

Arun Chacko On Arms • Truman Capote On Tennessee Williams

Sylvie daCunha On Amul's Kurien

imprint

FEBRUARY 1984 • Rs 4

Art Cinema Hits The Jackpot

Rauf Ahmed On The Rise
Of The Small Film

Ram
Jethmalani
Defends
The RSS

Tandon:
The
Computer
Millionaire

Subramaniam
Swamy On
Foreign Spies

Smita Patil

Anil Dharker's Guide To
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PAKISTAN, INCLUDING WHAT IS BANGLADESH TODAY, was created in 1947, as a homeland for the Muslims of British India by dividing this subcontinent. Our failure then, and through the years, as now, to grasp this simple fact, and our failure to proceed from thence on that premise is at the root of our communal and successionist problems today. That we heeded Mahatma Gandhi's and Jawaharlal Nehru's powerful advocacy of secularism for what India was left to us, that the Hindus of India, the majority belonging to the religion of India, are almost embarrassed to profess their faith, that anyone who advocates the cause of Hindus is likely to be branded a communalist, are all consequences that flow from that lapse.

The origins of what we call the regional tendencies, the demand of the Sikhs for special privileges, the threat of some to secede, the not infrequent accusations of Muslims that they are discriminated against, and that always the Hindus are responsible for all communal disturbances, are the consequences of this original lapse. If you concede a homeland to the Muslims and yet go about proclaiming by word and deed that you are more concerned with the welfare of the minority staying behind this side of the new borders than about your main constituents—the Hindus in this case—then why not a separate state for the Sikhs, an autonomous state for the Andhras? runs the argument. Had we, from 1947, secured adequate sanctity for the way of life of all Hindus, emphasising when appropriate or necessary that the heritage of this country is Hindu, then there would have been very little communal dis-harmony in the country after Independence, very little basis for demanding special privileges, and no ground at all for thoughts of secessionist treason.

* * *

THROUGHOUT HISTORY, people at the helm of national affairs and peoples they lead, have ignored what history teaches only at the risk of inviting grave peril. A situation of very grave peril to this republic is developing today in our continuing neglect, continuing suppression and, above all, continuing exploitation of the Harijans of India.

In 1982, some 1,000-odd Harijans of Meenakshipuram, the town in Tamil Nadu which attracts Hindu pilgrims, embraced Islam. Riots followed the conversion. And as is our habit, we forgot Meenakshipuram, the Harijans and the conversions. But the causes that led to the Harijan conversion to Islam—poverty, exploitation, isolation—and the attractions Islam offered—an I-will-show-you-Hindus kind of revenge, the dignity of belonging to a taunting religion and the possibility of landing a job in the Gulf—are a continuing titillation to the Harijan mind. It is not surprising, therefore, that conversions to Islam have continued and are spreading. It is probable that 15,000 or more Harijans have converted to Islam in the South alone to escape stigma and gain employment. How explosive is a conversion that has no connection whatsoever to faith is something I leave to your imagination.

Considering the mischief-making potential of our neighbours and their neighbours in the Gulf and given the vulnerability of the Harijans, it will not be surprising if 100,000 or more Harijans embraced Islam by 1985. Ten years from now, a comparatively well off, vocal community of Harijans will act as an even more powerful beacon to the rest of the community to embrace Islam. The opportunists among them will exploit the others to claim special privileges, even a separate state! And given the strength of their numbers (close to 75 million now) and the total neglect and exploitation of that community of which we are all so guilty, how are we going to deal with the situation then?

Very soon there will be much politicking and many and varied efforts to get the Harijan vote. We have a tragic tradition of making wild promises and even wilder concessions to win votes. Consider the recent loan *melas*. In the tight vote situation prevailing in the country today, the politicians will be even more irresponsible, the candidates will be even more reckless.

If we are to learn anything at all from the danger signals flashing, all political parties ought to get together soon and devise a code of conduct for dealing with the Harijans as voters and as citizens of India, and do something on a massive scale to make them feel secure and give them the dignity and opportunity that is their due also as human beings.

R.V. Pandit

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Letters



The Media Game

I write with reference to your excellent and topical article, *The Rules Of The Media Game*, (December 1983).

Mr Tooshar Pandit's defence of *Sunday* carrying an article by an obvious Swraj Paul mouthpiece, without letting its readers into the crucial facts, is a breath-taking example of the brazen partisan politics indulged in by some of our best media men.

C Antony Louis
Bombay

Your lead article on journalists and their ethics was timely and well-done.

In recent times, thanks to the likes of Shobha Kilachand, glossy journalism has, in particular, sunk to Stygian depths. So far as the recent Kilachand column in the *Weekly* is concerned, she has confirmed to us readers, that there is a paranoid human being under the pretty shell.

But why blame Kilachand alone? What kind of an editor is it who is prepared to spoil the reputation of a journal like the *Weekly* by publishing such rubbish?

G Doctor
Bombay

The lead article focussed on inaccuracies and authenticity—in other words, the need for objectivity in Indian journalism. It is desirable for journalists to strive for objectivity, but their environment and working methods inevitably make absolute objectivity almost impossible to achieve.

Moreover, stealthy suppression of certain news, perhaps due to the respective editorial policies (designed to

serve proprietorial interests) may disallow a journalist to move beyond a stipulated point.

Your article endorses Arun Shourie's suggestion to have a code of ethics for journalists which sounds too idealistic to be put into practice. Furthermore, there is no consistency in the editorial policy among newspapers in India.

CS Krishnamurthy
Madras

Kudos for your article on journalism and ethics. No other newspaper would have dared to touch this 'holy cow'.

The basic cause of unethical behaviour is the poor salaries. In spite of the Palekar Award, journalism continues to be a badly paid profession. The poor salaries combined with the frustration arising out of constantly socialising with people who live ostentatiously makes them vulnerable to bribery.

It is ironical that those who write about the exploitation of others should be themselves exploited.

Veena Shetty
Bombay

The article, *The Rules Of The Media Game*, was topical and very informative. Shirin Mehta and Amrita Shah have very rightly said that honesty, accuracy and fairness are in short supply as far as journalists are concerned. But, are they any better? On reading the article, it was evident that the authors had let their personal prejudices against fellow journalists like Khushwant Singh and Shobha Kilachand creep in most of the time.

Who is taking whom for a ride? The readers are being subjected to all sorts of trash in the name of good journalism. These so-called journalists are sacrificing quality to achieve their own ends. I wish your magazine, which has started afresh, would indulge in less mud-slinging and more objective writing.

N Raju
Hyderabad

With reference to *Rules Of The Media Game*, I would like to add in context with Raipur, that a journalist from the same region came to me some months back. He publishes a weekly from there and told me that he

felt like a king in Raipur/Bilaspur.

One wonders how he could earn a lakh per annum from a weekly which has a circulation of 2,000 and few advertisements. It is high time journalists evolved a code of conduct for themselves, otherwise we too might earn a bad name soon.

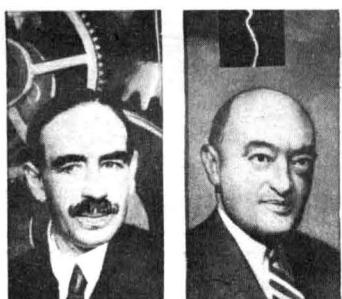
AL Rawal
New Delhi



Money In Films

Travesh Sinha's article (December 1983) was fascinating, enlightening, informative and appropriate. It is the first time that an article about movie hits and flops, their implications and the incomes of our top actors, actresses, directors and music directors has been extensively documented in a periodical.

BN Bose
Jamshedpur



Schumpeter And Keynes

Peter Drucker does a great service to society in recalling the works and theories of Joseph A Schumpeter in the context of the flurry of tributes to John Maynard Keynes on his birth centenary (December 1983).

The role of capital, profit, entrepreneurship, inflation and taxes has

become crucial for the future of mankind. The race of technology is nothing but the frenzied tempo of innovation in production. The concept of economic stability and equilibrium is dead. Inflation has become the hydra-headed monster destabilising governments. Deficit financing has become synonymous to drug addiction. Democracy faces disruption from the very freedom it encourages and capitalism finds that democracy works for its destruction. Schumpeter is vindicated more than Keynes is in the fag end of the 20th century.

In fact, the role of the entrepreneur has asserted itself not only at the macro-level but even at the micro-level—the individual workers themselves. In a successful economy each worker has turned into a little capitalist aspiring to be a bigger capitalist. Marx in his grave must be turning restlessly to see his innocent exploited workers saving to buy shares of those firms making maximum profit.

PK Biswas
West Bengal

Organising The Adivasis

Ashok Gopal's interview with Pradeep Prabhu (December 1983) made interesting reading. It is the same situation with the CPM in Bengal. The CPM has not hesitated to collude with the ruling elite at the Centre to liquidate the Naxalites. The Naxalites represent the free will of a nation and they have courage and a defined goal which does not suit the CPM.

Both capitalism and communism have failed the people. We have to wait and see whether the party-less democracy of Nepal or Pakistan will be a substitute since this system may be said to represent democracy at the grass roots level.

TK Narain
Bangalore

The Ugly Indian

Pranay Gupte's plain-speaking on the phenomenon of Indians being hated all over the world (December 1983) should induce some introspection.

The very people we try to please by going out of our way, such as the Arabs and Africans, hate us the most. On the other hand, we despise those very people who are fair with us, such

as the Americans and the British.

There are half a million Indians in America and a million in Britain but how many are there in the Soviet Union? Yet, we Indians are ever so critical of the West. The touchstone of Indian patriotism these days is anti-Americanism.

ML Haldar
West Bengal

Imprint On Swamy

I was disappointed by the article on Subramaniam Swamy (November 1983). Your efforts in boosting up the image of one who is of virtually no consequence in the Indian political scene shows how far removed from reality the journalists writing in the English language are in our country. Regarding the possibility of Swamy becoming the PM, I can only say, not in this life!

L Kumar
Calcutta

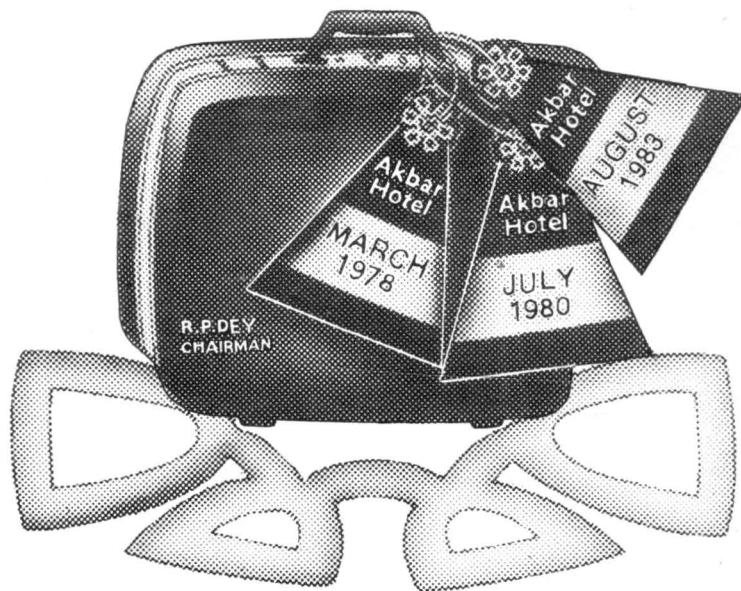


Gang Wars

Your reporter has really done a tremendous job in the article, *The Avengers*, on the gang warfare in Bombay (November 1983). It reads like the script of a Hindi movie even though the facts are based on an authentic series of murders. It only proves the extent of lawlessness in Bombay. The police can do nothing but watch as mere spectators.

Pankaj Mishra
Jhansi

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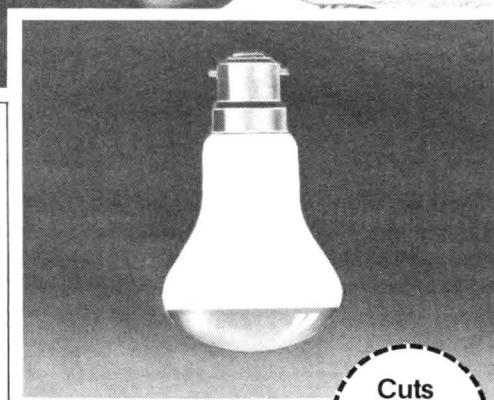
Indian Theatre: Enlarging The Human Spirit?
By *Dina Mehta*

The distinguished playwright asks some worrying questions about English language theatre in India.



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TIGHTLY CLENCHED SPHINCTER

Drunken politicians, Irish bombers, squabbling Gujjus and more.

THE DAY I landed in London, a bomb went off in Harrods. With only ten days to go to Christmas, the Irish Republican Army had decided to export its war to the mainland. The police were warned that unless they hurried, a bomb would go off in a car, parked near a Harrods shop window. No sooner had the officers identified the automobile, than the bomb exploded in their faces. Nearly a dozen people were killed and many more injured.

Somehow such crises tend to bring out the best in the British. A similar Bhindranwale-inspired explosion in Connaught Place, would have sent the good burghers of our capital into hiding for several weeks. But the Brits were far from fazed. In a day's time, the Harrods management had swept away the debris and the store was open for business again. Among the first shoppers was Denis Thatcher, the gin-swilling old-Mill-Hillian husband of Attila the Hen. ("No damned Irishman is going to keep me away from my shopping," harumphed Denis.) And the lights stayed on in Oxford Street and Regent Street as the Christmas rush continued.

While it seems trite to talk of the Dunkirk spirit and all that, the ability of the British to function under pressure remains unequalled. As unemployment rises, as their Prime Minister appears to be losing her grip (her senses, she lost some years ago) and as the value of the pound continues to slide through the floor, the British somehow manage to keep their upper lips stiff and their sphincters tight.

This is Vijay Sahni's second London Diary for Imprint. He is a regular columnist on Mid-day.



UNFORTUNATELY, THE DECLINE in Britain's economic prospects has extended into its political life. The present generation of political leaders is composed of half-wits and windbags. Despite facing the manifestly incompetent Thatcher Government, the Labour Party lost last year's election largely because of its leader, Michael Foot (an old friend of the Nehrus and an enthusiastic defender of the Emergency). Foot's successor, a balding Welshman called Neil Kinnock is more windbag than leader and his front bench not much better.

One result of this decline is that there is much less to laugh about, both in terms of parliamentary wit and drunkenness. Certainly, there will never be a George Brown again.

You remember George Brown, of course? As Foreign Secretary in the Wilson Government, Brown toured the world, getting drunk at every banquet and spitting in the eye of nearly every Head of State. My favourite Brown story concerns his state visit to Venezuela.

In the course of a banquet thrown in his honour, Brown proceeded to get completely smashed. Finally, when the plates (and glasses) had all been removed, the orchestra struck up a tune. Thinking, quite reasonably, that the dancing was about to begin and that, as Chief Guest he ought to lead it, Brown looked around for possible partners. Gazing through an alcoholic haze at what seemed a ravishing creature in a red gown, Brown staggered over. "Beautiful lady in red," he implored. "Will you dance with me?"

"No," replied the object of his attentions. "Firstly, because you are disgustingly drunk. Secondly, because this is not a dance, it is the Venezuelan national anthem. And thirdly, because I am not a beautiful lady in red at all. I am the Bishop of Caracas."

They don't make them like George these days! This lot of politicians is so boring that I've yet to hear a funny story about any of them.

OF COURSE, THERE are enough Indian politicians flying in and out of London to lend some light relief. During the Emergency, Professor DP Chattopadhyaya, our Commerce Minister, was detained for an hour by a Heathrow Airport Immigration man who mistook him for an illegal immigrant. Malicious gossip has it this was particularly ironic because the good professor was, at the time, clutching a brief-

What could be worse than a bunch of squabbling Gujjus? Answer: A bunch of squabbling Gujjus and Sasthi Brata.

case full of bank notes that he had been asked to deliver to Mr Swraj Paul. (Before Chattopadhyaya's lawyers send me a legal notice or Ralph Buultjens writes to complain, let me hasten to add that everyone knows how honest Chattopadhyaya is and no doubt, this apocryphal story is a filthy lie etc, etc.) Near the end of the Emergency, AR Antulay, then a mere Congress General Secretary arrived to address some Indo-Brit function organised by the ubiquitous Mr Paul. He was still rehearsing his speech when Mrs Gandhi declared elections and then, before he could pack his suitcases, he was downed by a heart attack. Finally, he spent the entire 1977 election campaign in a hospital bed in one of London's plusher nursing homes.

Once Janata got in, a new breed of politicians took to visiting London. Raj Narain arrived on a state visit only to discover that the High Commissioner was not waiting on the tarmac to receive him. "Why isn't he here?" he demanded of the unfortunate High Commission official who had been burdened with the task of meeting Mr Narain's plane.

"Well, sir," the official blubbered, "protocol has it that he can't come and receive the Minister of Health. However, he would like you to have tea with him this evening..."

"Nonsense!" bellowed Mr Narain. "I will have tea with you instead. Make all the arrangements." And soon, the poor civil servant ended up playing host to the Minister of Health.

WHEN NO INDIAN politicians turn up in London to lunch with Mr Paul and to shop at Marks and Sparks, the local community provides its own politics. Gujarati will not speak to Bengali, Sindhi will not recognise Marwari and nobody will talk to the Sikhs. Even within the Gujarati community, the divisions are immense. As they say: One Gujarati abroad is a misfit. Two Gujaratis are a 'cultural' organisation and three Gujaratis are two

cultural organisations.

The accuracy of this slightly unkind generalisation was borne out by last year's World Gujarati Conference. The jamboree was the brain-child of Ratilal Chandaria, the sharp, shrewd head of the Chandaria industrial family, who persuaded Gujarat Chief Minister, Madhavsinh Solanki, to inaugurate it. At this stage a band of dissident Gujaratis surfaced in the ethnic media. The most vocal among them were Chhotu Karadia, the influential Editor of *Asian Post*, Ramniklal Solanki, the Editor of a Gujarati paper and Praful Patel, publicity-loving 'leader' of the UK's East African *Gujjus*.

You and I might think that the Conference was uncontroversial enough. After all, what damage could a gathering of mild-mannered, *dhokla*-eating expatriates do to anyone or anything, except perhaps the *dhoklas*? Not so, said Karadia's little band. The whole thing was a ploy on the part of Chandaria's friends to advance their own interests and did not really reflect the interests of the inhabitants of Wembley, Leicester and other parts of Greater Gujarat.

Because of Patel and Karadia's influence, the row soon surfaced in Britain's national press. The divisions in the Labour Party were nothing compared to the divisions in the Asian community, commented *The Standard* (London). Why was Chandaria organising the Conference, the press wanted to know. What did he hope to gain? Perhaps because Ratilal was too complicated a name for Fleet Street sub-editors, the press took to calling him Rockefeller Chandaria.

Finally, the Conference was held on schedule, though Karadia and company kept up their shrill denunciations and Chief Minister, Madhavsinh Solanki, backed out of attending. "We told him not to come," say the dissidents.

"No, no! He was busy with flood relief," insists Rockefeller.

One consequence of this imbroglio was that Karadia's tired and emotional

hack-on-the-spot—Sasthi Brata—who was later fired, tried to maintain that his dismissal was somehow tied up with his attitude towards the Conference.

As they say in London, what could be worse than a bunch of squabbling *Gujjus*? Answer: A bunch of squabbling *Gujjus* and Sasthi Brata.

SIMON HOGGART TELLS the story of British MP Geoffrey Dickens who was pursued by a hideously ugly woman at a fête in his constituency. Wherever Mr Dickens would turn, he would find this horse-faced woman grinning at him. He moved from bingo stall to shooting gallery, but to no avail. She would simply not let him go. Finally, Mr Dickens fled.

The next week, his secretary handed him a letter. It was from the woman. Had Mr Dickens noticed her following him at the fete? She was a great admirer of his and would be eternally grateful if he could send her an autographed picture of himself. At the bottom of the letter, she had signed her name. Below it appeared in brackets, the phrase 'Horse-face'.

Mr Dickens was most impressed. Here was a woman who had been born ugly but had tried nevertheless to come to terms with her appearance. Presumably, 'Horse-face' was a snide term originally used by her critics, which this plucky woman had turned into a nickname.

He decided to go to town. He found a 8" x 10" glossy picture of himself and wrote on it: "Best Wishes to Horse-face." And then, he sent it off to the address provided.

The next day, his secretary mentioned the woman's letter. "Oh," she said, "we got a letter from that ugly woman who followed you around at the fête. She wants a photo. I thought you may have forgotten who she was. So, I wrote 'Horse-face' on the letter to remind you."

It is not known how many votes this gesture cost Mr Dickens. ♦

REPLY

BY RALPH BUULTJENS

CLEARING THE AIR

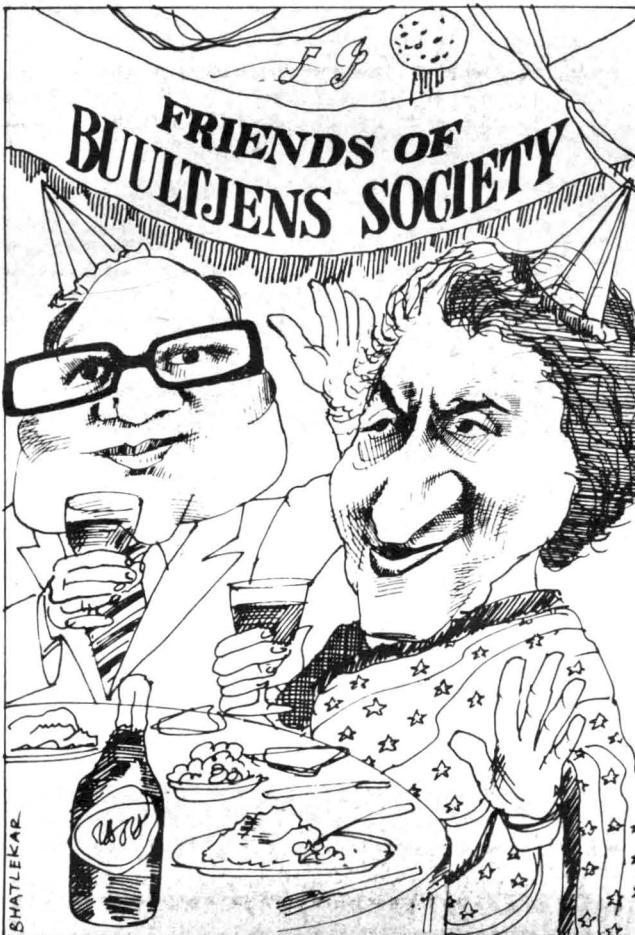
A reply to SNM Abdi's exposé of the Buultjens-Swraj Paul connection.

IN AN ARTICLE in the June 19 issue of *Sunday*, I discussed the DCM-Escorts-Swraj Paul controversy in the context of certain fundamental questions of interest to observers of the Indian economic scene. In the December 1983 issue of *Imprint* there were several references to this article and to me in a box comment written by an ex-employee of *Sunday*, a Mr SNM Abdi. I was saddened to read these observations because they have three qualities not normally associated with *Imprint*—poor research, malicious innuendo and a distortion of fact.

In his comments, Mr Abdi does no analysis whatsoever of the content of my article—no serious mention of its substance, theme or purport. He simply questions my credentials, tries to draw ill-founded conclusions from personal associations I have had for many years and misplaces extracts from a letter written by me to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in September.

It is not for me to say whether I am, as *Sunday* describes, 'an international authority' in certain academic and professional disciplines. Indeed, when Mr Abdi claims that he cannot establish my real identity and that a few people he contacted in Calcutta were unaware of my existence, he may well be right within the circumscribed range of his acquaintances. However, be that as it may, in the past year alone over 30 of my articles and writings have appeared in significant international publications including the *New York Times*, *Worldview* magazine, *International Review*, *Asian Post*, *The Daily*

In keeping with our tradition of allowing a right of reply, we publish Ralph Buultjens's viewpoint on the Sunday controversy.



*News and many others. During the past few months, my writings have been published in the United States, Britain, Japan, Sri Lanka and several other countries (including India—and not only in *Sunday*). In early 1983, *Newsweek* had a feature discussing some of my research—and so have several other publications from time to time. If Mr Abdi was a little better read or a little better informed or had put in some serious background work, he may have come across some of my writings. If he or anyone else is interested, I will be glad to make a bibliography available.*

Although Mr Abdi apparently finds it difficult to digest, I am a member of the academic faculty of several universities—the New School for Social Re-

search, New York University, Pace University Graduate School and Maryknoll Graduate School in New York. In addition, I have affiliations with several institutions of higher education abroad. All this can quite easily be verified, if Mr Abdi had made a minimal effort to do so.

Mr Abdi also makes much of the fact that I am acquainted with both Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Mr Swraj Paul. I have known both of them for several years—a distinction I share with many thousands of others. There is surely nothing unusual or wrong in this. In fact, I have occasionally participated in various public functions with them, events sometimes widely reported in the media in India and abroad. There is no secret in this and I do not see how this affects my professional competence to analyse an issue which falls within my area of study.

Next, Mr Abdi quotes, out of context, an extract from a letter by me to the *Far*

Eastern Economic Review in September 1983. My letter was written to correct a factual misstatement about Prime Minister Nehru and Mrs Gandhi. Both Mr Abdi's inferences and his quotations are slanted to give readers a very wrong impression. He castigates me with being 'deeply in love ... with the Nehrus'. In fact, what inspired this letter was not love of Nehrus, but love of truth—a distinction Mr Abdi appears incapable of appreciating!!

Finally, let me say a word about the article which I wrote for *Sunday* in June. While this evoked Mr Abdi's ire, he has not made a single analytical comment on it. Any well-motivated reader would realise that I was concerned with issues and principles, not

Since I do not know too many people in Calcutta, the cheque was sent to Apeejay for a charitable donation.

personalities. In fact, rather than presenting 'every conceivable argument in favour of investment by non-resident Indians', I went out of my way to caution non-residents against repeating what I consider the immoral and unworthy actions of DCM and Escorts managements. It may be of interest to your readers to know that my *Sunday* article and excerpts from it have been reprinted in other publications. At least two universities (excluding those with which I am affiliated) have used reprints of my articles as part of their international business studies.

As a kind of parting stab, Mr Abdi mentions that *Sunday* paid Rs 300 for this article and that a cheque was not sent through the Reserve Bank of

India, but was mailed c/o Apeejay House (the Paul family headquarters) in Calcutta. What Mr Abdi does not mention or deliberately evades, is this: when I was given to understand that *Sunday* wished to make payment for my article, I directed that any payment be donated to an Indian charity preferably in Calcutta. Since I do not know too many people in Calcutta (a fact Mr Abdi has already established) this cheque was sent c/o Apeejay for such charitable donations. This was done sometime ago and can easily be verified. Consequently, references to Reserve Bank, paucity of payment etc reek of an attempt to mislead—especially as a little further inquiry would have established the correct facts.

Mr Abdi's article illustrates, in full

measure, two of the key points I made in my analysis of the DCM-Escorts controversy for *Sunday*. First, incompetent performers should not be allowed to prey on the general public. Second, those who make public declamations have a responsibility for their actions—in journalism as well as in business! A little more openness to truth, more effective research and hard work, would improve the quality and veracity of Mr Abdi's work. Mr Abdi surely has an obligation to his profession—and to avoid giving readers of **Imprint** such unreal presentations, especially in an article on journalistic ethics!! The readership of **Imprint** hardly deserves the denigration inflicted on them by these seemingly ill-motivated efforts. ♦

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BY ARUN CHACKO

PRESENT ARMS

There's no business like the arms business.

BY REGULARLY SHRILLY raising the bogey of a Pakistani military attack, shortly after showing sympathy for Sind's recent democratic movement, India's political leadership has certainly succeeded in giving neighbouring President Zia a fresh lease of life.

Whether it was by accident or design is unclear. But the hint of Indian involvement in a Pakistani movement is like the kiss of death. And nothing better unifies that country than evidence of an Indian military threat. What better proof for them than hawkish statements from our Prime Minister.

President Zia should be extremely grateful to what he might consider arch enemies, but without whom he might have been long gone. The Russians bailed him out by invading Afghanistan in December 1979, when even the Americans had written him off. And now comes our intervention.

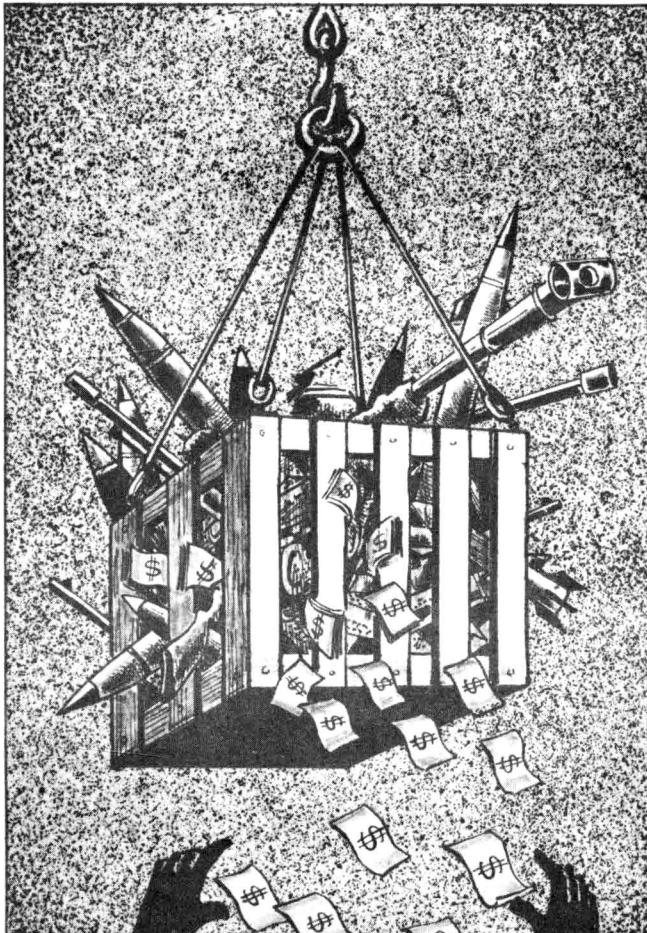
Just like a 'hostile' India is convenient for any Pakistani government beleaguered by domestic problems in order to divert attention and serve as a rallying point, precisely the same goes for India.

No one in his right mind would consider Pakistan a serious military threat, F-16 airplanes and Harpoon missiles notwithstanding. But it remains a convenient whipping-boy especially with imminent elections. More important, it could be an unlimited source of funds for the powers that be on both sides.

* * *

HEIGHTENED TENSIONS FOR bogus

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



or genuine reasons are always a convenient excuse to buy arms, even though they might not be required. The clandestine commission on sales in much of the Third World runs up to ten per cent of the total cost, which is concealed in the selling price borne by the tax payer.

Let us assume an Asian country buys Rs 3,000 crore worth of new military equipment, like many do each year. Then it is reasonable to assume, given the prevailing morality, that roughly Rs 300 crore would go in kickbacks to various decision-makers in the government and the military.

If things stopped at that, matters might conceivably be overlooked. But given a now suspicious neighbour, that is the beginning of a major arms race.

With enormous defence industries to keep going in peacetime, all arms manufacturers encourage further buying. They inform prospective clients of a neighbour's real or imagined purchases of further sophisticated weaponry, artificially create a demand and often sell the same things to both sides.

If nothing else, this provides a convenient excuse for further arms purchases and more commissions, besides keeping the military happy. But it also sows further mistrust. And, in any case the accumulation of weaponry, as Lebanon has so tragically shown us, ultimately leads to war.

This means continuing orders for the arms manufacturers, even more commissions for the ruling elite and greater dependence on the great powers. But falling into this trap, especially for poor countries like ours, has proved catastrophic. That this is no fairy tale scenario is fairly evident from the following early-'70s Colombian example.

The country was trying to reduce its military budget when the local Lockheed representative, trying to sell unnecessary Hercules transport aircraft, wired headquarters that high-ranking Air Force officers would, for a \$100,000 bribe per plane, 'justify their necessity of more equipment in order to guarantee the national security'. He explained that the national security bit was not strictly true but the officers wanted the bribes and for that they were willing to do anything.

It may also be noted that Pakistan used American Patton tanks against us in the 1965 war, while we replied with American Shermans. Both armies used American transport aircraft, which certainly helped US industry but set us

Was the Larkins brothers' espionage related to super power arms rivalry or was it anti-Indian in nature?

back several years. "The arms we supplied," seethed former US Ambassador to India, John K Galbraith, "caused the war. If we had not supplied the arms, Pakistan would not have sought the one thing we wanted above all to avoid: namely a military solution."

* * * *

THE ACTIVE ROLE of governments of arms manufacturing countries in promoting foreign sales, their widespread use of bribery and the horrendous corruption of buying countries' political leadership, military and bureaucracy, was spectacularly brought out in renowned British journalist Anthony Sampson's late-'70s book, *The Arms Bazaar*.

He reported that the British and German authorities allowed a tax deduction on business bribes. Anyone who sold to the Saudis and Iranians had to pay huge commissions to their royal families and Soviet bloc countries happily sold arms to South Africa.

A classic assessment was made by a Los Angeles professor, Peter Nehemkis who previously represented multi-national corporations. "This is an industry which flourishes in corruption," he said. "I have no problems with payments, only with their concealment."

Declared Sampson, "In the Third World, bribes have been much more important, as the means not only of competing with rivals but of enlarging the market. Whatever the ethics and problems of bribery in ordinary business, it has always had a special significance in the arms trade to the Third World...."

Elsewhere he significantly added, "But the real importance of the Lockheed and Northrop revelations lies not so much in the details of pay offs as in the relentless pressures that lay behind them, to sell arms at all costs. The mounting bribes were only the symptoms of the growing frenzy to push weapons into the new markets."

* * * *

IT IS IN the light of all this that the escapades of the Larkins brothers and those of their ilk need to be assessed. The fact that they were high-ranking military officers, albeit retired, should not conceal the fact that they could not have functioned without high-serving accomplices in the defence forces.

The crucial question is whether the espionage they indulged in for their American principals was of an industrial nature, related to superpower arms rivalry or indeed had a definite anti-Indian aspect by providing classified information through the CIA to Pakistan. The mere fact that the CIA was involved does not prove or disprove any of these possibilities.

