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imprint



THE BLOOD ON OUR HANDS

EVERY MONDAY & THURSDAY
BUSINESS EXPRESS



BREAKFAST BONANZAS
INDIAN EXPRESS
SEVEN DAYS A WEEK



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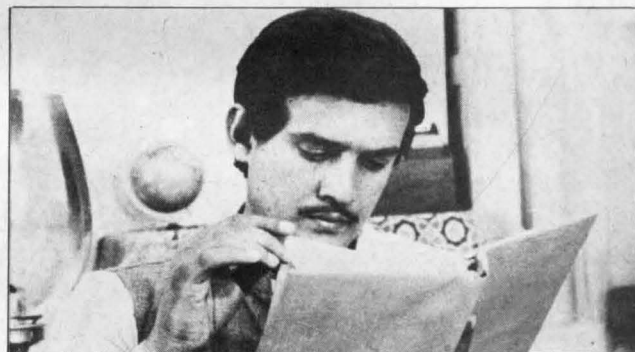
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A Distorted Picture

The circular letter of Mr R V Pandit addressed to the members of Parliament and State Assemblies published in the *Indian Express** (June 24, 1987) — the great champion of the cause of capitalists-cum-communalists-cum-reactionary forces of the country — is full of blatant lies and is part of a grand conspiracy to besiege the country by forces inimical to the emergence of a strong and prosperous India.

Nothing can be further from the truth than this fantastic and wild allegation of Mr Pandit that nobody believes what the government or any member of the government says or that the Rajiv government is a non-functioning government and that there is public scepticism even where the nation's security is involved. It is only Mr Pandit and persons of his thinking who rely on the words of their foreign masters whose sole aim is to destabilise the country. These persons are interested only in spreading canards against our dynamic Prime Minister, always tarnishing the image of the country by depicting a gloomy and dismal picture of the country. They are blind to several of the splendid achievements of the government headed by Rajiv Gandhi, which have heralded an epoch-making era and bewildered other nations of the world. These splendid achievements are distressing to some of the foreign powers who cannot tolerate a strong and prosperous India following her independent policies, and to their henchmen in India who are carrying on a campaign of blatant lies against Rajiv Gandhi.

Mr Pandit has given a clean chit to some of our neighbouring countries whose sinister and aggressive designs against us are well-known. This only shows that in his zeal to denigrate and malign the Prime Minister, he is quite blind to the danger to the security of our country. Only those who have no concern for the good or future of the country can give such chits to countries hostile to India.

The charges levelled by him about the Bofors deal, rampant corruption in the country or the devaluation of the office of the Presidency are unsubstantiated and fictitious.

Mr Pandit should know that according to our Constitution the President represents the dignity and honour of the nation but the office of the Presidency is decorative and ornamental. The real power is in the hands of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet because he has with him the mandate of the people.

The whole country is proud of the wise and sound policies of our Prime Minister — external as well as internal — based on statesmanship and realism. We are sure that these policies will succeed, vexing national problems will be solved, and our country, under the dynamic leadership of Rajiv Gandhi, will lead the whole world.

We appeal to all Members of Parliament and State Assemblies to vote for Mr R Venkataraman — the official Congress candidate who combines erudite scholarship and rich Parliamentary experience, is an eminent administrator, endowed with very many qualities of the head and heart. He is the most suitable person for the highest office of the country — the Presidency.

(Sd) Kazi Jalil Abbassi, MP (Lok Sabha)
Aziz Sait, MP (Lok Sabha)
Shamin Siddique, MP (Rajya Sabha)
Dr Hashin Kidiwai, MP (Rajya Sabha)
Rafique Alam, MP (Rajya Sabha)
Laxmi Narayan, MP (Rajya Sabha)

* from June Imprint.

New Delhi

On Electing a New President

In the face of the 'campaignist' — for want of a better word — attitude adopted by the national press, led by two Bombay-based papers, for or against Rajiv Gandhi (with respect to his relationship, as Prime Minister, with the President of the country) you have always tried to take a more balanced and objective view of the issue. I was, therefore, more than a little disappointed that you should advocate, as a second option to Justice Krishna Iyer, a second term for Giani Zail Singh, in your open letter to the legislators of India (*On The Marquee*, June 1987). Because, this meant that, wittingly or unwittingly, you were like M R Masani, advocating a Presidency and a Prime Ministership that will be confrontationist and, consequentially, constantly at loggerheads with each other. As we know, the relations between Giani Zail Singh and Rajiv Gandhi have by now deteriorated to such an unspeakable level as has never happened between any of the six Presidents and five Prime Ministers independent India has had so far. (I am stating this just as a fact, without going into who among the two is responsible for such deterioration.)

In view of this, if the Giani is re-elected for a second term, the clear and inevitable consequence, at least till the next general elections three years hence, will be that we will have a head of state and a head of government who are virtual anathema to each other. Can India's democratic polity afford this? Is this what the fathers of our Constitution intended? As is amply clear by now, from more than half-a-century already used up in writing about the rights and 'non-rights' of the country's President vis-a-vis the Prime Minister, during the last four decades, their relationship even under the Constitution is ever so delicately balanced that it calls for two individuals with a healthy quantum of goodwill and mutual respect for each other to work that relationship successfully. No one can any

longer say that these exist between Gianiji and Rajiv Gandhi. This being so, I would say that your advocacy of a second term for President Zail Singh was less than responsible, if not mischievous.

*C A L Mulanhunnathukavu
Bombay*

With reference to the *Marquee*, if we have to usher in a healthy democracy and not the sham that we are practising at present, Justice V R Krishna Iyer should be elected. In America if the President is a Democrat, the Vice-President is a Republican, to strike a balance, but in India, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the President all belong to the ruling party and naturally, as expected of them, they conspire with it, damaging the country's laws, democratic institutions and moral values.

Though the combined Opposition strength in the electoral college is 35 per cent as against 65 per cent of the Congress, Mr R Venkataraman, the Congress nominee, can still be defeated. But to achieve that, Justice Krishna Iyer must take a firm stand and go in for the kill. He should declare that if he is elected he will remove the present Prime Minister and instal a national government headed by V P Singh and consisting of Madhu Dandavate, K Arif Mohammed, A K Antony, Ramakrishna Hegde, N T Rama Rao, Jyoti Basu, S B Chavan, H N Bahuguna, S S Barnala, Kanshi Ram, Sharad Joshi, Datta Samant, Vasant Sathe, R V Pandit, E M S Namboodripad, A B Vajpayee, Chandra Shekhar and Baba Amte. If that happens, then Justice V M Tarakunde should be elected to the post of Vice-President.

If Justice Krishna Iyer adopts the above stance, fence-sitters in the Congress who are playing for time, will vote for him and we will have a true democracy. That will also help us end the misrule of the Congress and Nehru dynasty.

*Dr Leo Rebello
Bombay*

Your clarion call to the legislators of India will, in all likelihood, go unheeded, knowing fully well the legislators' scramble for loaves and fishes rather than being moved by higher ideals. Essentially, the Congress legislators are prisoners on parole.

His discrepancies in the past and his recent bold gesture notwithstanding, a second term for Giani Zail Singh and further humiliation would further alienate the Sikh masses.

A malleable R Venkataraman will ensure a full term for the Congress legislators and push through the flamboyant policies of the PM. In case of a crisis in the Congress party, Venkataraman can do a Sanjeeva Reddy! The partisan and opportunistic politician that he is, he will go out of his way to stabilise the Congress party at the expense of the nation.

*Jai Loy
Bombay*

Your appeal to the legislators is of value so far as independence of opinion is concerned, and it has come at a juncture when perhaps, the intelligentsia in the country by and large wants as President someone who can safeguard the ethics of the Constitution. However, there is nothing extraordinary in R V Pandit's appeal, and on the whole, it does not carry anything substantial by way of argument to convince the readers and especially the voters, to reject R Venkataraman and elect Krishna Iyer. The chief thrust of Mr Pandit's argument against R Venkataraman is that he is a pliable man. And Rajiv Gandhi wants a pliable man, a yesman. Mr Pandit also reminds the readers (and the voters) that Giani Zail Singh was also pliable, so much so that he was ready 'to pick up a broom and be a sweeper', if asked by Mrs Gandhi to do so.

The same Gianiji has now become wiser, stronger and has raised both his personal stature as well as the office of the President. If Giani Zail Singh could be independent, assertive etc in the course of his time, couldn't R Venkataraman also follow suit? Would he not be independent both in deci-

sion-making and personal dealings with the Prime Minister?

Both the candidates (Mr Venkataraman and Mr Krishna Iyer) are honest, upright and dignified. And both will nurture the interest of the nation, if elected. Between these two men, at least there should be no question of selecting one and rejecting the other. Preferably R Venkataraman would be better in the present circumstances;

So though R V Pandit's appeal seems straightforward and honest (motivated by the highest good to the nation), it is specious. As a matter of fact the appeal fails to foresee what good would result after electing Krishna Iyer as the President. Though a distinguished jurist and a man of independence, in what way would he safeguard the Constitution more than his Congress nominee counterpart would? The highest offices of the country cannot continue to waste time sorting out their personal differences. We have had enough of all this strain. What we now need is a healthy coordination and dignified relationship between these two offices, so that decision-making can be speeded up, and the Prime Minister and the President can devote their time to the more pressing problems of the people and the nation.

*Naresh Umrigar
Bardoli*

Sorry State Of Lankan Tamils

Apropos your June cover story, *The Siege Within*, profiling the sorry state of Tamilians in Sri Lanka, the problems in Sri Lanka have needed urgent attention for a long time but because there were several parties and groups to be consulted, such as TULF, LTTE, PROTEG etc. the issues were delayed and got out of hand. It was only when the Sri Lankan government attacked Jaffna — its temples, schools, hospitals, and the common people, including women and children — that the Indian government undertook its first sensible action, the air dropping of relief supplies to the beleaguered territory. If the Indian lea-

LETTERS



ders had made their stand clear right at the beginning — that they would protect the Tamilians in Sri Lanka — the Sri Lankan government would never have dared to treat Tamilians in such an inhuman manner.

Your story, with extracts from international newspapers, tellingly reflects the bankruptcy of our foreign ministry which spends crores of rupees on its embassies but not in keeping foreign countries well-informed.

Pannalall Mundhra
Calcutta

The article *An 'Anti' View on Sri Lanka* (June 1987) by Rahul Singh and some observations by Cho on Eelam in your cover story, call for a spirited refutation based on cold logic. Your views and conclusions are unfortunately, based on a profound ignorance of the realities of the developments and a deliberate misreading of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, political and economic history of the island kingdom. Let me clarify:

1. Let us, as a matter of priority, do away with the prefix 'Sri' alongside Lanka. Since when and on what basis, has the island been labelled 'Sri Lanka'? It has always been Serendip (since the days of Marco Polo), Ilankai (ever since Ramayana originated), Lanka or Ceylon. It was the assumed Aryan (!) arrogance of the Sinhala

racist chauvinistic elements that invented the new name (as a brazen insult to spite the Tamil majority) simultaneously when they mutilated the Ceylonese flag (which had earlier been approved and adopted by a parliamentary sub-committee) with the addition of 4 'bo' leaves giving it a 'Buddhist' complexion, against vehement Tamil opposition. It was as arbitrary a piece of legislation as the denial of fundamental linguistic rights to the Tamils when Sinhala was declared the only 'official' language.

2. The origin of the Tamils in Lanka can be traced back to at least a millennium B.C. We might as well speak of the Tamils in south India as of Lankan or Eelam origin rather than the Tamils of Lanka as of Indian origin (and I'm not talking of the 'Indian Tamils' inducted as indentured labour in the mid-19th century).

3. Until the implementation of the Colebrooke Commission's recommendations whereby a unitary government was set up in Colombo solely for the administrative convenience of the island's erstwhile British masters, Lanka comprised of three sovereign, independent kingdoms — the Tamil kingdom in the North and East; the upcountry Kandyan Sinhala kingdom; and the low-country Sinhalese Kotte. The Tamils are justified, one hundred per cent, in asking for their right to self-determination and to decide whether they should stay as a separate entity or federate with the other two Sinhala kingdoms. I shall enlighten you on the constitutional niceties whereby power was transferred to Ceylon, a totally different political procedure as compared to the Indian Independence Act. The Eelam Tamils are not fighting for separation, only for their fundamental right to self-determination.

4. The Eelam Tamils have as much right, to their homeland or even more, than either the Arabs or the Israelis have for their Palestine.

5. Mr Cho speaks of the Eelamite demand for their homeland 'bit' as nonsense! May I remind him that Paki-

stan was not even the shadow of a dream till as late as April 1947? Even Mahatma Gandhi had asserted that Hindustan could be partitioned only over his dead body. But I needn't remind you as to what really happened. Whoever thought of Bangladesh till even as late as November 1970?

As for in-fighting amongst freedom fighters, how united were we when we fought for our independence? Freedom has never been granted on a platter — silver or bloody — to anyone for the mere asking. It is for the people of Eelam to choose their leaders.

A Anandeswaran
Coimbatore

Medical Ethics

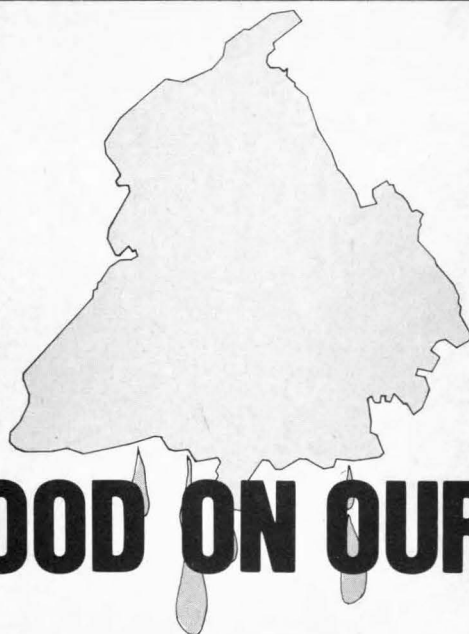
Congratulations to Sudheendra Kulkarni for his excellent article, *The Lucrative Diagnosis* (June 1987), exposing the malpractices and unethical methods employed by those engaged in the most noble profession of curing mankind. It is the only profession in the world where a person apart from earning money, also earns the sincere gratitude of his patients. Medical practitioners should realise that patients approaching them for treatment or consultation are totally dependent on them, and it is, therefore, both unethical and dishonest to betray this trust.

Today's nursing homes, part of our modern civilisation, have turned into business houses, and as such, are devoid of any scruples. There seems to be no difference between a doctor and an ordinary businessman, the oath taken by the former to serve people notwithstanding.

V Sagar
New Delhi

CORRECTION

We regret that in the story, *That's Entertainment* in the June issue of *Imprint*, the photograph purported to be of TV serial-maker Aziz Mirza was not of Mr Mirza. The error is regretted.



THE BLOOD ON OUR HANDS

YOU ARE A PASSENGER, with 75 others, on a Haryana Roadways bus bound for Rishikesh. You board the bus, HYE 1735, at Chandigarh, at 7.30, as darkness of the night begins to envelop the city. There is a delay, and the bus clangs to life only at 8.45, after an hour's delay.

Like you, most passengers — men, women and children — are bound for a pilgrimage to the holy cities of Rishikesh and Hardwar, both on the banks of the Ganga. There is a full night's journey ahead: the devotion of the faithful overwhelms you. *Ganga Mai!*

The bus streaks through the night, on to the Grand Trunk Road. Forty minutes out now, you are probably 25 kms nearer journey's end. The road is almost deserted; the night silent, except for the occasional bus or a truck from the opposite direction.

You survey your carriage. The driver is a Sikh, someone around 50. There are several children, travelling with their elders. There are couples. And there, they look like a whole family on a pilgrimage. You wonder what is it that they seek? Or is it thanksgiving? Or just simple faith! You wonder. . . . Seven hours of journey in the night ahead and you think of sleep, several passengers, especially the children, are already asleep.

The bus stops at what looks like a railway crossing. Beyond the railway line, just as the bus was settling on the road, it was brought to an abrupt halt. You see a Fiat car, plonk in front of the bus, blocking your road. The car is packed with men.

The men from the Fiat car, four of them, all armed with guns, board the bus. One displaces the driver, at gun point; others hold the passengers to their seats, also at gun point. The bus is moving again. One of the marauders says he and his gang are after your money and your valuables.

Fear has now gripped the passengers. Cold sweat streams down your chest; your hands and legs shake. *Ganga Mai!* The bus has now driven for ten minutes, may be a little more. Then, you realise that the new driver is turning the bus to the left, off the main road, and following the Fiat. The bus is brought to a halt. Here the night is black, dark, the surroundings secluded. A turbaned youth orders the passengers out. An old man says something about children. *Clut, clut, clut*. Bullets are pumped into him. *Clut, clut, clut, clut, clut, clut* . . . there is indiscriminate spraying from machine guns at the passengers who had come out as also at those who were still in the bus.

COVER STORY





COVER STORY

You fall with a bullet in your abdomen. You are bleeding. Ganga *Mai*, you cry, you don't want to die. No, no, you don't want to die. There is weight on your body. Loads and loads of weight.

In the darkness, you know there is blood and bodies everywhere. Blood from bodies drips on you. Several passengers fell on you as bullets felled them. Ah, now you do not feel any weight. No pain. Nothing. You are dead. Killed. Like 38 others. Including four children. And many women. In this Monday (July 6) night massacre.

ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, THERE IS GRIEF AND SHOCK. In New Delhi, there is more security for the VIPs and the VVIPs.

On Tuesday evening, the Union Home Minister, Mr Buta Singh, went on TV and assured the people that the terrorists in the Punjab were on their last legs. Almost timed to coincide with the Home Minister's TV appearance on the national hook-up, the terrorists struck again. This time on the Sirsa-Fatehabad Road, in Hissar district, butchering 32 passengers from two buses.

On Wednesday, The Times of India, in a sombre editorial, captured the agony of our people:

"In 1983, Mr Darbara Singh's ministry fell because terrorists killed six bus passengers. Six times that number died on the spot on Monday night, two more died subsequently in hospital, and nearly 30 others are battling for life in hospitals. But so much blood has flowed since 1983, that the nation has come to regard these horren-





dous outrages with muted anger, bordering on resignation. Such has been Punjab's, indeed India's brutalisation. Disturbing as this may seem, Punjab has slowly but inexorably moved towards becoming a gigantic Beirut, where the State is in no position to ensure the security of innocent lives. It would be comforting to think that the latest grisly episode is an expression of the terrorists' growing frustration. That explanation, however, sounds tired from over-use. Officials tried to suggest that the indiscriminate killings in South Delhi on June 13 were prompted by the terrorists' inability to do anything spectacular inside Punjab. That explanation now sounds like a cruel mockery. Once again, a manhunt will be launched by the police. Some days later, it will be claimed that a "notorious" terrorist responsible for this massacre has either been killed or arrested. The relief, however, will last only till the next outrage. Like Muktsar and Khudda, Lalru's memory too will fade." *(Only the first half of the editorial is quoted here: The Times editorial was written before the Tuesday night massacre.)*

ON THURSDAY, THE PRIME MINISTER, MR RAJIV GANDHI, read the Riot Act.

"The Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, today ruled out any kind of talks with extremists in Punjab unless terrorism was completely stamped out in the State. There will be peace in the State only if killing people in the name of religion is put to an end," newspapers reported Mr Gandhi as saying.

FROM THE TIME, IN 1982, when the Congress (I), under Mrs Indira Gandhi and son Sanjay, introduced Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to the politics of Punjab, with the Machiavellian design of splitting the Akali dominance in

the state, to the recent unscrupulous dismissal by Mr Rajiv Gandhi of the Barnala government, blatantly aimed at winning votes in an alienated Haryana, the Congress (I) and their governments have acted in Punjab in a manner that could not have led to any other situation than what the disastrous impasse which confronts us today represents. The army action in the Golden Temple, the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the massacre of the Sikhs in Delhi which followed the assassination, the signing of the Punjab Accord, the killing of Harchand Singh Longowal, and the slaughter of innocent people at the hands of Sikh extremists — every event is being enacted as per the script written in 1982 by the Congress (I) and the Government in New Delhi.

The Congress (I) wanted to rule in Punjab by hook or by crook. But the Akalis were not obliging. So the Akalis had to be divided. And divided they were. The Barnala-Badal divide is of that vintage. What we saw in 1985 was just the updating. The result of this divisive politics, for which, of course, the Sikhs and the Akalis are also responsible, is what you see: a split Akali Dal. And because of the historical communalisation of Sikh politics, no other party, in the near future at least, will be able to secure an elected majority in the state. (The situation was no different in Haryana — until the recent election. In 1982, the people of Haryana wanted Devi Lal. The Congress (I) wanted Bhajan Lal. So Bhajan Lal came, and Bansi Lal came but at the first opportunity, the people routed the Congress (I) itself from the State. Fortunately, the politics of Haryana is not communalised — there is a cohesive, Hindu electorate. Otherwise, the situation there too could have gone out of hand.)

When the Punjab situation went out of hand, Mrs Gandhi sent in the army and tanks into the Golden Temple. We, the people, by and large, applauded. This writer felt that a ghastly mistake had been made, and even suggested to Mrs Gandhi that only her resigning could possibly avert a great national catastrophe (see page 12 for the column printed in *Imprint*, July 1984 — it is relevant). Mrs Gandhi, of course, did not make that sacrifice for the country.

THE NEXT EVENT FOLLOWED THE SCRIPT: Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, was assassinated. The Congress (I) projected the assassination as her supreme sacrifice for India. It was. But it was also the inevitable price she had to pay for a series of grave mistakes, some of them inspired by divisive politics. *Imprint* (January 1985) grieved over her dastardly murder, and at the same time suggested a deviation from the path we were following in the Punjab:

“In life she dwarfed us all through the immense power she wielded as Prime Minister, imposing her will here, there and everywhere. In her death now by assassins’ bullets, we have diminished ourselves even more. And, by the butchery and destruction which followed the felling of Indira Gandhi, we have scarred ourselves deeply, both as a nation and as a people. In the event, our commitment to secularism is battered; our unity is shaken. Yet, India will live; our democratic structure will survive. Our secular framework will stay. And if we go about intelligently and with honesty and humility in the days ahead, we might even surprise ourselves and the world community at large.

“Some steps:

- Accept the federal character of this Union of India.
- Urge, shout, plead, entreat the new government to put decision-making back into the Cabinet Room; and to see that vital decisions are made in the secretariats and ministries concerned.
- We must again live with the fact and the truth that the Sikhs and the Hindus are but one people; any deviation from this cardinal truth in thought, in words, in deed, can only result in a holocaust that will dwarf the Nazi genocide. We have in five short days shaken the world with our capacity in this department!

“How did we hurtle ourselves to this stage? By our intolerance, by our political intransigence. It is by our intransigent conduct that we have denigrated the aspirations of the Punjab into the deathly ‘For-and-Against-the-Unity-of-India’ equation. The distribution of festive sweets by some when the Golden Temple was stormed, the gloating of some others when Mrs Indira Gandhi was murdered, are only the grotesque fruit of the cultivated intransigence so much in vogue of late as statecraft, in the affairs of the subcontinent.

“At once, then, we must retrace. The first step forward in the right direction could be a pilgrims’ march on foot. It could start from New Delhi, pass Indira Gandhi’s *samadhi*, and pass the spot where she was cremated so that the Sikhs (and others), who like their countrymen wanted to shed their tears and pay homage to their fallen Prime Minister, could now do so in safety. From there, it could continue on foot to Amritsar, and to the Golden Temple: to say sorry for what has happened, for what has been done; to seek forgiveness for the hurt and the humiliation caused; for the desecration of the Temple; for the harassment and for lives lost; and for perform-

ing some or the other *kar seva* which awaits all who want to . . .

"The government must also promptly assess and compensate for the material loss which the Sikhs and the Hindus have suffered in the carnage in Delhi and elsewhere. Such atonement alone may lead to amity. And only amity between the Hindus and Sikhs can douse the dangerous flames of Khalistan."

UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE COUNTRY, the Congress (I), Mrs Gandhi's legacy, could not resist the temptation of capitalising on the assassination of the leader in order to win an election. Mr Rajiv Gandhi was not any more responsible.

His speech at the Boat Club rally, soon after he became the Prime Minister, explaining away the November 1984 massacre in Delhi as a convulsion of the kind that occurs to bonding soil when a big tree is felled, gave an indication of the man's thinking. And, of course, there was the 1984 General Election advertising campaign which also offered clues to his thinking. "Will the country's border finally be moved to your doorstep?" Remember the barbed wire, the Sikh taxi driver? (*Imprint* had then itself denounced the campaign — as crass, destructive — RVP). It played on fear. And it had the opposite effect on the Sikhs. Going by what Mr Gandhi says now, what his Home Minister says, and what the government does, there is no basic change of attitude in Mr Gandhi's thinking. Perhaps, there cannot be: *his* mother was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguards.

Here, then, is the genesis of the continuing tragedy for the country, for our people, and even for Mr Gandhi.

A chronology of mass killings since Mr Gandhi came to power speaks for itself:

November 1, 2, 1984: Delhi massacre of the Sikhs. Violence elsewhere in the North.

May 10, 1985: Bomb explosions in Delhi and parts of North India.

August 20, 1985: Assassination of Sant Harchand Singh Longowal.

July 25, 1986: Sikhs kill 15 bus passengers near Muktsar in Faridkot district.

November 30, 1986: Sikhs kill 24 bus passengers near Khuda in Hoshiarpur district.

June 13, 1987: Sikhs kill 14 at a birthday party in Delhi.

July 6, 1987: Sikhs kill 38 bus passengers near Lalru in Patiala district.

July 7, 1987: Sikhs kill 32 bus passengers near Fatehabad in Hissar district.

AND THE KILLINGS WILL NOT STOP. The alienation will increase. And the concept of Khalistan, which is not taken seriously by most people, will begin to be viewed as attractive and its attainment a challenge to Sikh pride.

Mr Gandhi has appeared to be most uncaring even when large numbers of people are butchered. A Prime Minister who did not feel it was his duty to visit the riot-torn areas of Delhi in 1984 was forgiven: he was in mourning. But his absence from Muktsar and Lalru is difficult to fathom. Is he unconcerned? Or is he a coward? Of course, there are the security considerations. But surely we cannot go on creating explosive situations and then cite security as the reason for not showing Prime Ministerial compassion!

More. The statements Mr Gandhi makes on the Punjab situation, and his actions on that front betray his inability to understand what is at stake. His propensity to twist facts and act unwisely almost as a matter of routine, is complicating the problem. There must be some truth in former President Sanjeeva Reddy branding him 'confused', and President Zail Singh declaring him to be 'immature'. Can such a person resolve the gravest problem this republic is confronted with?

Consider the Prime Minister's most recent act in the Punjab: the sacking of Barnala. The ostensible reason was the rising toll of human life from terrorism. (The real reason, of course, was the Haryana elections.) The number of those killed under Central rule has trebled. But who cares?

In trying to resolve the conflict in the Punjab, Mr Gandhi has tried several strategies. All have failed. Yet, the government has not tried reconciliation with the alienated as a possible solution. Such reconciliation can be achieved only by releasing all the detenus, except a few confirmed terrorists against whom prosecutions can be launched successfully; in such an effort, the army deserters also need to be rehabilitated. And Julio Ribeiro must go. He has, unfortunately, come to be identified with the bullet for a bullet bravura. Bullets have no role to play in brotherhood. If Mr Gandhi cannot bring himself to consider reconciliation, then the people of India must press him towards such an effort. And if he resists, then he must go. Otherwise more blood from the Punjab will be on our hands.

on the marquee

JUDGING BY HOW NEW DELHI IS BEHAVING in the aftermath of Amritsar, it is obvious we are in deeper trouble in the Punjab now than ever before. The Prime Minister must now be aware of how deeply the Sikh sentiment is hurt; from the army she must have learnt how very serious is the security problem. Above all, she must now know how very difficult it is in the prevailing conditions to bring about any healing.

The path to normalcy is strewn with mines. The Sikhs are disenchanted, confused. To begin with, how are the Sikhs to react to Mrs Gandhi and to her administration? How are they to react to what remains of the Akali Dal? To SGPC? How are they to react to the saner of the Akali Dal, SGPC and the Golden Temple functionaries who surrendered to the army, rather than die in 'protecting' the sanctity of the Temple? (Sadly, not many Sikhs will admit now that some of their priests and leaders defiled the sanctity of the Golden Temple for too long and in total disregard of law and religion.) How are they to react to the Sikhs in the army who exemplarily participated in the action in the Golden Temple and elsewhere in the Punjab and were thus only upholding the sanctity of the State which is as important, if not more, than upholding the sanctity of *gurdwaras*, temples, churches and mosques? How are they to react to their neighbours, the Hindus, with whom they are one in most respects? How are the more sensitive among the Sikhs to react to other Sikhs in the armed forces or the police? And how are they to react over the hundreds killed and injured, thousands detained in the army action?

The disturbed situation is complicated by various perceptions people in the country have of Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister. Most of those who support her sending of the army into the Golden Temple, and praise her for her unfailing dedication to our nation's unity and integrity, almost simultaneously talk of the arithmetic of the increasingly important Hindu vote. The Press here and abroad has said that even morally Mrs Gandhi was right in sending in the army. "Morally it is hard to condemn Mrs Gandhi. . .," wrote *The Times*, London, in an editorial on June 21, 1984. But the same editorial states: "The short-term gain is almost undeniable. With elections in the offing she has already split the Opposition and won the general acclaim of Hindus. . . ." In the event, how are the Sikhs to shed the belief that they were used and exploited to advance Congress (I) in the state when it suited Mrs Gandhi, and bruised and thrashed when another course became imperative? ("I am humiliated," a Sikh far removed from the Punjab and his religion told me the other day. But not many Sikhs care to remember that Bhindranwale was humiliating most other Indians when he repeatedly declared that the Prime Minister of India must go to the Golden Temple to negotiate with him, a terrorist!)

There are no easy answers to these or any number of similar questions which arise when you look at the Punjab. When will the army be pulled out? When will the Golden Temple be vacated by the security forces and handed back to the priests? When will the Akal Takht, the second most sacred building which is badly damaged be repaired? By whom? Can the government risk bringing in an army of devotees for *kar seva* (volunteers for work on the Temple) that will be needed to repair the damage? How are Sikhs expected to react when large numbers of them see for themselves the extent of damage? (Repairs by government agencies is unthinkable.) How will the Hindus react to what the Sikhs do next?

On this page in April 1984 I had said "the murderous violence in the Punjab is threatening to turn into the ugliest crisis this country has faced since Independence" and suggested a plan of action for isolating the terrorists. But the government blundered on into creating the phantom of Khalistan in a million hearts which will be inflamed by the hurt and humiliation of the events of the last four weeks.

Mrs Indira Gandhi has often said that she has never sought office, nor is she really interested in Prime Ministership. But she is the Prime Minister of India, and the Sikhs hold her responsible for what has happened. Mrs Gandhi has often talked of sacrifice for the country. She has talked of the healing touch now. In the dangerous situation in which the country is today, only Mrs Gandhi can heal. By stepping down.

Imprint, July 1984 :

ON THE MARQUEE

THE ASSASSINATION OF SANT LONGOWAL — at the hands of Sikhs — and the earlier assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi — also at the hands of Sikhs — are the consequence of the politics of fire that we, in this country, seem to have opted for. Attributing Sant Longowal's murder to the machinations of Pakistan or to the conspiracies of expatriate Sikhs will not do. The killers are from within, from among us. And they are the product of grievous errors of judgement, of tragic mistakes, of short-sighted strategies and of deliberately devised divisive politics.

The Sant's assassination is the latest, and among the saddest, of the killings that seem to have become an inseparable part of the Punjab agitation: killings of Hindus by Sikhs, of Sikhs by the security services, of political figures by terrorists, and of Sikhs by enraged mobs during the communal riots. It is time, now, for all of us to strive to end the killings, to put this sorry chapter in our nation's history behind us, and to make amends to each other. We must seek to undo the damage done to the Sikh psyche and to end the havoc it has caused. Pointing a finger at certain Sikhs has the inevitable result of branding the entire community and alienating its youth. The dignity and self-respect of India's Sikhs has been gravely damaged and, until it is restored — until we can convince them that we don't see them all as threatening our well-being — there can be no dousing of the politics of fire.

From the beginning of the Punjab agitation, we have consistently failed to understand the Sikh psyche and, consequently, have behaved in a manner that seems almost calculated to wound and to belittle. Consider the background of our attitude towards the Sikhs in the first three decades of our Independence. Then, we hailed them as our bravest on the battlefield, most imaginative on the farms, and innovative in small-scale industries. The image of a Sikh with a Sten gun in the snowy Himalayas became the symbol of our resistance to China. During the wars with Pakistan, ordinary Sikh families, located on the border, functioned as virtual army kitchens, feeding our troops at considerable risk to their own lives.

During the agricultural crisis, we held the Sikhs up as harbingers of the green revolution and examples of the economic miracle that hard work and a scientific approach could bring about. Abroad, we sent them as emissaries of Indian skills and goodwill — as champion hockey players and athletes, as *bhangra*-dancing members of cultural troupes. Milkha Singh was for a long time our only Olympic hope. Such adulation, coupled with the prosperity that flowed into Punjab in the '60s, made an already proud people even prouder. Sikh pride has always been second to none — how many Sikhs do you ever see begging? — and the unity engendered by their religious and cultural identity has given them a distinctive ethos. The very act of keeping a beard and wearing a turban in the Punjab summer is an extraordinary act of faith: a symbol of the daily discomfort that a Sikh is prepared to suffer for the sake of his religious convictions and identity.

