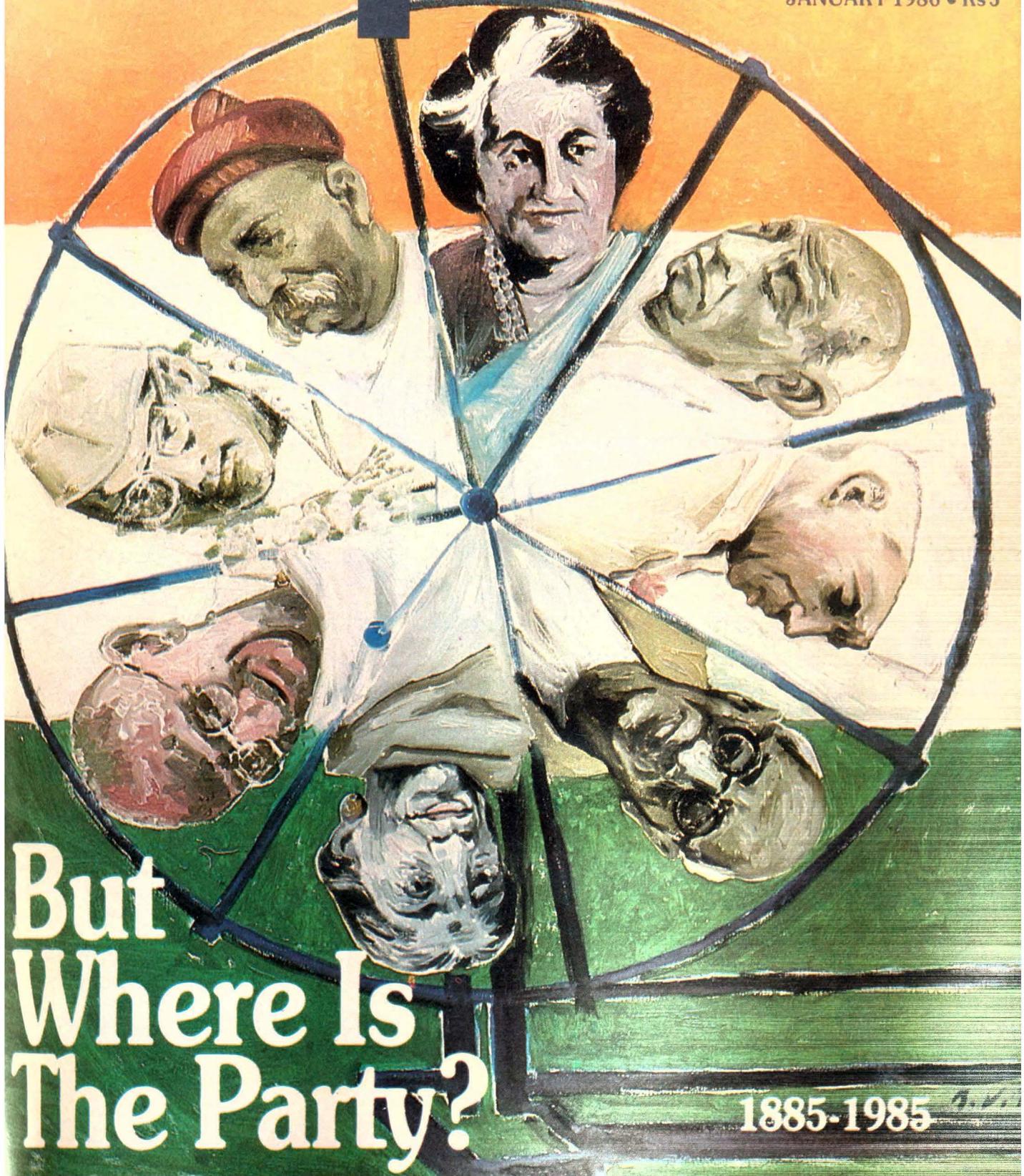


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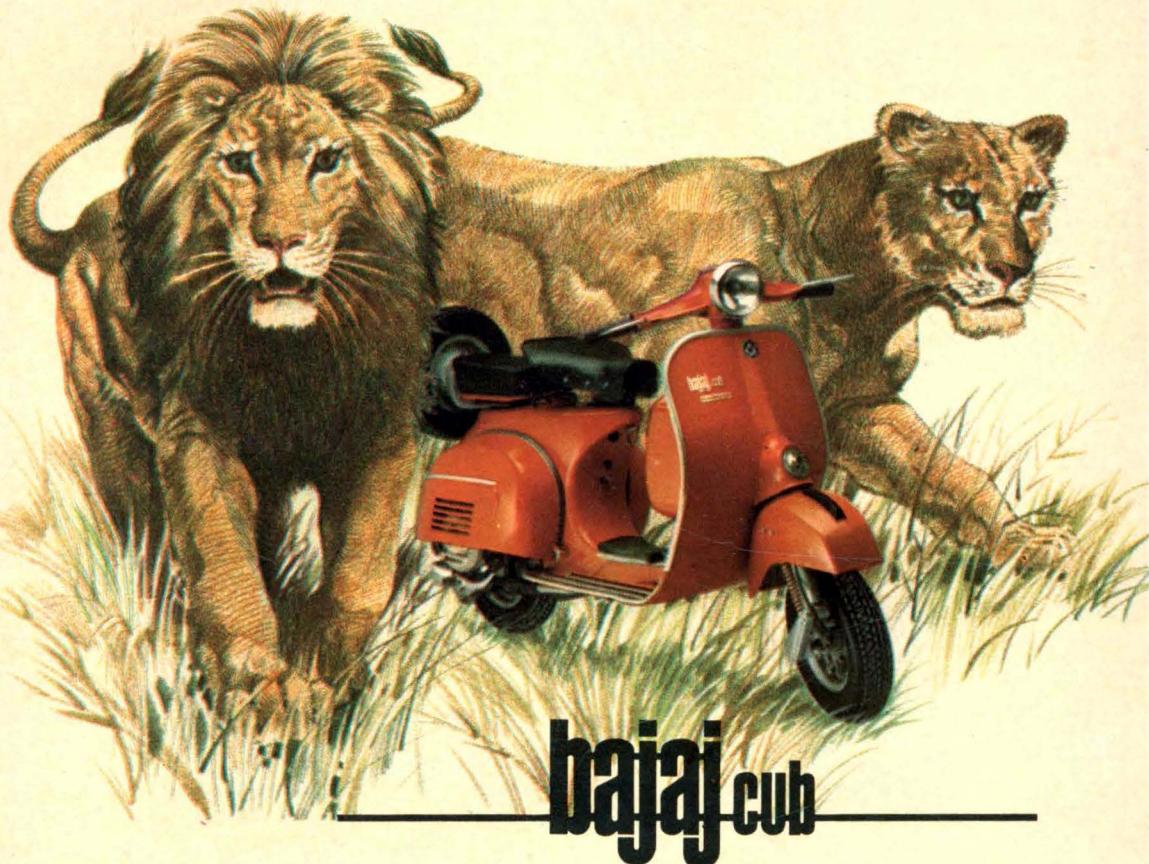
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The Party?

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ON THE MARQUEE

THE ROUT THE CONGRESS PARTY has just suffered in Assam, as also elsewhere in the country in by-elections, flings the question, **But Where Is The Party?** beyond largely the upstarts, and pretenders gathered in Bombay and their cohorts who have stayed home. This is now a question the people of India, too, must consider, and do something about.

In the parliamentary democracy we are committed to be, an administration can only be as good and as vigorous as the party in power. Always, and everywhere in the world, wherever good governments are run, the party is the soul, the spiritual locomotive, and at the same time the monitor of its government. We have seen this happen in our country while Mahatma Gandhi was alive, and Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad and C Rajagopalachari were at the helm at the Centre, and people like Dr B C Roy and B G Kher were heading the administrations in the provinces where, too, the governments worked energetically, despite almost insurmountable difficulties created by the Partition, the influx of refugees, and the suddenly risen expectations of the people. And all this in the face of inexperience in governance of almost all these stalwarts.

Although Gandhiji held no position in the party or its government, the assassination of the Mahatma in 1948 removed a moral force from the Congress Party and correspondingly weakened it. The death of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in 1950 deprived the party of its organisational strong man and thus removed a pile from the administrative foundation on which the new civil service was being built. The decline of Jawaharlal Nehru after the border conflict with the Chinese and the consequent demoralisation of the party also slowed the wheels of the administrative machinery. Lal Bahadur Shastri's sudden demise made bossism dominant and this, too, hit the party and bred a matching culture in the administration. The party split of 1969, caused by Mrs Indira Gandhi, shook and splintered the administration to its very foundations, each successive blow she inflicted on the party to establish her supremacy wreaking corresponding havoc on the administration. Not surprisingly, for a few days following her assassination, there was no administration, although we had a new Prime Minister and a leader for the Congress Party within hours of her death. Mr Rajiv Gandhi's failure, during the one year he has been the leader of the Congress Party, even to influence Members of Parliament owing their election to him to work for public good only, as servants of the people, is tellingly reflected in the increasingly circumspect bureaucracy. So much for how the strength and the reach of the party is mirrored in the administration of a country.

The Congress Party has come to this sorry pass for what it is today: Congress (I). The 'I' is, of course, for Indira, the obscene extension of which, for some time, was — Indira is India. All those who have eyes to see and hearts to feel realise what damage to the Congress Party this denigration has caused. Most of those who head the diminished party have an association of less than four to five years with the Congress. There is nowhere the concept of growing with the party from village to town to state to Centre, or from youth wings and other movements to the top. The way the centenary celebrations have been organised, as purely a show by people now in power, is not edifying. How can we ignore the fact that Mr Morarji Desai, for example, played a more important role in the freedom struggle than anyone of those to be projected at the centenary, when Mr Desai is not going to be there, no matter whose fault? It is sad that one is compelled to say all this on the occasion of the centenary of the Congress!

Only 50 years ago, when the Congress Party was celebrating its 50th anniversary, the All-India Congress Committee brought out a commemorative volume by Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya on the history of the Congress. Writing an *Introduction* to that volume, Dr Rajendra Prasad, the then President of the Congress, proudly wrote: "The Congress has thus marched on from stage to stage and covers practically every sphere of national activity. It is at present engaged in constructive work. Starting as a small organisation, it now covers the entire country with a network of branches and enjoys the confidence of the masses of the country. . . ."

What can the group which calls itself Congress (I) say on this centenary about its organisation, its reach, its constructive work? Today, the party is but an election machine of those who don a Gandhi cap and use its hallowed name to deceive the people into getting themselves elected. A share in the spoils of power is what they seek. So little is their concern for the electorate, their trust in them, and to the institutions they are elected to serve, that just two weeks ago, the Lok Sabha had to adjourn for lack of quorum: not 54 Congress MPs — 10% of the total membership of the House — cared to be in the Lok Sabha. This, in a House where they have an absolute majority of 460 members. Briefly, that is what the Congress is now. And this is the anchor of our government!

In the diverse land that India is, we need a strong national party to hold this country together. For obvious reasons, the socialists, the communists, the Jana Sanghis (BJP) and the members of the Janata, have little real-

istic hope of gaining mass acceptance. Being heir to a historical legacy, the Congress Party is still the best placed to fulfil the role. If the delegates meeting in Bombay for the centenary celebrations ponder the question we have posed on the cover, *But Where Is The Party?* they would at once realise what they need to do to be even distant heirs to the Congress legacy. Mr Rajiv Gandhi, who has used the election machinery to arrive where he is today, has most responsibility to apply his mind, and some of his time, to rebuild the Congress Party. He should start by restoring to the party the dignity and the historical legacy of its past role by dropping the undignified (I) from its name, even if Mr Gandhi has to go to the Court to achieve this. Most people will spontaneously support such a move.

When more than a 100 years ago, Allan Octavian Hume, an Englishman in the service of the British Empire, felt the need to cap with a safety valve the discontent of his sovereign's subjects in India, he wrote a moving letter (and thus founded the Congress) to prominent people, mostly Indians. "If only 50 men, good and true, can be found to join. . . . And if even the leaders of thought are all either such poor creatures, or so selfishly wedded to personal concern that they dare not strike a blow for their country's sake, then justly and rightly are they kept down and trampled on, for they deserve nothing better. Every nation secures precisely as good a government as it merits." Mr Gandhi needs to absorb the content of this historic appeal, and convey its message to his colleagues, comrades and also to people outside of politics. The people of this country too must realise the truth in what Hume said a hundred years ago, and refuse to be bowled over by election machines. Unless the office seekers come to you as a mass-based, solid good party, it may not be a bad idea to not cast your vote in future Lok Sabha elections.

If Mr Gandhi will spare a moment from the peripatetic life he leads as Prime Minister for introspection of his party's situation, he will, perhaps, realise that the concern of the founder of the Congress is as relevant today as it was 100 years ago. We need a safety valve. And we need men good and true who are not wedded only to personal concerns. Any introspection by Mr Gandhi will make him realise that he owes such an effort for what he also is: the great-grandson of Motilal Nehru and grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru.

* * *

THERE IS ONLY DISGRACE for the government in the arrest, and public humiliation of Mr S L Kirloskar, the industrialist. There is also disgrace in all the publicity being given to the tax raid on an outstanding enterprise — Bajaj Auto — run by Mr Rahul Bajaj. For the rest of us, including the Kirloskars and the Bajajs, well, we should all be ashamed of ourselves. Business spokesmen are openly admitting that at one time or the other most of our businessmen have done this or that thing wrong, and violated laws. The truth is even worse as the knowledgeable among the public know.

It is because of the "Oh, these businessmen are so dishonest" implicit in this cleansing drive while most politicians will not be able to account for much of what they own or spend that there is disgrace for the government in the two instances I have cited above. Also, in the case of Mr S L Kirloskar, there was no need to arrest an old man (he will be 83 next May); chargesheeting would have sufficed. And there is absolutely no justification whatsoever in law or in ethics for the authorities to broadcast allegations as they have done in the Kirloskar case, or giving out detailed information to the Press as in the case of the raids on Bajaj.

There is disgrace for all of us in this, and as I have said, we all should be ashamed of what is happening around us, because we, the people, have allowed wrongdoing to become a way of life. We allowed, and not infrequently tempted ministers even while the Mahatma was alive to become corrupt, so that we could justify our own avarice, wilfully denying the simple truth known to us all that wrongs breed wrongs on wider and ever wider scale. And it devours.

As someone who, like many businessmen, lots of professionals and most salaried people, pays *all* taxes due regularly ever since I began working three decades ago, without ever resorting to even those loopholes open to the honest, and thus ending up paying more direct taxes than many businessmen, I carry a personal grudge against tax evaders — their greed had until very recently taxed the honest to cruel and unbearable levels. But, while I know many businessmen are dishonest and tax evaders, I know also, for certain, that *most* politicians are dishonest and they live off, quite shamelessly by now, on monies of businessmen and traders, which they have accumulated largely through tax evasions. Even today, while the government is claiming to be different than its predecessors, and is so righteously painting many businessmen and government officials blue and black, will one politician please stand up to be counted as honest? The definition of 'honest' applied here is that he should be able to say that not only he is personally honest but that his party, since it is as a member of a party only that he counts in politics, is not using unaccounted money, and that he is ready to get the finances of the party audited by auditors of repute. I am referring here, of course, to the Congress (I), although most politicians in other parties are as dishonest in money matters as they have an opportunity to be.

And how unjust of this government to hound government servants in this 'clean-up!' Successive governments, by perennially swearing allegiance to socialism, to the poor, to poor Gandhiji, to this wordy principle or that, while themselves wallowing in privilege and in ill-gotten wealth, have paid inadequate salaries to government servants and condemned them to poverty, destroying their self-respect, and to the detriment of the country, made them utterly cynical. This has gone on while the government wastes money on half the things it undertakes. Government servants could have been easily paid twice their wages all through from early fifties and the country could have secured from them five times more dedication, loyalty and productivity had only good sense and integrity prevailed on the part of their political masters. Many of these wretched fellows are by now so corrupt and so destructive that they deserve not only Nagpur or Madurai but possibly the Andamans across the *kalapani*. But today, there is no moral justification for punishing the guilty beyond confiscating their illegally acquired wealth. More severe punishment will be morally justifiable when the rulers are truly clean, and honest. When the party in power is honest, truly clean, not just laundered white.

Long before even Kapal Mehra was arrested, I had, in the course of an article in the October 1985 issue of **Imprint** pleaded: "The Finance Minister needs to urgently lend credibility to the government's resolve to reduce black money. He should consider admitting, preferably in Parliament, that black money in this country is the result of the partnership between politics and business, and that the politician (and consequently the administrator) is as responsible as the businessman for this anti-national activity. Then there is this need to say, in so many words what many people now believe: that the party in power is not asking for, or receiving, any money in black, nor is the administration encouraging its generation. Such a categorical pronouncement will be several times more effective than any number of raids or veiled threats the Finance Minister may make. To substantially reduce the generation of black money, its employment in trade and industry, and to reduce the evasion of various taxes, the Finance Minister needs to hand-pick half a dozen cases involving prominent offenders, and fine them to the extent, and more, of their estimated illegitimate gains. Yes, our legal processes are cumbersome, but the Finance Minister does not lack the means to achieve this goal. A few successful prosecutions, widely publicised, will be more effect- valuable than the 2,879 raids the Finance Ministry has conducted during April-August this year. . . . However, in view of the earlier participation of politicians and bureaucracy with the offenders, there should be no punishment other than in terms of money, and no future harassment of those successfully prosecuted for offences committed earlier. In the changed atmosphere, hanging future offenders even from the lamppost, will be justified."

It is not too late even now to act on this or on somewhat similar pleas many others have made since. There is an opportunity here for Mr Gandhi's government to go a step further and deal with the widespread belief that some members of the government or their agents are collecting outside India cuts on most major purchases abroad and on contracts awarded to foreign-based companies. Secret commissions in Swiss banks are not uncommon in many international deals — Prime Ministers and Princes have been disgraced elsewhere on this account. In light of the unexplained source of Congress Party's funding, and in view of the general impression that businessmen here are not being pressed to fill the party's coffers, an explanation from Mr Gandhi himself will go a long way in creating a law abiding community of businessmen, traders and industrialists in fiscal matters at least. A simple declaration from the Finance Minister, and a direct explanation from Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister on these very elementary public concerns will also eradicate much of the corruption in various government agencies in one fell swoop. Corruption, black money, tax evasion, nepotism, dishonesty is everywhere, except in Utopia. Here in India it will cease to be the all destroying scourge and phenomenon it is once the government and the political party in power acts (opposition parties will fall in line fastest). And this is not difficult. To many young people in the central government, and in the party where members swear allegiance to these young people, such an effort at fiscal accountability must come naturally. Cocooned in the cockpit of flying machines, cordoned off by counter-productive security from the reality of India, the Prime Minister may think all is well because he means well: the reality is different, although, no doubt, his goodness and decent outlook has made a seachange in some areas of sore. Only to such a man a fellow Indian can address as I have. Only to persons one holds dear and respects can one tell in print: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Nobody then dare question the government why a Kirloskar is arrested, or a Bajaj raided.

In the event the Government and the Congress Party choose to ignore their obligation to fully satisfy the public on its legitimate right to be assured that the leaders of government are honest as they are sworn to be, and that their party is not corrupt, then, well, the government can do what it pleases. More will join politics to avoid being raided. But that will not suppress the public outrage, will it?



✓ **Imprint** is normally published on the first day of each month. We have, however, advanced the publication date of January **Imprint** by five days on account of the centenary of the Congress.

imprint

Vol XXV No 10 January 1986
A BUSINESS PRESS PUBLICATION

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TEL : 660136.

Cable : IMPRINTMAG in each city.

For Editorial And Accounts Correspondence :
IMPRINT, Business Press Private Limited,
Maker Tower 'E', 18th Floor, Cuffe Parade,
Bombay 400 005. TEL : 212825/215056/211752.

IMPRINT is a Business Press monthly publication with the publishing office located at Surya Mahal, 5, Burjorji Bharucha Marg, Bombay 400 023, India. **IMPRINT** is registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India under No RN 6178/61©1986 Business Press Private Limited. Reproduction in any manner, in whole or part, in English or any other language, is strictly prohibited. **IMPRINT** does not accept responsibility for unsolicited contributions.

For change of address and circulation enquiries write to : **IMPRINT**, Business Press Private Limited, Maker Tower 'E', 18th Floor, Cuffe Parade, Bombay 400 005, at least 30 days before the change of address takes effect. Both the old and the new address should be given. When writing to us enclose a recent mailing label showing the subscription number. Airmail rates are available on request. **IMPRINT** is distributed by India Book House.

LETTERS

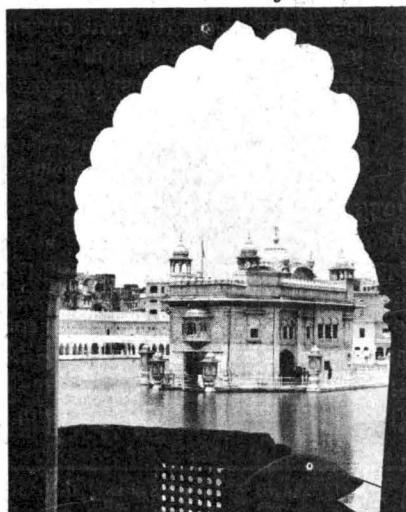
On Contempt

In K S Venkateswaran's excellent article, *The Law Relating To Contempt* (November 1985) there is a slight factual inaccuracy. The contempt case against A K Sen in 1970 was decided not by the Supreme Court but by the full Bench of the Delhi High Court when I was Chief Justice of that court.

It was held that Mr Sen's impugned speech was not calculated to obstruct or interfere with the course of justice and the due administration of law and, as such, Mr Sen was not guilty of contempt of court. Speaking for the full Bench, I further observed in that case that public discussion of a matter of great national importance cannot be stifled because a suit is filed by an individual in a court of law about that matter.

H R Khanna
New Delhi

A Miracle In Punjab?



R V Pandit's article *Grace And Faith Produce A Miracle In The Punjab* (November 1985) was balanced, analytical and well-researched. Now that the Akali government led by Surjit Singh Barnala is at the helm of affairs in Punjab, it should be the government's foremost duty to promote camaraderie between the Sikhs and the Hindus. This can be done by inducting Hindu legislators in the Akali Cabinet.

This calls for fortitude, will-power

and the support of the people of the state, all of which will contribute towards the restoration of Punjab's sagging economy.

Arvinder Singh Walia
Calcutta

A Critic's Perspective

Iqbal Masud's Guest Column (*A Critic With A Left-Wing Perspective*, November 1985) is probably the best-written column I have read in an Indian magazine in recent years. The scientific detachment with which Iqbal Masud analysed his own background is absolutely remarkable.

You should continue this column by inviting Arun Shourie (a Tory critic!) and Pritish Nandy (whatever kind of critic he is!) to write on themselves. It would be fascinating to know a critic's perceptions of himself!

D V Prasad
Shimoga

Remembering Indira

Remembering Indira by P N Duda (November 1985) clearly showed the other side of Indira Gandhi's personality.

When my daughter, then 11, wrote to Mrs Gandhi and expressed her desire to meet her during a short visit to Delhi in 1974, her private secretary wrote back, asking us to phone him as soon as we reached Delhi. When we called the Prime Minister's office a week later, we were surprised to find our appointment fixed for the very next day.

When we met Mrs Gandhi the next day, she asked my daughter about her education and how she liked New Delhi. She had some garlands in her hands. She patted my daughter's shoulder and smilingly placed the garlands around her neck.

Mrs Gandhi could sometimes be ruthless and cruel. All too often, she is criticised for splitting the Congress and for the 'Emergency excesses'. But she was also charming and gracious. That part of her personality has been forgotten.

Prabhakar S Harsole
Indore

LETTERS

The Havoc Of Socialism



K S Venkateswaran's *The Havoc Of Socialism* (December 1985) was a well-deserved assault on socialism.

In India, socialism is just a religious faith in inaction, a funny Micawberish belief that everything will turn out fine, and an experiment in stifling individual initiative and enterprise. It is a pot-pourri of Gandhism, Marxism and India's own eclecticism. It is, as all things Indian are, redolent of race, caste, creed and linguistic chauvinism. It has neither the intellectuality of idealism, nor the merit of pragmatism. And it suffers, like the country itself, from a multiplicity of analyses and interpretations.

While inhibiting private enterprise, socialism, strangely, has permitted considerable private wealth and privileges for a few who have resorted to smuggling, hoarding and black marketing. While laying down all sorts of economic controls, it has provided little social discipline. And to crown it all, it has created an army of bureaucrats that has almost strangled all activities through a maze of controls.

K N Ninan
Bombay

Judgment Against Jagmohan

Judgment Against Jagmohan (November 1985) revealed the political manoeuvring and chicanery perpetrated by a Governor, who is a constitutional functionary with the task of upholding the Constitution.

The Supreme Court judgment on

the Indian Express building demolition case is a damning indictment of Jagmohan, who flouted the august office of a Governor, to earn the goodwill of his political mentors in New Delhi. The Governor should lay down his office since he has lost credibility as the head of the state.

M V Ravindran
Ahmedabad

Jagmohan, the political bulldozer of the Emergency era, had in no uncertain terms tried to overstep his powers with the sole intention of harassing *Indian Express*.

A free press and a fearless judiciary are the supporting pillars of a democracy. The *Indian Express* has always been a champion of the downtrodden. But the former Lieutenant Governor has been careless and callous in his behaviour. If Jagmohan does not resign, the President of India should remove him from power.

U S Iyer
Madras

Selling Of The PM



The November cover story, *The Selling Of The Prime Minister*, was a brilliant piece on the whole — balanced, objective, factual and well-documented. But it was too harsh and unfair on Mrs Indira Gandhi who, nowadays, is invariably described as 'Machiavellian' or 'an avatar of Joan of Arc', etc.

Why have marketing techniques

not been used by the government in the past? Why have other parties not used them? After all, modern management techniques have developed perhaps more than any other discipline during the last three decades. Even our bureaucrats appear to have been unaware of management techniques. That is why the Government of India and the state governments have continued with the same procedures and practices which our colonial masters introduced a century back.

Rajiv Gandhi has advisors who understand what modern management is. That is why, in just a year, the country seems to have embarked on a new course of action.

Dr M V Pylee
Cochin

The most striking feature that emerged from your cover story was that while projecting Mr Gandhi as the only honest, dynamic young man who can lead the country into the 21st century, the media have undermined the achievements of Mrs Indira Gandhi. When anything goes wrong, the blame is always laid at somebody else's door.

Dr V Sagar
New Delhi

The Prime Minister's presence at various inaugurations and his rhetorical speeches before television cameras could help him gain popularity. But one wonders when he engages in the serious business of administration. We are used to hearing sermons from all sorts of ministers, past and present. But those that Mr Gandhi delivers are exceptionally long and boring.

H Y Meaji
Thane

In The Night

I enjoyed *In The Night* by Shiraz Sidhva (November 1985). It was written with empathy and understanding. After reading it, I recalled a scene from Shyam Benegal's *Mandi* where Shabana admonishes a grumbling Naseer: "Subha ho gayee, so jao."

C G Pradeep Kumar
Bombay

LETTERS

CRITICS AND MINORITIES

Iqbal Masud's *A Critic With A Left-Wing Perspective* (November 1985) might have been appropriately titled 'A critic from a minority community'.

Masud makes some observations about Arun Shourie and Girilal Jain's addresses to the Sikh community. "Both had a wealth of fact and reasoning at their disposal — but not the vital knowledge or experience of what it felt to be in a minority." To a liberal born Hindu, this remark of Masud's may not have much significance; it is only a Muslim, Christian or Sikh in India who will be able to appreciate his meaning.

Why does Iqbal Masud, if he truly claims to be a Marxist, harp on the fact that he is a Muslim? Why is he so obsessed with it? These questions (I am sure Masud would concur) would be asked only by a member of a majority community. It is not that Iqbal Masud cannot forget that as a Muslim he is somewhat different from those around him, it is also that he is not allowed to forget.

I am not concerned here with the truth or otherwise of the allegation, but isn't it true that Muslims in India have often been accused of owing their loyalty to Pakistan? Snide remarks, overheard accidentally, or accusations thrown openly, remind Iqbal Masud that if it ever comes to the crunch, he will not be asked whether he is an atheist and therefore owes no allegiance to Allah or Pakistan. What matters is that his name is Iqbal and he is therefore a Muslim. A liberal from a majority community is a liberal; a liberal from a minority community is a liberal from a minority community.

Have Girilal Jain or Arun Shourie ever been asked to prove their patriotic credentials? Iqbal Masud feels threatened every time he overhears a remark about Muslims. It is not easy for Girilal Jain and Arun Shourie to understand this. They do not have to reckon with the circumstances of their origin.

Girilal Jain is a Jain, which is today almost synonymous with a Hindu, as in the past, a Sikh was. If tomorrow



there are riots between Hindus and Jains, Girilal Jain will realise that besides being the Editor of *The Times Of India*, he is also a Jain and a member of a minority.

If ever there was a man with truly world-embracing ideals, it was Albert Einstein. The same Einstein spoke in favour of a Jewish homeland. It was not easy for even Einstein to forget that he was a member of a minority community.

Now that Khushwant Singh is on the hit-list of the Sikh terrorists, he is a hero. It was not so long ago that many writers felt compelled to criticise his stand on Operation Bluestar.

Today, Khushwant Singh is once again everybody's darling, though he himself must feel differently about it. The events of the last two years have matured him as nothing else has. From a writer perpetually talking of whisky and *Playboy*, he has sobered up sufficiently to be regarded as someone whose views must be taken seriously. Being a member of a minority is a healthy experience.

Khushwant Singh praises Rajiv Gandhi's conciliatory attitude. But will he ever be able to forget Rajiv Gandhi's words after the assassination of his mother — "When a big tree falls, the earth shakes"? Every liberal should have howled for Mr Gandhi's blood; but this justification of the riots only got a passing mention.

Coming to Operation Bluestar itself, the television performance of Lieutenant General Brar was supposed to be a masterpiece. Doordarshan went all out to show the secularism

of the army — Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were shown fighting the terrorists in the Golden Temple. Lieutenant General Brar slipped just a bit. I have not forgotten that slip after all these months. I wonder how many readers remember it. To quote Brar from memory: "We captured three men trying to escape. Medical examination revealed that they were Pakistanis." How much more communal can one become? As far as I know, only Anil Dharker pointed out this slip in his column in *The Sunday Observer*. Perhaps the others thought that if it had not been noticed, there was no point in calling attention to it. Things are not swept under the carpet so easily.

I am a Christian, or more correctly, I was born one. I am 23 years old. Masud speaks from a Marxist perspective. I was once a Marxist. Now I speak from no perspective but my own. For the last eight years at least, I have scrupulously kept aloof from ties of religion, but as I would once again like to emphasise, it has not been easy to forget that I was born a Christian. I am not allowed to forget that fact.

There must be something in the experience of being in a minority that makes Muslims or Christians or Sikhs gravitate towards Marxism, towards the oppressed everywhere. People will say I exaggerate. After all, how many Muslim Marxists or Sikh Marxists exist today? I must put it another way. A minority tends to hold on tightly to its members. This solidarity is, finally, an act of defence. But only he can be a dissident who holds very radical views. For such a person, there is no choice but Marxism. As I said, off the cuff, two years ago: "There cannot be Muslim liberals in India, it is far easier to be a Muslim Marxist."

Baba Amte once said: "Do not ask a wounded man what it feels like to be wounded. Get yourself wounded first." To understand what the minorities feel, the majority must make a tremendous effort at empathy.

A G Philip
Chandrapur

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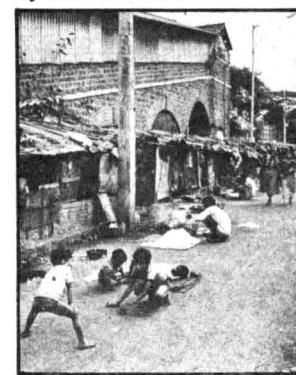
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BHOPAL WRANGLES

The government has failed to make Union Carbide accountable.

IT IS NOW more than a year since the gas leak in Bhopal killed about 2,500 people and disabled 25,000. Even today, the government has not revealed the exact figures either in Parliament or in court in New York. By 'exact figures' I mean names and addresses, since this is necessary to provide compensation to the affected families.

The government made two crucial decisions after the tragedy. The first was to seek compensation from Union Carbide, and the second, to seek compensation in court in the USA. There were two options: firstly, to nationalise Union Carbide, auction it to the highest bidder in India and, with the proceeds, compensate the affected people. The government could have augmented the fund by donating a similar amount from the state exchequer. There are buyers for Union Carbide in India. Dhirubhai Ambani has been trying to buy it for years, unsuccessfully. The price of Union Carbide in India is about Rs 84 crore, which means that each affected person would have received Rs 31,000 approximately. The government could have given an equivalent sum of money to enable each unfortunate in Bhopal to receive about Rs 62,000 on an average with families which had lost their breadwinners, receiving higher amounts.

The other option was to negotiate



with Union Carbide in the USA to obtain compensation. From the very beginning, Carbide was willing to pay Rs 130 crore in atonement. I gather from the Indian community living in Danbury, Connecticut, the headquarters of Union Carbide, that in a negotiated settlement, Carbide was willing to provide as much as Rs 400 crore, which would have meant about Rs 2 lakh for the death of a breadwinner in the family and about Rs 60,000 for the injured. The Law Minister, A K Sen, was informed of Carbide's willingness to pay this amount. Such negotiations may have given rise to

accusations that the government was shaking hands with the murderers, but with the media so much in the control of the government, this charge could have been effectively answered and relief quickly brought.

Instead of coolly considering the alternatives and taking the people into confidence, the government rushed to court in the US to demand Rs 1,300 crore in a suit for damages, thereby playing into the hands of Union Carbide, which naturally feels comfortable on home ground. Why the government did so, and who made the decision, needs to be seriously probed. Somebody sold out the hapless victims of Bhopal by locking up their due in a long legal wrangle.

Union Carbide is having an easy time in court. They are arguing that the case has no jurisdiction in US courts and hence the plaint for damages should be dismissed on the following grounds: one, all witnesses and victims are in India, and it is unreasonable to expect about 30,000 people to be flown to New York to give evidence; two, medical records and the doctors, engineers, etc, who have relevant technical data, have to be brought to New York; and three, the judge and his assistants will have to visit Bhopal to make an on-the-spot study as required by US law, and assess Carbide's liability. All these, argue Carbide's lawyers, make it necessary to try the case in India.

The Government of India's lawyers are countering these arguments by

Subramaniam Swamy, a former member of the Lok Sabha, is a regular contributor to Imprint.

Carbide is now resorting to making various insinuations in court. Its lawyer states: "India is an extraordinarily corrupt society. The money shouldn't go to build somebody's summer home."

BHOPAL WRANGLES

making the shameful point that the Indian government feels more comfortable in US courts since the Indian judicial system is 'inadequate because it is slow and chaotic, and ill-suited to adjudicate in a mass tort suit'. For a government to admit this in a US court (and this is reported in the November 1985 issue of *The American Lawyer*) borders on treason.

The government has hired a US law firm to argue its case. The firm is Robins and Zelle, and the lawyer is Michael Ciresi. This firm is said to have represented Union Carbide in some cases in the past, according to a lawyer interviewed on the *NBC Today* show on December 3, 1985. If this is so, then it is positively scandalous. Many here in the US, therefore, think that there is something fishy in the way the Government of India is going about the case. *The American Lawyer* states: "There is an element of greed in some of their behaviour that makes even the Carbide look good. And at least some of the Executive Committee's passion to litigate has to be linked to visions of big feed." The Executive Committee consists of the Government of India's lawyers and some others like F Lee Bailey.

Union Carbide, happy with this state of affairs, is making various insinuations in court. For example, Carbide told the court that they are willing to give an interim relief donation of Rs 6 crore, if the Government of India is willing to provide quarterly reports identifying each person who received the aid, and the nature of the aid given to the person. It is as if the government is on probation. Carbide's lawyer, Bud Holman, states: "India is an extraordinarily corrupt society. That money shouldn't go to build someone's summer home."

When government lawyers put up a mild resistance, the judge ruled that Carbide's donation should be sent through the Indian Red Cross and not the Government of India. As a citizen of India, I must hang my head in shame at this ignominy.

Carbide's lawyers have also alleged that the compensation that the Government of India is demanding — Rs 1,300 crore — bears no relation to what the government has awarded for other disasters in the past. For example, in a train accident on June 7, 1981, in which over 300 people died, the Government of India awarded only Rs 20,000 to each of the families of the dead. In a housing board tenement collapse in Bombay in August 1985, the state government gave only Rs 10,000 to each family that suffered a loss. Then why should the same government demand from Carbide Rs 7 lakh per dead person?

Recently, Carbide submitted an affidavit in court to say that the Government of India has infringed its own laws in the fees it pays to its American lawyers! In particular, Carbide alleges that the Indian government has violated the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act (FERA) by paying its lawyers in dollars without first obtaining a clearance from the Reserve Bank of India!

Thanks to the foolishness (or is there a sell-out?) of the Government of India in rushing to the US court, Carbide is sitting pretty. It is insured against such disasters as Bhopal for about Rs 260 crore. Even if the court verdict goes against Carbide, the awarded amount is not likely to exceed that. There is, however, every likelihood of Carbide winning. What the Government of India will do should Carbide win, remains to be seen.

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A PATENT FARCE

Why India should refuse to sign the Paris Convention.

INDIAN INDUSTRY is being asked to sign its own death warrant with a smile. Among those doing the asking are Union ministers and top officials of the governmental machinery. At a time when the Prime Minister daily repeats his resolve to lead the nation into the 21st century, a section of the government he heads is manoeuvring the country into signing the Paris Convention, a measure that would take India in precisely the opposite direction — into structures of 19th century colonialism.

The Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property was established by a handful of imperial powers in 1883, to create a patents structure suited to their own interests, a service it renders to this day, to the great detriment of developing nations like India. To put it mildly, accession to the Paris treaty would not only shatter Indian industry, but also abandon the economy to the tender mercies of the multinationals, in whose interests the structure presently operates.

Former Vice-President and ex-Chief Justice of India, M Hidayatullah, one of the country's most distinguished jurists and a man seldom given to overstatement of any sort, has this to say of the Paris Convention: "It cares little for the need for social change which is the crying need of developing countries, and does not speak in terms of public interest . . .

P Sainath is Foreign Editor and Deputy Editor of Blitz.



With its rules of priority. . . (it) will tend to wither local industries."

Hidayatullah is not alone in his opinion. Former Chief Justice of India, Y V Chandrachud, says he has no doubt that accession to the treaty will "impair seriously the growth of indigenous Indian industries. . . The Paris Convention will thus result in the choking of Indian industries and the flooding of the Indian market by patented goods manufactured in foreign countries by multinational companies."

But Union Law Minister Asoke Sen, in his wisdom, appears to believe

otherwise. He had hinted time and again — publicly, on one occasion at least — that India is considering signing the Convention. Also on high-volume is the propaganda of a clearly discernible lobby within the country, whose motives in attempting what would be a blatant betrayal of the national interest are obvious.

But first, more about the Convention itself, what it means, and who it serves:

In simple terms, the Paris Convention, which governs patent laws in 96 countries, operates as a structure designed to ensure and perpetuate the monopoly and stranglehold of major patent holders, mostly from the advanced Western nations. In theory, it 'protects' the 'intellectual property' of inventors. But the era of the single inventor went out with the Victorian age, and holding the stage now are rapacious multinationals which have established themselves

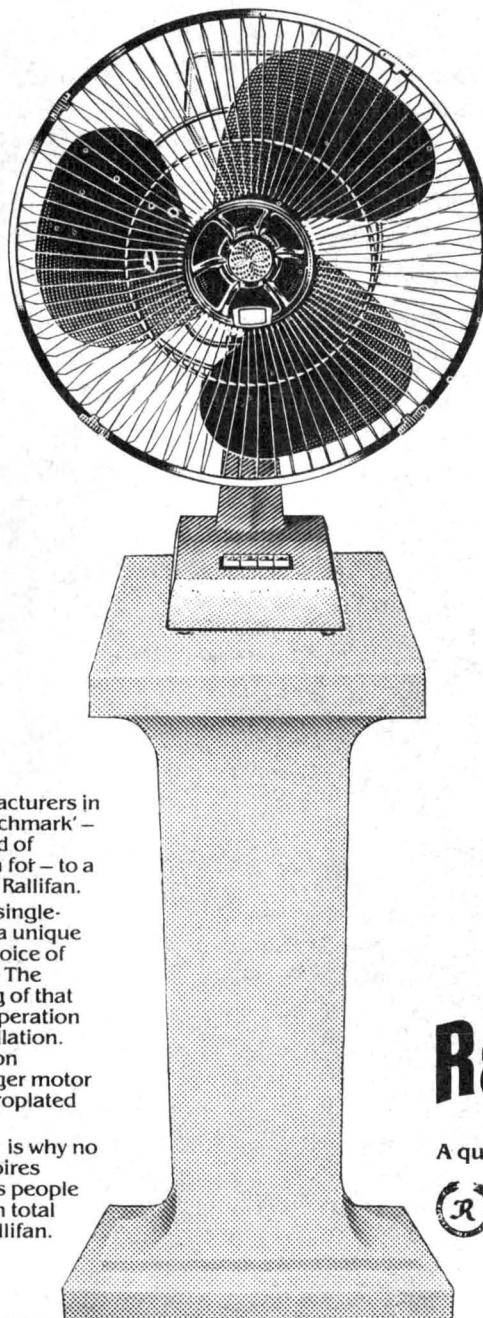
as supra-governments at the global level.

The rules of the Convention, says one UN document, spell out in considerable detail, "the provisions which secure private rights. . . (while making) minimal and feeble references to possible methods of control in the public interest".

Another UN study, on 'The role of the patent system in the transfer of technology to developing countries' observed that while the developing countries' share in world population was about 75 per cent, patent holding by their nationals accounted

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Acceding to the Convention would liquidate this country's independent patents law and lead to a return to colonial status where the law would discriminate negatively against Indians in their own country.