It is an established fact that, unlike our embassies who shun Indian visitors, foreign missions go all out to help their private sector's exports. The close link between the American military industrial complex, the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency, is too well-known to need repeating.

* * * *

WHILE THE TWO largest countries of the subcontinent continue to furiously arm themselves without much local protest, it is refreshing to find the industrialised world's citizenry rising up against their countries rush headlong towards nuclear disaster. But for various reasons, similar sentiments in the communist bloc countries have gone unreported.

On a recent trip to Romania, it was evident that the resentment and fear about the nuclear arms race was the number one concern of a huge cross-section of people. They were simply obsessed by the problem, which has thus far caused little concern here.

The Romanians were uninterested in scoring propaganda points. Admittedly they are the mavericks of the communist bloc. But they were as free with their criticisms of the Soviets, as they were of the Americans. If a member of the Warsaw Pact can be so objective, what's our problem?



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UNCONVENTIONAL WISDOM

BY SYLVESTER DACUNHA

DRINK A LITRE

The debate over Dr Verghese Kurien continues.

OPERATION FLOOD IS a 'first' anywhere in the world. Nothing like it had ever been conceived or attempted till the late Prime Minister Shastri told V Kurien to create more 'Anands' in India.

Dr Kurien and his planners evolved a blueprint for 18 Anands in the hinterland, milk marketed in Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta and Madras. It also covered the forming of co-operatives; training of management and personnel; construction of dairy plants; establishing transport and communication networks; installing cattle feed factories, artificial insemination centres, veterinary services, etc.

Each of the 18 agro-industrial structures was planned to be handed over to the milk producer co-operatives. This was an immense exercise of co-operation, of asset ownership by the villager. Kurien dubbed his grand design Operation Flood (OF).

In essence, OF was a fully integrated scheme to procure increasing volumes of milk in the countryside for sale in city markets at an economic price to the farmer. This signified a transfer of wealth to the villages, thereby creating a new momentum in the country's dairy output.

But where were the original 'start up' funds to come from? Kurien saw a source of finance in the idle European Economic Community (EEC) butter mountain. He therefore sought the donation of these EEC dairy surpluses. His plan was disarmingly simple. India was then importing dairy commodities on commercial terms to sustain liquid milk supplies in its major cities. Kurien

proposed in its place to secure donated butter oil and skimmed milk powder, to be recombined into milk and sold to city dwellers at commercial prices. The proceeds would be utilised to realising Operation Flood's objectives.

That was easier said than done. Hard-nosed international agencies had to be convinced that this was a viable strategy and not just another ambitious pipe-dream. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) informally agreed, after rounds of tough negotiations with Dr Kurien and his team, to gift dairy commodities then valued at around Rs 100 crore.

What is not generally realised is that the generous aid was promised to India against the personal credentials of V Kurien and the equity of his reputation



Sylvester da Cunha is the Managing Director of Da Cunha Associates. His accounts include Amul.

in the dairy world. The Government of India was not even in the picture at that stage.

As a matter of fact, Kurien had something of a task persuading New Delhi to accept OF programmes, even though he was not requesting an isolated rupee. In 1970, the Government of India finally accepted the proposal and Operation Flood was under way. This article attempts to examine some highlights of OF.

Milk Production Increase: Seen in perspective, Ministry of Agriculture figures confirm that between 1951 and 1961, national milk output grew by a modest 2.9 million tonnes. In the 1961-71 period it dropped to 2.2 million tonnes. Since OF, the 1971-81 figures show a spurt to 9 million tonnes. In the last three years there has been a further rise of 3.1 million tonnes.

Milk procurements of all OF-related dairies in 1970 were less than ten lakh litres a day. By 1983, that had risen to a peak of 62 lakh litres a day—a sixfold growth. (OF has shown that food aid effectively used can substantially increase indigenous production and eliminate the need for imports.)

The growth of dairying since 1970 has also been very impressive, especially when compared to the growth in other sectors.

That's the national picture. On the ground, the story is a happy one too.

What's happened in Bombay is fairly representative. The daily handling capacity of Bombay dairies has gone up from five lakh litres to 15 lakh in 13 years. Till a few years back, half of Bombay's fresh milk came from Anand in Gujarat. Today, almost all of it is generated from Maharashtra's own

Centuries of stagnation are being turned around in a few short years. Before Operation Flood had anyone heard of brand names like 'Vijaya', 'Aavin' and 'Verka'?

milksheds, of which a major share comes from Dhulia and Jalgaon—two of the many 'Anands' created by OF.

Any Bombay housewife will confirm the sea change that is evident in her milk supply. Quotas and ration-cards have been replaced by a situation of plenty. She can have as much milk as she wants—through Operation Flood.

Before Operation Flood, had anyone heard of brand names like 'Vijaya' (Andhra), 'Aavin' (Tamil Nadu), 'Verka' (Punjab)? The flood of milk they have been receiving has prompted them to mount heavy advertising campaigns.

The Delhi householder gets high quality milk on pressing a button at popular Mother Dairy booths—that's Operation Flood. Tetrapak milk came to Bombay before it was introduced in the US. This is 'long-life' milk that needs no refrigeration and is sold from provision shops—no cards, timings or queues. Tetrapak milk will soon be available in Indore, Jaipur and progressively elsewhere.

Centuries of stagnation are being turned around in a few short years. Most of the OF targets have been realised. The few delays that have occurred are because some State Governments were slow to accept the OF pattern. In spite of the delays, the performance exceeded the targets on many counts; but costs stayed within estimates.

Independence From Imports: Before 1970, India was annually importing around 43,000 tonnes of skimmed milk powder, a large part commercially paid in foreign exchange. The average imports during 1970-83 dropped to 35,000 tonnes. Commercial imports have completely stopped since 1975-76. The sale of this gifted powder is helping finance the building of dairy facilities. Gifted commodities will progressively decline as local production increases. Incidentally the indigenous production of *all* milk powders has

risen to 100,000 tonnes from 22,000 tonnes in 1969-70.

Anand Model Replicates: Eighteen new Anand-type co-operative units were planned under OF 1. In fact, 27 were developed. In OF 2, 89 such units have got going, milk being collected from 23,496 village co-operatives. Milk marketing already covers 72 class I cities.

The programme is already markedly successful in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, West Bengal, Orissa, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, Goa, Pondicherry, Andaman and Nicobar.

While Gujarat had a head start in the Dairy Co-operative movements, the OF programme has a broad-based impact across the country. Only 17 per cent of OF milksheds are in Gujarat and 31 per cent are in Village Co-operative Societies. The balance is fast changing as the programme in other states gains momentum.

International Recognition: OF has been periodically evaluated and reviewed by several international agencies including FAO and the World Bank. It is subject to on-going scrutiny by a GOI committee. Across the board, it has been deemed successful. Indeed NDB's technical services are increasingly being sought by UN agencies and bilaterally by individual countries. Dr V Kurien was recently invited by the World Bank to advise on re-creating OF in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. His views have also been sought by the Philippine Government to help re-organise its dairy sector. China has recently signed an agreement with the UN for a programme on the OF model.

Rupees 116 crore were initially generated by milk sales of Operation Flood. It must be remembered that this revenue was *extra to the country*. The funds created by OF 1 were incremental to the nation's dairy wealth. OF has not claimed anything of the

country's limited development funds.

Praising Anand recently, Mrs Indira Gandhi wrote: "This is one of our success stories of which we are all proud. Congratulations on the excellent work done and good wishes for the future. May the spirit of Amul spread far and wide in our country to help, instruct and improve the farmer."

Prosperity To Villages: An income of Rs 500 crore a year is flowing into the pockets of village milk producers. This will further increase.

One line of comment occasionally heard is that rural families are being deprived of nutrition by the lure of cash sales for their milk. Milk is a relatively expensive source of protein and vitamins. Vegetables and legumes are high calibre providers of these nutrients at less cost. The villager is no fool. He sells a major share of his milk at a fair, guaranteed and steady price and utilises the money to buy *dal*, wheat, greens and fruit for his household.

OF has also made a major advance in boosting the productivity of the average milch animal. It's been made possible by the provision of high value feed, fodder, concentrates, licks and better attention to cattle management.

Operation Flood is a world-renowned programme which is chalking impressive progress year after year. But beyond the figures is a multiplier ground-swell, the benefit of which will be enjoyed for decades and centuries to come.

Be that as it may, OF has lately been the target of sudden ill-will from a section of the press. This opposition is believed to have been motivated by various interested lobbies. That's neither here nor there. The press has every right to demand accountability from a public body. It is a healthy situation when commentators can subject official figures to analysis and raise questions, should they need answers. Operation Flood has a duty to provide explanations. The management is equal to it. ♦

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THE RISE OF THE SMALL FILM

By Rauf Ahmed

Why is *Ardh Satya* one of the year's biggest hits? Why have films like *Arth*, *Katha* and *Masoom* done better than all-star cast commercial extravaganzas? A close look at the shift in emphasis in the world's largest film industry.

OME YEARS AGO, ONE SUN-day evening, Manmohan Desai was watching *Maya Darpan* on his TV set. Five minutes ... ten minutes ... 15 minutes ... Suddenly he got up from his seat and hurled the paperweight in his hand at the TV. The screen was in splinters.

"Shit ... it negates the very concept of motion picture ... It doesn't even move physically ... Why can't he turn his film into stills and distribute them?" Manmohan Desai's outburst was representative of the contempt of 'tradition' for something outrageously different in form.

But in 1983, the tables were turned. The commercial film industry, which had all along scoffed at the very men-

tion of the term 'art', was suddenly in for a few rude knocks. Three 'small' films—*Masoom*, *Arth* and *Ardh Satya*—had outgrossed 70 per cent of the films churned out by the mainstream cinema. *Ardh Satya*'s profits were greater than high-priced Amitabh-starers like *Pukar* and *Mahaan* and it stood up to a highly-publicised blockbuster like *Coolie*. In the initial stages, the 'black' tickets of *Ardh Satya* sold at 70 rupees whereas those of *Coolie* were available at 30 rupees.

The writing on the wall was clear. The small film with 'small' stars had come of age. The Indian audience, benumbed for years by the opium of the escapist cinema, was slowly but surely waking up to see through its sham. The people were in no mood to believe that bananas could grow on palm trees

just because Amitabh Bachchan said so. An eloquent testimony to this is the triumph of a simple, realistic film, *Masoom*, over a star-studded, *masala*-ridden *Bandhan Kuchhey Dhaagon Ka*—though both had been adapted from the same original: Erich Segal's *Man, Woman And Child*. The audience was looking for reality.

Om Puri likens the rise of the 'small', 'non-*masala*' film to the emergence of a 'new' political order after the Emergency. "In 1977, the disillusioned voters were looking for a change. For far too long they had been taken for granted. Once they decided to hit back, no amount of controlled propaganda could stop them from pulling down the old government. Similarly people are fed up of the meaningless song and dance *tamasha*. They are

Rauf Ahmed edits Movie.

looking for a change . . .”

The most significant change brought about by *Ardh Satya*, *Masoom* and *Arth* is in the attitude of the distributor. As Hrishikesh Mukherjee says, “*Ardh Satya* has shattered the bogey that a small-budget film cannot make big profits. In future, distributors will be more receptive to small-budget films.”

Ardh Satya also proves that with a little imagination Om Puri could be traded for an Amitabh Bachchan. That the backdrop of a film could be made interesting without flying a 1000-strong unit to Srinagar. And more important, you can invest 15 lakh in a film and rake in one crore!

However, the commercial success of *Masoom*, *Arth* and *Ardh Satya* cannot be construed as a dramatic development in the ‘cinema sense’ of the Indian audience. At best, it can be said to have taken a small step forward. Towards *realism*, which in terms of *good* cinema is only a negative virtue. This step is significant though, because it’s a manifestation of people’s contempt for mindless escapism. This phenomenon is reminiscent of what happened in Hollywood in the wake of the runaway success of Peter Fonda’s *Easy Rider* at the turn of the ’70s. But

Ardh Satya has shattered the bogey that a small-budget film cannot make big profits. In future, distributors will be more receptive to small-budget films.

soon, the ‘new order’ evolved its own formula and bred a new kind of superstar-like Al Pacino, Dustin Hoffman and others.

As Mani Kaul, whose FFC-backed films *Uski Roti*, *Ashaad Ka Ek Din* had raised a major controversy in the early ’70s and been largely responsible for the categorisation of Indian cinema into ‘art’ and ‘commercial’, says, “The success of the middle cinema merely indicates the acceptance of a new form of mass communication. It doesn’t imply qualitative growth. The product of the middle cinema is comparable to the slick, well-researched films made by the big studios in Hollywood. They are ‘good’ because they are ‘authentic’

... but you can’t mistake them for good cinema.”

The middle cinema, in fact, represents a new kind of commercial cinema, with its own formula for titillating the mind. Like the commercial cinema, it also aims at ‘gripping’ the mind rather than leading it through an ‘experience’. But it differs in its exploitative technique. The commercial cinema ‘grips’ through a principle of distraction, which involves chasing the mind from one ‘episode’ to another, through an organised plot—from romance to song, from song to rape, from rape to comedy, from comedy to violence, from violence to romance again and romance to tragedy and so on—until in a cathartic climax, everything is resolved through some mythological principle. The middle cinema has carefully substituted the mindless clichés of the commercial cinema with *surface realism*. The kind of *realism* Govind Nihalani’s *Ardh Satya* proounds.

Notwithstanding the encomiums it has won, *Ardh Satya* is a simplistic attempt at projecting *realism* through a shrewdly constructed plot. At best, the film is a subdued, more refined version of Prakash Mehra’s *Zanjeer* made ten years ago. *Zanjeer* created a phenomenon called The Angry Young Man. And Amitabh Bachchan went on to become a cult figure.

At the time of launching *Zanjeer*, Amitabh was not a star. Perhaps he had fewer fans than Om Puri had at the beginning of *Ardh Satya*. Like Om, he lacked the looks of a conventional film hero and was not considered star material by the industry pundits. Rajesh Khanna, the then superstar, had dismissed the success of *Zanjeer* as a flash in the pan. “Even if *Zanjeer* runs for 100 weeks, it won’t make a damn difference to me. Do you think that *lambu* will be accepted as a



Om Puri and Sadashiv Amrapurkar in *Ardh Satya*.

Zanjeer was not as realistic as Ardh Satya. But there are parallels. In that film, Amitabh was the angry Inspector; here it is Om Puri playing the same role.

romantic hero? *Hero ka style hona chahiye . . .*

Amitabh didn't become a *romantic hero*. But he evolved a style of his own. And a new kind of 'hero' was born. One who was not all white but carried strong negative traits in his personality. The negative traits were imposed on him by society. He fought against the system, sought justice for the 'downtrodden' and even got it with the wave of a *danda*. The man in the street empathised with him. And it marked the beginning of a cult.

Anant Velankar of *Ardh Satya* is only an extension of that hero—a more real one. Also, he's more specific about his targets, perhaps in keeping with the times. He doesn't attack society as a whole, he attacks an institution within it. He's a disillusioned, disgruntled police-officer. He's angry. He wants justice. And very much like Amitabh in *Zanjeer*, he goes about his 'mission' with a wand in hand.

Zanjeer doesn't transcend the surface. Nor does *Ardh Satya*. It stays clear of what's happening *inside* the protagonist; Anant Velankar's conflicts are external. He reacts to situations which are totally 'external'. Even his 'anger' is attributed to his ruffian-looking father. The film also suggests, though obliquely, that the easiest means to reform a corrupt, putrid social system is through brute force as deployed by Anant Velankar. Here's where it becomes reactionary.

In a heroic climax, where Velankar throttles the 'villain' (Rama Shetty) to death, the film loses even its sense of realism. Rama Shetty is representative of a powerful, almost invincible segment of the underworld. He cannot be destroyed by an 'impotent' force like Velankar's! Not without a fight.

Ardh Satya is more refined than *Zanjeer* in that it projects the police force more realistically and takes care

to make the policemen *look* real. In *Zanjeer*, Amitabh's anger manifests itself in outbursts of heroism. In *Ardh Satya* Om Puri flares up and beats up people in a more calculated, more organised manner. *Ardh Satya* also eschews the grandiose sets and cheap trappings of the Prakash Mehra film, though Govind doesn't miss an opportunity to slip in a titillating cabaret number. In short, *Ardh Satya* documents a corrupt system more realistically in spite of making a virtue of violence.

In a sense, *Ardh Satya* takes on from Nihalani's first film: *Aakrosh*. There too, the theme was violence and frustration. There too, the victim of society's unfair structure (Om Puri again) resorted to violence. Both films have used realistic techniques to put across an essentially populist anti-establishment message.

Masoom, also a realistic film, belonged to the class of the well-made

Hollywood commercial. It played diligently on the emotions of the audience through three lovable kids! *Arth*, on the other hand, was a pseudo-intellectual attack on masochism. It played on the vulnerability of the woman ravaged by the male-dominated society—through a projection of the 'battle' of a woman wronged by her erratic husband to find her bearings once again. It was a frontal assault on the 'domestic establishment' and the women in the audience lapped it up with tears in their eyes.

In the 'small' category, Sai Paranjpe's films were different. They were less pretentious. *Chashme Buddoor* and *Katha* were intelligent comedies, unlike those produced by the mainstream cinema devoted to making Rajendranath let slip his striped underwear at every possible point. However, it was Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Golmaal* that first exploded the myth that Indian audiences don't like a full-length comedy. Gulzar's *Angoor* (a remake of one of Bimal Roy's resounding flops, *Do Dooni Char*, based on Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors*) was another full-length comedy that succeeded at the box-office. They were followed by the success of *Shaukeen*, yet another full-length comedy, though a crude one.

Will the trend sustain itself? Will the makers of the Small Film remain 'small'? The answer seems to be an obvious 'no'. As Girish Karnad says, "It is difficult to resist the delights of a big budget." Not that it's a sin to



Shabana and Naseeruddin in *Masoom*: well-made Hollywood commercial.

Even Shyam Benegal seemed to lose his touch in the glitter of the commercial maze. *Mandi* was the work of a disoriented genius—a big budget can be a handicap.

make a big-budget film. But in the past such ambitions of 'small' filmmakers have invariably ended in fiascos. Basu Chatterji's decline and fall is a glaring example. The man who made *Sara Aakaash*, which was a sensitive piece of art and who introduced the small film to the commercial industry through *Choti Si Baat* and *Chit Chor*, gradually degenerated to the level of *Shaukeen* in his bid to make a fast buck. The Basu of today is a shadow of the filmmaker who conceived *Sara Aakaash*.

Even Shyam Benegal seemed to lose his touch in the glitter of the commercial maze. His *Mandi* was reminiscent of the work of a disoriented genius. Govind Nihalani, whose brilliant camera work made a significant contribution to Shyam Benegal's success, seemed out of his depth making a film with Shashi Kapoor (*Vijeta*).

In part, the problem is one of motive. The way Shashi Kapoor tells it, all

his *Kalyug* was trying to do was portray more realistically the world of the Bombay business community. It was never intended to be an art film. But because it was directed by Shyam Benegal, who had mistakenly been typed as an art film director, the critics expected great depth and sensitivity. In the process, they ignored the film's attention to detail, consistency of theme and lively pace. It would probably have fared better had the critics been told that it was just *Dallas* transplanted to Bombay! But because the small cinema is still emerging, nobody—perhaps even the director—is sure of what they are trying to do.

"The success of *Ardh Satya* is an expected fluke," feels the shrewd, sophisticated, well-informed Bunty (Ajitabh) Bachchan, who is generally believed to be the 'brain' behind Amitabh Bachchan's phenomenal rise to fame. "It's part of a cycle . . . such films keep happening once in a way

and cause a sensation. It's too early to relate *Ardh Satya* to a trend."

In the '50s, Bimal Roy's *Do Bigha Zameen*, a 'stark' film with a non-star cast (of Balraj Sahni and Nirupa Roy) did cause a sensation at the box-office. A little later, Hrishikesh Mukherjee, who had been an assistant to Roy, made successful 'small' films like *Anuradha*, *Mem Didi* and *Guddi*. Gulzar made *Mere Apne*, *Parichay*, *Khushboo* and *Meera*. Yash Chopra made *Ittefaq*. In their time, these films were called the 'other cinema', because they were clean (without the *masala*) and no distributor rushed to buy them. These films and a few others like *Anand* and *Namak Haram* (with restricted *masala*) found distribution outlets thanks to the initiative of the Sippys—NC Sippy and his son Romu Sippy. (Romu recently produced *Sadma* and released *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*.)

About the time these films started gaining acceptance, the Film Finance Corporation decided to finance a few talented directors from the FTII to make creative films. This was backed by the writings of Mr Bikram Singh, the then film critic of *The Times of India* and a few others who took up cudgels for committed young filmmakers like Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani. This brought in a lot of notoriety both to Mr Singh and to the films of Kaul and Shahani, which were derided by the commercial film industry as 'motionless motion pictures'.

The die had been cast. The discussion generated by Kaul's *Uski Roti* and Shahani's *Maya Darpan* and the success of FFC-backed films like Mrinal Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* and Basu Chatterji's *Sara Aakaash* did set off a movement—though a very small one. More small films were made, partly because of the 'creative urge' of a few talented directors and partly because they meant stardom of a unique kind. Most of these films, even though they were esoteric exercises in futility, found preview-theatre audiences, because of their snob value. A time came when even liftmen and taxi drivers came up with reactions like: "Saab film bahut achchi hai lekin aam janata ke liye nahin hai."

Then came *Masoom* . . . *Arth* . . . and *Ardh Satya*. Sparks began to fly once again. As Kaul points out, "These films are not to be taken lightly. They will gradually displace the old order." With their ability to exploit an audience in search of realism.



Om Puri in *Aakrosh*: conveying an essentially anti-establishment message.

It is worth making a distinction between the middle class audiences that *Masoom* and *Katha* have attracted and *Ardh Satya*'s mass audiences.

"Their task is easier," as a distributor explains, "because their financial stakes are low." A star-cast film, sold at 60 lakh per territory, needs to make 3.6 crore to break even. Whereas a *Jaané Bhi Do Yaaro*, produced with 10 lakh and sold at 3.5 lakh per territory, needs to make a mere 21 lakh to break even. If it runs, it'll show a greater percentage of profits.

The financial factor cannot be dismissed too lightly. The Hindi cinema deals in risk—over half of all films made every year do not recover their investment. So far, distributors and producers tend to believe that if they spend lots of money, they can be assured of a hit. But now, so many star-cast films

are flopping that small films seem a safer bet.

However, it remains to be seen if more 'small' films can achieve the kind of success achieved by *Ardh Satya*. At the moment, the phenomenal success of Govind Nihalani's film appears a fluke, as Ajitabh Bachchan says. It's not an 'art' film by any standards. It's a *grim* film which soft sells the accepted commercial trappings like violence and *aurat ki izzat* in a restrained manner. If *Ardh Satya* had been made with Amitabh Bachchan, it would have probably raked in two crore per territory as against the expected 40 lakh!

Also, it has hit the screen at a time when anti-establishment films are in

vogue. *Meri Awaaz Suno*, *Andhaa Kanoon*, *Mujhe Insaaf Chahiye*, *Meri Adaalat* have all found ready acceptance because, like *Ardh Satya*, they appeal to the suppressed anger in the average Indian, who finds himself too impotent to hit back at the corrupt system he's a part of. The 'rebellious' hero of the 'anti-establishment film' is leading him to a vicarious catharsis!

Nevertheless, it is worth making a distinction between the *Ardh Satya* kind of small film and the cinema of Sai Paranjpe and Shekhar Kapoor. Both *Katha* and *Masoom* appealed to essentially urban, middle class audiences. They were films without the crude *masala* trappings of the Manmohan Desai-style cinema and of them, *Masoom* certainly tackled a daring theme; a couple comes to terms with the husband's illegitimate child. But they were not films made with the *Coolie-Amar Akbar Anthony* market in mind. Rather, they were the logical successors to the films of Hrishikesh Mukherjee and Gulzar—middle-brow, middle class entertainment.

That such films should do well and that producers should no longer have to pander to the lowest common denominator is, of course, a good thing. But, does it mark a shift away from the formula block-buster? Or are we simply going to have a situation in which the mass market, *masala*-oriented cinema coexists peacefully with a slightly more up-market middle class cinema?

The significance of the success of *Ardh Satya* is that it does not belong to this kind of cinema. The crowds that jostle and hustle for its black market tickets are not white-collar workers and clerks on their day off. Rather they are the mill-workers and rickshaw-pullers who would normally have gone and seen *Pukar* or *Coolie*. Though it is possible to overstate the case, *Ardh Satya* is, in a sense, the first 'art' film to break into the mass market.

Of course, as I have shown, it is an 'art' film only in the sense that it portrays a grimmer reality. But nevertheless, despite its thematic compromises and its superficiality, nobody can deny that it has proved one thing: it is no longer necessary to gift-wrap reality in gaudy commercial packaging to hit the mass market.

That, in itself, is significant. *Ardh Satya* may not be the new *Pather Panchali* but it is, within its context, a remarkable achievement, a battle half-won. Or if you like: a half-truth. ♦



Naseeruddin Shah and Farooque Shaikh in *Katha: intelligent comedy*.

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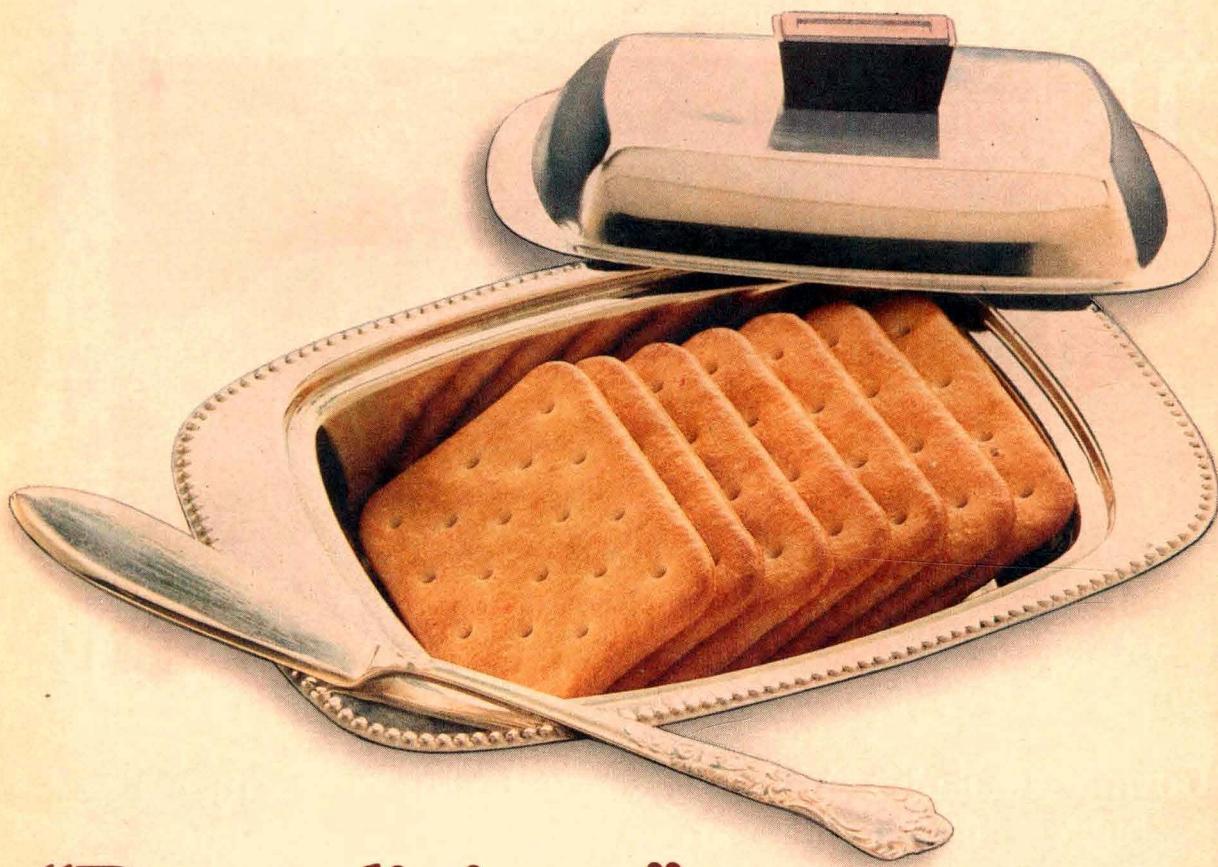
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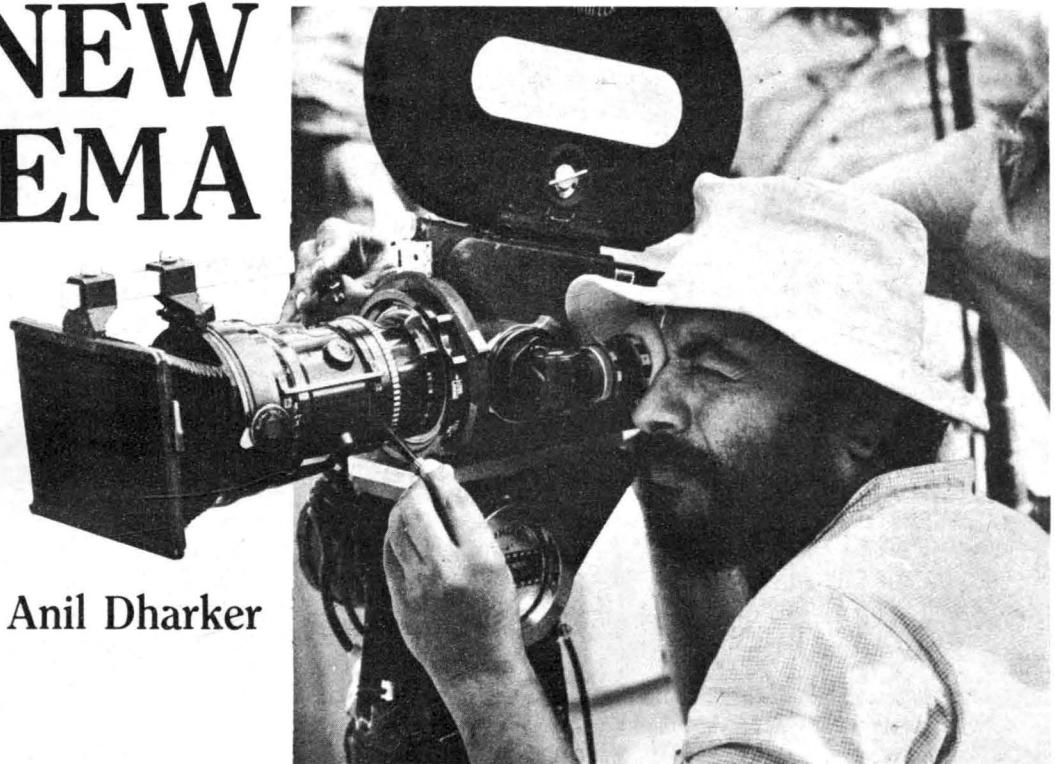


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A GUIDE TO THE NEW CINEMA



By Anil Dharker

Govind Nihalani's *Ardh Satya* may be the New Cinema's biggest hit but there are other equally good films. Imprint offers a guide to the best directors of the parallel cinema and their work.

AND GOD SAID, "LET THERE be light!" and there was Ray. In any Bible of the Indian New Wave, that must be the genesis. Thirty years after he made *Pather Panchali*, Satyajit Ray may no longer provide the immediate inspiration for today's filmmakers but for many years he was the only sane voice in the wilderness of Indian cinema.

The making of *Panchali* too was a classic example of a New Wave film: Ray, with no qualification in filmmaking except a burning passion and with no money to make the film except his own, starts off with a group of friends with no experience but unlimited en-

thusiasm. (Who would now believe that Subrata Mitra, widely regarded as India's best cinematographer, had not till then held a camera or that the late Bansi Chandragupta, the country's best art director, had never worked on a film set before?)

Satyajit Ray has not, in the formal sense, been the leader of the New Wave movement. That's partly because there hasn't been an organised movement here as in the French *nouvelle vague* and also, because temperamentally, Ray is aloof and not given to moving in packs. But by any moral reckoning, he is indisputably the leader: the man who brought real glitter to the fake sheen of the Indian film industry and in doing so, showed the world that Indian cinema was not just high camp.

Two other directors are now instant-

ly recognisable in the international film circuit: Mrinal Sen, from Calcutta and Shyam Benegal, originally from Hyderabad, now very much of Bombay.

MRINAL SEN

ALTHOUGH IT WAS MADE IN 1969, 14 years after *Pather Panchali*, many take Sen's *Bhuvan Shome* as the starting point of the New Wave. It wasn't Sen's first film (he had, in fact, made his first feature *Raat Bhore* in 1956 and completed seven other films before *Shome*) but it was his first in Hindi. And it worked, artistically and commercially. And a breakthrough in the language of Bombay Babylon was important; the Bengalis were slightly crazy anyway,

Anil Dharker edits Debonair and is a well-known film critic.



Mrinal Sen: starting the New Wave.

you would expect them to flock to *Pather Panchali* and films of that ilk, but Hindi? Seduce Hindi audiences from heroes and villians, bosoms and midriffs, songs and dances? And seduce them with grey rural tales in black and white?

Bhuvan Shome did just that. And both Sen and the New Wave haven't looked back.

Mrinal Sen's films after *Shome* were explicitly political. His ideology—left-wing (given Indian reality can there be any other?)—was stridently evident in his films. Think of *Ek Adhuri Kahani* (1971), *Interview, Calcutta 71*, *Chorus* and all the other films upto *Parashuram*

made in 1978 and you find his political views written strongly across them. None of the films become didactic—Sen is too ebullient a character to allow that—but, through freeze frames, negative shots, flashbacks, Brechtian distancing, they hammer their message at you. Their exhilarating inventiveness carries you forward, even though much of you rebels against so much gimmickry.