When such a community felt — rightly or wrongly — that it had been discriminated against economically, and slighted politically, we did not consider the grievances against this background. Instead, we ignored the demands, scuttled the possible solutions and played divisive politics. Anybody with any understanding of Sikh psychology should have been able to see that this proud community would react to these snubs by resorting to the martial spirit that we ourselves used to praise and employ in our own national security considerations. When this did happen, we still did not realise what we had done. Instead, we allowed the violence to grow till it assumed fearsome proportions. Then, we sent the tanks in, destroyed their Akal Takht and littered their Golden Temple with the corpses of extremists and pilgrims alike. When this action stunned, humiliated and horrified even moderate Sikhs, we still did not move to stop the spread of alienation. Instead, we began to treat all Sikhs as potential secessionists and our security forces combed their villages searching, and humiliating nearly every Sikh youth. Thousands were indiscriminately detained.

That all of this would lead to intransigence, to a never-ending chain of death, was inevitable. The assassinations, the bombings, the massacres in the November riots — the fire had spread almost too far. Then, last month, with the Punjab accord, and with the government's change of stance, it seemed, at last, that sanity had begun to prevail.

The assassination of Sant Longowal must not cause the sanity of reconciliation to be replaced by the madness of hate. The Sikhs must realise that most of their demands have now been conceded, and that the violence has gone too far. And we, in turn, should give their faith the accommodation it deserves. We must strive to douse the anger of Sikh youth, to tend to their wounds, to end their alienation. We must not fight shy of accepting that we misjudged their mood and desecrated their Temple. It is a time for making amends. For saying sorry and for grand gestures. Let us in peace, show the imagination we have so sorely lacked in this near civil war.

Imprint, September 1985

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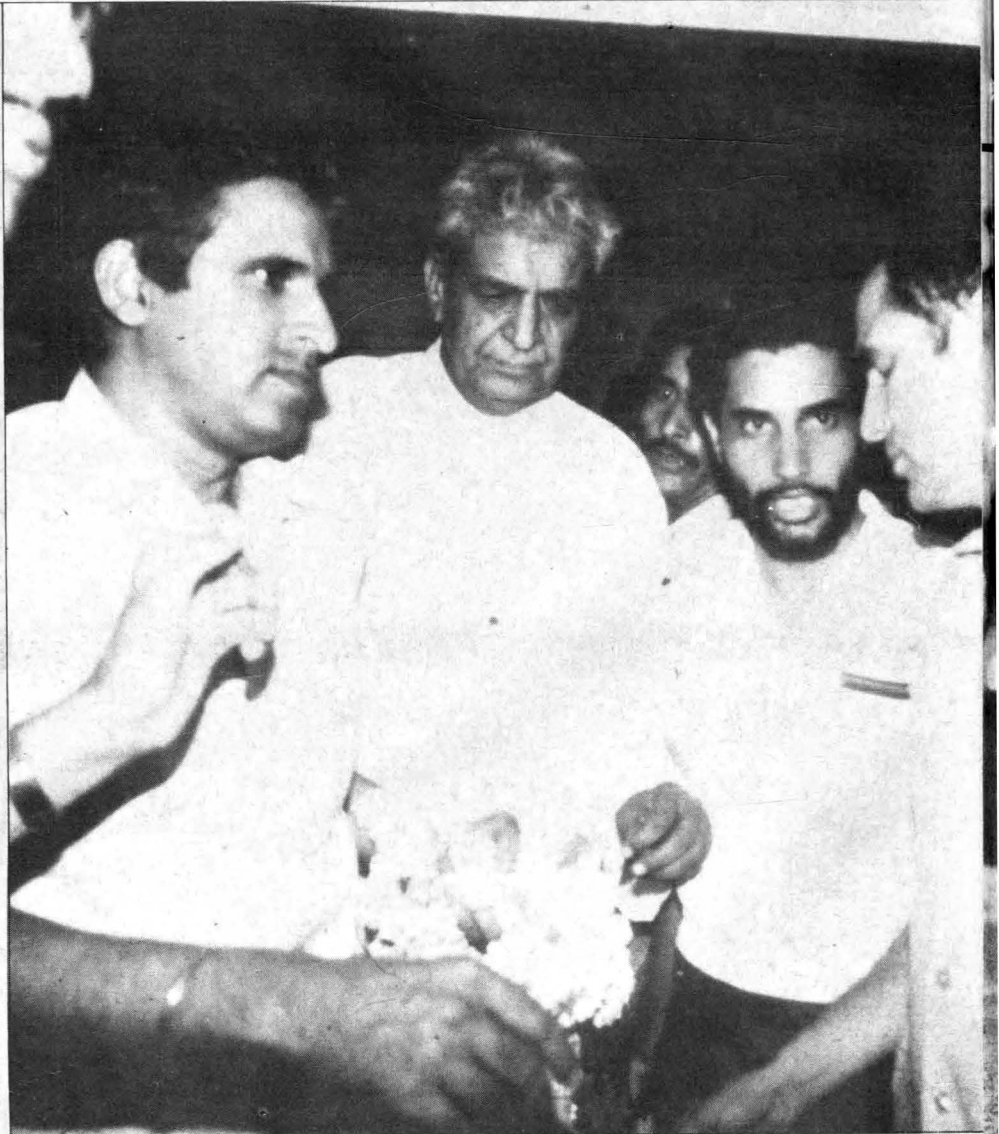
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THE PHENOMENON

Few Assembly elections have attracted as much attention as the recent Haryana elections. The massive Lok Dal (B) – BJP victory provided irrefutable proof, if proof was needed, of the people's mood of alienation towards and disenchantment with the ruling Congress (I) regime in general and its leader Rajiv Gandhi, in particular. Both political parties and the press were almost too quick to slot the Haryana poll outcome as more a Congress (I) defeat than a Lok Dal (B) victory. Haryana would lead the way to similar routs of the Congress (I) in the Hindi heartland, claimed political commentators confidently. However this confidence seems premature, argues MINNIE VAID-FERA, if one analyses the basic issues that were important in Haryana and the tumultuous impact of the Devi Lal phenomenon.



A visibly tired Devi Lal soon after his victory.

By Minnie Vaid-Fera

BARELY FIVE WEEKS after his triumphant ascension to the thorny throne of Haryana politics, the state's Chief Minister, 73-year-old Chaudhary Devi Lal, faces an enormous task — to make good his earlier promises of ensuring Haryana's 'equal status with Punjab' to his people, and to retain the secular, non-communal image he has carefully built up over the last two years. To do anything less will be to have failed in fulfilling the great expectations reposed in him, at the hustings, a short while ago. For now, there can be no



Chaudhary Devi Lal: triumphant at last.

easy posturing against the 'government's soft stance' towards the Punjab problem — Devi Lal is no longer a stridently critical Opposition leader. And in the aftermath of the dastardly killings of 38 bus passengers at Lalru in Patiala district on July 6, and 32 passengers on Sirsa-Fatehabad on July 7, he will have to strike the right balance between individual action and coordination with the Centre to combat terrorism. Almost as credible proof, for the first time, the Haryana government has announced its decision to work in tandem

with its counterpart in Punjab to jointly formulate viable solutions to the menace of terrorism. The time for euphoric celebration of a well-deserved electoral victory is thus past, as Devi Lal faces harsh realities in the very first month of his tenure as chief minister. In a sense, it has almost been a baptism by fire for him.

In another sense, moreover, the Haryana hoopla is also over. Hard on the heels of the Lok Dal (B)'s landslide victory came the immediate and in some cases jubilant, reactions, as political parties — including the Con-



"NO ONE CONSIDERED OUR PRIDE"

Haryana Chief Minister Chaudhary Devi Lal talks to Minnie Vaid-Fera.

30TH JUNE, 1987: the day of the victory rally at the Boat Club, a day of celebration for the victors in Haryana. For the architects of the Lok Dal(B)'s unprecedented victory, it is a time for euphoria — for the thousands of Haryanvi Jats who came into the city in truckloads, it is a time for making the most of a joyous opportunity.

Haryana Bhavan, just a few kilometres away from the scene of the celebration, is teeming with Haryanvis. Lounging on the lawns, crowding the entrance, filling the ground floor and lining the staircase of the building or simply waiting outside, patiently, to get a glimpse of their hero — Chaudhary Devi Lal. A blurred sea of innumerable faces, and the intense claustrophobia of hot and sweating figures colliding against each other is all that registers. Cleaving through this human mass proves to be quite a task. The first floor, where the chief minister is resting, is a shade more bearable. Several minions and then a press secretary inform me, ruefully, that the chief minister cannot meet anyone, not even for 10 minutes. Further cajoling gains for me, an entry into the inner sanctum sanctorum where Devi Lal is relaxing. Once again the answer is 'no'. May I ride along in the car to the airport? I ask. I'm not flying to Chandigarh, is the chief minister's answer. He is going by road, to Rohtak and some other places, en route to Chandigarh. Somewhat surprised by my suggestion, he relents, and gives in to my request to travel with him till such time as the interview lasts. After this offhand assent, he rises and leaves the room, flanked by aides and admirers. The short walk to the car is like a ceremonial procession with people jostling and nudging each other to get a glimpse of the tired leader. Several supporters attempt to touch his feet, a few succeed.

Amidst loud cheering, he enters the car, three burly Jats accompany him; the doors bang shut. The press secretary's *Patrakar ko aapke saath bhejein*, elicits an affirmative reply. A hefty Jat makes way for me, upfront. The cavalcade, complete with police car sirening its way ahead, gets moving. The interview begins as the car races past the broad avenues of Delhi towards the Haryana border.

Devi Lal's mood veers from extreme exhaustion and lingering euphoria to nonchalant confidence. After a slight hurdle over language, (he is more comfortable in Hindi and insists you converse only in Hindi), he pays close attention to questions and answers with obvious sincerity. Some questions are, however, dismissed or ignored; he makes frequent use of rhetoric in response to some others. Excerpts from the interview:

Imprint: What according to you were the reasons for the massive mandate that the people of Haryana have given you?

Devi Lal: The main reason was that Haryana was totally ignored in the Punjab Accord. In particular, those two clauses — 7 and 9 — have been unfair to us. The second reason is Haryana's financial condition and the rampant corruption here which made the people vote for us in large numbers. In the 1982 election also, the mandate was in my favour, but injustice was done to me and someone else was made the chief minister. *Is wajah se inhone kamar tod shikast di.* (This is why the Congress (I) was defeated so crushingly.)

Do you feel this was also a negative vote against the Congress (I), because of Bofors, Fairfax and the other scandals that you have highlighted in your election campaign?

Yes, we have got an anti-Congress vote but we had also fought a great deal

for Haryana for 23 months — to tell the people that this Congress government must go, under any circumstances.

You have been fighting — the Haryana Sangharsh Samiti has been fighting, for the past two years — to educate people in Haryana, you have led a *nyay yudh* . . .

Yes, *nyay yudh*, Samast Haryana sammelan, Haryana bandh, Shahidi sammelan — all this led to the political awakening of the people.

How relevant was the fact that the people resented their secondary status to Punjab, to your winning the elections? Did the people believe that you would end this status?

Woh to tha hi (That was definitely true). *Haryana ko to kuch samjha hi nahin tha.* (Haryana had never been considered to be of any importance). The Opposition was, of course always weak but even in the ruling party, among our representatives — for example, the agriculture minister, also the speaker, Baram Jakhar, who comes from the Fazilka-Abohar region — nobody was consulted over the issues dear to us, no one considered our self-respect or pride.

You have proclaimed, soon after your victory, that you will not abide by the Punjab Accord. How do you propose to solve the territorial question of Fazilka and Abohar, and the all-important issue of the sharing of the Ravi-Beas waters?

In a sense, the Punjab Accord is finished, isn't it? Those who framed it no longer exist, and now we feel that the government deliberately created a situation where these two states — Punjab and Haryana — would be in conflict. This was their policy and it was accentuated by Punjab to the point where no arbitration could be possible with any real representative.

That is why we have said as a solution, that the Punjab House should be dissolved. And we should begin afresh, call for fresh elections and a representative government with whom we can hold discussions.

But what is the guarantee that a new government will accede to your demands — you might get a lesser award for water or Fazilka and Abohar?

All these complications have been created again, they had been satisfactorily solved earlier, the decisions had been taken. But the government kept delaying their implementation, creating fresh problems.

Now that the Centre is building the all-important SYL canal, how do you propose to expedite matters? This delay in completing it has already resulted in severe losses for Haryana. Yes, we will pressurise the Centre, to complete it as soon as possible.

For the first time caste has played no role in Haryana's voting pattern. You have won in non-Jat areas also. Was this because for the first time, the people of Haryana had an identity of their own?

Yes, and people felt that it was their own crusade. That is why caste played no role. We have won in non-Jat areas, in towns also. The sympathies of the scheduled castes in the towns were also with the farmers. The upper classes in the towns were united but in spite of this the Lok Dal(B) won in urban areas. *Jahan paisa ho, caste jyada count karti hai.*

Your Sangharsh Samiti basically focused on rural issues, what explains your victory in urban areas?

Oh, we had accounted for the demands of the urban areas also. Especially those of the backward classes in the towns. So urbanites also felt that in comparison to the Congress(I), the Lok Dal is a better proposition.

You now seem to be emerging as a 'regional' leader like NTR, Hegde. . . Actually these are not regional leaders, they are the *original* leaders. Only such people can understand the country's problems. *Yeh jo rootless*

leaders aa jate hein upar se, inka base koi hota nahin. Phir ye regional sawal uthake, national sawaal le karke, rule karna chahte hain. These people are thrust from above. For example, four people rule India — Arun Nehru (He was later expelled from the Congress party), Fotedar (both from Kashmir, but do they represent their state?), Arun Singh (whose father was a Christian, whom does he represent?), and Rajiv Gandhi — isn't he rootless, he is a Parsi, whom does he represent? So, by contrast, these are regional leaders who can understand the problems of their people, their state.

How do you explain the polarisation of the electorate — the battle seemed to be confined only to the Lok Dal (B)-BJP and the Congress(I)?

During the crusade that we've been fighting for 23 months, the *nyay yatra* through every village of Haryana, the people became politicised. Moreover the reports of corruption — in Swedish arms and German submarines — influenced people. After all people do listen to the BBC and Voice of America, in addition to reading the newspapers. These reports of corruption filtered in to them.

Do you think you would have won with such a majority even in the absence of these scandals at the Centre? Oh yes, we would have definitely won, though these issues had their own importance.

Do you think Haryana will be held up as an example — that other states in the Hindi heartland will emulate? Yes, why not?

But what about similar conditions, similar massbased leaders, in other states?

(*Shrugs vaguely*) Conditions exist everywhere. As for leaders, anyone who takes up the problems of the masses becomes a mass leader.

What are your priorities for Haryana? Read our election manifesto — it's all there. Our main priority will be towards the farmers — to provide them with water and electricity.

gress (I) itself and the Opposition — editors, political analysts and commentators fell over each other to outline the larger implications of the election results. Briefly: that Haryana was the beginning of Rajiv Gandhi's end in the North.

With almost unprecedented unanimity, the Haryana scenario was analysed more as a Congress (I) or Rajiv Gandhi defeat than a hard-won and well-fought Lok Dal (B) or more specifically Devi Lal victory. 'Rajiv Routed' screamed newspaper headlines. Magazines followed suit, each predicting that Haryana had paved the way for humbling the Congress (I) in the Hindi heartland. That the rejection of the Congress (I) in Haryana was convincing proof that in the wake of the scandals at the Centre — Bofors, Fairfax, the submarine deals, the President-PM controversy — Rajiv Gandhi's 'Mr Clean' image was tarnished beyond repair. And finally, that Haryana had sounded a death-knell warning to the Congress (I) and Rajiv Gandhi in particular.

IT IS PERTINENT, however, to reconstruct the sequence of events in Haryana to determine the validity of the above claims. To a very large extent, the Lok Dal (B) victory was a result of what can aptly be described as the Devi Lal phenomenon. A one-man crusade for almost two years, to foster a feeling of a separate and distinct Haryanvi identity. Thus the formation of the Haryana Sangharsh Samiti — the launching of a non-communal, non-partisan campaign to arouse in the people of Haryana the feeling that injustice had been done to them by the Central Government, that they had, for years, been taken for granted, in the Centre's step-motherly treatment of them vis-a-vis Punjab and Punjab's belligerent Akalis.

This grassroots campaign drew its main sustenance from just one single factor — the ill-fated Punjab Accord signed on July 24, 1985. Devi Lal, who began his crusade the very next day, mobilising support from all walks

"HARYANA WILL LEAD THE WAY ..."

H N Bahuguna on his party's victory.

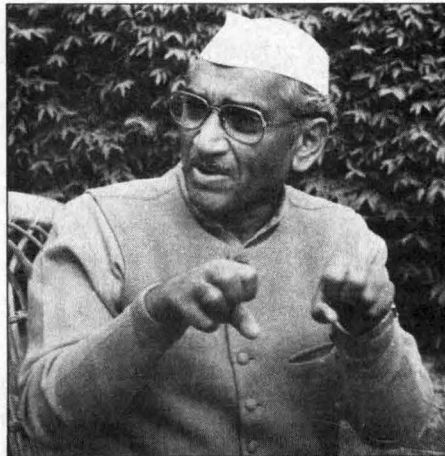
HEMVATI NANDAN BAHUGUNA is an impossible person to interview. Friendly and articulate, his intelligent features belie the daunting inscrutability that characterises his comments, his views, his answers. The 90-minute interview is rapidly transformed into a monologue, the questions into talking points, the answers into rhetorical speeches or grandiloquent proselytising. Any attempt to break his flow meets with a severe reprimand — "Let me finish..."

With the dexterity of a sword-fencer, he deftly fields questions to suit his purpose, digressing, evading or adroitly side-stepping uncomfortable hometruths. What finally emerges is the world according to Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna. Excerpts from the monologue:

Achievements Of The Lok Dal (B) Victory

The Haryana elections have eliminated many roadblocks to healthy democratic politics. First of all, though everyone reiterated the fact that Haryana is a traditionally caste conscious state, the people of Haryana set aside this caste factor. To give you just one example to illustrate this — in Hasangarh constituency where the Jat community forms around 52 per cent of the population and the Brahmins only five percent, Devi Lal put up a Brahmin candidate who defeated the Lok Dal (A)'s woman Jat candidate with a resounding margin.

Secondly, the Haryana elections demolished what I call the statistical theory of electoral politics, whereby due to the multiplicity of parties, the opposition votes get divided and the Congress (I) wins on a minority vote and rules the nation. The elimination of the Congress (I) on such a massive scale, in spite of the multiplicity of



parties, has not taken place in the country hitherto. The Janata victory in 1977 was a fractured one, the South was not with us.

The third important feature was that money power could not affect Haryana's electoral stands. Take Hisar, Khalka, Nagad — where the Congress (I) spent around Rs 50 lakh on each candidate, our candidates could not afford even Rs one lakh, yet they won.

The politics of guns, goons and gold did not work in Haryana. Such politics only succeeds in a weak political society where political issues are not sharpened, where politics is decadent and personalised, when vote catching becomes a business. All these factors found their graveyard in Haryana.

Genesis Of A Movement

Why did all this happen? First — we focussed a man, as a leader, — Devi Lal, who has the background of leading a political life of commitment, of service to the people, for 60 years, beginning with the freedom struggle. He was also a known figure in every home, in every hamlet, in every nook of Haryana. Most important, he was the *one* man who saw through the mischief inherent in that

agreement, now dead, buried and gone — the Rajiv-Longowal Punjab Accord. While the entire country and the media were hysterically supporting the Accord and political parties were blindly applauding it, only Devi Lal dissented.

The water allocation to Haryana was reduced from 4.8 maf to 4.2 maf to 3.5 maf in 1976. The Haryana government spent Rs 200 crore and modelled its internal distribution system on this basis. But even this 3.5 maf of water remained only on paper. Since the SYL canal has not been constructed, not only did Haryana's entitlement of water fail to become a reality, but water was being diverted to the Gobindsagar, in effect, benefitting Punjab. Now, the Punjab Accord specified maintenance of the water 'usage' of Haryana as on July 1, 1985. This left Haryana with only 1.3 maf. This agreement therefore was totally absurd, discriminatory and violative of all earlier promises. And if you consider that some districts of Haryana do not even have drinking water and other parts are totally dry and desert-like, you will realise the importance of water.

Then, take the question of building a new capital. In accordance with the escalation of prices, today it will be possibly 30 times more costly to build a new capital, than it was 19 years ago. The Shah Commission had, in fact, categorically decided to give Chandigarh to Haryana, but the Akalis raised a hue and cry and Sant Fateh Singh went on a fast unto death. So a new agreement was drawn and Fazilka and Abohar were to be given to us as compensation for Chandigarh, it was a hundred per cent Hindu area coming back to us. This too was not implemented, so why should Haryana bear the cost of this intransigence, indecision and iniquity? The Punjab Accord shut its eyes to the earlier water awards, and

to the crippling financial burden afflicting Haryana. If you want to bribe Punjab, you can't do it at the altar of the whims and fancies of the Akalis, making Haryana the sacrificial goat! Therefore we (the Lok Dal (B)), said "Thus far, no further."

The Victorious Campaign

It was then that Devi Lal began his campaign to educate his people. He began his Long March from Hissar to Delhi in the bitterly cold winter months. This 73-year-old man walked all the way — his feet were swollen, his health deteriorated, but he went on. Hundreds and thousands of people walked with him. The results were tremendous — the peasantry, the unemployed, the traders, — all interests converged when it became a question of the economic and social survival of Haryana. This gave rise to the Haryanvi identity.

Devi Lal dominated the movement like a colossus, making it very clear that he was not fighting the Sikhs or Punjab, he was fighting for Haryana, without any rancour or bitterness. He kept emphasising the positive side and this is mainly why, while the vitals of Punjab were being eaten up due to communal frenzy, Haryana was at peace. There wasn't a single instance of communalisation of any incident. Devi Lal thus made demands and backed them by action. The Haryana bandh, the Shahidi Sammelan and other movements stirred the people. He then raised a charter of demands which included the dismissal of the Bhajan Lal government.

Soon, when the Congress house started rocking, they decided to change the helmsman. The Haryanvi people saw Bhajan Lal's dismissal as a victory of their movement. Later too, as Rajiv Gandhi started naming concessions for Haryana, the people saw it as *their* success. Gradually Rajiv Gandhi even started claiming that he was, in fact, pressurised into implementing the Accord. Having signed Haryana's death warrant he be-

gan behaving as if he was its saviour. But people are not so foolish, they saw through the game. And to cap it all, came the scandals.

The President-PM controversy was created mainly due to the PM's disrespect to the Constitution, which lays down that he shall provide all information to the President. Now the common man felt that if the PM was keeping things secret even from the President, then he certainly has something to hide. The common man, after all, has common sense.

The second thing was corruption. The Haryanvi people had seen corruption, perhaps, at the largest possible scale — no person there could settle his affairs or grievances till he had greased someone's palm. People had witnessed Bhajan Lal's political treachery and Haryana was notorious for its *aaya ram, gaya ram* politics. But before launching his movement, Devi Lal ordered all Lok Dal (B) MLAs to resign. At a time when MLAs were being bought and sold, he asked them to make this sacrifice. Thus, qualitatively, the movement established its credibility.

In this developing political authority of Devi Lal, the Congress (I) defeats in Kerala and West Bengal put it in the minds of Haryanvis that the Hindi heartland had better start the job (of defeating the Congress (I)) also. The 1977 Janata victory was a fractured victory but now, 10 states had rejected Mr Gandhi during the last two years. So too, he was sent home, lock, stock and barrel in Haryana. The Haryanvi people, face to face with a moment of history, proved themselves equal to the opportunity. Then Devi Lal made certain additional points — loans to be written off, work to be given to the unemployed, pensions to the old, etc.

The Loans Question

The Haryanvi people were in debt because of the loans, all of which involved 50 per cent bribery. Since any real assets could not be created, the people did not have the strength to

pay back the loans. Nowhere in the world has agriculture and animal husbandry prospered except with a heavy subsidy. For example, the European Economic Community which was paying US\$6 billion subsidy in 1980, paid US\$40 billion subsidy to agriculture and animal husbandry in 1985-86. Now the Indian or Haryanvi agriculturist is not asking for subsidies, he is merely asking for remunerative prices for his produce. The agricultural-industrial price parity is heavily weighed against agriculture. When money is siphoned off each year from the agricultural sector to the industrial sector, farmers have no option but to renounce their debts. Don't countries renounce their debts? Didn't the President of Brazil say, "I have to choose between debt and democracy"?

You seem sceptical of how we're going to write off loans, but we will find methods. Where there is a will there is a way. If you decide whom you are going to serve, you will find methods to do so. Rajiv Gandhi thinks only of the elite, of 10 per cent of India's population. We are giving voice to the deep wounds inflicted on the poor, on the agriculturists, on the artisans, by economic policies that help only the rich. As for nationalised banks, we'll ask them for the same ratio they use when they write off the loans of 'sick' industries.

I'm sure Haryana will lead the way for similar victories against the Congress (I), in the North. After all, the issues are the same — regional disparities, agriculture, unemployment.

Rajiv Gandhi's government has been playing the Hindu card all along. Now with all these controversies erupting, the focus has shifted. I charge this government for its deliberate mishandling of the political situation. We'll expose them on the road, on the field, on the farm, everywhere. A fresh mandate is called for. We want a referendum, which is just a one-day job. The moral authority of this government is today at its lowest nadir.

'THERE WAS NO ILL-FEELING AGAINST ME'

Lok Dal (A) leader Ajit Singh talks to Minnie Vaid-Fera.

AJIT SINGH, leader of the break-away Lok Dal (A) and Chaudhary Charan Singh's filial if not political heir, is today, an unruffled man. Unfazed by his party's crushing defeat at the Haryana polls, he presents a cheerful, almost unconcerned exterior to visitors at his unassuming office at 15, Ashoka Road, Delhi. Surprisingly, too, he is easily accessible, as politicians go, answering questions with friendly courtesy and remarkable candour.

Imprint: How would you analyse your defeat, or rather, Devi Lal's overwhelming victory?

Ajit Singh: Well, it was the victory of a movement, rather than that of a party or person, in particular, and mind you, that movement was started by my father, Chaudhary Charan Singh.

More specifically, Devi Lal exploited the general feeling amongst Haryanvis that their state had been discriminated against. All the accords went against Haryana, people here felt that the Congress (I) didn't give a damn about them. And then, Haryana has always been anti-Congress — the basic mood this time was 'Throw them out'. Moreover, with the spate of scandals — Bofors, Fairfax etc — everyone believed that Rajiv Gandhi was not capable of delivering the goods.

How important was this factor (the scandals) of alleged corruption?

It was important — Devi Lal would have won in any case, but probably not to this extent.

How do you account for the polarisation of votes and your party's poor performance, in particular?

In the first place, there was this propaganda, on the other side, that we (or I specifically) were *jamnapari*, (outsiders).

Then, we couldn't provide an alternative — the Haryana Sangharsh Samiti had been fighting a crusade for two years, while we began campaigning only on June 8. There were also the usual last-minute defections. Besides, *our* propaganda had also helped him (Devi Lal) — our people had participated in the *nyay yudh*, in the Sangharsh Samiti. Believe me, there was no ill-feeling against the Lok Dal (A) or me, personally. The basic reason for our defeat was that people were afraid of Devi Lal losing again (after the 1982 fiasco). They panicked against a division of votes, they were scared of defectors, and of course, the bureaucracy was solidly against the Congress.

But let me emphasise again, there was no ill-feeling against me. People used to come up to me and say, "*Yeh Devi Lal ka aakhari mauka hai, beta. Agli baar tumhe vote deinge.*" (This is Devi Lal's last chance, son, next time we will vote for you).

Do you feel Haryana will be a precursor to similar uprisings in other Hindi-states? Is it an indicator of the public mood against the Congress-I, in the Hindi heartland?

Well, the mood is certainly there, everywhere. But Haryana is a very compact state — Devi Lal was able to go to every village, establish a personal rapport. There is a lot of homogeneity in Haryana and no religious divide. In addition to all this, the Congress provided readymade issues. The situation in other Hindi-speaking states is quite different. Take Uttar Pradesh for example — where caste, religious, regional imbalances exist, where no single personality is capable of dominating the political scene, where its sheer vastness is an obstacle. This kind of a landslide victory seems difficult outside Haryana.

How do you see the future of Haryana?

I don't know how long this power of euphoria will last. The extravagant promises he (Devi Lal) has made have led to high expectations. It will certainly be tough going for him. No one wants to arouse regional issues, or incite a Punjab-Haryana conflagration. If a strong government can be elected in Punjab, there can be a mutual give-and-take, especially as Devi Lal has the bargaining power now. You see, in Punjab, everyone has to outdo the other guy. Barnala may be a nice, honest man, but if someone stronger had been there, maybe all this wouldn't have happened. But Devi Lal will have to compromise with Punjab. If both states keep up their separate demands, nobody will get anything.

What about this waiver of farmers' loans announced by the Lok Dal (B)?

(*Smiles wryly*). The figures keep changing. I have heard that rural indebtedness is Rs 1,800 crore and that of the co-operative sector, Rs 55 crore. Then, there are the small shopkeepers too. And they (the Lok Dal (B)) have not declared any cut-off date. With the result that in these last two weeks people have been taking loans like crazy! As it is, Haryana is a deficit state — this is a burning issue. In extreme cases, I agree that certain loans should be written off but if it is done in this way, recycling will be stopped and people will once again fall into the clutches of money-lenders.

What about the water issue, and Fazilka and Abohar?

Well, in all this confusion, I don't know who is building the SYL canal (*Laughs*). This 3.83 maf promise is a gimmick. As for Fazilka and Abohar, that was an unjust decision, unfair to Haryana.



Ajit Singh: defeated, but not down.

of political life, had, according to H N Bahuguna, the party president, been opposed to the Punjab Accord from Day one. What Bahuguna describes as Devi Lal's persipacity in seeing through the Accord's pitfalls has also been denounced roundly by Congress (I) factions as 'exploitation of the Accord for personal or partisan gains'. Whatever the motivation, the Punjab Accord undeniably gave Devi Lal a ready-made platform to propagandise against the Central government's callous treatment of Haryana while signing the Accord. Not only were Haryana leaders totally ignored during its formulation, but as Devi Lal claimed in the duration of his marathon crusade, so also were the state's interests cruelly sacrificed. And significantly, these interests were very close to the heart of every Haryanvi in a state predominantly dependent on agriculture for its income — the all-important issue of water.

There appears to be substantial truth in what Bahuguna describes as 'a long history of injustice' to Haryana over the sharing of the Ravi-Beas waters. The Lok Dal's contention is

that according to the Indira Gandhi award, Haryana's share of the water was to be 3.5 maf (million acre foot) as well as all of the surplus water found in the system subsequent to 1976. The Eradi Commission later reported, on the eve of the Haryana elections, that since the quantum of water from the Ravi-Beas system available for distribution had increased, Haryana would get 3.83 maf of water. Ironically this too, as in the earlier case of the 1976 award, remained a 'promise on paper' since the vital Sutlej-Yamuna-Link (SYL) canal remained incomplete despite Rajiv Gandhi's ambitious proposal to complete its construction by August 15, 1986.

Therefore not only did Haryana not receive its legitimate share of 3.5 maf of water but the Punjab Accord further depleted its quota by proclaiming (Section 9 of the Accord) that the 'usage' of water on July 1, 1985 would be continued as the state's rightful allocation. This 'allocation', according to trenchant critics in the Lok Dal (B), was a mere 1.3 maf of water while the remaining water was to be drawn by Punjab. As justi-

fiable retaliation, one of Devi Lal's first acts on assuming power, was to categorically reject both the Eradi Commission and the Punjab Accord and insist on the equitable distribution of water as per the Indira Gandhi award which, including the surplus water mentioned earlier, would add up to a staggering 4.82 maf of water. He also called for fresh elections in Punjab so that the water issue and the territorial one of Fazilka and Abohar being transferred to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh, could be reopened with a government that was a truly representative one (see Devi Lal interview). Political commentators in the capital opine that Devi Lal, in actual fact, would like to negotiate a settlement with Prakash Singh Badal, with whom he shares close ties.

However, this move has been sharply criticised by certain sections in the Congress (I) who feel that Devi Lal cannot gain any advantage in reopening issues which have already been settled. Prof Sher Singh, president of the Haryana Raksha Vahini, and former union minister of state who lost to the Lok Dal (B)'s Hardwari Lal by a margin of over a lakh votes in the recent elections, puts forth his argument. "If Haryana reopens the issue, it will lose — after all, the water is with them (Punjab). We can get water only through the SYL canal. Devi Lal has no hold over the Akalis — they will never sit with him and give either water or Fazilka and Abohar to Haryana. If the Accord is implemented there is some hope of justice." He admits however that real justice can only be done by implementing the earlier decisions, and that if only the Congress (I) had done something to assuage the feelings of the people of Haryana in time, the battle would not have so easily been lost. As for the SYL canal, its non-completion has resulted in an enormous loss of Rs 2 billion each year and a total of Rs 16 billion so far, to Haryana, claims Sher Singh. More importantly, it is only through the SYL canal that large regions of the state that are arid and desert-like

can be irrigated and transformed.

