from a hardly justifiable cultural arrogance, the Delhites' comes from a crude alien culture and philosophy inflicted on them since Partition.

Other than that the city is in a complete mess. The country likes to make bogus claims about having the world's third largest reservoir of scientific talent, but its capital cannot be assured uninterrupted electricity supply despite adequate installed capacity. Cows roam the streets unhindered creating serious traffic hazards, which kill unsuspecting scooterists and cyclists. And the less said about the police and the municipality, the better.

The police is a thoroughly inefficient and corrupt force, probably responsible for more crime than it prevents. For ordinary citizens to get any redress is impossible, unless of course you have the power to harm. Then, mysteriously, things begin to work at an impressive speed.

Municipal employees are no different. Uncollected garbage is a serious health hazard. As a senior municipal official complained, "Political interference at all levels has destroyed the administration. Only 20 per cent of the city's *safai karamacharis* show up for duty each day. But that doesn't mean they do any work. And there is absolutely nothing we can do."

One consolation is Paris is getting a bit like Delhi, and in the future could conceivably be called the 'Delhi of the West'. ♦

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## FOLLOW-UP

BY ASHOK GOPAL

# DREAMERS OF THE AIR?

*Bhagat's ambitious TV expansion plan may never materialise.*

"A HIGH LEVEL decision seems to have been taken to soft sell the (Twenty Point) Programme." When **Imprint** made that claim in September, we were not fully aware of the nation-wide extent or frequency of the Twenty Point propaganda effort. Now the office of the Director General, All India Radio, informs us that in the 12 months preceding September the *total number of Twenty Point Programme broadcasts was 27,611* (emphasis mine). The figure surely substantiates the private media's claim that the ruling party is grossly misusing public broadcasting; indeed, it contradicts our claim that the government is 'soft selling' the Programme.

But as for Union Minister HKL Bhagat's Rs 68-crore special expansion plan, the private media's fear that it was specifically devised to broadcast propaganda for the coming elections, now seems unfounded. Bhagat's plan, it appears, may not materialise.

On September 19 he announced that the total outlay for television next year would be Rs 184 crores. The figure apparently includes the Rs 68 crores meant for the special expansion plan, another Rs 85 crores for the utilisation of INSAT-1B and the rest for the Planning Commission-approved television expansion schemes under the Sixth Five Year Plan (Bhagat's special plan was not examined by the Planning Commission; it is purely his and Mrs Gandhi's brainchild.) Thus by the end of the Sixth Five Year Plan (March 1985) we should theoretically have 132 Low Power Transmitters (LPTs) as against 20 at

*Ashok Gopal, an Imprint staffer, researched our September cover story on the media, Rulers Of The Air.*

present and 47 High Power Transmitters (HPTs)—there are only 21 at present. They will increase Doordarshan's 'coverage' from the present 19 per cent of the population to 53 per cent plus an additional 17 per cent who will receive weak signals.

All the above figures are laughable. Firstly, as **Imprint** stressed, Bhagat's figures talk of a nonsensical 'potential' audience, not the actual numbers who will buy and watch television. Even by the government's own figures, television's present 'actual' audience of two million will only reach four million by the end of 1984. In other words, even if Bhagat's plan is miraculously executed, the number of people who will watch television will only be a minuscule fraction of his dream

audience of 70 per cent.

HPTs are manufactured in India by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Bangalore. Under the Sixth Five Year Plan, BEL is to supply only nine HPTs but now thanks to Bhagat's jugglery, it will have to produce 13 of them in the same period. The hundred-odd LPTs Bhagat wants will be manufactured in India *for the first time*. (The 20 LPTs installed for the Asiad were imported.)

Besides this, of course, is the issue of requisitioning the land for transmitters, constructing the buildings to house the engineering equipment and staff. Whether all this 'infrastructure' will be available in the next 18 months is extremely doubtful, especially when even long-standing Planning Commission-approved schemes for the expansion of the television network have not been realised. Only recently the Commission asked for the 'speeding up of television centre construction in Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Trivandrum and Gauhati' so that they could be completed within the Sixth Plan period. It also admitted that programme production centres at Raipur, Muzzafarpur and Gulbarga are likely to 'spill over' to the Seventh Plan.

The Ministry does not seem to view the problem of beaming hundreds of programmes to diverse audiences all over the country from New Delhi, as a serious one.

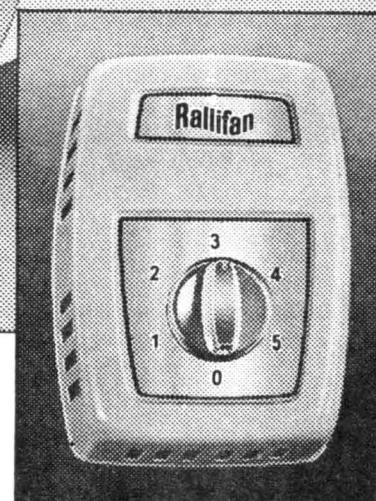
And the most significant question remains: How many states can afford to provide community sets (each costing around Rs 35,000) so that the 'common man' (to whom INSAT-1B is ostensibly directed) can watch programmes?



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BY AG NOORANI

# MASOCHISM AND MACHISMO

*India has much to learn from the blunders of America's foreign policy.*

## THE DEBASEMENT OF

Indian politics has found an accurate reflection in the steep deterioration of Indian political writing. Even at the best of times, however, foreign affairs never received from Indian journalists and even academics the study it requires. We have had apologetics for the official line—whether out of a mistaken notion of patriotism or in expectation of reward—or angry denunciations. The cool, clinical approach to the craft of diplomacy holds little attraction for the Indian commentator. Ironically, the most fervent of our apologists ardently admire American dissenters in the media and academia which only testifies to a certain lack of maturity.

American writing on world affairs did not awaken to maturity all of a sudden. It was a slow process and owes a lot to the writings of Hans J Morgenthau, George F Kennan, Louis Halle and Henry A Kissinger, to mention some.

Stanley Hoffmann arrived later on the scene and carries on the fine tradition. Born in Vienna, he lived and studied in France from 1929 to 1955 when he moved to Harvard where he teaches French intellectual and political history, American foreign policy and a few related subjects. Since 1960 he has turned out one striking book after another. *Primacy Or World Order*, published in 1978, was an excellent work analysing the choice confronting America—a return to the cold war in a vain bid to re-establish America's primacy or a quest for a world order ensuring security for all. By 1978 the Carter administration

was well-launched on a drift from one blunder to another.

This collection of essays sketches the background (the Nixon-Kissinger years), describes the Carterian blunders and proceeds to analyse the choices confronting Ronald Reagan who rode to power by exploiting the reaction to Carter's policies or lack of them. Since, both, masochism and machismo are ever-present in our highly self-conscious drive to attaining the status of a regional power, these essays, which mercilessly expose the implications of the twin-traits, are of enormous relevance to us. And, all the more so because their realistic description of international society is very educative.

He mentions 'three lasting features' of the present day system—the force



of nationalism, the 'revolutionary phenomenon' and the superpowers' conflict. He does not consider the conflict as an aberration or as something which can be 'ended' but rather as a fact of life—a highly dangerous reality which cannot be wished away or extinguished. But it can be and should be controlled, contained and regulated. At stake is nothing less than human survival.

Nuclear weaponry is responsible for peace between the superpowers. But it is a very fragile peace. Proliferation of nuclear weapons is an ever-present threat. So is the failure to tackle discord. The balance of terror leads to complacency. "Deterrence eliminates, or delays interminably, the moment of truth—in the Middle East, for instance. Because nothing ever gets settled, conflicts reappear again and again."

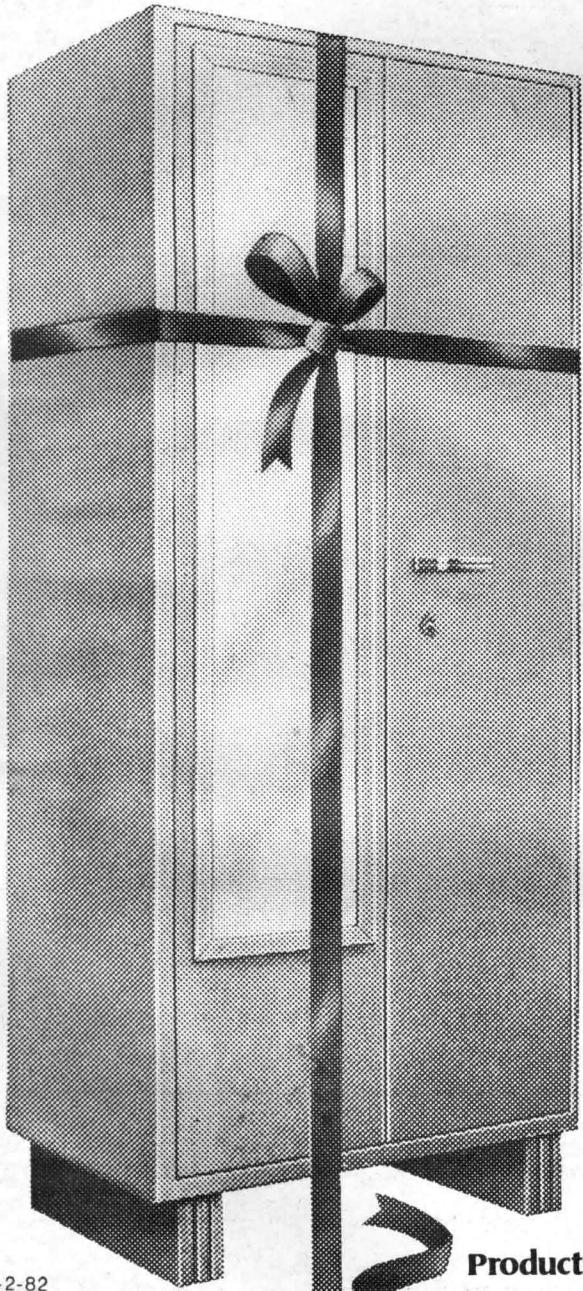
Professor Hoffmann mentions three possible courses which can help to mitigate the conflict. They are:

the adoption of an agreed set of rules to limit 'the intensity and risks' of a conflict which has to be lived with; the liquidation of all colonial situations; and, a drastic reconsideration of the role of nuclear weapons in the strategies of the superpowers.

This brings one to the heart of the matter, which is a readiness to accept the basic principle that the adversary also has his interests to protect. Much of Indian thinking on adversary-situations is flawed by an arrogant refusal to concede the legitimacy of any interest other than our own. Only if this basic principle is accepted can a reconciliation of conflicting interests be attempted at all. It cannot be a perfect or neat solution. It will be patchy and messy given the dynamics of the state

DEAD ENDS: American Foreign Policy In The New Cold War by Stanley Hoffmann; Ballinger Publishing Company.

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## *There is no Soviet master plan. Like any other power the Soviet Union seizes any opportunity for gain that comes its way.*

system. But the exercise is inescapable.

For all their might the superpowers find themselves helpless in many situations. They find it easier to deprive each other of possible gains than to snatch gains already acquired. Both are dependent on their respective clients' whims. Castro has led the Soviet Union into embarrassing situations repeatedly. Both superpowers have had to arm allies over whose decisions they had no control—US military aid to Pakistan, for instance.

In so complex a situation, the ignorant bigot is a menace to peace. "The trouble with simple-minded leaders is that, like simple-minded theorists of international relations, they tend not only to analyse all politics in terms of power, but also to equate power with the ability to coerce. Power remains the dominant concept for the study of international relations. But the flaws of a 'realism' that fails to distinguish between the nature and the role of power in an integrated community endowed with a central authority and the nature and role of power in the international milieu need to be pointed out more than ever. So do the flaws of a realism that does not distinguish between power as a means or intermediate goal, that has to be tailored to specific objectives and power as a yardstick comparable to money in economics. A traditional realism that equates power with military might, or a modern realism that analyses the structure of the international system only in terms of the distribution of state capabilities—as if the latter were all measurable and equally significant independently of their usability and effectiveness—is an insufficient basis for a theory of international politics. Today, military might is only one dimension of power among many." Our Swadeshi pundits who hold forth on world affairs with an air of supreme confidence on India's role as a regional power ought to imbibe these basics of sound, as against phony 'realism'.

The new orthodoxy that holds forth

among the Reagan administration as it wages the new cold war is particularly dangerous because of its disdain for the spirit of moderation. It works desperately hard to perpetuate the *status quo* because it sees 'the Red menace' in every movement for change. Not surprisingly, the US Secretary for Defence, Caspar Weinberger, detected pro-Soviet slogans in the campaign for democracy in Pakistan during his recent visit to that country. The lessons of Iran are lost on the Bourbons of the Reagan administration. Indeed, their voluble representative at the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick, has drawn a fine distinction between the hateful 'totalitarians' and the acceptable 'authoritarians'.

Professor Hoffmann perceptively notes: "Many of the potentially most unstable countries happen to be clients or allies of the United States—they range from Guatemala to Pakistan and the Philippines, from Haiti to Morocco and Egypt, from El Salvador to Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Our twin worries, in years to come, will be to prevent explosions in such places from becoming manifestations of anti-Americanism and opportunities for Soviet influence; and to prevent explosions and disruptions in the Soviet universe from leading to general war. The one thing we will not be able to do, however hard we try, is to prevent explosions. Rather than direct aggression, it is the exploitation of revolutionary conditions, either through subversion or through encouragement of local revolutionary groups, which is the most likely form of Soviet expansion. In Afghanistan, indeed, it was such exploitation that, having been a failure, led to aggression. In other words, the key issue—for the rest of the century—is the issue of revolution."

Stung by deceit in Vietnam, the US Congress tied the hands of the US administration. Watergate did the rest to impair its credibility. The Russians took the fullest advantage of it to

move ahead in Ethiopia and Angola. Carter simply lacked the capacity to devise a proper response. Reagan's response is a simplistic one based on the worst-case scenario.

It testifies to the author's objectivity that, unlike Morgenthau and Kissinger, sanity does not desert him when he turns his attention to America's sacred cow—Israel. He sums up the problem in a passage which deserves to be quoted *in extenso*:

"The fundamental obstacles to peace are Israel's refusal to move in the direction of a settlement of the Palestinian problem entailing self-determination for the Palestinians (indeed, the policies followed by Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin make impossible a settlement of the Palestinian issue acceptable to any Arab state) and America's failure to confront Israel except on marginal issues. If Israel showed a willingness to put an end to the creeping annexation of the West Bank and to accept the principle of self-determination for the Palestinians, then Arab intransigence, which has already been dented since Sadat's breakthrough, would probably recede further or be limited to eccentric states. In coming years, the United States will have to choose between a course that, if continued, will undermine the positions of moderate Arab governments with which Washington has been co-operating; and a more energetic course that will severely strain the special US relationship with Israel and the body politic in America. Only the second course offers any positive prospect for fulfilling the strategic and economic interests of the United States in the Arab world, as well as for ensuring Israel's long-term ability to live in peace and to play a role as a member of the (troubled) family of Middle Eastern nations."

There are areas where events have overtaken the author or he has been less than perceptive; eg Sino-Soviet relations. But the volume is a fine work of stimulating analysis. ♦

# The Man Who

*What makes a Harvard professor turn to Indian politics? Can India's first urban, middle-class politician ever amount to anything?*

*Subramaniam Swamy is young. He is controversial. And he is bright.*

*But will he ever become Prime Minister? Our cover story argues that he might have a better chance than most people realise.*

**E**XACTLY FOUR YEARS AGO, SUBRAMANIAM Swamy told me that he would be Prime Minister of India by 1989. The statement, delivered with cold finality, came half-way through an otherwise innocuous interview. We had been discussing what Swamy did in his spare time and I was, as a result, somewhat unprepared for a prediction about his political future. I remember suddenly sitting upright and staring at him to see if he was serious. He was.

"I have a feeling of destiny," he continued. "I know that in ten years, I will be Prime Minister."

"How can you be so sure?" I recall asking.

"Tell me one other politician of my generation who is as widely known as I am?" he challenged.

"Sanjay Gandhi," I replied.

"Oh, he doesn't count," he said dismissively. (This was,



# Would Be PM

after all, during the period when the Gandhis were in opposition.) I put forward other objections, but Swamy disregarded them all. Finally, I gave in and simply put the quote into the article. Predictably, it was picked up by other magazines and newspapers and requoted again and again, usually, partly in jest.

I remember the incident because it seemed to me to reveal something about the man. Throughout the interview he had been urbane, charming, witty and sparkling. At times he would sound like the Harvard professor he once was, and at others, he would

seem as Indian as the *dhoti-kurtas* he always wears. But there were some things that he would not joke about and when they were discussed, his eyes took on the sort of pallor that bad novelists call 'a steely glint'.

Mrs Gandhi was one such subject: "She is an evil woman. She had me thrown out of my job at the IIT." Atal Behari Vajpayee was another: "He is an immoral hypocrite." And of course, his own career was the third: "Sharad Pawar may not take me seriously, but the people of India do."

At the time, Swamy was still best known for his Emergency escapades

and his brilliant Harvard career. He was, the sceptics said, a man with a glorious future *behind* him. Over the next four years I was to follow his career with interest. He took to abusing Vajpayee in public, turned his back on his RSS mentors, and as Deputy Leader of the Janata Party, maintained the outspokenness that one usually associates with highly-strung back-benchers. As he shifted from the old Jana Sangh group into the newly emaciated Janata Party in 1980, he struck me as being a man who would never really belong in any Indian party. His views were too unconventional, he was



unwilling to accept the restrictions of party discipline, had no respect for the electoral alliances preferred by old-style politicians and retained still, the feeling that he was destined to get to the top.

But of one thing, there was no doubt: contrary to what the sceptics had predicted in 1979, Subramaniam Swamy had not faded away.

\* \* \*

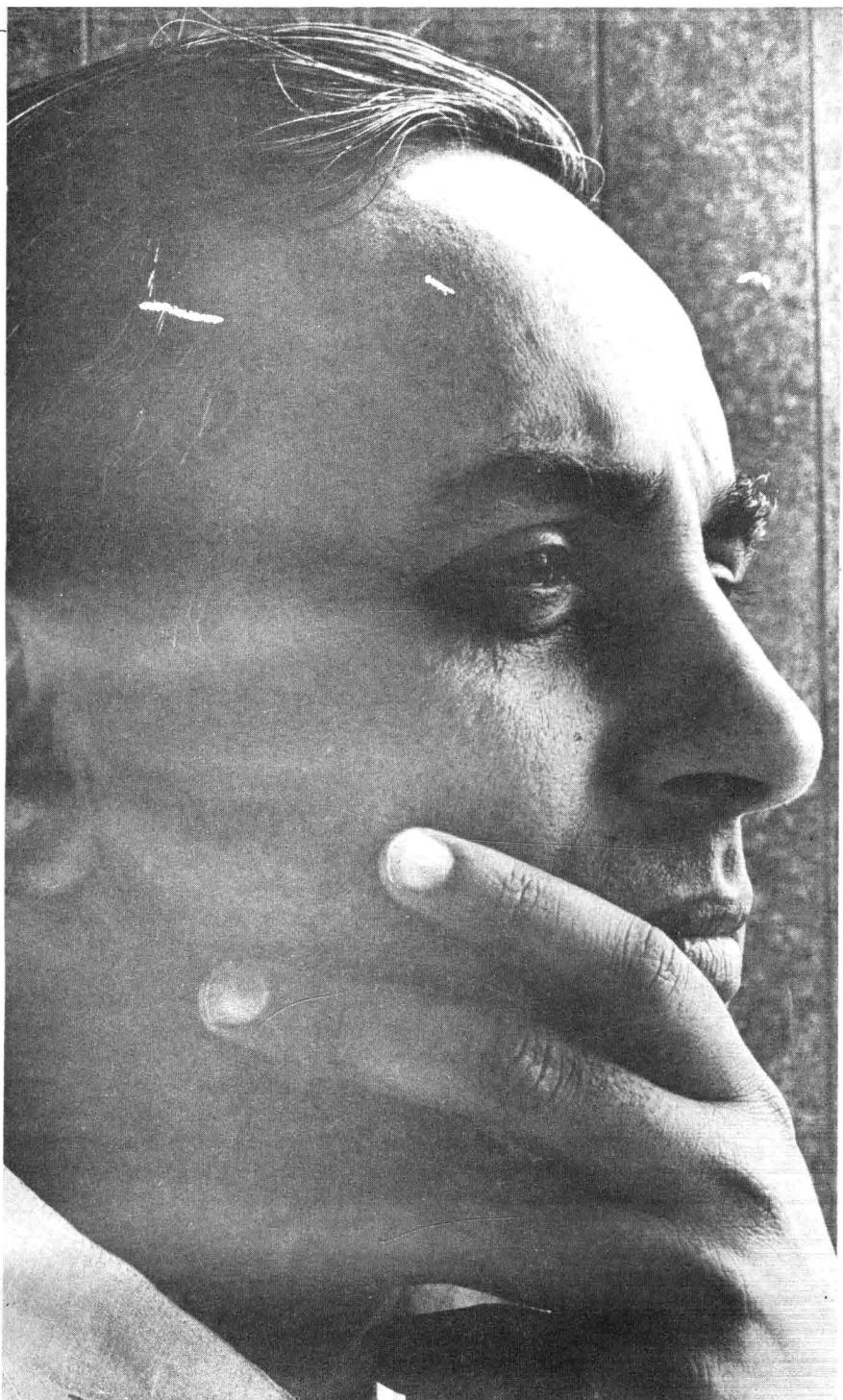
**S**WAMY STILL BELIEVES that he will be Prime Minister by 1989. If the possibility that he might not meet his own deadline has occurred to him, he gives no sign of it in public. There are still some things that he will not joke about (though Vajpayee seems to have now overtaken Mrs Gandhi as Public Enemy Number One in his estimation) and, to his credit, he has displayed an ideological consistency that is rare in Indian politics.

"What you must realise about me," he notes without a trace of modesty or arrogance, "is that I would consider myself as a phenomenon. After all, what is my background? My family didn't contribute anything to politics. I have no caste or religious appeal. I have built up whatever appeal I have purely on the basis of ideas."

There is substance to this claim. Though he is a brahmin from Tamil Nadu, his Lok Sabha constituency is in Bombay and he is not widely perceived as being a South Indian politician or a brahmin leader. Moreover, he has also not entered politics through any of the usual channels—trade unionism, student activism or district politics. He is perhaps the only Indian politician who stood for elections only after he had earned his PhD and an impressive reputation as an academic. In a sense, he is the first successful politician to emerge from the urban middle class.

Swamy was brought up in Delhi, where his father was a government official and studied at Hindu College and the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta. He won a scholarship to Harvard where he first read for a PhD and then became an Associate Professor of Economics.

He came back to India in 1969 to take up an appointment as Professor of Economics with Special Reference to China at the Delhi School of Economics. According to him, BN Ganguly, the Vice Chancellor who had invited him was replaced by KN Raj who



***"Eight RAW agents were sent to England to bump me off. If it proved too difficult to abduct me, then they had instructions to kill me."***

withheld the appointment. "Partly, it was ideological," he says. "It was a time when leftists like PN Haksar, Mohan Kumaramangalam and Raj himself were very influential and I was not perceived as being left-wing enough for them." There was also the matter of his youth: he was just 29 and too young to be a full professor by Indian standards.

Nevertheless, Swamy's economic credentials were impressive. He had written an influential article on *The Theory Of Index Numbers* with Paul Samuelson in the *American Economic Review* and was the author of a highly-regarded book on the economic growth of China and India. So, he managed quite easily to obtain an appointment as full professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi.

His political views at the time were, he recalls, a mixture of strong nationalism and anti-Americanism. "I had been in America during the anti-Vietnam War movement and was opposed to their foreign policy. At that time, India was going round with a begging bowl asking for aid and we had been forced to devalue our currency. It was quite a humiliating time for India. And then I would see all these second-rate American academics coming to India and posing as experts."

In keeping with his views, his first major magazine piece (in *Blitz*) was called *India Can Produce Nuclear Weapons*. A scholarly version of this article appeared in the *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)* and caused quite a stir. Another paper (later published as *Indian Economic Planning—An Alternative Approach* by Vikas) argued that a growth rate of ten per cent was attainable without any foreign aid whatsoever.

Such unconventional ideas made him unpopular among his colleagues but attracted a sort of fan following among students. Later, Swamy began to take an active part in the Institute's Senate and took to attacking RN Dogra, the IIT's Director. He recalls the dispute in good-guys-and-communists terms, maintaining that: "The communists were getting jealous of me and started calling me a CIA agent. They wanted me out." For whatever reason, he was dismissed in 1972. He challenged the dismissal and the case is still before the courts. No other jobs were forthcoming because he claims, "The communist network had decided to keep me out."

**G**IVEN HIS STRONG nationalism and slightly paranoid reaction to communists, it was not surprising that the Jana Sangh sought him out. Manoharlal Sondhi and Jagannathrao Joshi approached him for help in formulating the Party's economic policies. Like many other Indians of his generation and background, he had been brought up to be suspicious of the RSS and the Jana Sangh. "To this day," he notes, "my own father is strongly opposed to the RSS and I had heard of the fascist tendencies of the organisation." Moreover, he was not a particularly religious Hindu (his wife is a Parsi) and had developed a hatred of the caste system and some other Hindu institutions.

Why then did he join the Jana Sangh? His detractors say that he was on the make and that in his quest for recognition, he was not above an unprincipled alliance or two. Predictably, Swamy does not see it that way: "At that time I was so anti-communist that I was impressed by any organisation that could fight communism. The problem with fascist organisations is that as long as they are for you, you don't see the fascist tendencies. And the Jana Sangh wooed me like they would woo a baby." His economic views became official party policy and he spent the two years (1972-74) after his dismissal from the IIT, helping the party. "During this period I would support myself by going back to Harvard and lecturing for two months and then coming back to Delhi and living off that money for the rest of the year," he remembers.

In 1974, Swamy was asked to go and help with the Jana Sangh's campaign for the UP Assembly Elections. The campaign was a success and he was rewarded with a Rajya Sabha ticket. After two years of unemployment, he now had a new job.

To begin with, Swamy enjoyed being an MP. The Delhi magazine *New Age* heralded his entry into Parliament with a lead story claiming that he was an RSS-sponsored rival to Vajpayee. His own dramatic utterances ensured that he received wide publicity and he continued to write for several magazines and papers.

It took just six months however, for things to start going wrong. "My performance was so good," he says in that flat, matter-of-fact tone, "that I attracted more attention than Vajpayee. So, he started freezing me out. I was

asked to cut down on my publicity, I was not informed of decisions, they wouldn't tell me when meetings were held and Vajpayee started telling other politicians to ignore me."

On May 1, 1975, Swamy went to see RSS chief Balasaheb Deoras in Madras. "I want to resign," he told him. "This is not the party for me." Deoras asked him not to be too hasty. "I'll be in Delhi in July and we'll work things out then."

But by June 1975, the situation had changed more dramatically than either of them had anticipated.

\* \* \*

**T**HOUGH SWAMY IS DISMIS- sive of the Sanjay Gandhi parallels, both were *kurta*-clad children of the Emergency. Like Sanjay, Swamy had acquired a certain reputation in Delhi but was unknown to the country at large. The Emergency changed all that.

When the warrant for his arrest was issued, Swamy was tipped off and went underground at once. He hid in Bombay till January 1976 when he shifted to Madras. At the time, Tamil Nadu was governed by the DMK and he was able to board a plane to Colombo from Madras airport. From Colombo he went on to London and launched a campaign of active opposition to the Emergency.

At one stage, he was getting so much publicity in the Western press that, he claims, the government of India tried to have him killed. "I got a tip off that eight RAW agents had been sent to England to bump me off. I was informed that they had been told to kidnap me and bring me to India and that if this proved too difficult, to kill me." According to Swamy, the attempt came sooner than he expected. "I was walking along a street in Leicester when a brand new car with four Indians inside it stopped. Two of its occupants came out and acted as though they wanted to shake my hand. I raised an alarm at once and they rushed off. Otherwise, they would have dragged me into the car. I had noted the car number and so the British police were able to arrest the men. They all had Malawi passports and claimed to supply bread to the Indian High Commission for a living. The car had been bought two days before, which is normal in such cases. But because I had no proof that they wanted to abduct me, the police releas-



# MY ECONOMIC VIEWS

## *How to cut taxes and increase growth.*

**WHEN I ENTERED** politics in the early '70s, I had already propounded and published my thesis on the economic philosophy. I had argued (see my *Indian Economic Planning—An Alternative Approach*, Vikas, 1971) then that India could grow at ten per cent per year as against 3.5 per cent per year that our planning had achieved. I also had shown that India could do without foreign aid, produce nuclear weapons and go slow on family planning and yet achieve a near tripling of the growth rate in national income.

