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AUGUST 1987 Rs 6



Rajiv Gandhi's  
Penthouse  
Interview

**AMBANI:**  
DRAGGING  
GANDHI DOWN?



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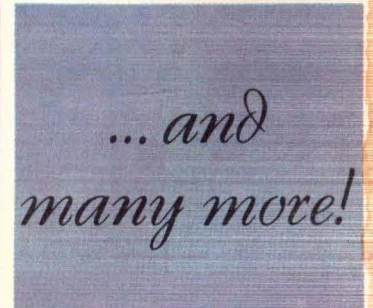
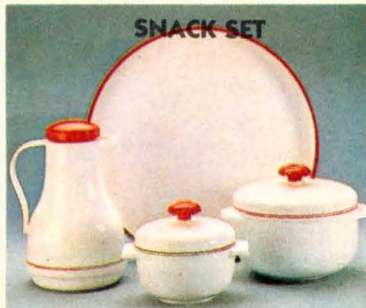
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**7** **AMBANI DRAGGING GANDHI DOWN?** Mr Dhirubhai Ambani of Reliance Industries Ltd. is on the prowl again. Ministers and bureaucrats appear to be at his beck and call. This blatant and dangerous favouritism can only tarnish Mr Gandhi's image further.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH BY HARSHMAN RAI



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# LETTERS

## Blood On Our Hands



You have written a brilliant editorial for the month of July 1987. It must have been agonising to narrate events — violent events — in chronological order. One shudders to think what is happening to this country. We earned our independence in a non-violent manner, but at this rate, one will begin to question the veracity of Gandhism and the theory of non-violence.

The most pertinent question now is: should we tolerate Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi any longer? What is the alternative? Moreover, aren't our double standards responsible for terrorism in the Punjab? The Tamils in Sri Lanka, with the active connivance of the Tamil Nadu Government, became terrorists in Sri Lanka with the sole intention of political expansionism. India violated Sri Lanka's air space, flagrantly disobeying international rules of co-existence. We support terrorism in Sri Lanka, yet continue to condemn 'unpatriotic' moves in the Punjab.

Violence cannot be met with violence. There has to be some other remedy. Only a person with unquestionable integrity can wipe out all the blood.

U S Iyer  
Calcutta.

## Pompous Inanities

I am appalled at the pompous inanities you have published in the letter by half-a-dozen Congress (I) MPs, 'A Distorted Picture' (July). The honourable Members of Parliament have, in their letter, expressed sentiments and advanced arguments conventionally associated with soap-box orators at Hyde Park, London. I would like to remind the honourable MPs that our national motto is *Satyameva Jayate* and therefore, truth will prevail — be it in the case of Bofors guns, West German submarines or any other form of corruption at the very highest levels in the land.

C A L Mulangunnathukavu  
Bombay.

## Immortal Abbas



Apropos *The Secularism of K A Abbas* (Imprint, July), P Sainath has done full justice to Abbas' multifaceted personality. His contribution to the film world is indeed noteworthy, in significant films such as *Dr Kotnis ki amar kahani*, *Dharti ke lal*, *Sheher se door* and *Saat Hindustani*. His column, 'Last Page' in *Blitz* and 'Abbascope' in *Mirror* reflected a unique style and a high literary calibre.

The 'Open Letters' addressed to Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Syed

Shahabuddin, epitomised Abbas' secular patriotism.

J V Naik  
Bombay

Kudos for paying tribute to K A Abbas. In his death, the nation has lost a great journalist and film-maker. He was India's cultural ambassador to the socialist countries, especially the USSR and China. A faithful proponent of nationalism and communal harmony, he also took an active part in India's freedom struggle.

His memory and his work will serve as a great inspiration for our younger generation. Our real tribute to him should be to work towards national integration and world peace.

Vinod C Dixit  
Ahmedabad

## Ambivalent Opinions

Your selection of representatives of the 'common people' (Imprint, June) left a lot to be desired. The school principals, doctors, consultants etc. seemed to express no real opinion on any issue — they veered between finding something 'fishy' or its reportage 'suspect'. Their views were mainly equivocal or ambivalent.

As for V P Singh, how many people in this country resign to uphold their principles?

Sheila Roka  
New Delhi

## The Third Eye And Kundalini

With reference to the review of our book *The Third Eye and Kundalini* (Imprint, July) we would like to mention that the Third Eye Foundation of India is a religious-spiritual organisation and its registered office is located at Kurukshetra.

Readers interested in buying the book can remit its cost (Rs 70) and delivery charges (Rs 15) to our Delhi office — J C Sachdeva, Hon. Joint Secretary, Third Eye Foundation of India, C-17/10, Malaviya Nagar, New Delhi 110 017.

R P Goel  
Delhi



## YES, AMBANI AGAIN!

**IF "AMBANI, OH NOT AGAIN!"** is your reaction to this month's cover story\*, I do not blame you. The Parliament, sections of the press and the grapevine have devoted far too much time and attention to the Ambanis and their Reliance Industries Ltd. Unfortunately, much of what has been said and written has been at best uninformed, and at worst, deliberately glossed over.

As a result, the giant textiles and petrochemicals corporation, the third or fourth largest enterprise in India, escaped investigation even when charges of grave malpractice were levelled against it in Parliament. As a result, Reliance Industries Ltd was virtually given *carte blanche* to relentlessly pursue the ambitions of its founder and chairman, Mr Dhirubhai Ambani. In the process, the company is, today, faced with hard times; it is hampered by delayed project implementation, is strapped for cash and its performance for the financial year January-December 1986 was poor. And any hopes for the future are slim: profits for 1987 and 1988 will be even more depressed.

Mr Ambani's manipulative practice of trading in his own shares on a massive scale, has already cost Mr Ambani, his friends and the investing public, a small fortune. The price of Reliance shares has fallen to Rs 120 from the high of Rs 385 a year ago. Strapped for cash for continuing market manipulation, Mr Ambani is now engaged in exercises far more detrimental to his investors: a close examination of the 1986 balance sheet reveals that Reliance bought and sold Rs 207 crore worth of fabrics and yarn, only to chase a higher turnover figure. In reality, the company has sold less of the well-known Vimal products in 1986 than in previous years.

The methods employed by Mr Ambani and Reliance Industries Ltd to put the squeeze on the 14,55,000 holders of the Rs 500 crore G series debentures, is reminiscent of practices indulged in by petty shopkeepers in back alleys of slums, not corporations or big businesses. This shenanigan is dealt with at length in the cover story that follows.

The identification of Mr Dhirubhai Ambani and Reliance Industries Ltd as being the root cause of the crisis currently facing Rajiv Gandhi's government, has now been endorsed in the Kremlin, as well as on Wall Street. "Reliance is one of the financial props of the ruling party," says the Russian Communist Party's English language mouthpiece, *New Times*.

"Since the late 1970s, government officials have been accused in the press and by the Opposition, in Parliament of bending the rules to suit Reliance. The company, and its chairman and founder, Dhirubhai Ambani, have been accused of making secret contributions to the ruling Congress (I) party, as well as widely distributing shares, gifts and loans to reporters, bureaucrats and government officials. The company denies the allegations, as does Congress (I)," states the world's most famous exponent of capitalism, the *Wall Street Journal*. This kind of publicity is not going to help our reputation as an established industrial nation or maintain our prestige as the dominant political power in South Asia, which we are.

**NOT SO LONG AGO**, when Mrs India Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India, and Pranab Mukherjee the Finance Minister, the Ambanis believed and behaved as if Reliance was corporate India. And in turn, by their actions, the government endorsed their assumption. The exclusive, cosy relationship that had developed between the two obviously involved large sums of money on the one hand, and out of turn favours on the other. That complications would result, was a foregone conclusion. The problems that Reliance Industries Ltd face today, and the plight that investors in that company may find themselves in, is only one aspect of the consequences of the Ambani-Government nexus.

The other aspect, far more dangerous for the country, is Mr Ambani's hold on New Delhi's ministers and bureaucrats. Matt Miller, the highly respected *Wall Street Journal* correspondent based in India, quotes Dhirubhai Ambani as bragging, "I know all government decisions before they are announced." It is this false confidence that such access inevitably inspires, that gives rise to recklessness in the face of crisis. The crisis, when it did hit Ambani in 1986, was the investigation launched by the Enforcement Directorate into his link with those NRI companies that have invested in Reliance, and the allegations of smuggling millions of dollars worth of plant and equipment. The

\* The third in four years; we have also carried, I regret to state, a follow-up to the 2nd cover story we carried in July 1986.



copies of two forged letters addressed to Mr Gurumurthy (of Reliance exposé fame) which landed on the Prime Minister's desk in New Delhi, purportedly from an American investigative agency, Fairfax, referring to investigations into the assets of the Prime Minister's friends, and simultaneously implicating Mr Nusli Wadia and R N Goenka for allegedly paying the investigative agency for its work, are at the root of Mr Gandhi's current discomfort. Yet, Mr Gandhi is reluctant to investigate the origin, of the two letters, now accepted to be forgeries. Who forged them? And why?

Since the government does not appear to be interested in enlightening the public, **Imprint** reproduces here a Question and Answer exposition we carried in the April issue. It is more relevant now:

**Q: What is Fairfax?**

**A:** Fairfax Group Ltd, to give the company its correct name, is a small investigative agency based in Annandale, Virginia, in the USA. It has a staff of six or seven operatives and is headed by Mr Michael Hershman, with Mr G McKay as the Vice-President. Both Hershman and McKay were involved in the Watergate investigations as prosecutors. It was after their success in the Watergate investigations that Hershman formed the Fairfax agency. Fairfax specialises in commercial investigations. The agency enjoys an excellent reputation.

**Q: Has Fairfax been hired by the Government of India?**

**A:** Of course, Fairfax has been hired by the Government of India. Mr Bhurelal, the Director of Enforcement, Ministry of Finance, the Government of India, appointed them in writing.

**Q: At whose instance?**

**A:** At the instance of the Government of India. In sensitive matters like this, an official at the Director's level refers the matter to his Secretary and the Secretary, in turn, will refer it to his Minister.

**Q: To do what?**

**A:** (i) To investigate how Reliance Industries Ltd allegedly paid the capacity fee of US\$ 5 million to Du Pont Chemicals, the US chemical giant, for the excess polyester filament yarn spinning machines Reliance Industries Ltd, owns at their Patalganga complex.

(ii) To find out how Reliance Industries Ltd paid Chemtex, USA, a sum of US\$ 5 million as capacity fee for the excess poly condensation capacity of roughly 35,000 tonnes per year which Reliance has allegedly installed without the permission of the Government of India.

(iii) To find out how Reliance Industries Ltd paid something like US\$ 40,000,000 to Chemtex in the USA for the excess polyester filament yarn spinning machines allegedly brought to Patalganga.

(iv) To investigate the source of funds of the NRI Isle of Man and Virgin Island companies which have invested in Reliance Industries Ltd. An investigation in the USA, where Mr Praful Shah who registered several of these companies is resident, will have shown if he has the kind of resources required for funding of vast NRI investments in Reliance Industries Ltd. If you are rich and in America, then investigations into the records of Internal Revenue Service would show such wealth.

**Q: What was the basis for hiring Fairfax?**

**A:** The *Indian Express* exposé on the Isle of Man companies of the Crocodile-Fiasco fame and later the articles about the Virgin Island companies which invested NRI funds in Reliance Industries Ltd attracted the attention of the Government of India and the government began to make inquiries to ascertain the source of these funds. After the *Indian Express* wrote about the smuggled PFI plant of Reliance Industries Ltd, the Government of India investigated the allegations of smuggling through the Central Investigating Unit of the Bombay Customs Collectorate and discovered that the company had, in fact, installed more machines and more capacity than the government had permitted. This conclusion was the basis of the Rs 120-crore *show cause* notice that the Bombay Customs authorities have, on February 10, 1987, issued to Reliance Industries Ltd. This, as well as the suspicions surrounding the source of the funds for the investments by the NRI companies from the Isle of Man and the Virgin Island, is the basis for the hiring of Fairfax. There are two or three more but similar cases the government wanted investigated.

**Q: Why is only Reliance being given such investigative treatment? Why this vendetta?**

**A:** The sums involved in allegations against Reliance are colossal. Also, the government is not adequately equipped to unearth corporate wrongdoing. In the case of Reliance, the *Indian Express* articles provided compelling evidence of wrongdoings. Therefore, the question of vendetta does not arise.

**Q: Why a foreign agency?**

**A:** An answer to this question will hurt my pride as an Indian. And your dignity too. Does anyone seriously believe that we are equipped to handle this kind of investigation abroad when the CBI and the Intelligence Bureau operations cannot even solve ordinary misappropriation cases involving crores of rupees in nationalised banks?



**Q: Fairfax says it has written no letters to Mr S Gurumurthy. Are the two letters, purported to have been written by Fairfax and mentioned or quoted in the press, forgeries?**

**A:** Yes, they are. Now even the government accepts that the letters have been forged.

**Q: Is the government investigating who committed the forgeries?**

**A:** No, not yet. But this is what the government must do with the utmost vigour and urgency.

**Q: Who could have committed the forgeries?**

**A:** Somebody who stood to gain most through such disinformation.

**Q: Why? To achieve what end?**

**A:** To get at Mr V P Singh, Mr Vinod Pande and Mr Bhurelal.

**Q: How were the forgeries committed?**

**A:** Fairfax wrote letters to Du Pont and to Chemtex in the USA telling them that they were retained by the Government of India to conduct investigations into some aspects of the two companies' transactions with Reliance Industries Ltd and that Fairfax was seeking this and that information. The communications to Du Pont and Chemtex must have been signed by Mr G McKay. It would be natural for Du Pont and Chemtex to forward these letters to Reliance Industries Ltd in Bombay for their comments.

**Q: Could any sensitive material that could harm our national interests or something that could embarrass some of our leaders have been passed on to Fairfax to facilitate their securing of the information Mr Bhurelal was seeking?**

**A:** This question can best be answered by posing another question. How many traitors have we discovered amongst us Indians in the 40 years since we have secured our Independence, despite the fact that day in and day out we talk of a foreign hand, of the enemies of India, of destabilisers etc, etc? If we isolate the Punjab-related treachery and terrorism, you will see that we have only economic treacheries, only economic traitors: people who deceive our country in terms of what belongs to the State. It is the economic traitor, people who illegally accumulate funds here and clandestinely remit it abroad who constitute the real threat to our country. These are the people the government should be hounding.

**Q: What are the roles of S Gurumurthy, Ramnath Goenka and Nusli Wadia in all this?**

**A:** The relationship between Ramnath Goenka and Swaminathan Gurumurthy — a professional association which has grown into personal friendship — has been widely publicised in the Indian press. Mr Gurumurthy has no business connection with Mr Wadia. But Mr Wadia has been a friend of Mr Goenka for several years. It is reasonable to assume that the friendship grew after Mr Goenka launched the investigative campaign on Reliance Industries Ltd. Mr Wadia had his own grievances against the Ambanis and Reliance. They had tried to thwart his every effort to obtain a DMT licence for a long time, and when this was obtained after a long delay, the setting up of the plant and later the very economics of the whole DMT operation was jeopardised through one measure or the other, evidently engineered by the Ambanis. There is reasonable ground to believe that Ramnath Goenka, S Gurumurthy and Nusli Wadia shared between them whatever information they had independently collected against Reliance — it was the acceptable practice of a writer and his newspaper exploring every available source of information, except that, in this case, it was possible that the source of some of the information, Mr Wadia, stood to gain from the newspaper's use of such information on the premise that 'what hurts one's enemy brings comfort to me'. It is very likely the three — Mr Goenka, Mr Gurumurthy and Mr Wadia — have helped the government look in the direction of Fairfax.

\*

**IN THIS ISSUE**, we reprint, with permission, an interview with Mr Rajiv Gandhi conducted by Russell Warren Howe that was published in the August 1987 issue of *Penthouse* magazine.

In a publisher's note, *Penthouse* says, "... this interview was conducted in New Delhi by Russell Warren Howe after officials in the Indian Embassy in Washington read a previous issue of *Penthouse*. They felt that Gandhi would want to reach our audience to share his views on India, the future, and how his democracy can co-exist with ours ..."

Given the fact that the Prime Minister makes a fine presentation of India's concerns in the interview, I fail to understand why nobody in New Delhi is ready to acknowledge or accept responsibility for its publication. After all, *Penthouse* enjoys a circulation of 5 million copies and a readership of at least five times that number. Following the publication of the interview, the statements that New Delhi has issued and the answers that the government has given to questions raised in Parliament, in turn beg more questions. But then, as far as our methods of functioning are concerned, that has become *de rigeur*.



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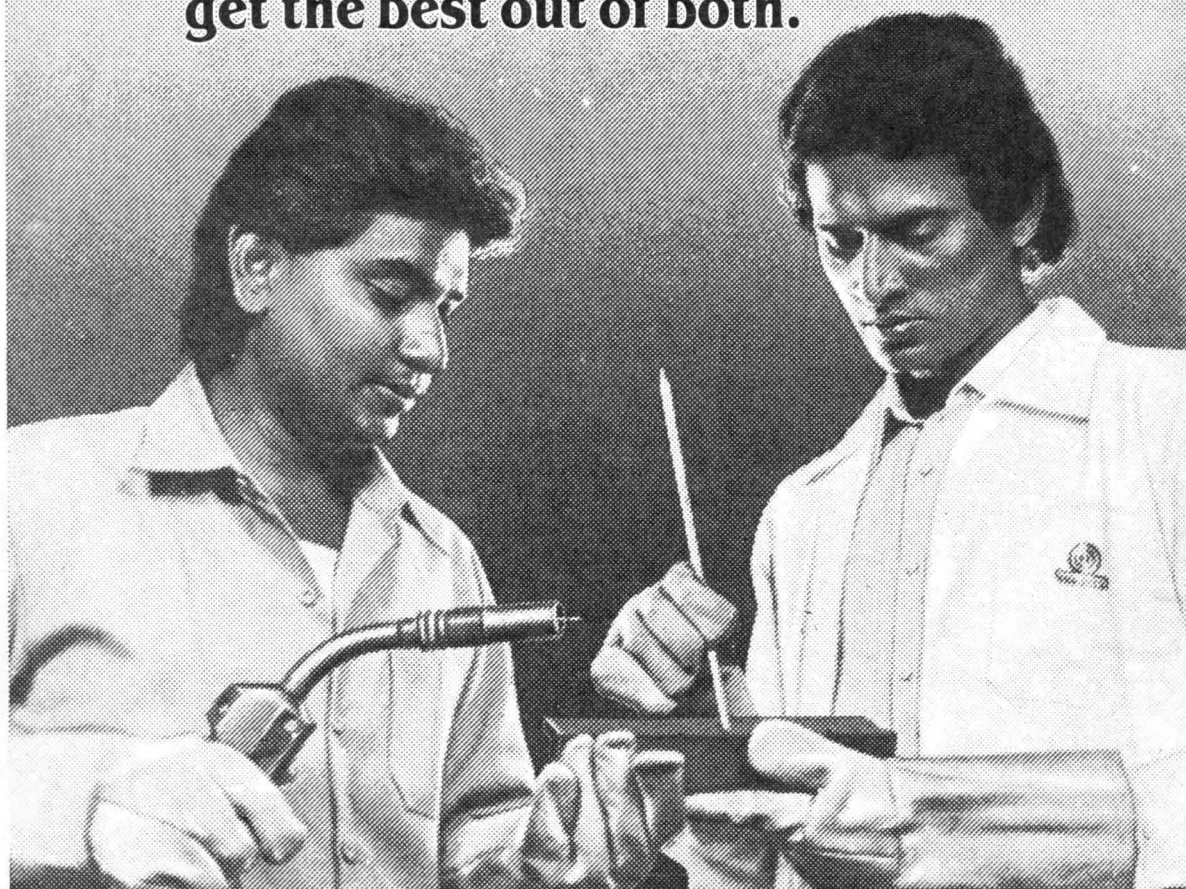
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# ONLY AMBANI, AGAIN!

In act after act, the government appears to display a determination to prop up Reliance Industries Ltd. But the prop cannot be sustained with impunity. Now the danger is, that in any ensuing storm, Ambani may drag Mr Gandhi and his government down with him.

**T**HE CONCISE OXFORD Dictionary does not tell us what LAB means, and, if not for Dhirubhai Ambani, it would not matter — the detergent manufacturers and the technological community knew. But, because of Ambani, and like PTA (Purified Terephthalic Acid) and DMT (Dimethyl Terephthalate), the two alternative but basic raw materials that are used in the manufacture of polyester, and both of which have become household words, with rather dubious connotations, LAB is also poised to enter our vocabulary. With grave consequences for the government, and for Mr Rajiv Gandhi.

LAB is, simply, a kerosene extract. Kerosene is prefractionated and then desulphured to extract normal paraffin (N-paraffin) which, along with benzene, is the basic component of LAB, which is used to manufacture synthetic detergents and laundry soap. Until a few years ago, vegetable nuts, seeds and rice bran of the non-edible variety, were being used to make soaps. Additionally, a small quantity of DDB (dodecyl benzene) was imported in order to produce the few synthetic detergents that the country needed for its small domestic market.

Today, the market for synthetic detergents and washing soaps has grown considerably. But so has the demand for edible oils. As new processes and refining techniques result in the extraction of a greater amount of edible oil, fewer quantities of non-edible oil are available for use by the



*Rajiv Gandhi's new ward?*

soap industry. This is where LAB becomes significant.

**A**S LAB IS A DERIVATIVE of kerosene, its plants are always located adjacent to oil refineries. For instance, in 1979, the public sector giant, Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd (IPCL), installed a 30,000 tonnes per annum (tpa) plant at Baroda, soon after the Baroda (Koyali) Refinery was established. The Tamil Nadu Petroproducts Corporation Ltd, a joint sector enterprise, is erecting a 60,000 tpa LAB plant near the Madras Refinery, which will be in commercial production from January 1988. Tata Chemicals has also applied for Government per-

mission to set up a 50,000 tpa LAB plant next to the Karnal Refinery (a Tata Chemicals — Indian Oil Corporation joint sector enterprise) in Haryana. All these plants will purify kerosene, extract N-paraffin, add imported benzene, and thus produce LAB.

At the same time that IPCL was given the go ahead to set up the LAB plant at Baroda, the government, in its overall plans, provided for another LAB plant to be established next to the Refinery at Vishakhapatnam. As a matter of policy, the government also decided that all LAB plants must be in the public or joint sectors, and not in the private sector. However, the government's provision for the LAB plant at Vishakhapatnam had not taken into account the considerable ambitions of Mr Dhirubhai Ambani.

**A**MBANI'S PETROCHEMICALS empire was being built at Patalganga, Maharashtra, and its location in a backward area entitled him to several state doles and incentives. From 1981 to 1984, Mr Ambani had considerable clout in New Delhi — Mrs Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister, and Pranab Mukherjee had, disgracefully, placed himself at the service of Mr Ambani as the then Finance Minister of India.

In the event, public sector and joint sector restrictions were not applicable to Reliance, neither were any restrictions about the location of his plant. Thus, the second LAB plant, a 50,000 tpa project, was awarded to



## COVER STORY

Reliance on August 23, 1984. Of course, the plant was to be located at Patalganga — at least 60 kms away from the nearest refinery. The plant was to cost Rs 105 crore, and was scheduled to start production in 1986. Cost escalations and delays — a Reliance tradition — delayed the commissioning of the plant, and in July 1987, Reliance announced that the plant, soon to be completed, would become operational in October this year.

But without the vital processing facility that extracts N-paraffin from kerosene!

In projections made to various financial institutions, Mr Ambani revealed that the N-paraffin processing facility will be available in December 1988! Until then, Mr Ambani will import N-paraffin.

But N-paraffin is subject to an import duty of 152% plus Rs 475 per tonne, on the CIF value (which is about US\$475 per tonne). Reliance will need 54,000 tonnes of imported N-paraffin per year, or, if you believe Ambani's statement about the kerosene-to-N-paraffin processing facility being available by December 1988, the company will require 60,000 tonnes of imported N-paraffin in the interim period. However, in written statements Ambani says his LAB plant will operate at only 70% of the capacity until December 1988, and in that event, Reliance will need to import only 47,250 tonnes of N-paraffin for consumption upto December 1988. When the IPCL LAB plant at Baroda imported a few tonnes of N-paraffin in 1985 and again just recently, it paid the import duty of 152% plus Rs 475 per tonne flat duty.

But not Ambani.

Mr Dhirubhai Ambani wants the government to levy an import duty of only 10% on the CIF value of his imported N-paraffin, thereby gifting himself with Rs 35.43 crore if he imports a total of only 47,250 tonnes N-paraffin for consumption until December 1988. And this largess, at the cost of the nation, naturally.

**A**ND MR RAJIV GANDHI'S government is poised to spring to Mr Ambani's aid.

In their efforts to prepare some kind of credible basis for obliging Reliance with the exemption, the Government of India is engaged in an exercise of painstaking creativity.

*Future LAB manufacturers will not be allowed to process kerosene into N-paraffin; the refineries will be directed to do that. In the meantime, Reliance and other LAB manufacturers will be allowed to import all the LAB that they need. Further, government sources reveal that the duty-*



*Ambani's latest prop?*

structure for imported N-paraffin will be so devised as to render the cost of customs-cleared normal paraffin at par with that of in-house manufactured N-paraffin. At US\$470-480 per tonne CIF, the foreign N-paraffin, which Reliance Industries Ltd will need to import, will cost a whopping US\$2,24,43,750 or Rs 29.62 crore in foreign exchange. By the time the government-owned Oil Refineries install the plants which need to be imported in order to process kerosene into N-paraffin, years will have passed, and in the meantime, two or three more LAB projects would have materialised. In that event, the import bill

on N-paraffin would exceed an unnecessary US\$100 million or Rs 132 crore in foreign exchange. And all this, basically, to pander to Dhirubhai Ambani's extraordinary demands.

**M**R DHIRUBHAI HAS a proven formula for success: *Approach the government with a proposal for a large scale, attractive, industrial project. Whisper allegations against any past, present and/or future competition. Present budgets and projections which are guaranteed to attract interest, regardless of their accuracy or authenticity, and even if they are based on figures which are false or deceptive — which is often the case with Ambani. Make bold claims about your technical skills. Boast of your construction and engineering abilities (in New Delhi, Dhirubhai had acquired the reputation of being an engineering marvel who executed projects in record time — often ahead of schedule — even before his first and uncomplicated POY plant was completed in Patalganga). Make promises that the entire project will be financed without resorting to significant borrowings from Indian banks and financial institutions. Talk of the great savings in foreign exchange that can be made — assisted by cooked-up figures. And grab the licence. Once that is procured, demand concessions. Manipulate policies. Ignore any and all previous promises made to the government; most of those placed in senior positions in the government are unfortunately blessed with a very short memory. And many more are willing to be induced to forget. Try to fool all the people all of the time. And you will be heralded as an industrialist of world class. In India.*

So far, Mr Ambani appears to be following this formula closely. In this case, it appears highly doubtful that he ever intended to install the kerosene-to-N-paraffin processing plant. He certainly doesn't seem likely to do so now. This plant needs money — Reliance has none. His LAB plant, even without the N-paraffin extract-

ing facility, is already expensive. If Ambani had ever meant to use the kerosene-to-N-paraffin-to-LAB route, he would have located the plant at Vishakhapatnam. However, in order to further mislead the pliable politicians and bureaucrats in New Delhi, Mr Ambani talked of transporting kerosene to Patalganga, pointing out its closeness to Trombay, the location of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd's (BPCL) refinery. His ludicrous plans involved the transportation of 3,80,000 tonnes of kerosene to Patalganga and 3,20,000 tonnes of N-paraffin extracted kerosene back to Trombay, using 200 truck tankers a day. Clearly, that would constitute a safety hazard as well as be an ecological threat. And Reliance could not be seen to take such risks in order to increase its profit margins, could it? So the Ambanis approached Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd for the use of their Bombay-Pune pipeline for transporting the kerosene to Patalganga and purified kerosene back from Patalganga to Trombay. BPCL refused to oblige. And how unfortunate—there is no rail link to Patalganga! In the light of this, there is only one way Reliance Industries Ltd's contribution to nation-building via the LAB plant could materialise, and that is through the import of the N-paraffin that the company's LAB plant needs. On concessional duty.

**I**F RELIANCE imports N-paraffin and pays the import duty currently levied, the N-paraffin will cost Rs 16,500 per tonne landed at Patalganga. It costs IPCL, the public sector star, Rs 14,500 per tonne to produce in-house, the N-paraffin that it consumes. Tamil Nadu Petroproducts Corporation Ltd will have a similar cost structure. Where is the financial wizardry that Ambani boasted of? What is his consequent standing in the market place? Mr Dhirubhai Ambani is no ordinary player. He was aware of this problem all along—in fact this problem was a deliberate creation for reasons he knows best. In the past,

he had overcome all obstacles by *salaming* everybody in New Delhi (his own published admission!). If the Rajiv Gandhi government wishes to retain any claims to integrity or to fair and impartial government, it must reject Ambani's plea for concessional import duty on N-paraffin and direct him to dismantle the plant at Patalganga, and pack it up for transport and relocation at Vishakhapatnam. Preferably, in the public or the joint sector. If this directive is met with resistance, Ambani should be left to drown. The government must halt the official plans currently being

**"At any rate, local informed quarters say that Reliance is one of the financial props of the ruling party".  
Surely a damning statement if ever there was one; and that too from the ruling party's friends in the Soviet Union. But then, the truth often emerges from the most unexpected quarters.**

drawn up to assign N-paraffin making to refineries only, a ploy obviously devised to bail Ambani out.

For Reliance shareholders, it may come as a surprise to learn that without the duty concession that Reliance is seeking, the company can, at best, make a profit before interest and depreciation (PBID) of only Rs 5 crore if the LAB plant operates at 80% of the installed capacity, and a PBID of Rs 6.34 crore when the plant operates at 90% capacity. But any projection of the plant's financial working *after* interest and depreciation reveals that the plant will lose money. Hand over fist.

This may not be all that disastrous for Reliance shareholders. The deliberate deception displayed by the company may prompt investors to rid themselves of their fatalistic complacency towards the (mis)management of Reliance's affairs.

**T**HE FAVOURS THAT the Rajiv Gandhi government is once again showering on the Ambanis have invited the scrutiny of even the foreign press.

In a recent article, the Soviet weekly newsmagazine, *New Times*, published in Moscow, plainly asserts that big business is at the root of the present crisis facing the Indian government, and adds, "At any rate, local informed quarters say that Reliance is one of the financial props of the ruling party". Surely a damning statement if ever there was one; and that too from the ruling party's friends in the Soviet Union. But then, the truth often emerges from the most unexpected quarters. The Western press, especially the economic and business journals, is equally blunt.

"In India," wrote the *Asian Wall Street Journal* recently, "some companies are more equal than others." The writer proceeded to explain how: "On May 7, the Finance Ministry lowered the consumption tax on Purified Terephthalic Acid, or PTA, a substance used in making polyester fibre. Only one company in India is a major consumer: Reliance Industries Ltd. It stands to save 225 million rupees (US\$17.5 million) a year because of the tax change."

"Government policies that appear tailor-made to benefit Reliance are nothing new. Now India's third largest private corporation, Reliance could hardly have risen from its humble beginning without numerous official favours. And despite several setbacks over the past year, including official investigations of questionable activities and the threat of a devastating customs assessment, Reliance continues to show remarkable powers of survival."



## COVER STORY

"During the past decade, the textile and petrochemical company has been granted industrial licences while others have waited in vain for government approval. On several occasions, it has profited when duties were suddenly raised or lowered, or when imports were restricted. Since it went public in 1977, the company's assets have grown by a factor of 33 times, now topping 11 billion rupees. A long string of annual profits was broken only last year.

"Since the late 1970s, government officials have been accused in the press and by the opposition in Parliament of bending the rules to suit Reliance. The company and its chairman and founder, Dhirubhai Ambani, have been accused of making secret contributions to the ruling Congress (I) Party, as well as widely distributing shares, gifts and loans to reporters,

bureaucrats and government officials. The company denies the allegations, as does Congress (I).

"In the past few weeks, the controversy swirling around Reliance has assumed another dimension. The company is seen as a root cause of the government's recent leadership and credibility problems."

Curiously enough, the article on Reliance Industries Ltd. (the lead story in the issue of the *Journal* published on June 24, 1987), written by India-based correspondent Matt Miller was titled, *Indian Firm's Success Stirs Controversy: Often Aided by State Licences, Reliance May Stumble With Gandhi*.

Many developments have taken place since June 24. It now seems probable that the next *Wall Street Journal* story on Ambani will be titled '*Gandhi Stumbles With Reliance!*'

Unless Mr Gandhi is careful. And I do not say so in jest.

**I**N SEVERAL STATEMENTS made to the press, as well as in several documents submitted to financial institutions and to the government, Mr Ambani had claimed that his PTA plant was going to be commissioned in late 1986. In his Chairman's Statement for 1985, issued on June 26, 1986, Mr Ambani reiterated this, "I am happy to inform you that the Purified Terephthalic Acid (PTA) plant with an annual capacity of 75,000 tonnes which is being implemented in collaboration with ICI of US and UOP Processing International Inc., USA, is on schedule." The cost of the plant, as of that date, was Rs 288 crore. On November 12, 1986, in a press release calculated to entice the public to subscribe to the

**"What is likely, however, and what must indeed be the case, is that the Patalganga PTA plant has a capacity of 150,000 tpa and not 100,000 tpa as recently announced by Reliance. But Mr Ambani is reluctant to admit this following the publication of allegations that Reliance has smuggled some plant and equipment, violated import regulations and evaded import duty."**



Rs 500 crore G series compulsorily convertible debentures, Mr Ambani announced that the PTA plant would be commissioned in the first quarter of 1987. In documents submitted to various financial institutions in June 1987, Mr Ambani declared that the PTA plant will commence commercial production in November 1987. At this juncture, it is important to realize that each month of delay in commercial production (and there have already been a few), costs Reliance about Rs 6 crore in monthly interest payments alone.