The Centre's continual appeasement of the Akalis over the water and territorial issues — to Haryana's obvious detriment — were points that were repeatedly driven home by Devi Lal while campaigning. It was an appeal directed unerringly to that segment of the state's inhabitants that could hardly have failed to respond. Water affected their daily livelihood and the perceived injustice to them sparked off righteous indignation. Why should they not be compensated with the rich tracts of the Hindi-speaking areas of Fazilka and Abohar for the loss of Chandigarh? Why should the earlier Indira Gandhi award that conceded these two territories to Haryana be sacrificed (in clause 7 of the Punjab Accord) for the principle of 'contiguity'? Why should Haryana foot the bill for the building of a new state capital? These arguments presented *en bloc*, with a skilful interpretation of Haryana's 'secondary status to Punjab', kindled hitherto unfocused grievances, giving rise ultimately to a Haryanvi identity that almost bordered on a kind of chauvinism — an identity that was basically in contradistinction to Punjab and the Punjab Accord, strengthened by subsequent agitations by its protector and leader, Devi Lal. From then on, it was almost smooth, if backbreaking (effortwise) sailing for Haryana's first mass-based, popular and credible leader. He launched one 'action' programme after another — Haryana *Bandh*, *Rastaroko*, Samast Haryana Sammelan (at Jind), All Haryanvi Shahidi conference (at Rohtak), *Nyay Yudh*. Apart from his long march on foot from Hissar to Delhi, the septuagenarian leader literally toured the length and breadth of the state, awakening the people's political consciousness. It was this solid grassroots endeavour that resulted in his opponents ruefully claiming that "Devi Lal has been electioneering for 19 months while we've just had 20 days."

Thus by the time elections were announced in Haryana, Devi Lal's

arduous efforts had already paid off — his message had taken root in the minds of his people. His election campaign therefore became a straightforward, albeit well-orchestrated, one. It concentrated on the sins of omission and commission of not only the state's Chief Minister, Bansi Lal — whom he projected as an apologist for the Centre's vacillating and indifferent stance, a '*pair pakad*' CM, instead of a '*gardan pakad*' CM — but also those of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

It was at this stage that the "soft and steady current", as veteran political commentator Madhu Limaye



Bansi Lal: Centre's apologist?

puts it, "in favour of Devi Lal turned into a veritable gale, an *aandhi*". For Devi Lal the spate of scandals that rocked the Rajiv Gandhi-government at the Centre, couldn't have come at a more fortuitous or appropriate moment. They provided him with a tremendous rhetorical advantage and became ultimately, the main plank of his election campaign. Gossip sparked by newspaper reports (Haryana is, proximity-wise, very close to Delhi), was fuelled by exaggerated accounts of Congress (I) corruption, by Lok Dal (B) activists, which could not be satisfactorily refuted by the Congress

(I) candidates, or even by Bansi Lal, in the state. Significantly too, as Madhu Limaye analyses, Haryana is a prominent army recruiting district — and has been since the British days. Service in the army has been an important feature of generations of Haryanvis. Therefore the kickbacks taken on defence deals had an even greater impact on the state's populace. Naturally Devi Lal capitalised on this — the slogans became more stridently obvious — "*Paltan ka paisa khane-wala Rajiv*". For Devi Lal, the bonanza of the alleged corruption deals became almost a decisive factor, transforming what might have been a comfortable victory into a landslide.

OTHER FACTORS also played their pre-destined roles. The stigma attached to Haryana's *aaya-ram-gaya-ram* politics of defection, the commercialisation and corruption of politics during Bhajan Lal's tenure, the arrogant image of 'Emergency's' Bansi Lal, the state's disgruntled bureaucracy, the Centre's obvious ploys such as declaration of President's rule in Punjab, the injustice done to Devi Lal in 1982 — all served to evoke definite anti-Congress sentiments in the state.

On the positive side was Devi Lal's skilfully planned election campaign, making inventive use — for the first time — of the latest technology to combat the Congress (I)'s state and money power. Video cassettes of Devi Lal's election meetings were circulated among the press and people alike, the eye-catching and earthy slogans launched at these meetings, finding an answering chord in the people's emotions. The video tapes successfully achieved their main purpose — to enthuse the masses and to arouse political awareness in the state — effectively challenging the government-owned medium of television. They also provided a powerful back-up in exposing the wheeling-dealing of unscrupulous politicians. For instance, video tapes of B D Sharma's election speeches where he claimed that he had joined Devi Lal to fight injustice, were shown to advantage, to the peo-

ple, after he defected to the Congress (I) to try (unsuccessfully) to garner Brahmin support for his son Rajesh Sharma's candidature.

A mutually profitable alliance with the BJP also featured prominently in the Lok Dal (B)'s success, the BJP winning 15 out of the 16 seats it contested. Though the BJP alliance was expected to pull in urban votes, the Lok Dal (B)'s ultimate victory transcended all caste or regional (urban-rural) factors, ushering in a resounding two-thirds majority of 58 seats by itself. And this in a state traditionally dominated by caste factors. This was possibly because, for the first time, the issues that were raised by Devi Lal during his election campaign transcended all feelings of caste and community. The question of a separate identity touched each Haryanvi's mind and heart. In that sense, Devi Lal's campaign was unlike any other, it did not focus on the failings of the earlier state government, as is usually done in such times; instead it launched a broad-based awareness against misdeeds at the Central or Prime Ministerial level.

The polarisation of the electorate resulting in the crushing defeat of the Lok Dal (A)-Janata combine and the dismal performance of Kanshi Ram's Bahujan Samaj Party were further testimony to the omnipresence of the Devi Lal factor.

Devi Lal's charisma and sheer doggedness notwithstanding, his promises too captivated the people of Haryana — notably the extravagant promise to write off all farmers' loans. What began as a waiver of *all* farmers' loans was later modified to loans of small farmers, co-operative and rural banks and small shopkeepers and finally to loans of *chote kisan* (loans upto Rs 5,000). While this scheme undeniably worked its magic during the elections, it has been severely criticised following Devi Lal's declaration that the state government would pay from its exchequer all short-term and long-term loans of farmers, totalling Rs 389 crore. This 'election debt' would be paid to the banks and co-operative

societies in four equal annual instalments, so as not to overburden the state's current budget of Rs 2,950 crore. While Lok Dal (B) supporters immediately justified and applauded the move — "if big industrial defaults can be written off, if industries can be declared 'sick', why not the poor farmers?" — economists stoutly criticised it. This kind of a 'blanket' waiver of farmers' loans was unheard of, they claimed. The normal procedure (in similar cases) is for the loans to be rescheduled, giving the farmers a longer crop period in which to repay the loans. Only in extreme cases could such an overall



Bhajan Lal: politics of manipulation.

waiver be applied, they felt. As for industrial 'sick' units, only 'bad debts' were written off, they pointed. The Reserve Bank of India issued an immediate statement that a waiver of this kind would severely affect the rural credit pattern, encourage defaulters and result in long-term damage to the rural economy.

IN RETROSPECT Devi Lal seems to have bitten off more than he can chew, at least on this issue. Though his party workers and even its president, H N Bahuguna, vociferously continue to advocate the benefits of

such a scheme, they are careful in not committing themselves either on the *modus operandi* to be adopted or the actual statistics concerned. Not the least among this scheme's pitfalls are that most farmers' loans are taken from nationalised banks which do not fall under this scheme's purview, that recycling of funds will perforce be affected and the farmers may well be enmeshed in the moneylenders' tangle. Both Devi Lal and Bahuguna remain unperturbed.

This scheme, as well as others such as the unemployment dole, (the old-age pension scheme has already been put into operation) will ultimately have to stand the test of time, as will Devi Lal's attempts to nullify or set right the injustice done to Haryana through the Punjab Accord. Devi Lal at 73, has expended a considerable amount of energy in defeating the Congress (I). Whether he justifies the tremendous confidence reposed in him by his people, remains to be seen.

What is clear however is the fact that any attempt by the other Hindi states to 'do a Devi Lal' will need rather more than just the spreading of a 'disenchantment-wave' (against the Congress (I) and Rajiv Gandhi in particular). To that extent Haryana will eventually be a precursor only if similar conditions, a similar climate, similar mass-based, popular leaders can be duplicated in the Northern states. More so, since communal factors are important in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and language cannot play a really instrumental role in fostering regional identities in these states, unlike states like Andhra Pradesh, for example, where Telugu became almost a symbol of identity. It seems premature, therefore, to view the Haryana elections as a movement heralding the downfall of the Congress (I), rather than highlighting what is essentially a protracted and well-earned party victory. The winds of change may blow over the North or the rest of the country nevertheless, but to attribute them, even partially, to the Congress (I) debacle in Haryana, seems unrealistic. ♦

POINTERS FROM THE PAST



Jawaharlal Nehru: "the world's most enlightened despot".

BROWSING THROUGH my old editions of *Encounter*, I came across John Mander's* article 'Indian Autumn' (*Encounter*, February, 1963) about India in 1962, and it stirred a comparative interest on India now — 25 years later. The article is especially topical now with news of fresh Chinese mobilisation

* Prominent British writer and a keen observer of the then Indian social and political scene.

in Tibet, and the fluid political situation in India. One remembers November 1962, Nehru, Krishna Menon, the 'Himalayan Blunder', the ineffective non-aligned movement, our turning to the US for help in the first major crisis after Independence, and the revival of periodic speculation about India's survival by our politicians, now conveniently called 'destabilisation' by our ruling politicians when their position is threatened.

Let us consider what John Mander said then, and its implications today. It is fascinating to look back and learn what has changed and what has not. Like so many other Westerners, Mander asks: "Where to begin? India a land without a beginning or an end, is not to be tied down." In late 1962, India, till then the land of Gandhi, non-violence and non-alignment, 'reverted to the human norm with a vengeance', with euphoric patriotism, not surrendering 'an inch of territory', in the face of the Chinese aggression in NEFA when surprisingly, we first turned to the US for help. What happened to that first gesture in crisis? A decade later India sealed a treaty of special relationship with the USSR, and its relations with the US have come under the pressures of global 'realpolitik' ever since. Mander was off the mark when he over-confidently said: "It is clear, of course, that India will turn to the West; and there is no doubt that this policy has overwhelming popular backing." US-Indian relations have proved him wrong, but only partly. We have moved closer to Europe and Japan since 1962. Ideology, trade, high-technology, and aid draw us closer to the West; geopolitics to the USSR.

Mander then described NEFA, 1962, not 'as a check but a rout', which the Indian public knew, despite official hand-outs to the contrary. They also got to know about the quiet connivance of Nehru's government earlier to the occupation of Aksai Chin by the Chinese since 1957 just as they have a pretty shrewd idea of the allegations behind Fairfax, the German submarines, and the Bofors affairs now, despite less than credible explanations and more. The common sense of the people is more than a match for the public relations and devious ways of authority. Mander

The retrospect is an interesting and useful mirror, reflecting past experiences that can often help shape future ones. John Mander's article 'Indian Autumn', published in **Encounter** magazine in 1963, on India in 1962, is relevant in the political scenario today, argues A D MODDIE.

then said, "India's democracy, whatever its faults, has proved itself a good deal more robust than the other fair-weather democracies of the Afro-Asian world." India has since confirmed this repeatedly, despite internal and external 'hands', in 1967, 1971, 1977, 1980, 1984, and now again in 1987. Some brave and honest sections of the Indian press have been as much the custodians of our nascent democracy, as the higher judiciary and the electoral system.

But, he goes on to say, "India is a one-man democracy", with Jawaharlal Nehru as that man and "the most enlightened despot in the world". Authority in India was almost synonymous with Nehru. It was so later too, with his daughter Indira Gandhi after 1969, and partly for hereditary reasons and no alternative in the wings, it seems to be the case with Rajiv Gandhi also, at least when the chips are down. His authority and credibility are, however, eroding much faster than his mother's and grandfather's. Mander was right when he observed: "A striking feature of the political scene is the difference in quality between the leadership of a party and its rank and file." Now that gap has narrowed. There is not much to choose between the leaders and the led. There is all-round mediocrity, and worse, in our politics. He thought the keenest apologist of the ruling party would not claim that most Congress Parliamentarians 'are more than a bunch of ignorant, yes-saying backwoodsmen'. Today no one damages the dignity of legislatures more than the ranting, desk-thumping, debateless legislators themselves.

He showed prescience when he observed India had 'two co-existent patterns of political leadership'. One was the democratic, party political pattern, borrowed from Britain; the



Rajiv Gandhi: eroding credibility.

other was an 'older, semi-religious pattern of personal authority'. And when he referred to the 'problem of future intersection of the two patterns, after Nehru', he identified a significant study area for socio-political research in India's political system and behaviour. If anything, the true spirit of democracy has taken severe knocks — from booth-capturing to purchasable defectors, debateless legislatures, dubious constitutional attitudes to the

President himself, not to speak of the long go-by to elections within the ruling party itself. When, at that time, many others were speculating "After Nehru, who?", A D Gorwala gave Mander the simplest answer, "After Nehru, Congress." He would have been nearer the truth if he had elaborated, "Congress, with an Indian style of autocracy." This is no different, this autocracy, where non-Congress governments in Tamil Nadu and



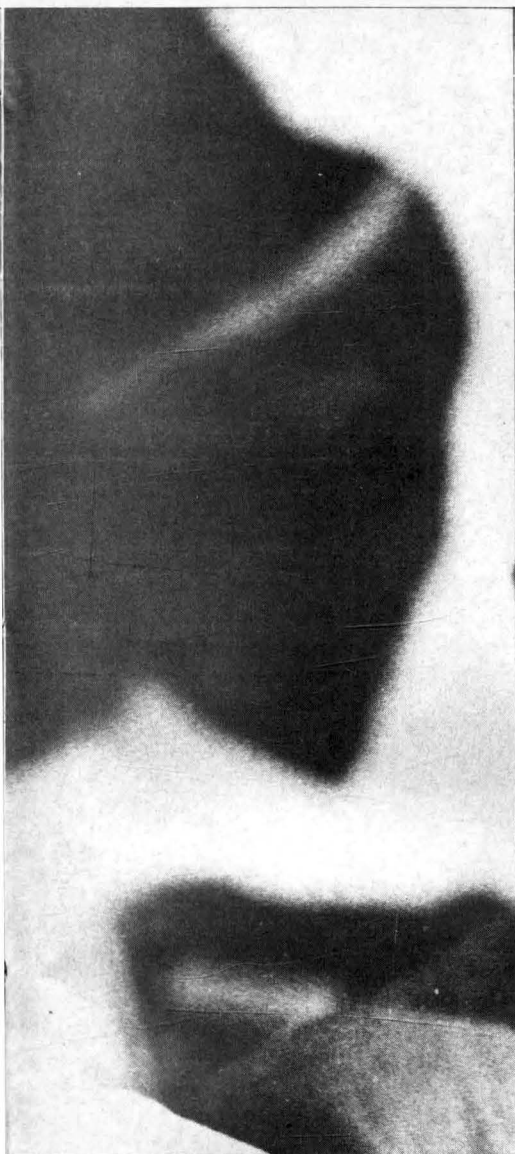
Andhra Pradesh are concerned.

Mander reminds us too of Selig Harrison's *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, flowing from his studies in Andhra Pradesh, and his fears that linguistic centrifugal tendencies may overcome the centripetal ones. It made a deep impression on Mander. Linguistic chauvinism has undoubtedly grown, and while the standard of the link language, English, has declined, as Mander forecast, there is a persistent demand for the English medium in education, even in the North. Yet, despite the growth of linguistic chauvinism and regional politics, India still manages to hold together by some mysterious alchemy. Galbraith's

clever description of India then as 'functioning anarchy', still apparently holds good on the surface. Beneath the surface, the labours of about a hundred million farmers and fifty million businessmen, professionals, officials, servicemen and voluntary agencies hold the country together, and nudge it forward at a pace of economic growth barely exceeding its population growth by one to two percent. Despite a large number of Indians being below the poverty line, erosion of lands, the decline of the green revolution, sick industries, inefficient and economically burdensome governments, and infra-structure politics at low levels, India holds

together — it counts — and there is a sustaining thrust for a better life. India has defied the pessimists within and without. There is an inherent energy in the people, despite all else.

So concerned was Mander about the linguistic problem that he made no mention of the communal one. Pursuing his linguistic fears, even in 1963 he thought English had become 'a dead language' with 'a general poverty of Indian intellectuals', with no 'take-off of Indian English', with Indian writers in English 'remaining in a colonial relationship towards the English of London and New York'. He quotes Prof Edward Shils' 'Cultural Provincialism'. Surprisingly, he found Indian



intellectuals not well-informed about Asian affairs. Both culturally and politically: "In the mind of the average Indian, the smaller nations are not greatly respected." How true and how relevant this observation has become in the light of our response to Jaffna!

There is so much in this to ponder over. English is a dying, distorted language, but far from dead. Witness the vigour of the English press and periodicals, and the new breed of modern poets in English (and the vernacular) who have shed Victorian, Sarojini-style gush. As for the colonial relationship, a new breed of expatriate Indian writers in English seem to be finding their place in the Western sun,

as Non-Resident Indians have done in business and the professions abroad. Having said that, since Vedic times we have been preponderantly involved in our huge, captivating shell, 'between the northern mountains and the southern seas' – a closed world. And Mander is largely right about smaller Afro-Asian nations. Even Switzerland is more appealing than Sri Lanka, and the Netherlands than Nepal. This has been a major failure of our foreign policy in these 25 years. Panchsheel and non-alignment, anti-apartheid and Third World solidarity have been accompanied with poor and arrogant neighbourliness. We do not appreciate that our neighbours feel the same towards us, as we feel towards the US – this reflects a fatal hegemonistic tendency.

And that takes us back to foreign policy, to China and India's neighbours then and now. That India miscalculated pre-1962 was apparent to Mander and to us. He partly attributed it to the failure of non-alignment (which he equated with 'ideological neutrality'), and partly 'Nehru and Menon's illusions about the nature of communism'. As for non-alignment, he recalled Washington and Jefferson's exhortations to America 'to keep clean of entangling alliances'. This was evident then too in India's foreign policy, in the days of political adolescence. New nations usually wish, like adolescents, to appear to stand on their own feet, to be clean of the manipulative ways of older people, to be different, to do their own thing. And Nehru, the quintessential modern Brahmin, had to have his pure new foreign policy *shastra*. Like good traditional Indians we both accepted it, and made a fixed aspirational virtue in the realm of fluctuating geopolitics, with shifting political interests in international affairs. Witness the EEC, Nixon and China, the Organisation of African States, to name only three major shifts in international politics, among many more, in recent decades.

Yet the military miscalculation of pre-1962 has been largely remedied. India's military power, its defence industries, India's industrial strength, its self-sufficiency in food, its opening up as a field of international investments with vigorous Indian enterprise: all point to a more substantial India. Panchsheel and non-alignment are no longer our armour. There is talk of a border settlement with China – rather belatedly. Mander perceived it a quarter of a century ago: "So India, after all, is going to change – the bullockcart has been eased half-way out of its accustomed rut." And he was so profoundly right too when he forecast, 'A new body of public opinion is now in being, which Nehru can no longer ignore', and we may add, nor can his successors.

The preponderant, resource-consuming governments of India, of all political complexions have failed, in their intellectual worlds, to appreciate one of Rajaji's fundamental pronouncements, civilisation. At the close of the century and 50 years after Independence, these governments and the political parties behind them show no sign of the basic dilemma they are in. There is no hope of real Indian development and real Indian democracy, without a substantially growing and economically independent middle class. And there is no future for their autocratic extortionist ways with the growth of such a middle class. There will be no walk-over, as in the case of the earlier Maharajas and landlords, and a few big industrialists. The sooner the Indian government and all its supporters and hangers-on learn that the Indian middle class, urban and rural, is the rising force of the future, and change their policies and styles accordingly, the better it is for both the development and democracy of India. India's greatest single need is a strong modern assertion of that middle class to release its vast creative energies from the stifling, corrupting, enervating grip of an ubiquitous, inefficient government. ♦

REPORT

DESPITE LAST-DITCH attempts by the Department of Environment (DoE) to stall the massive Narmada multipurpose projects, the Central government has caved in and agreed to give the 'engineers' the go-ahead. According to gossip-mongers in Delhi, Rajiv Gandhi — in his earlier, ebullient mood — had vowed not to give it the green signal because he was convinced of the deleterious environmental consequences of the project. But, harried by the Bofors and other scandals, he finally gave in to pressure: he wanted to be seen as someone who gave Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh the 'development' they were clamouring for.

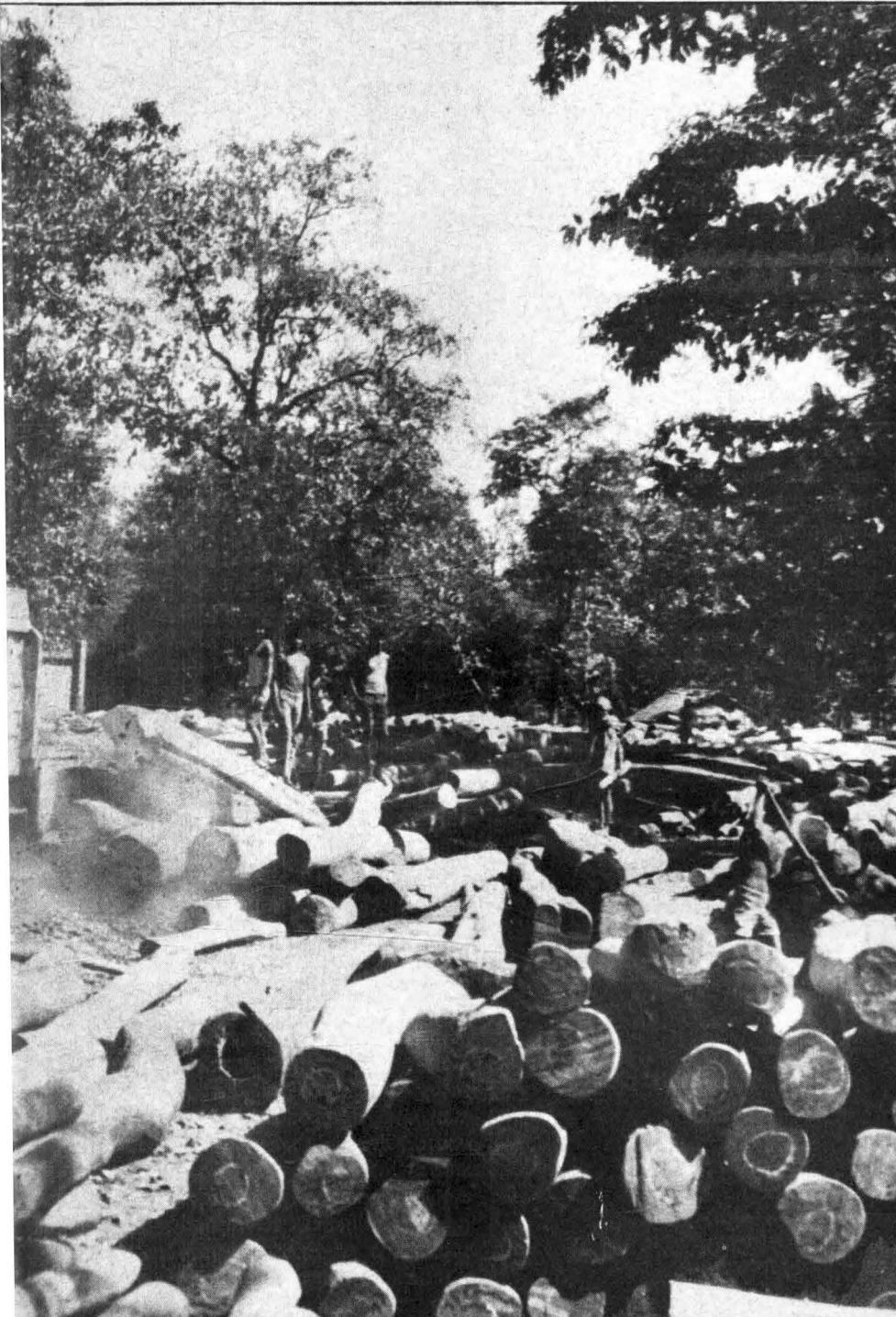
Only last year, at a seminar in Bhopal, the tough-talking DoE Secretary, T N Seshan, who is also in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, warned that if forests were being denuded at the current rate (1.5 million hectares a year), a time would come when Indian civilisation itself would wither away — or rather, to borrow an analogous metaphor, it would be swept away like the topsoil which finds its way to the Bay of Bengal. . . He queried: "Can we afford to destroy 4.5 million trees just to enable us to generate 500MW of power, or can we submerge 4.5 million hectares of forest land and uproot a population of 150,000 to enable us to build projects on the Narmada?"

The questions are extremely valid. Now, not only environmentalists but other thinking people are also wondering whether the 'temples of today', which Nehru spoke about when he opened Bhakra-Nangal 33 years ago, may prove the tombstones of a rich and diverse civilisation. Many of these issues were raised at a seminar organised in Bombay recently by a fledgling group known as the Forum for People-Oriented Water Utilisation, which has taken up the dams across the Narmada as a top priority for re-examination.

The Narmada project suggests itself for several reasons. With two gigantic dams — Narmada Sagar in



PROJECT NARMADA



Making way for dams: indiscriminate felling of trees.

The Narmada project is one of the biggest series of irrigation and hydroelectric schemes in the entire world and is expected to submerge 5.5 lakh hectares of land, uprooting a million people, mostly adivasis. Can we afford to destroy our environment in this fashion? DARRYL D'MONTE analyses the government's priorities.

Madhya Pradesh and Sardar Sarovar in Gujarat, in addition to 28 major, 135 medium and 3,000 minor dams, it is simply one of the biggest series of irrigation and hydroelectric schemes in the entire world. As it is, with some 1,500 'modern temples' already functioning, India is among the world's biggest dam builders. For instance, after building the second arch dam in Asia at Idukki in Kerala (till the 1980s, it provided around 40 per cent of the state's power), the Hindustan Construction Company was all set to dam Silent Valley, till the environmentalists intervened.

What is more, the Narmada flows through some of the poorest and driest parts of the country. Among the few villages in Maharashtra which will be submerged by the dams is Bamni, which recently surfaced in the state assembly because of the deaths due to malnutrition and sickle cell anaemia. Medha Patkar, an activist from the Ahmedabad-based Setu (Society for Social Knowledge and Action), one of the most impassioned speakers at the seminar, mentioned how no bigwigs from officialdom had even stepped into Bamni, near Dhule, till the outbreak of disease, because it was so remote. While this may buttress the arguments of those who believe that 'development' is the only solution for such backwardness, it also shows up the total neglect of what might be termed the 'forgotten lands' of India, tucked away in the tribal tracts.

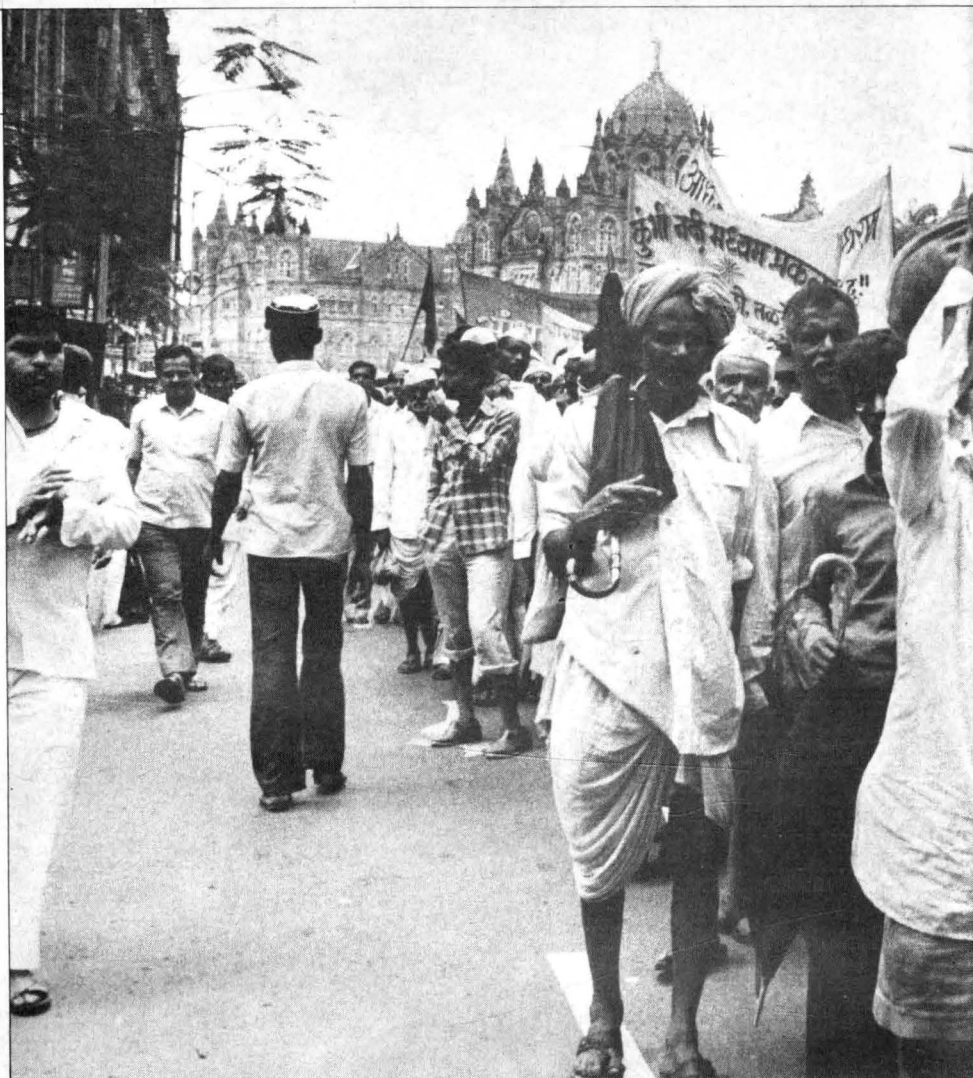
Very often, discussions on big dams and other so-called development projects organised by environmentalists turn out to be Sunday (or week-end!) sermons to the converted. The Forum's deliberations, however, took a somewhat different turn because of the presence of two senior Maharashtra government irrigation engineers — M D Deshmukh, who is the Command Area Development Commissioner and Secretary of the Irrigation Department (for the uninitiated, it is necessary to explain that the 'command' is the area that a dam irri-

REPORT

gates) and his colleague, A H Navkal. Their rather technical arguments were buttressed by Babubhai J Patel, the former chief minister of Gujarat, who made out a case for the projects as well.

Those who believe that large dams do good, even though a little bad, find comfort in statements such as that by the former Chairperson of the International Commission on Large Dams: "The world is crying out for water and high dams are a good way to providing it . . . On both sides (of the argument), we find life. If a dam submerges forests, wild floods also submerge them and furthermore will also kill men and animals. If a dam destroys a few villages, it gives prosperity to much larger communities and improves their way of life. This includes the villagers who have been displaced."

For Deshmukh and Navkal, "Environmentalists seem to have a fixed notion that the government and the engineers are out to destroy nature, that all that they are doing is absolutely wrong, and they are just representatives of vested interests. . ." They argued that the question of building small or big dams was purely a technical issue ('for mass transport, over long distances, a train is preferable, but it cannot replace a bus'). If the area submerged was only one-fifteenth that of the command, the benefits definitely outweighed the damage done. They maintained that the real destruction was caused not by dams but by the extensive deforestation of the catchment areas; the problems of siltation were restricted to northern India and didn't apply to the West. As for the submergence of tribal lands, "We do not quite agree with some environmentalists that the identity of these tribals needs to be protected at all cost. Sooner or later, with the encroachment of civilisation, this identity is going to be lost, whether we like it or not." Deshmukh put the alternative of smaller dams in his perspective: "It's like a man who is 40 years old, advertising for a bride



Farmers displaced by Chaskaman dam, Maharashtra, on a protest march.

of the same age, and being confronted by two 20-year-old women!"

WHAT IS AT stake, in discussing the Narmada, therefore, is not just the question of two or more dams, but of the entire model of development which stresses the exploitation of river waters by creating vast reservoirs and then carrying water in canals to distant fields. Side by side with this process of harnessing water is the exploitation of hydel power from these reservoirs. In both these models, the resource — water — isn't, as may be imagined, provided to anyone who wants it but to anyone who can afford it. In the case of canals, this means rich farmers — such as those who have sprung up in the Ganganagar area of northern Rajasthan, where the canal has changed land-use patterns from

animal husbandry to intensive agriculture. In the case of electricity, this means industries which, in the final analysis, employ very few hands.

Anil Agarwal, Director of the Centre of Science & Environment in Delhi, put the issue clearly when he pointed out, at the outset of the seminar, that "Water is going to be a very important factor in the future. It can't be examined in isolation, but is connected to the use of land. Who gets to use it? It is now very unevenly distributed." The trouble with a massive scheme like the Narmada is that it will flood some 5.5 lakh hectares of land, more than half of which is forest, and uproot around a million people, mainly adivasis, in the process. The question is whether it is right to deprive a much larger number of people, who are locked into the subsistence economy, of



their water, and turn these resources over to a smaller number who live in the command area, privileged occupants of the cash sector. The 'poor', then, can be viewed, in environmental terms, as those who depend on biomass (grass, firewood, thatch etc), which is closely related to water availability.