The recipe for the fast-growth-cum-self-reliance, in its basic ingredients, has relevance today, a decade later. In the last ten years we have continued at the snail's pace of 3.5 per cent per year, with more massive doses of foreign aid from the World Bank and the IMF. The question is, why?

The fundamental feature of the Indian economy today is that it is shackled by regulations which are cumbersome, arbitrary and contradictory. Many of these regulations are anti-growth and create disincentives which are damaging to economic progress. As a consequence, there has emerged a class of pirates, adventurers and kulaks who are threatening the very concept of industrialisation and agricultural modernisation. The planning priorities have been subverted by this New Class to render our Five-Year plans directionless, in fact shapeless.

Thanks to these ill-founded regulations, especially taxation and licensing, it has become more profitable now to consume than to save and more profitable to accumulate capital without realising output from it (witness the unprecedented rise in the capital-output ratio from 1.8 in 1952 to 6.1 today). Further, it is now more profitable to evade taxes than to pay them. The probability of detecting and the consequent confiscation, has been steadily declining with the rising corruption in the tax departments as also due to the increasing dependence of political parties on the evaded incomes,

namely black money. Our planning premisses have thus gone haywire.

My basic premiss is that the Indian people are highly intelligent and property-conscious. Due to the influence of religion, they have a social conscience as well. Therefore, social good can be achieved only by providing proper incentives and appealing to their religious duty. Any system that tries to force the Indian people against their inherited values would be subverted by them but not obeyed. So it is a hopeless task to have a command economy with detailed directives on what is and what is not public good, emanating from New Delhi. Unwilling Indians will manipulate and subvert it.

Instead, the best economic system for India is a market economy with easy-to-understand guidelines serving as rules of the game between consumers and producers. The role of the Government should be that of headmaster in a school, intervening to provide the infrastructure and impartially punishing the offenders of the game rules. Thus Government should provide railways, telephones, roadways, with finance and marketing facilities. It should unerringly punish economic offenders.

In order that consumers and producers play according to the just rules of the game, the Government has a definite responsibility to prevent the growth of monopoly. While I subscribe to this responsibility, I do not approve of the present method of doing it because it simply does not work. During the last two decades, despite all the hot speeches against Birlas and Tatas in Parliament, their assets have grown at the rate of 17 per cent per year.

The key to the defeat of monopoly lies in cost-cutting small industries and not in governmental monopolies commissions. Most of our monopoly houses are over-capitalised, and hence produce at high cost. If a network of small industries is fostered with marketing and finance support from Government, then the monopoly houses would lose

out in the ensuing competition. The present system of licensing with the usual loopholes are being actually manipulated by the large houses to prevent competition and cost-cutting.

In my economic philosophy, the two main goals are low prices and full employment. I would use the taxation system and planning priorities to achieve these two goals. In particular, income tax which merely provides four per cent of the Government revenue should be abolished. Excise taxes should be grossly simplified and should not be levied on small industries' products. This would lower prices.

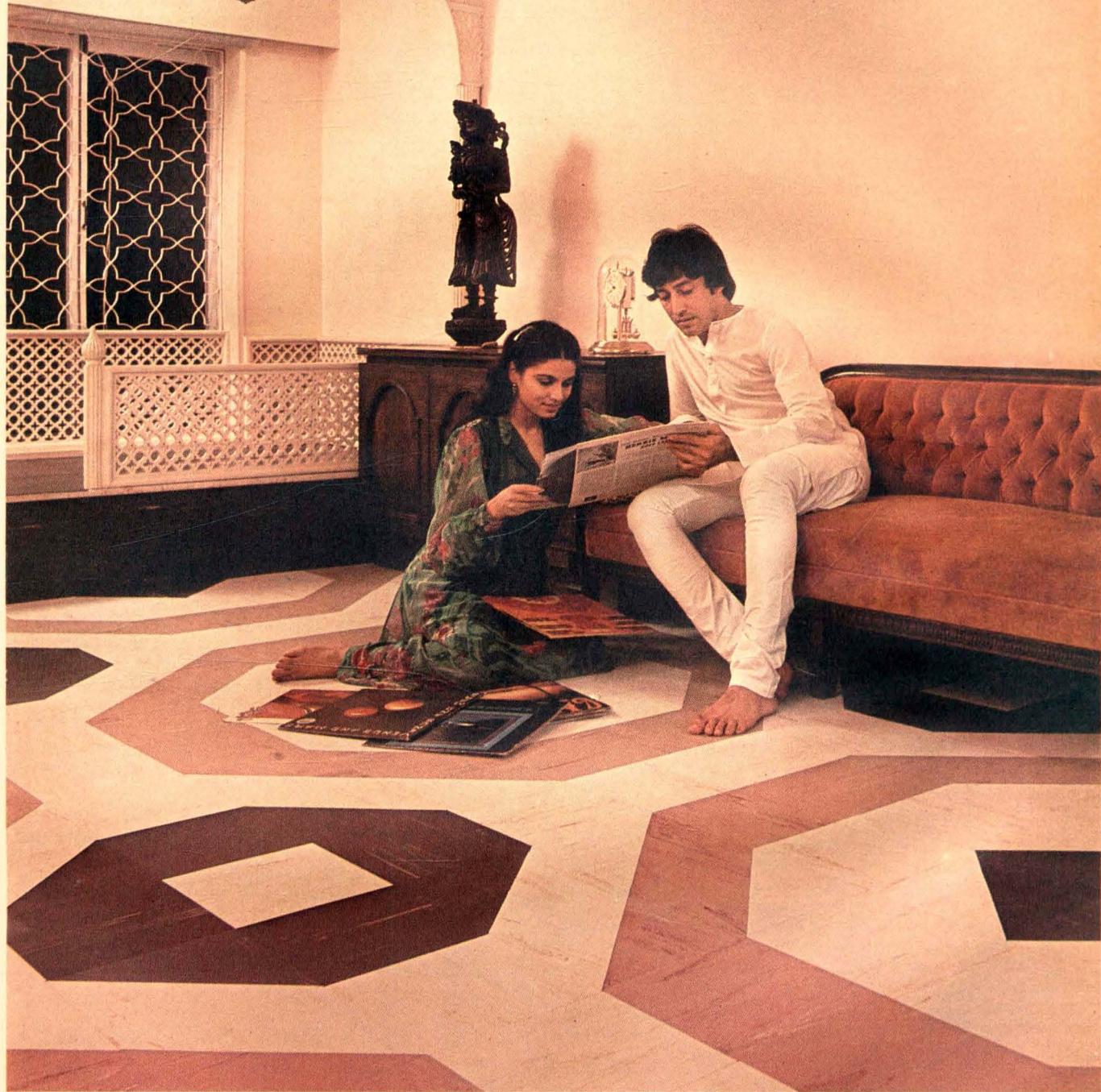
Full employment can be achieved by developing the concept of district industrial centres, by giving priority interest to agro-industries and supplementing it with governmental programmes such as food-for-work, massive projects of highway road construction and adult education. The educational system should be so geared that a young boy or girl after leaving secondary school or college goes straight to a bank in a district industrial centre and can organise a small industry under his or her management.

The same principle I would adopt for the peasantry. Those who own land should be able to organise themselves through bank credit and be able to market their produce in Government-provided centres. And those who do not own land should be able to progressively shift to small industries.

The core of my economic philosophy is my faith in the native intelligence and enterprise of the Indian. This faith comes after seeing Indians perform in the West, Middle East, Africa and Hong Kong. If the Indian is not performing in India, it is because he is not allowed to. My philosophy thus envisages removing the clamps on him and regulating his behaviour within broad easy-to-understand rules. If my philosophy is adopted, India will be a giant economic power in a 15-year period.

— *Subramaniam Swamy*

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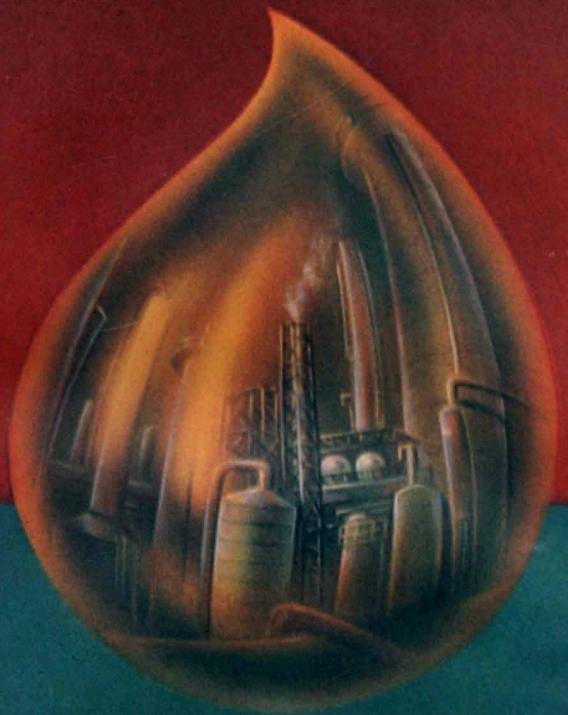
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ed them."

This incident went unreported, but Swamy's dramatic re-appearance in India caused a national sensation. On August 10, 1976, he suddenly turned up in the Rajya Sabha, addressed the chairman and then disappeared again. Because he managed to evade all the security services who were then looking for him, it was an amazing feat. It proved that Mrs Gandhi's police force was unable to keep a check on the activities of the anti-Emergency underground movement.

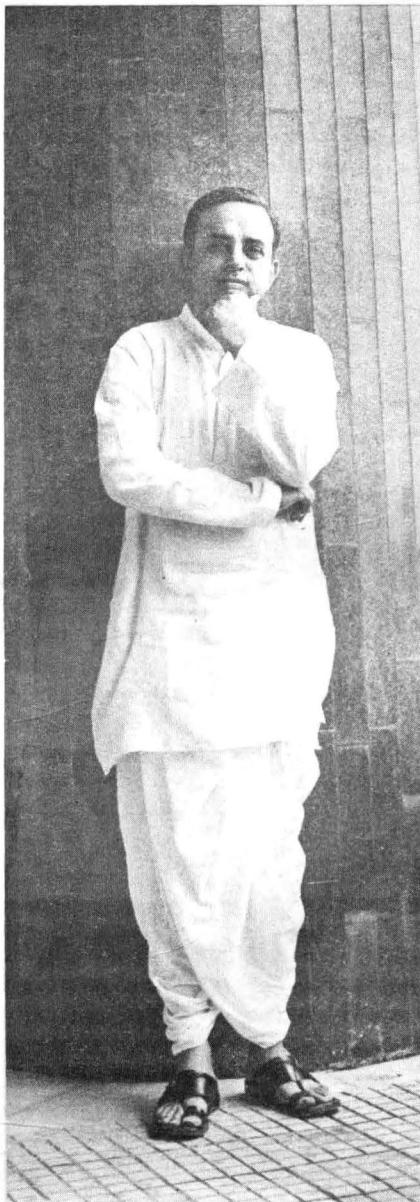
As Swamy tells it, the re-entry into India was easy. "I bought a London-Bangkok ticket and got off at Delhi. Instead of staying in the transit lounge, I strolled out, displaying my Rajya Sabha pass. Nobody even tried to stop me!" He escaped again by driving across the Nepal border. "It was very good for the morale of opponents of the Emergency," he recalls, "though Vajpayee of course asked me to surrender. He felt that by re-entering the country, I had caused Mrs Gandhi to feel that the removal of the Emergency would be too dangerous for her. Vajpayee had cracked up but it is true that Mrs Gandhi was shaken. CM Stephen once told me that he went to meet Mrs Gandhi the day after I had attended the Rajya Sabha and she was in pieces. She kept saying, 'What security is there if he can just walk in and out?' So I think my return had a great impact."

Swamy had always believed that Mrs Gandhi would call elections in 1977, though he thought that she would wait till November. So, he was not surprised when the government withdrew press censorship, released leaders from prison and dissolved Parliament. "I wanted to stand from New Delhi but Vajpayee called and said that he wanted to contest from there. Fortunately, the Bombay seat was available and I had some links with the city because my wife's family lives here."

As is now well-known, Swamy got elected on the Janata wave of 1977, defeating trade unionist and Congress candidate Raja Kulkarni.

\* \* \*

**S**WAMY'S TERM AS A JANATA MP began badly. On March 27, 1977, he told Ian Jack of the *Sunday Times* (London) that he didn't think Janata would last for more than two years. The party's



***He called  
Vajpayee  
an immoral  
hypocrite, an  
incorrigible  
womaniser  
and a heavy  
drinker.***

National Executive reprimanded him but he was not to be repressed. Asked by the press if he would accept a cabinet berth, he said, "Well, I'm not going to agree to be Minister for Civil Aviation," making it clear that he would only accept Home, Finance or External Affairs. To nobody's great surprise, none of these ministries was offered to him.

Later he called Jawaharlal Nehru 'a very corrupt man', demanded the abolition of the special status the Constitution granted Kashmir and made many other sensational statements that hit the front pages with a predictable regularity (among them was the claim that the Janata cabinet contained several drunkards—Swamy is a teetotaller).

Because he lacked any official position and because his reputation still rested on his Emergency escapades, Swamy soon earned notoriety as a publicity-seeker. Terms like 'court-jester' and 'clown prince' began to be applied to him by the press and one magazine even called him 'Raj Narain with a Harvard degree'. By October 1977, matters had got to the stage where the Party was seriously considering expelling him. Recalls Swamy: "Vajpayee organised an expulsion. All these characters—Chandrashekhar, George Fernandes, Madhu Limaye and others—went along with it. They would have expelled me for indiscipline had Morarji not put his foot down.

"I asked Chandrashekhar why he had done it. He said, 'Look, Vajpayee is the leader of your Jana Sangh group. If he felt you should be expelled, then why should we stop him?' That made me realise that I had to oppose Vajpayee who was getting extremely jealous of my prominence."

For most of 1978, Swamy seemed to concentrate on opposing Vajpayee. He attacked Janata foreign policy, went to China before Vajpayee could do so and began to speak disparagingly of the Foreign Minister's morals. He now says that he was fighting for his own survival. "Vajpayee is a past master of intrigue, so I had to smoke him out and fight the battle in the open. Otherwise, he would have finished me."

Swamy's controversial statements and his prolific journalistic output (he has written for *Sunday, India Today, The Illustrated Weekly* and *Onlooker*) made him famous. By 1979, he was as well-known as Chandrashekhar or



## INTERVIEW:

# “I SAY WHAT I THINK IS RIGHT”



**Imprint: Is it in good taste to continually attack Vajpayee's personal life?**

**Swamy:** He is a hypocrite. He is a man who has been posing as a *brahmachari* who has given up the joys of life and is suffering for the nation. It is his hypocrisy I object to, not the fact that he enjoys himself. I have my disagreements with Chandrashekhar but I never mention his private life—and it is not that I don't know. But he is not a hypocrite.

Even during the Emergency, most of the RSS people told me, if Vajpayee is allowed to meet you, he will convey your whereabouts to the police! That is the extent of Vajpayee's meanness. He is a cad and a coward who should not be allowed to occupy high office.

**Many politicians regard you as they would a mosquito. That is to say, you have a certain nuisance value but one swat, and you are finished.**

Yes that's right. I am a man who is rootless, who doesn't go and pay his respects to these politicians and they think I can be snuffed out. But they've learned the hard way that it is not so easy to deal with me. Recently there have even been offers of a peace treaty from Vajpayee's people.

**What about the persistent rumour that you are joining Mrs Gandhi?**

Vajpayee's people started it and as a consequence, my relations with Mrs Gandhi have improved (laughs). I can never join Mrs Gandhi because I have made my reputation in this country opposing her. If I join her, my credibility is finished. I'll cease to be a man of firm ideas.

**As somebody who has seen it from the inside, what do you think is the relationship between the BJP or Jana Sangh and the RSS?**

The relationship of the power-house and the bulb, or the body and the brain. You can't separate them. In the final analysis, the BJP will do what the RSS tells it to. So all of the RSS's prejudices will appear in the BJP's actions.

**You are not just saying this because you've fallen out with them?**

No, I've always said this. In October 1979, I wrote an article in *The Illustrated Weekly* in which I said that all larger decisions taken by the Jana Sangh/BJP group are a sham. The RSS takes the decisions in a small conclave and then the BJP endorses them. Either you accept it or you don't. But to pretend that you can separate the two is futile or hypocritical.

**In that case, why did you join the Jana**

**Sangh in the first place?**

I didn't know about it. I entered the Jana Sangh in 1974 and tried to leave in 1975, and the Emergency was declared a month after that. When I returned to India, I was a member of the Janata Party, not the Jana Sangh.

**What was it about the identity of the post-1980 Janata Party that made you want to stay in it? And does it have an identity now?**

I was one of the few people who said that the emaciated Janata could survive. In May 1980, Chandrashekhar talked to me about liquidating the party. In fact, they called a conference of 100 intellectuals, hoping to create a new party.

The identity of Janata has to be that it is a centrist party. Its thrust cannot be leftist. If at all it leans, it leans to the right.

**Why?**

Because that is how the party was conceived in 1977. The kind of things we did in the 1977 to 1979 period—decontrol of sugar, abolition of the P Form etc—proved this. A Gandhian framework means a rightist thrust. We must encompass a broad coalition.

Now the time has come to do radical things. If I was in charge, I would abolish income tax for five years and dismantle all the controls.

**But you know as well as I do that the Janata is not going to do that. You are in a minority of one in the party.**

I think that time changes things. People change their minds. There was a time when Chandrashekhar was issuing certificates to Mrs Gandhi for



*Chandrashekhar : "great stamina".*

her progressive ideas! I have full faith that as younger people enter the Janata we will dispense with the sham of state capitalism that we call socialism.

*How serious are your differences with Chandrashekhar?*

Not very serious but Chandrashekhar is a man who is easily influenced by rumours and once he hears something, he tends to believe it.

Then, he has a short temper and says something that will provoke me. So, I retaliate. I never, never take anything lying down. If I wanted to do that, I'd have remained a professor. In fact, today I can get a professorship anywhere. If I told Mrs Gandhi that I was giving up politics and wanted a professorship, she would happily give me two (laughs).

But no, Chandrashekhar and I have no fundamental differences.

*But you do, surely? In ideological terms, I can't think of two things you agree on. In terms of personal style too, you are very different.*

Yes, but I don't think of him as evil. He's not mean and vapid like Sharad Pawar and Vajpayee. These are people who don't deserve to occupy high positions. Chandrashekhar and I make up if we fight. At the moment, we have a peace treaty!

*But what do you have in common with the other members of your party? And isn't there a moral issue involved when you link up with a man like George Fernandes who you've attacked for toppling the Janata government?*

Well, I'm sorry, I was in a minority on this. I was told that the fact that people like Fernandes have rejoined unconditionally shows that they regret their behaviour. There is also a feeling in the country that we should all unite again. I was told that people like Karpoori Thakur, Devi Lal and Biju Patnaik have electoral bases of their own and that we had to take them all together or not at all. My own view is that it was a mistake. But I am willing to let 1985 be the last experiment of this kind of politics. And then I will decide that enough is enough.

Right now I'm not in a position to do much. I could quit and form another party but that would not be right. The mood in the country is not in favour of it.

*What did you think of Chandrashekhar's padayatra?*

Well, I had expressed myself against the misutilisation of time that it involved. We told him in the National



*Sharad Pawar : "mean and vapid".*

Executive meeting that if at the end of the *yatra*, he went back to doing what he was doing earlier, it meant that he just wanted to attract some publicity. The only thing I would say about the *padayatra* is that it was an act of great stamina (laughs).

In six months, with a car, he would have got the same affection of the people.

*It has been said that there is a hysterical edge to some of your pronouncements.*

Well, it depends on how it comes out in cold print. Something that I say lightly to a journalist may seem hysterical when it is put down.

*Nevertheless, would it be fair to say that you are readier to criticise your colleagues than any other Indian politician?*

Well, I got into politics because of different motives. I am not a usual politician. I say what I think is right, I do not submit to discipline and I fight every inch of the way.

I believe that in India you can get very far if you don't worry about consequences. Few of our politicians speak their minds because they are scared of causing offence.

If I couldn't say what I believed, then I wouldn't remain in politics. ♦



*Fernandes : "regrets his behaviour".*

Charan Singh—not bad going for a man who had only entered politics four years before. He says now that he realised that Janata was not going to last and therefore concentrated on building up a national following. He toured the country repeatedly and visited nearly every part of India.

He was fortunate that he had won Morarji Desai's confidence. The way he tells it, Morarji invited him to 1, Safdarjang Road in May 1977 and lectured him on party discipline. Swamy was able to convince him that he was not working against the interests of the party and the two became good friends. Later when Vajpayee, Advani and other Janata leaders attacked Swamy, Morarji shielded him.

Nevertheless, the impression persisted that Swamy was a lightweight, a political nonentity ("Who takes him seriously?" Sharad Pawar asked in early 1980) who would soon be forgotten. An opinion poll conducted by the Indian Market Research Bureau for *Bombay* magazine in late 1979 predicted that he would hang on to his parliamentary seat in the 1980 elections by a slim margin. As it turned out, Swamy won by a huge majority of 40,000 and went on to become Deputy Leader of the Janata Party.

\* \* \*

**T**HERE IS A SILENT demographic revolution in this country that people are not understanding. Seventy per cent of the electorate today is under the age of 40 and if you can mobilise them if you can excite them, then you don't need anything like the old electoral calculations." Subramaniam Swamy is as articulate today as he was in his 'out-spoken' phase four years ago. Then, I had wondered about the cold, hard ambition behind the sensational statements. Now, the ambition is out in the open and the sensationalism has been toned down somewhat. If provoked, Swamy will still make the odd controversial statement but it is easier to get him to talk about electoral strategy.

Unlike many of his comrades in the Janata Party, he does not see politics solely in terms of personalities. Unlike them, he also has an unusually shrewd grasp of what is happening in India today. Just as he gave the 1977-brand Janata two years, he seems willing to give this Janata *avatar* the period between now and the next General

Election.

When he talks of a demographic revolution, he gives the impression of having thought deeply about electoral behaviour. He knows that of the 70 per cent of the population below 40, at least 60 per cent are below 35. Such voters are relatively uninfluenced by caste loyalties and have little or no recollection of the Nehru era. They are more interested in a party that makes its policies clear and then acts on them. At 44, Swamy is the only politician from his generation to have reached a position of prominence in national politics. His Janata, BJP and Lok Dal counterparts are all members of a different generation (Chandrashekhar is 56, Vajpayee: 57 and Charan Singh: 81). Even if he lets the 1985 elections go by, Swamy will still be only 50 in 1990.

Till then he is biding his time. Despite his attempts at rationalisation (see interview), he is clearly a misfit in Janata just as he was in the Jana Sangh. He concedes that he could not have continued with the Jana Sangh: "They only value loyalty. There is no room for individual points of view." And he insists that he stuck with Janata rather than join the BJP in 1980 because he thought that the erstwhile Jana Sanghis were going back on their word. (At least one journalist though, remembers Swamy saying to him in 1980: "If I join the BJP, Vajpayee will make *kheema* of me.")

About Janata, he is more brazen: "There is room for all points of view." This claim sits uneasily with the fact that the 'progressive' views of Chandrashekhar and the erstwhile socialists clash completely with his own right-wing beliefs. If he had his way for example, he would abolish income tax, a view that is hardly likely to have them cheering in the aisles at meetings of the Janata National Executive.

\* \* \*

**S**WAMY'S ABILITY TO HIT the headlines, almost at will, is both his greatest asset and his biggest liability. Had he not been so outspoken, so willing to shoot his mouth off at the slightest provocation, he would probably not be as well-known as he is today.

On the other hand, it is because he is so articulate, that he is so often perceived as being glib and superficial. Controversy has made him famous, but it has also made him slightly

suspect in the eyes of many of his colleagues. The nagging feeling that he is no more than a clown, a man without political standing who inflates his own importance by attacking the few politicians who do matter, will not go away. There is a hysterical edge to some of his pronouncements and his readiness to ruin reputations at the drop of a *topi* suggests a certain immaturity. He would like to be called 'irrepressible', but he is often seen as irresponsible.

Swamy's detractors generally fall into two groups. There are those who feel that he is of no consequence, a mere newspaper tiger; and then there are those who feel that even if he is to be taken seriously, there is simply no prospect of his getting anywhere. His principle political mentor, Morarji Desai is 88 and embroiled in problems of his own. His old friends in the BJP and the RSS see him as a traitor and his colleagues in the Janata party disagree with him on nearly every issue. Should Janata win the next election, they argue, it is possible that he may not even be offered the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The first criticism is easily disposed of. He can be glib, irresponsible and even slightly hysterical. In the Indian context, these qualities are not unusual. Anybody who remembers the performance of the last Janata government where ministers called each other KGB agents and dangerous lunatics, cannot honestly be surprised by Swamy's volubility. That this necessarily makes him a clown does not follow. He is perhaps the only member of the Janata National Executive to have clearly defined economic views (which appear elsewhere in this issue) and his articles on Foreign Policy display a rare perceptiveness. Unfortunately for him, Indian politics tends not to be about issues and when the papers do feature him, it is as a loudmouth, not as a thinker.

It is the second criticism that has greater validity. Even if he is not a clown, will he ever amount to much, given the structure of Indian politics?

Swamy is certain that he will. The key to his confidence lies in his belief that India is changing far more rapidly than the older generation of politicians realises. He points out that the pundits have got the results of every election held in the last ten years wrong. The gradual change in the age structure of the population ('the demographic re-



***At 44, Swamy is the only politician from his generation to have reached a position of prominence in national politics. Chandrashekhar is 56, Vajpayee: 57 and Charan Singh: 81.***

volution' he often talks about) will render the conventional political wisdom obsolete. The violent electoral swings that we have recently witnessed indicate just how dissatisfied the people are with the existing structure of politics.

He backs this analysis with personal observation. "I don't publicise this but I have been addressing public meetings all over the country and I can sense the change in public mood. I was the first Janata politician to address a meeting in Patna's Gandhi Maidan after 1977 and it was the biggest crowd Patna had seen for some time. In Jamshedpur, I drew a crowd of 25,000 which is a lot for Jamshedpur. People want politicians who talk about issues and seem capable of doing what they promise."

He is dismissive of suggestions that without a political base, his position will always seem insecure. "Not at all. The worst thing a national leader can do is find a regional base. Mrs Gandhi has so much national standing because she is not perceived as a UP politician. On the other hand, Charan Singh will always speak for the Jats and Jagjivan Ram for the scheduled castes. Once you do that, all the other castes and communities become suspicious of you. I keep telling Chandrashekhar not to let people call him a Rajput leader."

In some ways, Swamy is still a very urban politician. His unwillingness to be associated with any region or caste, his open contempt for the hypocritical excesses of old-style politicians and his insistence on producing a clear statement of beliefs are the mark of an educated, young person from a large city who is disgusted by the existing state of Indian politics. His views too are the sort that most elite or middle-class people in Bombay, Delhi or Madras would agree with—less taxation, fewer economic controls and a distrust of Russia.

It is his view that because he is the first person from this sort of background to gain political prominence, he will always be perceived as a misfit. But there is no doubt that as India becomes more urban, as the literacy rate goes up and as the population gets younger, he will not seem so unusual.

"That should happen by 1989," Swamy laughs. "And I'll become Prime Minister before my deadline expires!"

— Vir Sanghvi

# THE AVENGERS

*The inside story of Bombay's recent gang wars.*



Shabir had gone wrong. He had trusted Nanda even though he knew that she was Amirzada's girlfriend. Admittedly, Shabir and Amirzada had made up, but there's was a tenuous truce and had Shabir not been so eager for his pleasure, he would have thought more carefully about letting Nanda lead him into a trap.