But that is not all.

Currently, in documents offering to sell part of the equipment installed for the PTA plant to the financial institutions, and then lease it back from them, (something we shall deal with later in this article), Mr Ambani states that the plant has an installed

capacity of 100,000 tonnes per year, and that it is now going to cost Rs 549.37 crore!

Last year, in an article titled, *Only Ambani: Business And The Subversion Of The Indian State*, this writer, contrary to prevailing opinion, had ridiculed claims that Mr Ambani had then made about his "company's proven construction and engineering abilities to set up complex world-scale projects" (quoted from the Chairman's Statement dated June 26, 1986). The article had stressed that Ambani and Sons were manipulators, not industrialists, and that they were refusing to disclose vital facts pertaining to the PTA project. (At the same time, this writer had categorically stated that calculations based on the then current operations of the company revealed that the Reliance equity scrip, then ruling at around Rs 350 per share was worth only Rs 120. And further, that the company would make hardly any profit in 1986. This, too, was contrary to the forecasts provided by the company as well as a myopic and manipulated press, both of which had conspired to predict higher profits for 1986 than the 'politics-related' profit of Rs 71.34 crore in 1985, and the bumper profits of previous years.)

This catalogue of delays and falsifications hardly lends any credibility to Ambani's new claims that commercial production at the PTA plant will commence in early November 1987.

**I**N ANY CASE, a 100,000 tpa PTA plant built at a cost of Rs 549.37 crore does not make commercial sense. Not unless Mr Ambani and the government have some kind of secret understanding to, for instance, impose a total ban on the import of PTA and then set the domestic polyester market on a vertical inflationary spiral, thus giving Ambani *carte blanche* to command any price that he asks for his PTA. This is unlikely, although the record of the govern-

ment-Ambani nexus over the past few years, points to the contrary.

What is likely, however, and what must indeed be the case, is that the Patalganga PTA plant has a capacity of 150,000 tpa and not 100,000 tpa as recently announced by Reliance. But Mr Ambani is reluctant to admit this following the publication of allegations that Reliance has smuggled some plant and equipment, violated import regulations and evaded import duty.

Already, Reliance has been served with a Customs Department Show Cause Notice, alleging an evasion of customs duty to the tune of Rs 120 crore on account of illegal import of machinery and plant. Now, any admission of increasing the tonnage capacity of his plant to 150,000 tpa without authorisation, will be catastrophic for Mr Ambani and his company, in terms of customs levies and fines, not to mention confiscation, which is almost obligatory in violation of this nature.

Earlier, we quoted Mr Dhirubhai Ambani, in his Chairman's Statement of June 26, 1986, as stating that Reliance has 'proven construction and engineering abilities to set complex world-scale projects'. But this is surely belied by the actual facts. The cost of the plant has jumped from Rs 185 crore in October 1984 for a 75,000 tpa PTA plant, to Rs 249.20 crore; then to Rs 288.10 crore in May 1985, then again to Rs 421.88 crore for the enlarged capacity of 1,00,000 tpa, and currently Rs 549.39 crore — thus, the original figure has trebled in three years, duty increases and foreign exchange fluctuations notwithstanding.

**W**HY IS IT THAT THE COST of this plant is galloping each year? Or is it that a percentage of the investments made by shareholders, is being siphoned off, and that too in foreign exchange? Also, why is it that a company with 'proven construction and engineering abilities to set up complex world-scale pro-





jects', is paying Rs 34.14 crore (Ambani's own figures) by way of fee for the technical know-how for the PTA plant and Rs 12.37 crore to foreign technicians engaged in its erection? What has happened to the world-class expertise that Reliance boasts off? Of course, Mr Ambani's claim was, like his other claims, an exaggeration. At Patalganga, what has emerged is a saga of mismanagement, poor employee relations and financial malpractice. For which the shareholders are paying. And so is the tax-payer at the mercy of a government clearly in league with corrupt business.

**T**HE PTA PLANT, in all probability, will not commence commercial production before May-June 1988. Until then, Reliance's Polyester Staple Fibre (PSF) plant will use imported PTA, and enjoy the Rs 22.5 crore concession on import duty that it has secured for itself at great cost to the national exchequer. Surely, a government which has sanctioned this duty concession is more guilty than Reliance Industries Ltd itself? A little over a year ago, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, as Prime Minister of India, declared in Parliament that Reliance Industries Ltd would be investigated, and, if found guilty of malpractice, would be severely punished. Today, Mr Gandhi appears to be actively aiding and abetting Reliance to accomplish and then get away with successive malpractices. How else can the government's reduction of duty on imported PTA, which benefits Ambani exclusively, be interpreted? Can the government explain how either the country or the consumer will benefit from this financial trickery?

And the LAB deal? Will the government be acting in the national interest if it allows Reliance to import the N-paraffin on the concessional duty that the company seeks? Will the granting of such concessions not constitute a blatant condoning of a deliberate deception by Reliance of the State? And a fraud against the-

state-owned IPCL and joint sector-owned TNPCL? Already, Reliance is presenting profit projections to nationalised banks and financial institutions based on the assumption that the imported N-paraffin for its LAB plant will be at a concessional import duty: this, to facilitate more borrowing. But, as mentioned earlier, Reliance's LAB project cannot make any profit if it is to function as other LAB projects have hitherto been made to function when import of N-paraffin is involved.

Mr V P Singh, when he was the Finance Minister of India, had to deal

**"Will the government be acting in the national interest if it allows Reliance to import the N-paraffin on the concessional duty that the company seeks? Will the granting of such concessions not constitute a blatant condoning of a deliberate deception by Reliance of the State?"**

with several Reliance-related matters. He used to be applauded by Parliament and the public, and complimented by Mr Gandhi, the Prime Minister, for his fair and objective disposal of Reliance files. As Finance Minister, he also had to deal with Reliance's application for the conversion of their E and F series non-convertible debentures. After acquainting himself with the facts pertaining to the history of the company, V P Singh was certain that the firm had enjoyed access to too much public money on schemes of doubtful merit. And he refused permission. Later, Mr

Singh had to deal with the next Reliance application, this time for a premium of Rs 190 per share on the G series compulsorily convertible debentures that the company was seeking to issue. Mr Singh sanctioned the debentures issue of Rs 500 crore but allowed a premium of only Rs 62.50 per share, in line with the real assets of the company. As it transpired, Reliance made a net profit of only Rs 14.17 crore in 1986 and the company itself now projects a net profit of only Rs 8 crore in 1987 and Rs 11 crore in 1988. When these privately made projections become public knowledge, as they will, the Reliance share which is hovering around Rs 118-120 will gradually slide down to Rs 75-80, its true intrinsic value.

Mr V P Singh, under great pressure from within and without the government to do Ambani's bidding, resisted, in the public interest. Imagine the fate of the Rs 500 crore G series debenture holders today if their debentures were to be compulsorily converted into 10 rupee equity shares on a Rs 190 premium?

With Mr V P Singh ousted, Reliance seems to be getting what it wants — including an upto Rs 17 crore bounty from the G series debenture holders. Perhaps, the new Ambani con trick deserves to be detailed.

**A**S IS WELL KNOWN, it has been Dhirubhai Ambani's scheme all along to manipulate the stock exchange quotation of the Reliance scrip upwards, using what brokers and the press call 'company sources' for market intervention. Publicity and propaganda about Reliance's successes, help. When the quotations are high, Reliance frequently sells shares that the still mysterious NRI tax-haven companies hold. Again, Ambani follows a particular formula: announce a debenture while the price is high; if the debenture issue that the government has allowed is strictly non-convertible in scope, announce that it is convertible — after all, the government will convert. When the

debenture is listed on the stock exchanges, push its quotation up by buying and selling through 'company sources'. If an honest Minister, for instance, Mr V P Singh when he was Finance Minister, does not oblige, engage in political maneuvering to remove him from office. In the meantime, describe the Ministerial rejection as resulting in a denial of a great investment opportunity. And soon, launch another debenture.

We have described how Mr V P Singh, as Finance Minister, dealt with the G series debenture application. The compulsorily convertible Rs 500 crore G series debentures were issued in early 1987. Each debenture, at Rs 145, was to be converted into two fully paid up Rs 10 Reliance equity shares, with a Rs 62.50 premium per share. As is well known, the debenture issue was over subscribed and investors were allotted less than what they had applied for. Now, anyone familiar with shares knows that shares have to be in lots of 50 and multiples thereof, to be marketable. Of course, odd lots of 3 or 10 and 20 or 30 are marketable, but with difficulty, and at about a 25% discount on the market price at the time of selling. Mr Dhirubhai Ambani, the self-appointed benefactor of investors, issued Rs 182.53 crore worth of debentures in the G series in lots of 10 and 20. Most of these were allotted to most of the 14,55,000 (Ambani's figure) investors who applied for small lots, and received even smaller allotments. Most investors, familiar with stock market practices, applied for lots of 25, 50 and multiples thereof. But Reliance allotted the debentures, as we have pointed out, in lots of 10 and 20 — that is, in non-marketable lots. Now, when a conversion is effected, these hapless people will receive their shares in non-marketable lots of 20, 40, 60 and in multiples thereof.

**T**HAT IS NOT ALL. According to the original offer document, the G series debentures were entitled to 13.5% interest on the face

value of the debenture from January 16, 1987 to February 4, 1988. However, Reliance approached the government sometime in June 1987 and requested permission to convert the debentures early — in August 1987. The government obliged, but almost as if to protect the investors, made the early conversion optional, that is, dependent on the investor's wishes. But Ambani is up to new tricks, and debenture holders will consequently be deprived of upto Rs 17.69 crore in interest payments that they were



*Ambani's spare prop?*

entitled to, which Reliance will pocket instead.

This is how the arithmetic works: Let us imagine that you have been allotted 20 G series debentures and you have invested Rs 2,900 (i.e., 20 x Rs 145 per debenture). At the time you applied for the debentures, you were assured of an interest of Rs 411.88 (i.e., 384 — 16.1.1987 to 4.2.1988 — at 13.5% on Rs 2,900). Now if you did not write to Reliance by 25th of August and inform the company that you did not wish to opt for early conversion, your 20 debentures would automatically be converted into 40 equity shares effective as of July 30, 1987. Let us suppose you did not receive the letter on time, and failed, as stipulated, to reject the offer by the deadline. You are then entitled to an interest of 13.5% on Rs 2,900 as from January 16, 1987 to July 30, 1987, i.e., 195 days — an interest of Rs 209.15 (i.e., 195 days at 13.5% on Rs 2,900).

Then, for 20 debentures, you receive 40 equity shares. Reliance has declared a dividend of 25%, i.e., Rs 2.50 per equity share for 1986 and has stated to financial institutions that it will give a 25% dividend only for 1987 and a similar quantum for 1988. So your 40 equity shares will fetch you a dividend of Rs 100. Adding up the receipts, you will receive a total of Rs 309.15 (Rs 209.15 + Rs 100). In which case, you have been deprived of Rs 102.73 on 20 debentures (Rs 411.88 which was your original entitlement as interest minus Rs 309.15 receivable). On 3,44,82,758 debentures (Rs 500 crore issue at Rs 145 per debenture), the debenture holders were exposed to lose Rs 17.69 crore (Rs 17,68,96,551). Of course, some diligent debenture holders will have written, so as to meet the deadline of August 25, 1987, to reject the offer of early conversion — and only those letter writers will have escaped Mr Dhirubhai Ambani's little swindle. Again, a government and a stock market which allows these shenanigans is as guilty as the Ambanis. But who cares?

**IF RELIANCE INDUSTRIES LTD** had any integrity or fiscal responsibility as a corporation, it would not have applied for early conversion of the G series debentures. And, if the company was in such a financial trap so as to be unable to pay interest, then it should at least have had the courtesy of stipulating that only those debentures, whose holders specifically asked for early conversion, would be converted, while those who did not write would be deemed as not wanting early conversion. But, as we have said earlier, Ambani and Sons are manipulators, not industrialists. The temptation to recall here what Mr Dhirubhai Ambani stated in a written document designed to entice the public to apply for G series debentures is irresistible.

"Each of these debentures will be automatically converted after one year from the date of allotment, into two equity shares of



## COVER STORY

Rs 10 each, at a very modest price of Rs 72.50 per share (inclusive of premium of Rs 62.50 per share), against the present market price of Rs 220 (as on November 10, 1986). Thus, the new shares on conversion will be available to investors at around one third of the market price — a rare opportunity for them to miss. Furthermore, in the event of a bonus issue being made by the company prior to conversion, the number of shares to be issued on conversion will be proportionately increased and the premium will stand correspondingly reduced.

"These debentures will carry interest at the rate of 13.5% per annum, payable half-yearly, and will be listed on as many as nine stock exchanges in the country to ensure easy liquidity."

There was not the slightest hint, then, that the company was poised to swindle its debenture holders. Should business corporations be allowed to build their empires and augment their profits on the proceeds of such underhand methods?

**I**N THE MEANTIME, the government of Mr Rajiv Gandhi, at various levels, gives Reliance Industries Ltd the 'most favoured company' treatment, causing us to wonder if Reliance Industries Ltd has entered into some sort of concord (or Accord?) with the Union of India. While the Tatas and the Bhatnagars are featured by the government on this or that 'Black List' (now, called the Less Preferential Treatment List, or some such farce) and denied government permission on petty grounds, Reliance Industries and Ambani pretty well rule the roost: Reliance Industries Ltd's recent application for a Rs 40 crore loan under the Textiles Modernisation Fund Scheme was processed by ICICI and other financial institutions in record time. Further, as mentioned earlier, ICICI has entertained an application from Reliance for a Rs 85 crore loan on a lease-back deal: Reliance has

offered to sell part of the equipment and assets from their PTA and LAB plants to ICICI for upto Rs 85 crore. ICICI will then lease the same equipment and assets back to Reliance. It would appear that ICICI has accepted Reliance Industries Ltd's claim that the N-paraffin that the company will import and consume will be subjected to a 10% import duty as against the 152% on CIF value plus Rs 475 per tonne, in force presently. Without this duty concession, the plant's profitability will be seriously impaired. ICICI has also accepted Reliance's claim that commercial LAB production will begin in October 1987, and, that the PTA plant will be operational from November 1, 1987. A single month's delay in commencing production will cost the company Rs 10 crore. But then, if the government has decided not to question any claims that Reliance makes, preposterous as they may be, who can?

Another manifestation of the relationship Ambani has with the government is even more disturbing. Reliance Industries Ltd has been served a Show Cause Notice for Rs 27 crore for evasion of excise duty in 1984. This was reflected in the Company's balance sheet for 1985, but erased from the 1986 balance sheet. Witness the following, in the Chairman's Statement:

"The Company in its interim reply dated February 25, 1987, pointed out that the contract for import of equipment or expansion of plant capacity, proforma invoices in respect thereof and the concerned licence clearly indicated that what was purchased, imported and installed by the Company did not violate any regulations.

"The allegation in the Show Cause Notice of alleged misdeclaration of more than twice the declared capacity at Patalganga and of the alleged unauthorised importation of spinning machines and the consequential notice to show cause why a claim should not be made on the Company for alleged differential duty/penalty of

Rs 119 crore was *ex-facie* unfounded.

"According to the Company and as advised after due consideration, the Company is certain that it will not be faced with any liability in respect of the Show Cause which is unfounded and legally untenable."

In the meantime, an interesting exchange took place concerning the Rs 120 crore excise Show Cause Notice for alleged illegal imports and evasion of duty, between Mr Dhirubhai Ambani and a shareholder, at the 13th Annual General Meeting held on June 24, 1987.

TPJ, a shareholder: Lastly I would like to know something about the customs notice which has been issued to the company. What is it about?

D H Ambani: There is nothing to worry about it. This is also one of those problems which have been created without there being any evidence or substance. We have already filed our reply to the Show Cause Notice long ago. But what do you think about the alleged case?

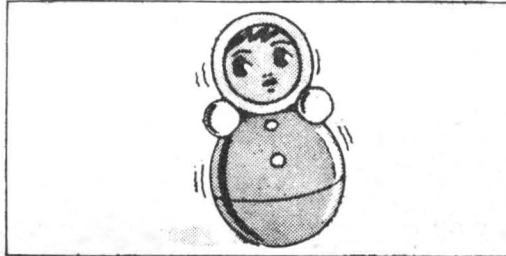
TPJ: I must compliment you, Mr Chairman, for the presumption built in the allegation levelled against the company. It is the presumption that you had your personal black money by which you have financed the import of additional plant and machinery. It is really a wonderful presumption. A person having his own undisclosed foreign exchange abroad would be putting that money to smuggle plant machinery belonging to a public limited company which has 28 lakh investors. Mr Chairman, so far so good, but I would like to ask you how much more personal undisclosed money you are going to give to the investors of Reliance Industries Ltd. What are your reactions?

DHA: I have no comments. I assure you I have no comments.

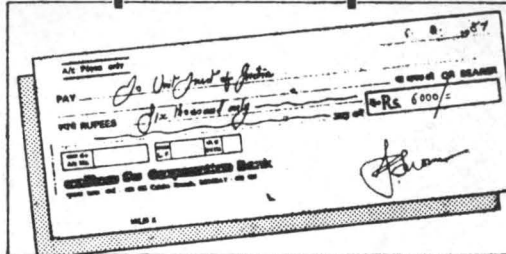
The whole auditorium burst into loud laughter.

Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime minister of India, is worried about Bofors and V P Singh. Understandably. But we hope he will spare a moment to worry about Ambani. ♦

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2	1,300	8	2,600	13	4,700
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4	1,600	10	3,300	15	5,900
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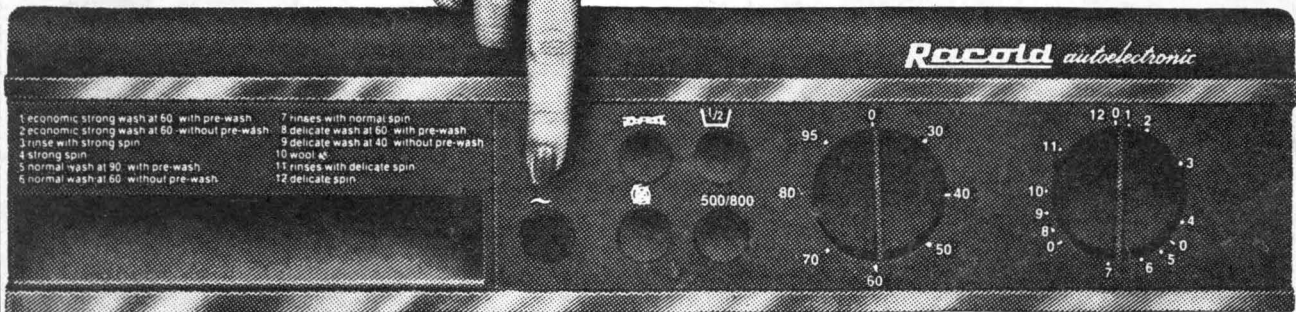
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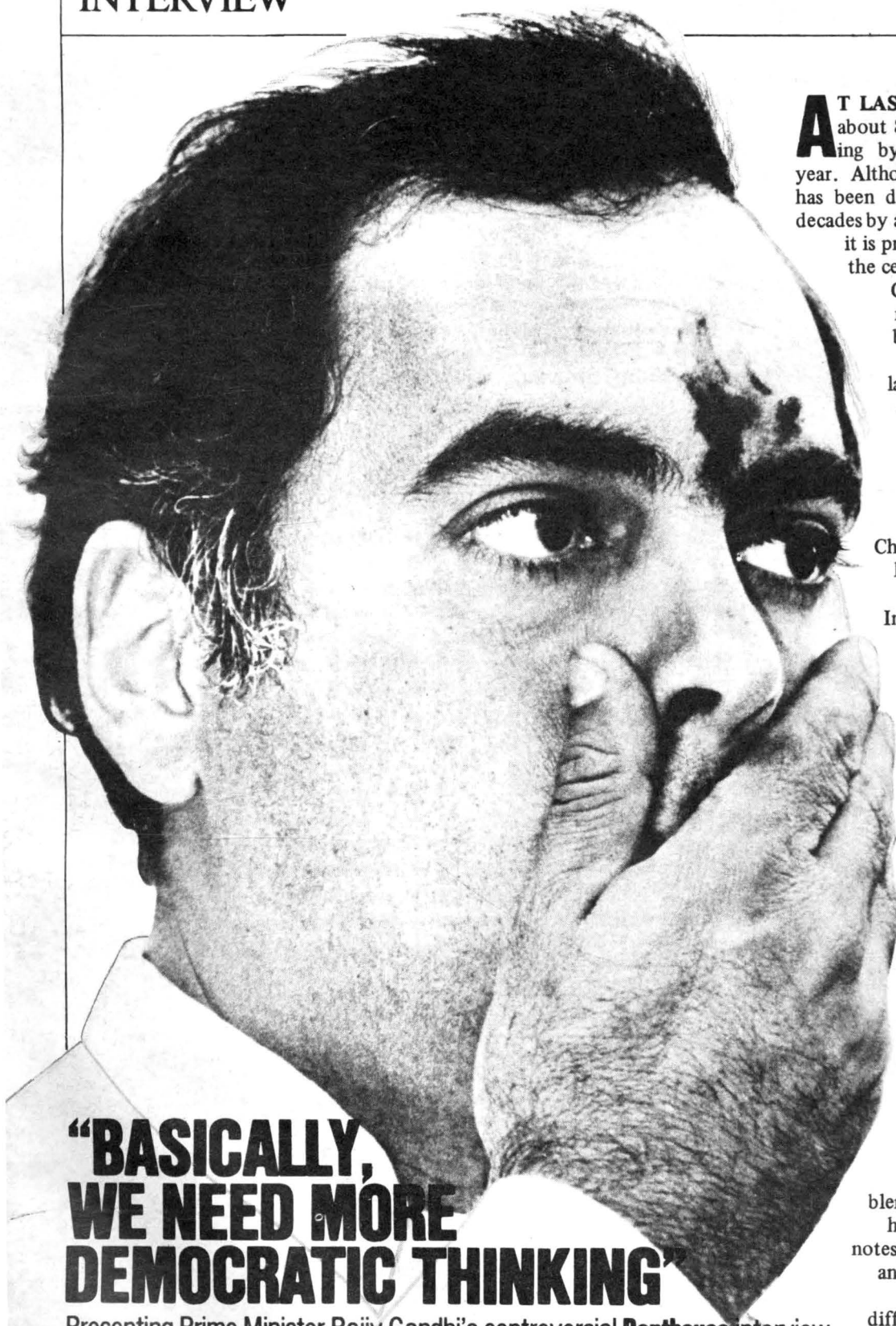


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## INTERVIEW



# "BASICALLY, WE NEED MORE DEMOCRATIC THINKING"

Presenting Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's controversial **Penthouse** interview.

**A**T LAST ESTIMATE, India had about 800 million people, growing by about 20 million per year. Although population increase has been dramatically cut in recent decades by aggressive family planning, it is probable that by the end of the century, India will overtake China — whose population may stabilise at about one billion. By then India may very well be the single largest nation in the world.

In a recent interview with this reporter that appeared in *Penthouse*, Henry Kissinger agreed that India was 'about a generation' ahead of

China in science and technology. This exchange led to a telephone call from the Indian embassy in Washington, expressing satisfaction at the recognition of this point and suggesting that the matter be pursued for *Penthouse* readers by an interview with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi himself. India and Japan —

and, to some degree, Malaysia — are the only democracies in Asia. But India is much more than the world's largest multi-party state: it's also the principal 'non-aligned' country, and an outspoken opponent of power politics whose pronouncements have often grated on Washington's nerves.

But mostly, India's problems with the United States have been, as Rajiv Gandhi notes, the result of its image as an ex-colonial dependency.

Gandhi frets about the difficulty in getting Washington to accept that India has as much right as China to a mind



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**If civilisation is to survive and go into the next phase of its development, we will have to get out of thinking of violent solutions to our problems. We must think of negotiated solutions; attitudes in the UN will have to be different.**

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of its own, and that New Delhi is no more of a mouthpiece for Moscow than Beijing is.

It's true, he concedes, that India buys from Moscow some of the weapons that Washington refuses to sell, but for high-tech weaponry New Delhi depends more on Western Europe. India's objective, like Japan's, China's, and South Korea's, is eventual self-sufficiency in this and other technologies.

When Gandhi spoke in his office in the Parliament building in New Delhi, he was in the midst of a bruising election campaign in three of India's component states. Ambassadors and correspondents were predicting renewed skirmishing on the Sino-Indian border when the Himalayan snows melted; but the premier had just apparently defused a taut border situation with Pakistan, with both sides agreeing to draw forces back from the frontier.

Problems with Pakistan continue. Gandhi expressed concern at an interview given to the London *Observer* by Abdul Qadeer Khan, Pakistan's brilliant nuclear physicist, saying that Islamabad now possessed the means to produce a nuclear weapon. Above all, he regretted that India's relations with the United States had become hostage to the cold war, because the Soviet military involvement in Afghanistan has given Pakistan leverage in Washington.

How genuine is Rajiv Gandhi's 'nice guy' image? Even his critics recall that he opposed his mother, Indira Gandhi's use of emergency measures — and the support his late brother Sanjay gave to them — and also opposed his mother's rigid devotion to socialist economics. As a pilot for Indian Airlines, a government corporation, he knew the drawbacks of the public sector.

This is not the only Indian political canon law that he questions. He says both his grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the British were wrong to set up states on language lines, since this encourages primitive loyalties and leads to demands for yet smaller

states, which he abhors.

But if he differs from his forebears on some things, he shares their distaste for the cold war and the 'balance of power' mentality, which he says makes the world 'dangerous and unstable'. Leading a country that indulges in more domestic political violence than any other, he sees the need for a peaceful, negotiated solution to all problems.

He has largely practised what he preaches, making substantial concessions to the militant Sikh community, despite their slaying of his mother and despite their 'small states' mentality. He sees India's principal long-term problem as being China, in part because of the cultural abyss that divides South and East Asia. China, moreover, remains a contestant with India for influence in Bhutan, Nepal, and India's own northeast provinces, and even in less 'Oriental' places like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and the Indian Ocean islands.

Gandhi, however, sees the world ripe for considerable change and India poised for economic takeoff, its underutilised power grid ready for industrial expansion, although its transportation network needs upgrading and the telephone system deserves a total overhaul. Because Western visitors habitually flatter him for promoting the private sector of the economy, he cites figures to show that public-sector investment has never been higher. India's mixed public-private economy will, he says, remain centrally directed.

Although independent India will be 40 years old on August 15, it is still marked everywhere by the Raj. Like his mother, Rajiv is as culturally British as he is Indian. Born in 1944 in Bombay, he grew up in the house of his famous grandfather, after his mother and father, a Parsi journalist, separated. At first acquaintance, he seems to possess more of his late father's reputed gentleness than his mother's steel. Although he treasures his father's favourite hunting gun, his main pastimes are music and photography.

He was raised by a Danish nanny and went to the fashionable Doon School at Dehra Dun, in the hills. Doon is modelled on elite British private schools, and there was as much emphasis on sport as on studies. He later dropped out of both Cambridge and London universities without getting his degree in mechanical engineering. He subsequently became a commercial pilot, serving with Indian Airlines, the domestic carrier, rather than Air-India, because he already had clear kidnap potential. He married Sonia Maino of Italy, whom he had met at Cambridge, in 1968. Although living, for security reasons, in his mother's official residence, the couple maintained a happy family life.

Their daughter, Priyanka, is said to be more interested in politics than her younger brother, Rahul. For their safety, both are educated at home, somewhat cut off from their generation and from the 'real India'.

The concern with safety is, of course, anything but academic. Gandhi's mother was gunned down, in 1984, by her own Sikh bodyguards — thus making him her successor in place of his much more political brother, Sanjay, killed earlier in a private air accident. In October 1986, he himself narrowly escaped assassination when a gunman's bullets went wide.

One senses that a part of Gandhi empathises with the virulent negativisms about India of such brilliant writers as V S Naipaul and Salman Rushdie. But another part is a character out of Shakespeare: because power came to him as a sort of royal chore rather than by choice, he seems more conscious of his own shortcomings and the burdens of office than most politicians. In fact, shortly after this interview was conducted, Gandhi had to accept the resignation of a close political friend, Defence Minister Vishwanath Pratap Singh, in a scandal resulting from Singh's investigation into possible kickbacks.

On the campaign stump, he appears to identify with the almost changeless rural India, where human

existences are often as nasty and brutish as they are short. In private, his soft features project an image of shyness as he sits in a spotless dhoti and speaks gently with a patrician economy of gesture. He is the portrait of the young manager, the yuppie whose friends from prep school and airline days are more likely to be in business, medicine, or law than in government service. The son and grandson of prime ministers, he seems most at ease when talking about his country's amorphous, challenging economy.

He is a man at home in Western clothes, and he shares his wife's tastes for European cuisine. He usually eschews the old Congress party symbols, from accepting flower garlands from sycophants to wearing his grandfather's 'Nehru cap'. Although he has cleaned out a lot of dead wood from the administration, he is respectful toward elders. Indeed, he has the politeness one associates with princes rather than elected 'leaders'. When the ink in a reporter's pen, bought in the snows of North Asia, expands and leaks in sweltering New Delhi, he notices the tiny drop on the writer's finger as soon as the writer himself and orders an aide to bring a tissue. The voice, which can be petulant in party meetings and rhetorical on the stump, is modulated in private discourse, almost unaccented, and he laughs easily and genuinely.

Behind Gandhi, in his large but Spartan office, maps of pre-British Mogul India are a reminder that there is nothing new in India's patchwork quilt of language, religion, and enmity. From another wall, a portrait of his murdered mother looks on quizzically. It's a reminder that the job he has taken on as a sort of patriotic duty has a poor life-insurance rating, and that he is at the mercy of any impassioned lunatic. Security in New Delhi is now so great that even some establishment journalists have been given government bodyguards.

*Penthouse* knew that its readers would like to learn more about this fascinating modern leader of the

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**Defence is going to be the area where it will take some time for us to get into with the United States, because on earlier occasions, we have had the feeling that the United States has not stood by us in times of tension.**

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world's second-largest nation and agreed that international journalist Russell Warren Howe interview him. Howe comments:

“Being a historian by training and inclination, I began the interview by pointing out that if the United Nations was being founded today, Germany and Japan would have the same permanent-membership-of-the-Security-Council status as France and Britain, and India would have the same status as China. This led to my first question.”

**Penthouse:** Since the end of World War II, India has been viewed in the United States as the largest of the small developing nations. But you can't go on being the largest of the small. What is the future role of India?

**Gandhi:** Well, the role not only of India but of everyone must change from what it was at the end of the second World War. Basically, after that war and perhaps after any major war, there's a search for some sort of balance; what really emerged was what was described as the balance of power, with the victors in the war wielding influence by dividing the world between two groups, each group feeling that it is absolutely correct in its thinking and the other is totally wrong. But each group based its authority on military power. Slowly, that has changed to economic power, but military power still plays a major role.

We feel that this is very dangerous and not a stable situation; to put it more broadly, if civilisation is to survive and go into the next phase of its development, we will have to get out of thinking of violent solutions to our problems. We must think of non-violent, negotiated solutions, which means that attitudes in the UN will have to be quite different.

**In what way?**

The attitudes are still too defensive. If India speaks against a particular issue, or on a particular point, it is not accepted that India can have a viewpoint. It is seen as being 'against

us' or 'for us'. In today's noncolonial world, we don't find that acceptable. We have the right to our own view. You can argue with it, but we have a right to it.

This basic difference in thinking has to come about — and it is coming about, but it's not translating yet into actual action. And that really has to be the next step in the UN system — accepting countries having their own viewpoint, accepting negotiated and discussed settlements, as opposed to violence.

**How much of a nuisance is the post-war division between the victors that we call the cold war? How do you see the future of India's relations with the superpowers for as long as the cold war continues?**

It is a terrible nuisance in every way, mostly because of induced tensions. In our own area, Pakistan is, from our point of view, the most visible tool of cold-war tension.

We have a situation there where sophisticated weapons in large numbers are being brought in. We have a situation in which their nuclear programme is being totally ignored. It is very clear to the whole world that this is a nuclear-weapon programme, yet it is still being ignored.

Their whole nuclear programme is based on — to put it crudely — stolen technology. So the whole programme could have been prevented, but it has not, and the only reason we can see that it has not been prevented is because of cold-war power interests.

**The United States plays Pakistan and China off against the Soviet Union. Doesn't India, in a sense, play the Soviet Union off against China and Pakistan?**

*(Laughing)* Well, we try not to play anyone off against anyone.

**If the cold war did not exist, would your relations with China and Pakistan be easier or more difficult?**

I think they would be very different. With Pakistan, I think there would be no problem at all. With China, it's very difficult to say. (The Sino-Indian War of) 1962 was a very major turn-

ing point in our relations. How much 1962 relates to the cold war is difficult to say. Perhaps '62 would have happened with or without the cold war.

**China captured a piece of your territory with the approval of its ally of the time, the Soviet Union, while President Kennedy supported India. Was this an issue of territorial conflict more than part of the cold war?**

Yes. Those problems are not necessarily linked to the international power struggle.

**You say that without the cold war, you and Pakistan could probably settle your differences. Do you mean that Pakistan would not be able to exploit the Washington link in its dealings with you?**

Yes.

**If there was no conflict between Russia and the United States, would China's attitude be different toward the world?**

Everyone's attitude would be different. It would be much easier to solve problems.