Since then there has been a mellowing. Sen's films have begun to show a subtlety absent before. And astonishingly, the once angry young man as he enters old age (at an energetic 61, he is not really old at all) has discovered a mature understanding of the human predicament; he is now willing even to forgive the trespassers for they know not what they do. In *Khandahar*, his latest film, Subhash, the photographer, ultimately shirks responsibility by hiding behind his lens but he has been allowed the gesture that redeems his seeming callousness. In their 60s, Ray and Sen—the two giants of Indian cinema and at one time its irreconcilables—have moved closer to each other. It's another matter that in this reconciliation, Ray's position hasn't changed at all.

SHYAM BENEGAL

SHYAM BENEGAL, THE THIRD of the triumvirate to gain international recognition, burst on the scene in 1973 with *Ankur*. Audi-



Shyam Benegal: showed a startling control over the medium in *Ankur*.

Like most Indian filmmakers, Benegal who is city-based and Westernised, chose to make films about the rural poor.

ences were surprised by his control over the medium, startling for a first film. But Benegal was that rare bird, the veteran novitiate: he had already made 600 commercials and 30 documentaries before coming to *Ankur*.

Of the three filmmakers, Benegal has been the most adventurous. His first three films, *Ankur*, *Nishant* and *Manthan*, formed a trilogy of rural exploitation. In that sense he has followed the path of most Indian filmmakers who, though they themselves were city-based and often Westernised, chose to make films about the rural poor, the area where our most deprived and most exploited, live.

Bhumika, made in 1977, was placed in a city (Bombay). Through it came to the foreground a concern for women which could be seen in the backdrop of his earlier films. Benegal's heroines were flesh and blood creatures and the heroine of *Bhumika*, based on the Marathi actress Hansa Wadkar, was more flesh than the conventions of Indian cinema have hitherto allowed.

The later *Kalyug* had her counterpart in the character played by Rekha. Audiences in the North blanched at the suggested liaison between her and her brother-in-law: what may be right for the *Mahabharata* is not necessarily right for cinema heroines. Benegal has also made *Junoon*, a tale of obsessive love during the Mutiny of 1857 and *Mandi*, a satirical look at society observed through the goings-on in a brothel.

The action of *Ankur*, *Nishant* and *Mandi* takes place in South India, near Benegal's birthplace, Hyderabad. Yet, because his films are in Hindi and his tone is cosmopolitan, Benegal is not regarded as a 'son of the soil' in official South Indian film circles. Nor would, I imagine, Aravindan, Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Girish Karnad—directors whose works are firmly placed in that



side of the country but which transcend any narrow chauvinistic considerations by their universality.

G ARAVINDAN

G ARAVINDAN, A LARGE, bearded man in his 40s is a strange mixture: cartoonist, painter, musician, writer and—inexplicably—bureaucrat on the Kerala Rubber Board. Except for the last (unless it helps in managing his films?) these talents clearly show themselves in his movies. The most noticeable quality is his visual sense; you will search hard to find a careless image in any of his films. Sometimes this emphasis is carried to an extreme: the camera lingers longer than it ought. But the cumulative effect of these images and a certain ambiguity in tone lends a haunting mysticism to many of his films (notably *Esthappan* made in 1979). His best film is still the 1978 *Thampu*, which looks into the life of circus performers as they pitch their tent in a village. The documentary style is deceptive; the film in fact, is full of poetic charm.

ADOOR GOPALAKRISHNAN

A RAVINDAN TAKES PRIDE in being entirely self-taught in the art of filmmaking (he stepped into a film school for the first time when asked to give a lecture). Adoor Gopalakrishnan, on the other hand is an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) in Pune. Instead of wailing about the iniquities of the system, Gopalakrishnan after graduation, decided to set up a parallel one. The Chitralekha Film Co-operation got together like-minded film technicians and today provides equipment, studio and projection facilities.

That feat alone would have ensured Gopalakrishnan an honoured place in

the New Wave. Adoor went one better. He's made three remarkable films: *Swayamwaram*, a story of eloping lovers facing harsh financial truths after the first flush of love; *Kodiyettam* (The Ascent) about a man coming to terms with himself and *Elippathayam* (The Mouse Trap) which won a rare British Film Institute award. Gopalakrishnan's output is meagre (the three films have come in 15 years) but that's because, he has said, "I allow my films to grow organically." He's also a perfectionist and that usually doesn't come quickly.

GIRISH KARNAD

G OPALAKRISHNAN AND Aravindan work in Malayalam, Girish Karnad in Kannada. His background is remarkably cosmopolitan, something which bothered him in his younger days. It doesn't now because he has made the best of a mixture of Kannada and Marathi culture and an English education at Oxford. He started as a playwright (his *Tughlak* is one of the most-performed English plays in India) and still continues to write for the theatre, but his films are in no way theatrical. In fact, *Kaadu* (1978), the story of a village, observed through the eyes of a ten-year-old, has the richness of a novel transformed effortlessly into cinema. His other films are *Vamsha Vriksha* (1971), *Godhuli* (1977) and *Ondanondu Kaladilli* (1973), a tribute to a Karnad hero, Akire Kurosawa and India's first martial arts movie (the martial arts are pure Kerala, not Hong Kong).



Aravindan: most noticeable quality is his visual sense.



Gopalakrishnan: a perfectionist.

KUMAR SHAHANI

P OSSIBLY ONLY ARAVINDAN of all these directors regards the story as unimportant; for the others, the tale is the thing. The joy lies in the story's slow unfolding and the minute observation that accompanies its telling. These directors thus belong to what one could call a cinematically literary tradition in the best sense. But only Aravindan, Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul have tried to explore the medium of cinema itself.

Shahani's *Maya Darpan* is possibly the one film which most single-mindedly tried to do this. The 'story' dealt with the attempts to confine a young woman's spirit by her authoritarian

father and her final liberation. Even this brief summary conveys more of a story than the film. Shahani used colour, framing, editing, rhythm and sounds to convey the oppressive atmosphere of the film; audiences found the film too stifling. *Darpan* was received with remarkable hostility and that resulted in Shahani not making another feature for ten years. Fortunately, the National Film Development Corporation came to the rescue and the director has just completed *Tarang*. Possibly the bitterness of the ten empty years caused Shahani to take a story straight out of a Bombay formula film and then turn it on its head with distancing asides.

MANI KAUL

A VOCIFEROUS HOSTILITY TO his first film *Uski Roti* didn't stop Mani Kaul from making other features. He followed it up with *Ashaad Ka Ek Din* and *Duvidha*, the latter made in 16 mm colour for the ridiculously low figure (even for 1973) of Rs 70,000. Kaul's problem was not to find backers but to come to terms with himself. Sometimes his obfuscations seemed to be there for themselves; the poetry in his images—and there certainly was poetry—seemed to repeat its own lines. With his last movie, *Satah Se Uthata Aadmi*, made in 1980, Kaul appears to have rescued himself from the trap he had fallen into. Based on the texts of the great Hindi writer, Muktibodh, the film has no formal plot. *Aadmi* consciously denies the theory of montage; each shot is complete in itself.



Mohapatra: a sensitive filmmaker.

Ardh Satya's success—both critical and commercial—has shaken up the Indian film industry.

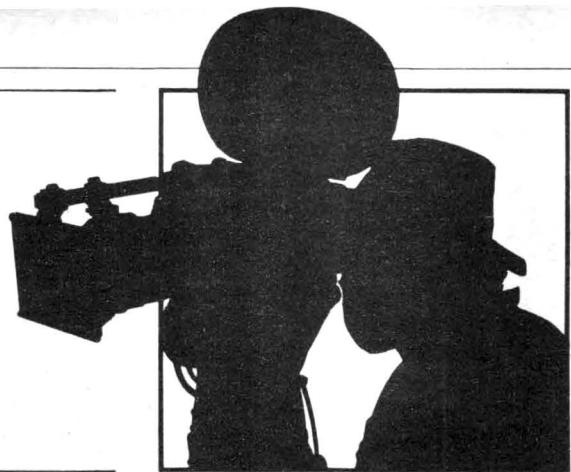
GOVIND NIHALANI

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CINEMATOGRAPHER KK Mahajan has been important to Mrinal Sen, Kumar Shahani and Mani Kaul; Nihalani's has been important to Shyam Benegal, both collaborating on all Benegal films until *Mandi*. There was no break up when *Mandi* came around; it was just that Nihalani had himself turned director.

Aakrosh, dealing ostensibly with a case of a miscarriage of justice involving a tribal, was an indictment of our whole system and the incongruity of a British system in our environment. It had the tension of a thriller and captured the popular imagination. But Nihalani's third feature (he directed a less successful film for Shashi Kapoor, *Vijeta*) currently running to packed houses in many theatres, has been an even greater success. *Ardh Satya* deals again with our iniquitous system of justice, this time through the story of a sadistic cop. The film's success—both critical and commercial—has been so remarkable that it has shaken up the Indian film industry.

SAEED MIRZA

AN ARTICULATE AND ENERGETIC director, often called the Angry Young Man of Indian Cinema (a label, one suspects, that he doesn't mind) Mirza has just completed his third feature, as yet untitled. His first two films *Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastaan* and *Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai* were notable for more than their long titles. The first dealt with the corruption of a rich young man who abandons his idealism without too much persuasion; in the second, Mirza accurately recreates the milieu of a Goan Catholic family living in Bombay and Pinto's futile bid to transcend it. *Albert Pinto*'s success lay in that, as well as the utter credibility of



its characters; Albert Pinto himself was an unforgettable creation.

MS SATHYU

HE HAS NEVER QUITE LIVED up to the promise of his first film. But *Garm Hava* must remain one of the most poignant films ever made in Indian cinema. It captured movingly the tragedy of Partition through a Muslim family living in Agra which escapes any overt violence. But the sensitivity with which the dilemma of a family faced with the choice of Pakistan is handled and the acting of Balraj Sahni—one of the best performances by any actor in Indian films—makes *Garm Hava* a landmark. Two of Sathyu's films now await release: *Bara* in its Hindi version and *Kahan Kahan Se Guzar Gaya*.

There are also some directors who have only made their first films but each film is accomplished enough to speak of considerable talent. Ketan Mehta must lead this list with his remarkable *Bhavni Bhavai*. Then there's Kundan Shah with his gift for slapstick and satire (*Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro*) and Nirad Mohapatra with his sensitive *Maya Miriga*, recently shown in Filmotsav'84.

This list may not be complete. It leaves out, for example, a few directors like Utpalendu Chakraborty (whose film *Chokh* won enormous acclaim) because I haven't seen their films. But it's enough to go on. Old Masters continue to work with increasing maturity, younger filmmakers are exploring newer subjects and styles with a growing confidence. If there's a black cloud to this silver lining, it has to do with our cinema still not letting go an unquestioned faith in narrative and a certain old-fashionedness in style. Perhaps it has something to do with these filmmakers' trust in their audience. But we too are growing up. ♦



OM PURI ON SMITA PATIL



An actor's view of a talented actress.

IFIRST MET SMITA IN SHYAM Benegal's office during her *Bhumika* days. Shyam had called me over to discuss my doing a role in the film and Smita and Naseeruddin Shah were sitting there when I landed up. Smita and I were introduced to each other and we hit it off famously. She said, "Hullo!" and I said, "Hullo!" Then she got down to talking seriously and uninterrupted with Naseer and I got down to talking business with Shyam, thus managing to fix up my debut in Hindi films.

Was I just a little bit nervy about acting in a film which starred Smita? After all, she was already a 'name' and I was a nobody. Was I in awe of her? Was I excited?

Not really.

Because all I had in *Bhumika* was a one-and-a-half minute role, which didn't involve Smita for even half a minute. (Who'd have thought that at a later date, in *Aakrosh*, we'd be so closely associated for a love scene—but more of that later!)

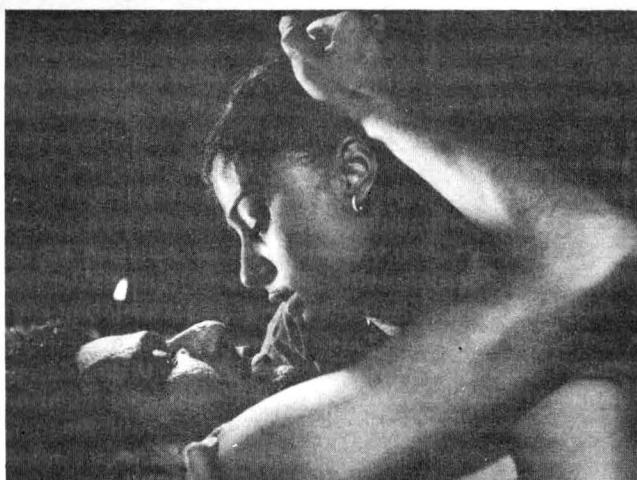
Frankly speaking, when I saw *Bhumika*, I wasn't so excited about Smita's performance—towards the end of the film, it was quite erratic. Her characterisation just didn't grow. And I was disappointed, because earlier, I'd seen her in *Nishant* and I'd thought she was brilliant. Her performance was so controlled. She was perfect!

In *Manthan*, too, she was superb. And in *Bhavni Bhavai*, I think she came up with an unsurpassable performance. In fact, I thought that she ought to have won an award for

Bhavai and not for *Chakra*, as she did. As for *Chakra* and her performance in it—well, let's not say anything about it.

It may seem odd that she can rise to ecstatic heights of acting in some films and sink to abysmal depths in others. But I think that's what Smita's all about. She's not consistent. She doesn't seem to be professional about her job. She's not a careerist. She's irresponsible in a pleasant way. She wandered into films and is still enjoying the whole thing to the hilt. She's a child, reacting yet by instinct. And she can still turn out marvellous performances. When she becomes a 'woman', there will be no holding her back.

Comparisons are odious, no doubt, but one can't help it when you are dealing with such a small, closely-knit world as that of small films. Shabana, unlike Smita, is cool on calculation—she has the cold fire of frozen carbon dioxide (the fire being her talent). She charts out her role. So, you'll never find a chink in her armour, be it in 'art' films or 'commercial' films.



"Smita helped me manage the love scene in *Aakrosh*."

Smita helps you do well because she's so pleasant on the sets. You feel very comfortable when she's around. Everyone relaxes and so you can get into your scene with great ease. There's no tension about having to get it right the first time, about having to 'steal scenes', etc. I'm such a shy guy, that if Smita hadn't put me at ease by being most unconcerned and taking everything in her stride, I'd never have managed to get through that torrid 'love scene' in *Aakrosh*.

Smita really touched me once on the sets of *Ardh Satya*. It was while we were shooting that last scene between us, where Velankar and his girl-friend are on the verge of breaking up. Everything was going well as far as the scene went. I was working myself up beautifully. Smita was responding magnificently.

Director Govind Nihalani ordered, "Take!" When the scene got over, I (playing Inspector Velankar) was on the verge of tears. I thought I'd done a fantastic job. Then Govind came up and

told me, "Great, magar ek aur shot ho jaye ... iss bar zara zyada ... zara ... genuine emotion lana ..."

I broke down. For Velankar. For myself.

No one could console me. Then Smita put her hand out across the table and touched me understandingly on the wrist. She didn't say anything. She just *felt* and she understood.

I stopped crying. And went out and did the scene just the way Govind wanted it.



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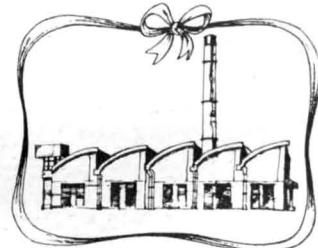
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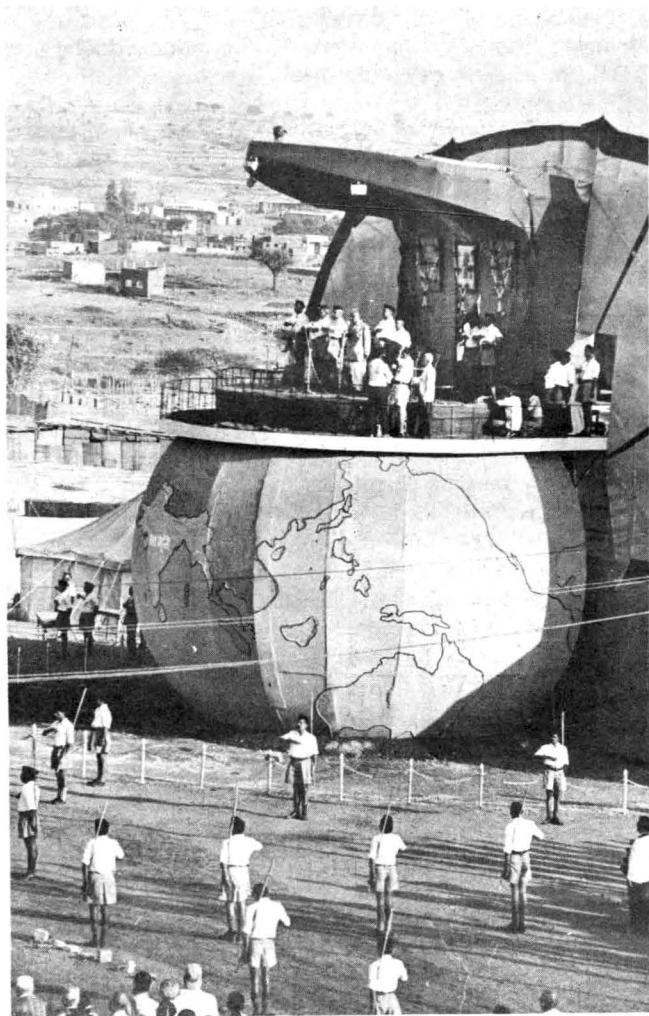
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IN DEFENCE OF THE RSS

Cultural organisation or Fascist front? Ram Jethmalani replies to AG Noorani's attack on the RSS.



MRG AG NOORANI ON THE RSS MAKES interesting reading. As usual, his article is copiously documented and reasoned with a lawyer's ingenuity. A footnote declares that it marks the beginning of a debate on the RSS and I am supposed to reply to Mr Noorani. I would not dream of crossing swords with an illustrious journalist and a very dear friend at that. I neither wish to initiate a debate nor enter into any kind of polemics with him.

Besides, I cannot presume to speak for the RSS. I have never belonged to it as a leader or even as a volunteer. My contact with it is scanty and only twice in my life have I addressed its *shakhas* (branches). I am not sure that what I said was relished by the rank and file or by the leadership. My first contact came at the time of Partition when I was still in Karachi shortly before my migration. The Hindu population lived every moment in fear of mayhem and murder. The brave boys of the RSS used to at least put up some semblance of a will to defend and go down fighting. Whether they saved any Hindu lives I do not know but the overall impact was one of admiration and gratitude.

In 1971, I happened to appear before the Madon Commission enquiring into the Bhiwandi and Jalgaon riots. I acquired some intimate knowledge of how and why the riots took place and the role in the riots of the alleged Hindu communalists. I later contested the Parliamentary elections from the Ulhasnagar-Bhiwandi constituency. Both the Jana Sangh and Shiv Sena had supported my independent candidature. I had some opportunity to observe the attitudes and behaviour of the RSS boys. I do not recall having met any leaders at that time. I never joined the Jana

Ram Jethmalani is the Vice President of the Bharatiya Janata Party and a leading lawyer.

It would be grossly unfair to blame the entire Muslim community for the actions of a single demented Muslim.



Hyderabad: after a communal riot.

Sangh and I have got into the Bharatiya Janata Party via the Janata Party which split in April 1980. I joined it because of my assessment that in comparative terms, its leaders possessed tremendous political integrity which was and remains the paramount need of the day. I knew that some of its leaders belonged to the RSS. This did not deter me in the least. I was looking for patriotism and honesty and by and large, I found both. This is not to be blind to its occasional blemishes.

IHAD A CONTRIBUTION TO MAKE TOWARDS THE drafting of its Constitution as well as the enunciation of its basic objectives. The latter were initially published in the form of a basic policy statement under the title: *Our Five Commitments*. The Party accepted positive secularism based on moral values as one of them. The document declared: "Secularism of the Congress has been totally immoral and opportunistic and a fraud played on the

people of this country because it increasingly communalised the Indian politics. Communal vote banks have come to play a very crucial role in the Indian electoral process. This cancer of Indian politics has to be fought because it strikes at the very root of nationalism and national integration. BJP would ensure full protection of the life and property of the minorities.

"Besides, secularism has been reduced to a totally negative concept. The Congress never gave any positive connotation to secularism as was given to it by Gandhiji. Secularism does not merely imply that there should be no intolerance among different religious groups. More positively, it also means distillation of common moral values whether derived from different religions or from other historical and civilisational experiences and approach, which always remained integral to the Indian civilisation."

The Constitution of the Party made it compulsory for every member to sign a pledge. It must be quoted fully only to put the record straight:

"I believe in the principles and programmes of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

"I am committed to the principles of national integration, democracy, *positive secularism*, Gandhian socialism and value-based politics.

"*I subscribe to the concept of a secular State and Nation not based on Religion.*

"I firmly believe that this task can be achieved by *peaceful means alone*.

"I am not a member of any other political party. I shall not allow my association with any other organisation to derogate from my commitment to the principles and programmes of the party. I do not believe in any kind of discrimination on the basis of caste, sex or religion. I do not observe or recognise untouchability in any shape or form. I undertake to abide by the Constitution, Rules and Discipline of the Party."

I have quoted these documents to dispel an accusation. To quote Mr Noorani's own words: "The Bharatiya Janata Party lost no time in demonstrating that it was the Bharatiya Jana Sangh anew.... Its record on every issue of communal significance specially the riots, reveals it to be the heir of Jana Sangh, not Jayaprakash."

Enemies of the Bharatiya Janata Party are free not to accept the Party's professed secularism or its faith in India's Constitution. One can only feel sorry for them. But it behoves every sensible person not to accuse a Party, of nearly five million formal members, of hypocrisy and disloyalty to its oath. This does not mean that there are no black sheep in its ranks, nor does it foreclose criticism of its specific postures and policies on identifiable issues, particularly those pregnant with communal significance. I must, however, record that I regard Mr Noorani's accusation as gratuitous and reckless. If and when some evidence is offered, there will be time enough to rebut it. It is this accusation and its character which have prompted me to write. As an office-bearer of the BJP, I cannot allow the charge to remain unrefuted. My observations on the RSS which follow, are only incidental.

IT IS UNFAIR TO IMPOSE VICARIOUS responsibility on a political party for the isolated acts of one of its inconspicuous members, as indeed, it would be grossly unfair to blame the entire Muslim community for the actions of a single demented Muslim or even a

group of Muslims. It is futile and dangerous to constantly talk of actions of individuals or parties no more in existence and thereby tarnish the honour and integrity of men currently on the political scene. While one may concede that an individual member of the RSS or the BJP may have in the past been guilty of fomenting tension, creating communal hatred or even actual violence, wisdom requires that one must cast one's eyes on the future and not morbidly conjure up the past. Is it wise to cite an Aurangzeb and his misdeeds to convict the entire Muslim community of today? Is it wise constantly to remind ourselves that India was partitioned as a result of communal hatred preached by Muslim leaders? Is it wise to recall the carnage of 1947 and the criminals who started it in the first instance? Is it even wise to continuously recall that Muslim intellectuals, who today wax eloquent about secularism, were only the other day firm exponents of the two-nation theory?

During the Janata regime, three states—Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh—had Chief Ministers who belonged to the old Jana Sangh and are now members of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Not one single communal riot ever took place in their states during their tenure of office. On the other hand, when there was a carnage in Moradabad during the Idgah prayers and the local police mercilessly gunned down innocent Muslim men, women and children, the police claimed that they had been attacked by the Muslims. It was an office-bearer of the BJP, who also happened to be a member of the RSS, Shri Madhav Prasad Tripathi, who conducted a local investigation and reported that the Muslims were right and the police were uttering falsehoods.

There is a passing reference in Mr Noorani's article to the misdeeds of the RSS in Assam. He claims that they have been well-documented. By whom, he does not state. I hope, the reliance is not on documents prepared by the puppet Anwara Taimur or by organisations of trespassing marauders themselves. The BJP's solution to the Assam problem is simple and non-communal. Those who have entered in violation of the law and Constitution of India must go, except those who entered in search of genuine political refuge. Only Muslim communalists and those who stand to benefit from illicit migration into India, would characterise the Assam problem as a communal problem. It is plainly a problem of law-breakers versus those who would want the law to be respected.

THE DUAL MEMBERSHIP QUESTION OSTENSIBLY broke up the Janata Party. Those who used the pretext to break it, have now publicly confessed that it was never a real issue. Before the final break up came, I repeatedly asked the persons concerned: "Can you give me one single illustration of something that the Janata Government did not want to do but was compelled to do by RSS pressure, exerted through the old Jana Sanghis? Conversely, can you give me one illustration of something that the Janata Government wanted to do but was prevented from doing by similar pressure?" No instance was cited and I believe that none can be cited. The truth of the matter is that Moscow had decided that Morarji's government must fall. Madhu Limaye considered it a historical necessity to execute the decision. So did Mr Hemavati Bahuguna. Charan Singh's insatiable ambition proved hospitable to their machinations. In the bargain, the RSS and old Jana Sanghis got a bad name. The rest of the story is too sordid to recount.

Morarji's government did not fall because of the RSS. It fell because of Moscow.



Desai: blame Moscow not the RSS.

What saddens me beyond measure is that Mr Noorani now relies on the testimony of Madhu Limaye to blacken the RSS and the present leaders of the BJP. The nature of the evidence points to the thin credibility of Mr Noorani's thesis.

It is quite in line with Mr Noorani's unfair exercise to cite an unposted and unsigned letter, said only to be a draft of unknown authorship, as the genuine expression of Jayaprakash's deathbed feelings and attitudes towards the RSS. There is not an iota of reliable evidence of any kind to support Mr Noorani's statement, couched in a totally misleading form, that Shri Jayaprakash was cynically betrayed by the RSS and died a disillusioned man. For long, the RSS have been accused of murdering Gandhiji. Even when the evidence offered has conclusively exploded the thesis, the falsehood persists. The article now heaps another murder on the head of the RSS. The insinuation is clear and unmistakable.

(Continued on page 37)

THE RSS AND COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY

It all depends on who you choose to believe.

The Article does refer to Reports of two Commissions of Inquiry, the Madon Commission and Jagat Narain Commission, the former dealing with the Bhiwandi and Jalgaon riots and the latter with those in Jamshedpur in April 1979. I am most reluctant to say anything which denigrates this very useful instrument of discovery of truth. Depending upon the integrity and objectivity of those who constitute a Commission, it can expose public fraud, corruption in high places and generally fix responsibility for public misdemeanours. I and another party colleague of mine had occasion to analyse the Jagat Narain Report. Our Report on the Report is now a public document called *The Truth Unmasked*. Our short Foreword to that document may usefully be reproduced:

"It is trite that Truth is the first casualty in every war. Mrs Indira Gandhi's war against peoples' liberties and public probity is no exception. To sustain her regime and camouflage its sordid character, she has hounded truth out of every sector of public life.

"When facts are in controversy, truth speaks through our judges. What happens if the judge's voice is stifled or his commitment to truth impaired? Civilisation will be dethroned and chaos shall be king. Chaos breeds demagogues and demagogues breed dictators.

"The Jamshedpur Commission Report is a veritable lid on the coffin of truth. What follows is a humble endeavour to resuscitate and revive it. Those who wish to discover it may well take the trouble of reading the few pages in which we have tried to compress our analysis and reasoning.

"It is our firm conviction that genuine secularism can only be fostered by fearless publication of truth. Today it may hurt one community, tomorrow another. In the balance it will sober everyone and produce lasting peace, harmony and a sense of oneness.

"Sadly and reluctantly we have concluded that the Commission failed in its elementary duty. Thereby it retarded

secularism and weakened the Republic."

After carefully analysing the Commission's Report and the evidence, we unhesitatingly recorded the following conclusions:

"a) The Commission's finding that the conduct of Dina Nath Pandey had directly contributed to the outbreak of the riots is a wild conjecture, in total conflict with the voluminous evidence to which the Commission has chosen to shut its eyes.

"b) The Commission's view recorded in paragraph 17 that 'the RSS with its extensive organisation in Jamshedpur and which had close links with the Jana Sangh and the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, had a positive hand in creating a climate which was most propitious for the outbreak of the communal disturbances is unreasonable to the point of being perverse. It is not supported by any evidence. It is in conflict with the evidence on record and it is inconsistent with other findings of the Commission itself.

"c) The riots that broke out were not started by the Hindus or by persons contemptuously described by the Commission as 'Hindu communalists' or 'akharawallas'. The trouble started because Muslim miscreants attacked a peaceful Ramanavami procession after having made full preparations to attack it with brickbats, bottle-bombs and other explosive substances.

"d) The processionists had no intention to provoke an attack on themselves and had no inkling of any attack. They had made no preparation—either to attack or to defend. Most of the persons who participated in the procession were unarmed. The only articles which could be characterised as weapons in possession of the *akharawallas* in the procession were the usual *lathis*, *bhallas* and *chakras* which, as is usual in these processions, are used for demonstrations of fighting prowess for the entertainment of spectators who collect on the route of the procession for this purpose only.

"e) The demand for the route of the Dimna Basti Akhara procession was legitimate. The rejection of this demand was illegal and unconstitutional. Resistance to the demand was the direct result of spurious secularism practised for a number of years in this country, the false information fed to the minorities and the misleading education imparted to them in the matter of the obligations of the citizenship of a secular State."

Being conscious that we were not independent judges, we suggested in the last paragraph of the Report a way of testing whether the Commission was right or we were right. This is what we said:

"There are other questionable findings of the Commission too. We do not propose to deal with all of them; it is not within the scope of the duty assigned to us. On major issues, however, our conclusions are totally destructive of the very substratum of the Commission's Report. It is true that the Commission's Report and our inconsistent findings will be before the people of this country who will decide for themselves whether the Commission is right or we are right. But, we suggest there is a way of having this issue itself judicially resolved. The Ruling Party and the Government at the Centre have to make up their minds whether they accept the findings of the Commission and if so, what administrative action is called for. Before they do it, in fairness, they can invite the Supreme Court to express its opinion under Article 143 of the Constitution of India which is not confined to questions of Law alone but extends to questions of fact as well. The findings of the Supreme Court will be binding on the country. This suggestion is both an appeal and a challenge to the Government of India."

Needless to say, the challenge was never accepted. Mr Noorani knows perhaps more than I do that some judges are not what we expect them to be.

(Continued from page 35)

able: JP dies heart-broken and the heart-break was caused by the RSS's betrayal! The truth is that Jayaprakash's dream was shattered by the shameless pursuit of power by small men who destroyed the magnificent structure that he so lovingly and carefully built. It had nothing to do with the RSS.

I am a personal witness to the final break up of the Janata Party in April 1980. A formula that came to be associated with my name, was accepted by all leaders of the Janata Party, including Chandrashekhar, Madhu Dandavate, Ram Krishna Hegde and Mr HM Patel. Even Morarji accepted it with a little modification. It is they who went back on that formula. When the BJP was born, it incorporated the formula in its Pledge which I have reproduced earlier. But the pledges of Hindus did not satisfy Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Pledges of the BJP are not likely to carry greater weight with his intellectual progeny. Unfortunately, that progeny has penetrated into the ranks of every political party including the Janata Party!

The Janata Party's dissolution reminds me of a young man who walked into my Chambers and suggested that he wanted to divorce his wife. To my question of whether she served him well and whether she was of good moral character, the young man fairly said: "Yes, Sir."

"Why do you want a divorce then?" I asked.

"She had a boy-friend before she married me," the young man uttered.

I asked: "Did you know about this boy when you married her?"

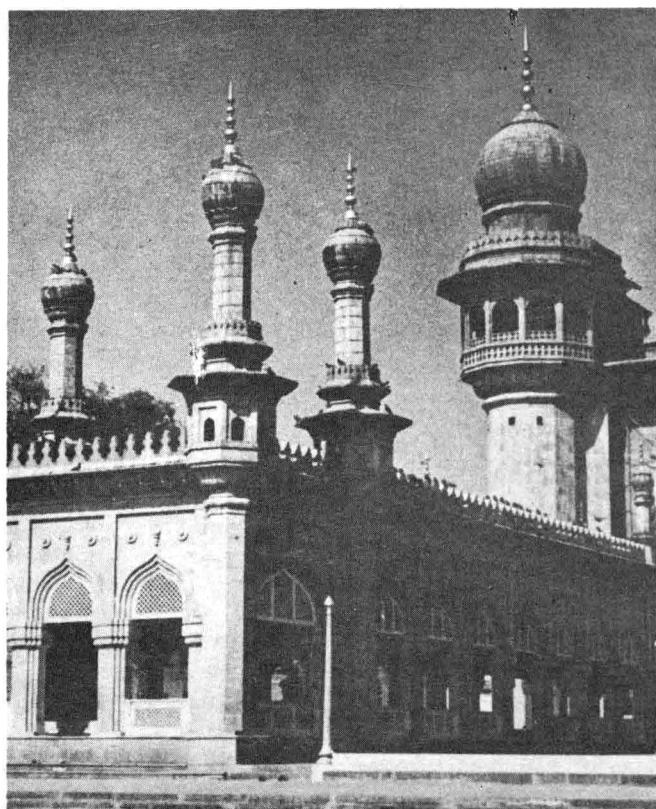
"Yes," he said and continued, "In fact, she was his girlfriend and I broke up the relationship." I had literally to ask him to get out of my office.

The connection between the Jana Sangh and the RSS was known when the Janata Party was formed. While the Jana Sangh destroyed its name, its symbol and its flag and whole-heartedly accepted the Janata Manifesto, it was never a term of the compact that those who belonged to the Jana Sangh will dissolve their connections with the RSS. No sensible person can deny that the RSS is carrying on some social and cultural activities and an intensive campaign of reforming the Hindu community. A person can admire these activities and whole-heartedly participate in them and yet be fully loyal to the Janata creed. I have already recorded that no one, directly or indirectly, even attempted to deflect the party from its declared manifesto. No wonder, Dr Hare Krishna Mehtab noted at the time of the break up of the Janata Party: "It is like asking the wife's caste after the birth of two or three children."