He cited the example of Leh in Ladakh, where despite very little water, which is provided by a single glacier, a society flourishes purely because it has worked out ingenious sharing regulations: each household is given fixed hours certain days of the week to draw supplies and violators are severely punished. Instead of a *Laissez faire* water policy throughout the country, some such equitable distribution has to be worked out. Suppose all irrigation from reservoirs be devoted to common land, on which

the poor depend for their cooking fuel and grazing fodder, instead of being diverted to private cropland. "The economic impact of improving the prospects of animal husbandry in this manner may be far greater," Agarwal stressed.

Although this may sound far too ecologically radical and economically disastrous — particularly if it means that food production will decline — it deserves to be looked at a bit more carefully. Experts like B B Vohra, now the Chairperson of the Advisory Board on Energy, have pointed out that contrary to the popular belief, the bulk of increase in agricultural production has come from increased use of groundwater, rather than surface irrigation. Yet the bulk of *sarkari* investment has been on surface irrigation, which has led to water-logging, salinity, and wastages in eva-

poration in expensive delivery systems, not to mention how rich farmers have ensured that the benefits of canals have flowed to them.

In Maharashtra, where 11 of 25 districts reeled under drought this year, there is an 'Eight-Month Irrigation Scheme' being mooted. (Two out of every three villages in these areas didn't have sufficient drinking water.) Even a single irrigation of just 50mm (2 inches) can save a standing crop in drought, so dams can be emptied out to meet the needs of kharif crops like jowar and bajra, which sustain the poor; the monsoons can recharge tubewells, which irrigate cash crops. If water was socially redistributed in this manner, the pattern of cultivation would automatically change in favour of the subsistence sector: crops like sugarcane would vanish off the face of Maharashtra. Heartless as it may sound, it is worth remembering that it is pointless to grow such a water-intensive crop in a state where life itself is unsustainable for vast sections of the population because of the shortage of water.

Agarwal emphasised how if even all the rivers of India were dammed, it would irrigate only a third of the land; the rest would depend on groundwater, for which mainly forests work as hydrological agents in first arresting rainfall and then releasing it gradually throughout the year. He cited the slogan, 'Trap water where it falls': on slopes, this would be done most effectively by trees; in *nallahs*, by check dams; in villages, by tanks and ponds. The reason why the country didn't experience such intense droughts in the past — the expenditure on 'man-made disasters' in 1986-87 is expected to touch Rs 1,200 crore, twice as much as in an average Sixth Plan year — is that societies had these natural water storage systems. The Narmada project must therefore be pitted against these time-tested and people's methods of storing this most precious resource, as against inefficient and corrupt bureaucratic systems of providing it. The answer is clear. ♦

ENVIRONMENT

THE ENVIRONMENTAL movement in India which, for all purposes, had its beginnings in 1972, the year of the Stockholm Conference, is today 15 years old. It would be appropriate, at this point of time, to take stock of the progress which the movement has made, the kind of challenges it faces in the future, and the manner in which these challenges may be met.

One of the important gains made during this period is the consensus that has emerged with regard to the major environmental issues which the country has to tackle. To begin with, our environmental thinking took its cue from the developed countries and perceived the control of industrial pollution and the preservation of the threatened species — of both flora and fauna — as important environmental objectives. However, when this matter was gone into by the Tiwari Committee in 1980 and later by the National Committee on Environmental Planning (NCEP) during 1981-83, two other objectives which have a great relevance for India and indeed for most other developing countries were also identified. These relate to the need to prevent any further degradation and depletion of the country's basic natural resources and life-support systems of land, water and vegetation; and to provide all human settlements with at least clean drinking water and a minimum level of sanitation.

It is a matter of gratification that there is a growing realisation that this four-point core environmental programme is not a dispensable luxury but something which is vital for the country's long-term interests and indeed survival. The need to preserve the country's production base and to combat industrial pollution and insanitation in the interests of public health is self-evident. However, the doubts which were at one stage entertained with regard to wildlife protection, as a rather elitist pastime — indulged in by people who considered tigers to be more important than human beings — have since largely dis-



A SCHEME FOR SURVIVAL

Despite sincere efforts, the environmental movement in India, has, in its 15 years of existence, failed to make any serious dent in the ecological problems facing the nation. B B VOHRA, eminent environmentalist and chairperson of the Advisory Board of Energy, outlines a 3-point programme as a minimum agenda for survival, and a game-plan for meeting the challenges ahead.

appeared. It is now widely acknowledged that the conservation of the species is not something that needs to be taken up merely for aesthetic and cultural considerations, important enough though these are, but also for the severely practical reason that the preservation of genetic diversity must be ensured for solving the problems of human health and welfare which may arise in the future, and cannot be even visualised today. The recent dramatic advances in bio-technology have indeed invested this matter with a special significance.

Another development which deserves to be noticed is the slow but

steady progress which has been made during the last 15 years towards the creation of institutional arrangements for the protection of the environment. The setting up of the National Committee for Environmental Planning and Coordination (NCEPC) in 1972 was followed a little later by the creation of the Central and State Pollution Control Boards. Thanks to the pioneering work done by the NCEPC in carrying out various environmental studies and spreading the message of environmental protection, all major political parties included, in their election manifestoes for the 1980 elections, pledges to protect the environment and maintain the ecological balance. It was in pursuance of such a pledge by the Congress (I) party that Mrs Indira Gandhi set up the Tiwari Committee early in 1980 and, on its recommendations, created a separate Department of Environment before the year was out and a few months later, the National Committee for Environmental Planning (NCEP) in place of the earlier NCEPC. Although the Department of Environment has seen five Secretaries during its brief existence of less than seven years, and only two of them have worked on a full-time basis, it has nevertheless been able to make itself felt in a new and largely uncharted field of activity. A great deal of the credit for this, it must be recorded, is due to the personal interest which Mrs Gandhi as well as the present Prime Minister have taken in its working.

During the last decade and a half, the environmental movement has also received legislative recognition in the shape of laws for the prevention of water and air pollution. The promulgation of the Environment (Protection) Act of 1986 is a particularly important development as it seeks to make the agencies responsible for the monitoring and control of pollution more effective by conferring greater powers on them than they have hitherto enjoyed.

The movement has also gained some strength and credibility through

the implementation of a number of programmes of environmental management. Project Tiger was initiated in 1973 and has succeeded in its objective of saving a threatened species and with it, the ecological balance of the concerned national parks and sanctuaries. The saving of the Silent Valley from submergence by an irrigation and hydel project and the protection of the Taj against air pollution — caused not only by the Mathura Refinery but also by local industrial units — are among the other achievements for which the movement can legitimately take credit. A large number of environmental impact assessment studies have been made and used to advantage.

More recently, the movement has received a very big boost by way of two national programmes of great environmental significance which the Prime Minister announced in January 1985. These projects are for the cleaning of the Ganga and for a massive afforestation campaign in order to combat what the Prime Minister has described as a 'major ecological and socio-economic crisis' faced by the nation. While the former project highlights the need to curb industrial and municipal pollution, the latter serves to stress the need to make better use of our natural resources.

But perhaps the most gratifying feature of the current environmental scene is the very significant improvement in the level of popular awareness regarding environmental matters which has taken place since 1972. This awareness is to be particularly welcomed because it constitutes the best possible guarantee that over a period of time an informed public opinion will make it necessary for governments, both at the Centre and in the states, to tackle the country's pressing environmental problems. It must however be stated that this achievement could not have been possible through the efforts of the government alone but is primarily the work of a large number of selfless and dedicated environmentalists, who have given freely of their time and energy.

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ALTHOUGH THE GAINS which have been made by the environmental movement during the last 15 years are by no means inconsiderable these must not be viewed in isolation but in the context of the challenges which lie ahead.

As far as the protection of wildlife is concerned, our record is something we can be proud of. There are today over 300 national parks, sanctuaries and biosphere reserves and more are being planned. However, the lessons contained in the recent incidents at Ranthambhore and Bharatpur should

stand degraded. If these conditions are not fulfilled, there are bound, in the long run, to be violent clashes between the guardians of our well-maintained reserves and sanctuaries and villagers in search of pasture. The point to note is that the protection of sanctuaries against intrusions is something which, in the long run, will be possible only if conditions in the areas surrounding them do not become too desperate.

As far as sanitation and the provision of clean drinking water are concerned, these tasks are being under-

sanitary needs of such immigrants. Open defecation and urination have become familiar sights in and around slums, and constitute a grave threat to public health.

It is futile to imagine that the problems created by the influx of the rural poor into urban areas can be effectively tackled so long as it continues unchecked. The basic fact must be recognised that the management of urban areas cannot be divorced from that of their rural hinterlands and in making a greater success of our rural development programmes, so that poor and landless farmers may find gainful employment in their own villages.

As far as industrial pollution is concerned, while a commendable job has been done by the Department of Environment in making environmental impact assessment studies and ensuring that no new big industries are allowed to come up which do not have built-in systems for pollution abatement and control, the problem of controlling pollution contributed by small new units and by existing plants has so far eluded solution. The 1986 Act will undoubtedly give greater legal powers to State Pollution Boards and other concerned authorities to penalise offenders. However, it must be recognised that punitive action alone will not suffice. If we are really serious about controlling industrial pollution, the carrot must be used along with the stick. In other words, offending plants must be assisted — by way of both suitable technical advice and soft loans — to instal pollution control devices within prescribed periods failing which they must be penalised on a progressive scale till they fall in line. This approach will however require a great deal of organisational effort as well as money, both of which will take time to arrange.

Let us now turn to the most important element in environmental protection — the proper management of our natural resources. The situation in this field is most alarming indeed. It must be stated, even at the



Victims of areas submerged by dams: senseless suffering.

not be lost sight of. It must be realised that the effective protection of sanctuaries, parks and reserves will, in the last resort, be possible only if the mounting pressures, of increasing human and animal populations on such areas are kept under reasonable control. This, in turn, can be done only if the management of our land and water resources — including forest and pasture resources — is vastly improved and if, in particular, an effective solution is found to the problem of excessive numbers of animals trying to graze off lands which already

taken through time-bound programmes by the state public health and water supply organisations. However, it is necessary to look beyond the statistics of targets and achievements compiled by these authorities and recognise the fact that sanitary conditions are deteriorating rapidly in almost all towns and cities, primarily because of the continued influx of the rural poor who set up slum colonies and even start living on pavements in search of livelihood. Municipal bodies are finding it increasingly difficult to cater even to the minimum

risk of repetition, that fully one-third of our total land resources of 266 mh which have any potential for biotic production are today lying almost completely unproductive. Another one-third are degraded to a greater or lesser degree and are therefore only partially productive. The country has lost a great deal of its forest cover. What is more, of the rather less than 30 mh of good natural forests which remain to us, at least 1.5 mh are still being lost every year. In most parts of the country, the loss of tree cover is so severe that it has resulted in an unprecedented shortage of fuel for cooking and is forcing people to use cow-dung — which is far more valuable as a fertiliser — as a substitute fuel. The continued denudation of water sheds has stripped them of enormous quantities of precious top soil and has led to excessive run-off losses during the monsoon season. It is this situation which explains the premature siltation of our reservoirs as well as the recurring floods and droughts, which are increasing both in frequency and severity, from which we suffer. In canal irrigated lands the efficiency of water utilisation is only a fraction of what it should be; besides very considerable areas have been lost to water-logging and salinisation. Finally, our over-worked ground water resources, which today constitute a more important source of irrigation than big surface projects, are seriously threatened by depletion in many areas, largely as a result of excessive run-off losses on denuded lands.

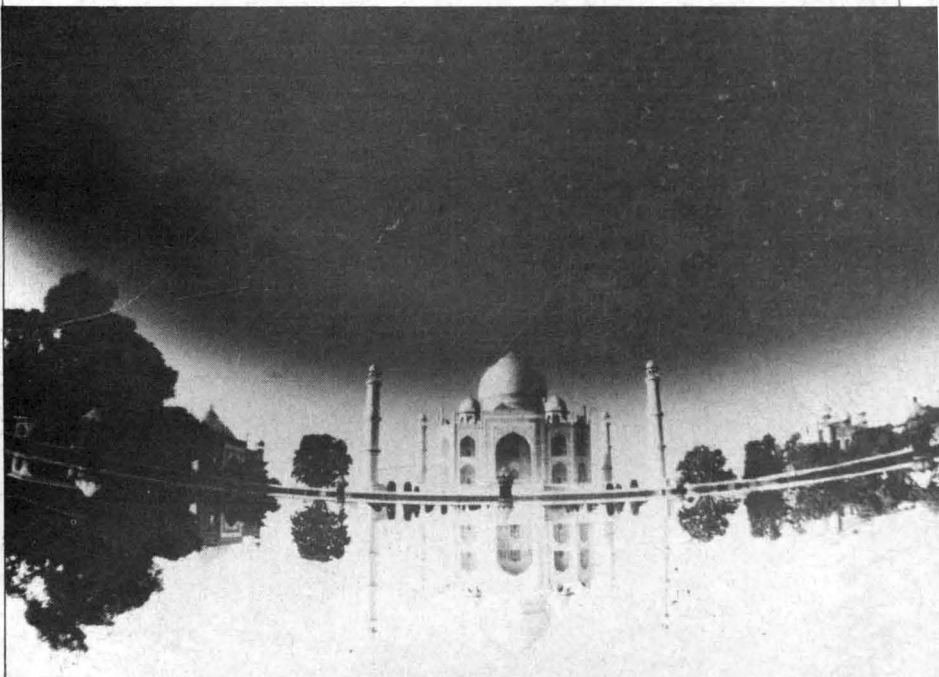
Although the Tiwari Committee had laid great stress on the need to ensure the optimal management of the country's natural resources and had recommended the setting up of a Central Land Commission as a first step towards this end, nothing tangible was done in this direction till Rajiv Gandhi set up the National Land Use and Wastelands Development Council under his own chairmanship early in 1985. The National Land Use and Conservation Board and the National Wastelands Deve-

lopment Boards were also set up at the same time. However, the present position is that while some progress has definitely been made on the afforestation front, very little is being done to conserve soil and water by preventing excessive run-off losses or to deal with the menace of water-logging.

Even in the field of forestry which is receiving a great deal of attention these days, the situation is such that in spite of all our efforts the rate at which new plantations are being established is still only around 1.7 mh

fellings are going on in all parts of the country, regardless of official instructions to the contrary. This is hardly surprising considering the very great laxity that has crept into our political and administrative machineries at all levels but particularly at the field level — the level which matters most.

The *second* matter which must receive urgent attention is how the pace of afforestation can be stepped up quickly. By now we have had enough experience of social forestry and wasteland development projects



The mesmeric Taj Mahal: racked by air pollution.

per annum and is thus only marginally higher than the reported rate of depletion of 1.5 mh per annum. Considering that not all the new plantations will survive to maturity, and that maturity is in any case several years away, the danger of our losing all our remaining forests before new ones come up to take their place is very great indeed.

What form should these responses take? The very *first* thing that the situation demands is that all further illegal and unauthorised fellings should be stopped at all costs. Today such

to know that 'man-made' forests cost anything from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000 per hectare — depending upon local conditions — to plant and maintain for the first three critical years. Since this cost is much too high to permit any largescale afforestation to be taken up in a hurry, it is clear that the 'man-made' forest route to the restoration of vegetal cover to our bare lands is not a viable answer to our problem.

Fortunately, there is an alternative route available. It lies in making use of the powerful forces of natural

ENVIRONMENT

regeneration, by creating conditions in which they can operate. This means, in effect, that denuded lands must be effectively protected against the ravages of grazing and browsing animals. Experience has shown that in all fenced-off areas, a great deal of natural growth of grasses, shrubs and trees takes place — through seeds already in the soil or borne by the wind or carried through bird and animal droppings — if only animals are not allowed to eat them up or trample them underfoot while they are still tender.

ideally one in every mini catchment — so that there may be enough moisture in the soil to support natural regeneration and we may be rid of the scourge of recurring droughts and floods.

At a time when the district administration is badly run down and has touched an all-time low — in many states District Collectors are not allowed to remain on their jobs for more than a year on the average — it goes without saying that such new and far-reaching initiatives can have no chance of success, assuming of

with merely four to six years experience? Why should not a District Collector remain on the job for at least five years and why should not his work be invested once again with the importance and the glamour that it deserves? Why cannot districts once again be made into viable and dynamic units of administration through a real devolution of powers by way of democratic decentralisation and made capable of handling the difficult but infinitely rewarding work of resource management at the only level which is relevant for this purpose?

Almost all the programmes which need to be taken up for environmental protection and improvement fall within the sphere of responsibility of state governments. These governments, however, have so far not taken much interest in such programmes, whether for lack of funds or lack of concern or for both reasons. While it is true that state governments are being advised to pay attention to environmental matters, it needs to be recognised that such exhortations will begin to be taken seriously only when the movement achieves a certain degree of credibility and is also backed by adequate plan allocations. At this rather difficult stage, it would help the cause greatly if the Centre could start practising what it preaches in the territorial and functional areas for which it bears direct responsibility, that is, the Union Territories and the Central departmental or public sector undertakings. According to this approach, the Centre should ensure that the city of Delhi does not contribute any untreated sewage to the Yamuna, that its vehicles and industrial plants do not pollute the air, that all the denuded lands in the Union Territory are clothed in vegetation, that all its slum colonies enjoy a modicum of sanitary facilities, and that there are enough well-sited and well-managed public latrines in the city to make open defecation and urination a thing of the past. Similarly, the Central Government should make it oblig-



Forest destruction in Tamil Nadu.

Such a strategy requires that the seemingly intractable problem of uncontrolled grazing by local or nomadic herds must be squarely faced if we are to restore vegetal cover to our bare soils at a cost the country can afford.

The *third* initiative which needs to be taken is to launch a country-wide campaign to minimise both soil and run-off losses by carrying out, on as extensive a scale as possible, works like contour trenching, contour bunding and terracing and the construction of numberless small storages —

course, that they get taken in the first place. But if we mean business, everything that comes in the way of better resource management must be swept away ruthlessly. We must think and act big if we are to get out of the ecological nose-dive in which we find ourselves today. There is, for instance, no reason why the requirements of the present crisis situation should not lead us to carry out a drastic revamping of district administration. Why should districts not be manned by officers with say 15 to 20 years service instead of by those

atory for all the numerous industrial enterprises under its direct control, ranging from steel mills to paper mills, to adopt efficient pollution control measures. Such an approach would not only establish the Centre's credibility in the field of environmental protection and equip it with a great deal of expertise and practical knowledge necessary for providing proper leadership to the states in this rather new field, but also create a reliable data base for estimating the order of investments which would be required to deal with various environmental problems on a countrywide basis.

Another matter which needs to be considered carefully is the exact role which the Department of Environment should play in the management of the environment. The central issue is whether this Department should play the role basically of a keeper of the country's environmental conscience, a watch-dog and gad-fly so to say, or whether it should be burdened with administrative responsibilities pertaining to the implementation of assorted environmental programmes. It would appear that the Department is moving in the latter direction and has already accepted responsibility for the control of industrial pollution and the cleaning of the Ganga. There are two dangers inherent in such a role which need to be carefully weighed before a conscious decision is taken in this regard. First, will not growing administrative responsibilities make the Department ignore the wood for the trees and lessen its capacity to act as a 'think tank' in a field of activity which is still rather new and uncharted? Second, and more importantly, even if the role of an environmental 'think tank' is given to a body like the National Committee on Environmental Planning, as recommended by the Tiwari Committee, will not the direct involvement of the Department in programme formulation and implementation offer a most welcome alibi to other departments and organisations of the government for

inaction on the environmental front? And this at a time when there is a clear need to involve as large a number of people and organisations as possible in environmental protection.

There are two other rather sobering thoughts that may be mentioned in passing, in order to remove any lingering hopes which some people may entertain that there are any shortcuts to environmental protection or that it can be achieved in a painless manner, without having to take, and what is more, implement, hard decisions. First, what kind of an

may find it possible to divert to more productive purposes some part of the enormous expenditures that are being incurred today on the maintenance of internal and external security? This is a problem that is bothering environmentalists everywhere, for while the global expenditure on defence has reached the US\$ 1000 billion a year mark, there seems to be never enough money, even in the West, for improving the environment.

To sum up, the challenges of environmental management in India are so colossal in nature, as compar-



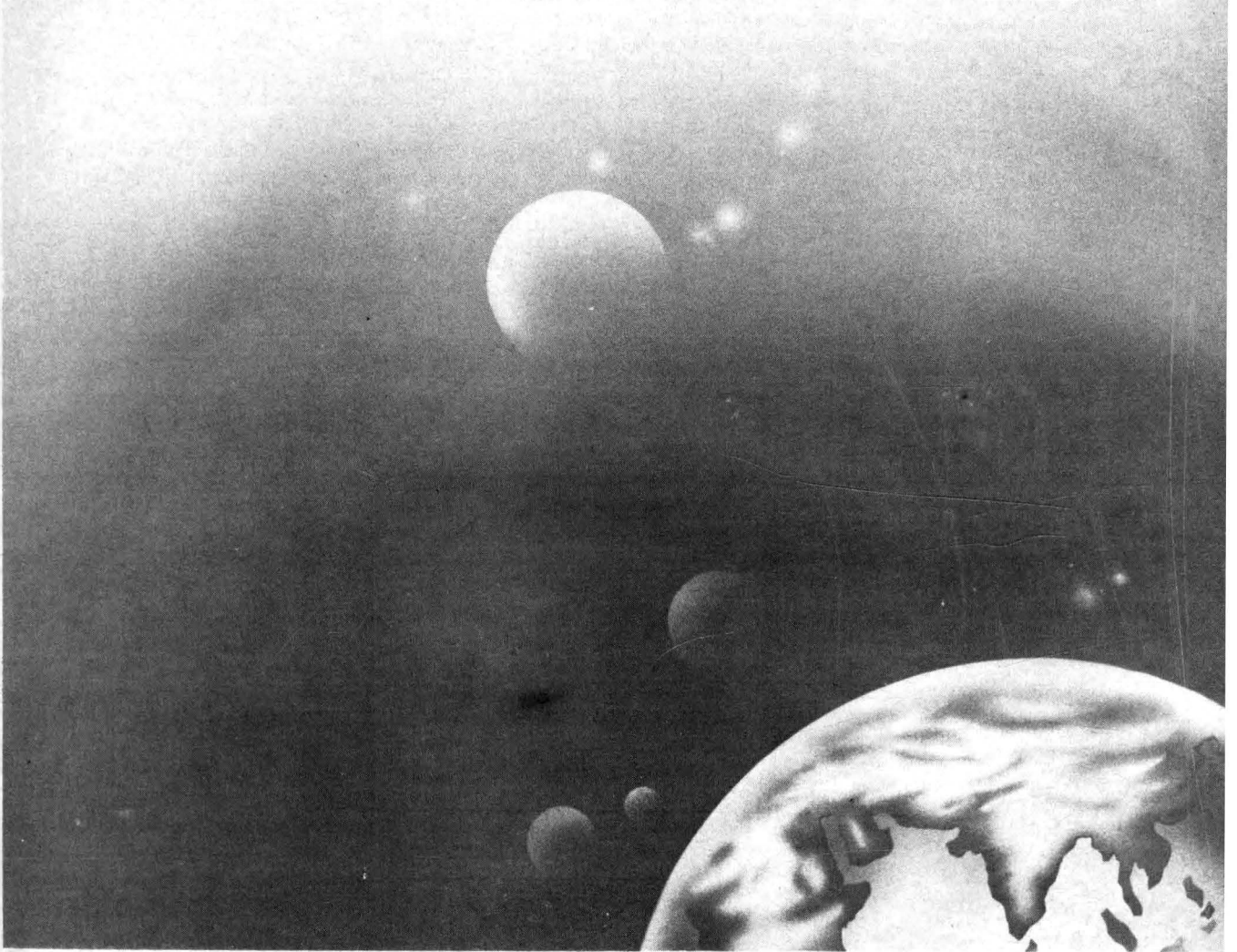
Pollution of rivers: drastic need for remedies.

environment can we hope for so long as our population continues to grow at over two per cent per annum and threatens to reach the 1000 million mark by AD 2000 and to double itself from its present level of around 800 million before it stops growing? Should not population control be therefore considered as a fifth area of environmental concern? Second, will the environmental movement ever have at its disposal the kind of financial resources it requires unless there is a marked reduction in tensions both at home and abroad so that we

ed with the resources available for meeting them, that we have no choice but to be highly selective and ruthlessly practical in approaching them. In the situation in which we are placed today, we must give the top-most priority to the tasks which brook no delay and which if left unattended to, bid fair to destroy the country's ecology, let alone ruin its economy.

Is it too much to hope that the country will demonstrate its will to live by implementing essential environmental tasks resolutely, however daunting they may appear to be? ♦

People at the top 1



The higher the apex of a pyramid, the greater its size and wider its base. This principle applies equally to any management function. And information, that essential tool, must increase in scope and in depth, to keep pace with changing needs.

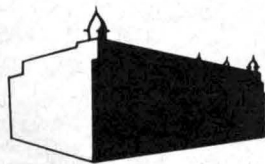
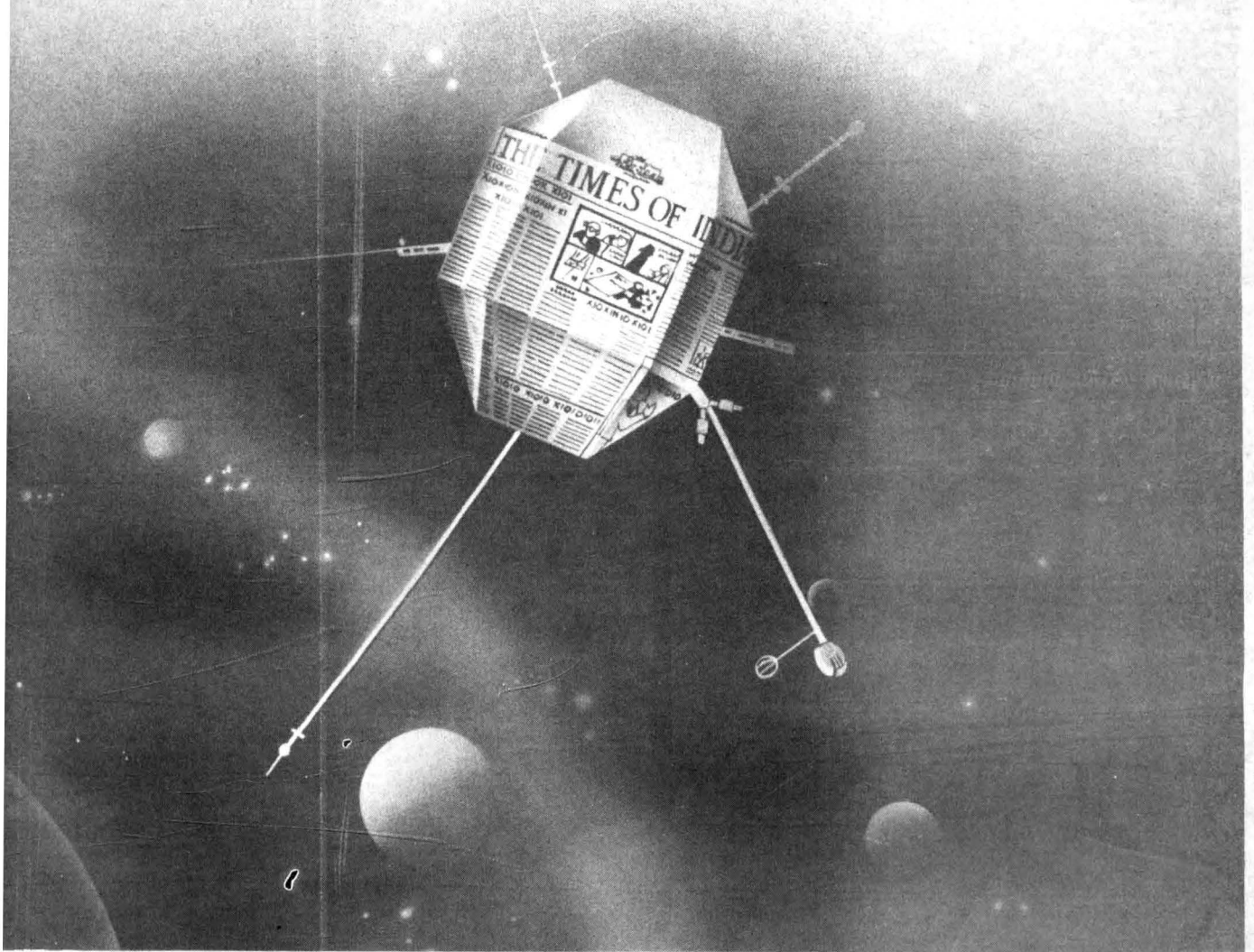
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THE SECULARISM OF K A ABBAS

Khwaja Ahmed Abbas was a legendary figure, by any standards. Journalist, novelist, filmmaker and historian extraordinaire. Surprisingly however, an important facet of his multidimensional personality, has not been highlighted so far – his deep commitment to secularism. P SAINATH profiles Abbas' consistent stand on communalism.



1945

Dear Mr Jinnah,

I was flattered to receive a letter from you – even if it was only a printed circular letter. You have asked me for my vote, and again I am flattered. But I am afraid I cannot oblige you . . .

Your election circular does not make it clear what position you take on the most vital issue of our national existence: FREE-DOM. Are you for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British power from India? What steps are you prepared to take to bring about the freedom of India?

Do you stand for abolition of landlordism, nationalisation of key industries, rigorous control of capitalist enterprises? Are you for the workers and peasants in their struggle for justice and betterment?

. . . You seem to believe still in the intrusion of religion into politics, while I believe that religion is strictly a personal matter and should not be mixed up with politics. You speak of a 'Muslim nation' – as if the Muslims of Russia, India, China, Europe and Malaya could (by any stretch of imagination!) be grouped together as a single political unit, simply because they have the same religion!

I can vote as an Indian citizen and not as a Hindu or Muslim or a member of the Scheduled Castes!

Last Page, *Bombay Chronicle*, December 2

1987

Dear Syed Shahabuddin,

I write to you this open letter as a fellow-Indian, a fellow-Muslim and a fellow-member of the Janata, though not of the Janata Party.

. . . You have seen it as proper to issue a call to Muslims to boycott the Republic Day celebration.

Do you know the importance of the Republic Day? Do you know the blood and tears, not only of Hindus and Muslims, but of members of other communities that have gone into it to achieve this Day?

. . . But you threw in the spanner of boycott. What did you want to achieve with it? What did the Muslims want to achieve with it? Luckily not all Muslims were with your boycott. Many do not even understand it. But it was a provocation of the few Muslims that would be hoodwinked by it. They will not think. They will lock up their thinking apparatus.

They will not go to Court, including the Supreme Court. They will not take recourse to the hundred and one legal and quasi-legal devices the Constitution provides. Instead of thinking they would have recourse to communal frenzy.

This communal frenzy will have its reaction.. in turn it will provoke and incite other communal frenzies. . . the country will be given over to disorder and violence. Muslims, being in minority, will suffer most.

. . . Consider this for a while, Syed Shahabuddin and save Muslims from another holocaust. Then your place is assured amongst the real well-wishers and genuine servants of God.

Last Page, *Blitz* January 31

ONLY VERY RARELY in recent times has the press of this country been so unanimous in lavishing praise and acclaim on a departed celebrity as it has on the death of Khwaja Ahmed Abbas. Nearly a month after his passing, diverse publications were still carrying articles on him, reproducing old articles by him and running the gist of his last testament.

Not that it was undeserved. As his 'Open Letter to Jinnah' of 1945 and his 'Open Letter to Shahabuddin' of 1987 show, Abbas displayed over four decades, an honesty and consistency virtually unrivalled amongst his contemporaries. This alone was enough to elevate his 'Last Page' above the status of a column, to the level of an unique journalistic institution.

Nevertheless, while the positive response of the press to this gentle but great literary giant was welcome, it was disappointing that a most important facet of Abbas failed to receive the attention it so richly deserves. Few have recognised the extent and calibre of his contribution to secular thinking and writing and to progressive movements in this country.

Certainly, Abbas' achievements as journalist, novelist, filmmaker and historian were outstanding, and richly deserved the acclaim they received. No other journalist, in any nation, in any language, in any publication, has equalled his record of running the same column for 46 years without break – six years in the *Bombay Chronicle* (1941-1947) and 40 years in *Blitz* (1947-1987).

Few authors can claim to have written a book for virtually each and every year of their lives – he died at the age of 73, having written almost as many books – while also being associated in one capacity or another, with the making of over 30 films and while running his weekly 'Last Page' column.

Very few filmmakers could capture the ethos of struggle and sacrifice as he did in films like *Dharti ke Lal* which was perhaps India's first

realistic film and made under near-impossible conditions with the British rulers impeding and obstructing its making at every stage. But Abbas the secularist is no less important. And his fight for communal harmony is visible in every column he wrote, every film he made, every book he authored.

The 'Open Letter to Jinnah' that he wrote in 1945 was just one of a number of stirring pieces he produced during the last years of the freedom struggle, particularly at the height of the communal frenzy. Abbas detested fundamentalists of every religious denomination and the very thought of compromise with such elements roused his ire.

