

Chandrababu Naidu On The Budget • Vardhabhai On Banugalla

● Nirmal Goswami On The Media ●

imprint

MAY 1985 ● Rs 5

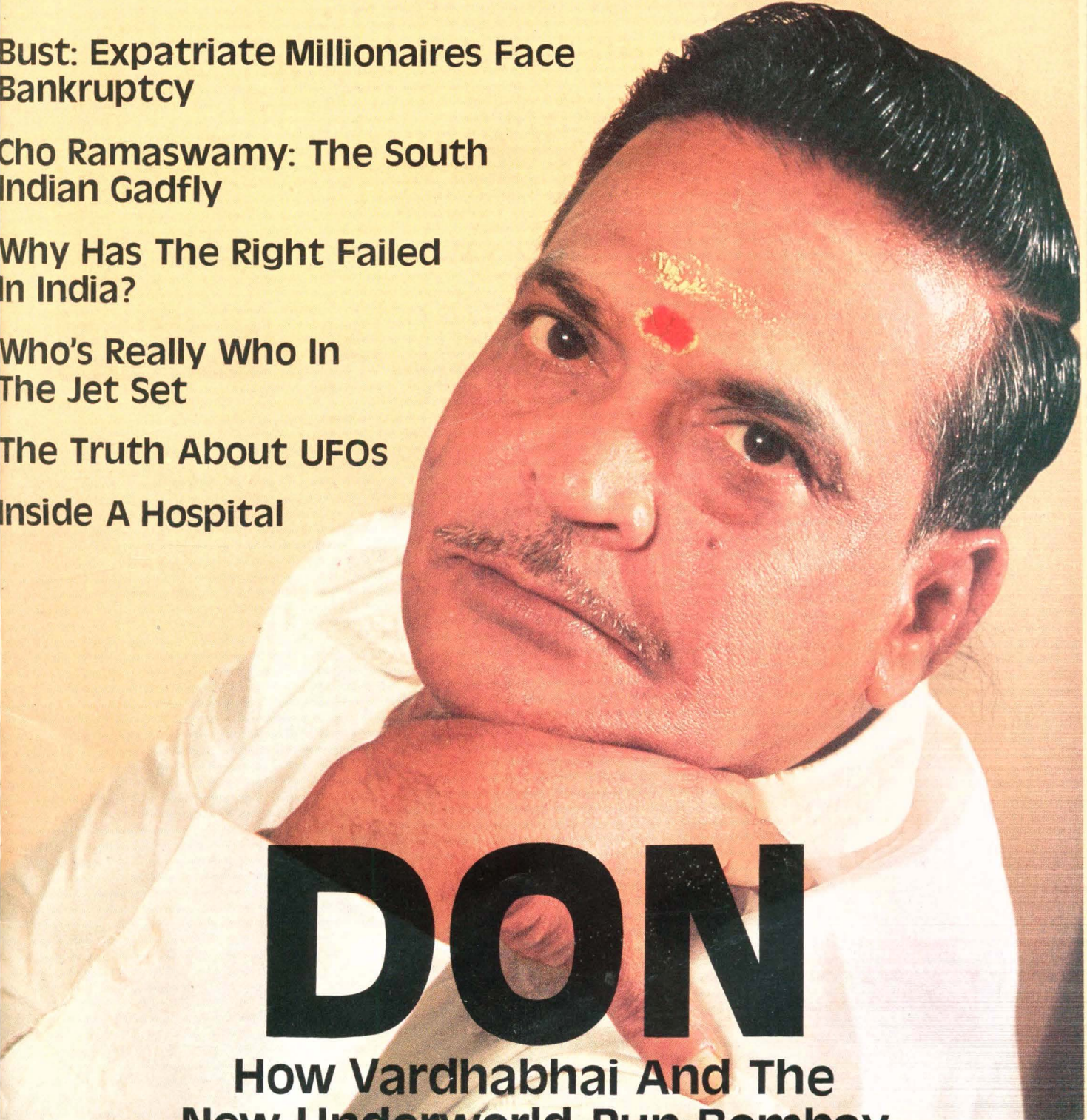
Bust: Expatriate Millionaires Face Bankruptcy

Cho Ramaswamy: The South Indian Gadfly

Why Has The Right Failed In India?

Who's Really Who In The Jet Set

The Truth About UFOs Inside A Hospital

A close-up portrait of Vardhabhai Phule, a man with dark hair, a mustache, and a bindi on his forehead. He is wearing a white shirt and has his hand resting under his chin.

DON

How Vardhabhai And The New Underworld Run Bombay

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on the marquee

THE AMERICANS ARE CURRENTLY REMINDING THEMSELVES and the world at large, through a media buzz, that it is now ten years since they quit Vietnam. No words or pictures are spared to reconfirm that the withdrawal was in defeat and disgrace. By extravagant productions in print and on the TV, the Americans are saying how very foolish they were to get involved in Vietnam; how mindless to have fought for so long; and how wise (eventually) and lucky to have finally got out. There is no effort in the exercise to justify the intervention. The long-term harm done to the American psyche by the messy involvement in the tragic war is quietly accepted.

But does mankind really learn anything from wars waged and lost, or won? Who won and who lost in the two world wars? Is there tranquillity in Korea? Who won in the China-India war? What did we in India gain by thrashing Pakistan two or three times? What price victory in the Falklands? Where is security or peace for Israel even after all those stunning victories? What are all the conflicts in Latin America and Africa about? Both Iran and Iraq are bleeding in the Gulf war between them. And Russia is just entering the sixth year of its war in Afghanistan with greater determination there than ever before.

Fortunately for America, there were clear, persistent voices right from the beginning of the US involvement in Vietnam which denounced America's war in Indo-China on moral, political, military and strategic grounds. Finally, it was the growing opposition to the war from within America that forced Washington to withdraw from Vietnam, and thus end the hostilities. But what happens where no dissent is permitted, as in Iran and Iraq or in the Soviet Union?

*

There are some eerie similarities between Vietnam and Afghanistan concerning the principal war makers. Fifteen years ago, Washington was announcing determined attacks on Vietcong held areas and on their supply routes from the North — and meekly Saigon was cheering. Now Moscow is announcing determined attacks on Mujahiddin guerrilla held areas and on their supply routes from Pakistan — and Kabul is blindly acquiescing. But the truth is the 115,000 Russian troops are as badly bogged down in the Afghan quagmire at the end of five years of this war as almost a similar number of Americans were bogged down in the Vietnam quagmire at the end of five years of that war. In Vietnam, the Americans were often fighting the Vietcong armed with American weapons fallen into Vietcong hands. In Afghanistan the Russians are fighting the Afghan guerrillas armed with Russian weapons captured by them or secured from elsewhere. In Vietnam, as the war went on, the American army threw in more than 500,000 men. Now Mikhail Gorbachov is understood to be willing to send in 400,000 more men there to win the war in Afghanistan. America spent more than it could afford in Vietnam — a staggering US\$150 billion. For Russia, too, it is not a cheap war — in terms of money or men. More than 10,000 Russians have already died fighting. In 1967, a full eight years before America quit Vietnam, the American poet Robert Lowell moaned, "It would take a million years for North Vietnam to have done as much harm to us as we've done to ourselves." What harm is the Afghan involvement causing to the Soviet Union? How is Moscow explaining Afghanistan to its own people (outside of those directly involved, very few Russians know anything about the scale and intensity of Moscow's involvement in Afghanistan) when the proclaimed enemy of the great revolution are the Americans and the Chinese?

* *

There is defeat for Russia in Afghanistan even if the Soviet war machine wins. In the long run, the Russians will only earn contempt and hatred from the Afghans. The Russians can learn from the American experience in Vietnam: and withdraw. The American experience shows that it is never too late to extricate from a disaster. And there is no stigma or long-term humiliation for doing so. Once the Russians quit, the warring Afghans will find a way to live together again. It is the Russian presence there that is fuelling the Afghan factionalism. And the Russians will learn to be more realistic about their fear of Moslem fundamentalism or American encirclement through Iran. The dominoes did not fall in South-East Asia after Vietnam — Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, in fact, strengthened themselves in the aftermath.

* * *

More than any other country, India has a role to play in helping Russians extricate themselves from Afghanistan. Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the consequent threat of hot pursuit of guerrillas on Pakistan territory (already some incidents of this kind have occurred, and Pakistani airspace is violated by Russian planes from Afghanistan quite frequently) cannot be comforting to us. We should use our access to Kremlin to bring about a political settlement aimed at terminating Russian occupation of Afghanistan, and securing for the Afghan people the right to determine their own future. The whole world would be a loser in varying measures if the Soviet Union is bogged down in Afghanistan for too long, and is then forced to withdraw frustrated.

R.V. Pandit

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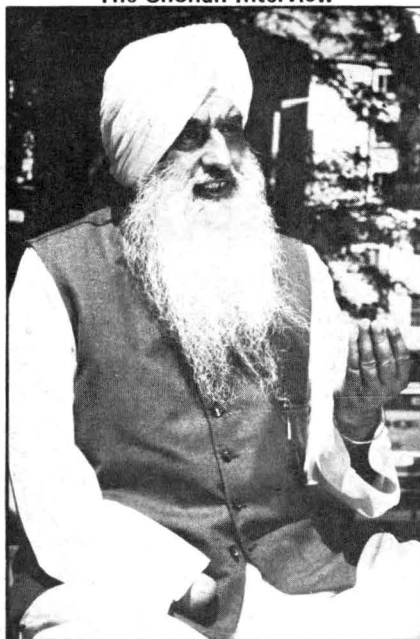
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LETTERS

The Chohan Interview



As a patriotic Indian and a Punjabi Hindu, I was shocked and ashamed to read Jagjit Singh Chohan's statement: "When Khalistan will come into existence, Punjabi Hindus will be our real treasure" (*Indira Gandhi's Assassination Was A KGB Plot*, March 1985). Punjabi Hindus may have protected innocent Sikhs and their families during the recent riots. But they never meant to offer protection to Khalistanis nor do they wish for Khalistan. All Sikhs are not Khalistanis. To brand Punjabi Hindus supporters of Khalistan is not just amusing, but mischievous.

When a large majority of Sikhs living in India are against Khalistan and are demanding only peace and dignity, where is the question of Punjabi Hindus settling in Khalistan? Khalistan exists only in the minds of CIA agents and perfidious characters like J S Chohan.

Yogesh Davar
New Delhi

The Jagjit Singh Chohan interview was very candid. The self-styled President of an imaginary country jumped from one baseless and absurd allegation to another. He came across as hungry for attention and publicity. His statements were incoherent and hollow, and so is the entire concept of Khalistan. In Hindi, *khalistan* means 'empty place'.

P C Lal
New Delhi

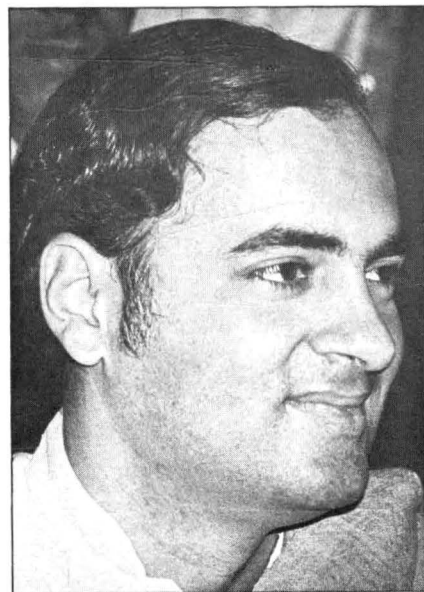
The Siege Of Language

Keki Daruwalla missed out Wordsworth's *Daffodils* in his article, *The Siege Of Language* (March 1985). The poet's heart leaps up when he beholds a rainbow in the sky. Hearts do not leap, frogs do. Hearts beat faster or slower as the situation prompts.

I have coined a word: 'Monalistic'. I have derived it from Mona Lisa's mysterious smile, and it describes an enigmatic situation. How about that, Mr Daruwalla? Want to lift the siege? English is equipped to withstand any siege.

P N Banerji
Meerut

Rajiv's Unrealistic Promise



R V Pandit has rightly pointed out that Rajiv Gandhi's promise to provide an administration free from corruption sounds unrealistic (*On The Marquee*, March 1985). Corruption and an erosion of moral values have taken place in every walk of life. This can, however, be minimised through a depoliticisation of the civil service.

An effort must be made to restore to the civil servant his status and the power to run the administration with greater efficiency. The importance of the civil servant's role has been stated thus: "Ministers come and ministers go, but the permanent machinery must be good and firm, and have respect for people."

H K L Gandotra
Jakovari

LETTERS

THE INTELLECTUAL NETWORK



Amrita Shah's *The Delhi Intellectual Network* (March 1985) made interesting reading. It is quite true that Romesh Thapar and Rajni Kothari are the doyens among Delhi's intellectuals. Yet, it was surprising to note the absence of Khushwant Singh's name from this exclusive list.

Khushwant, Romesh Thapar and Rajni Kothari represent the triumvirate of Delhi's intellectuals. They have become famous all over the country for their bold and intrepid stand on national issues.

Arvinder Singh Walia
Calcutta

One fails to understand the importance given by you to a few intellectuals. They specialise only in furnishing explanations after the occurrence of an event, and offering suggestions that no one listens to.

After they have poured out a Niagara of words on tons of paper, those in authority continue to do what they may and life goes on merrily in its own way, bypassing these intellectuals who never care to acquaint themselves with the actual happenings at the base.

T S Ramaswamy
Bombay

The plight of the so-called intellectuals makes sad reading. They continue to tumble from one error and regret to another and yet fight shy of admitting that they have become redundant. The reasons are not far to seek. For their concepts and terminologies, they rely on the developed countries of the West, and for their solutions, they look towards the State.

Besides, the general lethargy, limited interest, dependence on one leader and fear of experimentation prevalent among our people preclude any possibility of a worthwhile shift in the affairs of the nation, but these are the very areas our intellectuals refuse to tackle because they themselves are the victims of these vices.

H Dagia
Bombay

Reading Amrita Shah's *The Delhi Intellectual Network* called to mind Che Guevara's injunction, which fits our intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals perfectly: "It is the duty of intellectuals to commit suicide as a class."

Som Benegal
New Delhi

The Anti-Nuke Movement

Sundeep Waslekar's dig at the nascent peace movement in India (*The CND Work-Out Book*, March 1985) is highly disappointing. It is unfair to gloss over the effects of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki while calling the USSR a warmonger without giving a single illustration of this fact.

Waslekar opines that neither of the superpowers is likely to soften its position because a few thousand Indians

take a procession to Azad Maidan in Bombay or because heads of Third World countries confer at Vigyan Bhavan in Delhi. The pessimist in him forgets that a movement has always been initiated by a few enlightened individuals.

It is sad that Waslekar has so scornfully dismissed the feeble voice of the Indian peace movement, thus indirectly justifying the warmongers.

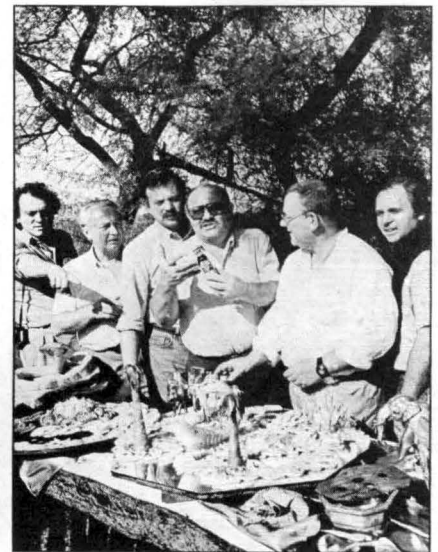
K M Achuthan
Bombay

The Forgotten Leader

Your cover story, *The Forgotten Leader* (February 1985) was the most interesting article on the political situation I have read in recent times. Indira, with all her boldness and firmness, relied more on loyalty than on ability and encouraged sycophancy. Her son, Rajiv, has so far lived up to his image of Mr Clean. He will do well to repudiate the matters that heralded the downfall of his mother and rule firmly but wisely and justly. However, her good work, howsoever little it may be, cannot be forgotten altogether.

Prabha Ravi
Bombay

Sang-froid

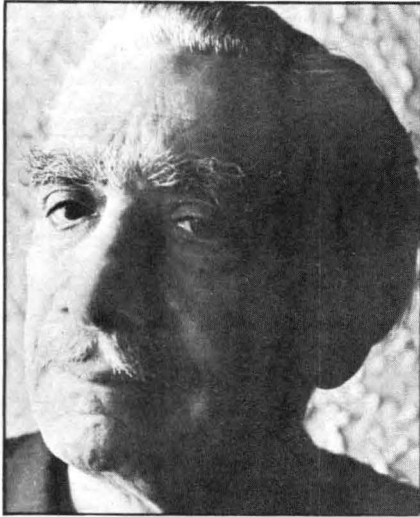


I enjoyed your issue of March 1985 immensely. I would especially commend the gourmandising writing of Malavika Sang-froid (*The Magical 'Mistri' Tour*). We need more humour in Indian journalism.

Nandan Maluste
Bombay

LETTERS

The Karanjia Interview



R K Karanjia has expressed the view that Mrs Gandhi could not stand V K Krishna Menon ("*Our Ignorance Was Our Blitz*," March 1985).

From certain views expressed by Indira Gandhi, this does not appear to be correct. The following extract from *My Truth* should throw some light on this:

"After the war, my father's health deteriorated; he probably wasn't too well before, but Krishna Menon's departure was a very big blow to him. I think what hurt him most was that his own colleagues had been so opposed to him and the manner in which they had literally hounded Krishna Menon out of the Cabinet. If my father could have withstood that, it would have been better, but the movement was so big and all the people he considered very close, T T Krishnamachari, Shastriji and all, were against him. It was a great disappointment."

Usually well-informed sources have stated that in the formative years of her prime ministership, V K Krishna Menon had been of great help to Mrs Indira Gandhi in translating Nehru's ideals into national policies. Bank nationalisation is one of the major policy decisions which can be referred to.

P Sankaranarayanan
Bombay

Lunch At Manori

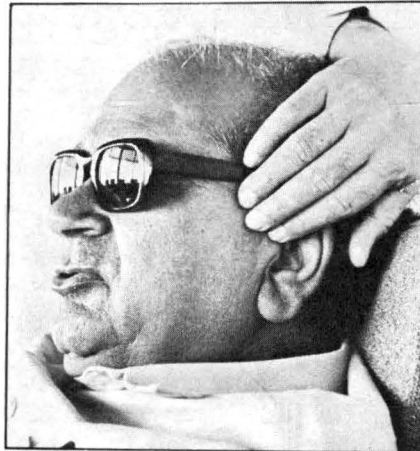
Rupali Padhi's short story, *Lunch At Manori* (March 1985) reveals how people from the lower classes fall prey to the fame and money they feel can

be found in the Indian film industry and how they are often disillusioned. Such incidents do occur in the film industry, but they go unnoticed.

The story exposes the unbelievable reality within the outwardly colourful appearance of the Indian film industry.

M S Kulkarni
Nizamabad

Bhagat's Rise And Fall



Is it right for a magazine like *Imprint* to grant undue publicity to a rogue like Bhagat (*H K L Bhagat: Rise And Fall*, April 1985)? There is enough proof that behind those dark glasses is a man who masterminded the Delhi carnage in November last year. His three lakh margin does not absolve him of this crime. It is a pity that the clean, new grass of our new government should shelter such snakes.

Sukumar Rahman
Madras

Calling Back The Dead

I am glad that Hutokshi Doctor has entered the realm of believers. Her article on the occult (*The Ghosts Who Talk*, April 1985) was an inspired piece of prose.

However, there is one thing that I would like to point out. There is mention of Madame Blavatsky in the article. Though she was often rumoured to be a medium by those who could not comprehend her teachings, she has categorically stated that seances are dangerous both for the spirit and the medium. She has explained why, at length in her book, *The Secret Doctrine*.

S P Tandon
Belgaum

The Prithvi Saga

Whatever be its problems, Prithvi has changed the face of theatre in Bombay, (*Saga Of A Theatre*, April 1985). I wish there were more committed people like the Kapoors. There is a need for similar theatres all over the country.

R Krishna
Faridabad

Cricket Mania Justified

In his letter, *Cricket Mania* (March 1985), K N Ninan borrows Bernard Shaw's famous quip: "Cricket is played by 22 fools and watched by 22,000 fools."

Detractors of cricket advance queer arguments to justify their stance — that only seven or eight countries play cricket, that all other activity ceases when the cricket season is on, and that the game is time consuming.

If the game consumes one's time, it goes without saying that one likes it. The belief that all other activity ceases during the cricket season has no basis. How many offices are closed during a test match? Do office-goers get any extra leave for watching cricket? And should we not, in fact, continue to play cricket till all the other countries start playing it too?

S Padmanabhan
Calcutta

The Magazine Boom



M V Kamath's review, *The Magazine Boom* (March 1985) was quite delightful.

It is, however, surprising to note the omission of *Imprint* and *Caravan* from the list of magazines in this article. Both these magazines are informative with an excellent standard and are also reasonably priced compared to other leading English periodicals published in India.

J V Naik
Bombay

imprint

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DON: VARDHABHAI

By Amrita Shah



He is the single most powerful underworld figure in Bombay. But Vardha is hardly ever photographed and gives few interviews.

Here, for the first time, is the full Vardha story. Along with an exposé by Sheela Barse, of the links

between the police and organised crime.

Cover transparency: Gautam Patole.

31 BUST!

The most flamboyant expatriate millionaires are in financial trouble. First came the Raj Sethia collapse. Then Mahmud Sipra went bust. Next Abdul Shamji was accused of over-borrowing.

A special report from London. Plus, The Other Sethia, and Whatever Happened To Swraj Paul?

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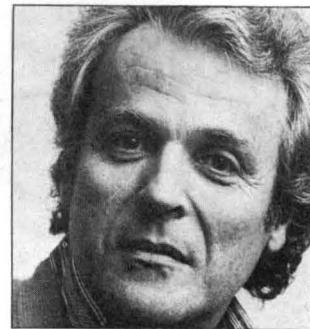
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BOO TO THIS BUDGET

It is loaded with inflationary dynamite and there are few structural departures.

THE FIRST BUDGET of the new government has been presented to Parliament and passed into law. Most of the month of March we heard nothing except raves about the budget and the departure that it represented. Nani Palkhivala who had criticised all previous budgets, praised this one as the 'finest in the last 38 years'. Nana Chudasama, who has made a name for himself with his weekly 'banner' comments hung on Bombay's Veer Nariman Road corner, declared it the first Swatantra budget.

The people who know me thought, that given my predilections, I too would go gaga over this budget. But I didn't. On the contrary, I am genuinely worried by it on two counts. First, if it fails to improve the economy then the movement of economic ideas in favour of market economy, which is gathering momentum, will be discredited. Mrs Gandhi thoroughly discredited socialism by preaching it. But, she had practised a gentle form of state piracy. Thus, socialism got a bad name without even having been tried. Socialism should be given up anyway considering that East Germany, USSR, China and Albania tried socialism sincerely and have decisively failed. India, too, would have failed had it experimented with genuine socialism. But Mrs Gandhi killed it with speeches alone. Her son, Mr Gandhi, may likewise abort market economy as a philosophy in much the same way. Therein lies my first worry about this budget: if it fails, then market economy in this country might

Subramaniam Swamy is an economist and politician. This is a regular column.



not get a second chance. Secondly, this budget is, after all, a poorly constructed economic package. Mr Palkhivala got carried away by the reduction or abolition of some specific taxes. But regrettably, his enthusiasm for this move has totally clouded his ability to dissect and analyse the structure of the budget.

I raise four basic questions about this budget, the answers to which will clarify what I mean.

Q: Does the budget alter the structure of taxes — between direct and indirect taxes, between taxes that can be collected with ease and those that create corruption and evasion?

A: No, definitely not. Some direct

taxes have been reduced, and one tax, the estate duty, has been abolished. But the trend of the last 30 years, of relying increasingly on excise duties, has been strengthened. It has brought down some direct taxes, but excise taxes are up, across-the-board. Excise taxes create the most corruption in the country. Although about 132 commodities are subject to a specific but complicated schedule of levies, the top 15 excise earners out of these 132 provide 92 per cent of the revenue. If the budget wanted to make a real departure, then excise taxes should have been abolished on about 117 commodities. The small loss in revenue (eight per cent) would have been made up by gains through increased production and cleanliness.

Further, philosophically speaking, if a choice had to be made, then rather than reducing wealth taxes and abolishing estate duty, the reverse is better — that is, abolishing wealth taxes and reducing estate duty. This is because of the principle that, as far as possible, equality of opportunity should be provided. Birth should not place anyone at an unfair advantage. But then, how is Rajiv Gandhi to appreciate that?

Q: Has the budget tapped any non-traditional sources of revenue to meet the looming resource crunch?

A: Certainly not. In tackling the resource problem, the budget has proved to be totally tradition-bound. Taxes have been heaped on soap, cement, diesel, kerosene, petrol, cloth, *paan masala*, etc. It has increased excise by 20 per cent across-the-board via Item No 68. The Finance Minister has planned a deficit of Rs 3,349 crore, the

The common man and development have both taken a beating so that those who live in Malabar Hill or own princely estates can sleep soundly.

BOO TO THIS BUDGET

highest *planned* deficit ever. (Experience shows that actual deficits at the end of the year end up being usually twice the planned figure.) Furthermore, the Seventh Plan's first year allocation has been slashed. Till now, every year plan investment had increased upwards of 20 per cent. This year the increase shall be only 6.6 per cent. In real terms this means it is less than last year's investment because of probable inflation of more than seven per cent. Thus, the common man and development, two crucial foci of the budget, have taken the beating so that Malabar Hill and ex-princely estate owners can sleep soundly.

There are non-traditional methods of raising resources. For example, if the government had abolished or reformed the present system of capital-gains tax, and made dividend income taxable at source, then at least Rs 5,000 crore could have been tapped from the agricultural sector. Presently, all that money is being hoarded or used to purchase gold. During the last five years, gold prices have shot up in India, while internationally gold prices have declined!

The government could also raise resources by privatisation of Modern Bakery, five-star hotels etc.

Q: Has the budget made a departure from the past, by ear-marking taxes mobilised from the people for projects that will provide direct relief to the people, so that the common man has a sense of tax-satisfaction?

A: No. On the contrary, increased rail fares will net Rs 495 crore, but the investment in railways (that is necessary for better coaches, new rails to obviate accidents, replacement of depreciated rolling stock) has been cut down, in the last year itself, by over Rs 130 crore in the annual plan (1985-86) contained in the budget. There is no relationship between the taxes mobilised and the relief given. In fact,

even in the matter of the Compulsory Deposit Scheme (CDS) abolition, this coming year is going to be a double headache. A person in the CDS bracket, will have to pay the due amount, but the refund he was to get has been put off till next year. Therefore, again there is no sense of tax-satisfaction.

Q: The Prime Minister has repeatedly said that we are going to get away from the concept of a soft, parasitic society to a hard, competitive one. Is this reflected in the budget?

A: No. The best indication of the continuing softness is the treatment of subsidies. In 1980-81, the subsidies given for food, fertilizers and export promotion were Rs 1,541 crore. Five years later, this budget has placed it at Rs 3,524 crore! Another indication of softness is when we export raw materials and then import them in processed form. Can you guess which is the largest single earner as export and the largest single liability as import? You might be surprised, but it is crude oil as exports and petroleum products as imports. Last year India exported Rs 1,420 crore worth of crude oil, simply because we did not plan a sufficiently large refinery capacity! In this budget, no steps have been taken to correct that imbalance.

These four questions clarify that the budget is, structurally, not a departure from the past. There has been some superficial tinkering with some taxes which have been suffocating a small vocal section, but for the general masses the grind continues. The budget fails because it is loaded with inflationary dynamite which may, in turn, explode the nascent move towards market economy. It is like democracy in Africa. People may never know what it is like, but what they saw of it they did not want. Boo to this budget from me.

The Gunpowder Plot



In 1605, a group of men plotted to destroy King James I and his government. They decided to blow up the Houses of Parliament during the Opening Ceremony. Their plan was to take over the government of the country. Guy Fawkes was to set light to barrels of gunpowder hidden under the Palace of Westminster.

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A NOVEL FEELING

Decisions are being made; things are at last moving in Delhi.

WITH THE GRADUAL end of winter and the days beginning to sizzle, the capital's mood should be shifting from lethargy to somnolence. But 100 days into Rajiv Gandhi's Prime Ministership, the pattern might be breaking.

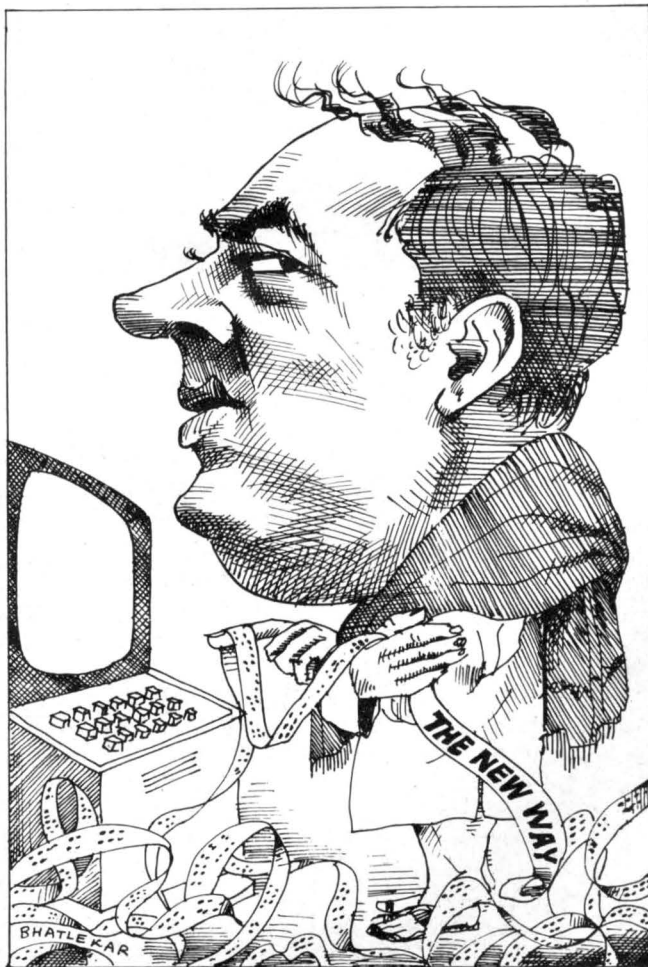
It could be temporary. But for the moment there is an unmistakable impression that things are beginning to happen. Decisions are being taken and even being implemented. It's a novel feeling.

Previous governments distinguished themselves by policies of drift and inaction, virtually destroying the country. The new decisions might not find favour with everyone. However, even bad decisions seem preferable to none at all.

We might still land in an abyss, though that, mercifully, appears a receding prospect. But a determined endeavour to try and achieve something worthwhile at the national level will certainly be a new experience for most post-Independence Indians.

As a distinguished retired corporate executive commented, "Our generation has made as big a mess of this country as is humanly possible. Now it is for the younger generation to extricate it and put it on the road to progress."

It seems to be trying. A major landmark in the country's political history came in the shape of the anti-defection legislation. The new budget, according to a wide body of informed opinion, is about the best ever. There is even some movement in the Punjab, where the threat to India's physical and emotion-



al integrity remains disturbingly real in the absence of a quick solution.

But in a sense, the real battle is against poverty and economic stagnation. And the solution lies on the agricultural and industrial fronts. Thus far, despite some obvious advances, progress has not been commensurate with the people's aspirations. Rocketing population has meanwhile nullified impressive gains.

Outside the major cities, India remains depressingly backward. Even cities have become cesspools, like the country, crushed by wave after wave of population.

Perhaps this budget, despite the carpers, gives the country its first real

chance to break out of its poverty trap. If it doesn't, we can look forward to more poverty, communal riots, separatist tendencies and chaos.

The relationship between sluggish economic advancement and general disaffection is very real, especially among basically industrious people. A good deal of Sikh unrest in the Punjab can be ascribed not so much to separatist tendencies, as the economic plateau reached after some spectacular progress during the years of the Green Revolution. Inadequate industrialisation, power and water for irrigation merely aggravated that.

Even Major General Jaswant Singh Bhullar (Retd), the Washington-based Secretary General of the World Sikh Organisation propagating Khalistan, is on record reiterating, "It is not a question of religion; Punjab is an economic problem."

The relationship between arrested growth and unrest is amply borne out in a converse

example from Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). For decades the state was Pakistan's Achilles' heel, with a strong secessionist Pakhtoonistan movement. Today Pakhtoonistan's strongest advocate is probably Karim Lala in Bombay. There are not that many interested Pathans.

This is not to say that a genuine secessionist movement never existed. But the influx of a great deal of money into, and expanding employment opportunities outside the state, effectively took care of the burgeoning desire for independence.

Today, Pakistani Pathans are part of the power structure, and are virtually indistinguishable from the dominant

No Indian city has the widespread wealth or the living standards of Karachi with its 400,000 VCRs and lakhs of cars, despite the fact that cars in Pakistan cost twice as much as in India.

A NOVEL FEELING

Punjabis. They form a quarter of the army, and control the country's transport business, down to driving most Karachi taxis. But there are even more integrating factors.

Western dependence on heroin has suddenly made hitherto marginal NWFP farming a very lucrative exercise. Pakistan earns roughly \$ 1 billion a year from the heroin trade. Much of that goes to poppy farmers and heroin laboratory owners in the sparsely populated state, over most of which no government, not even the British, had any control.

As one poppy farmer declared, "I know of no other crop which enables me to buy a brand new Toyota with a single harvest." And the number of new Japanese cars that stand alongside modest huts in the remotest parts of the province have to be seen to be believed.

Sealing Pathan loyalty to Pakistan are earnings from the Gulf. Unskilled or semi-skilled labour has gone to that fleeting eldorado in droves. Vast sums are remitted through legal and illegal channels. There seems little point in jeopardising all that.

Sustaining the boom is now Pakistan's real problem. As (Indian) Punjab has shown, things are fine as long as the going is good. Once the downturn begins, disaffection sets in. Unless there is some compensatory fallback position, or an industrial infrastructure built during the boom years, there is bound to be trouble.

Much of Pakistan's domestic stability during General Zia's eight-year tenure—despite its very repressive and arbitrary nature—has been due to this sudden explosion of wealth. Certainly no Indian city has the widespread wealth or the living standards of Karachi, with its 400,000 VCRs and lakhs of cars, despite the fact that cars in Pakistan cost twice as much as local ones do here.

True, there has been, and continues

to be, trouble especially in rural Sind. But that state has been left out of the general prosperity. Its cities are dominated by outsiders, the rural areas by a few landlords. There are virtually no Sindhis in the army, and hardly any have migrated to the Gulf.

Elsewhere, the people are much better clothed and fed than us. They also have a lot more spending money. Nowhere is the grinding poverty of our cow belt or urban slums evident.

In fact, well-informed people suspect that Pakistan's per capita income might well be higher than the official \$ 350 per year (compared to our \$ 260). They feel it could be as high as \$ 500, which is possible. Only, there is no way to officially explain it, given Pakistan's primitive industrial level.

A partial explanation could be a much bigger role of the black economy. There is still a great deal of money flowing in through remittances and heroin, besides Western aid. Apart from the aid, a lot of the money comes through illegal or non-official channels.

But the flow is ebbing, and remittances last year dropped by 15 per cent. Sooner or later the crunch is bound to come. Then the accumulated grievances of the prosperous years could explode, and sweep away the existing government. As in Kerala, there is no fallback position.

However, any economic comparison has to bear in mind that India still retains its poorest parts while Pakistan does not. In the ultimate analysis, the separation of poverty-stricken East Pakistan proved beneficial to our western neighbour.

Perhaps India too, would present a more healthy picture without the Hindi-speaking belt. There is no doubt that its exploding population, backwardness and indifferent productivity represent a millstone around the country's neck. But worse, because of the numbers advantage, the country's

political leadership will invariably come from there.

Nevertheless, India still has (even proportionately) vaster resources of skilled manpower, industrial infrastructure and education than Pakistan. It has this vast reservoir of intermediate level skills and technical know-how, which has already led to considerable self-reliance, and could spark off sustained rapid progress in the future. Obviously, this is a much sounder method of ensuring real wealth than uncertain workers' remittances, narcotics earnings, or foreign aid.

Given sensible economic policies, India seems poised for an economic take-off, which would generally raise living standards. A fair share of those policies are already here in the shape of the last budget. Only, these policies should persist.

Moreover, our industry should no longer be unreasonably protected from world-wide competition, enabling it to make extortionate profits with sub-standard products. The mass will improve, and a few deservedly die. As Indian immigrants to the West have shown, nothing taps potential and sharpens ability like competition. And as our bureaucracy reveals, nothing destroys talent as quickly as the lack of it.

In history, there are ample examples to illustrate that poor economic conditions have been the root cause of major social and political upheavals like revolutions and wars. The importance of a healthy economy cannot be overemphasised. Once the economy begins to move, more and more people will have a greater stake in it, especially the industrious Sikhs. People will be less willing to rock the national boat. Separatist tendencies would wither away. As NWFP's brave, independent Pathans or US ethnic groups have shown, nothing binds people as well as money.

HEGDE GETS AHEAD

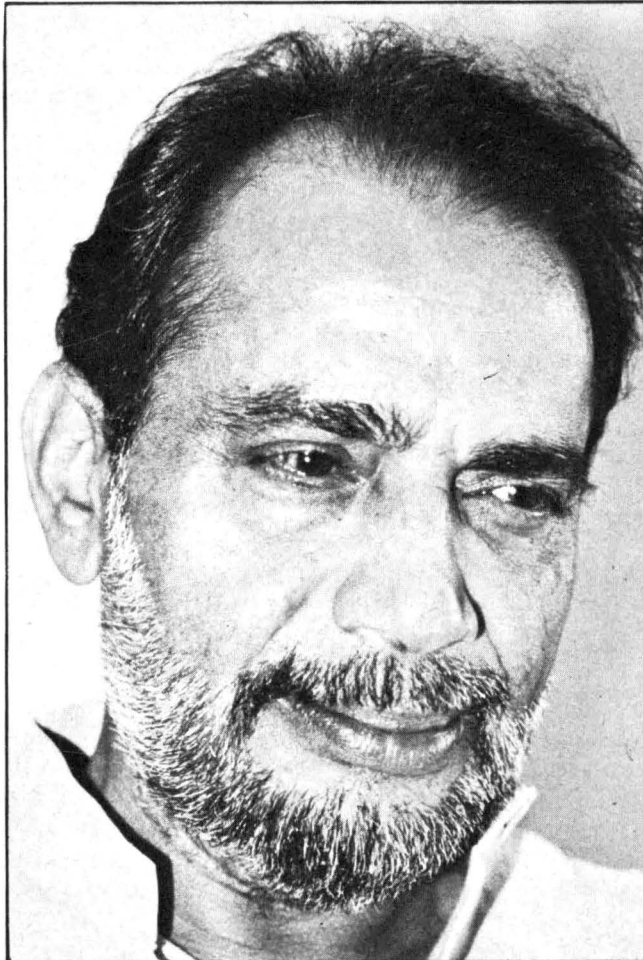
Karnataka's Chief Minister has pulled off an amazing electoral coup.

IT WAS an unlikely place for a chief minister to take his oath of office. The gigantic sweep of stairs that leads to the eastern entrance of the Vidhana Soudha is generally dotted with holiday-makers licking ice-cream cones and noisily munching popcorn as they gaze at or eagerly photograph the building's awe-inspiring pillars and majestic facade.

But this is no ordinary day. The holiday-makers have receded onto the sprawling lawns that surround Karnataka's seat of power, to join the revellers who have thronged here to witness a moment in history. As the Indian tricolour flutters wildly in the evening breeze over the inscription, 'Government Work Is God's Work', a tired but jubilant Ramakrishna Hegde is sworn in as Karnataka's Chief Minister for the second time.

"I owe my victory to the people," says the charismatic leader, making a very obvious statement. Maybe that is what prompted him to hold the simple swearing-in ceremony out in the open, in full view of the public who had made it possible, instead of within the cloistered confines of some panelled conference hall. As he arrived at the stroke of five, dressed nattily in an immaculate white *kurta-pyjama* topped with matching waistcoat, he looked every inch the people's hero. And they gave him a boisterous welcome—cheering, clapping, whistling.

The day before, they had turned up in lakhs at the victory rally organised by the Janata party. A large orange



moon hung low in the evening sky, as the multitudes let off endless fire-crackers and broke cordons to garland their resurrected Chief Minister. The diving board of a nearby swimming pool sported the Janata's farmer and sickle symbol, outlined in coloured lights. A human 'farmer with sickle' figure darted about the VIP platform, while a gaggle of photographers went shutter-happy through the entire evening.

Earlier in the day, Hegde had driven through the streets and bylanes of his constituency, on his 'thanksgiving' mission, *vijayotsava*. After thanking God at the Shankar Mutt Temple (an auspicious time had been worked out

by the temple authorities), he perched himself atop his *jaya vahini* and talked about how the elections had been an *agni pariksha* for him and his government.

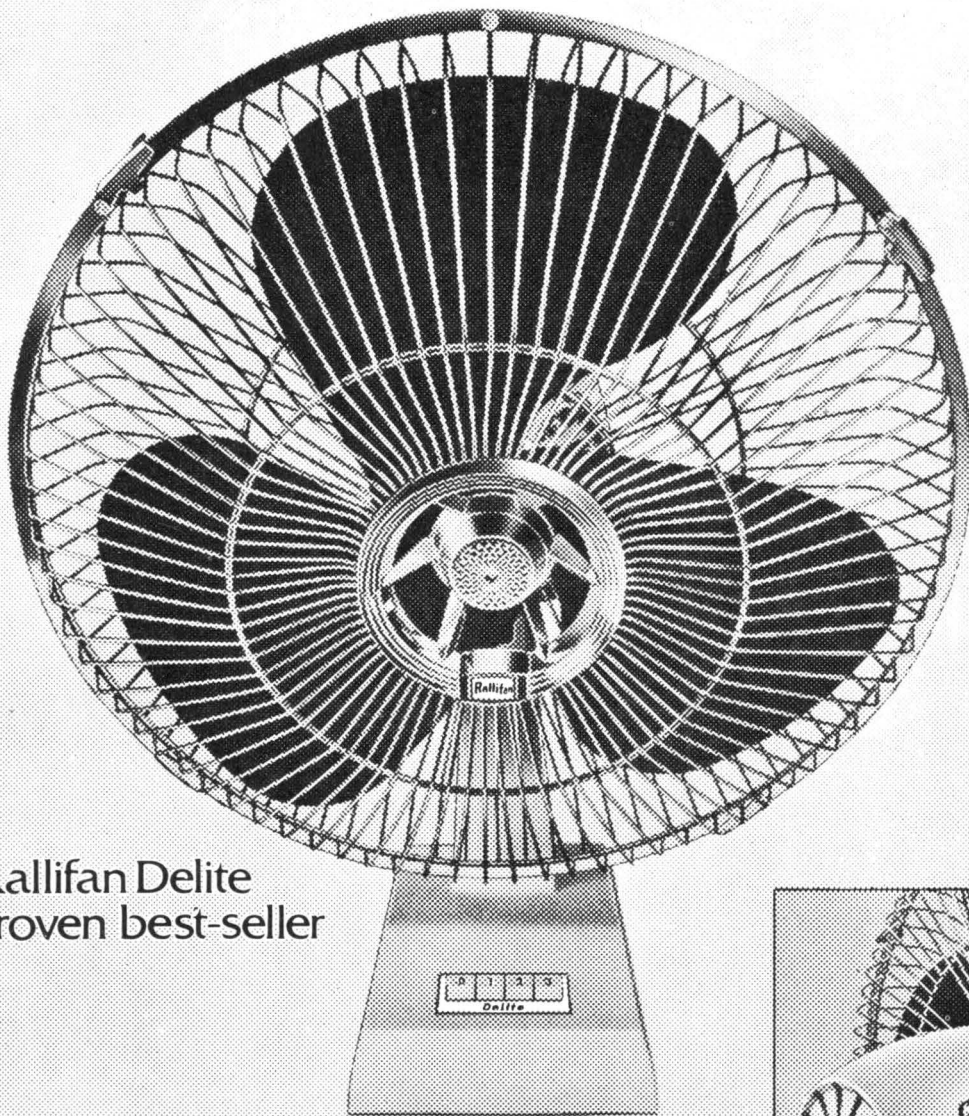
Everywhere, crowds lined the streets to cheer their leader. Flowers, bananas, and rice were offered to him and his family, while young girls performed the traditional *aarti*. Others threw colours at him, as a gesture of goodwill and affection. (The festival of Holi was celebrated on the same day.)