A PATENT FARCE

for a mere one per cent of the world total. Their nationals also hold no more than two-thirds of one per cent of foreign-owned patents in other countries. On the other hand, the document points out, 'an overwhelming majority (84 per cent) of the patents in developing countries is owned by foreigners, mainly multinational corporations of five developed market economy countries'.

It took 25 years of sustained effort after political independence in 1947 for India to free herself of subservience to these structures — she was earlier bound by the 1911 patents law enforced by the British colonial administration — and to formulate a patents law (Indian Patents Act, 1970) more in line with the national interest. Advocates of the Paris Convention are thus, in effect, arguing for a return to colonial status where the law would negatively discriminate against Indians in their own country.

It would have to be a peculiar variety of wisdom that advocates the liquidation of the basis of Indian industrial advancement since 1970-72, a basis it took decades of struggle to create. But what would be the scenario if India were to accede to the Convention? Among other things:

- It would liquidate this country's independent patents law. Hidayatullah states categorically that 'there will be a direct clash between the Convention and the (Indian Patents) Act'.
- It would inflate the nation's import bill to unimaginable proportions. The monopolistic rights it would confer on the multinationals of developed nations — which use technology as an instrument of both income and exploitation — would liquidate the pre-

sent multichannel imports option that the country exploits, and force the purchase of products from patented countries, very often at prices as much as 500 per cent higher than those currently obtaining.

■ The Indian Patents Act has ensured lower prices of medicines in India, compared to Western countries which are members of the Paris Convention. In a comparative study of the retail prices of 54 drugs, it was observed that world prices of most of these drugs were 100-200 per cent higher than the prices in India. Today, the per kilogram cost of bulk drugs like Temoxifen and Tobramycin is US \$ 3,000 when purchased from non-patented countries. If India were to purchase the same item from patented countries — which she would have to on acceding to the Paris Convention — they would cost US \$ 15,000 for just one kilogram.

■ The prices of crucial food, drug and medicinal products would shoot through the roof of Indian purchasing power. A single medicinal product like Cephalexin (500 mg) could cost as much as 2,903 per cent more than what it does now!

■ An immeasurable array of Indian industries would suffer grievous damage, if not total shutdown, through the agency of their own legal system. In short, a return to colonial structures operating against Indians in their own country.

Oddly enough, the protagonists of the Convention in India are trying to use the argument that when communist nations like the USSR can be-

come members of the Paris Convention, so can India. There is something ridiculous about the champions of 'free enterprise' and market economy touting the communist nations as models. The analogy is nevertheless utterly bogus.

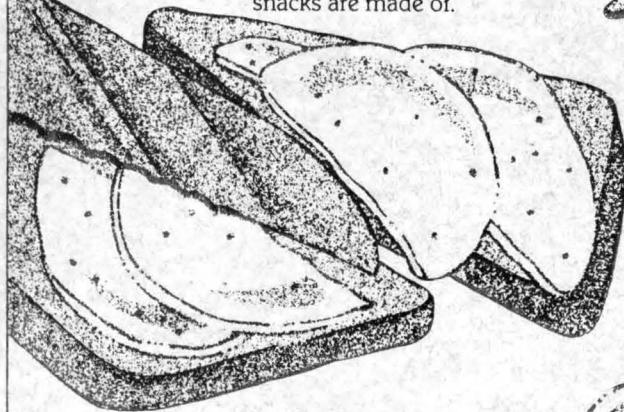
Socialist states have nothing to lose by being party to the Convention. Infringement of patent rights by them can result in no retribution since their judicial structures are based on the antithesis of proprietary rights! This is obviously not the case in India. Besides, would those offering the membership of 11 socialist states as an excuse, be prepared to emulate the other features of these nations — such as the abolition of private ownership of the means of production?

A corollary to this argument, recently advanced in the edit page of *The Times Of India*, is that when as many as 96 countries have signed, including nations with an advanced industrial base, why not India? Firstly, the numbers logic is in itself of dubious virtue. The large number of nations which have signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) has not led to India doing the same — and correctly so. Besides, which are the countries that make up these numbers?

Apart from the original members — in whose interest it continues to operate — 11 socialist states are also party to the Convention. As we have seen, the socialist participation is a very different kettle of fish. Then there are about 35 nations (almost entirely LDCs) with little or no industrial base or infrastructure to speak of. Since nothing of note is being manufactured in these countries in any case, membership does not alter their situation — it only ensures their

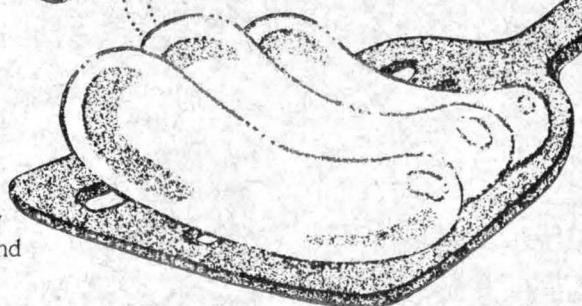
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The very same multinationals who stand committed to a 'free flow of information' are now opposing the flow of crucially needed scientific information. The paradox is obvious.

A PATENT FARCE

perpetual captivity. Indeed, India's possession of a relatively advanced industrial base would be precisely what would go against its interests, were it to join the Convention in its present form!

A third group of around 21 nations, including highly-developed nations like Canada, have not signed some of the amendments to the Convention and are thus not bound by some of its most rigid provisions. There have been six revisions of the original Convention, every one of these designed to further tighten the stranglehold of the developed Western nations.

Brazil, for instance, has not ratified any of the post-1925 revisions to the treaty, and her obligations under it would therefore be minimal. India, were she to sign up as a new member, would have no such option. What is worse, the treaty's peculiar character thereby creates structural asymmetry amongst its members. In dealings with Brazil, Indians would be bound by provisions that the latter could legally refuse to comply with! This means the total absence of reciprocity in dealings governed by the Convention — again a reversion to colonial-style international relations.

As a UN document notes: "It is being increasingly recognised by developing countries that the international patent system in its present form is not of benefit to them; it has, instead, a negative effect on them."

Another fraudulent argument is that 'positive' revisions, in keeping with national laws and interest, are possible. What does actual experience show? In reality, between 1974-81, as many as 22 inter-governmental expert groups and two diplomatic conferences have failed to achieve any 'positive' revision despite putting up fundamentally sound and workable

proposals.

Interestingly, the forces that create the most stringent regulation to maintain their monopoly are the same forces that have made a catchword of the term 'de-regulation' in other spheres. The very same multinationals stand committed to a 'free flow of information' — which they have made a religion — but this apparently applies only to the political news and information put out by their news agencies and other transnational media structures, never to the flow of crucially needed scientific and technological information.

Their own vision of unfettered 'free flow of information', if applied to the sphere of scientific and technological information, and if given the same intensity as their protestations in the field of political information, would simply mean the liquidation of the entire system of copyright and patents. This, in itself, is not unworthy of consideration. Indeed, it is their own concept taken to its logical conclusion. But would they ever countenance such a step?

The idea was certainly one that struck Mrs Gandhi when she was alive. As she told the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May 1982: "The idea of a better-ordered world is one in which medical discoveries will be free of patents and there will be no profiteering from life and death."

All the experience of the past, and all the enlightened opinion of some of the nation's most illustrious legal minds, do not seem to have made much of an impression on the Union Law Minister and an array of other individuals in the governmental machinery. The former conducts an 'I may — I may not' monologue, while the latter plug unashamedly for what would simply mean selling the nation down the river. ♦

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BUT WHERE IS

The Congress centenary celebrations need not be an opportunity for the nation to function once again as an

IT IS RARE for a single organisation to lay claim to having shaped a century of events in a subcontinent as vast and varied as India. But, the inheritors of what was created in 1885 as the Indian National Congress, claim credit for an all-pervasive and beneficial role in building and preserving this nation. Much of the history of modern India is, arguably, the history of the Indian National Congress. Why, then, are there no signs of national jubilation to mark the centenary of this momentous birth? On the contrary, in Bombay, the city of its birth, the planned Congress centenary celebrations have generated not enthusiasm but annoyance. Such is the response inspired by the fragment of the Indian National Congress which now acts as the sole inheritor of a 100-year-old legacy.

As the Congress (I) celebrates an appropriated legacy, much of the attention is, predictably, focussed on how it is different from the body created a century ago. Yet, the compulsion to compare is, at best, an academic diversion and, at worst, totally irrelevant. The Congress in 1885 was different from the Congress in 1920, which was different from the Congress taking shape in 1948. The post-Independence decades brought further changes so that the twice vivisected Congress, now with the 'I' suffix, has only a name in common with the body that ushered in the dawn of Independence.

It would be more appropriate in

this centenary month to analyse the development of the Congress and to attempt to demystify some of the legend. That the Congress was a 'movement' for much of the first half of this century is undeniable. But the strength and significance of that largely Gandhi-led *movement* have been confused with the myth about a great *party*. True, the movement was broad-based and built on a strong organisation. But, at the best of times, the Indian National Congress itself was a party loosely held together by the forceful presence of Gandhi and such charismatic leaders as Gokhale, Ranade, Bannerjee and others.

It is widely accepted that the broad-based support and organisation on which the Congress 'movement' rested were destroyed in the decades following Independence. Not only did the Congress cease to be a mass political party in the true sense of the term, but other political forces also failed to coalesce into a party that could effectively challenge the Congress oligarchy, which consequently grew into a ruling dynasty. Yet, while we frequently applaud the survival of parliamentary democracy in free India, we scarcely notice the absence of that crucial institution: the political party.

The vital question today is not how the Congress (I) is different from the legendary Indian National Congress, but whether it is a political party at all. For, on the ability of this, or any other political group, to function as a broad-based and consensus-seeking political party, rests the future of this country and of the very institutions of parliamentary democracy.



THE ABSENCE of effective and genuine political parties is the product of both socio-political and cultural forces, and of the personalities that shaped them. The Indian National Congress created in 1885 was, of course, not even intended to be a political party, let alone a protest movement. It was a safety valve device, installed by loyalists of the Raj, for gently releasing tension and dis-

Rajni Bakshi is a frequent Imprint contributor. The accompanying article is by Nagindas Sanghvi, a former Congressman.

THE PARTY?

epitaph for a once-great party. The Congress owes it effective and democratic organisation.



content. (See accompanying piece by N Sanghvi.)

The transformation from a loyalist to a militant body was the result of two factors. Firstly, there was a growing mass realisation about the exploitative nature of British imperialism. This process was vastly aided by the personalities who populated the history of the early 20th century such as Gokhale, Tilak, Gandhi and Bhagat

Singh. Secondly, there was the burgeoning of an Indian capitalist industrialist class which wanted total and unfettered control over resources, means of production and market forces.

The first process was more significantly aided by Gandhi than any other leader. This was due not so much to the originality of his ideas, but to his incredible ability to turn his own life into an example that would move and inspire millions of others. This ability was partly influenced by his South African experience, when he confronted the more crude and brutal forms of racist and imperial oppression.

Quite apart from the power of Gandhi's personal example, was the potent force of an English liberal education which enabled the Indian middle and upper classes to battle the British with their own weapons. The Western-educated Congress leaders between the '20s and '40s used the principles of Western liberalism to wrestle with the tentacles of the British Raj. Ironically, and to their own detriment, the communists, who were armed with a much sharper ideological critique of imperialism, sided with the British at the most crucial juncture in the struggle (the Quit India movement, 1942). It was the Congress leaders, speaking the language of Anglo-Saxon liberalism, who managed to make Independence a *cause célèbre* even in England.

It is important to recognise that the appeal to Western liberalism was more than just a weapon: it represented an affinity with the Western model of progress and development which

was crucial in shaping post-Independence India. In this context, the Indian industrialist class played a vital role. Many of them joined the Congress primarily in order to secure their own future. Economic and financial ambitions were their primary motivation. They wanted India to take its place as a free enterprise capitalist economy in the world market, not one that was subject to the dictates of British big-business and government.

Even while these factors were changing the character of the Indian National Congress, several charismatic, dynamic young leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel were rising to play leading roles in politics. Again, the power and force of Gandhi's personality had a dominant influence. Even while Gandhi was successfully opposed by the others in many critical issues, his role in the rise and installation of Nehru as the first Prime Minister of free India had a profound impact on shaping future developments.

Transformed by these forces and personalities, the militant Congress was a vast network of grass roots linkages and listening posts. It absorbed the village notables, moulded itself to the existing structure of Indian society, and made *Purna Swaraj* the dream of every man and woman. And then there was the much celebrated Congress 'consensus'. In retrospect, of course, it has often been questioned whether this consensus extended to anything more than the desire for Independence which bound together men of disparate views.

COVER STORY



Mahatma Gandhi with Sarojini Naidu: leading a national movement.

AFTER 1947, the Congress found itself at the crossroads. It had been, till that time, a national movement, the spearhead of a grand crusade to wrest Independence from the British. But once Independence came, with its bloody aftermath of the Partition riots, the party was faced with a dilemma. What was it to do now?

Gandhi had his own views on the subject. He recognised the lust for power among many Congressmen and lamented that what had once been a great struggle was turning into a race for power and glory. His solution was typical. He recommended the dissolution of the party and urged its members to devote themselves to the service of the people – a course he adopted himself.

And yet, Gandhi must have suspected that this was not a recommendation that would be accepted: it was one that he had himself damaged by promoting Nehru as his protégé.

Nehru was at least as interested in nation-building as he was in winning freedom. He had a vision of a brave new India, freed from the limitations of communalism, caste, zamindari, starvation and backwardness. His panacea was industrialisation and the only tool at his disposal was the Congress Party.

Thus, it was inevitable that the Congress would form free India's first government. With that inevitability came a host of problems: not every freedom-fighter was necessarily suited to the exercise of power. Many leading Congressmen did not share Nehru's vision of a brave new India, and a freedom movement could not be transformed into a political party without much effort.

So preoccupied was Nehru with the admittedly massive task of nation-building that he paid insufficient attention to these problems. Thus, corruption and nepotism grew unchecked. No attempt was made to build an

efficient organisation or to develop intra-party democracy at the grass roots. And clashes with those Congressmen who did not share Nehru's attitudes and views were inevitable. Sardar Patel died shortly after having united the country, and a stream of leaders later left the party. The socialists had basic ideological differences with Nehru, and left the party even before Independence. People like Acharya Kripalani, ill at ease with the power politics of the Congress, left soon after Independence. The rest found themselves swept away by Nehru's enthusiasm for Fabian socialism and so, the Congress began to take a leftward turn.

The local notables, on whom the grass roots structure of the old pre-Independence Congress had been based, also began to get increasingly disenchanted with the manner in which Nehru ran the party. Yet, so strong was his hold on the masses, that the one time the party organisation attempted to force a confrontation over the party presidency of Tandon, it was forced to back away. After that, Nehru ran the party pretty much as he liked, appointing his own nominees as presidents.

GANDHI MAY NOT have realised it at the time, but when he made his distinction between serving the people (what he thought the Congress should do) and joining the government (what the Congress did, in fact, do) he had sounded the death-knell of the Indian National Congress.

In the years to come, this distinction – one that should never have existed because the two aims are not contradictory – dominated Indian public life. Thus, the renunciation of political position became a virtue and the 'service of the people' was restricted to social workers and non-political organisations. On the other hand, the pursuit of political office – an honourable activity in most democratic countries – came to be seen as a cynical exercise.

To be fair, the Congress helped this distinction grow more marked.

COVER STORY

With Nehru having little time for the party, state units became machines run by powerful bosses whose integrity was frequently questioned. Corruption (though not as widespread as it is today) became part of the Congress's way of life and the Gandhian virtue of advertising one's austerity was perverted so that those who appeared the most austere in public were the greediest in private. Nor did it help that Nehru saw nothing improper in advancing his daughter's nascent political career. At a time when standards were already falling, Indira Gandhi kicked them a few notches lower by engineering the dismissal of the communist government in Kerala when she was Congress President in 1959.

In the '60s, the humiliating defeat in the war with China, the failure of the government to deliver on its election promise to raise the standard of living, and Nehru's own advancing age, began to catch up with the party. After his death in 1964, even Lal Bahadur Shastri's moderately successful, brief spell as Prime Minister (during which India claimed victory in the 1965 Indo-Pak War), and Indira Gandhi's accession to power in January 1966, did little to advance the party's prospects. Instead, it fell into the hands of a syndicate of party bosses who exemplified the machine politics of the smoke-filled back room.

By the 1967 general election, the great national crusade of Mahatma Gandhi had clearly lost its way. At the best of times, it had been difficult to say what the post-Independence Congress actually stood for, but now it became nearly impossible. Its organisation was in the hands of local bosses and village notables, it had no real ideology and its leadership was uninspiring.

Yet, it still offered the best prospect of a stable government. For, if the Congress was weak, its opposition was feeble. That despite this, the voters should still have mauled the party at the polls and driven it out of power in several states, showed the level of disillusionment with the failure of the Congress dream.



Nehru and Sardar Patel: vision of a brave, new India

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID about Mrs Indira Gandhi and the Congress split of 1969. Two things are, however, insufficiently emphasised. Firstly, it was not so much a split as a unilateral declaration of independence: she took only some MPs with her, the vast bulk of the membership in the states and almost the entire organisation remained with what became known as the Congress (O). And secondly, it was not as daring a move as it might have appeared then. The party had fared so badly in the 1967 elections that it seemed probable that it would — in its then form — have lost the next general election, due in 1972.

Mrs Gandhi recognised that the Congress organisation had lost its ability to turn out the voters. She recognised, also, that a party that had survived on the charisma of Nehru and Gandhi and on the shared aspirations of building a new India could not be carried on the backs of a few tired old men who had long since abandoned all pretence of ideological fervour.

Consequently, her Congress—Con-

gress (R) as it was then called — managed without an organisation, but with a hefty dose of charisma (hers) and the apparent ideological fervour of what would later be revealed as cheap leftist populism. In the short run, this prescription worked, and she returned to power with a landslide in 1971. This success led her to believe that in the final analysis, the Congress needed no local support bases and no organisation. Charisma and demagoguery were enough to produce electoral waves. So, every important Congress leader with a local power base was humbled or dispensed with and no attempt was made to build a party organisation. If Nehru had regarded the party apparatus as a possible impediment to his vision of India, his daughter regarded it as an irrelevance. Thus, the grand national movement of Mahatma Gandhi turned into no more than a vehicle for generations of Nehru family charisma.

IN THE LONG RUN, of course, neither charisma nor populism was enough. By 1974, disillusion-



AICC(I) session, 1983: infinite faith in the Nehru-Gandhi charisma.

ment with Indira Gandhi's Congress was rife and by 1975, she resorted to an Emergency to secure her position. In 1977, when she dared face the people again, they threw out her Congress.

The lesson of the Janata party experience was that political parties were not yet mature institutions in Indian democracy. The Janata was more a comic-opera than a party, and the Congress, in the Opposition, demonstrated its hollowness. When its leaders, angry about the humiliations meted out to them during the Emergency by Sanjay Gandhi, moved to expel him, they discovered that he'd never bothered to become a primary member of the Congress!

Ironically, while these leaders, bereft of the Nehru-Gandhi charisma and commitment and ideologically barren, struggled to find a role as an Opposition party, it was this same

Sanjay Gandhi who practised a novel form of opposition in India: the street riot. While the parliamentary Opposition floundered and the Janata government collapsed under the weight of its own contradictions, Sanjay and his mother split the party again. This time, even the pretence of intra-party democracy was dropped, and the new outfit dubbed Congress (I) — for Indira. Under this Congress (I) banner, the younger Gandhi toured the country, disrupting commissions of inquiry, provoking the police and fomenting civil disorder. (Two of his colleagues hijacked an aircraft — one was later made an MLA!)

When the Gandhis and their Congress (I) returned to power in 1980, they were secure in the knowledge that the charisma of their family name counted for enough at the polls. Thus, everything flowed from the

family: ministerships were awarded on the basis of loyalty to the family; state units were run by hoodlums who participated in Sanjay's street mayhem; and every minister found it necessary to repeatedly proclaim that he owed everything to Mrs Gandhi. Even Giani Zail Singh when he was elected President of India, announced that he would sweep the floor should Mrs Gandhi require him to do so.

THE CENTRALISATION of all authority in the family, the infinite faith in the Nehru-Gandhi charisma and the packing of all levels of government with sycophants and yes-men was most tellingly demonstrated when, after Sanjay's death, it was business as usual with another son moving in to fill the void created by his brother's departure. Attempts were made then to suggest that the Congress (I) was now the only Congress, and those like Veerendra Patil who had fought Mrs Gandhi at Chickmagalur, were re-admitted. But others like Y B Chavan were humiliated and ended up severely diminished figures in the new order.

The party that Rajiv Gandhi inherited from his mother was much the same as the outfit Sanjay and Mrs Gandhi had created in 1978. All he was able to do was weed out some of Sanjay's hoodlums and replace them with his own men. Its lack of structure, base and even motivation (other than a desire to seize power), were all strikingly obvious. Nevertheless, it won the 1984 general election by using some of the techniques Mrs Gandhi had employed in 1971 — the promise of a new India and the prospect of change with continuity — and by turning the stability of the country into an issue.

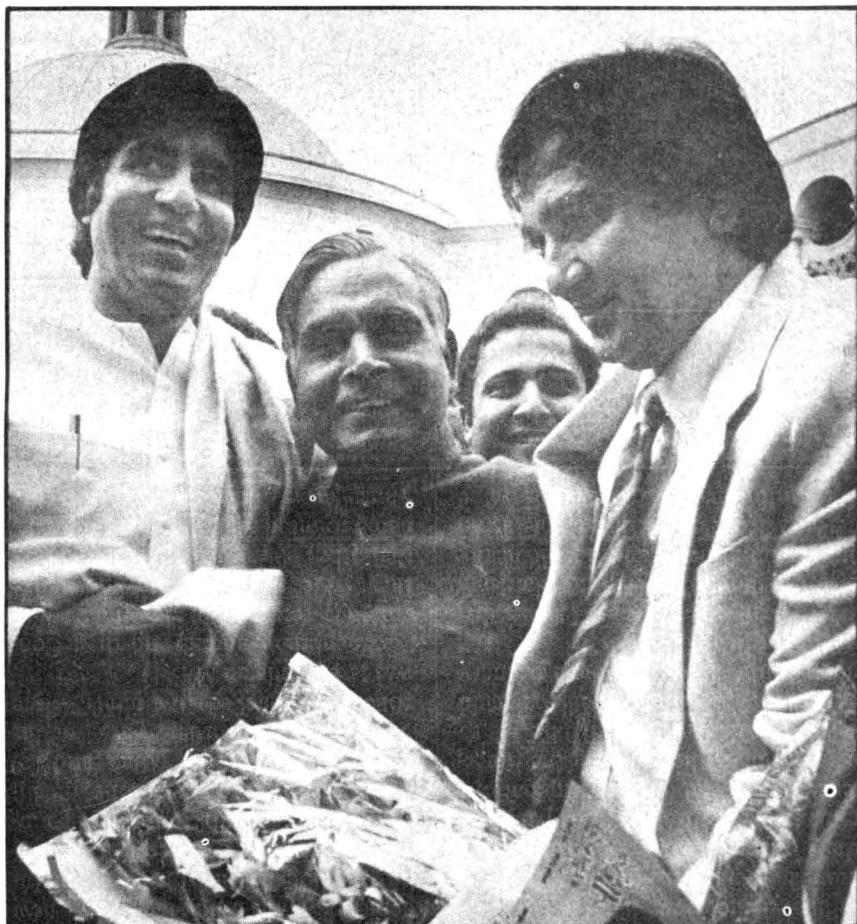
In 1969, Mrs Gandhi had covered up the nonexistence of her Congress at the grass roots by enlisting hundreds of 'intellectuals' who were all declared instant converts to the Congress cause. In 1983-84, Rajiv did much the same thing, except that he packed the higher echelons of his party with professional managers and

young urban professionals from the post-Independence generation.

Thus, today, you have the extraordinary situation in which the President of the Congress (I) has been a member of the party for less than four years, and many of his key aides — including Arun Nehru, former AICC(I) General Secretary — have less than five years of real political experience. Behind the window-dressing of film stars, top managers and other recent recruits, lies a hollow party of ciphers and shadows. There have been no organisational elections in the Congress (under its various guises) for 13 years, and every party official, down to the district unit, is nominated by fiat from Delhi. And all intra-party democracy stops at the door of Rajiv Gandhi or, as his party minions refer to him: the High Command.

Even the window-dressing has gaping holes. The bright new MPs of the Congress (I) were vociferous on issues like prices and administration in the Lok Sabha. When it comes to more fundamental issues like the anti-terrorist laws, and the Lok Pal Bill, which attempted to place the Prime Minister beyond the purview of anti-corruption laws and procedures, they are strangely silent. Nobody has much to say about the manner in which the President is belittled or about the way the government has ignored the strictures passed by the Supreme Court against Jagmohan. Nor do its members have much genuine concern for the suffering of people. In 1947, Congressmen assisted those affected by the Partition violence. In 1984, Congress (I) members were accused of participating in the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and, throughout 1985, even the new breed of Congress (I) MP ignored the problems of rehabilitating those affected by the 1984 riots.

ON THE EVE of its centenary, the Congress (I) is a party buffeted by electoral bad fortune. It has suffered humiliating defeats in Assam and Punjab and by-election reverses all over India. There seems no



Bachchan, Natwar Singh and Sunil Dutt: dominance of the Rajiv men.

doubt that the popularity and charisma of its President, Rajiv Gandhi, do not necessarily translate into votes at the state level. As this realisation sinks in, the Congress (I) old guard, which has accepted the dominance of the Rajiv-men because it sees in the Nehru-Gandhi charisma its ticket to power, will begin to get extremely restive.

It is not clear if the Congress (I) leadership recognises this. In most countries of the world, the centenary of a national party is an occasion for membership drives, for attempts to broaden its base and to expand its influence. In India, the Congress (I) has done none of this. Instead, it has contented itself with tearing up Bombay's already ravaged environment so that thousands of delegates can gather for three days of festivities.

This is all a far cry from the party

that Gandhi invigorated and transformed. Much of what the Congress (I) does today is at odds with the glorious traditions of the Indian National Congress. It has no motivation, only ambition. It has no ideology, only short-term objectives. And it has no real mass membership, only a rent-a-crowd approach to its gatherings and jamborees.

What is central to the future growth and stability of Indian democracy is not just the internal health of the Congress (I) but the evolution of one or more mass-based political parties. No parliamentary democracy can flourish without healthy political parties. Without them, this subcontinent will remain fettered to dynastic rule by mobocracy. It is in everyone's interests to hope that delegates to this month's festivities will appreciate this and revive their party. ♦

An Epic Transformation

The Indian National Congress started out in 1885 as a loyalist organisation. It took the influence of men like Tilak and, above all, Gandhi to turn it into a grand crusade for Independence.

By NAGINDAS SANGHVI

THAT THE CONGRESS was born in 1885, not as a nationalist, but as a loyalist association, is well-known. What is not generally known is that its proclaimed objective was not the overthrow but the perpetuation of the British Raj. Faithful servants of 'Malika Victoria', like A O Hume, hoped to expose and redress the more obvious abuses in colonial rule and consolidate imperial power. It will amuse us today to recall that this reform club orientation continued for 30 years. During that period, the Congress flew the Union Jack, professed loyalty to the Crown on every conceivable occasion, and closed its sessions with lusty cheers for the sovereign ruling from London.

The Congress leaders' trust in the British sense of justice and fair play was so pervasive then that they attributed every act of exploitation and repression to ignorance rather than to imperial design. Most Congress leaders of those days perceived no contradiction in their passionate concern for the Indian people and professed loyalty to the British empire. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was among the first to question this paradox. But when Tilak declared, some 20 years after the formation of the Congress, "Swaraj is my birthright!" he was not exactly applauded by his peers. Inci-

dently, the stirring words of *swaraj* being a birthright were first uttered by Dadabhai Naoroji in his presidential address to the Congress in 1906. Curiously, it was as a British citizen that he demanded *swaraj*.

Those were the days when all the leaders of Congress angrily repudiated charges of being seditious and anti-British. They claimed to lead a representative Assembly, an informal Parliament for voicing the grievances and aspirations of the Indian people and holding the fort till formal representative councils were established in India.

While the Congress leaders spoke in the name of the Indian people and claimed to represent them, they were, in fact, a very circumscribed group of rich, educated, upper caste Indians. Lord Dufferin sneered at them as a 'microscopic minority' and though the contempt was unmerited, the description was accurate. The major concerns of this leadership reflected the priorities of the elite: the facilities for candidates appearing for the ICS examination, the raising of income-tax exemption limits, the legislative councils, the encouragement to trade and industry. The Congress advocated the extension of the zamindari system all over India, and opposed the Punjab Land Alienation Act, which prevented money-lenders from

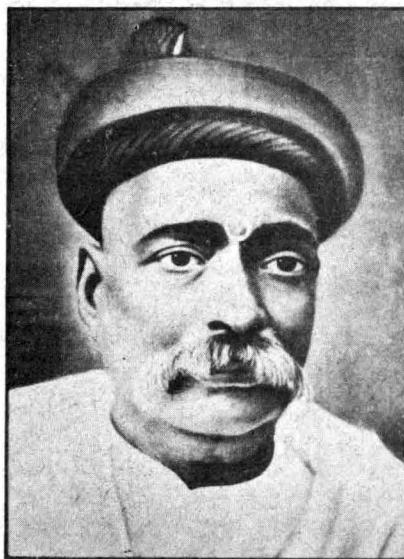
grabbing the land of their debtors. It denounced the crushing burden of the land revenue tax, but never mentioned the oppressive burdens of zamindari. The Congress could, therefore, not meet the challenge thrown up by Lord Curzon for reducing the revenue rates for all land, government as well as private. Several prominent Congress leaders were even averse to social reforms, and even those who preached them, hardly ever practised what they preached. It was Gandhi who later challenged, and triumphed over these elitist leaders.

It was logical, then, for the Congress to willingly fade away as soon as some parliamentary institutions were established. In 1910, a large section of the Congress leaders called for its dissolution because the Morley-Minto reforms had granted representative councils. But several imperial follies like the partition of Bengal in 1904 and later, the shocking Jallianwala Bagh massacre diluted whatever loyalty people had for the Crown.

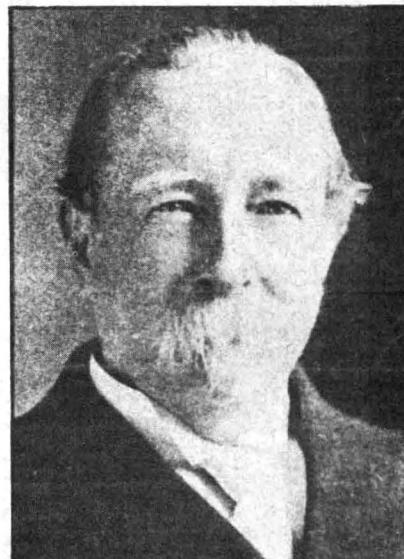
What retarded the evolution of the Congress, however, was not just the professions of loyalty to the Crown by its leaders, but the fact that they had never intended or expected to be a political party. It was launched as an annual event, a conference of leaders — an association of like-minded people to assess the situation



Dadabhai Naoroji.



Bal Gangadhar Tilak.



A O Hume.

in the Raj. And till 1919, the Congress did not undertake any activity. Despite repeated demands, the Congress had no constitution till 1908, and no formal membership till 1919. The President for each Congress session was chosen by an *ad hoc* Reception Committee and had no role to play after the session was over. Dr Annie Besant was the first Congress President, elected in 1917, who insisted on remaining active for the whole year. Even later, the anti-Partition agitation, the Home Rule Leagues of Tilak and Annie Besant, the Champaran struggle of Gandhi and many other agitations, were all organised outside the Congress fold.

Since there was no formal membership, the delegates to the Congress sessions were either elected at public meetings or nominated by various associations and organisations (some political, others commercial, and a few literary or social). Anybody willing to pay a small amount and suffer the discomfort of travelling to the venue, could walk into the Congress *pandal* as a delegate. Around 1920, it took Gandhi's special organisational skills to convert this ramshackle structure into a fairly cohesive, well-knit party. Indeed, the Congress that led India's struggle for Independence was very different from the loyalist outfit that Hume had planned.

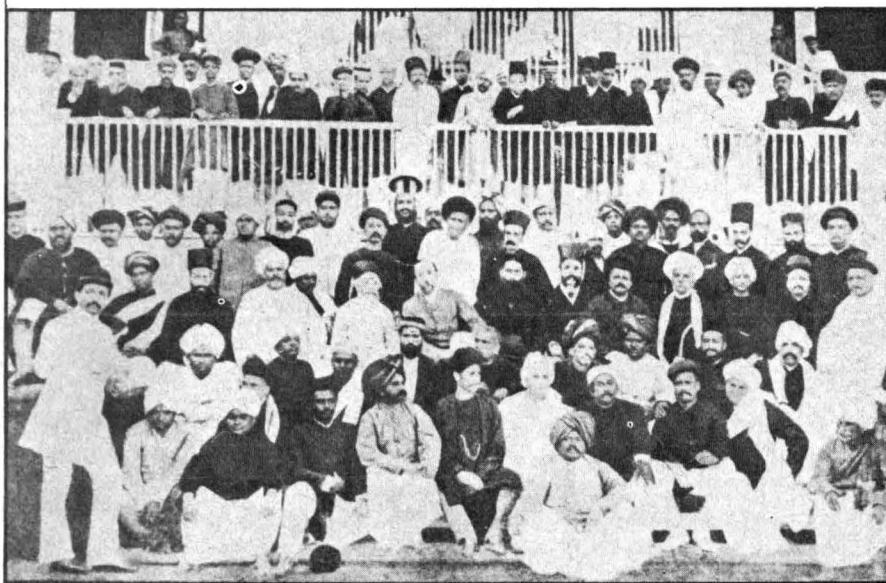
IN 1920, the Congress was transformed from an *ad hoc*, three-day *mela* of speeches and resolutions into an organised party seeking a mass base of local support; from a loose group to a militant, nationalist organisation. During the first two decades since its birth, the Congress had found itself in the uncomfortable position of being a loyalist body in the midst of growing militancy and nationalist feelings. The burden of imperial imposts made life even more difficult for the poor. Most avenues of employment remained closed to most people and recurrent famines — one almost every alternate year — brought misery to millions, and increased discontent.

The founding fathers of the Congress — Hume, Dadabhai Naoroji, Phirozeshah Mehta, W C Bannerjee and others — were not insensitive to this suffering. They just left it to the pamphleteers-cum-political activists to articulate this discontent. Tilak began to change all this. The cruel anti-plague measures in Poona in 1897 were the final straw. People exploded in anger — attacking the British. The Congress leaders could no longer evade the issue. They got involved, were divided, and split into moderates and extremists.

However, the arrogance and high-handedness of Lord Curzon, which

led to the partition of Bengal, once again brought some unity to the Congress. Suddenly, they were all extremists. Even Gokhale, in his 1905 presidential address, talked about civil disobedience and withholding of taxes. But even then, the Congress was not exactly receptive to mass action. Though its ranks had swollen at a rapid rate — from 72 delegates in 1885 to 1,889 delegates in 1889 — this growth did not secure the decision-making powers to the delegates. These remained with a small caucus. The Congress had, soon after its formation, adopted the procedure of allowing the delegates to elect a Subjects Committee, at the beginning of each session. This Committee then selected the subjects to be presented to the open session, drafted the resolutions and, of course, chose the speakers. The oligarchy that grew out of this system became so influential that, from 1887 onwards, all resolutions placed before the delegates at Congress sessions were adopted unanimously. Dissent was not suppressed — it was simply made organisationally impossible. Dr Annie Besant later castigated this device of shutting out all dissent, and thereby reducing debates in the Congress to meaningless rituals.

The caucus which controlled the Congress in 1905 was headed by Phi-



December 1885: the first Congress session.

rozeshah Mehta, who was averse to the mass agitation advocated by Tilak. Some others, led by S N Banerjea, 'even resorted to procedural deception in order to deprive Tilak of the Congress presidency in 1906. Tilak and his followers were then hounded out of the Congress and a new constitution was written to debar extremists from the Congress. The 'moderates' thus won the approval of the British, and earned the dis-

enchantment of the masses.

Consequently, attendance at Congress sessions began to decline for the first time, and reached its nadir in 1912 at the Bankepore session. Only 213 delegates registered, 159 of them residents of Bankepore. Meanwhile, Lala Lajpat Rai and B G Tilak were deported and numerous secret terrorist groups sprang up in India and abroad, a development that alarmed the British. Meanwhile, across the seas, a

young barrister, confronted with the indignity of being an Indian in racist South Africa, was developing a technique of non-violent resistance which would change the attitudes of the Congress, and eventually the history of India. Gandhi's South African confrontation was creating quite an impression among many Indians and even Lord Hardinge publicly advised the South African government 'to adopt a more civilised way of dealing with absolutely peaceful protestors'. Despite all this, the 'moderate' Congress wanted nothing to do with Gandhi.

But time was running out for the 'moderates'. Tilak's triumphant return from Mandalay, the outbreak of World War I, and the deaths of Gokhale and Phirozeshah Mehta, changed the outlook of leadership. When Tilak captured the Congress in 1917, most 'moderates' walked out of the party. But this was a Pyrrhic victory for Tilak. Gandhi, who had returned in 1915 from South Africa, was making an impact. A political disciple of Gokhale, Gandhi's professed goals exceeded even those of the extremists. He stormed the bastions of Congress organisation and shamed even the anarchists by daring them to fight publicly.

The Gandhi Cap

"THE ANNUAL SESSION of the Congress took place in the last week of that year, 1919 — at Amritsar. . . . Tilak advocated acceptance of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms with a view to proving their inadequacy. This was not the Gandhian way. If you accepted something you had to do so without mental reservations and give it a fair trial: If you did not want it, you had to fight it.

"The delegates supported Gandhi. But he disliked defeating Tilak. In a dramatic moment, Gandhi turned to Tilak who was sitting on the platform. Gandhi was wearing a small cap of white homespun that resembled an aviator's cap; it later became known as the 'Gandhi Cap' of Indian nationalists. Gandhi dropped his cap on the ground as a gesture of obeisance and pleaded with Tilak to approve a compromise. Tilak succumbed."

— From *The Life Of Mahatma Gandhi* by Louis Fisher.

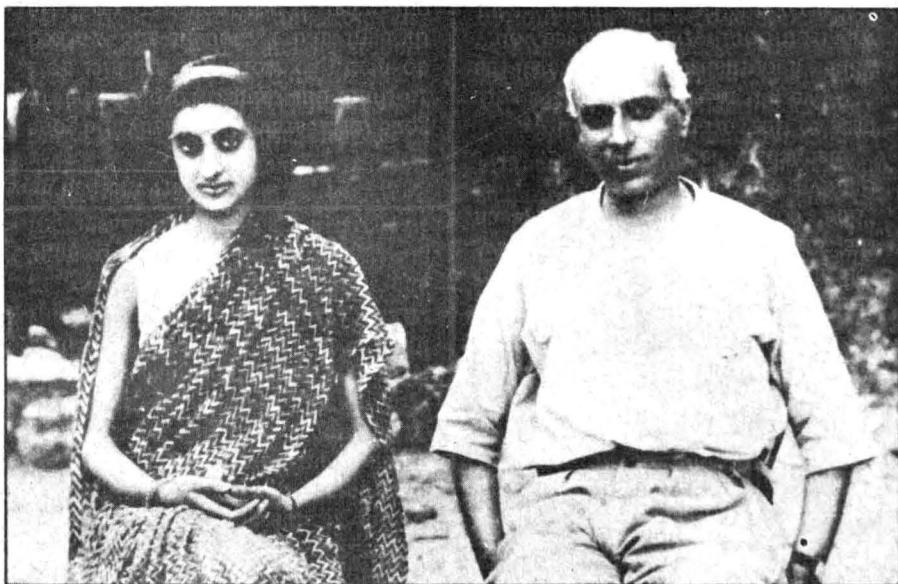
There are few in the Congress today who remember that Gandhi ever wore such a cap. The All India Congress Committee (I) office at 24, Akbar Road pleads guilty, albeit reluctantly, to complete ignorance about the origin of the topi. Are you sure he wore one? you are asked. Perhaps it's called a Gandhi topi because it was made of khadi and because Gandhi spun khadi?

Others volunteer that Gandhi chose to initiate the white khadi topi into the Congressman's outfit to identify him with the Indian rural masses which already used the topi in its normal dress. White topi as opposed to the red topi of the socialists and the orange topi of the Jana Sanghis.

Did Rajiv Gandhi's image-builders consciously choose the Nehru jacket and the Gandhi topi when he first made his appearance on the political scene? And was it also a conscious move that led to the dropping of the topi — almost as if, in this age there is no place for a Gandhi?

WHEN GANDHI emerged on the Indian political scene, the Congress was still controlled by a caucus. It was an inverted pyramid which rested not on any broad ideological base but upon the personal or factional eminence of its leaders. Even Gandhi could not entirely change the *ad hoc* and heterogeneous character of the Congress and it continued as a collection of incompatible elements. His goals were, in fact, paradoxical, since he wanted ideologically diverse groups tied into a disciplined organisation. Predictably, he failed. But by the sheer force of his personality, he brought some cohesion to the organisation. Since he so successfully made the Congress the spearhead of a powerful mass movement, virtually making the body and the movement inseparable, few seemed to care how good or bad the party organisation really was. Gandhi's ability to identify and then deal with the burdens of the poor in an intensely human and personal manner tended to overshadow the failings of his party. Even today, most people may not remember the mass struggles he organised as the failures they were.