"You promise to look at every question coming before the Central Assembly 'from the standpoint of the Muslim nation' ", he wrote to Jinnah in 1945, "while anyone who gets my vote will have to look at every political question from the standpoint of an anti-imperialist, freedom-loving Indian, and every economic question from the standpoint of a Socialist". He also railed repeatedly at 'the myth of a Muslim nation'.

Right from the time he began writing his famous column, Abbas fought not merely conscious fundamentalism but the growth of communal stereotypes, often employed by people he otherwise respected. Writing as early as March 1942 on Doris Gerrard's sculptures of 'Muslim Girl in Patna' and 'Muslim Girl', he asked whether the artist gave those titles 'without much thought, for want of a better choice, just because her models happened to be Muslims. Or does she imply that a Muslim girl is a racial and ethnological type different from a Hindu girl or a Christian girl? Because, if that is the implication, it is patently false'.

"Like Doris Gerrard, thousands of well-meaning people are unconsciously helping to perpetuate communal differences by talking in terms of Hindu and Muslim — when such differentiation is entirely irrelevant and



"It is not law and order that broke down in Calcutta, it was the very structure of human relations. And no amount of patrollings by the military or the police or personal intervention by the Viceroy will restore the foundations of humanity in Calcutta unless steps are taken to purge men's minds of fanaticism and the lust for violence."

unnecessary . . . Much of the nonsense we hear about the cultural differences of Hindus and Muslims is based on sheer ignorance about our own country."

Simple and straightforward enough. But not quite so simple when you recall the period he was writing in. At a time when Hindu-Muslim differences were being vigorously emphasised and propagated by both British imperialism and local fundamentalists, Abbas stressed the coming together of the progressives of both streams.

For him, Nehru and Azad were the symbols of such unity: "Azad and Nehru, the Muslim and the Hindu, the divine and the agnostic, the scholar and the scientist, were the symbols of an India, with all her diversities, united in a common purpose. Not mere symbols. They were India — these two men and the crowd." (*Bombay Chronicle*, July 1945).

The Partition and the communal frenzy that accompanied it shook Abbas. The pain and anguish it caused him are eloquently expressed in his writings of the period. The communal violence in Calcutta in August 1946 horrified him beyond measure. Yet, while heated debate ensued over whether a better police bandobust could have prevented such a situation from occurring, he wrote:

"It is not law and order that broke down in Calcutta, it was the very structure of human relations. And no amount of patrollings by the military or the police or personal intervention by the Viceroy will restore the foundations of humanity in Calcutta unless steps are taken to purge men's minds of fanaticism and hatred and arrogance and the lust for violence. . .

"There are lakhs of villages and thousands of cities and towns where, as in Calcutta, Hindus and Muslims are living and working together. There is no practicable way of separating their existence. It will require several thousand Pakistans to accomplish complete isolation of the followers of the two faiths. If the prejudices and passions that caused the murder of 10,000 in Calcutta are allowed to spread all over the country (and there are ominous signs of that) then what hope is there that the shame and horror of Calcutta will not be repeated a hundred times?"

THAT PROVED prophetic. In May 1947, he was writing scathingly of the communal and pseudo-religious notions taking hold amidst the frenzy: "Allama Mashriqi thinks we can find unity and freedom by following his Khaksar volunteers in their symbolic half hour march, while Raja Mahendrapratap believes he can solve the whole problem by touring the villages in a bullock cart propagating the Aryan state . . . The goondas of Amritsar have provoked their compatriots of Lahore by sending them bangles, as a symbol of cowardice, and now the Lahore goondas are proving their valour and

their manhood by setting fire to their city. Nero only fiddled when Rome was burning. He at least did not set fire to it."

In June the same year he came out with his widely reproduced piece: 'Who Killed India'. Giving due importance to British imperialism and its divide and rule policy, Abbas nevertheless concluded that India was also killed by 'the fanatical Muslim Leaguers. . . India was killed by the fanatical Hindus. . . India was killed, stabbed in the heart, by every Hindu who killed a Muslim, by every Muslim who killed a Hindu, by every Hindu or Muslim who committed or abetted or connived at arson and rape and murder during the recent (and earlier) communal riots'.

In the decades that followed, Abbas' writings exerted a powerful influence not only on millions of readers, but on entire generations of progressive writers. The immense respect that his writings earned him flowed in no small measure from his sheer consistency. His observations on the 1961 communal riots in Jabalpur are very similar to the ones he made during Partition:

"The fact remains that, 13 years after our Independence, communalism still holds evil sway over the minds of many people in our country. It is not enough to characterise it as an unfortunate hangover of the era of imperialism: Now that we are free, are we doing everything possible and necessary to root out communalism?"

There were literally hundreds of 'Last Pages' devoted almost exclusively to the problem of communalism and it is impossible to cover the lot. But the challenges he threw in these, the debates he stirred, the people he roused, all these are simply enormous in magnitude when you consider that he wrote in English, Hindi and Urdu and was translated into every other Indian language boasting regular publications.

In the 1980s he was still going strong, appalled by the Muslim Women's Bill and its implications which he saw as 'repulsive and disgusting'.



Abbas took great interest in writing about even the smallest efforts at communal harmony, never ridiculing them even when he found them decidedly eccentric. His attitude was that the poorest effort at promoting communal amity was miles ahead of the conscious fostering of communalism and therefore deserved sympathy.

In a series of pieces, he showered withering scorn on the Bill, its protagonists, the ruling party which supported it, fellow-intellectuals who soft-pedalled it and those who thought it an unimportant political concession.

Invited in September 1986 to a Convention on communalism and national integration, Abbas began his 'Last Page' on the subject with the words: "I found several well-known communalists (both Hindu and Muslim brands) sitting on the podium." Directing his ire against the ruling Congress (I) which he held mainly responsible for the 'obnoxious developments', he accused the government of creating a situation where:

"We appease Muslim communalists by succumbing to the cry of 'Muslim Personal Law', we encourage Hindu communalism by allowing and

encouraging the Trishul and the Yatra's other symbols, and we recognise Sikh communalism by having a 'pact' with the Akali party.

"You have to treat communalists as untouchable monsters — not allies when that suits your political purposes", he wrote, declaring that it was impossible to fight one chauvinism with another. At the same time, he had an unwavering faith in the ability of the Indian masses to rise above these problems. Thus, even while chiding Shahabuddin on his Republic Day boycott call in 1987, Abbas noted that the majority of Muslims would not go along with it.

He also took great interest in writing about even the smallest efforts at communal harmony, never ridiculing them even when he found them decidedly eccentric. His attitude was that the poorest effort at promoting communal amity was miles ahead of the conscious fostering of communalism and therefore deserved sympathy.

He devoted a full instalment of the 'Last Page' to the Ram Janma Bhoomi controversy (though he had written on it at length earlier) when he heard that historians like Irfan Habib and Romila Thapar would be associated with a committee to go into the Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy.

Describing the association of these scholars as 'one positive angle' he was sure that it would produce good results: "They are rationalists, they know their subject well, and they have a wider perspective of historical fact impinging on current communal issues."

On March 28 this year, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas wrote his final 'Last Page'. With his death five weeks later, India lost more than a literary giant. Its leading anti-communalist voice — a position he occupied for four decades — had been stilled. But as he wrote in his Will and Testament, if anyone still 'wants to meet me, there are over 70 books — open and start reading any of them. . . or see any of the pictures I produced — and you will meet me'.

YEH JO HAI



DOORDARSHAN



Celebrities pick the best and worst on TV

Among the various adjectives that one could employ in describing Doordarshan and its profferings, the most irrefutable would be that it is ubiquitous. It may be nauseatingly boring or sporadically interesting, but it is, above all, **there**. And the viewers willy-nilly take what is given to them, week after unexciting week.

But what do the people in this and its related profession — the cinema — feel about the medium? **IMPRINT** interviewed a diverse galaxy of filmstars, TV stars, serial makers and TV critics to discover their preferences and peeves on the idiot box. While several “never watched TV” like Rekha, Shabana Azmi, Naseeruddin Shah, Kitu Gidwani and Kulbhushan Kharbanda, others turned in fairly predictable answers. **IMPRINT** presents the glitterati’s views on the best and worst on TV.

Nukkad: original, creative, exciting and number one.

OPINIONS



SATISH SHAH

One of the most popular actors on television, still remembered for his hilarious cameos in *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi*: Any serial that appeals to all audiences, to the common people, is what I term a good serial. So I'd say that *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* rates first — not

because I acted in it but because it received a tremendous ovation, a really warm response from people of all ages. There's no doubt that *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* beats all the other serials.

Of the others, *Buniyaad*, did very well, on the whole, though it drifted and lost its grip once in a while. But I have great respect for Ramesh Sippy, and the serial was interesting. *Nukkad* was also very good, cleverly designed to appeal to everyone. *Ghar Jamai*, in my opinion, was the worst serial ever shown on TV. Right from the first episode, I could sense it was not working out. The script was weak, the handling was all wrong, we had a lot of technical problems, and limited time, so it boomeranged on us. Besides, nobody worked towards improving anything, there was no rapport and backslapping, of the kind we had while doing *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi*, where we were our own critics.

Of the current serials, *Kabir* is good, both technically and performance-wise. But watch out for *Dhamaal*!



Ghar Jamai: wrong handling?



Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi: universal favourite.

KHALID MOHAMED

Popular film and TV critic: The best serials telecast so far have undoubtedly been *Buniyaad* and *Nukkad*. Though *Buniyaad* was confined to the studio and was sometimes hackneyed, its narrative strength was undeniable. One got so involved with the characters, that one wanted to know what had happened, from one's neighbours in case one missed an episode. It really grabbed your interest. As for the acting, I think Alok Nath and Aneeta Kanwar were



outstanding — anyone with lesser talent might have made *Buniyaad* quite different.

Nukkad celebrated the spirit of fun, in addition to being meaningful. It also appealed to every section of the audience as well as to the discerning. Saeed blended sensibility with a slice of fantasy.

Next I think I'd vote *Satyajit Ray Presents* and *Kacchi Dhoop* as runners-up. Among the worst (serials) I've ever watched on TV was *Tasveer Ka Doosra Rukh*. Though it was meant to be a behind-the-scenes venture, to gauge people's reactions, it was stage-managed and corny, more

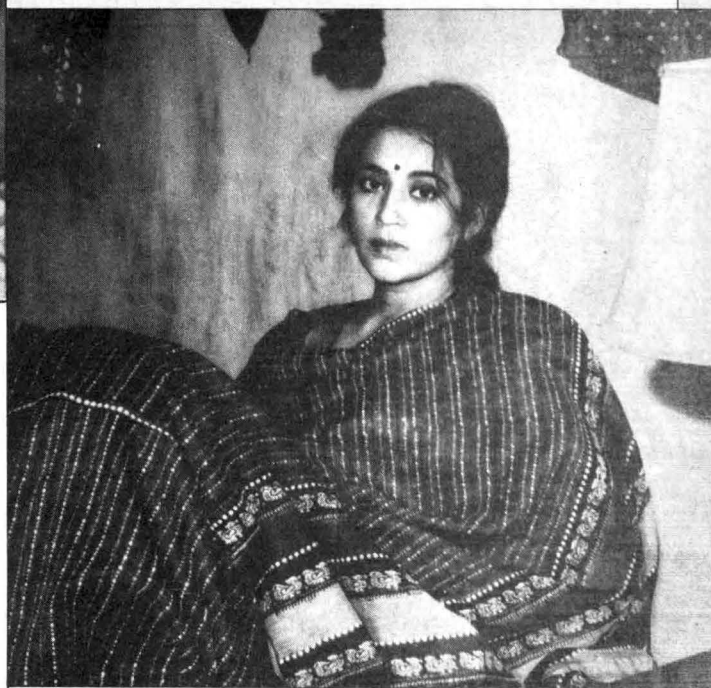
obsolete than the radio plays of the 1960s. Abroad, this kind of thing is done very sportingly, mistakes are acknowledged etc, but this serial was just self-congratulatory nonsense, with two Doordarshan people meeting the public and asking for their views.

Another 'terrible' serial among the more recent lot was *Poornima*. Its plot, values, acting calibre were all atrocious. It was thoroughly narcissistic and absolutely archaic, glorifying the working women to the point of idiocy. Today there's nothing worth watching on TV. If at all one watched anything of late, it was *Khoj* and that only because of Kitu Gidwani and her tough-girl act. The story was hardly absorbing but she had quite an attractive presence.

IQBAL MASUD

Film and TV critic: In my opinion, *Satyajit Ray Presents* was the best serial. Much of the credit for this should go to Sandip Ray, who also managed to extract brilliant performances from Amol Palekar in 'Class Friend' and Smita Patil in 'Abhinetri'. Another serial *Pradakshina* stands out for sheer technical excellence and serious attention. This is the first series of documentaries on the Ganga and has really imbibed the spirit of the Gangetic culture. *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* and *Buniyaad* (though it sagged in between) are also praiseworthy.

I wouldn't classify any serial as the worst but could perhaps list the ones I like the least — in fact all the serials



Swayamsiddha: damp squib?

OPINIONS

running on are pretty mediocre, with the possible exception of *Kabir* which seems to hold some potential. Otherwise, if I wasn't a TV critic, maybe I wouldn't watch TV.



Sai PARANJPE

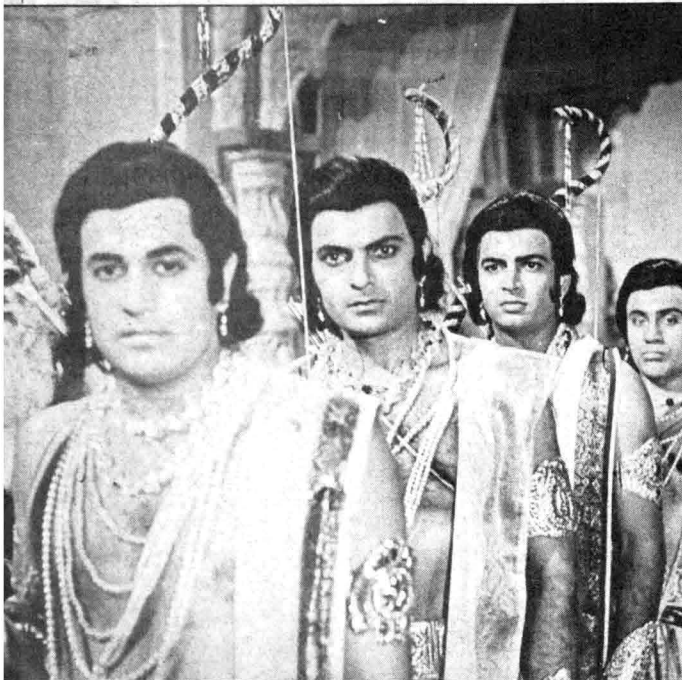
Renowned film and TV director and scriptwriter: I don't watch much TV so I can't comment on most serials, but I must make special mention about the TV play I saw recently, *Badaltey Rishtey* which was truly enlightening — the roles of a woman

and a man in a marriage were very effectively explored and most convincingly and credibly put across. It made a strong point for working women. Shama Zaidi, the producer, has blended both the educative and entertainment aspects very deftly. And a happy fact to be welcomed is that it was an in-house production — a contribution of Delhi Doordarshan. One rarely comes across such compelling television. It was, in short, a beautifully written play, well-enacted.

I invariably enjoyed the episodes I saw of *Buniyaad*. Manohar Shyam Joshi is our finest writer for TV. Being a scriptwriter myself, I know what a back-breaking job it is to churn out two episodes every week. Ramesh Sippy's direction and the acting were also noteworthy but it was



Buniyaad: popular winner.



Ramayan: mixed reactions.

Manohar Shyam Joshi's show all the way and hats off to him.

Another serial I sorely miss is the British comedy *Are You Being Served?* It was a lot of nonsense, pure distilled British humour. But we Indians are so snooty about entertainment. Unless we wave a flag and make the message very obvious, no serial is considered good. This serial was therefore discontinued.

Worst serial? During the early days of TV there was this serial, *Anveshan* by Basu Bhattacharya which I really enjoyed in a very negative way — not a single episode made sense. The idea was laudable and must have been put on paper very effectively to the Doordarshan authorities, but what came across was bad. Of course, the director very cleverly gave a lot of mileage to the sponsors by



showing this bit about two people going round the country on a mobike. The serial actually took the viewers and the TV authorities for a glorious ride.

Another bad serial I remember seeing was *Ajube* where a lot of good actors were wasted.

ASHA PAREKH

Famous actress of yesteryears: I don't really watch much TV, but of what I've seen, I liked *Buniyaad* — a nice soap opera with sleek acting and direction. The latter half though, dragged quite a bit. Then I've liked some episodes of *Chehre*, though some were shot very badly. *Yeh Jo Hai*

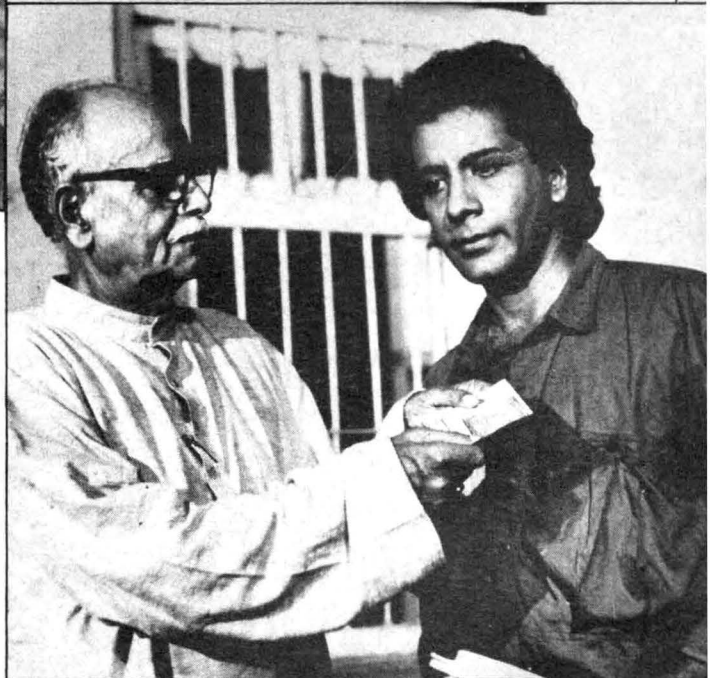
Zindagi was fun, relieved one's tensions. So was *Nukkad*, which was informative about the daily life of the poor.

As to dislikes, I can't really comment because since I haven't watched much TV it would be unfair. However, Breakfast TV seems quite bad.

BIKRAM SINGH

Film and TV critic: *Buniyaad* rates higher than most other serials. In spite of its ups and downs, it was successful in gripping one's interest for a whole year. The script was good, performances brilliant and direction intelligent. Amol Palekar's *Naqaab* was captivating, especially the story and the outstanding performance of Anil Chatterjee as an actor afflicted by stroke. His attempts to revoke memories of his glorious days and his delineation of a mentally and physically ill person, were truly moving. This serial was very beautifully detailed and well directed.

For the worst, I would like to pick out two from the whole bad lot: Mrinal Sen's *Kabhi Door Kabhi Paas*, though I watched only a few episodes, was very pretentious and I thought Mrinal Sen was being self-indulgent. It was disastrous. The other was Vijay Tendulkar's *Swayamsiddha* which generated so much hope right with the first episode — Vijay Tendulkar's association with the serial, the topic and Priya Tendulkar. It turned out to be a damp squib — it was really a case of misused and wasted opportunity.



Subah: glorifying drug addiction?



PANKAJ KAPOOR

The *Karamchand* craze: I don't think I could slot any serial I've watched as the 'best', simply because not one serial held my continuous interest. Some episodes of some serials were quite good but the basic and general standard is very mediocre. There can

be a tremendous scope for improvement both in content and presentation, of TV serials today.

I haven't really seen too many serials but of what I have seen, I liked *Kabir* — its content, its authenticity, its simplicity — it's quite good. But otherwise I can't use words like 'great' or 'horrible' for any of the current serials — most of them are lacklustre. Even *Karamchand*, I think 12 out of the total 39 episodes, were really outstanding. And though we did catch the audience's eye with our format, characters and slickness in presentation, yet we did falter at times. Luckily even where the plot was weak, we got by, due to the interest generated in the three main characters. Unless you have interesting characters in your serial, you cannot hope to captivate household audiences.



ANIL DHARKER

Editor and TV critic: As far as good serials go, I think there are none. *Nukkad* started badly, then became quite engaging. *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* was very funny to start with and then was intermittently so. *Buniyaad* was good in the early stages but petered

out like any soap opera. Mrinal Sen's *Kabhi Door Kabhi Paas*, *Satyajit Ray Presents* and *Ek Kahani* were unevenly good. Of the present lot, *Chehre* seems to be pretty promising.

Among the worst, I would list *Trishna*, *Subah*, *Ramayan* and *Anrita*. *Trishna*, which was based on Jane Austen's *Pride And Prejudice* was a brilliant idea, for though the novel was set in England and at a particular stage in their society, it is very peculiar to life in India now. But the direction was bad, the acting amateurish.

Ramayan had an opportunity to do something grand. But what we are getting are overaged, overfed actors going through *filmi* routines and costumes. The agony, and finally the death of Shravan's parents shown some time ago was farcical. The scene was meant to be very touching, but the acting and direction were so bad that it evoked only mirth. Here is one of our greatest stories which



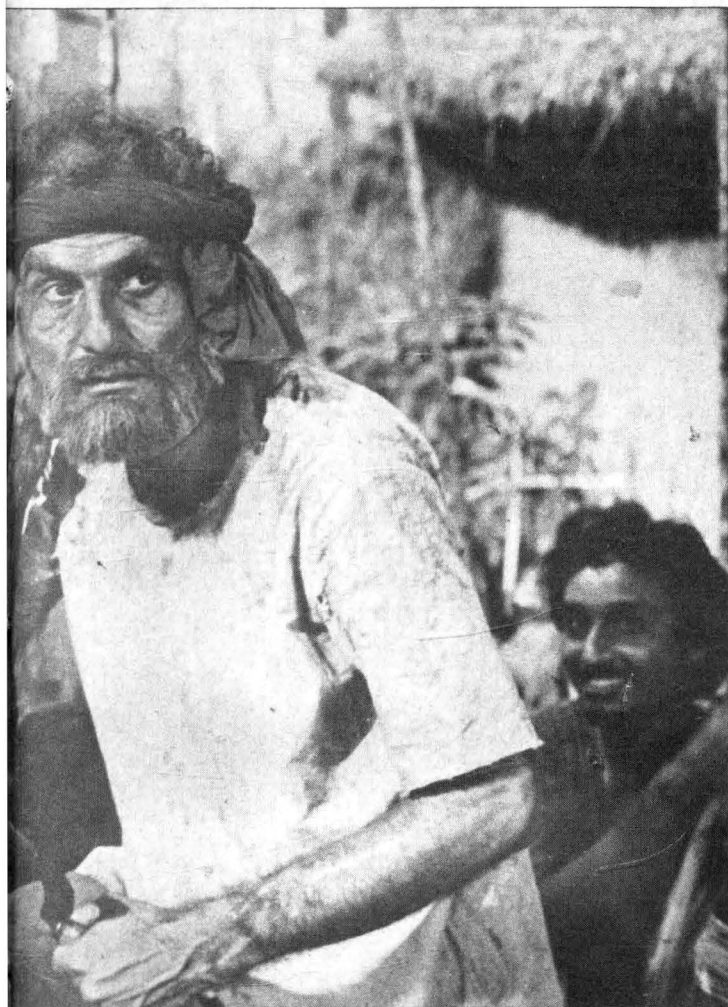
Kabir: topping the current charts.

has so much potential.

The concept behind *Subah* was good but instead of portraying the evils of drug addiction, it ended up glorifying it. In fact, Bharat (Salim Ghouse) became a real hero to most boys and girls and a recent survey showed how some young people even marvelled over him and wished they had a friend or elder brother like him! The depiction of university life was also quite unrealistic.

URMILA SINGH

Journalist and TV critic: I am always optimistic and like to believe the best serial of all time is just round the corner. Somehow past serials always seem to be better than the current ones. Some categories have thrown up good examples. *Buniyaad* I think stands in a class of its own among soap operas. In the non-fiction category I would place *Pradakshina*, with *Raj Se Swaraj* taking the second place and *Quiz Time* third. If *Sunil Gavaskar Presents* maintains its quality throughout, it might topple *Raj Se Swaraj* from



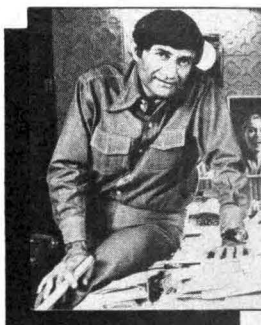
Number Two position.

Among sitcoms, *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* has had no serious contender for the first position though its quality was never consistent. *Ghar Jamai* laughed its way out of the running and *Karamchand* fell squarely between two stools. And these days *Dhamaal* is plumbing new depths.

It won't be possible to name an all-time worst since there are fresh qualifying rounds every three months. But *Poor-nima* comes pretty close. It has the highest concentration per square inch of detestable characters ever brought together in a single serial.

Most Pretentious Certificate:	<i>Kabhi Door Kabhi Paas</i>
Most Confused Trophy:	<i>Swayamsiddha</i>
Worst Documentary:	<i>Yatra</i>
Worst Sports Serial:	<i>That's Cricket</i>
Worst Children's Serial:	<i>Bawaji Ka Bioscope</i>
Best Teleplay:	<i>Hamidabai Ki Kothi</i>
Worst Teleplay:	<i>Sayyan Bhaye Kotwal</i>
Best Detective Serial:	<i>Khoj</i>
Worst Detective Serial:	<i>Apradhi Kaun</i>

Flop serial-maker of the year rolling cup to be shared by Shyam Benegal, Mrinal Sen and Vijay Tendulkar.



DEV ANAND

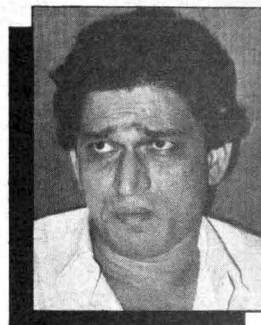
Dashing, debonair, evergreen hero and filmmaker: I haven't really looked forward to any one serial — except perhaps *Nukkad*. Yes, there was excitement over *Nukkad* — some episodes were very good. It was creative, original, well-done. It grew on you.

Most of the other stuff shown on television is extremely boring. The short stories, for example, were so pathetic. Even *Buniyaad* ultimately became very boring, meandering — I was never overwhelmed by it. And mine isn't a layman's opinion, we're critics, we understand this medium. Of course, being a government-controlled affair, television has its own limitations — that's one reason I haven't ventured forth to make serials of my own. Imagine, rushing to Delhi all the time, trying to get past the censors etc. There isn't that much money in it either, and as for impact, one evening's impact is just as easily washed away the next evening.

One advantage of TV is that it is generating employment for so many people. If only there was a parallel channel, if television was a private enterprise, the resulting tough competition would really be very good. Give the media to independent, creative people — there's no dearth of them. Television should be a people's point of view.

One programme I really liked was *Janwani* — it was bold and fairly democratic. Then all those sports finals, Grammys, Oscars, Live Aid etc were very lively. Showing classics on TV is also a good step. Of the current serials I've liked *Kabir* — parts of it were quite good.

On the whole I feel TV is no threat at all to cinema. At first it was like a toy, there was the curiosity factor. Now it's all a matter of course. You're eating, cooking, reading, you switch it on and off.



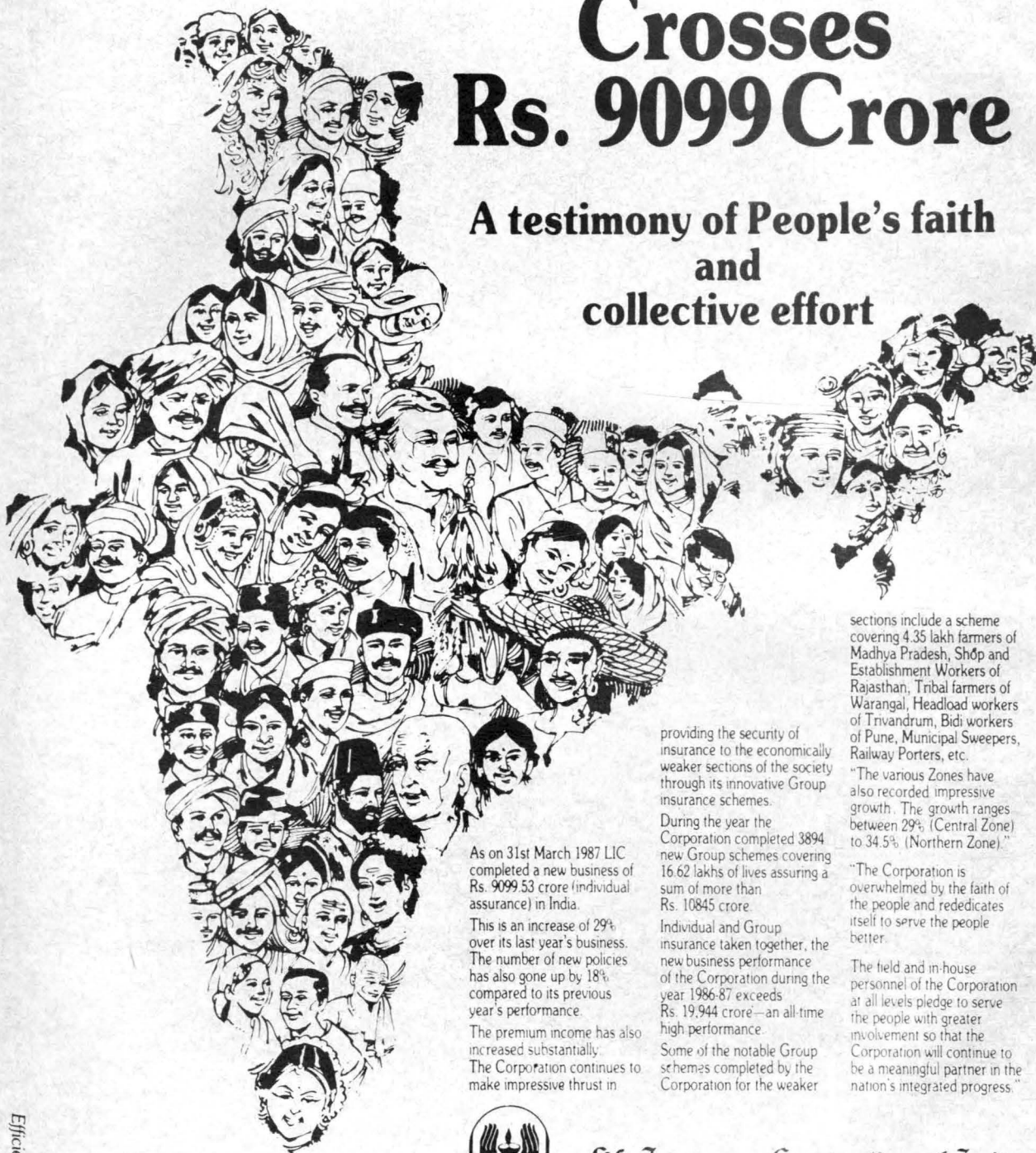
SHAFI INAAMDAR

Film and TV actor: I would rate *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* as the best TV serial ever. I don't say it because I acted in it, but because it did what no other serial could do — entertain. No other serial can touch it, *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* is the best. *Karamchand* and *Buniyaad* were also good. The first 25 episodes of *Buniyaad* were very engrossing.

I don't particularly detest any serial. *Hum Log*, though popular, was bad. The current ones are all lousy. ♦

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EXTRACT



A Day At The Office

ANOTHER DAY at the office," Karin thought as she paused before her office door on the morning of July 20, 2019. The door bore the sign: "Appelby, Weinstein, Harberger, & Rogers – Attorneys at Law."

"Good morning, Ms Rogers," the security guard said.

"Good morning, Ed," she replied. The door swung open.

She was greeted by the receptionist in the foyer.

"Is Robert here yet?" Karin asked.

"No, Ms Rogers."

"Tell him I need to talk with him

at his earliest opportunity."

"Shall I page him on his personal phone?"

