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Presidential Poll: An Open Letter To The Legislators Of India:

FOR THE SAKE OF OUR COUNTRY AND MR GANDHI REJECT MR GANDHI'S CANDIDATE

Dear Mr Abbasi,*

WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS you will be called upon to perform a sacred task on behalf of the people of India. This task is a privilege, conferred exclusively on you on the strength of your being a legislator — a member of the Lok Sabha as you are — or a member of the Upper House at the Centre or an MLA or MLC in a state as in the case of 4,000 others to whom also this letter is addressed. This task is a rare privilege as well, and it comes to most legislators just once or so in their tenure. The task and the privilege I have mentioned here is the task of electing the President of the Republic of India.

The election of the President this time round is unlike any Presidential election held in the past. Now you will be electing a new President at a time when the country is going through severe crises of confidence in the government and in the machinery of the state. Despite a duly elected government at the Centre — a Congress (I) government — enjoying an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha and a clear majority in the Rajya Sabha, it is almost a non-functioning government. What little effort at governance it makes is channelled exclusively to concerns of self-preservation. As such, most decisions and acts of the government have nothing to do with the public good, they deal only with the advancement of the few in power, and the government's survival. Moral turpitude has paralysed it.

Not surprisingly, the government has a severe credibility problem. Nobody believes what the government, or any one member of the government, says. There is public scepticism even where the nation's security is involved. Not many believed that Pakistan had aggressive intentions against India when we made all those movements of armed men and materials of war in January this year — at a cost of several hundred crores of rupees. It is generally believed to have been a ploy contrived by the Prime Minister to shift a difficult finance minister out from a sensitive ministry. So cynical have we become in the conduct of the affairs of State that strange coincidences occur even in our relations with friends: there was this damning Bofors report from Sweden's Audit Bureau. And presto! Timed to coincide with its publication in India were 20 Indian boats with supplies for Jaffna — sailing against Sri Lanka's wishes. And that thwarted effort was followed by the airdrop of food and other daily necessities. After this 25-tonne drop, which flagrantly violated Sri Lanka's airspace, there is no more concern — no more supplies till the time of this writing. If the need of the Jaffna populace for supplies was so dire, then we should have sent in a few airdrop sorties each day after the initial drop. Clearly, our government was playing 'save our skin' politics with the fate of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and with that country's sovereignty. Such is the moral morass we are made to wallow in by the present government.

The events which have followed the shifting of Mr V P Singh from Finance and his brief tenure in Defence have brought no credit to the government, to the head of the government or to the leader of the party in power. There are now substantial and credible charges of bribe-taking and corruption. The government has been caught lying, shifting, distorting and spreading disinformation.

ACCOMPANYING THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS is rampant lawlessness: the crime of killing has become routine in the capital and other cities of India. Communalism is taking a heavier and a more frequent toll. We spend far more today on men and machines for the internal security forces but very few of them are employed for the security of

* Mr K J Abbasi, Congress (I) MP from UP and others — 542 members of the Lok Sabha, 233 members of the Rajya Sabha and 3,919 members of the State Legislative Assemblies and Councils, who form the exclusive electorate for the Presidential Poll.

the ordinary citizen. Clearly, the State appears unwilling or unable to protect the citizen. The lives and the safety of only the rulers receive government concern; the citizen receives little protection of law.

The economic situation, which was showing signs of advance two years ago, is slowing. Corporation after corporation is putting out dismal reports on their performances during 1986. Farmers around the country are agitating for water, for power, for economic prices for their produce: drought conditions prevail across half the country. Despair, anger and belligerence are reflected daily in the public mood and attitudes.

For the first time in our history since Independence, the armed forces and the security apparatus are dragged into controversies related to bribe-taking and corruption by the highest. For the first time, and because of the bribe-taking apparently involved, doubts are cast on even the mainstay gun of the army and on the suitability of the submarines the navy has acquired.

YOU ARE BEING CALLED UPON to elect a new President for the Republic of India when the office of the President is beleaguered. In the two-and-a-half years that Mr Rajiv Gandhi has been the Prime Minister of India, he has done more than all his predecessors in office put together to devalue the highest institution created under the Constitution. He has shown disrespect to the office and to the person of the President to an extent where his minions openly hurl abuses at the President and even question the very relevance to the country of this high office. The government has, by a Cabinet resolution recently, questioned the authority of the President to receive information on vital matters of State, making it appear that the high Constitutional office is no more than a rubber stamp. And all this has happened at a time when the kindest words one can say about the present Prime Minister are that he is innocent, that he is immature and that he is grossly inexperienced. And that the kindest description that one can tag on most of his colleagues is that they are Yes Men. The state of the nation, as you have seen it emerge, is the result of this self-serving, and neglect of the public good.

In normal circumstances, Giani Zail Singh, the present incumbent in the Rashtrapati Bhavan, should have been the ruling party's candidate for a second term. But the government of Mr Rajiv Gandhi does not want him for a second term. Again, normally, the Congress (I) — the party in power — has the unquestioned right and privilege to nominate any member of their government or their party for the succession. And a person so nominated should have been straightaway elected. But these are not normal times, and this is not an ordinary Presidential election. But let me proceed.

The man you — the members of Parliament and the members of the Legislative Assemblies in the states of the Union of India as well as members of the Rajya Sabha and members of the Upper Houses in the states of the Indian Union — will elect as the next President will have an extraordinary and urgent task awaiting him at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He will have to immediately begin restoring the lost dignity to his office. He will have to bring moral and Constitutional authority back to the highest office in the land. He will have to deal with a Prime Minister who heads a Congress (I) government which enjoys an absolute majority in the Parliament but very little support in the country, as recent elections in some states have demonstrated. The new President will have to deal with a Prime Minister who appears unfamiliar with the political ethos of the country. Lacking political background and experience of administration normally essential for becoming the Chief Executive of a nation, this Prime Minister, who stormed into power riding the wave of sympathy generated upon the assassination of his mother, has, in turn, induced unnatural awe and silence in most members of his party who were elected with him. Thus, Mr Gandhi is the government. Only he. Almost as a natural corollary, the government has been making all the mistakes it can possibly make with grave and, in many cases, lasting consequences for the country. The Prime Minister appears to be doing what he likes, his likes and dislikes dominating what decision-making process such a style of functioning permits. In the event, national interest is equated with personal interest and is made subservient to personal whims, to survival. The President of the Republic you all will now elect will have to have a strong and a sane mind of his own and a moral stature to match, to deal with the grave consequences which now inevitably flow from these departures from the elementary procedures of a responsible cabinet government.

THE CONGRESS (I) HAS NOMINATED MR R VENKATARAMAN, the Vice-President of the Republic, for the highest post. Despite the charade of consultations that Mr Rajiv Gandhi recently made by meeting many leaders of the Opposition and leaders from the states of the Indian Union, it is clear that he wanted Mr Venkataraman to succeed Giani Zail Singh. In normal times, this would have been the best thing to do. It would have been the normal thing to do; we have the good precedents of Vice-President Dr S Radhakrishnan following Dr Rajendra Prasad, and Vice-President Dr Zakir Hussain following Dr Radhakrishnan to the office of the President.

But, as earlier stressed, these are not normal times. Mr Gandhi's preference for Mr R Venkataraman — a preference that the Congress (I) party has now endorsed — is largely because Mr Gandhi wants a pliable person in the Rash-

Of all the crises confronting the government of Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the acknowledged fact of astronomical sums being paid out as commissions on one pretext or the other in defence purchases to one or the other person, is the gravest. Mr Venkataraman was a defence minister of India during the years 1980-84. He could not have been totally unaware of what was happening. And if he was unaware, then as a matter of abundant caution, you must consider him unfit to be our next President.

trapati Bhavan. Mr Venkataraman is a distinguished pliable person. He has survived in the court of Mrs Indira Gandhi, and later in Mr Gandhi's circle, by always striving to do the pleasing things. His membership of the cabinet of Mrs Gandhi is remembered for referring every decision he had to make, every action he was entitled to take, to the higher authority. "What does the Madam say?" and "What does the Madam want?" were his obliging refrains as a senior member of Mrs Gandhi's government. As Vice-President he has accepted considerations at the hands of Mr Gandhi to which he is not, by custom, entitled. He travels, for example, by special planes when all Vice-Presidents hitherto have travelled by commercial airliners.

Mr Venkataraman is 77 and reports said that he had indicated that he would resign the office of the Vice-President on health grounds, because of age, if he was not nominated the Congress party's candidate in the forthcoming Presidential poll. Be that as it may, 77 is not an age to venture onto what surely is the most difficult and delicate job in India today. There is another disturbing aspect. As Vice-President of the Republic of India and as the Presiding Officer of the Rajya Sabha, Mr Venkataraman knows of the diminution the office of the President has suffered at the hands of the present government and its leader. Yet, he is anxious to get himself installed into that deliberately denigrated office. He is aspiring to this office without having in any way publicly indicated what he will do to restore the dignity and the stature which are the hallmarks of that office but which have been devalued by a delinquent government. Expectedly, soon after Mr Venkataraman was told that the Congress (I) party had chosen him as its presidential candidate, Mr Venkataraman told newsmen that he was more than happy that the party had reposed faith in him, according to *The Times Of India*. "I shall always endeavour to justify this confidence," he told newsmen (*The Times Of India*, June 15, 1987). As you can see, India, this country, his country, your country, my country, our country, does not feature in Mr Venkataraman's response to the nomination. So how will the nation fare at Mr Venkataraman's hands if there is a conflict of interest between his Congress (I) party and the Union of India? There is this conflict already — search your hearts for an answer.

Of all the crises confronting the government of Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the acknowledged fact of astronomical sums being paid out as commissions on one pretext or the other in defence purchases to one or the other person is the gravest. Mr Venkataraman was a defence minister of India during the years 1980-84. He could not have been totally unaware of what was happening. And if he was unaware, then as a matter of abundant caution, you must consider him unfit to be our next President.

OUR CUP OF CORRUPTION AND CHICANERY IS FULL, overflowing. Much dirt will be on public display in time to come — as the unfolding tragedy in the Bofors affair shockingly demonstrates — and there will be much gossip and many rumours. And many reputations will be sullied. In that event, it will be a very difficult time for a former Defence Minister who, though not personally corrupt, was at all times subservient to the needs and greed of his party bosses. Should we not take care now to spare possible embarrassment to a future President by ensuring now that we do not cause this to happen? You can do this, I am afraid, only by not voting for Mr Venkataraman.

The parties of the Opposition have been trying to find a consensus candidate for election to this high office. But, alas, there is no consensus as to what the role of the President in the affairs of this Republic is! Consequently, there has been no consensus candidate and the parties of the Opposition will put up a candidate of their own. As at the time of this writing, such a candidate appears to be the former Justice Mr Krishna Iyer. Mr Iyer has had some experience of government. He was a member of E M S Namboodiripad's Communist ministry in Kerala from 1957-59 and, thereafter, has been a distinguished jurist. An erudite man, he's widely travelled and commands

respect from a wide section of our people all over the country. But Mr Krishna Iyer is not a willing candidate. Perhaps, he fears there is little chance of his getting elected in the light of the vast majority the Congress (I) party enjoys among the electorate. Perhaps, he is disillusioned over the constraints the present government has imposed on the office of the President. Or perhaps there are personal reasons for his lack of enthusiasm to being a candidate. But if he is a candidate, then he deserves your vote. If you, in deciding who deserves your vote, for a moment think of the country and the country's interest alone, then you will yourself come to the conclusion that Mr Krishna Iyer will make a better President for our troubled motherland than Mr Ramaswamy Venkataraman.

THERE IS, OF COURSE, GIANI ZAIL SINGH, the President, who, reluctantly, is not a candidate for a second term and who Mr Rajiv Gandhi wants out. Yet, in the circumstances in which we have trapped ourselves, a second term for the Giani could be in the best interests of the nation.

"If my leader had said I should pick up a broom and be a sweeper, I would have done that. She chose me to be President," Giani Zail Singh had said on being elected President. Having at that instant devalued the office and his own stature as the then newly elected President by his words of pathetic subservience, Giani Zail Singh has grown to be wiser and more responsible while in office. With the earthy wisdom of a craftsman that the Sikhs from the villages of the Punjab are known for, he has developed an appreciation for the politics and the nationhood of India that is deep and wide in scope. He has emerged as a person with his own mind, who listens to a very large number of visitors from many walks of life, and increasingly questions the wisdom of many actions of the government when he finds them to be at variance with the national interest. The new courage that Giani Zail Singh has demonstrated in the face of South Block bullying has served, and will serve, the nation well. His refusal now to sign the Postal Amendment Bill 1986, even though he was involved in proposing a similar legislation while being a member of Mrs Gandhi's government, is a welcome sign reflecting the cognisance of the public mood. Reports one has heard of his conversations with visiting foreign Heads of State indicate a shrewd understanding of the world situation and India's position and role in it. His understanding of what is attainable in many spheres for this country is realistic, down-to-earth. Shorn of a political future, the Giani is different from what he was as a politician in the Punjab and as Mrs Gandhi's faithful Home Minister. There is a saying, 'Better to deal with the devil you know' and I urge you to consider the wisdom of this age-old saying in resolving the dilemma I am attempting to raise through this open letter. If you grasp that wisdom, then, perhaps, you would want the Giani to be a candidate for re-election as President.

Some of you would like Mr Gandhi to continue in office undisturbed for the next 30 months. I do too. In fact, if he can survive with honour, I would like him to return in 1990 for another term — he is young and he has a modern outlook. He is also capable of hard work and goodness. But Mr Gandhi needs an education in politics and in administration to better conduct the affairs of this nation. Experience of his governance for the last two-and-a-half years shows that he is not a fast learner, nor a good listener. And given the character of the Congress (I) party and, I am afraid, the sycophantic inclination of us Indians, you are not going to teach him much. Often, you all do not open your mouths even when consulted or asked to speak up on controversial subjects by your political masters. In the event, a President in the Rashtrapati Bhavan who can keep a stern eye on this government is a President the nation needs at this time. And do not for a moment believe the malicious reports about the President wanting to sack Mr Gandhi. Anybody with a discerning eye could have seen that the President was hurt over how Mr Gandhi has behaved as Prime Minister, but also had concern and affection for the grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru. There is estrangement between the Head of the State and the Head of the Government, but Mr Gandhi is largely responsible for the distance created. "I have departed from conventions in hundreds of things," you will recall Mr Gandhi telling the Press on June 18, 1985, when he was asked why he did not call on the President before or after his foreign tours, as was the settled convention and the practice of all earlier Prime Ministers. Some of you applauded Mr Gandhi then: *Wah! Wah!!* The rest has just followed — as was inevitable. So please do not blame only the Giani.

THERE IS YET ANOTHER CONSIDERATION as to why you should think of a second term to the incumbent office-holder. The Sikhs believe, rightly or wrongly, that they are being discriminated against. The denial of a second term to Giani Zail Singh, in the present context, will not be easily understood by an already alienated people.

Giani Zail Singh will have to move out of the Rashtrapati Bhavan on July 24. And go where? With just 40 days left for the scheduled departure (unless you and your fellow MPs and MLAs intervene), there is no safe place he can go to. As President of India, Giani Zail Singh receives almost as much security *bandobast* as the Prime Minister. The security considerations are on account of the Punjab. And the problems in the Punjab are the creation of the late Mrs Indira Gandhi and the Congress (I) governments she headed. Mr Zail Singh as a Congress (I) Chief Minister of Punjab and later as Home Minister in Mrs Gandhi's government at the Centre had a role to play in the messing up. But anybody even remotely familiar with Mrs Gandhi's style knows what little others could do in the

You can contribute towards making these remaining years of the present government less tortuous for the Indian Republic by electing as President someone who, as Head of State, can function as per the authority the Constitution has conferred upon the occupant of the highest office in the country.

Punjab or elsewhere when Mrs Gandhi had made up her mind. And Mrs Gandhi had made up her mind on most aspects of the policy on the Punjab she was to follow. The Giani, as we all know, was not a supporter of *Operation Bluestar*. Consequently, with the worsening situation in the Punjab, this nation owes full security protection to him. Whatever be one's opinion and view of Mr Rajiv Gandhi, this nation is united in ensuring his physical protection and although much inconvenience and harassment is caused daily to thousands of our citizens because of the security precautions taken, nobody much grudges the consideration accorded to him. Giani Zail Singh is in as risky a situation as Mr Gandhi is as far as a real threat from the extremists is concerned. The number of Sikhs killed by Sikhs in the Punjab and elsewhere is a telling indicator of what I seek to convey. While this terrible agony of the Punjab lasts, the Giani will be an attractive target for the extremists. As someone who has warned in advance, in writing, the government of some of the terrible events which have occurred recently, I must now say how likely it is that terrorists will try to get at the Giani, once he is out of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, to heap blame on Mr Gandhi and his government. Such an eventuality will poison the Punjab situation to an unthinkable impasse. While I am on this subject, how many of you realise that the President of India, for whose pomp and ceremonious functioning we open the national treasury, gets on retiring only Rs 2,500 per month as pension and another Rs 1,000 for secretarial help he may wish to hire. Giani Zail Singh cannot go back to the Punjab — he wishes to stay in Delhi for security considerations. But the government has not found a house for him yet. But going back to where I digressed, I feel it is your duty to consider this aspect in determining if Mr Zail Singh gets another term.

IN A DEMOCRACY, THE CHOICE OF THE PEOPLE MUST PREVAIL. Allegations of bribe-taking and corruption or even irresponsible acts — of the kind the Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, has committed on several occasions recently — are not reasons enough to dislodge an elected government until the next General Election. The survival of this sacred principle of democracy is more important than any number of weighty options the current agony of the nation throws up. In the event, it is the imperative, nay, the sacred responsibility of the privileged electorate, as represented by you, to elect a President who will control the damage the present Prime Minister and his government are likely to cause in the next two-and-a-half years of their tenure. You can contribute towards making these remaining years of the present government less tortuous for the Indian Republic by electing as President someone who, as Head of State, can function as per the responsibilities the Constitution has conferred upon the occupant of the highest office in the country.

On circumstantial evidence which Mr Gandhi has himself publicly chronicled, there is sufficient ground for any upright citizen of India to have no consideration at all for him: he has lied, he has misbehaved, he has used — as head of the ruling party and while being the head of the government — language, at a public address, which dishonours us as a people and as a nation and puts a question mark on our claim to be a civilised member of the comity of nations. He has got himself involved in spending colossal sums of money, the source of which can only be corruption and for the spending of which he accepts no accountability.

In the event, normally, the rational thing for the concerned citizen to do would be to work towards getting such a man out of power, but as I have stressed repeatedly here, these are not normal times. Mr Gandhi is young and appears to be capable of decency and goodness. Maybe he is a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. And because he has a clear mandate, let us hope and let us pray that the better side of him triumphs and rules. In such complicated circumstances, it will be in the national interest (and you will be serving a national interest of the highest importance) if you reject Mr Gandhi's and the AICC's candidate, Mr R Venkataraman, and elect as President either the candidate of the Opposition or bring pressure to bear upon Giani Zail Singh to seek a second term, and then support him as a matter of conscience.

Yours truly

R V Pandit

June 15, 1987

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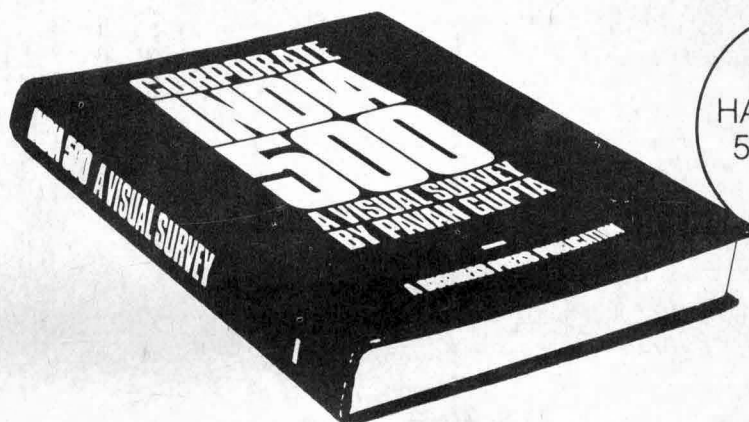
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LETTERS

On The Marquee

Kudos for highlighting the contrasts in our society (*On The Marquee*, May 1987) by showing our politicians' craze for imported cars, Italian tiles and their secret Swiss accounts and the poverty and deteriorating law and order situation in India. While people are starving in Orissa and many states are in the throes of drought, our politicians are preoccupied with their fanciful hobbies.

On the one hand, they wax eloquent about patriotism and, on the other quietly send their children abroad for studies. It is like some men in Bombay who always fight for Marathi, but send their children to English-medium schools. The need of the hour is to have men of integrity.

Politicians are no longer interested in serving the people, or the nation. They should first declare their assets including those in Swiss banks to the public. Politics is today reduced to making money through kickbacks and other fraudulent means.

S A Srinivasa Sarma
Bombay

Oh Calcutta!



The cover story, *A Stance In The East* (May 1987), by Dom Moraes

was very well-written and extremely thought-provoking.

The evocative description of Calcutta right from the past decades to its current sordid state was truly appealing. The article carries the conspicuous stamp of Dom Moraes' unique style of writing and though Calcutta was the main focus, the pathetic life of the poor in this country is well delineated, especially the section on Nirmal Hriday which was really soul-stirring.

The living conditions of the poor, however, are still appalling and in spite of the coming of the 21st century, things will not have changed here. Our politicians should now concentrate on alleviating the sorrows of the poor rather than indulging in idle talk.

Y Sivasankar
Hyderabad

The interview with Jyoti Basu was very disappointing. With a seven-page introductory build-up on Calcutta and its problems, and in spite of the 'great deal of time' spared to Dom Moraes for the interview, it turned out to be a damp squib except perhaps the opening question.

However, the eloquent photograph showing a destitute woman, with inadequate clothes, standing over her son who is sleeping on the footpath, with a neatly painted legend 'Clean Walls Make A Cleaner City', in the background, coupled with the author's anecdote on the Bengali socialite's obscene attempt to balance her concern for her figure with that for Mother Teresa's dying destitutes, was a telling commentary on the malaise in our society.

C Antony Louis
Bombay

Actor Versus Politician

The report on *Amitabh In Allahabad* (May 1987) was interesting. Amitabh Bachchan is doing his best for Allahabad, yet people are not satisfied because they equate him with



his screen image of an invincible hero, supreme and victorious in all circumstances. But in real life, this is not possible. If the local people are disgruntled with his infrequent visits to his constituency, this too seems to reflect their insatiable desire to keep seeing Amitabh Bachchan, the film hero.

People must learn to differentiate between the silver screen and real life. And Amitabh Bachchan should perhaps devote even more time to his people the price he has to pay for being a film star.

Pannalall Mundhra
Calcutta

Postscript

Harish Mehta has been cautiously neutral in his article on *The Indian Post* (May 1987), when it is quite obvious that the paper is no great shakes. After all that self-congratulatory advertising, it was more a damp squib than a trail-blazing newspaper. The Sunday section is especially lacklustre, without any imagination or creativity. Perhaps a new transfusion of talent is what the *Post* badly needs today.

Vivek Kadambe
Bombay



10 **SRI LANKA, THE SIEGE WITHIN:** Sri Lanka is today a nation divided. With the inexorably confrontationist attitudes of both the Jayewardene government and the Tamil militants, the chances of a negotiated settlement seem very remote, reports **SHIRIN MEHTA** from Madras.



22 **THE PEOPLE'S VOICE:** There has been a virtual media blitzkrieg in recent months — the Bofors deal, the Fairfax controversy, the President-PM rift, V P Singh's resignation, etc. But what does the common man — in the thick of all this intrigue — feel about these issues? **IMPRINT** finds out.

52 **A STATE IS BORN:** For Goa's colourful and ebullient population, its new statehood status has not resulted in great jubilation. **JAL KHAMBATA** profiles the changes the statehood brings to Goa.

59 **ENTER THE YAKUZA:** The all-powerful Yakuza is Japan's own version of La Cosa Nostra or the Mafia. We excerpt here, chapters from *Yakuza*, by **DAVID KAPLAN** and **ALEC DUBRO**, dealing with the contemporary crime syndicates in Japan.

68 **THE PROPHECY:** A heartwarming short story about adolescent trials and tribulations by **ANJANA APPACHANA**.



32 **THE LUCRATIVE DIAGNOSIS:** Medical malpractice — resulting in the injury, health deterioration and sometimes even death, of the unfortunate victims of this abuse — is becoming all too frequent today. **SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI** investigates the fraudulent measures adopted by the medical world.

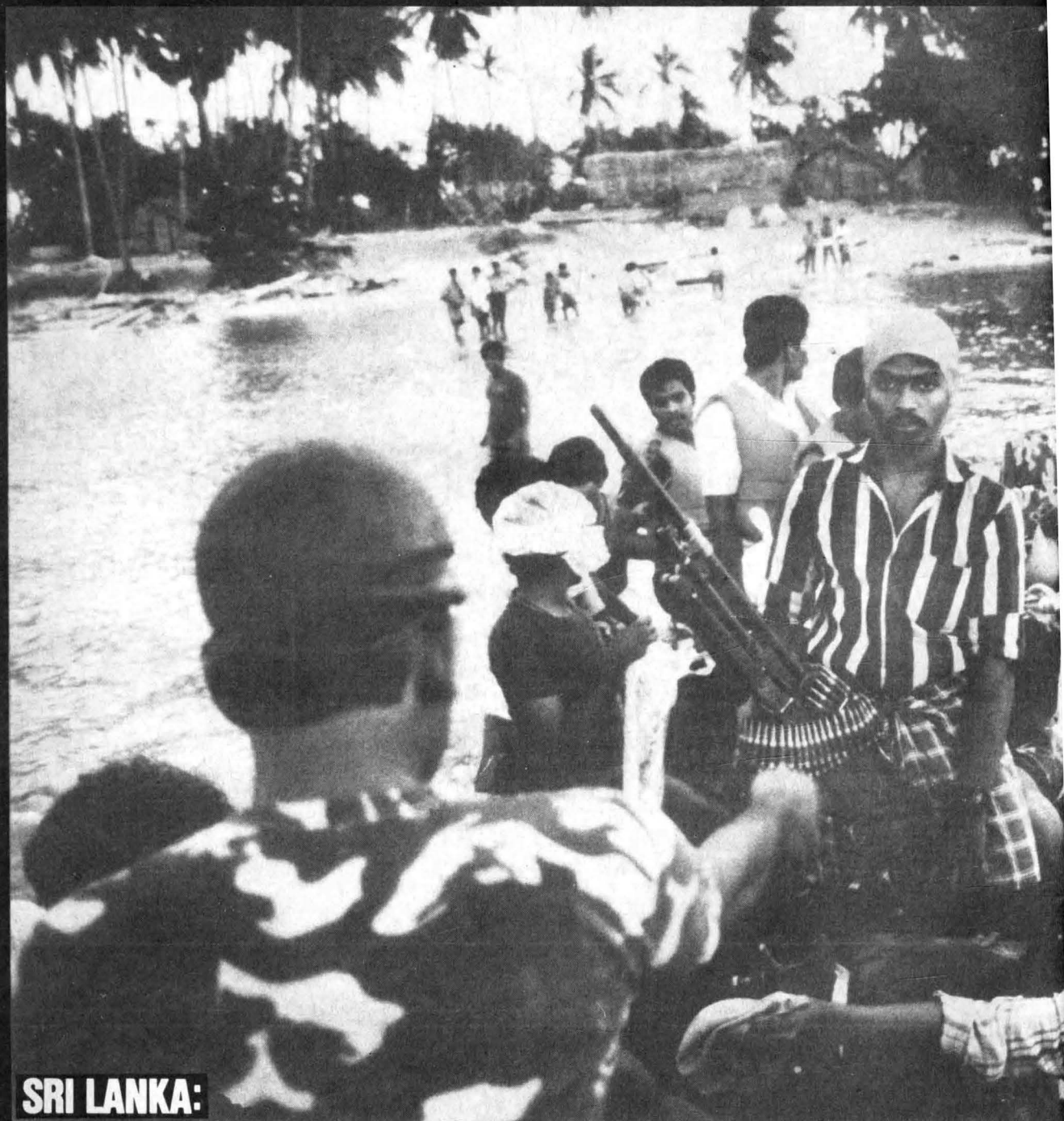


40 **THE GREENING OF BEED:** For veteran social worker Nanaji Deshmukh and his band of faithful followers, the greening of Beed, is the ultimate example of successful self-sufficiency. **NANDINI BHASKARAN** visited Beed to see the work they are doing to alleviate drought in the area.

80 **MONUMENT TO A SAINT:** Haji Ali, one of Bombay's best-known landmarks, attracts hundreds of devotees — both Muslim and non-Muslim — every day. **VIBHA NIRESHWALIA** profiles this holy tomb and speaks to some of the devotees.

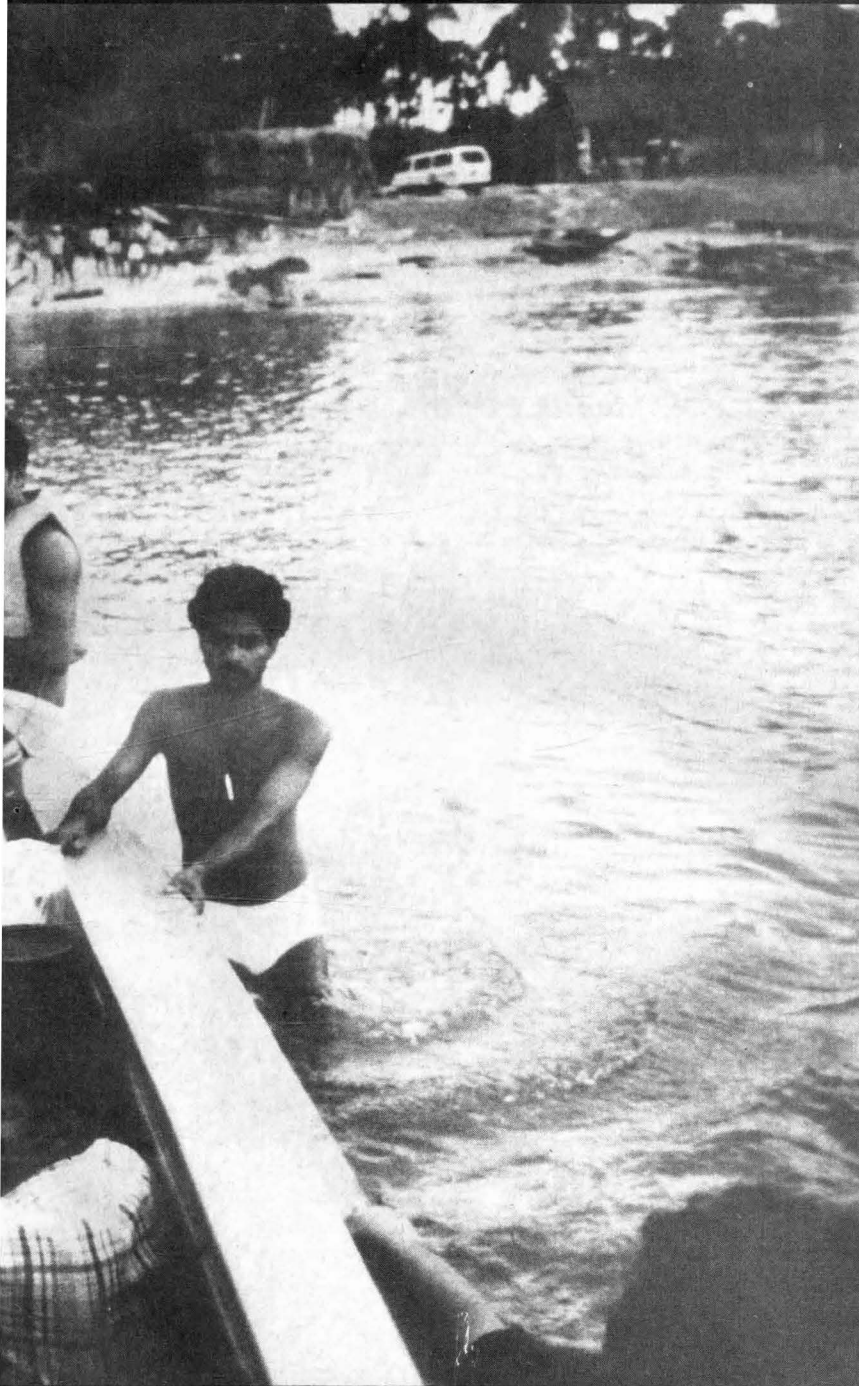
88 **THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT:** *Manoranjan*, Kundan Shah and Saeed Mirza's latest new television serial, is all about the successes and failures of the film industry, and promises to be uproariously funny, says **MINNIE VAID-FERA**.

92 **ASTROLOGY:** The usual monthly predictions by **BEJAN DARUWALLA**.



SRI LANKA:

THE SIEGE WITHIN



With the launch of the Sri Lankan government's military offensive on Jaffna, the chances for a negotiated political settlement seem dim. Faced with a hardening of attitudes by the Jayewardene government and the Tamil militants, what should India do? Can we afford to opt for a long-term solution? SHIRIN MEHTA talks to several people in Madras to find out.

The EPRLF (Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front) secretary-general Mr K Patmanabha said in a statement today that the Sri Lankan government had openly announced its onslaught on the Jaffna peninsula. Hundreds of Tamils had been killed and Jaffna town subjected to aerial bombing. The Sri Lankan government's efforts to decimate the Tamils, even as it was claiming it was for a political solution, revealed that it was not prepared to listen to 'the voice of any progressive or democratic force'.

— The Hindu, May 28, 1987.

The coastal town of Velvettithurai had been devastated with a large number of civilians senselessly slaughtered by the 'invading' forces, Mr A S Balasingham (political advisor, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) said. Aerial and naval bombardment had flattened buildings and towns. "They are using air power to inflict the maximum damage on civilian life and property, with callous disregard for human life," he said.

— The Hindu, May 29, 1987.

"What we saw was terror. . . making people afraid. We saw bombers coming, houses getting destroyed and people running into trenches. Big bombs — 25 kg bombs — and rockets. The Sri Lankan army wants the people to react against the LTTE. But they will not. They have no choice. They know that if the Tigers leave Jaffna they will get killed."

That was the word-picture from two journalists, Mr Michel Philippot of a Paris-based photo news agency and Mr Thomas Johnson of the French newspaper Actuel. They had spent the last 11 days in Jaffna. . .

— The Hindu, May 30, 1987.

Sri Lankan troops today massacred hundreds of Tamil civilians during their advance into the Vadamarachchi region of the Jaffna peninsula. . . . "Under the guise of relaxing the offensive the troops have come into the civilian areas. They hacked and stab-

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bed to death all those standing on the roads. The situation is very bad," said Mr A S Balasingham, political advisor to the LTTE. . .

— The Hindu, May 31, 1987.

PASSIONS run high in Tamil Nadu. Normally conservative newspapers like *The Hindu* carry impassioned front-page leads on the slaughter of innocent Tamil civilians in Sri Lanka. Militant groups like the

pings, even drug peddling, had risen alarmingly in the state since 1986. There was a disenchantment with the cause that brought violence to the very state that had provided a home away from home for the 'boys'.

But in Tamil Nadu sentiments can — and do — change within a week. Soon after the launch of the Lankan offensive on the Tamils, the people in Madras began to see an Indian invasion of Lanka as the only 'acceptable' solution. A separate Tamil Ee-

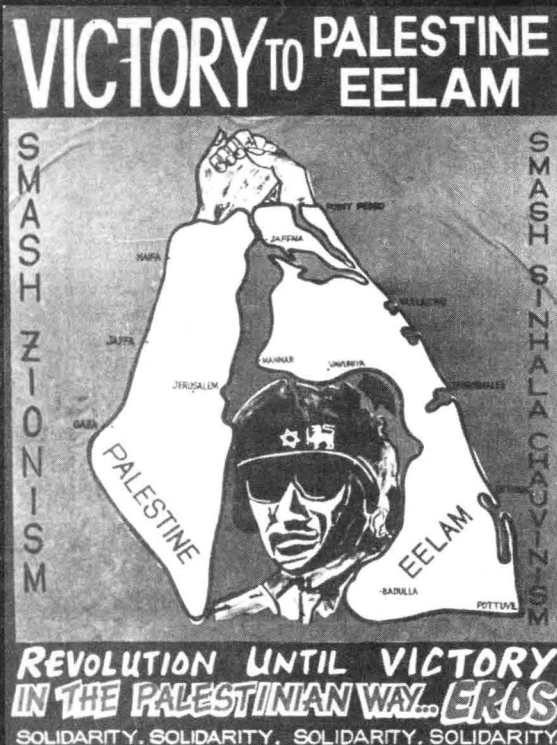
Lankan soldiers triggered off mass ethnic violence between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. Refugees and militants alike began to pour into Tamil Nadu via the 35-km-long Palk Strait to seek refuge and sympathy.

Politically the Sri Lankan Tamils have no links with their counterparts in Tamil Nadu. But, ethnically, the bonds are strong. When the refugees arrived, telling stories of cruelty and inhuman treatment, they were besieged with offers of help. The Opposition's Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) officially took up the cry for a separate state of Eelam, embarrassing the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) government in the process. The Tamils themselves, eager to empathise with their blood brothers from across the sea, began to put pressure on the M G Ramachandran government to help the Sri Lankan Tamils.

New Delhi, while ostensibly working towards a peaceful political solution, winked at the activities down south. Mrs Gandhi's foreign policy had always been to keep neighbouring countries slightly destabilised. So, when the militants set up training camps in Tamil Nadu, the Centre denied their existence. When local political parties extended help to the 'freedom-fighters' the Central government pretended not to notice. Visa and immigration regulations were waived to accommodate the influx. And through it all, the preparations for 'peace' continued.

Gopalaswami Parthasarathi, the Indian diplomat, visited Colombo twice to draw up a list of proposals that would be acceptable to both the Jayewardene government and the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). If the TULF would give up the idea of Eelam, then President Jayewardene was willing to consider forming provincial councils that would give a degree of autonomy to the north and east — regions where the Sri Lankan Tamils were in the majority.