THE RSS IS NOT A STATIC ORGANISATION. IT IS ever-growing as Kuldip Nayar and Mr Noorani himself have noted. But, it could not grow unless it changed too. Everyone conversant with Indian history, knows the circumstances in which the RSS was born. No fair student of history could blame the perceptive Hindu of 1925 for viewing the Muslim as an ex-conqueror who, having been dethroned by another, was collaborating with the latter to keep the Hindu in subjection. While the Indian National Congress was slowly getting ready to press for complete independence, the Muslim leaders and masses were seen only to be obstructing the process by playing a game congenial to the colonial power.

The earlier years had been years of tremendous political

Muslim intellectuals who wax eloquent about secularism were once firm exponents of the two-nation theory.



Has Islam adapted itself to India?

ferment as well as confusion. It was the aftermath of the Jalianwalla Bagh massacre which had roused the Indians as no other rebellion since 1857. To Indians generally it was a profound insult to national honour, pride and self-respect. The Muslim leadership, however, seemed unmoved until a year later when a curious issue blazed across the Indian horizon and profoundly stirred their emotions.

The issue was the Khilafat agitation. The Caliphate was the highest religious office in the Islamic world. It was located, however, in distant Turkey. On the defeat of Turkey in the First World War, the victorious allies had decided to disband the office of Caliph. This essentially religious provocation threw up the famous Ali Brothers—Mohammed and Shaukat. Gandhiji perceived the measure of Muslim feelings on the Khilafat issue and succeeded in combining forces on the two entirely unrelated questions—the political question of the Punjab and the religious question of the Caliphate. Even so, Gandhiji insisted on acceptance of non-violence, as

The madness of Gandhi's murderers must be viewed against the tragic tensions of the time.



The Gandhi Funeral: understandable?

the sole method of political action—a doctrine totally alien to Islam. Lokmanya Tilak unfortunately died even before the Khilafat Committee could muster its Civil Obedience Movement. Gandhiji emphasised *khaddar*, a simple way of life, renunciation and ashrams. Mohammed Ali Jinnah resigned from the Party never to return again. In mid-September 1921, the Ali brothers incited Muslim officers in the Army to sedition. They were arrested and Gandhiji seized upon this issue and openly espoused the view of the Khilafat leaders. In November 1921, Gandhiji proclaimed a nation-wide *hartal*. A mass Civil Disobedience Movement ensued and seemed to be progressing on non-violent lines. But, in the remote village of Chauri Chaura, a police station was set on fire killing half a dozen policemen and some more were killed in the general fracas. Gandhiji seemed aghast and called off the entire campaign. Gandhiji's actions baffled even Jawaharlal Nehru. It is not surprising that they baffled many others. The founders of the RSS turned to the

memory of the late Lokmanya Tilak.

The Civil Disobedience Movement had broken on the rock of Gandhiji's insistence on non-violence. Kemal Ataturk in Turkey had taken control of Istanbul and the Sultan Caliph, the spiritual head of Islam, had been forced to flee. The Muslims relapsed into their pro-British and anti-Hindu posture. Serious communal disturbances had broken out in 1923 and yet, the Congress had passed into the control of President Mohammed Ali. In this depressing chaos it must have been obvious to some that the Hindus had to fight for freedom by themselves and it is understandable that Gandhiji's non-violence was not to their liking. If Hindus had to fight their own battle against the British, the abuses that had debilitated Hindu Society had to be removed: caste, untouchability and exclusiveness carried to fantastic lengths. As Jawaharlal Nehru records in the *Discovery Of India*:

"The Muslims who came to India from outside brought no technique or political and economic structure. In spite of a religious belief in the brotherhood of Islam, they were class-bound and feudal in outlook. In techniques and in the methods of production and industrial organisation, they were inferior to what then prevailed in India. Moreover, a great majority of Muslims in India were converts from Hinduism. While the Muslims thought themselves to be ex-conquerors, the Hindus looked at them with disdain as being inferior ex-conquerors obstructing the Hindus' march to freedom."

Mr Noorani cites the RSS documents and pronouncements of that period. This is neither fair nor clever.

Then came the Partition. Without apportioning blame or deciding who outclassed whom, in shameless brutality, the Muslim League's call to direct action and the carnage of Calcutta prominently stand out in one's historical memory. Eventually the Muslims got their freedom without fighting for it. They even got a homeland. The Hindus in India could not be blamed for considering that the remainder of India was a Hindu homeland. Surely to persuade them that Pakistan was a Muslim homeland but Bharat was not a Hindu homeland must have required some time and serious effort. Yet, it was Hindu tolerance and catholicity that produced a secular Indian Constitution guaranteeing freedom of religion and total civil, economic and political equality to all. The RSS would, perhaps, have disappeared had it not been that Kashmir was invaded and while India was engaged in a mortal war with Pakistan, Gandhiji insisted on crores being released to Pakistan in the midst of the war itself. The murder of Gandhiji, a total national tragedy, may be unpardonable but the madness of those who brought it about must itself be viewed against the tragic tensions of the time. The least that must be said is that the intensity of the madness was in direct proportion to the intensity of attachment to the country. Misguided it may have been but genuine it was.

MUSLIM INTELLECTUALS MUST PAUSE AND consider whether there is or is not some justification for Hindus being cautious or even unduly cautious. In 1947, their population was 85 per cent. It is currently estimated to have come down by 10 per cent. The Muslim population has registered a corresponding increase. Muslim obscurantism has not disappeared. The lessons of the Srinagar Test Match are too eloquent to be summarily dismissed. Riots will continue to take place because processions will not go past Muslim mosques, which, with little effort, can

be insulated against noise. Districts with Muslim majorities are being carved out where possible. The Assam problem will not be sensibly solved because Muslims will be displeased. Our foreign policy has lost all its moral content to pander to the murderous and intolerant elements in the Middle East. The fake secularism of the Congress, which is only a smoke-screen for unreasonable Muslim appeasement and the deliberate policy of keeping them in a state of frightened exclusiveness, conjures up visions of Mohammed Ali Jinnah's proliferating points culminating in the tragedy of Partition. The RSS may be wrong but it has at least some justification for constantly throwing up danger signals and warning the nation of what might be. No patriot can shut his eyes to evidence of organised Muslim groups that publicly advocate, even today, Muslim rule of India—some exclusive and others by annual rotation! Those who do not believe this may turn to the records of the Bhiwandi Commission.

A couple of years ago, I met Balasaheb Deoras for an informal chat. I raised some of the problems to which Mr Noorani's article draws attention. His reply was sincere. What he said was: "Does the RSS speak the language of 1930 or 1960 or even of 1975? I have got to keep this organisation going and I cannot overnight throw overboard the legacy of long decades." With ingenuity one can pick holes in this statement but even Mr Noorani is not unmindful of the new streaks of thought and attitude which Balasaheb Deoras has slowly introduced in the RSS liturgy. He refers to Shri Deoras's Nagpur speech of September 30, 1979. In it doubtless, occurs the passage quoted by Mr Noorani: "The guarantee for India's secular character is not to be found merely in our Constitution nor in the assurance of a couple of leaders. It lies in the Hindu Society which forms the overwhelming majority in this country."

True, the passage also shows, as Mr Noorani rightly contends, that the word 'Hindu' is used by Deorasji in two different senses: (i) the narrower one of being a follower of the denominational religion called Hindu, and (ii) the wider sense as comprising all those who are in harmony with the life current of India's national culture irrespective of the religious denomination to which they belong. But, Mr Noorani would have been less unfair to Shri Deoras if he had quoted the entire extract of which he has cited only a small part. That would have helped to put the whole speech in its proper perspective:

"Dr S Radhakrishnan has freely used both the words Hindu and Indian to mean the same thing—the hoary cultural heritage of this land.

"Hindu Society, living here since times immemorial, has given rise to a great and comprehensive life-philosophy. It has offered as its precious contribution the grand concept of dharma—which has afforded full freedom and scope for all religious faiths to blossom in tune with their genius. *It has taught mutual respect in place of conflict between one religion and another.* As a result, a multitude of faiths and creeds have grown up here in a spirit of amity and goodwill. Well, is this a sign of narrow-mindedness? Have the Hindu people, in their practice, ever betrayed hatred or contempt towards the holy books or places of worship of other faiths? Can anyone show a single word of abuse or derision in the speeches of Sangh leaders towards Paighambar or Christ or the Quran or the Bible? 'Sarvesham avirodhena'—'malice towards none'—well, this has been the watchword distilled into our blood all these millennia.

No patriot can shut his eyes to the Muslim groups that publicly advocate Muslim rule of India.



RSS drill: patriotic Indians?

"Our society, basing itself on this great and all-comprehensive principle, has over the centuries evolved several institutions and systems and fixed up its life goals. And from this mental soil was born a Gautama Buddha who, moved by the sorrows of the world, renounced his loving wife and new-born babe; a Rama who willingly forsook the emperor's throne to embrace 14 years of forest-sojourn just to uphold his father's words of honour; and a Shri Krishna who gave the inspiring message of detached action to Arjuna; and a host of heroes and saints—Chanakya, Shivaji, Pratap, Guru Nanak, Kabir, Vidyaranya, Tiruvalluvar, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Narayan Guru, to name but a few—who have displayed the highest virtues of head and heart. The flow of life values which has thrown up all these luminaries is known by the name 'Hindu Culture'. And the life centre of Hindu Rashtra is this Hindu Culture. It does not preclude but includes all faiths and sects and all kinds of thought patterns. *All those who feel attuned to this life*

No country in which the Muslims are in a majority is a Parliamentary democracy.



current of our national culture—irrespective of their religious creeds—are Hindus. This is our considered viewpoint; and it is our experience that with its proper exposition many well-meaning Muslim gentlemen such as Shri Chagla and Christian gentlemen too, will accept it."

The trouble is that the word 'Hindu' is anathema to some.

MR NOORANI'S ARTICLE NEXT SEEKS TO emphasise that Gandhiji never compromised with the RSS. True, he did not, but no point can be made of this for a reason which some Muslim intellectuals might find totally disconcerting. The RSS had always opposed the division of India. To them, vivisection of Mother India was an unpardonable crime. Gandhiji said the same thing. He accepted the basic tenet of the RSS faith but where Gandhiji differed from the RSS was in continuing to cling to the will-o'-the-wisp of avoiding this tragedy by enlisting Muslim co-operation. The RSS had no such hope. Historical events show that Gandhiji was wrong and the RSS was right. Gandhiji's dream had been shattered not by the RSS but by the Muslim League and its Muslim followers in India who readily accepted the poison of the two-nation theory and opted for Partition. Gandhiji did not die on January 30, 1948. He died on August 15, 1947, when his dear India was cut apart. Some Muslim intellectuals today pretend to beat their breasts in grief over Gandhiji's death. They must, however, ask and honestly answer the question: How many of them accepted Gandhiji's doctrines and his message of love and unity while he lived? Having contemptuously rejected his teachings, how can they in all honesty call in aid the fact that the RSS considered him a gullible visionary, a saint not fit for the sordid realities of Indian politics!

Two points still remain: firstly, what did Gandhiji think of the role of Hinduism in the New India of his dreams? While he lived, he recorded: "Today, it seems as if Hindu dharma is tired and is unable to inspire us towards further progress. The reason is that it is we who are tired and not Hindu dharma. The moment we shall be able to get rid of this tiredness, there shall be an explosion and Hinduism shall shine with an immemorable glory in this world."

The passage shows the same pride in Hinduism as the RSS possesses. Gandhiji realised, as indeed has Nirad Chaudhuri, that Hinduism alone keeps this vast land mass a united country and a united nation. Hence Gandhiji took great pains to reform and unite Hindu society by preaching *Ram naam*, *Ram raj*, truth, non-violence, celibacy, honesty and self-sacrifice—the virtues which he considered the essence of the Upanishadic teachings. He was not afraid of calling himself

a staunch Hindu. In this *Young India* of December 1, 1926, he wrote: "I am a Hindu because it is Hinduism which makes this world worth living in. I am a staunch Hindu. Hence, I love not only human beings but all living beings."

Later, he declared: "Emancipation of India depends on how Hindus defend their religion." By Mr Noorani's standards, Gandhiji must be the greatest communalist of his age!

Secondly: what does the RSS leadership mean when Balasaheb Deoras refers to 'all those who feel attuned to this life current of our national culture irrespective of their religious creed'?

The RSS does not want any Muslim, Parsee, Sikh, Jew or Hindu to give up his essential spiritual faith. But, those who live in a secular Republic must conform to the religion of the Republic which is superior to every denominational religion. Those unessential tenets of any religion, whether it is the religion of the majority or minority, which are inconsistent with the survival of the Republic, have to be eschewed. All angularities that hurt the process of peaceful coexistence must be rounded off. Did not the Hindus give up polygamy? Have they not incorporated principles of Muslim law in their rules of succession? Have they not brought in the Christian concepts of divorce? Have they not accepted cow slaughter to a substantial extent in Article 48 of the Directive Principles of India's Constitution? Have they not accepted that every other religion can not only be freely practised but vigorously propagated? Hindu society has shown a tremendous resilience and adjustment to the needs of the Republic which include the exigencies of coexistence of numerous religious faiths. Have Muslim intellectuals on the other hand repudiated even the non-essential tenets of Islam which, according to some Muslim scholars of repute, are not even the tenets of Islam truly understood? Take the Islamic doctrine of Darul-Harab and Darul-Islam. This tenet was freely invoked when the Pakistan demand had not yet been conceded. The doctrine is totally inconsistent with the religion of a secular Republic. Take another illustration: a war by a Muslim power is supposed to be a sacred war governed by the regulations of jihad. Unbelievers must first be invited to embrace Islam. Either they comply or they must be put to the sword—an option which, incidentally, is not available to the idol worshippers. Take a third illustration: Muslims the world over are now wanting to return to the way of Islam. Fundamentalism is on the increase. No country in which Muslims are in the majority, is known to have established or sustained a Parliamentary form of democracy. None has created a secular Republic. Take a fourth: a uniform civil code is necessary for the unity of any society. It is one of the Directive Principles of India's Constitution. Muslim intellectuals are just not prepared for a change in this direction.

Neither Balasaheb Deoras nor the young volunteers who attend the daily drill at dawn or dusk or who respectfully salute the portraits of their leaders or who serve without discrimination the Hindu, the Muslim, the Christian and the rest in times of natural calamity or disaster, want to convert Indian minorities to the Hindu faith. They only want to make themselves physically strong in the profound belief that a sound mind can exist only in a sound body. They wish to be good Hindus because, good Hindus alone can protect good Muslims, good Christians and all the good men that inhabit this great country. Even if they are communal in some pejorative sense, they are honest and patriotic. They say what they mean and they conceal no dagger in their saffron sleeve. ♦

THE TRUTH ABOUT SPYING

Subramaniam Swamy on how foreign spies really operate.

THIS COUNTRY IS A HAPPY hunting ground for the intelligence agencies of many countries, primarily the CIA and the KGB, not just in terms of obtaining documents. The Larkins case only concerns spies being able to get certain defence documents about the deployment and character of Soviet weapons. But the kinds of espionage activities that exist in the world and in India in particular, are 'multi-dimensional'.

On one level, every inch of the Indian territory is being photographed by satellites sent up by both the Soviet Union and the United States. The satellite photography is so effective that they can tell what crops we will be growing and what the output of these crops will be. Some countries like the United States, boast that they can even photograph by satellite, the licence plate of an automobile moving on a particular road. There is no protection against this, unless you develop the same technological capability or use killer satellites, which can shoot down these satellites. Since we are not that advanced technologically, as far as our defence installations are concerned, the satellites are quite effective in providing information to both the superpowers.

The second level of espionage activity in our country is the penetration of certain vital government organs, particularly our own intelligence set-up. In the past, we have seen dramatic demonstrations of this kind of penetration. There was the classic English case of Kim Philby, who was a senior official in the British Secret Service. He had been recruited during his college days by the KGB and was in their employ when he was the senior-most intelligence man in the Wash-

Subramaniam Swamy is Deputy Leader of the Janata Party. This article is based on a Lok Sabha speech.



ton embassy. In fact, when he was about to be arrested, he defected and went to the Soviet Union.

It is very difficult to estimate the extent to which penetration has taken place in our country. In my opinion, the Indian intelligence set-up is in robust health, considering the fact that the government was able to nab the Larkins brothers after a great deal of surveillance, without any tip-off to the officers. Mr Venkataraman and Mr Sethi should be congratulated for keeping this up as should the previous Defence Ministers and Home Ministers who have kept our intelligence services, by and large, penetration-proof. But this is an area where special attempts and efforts have to be made continually, because it requires constant vigilance.

On a third level, espionage is done through penetrating organisations like trade unions. A large number of trade unions are targets for foreign intelligence activity. This is one area which both the superpowers are paying extremely detailed attention to. It is an area in which the government should take a great deal of care.

The fourth, which has now become very important, especially in the last five or six years, is the espionage done through what is called, 'disinformation'. Disinformation differs from 'misinformation', which is wrong information. Disinformation is dishing out information which looks authentic but which is, in fact, meant to confuse or create a wrong impression.

To take an instance. Recently, the Naval Chief of Thailand had a press conference in which he said that the Government of India had given permission for the use of Nicobar Island as a Soviet base. This was intended to prejudice world opinion against India. It turned out to be untrue and was later contradicted. Similarly, we get information in our country about certain



We have to be wary of KGB-front organisations like the World Peace Council, which run on Soviet money.

policies and attitudes of our allies and neighbours, which are published in the press and then turn out to be false. The *Patriot* recently published a news item about the Balkanisation of India. The US Ambassador to the UN was supposed to have been referred to in this speech. Of course, there was no truth to this—it was KGB disinformation. Disinformation is spreading and we have to guard against it. If we are not careful, a lot of innocent people will become its victims. Sometimes people write books based on disinformation. We do not know whether, for example, Mr Seymour Hersh, when he wrote *The Price Of Power*, in which he alleged that Shri Morarji Desai was a CIA agent, was in fact a victim of this kind of disinformation. Was Mr Patrick Moynihan another such victim when he wrote that Mrs Indira Gandhi had taken money from the CIA? The media in particular has to be exceedingly careful as it is often the target for this kind of disinformation technique.

Finally, there is technological espionage. What we have seen in the Larkins case and what the army officials engaged in, falls into this category. The information which has so far reached the Americans was not of much value. The Larkins brothers were caught in the earlier stage itself. This process of breaking-in an agent is a delicate one, which matures over time. If you read Kim Philby's autobiography, (*My Secret War*) you get a fair idea of how systematically, over a period of 10, 15 or even 30 years, the whole process takes place.

If the Americans are interested in Soviet equipment in our country, then the Russians are equally interested in the computers that come from the West into India. For example, about a year ago, a professor of electronics at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, was arrested and dismissed because he was collecting vital information about the computers that were being supplied by Western countries to the IIT. He was then passing this information on to the Soviet Union. He was finally apprehended as a KGB agent and removed from service.

In our country, Members of Parliament are not provided with documentary evidence. As a result, a lot of loose talk goes on about what a KGB front is and what a CIA front is. There is enough material and this can be provided to end this kind of speculation.

To illustrate this fact, take the World Peace Council which functions actively in our country. Sometime ago, it applied for what is called non-governmental organisation status to the United Nations. This is a very prestigious title. Many organisations have this status because it enables a private organisation

to have an office in the United Nations. When an organisation applies for it, it has to go through an examination and a fair amount of scrutiny over its budget. In presenting budget details, the World Peace Council Chairman finally admitted that the bulk of the funds for his organisation comes from none other than the KGB. The accounts he submitted were only for a small fraction of the total budget. The rest of the money came from the KGB.

In 1967, the Asia Foundation was found to have received funds from the CIA. One of the people who used to participate in the Asia Foundation functions and was also associated with the Foundation was Shri Krishna Menon. Nobody will accuse him of being a CIA agent! In the same way, I'm not saying that everybody who has participated in World Peace Council functions is necessarily working for the KGB, but both bodies have intelligence links that can be documented.

Because espionage is going on from both these sources, both the superpowers are involved. Ten years ago, the Government of India caught some Soviet diplomats when Swaran Singh was Foreign Minister. In 1969 we expelled two KGB agents. There are many such instances. I have not been able to confirm this, but it is reported that last year the intelligence services investigated some people who were suspected to be connected with the KGB.

Four or five known KGB agents are today, it has been alleged, working as diplomats in the Soviet embassy. In fact, these people have been expelled from other countries because of KGB links. I am sure there are spies in the American embassy as well. In fact, I think what is required is a pooling of information. Those who have good sources in the Soviet Union should tell us what the Americans are doing and those who have good sources in America should tell us what the Russians are doing so that the country benefits.

In the last one year, France has expelled 40 KGB agents despite having a left-wing government in power. England has expelled 90 agents this year. Sweden has expelled 11; Switzerland six; Norway four; Denmark three; Japan four; Bangladesh 18 and Sri Lanka, seven.

Our own government did not allow a US diplomat, Griffin, to come into this country. It is now incumbent upon the Government—in order not to show any tilt—to see that diplomats who have been expelled from other countries for espionage activities do not come into this country and are expelled if they do. It should do this with diplomats from every country.

THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG

A former Intelligence Bureau official offers a grim warning.

DURING THE LOK SABHA debate on the Larkins espionage affair in December 1983, the Defence Minister, Venkataraman, stated amid much desk-thumping that for every Larkins spying for a foreign power in India, mercifully there was a patriotic Group Captain, Jasjit Singh, thwarting such attempts and exposing the racket.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Larkins episode is, to use a much-hyped phrase, only the tip of the iceberg. For every Larkins nabbed, there are literally hundreds of them working with impunity. Who are these other people and more important, what is being done about it?

Admittedly, spy catching is a difficult task, for several reasons. The democratic environment in India places few constraints on sleuths and agents—both Indian and foreign—who can operate freely and fearlessly. The Intelligence Bureau's resources are limited and stretched. In addition India is a top priority file for both Western and communist blocs and an excellent third country territory for the superpowers and their satellites to spy against one another. Against this background it's hardly surprising that all kinds of self-appointed agents, professional spies and busybodies are falling over each other to purvey secrets to those who are willing to buy them. Whenever a Larkins is exposed, there is a self-righteous furore but once the dust settles, it is business as usual for all.

Politically, it is not expedient for Delhi to play the game of spy catching too rigorously because there are friendly countries, not so friendly countries and hostile ones. Moreover, timing is crucial. Even a hostile country's espionage activities must be publicised at the



right time for political and diplomatic reasons. Also, exposure of one spy by one country almost invariably invites reprisals by the 'victim' country because espionage is simply a game that everybody plays. In the politics of superpowers and alignment, the line dividing propaganda and espionage, diplomacy and 'cultivating' someone, spreading influence and lobbying, is sometimes blurred. An open-and-shut case like the Larkins one is indefensible but when you want to stop the menace, you have to appear to stop all of them. Mrs Gandhi knows when to derive political mileage out of a selected case now and then. She may even have a few cases short-listed! It suited her sense of timing, when Indo-Pak and Indo-US relations were taking a nose-dive, to publicise the Larkins event. If the timing is convenient and the returns attractive, she will not hesitate to haul a Soviet agent over the coals in the same manner. Orchestration is often the name of the game.

Even the overworked IB has several cases of the Larkins type at various stages of development. Not all of them, however, are about CIA or KGB operatives. Pakistan is the Bureau's prime counter-espionage target. Then there are exclusive counter-espionage branches for China, USSR and USA and one for all other countries. Each branch has an officer who reads through scores of reports every day—the results of wire tapping, mail reading and car chasing. Most important of all, are the reports of friends, enemies, contacts, cooks, mistresses and a variety of persons who claim proximity to suspected agents and diplomats—who sell their information to the IB in return for money. These reports are graded depending on their reliability and collated with other information received. Significantly the bulk of this distilled intelligence, though valuable, goes only into the

The author is a retired official of the Indian Intelligence Bureau who prefers not to disclose his name.



The CIA is far more aggressive than the KGB and it believes that agents must work hard for their keep.

monthly reports on the trend of activities of each country and its embassy. Because of this, many of the agents and contacts escape practically unpunished. Only when a report reveals diabolical dimensions—like a brazen bid to buy top secret information (not necessarily military, could be say, atomic research)—is a Special Project launched. All papers are up-graded from Secret to Top Secret and a team earmarked to launch an 'Operation'.

There is no guarantee, however, that an operation launched will yield results. In fact, only one in about 20 operations ends in the sensational arrest of the agent or the guilty diplomat who is declared *persona non grata*. Most of them end in a whimper. Either the leads given are wrong, or the suspect is alerted and ceases his activities or the reports lead the Government to no conclusion.

Espionage is very much like the other rackets we witness in India—smuggling, drug peddling, dacoity and so on. The headlines that scream about the ones who are nabbed conceal the hundreds who continue to operate silently. The luckless Larkins is grabbed and made an example of, in the hope that it would have a deterrent effect on others. The timid ones may shy off but the bolder ones become more careful and re-examine their own security arrangements!

The scouting for talents and spotting a target in India by the CIA is a vigorous exercise. They strive for quality, as quantity is no problem. (Who doesn't want a green card?) Here there is a sharp variance in the style of operation of the US and the Soviet intelligence agencies. The CIA is decidedly more aggressive since their need for agents and intelligence is also greater. They sift carefully the available talent, rejecting wheeler-dealers and loud-mouthed volunteers. The CIA also strongly believes that an agent must work hard for his keep. (Major General Larkins was paid a mere Rs 5,000 a month for all that he peddled at his level.) The CIA's security arrangements are excellent. The details of their operations are known to just one or two, seldom even to the Ambassador himself. It is, in fact, the Indian informant, with his lack of discretion and greed that leads to compromise of security in many cases.

The KGB on the other hand, often looks for committed radicals in India to act as agents and go-betweens. They look more for hard political intelligence, especially on the motives of India, than military intelligence. This necessarily drives them into the arms of politicians, who are briefed and de-briefed in detail during their visits to Moscow. Most KGB operations are strictly directed and

controlled by Moscow with little discretion and flexibility given to the New Delhi-based operator.

The British Intelligence, with the incomparable experience it gained during World War II, comes to the CIA's assistance whenever possible all over the world. Indeed, restricted collaboration between foreign intelligence agencies all over the world is an accepted fact. For over 20 years, senior Indian intelligence officers have been visiting London for training at MI 5 and MI 6, though they learn little that is new or readily applicable in the Indian context. These trips to London have been increasingly looked upon as foreign jaunts for the police officers who otherwise have fewer opportunities to go abroad than their IAS counterparts.

The training schemes of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) within India also lack imagination and planning. The trainees have to pore over old files and theoretical works like Alan Dulles's *The Craft Of Intelligence* and participate in contrived exercises. In the classroom lectures, the emphasis is on the theory of communism and the history of the communist movement in India—based mainly on syllabi designed years ago when it was thought that the primary threat to the stability and integrity of India arose from communist sources.

Most recruits to the IB, whether freshly enlisted from the market or inducted from the state police forces, are neither chosen for their talents nor are they accorded positions in relation to their aptitudes. The intelligence jobs are not sought after in this country because they are dull and desk-bound and the perks offered are more attractive in the police. With the formation of RAW (Research And Analysis Wing) in 1968, the jobs in the IB became even less attractive, as all foreign assignments (for our own intelligence-gathering operations) went to RAW officials. The saving grace about intelligence jobs is that accountability and risk are much less compared to police jobs. The quality of work turned out by the IB as well as RAW has also deteriorated in the last five years, owing to the formation of employees' unions and agitations in both organisations. It is an open question whether some of the intelligence officials themselves have betrayed their country by working for foreign intelligence services. Such embarrassments are generally well hushed up.

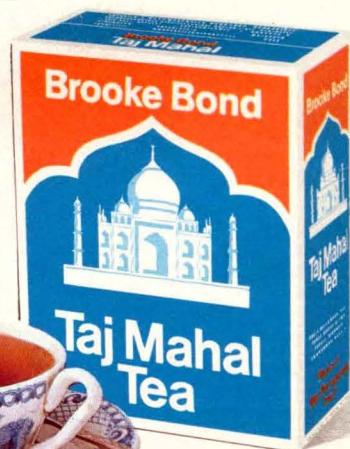
The lack of motivation and half-hearted training also contribute in some degree to the fearless espionage activities going on in the country. Unfortunately, once the uproar over something like the Larkins affair dies, the whole nation goes back to sleep. ♦

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Today's look is subtle, elegant; flashy styles are out. Shown here is a jacket in a rich, dark

coffee brown with a subtle design, complemented by a fresh white shirt and smart

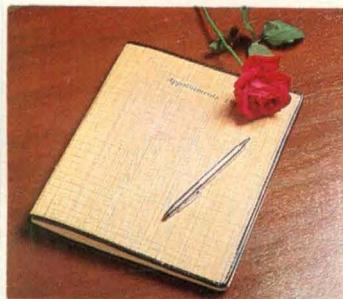
light trousers. Variations on a theme: a pure silk tie dashingly striped in brown set off by a stark white kerchief. For a look that's stylishly casual but never flippant.

FASHION GUIDE

TAKES IT EASY

DESK MANAGEMENT

An untidy desk, cluttered with bits and pieces, makes you feel disorganised. Try to keep things under control. Pens should work. Tea cups should be removed. The telephone deserves a neat area to itself, complete with notepad, pencil, the Directory and your own phone book.



THE ANNUAL HOLIDAY

An annual vacation is neither an indulgence nor a luxury. In fact, it's one of the simplest ways to prevent stress. Get away to a beach resort or head for the hills...you'll come back fresh, fit and ready for action.



UP TO YOUR NECK

The cravat has a nonchalant elan that's perfectly in place with the casual elegance of coordinates. Team a silk cravat with a cocktail outfit or sport a lightweight woollen cravat with a jaunty blazer.

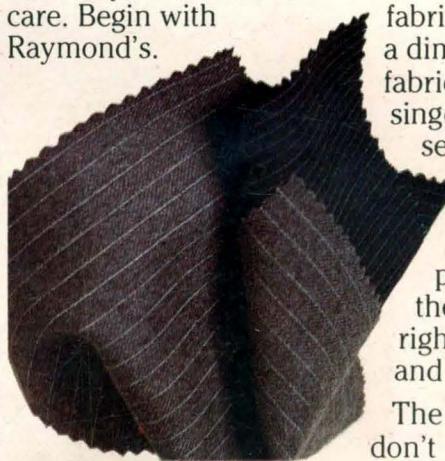


YOUR TRUE COLOURS

Overall, your outfit should be colour-keyed. But how do you choose the basic colours that suit you best? Look for shades that complement your complexion, the colour of your hair and eyes. Consider the occasion, too. Don't for instance, wear a bright red shirt to a board meeting!

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“I FIND MY OWN WORK VERY BORING”

At 75, RK NARAYAN, the Grand Old Man of Indian writing in English, is blunt and forthright about his colleagues and contemporaries. In a conversation with Vir Sanghvi he talks about VS Naipaul, Graham Greene, Salman Rushdie, Paul Scott and many others.



With the recent exception of Salman Rushdie, RK Narayan is the only Indian writer to have earned an international reputation for his fiction. Since he was discovered by Graham Greene over 40 years ago, Narayan has been published all over the world and his books have been translated into nearly every European language. Few authors can have received the kind of critical plaudits he has earned; each new book gets better reviews than the last one.

Vir Sanghvi spoke to Narayan in Bombay last month. Because the 75-year-old author is an exceedingly shy man who dislikes talking about himself, the conversation centred around Narayan's views on Indian writing in English and of course, his blunt appraisals of his contemporaries and colleagues.

What are you working on at the moment?

Well, I've been fumbling with a novel. I keep changing the focus from time to time and if you examine my notebook, you'll find all kinds of incoherent notes there. I wrote 10,000 words and

Vir Sanghvi is Executive Editor of Imprint.

Dialogue

then I changed my mind. It was supposed to be about a man who arrives in Malgudi and says he's working on a United Nations project. He drops names like Nehru and the Aga Khan, but it turns out that he is on the run.

Is he supposed to be an Indian?

Yes, of course. I could never write about a foreigner.



EM FORSTER:
"A Passage To India has survived because he confined himself to an area that he knew well."

Why not?

I don't know that psychology. Even in India, I confine myself to societies and personalities whose psychology I understand. That is why, even though my Malgudi characters are all imaginary, I can go as deep as I like about them. But I couldn't write about foreigners or people outside of my area. For instance, I couldn't even write about a Maharashtrian because the values are slightly different. I would not be able to set a novel in Bombay. Somebody from Malgudi might visit the city but that's all.

Doesn't that get somewhat limiting?

No, the whole world can be reflected in one village. I am familiar with Malgudi and I don't want to take any chances. I could do what Graham Greene does and write about different places from the perspective of a traveller but why should I? What is the point in my writing about Bombay or Delhi? Lots of novels have already been written about these places.

Have they? I can't think of any good novels about Delhi.



RUTH JHABVALA: "A very practised writer who writes about people that she has some experience of."

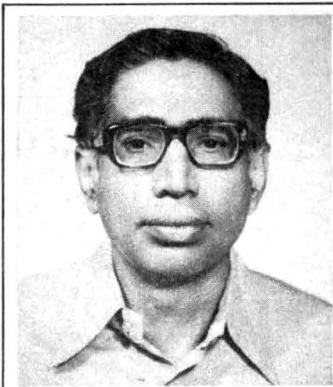
Well, lots of foreigners have written. Of course, it is shallow, very shallow. Their view of Delhi is wrong. Even EM Forster confined himself to Dewas, an area he knew well in *A Passage To India*. He didn't write about Coorg or South India. That is why his novel has survived.

Apart from Forster, do you think that any foreigner has been able to write perceptively about India?

No. I don't think so. I've never come across anything.

What about Paul Scott?

Paul Scott is different, I think. I've not read *The Raj Quartet*, but he was such a delightful man. I met him in London and we went out for lunch and so forth. The last review he did was of



IQBAL MASUD: "He gave my last novel a bad review but I think he was right. I had got lazy and let the story drift."

my book, *The Painter Of Signs* for *Country Life*. It was a very good review which gave me some idea of the book's impact. I don't think I meant all that he noticed in the book but it was very flattering. I was really amazed that he got so much out of a novel that I wrote only for my own amusement. Poor man! He died of cancer only a few months afterwards. Very sad.

Have you read anything by Ruth Jhabvala?

The Householder. And then she sent me *Heat And Dust*. It was good. She is a very practised writer and she knows how to confine herself to people and societies that she has some experience of.