The wedding flowers on the Ambassador were also a dead giveaway. Not only did they make the car seem innocuous but they also prevented curious passersby from looking through the windows—had Shabir been alert, he would have remembered to be suspicious of the unusual. And finally, there was the matter of his fuel tank. Obviously somebody had drained the petrol out earlier. That alone should have put Shabir on his guard.

But then, if Shabir died because of his over-confidence and recklessness, it was somehow appropriate. He had begun a career of crime by being reckless and only because of his confidence had he been so successful. He lived like a daredevil. And finally, he died like one.

Though his later activities made it difficult to believe, Shabir was the son of a policeman. His father, Ibrahim Haskar was a *havaldar* with the CID who decided, when he retired, that he had learned enough about criminals to become a successful smuggler himself. His sons, Shabir and Dawood inherited their father's criminal instincts. When Shabir was only 16, they opened a stall to sell smuggled goods at Crawford Market and later began to offer protection to smugglers. Gradually, they became big-time smugglers themselves.

Within the Nagpada area in which they lived, they soon earned an impressive reputation for daredevilry. When their brothers Nur Ul Huq, Anees and Abdullah entered the business, they became a mafia-style family with Shabir as the young Don. Despite their criminal activities, they mingled freely with their neighbours and never hurt anyone who was not directly involved in their business. To this day, many law-abiding Nagpada residents speak well of Shabir.

\* \* \*

**ADJACENT TO TEMKAR** Street where the Ibrahims live, is lane no 5, Kamathipura. And as anybody in Nagpada will tell you, the acknowledged *dada* of lane no 5 was Amirzada.

Amirzada, despite his later pretensions, had humble beginnings. His father Nawab Lala was a domestic servant. Of course he was no mere servant. His employer was Karim Lala, the international smuggler who has somehow become a leader of Bombay's Muslim community and a friend of such celebrities as Dilip Kumar.

Inspired by Karim Lala, Amirzada took to smuggling. He drafted his brother Shahzada and his cousins Alamzeb and Ayub in the business. While their smuggling activities were, to begin with, relatively insignificant, they had more success in the protection racket.

Smugglers require more protection than law-abiding citizens. Their goods are collected by fishing craft from ships that arrive close to the Bombay coastline. The fishing craft are guided to safe landing spots where they unload the cargo. This cargo is then taken to godowns till it can be distributed to the owners of special shops in Mohatta Market at Crawford Market and Gandhi Market in Matunga. Along the way, the cargo is vulnerable. The fishing craft can be hijacked, their unloading interrupted or the trucks carrying the goods to the godown can be robbed.

Amirzada told the smugglers that if they hired him, this fate would not befall their cargoes. He would guarantee their safety and provide protection. Not only did he have his brothers and cousins to assist him but he had also recruited some of the best toughs in the business. There was Ayub Lala, a well-known *goonda*. Then there was Iqbal Tempo, his name deriving from his tendency to bring hit men in a tempo. And of course there was Syed Batla, well-known for his ruthlessness and his apparent ability to go through life without a single human feeling.

Not everyone though, was scared of Amirzada's gang. Iqbal Natiq, a reporter for the Urdu journal *Razdaar* ran a campaign against the gang. Prodded by Natiq's crusading journalism, the Crime Branch arrested Amirzada and his associates in 1976, during the Emergency.

By the summer of 1977 though, the gang was free and eager to teach Natiq a lesson. Amirzada, Alamzeb, Syed Batla and Ayub Lala went to Natiq's house in Bhendi Bazaar. They threatened him with a sword and abducted him. At Khetwadi, the exact spot where they had been arrested, they stabbed Natiq on his legs, arms and



## *The Attack At The Funeral*



body. With blood pouring from his wounds, they pushed him into marshy land and disappeared.

When the police, alerted by Natiq's family, reached the spot, it was too late. They rushed him to a hospital but his wounds turned gangrenous and he died on August 2, 1977. Enraged, the police picked up the four killers, but a judge released them on bail shortly afterwards.

\* \* \*

**I**T WAS PROBABLY INEVITABLE that Amirzada and his family would cross swords with the Ibrahims. For a start, they were in the same business. Both offered protection to smugglers and each claimed that his family was tougher than the other. Then, there was the problem with Natiq. There can be no denying that Natiq was a friend of the Ibrahims, though it has never been established that they put him up to attacking Amirzada. Nevertheless, Amirzada thought that Shabir was behind Natiq and made no secret of his views.

Whether it was resentment at this slur, or whether Shabir thought that he was avenging Natiq, is not known but in late 1977 the Ibrahims took up arms against Amirzada's men.

They singled out Batla for the first attack. He was bathing at his residence when Shabir and Dawood burst through the door along with three henchmen—Mehmood Kalia, Khalid Pahelwan and Anjum. They whipped out swords and lacerated his arms. Then they shot him in the thigh. Their aim was not to kill but to disable.

Inspector Sudhir Jadhav, then of the Nagpada police station, was the first to get to Batla's home. He found Batla sprawled on the bathroom floor, his dismembered fingers ranged around him. His flesh was peeling off like the skin of an over-ripe banana and the flesh was sliced off his arms. He had a bullet in his leg and broken bones everywhere else.

Batla lived, but he lost the use of his hands for life. Characteristically, this did not deter him. He took to wearing iron-capped boots, taught himself karate and learned to defend himself by only using his legs.

From then on though, it was open war between the Ibrahims and Amirzada's men. In one celebrated incident,

the gangs met at the Nagpada junction (near the Alexandra cinema) and shot it out, Western-style, with bullets spraying the neighbourhood. Suddenly, the mafia war was front-page news.

It is not surprising that the rest of the criminal fraternity, disturbed by all the publicity, decided to step in. The seven major Dons of Bombay's underworld called a meeting. Haji Mastaan, Karim Lala, Hussain Somji, Jeenabhai Daruwali, Aziz Dilip, Majid Kalia and Hamid Daqi had realised that any more street battles would only lead to calls for stricter law enforcement and damage their operations.

The summit was held at Mastaan's strangely seedy villa on Bombay's winding Sophia College lane. Amirzada and Shabir faced the full wrath of the combined leadership of the underworld. They were told never to fight again and were made to swear on the Koran that they would henceforth live in peace. The oath ended: "If we ever violate this sacred oath, let Allah take our lives."

As part of the compromise, the Ibrahims put pressure on the witnesses in the Natiq case. Two key prosecution witnesses suddenly recanted and Amirzada and Alamzeb were acquitted. Batla and Ayub Lala however, were convicted. Nevertheless peace appeared to have returned to Nagpada. Amirzada and Alamzeb even attended Shabir's wedding.

\* \* \*

**IF THE DONS** thought that they had ended the Ibrahim-Amirzada rivalry forever, they were mistaken. Amirzada and Alamzeb hired two new hit men, Afzal and Jaffer and resumed their protection rackets. Inevitably, their business interests clashed once more with those of the Ibrahims.

On December 26, 1980, Anees, (one of the Ibrahim brothers) was strolling in Byculla with Mohammed Sahib, a family friend. They were accosted by Amirzada's two new henchmen. Afzal pulled out a knife and stabbed Mohammed while Jaffer fired several shots from his revolver, all of which went wild. Anees fought off the duo who fled but Mohammed had to be hospitalised.

Though Amirzada was not directly involved in the assault, it should have been obvious to the Ibrahims that the hit men were acting on his instructions. However, this did not strike Shabir who as head of the family, made the

Three homemade bombs exploded as the Ibrahims took the body to the graveyard.

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decisions. He felt that motive was lacking, though their business activities were clearly in conflict. Moreover Nagpada residents also offer another explanation. They claim that at Amirzada's sister's wedding, Shabir was rude to her and Amirzada's gang took it as a mortal slight.

Whatever it was that made Amirzada defy the word of the seven top Dons of the underworld, Shabir did not know it. Otherwise, he would not have been so trusting that February night when Amirzada's girlfriend Nanda led him to his death.

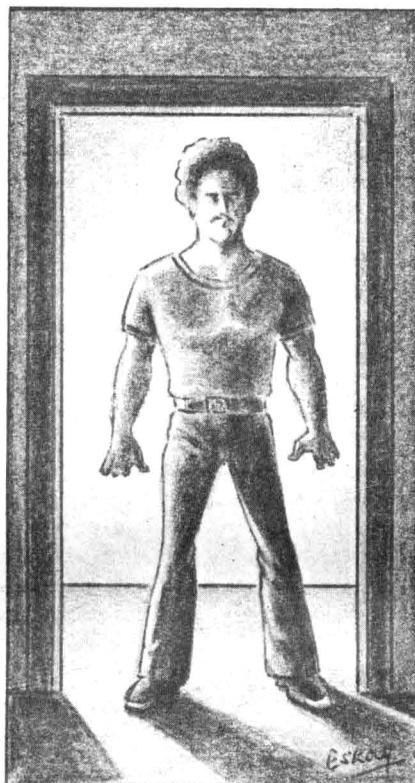
\* \* \*

**DAWOOD IBRAHIM BECAME** the head of the family after his brother Shabir was murdered. Wisely, he decided to move the family out of the protection racket in Bombay and to try and concentrate on smuggling. He set up a partnership with Lallu Jogi, the king-pin of the smugglers' paradise of Daman. Jogi put him in touch with Haji Ashraf, the 'little sheikh' of Dubai. The three of them formed a most successful partnership. Dawood would use the crores Shabir and he had made in Bombay to pay Haji Ashraf for goods that he would buy in Dubai. Jogi would handle the dirty work of sending fishing craft to collect the contraband from the ships in which Ashraf would dispatch the cargo. It was a scheme that couldn't go wrong.

But go wrong it did, and for the most mundane reasons. Dawood was driving back to Bombay with his henchmen Haji Ismail and Ali Abdul Antulay after meeting Jogi in Daman when Antulay's pistol went off by accident. Dawood was hit on the neck and Ismail on the hand. On June 10, 1983, they were rushed to a Baroda hospital. The police recognised them and arrested all three. When Jogi arrived to help on June 11, 1983, they arrested him too...

The Gujarat police, elated by this sudden windfall put the screws on Haji Ismail. After a few days of ceaseless interrogation, he cracked. Yes, he admitted, Dawood was the mastermind of the March 1983 operation during which contraband worth nearly Rs three crores was smuggled into Gujarat and yes, he had forged an alliance with Jogi and Ashraf.

After this confession, Dawood's fate was sealed. The Gujarat police, fearful that he might escape insisted on shifting him to the more secure



Sabarmati jail near Ahmedabad. They put him in an Ambassador under an armed guard on August 2, 1983 and decided to drive to Sabarmati—public transport was not considered safe enough.

As the Ambassador sped past Jamapur on the highway to Ahmedabad, another car drove up alongside. Before the police could react, its occupants opened fire. Dawood, displaying the survival instinct that Shabir had clearly lacked, ducked. His presence of mind saved his life. While the bullets hit the other passengers of the Ambassador, Dawood emerged unscathed.

At the end of the journey he was still under arrest, but he was alive.

\* \* \*

## T

**HE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION** was of course, the work of Amirzada's men. Their leader was due to come up for trial the next month for Shabir's murder and they felt that with Dawood out of the way, witnesses might be persuaded to change their stories.

They kept up the pressure. When one of Dawood's friends died, the entire Ibrahim family turned up for the funeral, eager to show that despite Shabir's death and Dawood's imprisonment, they were still a force to reckon

with. As the cortège left for the cemetery, one of Amirzada's men suddenly appeared. Before the Ibrahims could stop him, he flung crude home-made bombs at the mourners.

When the bombs exploded, they spewed ball-bearing, bent nails and half-inch screws. The shower of jagged metal dispersed the funeral party and left many of the Ibrahim gang members injured.

Fortunately, nobody was killed—a result that must have disappointed Amirzada's men. They had been singularly unlucky in their assassination attempts. Even the murder of Dawood had been botched. Later, Alamzeb, Amirzada's cousin ran into Rashid Arba, another member of the Ibrahim gang. He pulled out his revolver and fired six shots at Rashid. With their luck, Alamzeb and the Amirzada gang were sure to be disappointed—all six shots went wild.

But the worst was still to come. The Ibrahims had had enough. Shabir was dead, Dawood in jail and their members lived in fear of regular assaults from Amirzada's henchmen. Something, they decided, had to be done. Another roadside shoot-out was out of the question. Mastaan, Karim Lala and the other Dons would probably kill them themselves if they launched an all-out gang war. So, there was only one real solution.

They would kill Amirzada.

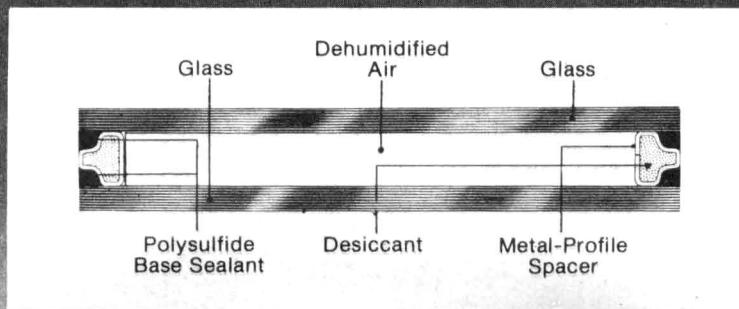
There was only one problem. Amirzada was in jail and there was no way that any of the Ibrahims could get to him. All they knew was that on September 6, 1983, Amirzada would be produced at the Sessions Court for the start of his trial. If he was to be killed, then it had to be done at that time.

There were obvious problems with this course of action. First of all, Amirzada would be surrounded by armed policemen. Secondly, it was not easy to smuggle a hit man into the Court. And finally, even if the attempt came off, the assassin was sure to be apprehended and none of the Ibrahims was eager to face the gallows.

In the circumstances, all they could do was turn to a contract-killer. The man they approached was Rajan Nair, popularly known as 'Bada Rajan', who had acquired a formidable reputation in the Ghatkopar area. Rajan supplied hit men for all occasions, and more to the point, some of his henchmen were expendable, that is, he didn't mind if

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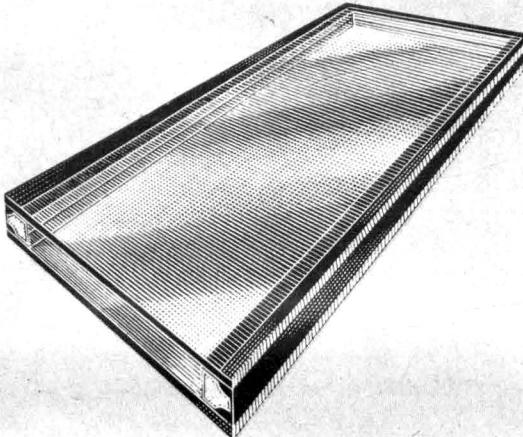
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the police shot and killed them.

Rajan said he had just the man for the job. David Paradhan was 26 and had never held a steady job in his life. For Rs 40,000, he would kill anybody and if necessary, kill himself in the process.

\* \* \*

**I**T WAS 11.30 IN THE morning on September 6, 1983, at the Sessions Court in central Bombay. Additional Judge SY Joshi was hearing the prosecution evidence, while Amirzada, charged with the murder of Shabir Ibrahim, sat quietly in the dock. The police were prepared to take no chances. Constables surrounded Amirzada and armed inspectors kept a watch.

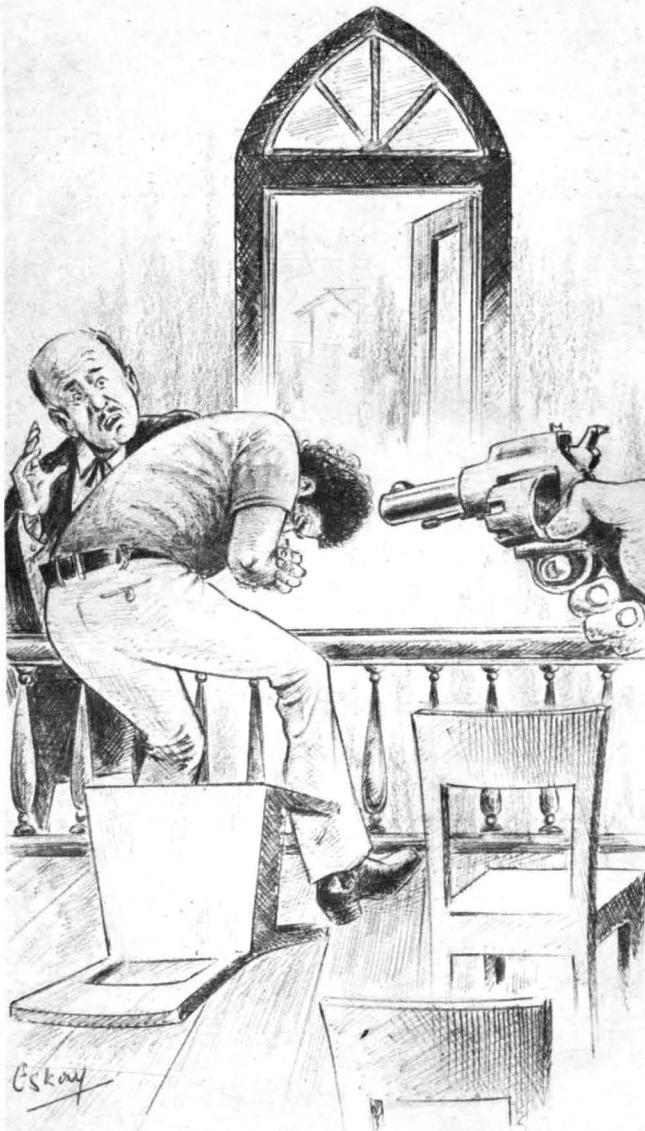
At 11.30 am, Dr Khade, the police surgeon, began telling the Court about the bullet wounds he had examined on Shabir's body. Nobody noticed David Paradhan stroll casually into the courtroom. The inspectors, concerned that Amirzada might try and escape, hadn't even considered the possibility that his enemies might kill him.

David, maintaining that slight non descript slouch, walked to the dock. Amirzada looked up and found that this stranger had whipped out a .36 revolver. David shot him in the mouth first. As the bullet drilled through his teeth and embedded itself in the back of his neck, David fired again. This time he aimed for the chest. Then he squeezed out two more shots and ran to the window.

The police were too outraged to react. David was in the process of leaping out of the window when sub-inspector Ishaq Bagwan of the Crime Branch finally drew his gun and shot him. The bullet hit his right thigh and as David stumbled, two constables pounced on him.

Others rushed Amirzada to the St George's Hospital. But he was dead before he got there.

Thirty months after he had been gunned down at the Prabhadevi petrol pump, Shabir Ibrahim was avenged.



## *Murder In Court*

**D**avid shot Amirzada thrice at point-blank range as the police watched.

**I**T TOOK THE POLICE TEN days to pick up Rajan. They burst into his room at Tilak Nagar, seized his .38 bore revolver and hustled him into custody. Rajan was no stranger to jail. In the last five years, he had been arrested eight times. In his experience, all you had to do was keep your mouth

shut till a kindly judge released you on bail.

The same thought occurred to Amirzada's men. Humiliated by the murder of their leader by a novice and hungry for revenge, they knew that Rajan would be out on the streets in a while. Then, he would probably go underground and when the case finally came up for trial, would be untraceable.

Alamzeb decided that he had to avenge his cousin. Honour demanded that he arrange to have Rajan shot dead in the same circumstances—a courtroom murder.

This was not easy to arrange. The police were now searching everyone who entered the courtroom and were determined to foil any attempt on Rajan's life. They went so far as to refuse to announce when they would produce Rajan before a judge.

Alamzeb was shrewd enough to realise that it would be futile to waste a member of his family on a hit man. It would be appropriate if he himself, put out a contract.

Fortunately for Alamzeb, Rajan had his own enemies. There was, for example, Abdul Kunju who had started out in crime with Rajan. Then, things had gone wrong; Abdul had stolen Rajan's girlfriend and Rajan had taken it all quite personally. In fact, Rajan had then tried to abduct her and persuade her to reconsider. Abdul and Rajan had fallen out and now, they hated each other's guts.

So when Alamzeb issued his contract, it was inevitable that Kunju would accept it. Like Rajan, Abdul Kunju was not going to send a professional to certain death. Instead, he hired Chandrashekhar Safalika, an impoverished rickshaw driver. Safalika could not handle a gun but he did hate Rajan, having been beaten up by his gang once.

Alamzeb and Abdul decided to train Safalika. They first bought him a gun and then they taught him how to use it. It wasn't necessary to turn him into a marksman, the shooting would be done at point-blank range. But Safalika had to learn how to pull the trigger and when.

# An Underworld Who's Who

## The Gangs

### Amirzada's Men

*Amirzada Nawab Khan (killed: 6/9/83)*

*Alamzeb Khan*

*Shahzada Khan*

*Ayub Khan*

*Ayub Lala*

*Iqbal Tempo*

*Syed Batla*

*Afzal*

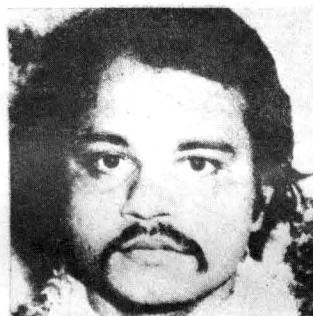
*Jaffer*



*Amirzada (extreme right), Dawood Ibrahim (third from right) and Alamzeb.*



*Safalika: Rajan's killer.*



*Shabir Ibrahim.*

### The Hit Men

*Rajan Nair (killed: 30/9/83)  
recruited  
David Paradhan*

### The Hit Men

*Abdul Kunju  
recruited  
Chandrasbekhar Safalika*

*Early 1976: Amirzada gang arrested.*

*July 1977: Journalist Iqbal Natiq murdered.*

*November 1977: Syed Batla's fingers  
dismembered.*

*May 1978: Shoot-out at Alexandra annexe.*

*July 1979: Cease-fire declared.*

*December 1980: Anees Ibrahim assaulted.*

*February 1980: Shabir Ibrahim murdered.*

*March 1981: Dawood Ibrahim turns to smuggling*

*in Daman.*

*June 1983: Dawood Ibrahim arrested.*

*August 1983: Attempted assassination of Dawood Ibrahim.*

*August 1983: Bombs thrown at Ibrahim's funeral party.*

*September 1983: Amirzada shot dead.*

*September 1983: Rajan shot dead.*

*October 1983: Abdul Kunju arrested.*

If Rajan had suspected that he would suffer the fate he had himself arranged for Amirzada, he would probably have arranged for his own men to stake out the courtroom. But he thought that it was unlikely that Alamzeb would go so far. And when his first appearance before the Court went off uneventfully, he was relieved. Now, all he had to do was wait for bail, he thought, as the officers led him out through the compound of the court.

At that moment, a man in naval uniform stepped out. 'SS Pilley' was the name tag on his starched white uniform. A curious spectator, thought the police and Rajan himself paid him no attention. Then the navy man did something that took them all by surprise. He reached into his uniform, whipped out a gun and before the eyes of the armed police escort, shot Rajan Nair dead.

He was not SS Pilley. In fact, he was not a navy man at all. He was Chandrashekhar Safalika and he still held the smoking gun that Alamzeb and Abdul Kunju had given him.

\* \* \*

**N**OW THE WAR HAD ENlarged its scope. While the Ibrahims were not particularly keen to avenge Rajan's murder, Rajan's own men were. They scoured Bombay for Abdul Kunju, they raided the houses of his henchmen and they announced rewards for anyone who could hand him over to them—dead or alive.

Kunju did the only thing he could. On October 10, 1983, he strolled into the Crime Branch office and announced: "Here I am. Now you protect me." The astonished policemen grabbed him before he could change his mind.

They hustled him away and kept his whereabouts a secret. When he was produced in court, the press was not informed and by the time Rajan's men found out, Kunju was back in secret custody.

By now the war was no longer a simple feud between Amirzada's men and the Ibrahims. Rajan's gang and Kunju's henchmen were involved too. Rajan's people announced a 'bandh' on the day they cremated him and all over the Bombay suburbs, the shutters

went down—no shopkeepers wished to risk the wrath of Rajan's gang.

Because the contract-killers had become such an important part of the dispute, the Syndicate found that there was little it could do. While Amirzada and the Ibrahims had been somewhat amenable to persuasion, the killers respected no authority—they lived by their guns and now they would die by them.

As the likes of Mastaan and Karim Lala tried to restrain the fight, they realised that matters had reached the stage where no cease-fire was acceptable. The wily Abdul Antulay, who ran the Ibrahim gang while Dawood was in jail, was determined to wipe out Amirzada's gang. He knew that Alamzeb was an unworthy successor to Amirzada and sensed that by acting decisively, he could finish the gang once and for all.

Alamzeb, pleased with his success in killing off Rajan and avenging Amirzada knew that his opponents underestimated him.

And that is how things were at the end of October.

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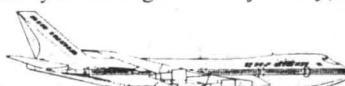
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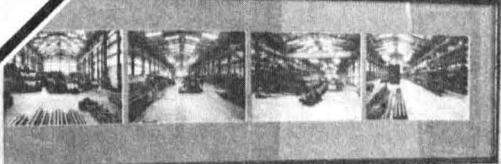
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**SWRAJ PAUL:**

## Abandoning Take-Overs

*Over the last year, Swraj Paul, 54, has become the most famous expatriate Indian in the world. His connections with Mrs Gandhi, his attempts to take over Escorts and DCM and his criticism of Indian industrialists have all kept him in the headlines.*

*The details of Paul's life are well-known. Born into the Aminchand Pyarelal business family (Apeejay), and educated at MIT, Paul went to England so that his daughter, Ambika, could be treated for leukemia. Ambika died but Paul stayed on in London and started his own business (the Caparo group) with interests in tea, steel, property, manufacturing and hotels. In the mid-'70s, he became close to Mrs Gandhi and is today, credited with an awesome influence in government circles.*

*Imprint interviewed Paul in London last month after the Reserve Bank of India had sanctioned the transfer of funds from Caparo to his stockbrokers. It seemed probable then that the government would support his moves to register his shares but it was unclear whether he would actually press for management control of DCM and Escorts.*

**Imprint:** Let's start with an allegation that you have not satisfactorily answered. Despite your criticism of the management of Escorts and DCM, your own Caparo group of companies does not seem to be particularly well-managed. What then are your credentials as a manager?

**Paul:** I know that the Indian financial press has said that my companies are not doing well but I think this only shows how primitive their thinking is. The criticism is based on an analysis of annual profits. Now, I think a financial writer should know that an investment company is not judged simply on the

basis of its yearly profit. As long as net assets increase in value, the company cannot be said to be doing badly. Take the case of my property company. If the rate of interest is 12 to 13 per cent than the yield will be only four per cent but this does not mean that the company is unsuccessful.

You have to examine the assets or the properties and see how their value is appreciating.

I do not run companies solely to declare high annual profits. I have long-term aims and in the long run, the value of my investments increases substantially.

***So what you are saying is that if the return on investment in Caparo is seen as profit plus asset appreciation, then that assessment works in your favour.***

I am not the only one saying this. Recently, Caparo Industries, my public company, had a convertible share issue. The issue was a success though we said that the price for conversion would be 40 pence a share. At the moment, the share trades for 30 pence. Obviously enough people felt that it would rise to about 40 pence in the near future for the issue to be a success.

When the *Times* (London) ran a series on *Fortune Makers in Britain*, they began it with Swraj Paul. They must have checked my credentials.

I do not usually reply to this allegation because there is no point discussing it with people who don't understand finance. But my performance speaks for itself. I began with £5,000 in 1969. Today the Caparo group has net assets of ten to twelve million pounds. These are my credentials.

***Mr Paul, you yourself valued Caparo at £10-12 million. But you have, by your own admission, invested eight-and-a-half million pounds in India. Isn't that a lot of money for a group worth ten million pounds to spend on one investment? Or is the money coming from elsewhere?***

Well, some of it comes from my companies, some from reserves and some from bank borrowing. In fact, a considerable amount comes from borrowing.

***Why are banks lending a ten million pound company so much money? Or are they aware of Swiss bank accounts that indicate your real financial muscle?***

That is untrue. No bank can lend Caparo money against a Swiss bank account in any person's name. They have to look at Caparo's assets and reserves and decide whether we are deserving of the loan. Our record was good, the investments seemed



***"I don't want to take over Escorts or DCM. And no, I cannot think of a situation when I would want to do so."***

attractive and so they lent us the money.