But Jayewardene had his own problems. The withdrawal of Mrs Siri-



By 1984 it was clear that the TULF had lost the right to represent the Tamils. The initiative had been seized by the guerrillas — groups like the LTTE and the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS). The time for peace seemed to have passed.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are given several column inches to propagate their version of the 'genocide'. Gory details from the visits of foreign journalists are highlighted in edit pages. And passionate editorials urge a 'shamefully lethargic' Central government to act militarily.

Only a week before the Lankan offensive, the mood in Tamil Nadu was not so sympathetic. Citizens in Madras were beginning to resent the militants who had brought crime into Tamil Nadu. Armed dacoities, kidnap-

lam was being talked of as a distinct reality. And the Sri Lankan government's actions loudly condemned.

So, how did the Tamils become the heroes of Madras? How did an anti-terrorist offensive come to be perceived as a genocide? And why is an Indian invasion of a friendly country perceived as not just inevitable, but even desirable?

TO UNDERSTAND the situation one has to go back to July 1983. In that month, the killing of 13

mavo Bandaranaike's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) from the talks caused the elaborate super-structure to collapse. At the same time, the militants began hardening in their demand for a separate state. The TULF's moderate line was no longer acceptable to the hardliners. It was to be Eelam, or nothing at all.

By 1984, it was clear that the TULF had lost the right to represent the Tamils. The initiative had been seized by the guerrillas — groups like the LTTE. The Sri Lankans saw the guerrillas as terrorists, and the guerrillas saw the Lankans as alien colonists. The time for peace seemed to have passed.

Until Rajiv Gandhi stepped in with his charisma and seemingly endless enthusiasm to solve the crises afflicting the sub-continent. Among the first things he did was to close down the training camps. India, Rajiv Gandhi made it clear to the militants, was willing to offer its services in getting the maximum benefit for the Sri Lankan Tamil cause. Provided the solution was drawn up within the structure of a 'united Sri Lanka'.

But the militant organisations, which had by now become increasingly intractable, were not so easy to convince. The Thimpu talks (where the militants were almost dragged to the negotiating table) were doomed to fail. Jayewardene, according to the militants, offered even less than he had conceded the year before. And a violation of the uneasy ceasefire before the talks officially ended, was the last straw.

Then came the December 19 proposals: another seeming landmark in a long history of fruitless talks. The militants held firm — without a separate Eelam there would be no talks.

Even as the Indian government was promising to bring the militants to negotiate, the Sri Lankan government was increasingly opting for the military solution. "We want to demonstrate the futility of resorting to violence to settle a political solution," Tissa Jayakody, Deputy High Commissioner of Sri Lanka says as he stares

out of the window from his Taj Coromandel suite in Madras. "We went in for it because others went in for it long before us."

But that is not how the problem is perceived in Tamil Nadu itself. The slaughter of Tamil civilians is rightly condemned. And loud editorials exhort the Indian government to 'act'.

WHAT SHOULD India do now? "The only solution for this genocide is an independent

bouring country, might not Pakistan feel constrained to do the same every time its Muslim brethren are allegedly butchered in communal riots here?

"What we need right now," S C Chandrahasan, soft-spoken leader of ProTEG (Organisation for the Protection of the Tamils of Eelam from Genocide) says, "are military allies. The first thing that the Tamil Nadu government should do is to ask the Centre to come in militarily. They should get in by making the genocide a reason

“What we need right now,” says S C Chandrahasan, leader of Pro TEG, “are military allies. The Tamil Nadu government should ask the Centre to come in militarily by making the genocide a reason for its interference...”



Eelam,” says Nanchil Manoharan, Deputy General Secretary of the DMK. “Negotiations are out of the question. According to international law if genocide takes place in a neighbouring country, we can go to war.”

Though a military solution may stop the killing, it raises all the issues that Rajiv Gandhi wanted to avoid. For a start, can such an action against a powerful neighbour be justified for what is, essentially, its domestic problem? If we were to set the precedent of marching in to ‘help out’ a neigh-

bouring country. After all, when Bangladesh was undergoing a similar situation, we sent troops in to help them. Why can't India do the same for the Tamils now?”

For a start, the situation is not the same. In Bangladesh, a minority (the military) was oppressing the majority. And by moving in to help, India finally managed to establish a popular government in the country. By moving in to Sri Lanka, on the other hand, India would be helping a minority overthrow a democratically elected

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majority. Can there be a justification for that?

And when we leave Sri Lanka (as we must some day) — what then? Will not the same democratically elected government come into power? Where is the guarantee that the Tamils will be any better off in the long run?

"Our solution is to go to war," Nanchil Manoharan continues, from behind his dark glasses, "see that the Tamils get a separate homeland for themselves. If this is not done, the

ment to seek outside help?

NOT EVERYBODY in Tamil Nadu, however, thinks the military option is the best. Some like A S Amirthalingam, secretary-general of the TULF, advocate partial military intervention.

"India should assert itself in some way," the moderate TULF leader feels. "Perhaps it should send down a food ship as a humanitarian gesture. Once India does that, the Sri Lankan

could do the rest."

But arming terrorists in such a way is precisely what we've been accusing Pakistan of doing in the Punjab. Can India justify its intervention to help what are, essentially, terrorist forces?

And would arming the militants really bring about a solution to the island's ethnic crisis? Past experience in Sri Lanka and in our own country has shown that it can only serve to make the situation worse. A protracted war between the government and the militants would not help stop the killing. It would exacerbate it.

"I WOULD not condone, but I can understand, what Jayewardene's doing. When guerrillas take refuge in civilian homes there are bound to be casualties," the bald-headed, colourful Editor of *Thuglaq*, Cho Ramaswamy, says in an outburst of nervous energy. "After all, a big country like India is giving asylum to terrorists, it did train them, the state government has been funding them — how do you expect Jayewardene to react?"

Cho strongly feels that India should never have let the militants enter India in the first place. "I object to their armed presence because it spreads the cult of violence in Tamil Nadu. I feel one cannot stop their propaganda, but I feel the militants should definitely not be armed."

R Desikan, Editor of *South Madras News* agrees. "It is a wrong cause. We don't need to get involved in this, I say," he claims, peering out from behind his lenses. "We should send them back. We should have said right in the beginning, 'Baba, you go back. We don't want you here.'"

But both Ramaswamy and Desikan agree that ignoring the problem won't help stop the killing: which is the prime humanitarian concern now. "I would advocate that Sri Lanka be divided and that will be to our advantage politically. A possible solution would be that the Sri Lankan government should accept a federal structure (except in national affairs like defen-



The TULF secretary-general, A. S. Amirthalingam advocates partial military intervention. "Perhaps India should send down a food ship as a humanitarian gesture so that the Sri Lankan government knows it can't play the fool," he says.

entire Tamil population will be wiped out."

Perhaps. But who will run the 'homeland' if it does come into existence? For a start, it is probable that the rival militant organisations would, themselves, wage a kind of civil war to get total control. And what would become of the Tamil population that lives in the rest of Sri Lanka besides the north and east? Would there not be a Sinhalese backlash against them?

Lastly, what if India's military action forced the Sri Lankan govern-

ment will know that they can't play the fool." In fact, India did air-drop food shortly after Amirthalingam spoke to *Imprint*. It doesn't seem to have weakened Lanka's resolve.

Balakumar, one of the three members of the Executive Revolutionary Committee that heads the Eelam Revolutionary Organisation (EROS) is more specific. "We want India to support us in every possible way," he says calmly, "not send down an army. Even if they sent in arms to us, we

ce) and the whole country can be divided into zones," Desikan says.

"This separate homeland bit is nonsense," Cho says sharply, as he nervously stuffs tobacco into his pipe. "Who's going to rule it? All we should do is use our influence with the Western countries to apply pressure on Jayewardene to stop the genocide."

Most people who advocate the increase-awareness-in-the-West-to-pressure-Jayewardene-into-stopping-the-genocide theory, say so because they know that Sri Lanka is largely dependent on Western aid to run itself. And recently, its heavy defence expenditure has increased its dependence on these countries. Therefore, Western countries could, it is argued, easily coerce Jayewardene into giving up the dreadful military option.

In fact, this option is non-existent. The West has viewed India's interference in Lanka's internal affairs with considerable alarm. No Western power is likely to back us against Jayewardene. But, the argument runs, the West backed us against Pakistan in the 1971 war because of the genocide in Bangladesh. Surely, the same principle applies here?

This argument is based on two misconceptions. Firstly, the US (the most significant Western power) did *not* back us in 1971 — Nixon and Kissinger tilted US foreign policy towards Pakistan. And secondly, for the issue to be seen in Bangladesh-like terms, the West must be convinced that Jayewardene is, in fact, conducting a genocide in Jaffna. So far, both the US and the UK have not bought this line. At the height of the Jaffna offensive, the US State Department issued a statement to the effect that officials from its Colombo embassy had visited Jaffna and found little evidence of civilian casualties or deprivation.

AND YET, however unpalatable the options, the one thing that India cannot do is sit back and watch — at least, not now. For apart from the feeling of empathy for the Sri Lankan Tamils in the south, India

has, herself, a lot at stake. The Sri Lankan problem has now become an Indian problem.

Official statistics for the state of Tamil Nadu show that crime has shot up since 1983 — the year the refugees and militants began to pour in. Papers are full of reports of Sri Lankan Tamils who have either been robbed or kidnapped and held to ransom. Since 1984, when a bomb blast rocked the Meenambakkam airport, killing 30 persons and injuring 37, the militants

The attitude of the police itself is interesting. On the record, officials like Rajashekharan Nair, IGP (Crime) are only willing to admit, "Crime has gone up marginally since 1984 — about 20-25 per cent. As far as the police are concerned we are definitely taking steps to curb violence. Since November 1986, we have arrested 30 such militants and seized their arms. You must understand one thing, however: most of their victims are Sri Lankan Tamils. And there is a quali-

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have gathered momentum. Police statistics show that whereas there was only one terrorist act in 1985 (the blowing up of the house of A S Balasingham, the LTTE's political advisor) incidents of robbing, kidnapping, etc, increased to 13 in 1986 and by May 1987, have gone up to 19. Observers believe that only one out of every four of these crimes gets reported — the Sri Lankan Tamils are too scared of the militants to actually lodge a complaint with the Tamil Nadu police.

tative difference between a Sri Lankan Tamil becoming a victim and, say, one of the citizens of Tamil Nadu itself. In the case of the Sri Lankans the militants may be settling scores."

Off the record, however, the feelings are different. A senior police official admits that sympathy for the Tamil cause is high. "Prabhakaran has become a leader by his very stature. He is trying to help out our brothers in Sri Lanka. Would it not be incongruous if the police were to arrest

AN 'ANTI' VIEW ON SRI LANKA

By Rahul Singh

PATRIOTISM is an easy emotion to arouse, especially in a relatively young nation like ours. But it can just as easily degenerate into chauvinism.

Just about everybody in this country has praised the dropping of relief supplies by Indian planes on beleaguered Jaffna. Plenty of voices have also been raised that the Indian government should have done much more than what was essentially a token gesture. Many otherwise sober and responsible people have advocated that India intervene militarily, to teach the Sri Lankans 'a lesson', presumably in the same way that China once taught India and Vietnam 'a lesson'.

Let us, however, try and reflect on the situation soberly, without too much emotion. What are the facts? First, by sending planes over Jaffna, we have violated Sri Lanka's sovereignty. We have done this, knowing full well that Sri Lanka is in no position to retaliate. It is not internationally accepted behaviour and we have put ourselves in the wrong in the eyes of most countries, particularly our neighbours.

To go back a little, what brought on the present crisis in Sri Lanka? A little less than two months ago, on April 17, Tamil militants hijacked three buses and, after separating the Tamilians from the Sinhalese, massacred 127 Sinhalese passengers, including women and children. In contrast, the worst outrage by the terrorists in Punjab, which sent shock waves around the country, was when some 20 bus passengers were killed at Muktsar. Four days after the April 17 massacre, a bomb went off in the heart of Colombo during the rush hour, killing over 100 innocent people.

It is worth bearing in mind that these two outrages by Tamil militants took place just when the Sri

Lankan authorities had announced a cease-fire, and when negotiations between Colombo and New Delhi on a solution to the ethnic problem were about to be resumed. The militants were clearly not interested in a peaceful, negotiated solution. On the contrary, they were out to sabotage it, which they succeeded in doing.

It is also pertinent to recall that a little over a year ago, Tamil militants entered the holy Buddhist city of Anuradhapura, and in a shooting spree that has few parallels in cold-blooded killing, gunned down 145 men, women and children.

In the circumstances, and given the massive provocation, the reaction of the Sri Lankan government in strafing and attacking militant strongholds in Jaffna was quite understandable. Jayewardene would not have been able to survive politically against the hawks around him, had he done otherwise.

As for Jaffna itself, certain indisputable facts are in order. Though it is very much an integral part of Sri Lanka, for over two years, Colombo's writ has not run there. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), after physically liquidating opposition from other Tamil groups, is in command. How would we have reacted, if a part of Punjab had been virtually taken over by Khalistanis? Wouldn't we have tried to subdue them in whatever way possible?

Let us now turn to India's role, or rather Tamil Nadu's role, in sustaining the militants in Sri Lanka. It is an open secret that most of the arms, many of them extremely sophisticated, which have been supplied to the militants, have been courtesy of the Tamil Nadu authorities. These arms have come from places like Hong Kong, Bangkok, the USA and Europe, into Tamil Nadu (avoiding the Customs, needless to say) and then been shipped into Jaffna. What

is more, until late last year at least, there were several camps in Tamil Nadu where guerrillas were given training in insurgency.

The parallel between Pakistan helping the terrorists in Punjab and India doing the same in Sri Lanka cannot perhaps be stretched too far, but there is little doubt that we have been applying double standards as far as terrorism is concerned.

The Tamils in Sri Lanka need and deserve our sympathy, as they do from the rest of the world, in what is obviously a terrible period of trial for them. They have many genuine grievances and have certainly been discriminated against in several ways. There is little doubt that eventually some form of autonomy for the Tamil majority areas of Sri Lanka will have to be worked out.

But the Indian government, and more particularly the Tamil Nadu government, must differentiate between the Tamil population in general, which wants peace, and the terrorists, who have categorically stated that nothing less than total independence will satisfy them. New Delhi needs to distance itself from the militants, which means that it must put a stop to their activities on Indian soil.

The highly emotive word 'genocide' has been used by the Indian government and the official media to describe the attack on Jaffna. It is somehow ironical — and has certainly not escaped the rest of the world — that just when we were getting so indignant about the Sri Lankan action, at least 100 people died in a communal carnage in Meerut — many of the victims being killed in cold blood by the police, according to reports — and over 50 in an inter-caste massacre in Bihar. Isn't it time we cleaned up our own backyard before pointing an accusing finger at others?

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him now? The police has to use discretion in these matters. We should not use a big machine to beat a butterfly."

This official collusion is precisely what the citizens of Tamil Nadu grumble about. A recent article in *India Today* states how militants are allowed to roam around metropolitan areas fully armed and are seldom arrested, even when non-bailable warrants have been issued in their names against past crimes. The police officials deny

identified about 500 people so far," Prabhu claims. "But their original lead that implicated some TELO people has led the police nowhere."

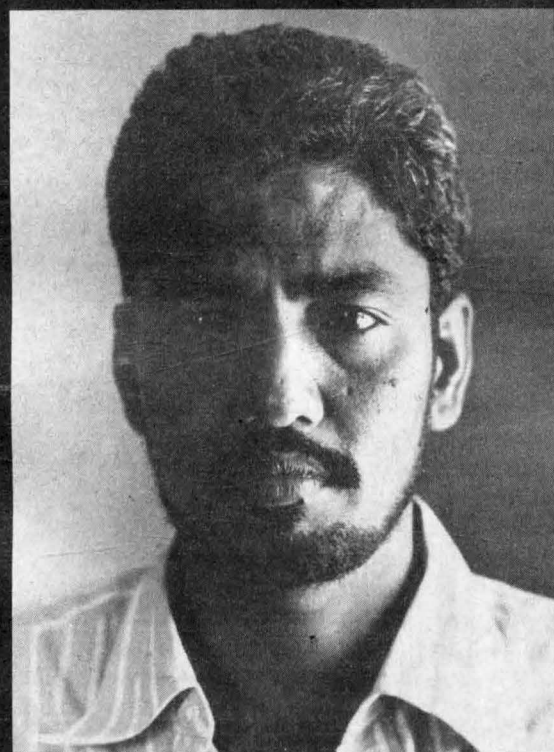
Where will it all end? There is a legitimate fear that if Jaffna falls and there is an influx of refugees or militants, the situation will only worsen — crime-wise. "The cult of violence is already increasing in Tamil Nadu. One hears that local Tamil groups are being trained in guerrilla methods," says Cho Ramaswamy.

internecine warfare between the rival groups has been brought into the streets of Tamil Nadu. To gain supremacy the Tamil Tigers have been known to wipe out organisations like the People's Liberation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE). If Jaffna falls, these battles may become more vicious — with long-term repercussions for Tamil Nadu as a whole.

HAD INDIA never got involved in the Sri Lankan problem, then it had one option: to treat the whole thing as a neighbour's internal affair. Now that option no longer exists and there is no easy solution in sight. The Sri Lankan government's hard line against even simple gestures like the deployment of food and aid to the Tamil civilians, makes it clear that they are not going to be threatened or intimidated by Big Brother tactics. Sympathy in the West seems to be with the Jayewardene government. And sealing our borders to the refugees from Rameswaram will not be possible considering the strong ethnic bonds that tie the people of Tamil Nadu to their counterparts in Sri Lanka.

Perhaps, the only solution India should opt for would be one that did not disturb her hitherto peaceful relations with this island neighbour. Tissa Jayakody, the pugnacious Deputy High Commissioner of Sri Lanka puts it best when he says: "Sri Lanka is willing to negotiate any time if India can bring the militants to the table. What India must not lose sight of, however, is the lasting relations between our two countries. Any other solution may be short-term and drastic." Jayakody, ironically, sounds a lot like Rajiv Gandhi discussing the Punjab problem. After all, one man's genocide is another man's police action.

But negotiations and settlements seem a long way away today. Domestic opinion is strongly in favour of a hard line action. And pushed to the wall, as he already is, does Rajiv Gandhi have the space to hold out for the long-term option? ♦



"We want India to support us in every possible way," V Balakumar one of the three members of the Executive Revolutionary Committee that heads EROS, says calmly. "Not send down an army. Even if they sent in arms to us, we could do the rest."

this. According to them, since November 1986, the militants no longer have it so easy.

But a disturbing fact is that crime is no longer confined to the Sri Lankan Tamils. S L Prabhu, General Insurance surveyor, was, in a bold move, robbed of valuables and jewellery worth Rs 75,000 on April 13 this year. Three Sri Lankan Tamil youths barged into the house, ransacked it by holding up the Prabhus at gunpoint. And since then there have been no arrests. "I must have

One such incident may have been the bomb explosion that took place on the Marudayar railway bridge on March 15 this year. Eight bogies of the Madras-Tiruchi Rockfort Express collapsed, killing 25 passengers and injuring 64. Although the police have declared it to be the work of a small-time left-wing organisation, the people of Tamil Nadu are not convinced. It is generally believed that the organisation was trained by a splinter group of the militants.

Besides, claim the Tamilians, the

"We don't have the capacity or the desire for

The West is generally perceived to be on the side of protection of human rights. Amnesty International and Yet, after India's action of air-dropping supplies to Jaffna, the West has become

FINANCIAL TIMES

EUROPE'S BUSINESS NEWSPAPER

Intransigence In Sri Lanka – Editorial comment, June 4, 1987.

It is difficult to overstate the risk to the regional stability of South Asia if India were to continue to flout international law and to encourage a flotilla to penetrate Sri Lankan sovereign waters without permission. The internal crisis in Sri Lanka is difficult enough, but the new dimension of Indian nationals being encouraged by their government to set sail for Sri Lanka's Jaffna peninsula with aid and provisions for the beleaguered minority Tamil community, under attack from government forces, has raised the issue potentially to the level of a major international conflict. . . .

There is some urgency to getting all sides into constructive discussions. Tension is rising daily, inflamed by terrorist outrages in Sri Lanka. If the internal conflict gets very much worse for much longer, India could come under irresistible pressure from the 50 million Tamils in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu to intervene. The consequences for both Sri Lanka and southern India would be a good deal worse than making significant concessions now to placate Sri Lanka's Tamils and restore some unity and hope of economic recovery before it is too late.

The Daily Telegraph

THURSDAY, JUNE 4, 1987

Mantle Of The Raj – Editorial comment, June 4, 1987.

INDIA'S decision to send a maritime

relief convoy to the Tamil rebels besieged in Jaffna in Sri Lanka marks its first direct intervention in the internal affairs of its southern neighbour. It is a decision that will command little sympathy in this country. The Tamil separatists of the island's north claim that they are the victims of Sinhalese racial and religious discrimination, and that only the achievement of autonomy will rectify their grievances. The Sinhalese riposte that autonomy would almost certainly lead to secession. They also point out that many Sri Lankan Tamils oppose separation and are as outraged by the vicious and provocative behaviour of the Tamil 'fighters' in recent months as the Sinhalese majority itself.

India will therefore be ill-advised to strike a moral attitude over its espousal of the Tamil separatists' cause. But the intervention highlights a larger pattern in the conduct of Indian foreign policy that makes the moralism inherited from the Nehru years increasingly inappropriate an attitude for the great power of South Asia to strike. Sri Lanka now becomes the fifth of India's small neighbours whose politics Delhi deems to be a legitimate concern of its national interest. The external affairs of the Himalayan states, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan, are controlled to a greater or lesser extent by Delhi, while Bangladesh, formerly the eastern wing of Pakistan, was brought to independence by the direct intervention of the Indian army.

It does not require an overlong memory to recognise similarities between the development of the Indian Republic's and the British Raj's exercise of power in the sub-continent. The British did not exactly acquire the Indian Empire in 'a fit of absence

of mind'. There was always a strong 'forward' party among the British rulers of India and its counsels often prevailed. But it prevailed over contrary counsels of caution and non-intervention largely because crises in the Raj's sphere of influence confronted the Raj with an urgent need to act. The Tamil rebellion is such a crisis. It would be fitting if Delhi now conceded that its current policy towards Sri Lanka is dictated by the logic of great power politics and not by some moral principle which the outside world will find difficult to identify.

THE TIMES



SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 1987

The Tigers Refuse To Be Tamed – From Michael Hamlyn, June 5, 1987.

. . . Though we were a thousand feet up in a helicopter it was plain to see that most of the main streets had been devastated, especially along the sea-front. There was a great deal of recent damage, which was done by shelling from the sea, by aerial bombing or by guerrilla mines and booby traps. Most probably all three.

The commanding general of the Sri Lankan armed forces, General Cyril Ranatunge, insisted that he and his field commanders, always had in mind the principle of the use of minimum force.

On the issue of a second phase to the military offensive, he said: "It is not a question of moving from place to place. It is a question of getting a political solution." At present that seems some distance away, and the wording of a funeral slab in the entrance of the splendid old Dutch church inside the Jaffna fort seems

confrontation... We're helpless." – Sri Lankan Government

even some European governments have chastised Sri Lanka for violation of Tamilian civic rights there. critical of our policy. Excerpts of what the Western press think of the Sri Lanka crisis.

appropriate. The slab, covered with broken glass and rubble from the roof tiles, reads: "*Hoe Lang is de Eeuwicheyd?*" How long is eternity?

THE ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL

Indian Jets Drop Relief Supplies In Jaffna – By Matt Miller, June 5-6, 1987.

... The Indian government continued to portray its efforts in humanitarian terms, citing 'the long suffering and beleaguered people of Jaffna'. But the use of military aircraft has brought into further question India's already-suspect motives in the relief operation, which some observers here and in Colombo had seen as a way to appease domestic pressures while scoring points internationally.

However, this latest action is highly provocative and could likely reinforce the long-held image in South Asia of India as a neighbourhood bully, sources said.

India "had packaged relief efforts beautifully," an Asian diplomat said. "Now, it's lost the whole propaganda value" of its unarmed convoy. The diplomat added: "I thought (India) would be more sensitive to regional considerations." A Sri Lanka government official added: "It was a case of overkill."

... Conflicting versions on Sri Lanka's response to the convoy cast some doubt on India's intentions. According to a spokesman for India's External Affairs Ministry, the Sri Lankan navy refused to allow the 19 fishing boats flying Red Cross flags, accompanied by a coast guard vessel carrying more than 100 local and

foreign journalists, into Sri Lankan waters. But a Sri Lankan government official said the navy agreed to allow the boats to unload their cargo of food and medicine at Kankasanturai, a small town 20 kilometres north of Jaffna.

The government official also said that when told of the impending airlift on Thursday afternoon, Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India, Bernard Tilakaratna, requested 24 hours to work out a distribution plan. This was refused, the official said and the planes took off from the southern city of Bangalore one hour later.

Attention now is focussed on Colombo and the possible retaliation against Tamils living outside Jaffna. The airlift came two days after 29 Buddhist monks were massacred in central Sri Lanka, allegedly by Tamil militants. The majority Sinhalese are primarily Buddhist, while the minority Tamils are mostly Hindu.

FINANCIAL TIMES

EUROPE'S BUSINESS NEWSPAPER

Battle For Tamil Hearts, Minds And Stomachs – From John Elliott Velvettithurai, June 6, 1987.

... A three-mile long bunker called Canada, and regarded by the Tigers as their main defence, took two days to capture and is now a mass of rubble. "The Tigers always said Eelam (their name for an independent homeland) would fall when Canada fell," said Brigadier Gerry de Silva.

"There was no warning at all last Tuesday week. The planes came in 5.45 am and they bombed and bombed till 6 pm," said Mr J Nathan, a quantity surveyor.

"Seven helicopters came in and shot along the streets. Three Avro transport planes dropped incendiary bombs on houses and there were five other bombers as well," said Mr Sinha, a lorry driver.

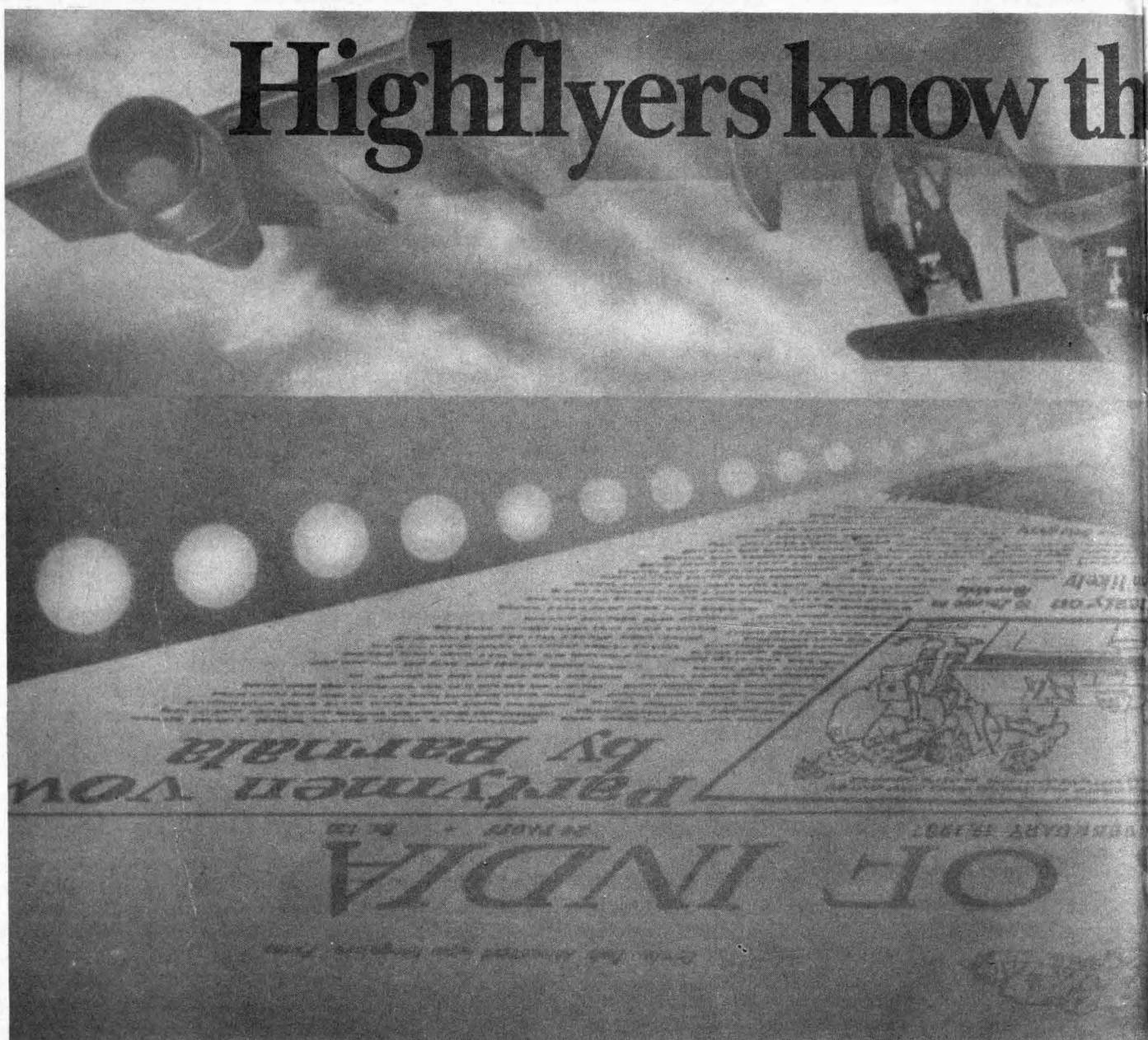
He was referring, almost certainly with some exaggeration, to part of Sri Lanka's limited air force of 25 Bell 212, 412 and 206 civilia helicopters, converted with machine guns and rocket launchers, six new SIAI-Machetti two-seat turbo prop trainers which have been converted with guns and rocket pods and were doing the bombing, and some antique Avro 748 transports.

There is no sign of the 'carpet bombing' alleged by India, or the massive civilian casualties and starvation which India used as justification for its violation of Sri Lankan airspace to drop relief supplies on Thursday.

"We did have bombing on concrete bunkers where there was heavy resistance. They were destroyed by air when the infantry asked for help," said General N Seneviratne.

People in the temple were divided about whether they wanted India to intervene. Most wanted arms sent to them or the Tamils to help them defend themselves, but few wanted India to invade. They knew little about Thursday's drop of relief aid.

Mr Athulathmudali was more cautious. With a glance to foreign journalists to ensure we were listening, he said: "Indian food be careful, diarrhoea, you know." He appeared to acknowledge an implied threat by India to intervene again if government forces renewed their attacks on the Tigers, but laughed: "It's like a big brother trying to bully a small brother – the small brother goes between the legs of big brother." ♦



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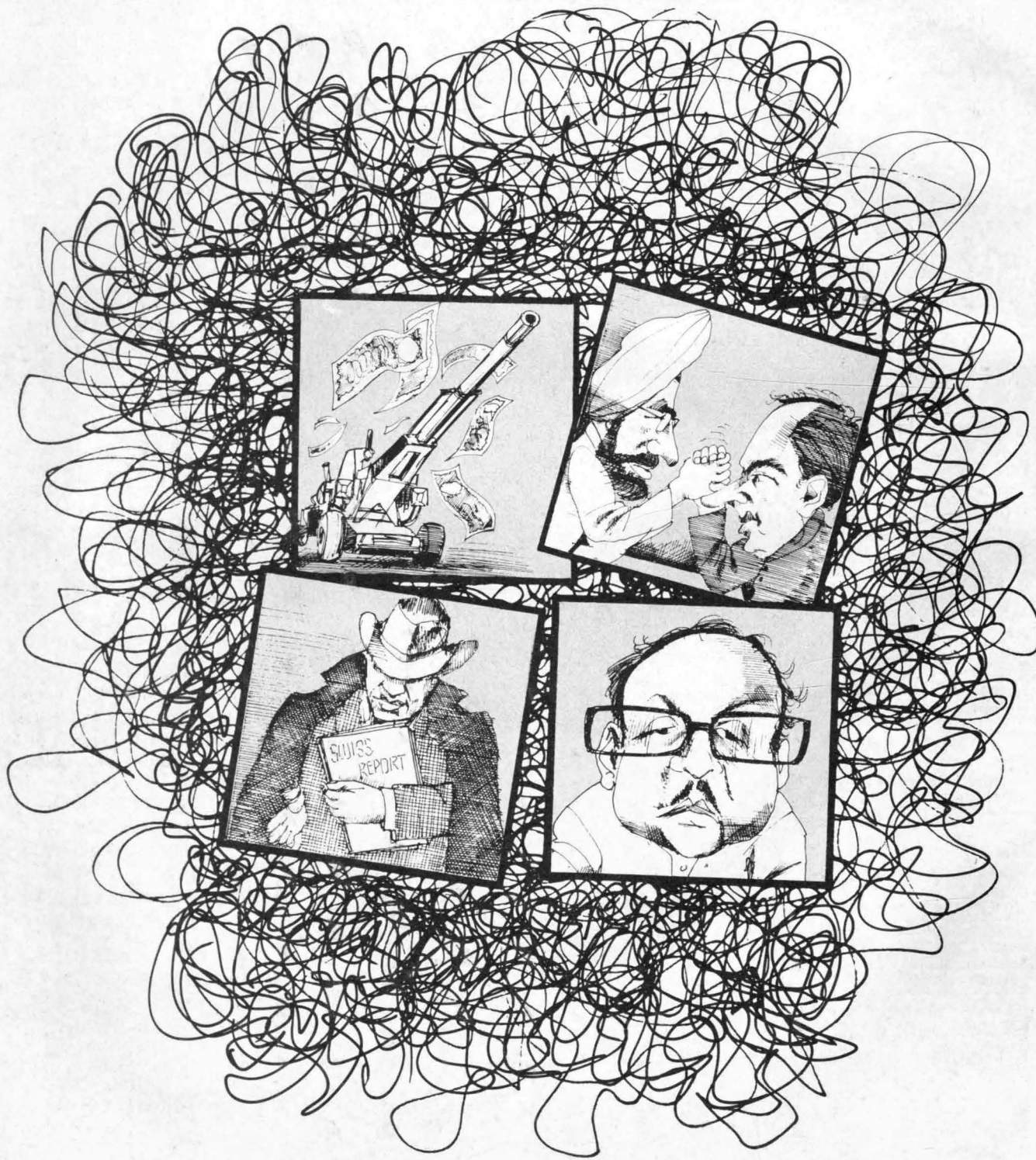
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THE PEOPLE'S VOICE



Never has the Indian press had it so good. The unprecedented spate of political scandals in the last few months have spawned sensational headlines, week after exciting week, flooding the Indian public with a virtual media blitz.

V P Singh's transfer from finance to defence. The Fairfax controversy. V P Singh's resignation. The Bofors deal. The President-PM confrontations. The issues have tumbled out, fast and furious. But in the recent glut in the printed word, in the vast array of information or misinformation, how much has the reader – the common public – assimilated, of these 'national crises'? **IMPRINT** spoke to a wide cross-section of people – executives, managers, school teachers, government employees, doctors, advocates, social activists, businessmen, typists and secretaries – to find out what they felt about the recent controversies.

K L Khandpur, ex-chairman of the Censor Board:

The Bofors deal

The public has a right to know the facts. Hence a proper investigation should be conducted. But somehow, I feel that things are being covered up. The Indian government should not depend on the Swedish government to hold an inquiry. Some investigation should be done here too.

The Fairfax controversy

Here also, the terms of reference are not comprehensive enough. There should be another agency or commission to go into foreign accounts and other such matters.

The President – PM rift

Both are at fault and should have conducted themselves with dignity and grace. But the PM is more to blame because after all, the President is completing his term shortly so the PM should have been more gracious to him.

V P Singh's resignation

He was not given a fair deal by Rajiv Gandhi. V P Singh has emerged out of the whole controversy with a definite edge over the PM.

Mrs Hemavathi Pal, school principal:

Bofors

The allegations made over Swedish Radio keep changing every time. One wonders how true they are. Something is fishy.

Fairfax

Why should the finance ministry appoint a foreign agency? How does one know that it's above board as far as its credibility is concerned?

President – PM rift

As heads of state, both behaved badly. The President's recent statement seeking reconciliation should have come earlier. Their differences should have been solved amicably instead of being blown up to such ugly proportions. Such rifts have repercussions on the nation which always feels insecure when there is a political or economic crisis.

V P Singh's resignation

Maybe he had his faults, but Rajiv Gandhi has lost an honest man and a good administrator whose presence in the Cabinet gave credibility to his government. It's sad he had to go. It's a great loss to the Congress.

Mrs Rhoda Hodiwalla, Government employee:

Bofors

In a multi-billion deal, it is naive to think that there are no kickbacks even if the deal is between two governments. And our bureaucrats and party functionaries are no saints. The only way to prove this is to investigate and this can be done by checking if those implicated in the case are living beyond their means.

Fairfax

The ministry of finance has done the

right thing in ordering a probe.

President – PM rift

The PM is foolish. Why is he afraid of keeping the President informed? The President, of course, cannot overrule the PM but it is his prerogative to receive information from the PM.

V P Singh's resignation

He should not have been shifted from finance to defence in the first place. Maybe he was not the ideal person, but he is definitely the best available person in the party.

P K Ramchandran, economist, World Bank:

Bofors

Government organisations normally follow the procedure of accepting the lowest quotation (for a contract). The defence ministry, as part of the government, should have followed this practice.

This whole business of kickbacks is very wrong. As for appointing commissions of inquiry into such deals, they are never independent organisations and moreover the facts are not made known to the public.

Fairfax

There was no harm in appointing it. But what followed was quite confusing and now Hershman (Michael Hershman, President of the Fairfax group) is only creating more confusion. I also feel the taxpayer has a right to know all that seems to be going on. Even the PM has agreed that

OPINIONS

there is something basically wrong in the way that Indians keep going to Switzerland to lock up their money.