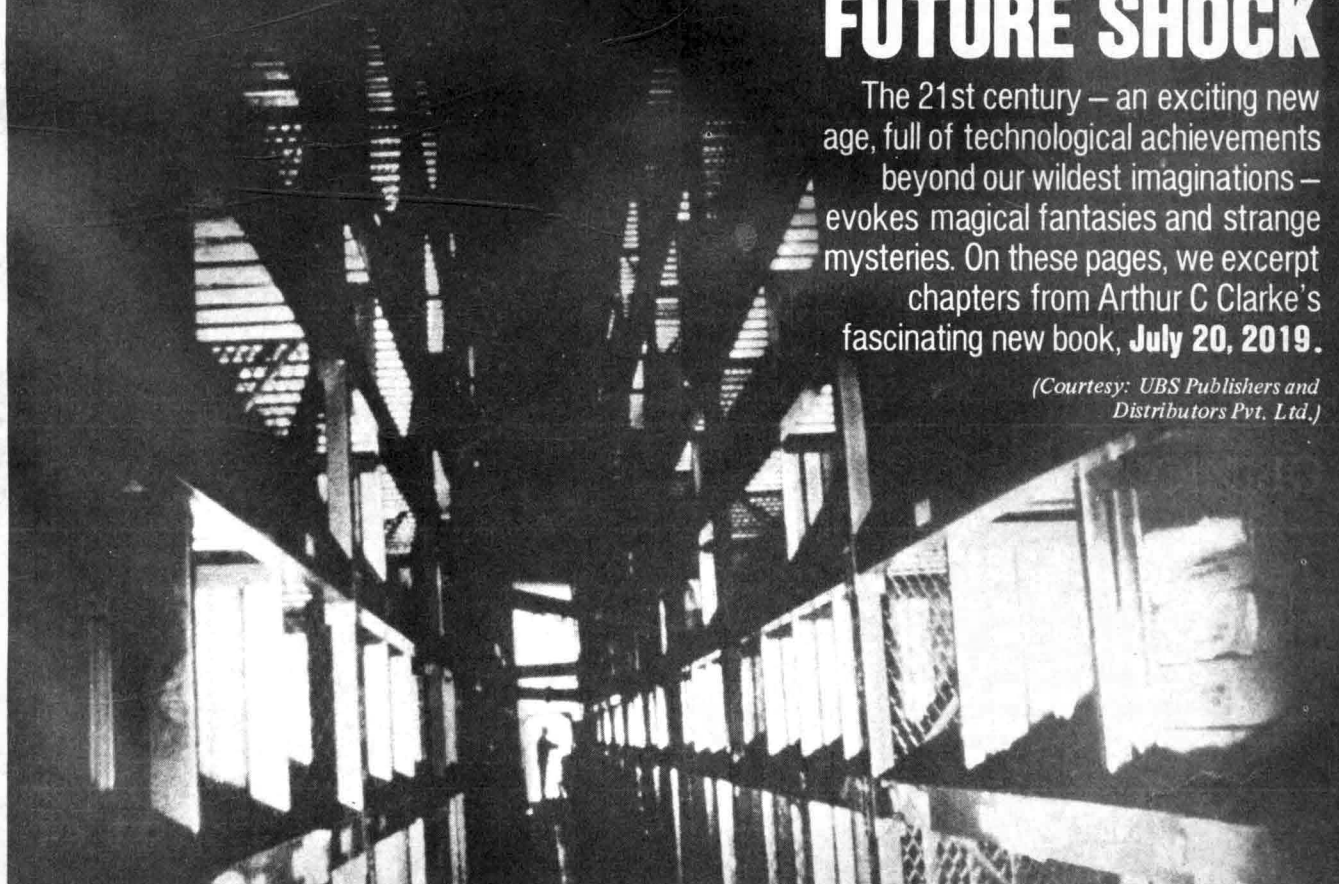
"No." It was not that important. She handed her coat to the receptionist and walked down the hallway to her office.

Her secretary had already displayed the day's schedule on the monitor.

FUTURE SHOCK

The 21st century – an exciting new age, full of technological achievements beyond our wildest imaginations – evokes magical fantasies and strange mysteries. On these pages, we excerpt chapters from Arthur C Clarke's fascinating new book, **July 20, 2019**.

(Courtesy: UBS Publishers and Distributors Pvt. Ltd.)



EXTRACT

The court appearance at 10 am for the Guthrie case gave her only an hour to clean up the daily correspondence and get a thorough briefing on the case. Settling in the office chair, Karin lowered the pickup cap over her close-cut curls. As the signals from the sensors in the chair combined with those from the cap, the intelligence amplifier came on line.

"Good morning, Ms Rogers." It was her secretary, George, an attractive man in his late twenties. He seated himself next to her work table with its computer terminal keypad and screen and put his own keypad in his lap. "Ready for correspondence," George announced.

"What's first?"

"We haven't received notification from the bank that Bowman and Evans have settled their account. It's now 90 days delinquent. Shall I send the usual notice?"

"No, George, they've got cash-flow problems. The Klimuk suit against them was a nuisance suit, and we won it. But the resultant bad publicity caused their space tourism bookings to fall off," Karin remarked. "If they haven't made a payment on the account within 60 days, remind me then." Her office staff was so efficient that she wouldn't worry about it. However, they were programmed so thoroughly to carry out such automatic functions as handling delinquent accounts that she had to intervene on occasion and exercise a judgement call.

"We've received a communication from the circuit court," George went on "concerning the matter of Jackson Barr versus Great Selene Mining Corporation. Judge Harada has reviewed the briefs and requests that counsel determine if the differences can be resolved by arbitration."

Karin thought about this for a moment. Harada was apparently hard-pressed for time; he obviously hadn't studied the briefs thoroughly. Karin decided it was time for a full audio-visual display.

"George, assemble a full-scan answer. Use stock footage showing me

in court attire against the bookcase. Here's what I want to say, so have it lip-synched. I haven't got time to tape it." As George recorded her words, she explained dispassionately to Judge Harada that the other party insisted on bringing it to the bench. She intimated that she and her clients would be happy to arbitrate and added that she was fully aware of the extremely busy docket.

"Done. Do you want to review it before transmission?"

"Yes." Sometimes George didn't exhibit the discretion Karin felt was necessary in such matters. He was an outstanding secretary but often lacked the human touch.

The door to the office opened, and an attractive young girl stepped in. Jill was Karin's para-legal. She greeted Karin, then stood expectantly, awaiting orders.

"How long will it take for you to brief me on the Guthrie case?"

"If I start now, there's just enough



The compact office of the future.

time before you have to leave for court."

It didn't take long. Karin resisted the temptation to believe she had this one in the bag. If she could present the case properly, it would probably be a walkover, provided that the court computer analysed the data and its consequences in the same manner as the one at Appleby, Weinstein, Harberger, & Rogers.

Finally, she had what she needed from Jill. Removing the cap from her head, she arose from the chair and started to leave. On her way out of the office, she told the receptionist, "I'll be back about fourteen hundred hours. Take my calls."

"Yes, Ms Rogers."

Since none of her partners had come in yet, Karin locked the door behind her when she left the office. This was a standard procedure, because when Karin departed there were no human beings left in the firm's office suite.

THE OFFICE OF A.D. 2019 sounds like a perfectly ordinary office of the late 20th century, except that there are no human clerical or secretarial workers in it. Routine chores — keeping files, setting up

The office of A.D. 2019 sounds like a perfectly ordinary office of the late 20th century, except that there are no human clerical or secretarial workers in it. Routine chores — keeping files, setting up appointments, keeping track of schedules, book-keeping and accounting, and the thousands of details that used to be carried out by human beings — are now in the far more capable hands of computers.

appointments, keeping track of schedules, book-keeping and accounting, and the thousands of details that used to be carried out by human beings — are now in the far more capable hands of computers. The machines are directed by artificial intelligence (AI) and coupled to intelligence amplifiers (IA), computerlike devices capable of linking directly with the human nervous system and extending human mental power, even projecting human images like Karin's secretary and para-legal into the wearer's mind.

The arrival of advanced computer and bioelectronic technologies in the office in the last decade must still come as a surprise to people who do not understand the central trend in office work for the past 100 years: replacing human beings with machines where machines can do the job faster, easier, and more efficiently. This has freed man to do the things human beings do best: attack problems we haven't anticipated, make complex decisions, and exercise judgments on the basis of very little data.

It should be obvious that although computer-based devices are at last running the office, human beings are still very much in control of them and of human circumstances where computers are involved. With all this in mind, let's take a closer look at Karin Rogers' law offices.

There are no human security guards, receptionists, personal secretaries, or para-legals in today's offices. Every one of those jobs has been assigned to a computer with a very large memory and the ability to link with other computers for even greater power. Sophisticated software gives it the artificial intelligence required for tasks that must otherwise be handled by human workers.

Computers have had each of the abilities these chores require since the mid-1980s, albeit in relatively primitive forms. Karin's 'security guard' analyses her image and voice print to confirm that the person wanting access to her office is indeed Karin Rogers. In principle, it isn't

difficult. Given enough money, you could probably have had this security guard controlling the locks on your door at any time in the past 25 years.

The 'receptionist' is a computer with a built-in answering machine, large memory, some artificial intelligence, voice recognition input, and voice output. Again, you could probably have bought all this in the 1980s, but it would have been expensive and not as capable as Karin's receptionist.

Karin's 'personal secretary' and 'para-legal' are not computers; they are functions of a very advanced type of computer that has become available only since 2010. Yet the technology to build it has existed for years.

Karin Rogers can see her assistants, but they are only images projected by the intelligence amplifier into her brain through her chair and cap. Karin created those images herself because they were pleasant, attractive, and easy to work with. The IA stored them in its memory and now re-creates them whenever she uses it. Other users deal with their own cast of artificial characters.

But what is an intelligence amplifier, and how does it project images into the brain?

At heart, it's a very large and fast digital computer with special sensors that can read human neural impulses and respond by sending electrical signals back into the nervous system. Karin does not have connectors wired into the top of her skull because a computer can communicate with the brain without such primitive connections, using methods tested as long ago as the 1970s.

For more than half a century — since the 1960s — neurophysiologists have been studying what they term 'event-related potentials'. They have been measuring the electrical activity produced in the brain by various stimuli and thought processes. This work has been going on at medical research institutes all over the world and in the physiology departments of nearly every large university and

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many private schools as well. It has drawn little attention from the news media, which have tended to concentrate on more spectacular biotechnologies.

Since the mid-1970s, for example, scientists at New York University have been using extremely sensitive electronic pickups to monitor and map the tiny electrical signals generated by viewing various patterns.

If the visual cortex of the brain could be mapped, then the entire brain could be mapped with similar procedures. Thus, by the end of the last century, biotechnologists had mapped the complete neural signature of the entire brain. As early as 1986, their work was causing a revolution in neuropathology and neurophysics.

It is easy to convert nerve impulses into digital signals a computer can read. Therefore, if we know the meaning of a neural impulse coming from a specific part of the brain, a computer can be programmed to recognise and decipher each pattern and 'read our minds' with external sensors.

The reverse technology — using a computer to send a signal into the nervous system — dates back to 1800, when Count Alessandro Volta discovered that an electrical signal applied to the skin would create a sensation of sound in the brain. Known as 'electrophonic hearing', the phenomenon lay unnoticed for more than 150 years. Then, in 1958, Houston teenager G Patrick Flanagan began working on a device he called the 'neurophone'. It can inject sound through the skin directly into the brain.

Other sensory data can also enter the nervous system. In the 1930s, famed physicist Henri M Coanda experimented with a system for stimulating the visual cortex of the brain. He used small electrical signals applied to the fingertips. Researchers in the Soviet Union continued this work and claimed to have stimulated visual images in people who had gone blind.

Why this information and these devices were not more widely known

in the United States before this decade lies in their potential applications in another form of intelligence. Someone once pointed out that there are three types of intelligence: animal intelligence, human intelligence, and military intelligence. One of Flanagan's neurophone patents was suppressed for eight years under a secrecy order issued by the Defence Intelligence Agency. Two popular articles on Flanagan's device and other sensory stimulators were quietly killed after government agents visited the editorial offices. Yet information about these devices and others of greater power was available in open technical literature.

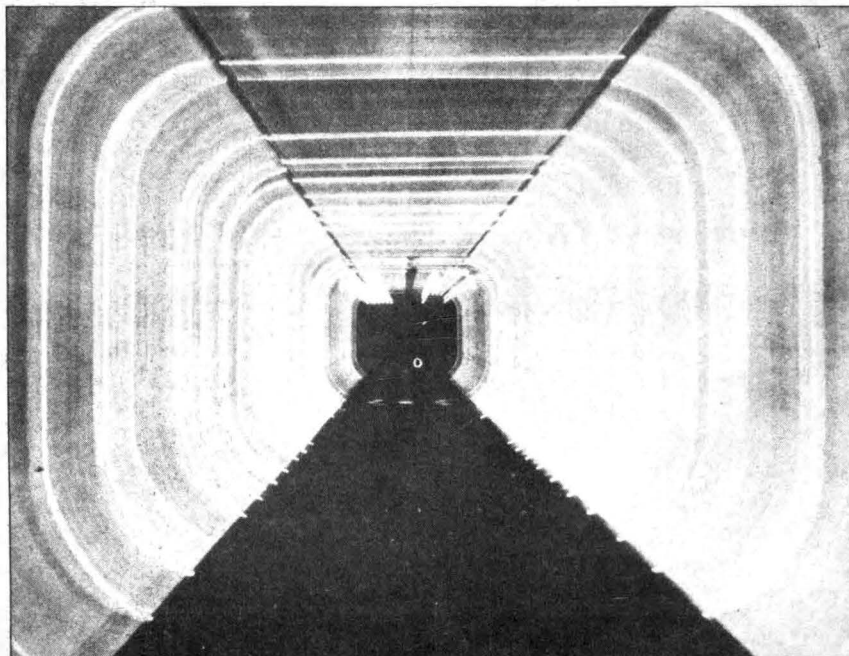
Thus, computers can easily talk to us by applying electrical signals to the skin. Some 35 years ago, scientists at the University of Utah and other research centres had already developed computerised stimulators that could bypass nerve damage and allow paraplegics to walk again. Since the turn of the century, this technique has been used to stimulate all the senses and to send pure data into the brain.

When Karin Rogers uses her intel-

ligence amplifier, it becomes an extension of her mind. She created George, her personal secretary, and Jill, her para-legal, because it is more comfortable to work with human images than with a disembodied computer. The IA extends her memory, helps her consider more data more rapidly, and links her with other people through a network of similar machines.

Karin's intelligence amplifier contains several people we didn't meet. 'Judge Marshall' is an elderly, white-haired legal expert. Karin may even have created a harem of imaginary lovers, though we prefer to believe that such a disciplined professional keeps her love life far removed from her work.

Obviously, there are real people in Karin's professional life — the other members of her legal partnership, for example. They have their own intelligence amplifiers. In larger offices, partners often share a multiuser IA, which can recognise each user's brain waves, preventing the use of files and computer personalities by others, just as passwords protected for confidentiality, each client's account in the simple computer net-



The office entrance of 2019 is an entryway into the human brain.

works of the 20th century.

Useful as they are, intelligence amplifiers still do not offer the quick, clear communication of a face-to-face conversation; computers still cannot duplicate all the intricate body language that human beings use without thinking. So Karin meets her partners from time to time and would still appear in court even if the courts agreed to conduct trials by IA network.

Of course, the technology that has changed Karin's working life in the last decade has changed her office as well. Gone are the desks at which many of today's workers began their careers. Though a few still cling to their solid-oak rolltop status symbols, drawers are useful only to store paper and lunch, and there is very little paper left in the office. Why cut down living trees when micro-electronics can yield the same result? 'In' and 'Out' baskets have vanished as well because everything can be stored more easily, compactly, and accessibly in computer files.

There are few personal office

When Karin Rogers uses her intelligence amplifier, it becomes an extension of her mind. She created George, her personal secretary, and Jill, her para-legal, because it is more comfortable to work with human images than with a disembodied computer. The intelligence amplifier extends her memory, helps her consider more data more rapidly, and links her with other people through a network of similar machines.

spaces, only cubicles with IA terminals. After all, if the intelligence amplifier can project human images into your mind, why not let it surround you with whatever office decor pleases you? You can have any furniture, window, or view you want. And you can change it at will, because it costs absolutely nothing; it's only a series of binary numbers in the office computer's memory circuits.

Because face-to-face meetings remain important — more so in some businesses than in others — most offices have at least one conference room with IA interfaces, a few separate computer terminals, and multimedia facilities. Where it is difficult for people to get together, teleconferences are conducted much as they were 40 years ago. But in 2019, technology has made them nearly as realistic as face-to-face meetings.

In well-equipped offices, your image is picked up by holographic television and sent to your conference partner's office. You sit before each other in three full-colour dimensions. The first executives to use holoconferencing 10 years ago, sometimes forgot the machinery that brought them together and actually attempted to shake hands after the meeting! Holoconferences are still relatively uncommon, however; the equipment is too costly and it is possible to get nearly the same effect by IA network.

Even in 2019, not all offices are supplied with intelligence amplifiers and other state-of-the-art computer equipment. Even with today's inexpensive hardware, some small businesses just can't afford them. These mom-and-pop companies are on the decline except in the crafts and other traditionally small operations.

On the other end of the scale, the plushest offices are not as openly computerised and IA-ised as more workaday environments. When cost is no factor and sheer conspicuous image is the goal, even today's top managers retain their desks, windows, and human secretaries. That is the ultimate one-upsmanship in the office world of 2019. ♦

A Day At School

ON THE EVENING of July 20, 2019, John Stanton is taking yet another teleclass. His classroom is actually a room in his own home that is outfitted for teleconferencing. At the moment, he is posing a question to his teacher. Sitting in a university video studio 1,400 miles away, the teacher appears in the room as a life-sized three-dimensional holographic image.

Meanwhile, in a nearby public school, an early-education specialist is teaching a four-year-old how to read. As studies today have already shown, early training leads to greater educational success later on.

At the 'magnet' high school across the street, specialising in the humanities, a sophomore is learning how quantum mechanics is changing our view of the universe. Other high schools in the community specialise in everything from science to finance.

Across town, at a McSchool franchise, a grandmother is taking a course on small business management. Two rooms away, her 16-year-old grandson is getting first-year college English out of the way early.

Nearby, at the university operated by a major corporation for its employees, students are taking classes in new technological developments in their fields or working toward advanced degrees in technical, scientific, or management specialties.

By the year 2019, such students will be typical, for most people will attend school throughout their life. Recreational learning will become popular as increasing technological efficiency creates more leisure and tomorrow's fast-changing technologies will require workers to seek constant training and re-training.

Today for instance, computer programming is a viable career. However, engineers are now working on computers that programme computers. As such machines come on the market, thousands of programmers will have to re-train for new careers.

Robot technicians are now increas-

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ing in demand. Yet robot technology is constantly evolving. These technicians will need updated courses for each new generation of machine. Meanwhile, engineers will design new speciality robots, such as zero-gravity robots to work on orbiting factories, already under study at such research centres as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Technicians will have to take more courses so they can fill the highpaying jobs in the new specialities.

Entirely new fields will spring up, too, like sea-bed mining and large-scale aquaculture to help feed the globe's exploding population. Workers whose jobs in other fields are being eliminated by technology will go back to school to prepare for careers in these new areas.

Traditional schools, kindergarten through high school, also will change because of new technologies. In fact, education's basic emphasis will shift. Our current educational system evolved to produce workers for the Industrial Revolution's factory-based economy, for work that requires patience, docility, and the ability to endure boredom. Students learned to sit in orderly rows, to absorb facts by rote, and to move as a group through the material regardless of individual differences in learning speed. But no factory jobs will be left in 2019. Except for a few technicians to watch over control panels, tomorrow's factories will be automatic with computers directing robot workers.

In this new computer-based economy, more and more jobs will involve the creation, transmission, and processing of information and ideas. As the number of jobs based on muscle and mindless repetition wanes, industry and business will increasingly require workers with sharp thinking skills. And, because most people will be taking courses lifelong, they will need to know how to learn — education itself will be a skill that virtually everyone will need. As a result, the emphasis in elementary and high school will shift: in the school of the future, the focus will be on teaching

how to think and how to learn.

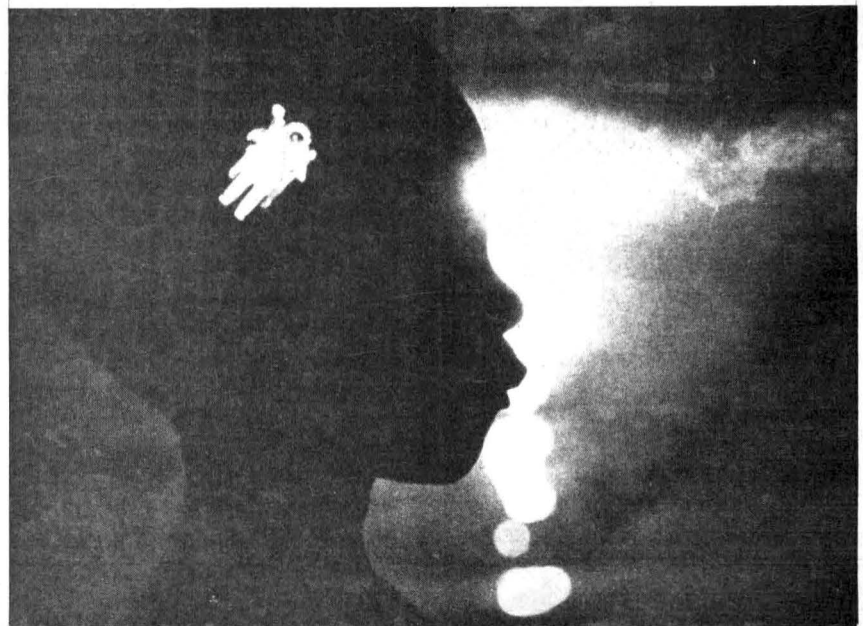
"We will have to deal with questions unforeseeable today, and so we need a broad-based education," says Barnard College president Ellen Futter. "We need people who can think outside their own areas of specialisation. We must give people certain key intellectual skills — analytical thinking, critical thinking, the ability to make judgements, to reason quantitatively, to balance opposed points of view. We must focus more on how to learn, how to think."

Meanwhile, the technologies that are changing society — communications satellites, fibre-optic cable, interactive TV, computers — will also change the way in which education is delivered. One result will be tremendous diversity in the educational system. Master teachers may address thousands of students scattered on several continents simultaneously, for instance. The technology that will make such courses available, teleconferencing, will soon be commonplace. In fact, major corporations already use such systems.

In a state-of-the-art teleconferencing room set up by a subsidiary of Comsat in Washington, D C, plush armchairs surround a sleek oak con-

ference table. Inconspicuously built into the head of the table is an electronic control console. On the wall at the table's foot are two floor-to-ceiling video screens. Executives using the room can cross the ocean, in effect, without leaving Washington.

When they arrive in the room for a teleconference, on the screen to the left they see their counterparts in London, Tokyo, or virtually any other city around the globe gathered in a similar room. Built into the walls of both rooms are robot TV cameras, controlled from the head seat at the table. Built into the table are 'smart' microphones, which can distinguish between the sound of a person's voice, a cough, or the clatter of a dropped ashtray, and instantly adjust the volume accordingly. The people in the two cities attending this electronic meeting can thereby carry on a normal conversation and watch each other as they talk. By placing a document over a glass plate built into each table, the two groups can project images of a contract, an agreement, a diagram, or any other document on the wall's second big screen. At the push of a button, they can print out duplicate copies of the document for their counterparts in the other con-



Dreams of space travel floating in the minds of children.

ference room to examine.

SUCH TECHNOLOGIES, aided by high-speed travel will knit tomorrow's world far more tightly, economically and culturally. Thus, the culture that tomorrow's schools transmit cannot be solely our own. Peter Glaser, an expert on space technology at Arthur D Little, Inc., puts it well: "We can't live in an island called 'Kansas' or 'Massachusetts'. How will our graduates be able to talk intelligently about things on the Moon if they don't even know what's going on in the country next door."

Of course, with so many technological and economic changes afoot, the social fabric itself will be re-woven. More leisure and discretionary income for many workers will be one change. As the old industrial system wanes, we will no longer need a kind of lock-step conformity to operate efficiently; individualism will spread all through society. "Craftspeople will increasingly be in demand, for instance," predicts Robert Ayres, professor of engineering and public policy at Carnegie-Mellon University. "As manufactured goods become increasingly standardised, and ever cheaper, crafted objects will be seen as increasingly

By 2019, today's monolithic educational system will have diffused throughout society. The public schools will still exist, but they will be only one facet of a stunning diversity of systems for delivering education, much of which will be privately operated. Many high schools will become confederations of subschools that cater to students' special interests, from physics to the performing arts.

distinguished and desirable." As computer networks decentralise our society, many people will be able to work at home, if they wish. Citizens will increasingly 'do their own thing'. And that will include education.

All of these changes — lifelong education, international education, new emphasis on how to think and how to learn, a new individualism — will put pressure on the public school system as we know it today. The result will be a blow-out.

By 2019, today's monolithic educational system will have diffused throughout society. The public schools will still exist, but they will be only one facet of a stunning diversity of systems for delivering education, much of which will be privately operated.

Even the public schools will be more varied. Many high schools will become confederations of subschools that cater to students' special interests, from physics to the performing arts. But the diversity will not end there.

"We'll have home-based schools, more private and religious schools, more schools founded by zealots, and more diversity overall," points out Vermont education commissioner Stephen S. Kaagan. "In Washington, D C, and Boston we're already seeing primitive alliances between industries and the public schools." Steven Kurtz, headmaster of Philips Exeter Academy, agrees: "I think we'll see big companies, like IBM or Marriott, taking over whole school systems, contracting with a city like Wichita to run the entire city's schools."

Meanwhile, many schools will reach into the womb, teaching pregnant inner-city women nutrition and child care. The aim, according to Milton Kopelman, principal of the Bronx High School of Science in New York City, will be to give disadvantaged kids a running start. From infancy on, the schools will work with underprivileged children, providing intellectual stimulation. Costs will be offset, at least in part, by the resulting shrinkage of welfare rolls.

But early education will not be solely for disadvantaged youngsters: For most children, school will start at about age four. In fact, a network of preschools is already growing rapidly, driven by the needs of working parents. Learning experts such as Madeline Hunter, of the UCLA Graduate School of Education, say that most children will start school early, not only because two-career parents will need a place to park their youngsters during the workday, but also because studies show that children who receive early education do better in school later on.

Meanwhile, most citizens of the year 2019 will never really graduate, returning again and again for classes and courses throughout their lives. Much of that education will be provided by their employers. This trend is already well underway. Many major corporations now operate what amount to employee universities. In fact, corporate education in the U S already involves as many people as all the nation's colleges and universities. Schooling that corporations provide for their employees is now education's fastest-growing segment.

Tomorrow's student will have a smorgasbord of educational choices. Besides corporate schools, there will be profit-making chains — 'McSchools' — and special schools catering to special students. San Francisco's Newcomer High School for immigrant youngsters and New York City's tiny new public school for homosexuals are pointing the way. In many cities, *all* schools will be magnets, organised around such specialities as language or art. Most schools will be open to all ages, a change that has already begun.

For instance, the Institute of Computer Technology, a public school in Sunnyvale, California, is for grades kindergarten through senior citizen. Typical of many of tomorrow's public schools, it is partly financed by local industries, which rely on the school to produce well-trained workers. It is open from 8 a m to 10 p m, six days a week, 12 months a year, with no

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extended vacations, says its director, Larry Liden.

Nicknamed High-Tech High by its 5,000 students, the school uses computers and electronic gear donated by industries in surrounding Silicon Valley. The businesses also suggest courses the school should teach, everything from programming in PASCAL and C to computer law and computer architecture to accounting and creative problem-solving.

Set up in 1982, the school is now establishing satellites throughout its region. A typical classroom contains at least 10 computers, a certified public school teacher, and a computer specialist, often on loan from one of the Silicon Valley high-tech corporations. During the school day, Institute teachers offer courses at the district's regular schools, with students beginning to arrive at the Institute itself for extra courses after 3 p.m. Adults usually dominate the Institute's evening and weekend classes.

In the future, such round-the-clock, open-to-all-ages schools will be the norm. But the most striking difference in tomorrow's schools will be the pervasiveness of electronic delivery systems. And this change, too, has begun.

Already available are computer-video combinations that perfectly simulate science laboratories, with students controlling the experiment just as if they were working with actual test tubes and chemicals, deciding to put in so much of this or that, or to heat the mixture to a certain temperature. If the experiment blows up, nobody is hurt and no laboratory is destroyed.

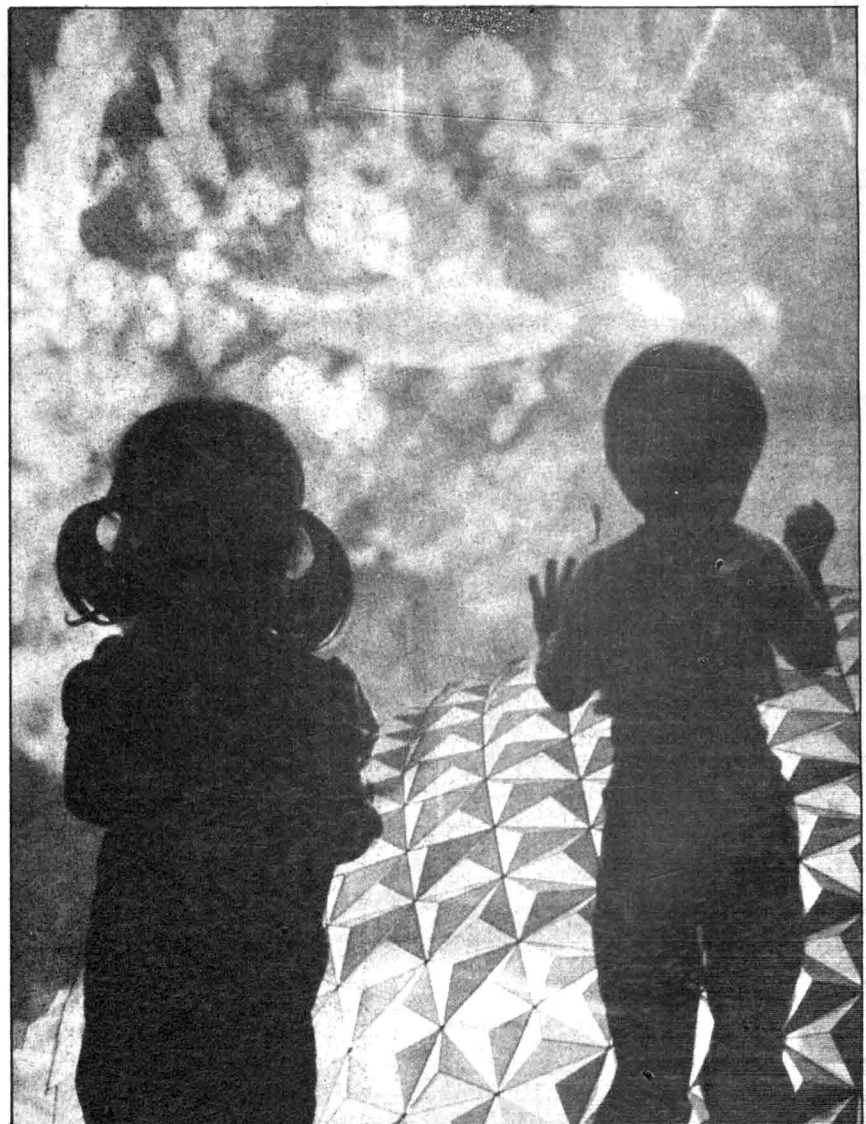
Computerised optical discs will have a big impact on education. Joseph Price, head of the science and technology division at the Library of Congress, points out that optical technology, still an infant, already can store the contents of 300 average-sized books on a single disc. In the future, books will be on-screen 'electronic entities'. In fact, Price is heading a project to study putting the entire Library of Congress collection on

discs. You might read the book, or parts of it, on the screen. For a printed version, you would go to a local 'bookstore', which prints out hard copies on the spot, via special printers. "Such a technology will certainly have an impact on the way textbooks are used in the school of the future," says Price. "This kind of technology will give kids access to information beyond today's wildest imaginings — not only virtually anything written, but also images, like any of van Gogh's paintings."

Meanwhile, exploiting computers, satellites, and video, schools in the

smallest rural community and poorest ghetto will be able to offer the same courses as a high-powered elite school. Using televideo hook-ups, they may well share the same high-calibre teachers.

COMPUTERS, TOO, will have a major impact on how students learn and teachers teach. Unlike earlier educational technologies, most of which have vanished, computers will take hold in the schools because they are already transforming society itself. As Gregory Anrig, president of the Educational Testing Service, puts



Education in 2019: an on-going process.

it, "Instead of replacing teachers, these technologies will supplement them so that youngsters not doing well in particular subjects can get extra help, while advanced kids will use the machines to work above and beyond the regular curriculum."

Carnegie-Mellon University is now linking its campus into a giant computer network, where everyone is on-line with everyone else. Students will write term papers on their computers, then send them on-line to their professors, who will return them electronically, graded and annotated with comments. Eventually, the system

will admit the school's alumni, so that they can take refresher courses or tap into the university data base. Ultimately, the city of Pittsburgh may be connected to the system — a preview of the wired society of tomorrow, where virtually all information will be available to everyone with a home computer terminal.