NISSIM EZEKIEL: "He is always very good as a critic but there aren't many others as good as him."

So, there are at least some books by foreigners about India that you like! What about books by Indians?

It becomes difficult to keep up with everything that is written nowadays. Our problem in India is that we have no critical tradition. Our standards are so low. Newspapers give a very cursory glance to new books. There are no competent reviews, just advertisements. If a writer is known to an editor, he will just phone and say: "Be kind to my book."

There are very few good critics, don't you think?

Yes, I can't think of more than five in Bombay.

Five! That many! Who are they?

Dialogue



VS NAIPAUL: "His non-fiction is a mixture of good observation and crude generalisation."

Iqbal Masud, I think is very good. . . . Yes, he is a very painstaking man. Even though he attacked my last novel, I congratulated him. While everybody else was praising it, he had an original view that at some point I got lazy and let the story drift and conclude. This is a fact. I agree with him and it was an honest and competent review.

Which other critics can you name?

Nissim Ezekiel.

Yes, he is always good, but who else?

Anita Desai.

Oh yes. She reviewed my book for the *New York Times* and her comments were very agreeable! But I don't think you'll be able to think of other critics. I know that I myself can't review very well. I'm usually not very flattering to anybody. When I want to criticise, I can be very forthright!

Generally, in India not only do we lack a critical tradition, but the novel is also not part of our culture. We have only dramas, philosophical treatises and poetry.

Have you any interest in poetry?

My interest in poetry stopped with the 19th century. Except for TS Eliot, I can't make out anything.

You haven't read any modern Indian poets?

I can't! They have one word in one line. Then, on the tenth line, they have another word. It is all gimmicks. Do you publish any poetry?

No.
Good for you!

You publish Indian editions of your books yourself. How did this start?
Over 40 years ago, I used to own and edit a magazine called *Indian Thought*. It had good writing and original short stories, many of them translated from Indian languages. But I found it impossible to continue it after a year because of the lack of good writers. And I found that one story I very much appreciated was plagiarised from PG Wodehouse.

Finally, my printer said: "Why don't you discontinue it?" I thought it was excellent advice and I turned it into a book publishing company. I thought that if I produced cheap, paperback editions of my books, then more people could read them. Even today, I do a small print run of 5,000 copies and by charging only a small royalty, I am able to sell them at only Rs 12 to 15.



SALMAN RUSHDIE: "I could not read more than 100 pages of *Midnight's Children*. I couldn't finish it."

Graham Greene. It was he who first arranged for the publication of one of my books and he has always been the first person to read my manuscript.

Your work has been compared to Faulkner's.

Yes, but I find him unreadable. In fact, (laughs) I find that of my own books! To be honest, I can never read my own work. I find it very boring!

So, when you want to settle down to a good read, what do you prefer?

Graham Greene. I read his books all the time. It is very rewarding to re-read his work. *The Human Factor* is, I think, my favourite.



SASTHI BRATA:
"A good style and language but it doesn't boil down to anything solid."

So how do you make your living?
I get enough book royalties from abroad to keep me going. I've been writing for American papers like the *New Yorker* and they pay well. For instance, I usually do one short story for them every year and they pay me \$ 5,000 for it. *Playboy* pays even more. They had a fiction editor who used to say that the breast-showing naked women were to attract the reader who would then read serious fiction!

Is there any writer you particularly admire?

Did you think he, rather than William Golding, should have got the Nobel Prize?

Yes, I think Graham Greene should have got it. William Golding's *Lord Of The Flies* was a very original conception, but you know, the film was so much better than the book. Much, much better.

There is a rumour every year that VS Naipaul is going to get the Nobel Prize.
Yes, he might get it. Who knows?

Do you think he deserves it?

That I'm not going to say (Laughs.) I liked his early fiction, but *A Bend In The River* was not very good. I don't like his later books. And his non-fiction is a mixture of good observation and crude generalisation.

At temperatures 50°C beyond boiling point, can you really take a pressure cooker's safety for granted?

You have our word on it.

A lot of things can happen when temperatures climb beyond boiling point. Tempers can flare. Pressure cookers may burst. Injuries can take place. The only way to prevent mishaps from happening is to look for a reliable brand name before you even begin looking around for a pressure cooker.

A name such as Bajaj.

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

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



BUY BEST. BUY BAJAJ.

THAT WAS THE

Gautam Bhatia's sardonic look at personalities,
POLITICS



◀ MAN OF THE YEAR: BHINDRANWALE

A small mind and a big arsenal belong to Bhindranwale—a benign, harmless little man with a navy blue bandage around his swollen head. He sits on top of a gold temple and plays God. His room is filled with life-size images of Mussolini, Hitler and Guru Nanak—humble statesmen, whose humble lives he emulates. During the day, he listens to the cricket commentary, eats *maki ki roti* and *saag* and prays with a passion. At night when he sits down to watch *The Lucy Show*, he is disturbed by images of innocent Hindus, still alive and riding in lonely buses. He turns off the TV to polish his guns.

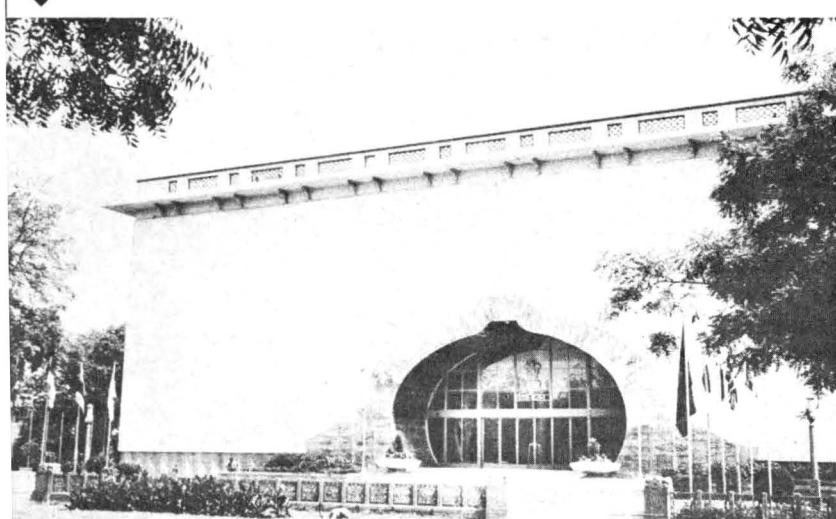


↑ COLLABORATION OF THE YEAR : MARUTI-SUZUKI MERGER

Even before the Fourth Five-Year Plan, Indira Gandhi and her son had a dream for a better India. It was a rare vision that saw 'a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage'. But, when Sanjay died, many hoped that his dreams too had died with him. Not so. For in 1983 the first Maruti, the tangible result of an international merger and a forgotten vision, rolled off the assembly line. It is believed, however, that the Maruti rolled off the assembly line only because its brakes failed and none of the engineers nearby had enough sense to prop a brick against the back wheels. Another Maruti is expected to roll off the assembly line in 1984.

GOVERNMENT BUILDING OF THE YEAR : VIGYAN BHAVAN

The abode of knowledge was the most widely used, abused and misused building of the year. In a six-month span, this monstrous entrance took in and barfed out more foreigners than even the UN headquarters in New York. Upcoming conferences: International Dandruff Convention followed by Dandruff Heads of State, Danmedia conferences and the Fourth Annual Meeting of the World Genitalia Union (WGU).



Gautam Bhatia is a Delhi-based architect. He is currently working on a project for Bhopal's Institute Of Forest Management.

YEAR THAT WAS

institutions, trends and unsung heroes of the last year.

PERSONALITIES



RURAL INDIAN OF THE YEAR: THE VILLAGE IDIOT

For years, Sikander Lal lived out his wretched drudge-ridden life in daily routine of spinning coarse cloth, eating insipid *dal* and fixing ugly cow-dung houses. He knew no better; there was no other alternative but to die. But that was before Gandhi. Today's rural Indian wears imported terylene, lives in prestigious concrete houses and eats Maggi noodles. And with all the free time on his hands he smokes home-grown dope, drinks country liquor and watches *Padmini Kolhapure* on video. He knows the ways of the world—his own and those of his urban brother. He is not a village idiot. Not yet, anyway.



PROPRIETOR OF THE YEAR: BALRAJ POL

Balraj Pol's life is one of the more touching stories of our time. When he left his home at 19, he said he wanted to try his hand at big business. For years he slogged—dealing with unscrupulous officials by day and weighty ledgers by night—pursuing his goal with the determination of a long-distance runner. But eventually all the hard work paid off. Today Balraj Pol is a national hero. He wears a yellow safari suit and rides in his curtained Mercedes Benz to business lunches at the Casa di Medici. He merges companies in the morning, drinks Scotch in the evenings and eats steak at night. And at 35, he is the author of two bestselling books—*How To Make Friends By Influencing People* and *All You Always Wanted To Know About Tax Evasion But Were Afraid To Ask*.

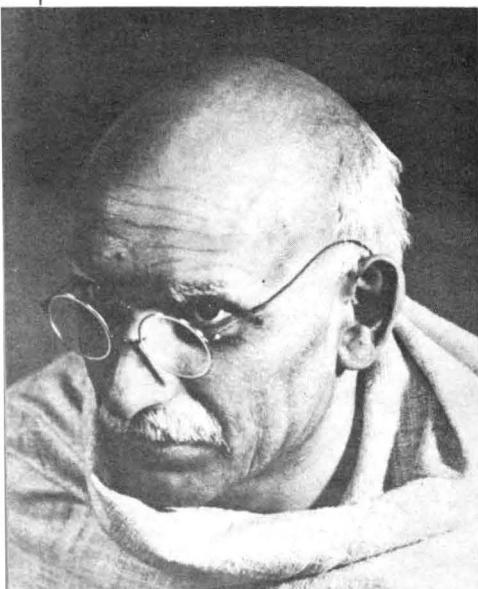
Balraj Pol's is a success story. He is the Managing Director of Defiance Textiles. His father is the director.

LABOURER OF THE YEAR: RAM GOPAL

Three years ago, Ram Gopal left his two-acre farm, mud house, wife and four children in the village and moved to a sewer pipe in the city. Today, Ram Gopal lives in a makeshift tent under a flyover with his wife and seven children. He earns Rs seven a day as a contract labourer. His children sell the *Evening News* at a road crossing. At night, after a dinner of onions and *chappatis*, his wife washes dishes in the sewer. Ram Gopal has made it. He is a big man in the big city.



LIFE-STYLE



◀ MOVIE OF THE YEAR: GANDHI

A moving story about a small brown man with one black sandal who believed in truth, non-violence and a clean bathroom. A simple man with little money and few interests in life. Dressed in a skimpy loin cloth, Bapu spends much of his time just lying around his mud house, reading and writing letters and cleaning lavatories. In the evening, he entertained friends, experimented with truth and ate salt—much in the fashion of an overgrown, self-styled hippie. A fairy tale of a movie. Highly recommended.



CIGARETTE OF THE YEAR: CHARMS

Like its name suggests, this mild yet lethal mix of 82 per cent tobacco and 12 per cent nicotine has charmed the smoking world of teeny-boppers. A devastating ad campaign that capitalises on puppy love and the spirit of the Wild West, pictures a man with that rugged denim look and wind-blown hair—alone in a rolling landscape, with just his woman, his guitar and his cigarette.



The spirit of freedom
is sweeping the country.

From the valleys of Kashmir to the palm groves of Kerala, from the bustling, bustling Metros of Bombay and Madras to the quiet hills of Shillong, the country is experiencing a phenomenon.

In smoothness. In taste.
In real value for money.
Charms Virginia Kings.

The most popular denim pack has become the

country's favourite smoke.



Already,
India's largest selling
Kingsize cigarette.

CHARMS
VIRGINIA KINGS

CIGARETTE SMOKING IS INJURIOUS TO HEALTH

If you know the difference between Keats and Shelley, you'll know the difference between this and any other suiting.



If their kind of poetry is a statement about the kind of person you are, here's a suiting that speaks your kind of language.
The style, the romance, the artistry.
A suiting from DCM Silk Mills.
DCM Silk Mills suiting feel better, fall better, look better.
No two ways about it.
If you're into Keats and Shelley, you couldn't be in any other suiting.

↑ SUIT OF THE YEAR: DCM SUITING SHIRTING AND PANTING

If you can tell the difference between thorough insolence and complete arrogance, between Lord Tennyson and Lata Mangeshkar; if you can tell the difference between a piece of turd and the crown jewels then you can tell the difference between a DCM ad and any other.

LIFE-STYLE



◀ SPORT OF THE YEAR: CRICKET

If a man from Mars were to land at a cricket stadium in India during a test match, his eyes would take in a strange sight. Eleven white blurs, seemingly stationary, but sometimes moving about listlessly and quite aimlessly for five days. He would watch one of these blurs move, bend a little, scratch, rub a red circular object against its white body and throw it away, only to gather it up again and again. And he would begin to doubt if there is any intelligent life on earth. And when he is told that this is a national pastime, he would be convinced of it.



◆ CLUB OF THE YEAR: THE GYMKHANA

In 1921, a white woman stepped off her carriage, towel and swimsuit in hand and proceeded to change in the makeshift rooms attached to the Lady Wellington Swimming Bath. Later, after a brisk swim she gets out and orders Vimto and fish fingers. The band nearby plays *God Save The Queen*.

Sixty years later a fat brown woman rolls out of her Mark 4 and proceeds to the makeshift changing rooms of the same club. Later, after splashing about in the shallow end she dries herself in the shade of a beach umbrella. Then she orders Vimto and fish fingers. The band still plays *God Save The Queen*.



A light suit made from DCM Silk Mills' range of 'Terror' silks. For casual wear.

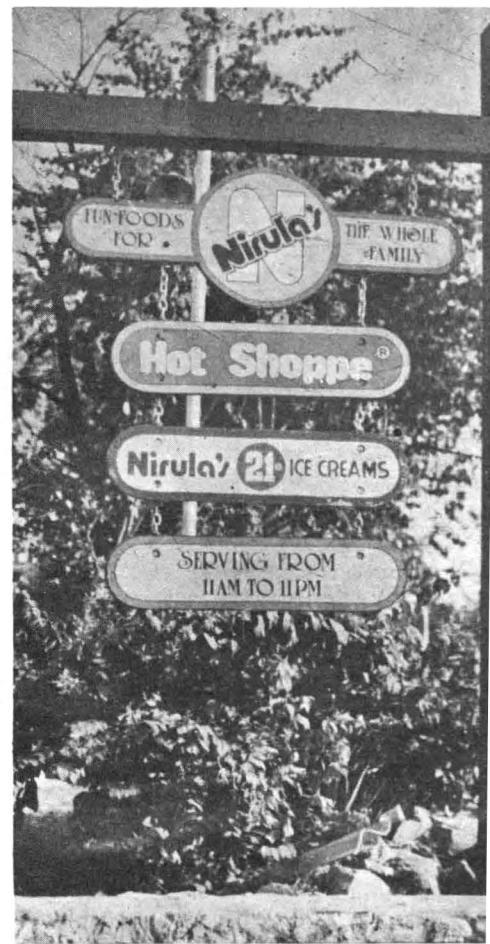
DCM
SILK MILLS

If you're smart enough.

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► RESTAURANT OF THE YEAR: NIRULAS

'East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet'. When Lalit Nirula read Kipling's prophecy he just laughed. And for good reason. For in every ice cream parlour, fast food restaurant and disco-joint across this enlightened land, East has not only met West but it has raped it clean off all its plastic symbols. The Mahabinger has met the hamburger, Butter Chicken, the Kentucky Frieds and Gulabbo ice cream the Banana-Split. Today, Macdonald arches, 32 flavour Ice Cream Parlours and Studio 29s are as Indian as yoga and transcendental meditation.



ARCHITECTURE



HOTEL OF THE YEAR: THE TAJ MAHAL HOTEL

Built on the Banks of Baroda, Punjab and Sindh and partly on the Reserve Banks, the Taj

Mahal Hotel is a slick 20th-century interpretation of an aging masterpiece. This modern building has all the charm and grandeur of the old Taj Mahal, without the fussy ostentation of a marble facade or the grossness of Islamic calligraphy. The unobtrusive sandstone box with its delicately carved pigeon holes, sits in a beautifully manicured parking lot—a quiet contrast to the vulgar sprawling bungalows around it. As a symbol of refinement it is home to the safari suit and all the ephemeral pleasures.



SHANTY OF THE YEAR: OM SHANTI HOME.

Inspired perhaps by the organic architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright, this humble building rises out of the ground every year, only to go back to it every monsoon. With its clean straight lines and sharply angled roofs, this is clearly a modern house—a humdrum architecture translated into the village idiom. Its functional layout allows all the activities of the house—cooking, sleeping, eating and defecating—to be performed conveniently in a 6' x 8' area.

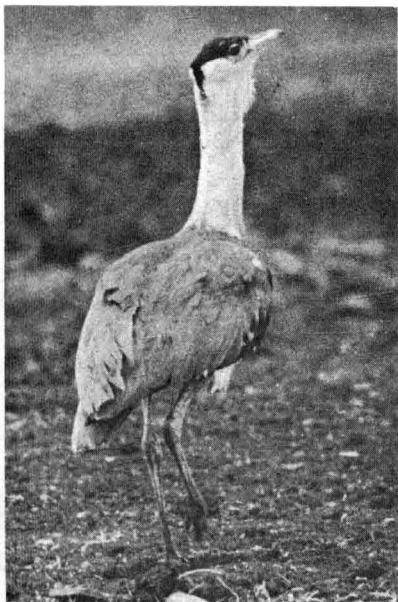


◀ HOUSE OF THE YEAR : A DELHI HOUSE

Stylistically, the house is a cross between Chandni Chowk Chipendale and Tamil Tiffany. White walls are juxtaposed against black roofs, sharp-edged rectilinear volumes of the house against the soft curves of balconies, tall, clear windows against short opaque doors. The facade is a face. A central mouth of a door shaded by a moustache of a porch, above which are two black eyes for windows set under the furrowed brow of a pediment. It is difficult sometimes to believe that such a complex variety of elements can be put together in so simple a thing as a house. Few architects would ever dare such non-conformity, such recklessness.

Yet, to our untrained, conventional eyes, this kind of architecture seems oddly naive and stupidly simple, like the architect himself. But it is quite possible that we are missing something—something that is too subtle, too obscure for our simple minds; someday, when our own conventional sensibilities have had a chance to develop, we may finally get a better understanding of Delhi's architecture. It may even provide us a clue to the architect's mind.

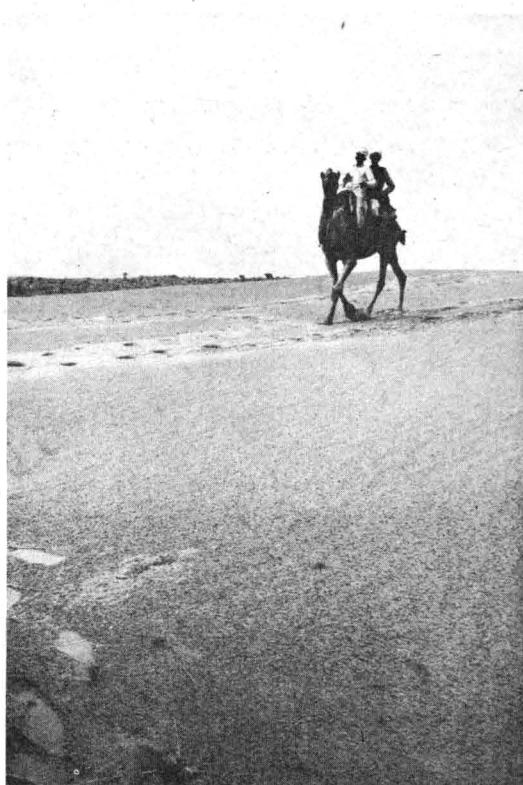
ENVIRONMENT



WILDLIFE OF THE YEAR: THE GREAT INDIAN BASTARD

As home to some of the rarest species of birds and wildlife, India was a fascinating country. A climate of striking contrasts once supported 15,000 different plant species and 75,000 varieties of animals. Things are different now. The Pink Headed Duck and the Forest Spotted Owl are now an endangered species as are animals like the Four Horned

Antelope and the Lion Tailed Macaque. And what's more, the rare but much loved species of bird, the Great Indian Bustard, has been replaced by the common and much despised species of man—the Great Indian Bastard.



DESERT OF THE YEAR: THE THAR, RAJASTHAN

A place of timeless beauty and romantic legends. Current programmes of desertification which call for the eradication of nomads and wildlife are not enough. What is needed is an effort to promote the extension of the sands to Punjab and Gujarat. Let us show how much we love our environment.

FOREST OF THE YEAR: THE KULU VALLEY FOREST

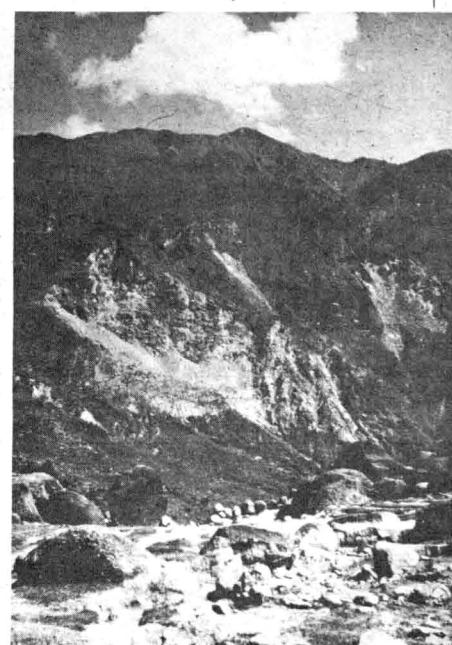
The Kulu Valley was once an ugly jungle of deodar trees, tall and stately, that completely cut out the much needed sunlight. On the ground, bushes harboured snakes and many strange animals. But thanks to the Himachal Pradesh Conservator of Forests, much of that has changed. Now, as part of a government programme to provide incentives to the local industry, many of these ugly, unsightly trees have been cut down by enterprising contractors. The Forest Department even provides a 50 per cent subsidy to Himachal residents wishing to set up furniture factories.

In return, many of them provide a 50 per cent subsidy to the government for allowing them these concessional rates.



CITY OF THE YEAR: DELHI

Modern Delhi has some of the widest streets in the whole world but also some of the narrowest, dingiest alleys: 7,000 air-conditioned hotel rooms and 38,000 mud shanties; 27,000 videos and 190,000 homeless; the highest per capita income in India and also the highest smog level in the world.





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imprint BRIEF



POPULATION BREAKTHROUGH

Pranay Gupte on Rafael Salas and his efforts to defuse the population bomb.

BACK IN 1968, American futurologists such as Prof Paul Ehrlich of Stanford University and others shook the world with warnings that a 'population bomb' was about to explode. Citing the world's annual population growth rate of two per cent plus, some of them predicted that by 1980 the global population would easily exceed five billion and that by the end of the century the figure would surely climb to eight billion, even beyond. The futurologists warned that most of the runaway population growth would occur in the world's poor countries. And we were warned that if something

wasn't done to curb the world's mushrooming population, violence would spread like wildfire as more and more people fought for access to declining resources.

Well, it is now 1983 or three years beyond that doomsday deadline and few of those dire predictions have been borne out. In fact, for the first time ever, the world's population growth rate is actually decreasing—it is now at 1.7 per cent annually and still falling, so that by the end of the century the current global population of 4.6 billion will have risen to 6.1 billion and not the seven or eight billion that doomsayers had warned us about.

The world's population 'problem' is far from being solved, to be sure, but

the unmistakable fact is that its previously rampant growth is now under control, especially in such giant states of the Third World as China, India, Indonesia and Brazil. The fact that the world's population growth is dramatically slowing down and that the earlier doomsday scenarios haven't quite worked out represents a clear victory for the unheralded men and women of the 'population business', those field workers, demographers, scientists, family planning counsellors and physicians who, in country after country of the developing world, have worked quietly but energetically to persuade people to keep their family size small. And the central figure among them for 15 years now has been Rafael M Salas

Pranay Gupte, a New York Times correspondent, is writing a book on population to be published by Times Books.

of the Philippines. The 55-year-old Salas, who is Harvard-educated, is officially an Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and head of its Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). Unofficially, he is known all over the world as 'Mister Population'.

More than any other individual, Salas has helped defuse the 'population bomb'. Through an unusual combination of political skill and managerial savvy he has persuaded Third World governments to incorporate population programmes into their economic development plans. He has convinced Third World leaders that they must match their political rhetoric in support of population control with funds for specific projects aimed at bringing down birth rate, improving general health facilities, increasing literacy—especially among women—and controlling that scourge of the developing world, infant mortality. He has coaxed Western governments—and especially the United States—to pump more than a billion dollars into population projects all over the world since 1974, the year when most nations of the world resolved at a megaconference that Salas organised in Bucharest, to commit themselves to a stepped-up global struggle against over-population.

He has taken the terror out of the word 'population'. Salas has done so by making the term acceptable around the world and convincing governments that it was indeed possible to regulate a nation's demographic trends. Salas's success has been not only the overwhelming governmental support he elicited for population programmes in different parts of the world, just as strikingly, his achievement has been that he was able to get governments in a wide variety of countries—Catholic, Moslem, Marxist, democratic, authoritarian—to institute population programmes without offending their particular cultural sensitivities. In such Catholic states as Ecuador, Colombia and Costa Rica, for example, he would underscore the fact that his agency—known popularly by its acronym, UNFPA—did not support abortion programmes and that if the Catholic Church was opposed to artificial birth control, then the UNFPA would give funds for programmes advocating the so-called 'natural' birth control method, which relies on a woman's biological cycle and which is favoured by the Church. In Moslem states such

as the ones in the Persian Gulf region where there had been some religious resistance to family planning and where in some cases the problem was one of underpopulation and not overpopulation, Salas offered support for health programmes that emphasised child and maternal care. In states of the Sub-Saharan region in Africa, the need was to conduct first-ever censuses and so that is what Salas gave money for. The leaders of China asked for and received, ten million dollars from Salas to conduct their first-ever census in 1982. In every case—involving some 5,000 projects in 150 countries in the last decade—Salas left it to the leaders of an individual country to decide for themselves what sort of population programme their nation should have. And now, because of Salas's unceasing efforts, every one of the world's developing states has some sort of population policy and programme.

WORLD-WIDE RESULTS

Leaders such as President Jayewardene, former West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi say that Salas's efficiency and energy have made a big dent in the world's formidable population problem. His achievements are tangible. Among them:

* In the heavily Catholic country of Ecuador, Salas convinced Church officials that they should start community health care centres where people could obtain assistance concerning the so-called 'natural' family planning method. UNFPA finances these centres and Ecuador's high population growth rate is already on its way down.

* In Tunisia, Salas helped develop what has become a model family planning programme in the Arab world. The programme emphasises literacy, women's employment and education concerning birth control. As a result, Tunisia's annual birth rate, which once was more than 50 per 1,000 of the population, has now dropped to 32 per 1,000, the lowest on the African continent and in the Arab world.

* In Indonesia, another heavily Moslem country, Salas focussed on the island of Java, which suffered from a high population density and high annual population growth. Through UNFPA's contributions to set up



health, family planning and birth control information centres, the island's annual population growth rate fell from more than four per cent to 1.4 per cent in 1982.

* In the predominantly Hindu island of Bali in the Indonesian archipelago, Salas helped devise family planning programmes that have resulted in a decline of the population growth rate from more than 4.4 per cent to just about 1.5 per cent.

* In Singapore, which is perhaps the outstanding 'success story' in population, Salas was involved in shaping a mass communications project



A maternal and child health care unit in Jordan: "Population programmes aren't simply a matter of fewer children. It means aiming at giving our children the fullest opportunity, education, good health care and jobs..."

through which radio and television audiences were given family planning information. Now Singapore has one of the world's lowest annual population growth rates currently down from more than 2.5 per cent a decade ago to about 1.5 per cent.

* In Mexico, which used to be a nightmare for demographers because of its rampant population growth, Salas-inspired TV soap operas and radio shows about the benefits of small families have been credited with helping bring down the country's population growth rate from more than four per cent annually ten years ago to

less than three per cent now.

How does Salas view such 'successes'? His response: "We have indeed made progress—in the last five years the world's annual population growth has dropped from 1.9 per cent to 1.7 per cent. But we cannot afford to be complacent about our achievements. There is still a great deal to be done."

The figures, he points out, continue to be startling: 146 births a minute, 8,790 an hour, 210,960 a day, 80 million a year. These are the unprecedented numbers by which the human race is expanding. The world's population is growing so fast in fact that in about three years it will grow by about 240 million—slightly more than the current population of the United States—and in 33 years, it will have doubled, if present trends continue.

Moreover, says Salas, of the world's current population of 4.6 billion, a quarter lives in what the UN and the World Bank say are conditions of 'absolute poverty' and many more face acute deprivation. Yet the fastest population growth is occurring in those very places where food, housing, sanitation and economic opportunities are in the shortest supply. The Rome-based Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) recently estimated that at current rates of population growth, 65 developing countries would find themselves by the year 2000 unable to feed, clothe and house some 650 million of their citizens.

SPREADING THE WORD

"When we deal with population, we are dealing with what is probably the most sensitive aspect of people's daily existence—their sex lives," Salas says. "How do you tell people how many children they should have—and not invade people's privacy or upset their values? But population programmes aren't simply a matter of having fewer children. Population also means increasing the value of each birth, it means guaranteeing that our children are given the fullest opportunity to be educated, to get good health care, to have access to the jobs they eventually want. I think population and development go hand in hand."

Salas, in fact, has made the word 'population' so acceptable that every one of the world's 140 or so develop-

ing nations now has a population policy. This 'success' has generated its own set of requirements: constant travel by Salas and his key aides such as Dr Nafis Sadik, a Pakistani physician, Heino Wittrin, a West German academician, Jyoti Shankar Singh, an Indian lawyer and economist and Edmund Kerner, a former journalist from Sri Lanka. Two-or-three-man teams are frequently dispatched from UNFPA headquarters in New York to various countries to evaluate new requests for aid, with follow-up visits once such projects—whether they be a maternal care centre, or a family planning clinic, or an adult education centre to promote population information—get going. Such visits accomplish two things: UNFPA officials get a first-hand sense of what goes on in various countries and residents and officials of those countries get an opportunity to convey to the UNFPA what specific requirements they have for expanding population programmes. In June this year, for example, Dr Sadik—who in early 1983 underwent open-heart surgery—visited six countries, including Sri Lanka and Malaysia. At the same time, Singh was evaluating a family planning programme in Costa Rica, while Wittrin was consulting with officials in the Middle East.

The energy of these officials may seem boundless but in a sense they are obligated to put in such colossal mileage. That is because of Salas's insistence on keeping his staff costs low and his staff size small. His agency, which maintains field offices in more than 30 countries, has a world-wide staff of about 200—compared with thousands employed by each of the UN's dozen or so other agencies. The UNFPA has become under Salas the world's biggest source of multilateral funds for population to developing countries and, in fact, Salas runs it like a mini-corporation. The Filipino, who received a master's degree from Harvard University's Graduate School of Public Administration in the late-'50s, tends in his everyday conversations to quote from American management manuals. Books on management are required reading for his executives, who usually pack such volumes for their plane rides. UNFPA executives are periodically dispatched to management-by-objective seminars. Salas keeps a close watch on his associates's expenses and can be irascible when given evidence of waste. Noting this recently, President Junius

R Jayewardene of Sri Lanka told me: "If various international agencies within the UN were run as Salas runs his population agency, we might have a more effective world organisation."

PERSUADING THE CHURCH

Salas was flying home to New York from Santiago, Chile, in the summer of 1979 and disembarked at Quito, the mountain capital of Ecuador, for a day's stay. Ecuador is a country with nearly ten million people and a population growth rate that is the highest in Latin America. It is a heavily Catholic country and Church officials had long resisted United Nations suggestions for family planning centres. The UNFPA had given nearly two million dollars between 1976 and 1979 to health care programmes, but Salas saw during a day visit to the slums of Quito that there was great need for more health centres. He says he was appalled by living conditions in these slums, conditions stemming from increased emigration to Ecuadorian cities by peasants who found agriculture less and less lucrative.

When Salas returned to New York, he directed a nine-man task force to fly down to Ecuador and make recommendations on what additional support UNFPA could give to Ecuador. Government officials had already requested more money for health care programmes but Salas wanted to be certain that these programmes would serve residents of congested neighbourhoods in Quito and Guayaquil, Ecuador's two big cities. Subsequently, an additional \$200,000 was authorised by Salas for expansion of maternal health care facilities.

Still, what continued to disturb Salas was that little was being done concerning the country's burgeoning birth rate, which hovered around 38 births per 1,000 persons annually or an increase each year of the population by 3.8 per cent. At the suggestion of UNFPA's then co-ordinator in Ecuador, a Chilean physician named Hugo Corvalan, Salas flew down to Quito last year and met Monsignor Antonio Gonzalez, head of the Church's office in Quito. Salas says that it was his view that no family planning effort in Ecuador could get started unless Church officials were some-



how persuaded to go along.