President — PM rift

Since the President is the supreme commander of the armed forces, I feel he has the right to any information about defence deals. What the PM is doing is not correct. Nothing should be kept a secret from the head of the state.

V P Singh's resignation

He did the right thing by resigning. If he hadn't, his image would have been tarnished.

S S Pujari, doctor:

Bofors

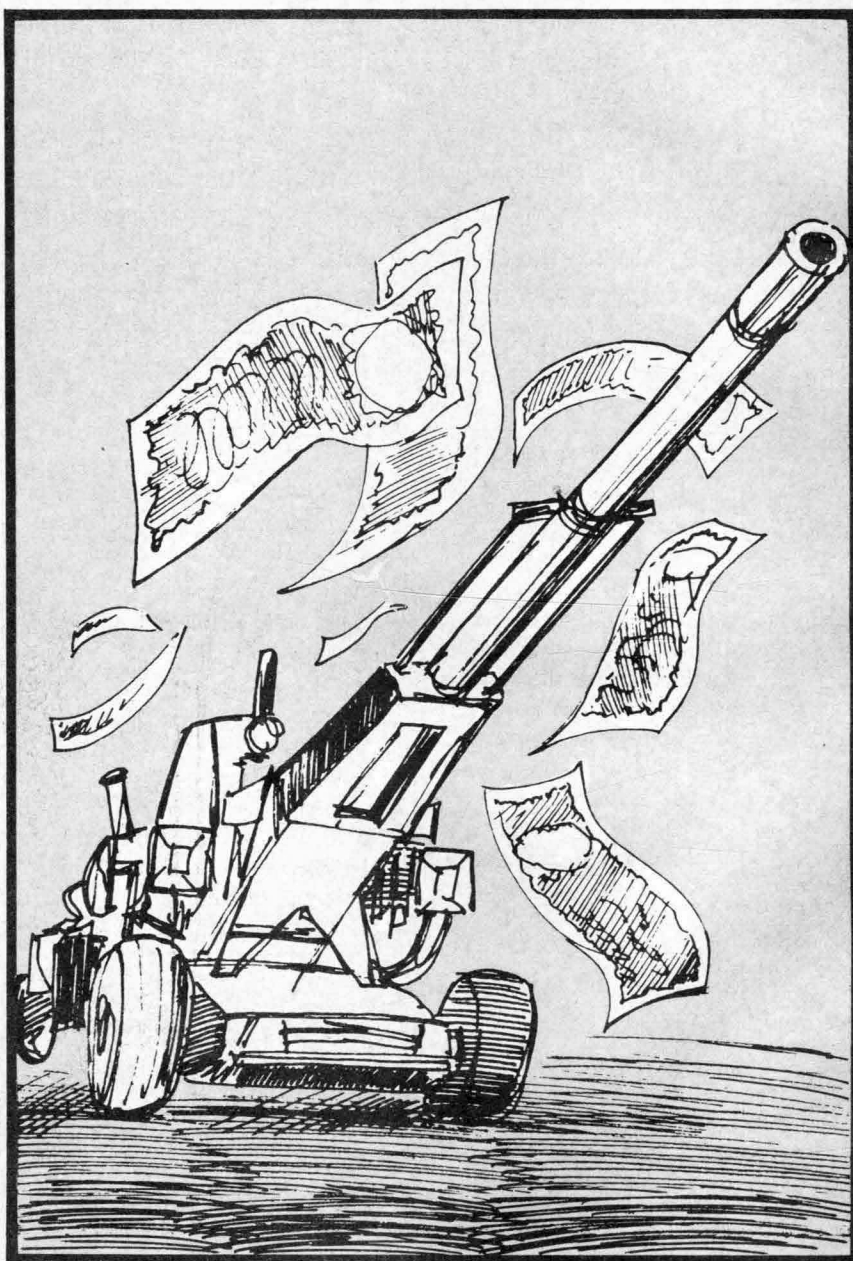
There may be kickbacks but this is not something new. But the allegations made on Swedish Radio make one suspicious, since they keep changing from time to time. And there is no proof so far. It all seems motivated against Rajiv Gandhi and his government.

Fairfax

It isn't right to hire a foreign agency which can at any time blackmail the government. Moreover, it's against the ethics of any detective agency to make their findings public. But Mr Hershman's statements suggest that he is not just doing a job for a fee, like any other professional detective agency. It is also foolish to appoint a foreign detective agency for industrial espionage as vital information about the industrial growth of our country would be known and this can be used by others against the interests of our country.

President — PM rift

The President's position is almost like the British monarch's, the only difference is that he is elected here. And it's up to the council of ministers to decide how much the President should know. Sometimes, information is



withheld even from the most supreme body, the Parliament, on the discretion of the council of ministers. So similarly, they can also decide how much to tell the President. The President on his part should abide by the advice of the PM and shouldn't hobnob with opposition parties like a politician. It's also farcical if he thinks that he has the power to dismiss the PM, as the PM is the elected representative of the people.

V P Singh's resignation

I think the PM was very lenient with V P Singh. He should have been firm with him right from the beginning. Delegation of authority doesn't mean taking the law in one's own hands. He brought the situation on himself.

Rahul Agarwal, social activist:

Bofors

There's no proof till date about kick-

backs but if there are, then the implications are serious. It's a dangerous practice and the offenders should be brought to book.

Fairfax

Hiring a foreign agency is all right depending on the extent of investigation allowed. An investigating agency is usually professional but the way findings are being revealed to all and sundry by Fairfax, it is unethical and holds dangerous portents. It can become a method to blackmail the government. The agency should have been also asked to probe into the affairs of other economic offenders and not just a few business houses. This reeks of a partisan attitude as though someone is seeking a vendetta.

President — PM rift

The President should not raise such a furore because it's ultimately the Cabinet's discretion about how much should be revealed to him. And he is deluding himself if he thinks he has powers to dismiss the PM, for he is not a representative of the people.

V P Singh's resignation

He was getting immensely popular with the press and the public. He shouldn't have resigned, it was a hasty decision. He could have remained in the Congress and still fought for his principles.

Sudesh Mohanty, businessman:

Bofors

All defence deals have kickbacks, Bofors is no exception. It seems to be a new method adopted by the government to secure party funds. However, it's dangerous as it can endanger the security of the nation, for the emphasis would be more on the kickbacks rather than the quality of armaments.

Fairfax

Had an Indian agency been appointed, it may not have been able to function independently owing to political or business pressures. So it was right

to have a foreign agency. However, one wonders if Fairfax is in any way influenced by business rivals in India. This reduces the credibility of the agency and defeats its purpose.

President — PM rift

The PM is interpreting the Constitution in his own way. According to the Constitution, the President is entitled to seek information from the PM. The PM is wrong.

V P Singh's resignation

Instead of shifting V P Singh to defence which finally resulted in his resignation, the PM should have gone all out to support him. Now he has lost a very good and balanced advisor.

N Ravindra, bank executive:

Bofors

It shows an erosion of values — it's the outcome of politics without principles and commerce without morality.

Fairfax

The finance ministry was justified in ordering a probe but it shouldn't have restricted the scope to affairs of certain companies only.

President — PM rift

The rift is because of the immaturity and arrogance of the PM. The President should be accorded the normal courtesies by the PM and should be briefed regularly.

V P Singh's resignation

He had no other option since he was pushed too far. But he partly invited it by adopting a very rigid attitude. He had also antagonised industrialists by constantly hounding them like a policeman.

V Vishwanath, finance manager:

Bofors

It's possible there were kickbacks. It's generally prevalent in many deals, so it doesn't take one by surprise.

Fairfax

Fairfax is a professional body but the danger in engaging a foreign agency is that it may overstep its brief and gather a lot of other information about India which may not be in our interests.

President — PM rift

It was wrong of the PM to keep the President uninformed on important matters. I think Rajiv Gandhi acted highhandedly. Power seems to have gone to his head.

V P Singh's resignation

V P Singh is a sincere man but I don't think it was the right time to rake up such issues which only give a handle to opposition parties. In the process, he has embarrassed his own government. Rajiv Gandhi too is an honest person but in politics, survival is supreme, and he needs the support of capitalists for election funds. V P Singh became the sacrificial goat. He was left with no option but to go.

Beulah D'Abreo, personal secretary:

Bofors

I don't consider it to be a scandal. Don't most major deals have a provision for kickbacks? So what if it is a government deal? The only factor to be ascertained here is that owing to the kickbacks, there should be no compromise on the quality of arms.

Fairfax

We shouldn't have appointed a foreign agency. By doing so, we are showing a lack of confidence in Indian agencies. When will we stop disparaging everything Indian? And why restrict the range of the probe to only certain companies?

President — PM rift

Though I believe the PM would not have lost anything by keeping the President informed on all topics, I also feel the President acted like a politician. And after being so servile all this while, why is he raising such a fuss now, at the fag end of his tenure as

OPINIONS

President? He should now leave graciously and with dignity.

V P Singh's resignation

He is a good man, no doubt, but too pig-headed. When you enter politics, you do it with the knowledge that the system as such is corrupt. One has to contend with so many factors. He should have been more flexible. Naturally, Rajiv Gandhi had no option but to accept his resignation.

Prabhakaran, advocate:

Bofors

I don't think there were any kick-backs. All this was done to malign the government.

Fairfax

When we have our own machinery why should we employ a foreign agency? It also costs the exchequer so much. It's a waste of public money.

President — PM rift

I think it's a question of the interpretation of Article 78 of the Constitution. The President has no powers and has to act on the advice of the Prime Minister. Hence the PM is supreme and it's his decision to withhold information or keep the President informed.

V P Singh's resignation

He had to resign because he was not toeing the party line. Maybe he is an honest man, but he wanted to show off and act smart. He had no alternative but to resign.

Manoj Wadhvani, stenographer:

Bofors

Instead of wasting money on such scandalous deals, the government should do something to remove poverty in the country.

Fairfax

V P Singh was right in appointing Fairfax, since the public should also be aware of the shady dealings of the VIPs.



President — PM rift

The PM shouldn't use the President as a rubber stamp. He should keep him informed from time to time.

V P Singh's resignation

That's politics. But it was a great loss to the nation.

Pallabh Bhattacharya, printing technologist:

Bofors

It seems a huge amount of money for India to be paying — Rs 1,500 crore. It reflects a loose and corrupt administration. I have been reading most newspapers and magazines covering this, but I feel it became news only after the bribery came to light. It should have been covered even more extensively. But this enormous amount of money — for defence? What is its utility? I also feel that

foreign scandals are more rampant than national scandals.

Fairfax

I don't see anything wrong in appointing it. But V P Singh was too ambitious and expected too much. Ultimately he was defeated. What he did was good but he should have informed the government in advance. If the motive (of hiring Fairfax) was to strictly investigate, it's all right. But the real reason shouldn't be to harass industrialists, for they are the backbone of the economy of a country. I don't support V P Singh's attacks on industrialists — such attacks will impede the industrial growth of the nation.

President — PM rift

It is a constitutional crisis. No one knows the actual position of the President. I feel there is an improper delegation of authority — either make the President a puppet constitutionally or give him constitutional power. It shouldn't be so vague.

V P Singh's resignation

Well, he thought he was indispensable but he was wrong. The way he handled the hiring of Fairfax was wrong. Besides, V P Singh came to power knowing Indian politics, the Congress (I) etc. He had resigned earlier also, so he knew the rules of the game.

Dr Ashok Kothari, general practitioner:

Bofors

I don't see anything wrong in the government paying Bofors such a large sum of money — after all, if we're not sure of the quality of production in our own ordnance factories, there's no harm in approaching foreigners. And there are no two opinions about Bofors — it is a very old and reputed Swedish company. What I don't approve of is the bribes taken by the middlemen. Of course we don't really know whether there *were* middlemen or not, but if that is proved, it was a very unpatriotic thing to do.

Fairfax

It was the right thing to do, Fairfax is a very competent agency. I'm told this was done in the past also. As for the Bachchan brothers' involvement in all this, I really don't know much about it.

President — PM rift

Giani Zail Singh is at the fag end of his career, why does he want to know so much? It's like a fight between two brothers, after all they're both of the same party. But earlier too, some Presidents — Dr Rajendra Prasad, Sanjeeva Reddy — were uncomfortable at the end of their careers, they were also bitter. I feel it is totally wrong to choose a President from any party. But Zail Singh has behaved with dignity and seems very balanced. Rajiv Gandhi also does not seem very immature, after all, he has been consulting the Cabinet on this issue. But certainly all this should not have happened.

V P Singh's resignation

I'm very sorry about that — most Indians are. He was a loyal person, under a lot of pressure.

Sudhakar Kasture, import-export consultant:

Bofors

I feel the media has gone a bit overboard in its reportage of both Fairfax and Bofors. Though it hasn't really sensationalised the whole issue, its tendency to publish the comments of every MP, without throwing any additional light on the matter, seems overdone. The media should have concentrated only on the comments of important people.

Equally importantly, I feel that what has been printed on these issues (Bofors and Fairfax) is only the tip of the iceberg. People have the right to know the inside story, the truth. As to Bofors in particular, I strongly object to the kickbacks. Moreover since defence is a national priority, every saving should be taken into account. I know, for instance, the

foreign exchange problems that are prevalent today, so this kind of deal is a drain to foreign exchange.

Fairfax

What is known about Fairfax is not reliable, it is unsubstantiated. The whole issue is under a dark cloud. One can't say it was worthwhile hiring such an agency for such a purpose. For instance, what were Fairfax's methods in tracking down black money transactions? The people at the helm are the best judges, it is a combined responsibility — in that respect V P Singh *should* have informed the Cabinet about what Fairfax was doing.

President — PM rift

Both of them should be more dignified, after all they belong to the same party. There's no point in asking for a third mediator to intervene. This is a democracy, isn't it? Why can't they sit across the table and talk out their differences? Besides this is not a personal fight, the dignity of their respective offices should be maintained: they represent 70 crore people's consciousness. They should also caution their partymen from speaking on this issue.

I feel the President has a right to know. Moreover he can't issue any directive or command to the PM which the latter *has* to follow, so why deny him the right to know? I also feel this whole question of secrecy, of commission reports not being made public, is all wrong. People have a right to know.

V P Singh's resignation

There has been a lot of ornamental talk, at the PM's and the Opposition's level. It is all so gloomy. V P Singh reiterates constantly that he is a staunch loyalist of the Congress, yet he gives different interviews all over. The PM also does not say anything directly. This indecisiveness should give way to decisions taken at the government, party and academic levels.

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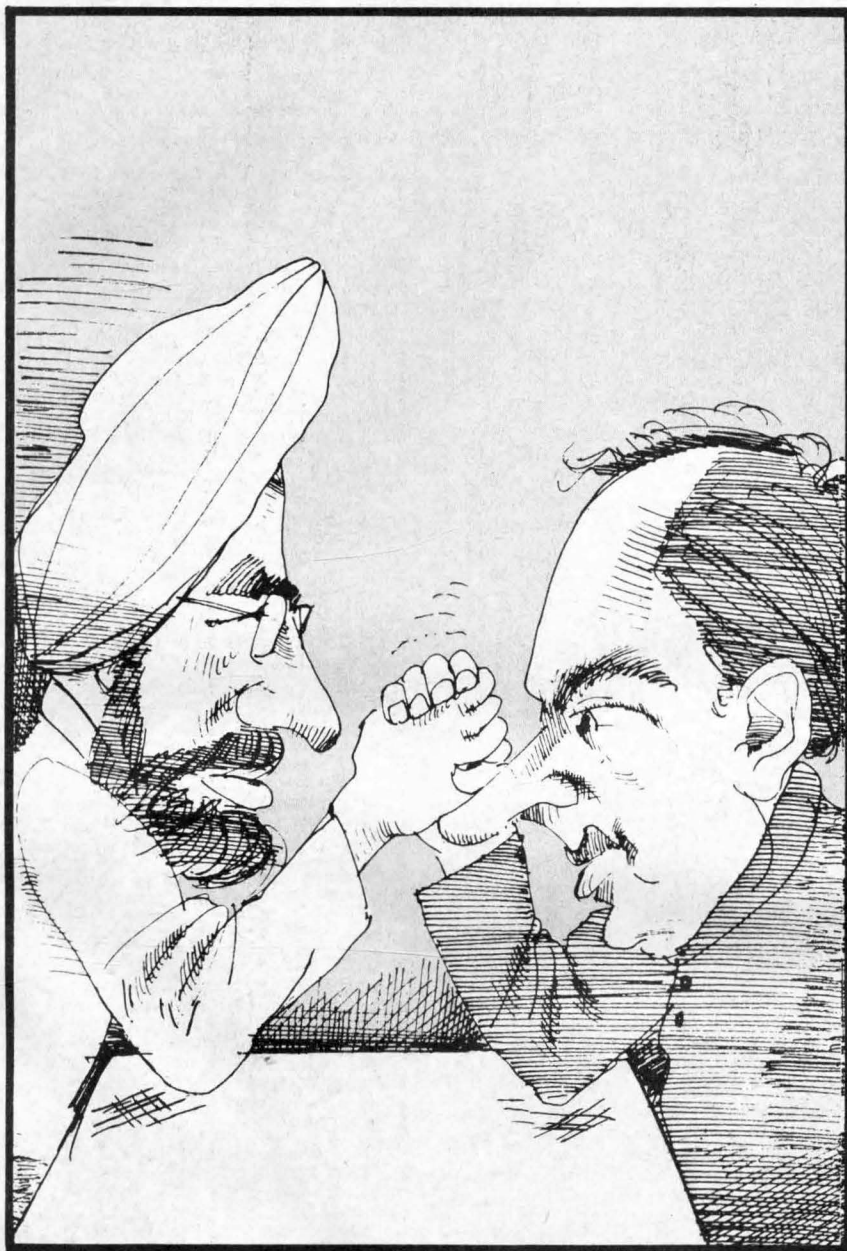
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Jagdish V Dore, executive:

Bofors

Right from Adnan Khashoggi to Ronald Reagan sending contras to Iran, it's a well-known fact: there are always agents in arms deals. So the issue is not whether there was an agent to him but whether the money paid influenced the decision on the type of arms bought.

Fairfax

There is no harm in appointing a foreign agency especially if they are experts in a certain field of investigation. The World Bank, in its IMF reports said that Rs 1,300 crore had been deposited in Swiss bank accounts by Indians. The then Finance Minister, V P Singh, *had* to track this down. He was already on a course of 'cleaning up' the government, when his focus shifted from industrial hou-

ses at home to politicians with Swiss bank accounts abroad, soon after Fairfax supplied him with the information. Besides, has anybody seen a crore of rupees? It's a large amount of money, and physically difficult to hide. It's said Amitabh Bachchan was getting Rs 40 lakh for a single film. Where was he keeping it? It's likely that he among other politicians did have a Swiss bank account. What is unfortunate, however, is that industrialists are using this opportunity to stab each other in the back rather than compete in the market place.

President — PM rift

The conflict has become more a conflict of motives alleged and motives accorded to the two personalities by critics. Rajiv Gandhi alleges that his motive in keeping certain official matters secret is in the interests of national security. While his critics say that he is doing so to protect his friends. The President says he has the power to seek and get information as and when he desires to correct the government and to establish the supremacy of the presidential office. Critics say that he wants to use this as a bargaining tool to stay on in power another term — so that his life may have adequate protection against terrorists who have him on the hit list.

In all this motive-mongering, the press has been taking sides — instead of interpreting or analysing the conflict. Girilal Jain, for instance, has, only in the last three months, been endorsing Rajiv Gandhi's actions: he has shifted course. It's been reduced to a media game.

V P Singh's resignation

He was the best Finance Minister we ever had. Rajiv Gandhi acted unfairly and his 'Mr Clean' image has been sorely tarnished in the process. His resignation only strengthens the belief that politicians were on the list of people implicated and V P Singh was gunning for them.

HEALTH IS WEALTH, says an old adage. But what happens when wealth-seeking becomes the *raison d'être* of certain upholders of the system that ensures and promotes people's health care? Not only does the entire system then seem to develop a vested interest in people's ill-health — which serves as a source of increasing private profits for its functionaries — but, in the process, the *truly* oldest profession of civilised humanity is dethroned to cater to the dictates of petty commerce. A profession which incorporated the first, and the highest, ethical principle of alleviating people's pain and suffering is then easily comparable to any business in which maximisation of profit becomes the overriding rule.

An extract from Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesis*, a book that exposes the rot within the medical world, is equally relevant in the Indian context today:

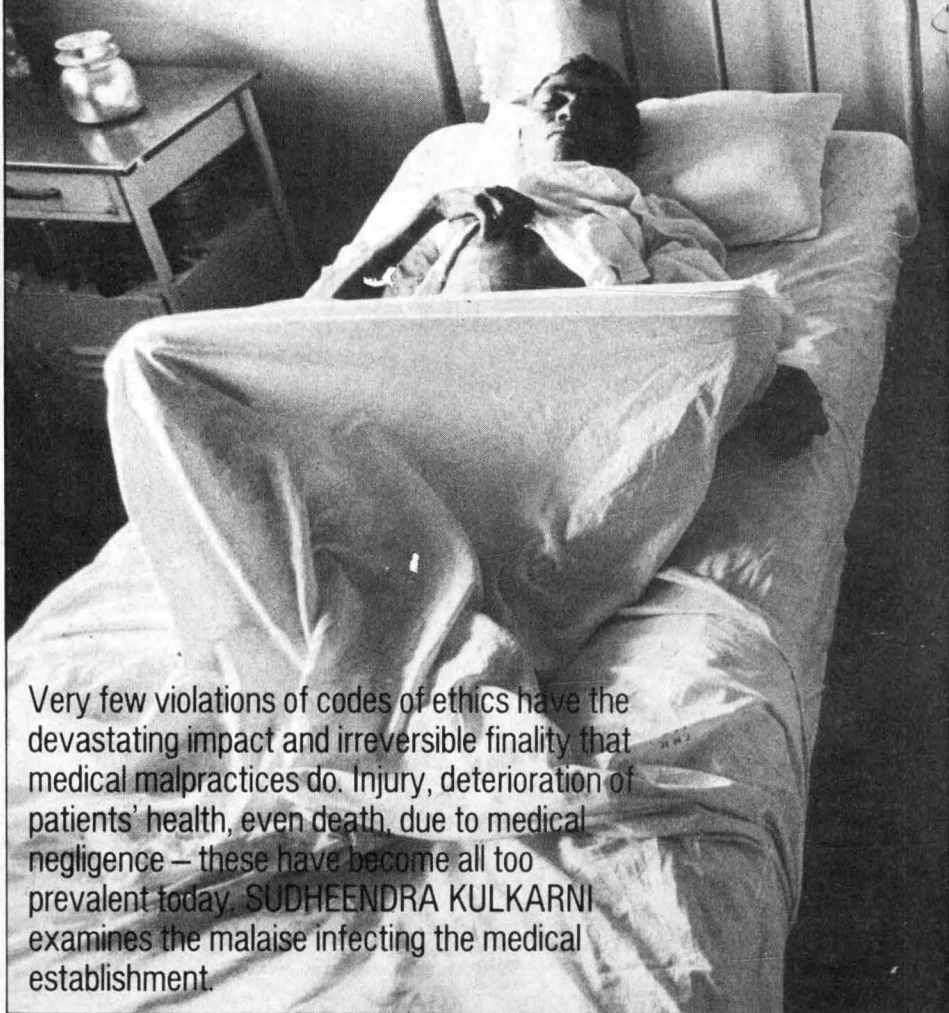
Doctor-inflicted pain and infirmity have always been a part of medical practice. Professional callousness, negligence and sheer incompetence are age-old forms of malpractice. With the transformation of the doctor from an artisan exercising a skill on personally known individuals into a technician applying scientific rules to classes of patients, malpractice acquired a new anonymous, almost respectable status.

Nothing illustrates this more strikingly than certain glaring iniquities in the health care system prevalent in India now. Consider the following:

- The Lentin Commission's probe into the deaths of 14 patients in Bombay's government-run J J Hospital last year, has already exposed the close nexus between unscrupulous drug manufacturers and corrupt bureaucrats and politicians. The administration of adulterated glycerol which caused the deaths is by no means an isolated case. Nearly 15 per cent of all drugs marketed in India are sub-standard or spurious.

- Barely three months after the J J Hospital tragedy, four infants died in

THE LUCRATIVE DIAGNOSIS



Very few violations of codes of ethics have the devastating impact and irreversible finality that medical malpractices do. Injury, deterioration of patients' health, even death, due to medical negligence — these have become all too prevalent today. SUDHEENDRA KULKARNI examines the malaise infecting the medical establishment.

Bombay's Alless Cama Hospital, reportedly after they were given an immunisation dose of triple antigen. Although a committee of experts is still probing the incident, the initial suspicion was that a muscle relaxant, 'scolin', was wrongly injected in place of triple antigen.

In an identical instance of reported negligence, five children died at D M Gandhi Hospital at Kadod in

Gujarat, in August 1985 after they were mistakenly injected with curare, also a muscle relaxant, instead of the triple antigen vaccine.

- Five new-born babies died of pyogenic meningitis in Bombay's municipal-run KEM Hospital in April 1986. The disease was caused by an infection of salmonella typhie (an organism fatal in the case of children), which was spread by a woman who



had undergone an abortion in the children's ward.

- In Lucknow's once-prestigious King George's Medical College Hospital, bribery is allegedly, the general order of the day. In June last year, one Sohan Lal, suffering from hypospadias (a disease causing disfigurement of the organs) paid Rs 500 to a technician to get operated out of turn in the plastic surgery depart-

ment. The technician performed the operation himself, causing Sohan Lal's genitals to develop gangrene.

- While abortion is a woman's justifiable right and is perfectly legal in India, there exists no ethical stance or standard by which one can support selective abortion of female foetuses with the help of sex determination tests. This is taking place on an alarmingly increasing scale, following the

patriarchal dictates of Indian society, which considers the birth of a female child a major liability for its parents. A recent study conducted by Dr Sanjeev Kulkarni on behalf of the Foundation for Research in Community Health, Bombay, revealed that as many as 84 per cent of the private gynaecologists in the city conduct amniocentesis tests and 50,000 selective abortions of female foetuses — a conservative estimate — are carried out each year.

- A cardiologist in a reputed 'five star' hospital in Bombay has a reliable method of acquiring patients. He arranges periodic visits to district and taluka towns in Maharashtra and Gujarat, with the help of some paid agents to hold 'free' medical camps. The patients who consult him are lured to Bombay with promises of free facilities for investigative and operative treatments. However, once the patient reaches Bombay, he faces the same procedure — payment of exorbitant sums of money at each stage of the treatment.

- Ingenious ruses master-minded by unscrupulous doctors, to defraud gullible patients, abound. A chest specialist in a Bombay suburb has devised a truly novel if roguish method of augmenting his income. He sends his semi-literate patients to a radiologist with whom he has a prior arrangement, for treatment. The radiologist inserts a one rupee coin behind the X-ray cartridge, causing a round patch to appear on the X-ray film. The specialist then advises the patient to undergo treatment for the next three weeks in view of the 'abnormality' revealed in the chest — at a cost of approximately Rs 300-500. A steady progress in the 'affliction' is then recorded on the X-ray, using 50 and then 25 paise coins. Finally the patient is declared 'fit'. This outrageous trickery has thus cost the patient Rs 1,000 or more, as well as a long period of artificially created anxiety.

- A doctor working in a mofussil town in Maharashtra has an even simpler method. He has a junk X-ray machine that never works, but that

The Oath That Started It All

IT IS NOT surprising that the earliest sphere of social activity for which ethical principles were codified in history, was medicine. In all probability, human beings' first notions of ethics were born when they were confronted with a medical challenge.

Hippocrates (460-377 B C), the legendary Greek physician who is regarded as the father of modern medicine, formulated the first known code of medical ethics. With the growth of medical science in the past 2,400 years, no trace remains of the many elements of the Hippocratic school of medicine. Yet, its norms governing the physician-patient relationships and conduct between physicians have survived to date as the guiding lights of medical ethics. The Hippocratic Oath is still administered to medical graduates in many countries including India.

The Oath enjoins upon the novitiate "to swear by Apollo the physician . . . to hold my master in this art equal to my own parents . . . I will prescribe regimen for the good of patients according to my ability and my judgement and never do harm to anyone. To please no one will I prescribe a deadly drug, nor give advice which may cause his death. . . Into whatever houses I enter, I will go into them for the benefit of the sick, and will abstain from every voluntary act of mischief and corruption, and, further, from the seduction of females, or males, of freemen or slaves. . . If I keep this faith faithfully, may I enjoy my life and practice of art, respected by all men and in all times.

But should I trespass or violate this Oath, may the reverse be my lot."

The purity, rationality and humanism of this oath have inspired and influenced all the later codes of medical ethics. The 1948 Declaration of Geneva by the World Medical Association — which was formulated in the wake of the most horrifying acts of barbaric cruelty by Nazi doctors and researchers during World War II — was an update of Hippocratic ideals in modern times. The declaration stated: "The health of my patient will be my first consideration. . . (and) I shall not be influenced by considerations of religion, nationality, race, party politics or social standing."

The atrocities perpetrated by Nazi doctors in concentration camps also provoked the adoption of the Nuremberg Code which laid down the rules for permissible medical experimentation on human beings. These rules were further elaborated and perfected in the Declaration of Helsinki (1975).

The World Medical Association has produced four other important statements: The Declaration of Sidney (1968) — a statement on death; The Declaration of Oslo (1970) — a statement on therapeutic abortion; The Declaration of Tokyo (1975) — guidelines for doctors with respect to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in relation to detention or imprisonment; and The Declaration of Hawaii (1977) — guidelines for psychiatrists.

eum. Taken collectively, they define a pattern of the state of ethics in India's health care system which seems to have become a rule rather than an exception. Says Dr R K Anand, president of the Association for Consumers Action on Safety and Health (ACASH), probably the only consumer organisation in the country campaigning against malpractices in health issues, "Not everybody in this field is corrupt. There are many honest and conscientious doctors. But what is worrisome is that their number is dwindling and the problem of the lack of ethics in the medical profession is assuming even more menacing proportions."

Dr Anand, a reputed paediatrician attached to Bombay's Nair Hospital, describes the situation as one of growing contradiction between a doctor's own perception of his profession as a noble calling in life and as a business undertaking. "Our colleagues sometimes rationalise the situation by asking why only the medical profession should be seen as a calling in life. When there is corruption in every other field, why single out the medical profession? While this is true to some extent, the important difference is that while the consequences of unethical practices in other areas may be indirect, in medicine they are direct and mostly irreversible."

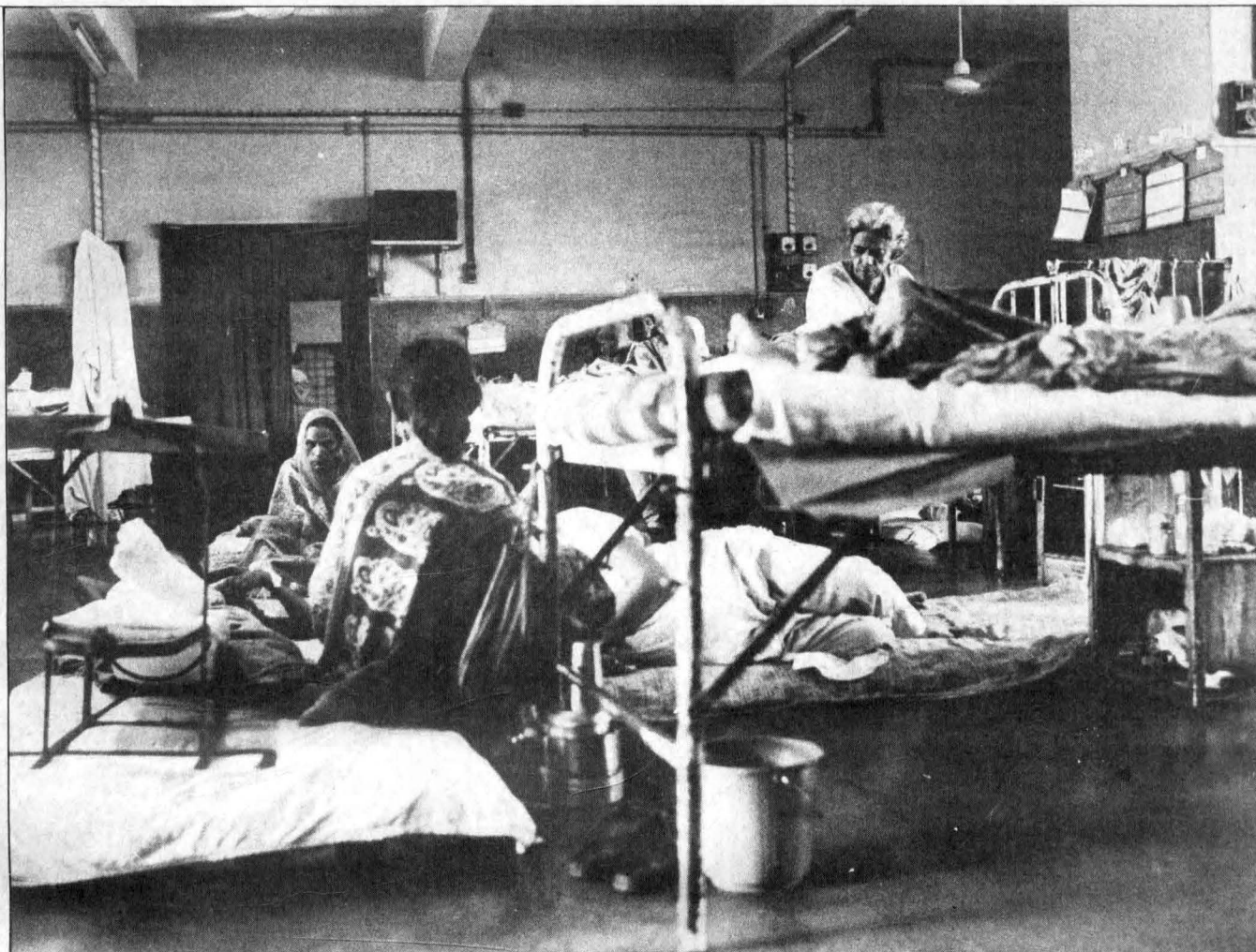
It is precisely because medical science and practice deal directly with human life that the question of ethics is posed so sharply in this field. While the scope of ethics is undeniably universal, it becomes even more important when it has a bearing on people's life and health. Unfortunately, in the case of both the press and society at large, the question of medical ethics is only understood in the narrow terrain of malpractices and scandals in individual cases. In reality, however, its scope must be seen to cover not only the functioning of the individual doctor or hospital but the entire gamut of economic and political realities operating nationally and internationally.

"It is futile to talk about medical

doesn't prevent him from providing the facility to his illiterate rural patients. Armed with a large stock of X-rays of TB patients collected from various hospitals, he makes a show of operating the machine. Handing out an X-ray from his stock, he informs the patient that he has TB and must

undergo a long treatment. He then starts a course of distilled water injections and 'medicines' (which have no effect, good or bad, on the patient) and supplements his already lucrative practice.

The list of such examples of malpractices can be continued *ad nause-*



ethics without taking into account the government's overall national policy on health, nutrition, education, housing, drinking water etc, and the mode of operation of powerful drug multinationals," says Dr Mohan Deshpande, an activist of the Lok Vidnyan Sanghatana, a Maharashtra-based organisation working for a pro-people science movement. "Indeed the scope of medical ethics is so vast, and therefore the lack of concern and awareness in the medical community so appalling, that an organisation like the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, (which incidentally, won the Nobel Prize in 1985) has declared even the campaign for nuclear disarmament as an ethical issue for doctors. Their argument is that since doctors are duty-bound to advise their patients about all sources of danger to their life and health,

how can they be unconcerned when there exists the greatest threat to the very existence of the human race — the threat from nuclear arms race?"

The need for understanding medical ethics from a comprehensive, holistic perspective is as paramount as it is ill-realised both among doctors and society as a whole today. Dr Deshpande illustrates this with a telling example: "When the Bhagalpur blindings were brought to light by the press a few years ago, there was legitimate outrage everywhere and the act was seen as the most barbaric violation of ethics and civilised behaviour. But few people consider that India has the largest number of blind people in the world, most of whom have lost their eyesight in childhood because of a Vitamin A deficiency. This deficiency can be easily removed by provision of green vegetables, fruits

and cheap tablets. Why do people then, not question our nutrition policy which could so easily rectify matters? Similarly, when drug multinationals consciously refuse to step up their production of life-saving drugs needed for curing common diseases like tuberculosis, leprosy, gastro-enteritis and other water-borne diseases, there is hardly any outrage in society."

As everyone conversant with the functioning of the Indian medical system knows, to a great extent culpability lies with the profit-seeking, monopolistic pharmaceutical companies, whose baneful influence has permeated the entire system. In 1984, only five to six per cent of the Indian people could afford modern drugs needed for their health care and another 25 per cent had access to them only marginally. Even more shocking,

Medical Ethics And The Law

What are the legal avenues open to the unfortunate victims of medical malpractices? Sudheendra Kulkarni outlines the law and medical ethics.

IN INDIA, although instances of medical negligence causing damage to patients and other violations of established medical ethics are all too common, the number of suits against errant physicians and hospitals for torts or civil wrongs are insignificant. Perhaps less than 0.001 per cent of physicians are dragged to the court by their patients during the course of their practice. The corresponding figure for an advanced country like the USA is 1.5 per cent.

But there are indications that the situation is changing, albeit slowly. The 14-month-old judicial probe under Justice Bakhtavar Lentin which is investigating the tragic deaths of 14 patients due to administration of toxic glycerol in Bombay's J J Hospital has already created legal and media history. Although there is widespread scepticism about its end result, the proceedings of the probe have probably heightened mass awareness over health issues. Noted Bombay lawyer Ms Indira Jaisingh, comments, "I for one, do not see the rationale behind prolonging the JJ probe like this. But it is obvious that unless there is a sustained popular pressure on the government to mend the ways of its health system, even a positive verdict in such probes will come to naught."