Look, a lot of people invest in India. Why are people only questioning where Swraj Paul gets his money from? Why treat my money so differently?

***It is widely believed in India that these millions actually come from commissions in deals with the Indian public sector in which you have been the middleman.***

I want to state categorically that I do not get into any deals with India. This is absolutely false. I am surprised that the *Times Of India* printed Prem Shankar Jha's view to this effect. It is not only atrocious, it is stupid.

***Are you denying any involvement in the sugar deal with Noga or the steel deal with Davy?***

I do not as a principle get into any deals. When the Davy deal was announced, the Indian papers said it

had been approved because Mr Paul is involved. When it was cancelled they said it was because Swraj Paul is not involved. Not only is there no evidence, there is no logic.

***But surely, there is evidence of the Noga deal?***

In my view, Noga is not an affair worth talking about. Why the *Statesman* brought it up the day after I left India is something I do not understand.

I have made my position clear. During the Janata period various efforts were made to find something against me. Mr Ram Jethmalani appointed himself a special investigator—as far as I know, no government appointed him, perhaps he thought he was an extra-constitutional authority.

They filed this bogus case against me purely to cause trouble. When nothing came of this investigation, they said conveniently that it was because the Janata government fell too soon.

Now, Jethmalani is suing me for libel. I welcome the case because I will defend myself in court. What nonsense he talks!

I don't have any Swiss bank accounts though I am allowed to have an account anywhere in the world as a British citizen.

***Turning to the Escorts-DCM saga, it now seems probable that you will be allowed to register your shares. What next? Do you intend to take over the management?***

There are about ten companies all over the world in which I have a stake ranging from two to 30 per cent. I am not involved in their management. Why can't I invest in an Indian company without being accused of trying to take it over?

***Let me rephrase the question. Do you want to take over the management of either of these companies now? And if not, do you visualise a situation in the future when you may want to do so?***

No. I do not want to take them over now. And no, I cannot think of a situation when I would want to do so.

If I wanted, there are at least ten companies in Britain who would gladly turn over their management to me. All I want is that as a share holder of Escorts and DCM, the management does not rob me.

*Can we extend the scope of that question? Are there any public companies you want to take over in India? There is speculation about Mahindra and Mahindra. And it is rumoured that you are a large share holder in Larsen and Toubro.*

I am not a large share holder in Larsen and Toubro. And I do not want to take over any public companies. I am only asking for the rights of a share holder.

*In that case, do you regret having invested in these two companies?*

No, I responded to an invitation made by Indian industrialists to invest in India. I did not anticipate all these problems—which, incidentally would never arise in England or America—but I am glad now that I have made my stand clear on two points. Firstly, if I am a share holder I do not want any theft by the management. Secondly, the company should be run by the best people, not by the children of the Chairman.

*You have been called a bull in a china shop and your personal style seems to be characterised by a tendency to abuse. What do you have to say to this?*

No, only the press has created this image.

*That's not true. You called Ram Jethmalani a 'slimy liar', two distinguished journalists 'purchaseable commodities', talked about JRD Tata's scandals...*

Only in reply to what they have said. Ram Jethmalani has called me all kinds of names. JRD Tata came out with a statement in which he said it was 'laundered money'! I was asked about it, so I said what is the holy cow about JRD Tata? All of Bombay was talking about Tata scandals—Forbes, Forbes Campbell, SKF Bearings, Taj etc. If I point this out what is wrong?

Have you considered what I've been called? Bharat Ram has called me a smuggler. These industrialists have tried to defend themselves by maligning me.

*What about the journalists? As economic writers, they have a perfect right to disagree with you.*

I only made a statement of fact. I said they had been paid off. I am prepared to go to the International Press Council. Let them see if these articles



## ***“What is the holy cow about JRD Tata? All of Bombay was talking about the Tata scandals—Forbes, SKF, Taj etc.”***

are the work of honest journalists. In England I would have sued these people for libel. In India, it takes too long, unfortunately, to go to the Courts.

*Do you genuinely believe that they only criticised you because they had been bought?*

Yes. When I was in Delhi, Swaminathan Aiyer of the *Indian Express* asked me for an interview. I refused. He wanted to know why. I said that all he engaged in was character assassination. He said, "Wouldn't you like to reply?" I told him, "Mr Aiyer, I don't need a certificate from you." Then I asked him, "Tell me, how much have you been paid to attack me?" He did not have the courage to deny this.

*Isn't it possible he simply didn't think it worth the effort to convince you of his honesty?*

If you read the nonsense that appears in the press, you will not ask me this.

They are purchaseable commodities.

*Well, are you starting your own paper in India, then?*

No (pauses) not really.

*Not really? Is that a qualified denial?*

No (laughs), we have thought about this in the past. But there are no plans at the moment.

*It has been reported that Nusli Davar, Chhotu Karadia and others were to be part of such a venture.*

In *The Sunday Observer*, yes (laughs). Vinod [Mehta] is amazing! I don't know where he gets his stories from. I have no plans to hire Chhotu. As far as Nusli Davar is concerned, I only met him because he invited me to inaugurate his association. Do people think I know him that well?

No, I think I can deny these reports completely!

*Why don't you credit the Indian press with any integrity? Why can't you accept that they simply may not agree with you?*

Look at the things that are written. I said that you can't treat a public company like your private property if you own only four per cent of the shares. Immediately one or two magazines and papers said, "Look at Ford. Look at General Motors. How many shares does the Chairman control there?"

Now, I can understand a glossy magazine missing the point but a newspaper writer should know better. There is no parallel. Of course there are professionally-managed companies in which managers do not own the majority of shares. I myself am Chairman of Nova Park Hotels with only four per cent of shareholding.

But the Chief Executive of General Motors does not siphon off money, he does not make his son Joint Managing Director. He does not treat it like a family concern. He does not claim to own it. My point is that in Indian companies this does happen.

*Don't you claim to own Caparo Industries?*

No, not my public company, only the private ones. I am not like some Indian industrialists. Look at Ashok Jain. He makes statements on behalf of FICCI without even consulting his members. Look at his own case. He calls me a foreigner and yet he insists on keeping

his company's British name—Bennett, Coleman and Co Ltd. I can see why, though. If he called it Ashok Jain and Co nobody would buy a share in it. (Laughs.) Of course, every single one of his companies is sick!

Or you take Ramkrishan Bajaj. He gets up and makes a speech on ethics. Ethics? What about the Bajaj and Firodia case? That's ethics? Holding up excise duty—that's ethics?

Now, you'll say that Paul is abusing again!

*Would you have felt so strongly about the structure of Indian industry, if your own investment hadn't got you into trouble?*

After they started attacking me, I began studying the structure of industry in India. I find that industry does not show an adequate return on capital employed. Why? My view is that the return is there but that it is being siphoned off.

All these companies have grown because the government has held their hands. The top 11 houses in India have an investment of Rs 27,000 crores. I'm informed that of this, Rs 140 crores is their own. The rest comes from other

sources and financial institutions. So really, they own a half per cent of what they treat as their own. And then they continually complain about government policy, about competition and about other investors. I often wonder, isn't it easier to just give them their half per cent and tell them to go?

***"If he called Bennett and Coleman, Ashok Jain and Co, nobody would buy a share in it."***

*A purely practical point. Wasn't it a mistake to take on DCM and Escorts together? It would have been easier to take over Escorts on its own.*

No, I was not interested in taking over Escorts at all. Over ten companies here would be happy to have me on their board. Why should I care for Escorts?

But let me ask you one thing. Supposing you had a three per cent share in a company. You would get

your dividends every year. Now, would you, guaranteed you were of a regular income from there, still spend all your time looking after this company for a salary of only Rs 7,000 or so? Or would you try and do something else with your skills? I think most people would not bother to stay on for this Rs 7,000 a month.

But, Nanda does. Bharat Ram does. Why do they do it? Could it be because they are actually getting a lot more than just Rs 7,000 from these companies? Could it be that retaining management control makes it possible for them to siphon off a considerable sum?

*A last question. This has all been quite messy. Was it worth the trouble?*

I feel very sad. I took an investment in India and had no idea that I would be attacked so viciously, my credentials questioned and attempts made to refuse to register my shares.

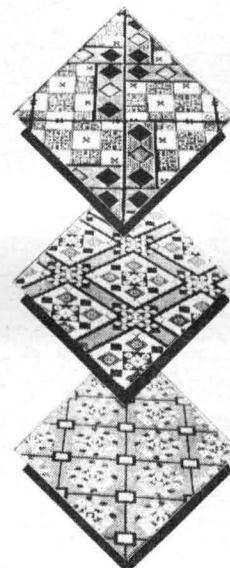
It has been called laundered money, I've been called names and I've had to spend so much time on this matter.

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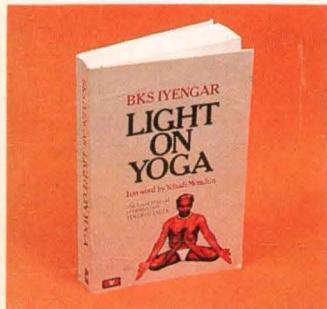
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# FASHION GUIDE

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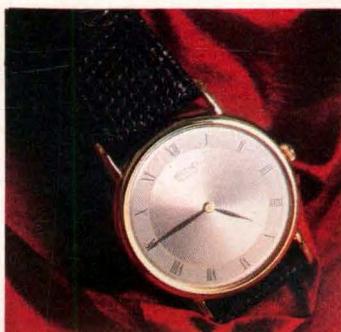
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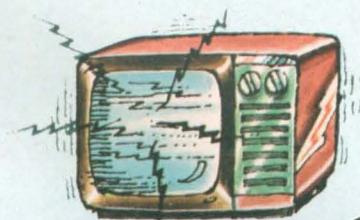
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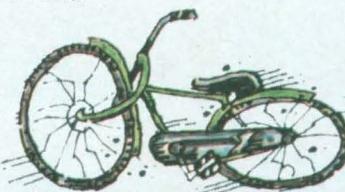
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# Koestler's Papier-Mâché Gandhi

*Rajmohan Gandhi defends his grandfather.*

## THE DEATH OF ARTHUR

Koestler was a brave but sad episode. Both believers in the right to die when (and how) one wants, he and his wife put their principle into practice and, not long ago, ended their lives. In writing (at Imprint's invitation) this reply to Koestler's criticisms of Gandhi, I hope I shall show the fairness and respect to which anyone recently dead is particularly entitled.

His death was not necessary for an acknowledgement of his writing skill. Of its epigrammatic character a phrase from his Gandhi piece can suffice as proof. He called the Mahatma's philosophy 'easy to eulogise and impossible to realise'. Pithy! But his attack does not demolish Gandhi. Though his spears make holes, what they perforate is a papier mache Mahatma, not the man who lived and loved and grieved amidst us some decades ago. In constructing this paper likeness, Koestler no doubt uses some pages from Gandhi's own *Hind Swaraj*. But it remains a doll. What follows will, I trust, show that the doll is not quite true to the man.

I will take up Koestler's points seriatim. He opens with khadi. (Not, in my view, the most natural beginning. While khadi was a life-long concern with the Mahatma, it is indisputable that India's freedom, Hindu-Muslim friendship and justice to the untouchables were even stronger passions with him. To Gandhi's role in India's struggle for freedom Koestler makes only a passing and derogatory reference; the other two goals he ignores altogether!)

Claiming that Gandhi wish-

*Rajmohan Gandhi, grandson of the Mahatma was Editor of *Himmat* and now writes regularly for The Indian Express.*



ed to pit the spinning wheel against giant factories and saw it as 'an economic panacea' and the 'gateway to salvation', Koestler goes on to assert, "The spinning wheel found its place on the national flag but not in the peasants' cottages."

Koestler makes a pardonable mistake. It is the Asoka wheel, not the spinning wheel, that adorns India's flag. Still, it is true that at Gandhi's instance Congress accepted the *charkha* on its standard. Today, according to KS Bandopadhyaya of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission, 'more than two million people in no fewer than 100,000 villages' are supported by khadi and allied products. That their earnings are low and subsidised does not make this record 'a dismal and predictable failure', which is Koestler's dismissive phrase.

"What," it may be asked, "is the worth of 20 half-paid jobs in every fifth or sixth village?" The answer of course is, "Better that than to keep even these two million wholly unemployed." Better by far.

Yet Koestler's principal error here is not that he underestimates what even a pittance can mean to the spinning or weaving wife of a landless toiler; it is that he does not see beyond the (to him) archaic spinning wheel to Gandhi's key thought: 'production by the masses rather than mass production'. The latter enriches some (factory owners and urban workers) but the former saves many from unemployment and idleness; neither aspect seems to appeal to Koestler.

While quoting Tagore's reservations about the emphasis on khadi and some of Gandhi's sentences in reply, Koestler leaves out (perhaps for reasons of

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space) a crucial part of the Mahatma's argument. Said Gandhi:

"True to his poetical instinct the poet (Tagore) lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their day's food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood had flowed during the previous night. But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under the Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire. I have found it impossible to soothe the suffering patients with a song from Kabir. The hungry millions ask for one poem—invigorating food. They must earn it themselves."

I see care for human beings in the above, not a fad about an obsolete wheel.

Before freedom, khadi had psychological as well as economic value. The hypocrisies of those wearing it have killed the former but the latter remains. When, as now, workspace is at a premium and fuel prices almost prohibit manufacture and transport, the world wants a product that can be made at home and has an assured market close to home.

If khadi was not and is not a perfect answer to this need, it was, at the very minimum, a remarkable attempt to find one; and it did bring life-saving food to hundreds of thousands, if not to millions. A microchip age might, who knows, throw up a modern equivalent of khadi, a needed product capable of being made in a peasant's cottage and of being gainfully sold (without being subsidised) in his village. If so, it would be, in my opinion, a confirmation and fulfilment of Gandhi's khadi philosophy, not its rejection.

**BUT DOESN'T HIND SWARAJ,** which Koestler brings on next, prove Gandhi's opposition to industry, western ideas, hospitals, courts of law and modern schools? Taken literally, some sentences in it do; and if Koestler were to confine himself to saying that all sentences in *Hind Swaraj* do not quite square with the modern age, I would readily agree. But everything in *Hind Swaraj*, which was written in 1909, is by no means synonymous

## *If khadi was not and is not the perfect answer, it was a remarkable attempt to find one; it did bring life-saving food to thousands.*

with the essence of Gandhi. He wrote it principally (as the introduction to the original edition discloses), to show the futility of the grenade as the means to Indian independence, not to lay down dogmas for a new cult!

Yes, he wrote prefaces to two new editions in his lifetime—in 1921 1938. But that was about all. In none of his countless talks to Congress or to audiences of India's common folk did he refer to *Hind Swaraj* or its extreme utterances. They were not the themes of his innumerable articles in *Young India* and *Harijan*. When asked in Noakhali in 1946 to express his life's message, did he say it could be found in *Hind Swaraj*? "My life is my message," he answered. My life, not a book I once rapidly wrote. Attenborough the filmmaker got the point and tried to catch the life; the result has stirred millions, even if quite a few have written critical reviews. Koestler the writer, had he tried to make a film on Gandhi, would have debated *Hind Swaraj* on the screen, leaving the audience to ask, "Where was Bapu in that movie?"

In emphasising that *Hind Swaraj* and Gandhi are not interchangeable terms, I do not wish to suggest that the former is indefensible. It should be looked at in perspective. Gandhi wrote it ten full years before Jallianwala, five years before World War One, three decades before World War Two, in other words well before humanity would learn its shattering lessons about the West's moral weaknesses. It was a time when, at the drop of a sola topee, eloquent Indians conceded the cultural and moral superiority of the West over

India, a time when the economic and military successes of the West had blinded most Indians to what was precious in their own civilisation. In *Hind Swaraj* and elsewhere Gandhi reminded Indians that their shortcomings had not destroyed the truth in what the wisest of their forebearers had said; and he spoke prophetically of the fragility of Western civilisation.

The book is not an impartial account of the civilisations of India and the West (the nationalist Gandhi shows himself in it), but it was a significant, and perhaps necessary, corrective to the adoration of the West to which many Indians had given themselves. As Koestler grants, Gandhi 'aroused in Indians, after centuries of lethargy, stirrings of self-respect'. Perhaps in *Hind Swaraj* he went too far; and no doubt a time later came when, in her relationship with the West, India exhibited more the sin of self-righteousness than a feeling of inferiority; but Gandhi's intervention in defence of Indian civilisation was called for.

I disagree with *Hind Swaraj*'s sweeping denunciation of the courts, schools and hospitals that the British built in India. But we all know that these institutions do not always offer justice, education and medical relief; Gandhi's charge that they harbour vice, degradation and misery is not unfounded. "Hypocrisy, tyranny etc have increased," Gandhi wrote in *Hind Swaraj*, touching on the effects of educational institutions. "English-knowing Indians have not hesitated to cheat or strike terror into the people. . . ." Entirely wide off the mark?

Does not involvement with our courts and hospitals often bring suffering? I doubt that Koestler ever had occasion for such involvement. I should like to believe that he did not, for his own sake! My last point in relation to *Hind Swaraj* is that Gandhi's stress, where medicine is concerned, on sanitation, public health and preventive treatment and, over justice, on mediation and arbitration, places him (even the Gandhi of *Hind Swaraj*) among the more modern students of these fields.

**GANDHI'S SONS SUFFERED, SAYS** Koestler, because the Mahatma 'tried to live up to his principles and never sent his sons to school'; and he quotes Gandhi's admission that he had not been 'able to devote at least one hour to their literary education, with strict regularity' and that 'all my sons seem

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to feel the handicap of a want of school education'.

The first of these quotes and the fact that it was followed by an expression of 'regret that I failed to ensure for them enough training in that direction' disproves any notion that Gandhi was against literary education—that he was in favour of 'all toil and no learning'. We must remember, too, that when speaking of his shortcomings Gandhi was inclined to exaggerate. From what my father Devadas, the Mahatma's fourth and last son, used to tell, it would appear that for long periods Gandhi did personally devote an hour a day to the literary education of his sons, that he was a splendid teacher and that some of the Mahatma's ashram colleagues, Indian and European, also taught the ashram's children, including my father and his brothers.

While it was natural for the sons to remember (with disappointment) that they did not go to formal schools, it is not as if they were deprived of all intellectual attainments! Two of the four, Manilal and Devadas, became well-known editors. (This is a fact Koestler does not mention, though he does say, "Gandhi ordered Manilal to Natal to edit *Indian Opinion*," rather suggesting an assignment to a dog-house! In fact Manilal loved the opportunity and became an influential editor.) Obviously the ashram's teachers, including Gandhi, had been good at their art.

"Gandhi's relentless tyranny over his sons was exceptional," writes Koestler, "—he rode them like the djinn of the Arab legend, whom his young victim cannot get off his shoulders." With much respect, dear Mr Koestler, this is only your imagination. You never met Manilal, Ramdas or Devdas. They had the feelings not of 'a victim to an overriding djinn' but of sons who had received tenderness as well as challenges from a determined but human (and witty) father.

Yes, Gandhi's relationship with his eldest son Harilal was a failure for which both sides must take the blame. Such failures are not, alas, wholly uncommon, and 'relentless tyranny' in the father is not always their cause. Harilal no doubt had the courage to rebel but the enthusiastic participation of Manilal, Ramdas and Devadas in the movements their father initiated—a participation that earned each of them rough terms in the prisons of South

## ***Hardness masked Bapu's warmth but his sons knew that this hardness was often the warmth's index.***

Africa or the Raj—was not due to meek obedience. They believed in Bapu's programme, were certain of his warmth towards them—and had the fibre to struggle.

A 21-year-old Devadas, Allahabad-based at the time, sends his father in Ahmedabad an account of the (1922) Chauri Chaura killings and thereby causes Gandhi to suspend his movement when it is at its height. (But how is Koestler to know facts like this?) Only a son trusted (indeed respected) by his father can thus influence him, not a son 'tyrannised' by his father.

"Go now and tell the Chauri Chaura men that they were wrong in turning violent," Gandhi instructed Devadas. He knew he could be lynched—by the killers or by the kin of the killed—but Devadas went, in fear and trembling and spoke to them. It was an experience he was proud of.

Hardness, thus, often masked Bapu's warmth but the sons not only never doubted the latter, they knew that often the hardness was the warmth's index. This psychological truth should not have been beyond Koestler's grasp.

**IT SEEMS TO ASTONISH KOESTLER** that Gandhi should have chosen 'as his political successor young Jawaharlal Nehru, a product of Harrow and Cambridge'. The reasons for astonishment lie in Koestler, not in Gandhi. Koestler is wrong in believing, and asserting without substantiation, that Gandhi was 'hostile to intellectuals with an English education'. Even in *Hind Swaraj* there was no hostility to any individual, English or intellectual or whatever; only systems were assailed.

Moreover, who, besides Jawaharlal, were among his closest friends and colleagues? The London-educated barrister, Vallabhbhai Patel, the lawyer and man of letters, Rajaji, who wrote first in English and only later in Tamil, the Mahatma's superbly gifted secretary Mahadev Desai, whose mastery over English exceeded his considerable Gujarati skill, and Tagore, the universalist....

Fixing his gaze on certain *Hind Swaraj* lines, misreading Gandhi, converting him into an anti-modern, anti-western, back-to-the-village, anti-democratic faddist, finding some confirmation for parts of his image in the sternness Gandhi undoubtedly displayed towards some of his ashram co-workers, Koestler is unwilling to recognise the spaciousness of his subject.

The fact is that Gandhi was a remarkable combination of the masterful Indian (or Hindu) ashram chief, freely imposing rules and tests on those voluntarily accepting his guidance and of that democrat, whom the West extols but does not always produce, who gives dissenting and minority opinions their due role. This second Gandhi, one that Koestler is blind to, played a key part in providing Indian democracy with a stable foundation. Much can be said in proof but let me only quote from that fine (indeed great) liberal journalist, the late B Shiva Rao:

"When (in 1946) all arrangements were complete for the election of members of the Constituent Assembly, I sought an interview late one evening with Gandhiji at the Bhangi colony in New Delhi. 'What is it about?' he asked me with a smile in front of his hut. I explained that it was the composition of the Constituent Assembly I was interested in: Congress leaders who had been to prison several times could not be expected to have specialised in Constitution-making. There were 15 persons outside the Congress, I took the liberty of adding, who could contribute materially towards carrying out such a task.

"Gandhiji readily agreed. . . . 'But have you a list of such persons?' he asked. I promptly pulled out a sheet of paper on which I had drawn up such a list for him and said, 'Here it is'. At the top of the list were Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Mr N Gopalaswami Iyengar, Dr MR Jayakar and Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer. 'They are all good names,'

14th November. Children's Day.



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Gandhiji said, 'but show the list to Maulana Azad (Congress President at the time) and to Jawaharlalji. You may tell them it has my approval'. The list went through the working committee....'

And yet Koestler calls Gandhi a commissar! Gandhi the democrat, Mohan the friend (as he was to Charles Andrews and a few others) and the Bapu who cared for so many individuals like a father (read any of the hundred-or-so volumes of *Collected Works* and you will have some idea) do not find a place in Koestler's essay. He quotes Tagore to buttress his line but does not tell us that of Gandhi the poet had written:

"He stopped at the thresholds of the huts of the thousands of the dispossessed.... When love came to the door of India, that door was opened wide."

I do not say that the yogi and the commissar were ever-absent in Gandhi's life. But let us not neglect the Gandhi who loved, the Bapu whose heart beat in concern for a Jawaharlal here and a leper there, for Miraben and Manu, Charles Andrews and Mahadev, Vallabhbhai and Rajaji, the untouchable and the victim of strife.

**KOESTLER DWELLS AT LENGTH** on Gandhi's opposition to carnal lust and what he rightly calls the Mahatma's 'quest for chastity'. Says Koestler: "Gandhi's lifelong struggle to overcome his own 'carnal lust' and 'animal passion', his public *mea culpa* when he confessed to a 'lust dream' followed by a penance of six weeks silence—all this made him the living symbol of the 'guilt-ridden Hindu attitude to sex....'

Not Hindu alone. Lust is a sin in Christianity too and, if I am not mistaken, also in Judaism. It is placed along with pride, avarice and hate. Most people can write the word without having to use quotation marks! Of course lust is natural to human beings. But, equally, is not restraint desirable? Given free rein, does not lust break marriages and cause children to suffer?

Whatever we may think of Gandhi's fiery method of testing his *brahmacharya* (I would not recommend its emulation), we are on safe ground in supporting the quest for chastity. It frees a man for service—and gives him a unique appeal. Referring to Gandhi's battle for self-control, Philip Yancey says in *Christianity Today*: "Discipline opened doors of freedom. It did not

## *The Bapu who cared for so many individuals did not find a place in Koestler's essay.... I think the real Gandhi can afford to smile at Koestler's debunking of the toy Mahatma.*

close them.... One cannot deny that the 'soul force' of Gandhi's leadership radiated power because of his unimpeachable personal example." Gandhi may have been unrealistic in believing that India's population could be controlled by marital continence, but his voice in defence of chastity, howsoever solitary it might sound, has its value.

**IN AN EXTRAORDINARY PAR**ental remark, sandwiched between a pair of dashes, Koestler asserts, "—as many Indians and others have pointed out, independence would have come much earlier without him—." Who have 'pointed this out'? Only a few of those Indians whose leadership was clipped following Gandhi's arrival, or their followers. Who can be expected to form a fairer estimate? Those at whom the freedom movement was directed, the British who ruled India.

Wavell, first Commander-in-Chief and then Viceroy in India, did not take to Gandhi. But in his journal he wrote, "He (Gandhi) certainly hastened the departure of the British, which was his life's aim." (Note that Wavell regards freedom, and not khadi, as the Mahatma's chief goal.) And the English historian AL Basham, while wondering whether 'in this day and age' Gandhi's 'austere doctrines' can have much meaning, adds, "There can be no doubt that it was chiefly through Gandhi's personality and the policies he prompted that India achieved independence."

**KOESTLER NEXT CONTRASTS THE** 'lavishness' of the Mahatma's World War Two advice to Britons, Frenchmen,

Czechs, Poles and Jews to lay down their arms, in the spirit of non-violence, with his condonation of the Indian army's involvement in Kashmir when forces from Pakistan raided the territory.

A glaring inconsistency? No doubt. But surely we can distinguish between Gandhi the idealist who (like many an editorialist the world over) lays down general principles (at times doing so unwisely and indiscreetly) and the practical Gandhi who has to choose the issues on which to confront Nehru and Patel.

Almost precisely when the Kashmir struggle erupted, Gandhi tackled Nehru and Patel on the Hindu-Muslim, Indo-Pak question. He pressed for relief, rehabilitation and non-retaliation—and, finally, he went on an indefinite fast in defence of Muslim rights in India and Hindu rights in Pakistan. His attitude represented non-violence, or love in action; it meant a clash with Nehru and Patel, neither of whom liked the idea of Pakistan obtaining its Rs 55 crores. All this is familiar history to most of us. But Koestler keeps it out.

**TOWARDS THE END KOESTLER** refers to the assassination and goes on to say that with it Gandhi's 'defeat was complete'. This assessment provides the clue to Koestler's whole attitude. To be killed is to be defeated. Was the Crucifixion a defeat? Were Lincoln and Joan of Arc failures because they were martyred? If to be killed is to be defeated, then to suffer pain must be partial defeat and to discipline or deny yourself also a failure of a kind. What a verdict on the lives of millions of ordinary human beings who are obliged, by illness or by poverty, to endure pain or to deny themselves many times a day!

"India would be better off today and healthier in mind without the Gandhian heritage." That is the concluding sentence. Better off without a fight against corruption. Without a struggle for untouchables and peasants' rights. Without a struggle for individual liberties. Without an emphasis on non-violence in these struggles. Without the goal of Hindu-Muslim partnership. Without the injunction to turn the searchlight inwards. Without a reminder of *daridranarayana*. I think the real Gandhi can afford to smile at Koestler's debunking of the toy Mahatma.

## KEEPING FIT THE DEBOO WAY

*Astad Deboo on the dancercise fad.*

*Astad Deboo, 36, began performing at the age of 22. Having specialised in modern dance and traditional Indian dances like Kathakali, Deboo sailed West 14 years ago. He has been performing ever since and has won rave reviews. The author Anju D Aggarwal met him to ask about the latest craze—dancercise.*

### **What exactly is dancercise?**

It is a combination of dance and exercise usually synchronised with music to keep a fast or slow beat. It is an ingenious approach to losing weight and also to toning up the body—a fun way to reduce and exercise.