When the non-co-operation movement of 1919-22 failed, the capturing of seats in councils tempted many Congress leaders to revert to the parliamentary path and co-operate with the British authorities. Gandhi could have forced the issue and blocked this path, but with characteristic humility, he held back his followers, the no-changers, as they were called. The changers, headed by C R Das, Motilal Nehru and Vithalbhai Patel, formed the Swarajist Party and joined the councils and municipal bodies. But they were soon disillusioned, and returned to Gandhi's fold. No longer content with the promise of Home Rule or Dominion Status, the Congress shed, in 1928, the veneer of loyalty to the Crown and demanded Independence — *Purna Swaraj*. The Simon Commission, which came to study Indian discontent, was boycotted and Gandhi led the Congress Party's struggle onto an even more defiant path. The movement was no



Nehru with Indira: the party was made by its leaders.

longer limited to mere non-co-operation, but extended to active disobedience of laws. However, Lord Irwin, the Viceroy, persuaded Gandhi to retract a little. The compromise failed since there was, by then, virtually no meeting ground between the Indian and the British points of view.

However, the failure of this struggle and the opportunity for sharing of power in the states under the 1935 Act, once again caused the pendulum to swing in the other direction. This confounded Gandhi and he stepped aside, this time resigning his membership of the party. Gandhi was a philosophical anarchist, leading a bunch of constitutionalists — some conservative and some radical. With the magnanimity of a patriarch, he allowed them to adopt a line of action he felt was wrong. The Congress, and this time almost the entire party, turned to constitutionalism, fought elections, captured power at provincial levels, and covered themselves in glory as able and strong administrators. World War II drove the Congress into the wilderness and presented it with unpleasant alternatives for action. Co-operation with British imperialists was clearly impossible, but so also was a struggle which would weaken the Allied fight against Hitler's fascism. Gandhi ultimately did

launch a struggle, but it failed to take off.

The new world order which finally emerged from the ruins of World War II, and the victory of the democratic forces, made Independence inevitable. Amidst the agony of seeing free India divided, Gandhi continued to see the Congress as a body for social and political transformation. In 1948, he pleaded that the Congress, having fulfilled its historic mission, be converted into a Lok Sevak Sangh.

But this did not suit those who had struggled for a free India, and who felt that the consolidation of freedom was in the party forming a government, and through administration, shaping a new India.

The history of the Congress is, therefore, a history of its leadership. At any given time, the party has been as good or as bad as its leaders. The tensions, the shifts of power, and even the splits in the Congress, whether in 1908, 1918, 1935 or later, in 1969 and 1978, though sought to be projected as the result of ideological differences, were primarily conflicts between personalities, not ideas or programmes.

With the era of militancy over, the age of caucus control was revived and became the elemental force in post-Independence India. ♦

ALONE AGAIN

Superstar. Political hot-shot. National figure. Amitabh Bachchan has been called all of these. But what of the man himself? MALAVIKA SANGHVI went to meet him and found a lonely, vulnerable individual trying hard to cope with the unique position he has found himself in.

“IT'S GOOD to see you looking so well,” I said to Amitabh Bachchan.

“You know,” he told me. “If you see a myasthenia victim, you will never make out that they are ill, but they are, in fact, critically ill. Our whole body is composed of nerve endings that carry impulses from our brain to our muscles. Between the nerve and the muscle is a liquid that acts as a catalyst before passing on the impulse to the muscles. When this liquid goes into short-supply, you are affected with myasthenia. You climb four steps and then, you can't take a fifth one. You gulp something, and you can't hold the liquid in your mouth.”

“But you are not that badly off, are you?” I persisted. “I mean, look at you! You don't seem to get tired.”

“Hmmm,” he said, “it depends. If I were to do a rapid movement like combing my hair. . . .” he paused to run an imaginary comb in the air over

his head, “well, then my hand will suddenly stop in mid-air.”

“Has that ever happened to you?”

“It just did.” His hand froze in the air above his head, and a look of fascinated bewilderment spread across his features.

I tried to change the subject, slightly embarrassed at having drawn attention to a man's illness, but Bachchan didn't mind. He has, it seems, come to terms with myasthenia gravis. “I used to take drugs for it,” he continued. “Eight pills a day. Then I brought it down to two. Now, since last month, I've given them up. I want to see if I can do without them. It is an amazing instrument, the human body. We misuse it. We damage it. And the damn thing still keeps on.”

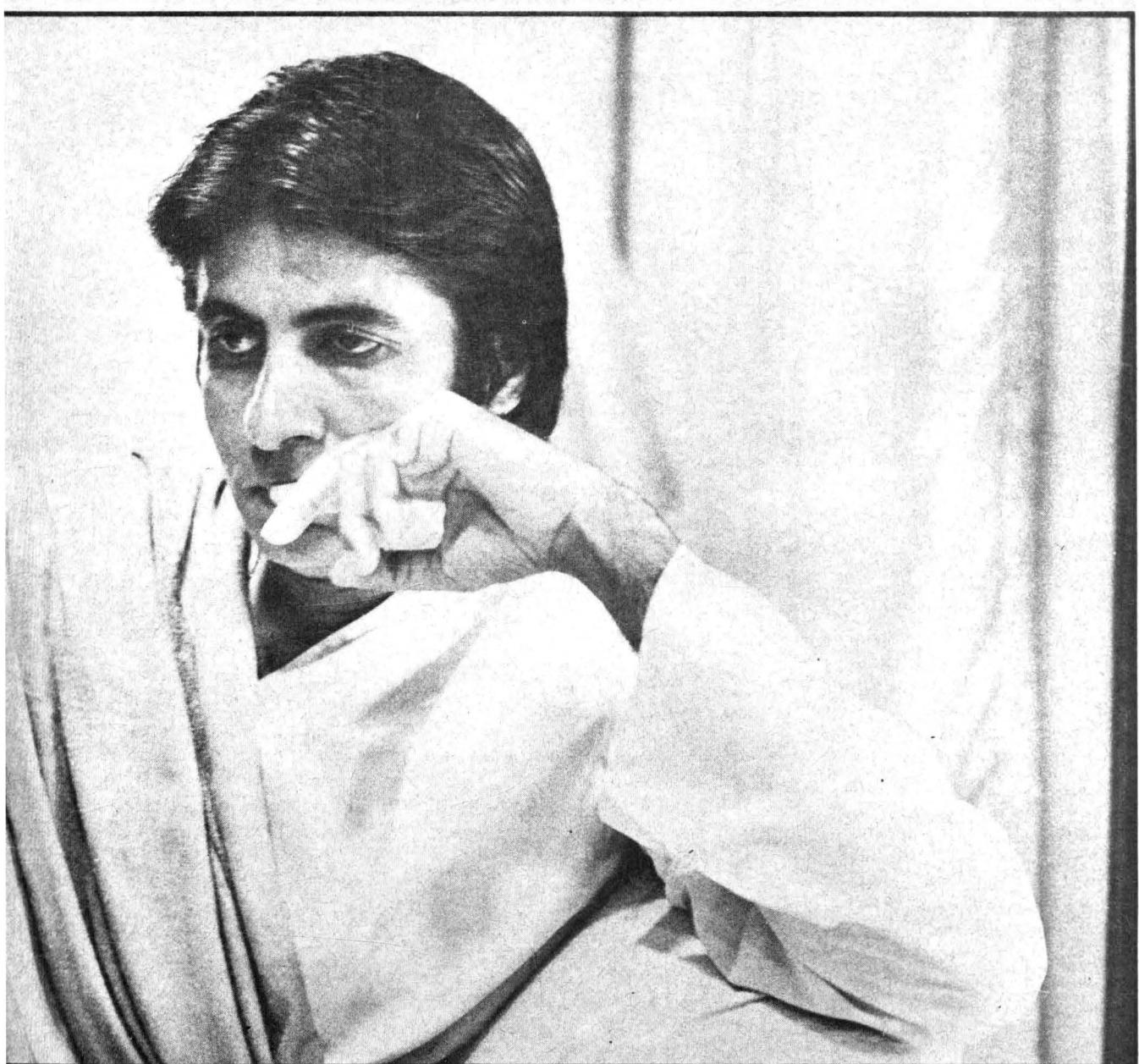
As nearly everybody knows by now, Bachchan's body has taken more damage than most. In 1982, hospitalised after a freak accident, he was declared clinically dead and came back to life. A year later, he burned his

hand and arm playing Diwali. And in 1984, he was afflicted by the mysterious myasthenia gravis.

Not much was known about the disease. There was the risk of fatality: if your lungs were affected, then that was it. And there were all the terrible stories about Aristotle Onassis who lost control over so many of his muscles that, finally, they had to tape his eyelids up to keep them open. Fortunately, so far Bachchan has managed all right despite his myasthenia.

He knows how lucky he's been. Last year, he went to Moscow as a delegate to the Film Festival. At a dinner, he found himself sitting across a table from a Lebanese delegate. “He was my age,” Bachchan recalled





softly. And, as all around them the fun, food and festivities proceeded, the two men regarded each other: the Lebanese, too, had myasthenia gravis. Except, of course, that his situation was much worse. His face had been permanently damaged. He couldn't even move his eyeballs.

And there, at the Moscow Film Festival, for one brief moment, Amitabh Bachchan ceased to be India's reigning superstar and its best-known Member of Parliament. As he and the Lebanese sat and talked, comparing notes, sharing anxieties, Bachchan became just another man, fearful of the damage done to his body, and apprehensive about what the future held in store for him.

FILM CITY. A vast, sprawling conglomeration of sets and sound stages on the outskirts of Bombay. Tinnu Anand, a former assistant to Satyajit Ray, is shooting his *Shahenshah* there. Comedian Jagdeep is one of the main participants in today's scene. He is required to wear funny clothes and run around the sets trying to rouse a police inspector.

The police inspector is, of course, Amitabh Bachchan — back in Bombay, back in films, and back to playing a role that he has essayed so many times before. Until the shot is set up, Bachchan waits in a cold, impersonal dressing-room, wearing the khaki police inspector's uniform he

will need for the scene. He sits bolt upright in a high-backed chair like some paratrooper passing the time till the jump.

Around him are his personal belongings. A Louis Vuitton leather briefcase, an enormous diamond-encrusted, gold Rolex wrist-watch, two pairs of clothes (jeans and T-shirt and checked lungi and vest), a gold chain with a pendant and a fountain pen. The expensive nature of his possessions contrasts strangely with the lurid furnishings of the dressing-room: the walls are garishly papered and covered with portraits of pink-nippled blondes and wild-maned stallions.

"Yes," he says. "I'm still making films. I want to keep doing a film or

two a year." Why not more? "Because I don't think my health or my commitments will permit me to." What kind of films? "Well, the offers keep coming."

Indeed, they do. At the moment he has *Shahenshah*, an old commitment that he could not extricate himself from. There's *Akhi Rasta*, directed by Bhagraj and begun four years ago. And there's *Ganga, Jamuna, Saraswati*, still to be begun but almost certain to be a hit because it is directed by Manmohan Desai whose *Mard*, also starring Bachchan, is the biggest hit of the winter. By next year, this list of commitments is certain to increase.

Does it ever worry Bachchan that, his new-found political career notwithstanding, he's still making the same, slightly inane kind of Hindi film? Does it seem incongruous for a Member of Parliament to be running around trees in countless song sequences?

Bachchan's been asked this before; he's familiar with the criticism. "People keep feeling that I should make the odd purposeful film which I've been accused of not having made so far," he says in that 70-mm voice. "Frankly, I don't know what they mean by 'purposeful'. I feel that all the films I've done till now have a purpose. It may be a good purpose or a bad purpose, but it is a purpose. There must be a purpose if so many people come to see them!"

"But you know the language that's used. Parallel Cinema. New Cinema. The Other Cinema. Perhaps, I'm expected to play a character who glorifies some chapter in history. I don't know! So far, no such film has been offered to me." So nothing's changed. Six years ago, when critics blamed Bachchan for sticking to the big-budget extravaganza, he gave the same reply. Now, MP or no MP, Amitabh Bachchan, the film actor, still has the same philosophy.

Outside Bachchan's dressing-room, a crowd of visitors has gathered. There's Kalyanji, the music director. There's Ramanand Sagar, the pro-



"Basically I am not a politician. The electorate was kind. But I'm not forming any group. I don't have a strategy or political thought. I simply want to do my best."

ducer-director. Then there's Amjad Khan who says with a smile, "It is rumoured that Amit is supposed to be in my next film." And there's Vinod Chopra, the new-wave film director. Bachchan makes time for all of them, sometimes closeting himself with one or two for close consultations. "It's strange," he muses, "but though I've been away and less deeply involved in the day to day happenings, I have been able to go more deeply into the fabric of the industry. I've been fighting for the industry in Delhi, so I feel very involved."

Finally, the shot is ready and Bachchan moves to the sound stage. He slips into his role with such ease that it is almost as though he has never been away. The scene requires him to sit on a desk, rest his feet on a filing cabinet and pull his police inspector's cap over his face. (Interestingly, Bachchan wears Gucci shoes, despite his otherwise authentic inspector's uniform.)

Most of the action centres around Jagdeep. Bare-chested, knickered in black and red appliquéd shorts, and with hearts stuck all over his perspiring body, Jagdeep is busy psyching himself up for his big scene. When

Tinnu Anand calls, 'Action!' Jagdeep springs to life. "Jago sonevalo," he shouts, his eyeballs revolving in their sockets like the wheels of a circus bicycle. With each shout he gets more agitated till, finally, he is beside himself, screaming with rage and demanding justice while slapping his forehead and jiggling his breasts.

The drama ends when the reclining Bachchan finally stirs. "What in God's name," he asks, eyeing the hysterical Jagdeep, "are you dressed like that for?" It is throwaway line, deftly underplayed and certain to get a laugh in the cinemas when the picture is finally released. Now, it has the effect of causing Jagdeep to collapse onto a chair.

"Cut!" shouts Tinnu Anand as Jagdeep's sinewy body hits the chair. Bachchan rises, readjusts his cap, turns to Anand and asks in that same throwaway manner: "Why do you always have an orgasm when you say 'Cut'?"

ONE YEAR AGO, when Amitabh Bachchan trounced H N Bahuguna in Allahabad, his political career seemed set to follow the spectacular success of his film career. After all, he had a national following, great charisma and, moreover, was among Rajiv Gandhi's closest friends. There were those who predicted that he would soon become the second most important person in India, others who regarded him as possible Prime Ministerial material, and nearly everyone thought it probable that he would find a seat in the Cabinet, perhaps even as Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

In fact, little of that has happened. Bachchan got himself embroiled in two controversies (over not paying enough attention to Allahabad, and over calling politics a 'cesspool'), made little capital out of his friendship with Rajiv and displayed no political ambition other than the twin desires to help his party and nurse his constituency.

Even so, I asked him, did it worry

him at all that the ministerial berth that everyone had imagined was waiting for him never really materialised?

"No." He was emphatic. "People say I should have been given a position. But I don't think I'm qualified for a position. And I don't want to go through life thinking, 'Have I got more than I've given?'"

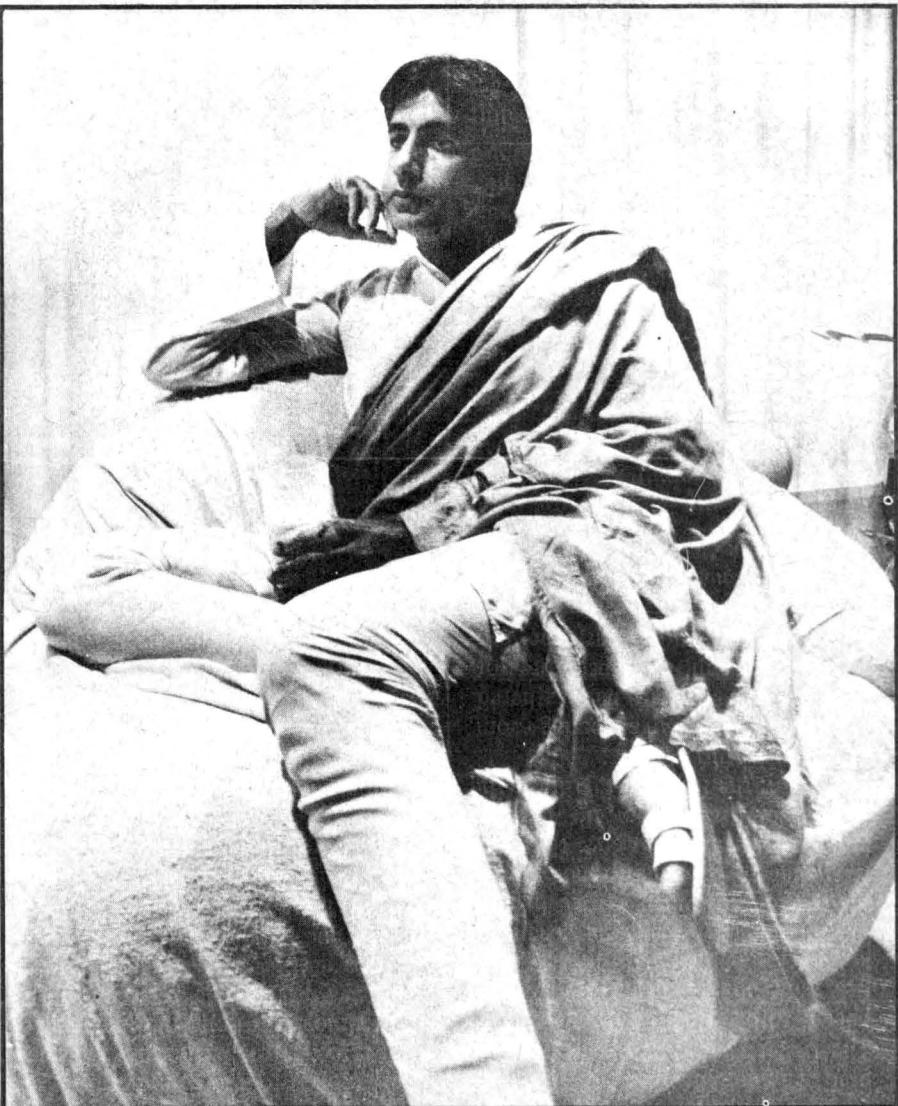
Did that ring true? A politician who took the trouble to fight a messy election campaign and then, didn't care about getting a position?

"Look. Let's get one thing clear. Basically, I'm not a politician," a ripple of irritation passes across his face. "I stood for election because, at the time, I felt all like-minded people should come forward. The person at the helm was known to me. I believed in what he stood for. The mandate was successful. The electorate was kind. But I'm not forming any groups. I don't have a strategy or political thought. I simply want to do my best for my constituency."

The concern for Allahabad is genuine. Shortly after he got elected and broke his self-imposed ban on interviews, film journalists rushed to talk to him. They asked the usual questions about Prakash Mehra and Manmohan Desai, about Sridevi and Jayaprada and expected the usual replies. Instead, all they got was Allahabad. Bachchan would talk of nothing else. Did they realise that there were villages in India where people had never seen a light bulb? That there were people who walked miles for a single bucket of murky water? That he had come across a woman who had gone to the fields to relieve herself and had been raped by five men?

Didn't they see, he would round on them and demand, that they were all leading superficial lives? That there were people suffering in the villages? Faced with this tirade, many of the film journalists fled. The rush for interviews thinned. Bachchan, they told each other, was behaving like a man possessed.

I asked him if the fervour had abated. Did he still get as worked up



"For the first time, I'm being accused of not doing enough."

about the people in the villages? "I know it sounds like a helluva cliché," he replied, a little defensively, "but I'd like to help the downtrodden. Their demands are so small. They ask for so little. And we can't give it to them. It's pathetic. There's so much to do — in every field. If I donated my entire wealth, it wouldn't help. There's not much one man can do."

"I'd like to do something. I'd like to dig a thousand tubewells. I'd like to build schools. I'd like to electrify my constituency. But it's not easy. The system is slow. It takes time for anything to get done. Everything has to be done through government channels. So, for the first time, I'm being accused of not doing enough. It's not like my films. In three hours, I righted wrongs and handed out justice. But in politics, even a lifetime isn't

enough to hand out justice."

DESPITE not holding a ministerial post, Amitabh Bachchan is, at least in the eyes of many observers, one of the most powerful people in Delhi. This is not a characterisation that Bachchan himself recognises.

"I shifted to Delhi because I figured that I'd be nearer Allahabad, and I could spend more time with my parents and children. It hasn't worked out that way. I actually have less time for them. I have no time for anything — doing up my room, for instance. And then, when I find the time, I lose the inclination. . . .

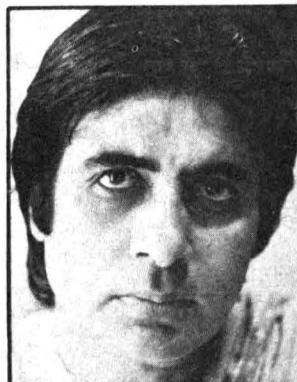
"I leave for work at 8.30 a.m. and there are nearly 200-300 people waiting to see me with requests and petitions. For the more urgent ones, I ac-

company them to the ministry concerned. When Parliament is not in session, I spend most of the day in the office. Now, I find I can't cope with the paperwork in the office. I have to bring it home and that leaves less time for the children."

Even so, for a man who always seemed an outsider in Bombay, it must be nice to get back to Delhi, the city he went to University in? Wrong, again: "Though I've not been a victim of it, I've noticed that when you socialise in Delhi, people are very conscious of who you are. In Bombay there is no ulterior motive. People meet to have fun. But in Delhi, I get the feeling that it is 'Who came?' 'What did they say?' 'How did they behave?' 'How will it reflect on our future strategy?' It's that kind of place."

Despite the general downbeat tone of his remarks, he brightens when it comes to talking about Rajiv. "I know nobody will believe me, but I always knew that Rajiv would be PM. There was no logic to it. But I knew that if he were to be PM, he'd make a very good PM. Sometimes, the little things a man does are clues to his character. For instance, if Rajiv entered a room that was untidy, he would instinctively begin clearing it up. Or, the way he drove his car. Sitting with him, one felt safe. One knew that things would not get out of control and that even if they did, he would know what to do. He still drives a car, knows how to fly a plane, and ride a motorcycle. How many Prime Ministers can do that? I think driving a car is a fair indication of a man's personality."

WHAT IS ONE to make of this long-legged actor-politician? A millionaire who is troubled by the poverty and suffering of the real India. A screen idol who finds that real life lacks the easy solutions of celluloid. A charismatic politician who has no real ideology, no driving ambition and derives no real enjoyment from politics. What makes Amitabh Bachchan tick?



"I sincerely thought: 'I am just a vegetable. My body's gone. How will I work again?' I feel for the handicapped. There was a time I had forgotten how to walk."

He is back in that garish little room in Film City, perched on that same high-backed chair, waiting once again for the call to the sets. His screen make-up still plastered on his cheeks, his khaki uniform still draping his lanky frame, his face impassive as he talks about politics, he seems like a man trapped between two worlds: unable to leave one and uneasy about throwing himself fully into the other.

While outside the fans congregate for a glimpse of India's leading sex-symbol and spot-boys and assistants rush around preparing the sets for Amitji, the star himself seems more lonely than aloof; more depressed than distant.

He has obviously been doing a lot of thinking. "Mine is," he says slowly, "a unique situation. I mean, cases like NTR and MGR are different. NTR came straight into the number one position and MGR switched to politics wholly and solely. It must be difficult for people to accept an actor who is also a politician." He pauses. "I'm just beginning to understand myself."

If the confusion is convincing, and perhaps only to be expected, the vulnerability is not. After all, wasn't it

Amitabh Bachchan who told the film magazines to go to hell? Told them that he wouldn't waste his time with them and that they could write whatever they liked about him? How can such a man suddenly start to care so much about criticism?

And Bachchan *does* care. The uproar over his alleged disappearance from Allahabad has hurt him more than people realise. As he says now, whatever he does seems to be misunderstood. If he signs a film, the Opposition says he's not serious about politics. If he actually takes the trouble to arrange a premiere in Allahabad, then his rivals say that it is a gimmick. If he says that politics is a cesspool (and can there be any honest man alive who does not think that Indian politics is a cesspool?) then suddenly, professional politicians turn holier-than-thou and begin berating him, a mere novice, for daring to question their profession.

The vulnerability can only be explained if one realises that what keeps Bachchan going is his relationship with his fans. It never mattered what *Stardust* or *Star & Style* said about him because for every snide remark, there was another Golden Jubilee, more proof that his fans loved him. Now, that equation no longer exists. Sure, he is still India's biggest star and *Mard* is a super-hit, but these things count for relatively little in politics. In that field, there's no reassurance, no Golden Jubilee. You face your public once every five years and that's it.

And so, Bachchan having won the love and trust of the people of Allahabad once, finds that now there's little he can do to repay them. He can't electrify the constituency. He can't give them water. These things are not in his hands. And his electorate, too, can't reassure him, tell him it understands.

Frustrated, adrift in the cesspool, he remains vulnerable to the taunts and barbs hurled at him by politicians who resent his popularity and are intent on pulling him down.



"Though I hated it then, school was the happiest phase of my life."

ARE YOU HAPPY?" I asked Amitabh Bachchan. He thought about it, and I decided to rephrase the question. "Look," I said, "you've been so many things. You've been a *boxwallah* in Calcutta, a film star in Bombay, a politician in Allahabad, an MP in Delhi: where have you been happiest?"

"Oh, none of those places," he replied instantly. "I think school (Sherwood College in Nainital) was the happiest phase in my life. Even though I hated it at the time, looking back, I was very happy. I had no problems. It was the happiest I've been. I miss those times."

Life has not been kind to Bachchan over the last three years. "After my 1982 accident, I was very depressed. Very desperate. I had to overcome great trauma. A year after that, I burnt my hand. It was just a mass of

flesh. No nails. No skin. Nothing. It was like a tandoori chicken. But I tried to fight the odds, to keep going.

"Then, in 1984, I discovered that I had myasthenia gravis. It was such a debilitating disease. I sincerely thought, 'I'm just a vegetable.' It affected me mentally. I mean, 1982 was bad enough. I had just overcome that, and then, this hit me. I thought: 'My body's gone. How will I work again?'

"I feel for the handicapped. I know what it means not to have the use of an arm or a leg. I've been through that. There was a time when I forgot how to walk. When I'd spend an entire day trying to move my leg from here to there. I'd wait till night till everyone had fallen asleep and then practise walking to the edge of the door. Suddenly, you realise how important every part of one's body is.

"Look at my arm. The web of my palm was stuck. Do you realise how

important the web is? That man is man because of this web? That, I can't do all kinds of things, like gripping things because of the web?"

He stopped talking. I looked at his arm and noticed it was still discoloured from the burn injury. By then, it was time to go to the sets again.

SHAHENSHAH. Scene Four. Shot 6A. Take 3.

Director Tinnu Anand is ready and waiting for his star. A toothless old character-actor is costumed and ready. Bachchan sweeps into the sets like the pro he is. As cameraman, Peter Pereira starts shooting, the star, still in his police uniform, begins his speech: "And then, I smacked him in the chest. One of his eyeballs went to Allahabad. Another went to Ahmedabad..." The character-actor who is probably supposed to look impressed, looks embarrassed, instead.

ENCOUNTER

Just then Praveen Kumar, the 6'8" former athlete, bounds onto the set. According to the script, this is the man whose eyeballs Bachchan is supposed to have sent off on a tour of the country. Bachchan cringes: compared to the giant, even he seems puny. He swings his body to full height in bravado...

"Cut!" shouts Tinnu Anand. "The camera can't swing down. You'll have to face his tummy."

"What is the point of coming near his chest?" objects Bachchan.

The director is insistent. The shot is redone. Once again. And again.

Finally, Bachchan turns to Pereira. "I'll help you this time," he jokes. And he puts his all into the take.

"Cut and print!" shouts Anand. "That's a beauty."

But no. Bachchan insists on another take.

BACK again in his dressing-room, Bachchan sips a soda and seems more relaxed. The visitors have all congregated outside. I tell him about a woman I've seen on the sets for the second day in a row. "She's come all the way from Breach Candy by taxi just to see you."

Bachchan is unimpressed. He's used to this sort of thing by now.

"I've just met another girl," I add. "She's a journalist. She's come all the way from South America to see you."

"Ah yes." He smiles drolly. "But she hasn't come by taxi."

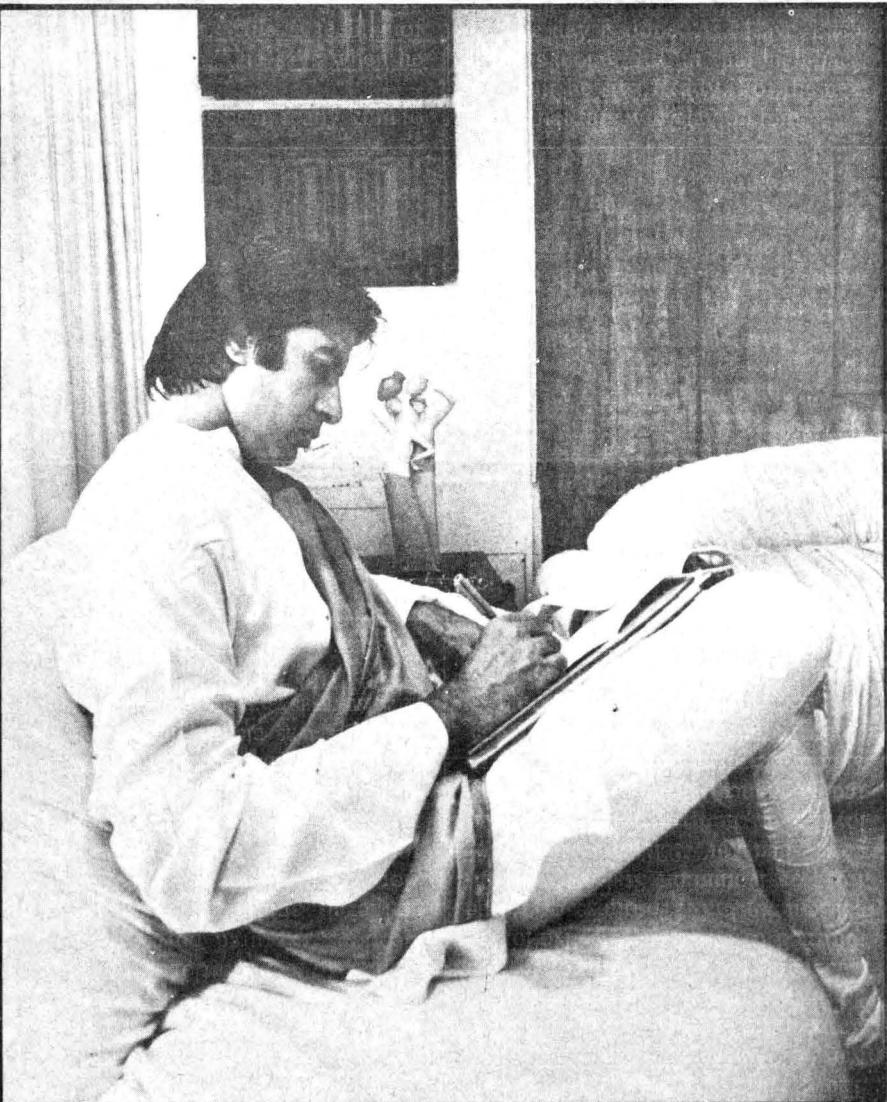
The shot seems to have revived Bachchan's spirits. He is at ease, in control of himself. I ask him about the future. What does he see himself doing five years from now? "Well, if the party thinks I'm good enough, I'll stand for election again."

And in ten years?

"I never plan that far ahead."

But surely, there must be some sense of direction to his life?

Bachchan sighs. "You know," he says, "in 1984, after I discovered I was suffering from myasthenia gravis, I got very depressed. I decided to go to America for a while. Ostensibly, I'd



"My life will never run smoothly."

gone for treatment. Actually, I'd gone to think out things. To plan what to do next. To work out my life. So I thought and I thought and worked out what I was going to do." He pauses.

"And then, the day I came back to India, Mrs Gandhi got assassinated, and everything changed again." He stops. "So, I've decided that my life will never run smoothly," he continues. "There's no point planning. It never seems to work out."

All the same, it has been quite a life, hasn't it? Bachchan begins to pack up for the day. "Yes," he says. "Oh, yes." He disappears to the loo to change into white cotton jeans and a yellow T-shirt. "It's a feeling of great satisfaction," he says when he returns.

"I feel God has been really kind to

me. I've really had almost everything in life. Success. Failure. Money. Fame. A bit of death. A bit of misery. I'm really prepared for any eventuality. Because nothing could surpass what I've already been through..."

His dressing-boy enters, collects the police uniform and starts to pack the star's personal possessions. The lungi, the Vuitton briefcase, the pen, and a sheaf of papers marked 'Constituency'.

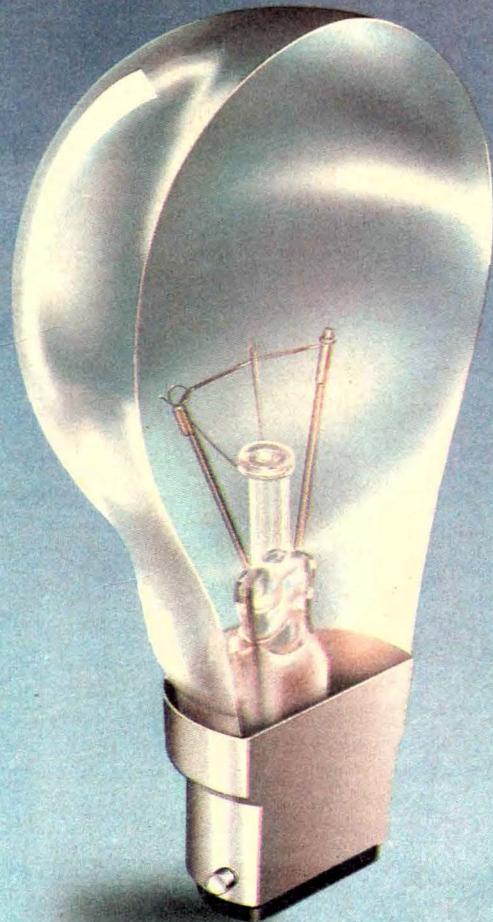
"It's very difficult for people who are not with me to understand my movements. I'm still in a quandary. I will, I think, settle down to it in time to come. Let's face it, what I did was not insignificant. It's Big Time!"

The day is done. As I leave, Bachchan is alone. Still in that high-backed chair he sits. Ready. For the next trick that fate will play on him. ♦



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STREET LIFE

The controversy over Bombay's hutment-dwellers has raised questions about the role of property in a socialistic state, the state's obligations towards its citizens and of competing priorities.

BY AMRITA SHAH

FEW ISSUES embody as clearly the failure of the government in various fields as Bombay's pavement-dweller problem. The inadequacy of employment in the rural sector which has driven lakhs of people to the city, the unwieldy development of the island city that has led to a housing shortage, the consequent proliferation of slums and the inability of the civic authorities to check or provide for the influx, have all contributed to a problem that threatens not only Bombay but all the urban centres in the country.

A census conducted in 1976 put the number of Bombay's hutment-dwellers at 28 lakh. The present day estimate is 47.7 lakh (the government's estimates are somewhat lower). The difference is attributable not only to the subsequent influx but also to the one lakh pavement-dwellers who were specifically excluded from the 1976 census.

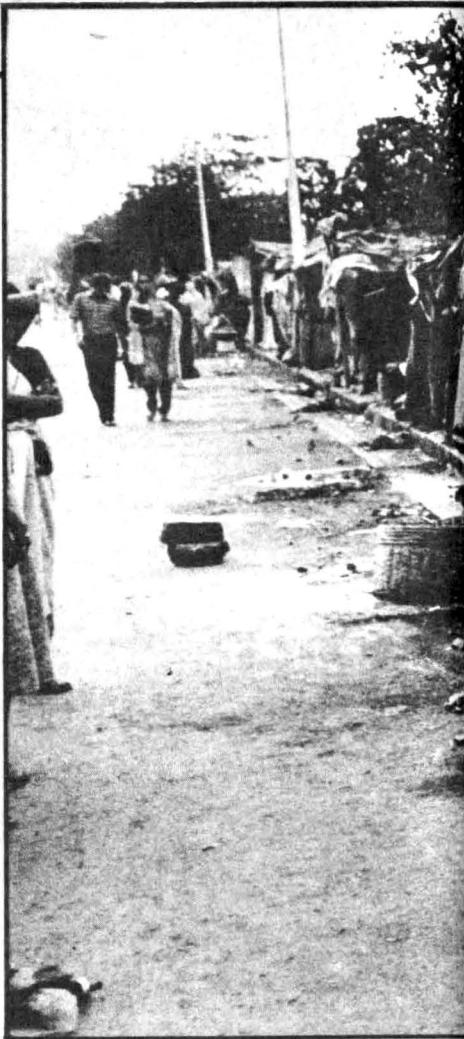
Pavement-dwellers are those who live on pavements, railway tracks, on or under bridges and in pipes, as distinct from slum-dwellers who generally form part of larger slum settlements. While various Acts have been enacted with regard to slum-dwellers, pavement-dwellers are relatively unprotected by legislation. The unavailability of basic amenities — which most slum-dwellers now have — and their location, make pavement-dwellers a far more serious threat to the smooth functioning of the city than their counterparts in the slums.

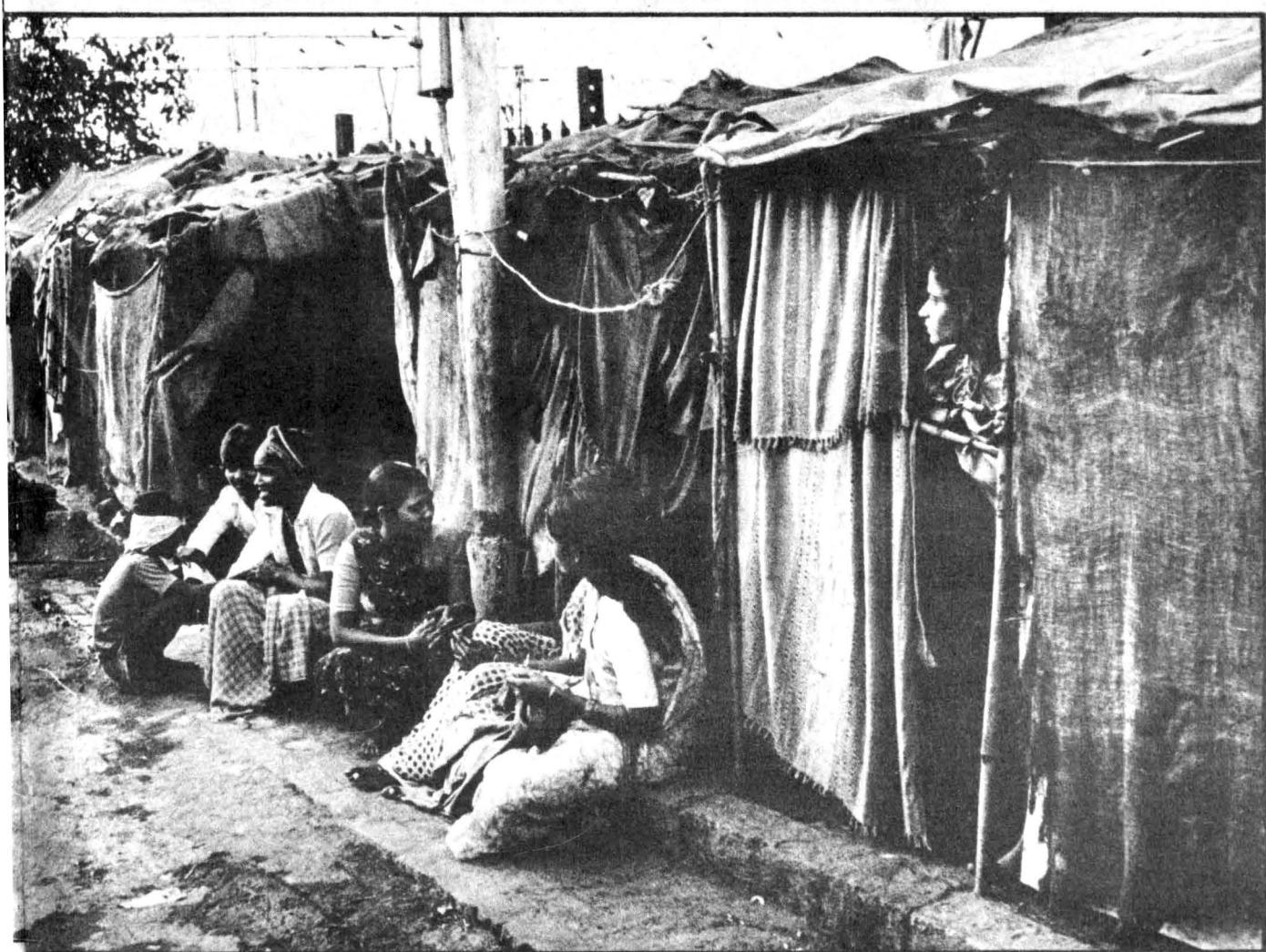
In July 1981, a solution to the growing problem was sought to be provided by Maharashtra's then Chief Minister, A R Antulay. His strategy was simple: deport the 100,000 pavement-dwellers and destroy their dwellings. The implementation was particularly barbaric. Early one morning, under a heavy monsoon shower, pavement-dwellers on one of the arterial roads in Bombay and slum-dwell-

ers from the Western Express Highway were herded into State Transport buses heading for unspecified destinations. Their belongings were destroyed and dumped into rubbish vans. In the *mélée*, families were separated, people died and a woman even delivered a baby in one of the buses.

The move was hailed by most of the city's residents as being long overdue. Slums were widely regarded as a nuisance and a breeding ground for disease and crime, and encroachments on pavements were regarded as even worse. Their removal seemed eminently desirable. But that was only in theory. Few could find a justification for the brutal methods used by the authorities.

The act of deportation itself, being unconstitutional, seemed most indefensible. The People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) moved the High Court, the day the deportation commenced, for an injunction to stop it. The state government con-





ded the illegality of deporting hutment-dwellers and agreed to halt it. The High Court further stayed all demolitions till the end of the monsoons.