A month ago, it was these very people to whom the Janata party had appealed: "Bring back Hegde. He knows your problems. He knows your feelings."

"This is not just a victory rally, it is an affirmation of my government's, my party's pledge to keep our election promises," he told the people. Only a day ago, he had, with the help of his people, proved his 'relevance' to Rajiv Gandhi and other cynics who had proclaimed that Hegde was a spent political force. After the crushing defeat his government suffered at the hands of the Congress (I) during the last Lok Sabha elections, it almost seemed as if this was true. And Hegde took a calculated risk, offering to step down before the Assembly elections were called. Only Rajiv (who feared this might create unnecessary sympathy for the chief minister) entreated him to stay on as caretaker chief minister, and the Janata leader agreed to do so.

Now, the electorate had returned him with a thumping majority (140 out of 224 seats). The Assembly election campaign had been markedly lacklustre, (except for the whirlwind visits of Rajiv Gandhi and N T Rama Rao

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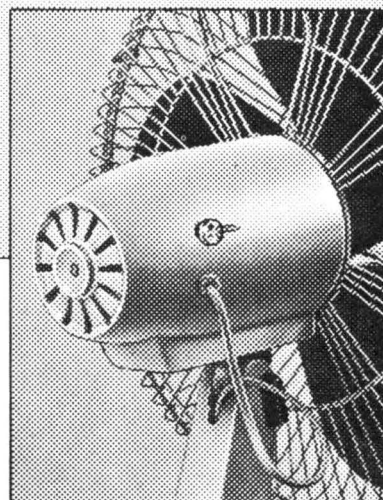


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How many of us are fortunate enough to live in a city where there are no crowds, no extremes in climate, lots of space and plenty of gardens and trees? Bangaloreans have been used to heaven too long.

HEGDE GETS AHEAD

who was campaigning for the Janata party). Even on polling day, dejection was writ large upon Janata party workers' faces as they geared themselves for defeat, whereas the Congress (I) party-men were indiscreet enough to presume that they had already won. The people who had unanimously brought Mrs Gandhi's son to power in December, felt that they had done their duty by him, and preferred to sit at home, watching the cricket match on television. Nobody expected a Congress (I) defeat in a matter of two months. The few journalists who had dared to stick their necks out by predicting the results, had laid their bets safely (they thought), on the Congress (I).

It was only as the results slowly trickled in, that the electorate showed some signs of animation. Glued to TV sets and radios, office-goers put their pens down, and shut their files and ledgers, while crowds gathered in front of newspaper offices to keep track of the latest tally. By about four p m, the city wore an air of distinct festivity: firecrackers were set ablaze and colour was smeared on friends and strangers alike.

Apart from joy, the other discernible sentiment was relief. Why let the Centre maintain a stranglehold on every state? Besides, the faction-ridden Congress (I) leadership in the state was much too tainted to be desirable.

Hegde's personal triumph was unparalleled anywhere in the state. He won by a margin of 42,000 votes, defeating his rival, K M Nagaraj, a local tough (who else would be brash enough to contest the CM?), who was quite taken aback when he was told he had lost the election. The first thing he did was despatch his gang of *goondas* to retrieve the saris and chappals that he had distributed to the poorer women in the constituency, during the course of his campaign!

Hegde's throat, which had stood the onslaught of many hours of cam-

paigning remarkably well, was granted a day's rest as he set about making plans for his new ministry. No longer did he have the unenviable task of appeasing party workers by granting them posts, so that they would not desert him. Besides, his party had won on its own steam, casting off its dependence on its erstwhile allies, the BJP and the CPI. The mandate had given him and his much-touted 'value-based politics' a new lease on life. Only the next five years will show whether he can really fulfil his promise of forming a 'model government'.

* * *

TO THE OUTSIDER, Bangaloreans must seem a paranoid and pampered lot. No other city in the country has it so good — tree-lined roads with only a hint of traffic, plenty of land and space available, acres of sprawling lawns and gardens, a large lake in the heart of the city, and a climate that would put most hill-stations to shame — salubrious, they call it. And yet, you should hear the inhabitants of this veritable heaven rave and rant about population explosion, overcrowding, the lack of greenery and the maddening heat.

Every time a die-hard Bangalorean (and there are many) meets a new migrant who has dared to encroach on his sylvan environs, his displeasure is ill-concealed. The morning papers are often filled with prophecies of doom for the Boom City; Bangalore is bursting at the seams. According to a recent 'official' study, the city's population will zoom to 60 lakh by 2001. But surely that is not cause enough for alarm — 2001 is another 15 years away. And though the city registered a growth rate of 76.17 per cent during the past decade, this has hardly caused a squeeze. Even at peak hour, the city's main artery, Mahatma Gandhi Road, wears a deserted look. If this is overcrowding, Bangalore must have been a ghost city ten years ago!

Come summer, and as the rest of

the country swelters, Bangalore keeps its cool. But not Bangaloreans — there is much swooning and a good deal of fretting and fuming every time the mercury rises even a little. True, the city is hotter than it used to be in the early days when its old, gabled homes never needed ceiling fans. But that is still no excuse to run for the beer or the pool when the temperature rises to 25 degrees.

And Ulsoor Lake, that lovely stretch of rippled water in the city's midst, they call a cesspool. "Have you been to hell lately? Then go to Ulsoor Lake," goes one ecological campaign. How many of us have drawing-rooms that look out onto placid waters? Bangaloreans have been used to heaven too long.

Their deepest insecurity stems from a concern about the Garden City's diminishing foliage. Environmentalists and citizens alike are deeply perturbed that their arboreal fantasy land will one day be as barren as the Thar. Judging by the profusion of trees, this process of de-leafing should take another century.

While it is all very well to be forewarned of imminent ecological decay and disaster, there is only one cure for this unfounded, disgruntled pessimism. Let the Bangalorean leave his ravaged city for the shores of Bombay or Calcutta, or even nearby Madras. Only then will he appreciate his privileged existence.

* * *

ONE PLACE WHERE Lean's *A Passage To India* is bound to run to packed houses, is Bangalore. Half the city's population has 'starred' in this latest Raj extravaganza. Already these Hollywood hopefuls are telephoning their relatives abroad to find out just how many seconds the camera has lingered on their frames. Imagine watching the film with an audience of excited extras yelling out, "There's my arm!", "That's my back!" ♦

DON

Forget about Haji Mastaan. Vardha is the most powerful underworld figure in India today.

So far he has shunned the press, and few photographs of him exist. But he agreed to talk to **AMRITA SHAH** and to be photographed for this: the first comprehensive report on his activities.

VARADARAJAN MUDALIAR is holding court.

In his simple apartment on the third floor of Nagda Mansion in the Bombay suburb of Matunga, Mudaliar listens to the woes of the faithful. Slum-dwellers, petty clerks, big businessmen, savants, mendicants and professional mobsters prostrate themselves before the Godfather. They tell him their problems, seek his assistance and solicit his intervention in their affairs.

Mudaliar listens. His dark forehead is smeared with sacred ash, and his thick black hair is swept all the way back. But it is his eyes that dominate the room. Attentive and alert, they rarely flicker, and take in everything that happens in his durbar. A candidate for municipal office wonders if Mudaliar would be good enough to inaugurate his election campaign. An old, sickly man begs him to deal with an errant decorator who has refused to set up the *mandap* for his daughter's wedding. A cripple beseeches him for money to enter a hospital. Gangsters bring disputes for adjudication. Slum-dwellers ask for protection from corrupt policemen. Women complain of harassment.

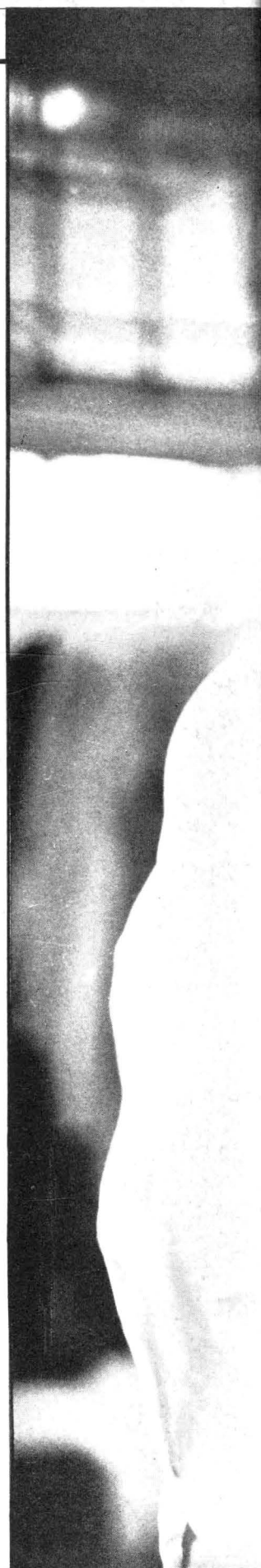
By the early afternoon, Mudaliar has adjourned his court. The favour-seekers have departed: their chappals and shoes no longer overwhelm the red coir carpeting on the stone steps that lead down from the third floor of Nagda Mansion.

And now, Mudaliar switches to a new persona. A group of angry Eelam Tigers files in. They complain bitterly about the atrocities perpetrated by the evil Sinhalese on the hapless Lankan Tamils. They suggest solutions. They plot strategy.

Once again, Mudaliar listens. His face hardens, anger flashes through his eyes and concern flows through his body. Softly, he begins to talk. He tells them of his visit to Delhi. How he led a procession of 4,000 concerned citizens to the Boat Club and invited politicians of all parties to save the Tamils. How his followers presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister asking him to intervene in the Sri Lankan problem. He cannot deliver miracles, he says. But he will do all he can for his fellow Tamilians, stranded across the waters, in a strange and hostile land. The Tigers leave, satisfied.

Mudaliar does not forget the Tamils. That evening, he graces a function at

Amrita Shah, also wrote the Weekly's cover story last month on the old underworld.





the Shanmukhananda Hall. It is Bombay's largest indoor auditorium and it is packed to capacity. As the crowd claps and cheers, Mudaliar announces a donation of Rs 25,000 to the Eelam People's Revolutionary Front to 'intensify the Tamil struggle for liberation'. Moreover, he promises to bear the entire cost of 500,000 postcards to the Prime Minister; cards that will ask him to help the Lankan Tamils.

It is a crowd-pleasing gesture and a generous one. Varadarajan Mudaliar wins the respect of his people and the admiration of the Matunga Tamils. The next day's newspapers note his contribution by covering the meeting at length.

After all, Mudaliar is a social worker. A philanthropist. A man who helps those less fortunate than himself. That's how the newspaper reports have regarded him. That's what he tells interviewers.

He doesn't say, of course, that he is also Bombay's single most important underworld figure. A don whose word is law. Whose power is such that politicians supplicate before him. Who is so feared that nobody will testify against him. Who is so clever that the police can't touch him.

The new Godfather. The man who runs Bombay.

IN HIS PRIVATE PERSONA as underworld chieftain, Varadarajan Mudaliar prefers a shorter, earthier name: Vardha. It is by this name that he is known to his friends in the criminal fraternity; and it is this name that strikes terror into those unfortunate enough to stand in his way.

His high public profile and his well-publicised status as a Tamil leader are both symptomatic of the current state of Bombay's underworld. In the old days, men like Haji Mastan and Yusuf Patel could never have aspired to such social eminence. Till their highly-publicised arrests in 1974, they were rarely seen, or heard of, in public. It was only after their equally publicised reformations in 1977 that they came out into the open, went into legitimate business activity and started charitable ventures. Even today, eight years after they went straight, they cannot openly hob-nob with top politicians or arrange to have memoranda presented to the

COVER STORY

Prime Minister.

Yet Vardha, in the guise of Varadarajan Mudaliar, social worker, is something of a city celebrity. He contributed to the AICC (I) conference in Bombay, and helped organise Rajiv Gandhi's *padayatra* through Dharavi in 1983. Even when the government cracked down on organised crime in 1984 and arrested Haji Mastaan and Karim Lala, Vardha remained outside the purview of the law. In 1982, a half-hearted move to arrest him for instigating the looting after the Bombay police riots, was easily scuttled and it is now eight years since Vardha has seen the inside of a jail cell.

While the old dons functioned mainly in the Muslim areas of the city and stuck to smuggling, Vardha has spread his tentacles all over the Bombay suburbs and has quite brazenly dabbled in most kinds of criminal activity. Like *Ardh Satya*'s Rama Shetty (a character based on Vardha), he has bought off policemen, politicians and bureaucrats and has set up a parallel administration of his own.

The new underworld that Vardha rules is quite different from the one Haji Mastaan ran. For one, it has much more money, and for another, it is far more violent. Guns are routinely brandished; contract killing is a way of life. The murderous gang wars that erupted in Bombay two years ago were indicative of this new state of affairs.

Most sinister, though, is the fact that the new breed of gangster no longer makes his money in victimless crimes like *matka* and prostitution. Theft, armed robbery, drug-dealing and extortion have taken over, and the underworld has moved closer to affecting the day-to-day existence of the people of Bombay. Because dons like Vardha have so much money and so much muscle, nobody can deny them anything.

WHILE the Vardha legend has it that he grew up in Tamil Nadu and came to Bombay as a young boy, Mudaliar was, in fact, born in the Bombay suburb of Kalyan on October 9, 1925. His father worked as a fitter in the railways and earned a mere Rs 12-18 a month. Varadarajan dropped out of municipal school in Koliwada when he was in his early teens

and found work repairing cars and fixing primitive electrical appliances.

Later, he shifted to working at the docks and found employment as a ship-painter on a daily wage of Rs 1.50. In 1956, he became a porter and met up with Haji Mastaan who was the uncrowned king of the dock world.

From an early age, Vardha showed scant respect for the law. He began as a local *dada*, ruling the area around his little hut in Matunga. Then, he switched to stealing cargo from the docks and soon became part of a well-organised gang of dock thieves.

In the late '50s, he saw that there was money to be made in the hooch trade. He set up *bhattis* all over his part of Matunga and started transporting liquor in a fleet of taxis. The police were aware of his activities but regarded him as being of little consequence. Periodically, a sub-inspector would drive his jeep to Vardha's hut, pick him up, take him to the station and shake him down.

Even in those early days, Vardha disliked competition. Matunga's best-established bootlegger was a man called Ramaswamy and Vardha decided to run him out of business. His *bhattis* were smashed, his couriers beaten up and his family threatened. Finally, a terrified Ramaswamy fled from his home at night, took his family to the airport and boarded a flight to Madras — an unheard of luxury in those days.

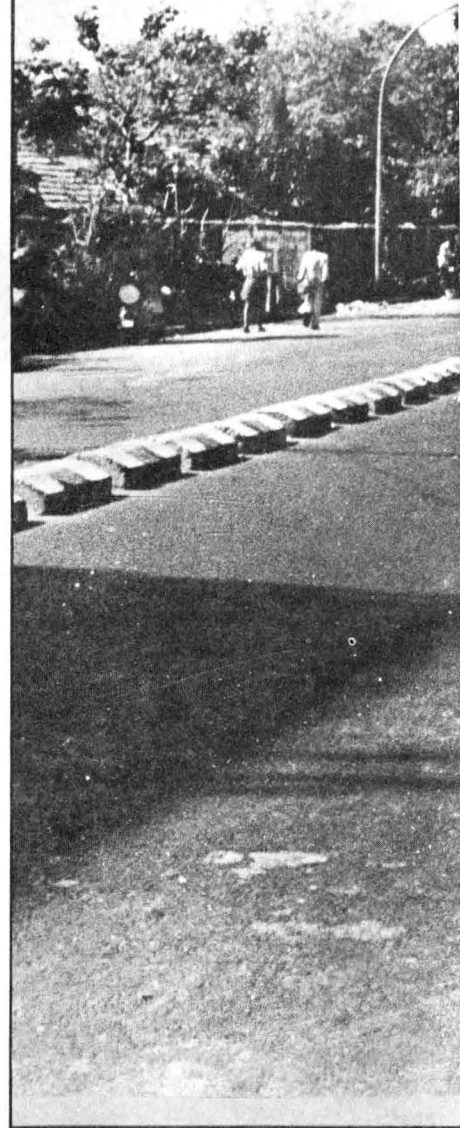
Mastaan, meanwhile, had been pleased by Vardha's skills as an enforcer, and had promoted him up the rungs of his organisation. With Mastaan's backing, Vardha branched out into a little entrepreneurial activity of his own. In 1962, he opened a garage at Koliwada. A few years later, the police suspected him of involvement in a gangland killing, and an official investigation was begun. No charges could, however, be substantiated and no witnesses came forward to talk — a pattern that was to recur throughout Vardha's career.

By the early '70s, Mastaan's gang ran most of the smuggling in Bombay, and Vardha had risen to become Mastaan's only Hindu caporegime. His personal hold over Matunga had grown to the extent that he controlled the entire hooch trade and no criminal could function in that area without

acknowledging Vardha's supremacy.

Then came the great smuggling scare of 1974. Vardha was arrested under MISA along with Mastaan, Bakhia, Yusuf Patel, Karim Lala and dozens of others. In those days, he was still not well-known enough for his arrest to earn a separate mention in the papers. His name was lumped along with the other members of the Mastaan gang who had been detained.

Vardha spent 33 months in jail. By the time the expensive lawyers hired





King of Matunga: Vardha tours the streets of his kingdom with entourage in tow.

by Mastaan had got around to challenging the detention orders, the Emergency was declared and half the Opposition joined the smugglers in their cells.

When, in 1977, Mrs Gandhi was defeated and the *détenus* released, Vardha was taken aback to find that Mastaan intended to reform. The old don was determined to go legit and to become a public figure. To do that, he felt that he had to publicly renounce his criminal ways.

It was the end of one phase in

Vardha's career. He was now on his own. And in April 1977, nobody could have guessed that eight years later, a 'reformed' Mastaan would be no closer to earning the respectability he so desperately desired. While Vardha, who would re-embrace crime with a vengeance, would be a respected public figure!

THE MASTAAN GANG had worked on a sound communal principle. The don picked up

alienated, poor youths from Bombay's Muslim area and initiated them into smuggling. Frustrated by their failure to find a steady job and grateful to their benefactor, these youths became Mastaan's most dedicated followers. Left to reconstruct an empire of his own, Vardha tried a similar ethnic formula. Except that the boys he picked up were all hungry, young Tamilians from the streets of Bombay.

One of them, Parmeswaran, who rose to be caporegime in the new

organisation, was a beggar outside the Churchgate commuter train terminus. Soma and Tillu were two unemployed youths, eager to earn a steady living. When Vardha thought that a job required expertise, he simply bought out a rival. Thomas Kurien (better known as Khajabhai) operated his own bootlegging stills till Vardhabhai took over his organisation and made him a senior lieutenant in his mob.

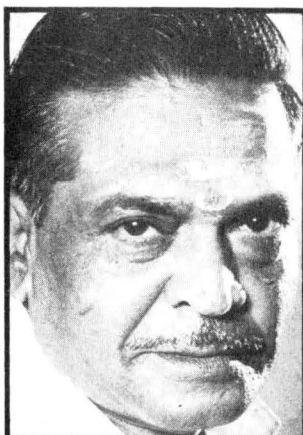
In the Mastaan tradition, Vardhabhai avoided soiling his own hands with the daily filth of the criminal world. His underlings did the dirty work. Khaja took over the transportation of liquor. Soma directed smuggling operations. Tillu handled enforcement, and organised violence. Parmeswaran administered a slum at Antop Hill.

Pleased with Khaja's work, Vardha bought him a restaurant at Antop Hill. Khaja named it Janith after his wife and the gang shifted its headquarters to its permit room. Close by, in the marshy area beyond the sprawling Central Government quarters, on little islands, linked by wooden planks, a network of 200 hooch distilleries worked night and day. Smuggling continued to flourish. Vardha's old contacts at the docks ran a profitable thieving operation for him. Protection money was extorted from shops in the area. Robbers contributed to Vardha's coffers as tribute.

The money just kept pouring in. Khajabhai, who had started out as a *chowkidar* in Antop Hill, bought himself a rubber plantation in Kerala and a string of video parlours. Vardha himself started a film distribution company in Madras and invested in the *benami* ownership of several Bombay hotels.

Soon, all of the area's transit camps, government housing, shopping precincts, a colony of Sikh truck and taxi drivers, neat South Indian middle class houses, and rapidly mushrooming slums, became part of Vardha's empire. The residents were outraged but powerless. Vardha had taken the elementary precaution of buying up the local police force.

Periodically, he would drop in at the Matunga police station, stroll into the offices of the Deputy Commissioner of



BY MID-1982, Vardha controlled Bombay. Dock thieving, bootlegging, extortion, smuggling — his activities multiplied. Nobody in the police force had the guts to take him on.

Police, and settle down for a chat. Nobody arrested him. Nobody threw him out. They treated him with respect and courtesies.

And then, Vardha realised how easy it was to operate in Bombay if you just paid the right people the right amounts.

BY MID-1982, Vardha had expanded his activities beyond Matunga. He had emerged as a social worker, political financier and civic celebrity in his own right (see later sections). Nothing or nobody seemed to be able to stop him.

Ironically, at this very time, Vardha ran into a spot of trouble from a quarter he had long taken for granted: the Matunga police station. In June 1982, Y C Pawar, an Indian Police Service officer, was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Police for Bombay's Zone IV — which includes Matunga. Pawar refused to see Vardha, would not accept money, and worst of all, began patrolling the area himself. Trouble seemed certain to follow.

On the early morning of July 28, 1982, the incident that everyone had

been dreading finally took place. At three a m Pawar, accompanied by a driver and a wireless operator, drove round the area on his night rounds, in a police car. A sub-inspector in a jeep preceded Pawar's car.

At the Sion Hospital junction, Pawar's driver noticed a black Chevrolet some 300 metres ahead. "*Saab*," he said in Marathi, "this looks like a liquor car." Intrigued, Pawar asked him to follow the Chevrolet. The driver of the black car noticed the police convoys and pressed his foot on the accelerator. Both Pawar and the sub-inspector in the jeep gave chase.

The driver of the Chevrolet kept blowing his horn, asking apparently for assistance from some unseen accomplices as the chase continued. Meanwhile, the police jeep found that it could not keep up and Pawar was left to follow the Chevrolet on his own. Suddenly, two taxis appeared and attempted to block the way, but Pawar's driver swerved and bypassed them. Next, a man on a scooter arrived and began throwing stones at the police car. A large stone hit the front door but Pawar instructed his driver to keep going.

Finally, after 40 minutes, a police wireless vehicle, alerted by Pawar's radio operator, arrived on the scene. Together, the two police cars forced the Chevrolet to a halt and arrested its occupants. Inquiries revealed that the car belonged to Khaja and was under Vardha's protection. Allegedly Pawar — in a scene right out of *Ardh Satya* — then beat up the driver and the other occupants of the car.

Next, he sent for Khajabhai, handcuffed him and paraded him through his kingdom, making him identify all the hooch *bhattis*. This was unparalleled humiliation. Beating up Vardha's men was one thing — but disgracing Khajabhai in public was unheard of. What standing would Vardha have now?

Obviously, Vardha's gang had to 'get' Pawar — but how? It is symptomatic of the brazenness of the new underworld that rather than issuing a contract on Pawar's life, Vardha decided to use the courts. Khaja, Monica Edwards (the wife of the driver of the Chevrolet) and James Joseph, manager

of the Janith restaurant (and allegedly, the stone-thrower on the scooter) filed writ petitions in the High Court claiming that Khaja, Edwards and Joseph had been dragged out of their houses, taken to the police station, and beaten up by Pawar. Celebrated lawyer-MP Ram Jethmalani appeared for Vardha's men.

The High Court passed orders for the lower courts to issue process against Pawar. Now, the DCP would have to defend himself in court like a common criminal — the roles had been neatly reversed.

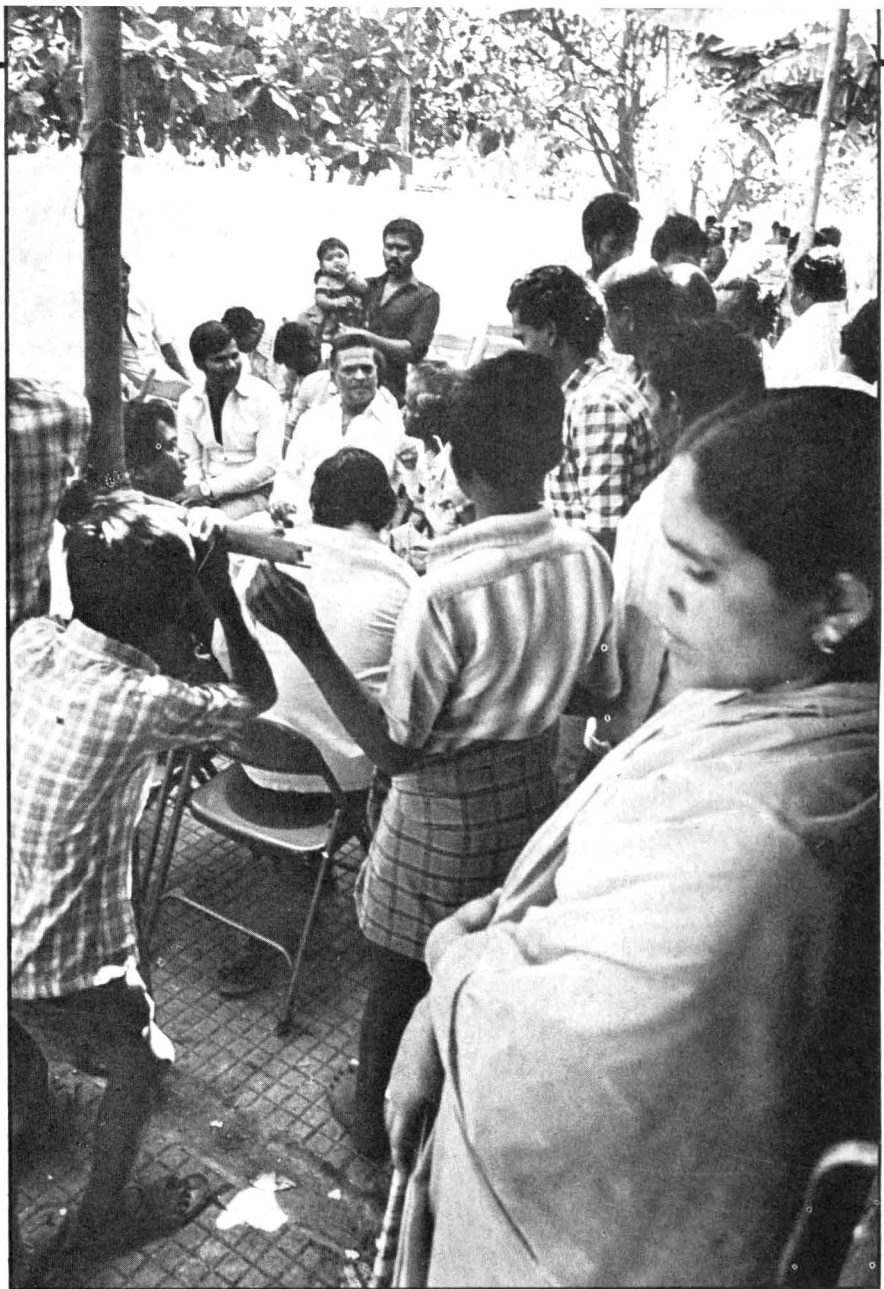
Unfortunately for Vardha, Pawar did not succumb to this pressure. Instead, he launched a crackdown on all of Vardha's activities. Within a year, he had destroyed every one of Vardha's *bhattis* and put an end to all illicit distillation of liquor in Zone IV. Vardha reacted by using political pressure to have Pawar transferred. This move backfired when Julio Ribeiro, Bombay's Police Commissioner, threw his weight behind Pawar.

Foiled, Vardha turned once again to the law. Pawar was summoned regularly to court and made to stand in the dock while a courtroom packed with Vardha's *goondas* heckled and jeered at him. The situation gradually became intolerable for Pawar. He ended up spending hours in court, paid out a small fortune in legal fees and became depressed and demoralised.

In early 1985, two inspectors from the Antop Hill police station went to see Vardha. They proposed a deal. If Vardha would have the cases withdrawn, then Pawar would get himself transferred. Vardha was leery. Pawar, he pointed out, was due for a transfer anyhow. At this, the inspectors suddenly changed their tune and began abusing Pawar.

The incident would have ended there had somebody not taped the entire conversation and sent copies of the tape to newspapers. When journalists heard the tape, they began investigating the nexus between Vardha and the police, and Commissioner Ribeiro suspended the two inspectors (see box).

Who had sent the tape? Vardha was the obvious candidate. By showing the



The Godfather holds court: Vardha is always accessible to favour-seekers.

press how police inspectors grovelled before him (one of them even asked for a bottle of Scotch) he was able to discredit the police force and demonstrate his own power. By the end of March 1985, his men were claiming that many such conversations had been taped and that if any police officer attempted to touch Vardha, then a recording showing how the officer had come asking for money would be released.

It was an effective ploy. The police were shown up. Pawar was further demoralised. The inspectors were suspended and disgraced. And Vardha came across as machiavellian and omnipotent.

STRONG AS VARDHA'S links with the police are, his links with the bureaucracy and politicians are even stronger. In Bombay's amoral, lawless environment, many minor bureaucrats have to go to him for protection and assistance. In that sense, he offers more security than the police.

Vardha recalls how some years ago, G R Khairnar, the Kurla Ward Officer incurred the wrath of some powerful interests whose property he had destroyed. Fearing retaliation, he asked to see Vardha. "*Hum kaunsa governor hai?*" Vardha asked with deliberate self-deprecation, but went to see him all the same. Khairnar explained the problem and requested protection.

Ever the helpful Godfather, Vardha told him to stop worrying and assigned two bodyguards to Khairnar.

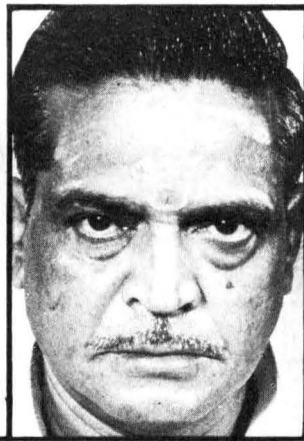
Later, claims Vardha, Khairnar invited him to his Shivaji Park residence and asked for another favour. Would Vardha withdraw the cases against Pawar? Khairnar, it transpired, was related to Pawar and had a vested interest in the matter. Vardha put on his most humble manner. "*Dekho saab*," he said. "I have not filed the cases. It is not for me to withdraw them."

A few months ago, Khairnar and Vardha met again. The Ward Officer had destroyed some unauthorised shrines, and local residents begged Vardha to intervene. According to Khairnar, a showdown resulted between the two men — a story Vardha will not confirm. All he will say, in his most dismissive manner is, "He is a government servant. He does what he is told."

The Maharashtra government's Department of Home Affairs, which controls the police, is also amenable to Vardha's brand of persuasion. When the Commissioner revoked the licence for Khaja's restaurant, the Department intervened to have it re-issued. Similarly, the Department has been only too willing to grant revolver and loudspeaker licences to Tillu. Last year, the Home Secretary even went so far as to suggest to Ribeiro that he consider transferring Pawar: a tribute, once again, to Vardha's connections.

MOST INTRIGUING of all are Vardha's political connections. All underworld figures have political ambitions, but most politicians steer clear of them. When Akbar Ahmed attended Haji Mastaan's daughter's wedding, it became a major political scandal, and though Mastaan formed his own party in late 1984, he made a fool of himself after his candidates lost their deposits in the Assembly elections.

Vardha, on the other hand, has no trouble in getting politicians to grace his functions. V Subramaniam, the former finance minister of Maharashtra, cut the ribbon when Vardha donated ambulances to charity. (One such ambulance was later involved in smug-



IT WAS VARDHA
who organised Rajiv
Gandhi's 1983
padayatra through
Dharavi. "The
padayatra could
never have taken
place without me,"
he says proudly.

gling Rs 46 lakh worth of contraband.) And one of Vardha's proudest possessions is a colour photograph of himself with Amitabh Bachchan, taken at one of his Ganapati celebrations.

During Rajiv Gandhi's 1983 *padayatra* through Dharavi, the Congress (I) turned to Vardha after it heard that Datta Samant was planning to disrupt the procession. Says Vardha proudly: "The *padayatra* could never have taken place without me." Vardha was called in to arbitrate a dispute during the *padayatra*: both the BRCC and the Youth Congress wanted their own *pandals* to come first. Vardha's solution was simple — he erected his own *pandal* first.

Of late, however, Vardha has got a little disillusioned with the Congress (I). "I'm not a party man; I support individuals," he says piously. The disenchantment with the Congress can perhaps be traced back to a squabble with his old associate, V Subramaniam. "I supported him in the last election but he did not work and people complained to me," Vardha explains. "So this time, in the Assembly elections, I

supported Rustom Tirandaz of the BJP against Subramaniam." Despite Vardha's support, Tirandaz lost. "But," says Vardha defensively, "he lost by a very narrow margin. After all," he adds without any trace of irony, "Subramaniam had money and police support."

The other candidates Vardha has supported tend to be from the Congress (I). In the Lok Sabha election, he supported Gurudas Kamat and Sharad Dighe. In the Assembly election, he supported a Parsi from South Bombay: Marzban Patrawala. He says that he will keep a low profile during the elections to the Bombay Municipal Corporation but last month, he willingly inaugurated the campaign office of a Shiv Sena candidate. Vardha's Shiv Sena links are curious. He is proud to be a Tamil in Maharashtra so the Sena should hate him and yet he has considerable support among Shiv Sena politicians.

It is not clear why politicians have no hesitation in sharing a platform with Vardha. In March 1985, when he organised a rally to put forward the case of the Lankan Tamils at Delhi's Boat Club, he claims that he got H N Bahuguna to address it. Over 30 Tamil Nadu MLAs also attended the rally, and many of them went to see the Prime Minister to present Vardha's memorandum on Sri Lanka.

One explanation for Vardha's surprising political clout is that standards in public life have dropped so completely that a mafioso is regarded as being not much worse than the average politician. Even so, it seems strange to see Members of Parliament openly seeking the support of the man the Police Commissioner of Bombay describes as 'the king of organised crime in the city'.

IF N T RAMA RAO had been born and brought up in Bombay, he would probably have looked like Varadarajan Mudaliar. Alternatively, if Varadarajan Mudaliar had been an actor, he could probably have played himself in *Ardh Satya*.

The *Ardh Satya* parallel is a source of constant annoyance to Vardha. He doesn't mind people telling him that



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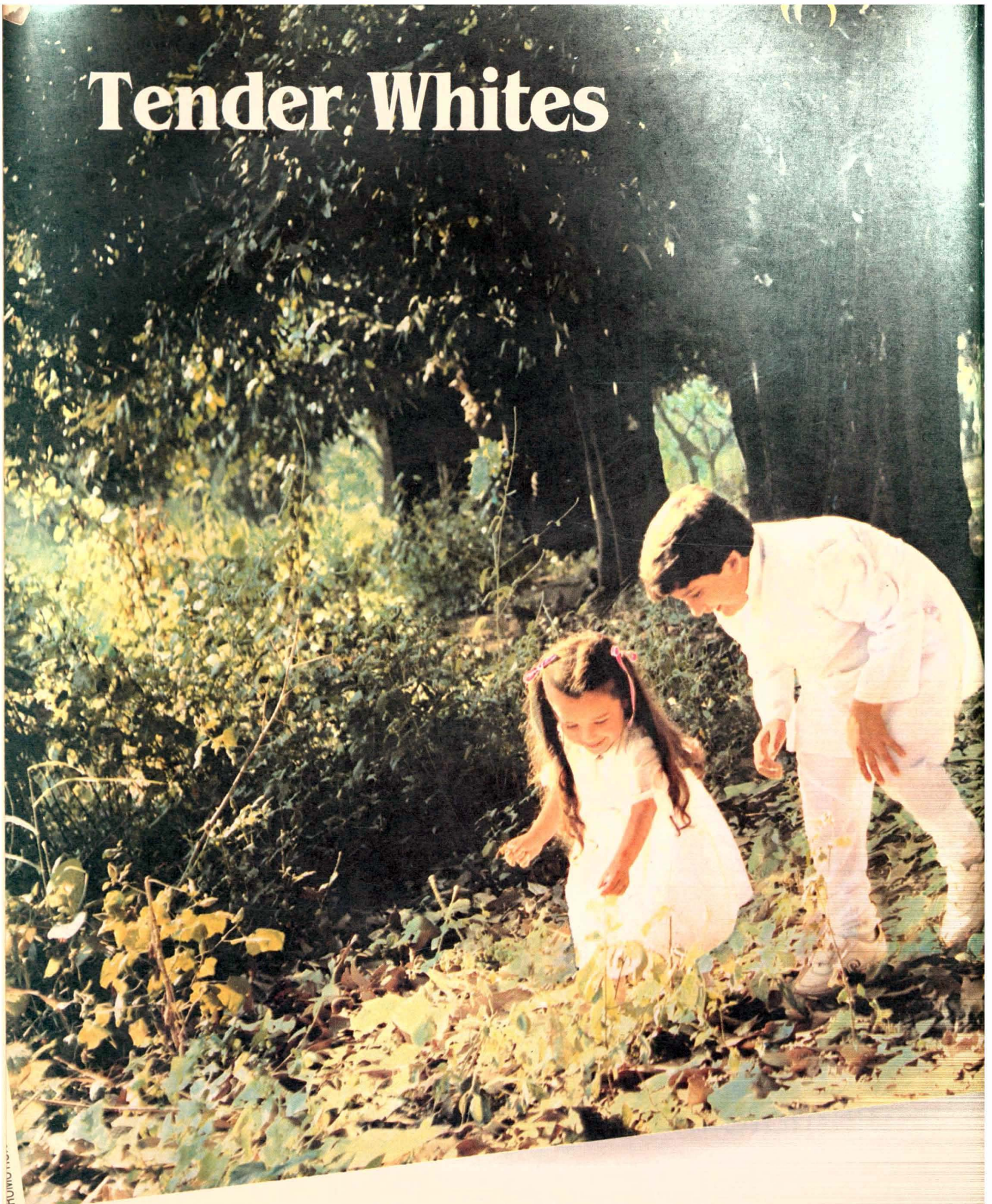
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Don-at-large: this woman wanted Vardha's help — she is one of many.

he looks like NTR: dark, paunchy and intense. But he is getting a little tired of everyone pointing out that he's just like Rama Shetty. "*Ardh satya, aakha satya, hum ko kuchh maloom nahin. Kya hai yeh saab?*" he snaps in his harsh Bombay Hindi, sounding, despite himself, exactly like Rama Shetty. "This is a free country, *saab*. People can write what they like. I have not even seen this *Ardh Satya* film."

Vardha's living-room at Nagda Mansion is distinguished by the kind of taste that characterised Rama Shetty. A TV set sits in a showcase along with hideous silver and glass objects. The don himself sits on a rexine sofa, facing the balcony where shirts hang out to dry, blocking the sunlight. His living-room patter is pious. "I believe in five things for a good life," he announces. "Good health, domesticity and charity." Nobody in the room dares point out to Vardha that he has named only three things, not five. In any case, the forgotten two things probably have to do with a bizarre personal puritanism. Despite being the hooch king of Bombay, Vardha does not drink. He merely smokes the odd cigarette from a fresh pack of State Express, perhaps.

But even that is an aberration — left to himself, he says, he'd prefer Four Square. ("One has to get used to foreign cigarettes however," he explains.) Vardha also does not womanise. In fact, he recently expelled Parmeswaran, his caporegime, for entering a prostitution racket.