In the lower grades, students work with computers to learn mathematics, reading — with computerised sound demonstrating pronunciation — and writing. A playful child who tries typing out the sentence, "The ball kicks Ben," will see an on-screen ball

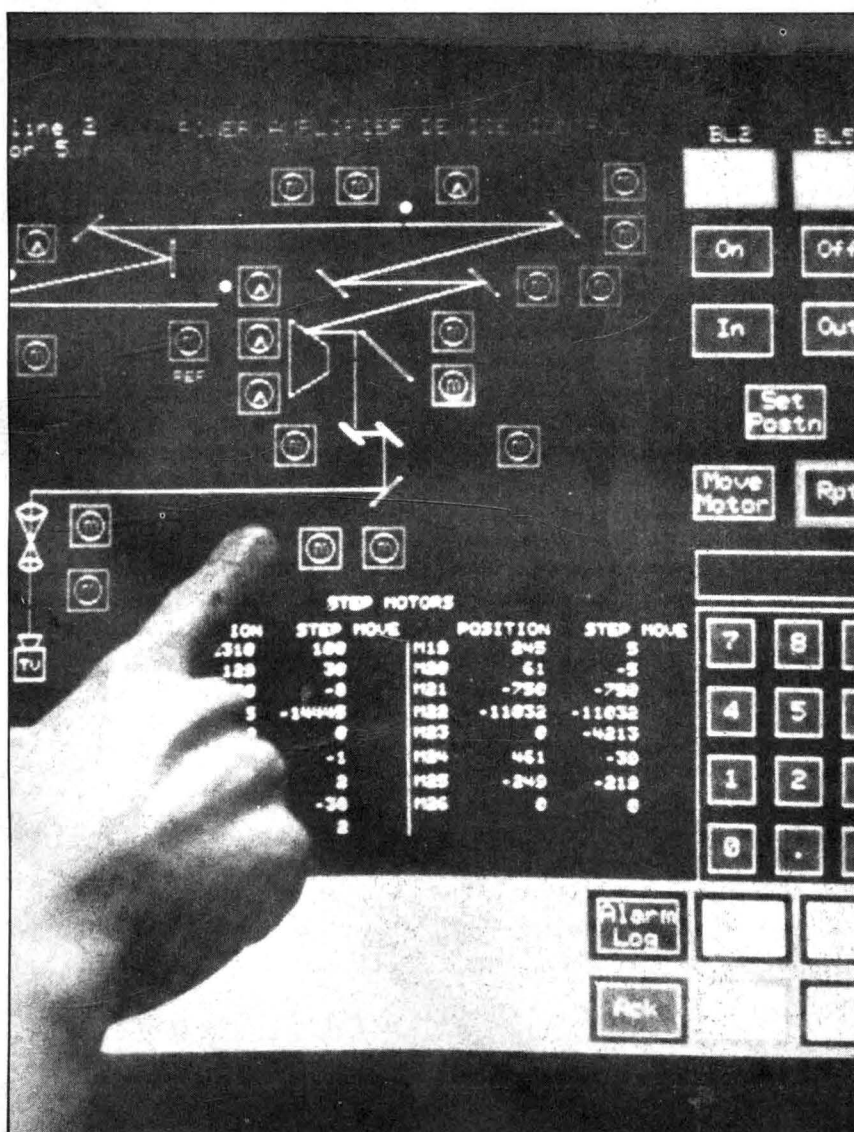
sprout legs and boot a boy. Students take periodic on-screen tests to check their progress. Then the computer decides whether to give them extra work or send them on to the next level. A high school student working on history might see this message pop onto the screen: "Your answer is right, but check the spelling!" Students working on French, using video-discs coupled to the computer, might find themselves walking down a street in Montreal, looking at street signs and choosing which turns to take.

Every Friday, the computers print out progress reports on each student. One recent report revealed that a third grader, Jenny, was actually paying attention to her work only about three minutes out of every 20. Alerted, teachers helped Jenny stretch her attention span, improving her work markedly.

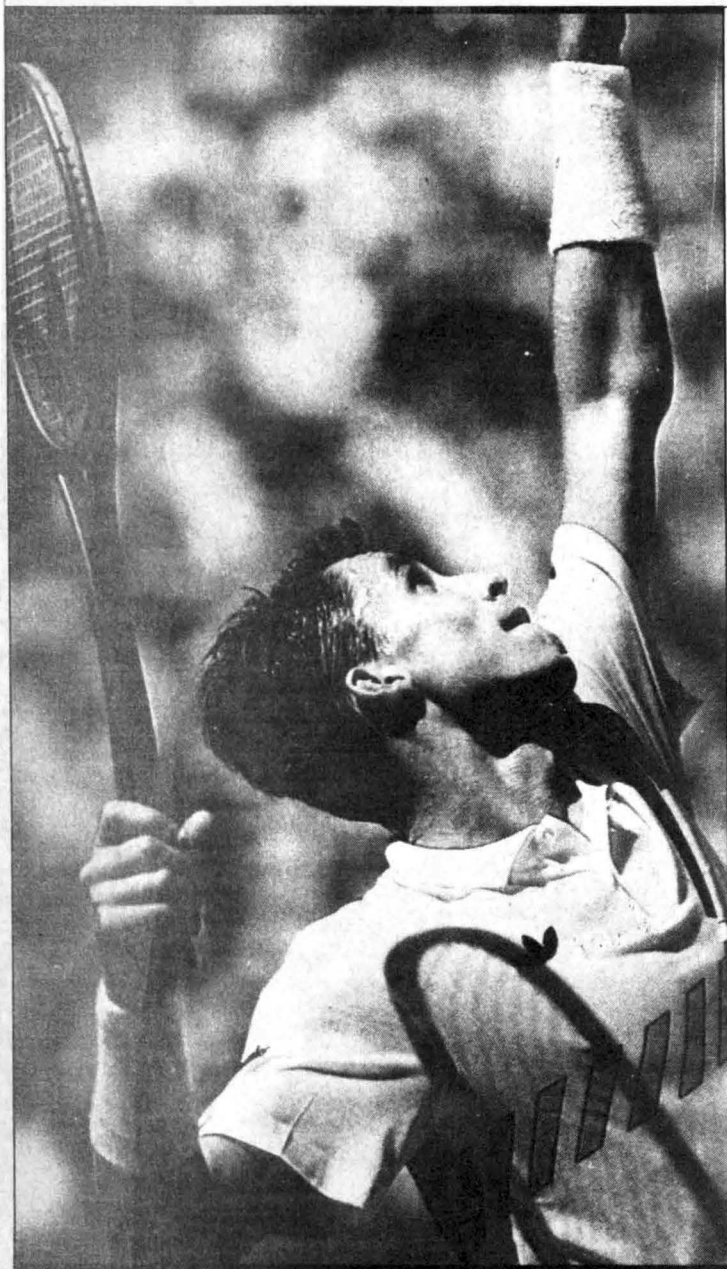
"The old delivery system in the public schools is stressed, it's delivering all it can," says Nancy Heuston. "Computers are a new delivery system for teachers to use, and they can use them to make a first-rate education available to every child."

Artificial intelligence, still in its infancy, will dominate the educational system of 2019. "In just a few years, we'll have machines with 25 times the power of today's IBM PC," says David Kay, vice president of the Kaypro Corporation. "Programmes will have advanced to the point of being able to sense what you don't understand and help you along." Within a decade, the machines will be able to see, listen, talk in languages ranging from English to Japanese, learn, and make judgements.

"My grandchild's best friend will probably be a computer," says Ira Goldstein, director of the Application Technology Laboratory at Hewlett-Packard's Palo Alto laboratories. "It might well be that every child will grow up with a computer nanny who, in time, will change with him, becoming his lifelong companion. It's difficult to imagine how such a society will work, but the potential is much greater than the risk." ♦



Courses taught through computers.



Ivan Lendl: disappointed, once again.

ALMOST AS ALWAYS, the Indian interest in the recently concluded 101st Wimbledon tennis championships was confined to . . . watching it on TV. Not a single of our three representatives made a ripple in the biggest tennis event of the world, leaving us all wondering, once again, as to when, if ever, an Indian will make it to the finals of the most prestigious sports show on earth.

It seems symbolic that, as in other spheres of our national life, even our

TENNIS ANYONE?

Arvind Lavakare on thrilling times, Wimbledon times. A short profile of Wimbledon '87.





Pat Cash: a magnificent performance.

Doordarshan got its priorities wrong in the matter of sport. Instead of showing some of the crucial singles matches of Wimbledon live, it preferred to concentrate on the cultural extravaganza of the Festival of India at Moscow. Now one is not against culture, especially when it has political overtones, but it is this intense preoccupation with international politics and our 'ancient heritage' that has led our country astray from basic issues such as drinking water for the millions, to sports facilities for the young. Moreover, a recital by Amjad Ali Khan can be enjoyed as much live as on a cassette; a Jimmy Connors vs Pat Cash tennis match, however, can be relished only as it takes place, nail-biting suspense, etc. — a sports encounter naturally cannot evoke much interest after it has been put on a video tape or onto a film in the can.

But to return to Wimbledon's historic grass courts. This year's championships had three heroes: the ground staff, Jimmy Connors and Pat Cash. Each had a lesson to offer to us Indians.

The ground staff at Wimbledon faced a stupendous task when the rains of the first week of the tourney forced matches to be postponed in dozens. If the championships were to be concluded on the customary second Sunday of the fortnight, it was imperative that the courts be dried and maintained on a war-footing effort. With the weather gods smiling, this was achieved and the organisers held its Champions Dance on the conventional day. Magnificent show, that!

So much has been written about the stupendous fightback which 34-year-old Connors made against Michael Pernfors, 11 years younger. So much, in fact, that to say it again, even in different words, is to gild the lily. What ought to be an eye-opener to us is that a great triumph in any sphere of life is as much the product of zeal and courage and determination and a never-say-die spirit as of talent, youth, luck and incentive.

Martina Navratilova: a living legend.



Steffi Graf: sterling courage.

The biggest hero to stride the Wimbledon turf this year was undoubtedly Pat Cash. Almost a non-starter, this Australian finally won the singles crown with relative ease, all his guns ablaze, a torch-bearer for youth's energy and bravura. A great performer by any yardstick.

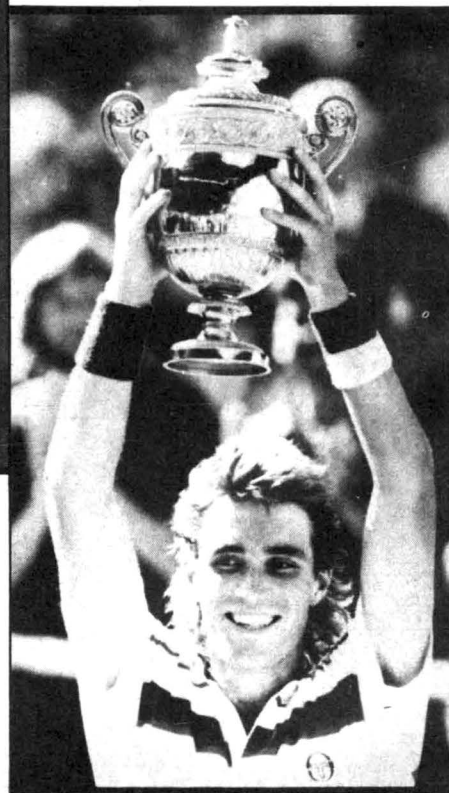
As Cash edged his way nearer and

nearer to his biggest triumph yet, I was in the midst of a minor conflict: I wanted Ivan Lendl to win the Wimbledon title because he was the world's number one without only that solitary prize in his belt; besides, the champ has all along been a model of decorum and dignity both on and off the field — he deserved the ulti-

mate recognition, therefore, in this modern sports world of brats and upstarts. On the other hand, I wanted Cash to win for his elan, his daring strokeplay, and his courage in fighting his way up, ramrod straight, against a broken back of two years ago. Ultimately, his venturesome variety of strokes against Lendl's preference for the staid and stereotype pattern won him my vote — and, of course, the Wimbledon trophy.

If these were the heroes, there were heroines too at this Wimbledon. Their names: Martina Navratilova and Steffi Graf — in that order. The former is already a legend in her lifetime, yet her eighth singles title at

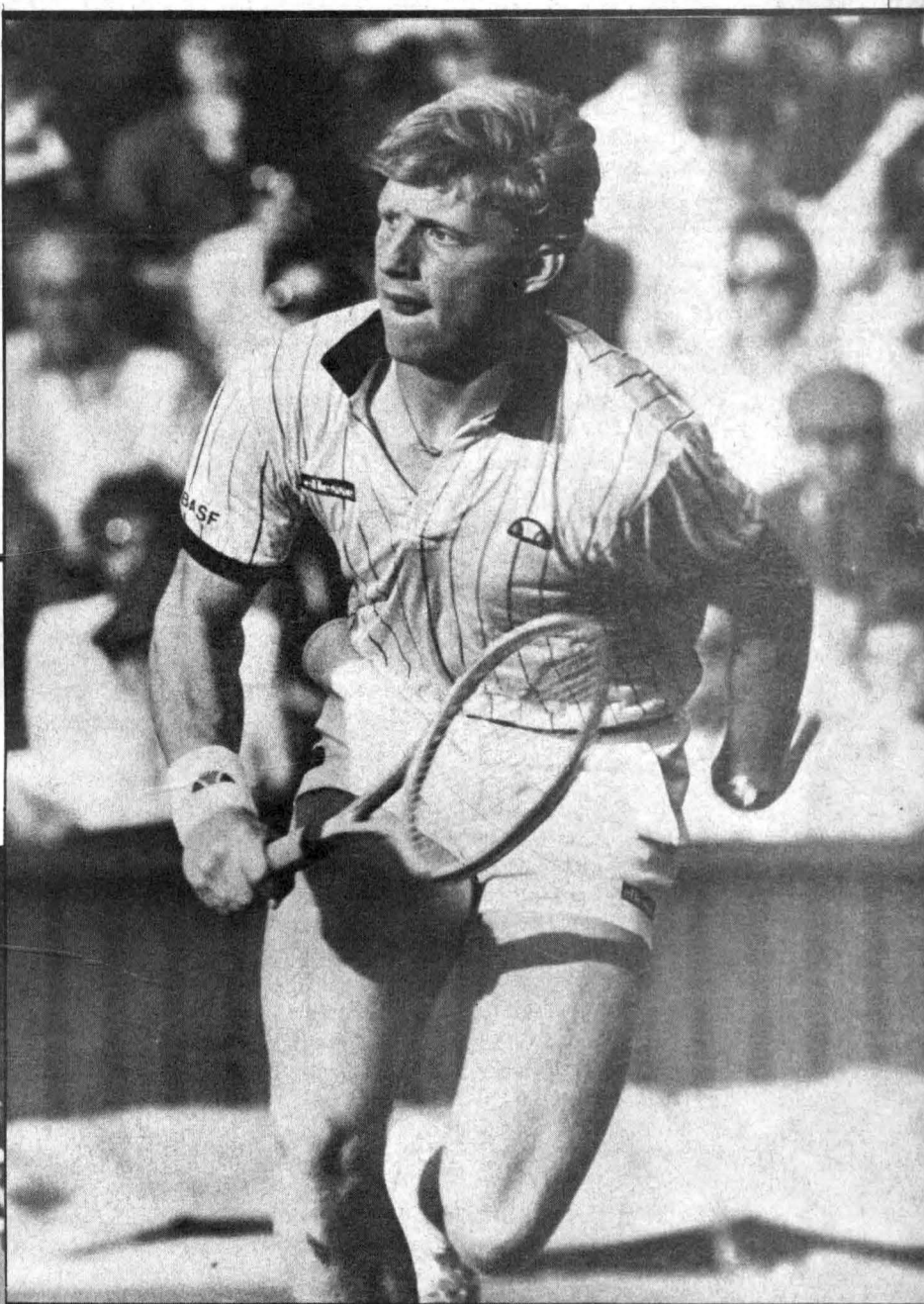
The biggest hero to stride the Wimbledon turf was undoubtedly Pat Cash. He won the crown with relative ease, a torch-bearer for youth's energy.



Wimbledon merits a superior rating than Graf's utterly refreshing display. What amazed one about Navratilova's performance was her will power allied to remarkable physical fitness. Although prize money and another Wimbledon success ought not to have mattered so much really to her, the lady played her last two matches — against Chris Evert and Graf — as if she wanted to prove that there's much more to sport than millions of dollars in the bank and several trophies in the cupboard. It was the kind of effort that elevates any sporting endeavour to Olympian heights.

Graf displayed sterling courage,

Martina played her last two matches — against Evert and Graf — as if she wanted to prove that there's more to sport than millions and trophies.



Boris Becker: out of the running.

playing all her strokes against the champion of champions, instead of merely conserving them. The athleticism and power of this 18-year-old fighter was something not quite seen before, though she herself must have wondered how Navratilova returned a winning stroke with a lunging winner performed with a tumble as a

postscript. Graf, I suspect, had added a new dimension of speed and power hitherto unseen in women's tennis.

Meanwhile, let us reflect and introspect as to why the Indian interest in Wimbledon or Wembley or the Olympics is confined only to watching it all on TV. ♦

IN LIGHTER VEIN

ARTHUR HAILEY'S *Airport* has a galaxy of interesting characters — the airport manager, his wife, the pilot with a roving eye, the airhostess who is carrying his child, a passenger who carries a bomb, another passenger who does not believe in buying tickets and so on. Yet Hailey could have made his novel more exciting had he, while researching for his book, flown Indian Airlines and witnessed a confrontation between a minister and the cabin crew!

Imagine the additional twists and thrills to the plot had the minister been a woman, young and attractive. In fact someone like our own Chandrika Kenia, Maharashtra minister of state for law, judiciary and technical education. Had Hailey featured such a character in *Airport*, he would have created the most-sought-after-role in the movie, with Meryl Streeps and Jane Fondas vying for it, pushing the roles of the airport manager (Burt Lancaster) and the pilot with a roving eye (Dean Martin) into the shade!

Chandrika Kenia comes off as a breath of fresh air in the turgid world of Indian politics, reminding one of Tarkeshwari Sinha of the 1950s. She really has everything that ought to go against her in traditional politics — youth, good looks, spirit and the ability to survive despite putting an occasional foot into the mouth. Her storms are not made in tea cups: they reverberate from the Council Hall, party meetings and the interior of an aircraft. It's a pity that instead of defending her, the 'free press' of our country makes only snide comments on her.

I see at least 10 letters a month in the 'Letters to the Editor' columns of various newspapers, from airline passengers complaining bitterly about the treatment they receive from the pursers and hostesses of Indian Airlines and Air India. Rude behaviour, refusal to extend even normal courtesies, overbearing attitude and the works. There are also frequent news items on the same issue, yet the airlines get away with all this and more.

Let a minister get involved in such a fracas, and then he or she gets it in the neck. 'Arrogant Minister', 'Rude Behaviour', 'VIP Tantrums', blare the newspaper headlines. Aren't ministers also passengers? And in the case of Chandrika Kenia,

Hath not a female minister
normal tastes,

Hath not a minister hunger, thirst,
need for courtesy,

If she is insulted would she not
flare up, if she is

wounded would she not lodge a
complaint?

And this is exactly what she did.

Can't we be a bit objective? Chandrika Kenia first asked for a newspaper. This is perfectly natural, the way things are happening all over the country. She wanted to be posted of all the latest political developments that are taking place. I, for one, am happy that we have a minister who reads newspapers and asks for them. Had Chandrika Kenia demanded lipstick, perfume or some exotic food or drink, the furore that followed would have been justified. But denying a minister a newspaper? That too in a public sector enterprise like Indian Airlines? High-spirited Kenia naturally would not put up with this and created a rumpus. Perfectly justified, I would say.

What did the press and her co-passengers expect of her? That she would sit down meekly and read the airlines brochure? Or the brand name of the chocolate wrapper? A minister's time is too precious for such frivolities. It was her sacred duty to have dashed off a complaint to the Indian Airlines authorities. Some of the esteemed members of our 'free press' mocked the tone and contents of the letter, and the errors it contained. Well, what kind of rubbish do our reporters and even editors produce day after day?

Some days after the Kenia letter and after IA had exonerated its hostesses, the *Indian Express* carried an interesting news item. IC flight 147 (Bombay-Jamnagar-Bhuj) whose passengers included music directors Kal-

yanji-Anandji, singer Kishore Kumar and the one and only Tabassum (all bound for Bhuj for a charity show), was re-routed to land first at Bhuj and the passengers were kept fuming at 40 degrees Celsius, while the crew bid a fond 'adieu' to the VIP passengers. Further, throughout the 40-minute flight from Bombay to Bhuj, Tabassum was reportedly inside the cockpit! Was she featuring the pilot in her *Phool Khile Hain Gulshan* . . . ? Yet there is no hue and cry about this. And when Kenia takes up cudgels for the legitimate rights of passengers, she is taken to task by the press.

Trouble seems to follow Chandrika Kenia wherever she goes. Take the

In Defence Of Chandrika Kenia

recent incident at Palghar, Thane district. Everyone knows that politicians, from the Prime Minister to the taluka panchayat *pramukh*, have to arrive late for their functions. That is supposed to show how busy they are. If you are on time or before time, it is presumed that you have no work to do. This may lead (in case you are a minister) to your being dropped from the cabinet, thereby saving some funds for the exchequer.

Chandrika Kenia at times, does not realise that she is a politician and has to act like one. How else can one describe her action in reaching

Palghar fully 90 minutes ahead of schedule for the function? She had forgotten one of the most important commandments of politics and public life, Thou Shalt Be Late For Every Function Thou Art Invited To.

Some of the party hotheads accused Kenia of being rude to them, complaining of the lack of public reception and adequate *bandobast*. Again, fully legitimate demands. Wasn't she entitled to these perks? Didn't she take the trouble of arriving at the adivasi area, even ahead of time, so that she would be able to spend more time with the masses of the area? As a state cricket player, Kenia is in the habit of getting ready and arriving at the ground, much ahead of others so that she could get acclimatised to local conditions. This is something to be commended in her. When Sunil Gavaskar does the same, on the day of a Test match, everyone goes 'Hooo. . . .hah. . . .'. Why can't

the same courtesy be extended to Chandrika Kenia?

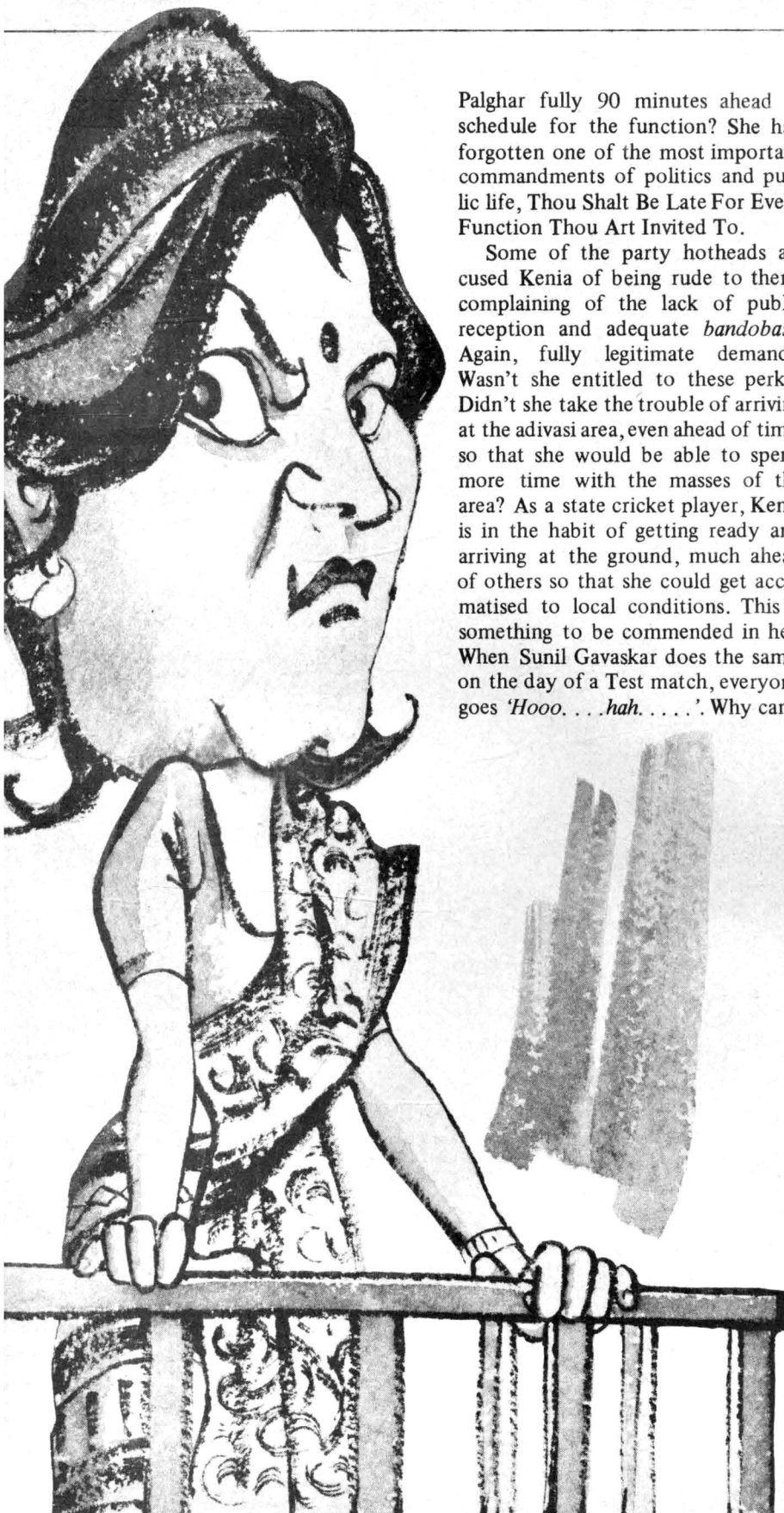
And did she really slap a representative of the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad at Pune? A lot of people would agree that student leaders of these days, do deserve a slap or two. Kenia might well have tried to defend herself, attempting to 'hook' away the aggressive arm of a student leader. A clear case of self defence!

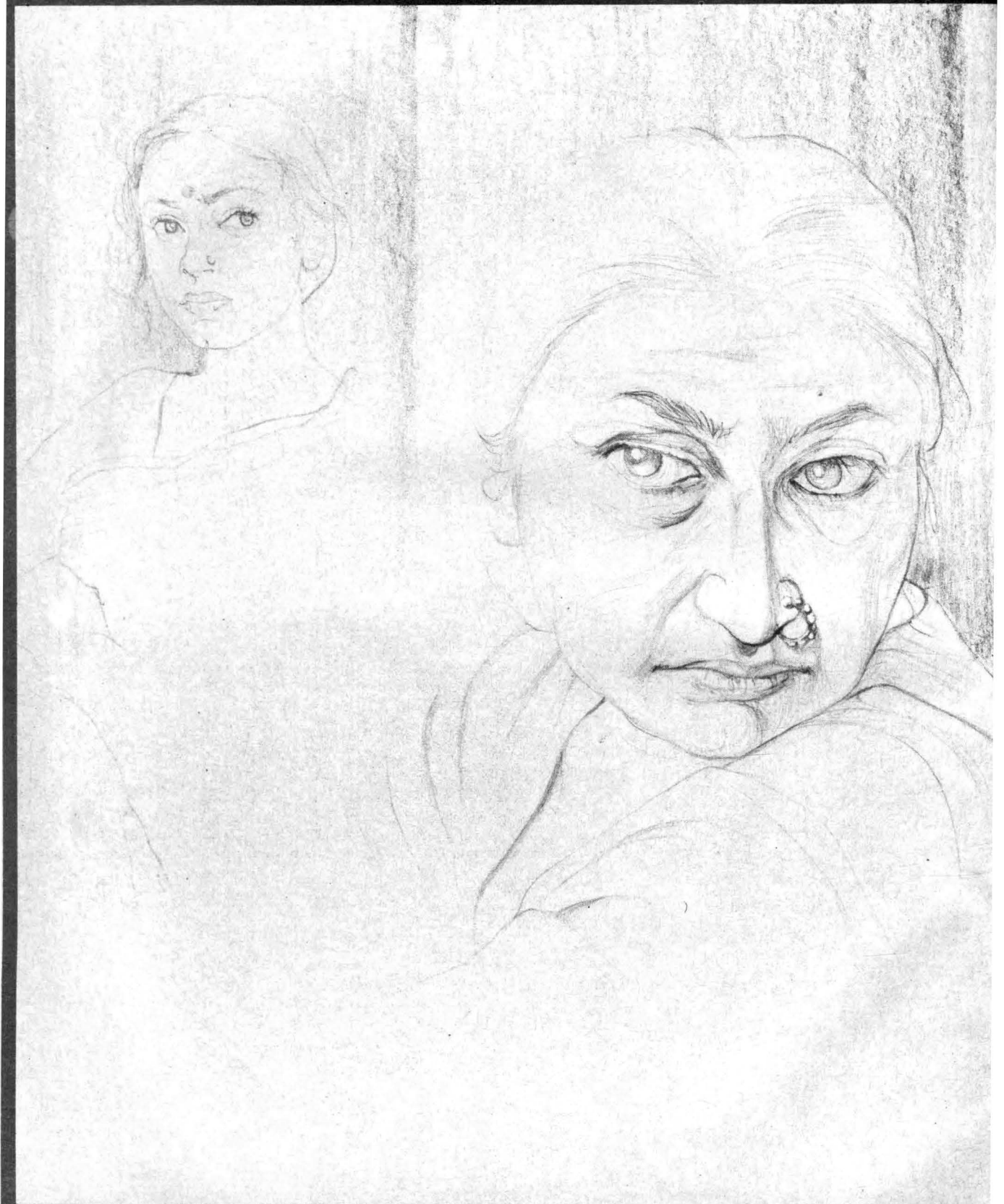
As for the famous breach of privilege motion during last year's monsoon session at Bombay's Council Hall, it was clear that the press had been tipped off by the Yuva Janata Parishad as they *gheraoed* Kenia over the issue of college admissions. Young women have to protect themselves from such *gheraos*. Remember what happened to Ms Satoskar, assistant dean at KEM hospital, when she was *gheraoed*, abused and assaulted by the striking doctors of MARD? One woman against hundreds, that's the record of our brave young men and women.

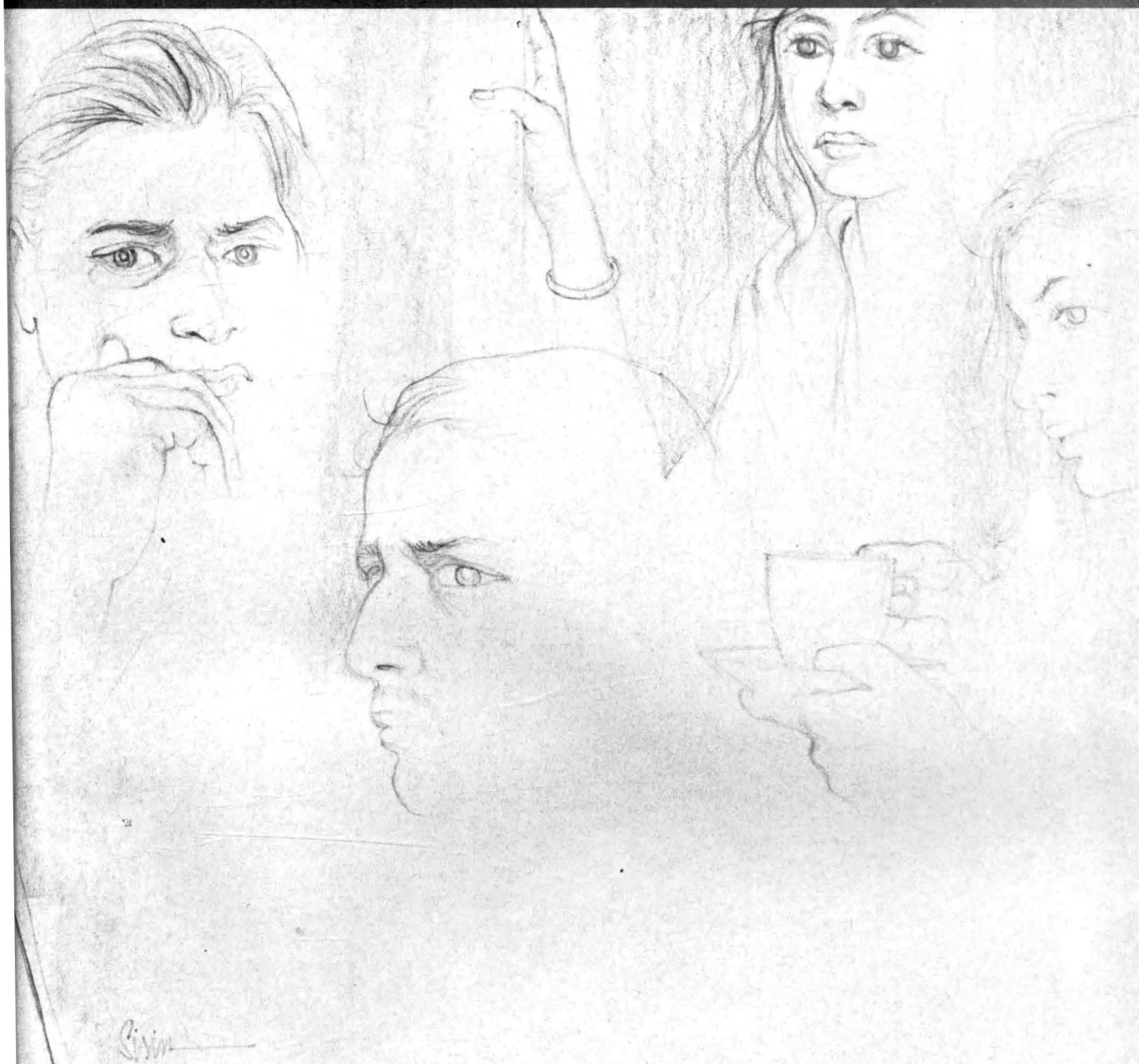
Take a look at Maharashtra's political scene. Vasantdada Patil half-dead, half-alive, hops from Jaipur's Raj Bhavan to Bombay Hospital. What's happened to Shalinitai? Or for that matter Sharad Pawar after his homecoming? Chief Minister S B Chavan, minus even his sideburns, must be one of the most colourless chief ministers in the country. And no one would have even heard of people like Bhai Sawant but for the Lentin Commission hearings where witness after witness depose that all he does is phone the FDA and order its officials to favour this pharmaceutical firm or that?