**I wondered if you might think that in some cases it could be more difficult, because the rules would be changed. Beijing, after all, has a lot more in common with Moscow than with Washington.**

Yes, but the rules would be changed, hopefully, away from violent solutions. Because we are still looking at violent solutions! The cold war, by definition, speaks to an ultimate violent solution, which you (superpowers) are trying to stave off.

**The superpowers are nuclearly paralysed. Without the cold war, wouldn't there be more conflict of a less than nuclear but still of a very deadly nature, all around the world?**

Well, we have conflict all around the world continuously. I don't think there has been a year when there has been no conflict. There's the war in the Gulf. South Africa is no less than a major (civil) war. There's Afghanistan and the *mujahedeen* (guerrillas), whom Pakistan supports because it's

the key to aid from Washington. In Nicaragua, we've got a major uprising.

**So why do you think there would be less conflict if the cold war ended?**

Because our attitude to solutions might change. It's not just the cold war. Our attitude to solutions must change across the board. If we only ended the cold war and we still kept violent options as our basic solutions, as we do today, things would be no better. Perhaps they would get worse. What is required is a change in this basic attitude.

**So how do you see India's future relations over the next few years with the United States? It's seemed as though defence supplies have been the touchstone, but you're saying that this is not really all that important.**

Well, defence supplies to Pakistan!

**And the fact that the United States has been less than forthcoming in defence supplies to India.**

We're not really asking (now) for American defence supplies. President Reagan and I talked about this when I was in the United States in June 1985, and what we decided was that after such a long period of differences and suspicion we needed a period of getting to know each other better, and building confidence in each other, before we did something very concrete. The last two years in our relations have been very much in that direction, although we have not had any defence purchases. We have had a lot of high-tech exchange, which has been very good.

**Including defence or 'dual use' technology?**

Well, defence-related, perhaps. Some (new) raw materials, some components which could go into defence. But no real hardware. Defence is going to be the area where it will take some time for us to get into with the United States, because on earlier occasions we have had the feeling that the United States has not stood by us at times of tension, and this has caused problems.

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**Our defence is not totally based on Soviet equipment — which is the view in the United States. Our really high-tech stuff is mostly from Western Europe — France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Sweden, West Germany and Italy.**

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I think it is also necessary for us to clarify that our defence is not totally based on Soviet equipment — which is very much the view in the United States. Our really high-tech stuff is mostly from Western Europe — France, Great Britain, Switzerland, Sweden, West Germany, Italy. Most of our really sophisticated (defence) equipment comes from those countries.

As potentially the largest nation in the world, aren't you also going for a greater level of self-sufficiency, of independence from the superpowers and Europe?

A very high level of self-sufficiency, and of course it will take time to do that. In the really frontline areas, we are not able to get the equipment either from the Soviets or from Europe and we have to develop our own — and we *are* developing our own.

In the long run, wouldn't it be a healthy development anyway, even if there were no problems about supplies?

Absolutely. Except that we have a policy of no export of weapons, which makes it very expensive for us to develop everything, so we can't do all the little things that make up a military system. There's a big lobby in India that wants us to abandon our ban on arms exports; but we feel that India's the last bastion that is really sticking to certain principles, as opposed to financial or monetary or economic returns and putting financial values on everything.

Yes, we have to have a defence. We can't be absolutely hopeless in that domain. But the basic thrust toward reducing the importance of defence is more important than building that defence up.

Dr Kissinger agreed with me recently that India was about a generation ahead of China in science and technology. Do you see any hope of co-operation between China and India? It's very difficult to say at the moment, because the border problem vitiates all our talks.

**Are the Chinese still involved with supporting secessionist and anti-government movements in Assam and elsewhere?**

It's very difficult to say how strong the links are, and it's equally difficult to say there aren't any. (*Staff aide laughs loudly at this evasion*) Okay, there are links, there are!

**Haven't you also said that Nepal is supporting factionalism in the Northeast?**

I didn't make that statement personally. We have some indications, but we're not sure whether the Government of Nepal is involved. But whether that comes from sources other than the government — let's say we've nothing to link the Nepalese government to it.

**Pakistan definitely plays a role in the Muslim-Hindu faction fighting in Gujarat and in the Sikh mayhem in the Punjab. If they would give up their role in internal Indian politics in those areas, could friction between India and Pakistan be reduced?**

Well, it would be easier to have very good relations with them. Now (the disputed border area of) Kashmir is a problem, but we don't think Kashmir itself is the source of the problem any longer. It's only part of the problem. The source of the problem is the strategic interest of the various countries in the zone. If that (element) could be removed, I have no doubt that we could solve our problem.

**What effect does Pakistan's nuclear capability have in the conflict?**

Well, it's difficult to say what they really wanted, with going to the press (about the Pakistani bomb). It's one more bit of information. But the fact is that we have known for a long time that they are close to a weapon.

**Your own bomb capacity is a reaction to the Chinese bomb. The incipient Pakistani bomb is a reaction to your bomb capacity and to Israel's nuclear inventory. They're all interlinked.**

Except that we have not made one. We have not progressed. We've de-

monstrated that it's possible to have the capacity (to do so) and (yet) not make a weapon which few other countries have. In fact, we're the only one not to have gone any further. We really froze it in 1974.

**Doesn't the nuclear world's understandable unwillingness to use 'the bomb' except as a form of bluster increase the risk of minor proxy conflicts?**

There'll never be a shortage of minor conflicts.

**Would you agree that chemical warfare could be almost as bad as nuclear warfare? It's cheaper. It's low-tech, low skill.**

Everyone will have it. That's why I don't talk (just) about nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament is only one aspect. What's required is a change in the way we think. Basically, we need more democratic thinking. If we can solve our internal problems across the table, we should be able to solve our international problems in a similar fashion.

The world is growing towards that. If you look at the countries now and compare them to the countries 500 years ago or 1,000 years ago, by and large they are growing bigger. There's a tendency to have larger countries or larger groupings, in the sense that the European Economic Community is a group which works together in one field at the moment, but which is shifting into political areas as well. So what we're working towards is non-military solutions to our problems. But in the final analysis, we're still thinking in terms of violent solutions.

**Surely this is because there's so much violence on the minimal scale — for instance, factional dissidences in India, compared for instance with factional dissidences in South Korea. I was in South Korea when 100,000 people demonstrated across the country, but only a handful were injured and no one was killed. Here, you lose more people in one riot than we lost in a week in Vietnam.**

We've got to learn the Korean technology.

**Isn't it more in the culture than the technology?**

Well, their society is much more tightly knit than ours, more homogeneous. We have a very heterogeneous society. Traditionally, it's always been a very diverse society.

**And it's poorer — don't the poor take more risks with violence than the less poor?**

Yes.

**Do you really think that democracy can last here?**

Oh, democracy will definitely last here. There's no question of any other way. It would be chaos.

**But it's gone to dictatorship in Pakistan.**

Well, democracy was never there to begin with! (*Laughs*) Just bits and pieces, here and there.

**If the choice is between letting one of the secessionist or pseudo-secessionist factions have its way, or military rule, which would be the lesser of the two evils?**

Oh, I don't think we'd let it get to that sort of a decision. What happens with any society like India's, which is very diverse and which is developing at a fairly good rate at the moment — about five per cent a year at least — (is that development) can't be balanced and (you can't have) development across the board. There will be ups and downs. Then, any development will mean change in the relative position of the various groups. If a group has got a vested interest in a particular system, (then) as you develop, that system will destruct and other systems will come up and replace it.

So there is going to be tension in our society. With such a diverse society, the people who are involved in these ups and downs, if they are not carried along with the mainstream, feel as if they are not getting a part of the cake, and then they try to isolate themselves into their groups.

It may be a religious group. It

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may be one religious group in one area and a different religious group in another area, or a caste group or an economic group. So these tensions come up. But what we have to do — and this is where short-term political solutions are not the answer — is to pull these groups back in, to get rid of their feeling that the mainstream is leaving them behind or leaving them out. The challenge is to pull them back in and convince them that, within the system, there is a role for them and (that) there are definite benefits for them, rather than (their having) a confrontational attitude and telling the government, “You’re bad guys, we’re going to fix you.”

**So you don’t think there’ll ever be any secessions from India?**  
There won’t be.

**But there’ll be more new states within India, like the one you just created in Mizoram.**

I am totally against them. My feeling is that we made a big mistake (in 1947) with (creating states based on) linguistic divisions.

Now, of course, it’s easy for me to talk in 1987! Perhaps if we had not had linguistic divisions at the time of Independence, things would have been quite different and much worse! But today, my feeling is that we should have had geographic boundaries or perhaps just longitude-latitude lines.

**I’d like to talk to you about economics. Am I correct in saying that since you came to office, the changes you have introduced are an attempt at a balance between socialist humanism on the one hand and free-market competition and efficiency on the other?**

That’s true. Except that it’s not I who started this off. It was my grandfather. We call it a mixed economy. I don’t see either an American formula or a Soviet formula or a Chinese formula or for that matter anybody else’s formula as totally valid for India. What we need is an Indian formula. If the formula for the US works,

fine, that’s good. But our conditions are totally different.

The US formula cannot work here. It has to be a formula which suits our conditions. Also, it will vary as the country develops economically, and as the manpower develops.

**Is that what is happening in China?**

The Chinese have been much more — well, I won’t say adaptive, because they’ve been swinging from one end to the other! But the fact is that what’s required is a system which adapts as you develop. We’ve adapted. That’s why we have not had the type of problems which China is facing now in modifying their thing.

Our biggest sector has always been the agricultural sector, as in China. In India, it has always been in the private sector. It has never been tampered with by putting it in the government or state-owned sector. And it’s given us fantastic results.

**Unlike the Soviet Union, for example, you’re self-sufficient in agriculture and food.**

Exactly. I think you can say that India is an example to the developing world. Today, it looks as though agriculture needs a bit of a push or a thrust from government and we’re trying to do that, but by and large we leave farming to farmers.

**What is the situation in the industrial area?**

On the industrial side, the situation is totally different, mainly because we accepted from the start that we were very, very low in actual know-how. We had one or two steel mills. We had a textile industry. Very low technology, and these industries were being killed off to a very great extent. If we had left it to the private sector, the technology would not have been acquired for development.

Now the technology is available, and what is required is for the public sector to concentrate on certain thrust areas and, as the spin-offs start coming, to let those go to the private sector, let the private sector develop them. The public sector has certain very big advantages. You can put the

cutting-edge where you want it. With the private sector, it is very difficult to do that. They're looking for profit. They're not looking for return (simply) in terms of know-how and technology, or developing manpower, or developing certain fields of activity which we might feel necessary for the country. They will react only on economic return.

The public sector must be able to move on, remaining in critical areas and not getting caught up in all sorts of non-specific and redundant things. I see no reason why we should be making cornflakes and tomato sauce in the public sector. That's totally a waste of energy and a waste of investment in money.

And because I see the public sector as the cutting edge and as a necessity at times, you can't ask them to be completely economically viable. If you make a factory in an area where there is no infrastructure, you can't tell them at the same time, "You have got to give us ten per cent return on investment."

**But aren't you going more into the development of the private sector than in your mother's or your grandfather's time?**

Very much more, the private sector.

**What about cooperation with Japan or Korea?**

We're having problems with Japan because their yen goes up so fast. All the companies that are cooperating with Japan are in trouble, because all the imported components cost more.

**What about technology-sharing over the long haul?**

This is another problem. Japan really has very good production technology, manufacturing technology, (but) they're not very good at frontline stuff. If we want really cutting-edge technology in certain areas —

**Computers?**

Computers, for example, even electronics — it's not available from Japan. The United States and Western Europe are much more advanced.

**You've spoken admiringly of Japan**

**and South Korea as models of economic development. Both of those economies are almost as centrally directed as the Soviet Union's. Is this the solution — a sort of state-controlled free market?**

We need some control in India. But we're not disciplined like the Soviet Union or South Korea or Japan. Our people are just so much more democratic and outspoken. You can't put a lid on them. Our character is much more like the American (character) in that sense. If somebody wants to do his thing, he will do his thing. You can't tell him, look, that's not on, old chap.

**Can't you establish such discipline by law, state-directed free enterprise?**

Well, we've been doing it by law. For instance, we have been licensing car manufacturers, and it hasn't worked. And now we're going to have to give them an open market and let some of them kill each other off, until a few are left standing instead of the government killing them (by refusing licences).

**At the Congress party's centenary recently, you delivered a somewhat spirited attack on its abuses and corruption. Could these abuses be due to the fact that, apart from a brief interregnum, your party has been in power for half a century?**

Well, vested interests develop, so there's an interest there.

I think it would be very necessary and good for the country to have a proper opposition party, as opposed to 23 opposition parties with no serious standing in the House.

**Are the 'new rich' a problem here — in regards to the widening gap between the business elite and the poor mass of Indians?**

Not really, because the numbers of the relatively rich are getting larger all the time. It only affects society in the sense that there is a lot of conspicuous consumption — which we are trying to curtail, but it's difficult. This is, alas, a democracy! ♦

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SPECIAL FEATURE



By Man Mohan Singh



# FREEDOM AT MIDNIGHT

"It is still intense. It is still near ..." The shadows of the Summer of 1947 still fall. In this Independence Day feature, MAN MOHAN SINGH relives the pre-Partition days. His soul-stirring story rekindles each nuance, shade and passion of the many midnights preceding the dawn of freedom.

**O**NE DAY, PERHAPS, I would understand the complete meaning of history which demoiselle cranes from the cold North inscribed on the sky, in the Summer of 1947. There is yet another avian language — the language of vultures, wheeling and gliding against the blue sky. A language with a dark alphabet. When would someone decipher these two sky scripts to unfold the greatest epic of human suffering, the amputation of a land on the midnight of its freedom?

That was the time when stray dogs wailed from the village fields, the time when owls hooted during the day. It was the time when the howling of the jackals besieged the village at night, in a strange encounter of the eerie kind. It was the time



## SPECIAL FEATURE

when vultures, like winged scourges in the sky, blocked the view of God.

It was my tryst with destiny. But, as a child, I did not understand what 'tryst' meant.

My memories of that summer are of mangoes swinging juicily from large umbrella-like, canopied tops of trees. After sunset, the dogs would tilt their heads towards the sky, sniffing wind, and cry in a long, soprano-like wail that faded into a growl and ended, with a jerky yelp. The silence that followed was even more chilling. These were the stray dogs policing the village boundaries. These were not pedigreed urban dogs, trained to distinguish the *dhobi* from the doctor. They were dogs living an elemental existence, dogs that had learnt to sniff the undercurrents of eruptions and the winds of history.

I cannot recreate that image now; perhaps not even in the largest amphitheatre; not even through the Star Wars' acoustics technology of sounds or silences from the other world. The greyness of the dawn that used to linger had a touch of a creamy, silken kind; something like a laced curtain that swung over the sunrays. In the *Gurdwara* where people gathered, the prayers were muffled as if wrapped in towels. The morning drumbeat of the village tom-tom portended that the village yet existed, though the number of devotees dwindled. In some mysterious movements, some people disappeared overnight. Perhaps, it was to take shelter in the larger towns, or where one had relations, either in the armed forces or the police. Some left no trace. In the morning after their departure, the doors of their homes gaped ajar in horror and disbelief.

The Canal with Seven Falls was one of the most awesome sights near our village. At night, as one passed over the bridge, it roared and wailed in strange and shifting notes. As children, we were told the story of a blind orphan girl who was pushed by her uncle into the canal in the dead of night. The girl floated for miles

before she was rescued, in the morning, by a saint. She survived the turbulent journey under so many bridges and down so many waterfalls. She lived to narrate how a benign hand had held her's and how she had literally walked on the restless waves. This story used to be narrated with great reverence since the blind girl grew to become a saffron mystic, adored and worshipped by villagers. A small tomb was built for her when she died, although tombs of dead women were never heard of in our area.

The river close to the village was swollen as it eroded huge chunks of earth which fell into the water, breaking... exploding... dissolving. At night, people kept vigil, with the young and sturdier folk standing guard on the banks of the river. They would often report that the river in spate made peculiar sounds, like those of multitudes being washed away in its drunken turbulence.

The pre-Partition chorus of nocturnal noises was conducted by the canal and the river. At night, when the jackals and dogs observed an interlude of auditory ceasefire, the river and the seven wailing falls of the canal roared back. These two watery giants raged as if they were breaking banks, as if they were bulldozing houses incessantly. I still remember hearing noises, and the cries of people borne away helplessly on the roaring, raging waters. On one such evening, a drowning woman was heard shrieking for help. No one stirred to rescue her. In the morning, when people went to the canal to see what had happened, they saw the bloated body of a woman, dead for sometime, spinning in the whirlpool. That night, the wailing dogs held a requiem mass.


If these noises needed an expansive backdrop, it was provided by the evening fires. Late in the evening, we used to stand on the rooftops surveying the horizon. The fires were still far away on the periphery of the *tahuk* town. Soon, while people sta-



red harder, the fires would flame, rage, and spread. As night advanced, we gazed at the distant, fiery prospects. From each and every rooftop, boomed the voices of people who spotted fires wherever they looked. And then, a whole ring of fires blazed as if the large, pre-monsoon ring around the moon was burning in some cosmic circus.

**THOSE WERE WEIRD DAYS** of a terrible insecurity. Under the starry sky, women trembled in fear, as if, apart from removable valuables, they were the greatest target of raiders. Each one, as the evening set in, searched for a small boy to sleep with. Sometimes, the child did not even know the woman whose bed he shared. For us, who were often drafted in this act of sharing and belonging, it was a strangely sensuous experience of fear and desire.

My only participation in the freedom struggle which I can recollect, is



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having tried to hit a white soldier with a stone from a catapult. I remember having hidden behind the parapet, on the roof of a house, while trucks of soldiers passed through the village. We saw them sticking their heads out as the trucks hurtled across the harvested landscape. There were six trucks. I loaded a sharp stone, pulled the catapult cords hard, and let go. I ducked my head, shut my eyes as if I had hurled a shrapnel at a wheeled Goliath. The stone missed the human target and hit the bonnet.

I still remember the stone spinning midway in its journey to the target. I saw some ripples in the village pond as the stone bounced off the bonnet.

The truck screeched to a halt. We loaded our catapults again as a rifle-barrel protruded menacingly from the truck. I still remember how, as we stood up, the soldiers looked amused, and then, one of them waved to us.

As soon as the trucks rattled away, I became an instant celebrity.

Not much later, my village was shaken by a sad happening. Next door to us, a young bride was widowed. Her husband, returning from the fields was killed, suspected to have been stabbed by young fanatics of the other community, living in another part of the village. I still remember my feelings of guilt, for sometimes, many of us used to find strategic, prying positions behind wall-parapets, and watch this young bride bathe with a cot as a screen. She used to massage her body with ash and mud, and then pour bucketfuls of cold water, drawn from the well. The innocent scene used to give us a strange stiffening, deep down in the stomach. I remember how an older boy in our group would roll on the ground each time he saw her bathe, particularly when thin rivulets of water trickled down from her neck through her coat of mud and ash.

When she was widowed, we watched her silently, as the orchestra of women mourners beat their thighs and breasts to draw her out. It was in one of these mourning sessions, that the bride lamented that she used to bathe in ash and mud to ensure that she would be blessed with seven sons. My memory of the mourning, of wails and cries, of huddled women in black skirts, of that beautiful girl sitting with her dishevelled hair and staring at the sky, is still very lucid. It was as if a goddess from the pages of village mythology had lost her husband. I still remember longing intensely, at that time, to be near her, to touch her, to know that she was real. The village partition lines had now been drawn. Till then, in our world of make-believe, no one had thought that anyone would ever come to any harm in our village. A week later, equally mysteriously, a woman from the other community was stripped, killed and thrown into a well.

Sometimes, I wonder about the most important feature of our exis-

tence those days. It was the sky, the colour of it, the grey and black, the sky that brooded over fires raging far-away, the sky that presided over our lives. A covenant which our village had signed with time and the river, long ago, appeared to be engraved on the sky. It was in one such image that the priest of the village, one day, addressed the congregation. In a sonorous oration, he said that we had defiled the sky, and that is why, he divined, the vultures had appeared where once demoiselle cranes from the distant North had circled in beautiful, fleeting, fast-changing formations. Our language teacher, too, said that the formations that cranes made on the sky were of a divine alphabet. But the vultures, he said, autographed the sky in the language of death, spoken only by Yama and the devil himself.

**IT WAS THEN THAT CARAVANS** of people started forming and embarking on long journeys across the far-away border. The Five Rivers had been divided. The caravans or *kafilas* moved across the land like mountain-creeks, and flowed like swollen, drunken rivers taking chunks of earth away with them. These were a strange kind of people. Sometimes, we watched them walk meekly behind creaking carts, keeping to the road in an act of linear discipline. Then, late in the evening, they would break out in a roar, and yell and kill people in the villages. They were like molten lava. As the caravans passed, leaves of trees and tender shoots of plants would disappear, as if after a locust invasion.

It was one such *kafila* which brought the first dose of fire and death to our village. At night, hordes of migrating people camped in the school. They killed the school guard and threw his body into the pond. On departing, they set the school on fire, making a bonfire of desks and black-boards. Next morning, instead of going to the *Gurdwara*, the people gathered at the charred school. What





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was once a song of satchels and multiplication tables, had become a tangle of legs and backs of benches and chairs. Only the names of succeeding generations of students, knifed on the benches and desks, still remained on half-burnt carcasses of school furniture. That day the village priest, barefooted, intoned a prayer for our cremated school, while smoke coiled out of the heap of books and roll-call registers.

Then, one day, another passing caravan struck at our village. In the evening, a villager came gasping and announced that a whole caravan of people armed with spears and guns was moving towards the village. I still remember how, for a moment, we stared at each other, as if transfixed. I remember how we clung to our mother. She was, to us, a hen and the trembling brood of us wanted to take shelter under her wings. All too soon, something exploded like a cannon as marauders broke into the village with death and curses. A long period of brooding fear had produced in our

village, weapons of the most curious kind. Everything that the village had in steel was shaped into an axe, spear or hatchet. Each house had a heap of stone missiles to hurl on attackers. The stone and bronze ages mingled in a strange historical confluence in our village of the 20th century.

And, as the attackers let themselves loose, we all ran, and I, like a chick knowing my cover, dived into a dark room where hay was stacked for the cattle. It used to be our favourite place for hide-and-seek. It was there, for three days, that I would be hiding. The sharp, golden pieces of wheat straw gleamed in fluorescent hope in darkness. The den smelt of freshly harvested fields. The haystack was like a hill enclosed in a room. Therein, I covered myself with straw, keeping my nose and mouth exposed, to be able to breathe.

From all over the village, came shrieks, cries and explosions of guns, as hand to hand battles raged. As houses burned the glare lit up the golden heap of hay, licked by tongued

flames. There, in a nightmare, I thought of stories from other villages where children had been killed and carried on points of spears. Each shriek and wail seemed to be of someone I had known or was related to — a friend, a sister, a brother, a neighbour. In the seizure of fear, I had even forgotten how to cry. I did not want to be ever discovered by anyone, as I imagined spears and hooks probing the hay-stack to pick me up. Then, I dreamt of being carried on the torso of a dead woman. I dreamt of floating on the canal and people closing in on me from all sides with long spears. A sharp pain hit me, like the thrust of a long blade, through my navel. I shrieked and faded with the setting sun as the gold of the straw darkened in the subsiding fires.

With those shrieks in that dungeon, I lost words, as if forever. I am now trying to piece these together as shapes of the dead and the living, the burnt school and the summer evenings, come alive. They are falling into a pattern, into a mosaic of memories and metaphors.

The rest of the story is not mine. It is a story of how I was retrieved from the straw heap three days later. That was the way I awoke to freedom. The last of the caravans had passed. The dead had been consigned to fire and the river. The morning looked less grey and it did not have the touch of the moist, silken, creamy kind. The vultures had mysteriously disappeared from the sky. This was many days after the midnight of freedom. When I emerged out of the dark dungeon, houses and people, and our land had changed forever. Our contact with calendar and time used to be the closing and the reopening of the school. There was no school to go to that winter.

It is still intense. It is still near — the image of a fear unfurled on the mast of a shriek. Perhaps, that is the kind of language in which I can paint the dawn of freedom — the shaft of a shriek, and a fragment of sunlight fluttering on it, as if, defiantly. ♦

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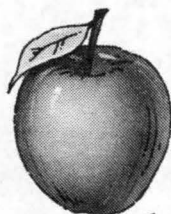
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## GUEST COLUMN

**I AM A PUNJABI**, admittedly a diaspora Punjabi; I speak the language and since 1982 have made several tours of duty to the Punjab to cover the political situation there. Last year, I gave up the two bubbles journalists like to travel in — the rented car and the hotel room — and took to the roads in buses and trucks to stay with whoever would have me. In the last nine months I have travelled through most of the state in this slower, more sensible fashion, meeting hundreds of people and observing their lives rather than merely recording their opinions. (What people tell journalists in the first hour of acquaintance is usually rubbish, what they think the journalist *ought* to hear. This I have found to be a fairly universal rule and it explains why whistlestop journalism the world over is so incredibly facile. You have to stay awhile to begin to observe.)

People often ask me what I think will happen to the Punjab. I usually ask them to read my book about my travels when it is published next year. I am interested in the concrete, the particular; the nuances of experience not the abstractions of trends.

This rarely satisfies my interlocutors. "But when will all this end?" they ask impatiently. I am no soothsayer but when pressed for an answer I compose a nonchalant expression and say "Oh, 30 years, 40 years . . . the 'Punjab problem' will go on and on."

Much as I like Mr Rajiv Gandhi's smiling face I seriously believe this. I do not believe this present leadership is capable of solving the problems that plague Punjab. Further, and far more serious: I do not believe that the political culture of India is ever going to throw up a leader who can find a lasting solution to them. It's not that there are no people who could solve these problems; it's just that our political processes are not going to produce such leaders. Of all the leaders we have had in this century, I believe that one man could have easily won the trust of the hurt Jat Sikhs and brought them around.

## PUNJAB NIGHT WITHOUT END



For many other reasons I would not like to live in an India run by Netaji Subash Chandra Bose but I feel convinced he would have been able to do this job; what concerns me here, however, is the fact that Indian political culture is never going to let a man like that take charge.

When people say that India is a democracy I understand what they

mean but I think it's the wrong word they use. In terms of civil rights it is a joke to think of India as a democracy. All I have to do to demonstrate this is to go to the nearest police station and lodge a complaint that my camera has been stolen, dropping a hint that I think my servant or one of his friends took it. The servant — and, if he is not careful enough to

'confess', his friends — will be beaten and kicked at the police station late into the night. What the readers of **Imprint** enjoy are not, for the most part, civil rights but civil privileges; we do not get beaten in a similar situation because we look like people who know people who know the IG.

Nor, for that matter, is India a democracy, in that the people feel they have the government in their hands, that they have the power to change the government and get a significantly better one. Certainly not at the national level. Quite apart from the 'single party' dominance the Congress has exercised, our Lok Sabha constituencies are far too large for constituents to feel they have a 'power' over their MP, and the sum of money required to run with a chance is so great that ordinary people no longer believe that they could ever join the circus.

And yet, in a very perceptible way, India is a 'democracy'. If there is any doubt one need only cross the border and visit our neighbours. The difference is this: in India we are allowed politics. Collective demands in India are mediated through politics. And for politics to have free play we have rights of assembly and expression. (To those unfamiliar with this Aristotelian conception of politics I recommend Professor Bernard Crick's admirable little book *In Defence of Politics* in which he defends politics from all competing heresies, even democracy.)

**IT IS THIS PECULIAR** Indian way in which politics are allowed free play that makes for our distinctive political culture. When our middle classes speak in a self-congratulatory way about our being 'the only democracy in the Third World', it is the existence of the political marketplace that they allude to. It is the buying and selling of interests and privileges that we have perfected to a fine art. Some people have suggested that India has remained a 'democracy' because of her sheer size; it is impossible to run a sixth of mankind from a dict-

ator's office. Perhaps there is something to this but even more important, the reason why politics has come to stay here is surely the 'bania' mentality prevalent in most of India; the sheer practicality of such an approach.

Consequently political culture has come to acquire quite a few unwritten rules and methods: you tell a lie when you have to; rarely if ever, refuse to do someone a favour — it is permissible subsequently not to do the favour but you must always pretend that you tried. When involved in negotiation or agitation, if you see a vacant space, occupy it; when it becomes difficult to stay there, retreat. One could go on and on, abstracting from standard political techniques but I think you get the picture.

The basic premise of politics is that everyone has a price. The skill of the politician is to find out what the right price is. I hope I do not sound disapproving: it is, of course, a dirty business, but it's better than the havoc idealists have wrought and it is the best protection we have from totalitarianism. Hitler was an 'idealist'; just think how different things would have been if he had a price.

Politics may protect us from the righteous but it brings with it, its own problems. It encourages people to agitate in order to create for themselves political credit. So as to be able to negotiate you must make a nuisance of yourself, but only a limited nuisance, otherwise things might get out of hand. (Longowal belonged to a political culture and understood this principle; Bhindranwale didn't so he didn't recognise the limits. In consequence he could not be tolerated, had to be killed, even if it meant the Government of India had to send troops and tanks into the Golden Temple to achieve this.)

Good or bad, politics has worked in India for the past 40 years with remarkable success. There have been three notable failures, though. One, the Naxalites. Luckily for the system, the Naxalites did not share an ethnic bond that would complicate matters

once the state began to eliminate them in encounters. It is the other two exceptions that have proved more intractable: the hill tribals of the Northeast and the Jat Sikhs of Punjab. I do not think it is a coincidence that both these groups are markedly different from the 'banias' of the plains.

Something that most Indians have never understood is the way Bhindranwale — and his followers — considered himself morally superior to the politicians he dealt with. "Bibi" he would say, referring to Mrs Gandhi, "calls me a communalist. But she too is a communalist. If she can be communal why can't I?" In early 1984, towards the end of his stint in the Golden Temple he used to refuse to meet Longowal unless there was a tape recorder on, to capture their conversations. "*Too ikk gall kehenda hai, pher mukkar jaanda hai.*" (You say one thing then fail to keep your word.)

One could complain that Bhindranwale was wrong, that he was naive and did not understand the necessary deceptions of Indian political culture. But he is dead and gone, and complaining will not help us very much. What is more important is to realise that for the Jat — robber nobleman though he may be and morally defective in his own way — straight talk (*siddhi gall*) is of tremendous importance. We laugh at them in our jokes; what we are really laughing at is their inability to wholly grasp our subtle and devious ways.

In 1849 John Lawrence entered Lahore as Commissioner. The British had finally taken the capital of the last Indian kingdom to put up a resistance to their rule. Within eight years the Jat Sikhs were at the centre of the British defence when the Hindustanis decided to mutiny. How did the British convert their foes into their most loyal subjects? (The canal colonies and the consequent prosperity of Punjab came later.) It is a question I would like the Indian political elite to try and work out. I somehow doubt if it ever will. ♦



## ANALYSIS

*I am one of those police officers who have had extensive contacts with the armed forces. It began with the Hyderabad police action in which I participated, both in the planning and in the operations. I then visited several training institutions of the three forces and learnt about the meticulous planning that goes into training. Most rewarding have been my contacts at the front during two wars. What I saw there made me respect the armed forces for their courage and their sterling sense of sacrifice in war.*

**W**OULD IT BE CORRECT to say that the armed forces look down on the police? Everyone says so. Yet, nobody can do without the police. Not even the army. The two forces are seldom able to come together without misunderstandings, back-biting, and petty re-primations, at the expense of the people and their safety. Even at the height of a riot, when the two should work in perfect harmony, there is friction because the army feels that the police, as usual, have made a mess of it, and that they have been called in to pull them out. In a war situation, the roles are reversed. It is the army that is on the asking side, with the police keeping distance. The army wants more battalions, more protection in the rear, a more intense search for parachutists, and more intelligence. Together, the Indian army and police constitute a formidable force, one to be reckoned with. Divided, they are regarded as precarious safeguards of democracy.

In several countries, the armed forces have played a pivotal role in political life, and sometimes, even subverted democracy. The Indian experience, however, has been quite the opposite. The armed forces have not only distanced themselves from politics, but they have actively and energetically supported democracy; even helped to overcome some of its defects. In the last 40 years, there have been numerous occasions when the democratic process has been under strain, weakened by external forces,

insurgencies, and internal political breakdowns of a serious nature. On each occasion, the armed forces supported the democratic process, and clearly conveyed that they would not be party to adventurism of any kind. Thus, the Indian armed forces provide the developing world with an exemplary model of how armed forces can supplement and support the democratic system.

Yet, it would be a mistake to think that there can never be a military takeover in India. The day may come when the civilian government at the Centre is so eroded with acute political and religious animosities that it will no longer be able to hold the nation together. This may be preceded by a continual weakening of the Centre by unanswered grievances, unbridled extravagance, inflation, and a lack of political decorum. Already, the law-and-order machinery has been strained by external communalism and internal politicisation. If, in a period of economic and social crisis, the political process disintegrates completely, and there are frequent police failures with large, armed gangs roaming the countryside and terrorising and looting its populace, the civilian government may, on its own, ask the military to take charge and tide over the period of serious failure. A return to democracy after that may be difficult. Political failure in a democracy is the chief cause of a military junta.

**THE DISPUTE BETWEEN** the army and the police begins with a basic misunderstanding of each other's methods of operation. The army finds it impossible to believe that a policeman is enjoined by law to work without orders, to act essentially on his own judgement. In turn, the police fail to realise that receiving orders and executing them is the basis of army operations. Protocol stands tall in the eyes of the army. It means *izzat* — command and control. These words, command and control, appear frequently in every discussion.

The main question that an army



# THE ARMY-POLICE NEXUS

The tenuous and volatile relationship between the Indian army and the police has often led to confrontationist rather than cooperative attitudes, deplores K F RUSTAMJI, in his analysis of the army-police equation.

officer asks is: "Whom do you take orders from?"