### **Where does dancercise fit in today's health boom?**

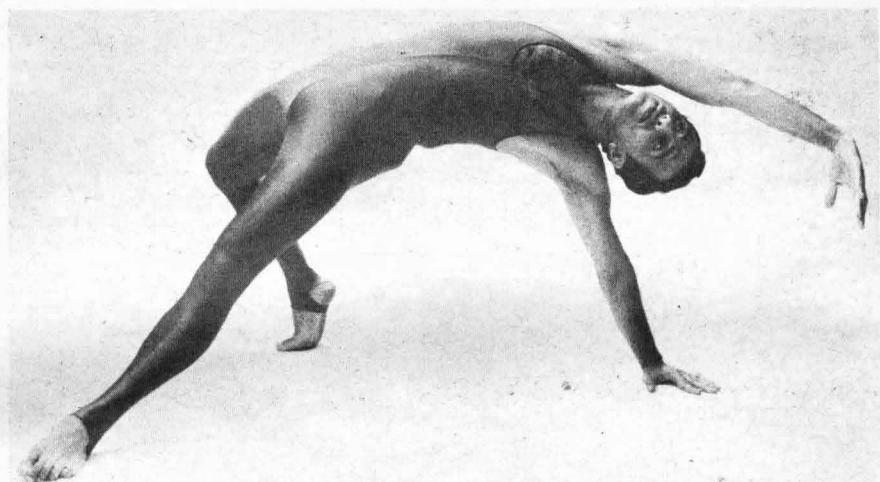
Dance is essentially rhythm and dancercise a strenuous way of combating extra tiers of adipose (fat). Today, people are getting not only figure conscious but also health conscious. Dancercise not only keeps the body free from illness but also strengthens the muscles, tones up the internal organs and makes the skin glow radiantly. It makes you look good and feel good. It revitalizes the body by stimulating the best originator of energy and power—the centre, the lower part of the body. Like yoga, it insists on deep slow breathing which purifies the bloodstream. As the body moves it comes alive and all this reflects on one's gait, makes one aware of oneself. Exercising this way also helps to purge one of a stream of emotions, combating feelings of irritation, boredom, restlessness, listlessness.

### **Can't disco dancing be used as a substitute for dancercise?**

No.

### **Why?**

Anju D Aggarwal is a Bombay-based freelancer. Her articles have appeared in the Eve's Weekly and Mid-day.



Because, in dancercise you bend yourself, stretch and dance creating an aesthetic geometry coupled with a smooth, disciplined control. In disco dancing, you move the body in a particular fashion and much more passively than in dancercise.

### **After all that movement one is bound to feel terribly enervated!**

Paradoxically, the more energy you spend, during these exercises, the more you get. This is because the body is geared upto the maximum with the right amount of breathing and free movements. Any fatigue that one might feel is only when one starts on these exercises. In fact, after a few sessions, the body harmonises beautifully with the music and a person emerges feeling relaxed and curiously light.

### **What kind of music goes with these exercises?**

Generally torrid beats that appeal to the emotions. But there again we have various kinds of music. A pep-booster in the beginning to warm up; a more jazzy one to spin-off and a sober one in consonance with slow movements like those combining yoga.

### **Considering that these exercises are so strenuous, does one have to diet too?**

This depends on the individual. I, for

instance, increase my intake of fluids to prevent dehydration. In Bombay I believe some dancercise classes have a diet chart too and the instructors emphasise the importance of diet. But, personally I don't think it is necessary because the exercises are strenuous enough. On the other hand, some teenagers and middle-aged people join specially to lose weight. For them, a more effective way would be exercise-cum-diet control.

### **How many exercises are there in dancercise? How long does it take to learn them?**

Each instructor charts out the programme for his class, with a sprinkling of dances. Some include yoga, some don't. Naturally, it would be difficult to specify the exact number. The duration required to learn dancercise again depends on the instructor. As I am abroad performing most of the time, I conduct short courses lasting a few weeks when I am in town. My course is a mixture of yoga and various modern dances.

### **But, suppose a person cannot continue with them would he return to his original flabby self?**

This depends on an individual's metabolism. A person would regain what he has lost if he does not control his diet.

## HINDI-CHINI BYE-BYE

*Genuine Chinese cuisine is fast disappearing in India.*

**"REMEMBER THE FIRST** time you tasted Chinese food?" asks an ad for a Bombay Chinese restaurant. Well, as a matter of fact, I do. It was at a popular eatery in Bombay's Colaba area and we sat in a small cabin while eager Chinamen waited on our every need. "What would you like?" asked the polite manager, almost as a formality. He knew what we were going to order, just as he had known what everybody else in the restaurant would eat.

"Well, let me see," mumbled our host, a long forgotten uncle. "Umm, I think we'll have a soup first. How about some shark's fin soup, eh?" This to us with a loud laugh. "Eek" said the ladies, while the rest of us made sounds appropriate to revulsion. "Oh, all right then..." a pause during which the manager waited patiently. "I think two large bowls of sweet corn wouldn't be a bad idea." The manager dutifully noted down the order pretending that he hadn't expected the selection.

He kept up this charade even when my uncle, having made suitable attempts to seem confused by the wide range of dishes, went on to order American Chop Suey, Prawns in Garlic Sauce, Sweet and Sour Chicken and all the other dishes he always ordered. He was charmingly polite even when my uncle presumed to compliment him on the cuisine once the food had arrived. "Not bad, not bad at all," my uncle muttered, his grave manner suggesting memories of similar repasts in Canton or Shanghai, in the good old days. At no stage did he snarl "What

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



would you know, Indian pig? All you twits come and order the same nonsense night after night. If I gave you something more genuinely Chinese, you'd probably get up and leave."

As I grew older and discovered the joys of Chinese cuisine for myself, I often thought back to that polite manager and his inscrutable charm. I began to marvel at the patience of the Chinese and their apparent willingness to let us ignore the incredible complexity of their cuisine. What wonderful people! I thought.

Now of course, that restaurant has been pulled down but Chinese is the new 'in' cuisine in Delhi and Bombay. And in retrospect, I'm not so sure that the manager did the right thing by shielding us unadventurous Indians

from the pleasures of his cuisine.

Largely because the Chinese restaurants of the '60s allowed us to grow up on a steady diet of chop suey and sweet and sour, most of us never really learned what Chinese food was all about. We began to think of it as heavy, slightly sweetish sauces, pieces of meat and poultry deep-fried in batter, and mounds of fried rice, sometimes with a fried egg on top. Those of us who were more 'adventurous' simply drowned each dish in chilli sauce while others liberally spooned chopped chillies in vinegar onto their plates.

The process of vulgarisation gradually became outright bastardisation. Restaurants began to learn that the clientele liked its food spicy, oily and preferably deep-fried. Menus were altered accordingly. Then, a new class of restauranteur sensing the advantages of running a cash-business in a high-tax economy, entered the fray. Chinese restaurants came up overnight at every street corner.

Noting this phenomenon, the publisher of this magazine, an old Hong Kong hand who visits India periodically, asked me if the popularity of Chinese cuisine was due to a new health awareness among Indians. Were we also becoming more international in our eating habits? he wanted to know. I had to disillusion him. The greasy food such establishments serve is by no means healthy, and most self-respecting Chinamen would probably pass out after eating it.

As NJ Nanporia keeps lamenting, the new Chinese restaurants serve a cuisine that is largely of their own creation. Even the most experienced chefs are second generation immigrants

# Options-Food

and have never been East of Chowringhee. They know only the simple home-style cooking (the equivalent of our *dal-chaawal*) of private houses, and the few fancy dishes they have picked up are those that their fathers served at their restaurants in the '50s and '60s—ie the slightly more elaborate sweet and sour stuff.

But it hardly matters. The average Indian isn't after authenticity, he wants *masalas* and *pakoras*. And so, new dishes have been created, exclusively as they say, for the Indian market. One Bombay restaurant serves a 'Brando Prawn'. Right out of On The Waterfront, you might think. Actually, it is a simple prawn *pakora*. Another serves a Four Treasure Vegetable Bomb. It isn't quite Kublai Khan meets the IRA, rather, it is cabbage, carrots, potatoes and french beans finely diced and then squeezed into a little *tikki* over which is poured a mixture of tomato ketchup and red chilli. Bombay's suburban establishments are more bizarre. Confronted with Chicken Lollipops, I demanded to know what this concoction was; it turned out to be a sweetish drumstick.

Who eats this muck? Chinese chefs I have spoken to (who, incidentally are becoming increasingly contemptuous of their Indian guests) blame some of the bastardisation on vegetarians. While Chinese cuisine has many wonderful vegetable preparations, it is not, on the whole, the sort of food a vegetarian can eat day in and day out. But many Indian vegetarians have now taken to eating Chinese (in Bombay it is the Gujaratis and the Marwaris), and a new cuisine, consisting of Vegetable Bombs and the like has been evolved to feed them.

There is also what one Chinese chef calls the Punjabi factor (that I do not approve of these communal distinctions does not mean that I am not sorely tempted to go along with them). It was the Punjabis who created the vulgarised 'Moghulai-style' North Indian food of the Kwallity-Gaylord kind of restaurant—a cuisine that nobody serves at home. Now, the same people have moved into the Chinese restaurant business. (More and more Chinese restaurants are owned by non-Chinese. And the same formulas have

been applied to Chinese cuisine—lots of grease, thick gravies, chopped chillies and the golden rule: when in doubt, deep fry.)

That the techniques of vulgarised North Indian cuisine cannot be adapted to the delicate flavours of Chinese food, does not seem to have occurred to the new restauranteurs. And why should it? The patrons of the newer breed of Chinese restaurants are precisely those whose idea of *desi haute cuisine* was Kwallity's. As far as they are concerned, one kind of *masala*-laden, oily cuisine is as good as another.

I've seen attempts made to argue that Indo-Chinese is a cuisine in its own right like say, Tex-Mex. It is, I suppose, possible to sustain this claim just as it is to argue that the revolting muck passed off as 'Indian' food by the Sylhetis, who run England's 'Indian' restaurants, represents a cross-over cuisine in its own right.

But there is a difference. After years of downing bowls of Chilli Con Carne, Americans are learning that there is a proper Mexican cuisine. The Brits too have begun to appreciate the tandoori cuisine of the Shezan-Kundan kind of genuine Indian restaurant, to say nothing of the Goa curries of the Bombay Brasserie. Most cross-over cuisines represent transitional phases before a genuine cuisine finds wide acceptance in a foreign country.

This is clearly not true of the Indo-Chinese food of our newer restaurants. The sweet and sour places of my childhood may not have encouraged adventurousness but at least they were real enough. Now, we are going the other way. Instead of turning to a more genuine cuisine, we are further perverting Chinese food into a greasy, tasteless mess.

Only a handful of establishments in Bombay and Delhi serve a genuine enough Chinese cuisine, and most of them are in hotels that cater to foreigners (not all hotel restaurants are authentic: ITC's Chinese food is as Chinese as Shatrughan Sinha). Otherwise, as the bastardised cuisine takes over, it looks as though we are going to see genuine Chinese food disappear from India in the near future.

—Vikram Sinha



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## AN UNMARRIED WOMAN

*Fatima Ahmed on the joys of living alone in Bombay.*

MY FIFTEEN YEARS in Bombay have been a variegated experience. With much sunshine and some shadows. To be the city's milieu, to live its pace, pliancy and diversity has been my ambition. The '60s were edging out of calendars when I decided to call Bombay my home. A single woman living alone was still a discordant note in its social chords. More so when she turned out abstract paintings and earned an irregular keep! Families with rooms to let were wary of me. When they did not slam the door in my face, they battered me with questions, scathed me with suspicion—and would not, I am sure, have taken the paltriest of bets on my virginity!

But I had come to stay. Going back to my home town would have been the folly of retrogression. Hyderabad's decadent feudal norms were my *bêtes noires*. Its conservatism a prison for the artist and the woman in me. Freedom is the leitmotif of my life. Nothing can reduce me to routine or ritual. Exhorted by Shaw to "Try to get what you like or else you will grow to like what you get," I geared myself up for Bombay.

Accommodation was my most harrowing experience of Bombay. Almost insurmountable, were it not for my innate courage and a sense of humour that never misses out on the ludicrous even in a grave situation. I remember a Sunder Lal who had materialised out of an advertisement in a daily. A taciturn bachelor with an exclusive apartment furnished with every comfort. And he was willing to part with a room, balcony and bath for free for "whatever the young lady wants to pay. Money is not my hang-up. I want good, respectable company!"

Then there was Kami. An affable Punjabi amazon. She spotted me in an art exhibition and talked her way into



my naive gullibility. "A room?" she scoffed. "You must have an entire apartment to yourself. Budding artists like you are the country's pride and responsibility" and other such rhetoric. Then followed a series of parties where Kami tried to entrust me to the 'avuncular' care of the rich!

Sunder Lal and Kami are not the wiles of Bombay alone. They are the universal thorns in the flesh of an unattached woman. After my extensive travels in India it is only in Bombay that I feel on safe ground especially as compared to UP and Bihar where law and order have been assigned the niche of history.

Men, are one of the best things that has happened to me in Bombay. Without them and their attentions the city would have been boredom and concrete. I have more men friends here than elsewhere in the country. They are refreshingly different, liberal in outlook, Westernised in attitudes. My fierce independence and unconventional lifestyle do not frighten nor does my talent overawe them. I am of course speaking of a certain coterie: the non-conformist and the intellectual. The males I have met outside Bombay are the prototypes who either lust for a

woman or propose marriage. Seldom, if ever, do they befriend her.

Behind the walls of Hyderabad, with its gossiping mouths and prying eyes, I had taken a somewhat myopic view of women's liberation. When I jostled in the peak hour traffic in the gents compartments of Bombay's breathless trains, I called it liberation. Also when I ate in Irani, Udupi and *dabha* restaurants, took solitary walks in the least sophisticated areas of town, ate *paans* standing by the *paanwalla's* *gaddi*, smoked *bidis* on parapet walls of sea fronts. (Taboos that back home would have struck my family off the rolls of respectability!)

These acts of defiance, although small in themselves, helped break a big barrier in me. A barrier of class and bourgeois values. To be freed of the past, that dead load of the mind, was my real liberation.

In the last 15 years, Bombay, the fast-changing city, has changed its social attitudes drastically. A woman living all by herself is no longer an isolated incident. Her numbers have mushroomed, and she is now well integrated into the multi-hued fabric of the city. The once prevalent belief that she lived alone, always by compulsion and never by choice, is dead. Equally erroneous is the notion that she suffers untold privations. Life is what we make of it, whether single or married.

Mine is crowded with friends, travel, diverse interests, work and above all, an insatiable love of life. It is, as the phrase goes, a single blessedness—as a life with only options and no compulsions is bound to be. I can describe it the way Lamb describes his vocation, 'A walking stick and not a crutch'. Freedom for me is not merely having a choice but being able to live that choice to its fullest potential. And Bombay has made that possible. The city has never imposed itself upon me. It has just happened to me moment by existential moment. I have never, even once, regretted my decision to live in it.

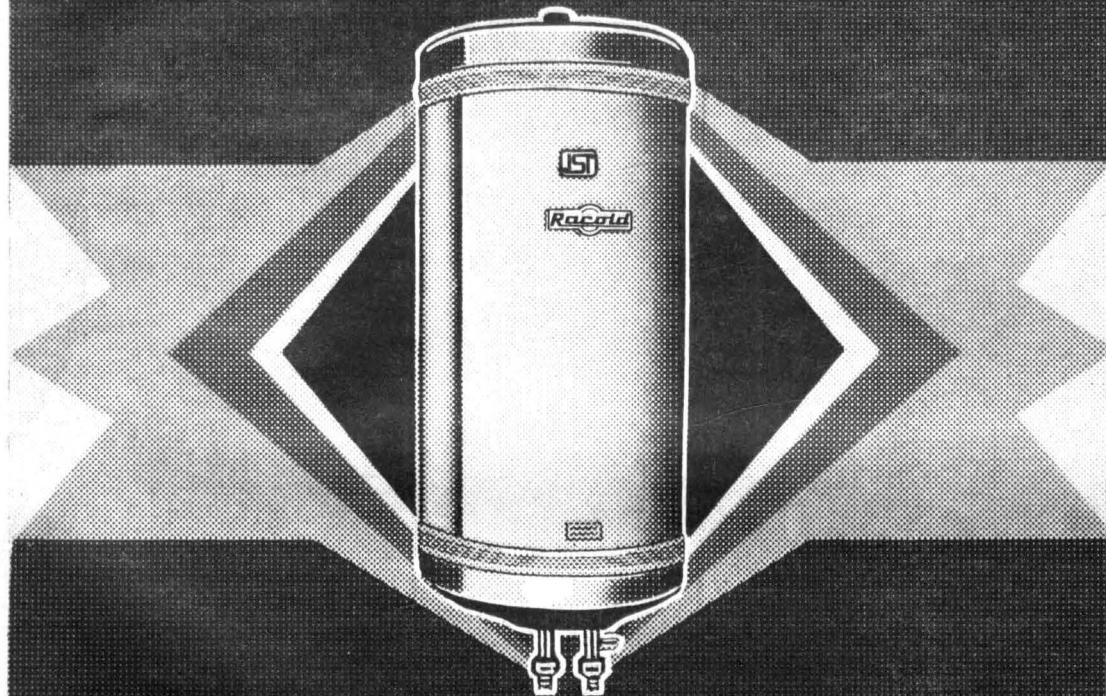
*Fatima Ahmed is a well-known writer and painter. She lives and works in Bombay.*

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## THE ENTERPRISE-ING AD-MAN

*A conversation with Mohammed Khan.*

**Q:** *Where did you receive your education and your training in advertising?*

**A:** I did my schooling in Hyderabad. After studying English at St Stephen's I went to England and did a diploma in advertising at the College For Distributive Trades in London. I lived in England for nine and-a-half years during which time I worked with two advertising agencies in London and a small one in Cardiff.

**Q:** *When did you come back?*

**A:** I came back in 1971 and started work with da Cunha Associates. Then we started Rediffusion. But I felt disillusioned with the way things were here. I considered going back to London, but I didn't want to live like a second class citizen. I went back to Hyderabad and started a trading stamp company. I learnt a lot but there was no satisfaction. It was probably the most fruitless year of my life.

I came back to Bombay and joined Contract. I was with them for four-and-a-half years till I left and started Enterprise. Enterprise completes six months today and what is happening here is beyond our expectations. In six months we have exceeded what we were hoping to make in a year by 50 per cent.

**Q:** *Have you found that studying advertising in the West has been a drawback in dealing with Indian consumers?*

**A:** No, in fact it has been a great advantage. There they don't teach you to cater to the British people—they teach you the basic principles of advertising. The critical thing is to learn the basics of mass commu-

*Mohammed Khan is Managing Director of Enterprise Advertising. His campaigns include Charms and VIP skybags.*



nication. I find that people here don't have their basics right, they are muddled.

**Q:** *You are known for your snappy captions ('If you want to talk you don't have to walk'—Superphone, 'Charms is the way you are'). Can clever lines sell a product?*

**A:** No. Not even good advertising can sell a product. What good advertising can do, is to induce people to try the product once. After that it is up to the product. Good advertising can't sell rubbish, but it can change the image of a product. In the case of Superphone, everyone knew what an intercom was, but the need for one was never established.

We made the intercom an interesting product photographically. We showed an intercom like it has never been shown before. This is basically what creativity is all about—a continuing process of finding new solutions to old problems.

**Q:** *What would you consider your most successful campaign so far?*

**A:** There are several. Superphone increased its turnover three or four times. Charms has become the largest-selling kingsize cigarette in a few months. Lakmé shampoo has done very well.

**Q:** *What were the reasons for the success of the Charms campaign?*

**A:** I think Charms has become an institution. We decided to get out of the rut of doing the same old thing and do something new—more in keeping with the '80s. We have shown it as the symbol of a desirable lifestyle which is not necessarily limited to any particular target group, but has come to be accepted universally by everybody. It represents a lifestyle which is casual, free and informal—which is the way people are today.

It is not only the denim packet, it is the price value relation that has worked. We are offering a stylish image at a price most people can afford. And the product is fantastic! An example of a good ad not selling junk. The consumer is not an idiot. He is a discerning person.

**Q:** *Several people feel that the Charms advertisement encourages younger people to smoke and is thus, ethically wrong. What do you feel?*

**A:** Nobody in his right mind would launch a campaign to get new smokers. The campaign is not aimed at encouraging any newcomer. The idea is to make people switch from one brand to your brand. Also the denim packet is not restricted to any section. In fact the kind of people who are smoking Charms include 55-year-olds...

**Q:** *Several ads these days seem to be imitations of foreign ads. Is it deliberate or does it just reflect a dearth of originality?*

**A:** I don't think there is much aping of the West here. There are people here who live like that. Advertisements are just a reflection of social standards. If people didn't wear jeans, there would be no Charms.

**Q:** *Isn't the current Superphone slogan lifted?*

**A:** It is not my account any longer.  
— Amrita Shah

# HARD TIMES AT

*How India's oilmen cope  
with the problems of  
isolation and imminent  
danger on the high seas.*



**ON THE RIG FLOOR:** Jobmen direct the descent of the heavy sharp-edged drilling bit.

**W**

HEN KESAR SINGH rises at 5.30 am, there is just one thing on his mind. He dons his orange overalls, straps on his heavy workshoes, washes and breakfasts in the mess. He then makes his way to the towering 150-foot labyrinthine derrick on the rig floor aboard the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC)-owned jack-up rig, Sagar Pragati (SP). This will be his venue for the next 12 hours. Yesterday passed without a hitch and today, despite the foggy, overcast skies and the ominous rumble of thunder, he is alert and geared for the 12-hour day ahead—a job that has become central to his life over the past 24 years.

In the morning haze, SP's derrick looks like an electric transmission tower, its base a tortuous maze of glinting steel frames. The derrick dominates the rig floor where drillers like Kesar Singh and his colleagues the jobmen, rigmen and the brake operator ready themselves for 'making connection'. The five men take control of the cable wires, drill pipes and pulleys, transport the leaden sharp-edged drilling bit into position and blur into action as they dart and heave through the network of machines. The toothy bit spins swiftly as the rotary disc turns at 130 rounds per minute and soon it gnaws into the sedimentary layers in the depths of the ocean bed. A fountain of mud gushes out spraying clay blobs all over the rig floor. The entire operation is over in minutes and the jobmen collect the fragments that the drilling mud churns up as these will be thoroughly checked for signs of oil. In less than an hour,

# BOMBAY HIGH

*Text By Ketaki Sheth  
Photographs By Sooni  
Taraporevala*

the exercise will be repeated perhaps continuously for the rest of the day.

In a few days, perhaps a few weeks, given the uncertainty of the job, the last of the five oil wells aboard SP will have exhausted its supply. The metallic township on stilts carrying Kesar Singh and the rest of the crew of 80 oilmen will then move on to a charted destination somewhere else in the Arabian Sea, approximately 100 nautical miles off Bombay's shoreline.

As a senior assistant to driller chief Ujjal Singh, Kesar Singh, 42, earns about Rs 2,800 per month. Starting as a young jobman at the age of 18, right through his oil career, Singh has witnessed and experienced many hazards. In 1961, when he was 20, it rained boulders, oil and gas in his area of operation during the Ankleshwar blow-out. He has many such tales to tell of his years on the field not only to his colleagues but also to his aged mother, wife and two hockey player sons back home in Chandigarh.

Only some weeks ago, on board SP, when the papers screamed *Blow-out Averted On Rig*, Kesar Singh, then on day shift awoke to flashing signals and piercing alarms at dead of night. There had been a gas leak which could have caused a fire but which had been controlled by the night shift crew. And a few months ago, the SP crew had participated in a rescue operation when a young Indian seaman aboard a foreign supply vessel which had come to deliver essential supplies to SP, fell into the surrounding shark-ridden seas. Within minutes of the incident, Kesar Singh's supervisor, toolpusher HC Joshi had organised a rescue attempt under the able-bodied stewardship of crane



**LONG DAY AHEAD:** It's a 12-hour shift for driller Kesar Singh, now 24 years with ONGC.

operator Hazara Singh. The young roustabout's life had been saved. And minor accidents are somewhat of a routine thing, explains Kesar Singh in a rather prosaic manner as he shows me his right thumb which bore the scar of three stitches.

Life on the rigs is punctuated by risks and perils, it's an accident-prone and hazardous job. "But I like the challenge, the adventure," says toolpusher Joshi whose oil career spans 25 years since the time he graduated from Agra University in physics and maths and soon after joined ONGC. "I thought of devoting my whole life to oil," reminisces the senior 'captain of the ship', who had a late marriage at 34 after experiencing a dilemma of having to get married as it was the right thing to do and dedicating his life to oil which is what he really wanted. "But my wife has adjusted tremendously and is very understanding."

As captain of his crew, toolpusher Joshi earns about Rs 4,000 a month and is responsible for every drilling operation, equipment maintenance and safety check. Despite an offer of Rs 50,000 per month in the Middle East, Joshi continues with ONGC: "I saw it in its early stages, I want to see it grow."

For all the risks, the heavy physical labour and the long hours, ONGC employees on the field are badly paid. It's been 25 years before Joshi has tipped the highest pay slot and 24 before Kesar Singh has made his monthly Rs 2,800. "Even pilots get more," says Joshi. "People realise that a pilot is responsible for his 300 passengers. Now it's high time they realise our situation." But what keeps the oilmen in the field, as Baldev Singh, field production supervisor aboard production platform Bombay High North (BHN) points out, is the fact, "that here you are not only working for your family and friends, but for the nation."

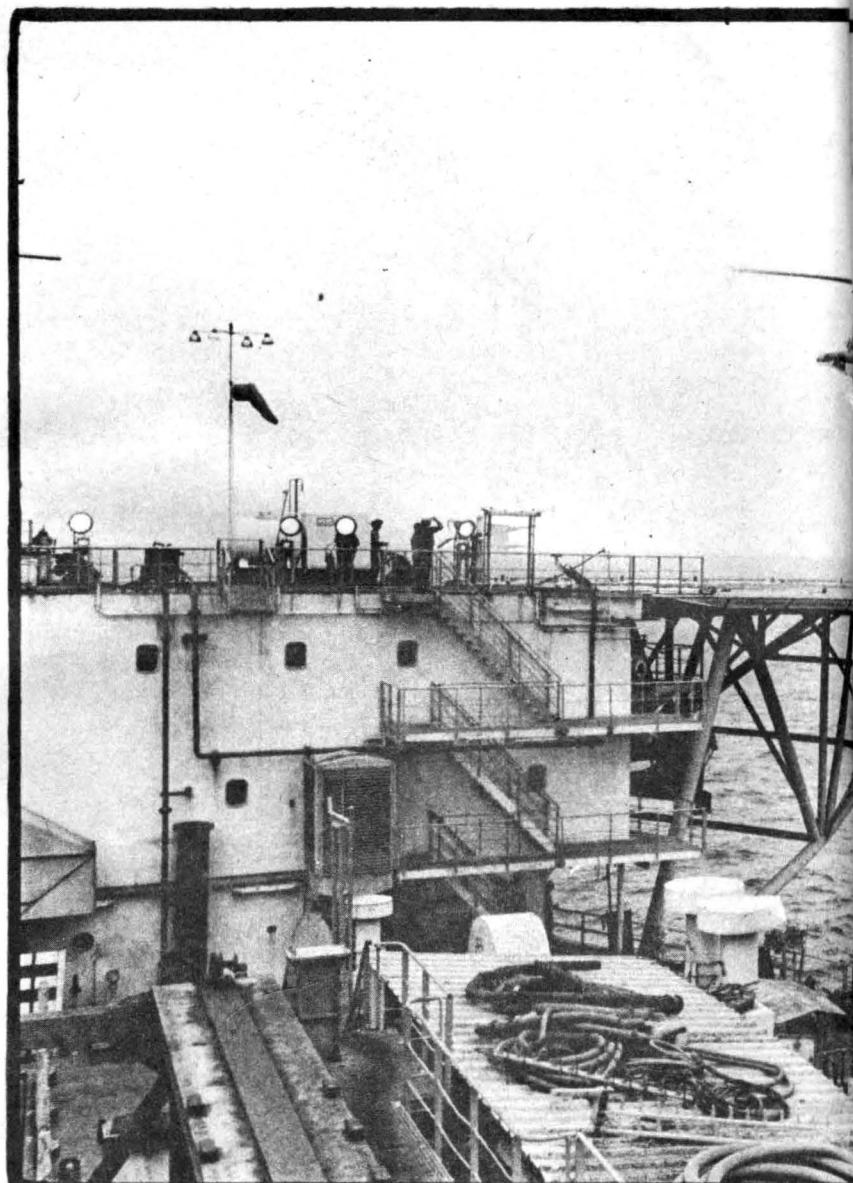
To the bachelor on board an off-shore vessel, an oil job is not only challenging and exciting, but a change from the everyday office routine and at times even an escape from daily pressures. To Calcutta-born T Mukhopadhy, 23, a petroleum engineer on Bombay High North, (one of the two production platforms that jointly produce 400,000 barrels of oil a day contributing largely to India's present 20.8 million tonnes annually) "It's

the dough and the change from the regular 9-5 job." To Mukhopadhy's colleague, engineer Vikas Tayal, "There are some problems, but we find it better than being in Bombay. We can avoid local trains. Avoid saving or hunting for a flat. Given a choice of working in the city or here, I'd gladly choose being here." According to a mechanical engineer, "I don't have many friends on shore. So when I go home every fortnight, I just sleep. I get bored. And then I want to get back."