The PUCL then decided to take the case to the Supreme Court but was pre-empted by Bombay journalist Olga Tellis, who filed a writ petition through her advocate, Indira Jaising, in the Supreme Court in August 1981. As there were basic differences between the two — Tellis wished to argue for a fundamental right to live on the pavements, a view the PUCL did not concur with — the petitions were filed separately. Though Tellis's petition dealt with pavement-dwellers and the PUCL's with pavement and slum-dwellers, the two were dealt with as one matter by the court. Various interim orders were also passed to protect the hutments in existence at the time the petitions were admitted. The orders were to be effective till the petitions' disposal.

The petitioners were no longer arguing on purely humanitarian grounds. The very right of the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) to demolish without providing alternative accommodation was being questioned. The distinction between pavement and slum-dwellers was merely semantic, for the petitioners' claim for alternative accommodation extended to both. The Supreme Court finally delivered its verdict in July this year: The BMC was entitled to demolish hutments, it decided, but not without giving alternative accommodation to those censused in 1976. Seen from the petitioners' point of view, the whole exercise has proved futile since the Supreme Court directive was one the state government had been willing to comply with as early as 1981.

In the four years that intervened, the emphasis has shifted. The question now is not whether the BMC should be allowed to carry out its

statutory duty of clearing pavements, but whether the State is obliged to provide alternative accommodation to those dishoused. The issue itself has become increasingly politicised. The Shiv Sena, back in power at the Corporation after a gap of several years, welcomed the Supreme Court judgment, arousing fears of a drive against non-Maharashtrians amongst the hutment-dwellers. George Fernandes — eager to re-establish his hold over the city — has threatened to oppose any move towards demolition, and Datta Samant is reported to have formed defence squads to protect hutments. In the process, the basic arguments that created the issue have been obscured.

THE CONTROVERSY over Bombay's hutment-dwellers has continued since Antulay's disastrous manoeuvre. The middle class protested vociferously against the stalling of the slum clearance

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programme, since it perceived the continued existence of slums as a major cause of most of the city's ills.

At first, those opposing the demolitions took extreme stands. Olga Tellis and her advocate Indira Jaising insisted that pavement-dwellers had a fundamental right to live on the pavements. Another journalist, Praful Bidwai, even claimed in an affidavit that since footpaths were now used as places of dwelling, they could no longer be regarded as mere footpaths. The PUCL — whose agitations over issues involving civil liberties had, till then, the full support of the middle class — found itself in unusual company.

In fact, not many saw it as a civil liberties issue. To argue, as Indira Jaising did, that the right of a pavement-dweller to live on the pavement should take precedence over the right of a pedestrian to walk on it meant, in effect, discrimination in favour of one section of society. That the PUCL was seen as upholding this essentially leftist line of reasoning surprised many and caused dissent among many traditional liberals.

Nani Palkhivala for one, argued in an interview with *The Sunday Observer* that the pavement-dweller, being possessed of the same rights as any Indian citizen, was equally subject to restrictions imposed by the law. The prevention of the BMC from performing its statutory duty of clearing pavements was, therefore, he contended, based on legally untenable grounds. "It is a measure of the apathy and naivete of a vast majority of the Indian public," he complained, "that specious arguments based on legally indefensible grounds about the rights and privileges of pavement-dwellers have gained acceptance in certain quarters." His stand was hailed by some, while others dismissed him as a spokesman for the rich and for people with vested interests.

The same criticism could not be applied to Durga Bhagwat, a fiery social worker, who resigned as Vice-President of the PUCL's Bombay unit in protest over the organisation's stand. "We have to work with the

government sometimes," she maintained, complaining about the increasing 'radical content' of the PUCL and its habit of speeding to the Supreme Court at the slightest provocation.

The PUCL, for its part, maintains that its involvement was not unjustified considering the brutal manner in which hutment-dwellers were evicted in July 1981. "The whole operation smacked of terror," recalls Sidney Pinto, General Secretary of the Bombay unit. The PUCL had a strong case for a stay order, not only on humanitarian grounds, but also because Antulay intended to deport the hutment-dwellers to their native places. This scheme clearly contravened the constitutional right to travel

High Court submitted that no such claim could be founded in the Constitution. "Though we claim that the absence of alternative accommodation affects the pavement-dwellers' fundamental right to life, it would be absurd to claim a right to live at a traffic light or anywhere," says Darshana Bhogilal, an active PUCL member.

The PUCL's basic argument was this: The hutment-dwellers were in Bombay for their livelihood and to evict them by demolishing their huts would not only deprive them of their right to a livelihood, but of their fundamental right to life — which the Constitution provided under Article 21 — as they would subsequently be driven to starvation and death.

Arguing this point, V M Tarkunde, former President of the PUCL, told the Supreme Court: "Our livelihood, our occupation, is in Bombay and since we cannot rent or buy accommodation, we must stay on the pavements — simply in order to live... In these circumstances, is it fair or reasonable to oust us?"

Substantiating the argument, Minar Pimple, one of the convenors of the Committee for the Right to Housing, quotes sample surveys conducted by social service institutions which prove that repeated demolitions weaken the hutment-dweller economically.

Indira Jaising, advocate for the other petitioner, Olga Tellis, argued that the right to life included livelihood and that it was only to exercise this right that the pavement-dwellers lived on the pavements.

In its judgment, the Supreme Court accepted the argument that depriving hutment-dwellers of their homes would amount to a deprivation of their right to live. But, it qualified, the right to life was not absolute and could be taken away by 'procedure established by law'. The provisions under the BMC Act which empower it to remove encroachments on public passageways were, it concluded, not unfair or unreasonable.

This has since been challenged in review petitions by both Olga Tellis and the PUCL. "It is not the intention of the BMC Act to take away

SHOULD A CIVIL
liberties organisation, after
having intervened to halt a
barbaric demolition,
continue to press for
alternative accommodation
for the slum-dwellers?
After all, the scarcity of
land affects everyone in
Bombay.

and reside freely throughout the country.

Whether a civil liberties organisation should, having once intervened to halt a barbaric demolition, continue to press for alternative accommodation for the slum-dwellers, in the face of a land scarcity affecting everyone in Bombay, is questionable. One PUCL member, at least, admits to having reservations on this point. "But once in it, it becomes difficult to pull out," he explains.

It needs to be clarified, however, that the PUCL did not claim a fundamental right to reside on pavements. In fact, Ashok Desai, while appearing for the organisation in the Bombay

“At Least We Earn A Little Here.”

Controversy has not changed the pavement-dweller's life.

WHILE the middle class, the activists and the politicians fight it out, the pavement-dwellers continue to live as before — seemingly unaware of the controversy their existence has created.

On P D'Mello Road in South Bombay, for instance, it is business as usual. A pot of rice cooks slowly on a makeshift stove of bricks and sticks. An old woman watches the steam rise and mix with smoke from the passing cars.

Though it is only 11 a m, the day is already several hours old for the pavement-dwellers who live on either side of the busy road. Only old men, women and children can be seen outside the huts. The younger men have left to report to their *seths* at the iron and steel market nearby. Some are already pushing their handcarts — loaded with iron bars — through various crowded roads in the city.

Kalidas Mukherjee is still at home, for he is not needed till later in the day. Unlike some of his neighbours, the 31-year-old Bengali is a first generation immigrant and did not, like most of them, leave home to avoid starvation. On the contrary, it was a fight with his father — an employee of the Equitable Coal Company in West Bengal — that resulted in his leaving home at the age of eight. He ran away with another native to join his brother who lived in the sprawling slum of Dharavi.

After four years, his brother decided to return to their home in the semi-rural settlement, Charanpur, and Kalidas was left to fend for himself. A hut in a slum meant paying rent to the slum lord. And Kalidas had no money. So he left Dharavi and slept on the pavements of Carnac Bunder, where he worked. “What is the point of a house, if there is no one to share it with?” he questions.

By the time he was 25, he was married to a girl from Karnataka and had constructed a shelter of poles, plastic sheets and sacks to live in. His



Kalidas Mukherjee: one gets used to a place.

handcart licence card now had an address. It said ‘Kalidas Mukherjee of Carnac Bunder’.

Dressed in a black printed bush-shirt and dark trousers, Kalidas looks every inch the city slicker. “One gets habituated to a place,” he explains, leaning against the stone wall against which his hut is built. The electric blue wall with its array of godly photographs is the only spot of colour in the dark ‘room’. A bag with a folded mattress hangs from a post and tins of cooking necessities stand in one corner. A few aluminium vessels and a steel *thali* dry outside the frail wooden partition of the hut. The floor, smoothened by years of usage, is bare. Looked at from the outside, the long row of huts looks monotonously similar. The interiors, however, are examples of individual inventiveness.

It is a difficult life. Kalidas earns Rs 25-30 per day. But providing for three children is not easy. Most of the children on P D'Mello Road don't go to school. Their mothers, busy with their numerous offspring, have no time to work. There is little money that is earned and nothing is saved. Which is perhaps a good thing, for thefts are common. Women own no

jewellery, except for the glass beads they buy from the trinket-seller who comes by with his beribboned board of wares.

“At least we earn a little here,” says Kalidas's young female neighbour. “In our villages we would have starved.” Food — generally meat and fish — is perhaps the only indulgence the pavement-dwellers allow themselves. Apart from which the only other regular expense is the ten rupee bribe paid to a civic official every month, for the use of the local fire hydrant.

But a house? The pavement-dwellers laugh scornfully. “We can't save anything. How can we even think of a house?” asks one. “If people are so concerned about us, why don't they give us a house in one of those tall buildings?” says another derisively.

The bravado, however, conceals an anxiety about the future. Reports of demolitions elsewhere, reinforce their fears of being shunted out of their homes.

None of them know where they would go if their huts were demolished. “If they make arrangements for us elsewhere, we will go there,” says Kalidas. “But they must move us together. I wouldn't go alone.” ♦

life," points out Jaising. Argues Bhogilal in a slightly different vein: "How can the procedure be fair if it still results in a loss of life?"

IF THE STATE cannot provide alternative accommodation after demolishing huts, then let them remain on the pavements," says Indira Jaising emphatically. On moral grounds, the argument for alternative accommodation is a strong one. After all, the problem is, at least partially, the creation of the State — and must be solved by it in a humanitarian manner.

But as a legal principle, an obligation on the State to provide alternative accommodation to protect the right to life, has dangerous implications. To begin with, it justifies an illegality. If squatting can be recognised as an exercise of the right to live, cannot the same defence extend to theft out of necessity? Secondly, why should the right to life only include livelihood? Shelter, clothing and food are, surely, equally essential ingredients of such a right.

And if the State can be called upon to provide one such ingredient (in this case accommodation to protect livelihood), it can be called upon to provide all. Surely, that would entail an obligation on the State to implement the Directive Principles of State Policy — an obligation which, according to a previous ruling of the Supreme Court, does not exist. Directive Principles, however desirable, exist in the Constitution only as aims which the government should work towards, unlike fundamental rights which the government is legally bound to comply with.

On both points, Jaising has firm views. According to her, necessity justifies everything. "I would even redefine crime," she asserts. As for the right to life, she finds it too abstract a concept. It is, she believes, not worth anything unless it also includes the wherewithal to live, which covers the right to shelter, employment, food. . . "That is what I'm fighting for ultimately," she concludes.

The PUCL's Darshana Bhogilal, ex-

pressing a view that many in the PUCL find unacceptable, agrees that civil liberties without the means to live are superfluous. But, she feels, it is for the courts to decide how Article 21 is to be interpreted. On the point of Directive Principles, Ram Jethmalani, arguing on behalf of the PUCL, expressed the view that though the court could not enforce the implementation of Directive Principles, it could certainly restrain the State from violating them.

However, by recognising that deprivation of shelter would affect the hutment-dwellers' right to life, the Supreme Court has expanded the scope of Article 21. Eminent advocate, Ashok Desai, feels this is a welcome sign because it 'enables judicial

"The petitioners are in effect questioning the role of property in a so-called socialistic state," says K S Venkateswaran, Editor of *Freedom First*. "And it is not the judiciary's role to make policy — that can only be left to the government." Ashok Desai, though more favourably inclined to an activist role for the judiciary, agrees that 'the extent to which judges can mould the Constitution is limited by the extent of the government's resources'.

All things considered, should the hutment-dwellers' issue have gone to court at all? "Of course," says Jaising, "every forum is the right forum." The PUCL has different views on the subject. "We would have liked to avoid going to court," says Darshana Bhogilal, "but the government is so unresponsive — it left us with no choice."

The Supreme Court judgment permitting demolitions and the Shiv Sena's insistence on its immediate implementation, aroused expectations of large-scale demolitions in November. Nothing like that has happened so far. In fact, it will now be even more difficult to demolish than before, because the issue has become politicised. "Such a scare has been created that no action can be taken just now," says Bombay Pradesh Congress (I) Committee President, Murli Deora. George Fernandes agrees. "The number of hutment-dwellers has increased," says Fernandes, "which makes a united and audible struggle possible."

Bombay Municipal Commissioner, Jamsheed Kanga, however, clarifies that he has no intention of carrying out mass demolitions. "But I owe a responsibility to the city," he qualifies, "and I cannot give it up because of obstructions." So, demolitions will take place, but in a phased manner. Mayor Chaggan Bhujbal, points out that the existence of 12,500 huts on municipal land has stalled several projects including the laying of World Bank-sponsored pipelines. The proliferation of dwellings over drains brought the city to a standstill for a few days during the last monsoon.

THE SUPREME Court judgment permitting demolitions aroused expectations of large-scale demolitions in November. But the politicisation of the issue now makes it even more difficult to demolish than before.

scrutiny without formal amendment of the Constitution'. At the same time, he concedes that in its wider application, an expansion of the Article would involve the establishment of a Welfare State which, 'in view of the Constitution and the government's limited resources cannot be attained merely by a judicial process'.

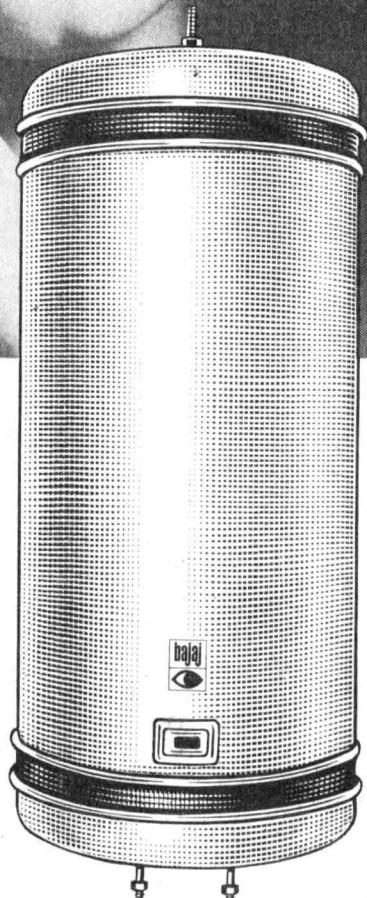
Yet, the establishment of a more socialistic government policy is exactly what at least some of those championing the slum-dwellers' cause desire. "The government should take over private property and redistribute it with the poor having to pay the least," says Indira Jaising, expounding her ideal solution.

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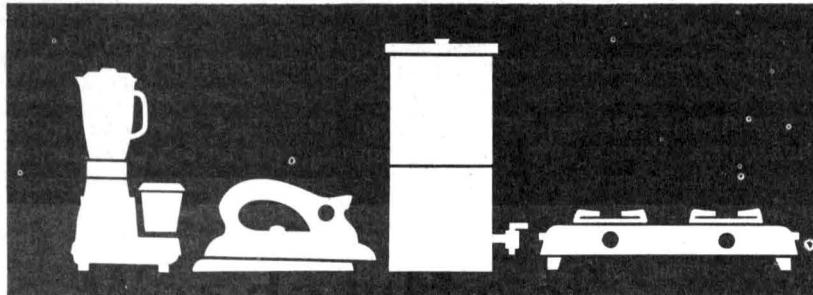
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These huts will probably be the first to go. "We don't want to disturb those on municipal land which we don't need immediately," insists Bhujbal.

Meanwhile, Kanga is looking around for land to rehouse the ousted. Bhujbal maintains emphatically that rehousing hutment-dwellers is the responsibility of the state government and not of the corporation.

THE GOVERNMENT'S proposals in the matter were outlined in a statement made by the Chief Minister. The government, he said, would accommodate the over 20 lakh censused slum-dwellers — that is, the pre-1976 immigrants — on vacant land in the suburbs on a permanent basis. Although the government has no legal obligation towards the post-1976 influx, it would make arrangements for those who came to Bombay between 1976 and 1980 — numbering roughly 20 lakh — to stay temporarily on vacant plots in Malwani, a distant suburb. The rest would be left to their own devices.

Local activists argue that the government should rehouse all the hutment-dwellers, whether they live in slums or on pavements. The cut-off date is arbitrary, claims Indira Jaising, and discriminates against pavement-dwellers who were specifically excluded from the 1976 census. Especially, says Darshana Bhogilal, when there is land available to rehouse all of them.

According to the PUCL, government figures reveal that the government and the BMC have access to land which could house up to 6.2 million people in Bombay. A scheme prepared by the organisation envisages the collection of ground rent from people housed on this land which would generate funds for low-income housing projects.

Kanga, however, denies the existence of sufficient vacant land to rehouse all the hutment-dwellers. Much of the land earmarked by the PUCL, he points out, is marshy or unavailable for a variety of reasons. Certain plots have been reserved for projects

which the BMC has been unable to complete due to a shortage of funds. Whether they should be given over to accommodate evicted pavement- or slum-dwellers, is debatable.

It is really part of a wider question: Should encroachers on public land be given preference in the matter of housing when lakhs of tax-paying residents of Bombay are equally in need of it?

Besides, the influx will not stop even if all the hutment-dwellers are rehoused. According to Datta Samant, 400 families come to Bombay every day in search of a livelihood. Will they also have to be rehoused?

Critics of the government refute these arguments by pointing out that the government has consistently

CRITICS OF THE government point out that it has consistently favoured the interests of the big builders and made little progress in providing affordable housing for the lower-income classes in Bombay.

favoured the interests of big builders and made little progress in providing affordable housing for the lower-income classes in Bombay. "The pavement-dweller problem is really a reflection of the government's wrong housing policy," claims Olga Tellis. Her contention is that, had the city been developed in a planned manner, the problem would not have assumed its present day proportions.

Maharashtra Chief Secretary B G Deshmukh agrees that there is an urgent need to decongest South Bombay and to develop satellite towns around the city. "But the main problem is really the influx," he claims. The state's Employment Guarantee

Scheme in the rural areas has, he maintains, checked it to an extent, but immigrants from other states continue to pour in.

There are no simple solutions to this problem. Especially when one sees the problem in its national perspective. Currently, one-fourth of India's population — around 150 million people — lives in the country's urban areas. And the number is rapidly increasing. A Planning Commission task force on urbanisation in the Seventh Plan estimates that by 1991, 20 cities will contain 28 per cent of the country's population, with an additional 7.5 million people living within the extended metropolitan confines.

Of this rapidly expanding urban population, one-fifth, or 22,000,000 people, live in slums. Experts in low cost housing claim that this number will increase by eight per cent every year in the larger cities, which is twice the normal urban growth rate. If this trend persists, the shortage of housing would rise by 300,000 units annually. It is obvious, however, that living in a slum is not a disincentive for most rural immigrants. This is not surprising if one considers that in most cases the living conditions in a village are not much better than in the city. The census of India 1971 claims that only 19 per cent of rural dwellings are *pucca*, the rest resemble slum dwellings. In fact, a study conducted by a Planning Commission task force places housing sixth in the hutment-dweller's list of priorities.

Undoubtedly, the solutions to the hutment-dwellers' problem will have to be of a long-term nature. Schemes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme and the National Rural Employment Programme have helped to curb migration to the cities, but not enough. Any immediate solution to Bombay's hutment-dweller problem can only be a stop-gap measure. If steps are not taken on a national scale, the sheer magnitude of the problem will render any discussion of competing rights totally meaningless. ♦

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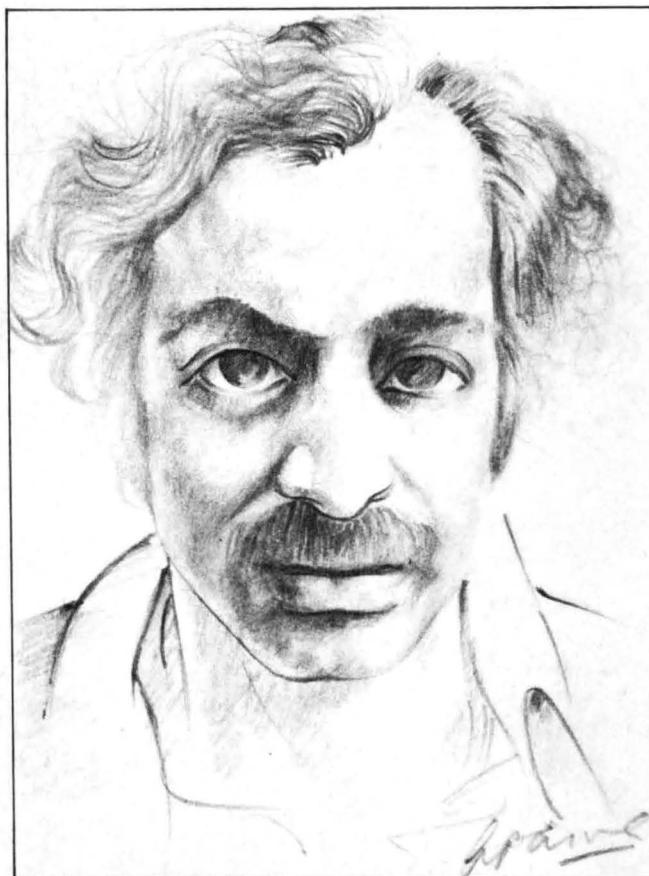
A rare full-length interview with M J Akbar, communicator extraordinary.

BY VIR SANGHVI

THERE IS one easy way to become a famous editor in celebrity-starved India: plaster your photograph all over your publication, make public pronouncements on every issue and become a staple of the glossy magazines. It is to Mobashar Javed Akbar's credit that despite eschewing this path, he is among the country's most famous journalists. What is more important is that he is also one of the most adventurous — a trend-setter who has constantly sought new challenges.

At the moment, Akbar is perhaps best-known for *Newsline*, his pioneering television newsmagazine. *Newsline* has hit the headlines almost from the fortnight it first appeared. The Sri Lanka government complained about a report on the Tamil Tigers in its first programme, as did the Chief Minister of Orissa whose evasive answers were exposed by *Newsline*'s reporting. More recently, Haredio Joshi, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan held a press conference to protest about a report that suggested that there was less to some of the development projects shown to the Prime Minister during his visit to the state, than had met the eye.

The move into television is merely the latest in a series of 'firsts' that Akbar has to his credit: In 1974, when he was only 23, he turned *Onlooker* into India's first newsmagazine. At 25, he transformed *Sunday* into India's fin-



est and gutsiest weekly magazine. When he was 32, he launched *The Telegraph*, India's first modern daily newspaper. And last year, with the publication of *India: The Siege Within* by Penguin, to laudatory reviews, he became one of the first Indian journalists to write a book that was both erudite and readable.

Akbar rarely gives interviews. He is reluctant to be photographed and unwilling to talk about himself. Nevertheless, last month, while the controversy over *Newsline*'s Rajasthan programme raged, he agreed to sit down and talk to Imprint about his life and career, in a rare interview.

Imprint: How did you think of *Newsline*?

M J Akbar: It is a fairly obvious idea — at least to a journalist. Television is now going to be a very important part of the national quantum of media. That is indisputable. If people refuse to believe it, then they are welcome to live in their silly world like some patriarchs.

What remained to be seen was whether the medium was going to be opened up to people like us, who were not content with merely saying how good the government is. I did *Newsline* because I saw an effort being made to open new windows. There is a point of view — held by people I respect like Kuldip Nayar — which says that until TV is autonomous, one should not appear on it. I have a

lot of respect for that view, but I felt that one had to begin doing something since the government-controlled media were now getting interested in the concept of credibility.

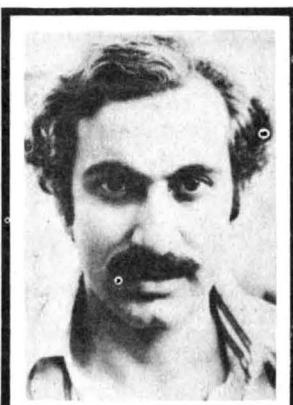
There were so many signals coming out that things were changing. The government — specifically, the Prime Minister — wanted to change the image of TV. When I heard about the letter the Prime Minister had written Mr Gadgil about TV, I thought why not ask Doordarshan what they would say to such a programme? There was no point condemning them before I had tried something. And when I suggested it to them, it went through very smoothly.

Everybody was quite enthusiastic. Mr Gadgil, the Minister, Mr Gill, the then-Secretary, and Mr Harish Khanna of Doordarshan. At one stage, Mr Khanna wanted Doordarshan itself to sponsor it, but I thought it would be better off with an outside sponsor.

How did you evolve this format?
It is an old format. Most formats in the world have been thought of before. It is just a question of how imaginatively you can adapt that format for your purposes. People seem to forget that Doordarshan itself had a programme like this. It is really a question of what content you put into it.

Have you had problems with Doordarshan?
In theory, they are very enthusiastic but when it actually comes to practice, that's when the problems arise. In the first three programmes there have been problems about what should go and what shouldn't.

I can understand why they objected — it's not easy to change a way of thinking. You must remember that if they've cut out one minute or two minutes and destroyed the internal balance of the programme, they've also let 38 minutes go. And why not give them



"Doordarshan objected to the Tamil story in the first programme. They cut out some film of Tamil guerrillas in action in Sri Lanka. I was quite upset because it was a big scoop."

credit for that?

What did they object to?
The Tamil story in the first programme. They said it would interfere with our foreign policy. We had films of the Tamil guerrillas actually in action in Sri Lanka and they cut that out. It was a very big scoop and I was quite upset when they cut it. But I'm not going to argue about that. I would object if they cut something like our Rajasthan story.

In that first show, I thought they would cut the segment about the Orissa Chief Minister — you know, the Bonita story. But they let that go and cut the Tamil story. Anyway, whatever they did, they did presumably with the best of intentions.

Are you satisfied with the way in which the programme has shaped up?
Very satisfied. We had our teething problems, but I think the programme has got better each time. One of our problems has been with the technical

side of things because we are all working under pressure. What you really need for a programme like this is a staff of 20. We have two people — now we've made it three. My heart goes out to Vinod Dua who spends day and night editing and running around. The first two months were absolutely murderous for him.

Unfortunately, you can't have a staff of 20 unless you get a commitment from Doordarshan for a much larger series of programmes. This is something I've stressed in conversations with Doordarshan and the Minister, and the latter has said that he understands and that when the programme comes up for renewal, he'll keep this in mind. But even without the staff, I think the technical quality has been improving.

Who owns ATV, the company that makes Newsline?

Well, the whole idea behind ATV — which is more important than who owns it — is that it recognises the importance of TV. I've been pushing Aavek and Arup (Sarkar), who are really more friends than employers, into moving into TV. When the media scene changes, you have to work out where you fit into this new structure. Just as, if there is a vacuum in magazines, then you move into magazines and lead the boom. If there is a TV boom in the country, then you have to find your own place in it.

The aim and charter of ATV is that we refuse to produce sit-coms. We regard TV as another dimension of news. This company will specifically create only news-oriented programmes or docu-dramas. However profitable and easy it might be to make comedy shows, we are not interested in them.

What do you think the impact of Newsline has been?
Considering that our first programme had the Orissa CM and a foreign government protesting strongly and by the fourth programme we had

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Harideo Joshi calling Cabinet meetings and all the Delhi newspapers covering it... *Newsline* has become part of the news now and I think that shows its impact. The letters we are getting, whether from former I and B secretaries or a Khalid Siddiqui (the famous Tiger Siddiqui of the 1971 war) or the average viewer, tell us about the impact.

Do you have any figures for the size of your audience?

No, we don't, but would Harideo Joshi have bothered about it if enough people didn't watch it? You don't really have to count numbers when something is getting such a reaction. We've discovered that in just four weeks, people have already begun to take it seriously.

How do you react to the controversies?

I challenge Mr Harideo Joshi to deny the thrust of our story. His replies have little validity. He doesn't even deny most of what I've said. It is some clever bureaucrat who has very intelligently written out answers to what we said in the programme, and Mr Joshi has read them out.

The story was about the four villages that the Prime Minister visited. They had shown him development, running water, etc. Unfortunately, much of this doesn't exist now. Water ran that day in a 300 yard *kacha mohri*. It was pumped in and then went back to its source. The moment the PM left, it stopped and everything was forgotten about. When we went, we found the pipe disused. When we touched the *nullah*, the lime collapsed in our hands.

Now, the Rajasthan government is coming up with all kinds of explanations. "It was meant to be *kacha*," etc. It's absurd; you don't make something which will crumble in a week. The people themselves told us that no official visited the village after the PM left. Now, the Rajasthan government is saying that



"I challenge Mr. Harideo Joshi to deny the thrust of our story. His replies have little validity. Some bureaucrat has written the answers and he's read them out."

there have been 19 visits by the BDO and this and that. Well, the BDO may have entered such visits in his books, but the people there certainly have no recollection of anyone having visited them.

It would have been far more honest if Mr Harideo Joshi had simply said that there were certain problems, that he was sorry that this had happened, and that he would see that things would get better. That would have been far more credible and after all, people know that Rajasthan faces severe problems. They don't expect Mr Joshi to wave a magic wand and make everything all right.

But you know how people react to investigative journalism. It's the same as in the print media. If you don't have a tape-recorded version, they'll deny they said it. If you do have a tape-recorded version, then they'll say, you've quoted them out of context. (*Laughs.*) In TV, the proof is there on the screen. So then, all that you can say is that it is biased!

What impact will TV have on magazines?

There's no real need to compare. The two are different things. Look at America. Just because CBS is there, it doesn't limit *Time* magazine. Each has its own place. TV has great advantages, but also very great limitations.

What would you say are the limitations?

Analysis. TV is a series of images. It is a great medium for communication, but it's flat communication. I couldn't write my *Dateline* column for TV. I think the world would be a much poorer place without print media.

What are TV's strengths?

Its reach. The fact that it can get into a far greater number of homes because of its visual charms. There is a certain immediacy about the visual which the written word cannot always compete with. For instance, the believability. If I had written that 'a canal in a village in Rajasthan doesn't produce water' — that sentence would never have carried the impact of a visual showing the canal.

The limitation of television is that it doesn't allow you to explain the rationale behind this — what kind of government Rajasthan has and why. I could never explain on TV how we could create a government structure where good intentions would be better translated into actions.

Do you think that the magazine boom in India is now going to have to change direction?

Yes, inevitably. When a new technology arrives, the old one has to adapt. But I don't think that TV will kill off the magazines. A few editors might get killed off in the process but the demise of an editor who can't adapt is not the same as the demise of a magazine. There will always be new editors to replace those — like many in our great country — who are stuck in 1940.

Some of them are stuck in 1868
(laughs).

Why did you give up the editorship of Sunday?

I had been doing it for nearly ten years and I really felt stale. It was becoming a great strain to think of new cover stories every week. And I think one must have the courage to accept that one is failing.

When did you decide that you were getting stale?

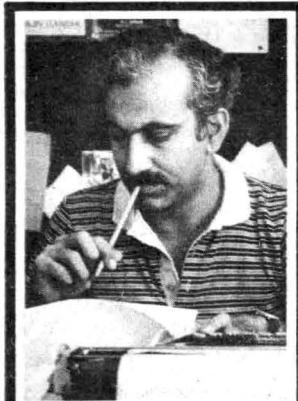
This year, I think. Just after the elections. I just felt *bahut ho gaya*. Plus, maybe, this idea of what to do with television had begun to interest me. Now, I can do two things at the same time, but not more than that! Before I do something, I tend to spend a long time thinking about it. So, I allowed myself six or eight months of thinking before taking the plunge.

One thing that I have always believed in is that one must do the maximum one can for people who've already been with the organisation. I don't think that when you need a new editor you must go around the country looking for some whiz-kid. I believe that the first chance must be given to people who have been inside. If they don't work, then it's up to the management to look around. But the first option must be given internally. And we appointed our Chief of Bureau in Delhi the next Editor of *Sunday*.

Looking back at ten years of Sunday, what do you remember with the most affection?

The great energy we imparted into journalism. It has been said before but I think it bears saying again, that *India Today* and *Sunday* were the creation of young minds. Young and fresh. We went out and found stories from (smiles) the parts of India that other publications didn't reach. Nobody cared about those stories.

Did you expect Sunday to have the impact that it did?



"I'd been editing 'Sunday' for nearly ten years and I really felt stale. One must have the courage to accept that one is failing. It was becoming a strain to think up cover stories."

I knew it. Of course. (Smiles.)

How old were you at the time?
Let's see. I was, mmmm, 25, when we came out.

And yet, you were so confident of its impact?

Absolutely. It's very interesting. Each time I've started anything new the first reaction to whatever I've started has always been negative. Everybody has always written my obituary in the first month (laughs). *Sunday*, *Telegraph*, my book, *Newsline* — people have always been sceptical. What has sustained me has been the reaction of the audience I've been trying to reach. It takes time for their reaction to come in and till then, the sceptics write my obituary.

But I never allow critics to get me down. Look at the attitudes of some of the people who write, anyway. Things go wrong, then they swoop down.

Now that we have shown that we can bring to TV some of the best

values of print journalism — investigation, going and looking for stories, etc — there is a studious silence on the part of the critics. Suddenly, they've found lots of other things on TV to write about (smiles). On the other hand, other critics — Anil Dharker of *Sunday Observer* or Khalid Mohammed of *Times Of India* or M R Dua of *Hindustan Times* — have been, I think, fair: criticising our faults and supporting our successes.

Coming back to Sunday, that was a magazine format you more or less invented yourself, wasn't it?

Yes, it was. We were then living in an age when there were virtually no other magazines. There was only the *Weekly* and there was *India Today*, but it wasn't quite what it is today. I didn't think that, in that environment, a straight political magazine would work. It had to cater to what was called 'the need of the family'. Therefore, the *Variety* section.

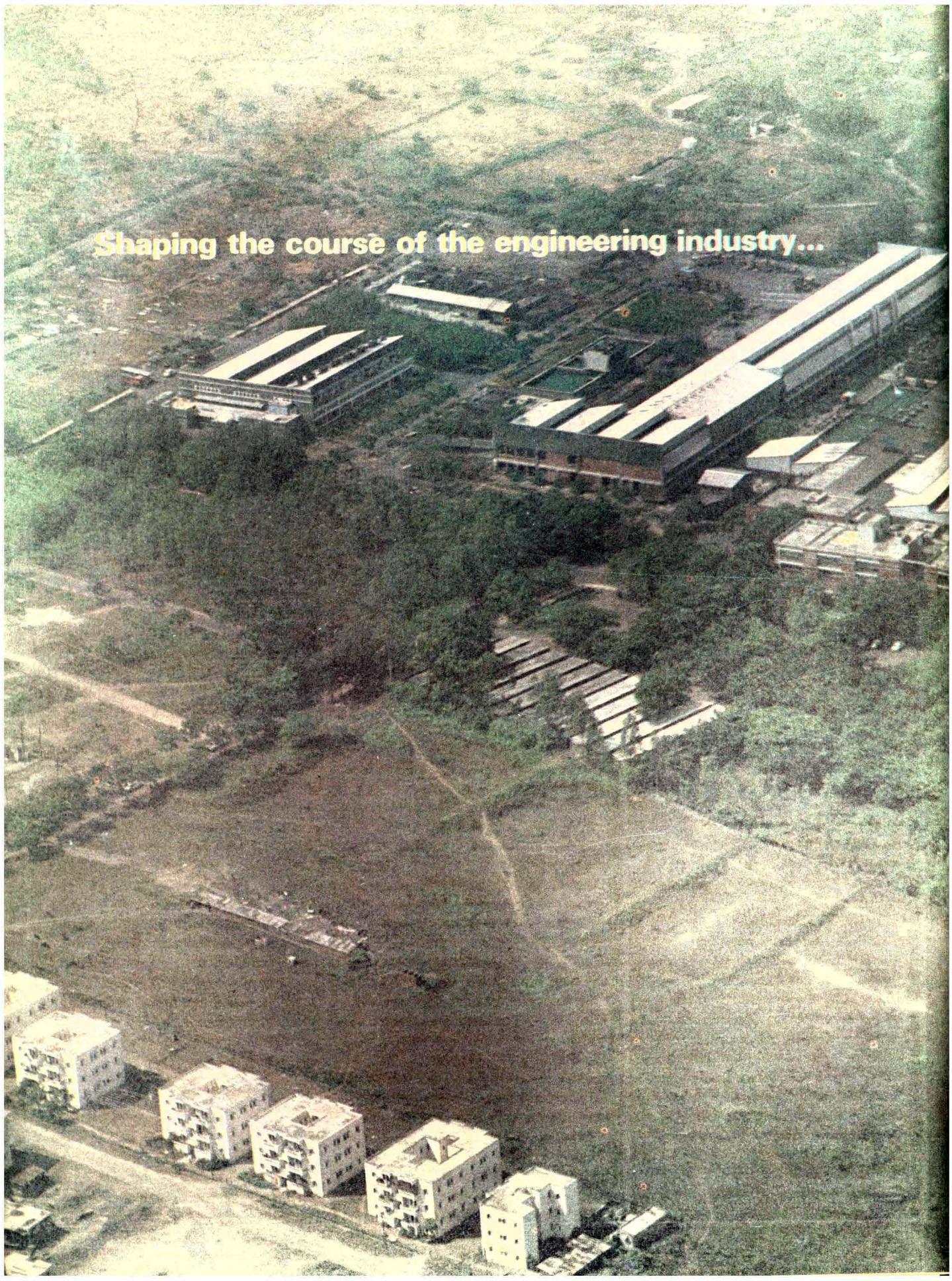
The analogy I used to use then was that the magazine was a bit like an Indian meal. The average European meal is one-dimensional — meat and potatoes. But an Indian meal would be *roti, sabzi, dal, bhaji*, chicken and mutton. And on top of everything — after those 17 courses — they still want *achaar* and *papad*! Therefore, *Khaas Baat*.

It was a daring time to come out with a magazine, wasn't it? The Emergency was still on.

Yes. We were in trouble with the second issue itself. We were asked to put Sanjay Gandhi on the cover and say how wonderful the Emergency was and there was no way I was going to do that.

Do you think the Janata period of 1977-79 contributed to the rise of Sunday?

Absolutely. The Almighty himself was in charge of all publications in India in those days. (Laughs.) You could write three cover stories a



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week. One whole section every issue could be about Raj Narain.

Some people have accused *Sunday* of breaking the Janata government. This was said quite seriously. I think the *Sunday* of that period remains the best record of what went on in the Janata government.

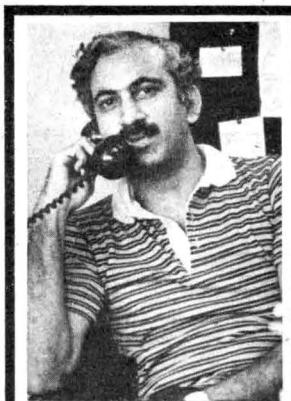
How did you get access to these Janata leaders? You were all quite young and the magazine was new.
We just went and asked them. You see, we had one great advantage. Our reporting team used to tour the interior and we used to meet most of these people and build up relationships with them out there, not in Delhi. Even the mightiest of leaders are very lonely when they are spending the night in Dhanbad or Satara or Muzaffarpur. They are quite happy to find somebody to talk to there.

One reason why you personally came to great prominence during that period was because you didn't hesitate to put your own views into Sunday. Have you ever had second thoughts about that?

No. Not at all. I am an ideologue. I do have a philosophy and a belief. And I carry that with me wherever I go. If I have to compromise on that, then I would probably change professions and be making more money.

And my philosophy is not particularly unusual. It is the philosophy of the Constitution of India. I've always tried to consciously promote a secular viewpoint and it has got me into trouble – not just with the RSS but with the Jamaat. Today, I believe strongly – and have used *The Telegraph* to say it – that the pressure on Shahbano is wrong. And within our own community, the work of fundamentalists is something I've opposed. Even Shahbuddin – who I don't think is a bad man or anything – is wrong on this.

The RSS has a great deal of influence in the media and RSS people spread stories about me.



"If I want to get into politics, I'll do so very openly. But that is something I've never worked towards. I just want to be one of the best communications people there is."

They smeared me by calling me a communalist. It used to upset me once. At one point, some people in power tried to investigate me. But now, all this doesn't faze me. I don't want this to sound sentimental, but I am an honest man. One day, it occurred to me, that all these people who were probing – what would they find? There was absolutely nothing about me that was hidden.

Supposing, say, the Intelligence people found out that I had met somebody who was anti-government. Ten days later, that meeting would be in *Sunday*, in any case! And I've never accepted a rupee from anybody.

The great thing was that all these people who kept accusing me of being a communal Muslim did not realise that the people who bought *Sunday* were not all Muslims – most were Hindus. And they clearly didn't believe that I was communal because if they had, then they would have stopped buying *Sunday*. No communal publication could ever

have sold the way *Sunday* did.

My sustenance – as I said earlier – has always come from the readers. Just as my sustenance on *Newline* comes from the viewers. I don't worry about other critics. When *The Telegraph* started, a Bombay paper even went so far as to suggest that only Muslims would buy *The Telegraph*. As if the Sarkars were going to create a paper solely for the Muslims!

After the Janata period, people stopped accusing you of communalism. Then, the allegation was that you had political ambitions and were using the papers to promote them.

It was very silly. People keep saying, "When are you becoming an MP?" and I keep telling them that the one thing I've never accepted is a demotion (*laughs*).