To the policeman, this is not self-evident. "Orders?" he repeats blankly. "We-ll. . . nobody. The government, perhaps. . . In fact, that is my whole gripe. I do not want orders. The law forbids me from taking orders from anybody. It all depends on our judgement, that of the DM and mine," he asserts.

"You mean you work on your own? I thought so. No wonder the place is a bloody mess."

The policeman replies: "It is the taking of orders which spoils our work. We call it interference."

"But who does your deployment?"

"I am not sure . . . the RI, perhaps . . . No, the City Superintendent . . ."

"My God! No wonder you people are in such a state."

Yes, the differences between the army and the police begin with a lack of understanding of police work, and the constraints that the law imposes on them. It was only when the army did a spell of policing in Punjab that they realised how difficult it is. Never again, they say, because it incurs public displeasure which damages their image for war.

Consequently, the army finds it difficult to take a hard line when it feels it might create adverse reactions. A good example of this were the 1984 riots in Delhi. It was obvious to the army when it was called in, that there was a total failure of the administration — wrong orders by the men at the top, misunderstandings, and a general inability to keep in touch with the public mood and discover what was happening. Saving the situation would have required a lot of gunfire. So, the army treaded cautiously, and made excuses, saying that the right orders had not been given. But, basically, they were waiting for the situation to cool down. These tactics worked, to some extent. Then, an increased presence brought the situation under control.

**THE MAIN POINT** of dispute bet-

ween the army and the police in a riot is what has been called the 'handing-over syndrome'. The army officer produces a document saying that administration has been handed over to the army, and seeks the district officers' signatures. The DM and SP say it cannot be done. Sometimes, they sign under duress. What has amazed me is that the Centre, in order to avoid such conflicts and delays, has never tried to clarify or explain the objectives of the Blue Book which contains instructions prescribing the action that should be taken when the army is called in by the civil administration. Just a single meeting under the Home or Defence Ministry would resolve this problem, and save officers in the field from controversy at a difficult time.

The army and the police are the two forces which ought to be able to work in unison during times of peace and war. Each can greatly strengthen the other once they make an effort to learn more about each other. Common training programmes, visits to the border, frequent seminars at training institutions, studies, even lending officers to each other, would help a lot. But the objective should not be to make the police similar to the army. It cannot be so since their roles are totally different. The main aim should be designed to understand and appreciate each other, and to learn to be friends, not masters.

We are entering a period of political upheaval, in which a weakened Congress will be fighting with repressive tactics. The right and left wing parties will give their own answers to violence. If there is large-scale drought or famine, or some other serious calamity, our stability as a nation will depend upon the firmness of the administration. We will then have to produce an administration in which there is harmony between the various departments of government, backed by the armed forces wherever and whenever required. It is towards this vital task that all thinking men in the civil and armed services and the judiciary should direct their attention. ♦

*The most common site for army-police confrontations: a riot situation.*



## SPECIAL REPORT

**T**HE FIRST SHARP WHISTLE blows as the dust begins to settle over the park. One short burst and the *shishu swayamsevak*s (under eight years of age) run over from where they have been chatting in the distance. There is much good-natured jostling as they form a haphazard line. A stern look from the leader and the serpentine queue straightens its coils.

Another whistle summons the *bal swayamsevak*s (adolescents), and the next one, the *taruns* (young men). As the *praudaks* (elderly men) get into line, my guide, Dr Tupkari quietly slips into the queue. The ceremony of lowering the *bhagwa-dhwaj* (flag) is about to begin, and as a good *swayamsevak* (volunteer), it is his duty to pay his respects.

What follows has a slightly unreal air about it. Till then, the groups had spent their time playing games in the park. Incidentally, none of them apart from their leaders, are dressed in the uniform of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) — a white shirt and loose *khakhi* shorts. But now the mood changes dramatically. In solemn silence, they watch their leader march awkwardly upto the flag and salute it. The waiting *swayamsevak*s follow suit.

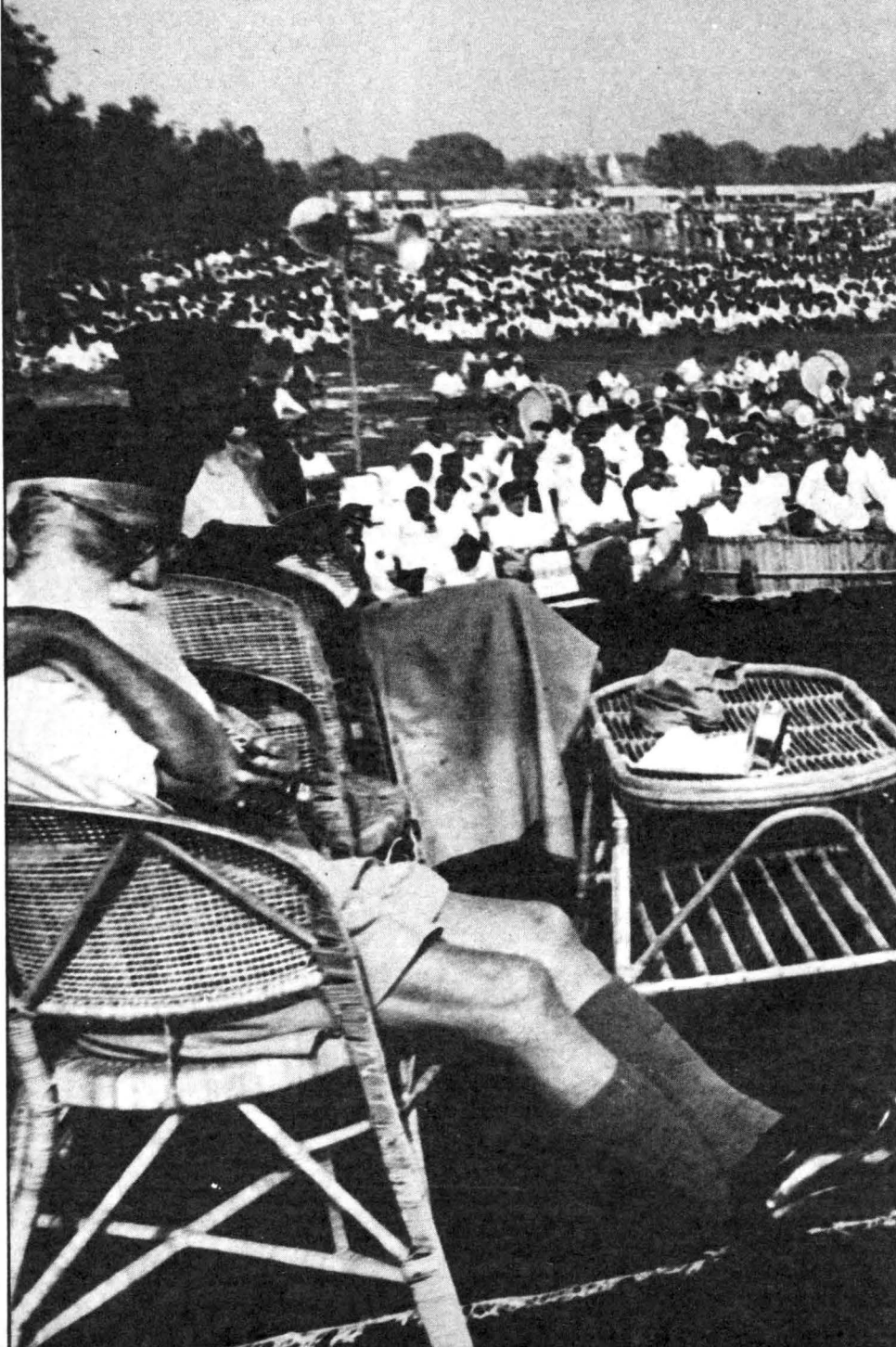
And then, in the gathering gloom, the chant begins. "*Namaste sada vatsale matrubhoomi*," intones the leader loudly.

"*Namaste sada vatsale matrubhoomi*," the *swayamsevak*s shout in response.

"*Tya Hindu bhoomi sukhavadeeto han*," the leader chants in a curious monotone. And the assembled gathering echoes the chant. Painstakingly, they repeat the four stanza prayer line by line, exalting the virtues of the motherland, vowing to avenge any harm that might come to her, pledging to sacrifice themselves, and promising to control any divisive tendencies in the nation.

The prayer ends and darkness sets in. The white shirt of the leader is barely visible as he approaches the saffron-stained flag — lying limply

# RSS THE HINDU CITADEL



In recent times, few organisations have commanded such a following, or generated as much controversy, as the RSS. Founded in 1925 to realise their concept of a Hindu Rashtra, today it boasts 22,000 centres nationwide, and a band of loyal swayamsevakas dedicated to spreading its ideology extensively.

Despite the growing popularity of the organisation, dissenting voices can be heard. On these pages, IMPRINT provides fresh insights into the workings of the RSS.





## SPECIAL REPORT

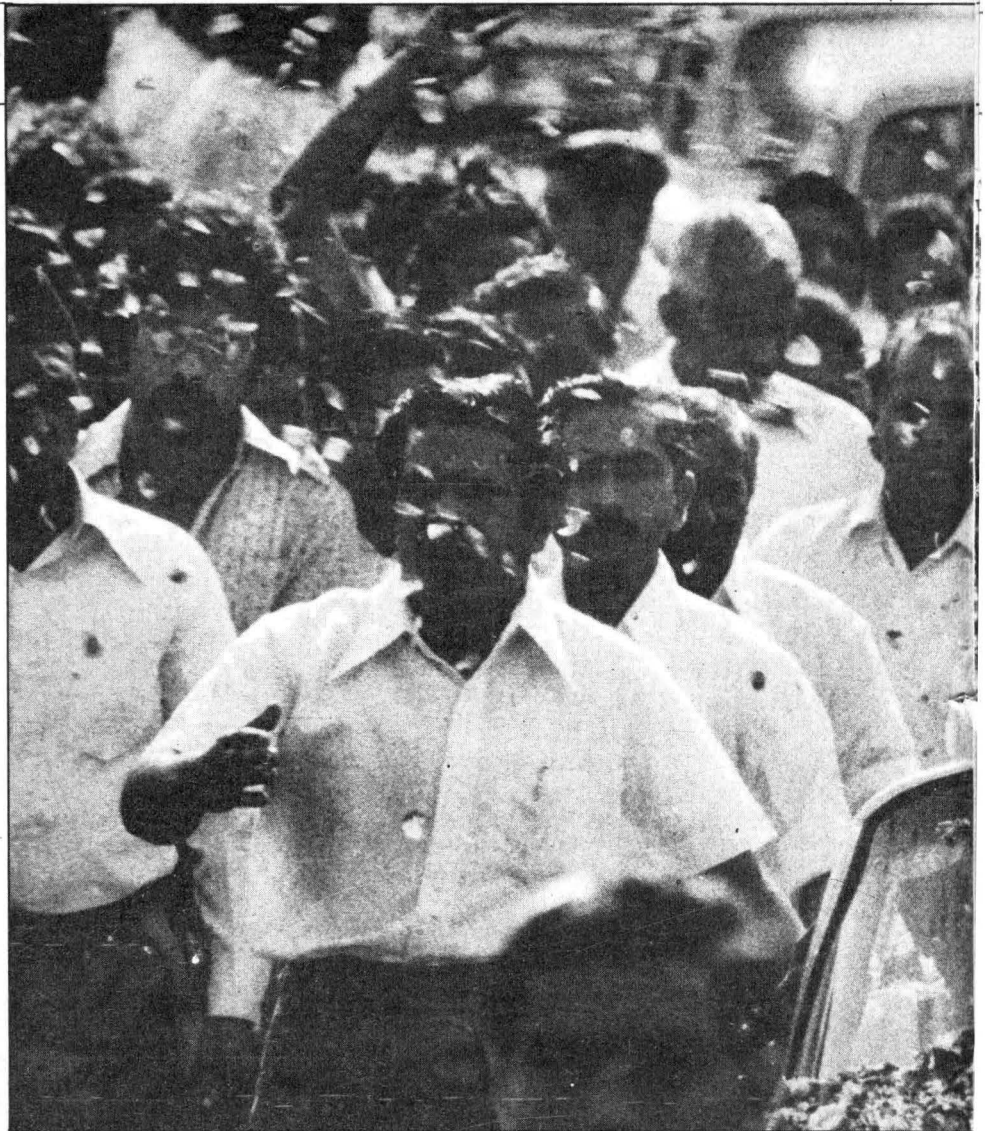
against the stick. He removes the flag and after folding it carefully, he mock-marches back to place. And, at long last, gives the one short blast on his whistle that the congregation has been waiting for.

A lively chatter emanates from the assembled groups as they break formation and loiter back to their homes. Another day has ended.

As we walk away from the Rana Pratap Nagar *shakha*, Dr Tupkari takes pains to interpret the prayer. There is no incitement to violence, he asserts. Instead it exhorts the motherland to enlist the services of the *swayamsevak* — his blood will be shed for her if she so desires. The language is Sanskrit, a medium that unites various regions of India. Dr Tupkari believes that people who describe the RSS as communal or unethical should listen to this prayer. They will immediately discover that this is not so.

Earlier in the park, Dr Tupkari had explained how the RSS functions. There are 22,000 centres all over India, and each, in turn, has several *shakhas* (branches). The Nagpur centre, for instance, is made up of 210 *shakhas*. It is impossible to say how many *shakhas* exist nationwide as no formal count is kept. But he is certain that the RSS has a national following, or a network, which surpasses that of other similar organisations.

"There is nothing sinister about the organisation," Dr Tupkari explains. "Children and young men gather daily in the *shakhas*, to exercise, play games and do *yogasanas*. In addition, judo (or *niyudha*, the art of self-defense without a weapon) is taught and lathi-wielding practised. Besides this, of course, there is 'mental training'." Dr Tupkari pauses as he wonders how best to explain it. "Depending on the age group, different subjects are discussed. Initially, only stories about our cultural heritage are narrated. Later, these are explained in greater depth. Finally, the *swayamsevaks* are informed of the contemporary status of Hindu



RSS sarsangchalak Balasaheb Deoras.

society vis-a-vis the rest.

"We are trying," Dr Tupkari continues, "to cultivate a sense of pride in our history, a feeling of belonging to one nation and a commitment to do something good for the country."

**THE STRUCTURE ITSELF** is intricately planned. Each locality has a *shakha*, which all the neighbourhood boys are enticed to join. Since 'attending a *shakha*' means fun and games, young boys attend enthusiastically in the initial stages. Later, depending on the enthusiasm shown, a boy is chosen to head the unit. Most of these boy leaders have an excellent rapport with their colleagues, and can demand their attendance at any RSS function at short notice. Much later, having displayed total dedication to

the Sangh, *swayamsevaks* may be sent as *pracharaks* (full-time workers) to other districts, to spread the ideology of the RSS.

"This is why this organisation is unique," Dr Tupkari later explains at his home. "The *pracharaks* are sent to live in different areas, sometimes far away from home, in regions where even the language may be alien. They are not even paid. And yet, we have at least 2,000 such workers in the RSS. No one in the Sangh seeks to gain anything, or hankers after a post, and very few actually leave the organisation. They may not come to the *shakhas* regularly but their goodwill is there for us to draw upon at short notice."

According to Dr Tupkari, the fact that the RSS preaches a 'Hindu



Rashtra' does not make it anti-national. "After all, who is a Hindu?" Tupkari asks rhetorically. And replies, "Anyone who considers India as his motherland, as a sacred land. No Muslim, for instance, has ever been barred from attending a *shakha*."

But wouldn't the lathi-wielding and judo training intimidate even like-minded Muslims? Could they actually ever identify with the RSS? Dr Tupkari is quite firm: "There have been Muslims who have joined the organisation but who have dropped out subsequently. We do not bar them. And as for their feeling threatened, if a united force of 20 crore people can feel that way, what about the Hindus who are in greater disarray?"

"To say that Muslims are in the

minority, and therefore should be treated gently, is a timid view. It means that you are not willing to insist upon your rights. Only a weak society would allow its citizens to defy or live beyond its codes. To rectify this, we must tell them: 'Look, keep quiet, or else you will be dealt with as criminals.'

"Have the Hindus ever demanded that the Muslims should not have religious processions?" Tupkari continues, well in his stride by now. "Have we ever stopped them? And yet they constantly threaten to sabotage ours. The problem is that Hindus do not realise what the enemy is like. Do you know that in certain parts of Kerala, when Hindus walked through a Muslim locality they dared not hitch up their *lungis* and walk because it

wouldn't have been allowed? Now, with a strong RSS base there, the *lungis* are pulled up. There are many such fights but at least they show that we're willing to stand up for our rights."

Not surprisingly, when pressed for names of Muslims who have been RSS members, Dr Tupkari can come up with none.

**THE RSS HEADQUARTERS** in Nagpur is a staid building with an unimpressive mud-road entrance. Outside, next to the lone tree is the *bhagwa-dhwaj* – the flag which replaces the guru in the eyes of every *swayamsevak*. You are proudly informed that this was the very tree under which Dr Keshav Baliram Hedgewar gathered with a few friends on Vijaya Dashmi Day in 1925, to discuss an idea which had been germinating in his mind for quite a while.

Dr Hedgewar, according to RSS legend, was an active member of the Congress during his youth and knew Gandhiji personally. Disgruntled with the Congress and the way it was run, Dr Hedgewar decided to start his own organisation. What had sustained the country, he decided, was not organisations like the Congress, but the Hindu society. Foreign invasions and subversion had only been possible because the society had become fragmented and easy to infiltrate. Had there been unity, there would not have been any conquests, or easy victories for Muslim and British invaders.

Dr Hedgewar, therefore, formulated the concept of the Hindu Rashtra – or way of life. If Hindus could be made aware of their great tradition, their immense cultural heritage, and could be taught to unite against anyone who planned to divide the motherland, a powerful society would emerge. Having witnessed the battles for money and power in the Congress, he decided that finances for his organisation would only be accepted annually on Guru Purnima, when the *swayamsevaks* would salute the flag (their guru) and give as much as they could afford for the day-to-day running of



## SPECIAL REPORT

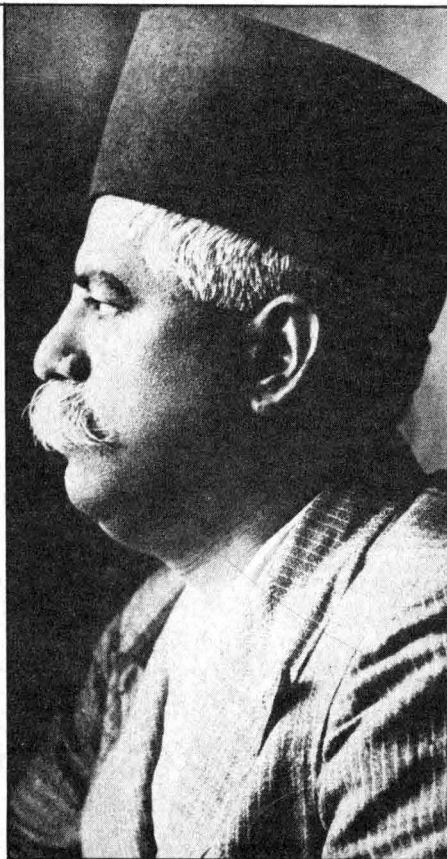
the RSS. With this money, Dr Hedge-war vowed, the RSS would run itself. Practically every area has its own collection. The money is then given to the *nidhi pramukh* of the branch concerned, who will be responsible for maintaining proper accounts, which are annually audited.

Most questions about the amount of money collected are naturally evaded. The claim is that nobody knows for sure, since each *shakha* more or less has its own 'expense account'. For instance, Nagpur, according to conservative estimates, collects about Rs 4 - 5 lakhs annually. Since it is only one of 22,000 centres, finances seem to be no cause for concern.

Since even the *pracharaks*, the full-time workers of the RSS, are not paid, the funds are ostensibly utilised for functions, travels and charitable purposes. Every other aspect of Sangh work — including the camps that the aspiring *swayamsevak*s attend — are paid for by the members themselves. *Pracharaks*, in fact, lead very hard lives, and often do not have sufficient funds for their own meals and are consequently forced to rely on the generosity of the Hindu Sabha.

But the *pracharaks* are apparently proud of their spartan life-styles. Mr Didolkar, member of the Nagpur University Council and Executive Committee, contentedly reminisces about his life as a *pracharak* in Tamil Nadu. While he talks, looking up from his *paan* preparations from time to time to emphasise a point, you realise what a lonely life he must have led, way back in 1947.

"I was sent to Tamil Nadu only for two reasons," he says softly, with the air of a man settling down to a long tale. "I could speak English, and I was expected to establish as many centres as I could. At that time, there was an anti-North feeling amongst the Tamilians," Didolkar recalls, gazing out of the window. "They used to refuse to recite the RSS prayer because it was in Sanskrit. They said they would only recite it if I translated it into Tamil. I used to tell them



RSS founder Dr K B Hedgewar.

that Hindi was a North-Indian language, but Sanskrit wasn't, and that if they were going to be part of an all-India organisation, a common language should be observed, whether in the North or the South.

"Yes, it was hard at times. The minimum maintenance we would be given was Rs 30 in those days. Now it has risen to Rs 200. Usually, some local worker would invite us to eat at his house, and we'd soon become a part of his family."

Currently working in the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Didolkar is nostalgic about those years spent trying to establish centres in remote areas. He has, it seems, been through it all: learnt a new language in order to be able to communicate with his *sevak*s, gone to jail during the 1948-50 nation-wide round-up of RSS workers (after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination) and sacrificed the security and support of a wife and family to devote his life to the Sangh. And even now, through the ABVP, he

channelises his energies to recruit fresh members for the RSS.

"Today," Mr Didolkar says with his dreamy, faraway look, "no sphere of life remains untouched by the RSS. The original idea was to send crusaders into various fields to spread our philosophy. Now there are active RSS workers and members in almost every organisation — be it a trade union or a political party."

**DIDOLKAR STRONGLY DENIES** the presence of any communal beliefs in the organisation. "In fact," he asserts forcefully, "the RSS recognises neither caste nor creed, to the extent that I do not even know the castes of my colleagues."

However, can any organisation that has no members other than Hindus claim to be non-communal? There is a slightly fierce gleam in his eyes as he says, "Of course, other communities are represented in the RSS. Jal Gimi, for instance. He's not a Hindu. And there are Muslim sympathisers. . . In fact, we consider the Parsis to be a part of the Hindu Rashtra because they live in peace." (Later, it emerges that Jal Gimi is not a member of the RSS but of the erstwhile Jana Sangh.)

"Actually", Didolkar says sharply, "if you call us communal, we don't mind. But if you call us fascist and accuse us of subverting the government, we object. For instance, have we ever found a reason to start Hindu-Muslim riots in Nagpur? There never will be a riot here because we are in the majority and the Muslims know it. They behave themselves." Mr Didolkar concludes brightly, a little too brightly, "I would like to say that I am proud to be an RSS man."

Dattatre Anandrao Pande apparently was not. An agile man with a shock of white hair, he explained that he joined the RSS when he was 11 — in 1930-31 — mainly to play games. "Their concept at that time was that only Hindus should rule India," he explains. "They taught us to hate Muslims, that Muslims were intruders and should be driven out in order to free the Hindu Rashtra.



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## SPECIAL REPORT

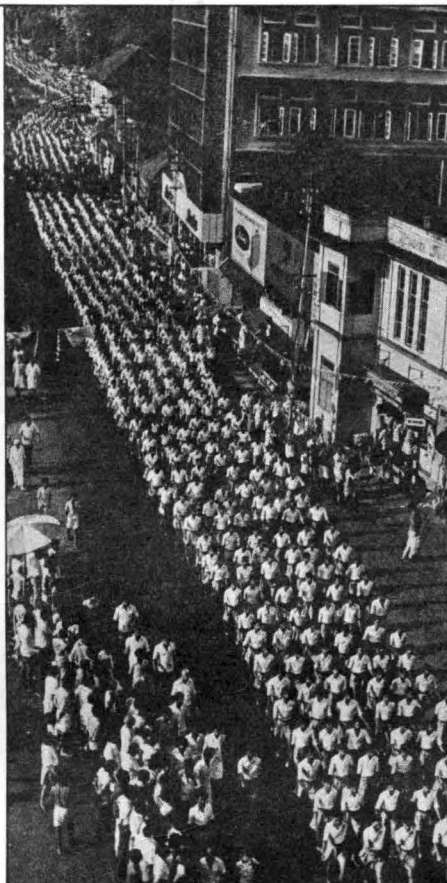
They also wanted to defame Gandhiji (saying that although he was old, he slept with young girls lying next to him).

"Today, I feel that their approach is totally negative." Pande pulls back the short springy hair from his forehead as he continues: "They never discussed Hinduism or what form of philosophy they wished us to follow. They were definitely a militant organisation. I think it significant that the rise of fascism in Europe and the rise of the RSS in India took place more or less simultaneously."

Pande pauses to consider. "There was no opportunity to oppose your *sarsangchalak* (chief). At that time, all attention was centred around Hedgewar. This was what prevented the intelligentsia from remaining in the organisation, which believed that a new entrant should express great respect for the RSS. One could abuse Gandhi or Nehru, but not Hedgewar. Now, is that normal?"

D A Pande recalls how, upto the age of 13, he regularly attended his daily *shakha* meetings. By the time he was 14, he was already visiting places like Mandla, Ghotegaon and Narsinghpur for RSS work. "Local residents extended their hospitality to us when we visited their towns. More often than not, the Hindu Sabha used to entertain us," he says with a slight lisp. "But I now feel that the RSS does not look after its workers. For instance, Mr Doshi, one of their *prant pracharaks* (district heads) died recently in miserable conditions and nobody bothered about him. Isn't that callous treatment of someone who made considerable sacrifices for the organisation?"

Pande worked in Mysore as a *pracharak*, from 1938-42. He was present when a directive issued by Dr Hedgewar said a uniform was needed for the RSS. In 1942-43, Pande wished to work towards famine relief in Bengal, but his request to be sent there as a *pracharak*, was rejected. Then came a stint in Bihar followed by Mahatma Gandhi's assassination after which many RSS workers were



*Sevaks march through Trivandrum.*

imprisoned for two years. Ill-health prevented further activity, and Pande was forced to return home.

"You must understand," Pande says, "that at that time, I was as eager to work for the RSS as anyone else. I wanted to go to Assam, Bengal — all the areas where the Sangh would have had difficulty establishing itself. But I wanted to get married before I went there."

Refused formal permission to marry and yet told to continue working for the RSS as a *pracharak*, Pande began to increasingly question the Sangh's activities. "I asked Gurujii Golwalkar (the second-in-command) why the RSS had not exercised its power at the time of the Partition. He replied that the South had not been prepared." Pande looks sceptically at me and smiles. "But I knew that was not the real reason."

"Most of what they say is not true," Pande continues. "They say they are not communal yet they don't

want Muslims and Christians in their ranks. They used to preach against Communism and the same hatred is being preached today. They say that you can join any political party but they didn't really approve of my joining the Congress. It's not that they openly condemn you, but you soon find that you are an outcaste."

"However, within the RSS there is dissent. At the time Dr Hedgewar died, there were two distinct groups: the cultural one led by Gurujii, and the political camp led by Balasaheb Deoras. Even now, very few people are aware that Deoras (now the *sarsangchalak*) had dissociated himself from the RSS for seven years after Gurujii was appointed. He had hoped to be the chief. Personally, I too feel that there was something wrong in the appointment: how could Dr Hedgewar, lying in a coma during his last few days, have been able to verbally appoint Gurujii as his successor?"

"So you see, even way back then, there was an ongoing struggle for the RSS to become political. And ever since Deoras came to power there's been no doubt that they plan to dabble in politics. They have their own front organisations like the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad. It was at an Officers' Training Camp that the plot to unseat Mrs Gandhi took place. And it was for political gain that the RSS and Jayaprakash Narayan joined hands..."

Mr Pande seems to have run out of things to say. But in spite of an earlier assurance that his comments could go on record, he becomes a bit wary as he leads me to the door. "You can repeat what I have said," he says, "but don't mention names, will you? It's not that I am afraid," he adds quickly as he reads the question in my eyes. "But, you know, one has to live in Nagpur amidst these people. And it's not always easy."

As I leave him at the gate, I realise that the fear that has gripped him is not unlike that with which the public responds to the RSS, their cultural and social achievements notwithstanding.



**W**HEN VIJAY AMRITRAJ, a creaky old 33, lacking the physical fitness and driving ambition which characterise the play of fellow veteran Jimmy Connors, requested the 1987 Wimbledon Committee for a wild card entry, he must have set the stiff upper lips a-quiver. Eyebrows must have delicately risen, and clipped Oxbridge accents questioned the motives of the Indian for whom tennis seems to have become a sideline in the last four to five years.

Was the US-based Indian, who by June, had slid to the rank of 377th in the world, attempting to play in the world's premier tennis competition for old times' sake? After all, he had played in 15 earlier Wimbledon, although his best achievement at the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club had been a quarter-final loss to Jan Kodes, in the Pro-boycotted competition of 1973.

Reluctantly, perhaps because he would prevent a talented, young aspirant from displaying his 'very British' prowess on the hallowed grass, and purely for old times' sake, the Committee granted the request of the Indian, whose insignificant ranking barred him from the qualifying rounds. After all, they must have reasoned, Vee-jay had possessed the ability and experience to tame a couple of fast, fit and raw youngsters before he himself came a cropper.

It would also appeal to the spectators — the classic Youth-versus-Experience battle. Besides, the old-timer did speak rather impeccable English which would broadcast well on good old BBC, should there be a need for a standby programme in the event of rain. "Oh, the rain is an old friend at Wimbledon," Vijay told viewers. "I would be disappointed if it was absent. I've brought my broly along, you see."

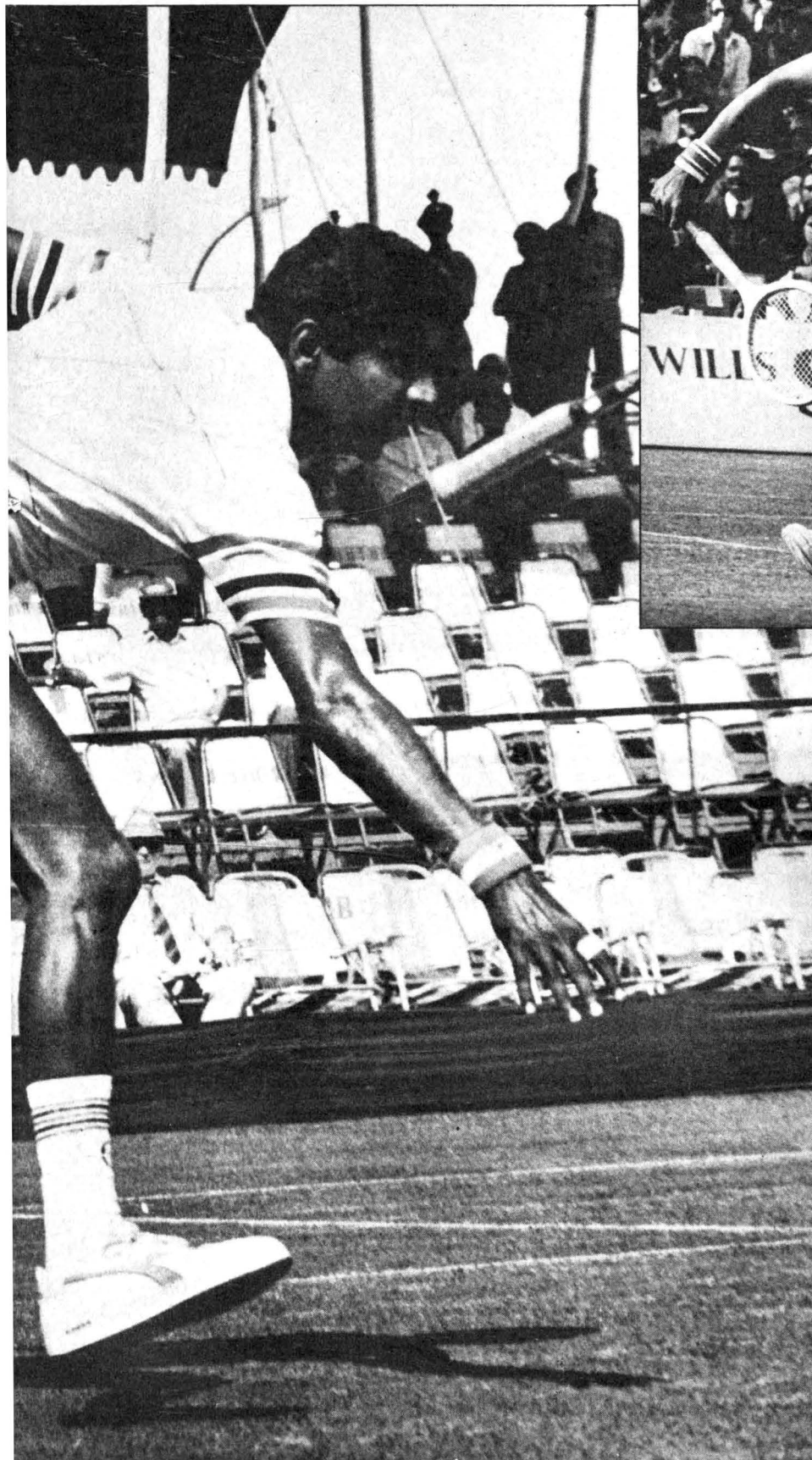
**THUS, VIJAY OBTAINED** one of eight wild cards which allowed him to participate in the main draw of Wimbledon 1987. He did tame a fit, fast young European, ranked 300



## DAVIS CUP — GAME, SET AND MATCH

The Davis Cup competition is a team event with a charm all its own. Its special magic lies in collective co-ordinated effort rather than individual merit. SHIRISH NADKARNI delivers an informative and lively commentary on India's entry into this year's Davis Cup semi-finals, on competitive tennis and on India's own tennis aces.