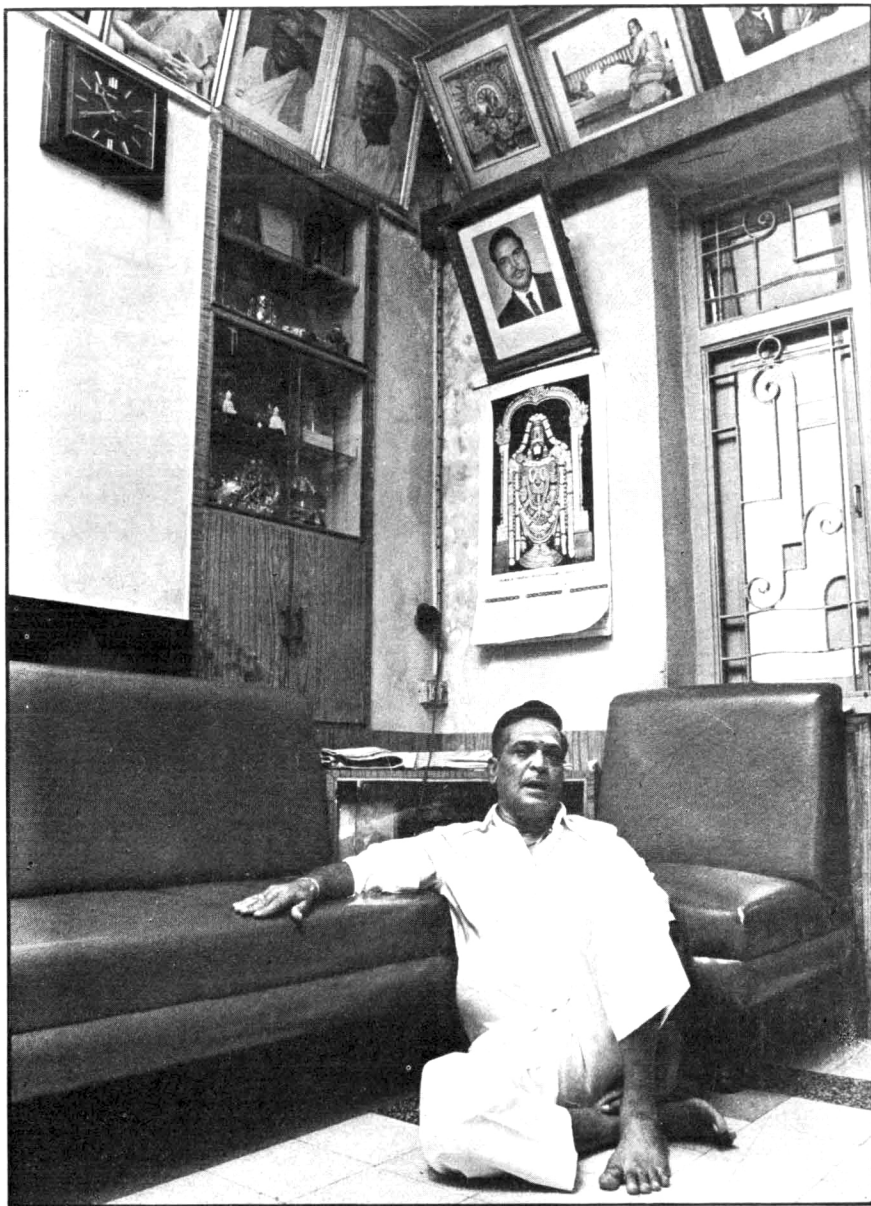
Prominent in Vardha's living-room is a photograph of a round-faced woman — his wife of several decades. There are others of the two of them together — one of them with their seven children and another of Vardha lying on a sofa while his wife squats submissively on the ground. Vardha likes to think of himself as a family man. A grand-daughter plays on his lap while his sons keep poking their heads into the living-room. With paternal pride, Vardha offers a run-down of their activities. The oldest handles his finances, another manufactures dies, a third is about to join catering college, and so on. Then, with an unexpected flash of humour, Vardha reveals that his second son plays the villain in South Indian films.

Vardha's perverse puritanism, and his family man image go well with his ostentatious religiousness. Every year,

for the last 29 years, he has organised public celebrations during the Ganesh festival. As his resources have increased, so has the scale of the festivities. Now, he erects a huge Ganesh statue in Matunga, feeds thousands for the 11 days of the festival, hosts VIPs who come to pay their combined respects to the don and the deity and, finally, leads a procession to sea to immerse his idol. The police go along with all this. Senior officers personally direct traffic away from Vardha's processions and loudspeaker licences are freely issued. For the last 21 years, Vardha has also fed poor Muslims at the Central Bombay *dargah* where he claims he first met Mastaan.

This piousness leads him to proclaim his faith in 'social work'. Sitting cross-legged in his favourite spot on the floor between the two sofas in his living-room, Vardha holds forth: "I believe in doing service. *Kuchh na kuchh do. Paisa ho to kuchh achha kaam karna chahiye.*" Gesticulating dramatically, he warms to his theme: "*Lekin social work aur politics ko milne ka nahin.*"

Despite the non-political protestations, there are several political



Vardha at home: pious protestations and a 'family man' image.

photographs on his fading green walls. First comes a picture of MGR: "He came to my daughter's wedding; her husband is a member of his AIADMK." Next comes a framed Indira Gandhi poster: "She was the leader of 18 crore people," he says, getting the population of India wrong. A black and white picture of Kamaraj moves Vardha to raptures: "He was a great man, even though he studied only to the seventh standard. He remained unmarried to serve the nation."

Vardha's interest in Tamil Nadu politics is an enduring one. He founded the Tamilar Peravai for Bombay's Tamils in 1982 and can count on the

support of dozens of AIADMK legislators. Frequently he takes it upon himself to propound solutions to the problems of the Tamils.

The memorandum his men presented to the Prime Minister contained one such solution. As Vardha saw it, everything was quite simple. All Rajiv Gandhi had to do was march across the waters, attack the hapless Lankans and annex Sri Lanka. Moreover, added the memorandum, there was a historical precedent for this smash-and-grab. "Be like Lord Rama," it exhorted the Prime Minister, "and make Sri Lanka a part of India again." This strange combination of religion and brute

force characterises Vardha's politics, as it does his other activities.

On the record, however, Vardha denies using force. Secure in the knowledge that he has left behind no proof and that he has bought off everybody, he dismisses all the allegations made against him. "Nobody can point a finger at me," he insists with pious smugness.

The specific charges are shrugged off. The campaign against Pawar: "I've never met him."

The cases against the DCP: "Others have filed them, not me."

His links with Haji Mastan: "I know him because he's a social worker."

He denies all knowledge of the tapes containing his conversation with Inspectors Deshmukh and Samson. "I don't know anything," he says blandly.

But surely, that's his voice on the tape? "No, an actor must have mimicked me," he says, deadpan.

Isn't this somewhat far-fetched? "No, not at all. You know, there are people like Mahesh Kumar and party — professional mimics."

Did he ever meet Samson and Deshmukh, then? "No. No such meeting ever took place at my house."

How did the tapes get to the press? "Who knows?" he says. "There must have been a reporter here the day these inspectors came to see me. He must have taped the conversation."

So, a meeting *did* take place then? Vardha has clearly contradicted himself in the space of two minutes.

He is unafraid by the contradiction. He shrugs off all further questions, not really caring what the world chooses to believe. The phone is ringing and he has work to do.

"Yes," he barks into the receiver. "Humko kabhi time hota hi nahin," he drawls. "Lekin, aajao. You come." The call over, he smiles smugly. "It is election time," he explains. "People will keep calling me. Kya karen?"

The routine continues. The phone keeps ringing. The supplicants fall at his feet. The durbar fills up. The requests for assistance keep pouring in. Strangers beg for money.

Vardha doesn't mind. He's used to all this. After all, he's Godfather of Bombay, and a man has responsibilities to his people.

CENTRE OF A STORM

Vardha has bought off many of Bombay's police officers. **SHEELA BARSE** exposes the links between the don and the police.

WHEN THE FAMOUS cassette tapes containing the conversation between Vardha and two police inspectors reached the press, reporters rushed to Julio Ribeiro. Ribeiro is not only the most popular Commissioner of Police that Bombay has had for many years, but he is also one of the most honest policemen in the country. The reporters asked Ribeiro what he made of the tapes. The Commissioner said he was shocked and was suspending Deshmukh and Samson, the two inspectors who had met Vardha. He was asked if he intended to launch an investigation into Vardha's links with his force. No, said Ribeiro. Did he plan to set up a special task force to root out corruption in the Bombay police? No, again. Why was this? Well, said Ribeiro, the nexus between police and crime is as old as the hills. And in any case, he added, the corruption was too deeply rooted for any such task force to be successful.

The fact that as honest an officer as Ribeiro should plead helplessness in the face of the increasing links between the police and the underworld shows how powerful the mafia has become. Vardha and his associates can do pretty much what they like without any fear of police interference. Worse still, police officers grovel before Vardha, partake of his hospitality and protect his interests. Even honest officers like DCP Pawar and Ribeiro, who oppose everything Vardha stands for, have no alternative but to negotiate with him on his own terms.

Despite Ribeiro's suspension of Samson and Deshmukh, it seems clear that the two officers went to see Vardha at Pawar's suggestion. And it also seems clear that Ribeiro himself has been a party to negotiations with Vardha.

The friendship between Ribeiro and

Sheela Barse has written extensively about the Bombay police for several years. She is a frequent Imprint contributor.

Pawar dates back to 1980 when Ribeiro was appointed DIG (Railways). Ribeiro had been Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime) in Bombay and was expected to be appointed the next Bombay Police Commissioner. His transfer to the railways was, therefore, a near-demotion and moreover, he was not even given an office to sit in for weeks. Pawar was then Superintendent of Police (Railways) and offered his office and desk to Ribeiro.

Ribeiro did not forget the gesture and when he was finally appointed Bombay's Police Commissioner in February 1982, he appealed to Pawar to come over to the Bombay Police. Pawar agreed. Ribeiro appointed him DCP Zone IV and asked for his help in breaking the back of the illicit gambling and liquor trade. Pawar, who is notoriously inflammable, did break the back of the hooch trade and after his clash with Khaja and Tillu, broke a limb of one of the accused as well.

Vardha's men lodged criminal complaints against the DCP under Sections 323, 324 and 326 of the Indian Penal Code, for causing simple and grievous hurt. The latter is a serious charge and an unnerved Pawar turned to his colleagues for help. Unfortunately, his associates see him as a complex, volatile person who has a chip on his shoulder about being a member of the deprived class. They refused to help. That left Pawar with no option but to turn to Ribeiro, who did support him and at least twice sought the intervention of politicians on Pawar's behalf.

When this didn't work, Ribeiro considered sending emissaries to Vardha. P M Sait, ACP (HQ), PI (HQ) Tarte, PI Samson, PI Deshmukh and retired ACP Madhu Gupte met with Ribeiro to discuss options. Eventually, Gupte met Vardha on Ribeiro's behalf, a meeting Vardha refers to in one of the tapes ("Hum CP saab ko bola").

Vardha, apparently, agreed to come and see Ribeiro at his office, but on the Saturday evening when he was due,

sent Khaja, Soma and Tillu in his place. They promised to withdraw the cases once Pawar was transferred. However, since Vardha had not turned up himself, Deshmukh and Samson were sent by Pawar to obtain his personal assurance that he would withdraw the cases.

As the tape reveals, Vardha got them drunk, led them up the garden path, and then exposed them.

Once the tape was made public, Ribeiro was placed in the awkward situation of having to suspend Deshmukh and Samson, while admitting that Pawar had sent them to Vardha.

THE WHOLE SORDID saga of the police and Vardha must however, be viewed in context. As horrifying as the spectacle of senior police officers negotiating with a don may be, these officers are still the good guys in the story; the honest ones. The rest have no need to negotiate with Vardha: they simply do what he tells them to.

A case in point is the Crime Branch Criminal Investigation Department (CB CID) which its officers like to describe as India's Scotland Yard. Far from stamping out crime, the CB CID actually launched its own protection racket in the days when Mr V Wakatkar was the Assistant Commissioner of Police, CB CID. No major gang could continue to function in Bombay if it did not give the CB CID a cut on its earnings. Around this time (about 15 years ago) came the rise to power of most of the city's mafia dons.

The CB CID's other major source of income was recovering stolen property. Generally, the officers would beat up an arrested burglar till he revealed where he had stashed his loot. Then, at night, they would jump into police vehicles, recover the booty — and keep it!

Criminals came to expect CB CID officers to do this. In his tape-recorded confessions, Billa, the notorious rapist, robber and murderer, shares a knowing

COVER STORY

chuckle with the interrogating officers when they question him about the fate of the contents of his suitcase. Billa was carrying over Rs 42,000 plus two or three items of gold jewellery when the CB CID arrested him in 1978. This treasure neither turned up in court, nor was returned to its rightful owners.

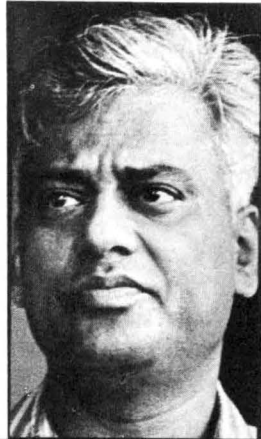
After Wakatkar retired and Ranbir Lekha replaced him, business went on as usual. Social workers in Vardha's area claim that Lekha, ACP Shringarpure (now promoted to DCP), PI Sahasrabudhe, PI Wagle, PI Godbole, PI Samson, and several others frequently enjoyed Vardha's hospitality and drank his Scotch. PI Tarte, who was Senior Inspector in the Vigilance Branch for a year or two, allegedly continued to get his share of the *hafka* collected by his old department—the CB CID.

IT IS POSSIBLE to claim that these allegations emanate from interested parties. However, it is impossible to deny that the CB CID made few arrests in Vardha's jurisdiction. If they did have to arrest somebody in his fiefdom, they always sought his permission. Last year, when the police heard that contract killer Rajan Nair was hiding out in Vardha's area, they had to ask Vardha to produce the wanted man.

The press rarely examined the working of the CB CID. Crime reporters in the Police HQ Press Room were kept happy by CB CID officers and churned out highly laudatory reports of the 'excellent' detection work of these officers. Phrases like 'the Scotland Yard of the Bombay Police' were slipped into reports.

Nobody reported that CB CID officers received Vardha's largesse. Or that Vardha routinely paid off all the policemen he met. Anyone, from a constable in need of money for medical treatment, to an ACP who had to get his daughter married, could approach Vardha. When Ranbir Lekha's daughter got married, there was a strong rumour that Vardha had treated the wedding as a family affair.

The police top brass also turned a blind eye to the workings of the CB CID. Only one officer turned the screws on corrupt inspectors — R D Tyagi. Unfortunately, he was the Addi-



IT WAS DCP Pawar who along with Commissioner Ribeiro opened negotiations with Vardha. The two of them sent several emissaries to the don to plead for a withdrawal of the cases.

tional CP (Crime) for barely five-and-a-half months. Other senior officers seemed unaware of what was going on. When Ribeiro took over as Commissioner, he announced that he was going to shake up the force. He chose to do this by transferring out CB CID officers and all of them managed to get the best and most lucrative police stations: Colaba, Bandra, Santa Cruz, L T Marg, and the like. For instance, PI Tarte, who still has the CP's ear, has always managed the most lucrative postings: Vigilance Branch, L T Marg police station, CB CID and HQ. Before Tarte was posted to HQ, he was in the Bombay Port branch of the CB CID — it is well known that Vardha's major criminal operations are in the docks.

WITHIN the police force, there is much speculation about the manner in which Ribeiro decides who to transfer and where. He does not consult his senior colleagues (the Additional CP or the DCP at HQ) about promotions and postings as his predecessors used to and insists on

making the decisions himself. It seems that he relies only on the opinion of former CB CID ACP Madhu Gupte and Inspector Tarte.

This may be significant because frequently, Ribeiro's decisions have seemed misguided or unwise. For instance, he transferred Inspector Kumbhar of the Antop Hill police station even though Kumbhar was DCP Pawar's most dependable and trusted subordinate. It was Kumbhar who had rid Antop Hill of Khaja's nefarious activities and Pawar was counting on him to ensure that Khaja would not rise again. Much to Pawar's surprise, his friend Ribeiro decided to transfer Kumbhar without even asking his advice. Pawar, Kumbhar and the entire police department learned of the transfer only from the police notice.

Pawar and Ribeiro clashed over the transfer — a reference is made to this clash on Vardha's tape — and Kumbhar's replacement, Samson, had to wait for a day before taking over. Later, Pawar seemed to have revised his opinion of Samson who has won the President's Police Medal, and who would clear the courtroom of Khaja's henchmen whenever Pawar appeared in court. Evidently, however, Samson never forgave Pawar for objecting to his taking Kumbhar's place and on Vardha's tape, he uses obscene language to describe Pawar.

Now, Samson is under suspension and his career hangs in the balance. Ironically, however, he might get off lightly. The police inquiry into the episode has been entrusted to N C Venkatachalam, the Additional Commissioner (Crime), who may be less than keen on pursuing it. Venkatachalam himself features on Vardha's tapes. The don notes approvingly that the Additional Commissioner had brought his family to visit him. Stories to the effect that Venkatachalam and Vardha are friends have been in circulation for some years now. The Additional Commissioner is even supposed to have personally overseen the traffic arrangements during one of Vardha's Ganapati festival celebrations.

Within the police force, there is some dissatisfaction over Ribeiro's role in this affair. As he was involved in the negotiations with Vardha from the beginning, it seems unlikely that Pawar



Trapped in a bind: Ribeiro and Pawar were forced to negotiate with Vardha.

would send Samson and Deshmukh to Vardha without informing him. In that case, was he justified in sacrificing the two inspectors when Vardha released the tapes?

Secondly, was negotiation the only solution? Officers recall that when Ribeiro was hauled up for contempt of court, he got Nani Palkhivala to appear for him. If he had persuaded a legal heavyweight to appear for Pawar, then the DCP would not have panicked when he saw Ram Jethmalani appearing for Vardha's men. A good lawyer could have saved Pawar from the regular court appearances that have sapped his morale.

Thirdly, what kind of inquiry has Ribeiro ordered into the tapes? The Additional C P (Admin) Sudhakar Dev, in whose jurisdiction such an inquiry falls, says he knows nothing about it. And why was the inquiry entrusted to Venkatachalam who features on the tapes himself?

RIBEIRO is expected to be transferred soon. Whether Vardha's hold over the Bombay police force can be broken depends on the new Commissioner. But even he will have his work cut out for him. Not

only is the police corrupt, but politicians and bureaucrats are also on Vardha's pay-roll. It is doubtful if a Police Commissioner on his own can do very much as long as Vardha's influence remains this strong.

Last month, however, there were some encouraging signs. B G Deshmukh, the newly appointed Chief Secretary of Maharashtra, suddenly turned up at the Antop Hill police station and asked an inspector to accompany him to Khaja's Janith restaurant. Deshmukh found that the bar was serving liquor outside of normal licencing hours and was within 80 metres of a nearby church. When the police department had revoked Janith's licence on these grounds, the Home Department had intervened to restore it. Deshmukh is now expected to overrule the Home Department and cancel Khaja's licence.

There was also talk of a CBI inquiry into the nexus between the Bombay police and the underworld. Should this come about, then some interesting questions will be raised.

- 1) What, for instance, will be the CBI's charter?
- 2) Who will identify the underworld

of Bombay for the CBI team?

3) Even if they succeed in listing the underworld characters, are they to investigate links at the PI level?

4) Will the CBI be allowed to extend the scope of its inquiry if investigations lead them to politicians and bureaucrats, including those who are pressing for the inquiry?

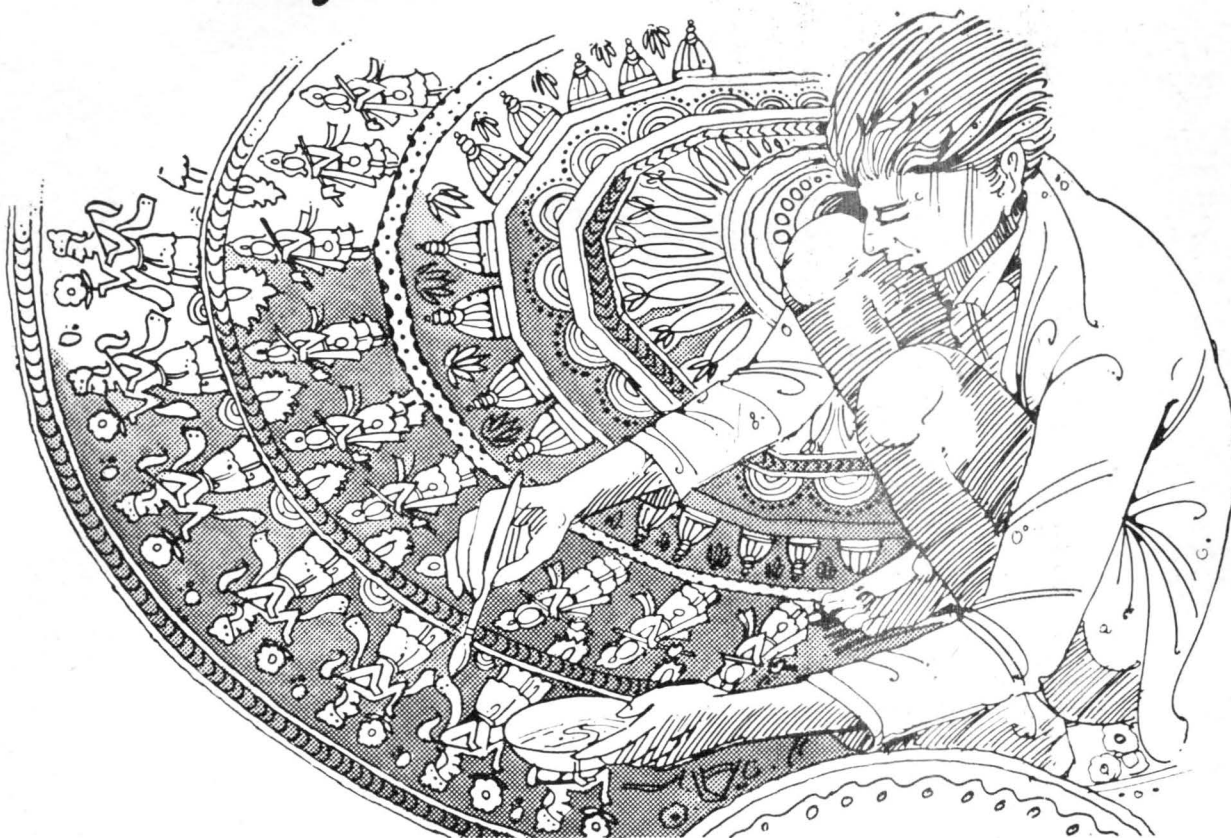
5) Since the CBI can look into a state matter only with the consent of the state, will the Maharashtra government undertake not to halt the investigation in case it implicates important politicians?

6) Will the CBI guarantee protection to those officials who come forward to talk?

There are precedents for such an investigation: The Knapp Commission in New York; Operation Countryman in Scotland Yard. What is lacking however, is the will to launch such an inquiry. Individual police officers alone cannot tackle Vardha. If any attempt to break Vardha's hold on the police force is to succeed, then it must be backed by senior policemen, bureaucrats, and politicians.

Given Vardha's connections, that seems unlikely. ♦

Atul blends chemistry with an ancient art



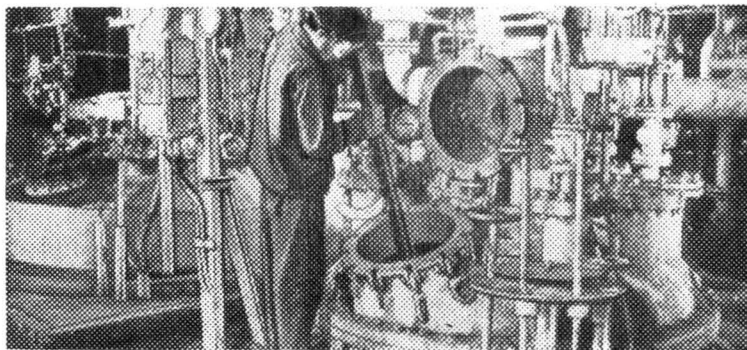
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BUST!

The glamour is fading. Some of the most famous overseas millionaires are in financial trouble.

THE SAGA of Raj Sethia — the biggest bankrupt in British history — has received wide publicity. Much has also been heard about the methods Sethia employed to build his empire: persuading bankers to lend him millions of pounds without providing sufficient collateral or security.

Relatively unpublicised, however, is the fact that many other expatriate Asians have also got rich using Sethia's methods. Already, one empire has crumbled after the Bank of England started asking questions about its borrowings. Another empire is at the centre of a media storm and its borrowings have also come under close scrutiny.

In this special report, *Imprint* examines the controversies surrounding two flamboyant expatriate Asian millionaires: Mahmud Sipra and Abdul Shamji. Both Sipra and Shamji were clients of the now notorious Johnson Mathey Bankers (JMB) corporation.

Last October, the Bank of England was perturbed by reports that JMB had loaned out hundreds of millions of pounds without asking for adequate security. Moreover, a large proportion of the borrowers were businessmen of Asian origin. One of them, Raj Sethia, had already gone bust, owing JMB millions of pounds.



Raj Sethia in police custody in New Delhi.

The Bank's auditors examined JMB's books and came to some disturbing conclusions: at least £ 200 million would probably have to be written off as bad debts. The auditors also combed through the books of one of JMB's biggest borrowers: Mahmud Sipra.

The Bank decided to take over JMB itself to prevent its collapse. Sipra's accounts were frozen and his

companies promptly went into receivership. JMB demanded immediate repayment, bounced Sipra's cheques and saw his empire crumble.

As the city of London recovered from the shock of the Sethia and Sipra collapse, speculation over the identities of JMB's other Asian borrowers mounted. The Bank of England would not provide any names but it took the unusual step of calling in the Fraud Squad to investigate the manner in which JMB executives agreed to lend out millions.

Two months ago, the *Observer* revealed that Abdul Shamji had borrowed between £ 18-20 million from JMB. Shamji, the *Observer* disclosed, had other borrowings too, including several million pounds from the Punjab National Bank, one of the banks involved in the Sethia collapse. As the *Observer* hammered away at his reputation, suggesting that his

empire was perilously over-extended, Shamji broke a media silence.

So did two other expatriate millionaires. Nirmal Sethia, the richest of the Sethia brothers, who is upset by reports linking him with his brother Raj. And Swraj Paul, the best-known expatriate, who has been keeping a low profile recently, talked about his place in the Gandhi circle.

DECLINE AND FALL

Mahmud Sipra's empire has suddenly crumbled.

THE RISE and apparent fall of Mahmud Sipra, sometime shipping magnate, international commodities dealer, would-be movie mogul and aspiring actor, must be one of the most amazing sagas in the world of high finance. Only a year ago, the Sipra story seemed like a fairy-tale come true. Its protagonist straddled continents, spending millions, chasing actresses and making headlines. But today, defeated and increasingly desperate, he hides out in New York, facing imminent ruin and threatening bitter vengeance.

Mahmud Sipra hit the international scene in 1982, claiming to be a large ship-owner, and a major commodities trader. He had the accessories that went with those claims: plush offices on London's Brook Street and New York's Madison Avenue, a town house off London's Park Lane, a country estate in Connecticut, a private plane and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of ready cash. He threw grand parties on his own ships, owned racehorses and had his cologne (*Arrogance*) made specially for him in Switzerland.

The following year, he became a media figure. He first hit the headlines in the film trade press (*Variety*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Screen International* and the like) when he came to the rescue of *The Jigsaw Man*, a British thriller starring Michael Caine and Laurence Olivier. Production had stalled for lack of funds when Sipra stepped in and injected over £2 million. With the British film industry in decline, anybody who rescued a film became newsworthy at once. Sipra followed up this early publicity by escorting starlet Susan George to various London night spots and thus made it to the gossip columns as well.

His fame spread to London's 'ethnic' press when *Asian Post* featured him on its cover and called him 'the

new Ravi Tikoo'. Sipra obviously liked the publicity: he then proceeded to buy *Asian Post* and arranged for it to also feature on its cover Salma Agha, the Hindi film actress to whom he had announced his engagement. The Salma Agha connection ensured that Sipra became the staple of the Bombay film magazines as well. By the second half of 1983, most of the mainstream Indian press was curious about this expatriate Pakistani millionaire, and stories about Sipra appeared in *India Today*, *Society*, *The Sunday Observer*, *The Telegraph*, *Gentleman and Imprint*.

At this stage, the Sipra bandwagon arrived in India and parked itself at Bombay's SeaRock Hotel. Sipra lived in grand style (his entourage took over three suites and ten rooms in the hotel), but spoke only vaguely about his business activities. His real interest was films. He announced a multi-star cast international production called *Pawn To King Three* (starring Omar Sharif, Christopher Lee and, of course, Salma), and decided that he was also keen on producing two Hindi films. His mogul-like aspirations were put into sharper focus by the revelation that he intended to star in *Pawn To King Three* himself, would also act in one of the Hindi films and would probably direct the other one. Any scepticism about such starry ambitions was silenced by the fact that Sipra seemed to have the money required to act out his fantasies: Christopher Lee, Omar Sharif and director Peter Hunt had been signed up and he had also invested over £1 million in a Michael York-Trevor Howard vehicle called *Bengal Lancers*, to be made in India by Stephen Weeks.

The first cracks in the Sipra legend appeared in 1984 when the Government of India denied him a visa without revealing the grounds for its re-

fusal. Nevertheless, gossip in Delhi had it that Sipra had a strong Pakistani connection and was closely associated with the Zia regime. (He had instructed *Asian Post* not to feature Benazir Bhutto.) There was speculation that he had financed the men involved in 1984's abortive Pakistani coup and had then sold them out to General Zia to win the General's favour. Other sources had it that he was, in fact, a Pakistani Intelligence agent. The film productions were, it was said, an ideal means of smuggling spies into India as 'unit hands', and Sipra enjoyed the kind of access to Indian society that few other Pakistanis could have managed. Such speculation was compounded by suggestions that the Sipra millions came from drug smuggling, Pakistan's major export-oriented growth industry. Sipra, of course, quashed such gossip and expressed dismay and amazement over the rejection of his visa application. Nevertheless, the stories about drug-dealing persisted and the exact state of Sipra's finances began to seem mysterious. While on the one hand, there was the luxurious life-style, there was also the fact that *Asian Post* bills never seemed to be paid in time. Then, the production schedules for *Pawn To King Three* kept being pushed back and finally, there were problems over *Bengal Lancers*. Sipra pulled out of the project claiming that the footage that director Weeks had sent back to London for processing was sloppy and amateurish. As both Weeks and his cameramen are distinguished professionals, this explanation seemed bizarre. A well-publicised row (it even made the *London Times*) ensued and it was revealed that Sipra had intended to act in the film himself, and that his complaints about the quality of the footage had coincided with the denial of an Indian visa to him. Could it be,



Sipra: So that is where all the mystery millions came from.

cynics wondered, that Sipra had lost interest in the project when he realised that he couldn't join the unit on location in India?

Despite such doubts, the Sipra bandwagon rolled on. In the summer of 1984, he turned up at the Cannes Film Festival, rented a yacht, (*The Chantella*) and threw star-studded parties. Now, *Pawn To King Three* (still to go on the floors) was just one of three international productions that Sipra

had planned. To prove his bona fides, he then purchased a film studio in Ireland and tried to entice producers to use its facilities. *The Jigsaw Man* did not do well in America but Sipra seemed unfazed. He told interviewers that he was optimistic about the future and when the staff of *Asian Post* threatened to revolt, he simply fired the editor and closed the magazine.

Next, he turned up in Pakistan and

announced that he was shifting the location of *Bengal Lancers* to that country and retitling it *Khyber Horse*. Predictably, he made the gossip columns there too because of his rumoured involvement with an actress called Barbara Sherrif. By now, the Sipra saga was beginning to have a familiar ring to it: a lavish life-style, grandiose film projects, and romances with actresses in three countries. And while the headlines seemed repetitive, all doubts were silenced by the fact that, despite never seeming to do any work at all, Sipra still had money to throw around. He might have seemed erratic and glamour-struck, but the millions certainly seemed real.

As the millionaire-image was so crucial to Sipra's credibility, it seemed inevitable that the Sipra saga would come to a sorry end when questions finally began to be asked about his finances. In October 1984, the Bank of England reacted to rumours that Johnson Matthey Bankers (JMB) a British merchant bank, was in trouble, by first ordering an audit of its books, and finally by stepping in to rescue it.

The Bank's auditors were dismayed to find that many of JMB's loans had been made to Asian millionaires who did not have the solid assets required to collateralise these loans. JMB's biggest Asian borrower was Mahmud Sipra, and companies associated with the flamboyant movie star-to-be had been advanced in excess of \$ 30 million. The Bank's accountants suggested that the loans had been improperly made, that no sensible banker would have given Sipra so much money. Price Waterhouse, the auditors appointed by the Bank, combed through Sipra's books, discovered that his shipping company was in deep trouble and wondered if he had the assets required to collateralise his borrowing.

The Bank's action caused a run on Sipra's finances. Ship-owners and brokers began legal proceedings to recover the money he owed them and two of his film companies went into receivership. JMB refused to honour cheques issued by Sipra's companies and consequently, his activities ground to a halt: his ships could no longer ply, the lease payment on his Madison Avenue office could not be met, the

THE EXPATRIATES

Khyber Horse crew found that their salary cheques bounced and his commodity trading wound up. Such an action would have seriously hurt a solvent businessman: in Sipra's case, it ruined him.

Sipra reacted by suing JMB and the Bank of England for \$ 300 million and insisting that he would have been able to repay the loans regardless of his lack of visible assets. Further, he alleged that a South African gold cartel, which had shares in JMB, had tried to destroy him. "Someone said this chap has got to be stopped now," he told *Society* magazine. But he did admit that he was in financial trouble. "The shipping market is in deep financial recession. . . Every day one or the other Greek owner goes under. . . They could have been understanding. They could have given me time."

Even this story has a familiar ring to it. In 1983 he told *Imprint* how he had gone bust in 1977 because 'a powerful cartel of ship-owners was worried by my success and tried to

destroy me'.

Sipra's suit has yet to be heard but the Bank of England does not seem unduly worried. In March 1985 it called in the City of London police's Fraud Squad to investigate how the likes of Sipra managed to extract so much money from JMB. Now, there is talk of criminal action against the JMB managers who advanced the loans and stories about bribes and kickbacks.

The collapse of JMB, with estimated bad debts of upto £ 200 million, does at least clear up one mystery: where Sipra's money came from. Nobody disputes that Sipra had some early successes in ship-chartering and commodity trading. *The Financial Times* reported that in 1983, he won one of the largest grain deals on record: to transport one million tons from America to Asia. But these successes should have faded after the shipping recession which hurt every ship-owner in the world. Yet, it was at precisely this time that Sipra chose to jet between continents, running up huge

hotel bills and pouring millions into films that never got made, without actually doing anything to earn these millions.

Now, it transpires that he was, in fact, spending JMB's millions. There was no need for him to worry about the state of his shipping company as long as JMB kept financing his adventures. At the time, nobody was willing to accept that he was spending borrowed money: after all, which bank would advance so many millions to a star-struck Pakistani who bragged about having gone bust once before and who seemed to select hare-brained projects? Sipra too, encouraged the belief that it was all his money and that he had so much of it that \$ 14-20 million meant nothing.

One mystery does remain. What was it about this man that enabled him to charm over \$ 30 million out of a conservative British bank? And having got the money, why did he blow it all up on flighty projects designed to turn him into a movie star? ♦



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WHERE'S SWRAJ?

Swraj Paul is alive and well and living in London.

A YEAR AGO, Swraj Paul was ubiquitous. Whenever Mrs Gandhi went abroad, he would be at her side. When he came to India, he would hold court at the Delhi Taj and arrange his functions at Rashtrapati Bhavan. As his battle to have his shares in Escorts and DCM continued, he would routinely criticise the structure of Indian industry and attack individual industrialists. The key to Paul's power was not just his proximity to Mrs Gandhi, it was also his phenomenal success as an expatriate millionaire in London.

These days much less is heard of Paul. With the exit of R K Dhawan and Pranab Mukherjee his influence in Delhi is thought to have dried up. When Paul does feature in the press, the stories are unfavourable. And with expatriate millionaires all seemingly going bust, Paul's financial success in London has also begun to seem less praiseworthy.

All suggestions that he is under a cloud, that he is not as rich as was made out, or that his influence is at an end are, Paul would like the world to know, entirely unfounded. Sitting in his brand new Caparo House on London's Baker Street, Paul emphasises that much of the speculation is malicious and nonsensical. Unlike other Asian millionaires who have gone bust, he is not a trader and runs a rock-solid financial empire that employs 4,000 people in Britain and 27,000 in India, and includes the largest privately-owned tea company in the world. He does not think that he will have to write off the £ 10 million or so that he invested in DCM and Escorts, and as for the decline in his political fortunes, he claims not to have noticed any decline.

Paul is perhaps keenest to distinguish between his own holdings and those of the likes of Raj Sethia and Mahmud Sipra. His Caparo group, with an annual turnover of £ 200 million, is in industry, not trade, and is well-known



in the engineering world for its shrewd management, its financial muscle and its reputation for always filing its balance sheets on time, unlike other Asian-owned companies. It has recently taken over Fidelity (1984 turnover: £ 43 million), the UK's second largest consumer electronic manufacturing company, and is in the process of constructing a £ 18 million steel mill (with the British Steel Corporation as a 25 per cent partner) that will be the most modern in Europe.

Paul asserts that he never borrows from any Indian bank (unlike the likes of Raj Sethia and Abdul Shamji) and gets all his borrowing facilities from major British banks. Moreover, he has never borrowed from the troubled Johnson Matthey Bank.

He is less voluble about his Indian investments now, than he was a year ago. He has stopped calling Hari Nanda and Bharat Ram names but claims vindication at the hands of the new government: "I had brought to light the sickness of Indian companies and the mismanagement. Now, the government is contemplating measures against sick managements. This is what I had said."

The Bombay High Court judgement against the Life Insurance Corporation obviously came as a surprise but Paul seems confident that the Supreme

Court will overturn it. A few months ago, he took further precautions to safeguard his investment. His lawyers told him that were the courts to rule in favour of Escorts and DCM, he could sue the Punjab National Bank for having misled him and recover his money. Paul served a notice on the bank but seems confident that he will not have to go through with the case.

And what of his political connections? "The dropping of R K Dhawan and Pranab Mukherjee makes no difference to me," he says, "because I have never considered my position as being based on individuals. I am as strong an admirer of the Gandhis as I was earlier and will do anything for them." What about the report that Rajiv refused to meet him? "One paper said I met him, another said I didn't. Let them contradict each other. It is better if people think I'm out. I like to keep a low profile."

He is upset about the reports linking him with the espionage scandal and with interference in India's foreign policy. When *The Times Of India* report about his Sri Lankan efforts appeared, he telexed an angry letter to the paper ("I am shocked and surprised at the irresponsible attitude of a so-called serious newspaper. . ."), which the *Times* never published. He was even angrier about another report that linked an unnamed expatriate businessman with the spy scandal. Obviously, the stories are being systematically leaked—a fact that Paul has come to accept. "I have many friends in India," he says bitterly. So is he out or in? Paul emphasises his high regard for Rajiv but even he will not claim that he shares with Rajiv's men the rapport he had with R K Dhawan and Pranab Mukherjee. This fact alone is enough to dilute his influence. During Mrs Gandhi's reign much of his power came from getting officials and ministers to do his bidding without referring to the Prime Minister. That will not happen now. ♦

SHAMJI UNDER FIRE

Abdul Shamji denies consistent press reports that he's in trouble.

TILL THE START of this year, Abdul Shamji's was the success story of the expatriate Indian community. He rose from a village shopkeeper in Uganda's Gomba district to the controller of one of East Africa's largest industrial groups with interests in automobiles, property, mining and hotels. He lost that empire in 1972, when Idi Amin expelled the Asians. Shamji escaped to London with some money (estimates of how much this was, range between £ 5,000-500,000) and set about creating another fortune.

It took him only 12 years to succeed beyond his wildest expectations. His Gomba group controls Belgrave Holdings plc, a property and engineering company that he turned around; Stonefield, a truck company that he 'rescued' when it went into liquidation; three London theatres: The Garrick, Duchess and Mermaid; a safe deposit chain with three branches; four hotels (The Rathbone in London and three International hotels in Wembley, Birmingham and Leicester); Weymouth American Handbags Ltd; six multi-purpose cargo ships of 3,700 dwt; and various other offshore enterprises. A flattering profile in the February issue of the *Tatler* gushed "Abdul Shamji's assets are worth in excess of £ 125 million." And in August 1984, *South* was as impressed: "In little more than ten years, Shamji has established Gomba as a major trading company with extensive interests in property, manufacturing and shipping. Its turnover is well in excess of \$ 100 million."

This pretty picture was clouded earlier this year when Michael Gillard, the highly regarded star financial writer of the London *Observer*, (and *Private Eye*'s City columnist) suggested that there was less to Shamji's empire than met the eye. Gillard, whose reporting had revealed that Johnson Mathey

Bankers (JMB) had loaned hundreds of millions of pounds without adequate security, linked Shamji's Gomba group to JMB's borrowing.

"Companies associated with Ugandan Asian businessman Abdul Shamji and his Gomba group are understood to rank among the main borrowers from Johnson Mathey Bankers. JMB is estimated to have loaned up to £ 20 million to Shamji-related companies. There is also further exposure on a US jewellery deal," wrote Gillard (along with Lorna Sullivan and Arlen Harris) in the *Observer* on March 3.

It was the *Observer* that first highlighted Mahmud Sipra's connections with JMB and it featured Sipra week after week till his UK companies went into receivership. The paper had suggested (as had most of the British financial press), that most of JMB's dubious loans were made to Asian businessmen. So far, Sipra and Esal's Raj Sethia had been named as beneficiaries of JMB's mystifying largesse. Now, there was another name to add to the list.

The *Observer* made several specific allegations about the financial structure of Shamji's companies and gave him the full Sipra treatment, featuring him every Sunday for four weeks. The allegations were:

1) That JMB had commissioned a valuation of all properties against which it had lent money, and had now imposed floating charges on two Gomba group companies. Gomba's borrowing was so substantial, the *Observer* suggested, that it gave debentures covering effectively all the assets of both Gomba Holdings and Gomba UK on January 9 and 10.

2) That Johnson Mathey Jewelry Corporation sold jewellery to Strongsay, a company associated with Shamji, only to find that Strongsay could not pay the \$ 11.9 million it had promised

to pay. The jewellery is now sealed under court order and Strongsay's stock is frozen.

3) That Shamji's much heralded rescue of Stonefield, the truck company he 'saved' in 1981, has run into trouble. The liquidator has sued Gomba for £ 100,000 because the full price has not yet been paid. And the Scottish Development Agency (SDA) which put £ 5 million into the venture has also sued Gomba on the grounds that rent has not been paid.

4) That Shamji's companies did not file their accounts at Companies House within the stipulated time.

5) That Shamji's bankers included Punjab National Bank which, like JMB, was also involved in the Esal crash.

6) That a company which Gomba controlled, London Leisure and Art Centre (LLAC) faced a winding-up petition because it could not repay a loan of £ 1 million.

7) That the last accounts filed for Gomba UK at Companies House (for the period to December 1982) showed borrowings of £ 14 million of which £ 10 million was repayable within five years. Since then, there has been substantial expenditure.

The allegations were serious and by repeating them again and again, the *Observer* displayed that it was not making them lightly. Shamji has never concealed the fact that his empire owed much to bank funds ("While Britain went into recession, he borrowed," the *Tatler* simpered). What was notable, however, was the *Observer*'s suggestion that he was over-extended, and that his excessive borrowing could not conceal his inability to pay his bills. As Gillard noted snidely, "What has perplexed observers is why LLAC failed to pay £ 1 million and so avoid the embarrassment of a winding-up petition. Especially when the *Tatler*



Shamji: Can he pay back the millions he's borrowed?

estimated Shamji's assets as being worth in excess of £ 125 million."

For a paper of the *Observer's* standing to pursue a man so relentlessly, if he had nothing to hide, was unusual: the inference that Shamji's empire was on the brink, was inescapable.

Shamji himself was not oblivious to the effect the articles had on his reputation. "They were trying to destroy me," he said last month in his office on London's Park Lane. "They destroyed Sipra this way. But," he added resolutely, "I am too solid for that. I have weathered the storm. This will pass." As if to prove his point, he issued two libel writs against the *Observer* and complained to the Press Council.