P M Bakshi, an authority on medical law, lists two principal situations in which a doctor or a hospital may be liable to pay damages in tort:

- a) Where the doctor resorts to an 'invasive' medical procedure without the informed consent of the patient, or
- b) Where, though the doctor has taken such consent, he has not taken reasonable care in diagnosing the ailment or in prescribing or administering treatment or in some other manner.

It is a general rule of law that 'in-

formed consent' must be taken prior to the performance of therapeutics on the patient, provided he is mentally competent, a major and in a conscious state of mind. If these conditions are not met, consent of the guardian suffices. Consent can be waived if the patient is unconscious and is in need of urgent medical aid. For the purposes of non-therapeutic procedure, such as experimentation on human beings for medical research, consent must come from the patient himself. Proxy consent is not allowed in such cases.

Medical negligence is classified into three categories: civil, criminal and contributory. Most cases of medical negligence fall into the first category. Civil negligence covers situations where damage is caused owing to lack of reasonable skill and care. The onus of proof generally rests with the patient or his relatives. But under certain conditions the patient can file a suit under the doctrine of (*res ipsa loquitur*) which takes into account circumstances when the plaintiff does not have any evidence but is convinced that he has suffered 'unusual' damage and that such injury would not have occurred in the ordinary course of events. In such a case, the doctrine holds that the fact that the patient has suffered injury 'affords reasonable evidence . . . that the accident arose from want of care'.

Mental illness, which is generally, but mistakenly, considered synonymous with lunacy, presents a wide variety of legal problems. Although the term includes adjustment problems, personality disorders, psychosis and so on, the Indian law addresses itself only to lunacy. The law itself — the Indian Lunacy Act, 1912 — is an outdated legacy from the British days.

Illegality is rampant in the way mentally ill patients are given psychiatric treatment in India. Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) or 'shock therapy' is indiscriminately given to patients and in a highly primitive manner.

Female foeticide through amniocentesis and other sex determination tests presents one of the grossest infringements of medical and even elementary human ethics. The issue has also become the focus of an unprecedented protest action by women's, doctors' and other voluntary organisations in different parts of the country. In response to the mounting campaign for a ban on sex determination tests (except for the purposes of detection of sex-linked foetal abnormalities, and these, only in public hospitals) both the Maharashtra and Union governments have promised to enact necessary amendments in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1974). The promise however has remained a mere formality, on paper, for a long time. Indira Jaisingh ascribes the delay to 'the basic lack of realisation on the part of the government of the urgency and the genuineness of the demand'.

If the issue of selective abortion of female fetuses with the aid of sex determination tests has posed a daunting challenge before women's organisations and all those committed to feminist issues, current medical research on sex pre-selection techniques is likely to pose a far greater danger. When sex pre-selection, artificial insemination and surrogate motherhood make an entry into India, they will most certainly lead to extremely hazardous consequences. Are the Indian society and its legal system capable of acting in time to block the entrance of this newest offence on medical ethics?



70 per cent of the people living in the rural areas and urban slums, who are the principal victims of endemic and epidemic diseases, had virtually no access to treatment with modern drugs. The drug companies, with the active patronage of the Central government, follow a deliberate policy of overpricing, under producing essential drugs, and other fraudulent measures, which in turn, create that artificial shortage.

There are over 60,000 brands of 3,000 drugs and chemicals presently manufactured and marketed in India of which hardly 2,000 are useful in all types of health care. In 1981 the World Health Organisation (WHO) identified about 260 drugs as essential and life saving, with the remark that 'each country should prepare a list, fixing priorities considering their

specific health needs'. After due consideration of the socio-economic conditions of our country, the Hathi Committee (1976) had earlier identified 117 drugs. The working group of the National Drugs and Pharmaceutical Development Council suggested a list of 96 drugs. Of course, this list of essential drugs needs updating at regular intervals with minor variations to meet the regional morbidity patterns.

As much as 65 per cent of the total drug production in the country belongs to the non-essential or harmful category. It is indeed a cruel paradox that while the majority of the population is starved of essential drugs — where 50 lakh doses of polio vaccine are needed, only one-tenth of the requirement is met; Vitamin A production in 1984 was only 50 per cent of the target set by the govern-

ment — the sales and profits of drug companies have continued to rise unhindered. The assets of the multinationals in the drug industry was Rs 10 crore in 1950; in 1985 the figure was Rs 2,000 crore.

The best example of non-essential drugs are the ubiquitous tonics, of which there are literally hundreds of brands flooding the market. The pompous claims of most of the preparations branded as cough syrups, B-Complex syrups, energy tonics, growth promoters, digestants, liver tonics, impotence erasers, etc, are pure hogwash. It is only due to the high-powered marketing sales pitch of the drug companies that a psychological need is created for such medicines among patients, ensuring spectacular sales.

A common fraud practised by drug companies is to keep the consumers

in the dark about the possible hazardous side effects of their products. Another is the continued manufacture and marketing of drugs which are banned in many developed countries because of their proven harmful nature. Analgin, manufactured in India by Hoechst, under the brand name of Novalgin is banned in its parent country — West Germany. It is known to cause fatal disorders called agranulocytosis (depression of white blood cells in the bone marrow). Yet, the drug commanded an annual sales turnover of Rs 17.02 crore in 1983.

Ciba-Geigy's Moxaform and Enterovioform (generic name: clioquinol) were banned in almost every country after they were clearly implicated as a causative agent for SMON (Subacute Myelo Optic Neuropathy, some of whose features are paralysis and blindness) in Japan in the 1960s. In India too, there are nine published cases of SMON. Yet, not only has its production been allowed in this country, but its output increased from 230 tonnes in 1979-80 to 365 tonnes in 1982-83!

The high-dose Estrogen-Progestosterone combination (EP Forte) drugs have been banned in the USA, West Germany, Bangladesh and a number of other countries as they are known to cause deformities in unborn babies. In India, however, they are freely sold for pregnancy-testing although there is no scientific basis for such use. They are even available at drug stores without a doctor's prescription. Their sales in 1984: Rs 5.38 crore.

The Operations Research Group (ORG), Baroda, listed Pfizer's Becosules among the 12 top-selling irrational drugs in the country. Yet, it is the chief money-spinner for the company; in 1984 its sales were Rs 9.98 crore and accounted for 32.57 per cent of the company's yearly sales.

The list of irrational drugs is a long one and includes such best-sellers as anabolic steroids, Phynylbutazone and Oxyphenbutazone, fixed dose combinations of Streptomycin and Penicillin, antihistaminics like Periacin which are promoted as appetite

stimulants, and antidiarrhoeal preparations like Pectocab.

A major unethical practice of drug companies is their aggressive promotion of the brand names of their products and their continued refusal to switch over to generic names.

An overwhelming majority of drugs in the Indian market are sold by their brand names, the generic names written, if at all, in extremely small type.

According to Dr Arun Bal, a Bombay-based consultant surgeon and honorary secretary of ACASH, the drug companies' reluctance to switch over to generic names arises directly out of their profit considerations, "Drug prices are bound to come down if a switch-over to generics is made," he says. "The companies are able to charge artificially hiked prices for their brands because they have been able to create a 'brand image' and a 'brand loyalty' by their aggressive promotional and marketing techniques over the years. As much as one-third of their total outlay is spent as advertising and promotional expenditure and administrative overheads — the costs being passed on to the user."

In medical education courses, all information about drugs is given in generics. Yet, when a young doctor starts prescribing he has to immediately switch over to brand names, for which his only information source is the drug companies. The amount of misinformation and disinformation about drugs that is spread by the companies often leads to doctors themselves getting 'indoctrinated'.

The Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), the chief spokesman of the drug industry lobby, defends brand names under the plea that they ensure 'reliability of product' and 'total manufacture responsibility'. This bluff has been convincingly called by Dr Amit Sen Gupta of the Delhi Science Forum in *Drug Industry and the Indian People* (1986) in which he writes: "Out of a total of 218 reported cases of sub-standard production of drugs in 1981, 135 were from 23 multinationals. Wh-



en drug companies talk of 'reliability' and 'responsibility', it must be remembered that in 1923, the League of Nations officially pulled up Hoffman La Roche, founder of Roche, for his involvement in cocaine trafficking. The same Roche and Bayer, two 'responsible' multinational companies today, carried out experiments of psychotropic drugs on pregnant Jewish women in concentration camps during World War II in Germany . . . Finally, the argument that change to generics will stifle research and production of new drugs is also baseless. If that were so, no drug research would be taking place in the Soviet Union and China where brand names do not exist but which have nevertheless achieved impressive results in making available modern drugs to their populations."

The promotional and sales tactics adopted by drug companies constitute another murky area in medical ethics. Presenting expensive gifts, free samples, organising tours for doctors, sponsoring doctors' seminars and conferences in five star hotels — all these are a common component in the companies' sales tactics. Dr Bal cites an interesting instance of how



a function on immunisation organised by the Indian Medical Association in Bombay to mark the WHO Day on April 7 a couple of years ago, attracted only 15 doctors, whereas a dinner meeting at a five star hotel sponsored by a drug multinational company on the same day was attended by several hundred leading doctors of the city.

That doctors too become willing accomplices in the money-making game is an all-too-obvious fact. At present, there is no legal limit on how much a doctor or a private hospital should charge for a particular regime of treatment or operation. Says Dr Anil Pilgaonkar, an independent health activist in Bombay, "It is an out-and-out seller's market in which the consumer has no say at all and the government willingly turns a blind eye to the goings-on. What is equally shocking is that almost all of a doctor's income is unaccounted, enabling him to evade taxes in a most blatant manner."

The scramble for more money has caused many unethical practices of private medical practitioners to take on an organised form. It has been a common feature in all big cities for general practitioners, specialists and

owners of pathological laboratories to function in tandem according to an unwritten agreement based on commissions and kickbacks. Says Dr Deshpande, "A GP sends a patient to a consultant for specialist advice and gets a commission in return. The specialist sends the patient to a pathological laboratory for investigation and gets his own cut. The cut may vary from 15-30 per cent, but can be as high as 50 per cent in the case of new entrants. It is obvious that such a system forces a patient to undergo unnecessary consultation and investigations only because it is a source of easy money for doctors. And the system works so rigorously that should a specialist fail to pay the GP his share in time, the latter immediately stops sending him his patients."

Since the level of investment in private nursing homes and hospitals is much higher than in private clinics, the scale of profiteering indulged in by them is also proportionately higher. It is well-known, for instance, that the so-called medical research centres attached to large, private hospitals are nothing but a clever ploy to transfer profits and keep the taxman at bay. In the guise of a Medical Research Centre established under the Societies Registration Act (1860), hospitals commission huge additional bed capacities, ostensibly meant for scientific research but which are in actual fact, given to patients on purely commercial lines. Not only is the income from this source tax-free (as per section 35 (2A) of the Income Tax Act) but the hospital is also entitled to several other benefits from the government.

Few things in the contemporary medical world are as hypocrisy-ridden as the system of honorary doctors in big private and public hospitals. The appellation 'honorary' is clearly a misnomer in their case since few of the doctors work on a nominal honorarium. A majority of them earn astronomical incomes because of their association with big hospitals. Many honoraries attached to municipal and government hospitals are also known to misuse public hospital facilities,

by admitting their private patients there, but charging them for 'consultancy' in their private clinics.

It is hardly surprising then that in such a predominantly profit-oriented health care system even elementary medical services have become so costly as to be well beyond the reach of the middle-class let alone the urban and rural poor. As Dr Ian Kennedy a well-known British health theorist, said in his Reith Lectures ('Unmasking Medicine') on BBC some years ago, "Now, more than ever, to be wealthier means to be healthier."

With so many malpractices permeating the structure of health care in India, where should corrective action take place? Conscientious activists and researchers in the field are agreed on a broad strategy which includes the thorough overhauling of the national health policy with priority on a people-oriented, preventive and community health approach, fulfillment of health-related social demands like proper nutrition, drinking water, housing, sanitation and so on, nationalisation of drug multinationals and strong curbs on profiteering in medical care.

But this by itself is not likely to make individual doctors more ethical in their functioning, unless there is a concomitant reform in medical education. Emphasising this aspect, Dr Anand says, "As long as entrance to medical colleges is based on capitation fees and the cost of setting up a dispensary or a nursing home is as high as it is today, you cannot hope to see young doctors motivated by a spirit of service. Also, medical students should have a full-fledged course in ethics and philosophy in their curriculum."

But in the final analysis, medical ethics are not separate from but only part of, the larger canvas of ethics in society. Therefore, unless that larger canvas is redrawn — that is, unless there is a radical, thorough-going social renewal on ethical lines at all levels — hopes for improving ethical standards in the medical field will remain illusory. ♦

SPECIAL FEATURE

ON A STILL EVENING in Domri village, in Beed district, as the hot sun begins to wane, there can be heard, above the isolated cawing of crows on the wing, one slightly more assertive sound — the roar of an excavator, as it plants its cavernous jaws into the hardened earth and comes up with a high mound of silt. As it moves off to the distant bunds behind which the silt will be deposited, there appear on the horizon a steady straggle of men and women armed with pickaxes, shovels and basins. There are soon about 300 to 500 people. Short, sharp whistles are blown, and the place is soon bustling with activity.

A wall is being manually put together stone by stone. Elsewhere, some youths are collecting the stones that will be used for the purpose. (The stone wall has to be about 10 feet high, three feet higher than it is now to prevent the rain water from washing the silt back in again.)

From afar, it may all seem like a clip from a silent film: one row of women passing the empty basin to the one next to her and the one next to her till it reaches a group of women huddled on the hillock, who fill the basins and pass it to another row of women who wait in turn, to pass the basins on to the girls standing at the stone wall with *dupattas* tied round their waists, who will arrange those stones into some semblance of architectural order.

This is no silent film, these are young men and women from the neighbouring villages in perennially drought-stricken Beed district, who are here to do *shram sadhana*, for the *dhanyata abhiyan* (fulfillment campaign) launched by Nanaji Deshmukh and volunteers from his Deendayal Research Institute (DRI), Delhi. It is 'fulfillment' in more than one sense. For Deshmukh, the veteran RSS leader and committed social worker, this project was taken up in the light of the DRI's success with Gonda, one of the most backward districts of UP, which, with the active participation of the local people, is today, an exam-

ple of flourishing self-sufficiency. For the people of dry, rocky Beed district, the campaign or *shibir* is an introduction to the concept of self-help, of community service and of looking beyond the government's scheme of things to have their needs fulfilled.

Year after year, Beed district is in the clutches of drought. What was perhaps not noticed by those who have attempted to alleviate the distress of the people, was the fact that 50 percolation tanks in the district were lying inutile. These tanks are said to have been built during the

time of the Nizam of Hyderabad who also ruled Beed at that time. Over years of neglect and steady accumulation of silt, they have become non-functional: they have no water holding capacity. Normally water would accumulate there during the monsoons and seep through underground to the wells and thus reach the people.

So a thorough survey was made of the district and its needs, by the DRI workers, and finally Sondara tank of village Domri was selected for desilting. The tank which is 1800 feet by 1800 feet by 10 feet, and has



THE GREENING OF BEED

The 'fulfillment campaign' of veteran social worker Nanaji Deshmukh and his band of committed workers, in drought-stricken Beed district of Maharashtra, is a successful example of flourishing self-sufficiency, reports NANDINI BHASKARAN from Beed.

fore the rains came. He toured the districts. "We did not press or convince the people. We just spoke to them and moved on," he says. And they did come — if not 2,500 people, about 1,379. They are mainly school- and college-going boys and girls from villages in the adjoining districts who know nothing of social work or shovelling earth. The divisional commissioner offered to pay Rs 10 per day per student but it was declined.

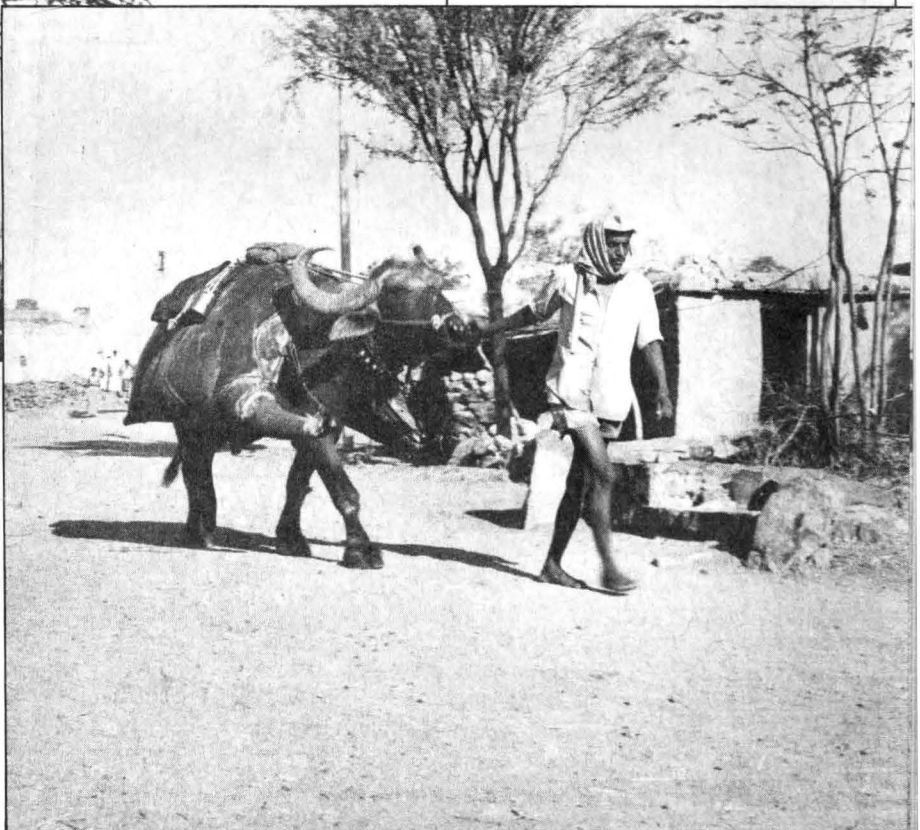
If the response was not sustained or as overwhelming as expected, "this is because May is a month of bank exams and marriages," says Deshmukh. Many villagers are away either attending marriages or getting married themselves. Laxmanrao Deshmukh, a high school teacher in Domri village, was away attending a wedding. His wife Kamal, who had worked with Vinoba Bhave in 1958 and finds *samaj ka karya* satisfying, is an active and articulate member of the village Mahila Mandal. She says she



a water storage capacity of 0.13 million cubic metres, will, when operational, solve the drinking water problem of about 10,000 people.

The cost of the project, according to J N Rathi, a company executive and long-time associate of Deshmukh, worked out to Rs 30,000 a day for food and Rs 8,70,000 for shelter, sanitation, electricity and water supply. Rallis India has helped with funds and Telco has provided an excavator.

Deshmukh made known his mission: that it would require the efforts of about 2,500 workers between May 1 and 31 to clean the tank of silt be-



Bringing succour from afar: a bhisthi (water carrier).

SPECIAL FEATURE

had always wanted to do something for the community, but until now the *prerna* (inspiration) for this was missing. This makes her rather unusual. For, "*Dehatis* don't have a sense of priorities," according to Bhagwan Anna Saheb Chaudhary, a high school teacher from Mazlegaon village (Beed district), who looks like he can be quite exacting. He is also supervising the progress on the stone wall. "Most of them are immersed in, and limited by themselves and their immediate families. This *abhiyan* is intended to make them think of their larger social context."

It is also a measure, a test of the public's desire to help themselves. "In the 15 years that I have been in active social work," says Nanaji Deshmukh, "I have found that people are interested in their own development much more than professional social workers are. These villagers have not come for name or fame: they have *volunteered* their services. While they may have had a feeling that 'we owe something to society', this has not so

far been channelised or used." Much of the apathy that beleaguers people, he says, comes from politicians going from house to house, making assurances and keeping none of them. "People con themselves into believing that without power or position nothing can be done. It is our youth power, the people's power that has to be used. I find our efforts have been fruitful. See, we have limited facilities here," he says, pointing to the *shamianas* of sackcloth, and the tents flapping in the hot breeze, "but still they come."

"It's not easy for them to come," says K D Joshi. This kindly, soft-spoken man set up a *gurukul* eight months ago on the same land in the valley, after giving up his job as a management consultant in Pune, and joining the DRI full time. "Ninety per cent of the villagers have just returned from the sugar factories, from cutting sugarcane and transporting it to the factories. Just 10 days ago, there were not more than 200 people here at the *shibir*: just some women and



Volunteers desilting Sondara tank.

old people. Agriculture is not gainful employment in the non-agricultural season. So between November and April-May the people of Domri and the adjoining villages of Ambejogai and Parli-Vajnath go away to Nasik, Nanded, Ahmednagar, Satara and Sangli districts in search of work." They get paid Rs 38.60 per metric tonne of sugarcane cut and transported, which works out to about Rs 1,000 per month, but this does not turn out to be entirely profitable, what with incidental expenses like hiring the bullock cart, and debts incurred when the income earned in two months has to be spread over six.

Given then the extenuating circumstances, motivation seems to be the key, and the reason for the presence of so many young people here. Pramod Badgujar is wearing a khadi shirt and is patting his Amitabh Bachchan hairstyle neatly into place before joining the 300-500 other *shram sadhaks* who are posing for a group photograph. Pramod is from Jalgaon. He had come to Beed to his uncle's place on a holiday, heard about the *shibir* and come to Domri. Pramod is a member of the Rashtriya Seva Dal (RSD), a Congress (I) organisation, and seems to be clear about what he's doing. "There are people who are interested in serving society like Nanaji — but there are people in the



Community effort at Domri village.



RSD and here too, who just talk. But most of the people who have come for the *shibir* work hard. It's not a frivolous interest. Some, of course, have only come to eat," he adds candidly.

Pramod's initial experience of community service in Jalgaon was tough going. When he spoke to the villagers about 'the national interest' and 'working for the people', they'd attend only to make fun of him — for about 15 days they did this, then realised he was serious.

"If we are able to identify 30 people who will devote themselves seriously to the service of the people," says Joshi, "it will be a major achievement at this *shibir*." According to him, about 25 have already come forward.

THIS IS ONLY a part of Deshmukh's 'wish fulfillment'. The geography and the particular needs of Beed district are realities that make wishes seem horses. Nevertheless, Deshmukh's vision seems to inspire the effort, to win over prejudice and antiquated thinking.

The desilting project was primarily undertaken because "Percolation," Deshmukh believes, "is the only way out of drought. There is no water underground in Beed. And the monsoon here is also so scanty. This is the

only way the wells can receive water."

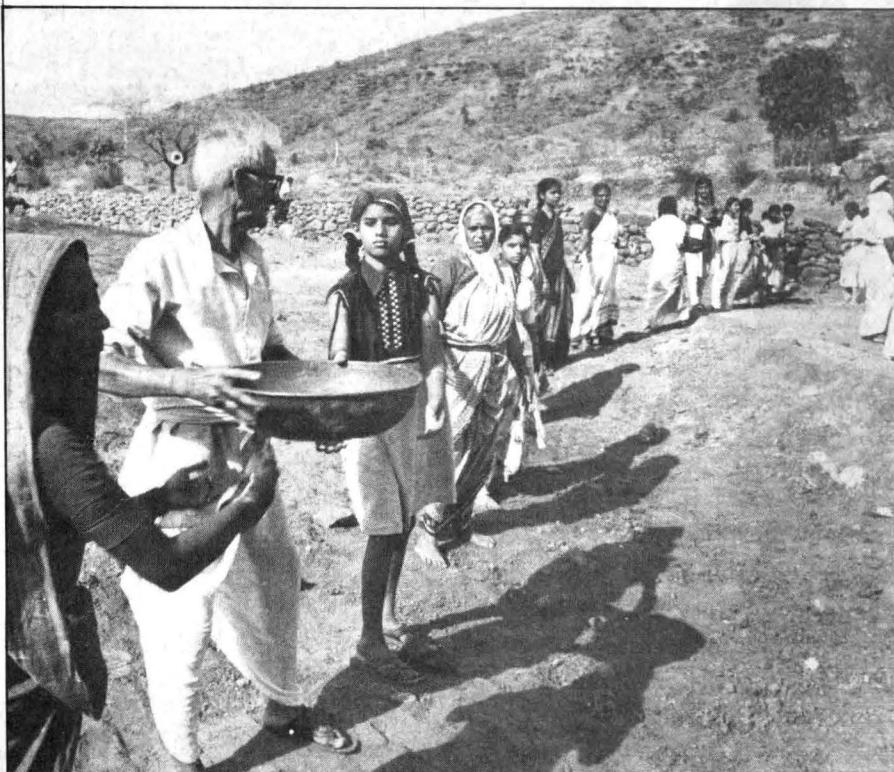
Drought in Marathwada is so recalcitrant because of two major factors: the first is the priority status accorded to the sugarcane crop in the entire state, not the Marathwada region only. Sugarcane needs a lot of irrigation, and sugar factories are a powerful lobby in the state. "The water resources are being exploited by them," says Deshmukh, "and therefore, the water level is dropping so speedily that water is not to be struck even 300 or 400 feet below the ground. And the rainfall is not sufficient to replenish this scarcity."

The other factor is the peculiar geography of the Marathwada region: the Sahyadri mountain ranges are so located that when the rain clouds dash against them most of the rain falls on the western side of the mountains, while Marathwada is in the east. So the yearly rainfall here amounts to seven to 12 inches only.

The aridity is visible as one leaves Aurangabad. The sturdy bougainvillea and the copious gulmohur that

line the city's roads, peter out en route to Beed, though these are trees that do well with little water. All that is grown in Beed is jowar, bajra, a few pulses and peanuts, all rain-fed crops. There are no green vegetables available in these villages in summer except for a bitter quality spinach, "for which you may have to go upto Beed", says Joshi. There is only the ubiquitous potato, and onion which the villagers eat in abundance, for it is said to prevent sunstroke. Cactii grow quite plentifully, some level with the ground, others in familiar swordthrusts of prickly succulence.

Deshmukh has found that the villagers do not cultivate more than Rs 250 worth of produce per acre per year. He chose Beed mainly to be able to show to them what more could be done with the same land. Some horticultural experiments carried out at Rahuri Agricultural University (on the border of Beed and Ahmednagar districts) have yielded anar, ber and sitaphal to the tune of Rs 15,000 per acre per year. "I want to create a mo-



Young and old help transform Beed district.

SPECIAL FEATURE

del here so that the whole of Marathwada will be able to follow it. Before this can be done, however, the people have to be made to understand the concept of say, 'drip irrigation'. *Boond, boond se kabhi ped uga karta hai?* is what they ask me," he says, with patient amusement. "Also, they don't know how to grow crops on the hilly areas: the land has to be serried." Deshmukh intends to have the forest department dig three circular trenches at descending levels, plant trees in them, so that the silt, which is excellent manure, gets deposited there, thus benefitting both the villager and the government.

IN ONE of the tents where the women stay, sits 10-year-old Surekha Sridhar Aghao, writing a letter to her mother in Daunapur, a village in Ambejogai taluka. Surekha has come to attend the *shibir*. She is in the fourth standard and is actively involved in teaching children at the DRI's branch in her village. She has large sparkling eyes and looks frail. But

this is how her letter may have read.

"Dear Aai,

I have been too busy to think about home, but I wanted to write and tell you about all that I'm doing and the many new things I've been learning.

The *shram sadhana* I came to do — to help desilting the Sondara tank — is only one aspect of the activities here. We've been organised into keeping to a disciplined schedule. My day is something like this. We rise at 5 am, rather bleary-eyed: yesterday, there was a thunderstorm, and in the short burst of rain and hail and lashing wind, our tents collapsed. We tried to put it up thrice, but failed: the wind was too strong, and surprisingly for this time of year, chilly. It was a very fitful night but then we're getting used to such hardships.

At 6 am, we are served tea. Then we gather for prayers, which include verses from *The Bhagavad Gita* and couplets by Rahim and Kabir. Then from 7 to 9 am, we are at work. So



Stricken by the ravages of drought.

far, it has not been strenuous. The last 10 days have gone in erecting a stone wall. There's still about half the length of the wall, about 300 feet, left to cover and not enough people to do it. Today there were about 150 of us, which isn't many. Since we don't know how to stockpile the stones, there are some peasants — they are conspicuous by their coloured turbans — who come on a daily wage basis to teach us.

The men carry down huge stones on their heads from higher up in the hills. Today a group of boys was struggling to roll a huge boulder. We do have a few implements given to us by the government. If we were to purchase our own, who would buy them off us later? We have to perform within these limitations.

There is a break at 8 am, when we drink water and sing songs, which is the part I like best.

We return to our tents by 9 am, quite hungry. Breakfast is usually *poha*, *upma*, *daliya* or gram, quite a variety, as you can see, and prepared in a huge tent in huge utensils by contractors from the village. We then get a couple of hours which is now, when I'm writing to you — to bathe, and wash our clothes, and talk.

Between 11 am and 12.15 pm, we form ourselves into small discussion groups, while the afternoon sessions



In search of the elixir of life: villagers migrate from Beed.



between 3 and 4.30 pm are usually for talks by visitors, like Vinayak Rao Patil, MLA, who spoke on *Vriksharopan* (tree-growing).

Sometimes the talks are a little high-falutin'. The other day, Mahesh Sharma, Secretary, DRI, spoke to us on Deendayal Upadhyay and his services to the country. He talked about how society is not a thing in itself and how it is based on the mutuality of individuals, and that Marx had said everybody must have food, clothing and shelter. It was 3 pm, the hot sun filtered in through the sackcloth. The younger children fidgeted, one leaned against a pole and soundly slept, while another spat expertly in the mud. Nanaji says the talks are meant to introduce these subjects to us, but he did agree that the speaker could have used simpler language. I learnt afterwards that the speaker was doing his PhD on Deendayal Upadhyay.

We have lunch at 12.30 pm. We take turns to serve the others before we eat ourselves. Lunch usually consists of *rotis*, dal, rice, a vegetable, which is mostly potato nowadays since it's summer, and several slices of raw onion. It's spartan but wholesome. Sometimes though, it's chilly hot: the people in the Marathwada region are known to eat a lot of chillies. Nanaji was saying that when he first came here, he found the villagers

didn't know the basics of cooking.

It was very touching the other day when one villager from Dombharwada, and on another day, one from Naigaon, did their bit by bringing home-made *bhakris* (*jowar rotis*) for all of us. They came, playing the *lejh-hin*, a local musical instrument. It was all very rustic.

The afternoon talk is followed by tea and then we pick up our basins and are off to work from 5 to 7 pm by which time the sun is going down, if ever so reluctantly! Dinner is early — 7.30 pm — and then there is usually an entertainment programme. Yesterday, Achala Joshi, a feisty schoolteacher from Beed and a marvellous mimic, gave us a one-woman performance, and today, it will be Sunita Pradhan's Kathak. Sunita says she wants to live with the villagers to eventually depict the villagers' condition through her dance, through the various *rasas*.

I don't know if I will come away with the same zeal at the end of the *shibir*: Nanaji was saying that 25 peo-

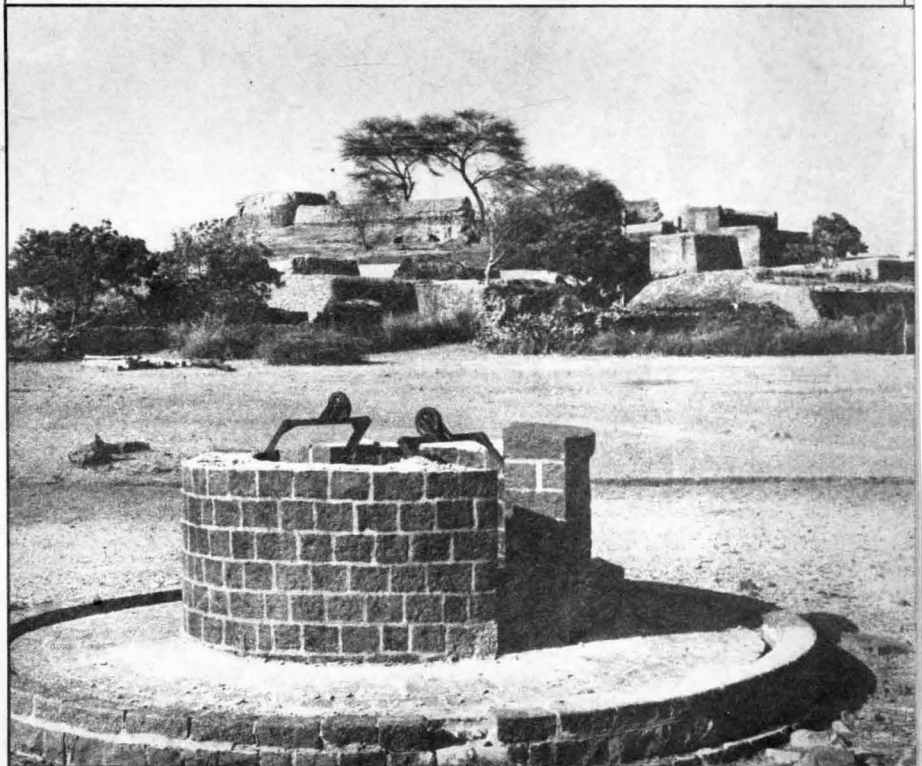
ple have offered their services full-time for the development of Beed. According to Joshi, all development is relative. And it has to happen at its own pace, given the exposure and the inspiration.

I better end my letter before I become too sententious. It's just that I came to the *shibir* to carry a few stones to and fro, repair the bund of Sondara tank so that the water, which will fill it when the monsoons come, will not overflow. But I've learnt a lot more besides. I'd like to plant a tree when I come back home.

Love,
Surekha

WHETHER ONE is planting trees, or teaching *acharan* (good conduct) to little children or showing villagers how to maximise their yield, it all ultimately devolves on a few individuals. Pictures of Gonda's verdant prosperity seem to mock the dry aridity of Beed. "But," says Deshmukh confidently,

(Continued on pg 51)



A deserted village encircling a dry and inutile well in Beed.





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THE RURAL MESSIAH

Nandini Bhaskaran profiles Nanaji Deshmukh, architect of the greening mission at Beed.

HE IS 73, has a noticeable spring in his step and frequently jetsets about the country (when he is not walking its dusty villages), actively doing what he has believed in for the last many years: that unless we activate the mass of the people in the task of national reconstruction, all talk of democracy and socialism is idle fancy.

Nanaji Deshmukh's vision of rural development has the smell of the earth in it. By stripping it of cliches and slogans like '*Garibi Hatao*', he has made it a largely self-motivated activity.

Born in 1916, Nanaji hails from Nanded. His mother died at a very young age. He was brought up by his sister. He left home young for Pilani where he did his schooling. He joined the RSS in 1932, because 'it was an organisation that was committed to working for the country's independence'. Prior to this, however, Nanaji remembers having gone to jail at the age of 12 — and receiving 11 whiplashings, for shouting *Vande Matram* in his school in Akola district. "The marks are still there," he recalls with quiet pride. "But not one of us wept."

He became a social worker in 1934. Then after the country got independence, Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, who was Minister for Industries in the first Government of India resigned in 1950 and formed the Jana Sangh. Nanaji joined the party along with Deendayal Upadhyay. That was the beginning of an active political career, which was to last until October 8, 1978, he remembers precisely.

However, he worked for the Janata Party in the 1980 election too, at the behest of Jayaprakash Narayan. "JP became my real leader in 1973," he says, "because I thought Indira Gandhi was making ruling party politics too dictatorial. And JP was the only one I thought who could face Mrs Gandhi. JP resorted to many agitations, he helped the Navnirman Sa-



Nanaji Deshmukh: the gentle crusader.

miti's agitation in Gujarat. There was total revolution in Bihar. I was solidly with him."

But as early as 1963, Nanaji was being assailed by doubts: politics was not leading anywhere. Anti-Congress slogans were started in 1955 itself by Ram Manohar Lohia, who said that in the coming seven years, through continuous agitations, he would grab all political power in India. But, in 1962, he himself was defeated by Nehru. "I was with him, the Jana Sangh was with him," says Nanaji somewhat cynically. "And he realised that no one party could topple the Congress. I felt then that this was not positive politics and it was not going to lead anywhere."

What was also troubling Nanaji at this juncture was the political sloganeering during election time: 'You vote for us, we will deliver you of your ills' type of carrot being held out. "This way, the people's power, the youth power, was being disregarded. Thus the impression had been created in people's minds, since 1952 to date, that only people with power and position can do something for society and that the ordinary citizen can do nothing."

Nanaji was also irked by the re-

gionalism that had crept into politics at the cost of the national interest. "Nowadays, it is not every political party that has a leader but every leader who has his own political party. They (the leaders) feel that since 'no one party is going to rule the country, if I have a party maybe I can also get into the cabinet.'" It is this attitude, he feels, that can allow neither the country nor its people to develop. He therefore decided to quit politics, organise the people and show the politicians that people can help themselves — even without their promises and their slogans. "Maybe only then these politicians will come to the right path."

Nanaji was offered the post of Minister for Industries in Morarji Desai's first cabinet, in 1980, but he declined. But it was while he was the Janata Party's general secretary that he adopted Gonda district for development by the Deendayal Research Institute — founded by his close associate, Deendayal Upadhyay in 1972. Gonda was chosen because of the way it was ravaged, year after year, first by drought, then by floods. Water logging was its particular problem.

In five years, the district burgeoned with 50,000 tube wells, schools for children and adults, health care facilities and craftsmanship training courses. It was largely possible because 70 graduate student motivators were put on the task: there was a general streamlining of all governmental procedures, fraudulence was checked, the farmers got their loans properly and the raw materials were in timely supply.