By Shirish Nadkarni



*India's aces: Vijay Amritraj and Ramesh Krishnan.*

places above him on the ATP computer, leaving poor Damir Keretic bewildered at the stream of smashing shots from the veteran's racket and a twist of the ancient wrist, along the sidelines. He then went down, as the bookies had predicted, to American Scott Davis in the second round, and finished as a non-qualifier.

Had the Committee chosen to ask the Indian for his motives in seeking that wild card, they might have been surprised. Vijay was at Wimbledon not for old times' sake. His motive was crystal-clear: "I entered in order to get grass court practice, with next month's Davis Cup quarter-final tie against Israel in mind. I have always said — give me a couple of invigorating matches on grass, and I will be in good form for the Davis Cup, particularly if it is played on grass in India. In fact, I played at Queens, the Stella Artois Lawn Tennis Competition which traditionally precedes Wimbledon, only to gain that extra grass court touch."

Those who saw Vijay beat Keretic in straight sets had mixed feelings at the end of the encounter. The tall,



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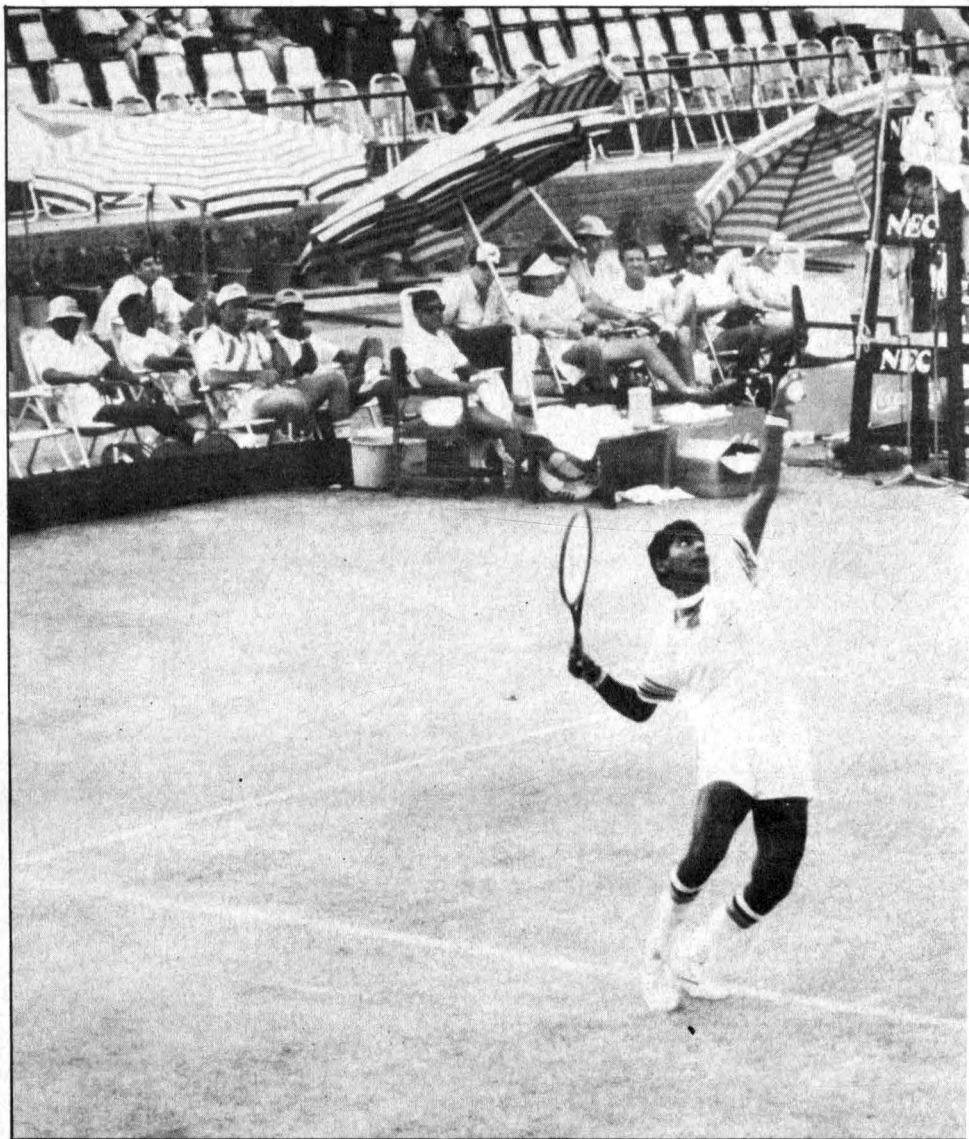
dark Indian was a good eight years older than his 25-year-old West German antagonist, but the sparkle was evident in his strokes as he made the younger man chase the ball all over the court with a series of beautiful passing shots and cleverly disguised lobs.

At the same time, he was as slow, stiff and ponderous as a gracious old elephant, appearing painfully stiff while he bent and stretched at the net, particularly for the dipping forehand volleys. He looked like a typical injured soldier, with a back support showing clearly through his sweat-soaked T-shirt, a taped finger à la Borg, and thick ankle-bands, not to forget a retinue of mostly female admirers. However, the manner in which he varied the pace and direction of his service, making the German constantly misjudge and mis-hit, was an education in itself.

**THE VETERAN WAS AWARE** of the heavy burden he carried on his broad shoulders, even as India prepared to face the highly trained, young Israelis on the pacy grass courts of Huz Khas, New Delhi. In his 18th Davis Cup competition, Vijay was faced with the familiar prospect of having to play both the singles and doubles, for all three days of the tie, if it proved a long one.

It was indeed ironic that India and Israel, ranking low among the 16 nations in Category One of the Cup, were vying for a place in the last four, while stronger nations like Argentina and Czechoslovakia, their respective pre-quarter final rivals, had to battle hard to avoid relegation from the premier classification. The insipid display by Aaron Krickstein, Jimmy Arias and Co. forced the former and frequent champion, the United States, into a similar position against West Germany.

**THESE TWO COUNTRIES** with recent Wimbledon champions in their teams, had to play against each other to avoid relegation. The US failed in



*V. Amritraj: Sealing India's entry into the Davis Cup semi-finals.*

its bid when Boris Becker, who had bagged Wimbledon in 1985 and 1986, slipped the ball across John McEnroe, the 1981, 1983 and 1984 Wimbledon champion, in a magnificent, five-setter which lasted more than six hours, and is considered one of the finest Davis Cup singles matches of all times.

And so, the likes of McEnroe, and the newly crowned champs of the Wimbledon men's doubles, Ken Flach and Robert Seguso, will play in the Little League, as Category Two is disparagingly called on the pro circuit,

in the 1987-88 competition, bitter in the knowledge that the Mansdorfs, Glicksteins and Amritrajs will continue to adorn the premier classification next year!

But then, that is the charm of the Davis Cup — a team competition, whose essence and special magic has always escaped lone wolves like the current world No 1, Ivan Lendl. "Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said, 'This is my own, my native land' " are the poet's words that come to mind



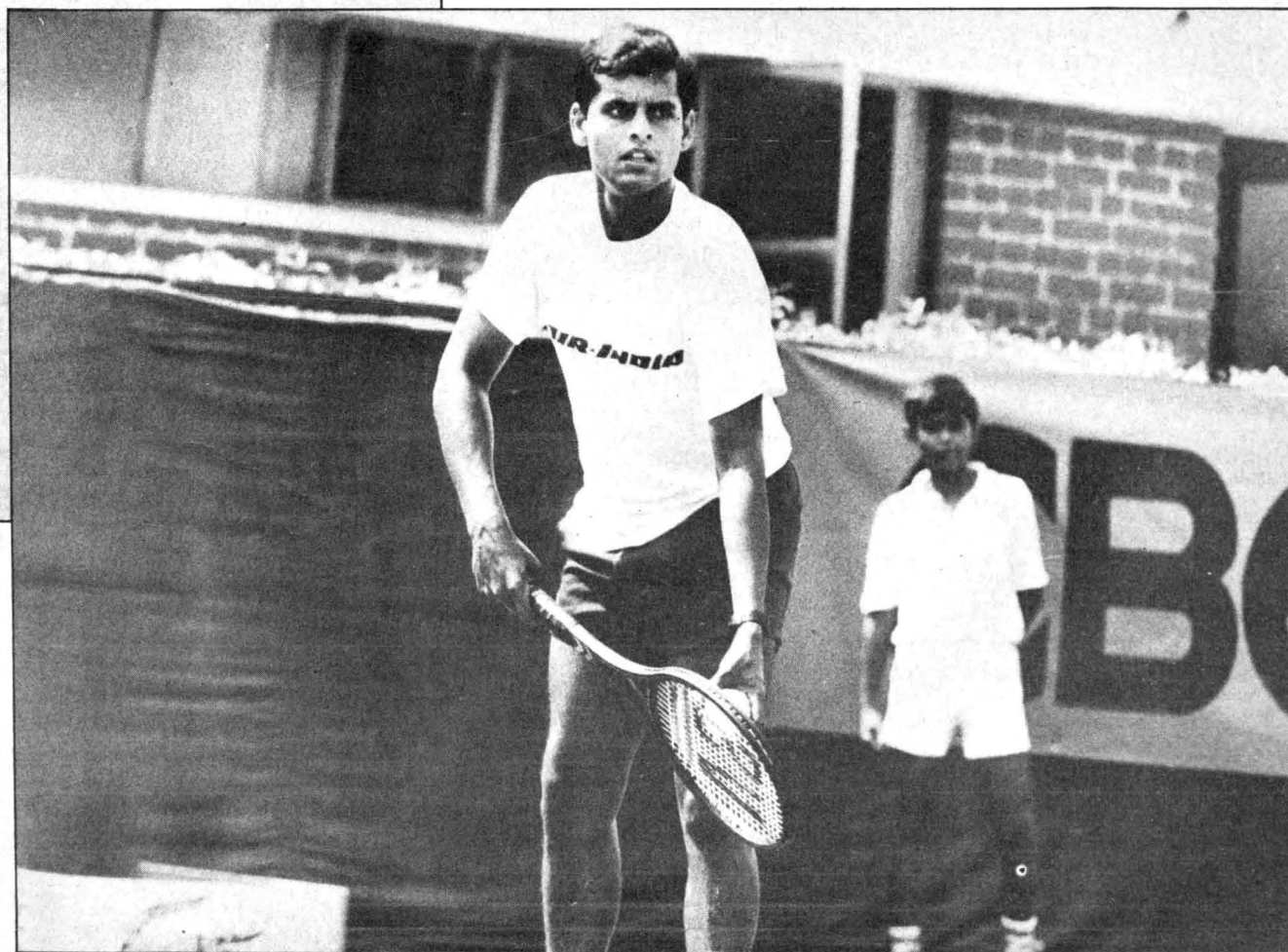
when one eulogises the manner in which a player can rise so much above his own capabilities, and produce for his country, a performance he might have been incapable of in individual competition.

**THE CUP ITSELF**, more properly called the International Lawn Tennis Team Championship, originated in the rivalry between British and American players, whose parallel may be found in cricket in the bitter fight between England and Australia for the 'Ashes'. It was first played in 1880, when an Englishman, OE Woodhouse, carried away the first 'Championship of America'. A dozen years later, the British initiated an international team event, playing a best-of-nine rubbers

against Ireland — a format that was extended the next year to a best-of-fifteen. It was named after Dwight Davis.

Dwight Davis, like many other leading players of his time, was a Harvard graduate, and a national player. In 1899, he offered a challenge cup for an international team competition — a proposal that was accepted by the US National Association in 1900, and was made open to any nation with a recognised lawn tennis association. Davis had the honour of winning the first cup rubber, for England, when he defeated Ernest Black of the US in a four-setter. That was the only consolation for England, since the US won the tie.

By 1914, nine nations were regular



*R. Krishnan: Serving Indian Tennis.*



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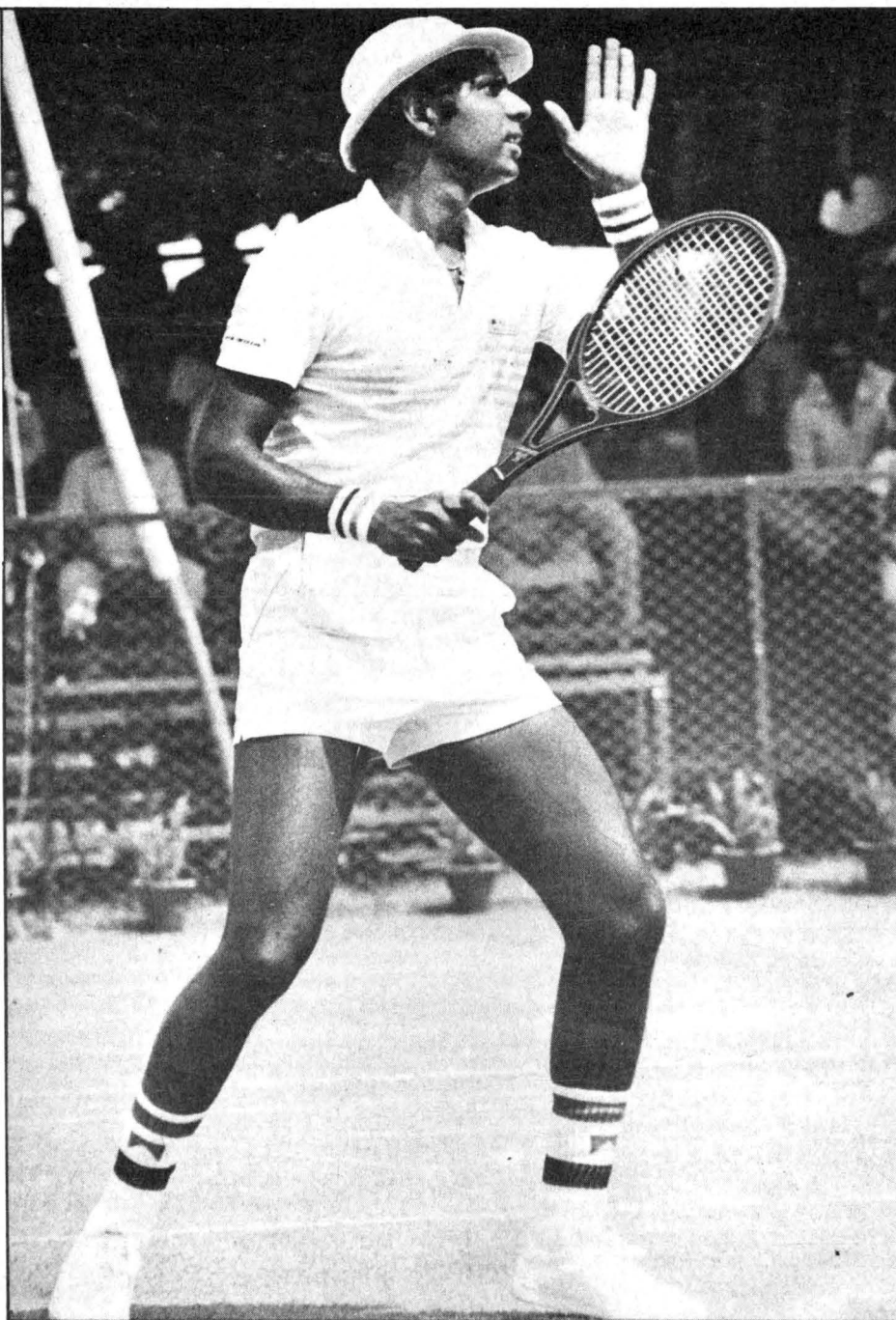
participants in the Davis Cup. After World War I, the zonal system was adopted. In 1933, qualifying rounds for weaker nations were created, since the competition was becoming unwieldy. The weaker teams had to play amongst themselves to gain acceptance into the main draw the following season, in a manner similar to the way contestants from Category Two have to qualify to enter Category One today. By 1939, there were 41 participant nations.

The increased interest in tennis after World War II brought worse congestion, and more zones had to be created, with only eight zonal finalists qualifying for the inter-zonal final. The most radical change arose in 1972, with the abolition of the Challenge Round. Until then, the year's champion nation was not required to play in the preliminary competition the following year, and would only play the winner of the qualifying competition. From 1972 onwards, the Cup-defending nation was required to play throughout the entire competition.

Commercial sponsorship of the Davis Cup started in 1980, and in the following year, there was a marked change in the format, with the best 16 nations placed in a non zonal competition. The others still competed in zonal tussles. The rule was that the four worst nations from the top group, found by staging a relegation round among the eight first round losers, would then have to play again in the zonal section.

The entry of Tunisia in 1982 has brought the total strength of participating nations to 70. Between 1900 and 1987, the Cup — a massive, silver punch-bowl, plated with gold, has been played for 77 times. No challenge was made in 1901 and 1910, and the competition was in abeyance during the War years from 1914-18 and 1939-45.

**DAVIS CUP RECORDS** are legion. Great Britain, predictably, was the most constant competitor taking part



*India's Tennis Ace: Vijay Amritraj.*

in all the competitions from 1900 onwards, except in 1901 and 1910. USA has the longest run of successes in winning Davis Cup ties. It won seven successive Challenge Rounds from 1920-26. It also has the most impressive rate of success having won 17 consecutive ties and the trophy five times, from May 1968 till December 1973, when it lost to Australia in Cleveland, Ohio.

Among the more unusual records in the annals of the Cup is the longest

duration for a tie — 113 days. The 1976 Eastern Zone Final between New Zealand and Australia began in Brisbane on February 28. After three days, with the score standing at 2-1 in Australia's favour, it was shifted to England, where on June 19, Newcombe gained the winning point for the Kangaroos, by beating Brian Fairlie.

**INDIA, WHICH JOINED** the competition in 1921, also holds some re-

cords, one of which will never be broken with the introduction of the tie-breaker. We have to our credit played the greatest number of games in a Davis Cup tie. In the 1974 Eastern Zone Final at Calcutta, we beat Australia by a narrow 3-2 margin, after a tie which lasted 327 games. The doubles between Vijay and Anand Amritraj on the one side, and John Alexander and Colin Dibley on the other, was one of the most fiercely contested ties in history, with the Indians eventually winning at 17-15, 6-8, 6-3, 16-18, 6-4.

India also has the dubious distinction of being the only nation to concede a walk-over in the final. Three years after the abolition of the Challenge Round, India fought through a 55-nation field to the final in 1974, but refused to play against South Africa in protest against apartheid. This was the second time India reached the final, the first being in 1966, when the superb squad of Ramanathan Krishnan, Premjit Lall and Jai-deep Mukherjee lost by a 1-4 margin to Australia at Melbourne.

'Krish', incidentally, was a Davis Cup supremo, who always played his best for the team competition. One remembers the remarkable rally he staged against Thomas Koch of Brazil, roaring back with a nine game reel after trailing by one set to two, and down 2-5 in the fourth. He ranks ninth in the list of Davis Cup stalwarts who have won 50 or more Cup rubbers. Krish played in 42 ties between 1953 and 1969, and won 69 of the 97 matches he played for India. Mukherjee is not far behind with 62 rubbers won out of 98, and one rubber unfinished.

**THAT PHENOMENAL KRISHNAN-Koch** match was nostalgically recalled this year when Vijay Amritraj staged one of the most remarkable rallies in the history of the game — just as remarkable as that of the other 'elder statesman' of Wimbledon 1987, Jimmy Connors. In fact, there were startling similarities between the posi-

tions in which Vijay and Connors found themselves in their matches against Argentina's Martin Jaite and Sweden's Mikael Pernfors, albeit in different competitions. The Indian was playing in the Davis Cup pre-quarter final deciding fifth match, while Connors was also playing the pre-quarter final.

Both were down by two sets to love. Both players conceded a dozen years in age to their respective opponents. Connors, whose rumbustious strokes were smothered by Pernfors' underspin, trailed 1-6, 1-6, 1-4. Vijay was simply outrun and out-hit in the first two sets, and was down 0-3 in the third, facing a second successive break in the set at 0-30 on his delivery. How much closer to the wall can one be forced?

If the Indian ace came through that match — on, incidentally, the same day that Sunil Gavaskar produced his best Test knock on a beast of a strip at Bangalore against the touring Pakistanis — it was a triumph of sheer raw guts and a great victory for the Davis Cup. There was no individual trophy or large pay-package at stake, only the honour of the country.

It was the same Vijay who had been outmanoeuvred by the American Scott Davis at Wimbledon, less than a month earlier. In comparison, both Amos Mansdorf and Gilad Bloom, Israel's top singles stars, had fared much better at Wimbledon on a fast grass surface, on which the Davis tie was also played.

Mansdorf, ranked 36th in the world, was beaten by France's ninth-seeded Henri Leconte in the second round after an almighty five-set tussle, which the Frenchman narrowly won at 6-2, 7-6, 2-6, 1-6, 6-2. Bloom, who came through a brawling five-setter with Martin Laurendeau of Canada, only the previous day, put up a creditable performance against Leconte in the third round, before losing at 3-6, 6-7, 5-7. Israel's preference for battle-scarred veteran Shlomo Glickstein to Bloom (20), was

because their manager had great respect for Vijay's rich Davis Cup experience.

**IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS**, it did not make the slightest difference. That intangible, extra something which is part and parcel of Davis Cup matches, especially in front of home crowds, proved the decisive factor as India took a 2-0 lead at the end of the first day itself. Ramesh Krishnan, at 29th the highest ranked player on either side, bewitched and bothered Glickstein with his superb ground strokes, while Vijay simply toyed with Mansdorf before giving him a licking in straight sets of 6-4, 6-4, 7-5.

The same Vijay had beaten Jaite and Horacio de la Pena of Argentina in March, and Andrei Chesnokov of the Soviet Union last October. If there was any difference between the Vijay of March 1987 and the Vijay of the India-Israel tie, it was that the old-timer had decided to take his physical fitness in hand early enough. Hence, his attempt at Wimbledon.

And when, the next day, the Amritraj brothers sealed India's entry into the Cup's semi-finals with a slick, straight sets' triumph in just an hour-and-a-half, the Indians defied the odds that were against them when the original draw for Category One was announced at the beginning of the year. India's next opponent will be Australia, led by the recently-crowned Wimbledon champion and a terror on grass — Pat Cash.

On computer, Vijay Amritraj, brother Anand and Ramesh Krishnan do not seem to have much of a chance against Cash, Peter Doohan and Co., particularly as the tie will be played Down under. But then, at the risk of borrowing one of Vijay Merchant's phrases, one can never tell with the 'glorious uncertainties' of Davis Cup play. Had the tie been held in India, Vijay could well have pulled-off another miracle. He may, with some magical strokes from chubby Ramesh Krishnan, do it yet in Kangaroo land, this October! ♦



## DEV ANAND FOREVER YOUNG

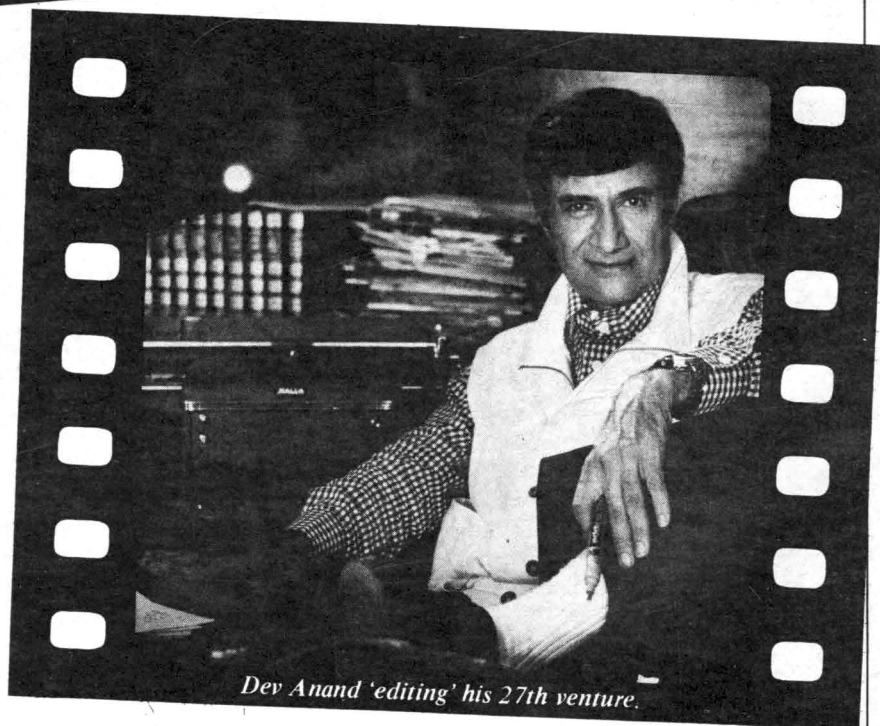
For 65-year-old Dev Anand, writer, producer, director and actor of numerous films, time seems to have stood still. Though his debonair appearance now bears traces of age, his enthusiasm and commitment towards filmmaking remain unchanged. *Sache Ka Bol Bala*, Dev Anand's latest film, focusses on the trials and tribulations of a newspaper editor. MINNIE VAID-FERA talks to Dev Anand on the sets of his 27th film.

**T**HE VOICE IS RESONANT, well-modulated and unmistakably familiar. "You *look* at the photoframe, *look* around you quickly, then *back* to the frame, you examine the photograph carefully and realise — *the brooch!* It *is* the same brooch. You recollect your words to your sister and break down. . . CUT IT!" Having reached a crescendo, the voice dies down. The figure that seemed electrified a moment ago, relaxes in the chair and pivots around, eyes gleaming with zest and satisfaction. Dev Anand is currently shooting his 27th film, *Sache Ka Bol Bala* — about a newspaper editor who fights a relentless crusade against injustice — at Mehboob Studios, Bombay. A series of fleeting expressions cross his mobile face as he issues rapidfire instructions to his heroine, Meenakshi Seshadri.

Dev Anand literally enacts each scene himself, the artistes appear to merely copy him. Like puppets they dance to the tune of a master who calls the shots and pulls the strings. As soon as the shot is okayed (and he

cal discomfort — he is immaculately dressed in a thick blue jacket with an upturned collar — he seems omnipresent, tackling minute production details, explaining the next shot to his performers, tripping over tangled cables and all the while examining the script-sheet in his hands. His energy leaves you breathless with admiration. At 65, Dev Anand towers over his much-younger colleagues; his bubbling energy and phenomenal stamina are astonishing. The next four hours are a riotous kaleidoscope of movement, gesture and instruction. Dev Anand does not unwind, not even for a moment.

Close, upfront under the harsh glare of arc-lamps, his face bears traces of age; a few wrinkles, a few lines. But as it breaks into a smile you recognise the Dev Anand of old — the



Dev Anand 'editing' his 27th venture.

is not unduly exacting), and while his heroine sinks into a chair, fanning herself vigorously, against the studio's stifling heat, under the arc-lights, he bustles about preparing the props for the next shot. Oblivious of any physi-

flamboyance and the style. The face that haunted you in *Guide*, that fascinated you in *Jewel Thief*, *Hum Dono*, *Kaala Pani*, *Tere Mere Sapne*, *Hare Ram Hare Krishna*, and a host of other movies. Suddenly, once the

nostalgia is set aside, you realise that for Dev Anand, time has stood still.

Thirty years ago, he was paired with young, beautiful actresses; today, he continues to be the pivotal character — in fact, the hero — of all his films. With regard to sheer tenacity and will power Dev Anand dwarfs his contemporaries, many of whom have wound the reel years ago, while others have concentrated on promoting their children's careers.

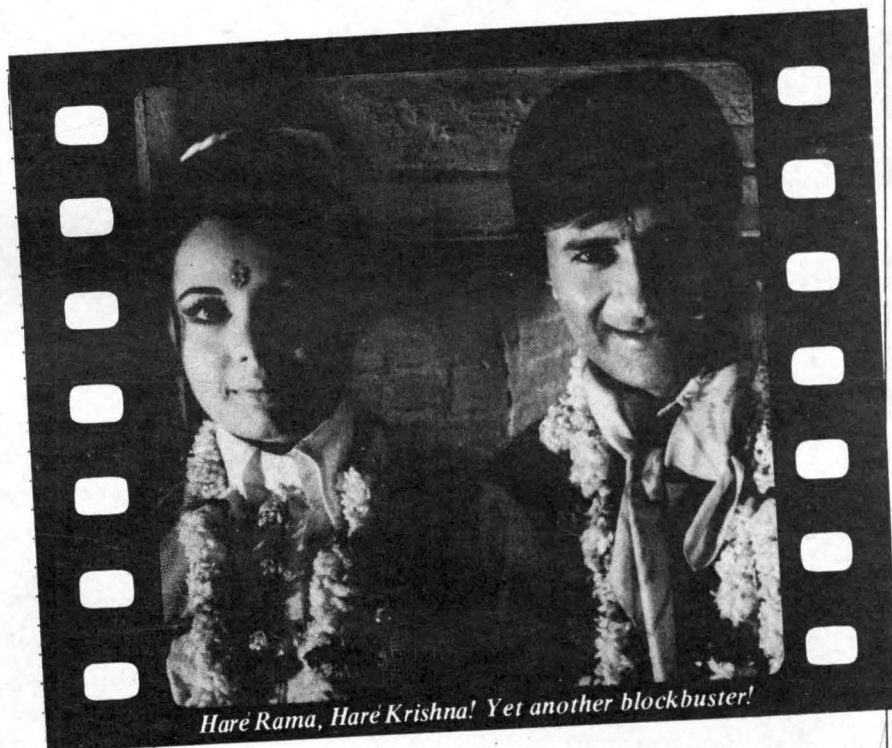
"*Jiska kaam nahin hai, hat jao bhai; koi tamasha nahin hai!*" his voice booms over the noisy activity on the sets. His relationship with his unit is one of friendly camaraderie, nurtured by years of familiarity; his authoritative directions are never imperious.

A single shot of approximately one minute takes almost half-an-hour in preparation. In this case, the locale of action is an office, supposedly in Geneva, — a 'room' cunningly designed with a large backdrop of window-frames allowing the alpine scenery entry, while the office desk is cluttered with the Swiss flag and the all-important photoframe. Anand, not too happy with the photoframe which will be later seen in a close-up, after looking through others, settles for the original one and proceeds with the shooting. But what is the newspaper editor doing in Geneva, with his protégé, reporter Meenakshi Seshadri? The film's plot as he narrates it, is extremely involved and convoluted. The protagonist, a mature and fearless newspaper baron-cum-editor, relentlessly fights for the causes he believes in, refusing to be bought or victimised. Since he owns the newspaper, he brooks neither interference nor limitations, and "dispenses justice to his readers". "I have not consciously modelled my hero on an actual personality," says Anand. "I have portrayed an editor as I *think* he *ought* to be — a man who upholds his ideals, because he is backed by the courage of his convictions." He dismisses the credibility factor as irrelevant. "My hero resem-

bles a mythical or Utopian character, since in our milieu, the hero cannot be a double-faced cheat or a rogue. The audience will not accept it. They want their hero to be good, they *want* to cheer him. My hero emerges victorious, clean, despite tremendous odds."

**IT IS THE AGE-OLD** good-versus-evil formula, cleverly packaged into a perfect commercial 'mix' — drama,

has, surprisingly, deviated from his habitual practice of promoting new stars. *Sache Ka Bol Bala* boasts an impressive parade of familiar names — Hema Malini, Jackie Shroff, Meenakshi Seshadri, Marc Zuber, Satish Shah, Sadashiv Amrapurkar, and of course, Anand himself, in the stellar role of an honest, upright editor. Is this a fall-out from the failure of his last film, *Hum Naujawan* (which starred rank newcomers) or merely pre-



intrigue, action, emotion, music, romance and sex. Anand agrees enthusiastically. "Different people will watch my film for different reasons. I think we have got the right material. You see, when your audience is comprised of people from different social strata — including discerning critics, middle classes and indiscriminate masses — you have to strike the right balance; you have to incorporate a strong storyline and pad it up with entertainment, haunting songs, intrigue, etc."

Catering to the box-office is obviously of prime importance. Anand

cautionary tactics? Before the question is framed, he replies — a pattern he adopts throughout the one-hour interview, and which seems to be a habit. Occasionally, his words trip over themselves as he formulates his arguments — the impatience, the restlessness, an integral part of his personality. "I do not quite know why *Hum Naujawan* failed — maybe the theme, in spite of being authentic, was too bold. But, *this* film is visualised on an enormous canvas — it's budgeted at over a crore, the biggest production so far, at Navketan. However, my decision to enroll established



stars has not been motivated entirely by financial considerations — after all, the risks I am taking now are greater than ever before. I have only broken the monotony of following a set pattern, year after year.”