Gomba claims to have replies to all of Gillard's allegations:

- 1) Gomba's JMB exposure (which Shamji is reluctant to quantify) is fully secured by assets. It is true that the Bank of England, JMB's rescuer, is revaluating its assets, but the Bank is doing this to *all* of JMB's borrowers.
- 2) The allegations about the jewellery affair are false and slanderous.
- 3) It is Gomba that has been badly treated over the Stonefield deal. In fact, if the Stonefield liquidators or the Scottish Development Authority had met their obligations, then Gomba wouldn't have lost money. Gomba is suing both for £ 8.5 million.

4) It is not uncommon for companies to file their accounts late: many businesses do this.

5) Gomba's PNB exposure is relatively small: £ 3.4 million. It is fully secured against property.

6) The LLAC affair has more to it than the company's inability to pay £ 1 million. It is part of a struggle to gain control of the Wembley complex, Europe's biggest sport and leisure complex, which could well be the site of the 1992 Olympic Games.

Shamji suggests that it is the Wembley battle that has sparked off the present controversy and that the anti-Gomba stories are part of a conspiracy to frighten him away from Wembley.

The Wembley saga (the subject of the longest of the *Observer's* four stories) has its origins in Shamji's attempts to wrest executive control of the complex. Wembley has an extremely complex ownership structure but the ultimate ownership rests with LLAC. Shamji now has a majority of LLAC shares and wishes to control the board of Arena, (majority-owned by LLAC) which controls the Wembley operating company. According to him, the board of Arena does not wish him to take over, and his detractors have leaked these embarrassing stories. Nevertheless, he is confident that he will triumph finally. His supporters suggest that the opposition to him is rooted in racial prejudice and some even claim that it is a Jewish conspiracy — his Wembley opponents are Jews.

How it will all end remains to be seen. Shamji insists that the *Observer* will apologise, but even he concedes that the image of his empire has been shaken. He has turned Belgrave Holdings plc around (he owns 34 per cent of the stock) and it declared a £ 2.29 million profit last year. However, if, as a flattering profile of Shamji in *South* claimed, 'the core of Shamji's business is Stonefield and Belgrave', then the *Tatler's* £ 125 million figure for Shamji's worth is widely off the mark. He owns only a third of Belgrave which is at best a £ 20-30 million company; also, he has borrowed substantially and Stonefield has now gone bust. ♦

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THE OTHER SETHIA

Nirmal Sethia has nothing to do with his brothers.

WHEN RAJ SETHIA's Esal group collapsed, owing British and Indian banks hundreds of millions of dollars, Nirmal Sethia was most upset. Partly, it was because his brother was in trouble, and partly it was because the family name had fallen into disrepute. But, to a large extent, it was also because Sethia feared that the general public would not be able to distinguish between the Sethia brothers and would assume that Nirmal too had gone bankrupt. In fact, the Sethias all run entirely distinct business ventures, and Nirmal's N Sethia Group is in the midst of a boom period.

The Sethia brothers are the sons of Sohan Lal Sethia, a Calcutta jute merchant, who opened an office in London over 60 years ago. Nirmal fell out with his family and started his own business in 1965, in competition with the family firm. When Sohan Lal died in 1967, his three sons, Ranjit, Nirmal and Raj (a fourth son has no interest in the business), moved closer together and in 1969 merged their businesses. Nirmal became chairman of the Sethia group of companies in 1975 (though Ranjit is older). But the brothers fell out messily in 1977 and went their separate ways. Ranjit joined with some cousins to run the House of Sethia, Raj started the Esal group (after Sohan Lal's initials) and Nirmal revived his N Sethia Group.

Of the three family groups, Esal and the N Sethia Group grew fastest. But while Raj was essentially a gambler (he owned 150 racehorses), Nirmal was a financial conservative with a



horror of borrowing. His N Sethia Group made millions in commodity trading but much of its income went into the buying of property. Today, Nirmal's British companies own several prime properties in London including Grafton House, where the BBC has its offices. A study of balance sheets suggests that the companies in the N Sethia Group in Britain — N Sethia Holdings, N Sethia (London), Anamika etc — are worth between £ 40-45 million. There are also overseas companies in Singapore, Canada, the USA, Turkey and Nigeria, which are involved in engineering, insurance, property and commo-

dity trading, but these are controlled by off-shore trusts and their value (unofficially estimated at \$ 150-200 million) is difficult to assess.

After the three Sethias split, relations between them remained tense, with lawsuits being traded. While Ranjit and Raj became friends again, Nirmal's companies continued to compete with those of his brothers. For instance, Jokai, the Assam tea plantation controlled by Raj, had almost been bought by the N Sethia Group when Raj launched a counter-bid and clinched the deal without Nirmal's knowledge.

Despite this undercurrent of tension, the brothers tried to help Raj when he first began to go under. Nirmal lent him over \$ 3 million to pay back his loans and Ranjit also interceded on his behalf with officials. Unfortunately, Raj's debts were so massive that nobody could do much.

Since Raj's troubles began, Nirmal has reacted with vengeful fury every time the press has linked the brothers. Last year, he sued *Asian Post* which ran an apology on its cover, and extracted an apology from its owner, Mahmud Sipra. He is now suing *Business India*.

Two months ago, he sued the *Tatler* over an article on Asian millionaires (Sethia, Shamji and Paul). Sethia objected to the headline blurb which claimed that Asians borrowed heavily. Last month, the *Tatler* apologised and noted that Sethia had nothing to do with Raj and had no large borrowings.



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THE GLABROUS GADFLY

Actor, politician and journalist: Cho Ramaswamy is a genuine South Indian phenomenon.

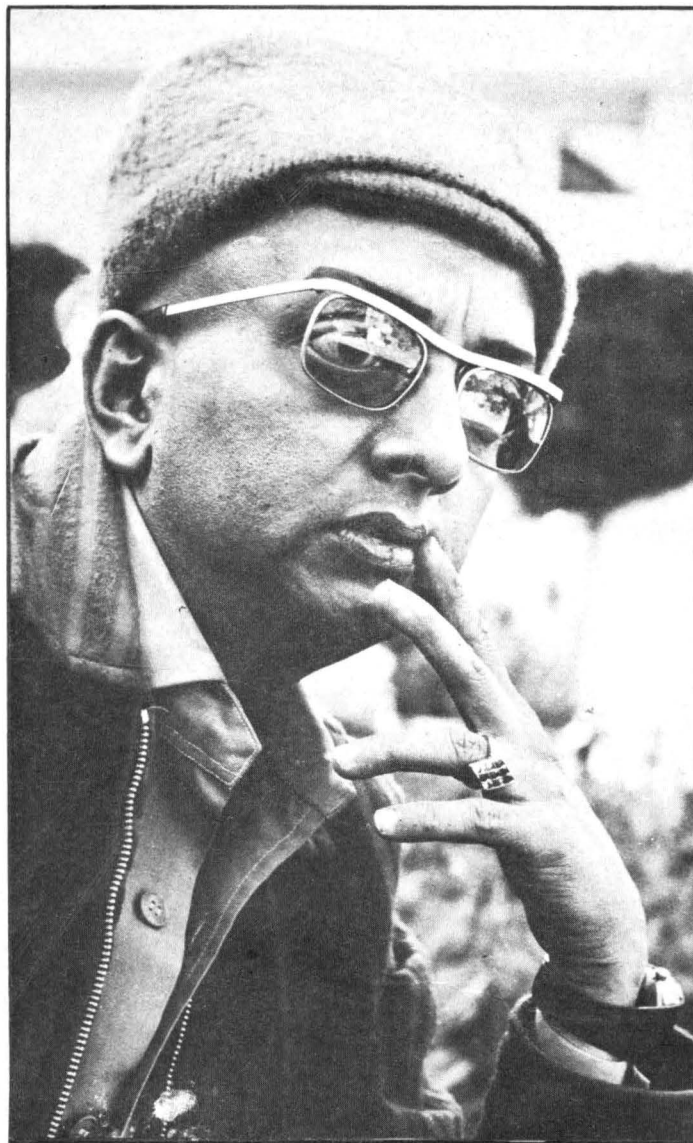
BY SHIRAZ SIDHVA

HE LOOKS DIMINUTIVE, shrunken almost, sitting in a corner of his cluttered office, in his high-backed swivel chair. Chunky gold-rimmed glasses form rectangles over his wide-open eyes, distracting from the thick-set lips, the large nose, the protruding ears. A long gold chain hangs over a generously unbuttoned safari shirt. And on his nail-bitten fingers, he sports a giant ring made up of various gemstones. But what you really notice is the gleaming, hairless pate and those expertly pencilled eyebrows.

This is Cho Ramaswamy. The shrewd lawyer, the eccentric editor, the irreverent journalist, the talented playwright, the popular stage actor, the ridiculous film comedian, the prosperous businessman dealing in plastics, the champion civil liberties crusader, the cricket commentator, the amateur photographer, the thundering public speaker, the glabrous 'gadfly of Tamil Nadu politics'.

Cho decides to indulge in a little play-acting. He notices that you have walked in with a head full of preconceived notions and he sets about systematically dispelling them.

If it has been said or written that Cho is eccentric, he is as normal as a right angle today. If he has been called a clown, he decides to play the sober nun. If you expected to encounter his famed gift of the gab, he has suddenly lost his



tongue. And which 'atheist' would have so many garlanded pictures of gods and goddesses on each wall of his office, making it look like a *puja* room? The iconoclast seems to have donned a mantle of reverence today.

"Let us see what you can make of this," he mutters ominously, as he waits to field my questions. He volunteers no information, dazzles with no wit. Ten minutes and many monosentenced replies later, you begin to retreat, having accepted defeat. You have all the biographical details already. And you haven't travelled to Madras merely to check them out. Your attempts to provoke are getting you nowhere. Did Cho really say that Indira did not make an effective prime minister only because she was a woman? "Did I say that?" he asks. "I don't remember. All I can say is, I am quite capable of having said such a thing." You notice the half-smile hovering on his mouth, the twinkle in his

lashless eyes. "Is that all?" he taunts. "You said you'd need more time with me." It is then that you realise that you have an ace up your sleeve.

Cho loves the limelight. He loves being interviewed (he was probably playing at 'being different'). He loves people asking his advice (and there are many who do — from politicians to plebeians). He loves the klieg lights on the sets

Shiraz Sidhva is based in Bangalore. She is also the author of Bangalore Diary elsewhere in this issue.

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Cho on stage: making digs at society.

and the spotlights on stage. He loves playing to a packed house, resounding with the roar of laughter and cheering as the audience laps up every gesture, every joke of his. You put down your bag and sit back with revived determination, as you watch the mask slowly slip away.

THE EARLY YEARS of S Ramaswamy's (for that was his name before he replaced the nondescript alphabet with the expletive, 'Cho') life were as colourless as his later ones are stimulating. His father was a well-to-do agriculturist who was appointed managing director of a distillery so that the company could use his land to dump its waste molasses. After graduating in the sciences, Cho read law, but he had only one burning ambition — to become a great cricketer. But he never got beyond playing at the

league level for the Madras Cricket Association, and soon realised that he was only being tolerated on the team. "I just didn't have the gift," he admits. (Later, he was to sublimate this passion by becoming a cricket commentator.)

At 24, Cho accompanied his uncle to his first play. He had never been to the theatre before; so overwrought was he by the experience, that he went home to write his first play in a burst of 24 hours. The next thing he did was join a troupe of actors to give vent to his new-found talent.

There was a time when he was considered too insignificant to be allowed to book the prestigious Shanmukhananda Hall in Bombay, and had to be content with performing to a limited audience in suburban Chembur. All that has changed now, and Cho has become a household word in every Tamil home. But he has never forgot-

ten those early days. His 40-member troupe, Viveka Fine Arts Club, is filled with amateurs — mainly white-collar workers — who spend their evenings rehearsing and performing Cho's plays.

Since 1960, Cho's 30-odd plays have been performed over 3,200 times, and he still plays to full houses 12 nights a month. But the plays and the acting have never been ends in themselves. Cho does not believe in crafting 'monumental' plays or plays of perpetual value. Like his mentor, Bernard Shaw, he believes that it is his duty to mirror society as he sees it, point out the flaws and thus, reform it.

It is this attitude that has made Cho the *enfant terrible* of the hitherto staid and conventional Tamil stage. His plays represent a particular brand of political and social criticism, with distinct glimpses of Shavian and Wodehousian humour. Nearly always, they are rooted in a milieu that is intrinsically Tamil.

In all his plays, Cho makes digs at the Tamil way of life, the people, the government, the Opposition, and social evils like corruption. *Quo Vadis* (many of his plays sport titles in foreign tongues) commented on police atrocities; *Dil Ek Bandar*, Cho's version of *Pygmalion*, was a social satire which portrayed a callow youth falling for the raw charms of a buxom vegetable-vendor; *Is God Dead?* dealt with corruption, atheism and bad doctors; *Sambhabhami Yuge Yuge* caused quite a stir in Tamil Nadu's political cauldron because of its scathing attack on the state's government; *I Had A Pleasant Dream* spared no effort to ridicule Cho's favourite target, Karunanidhi, the DMK leader, then chief minister of Tamil Nadu.

Things came to a head when Karunanidhi, instead of banning Cho's plays (as he did *Sambhabhami Yuge Yuge*), put aside his files to produce a theatrical riposte to Cho's constant attacks. Unfortunately, *Nane Arivali* (I Alone Am Genius) could not meet Cho's well-directed thrusts at the DMK government, and lacked theatrical value. It was through Cho that the leader finally met his political Waterloo.

Cho's *magnum opus* remains *Thughlak*, a play he wrote in 1969. In the play, a foolish king (based on a historical character with the same name) is reborn to re-enact his treachery. In

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1971, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting banned the film version of the play, because it was a harsh indictment of the politics of the time. A crowd of 5,000 people congregated on the sands of Marina Beach to protest against the ban, but the authorities turned a deaf ear to their pleas. Later, the censors passed the film, but not without cutting over 700 feet of film.

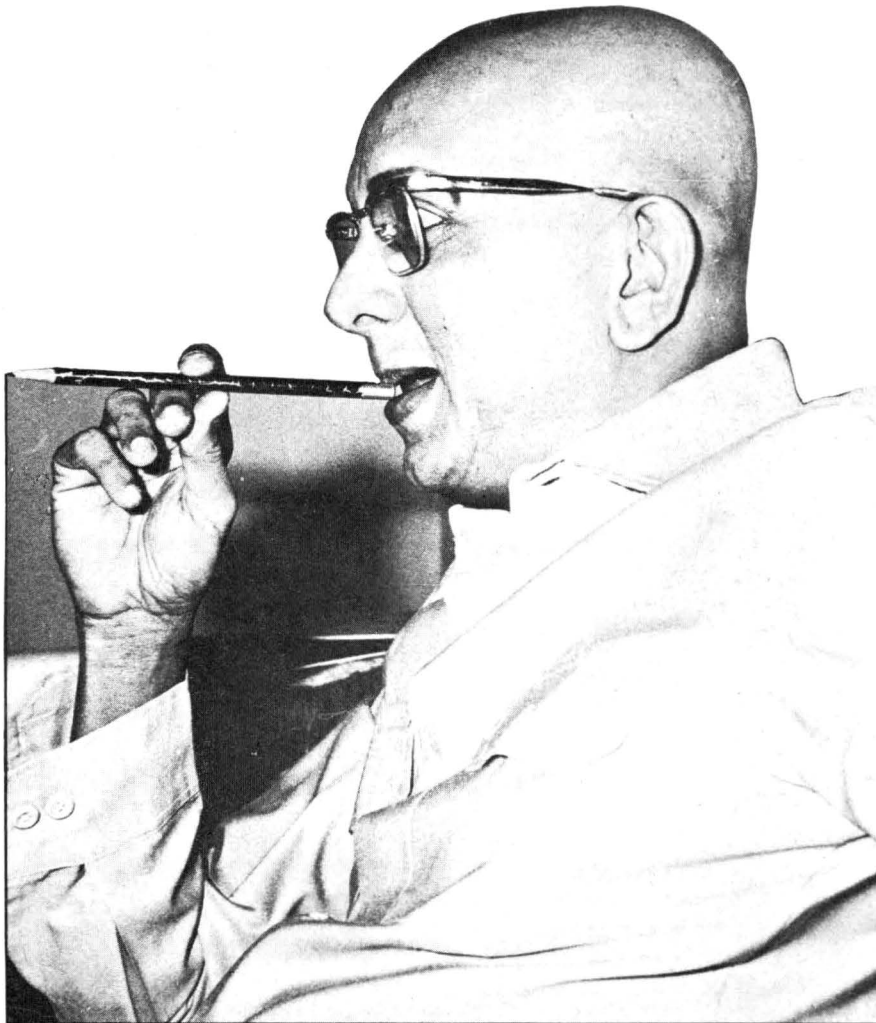
From theatre to cinema was a short and logical step. Mainly playing the comedian's role on the Tamil screen, Cho has acted in 160 films, written 14 scripts, and directed four films. He has practically given up script-writing, he says ("Unless, of course, a director comes to me and says he will not make the film unless I write it") but continues to accept roles every now and then.

IN 1970, Cho started *Thughlak*, a Tamil fortnightly. He had so much to say and he found the scope of theatre limited. With an initial circulation of 35,000, *Thughlak* was conceived as a sort of Opposition paper ("I am always on the side of the Opposition"), which would serve as a forum through which Cho could reach wider audiences, more directly.

"The venture was initially greeted with a lot of scepticism," recalls Cho. "But I went on with it, regardless." Over the years, the circulation has steadily spiralled to reach 2.35 lakh. This may not seem a large figure for a Tamil publication but, if Cho is to be believed, *Thughlak* has a readership of 14 per copy, which makes it tower over *Kumudam*, even though the latter has a circulation of five lakh.

Thughlak was quick to gain notoriety when Cho dared publish photographs of the lewd tableaux of gods and goddesses displayed at the Salem anti-God procession. Tamil sensibilities were outraged and the magazine was banned by Karunanidhi. "I am grateful to him," chuckles Cho. "He made my magazine popular."

Cho has since resorted to all sorts of gimmicks to ensure that his readers never tire of him. During one election, he got a friend to enter the fray as an independent so that *Thughlak*'s reporters could be present at polling time and when the votes were counted. The 'candidate' had an interesting mani-



The iconoclastic editor: the role he loves best.

festo, which was published in *Thughlak*. He promised a harbour in inland Madurai, vowed that every farmer on the city's busy Mount Road would be gifted a gold-mine, assured that all citizens of Tamil Nadu could use his guest house when they visited Delhi, claimed that suburban Madras would be converted into a tea garden, and that the waters of the local River Cooum would be joined to the mighty Ganga thousands of miles away.

"These are precisely the sort of promises our politicians make during election time!" exclaims Cho. "They are all beggars and thieves during elections."

One of the magazine's features is an imaginary daily news column. "I fictionalise events," explains Cho, reaching for a chapstick to paint his lips. "For instance, one of my characters was an actor-turned-politician (no dearth of those in Tamil Nadu) who

met Mrs Gandhi regularly to discuss the politics of the nation with her. He was made to say all that I wanted to tell her."

His 'crystal-gazing' activities have helped the magazine too. "I predicted the Emergency," Cho says triumphantly, leaping up to land cross-legged on his chair. His predictions include NTR's eventual reinstatement after his ignominious ouster last year and MGR's recent miraculous recovery. "I knew the man wouldn't take things lying down," he says, admitting that in this case it was more an understanding of MGR than intuition that helped him make his 'prediction'. "Earlier, when he had lost his voice, people were impressed because he was so generous with his time. And all the while, the man was only practising his voice!"

It was on MGR's intervention that Cho was not arrested during the Emer-

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gency. "He denied me some publicity on that account," quips Cho. The magazine was banned and he was pulled up by the Shah Commission for his Emergency antics. "Mine is the only magazine in India where even advertisements have been censored," claims Cho. The ad which was 'planted' by Cho, was ostensibly issued by a puppet manufacturer. Headlined *The 20-Point Puppets*, it went on to bestow several attributes to each of the 20 puppets, quite obviously tearing the Centre's 20-point programme to shreds.

When issues of *Thughlak* were confiscated at post offices, Cho started mailing a few copies at a time from different places to escape the detection of the authorities. He also started *Pickwick*, an English version of *Thughlak*, which, surprisingly, the censors did not take notice of. The magazine died with the Emergency. "It had served its purpose," says Cho, dismissing the allegation that the magazine was a flop. "I saw no reason to keep it alive."

CHO CAME to be regarded as some sort of hero after the Emergency. "The special attention the government accorded me, made people say I was a courageous man," he says, smiling modestly. "I have only them (the government) to thank for my popularity."

In the Janata days, he set about editing *Thughlak* with renewed vigour. "The Janata gave me so much interesting material to write upon," he laughs. In August 1979, Cho the lawyer filed a petition in the Madras High Court, calling upon Charan Singh to show what legal and constitutional authority he could claim to hold the office of prime minister. And in 1980, he created an uproar by printing a facsimile of a stamp to commemorate the death of Captain Subhash Saxena, Sanjay Gandhi's co-pilot on that fatal last flight. "Both of them died in the same crash," argued Cho. "Why should only one of them be honoured with a stamp?"

Thughlak is really an extension of Cho's personality. Often he writes the entire 40-page issue, which has about eight pages of advertisements, himself. The fortnightly's contributors include columnists Kuldip Nayar, and Arun Shourie whose *Weekly* columns are simultaneously published here in Tamil.

A complaints page and a section on the economy are also included. "I encourage readers to send in articles, especially if they express views that are different from mine," informs Cho. "Of course, I always reply."

Who are Cho's readers? If the readership survey recently conducted by the magazine is to be relied on, there are at least 32 lakh people who read *Thughlak*. And still he claims he doesn't know who they are. "My readers don't belong to any particular section of society. All I know is that ours is the most widely-read magazine in the state!" exclaims Cho.

"With *Thughlak* I started a trend. Earlier, nobody dared to criticise C N Annadurai or Karunanidhi. Little by little, they all gained courage." He is derisive of the English press. "Look at how they have built up Jayalalitha, who is a nonentity," he explodes. "She has neither brains, nor political acumen. Besides, she has betrayed the party in New Delhi. She is not a force to reckon with, and never was, in my opinion. The crowds she attracted during the Lok Sabha campaign came because she spoke for MGR. And the press is thrilled with her because she speaks English!"

As *Thughlak*'s Editor, Cho holds himself accountable for his readers — to the extent that he is always honest with them. "I have never expressed a dishonest opinion, and I never will," he states.

This attitude is very much an assertion of the individuality that has become Cho's cherished trademark. "I always listen to what people have to say to me, but I never heed their advice," he reiterates. "I always make my own decisions."

ONE OF CHO'S DECISIONS considerably shook his credibility. In 1983, he announced that he had joined the Janata party after having professed for years that he did not belong to any party, and that democracy was his only ideology. "People often asked me why I commented so much on the state of affairs without actively participating in politics," he defends himself. "Thinking that the Janata would be the factor to link the Opposition, and tired of being considered an 'outsider', I finally ac-

cepted Chandrashekhar's repeated offer."

In the minds of his readers, however, this step was tantamount to betrayal. "I got 780 letters warning me that they would watch me carefully," says Cho. "I assured them that my affiliation with the Janata would not convert *Thughlak* into a party magazine."

To Cho's credit, he has stuck to his word, much to the relief of his readers. "I have always written in support of the Janata, even before I joined them. But I will not keep quiet when they do things like align with the DMK. How can a national party hope to grow at the mercy of a regional one?" he asks.

Earlier, Cho has gone on record as having said, "Adult franchise is the curse of democracy. Democracy is spoilt by people who don't know how to use their votes." But now, the editor seems to have revised his opinion. "I have come to believe that the Indian voter is quite intelligent. You inform him, and he will invariably take the right decision."

Would not criticism of his own party in the magazine be construed as anti-party activity? "The party leadership trusts me, and recognises that my criticism is in good faith," he says. "The Janata was the most effective political platform available to me."

Considering his party has been marginalised in recent months, does Cho still think he made the right decision? "Certainly," he says. "I have suggested to Hegde that the saner individuals in the Opposition form an entirely new party, choosing a leader who is totally subservient to the party, but a powerful leader in the eyes of the people."

For a long time, Cho has been advocating a merger between the Janata and the BJP. He has always exhibited an abhorrence for the Left ("If the Left has a future in India, India has no future left"), but he insists that he could not subscribe to the Hindu *Rashtra* concept of the RSS. "They (the BJP) are a disciplined and patriotic lot," he adds, however.

Cho does not agree that he has lost his claws after joining the Janata. He flaunts his swelling readership as an index of his popularity, and pulls out photographs of the 35,000-strong

crowd that attended his reader's conference this January.

"If I can hold my own against mass entertainers like MGR and Raj Narain, there must be something in me," he quips. "That sort of competition would have killed any other man."

Cho is quite clear, however, that he will never accept a party position or contest an election. "I have been offered the South Madras seat several times, and many party posts, but I have always declined," he claims. "It would compromise my position as a journalist; besides, the candidate is put into such a humiliating position."

"My readers know that for me, the magazine comes first. There is nothing like it anywhere in the country," he says, with ill-concealed pride. "I have my principles, and I will always stand by them. I am not a hypocrite."

Since *Thughlak* is Cho's alter-ego, it is surprising that he doesn't own it. "I have never felt the need to own *Thughlak*," he says. "My publisher has not asked a single question in all these years."

Cho's brand of journalism has necessarily brought with it a fair share of trouble, both in court and out of it. Cho the lawyer is not deterred by the numerous defamation suits that Cho the writer-editor has brought upon himself. The man is not afraid of threats, either. "I don't seek anybody's protection, even though my life has often been in danger," he says melodramatically. Soon after *Thughlak* started in 1971, toughs surrounded his house, armed with cycle chains, threatening to thrash him if he didn't stop criticising the government. At a public meeting, someone hurled a knife at him. "The women of the house are often threatened over the phone," he says. "Once, I got a letter saying that I would meet my death in Erode if I insisted on addressing the rally there," he tells me, obviously enjoying himself. "I went anyway. Surely someone who plans to kill me is not going to warn me in advance," he reasons.

WHEN CHO is not busy lambasting what he considers the enemy (be it a social evil or a political party), playing at lampoonist or campaigning for the Janata in Karnataka during the Assembly elections, or



Cho insists: "Joining the Janata has not eroded my credibility."

being the custodian of civil liberties (as when he, along with Shourie and Rustamji, escorted Telugu Desam MLAs from Karnataka to Andhra Pradesh 'on behalf of the nation' last year), he is busy earning a living as law consultant to the Madras-based conglomerate, TTK.

If *Thughlak* provides the main sustenance in terms of power and contacts, it is his consultancy and his business interests (he refuses to discuss them), that enable him to maintain a life-style that could be more aptly termed comfortable than lavish. Notwithstanding the gleaming red Datsun in the porch below or the expensive-looking cassette deck in his room, his tastes are simple, his needs few. He listens to religious discourses, and loves Carnatic music as anyone can gauge

from the large rack on the wall, loaded with cassettes. He has a penchant for photography. And pipe-smoking is as far as he'll indulge himself, thank you. (Cho fought tooth and nail to make Tamil Nadu a dry state but 'today even colleges are liquor dens'.)

Cho is an expert at juggling his time between his various professions and activities — a feat that would make a schizophrenic out of any normal man. "I'm absolutely normal," he exclaims. "And, I have certificates to show for it." (When in 1976, all his hair fell off within a span of ten days, Cho had the doctors give him a bunch of certificates to prove that there was nothing the matter with him.)

"Whatever I am involved in at a particular time, becomes my job," he explains helpfully. "At the moment, I

am immersed in *Thughlak*." Is the country's new government his latest target? "Rajiv is such a colourless person that it is difficult even to exaggerate about him," he says. "But if he is the same man that he was before his mother's death, the same man who offered Telugu Desam MLAs Rs 25 lakh each; who toppled NTR when he saw that the man's health was failing (with his mother's blessings, of course), and gave a clean chit to Ram Lal; who masterminded the horse-trading in Karnataka, and created the Bhindranwale phenomenon; whose baseless and venomous attacks on the Opposition lack taste; and whose latest contribution to the country is the unheard-of amounts of money he has spent on his campaign — then, I can only say one thing: that we have had it as a nation." He shrugs his shoulders. "He may have changed, of course, but we have no evidence of that yet."

Cho's latest ambition is to acquire a rural base for the magazine so that he can spread political awareness among the rural people. "Give them the right information, and they will vote correctly," he says.

CHO BEGINS each day at 4.30 a m, generally reading biographies (Kamaraj, Sardar Patel, Shaw, Subramaniam Bharathi are his heroes). Sometimes he spends time with his teenaged son and daughter, or potters about the house, indulging in mundane chores like dusting. But isn't he a male chauvinist? "I don't believe that women are made to be dusters," he chuckles, quickly qualifying his sentence. "You have to dust after them — they do nothing well." He steers clear of any physical activity ("They tell me to walk, but I only talk").

By eight a m, he is on the move, visiting clients and friends, before he arrives at his cluttered office in a large empty bungalow on Madras's posh Anderson Road, with passages piled high with newspapers. Here, both politicians and 'common folk' seek his advice and pour out their woes. "Even if I am not able to help them, they come to me for some words of comfort," he



On stage again: Brahmin turns mauvi.

says matter-of-factly. "I always listen, I never argue."

It is here that he entertains his friends (he has many, he says) and goes about the business of editing his magazine. The battery of phones by his side keeps interrupting with the incessant ringing. For all his activities, Cho is surprisingly accessible. "My doors are always open," he states. He picks up the intercom (his staff sits downstairs), gives a low whistle and makes a loud clicking sound with his tongue before he asks for coffee. He does not perform his cigarette-twirling-in-the-air act, but he does help himself to the lip salve again. And all the while, he keeps hissing to himself.

Cho's work is never done. In the evenings, he is either the chief guest at a function, giving away the prizes, or addressing a Rotary or Lions meeting, if not a public rally. And every few days there is a performance, when the 'Chaplin of the Tamil stage' dons his disguise and plays one of the many roles he has mastered.

You are fortunate to be invited to one of these soirées. As the lights dim on the packed house, an orchestra

strikes up a lively tune, and the curtain opens on *Is God Dead*? You have been told that Cho's wit flies far above the heads of his audiences, but now you can see for yourself that this is not true.

The play is about a surgeon who wins a Padma Bhushan even though he has killed many of his patients (he leaves his scissors in someone's stomach, etc); an atheist for whom God is reborn, but who eventually dies as a result of his new-found belief; a social worker who butters up politicians and lines her pockets, and an assortment of two-bit characters. It is slapstick at its worst. But the audience loves it.

Cho is very much in his element as he plays to the gallery, making practised pauses to allow the audience their laughs. The level of acting is adequate, even if a little sloppy; the home-made sets are quite convincing. Cho is completely at home being the centre of attraction — he clearly

steals the show.

Cho's critics (and he has many) are quick to point out that he has vulgarised traditional Tamil theatre when he could have done so much to preserve it in its pristine form. The man who is crusading against exploitation, against political chicanery, against slogan-mongering unbacked by action, has no political philosophy to offer, no economic doctrine to profess, no social pattern to enforce, no alternative, they complain. It is the problem, not the solution, that is his target, they say.

But Cho carries on, regardless. He has never been one to go by what people say of him. He has his loyal band of readers who faithfully pay for his magazine every 15 days and turn up in thousands at any meeting he cares to address; he has his political party with its indulgent 'high command' (so what if it is not in power?); he has his troupe members who would do anything for him, play any role he needs them to; he has his thriving practice, and no dearth of material comfort. And as the lights dim and the curtain falls, he has the applause. That is what he likes best. ♦

THE INDIAN MEDIA AND THEIR MYTHS

THE PRESS in India lives mythically. It is unable to interpret the perplexities of society. So it settles for the lesser chore of reporting its unrealities.

Read the major newspapers and magazines. Do they tell you what exactly is happening? Nobody has had any precise idea about the condition of the Eastern territories since the last ten years or so. One hears vaguely about acts of treason and subversion and routine army retaliation. But the shadowy hills and valleys of Nagaland, Meghalaya, Assam and Arunachal remain a cocoon of isolation. Kashmir has been a question mark since the birth of the nation. Bloody battles between the two neighbours, Byzantine intrigues within the power centres of the state and the strangely uneasy relationship between Srinagar and New Delhi have been reported on thousands of reams of costly newsprint. Yet the average, intelligent citizen would not be able to speak on the subject with any degree of clarity or cogency for more than five minutes. Punjab has been the big, fast-breaking story for months, if not years. Does anybody know who exactly won or lost and precisely what issues were settled or left open?

The press does not know. Because the police and politicians don't really talk to the press. And the people certainly don't. This hiatus disables the press. It fails to grasp the perplexities of Indian life. But there are agreeable delights in fastening onto its unrealities.

Swraj Paul, Rajendra Sethia, Haji Mastaan, Yusuf Patel, Bal Thackeray, Dharendra Brahmachari, Amitabh Bachchan's hospital bed, Phoolan Devi's

Nirmal Goswami writes frequently on theatre, poetry and the media. This is his first appearance in Imprint.

ghoulish erotica, Sunil Gavaskar's erratic record, Rajiv Gandhi's overnight charisma, David Lean and Richard Attenborough's commercial ventures, Coomarr Narain's moles, are images of these unrealities.

They are light years away from the reality that the starkly vulnerable Indian knows. So are the stage-managed stories of the scientific establishment's heady forays into outer space. Most of the voters can hardly relate to these images. Even the tax-payers are too preoccupied with the daily drudgery of living to care about these remote sensations.

One redeeming feature provides a temporary gleam of hope. The dog-eat-dog competition in the information industry in other parts of the planet, particularly the United States and Europe, has created a flood of pseudo events. When the president decides not to address the press on the appointed day, that becomes bigger news than what he might have actually said. This is non-news hogging the headlines. Daniel Boorstin, the American scholar, has talked at length on the many ways of manufacturing non-news in his incisive book, *The Image*.

We are not in the same league yet. Besides, the near perpetual shortage of newsprint will have a sobering effect on such propensities. Therefore, what I call unreal news remains the dominant characteristic of the press, and invests its mythical life with a spurious depth.

Another Western invention plays a pivotal role in this sphere. The Interview.

Vinod Mehta of *The Sunday Observer* has elevated it to an act of faith, usually on his last page. Pritish Nandy smears it on *The Illustrated Weekly* in his senatorial style. M J Akbar of *The Telegraph* spikes it with his low cun-



ning and serves it up as high-key montage.

These three publications also lend credence to the view that the media are like women's clothes. They follow fashion. I am excluding radio and television from the ambit of the media for obvious reasons. State control reduces these to a totally partisan category. They are about as respectable as company house journals.

Fashion consciousness is visible even among the less attractive and not-so-dull newspapers. Practically all of them are new. Most of them are published from Bombay where money is the only language that makes sense. They pretend to belong to different market segments. And all of them suffer from an anxiety complex. This is to be expected. Keeping up with fashions is a strenuous job.

So you have Rusi Karanjia, who sired a bulldog of a newspaper. And you can hear *The Daily* whimpering every morning. *Mid-day* is Khalid Ansari's high noon. But now the shadow of Behram Contractor rises to greet him.

New Delhi, from the capital, was perhaps the first of this brash, back-slapping and largely self-centred breed of new journalism. But in spite of



Khushwant Singh, *New Delhi* died of an overdose of anxiety. It was an apocryphal experience. Aroon Purie is a brilliant innovator. He gave us our first national magazine with a strong political orientation. But *India Today* has become so incredibly respectable that one can hardly talk about it without losing one's sense of proportion. I do not think I understand what *Gentleman* stands for. Perhaps it is high grade bar-room gossip which races from international politics to literature, to vintage cars, to men's clothes and just about everything else. Yet Minhaz Merchant, the Editor, is unfailingly profound whenever he speaks through his column. Kasturi & Sons of Madras, the most guttural editorial 'we' of India, have stunned their admiring Brahmins with a spectacular and most uncharacteristic display of colour in *Frontline*. And this gaudy splash went on to become a runaway success with just three issues. *Herald Review* of Bangalore is faintly heard, and *Eenadu* of Hyderabad just cannot be shut off. *The Week* of Kerala is reported to have a secret formula of success.

This relentless proliferation has driven the staid old maids to sporadic bouts of plastic surgery. *The Times Of India* and *The Statesman* are among

Has any investigative reporting ever explained to you why millions of correctly born Indians looked upon Indira Gandhi as a mother? The press has lost its purpose.

these reluctant patients. Which is not so bad. But I still find little consolation in Marshall McLuhan's optimism: "There is absolutely no inevitability as long as there is a willingness to contemplate what is happening." What has, in fact, happened is that the press has lost its purpose.

Has any newspaper told you clearly why Bombay goes berserk over inedible fast food, absurd clothes and third-rate jazz? Has any investigative reporting ever explained to you why millions of correctly born Indians looked upon Indira Gandhi as a mother? Does any 'feature', 'essay' or 'special' ever disclose why the poor will never become rich? Do you really comprehend the flood of reports on nuclear reactors misbehaving, irrigation projects going awry, military hardware getting sophisticated, power lines snapping and weighty judgements being pronounced in the higher courts of law? I doubt it. The truth is that you are not meant to understand all this. The harmless intention is to fill the pages of newspapers with incomprehensible stories and uphold the sanctity of the daily editorial conference. The unreality of the press ferments in its obsession with the event. The relation of the event with the reader is of little consequence.

The cleavage between the press and its public will expand. I am talking about a number of intense newspapers, magazines included, which are eager, earnest, reasonably polished and tolerably articulate. They are progressively distorting themselves in their pursuit of imagery. The habitual denial or reality only deepens the mythical quality of the press.

How else does one explain the craze for the ten best dressed men, the ten most handsome men, the ten most beautiful women, the ten worst dressed men and such other trivia?

Folly, greed and hypocrisy create most of the disasters which have gnawed at the vitals of this country. The

press, for many understandable reasons, feels extremely uncomfortable with these realities. So it chases mythical issues and stubbornly hopes to keep the nation informed. In its enthusiasm for objectivity, it never fails to criticise conventional wisdom. But when it comes to the question of being self-critical, the press claims inviolability. But with mandarins like Girilal Jain, the press will lumber on like a sacred cow.

The business press is a rare example of working to a purpose. *The Economic Times* was the first breakthrough in corporate coverage, mostly unbiased, frequently critical, always informed. *The Financial Express* of Ram Nath Goenka is equally sober. These two newspapers drove the dull, boring boardroom rags like the *Capital* of Calcutta, *The Eastern Economist* of New Delhi and *Commerce* of Bombay to the wall. Then came the inevitable magazines with their cold, steady eyes on the cash register. The publishers of *Business India* and *Business World* judged with uncanny accuracy that the corporate world was ready for fan magazines. In no time, notable managers, brilliant professionals and the scions of merchant princes began to be projected as superstars. Sophisticated sycophancy, uncritical appraisals and abject deference characterise these magazines specialising in PR journalism.

The mainstream press will continue to obfuscate you. The pungently sweet smell of opium pervades the air. Can you go back home? Home is where confused readers contract diseases, forget to pay their bills, claim their dues, learn irregular verbs and want clarity from the black phalanxes on the white page. Alas, they are condemned to the incoherence of the time-bound rotary press.

"Because something is happening
But you don't know what it is
Do you, Mister Jones?"

—Bob Dylan

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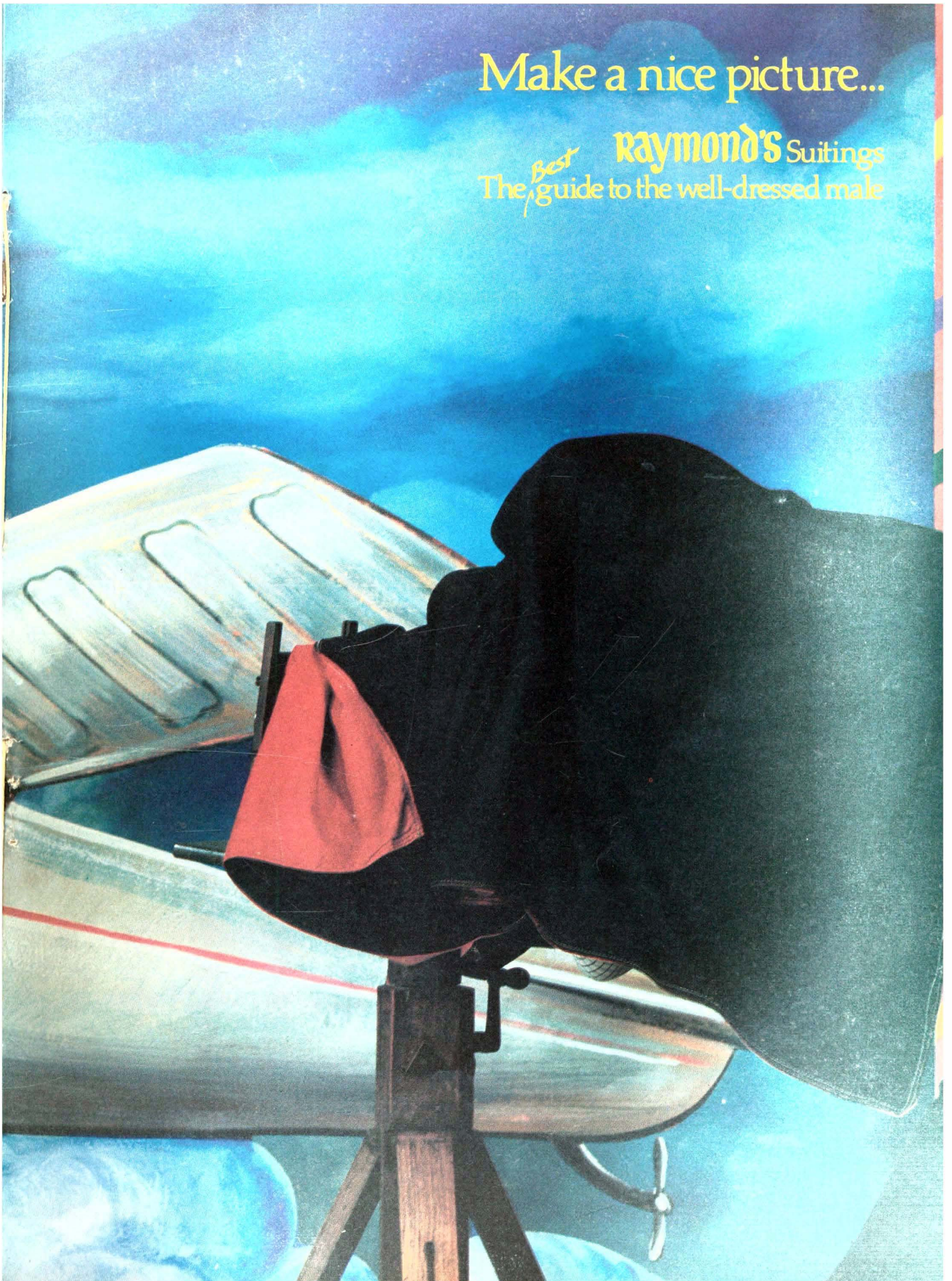
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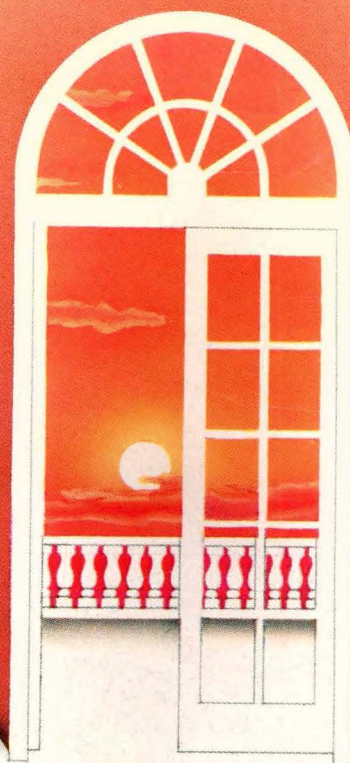




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THE POETRY FESTIVAL

LET ME make it clear straight-away that this is a write-up about the poetry read out at the Poetry Festival in Delhi and not its politics. When it comes to cheap thrills, poetry always takes a back seat to politics, black magic, scandal sheets and tarot cards. Hence, it is not my intention to write about who outwitted whom, who hijacked whose festival, and who got gassed.