It was all possible, because the people were involved, says Nanaji. His vision now encompasses Beed district and soon, Singbhum district in Bihar too will be in the fold of its own people, given the impetus the other two have received. ♦

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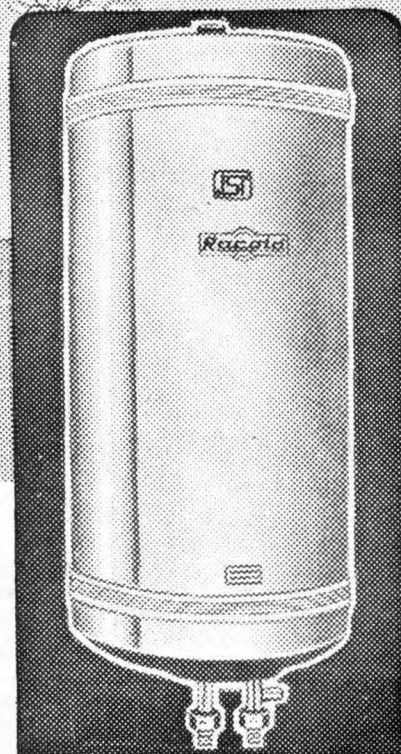
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MOTIVATION

SPECIAL FEATURE

(Continued from pg 45)

"no part of India need remain backward if we can persuade the people to take up good work." There are some at this *shibir*, who have been working at the grassroots level in their own villages, and others, who have also made this commitment.

There is Anupreeta Bhaskar Rao. She is 16 years old: she says she will work for three years with Nanaji, then go wherever he sends her. "I want to teach the illiterate," she says. "Girls in Maharashtra never get a chance to break out on their own. I want to teach women to be more aware, to be self-sufficient, maybe in a cottage industry. This is my calling."

This is admirable, but perhaps more difficult than she imagines. Achala Joshi, a school teacher in Beed and the wife of a doctor, found that her efforts at doing social service — persuading the Dhors, a community of tanners, to give up leading a dissolute life, had them scornfully asking, "Have you come here to teach us family planning?" When she said, "No, to teach your children," they thawed. Other doctors' wives were not disposed kindly towards her for doing 'unconventional' things, like visiting the unsavoury areas of the town and mobilising the people into organised activity.

An indifference to getting what is their due is also endemic in the rural areas. "Obtaining government aid is a long process," Achala says. "In Dhanapur, for instance, the government was going to subsidise a gobar gas bottling scheme. To obtain that subsidy, we had to make a list of guarantors, who would contribute a certain amount and the government would provide the rest. But village people don't understand governmental procedures. They give up and say, '*Jaane do. Lakdi hi jalayenge.*'"

It is easy to throw up one's hands in despair, but, says Laxmikant Joshi, an active DRI worker in Kej tehsil, "The greatest resource in the villages is *manveeyata* (fellow feeling). In the cities, on the other hand, the doors are closed even in the day. But at the

same time, in the villages, there is so much blind faith, untouchability, *jaati-bhed*. One needs *sahansheelta* to teach them even in the face of such resistance."

Babasaheb Amte, is one of them, who, after a lot of initial skepticism has acquired the dedicatory spirit and the confidence to function in a mediatory, but firm manner between the government officials and the rural people. Amte, who hails from Bedarwadi village, changed once he came into contact with Joshi's *gurukul* 11 months ago (July 1986). He joined him reluctantly at first to build huts that would be the classroom and the living quarters. He ended up staying on to study the *sanskar* and *margdarshan* taught there.

Amte tends his farm for a living and also does daily wage work, but of late he has become quite instrumental in fighting governmental red tape in his village. Under the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), each one is paid for a day's work. Once, a labourer was paid Rs 5.10 instead of the usual Rs 6. Amte discovered later

that this was being done in order to pay 19 persons who had not worked at all.

On two other occasions, the clerk tried to avoid giving the customary EGS ration card coupons to a labourer. Amte led the workers to the clerk's house and warned him that if this continued, they would have him reported. The threat worked.

In what way had serving the community helped him? "Prior to joining the DRI," Amte says, "my village-folk had no faith in me." Now they are asking him to contest the gram panchayat elections.

"Rural reconstruction," says a brochure on the DRI, is an important activity and the purpose for their having adopted first Gonda, now Beed, and soon Singbhum district (Bihar) too. The desilting project is only the first step to changing the face of Beed. "In five years, I can turn this area into a California," says Deshmukh, "if we can involve the people in all our undertakings." And coming from him, it doesn't seem a fond or foolish dream. ♦



Lunch time at the dhanyata abhiyan work site.

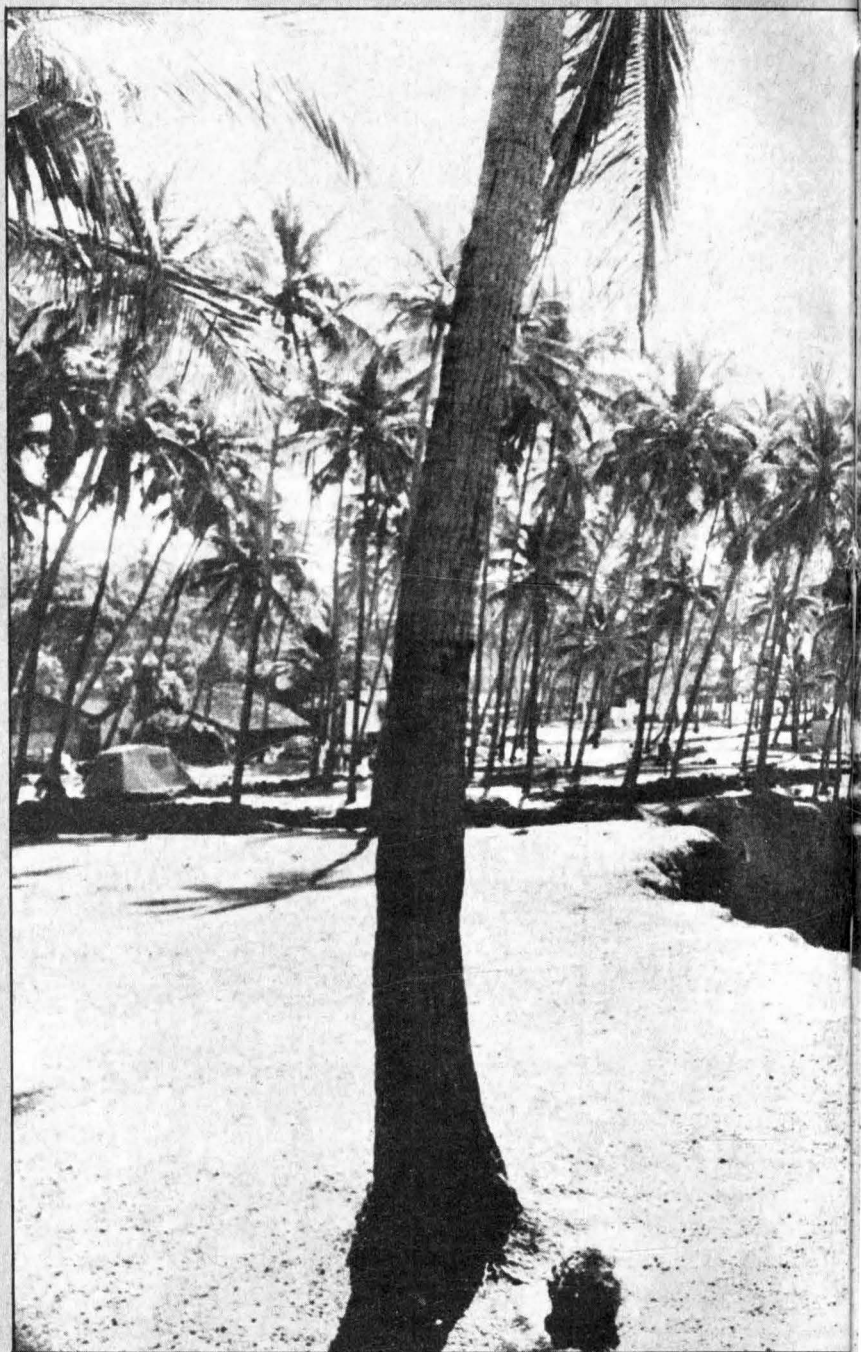
SPECIAL REPORT

ON MAY 30, 1987, Goa was ushered in as the 25th state of the Indian Union, without any of the attendant fanfare and celebration. The death of former Prime Minister Charan Singh extinguished the fancy illuminations all over Goa and stilled the joyous cheers of its normally ebullient people. For them, the Goa, Daman and Diu Reorganisation Bill, piloted by Union Home Minister Buta Singh, 'to satisfy the desires and aspirations of the people', has led to a feeling of uncertainty rather than unstinted approval and acceptance. This is possibly because the people of Goa do not see themselves benefiting from the newly bestowed powers nor do they really understand its ramifications.

Though both the Goa government and the Opposition in the state have hailed the statehood vociferously — since it introduces unfettered powers to legislate and to allocate resources without accountability to the Centre — there is also an unanimous outcry against the Centre's termination of the yearly aid given to the erstwhile Union territory. The common demand is for Goa to be treated as a 'special category' state like Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, to ensure such aid.

Economic Implications

Significantly, many believe that



Goa's golden beaches — lucrative tourist attractions.



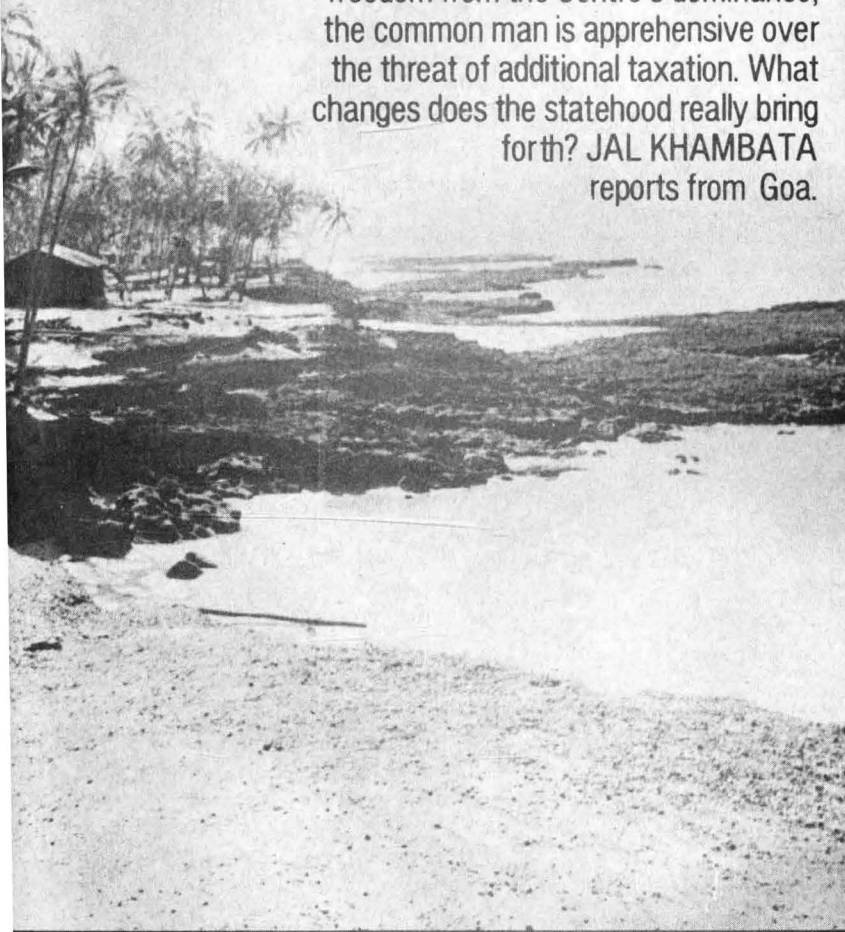
Governor Dr Gopal Singh.

statehood for Goa rings down the curtain on the golden era of capital flowing in from Delhi, that the social services in future will not be for free and that, as Maharashtratravadi Gomantak Party (MGP) President Ramakant Khalap says, every Goan will have to

shell out Rs three per day to maintain the state. The bureaucracy, comprising about three per cent of the total population, alone takes up more than 60 per cent of the state's total budget. Quite obviously, the state's income from its own resources is not suffi-

A State Is Born

Goa's newly created status of statehood has evoked a wide spectrum of reactions from its people. While the bureaucracy and the government have hailed the new political and economic freedom from the Centre's dominance, the common man is apprehensive over the threat of additional taxation. What changes does the statehood really bring forth? JAL KHAMBATTA reports from Goa.



ent to keep this bureaucracy going, let alone framing new plans and projects.

Though Goa boasts the second highest per capita income in the country — Rs 5,016 — its expenditure being higher than its revenue, it will remain a subsidised state for some

time. In the past 25 years, the Centre had pumped Rs 2,173 crore into Goa — a major slice of the investment being for the provision of education and health facilities, electricity, water and transport (Goa is one of the few states in India that has metalled roads

and electricity in every village). This aid from the Centre — a dependency that Goans will now have to shake off — is largely responsible for the fast rate of its economic growth.

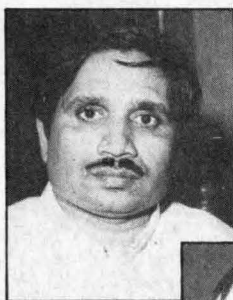
Chief Minister Pratap Singh Rane and senior officials in the Goa government are, however, confident that the state's finances will not deteriorate, despite its weaning away from the Centre. An expert committee of the State Planning Board is busy finalising its report on how to boost the economy without taxation. Chief Minister Rane has also given repeated assurances to his people, against the imposition of fresh taxes. According to B P Misra, Finance Secretary, economy measures will be applied only for the non-plan expenditure, as the state government will receive aid from the Centre for its plan expenditure. These explanations, unfortunately, do not seem to have convinced the people of Goa, whose mood remains one of cautious optimism.

Y D Chowgule, President of the Goa Chamber of Commerce and Industry, feels that the newly-formed Goa government will have to adopt a cautious approach in spending money on various projects, keeping in view its new financial position. Purshottam Kakodkar, veteran freedom fighter and member of the Rajya Sabha, also feels that Goa's economy will not suffer since 'the Centre will not neglect



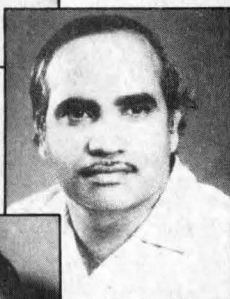
Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Rane.

SPECIAL REPORT

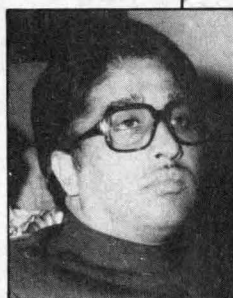


Goa's six-member Cabinet.

Shantaram Naik, MP from Panaji.



Labour Minister Vaikunth Desai.



Law Minister Shaikh Hassan.

Goa on any financial issues'.

Reactions to the larger implications of the statehood are mainly wary. Frasma Sequeira, former MP from south Goa, says that the statehood means 'great possibilities of improved representation, responsibility, accountability and relevant development'. Dayanand Narvekar, Speaker of the Goa Assembly, feels that the people of Goa will have to work sincerely and unitedly to carve out an ideal state of Goa in the country. Shaikh Hassan, Goa's Law Minister, sees the statehood as bringing about a faster development of the territory. Agriculture Minister, Francisco Sardinha, points out that the Congress (I) has proved its sincerity by bestowing the statehood on the people of Goa. Says Samant, Principal of Miramar's law college, "The statehood will be beneficial to the people of Goa in the long run, though initially there are bound to be some difficulties."

Changes in Status

What changes *does* the statehood



Goa's traditional fishermen at Kandolim beach.

status really bring to Goa? Lieutenant Governor Gopal Singh becomes Governor, Rane continues as Chief Minister, dealing with the same Congress (I) government and bureaucracy. Though the state's opposition parties want fresh elections to the new Legislative Assembly, in a bid to wrest power, the Congress (I) — in view of its waning popularity due to the eight-month-long language agitation last year — will postpone the elections as far as possible. The Reorganisation Act provides this facility by its conversion of the Legislative Assembly of the erst-

while Union territory, into a provisional Legislative Assembly of the new state, without the two members from Daman and Diu. This Assembly can complete its full term which ends in December 1989.

The most striking change in Goa's status will be the end to all red-tapism at the Centre, which had blocked socio-economic development in Goa. The tedious process of every legislation passing through several ministries at the Centre, often defeating the purpose of the new proposals, will now be replaced by total autonomy in the



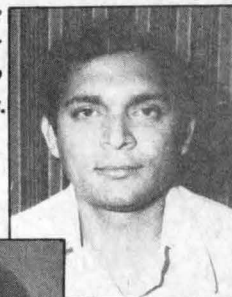
state. Earlier, every major financial scheme needed the Centre's prior approval and administrative sanction. Now, only political clearance of new schemes will be necessary. B P Misra puts it succinctly: "Earlier our officials and ministers had to rush to Delhi for the clearance of every scheme, first by the concerned Central ministries and then by the Finance Ministry. Now, we just have to walk next door (the Secretariat in Panaji) to get the sanction from the concerned ministry."

Autonomy notwithstanding, the

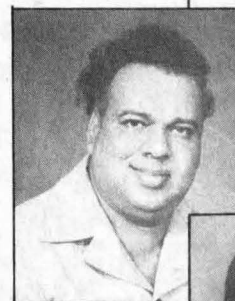
state government today faces a Hobson's choice with respect to funds for new projects — it can either borrow from the market or, once again, go to the Centre with a begging bowl. Goa's income is hardly 40 per cent of its total expenditure — it will need at least Rs 173 crore from the Centre if it is to meet its current year's budget proposals of Rs 271 crore.

The non-plan revenue deficit alone has escalated from Rs 28.18 crore in 1982-83 to Rs 76.55 crore last year. According to Ramakant Khalap, at this rate the deficit will touch Rs 100

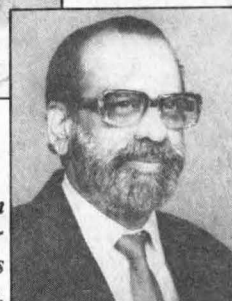
*Agriculture
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Francisco
Sardinha.*



*Information
Minister
Harish
Zantye.*



*Tourism
Minister
Dr Luis
Barbosa.*



crore during the current financial year, necessitating increased Central assistance to realise new projects.

The financial memorandum attached to the Reorganisation Act, however, gives hope of such assistance, though at a reduced scale, until the next Finance Commission decides Goa's share from the Central pool of taxes. The memorandum promises Rs 34 crore this year and Rs 20 crore in the next. Goa will also be entitled to Rs 80 crore from the Centre. Goa's Chief Secretary P P Shrivastava, staunchly believes that, contrary to all fears, Goa's economy has a sounder base today than it had in the past. He cites, in support, the annual growth rate of six per cent in the last 25 years, and since Goa's liberation from the Portuguese rule. Shrivastava foresees abundant prosperity in the future, when the emphasis will be on the more productive industrial sector.

This optimism is, however, not shared by disgruntled factions who are unhappy with the statehood — the most vocal being the Goa government's 32,000 employees, 6,000 of them temporary and over 1,300 gazet-

SPECIAL REPORT

ted officers. Accustomed to automatically benefiting from all the facilities provided to Central government employees, the non-gazetted employees association fears that such benefits will no longer be forthcoming in view of the state's inadequate resources. The state government is also not bound now to implement any benefit plan announced by the Central government. There could also be a virtual ban on fresh recruitments in the coming years, as the creation of new posts would undoubtedly mean more expenditure. Political considerations, however, seem to weigh heavily in the employees' favour as they (and their families) account for 15 per cent of Goa's electorate, significant enough to tilt the balance in the elections.

Political Implications

The political atmosphere in the state, in the aftermath of the statehood, appears to be rife with speculation and confrontation. The most imminent one concerns the issue of the strength of the new Assembly. While the Reorganisation Act specifies a total number of 40 seats, political parties in Goa hold differing views. The Congress (I) and the BJP are in favour of a 40-member House, while the MGP, the main Opposition, which had ruled the Union territory during the first 16 years, prefers a 30-member House and a six-member Cabinet. The Goa Congress, a splinter group of the Congress (I), has put forth the unreasonable demand of a 60-member House, with extra constituencies in the Konkani-dominated south Goa, their stronghold after the recent language agitations. (A 40-member House would mean an average constituency of 15,000, the number of voters in the state being approximately six lakh. A bigger House would mean even smaller constituencies, in sharp contrast to those of 50,000 in other states.)

The delimitation of the present 28 constituencies into 40 as per the Act, is the most debilitating threat to those dependent on the communal vote, especially the MGP, which banks heavily



Tourists relaxing on the palm-fringed Anjuna beach.

on the Hindu votes. Delimitation may shift the balance of votes and the party may lose its vote in predominantly Hindu areas, earlier fed by anti-Brahmin propaganda by the first Chief Minister, D B Bandodkar. Hindus account for 66 per cent of the population as per the 1981 census, while Christians rate second with 29.28 per cent and Muslims 4.46 per cent.

The Act avoids any legal impasse by specifying that all existing laws will continue until suitably amended by the state's Assembly within a period of two years. This will enable the present leadership to delete some Portuguese civil laws still on the statute books.

Delinking Of Daman And Diu

The Reorganisation Act also terminates the term of S B Solanki and Dr J S Prabhakar, MLAs from Daman and Diu respectively, a highly discriminatory feature. While Goa has forged ahead of other states in most sectors except industrialisation, the overland districts of Daman and Diu have not followed suit, in spite of being surplus areas. S B Solanki, Deputy Speaker until the delinking, says that the government spent Rs five crore on Daman and Diu in the previous financial year while earning a revenue of Rs 10 crore from them. Most of their revenue derives from the lucrative sale of liquor, since they are the only 'wet' pockets



near an otherwise 'dry' Gujarat. The sale of cars, trucks and tractors also yields a sizeable income for the government due to the lower sales tax imposed in these two districts.

For the political parties and the people of Daman and Diu, a merger with Goa would have meant inevitable taxation, while one with Gujarat would have quashed their liquor-dependent economy. The change to being an independent Union territory has been acclaimed by most of its inhabitants.

In any case, the only bond between Goa, Daman and Diu that stands snapped today, is the historical one — Daman and Diu, 500 and 700 kms away from Panaji respectively, are

considerably diverse from Goa, geographically, culturally and linguistically. As Pundalik Naik, well-known Konkani writer and convenor of the Konkani Porjecho Avaz, says: "De-linking will end the harsh memories of the pre-liberation Portuguese dominance." Though Daman will be the new capital of the Union territory, it will be administered, distance notwithstanding, from Panaji, by Dr Gopal Singh who has also been named its Governor.

Dr Singh is probably the most jubilant officer in Goa, following the statehood, filled with enthusiastic fervour and plans for new projects. The first on his list of priorities is the launching of a steel plant for Goa, to utilise the iron ore that is being imported from Japan. The fact that these iron ore mines will not have much mining to do within the next 30 years, as they are already empty, has not, however, been considered.

Tourism As Industry

Tourism — the main strength of the post-liberation Goan economy — is next on his agenda. Its high-pulse momentum is evident both in terms of financial rewards and employment generation, according to *New Horizon*, the state government's first publication released by Rajiv Gandhi at the statehood celebrations at Panaji on June 3. Goa's Tourism Minister, Dr L P Barbosa, elaborates that income from tourism reached a record level of Rs 70 crore, the industry providing direct or indirect employment to over 1,70,000 inhabitants — almost 15 per cent of the population.

The tourist trade in Goa received its real boost in the early 1980s, following the hosting of CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meet) and the papal visit shortly thereafter, which placed Goa firmly on the international tourist map. The number of tourists visiting Goa thus shot up from three lakh in 1977 to over 7.75 lakh, including 93,000 foreigners, in 1985-86. According

to Vinod Duggal, Managing Director of the Goa Tourism Development Corporation, roughly 10 million tourists visit India annually, of which Goa's share represents a staggering 10 per cent.

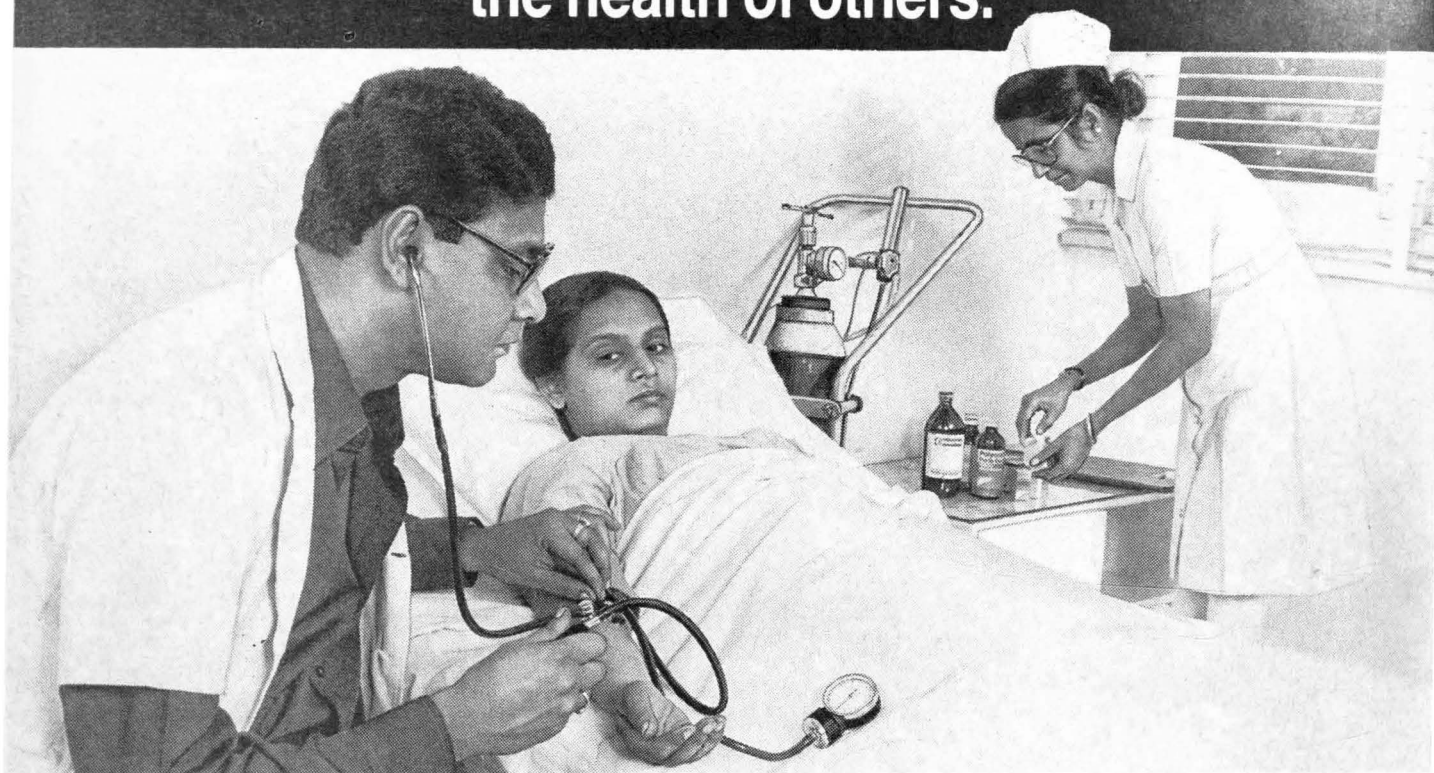
This phenomenal influx of tourists explains the upswing in the tourism infrastructure of the state, to meet the needs of an ever-expanding traffic. From a little over 2,000 beds available a decade ago, today there are over 10,650 beds in different categories of hotels. Goa boasts of seven five-star hotels — the Centre has cleared an additional 19 such hotels to be built along the 105-km coastline of Goa during the next three years. The Central government will also build an Institute of Water Sports in Panaji.

At its first Cabinet meeting, following statehood, the Rane government declared tourism in Goa to be an 'industry' entitled to all the benefits available to industrial units. Big business houses and investors all over India will now be invited to build hotels near the coast — a policy that is bound to lead to confrontation with local environmentalists and traditional fishermen.

Within hours of the swearing-in of the six-member Council of Ministers on May 30, the government issued a policy statement promising a responsive administration and a welfare state for its people. To achieve this goal satisfactorily, the government will bifurcate Goa into two districts — North and South Goa with Panaji and Margao as their respective headquarters.

In the final analysis, the future of Goa — both in terms of economic progress and political maturity — will ultimately be shaped by the enterprise and determination of its colourful people and the elected representatives they vote into power. The choice of fending for themselves or maintaining the earlier status quo of relying on the Centre to solve their problems, will also rest with them. And, finally, whether the statehood will be beneficial to the people of Goa in the long run or not, will depend upon these decisions. ♦

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HE WAS A MAN the Sicilians would have called the *capo di tutti capi*. At 65, he reigned as the nation's most powerful gangster, thanks to the help of friends like Yoshio Kodama and to his own extraordinary abilities. He was Kazuo Taoka, third boss of the Yamaguchi-gumi — an alliance of more than 500 gangs — and overlord of 12,000 yakuza throughout the Japanese Islands.

Taoka radiated confidence and power as he rested at his table in the Bel Ami nightclub. The club sat nestled in a crowded entertainment district of Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital and cultural centre and long a Yamaguchi stronghold. On stage, a limbo dance being performed was nearing a climax and about 50 guests were applauding. It was early on a Tuesday evening in July of 1978.

A young man in a white shirt arose from his seat and slowly walked towards the table near the stage where Taoka and five bodyguards were sitting. He came no closer than 15 feet, slipped out a .38-caliber pistol, and blasted away at Taoka, leaving a hole in the godfather's neck. As the assassin fled for his own life, Taoka was rushed into a bulletproof Cadillac and sped with police escort to a nearby hospital.

Taoka's assailant, 25-year-old Kiyoshi Narumi, belonged to a gang in the Matsuda syndicate, a bitter Yamaguchi rival also active in western Japan. When a Matsuda boss died in a 1975 turf war with the Yamaguchi-gumi, Narumi and other Matsuda gang members had swallowed the ashes of their murdered *oyabun* (boss), in a pledge of revenge. Taoka, however, survived, as he had other assassination attempts. His assailant was not so lucky; he was found brutally murdered several weeks later on a mountainside near Kobe, headquarters to the Yamaguchi-gumi.

The assassination attempt sparked a gang war right out of Chicago in the 1930s. Gangsters fought gangsters in broad daylight, attacking each other on the streets and raiding each other's offices. At least five

more yakuza affiliated with the Matsuda-gumi were murdered in the bloody retaliations that followed.

The shooting swept Taoka out of action for several months, but more important, it signalled the long-term decline of the great godfather and, perhaps, of the immense syndicate he had built. The Yamaguchi-gumi could handle an upstart rival like the Matsuda gangsters, but pressures within the syndicate were changing the face of Japan's biggest crime group. The Yamaguchi-gumi owed much of its strength to Taoka's charismatic leadership, which suddenly

seemed highly vulnerable. Taoka had been suffering from an increasingly serious heart ailment for 10 years; by the time of his shooting, the godfather found his lieutenants already struggling for his succession.

Another problem facing the syndicate was a growing generation gap between older and younger gang members, with far too few middle-aged mobsters to help fill the void. Yakuza elders, not only in the Yamaguchi-gumi but in gangs throughout Japan, began complaining that their formidable yakuza tradition, of unquestioning loyalty to the boss, was no longer

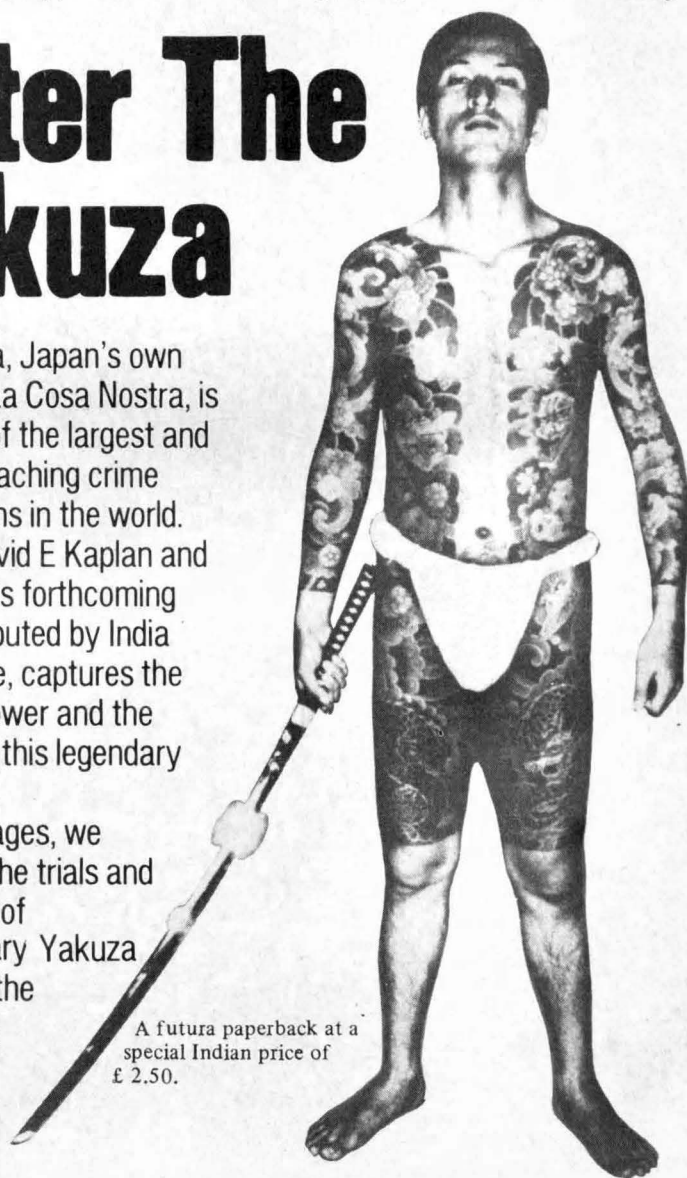
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blindly accepted by the younger soldiers. Other values, too, were being questioned — of strategy, of leadership — and not just by the underlings, but by the senior bosses themselves. In the Yamaguchi-gumi alone, as many as 23 bosses of affiliated gangs were expelled or disciplined for opposing syndicate policy. Police theorised that the Yamaguchi-gumi, which pioneered the modern Japanese crime syndicate, had simply grown too big — and too dependent on Taoka's leadership.

Another new development was the open fighting in the streets. For years the yakuza credo dictated that fights among the gangs would be settled outside the realm of legitimate society; it was part of the image of the noble gangster, never to involve in gang business the common people, the *katagi no shu* (literally, citizens under the sun). But recent gang battles had erupted with little regard for anyone, least of all the general public, and the Japanese were growing tired of the open violence and disregard for custom. So outraged was the public that police launched a much-heralded 80-day battle to end the gang war, fielding 1,100 officers in what was then the largest mobilisation in postwar history. During the first two months of the crackdown, authorities rounded up 2000 gangsters, including 518 senior members of the Yamaguchi-gumi. Officials went after Taoka's number-two man, Kenichi Yamamoto, nicknamed Yamaken, eventually putting him away for three-and-a-half years of hard labour on charges of firearms possession and intimidation. Prosecutors further pressed a number of old cases against Taoka that included violation of tax laws and blackmail of construction and steamship companies.

Responding to the growing pressures on his huge syndicate, within a year of the shooting, Taoka fashioned an uneasy but effective truce with the Yamaguchi-gumi's most bitter enemies. To make sure the public got the message, Taoka did what any modern, self-respecting Japanese god-

father would have done; he called a press conference. Under the glare of television lights, some 60 newsmen crowded into Taoka's plush home, sitting cross-legged on tatami mats. For over an hour, the reporters listened to Yamaken, flanked by two other gang leaders. (Taoka himself was conspicuously absent.) The boss' right-hand man began by reading from a prepared statement in formal, flowery Japanese. Reporters were able to check his words against copies of the speech distributed earlier as part of a press kit. In the nationally televised

Despite its problems, the Yamaguchi-gumi still stood as Japan's most formidable crime syndicate. As one newspaper remarked, the gang's rhombus-shaped golden pin remained 'a persuasive lapel ornament'. In much of Japan, the showing of one's pin, combined perhaps with the baring of a tattoo, could get trucks moved, goods discounted, and hallways cleared. Other gangs show off their own badges, of course. Each syndicate wears a different design, proudly displaying its colours on official occasions, much as if they were Rotary



Kazuo Taoka, Japan's most powerful mobster, makes a court appearance.

address, the Yamaguchi-gumi declared an end to the bloodshed and solemnly apologised to the public and police for the 'trouble' caused them. Following the press conference, events finally began to slow down for Japan's largest gang — but not for long.

Taoka stayed out of public life for much of the following year. He later re-emerged for a series of appearances in 1979 to quash rumours that his health was failing, but the yakuza boss looked pale and thin. In the sensational weeklies that chart the movements of Japan's far-flung underworld, Taoka's appearance only increased speculation about who would be his successor, the fourth boss of the Yamaguchi-gumi.

brothers. In Japan, where the group, not the individual, defines much of daily life, the pins are an easy mark of identification.

The pins cannot always work their magic, however, particularly when their bearers are faced with police or other gangsters. The emblems were part of the matching outfits worn by Yamaguchi members as the gang made a well-publicised attempt in 1980 to expand its territory to Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island. Nearly 200 gang members, clad in white blazers and black polo shirts, flew to the capital city of Sapporo for the formal opening of their branch office. They were met at the airport by 800 members of local underworld gangs who had banded together to

keep the Yamaguchi-gumi out of their territory. A nervous contingent of some 2000 riot police kept the two groups apart. Officials stopped the Yamaguchi gangsters from opening their office by quarantining the entire delegation in their hotel at a ski resort; a day later, their mission a failure, the gangsters returned to Osaka on a single flight of All Nippon Airways.

Far worse news awaited the Yamaguchi hierarchy than their failure in Hokkaido. One year later, the event long dreaded by the syndicate arrived.

During his 35-year rule, Kazuo Taoka had run his syndicate with that famous Japanese knack for using innovative techniques while preserving traditional values. Despite the Yamaguchi-gumi's control of more than 2,500 businesses, sophisticated gambling and loan-sharking operations, the organisation still functioned along feudal patterns that had existed for 300 years.