Somehow, the explanation does not ring true, especially when he talks of the thrill and triumph of introducing newcomers, moulding and shaping their performances, encouraging and influencing them to give their

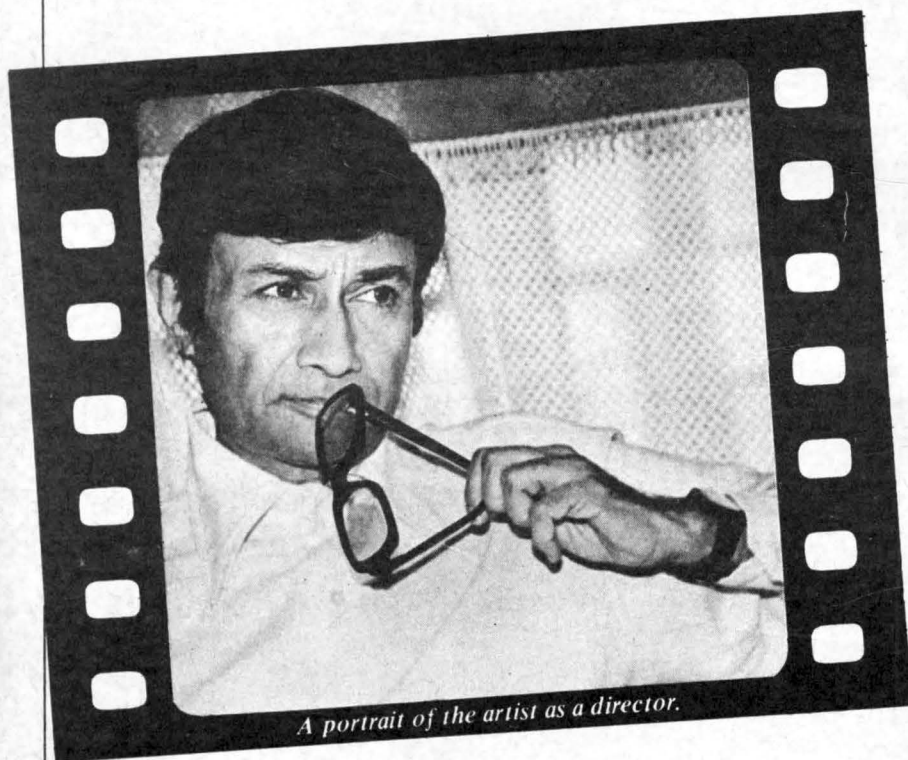
Indeed, his stamina, seems superhuman — fuelled and sustained by his almost-obsessive devotion to his work. “When I am working, I am never tired; I think fast and work fast. If I am committed to some project, totally involved in it, nothing can stop me. The energy comes from within — I get charged with it. That’s why I’m here! Otherwise, I would have retired long ago.” It is, ultimately, the only plausible explanation for a relentless

cord time.” To a certain extent, the film was also one of Anand’s self-indulgent exercises, not geared principally to appease commercial tastes.

**BUT THEN, DEV ANAND’S FILMS** have almost always, tried to be different, with unusual themes and daring treatment — *Hare Ram Hare Krishna*, *Des Pardes*, *Swami Dada*, *Hum Naujawan*, to name a representative few. Unfortunately, despite this originality and an almost total conformation to the box-office matrix, Anand’s films have, in the recent past, rarely equalled the box-office success of a *Ram Teri Ganga Maili* or a *Mr India*. Yet, he remains totally unperturbed, his expressive face reflecting momentary confusion. “Maybe I have slipped up somewhere, perhaps missed the point, in narration. Sometimes, the themes have been unacceptable to the majority, *Swami Dada* for example. In other instances, the right blend of action and music, which I think are essential to every film, has been unsatisfactory. But even if my films haven’t been super-hits, they *have* been, by and large, accepted by the public. As far as I am concerned, that is a hit. After all, out of the 200-odd films made annually, only 10 are top hits.”

Obviously, audience acceptance and participation are the watchwords of Anand’s film-making philosophy. Once his project crosses the planning stage, he does not look back. As long as the masses respond favourably to his creation, he is unaffected by the film’s commercial success or failure. Critical acclaim does not feature in his list of priorities. In fact, he is openly contemptuous of the so-called ‘art’ films which receive awards, or accolades, from elitist viewers and critics.

“I do not understand this ‘art’ cinema terminology. For me, each form of cinema is art. Cinema isn’t a moralistic, classroom affair for 200 people; it is meant to be enjoyed by the majority. People do not go to a theatre to watch an essay — they can



*A portrait of the artist as a director.*

best. “I love recruiting newcomers for my films. They are so receptive, flexible, eager to learn. They listen to you, try hard to please you. . . give you bulk dates,” he chuckles ruefully. “Stylised stars take their own time. I *have* to be tolerant, wait for them. Of course, once they’re on the sets, they vibe very well with me, especially since I am out there with them, and they respect me,” he adds quickly, as a placatory gesture. But he chafes at the delay, at those unable to keep pace with his legendary energy. “What can I do (when others lag behind)? I sulk,” he admits frankly.

daily work schedule of 14-16 hours. Not surprisingly, Anand has completed a blockbuster extravaganza in just 15 months. By his own standards, of course, it is the longest period he has ever allotted to a film. *Hum Naujawan*, was ready in three months while the trail-blazing *Hare Ram Hare Krishna*, made over a decade ago, was shot in nine weeks.

He is uncharacteristically nostalgic: “*Hare Ram* had a very un-Indian theme — it highlighted the ‘hippie’ phenomenon, which I had witnessed in Nepal. So, I took my entire unit to Nepal, and the film was ready in re-

read a book if they want to do that. A film must grip you, entertain you. 'Art' cinema is all bullshit, a phony expression." Has he *seen* the films of reputed filmmakers like Ketan Mehta, G. Aravindan, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Prakash Jha and Utpalendu Chakravarty? "Actually, I have not seen most of these 'art' films. I have not been impressed by those I have seen either. I find them a strain, and frankly, quite tiring. And, if it is tiring, it's not good cinema, is it? Besides, the pace is so slow," he adds scornfully. His criticism is, however, extremely hackneyed, and easily contradicted by the frenzied and breathless tempo of several meaningful 'art' films.

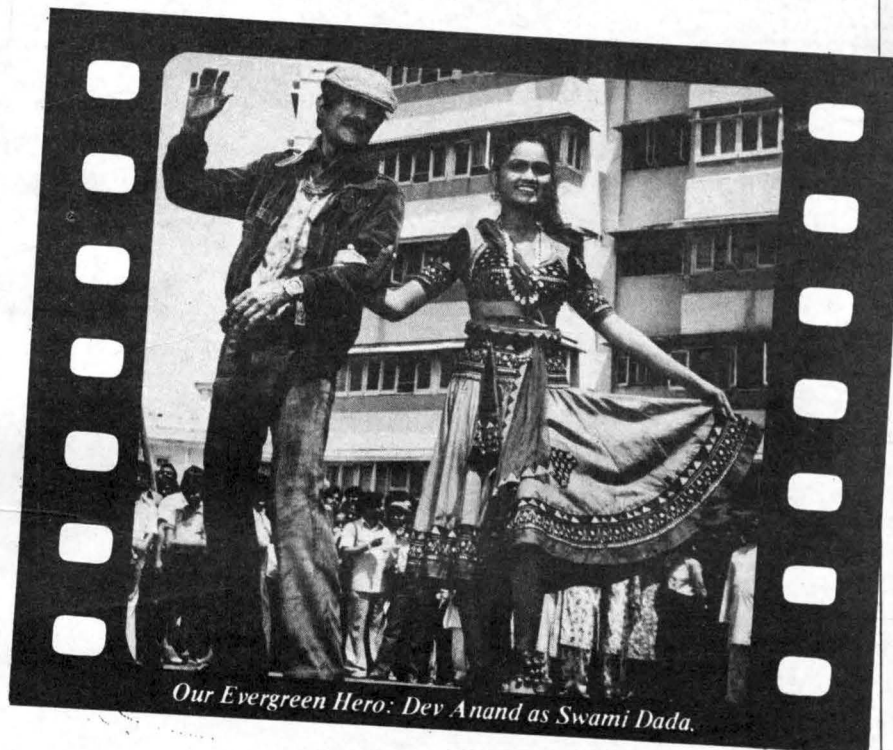
Audience-approval notwithstanding, Anand is busy planning his next film, which is to be launched as soon as the shooting of *Sache Ka Bol Bala* is completed (85 percent of the film has been shot already). Among Anand's admirable traits is his remarkable ability to continue making films despite several failures. One wonders how he manages to break even, financially? "It is very simple," he explains, "I have an organic unit consisting of regular staff members. I do not pay myself — for directing, acting or scripting my films. And then, I am not extravagant. I do not waste raw stock." He proudly admits that the tremendous goodwill he commands in the film industry, due to his formidable reputation for hard work, keeps him going. Besides, a new Dev Anand film *always* draws, in the initial weeks, a sizeable, devoted audience, curious about his latest offering.

Twenty years after his heyday, Dev Anand is still seen, quintessentially, as a 'born' actor — his unique style of dialogue-delivery, flamboyant gestures, even his angular stride, have been so deeply absorbed by his audiences as to preclude any deviation from his composite image. All that has changed over the last two decades is the focus. Although he invariably casts himself as the film's

protagonist, he is wholly involved in the overall creation of a film. "The satisfaction I gain from making an entire film — from scratch — my creative endeavour, is much greater than merely that found in performing. This is chiefly why I have almost stopped acting in productions other than my own. Unless I am offered a really challenging role, one which I have not played so far, or which can fetch me an Oscar, I will not accept it."

His voice rises dramatically, "The work one does is so important, it will influence, and be assessed by millions of people." He thumps the table for emphasis. It is the only theatrical gesture, almost a three-second 'live' performance, he has made so far.

He resumes his monologue, matter-of-factly. "This film is going to be lapped up by the public. I am aiming to beat the top commercial directors. My theme — that the press is the guardian and watchdog of democracy



Our Evergreen Hero: Dev Anand as Swami Dada.

**DOES NOT HIS PREOCCUPATION** with the myriad aspects of filmmaking affect his own performance? The inspired actor of films like *Guide* now seems content with mundane, often mediocre roles. He smiles gently, not in the least offended by the criticism. "*Guide* can never be repeated. It belongs to an entirely different genre. But, I agree that my performances might have suffered while I was enjoying the exciting experience of moulding aspiring newcomers. After all, I wish to leave a footprint in the sands of Time, and I believe my films will help me achieve this goal."

— is an eternal one. I have also put in tremendous effort. Don't I deserve a hit?" Immediately, he switches, true to form, to the future. "If this film succeeds, I will be able to plan three others, invest my profits in the industry, create new stars, explore new horizons. . ." He is forever the dreamer, the innovator and the creator while he produces, directs and acts in his creations. His fervour, like his undeniable charm, is infectious. As one leaves the sets, one hopes that *Sache Ka Bol Bala* will obtain for its creator, the success he so richly deserves. ♦



# ASTRONOMY

**A** STAR EXPLODED in our galaxy milleniums ago. It has become visible to earth only this year. While the cataclysmic process by which a star dies is common, this is the first time, thanks to the telescope, that astronomers may clearly observe the supernova while it expands.

The supernova will make its second appearance over India in late August, having been previously sighted in May. Since the star lies deep in the Southern sky, only the Indian Institute of Astrophysics' Vainu Bappu Observatory at Kavalur, Karnataka, will be able to study it. Even at Kavalur, the supernova will be barely 10 degrees above the horizon during its merideanal transit, and close to the sun.

It has been christened SN 1987 'A' with 'supernova' abbreviated, the numerals denoting the year of sighting, and the letter 'A' indicating that it is the year's first supernova sighted. It was discovered independently by three persons, early this year.

Canadian astronomer Ian Shelton spotted it on February 23, at the Las Campanas Observatory, Chile. He was taking routine photographs of the Milky Way's irregular satellite galaxy — the Large Magellanic Cloud (LMC), with a 10 inch telescope. On developing his photographic plates, early next morning, Shelton noticed a bright starburst in the familiar Tarantula Nebula. The intruder had been absent on the previous day's plates. Believing the plates to be flawed, he re-examined that particular patch of space through his telescope. . . and discovered a 'new' star! Up there, in the fuzzy area of the LMC was a supernova visible even to the naked eye.

Simultaneously, Oscar Duhalde, a telescope operator at the same observatory, and Albert Jones, a septuagenarian amateur astronomer in New Zealand, spotted the new supernova. The discovery generated universal excitement. SN 1987 A is the brightest supernova sighted since the telescope has been used, and the

sixth brightest in a thousand years.

Furthermore, it is the first supernova visible to the naked eye after almost four centuries. Johannes Kepler discovered the last explosion in 1604, five years prior to Galileo's invention of the telescope and 31 years after Tycho Brahe's supernova. Earlier starbursts were witnessed in 1006 and 1054 AD by Chinese and Japanese astronomers. The closest supernova sighted in the recent past was in 1985, but it lay just beyond the naked eye's detection.

Having checked the supernova's existence with his own eyes, Shelton informed the Boston bureau of the International Astronomical Union (IAU). In turn, it telegraphed, among other stations, the Bangalore centre of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA). They received the news on February 25, "at 4.30 pm", recalls Prof N Kameshwara Rao, who is co-

ordinating the institute's observational programme of the supernova. "We were already a day late by then," he laments.

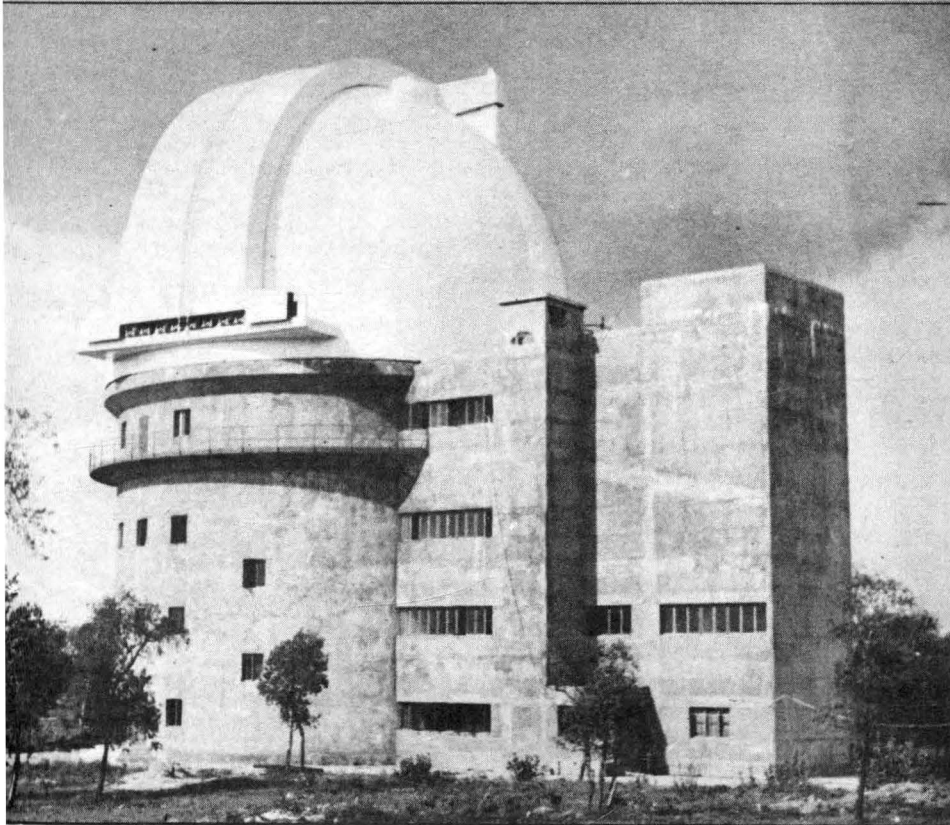
Attempts to book a trunk-call to the Kavalur Observatory failed. So, a scientist was sent to Kavalur the next day with garbled instructions from excited astronomers and astrophysicists. On arrival, he found the supernova so close to the horizon that tree branches and a wall obstructed the line of sight of some small telescopes. Enthusiasts soon cleared the obstacles.

One might think that a supernova which took many light-years to reach within our visibility could wait a little longer. Yet, time and space wait for no man. Time to the astrophysicists was very precious in relation to the sheer magnitude and rarity of this stellar event. Thus, while telescope time is usually allotted to Kava-



*Arrow indicates SN 1987 A, sighted at the Kavalur Observatory.*

# STAR TREK



*The Vainu Bappu telescope at the Kavalur Observatory.*

On February 26 this year, researchers at the Kavalur observatory of the Indian Institute of Astrophysics in Karnataka, made a stunning discovery with the help of an ordinary telescope. They sighted the year's first supernova — SN 1987 A — earlier detected by three astronomers independently. The supernova, visible to the naked eye after almost four centuries, will make a second appearance over India, later this month.

M D RITI follows the supernova's trail and profiles the enthusiastic response of excited astronomers.

lur's various projects in 'shifts', all observers and researchers were asked to concentrate on the supernova. Finally, on the night of February 26, the observatory obtained the supernova's spectrum.

**ALTHOUGH THE DYING STAR** reached the peak of its brightness in May, on its approaching visit it will remain visible for almost a year. As the year progresses it will appear earlier. It will be viewed best by amateur astronomers in December 1987. While in the Southern hemisphere it may be seen hazily with the naked eye, and more clearly through binoculars, in India it will have to be observed through telescopes. Furthermore, it will only be visible in certain areas of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and throughout Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Hassan and Chikamagalur, Karnataka are the uppermost northern boundaries of visibility.

As observed from India, the supernova will 'rise' and 'set' in a small circle. At such a low elevation, how-

ever, the sky is seldom clear. Vision is usually obscured by clouds, artificial glare and smog. It will be found by the telescope near Aldebaran in the Taurus Constellation and Antares, the brightest star in Scorpio.

Supernovae may be divided into two broad categories — Type 1 and Type 2. The former are found in spiral discs and elliptical orbits where older stars of lower mass are seen. The explosions are systematic, with the brightness of the dying stars, a few billion times brighter than our sun, increasing after three weeks. Hydrogen lines are absent in their spectrums.

Type 2 supernovae normally occur only in galactic spiral arms where massive stars are found. They peak more rapidly than those of Type 1, and remain constant at this peak for sometime. Hydrogen lines are prominent in their spectrums. SN 1987 A belongs to this variety, according to Prof Kameshwara Rao.

SN 1987 A is important for many reasons. If the hypothesis that Sandeluk, a blue supergiant star, exploded into this supernova is correct, as Prof Rao reveals, this is the first time in astronomical history that a supernova sighted has a well-studied progenitor.

It has also confirmed a formerly theoretical hypothesis: "the explosion of massive stars leads to the formation of neutron stars, which are perhaps the most dense objects in the universe," explains Prof Rao. "One cubic centimetre of neutron star matter weighs 270 billion kilograms. This formation is accompanied by the production of neutrinos or tiny uncharged particles which do not interact with matter. Just before this supernova was observed, a burst of neutrinos was detected simultaneously at the Komioka Mines, Japan and at Cleveland, Ohio. The observation of neutrinos in the predicted range of energies and quantities is a real achievement of theory."

The discovery of Sandeluk being the probable progenitor of this su-



## ON THE SUPERNOVA'S TRAIL

M D Riti talks to Prof J C Bhattacharya, director, Indian Institute of Astrophysics.

**THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF** Astrophysics traces its history back to 1786, when William Petrie, an officer of the East India Company, set up a small observatory in his Madras home. In time, this observatory grew into an institute with a solar physics observatory in Kodaikanal. M K Vainu Bappu, who became the institute's director in 1960, built it into a reputed research establishment with centres at Kodaikanal, Bangalore, Kavalur and Gauribidanur. The Kavalur observatory is named after this dedicated astronomer.

Prof J C Bhattacharya, the institute's present director speaks of the supernova SN 1987 A, and the institute's study plans for it.

**Imprint: This supernova explosion took place aeons ago. Is there any way in which you can find out what is happening to the star right now?**

**Bhattacharya:** We will not know for some time what exactly is happening to the supernova right now. Light travels at a fixed velocity and nothing can change that. All we can do is wait and see.

The supernova must have exploded before human evolution. The light, the radiation and the particles that it spewed at that time have just reached us.

If you made a scale model of our universe with our sun the size of a football, the earth would be like a mustard seed at a distance of 15 metres.

**What are the institute's plans to study this supernova?**

Astrophysics basically tries to discover the strength of various types of radiation and compare it with laboratory measurements. There are three broad ways in which we do this. We measure the total light radiated from the star, in slightly different directions, through photography. The image that we receive is small but bright; the brightness exposes the surround-



ing areas too. In photometry, we put this light through various filters.

Then, we disperse the supernova light in different directions, trying to discover the relative strengths of different kinds of light. This is spectroscopy. The spectrum tells us a lot about the temperature of the supernova and whether it has any magnetic fields. This is the observational plan of the institute.

**Have you acquired any new equipment to study this phenomenon?**

We have acquired a lot of equipment to study astronomical phenomena over the past 30 years. The specific equipment that we will use to study this supernova are cameras, photometers, spectroscopes and polarimeters, all of which we have. This is all that can be used.

**What should an amateur astronomer who wants to observe the supernova do?**

He can photograph it and study it. However, he must take care to include a non-varying star in the frame which he can use as a comparative standard. Care must also be taken when developing the photographs — he should use fresh solution and time the developing process exactly. If he maintains

continuity from one frame to the next, he will see whether the supernova has expanded over time.

**What equipment would he require?**

The standard requirement would be a telescope — to intensify the image of the supernova, collect more light and produce a bright picture. After that, he can use a photographic plate to take a photograph, a photometer to multiply and measure electrical variations, and a spectrometer to disperse the light and record it.

**What exactly can the casual observer expect to see if he looks for the supernova? Anything spectacular?**

He will just see a new star that was not there before. All the spectacular things are only seen through spectroscopy. Besides, in astronomy, most phenomena are combinations of various tricks. It is rare that one comes across something really stupendous and adds one's name to the list of great astronomers, like Isaac Newton. It is more a question of systematic, planned observation and calculation.

**What are the implications of the sighting of this supernova to the world of astronomy or science?**

This is the first naked eye sighting of a supernova since the invention of the telescope. It is very bright when seen through a telescope. Thus, it will give us the opportunity to understand the supernova phenomenon through actual observation. We can disperse its light over a wide area and study its characteristics.

The things that occur in nature are much stronger than anything one could create in a laboratory. A piece of matter from this supernova could weigh more than 50 tonnes, while a similar piece of gold or platinum, which are the most dense things we could think of, would weigh only 20 grams. The real purpose of astronomy and astrophysics is to try to understand more about the wondrous processes and phenomena of nature.

# WHAT IS A SUPERNOVA?

pernova was surprising. Presupernova photometric observations estimated Sandeluk's size to be roughly 40 solar radii, its surface temperature approximately 15,000 degrees, and its brightness about 1,00,000 times greater than the sun. Hitherto accepted theories indicate a red supergiant star with a greater solar radius and surface temperature as the progenitor.

How, then, did the supernova evolve? According to Prof Rao, theory shows that the evolution of a star depends upon its mass and chemical composition. A star with a metal content as low as 15 or 20 times the sun's mass can explode. Our supernova was ignited by the LMC's low metal content. "However," adds Prof Rao, "the spectra we got at Kavalur, about a month after the outburst, showed abundant nitrogen in the ejecta. This indicated that the star had passed through a cool, red supergiant phase before it became a blue supergiant that exploded."

**ABOUT A DOZEN** observational astronomers and theoreticians from IIA, under Prof Rao, are actively studying SN 1987 A from Kavalur. "If we were in the Southern hemisphere, we would probably have to drop all other research for as long as the supernova is visible," jokes Dr T P Prabhu, one of the team's astrophysicists. "The total manpower involved in this research will probably keep rising. Many astronomers are willing to spend their lives studying this exciting phenomenon."

With the progression of time, it should be possible to see deeper into the supernova's core and to discern the composition of its nebula. It will be an invaluable observational experience.

Research on this dying star will have little impact on the lives of most people. "It will only be of interest to pure researchers", asserts Dr Prabhu. "We may learn more about nucleosynthesis and the chemical evolution of a galaxy. It will also give us a clearer picture of the processes

**THE FINAL CATAclysmic** stage in the life of a huge star is called a supernova. Here, a single star explodes so spectacularly that it shines brighter than an entire galaxy consisting of billions of other stars. How and why does this happen? The answers are found in analysing the process of stellar evolution and the life-cycles of stars.

Dr Bhattacharya explains the process quite simply, in a paper that he formulated on the new supernova. It all begins with the contraction of an interstellar cloud which is a trillion times larger than our entire solar system. As the cloud contracts, its internal temperature keeps rising until a core temperature of about 10 million degrees is reached. At this point, hydrogen starts converting into helium..

Radiational energy released by this conversion stops further contraction. And a star is born. Energy radiated by the nuclear process in the core is released steadily. The star then reaches what astrophysicists term the 'main sequence stage' in which it spends 90 per cent of its lifetime.

Ultimately, all the hydrogen available in the core is utilised. So, contraction re-starts. The temperature in the core keeps rising. When it reaches 200 million degrees, helium gets converted into heavier nuclei like carbon, nitrogen and oxygen. The contraction process stops again when the shell of hydrogen starts fusing. This leads to an increased generation of energy that pushes the outer envelope of the

star, which becomes a red giant.

The diameter of the star keeps increasing. After it reaches a peak, it starts contracting again. As the star shrinks, its temperature rises. This is how it reaches the 'white dwarf' stage, in which it becomes a hot, dense body, radiating energy. In the next phase, the star cools down to a temperature at which no visible radiation is emitted. Finally, it becomes a cold, dark cinder drifting in the vastness of space.

When the interstellar cloud itself is very big, the process occurs much faster than in small clouds. When the contraction after the 'main sequence' stage begins, the ignited helium core and its burning shell of hydrogen cannot arrest the imminent collapse because of tremendous gravitational pulls. The core temperature keeps rising and fusion takes place at an increasing pace. Finally, the entire outer mantle blows up in a gigantic explosion. This is a supernova.

Until now, supernovae have been observed only after explosions. Hence, any explanation of their genesis is based purely on theoretical calculations. Nobel laureate S Chandrasekar envisioned a situation in which the inner core collapses to even smaller volumes. The gravitational forces at the surface of such a core would be so strong that they would pull everything, including light and radiation. The core then becomes a *black hole* that sucks all surrounding objects into its bottomless pit, eternally.

of stellar evolution. After a while, the nebulosity of the star will become visible."

Although supernovae research may be uninteresting to most others, SN 1987 A has turned sleepers into star-gazers. Supernovae are the progenitors of new stars and planets. "They are the means by which many elements manufactured inside massive stars are ejected into the interstellar system," explains Prof Rao.

Elements like gold and uranium are present on earth because of the many supernovae explosions that took place before the genesis of our solar system. "The iron in our blood and the calcium in our bones came from the interior of stars", he adds.

As Carl Sagan says, we are all made of star stuff. Without supernovae explosions we would not 'be'. SN 1987 A promises the universe new stars, planets and life. ♦



# THE TATA ENGINEERING & LOCOMOTIVE COMPANY LIMITED

Statement of the Chairman, Mr.S. Moolgaokar,  
for the year 1986-87

The year that ended on the 31st of March 1987, gave precious little to cheer us on the financial front. The demand for medium and heavy vehicles remained stagnant. The capacity which your Company has installed for the manufacture of these vehicles could not be fully utilised, resulting in increased fixed expenses. They could not be recovered by any worthwhile price increases, as the market for these vehicles has become price-sensitive. In addition, we had to incur a capital expenditure of Rs.64 crores and absorb a massive annual increase of Rs.23 crores in wage costs. Expecting a growing market, we had carried large inventories, which contributed to our interest burden and depressed our profits further. The net result was a seeming paradox. Our turnover increased to touch a record of Rs.1,197 crores as against Rs.1,026 crores last year; but we made a meagre profit of Rs.2.93 crores as against a pre-tax profit of Rs.18.32 crores in the last year.

The commercial vehicle industry, with its manifold backward and forward linkages, is also sensitive to the economic environment in the country. Thus, the current stagnation in the Indian economy, particularly in the industrial sector, the continued and spreading political turmoil and the tinkering by the concerned authorities with the growth of the automobile industry, all took their toll. Government's unexpected turnaround and the subsequent inordinate delay in framing a policy for the passenger car industry has also hurt your Company seriously. We have already taken several measures to arrest this slide and to safeguard

the Company's future in the emerging environment.

## PRODUCTS FOR TOMORROW'S MARKET

Anticipating the very slow increase in the demand for medium and heavy commercial vehicles, we have entered the light commercial vehicle market. Two totally indigenous models were developed in record time by our engineers. The first, a 4-tonner called 407, was launched from conception to market in just 18 months. It has been a successful product and we are getting a major share of the growth in the LCV market, which otherwise would have gone entirely to the newcomers. The second, a 6-tonner called 608, has been launched recently, i.e. in February 1987. The customer response to these models has been good, fully justifying the capital expenditure incurred by the Company to develop, test and tool up these vehicles for volume production. Our market share is already higher than that of any other make with a foreign collaboration and, as we install additional production facilities, this share will keep on growing. A third, a 2-tonne model, is already under extensive testing and will be ready for marketing early next year. This will be technologically the most advanced model in this range. It will be the first of a series of sophisticated light vehicles which will meet tomorrow's needs, both in India and abroad. Needless to say, like the 407 and the 608, this series will be totally indigenous.

## IMMEDIATE STEPS

Besides entering the LCV market as a measure to ensure the Company's future, we are sparing

no efforts to improve the quality, the fuel efficiency and the competitiveness of our existing range of medium and heavy commercial vehicles. In today's environment, it is not enough to deploy our capital efficiently and thus reduce costs; it is equally imperative to provide quality products and to be responsive to customers' needs and wants. So far our exports were mostly directed to other developing countries, particularly those in the Middle East and in Africa; now we are exploring another virgin avenue, namely, the export of vehicles to developed countries. With our wide range of models, we feel reasonably confident that we shall be able to win a share of the markets in some of these countries.

## SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE

While we have taken these and other measures to see us through difficult times and to safeguard the growth of the Company, there is no denying the fact that the commercial vehicle industry will now be passing through a challenging phase. For most of us in this industry, the days of the sellers' market, of a long order-book position, and of the complacency which these inevitably led to, are all over. I am not the one to be sorry for this new phase, because in the long term it will ensure a better deal to the customers and better results for the efficient producers. Growth, and more growth, is not only necessary and desirable for success in our industry; it becomes inescapable for a large leading Company like yours for which the break-even point increases every year. We have, therefore, to keep

on widening our range and improving our existing products. We must also keep both our plants productive, flexible and young.

Shareholders may not perhaps be aware that at our large plants at Pune and Jamshedpur, we have over 7,000 machine tools and hundreds of other items which we continue to rejuvenate. In a sophisticated industrial operation like ours, modern international standards are themselves continuously improving. We, therefore, need all the upgradation of our plants that we can afford. But, with the prevailing high prices of equipment and the unfavourable exchange rates, we are in no position to buy or import new equipment in place of every machine of ours that is aging. Fortunately, we have built up the design and manufacturing facilities and the human resources needed to undertake a massive in-house modernisation programme for our equipment. This will be an on-going process at both our plants, where we now have the capacity to rebuild and modernise upto Rs.20 crores worth of machine tools each year. You will agree that this will stand us in good stead in the years to come.

### **FINANCE FOR ROADS**

I have lamented, more than once in the past, on the total inadequacy of the length and quality of our roads. At least two deserving proposals were made in this connection. One of them related to the participation of the private sector in the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and the like. Government initially responded expeditiously with a constructive policy in July 1985, but it did not see its way to accepting some of the consequential suggestions made, such as, for example, according industry status to road construction activity. Admittedly, industry's response to the Government initiative has also not been encouraging, judging from

the fact that few concrete proposals were apparently received by Government and none of these have so far been translated into action.

The other proposal, which was for setting up of a "Roads Fund," has not been acted upon at all. As a result, while the motor-vehicle industry continues to contribute vast tax resources (an estimated Rs.4,452 crores in 1986-87), scarcely a fraction of the contribution is utilised for construction and maintenance of roads and bridges. This stands in strong and sad contrast to trends overseas where the message has gone home that more and better roads are vital for economic progress. Not many are perhaps aware that even in the U.S., there is since 1956, a Highway Trust Fund, supported by all the taxes paid by highway users. The money required by the Fund for this obligation being far in excess of what it collects, a part of the general tax revenues is also used to provide supplementary finance for this Fund. It is this Fund that was primarily responsible first for the construction of the 42,500 mile long Interstate Highway System in the U.S., and then for the development of other road-building programmes. The Fund gives so much deserved importance to the repairs and rehabilitation of existing roads and bridges that in 1985 more than half of the Fund's \$13 billion spending went to keeping the system in good repair. Not so in India. When will we shed our leisurely pace and adopt a results-oriented approach? I feel frustrated when I read such success stories of the numerous ingenious ways in which the task of construction and maintenance of highways and other roads is being tackled abroad with the urgency and the professional sophistication that it deserves. These may not be instant recipes for us, but surely we can't afford to wait while others make such rapid progress.

### **OCTROI ABOLITION**

Before concluding this Statement, I would like to refer again this year to the obnoxious octroi duty and the welcome decision of the Maharashtra Government to abolish it all over the State on or before 31st May 1988. The savings that will accrue to the nation in terms of time, energy, fuel and elimination of corruption would themselves well exceed the apparent loss of revenue estimated at about Rs.400 crores in Maharashtra in 1986-87. Of course, industry has no intention of depriving Government of its legitimate dues received so far in the form of octroi. The task of recommending alternative sources of revenue should not be beyond the ingenuity of the Committee which has been formed for the purpose.

### **GOALS THAT BUILD THE FUTURE**

With the 50,000 vehicles Telco sold in 1986-87, we now have a standing among the world's leading manufacturers of medium and heavy commercial vehicles. The speed with which we have been able to develop new models, respond to the demands of a varied but limited market, and set up in record time the facilities for producing vehicles indigenously, is a measure of the vitality we have built into our organisation. Though we have not done well financially this year, we know we are taking the right product decisions which will be the mainstay of the Company during the years to come. The difficult period through which we have passed has taught us many lessons, the most important being: If we, the Telco family, work and innovate as a team, there is no obstacle our Company cannot cross.