Strangely enough, I was blissfully ignorant of the festival. Sometime in that terrible summer of '84 one heard about a big gathering of the poetic clans, a sort of *loya jirgah* of poets, being arranged by Bharat Bhavan at Bhopal. I had locked this information away in some safe deposit vault of the mind and forgotten all about it, password, code and key.

Late in February, came this telegram from Bharat Bhavan inviting me over to the festival, four days in Delhi and four in Bhopal. I wrote back that I could not make it to Bhopal because of other pressing work. If I had the slightest inkling that Bhopal as the venue was to become the eye of the stormy controversy, I would have written that I could only attend the festival in Bhopal and not in Delhi.

At about the same time, volatile telegraphic exchanges were taking place. "Am not in league with Union Carbide," a Hindi poet is reported to have telegraphed in response to the invitation. "You are not in league with poetry," Dilip Chitre is reported to have shot back.

Two days before the festival I got a call. Could I join the steering committee for lunch at Samrat Hotel? What exactly are we going to steer, I asked cautiously. The festival, of course. The committee, I noticed, was driving close to good food and some excellent white wine. While one is not too certain

Keki Daruwalla, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award, is a regular Imprint columnist.

The recent Poetry Festival has got more publicity for its politics than it has for its poetry. This article is part of an effort to redress the balance. It is not about Bhopal. Or about the ICCR. Or about Dilip Chitre.

which wine goes with fish and which with the red meats, both the white and the red wines go very well with poetry. Jokes aside, the steering committee did well in splitting the festival into various sessions, namely, Folk Voices, Voices of Loneliness, Voices of Protest, Voices of Despair and Hope, and Other Voices. Whatever opinion one may hold about dismembering the muse thus, this scheme gave a much-needed format to the festival. Everyone worked hard to see that it went off without a hitch. Dilip Chitre worked like a Trojan. The others worked like the Greeks.

But what about the actual poetry at the festival? Any clear, short answer would be less than fair to the diverse poetry read out on the lawns of Teen Murti. Firstly, the poetry of various languages had to be reduced to English currency. The pound isn't doing all that well these days. But I must say that the translations were pithy and came across effectively, even though some of the lustre of the poems must have dimmed in the process. As expected, the verse was not affected or high-falutin, tossed about on a blanket of air. It was firmly moored to the ground. There was an excess of gloom about a majority of the poems, as poets wrestled with their environs. The festival started with the Latin American poet, Carlos German Belli reading out

Papa, Mama, a poem which transcends Peruvian poverty and reaches out beyond the human condition, as it were, the poet preferring to become stone or tree or bird rather than remain in the human family:

"Oh Papa, Mama,
how hard you fought
low Peruvian wages
to keep your children,
Mario, Pocho, myself
in the human race.
And now all I can say
is: Death hasten me
from this sane human race
forever, to choose
another ancestry
and face in cliff
or elm or owl."

In the session, Voices of Protest, the poetry came out hissing like steam from fissures in volcanic crust, or at times like gas from a leaking tank (There again, Bhopal is too much with us!) There were two long poems or prostitutes, one by Soubhagya Misra the Oriya poet, and the other by the Filipino poet, Goh Poh Seng, a doctor who has given up his practice to write verse. He writes in English and not in his 'native' tongue and has problems similar to the ones which confront Indian-English poets. *The Girl From Ermita*, which he read out, is a well known poem:

"If you ever come to Manila
come down to red-light Ermita
where nightly I ply my trade
But you don't really want
to hear the same old hard luck
story!

There are no new legends
anymore.

Better take me away somewhere
take me in your sweaty arms,
and your eyes cold as death
can feed on the peach of my skin
and your savage heart
can release its black secrets.

You can do what

you like with me
I know all the positions. . ."

Rendra Mangga Raya of Indonesia hardly had a poem in which he did not take up cudgels for a poor woman 'plowed by the landlord' and the farm labourer whose 'sweat falls like gold', who, when he asks for a share of the profits, is sent condoms by the economists. When Rendra read out his *Testimony 1967*, I could not help noticing an odd metaphor. The poem starts with the lines:

"The world we are building is an
iron world

Of glass and howling holes."

Sorry Rendra, you can either have a world of iron or a world of glass; you can't have both. Rendra has a devastating poem called *A Pickpocket's Advice To His Mistress* where he tells her that his fate is chancy and that he is not the right sort of father for the baby she bears in her womb.

From this kind of François Villon milieu to the deafening roar of Apirana Taylor, is a far cry. Taylor comes from mixed blood — Maori and Pakeha. Pakeha, incidentally, stands for New Zealand white. Disdaining the mike, Apirana in an absolutely thundering voice recited his invocation to the sky gods. It was unforgettable — not the poetry but the loudness of his voice. About his passion and commitment there seemed very little doubt, his whole six-foot frame turning into a vocal chord, as it were, as he shouted out his lines. The dilemma of a dual heritage no longer bothers Taylor. He has identified himself totally with his Maori legacy. Mythography for him means the Maori gods and spirits, like Ruamoko, the god of earthquakes. "The English took away our language, our culture," he says. "They tried to destroy us. Now we are trying to get it back. That is why there is anger in my poems." I am not sure what he really is trying to get back. Like most poets not writing in their native tongue, Taylor bore a grudge against his circumstances, namely, that he is unable to write in Maori. The refreshing thing about Taylor, is that he is not a lecturer — he makes a living through carpentry and shepherding.

**There is no
bandwagon that
Indians will not climb
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dire consequences.**

The *pièce de résistance*, however, was the recital by Dennis Brutus and the exposé on poetics by Edward Brathwaite. Dennis Brutus referred to the inflated coinage of the poet and stated that the objective correlative was not enough. He referred to his five years of house arrest in Robin Island (South Africa) where 1,100 political prisoners were subjected to torture at the hands of 200 criminal prisoners, many of them 'multiple murderers' and 'multiple rapists'. In 1964, along with other prisoners, he had to walk into the sea and fetch rocks, his body covered with slime and seaweed. If one slipped and fell into the shallow sea, the warden would come and put his foot on the prisoner's neck and hold him down till the bubbles stopped rising from the water. No wonder he writes about 'the incisive thrust of the clear air into the lungs'. In his book *Stubborn Hope* he asks, "How are the shoots of affection withered at the root?" Racial animosities in South Africa have no answer to this question of his. Dennis Brutus, of course, is a bit of a legend and when you meet the man, the passion and commitment are transparent. Of necessity, however, all this does not get translated into his poetry, which often slips into political statements, for example: "I am a rebel and freedom is my cause." Yet, knowing his background, one still gets affected by lines like the following:

"For why should I not dream

and hope?
Is not revolution making reality
of hopes?
Let us work together that my
dream may be fulfilled
that I may return with my people
out of exile
to live in one democracy in
peace."

Brathwaite, in his talk about speech-rhythms, described the iambic pentameter as a military, regimental, imperial beat. He recited a line or two out of Grey's well-known *Elegy* and lampooned the military rhythm. In fact, he marched to the beat, advising poets to break out from the tyranny of the iambic pentameter. The Caribbeans had nativised the English language into the Creole, and the poets had learnt to break the monotony of the beat with a skip, a slight chip here and a syncopation there. Brathwaite lives in Barbados and stated that as a child he played ducks and drakes there. He felt that each skid of the stone over the water had turned into an island now. He also said that if God were to create music or poetry, as a West Indian, he felt that the rhythm He would turn to would be the calypso.

There is no bandwagon which people will not climb onto in this country, and poetry is no exception. Chairing one of its sessions I found that everyone wanted to read their poems. An aged gentleman confessed that he had written only one poem in his life and naturally enough, wanted all of us to have the privilege of listening to it. Someone from Simla wanted to read out his poems merely because he 'represented' Himachal Pradesh. A Telugu 'poet' who was denied the floor, warned, "You will pay for this." Indians were not the only ones, of course. An interpreter had been invited by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to translate gypsy poets. He climbed onto the stage during every session and sang gypsy songs, which all of us thought, were his poems done to music, till a Central European poet turned to me and said: "This fellow has never written a poem in his life! It makes me sick!"

While some poets were shy and one

never got to know them, others displayed admirable sang-froid. For instance, I was very happy to find that Dr Puthaneri R Subramanyam carried his printed bio-data with him which said that his "poetic talents blossomed at the age of 15 in 1937. From thereon, for the past 48 years, he is shining as a star in the world of poetry, having hundreds of poems to his credit."

The Russians, S A Baruzdin and E V Vahadov, came with a beautiful interpreter in tow, but their tirade against Hitler and fascism (a bit late in the day, I thought) left people cold. So did their quotations from the verse of the Indian revolutionary, Romesh Chandra. Most people in the audience had never heard of Romesh Chandra!

Eventually, a gathering of this kind will be remembered by its ambience, the exchange of notes, the cross-cultural traffic of ideas.

A word about the angry Indian

poets, who include Namdeo Dhasal, the Dalit Panther, and the Marathi poet whose poem, *A Day's Address To The Lord* I translated. The poem starts off with a bang, by calling God a mother-seducer in the first line itself. The tirade starts building up:

"Have you ever chopped one
cartload of firewood
for one piece of bread?"

Possibly, the Lord hasn't. He has not even gone down a mine-shaft to work coal out of the pits, if you ask me. Later, the Lord is told that "You don't have to pimp/to get half a tumbler/of country liquor for your father." Fair enough. God must be having an expense account that fetches him the best Scotch going. But when he goes on to say, "Lord, you are not placed in a situation like ours/ For that you first need a mother/ who whores for her children"—I object. You can't in the first and the last lines of your poem call someone

a mother-sleeper and in the middle say that he does not have a mother. Even abuse must have its logic. As a result I wrote the following cautionary poem.

TO THE ANGRY INDIAN POET

When the obese Allen Ginsberg
hardly gets a rating
and his Hare Krishna cult
is already dating
When Lawrence Ferlinghetti
is getting remote as the yeti;
And Gregory Corso
Is off everyone's torso;
When 'God is dead' has been said
by fife and drum and gong
and none will touch that sixties
cliché
with a pair of tongs
Why are we dating Osborne?
Why does God get a berating?
What exactly is the angry
Indian poet celebrating? ♦

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EMERGENCY WARD IV

There's enough drama to make a thousand films. Death, horror, and tragedy. Men mauled by tigers. Charred by flames. And more.

By Hutokshi Doctor

A STRETCHER is lowered from an ambulance. The saline drips fast, the bottles are carried aloft. The man on the stretcher lies conscious but numbed with Pethadine. His face is charred black, his eyes are swollen and bloodshot. All along his body the skin has been licked off by flames in a grotesquely striated pattern. You can smell burnt flesh as they carry him in and lay him down on the floor of the Emergency Ward. The usual enquiries begin, but the doctor on casualty duty this morning does not examine him — there is nothing that can be done here. As the sheet that covers the lower part of his body is peeled off, crackling as it leaves the blistered flesh, you wait for the screams. But Pawar, police officer, only lies there in a stupor.

No relatives have come with this man. Only a neighbour, who grimly holds up the bottles of saline. Several curious patients and nurses surround the stretcher, staring down at him, and I wonder what will happen when the tranquillisers begin to wear off. How will this young policeman take the pain? Up in the Plastic Surgery Ward, how many months will he wait for his body to heal, inch by inch? And how will he take the knowledge of the death of his wife who, they say, in an

uncontrollable spurt of anger, poured kerosene over herself and died three hours ago? And how will he quell visions of himself in her flaming grasp? Or his own voice shouting for water as he kicked over an empty drum and clawed at a dry tap? Even his neighbour will never forget the sight. They wheel him away to Ward 36, and the smell of burnt flesh goes with him.

Peace returns to Ward 4. A transitory place where each night brings its share of emergencies and each day brings a stream of patients: some to be treated and discharged, some to wait their turn in the Operation Theatre, some to be removed to the cramped and crowded wards upstairs and some to die in these rusted beds with their stained rubber sheets and yellowed linen.

The Emergency Ward is located in one corner of this government hospital in the crowded Muslim areas of Central Bombay. The 200-bed capacity of this hospital is invariably stretched to accommodate 400 patients.

Night, the saying goes, never falls in the Emergency Ward. The fans are always whirring, the tube-lights always burn. Even on those rare occasions when the ward is quiet and most of the beds are empty, an air of expectancy prevails. There is always the feeling that

Hutokshi Doctor is an Imprint staffer. Her last feature was The Ghosts Who Talk in April.





BEING THERE

the quietude is unreal, that at this very moment an ambulance is making its way through the crowded roads lined with cluttered houses and interspersed with the green domes of mosques.

And when the patients come, they say, they really come in hordes.

But, barring the brief interruption, it is a quiet morning. Three ward-boys in white shorts get back to work, cutting long strips of bandages and rolling them into bundles. Another plucks wisps of cotton wool from a huge white cloud and rolls them into smaller balls that will be stuffed into bleeding nostrils and aching ears, that will be rubbed against dozens of sore arms preferred for injections in the course of this day.

On one side of this lofty room, where the white enamel basins and buckets are always brimming with blood-soaked swabs and empty vials, the saline drips slowly into the forearm of Akbar, who was brought here last night with his blood sugar dangerously high and raw carbuncles on his arms. Beside him sits a woman in a black *burkha*, waiting for this last bottle to be exhausted. The night has passed. For her, the crisis is over.

But for Bachchu, 10-year-old son of a rag-picker, just wheeled in from the X-Ray Department, and curling up under his mother's yellow *chunni*, the ordeal has just begun. His right leg has compound fractures and he must wait until late evening before he is summoned to the Operation Theatre (OT) upstairs. On the benches that line the corridor outside Ward 4, several little companions wait and five half-empty bags of rags are propped up against one wall. Akbar's father sits slouched in one corner, dozing. Every half-hour or so, the old man walks in to look at his sleeping son, briefly.

FOUR NURSES march in to relieve the night nurses. Their uniforms are freshly starched, but their ridiculous head-dresses, secured with long bobbins, are grimy with repeated use and their socks, held up with rubber bands, are yellowed. Notes on last night's activities are exchanged. Last night's 'grand emergency' was a railway accident that left a man's arm almost totally dismembered and his hip bone sticking out white from a mass of

crushed flesh and muscle. Two nights ago the 'grand emergency' came in the form of a man mauled by a tiger at the Byculla zoo. "His arm had to be disengaged," says Staff Nurse Ekbote, who has dealt with emergencies in this ward for four years. Her presence, they say, presages disaster. "Whenever Staff Ekbote is on duty so many grand emergencies come..." sighs her colleague. And Senior Staff Ekbote laughs proudly and says: "Muharram! You should come here then. So many stab wounds come, whole night."

The night nurses, with their gory reminiscences, depart.

The Out Patient Department (OPD) behind the Emergency Ward, is crowded with patients, every one of them a victim of poverty. The only department that is deserted is the vasectomy camp where a volunteer sits, ready to dole

TWO NIGHTS AGO,
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zoo. His arm had to
be disengaged.

out Rs 200 to men who never enter. Dozens of doors open onto a cavernous waiting-room. There is no privacy for patients being examined. At least ten patients wait while one is being examined and everybody fights for the stools at the doctors' sides. Then half the patients are sent packing to the dispensary where medicines are doled out free of charge and the other half are directed, inevitably, to the Emergency Ward.

Back at the Emergency Ward, Staff Keluskar has taken charge. Authoritative blue-belt, she rules the roost. To the OPD patients who flock to the door for dressings and injections she yells: "Single file! Single file!" She allots beds, sends patients for ECGs and X-rays, raps errant ward-boys on the head, jokes with the doctors who visit the ward periodically.

Two housemen are on duty today. One of them questions a vague father about his son, lying gasping in pain. An old scar runs down one side of his abdomen. The doctor asks what the operation was for.

"Pata nahin, saab."

"Kya takleeph thi?"

"Pani bhar jata tha."

"Pani?"

"Haan, saab."

And so it goes on. A fat young man is wheeled in on a stretcher, groaning loudly and rolling from side to side. Trainee Nurse Rajput, knocking off the top of a vial as expertly as a chef breaking eggs, fills her syringe, and advances. The sight of the needle is too much for the patient who pleads, begs, and finally bursts into loud sobs. Two embarrassed friends hold him down. Nurse Rajput tells him kindly: "You don't look here," pats his cheek, and shoves the needle in. More yells follow.

Between arranging various sizes of syringes and needles in the bubbling sterilizer and poking needles into arms, Nurse Rajput, in the profession for just over a year, rushes back to her chair to read a paragraph or two in *Toohey's Medicine For Nurses*.

"What's wrong with that patient?" asks a debonair and cocksure doctor, pointing to the hysterical fat man.

"Abdominal pain, doctor."

"What are the causes of abdominal pain?" the doctor asks, pointing to the 13th edition of *Toohey's*.

"Colitis, appendicitis, urinary retention..."

"You'll need to read a lot more of *Toohey*," he says. And Nurse Rajput returns diligently to the chapter on Respiratory Diseases, staring hard at a diagram of bronchioli and alveoli.

When he is out of earshot, Nurse Rajput confides: "This is horrible, horrible work. Everyday to see all this..." She looks around the large, drab room where the only colour is the green of the sheets that shroud surgical instruments and the green of a hillside against a very blue sky — somebody's effort to brighten up the room.

ALMOST ALL the beds have now been occupied by patients — some still, some stirring, some groaning, and one old Muslim with a lean, chiselled face who sits upright through

BEING THERE

the afternoon, with one stump crossed over one thin leg, stoically waiting for an abscess on the stump to be drained.

Babies are being rolled over and poked on the bottom. One scream and, before they can draw in their breath again, they've been bundled out.

Noor Hassan is being wheeled out of the ward. "*Dekhte nahin? Haddi toot gayee hai,*" he mutters darkly as he passes by. "*Sari duniya ko pata chal gaya hai.*" A ward-boy manoeuvres the cantankerous Noor Hassan down the corridor and into X-Ray, his swollen limb stuck out in front for everyone to see.

Out in the corridor, scores of people wait, some for relatives and friends, others for the Minor OT to be unlocked so that small wounds can be dressed and small operations performed. A craftsman waits with four crushed fingers, trying to stem the flow with wads of gauze, but the blood trickles down to his elbows nevertheless.

An aged couple stands against one wall. White-bearded Mushtaq has come to take his wife home after two months spent recuperating from an operation that has left a scar running across her neck. They walk into the Emergency Ward, holding out their prescription for medicine. And they are sent back to the dispensary where they have already been told that the medicines are not available. They deliberate outside the dispensary. Then Mushtaq slips the prescription across the counter again. "Come back tomorrow," he is told. But Mushtaq refuses to go back to Bhiwandi without the medicines. He settles down on a bench. His wife squats on the floor. "*Allah kuch na kuch karega,*" he says.

IN ONE of the Minor Operation Theatres, dressings are being done. In the other, an intern bends over a figure covered in green. One red hole is exposed and the intern's gloved fingers dab away at the bloody spot, the torn and bleeding ear-lobe of a woman. The intern prepares to make her first suture. On the other table, an abscess on a man's arm is being cleaned with spirit. The man shrieks in pain. A trainee anaesthetist tries four times to get the needle into the right vein. At the fifth painful try, she succeeds, and the patient's eyelids droop

as the anaesthesia flows in. Dr Karve struggles into a green gown and pulls on a pair of surgical gloves. In the middle of a long tirade about the inadequate staff and salary at a government hospital, Dr Karve makes the incision across the abscess. Blood and pus pour out. Three white fingers are inserted between the leathery flaps of skin and more gore is dug out of the abscess. An orange tape is tucked into the three-inch incision, the orange turning red as it soaks up the blood. The dressing is done, quickly. The intern at the other table is still struggling to get a neat job done on that ear-lobe.

Outside the cold OT, with its overpowering antiseptic smell, two more abscesses wait to be drained. Bloody gloves are being washed at a sink, then sterilized, then powdered and packed away. On a tall clothes-rack, several

THE VISITORS
wait to file into
the wards. Some
bring apples. Some
bring tea. But
nobody ever brings
flowers to a
government
hospital.

pairs of gloves flutter dry.

Little children, tired of waiting outside Ward 4, begin playing with stones tied up in long, dirty bandages. And inching his way down the corridor is Navinbhai. He has just been discharged, and though his speech is incomprehensible and his facial muscles slack, though he must flop down onto the benches every minute or so, he is determined to walk out of this place alone. His wife walks behind him, encouraging, but never allowed to give him a hand.

And Nurse Rajput is back to sterilizing her syringes and needles, cracking off, in one swift movement of her scissors, the tops of her vials. She has had no more time for *Toohay*.

A houseman is examining a middle-aged woman who woke up at four this morning to store water for the day, fell

down in the bathroom suddenly and discovered, in a matter of minutes, that she could not move her right arm or leg. Neither could she enunciate her words or control her bowel and bladder movements. Her left eyelid droops, and she sees double with that eye. The doctor fetches a piece of gauze and wipes her tears away. Then she is wheeled away to Neurology.

Nobody stays long in the Emergency Ward, but still, it is never empty.

An alcoholic has just been brought in, reeking of liquor and with a cracked arm and fractured femur. His dirty, unshaven face is quite calm as Dr Ahuja, the orthopaedic trainee, moulds a plaster cast over his arm. His leg will be held in traction for two-and-a-half months in the Orthopaedic Ward which begins where the staircase ends, with mattresses stretching across the floor, where paraplegics, with even their heads clamped down, call out to the doctors as they pass by, waiting for a reassuring word.

In the lobby, scores of visitors wait to file into the wards at visiting time. Some bring an apple each, some come with welcome flasks of hot tea, some carry packets of Britannia's Glucose Biscuits — offerings to the sick. Nobody brings flowers to a government hospital.

In one corner of the lobby, a man sits cross-legged, rocking himself and crying. And Bachchu, the rag-picker's son, waits on a stretcher for a bed-lift to take him up to the OT. At the far end of the lobby, a man and wife have clambered onto the pedestal of Sir JJ, patron saint of this hospital, turbaned and jowly. They place flowers between the folds of his robe. The wife lights several sticks of *aggarbatti* and waves them around as Sir JJ towers head and shoulders above her. The husband cracks a coconut, sprinkles the water over Sir JJ's legs, then places the two halves reverently upon his feet. And then a little boy is told to be properly grateful to the patron saint who has blessed his mother's recovery. So he goes up to the huge black figure, stares up in awe, folds his hands and scampers away as fast as he can. Then the family hurries away, before the sun can set behind the old white walls that Sir JJ built, before the inauspicious darkness descends. ♦

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THE FAILURE OF RIGHT-WING

Why have Right-wing parties never been successful in Indian politics? Why is socialism still a vogue word? Sundeep Waslekar offers some explanations.

WHEN RAJIV GANDHI appeared on television to address the nation on his landslide, he belied the expectations of many people. He said, in very categorical terms, that he had no intentions of breaking with the socialist policies of his mother. "The mandate is not just for change," he later clarified to a journalist. "It's for a continuity of certain ideals, certain ideologies, of certain policies, but a change in implementation."

Rajiv's choice of men for his new scheme of things reflects the preponderance of Leftist old-timers. Sukumoy Chakraborty continues to be the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors. G Parthasarathy's position as the head of the foreign ministry's Policy Planning Committee is strengthened by the appointment of the low-profile Khurshid Alam Khan at the minister of state level. K N Raj, an economist of Leftist convictions, was approached for the deputy chairmanship of the Planning Commission. It was only after Raj turned down the offer that Reserve Bank Governor, Manmohan Singh, was transferred to Yojana Bhawan.

Sundeep Waslekar, a frequent Imprint contributor, teaches Politics and writes for several American publications.

That the new Prime Minister is only aiming at a simplification of existing procedures, and not any fundamental deviation from socialism, is clearly indicated by his actions. There is no hint of privatising any public sector units. Despite the euphoria of the business community and stock market rallies, Rajiv and his men have not said anything about scrapping controls. The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act remains as it was. Changes have mainly been limited to matters of structural convenience like the amalgamation of the Department of Company Affairs with the Industries Ministry. Notwithstanding all the talk about reorienting foreign policy, Rajiv has adhered to non-alignment and old equations. He has, on more than one occasion, assured the Soviet Union of the continuity of old policies.

Why is Rajiv Gandhi so keen on Leftist rhetoric and policies? Has the Right failed again to assert itself despite Rajiv's executive buddies? Or has the Left also failed, except in rhetoric? For if Rajiv has not abolished controls, he has not increased them either. Though the MRTP ceiling has been raised in the recent budget, the controls still remain. If no public sector unit is privatised, there is also no indication of nationalising private sector industries. Rajiv Gandhi has indicated that he is keeping his options about the United States open even though he would like Indo-Soviet ties to grow. And although he has talked about secularism, he has not exactly desisted from going out of the way to attract Hindu votes.

RAJIV'S REFUSAL to make a drastic departure from existing policies, either towards Right or Left, is a commentary on the success of a consensus. Successive governments in India have formulated their policies within a broad framework of accepted



THE



notions. In a system where one party has dominated the polity and where most of the Opposition parties are breakaway groups from that party, the consensus has always been a Congress consensus. Besides a few regional parties like the Ram Rajya Parishad in Rajasthan, the Ganatantra Parishad in Orissa, which no longer exists, and the Jana Sangh-turned-Bharatiya Janata Party, the Opposition to the Congress consensus has come from within the Congress or from those who have left the Congress.

Undoubtedly, around the time of the birth of the nation, the Congress, due to the overriding personality of Nehru, had shifted distinctly to the Left. Sardar Patel was the only person who could have succeeded in shifting the consensus to the Right. The Congress, being synonymous with the freedom movement, had swept big industries, landed farmers and urban professionals with it. Only communal interests had kept aloof from the Congress since they had their own body, the Hindu Mahasabha. Rightist interests within the Congress — entrepreneurs, rich farmers, the Westernised intelligentsia — supported Nehru against Sardar Patel, largely because of his personal stature, while Patel was backed by merchants, retired civil servants and orthodox Hindus. But he also controlled the party machine and enjoyed a strong rapport with middle-level party functionaries.

Patel used his influence to convince the AICC's February 1948 session to pass an amendment to the party constitution which prohibited the functioning of the Congress Socialist Party, and forced the socialists under Acharya Narendra Dev's leadership to quit the Congress. He twice opposed Nehru's plans of setting up an Advisory Planning Board, a forerunner of the Planning Commission, by insisting that such a board should comprise industrialists, business economists and civil servants. He succeeded in listing the right to property among the fundamental rights, despite Nehru's stiff opposition to it. He also forced the Cabinet to agree to the privy purses sanctioned to the former princes. So great was Patel's primacy in the decision-making process that it led the Communist Party of India (CPI) to lament,

"Nehru's utterances remain mere words and Nehru becomes more and more the democratic mask for Patel." Observed Michael Brecher, Nehru's biographer, "Patel could have even ousted Nehru from the prime ministership; the party would have backed him."

Patel's death in December 1950 eliminated any possibility of change. It also created a leadership vacuum in the Congress Right. There was neither a line of succession nor a coherent pressure group. Purshottamdas Tandon, whose election as Congress party president had been supported by Patel, was too weak to oppose Nehru's personality. He was easily removed from the presidentship. Nehru continued to dominate the Congress all through the '50s. Those who did not agree with him, like Minoo Masani, had already left the party. Others, like Rajaji, kept quiet and slowly retired from politics. It was at the state level that the consensus on socialist policies was opposed. Morarji Desai and S K Patil, in the then state of Bombay, did not fully approve of Nehru's socialism since they drew support from capitalists. Similar were the cases of Atulya Ghosh in West Bengal and K Kamaraj in Madras. But Desai, Patil, Ghosh, Kamaraj and others of their tribe were dwarfs before a towering Nehru. There was little that they could have done at the national level.

MORE INFLUENTIAL Rightist forces appeared outside the Congress. Some former maharajahs joined hands to form regional parties. Promising the electorate the good old days of Lord Rama, *ayurvedic* medicine and a barter economy, Swami Karapatri's Ram Rajya Parishad from Rajasthan won three seats in the first general election. In Bihar, Raja Kamkhya Narain Singh's Janta Party emerged to oppose the abolition of zamindari. And in Orissa, the Maharajah of Kalahandi floated the Ganatantra Parishad.

The communal forces also organised themselves. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Hindu Mahasabha launched a political alternative, the Jana Sangh. But the Jana Sangh had its own limitations. In its over-obsession with Hindu nationalism, it overlooked the fact that the Hindus were also

workers, producers and consumers. Those Hindus who were more interested in their own welfare than in the philosophical welfare of their religion were hardly enthusiastic about the Jana Sangh. Its campaigns for cow-slaughter-ban, compulsion of Hindi, a single penal code and Hindu nationalism only attracted upper caste, literate, salaried, Northern, orthodox Hindus. In particular, its silence on economic issues drove industrialists and rich peasants away.

The party that some, if not all, industrialists and landowning farmers sponsored as their own was the Swatantra Party. The Forum of Free Enterprise, an association of Bombay business executives, together with the Madras-based All India Agriculturists Federation and disgruntled Rightist elements in the Congress, created the Swatantra Party in 1959. Its Western intellectual appearance enticed urban professionals while its orthodox social programme lured maharajahs into its fold. The Ram Rajya Parishad, Ganatantra Parishad and Janta Party also merged with the Swatantra Party.

Even though some of the key Swatantra leaders were financiers and executives of large industrial houses — Homi Mody, A D Shroff, Minoo Masani — the party was not exactly the favourite of Indian industry. That status went to the Congress. Except for Morarji Vaidya, a Birla executive who was involved only in the initial stages of the formation of the party, North Indian industrialists did not associate themselves with the Swatantra Party. For industry at large, the Swatantra Party was, at best, the second alternative.

The business community was merely being businesslike in its preference for the Congress over Right-wing parties like the Swatantra. Since the political system commanded the economic system in India, it was obvious that economic interests would be subservient to those who commanded the political system. The Congress might or might not be a Leftist party. But it was certainly the ruling party and it seemed poised to remain the ruling

party for a few years. Industrialists were bothered about licences, quotas and permits and these were interests which could not be left to weak Opposition parties. They would give some funds to the Opposition parties in case the latter came to power in future. But so long as the Opposition parties were in the Opposition, they could not be the recipients of benevolence.

INDUSTRY, however, had its own preferences within the Congress. Those it supported — S K Patil, Morarji Desai, Atulya Ghosh — made appearances on the national scene by the early '60s. The Indian army's humiliation at the hands of the Chinese made it possible for the Congress Right to reassert itself. The leaders of

THE SWATANTRA Party's so-called success in the 1967 elections was an illusion. The party did have 44 MPs returned but it increased its share of the popular vote only by one per cent.

the Congress Left — K D Malaviya and Krishna Menon — were thrown out of the Cabinet. Nehru himself was weaker than ever. Notes Sarvepalli Gopal, prominent historian, "After 1962, Nehru's purpose and authority shrivelled and he reigned in increasing decrepitude because he could not bring himself to retire and others were too good mannered to insist on his departure." S K Patil and Morarji Desai, who held the significant portfolios of agriculture and finance respectively, openly flouted the Planning Commission's recommendations. Patil refused to licence wholesale trade and procure foodgrains at fixed prices in the wake of the food crisis. He insisted on giving incentives to increase production and solve the problem of food shortage. He and his

colleagues also flaunted their connections with the Washington establishment.

The Congress Right got an opportunity after Nehru's death. The syndicate leaders controlled the party machine. Had they stayed together, they could have grabbed the government. But a lust for power, a lack of vision and sheer imprudence stimulated Kamaraj, Atulya Ghosh, Sanjiva Reddy and S K Patil to conspire against Morarji Desai. Lal Bahadur Shastri, who they chose, was politically very weak. Even though he made a tacit break with the past, he was by all means a Nehruvian. He invited Indira Gandhi to join his Cabinet, perhaps unknowingly preparing her for greater government responsibilities after him. After Shastri's death, Kamaraj and his capitalist cronies in the Congress prepared themselves for political suicide. In organising a support campaign for Mrs Gandhi against Morarji Desai and assuming that they would be able to check her because she was young and immature, they demonstrated their own immaturity.

It was the beginning of the end of the Congress Right. Charan Singh's departure from the Uttar Pradesh ministry in 1967 to form the Bharatiya Kranti Dal expedited its erosion. Having been known for championing the cause of peasant cultivators, he managed to mobilise Northern landowning farmers to support his Dal.

In the meanwhile, an intermediate class of shopkeepers and small traders had grown, which identified itself with the Jana Sangh rather than the Congress. Little concerned about the ruling party's control over licences, petty merchants would rather be with a party that satisfied their ego. They enhanced the Jana Sangh's strength in Parliament from 14 in 1962 to 35 in 1967, or from 6 per cent to over 9.4 per cent of the votes.

The Jana Sangh's and the BKD's gains were Swatantra's losses. True, the Swatantra Party returned 44 MPs in the 1967 elections as compared to 18 in 1962. But the increase in votes was only one per cent. "The party's so-called success was an illusion," says Howard Erdman, author of a book on the Swatantra Party's history. People had voted for local Congress dissidents and groups like Gujarat's Kshatriya Mahasabha and Orissa's Ganatantra

Parishad. Where there were no local groups — outside Gujarat, Orissa, Rajasthan and Bihar — the Swatantra Party was mauled at the polls.

But it was the Congress, and not the Swatantra Party, which faced a real debacle in the 1967 poll. It lost 80 seats in the Lok Sabha, exercising a strain on the Leftist leadership and enabling the syndicate to stage a small recovery. Morarji Desai staked his claim and succeeded in securing the deputy prime ministership. The 1968 Hyderabad session of the AICC was a test of strength. The syndicate barely managed to retain the balance of power in the election for the seven elective seats in the 21-member Congress Working Committee. In appointing the 13 nominated members, S Nijalingappa, who had been chosen compromise president, preserved the same factional balance. The new Central Parliamentary Board elected by the Working Committee also appeared equally divided between the two groups. The vacuum persisted in the Congress party for a few months with no group in a clearly dominant position.

AS THE '60s came to a close, the Indian polity underwent a clear Right and Left divide. The Congress syndicate patched up its internal differences. Morarji Desai joined Kamaraj and Atulya Ghosh in sponsoring Sanjiva Reddy as the presidential candidate and then in splitting the 85-year-old organisation. S Nijalingappa finally jumped off the fence and decided that he shared Kamaraj and Company's age, habits and ideology. He then invited Indira Gandhi's wrath for having held secret meetings with the Jana Sangh and Swatantra leaders. The Congress Right was at last talking to the non-Congress Right.

The *rapprochement* between the Congress and non-Congress Right-wing forces created a grand alliance. Industry already backed the syndicate and the rich peasantry was with Charan Singh. Zamindars, maharajahs and urban professionals were with the Swatantra Party. The intermediate class and communal forces backed the Jana Sangh.

Facing the grand alliance of the Right was Mrs Gandhi. She was the representative of women, workers, the lower-middle class and the rural poor.

The leader of young radicals like Mohan Dharia and Chandrashekhar and the inspiration of CPI-converts like Mohan Kumaramangalam, Mrs Gandhi seemed to be set for a revolution. Moreover, she was the most obvious inheritor of Jawaharlal Nehru's legacy. Her nationalisation of banks in 1969 proved that she was prepared to translate her convictions into practice. The communist parties, particularly the CPI, joined her in her Leftist rhetoric.

As the Right and the Left faced each other on the eve of the 1971 elections, the country was in a pessimistic mood. The 1966 devaluation of the rupee had hurt the national ego. Moreover, it failed to provide any great succour in narrowing the balance of pay-

al fervour in favour of change.

And who could best provide the change? Who had not been tried before? It was a golden opportunity for the Jana Sangh-BKD-Swatantra group. Had they come out with an attractive alternative, recruited desperate youth and students, offered a singularly novel solution to the economic woes, they would have won the people's acceptance. But the non-Congress Right did not bother to open its eyes. Intoxicated by a zeal to expunge Mrs Gandhi, it laid out strategies which ensured its own extermination. Instead of inviting the youth of tomorrow, it associated itself with the failed Congress syndicate of yesteryears. Together they presented Ram Subhag Singh, a faceless politician, as their official leader in the Lok Sabha.

On the other hand, Mrs Gandhi promised a miracle. Discarding the old party machinery, she revived the moribund Youth Congress and set up a separate National Students Union. V Ravi, the Keralite student leader in charge of the AICC's student wing, travelled all over the country establishing NSUI branches in universities and colleges. Jagjivan Ram, a Harijan, was placed in the august office of the party presidentship. Thus, armed with her image as a saviour of the backward castes, youth and the dispossessed, Mrs Gandhi undertook a whirlwind tour of

THE 1971 ELECTIONS saw a battle between the Left, represented by Indira Gandhi, and the Right, represented by the Swatantra, Jana Sangh and Congress (O).

ment deficits. The backlog of the registered unemployed had increased from 12 million in 1966 to 15 million in 1971. Worsening food shortages and spiralling prices had caused starvation deaths in Bihar and triggered off large-scale food riots in West Bengal and Kerala. The planning process had completely collapsed, relegating the five-year plans to a temporary system of annual plans. There were problems, problems and only problems on the economic front. The electorate was depressed and confused.

Anyone who could have provided the promise of a dramatic solution to economic problems would have received a massive mandate. People were looking for something new, possibly a miracle. There was a definite emotion-

of the nation. Making an ideological issue of her differences with the syndicate personalities, she explained the Congress split as an attack of vested interests on her economic programme for elimination of poverty. *Garibi Hatao*, a simple slogan was coined to explain the complex issues of economic reform.

The voters had to choose between Indira *Hatao* and *Garibi Hatao*, failure and potential, the old and the new, the aged and the youth, mediocrity and glamour. Their choice was obvious.

MRS GANDHI secured more than an electoral victory in 1971. As the Congress syndicate and the Swatantra Party had been discredited, industry switched loyalties

to her. Industry also realised that it was possible to use controls and licences to its advantage rather than being discouraged by them. A new class of bribers and bribe-seekers emerged in India. As the business community was depoliticised, politics became a lucrative business.

Urban professionals also turned to Mrs Gandhi. Her victory over Pakistan and India's high profile in the world satisfied their egos. Mrs Gandhi represented the future, the hope. But when they realised that their hopes were hollow, they became disillusioned.

Landed farmers were split into two camps. Some stayed with Charan Singh. Others joined the Congress. Songs of praise for Mrs Gandhi could place them in the modern power structure. Despite all the socialist rhetoric, the landed interests were best served by the Congress. Since the practice of purchasing block votes flourished with bribery, perpetuation of old equations became easy in the rural areas.

Thus, deprived of the support of many of its natural constituencies, the Right was in a total mess. The Congress moved further to the Left. There was more and more slogan-mongering. Russian support for India during the Bangladesh War and Mrs Gandhi's personality conflict with the Nixon-Kissinger duo tilted foreign policy towards Moscow. But victory in the war only earned India ten million refugees from Bangladesh and additional taxation. The oil price hike of 1973 aggravated the economic crisis. As expenses increased with no corresponding rise in consumption, much less in income, people were even more disillusioned. They expressed their anguish in the form of strikes, lock-outs and riots.

The Right had another opportunity at this stage. Had it organised itself and offered an attractive alternative, it could have gained acceptance. Instead, it opted out of parliamentary politics. Jayaprakash Narayan's call for 'total revolution' and Gujarat's Navnirman Movement attracted popular support from the people and prompted the Emergency. The entire Opposition was

behind bars by the end of June 1975. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh was banned. The Swatantra Party was almost liquidated. The Jana Sangh was on the verge of extinction.

THE INTERMEDIATE class and communal forces which had hitherto supported the Jana Sangh now sided with Sanjay Gandhi. Sanjay hated communists and communism. And even though he befriended some individual Muslims — notably A R Antulay, Akbar Ahmed, F M Khan — his image was anti-Muslim. Much to the pleasure of his dumb and rowdy followers, he floated the slogan, "Talk less, work more." 'Talk less', meant wasting no time in ideological rhetoric, particularly of the socialist

**THE PARADOX IS
Rightist interests
benefit most from
Leftist policies and
Leftist rhetoric. So
how then can the
Right ever openly
stake its claim to
power? Socialism
works better for
the capitalists.**

style. 'Work more' implied, apart from planting trees and sterilising young men, issuing souvenirs and using all sorts of means to collect funds.

When elections were announced in 1977, the consensus was inclined towards the Right. The choice was between the Sanjay Right and the moderately Right-wing Janata party. Since the latter also offered liberty, particularly from sterilisation, it was brought to power. The non-Congress Right now almost snatched the opportunity. Morarji Desai was the prime minister, Charan Singh held the number-two position in the Cabinet. Atal Behari Vajpayee of the erstwhile Jana Sangh controlled the foreign ministry while Swatantra's H M Patel managed the economy. All the important min-

istries, except industry, were thus controlled by the Right.

But mistakes were repeated. Septuagenarian and octogenarian leaders did not understand what little urchins in India's streets could. Too busy with their quarrels, Charan, Morarji and Vajpayee did not envisage the Leftist attack from forces inside the Janata party. After a visit to Moscow, Madhu Limaye conspired with George Fernandes and Raj Narain against Morarji's government. Indira Gandhi lost no time in picking up her threads.

Indira Gandhi's second reign and Rajiv Gandhi's current Congress have thus accommodated all the Right-wing interests. The non-resident investment scheme, plans to purify the Ganges, computerisation, streamlining of the industrial licencing process, educational reform, the recent announcement about industry per district, are all designed to serve the Right. The poor are forgotten except at the time of occasional loan-melas. Otherwise, these are the days of the Asiad, NAM and the contractors who benefit from them.