Work schedules aboard an oil vessel include 15 days on sea working 12 hour shifts and 15 days leave every month. But many bachelors like the engineers on BHN, long to get back

after the stint at home. "It's the feeling of camaraderie, of friendship, of closeness," says Mukhopadhy, the most articulate of the young group of engineers. "When the cricket world cup victory was announced, we danced, we smoked (smoking is permitted in certain sections of an oil rig or platform), we had a special dinner. We were delirious. It was like New Year's eve all over again."

Abhay Kalyankar, 26, safety-in-charge aboard BHN is a chemical engineer from Chandigarh, whose job is to ensure the regular working of safety measures on board as well as the carrying out of weekly drills. Like Mukhopadhy and Tayal, Kalyankar earns about Rs 2,600 a month,



*VIEW FROM THE TOP: Canadian-owned, ONGC-chartered*



ten-seater chopper hovers above Sagar Pragati's landing pad.

works on a 12-hour shift and goes home every fortnight. Did you have initial adjustment problems, how does it feel being away and totally at sea, do you like the job, I ask them.

"If you have a wife and kids and accommodation," says Mukhopadhyaya, "this job's no good. But for those of us who are single this is great. It took me one week to get adjusted. I was, let's say, pre-adjusted." Kalyankar has a different dimension to add: "Socially, one is a loser. Amongst ourselves we have good relations. The best possible. But still there's a limit to the spectrum of relationships. What we get as off duty allowance (Rs 400) doesn't really make up for what we miss out on socially." Mukhopadhyaya comes

straight to the point: "It's not just greenery and birds. We miss female company." ONGC operations come under the Mines Act which precludes employing women—engineers or nurses—to work on the rig floor, oversee infirmaries or even to supervise catering or recreational facilities which include video and table tennis rooms, carrom boards and libraries.

But videos, chopper rides, foreign cigarettes and hi-fi equipment are all very well, says AK Das, 26, Sagar Pragati's only directional driller. "All my friends back home think I fly by choppers, smoke Rothmans; few really know the hardships involved."

Unlike Mukhopadhyaya and his friends on the production platform, there are

many to whom a job is a job. The fear, the glamour and the challenge to some doesn't really exist. To KG Dhamankar, a rigman earning Rs 1,200 a month, "Ab ye sab aadat ho gaya. Agar hum sochte rahe tho accident ho jayega. (The job is now a habit. If I keep thinking, I will have an accident)." Dhamankar is the son of a retired millman in Bombay. The only glimpse of their son's job is what little they may see of ONGC on TV as no photographs are allowed to be taken on board by crew members. To the ten roustabouts aboard SP who earn Rs 1,100 a month for jobs ranging from painting to mending to loading, unloading and shifting, ONGC offers permanence. The temptation is sometimes great to join a foreign rig here says one of them. "There they start at Rs 1,700. But they treat you like a native."

We notice and are introduced to five foreign technicians on board Sagar Pragati, whose contract with SP terminates sometime in November this year. The technicians are employees of the American-owned oil company, Atwood Oceanics, which has nine rigs all over the world including two in India (Shannandoah, Gettysburg). The Atwood personnel aboard SP include a toolpusher, a barge engineer, a driller, an electrician and a mechanic. We learn that they get paid far more than their Indian counterparts, fly home to different parts of the world after every month of work and get handsome perks. In fact, ONGC pays \$ 40,000 per day for every foreign rig contracted for Indian operations. (There are seven foreign rigs contracted by ONGC, and six ONGC India-owned oil rigs in Bombay High's offshore operations.)

According to Paul L Daigle, drilling superintendent of Atwood's Bombay operations, "There's a lot of potential here. It's just that here everything is controlled by the government. In Saudi Arabia, things were the opposite. The government contracted private foreign oil companies on a large scale and they struck rich." When asked about India being self-sufficient by 1990 which is the projected estimate (today India produces 65 per cent of its oil), Daigle feels were it not for the tangle of red-tape, it would be 'much sooner'.

Although most officers were agreeable that they got along well with their foreign counterparts, there was a general feeling of 'we can really do the job



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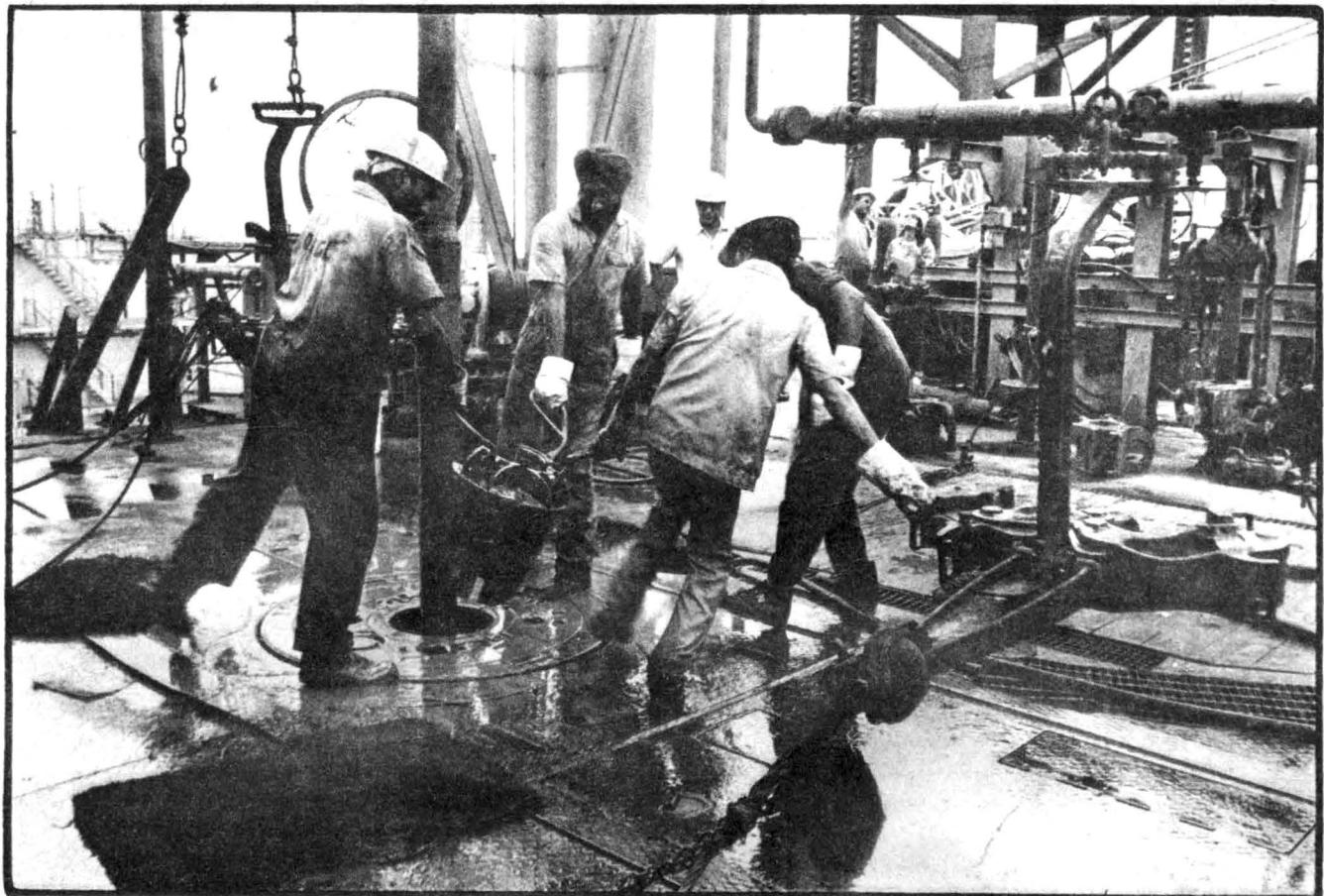
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**MAKING CONNECTION: Oilmen blur into action during a drilling operation.**

as well'; and that yes, knowing about their generous salaries and perks, does cause a feeling of dissatisfaction. According to one engineer aboard the BHN platform who has often to meet with foreign consultants, "Some of them just hate Indians. You can tell. Some are such snobs. There's even an expatriate's menu here. And during recreation, they stick to themselves. Sometimes they don't even do a damn thing. Recently, there was a problem with the pumps and generators. A few 'experts' came and made it worse. Most of them have a superiority complex."

To many who have families and children and come from all parts of the country, the 15-day absence from home every month is 'a mental strain we carry subconsciously', says toolpusher Joshi. "Here you are in a mousetrap. If the platform catches on fire although there are many precautionary measures, you are still trapped. And this is worrying to many of our families," adds an engineer. "Many of them hide the real facts," explains Joshi, who as captain of his rig deals with the many personal problems that his crew experience. According to Bal-

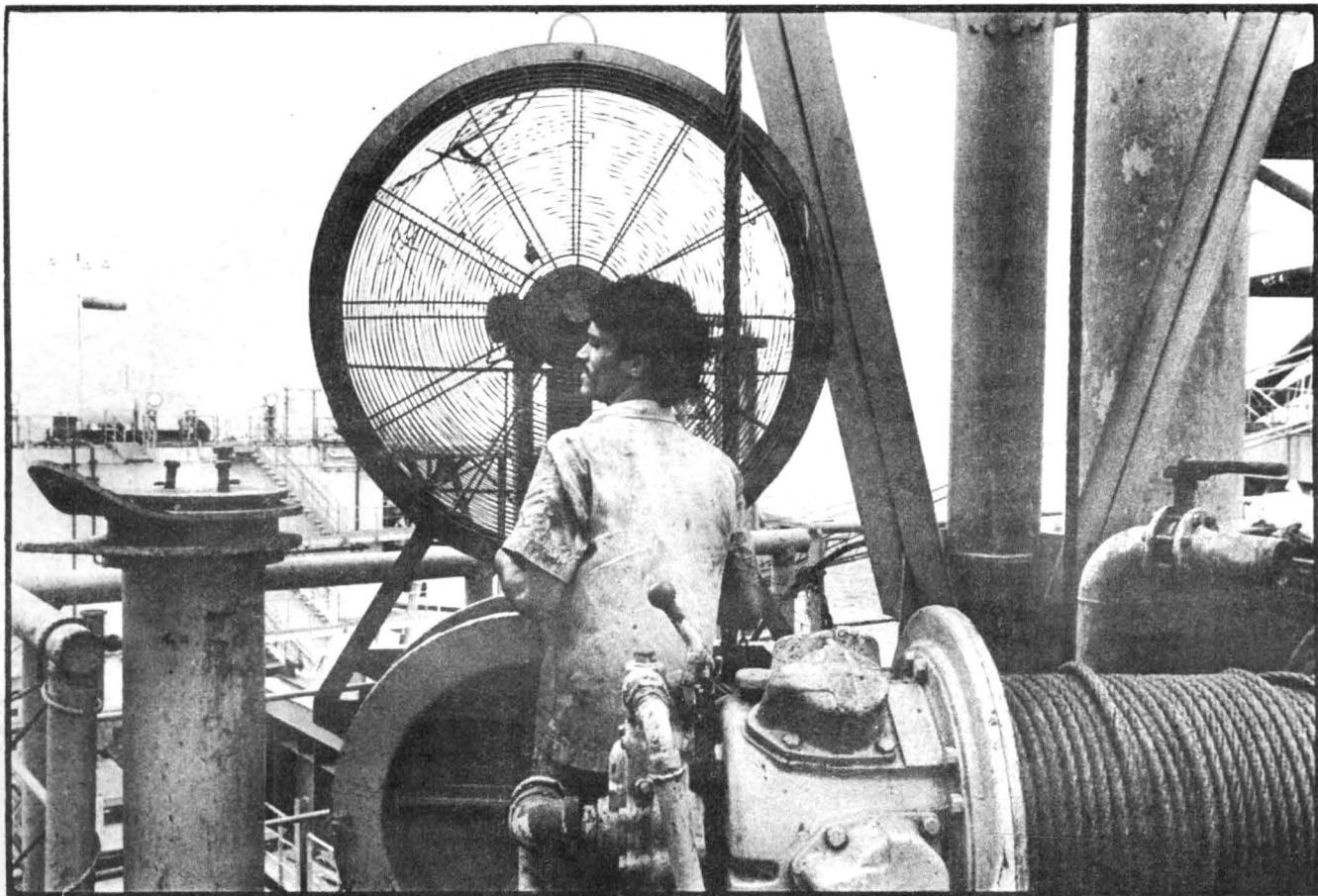
dev Singh, field production supervisor, at BHN, "Our life is much tougher than other public sector undertakings. Except perhaps in the coal mines. Once you're here, you're cut off from the mainstream. Every early bird goes to his nest every evening. We go every 14 days. This is our major disadvantage."

Going home every fortnight entails advance train reservations as not getting a ticket is an expensive business for most employees for whom Rs 12 a day (daily allowance) in Bombay is inadequate. "We miss so much time just organising getting home," says an engineer whose home is in Bulandashar, UP. The lack of ONGC assistance in train reservations affects many. Some, like Om Prakash, crane operator with BHN take 3-4 days just getting home, leave alone time spent in getting a ticket. Although the helicopter taxi service transports personnel from each of the six ONGC rigs and two production platforms six times a day, those like Prakash from Hoshiarpur village in Punjab have to change trains and then take a bus home.

But reservations and risks are not the only dilemmas. To be working in a

high security area cut off from the mainstream, means that even families never get a chance to visit and since photography is generally prohibited, few families get a feel of what it's really like. To some, like crane operator Om Prakash, life at sea was a totally new experience. When Prakash first joined Bombay offshore, there were times when he would stand at the railing of the high-rise production platform and look out at the everchanging all-encompassing sea: "Kahan aake phas gaye? Bombay High aake mai ne samundar pehli baar dekha. Hamare khandaan me se kisi ne samundar nahi dekha hai. (How did I get trapped here? At home no one has ever seen the sea. It was only after joining Bombay High that I saw the sea)." And, he adds, when he describes cyclones and typhoons to the family back home they are totally mesmerised. Being 'at sea', quite literally also implies being isolated targets at war time. Says Joshi: "We are sitting ducks for the Pakistanis. From Karachi they can just fire."

We had the opportunity to spend a day at a production platform where oil is separated, processed, tested and piped to Uran via submarine pipes, and a



*A JOB IS A JOB: To some, like rigman KG Dhamankar, the glamour and challenge are non-existent.*

day at a rig where oil is actually drilled. We had occasion to meet oilmen of different categories and photograph them at work. The difference here as opposed to most other public sector undertakings that spend more time offering *chai* and going through the whole PRO formula, is that no time is wasted on frills and fuss. As Baldev Singh of BHN says, "You become so barrel conscious—every minute is measured by the number of barrels."

In fact it was a particularly trying and 'barrel conscious' day for Baldev Singh the day we met him. Around lunch-time when we were in the mess with a group of officers at BHN, there was a violent split-second vibration which was followed by a power failure and resulted in what is referred to as a 'shut-down'. The shut-down lasted 25 minutes and the loss of production time was equivalent to 3,000 barrels of oil. This particular shut-down, we were told, was caused by a supply vessel colliding with a portion of the production platform which had caused a generator breakdown. Such shut-downs, while being of critical importance, can be caused by any one of many factors: fuel failure, high exhaust temperatures,

failure of a cooling van, a sudden and violent vibration and/or the failure of the power generator, as was this particular case.

There was visible panic on Baldev Singh's face as he and his crew swung into action to put right the shut-down. But Singh has been used to much graver incidents. While working on a rig in Kalol, Gujarat, in the '60s, Baldev Singh recalls having actually put out a blow-out. "People's first reaction was to run away," he recalls. "I started operating the blow-out preventer and it went out in half an hour. I then grew unconscious and the next thing, I knew I was in Wadilal hospital. I was able to save the well but it was a frightening and unnerving experience."

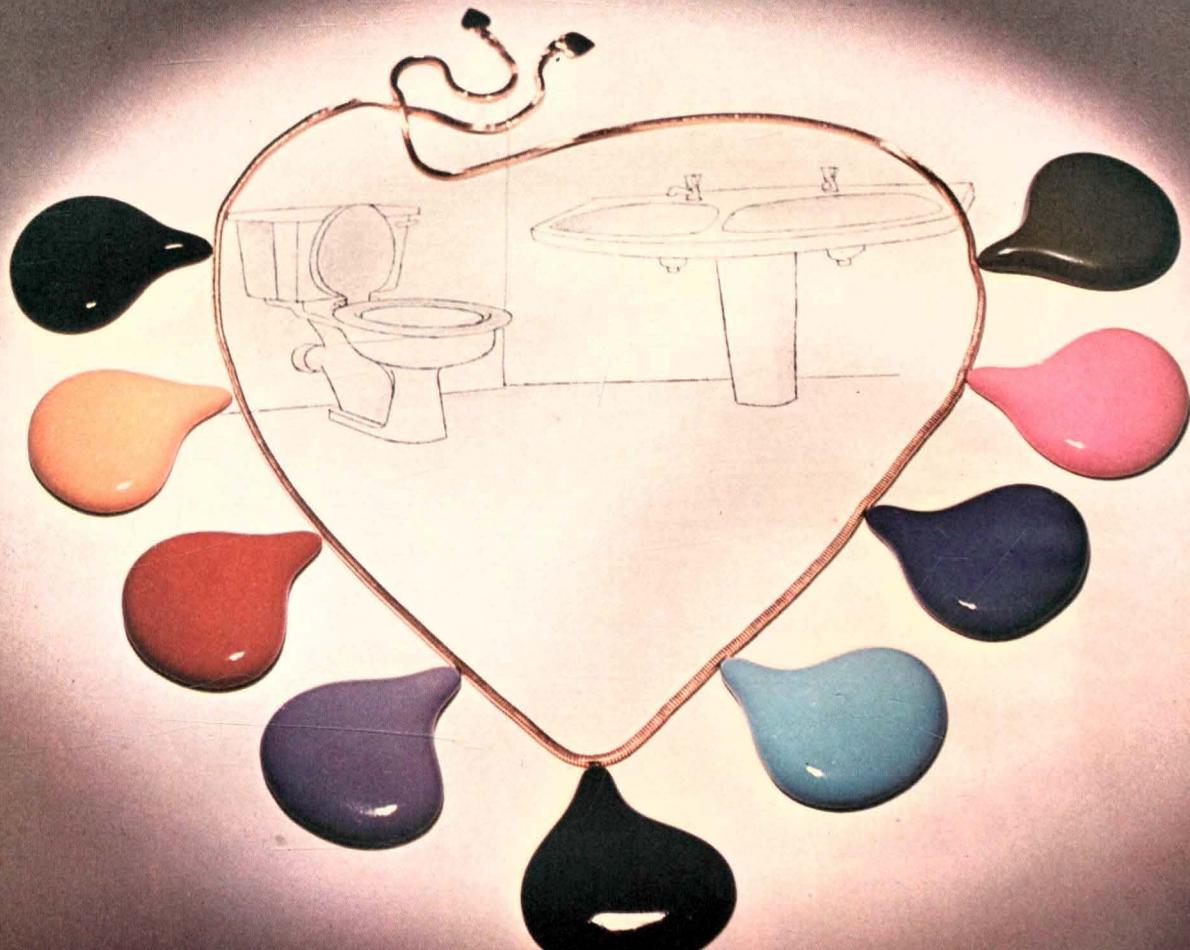
With all the instability of this kind of field job, few would rather opt for the administrative office kind of job where you wear a suit, carry a briefcase and sit in an airconditioned office. Here, officer or roustabout wear work overalls and are right on the spot where the job is. According to a class one officer, families and society at large haven't really been able to accept this soiled hands, stained overalls, 'workman's image'. "Unfortunately, the dignity of

labour hasn't really been accepted in this country and there are many who can't understand that we are all out in the field working together." To 22-year-old mechanical engineer Ashwini Kumar, whose first job this is, working at the heart of the matter has yet another dimension: "Working with one's hands makes you really get to the core of engineering."

As offshore oil drilling is still fairly new in India, there are many for whom this is the start of a new experience. Few have really given retirement a thought. Says Ujjal Singh who started out as a science teacher and ended up being 19 years with ONGC, "When I retire, I'll probably join my father in making musical instruments."

To Ujjal Singh, retirement at 58 would see him back with the sitars and harmoniums he grew up with. For many others, for whom retirement is a long way off, it means enjoying, savouring and experiencing every minute with its frustrations and its rewards. In the meanwhile, "It is the little things we miss most. Like taking a walk to a *dhabha* for a cup of *chai*. The simple motion of life."

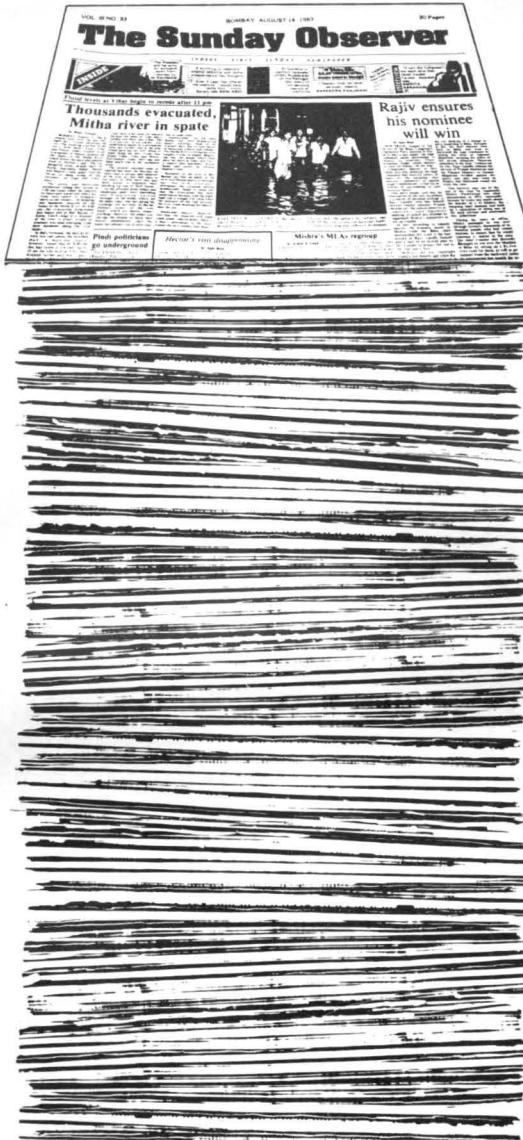
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## **AT THE TOP AT TWO—THANKS TO YOU**

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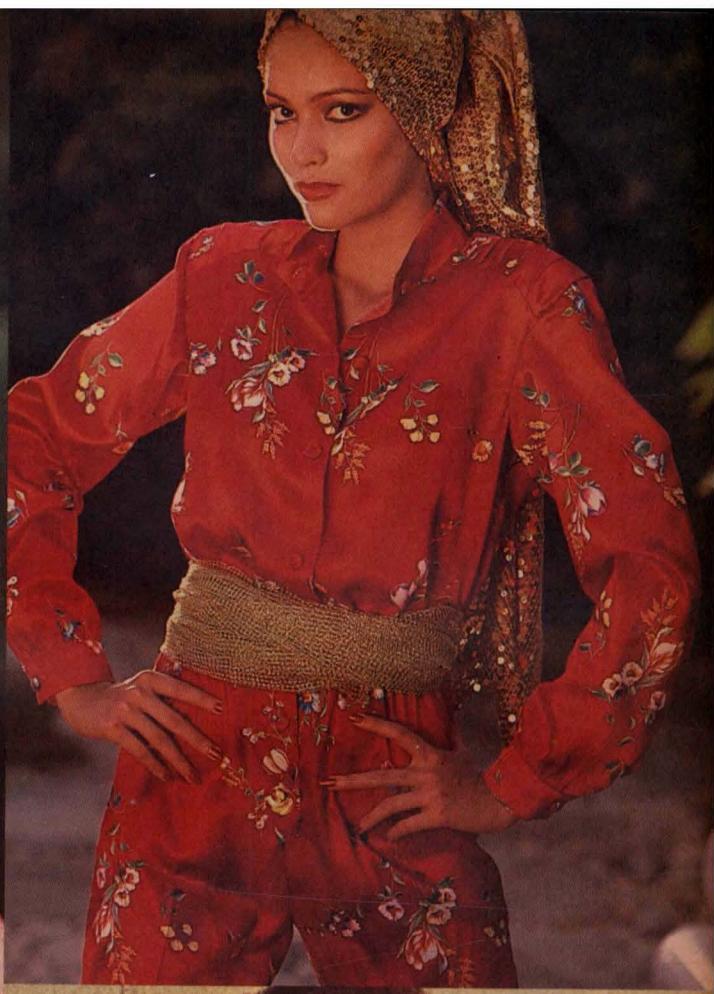
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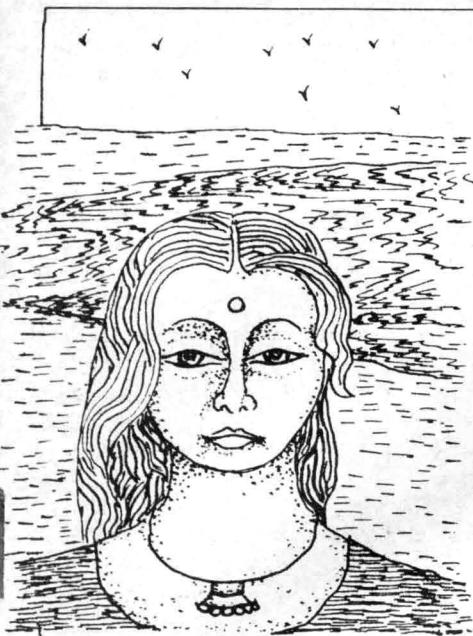
# THE LONELY VIGIL

By Dina Mehta

LEELA'S HANDS ALWAYS saw more than her eyes. That was why it had annoyed Sharad when she sketched him that night on the back of an old envelope.

The obvious things about Sharad, which could be assessed by a passing stranger, were there in the sketch: the moist, lustrous eyes, the flaring nostrils, the tight mouth, the thick neck, the splay-footed stance. But her swift attempt to capture his personality on paper had resulted in the very opposite of what Sharad considered himself to be: clement, chivalrous, susceptible—in spite of the enormous success of his movies and other sharp business ventures. There was something foxy about the face in the sketch and with offended dignity Sharad had left his chair to find solace in the impeccable image of the portly, benevolent man of substance confronting him in the mirror. And seeing him poised thus, Leela had added a few bold strokes and he had been inflated into a balloon, a vain, middle-aged knight errant too paunchy to bend another bow, a go-getter who despite his bleeding heart had done well for himself, with no perceptible





Now, with an  
uneasy sense of  
defilement, she was  
awaiting old  
age.... A few  
more years and she  
would be an old  
woman.

load on his conscience. The additions, incredibly expressive, had upset Sharad further. He did not appreciate the masterful assurance of the lines and she had torn up the sketch. But his mood had remained sulky and he had not made love to her that night.