The two men met at Monsignor Gonzalez's office, a 17th-century Spanish villa of long corridors, tall wooden doors and high ceilings. They discussed the general social scene in Ecuador, a putative oil-rich country that is a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Monsignor Gonzalez agreed with Salas's view that the illusion of jobs in large cities—an illusion created largely by Ecuador's OPEC status—had drawn thousands of able-bodied men and women away from their rural homes. When jobs could not be had, the two men opined, the former peasants found themselves in conditions of acute poverty, they sometimes turned to crime—and they start-

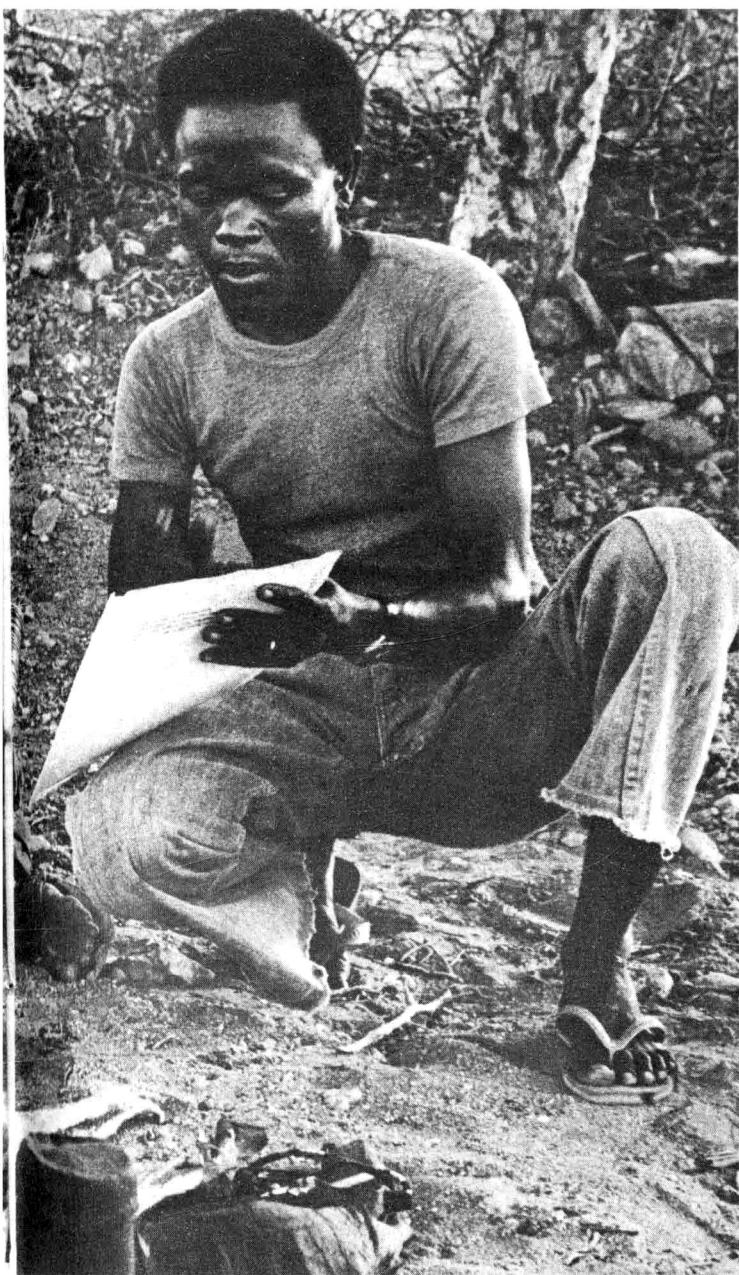
ed breeding like rabbits, sometimes out of pure frustration. Perhaps if an intensified drive was launched to promote family planning in the poor neighbourhoods...

"We are very willing to help," Salas said.

"But you know the Church's position on that—we oppose all forms of artificial birth control," Monsignor Gonzalez said.

"Then we will support 'natural' birth control clinics," Salas quickly said.

To Salas's surprise, the Monsignor agreed on the spot. Salas told him: "At UNFPA we have no ideology, no one way of doing things in the field. We do not necessarily promote artificial birth control programmes only. We never



Family planning in the Marsabit area, Kenya: "We are dealing with the most sensitive aspect of people's daily existence—their sex lives.... Population and development go hand in hand."

fund any abortion programmes. Our interest is in checking overpopulation, and we leave it up to a country's leaders to decide for themselves which is the best way to bring down the population growth rate."

Monsignor Gonzalez later told me that he personally had been worried for a long time about Ecuador's mushrooming population but that he felt the Church could not involve itself in such a delicate issue. Why did he change his mind about involvement?

"Our involvement in family planning stems from our humanitarian and social concerns," Monsignor Gonzalez said. "We are proving that in Ecuador the Church is not socially negligent." Then he added that had Salas not been persistent and had he not sought out a

meeting with Monsignor Gonzalez and had Dr Corvalan also not lobbied vigorously for some sort of family planning programme in Ecuador, most likely nothing would have been done.

TOWARDS SELF-HELP

There now are three 'natural' family planning clinics in Quito, and UNFPA gives more than \$50,000 annually to the facilities. Some 1,000 people visit the three centres each week for information on family planning, maternal care and child care. To combat the problem of unemployment, Monsignor Gonzalez has devised a pro-

ject under which men and women sweep streets, learn and market handicrafts and pursue vocations such as car-fixing, carpentry and plumbing. More community clinics are being opened with the financial assistance of UNFPA and Western diplomats based in Quito say that through the mass awareness that is being generated about family planning through the clinics—and through TV and radio commercials that are being produced by the Ecuador government about 'natural' family planning—the country's overall birth rate will decrease.

Salas is especially proud of UNFPA's involvement with Ecuador because he feels it offers an example of how the organisation adapts its aid-giving policies to a country's cultural and political environment. "I believe it is important that international agencies such as UNFPA assist these countries in promoting whatever kind of programme that they themselves see best for their environment," he says. "We cannot force programmes down anyone's throat. We cannot ask them to accept methods that are alien to their culture or social climate.

"It is just not enough to give out money," he says, "you have to see where it goes, how it is used, who it benefits. Too often development aid is poured into a bottomless well and no one knows what happens to the money." Largely because of such continuous scrutiny by Salas, there is general agreement among Western donors that, dollar for dollar, the money given to population is one of the best investments the West has made.

Indeed, if one of the objectives of developmental aid is to eventually phase out Western financial involvement in Third World development and to generate a self-help ethic among developing countries, then this objective has been achieved when it comes to population. Salas points out that for every dollar of outside assistance now received by Third World countries for population, these nations are putting in four dollars of their own for population programmes. Countries such as Singapore and South Korea, where Salas helped devise unique mass media campaigns promoting family planning, no longer require Western economic assistance for population because sufficient funds are raised within their own boundaries.

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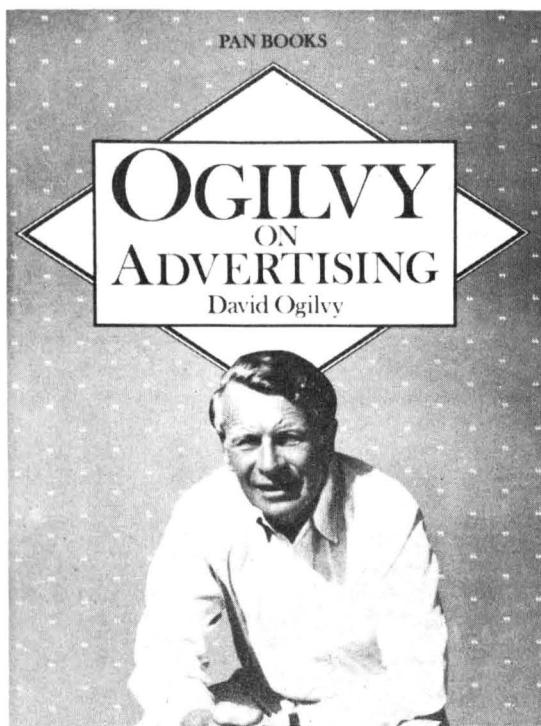
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BHATEKAR

TRUMAN CAPOTE

Tennessee Williams: Thinking Of Old Times

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS DEAD at 71.

So announced the headline on the front page of *The New York Times*. He had strangled, it turned out, while using a plastic bottle cap to take barbiturates; incredibly, the cap had popped down his throat and choked him to death. All of this had happened at the Elysée, a curious little hotel located in the East 50s. Actually, Tennessee had an apartment in New York. But when he was in the city, he always stayed at the Elysée. The apartment, a small jumble of sparsely furnished rooms 'conveniently' located on West 42nd Street, was reserved for the entertainment of kind strangers.

It was a strange end for a man obsessed with a rather poetic concept of death. Even as a young man, he was convinced that the next day would be his last. The only serious quarrel we ever had involved his hypochondriac sensitivity to this subject. At the time, he had a play in rehearsal: *Summer And Smoke*. We were having dinner together and to amuse him (I thought) I began to tell him stories I had heard from members of the cast about the play's director, a woman from Texas. It seemed that at every rehearsal, she would assemble the cast and tell them what an effort they must make, how hard they must work, "because this flower of genius is Tenn's last. He is dying. Yes, he is a dying man with only months to live. He told me so himself. Of course, he's always claiming to be dying. But this time, I'm afraid it's true. Even his agent believes it."

This is the start of a regular column by Truman Capote which will alternate with one by Graham Greene.

Far from amusing my old friend, the anecdote enraged him. First he broke glasses and plates, then he turned over the entire table and stalked out of the restaurant, leaving me amazed—and also to pay for the destruction.

I WAS 16 YEARS OLD WHEN I MET him. He was 13 years older than I was, a waiter at the Greenwich Village Café and a would-be playwright. We became great friends—it was really a sort of intellectual friendship, though people inevitably thought otherwise. In those early days, he used to give me all of his short, one-act plays to read and we would act them out together. Gradu-

**Now when I
remember
Tennessee I
think of the
good times, the
funny times.**

ally, over the years, we built up *The Glass Menagerie*. I would play the daughter.

With his tendency toward around-the-clock sex and gin and general carousing, Tennessee, who was not a born survivor, probably would not have lasted beyond the age of 40 if it hadn't been for Frank Merlo. Frank was a sailor, a war-time discovery of mine. Some five years after I met him and when he was no longer involved with the Navy, Tennessee saw us lunching in a cozy Italian restaurant. I never saw him so excited, either before or since. He deserted his own luncheon companion—his agent, Audrey Wood—

and swiftly, without any invitation, sat himself at our table. After I had introduced him to my friend, not two minutes passed before he said, "Could you have dinner with me tonight?"

The invitation clearly did not include me. But Frank was embarrassed; he didn't know what to say. I answered for him: "Yes," I said, "of course he'd like to have dinner with you."

So he did. They were together for 14 years and those were the happiest years of Tennessee's life. Frank was like a husband, a lover, a business agent to him. He also had a great gift for parties, which suited Tennessee just fine. When Yukio Mishima, the brilliant Japanese writer—the one who formed an army and confronted the Japanese military commander and ended up committing hara-kiri—came to New York in 1952, Tennessee told Frank that he wanted to throw a party in Mishima's honour. So Frank rounded up every geisha girl between New York and San Francisco but he didn't stop at that. Then he outfitted about 100 drag geishas. It was the most fantastic party I'd ever seen in my entire life. And Tennessee dressed up as a great geisha dame and they drove through the park all night till dawn, drinking champagne. This was Mishima's first taste of life in the Western world and he said, "I'm *never* going back to Japan!"

When Frank died of cancer in 1962, Tennessee died a little, too. I remember all too well the last hours of Frank's life. He lived them in a New York hospital room, where crowds of friends drifted in and out. Finally, a stern doctor ordered the room rid of all visitors, including Tennessee. But he refused to leave. He knelt by the narrow bed and clutched Frank's hand, pressing it against his cheek.

Nevertheless, the doctor told him he must go. But suddenly Frank whispered, "No. Let him stay. It can't do me any harm. After all, I'm used to him."

The doctor sighed and left them alone.

Tennessee was never the same after that. He had always drunk a good deal but he started combining drugs and alcohol. He was also meeting some very strange people. I think he lived the last two decades of his life alone—with the ghost of Frank.

BUT NOW WHEN I REMEMBER Tennessee, I think of the good times,

Tennessee was an unhappy man even when he was smiling the most, laughing his loudest. Blanche and her creator were interchangeable....

the funny times. He was a person who, despite his inner sadness, never stopped laughing. He had a remarkable laugh. It wasn't coarse or vulgar or even especially loud. It just had an amazing sort of throaty Mississippi-river-man ring to it. You could always tell when he had walked into the room, no matter how many people were there.

As for his sense of humour, normally it was pretty raucous. But when he got into a fury, he seemed to swing between two things: either very sick humour—laughing non-stop during those five-martini lunches of his—or deep bitterness, about himself, about his father, about his family. His father never understood him, his family seemed to blame *him* for his sister's insanity and Tennessee himself—well, I think he thought he was not very sane. You could see all of this in his eyes, which had a changing in them, like a Ferris wheel of merriment and bitterness.

This isn't to say that he wasn't fun to be with. We used to go to the movies together and I guess I've been thrown out of more movie houses with him than with anybody else in my life. He would always start reciting lines, making fun, doing Joan Crawford. Before long, the manager would come down and tell us to get out.

My funniest memory, though, is of four or five years ago, when I was staying with Tennessee in Key West. We were in a terrifically crowded bar—there were probably 300 people in it, both gays and straights. A husband and wife were sitting at a little table in the corner and they were both quite drunk. She had on a pair of slacks and a halter top and she approached our table and held out an eyebrow pencil. She wanted me to autograph her belly button.

I just laughed and said, "Oh, no. Leave me alone."

"How can you be so cruel?" Tennessee said to me and, as everybody in the place watched, he took the eyebrow pencil and wrote *my* name around her navel. When she got back

to her table, her husband was furious. Before we knew it, he had grabbed the eyebrow pencil out of her hand and walked over to where we were sitting, whereupon he unzipped his pants and said to me, "Since you're autographing everything today, would you mind autographing *mine*?"

I had never heard a place with 300 people in it get that quiet. I didn't know what to say—I just looked at him.

Then Tennessee reached up and took the eyebrow pencil out of the stranger's hand. "I don't know that



there's room for Truman to autograph it," he said, giving me a wink, "but I'll initial it."

It brought down the house.

THE LAST TIME I SAW HIM WAS A few weeks before he died. We had dinner together at a very private little place called Le Club and Tennessee was fine physically, but sad. He said he had no friends anymore, that I was one of the few people left in his life who really knew him. He wished we could be close the way we were in the old days.

And as he talked and the fireplace

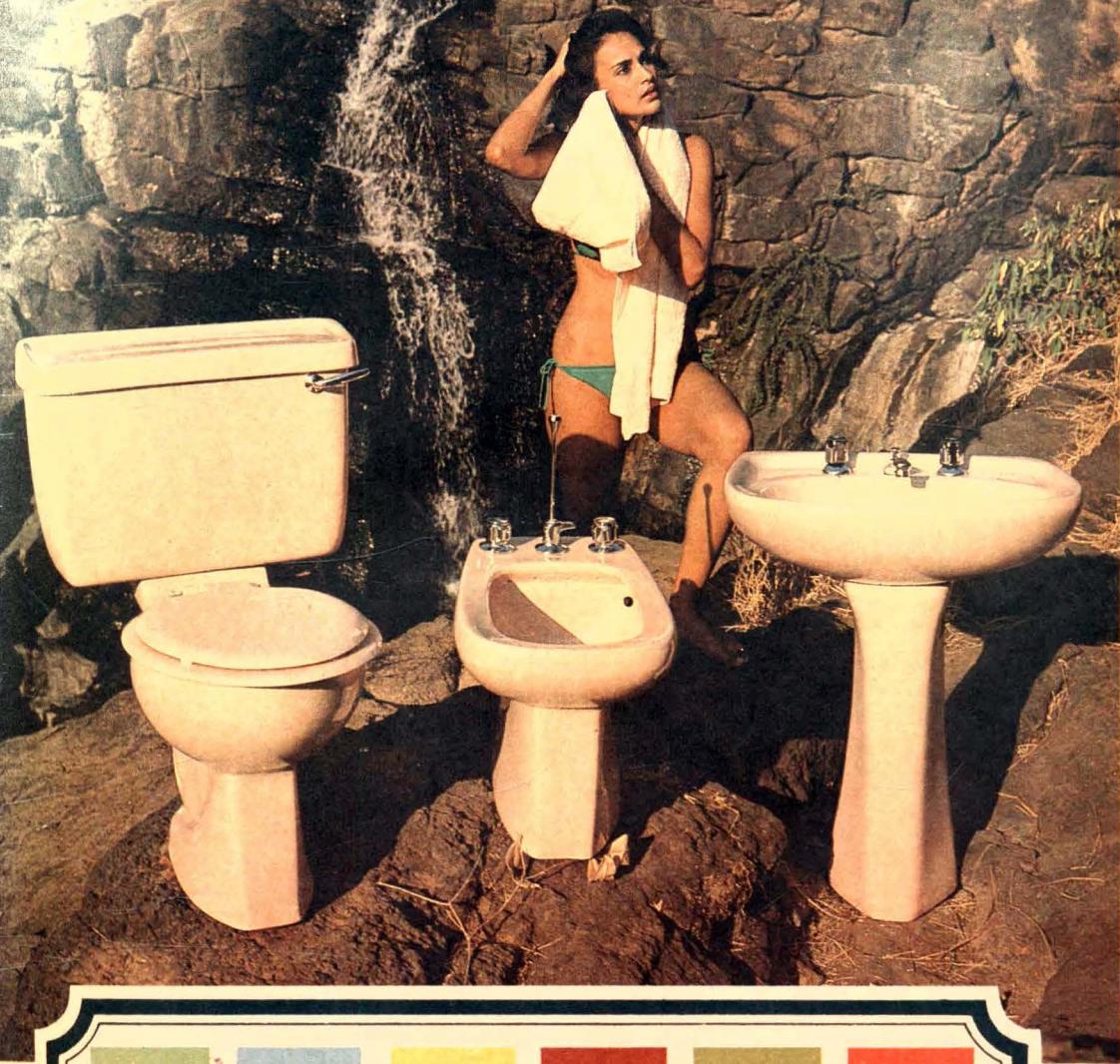
blazed, I thought, Yes, I *did* know him. And I remembered a night many, many years before when I first realised that that was true.

The year was 1947, and the opening night of *A Streetcar Named Desire* was a hauntingly dazzling event. As the lights dimmed on the final scene and Blanche DuBois, reaching out in darkness for the guiding hands of a nurse and a doctor, whispered, "Whoever you are—I have always depended on the kindness of strangers," a thrilling silence immobilised the audience. Terror and beauty had stopped their hearts. Even long after the curtain had descended, the hush continued. Then it was as if a cascade of balloons had exploded. The magnificent applause, the momentous rising of the audience to its feet, was as sudden and as breathtaking as a cyclone.

The stars, Jessica Tandy and Marlon Brando, took 16 curtain calls before the 'Author! Author!' demands were met. He was reluctant to be led onstage, this young Mr Williams. He blushed as though it were the first time he had ever been kissed and by strangers, at that. Certainly, he had not splurged on the evening (he had an overpowering fear of money, one so severe that even an occasion such as this could not make him succumb to thoughts of a new suit), so he was dressed in dark blue that many a subway seat had shined; and his tie had become loosened; and one of the buttons on his shirt was dangling. But he was beguiling: short but trim, sturdy, healthy coloured. He held up two smallish ploughman's hands and quietened the ecstasy long enough to say, "Thank you. Thank you very, very, very . . ." in a voice as sluggish and Southern as the Mississippi if the river were polluted with gin. What he felt, one felt, was joy, not happiness; joy is cocaine brief but happiness has at least a little longer-lasting languor.

Tennessee was an unhappy man, even when he was smiling the most, laughing his loudest. And the truth was, at least to me, that Blanche and her creator were interchangeable; they shared the same sensitivity, the same insecurity, the same wistful lust. And suddenly, as one was thinking that and was watching his bows to the deafening clamour, he seemed to recede on the stage, to fade through the curtains—led by the same doctor who had guided Blanche DuBois toward undesirable shadows. ♦

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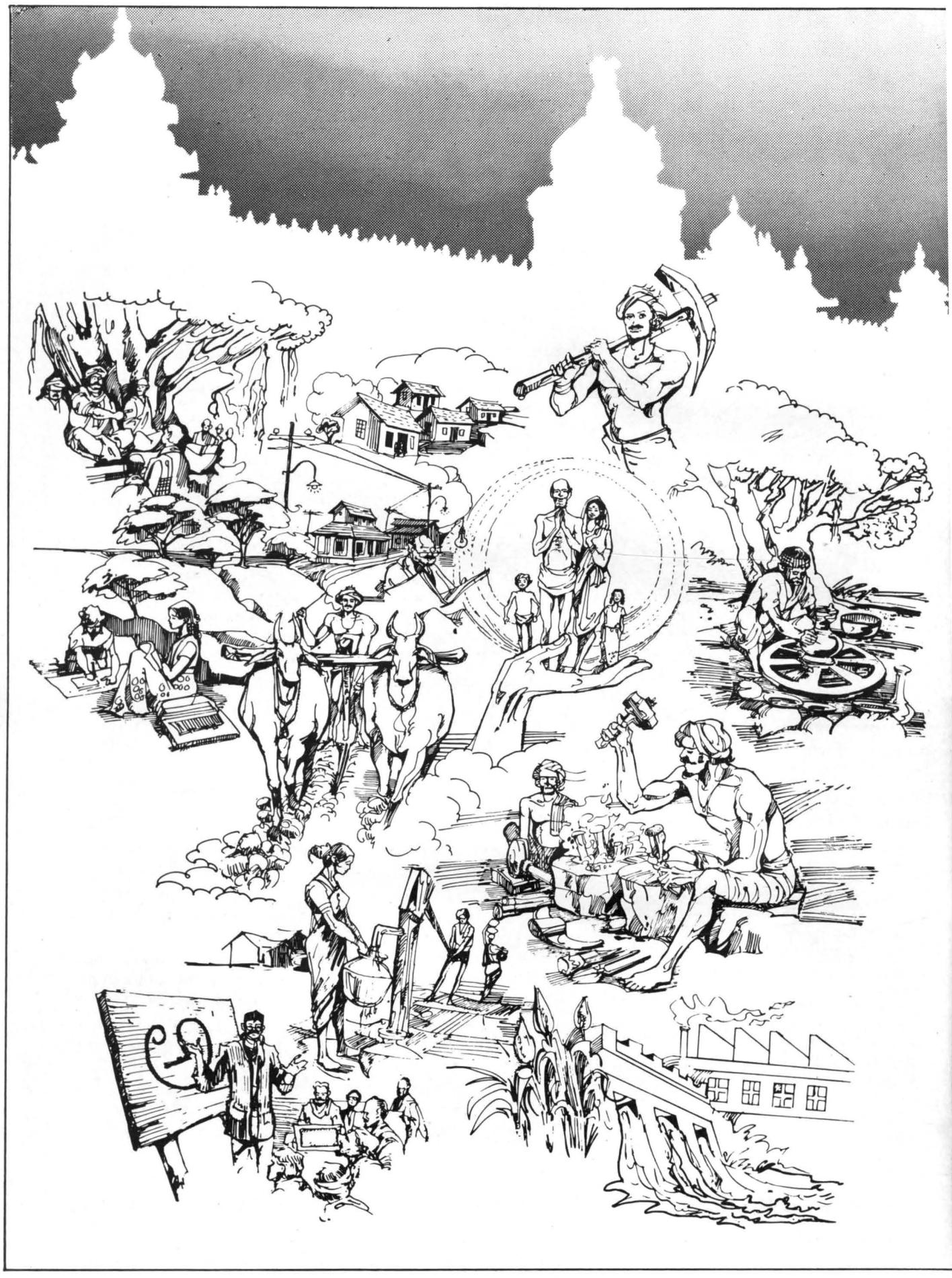
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TOWARDS A CLEAN ADMINISTRATION :

- * To curb corruption, Lokayukta being set up with jurisdiction over all public servants including the Chief Minister.
- * A separate department set up for quick redressal of public grievances.
- * A Bill to prevent defection.

DECENTRALISATION OF ADMINISTRATION :

- * Democracy at grass root level—Bill introduced for the establishment of Zilla Parishads, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats.
- * Elections to City Corporations and Municipal Councils held for the first time during the last ten years.
- * Minimum age limit for voting reduced to 18 years in Municipal elections.
- * Reservation of 20 per cent seats for women in Municipalities and City Corporation.

PRIMACY TO KANNADA :

- * Teaching of Kannada in schools made compulsory.
- * Use of Kannada at all levels of administration.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT :

- * Provision of drinking water to every village in two years; 16,000 bore wells sunk so far.
- * Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme for year round employment for agricultural labourers.
- * Relief of Rs. 36 crores granted to farmers by way of waiver of loans, exemption from water rate, subsidy for failed wells, etc.
- * 80,000 hectares of additional land brought under irrigation.
- * All houseless and siteless agricultural labourers to get sites in two years—Rs. 12 crores spent on construction of Janata houses this year.
- * Antyodaya for economic advancement of the poorest of the poor—introduced in 46 taluks.

INDUSTRY :

- * The New Industrial Policy: Establishment of 1000 small and cottage industrial units every month.
- * Special encouragement for handicrafts and handlooms; 20,000 Khadi and Village industrial units to be set up in five years.

EDUCATION :

- * A comprehensive bill introduced for reforming the education system.
- * Exemption from payment of capitation fee for Karnataka students in Medical and Engineering colleges.
- * Ordinance issued for phased abolition of capitation fee in five years.
- * Aksharasena—a massive programme started to eradicate illiteracy.

SOCIAL WELFARE :

- * Direct employment to outstanding graduates from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- * Abolition of Devadasi system.
- * Scholarship amounts increased for weaker sections.
- * Minorities Commission and the second Commission for Backward Classes appointed.

EMPLOYMENT :

- * Permanent employment provided for 24,000 daily wages workers.
- * Pensions and Medical Benefits given to journalists with low income.
- * AND MANY MORE MEASURES FOR PEOPLE'S WELFARE.

The odds were, and still are, heavy and the obstacles many. Still, with determination and dedication the Janata Government has striven to fulfil the needs of the people and translate their aspirations into reality.

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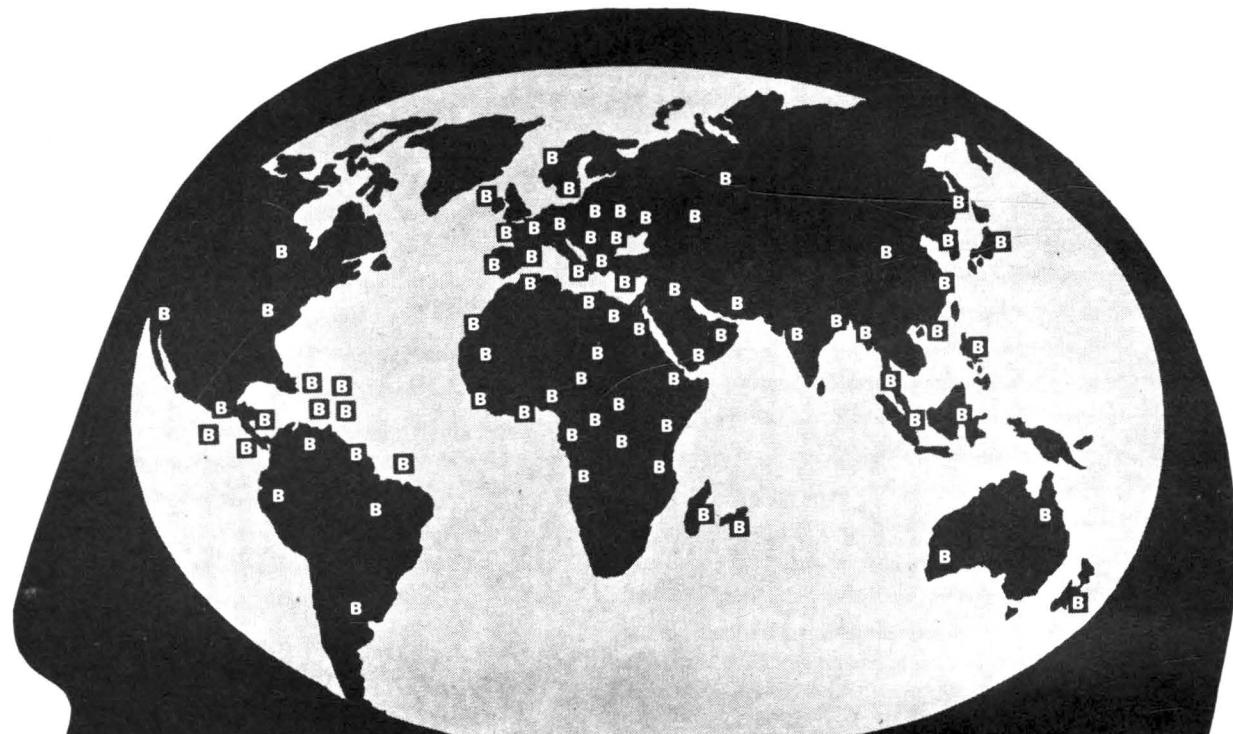


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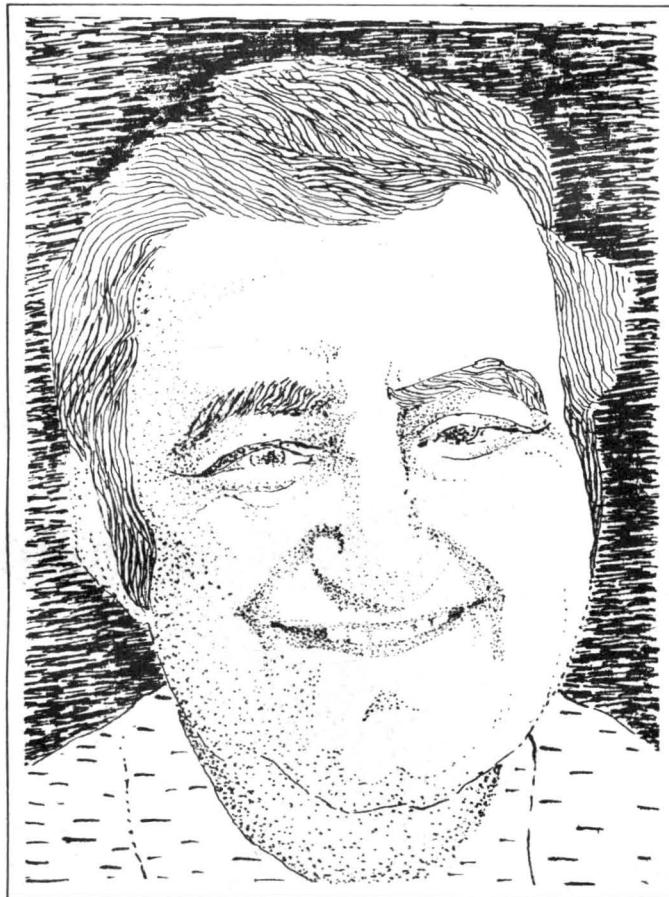
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Sirjang Lal Tandon: Silicon Valley's Indian Computer Millionaire

By Kathleen K Wiegner

When Forbes magazine published its list of the 400 richest people in America, only one Indian was on the list: Sirjang Lal Tandon.

Despite being virtually unknown in his own country, Tandon is a celebrity in the US. He has created a \$ 300-million computer company in just eight years. Sixty of his employees are millionaires and in 1983 Forbes picked Tandon Corporation as its Up and Comer of the year.

IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE automobile industry, scores of independent partsmakers flourished. There was Weston-Mott Axle Co in axles, Brown-Lipe-Chapin Co in gears, Northway Motor And Manufacturing in engines. As the industry matured, the number of independent partsmakers dwindled. Only a few, like \$3-billion (1982 sales) Borg-Warner, survived on their own and prospered.

It's an old and well-known story, being repeated in today's growth industry—computers. By the end of the decade, many, perhaps most, of the hundreds of computer component and peripheral makers will have become memories. Indeed, such pioneers as Memorex, Pertec and Shugart Associates have already been swallowed up by larger companies.

Tandon Corporation, *Forbes*' Up &

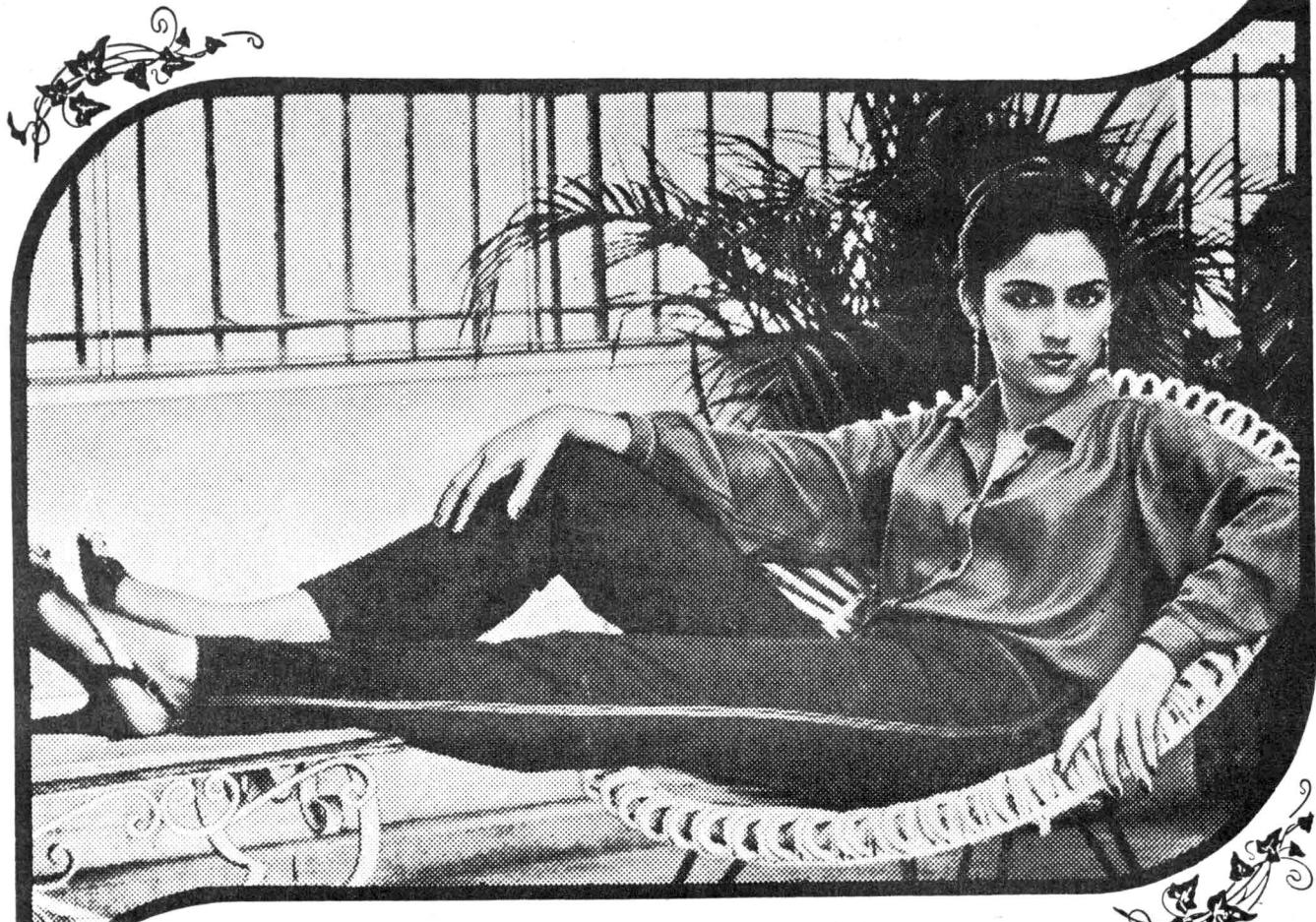
Comer of the year, has all the makings of a survivor. In eight years Tandon, based in Chatsworth, California, 25 miles north of Los Angeles, has grown from nothing to sales this year near \$300 million. It was profitable its first month in business. This year it should earn over \$27 million—about 15 per cent on equity. Long-term debt: a negligible \$23,000. On an equity base of over \$200 million, Tandon is not seriously threatened by the potential loss on its \$12-million worth of accounts receivable from troubled Victor Technologies, a loss that would sink many a young company.