The rhetoric is, however, Leftist. It always pays to talk about selfless service and altruism. It pays to talk about sacrifices for the poor and the down-trodden. It pays to be known as progressive and egalitarian rather than orthodox and selfish profiteers. It also pays to claim an association with Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

This is the big paradox. The interests of the Right are promoted by parties which talk about socialism, the leaders of which are assisted by a succession of Leftist advisors, ranging from Mahalanobis to Chakraborty. On the other hand, the interests of the Left are promoted by organisations like the PUCL which talk about liberty, and whose leaders, like Arun Shourie, are known Rightists.

In this paradox, the Right, as an ideology, has failed, as it cannot deliver the goods to Rightist interests who benefit from Leftist rhetoric and a Leftist-controlled economy. In the absence of a competing ideology, what the country has today is a free-for-all broad consensus which might sometimes be inclined to the Left, sometimes to the Right. The choice is no longer between different programmes and ideologies. The choice is between personalities. ♦

H N BAHUGUNA

He has changed parties, personae and policies so often that nobody should take this Natwarlal seriously. But the Indian press still blows his trumpet.

By Vidhushak

IMAGINE an inter-collegiate quiz contest on Doordarshan. Team A is asked a question about the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu and it comes up with the correct answer. Team B is queried on the political avatars of Hemavati Nandan Bahuguna. It gives up. The question is then passed on to Team C and then Team A. They too are floored. After the programme is over the contestants grumble, "How can one remember so many political avatars? We knew the names of the 100 Kaurava brothers. . . But Bahuguna. . . that's asking too much."

The contestants do have a point. After all, how many, even of the politically conscious, are aware that H N Bahuguna is at present (that is provided he has not changed parties during the period this article was processed) the head of the Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) wing of Chowdhary Charan Singh's Dalit Mazdoor Kisan Party (DMKP)?

Critics of the DMKP point out that the party stands for none of these: Dalits, *mazdoors* or *kisans*. If that is so, how far does Bahuguna's DSP represent democracy and socialism?

Labels come easy for Indian politicians. We have 'Left-wingers' whose standards of living would have astonished Marx and Lenin. Some of our 'progressive democrats' like Sharad Pawar have been the worst of defectors. Our Right-wingers merrily hob-nob with alleged Naxalites. In this frantic scramble for power, Bahuguna stands unique.

Let us try to analyse the Bahuguna enigma. It goes something like this: from the Congress to the Congress (I), then the Congress for Democracy, followed by the Janata, and the Congress (I) again — Independent but supported by the Opposition — and then the Democratic Socialist Party and the DSP wing of the DMKP.

How is it that such a turncoat politician has functioned for years at the national level? The answer: He is a paper tiger projected by sections of the media.

What are the political highlights of this paper tiger? The 66-year-old Bahuguna has been a minister in the UP Cabinet, chief minister of UP and a Cabinet minister at the Centre, sport-



PAPER TIGERS

“Doon School boys,” roared Bahuguna, “are not the representatives of India.” Sadly, the electorate didn’t think that he was fit to be a representative either.

ing the Congress and the Congress (I) labels. When the Janata came to power, Bahuguna, as the CDF representative, became, once again, a Cabinet minister. Back in the Congress in 1980, he was the party’s general secretary; but he quit when he was denied a Cabinet post. Since then, he has been in the wilderness, emitting occasional roars, as all paper tigers do.

What has been the major guiding force of such a political career: opportunism or ideology? Did he leave the Congress (I) in 1977 because of his disenchantment with the Emergency or had he shrewdly guessed that the party stood no chance in the Lok Sabha election? As mentioned earlier, ideology is a rather flexible factor in Indian politics and Bahuguna has always been a smart operator, who, surprisingly, has overreached himself since 1980.

Bahuguna is supposed to be considerably Left-of-centre, secular (championing the causes of the minorities, particularly the Muslims), a friend of the Soviet Union and a spokesman of the masses. He ought to have been a misfit in the Congress which thrived on populist slogans like *Garibi Hatao* which applied only to its leading lights who enriched themselves, backing big business houses and pushing hard for the multinationals. How he survived in the Janata circus under a Right-wing prime minister, a pro-West foreign minister and a deputy prime minister-cum-finance minister who was unabashedly for the landed gentry, particularly the Jats, is a mystery.

Even then, Bahuguna had some aces to play — he was the saviour of the minorities. If the Shahi Imam of Jamma Masjid was the Hardy of our Secular Comedy series, Bahuguna was the Laurel. Together they were terrific, rushing to the site of every communal riot, issuing statements which confused everyone and holding the RSS responsible, even while Bahuguna was working with his RSS-backed Jana Sangh

Cabinet colleagues.

How did Bahuguna tolerate the pro-West leanings (dubbed ‘genuine non-alignment’) of the Janata? Was he aware of the clandestine visit of the hated Moshe Dayan as Morarji’s personal guest? How many times did he speak out against Kanti Desai’s growing power, influence and wealth? What was his reaction when he was being dubbed an ‘agent of the KGB’? Was it ideology and opportunism that made him stick to the Janata?

It can be presumed that Bahuguna quit the Janata and returned to the ‘authoritarian’ Congress (I) only because he knew where his future lay. But then how can one serve the people as a party general secretary? One has to be in the Cabinet for that. Of course, there were some bright moments for Bahuguna: his Lok Sabha victories from Garhwal with the support of all the non-Congress (I) parties. That turned out to be the prelude to the final fall.

Was the 1984 Lok Sabha poll the last hurrah for Bahuguna? Pitted against Amitabh Bachchan in Allahabad, only a paper tiger could have made the statement, “For me this election means whether democracy in this country will survive or not.” Wife Kamala Bahuguna haughtily declared, “This is not worthy of a contest. The Congress (I) has conceded defeat by fielding Bachchan.” And Bahuguna could still come out with, “He collects crowds, I collect listeners. He collects viewers, I collect voters.”

Well, Bahuguna is out, and democracy, fortunately, is very much in. The Allahabad voters have come to recognise paper tigers; they gave an unceremonious heave-ho to the *dal badloo*.

Yet, paper tigers like Bahuguna, though often down, are seldom out. Though Jagjivan Ram has gracefully sunk into political oblivion after scraping through the Lok Sabha poll, Bahu-

guna is still thrashing about, gasping for breath. Rarely changing stripes, paper tigers keep giving interviews and making inane statements, and Bahuguna has not lagged behind in all this.

A favourite of *Blitz*, Bahuguna was reportedly propagating a ‘national consensus’ at the centre because of the ‘decadence of the Congress party’; it also seemed that he had joined the DMKP to ‘save Parliamentary democracy’. One can only observe: “God save Parliamentary democracy!”

“Doon School boys are not the representatives of India,” roars Bahuguna. “The sympathy wave is for Mrs Gandhi, not for these boys who are trying to ride the wave of emotion.” And when Amitabh told the electorate that he had entered the fray to strengthen the hands of Rajiv, only Bahuguna could come out with: “I am not interested in strengthening anyone’s position. I am only interested in strengthening the hands of millions of people who are without food, clothes and shelter.” Bahuguna would have been nearer the truth had he said, “I am contesting the poll only to strengthen myself!”

Today, like the short-lived Rashtriya Sanjay Manch, Bahuguna’s DSP lies in tatters, cruelly exposed as a joke of a political party, wiped out at the UP Assembly polls even in the hilly regions of UP, its so-called strongholds. One feels a bit sorry for Bahuguna, a professional politician, more mature and decent than Menaka Gandhi. A defeated MP, he has nowhere to stay in Delhi, and plans to come back to Allahabad to do ‘concrete work’. What has he been doing all these years?

In the meantime, he is threatening to write a book (*The Rise And Fall Of A Paper Tiger?*) on why Indira Gandhi would not have remained the prime minister and the party would never have split had he not supported her in 1969. So, watch out for this masterpiece in the fiction bestseller lists! ♦

EXTRACT

WHO'S *really* WHO

They are the people who fill the gossip columns. Who haunt the ski slopes of Gstaad. Who break the bank at Monte Carlo. Call them High Society. Or White Trash. But they comprise a modern day social register.

COMPTON MILLER offers a sardonic and not entirely flattering guide to some of them.

MARTIN AMIS



Writer. His literary Don Juan exploits have sometimes masked his real talent. The first four novels received mixed acclaim but were all noticed. Auberon Waugh described his satirical skills as 'an ear for bizarre dialogue, a rare order of comic invention and a malign, obsessive awareness of all the dirtier springs of human behaviour'. His usual cast of young debauchees, nihilists,

drug addicts, nymphomaniacs, sadists and freaks made him wonder if he lacked a serious moral purpose.

Amis began with two disadvantages: having a famous father and being so Lilliputian. Much-bullied at his Battersea grammar school, he fought back by dispensing stolen cigarettes and reading palms. He was eventually expelled after he spent four months AWOL in the Caribbean, filming *A High Wind In Jamaica* with Anthony Quinn.

After gaining a First at Oxford he won the Somerset Maugham prize for his first novel *The Rachel Papers* in 1973. He then worked on the *Times Literary Supplement* and was *New Statesman*'s literary editor.

Female admirers of his Jaggeresque face, lank blond hair and caustic wit have included erotic painter Angela Gorgas, Lord Rothschild's daughter, Victoria, and

Compton Miller is a gossip columnist. This article is extracted from his Who's Really Who with the permission of IBD.

Winston Churchill's granddaughter, Emma Soames. He admits once frolicking nude in a Hampstead pond with a Very Important Literary Hackette. Some cruel souls swear he dyes his eyebrows black.

MAHDI AL-TAJIR

Arab diplomat and middleman, sometimes called the world's richest man. "One billion? Two billion? I'm worth much more than that," he shrugs. One year he spent £30 million buying British property, including the Palladian Mereworth Castle. He has yet to sleep there, although he donates to local charities.

A Bahrain carpet-merchant's son, he went to Preston Grammar School. He then became senior Customs officer in Dubai, the Gulf port built on gold smuggling with India. The oil boom helped swell his coffers.

Backgammon-playing Al-Tajir has been the United Arab Emirates' ambassador here since 1972. A genius of a businessman, he has world-wide interests in banking, insurance, commodities and real estate. He bought a 20,000-acre Perthshire estate and started a Highland-water bottling plant to rival Perrier and a Moslem abattoir to supply our growing Asian population.

For foreigners in the Gulf States this bushy-browed Anglophile is the key contact, playing a Sir Ernest Cassel role to Dubai's Sheikh Rashid as financial advisor and 'eyes' in Europe. "He's a cross between the devil and the grand vizier," adds one observer.

JEFFREY ARCHER

Political has-been, tycoon *manqué*, now Britain's highest-paid author. In eight years his four novels, *Not A Penny*

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More, Not A Penny Less, Shall We Tell The President?, Kane And Abel and *The Prodigal Daughter* have sold over 40 million copies. He is so rich that he turned down Steven Spielberg's \$250,000 to write the *ET* book, just three weeks' work.

Educated at Wellington School (not the Berkshire public school), he became a precocious success at Oxford. He was a double Blue (athletics and gymnastics), president of Vincent's Club, a £1-million Oxfam fundraiser with a Beatles stunt and married to the beautiful Mary Weeden.

At 23 Archer was the Greater London Council's youngest councillor and at 26 the 'baby' of the House of Commons. He simultaneously made a fortune from property and commodities. In 1970 he lost everything in an unwise Canadian speculation. He resigned his safe Tory seat at Louth, sold his South Kensington mansion, Rolls Royce (registration ANY 1) and Russell Flint oils.

Now, as our Harold Robbins, minus the kinky sex, Archer has become mellower and kinder, though still very loud. His ambitious agent, Debbie Owen, has greatly contributed to his fame. But he has yet to conquer Hollywood with a blockbuster film. Mary has two sons and stays in Grantchester near her work as a Cambridge solar-energy expert. He joins them at weekends, negotiating even bigger deals Monday to Friday in his penthouse flat overlooking the Thames.

PRINCESS ANNE



Our royal Penelope Keith. The least-loved member of the Royal Family is turning into a conscientious, caring ambassador. In a recent survey she ran second to the Queen in her number of public engagements. She spent six out of 12 months away from her family in Gloucestershire, either riding, banqueting or touring overseas for the Save the Children Fund. Outwardly

she still shows many of the House of Windsor's faults. Rude and arrogant, unclever, she often appears to prefer horses to humans. She tells pressmen to 'naff off' and has called her husband, Mark Phillips, 'a silly bastard' in public.

But 'Four-Letter Annie' is misunderstood. Journalists do goad her and photographers follow her at equestrian events just to snap her falling off her horse. She is a typical rustic Sloane Ranger, happiest in jeans, quilted jacket, wellies and headscarf, loathing London and anything reeking of sophistication. Above all she is an Olympic-class rider, winner of the European three-day event championship and one of the best riders of her generation. Critics even complain that royal funds buy her the best mounts, like Doublet and Goodwill. "I can't win,"

she laughs grimly.

The Princess bores easily, a liability at public functions. If she yawns, looks sulky or speaks her mind it is because she has no artifice. Viewers of the Michael Parkinson show must have been surprised to see this side to her character. Most mothers with young children leave their jobs, but she refused. However, she is determined to spend more time with Peter and Zara Phillips than the Queen did with her (one reason, it is said, why she became so unruly).

Despite rows, Anne and Mark are as happy as any other upper-middle class couple. They share their horses and family and are far too conventional to divorce. Like Prince Philip, she will mellow. Press interest is already diminishing in favour of the younger, more glamorous royals. She will grow into a dignified country lady like her great-aunt, Princess Alice, Duchess of Gloucester. When will the Queen bestow on her the title of Princess Royal?

DR GERMAINE GREER



Former sexual freedom-fighter, Australian guru and self-styled La Dottoressa. She reverted to a single status although she was married for three weeks to a brawny labourer. She faded somewhat after her bestselling *The Female Eunuch*, a diatribe on men's dreadful treatment of the fairer sex.

Now, 15 years later, with *Sex And Destiny* Germaine has recanted. Sexual permissiveness was all a mistake: women have been used by men like a doughnut into which jam is squirted. Her volte-face on woman's lib was likened to Einstein denying his theory of relativity. In the '60s she had more lovers than she can count, including Hollywood stud Warren Beatty ('physically he's practically flawless'). Now she recommends the primitive Dani tribe who practise four to six years' abstinence after childbirth.

Germaine remains mistress of the stinging put-down and witty aside. Once on TV she was abused by Mary Whitehouse for her flip claim that British women buy more than a million vibrators a year. A recent biography claimed that she never wears knickers.

As a child Germaine was ordered to keep silent during TV commercials by her adman father. This must have been difficult for such an exuberant Sheila, built like an aboriginal totem-pole. Over-educated at Melbourne, Sydney and Cambridge universities, she joined the women's movement while lecturing at Warwick University in the late '60s.

Cat- and gardening-mad, she travels between homes in London and Tuscany where she has a farmhouse. For

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three years she lectured on Women's Literature in Oklahoma and recently wrote a more serious tract on the world's greatest female painters. Alas, her natural aggression and earthy approach often deter eager males drawn to her original mind. Her lasting regret is that she had no children. She remains one of the kindest, most caring friends.

MICK JAGGER



Rock's grand ole daddy and 'the only man with child-bearing lips' (Joan Rivers). He first appeared on TV as a schoolboy demonstrating canoeing, rock-climbing and camping with his father, Joe, a Dartford PT instructor. Weightlifting, press-ups, tennis and five-mile runs have kept him healthy for marathon concert tours and recording sessions, although he always looks shagged-out.

He has a strong sex drive. "Mick has always found grand families as seductive as long legs," a friend revealed after Jagger had escorted Sabrina Guinness and Natasha Fraser.

Old Jumping Jack Flash has never been quite the yobbo he pretends. The South London accent is put on for interviews. It was all part of the shock-the-establishment image conceived by the Rolling Stones' first manager, Andrew Loog Oldham. Darn it, he is a London School of Economics drop-out and his favourite pastime is cricket, y'know.

Today the jaded superstar is desperate for new challenges. . . intelligent film roles, a West End musical perhaps. "We're going to have to break up soon. We can't go on like an old comedy act." Having gone through the druggy, heavy-drinking, four-groupies-a-night scene, he yearns for a conventional life. Meanwhile he complains how broke he is, flits between his five homes and tries to keep up with girl-friend, Jerry Hall. His real love is daughter Jade. "When she grows up I'll warn her to watch out for blokes like me."

PRINCESS CAROLINE

Europe's 20th-century Venus. If Princess Diana has always been Lady Goody-Two-Shoes then Caroline is a royal Susan George. Headstrong, spoilt, irresponsible, over-sexy are some of the politer epithets. Prince Charles secretly fancied her but was too aware of the headlines to pursue her. (He could never have married a Catholic anyway.) Tall, perpetually tanned, with a Jane Fonda smile, she looks — even if she does not always behave — like the fairy-tale Princess.

Caroline's background caused her to rebel: the English boarding-school, the constant interference from Prince

Rainier and Princess Grace, plus the absurd Grimaldi family pretensions. Aged six she once saw Sir Winston Churchill being fêted in the south of France. "Is that man even more important than my Daddy?" she asked nanny.

The bra-less, uninhibited, nightclub-loving Princess soon flew the coop. She was reported 'necking' in the back of a car with London playboy Nigel Pollitzer. She romanced Wimbledon champion Bjorn Borg and a French pop singer. Finally she married social-climbing Paris' businessman Philippe Junot against her parents' wishes — and regretted it. Undeterred, she gallivanted with childhood friend, Robertino Rossellini and was photographed topless on a Hawaiian beach with Argentinian tennis champ, Guillermo Vilas.

Princess Grace's death temporarily sobered Caroline. But she was too rich, too beautiful, too easily tempted to be quiet for long. She took up with handsome Italian oil heir, Stefan Casiraghi, 25, and married him in 1984, shortly before the baby arrived. An ex-girl-friend observed: "Caroline must never let him out of her sight. He has a tendency to stray." We shall see.

PRINCE ANDREW



Europe's most eligible bachelor, forever labelled Randy Andy. The Wayward Prince image was improved by his Biggles-like Falklands exploits. But, until he marries, his penchant for fast blondes, raffish discos and press-baiting will continue to land him in trouble. As Jimmy Tarbuck joked: "He's at the awkward age — too young for Joan Collins and too old for Britt Ekland."

Like his brothers, Andrew was at Gordonstoun. But instead of university — his A-levels were too poor for Oxbridge — he went to Dartmouth Royal Naval College, where the Queen wisely signed him up for 12 years. Attached to HMS Invincible, he flies Lynx helicopters, appropriately known as 'the sports cars of the sky'.

The six-foot prince is, alas, more extrovert, brash and shallow than Prince Charles. Yet he has always felt overshadowed by his brother's polo feats and personal achievements. The reckless streak is so reminiscent of his great-uncle, the Duke of Windsor. Yet for all his public gaffes, he is mobbed like Boy George wherever he goes — and visibly enjoys it.

TINA BROWN

Social observer and Editor of *Vanity Fair*, a talented interviewer with mega-ambitions. She won the Catherine Pakenham 'Young Journalist of the Year' award in 1975

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and prospered. During three years as editor of the *Tatler* she tripled the circulation of her 'upper-class comic', replacing its worthy, run-down anachronistic contents with bright, satirical, socially spot-on articles using star journalists.

Small, blonde, with beautiful eyes, Tina shows great professional interest in everybody. She invariably captivates interview 'victims' who respond to her sympathetic probings and sometimes mutter later about a 'hatchet job'.

Daughter of film producer George C Brown (*Guns At Batasi*, *Hotel Sahara*), Tina began writing for glossies at Oxford. Her first play won the 1973 *Sunday Times* student drama award and she went straight into national journalism. She landed the *Tatler* after a series of brilliant *Sunday Telegraph* magazine profiles.

She is married to former *Sunday Times* editor Harry Evans, 56, who sadly lost the editorship of *The Times* before Tina could become Lady Evans. She made an embarrassing attempt to become presenter of BBC's *Film 82*. With one book and four plays behind her she will inevitably follow the bestselling success of Arianna Stassinopoulos. But first she must prove that she can continue to captivate sophisticated Manhattanites with her breezy, controversial *Vanity Fair*.

SIR RICHARD ATTENBOROUGH



Cecil B de Mille born of Sister Teresa. Who could guess that the weedy stoker in Noel Coward's *In Which We Serve* would become an award-winning director, millionaire businessman and knighted philanthropist. A Cambridge don's son, he went to Wyggeston grammar school, won a RADA scholarship and made his stage debut in 1941. Friends say he always had a *folie de grandeur* but with a saving social conscience.

Attenborough — universally known as 'Dickie' — became a post-war Boulting Brothers protégé. He fought in too many run-of-the-mill action pix, though won praise for *Brighton Rock*, *I'm All Right Jack* and *Guns At Batasi*. With actor Bryan Forbes he then formed a production company, making films like *The Angry Silence* and *The League Of Gentlemen*.

Joan Littlewood's *Oh! What A Lovely War* established him as a director. He continued acting in tandem with directing *Young Winston* and his first major hit, *A Bridge Too Far*. Filming *Gandhi* became his obsession for 20 years. Its world-wide Oscar-winning success has made him our hottest director. For his latest bio-pic on the English radical Tom Paine he earns an ever higher percentage.

Pink-faced Dickie strove for his knighthood and now

hopes for a life peerage. His flamboyant, tubby persona, loaded with camp 'darlings' charms city financiers and greedy superstars. Unusual for showbiz, he has remained faithful to his wife, '50s actress, Sheila Sim, throughout their 40-year marriage. Despite his millions — he founded Capital Radio and is a director of Lord Cowdray's film company, Goldcrest — he still lives in the same Richmond house. The art collection grows, with Sickerts, Picassos and Ben Nicholson's. His Rolls Royce numberplate is RA III.

In another age, SDP-supporter Attenborough could have been a Wilberforce. For beneath the wheeler-dealing and Variety Club self-congratulation, he cares deeply about his fellow men.

RICHARD INGRAMS



TV critic and *Private Eye* Editor/proprietor, 'Lord Gnome'. The Ingrams enigma is how a gentle, organ-playing recluse can write so viciously. What fuels his campaigns against 'Sir Jams' and other victims? Why the constant snideries about Jews, blacks and 'homosexualists'?

Ingrams perhaps shares the split personality of an American B52 pilot napalming

Vietnam villagers. So cocooned is he in Berkshire society and the *Eye* gang that he can zap targets in the other world without conscience. Though selling 200,000 copies an issue, he still regards his 'organ' as an undergraduate scandal sheet. Anyone who takes offence and sues is therefore regarded as a 'bad sport' and is bullied further.

Ingrams, more circumspect in his media targets since he began appearing on TV and writing books that need reviewing, guards his own privacy. He seems to be inviolate from gossip-column attention. A member of the Baring banking family, he developed many of his prejudices from Shrewsbury and Oxford. He has the puritanism of a reformed alcoholic. After 21 years as Editor he will step down soon to concentrate on his 'serious writing'.

SHIRLEY CONRAN

Filthy novelist and Monte Carlo tax exile. This female Harold Robbins is determined to be the new Jacqueline (*Valley Of The Dolls*) Susann. She wrote her blockbuster first novel *Lace* to a formula: each character was first analysed for plausibility and motivation by a psychiatrist and the action included some perversion, rape or major shock every 250 words.

The plot found a new use for goldfish and intrigued

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one US publisher enough to bid a record one million dollars advance. The *Dallas* producers paid a similar amount for the TV rights.

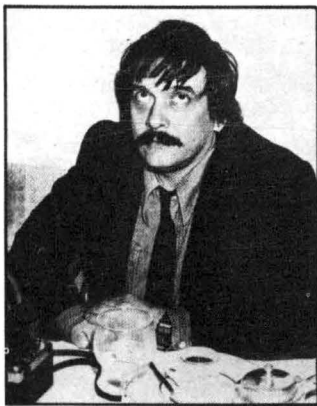
Shirley's background is more Home Counties *nouveau* than Mayfair. Her father ran a dry-cleaning chain and drove a Rolls. She went to St Paul's Girls' School and was 'finished' in Switzerland. After studying sculpture at Bristol College of Art she married designer Terence Conran.

Her dynamic creativity inspired him when he founded his furniture manufacturing business. They have two talented sons: dress designer Jasper and Sebastian, his father's right-hand man. That marriage lasted eight years and was followed by two equally unlucky marriages.

Shirley achieved her own success as a journalist on the *Daily Mail* and *Observer*. In 1975 she wrote her first best-seller *Superwoman*, a modern Mrs Beaton for the harassed housewife. "I'm really no more than an expert saleswoman, not a writer," she confesses.

Fame has made this strong, green-eyed blonde lonely rather than happy. In her two-bedroomed Monaco flat she misses her friends. Constantly travelling, she meets the wrong sort of people. A rose-covered cottage in Dorset might suit her better, except she has this excessive drive to keep adding to her millions. Meanwhile, she has bought a house near Regent's Park.

DAVID BAILEY



Photographer and generation leader. The cheeky Cockney working-class boy who epitomises the Swinging Sixties ethos, he was the original for Antonioni's film, *Blow-Up*. With a costermonger's cap perched on his black, greasy hair and squat, paunchy physique encased in denim, he is no Michelangelo's David. But he has a breezy, earthy chat, cockiness and nonchalance which

lure beautiful girls.

Bailey left school at 14 and worked in his father's tailoring business, sold shoes, dressed windows and played the trumpet. He taught himself photography while doing National Service with the RAF. He landed a *Vogue* contract, and his pictures of Jean Shrimpton, then a debby 20-year-old, created the world's most famous model – and his own career. He made her look haughty yet vulnerable and fun. He never married the Shrimp; instead he wed France's leading actress, Catherine Deneuve, cold and very grand.

Bailey has featured in all the chic society magazines, directed countless TV commercials and had many *homages* including that from the National Portrait Gallery. Two early books, *David Bailey's Box Of Pin-Ups* and *Goodbye Baby And Amen* have become collectors'

items. Many contemporaries dropped out with drink, drugs and over-the-top problems. But somehow he has always managed to stoke up that enthusiasm to keep creating new angles.

Bailey and his exotic third wife, Marie Helvin – 'the most beautiful woman I've ever photographed' – love to go ritzing with the Langan's crowd. But he does not drink, smoke or eat red meat. Home is in North London where a black major-domo called Caesar looks after them, five cats and an Old English Sheepdog, (the 25 noisy parrots have been given to London Zoo). He has never had children. Bailey and Helvin separated in 1984.

DAVID BOWIE



Former Prince of Wails, now an established actor. He followed the Beatles, Rolling Stones and The Who as the '70s' most influential, trend-setting performer. Both musically and fashion-wise, he has triumphed.

Born David Jones in London's depressing Brixton, his father John ran a Soho wrestling club and mother Peggy was a cinema usherette. Their son learnt

the saxophone and began jamming in local groups like the Hooker Brothers and King Bees. While working in a West End ad agency he cheekily wrote to washing-machine tycoon, John Bloom, asking for financial backing. Bloom booked him for his wedding anniversary celebration, but after two songs shouted: "Get them off, they're ruining my party."

After five flop records David, rechristened David Bowie, had his first hit in 1969, *Space Oddity*. The shaggy dyed-blond hair was now cut Mod-style. His freaky image-changes mesmerised fans long before Steve Strange and Boy George. There was the androgynous Ziggy Stardust, the druggy neo-Nazi Thin White Duke and the New Romantic periods.

John Lennon described Bowie's early music as 'rock 'n' roll with lipstick on'. His *Young Americans* album predated the Bee Gee's smash *Saturday Night Fever* disco sound and the electronic *Low* and *Heroes* began the synthesizer craze.

This stringy, ghost-complexioned superstar with a twisted grin has suffered many vicissitudes. In the late '70s he fled Tin Pan Alley to live anonymously above a car-parts depot in the Turkish quarter of Berlin. Drugs and sex problems had driven him 'bonkers' he later revealed.

Acting has now brought a more sober, civil servant-looking Bowie. The sinister film *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence* made him a bankable Hollywood name. Earlier productions like *The Man Who Fell To Earth*, *Just A Gigolo* and *The Hunger* drew mixed reviews. He was

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praised for his Broadway debut in *The Elephant Man* in 1980.

Bowie became the first British pop star to proclaim that he was bisexual. His outrageous American ex-wife, Angie, describes in her memoirs how they shared three-in-a-bed romps. She used to bring her husband and his lover, Amanda Lear, banquets for breakfast.

Now based in New York and Lausanne millionaire, Bowie looks after his son, Zowie, 13. A sell-out world-wide tour and the *Let's Dance* album re-established his pop credentials. But he will develop into a weirdo Rock Hudson rather than a Frank Sinatra.

RUDOLF NUREYEV



Today's Nijinsky. No other ballet star has the same charisma. He can afford to be haughty, moody, tempestuous. He never stops performing — commuting to London, New York, Rome, Copenhagen — by private jet. But many critics complain he has peaked and is too heavy-footed for those great leaps. "If I stop dancing," he sniffs, "they would have to take me into hospital."

As the Paris Opera Ballet's new director he choreographs as well as dances six months of the year.

Born on a train in Outer Mongolia, this Tartar peasant's son became a Kirov Ballet star. In 1961 he defected to the West and for 16 years danced with Covent Garden's Royal Ballet. His long partnership with Dame Margot Fonteyn captured the imagination of balletomanes. An attempt to move into films failed with *Exposed* opposite Nastassia Kinski.

Nureyev lives a very private, frugal, gypsy life. Nominally based in Monte Carlo, he mainly dosses down with friends or in hotels. It is a mystery how the world's highest-paid hooper spends his £500,000-a-year fortune. Romantically, he prefers short-term liaisons with other dancers to enduring passions.

PETER LANGAN

Champagne-quaffer, dog-biter, occasional restaurateur. Each decade has its culinary heroes and Langan is an Irish Alvaro. He is famed less for gastronomy than as a 'character', a collector of pretty people, a creator of fashionable ambiances. Everyone scoffed when he and Michael Caine opened the vast Brasserie in 1976, but his exhibitionism soon lured punters.

A customer once complained that he had just found a cockroach. Langan immediately swallowed it with one of the six bottles of champagne he drinks daily. He has chased Lady Falkender into the ladies', fallen asleep on

Melvyn Bragg's table and barred the Rolling Stones for being late. Pretty girls are often checked to see if they are wearing stockings and suspenders.

Langan is a scion of a *nouvelle bourgeoisie* County Clare family — his father ran an American oil company. As a child he upset masters at the local Eton and angrily became a Sunderland petrol pump attendant. After various London jobs, washing up and cooking, he opened his first restaurant, Odin's, off Harley Street. Friends like David Hockney, Patrick Procktor and Jonathan Routh lent paintings and drew the menu.

Owner of three London restaurants, the white-suited Langan now hopes to repeat his success in Los Angeles. Despite his buffoon's image, he remains highly professional, but bores easily. "Peter likes setting things up but hates running them," says partner Richard Shepherd. Few realise that he has a long-suffering wife, Susan. She helps him write witty book reviews and has a pudding named after her at Odin's.

BOY GEORGE



South London thoooperstar. This reckless, liberated, weird, working class phenomenon now out-grosses the Beatles. He has invented a unique Liberace-style image, brilliantly composing his own hits. His alley cat's guile should guarantee staying power. "I've made fat people fashionable," he grins.

An Irish-Catholic builder's son, the former George O'Dowd was expelled from

Eltham Green School aged 15 for being 'unmanageable'. He then left home. His late teens were a Dolce Vita of squatting, shop-lifting, sexual excess and the dole. Punks persecuted him for trolling around in girls' frocks, make-up and braided 'dreadlocks'. Survival and a determination one day to be famous preoccupied him.

A tougher, cynical Boy George began making an impact four years ago. Once a week he hosted a fancy dress evening in Soho. With close friend Marilyn (alias Peter Robinson) they would gatecrash starry parties and out-range even the paparazzi with their tame sluts' garb.

By day Boy George began lyric writing. His singing debut was, briefly, with Malcolm McClaren's group Bow Wow Wow. The new Culture Club, formed with drummer Jon Moss, bass guitarist Mickey Craig and lead guitarist Roy Hay, was turned down by most major record labels. They were too grotesque. But Virgin Records signed them and in 1982 their third record, *Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?* reached number one in 51 countries.

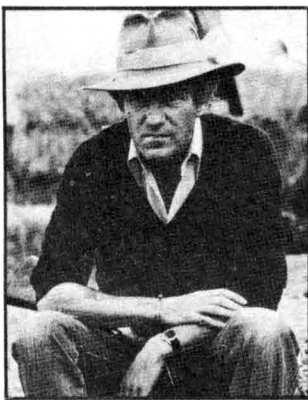
The former King's Road hat-seller is a strapping six footer with masculine hands, pear-shaped body and stubble showing through his foundation-cream. He has an earthy, articulate manner with flashes of acid camp

EXTRACT

humour. He attracts boys and girls, but says he is not very sexual. "My attraction is my personality." His famous remark, "I am a pouf with muscles" only endeared him to more fans.

Today, with classics like *Karma Chameleon* behind him, Princess Diana his greatest fan, a place in Madame Tussaud's, and a beckoning film career, fashion has caught up with him. Whether he can continue to bury George O'Dowd — he slaps photographers who try to snap him without make-up — is another matter. Like Dorian Gray the image may start peeling.

EARL OF LICHFIELD



Queen's cousin, royal photographer and nudie-snapper. He is the only relation allowed to whistle at the Queen — for the royal wedding group photographs he found it the best way to grab her attention. He has always behaved and looked like a pop star, with his flashy silver Mercedes, matching women, a seahorse tattooed on his arm — a mixture of hip and Hooray. "It proves you can

be incredibly well-born and yet look very charlie," a baronet friend once observed.

After Harrow and the Grenadier Guards, Lichfield reversed the barrow-boy-becomes-photographer syndrome. As the trendy Earl he impressed the dolly-birds, worked the nightclubs and parties, did fashion spreads for *Vogue* and the *Daily Express*. Beautiful would-be Lady Lichfields included actresses Gayle Hunnicutt and Britt Ekland whose later memoirs rather shattered his 'pumping iron' image.

At 35, Lichfield, announcing that he was tired of gallivanting, was conventional enough to marry the Duke of Westminster's heiress sister, Lady Leonora Grosvenor. (The Queen Mum was reputedly furious — she had earmarked Leonora for Prince Charles.) Loyally, she has produced three children. They live between his Staffordshire stately home, Shugborough Hall, and Belgravia. Hard-working and very commercial, he 'escapes' for two weeks a year to photograph two blondes and a brunette for Unipart's girlie calendar. He recently caused a models' revolt when some objected to being video-ed at audition.

As he gets paunchier and greyer, Patrick Lichfield will slowly revert to country peer, administering his 8,000-acre estate and speaking occasionally in the House of Lords. His books, calendars and Burberry ads will live on.

OMAR SHARIF

Bridge-player, racegoer and one-time Valentino, known as Cairo Fred. The quintessential Paris boulevardier, he

seldom rises before noon, nonchalantly checks on his racehorses at Chantilly and winnings at his Trouville casino, enjoys an early evening's bridge and then dines with male cronies in a five-star restaurant. Making blockbusters and women hardly bothers him now — although he recently starred in Terence Rattigan's play *The Sleeping Prince* and *The Far Pavilions* TV series.

Sharif will always be remembered for the award-winning *Lawrence Of Arabia* and *Dr Zhivago*. Later films, he admits, were done to pay heavy gambling losses. Leading ladies like Barbra Streisand, Anouk Aimée, Catherine Deneuve and Dyan Cannon were once said to be smitten. "I'm frightened of deep relationships now. I don't want to be hurt." He prefers 'a good bedtime book'.

The morose chain-smoking superstar was formerly head boy and cricket captain at Egypt's Eton, Victoria College. His wealthy timber-merchant father lost his property after King Farouk was overthrown. Sharif became an actor, married a leading Cairo actress and had his only child, Tareq. He divorced in 1966. Can a Hollywood producer or luscious lady winkle him out of premature retirement?

DUDLEY MOORE



Tinsel Town's unlikeliest sex symbol. For the first 20 years of his career this gnome-sized comedian was about as famous as Lionel Blair. He was the cheeky pianist, Peter Cook's 'feed' and comic relief on TV panel-games. Then he moved to Hollywood, landed the lead opposite Bo Derek in *10* and suddenly became Robert Redford. Well, almost. After *Arthur* with Liza

Minnelli he was a million-dollar-a-film superstar.

Moore at 18 was a shy, five-foot-two Dagenham musical prodigy with a club-foot. A railway electrician's son, he won an organ scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford. Then he met Cambridge University actors Cook, Jonathan Miller and Alan Bennett. Their revue *Beyond The Fringe* inspired the early '60s satire boom. While starring in the West End he also played at the fashionable Establishment Club with his jazz trio.

Moore will always be remembered for his 'Dud and Pete' TV dialogues and the porno 'Derek and Clive' records. But early films like *Bedazzled* and *Thirty Is A Dangerous Age*, *Cynthia* were mediocre.

He has always been romantically accident prone, usually chasing leggy young blondes. His two wives were actresses Suzy Kendall and Tuesday Weld. A recent girlfriend, former Miss America Susan Anton, was nine inches taller.

New movies have led Californian critics to dub this likeable import 'the most successful failure in Holly-

wood'. *Wholly Moses*, *Love Sick* and *Six Weeks* (his first straight role) were hardly blockbusters. One scathing reviewer of another Moore film *Romantic Comedy* just wrote: "*Romantic Comedy* is neither."

FREDERICK FORSYTH



Bestselling author. This heavyweight Agatha Christie produces complex, well-characterised thrillers that transfer very effectively to the cinema. Like Hemingway he is that rare journalist who can write fiction (oh, yes). Critics now wonder if he has the talent to raise his sights from mass-market to more erudite prose.

A Kent dress shop-owner's son, Forsyth went to a minor public school. As a Reuter's correspondent in the '60s he discovered many of his future plot-lines. His third novel, *The Dogs Of War*, drew on two years Nigerian service during the civil war. Back in London he argued the Biafran case emotionally on TV.

In 1970 this stocky, poker-faced, crewcut aficionado of the bullring bravely chose to become a full-time author. He finished *The Day Of The Jackal* in a month and it was rejected by four publishers. Hutchinson have since published all seven novels. Paperback rights of his latest one, *The Fourth Protocol*, were sold for a record £800,000 without a word having been written.

A qualified pilot, Forsyth is a loner who dislikes the razzamatazz of superstar authorship. His Irish wife, Carrie, is an extrovert former model.

Neurotic about his working environment Forsyth insists on writing in a room with the blinds tightly drawn. To remove other family distractions he 'commutes' to a huge studio flat nearby.

ANDREW LLOYD-WEBBER

Millionaire composer. No British song-writer since Gilbert and Sullivan has achieved his success: he had seven West End and Broadway musicals running simultaneously in 1984 and his estimated weekly earnings are a million dollars. One critic wrote that he could even turn the Reykjavik telephone directory into a musical. Yet the recent *Starlight Express* was praised more for its innovation and technical brilliance than for its score.

Andrew comes from a classical music background — his father was Director of the London College of Music and his mother is a piano teacher. He began writing at Westminster School. Later, at Oxford, he collaborated with Tim Rice on *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. Everyone told them Bible stories were 'un-commercial' but West End agent David Land gave them

each a weekly £50 retainer to expand it. The next show, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, became their first hit. This was followed by *Evita* (plus Rice), *Cats* and *Song And Dance*. He has had only one flop: *Jeeves* in 1975 (which he wrote with Alan Ayckbourn).

The energetic, but earnest Lloyd-Webber is careful with his money. A friend, spotting him looking particularly down-and-out, remarked: "I see you've changed your tailor, Andrew — from Shelter to Oxfam." He lives on a 100-acre Berkshire estate in *Watership Down* country. He has two children, Nicholas and Imogen, from his first wife Sarah, whom he divorced to marry former *Cats* dancer Sarah Brightman. He fell in love with her when he heard her sing Rachmaninov in Russian.

This modern Richard Rodgers spent £1,300,000 buying the Palace Theatre as a showcase for British musicals.

DAVID HOCKNEY



Pop Art Leonardo with a touch of Picasso, our wealthiest and most significant painter, though too prolific compared to Bacon, Freud and Kitaj. He has spawned a generation of art school disciples who reproduce lonely vases of yellow tulips, stark window-scapes, blue tropical swimming pools and naked boys on ruffled beds.

A proud Yorkshireman, he reluctantly lives in California, but keeps a Notting Hill studio. Britain is 'boring and stultifying', weighed down by bureaucracy and philistinism. He displayed public anger over former Tate Gallery director Sir Norman Reid's attitude to modern British artists. "I'd like to organise a Piss-off Society."

Born in Bradford, son of an audit clerk, Hockney went to Bradford grammar school and the Royal College of Art. Dealer John Kasmin gave him his first one-man show in 1963, so beginning a long association. He has since exhibited at the New York Museum of Modern Art, the Louvre, the Tate, designed sets and costumes for Glyndebourne, La Scala and the Metropolitan, illustrated Grimm's fairy tales and Peter Langan's menus.

Hockney cultivates an ageing Milky Bar Kid look, with his rumpled clothes, odd-coloured socks, bleached hair and round specs. He has little use for material possessions and professes bafflement that his pictures fetch £50,000 at auction. Watch the waiters and customers at Langan's scramble for his paper tablecloth doodles.

The maestro's favourite models used to be dress designer, Celia Birtwell and his companion, Peter Schlesinger. Now it is his mother, Laura. The latest fixation are his Cubist photographs — mosaics of small, overlapping prints to construct a multiple image. He also has 100 scrap-books filled with snaps of holidays and close friends.