Kazuo Taoka's 35-year rule ended with a final heart attack in July 1981. A quiet, private service was held for the immediate family and friends one week later. But a second funeral — an official one — was deemed necessary by the gang. Despite repeated police warnings, after three months of preparation, syndicate leaders arranged to give Taoka an elaborate Buddhist send-off in the best yakuza tradition. Police responded by raiding gangster homes and offices nationwide, and arresting nearly 900 gang members. Among the contraband seized: 102 guns, 192 swords, and two pounds of amphetamines. But the crackdown didn't work: to the Yamaguchi-gumi, the funeral was a matter of honour. On a Sunday in late October, some

1300 yakuza from 200 gangs gathered in Kobe to honour their departed boss. The service took place at a site where a Taoka Memorial Hall was to be built, adjacent to the godfather's home in a posh residential area. Three doors down sat the Hyogo Prefecture District Court, located amid the offices of Kobe's most respected lawyers. Surrounding those offices — and the gangsters — stood about 800 helmeted riot police armed with metal shields. Another 500 police checked the arriving visitors at 16 different places, including major airports and train stations.

Flowers arrived from all over the country — from other mob leaders, from prominent businessmen, and from Taoka's old friend Yoshio Kodama, then slowly dying in a Tokyo hospital. For those who came to pay their respects personally, body searches by police were the rule. Among those in attendance was an all-star cast of Japan's entertainment industry: singers, actors, musicians. Said one star, Yoshio Tabata, "From the late fifties to the late seventies, what entertainer in Japan was not helped by Taoka?" Also at the wake appeared Japan's leading man of the cinema, heart-throb Ken Takakura, who, among his numerous roles in yakuza movies, had played Taoka in a film trilogy about the godfather's life.

Taoka had reportedly chosen his ruthless number-two man, Yamaken, as his successor. But shortly after the press conference, Yamaken was thrown into prison and not due out until late 1982. The syndicate, meanwhile, was in such disarray that few could tell who was in charge. Police thus watched closely to see who would fill the spot of chief mourner at the funeral, a role traditionally assumed by the syndicate's new boss. Much to their surprise it was the godfather's widow, 62-year-old Fumiko Taoka.

It was, perhaps, a measure of the near panic Yamaguchi leaders felt that, in the heavily macho world of the yakuza, they had openly turned

to Fumiko, long a silent power in the organisation. Her role was to be a temporary one, bridging the gap until a strong male leader emerged. But in a land where women hold few top jobs and Western-style feminism has made little progress, the appointment was nothing short of remarkable. The place of women in the yakuza has long centred around their roles as prostitutes, hostesses, and housewives for the gangs. Occasionally, though, they amass considerable power in the Japanese underworld. As one gang member explained to a Japanese weekly, "There are women *oyabun* (bosses), but they don't openly show their faces in the yakuza world. Women don't go about brazenly in a man's world . . . (Fumiko) will probably be there to act as receiver for others."

For a while, then, the 12000 men of Japan's largest crime syndicate were led by a woman. Fumiko reportedly occupied her late husband's seat at top-level meetings, and passed judgements on intra-gang disputes. With Yamaken due out of prison within months, most gang members expected a relatively smooth transition. They were mistaken.

Before he was a free man again, Taoka's heir-apparent paid for his long years of heavy drinking. Seven months after his boss' death, Yamaken too succumbed — to cirrhosis of the liver. Suddenly, the entire structure of the Yamaguchi-gumi was thrown into unrelenting confusion. The work of a generation of gangsters — a complex blend of feudalism and corporate management — was now at risk.

DURING HIS 35-year rule, Kazuo Taoka had run his syndicate with that famous Japanese knack for using innovative techniques while preserving traditional values. Despite the Yamaguchi-gumi's control of more than 2500 businesses, sophisticated gambling and loan-sharking operations, and heavy investment in the sports and entertainment fields, the organisation still functioned

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along feudal patterns that had existed for 300 years. Day-to-day management of the syndicate — like other yakuza groups — depended on the ancient relationships of *oyabun-kobun*, (parent role-child role) with fictive kinships extending from the highest 'parent' to the lowest 'child'. These feudal vestiges certainly didn't hurt the gangs as they adapted to a modern, corporate world. By the time of his death, Taoka's organisation was grossing well over \$460 million annually, according to police. American executives from General Motors to the Mafia would no doubt give a great deal to manage such fervently dedicated workers as those of the Yamaguchi-gumi.

Above it all, Taoka reigned as an underworld shogun. But as is often the case, the godfather was removed from the daily affairs of the syndicate. That was left to his second-in-command, Yamaken, who had served as a kind of chairman of the board for the Yamaguchi 'Corporation'. On the fifth day of each month, Yamaken held a meeting with 12 leading bosses who functioned as a board of directors, deciding on syndicate policy and carving up the spoils of underworld Japan.

In all, there were 103 Yamaguchi bosses of various rank from more than 500 separate gangs. The bosses held office according to the parlance of the *oyabun-kobun* relationship; at the top ruled four *shatei*, or younger brothers to Taoka. Also atop the pyramid served the other eight directors, the *wakashira-hosa* (assistant young leaders), one of whom would be appointed a *wakashira* (young leader). Equivalent to the Mafia's *consiglieri*, or counsellors, were six members of a senior consultative group, the *sanro-kai*. Below this hierarchy lay a series of lesser offices: one *kambu atsukai* (executive), and 83 *wakashu* (young men), who each commanded their own legions of *kobun* (children) or *kumi-in* (enlisted men). Within these individual gangs existed a maze of similar relationships, all based on the *oyabun-kobun* system. In addition,

there were large numbers of apprentices and fringe persons to oversee.

Vast sums of money flowed through this feudal hierarchy. The major affiliated gangs and the syndicate itself each issued an annual financial report. The gangs were required to send monthly amounts to the syndicate headquarters, often in thousands of dollars. In addition, payments were made as New Year gifts, for funerals (Taoka's brought in nearly \$500,000), for each gangster released from prison, and to help pay for inspection visits by the Yamaguchi

likes."

Those figures were confirmed by a National Police Agency report issued in 1979, which also shed light on the salaries of lower-ranking yakuza. A typical gangster-soldier, said the report, took in around \$14,000 a year, about the same as an average salaried worker in Japan. Members who controlled the earnings of women, such as pimps or club managers, fared much better, bringing in more than \$45,000 annually. And senior members below the rank of boss could count on twice that amount, or about \$90,000. But



Rival gangsters: Kazuo Taoka with Kakuji Inagawa, head of the Inagawa-kai.

brass. By one police estimate, Taoka received annual tribute from his varied gangs totalling more than 500 million yen (\$2.1 million).

Those beneath Taoka also fared well. In a revealing 1984 interview, with the *Mainichi* newspaper, a Yamaguchi boss let the public know just how well: "A boss of medium rank will make about \$130,000 (annually)," he said, "but when you get to the godfather class, you're probably talking of more than \$400,000. A syndicate head with 1000 men under him can count on bringing in \$43,000 a month. . . Even if you deduct, say, \$13,000 for entertainment and office expenses, that still leaves him with \$30,000; that's a good \$360,000 a year. And he can use it any way he

the big money remained with the men at the top.

"Remember," said the Yamaguchi boss, "a gang leader's income depends on the number of soldiers he has under him. People say the Yamaguchi-gumi controls the Japanese underworld, but we didn't plan it that way. Competition between bosses for a bigger piece of the action has led them to expand their turf, until suddenly the syndicate is everywhere."

To the Japanese on the street, it did indeed seem like the Yamaguchi-gumi was everywhere. In the traditional business of the yakuza world, Taoka's mob commanded the field in western Japan. Its varied gangs controlled day labourers at the ports and in construction jobs, monopolised

hundreds of street stall operators; extorted cash from local bars and national corporations, and ran gambling rackets from street-corner numbers operations to high-stakes card games worth millions of dollars a night. They organised political parties and worked as campaign aides for rightist candidates. And they ran nightclubs and cabarets, complete with hostesses, prostitutes, and virtually anything the public wanted but wasn't supposed to have.

Kazuo Taoka's greatest contribution, though, was in forcing open Ja-

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pan's fast-growing economy to a rapidly modernising underworld. By the early 1970s, the Yamaguchi-gumi was tied into professional boxing, sumo, and Western-style wrestling. Along with other leading syndicates, it controlled some 100 production companies in the entertainment business. In addition, scores of talent agencies and booking firms were yakuza-controlled. Many performers could not venture onto a stage without the blessing of their yakuza sponsors. Movie companies, too, with their insatiable appetite for yakuza films, fell under the influence of the gangs.

But the Yamaguchi-gumi also led the way into areas beyond entertainment. Despite a formal ban by the

big syndicates on the sale of narcotics, Yamaguchi members turned to drug dealing as an easy way of meeting their monthly payments. By the 1970s, police estimated that nearly half the yakuza's income was generated by sales of amphetamines, the drug of choice in Japan. Other fields, too, proved especially lucrative.

The gangs moved into moneylending, smuggling, and pornography. The front companies made bids on huge public works projects, including subways and airport construction. They rigged baseball games, horse races, and public auctions for foreclosed property. The syndicate's aggressive stance and 'anything-goes' policy inspired an entire generation of enterprising mobsters. Yakuza began to move wherever they could find an opportunity. They seized control of hospitals, English schools, amusement halls, and fortune-telling parlours. They bought into real estate, video games, trucking, waste disposal, and security services. They manufactured and distributed counterfeit Japanese stamps and bills, US dollars, Cartier watches, and even brand-name food products.

It took all of Taoka's immense power to bind these varied scams together. The Yamaguchi-gumi was not a monolith; gangs often acted independently of one another, and despite Taoka's unchallenged authority, divisions continually surfaced within the syndicate. Factions developed between militant gangs — anxious for expansion and eager to use violence — and more dovish and neutral groups. Differences existed as well between *tekiya* (street stall operators and peddlers) and *bakuto* (gamblers) bosses, and among newer occupations such as financial racketeering and drug dealing. But on important issues — mergers, key promotions, territorial wars — the cabinet was always consulted. And behind every decision stood the authority of the most powerful man in the Japanese underworld. To the yakuza in the street, there seemed to be no problem that their godfather Taoka could not solve for them.

THIS, THEN, was the tightly knit structure thrown into confusion by the deaths of Taoka and Yamaken. The once invincible Yamaguchi-gumi suddenly found itself under assault from all sides. Police took the opportunity to launch an 'eradication' campaign against the syndicate, arresting many of its top leaders. Squabbling broke out within the organisation over how to best manage the conglomerate's vast resources. At the same time, rival gangs, long annoyed by the syndicate's power, began harassing Yamaguchi members, infringing on their territory and picking fights.

To counter these problems, an elite group of eight was selected to run the syndicate's affairs, with guidance and mediation from Taoka's widow, Fumiko. For a time their efforts at collective leadership were successful. Despite all the syndicate's troubles, from Taoka's death in 1981 to 1983, the Yamaguchi-gumi actually grew in size to a peak of 13346 gangsters. A record 587 gangs comprised the syndicate, stretching into 36 of Japan's 47 prefectures.

It was clear, though, that the organisation would soon have to select a new godfather, and that he would come from the group of eight. Among these eight bosses, men largely in their late forties and fifties, competition already was keen over who would grab the top spot. Feuding broke out. As tempers in the mob reached the breaking point, the contest came down to two veteran mobsters. The first: 58-year-old Hiroshi Yamamoto, a relative moderate and close associate of Yamaken. Among Yamamoto's qualifications was leading the syndicate in its successful drive into Kyushu, the southernmost island, during the early 1960s. The second candidate: 50-year-old Masahisa Takenaka, an extremely aggressive but popular leader and longtime friend of the Taoka family. Fumiko reportedly favoured Takenaka's militancy over Yamamoto's *interi* (intellectual) yakuza. Among Takenaka's qualifications: 11 convictions for extortion, battery, and other crimes, and pend-

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ing charges on illegal gambling and tax evasion.

In the end, the selection was made in the finest tradition of gangland democracy, with intense lobbying and several votings by the 104 bosses. Amid charges of bribery and intimidation, a final tally was at last reached: the day had gone to Takenaka, 57 to 19, with numerous abstentions. Playing the role of final kingmaker was Fumiko, who then bestowed the full blessings of the Taoka family on the new leader. But more trouble lay ahead. When Fumiko summoned the defeated Yamamoto to ask his cooperation, the yakuza boss refused to become Takenaka's subordinate.

Within days, Yamamoto was calling his own press conference, and in a short address told all of Japan that the moment of truth had arrived. "... I cannot agree to seeing Takenaka become the fourth head of the Yamaguchi-gumi," he announced. "I told [Mrs Taoka] that I regretfully could not accede to her request. That is my frank and final decision." With that said, on June 19, 1984, at one of Kobe's leading restaurants, Yamamoto and 18 top lieutenants formed the Ichiwa-kai, taking nearly half the syndicate's 13000 men and instantly creating one of Japan's top three crime syndicates. The Ichiwa-kai bosses, dressed in dark blue suits, cemented their new relationship in a lengthy ceremony of sakazuki, with each man exchanging drinks of sake as a symbol of blood brotherhood.

Not to be outdone, Takenaka staged an even more elaborate ceremony on Shikoku Island to assume his position as the fourth Yamaguchi godfather. Some 300 fellow mobsters attended, immaculately dressed in black suits with white ties, polished Yamaguchi pins shining from their lapels. At a traditional Japanese inn, Taoka's widow solemnly handed a dagger to the new boss, symbolically marking Takenaka's ascension to the Yamaguchi throne.

For the next six months, tensions remained high between the two syndicates. Slowly, though, the Ichiwa-



Masahisa Takenaka, Taoka's successor in 1984.

kai began to lose ground. The parent Yamaguchi syndicate promised amnesty to all those who would rejoin. The syndicate even instituted a new benefit for its members — retirement pay — and awarded the first amount, about £ 42,000, to a 71-year-old bookie, with the gang since 1948. The efforts seemed to work. The Yamaguchi-gumi steadily recaptured much of its lost membership, its ranks swelling to some 10,000, and again became Japan's largest crime organisation. The Ichiwa-kai, meanwhile, had been reduced to 2800 men. Worried by the increasing defections, the Ichiwa-kai's Yamamoto took action.

The ambush occurred on January

26, 1985, a Saturday night. At least four Ichiwa-kai hit men arrived in a black car at the Osaka apartment of Takenaka's mistress. As Takenaka and his two highest gang bosses stepped into an elevator, a hail of bullets ripped through their bodies. All would soon die from their wounds. In one attack, the Ichiwa-kai had swept away the top leadership of the Yamaguchi-gumi but had begun a murderous gang war.

In the midst of more raids and executions, the Yamaguchi-gumi took time to pay respects to Takenaka. In a nationally televised funeral more than 1000 black-suited gangsters gathered again at Taoka's mansion.

The ambush occurred on January 26, 1985. At least four Ichiwa-kai hit men arrived in a black car at the Osaka apartment of Takenaka's mistress. As Takenaka and his two highest gang bosses stepped into an elevator, a hail of bullets ripped through their bodies. In one attack, the Ichiwa-kai had swept away the top leadership of the Yamaguchi-gumi, and begun a murderous gang war.

Black and white bunting covered the home, and a procession of Mercedes and other foreign luxury cars stretched down the street. The mobsters were in no mood for mourning, however. "We must kill," muttered one to a reporter. "Total slaughter," rumbled another.

By early February, the 83 bosses of the Yamaguchi-gumi had met and unanimously elected 62-year-old Kazuo Nakanishi as their new leader, and then declared open war on the Ichiwa-kai. An immediate bloodbath was averted only by the rapid mobilisation of 660 riot police to 184 gangland homes and offices. Over the next month, officials arrested more than 990 mobsters and confiscated some 50 handguns and rifles, among them at least one US Army M-16 automatic. Nonetheless, more than 200 armed attacks between the two syndicates erupted over the next year, leaving 26 gangsters dead. But the biggest surprise was yet to come.

Although the Yamaguchi-gumi held a commanding lead in sheer numbers, the Ichiwa-kai's men had made off with most of the syndicate's arsenal when they seceded. Desperate for firepower, the Yamaguchi hierarchy embarked on an ambitious and ill-fated journey, according to US lawmen.

Events reached a peak in September 1985, when US undercover agents in Honolulu arrested Takenaka's powerful brother, Masashi, and Hideomi Oda — the syndicate's reputed 'financial controller' — for conspiring to buy three rocket launchers, five machine guns, and 100 handguns from what they thought were Hawaiian organised crime figures. As part of a related deal, claimed US officials, Yamaguchi members sold or conspired to sell 52 pounds of amphetamines and 12 pounds of heroin to the Americans (with a total street value of \$ 56 million). In addition, Takenaka's associates were charged with trying to hire one of the undercover agents to assassinate Yamamoto of the Ichiwa-kai, to whom their own members could not get close. It was a remarkable coup for US officials, the payoff from a year-long multinational investigation involving six federal agencies and local police in Honolulu and Hong Kong. But for the Yamaguchi-gumi the venture was a complete disaster. Instead of gaining a fat arsenal and a foreign assassin, the syndicate had lost a great deal of money, 'face', and, pending trial, two of its highest-ranking members to American jails.

Back in Osaka, the episode undoubtedly cost the fingertips of certain Yamaguchi brethren. But tempers slowly cooled down, for the Ichiwa-kai had accomplished its primary task, and the Yamaguchi-gumi was thrown back into a state of utter confusion. In the end, those who had predicted the Yamaguchi-gumi's demise after Taoka's death seemed premature, but not incorrect. By the mid-1980s, it appeared likely that Japan's largest syndicate would never again dominate the yakuza world.

ALTHOUGH THE Ichiwa and Yamaguchi organisations together account for only 13 per cent of Japan's underworld, the impact of their gang war has been dramatic. Careful plans for expansion have been disrupted, while other, more stable syndicates vie for a larger piece of

the action. The effects, furthermore, have not been limited to Japan. With alliances and enemies extending throughout the nation — and across the Pacific — the underworld map of the region is being re-charted. Agreements with Chinese Triad gangs in southeast Asia, and with the Mafia and other crime groups in the west, are more important than ever to the feuding gangs, who need to ensure a constant flow of handguns and high-profit drugs into Japan.

The splitting of the Yamaguchi-gumi, however, did not change the basic trajectory of organised crime in Japan. Despite police claims of nearly halving the number of yakuza since their peak in the early 1960s, the big syndicates continue to grow. The smaller gangs have borne the brunt of police crackdowns and changing times, succumbing to repeated mass arrests or absorption by the great syndicates. In 1963, the police counted 184,000 yakuza in 5,216 groups nationwide. By 1983 the official figure had dropped for the first time below 100,000, to 98,771 yakuza in 2330 groups. At the same time that the yakuza ranks were being cut in half, however, the largest syndicates steadily increased their share of the underworld. Since 1963, Japan's eight largest crime groups have grown from eight per cent to more than 32 per cent of all yakuza.

The schisms within Japan's largest syndicate had virtually no effect on this trend. By 1985, the Yamaguchi-gumi, with 10,000 members, was still the largest syndicate in Japan — and among the largest in the world. The splinter Ichiwa-kai, with less than one-third that membership, ranked a respectable fifth among the yakuza. The Osaka gang war, however, did bring to prominence the nation's other major gangs, particularly those based in and around Tokyo. Of growing importance, suddenly, was the number-two syndicate in Japan — the Sumiyoshi-rengo.

The *oyabun* of the Sumiyoshi syndicate practise a somewhat different form of criminal management

EXTRACT

than do the Yamaguchi-gumi bosses. Kazuo Taoka had run his syndicate in the traditional way, structured in pyramid fashion, with enormous control vested at the top in a boss of bosses. By contrast, the Sumiyoshi-rengo, or 'federation', is just that – a federation of crime families. Although both syndicates share many characteristics, they represent the two organisational poles of gang structure in the yakuza world.

The Sumiyoshi-rengo comprises a league of gangs. The pyramid of power in the Yamaguchi-gumi comes to a fine point, headed by a single man. The top of the Sumiyoshi pyramid is broader; while a powerful *oyabun* reigns over the syndicate, he is only one of several bosses, all considered equal partners. The Yamaguchi-gumi's pyramid resembles that of the traditional Italian Mafia families early in this century, with absolute obedience and close-knit ties throughout much of the organisation. The Sumiyoshi-style federation is a more modern development: less money goes to the top as tribute, less authority is vested in the godfather, and, consequently more autonomy lies with the individual gangs.

This more decentralised structure hasn't hurt the money-making ability of Sumiyoshi gangs: officials conservatively estimate that the syndicate brings in more than \$ 276 million per year. Indeed, much as the Yamaguchi-gumi resembles early Mafia families, the makeup of the Sumiyoshi rengo closely follows that adopted by the American mob when it modernised during the 1930s. It was then, under the leadership of Lucky Luciano and others, that US gangsters first created a national federation of crime families that law enforcement agencies would call La Cosa Nostra, but insiders would simply refer to as the Commission.

Both types of yakuza groups, despite differences in structure, possess the same basic tenets governing gang life. What is more striking is that these unwritten laws have also been shared by American mobs since their forma-



Recruits for the Yakuza: a bosozoku gang.

tion:

1. Never reveal the secrets of the organisation.
2. Never violate the wife or children of another member.
3. No personal involvement with narcotics.
4. Do not withhold money from the gang.
5. Do not fail in obedience to superiors.
6. Do not appeal to the police or the law.

Despite the similarities, though,

even the traditional Mafia in America is less intricately structured than comparable yakuza syndicates. There are fewer officers and less control over the varied gangs. Crime families in the United States need this greater autonomy to help ensure the invisibility and mobility on which the American mob depends. The Mafia may be a social institution in the West but unlike the yakuza, it has little or no public standing and must remain in effect an underground organisation. This also bears on why the US

Nearly one-third of the yakuza's recruits come from the infamous bosozoku or hot-rod gangs, the product of a postwar increase in Japanese juvenile delinquency. Like the yakuza, the bosozoku are highly organised within their troublesome groups. Sporting swastikas in imitation of western biker gangs, they bear names like Medusa, Black Emperor, Fascist and Weatherman, often unaware of their symbols' true meaning.

Mafia is so much smaller than the yakuza: years of secrecy have kept the mob down to an estimated 2000 to 5000 initiated members in 24 families across America — just half the size of the Yamaguchi alone (although with associates the Mafia may number as high as 50,000).

Traditionally limited to those of southern Italian extraction, the Mafia is only one facet of organised crime in the West. Like the United States itself, American crime syndicates are diverse and multi-ethnic, ranging from drug-dealing motorcycle gangs to small-town bookmakers. The organisation of the yakuza, by contrast, is fairly standardised, particularly among the traditional *bakuto* and *tekiya* gangs.

THE OFFER of a surrogate family is often what attracts recruits to the ranks of the yakuza. The varied gangs serve as a kind of safety valve for the tightly structured Japanese society, in which not having a steady job or an upstanding family can ruin one for life. Indeed, most new recruits are poorly educated, 19 to 20 years of age, and are living alone when they join, according to data from Tokyo's National Police Science Research Institute. A surpris-

ing number come from broken homes: 43 per cent have lost one or both parents.

Nearly one-third of the yakuza's recruits come from the infamous *bosozoku*, or hot-rod gangs, the product of a postwar increase in Japanese juvenile delinquency. Like the yakuza, the *bosozoku* are highly organised within their troublesome groups. Police in 1982 estimated there were 42,510 *bosozoku* active in 712 gangs, loosely affiliated under five nationwide federations. Sporting swastikas and similar paraphernalia in imitation of Western biker gangs, they bear names like Medusa, Black Emperor, Fascist, and Weatherman, as often as not quite unaware of their symbols' true meaning.

The *bosozoku* are in fact a mirror of yakuza society, but their members are often no more than adolescents. More than three-quarters are under the age of 20, nearly 60 per cent between 16 and 18 years old. Most of them are dropouts from Japan's fiercely competitive school system who soon find themselves frozen out of the country's rigid job market.

The Medusa and other *bosozoku* gangs are not the only sources of recruits for the nation's underworld. The ranks of the yakuza are also filled with vast numbers from two groups that have suffered relentless discrimination in today's Japan: the nation's 676,000 ethnic Koreans and its two to three million burakumin — the members of Japan's ancestral untouchable class. The issue is sensitive enough for the police not to officially estimate the numbers of these groups within the yakuza. But unofficially, police believe that in the Yamaguchi-gumi, for example, burakumin comprise some 70 per cent of the membership, and Koreans 10 per cent.

Similarly, although to a lesser extent, many of the small numbers of resident Chinese are also driven into the yakuza. For these minorities, for the *bosozoku*, and for the nation's poor, the gangs can easily seem like the only way out of an otherwise miserable life. Like organised crime

in America, the yakuza provide a vehicle for upward mobility. Children of successful gangsters are invariably given first-class education and encouraged to get legitimate jobs. Such are the attractions of adoption into a yakuza family.

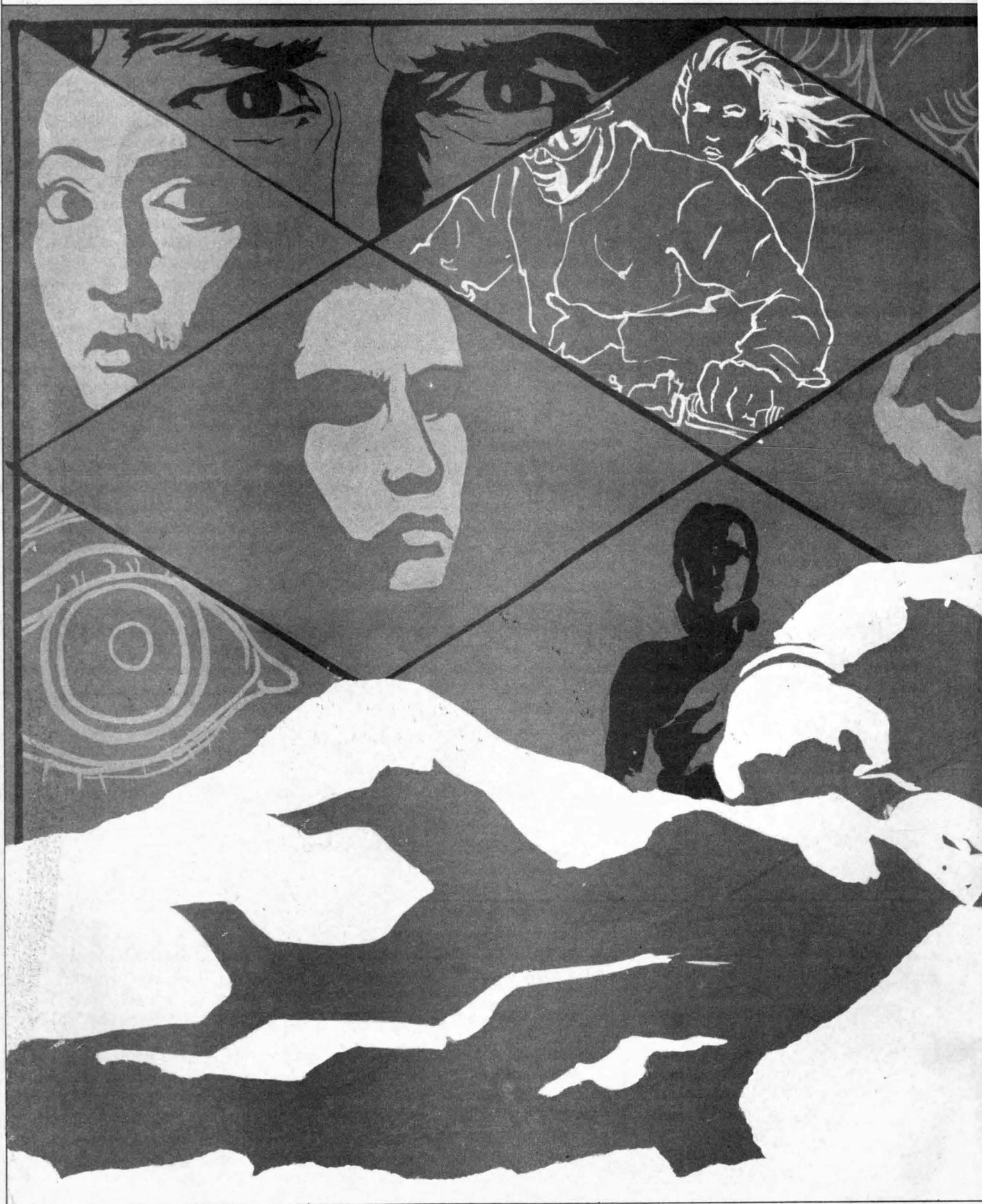
Like Japanese corporations, the yakuza gangs can boast all the trappings of belonging: business cards, used far more widely in Japan than in the United States, are routinely issued to members, embossed with the gang's emblem and clearly identifying the bearer's syndicate, rank, and name. Other symbols are widely used as well, such as flags and lanterns, and even official songs.

So organised are the yakuza that the larger syndicates even issue their own publications. The Yamaguchi-gumi, for example, publishes the monthly *Yamaguchi-gumi Jiho* and sends it to all gang members. The magazine resembles periodicals published for employees, of large corporations and other organisations in Japan, including the prefectural police.

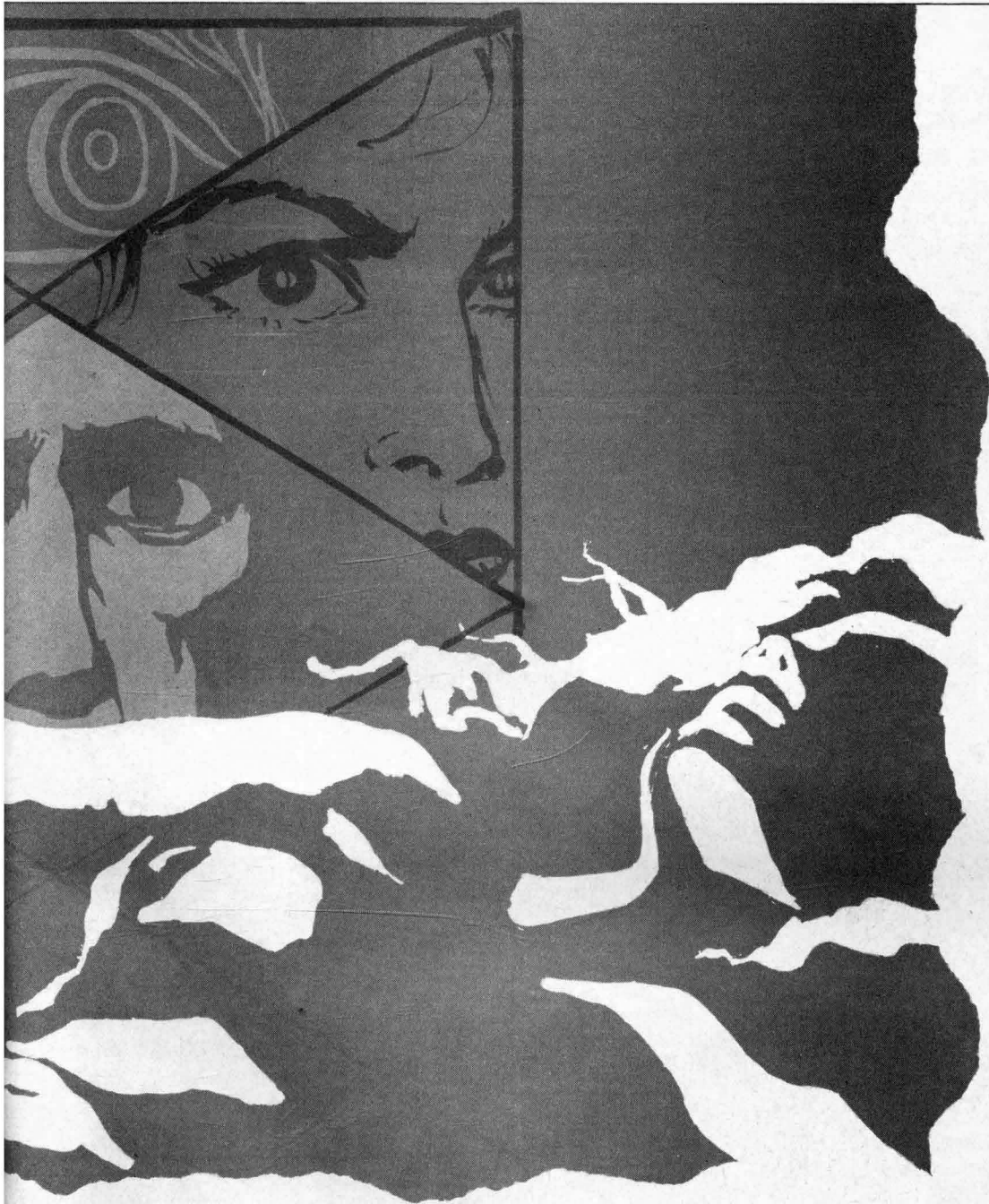
The gangs use other means as well to ensure cohesiveness. In addition to various rituals, heavy slang — difficult for many Japanese to understand — has been practised widely for generations; today the words vary even from gang to gang. Certain customs, such as tattooing and finger-cutting, also play a major role, marking the yakuza for life. To demonstrate that infractions of policy are not to be taken lightly, many gangs prominently display the severed fingers, preserved in spirits, at the group's headquarters.

The sense of belonging to the group — so important in Japan — does not come easily in the yakuza world. Indeed, the commitment to the gang is perhaps greater than that demanded by any other group in Japan. Many would-be yakuza fail the requirements of gang life and quit or are expelled. There is a 10 per cent annual turnover, but those who survive the first few years adapt as successfully as any Japanese in a society where lifetime employment is an institution. ♦

FICTION



By Anjana Appachana



The Prophecy

IN THE END we decided to visit the astrologer before going to the gynaecologist. After an hour's wait in the relentless afternoon sun, a scooter finally stopped for us. When we told the scooterwalla where we wanted to go, he snorted and spat out a copious stream of betel juice.

"I don't go such short distances," he said contemptuously. We turned away wearily. "It will be ten rupees," he shouted.

"Go to hell," said Amrita. "You scooterwallas are all the same."

FICTION

I dragged her back. "Forget your principles today. We'll both collapse in this heat."

We sat inside the scooter. To the scooterwalla's left was a picture of Goddess Lakshmi with a tinsel garland around it, to his right, one of a film actress, bare-bosomed and smiling. Surveying us through the rear view mirror, the scooterwalla grinned. He lit a beedi with a flourish and started the scooter. Loudly and at breakneck speed, the scooter weaved its way through the traffic. We clung to the sides and helplessly tried to hold our sarees down.

"Maybe I'll be lucky and have a miscarriage now," gasped Amrita.

"Slow down," I shouted above the noise of the scooter. He accelerated. "*Slow down, will you?*"

He turned to me, grinning. "What did you say?"

I screamed, "Look at the road, don't look at me! Slow down!"

He missed a car by an inch, swerved violently, threw back his head and laughed. "Which college are you from?" We did not answer. He accelerated.

"*Slow down! Do you want us to die?*"

"Memsahib," he said, "death is neither in your hands nor mine. If we have to die, we will die. It is all written down."

"You die if you want to. At the rate you're going you'll kill us too."

He bounded up and down in his seat gleefully. "Who cares," he sang, "who cares if I die, who cares if you die, what difference does it make!"

"Stop talking to him," Amrita told me, "he's enjoying it."

The scooterwalla accelerated again and looked at me hopefully in the rear view mirror. I looked out at the road. We had passed our destination. "*Stop, stop!*"

He turned to me again and winked. "What is there to be so scared about? People die all the time."

"*Will you please stop, we've passed the place!*"

He braked immediately and we almost fell over him. He leered at our bosoms and said, "Madam, you should have warned me. This is how accidents happen."

I thrust a 10-rupee note into his outstretched hand. He took it, caressing my fingers as he did, smiled slowly and drove off. Shakily, we began walking to Chachaji's house. Chachaji, as the astrologer was called; was very popular with the girls in our college. His prophecies came true and he was cheaper than the rest. He could read your mind. One look at you and he knew everything — your past, your present, your future.

His wife opened the door for us and led us to the living room. I could hear the pressure cooker in the kitchen and the house was redolent with the smell of chicken curry. Somewhere inside a baby cried. The smell of *agarbatti* wafted in and Chachaji entered. Spotless white pyjama-kurta, soft white beard, frail frame, startling grey eyes. . . mystic . . . ethereal. We stared at him, dumbstruck.

He sat opposite us and gazed into our faces. He smiled.

"Yes, my children?"

I looked at Amrita. It had been her idea to come here. When she did not say anything, I spoke. "We wanted to consult you."

"Yes, yes. They all want to consult me." How soft his voice was.

I looked again at Amrita. Her eyes were swimming with tears. I knew how she felt. I could have confessed anything to him.

He turned to Amrita. Almost imperceptibly, he shook his head. "*Beti*, you are in a forest, lost, wandering. You do not know where to go." Dumbly, Amrita nodded. He sighed and closed his eyes. "I see a boy." We started. "I see trouble. It all began with this boy. What is the date, time and place of your birth?" She told him. On a piece of paper he did some rapid calculations. He shook his head. "The stars are not good. The shadow of *Shani* is falling on you. It is a very unlucky year for you."

Amrita whispered, "Chachaji, what will happen?"

"Happen? Has it not already happened?"

She flinched and lowered her eyes. Her fingers gathered and ungathered her pleats. "What will I do, Chachaji, what will I do?"

He closed his eyes once again. I was sweating profusely and there were beads of perspiration above Amrita's mouth.

His wife entered with two glasses of water for us. We drank thirstily. She smiled at us. "You are both so pretty." We smiled gratefully. "But you don't know how to wear sarees," she said, clicking her tongue. "Stand up for a moment." We stood up obediently. She bent and pulled our sarees down. "Always wear your sandals before wearing your sarees. Or else it'll ride high." She adjusted our pleats, then stood up and surveyed her work with satisfaction.