The company is the creation of Sirjang Lal (Jugi) Tandon, 41, a US-educated mechanical engineer from Punjab. Tandon has built his company the same way every great manufacturer from Eli Whitney to Thomas Watson

has: by paying constant attention to the minutest details of manufacturing cost and cutting prices to the bone. American businessmen, who carp about the problems of manufacturing in late 20th century America, should take a good look at Tandon.

Tandon makes disk drives for microcomputers. The drives are housed in little boxes that resemble cassette tape players and sit alongside or inside computers, providing the memory storage. In each drive a recording head 'reads' and 'writes' magnetic information on the disk. A small motor rotates the disk to the precise spot where data are to be entered or retrieved. Making the drives is an intensely competitive business. About 110 independent companies or corporate divisions now make them. Tandon has quickly become far and away the world's largest indepen-

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dent disk drive producer for microcomputers. Of the 4.3-million 5 1/4-inch flexible or 'floppy' disk drives—currently the industry's most popular type—that are expected to be shipped in the North American market this year, Tandon will ship 2.8 million, a better than 60 per cent market share.

Don't talk about 'high tech' to Jugi Tandon. He doesn't think of his company that way. He thinks of it as a skilled manufacturer. "The computer industry," he says, "has historically been extremely good at research and development, but it didn't focus on manufacturing sophisticated electro-mechanical devices in large volumes. The basic technology in disk drives is the same as ten years ago. The difference is that then drives were produced for specialised customers. Now we are making a consumer product."

Hence the stress on basic manufacturing economies. Tandon's success makes a case study for Microeconomics I. The microcomputer market is highly price-elastic; that means price changes greatly influence demand. The disk drive represents 35 to 40 per cent of the retail price of a microcomputer. By cutting prices, which Tandon has done several times by 30 to 50 per cent, he not only enlarges the total market for drives but his own share as well.

How do you do this and still make money? Manufacturing cheaply and spreading your overhead over a broader base than your competitors can.

Tandon is very much your gut businessman. While he did study engineering, he had neither the time nor the money to waste on an MBA from one of the prestigious B-schools. (Tandon earned his MBA studying nights at the University of Santa Clara.)

He came, however, from a culture of frugality where every penny counts and for all his Americanisation he has never lost his prejudice against unnecessary spending in business. That has been almost as true of his personal life as of his business life. "I always went home to my wife instead of going to the drinking parties," Tandon says. "I wasn't part of the 'in' crowd."

One of eight children of a Punjabi attorney, he came to the US in 1960 to finish his last two years of college, working as a busboy while earning a BS in mechanical engineering from Howard University. He later got a master's degree from Kansas State University, joined IBM as a junior engineer



Tandon came back to India in 1967. But there were no opportunities. So he went back to the US and became a millionaire.

and then, as he had always intended, returned to India, in 1967. "But there were no opportunities for me there," he says.

A year later found him back in the US, married. IBM had promised him a job but he was broke and rather than wait he applied at Memorex, then making large disk drives. Memorex gave him a job right away—nobody else wanted it—on a project to develop a small floppy disk drive. When IBM introduced its own small drive, Tandon's relatively unimportant project suddenly became hot. In fact, small drives in general got hot. Alan Shugart, then at Memorex, too, joined with some other Memorex technicians and left to form Shugart Associates. (He later lost control of his drive company and started a new one, Seagate.) Shugart seems to have made one major mistake: he didn't invite Tandon to join his venture.

In any case, Tandon says, "I wanted to start my own company, too. But I was just an engineer. Alan had the name. I couldn't raise any money. People I approached said, 'Who are you? We're not going to give you a dime.' I was asking for \$50,000 and would probably have given up 90 per cent of the company."

Eventually, in July 1973, Tandon found his way to Pertec, the Los Angeles-based computer products maker.

Pertec offered Tandon a deal: work on his floppy disk drive at Pertec and Pertec would give him a nice stock bonus. But at Memorex, Tandon had learned about more than making floppy disk drives. He had learned about funny money. "I had the experience of watching a \$20 stock [Memorex] go all the way to \$170 and back to \$5," he says. "So I said to Pertec, 'Give me in cash half of whatever you think I could make on the stock.'" (As it happens, Pertec was taken over by Volkswagen subsidiary, Triumph Adler in 1980.)

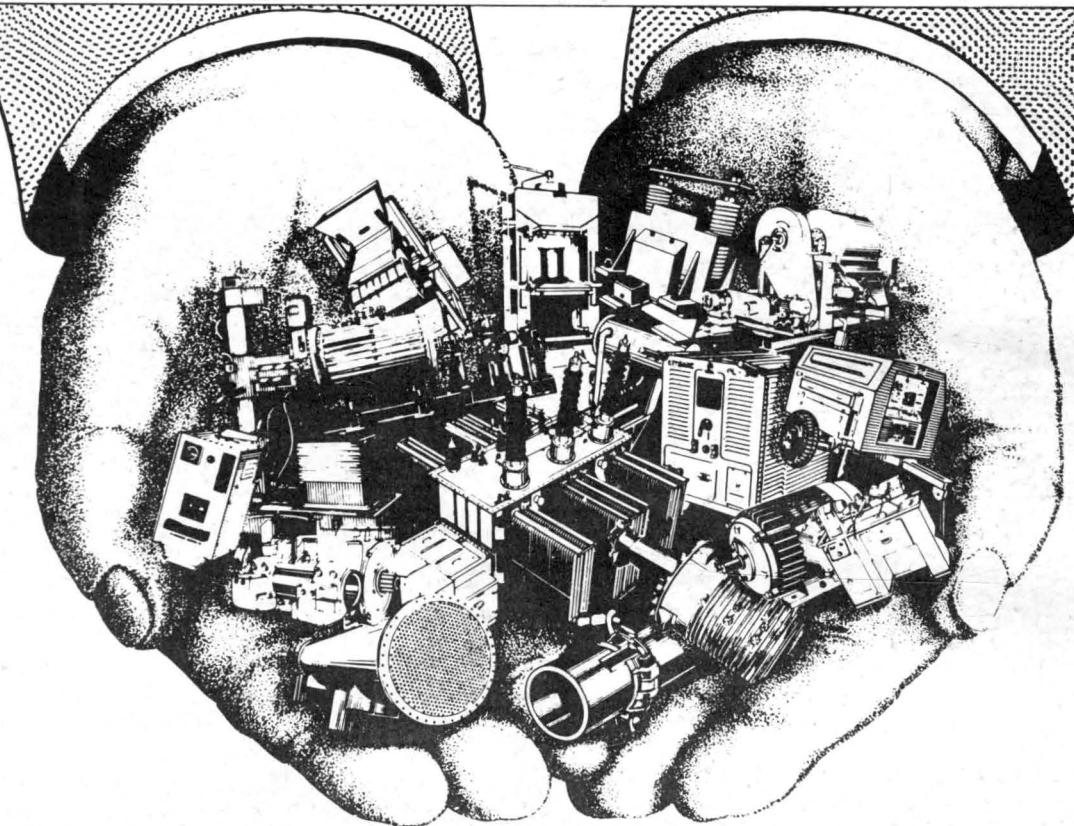
Two years later, in October 1975, Tandon took the cash, \$65,000 and walked away, a free man. Frugal as always, he put some of the payout into three Los Angeles houses and banked some for future living expenses. Then, with \$7,000, he bought machinery that he and his brother put in working order and with the help of Tandon's wife, Kamla, began making recording heads for disk drives.

Why recording heads? Because Tandon put his ear to the market and heard it calling for efficiently manufactured heads. He figured that he could sell heads for \$18 each. The going rate then was \$40. As Tandon says, one man's fat margins are another man's opportunity. By 1978, just three years after leaving Pertec, Tandon was the largest independent supplier of recording heads. Sales were at \$3 million.

The head is the most costly part of the disk drive and Tandon by then was the established low-cost head producer. Why not produce the entire drive? By 1979 Tandon had decided to do so. Here again, the high margins and 'sloppiness' of the competition came to his aid. Tandy Corporation, whose Radio Shack stores were heavily committed to the personal computer business, was having problems with Tandy's principal disk drive source. John Roach, Tandy's Chairman, set out looking for alternative drive sources. But wherever Roach went, potential suppliers informed him that they could only supply Tandy with more drives if Tandy could supply them with more Tandon recording heads. Roach is no fool. He tracked down Tandon. Says Tandon:

"We were in this tiny building that John Roach said looked like a high school cafeteria. We had a prototype of a disk drive. That's all. I said to

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Roach, "When do you want production?" This was in May 1979. Roach said, "July." I said to our engineers, "We have a chance to really grow this company or we're totally going to screw it up." We spent ten minutes and everybody said, "We're going to go at it."

The rest, as they say, is history. Tandy got its drives on schedule, with an order that eventually totalled 50,000 units. A flood of orders soon came from other microcomputer makers and finally from mighty IBM itself, for the PC. IBM currently ships the majority of its PCs with Tandon drives.

Since the company went public in February 1981, its share price has risen from four (adjusting for stock splits) to over 30 but has slipped back to a recent 25. Key Tandon employees got stock and options and 60 have become millionaires, one of them a former assembly-line worker whose stock is now worth \$6 million. Tandon, of course, is even richer. His 11 per cent interest in the company is worth \$135 million at current prices.

Tandon remains, in a sense, a 'passive' manufacturer, turning out precisely what his customers want, no more and no less. "We don't invent things for the sake of inventing things," he says. His engineers meet customers face-to-face. "We say, 'How would you like it if we did this?' They say, 'Great' or 'It makes no sense.'" This helps Tandon keep his research and development spending to a low and efficient four per cent of sales. Nor does he have to spend a lot on marketing—just three per cent of sales last year.

It therefore becomes necessary for Tandon to start production with the lowest costs he can achieve. He does not use predatory pricing to drive competitors away and then raise prices. Rather, he starts with low but profitable prices. That way, if the competition doesn't quickly fold—as it very embarrassingly did not when TI tried to blow away the other home computer makers this year—Tandon can still profit. And, as volume builds, he can cut prices again while unit production costs fall. In this he is no philanthropist but a canny businessman. Says he: "So many companies make phony profits by selling at high prices. But what do you do when the next guy sells for less than you do? In this technology you have to keep bringing prices down. You can't afford to get sloppy."

To keep costs down, Tandon has



He is beginning to enjoy the trappings of success. He owns 11 cars, including a Rolls Royce and a Lamborghini.

moved some manufacturing out of the US. Tandon Corporation's labour-intensive recording heads, for example, are now made in India, in Bombay's free-trade zone. There, Tandon enjoys low labour costs and a disciplined, trained labour pool that was left behind when IBM pulled out of India in 1977. Family-owned Tandon India, run by Tandon's older brother, Manohar Tandon, now supplies over 70 per cent of Tandon Corporation's recording heads. A Tandon India subsidiary also recently began manufacturing the small stepper motors Tandon puts in its drives.

Tandon has probably become more integrated vertically than any of its competitors—which helps keep costs down. The company even produces its own printed circuit boards—20,000 a day—at plants in Simi Valley, California and Singapore.

Tandon worries about the future and he should. "I am always looking over my shoulder," he says. He watches his competitors constantly. The microcomputer industry is so new and tumultuous that any obscure new-comer could blindside him should he stop paying attention. He has no intention of becoming the computer industry equivalent of the old Northway Motor And Manufacturing Co.

Tandon worries about his best customer, IBM, which currently accounts

for at least 20 per cent of Tandon's sales. IBM's increasing domination of the small computer market poses its own kind of Chinese curse, in that a big IBM order can cause drastic shifts in market shares. Tandon constantly reminds himself that IBM—or any customer—can always take its business elsewhere, including in-house. Automakers have always weighed the buy-or-build option. Tandon's customers are no different.

On that score, however, things seem to be going Tandon's way. In September, Apple Computer announced it would halt its in-house production of disk drives and begin buying from outside sources. "Three years ago I offered Apple my license [to build disk drives] free of charge," Tandon beams. "I knew they could not produce them as cheaply as I can. Now they have proved me right."

Tandon's toughest challenge is to keep managing well a company whose sales have doubled every year for five straight years. In its early days, Tandon often rushed drives into production and out the door to meet orders from new companies that had themselves rushed designs into production. That haste often led to quality problems. Tandon does not deny it. But this, he says, is changing. "We are in our second phase now. We have the volume, we have the work-horse products. We can take a longer time to test products and see if we can cut costs. I don't need to add, say, another \$2 million in revenues by shipping a substandard product. Three years ago I couldn't have had that strategy."

The final question is, of course, where to go next. Tandon does not rule out the possibility of manufacturing an entire personal computer; he already makes much of Atari's system. But like his disk drives, his computers would be sold to original equipment makers, for resale under the OEM's name, not Tandon's. Manufacturing, says Jugi Tandon, is his game, not marketing.

Jugi Tandon is beginning to enjoy the trappings of success. He now owns 11 cars (including a Rolls Royce and a Lamborghini) and has a 30-room home under construction on 20 acres near his Chatsworth factory. He has well earned these rewards but the question now is: will he retain in his business life the same habits of frugality that he no longer needs to practice in his personal life? For his, after all, is a business built upon frugality. ♦

MEMORIAL

By Anuradha Mahindra

WHEN THE SUMMER heat became so unbearable it warmed our mosaic floors, I would wait to hear the koel sing. Then I knew it was time for the rains. In my childhood it was rain and death that fascinated me. My mother hated the monsoon more than death. She always said morning showers made the sky so grey, so gloomy, she wished she had never woken from sleep. But I liked the rain. The garden would look beautiful and the Maulsari tree on the driveway would begin to flower. The Maulsari buds were small and white. When they blossomed out after the first showers they covered the tree so its leaves were not seen. But the flowers usually dropped to the ground after a day or two. I could watch them fall, one by one, from my bedroom window until hundreds of them sprinkled the driveway like snowflakes. Then I used to run out into the open and inhale the air filled with their sweet smell. Often I would crouch under the tree like a gardener about to pull weeds and gather the flowers till they spilled out of the pockets of my thin summer dress.

The *mali* had taught me how to string the flowers on long fern stems and make ornaments for the hair. The first one I would give to Mataji who usually sat out in the garden for her evening tea.

She would come outside with unerring punctuality each day and sit cross-legged on one of the white cane chairs lying near the flower beds. There were four chairs. Each one had the same green upholstery. They stood decaying and rickety, unkempt like four abandoned children. When Mataji sat on one of the chairs the other three looked stark in their emptiness. But occasionally she used one to stretch out her legs and then the other two

would stand like a pair of mute spectators. A wizened old ayah with white hair swept back into an untidy bun, a few strands curling over the nape of her neck would shuffle in with the tea tray. Muttering a few banalities, she would stir the tea and then disappear into the mysterious servants quarters at the back of the house. The tea would come in an old-fashioned steel glass and into it Mataji would soak some *kurmura*. Then her moist lips would swoop down to the rim of the glass and slurp up the hot tea with such sibilance, that I would hear it on the driveway beyond and my stomach would growl for a taste of the little

as if the two were involved in a sort of primeval dance of friendship. The willowy Ashokas and her.

She had changed, I thought, from the times when she used to stand in the outer corridors, neatly dressed in a blue or yellow silk saree, waiting for my grandfather to return home from work. Then she would bubble with excitement like a steam engine starting up for a maiden run. And as soon as she heard his black Dodge with tail wings sweep into our driveway, she would dash indoors to lift the pot of boiling water and make him a cup of good hot tea. My grandfather would stumble out, clearing his throat with the same guttural noise as the halting engine of the car, and then he would ask the waiting servant, "Bahuji kahan hein? (Where is madam?)"

But it was all different on the day he died. I remember hearing her loud wails come floating upstairs to my bedroom. She was screaming uncontrollably and took only short rasping breaths after long intervals of crying. The broken voices of the other women of the house could be heard trying to pacify her. But she did not stop. Her grief was too great and she was beyond all temperance. Then I no longer saw her in those bright silk sarees. She only wore white and for days roamed the house like a silent ghost, her face blank and devastated.

When she had refused to smile for a whole month it was my father, perhaps, who suggested the Pandit should come. Mataji had gradually lost interest in people and rarely spoke to the family. After a while even that stopped. She lived in an opaque cocoon which isolated us all. We only hoped the Pandit would somehow break her out of this spell. Perhaps he could recite hymns from the holy books, from the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. We did not know what it was that could restore her happiness.

So each day on my way home from school, the driver would stop outside a yellow house on Marine Drive, while I

Mataji would sit in the garden alone, in a strange reverie, her slight hunched body rocking in slow motion as she gazed into the air in front of her.

pieces of puffed rice.

I would run to her and give her a handful of Maulsari. She would then ask me to open my mouth and with her frail hands would drop some *kurmura* into my mouth. She did this always. As if in thanks for my gift of flowers.

Then she would sit there alone, in a strange reverie, her slight hunched body rocking in slow motion as she gazed into a blank space of air in front of her. Often, she would stare for hours at the Ashoka trees, stretching tall towards the evening sky. With a light breeze they would sway gently, in time with her own solitary rocking,

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waited in the scorching sun for Panditji to stomp out and ride home with me. He would often bring me an apple or a banana with the thought that I must be hungry after school. I would occasionally bite into the apple, but more often it just rolled on the seat, jostling between us as the car stalled and started at the intermittent lights. The car would race through Marine Drive, go under the flyover and past Chowpatty beach, turn the corner at the Babulnath Temple and finally struggle up the hill into our narrow driveway. And all the while I would forget about the sweltering heat, forget about the advertisement on Patel Bridge, only to stare at his ancient form. Ancient like the temples of Benares where he was born a long time ago.

He had many lines on his face like rings around the trunk of a palm tree, etched over a thousand years. I could never tell how old he was because his eyes always sparkled like a new-born child's. Would he go on to live forever, I wondered, on and on till the next generation came and the one after, until finally it was the end of the world?

The Pandit wore a white kurta and white dhoti like the holy men, I had seen on the centre pages of the *Illustrated Weekly*. Stuck in the middle of his forehead was a red *tikka* which he wore with the same perfection every day. It was never bigger, never smaller. Just the size of an old one paise coin, it hovered on his receding forehead like Shiva's third eye. Round and round my head would spin as I looked at it and learnt from him about Gods and Goddesses.

About Rama who had seven avatars and Shiva who had three heads. Did the Pandit too have more than one head? I searched his neck for signs of the hinges he must have in order to dismantle one face and wear the other. But all I could see was his aging skin which hung in loose folds under his pointed chin, reminding me of an extinct bird.

It was the central hall at the far end of our house which had been cleared for the Pandit's daily discourses. The two pink art deco sofas were moved. And in their place were put two divans, one facing the other across a moth-eaten Persian carpet. I had never liked the sofas. They were too heavy and had no arms, like fat wrestlers without limbs. I would be glad to see them

gone. My grandfather's wooden bookcase I knew would remain. And so would the impressive portrait of him wearing his white *achkan* and his black box-like headgear.

There was one feature of this room which always fascinated me. It was the ceiling. I had never seen anything like it at any of my friends' homes. This ceiling was painted in relief with happy-faced cherubs smiling down at you like drunken babies. I had never understood what reserves of poor taste had moved my grandfather to commission such kitsch. Yet when the Pandit's spiritual oratory would echo off the ceiling, it came into its own and I forgave my grandfather his lapses in style. The hall was my grandfather's very own Sistine Chapel.

The Pandit always sat on the divan that was raised a little higher than the one the others sat on. It was a subtle way of distinguishing him from the

The Pandit recited his verses like a Greek orator: he was loud and confident. He liked the glory of his pedestal and would gesticulate majestically in the air.

family: a holy man among the ordinary. At first the whole family would gather to hear him. My mother, my aunt and her six children. The three fat ones and the three tall ones. My father and his brother rarely joined us. They were always in a hurry to talk business on the telephones. In those days it was an unspoken law in our house that the men never did anything the women did. It made them look weak. So they would just stride through the hall, quickly bow their heads and vanish into the inner preserves of the house.

The Pandit recited his verses like a Greek orator: he was loud and confident. He liked the glory of his pedestal and would gesticulate majestically in the air. His oval head would swing to the rhythms of his Sanskritic chants. Words flowed out of his mouth with

the smoothness of water emptying out of a tap. Never faltering. Never stuttering. I had never caught him referring to the texts open before him. His brain stored myriad hymns catalogued in perfect sequence like an inexhaustible archive. He could quote from different epics with equal eloquence. It made my mother angry because I did not want to listen to her bedtime stories anymore. I only wanted to swirl in his whirlpool of ancient conundrums, until it was so late, my head would turn dizzy with sleep.

Strange things were revealed to me in those days. I learnt that men do not die. No. Men die but are born again into a new life. "You could be reborn a cat in your next life," the Pandit had once told me. Birth and rebirth. It was an endless cycle. Cats howled outside Mataji's windows and on their arched backs I had begun to see, in my childhood fantasies, my grandfather's balding head.

When Mataji sat on the lower divan, she sat still. Her back curved out of the lotus position she always assumed. She did not leave her head uncovered before men, so her *mulmul pallav* always veiled the sharp widow's peak on her silver-grey hairline. When the Pandit recited she rarely moved, never spoke. It was difficult for me to tell if life had momentarily escaped her. I would have to glance and check whether her chest still heaved, up and down, as air filled and emptied from her lungs. At times I felt the presence of her body meant nothing. What really gave it life had fled for this moment and floated above, amid baby-faced cherubs and winged angels.

My mother and aunt slowly lost interest in the Pandit and his discourses. They would shift and fidget, their crisp organdie sarees rustling like a stack of dry leaves in the wind. My aunt began to knit on the divan. Other things dragged my mother out of the house. She would sneak through the back door of the hall to attend those evening get-togethers. We could all hear the Fiat rumble as the driver started the engine, then the car zipped out of the gates to other houses that stood in open, more inviting compounds. Mataji knew youth still galloped in my mother's blood, so she did not say much. She would only ask, "Aaj choti bahu kahin party mein to nahin gae?" (Hasn't the younger daughter-in-law gone to a party today?) Her questions were always in

the negative, as if she wasn't sure.

It was perhaps the last Sunday in August when I learnt the Pandit would not come. I overheard my aunt instructing the driver, "Rodrigues, bring baby straight home from school tomorrow. Panditji is sick." Somehow I knew she had lied because the Pandit never returned. We did not hear of him again. Nobody knew when he died.

In the following days Mataji changed. Her body thinned, so her bones protruded from under her white flesh. She grew weak and subdued. We began to worry because she started to eat less and pray more. Whirls of *agarbatti* smoke would rise out of the windows of her room endlessly. It intoxicated the cats. They would hiss and stretch and then slip into a dull stupor.

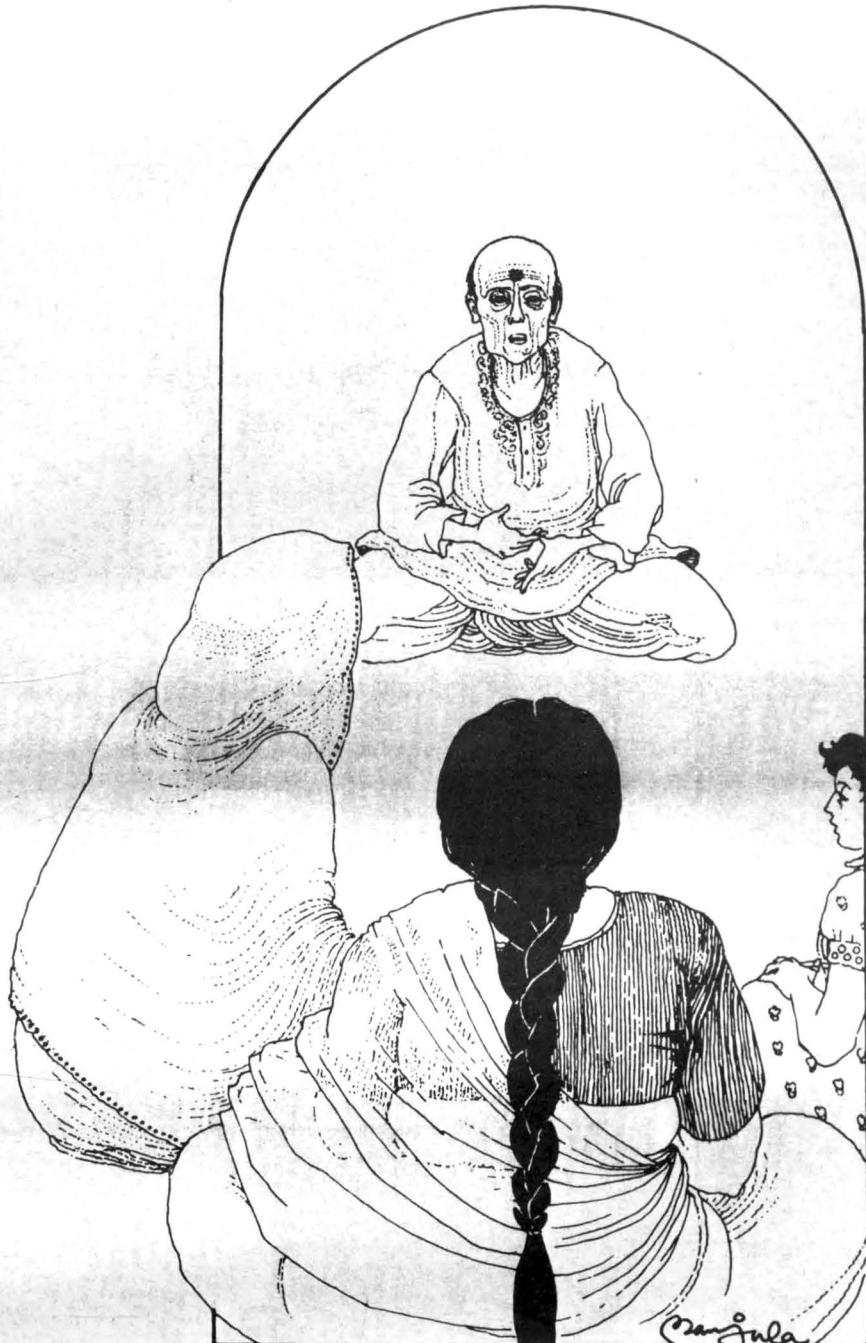
Mataji's room lay in the farthest corner of the house. Beyond it there was nothing. Only the ugly red water tanks and a green trellis on which grew some wild creepers.

At dusk the sun would peep through the trellis and play on Mataji's window in soft rosy hues. When the sun finally disappeared, Mataji lit her *diya*. The window would be dark for an instant and then the flame's yellow glare would stutter in the glass.

I don't think Mataji ever crossed the hall again. In the evenings she used the side door which led out from the small dining room to the garden. Nobody else used the hall either. It was left for me and a brood of pigeons that nested on the wide pelmets.

When my mother caught me, one evening, sitting alone in the hall I knew she was scared. She was afraid her child could be so happy to sit by herself in a dark, lonely room. So she began to take me out and everyday we went to the playground at Hanging Gardens. My mother sat on a curved park bench and watched the double-decker buses groan down Malabar Hill, while I pushed higher and higher on the swings till they made me fly over the teeming city. The ayah never liked the outings. She would just spurt out jets of *paan* expectorant through the middle of her teeth and make big red blotches in the sand-pit.

On the days we couldn't go to the gardens, I would sit on the red water tanks beyond Mataji's room and it was there that I first began to notice dusk. How light and darkness eluded each other in endless circles. The sun would dip in the pink sky, hide low behind the towering buildings and then vanish



somewhere in the far, receding west. But before our house could gather gloom like cloudy monsoon skies, my mother would switch on the milky tubelights. Their blue-white fluorescence reflected out of the windows onto the trellis like artificial moonlight. Soon the trellis would be a kaleidoscope of colours as lights blinked on in neighbouring houses. Yellow bulbs in dirty kitchens and crystal chandeliers in ornate bedrooms. Like my mother, people all over were trying to chase the irrevocable night away.

Mataji lit no bulbs, no lamps. She alone knew when the night was spent, the new day would be born again. So

she prayed at dusk. Her marble-white body aglow with just the single flame of her earthen *diya*. "Meditation brings enlightenment," the Pandit used to pontificate. "And when there is light within, the spirit does not die." And through my child's eye, I thought I saw a light shine from my grandmother's stooping figure.

THE HALL REEKED OF DEAD
flesh and wet flowers. Her grandmother's body lay flat on the bamboo stretcher in a shroud of *Maulsari* garlands. One from each of them. One from her too. It had the smallest flowers, but they were fresh. Hand-

picked.

Drops of water trickled down from the tiny petals onto her grandmother's soft skin. She saw the body did not flinch. She had never seen a corpse before. The limbs were wooden, the eyelids fixed and the chest totally still. She wanted to reach out and wipe away the water. But she could not move at all. Her own body had frozen like the blocks of ice guarding her grandmother.

It rained heavily outside. Her mother and aunt cried buckets. They beat their chests in violent rhythms. Her mother followed her aunt like a puppet. But still their limbs had life, they had feeling, they had sorrow. The men tried hard to hold back their tears and again they wished to be different from the women. They just stood in a corner with straight, white faces. That day there was a profusion of white; sepulchral white sarees and stark white kurtas. She saw them through her bleary eyes. Weak sails fluttering over a tempestuous sea.

"You can sleep with us tonight," her father said.

"It's all right," she replied.

It had been nearly six years since she remembered curling between her parents' warm bodies at night. Their soulful snoring helped to keep the bogey men away. She loved the feel of her mother's chin digging into the top of her own small head as she nestled between the folds of her mother's flabby neck. No black crows or bearded old men could snatch her away. Tonight, after her grandmother's death she felt the need to be safe again. She climbed up the winding staircase to her parents' bedroom.

Their room had old wooden flooring made from long brown planks held together with rusted nails. She always tiptoed inside. The planks creaked when she walked because the nails had come loose over time. She saw her bed had been laid on the floor, but the ayah must have forgotten to spread the blanket. She slipped out through the door to her own room and picked up the blanket. It was lying in a limp mound on her desk. She dragged the blanket back to her parents' room and its velvet corner trailed on the teak planks until her toe stumbled onto her mattress and she stretched out on it.

Over her head she could hear the sound of water pouring out of a jug into a glass. It was her father. He never

slept one day without swallowing all those pills. His body had been weak ever since he was a scrawny-necked boy with wheezing breath and puffy eyelids. He walked towards the brass lamp and stretched his arm towards the switch.

"Don't put off the light today." A voice leaked out from under her mother's silken razai. Her father turned back to the bed without an answer. A yellow circle of light stained the wood just like red paan blotching the sand-pit.

"Mother did not have to die, you know," her father said.

"Hmm..."

"I said mother did not really have to die."

"Old people always die."

"But mother did not have to."

"She was prepared."

"Do you believe all those things the

*She loved the feel
of her mother's
chin digging into
the top of her own
small head as she
nestled between the
folds of her
mother's flabby
neck.*

Pandit said?"

"Yes."

An insect crawled out from under the mirrored cupboard and into the circle of light. It scurried into a gaping black hole in the opposite wall.

"How could the Pandit read things into her death?"

"He was a wise man."

"Mother did not have to go."

"He said her death would be easy."

"I don't believe it. My own mother dead. Hai Ram."

"She went like a bird, she's free..."

"Do you know when I will die?"

"Just do those poojas now." Her mother's feet shuffled uneasily under the razai.

"Why? To save the walls?"

The insect thrust its head out of the hold. Then slowly its flat body squeezed through and she saw it was a cockroach.

"Yes. Mataji would have wanted you to save the walls."

Her mother scratched her toes.

"I don't want to believe that wretched Pandit."

"The Pandit told her these walls would crumble after she was gone."

Her mother sat up in bed, turned sideways and stamped her bare feet on the floor. The boards trembled in protest.

"Maybe that was why she sent him away from the house."

"Perhaps."

He watched his wife slip on a pair of wool socks and settle back into bed. He said, "I think mother died to save our ugly cracked walls."

The next month her father had the house painted. Ceiling, floors, the walls. He had them painted ivory-white. Ivory came from elephant tusks. She had never seen a real live elephant, but knew they had good memories and long lives. Perhaps her grandmother was reborn an elephant.

MY AUNT'S HUSBAND DID NOT like the smell of paint. It made him very sick. He would cup his fat hands over his nose and mouth and make his way around the house. He looked like a monkey wearing a gas mask. He had never really cared about looking silly. One Sunday he threw up and the doctors said he would have to stay in bed. He did not mind that. He must have liked to stay in bed, because when the doctors said he was well again he only slept. He lay all day and night in bed with a crumpled white sheet over his round head.

My aunt found it difficult to leave her room now. When she was bored she would sit out in her verandah with her knitting. She would knit many sweaters, one after the other.

"Your father did not really need to paint the house," my aunt said to me one day.

"He had to save the walls," I replied, noticing how large her eyelids were, and how none of her children had been spared this feature.

"But the monsoon will ruin the paint," my aunt said. She had lost a stitch and she batted those hooded lids with irritation.