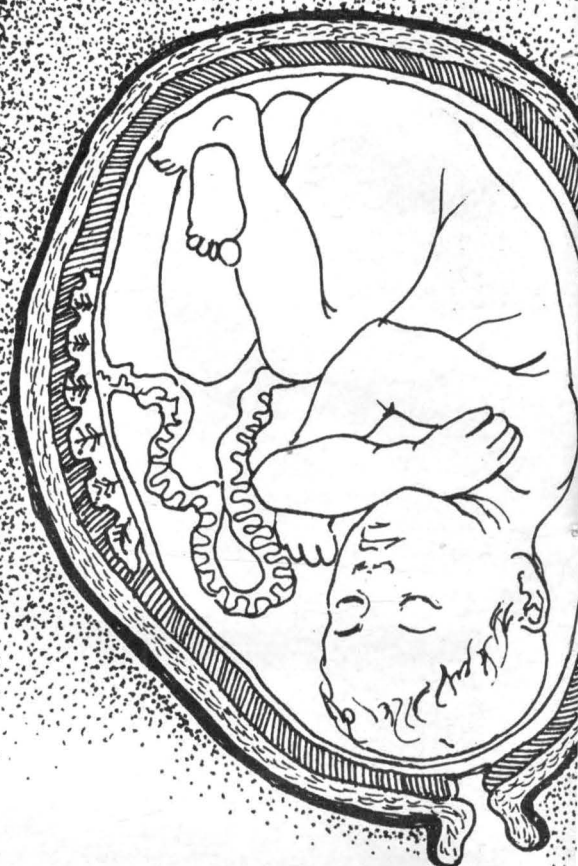
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*Note: This does not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting.*



# TERMS OF ENDEARMMENT

How important is a mother's first contact with her newborn baby? How many mothers realise and fulfil the baby's immediate need to be enveloped in a warm and intimate cocoon of love — to be stroked, cuddled and held close? This initial and vital bond between a mother and her newborn is crucial to the infant's emotional, intellectual and physical development, says Dr Thomas Verny in his book, **The Secret Life of the Unborn Child**. We present chapters from this informative book, distributed by India Book House.



**H**ER CONTRACTIONS started one April evening while she was setting the table for dinner. At first the pain was so slight — really more a vague gnawing than a pain — that she thought it might be her imagination. Her delivery date was still a month away; it could easily have been a false alarm. By the time she was being wheeled into the delivery room three hours later she knew it wasn't. The bursts of pain were coming in five-second intervals now. She was ready to deliver, so ready, there would not even be time for an anaesthetic to ease her pain. The birth would have to be drug-free.

That was not the way she had planned it, and for a woman normally upset by the unexpected, that might have been deeply distressing. But watching her child being born had a deep effect on her. In the hours and days afterwards, she found herself elated. She felt better about herself than she could ever remember feeling and much closer to Ann — as the baby was named — than she had been to her first child. Somehow, being able to hold and cuddle her child — which she had been too drugged to do with her first-born — had dissolved her anxiety.

'Mrs B.', as Dr Lewis Mehl called this woman in one of his papers, is real; so is her story and so, too, were her feelings and thoughts after the delivery. Stroking, hugging, bonding with a child does make a critical difference. As little as an hour spent together after birth can have a lasting effect on both mother and child. Study after study has shown that women who bond become better mothers and their babies almost always are physically healthier, emotionally more stable and intellectually more acute than infants taken from their mothers right after birth.

Bonding is that central. Everything a woman does and says to her infant after birth — all the seemingly purposeless cooing, hugging, stroking and even looking — have one specific purpose: to protect and nurture her child. In exactly what ways this system works we do not know, though new evidence indicates that, in this period at least, much of what is called motherly behaviour is biologically regulated.

This possibility was raised by an intriguing study done at Rutgers University. Experimenting with the body chemistry of female rats, an investigator there noticed something strange. The animals' maternal instincts were dependent on the flow of a certain specific hormone. It appeared in their bodies towards the end of pregnancy, and as long as it was present the rats made ideal mothers. That, in itself,

was an important finding.

What the researcher wanted to find out, though, was how the flow of this hormone was controlled. He discovered that the regulatory mechanism was the presence of the rat pups. If they were taken away immediately after birth, the hormone vanished from the mother's body and along with it, her maternal instinct. Once gone, nothing could restore that instinct, including the return of her offspring.

Animal studies are, in themselves, rarely definitive, but there is excellent reason to believe this one may be. We already know a newborn's presence is biologically critical to his mother in at least two important respects. His cries stimulate her production of breast milk, and the touch of his skin against her breast releases a hormone that reduces post-delivery bleeding. Is it too far-fetched to suggest that his presence may also release her maternal instincts? Most of the biological and behavioural evidence suggests not.

Child abuse, which occurs far more frequently among youngsters who were born prematurely, is a case in point. Many authorities believe that the isolation of premature babies in special paediatric units for weeks, sometimes months after birth, has a devastating psychological effect on their mothers, making them more likely to physically abuse their children later.

Furthermore, the available evidence indicates there is a specific period immediately after birth when bonding, or the lack of it, has a maximum effect on both mothers and children. Studies disagree somewhat on its length — some limit it to the first hour or less, others to the first four or five hours. A study done by bonding pioneer Dr John Kennell and his team indicates that its uppermost limit is well under 12 hours. He and his colleagues found that bonding immediately after birth, drew a mother closer to her child than bonding that began 12 hours after delivery. The

differences appeared almost immediately. Within a day or so, the early-contact mothers were already holding, fondling and kissing their babies noticeably more than the late-contact group.

This does not mean late-contact women will make bad mothers. A woman's maternal feelings are too complex and personal to be entirely reducible to biological reactions. The thousands of intimate moments that fuse mother and child together throughout life are also important. It's just that bonding gives a woman an important edge. And any edge is vital because of the total pattern or attitude it helps form. Dr Kennell's team, for instance, noticed that even elementary tasks such as changing nappies and feeding give non-bonding women more difficulty. A case in point is one young woman whose child was whisked away immediately after birth; it was nearly 24 hours before she saw him again. At first, that had not bothered her terribly, she said, because in the hospital she felt close to him. A month later, her attitude had changed. She felt uncertain that the baby belonged to her; the baby seemed like a stranger. This woman was sure that eventually a bond would grow between her and her child; however, it would have grown sooner if she had been able to spend some time with her baby after birth.

Almost invariably, women who bond early behave differently. The same differences turn up in study after study whether the subjects are white, black or Oriental, rich, poor or middle-class, American, Canadian, Swedish, Brazilian or Japanese. Up to three years later, bonding mothers still act more attentive, enthusiastic and supportive. Looking at one group of women a year after their deliveries, Drs Kennell and Klaus found they were still touching, holding and stroking their children more. When the researchers visited them again a year later, the women were now *talking* differently to their children. Very few of them yelled or shouted. A



## EXTRACT

mother might gently suggest to her child that it was nap time or that he ought to pick up his toys, but it was always done with implicit respect; rarely was an order issued. The investigators were also struck by the way the women's talk seemed to envelop the children in a rich, nurturing swirl of soothing, ego-building words. Simply by the way they were addressed, these toddlers knew they were loved and wanted.

Speech like this is not taught in a prenatal class and it cannot be learned from Dr Spock. It comes naturally to happy mothers. Their choice of words, their speech patterns and their tone of voice are completely spontaneous.

**NATURE HAS GONE** to great lengths to design a bonding system that fits the newborn's needs in very precise ways. She not only dramatically alters the behaviour of an adult woman who has already lived 20 to 25 years or more (an alteration which Freud insisted was impossible), she alters it in exactly the ways and for the length of time that suits the baby best. To thrive emotionally, intellectually and physically, an infant needs the special kind of loving contact and care that only bonding fully develops in his mother.

The baby also is prepared to play his part in bonding. Unable to feed, clothe or shelter himself, the sounds he makes and, even his looks are specially designed to elicit a loving, protective response from those who can feed and clothe him. Not long ago, scientist Carl Sagan remarked on the special tug, large-headed, small-bodied creatures seem to exert on us. Dr Sagan thought it might be because an outsized head subconsciously reminded us of the brain's predominance over the body. It is more likely that we are programmed to respond lovingly to all such babylike figures. We may 'think what is endearing about cartoon characters like those in 'Peanuts' — Charlie Brown and Linus for example — is their stoic humour, but



I wonder if we are not really responding to the vulnerability of these figures with their outsized heads and small bodies.

Certainly, on seeing her newborn for the first time, a mother will instinctively reach out to hold him. The most natural reaction in the world, like every other aspect of bonding, it also fulfils a specific and essential need of the child. At birth, love is not only an emotional requirement but a biological necessity for a baby. Without it, and the cuddling and hugging that go with it, an infant will

literally wilt and die. The name for this condition is *marasmus*, from the Greek word for 'wasting away', and during the 19th century it killed more than half the infants born; until the early years of the 20th century it was responsible for nearly 100 per cent of the deaths in foundling homes. Quite simply and brutally, these children died for lack of a hug. Today there are fewer cases of *marasmus*. Unfortunately, though, there are still too many neglected babies among us. Doctors call them failure-to-thrive infants.

**Only a very narrow spectrum of stimulation registers on newborns. A woman who wants to amuse, entertain or interest her child must choose her forms of play very carefully. And without knowing how or why, that is what she does; bonding increases her emotional sensitivity. A bonding mother often knows intuitively what will hold her child's attention.**

Even a little caring produces small miracles in a love-starved child, as one investigator demonstrated in a study on low-birth-weight infants. Their slower-than-normal growth rates are usually blamed on organic problems, slight brain damage being the most frequently named culprit. This researcher thought there might be another explanation. He noted that in the first weeks of life, these babies are often isolated in paediatric intensive care units. With their high-powered technology, these units can do everything for a child except hold or love him.

And that is what the researcher thought was wrong. So he selected a particular group of infants in his unit and asked the staff to stroke them for five minutes every hour around-the-clock for 10 days. Five minutes is not much time and a nurse is not a mother, but for all that, the stroking produced dramatic results. These babies gained weight faster, grew more quickly and were physically more robust than the infants who had not been touched.

A few years after this study, another team ran a somewhat similar test, making what proved to be one critical change. Instead of paediatric nurses, they used real mothers. Initially, that did not produce any major surprises. Like most other bonding babies, the infants thrived. But when the investigators examined these children four years later, another major difference had emerged. On the average, the stroked youngsters scored 15 points higher in IQ tests than the children who had not been touched.

Of course what happened to these youngsters at one, two and three was also critical. Intelligence is not set in granite at birth and it does not develop in a vacuum. It requires continual stimulation by the child's family, friends and teachers. By joining mother and child, bonding supplies not only someone who understands and loves the baby but also an ally who can provide the infant with the stimulation he needs to expand emotionally and intellectually. This is a lot harder than it sounds.

**ONLY A VERY NARROW** spectrum of stimulation registers on newborns. A woman who wants to amuse, entertain or interest her child must choose her forms of play very carefully. And without ever quite knowing how or why, that is what she does; for just as bonding increases her feeding and nappy-changing skills, it also seems to increase her emotional sensitivity. A bonding mother often knows intuitively what will hold her child's attention.

Much of what a newborn learns in the first days of life, he learns through his eyes. Lying in his cradle he is forever turning his head this way and that, searching his horizon for someone or something to spark his interest. He wants to be entertained, excited, possibly even to learn, but because his range is so severely circumscribed, the visual stimulation must be of a very special order. If it is too intense, he will feel overwhelmed and withdraw; if it is not intense

enough, he will not notice it. A face at rest, for instance, will not arouse him; it is too 'low-key' and, at this stage, its features have not acquired the emotional resonance they will later — even if they belong to his mother. But flaring eyebrows, rolling eyes, a head thrown back in mock surprise — in other words, all the somewhat exaggerated, slightly silly expressions bonding mothers make instinctively — turn out to fit his stimulation spectrum perfectly.

Japanese, American, Swedish, Samoan and nearly all other mothers play with their babies in exactly the same way. They choose forms of play that fit a newborn's intellectual spectrum precisely. Moreover, evidence indicates that all the seemingly random, silly behaviours mothers use in play are not random or foolish at all, but a number of quite distinct games, each with its own set of rules, regulations and time frame; each is designed to broaden the child's intellectual abilities.

Even at seven or eight weeks of age he has distinct ideas about what makes a good game, how it should be played, and for how long. One of his favourites is what bonding expert Dr Daniel Stern calls 'punch line behaviour'. It is so named because watching women and their babies at play reminded Dr Stern of a comedian, telling a long, elaborate, funny joke to a receptive audience. It begins with mother and child revving each other up. The comedian's part is played by the mother; she does something silly — maybe crosses her eyes. The baby smiles or moves his arms and legs excitedly — a signal he wants more. That encourages the mother to do something sillier still. "Gradually each of them grows more and more excited until, finally, the game reaches a climax similar to the punch line of a joke. Both 'break up' in laughter — the mother often literally, the child figuratively — his excitement threshold peaks and he kicks and waves his arms and legs wildly. Then after a pause, much like the breather a pro-



## EXTRACT

fessional comedian gives an audience between jokes, the game begins again.

That is, if the child wants it to. If he is bored, and he gets bored quickly at this age, he may signal that it is time for a new game by turning his head away, lessening the intensity of his gaze, or by refusing to smile, which are the ways he expresses his wishes and feelings at this point.

He is also equally adept at sensing other people's feelings towards him. Eyes tell him a lot, but touch tells him even more. Stroking, petting and holding are an infant's information source — a way of making some important judgements about the other person, and more importantly, about that person's feelings towards him. If an infant is approached in a cool, uninterested, suffocating or angry manner it tells him he is unloved and, perhaps, even in some danger. Alternatively, if the holding is warm and supportive, he picks up the feelings of this person and reacts accordingly. Bonding mothers somehow seem to know this, too. Whether they are more confident or more comfortable, bonding mothers almost invariably embrace their children differently.

Feeding, particularly breastfeeding, comes as naturally to bonding mothers as every other aspect of infant care. Matching the breastfeeding experience of bonding women and non-bonding women, a Seattle investigator found some striking differences. By the eighth week after delivery all but one of the non-bonding women had given up breastfeeding as simply too much bother. The bonding women, on the contrary, found the experience so exhilarating they all breastfed their babies until they were at least eight weeks old.

Much the same thing happened among a group of Brazilian women. Two months after their babies' births, three quarters of the bonding women were still breastfeeding. Among the non-bonding women, only one quarter had continued breastfeeding beyond the second month.

Keep in mind that what these stu-

dies were measuring was the effect of bonding on the length of time a woman breastfed, not the psychological benefits of breastfeeding itself. Scientifically, that has yet to be established in a conclusive way, though one day soon it will be. Nature is very economical. Each of her systems is designed to fulfil many different needs; there is no reason to think breastfeeding is any exception to this rule. If it confers very real physiological benefits — and breast milk's effects on a child's health and immunity are considerable — it is also likely that it confers psychological ones. This, however, is no reason for a woman who doesn't breastfeed — because she can't or doesn't want to — to feel guilty. What really counts psychologically is what emotions are communicated to the infant during feeding. A child can feel loved whether he is breast- or bottle-fed.

**A FATHER'S LOVE** is every bit as complex and important as a mother's. Given a chance, a man can be just as 'motherly' as a woman: protective, giving, stimulating, responsive to his children's needs, caring. Largely because the stereotypes and misunderstandings about fathers run so deep in our culture, it has taken us an inordinately long time to notice these simple facts of life. Even people who should have known better often did not. Anthropologist Margaret Mead was probably being ironic when she defined a father as a biological necessity before birth and a social accident after it, but she was also expressing a widely held view.

Fortunately, it is one that is beginning to change. Lately researchers have found that the sight of a newborn triggers the same repertoire of loving behaviour in a new father as it does in a new mother; he coos, stares at, and talks to his infant just as often and just as avidly. Until psychologist Ross Parke and his team began haunting the maternity ward of a small Wisconsin hospital several years ago, however, no one had ever



noticed this. Dr Parke did find that men are slightly slower to warm to their children — probably because they are not as biologically or culturally primed as women. But even this difference vanished when visiting times were adjusted to the fathers' schedules. Fathers kissed, hugged, rocked, touched and held their newborns just as much as their wives did.

The clinical name for this is 'en-grossment' and another group of investigators discovered that what produces it in women also produces it in men — early infant contact. In this report the sooner fathers were able to see their babies, the more absorbed and interested they were, and the more eager to touch, hold and play with their babies. If that early contact included being present at birth, they were also able to distinguish their child from other children (fathers absent from delivery did not report this) and felt more comfortable holding their infants.

Researchers found, however, that

**On seeing her newborn for the first time, a mother will instinctively reach out to hold him. The most natural reaction in the world, like every other aspect of bonding, it also fulfils a specific and essential need of the child. At birth, love is not only an emotional requirement but a biological necessity for a baby. Without it, and the cuddling and hugging that go with it, an infant will literally wilt and die.**

men played differently with their babies. Usually, they are more active and physical than mothers, but even this difference has its own part to play in the bonding drama since father-child interaction seems to make a woman more responsive. Dr Parke and his colleagues noticed that when a father was present, his wife smiled more often at their baby and was more attentive to his needs. Because several other studies have uncovered similar behaviour differences, many investigators now believe that each parent — by the way he or she relates to the child — makes a unique but complementary contribution to the infant's physical, emotional and intellectual development. Whether this is genetically or culturally determined is impossible to say. From the available evidence, social conditioning may play the larger role. Fathers and mothers act around their babies much like men and women are expected to act — in general. A woman almost invariably assumes a caretaker's

role, more concerned with what are traditionally 'womanly' duties: feeding, changing nappies and consoling the child. Fathers tend to be much more aggressive and playful with their children.

Probably the best example of the depth of these differences is a study done recently by a team of imaginative Boston researchers. Straightforward in design, it involved putting mothers, fathers and children together in a playroom and watching how they interacted. Within the sexes, the similarities were striking. Mothers, on the whole, were calm, protective and gentle with their children. Rarely did their interest flag or their tempers flare. Whether they were holding, hugging, talking or playing with their babies, they were almost always tender and calm. Fathers, in contrast, were much more excitable, mercurial, and rambunctious. Women talked more while men poked the baby gently with a finger or lifted him up in the air.

What is most striking about this study is the way each parent complements the other. But a child's self-confidence and self-image are the result of *all* the messages he receives from his parents. Whether this occurs through the stroking, hugging and gentleness of his mother or the physical play of his father, or vice versa, does not really matter. The important thing is that he receives jointly from his parents the encouragement to be himself.

Social conditioning determines who teaches what to the child. Dr T Berry Brazelton of Harvard has another, but not necessarily contradictory, explanation. "It seems to me," says Dr Brazelton, "that the baby very carefully sets separate tracks for each parent — which, to me, means the baby wants different kinds of people as parents for his own needs. Perhaps the baby is bringing out the differences that are critical to him as well as to them."

The greatest mystery of all, though, is what accounts for father-

infant attachment. Ultimately, it is love. But at the beginning the obvious psychological and physiological links that tie mother to child are lacking. Fathers do not carry children for nine months, never breast-feed them, only occasionally bottle-feed them, and rarely spend as much time with them as their wives do. Yet the bond that is eventually forged between them and their babies can be just as strong and vital as the mother-infant bond.

One way we have established this is by studying the child's mealtimes. Eating is as much an emotional act for an infant as it is a physical one. If he is uncomfortable or wary, he won't eat. Hence, if a baby drinks as much while his father is holding the bottle as he does when his mother is, that is a good indication he values both parents equally. This is what happened when a group of fathers and mothers were asked to feed their babies alternately. Milk consumption remained the same whichever parent was doing the feeding.

An even better measure of a baby's feelings towards his parents is to watch his reaction when one or the other of them leaves the room. 'Separation-protest' is the rather heavy-handed name of this reaction, and over the years, dozens of studies have been done using mothers; but until 1970, when an enterprising young investigator named Milton Kotelchuck organised what turned out to be his landmark study, no one had ever thought to include fathers. In design, the experiment was elegantly simple: Kotelchuck took 144 babies and measured their reactions when their mothers or fathers walked out of a playroom and left them alone with a stranger. He found that a father's leaving upset an infant as much as his mother's did. Many of the scientists present at the meeting where Kotelchuck read his paper, were openly sceptical of his findings, reflecting our society's attitudes towards fathering. Yet this too is changing, as it must. ♦



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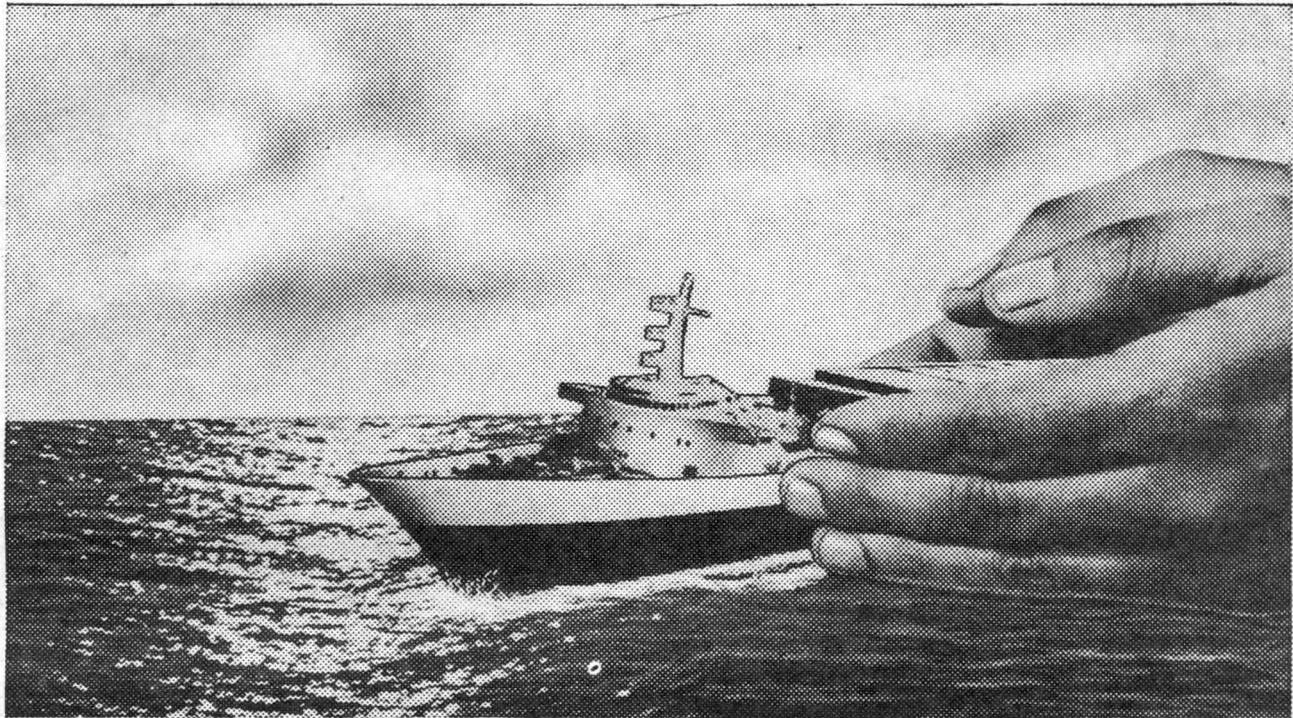
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FICTION



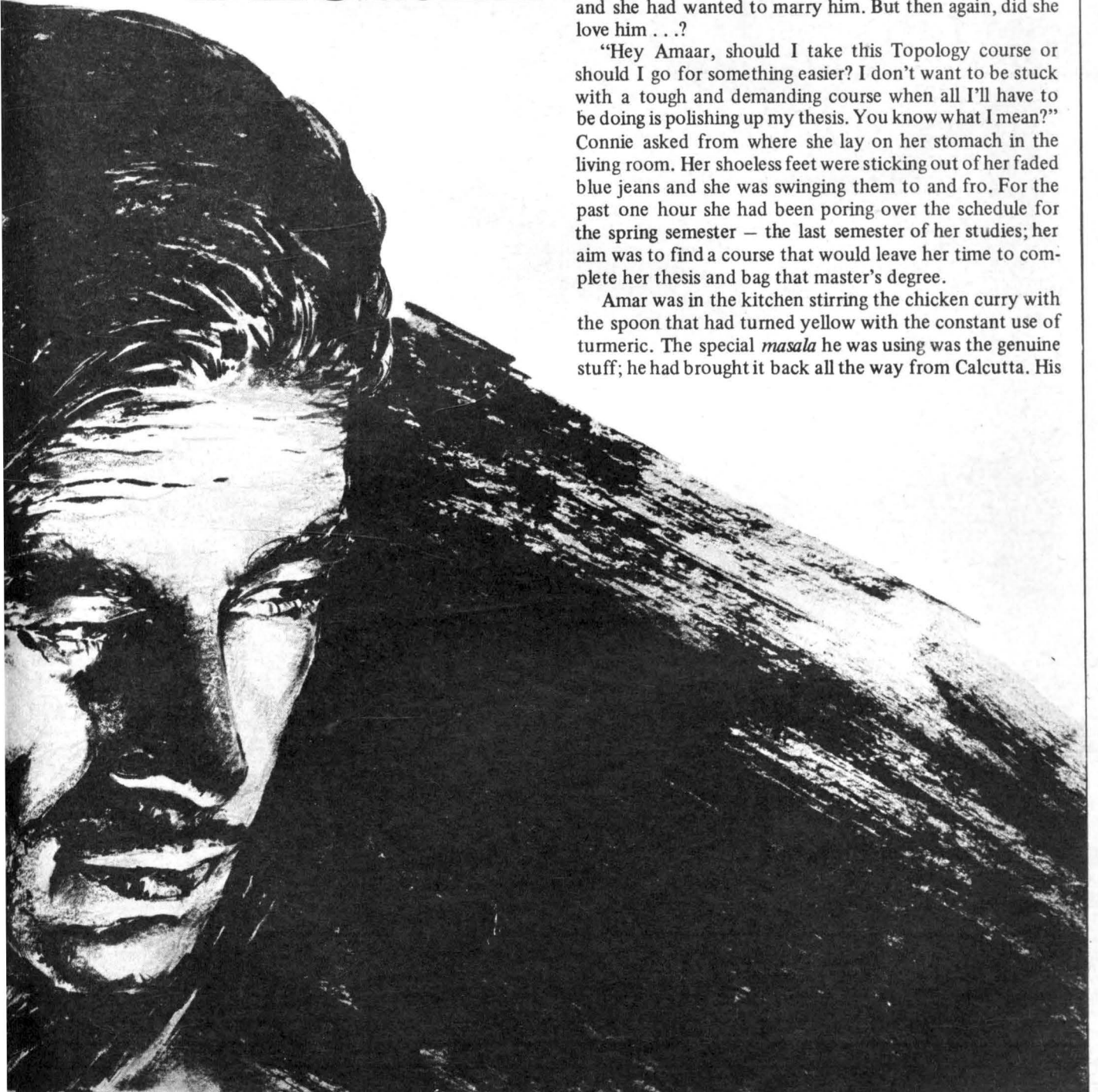
By Indu Suryanarayan

# THE MASTER'S DEGREE

**A**MAR LOVED HIS MOTHER, he loved his dog. A disconcerting question that raised its ugly head to haunt him and taunt him ever so often these past few weeks was — did he love his wife? Really truly, did he love her? Of course, he loved his wife, he had to. He had married her, hadn't he? And much against the displeasure of his mother, too. Connie was smart, she was pretty, although her face was a little too thin and narrow, and she had wanted to marry him. But then again, did she love him . . . ?

"Hey Amaar, should I take this Topology course or should I go for something easier? I don't want to be stuck with a tough and demanding course when all I'll have to be doing is polishing up my thesis. You know what I mean?" Connie asked from where she lay on her stomach in the living room. Her shoeless feet were sticking out of her faded blue jeans and she was swinging them to and fro. For the past one hour she had been poring over the schedule for the spring semester — the last semester of her studies; her aim was to find a course that would leave her time to complete her thesis and bag that master's degree.

Amar was in the kitchen stirring the chicken curry with the spoon that had turned yellow with the constant use of turmeric. The special *masala* he was using was the genuine stuff; he had brought it back all the way from Calcutta. His





## FICTION

mother had collected the chillies, the mustard and the coriander seeds from her kitchen garden to prepare the condiment. Being jittery and wary of stuff that was so potent that it changed the colour of utensils, Connie had asked Amar to use just that one wooden spoon so as to limit the yellowing to no more than one spoon. As the aroma of ground ginger, garlic and cumin filled the air, Connie called out again, "And Amaar, dear, could you please turn on the exhaust fan? Otherwise, I'll have to open the windows to get rid of the smells."

Amar turned on the fan but did not answer her earlier question. He was getting increasingly disgruntled with the way Connie carried on with her courses and thesis and degree. All she seemed to care for was her studies. While her interest in the year-old marriage had undergone a metamorphosis, Amar still felt the urge to bask in the romance of it. Last evening, for instance, when Amar had suggested they should go for a walk on the beach and eat ice-creams later, she had flatly refused, giving her studies as an excuse. Amar had been tempted to remind her of their vow to taste all the 48 flavours of ice-cream that the store offered — they had tried but 16. Anyway, he had remained silent and had taken the dog Topsy, for a walk round the block.

Amar had a gnawing suspicion that he had somehow lost touch with Connie at some level, and he blamed himself for that. He had made it financially possible for Connie to become a full-time student and pursue the degree. As he stood in the kitchen, he remembered how Connie had recently expressed a wish to get a doctorate degree someday; he shuddered at the very idea, and continued to season the chicken curry with ground black pepper.

If Connie had claimed the living-room as her domain to carry on her studies, the kitchen table was Amar's favourite place to work over the paper he was trying to finish. A problem he had been wrestling with for more than three years had begun to yield some lucid results. He closed the lid on the chicken curry and turned off the stove before returning to the papers spread out on the table. Picking up the pencil to unravel the finer knots of the problem, he happened to look out of the window. "It has started snowing," he announced in surprise.

It was on a day like this, a Wednesday afternoon, to be exact, that he had sat by the window at that pizza place watching the huge snowflakes fall gently yet steadily. Connie had come in from the snow, with her short blonde hair covered with wet snow, her thin face flushed and taut with the cold. She had made him get up from his chair. "I think I left my scarf here somewhere, I know I was sitting at this table when I came here after my class. . ." She looked behind the chairs and under the table, but could not find the scarf. "It was a gift, you know, I really liked it very much, it was my favourite scarf. . ." "Well, it is not here," Amar offered lamely. "What colour was it?" "It was blue, no green, actually a kind of blue-green," Connie answered, still searching the place with her eyes. "It is not



here, I have probably lost it. Thanks anyway. I am sorry to have disturbed you," Connie apologised without looking at him, and left.

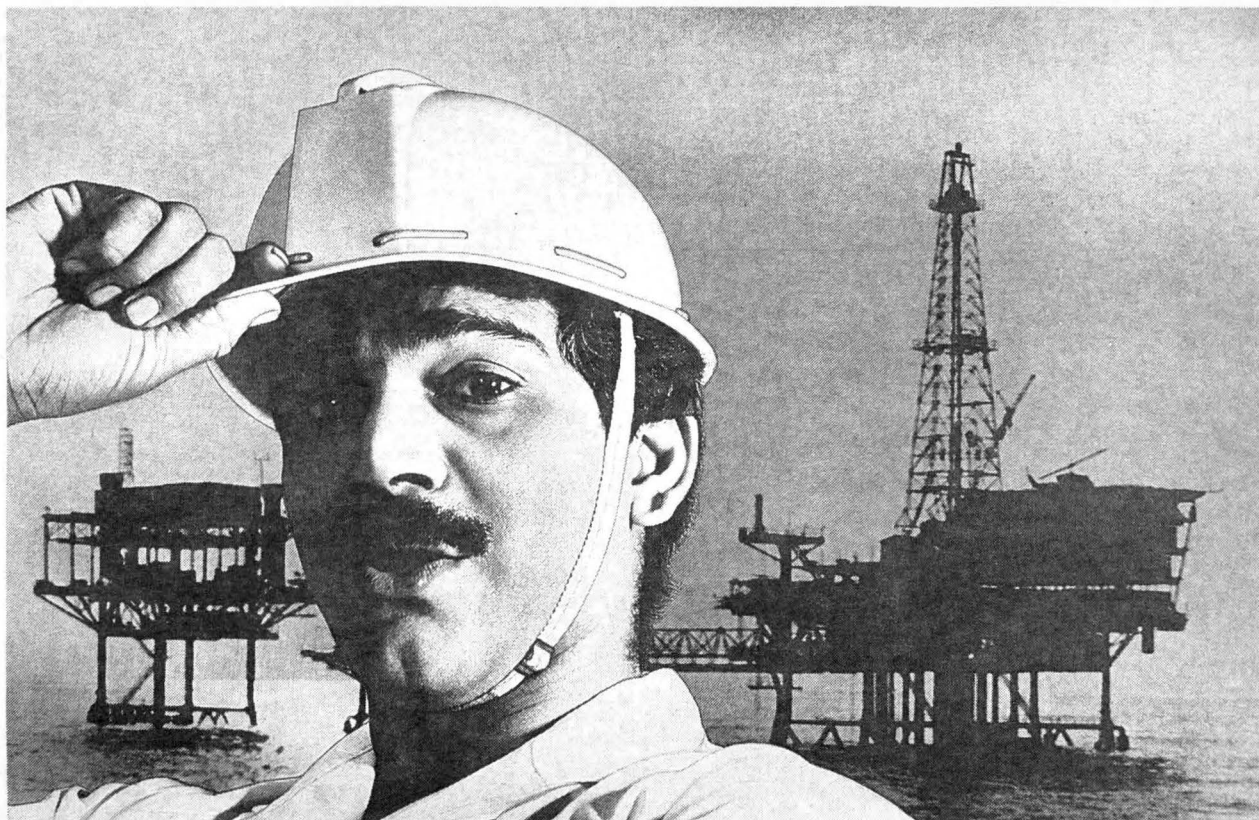
That night Amar could not sleep. He was touched by Connie's loss of that scarf and was compelled to do something about it. In the morning, he went to a department store and bought a bright blue scarf made of a sheer, shiny synthetic material. He decided it would match Connie's eyes.