Would he want to take her out to dinner tonight?

Leela prayed not, as seated on a stool before her dressing-table, she began to fashion the vermillion mark on her forehead with clever fingers. Yet she knew that if he suggested a night out she would agree with alacrity. To keep your man you had to be gay. You had to obliterate everything not of immediate concern to him, feed him on festive moments, make the past and future seem unimportant.

The past? Her hand stayed its task.

The past had begun for Leela more than 20 years ago in a moon-flooded room, with the surf beating its throbbing rhythm into their nights. It was a small village Sharad had swept her off to, at the very edge of the sea. Two weeks of blinding, unreasonable happiness. The sun, the sand. The palms, the waves. The strong scent of drying nets and fish by day. Silver foam by moonlight. The new, unsuspected hunger of her body. And the joy that was just beginning, the joy that was but a thimbleful from the bottomless well that was to be theirs for eternity. Who could have thought that the great movie producer would have noticed the shy girl who worked with downcast eyes on the vulgar posters in his publicity department? But he had noticed her. And it was as if before

those two enchanted weeks she had not lived. The past. Her past, so dear to her.

And the future? Leela felt a pang and a muscle twitched high up in her cheek. Even when they were together now, there was a great distance between them. A vivid picture flashed before her mind: with painful, melancholy intentness, like one who sits beside the bed of a dear friend in his last illness, she was keeping vigil over their dying love.

No, no, what could she be thinking of? A look of panic showed in the dark eyes that gazed back at her from the mirror. You are condemned, they seemed to say. For a girl born outside the pale of society, you have done well for yourself: daughter of a village *chamar*, your talent got you out of the village, away from the stink of hides and rotting carcasses and earned you an education; and your beauty set you up in this luxurious apartment like a queen. . . But, dear God, Leela stared intently at her face again, why had she made so sad and improvident a use of her talent, her beauty, her whole life? Why had she not indeed lived like a queen, regally, in a white heat of self-esteem, with a royal response to life? And now, with an uneasy sense of defilement—such as she had never felt when as a child she had lived with the smell of animal skins and dung, putrid water and bruised grass—she was awaiting old age and foul disintegration. She could trace the beginnings here; and here; and here. A few more years and this would be an old woman. . .

Leela got up abruptly, overturning

the stool. If Sharad wants to take me out to dinner tonight I'll go, I'll go, she told herself with rising hysteria. But their last night out had been a harrowing experience and though she did not want to think of it now, her nervous mind swung back to it like a needle. . .

They had stepped out of the night-club satiated with food and drink and a hard, brittle gaiety, when a skeleton hand had stretched out in the darkness of the street and a hoarse, rasping voice had begged for food. Just a bite. A sip. A morsel. Of anything, so long as it was food.

They had as usual ignored the pleas and Sharad had hurried her into the waiting car. But he had trouble starting it and a shadow stood shapeless outside her window, all rags and an emaciated wrist and the same thin dry thread of a voice trailed her into the car. She could not escape it. "Please, Sharad raja?" she had appealed to him.

"What can I do?" Sharad had thrown up his hands from the steering wheel. "There are so many of them." Which was true. The migration from villages to cities never stopped and the recent drought had swelled the number of destitutes in Bombay to frightening proportions. For how can the hungry be expected to understand the finite dimensions of a city? "Can I be buying food for them all?"

"I think this one is starving."

"So?" But she saw his face working. He was tender-hearted and bountiful, her Sharad. The engine had purred into life but he braked savagely. "All right, damn it."

They had bought food for the poor wretch. They need not have stopped to watch him eat but she had insisted on it—as if she were afraid it would be snatched out of his hand if she did not keep watchful guard over him. The creature before them could well be a young man, it was impossible to tell, but he would not be able to protect his rations even from a dog.

So they sat in the car and watched him eat from a wet newspaper, crouched over it like a ragged umber-bird on the pavement, the light from the lamp-post shedding an eerie transparency on the scene below. A hand had quivered, turning into a bird's claw as it reached for the food. Mauling fingers reached a mouth. They heard jaws snap and grind together. Mesmerised, they watched a scrawny neck jerk and contract with the effort of swallowing.

Almost the last morsel from the soggy paper had been scraped up when without warning he began to retch. There was a violent spasm, a frantic contortion and a head had turned and brought out all that had been swallowed on the pavement. A shrunken stomach had repudiated the load.

They had driven away, not daring to look at each other. The gaiety of the night was frozen solid, it was ice, it was voiceless lament and horror. As sentinel she had failed and it was as if she would never be capable of another human emotion again. Leela had not looked round as she hurried blindly out of the car. She did not ask if Sharad were coming up. And he drove away without a word.

For days food stuck in her throat. Leela could not sleep. Jolted by the shock, she saw, with a hurtful clarity, that the world had become a stranger to her with each passing day. It had kept moving away from her in steps so small that over the years she had failed to notice them. And ever since she had stopped painting—that is, ever since she had given up searching, probing, exploring colours, dimensions, recognising perspectives and correlations; ever since she had beaten down the desire to create the most passionately true, the fairest, the ultimate thing in her power—she could not recapture the world. Or herself. Who was she? Why had she totally submitted herself to the arbitrary rules of a role she had allowed herself to play? She had been afraid and she had chosen to comply. A regulated relationship between lover and mistress was both banal and safe, it gave her the illusion of living in a protected, trustworthy environment. *Safe*, that was what she was. She hugged the word to herself. Why, she could have been one of those hungry wretches on the streets!

Time had mercifully blurred the memory of that night. The emaciated shadows on the streets were part of a grotesque assemblage in an abstract painting. They were not real. They were not her problem. They were not her guilt. . . Yet Leela had not quite forgotten, for her hands trembled a little as she set the stool on its feet again.

Sharad came in as she was fumbling with the clasp of the gold bracelet he had given her.

"You've come, raja!" Leela called out in a breathless, dramatic voice, stepping swiftly into the role she had

## The implacable set of his mouth reminded her of the man in her sketch: a man who had accumulated his wealth by dubious means . . .

adopted over the years.

He raised his brows. "Were you not expecting me?"

"Yes, yes, of course." Leela gazed up at him with feverish, searching eyes as if she wished to swallow him up, devour him whole as he stood there before her with the profile of his belly clearly delineated by the high-buttoned coat. "My, you are all dressed up," she added brightly.

"Yes." His voice was self-conscious, wary, as he smoothed his new *achkhan* with thick, powerful fingers.

Fidgeting awkwardly with the bracelet, Leela waited for the invitation she so dreaded. When he said nothing, she clutched the loose end of her sari with both hands and spoke with false heartiness, "Well sit down, sit down, while I change into something fancy too!" She gave a high-pitched laugh and saw him frown, as if the thick casualness of her voice had grated on him. "A beggar maid can't be seen out with a maharaja?" She spoke gaily. She looked arch. She smiled at him from the corner of her eyes. But her alacrity seemed to displease him, for she saw him frown again and her hands grew cold.

"I thought you were not liking to go out to dinner. Last time you said it."

"Not if you don't want to," Leela said quickly. "But since you are all dressed up—I naturally assumed. . ." she faltered, then went on with a little rush. "No, I don't want to go out, really, please. It depresses me. We are sure to run into some of those hungry wretches on the streets. Let's stay here! With my own hands I'll cook some-



thing for you, raja. We'll have a nice, quiet. . ."

"Only for half an hour I'm here," Sharad interrupted her with a quick glance at his watch. "Then I go."

"Go?" she looked blank. "Go?" He spoke casually, "I go to dinner. Supper Club."

Leela sat down abruptly. "But you just said. . ."

"I knew you are not liking to go," he said as he took his seat opposite her, "so I came to say hello. Then I am going."

"Alone?" The word escaped her in spite of herself.

"I am taking my wife," he said, evading her eyes. "Her brother and his wife are in town, didn't I tell you yesterday? I am having to take them out. You know how it is," he added deprecatingly.

Leela clasped her hands tightly in her lap. It's a lie, she told herself dully. It's a lie. He is not going with his wife. He is going with someone else. A girl. Another actress, must be. I know it, I know it. Her lips trembled.

She began to speak rapidly, her voice thick and choked, the words falling, stumbling over each other: "Why do you lie to me? Why? Why? You are free to do what you like. Go with whom you like. Take anyone out to dinner, I don't care. You know I don't care. Because you always come back to me, always. I leave you as free as the wind, there is only the bond of love between us." She twisted her hands in anguish. "Then why do you lie to me? Tell me why, why, why?"

She went on ceaselessly, almost

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incoherent. "Why do you have to lie? You know I am devoted to you. Don't you? You know I have surrendered myself to you with perfect faith, utterly, with complete abandon." A wild look of exaltation appeared on her face as the steady, devastating stream of words bubbled out of her mouth. "I don't ask for anything. Do I? Do I? I demand nothing. Nothing. You can trample on me. Yes, trample on me. Stamp me into the dust!" Even as she said these things one part of Leela was aghast. She knew these hysterical outbursts always ended in disaster, she only succeeded in exasperating him every time she subjected him to an inquisition. . . Yet here she was, doing the very things she had forbidden herself.

Sharad let her speak. He was not listening, he appeared to be overcome by a great ennui. He looked round the room he had furnished so lavishly for her with glum disapproval, as if all those peacock blue and yellow draperies made him long for restful colours, for cool, blank, unadorned walls.

"I don't want to stand in your way for anything," the desperate voice churned on. "Anything. You can have your fun and—and your freedom. Have I ever tried to stand in your way? See for yourself how little I stand in your way for anything. For anything. Don't you know me? Believe me?"

"Yes of course," he said. "Of course I am believing you." He looked broodingly at her twisted, agonised face.

"Then why do you lie to me?" Tears streamed down her cheeks and left streaks of black there. She no longer looked lovely when she cried. "Why do you lie? Why, why?"

"Who's lying? I am having to take my wife..."

Her face hardened, even the tears seemed to freeze on her cheeks. "Why don't you tell me the truth? Why don't

you trust me any more?" She was bent on stripping him, laying bare the falsehood, humiliating him, crumbling his papier/ maché defences with her unrelenting blasts.

"But I do trust you." He was bored. He was patient. He was anything but combative.

"I know I count for nothing! I accept that I am nothing. I am ready to accept anything from you!" All her obstinacy was roused and slowly but surely she was driving him into a corner. At any moment now she expected him to capitulate.

He sighed. "Leela, you must not. . ."

But in her flagellant mood she would not listen. "Why don't you believe I am sincere? Have you learnt to doubt my word? I ask nothing for myself. Have I not given up everything for you? Made enough sacrifices? My work, my talent, my painting. . ."

But she had said the wrong thing. "Sacrifices!" He stood up. "You made the sacrifices?" His lustrous eyes flashed. "What kind of life were you having when I took you out of it, eh? Who were you before you came to the city, eh? A pariah that is not allowed up a temple's steps! Even your shadow on the roads causes pollution. Even from the village well you were not allowed to draw water, you were always saying. Even a *paanwalla* threw a jugful of water on the coin you gave him to disinfect it! And I! I am having pure blood in my veins! I am from Brahmin stock. You understand?" He was heroic now in his wrath. "Who was my father, are you knowing? And who was yours? A leatherworker, *chamar* . . ."

"Oh please stop."

"And my mother, who she was, you are knowing?"

"Don't, no more. . ."

"Then what are you talking, eh?"

The set of his mouth was implacable and for a brief moment she recognised the man in her sketch: the man of power who had accumulated his wealth by dubious means, who had his greedy hand in every financial pie in the country, the producer of bastard movies, the promoter of spurious housing projects, the manipulator of grain deals made possible by droughts and famines. . . But she really did not wish to see. She hid her hands in her lap as she said, "We were talking of us, Sharad. What is happening to us?" Now her despair was keen and real. "You want to drive me out of my mind, is that it?"

"Then you don't talk!" But he was somewhat mollified and sat down again.

"You'll end up by deserting me!"

"No no. Of course not." His voice had softened perceptibly and immediately she expected him to acknowledge defeat and then she would become radiant, her voice would take on warm, thrilled accents and she would draw him closer in a stranglehold, protesting all the time that he was free to do just as he chose.

Leela's face was convulsed as she said, "You'll end up by walking out on me!"

Sharad rose to his feet again. He sighed deeply, went up to her where she sat and cradled her face against his paunch. "Of course I can never be deserting you, how can I? Do I have a heart of stone? You are upsetting yourself over nothing. I have to give some time to my wife"—she stiffened in his arms and he continued hastily—"but I will see you tomorrow."

She knew then that she had lost this battle. She tried to smile up at him, cloying and sponge-like in her humility and the effort caused a muscle high up in her cheek to twitch violently. But he was glancing surreptitiously at his watch.

For a full hour after he left, Leela wept. She wept for her lost youth. She wept out of pity for herself for despite every effort on her part the breach between them continued to widen. She wept in terror that one day he would leave her for a younger woman and how could she bear to grow old alone? Behind her eyelids she saw a lone figure toiling wearily, in immense solitude, towards decrepitude and death. And she wept for that other unidentified thing she had lost since she was a little girl, so that now her eyes strayed to the ground, never up at the stars.

At last the tears ceased. Leela dragged herself to the mirror and began to repair her face, which was in a hideous mess. For several minutes as she worked on her eyes with *kajal* she felt nothing. She even attempted a wan smile. Poor Sharad. What a scene she had made for him! Abruptly she swallowed her smile. He had lied to her, hadn't he? It was better, for her own peace of mind, to turn a blind eye to his frequent betrayals, to leave his subterfuges unanalysed. She went on disguising her face. He had promised to see her tomorrow, hadn't he? She would wait for tomorrow. ♦

## Mulk Raj Anand

Photographed By  
Ayesha Soni

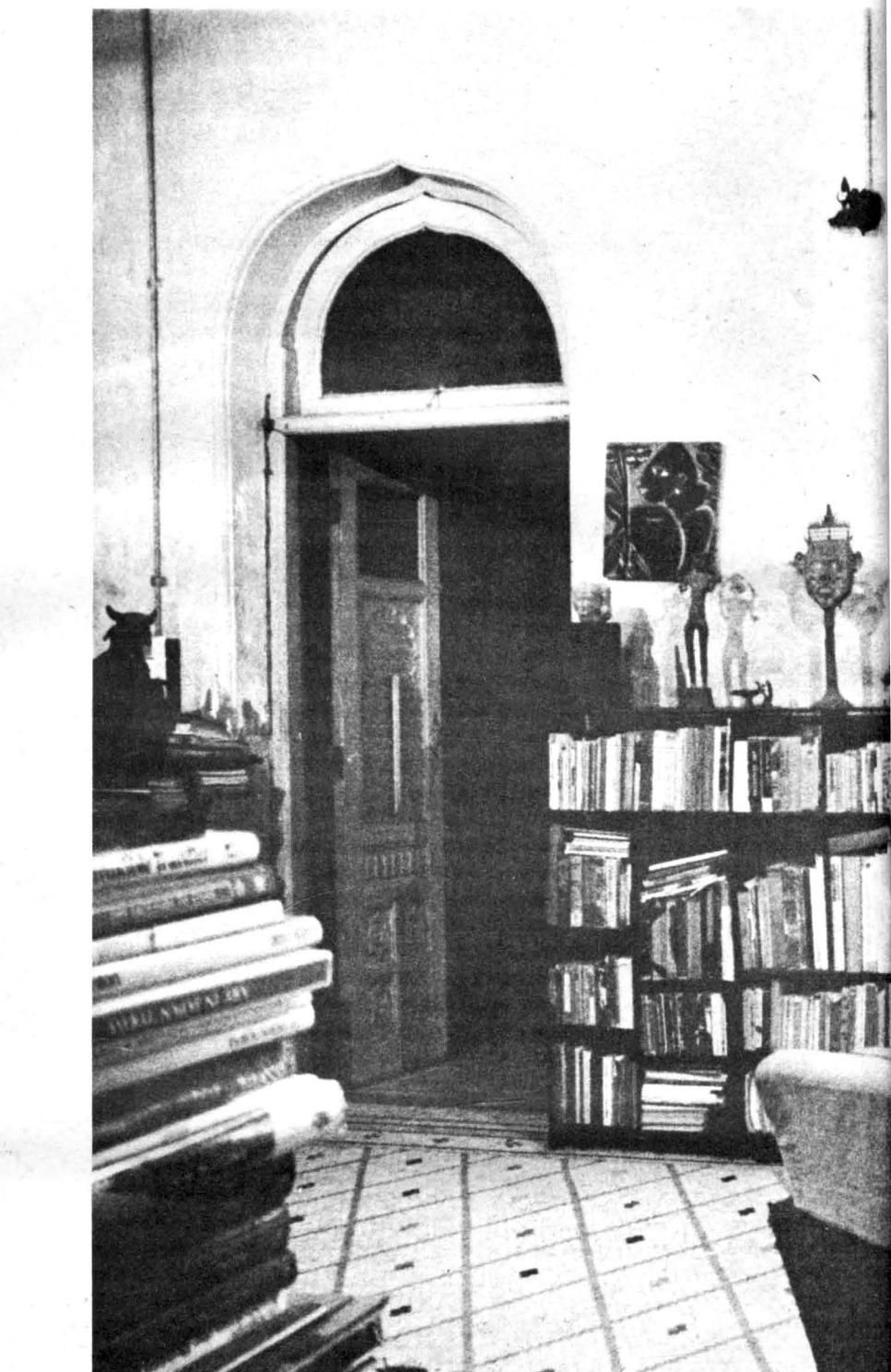
IT'S LARGE, HIGH-CEILINGED, dark and musty—a room which needs a light even during the day. It is a rare size compared to the tiny matchbox apartments that are rented in the other buildings in Cuffe Parade. Crowded along the edges in dusty profusion are the books collected by art connoisseur Mulk Raj Anand over the last 30 years—books on art, novels and the *Marg* volumes.

Dressed in his casual *kurta-chooridar* which is his normal dress, Mulk Raj Anand talks of this room with tenderness. "I have loved so much and lived in it so creatively that it has an atmosphere of its own... Just look at the space all around. The people who built this room had an awareness—they left room for you to move and relax." His love for the room is intensified by the hatred he has for the apartments opposite.

But the feeling for the room has been built up over the years. Mulk Raj Anand inherited the flat from Anil D'Silva who started off the *Marg Encyclopaedia*—a magazine he has been in touch with since its inception. For the first seven years this very room served as a production platform for *Marg*. "All our work was done here. One corner was reserved for the typing and the rest of the room was for the research."

Functionally bare (his wife Shirin conducts Bharata Natyam classes here) the room is still distinctly Dr Anand's. The painting above his corner—consisting of the bed and desk where he spends practically his whole day—is done by a Sri Lankan artist, George Keyt. Dr Anand claims that it is a perfect harmony of sound and colour. "The figures are done in the pattern of sound waves linked by the musical instruments."

These artistic mementoes are, in fact, what Dr Anand dotes on. Every relic has some history. "The cow sculpture (the one to the extreme left of the picture) is from Bastar. You can almost

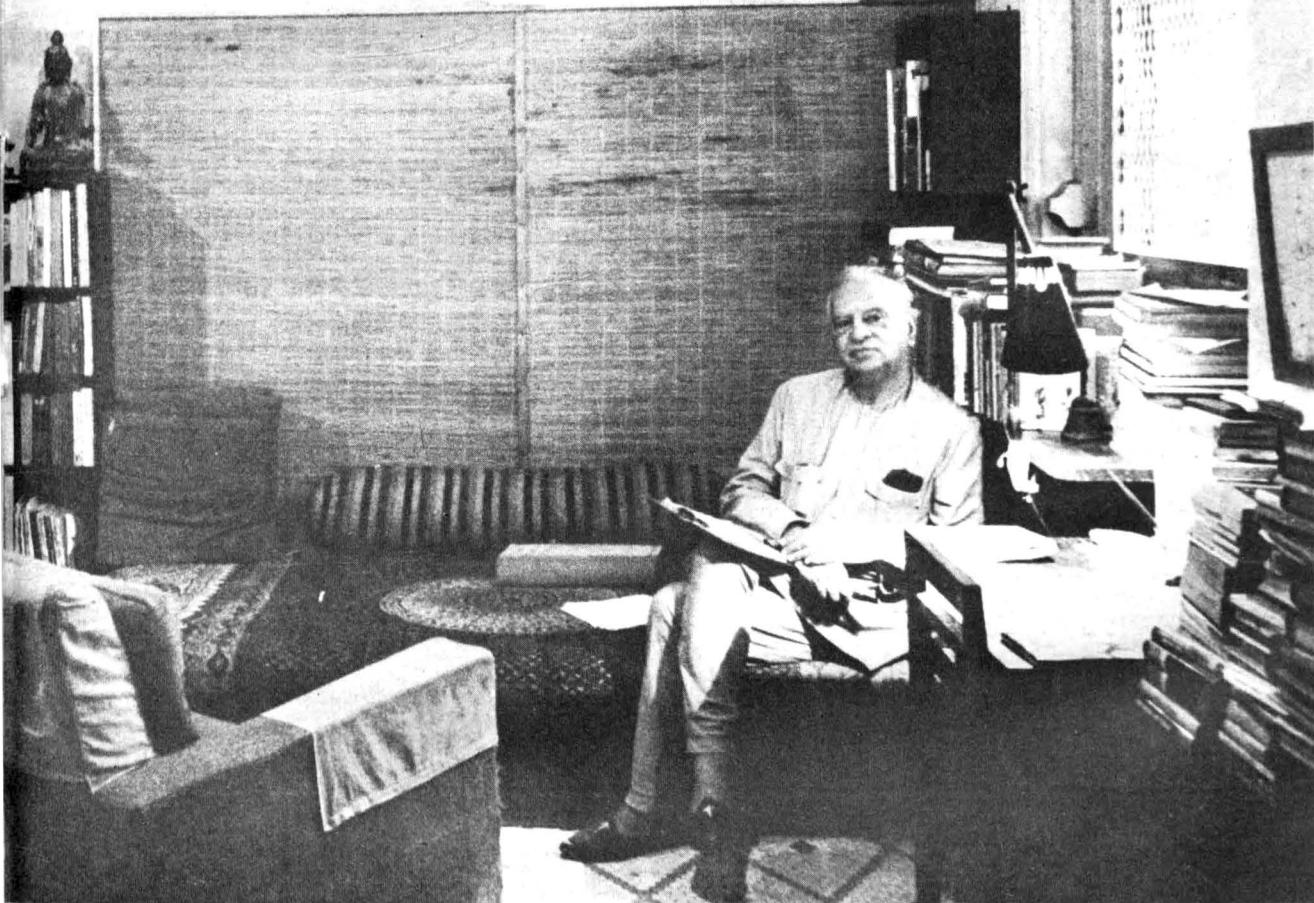


feel a sense of wonder grip you when you see this simple but powerful shape. In fact, one can almost say, that the power of the cow is entirely in the nostrils."

Other treasured pieces include the Buddha (ninth century BC) which is on a showcase opposite Anand's corner and the tantrik paintings. "The Buddha used to preach the eight-fold path of gentleness," Dr Anand mumbles inaud-

ibly. "It is the same calm awareness from which I write books—with detachment and a total awareness of good and evil." There are three Buddhas in the room—one so old that it is practically crumbling.

Mulk Raj Anand spends at least four days of every week in this flat. The rest of the time he spends in Khandala—where he actually writes and paints. He adheres to a strict



routine which he has laid down for himself years back: a walk at 5.30 am to begin the day; 6.30: tea; by 9.30 he has finished writing whatever he has to for the day. "I spend a lot of time on translations." After a quick lunch and a long nap in the afternoon he entertains after six pm and is in bed by ten pm.

Little wonder then that Mulk Raj Anand regards the room as one that

has a character. Within its untidy clutter of books exists an order that only he can understand. He sits in his corner in his own specific way—either cross-legged or reclining on the *gaddi*. All his reference books are within easy grasp behind him. The lamplight can be adjusted to fall where he wants it to. The *kalamkari* bedspread was his choice—everything has to be just right.

And in this little corner with his

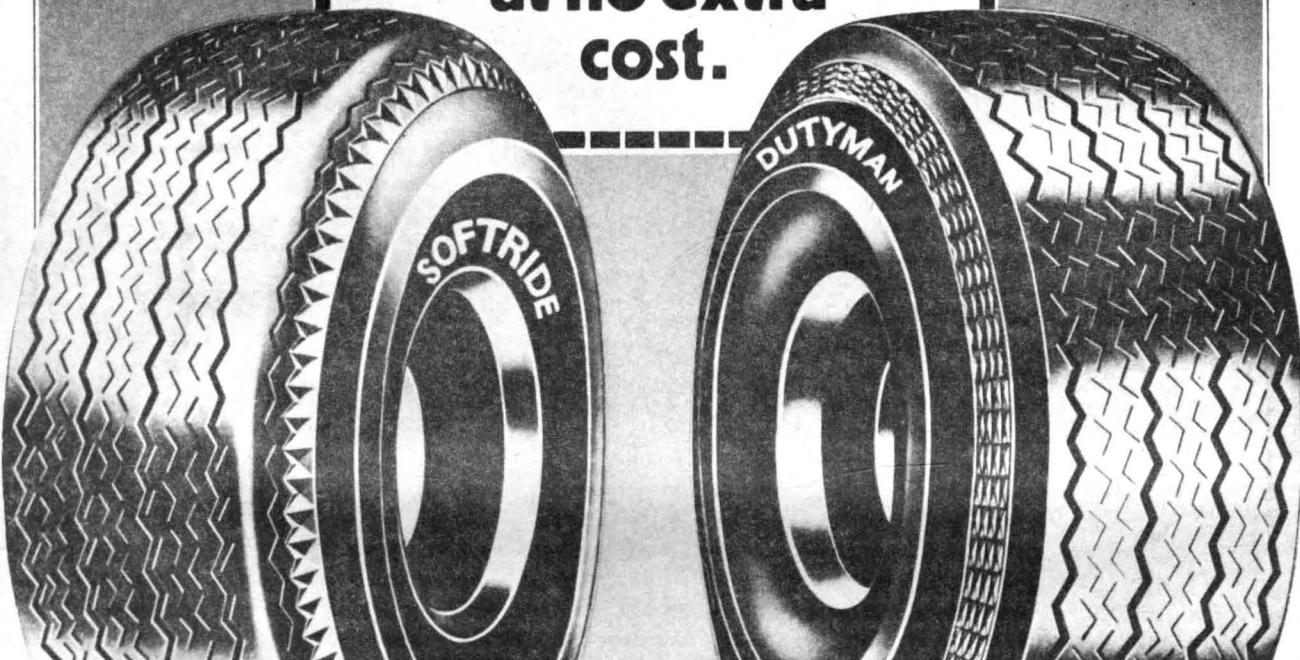
beloved art books and his treasures, Mulk Raj Anand sits esconced in an existence which disdains any other. "I feel it is important to bring a freshness to the direct experience of the human predicament... Human living has become dark and impossible. How can we speak of culture till we have this darkness all around?"

— Interviewed By Shirin Mehta

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Guest Column/by Dhiren Bhagat

## THE TELE-VISUALISING OF KIPLING'S KIM

**E**ARLIER THIS YEAR ANGUS Wilson was in Bombay and when we met, the talk inevitably veered round to Raj literature. Wilson is no stranger to the subject having written a highly acclaimed book on Kipling. He recognised that at present there was a great deal of vulgar interest in the Raj, quite possibly, he suggested, part of a Thatcherite obsession with Empire. But he would not dismiss interest in the Raj as superficially as that. "At a more intelligent level," he went on, "it could be that the Raj and India provide our art some more fixed and formal shapes, some more interesting shapes, shapes like the extraordinary relationship between Kim and the lama, shapes our literature wouldn't have without recourse to India."

It is difficult to disagree. Even after the appearance of *Midnight's Children*, *Kim* is still quite possibly the finest story about India, as Nirad Chaudhuri once described it. Kipling has of late been maligned as an imperialist and less plausibly, as a racist and in consequence recent generations of Indians have been educated without ever reading *Kim*. (Everyone knows the first line of *The Ballad of East and West*: 'Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet' but how many know the third and fourth lines of the same poem: 'But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, / When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!')? But unpleasant though Kipling's attitudes may be in some of his work, in *Kim* he transcended the parochialism that gives offence and his empathy with all the Indian characters comes through clearly.