If I do want to get into politics, I'll do so very openly. I don't think politics is such a bad thing. What is there to be so coy about? If I did want to enter politics, I would do that job also with honesty. That means that you have to justify your being an MP by going to an area and developing a political relationship with the people. I would never want to be just a Delhi-based politician.

But that is something I've never worked towards. I just want to be one of the best communications people there is. And I think that's enough of an ambition.

*It didn't worry you when you started editing *The Telegraph* that you were devoting a lot of time to a one-city publication when you already had a national reputation as Editor of *Sunday*?*

I realised that, but I still wanted to do it because I knew that *Telegraph* would be a trendsetter in newspaper journalism. When I make a statement like that, people accuse me of arrogance. But I don't think it's arrogance at all. It's just assessment. To say that you are going to be better than the existing newspapers,

anyway, is not making a very great claim (*laughs*).

Can we talk about the one disappointment in your career: New Delhi? What do you think went wrong?

Well, it was over-priced.

I think it was more than that. I think it was five years too early. Very little of what Imprint does, for instance, would have seemed out of place in New Delhi. But, at that time, I don't think India was ready for it.

Yes, perhaps. You know, I was looking at an old issue of *New Delhi* the other day and felt quite nostalgic. There was some good writing in it.

I think one of the reasons it didn't work was because we became a victim of this class which I grew to despise after that.

Which class?

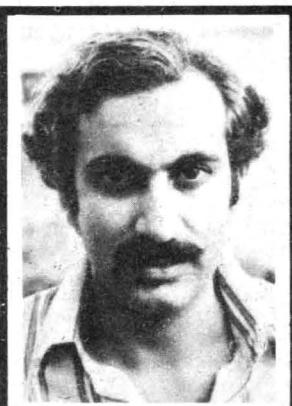
This class of quick commentators. We didn't wait for audience reaction. We funked. It takes a while for reader response to become known and we didn't wait long enough.

It takes longer in the case of quality publications. Take India Today. It took two years.

Exactly. But it succeeded because Aroon Purie had faith in himself. I must say I really admire Aroon Purie. He had a great ability to adapt and never got put off by criticism which can be very murderous in this business. He stuck at it and produced a magazine of great quality.

Coming back to New Delhi – do you think you learned from the experience?

Yes. You learn a lot from failure. It cured us of many things. It made the Ananda Bazar group much stronger. For one, it ended all notions of infallibility. Number two, after the bitchiness and initial anger had died down, it brought us all closer: Aveek, Arup, and myself. It took time because there was a lot of



"This class of quick commentators, which I grew to despise after that, hurt 'New Delhi'. We didn't wait long enough for reader reaction. We funked."

bad feeling. Long cover stories were written in magazines saying the whole thing was my fault, and that everybody else in the Ananda Bazar group was blameless.

But after a year, when things settled down and people discovered that I had held on to my job, it created a better relationship within the group. We realised that we could survive through defeat. And that gave us the strength to take a gamble on *The Telegraph*.

Of course, the same thing happened with *The Telegraph*. For the first three months, people used to sneer at its prospects. But we lasted out and there was a great determination that we were going to make a success of this one. It took about five or six months till, one day, it turned. It was quite unnerving coping with the whisper campaign against us, but we did it.

Why did you write India: The Siege Within?

It was a kind of testament. I had to

work it out in my own mind: Should I be committed to the idea of India or not? I had to think about this very deeply. Because if I wasn't committed to India, then I could go off somewhere and earn a lot of money working for *Gulf News* or something like that. I had to know why I shouldn't do that. Why I should stay.

And after I had started thinking about it and had discovered what enormous sacrifices leaders like Nehru and Azad had made to create a secular nation, I decided it would be absolutely criminal to run away from a task that was not complete. The fight against communalism and for democracy had to continue, whatever be the limitations of my individual ability. The book came about because I had to pass that rationale on.

I think that what I said in that book has been borne out by events. When I was writing it, could anyone have imagined that Punjab would be solved through democracy? I knew that there would be sniggers from some people who read it.

I thought the most striking aspect of the book was the faith in Indian democracy that ran through it.

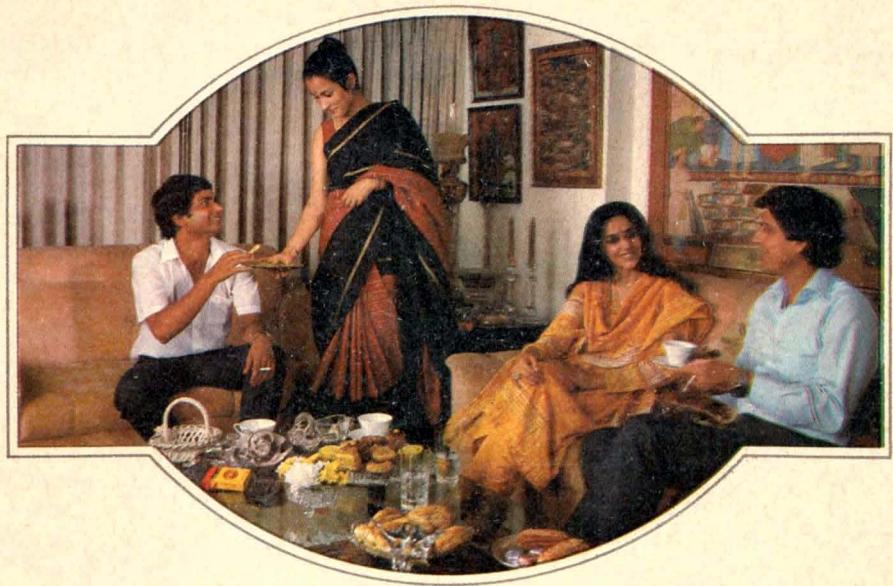
Yes. People forgot about Madras and the fact that there was a secessionist movement there. But, in the end, Indian democracy triumphed. People forgot the successes of Indian democracy.

This country has many enemies. Nobody can bear the thought that the Indian nation is on the verge of breaking through. It's like the Japanese in the '50s when people would dismiss them as being only capable of making cheap plastic products.

So, you are optimistic about India?

Yes, absolutely. If we keep on this way we will be a very flourishing nation. One that will influence the environment around it. The world will become a different place.

Yes, I am very optimistic. ♦



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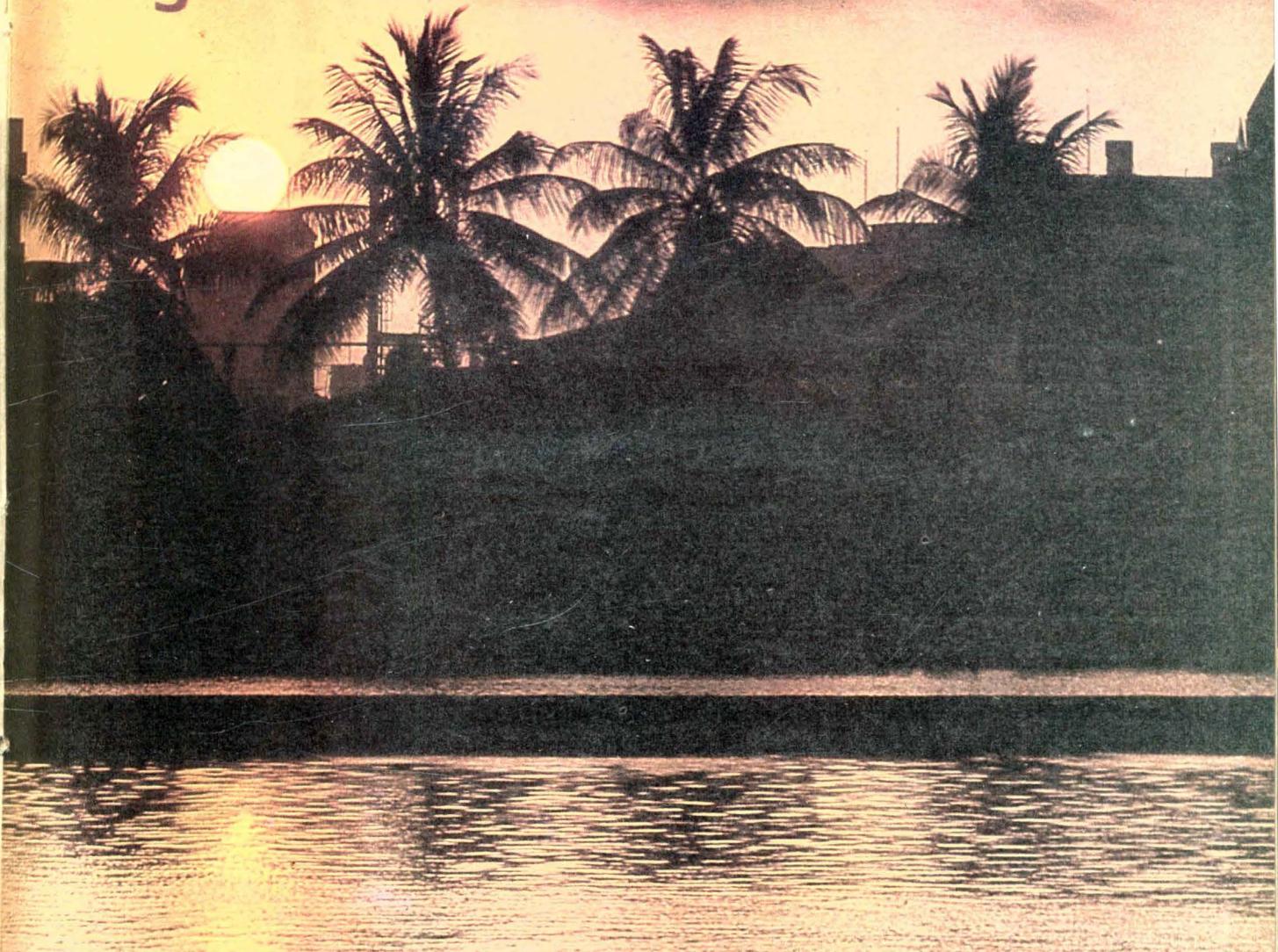
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TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Where is the economy headed? Are we ready for the 21st century? An **Imprint** discussion between Vinod Doshi, Chairman of Premier Automobiles, Murli Deora MP, Gurcharan Das, President of Richardson Hindustan, and Dilip Piramal, Chairman of Blow Plast.

Gurcharan Das: The 21st century is a nice catchword but what we should really look at is how we see the Indian economy in the '90s. For that, we need to look at the next five years to see if we can create the pre-conditions necessary to have a true economic take-off in the '90s.

Vinod Doshi: This is an important factor. What exactly are we talking about when we talk of entering the 21st century? Once we know that, we'll know what are the pre-conditions that we need to create in the '90s.

Dilip Piramal: When we talk of the 21st century, we think in terms of scientific progress and a high standard of living. I think Rajiv Gandhi, who has coined this term, means it symbolically — he is giving the country a new direction.

But before that, we must be able to provide people the basic amenities in life — two square meals a day, drinking water. Even now, many villagers have to walk five kilometres every day to get their daily supply of drinking water.

Today, 40 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. Something must be done about this.

GD: These are the ends we would like to achieve, the needs we'd like to fulfil. But these needs will be ultimately met by economic growth.

DP: And growth that focusses on agricultural growth rather than industrial growth. While we are self-sufficient in agriculture today, with a production of 150 million tonnes, this is still limited to the people who can afford to buy foodgrains.

GD: So the basic issue becomes one of demand. What needs to be created is purchasing power. Even if production reaches a level of 170 million tonnes, it is still meaningless, unless it is backed by a viable demand. And that is where industry comes in, because someone has to provide the jobs.

VD: It is wrong to believe that industry will provide jobs. Industry is not a job-provider in a big way. Job-providers are agriculture,



construction and road building.

DP: And it is not only agriculture, but the rural-oriented economy, that has to grow.

GD: I agree that industry, on its own, cannot deliver the goods as far as employment is concerned. But an industrial project has spread-effects which affect agriculture, transportation, all these sectors. I personally think that in the last 30 years, we have focussed excessively

This discussion was held on October 25, 1985. Gurcharan Das moderated the discussion.



and wrongly on redistribution rather than growth. Today, there is an emphasis back on basic growth rather than sectoral or small-scale growth in the interest of making the system more broad-based.

VD: Coming back to agriculture, I'd like to say that we cannot allow ourselves to feel complacent because we have managed to achieve some exports to Russia and Africa. The surplus is not really worth mentioning. Even a 15 per cent

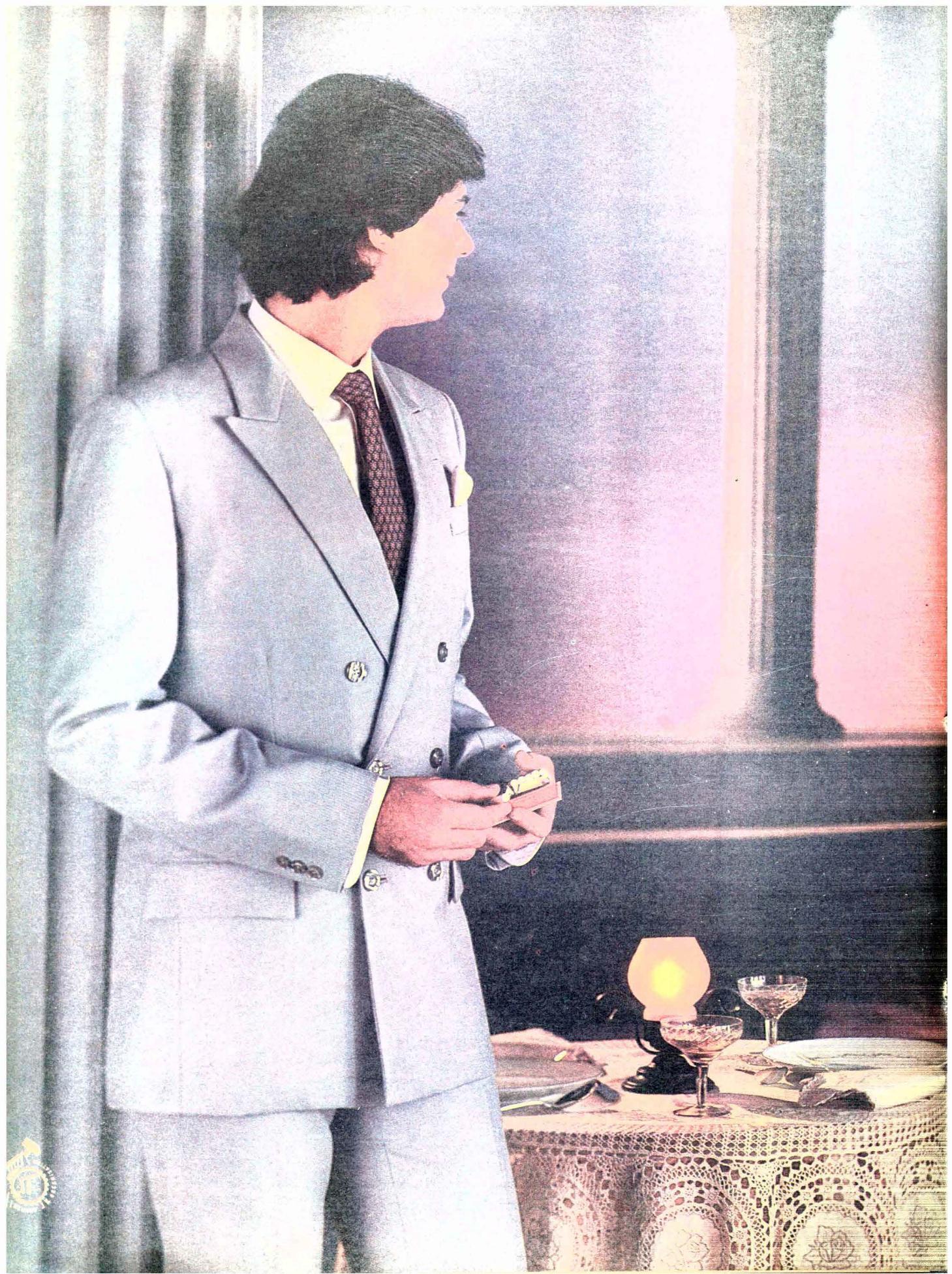
increase in consumption will result in a shortfall.

DP: What we require are productivity linked land reforms. Our yields are among the lowest in the world. Yet Punjab, which is one of the smallest states in India, has a marketable surplus.

VD: I would like to touch on a basic issue. As a people, we are highly tradition-bound. We carry on with what has been taught to us by our

forefathers, whether it is land division among brothers or the sharing of family wealth. These concepts have to undergo a change, and this could be possible, maybe through an orientation or educational process. We cannot allow ourselves to be bogged down by just tradition.

GD: When you talk of productivity related land reforms, are you speaking about more capitalist agriculture?





DISCUSSION



"To upgrade our living standards, we have to be able to provide the right kind of education. This is one of the ways of changing social attitudes also."

— GURCHARAN DAS

VD: Same concept as economies of scale, if you are talking of that in manufactured goods then...

Murli Deora: I would say, more than this, we need a change in the crop pattern. We are surplus in wheat, but terribly short in pulses and oilseeds. We are one of the largest importers of edible oils in the world. So, we should give the farmers incentives to move into other crop areas.

VD: This is a valid point and I feel this idea can be extended to non-edible products with diverse uses also.

GD: What would you say to allowing a greater hand to the corporate sector in agriculture? One company has recommended to the government that it be allowed to plant palm forests in the Nicobar Islands; and if this happens, in five years time this country, which is spending Rs 1,400

crore on oil imports will be self-sufficient.

MD: The Maharashtra government is inviting industries for similar projects — giving land almost free for afforestation, and allowing them to grow even fruit and vegetables there.

VD: For industry to get involved, agriculture must become a raw material for it. Industry is only a shadow, it cannot lead.

DP: We talk of giving remunerative prices to farmers, but agricultural prices are too high. If costs were lower, prices would be lower and yet remunerative.

MD: But this should not lead to unemployment. Increased mechanisation can cause unemployment.

DP: Not merely mechanisation.

In the villages there is underemployment...

VD: There must be mechanisation to the extent of improved productivity. If production increases, mechanisation is welcome, but not beyond this.

GD: In states like Punjab and Haryana the standard of living of the rural people is a signal of the fact that a small gain in agriculture will have a greater multiplier effect than a larger gain in industry.

VD: If a farmer is assured of a market for his produce, if the demand in India is low, create it by selling to someone else. The pricing and procurement policies need to be rethought.

GD: I think we should turn to another important input for the year 2000 — education. To upgrade our living standards, we have to provide the right level of education. Our social attitudes have to change, and this is one of the ways of doing so.

DP: I feel we have to highlight the significance of vocational education.

VD: But how do you change the basic concepts of the people? For that, basic education is necessary.

GD: But obviously not in the soul-killing way it is imparted today. Education has to be more vibrant and dynamic. Besides, there is a great need for well-trained and skilled workers.

DP: The dignity of labour, which is lacking today, needs to be inculcated among the people.

MD: The government is trying to do just this and, by the end of the year, we may see a new education policy.

VD: Education extends beyond the confines of the classroom, ~~to~~ ⁱⁿ homes, and we often imbibe the best aspect of our culture from our elders.

GD: One of the things that can be done is to improve the quality of the teacher and with it will come better quality education. A dramatic rise in the salaries of teachers will

DISCUSSION

attract better talent. If the government sets an example, private institutions, too, will follow.

MD: The Prime Minister has said that in the Seventh Plan, an extra Rs 15,000 crore have been provided for Human Resources (education). If the government can subsidise the purchase of fertilisers, why not education?

VD: For higher education other facilities, besides inspired and dedicated teachers, are also necessary.

GD: By restricting admissions to higher educational courses, and therefore, having smaller classes, we may be able to have better education. Let us move on to industry, and see what pre-conditions need to be created there.

DP: The last year has seen a dramatic change in attitudes at the top. The mess that the economy is in, is the result of the policies of the past 20-25 years, but now we are moving in the right direction.

MD: I do not agree with you. At a time when money was short, when people were not coming forward to invest, the government was able to provide the infrastructure for an industrial economy.

But, the policy of protection has helped industrialists who have practically suffocated the country with less supply, so that it has always been the consumer who has been the worst sufferer.

Recently, in Parliament, Veerendra Patil, ex-Minister for Industry, was grilled for not penalising a company whose production was 3,000 times its licenced capacity. But they should be congratulated for achieving this production. This only emphasises the fact that the licencing system is wrong. The government has realised that there have to be changes in the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act and Company Law Act.

DP: The government should review its legislations of the past 20 years,



"While we would like industry to open out and grow, the government has to accept the fact that there will be natural mortality. Sick units must be allowed to close down."

— VINOD DOSHI

and assess their efficacy. The effect of most of the economic legislation, like the MRTP Act and the Urban Land Ceiling Act, has been exactly the opposite of what it was supposed to have been. Monopolies have increased, and urban land prices have shot up.

VD: The realisation is there, though, maybe, too late. Another point related to industry is that while we would like to open out and grow, the government has to accept the fact that there will be natural mortality. Sick units must be allowed to close down.

GD: The inefficient must die.

VD: We cannot afford to pump valuable money into sick units, just for the sake of a few thousand workers there. Labour-oriented policies have to go. The last year

has seen a dramatic change in other policies, but nothing has been done in this area. Labour policies continue to be sloppy. In fact, the new bonus situation has worsened matters.

MD: Labour has a large role to play in the production process. While labour in the organised sector may be looked after, even in the city of Bombay, minimum wages are not paid, hygienic working conditions do not exist.

VD: My point was that the new legislation on bonus is extremely short-sighted. On the one hand, there is to be an increase in the bonus paid, and on the other, they have instituted a cut-off point at Rs 1,600. In the next couple of years, so many employees will cross this mark, and there will follow a continuous battle between industry and the



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DISCUSSION

workers.

DP: The whole principle of bonus is that it is a deferred wage. Yet, the government is denying its own employees this deferred wage.

VD: Anyway, my basic point was of growth and death.

GD: Sick units should not be taken over.

VD: Takeover is justified in the case of industries which are important from the national point of view. Whether the government runs industry efficiently is another matter. I personally think that the moment the public sector is given operational freedom and is freed from politicians and bureaucrats, it will be efficient.

MD: If bureaucrats don't run the public sector, who will?

VD: Professionals.

GD: Going back to your earlier point about the attitude towards labour, I'd like to stress the importance of the market — the legitimacy of the market economy. The more you tinker with the economy, the more inefficiencies you create.

MD: I would like to go back to the point about labour that Mr Doshi raised. The city of Bombay witnessed the textile strike that continued for two years. A quarter of a million people in this city were jobless. Twenty-five per cent of these workers were not permanent employees for 15 years. In this situation, I blamed the millowners. This has made the government pass certain legislations. You say we are playing to the masses — but it is only the government that will look after the interests of the poorer people. The sole reason for the textile sickness in the city was that these industrialists have not put their profits back into the mill.

GD: Be that as it may, the government should not have taken them over. If they were sick, they should have been allowed to die.



"Expensive labour is a factor that hinders our competitiveness in international markets and so we find it difficult to boost exports."

— DILIP PIRAMAL

MD: What else could we do when there were so many people starving for so many years? I am personally against nationalisation, but a quarter-million people in a single city! Not just that, the whole city's economy was affected.

GD: But the government's answer was wrong.

MD: The Prime Minister said in Parliament that the textile mills are supposed to make cloth, not generate jobs. But this is very difficult to implement. The new textile policy (though I was in favour of it initially) is, I now realise, promoting the interest of the millowners at the expense of the powerloom and handloom sections. That is not what we want.

VD: My point is that takeover should not be blatantly condemned.

GD: I don't think it is permissible in any situation. I was even against the Chrysler bail-out in America.

VD: Take the case of two well-off companies. Larsen & Toubro and Walchandnagar Industries Limited,

involved in important national programmes for space, defence, etc. It has taken 20 years to build up this expertise. And if they are inefficient, should they be allowed to die?

GD: Government intervention can only be justified to ensure competition in the economy.

MD: In a public limited company like L & T, the majority shareholders are ultimately the financial institutions like UTI and ICICI, which are owned by the government. The recent boost to the stock market is a reflection of the people's faith in the government. We are one of the few countries in the subcontinent to have survived as a democracy.

GD: Can we come back to labour policy? It is one of the areas that Rajiv's government has not yet addressed itself to. We have realised that unless there is a change in attitude regarding the balance between labour and management, some of the ills of the economy will not be corrected.

DP: It is a factor that hinders our competitiveness in international markets. Labour is not cheap, and therefore we find it difficult to boost exports.

GD: Our labour policy should be productivity related. The workers are getting their demands passed and salaries raised, without giving the employer a corresponding increase in productivity.

VD: The government is not prepared to demand from the workers an obligation to the organisation they work for. This is one of the reasons for the inefficiency of the public sector.

MD: You are thinking only in terms of organised labour in big cities. In the villages, labour is still exploited. Though there are laws, these are not implemented.

GD: Ever since Independence laws have protected the few against the many. The organised sector has

DISCUSSION

risen, and the differential between the organised and unorganised has become very great.

MD: The organised sector is articulate. They demonstrate, the media is with them.

GD: It is ironical that we as managers constantly think of insulating and reducing the impact of labour in our operations. They have turned, at times, to greater capitalisation, where it is not necessary. With more amenable labour, there may have been greater employment.

VD: An offshoot of this situation is that, with modernisation, some people become surplus. Though I am ready to train this man who is in excess, the unions are not allowing this to happen, and the government has to come down with a heavy hand on such resistance from the unions.

MD: It is not possible to make such rigid laws or to implement them.

GD: We must realise the need of greater productivity if we are to enter the 21st century.

VD: As a matter of interest, out of a total of 10,000 employees in Premier Automobiles Ltd, 5,000 will find themselves on the list of those drawing above Rs 3,000. So labour is looking after itself.

GD: What do you feel about the new legislation that is coming — the idea of the workers being allowed to own five per cent of the stock?

DP: I don't think many will buy it.

MD: But it will give workers a sense of involvement.

GD: We offered shares to all employees in our company, and we find that share owning employees identify more with the goals of the organisation than those who don't.

I would like the legislation to go further and allow workers an even greater share of equity. Workers can identify with the performance of the company.

Another important aspect of



"The recent boost to the stock market is a reflection of the people's faith in the government. We are one of the few countries to have survived as a democracy."

— MURLI DEORA

industrial policy that remains to be discussed is the reserving of over 800 activities for the small-scale sector.

MD: It is the big companies that misuse these reservations. They formulate bogus small-scale companies and get their goods made by them. On the one hand, we complain about reservations for small-scale, on the other we take advantage of the loopholes.

Any policy is for review. If we make mistakes, we can correct them.

GD: Take the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) Act, for instance. The logic behind it is sound, but the MRTP assumes from the start that the producer is guilty. The onus is on him to prove that he isn't. It should be the other way around. After observing market behaviour, the MRTP Commission should try to prove restrictive trade practices.

DP: The irony of the whole situation is that today, the biggest monopoly is that of the government's

commercial undertakings, like the airlines. Today, there is a shortage of electricity, telephones do not work efficiently. The government creates the monopoly, and exercises monopoly power.

GD: So, do you think there is a case for privatising the public sector?

DP: Well, maybe something like the railways can't be privatised, but at least consumer laws can be made applicable to them.

MD: I don't think privatising is the solution. The problem in the public sector is that there is a shortage of outlay. Maybe, public sector shares could be brought into the open market. They are thinking of doing this with the ONGC, and instituting public ownership.

VD: Half the public sector investment could be raised from the people. Rs 15,000 crore can be mobilised this way. The government would still retain 50 per cent of the shares, run the organisation, and be answerable to the public.

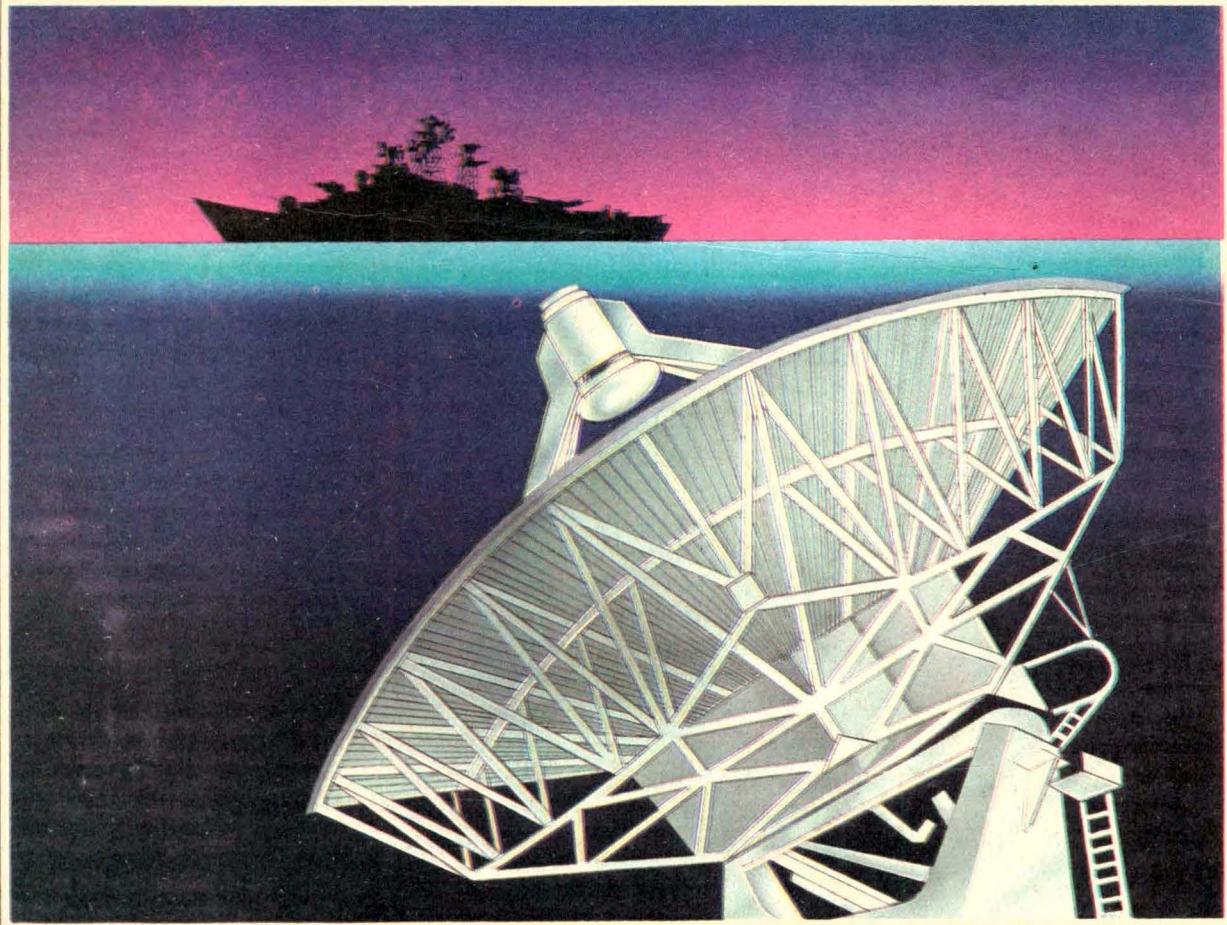
MD: This is being done in the joint sector.

VD: Even the railways; let the four regional railways — Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western — compete with each other and naturally efficiency will improve!

DP: We must realise that it is competition that will see us through to the 21st century. We must be able to hold our own in the international market. To this end, recent policy changes, regarding the import of latest technology and equipment in certain areas, are reassuring.

GD: I think we are all agreed that we are now moving in the right direction. Recent policy changes will still take time to filter down. One factor which seems to have been emphasised by everyone is the great need for improved productivity and lower costs in all areas, if we are to be able to compete in the open market.

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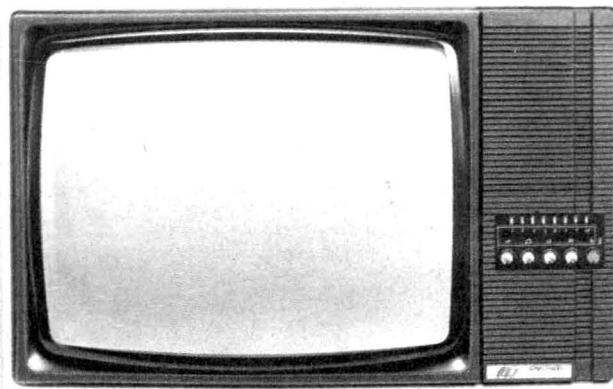


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BY HUTOKSHI
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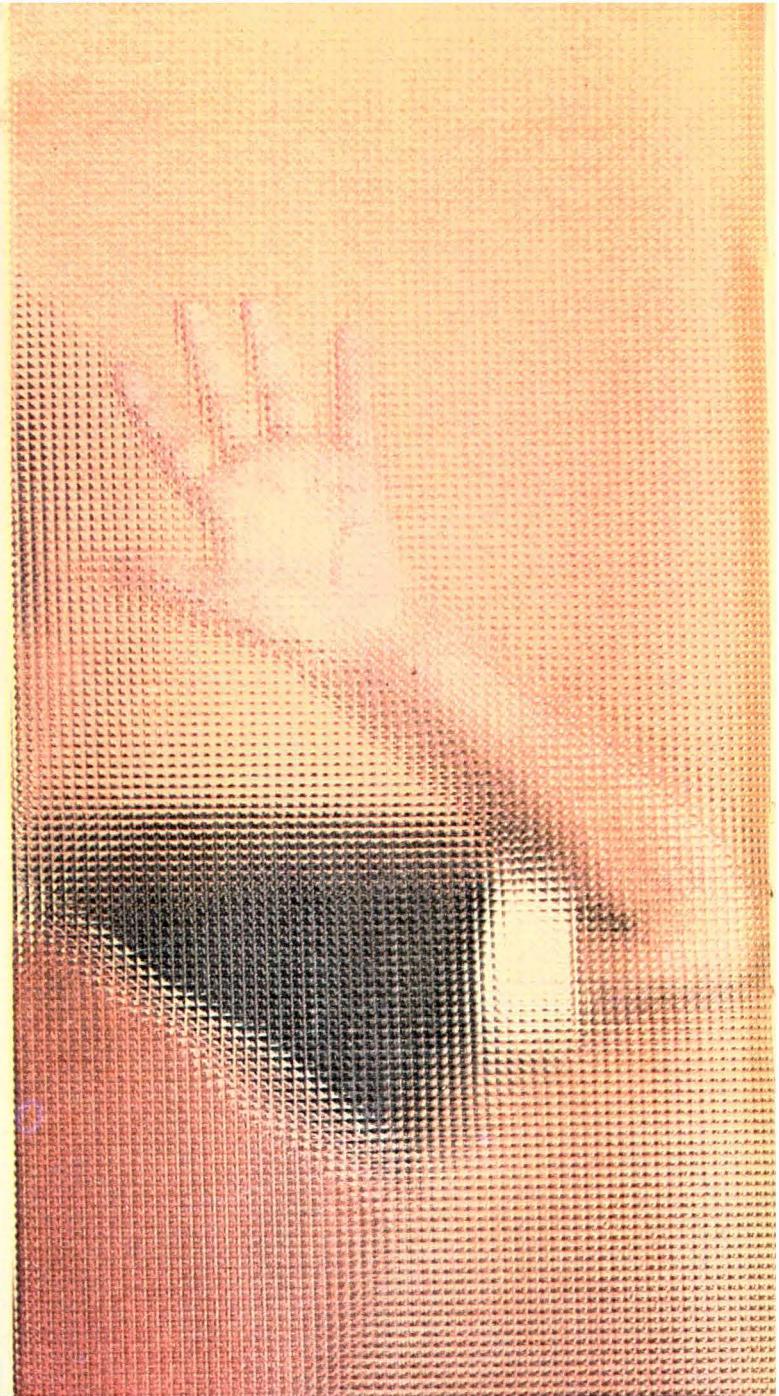
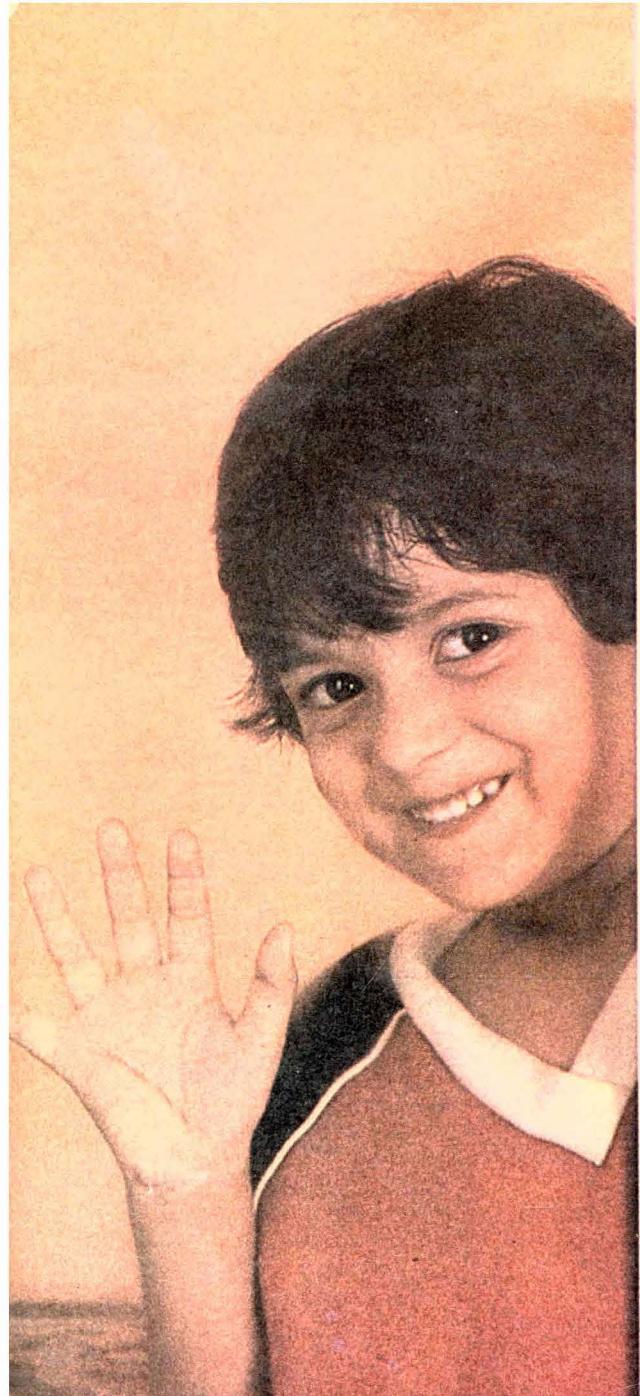
HE GREAT EUTHANASIA DEBATE in the West in the '70s passed India by, scarcely causing a ripple. Somewhere on the periphery, Karen Ann Quinlan passed into a coma. The 'landmark judgment' of the California High Court which di-

rected her to be taken off the respirator, went almost unnoticed. Twenty-eight states in the US pushed through some form of legislation on euthanasia. Exit, in UK, published its controversial booklet, *Guide To Self-Deliverance*. James Haig, 24-year-old quadriplegic, created a stir by demanding euthanasia and then dying, on his third attempt at suicide, by somehow setting a sofa ablaze with a cigarette lighter. London *Times* staffer, Derek Humphry, wrote a book called *Jean's Way*, describing how he mixed lethal drugs into his wife's coffee to help her escape the last stages of bone cancer. He was prosecuted, then let off, and through the whole controversy, received 1,000 letters and calls from relatives of patients in similar circumstances. Then he went to the USA and founded a Society for the Right to Die called Hemlock.

In Scotland, Dr George Mair published his *Confessions Of A Surgeon* in which he wrote about the many patients he had allowed to die, among them a woman in her 40s who listened to Beethoven's *Symphony Number 9* while he slipped a needle into her vein. After the book was published, one of his colleagues went on the air to declare — "You, sir, are a murderer!" In Switzerland, Dr Peter Haemmerli was accused of starving his aged, chronically ill patients to death, and in defence said that all he had tried to do was make some decisions that would strike a balance between humanity, reason, and sound medical practice.

But in India, nobody debated the issue, and the right to die went unrecognised. Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code, which declares suicide and the abetment of suicide a





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crime, went unchallenged. In most parts of the country, diseases struck and took their toll, unhampered by modern medicines and artificial life supports. Death came all too soon and euthanasia was of no use.

Until, in an increasing number of hospitals around the country, death began to be kept at bay: defibrillators stimulated dying hearts and respirators expanded tired lungs. The case of a fireman in Ahmedabad, in a coma for several years and kept going by nourishment and drugs through a nasal tube, came to the public's notice. And, as more of these cases were reported, the medical community ran into trouble over what constituted death, and whether the definition of death should be extended from a condition where the heart and lungs stopped functioning, to a condition where a flat EEG reading showed that the brain was dead. In several of these 'vegetable' existences, economics decided issues that intellect and emotion could not come to terms with. So, when the money ran out, the plugs were pulled out, too. In comparatively fewer cases, the patient/relatives and the doctor agreed about the removal of life support systems. But when it was done, it was done clandestinely, and nobody talked about these cases, fearing legal reprisals. But, in cases where hope never ran out, money never ran out, and medical opinion was divided, patients lingered on. Like the fireman in Ahmedabad, now in the tenth year of coma, a 'ventilated corpse'.