**INSTEAD OF GOING** to the faculty club for a late lunch, Amar decided to go to the pizza place around noon. Though he closely watched every young woman that entered, he could not see Connie. He went with the scarf again the next day and the day after. He was disappointed each time. It was not until the following Wednesday that he saw Connie with two other girls, sitting there, eating a salad. If she saw him, she gave no indication. Although Amar was a little disappointed, he waited until she had finished her lunch. When she was at the door, he walked up to her and asked, "Did you find your scarf?"

"What?" Connie asked, startled.

"Remember me, I was here the other day when you were looking for the scarf? I got you this one which you might like." He held out the scarf. Though taken aback at first, Connie took it and did not know what to say. "I think that is cute," she had said finally with an awkward laugh; thanking him profusely, she had left to join the two girls who were probably her classmates.

Connie had been limping along towards her master's degree, taking a course here and a course there, for the last three years. She could only attend school part-time since she had to support herself with a full-time job in a fish packing store. As she neared the end of the trail, she was growing increasingly impatient and at times even desperate. The work at the store left her exhausted and the idea of the thesis looming ahead seemed more like a guillotine than a goal. She knew she would never be able to complete it if



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# FICTION

she could not be a full-time student. And that seemed impossible.

After the incident of the lost and found scarf, Connie began to come alone regularly to the pizza place and Amar invariably bought her lunch. They became good friends, each responding to the other's feelings, both sharing an eagerness to listen and to gauge each other's needs and views. Being a maths professor, Amar coached Connie for every course she took the following semesters so that she could come out with a pass grade. He had taken it as a challenge once he realised the limitations of Connie's knowledge of maths; and he was elated whenever he triumphed.

The relationship flourished in its own delicate way. There was something fragile about it though as individuals both Connie and Amar were strong as steel and iron. Before long, they realised they needed each other to share the good times they were both susceptible to. Connie loved Amar's gentle ways and soft voice as much as his passion for cooking. She appreciated the support and interest that Amar offered where her studies were concerned. Amar saw Connie as the special person in his life who would fulfil his dreams of having a family. Connie attributed his yearning to raise a large family to the fact that he himself came from a large family. Amar was the youngest of nine children and felt close to his mother and sisters.

They had been married in a simple civil ceremony with the required two witnesses. Connie's father had come down from Boothbay Harbour in Maine and Amar's close friend and old classmate, Ajit Singh, had come from Ithaca, New York. The honeymoon at Hawaii had been brief but perfect. A week after they had moved into the new house, Amar had brought home a frisky young German Shepherd dog from a secretary in the department who had moved from a house into an apartment following her divorce. Though Connie said she hated dogs, she said that she really liked Topsy. In fact the name was her idea since the dog had a way of falling all over the place when she got excitedly affectionate.

**WHEN THE HONEYMOON** was over, the first fight between Connie and Amar had been over Topsy. Amar was furious that evening when he found Topsy had not been fed in the afternoon. He had nagged Connie until she had lost her temper and yelled all kinds of obscenities at him. Amar had clammed up and pulled down a mask of indifference on his face. The fight had been a revelation to both Amar and Connie of their individualised styles of losing tempers. When Connie was mad, she yelled and argued and cried, to top it all. But when Amar got mad, anger froze his mind and tongue alike. He lost all interest in life; he starved and walked around like a silent, depressed ghost. Connie did not seem to mind this at all; in fact she treated the hiatus as a period of her own privacy and resurrection until Amar regained his normal communicative condition.

Amar's presence in the kitchen was the result of such a thaw. He had sulked for five days after the way Connie

had treated one of his close friends. When his old professor from India, C K N S Rao, had called to say he was in town and wanted to see Amar, Connie who had answered the phone had told him that Amar was too busy to see anyone since he was working on a paper he had to present at a conference next month. When Amar heard of this, he had been most upset. "He is the kind of friend for whom I would put everything else aside," he had told Connie. He had nursed his injured ego in sombre silence for five days and thawed only when Connie said she had made an 'A' in an advanced maths course. He had recovered as if after a fever. His appetite was back, he felt like cooking something special that both he and Connie loved, and that was the chicken curry.

**AMAR HAD FINISHED** all he wanted to do with his paper and went to the stove to check the chicken curry once more. Still thinking of Connie's question about the Topology course, and trying to decide what he should tell her, he went to the refrigerator and took out a beer. He wondered for a moment if he should offer Connie one, but decided against it. He slammed the door shut, noisily opened the can, took a sip and began to hum a Hindi song.

When he entered the living room to sit on the couch and read the newspaper, Amar had to wade through sheaves of paper and innumerable text books, some opened up on particular pages, others marked with pieces of paper. He kicked aside a crumpled scarf and stared at its familiarity. He even wondered if he should pick it up and put it on the table. Not considering it worth the trouble, he walked to the arm-chair and sat down.

Amar happened to glance at Connie, and caught her in the act of gathering her hair in a pony tail and fastening it with a large barrette. Her thin, frail arms looked whiter than ever, making her seem vulnerable and care-worn. The gesture touched Amar in a soft spot. He felt sorry for her; he even felt ashamed that he could hate her so much. He put his feet up on the table and spread out the newspaper on his lap, giving no indication of his passing mood. By experience he had found that if he gave an inch, Connie grabbed a mile. Connie did not look up at him and continued to chew on her pencil thoughtfully.

"If you are thinking of taking that Topology course, forget it, the course is too tough for you," Amar said turning over to the sports section.

Connie sat up abruptly and re-did her pony tail. She looked at him with a quizzical expression. It was obvious that she wanted to say something really trenchant. Just at that moment, however, Topsy came and sat close to Connie. Even as Amar was talking to Topsy, Connie picked up a small cushion and whacked her on the head.

"Get out of here, you filthy dog," she yelled in disgust and watched the dog retreat, head bent down in humiliation.

Amar was shocked and sat staring with his mouth open. Recovering himself, and his instinct to freeze rather than



## FICTION

create a scene or cause a clash, he picked up the Celtics game where he had left it and continued to read and drink the beer, as if he did not care.

Once Connie had finished choosing her schedule, she got up and went into the kitchen. She returned with two plates heaped with rice and topped with the chicken curry. She handed Amar a plate and sat down on the couch with her own and began eating. Seeing no fork on his plate Amar went to the kitchen, brought a fork and began eating, too. Somehow the chicken did not taste as good as he had thought it would.

**IT WAS THE FIRST** weekend after the classes had begun. Connie came home from the library and flopped down on the couch in the living room. She had worked for eight hours straight and was exhausted beyond words. The worry that had awakened her that morning came back in full force. She had missed her period by five days but had decided not to tell Amar yet. She had read somewhere how hard work often threw the menstrual cycle askew. As she lay on the couch, she was convinced something serious was going on inside her. She began to cry and soon it turned into heart-rending sobs. This is how Amar found her when he came home.

However, the same night Connie had her period and both Amar and she were relieved it had only been a false alarm. Connie had completed the courses, all that was left now was the thesis. Burying herself deeper into the books, spending all her time in the library, Connie kept moving towards getting that degree. There were days when she and Amar would not even exchange a word.

This time they found out it was no false alarm. Connie was pregnant and after the doctor confirmed it, for a time at least, Amar and Connie seemed to have patched up all their differences. Amar was so happy that he would at last have some good news to give his mother. Maybe he should ask her to visit them as soon as the baby was born. Or he could go to India with the baby, since Connie didn't want to go there at all because of what she called the 'savage heat'. Amar patiently ignored the many preposterous demands of Connie during her pregnancy.

One day Connie came up with a strange suggestion. "I think it may not be a good idea to keep Topsy with us. She is a ferocious dog and German Shepherds have been known to attack little babies. We read stories about babies being mauled by big dogs all the time. I don't want to go through that kind of trauma. Today when the neighbour passed by with her baby in the carriage, I saw Topsy pacing up and down with her teeth bared like this." Connie ground her bared teeth to imitate the dog.

Amar closed his own mouth tighter. He couldn't help feeling that Connie was being totally unreasonable. He refrained from suggesting that she was paranoid. Amar thought she had neither the patience nor the understanding that he associated with motherhood.

Connie next began to complain about the irritation in



her eyes whenever she wore her contact lenses; she insisted it was because of her pregnancy. She was extremely upset and cried for an entire afternoon, complaining and carrying on about how annoyed she was that she could not use her contact lenses anymore. She had to wear glasses. Amar had burst out, "Are you glad you are having this child or not?" If he had thought he could control Connie he was wrong. For in reply she had shouted, "Who the hell wants this kid anyway? I should probably get an abortion." Amar's reaction had been a silence that resembled the deep freeze.

"What's the big deal," Amar had asked himself a hundred times, "if she can't wear contacts, she can use her regular glasses. She is working for her master's degree, not competing in a beauty pageant."

Even Topsy sensed life was taking fast and unexpected turns in the family. She soon discovered that life was not a bowl of roses, not even a bowl of dogfood whenever Amar and Connie had their fights. And these kept getting more frequent as the days went by. If it was not the contact lenses it was the smell of the Indian spices in the kitchen. True, they did make up after the fights and turned friendly all over again, even showing Topsy some dog-respect and love. But the old times were gone forever and Topsy could no longer look forward to sleeping in their warm bed. The garage was her constant sleeping place now. It was sad that Topsy, after chasing the ball and fetching it in her mouth, did not know where to take it or to whom.

**IT WAS A WARM** spring-summer day and Connie parked the car in the driveway and came out. She was proofreading and making the final corrections on her thesis so that she could graduate in June. She asked Amar to bring in the grocery bag from the car since her hands were full with her books and papers. Amar agreed cheerfully and said he was making some muffin pizzas in the toaster oven and would presently make her some tea.

Amar remembered that Connie had gone shopping the previous afternoon, and forgotten to bring in the bags.

There was even a jug of milk and two cartons of orange juice. They would all have to be dumped in the sink. His heart sank at the thought.

When he walked through the kitchen door, Amar was just in time to witness Connie in action. She picked up the toaster and the muffins that were still inside and hurled them at Topsy. The dog dashed out howling in pain and fear.

Amar was shaking with rage. "What's the matter with you? You are going crazy. Why did you hit the dog? It is bad enough you are starving her to death."

Connie glared at him with hatred. "You take care of the dog if you want. And see to it she doesn't come into the kitchen when I am here. I am sick of this whole business. You don't listen when I tell you that we must get rid of that dog. I am becoming a nervous wreck with that dog hanging around me all the time. You don't care, do you? Anyway, that dog was your idea in the first place, you can do what you want with her."

Amar walked to the living room and saw Topsy sitting in a corner with her muzzle settled between her paws. He accepted the fact that the dog was his sole responsibility, just as the baby was Connie's responsibility. This realisation hit his mind like a slab of granite and he decided to do something about it.

When Amar came home that evening from school, Topsy was eating a bowlful of dogfood in the garage. Connie had made beef stew for dinner and also a salad and a cake. She had cleaned up the living room, put away all her books and papers. She was all done with her thesis and was celebrating. Amar could even smell her favourite perfume in the air.

Maybe he had been too hasty in calling the animal shelter to dispose of Topsy, Amar thought. It was probably as much his fault as Connie's if their marriage was on the rocks. Though Connie was only in the first weeks of her pregnancy, thoughts of the baby filled Amar's mind constantly. Amar now thought that the baby's arrival might cement and strengthen their relationship, create love and security for Topsy. Things were not beyond hope or control. At least not yet.

Amar washed the dishes and cleaned up after dinner. He told Connie he had to work over his paper that was to be presented at the conference. He went into the kitchen and spread out his papers and started working. When he got up to make a cup of coffee for himself, he made a cup of hot cocoa for Connie and took it to her where she was sitting, writing a letter, probably to her father. She looked up at him with a smile and thanked him.

The annual maths conference was to be held in Dallas, Texas. Amar was quite excited about presenting his paper. He told Connie how much it meant to him to attend the conference and she had readily agreed that he should go. He had his reservations for the plane and the hotel and he would be away for three days. He would take the car to the airport so that Connie would not have to give him a

ride or pick him up.

Amar had been so very busy the first evening of the conference that he missed calling Connie. He had met a lot of old friends and colleagues and seemed to have forgotten all his worries for the time being. He tried to call Connie the second night, but there was no answer. Probably she had gone to visit a friend or taken Topsy for a walk. The next morning he talked to her and she told him she had submitted the copies of her thesis to the graduate school and she was happy it was all over.

When Amar drove into the driveway, it was almost midnight and the moonlight shone on the house and filled the yard. He unlocked the kitchen door and quietly entered the living room. When he turned on the light, for a second he thought he had walked into the wrong house.

**THE LIVING ROOM** was stripped to the floor, so were the kitchen and the bedroom. A forlorn, naked mattress was lying on the wooden floor. There was not a stick of furniture around.

Coming back to the garage, Amar turned on the light. He noticed that the yellow plastic bowl which belonged to Topsy was still there in its usual place. A wave of relief swept over him and he called out to the dog as he walked into the backyard. He whistled again and again till he was breathless. There was no answer. "What the hell is going on?" Amar asked himself and came back to the living room in a daze.

He searched room after room for some clue. A folded notepaper in the fireplace caught his eye. Opening it he read:

"I am going back to my father's house. I gave away Topsy to the animal shelter. They said they would put her to sleep. I have taken whatever I needed including the washer and dryer. The u-haul that my father brought held more things than I thought. Don't bother contacting me. I do not want to come back to you. I want to pursue a career, become a teacher. By the way, I am not going to have the baby."

Not having the baby? Not having the baby? Amar wondered, lost in the shock that left him numb. What did it mean?

He walked into the kitchen and drank water with a cupped hand. He could not wash down the taste of ashes on his tongue. But strangely enough he felt a tug of relief, of freedom, pulling him away from his conscious self. He found the ground under his feet, and with that realisation, paced the wooden floor like a soldier on duty, mobilising his strength. When he looked down at a corner, he saw that the wedding picture that had always stood on the fire-place ledge was ripped into two. The half which contained Connie's picture smiled at him vacuously; the half that was his own lay upside down. He slowly picked them both up, and went into the kitchen to throw them into the garbage can. Suddenly he realised that the smell of garbage was pervading the entire house. ♦



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**N**EXT CHRISTMAS there will be no card from Miss Stevens amongst the many greetings that come to us from our children and friends in all parts of the world; no distinctive little card beautifully painted in water-colours, featuring a bri-

ghtly feathered songbird or an exotic spray of flowers. Because yesterday, Miss Stevens quietly folded her tent like the proverbial Bedouins in the desert, and joined the caravan which is ever on the move from this world to the next.



# PROFILE

We first came to know her through an old comrade with whom I had served in the Indian Army. He wrote to us from Pune, some 200 miles from Bombay, with a request to keep an eye on his old, invalid aunt who lived near us. Aileen Fay White-Stevens was 67 years old when I met her and had been confined to her bed with paralysis since the age of 27, an age when most young women were eagerly stepping over the threshold of life in search of careers, excitement and marriage. She had already heard from her nephew and greeted me warmly. And thus began a 10-year friendship that greatly enriched our lives.

Miss Stevens lay in a large room on a steel cot, propped up on pillows, her face gaunt, hair braided and coiled around her head, prominent nose, eyes direct and piercing, voice strong and expressive. The furniture consisted of a large, wooden cupboard, a frigidaire, a bookshelf with two photographs on it and a large, old-fashioned iron-bound sea-chest. On one side of her bed was a table, set against a large window and on it a radio set, a bottle of water and a glass tumbler; on the other side was a black wooden box on which lay an assortment of notebooks, pencils, a bottle of gum, a box of water-colour paints and her purse. The day's newspaper usually lay at the bottom of the bed. On the sea-chest was a guitar in a cloth cover.

At first my wife Connie, who tends to be reserved, did not join me in my visits; so I would go to see Miss Stevens by myself every Sunday evening at 5 p.m. for an hour, before going on to evening Mass at the church nearby. After some months, Connie decided she would accompany me and our weekly visits became a regular routine. Fay was looked after by a servant woman named Philomena who occupied the other room with her son. She was a faithful attendant and by way of appreciation, Fay met the boy's educational expenses.

For most people, visiting an elderly, bed-ridden person would have been a dreary chore, but for us each visit

was a small voyage of discovery to which we eagerly looked forward. Miss Stevens (as I always addressed her) did not encourage visitors and did not believe in doctors or medicines except in dire necessity. Knowing how much she wanted to talk, when we went for our weekly visits, we mostly listened, commenting only where necessary. She was a Theosophist who believed in reincarnation but practiced no religion. Expectedly, Miss Stevens developed a close relationship with Connie who is a nurse and a good cook, and she enjoyed the occasional little delicacies prepared for her. With me, she was often disputative as I could not resist drawing her into discussions on abstruse

**Gradually the story of her life unfolded: Fay sitting hunched up on her pillows, her eyes alive, voice vibrant, face mobile, as though making up for the unresponsive lower half of her body.**

points of doctrine; but we both enjoyed these wordy exchanges.

**AS WE GAINED HER CONFIDENCE**, gradually the story of her life unfolded, Fay sitting hunched up on her pillows, or leaning forward resting her elbows on a pillow, her eyes alive, voice vibrant, face alive and mobile as though making up for the unresponsive lower half of her body. With incisive voice and evocative language she re-lived the past she clearly recalled in narratives.

Fay and her younger brother Bob started life somewhere near Kew Gardens in London, their father a dour six-footer working in a Government department. He apparently did not have much time for the family and

Fay remembered him most for the large number of clocks he kept in the house and the amount of time he spent winding and setting them each day. Brother Bob was a lively, mischievous but malicious boy who usually managed to shift the blame for whatever mayhem he had wrought, onto his sister's shoulders, for which Father thrashed her. Her mother was the inspiration, joy and guiding spirit of Fay's life and every conversation was sprinkled with "Mother said..." and "Mother would have none of it..." and "Mother sang so beautifully."

When World War I broke out in 1914 Mr Stevens was commissioned into the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the family shipped out in a war-time convoy to Hongkong on a posting. Fay was put into a French convent where she was not very happy, and Mother became something of a celebrity because of her piano playing and singing, very much in demand at social functions in the Colony. The family spent a holiday in Japan in a picturesque little resort in the hills which etched a treasured niche in Fay's memory; she lovingly described the cultured genteelness of Mother who, unlike the other crude foreign visitors at the little Japanese hotel, went out of her way to learn and respect the delicate Japanese customs, winning the regard and affection of the village folk.

Sadly, Father who was seldom at home, drifted away from the family, and Mother and the two children returned to England in 1918 after the war ended. As usual, Mother was the toast of the ship because of her accomplishments. Back in England, the family first stayed in lodgings on the south coast and then found a house in Weymouth. After struggling for five years as a governess, Mother succeeded in getting Bob admitted into a public school and took a teaching job in France. Mother and daughter stayed in a *pension* and the little girl was befriended by a number of emigres from the Russian Revolution of 1917, including a Count and Coun-

tess. Fay attended a French day school and with a remarkable facility for languages, became fluent in French and German, with a smattering of Russian.

Mother and daughter returned to England in the late 'twenties. Fay completed a secretarial course and took up a job whilst Mother taught piano and gave singing lessons. About this time Bob was ready to enter college for a degree in engineering. This called for tremendous sacrifices and hard work from his mother and sister, but they saw him through; then Mother withdrew all her savings to pay for his passage to Canada for a good job as an engineer, where he eventually achieved success, married and built his own home. Letters and photographs kept Mother and Fay informed of the family in Canada. Father, on the other hand, was never heard from again. Mother again took up a governess' appointment in France to recoup the family finances, whilst Fay got a job with a firm of importers in Germany. This involved taking dictation in German, translating it into English and vice versa, handling the correspondence between the German and English companies.

**WITH THE UGLY SPECTRE** of Nazism beginning to loom over Germany, Mother and Fay moved to Spain in 1934 where Fay soon found employment in a Spanish firm trading with England, and picked up Spanish so quickly that she was able to repeat her bi-lingual feat, this time taking dictation in Spanish, translating it into English and vice versa, as she handled the overseas business correspondence. Quite a remarkable performance for a young lady in her mid-twenties. But the Spanish ideal began to cloud over as the Civil War broke out in Spain in 1936 with Franco's Fascists, aided by the Germans and Italians, determined to wrest power from the Republicans, and though life went on, it was often tense.

For Fay, it was a specially significant period in her life. She started

classical guitar lessons under a well-known Spanish guitar maestro and did so well that he selected her to play a special solo item at a public performance. The guitar became a close companion and was to give her many hours of pleasure and consolation in the dark days which lay ahead. For around that time she started displaying alarming symptoms of paralysis in her lower limbs – and both Fay and Mother knew that the young girl was likely to become a victim to a dreaded hereditary affliction of the Stevens family, whereby partial paralysis struck female members at random, two generations apart. The talented, attractive, hard-working Fay Stevens lost the use of



her lower limbs and had to take to a wheel-chair. But she lost none of her zest for life, and continued with guitar lessons though she could no longer work.

Now a new menace appeared on the international scene with the rise of Nazi Germany and by October 1939 it became evident that war in Europe was imminent. Foreigners in Spain began to leave and together with other English families, Mother and Fay were put aboard a French freighter which was to deliver a cargo to the Canary Islands in the Atlantic Ocean off the Spanish Sahara, before heading back to the French port of Cherbourg. The ship was in no hurry so passengers were debarked in the Canaries for a two week stay-over,

before heading towards the English Channel, where the French skipper was persuaded (for a fee) to land his English passengers at Portsmouth before going on to Cherbourg. Mother and daughter passed the years of World War II from 1939 to 1945, in a boarding house at Weymouth, listening to the pounding of the British anti-aircraft batteries on the south coast of England as the German bombers flew in on their missions of destruction. They lived a hard, lonely life, with Mother employed in one of the defence industry factories. But as always, it was Mother's courage and strength that encouraged Fay to make the best of her sad situation and they spent long hours together in loving, cheerful companionship, filled with music and laughter. Mother was Fay's inspiration; Mother washed her and changed her, cared for her and looked after her; discussed books with her; books which were to become Fay's close companions.

Mother bought a second-hand typewriter and Fay took in typing, did exquisite needlework, painted, played the guitar and read, read, read. But physically she deteriorated and doctors advised her that it would be better for her to move to a warmer climate. Colombo in Sri Lanka was first considered, then India was decided upon. So in 1956 Mother and Fay came out by sea to Bombay and moved into a boarding house in south Bombay. Later they moved to Lonavala, a beautiful hillstation in the Western Ghats on the way to Pune, where they stayed in a small hotel in the Lonavala woods, owned by a genial Parsee couple. But it was hard to earn a living in this rural area and after a year, they moved back to Bombay.

**TO MAKE THE INDIAN** venture possible, Mother had sold all their possessions in England which brought in a capital of £ 1,000. Mother and daughter now started to take an interest in the Stock Market and gradually reached a stage of expertise which permitted them a reasonable



## PROFILE

degree of financial security. This was all part of Mother's careful planning as she knew she was dying of cancer.

Then one day in her late seventies, Mother died quietly. Friends brought Fay to the seaside suburb of Juhu and found her a flat and a servant girl, Philomena; and a few years later we came into her life. We remember her as a brave woman, ever busy, cheerful and full of enthusiasm, with never a complaint of her handicap. Seldom was she idle; either the typewriter was clacking away busily on a pillow in front of her; or she was working on some exquisite piece of embroidery, knitting or needlework of some kind; or she was busy painting, bent over the pillow she used as a desk. She had an old valve radio set which was generally tuned into the BBC; she also used it to study Arabic and Hindi. I had had this old set repaired about three times till the shopman said nothing more could be done for it. After a great deal of persuasion I got her to ditch her old friend and let me buy her a good, new set which gave her excellent service.

With time, Fay's legs gradually drew inwards at the knees and soon became permanently fixed in the squatting position, so that she could no longer use her wheelchair, which I gave to a hospital at her behest. But her remarkably busy mind and fierce spirit of independence, together with her formidable courage, supported her unflinching. Connie's brother served in Air India for several years, which enabled him to give her a passage to England every year, where she visited our two children settled there. These visits were occasions for much planning between Fay and Connie as to what was to be brought back for her. Miss Stevens' requirements were modest — water-colours, paint brushes, bovril, soup packets and her favourite sweets 'Liquorice All Sorts'! And when Connie returned, Fay was like an excited child opening her little packages and admiring them. Those were happy moments for us too.

Whilst Connie was on these visits to the children, I continued to spend

Sunday evenings with Miss Stevens, listening to her reminiscences, discussing books which she read avidly, her eyesight being so good that she never required spectacles. Occasionally we just listened to the BBC and were able to share our enjoyment of classical music. On one of these visits I had been dispirited and remarked that I had been asked to do something for a friend which I felt was not possible.

"Never say that," declared Miss Stevens. "Never say anything cannot be done. Tell yourself it *can* be done and try your hardest to do it. Say you *will* do it. And you'll be surprised how often you succeed." I had heard such exhortations often enough

**Mother was Fay's inspiration:  
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at school, in the Army and from others. But coming with such strength and confidence from a frail, crippled, old woman, it had a strangely convincing effect on me which has lasted. Her philosophy was always positive, but she herself was adamant and strong-willed, for though she often asked for our advice on problems, she eventually did things her way.

In the autumn of 1985, Connie and I spent a long holiday with the children in England, our eldest girl also joining us from India for the celebration of our 40th wedding anniversary. On our return, we were surprised to observe Miss Stevens betraying an air of listlessness. The old typewriter had long been disposed of, there had been little needlework, the

paints had not been used much and the guitar lay neglected on the old sea-chest. She cheered up at Christmas time but early in the new year, grew despondent, and one day she sighed.

"I'm nearly 78 and I'm getting tired. I don't think I want to live much longer."

On another occasion when she had been gazing out of the window, she said: "I used to love looking at the sky, but I haven't seen it for years now, since that building next door came up." I suggested that we switch her position around so that her head was where her feet were, and then she would be able to see the sky. But she said it did not matter now.

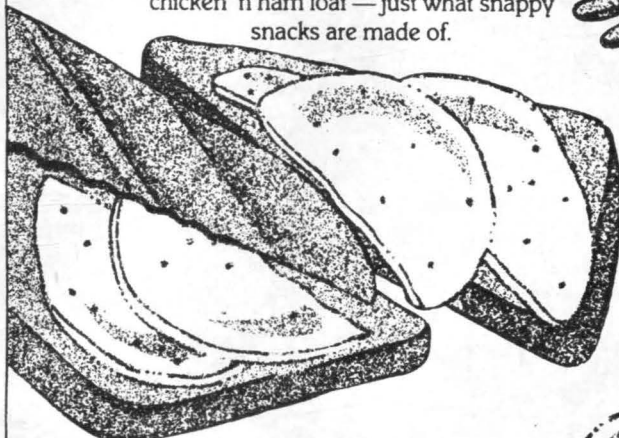
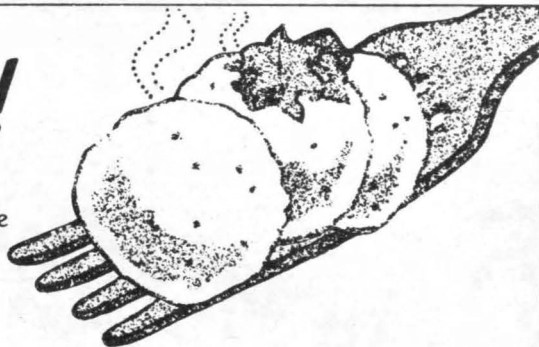
Then one Sunday evening in May when we went to visit her, we found Fay lying back and staring at the ceiling. We started telling her that we had both been down with the 'flu when we realised she herself was not well. In between heavy breathing Fay said she had been ill for two days; then leaned forward on the pillow in her lap and spoke only occasionally, no longer the sparkling spirit of good cheer. On Tuesday Philomena came over to say that Memsahib was looking very bad and when Connie went back to the house with her, she found that Miss Stevens had passed away.

She had expressed a wish to be cremated so we made arrangements accordingly. Apart from two lady friends, Philomena and both of us, there were no other mourners. In a touching gesture that was typically Indian, every family in the block of flats gathered around the hearse in the compound to pay their respects to a departed neighbour; and before the cortege drew out, prayed silently according to their own faiths — Hindu, Muslim and Christian. At the crematorium the simple, white coffin was consigned to the flames without any ceremony, as Miss Stevens herself had already returned to the Infinity in which she believed, to await her next reincarnation.

And so Miss Stevens, goodbye. ♦

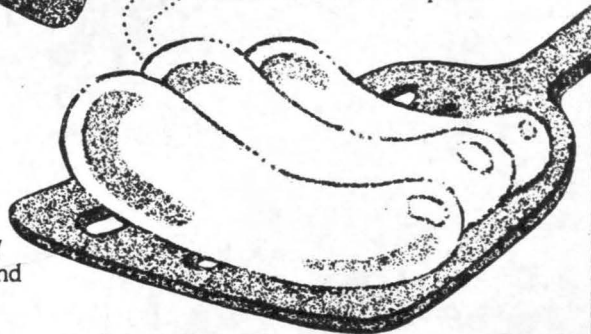
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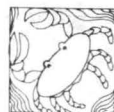
**ARIES: March 21 to April 20:** Mars, the energy planet, is finely placed in your solar scope and will help you in the fields of romance, sports, entertainment and creative work. Most of your work will be completed between the 9th and the 22nd. Friends and supporters will rush to your rescue this month. All problems dealing with children, education or research, will be solved.



**TAURUS: April 21 to May 21:** The Sun trine Saturn formation lays emphasis on your home, its renovation and decoration; on parents, elders and in-laws; on real estate, farming, gardening, buying and selling. This is also the right time to reschedule your style of working. The first week will usher in trips and ties. Taureans will make commitments in August and meet them too.



**GEMINI: May 22 to June 21:** Set a difficult and hectic pace for yourself this month, as Mercury trines Saturn. Mercury also indicates messages, news, relatives, neighbours, travel, alliances, calls and good luck for you. Contracts and assignments will come your way; grab them. People will be very friendly and helpful, so don't hesitate to ask for favours or guidance.



**CANCER: June 22 to July 22:** The Full Moon in your 8th sector signifies financial augmentation, either as an increase in earned income, a lottery, loans, perks, a promotion, or shares, units, etc. Buying or selling is a salient feature this month. Your family will be pleased with you. You will do a lot of entertaining and socialising in the latter half of August. This is also the right time to reach out to people.



**LEO: July 23 to August 23:** The Mars trine Uranus position will encourage you to take on new ventures and enterprises. Writers, teachers, editors, entrepreneurs, film, theatre and TV directors, politicians, policemen and those in the Defence Services will excel, and their merit will be recognised. Leos will be romantically inclined this month. Children will be a source of pleasure.



**VIRGO: August 24 to September 23:** This is a contrary month for Virgos, with an emphasis on travel, introspection, and a slightly forced relationship with people, due to circumstances beyond your control. But you will meet interesting people, journeys are also likely. You may have dealings with law courts and governmental bodies. You will also draw up health and welfare plans.



**LIBRA: September 24 to October 23:** You will be very lucky this month as the New Moon falls in your 11th angle, signifying gains, gaiety, glamour and gold. This is an ideal time to strike out boldly and take the lead. Unions, alliances, partnerships and attachments may lead to permanent ties, such as weddings or business collaborations. Group activity will be ideal.



**SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22:** The Moon's first quarter in your sign indicates great drive and ambition, which should help you succeed in new ventures. You should also go in for expansion, diversification and distribution in your career. Executives and artists will excel on their own initiative. You will shake off your lethargy and work yourself to the bone. But the last week will be fun.



**SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21:** Sun trines Uranus, the Awakener, which in turn activates your intuition, ignites your imagination and enhances your creativity. Ceremonies, publicity, sales, ties, collaborations, journeys, a refurbishing of your image and that of your company and an ability to wield authority are the positive features of the month.



**CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20:** Money is the name of the game this month — buying, selling, shopping, bargaining, negotiating, clinching deals and resolving arguments and controversies. A refuge away from home is likely to be in the offing. Dealings in property and export-import are foretold for Capricornians. You will also help raise funds and capital.



**AQUARIUS: January 21 to February 18:** While a few disputes and differences are likely, as the Sun and Mars transit your 7th angle, ties and partnerships are also in store for you. It may also be the right time to shed your inhibitions and rediscover your true personality. The key word is communication — at different levels. Journeys, calls and messages play a pivotal part for Aquarians.

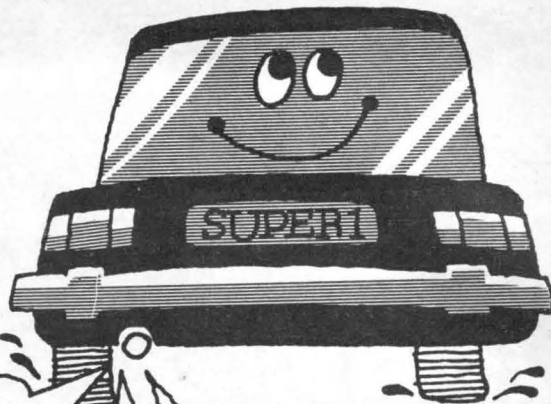


**PISCES: February 19 to March 20:** August will be a month of pressures and numerous demands, from various sources. You will have your hands full in your work sphere. Promotion and perks are likely while you may also have to attend to the hiring and firing of your subordinates. Unemployed Pisceans will find a job, or part-time employment. Loans and funds will be easily available. Interesting visitors are likely to meet you. ♦



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