"Champa's mother," sighed Chachaji, "they have not come here to talk of sarees."

"Oh you," she dismissed him with a gesture. "Don't frighten these children with all your talk." She picked up the glasses, gave us another sunny smile and walked out of the room, her *payals* tinkling softly.

Apologetically we looked at Chachaji. He smiled indulgently. "Yes, children, what else do you want to know?"

"What should I do?" asked Amrita.

"I will do a puja for you. It will negate the bad influence of *Shani*. After six months, I will perform a second puja. Your stars will change. The shadow of *Shani* will no longer envelop you." Worshipfully, we nodded our heads. "For the puja," he continued, his gaze fixed at the wall behind us, "you will have to give a donation."

"How much?" Amrita asked, fumbling in her purse.

"Whatever you wish, *beti*, whatever you wish. With the blessings of God all will be well. I will do a special puja for you."

Amrita gave him twenty rupees. He took it and fingered the notes meditatively. "My child, this will suffice only for a small puja. For you, I will have to perform a big puja. Or else the trouble may become worse."

"Chachaji, I have very little money."

He shrugged his shoulders. "If that is your wish then. This may not suffice to negate the evil influence of *Shani*."

I took out ten rupees from my bag and gave it to him. "Chachaji, this is all we have."

He smiled, took the money with one hand, and patted my cheek with the other. "You are a true friend, *beti*. You are a loyal friend. Your stars are good. You will do an M A. It is possible that you will work. You will marry a handsome man and have one son, one daughter."

"When will I get married, Chachaji?"

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen."

"In six-seven years, *beti*."

"Will it be arranged?"

"It will be love. You will have a love marriage."

"Will I go abroad, Chachaji?"

"Many times, many many times."

"Thank you Chachaji," I said, quietly ecstatic.

He turned to Amrita. "After I perform the puja, your stars will change. You will marry a handsome, fair, rich, influential man. You will have two sons who will rise to powerful positions in the government. They will bring you power, fame, respect. And you will also travel abroad, many many times."

He rose. We folded our hands.

THE HEAT HIT US as we stepped out of the house. We walked towards the bus-stop slowly.

"Oh, no, Patram!" I gasped and pulled Amrita back from the road. In silence, breathing heavily, we stood where we were. A khaki-clad man walked past us. He was not Patram. Feeling foolish, we continued walking.

Patram was the omnipresent, omniscient peon-cum-bodyguard-cum-regulator-of-rules, employed by our college, who watched the boarders like a hawk and reported all the goings-on to the Superintendent. He knew who sneaked out of the gates before the rules permitted, who returned after 8 pm, who smoked, who had a boyfriend. Just last month two girls had been expelled from the hostel after Patram smelt cigarette smoke in the corridor outside their room, and informed the Superintendent. The case went up to the Principal. The girls pleaded with her but she would not budge. She said that she would not have girls of such loose character in her college. They had to leave. If someone decided to sneak out of the college gates and see a 1.30 film show, Patram was sure to know. He was everywhere, in the markets, cinema theatres, Connaught Place. We lived in dread of the famous khaki dress and cap, and the permanent grin on his face. That morning we had walked out of the college before official going-out time and there had been no sign of Patram. Dressed in sarees for the first time in an effort to look older, we had walked out of the gates, awkwardly and with trepidation. Still no Patram.

And now, weak with relief at the false alarm, we waited

for the bus that would take us to the gynaecologist. It arrived almost immediately, and for once, it was not crowded. "Forty rupees," Amrita said as the bus began to move. "We've spent forty rupees today."

I said nothing. We had just a hundred between us. We had no idea how much the gynaecologist would take. The previous day, in a desperate bid to make some money, we had gone around the hostel collecting old newspapers, empty jars and bottles. We had fitted these into six polythene bags and trudged to the nearby market, trying to appear oblivious to the noise they made as we walked, praying that the polythene bags would not fall apart. In the market we had squatted before the *kabadiwalla* and bargained at length. He had said that he would give us twenty rupees for the whole lot. We had asked for thirty. He had refused. We had walked away and he had called us back. Twenty-five, he had said. So we struck the bargain. On the way back, overcome by the sight of pastries at the bakery, we had spent most of it on black forests, lemon tarts, chocolate eclairs and chicken patties. And now we had barely enough for the gynaecologist, let alone the abortion. Maybe, I thought, she isn't pregnant after all.

The clinic was plush, beautiful and smelt rich. Our hearts sank. We sat at the reception and waited Amrita's turn. There was just one other woman there, in a bright pink chiffon saree. She stared at us. We thumbed unseeing through the magazines. She continued staring.

"She's going to ask questions," Amrita murmured.

"Lie."

"What?"

"So," said the woman, "you have come to visit Dr Kumar?"

We nodded distantly and went back to our magazines.

"How old are you both?"

"Twenty," I replied. Beneath my saree my legs began to tremble.

"*Achcha*? You look younger."

Amrita smiled. "That's good."

She continued surveying us and her face grew grim. She drew her *pallu* over her shoulders. "Are you married?"

"Yes," I said.

"No," said Amrita.

"*Achcha*?" She turned a shocked face towards Amrita. "Then what are you doing here?"

"Period problems," said Amrita and went back to her magazine.

"What problems?"

"Irregular," I said.

"Too frequent," said Amrita.

She smiled knowingly. "There seems to be some confusion about the problem, yes?" We did not reply. She turned her gaze to me. "So you are the married one."

"Yes."

"You don't look married. How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"So what is *your* problem?"

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FICTION

"I'm accompanying my friend."

"*Achcha!* So the married friend is accompanying the unmarried friend to the gynaecologist!" She knew, she knew. She fingered her *mangalsutra*. "It seems to me that neither of you is married." She waited. "And if that is so, God knows what you are doing here."

The nurse called, "Mrs Mehta, your turn please."

She rose, exuding a strong whiff of Intimate as she did, and walked in. "Bitch," said Amrita.

Ten minutes later, Mrs Mehta emerged, gave us a meaningful look and left.

We went in, sat opposite Dr Kumar and began to cry.

She was wonderful. She spoke to us in low, comforting tones, gave us tissues, got us cold water and had the nurse serve us tea. Finally, red-nosed and swollen-eyed, we were quiet.

She turned to Amrita. "You're pregnant?"

"I think so."

"Let me check you up."

I sat in the room while she and Amrita went to the adjoining room. When they emerged, I knew it was confirmed. Amrita sat next to me. She was trembling. I put my hand on her knee.

Dr Kumar's eyes, brown and gentle, looked troubled. She reminded me of my mother. But I could not tell my mother if I were pregnant.

"How much will an abortion cost?" asked Amrita.

Dr Kumar rested her face against her hand. "You don't want to get married?"

"No."

"Does the boy know?"

"No. There's no need for him to know."

"So you don't intend marrying him?"

"No. How much will it cost?"

Dr Kumar was silent. Finally she said, "It's a thousand rupees in this clinic."

"We don't even have a hundred. Oh God."

"I have a suggestion," said Dr Kumar. "There are government hospitals and clinics where it can be done for just a hundred rupees. I'll give you the addresses. Fix up an appointment with them today."

"Are they all right?" I asked.

"Oh yes, absolutely. Don't worry about that. They have excellent doctors and it's a simple operation. People are having it all the time." She paused and then asked, "Would you like to take your parents into confidence?"

"No, no. No. They'll have nothing to do with me. My father'll kill me."

"*Beti*, listen. Sometimes we tend to misjudge our parents. Often they are the best people to turn to at such times."

"You don't understand," Amrita whispered. "My father, you don't know what he's like. Last year our neighbour's daughter got pregnant. She threw herself in front of a passing train. Her parents refused to claim her body. And my father said, that is how it should be."

"Your mother?"

"What could she say? She cried for days."

"Can't you tell your mother?"

"No, she can't keep anything to herself. She'll tell my father."

Dr Kumar seemed lost in thought. After some time she sighed and said, "Are you both in the hostel?" We nodded. "So your parents are not in Delhi?" We shook our heads. "I see." She wrote down a few addresses and gave them to us. We rose to leave. "Wait," she said, and proceeded to give us a 15-minute talk on contraception. Wide-eyed and quivering with embarrassment, I listened. I could barely look Dr Kumar in the eye as she systematically went through it all. How did people ever buy these things? How did they look chemists in the eye? How did they ever get down to it? Amrita looked tired but unembarrassed, nodding from time to time. After Dr Kumar finished, she said "Don't be so foolish next time." We got up. She said, "Amrita, you're already two months gone. Don't wait much longer." Amrita nodded.

Dr Kumar refused to take any money.

IT WAS FIVE when we reached the hostel. We changed out of our sarees and looked at each other.

"Marry him, Amrita," I said tentatively. "Please," Amrita replied, "you'll never understand."

I didn't. I didn't understand at all. I liked Rakesh, he was handsome, bright, fun to be with. He smelt wonderfully of aftershave and had given us our first motorcycle rides. But she said he had no aesthetic sense. He's so *nice*, I told her, so *nice*. She said she didn't *want* nice. She didn't *want* to get married after college. She didn't *want* to end up like her parents. She wanted adventure. I, half in love with Rakesh, his aftershave and his motorcycle, was sure he would provide adventure. She scoffed at the very idea. Often I wondered why Amrita had gone into this strange, loveless relationship. Normally so communicative with me, she was unusually reticent about her affair with Rakesh. Was it just the sex? My mind recoiled at the thought. Nevertheless I wondered.

It's nothing so great, she told me once and I tried to school my expression at this unexpected revelation. She had done it! How often? She looked the same. I waited to hear more but she said nothing. I continued feeding my fantasies of handsome young men on motorcycles, smelling of Brut, with deep voices and British accents. I would happily have settled for one after college, happily married one. He would never tire of me or I of him. He would always make my heart beat faster. Yes, marriage would be that wondrous path of rapid heartbeats and unending, intimate discoveries. In my fantasies I was beautiful but enigmatic, virginal but willing to surrender it all to the man I married. If it happened before marriage he would not respect me. I would tame the beast in him. Did Rakesh respect Amrita? Did she drive him crazy with desire? On our occasional outings together I watched them covertly.



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FICTION

They laughed, talked, ate, drank. I could see no hidden fire in Rakesh's eyes, no answering flame in Amrita's.

She spent the weekends with him in his hostel. "This bloody college and those frustrated spinsters make me sick," she would tell me every Sunday evening, referring to the Superintendent and the Principal. "I'll be glad to get out of this hole." Rakesh never seemed to figure in her plans for the future. She wanted to become a journalist and I had no doubt she would succeed. She had strong feelings, wrote expressively and had a strange kind of courage, an indifference to what people thought of her. As long as I had known her, she had done exactly what she wanted. While I, I seemed to spend my life looking over my shoulder to see who was watching, starting, for fear someone was listening, always fearful that 'they' would know. Now, on Amrita's behalf, I was guilty, scared of discovery, certain that retribution was imminent.

We went to the hostel phone to fix up the appointment, but it was out of order. There was no other phone we could use in the college. We began walking towards the gate again. The taxi-stand next to the college had a public phone.

"Hemlathaji, Amritaji!" It was Patram's voice behind us. We turned. He was grinning. "The Superintendent is calling you."

I was filled with foreboding. "We'll make a phone call and come."

"No, *ji*, you come now."

We followed him to the Superintendent's office. She was sitting at her desk, sullen as ever, but there was a predatory gleam in her eyes. "Where did you go today?"

"Nowhere," replied Amrita.

She snorted. "There is no need to tell lies. You girls are all the same. What kind of families do you come from, I wonder? Do they teach you to lie or do you learn it after coming here?"

"Don't refer to our families," Amrita said. I could see her fist clenching and unclenching.

"You don't tell me what to refer to and what not to refer to. Who gave you permission to go out of the college at 12 o'clock?" She gave us a triumphant look. "Yes, you think I don't know. I know everything!"

"We went across the road to eat some *chaat*," I said.

"Hah! *Chaat*! You did not go across the road to eat your *chaat*, you went three miles away to eat your *chaat*. Patram!"

Grinning, he entered the room.

"Where did you see them?" He told her.

She smiled, "*He* will not lie." Patram continued to grin.

WE WERE GATED for two weeks. The phone remained dead for that period. The second week, we sneaked out of the gates to make a phone call from the taxi-stand and fix up an appointment with the doctor. We got three wrong numbers and ran out of coins. On our return Patram was waiting for us. Once again he escorted us to the

Superintendent's office. Our gating was extended to four weeks. Two weeks passed, three weeks, and the phone continued to remain dead. One day someone casually mentioned that her sister had had a miscarriage after eating pickles. That evening I made Amrita eat half a bottle of mango pickle. The room smelled of it for days and she was violently sick, but nothing happened. She said, "If I starve myself, maybe it'll die," and did not eat for three days. She almost collapsed, but nothing happened. I said, "Eat, you'll need your strength for the abortion." "When?" she said, "when?"

Amrita's brother came to visit her from Bombay. He was turned away at the Superintendent's office. The Superintendent said, "We have no proof that you are her brother." Her brother asked, "What proof do you want?" She shrugged her shoulders and said, "I must have some proof." He repeated, "What proof?" She said, "Your name should be on her visitors' list." But Amrita had no names on her visitors' list since her parents knew no one in Delhi. Her brother had to leave. The Superintendent came out of her room and saw us standing there. She folded her arms across her ample breasts and told Amrita, "Don't look at me like that. If the rules in this college don't suit you, you are free to leave. No one is forcing you to stay here. This is not the only college in Delhi. My God, see how she is looking at me." She turned her face and waved us away.

Back in our room, Amrita raged. She damned the college and the authorities. "One day," she said, "I'm going to expose the place for what it is. I'll write about it and have it published." I replied, "Everyone knows what it stands for, everyone approves." She said, "After I publish my article, no one will want to attend it." I said, "It'll have exactly the opposite effect — your article will reassure every middle class parent like yours and mine." But as the days passed her fury abated. For the first time, I felt her rising fear. The more fearful she was, the quieter she became. Daily I murmured reassurances while unobtrusively examining her stomach. It seemed to grow no bigger. Would an abortion at this stage kill her? I imagined Amrita's prolonged, bloody death at the clinic, with me left behind to break the news to her parents, to the Superintendent, to the Principal, to my parents. The horror. Would they hold me responsible? And then I was ridden with guilt for thinking such thoughts, for feeling, not sorrow, but terror at the seemingly endless repercussions of such a death. My fantasies turned into nightmares.

As our gating entered the fourth week, Amrita fell ill. She refused to let me call a doctor. "He'll find out I'm pregnant," she panted, "I'll be all right tomorrow." At midnight her temperature rose to 104 degrees. I went to the Superintendent's room. Thank God, her light was on. I knocked at the door. She opened it and glared at me. "Is this any time to come knocking at my door?" I told her, "Amrita's very ill. Her temperature has gone up to a 104. Please call a doctor." The Superintendent went inside her room and came out with some aspirin. "Give her this.

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Bhavana

FICTION

Everyone falls ill once in a while." She began to close the door. I put my foot in it. "I've already given her aspirins. It hasn't helped. *Please* call a doctor." Her nostrils flared. "Get out." She pushed me and banged the door shut. I stood outside her room for a long time. Then I went back to ours.

Amrita's temperature remained the same the next day. The Superintendent called a doctor. The diagnosis — measles.

"Oh my God, oh my God," said the Superintendent, wringing her hands. "Now everyone in the hostel will get it. She had better leave the hostel."

"She has nowhere to go," I said.

She gave me a look of pure hatred and left the room hurriedly. Half an hour later I was called to her office. She was sitting there with the Principal. "What is all this I hear?" the Principal asked me.

"All what?"

"Don't take that tone with me. Your friend has measles. She'll infect the whole hostel."

"She can't help getting it."

The Principal looked at me in amazement and then turned to the Superintendent. "Look at her. Look at this girl. Can you hear how she speaks! What is your name?"

"Hemlatha."

"Well, Hemlatha, it seems that you have not learnt to speak respectfully to your elders."

I was silent.

"Do you smoke?"

"No."

"One cannot trust these girls. Keep an eye on her. I'm sure she smokes."

"You can see what trouble I have, dealing with girls like her," the Superintendent said. "Sometimes I feel I should resign from this thankless job and go to an ashram."

"Oh no, oh no," said the Principal. "You are doing a good job, you are doing an excellent job. You are like a mother to these girls. We give them love and care, we give them a home away from home, but it seems we are nursing vipers in our bosom." She turned to me again. "Your friend will have to leave the hostel. Who are her local guardians?"

"She doesn't have any."

"What do you mean, she doesn't have any? Every girl here has to have local guardians."

"They've been posted out of Delhi."

"This is the limit. This is really the limit. No local guardians indeed." She brooded for some time. "Do you have any?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you ask them to keep her for some time?"

"I can't do that."

"She can't do that. Listen to her — she can't do that. This is a strange kind of friendship indeed." They both looked accusingly at me. "Where do her parents live?"

"In Bangalore."

"Well, they will have to be called. She has to be taken away."

My hands were clammy. "Is that necessary?"

The Principal snorted. "She asks if that is necessary. My dear girl, do you have a suggestion?"

"I could look after her."

"Here? Certainly not."

"Maybe we could have her admitted to a hospital in Delhi?"

"We, my dear girl, we do not have time to go running around finding out if hospitals can take such cases. This is her parents' responsibility." She got up. "Telephone her parents today," she told the Superintendent. "And have their meals sent to them in their rooms. On no account are either of you to enter the dining hall. If you have to attend classes, go from the back door. We'll have it opened for you."

THE SUPERINTENDENT placed a call to Amrita's parents but could not get through. She sent a telegram but there was no response. For a week Amrita stayed confined to our room. I continued attending classes, going out of the back door of the hostel. For some unaccountable reason, it did not matter to them if I infected the others in class, but the dining room was taboo. Amrita wept silently throughout, and when she was asleep, I did. Often I would wake up at night to find Amrita awake, gazing at the ceiling, her face now full of spots, her large eyes swollen and red. We hardly spoke. Finally the Superintendent got through to Amrita's parents. They had not received the telegram. They said they would fly to Delhi the next day. Turning to the wall, Amrita said, "This is the end. My father will have nothing to do with me. Where will I go? Where will I go?" I could offer no comfort, no sanctuary. I kept saying, "He won't do that, he won't do that." Then I said, "Rakesh is there, he'll see you through, he'll have to." She was silent and then she said, "Call him, tell him."

The hostel phone was out of order again. I asked the Superintendent if I could use hers. She refused. In the end I walked out of the college gates, my pocket full of 50 paise coins, while Patram followed me, calling, "Hemlathaji, come back, come back, I'll report you to the Superintendent, I'll tell the Principal, you will see what I will do, you will see what happens." He followed me to the gate and watched me walk to the taxi-stand. The taxiwallas stared at me while I dialled Rakesh's number. I got a wrong number the first time. The second time the call got disconnected. The third time I got through. Rakesh was out, I was told, but would be back in 10 minutes. I waited, while the taxiwallas eyed me. One lay down on the charpoy next to me. "It is so hot," he groaned. He removed his banyan, lowered his pyjamas and looked at me. I looked away. It was getting dark and every emerging shadow seemed khaki-clad and wore a wide grin.

I walked down the road slowly. Five minutes. A cyclist

FICTION

swerved towards me and I stepped back. He groaned and cycled away rapidly. I walked back and tried the number again. I got through. Rakesh was back. I told him, "I'm at the taxi-stand next to the college. Come quickly, Amrita's pregnant. Her parents are coming here tomorrow. She's down with measles. Both of us are gated. Come quickly, I'm not supposed to be out of the gates." He said he'd be there immediately. I walked a slight distance away from the taxi-stand and waited. "Madam," said a voice behind me. I shuddered and looked back. It was the same taxiwalla. He looked me over and scratched his groin. "Can I help you in any way?" "No," I said, and turned away. He remained where he was. "Do you need any 50 paise coins?" "No," I said, "no." I walked further away. He followed me. I crossed the road. He stood opposite, staring at me. Ten minutes later Rakesh's motorcycle came to a halt beside me. The taxiwalla walked back.

"Why didn't she tell me," he kept saying, after I told him everything. "Why didn't she tell me?"

"What will you do? Her parents are coming tomorrow."

"I'll marry her."

"You're 19, you're in your second year of college. You don't have any money, what do you mean you'll marry her. Where will you live, you don't have a job."

He looked at me helplessly. "I'll work out something."

"She wants an abortion. Can you pay for it and arrange everything?"

"Yes, tell me what to do?"

"I don't know, you find out."

"Hemlathaji!" It was Patram. "The Principal is calling you."

"I'm coming."

"Hemlathaji, I have been watching. The Superintendent has called the Principal from her house. It has become a serious matter."

"I'll be waiting outside the gate tomorrow," Rakesh said.

"She can't come out."

"Can you?"

"No," Patram said in English. "I understand English. All understand. No one go out."

Desperately Rakesh said, "I'll be waiting outside all day."

FOR THE THIRD time Patram escorted me back to the Superintendent's office. They were both waiting for me. Grinning, Patram said, "She was outside the gates for one hour talking to her boyfriend."

The Principal made a sound of disgust. "Nothing unexpected in that. It is all these girls are interested in." She turned to the Superintendent. "How many rules has she broken?"

The Superintendent smiled grimly. She opened her diary. "Number one. Four weeks ago she went out with Amrita at 12 o'clock. They were both gated for two weeks. Number two. Even then they went out. They were

gated for two more weeks. Number three. Today she goes out again." She threw the diary on the desk.

"It is girls like you and your friend who ruin the reputation of our college," the Principal told me. "Breaking rules, making boyfriends, smoking."

"I don't smoke."

"She says she doesn't smoke. Next she'll say she doesn't have a boyfriend." She pulled the telephone towards her. "I am phoning your local guardians to take you away. You can start packing your things."

I wish I could say at this point that I had let her phone them. I wish I could say that I had walked out of the room with an appropriate remark. I wish I could say that I had told them what I thought of them. (Even today I relive that scene and say all that I did not at that time.) I wish . . . I wish . . . I wish. I wish I didn't have to say that I began to cry hysterically while they watched me with satisfaction. That I begged them to forgive me and give me another chance. That I told them that my parents would never understand. That I kept repeating, please, please don't expel me, I'll never repeat my mistakes. That the Superintendent said she wanted all this in writing. That I gave her a written apology, still sobbing, still begging. They both smiled and shook their heads. And the Principal asked the Superintendent, "So you think she has realised her folly?" And the Superintendent replied, "Who knows with these girls, they are such good actresses." And I said (Oh God) I said, "I will do anything you want me to do, but please don't expel me. . . Please forgive me, please forgive me." And they said, "We cannot give you an answer now, we shall have to think about it. We will watch your behaviour and then we will decide." And I thanked them.

THE NEXT MORNING, from our first floor window, I saw Rakesh's figure next to his motorcycle, waiting outside the gate. I sent him a note through my next-door neighbour, explaining the situation. But he continued waiting in the afternoon sun while I helped Amrita pack her belongings. Her parents arrived in the evening. Her father waited in the Superintendent's office while her mother came to our room and sat by her daughter, stroking her hair. "My poor baby," she said, "my poor, poor child." And she smiled at me and said, "Hemu, *beti*, thank you for looking after her all this time. My daughter is lucky to have such a friend." She continued stroking Amrita's hair. "Ma," Amrita said, "Ma, I'm pregnant." Her mother's hands stopped. "Ma," Amrita said, grasping her thigh, "I'm three months pregnant Ma. Ma, where will I go? Where will I go?" Her mother was still, so still. She closed her eyes and whispered, "*Bhagwan, hai Bhagwan.*"

In the distance a clock struck six. From my position at the window I could see Rakesh outside the gate, waiting.

"MA!"

We started. Amrita's voice sounded strange.

"Ma, I think I'm bleeding."

She was. Slowly, the white sheets were staining. Amrita

began to cry, loud, harsh sounds. Fascinated, I watched the red take over the white while the room filled with the horrible sound. And then there was a knock at the door and the Superintendent entered. I threw a blanket over Amrita and the sound of her cries stopped abruptly. The Superintendent's eyes bulged. "What is the matter?"

Amrita's mother began stroking her hair again. "My daughter is tired. It has been a strain. Please call a taxi. We must leave now."

The Superintendent eyed us suspiciously. She came closer to Amrita and whipped the blanket away. Amrita's mother gasped. The Superintendent gave a strangled scream. Amrita closed her eyes and the Superintendent said, "I should have known."

"Please call a taxi," her mother said.

"Taxi — nothing doing, I'm calling the Principal." She rushed out of the room and we heard her heavy footsteps echoing down the corridor.

"*Beti*," her mother's face was distorted, "please call a taxi."

"I can't, I can't, I'm not allowed out. You call one from outside the gate, I'll stay with her."

"Ma, don't leave me," Amrita moaned.

I held her hand tightly. "I'm here."

Small, incoherent sounds escaped her mother's throat. She looked at us and then went out rapidly.

I was with Amrita for 15 minutes while she continued bleeding. I used up all the sheets we had to use below and between her. The blood soaked through them all, right down to the mattress, and the room was heavy with its smell. Amrita moaned and twisted and turned and held on to my hand until I felt I could no longer bear the pain of it all. Then the Superintendent entered the room with the Principal. The Principal took the scene in and hit her forehead with her hand.

"Tell her parents to take her away," she told me, "tell them she cannot come back to this college. Where are they?"

"Her mother's gone to get a taxi." I was shivering violently.

I heard footsteps in the corridor and her mother entered the room, panting. She ignored the Superintendent and the Principal. "*Beti*," she told me, "help me carry her down."

"And don't bring her back," the Principal said, tight-lipped. "We don't want such girls here."

"Madam, madam," the Superintendent said hysterically, "it isn't my fault — she broke the rules and got into this mess."

"No one is blaming you," the Principal said.

They called Patram to carry her suitcases down, while her mother and I carried Amrita downstairs to the waiting taxi, past the Superintendent's room, past her amazed father, followed by the Principal and the Superintendent. We laid Amrita down on the back seat of the taxi and her mother said to me, "Come with me, *beti*, please come

with me."

"Nothing doing," the Principal said, holding my arm. "This girl is gated, she is going nowhere. We have had enough trouble. Now Amrita is your responsibility." I stood between them, helpless.

"Will someone tell me what is happening?" her father asked.

"Yes, I will tell you," the Principal replied. "Your daughter is pregnant and at this moment she is aborting. You do what you want with her and don't bring her back to this college."

Her father's face seemed to shrink. He shook his head uncomprehendingly. Her mother took his arm gently and opened the door of the taxi. "Get inside," she said, "we have to go to the hospital." She sat at the back with Amrita. Slowly, the taxi drove away.

"So, Hemlathaji," said the Superintendent but I walked away from her, away from the hostel, away from it all, towards the college building. I climbed up the stairs to the first floor and sat there against the wall.

Much later, I looked at my watch. It was 9.45 p.m. They would lock the hostel door at 10. I walked back slowly and went upstairs to our room. The stench of blood greeted me, and on the bed, an accumulation of sheets, all red and white. I bolted the door and walked to the window. He was still there. I drew the curtains.

THE REST I heard from my mother's sister in Bangalore, who is a good friend of Amrita's mother. She stayed with us for a week and in the strictest of confidence, gave us a blow-by-blow account of everything. Amrita was in hospital for a day and then flew back with her parents to Bangalore. The following month she was married off. "That is *luck*," my aunt said. "*Such* a nice boy."

Rakesh came to meet me the following term. I told him about Amrita. At the end he said, "I see." That is all.

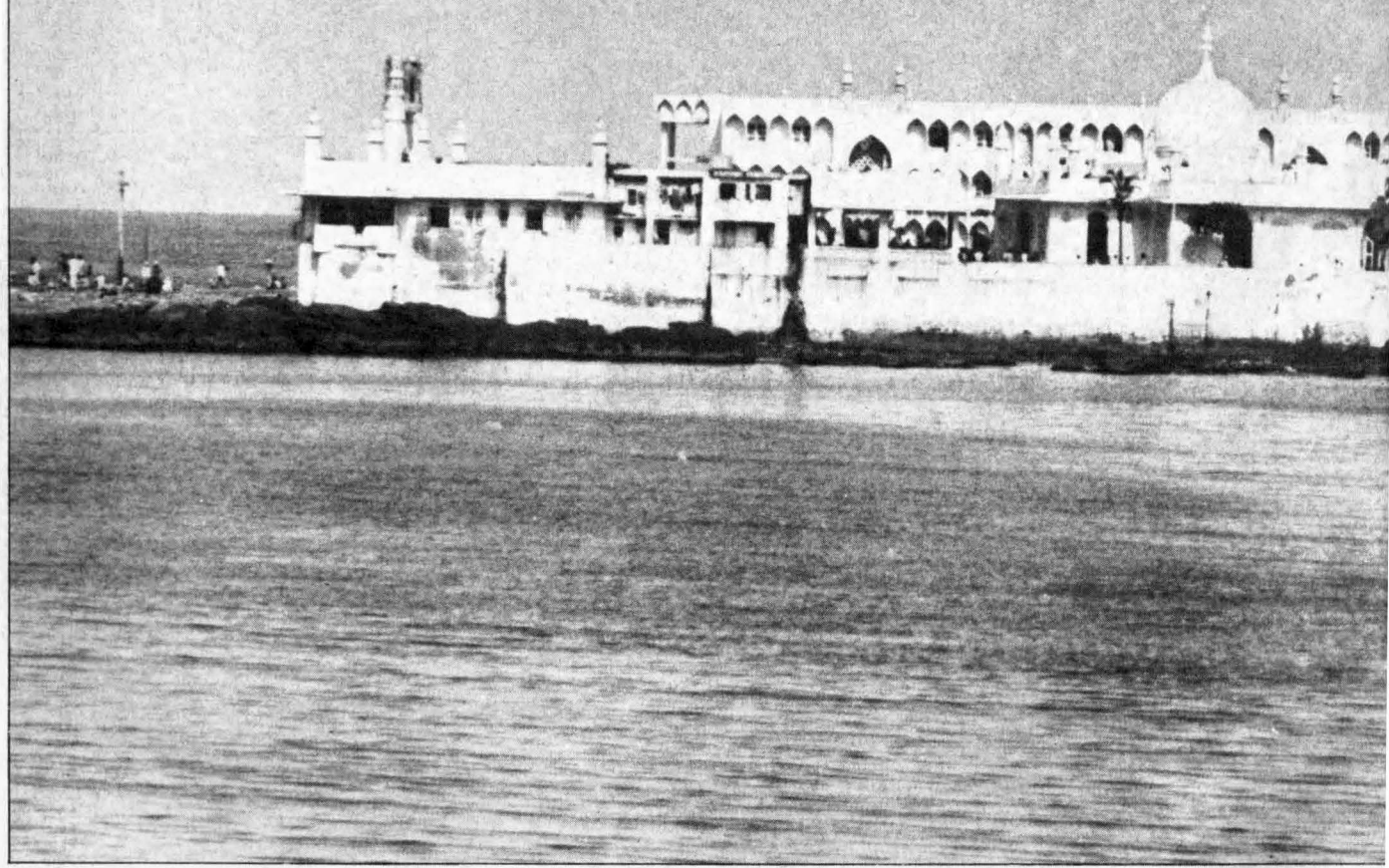
The rules in the hostel became stricter. Patram kept a close watch on me. Like the Cheshire cat, his grin followed me everywhere.

The year I graduated, Amrita wrote. She had no time for letter writing, she said. There had been too much to cope with that first year; the abortion, her marriage, her first child. And the second year, her second child. Her father began speaking to her after her son was born. Her mother never referred to what happened. But she stood by her. Of course, her husband knew nothing. He's nice, she said. Business was taking him abroad the following year. She would probably accompany him. She longed to talk to me, letters were so difficult. And all the interruptions, babies crying, meals to be cooked. . . you know how it can be, she said. Oh, Hemu, no, you cannot know. She asked, remember Chachaji? He got it all right didn't he? He will *always* get it right won't he? For this is how it will always be, yes, this is how it will always be. Oh Hemu, Hemu, my stars have changed haven't they?

And mine, Amrita, and mine. ♦

FEATURE

MONUMENT TO A SAINT



The dargah of Haji Ali, one of Bombay's most prominent landmarks, has been over the years, a constant source of solace and refuge for millions of its devotees. The dargah assumes different shades for different occasions — peacefully serene for its daily devotees and festively gay for ceremonial revellers such as those at the Id-ul-Fitr celebrations last month. VIBHA NIRESHWALIA examines the religious significance of this dargah and speaks to its worshippers.

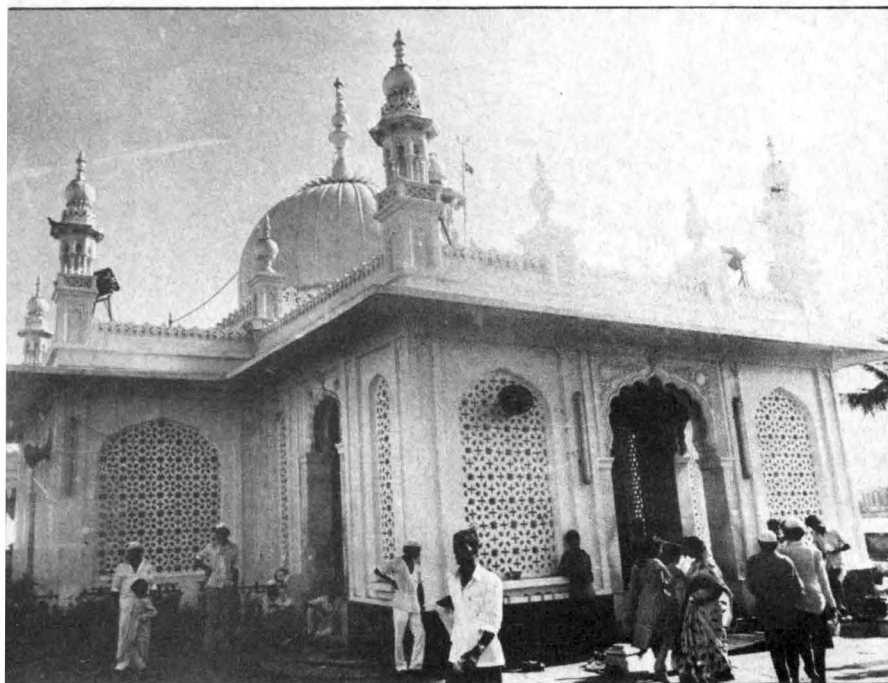


THE MATUTINAL PRAYERS are over but it is morning still and the summer sun is hot on the body, as pilgrims walk gingerly on the narrow cement causeway which leads to the dargah of Haji Ali, situated on a rocky islet at South Worli, Bombay. The dargah commemorates the revered Muslim saint, Haji Ali, who has a large following among people of all faiths in Bombay. Cordoned off from the maddening bustle of the city by the waters of the Arabian Sea, the dargah looks resplendent under the strong sun. In fact, its mere sight fills devotees with religious fervour as they approach the dargah to seek the saint's benediction.

En route one's attention is diverted by the cries of the hawkers from the wayside shops, urging you to buy their wares: little symbols of Muslim faith, religious books, coloured bangles, flowers, incense sticks or embroidered satin coverlets for the tomb. Maimed and disfigured beggars line the sides of the pavement, stretching out their partially amputated limbs for alms as they invoke the blessings of the saint on the pilgrims. There is also the turbulent sea to contend with, the waves sometimes tall enough to drench those walking the causeway. At the end of the causeway, which is a short walk, are 10 steps which lead to the huge main entrance to this magnificent structure.

In the courtyard is a huge gathering of devotees: the old, the young, the diseased, the wretched and the serene — all spurred by the same religious impulse: to seek the grace of this granter of boons. They take off their footwear and step reverentially into the sanctum sanctorum which houses the 400-year-old tomb of Haji Ali, whose body is said to have come floating to this spot.

Haji Ali is believed to have been a great Sufi saint from Bukhara (old Turkey), now in Russia, which was a flourishing centre for Islamic art and learning. Legend has it that once, while returning from a pilgrimage of Haj, he got a premonition



The holy dargah that enshrines the saint's tomb.

of his death. He willed then that his body should not be buried according to the traditional rituals but be left free in the sea to float to its unknown destination. His desire was fulfilled on his death, and his body was put in a coffin and lowered into the sea. The coffin floated for many days and finally halted at this rocky islet, taking the fishermen at work by surprise. On opening the badly ravaged coffin they were stunned to see a dead body which exuded radiance. This was no ordinary person, they realised, and buried his remains in a simple tomb on the rocks. Word spread and soon people came in hordes to seek the blessings of this holy saint. Wishes were granted and expectations fulfilled; the sick recovered and the wretched were blessed. Faith in this Baba became deeply imprinted on devotees' minds and soon this tomb became one of the most famous shrines of the city as well as a prominent tourist attraction. A Haji Ali Dargah Trust was formed in 1919 to take care of the tomb and in 1936, the causeway was constructed to facilitate the pilgrims' passage towards the tomb.

It was only in 1952 that a struc-

The danger of the tides notwithstanding, there is a perennial stream of devotees who congregate at the dargah. Hindus, Muslims, Catholics, Sikhs and Parsis converge here. The cosmopolitan mix of the devotees is judged by the fact that on Sundays, about 60 per cent of the devotees are non-Muslims. The dargah also attracts very large crowds on Thursdays.

ture in cement with domes and minarets was built over the tomb and slowly this hallowed place acquired other facilities like a masjid, and separate enclosures and resting places for men and women.

The inside walls of the dargah are painted a sparkling white and intricate mosaic work adorns the ceiling and a part of the walls. The different names of Allah and the emblem of Islam, *Chand-Tara* (the Crescent and the Star), are inscribed on the walls.

The tomb is elegantly covered first with a heavy *zari chaddar* and then a red and green one in satin. There are flowers strewn upon it, beside it, and around it. The tomb is supported by eight small marble pillars that end in a canopy inlaid with exquisitely coloured glass work. The tranquillity and beauty of the place soothes. Each has his own way of praying: some read the *fateyha* and take rounds of the tomb, others kiss the golden coverlet and offer flowers, incense sticks and money. And so it's an endless stream from 5.30 in the morning to 10 pm.