It was the death of a tired old man from Poona, Gopal Mandalik, that provided the impetus for the first organised group to support the right to die. Mandalik decided that he had lived a good life, done all he could in 80 years, and it was time to die. He also decided that he couldn't kill himself, because suicide was a crime. He wrote to Morarji Desai, then Prime Minister and, in early 1980, to Mrs Gandhi. His letters were probably dismissed as the ravings of a senile old man, but Mandalik waited for a reply that would resolve his dilemma. Finally, in 1980, he poisoned himself. Following his

death, a handful of people came together in Bombay and set up the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity (SRDD). People who had seen friends and relatives linger on, took up the cause with a vengeance; physicians, unsure where the Hippocratic oath ended and humanity began, joined the Society; and Minoo Masani, SRDD's Chairman, was suddenly everywhere, writing and speaking on the right to die, quoting Ken's now-famous words in Brian Clark's play *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* — "If I choose to live, it would be appalling if society were to kill me. If I choose to die, it would be equally appalling if society kept me alive." And euthanasia began to be discussed with a fer-

request the withdrawal of 'maintenance medical treatment' if he suffers from a terminal disease or injury. The physician must comply with such a request provided a 'consultant unconnected with the case' is satisfied that the patient is suffering from a terminal disease. The physician, the patient, and members of his family 'shall be free from any civil or criminal liability whatsoever'. The Bill also provides that a patient may give the power of attorney to someone to execute the declaration, should he be unable to express himself. The Bill's last clause goes a step further than the 'Living Will' legislation in the US on which it is modelled: If a physician fails to comply with a patient's request, the case must be transferred to another doctor. If the case isn't transferred, the patient can file a petition in a district court against the physician, demanding a discharge from the hospital, 'and the court shall give such relief to the petitioner as the court may think fit'.

The Bill is to be circulated for a year to 'elicit public opinion' but nobody, least of all Professor Varde, envisaged the storm it would create. The SRDD began a vigorous propaganda campaign on euthanasia. Vinoba Bhave, Sant Dnyaneshwar, Tukaram, V D Savarkar and even Gopal Mandalik came to constitute the SRDD's gallery of heroes who have upheld the right to die. In a typical article on the death of Bhave, who refused medication in the last year of his life, Masani wrote: "He surrendered his frail and tired body when he felt it was unable to co-operate with the soul. . . . By his action, Vinobaji gave lie direct to those who claim that voluntary euthanasia is alien to Indian tradition." To strengthen the argument, Masani invoked the sanction of Gandhiji, claiming that the venerable old man once ordered a suffering calf in his ashram to be killed. So, ahimsa was one thing and euthanasia another.

The SRDD, with its rhetorical spiel, succeeded in keeping the issue alive. Back came letters to the editor saying that karma was as central to Indian philosophy as self-surrender. Back

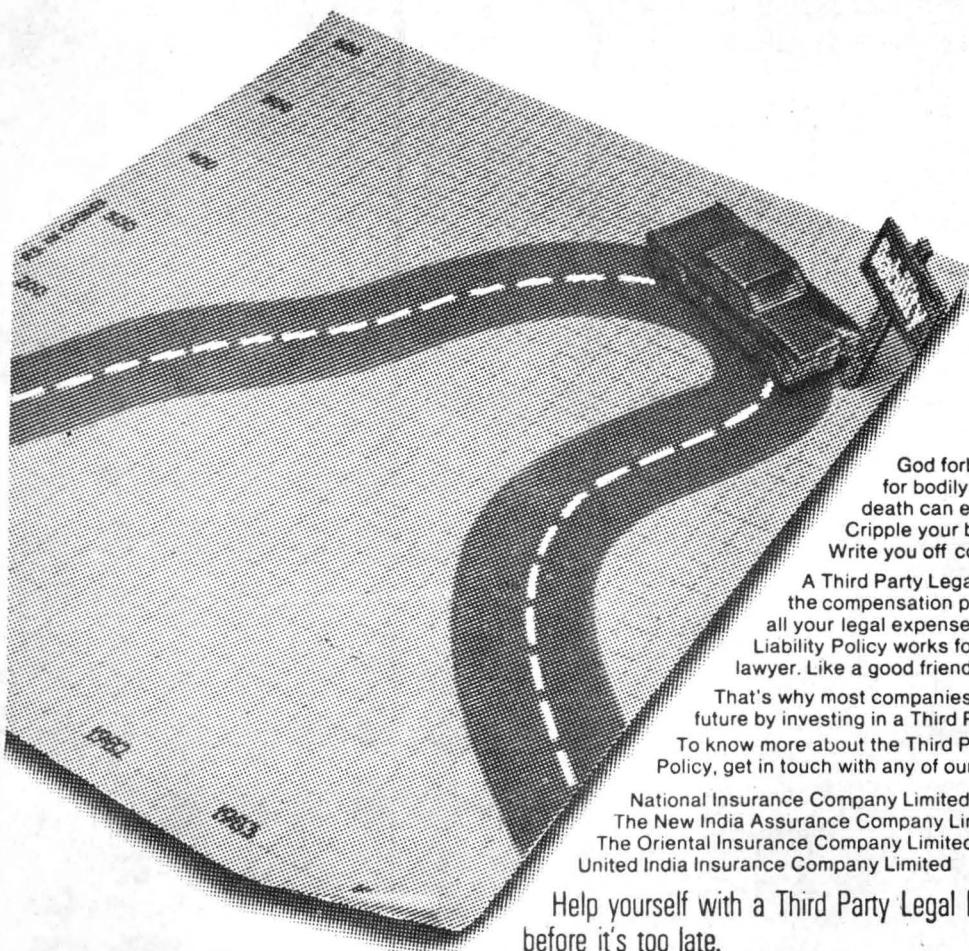
THE VARDE BILL created a storm: There were conflicting interpretations of euthanasia and Indian philosophy, coupled with the SRDD's rhetorical spiel.

And an almost irreconcilable divide on euthanasia within the medical community.

vour that was earlier reserved for issues like capital punishment.

SINCE 1980, two Bills on euthanasia have been proposed. The first, Moolchand Daga's Bill on mercy killing, which advocated active euthanasia, was quickly buried under a host of questions in Parliament. The second, Professor Sadanand Varde's Bill, introduced in the Maharashtra Legislative Council on July 5, 1985, provides for civil and criminal immunity for doctors withdrawing life support systems from terminally ill patients. The Varde Bill is more conservative, restricting legislation to voluntary, passive euthanasia, where the patient 'in sound mind' signs a legal declaration to the effect that he may

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came letters bearing the simple logic of the Fifth Commandment — "Thou shalt not kill." Others hailed the Bill and commented that at last India's problem of beggars would be solved, at last lepers in India would have a dignified alternative to an undignified existence. Heads of various religious groups held a meeting to denounce the Bill, and the Archbishop of Bombay visited the Chief Minister to lodge his community's protest. The Pope, it seemed, had declared that passive euthanasia was acceptable 'where death is inevitable' but the Varde Bill defined a terminal illness as one 'which will, in all probability, result in the expiration of life'. There was, the Christian lobby maintained, a difference.

In the middle of this garbled mix of emotional outpourings, interpretations of philosophy, confusion over definitions and misconceptions about euthanasia, Professor Varde, sitting in the Janata party office in the Corporation building, smiles delightedly at the reaction to his Bill. He admits that he knows little about similar legislation in the West, that he consulted no one on the medical, legal and ethical aspects of the Bill, that the Bill is, in effect, the SRDD's Bill, and says: "It was just a shot in the dark."

BOMBAY'S medical community is almost irreconcilably divided on the issue of euthanasia in general and the Bill in particular. Sixteen leading physicians in Bombay, including the Heads of the Tata Memorial and Jaslok Hospitals, issued a press release that stated: "We find (the Bill) to be a modest, permissive measure. First of all, it does not legalise active euthanasia. Secondly, it does not compel any doctor to do anything. Thirdly, even when a patient and a doctor agree, the doctor cannot respond to the patient's wish unless a consultant, unconnected with the patient, certifies to the terminal nature of the illness."

A report issued by the Biomedical Ethics Centre in Bombay, however, stated: "The terminology (of the Bill) is extremely ambiguous and open to serious defects and wide interpreta-

tions, leading virtually to suicide on demand. It can operate seriously against ethical and moral standards and opens the door to grievous malpractice and serious abuse in matters of life and death." The medical community itself is not agreed on the definitions of voluntary active and passive euthanasia. The Varde Bill does not mention the term passive euthanasia, but implies it when it refers to the withdrawal of life supports, whereby a patient dies. Dr C J Vas, neurologist and Managing Trustee of the Biomedical Ethics Centre clarifies that, in India, 'active euthanasia' is often taken to mean the actual administration of a lethal dose to a patient. All over the world, however, the

medical treatment' as anything other than 'all artificial means or measures of whatever kind administered as medical or surgical treatment designed solely to sustain life processes'. This definition could extend from simple intravenous drips and tubes for food, to dialysis machines, respirators and pace-makers. The term 'terminal illness' could vary according to circumstances: for one man cancer is a terminal disease, but not necessarily for another. For some people in India, tuberculosis is still a terminal disease. Where do you draw the line?

There are other terms, too, like 'sound mind' which are questionable. It is likely that declarations will be signed in a fit of depression and that, in certain cases, a patient may want to revoke his declaration but cannot, either because of emotional pressure or because he cannot communicate.

Doctors like Dr L H Hiranandani, a reputed ENT specialist, question the basic premise of euthanasia: that a patient, however ill, should ever want to die. With his articles headlined *Killer Bill!* and *Murder Of Millions!* spread out around him, Hiranandani says: "In all my decades of medical practice, I have never encountered a terminal patient who has said he wants to die. They come to me and they plead: 'Doctor, I want to live as long as possible.'"

Hiranandani is equally emphatic about the loopholes in the Varde Bill which could be exploited by unscrupulous doctors and impatient relatives. "The Bill is going to give unchallenged powers to a doctor. Doctors have committed crimes, including murder. They are not infallible." To this, Varde replies: "You cannot place a moratorium on everything that is good," and Masani says that if doctors can be bribed, so can a medical ethics committee, or a judge.

Dr Vas, also President of the Federation of Catholic Medical Associations adds: "Ostensibly, the invocation of the court is to protect a doctor who wishes to withdraw life-sustaining treatment. In fact, it forces the doctor, who may wish to preserve life, to act against his conscience." "The

THE BILL IS SILENT on various points: What is 'maintenance medical treatment'? What is a 'terminal illness'? For some people in India TB is still a terminal illness. Where do you draw the line?

term is defined as a purposeful act or omission which results in the painless death of an individual. Whereas passive euthanasia is confined to patients in the last stages of a terminal disease, where treatment and life supports are withdrawn, so that the patient is only kept as comfortable as possible, with pain-killers and tranquillisers, dying ultimately of the disease, not because of the removal of life supports. Therefore, in certain cases, the removal of a tube carrying nourishment to a patient could cause death by starvation, which would be active euthanasia, just as the withdrawal of a simple catheter from the trachea of certain patients could cause them to suffocate. The Bill is silent on this point.

Neither does it define 'maintenance

Varde Bill," Masani counters, "does not say the doctor *has* to carry out the patient's wish. Going to court is only in the case of a pig-headed doctor who refuses to transfer the case or discharge the patient."

THE VARDE BILL will, in all probability, be dropped in the face of all this opposition. But the basic issues will remain, the most important issue being the relevance of euthanasia in India.

Given the fact that no doctor in India has been sued for withdrawing treatment or artificial life supports (as distinct from negligence), is there a necessity for legislation on euthanasia? A workshop on the criteria of death, held in Bombay recently, came to the conclusion that, according to common law, a patient must sign his consent before being admitted to a hospital, before surgery and before the commencement of sophisticated treatment. If a patient or his relatives find that the treatment is excessive, unreasonable, or causes unnecessary distress, the patient can be withdrawn from this treatment. In cases where the doctor is satisfied that brain death has occurred, he is legally justified in withdrawing treatment and requires no immunity from the law.

The participants concluded that what was more necessary was a uniform code or guidelines laying down the criteria of death, taking into account cases where brain death occurs prior to the cessation of cardio-respiratory functions (this happens in about one per cent of cases). It is the lack of legalised criteria of death and a uniform set of tests to determine brain death, that sometimes causes patients to linger on with the help of artificial supports. If this is done, legislation on euthanasia would not be required.

The SRDD, while proposing legislation on euthanasia, is also clamouring for an amendment to Article 309, which declares that an attempt to commit suicide and 'any act towards the commission of such an attempt' is punishable with simple imprisonment for a year, or a fine, or both.

Section 309 contradicts entirely the crusade for the right to die. Its basis is that the life of a citizen is valuable not only to its possessor, but also to the State, which seeks to protect the lives of its citizens, even from themselves. It could be argued that the SRDD should win the State's recognition of an individual's right to choose between life and death, before going on to espouse the cause of euthanasia, where the issue is not just self-determination, but the need to involve others in a person's decision to die.

Attempted suicide is not an offence in most other countries — even in the USSR. England was the last to abolish the 'crime' of attempted suicide by the Suicide Act of 1961. The

concluded in a similar case that suicide by starvation couldn't be regarded as a crime, since it could be interrupted at any time except, perhaps, the last stage. Which made it difficult to tell whether the man would continue the fast to the end.

Recently, right to die activists had cause to hope that the State would realise the anomalies of Section 309. In the case of Sanjay Kumar Bhatia, who attempted suicide on October 5, 1981, Justice Rajinder Sachar of the Delhi High Court, while acquitting him, observed: "Instead of society hanging its head in shame that there should be such social strain that a young man should be driven to commit suicide, it compounds its inadequacy by treating the boy as a criminal. . . . Need is for a humane, civilised, socially-oriented and conscious penology. . . . So long as society refuses to face this reality, its coercive machinery will invoke a provision like Section 309 IPC, which has no right to remain on the statute."

THE RIGHT TO DIE IN India has curious conditions: If a man starves himself to death with the altruistic motive of self-purification, he is lauded as a saint. But if he botches up his suicide, he's treated like a criminal.

abetment of suicide, however, remains an offence in most places.

The right to die in India has certain curious conditions. If a man decides to sacrifice himself by starving to death, with the altruistic motive of self-purification, that is called *atma-visarjan*, and he will be lauded as a saint. Also, if a man jumps out of a window and dies, it's all right. But if he botches it up, he's treated like a criminal. Perhaps, the only times lawmakers and the SRDD have seen eye to eye on the issue of the right to die was on the death of Vinoba Bhave and, last year, the painful 33-day suicide by Bai Khetbai, a 75-year-old Jain woman in Bombay.

Commenting on this paradoxical situation, the Allahabad High Court

THERE IS a section of public opinion that questions the relevance of euthanasia in a country where 70 per cent of the population still has the bare minimum in terms of medication and drugs, where people still die of starvation and exposure and malnutrition. The argument is simple: millions of people in India do not have to choose to live or die. They just *have* to die. They have no alternative. No drugs, no drips, no respirators and no pace-makers. And when they do have access to all of these, they have no money to buy them with. Is it just that, having failed to confer dignity on life, society has set out to bestow dignity on death?

You could argue that the majority determines the priority, that euthanasia is a concept conceived by the elite for the elite. That a few hundred brain-dead patients who linger on in Indian hospitals don't warrant a debate, or legislation. But then, you are sidetracking the issue. The issue is not how many people need euthanasia, the issue is that people have the right

to die. "What does it matter how many respirators there are?" asks Masani. "Even if there was one man on one respirator, we'd fight for his right to determine when to die. Either we want reform or we don't want reform. This sort of argument is dishonest."

If you accept this logic, then you could ask: Can the euthanasia movement be restricted to the terminally ill who have signed a declaration? What about those who suffer but are unable to communicate? What about people who have suddenly entered a coma, nearly dead, but not completely dead? What about Mongoloid babies, or babies with spina bifida? What about the baby who was born with a shapeless mass of mucous membranes instead of a face, but was normal in every other way? Today she's eight, with a 250-word vocabulary, she's blind, she's had 12 operations in an attempt to construct a face, but she's still grotesque, socially rejected. Should she have been allowed to die?

Minoo Masani emphatically supports active euthanasia. "But," he says, "social reform is not made in a leap. For the time being, in India, one thing at a time."

"Nowhere else in the world has active euthanasia been legalised," says Dr Vas. "The World Federation of Societies for the Right to Die (of which the SRDD is a member and Masani the current President) is determined to make India the cauldron for legislation on active euthanasia. The fall-out will be dangerous."

Active euthanasia is acceptable in principle. But its spread effects would be disastrous. Already, people seem to harbour misconceptions about the meaning of euthanasia. Already, some people have openly declared that euthanasia is applicable to chronic asthma and tuberculosis patients. One doctor has gone so far as to suggest that euthanasia is the answer to the AIDS problem, and the problem of India's lepers. Active euthanasia could ultimately mean the inclusion of the mentally retarded, the insane, the spastics, the deaf-mutes, the blind —

where will it all end?

The Biomedical Ethics Centre has compiled information to show that most Right to Die movements have an unbalanced, extreme element. In America, a past President of the Euthanasia Society of America (ESA), Dr Foster Kennedy, urged the legalisation of euthanasia 'primarily in cases of born defectives who are doomed to remain defective, rather than for normal persons who have become miserable through incurable illness'.

Dr A L Wolbarst, an ardent supporter of euthanasia, said: "When insane or defective people have suffered mental incapacity and tortures of the mind for many years — 43 years

ACTIVE EUTHANASIA is acceptable in principle, but its spread effects would be disastrous. Will it ultimately mean the inclusion of the mentally retarded, the insane, the spastics?

in a case of my own personal knowledge — euthanasia certainly has a proper field."

"It is the same old game," Dr Paul Marx stated in 1978. "First come the stereotype and the plea for a 'good death'. Next comes 'death with dignity' amid protestations that only 'negative' (passive) euthanasia (which, remember, is not euthanasia at all) is envisioned. 'Suicide by proxy' follows. And the end result is the 'merciful' extermination of all lives 'devoid of value'."

SOME FORM of legislation on euthanasia is required. But it will bring in its wake several abuses and problems. Despite the 'progressive' legislation on euthanasia in the

US, several procedural problems have been reported recently. At a medical centre in Phoenix, Arizona, doctors refused to disconnect an 83-year-old woman from a respirator without a court order, since her Living Will declaration signed three years ago in another state, was not recognised in Arizona. The chaos that would ensue in India if some states legislated on euthanasia while others didn't, can easily be imagined.

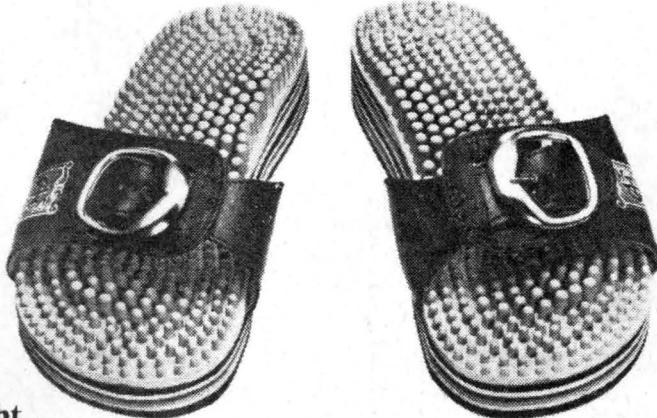
American hospitals are being criticised, too, for a lack of clear procedures in observing and recording the wishes of dying patients. There have been cases where nurses and housemen have been left to decide, whether or not to resuscitate a sinking patient and put him on life supports.

It is impossible, however, to remain unmoved by the emotional arguments for euthanasia. By, for example, the suicide of Arthur Koestler, who suffered from leukaemia and Parkinson's disease, and was determined to follow Exit's *Guide To Self-Deliverance* to the letter. When they found him, on a winter evening in 1983, he was sitting in his usual armchair, an empty brandy glass tilted in his hand. On the sofa beside him, also dead, sat his wife, Cynthia. His suicide became a 'demonstrative act' in the struggle of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society (formerly known as Exit). All over the world, people felt the force of his words: "The whole concept of death as a condition would be more acceptable if dying would be less horrendous and squalid. Thus, euthanasia is a means of reconciling individuals with their destiny."

The right to die is trammelled with medical, legal and ethical questions. There are no simplistic answers. And there can be no simplistic legislation. For every modification in the law, there are more loopholes and snares. And, in the end, you are left with the same old questions: How does man decide that in this case, and this case, but not in that, he has the right to adopt the role traditionally ascribed to God? And will there ever be legislation that will ascertain infallibility in the exercise of this right? ♦

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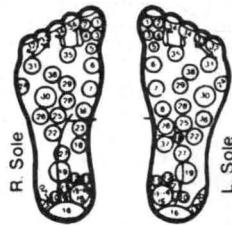
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BHAGWAN RAJNEESH

The saffron sage is back in the news and on the covers of innumerable magazines. But, asks CHAMPA RAJADHYAKSHA, are the media being conned into giving him too much publicity?

IT'S NOT ENOUGH to be a guru or a godman. You need a gimmick. Take the strange case of Abhay Charan De alias Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. An obscure Indian guru, nobody had really heard of him till he talked shipping magnate Sumati Morarji into paying for a trip to New York. Once he got there, the canny De immediately set about converting a band of clapped out hippies to his brand of Hinduism (which centres around Sri Chaitanya). Once he had converted them, they were made to shave their heads (except for a *choti*), wear robes and dance up and down Fifth Avenue chanting "Harry Rama, Harry Krishna, Harry, Harry." Suddenly, everyone was interested. Why were these Americans doing something so outlandish? Who had made them do this? Who was this Prabhupada guy, anyway? And so, once Mr De had found his gimmick (the shaven headed, dancing white men), he became famous and his Hare Krishna cult just grew and grew.

Or, take the case of Mahesh Yogi, a perfectly reasonable yogi whose Transcendental Meditation represents a genuine yogic phenomenon. But even Mahesh Yogi was nothing till he found his gimmick: Yogi To The Rock World. And, then, with the Beatles, the Beach Boys and Donovan by his side, he became A World Figure. Or, con-

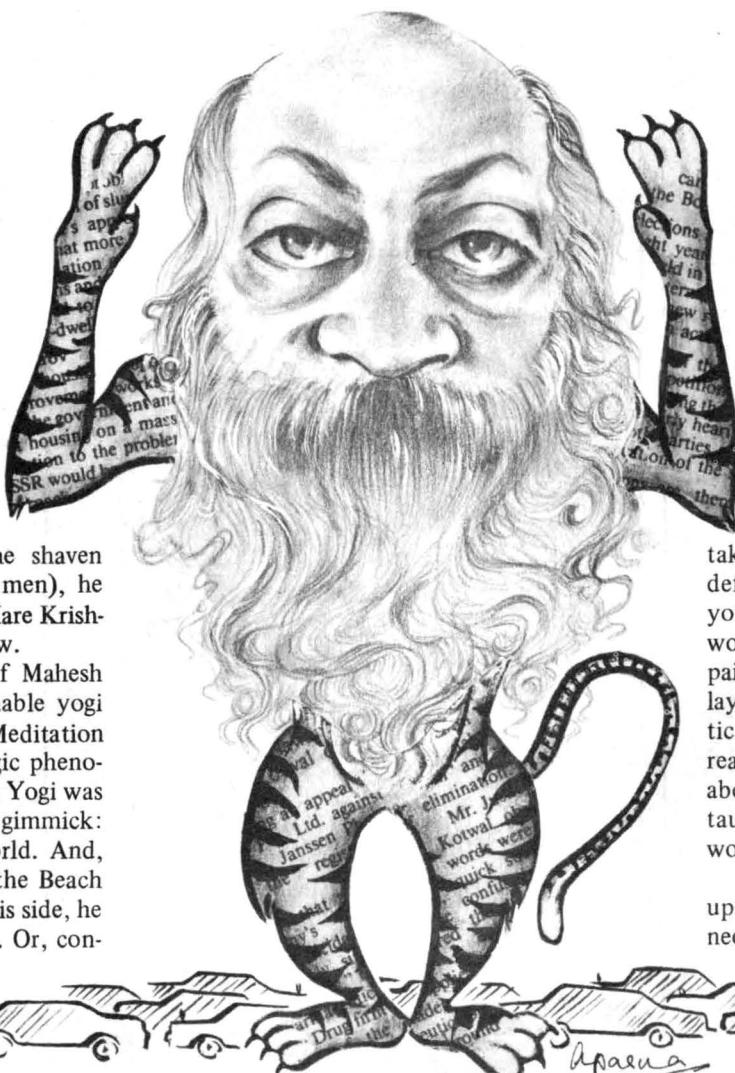
sider the Sai Baba saga! Who would take seriously an Afro-headed spouter of gibberish if he didn't have his gimmick: magic? Marry the message of the Shirdi Sai Baba to the spirit of the late Gogia Pasha and then — hey presto! — you have The God With The Omega Watches.

Nothing better illustrates how the path from spiritual obscurity to mystical legend is strewn with stunts and gimmicks than the rise of Rajneesh. At first, Rajneesh was no

more than a local Bombay guru who hung out at Peddar Road's Woodland apartments and recycled the philosophy he had picked up in his days as a college lecturer. Then he began to get ambitious. He wanted more.

This led to the first gimmick. He became The Filmi Guru. Various film personalities — among them Mahesh Bhatt, Vijay Anand and, of course, Vinod Khanna — announced that they had taken *sanyas*. (*Sanyas*, as redefined by Rajneesh, meant you didn't have to give up the world or do anything quite so painful. Apparently, salvation lay in orange robes and a plastic medallion.) Suddenly, the readers of *Stardust* knew all about this great sage who had taught salvation to the film world.

The first gimmick was tied up with the second stunt. Rajneesh was no slouch when it



PAPER TIGERS

With his flowing robes, diamond wrist-watch and long beard, he looked as though he had escaped from a George Lucas movie. And he was smart enough not to wreck the image by opening his mouth.

came to marketing and he'd learnt from A C De that the best way to make yourself famous was to make your disciples wear silly clothes. Hence, the aforementioned orange robes and medallion. (Now, in 1985, he candidly admits that the joke outfits served no real purpose. "I had chosen them just to make the world aware of a new movement," he confided to *India Today*.)

When it got rather boring to have to depend on Mahesh Bhatt for publicity, and his new Poona ashram needed a big marketing push internationally, Rajneesh thought up the third gimmick. Recognising that the world press was less than fascinated by the likes of Vijay Anand, he cannily repackaged himself as The Sex Guru. To help the free love image along, the balding *Bhagwan* took to including a couple of dirty jokes in each of his sermons. (Most were stolen from *Playboy's* Party Jokes and sounded like the masturbatory patter of Middle American travelling salesmen.) And his press office, headed by a smooth Canadian PR man who called himself Krishna Prem, dropped enough hints to visiting pressmen to make them feel that beneath all his holy hokum, the old boy liked nothing better than getting his rocks off. (Now, even the sex has been disowned. "Those who have been long with me have lost all interest in sex," he accepted in the same *India Today* interview.)

Sadly for Rajneesh, the fourth gimmick was only partly successful. "Some of the world's most creative people come to this ashram," Krishna Prem would assure the media, while his staff worked overtime to dig up big-name foreign devotees. Unfortunately, the famous steered clear of the fatuous. All Rajneesh could manage was Terence Stamp, a fading British actor who, in turn, sent *London*

Times's columnist Bernard Levin to the ashram. Levin went berserk, wrote two signed articles praising the *Bhagwan* (who was promptly dubbed the Bagwash by the rest of the British press) and then realised he'd made an ass of himself. He now pretends that his Rajneesh phase never occurred.

From a *chawl* to Peddar Road to Poona to the world. At least that's the way Rajneesh must have seen it because one fine day, fed up of the embarrassing questions asked by the Indian tax authorities, he disappeared. He cropped up again in America, disowned India, reshuffled his personal staff, and tried to set himself up as an international guru. To do this, he needed a new gimmick. America is not short of cults and a balding, bearded Bihari seemed of no lasting interest. But Rajneesh had already dreamt up gimmick number five.

Now, he became The Guru Of Excess. America loves waste and thrives on conspicuous consumption. And so, Rajneeshism became the Cult of Conspicuous Consumption. An ashram? Why just an ashram? Why not a whole town? And so, while the bemused residents of Antelope, Oregon, watched, Rajneesh's disciples bought up their entire town and renamed it Rajneeshpuram. Transport? Sure, but why just a car? Why not a Rolls-Royce? Why not 93 Rolls-Royces?

The Americans loved it. Here was this guy saying it's okay to be rich, and what's more, proving it! And Rajneesh was perfect in every respect. With his flowing robes, diamond wrist-watch and long beard, he looked like he'd escaped from a George Lucas movie, and lest he wreck the image by opening his mouth (America was already familiar with *Playboy* Party Jokes, unfortunately), he maintained a vow of silence.

Alas, things began to go badly wrong after gimmick number five. In the manner of some biblical legend, nearly everything Rajneesh espoused began to backfire on him. The promiscuity that he had once celebrated, suddenly turned sour somewhere inside his head. Now the message of the Rajneesh cult was no longer: 'Let's get laid' but 'Beware of AIDS'. Rajneesh's obsession with the disease grew to such an extent, that he forbade his disciples from fornicating without condoms, kissing or indulging in oral sex.

Just as the promiscuity turned sour, so did the consumption. With so much money floating around, it was obvious that there were going to be rows over it. And sure enough, Rajneesh fell out with Ma Anand Sheela, his right hand person, over money. She stole my money, he said. He wanted to buy a \$ 2.5 million wrist-watch and I said no, she retorted. And so it went.

Finally, of course, the Bihari *Bhagwan* had to give it all up and return to the land of his birth, the very country he had once disowned. Now, he has new gimmicks. He has tried to paint himself as a victim of US fascism. Alternatively, he has tried to play a poor helpless bimbo who has been cheated out of his wealth by a scheming Gujarati 'bitch'.

You would think that the Indian press, having seen this enterprising conman rise from obscurity, would be content to let him now slide back into the obscurity he so richly deserves. But no, there's no bigger sucker than a sensation-hungry journalist. And so, as the hacks queue up in Manali begging for 'exclusive interviews', be sure that Rajneesh, king of the gimmick, and sultan of the stunt will manipulate them just as he has done for over a decade now. ♦

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“

*There's a lady who's sure, all that
glitters is gold
And she's buying a stairway to
heaven.
When she gets there she knows if
the stores are all closed
With a word she can get what she came for
... and she's buying a stairway to heaven.*

*There's a sign on the wall, but she wants to be sure
'Cause you know sometimes words have two meanings.
In a tree by the brook, there's a songbird who sings
Sometimes all of our thoughts are misgivings.*

*There's a feeling I get when I look to the West
And my spirit is crying for living
In my thoughts I have seen
Rings of smoke through the trees
And the voices of those who stand looking.*

*And it's whispered that soon if we all call the tune
Then the piper will lead us to reason
And a new day will dawn, for those who stand long
And the forests will echo with laughter.*

*If there's a bustle in your hedgerow
Don't be alarmed now
It's just a sprinkling for the May
Queen
Yes, there are two paths you can go
by
But in the long run there's still time
to change the road you're on.*

”

Zoso



ZEPPELIN

By Stephen Davis



A

FTER THE YARDBIRDS broke up in July of 1968, Jimmy Page retreated to his boathouse in Pangbourne-upon-Thames and weighed his options. With Peter Grant owning the rights to the Yardbirds' name, Jimmy could go on playing hard rock under that banner indefinitely. A Scandinavian tour was already set up for the fall; Japan, Australia and America were available after that. But now Jimmy preferred the softer, folkish music of Pentangle, the Incredible String Band and Joni Mitchell. There must, he thought, be a middle ground between light and heavy music.

At home by the Thames, Jimmy almost never touched his electric guitar, preferring to strum and pick his acoustic. But he and Peter Grant knew that they had to follow their gut instinct for how to get the real money: by playing 'heavy' music in America. The biggest-selling band there was Iron Butterfly, whose album *In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida* featured repetitious, droning blues scales and would survive on the charts for years. The other big band of the day was Vanilla Fudge, who played it somewhat lighter, alternating what was called 'white blues' with softer, less bombastic passages.

One musician who had been asking Page about his plans was John Paul Jones, the session bassist and arranger who had played with Jimmy at dozens of recording sessions since 1965. Even before the demise of the Yardbirds, Page recalled, "I was working at the sessions for Donovan's *Hurdy Gurdy Man*, and John Paul Jones was looking after the musical arrangements. During a break, he asked me if I could use a bass player in the new group I was forming. He had a proper music training, and he had quite brilliant ideas. I jumped at the chance of getting him."

Coming up with a singer proved to be more difficult. Since Page's new band was to be patterned after the Jeff Beck Group, it needed a singer with the romantic persona

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of a Rod Stewart, someone with the nerve to get on a stage and hold his own opposite an electric guitar. But all the good singers — Steve Marriott, Steve Winwood, Joe Cocker, Chris Farlowe — were busy. Terry Reid, only 18, had been snatched by Producer Mickie Most at the last minute. But Reid told Jimmy and Peter about a little-known singer with a band called Hobbs Tweedle up in Birmingham, a great tall blond geezer who looked like a fairy prince and possessed a caterwauling voice. They called him the Wild Man of Blues from the Black Country. His name was Robert Plant. Peter Grant's office contacted Robert at home. They made plans for Jimmy and Peter to see Robert at a Hobbs Tweedle gig that weekend.

Jimmy, Peter Grant and Yardbirds bassist Chris Dreja turned up at the Hobbs Tweedle gig at a dismal teachers college in Birmingham. They were let in the back door by a 'big, rug-headed kern' who they assumed was the bouncer. But when they saw him on-stage in his Moorish caftan and beads, doing *Somebody To Love* in a bluesy, sirenlike soprano, they gave one another the look. "It unnerved me just to listen," Page said later. "It still does, like a primeval wail." After finishing his set of Moby Grape and Buffalo Springfield songs, Robert approached Jimmy to find out what he thought of the show. But Jimmy and the others were low-key and vague. Jimmy said only, "I'll call you within a week." But on the way back to London, Jimmy was intrigued. That voice . . . it had it, that distinctive, highly charged, sexual quality that Jimmy needed. Jimmy called Robert back and invited him down to Pangbourne.

In the boathouse on the Thames, Jimmy played Robert some of his favourite records: soft things, like Joan Baez doing *Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You* and Robin Williamson's Incredible String Band, and rock 'n' roll tunes, like Chuck Berry's *No Money Down*. He played Little Walter's harmonica blues and explained to Robert his idea for a new kind of 'heavy music' with slower and lighter touches, music with dynamics, light and shade — chiaroscuro. They talked about a band in which the singer and the guitarist would be equally important. Jimmy played Robert *You Shook Me*, from an old Muddy Waters EP, with Earl Hooker playing the melody on electric guitar behind Muddy's voice. Jeff Beck and Rod Stewart had already done it with the same song on Beck's new album, *Truth*, but that didn't matter. It was the sound Jimmy wanted.

After a few days of discussions, Robert was almost beside himself. Here was this attractive, mysterious, soft-spoken rock star offering the prospect of stardom and immense riches in America. For the first time, Robert had

found somebody who might know what to do with his boundless reservoir of energy.

Robert was so excited that when he left Pangbourne, he hitchhiked up to Oxford to find his friend, John Bonham. A few years earlier, Plant and Bonham had played together in a blues band called the Crawling King Snakes. Bonham, the group's drummer, was a big, long-haired fellow whom everyone called Bonzo, after the dog in a British comic strip. Bonzo's idol was Keith Moon, the Who's drummer, and Bonzo used to line the inside of his bass drum with aluminium foil to make the thing rattle off like cannon fire. He and Robert became fast friends and wound up playing together in another group, the Band Of Joy. On this night, as Plant met up with him to persuade him to join Page's new group, Bonham was playing with folk-rocker Tim Rose.

It had been three months since Bonzo had last heard from Robert, and the drummer listened to his friend's breathless spiel about Jimmy and Pangbourne and the new band. "Mate, you've got to join the Yardbirds," urged Robert. But Bonzo was unimpressed. To him, the Yardbirds was a name from the past with no future.

The first time Page saw Bonzo, the drummer was playing a country club in north London with Rose. At the time, Page was still considering making his new band sound something like Pentangle, the acoustic group that featured guitarist Bert Jansch. But when he heard Bonzo's merciless attack, he knew what his new band would sound like. An intensive campaign to snare John Bonham ensued. Robert sent eight telegrams to Bonzo's pub, the Three Men In A Boat, in Walsall. These were followed by 40 telegrams from Peter Grant. Still, Bonzo wouldn't join.

The success of the Tim Rose gigs had brought in other offers. Joe Cocker wanted him, and Chris Farlowe offered him a job. It was a hard decision. Farlowe was well established and had a new album produced by Mick Jagger. Everybody in London was sure that Cocker, the blues belter from Sheffield, was going to be very big. But, as Bonzo later recalled, "I decided I liked their music better than Cocker's or Farlowe's." So Bonzo finally accepted the drummer's chair with the New Yardbirds. The line-up was complete.

Led Zeppelin recorded its first album during two weeks in late 1968, reworking old blues material in extended, highly electrified versions. To fulfil an old contract, they had toured Scandinavia as the New Yardbirds and, in October 1968, made their debut as Led Zeppelin at Surrey University, earning a mere £ 150.



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MOTIVATION

Meanwhile, Page and Grant had negotiated a worldwide recording contract with Atlantic Records, and the band received a large cash advance. Still, Led Zeppelin was unable to get decent bookings in England, so Grant took the group to America in early 1969. The band was an instant sensation and soon returned for another tour.

AMERICA BECKONED Led Zeppelin with money, girls and fame, and so, on April 20, 1969, the group flew back to Los Angeles for its second tour, shepherded as before by notorious Road Manager Richard Cole. In Los Angeles, Cole installed the group in bungalows at the Château Marmont hotel, where Led Zeppelin's orgies wouldn't disturb the other guests.

By early May, *Led Zeppelin* had entered the American Top Ten and the band was raging. The shows usually began with *Communication Breakdown*, which segued into *I Can't Quit You Baby*. Often the shows would bog down in the bombastic sludge of *Killin' Floor*/*The Lemon Song* and *Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You* before ending with the usual oldies medley. At one show at Winterland in San Francisco, the medley started with *As Long As I Have You* and ran through an improbable mélange of the lullaby *Hush Little Baby*, *Bag's Groove*, *Shake, a la* Otis Redding, and *Spirit's Fresh Garbage*.

Two days after the San Francisco concert, *Led Zeppelin*'s sojourn in Seattle established the band's infamous reputation. Seattle was where the Shark Episode took place. The show itself was another success: *Led Zeppelin* took the stage at the outdoor festival after the *Doors* had finished their set — made anticlimactic by Jim Morrison's incoherent rambling. The audience, quite bored, was revived by the explosive rhythms of *Led Zeppelin*.

Back at the hotel, the triumphant members of the band started drinking. Richard Cole says that what happened later was his fault. "In 1968, I was with Terry Reid, supporting the Moody Blues in Seattle, and their Road Manager told me the band should stay at the Edgewater Inn, because there's a tackle shop in the lobby and you can fish right out the window of the hotel," Cole explained. "So the next time I was in Seattle was with *Led Zeppelin* and *Vanilla Fudge*, and we started to catch sharks out the window. By this time the tours were more and more *risqué* and you could do what you liked with the girls who showed up at the hotel."

According to *Led Zeppelin* legend, a pretty, young groupie came up to Cole's room while he and Bonham were fishing. She was disrobed and tied spread-eagle to the bed, then the band members stuffed pieces of shark in

her. Richard Cole says it didn't happen that way. "We caught a big lot of sharks, at least two dozen, stuck coat hangers through the gills and left 'em in the closet. . . . But the true shark story is that it wasn't even a shark. It was a red snapper. Bonzo was in the room, but I did it. Mark Stein (of *Vanilla Fudge*) filmed the whole thing."

Cole blames *Led Zeppelin*'s debauchery on alcoholism. "All the so-called *Led Zeppelin* depravity took place the first two years in an alcoholic fog. After that, we got older and grew out of it. It became a realistic business."

*It would be a long time, though, before *Led Zeppelin* lost its taste for the wild life. The band adopted Los Angeles as its American home and recorded *Led Zeppelin II* on the road in 1969. That record was followed by another American tour — and another round of frolic.*

*The next year the band recorded the folkish *Led Zeppelin III*, which was blasted by the press as imitation Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. But the record was another instant hit, and late in 1970, Page and Plant went back to the cottage in Bron-Y-Aur, Wales, where they had written *Led Zeppelin III*, to work on material for their fourth album.*

IN WALES, Robert and Jimmy began to develop the introduction and work out the separate sections of a new song, an anthem that would replace *Dazed And Confused* as the centrepiece of *Led Zeppelin*'s concerts. In November, Jimmy dropped a hint of the new song's existence to a music journalist in London: "It's an idea for a really long track. . . . You know how *Dazed And Confused* and songs like that were broken into sections? Well, we want to try something new with the organ and acoustic guitar building up and building

up, and then the electric part starts. . . . It might be a 15-minute track."

By the time *Led Zeppelin* began to record at Island Studios in Basing Street, London, in December 1970, Jimmy thought the band might end up with enough music for a double album. Part of *Stairway To Heaven* — the six-string intro that had been composed in Wales — was recorded there. But soon the group decided to move the rehearsals and recording to a country house in Hampshire. One evening, after Rolling Stones Road Manager and boogie-woogie piano virtuoso Ian Stewart had arrived with the Stones' mobile studio, Jimmy and John Paul Jones finished and wrote down the chord changes to *Stairway*. The next day, the band ran through *Stairway To Heaven* for the first time.

As the various sections began to come together, the musicians began to smile at one another. Again, they felt



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the magic of their first rehearsal. They knew they had something. Bonzo had problems with the timing on the 12-string section before the solo, and they had to play it a few times before they got it the way Jimmy wanted it. While this was going on, Robert was listening and pencilling in lyrics. "He must have written three-quarters of the lyrics on the spot," Jimmy said later. "He didn't have to go away and think about them. Amazing really."

The lyrics of *Stairway* reflected Robert's current reading. He had been poring through the works of the British antiquarian Lewis Spence. He later cited Spence's *Magic Arts In Celtic Britain* as one of the sources for the lyrics to *Stairway*. With its starkly pagan imagery of trees and brooks, pipers and the May Queen, shining white light and the forest echoing with laughter, the song seemed to be an invitation to abandon the new traditions and follow the old gods. It expressed a yearning for spiritual transformation deep in the hearts of a new generation. In time, it became Led Zeppelin's anthem.