"My mother is going to waterproof the walls," I answered, and watched my aunt pour tea from a chipped Hitkari teapot into a pink teacup. She sighed heavily after the first sip.

Outside a light drizzle covered the

house in a hazy film of mist. Water dripped on the square-faced air conditioner that jutted below a shuttered window. It made a tinny sound like a recording from a Jamaican steel band.

When my aunt had finished her tea, the old ayah limped in to collect the tea-tray. She had lost her front teeth so she did not talk much, only grunted vaguely at me. She lifted the tray up and the cups clanked on the saucers. Some tea dribbled out of the spout of the teapot. The ayah left without a word. When her back was turned I could see her bun had come undone. It hung clumsily from her head, strands of white hair straggling over her humped shoulders in a tangled mess.

The rain had begun to let up outside. Through the clearing air I saw the last raindrops fall like tears on the leaves of the Maulsari tree. For a short moment they glistened, transparent jewels in the fading light and then they slid down the tips of the leaves and spattered softly on our concrete driveway.

SHE COUNTED THE SLABS OF CONCRETE leading out from her aunt's verandah, down the driveway, upto

the heavy iron gates which gave onto the pitted road outside. There were fifty-two. They were unevenly laid, some were bigger than the others. A few had come loose and tufts of delinquent grass sprouted up between the cracks. She walked in a straight line, hopping over the cracks, out to the gates where her grandfather's name was mounted in big, block letters. The T had dropped out of his first name and then the S was missing from their last name. She traced the wet outline of the two alphabets with her forefinger and thought of her grandfather's bald head.

The drain to the right side of the road babble on like a child straining to attract her attention. She walked alongside it, down the sloping street and patted her feet into pools of grainy water. Everything looked wet from the rain—the street lamps, the neighbouring garages and the deserted shop windows.

She stopped short before the end of the slope. From here the road branched out into narrow gullies that streamed towards the heart of the city. She had never been allowed to walk the crowded streets alone, especially after it grew

dark.

The street lights flicked on and suddenly the wet road shimmered under haloes of golden-yellow. She turned the bend, past the circulating library and glanced back over her left shoulder towards their house. It wasn't there. In all these years, she had never noticed that the Maulsari tree was so big. Its sprawling branches criss-crossed over the tiled roof forming intricate lattice that screened the house.

She looked for the small white flowers, but could not see any on the tree. They must have fallen to the ground after the light rain. She swung around, crossed to the other side of the road and started to hurry back. But, by the time she reached the high iron gates, the flowers had already begun to stream down the wet driveway into the drain outside.

She paused and then crouched on the hard concrete, just like before. Then, sweeping her hands in wide arcs across the unevenly laid slabs, she gathered all the white flowers, walked over to the garden and heaped them onto an empty cane chair making, what seemed to her, a perfect pyramid of snow. ♦

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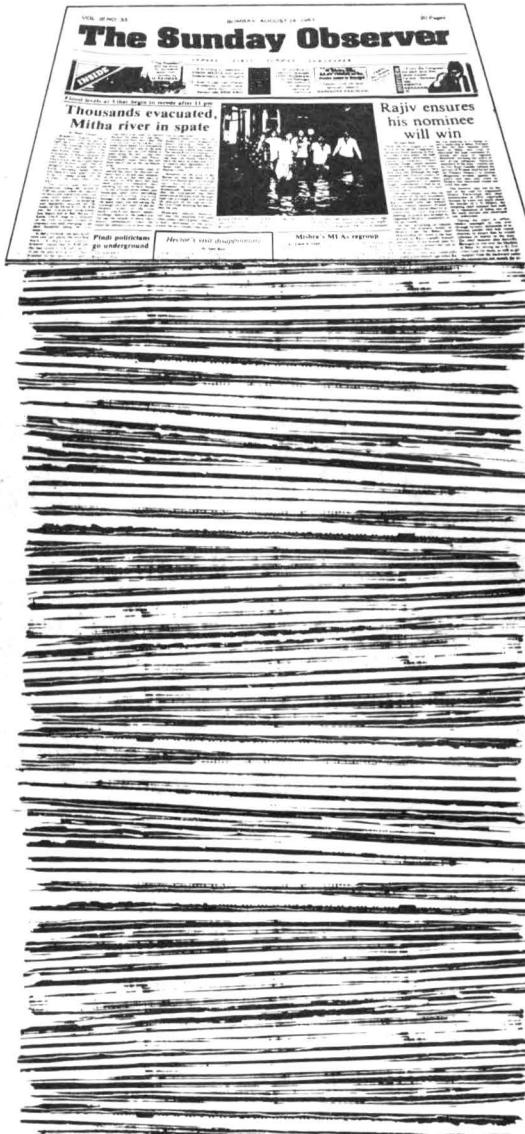


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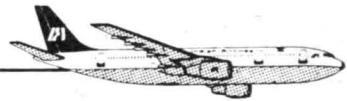
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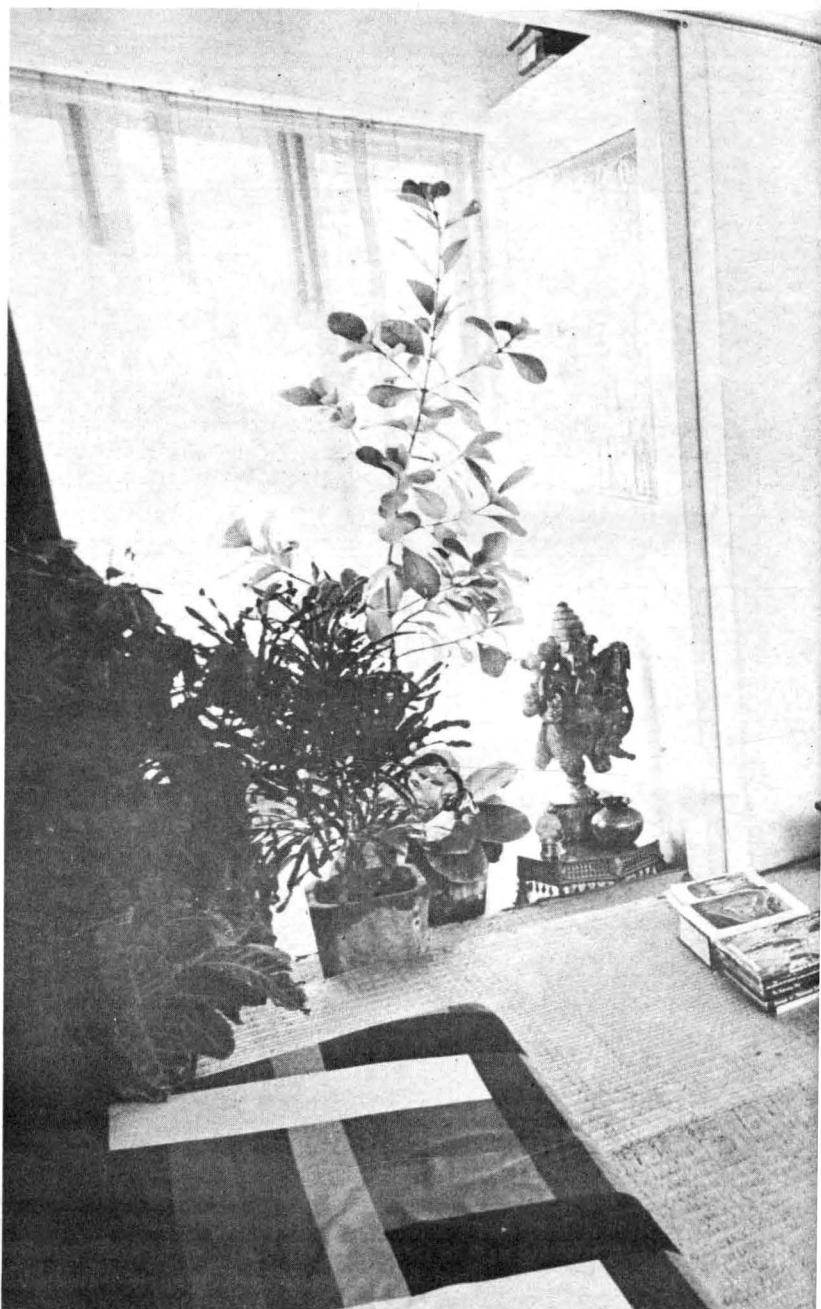
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Photographed By
Ashok Gupta

THERE IS SOMETHING Japanese about the way Dr Saryu Doshi, art historian and Editor of *Marg*, has chosen to lay out her room. There is a linear uncluttered appearance in its structure. Most of the floor area is draped with a natural-hued *chattai*; there are chicks hanging over the large glass window through which the sea and most of the buildings on Peddar Road can be clearly discerned. The place commands silence and peace. There are no lit *agar-battis* filling the room with their gentle aroma but such is the atmosphere of the room, that one misses their presence.

It is, for all practical purposes strictly a work-room. "Somehow I can't see myself entertaining in this room or doing anything else besides my work," says Saryu, who rises most mornings at four am to begin her research, reading and writing and all other such activities that befall a dedicated and fastidious editor. At that hour of the morning, when the world is very young and fresh, Saryu finds that she can concentrate much better on the work at hand.

To be fair, Saryu's work-room, really belongs to her son, Maitreya, who is away at Stanford completing his MBA. "I always needed a work-room," she says, "especially after I took over *Marg* in April 1981, and had to keep transporting various reference books from Pune (where we used to spend a great deal of time) to Bombay, where I required them. Soon I found that the books began to pile up alarmingly and since I was working out of the guest room, I had to gather all my material and beat a hasty retreat each time a guest appeared. I found the whole arrangement extremely makeshift and unsettling. And so when my son's room fell vacant, I seized upon it," says Saryu and then adds, "Of course, no one was happier than Maitreya by the idea." Saryu hardly made any structural changes on taking over the room. "I moved out a couple of bean bags and



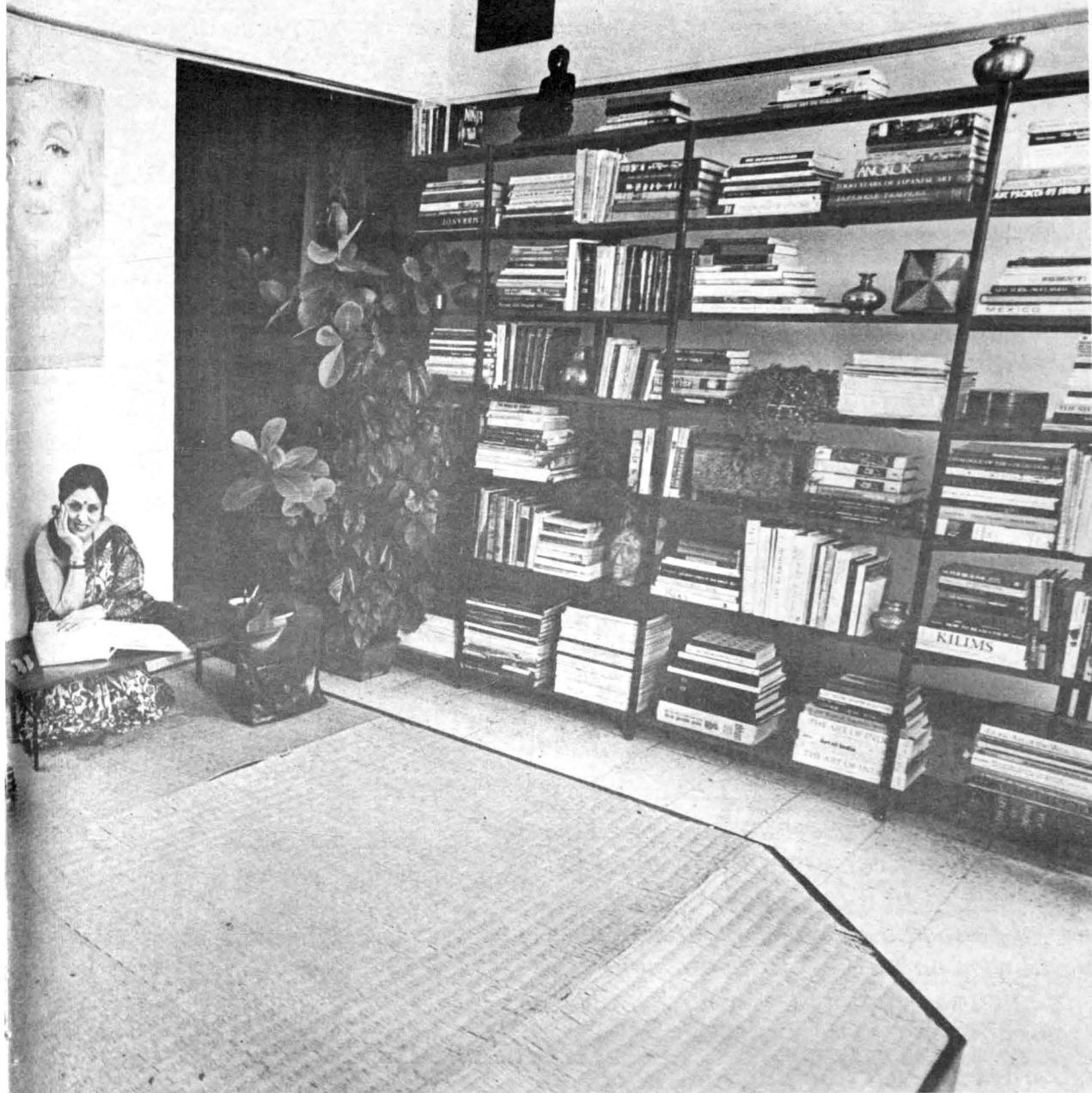
moved in this book rack in place of my son's drum set."

The presence of the bookshelf, though, somehow, alters the whole nature of the room. It is by any standards a magnificent one, stacked to bursting point with books that cover the vast range of Saryu's interests. At a glance, it holds most of the Thames and Hudson *The World Of Art* series, all the classic books on history, including the *Babur-Nama* and a host of books on her particular area of interest which is Indian miniature painting of the Jain period, along with quite a few on photography, films and historic movements around the world. "All my son's friends

who dropped in to see him when he was in town said the same thing on entering the room: 'Wow has your mother really read them all?'" says Saryu.

Scattered on the book rack is an interesting array of bric-a-brac, which is an indication of Saryu's other avatar: the buyer and patron of art. And even though she has not shifted any of her collection of contemporary paintings into the room yet, the whole ambience, thanks to the antique brassware (of which she has quite a collection) and the masks she picked up on her last trip to Acapulco, give the room its colourful, eclectic atmosphere.

Saryu leaves for the *Marg* office at



10 am and returns sometime in the afternoon, depending upon her deadlines and impending work after which time she might have to read, write or partake in some research. "The moment I enter the room," she says, "I feel geared towards my work. It sets me in the right mood for it." Also, being a woman interested in a lot of activities and being as she is, a member of the Censor board and an amateur photographer, the room also serves as a storage space for 500 to 700 transparencies of her own.

"I am quite a fastidious person," she says, "I could never work in a room that was cluttered and didn't give me

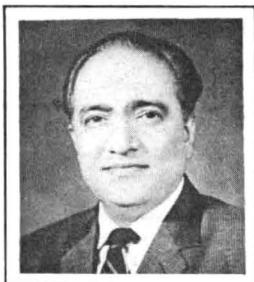
easy access to the materials pertaining to my work."

There are two interesting niches in the room, created out of an enclosed balcony that lend the room two distinct dimensions. One, the smaller of the two, holds a large comfortable sofa, a couple of leafy plants and a low stool on which rests a red dancing Ganesh, along with a brass *ghada*, which she is particularly proud of: "It's a 17th century Deccan piece and I got it for a steal at an antique shop in Delhi."

The other area is slightly larger and hidden from the main area of the room by curtains. In here is a small desk on which sits the secretary, who comes in

between 9.30 and 11 each morning to carry out the correspondence. Saryu's attitude to her work and to the room, is reflected in a pair of miniaturised silver slippers lying on the low wooden table at which she works. "To me they represent all my gurus—Professor Eisenberg and Dr Motichandra," she says. "I like to have them around while I work." About the large print of Marilyn Monroe that stares out from the wall above her table, she is less enthusiastic. "It came along with the room," she says. "Since it is, after all, my son's room, I thought, why remove it? In any case I think she's gorgeous."

—Interviewed By Malavika Sanghvi



YOUR FACE IS YOUR FORTUNE

Ghanshyam Joshi is one of Bombay's better-known astrologers and face readers. He has recently founded the International Research Foundation of Scientific Palmistry, a wing of the Cheirological Society of India.

Joshi claims to have evolved an international theory of behaviourism through which he can assess the character and personality of people by studying their faces. He also claims to be able to predict their future through this method.

Rather than interview Joshi about his many achievements Imprint decided to submit him to a test. Anju Aggarwal selected four photographs from our photo library and asked Joshi to make predictions about these four people.

We refused to tell him anything about the four people we selected—even their names—and left him entirely on his own. We were fairly confident that he would not recognise Mulk Raj Anand and Ajit Kerkar but were less certain about Salman Rushdie. And it seemed inevitable that he would know at once who Nazia Hassan was. To our (slightly sceptical) surprise, Joshi claimed that he did not recognise any of the four. All his assessments were based, he said, on the 'vibrations in the photo'.

SALMAN RUSHDIE



The popular name or surname of this person has to begin with R, M, N, or E. An out and out philosopher, this person will be held in high esteem by people. Though a philosopher, his basic education has been in science or commerce. He will be interested in writing and occultism. He will know quite a lot about music.

He does not seek the limelight, nor is he aggressively ambitious. He lets nature take its own course and leaves things to God. He is an upright and honest man and will be appreciated on his own merits. Sometimes he may be misunderstood but generally, things will always go in his favour.

At the age of 38 he will become controversial but his staunch adherence to truth will gain him popularity. However, he must take care of his eyesight. His family life will be happy. He will have more daughters than sons.

COMMENT

Right about the initial and the esteem, but wrong about the education. Rushdie did not study either science or commerce. Nor is he known to be either particularly religious or especially fatalistic.

As for the future, Rushdie will be 38 in 1985 and may well become con-

Options-Focus

troversial and he may also have more daughters but at the moment, he only has one son.

Joshi is right about Rushdie's eyesight but as he wears spectacles, this is not an unusually perceptive observation. Nevertheless, more hits than misses: he did get the interest in writing, the esteem, the popularity and the honesty right.

NAZIA HASSAN



This girl has an artistic temperament and will go in for a career in singing for which she has a natural gift. She aspires to settle in a country other than India. She will get married soon. Her husband will encourage her in her career. From the age of eight or nine she has been actively involved in music. Though she is intelligent and can successfully go in for higher education, she will not do so. She will give up studies for glamour. She is simple at heart. Her eyes show that she is willing to sacrifice anything for real love. She has a very pleasant nature and is usually reserved. She has a bright future. Her name or surname will begin with H.

COMMENT

A tricky one. Joshi insisted that he did not recognise the girl in the picture and we took him at his word.

If he was being honest, then his observations are extraordinarily perceptive.

Nazia is a singer, she will probably settle down in England, where she now lives and there is talk of marriage. When Aap Jaisa Koi was a hit, she insisted

that she was not going to abandon her studies and planned to go to Oxford or Cambridge. But, as Joshi guesses, she has chosen a life of glamour.

A bright future? Perhaps he knows something that we don't!

MULK RAJ ANAND



The name or surname of this person must begin with D, S or A. He is either an author of various books, a publisher or a social leader. Owing to his frank and often blunt nature, he has many enemies and has antagonised many people. He has often not been given the honour due to him by the Government. If this is a recent photograph, then by the end of 1984 he will be the recipient of great laurels. He has refused offers of power. He is very influential. Political leaders too may seek his advice confidentially. He is a man of staunch principles and will always be involved in welfare activities. His face suggests that he is a good painter or an instrumental musician. His family life will be happy. Some of his children will settle abroad.

COMMENT

Joshi clearly did not recognise Anand, but his guesses were nearly all on target.

Anand is an author and would probably regard himself as a social leader. He is nothing if not blunt and recently made many enemies over his ejection from the editorship of Marg.

He could well have gone into politics and has been on first name terms with many political leaders (Mrs Gandhi is alleged to call him Uncle Mulk). Per-

haps he will win some award by the end of the year!

Anand's interest in painting is well-known and he is happily married to dancer Shirin Vazifdar.

AJIT KERKAR



A self-made man, this gentleman started out by being either a doctor or a lawyer. But he will go on to become a managing director. He is ambitious and energetic and has the stamina of a young man. He prefers to be alone during his leisure time.

He worships his work and deals with his adversaries competently. He is precise and analytical in his arguments. He is a strict disciplinarian and is very punctual. Though he loves his family members he does not demonstrate his affections.

He has a very bright future and will reach the peak of his success in the next two years. His name or surname begins with 'B' or 'K'.

COMMENT

Ajit Kerkar was neither a doctor nor a lawyer as Joshi guesses but he did go on to become the Managing Director of Indian Hotels (The Taj Group).

His colleagues feel that he is extraordinarily energetic, working long hours into the night and the spectacular growth of the group is largely due to his own ambition.

Most of his adversaries would probably argue that he has dealt with them more than competently and he is known for his precision and analytical ability.

— Anju D Aggarwal

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INDIAN THEATRE: ENLARGING THE HUMAN SPIRIT?

“WHAT'S SO BORING about television is that it *reduces* life and the human spirit," said playwright John Osborne in an interview with Kenneth Tynan and went on to add: "Enlarging it is something that the theatre can do best."

This enlargement that Osborne had in mind as a function of the theatre has nothing to do with reaching for a bigger audience. Nor with large casts and elaborate showmanship. It has everything to do with the theatre's ability to challenge and exhilarate the minds of the viewers. This is the 'enlarging' that Osborne was talking about, the presentation of a theatrical experience to make the audience more aware, more questioning and so to stretch its perceptions to the point where a sense of involvement and meaning is born in each attentive consciousness.

This is true relevance and the question that arises is, do we have an audience today for this kind of theatre?

There was a time when plays provided spectacles for whole cities, when a holiday was declared so that crowds could converge on the centre of the town to witness dramatic performances of such power that the Athenian, who had sat enthralled on his hard seat all day, returned home at sundown no longer the same Athenian who had sallied forth that morning. But today, alas, the theatre-going audience anywhere forms a very small section of the public. Films, and in particular the television habit, have ensnared the un-

faithful and atrophied a vital psychic function: the ability to imagine for ourselves. The camera chains us to the present image, it seldom drives us towards meaning. It is not the smallness of the television screen that 'reduces life', but what surfaces on it is too glib to demand a gestative activity of the mind.

In our country the small audience loyal to the stage is further divided and channelled into the several regional theatres—which are lively enough because the plays they offer correspond to something real in the lives of those who view them. When we come to the English stage in India this correspondence is absent and in a city like Bombay we are left with a thin clique of theatre-goers which accepts indiscriminately whatever fare is provided it, so long as the stuff is imported for its consumption.

Its critical faculty reduced to impotence on this unbalanced diet, the Bombay audience is an audience of sheep. And the producer/director of the commercial English stage (thrown up largely by the city's advertising community) feels free to slap on the boards any titbit he chooses for his flock to nibble on—so long as it is foreign cuisine that he dishes out. And if it is an acclaimed piece of tomfoolery lifted from West End or distinguished loot from Broadway, so much the better. The sheep are ready for the pen even as he goes into rehearsal—for to be seen in a herd at such a performance has a snob value which can comfortably be translated into profit at the box-office.

The astute producer will also be tempted to pick the odd thriller (*Sleuth*, *Deathtrap*), the musical that has had a successful run abroad (*Jesus*



Christ Superstar, *Evita*), or revivals of plays that have been done to death there (*Death Of A Salesman*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*). Or he will glut the stage with light comedies and farces—plays which have a caper instead of a theme, stereotyped romps instead of a plot, dog-eared gags instead of dialogue. When they are more articulate, these comedies will talk to the audience about the prevailing temper, disposition, custom, usages and moral atmosphere of, say, a community in Newport or Darien or Finchley or Chichester or wherever. And the lines will be peppered with alien allusions and imagery, with innuendo and *double entendre* which will evoke some compulsive bleating but which are not really shared, which fly down like missiles that have lost their warheads and return tamely to base.

No sharp after-taste of life spills over from these plays (*Mary Mary*, *Tunnel Of Love* etc, etc) to the viewers who feel at best, a lukewarm involvement with the action unfolding before their eyes. And the phony British and American accents in which the lines are delivered (which slip embarrassingly at times and have to be shored up with visible effort) or the pear-shaped elo-

cution encouraged by erstwhile drama coaches, succeed in further distancing the audience from the reality concocted for it before the footlights. The stage and the woolly-headed spectators in no way re-create each other—therefore what is astonishing is the docility with which they (the sheep) accept the burglar's swag of mediocrities displayed for them on the boards year in and year out. (Here we may interrupt a moment with this query: drama as an educational means and stimulus—even as an end in itself—is found everywhere in our English-medium schools, colleges, universities. As an activity it spills over into afterwork hours and vacations. . . At what stage, then, do these eager young actors and would-be directors with a taste for debate and for sustained argument, metamorphose themselves into sheep?)

What is also amazing is that the more experienced and bigger (financially speaking) the producer, the bolder will he be in his borrowings and—with the aid of video tapes—in his virtual xeroxing of whole productions conceived in the West. Let it be freely admitted that these copies are sometimes first-rate and are even said to be

an improvement (the homework has all been done, after all) on the original, which few Indians get to see anyway. Let it also be argued that if he must borrow and he must imitate and he must plunder footlit arenas, this producer performs an oblique service to

The more experienced and bigger the producer, the bolder will be his borrowings—his xeroxing of Western productions.

the theatre when he carries out his depredations on the genuine article—the kind of play that stimulates questions or drama that encourages the mind to feel its way compassionately into the problems of the oppressed or

the handicapped.

Surely it is more rewarding to make a triumphant copy of *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* than of *A Thousand Clowns*? More courageous to stage *Children Of A Lesser God* than a tame reproduction of a Neil Simon comedy? And doesn't the video tape obviate the danger of wrongly locating the centre of gravity (as sometimes happens with smaller local productions) of these difficult plays?

These are specious arguments. The producer/director who is content to 'borrow' is engaged in an unhealthy exercise because it is one in which he does not need to mobilise his entire intellectual resources and imaginative vision. Because it is one which provides him with a pseudo-audience—and how can you get sheep to revolt? The habit is pernicious because it stunts the growth of local playwrights—theatre is not a long-distance echo in no man's land but an indigenous plant, an assimilation which involves soil, roots, air, water, light. And finally this self-indulgence effectively prevents him from bringing to the theatre the 'enlarging' of the human spirit which is its true function. ♦

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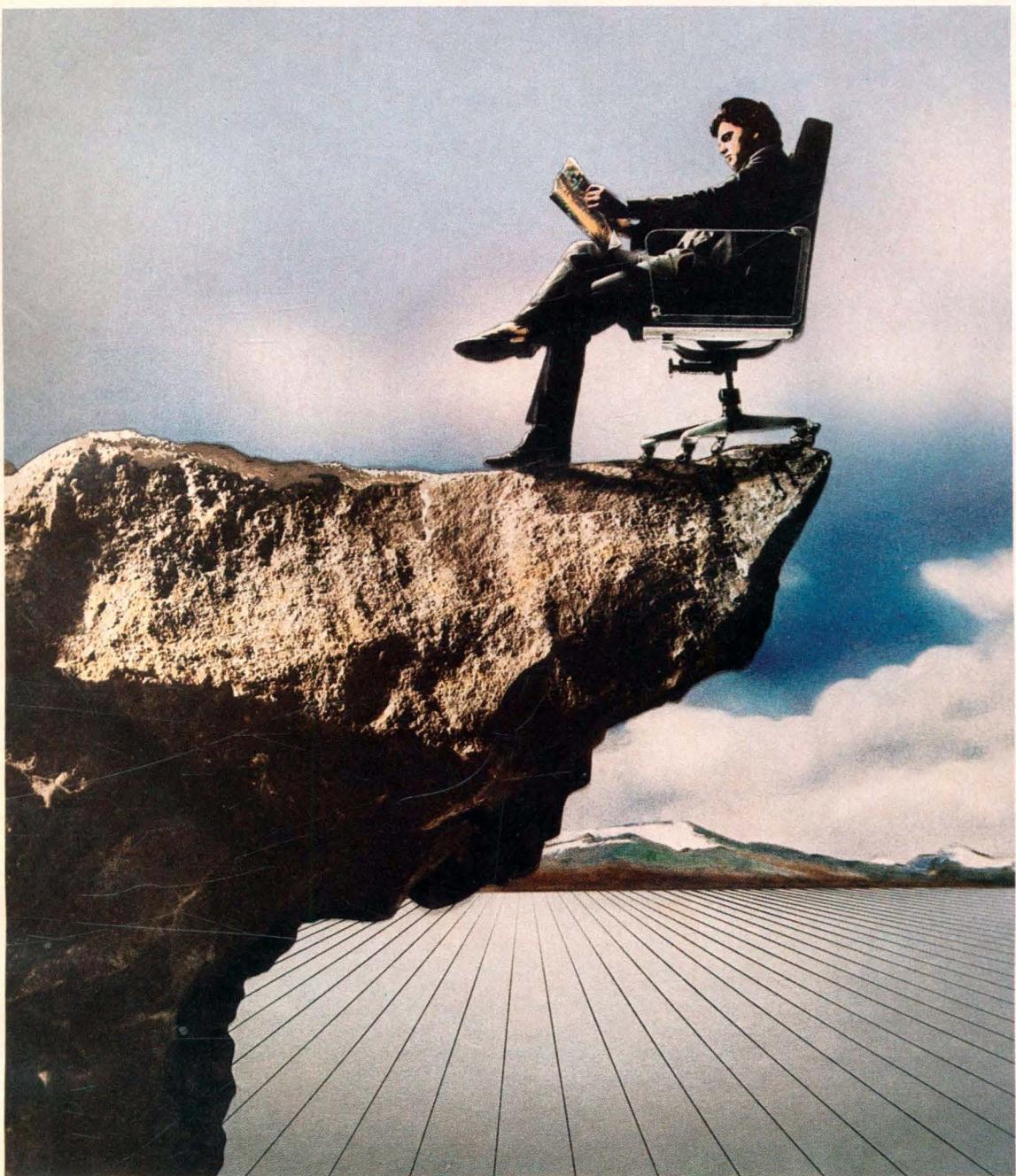
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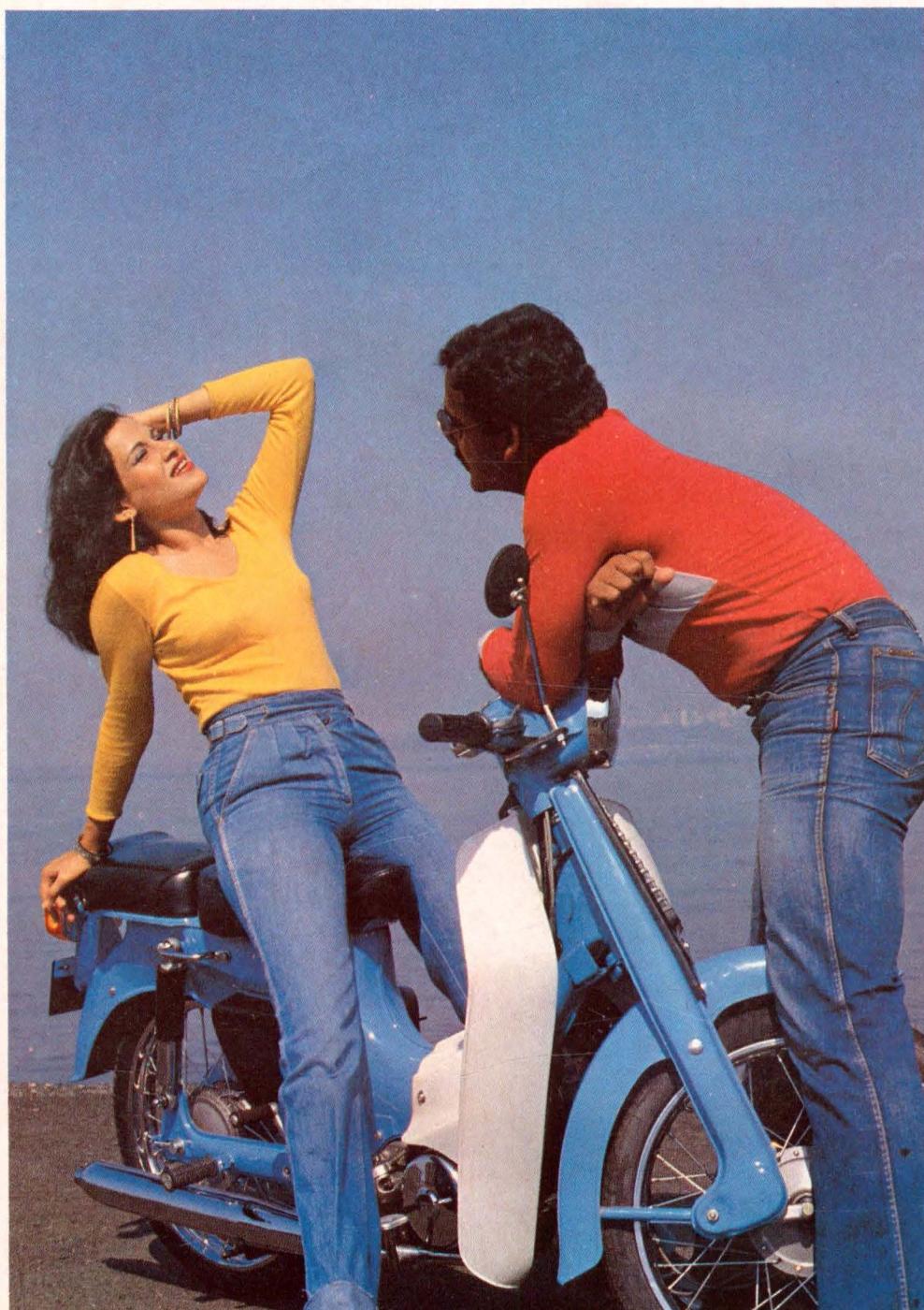
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