Mohammed Yunus, a dark elderly man, who sells flowers and other offerings at a stall near the dargah is a staunch believer in Baba's powers. "It may take time, but sooner or later, your wishes will be granted," he intones. Chandrika, a Hindu by religion, has been visiting the dargah since the day she remembers. Her mother, she believes, was cured of an 'incurable' disease by the blessings of Baba Haji Ali. Since then it has been a tradition in the family to come here every Thursday (*Jhumme raat*), an auspicious day for Muslims. Smiling shyly, she adds that she is now happily married to the man of her choice all because of the blessings of Baba Haji Ali. "Baba is like a father and I'm in constant communion with him," she says earnestly. Ghulam Jhilani, a portly, middle-aged security guard at the dargah also vouches for the powers of the Baba. This is not surprising for he was once retrenched from his earlier job and had come to this dargah to seek solace through prayer. Hardly was he out of the dargah than he was offered a job by Khan Saheb, a *mujawar* (priest) in the dargah. "My *mannat* was fulfilled immediately, my prayers were heard," he affirms. Rashida Bano advises devotees to tie a *dhaga* (thread) on a tree outside the dargah for wish fulfillment. "He will hear you and you will be blessed," she says with conviction.

Stories of the grace of the Baba and his power in alleviating the suf-

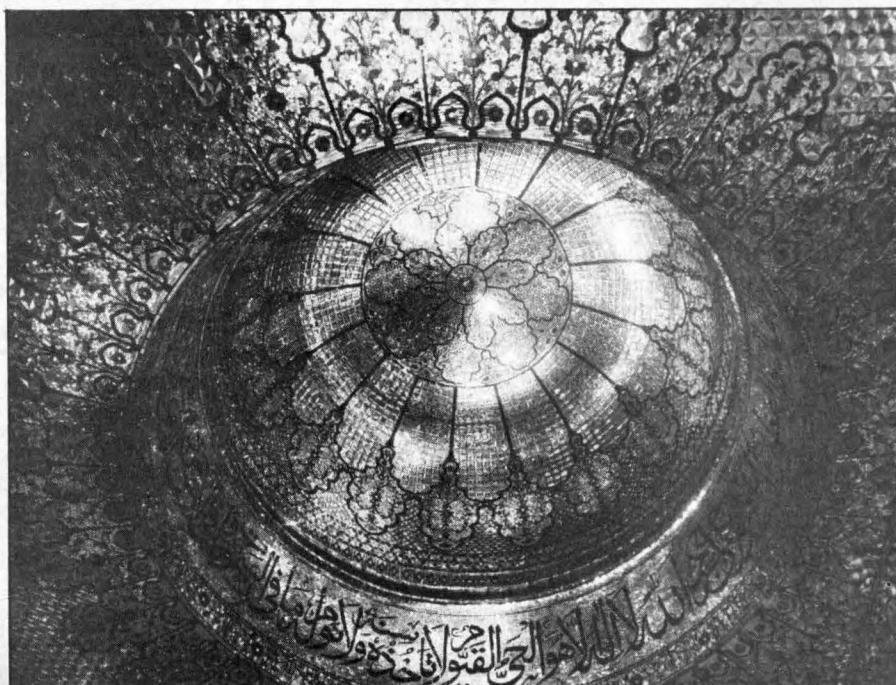
ferings and misfortunes of his devotees are eagerly narrated. Among the various myths that abound, is the one that maintains that once a year, a gargantuan fish comes in front of the dargah, lifts its head in salutation and quietly swims away. Such myths are gently dismissed by Sayyed Khalimuddin, the manager of the Haji Ali Dargah Trust. While reiterating the greatness of Baba Haji Ali, he discourages superstition. "It is Allah who is our benefactor," he says.

A soft-spoken and genial man, Sayyed Khalimuddin's devoutness lies in doing his duty: managing the dargah trust, which supervises the maintenance of the shrine. This trust, whose chairman is A S Merchant, runs the dargah from the funds it receives from the donation boxes. "The boxes are opened every three months in the presence of other members of the trust and their bank officials," he explains. "We collect approximately Rs 10 lakh each year. Recently, the mirror work on the upper walls and the ceilings of the domes cost us Rs 1,19,000. Other portions of the dargah have also been renovated. Currently, we are doing up the gateway."

There is also a sanitarium close to the dargah which gives temporary shelter to homeless Muslims, at a nominal rent. "This building was originally planned to house more flats," Khalimuddin says, "but there was strong opposition from the Bombay Beautification Committee and other citizens of Bombay as they felt this structure detracted from the beauty of the dargah." And so a two-storied sanitarium was built in 1984.

To ensure the safety of the devotees during high tide, a red flag is hoisted at the gate. The gates are then closed and the devotees inside the precincts of the dargah are not allowed to go out.

The danger of the tides notwithstanding, there is a perennial stream of devotees who congregate at the dargah and sometimes attend *namaaz* at the masjid behind it. Hindus, Muslims, Catholics, Sikhs and Parsis con-



Magnificent mosaic of the dargah's dome.

"I come here during the fair and believe me, no one returns empty-handed," says Ruby, a frail 88-year-old Parsi lady who visits the dargah, quite undeterred by her failing eyesight or the furious roar of the sea. It is ultimately the power of faith that reigns supreme. The monument has stood on a rock, braving the ravages of the sun and wind and the buffeting of the waves.

the dargah.

This dargah has no special *urs* (feast) but the second day of Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ul-Zoha are celebrated with fervour and gaiety by the Muslim devotees, who set up a makeshift fair on the premises and on the main road outside. "I come here during the fair and believe me, no one returns empty-handed," says Ruby, a frail 88-year-old Parsi lady who visits the dargah, quite undeterred by her failing eyesight or the furious roar of the sea.

It is ultimately the power of faith that reigns supreme. The monument has stood on a rock, braving the ravages of the sun and wind and the buffeting of the waves. Visible from the gate of the dargah is the golden spire of the Mahalaxmi temple. Somehow these two holy monuments seem peacefully reconciled and symbolise the quintessential truth of all religions: love, truth and the ultimate brotherhood of man. Devotees slowly troop out of the dargah. The sun, now a blur of red, gradually turns the sky crimson. Soon the devotees pour out, to return to the claustrophobia and noise of Bombay's traffic, but fortified by their visit to the dargah. ♦

verge here. The cosmopolitan mix of the devotees is judged by the fact that on Sundays, a public holiday, about 60 per cent of the devotees are non-Muslims. The dargah also attracts very large crowds on Thursdays and special arrangements are usually made on the main road to avoid traffic jams. *Qawallis* are also performed on Thursdays: these are usually compositions eulogising Baba. Recently, the renowned *qawalli* singers, the Sabri brothers from Pakistan, sang in



Hindustan Lever Limited

PRODUCTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT

**Abstract of speech delivered by
Dr. A.S. Ganguly,
Chairman,
Hindustan Lever Limited,
at the Annual
General Meeting
held in Bombay on
Friday, May 15, 1987.**

Introduction

India today perceives productivity as an essential ingredient for rapid economic development. Statistics and information regarding productivity are generally scanty or much out-of-date to be meaningful. However, economic development is so intimately related to productivity that I felt it might be worthwhile examining issues involved, based on available data.

It is estimated that out of approximately 220 million people in India in the employable category, less than 10 per cent work in 'organised' public and private industry. Another 5-10 per cent are engaged in ancillary and service sectors, most of which are peripheral to the organised industries. For the purpose of this address, I have restricted myself to productivity issues concerning only the 'organised' industry.

The most worrisome issues are erosion of productivity, lack of innovativeness and high cost of infrastructure all adding up to the high cost of end products. Although it is generally recognised that modernisation of industries is essential to improve our productivity and reduce costs, we have not considered the means to resolve the undercurrent of apprehension that modernisation will somehow lead to a loss of employment and pose a threat to individuals. The human factor is a key issue in modernisation and needs as much attention as the other issues in planning for modernisation.

Productivity and Manpower

In organised industry, there exist distinct methods for measurement of productivity on the shopfloor, the office and the market place. Management productivity is rarely ever referred to. However, in reality all of these are intimately interconnected.

The popular belief is that India has a pool of skilled and competent manpower, comparable to many industrially developed countries. The cost of manpower is comparatively low. These two together give Indian industry a potential competitive edge, at least in some sectors. However, other than certain gross indicators, not much data is available to distinguish those parts of Indian industry which are genuinely competitive.

A closer analysis of available data reveals that the productivity growth in Indian manufacturing sector has taken place almost entirely due to capital deepening. The capital deepening is reported to have taken place at the rate of 3.1 per cent per annum. In other words what it means is that total factor productivity has declined at 0.6 per cent per annum.

A comparison of wage growth and productivity in an area of our traditional strength, textiles, indicates at least a part of the reason for our competitive disadvantage. For instance, during the period 1974-83, for an increase in unit wages of 1.5% per annum, South Korea achieved a productivity rise of 5.6%. In the case of India the corresponding figures are 4.8% and 3% per annum. Let us consider the hourly average wage (1981-82) in Electronics and Garments, both labour intensive industries. If we take the Indian wages as 100 for both, the respective figures for Hong Kong are 529 and 515. In the case of Japan the figures respectively are 351 and 1780.

Notwithstanding their wages being higher than in India, the other countries dominate the export market mainly because of their higher productivity and better quality.

Add to this the important data of manhour per work week in different countries in the manufacturing industry. In South Korea the average hours worked per week in 1983 was 54 compared to 49 hours in Singapore and 40 hours in India and West Germany.

It is not, however, just the hours devoted to work, but how effectively the time is utilised to produce goods and services, which is the real measure of productivity.

Any discussion on manpower productivity would be incomplete without some measure of work attitude and ethics. In the absence of other more closely related data, mandays lost may serve as an

indirect indicator. The figures present a grim picture: Average mandays lost was 10.6 million during the period 1961-69. During 1981-85, it has risen to 48.6 million.

Although we generally compare percentages and frequency of mandays lost as an index of health in industrial relations, what remains unreported is the absolute number of mandays lost, the cost to the individual, to the industry and to the nation.

It is vitally important that we reject the impression that we are not committed to hard work. The unfortunate fact, however, is that productivity is still not a major corporate focus in industrial management and hence does not figure as an integral part of our industrial development strategy.

Productivity and Infrastructure

The contribution of the infrastructure sector in improving total factor productivity cannot be overstressed. However, the long term trends suggest that in this sector as well, real wage growth rate has invariably increased faster than productivity growth.

It is well recognised that the level of technology sophistication has an overwhelming influence on productivity. In the case of steel manufacture, for instance, international comparison reveals staggering differences. Even though the high cost of steel production in India is well-known, plants of comparable vintage and capacity require five times the manhours per unit output in India.

So, rationalisation of manpower and modernisation are two key issues which remain unresolved in much of our industry. Whereas modernisation is technology and market led, manpower utilisation as mentioned earlier is a more complex socio-economic problem. Lack of sensitivity and attention to these factors have been primarily responsible for the incidence of widespread obsolescence in industry and consequent loss of employment opportunity faster than the rate of job creation.

Productivity and Technology

The classic studies by Kendrick, Solow and Denison reveal that bulk of the 'improvements' in output can be attributed directly or indirectly to technology



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PRODUCTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT

change. These studies report that around 40 per cent of productivity increase in the USA can be correlated to advances in technological innovation and spending on R&D.

In EEC countries, technical progress (as distinct from contribution of manpower and capital), accounts for more than 50 per cent of GDP growth. This technical progress is made up of technology upgradation through (a) technology import and (b) technology development through domestic R&D spending and innovation.

Data on total factor productivity growth, which in a broad sense is a surrogate of technical efficiency, is revealing. During the period 1959-60 and 1979-80 the total factor productivity growth per annum was 5.7% for South Korea; 3.1% for Japan; and 2% for Turkey. In the case of India it declined by 0.6% per annum.

In India technology innovations and modernisation of capital goods have not undergone appreciable change. Secondly, strategic technology development and investments have been influenced mainly by policy rather than by market forces.

One of the inevitable consequences is the continuation of selective dependence on technology imports in the intermediate term, in order to bring about a quantum change in efficiency through modernisation. The selectivity has to be balanced by the extent of support that has to be provided to indigenous capital goods industry and their long term development.

Increase in the prices of domestic capital goods is significant: 6.8% in 1983-84; 8.7% in 1984-85; and, a hefty 12% in 1985-86. A comparison of domestic and imported (cif) prices of selected imports by the capital goods industry reveals that domestic prices of items such as steel plates, structurals, copper rods etc. are 200 per cent or higher than the comparable imports (cif).

It is encouraging to note that our R&D expenditure as a percentage of GNP has been steadily increasing, although this is not reflected in any significant innovative thrust as yet. Expenditure on R&D as a percentage of GNP has grown from 0.05 in 1950-51 to 0.73 in 1983-84. The share of the private sector R&D expenditure as a percentage of the total in 1983-84 stood at 13.6 (1960-61: 0.5%).

Considering our resource position and stage of development, these figures signify considerable expenditure. In USA and Japan the corresponding figures are about 2.5 per cent. In countries such as South Korea and China it is in the range of

0.8 to 1 per cent of GNP. However, if Defence R&D is excluded, then the bulk of R&D expenditure in industrialised countries is in the private sector and there is a correlation between R&D expenditure and production contribution. In India on the other hand, bulk of R&D expenditure is incurred by the Government; some in public sector companies but mostly in national institutions.

Productivity and Exports

The rapid expansion and diversity of the Indian economy is placing our balance of trade under sharper focus.

While we have made progress in certain non-traditional areas such as garments, leather, handicrafts and an ambitious plan has been formulated for software export development, an export strategy cannot be sustained without active involvement of capital and manufactured industrial goods.

The average profitability in the domestic market based on the RBI sample of 1700 companies indicate that profit before tax to sales ratio is around 7 per cent. Export profitability however is marginal even without allocation of overheads. It would thus seem that for some natural growth to take place, the incentive package must be so architected as to make profitability of exports attractive, even if marginally, in order to provide some balance with the domestic market.

One way to fund the added support necessary to boost exports is to link at least some of the countries' non-strategic imports with exports.

Productivity and Policy

Industrial licencing, MRTP, FERA, etc. which are an integral part of Government's policy, are supposed to promote economies of scale, higher productivity and lower cost.

Unfortunately, only 35 per cent of our organised factory sector has capital stock of recent vintage. This may partially explain why key manufacturing sectors consume more energy per unit output, and there is also wide variation across units even within a particular industry.

Policies and measures which help reduce delays can have a far greater impact on cost and productivity than is generally realised. Next to capacity utilisation, delays in project completion is the single biggest factor in loss of competitive edge. It has been estimated that one day's delay in commissioning a 2000 MW Super Thermal power station can lead to a loss of Rs.40 crore equivalent of production.

The measures initiated for different industries with regard to economic size plants, broad-banding etc. are therefore as important as the measures to rationalise licencing and related issues of policy.

Productivity and Hindustan Lever

Concern for productivity improvement has a long history in Hindustan Lever Limited (HLL). Commencing nearly forty years ago, the initial emphasis was on work and method study approaches which steadily improved manpower and machine productivity. For comparable plant and machinery our productivity match global standards. Similarly value addition efficiency through technology innovation as well as sales and distribution productivity have been key features in our developmental process. These have added up not only in terms of absolute productivity gains, but in addition have proved advantageous in new investment and technology decisions. Training of new employees in our increasingly dispersed and remote manufacturing locations is based on models developed specifically to boost productivity.

While Method and Work Study form the base of the concern productivity strategy, technology and other changes have provided new opportunities, e.g. Energy Engineering.

A concern-wide cost effectiveness programme has as its goal cost saving between 1-2 per cent per annum on sales value. Cost Engineering and Big Scale Value Analysis are other proactive ideas which have enabled our finance managers play a big role in boosting productivity.

Computers are no longer manpower saving devices, but are tools which are now irreplaceable in the management and use of information in business decision making. Another area where microprocessor technology is bringing about quantum change in productivity and efficiency is in process control.

More recently we have been trying to devise ways and means to assess and improve management productivity and effectiveness. The two important qualities that we are focusing on in assessing managerial effectiveness are contributions to Human Relations and Productivity.

Summing Up

After 40 years of relentless efforts, Indian industry has attained a critical mass and is poised to grow at a faster rate. The cost and value of this progress could benefit far larger sections of our population if



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our resources and efforts could be more productively used.

Although the awareness of the issues involved is now more widespread, the problem of social and economic insecurity prevents effective measures being taken to bring about change. The subjects of productivity and modernisation thus tend to be obscured.

While the key issues, human and societal, must be an integral part of any plan to improve productivity, the following may be considered as short term measures to make a modest beginning.

- (a) Our National Plan may consider whether a part of our growth (say 25 per cent) should be planned to be derived from productivity increases alone.
- (b) In order to encourage units to meet the national objective, automatic expansion of capacity must be allowed without undue restraints. The 25 per cent ceiling on capacity expansion should

not remain a sacrosanct figure. Market forces should provide the balance and controls.

- (c) The concept of productivity circles may be considered. For this purpose, annual norms along with methods which would help achieve productivity increases and a set of gain indicators should be worked out for each industry.
- (d) Industries above a certain size may be asked to submit productivity perspective plans to qualify for fiscal incentives and selective imports for modernisation.
- (e) Government policies on matters such as growth, location, size, etc. must have as a major consideration productivity improvement, especially in industries which are critically dependent on economies of scale.

In Hindustan Lever innovation and improvement of productivity have had an enormous influence on its operations. The

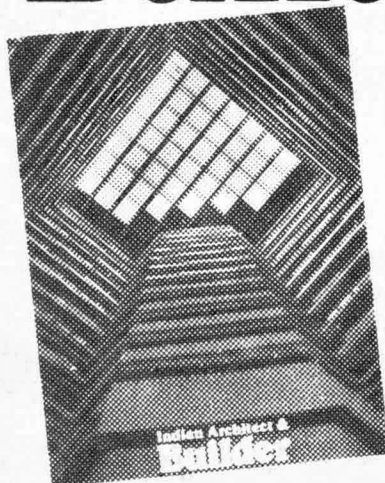
data of the last ten years show that in spite of various problems faced by the corporation, total factor productivity has improved at the rate of 5 per cent per annum. There must be other organisations which have done as well or better. The most important point is that if a productivity culture were to permeate more widely, the value of our economic growth to all sections of our society would be of a different order.

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

The full text of this speech is available in booklet form. For a copy write to: Communications Department, Hindustan Lever Ltd., P.O. Box 409, Bombay 400 001

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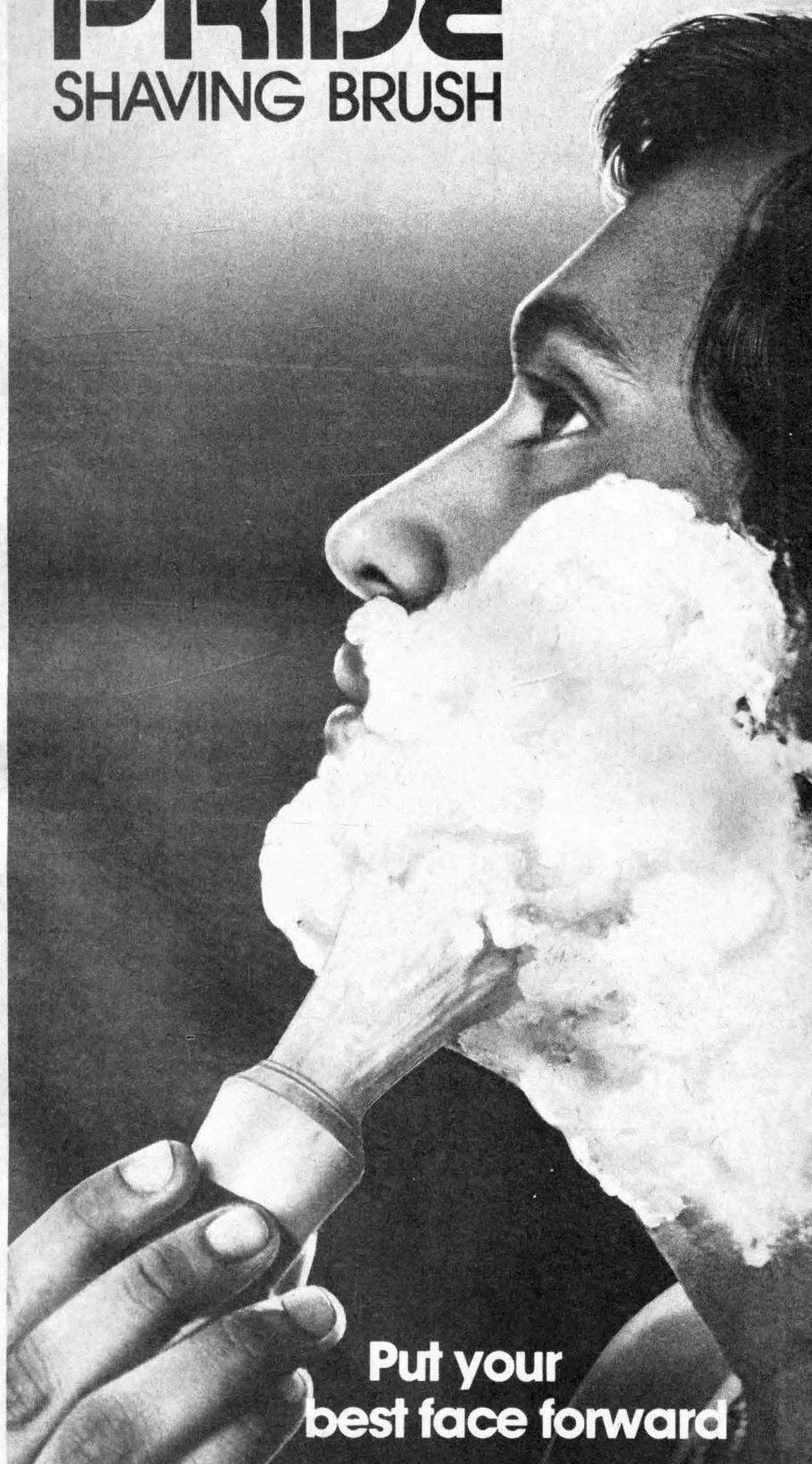
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**First Issue –
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art paper
production

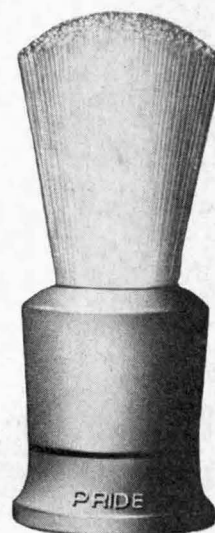
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Bravara

TELEVISION

MANORANJAN, Kundan Shah's latest television serial, promises to be just that — pure entertainment. Tentatively scheduled for a July-August telecast, *Manoranjan* is expected to scale even greater heights, in terms of both quality and popularity, than Shah's earlier rollicking serial *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* (he had directed the first few and zanier episodes). *Manoranjan* is a satirical tribute to the film industry — both the bigwigs and the lesser lights. It is in Kundan Shah's succinct words, "a mad comedy".

But then, comedy has been Kundan Shah's forte — his very first feature film *Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro* broke fresh ground, effortlessly proving that comedy had come of age in Indian cinema. Blending devastating verbal and situational humour, with innovative use of slapstick, the film brought Shah a well-deserved national award. He followed this up with *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi* which established an immediate rapport with its audiences. Kundan Shah's entry into television also marked the beginning of an eventful collaboration with the Mirza brothers, Saeed and Aziz. And the trio made a winning combination, whether it was the earlier *Nukkad* and *Police Station* or *Manoranjan* and *Intezar* today. While *Police Station* is a closed chapter now — it was banned by Doordarshan for its uncomfortably authentic portrayal of the police force in India — and *Intezar* is awaiting approval, *Manoranjan* is all set to take off. The first 13 episodes have been cleared (though it has been visualised as a 28-episode serial by its creators) and shooting has begun, with a *Nukkad*-dominated cast. Though the serial will adhere to a story format with definite links in episodic fashion, viewers can switch on to any episode and enjoy it without being thoroughly clued in. It will be a soap opera with a difference and without undue emphasis on personal conflicts and emotions.

"*Manoranjan* is not based on conflicts *between* characters. It will concentrate on the conflicts and relationships between characters and their surroundings. To that extent, it will have a social relevance," says Kundan



By Minnie Vaid-Fera

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT

Kundan Shah and Aziz Mirza's new television serial, **Manoranjan**, is poised to get off the ground with a resounding bang. Its message-oriented black humour, replete with hilarious gags and one-liners, has the potential to hold audiences captive, says MINNIE VAID-FERA.

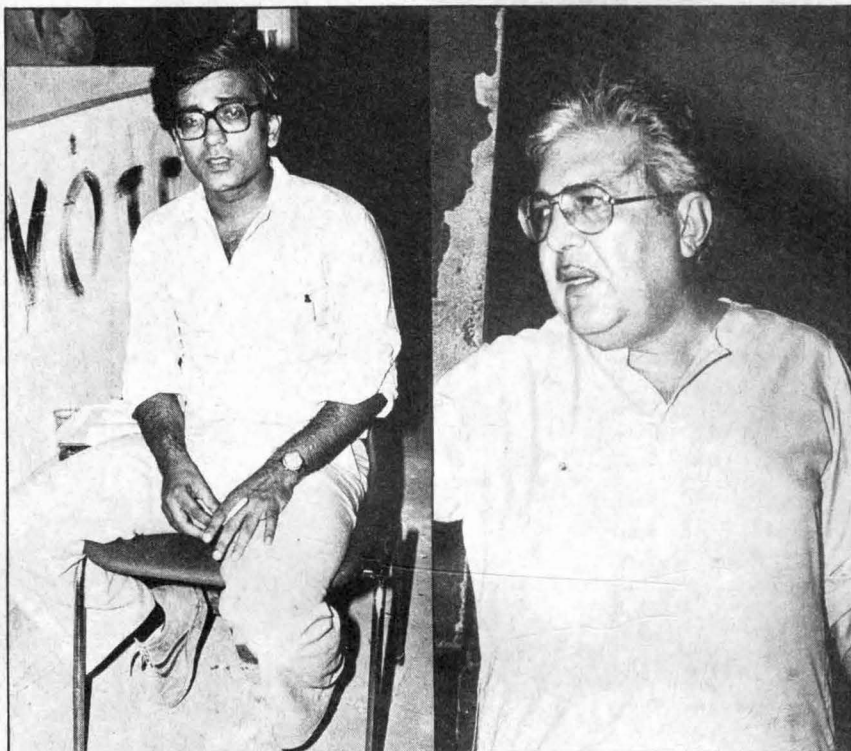


A TRAILER

A sneak preview of the pilot.

Scene I — A typical commercial film is being shot. The macho hero, well-groomed and well-fed, enters the heroine's bedroom, spouting effusive declarations of love. The heroine gets hysterical in coy agitation — "My father will shoot you if he finds you here." Father dear father, is waiting for his cue. He barges in with a shotgun, stating his intention to blow the hero to smithereens. Cue for the heroine to display exemplary courage and throw herself in front of her lover, as protection or sacrifice.

Scene II — One of those 'cruel ironies of life' is being depicted here. The bloated and pampered superstar, playing a hungry, impoverished man, staggers exaggeratedly into a small hotel and begs for a glass of water. When accidentally a plate of masala dosa is placed in front of him, he is unable to resist temptation — and begins stuffing it into his mouth. Enter the 'prosperous' hotel owner, who in actual fact is a starving out-of-work scriptwriter playing the extra's role. His lines are very simple — he has to admonish the hero for tucking into a dosa he has no money to pay for. The 'extra' hotel owner begins reciting his lines courageously but is overcome by the appetising sight of the dosa. He muffs the shot badly. This same shot is 'taken' repeatedly, each 'take' more disastrous than the next. The 'extra' forgets his lines in his drooling over the dosa, the hero forgets the sequence of his dialogue, the director tears his hair, the producer tries to calm the ruffled feathers of the demi-god superstar. One 'take' follows another, while the comic situation reaches a crescendo with 'take' 47 — the extra is unceremoniously thrown off the sets, and the 'poor' hero burping after 47 masala dosas, refuses to shoot any further. A 'mad' episode comes to an uproarious end.



The winning combination: Kundan Shah and Aziz Mirza.

Shah earnestly. He goes on to explain the focus of the serial. "*Manoranjan* is basically about failures — about that struggle in life in which people fight against all odds without giving up hope. It is this philosophy (of struggle and hope), against the backdrop of the Indian film industry that we have tried to portray in *Manoranjan*."

At the literal level, the serial operates on two tracks. One in which a superhit film is being made with a superstar who halfway through the film, starts developing kinks of his own. To rescue the film from flopping badly, the producer labels it the superstar's 'last' film. And thus, the plot unfolds; the film ultimately succeeds.

The second track features the 'failures' or optimistic dreamers who also plan a film. The spot boy, the out-of-work scriptwriters, the has-been director, the junior artistes — all pool in to finance a film. Predictably the film collapses. And it's back to the grind for all the ambitious star-aspirants.

Except for one man — the director — who becomes obsessed with the idea of making the film. An involved and confusing scenario follows with the plot taking bizarre twists and turns, with a generous smattering of slapstick. "I don't understand why slapstick is looked down upon by critics" says Kundan Shah. "Handled well, slapstick can be the greatest comedy there is. *Manoranjan* was inspired by the Marx brothers. I hope we come up to expectations," he adds frankly.

High expectations notwithstanding, how far will the vast Indian television audiences, fed on a weekly dose of melodrama and mush, accept a serial that breaks free from family entanglements and emotional intrigue, that has no established protagonists, that professes to be 'mad'? "Well there's always that risk — that we might fail in getting the response we want. But we are all working extremely hard, we haven't cut corners or taken the easy way out," defends Aziz Mirza stoutly. "We wanted to be mad — to show a slightly sophisti-

"ONE HAS TO FIGHT FOR SPACE"

Saeed Mirza talks about **Manoranjan** and Doordarshan's baffling policies.

MANORANJAN SALUTES the buccaneering spirit of millions of enthusiastic entrants to the film industry. It's a strange breed that enters this profession, people who are poles apart. Yet they're all bound together by a common dream – of making it big. For every one person who does make it, there are literally thousands who fail, yet the race is on – for scriptwriters, actors, directors, dance directors, fight masters etc. The film industry, despite being a totally speculative profession with a very low success ratio, is so unbelievably glamourised that it attracts hordes of newcomers year after year. This is the backdrop for *Manoranjan*. It is a tribute to all those who have made it as well as those who've been unsuccessful for 40 years or more but are still undeterred in their belief that 'tomorrow we will realise our dreams'. *Manoranjan* pays due respect to that drowning man who's still got his finger sticking out.

This subject has been close to us, we've been in it, and we wanted to project the whole nature of dreams, in *Manoranjan*, right down to the popular level of the street. *Manoranjan* has a distinct storyline, a thread that weaves everything together; it is very systematised, far more than say, the earlier *Nukkad*, where we created a situation, a concept. With *Manoranjan*, the mythology already exists.

It is a comedy that will work, provided the inner core is real. I don't



Saeed Mirza: volcano of talent.

think that Indian audiences are illiterate, in the academic sense, in their acceptance of good comedy. In fact I think they're far more civilised than American audiences. All comedy is different, you have to realise the pitfalls of each type and work it out.

I don't know whose idea it was originally, but *Manoranjan* struck us all as being absolutely right. But it's Kundan (Shah) and Aziz (Mirza) who're really involved with the actual scripting and direction of the serial. I'm generally used as a sounding board – after I give my reactions, sometimes they have to start all over again. It's a system of checks and balances – very essential towards getting objective opinions. I do the same with Intezar – rely on their assessment of

my work and ideas.

Intezar is awaiting approval from Doordarshan. Ours is a no-holds barred relationship with Doordarshan – we deal with them at a totally professional level. But they follow a policy of total adhocism. They have no system at all to screen the hundreds of proposals that pour in. It's never the proposal that they consider, but who's making the proposal. And there are all kinds of people – bursting with patriotism or religiosity who want to make a serial under these guises – who keep flooding Mandi House with proposals. As a result, one has to fight for space, it's a bloody war of survival. We have to keep fighting tooth and nail, to keep telling them, "Look, we're trained, we're professionals." All they have to do is sift the wheat from the chaff and spot the genuine article.

But I guess they are also caught in their own contradictions – probably every person at the government level finds it difficult to be open, even if he wants to. As for their censorship codes, though these are far stricter now, I don't think *Manoranjan* will be affected. I mean, we've more important things to say instead of concentrating on sex or violence. As for political censorship, since our serial is restricted to the film industry, only the overtones or subtleties will be evident. It all depends on the way you look at things – anything can have national repercussions.

cated, dry kind of humour. There's a very thin line, really, between madness and absurdity, we've tried to be just mad. I frankly don't know whether we'll be accepted by the viewers," he adds thoughtfully.

After *Police Station*'s regrettable fate, will they (Saeed-Aziz-Kundan) compromise here and there, in follow-

ing Doordarshan's edicts? "Personally I felt *Police Station* would have been lapped up. But yes, after that experience, we will be more careful, we will work within our limitations. But after all, all that we're trying to do in *Manoranjan* is to provide honest-to-God good fun," says Aziz Mirza.

And if the first episode (the pilot)

is any indication of the style and tenor of the serial, television buffs are in for 13 weeks (maybe more) of sheer fun. And the sponsors – Godrej – for soaring profits once again (after *Buniyaad*). And the Kundan Shah-Mirza brothers' team for scoring another first – a truly original comic soap opera. ♦

BEJAN DARUWALLA'S PREDICTIONS



ARIES: March 21 to April 20: This is the time to get going. You will make good contacts and communicate effectively with people. A transfer is not ruled out during June-July. You may decide to migrate. So this month it is likely you will be on the move. The first two weeks of June will be significant professionally and a promotion or additional perks may be in the offing.



TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: With the Full Moon on June 14, the highlight is on speculative activities, trading, shopping and business deals. You will entertain with aplomb. The focus this month will also be on the home and a few of you may even use it as your base. Renovation will keep you busy. Friends will bring much joy. A journey with a stop-over is probable.



GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: The New Moon on May 27 finds you in a dilemma. Family problems and money matters keep you occupied. Be careful while signing important documents. Legal matters crop up around the 14th. This month is also conducive for forming new attachments and renewing old ties. An old flame is likely to crop up in your life again.



CANCER: June 22 to July 22: Mercury and Mars are in your sign and the emphasis is therefore on creative pursuits. Expenses could be heavy this month. You will meet new people and also get immersed in work. Do not let your sensitivity get the better of you. Important decisions which might change the course of your life have to be taken. This month will see you reaching out to people.



LEO: July 23 to August 23: The juxtaposition of Jupiter and Uranus indicates romance and a round of hectic socialising. Your friends will support you in your ventures. This is the time to make the best of opportunities. Collaborations and partnerships are probable around the 15th. You may clinch a deal in the last week of June. You may consider proposals for buying or selling vehicles.



VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: The Sun and Saturn are in opposition and this may cause problems on the domestic front. The health of parents, in-laws, spouse or other family members may cause concern. At the same time, new opportunities for advancement in your career are likely. Your attention and time will have to be divided between home and work.



LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: The vistas of your mind will open out to art and culture. You may even undertake research in this area. Teachers, editors, writers, scholars, salesmen, publishers and entrepreneurs will make it big. June-July are just the right months for reaching out to people and places. The spotlight is on business collaborations and contracts.



SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22: The emphasis will be on loans, funds or joint-finance. You may also be buying or selling shares at the stock market. Strong emotional attachments are foretold for Scorpios. Domestic matters will be given a higher priority this month. You must take care of your health, as the Sun opposes Uranus and this indicates health problems. A hectic time is in the offing.



SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21: The influence of Jupiter, Sun and Saturn on your sign suggests obstacles and only partial success in what you undertake. But there is never a dull moment. Tensions bring out the best in you, so you will be at your creative best. You should devote some time to socialising as this will ease the pressures at work. Legal issues may crop up.



CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: Your health needs to be taken care of. Be demonstrative in personal relationships, but it will not help to be possessive. Mercury opposes your sign and this suggests travel. There may be some opposition to your plans, but you are advised to settle matters amicably rather than adopt a rebellious stance. Legal issues will have to be sorted out.



AQUARIUS: January 21 to February 18: Romance, good luck and an increment in salary await you this month. This is the right time to try out your ideas and be different. Your luck will hold and you will win accolades. Children bring much joy. Foreign connections prove useful. Your orbit of influence will widen considerably and this means you will wield more power.



PISCES: February 19 to March 20: Conflicting and disturbing elements cannot be brushed aside now. You should patiently and tactfully try to beat your rivals at their own game. The home scene may not be very pleasant. Your spouse may not agree with all you do. However, you will succeed in creative pursuits. An official engagement, the birth of a child in the family, or a romantic involvement are foretold. ♦



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It's got safety built into it

Fade-resistant disc brakes on the front wheels with servo assistance for reduced pedal effort and instant

stopping. Large windscreen for better visibility. The door frame, roof and floor panels are individually pressed out of single metal sheets to ensure a structurally stronger body. They all add up to a safer ride.

Just the right size

It's compact enough to spell fuel efficiency and easy manoeuvring. And big enough to seat five comfortably. There's more legroom inside and more luggage space in the trunk.

The look says sleek

Clean, elegant lines. Polyurethane bumpers and steering wheel. Wraparound tail lights. A smooth paint finish. Ribbed upholstery.

Contoured, reclinable front seats. Every part spells sleekness.

From Premier Automobiles, — of course!

The Premier 118 NE combines the sturdy body of the Fiat 124 and a modern, fuel-efficient 1.18 litre engine designed in collaboration with Nissan. PAL engineers have tested and perfected the model to suit Indian climates and road conditions.

After all, we've always given you the better car. Now, with new horizons opening up on the car scene, isn't it natural the better choice should come from us?

PREMIER 118 NE



The Premier Automobiles Limited