In this depressing atmosphere, Chandrika Kenia stands out as the only hope. Brash, vocal and sure of her ground. It's high time she is shifted to the Centre. Even the forces of destabilisation would take one look at her and decide not to destabilise. ♦

Sisir







THE POST-MORTEM

IT WAS 2 AM when the man died. As he opened his mouth to drag some life-giving air into his weak lungs, Gauri tipped out a few droplets of Ganga water from a long, green bottle, standing like a sentinel, on a chair next to the bed, for the last one week during which the man had gradually gone into a decline. Gauri had even managed to drop the tiniest scrap of gold into the toothless cavern of the gasping mouth, having carried it around in a knot at the end of one corner of her *pallu*; somehow she had known he would not recover. The wife and elder

FICTION

son, Rahul, had then hastily laid the body on the bare floor, but the man expired in the brief interval in which he was being transferred. Later the two had spread a sheet and placed the body on it; the wife had gently closed the expressionless eyes and her last duty to him was over. Laxmi had been the only other person present, but she had stood in a corner, sad and lost, and it was only on hearing her child crying that she left the dead to tend to the living.

They waited till dawn to inform the neighbours and relatives, of the demise, though Rahul went to give the news to the other three family members. A depressing silence enveloped the house, relieved by the intermittent howling of Rani, the black bitch, who had smelt death and was howling out the dismal message to the sleeping, uncaring world. It was strange how vociferous Rani was in her lament, because the old man had always spurned her and the very sound of his footsteps had been enough to make the animal slink away.

The house was built over a plot the dead man had wheedled out of his wife's father. He was a smooth talker, the old man, and he acquired the land even as Gauri's brothers gnashed their teeth. Very subtly he aggravated the family tensions which exist in every house. He cajoled his father-in-law, "Don't worry, father, I'll look after you and consider myself fortunate for being able to do so. It's just a matter of time, I am sure your sons will realise your value."

"Keep quiet woman, and cook the food," he growled at his wife, when she objected to his wiles in trying to appropriate her brothers' rightful heritage.

"My share was given in the form of jewels and utensils," she protested.

"I know what I am doing," he snarled and the minor clerk in a government department proved his resourcefulness by putting up the three-room house with loans, bribes and by using up his Provident Fund. To all outward appearances he had lived a full life and made a success of it, by exploiting his opportunities and wresting perforce what he could not get honestly.

The three rooms were arranged like railway compartments, one behind the other. A verandah brought up the rear flanked, in turn, by a kitchen and a bathroom. In a small yard, enclosed by low walls, there was a small water-tank with a cemented sloping floor below the tap, draining the water into a shallow canal, which led into a small patch of vegetables at one corner of the front yard. Now in that silent hour, even as the dead man's body was losing its heat, he loomed larger than life — evident in the nylon cord strung across the yard for clothes; in the vegetable patch where the spinach leaves had just sprouted, green and healthy, life-giving, though the hands that had planted them lay lifelessly, folded on his unheaving chest; in the white-washed walls of the house hung with gaudy calendars of gods and goddesses; in the house he had built fiercely and possessively; in each member of his family who had lived and suffered with him, hated or loved him.

"I've left the house to you," he had told Gauri one evening, when alone, as he lay sick in bed, "and after you, it will go to the sons. But remember, don't sign any papers while you live. Understand?" Gauri had nodded her head, eyes streaming with tears, disturbed at the recent trend of his conversation. "Take out the papers, there," he pointed with his eyes, looking at a worn satchel, which was kept on top of a rickety wooden cupboard. Gauri had taken out the deed and, folding it up, she placed it at the bottom of the small, curved wooden box in which she kept her gold bangles. She wondered even then how ownership of the house would make her independent, when she would be dependent for food and clothes on her sons. The old man's pension would naturally be discontinued on his death, and she knew that he had no savings. How superfluous old people became if they had no money or were physically infirm.

Often of late, when she struck a match to light a fire or a lamp, and then blew out the used stick, she wished life could be snuffed out just like that — without any fuss or obligations. One could live alone and yet in death somebody was needed to dispose of the carcass; family ties then found overt expression in the rites that had to be performed by the related survivors. And so, though indifferent to the living man, one paid him homage when he was dead because he was a part of that to which one belonged and because in each one is the fear of being ignored in death, as a retribution. For three days the old man had hovered between life and death. It seemed she could still hear the stertorous breathing, see the arching and depressing of the bony cage, under the blanket, to the accompaniment of a frightening, rattling noise located somewhere near his Adam's apple.



IN THE LARGEST ROOM, near the verandah, the body lay and Gauri sat in a corner, on a straw-mat her elder daughter-in-law, Sita, had spread out for her. It was a simple room: with two string charpoys, and two battered old trunks under one of them, a barred window staring at the stately papaya trees outside, their serrated leaves etched

against the translucent sky, and an old almirah at the side of the window. Gauri's and the old man's joint personal possessions had been gradually pushed into that one room as they made space for the sons and their families.

Gauri looked down at the blue glass bangles round her broad wrists, on which the veins stood out puffed and prominent. She had worn them at the Dussehra *mela*, 15 days back. "How you waste money, woman," he had told her from his sick-bed. But his voice had lost the whiplash quality it earlier possessed and it carried a note of indulgence — like one uses for a child. Soon she would break the bangles, deliberately, in the brutal gesture of self-annihilation, for what is a woman without her husband! Her wrists had thickened over the years; but once they had been slim and fragile, sporting red bangles, which she still kept wrapped in a handkerchief together with the gold ones. Forty years ago she had stepped over the threshold, full of a young bride's dreams, into a marital life, marked by the inevitable cooking, washing, bearing and rearing of children and then seeing them grow up and away from her.

Strange how scenes from the dead past detached themselves and possessed her mind. She seemed to see her husband, then young, beating a bawling Rahul, "Simping bastard, can't fight back," when he had come home with his nose bleeding and books torn after a school brawl.

"That rascal! He'll grow up to be a thief. Do you hear? I'll flay him! Just let me lay my hands on him," when incoherent with anger he had searched high and low for the mischievous Rakesh, who had finished the box of sweets his father had bought for guests expected that particular evening. Gauri remembered how she had to stifle the squeaks of laughter tickling her throat, by stuffing her *palu* into her mouth because the 12-year-old culprit lay sprawled under the bed, savouring the booty, while the father sat above berating him. She dared not reveal his hideout because her husband was merciless in rage. She remembered him in his sunny moods, when he swung his little, giggling daughter, Laxmi, high up in the air, "My *gudiya* how pretty you look in your new pink frock. Next week I'll buy you ribbons and socks to match."

How helpless he had looked as, unshaven and hollow-eyed, he had sat through the night ministering to his wife's wants, when she lay critically ill. How often she had heard him mutter, "Get well Gauri. What will happen to us without you?" It was then that she had realised that her overbearing husband loved and needed her, in his own selfish way. But all that was past and done with and as she glanced at the dead man, she felt the most important phase of her life was over.

There had been a pressure on Gauri's fingers before he died. The old man's fingers had been clammy, with the coldness of lifeless marble, and it made one want to examine one's fingers for dampness. What had the pressure denoted — a regret for deserting her, an apology for the drab life he had married her into or was it merely a desire to hold on to life by clinging to the living? Then the hold had

slackened and the cantankerous, gasping but astute, old man was dead.

Gauri's hair was dishevelled after the night's vigil over the ailing and now dead man, her *bindi* a nondescript smear across her forehead. The light fell on her gold nose-ring and as Sita entered, her glance fell on it. "The old woman will have to take that off, I'd better make sure she doesn't give it to her daughter," Sita decided and then she looked with distaste at the dead body, "Rotten carcass of a rotten man, huh! Good riddance!" All her bitterness against the dead man welled up again and her sharp, bony face seemed to become harsher. How often she had cursed him when she relived her father's despair and humiliation.

"Please don't be so unreasonable, *Bhaisahib*," her father had pleaded two days before her marriage, "I am a middle-class man and have two more daughters to marry off. From where can I give you so much money? You also have a daughter." But with all the heartlessness of an archetypal father-in-law he had turned a deaf ear and pronounced with finality, "No money, no marriage." Her poor father, shackled by three daughters to a life of cringing, genteel poverty. Sita was now determined to get everything back. She knew one of the trunks, the smaller one with the big knobs on the four corners and a red click lock, contained the old woman's bangles. They were heavy and of solid gold and if valued and sold would help recover at least a part of the dowry her father had had to pay two days before her marriage. The old woman had brought them from her father's house and had been unexpectedly adamant about not parting with them — even for Laxmi, her own daughter. But Sita was determined to get them, steal them, if necessary, after all the fripperies of death were over. Sweet vengeance!

"How peaceful the place is now", she thought. The old man's death had released her from the corroding hatred of the last 10 years which had gnawed at her vitals. The aftermath of death was always multi-faceted: it brought in its wake, joys and sorrows, tragedy and good fortune; it played a major role in the re-arrangement of official, social and family gradations. Sita looked around smugly, "I am the elder daughter-in-law," she thought, "and I will take this room with the adjoining kitchen, verandah and bathroom. Megha can take the other two rooms. Let's hope the devil's papers are straight. As for the old woman — I'll not keep her." But she realised she could not shirk her duties so blatantly and conceded grudgingly, "Anyway if I have to, it won't be for more than three months in a year and for the rest she can fend for herself — visit her other son, daughter, brothers, go on a pilgrimage, hang herself. Who cares!" Gauri had never been unkind to her, but neither had she intervened when the old man had taunted her, not that Sita believed in being a martyr and could ably hurl a crushing verbal stone for every acerbic remark the old man directed her way.

SITA LEFT JUST AS RAHUL, her husband and Gauri's



eldest son, entered. He sat down, next to his mother, on the mat. Rahul always required a ballast to sail through life and no matter how much he had cowered before his domineering father, he knew someone had to be there to prod him to study, get a job, to marry, in fact to make all the major decisions of his life. In a long forgotten gesture he put his arms around Gauri – at this moment the roles were reversed, for the son had become the comforter. Gauri suddenly gave vent to the pent-up tension within her, as tears and sobs, which had their origin in the deep crypts of her being, welled up as a dirge to lament the passing away of her mate, the imperceptible but inevitable nudging out of her generation. Rahul wiped his mother's tears just as Gauri had wiped his for he had often cried peevishly, when Rakesh bullied him, helplessly when the father thrashed him, quietly, even in maturity, when he reproached him for his virago wife and his childless state. Yet how long ago was it that he had acted as a son? Like all doting sons, he had proved to be a dutiful husband, able to fulfil effectively only one role at a time – of a son or a husband.

"Ma, why didn't you consult me before marrying father?" he had naively asked Gauri as a nine-year-old, while helping her to clean up the kitchen, after the old man flung his *thali*, heaped with rice, and small *dal* and vegetable-filled *katoris*, in a fit of temper. However, at this particular moment there was a constriction in his throat, as he looked at the lifeless form. *Prabhuji, avgun chit na dharo* (Lord, disregard my faults) – the words of the old man's favourite bhajan came back to him. Rahul had loved to hear his deep, melodious voice – creating a subdued, divine elation within him – as he sprinkled water over the tulsi plant, growing just outside the verandah, on the left side of the three shallow steps. He had always enjoyed listening to him, as he pored over his books, bleary-eyed every morning, supervised by his father's vigilant eyes, even as the words and notes poured forth pleasingly in the early morning hush.

"It will be lonely for Ma in this room," Rahul thought sadly and then with a sigh, "if only I had a child. Perhaps Sita will be kind and spend some time with her. Perhaps," Rahul felt he was unable to cope with the situation and

salved his conscience by making one positive mental contribution, "Anyway let Ma rest and she can be relieved of the cooking chores at least." With typical male blindness, he did not envisage that making Gauri relinquish her hold on the kitchen was tantamount to forcing her to abdicate the domestic throne from where she ruled the women in the house. "Let Sita decide," – like a full-stop, Sita loomed large at the tail-end of all his thoughts and deliberations.

"Huh," Sita stopped at the doorway, on seeing the mother and son; she felt their intimacy in that quiet moment and instantaneously took steps to wean her emotional husband from his bereaved mother.

"Rahul go and call the panditji. It is nearly 4 am now. Fix everything beforehand, there should be no haggling afterwards." She spoke loudly and in a matter-of-fact manner, as though entrusting him with a mundane household task. Soon Gauri was left alone, gulping down her sobs.

In the next room Laxmi, Gauri's daughter, was also weeping for the father she had loved and lost. "I'll gouge your eyes out if you so much as look at her," he had threatened a neighbourhood Romeo, who whistled at Laxmi on her way to school. Of course the hapless girl was teased even more mercilessly, when the father was not around, and she had dared not complain, knowing her father's ire. Laxmi – her name was meant to be auspicious. "My daughter will be a Laxmi for the family she marries into," the proud father had always declared. And ironically her very life had strong connotations of money. She took with her the dowry received from Sita's father; but the tainted money carried a curse and like a wounded animal, boomeranged on her life, tearing it with sharp fangs, gorging itself even as it perished; Laxmi's husband and father-in-law were insatiable in their demands and the old man complied with their wishes till he was sucked dry. And Sita had gloated, seeing the old man, sitting on his bed, his head and back bent over his crossed legs – a pathetic huddle she could have gladly kicked and spat on. Laxmi was permitted this visit to ensure the old man left her a share in the house. "Otherwise we'll go to the courts; so do your best," the husband reminded her severely, through the window, as the train chugged out of the station. "My poor Laxmi, my unfortunate daughter," the old man often wept for her, as he had wept, she was told, on her birth because she was a girl – exactly as she had wept after bringing another Laxmi into the world. She laid her slumbering child on the bed and went to join Gauri and her dead father.

In the end room Megha was yanking the blanket off her husband's body. "Get up! What's wrong with you? The old man's dead. Your father's dead," she emphasised, "and you are snoring away. Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Gauri's second son, Rakesh, got up with a curse on his lips.

"Damn it! Did he have to die at night and disturb my sleep?" He ran his hands over his luxuriant hair which would be shaved off as a mark of mourning. "Damn," he repeated again.

"It's 4.30 and you should inform your relatives and

friends. *Bhaisahib* has already left to call the pandit."

"As though they really care," he snorted. "They'll curse us for informing them so early, even before they have had their morning tea. That reminds me, make me a cup of tea."

"Are you crazy!" Megha was aghast. "How can I light a fire, when the body is not yet out of the house?"

"Will you get me a cup of tea!" Rakesh shouted and Megha slipped out quietly and went into the kitchen, ran a lighted match round the wicks of the kerosene stove and put the water to boil. "Like father, like son," she thought. What a strange family it was, with each one so self-centred, including the dead man. The sound of the kettle being filled outside and the careful sounds from the kitchen penetrated Gauri's haze of grief and she realised life would go on normally for everyone, except herself.

Megha gave the tea to Rakesh and then looked in on Gauri. Megha was sensitive and she felt a stirring of pity for the widow, sitting huddled on the mat, her face hidden in her drawn-up knees. She fetched a shawl and draped it over her shoulders, but then the pragmatism of a working woman asserted itself. "Now we will be saddled with her," she thought, stifling her kinder feelings, "better not pamper her too much." Like Sita she too dwelt on divisions and separation. "Well, the kitchen will go to Sita *Bhabhi*. All the better. I will have a more serviceable one installed in one of the two rooms, which will come to us." But Megha was more sensitive to nuances and moods and the very blankness and expressionless atmosphere of the house had struck her.



MEANWHILE, RAKESH sipping the hot tea, offered his tribute of remembrance by summing up his father's life in terms of his paltry bequests — a few hundreds in the post office, that is, if he hadn't already passed that on to Laxmi, a gun, some big brass utensils. "They will have to be disposed of," he thought. He did not belong to the class of people, who were maudlin over objects or relationships. It was true the old order had to change, but one had to marvel

at the promptness and thoroughness with which an entire lifetime could be swept away, as though with a broom, and dumped in the dust-bin, to have everything clean before the start of a new day.

Rakesh had not deigned to list the house in the legacy because he accepted it as the male progeny's right. The house had always given the old man a sense of achievement; it was something substantial for which he would be remembered, his spouse respected, and for which his sons would always be grateful. But Rakesh was never touched by finer feelings — he was too much like the old man, while Rahul's thought-process bore the imprint of his wife's personality.

But Rakesh had defied his father the most. He had stepped out of the family groove and dared to fall in love and marry a girl of his own choice — *sans* dowry. Their cursedness was their similarity and though their reactions and responses were the same, both could take an equally belligerent stand on an issue by taking opposite sides.

"Dowry! Don't you dare utter that word. You think I am Rahul to stutter and stammer before you and assent to whatever you say," he had warned his father when the latter mentioned dowry on being informed by Rakesh of his decision to marry Megha, an office colleague.

Sitting on the bed Rakesh reflected, "Of course the foolish farce of living together will have to be given up. We'll eat separately. Ma, well, she can stay with us. I suppose Sita *memsahib* won't want to keep her. It will be convenient to leave the baby with her when Megha rejoins office at the end of her maternity leave. It will save the expenses of employing a *bai* and will be safer too."

He put the empty glass under the bed, flung the blanket away and with one smooth movement got out of bed. In the time he took to pick up and wear yesterday's crumpled shirt — to suit the occasion — he had finalised other details, "*Bhaisahib* can give Ma pocket money and I'll feed her." And then he hastily fumbled for his slippers as a thought struck him. "Must make sure *Bhaisahib* is not carried away into incurring heavy expenditure. He is so sentimental," he muttered. After a quick wash Rakesh entered the old man's room; almost impersonally he looked at his dead father, widowed mother and a little longer at his unhappy, sobbing sister and then tied up the last loose end in the family's affairs.

"And as for Laxmi, she'd better stop being a parasite. The next time her bastard of a husband makes a fresh demand I'll lodge a complaint with the police," he decided and went in search of Sita to discuss the financial and other aspects of the funeral.

The sky had by now lost the gloomy sobriety of night; the sleep-flushed face of the sky dimmed the crescent moon, which was shoved into a corner, abandoned like a discarded mistress. The air was suddenly alive with the merry chirping of a bird, while inside the wife and daughter mourned and in the verandah Rani whimpered. It was the beginning of a sad and beautiful day. ♦

THE POWER OF KUNDALINI

WHEN I WAS a boy I had heard the story of young Narendranath who used to talk disdainfully of the yogic powers of Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna. One day Sri Ramakrishna beckoned Narendranath to come and sit next to him and touched him lightly. Whereupon Narendranath lost consciousness and went into a trance. He had been — to use an earthy phrase — hit for a sixer. His companions became panicky, but Sri Ramakrishna quietly said: "Let him be. He will come out of it in his own time." Which Narendranath did — after a couple of hours. That was the first step which eventually was to turn a sceptic into Swami Vivekananda.

I was reminded of it in recent weeks when I received two books by mail from two persons independently of each other, both on Kundalini. One is entitled *Third Eye and Kundalini* which is the subject for this review. It is autobiographical in nature and its author is B S Goel. The other is a collection of articles by such accepted authorities as Gopi Krishna, Swami Rama, Swami Muktananda, Haridas Chaudhuri and Yogi Bhajan, and is entitled *Kundalini, Evolution and Enlightenment*. It is in the nature of a text book, and is edited by John White.

What is kundalini? It is traditionally symbolised in yogic texts as a sleeping serpent coiled at the base of the human spine. According to the kundalini concept, there is a direct connection between bio-energy and spiritual experience. This has led some modern scholars to translate kundalini as meaning 'latent reservoir of energy', 'power at rest' and 'psychosomatic power centre'. Some questions naturally arise: can kundalini be aroused? How can it be aroused? What is the end result? Is arousing kundalini beneficial? Can anybody experiment with it? What is the best way to engage in it?

I have mentioned just two books, but there are several available on the subject. By a strange happenstance, I have probably received two of the best. Which should I recommend the reader to read first? My own suggestion is that the text book should be read first. It is the introduction to the subject. One should then proceed to Goel's autobiography, which the author terms 'an experiential account of the journey from dust to divinity', to be able to make some meaning out of it.

The fact is that as White notes, kundalini has many levels on which various difficulties and controversies will be encountered. Kundalini is the personal aspect of the universal life force named *prana* and is akin, if one might say so, to the Holy Spirit of Christian theology. *Prana* has not yet been identified by modern science but ancient wisdom maintains that it is the means for raising human awareness to a higher form of perception, variously called illumination, enlightenment, cosmic consciousness and *samadhi*. What Sri Ramakrishna led the unwary Narendranath into was *samadhi*. That was the key to Narendranath's own personal liberation. But it was only possible because he had Sri Ramakrishna as his guru.

Can one get into *samadhi* without a guru? I would now refer the reader to Goel's book and to the introduction to that book which should be read carefully. Goel says that from his own experience (and his book has to be read to be believed) he found that kundalini could get activated in three ways. It could get activated automatically in certain cases, but without being a part of *guruta-twa*, which, in effect, means that the person attaining kundalini is not making very conscious efforts to achieve the highest stage of yoga and the arousal of kundalini is *not* an act of the grace of a *guru* or the Lord. In such an instance says Goel, 'the person will ge-

nerally go into a state of ecstasy for a few days' and 'he may also contact the highest source of wisdom and may talk about religious and spiritual matters'. Goel warns that subsequently the individual could enter a state of 'most severe depression' and be declared a paranoid suffering from religious delusions.

Secondly, the kundalini might get aroused in one making sincere efforts in yoga by an act of the grace of God/guru, without the individual being directly conscious of it. Says Goel: "One remains in doubt about the genuineness of one's own experiences. One passes through great troubles which include mainly depression, anxiety, restlessness, fear of insanity, fear of death, complete loss of confidence and certain other similar things. However, one also retrieves one's position automatically, at regular intervals. It becomes a process of 'ups' and 'downs'. If it is so, one can feel sure that the kundalini is activated as a part of Divine grace."

Thirdly, the kundalini may get activated in a person after his Third Eye is opened by guru/God. In such an event, says Goel, one sees everything clearly and never develops any doubt about the genuineness of the experience. It is a sign of the highest grace and mercy of the Lord. Goel calls the full awakening of the kundalini as 'the greatest event' or rather 'one of the greatest events' in spiritual life providing us the instrument to see God in form. Then he adds: "When the Third Eye opens and the individual soul meets God in form, it is still a state of duality. He and the individual *jiva* are two entities, though quite close to each other. Now an automatic kundalini process starts and continues until the duality vanishes and non-duality is finally established. This is the state of *advaita*. The drop loses its identity completely and becomes the ocean. It is final self-realisation."

Goel's book is a fascinating account of his own progress towards achieving kundalini through the grace of his guru Sri Sathya Sai Baba. There will be many sceptics who will not accept Goel's account on its face value. Never having met Goel, I am in no position to vouch for the account, one way or another. In such matters, there are three classes of people: the disbelievers, the unquestioning believers and the sceptics who are willing to be convinced, given the evidence. *Third Eye And Kundalini* provides the hard evidence.

FOR GOEL, the journey from dust to divinity has not been easy. Indeed it has been a most painful one. At one point he says: "I could possibly have saved myself from undergoing suffering twice — once, when I was broken and reconstructed through psycho-analysis and the second time when I was broken and reconstructed through kundalini."

What gives Goel's work a special relevance is that it describes what happened to a man who set out to achieve kundalini. I have never read a more severe and unsettling account. The path to achieving kundalini is by no means easy. Goel traces it with unerring fidelity. He emphasises that kundalini yoga is the result of the grace or *kripa* of a *siddha* (one who has himself become Enlightened). According to him, as kundalini is a yoga of His mercy and grace, so all human beings who surrender to Him, or who yearn for Him and make some efforts to realise Him, are eligible for it. Those who consider themselves 'sinners' and thoroughly worldly persons can also be selected by Him. A state of near-perfection is not a pre-condition to achieving kundalini. In other yogas, says Goel, the aspirant has to rise to a higher state of mind by his own efforts. A high degree of perfection is considered very necessary for achieving the final goal in other yogas. But that is not so in kundalini. Once the kundalini is activated there is no possibility of the *sadhaka* going wrong anywhere. The

THIRD EYE AND KUNDALINI

(An Experiential Account of Journey From Dust To Divinity)

B. S. GOEL



THIRD EYE FOUNDATION OF INDIA

important point is to attain the grace of the guru — the right sort of a guru. For Goel it was Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Goel notes that two things can help in attaining kundalini — the state of internal cleanliness, and the grace of guru/God — but adds that he does not doubt 'that more than the first condition of cleanliness, it is the second condition of grace which is responsible for success in this otherwise dangerous path'.

Goel's own relationship with Sri Sathya Sai Baba is related in one of his earlier experiences. He recounts it thus:

The most breathtaking experience emerged like this: I was sleeping in a state of most fearful depression. The time was midnight. Someone pulled my blanket and I opened my eyes in great fear. What I saw was, however, the most astonishing event of my life. Sri Sathya Sai Baba was standing near my bed in a most resplendent form. I was simply wonderstruck. But immediately my knowledge of psychology based on long years of my psycho-analysis asserted itself. I tried to catch hold of the Form which was standing before me into my arms. As I could not

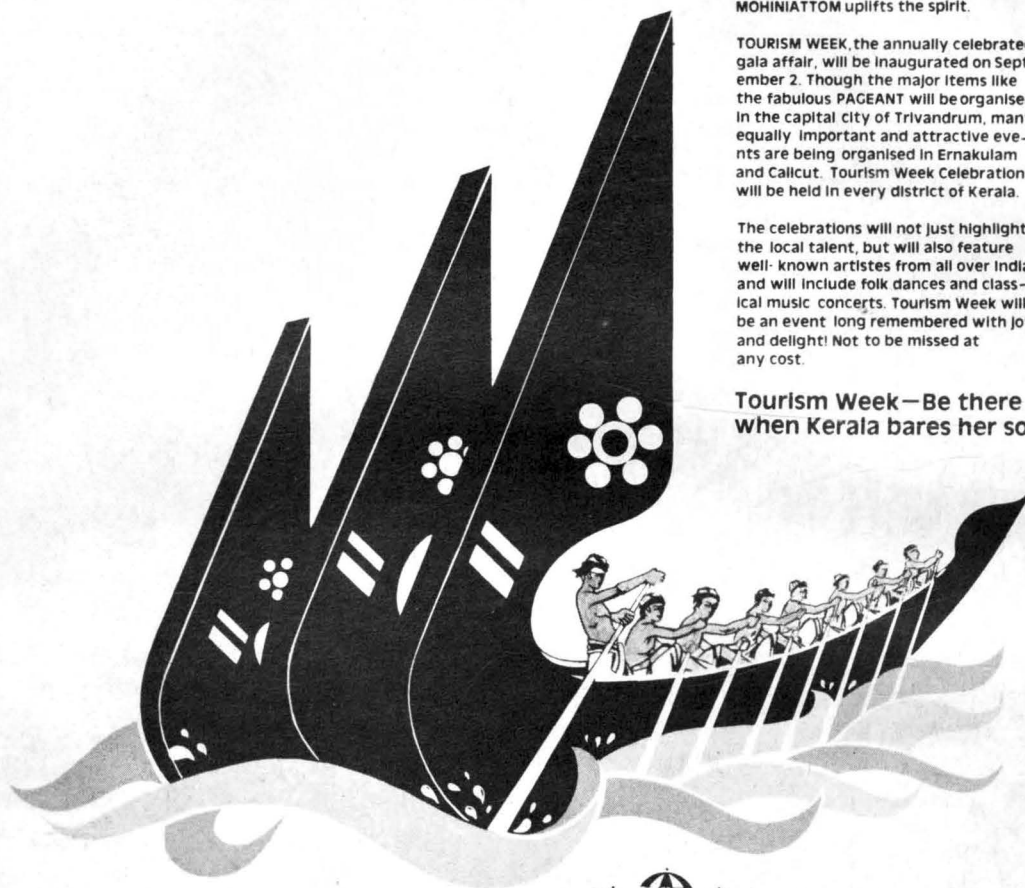
do it, I interpreted the whole thing as a mere hallucination and pulled my blanket over me to sleep again. But to my great surprise, Baba pulled up my blanket again, made me sit and asked me to meditate in a very relaxed way at the mid-point between the two eyebrows. I was again wonderstruck, but this time everything was so clear and obvious that I had no doubt about it. Nor could I dare to interpret it as hallucination. I acted as I was directed. I started meditating. Baba disappeared. I meditated from 1.30 am to 4 am. This was the first major aspect of Guru's grace.

Goel is not trying to sell Sri Sathya Sai Baba to anyone — there are, quite conceivably, other gurus in India who can also help.

There is also a warning about kundalini that needs to be remembered. Kundalini, says Goel, is Cosmic Energy, also known as the power of God. As such it remains under His powers. "If this energy is not controlled by God, it can break the whole nervous system within a matter of moments, thus resulting in great suffering. In such cases, a state of intense but momentary ecstasy generally emerges immediately after the arousal of kundalini, but it soon gets substituted by intense depression, uncontrollable anxiety, consuming fears, religious delusions and a desire for instant death which can result in an attempt to commit suicide."

I am not sure that I will ever want to be a *sadhaka* or experience kundalini, even were He to give me supernatural powers. But the goal is beguiling. Goel's journey has been long and arduous, but he was a born *sadhaka* who could not have been anyone else. It is most difficult to surrender one's ego, but Goel has achieved this. His is a remarkable story recounted in great detail. The sceptic may — in all certainty will — treat it as an exercise in self-delusion. But if it is indeed that, it is a magnificent self-delusion. In any event, it is worth reading. ♦

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BEJAN DARUWALLA'S PREDICTIONS



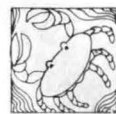
ARIES: March 21 to April 20: The spotlight this month will be on two main trends: domestic matters concerning home, property and in-laws, and creative matters. The period after the seventh is especially conducive for this as Mars influences your house of imagination and intuition. The Full Moon on July 11 signifies hard work, but not without rewards. Health is suspect.



TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: The New Moon on June 26 suggests travel and communication. Your family may also join you on a trip. This is the best time to launch a venture in the field of sales or publicity. A wish-fulfillment is probable. You will reach out to people and places. Ceremonies and religious rites are in the offing. Spiritual and intellectual activities keep you busy.



GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: The Moon's first quarter helps Geminis to socialise, gossip and live in style. You will communicate vibrantly and will be very popular. A family get-together is in the offing. Speculative activities are highlighted as Venus changes signs. This also indicates an indulgence in the luxuries of life. There will be renewed enthusiasm and zest for life.



CANCER: June 22 to July 22: Now is the time to shed your inhibitions and enjoy life. The Sun-Mercury-Venus-Mars quartet flit in your sun-sign and this suggests a period of much gaiety. Take the initiative with people and you will be overwhelmed by the response. Your relationship with your partner is also at a dizzy peak. Travel and intimate ties are prominent features of July. You will get lucky breaks this month.



LEO: July 23 to August 23: The Moon's last quarter indicates business collaborations but there will also be unforeseen expenses. You will be in an introspective frame of mind and will manifest psychic abilities especially around July-August. The emphasis will be on change. Domestic matters may precipitate such changes. Personal relationships will be smooth.



VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: Mars trines Saturn so artists, teachers, religious heads, psychics and editors will be in their element. You must socialise and reach out to people. That's the best way to relax. You will scale new heights of popularity this month. New schemes must be tried out between June 26 and July 11 to ensure maximum success.



LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: The first quarter of the Moon influences your sign and this suggests hard work. But you will still strive to devote some time to personal relationships. This month will end on a note of satisfaction for you. The Sun changes signs on the 23rd which infuses zest and vigour in you. Favours will be granted and you will be romantically inclined.



SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22: The Full Moon on July 11 propels you into launching new ventures. Business collaborations are indicated. On the spiritual plane, you will devote time to prayer and meditation. Religious ceremonies are foretold for Scorpions. A breakthrough at work is imminent. July is the month to break through all barriers, both at home and at work. You must avoid procrastination.



SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21: Despite the Moon-Saturn-Uranus conjunction in your sign, funds and loans will be available to you. It would be advisable to go in for a medical check-up now. A journey is possible on or after the seventh as Mars changes signs. Financial and property transactions are probable in July-August. You will finalise a new deal.



CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: There will be a little opposition to your plans owing to the positions of Sun-Mercury. So marshal your resources accordingly and be prepared for litigation. Travel prospects are bright. The New Moon falls in your seventh sector and this is congenial for business partnerships. Capricornians will be in the limelight this month.



AQUARIUS: January 21 to February 18: Though prospects are not bleak, there could be a few posers in July regarding your career, family and health matters. People might blow hot and cold towards you. July may be a period of transition and therefore, slight uncertainty. Mars is in opposition from the seventh and this could mean ill-health, enmity and hospitalisation.



PISCES: February 19 to March 20: Moon sextiles the Sun and Mars, and this suggests success in your endeavours. You will pre-occupy yourself with creative pursuits and research. Travel is certain in July. Follow your impulses this month. Your contacts will lead to business contracts and new assignments. You will steal the thunder at a gathering or a function. Health needs to be taken care of.

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