*Dhiren Bhagat is the editor of a forthcoming book—Disguises—How Photographs Lie to be published by Hamlyn, London.*

Though generations of English schoolchildren have read *Kim* as an adventure story it is much more than that, in fact it isn't a children's novel at all. True there is the adventure of Kim working for the Secret Service, wresting secrets about the North West Frontier Province, keeping the bad Russians out, playing the Great Game. But Mahbub Ali, the Afghan horse trader and secret agent is only one of Kim's gurus: the lama is the other and he instructs Kim in the Way of the Wheel. The tease in the novel is that we never know which quest Kipling considers the more important: both are concerned with seeing aright and Kim inherits both visions.

Towards the end of the novel Kim the waif, the Irish orphan who was reared in the bazaars of Lahore wants to know who he is. As Ravi Seth, the 14-year-old boy who will play Kim in the film puts it: "He has to decide whether he is black or white and he decides that doesn't matter." Angus Wilson's answer is a little more literary but substantially the same: "The story of Kim and the lama is... the culmination and essence of all the transcendence that Kipling gained from his Indian experience. In it alone of all his works he does ask 'Who is Kim?' although he cannot answer the question. In a sense, the answer is the book itself, for it is the best thing he ever wrote." (*The Strange Ride of Rudyard Kipling* Secker and Warburg, 1977). It is a question that has always reached the Anglo-Indians: and of late the Indo-English have begun to ask it as well.

**BACK IN 1950** Victor Saville directed MGM's version of the novel: Dean Stockwell and Erol Flynn spying for the Empire against the Russians in Afghanistan. The result was predictable. Now with the Raj boom on in the West these days it was hardly like-



*The columnist: Dhiren Bhagat.*

ly that Kim would be left out. David Conroy, Managing Director of London Films, got the bright idea two-and-a-half years ago. What he didn't have was the four million dollars.

No matter. Several trips to America later he had done a deal with CBS network. They agreed to buy the finished product for American television at a whopping price. Conroy hired his crew and came to India to shoot, bringing with him some 45 people.

Initially Waris Hussein, the celebrated TV director, was to have directed the film. But due to his post-production commitments with *Princess Daisy*, a mini serial he is making for NBC (an adaptation of the Judith Krantz novel of that name) he was unable to make *Kim*. So Conroy hired Al Rakinoff, a Canadian director who lives and works in England. Unfortunately an illness in the family prevented Rakinoff from taking on the assignment at the last moment and in consequence John Davies who was to have produced the film took over as director and Conroy moved in as producer. The two have often worked together, notably in the late '60s when Conroy was with the BBC and Davies a freelance director. Together they made *Nana*, *Germinale* and the epic 20-part *War and Peace*.

**I REACHED MANALI** on September 23 on the flight that brought Peter O'Toole in. He looked dazed. He had

## **"For a man who had once described acting as 'just farting about in disguise', he did seem to take his work seriously."**

just flown in from England hours ago and the ravage of the ride could be discerned on his face. He was accompanied by a dour secretary, a young woman fitted with pillars instead of legs. At Chandigarh airport O'Toole walked to the edge of the tarmac and lit a cigarette. I should have cadged a few minutes from him just then but I had to go into the terminal to make sure about the onward flight. It was a pity because as soon as we reached Manali he became the meditative lama and had to be guided everywhere by his plump secretary. (At one point, two days after he had reached Manali he wandered upto the table where we were having lunch by the river Beas and approached director John Davies' son, Ben. "Hello Ravi." Ben's mother corrected him and before she could point to Ravi Seth, sitting opposite, the only other child at the resort, O'Toole had tripped and begun dragging his dazed self to another table.)

Apparently Kim had been a childhood friend of O'Toole's and he was quite keen on the part of the lama. The only problem that Conroy perceived was O'Toole's piercing blue eyes. But the actor agreed to wear brown contact lenses to correct this. For a man who had once described acting as 'just farting about in disguise' he did seem to take his work seriously.

The crew was divided at four hotels in Manali. I stayed at Span Resorts with the director and the major actors. By any reckoning it must be the most luxurious hotel in the Himalayas, what with its stone chalets with pine pillars, its extravagantly stocked bar (the best in the country) and its excellent view of the river Beas and the Kulu valley. The shooting didn't begin for a few days so I spent my time in the hotel talking to the actors.

Ravi Seth seems an excellent choice for Kim: half Jain, half American. The

surprising thing about him is that at school (the International School at Kodaikanal) he has acted in only two plays: "In the Seventh we did *Rapunzel* and this year we did a take-off on *Sleeping Beauty*." When selected for the role he didn't really know *Kim* though he had read *The Jungle Book* a few years ago. "I didn't know Kipling was considered an imperialist," he said insouciantly.

John Rhys-Davies was less insouciant. He is an impressive actor who has played several interesting roles, notably Rodrigues the Portuguese in *Shogun* and Salah the Arab sidekick of Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. He is to play Babu Hurree Chunder in the film. "When I was at University in the early '60s, *Kim* was very much out of fashion. In fact I was looked upon by most of my friends as a crypto fascist for even daring to mention Kipling because it was a time when we rejected all the colonialist and imperialist attitudes. But he is a very fine writer and can tell a good story, a journalist in fact."

Over the years Rhys-Davies has changed his views on Kipling somewhat. "There are attitudes in his books which I find, which I used to find, plainly disgusting. I now think I was oversimplifying, because I think that he was conscious of an ambivalence there, sometimes. Sometimes he is merely recording some things like a journalist does... I think *Kim* is one of the great childhood books, like *Swallows and Amazons* or *Pinnocchio*. You know it's one of those wonderful books of childhood that you read as a child and look back in affection as an adult. You can love Robinson Crusoe and still be opposed to racism. It may appear incompatible but if you have that rigid attitude towards books then for God's sake half of what was written before 1950 is out."



*O'Toole: dazed and confused.*

The shooting schedule is tight. Two weeks in Manali, three-and-a-half weeks in Jodhpur, two-and-a-half weeks in Agra. And then, at the end a week's studio work back in England—the lama's cell, Father Xavier's tent and a few other shots. Conroy and his crew are busy, determined to make a good movie.

**GOOD INTENTIONS APART**, what must be recognised is that *Kim* is being made for a TV audience and American TV audiences are particularly stupid. (When Olivier's *Richard III* was shown on American television, General Motors sponsored the programme—NBC had paid half a million dollars for the one screening—and during the commercial breaks viewers were told who Shakespeare was. What really got Olivier's goat though was the commercial in which viewers were told that a certain automobile had 'more power than all the horses in *Richard III*'.) How much will they understand of *Kim*?

Already two concessions have been made for this audience in terms of alterations in the script. One, modern audiences are no longer familiar with the political situation of the day: Afghanistan being protected by the British from the bad Russians. (When the Russians walked into Afghanistan and it seemed possible that Reagan might send in the troops, an American magazine conducted a poll that reveal-

## "Good intentions apart, what must be recognised is that Kim is being made for TV and American TV audiences are stupid."

ed that approximately 98 per cent of the Americans didn't know what Afghanistan was.) To cope with this ignorance David Conroy has added a few scenes at the beginning of the movie featuring two Rajas, the Raja of Hilas and Raja of Bunar to be played by veterans of the stage, Aamir Raza Husain and Jalal Agha. In these scenes the political situation of the time will be sketched in. Of course there were no Rajas of Hilas and Bunar—the Frontier was ruled by Afghan tribal chiefs—but this slip is Kipling's. Though the Rajas don't actually appear in the novel we do have Hurree Babu explaining to Kim: "Hilas and Bunar—Rajas with guns—undertook for a price to guard the passes against all coming from the North."

The other change in the script is the more serious one and here the hand of the American financiers becomes evident. (It must be recalled in this context that David Lean has been plagued by his American financiers in much the same way: in *Passage to India* they insist the 'romantic interest' must be developed between Adele and Aziz if no one else can be found.) Conroy has gone in for a sub-plot that didn't exist in the original, a love story between Corporal Bruce (played by Mick Ford) and Indra. Kim assists the two in their assignations and finally when the two get together, Corporal Bruce deserts the Army for Indra's charms. Conroy tries to justify the addition: "One can use the sub-plot almost as shorthand to tell Kim's own story..." but it won't wash.

The other concession of course is in the use of Western actors. Tyrone Power was somehow 'acceptable' in 1940 in *The Rains Came* and Yul Brynner as late as 1966 in *The Long Duel* but thanks to Merchant-Ivory and now to Attenborough (Kingsley's role was exceptionally successful but

the rest of the casting was racially accurate) I think the audiences have become too sophisticated to accept Western actors playing Indians on screen. Thank God Lean didn't go in for a Robert De Niro as Aziz. Unfortunately, Conroy and his team (casting director Ann Fieldan) thought otherwise. The three important Indian roles—Mahbub Ali, the lama, Babu Hurree Chunder—have been given to prominent Westerners. Director John Davies was on the defensive when he discussed this with me. "One of the problems obviously is, if you're mounting a production like this and of course, yes, it's a compromise if you like, you're making it necessarily for a Western television audience, it's very expensive to make. To make it possible you have to employ actors who are going to bring in the audience... Maybe it would be nice if it wasn't a fact. But it's a fact."

David Conroy was definite about what he wanted from the film. "My real interest is the story of a young boy who is growing up in India as an Indian and suddenly he is told he is English. Then he begins his search for his own identity. *I'm neither, I'm Kim*. That's what's important. That, if you like it, is the story. What permeates all my work (and *Kim* is a good example of this) is having a good yarn which appeals to a mass audience, that's what I want to do and at the same time put in a little thought for them, something that they wouldn't normally come across and I'd like to think that if other producers made this film they wouldn't put it in. They'd go for the adventure story."

Has he made concessions for this mass audience? "No, the dilemma never arose: should I play for the mass audience or not? My dilemma instead was: is my vision stereotyped? How am I perceiving India? How am I perceiv-



*The Unit: clockwise, Conroy, Agha, Seth and Rhys-Davies.*

ing Indians and their behaviour? And the answer comes back: through European eyes, with very little knowledge of India, not sufficient knowledge of India to do this, and maybe with the heritage of the British Raj sitting on my shoulder... One of the edicts I have issued is: there will be no snake charmers. There will be no Indian rope tricks. That's not what I want to see. I want to see India."

On the call-sheet for September 26, the first day of the shooting, the first assistant, a genial podgy Cockney called Gino, inserted a motto for the day: "Out of intense complexities intense simplicities emerge." No doubt he was referring to the seemingly unwieldy logistics of the operation and the disorganisation that was evident amongst the actors on the weekend before it all began. (Nobody seemed to know the other: the landslides had played havoc with the valley's hills and in one case there was a motor accident on the way to the hotel: nobody was aware that the unit had brought up a doctor from Delhi.) Gino's motto expressed the hope that all would go well. But equally, it was a comment on the film.

Let's see what Conroy sees. I tend to be wary of intense simplicities that just emerge from intense complexities. As Mahbub Ali wisely cautioned Kim: "The Game is so large that one sees but a little at a time." ♦

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# *Kitsch As An Art Form*

*By JP Singhal*

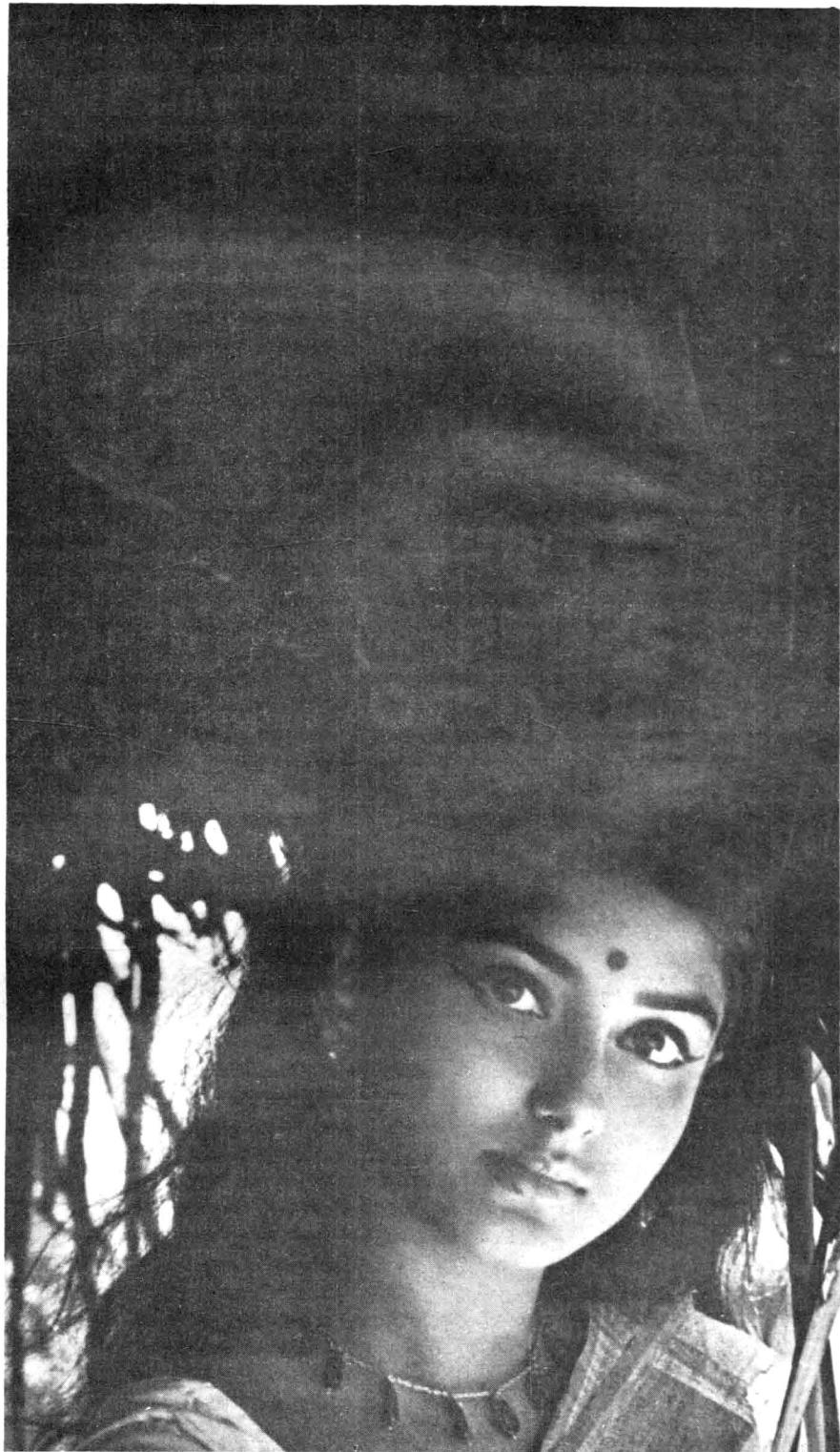
**"I AM A** glamour man. I believe in the right pose, the right composition, the right lighting." He is also, he admits, a workaholic dogged by perpetual fears of insecurity. These qualities have earned JP Singhal, 49, success in the advertising photography business and a special niche in the Hindi film industry. A 'Singhal portrait' is considered a 'passport' to stardom and the list of stars who had their first 'publicity photograph' taken by him reads like a *Who's Who*: Hema Malini, Dimple Kapadia, Raakhee, Poonam Dhillon, Sunjay Dutt.

A short, jovial man, Singhal makes no defences about his work—"I am a glamour photographer"—yet even within this self-restricted area he has evolved and consistently stuck to a 'Singhal style' that has become a hallmark amongst advertising agencies and film publicists: soft-focus, sensual portraits (usually of girls), shot *always* in natural light. Though he has been in the business for the last ten years he still doesn't have a regular studio or the glamour photographer's usual paraphernalia of lights, strobes and umbrellas.

Singhal's favourite photographer is, obviously, David Hamilton. But unlike Hamilton, Singhal says, his focus is not on just nubile girls but 'classical feminine beauty'.

"My photographs have a 'painterly touch', my work is recognised for that," he says proudly, as he may well be. Singhal is an established calendar artist and he estimates that the total number of calendar reproductions of his photographs and paintings runs into several crores. But, he still feels, 'insecure'. "I come from a middle class family from Meerut. I cannot speak English fluently and I never formally studied painting or photography.

"I do not even fully know my own camera. But I never felt the need either. After all, photography is essentially a question of only how much you want to see and from where." ♦



## ■ *Images*





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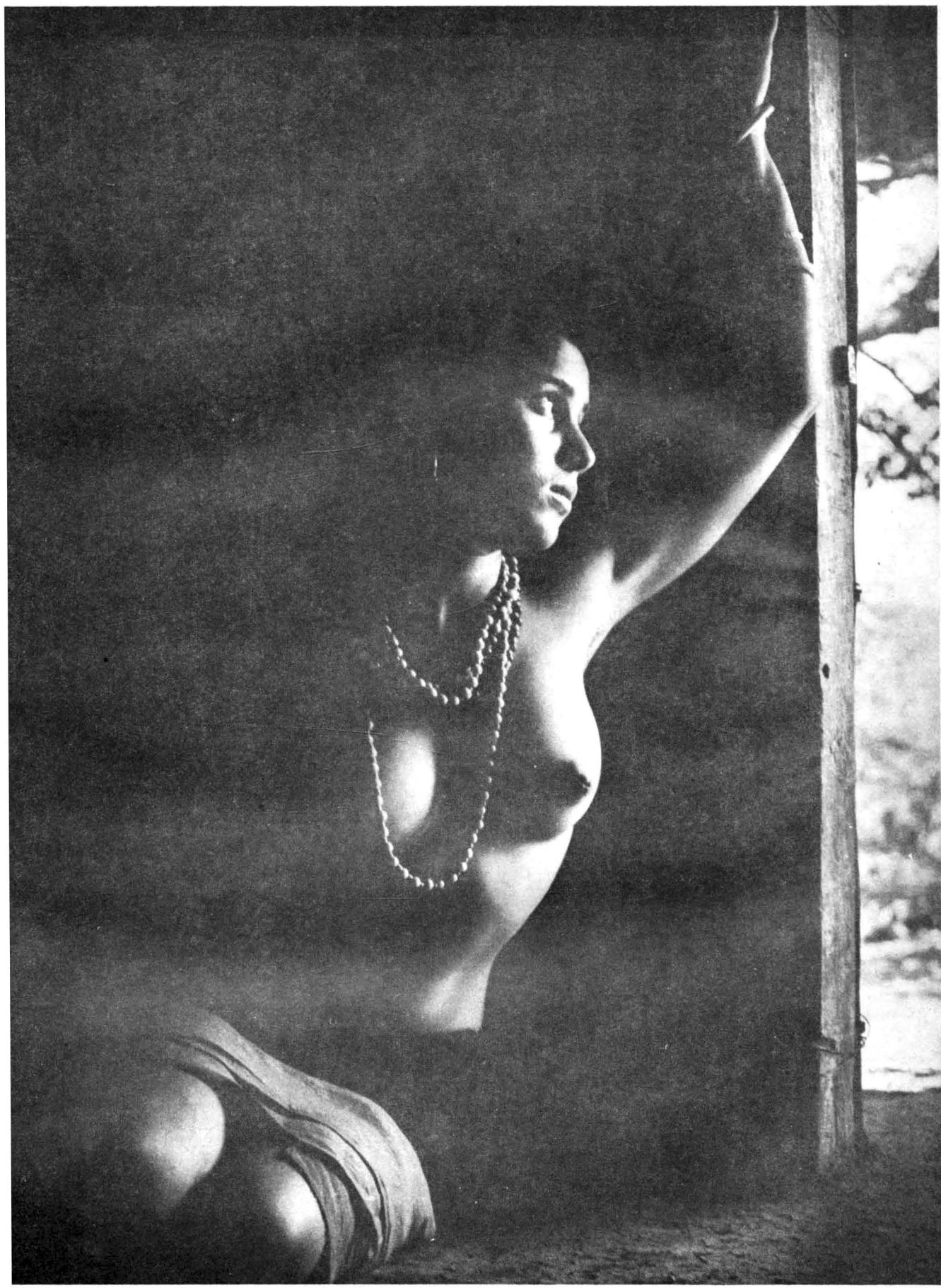


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# ASTROLOGY

## Bejan Daruwalla's Forecasts For November



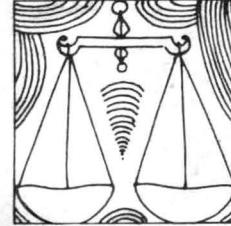
**ARIES:** March 21 to April 20: The sun in your eighth angle will influence your joint-finances, taxes, insurance, religious ties and issues related to wills and legacy. Intimate relationships are foretold at least till November 12. On and after November 23, active plans for a journey, a collaboration, a publicity boost, will be charted out. This trend will continue well into December. There's a marked danger of ill-health and accidents.



**GEMINI:** May 22 to June 21: Except for minor health problems and an additional work load, a favourable month. Partnerships now show signs of blossoming. It could mean wedlock shortly, or an official engagement. However, you could fall out with colleagues and superiors in November. So, why not cool it? Take periodic rest and break your tight working schedule. From November 23 to December 23 a home away from home, research and a tie-in are predicted.



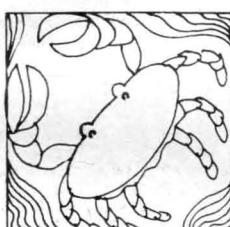
**LEO:** July 23 to August 23: The home base could be hard hit. That means elders, family matters, property issues, could give you a few anxious moments. On the pleasant side, Venus in your third sector from November 9 assures you contacts and partnerships. Should your individual horoscope be strong, it could result in a home away from home and foreign collaborations. It is absolutely certain that in the first 19 days, you will feel restless.



**LIBRA:** September 24 to October 23: Three directions now are indicated: finance and family; trips and ties (especially after the first fortnight); news, messages and journeys. The first fortnight is for finance and family, buying, selling, investing. After that, as Venus shifts in your own sign (it actually does so on the 9th), you will deck yourself good and propah! The last week is for making your major moves.



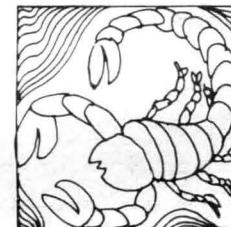
**TAURUS:** April 21 to May 21: A month of slight opposition and upsets, but these can be overcome depending on your inclination and innate nature. Mars is in your fifth angle till the 17th, making you romantically inclined. A legal battle, a confrontation, is not ruled out. There could be a slight money squeeze till the 19th. If you feel things are not going according to plan, bring into play your characteristic patience and stamina.



**CANCER:** June 22 to July 22: A newsy month, a month of exceptional creativity, if only, you let yourself go and trust your intuition. The influence of Mars means you will be reaching out to people and places by varied media of communication and transport. Also deeds and documents will be signed and journeys are foretold. Go all out the first fortnight to make your presence felt. Be seen, heard, noticed. That's the way to success.



**VIRGO:** August 24 to September 23: The duo of Mars-Venus in your sign, helps you to feel the quick pace of life, communicate effectively, crash through a party or a social or a club and win plaudits! News, views, messages, documents, contracts, legacy, and funds neatly sum up the month for you. The last week is the launch-pad for installation, renovation and decoration. This will be one of the busiest months of the year.



**SCORPIO:** October 24 to November 22: Despite the dreaded Sun-Saturn conjunction in your sign, headway can be made in terms of travel, contacts and alliances. It might not be easy, but Scorpio persistency is tremendous and therefore, there's hope. A lot of movement, this month, as Mercury flits in your sign till the 13th. The last week is very definitely for finance, food and family. Health and relations are suspect.



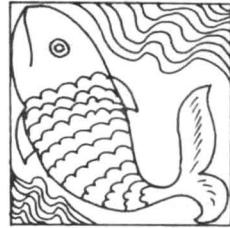
**SAGITTARIUS:** November 23 to December 21: Good in patches, but expenses and introversion, could make it tough for you. You will turn inwards till the 15th, thanks to the new moon effect. After that, you will open out. Links with foreigners, strangers, suspicious characters are foretold. Visits to hospitals, asylums, clinics are your destiny. On and after the 17th, distant lands and new places beckon you. Shady dealings are possible. Your Jupiterian optimism won't see any obstacles in your path, which may be just as well as this could keep your spirits high. Your strong character will draw many.



**CAPRICORN:** December 22 to January 20: Act fast, move rapidly, think quickly and the world will be yours. Boundless energy will go with strong ambition this month and that's the sure way to succeed. Alliances, group meetings, socials, conferences are in store. The secret is in taking the initiative and forging ahead. November is the time to marshall your resources, regroup your forces and attack purposefully. That's the key to it all. Be the leader. Push for all your worth. But you are also advised to control your dictatorial qualities or else you could be clashing with people who are less practical.



**AQUARIUS:** January 27 to February 18: The sun and Mercury in your tenth sector signifies terrific work pressures, a striving towards perfection, health hazards to elders, parents and in-laws. Your enemies will be out to get you but your prestige will not be hit. You will turn the tables on your detractors on and after the 23rd. It is only the first fortnight, which, though eventful, will be exceptionally strenuous, in some cases, shattering. In the work field, anticipate changes; these could be thrust upon you. In a nutshell, your work area and your status are the two flash points in November.



**PISCES:** February 19 to March 20: A period of evolution, progress, intuition and though these are big words, the prediction is not hollow! Journeys, alliances, flights of imagination are predicted. There is a possibility of pipe-dreams and hallucinations too, tours and publicity boosts. Astrologers, psychics, writers, teachers, preachers, swindlers, con-men, admen, politicians, do make it big as Mercury conjuncts Uranus this month. The last seven days are for consolidating your position. In other words, a month of power. Also a good time to re-evaluate your career and personal life and make decisions. ♦

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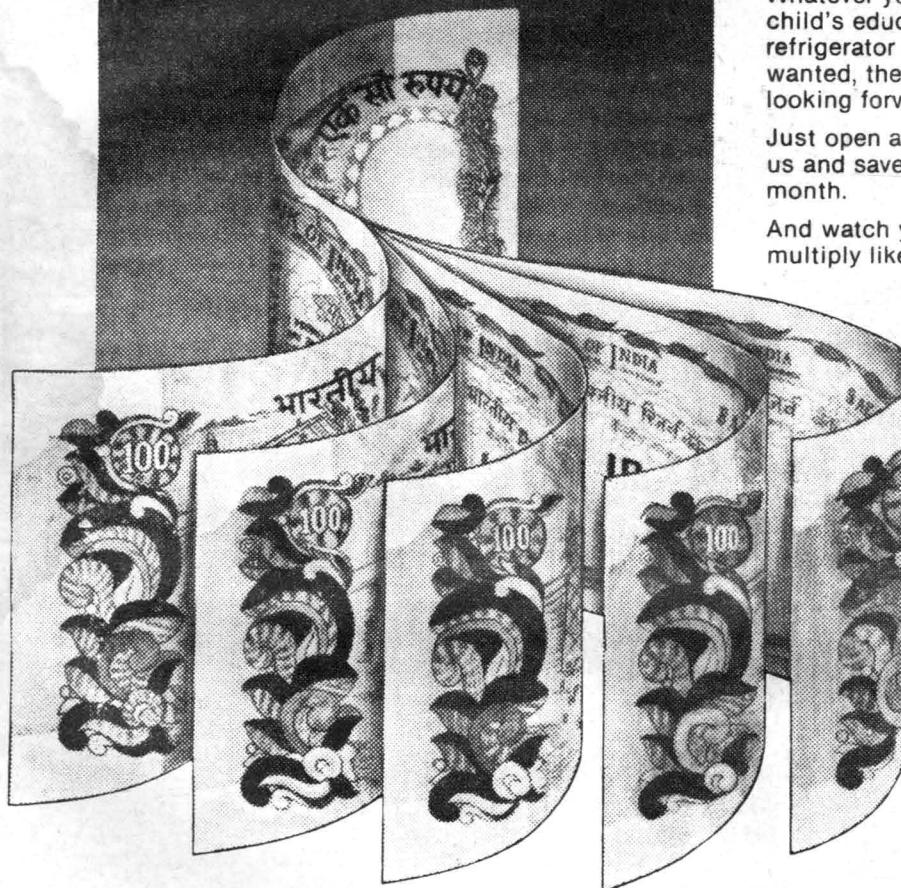
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