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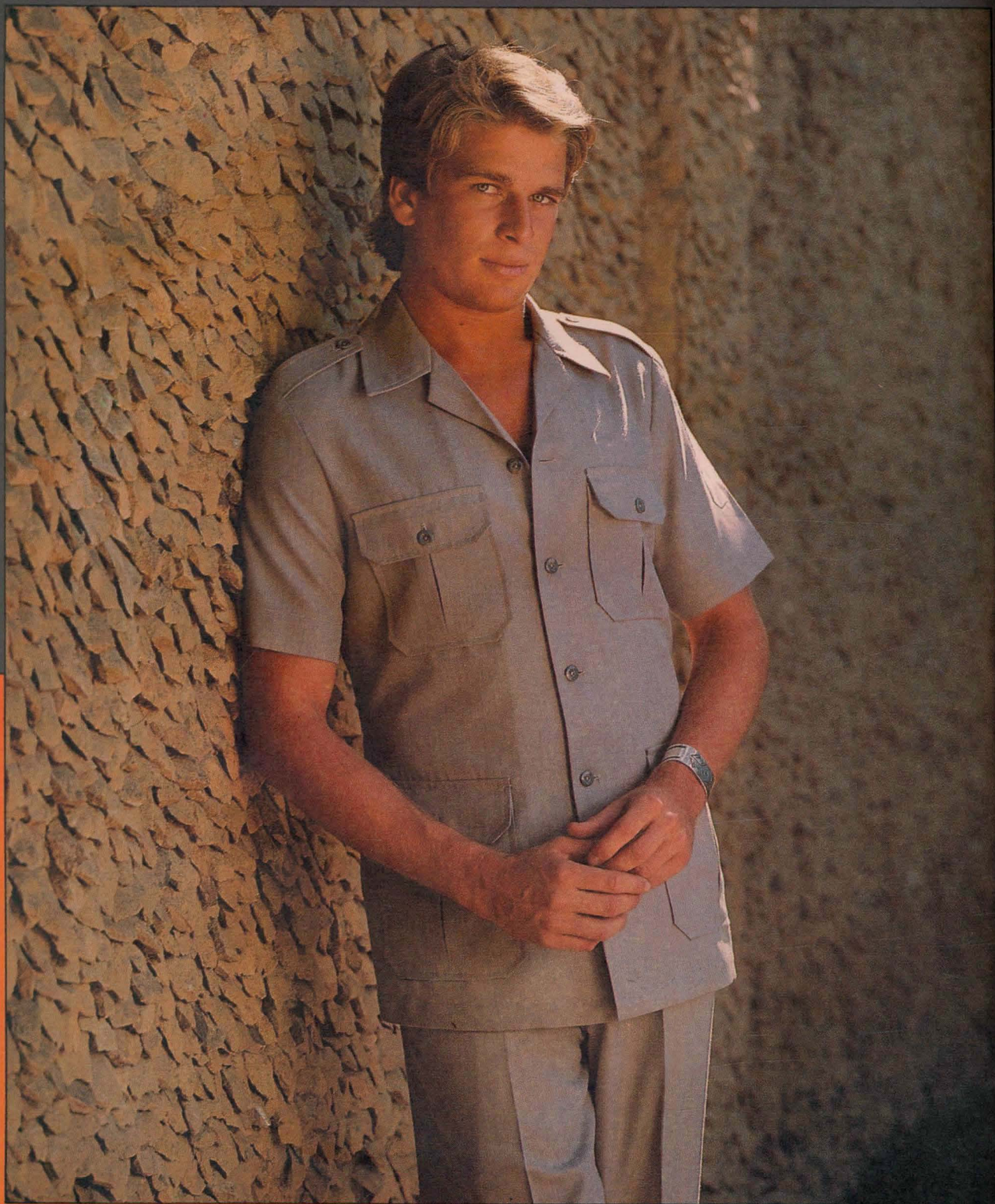
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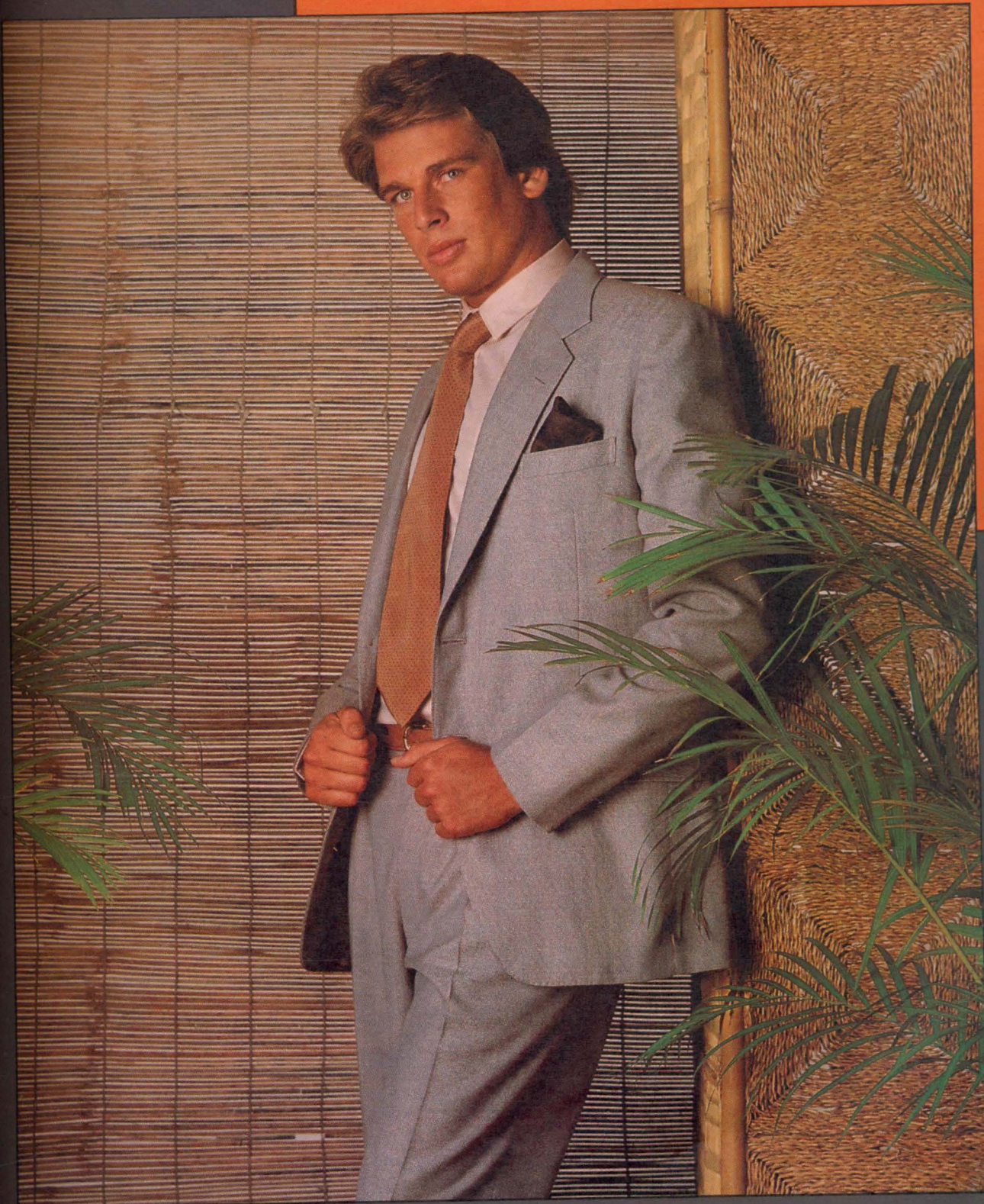
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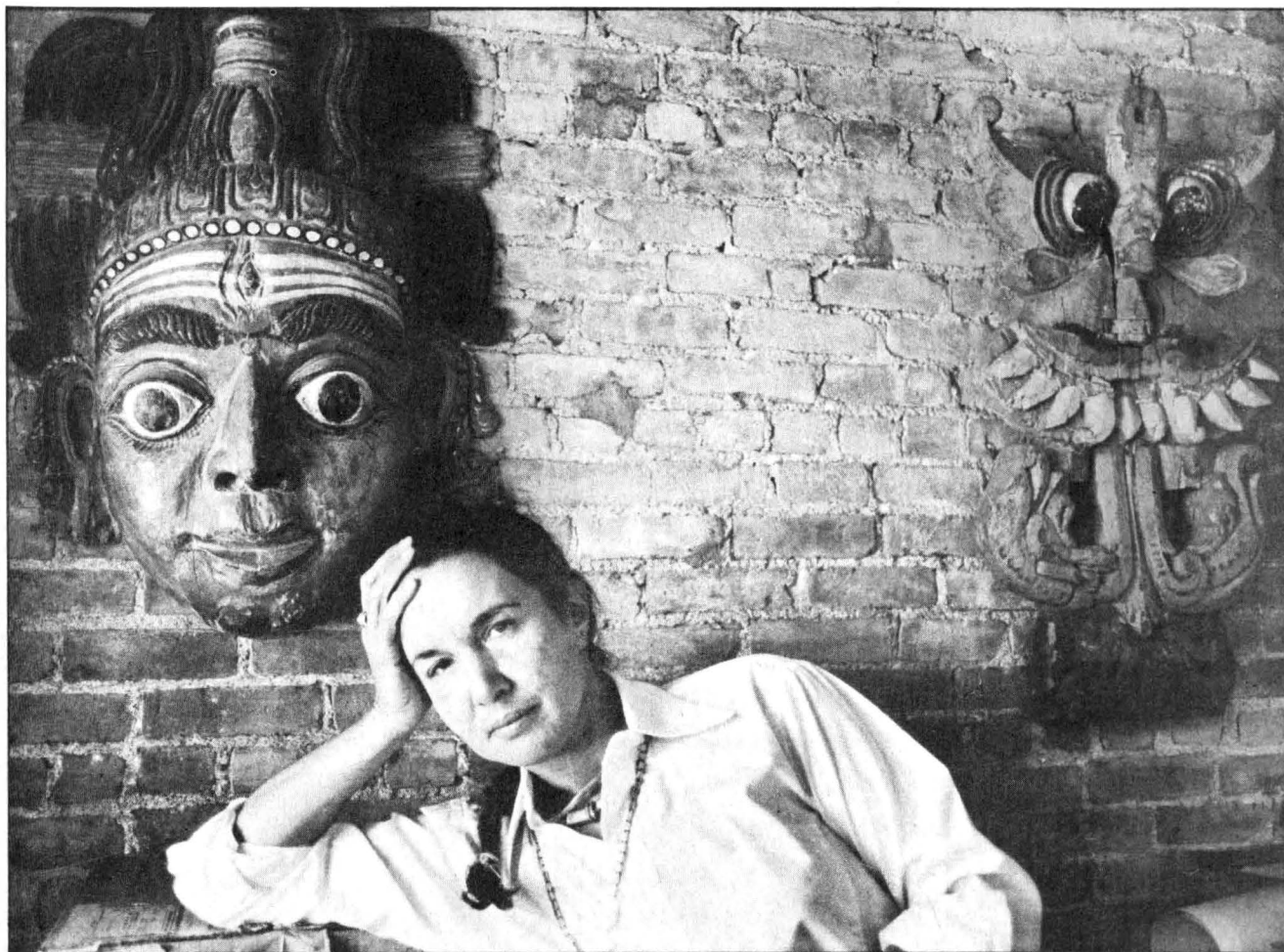
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"I'm Not A Missionary"

Mary Ellen Mark talks about her pictures and the role of the photographer.

By Ketaki Sheth

Amongst contemporary American photojournalists, one of the names one associates with periodicals such as Life, Geo, Stern, American Photographer, is Mary Ellen Mark's, recently estranged from the Magnum co-operative with which she had been associated for many years. It is difficult to categorise the body of her work as photojournalism per se. If we define

Ketaki Sheth was on the staff of Imprint. She is now a freelance photographer and writer.

photojournalism as that which informs, is newsworthy, makes clearer through visuals, or a report, then Mark's work would be a highly personalised concept of this. Mark herself describes her work as 'social documentary stories', selecting 'subjects that I think are worth being seen; worlds that I can go into, that I think people should see'. Apart from photofeatures published in magazines, her three books include Passport (Lustrum Press, 1974), Ward 81 (Simon &

Schuster, 1979) and the controversial Falkland Road (Alfred A Knopf, 1981), which has been banned in India.

Imprint: *Did the social, political and moral climate of the '60s propel you to become a photojournalist? What was the state of photojournalism then in the US? Were you specifically trained for the job?*

Mary Ellen Mark: *I started working as a photographer in 1964; as a practising*

photojournalist in 1967. During the years 1963-64, I was a student of photography at the Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania. When I was there, it was run by a man named Gilbert Seldes, who was very avant-garde, particularly for that time. He was an all-time person in radio; he had been real innovative in radio. The photography school was run in a very free way — we were given independent assignments and I had a really good teacher who worked as a magazine photo editor in New York. So, it was an excellent way to learn magazine photography. But the school has changed a lot now. It's very academic and theoretical; I don't even think they teach photography now.

It was a very exciting time when I started out — the '60s. There were wonderful demonstrations to photograph; there was a great climate for taking pictures in New York, and I was lucky I had the chance. I would go to these demonstrations — there would be great anti-Vietnam marches

one week, and pro ones the next. There was such a range of things going on: protest marches, the women's movement, runaway kids. And there were magazines specifically interested in documentary style stories, like *Life* and *Look*. In fact *Look* gave me one of my early breaks.

What was the Look assignment? Was it the first picture story you published?

Actually, I started working before 1967, when I think about it. When I was at university, I worked for the alumni magazine — that was how I first learnt the rules of doing an assignment. But in New York City my first assignment was when I worked for a Catholic magazine, *Jubilee*, doing assignments. They gave a lot of work to documentary photographers at the time. It was my first break. My big break was when I met Pat Carbine who was the magazine editor of *Look* while I was at university. She said to call her when I came to New York City. So I did, and she gave me some assignments for *Look*. I did a lot of small

assignments in the beginning. One of them was on a child genius; another was on an actress who was a victim of a stroke. Then finally, in 1968, I heard that Fellini was making a film in Italy, so I suggested to *Look* that I do a story on him. So they sent me and that was a major break and a great opportunity.

At the panel discussion on the picture essay at the International Centre for Photography last week, you mentioned how Mother Teresa (Life, July 1980) was perhaps one of the most aware of and alert to the camera subjects you have ever photographed. Could you elaborate a little?

Well, you know, you wouldn't really expect it of her. I mean, if you ask her about current popular things like the Beatles or Muhammad Ali, she doesn't know. But as far as what's going on around her at any precise moment, she's a hundred per cent clear in all directions. At one point in Calcutta, I was trying with a long lens to photograph her feet — there was quite



"You can't really be an invisible fly on the wall unless you are in the midst of a great event, like a war or something."



"I'm interested in people. That's why I couldn't be a great wildlife or landscape photographer."

a crowd. In all this, she was quite aware of my presence even at that distance and tucked her feet in the folds of her sari. I don't think I've ever photographed anyone quite like her.

Can you describe some other encounters/experiences with people you have photographed in the past?

Well, always, some people are easier to photograph than others. When you photograph people who are famous, it can be quite complicated because some people are tired of being photographed, or they simply don't like it. I think one of my most unpleasant experiences most recently was photographing Brooke Shields for the cover of a magazine. It was so frustrating. First of all, I had to wait around, I couldn't get access for four days. This was in the Bahamas. To top it all, just before I was leaving, the mother of Brooke Shields said to me, "You're not good enough for my daughter; you should stick to photographing Mother Teresa and cripples and cancer patients." Sometimes you have to deal with people of this nature, and at other times you have to bounce it off and laugh, especially if it is with people

you don't really care about, like Brooke Shields's mother. If someone I really respected said something like this, I would be devastated. Everything is a question of balance. You have to sense people and psych them out and feel who they are. You can't blast in there and do what you want. Part of this job is to realise who they are. One must be sensitive and not push too hard in their direction. With Mother Teresa, for instance, you simply cannot invade her environment or disrupt what's going on. Each situation calls for something different. If you are assigned to go to someone's house and photograph a family, you first come and meet them and then begin. But when you are out on the streets, like the runaway kids story in Seattle (*Life*, July 1983), it has always to be confrontational.

So, you never really adopt an invisible, fly-on-the-wall method in such circumstances, like on the streets in Seattle...?

No. In such cases, I start off with the camera around my neck because I think it is much better to be direct right from the start than to not wear your camera, to make friends and then

suddenly whip your camera out. Then it's like you're out to use somebody. You can't really be an invisible fly on the wall unless you are in the midst of a great event like a war or something. I always have my camera around my neck so that everyone is clear about what I'm doing. It sometimes can lead to hostility, but you then have to deal with that. You have to be interested in people, that's what's most important. That's why I don't think I could ever be a great landscape photographer or a wildlife cameraman, because I'm not that interested in animals or landscape. It's best to photograph what you're interested in.

On assignment, do you set out with a point of view or does this shape along as you go deeper into the story?

I believe in a point of view. I think you always have a point of view. I try not to be narrow-minded before I go into anything, to be open about changing my mind about someone or an event or whatever. Of course, you can't help being prejudiced in certain things and you go in feeling someone is good or bad. It's hard to be totally objective. About Falkland Road and the prostitutes in Bombay, for

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instance, there's no question in my mind that the more time I spent with them, I thought they were great. And before I went in to do the story, I was thinking, what are they going to be like, are they going to be tough, hardened women? They aren't at all. They are survivors. I learnt that as I went along.

There are some who have described Falkland Road (Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1981) as a powerful, complex and disturbing social document and others who feel it is voyeuristic and exploitative. It certainly draws attention to some important ethical issues in the field of social documentary photography. On the one hand, there is a strong feeling that one must share that world with those who walk around with blinkers. On the other, it suggests invading a territory and returning with a personal gain. Where does one draw the line? Do you feel you have to adopt an emotionally resilient attitude?

I would say without question, that Falkland Road was the most fascinating assignment I have ever done. I feel closer to those women than I have to any people I have ever photographed and I was the saddest when I had to leave. I was devastated when it was all over. I think about them more than I have anyone else and on each trip I try to return there and meet some of the girls, especially Saroj (to whom the book is dedicated). I decided I wanted to do it in 1968 when I first went to India. It was always something at the back of my mind. When I went back to India, each successive year, I would go to Falkland Road because I thought it was an incredible place, an extraordinary place — I'd walk around and see the women and I'd really want to know more about them. Finally, 10 years after that first trip, I convinced *Geo* to send me to India to do the story (it eventually ran in *Stern*). I got closer and closer to the women and got to learn more about them. My friendship with Saroj gave me an entry into the world.

From the beginning, I knew I didn't just want to photograph the women behind the cages, from the streets. I wanted to photograph them with the

customers. I wanted people to realise that these women are not bad or dirty or whatever; particularly when compared to prostitution in the US, where there's so much drug use. In India, it's strictly a story about survival.

I think where you draw the line is if pictures misrepresent or distort. And here, you have to very carefully select and edit your transparencies before you give them to a publisher or an editor. For example, there were photographs of an abortion clinic I went to in Bombay where the girls from Falkland Road would go. There was this really obnoxious doctor who performed the operations and allowed me to photograph. I knew I couldn't publish photographs of these women undergoing abortions. Also, there were some pictures I had where a madam and one of her girls had a terrible physical fight, but I knew I couldn't publish it because people would interpret it incorrectly. I was very closely involved in the actual making of the book. I wrote the text, the captions, I did the selection. I never wanted anything to be misrepresented. I wanted to photograph every aspect of their lives. If you are photographing prostitutes and you don't show them selling their bodies to men, then you can't capture the strength and the strong survival instinct these women have. I don't feel the pictures are erotic, I never intended them to be.

You describe the women as strong, tough, defiant. But some look transparently vulnerable, particularly to the world of the camera. Like the young teenaged prostitute, the epileptic being dressed up by the madam, a young woman bathing during her periods. Is it fair to freeze these undecided moments in their lives?

I prefer to photograph vulnerable people — people that I feel haven't had a break in life. I did want to show their sexual and emotional vulnerability. I think people like this are the only people worthy of being photographed. I felt very sympathetic and close to them.

Was it an advantage in this situation — being a foreign woman? How did you overcome the language problem?

Yes, it was an advantage. The social structure in Asia is so defined. So they may not have opened up to an Indian photojournalist that easily because he or she would immediately be slotted in his or her rank in society. Perhaps they would be more embarrassed to open up to an Indian. With me, they couldn't quite place me. In fact, they were quite amused by the way I dressed and curious about my being single. About the language problem, I had an Indian with me most of the time except in the most intimate of situations where they preferred not to have him around.

Despite the best of your intentions, sometimes, as in the case of the magazine American Photographer which titled the feature Love Means Never Having To Wear A Sari, the sensational aspect of the editorial world seems to have scored. How do you deal with this problem?





"I prefer to photograph vulnerable people – people who haven't had a break in life."

I was so furious, I was absolutely infuriated. It was terrible, it was everything I didn't want the book to be. I felt so devastated and paranoid. Here I had been so careful, doing the layout, the captions, the text, before they ran the pictures. It was some editor thinking – well, this is a punchy title, readers will love it. Sometimes, it can get even worse. Like when my Indian street performers piece appeared in an Italian magazine. Despite my handling of the text, captions, et al, they linked the story with an introductory line suggesting child exploitation in India. A complete distortion. My story and pictures had nothing to do with it. And street performers are a tradition and not any form of child labour, which is what they linked it with. Again, an editor who wanted a snappy lead. I'm told it was the fault of the agent, but I don't believe it – I think it was the fault of the magazine. The agent wrote me a

long letter of apology. I think it was just that the magazine wanted something snappy.

How would you describe the intentions of your work?

The intentions of my work. . . that's a complicated question. I think I take photographs because I want people to see them. I pick subjects that I think are worth being seen; worlds that I can go into that I think people should see. So in India, I was particularly interested in doing real sociological stories, not just the exotic Indian picture that we see. India is the most exotic country in the world and people can take exotic photographs; there's no place like it. But I was more interested in doing social documentary stories – and sharing these with people. We can take it story by story.

With Falkland Road, it was my intention to find out what that street was like. Once I realised how these

women were really survivors and that their strength and courage could really be related to every society, not just India, I wanted other people to realise that. It's universal. These women are not dirty or bad, and in India, as I said before, prostitution is simply and strictly a story about survival. In the end it always boils down to survival in any form of prostitution. I really do see a strong relationship between India and America in social documentary stories and this always interests me.

With the street performers. . . well, I had always seen these guys on the streets. You always associate snake charmers with India or the acrobats or whatever. But I wanted to know where they came from, because then you get to know something personal and human about them. They become more than just the oddity or the kind of strange fascination that snake charmers hold. You know that he's got a family too, that his trade and

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tradition go together, that there's a real perfection to his craft. So, I thought it would be interesting to tell a story about it.

In Calcutta, with Mother Teresa, I just always wanted to go there. I became more interested in the people that were there than her. I mean, she's a great woman, and she's done some amazing things, but the people there — it's that kind of survival instinct again, that's what really caught me. So it's stories like this, even like the runaway kids of Seattle, that can relate to any place in the world. It would be interesting if a story like that could run in India, so that people would realise that even in America, there are those out on the street. Everyone's always picking on India and saying how can you take it, but my God, we have it in our own country too. At least in India there's a community and people take care of one another. But here in the US, you are totally isolated. When you are on the street, you are alone. So that aspect interested me. These kids in a city like Seattle — and not New York City or Los Angeles — pushed out on the streets. Nobody to take care of them, their families don't care. I think it is fascinating to get into these worlds and learn why.

But photography can't change anything or everything. Sometimes, some good can result from a story. Like I just did a story for *Life*, on this cancer camp and they managed to raise a tremendous amount of money, close to a million dollars, because of the story. So that's a great feeling because you believe in the good work the camp is doing and the kids are so great. It would be nice if some billionaire in India fixed up a whole street and decided to look after everyone in that community, but it doesn't happen. It doesn't even happen in America. While they did manage to raise some money for shelters for the runaway kids in Seattle, I doubt there has been a significant change in the situation. But I'm not a missionary, I'm a photographer.

I think, as a photographer, there's tremendous moral responsibility; I think you can't lie. But you have to be careful because cameras can often twist and distort situations. You can

juxtapose anything, not only in taking the picture, but in the way the story is laid out. As I said, about this aspect (layout, production), there's little you can do. You can't hold onto a story forever and never let it be published. So I don't know what the solution is to that.

Being in New York which is pretty much a centre for many of the best photographers, do you wind up spending time, when you are not working, with them? Also, whose work do you feel you may have been influenced by?

Actually, I don't really have many close friends who are photographers. My friendships are more open and varied and outside the world of photography. Gwen Thomas is a close friend of mine. She's an art photographer who photographs and then paints her prints — completely different work from me. She's a wonderful friend and has been for years. But it's more to do with friendship than photography. Then there's Michael Abramson, a photojournalist, but again a friendship not based on talking shop. Jehangir Gazdar in India is a great friend, a wonderful guy. Candice Bergen is an old friend, because I know her from school and Rusty Unger, who is now a writer. I just feel one shouldn't lock oneself in too tight a photography group.

I think one is always influenced by everyone and everything, in a way. What's important is not to be too influenced by someone because you certainly don't want your work to be like someone else's. I think the worst thing is for someone to say that your pictures look like so and so's. So I try to keep very open about it. But at the same time, I want to be open in the other direction. One must look at all the work that is being done so that one can learn from it and be inspired by it.

How do you support your primary interest in photography — social documentary photography?

To support my habit of working in documentary photography, I work in films. It's commonly referred to as 'special photography'. Special photography is to me what annual

reports are to others working in this genre. Because money in magazine photography is very, very little. 'Special photography' means a company hires me from five to three weeks to do stills which are then used in ads. So I'll do portraits of actors and actresses, sort of like building a studio on the sets.

Do you operate through an agency?

I used to work through Magnum, which is an excellent agency. I have tremendous respect both for the photographers who work out of there and the people who run it. But I decided a few years ago, that I was going to see what it would be like to work in a more independent way. I'm now in the midst of an experiment. I have my pictures in a photo library, Archive. After something is done, the pictures go there and they sell it. But all the work is mine, independently, and there's no agency fee involved. I have an agent who gets me film work, but that's separate.

Do you use the Leica M4 and Nikons mainly as a photojournalist?

I have been using the Leica and Nikons all these years. I've now also started using a Rollei 2¼ — that's something new. I started using it for portraits two years ago. That changed the way I work and it was terrific to learn something new. I use a lot more strobe now than I did before. Since I prefer to be closer to my subjects, I prefer wider lenses, generally between 24 mm and 35 mm, sometimes a 50 mm lens for portraits. I shoot a lot, sometimes too much. I believe a contact sheet is like a sketch pad — you sketch different frames and then you select what you want.

On a project, do you prefer to work towards an exhibition or a book form?

I would always work towards a book. I work on photos hoping they will find their way into a book form. Finding publishers is becoming increasingly difficult in my kind of work because publishers look for more conventional images. Take the Mother Teresa project. It's hard to find a publisher because everyone wants stereotypical, romantic, conventional images of her.

AN HONEST COMMITMENT

'Damul' is a brave new Hindi film from Prakash Jha.

BY DOLLY THAKORE

TWENTY Killed In Bihar, Polling Booths Captured, Violence Mars Polling. These are the headlines that accost us whenever elections are declared. And irregularities of this kind, analysed by political observers and crusading investigative magazines, have shocked readers.

But one talented son of the soil of Bihar, Prakash Jha, has expressed his simmering resentment at the injustice perpetrated on the poor and bonded, in *Damul* (Bonded Until Death), a film based on the socio-political patterns prevalent at the grass roots level. There is no fire in his eyes or attitudes. Gentle-eyed Jha exudes quiet confidence. But his work is explosive. He is incensed at the extortive tyranny that fetters and victimises the politically innocent, financially crippled labourer.

There are no cinematic licences in *Damul*. It is Jha's testimony of the inequities of society. He has lived and observed it all at close quarters. And *Damul* is his expiation of the resultant pain and guilt.

In the North Gangetic plain of Bihar, the *panha* tradition prevails. Landlords trap honest labourers, already heavily indebted to them, instigate them to commit petty crimes, tip off the police and then offer monetary *panha* (protection) to dispense with the impending arrest. The labourers are drowned in further obligation and are then forced to steal to pay back the loan.

Damul opens on a scene of the weekly village market. The *mukhiya*, Madhav Pande (Manohar Singh) is introduced while Baccha Babu exhorts the untouchables to nominate Gokul Chamaar as the Opposition candidate, thus electing the *mukhiya* from among their own kind. For Prakash Jha, the *mukhiya* represents the feudal capitalist bloc, and Baccha Singh the socialist bloc.

The *mukhiya* and his mafia-type henchmen hold the harijans hostage while sycophantic villagers help them rig the votes.

Punya Chamaar, bold enough to report this, is shot dead.



A still from Damul: sensitivity, not sensationalism.

And Sanjeevana (Annu Kapoor), his son, is desperately racing to his fields, which the *mukhiya* has ordered to be confiscated in lieu of his father's debt. Once Sanjeevana is in his clutches, the *mukhiya* encourages him to steal cattle. The tradition of persecution and harassment of bonded labour has become so established a norm, that no one questions it.

Sanjeevana, caught after a few guilt-ridden thefts, goes into hiding in the *mukhiya's* godown. But he implicates the *mukhiya* who, incensed, sends his touts to try and get him. *Damul* does not pursue this single thread. Prakash Jha expresses the overall

harassment of the labourers and the ubiquitous muscle-power of the *mukhiya*. Baccha Singh provokes an exodus to Punjab, but 20 labourers, migrating to Punjab in search of work, are gunned down and the others forced to turn back. Madhav Pande manages to persuade all the labourers to switch allegiance. Only Sanjeevana stands firm. But what is one witness against the powerful?

Enter Deepti Naval, a village widow who has grudgingly tolerated Madhav Pande's nocturnal visits in return for the management of her fields. She now befriends Sanjeevana. The *mukhiya* directs his sycophants to do the inevitable — exterminate her — and implicates Sanjeevana for the rape and death of the widow.

So, Sanjeevana is framed and sentenced to death by hanging. And the wicked go free. The tragedy and persecution of innocents is so depressing, that the end, the hacking to death of the *mukhiya* by Sanjeevana's wife (Sheela Mazumdar) comes as a relief.

The location, the performances and the unfolding of *Damul* are so genuine that one finds it difficult to believe that Annu Kapoor (Sanjeevana) is just an aspiring actor from the National School of Drama, and that Manohar Singh and Pyare Mohan Sahay are only playing a part.

Damul is an honest commitment which explores the anatomy of society without sensationalism. ♦

FICTION

YESTERDAY YEARS AGO

By S Shankar Menon

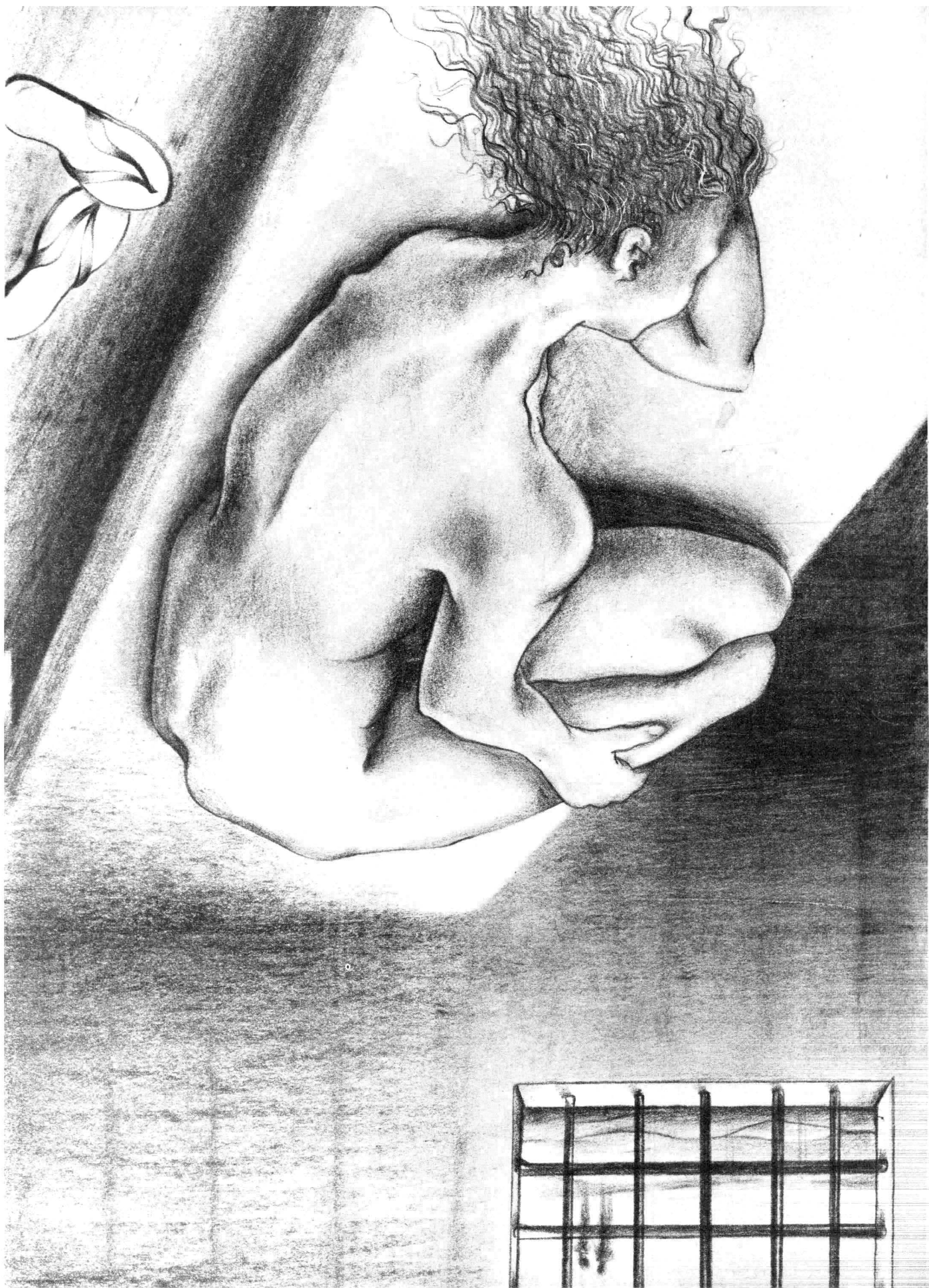
I TALK OF YESTERDAY. Except that yesterday was a few years ago, taken away by the wrong end of a telescope to a cot under a mango tree in a remote field in the harsh Central Indian countryside. Where my love and I strayed in the summer afternoons. Pushed to a point where few could do anything for us, trying to put together a few memories from our days that seemed doomed to drift, and to a total absence of any kind of meaning.

When I talk of the day before yesterday, I remember more my dry body, disregarded much too long. Its aridity frightened me, just as its contours pleased. Before I lay down after the day's lectures were over, in the dull interior of the women's hostel, I would take off my clothes in that airless room. Let my hands dip and touch, stroke my flat stomach, tease my warm thighs. There was a texture of parchment I could do little about. I was afraid my skin would crack, divide into fissures like the countryside before the rains.

When my body began to burn, the harsh *aandhi* whistled outside the classroom. Inside, men older than me sat in rows in front and stared hungrily. There came a series of other images, other rooms. The pond behind the ancestral house where I splashed with cousins. As we grow older, we grow happily more adventurous. Now, the once innocent touch of bodies sent quicksilver flashes that searched new nerve ends, fire dissolving into tingling pain under the palm fronds. There were meetings in the attic on rainy afternoons when the straw was wet with the moisture of the season and of bodies locked in their own new solstices. Damp in new joys, the gushing cataracts outside, pushed me through the waterfall of adolescence to the awareness of new and imagined possibilities.

Now far away from the swaying coconut palms, here I was, teaching Economics to undergraduates in Chandigarh.

Shankar Menon, an IAS officer, is Managing Director of the MTDC.



This was drudgery made sharp by necessity. It was more difficult than doing an M Phil on the Purchasing Power Parity System in the Theory of Money from the University of Ernakulam. It was certainly more thankless than all the joys of uncertain adventure that I had hoped for, in having to come so far from home.

The boys in Chandigarh had seen only the worst of Malayali films. Sub-titles like *Her Nights* and *Crazy Lady*, sent them in droves to the local Regent. They had obviously come to think that girls from Kerala were relentless in their search for pleasure. What I wanted, not one of them understood. Or even tried to. There was no help from anyone else. My male colleagues at the university were, at best, serious nit-wits.

In the campus, we women lecturers kept close to each other. We were the lonely, the alienated, the depressed. I was desperate for a job since I had three sisters to educate. My brother had vanished to Kuwait chasing dinars in the desert. Instead of regular remittances that all the others like him sent back, there was not a word. My parents were sick with worry and there was no money in the house. Getting a job in Chandigarh was heaven sent. With three PhDs in Kerala, you could just about sell tickets on the ferry from Cochin to Mattancherry. If you were a girl you could, perhaps, teach in a convent after all the nuns grew old and died and no Syrian Christian girl wanted any of the vacant jobs.

My room in the hostel shut me in from the surge and rhythms of the countryside all round. Corbusier's concrete shapes I could cope with. In their neat rectangles, their carefully calculated curves, the spirit was caught and chastened, taught how to behave, turned into a civilised handmaiden to utility.

Beyond the city stretched the fields of wheat and sugarcane. I took the bus to Pinjore once in a while with other girls on the staff. We were all anxious to get away from men who tried hard to reach, to grasp at our privacy. Their meaningless banter gave lie to their academic distinctions. Over-mothered, they were incapable of adult relationships. Among the men I met, there was no effort to try and probe for textures or thoughts or moods. How my body waited for the bold experience of hands that had washed in the stream of ideas, that would be a salve to the unhappiness of my intellect, and quieten my nipples tense in the languid summer nights.

When a DIG was killed in the temple at Amritsar, I felt the temper of a country unused to its own expression of already considerable strength. At 23, I desperately needed someone arrogant in the gentleness of his own vitality. All around me, were men lashed to their motor cycles, sending forth gigantic shafts of death, forks of fire that spat into street corners, leaving twisted bodies behind.

Another DIG was found floating in the lake nearby. The city sat up and talked. In the staff room there were stories that seemed wild, improbable, creations of others like me denied the human touch of benedic-

tion or affection. They were stories of those away from the trivia of an evening, waiting for a lover or a husband to come back. My college colleagues became haridans who preyed on sensation, carving up pieces of gossip into bits and shards that could be nibbled only by sharply pointed teeth.

The boys in the class became more arrogant. I was even afraid to meet them in the evening for tutorials. They could scent my longing for companionship, for the press of flesh on my all too human flesh. Anyone could see the cavities of my eyes that looked within and were not at all ashamed of what they saw but merely sorry at the sense of daily waste. I was not willing to accept the quick glass of water thrown into the slowly stoked embers. There was no question of a bright student called for a carefully planned evening. I could not even consider his willing energies at the mercy of all my restless longings.

Chandigarh was a shroud and I had to break free. A missionary college in Nagpur advertised for a lecturer. I applied, almost apologetically. The college was well-known. They paid my fare for the interview. More surprised than anyone else, I was chosen from 23 applicants. Perhaps my precaution in wearing a dull brown sari had helped. The women who turned up, came proud as peacocks. The priests who took the interview, saw my seriousness. The men who applied were defeated already. Their qualifications were impressive only on paper, their nepotism could not reach children of a different God. One of those from the local university, even confessed that M Phils were being handed out almost for the asking and that Nagpur University had produced the largest number of doctorates every year.

The college was on a wooded hill next to a theological seminary. The boys and girls were very serious students. They came from average backgrounds. They understood English but few, except those who had gone to convent schools, could speak it. Yet teaching Economics at the undergraduate level, hoping a post in the university would fall vacant, was death all over again.

If I was oppressed by the aggression of Chandigarh, here I was stifled by the unending somnolence. Lectures over, I would walk to the Nirmala Niketan run by the nuns. Its high walls kept away intruders. The girls who stayed there were from small towns all over Central India sent to Nagpur for the best education available.

In the college staff room, everyone was timid as mice. The priests and the trainee priests who ran the institution, were serious and strict. Out of the window I looked at the lush trees, incomplete swimming pool, the neat row of graves next to a chapel silhouetted against the green and gold of the evening sky and wondered where my mind would rest, when my body would awaken to the touch of mutual need.

There was nothing much in the city. Sitabuldi had noise and garish shops full of saris. I did not need any more saris. Who would I please? Sadar had restaurants,

but I had no need to eat out. Most evenings I took one of the girl students from the hostel and went to the deer park near the children's railway in the seminary hills. We fed the animals, watched the brilliant Gondwana sunsets and slowly walked back to the hostel. I couldn't talk. I could barely think.

The God of all the martyrs and saints whose heirs lived and worked in the seminary, answered my prayers. He came on the Annual Day of the Students' Union, our chief guest. In a car with a red light on top, his hair wild with the sun, a young-old man with a spring to his step and a smile that knew the world in its treachery and insolent defeat. Who had tasted the rancid waters of days wasted for him and who insisted they were irremediably sweet.

The chief guest addressed the students as he would old friends. He was 25 years older than all of them. Somehow, he had walked with them to school, played with them in the cricket fields, agonised over their examinations and sung their songs of rock and soul and the repetitively homespun Shankar Jaikishan, as the noises of foreign radio stations and records filled their homes and places of entertainment.

I sat in the row of chairs in front of the stage. I felt his eyes sweeping over me, reaching out to the African students at the back, wanting to welcome them to this strange, unusual city, wanting to look back at me and take my hand and walk out of the door before everyone else. As Father Sebastian, the Principal, would sit stunned and the students unnerved into raucous silence. That so pure a heart should want to beat so easily and readily with another before there was word or deed or faith or promise.

We were introduced after the speeches were over. The College Union was inaugurated and the college staff had tea with the chief guest. I hung back, trying to put off getting to the point my life seemed to have led to in fits and starts. I had progressed and regressed, in fumbings with my cousin as we bathed in the pond at the back of my house, in looking away from the terror and blood of 40 lusty young males who would look and leave me quivering behind the desk, leaving only a chalk in my hand, with not a stitch of clothing on.

Collector, commissioner, I know not what he was called—I know that he had a name and he would be mine. He rang two days later. The harsh inadequacies of the local telephone system, the impossibilities of getting messages from our sleepy *chowkidar*, the hesitations of finding an excuse to meet, all were surmounted. That he had a wife and family seemed a blessing. Our urges did not need any special sanctity. Only the finding together of a field at the end of many roads. Where there was birdsong in the trees and where the light would shine on the grass as we sat and talked, lay and touched.

In Nagpur, it was difficult to go out. He was well-known. I had my students everywhere. Starkie Point, the small hill past the Air Force Maintenance Command, had long since been abandoned to the perverts and thieves who preyed on unwary couples. The plea-

sure gardens of the Bhonsles near the Telenkhedi Lake were full of mosquitoes, that stung the exposed limbs. My love bitten on a bare bum could clearly not be a love for very long.

He found breaks during his day from crowds of visitors. There was the special attention he had to give to politicians whose words kept him chained to a command he treated with wry disdain. I would finish part of my lectures in the early afternoon. He would meet me in his car near the university library and we would drive past the airport, along Wardha Road, past the level crossing and into the countryside.

We talked little, for there was no need. When the car stopped, it was in a small lane, past the 23rd kilometre stone, away from the road. Under a mango tree next to a well, we sat on a rough cot brought out by a villager. We would ask to be please left alone and we would be. We would later take the cot into a small hut. There were cows tied outside and they could be heard shuffling in their fodder, as we made love.

There were the afternoons, when the world grew unhappy and discontented and only we were wholly at peace. There were international meetings in Delhi, fortunes were spent in making rustic five-star retreats in Goa for presidents and generals and kings and queens and prime ministers. We explored each other, my love and I. Each nerve traced and touched, tingled like a leader at the first surge of applause for his speech. The growing rhapsodies of bodies in fine counterpoint were intensely personal to our newly discovered joys of complete adequacy.

Afterwards, he would drop his head on my breasts and cry. His tears were a balm to my nipples once more. The rasp of his tongue began all over again, slowly, very slowly, to send me shuddering and calling his name. It was a name I did not know fully. When I saw it every morning in the local papers, it was part of the scenario of national events in which he had a major part in view of his regional eminence. Now, next time, his name did not matter except that he had scooped me out from a stagnant pool, purifying with his reflective eyes all those whose looks had stunned me over the years. I knew him hardly and too well. As perfectly as the thrust of his body that separated my thighs, as completely as his breath that poured into my throat, every bit of him drawing up from my belly the final moan of a woman who finally is one.