Late in 1971, after yet another arduous American tour, Led Zeppelin flew overseas to play the still-unconquered Orient. It was a tour that would cement Led Zeppelin's reputation as rock's reigning – and most debauched – band. When Led Zeppelin arrived in Japan, Immigrant Song, was Number One on the charts.

Exhausted from 1973's record-breaking Houses Of The Holy tour two years later, Led Zeppelin didn't play a note in public in 1974. Instead, the band worked on a new album, Physical Graffiti, and prepared to start up its own record label, which would be called – ominously – Swan Song.

IT HAD BEEN DECIDED to celebrate the inauguration of Swan Song Records with elegant receptions in New York and Los Angeles in May 1974. In England, the musicians were restless and looking forward to the parties and ensuing madness in America. When they arrived in Los Angeles, Led Zeppelin hunkered down at the Continental Hyatt House on Sunset Boulevard. At the Riot House, as the hotel was known, the scene was ridiculous. Dozens of pubescent girls were camped in the lobbies and corridors, throwing themselves at anyone vaguely connected with the band. Despite the security guard standing watch, half a dozen teenage girls were sleeping outside Jimmy's door every night. In his suite, Jimmy kept two refrigerators stocked with cold beer. One was for him and his guests; from the other, he would extract cans, then open his door with the chain on and throw cold beer to the feral girls out in the hall.

Fourteen-year-old Lori Maddox had been Jimmy's

main squeeze, but he had other girl-friends on the scene as well. Chrissie Wood, wife of Ron Wood of the Stones, was sometimes in residence. And Bebe Buell, a beautiful model and older woman of 19, who was then living with Todd Rundgren and about to make her media debut as a *Playboy* Playmate, was due to arrive any day. At one point, a photographer for rock magazines also found her way into Jimmy's bed.

Bebe Buell was Jimmy's designated escort to the Swan Song soirée. Lori Maddox was in a state about this. She had taken a Quaalude and wandered about the party looking dazed, beautiful, bruised. Somehow, she had bloodied her nose, and her snow-white dress was stained a vivid red. As Jimmy and Bebe were leaving, Lori jumped out from behind a statue, crying to Jimmy, "Why are you doing this to me?" Jimmy jumped into the limo.

Later, after the party, they all went to the Rainbow, a club on Sunset. Jimmy had an emotional public row with Bebe, who told him he was being cruel to Lori. The next morning, Lori showed up at the Riot House, where she says she found Jimmy and Bebe in bed. She ran out. A few hours later, she waded through the crowd of girls camped outside Jimmy's suite and knocked on the door. Bebe opened the door with the chain on to see who was there, and Lori attacked her, grabbing Bebe by the hair and trying to drag her out of the room, encouraged by the corridor girls, who hated Bebe Buell as a rival interloper from Back East. Sitting calmly in his suite, watching as two of his girl-friends tried to tear each other's hair out, Jimmy was amused. Later, he said that the whole thing was hilarious.

In 1975, the tax-exiled Led Zeppelin was in full flight. Between the band and its Swan Song acts, it had nine albums on the charts as it began an ambitious but gruelling US tour, plagued in turn by Jimmy's broken finger, Robert's influenza and Bonzo's violent temper. Somehow, the old Zeppelin carnival atmosphere had dissipated. There were strange portents in the air.

LED ZEPPELIN had reserved its usual floor at the Riot House, but the expected surreal chaos failed to materialise as it had in the past. The young girls hanging around the lobby were no longer allowed upstairs. Even the notorious Zeppelin roadies were somewhat quieter. The old Zeppelin sack-and-pillage mentality was dying down. One reason may have been the presence of heroin.

Jimmy spent his days in his suite with the shades drawn and candles lit. He gave several interviews while sitting before a coffee table covered with switchblades and other



STAIRWAY TO Heaven was the ultimate Zeppelin anthem. With its imagery of trees, pipers and brooks, the song seemed an invitation to abandon the new traditions and follow the old gods.

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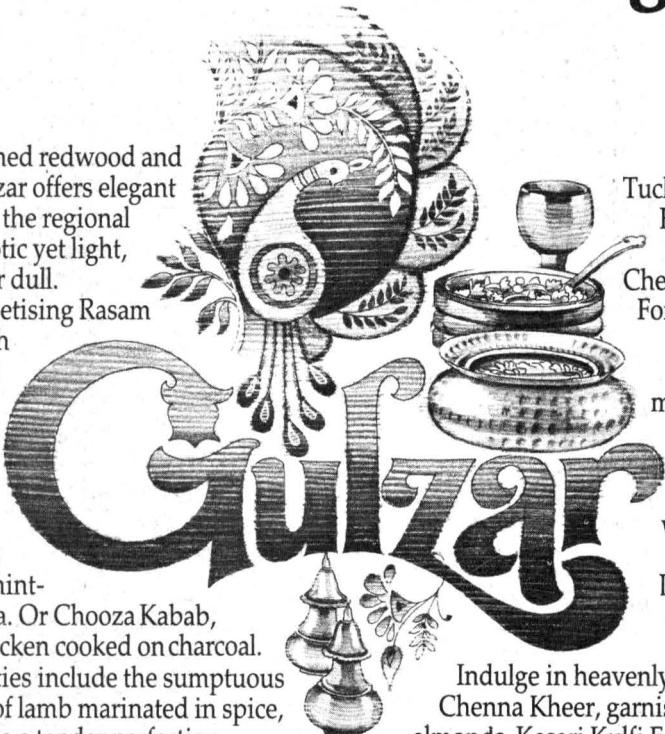
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knives. As he spoke, his hands fluttered about in the air. The phone was off the hook, Richard Cole kept the Dom Perignon flowing, and all food was brought in. With an armed guard sitting outside the door, Jimmy had the isolation of a monk. He spent days and nights wide awake, holding his guitar and, as he told a reporter, 'waiting for something to come through'.

The first California date was in San Diego. The band hit the stage with *Rock And Roll*, and the San Diego Sports Arena erupted. The fans immediately flattened the seats and pressed up close to the stage like netted fish. People fainted and were either trampled underfoot or passed over the crowd to the security men in front of the stage. The sheer body heat inspired the band. Jimmy whanged into the rarely played *The Crunge* and manipulated his theremin (an electronic instrument played by moving the hands between two antennae) with wild shamanistic gestures. Robert constantly pleaded for order, but the show was a masterpiece of mayhem. As the band left the stage for the last time after an hour of encores, a huge white-hot neon sign lit up the hall: LED ZEPPELIN.

As always happened when Led Zeppelin stayed in Hollywood, the band attracted a constant stream of clearly unstable strangers, just hanging out, hoping for a glimpse of the band — or something more. One morning, before the Long Beach show, a girl with mousy brown hair knocked on Danny Goldberg's door. A nervous tic marred her face. She said she had to see Jimmy Page, because she had foreseen something evil in his future and thought it might happen that night at the Long Beach Arena. She swore that the last time this happened, she had seen someone shot to death before her very eyes. The girl was frantic. She was persuaded to write a long note to Jimmy, and then she left unwillingly. The note was burned, unread. A week later, Danny saw the same girl on the television news. She had just tried to assassinate Gerald Ford. Her name was Squeaky Fromme one of Charles Manson's old girl-friends.

Weird vibrations surrounded the band. Something was wrong. Richard Cole could feel it. "That year they went into tax exile seemed to me like the beginning of the end," he says. Even Jimmy admitted to journalist Lisa Robinson that he could feel the vultures circling. "I'd like to play for another 20 years," he said, "but I don't know, I just can't see it happening. I don't know why, I can't explain it in words. It's just a funny feeling... a foreboding."

Later that year, Page's fears proved prophetic. Robert Plant and his family were seriously injured in a car crash while they were vacationing on the Greek island of Rhodes.

Plant's wife was nearly killed, and Robert himself had to walk with crutches for nearly six months. Unable to tour, the band recorded the hard-hitting album *Presence* in Germany and, in 1976, released a clumsy, self-produced concert film, *The Song Remains The Same*. In 1977, Led Zeppelin reunited for what would be its last American tour.

THE 1977 TOUR began in Dallas on April Fools' Day. Shows would again run over three hours, through 15 songs and two encores. From the beginning, though, it was clear that this tour was different. Peter Grant's wife had left him, which put a tremendous damper on the spirit of the tour. And Jimmy arrived in the States looking and feeling very weak. In addition to the pulled curtains, lit candles and the ever-present stereo, Jimmy needed heroin.

One night in Chicago, Jimmy went on dressed as a Nazi storm-trooper. By the third night, he was feeling ill. He needed to sit in a chair to play *Ten Years Gone*, and then he staggered off with severe stomach cramps. The show was cancelled. Later, the problem was said to have been food poisoning.

While in Chicago, Page sat in his darkened hotel suite as Neal Preston, the tour photographer, clicked through tray after tray of Zeppelin concert slides. Jimmy was looking for a certain picture of himself, but every time a new slide came up, he would be dissatisfied, pointing out some flaw in his physique — "Belly!" "Crow's-feet!" — that the camera had captured. Finally, Jimmy was asked exactly what he wanted. Without missing a beat, Page answered: "Power, mystery and the hammer of the gods."

During April, Led Zeppelin claimed its true domain, the cities of the American Midwest. "It is indeed a pleasure to be back the third night," Plant told the audience at the last show in Cleveland. "But oh, how weak the mortal frame." Two nights later, Led Zeppelin played for 76,000 raving kids at the Pontiac Silverdome in Michigan, breaking its own four-year-old attendance record.

After a two-week break in July, the final leg of Led Zeppelin's 1977 tour began at the massive Seattle Kingdome. A week later, the group was in San Francisco for two concerts at the Oakland Coliseum, promoted by Bill Graham. As usual, Graham's veteran security force was at odds with the Zeppelin flying squad, corporaled by John Bindon. For ten years, Peter Grant and Bill Graham had been calling each other's bluff. On July 23, the night of the first Oakland concert, there was a showdown.

It started with Peter Grant's young son, Warren, who was along for part of the tour. A hand-lettered sign saying 'Led Zeppelin' was on the door of one of the house trailers in use backstage as a dressing-room, and young Grant ask-



**THE GIRL
seemed convinced
that Jimmy Page
was going to die.
Goldberg ignored
her. Then, a week
later, he saw her on
TV news. She was
Squeaky Fromme
and had tried to
kill the President.**

EDUCATION

Public School to go Public

In January 1986, the capital market will find itself faced with an unusual proposition — for the first time in the country, a school formed as a public limited company will enter the market to raise equity capital. The Sanathana Dharma Gurukulam Limited (SDGL) — the public school in question — is a company promoted by the Madras Motor Finance and Guarantee Company Ltd. (MMFGL), a group consisting of 15 companies.

"The school is an experiment, not only in its method of raising finances, but also in the system of education that it is slated to follow — the gurukulam pattern applied to the modern system of education" claims P.V. Sivan Nair, chief executive, MMFGL. "The inspiration came from several religious heads, including the Sankaracharya of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham," he adds.

Institution of excellence:

SDGL will not be another run-of-the-mill public school. "The intention is to establish an institution of excellence. The emphasis will be on moral, cultural and spiritual values, aimed at developing the total personality of the children with a thrust on Indianness," declares T.N. Lakshmi Narayanan, chairman of MMFGL.

The group has been quite business-like in planning the school, inspired, possibly, by the success of the Apollo Hospitals issue. Rs. 2.4 crores of the initial paid-up capital of Rs. 4 crores will be raised through a public issue. Since the total cost of the project is Rs. 8.4 crores, the promoters also intend collecting non-interest bearing refundable deposits from the children admitted. These will range from Rs. 6000 to Rs. 7500 per child, depending on the class to which admission is sought, and will be refunded when the child leaves school. Since the school will not receive grants from any other agency, MMFGL will give it hire purchase loans amounting to Rs. 1 crore for the acquisition of furniture, crockery, cutlery and so on. These items will also serve as security for the loan.

Incentives to investors include the reservation of a seat for each shareholder from the quota of the promoter who will hold 1,000 shares of a face value of Rs. 10,000. All shareholders will be allowed a rebate of five per cent on the fees payable by the candidate. "Since we expect the issue to be over-subscribed, in all probability no shareholder from the public issue quota will hold 1,000 shares," explains Nair. MMFGL also expects a sizeable amount of NRI investment to flow in through equity participation. Since the directors of MMFGL do not have much experience in educational matters, none of them will be on the school board. Sivan Nair, as MMFGL's chief executive, will represent the group on the board.

Administration pyramid:

A three-tier system of administration will be followed. At the apex of the pyramid will be board of directors consisting of retired vice-chancellors and public figures. "This board will look after the financial aspect and the broad policies of the company," explains Nair. Next will be the academic council consisting of 20 to 25 members, with C. Subramaniam, former Union Finance Minister, as its chairman. This council will take care of the curriculum and the framing of studies, and will also decide on matters like the allocation of time to school work, extra curricular activities, etc.

At the base of the pyramid will be an educational trust body formed "to look after the cultural activities of the institution, and as such will be an extension of the school," says Nair. "Cultural performances will be given, not only within the school but also outside it," he adds. This is a departure from the normal practice in most schools.

SDGL will follow the pattern set by the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) since the school expects students from all over India. The attempt is to fuse gurukulam learning with the prevailing public school system. Since a close rapport between the guru and his shishyas constituted an essential feature of the gurukulam system, the promoters would like to adopt this practice to the extent possible. "The teacher and the taught will be together for 24 hours and will be housed in the same dormitory," reveals Nair. The ratio of teacher to students will be 1:25 for classes I to V, 1:30 for classes VI to X and 1:25 for Classes XI to XII. "We are on the look-out for married couples in the teaching profession in order to facilitate this process," he adds. The minimum qualification for a teacher is a post-graduate degree.

Time allotments:

However, this is not all. Unlike other schools, the total time available to the student will be divided into three parts. The time allotted to academic learning will be as per the CBSE pattern. The remaining time will be equally divided between physical and cultural development. Games and sports will be compulsory for all students.

Cultural development will involve a study of the rudiments of Indian culture. "We will explain the relevance of Indian customs, festivals, rituals, etc," says Nair. Besides, the students will also be offered an introduction to the various arts. Facilities for riding, shooting, yoga, the martial arts, trekking, driving, computer assimilation, vocational training, etc, will also be provided.

As a matter of policy, almost all service appointments will be from the armed forces. This is in view of the discipline problem faced by most schools, where drugs and strikes are a common feature. "Army personnel are more capable of handling such problems," explains Nair.

On schedule.

Construction work is proceeding at full swing on a 300 acre plot near Chinglepet. "We will be able to start with Classes IV to IX during the academic year 1986-87, by which time 99 per cent of the work is expected to be completed. Classes I to XII will function from the academic year 1987-88."

The second phase of the plan will involve setting up a college with separate faculties for the arts, the sciences and commerce. Third phase will involve establishing an institution for post-graduate education. "By 1990, the complex will be completed," promises Nair.

"Upon completion, the project will yield a return of 30 per cent to the owners of its equity," claim company sources. This co-educational school aims at a student strength of 3,750, with a provision for an increase of 10 per cent if needed. According to Nair, "The break-even point will be reached within the first year of operation, when the student strength comprises 50 per cent." He says that, "the equity investors in this unique venture will get a dividend for the investments in the very first year of operation." But as the saying goes, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and until the project takes off, the promoters must keep their fingers crossed.

HIGHLIGHTS

The school will have a student strength of 3750 with provision for a 10% increase in admissions as need arises.

It will be a co-educational institution with provision for separate dormitories and messing arrangements for boys and girls. All requirement of students including food, uniforms and books will be provided.

The curriculum include among others, horse riding, swimming, rock climbing, rifle shooting, trekking, car driving, martial arts, yoga, computer training, gymnastics, all sports, debates, public oration and many other relevant subjects.

The project will be implemented in two phases. The first phase will be induction of classes IV to class IX. The second phase will see addition of classes I to III and X to XII. Addition of collegiate education will follow.

ed one of Graham's security men if he could take the sign. According to Richard Cole, the security man shoved Warren Grant away. Bonzo, offstage for a moment, saw this and went over and cursed and kicked the security man a few times before getting back onstage.

Then Peter Grant was told that someone had hurt his son. Grant and Bindon took the security man inside the trailer and allegedly assaulted him while Cole stood watch outside. Another of Graham's people came to his colleague's aid and was beaten up by Cole when he tried to get into the trailer. When Graham's people finally got inside, the trailer was awash in blood and the security man was the unconscious victim of a prolonged, steady beating. Graham's employee was taken to the hospital.

Feelings were running high. Led Zeppelin's second Oakland show took place only after Bill Graham had been forced to sign a letter of indemnification, absolving Led Zeppelin from responsibility for the previous night's carnage. (The document was, of course, illegal, as Graham had no legal right to act on behalf of his hospitalised employee.) Jimmy Page played the entire show seated in a chair, an unprecedented gesture for a rocker.

The next day, Led Zeppelin was packing for a trip to the next city, New Orleans, when Richard Cole happened to look out the window and saw police SWAT teams surrounding the building. A few moments after Cole stashed the band's cocaine, he was arrested, as were John Bonham, Peter Grant and John Bindon. All were charged with assault, then freed on bail.

After this debacle, the band members went different ways. Paul Jones took off with his family for a camping trip in California. Jimmy stayed put in San Francisco with Grant, while Robert, Bonzo and Cole flew to New Orleans and checked into their usual hotel. "As I was checking the group in," says Cole, "there was a call for Robert from his wife. Two hours later, he called me and said, 'My son's dead.'"

On July 26, five-year-old Karac Plant had been attacked by a violent respiratory virus. The next day, the child's condition worsened. An ambulance was summoned, but the boy died before reaching the hospital near Plant's home outside Kidderminster. Plant, Bonzo and Cole flew home immediately.

A few days later, Cole went up to Birmingham for the funeral of Karac Plant. Afterwards he sat on the green lawn of the crematorium with Robert and Bonzo. The three veteran rovers were saying little, mostly just staring. "The fucking whole thing was wrong," Richard Cole said later. "It should never have happened.... It was never the same again.... It was like somebody said, 'Here, you fuck-

ers, have this!'"

*For the next three years, Led Zeppelin was hounded by rumours and gossip. There were lurid press reports of a curse on the band, stemming from Jimmy Page's interest in black magic and the occult. The group's long decline was hastened by the emergent punks and New Wavers, who reviled Led Zeppelin as a group of boring old farts. Finally, in 1979, Led Zeppelin staged a come-back, recording its last album, *In Through The Out Door*, under the leadership of John Paul Jones. The album was a hit and in 1980, Led Zeppelin barnstormed through Europe.*

A LITTLE MORE THAN TWO MONTHS after touring Europe, Led Zeppelin convened to rehearse for its upcoming American dates. The band assembled at Jimmy's new house in Windsor, a huge former mill alongside the Thames.

There, on Old Mill Lane in Windsor on September 24, 1980, Led Zeppelin gathered for the last time.

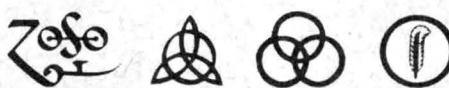
Zeppelin Road Manager Rex King was chauffeuring Bonzo that morning. He picked Bonzo up at his place, Old Hyde Farm, but the drummer insisted that they stop in a pub before driving to the rehearsal. At the pub, Bonzo drank four quadruple vodkas. Later, Bonzo continued his binge at the reunion party at Jimmy's house, then passed out on a sofa. Jimmy's assistant, Rick Hobbs, had been through this scene before. He dragged Bonzo to a bedroom and laid him on his side.

By the following afternoon, Bonzo hadn't appeared. Benji LeFevre, who worked for Robert, went in to wake the drummer. But Bonzo's face was blue and ghastly, and he had no pulse. Bonzo had been dead for several

hours. He was just 31 years old.

At a coroner's inquest some time later, a pathologist reported that John Bonham had died of an overdose of alcohol, having drunk 40 measures of vodka during a 12-hour period and then choked on his own vomit while asleep.

There were unfounded press reports that the three surviving members were divided about whether or not to split. Various English drummers were rumoured to be under consideration as Bonzo's replacement. But Jimmy couldn't see going out on the road with anybody but John Bonham. Nobody had the heart for it. On December 4, 1980, as the English winter days grew shorter, Led Zeppelin issued a statement to the press: "We wish it to be known that the loss of our dear friend and the deep respect we have for his family, together with the sense of undivided harmony felt by ourselves and our manager, have led us to decide that we could not continue as we were." ♦



JOHN BONHAM died of an overdose of alcohol, having drunk 40 measures of vodka during a 12-hour period and then choked on his own vomit. That was the end of Led Zeppelin.

FICTION

how the Doab was saved.

BY KEKI DARUWALLA

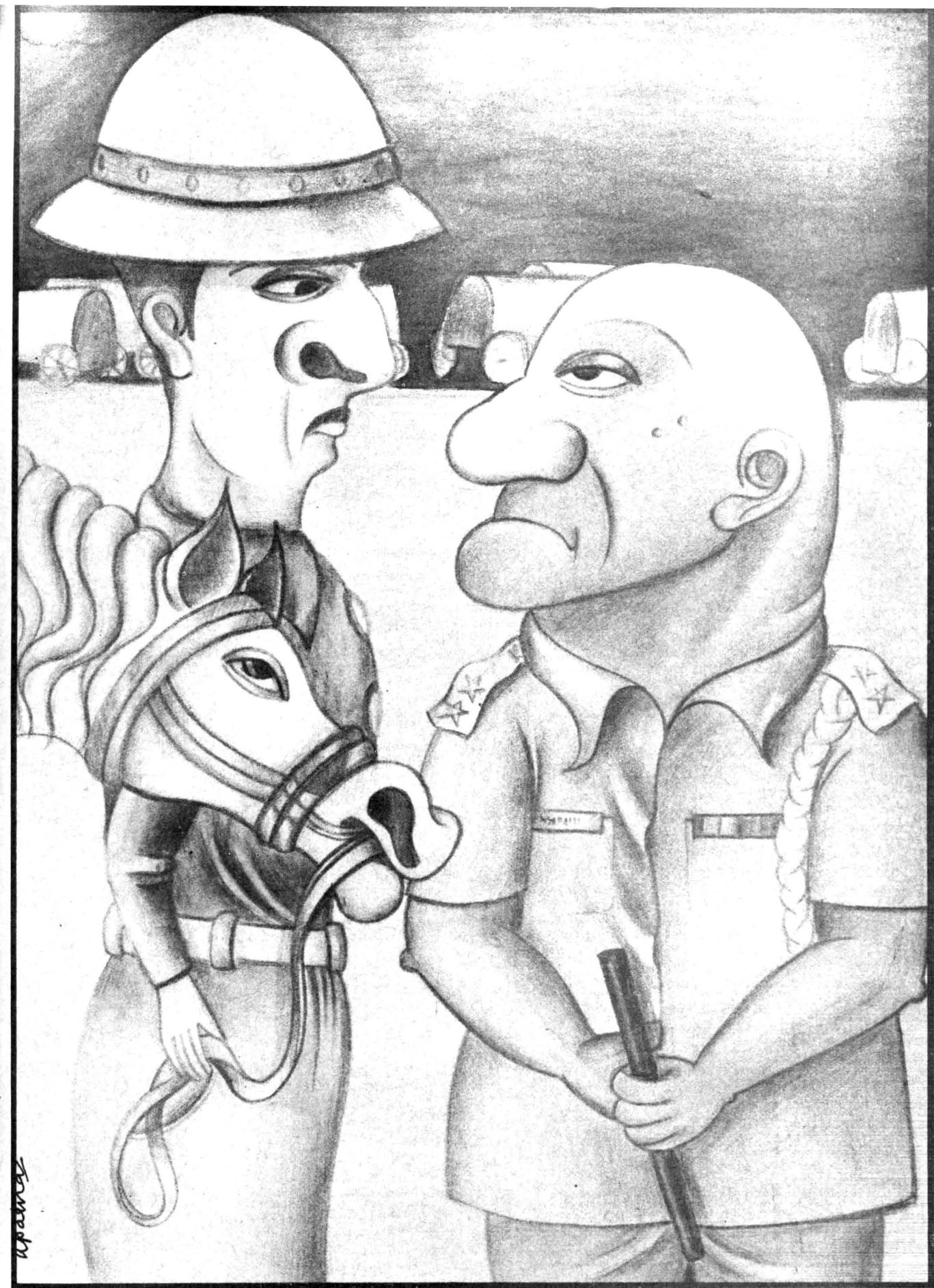
THEY WERE BAD DAYS. India was getting its freedom. It was not just the five rivers of Punjab that had begun to run red. The dye had started spreading on the Indo-Gangetic plain as well. The district of Sorgarh, its northern boundary marked by the Ganges, but its western flank exposed to Punjab, had to be sealed off from the long knives. The best way to achieve this, thought the government, was to post a new Superintendent of Police, a man called Brijinder Narayan Sinha, a squat man with a slightly fretted face and two marks near the cheek-bones left behind by a cursory visit of chicken-pox during his adolescence. He had risen from the ranks and would have retired as a Deputy Superintendent, but for a scramble among English officers to get back home before the Union Jack finally came down the flagstaff. Muslims to Lahore, Hindus to Delhi and the British to London — that is how the exodus-trails wound their way. And so Sinha found himself heading a district with a bathing fair at Kanhaiya Ghat and an Urs at Saidpur to tide over.

Sitting in his confidential office with Mathur, his ASP under training, Sinha turned to his Telephone Orderly, saying: "*Chhotey kaptan sahib sey phir milao* (get me the Junior Captain)." That meant Ron Hardwick, the ASP, who had put in about five years of service already. Just when his turn for a district charge seemed round the corner, British rule in India was disappearing down the lane. The orderly padded down the room in his bare feet with the instrument, the wire uncoiling, dialled two digits, spoke to Hardwick's orderly and reported that *Chhotey Sahib* was still at his *chhota hazari*. "Still at his bacon and eggs, I guess," said Sinha to no one in particular, after the orderly had left. Mathur noticed that he pronounced 'bacon' as 'bacaun'. "Half-an-hour earlier when I rang, I had got the same answer. That is the trouble with this district," continued Sinha irritably. "I have an Inspector who is corrupt and an ASP who takes his sausages too seriously. One is a *paisa-khau* and the other a *sooar-khau* (one is a money-eater and the other a pig-eater)."

A few minutes later the phone rang. "You phoned when I was having breakfast," said the voice at the other end. "Anything the matter?"

"No, no, Mr Hardwick, nothing at all. I always say to my young colleagues that a policeman starts his morning with a good tuck-in. One

Keki Daruwalla is our regular Nightwatch columnist.





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FICTION

never knows when he will get his next meal. The exigencies of work being what they are...."

Mathur noted that his boss had obviously been cut short mid-sentence. He heard him say: "Yes, yes, I know today is Sunday. In fact, you must be going to church! No? The Wheler Club, did you say?" (Mathur noticed that he pronounced 'Wheler' as 'Wheeler'.) "I see, for tombola? Well, have a good time."

He put the phone down and looked intensely at Mathur. "So the ASP will be playing the tombola and I the tambourine when the fun starts. There is a phrase for it, Mathur."

"When the balloon goes up," suggested Mathur tentatively.

"Yes, yes, that's it," said Sinha, pleased at the other's ready response. "When the balloon goes up, Mathur, I hope our kismet will not come down."

Sinha railed a little against his seniors in Lucknow for ordering him to detail his ASP to look after the bathing fair. An Inspector used to handle it with great ease formerly. He cursed his Inspector General and then started dictating orders. The mounted police were to march off for Kanhaiya Ghat by four a m next morning. The ASP under training was to be Circle Officer of the *mela*. Hardwick was to camp at the fair during the peak days along with a contingent of the armed police. He dictated Hardwick's entire movement order, the date and time he would leave, even his mode of transport.

"If I may say so, sir, this is rather unusual."

"But it has to be done, Mathur. Otherwise he will slip off for a week of pig-sticking in the marshes of Bahadurgarh."

On Tuesday morning Hardwick was a little surprised to see Mathur on parade, and took him home for breakfast after it was over. Hardwick's neighbour, David Scrivener, an Assistant Engineer in the Public Works, also joined in.

"You should have been on your way to the fair, don't you think?" said Hardwick to Mathur.

"I think I'll leave tomorrow."

"But the fair *starts* tomorrow," Hardwick seemed nonplussed.

"Yes."

"But you must think of the horses. It is 40 miles by road. You could kill them."

"I'll go by car."

Ron and David exchanged a glance despite themselves. So this was what things were coming to. No riding! The sahib's buttocks were too tender. Or perhaps it was the thighs — too prone to abrasions. Court clerks, that was what they were fit to be, Anglicised Peshkars, rabbity menials. Wet, the whole lot of them, thought Hardwick. Wet, wet, wet.

"Won't you need the horses there? They're a bit handy for crowd control, you know."

"The horses have already left," said Mathur, affecting a little surprise that his senior should not have learnt of it.

"Left? When? How? I don't know a thing about it." The reserve lines and the mounted police were under his charge.

"The SP issued orders," said Mathur, trying hard to avoid the other's eye. Hardwick peered at him intensely to see if he could detect the slightest trace of a smirk. There wasn't. Only, perhaps, a trace of embarrassment that Hardwick was not fully in the picture. Then he tried to picture the SP, chuckling away perhaps, the shifty so-and-so. He had hardly been here a fortnight and already the old bandycoot had started short-circuiting him. It also struck him that Mathur and Sinha were of the same caste. Hardwick was glad he would be home within a few months. They could stew in their own casteist juices till they were ready to be served for dinner; not to Nadir Shah tramping down the Khyber, but say the Japs, a few decades later, or the Russians, perhaps. He was glad he wouldn't be around to

see all that.

"Horsy, I think I'll get along," said David Scrivener, pushing back his chair and dusting some bread-crumbs from his khaki shorts. "Lot of work to be done on the road," he said, pulling on his cigar. "Won't be seeing you for some time now. Anyway, we meet at Bahadurgarh, don't we?"

"Of course, the 21st, isn't it?"

David nodded and strode away. He spoke with an exaggerated drawl and Mathur had missed some of the words which had got lost in his nostrils or in the cigar-end he was chewing. But he had caught the word 'Bahadurgarh' and knew that they were talking of the boar hunt the *kunwar sahib* of Bahadurgarh would organise. They were in for a disappointment, he knew. That movement order would be on its way any moment now, though its despatch would be timed by Sinha himself.

On Friday, Hardwick walked back with Sinha from parade. "By the way, I thought you should know that I will be going to Anupshahr for about three days — the horse-and-cattle fair, you know. We missed the bus or rather, the mares, in Nauchandi last year. Lack of funds. We need three horses. As it is, it will take them six months to be broken in."

"I appreciate your anxiety, Mr Hardwick, and your expertise in horses would be invaluable. We all know you are a renowned horseman." There followed a two-minute panegyric on Ron's horsemanship. "But who brings good horses to a fair during the rains? All you will get is *tuttoos*, ponies. And we need your expertise in other fields also. How can I spare you? I would prefer an experienced ASP to three wild *tuttoos*."

"I thought we could have done without the comparison."

"I meant no disrespect. Just look around you and tell me who I can rely on? The Inspector is corrupt and Mathur is just a *launda*. Who can I turn to, except you? You are a pillar

of strength to me. In fact," and here his tone changed from the rhapsodical to the matter of fact, "why don't you visit the Kanhaiya Ghat fair?"

"I do intend going there briefly, around the 18th, the peak day, you know. Later, I intend going for a boar hunt to Bahadurgarh."

The SP stood up. "Well, Hardwick, good hunting, or do you have some other term for killing boars? No? Good pigging, shall we say? Ha, ha, ha!" and he laughed uproariously while Hardwick smiled politely and left.

Good pigging! That would add to Sinha's already formidable arsenal of howlers. His most famous one was 'letyoos' for lettuce. It would make a good story, he thought, as he entered his house. His orderly, Imam Baksh, sat on the floor and started unwinding his puttees from his shins.

"Huzoor, *kaptan sahib* has sent a *lifafa*."

"*Lifafa?*" He opened the envelope. "Jesus Henry Christ! Holy Farting Chr. . ." It was his movement order! "Departure Sorgarh: Ronald J Hardwick (IP) will move for Kanhaiya Ghat by car at 0400 hrs along with two platoons of the armed police on the 14th instant." Fourteenth? That was tomorrow! He went through the order, muttering oaths while Imam Baksh hurriedly unlaced his ankle boots lest the sahib let fly at him. Hardwick came to 'Departure Kanhaiya Ghat, 0400 hrs, 20th instant'. This was too much. He would miss his shoot at Bahadurgarh. He roared and he cursed while his Irish Setter crept under a chair and Imam Baksh hastily withdrew to the kitchen.

HARDWICK LEFT at midnight with two truck-loads of armed police. After they had covered over half the distance the going became tough because many bullock-carts, covered and strung with veils, were headed towards the fair. But once they neared the Gadawli fork where the roads branched off, one to Saidpur and the

other to Kanhaiya Ghat on the Ganges, there was a total traffic jam, with hundreds of carts milling around. He found that the labour gangs had sealed off the road to Saidpur. "I want to talk to the overseer," he shouted. In half-an-hour the Assistant Engineer came up, no other than David Scrivener. "The trouble is, Ron, the minister comes here day after. We have to do the road up for him. Some portions have even to be tarred. There is no way I can do that except by stopping traffic."

"How is it that we had no intimation about it — I mean, the minister's arrival and all that?" He was vaguely aware that he had been asking similar questions too often lately.

"Search me," said David, "but my orders are clear: the Rt Hon Minister Khan Bahadur Sami Ullah Khan — too many Khans here if you ask me — comes to Saidpur on the 16th. 'Carry out repairs urgently. Financial grants follow. Chief Engineer, Public Works, Lucknow.' That's it."

"But David, you can't do that. If you block the track to Saidpur there will be utter chaos on the roads. As it is, I have seen nothing but bullock-carts for the last ten miles."

The only solution to the problem lay in diverting the carts going to Saidpur via Kanhaiya Ghat. From there they could go to Saidpur. It meant twice the distance, traversing two sides of a triangle, as it were. But that could not be helped. Snap decisions, that was what the sahib was supposed to give. He was damned if he was going to dither, scratch his head or consult his underlings on a matter like this!

He reached the fair about two hours before daybreak, dismissed his attendants, dragged a chair out of his tent and sat there just looking into the night. Though the gaslights had guttered out, the area was dotted with hurricane lanterns — the glass casings turning black with soot — and some weed-and-drift wood fires which were kept going by *chowkidars*

and *kanjars*. A boatman, dripping wet, black as char and warming his hands, seemed to be emerging from one of the fires. Like a phoenix, he thought, or rather, like a salamander. Yes, that was it, this eerie, fire-pocked landscape looking from afar like some vast plain of glowing embers reminded him of salamanders, those amphibians that dart out of the fire, those flash-fed ephemera that flourish in the fiery core of destruction.

The place seemed to be assaulting his senses from all sides — the bog-and-thatch watch tower which loomed over the fair, silhouetted grotesquely against the sky, the tang of the river in the wind, the repetitive cry of the lapwing wheeling over his tent, the harness bells of bullocks as they moved their heads to drive away the flies. He loved the Khadir, this land of plumed grass and bulrushes, of huge melons, of graziers and cattle thieves, of *jheels* and marsh birds. To think that, within a few months, while having a pint of bitters at a pub, or tea and scones with his grandmother at Tunbridge Wells, all this would look a dream, a memory of chimeras, carried over from some lasting hallucination!

Next morning, Hardwick plunged himself into a whirlwind of activity. He inspected the 'Lines' — a row of tents — and the armoury, which was a bigger tent, a 'Swiss Cottage' as it was called. He was not happy with the armoury and wanted it reinforced. "I want the armoury *mahfuz* (safe), you understand, *mahfuz*. Have it stockaded, *lakri* (wood) all around, *tagda*." He went round the camps, the armed police, the voluntary organisations, Boy Scouts, even the municipal sanitation staff.

When Mathur called on him he found him relaxed, with a day's work already put away. Strangely enough, he was in a reminiscent mood.

"You know, Mathur, last year we had Cuthbertson here for training. What a time I had with him! He came with a head full of Pathan stories. He had read all those books on the

North-West, Andrew Skeen's *Passing It On*, a manual on tribal fighting and what have you. He had seemed a normal sort of chap in Sorgarh. But once he came here, he started asking about perimeter defences, alarm posts, piquets, ditches and parapets and trenches and I don't know what else. I laughed it off at first, half thinking that he was pulling my leg. Then we rode to the Lines after the Muster. When we entered the tents he couldn't believe his eyes. 'Don't the men sleep armed and accoutred?' he says. No, I told him, they sleep in their undies. Then he started asking — 'Where's the *diggi*?' *Diggi*? I had never heard the blasted word. I somehow ferreted it out of him that it meant a canvas tank used in the NWFP to store about 20 gallons of water. 'We don't need water tanks,' I told him. 'We have the river here. That's our ruddy *diggi*!'

As he was shaking his head, even thinking of Cuthbertson, the Inspector came in, saluted, and conveyed the rather dismal news that the carts of Muslim pilgrims had started rolling into Kanhaiya Ghat. "Yes," said Hardwick rather coolly. "I permitted that." The announcement was received with shock.

"But this has never happened before. There is no precedent," remonstrated Mathur.

"Precedent?" said Ron. "That is exactly how a babu or a court clerk would think. You have to rise much above all this. That is why I mentioned Cuthbertson to you!"

The Inspector spoke up. The festival register forbade the Muslim carts from taking any other route except the direct one from Gadawli to Saidpur, the one under repairs now. If someone took them to court on this, there could be trouble.

"What would you have done if you had been there, CI sahib?"

The Inspector saluted. "Sir, I would have confiscated the steam roller and forcibly allowed traffic on the road. If the engineer sahib had resisted, I would have arrested him.

Gustakhi maaf, huzoor."

While the Inspector and Mathur went off to make the best of a bad situation, Hardwick put on his breeches and riding boots and rode off for the *dargah* at Saidpur. But first he took a look at the carts to assure himself that nothing was awry. They were moving in two streams, cheek by jowl, into Kanhaiya Ghat, the Muslim carts covered from the rear and decked with green veils, the Hindu carts flaunting orange and red *chunnis*, with the women smiling and singing away, clapping their henna-dyed hands. His uneasiness subsided a little. No, he could not visualise them at each other's throats.

At the *dargah*, eight miles away, the Sajjada Nashin was himself there to receive him. Ron had an uneasy feeling that the man had known by some sixth sense that Ron was coming. "Sir," he said. "People attend Urs Sharif every year with their heartfelt desires and cherished wishes, and returning, go brimful with the fruition of their inner aspirations." Having delivered himself of this rather fruity oration, he bowed and added, a little tentatively: "Perhaps His Honour has some cherished wish or heartfelt . . ."

"I have none. Thanks," said Hardwick rather curtly. Ron dismounted and asked him a few routine questions. Then he casually mentioned the changed route of the pilgrims to the *dargah* and asked: "Are you afraid?" Sajjada Nashin answered: "I am always afraid, but only of God." For an instant, his eyes had flared with a sudden intensity, Ron marked. Ron's respect for him increased. Before he cantered off, he wished him a 'Happy Urs'.

When he returned to his camp, a delegation was waiting for him, led by the lawyer, Bajpai. He knew what they had to say. That was the beauty of these people. So easy to read. You saw a face and you could write down, in about two minutes, the crux of what he was going to say. "You want the road from Gadawli to Saidpur

opened, do you?" asked Hardwick. "Precisely," they said. Muslim pilgrims had always taken that route. "Sir, this has been happening from very long while." "In that case," said Ron, with some asperity, "it will not happen for a longer while, if I may say so. Everything has been upset this year because of the minister's visit. If we allow traffic on the road now, carts will have to go squelching through liquid tar." In five minutes, they were eased out. There were no further arguments, no appeals. Ron was surprised that they went away quiet as lambs.

The riot started that evening. The Hindus were smouldering with discontent at the changed route of the Muslim pilgrims. Then a Brahmin child got lost in the fair and a rumour went around that he had been sighted in one of these Muslim bullock-carts. That did it.

The Hindus made a rush for the bullock-carts proceeding to the Urs. "We'll teach you to pass through Kanhaiya Ghat again." The curtains covering the bullock-carts were ripped aside as some enthusiasts started looking for the missing boy. There was a rapid-fire exchange of curses over the violation of purdah and the lathis started swinging. Very few people knew what was going on. There was much shouting and screaming, and Hardwick felt the thud of thousands of feet scampering around aimlessly. Hindus herded their women back from the bathing ghats into their camps, which they began preparing for a siege. They seem to be back in the medieval ages, thought Ron. Such hate and such fear he had never seen in eyes before. The shock of it all was greater because he felt responsible. If only the carts had kept trundling on that damned road, repairs or no repairs, minister or no minister, nothing would have happened! The women would have kept singing, clapping away with their henna-dyed hands, watched the Krishna Leela, taken a dip in the river, made some offerings at the temple, and

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gone home, still singing. If only he had not listened to David. He had ridiculed Cuthbertson in the morning. If now anything happened to the armoury, he was not sure who would have the last laugh. He appeared to be the most composed of men as he gave the order to guard the armoury. That was the only order he gave throughout the riot: one platoon with rifles loaded and bayonets fixed to stand guard over the armoury, and the other platoon to stand by as reserve. Both were to switch duties every 12 hours.

Despite protests from Mathur, Hardwick refused to part with the armed police. "Mathur, if the armoury was stockaded, I would have given you every man jack I have. But there's just a canvas flap between these rifle-racks and the mob. If they get their hands on these guns, the whole district will go up in smoke."

Through the long night, the rioting went on. Carts were looted, women molested. It was lucky that at least one community had no knives. They only used the lathi.

Things got no better at dawn. A Hindu boy staggered in looking very much like a dartboard, with three knives sticking out of his back.

Within three days, the place looked like a ghost camp. With the assembly of five or more people banned, the fair had broken up. Some of the structures were being dismantled. The circus people had already pulled down their tent. Sinha had come, stormed, and gone back. Ron was a little surprised, therefore, when his orderly announced that lawyer Bajpai had come to see him. "Yes, Mr Bajpai, what brings you now? The traffic to Saidpur is through!" He laughed a little sardonically. "Unfortunately, you left no pilgrim carts to go there, did you?"