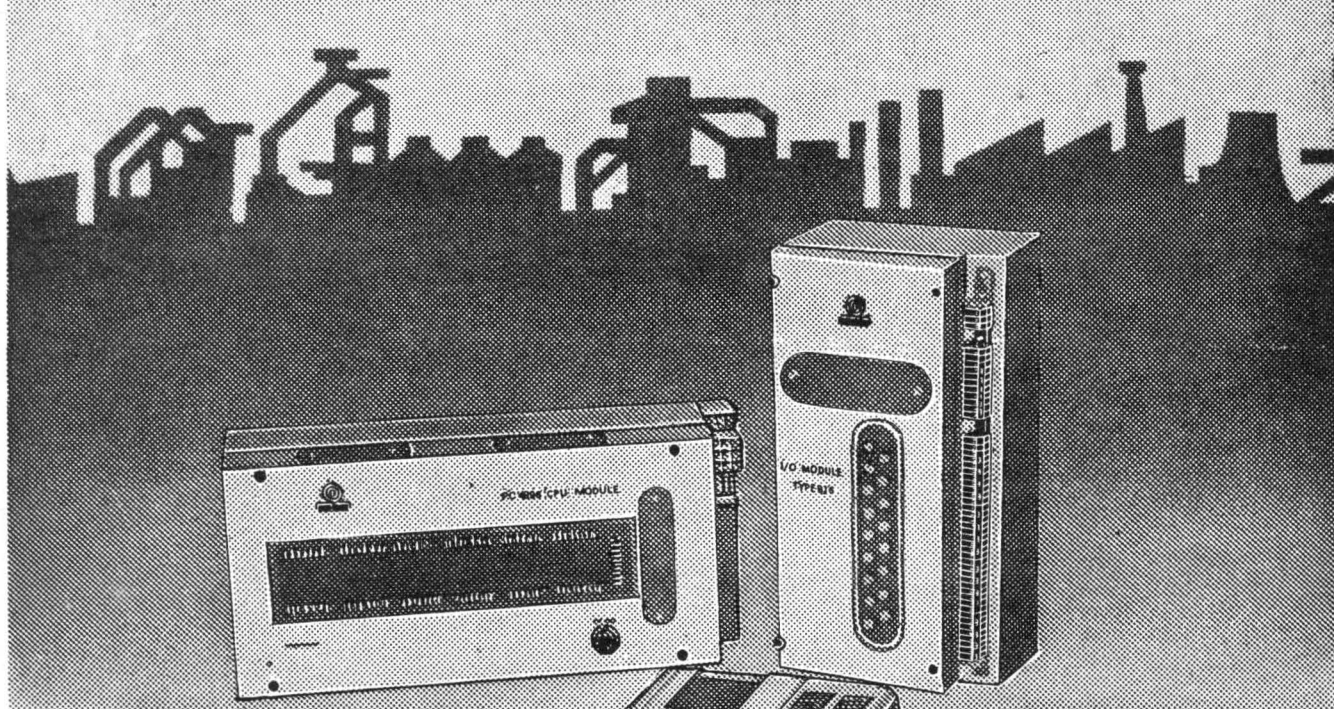
There was hurry after all that. In the fresh silence, bodies moved apart from a slapping wetness, clothes were put on. The car turned back to the city past the ripening pods of *jawar*, the thick stalks of sugarcane, strong in gushing water.

Camelots do not last long. Our own was cut short all too soon. My brother suddenly returned from Kuwait. He had a bedding roll and a three-in-one in hand, Rs five lakh in the bank and a friend from nearby Idapalli in tow to help him set up a factory. I was called back. That was yesterday, or years ago.

I was married off to my brother's friend. I am perfectly happy. My husband is pleased at my infinite, intimate variety. He does not have the nerve to ask. ♦

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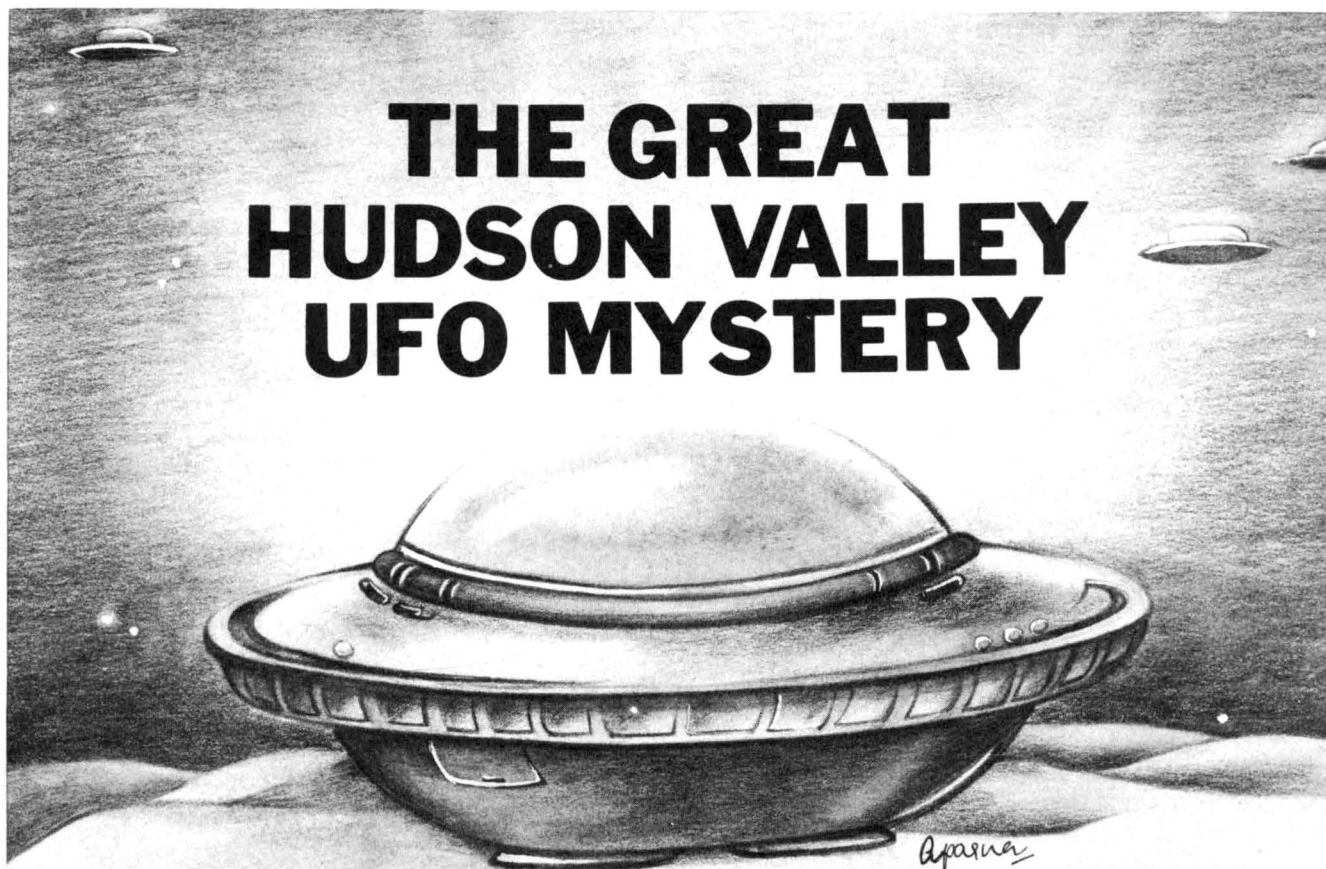
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THE GREAT HUDSON VALLEY UFO MYSTERY



As UFOlogists continue to believe in flying saucers, pilots provide an answer.

BREWSTER, NEW YORK, had never seen anything like it. Late in August hundreds of people invaded the Hudson River Valley town 40 miles north of New York City and jammed into the Henry H Wells Middle School. Swelling the crowd were reporters from wire services, small-town weeklies, and New York City's major newspapers, as well as television camera crews. The occasion was a 12-hour conference on unidentified flying objects, and it drew several of America's leading UFOlogists, including the dean of them all: J Allen Hynek, retired chairman of the astronomy department of Northwestern University, technical advisor to the movie *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*, and one of the few scientists who take UFO reports seriously.

But why Brewster? Since early in 1983, thousands of people in the surrounding regions of New York state and nearby Western Connecticut

have reported — and a few have photographed — some startling sights in the night skies. Beyond any doubt, most of the witnesses have seen *something*, and many are convinced that what they saw was unearthly, in fact extraterrestrial. Local newspapers have contributed to the excitement. One proclaimed, *We Are Not Alone*; another headlined, *These Things Are Real*. A UFO telephone hot line, set up early this summer by attorney and UFO buff Peter Gersten, had received more than 600 calls by mid-September. Since the summer of 1983, four issues of the bi-monthly *International UFO Reporter*, a publication of Hynek's Centre for UFO Studies in Evanston, Illinois, have featured long, front page stories about a mysterious 'boomerang-shaped UFO' making repeated visits to the skies of New York. Even before the Brewster meeting (which Gersten organised), it was evident that the Hudson Valley sightings were among the most nu-

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merous and well-corroborated since Americans in large numbers began reporting flying saucers in 1947.

The rumours and excitement reached a climax in the crowded auditorium of the Brewster Middle School where, one after another, witnesses took to the podium to recount their experiences. Most often they reported seeing a huge object, circular or V-shaped, bearing red, green, and white lights, hovering noiselessly or with a slight hum, performing abrupt manoeuvres, then suddenly disappearing.

One of the more dramatic accounts came from Monique O'Driscoll, who told the group that while she was driving home from her mother's house one night, the voices on her CB radio were suddenly drowned out by static and she saw something approaching in the night sky. "I was not afraid of this thing," she said. "It started toward the headlights very slowly, sailing toward me. I started to feel uncomfortable." Nonetheless, she followed the object as it veered away and hovered over a nearby house. "I looked at the belly of this thing. It was a dark grey metal, like the framework of a bridge. After a few minutes it started going away. It was really exciting and I didn't want it to go away — and then, zip, it was gone."

Eugene Bauer told of a V-shaped object about the size of a 747 jet, with four lights on each side and one in the middle. It was drifting over some high-tension wires and making a crackling sound. "Maybe it was getting power from the power line," he said. "All the lights turned from red to purple, as if it were trying to say, 'Look at us, we're here.' There was not a sound. These things are real, and they are out there. I think the government is covering up and not telling the public what's going on."

Another UFO encounter was described by Michael Faye, a commercial airline pilot, who spotted a strange flying object shortly after he took off from Newark Airport one night in June and was heading north along the Hudson River. It had six or eight lights that went out all at once as he drew near. "It was a moonlit night and I could see," he said, "but it had disappeared."

Descriptions like Faye's were what particularly impressed Hynek. "Here we are in an urban area with highly educated people," he said. "IBM exe-



Astronomer J Allen Hynek.

cutive, pilots, naval officers — you don't call this type of person a liar. You'd be subject to a libel action if you did." That theme was echoed by Lieutenant George Lesnick of the New Fairfield, Connecticut, police department, who has been following reports of UFOs for 32 years. "Something has to be going on here," he said. "These reports are being made by reliable people, not by drunks. I'm definitely a believer."

But many of the local police are not. For two years, they have been responding to UFO reports by reassuring callers, telling them that what they saw were probably lights from small aircraft. In fact, one resourceful state policeman, spotting a UFO one night, chased it until it descended — in the form of several small planes — at the Stormville Airport, a 3,300-foot strip behind an old estate house 15 miles from Brewster. That revelation did not satisfy most UFOlogists. Investigators from the *International UFO Reporter* visited the area and allowed that some of the sightings might indeed have really been small planes, probably flying in formation. But for most of the sightings, especially the giant boomerang, the publication insisted, the 'plane for-



UFO buff Peter Gersten.

mation theory' was 'completely untenable'.

What particularly impressed the *UFO Reporter* team, and frightened many Hudson Valley residents, was the fact that the UFOs often just hovered, sometimes with a slight hum, sometimes noiselessly. They made abrupt right-angle turns, disappeared and reappeared suddenly in the sky, their lights changing colours. Could any kind of earthly aircraft duplicate those feats? Gersten, for one, does not think so. He claims that government documents he acquired under the Freedom of Information Act provide "overwhelming proof that UFOs do exist. These documents show us that the objects perform in ways that are beyond the range of present-day technological development."

There was another explanation that Gersten, Hynek, and most of those in attendance at the Brewster conference seemed unable to accept. It involved one of the groups whose judgement and responsibility Hynek so greatly admires: pilots.

AS *Discover* reporter Glenn Garelik found during extensive interviews in the Hudson Valley region, the area abounds in amateur pilots who fly private planes out of a number of airports, including the strip at Stormville. Several years ago, it seems, a few of the Stormville pilots began practising formation flying, first in daylight, then, as their skills improved, at night. Before long, other pilots joined them, and what began as loose groupings of planes became tight formations of aircraft with as little as six inches between wing-tips. Wasn't this a bit reckless? Perhaps, some pilots say. But by keeping their eyes on the navigation lights (green on the right wing-tip, red on the left) of adjacent planes, communicating by radio, and obeying the signals from a lead plane, it was easy for them to co-ordinate their movements. (Their radio conversations have been overheard by other pilots on the 122.8 and 122.9 megahertz aviation bands.) Also, some pilots point out, should two planes flying close together at the same speed accidentally brush wing-tips, the impact would be rather gentle, not particularly dangerous.

By early 1983, when the number of planes in the night formations occasion-

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ally reached eight or nine, police switchboards in Brewster and surrounding New York communities were jammed with calls from people reporting UFOs. When local newspapers began printing stories about strange sightings and experiences, and television stations ran tapes of the mysterious lights in the sky, the pilots were incredulous, then amused. If people wanted to believe in UFOs, they decided, why not give them something to talk about? More pilots — and not just from Stormville — joined in, and, according to some, the group began calling themselves the Martians. People at Stormville began clipping articles about the UFOs, and posting them on the bulletin board at the airport's operations centre. Joining in the fun, the airport snack bar began offering 'UFO burgers', a \$ 1.75 concoction of barbecued beef, melted cheese, and 'a number of unidentified flying ingredients'. In an effort to divert reporters

who flocked to the area, the pilots began a 'disinformation' campaign, attributing the sightings to 'those military folks over at Stewart Air Force Base', or to 'some kind of — whaddaya call it — hologram they're working on over at IBM'.

Among themselves, the Stormville people made scornful remarks about the UFO sighters. "Hogwash," said one. "They all ought to be in Wingdale (the site of a nearby psychiatric hospital)." "Well, I guess it's got to be a flying saucer," said another. "I don't believe in planes." Indeed, the public reaction seemed to spur them on to even more intricate manoeuvres and deceptions.

Flying Cessna 152s and other single-engine planes in tight formations, they might all douse their exterior lights at the same time, keeping track of each other's positions by switching on their dim red cockpit lights (which cannot

be seen from the ground). This would result in reports about UFOs that suddenly disappeared from the sky. They varied their formations, from crescents and circles to crosses that looked from the ground like diamonds or Vs, giving rise to reports about different, and sometimes startling, UFO shapes.

Occasionally, the pilots might all turn their landing lights on and fly slowly toward, say, the busy Taconic State Parkway, which runs parallel to the river. To alarmed motorists, these oncoming bright headlights formed the outline of a giant UFO that seemed to be suspended in the sky. When the Martians all turned off their landing lights at once, the UFO suddenly disappeared, sending motorists racing toward the nearest phone booth to report their experiences to the police. And what about the changing colours of the UFO lights? Observers on the ground to the left of the flight might see only



Edward Condon with a model UFO and his report.

UNDER PRESSURE from Congress to explain the growing number of UFO reports, the air force commissioned a team of scientists from the University of Colorado, led by the late physicist Edward Condon, to study the phenomenon in 1967. Two years and \$500,000 later, after its work had been reviewed and approved by the National Academy of Sciences, the team released its findings in the 1,465-page *Scientific Study Of Unidentified Flying Objects*. Much to the dismay and anger of flying saucer buffs, the so-called Condon Report methodical-

A SCIENTIFIC LOOK AT UFOS

ly demolished most of their pet theories and presented rational explanations for many of the famous UFO sightings.

Conceding that a few events could not be explained (because not enough information was available), the Colorado team attributed most sightings to optical illusions, stars, atmospheric inversions, meteors, flocks of birds, airplanes, balloons, and outright hoaxes. The search found absolutely no evidence that UFOs were emissaries of extraterrestrial civilizations. Consequently, the team concluded, there was no scientific justification for further investigation of the phenomena. It recommended shutting down Project Blue Book, a unit set up by the air force in 1957 to log and evaluate UFO sightings.

Among the Condon Report's more notable findings:

- After analysing a fragment of magnesium that UFO buffs said had come from a saucer that exploded over Brazil, the scientists found that it was not, as the believers had claimed, purer than any magnesium ever made by man. In fact, it contained more impurities than most commercially refined magnesium.
- Shown a picture of a ring-like UFO photographed in 1957 near Fort Belvoir, Virginia, army technicians immediately identified it as a vortex ring formed when a mixture of diesel oil, gasoline and white phosphorus was exploded by TNT at the base to simulate atomic bomb explosions.
- Night-flying UFOs with flashing lights, unearthly manoeuvrability, and extraterrestrial occupants, reported over Colorado by 30 witnesses, turned out to be a candle-heated hot-air bal-



Flying saucer in Ohio.

loon launched by two high school boys.

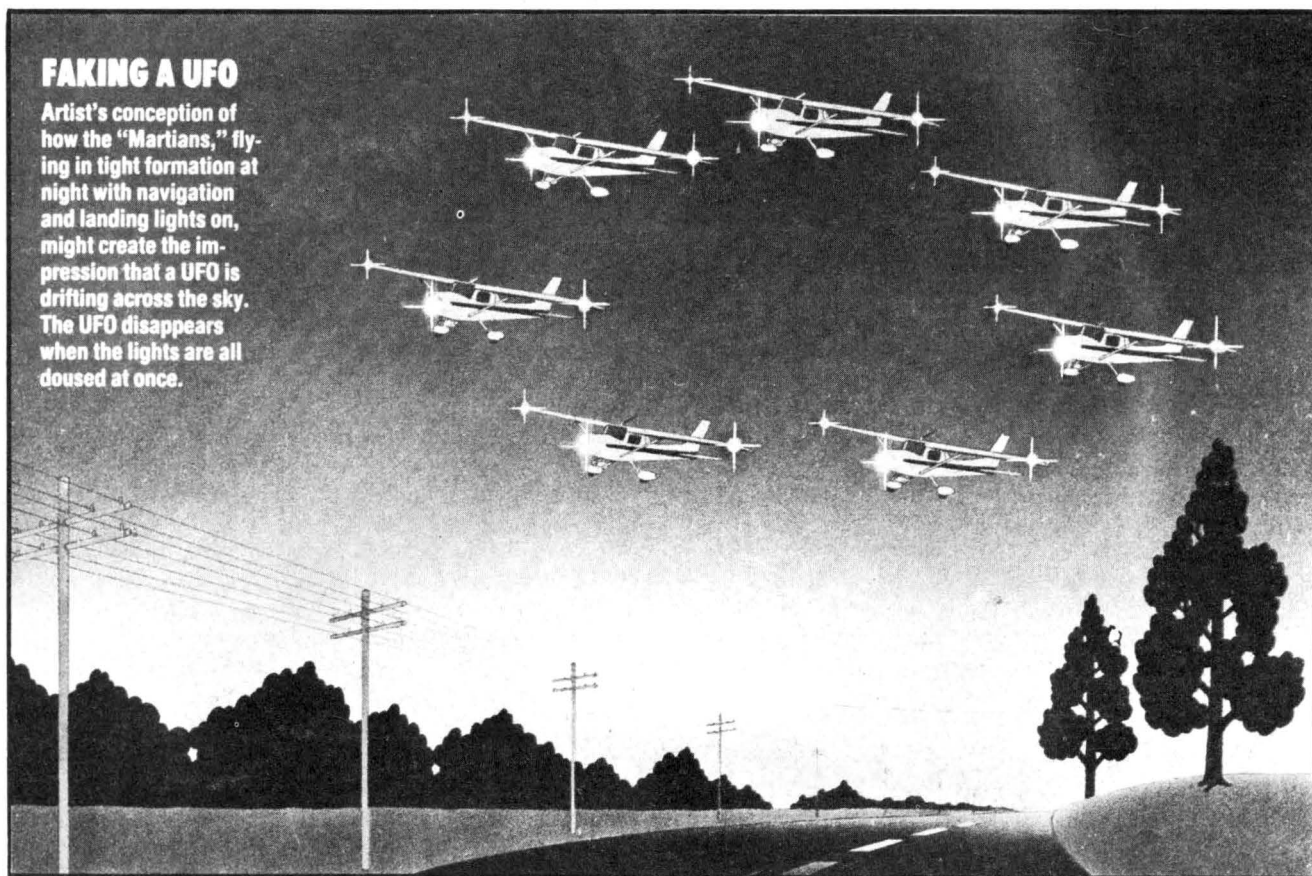
• A 'claw-shaped' impression on the dry sand of a beach — supposedly made by a UFO, and featured in a *Look* magazine special issue on flying saucers — was found to have been created by urine. "Some person or animal," the Condon Report stated, "had performed an act of micturition there."

Apparently convinced by examples like these, the air force terminated Project Blue Book in December 1969, putting an end to government involvement in UFO investigations.



FAKING A UFO

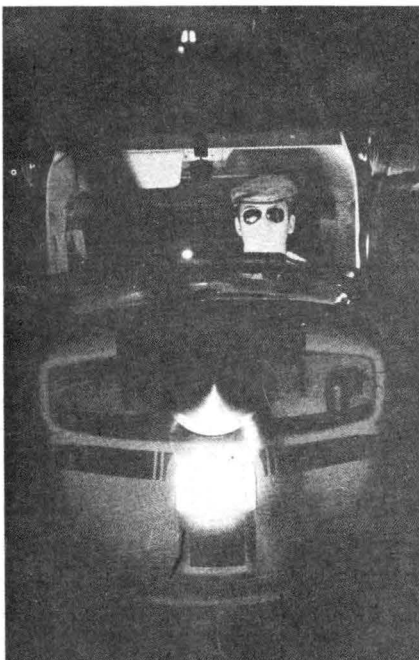
Artist's conception of how the "Martians," flying in tight formation at night with navigation and landing lights on, might create the impression that a UFO is drifting across the sky. The UFO disappears when the lights are all doused at once.



the red navigation lights on the left wing-tips; the fuselages of the planes could block the green lights on the right wings from view. If the formation circled back, the same observers might see a moving pattern of green lights, but no red ones.

And what about the silent or gently humming UFOs reported by so many people? Cessna 152s, especially, have exceptionally quiet engines; but any single-engine plane, even if directly overhead, is barely audible from the ground when it flies above 3,000 or 4,000 feet. And "above 5,000 feet," says one pilot, "there's no noise at all — especially when they're two miles away." If the observer happens to be upwind of a plane, says another, it may be inaudible when it is just 1,000 feet above the ground.

As word of the night flyers began to spread, the UFO buffs were not amused. Said the *UFO Reporter*, "Apparently, a number of the pilots and the staff connected with the (Stormville) airport were deliberately doing a little leg-pulling. . . but this formation flying cannot explain the bulk of the March reports described in the last issue." Ger-



Night flying without navigation lights.

sten was incensed. The pilots, he said, were trying to 'deceive and confuse the public, diverting attention away from the real UFO'. He offered a reward of \$ 1,000 to anyone who could identify them. In mid-September, presumably

acting on complaints about the night flyers, a Federal Aviation Administration team paid a surprise visit to the Stormville strip to examine the planes parked on the field and look for illegally-rigged navigation lights or other violations. (The planes passed muster.) Several men suspected of being Martians began getting mysterious telephone calls from strangers, and one received an outright threat.

The sudden attention has made the Martians and their allies wary. It has been a lot of fun, they say, but not worth losing their licences for an FAA infraction. Turning off navigation lights during a night flight, for example, is illegal. Then, too, they are worried about the possibility of violating local 'criminal nuisance' ordinances or being sued by people who have been frightened or distracted while driving. The bulletin board at Stormville has been cleared of its UFO clippings. In the snack bar, a 'Not Available' sign has been pasted over the UFO-burger listing. And the number of UFO sightings in the Hudson Valley has dropped precipitously.



WILLIAM GOLDMAN

The Making Of Marathon Man: A Scriptwriter's Memoir

I DON'T REMEMBER much clearly about *Marathon Man*. I wrote, in a compressed period of time, two versions of the novel and at least four versions of the screenplay, and after that, someone, I suspect Robert Towne, was brought in to write the ending. So all in all, it's pretty much a maze.

What I do remember clearly, as clearly today as then, is Olivier.

The part Olivier wanted to play was that of the Nazi villain, Szell, who is living in considerable luxury in South America. Circumstances force him to come to New York to retrieve a fortune in diamonds.

He wanted the role; obviously we wanted him. The problem was would he be physically able to or, more bluntly, would he even be alive? The man has been dogged by a series of hideous ailments over the past years, killing ones. But the man is also a bull, and each time he somehow survived.

When *Marathon Man*'s director, John Schlesinger, first went to visit him to discuss the possibility, he came away filled with doubt. Olivier, he reported, was then almost totally incapable of movement; one side of his face worked — that was all. Beyond the question of his recovery was this: Would he possibly be able to pass the physical that all leads must take for insurance purposes prior to a film?

All answers came in positive, and rehearsals began in a large room in what had once been the Huntington Hartford Museum above Columbus Circle. Schlesinger and I and a number of others arrived early. There is always tension at such a time, but now there

was more than normal: a new problem had arisen.

The Olivier role called for him to be bald. In his past, the character had been nicknamed 'the White Angel' because of his glorious white hair. In the script, in order to help disguise himself, Szell shaves himself bald. Now a delicate moment was at hand: Olivier was old, he had been desperately ill, he didn't look all that terrific anyway — and no one wanted to bring up the subject of having his hair shaved. (There were rumours about his health flying everywhere and this would only add to

Though I wrote
the novel and
the screenplay
for 'Marathon
Man', all I really
remember is
Olivier.

it; "I just saw Olivier and his hair has fallen out. He looks worse than I've ever seen him. Bald. How much longer can he last?")

A barber was hired for the day, but he was hidden in a room downstairs. For all anybody knew, maybe Olivier didn't even want to play the part bald. Christ, we all have vanity, and this was once one of the world's matinee idols.

Rehearsal time approached. The barber was waiting below. But who the hell was going to ask this legend about getting disfigured?

There were no volunteers.

On time, Olivier moved silently and alone into the large room. We all made our hellos. Olivier carries none of his greatness with him. He is famous for taking directors aside early on and saying, "Please, you must help me. Tell me what you want." Most stars like to be thought of as being private people, being shy. We even grant those attributes to Woody Allen, this in spite of the fact that he must be the most visible celebrity in New York.

It's not an act with Olivier. He never has considered himself to be all that much as a film actor. On the stage, obviously, he is something. In films, he thinks of himself as being just another player.

He also never refers to his great career as a director. No mentions of *Henry V*. Orson Welles, another great director, reputedly has, on more than one occasion, when he first came on the floor to act, looked around, then nailed the director with probably one eyebrow raised and intoned, "Is *that* where you're going to put the camera?"

Anyway, after we greeted each other there was this very long pause. Broken by Sir Laurence, who said, "Would it be possible for me to be shaved bald now? I think it might be best to get it done."

Relief, may I add, abounded.

During lunch break we found ourselves together and I didn't know what to say, so I fumbled something about was his hotel all right, did he like New York? Did he know it well?

"Not all that well," he answered. "I was here I think in 1946 and in 1951 and 1958, but I'm not that familiar with the city."

I nodded, wondering what to say next when suddenly it hit me — Jesus Christ, 1946 was his *Oedipus*, one of the two performances in all my life I wish I'd been able to see. (Laurette Taylor in *The Glass Menagerie* was the other.) And 1951 — that was the two Cleopatras, the Shaw, and the Shakespeare he performed in with Vivien Leigh. And 1958 was his phenomenal work in Osborne's *The Entertainer*. He never referred to the plays, just the years.

But those weren't dates we were talking about; that was theatre history.

DURING A BREAK that afternoon, he was telling a story about being mugged. I was a good distance away, staring out of the window like a fool, listening to every word.

Goldman is a leading scriptwriter. This feature is extracted from Adventures In The Screen Trade with the permission of IBH.

Olivier, in spite of himself, scares other actors. I know of one superstar who spent the night in panic because he had to act with Olivier the next day.

The point of the story was he was in his home in Brighton, watching television with his family. And what was on television was one of his Shakespeare movies. He went downstairs for a moment, and when he was on the lower floor, the mugger clobbered him and he shouted. But on television upstairs, what was going on was a soliloquy, and his children just thought there was Daddy below, doing the speech along with the tube.

Well, when he told that story, when he told about being struck and shouting — Olivier really shouted.

I spun from the window, startled by the sound, startled and at the same time thrilled. Because there it was, and I was in the room with it: the famous Olivier stage cry, the sound that has mesmerised audiences for half a century. I stood still, frozen by the power.

Sure he was old, and God yes, the Fates had been dogging him. But even now, when he wanted to let it fly, it was there.

WILLIAM DEVANE, a fine American actor with a lot of stage experience, played another of the villains in the story. He rehearsed his first scene with Olivier and it all went quickly and Devane was just terrific.

When they broke, I cornered Devane, who is bright and very articulate, and I told him how wonderfully he had done and asked what it was like, rehearsing with Laurence Olivier.

"It doesn't matter," Devane replied.

I didn't know what in hell he was talking about and said so.

"This is rehearsal," Devane said. "It's nothing. When the camera starts to roll, he'll give me a little of this, he'll give me a little of that, and you'll never know I'm in the movie. No one's going to be watching me — that's Olivier, man."

DUSTIN HOFFMAN loves to improvise and he's expert at it. He and Schlesinger and Olivier were sitting around a

table, going over the penultimate sequence in the movie, where Hoffman has Olivier at gunpoint and they begin a long walk. Hoffman said, "Let's improvise it for a while."

Olivier said he'd really rather not. Improvisation is not something he likes to do, it's not part of traditional English theatrical training.

Hoffman jumped up. "Let's put it on its feet and improvise."

Olivier resisted again.

Schlesinger said he thought that since we were there to rehearse, why not try it.

Olivier got up. Slowly.



He was, as I've indicated, recovering from whatever terrible disease had recently crippled him. His hands, even now, were bandaged. (I don't know the specific nature of this particular ailment; someone said it was the nerve disease that had killed Onassis, but I can't vouch for that. And when I say his hands were bandaged, I don't mean totally swathed. But there were Band-Aids criss-crossing his skin and all Scotch-taped in place, perhaps to hide the sight of swelling.)

He was protected brilliantly in the movie. There is only one moment where you can tell how frail he really was. It's at the end of the sequence in

the diamond district, when he was to try and run for a nearby cab, perhaps two paces away. If you watch closely, you can see the struggle he had to put out to get to the cab. Even then two steps were almost too many.

But now, as he stood slowly in the rehearsal hall, we were months before the shooting of the diamond scene. Hoffman mimed a gun and said, "Okay, get going" and they started to walk around the rehearsal hall.

Olivier tried ad-libbing, said again and again that he really wasn't skilled at it, could someone give him his lines, and Hoffman said, "You're doing great, just say anything, come on, we're getting somewhere."

So they walked.

And walked. And kept on walking.

I don't know why all this was allowed to happen. Improvising is a part of Hoffman's vast technique, and perhaps that was the reason. But Olivier, in spite of himself, scares the shit out of other actors. (I know of one giant star who insisted on Olivier being in a movie with him. This man was and is a friend of Olivier's. The movie was well into shooting when Olivier's role began, and the night before his first appearance, the star who cared for him and insisted on him was awake the entire night in, quite simply, panic. He was nursed through that night by his producer, who told me it was so sad, seeing this star all but helpless because he was going to have to act with Olivier the next day.)

And I think part of this was because of Hoffman's need to put himself on at least equal footing with this sick old man.

And I don't know why Schlesinger didn't stop it. Perhaps, as he indicated, to see what might come out of it that might help the sequence.

But I also have to think that Schlesinger knew that Olivier wouldn't give him any trouble: Hoffman was the star, Hoffman had the vehicle role, if anyone was going to bring him to grief, Hoffman was that man, and to go directly against his star's wishes so early on might not be a move of great wisdom — I'm not talking about the improvisation, I'm talking about the walking that went along with it — because inside of a few minutes, Olivier's ankles were beginning to swell.

But on they walked. And improvised. And Hoffman was terrific. And Olivier did his best. And Schlesinger watched it all.

Why did Dustin Hoffman behave so badly with a sick, old man? Could it be that he needed to cover up his own insecurity?

And Olivier would not sit down. Would not. Give in.

He could have stopped, he could have asked for a chair, he could have requested a break.

But he walked.

And now his ankles were bulging. Pain is impossible to quantify. What lays me up may be something you can deal with easily. No one can say how much anyone is capable of enduring. But watching it all take place, seeing the old man grow increasingly pale, was something I knew then I'd remember. And I mean forever.

Truly skilled actors are rare. Of those, a few are blessed with brilliance. And of those, fewer still have even a shot at greatness. Most (Burton, Welles, Barrymore) blow it.

Every century or so, we are blessed with a tiny handful, and as impossible as their task may be, *staying* great is that much harder.

Olivier made his first stage appearance in 1922 — he played Katherine in an all-boys production of *The Taming Of The Shrew*. I doubt he was a great Katherine. But watching him as that awful improvisatory afternoon came to an end, I think I glimpsed why Olivier has been able to endure in that incredible rarefied atmosphere for so many decades. He was sure as shit great for me that day, and he'll be great on the day that he dies.

Assuming he allows that to happen. . . .

LAST OLIVIER STORY.

He and Roy Scheider were rehearsing a scene. In the story they are very close to violence, but both are still trying to figure out what the other one knows. The dialogue went like this:

OLIVIER: "We must talk. Truthfully. Are you to be trusted?"

SCHEIDER: "No."

OLIVIER: "Was that the truth? Or are you trying to upset me?"

SCHEIDER: "I know why you're here — and I know that sooner or later

you're going to go to the bank —"

OLIVIER: "Perhaps I have already been."

Schlesinger interrupted them. He said, "Larry, that's supposed to go fast, and after Roy says the line about the bank, you're taking a pause before 'Perhaps I have already been.' Don't take the pause."

Olivier said, "Of course," and they started into the dialogue again. And then he stopped. "I have a problem about not taking the pause."

We waited.

"I'm trying to find out information. Roy says, 'I know why you're here.' And I need to find out what that means. Then Roy says, 'I know. . . ' And I'm listening. Then he says, 'I know that sooner or later . . . ' And I'm still listening. Now he says, 'I know that sooner or later you're going to go . . . ' And I'm *still* listening. Finally he says, 'I know that sooner or later you're going to go to the bank.' That pause I'm taking is to give me time to register the information about the bank."

"I understand," Schlesinger said. "But we've got to get rid of the pause."

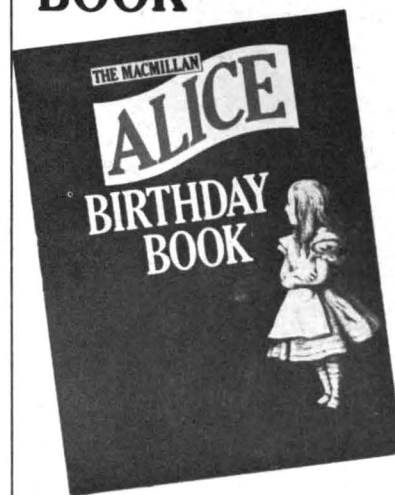
Olivier turned to me, then. "Bill," he said, "could I suggest an alteration in the line? Would it be all right if I changed it so that the line went, 'I know that you're going to go to the bank sooner or later?' You see, then I could register the word *bank* while he was saying 'sooner or later' and I wouldn't need the pause."

Obviously it was fine with me and the line was altered and we went on without the pause. And probably this two minutes of rehearsal explained at length doesn't seem like much put down in black and white.

But that moment — when the actor of the century asked me would I mind if he switched six words around — is the most memorable incident of my movie career. Olivier. Calling me "Bill." Olivier. Asking me would I mind.

That's high cotton. . . . ♦

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Bejan Daruwalla's Predictions



ARIES: March 21 to April 20: Venus in your sign makes you

overindulge in food and drink. Buying, selling and shopping in the second half of the month, are focalised. Over the last seven days get your travel kit ready as the impulse to go on journeys will be exceptionally strong. Between the fourth and the 19th, health precautions are absolutely essential. There is a strong possibility of a job hop this month.



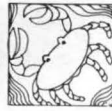
TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: On the 14th, Mercury ingresses your sign. This signifies

movement, news and views, letters and calls, contacts and contracts. Got it straight? No new move or activity should be pursued around the 15th as there is the Sun-Saturn opposition. A personal problem will be resolved around the last week of May or the first week of June. You will definitely be career-oriented this month.



GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: The Moon's last quarter helps

you to be introspective and creative. The snag is that expenses will drill holes in your wallet and pocket. Many of you will be planning a journey, visiting clinics and hospitals, doing a lot of social work. Your pent-up resentment against those who have hurt you will burst out, because Mars is in your sign the entire month. There will be health hazards.



CANCER: June 22 to July 22: The full Moon helps you in

terms of socialising, children, hobbies, romance and research into occult phenomena. The Jupiter-Moon conjunction on the 11th could usher in socialising and open the bank doors to you. Knowing you as I do, that would be fun! In the last seven days, there will be exceptionally heavy expenditure. Games of chance were meant just for you.



LEO: July 23 to August 23: Time to sweat it out. There could be a

change in your profession or business. It would be wise of you to reserve your best for the last ten days as the Sun changes or shifts into a more favourable sign and angle. Ideally, try and fuse business and pleasure. The health of parents and in-laws could be a source of acute anxiety. Your health, too, needs attention. Financially, the month of May is not favourable. Money slips away.



VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: Venus-Jupiter sextile signifies

collaborations, ceremonies, journeys. You will be able to give your very best, as the fires of your imagination will be stoked. For salesmen, teachers, writers, editors, radio and TV announcers, this is definitely a fine month. Use this month to burnish your image and that of the company you represent. A career-oriented month, with friends taking second place.



LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: Matters related

to funds, joint finance and partnerships, form the gravamen of this month. There is the possibility of an operation. See that you don't take undue chances if at the wheel, or using sharp instruments. Intimate relationships and ties are very possible. Get your travel kit ready on and after May 20th. Ceremonies are foretold for Librans.



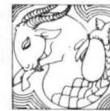
SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22: Tension and hassles

are your bosom companions during this month, because the full Moon falls in your angle of opposition. A break-up or a law suit is possible. You are advised to cultivate tact and diplomacy. In the last nine days, a windfall, a gift or a legacy is predicted. Also, taxes will have to be paid in May and June. Affairs of the heart take an uneven course, but your tenacity pulls you through.



SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21: Those in avi-

ation, oil and drilling, TV and stage, industry and trade, should be careful about their health. Hospitalisation is probable. Problems connected with subordinates and colleagues will consume your time, money and energy. Loans and funds might not come as expected. On the brighter side, romance blooms, and you are as good a lover as those born in other signs.



CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: Catch the bull

by the horns, literally and metaphorically, as this is a month of power and pelf for you. Despite the Sun-Saturn opposition, you will score over your rivals and be one-up on them. Exceptionally heavy expenses are foretold for this month. During the last ten days, your job or profession will be extremely important and exceptionally demanding.



AQUARIUS: January 21 to February 18: The home front

could be under a blitzkrieg. The health of parents, relatives, in-laws and dear ones could make you lose your sleep and your cool. It could also have an adverse impact on your profession or business. Therefore, keep these two compartments watertight. From the 21st of the month, the Sun enters Gemini, and pressure will slacken. That's the silver lining. A romantic month.



PISCES: February 19 to March 20: Journeys

with a stopover, long distance connections, a huge publicity boost, exceptional creativity, visits by strangers, foreigners and relatives are the facets of this month. Despite a few health problems, you will be able to advance and achieve your goal. A round of renovation, decoration, alteration in the home or office is on the cards in May and June. For some of you, a major shift is possible. ♦

"These clothes are designed to have fun in : and you'd love to be a Party to this!"

Sharmila says....

"After working hard, I love to relax with my friends. Someone brings the food, someone else brings recorded music and before we know it, we're in the middle of a marvellous party. If, however, you are invited to a more formal one, this is what you need to wear:

Party to a suit : This suit is a knockout for a really formal occasion, when you would like the spotlight firmly on you. The pin-tucked shirt



front is really elegant, but the scene-stealer is the sweeping shawl collar on the dinner-jacket, faced with matt satin.

Cocktail chic and Party Politics :

For equally formal occasions, and for business entertaining, when you need to impress with your wit and your appearance, the three piece suit is infallible.



SHARMILA ROY CHOWDHURY

This one, in deep navy blue, can see you through a day at the office to cocktails at seven.

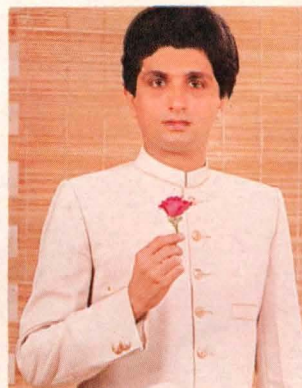
Another suit, in Kenya-coffee brown. single-breasted, with asymmetrical pockets, was made for the happy hour

The Indian National

Party Spirit : At Mehfis or wedding receptions, or whenever you want to dress with traditional flair, try an Achkan churidaar. This one was made for very dignified

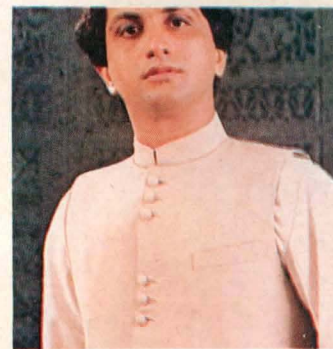


occasions, indeed, with the Achkan in cream with gold buttons down the front and churidaars to match. If the function is important enough, let it go to your head - wear a turban!



For those quieter evenings spent with armchair philosophers, or for kavi sammelans, this is perfect: an art-silk kurta-churidaar and a shell coloured Nehru jacket buttoned over it. If you can, wear it with - what else? - one perfect rose.

Where do you start selecting the fabric for your party wear? Here's an invitation - consider Graviera. Graviera is crease-free, wash 'n wear and has polychrome fast colour. Graviera, with its all weather durability was made for all the seasons of the year: summer, monsoon and winter. Graviera makes sense not only rationally but emotionally, too: when you reach for Graviera, you choose luxury suiting, famous all over India and well-known for its high standards of excellence. It makes you look and feel your best. You can't go wrong with Graviera."



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