"Sir, when there were carts, there was no road. Now, when there are no carts, every by-way and highway to Saidpur is open to traffic. Such are the ways of the government." They both laughed. "But I came to thank

you, sir."

"Thank me?"

"For saving the *doab*."

"Saving the *doab*?" asked Ron, incredulously.

"The plain between the Ganga and the Jamuna," explained the lawyer.

"I know what *doab* means, dash it all," said Hardwick, a little irritated. "But what is all this talk about saving it?"

"You saved the armoury, sir. Your armed police have saved the *doab*." Could the man mean even five per cent of what he was saying? thought Ron.

It suddenly dawned on Hardwick why Bajpai had earlier left with his delegation without as much as a murmur. He wanted the Muslim carts to come to Kanhaiya Ghat so that they could be taught a lesson! It never occurred to Hardwick, though, that he was now being thanked not for saving the armoury but for keeping his entire armed police pegged around it, allowing Bajpai's men a free hand to do as they pleased.

THIS WAS NO SEASON for inquiries. Each package of horrors obliterated those of the previous days. No riot could retain the spotlight for long. Initially, with freedom, came also the freedom to knife and burn. And, of course, there was the fundamental right to molest, especially if the women belonged to the other community. One heard of refugee columns and their travails, and of the ghost trains of the slaughtered steaming in from Lahore like mortuaries on wheels. Not very many people were bothered about what was happening in some sleepy hollow in the United Provinces. A nasty telegram from the IG was answered at length by highlighting the minister's rather ill-timed visit. A circular order was issued to Public Works engineers asking them to take district authorities into confidence before closing a road to traffic, and the matter was closed. If, indeed, such matters can

be closed. Putting a lid on the past is not an easy business.

The Superintendent called a conference of all his *darogas*, Sub-Inspectors. They came in their red-and-blue *safas*, their cotton tunics and shorts, puttees and ankle boots. They sat there tight-lipped, straight-backed and rigid, as if rigor mortis had just set in. The Superintendent, flanked by his ASPs and Inspectors, lost no time in starting his address on a somewhat hyperbolic note ("Rain water and blood are flowing today in equal proportions"). He excoriated the Indians for having sunk to the level of beasts, and said that Punjab was in flames and the only reason the fire had not spread to UP was that Saharanpur, under its dynamic SP, stood like a fire line in between. But how long could they keep the fire out? Their own district, Sorgarh, had, by the grace of God, come out with flying colours. "We have been through many trying situations," he continued. "Some of you may not know that over 30 women were abducted at the fair. Very sad, very sad. But worse is to come. The wretched women have been recovered!" He seemed to make that out as an even bigger disaster. "They have been recovered in Aligarh and Delhi, and are being sent to us for being restored to their parents. Some of you must be aware of the feeling in the town. The families are refusing to take the girls back unless they are accompanied by the heads of their abductors, or so some of the leaders would have us believe. Anyway, the women come here, at the clock tower, by noon, and if there is a hostile demonstration, we deal with it. The trains have become dangerous and so they are also sending a refugee column in a convoy to us, and then on to East Punjab and into Pakistan. We have to escort them till Saharanpur. Not the pleasantest of prospects, I can assure you."

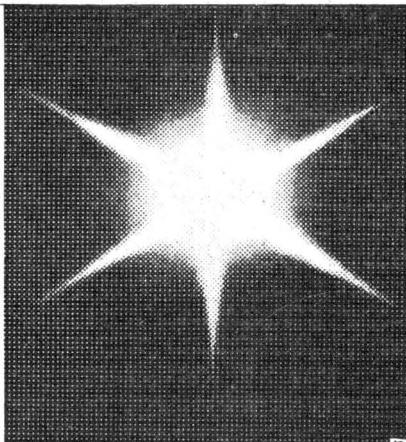
Then came the orders, rapid-fire as usual. Each *daroga* would be responsible for the stretch of the highway passing through his police sta-

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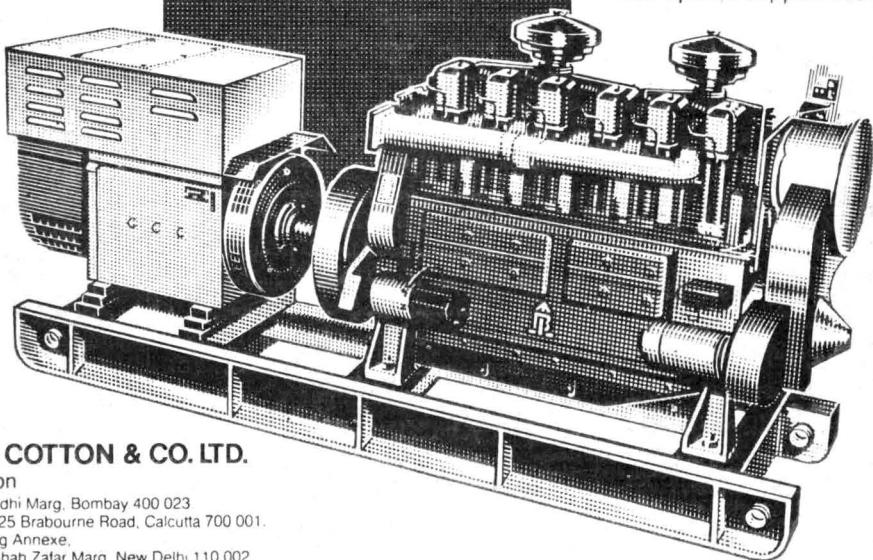
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tion. If anything happened, his neck would be on the chopping block. The Village Defence Societies of all villages flanking the road were to be alerted. Guns of persons with known communal sympathies were to be confiscated.

"As for the city," he said, "I am told that one community, out of a sense of shame and humiliation, wants to burn half the town, when their women are brought back. The other wants to attack the refugee convoy. I will deal with the matter personally." He called for suggestions and dismissed them out of hand. Then he turned to the ASP. "Could we draw upon your valuable experience, Mr Hardwick?" The ASP answered: "I should think a flag march through the town by the mounted police should do no end of good."

Horses, that's all he can think of, thought Sinha. Horses and pigs! No wonder his English colleagues called him 'Horsy'. He had got that titbit from Mathur. "Excellent suggestion, on this er... flag march. Well, gentlemen, that's all. Everything will be all right by the grace of God and the King, Defender of the Faith... er... I mean we are defenders of all faiths now." He stammered a little as he beat a hasty retreat. A close shave that, he thought. This comes of swearing by an alien king for 30 years!

The next day, at noon, Sinha drove to the clock tower with his two ASPs and a truck full of armed police in tow. "Mathur," he said, "your training starts today. In Saharanpur, Gopi Handoo is keeping his district quiet by placing a Bren gun atop his jeep and patrolling the streets day and night. He goes about bare-bodied, you know — just in his khaki shorts, boots and with his rifle. But then, the man is big and he is handsome. Tremendously handsome. Well, that is one way of dealing with things. But what if you are short and ugly?" He laughed. "And what if you don't fancy going around without a shirt? Then you do what I am going to do."

When they reached the spacious square around the clock tower, the men jumped out of the truck. No one knew what would follow. Only the Reserve Inspector, the man in charge of the reserve lines, and known generally as 'Line Sahib', had been briefed and knew the drill. All traffic was stopped. A hundred yards were marked off to the north of the clock tower. A detachment was placed there. "Line Sahib!" shouted the SP. "Can you mark off people from where you are standing?"

"Yes, sir," said the Reserve Inspector, looking through his gun sights.

A similar drill was carried out and a section detailed 100 yards to the east.

"Are you getting a clear view?"

"Yes, sir," shouted the Head Constable.

"You are not being placed there to watch a *nautanki*! What I want to know is, can you drop a man from where you are standing?"

"*Ji, huzoor.*"

"One shot, one body, that's what I want," shouted the Superintendent. "If anyone misses, I'll sack him!"

By now, people had gathered around. "What is all this about?" they asked members of the constabulary. The answers had been well rehearsed.

"Nothing much. It is all about that demonstration tomorrow when the refugee convoy stops here. Routine arrangements for the firing."

"Firing?"

"Yes, on the mob, you know."

Some drums were now taken down from the vehicle. "What are these for?" asked the bystanders. "Nothing much; just to block the exits once the firing starts."

"Line Sahib, I am sure you have forgotten one thing," shouted Sinha to his Reserve Inspector, 100 yards away.

"What, sir?"

"Dead bodies. Any arrangements to lift them?"

There was no answer from the other end. "I knew you'd slip up

somewhere. See that six trucks are commandeered. And please see to the *bandobast* at the mortuary!"

The ASPs who were watching the whole scene with growing wonder, now followed the party towards the main mosque where the recovered women were to be restored. A labyrinth of alleys led to the mosque. The same drill was gone through here while long-bearded *maulvis* watched askance and women peered through slats or cracks in doors or holes in moth-eaten curtains. One section went up a yellowing staircase to a small balcony jutting out into the street. The Inspector shouted: "Sir, we can fit in only four men here!"

"Give them machine guns, in that case." A constable then suggested loudly that if there was a big crowd in the street the best thing would be to drop a grenade! The SP's face lit up. "Line Sahib, I want that man promoted right now." A stripe was torn from somewhere and pinned to his arm.

THE NEXT DAY at about two in the afternoon, Hardwick went to the SP's residence, since he did not find Sinha anywhere else. The bamboo blinds were down on the verandah. Not a soul seemed to be stirring. It took Sinha ten minutes to come out, rubbing his sleep-sticky eyes.

"Yes?" he asked querulously.

"The refugee column has arrived. So have the women. There is no reaction in the town, though. No tension whatsoever."

"You seem to be surprised. Did you for a moment think that things could have been otherwise today?"

"Well, er... to be frank, I was not too sure."

"Have more faith in me, Mr Hardwick. Go home and sleep. Not a leaf will stir here for months to come."

Nothing happened in Sorgarh that day and during all the succeeding days of that fateful September. Not a stone was thrown, not a slogan raised. The communal holocaust never managed to travel from the land of the five to the land of the two rivers. ♦

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MATRIMONIAL ADS: A LEGACY OF THE RAJ?

SMIRKING at matrimonial advertisements in Indian newspapers has become a cliché of the British response to modern India. As soon as the diarrhoea-ridden traveller settles into the marble loo seat in his room at the Taj, it would appear he reaches for a copy of *The Times Of India* and races to the page headed *Matrimonials* to squeeze its columns for a few easy paragraphs that will lighten the journal he is keeping.

How quaint, they all seem to say. V S Naipaul in *Area Of Darkness* (1964), Trevor Fishlock in *India File* (1983), Angela Wilkes in the *Sunday Times* last year: memory throws up these names at random; doubtless there are many others who've gone in for the same sort of fun. Marilyn Silverstone is American but the following extract from Dom Moraes's *Gone Away* (1960) typifies the response I am talking of:

When I got back to the hotel I found Marilyn in her room chuckling over the matrimonial advertisements in one of the newspapers. This is the modern form of arranged marriages: instead of having an astrologer as go-between, as they did before, orthodox Indians now use the advertisement columns.

"What's so funny?"

Marilyn read out one of the advertisements between chuckles.

"Wanted one vegetarian virgin, skilled in H H affairs, for 20-year-old clean-shaven bachelor. Caste

no bar."

"What on earth are H H affairs?"

"House Hold," said Marilyn, and giggled furiously.

There is a joke in all this, but it's not the joke the travellers get, nor is it a joke the advertisers intend. The joke is on the travellers who giggle in ignorance.

To understand what is funny about this we must first tease out the point of the travel writer's joke. He is aware that most of humanity for most of history (the British included) have preferred arranged marriages — that this ancient and possibly universal custom persists in India in the late 20th century may be curious but is hardly funny. But arranging marriages by *advertisement* is something altogether different. . . What a droll invention! That is what is implied in the giggles.

But what none of the travellers mentions, doubtless due to ignorance, is that the matrimonial advertisement came to India from Britain, where it was a common feature for more than a century-and-a-half. The Indians had arranged marriages long before the British first set foot in India, but matrimonial columns in the newspapers are part of the imperial legacy, British innovations the Indians have found handy, like railway engines, Parliament, and postage stamps.

Whoever else may be responsible, the British Museum can hardly be blamed for promoting this ignorance. Even if one can't be bothered to peruse 18th and 19th century newspapers there, the Museum has an ex-



cellent collection entitled *Matrimonial Advertisements 1746-1862* (cup 407 ff 43) which has hundreds of samples.

It is difficult to think of a feature of the Indian advertisements which is not to be found in this collection. Are the Indian advertisers unduly worried about social status? Here is a not untypical item from the *Gazetteer* of August 15, 1775:

A most advantageous opportunity now offers to any single young gentleman of character and genteel connexions; the advertiser of this will, upon the most disinterested terms, introduce such to a most accomplished young lady, with a fortune in her own hands of seventeen thousand pounds. To prevent trouble, no tradesman or shopkeeper will be accepted of. . . .

Do the Indians specify particular religious sects?

MATRIMONY — A Gentleman of RANK, a Protestant, and possessing an unencumbered income of

Dhiren Bhagat, a freelance journalist, is a frequent contributor to The Spectator, London.

Do Indian advertisers ask for photographs, speak of people like cattle, use English improperly or suggest curious financial arrangements? All this and more are to be found in the British matrimonial ads.



1,000 l. per annum is desirous of an union with an accomplished Young Lady of a suitable age, and whose station in society and connections are at least on a par with his own. (1839)

MATRIMONY — A GENTLEMAN, one of the two first professions of respectable appearance and connections, a graduate, single, age between 25 and 35, agreeable, is most desirous of being HAPPY with a LADY of decidedly Evangelical sentiments (as he is so), amiable, accomplished, respectable . . . (1830)

Do the Indian advertisers ask for photographs? Consider this, from a Wiltshire journal in 1848:

MATRIMONY, should this meet the eye of a pious lady under thirty . . . she may obtain further information by stating particulars, with real name and address, by letter pre-paid, enclosing stamps for return postage, and a *portrait* to . . .

Do the Indian advertisements

speak of people like cattle? This is a typical 18th century advertisement:

A young Gentleman, a Native of North Britain, (but with very little of the Brogue) of a genteel Profession, tall in Stature, finely shaped and well proportioned, has a delicate Head of Hair, white Hand, a large Calf, strong Back, broad Shoulders. . . . (1760)

Are there some Indians who can't spell, can't use the English language properly? From the *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, sometime in 1838:

MATRIMONY A Gentleman who is residing near the senter of Gloucestershire quite retier from all bisness being possed of an income of £ 200 a year, wishes to ingage in wedlocks with any eaged woman of his eakles. if widow or aney other case for life intrest onley would be excepted as the Gentleman wishes not to enjoy any propertey from any famauly by any means whatever. Pleas to direct ABZ at the Gloucestershire Cronicuell printing offic post paid with the particulers of the case will be ansered by leter or in person in the inshewing week.

Curious financial arrangements? From the *Gazetteer* of July 11, 1768:

A Gentlewoman who has a friend lately married, and thereby entitlled to 4000 l. has it in her power to assist a single gentleman, in a matter exactly of the same kind, if he can, through any means, raise or lend her about 150 l. or 200 l. for six months; the security is quite unexceptionable, and every thing is as clear as possible, and the success almost certain.

Indeed some advertisers appear to have been confused and placed under *Matrimonials* proposals that should have gone under *Business Opportunities* or *Property*. Here is a member of the Commons advertising in 1778:

A Gentleman, who is a Member of Parliament was elected by his own interest and the favour of his Constituents in the Borough which he represents; is upwards of thirty years of age; possessed of an estate in a very desirable part of England, of the annual value of sixteen hundred pounds, receives net thirteen or fourteen hundred, being greatly underlet; upon part of which estate he owes upon mortgage 13,000 l. The estate is situated in a ring of fence, may consist of between three and four thousand acres of inclosed land in the South of England, and is in his own power to leave it to whom he pleases; he being a single man, having no relations at present, is very desirous of marrying a Lady of good temper, and some fortune, as neat as may be sufficient to pay off the incumbrance; the estate will be clear, and he proposes to settle as a jointure upon her, any sum not less than six hundred pounds a-year, reserving something for their issue, as she in her discretion shall think fit; he has a country house well and compleatly furnished, a park stocked with deer, and other conveniences.

Any Lady of Family may by herself or agent, know the truth of this advertisement, by directing a line to L M to be left at the York Coffee house, St Jame's-street . . .

Two years before that an even more extraordinary advertisement ap-

Advertising in newspapers was never the most respectable thing to do nor is it in India, today. Perhaps, the best argument for the ads was, and still is, effectiveness. If they enable people to find happiness, they have served their purpose.

peared, in the *Public Advertiser* of April 16, 1776. It was another lonely MP:

A gentleman who hath fulfilled two succeeding seats in parliament, is near sixty years of age, lives in great splendour and hospitality, and from whom a considerable estate must pass if he dies without issue hath no objection to marry any widow or single lady, provided the party be of genteel birth, polite manners, and five, six, seven, or eight months gone in pregnancy. Letters addressed to — Brecknock Esq at Will's Coffeehouse, facing the Admiralty, will be honoured with due attention, secrecy, and every possible mark of respect.

But we haven't caught up with the British in all respects. I have never come across an Indian matrimonial advertisement in verse but the English sometimes versified. To quote just one example, here is 'Horatio' of 81, St James's Street, a most particular gent who advertised in 30 lines for a woman who, *inter alia*,

With manners quite gentle, bewitching, and bland
Mozart and Rossini she must understand.
Her eyes must be blue, — her complexion be fair
Her form be well moulded, and dark brown her hair;
Her eyelashes long, her teeth very white,
And her lips invite kisses from morning to night (1830).

ADVERTISING in newspapers was never the most respectable thing to do, nor is it in India today. It was, in Britain, and still is, in India, a convenience many

resorted to when the traditional methods of finding a spouse did not prove satisfactory. It may have had something to do with increasing urbanisation, with the breaking up of communities which were used to marrying off their young in traditional ways. More important, it had something to do with the fact that newspapers were around, and that someone got the bright idea of putting them to a new use.

Here is an argument for advertisements from a member of Gray's Inn who was himself advertising for a wife in 1847:

MATRIMONY — Although it may be allowed that a prejudice exists against advertisements for matrimonial alliances, still it is also well known, and must be admitted, that many very happy and prosperous marriages have so occurred; it is also well known that the season of courtship is, in general, one of gross deceit and hypocrisy on the part of both, which by advertisement is wholly obviated, both parties knowing what they are about, and the truth must be made apparent.

I think the lawyer makes too much of the honesty of advertisements. Perhaps, the best argument for them was, and still is, effectiveness. If the advertisements enable people to find a happiness they would not otherwise find, the advertisements have served their purpose. Here is someone responding (by advertisement) to an invitation he read in the *Daily Advertiser* sometime in 1760:

Whereas I had long despaired of meeting with a temptation to enter into the holy state of matrimony,

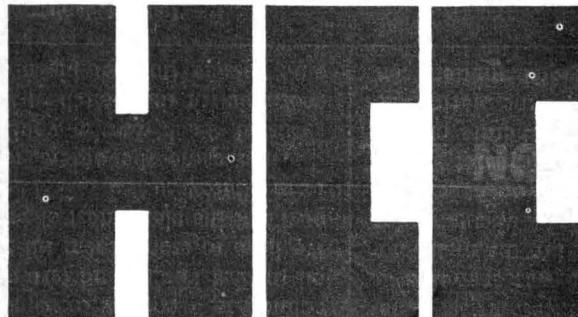


till taking up the paper of Friday last, I read the agreeable advertisement of a Lady whose Sentiments jump so entirely with mine, I am convinced we are cut out for each other, and therefore take this method of describing myself: I am a Gentleman of unexceptionable good family: losses and crosses have reduced my fortune to my wardrobe, a diamond ring, a gold watch, and an amber-headed cane: but as you have generously said you don't even wish a fortune, I imagine this will be no hindrance: my person is far from disagreeable, my skin smooth and shining, my forehead high and polished, my eyes sharp tho' small, my nose long and aquiline, my mouth wide, and what teeth I have perfectly sound: all this, with the addition of a flaxen full bottom....

Unfortunately, the *Daily Advertiser* does not go on to record whether the publication of this description brought the penniless nob any happiness. ♦

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BY MICHAEL CRICHTON

COMPUTER GRAPHICS

Can the computer ever really be taught to 'create' something?

COMPUTER ART has been around for 20 years, and the term now has certain widespread assumptions attached to it. Most people have seen computer art, particularly computer graphics, which have been used in movies and television commercials extensively during the past ten years. As the products called 'computer art' have become more familiar, it has become harder to ask whether they should be called computer art — or whether there is, really, such a thing as computer art.

Art has always been a human activity. Even when mechanical processes are involved, we have focussed on the human aspects. Thus, a machine-woven rug can be appreciated for its human design, while the perfection of the execution of that design is uninteresting since it is mechanical.

But the concept of computer art threatens to upset this traditional view, because the computer is not as elementary as a weaving machine. 'Computer art' carries the suggestion that the computer may have created the work itself, and not merely acted as an agency for execution.

Can the computer create something? At first glance it seems obvious that it can. Animated computer graphics, with their fluid transitions and whiplash perspectives, look strikingly new. And if one watches the machine doing animation work, there seem to be lengthy periods when the computer is acting 'on its own'.

But if one observes these processes in more detail, it becomes clear that creation is not occurring within the

Michael Crichton is a bestselling novelist and film director. His novels include The Andromeda Strain and Congo.

machine. First of all, computer graphics are not unique. Computers have yet to generate anything that cannot be done by hand — and usually already has been done. Second, the apparent ability of the computer to act 'on its own' is the outcome of thousands of hours of patient human effort to refine its instructions. The computer can manipulate a shape for us if we have already informed it what a shape is, what the rules for shape manipulation are, what this specific shape is, and so forth.

But what about the situations where the computer makes something not precisely determined by the programmers? I can write an indeterminate art programme. The more general my commands, the more likely it is that I will get back something that surprises me. Is that surprise proof of creativity?

No, because I still had to give the computer a rather long list of instructions. Inescapably, I must tell it the boundaries within which it acts, and the rules of behaviour within those boundaries. Because I do so, the essential creativity remains with me, not the machine.

I have reached this conclusion sadly and reluctantly. I have been a writer for nearly 20 years and I am lazy. When I first brushed up against these machines, I immediately thought to put them to work doing the hard job of making up stories. This did not strike me as impossible, at least in simple ways.

After a famous mystery writer died, a cardboard wheel was found pinned to the wall of his study. This wheel was marked like wedges of a pie with notations such as 'Get knock-

ed out' or 'Go to another place'. Apparently the writer spun the wheel whenever he was stuck for a plot change. That's common enough; in *A Moveable Feast*, Hemingway mentions incorporating apparently chance events in writing. If he wrote on a rainy day, for example, the rain got incorporated into his story. Most writers are aware that they incorporate outside occurrences from time to time. In principle, it's not much different from spinning a wheel to decide what happens next.

It would be simple to put a writer's plot wheel on a computer. But that wouldn't help much, because the instructions on the wheel are just spurs to creativity. A phrase such as 'Get knocked out' merely jogs the creative energies of the writer. In fact, incorporating an external event and making it one's own is the creative part of the process — not the external event itself. The more I thought about it, the more the spinning wheel seemed like a joke.

Isn't it possible to imagine a machine that could do something more? Can't a machine be given enough rules and information to enable it to tell us stories? Yes, it can. That's been done several times. The trouble is that the stories aren't interesting.

What makes an interesting story? In an interesting story, we want to know what happens next — because we have identified, in some way, with the characters in the story. We are able to identify with characters of a different sex, or from a different time. We can identify with unpleasant characters, even characters that we hate. The process of identification is complex, but there is something in-

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Although machines can imitate many aspects of human behaviour they cannot replicate formal rules for writing tragedy—assuming such rules exist at all. For nobody knows what makes the difference between the good use of a formula and the bad one.

eluctably human about it. Machines can't create the conditions for that identification in us — because they are machines.

In saying this, I am not making a philosophical point, but a practical one. It is indisputable that machines can imitate many aspects of human behaviour, and can proceed in ways indistinguishable from human procedures in limited situations. But the formal rules for playing chess are simple compared with the formal rules for writing tragedy — assuming such formal rules exist at all. I suspect they do, but that doesn't mean that they can be discovered in any easy way. Even when human stories follow obvious genre formulas, we distinguish between a good use of the formula and a bad one. What makes the difference? Nobody really knows. Even the most perceptive critics are talking about behaviour that they themselves cannot duplicate. What hope is there for the computer programmer? I think, as a practical matter, none.

If true computer music were ever written, it would only be listened to by other computers. I think this is an inherent limitation that we prefer to ignore.

For example, there has been a great popular interest in extraterrestrial life in the past decade. It has caught the imagination of the entire society, from scientists to movie-makers. But the fact is that all conceptions of alien life are basically like us. Those rubbery cute little guys are just that — rubbery cute little human beings. There are stranger life forms already on our own planet. And the biases that configured the plaque on Pioneer 10 are little better concealed, although there was at least an attempt to be more general. What's interesting is that the attempt failed; it always fails.

You can't get the human bias out

of the human imagination. All we can imagine are variations of ourselves, because nothing else makes sense to us. We see what we know, and we imagine what we can imagine. Human art is inevitably human.

Is there anything, then, that can be called computer art? I think there is. I think that certain products of the search for artificial intelligence — programmes such as ELIZA and SHRDLU — are computer art.

By computer art I don't mean the computer made them; I mean they are human artworks possible only with a computer. Why are they human artworks?

First of all, they are hand-made creations, often beautifully done. They aren't the inevitable consequence of a scientific theory; they are *ad hoc* constructions by human beings.

Second, they create a little world, akin to medieval miniature paintings. Within this little world, everything conforms to the artist's (programmer's) perception of how that world works, and they are internally consistent — one of the hallmarks of a work of art.

Third, they reflect back to us something about the outer or 'real' world that this inner world partially describes in a simplified form. In this respect, too, they are clearly works of art, since all art is a simplified version of some larger reality.

Finally, they inevitably show the traces of their creator. Even if a team of people has built the programme, the team has operated under someone's instruction and guidance. That person has a world-view that is reflected in the final programme.

If one imagines artificial intelligence programmes as an art form, then many objections to them disappear (and perhaps much funding). We don't complain that the Sistine

Chapel ceiling is not also *The Last Supper*. The very idea is absurd. Art is inherently limited; we appreciate it for what it is, not what it isn't.

For example, SHRDLU was a doctoral thesis by Terry Winograd, a brilliant artificial intelligence worker. SHRDLU operates in a limited world in which a robot arm moves blocks and other forms on a tabletop. (There are no actual blocks or robot arm; the world is all imaginary, though it is represented graphically.)

SHRDLU is so remarkable that it seems uncharitable to point out that the programme can't tell you who won the football game, whether it's raining outside, or who's the President of the United States. SHRDLU only functions in its little world of boxes on the tabletop. It can't step outside this miniature world at all. It's like an elaborate 19th century clockwork mechanism where little figures dance on a little landscape. It's wonderful for what it is — and it represents only a small part of the vastness of the real world.

Problems arise from the claims made for SHRDLU and other programmes, since the avowed purpose of artificial intelligence studies is to produce just that, a genuine artificial intelligence. But there's no reason to dismiss these beautiful creations because their makers overstate their significance. Leonardo da Vinci insisted he was a scientist representing reality according to natural laws. In a sense he was, but not in the same sense as Galileo, who made an identical claim for his activities.

We have learned the wisdom of appreciating works of art for what they mean to us, not paying too much attention to what the creators think they mean. In recent years we've come to treat science and technology in the same way. This is healthy and sane. ♦

From early 1986.

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SPEARHEAD OF PERCEPTION

PEOPLE with good horse sense should stay away from philosophical realms. Pie-dogs should not stray near kennel clubs. Good advice, but I am going to flout it. For at the moment I am intrigued by what people feel when they say something very banal with the solemnity that could have been forgiven had it accompanied a profound utterance. So, I will take off from something I had said in my first column, 13 months ago, namely, that language is the spearhead of perception. I wish to draw attention to the limitations of language and the hiatus between words and reality.

Two fairly axiomatic things need to be said in this regard. Firstly, that language constricts reality, and secondly, that it does not measure up to reality. To take the latter part of the statement first, does a word like 'love' measure up to that tremendous emotion? Half the world's literature and two-thirds of cinema are perhaps offshoots of, and devoted to, this one word. How inadequately this four-letter construction covers the thousand nuanced shades which this particular emotion generates and radiates! 'War' is a small word and nothing short of living through it can convey its horrors. Moreover, it would mean different things to different people: adventure to the young, agony to the wounded and extermination to the Jew (if it is World War II we are talking about). Brice Parain, the French philosopher and winner of the Prix des Critiques in 1964, asks: "Were there any words or sentences that would not seem hollow, stupid or odious at the side of a corpse of a 20-year-old boy on the battlefield?"

Keki Daruwalla is one of India's foremost English language poets. This is a regular column.

How does a word like 'love' measure up to that tremendous emotion? Half of the world's literature and two-thirds of cinema are devoted to this one word. Yet, can the word ever convey enough?

The word, and the experience which the word defines, are necessarily different. 'Night' is a noun, but it is also an experience. It is a word we all know, but the experience of it, the crickets, constellations, the car lights flashing in the distance, all this can never be evoked by one word. Between the experience and the word, falls the shadow.

A fearful animal that haunts our dreams now and then, which made our ancestors wet their fig-leaves, an animal that stinks and roars to the high heavens, we call a tiger. Reality gets constricted, encapsulated thereby. The name 'tiger' is not as big as the reality of the tiger — roar, stripes, smell and all. But it is too much to expect that each time you utter it, a word turns into a code whereby you can open an Alladin's cave of sensations. And yet there are occasions when a word brings back a flood of associative reverberations. For instance, the word 'holocaust' does bring back memories. But this is because the horrors are so close to us in historic terms.

But language is limited in another sense. Every shade of thought and feeling does not necessarily translate itself into words easily. Each individual's anger, passion, sense of ennui,

are a shade different from another's, shaped by his background, his circumstances, heredity. But words are common currency. The very process of articulation in words is, to an extent, a loss of individuality, a shift from your own private spring of water to the village well, as it were.

There is a reality which is defined by words and another where words may not have a part to play. Each of us has a stream of thought and feeling flowing inside us. This stream of images, reveries, wishful dreams, is not necessarily sustained by words. Its translation into words, in fact, can be traumatic.

"To persist in wanting words to be there to reveal outside what one is like in the depths of one's being means that madness or overwhelming pressure is threatening. Solitude is rent only by violence. One remains misunderstood, unknown, always the loser, desperate in jail. It is the fundamental impossibility, the first contradiction: what is unique in each person cannot be known by anyone; one has only an inkling. We can merely say of ourselves the same that we say of others. To speak is already to take up one's position in the rank." (Brice Parain in *A Metaphysics Of Language*.)

This is what poetry is all about, to overcome this 'fundamental impossibility', to express uniquely that which 'cannot be known by anyone', to articulate an extraordinarily individual response. Philip Larkin, the sensitive, reclusive poet who died only a few weeks ago, did just that. The last four lines of his poem *Here* tell of driving from 'rich industrial shadows and traffic all night north', 'through fields too thin and thistled to be called meadows', 'swerving to solitude of skies and scarecrows, hay-

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stacks, hares and pheasants' till he reaches the coast.

"And past the poppies bluish neutral distance
Ends the land suddenly beyond a beach
of Shapes and shingle. Here is unfenced existence
Facing the sun, untalkative, out of reach."

This sudden change of dimensions at land's end, this strange feeling of existence suddenly seeming unfenced, could not have been brought out more subtly. And here he is telling you about the feel of a train slowing down as it approaches a station at the end of his poem, *The Whitsun Weddings*:

"We slowed again,
And as the tightened brakes took hold, there swelled
A sense of falling, like an arrow-shower
Sent out of sight, somewhere becoming rain."

MANY PEOPLE must have read the statement issued at the end of the historic summit meeting in Geneva between President Reagan and General-Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov. I wish to draw attention to the paragraph on 'Security': "The sides, having discussed key security issues, and conscious of the special responsibility of the USSR and the US for maintaining peace, have agreed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."

Is it a coincidence that the statement should have mentioned the fact 'that a nuclear war cannot be won' first, and then added the rider 'and must never be fought'? Can a neutral observer draw his own conclusions? Would it mean that could a nuclear war be won, there would have been no need for any treaty or for any ban on fighting it out? Was this passage merely constructed clumsily, or does it reveal the mental make-up of the people who drafted the treaty, men

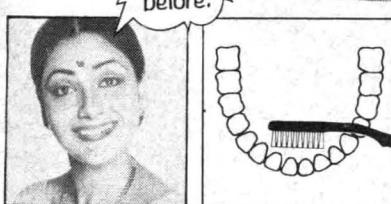
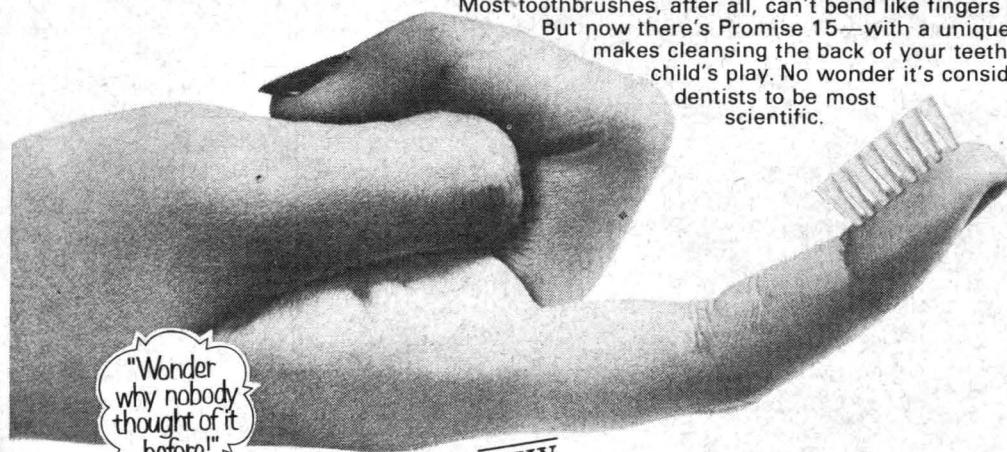
who influence those leaders who govern the destinies of the human race today?

REVERTING TO my old subject about mixed metaphors, I came across the following in the *Indian Express* dated November 22, 1985, on *Federating The Congress Party*. It says that the Prime Minister 'has tried to block some of the corrupting channels but he has not moved even an inch towards restructuring the Congress party'. Firstly, when a metaphor on cleansing was needed, a 'block' was a most unhappy choice. Even a dredger would have done better. As it is, we are left with channels being blocked, and later the 'block' 'moving' towards 'restructuring' the party. Immediately thereafter, the writer moves off into stormy weather, talking about a 'groundswell' of confusions. With such disparate images/metaphors, a groundswell of confusion is all you are likely to get. ♦

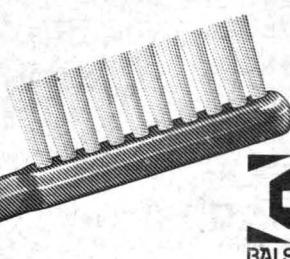
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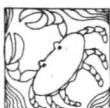
ARIES: March 21 to April 20: Sun-Venus in your tenth sector causes a focus on the work front—business, profession, job. You score over your rivals, and you may launch a new project. January is an exceptionally hectic month. Issues of status and prestige will crop up. The last week, though, is for fun and socialising. Much will be accomplished this month.



TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: The accent is on journeys, ceremonies, celebrations, psychic and religious experiences, as the Sun joins with Neptune in your ninth sector. Collaborations and personal ties will be a dominant trend in 1986. The last quarter of the Moon makes you think about changes in your home. A month of luck and leadership.



GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: Two distinct trends this month: first, the full Moon highlights funds, loans, taxes and wills. And second, while health could bother you a bit, before January is over, there will be a shift, more responsibility, and important negotiations affecting you and your partner. If you feel confined or fettered, just remember that it is a passing phase.



CANCER: June 22 to July 22: Partnerships, publicity, pep and push are destined for Cancerians. You will be going places. Friends and well-wishers will help you. The first 15 days are for new developments, a relationship, a different line of work. Expect a few health hazards, attributed to worry over trifles, overeating and long periods of sustained work.



LEO: July 23 to August 23: A promotion, a job for the unemployed, an exceptionally heavy work-load, and ambition spurring you on, make January a high pressure month. The first ten days are for contacts and close ties, thanks to Mercury. The health of parents and in-laws could cause concern. Your relationship with colleagues will be of paramount importance.



VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: The new Moon in Capricorn aids your creative impulses in the arts, history, psychiatry and medicine. Professionals will blaze new trails. Hobbies and educational pursuits, romance and good fellowship, keep you busy and fulfilled. This implies that you start the new year on a winning note. For many of you, 1986 will be a year for attachments.



LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: A Venus-Sun-Neptune combine in your fourth sector indicates renovation, decoration, alteration, refurbishing, buying, selling, and shopping. A new office, the selection of a site, and a journey abroad come under active consideration in January. A major decision in the last week will help channelise your activities.



CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: Mars, Pluto and the Sun help you negotiate, gain your objective, win plaudits, get a bargain, and build an exceptionally useful relationship on a professional level. On the personal front, all is well. Your confidence will do the trick. Many Capricornians will shed their inhibitions. This month is for contacts and communication.

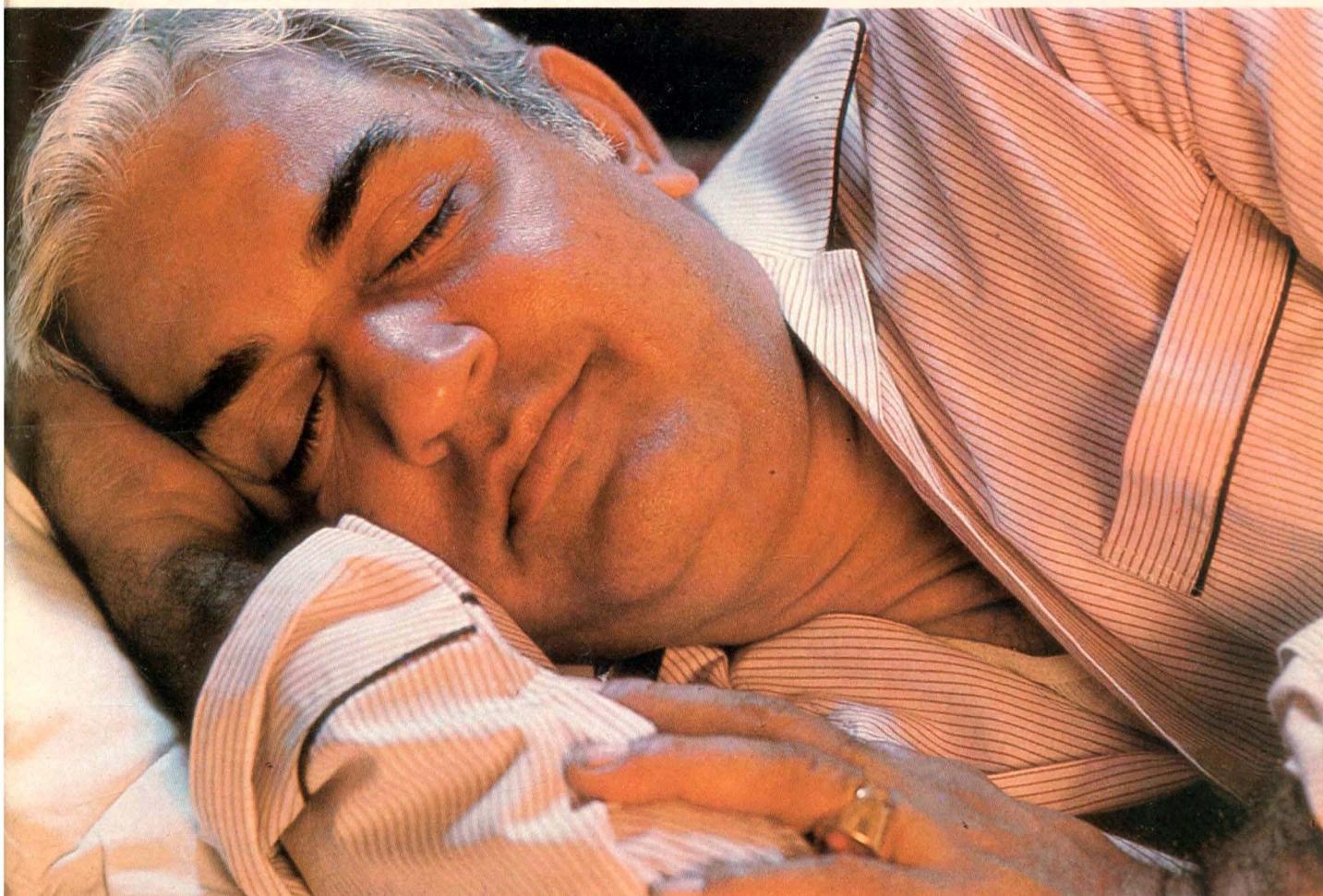


AQUARIUS: January 21 to February 18: You will succeed in a sudden and unexpected manner, as Jupiter is still in your sign by Western astrology. Your enemies will be routed at the last minute. Expenses will be considerable. Many Aquarians will be introspective and a good deal of soul-searching will be done. After the 19th, you will be more outgoing.



PISCES: February 19 to March 20: The new Moon in your 11th sector suggests a wish-fulfilment, awards, friendship and fraternity. For quite a few Pisceans, January will be harvest time. New appointments, the luck of the draw, romance and engagements, are the other areas which you will cover in style. Sudden gains are not ruled out. Make use of opportunities for advancement. ♦

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