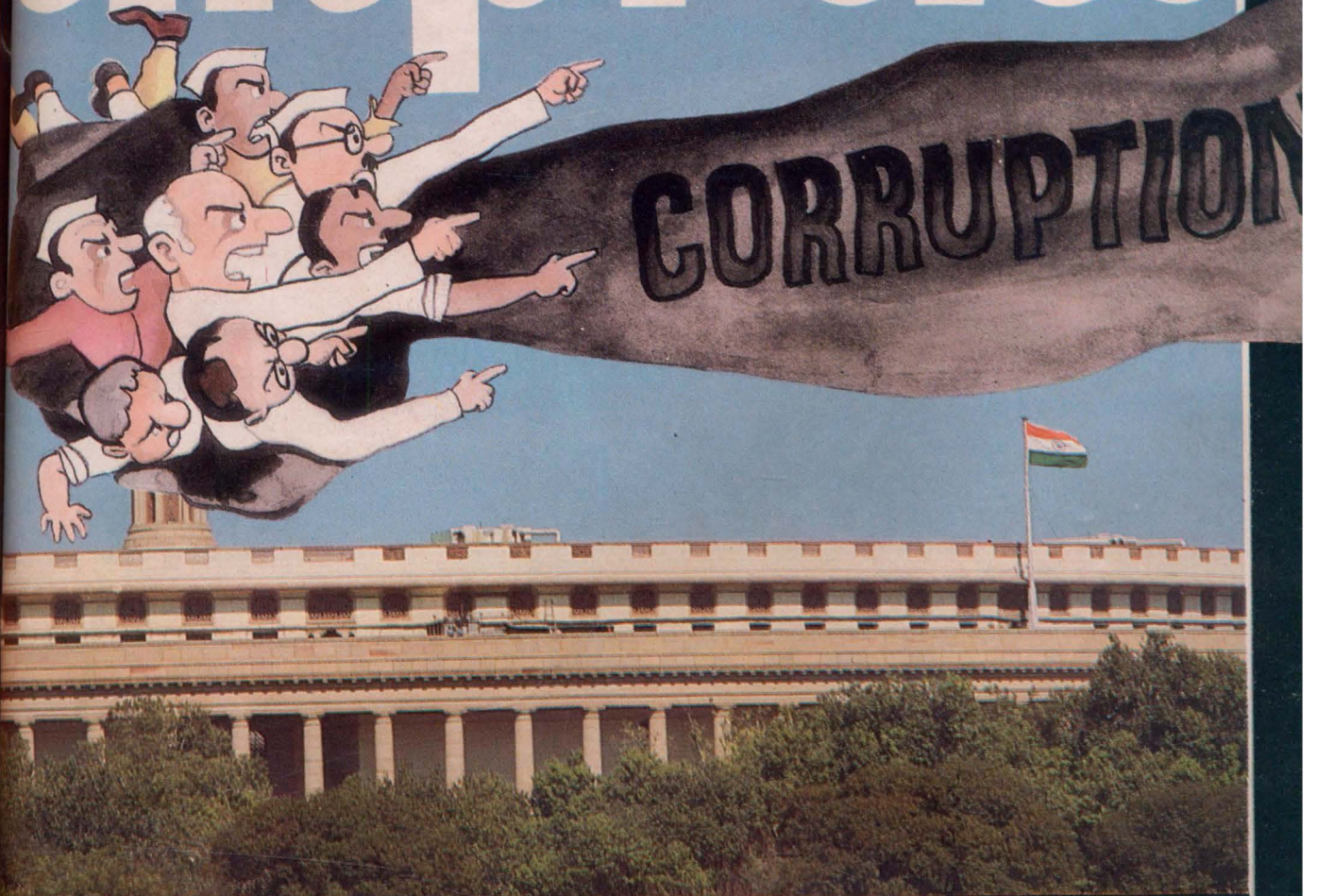


SEPTEMBER 1988 Rs 6

# imprint



**LET'S NOT BE  
SUCH BLOODY  
FOOLS... R V Pandit**



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## DEFAMING THE PEOPLE

**THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DEFAMATION BILL 1988** was drafted, and steamrolled through the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the 30th of August 1988, 15 days after the 41st Anniversary of Freedom, is indicative of the panic which has seized New Delhi. Rajiv Gandhi's is now a frightened administration — frightened of the consequences which will inevitably flow from the numerous financial shenanigans the administration has flagrantly indulged in, and which are now likely to be exposed in much greater detail than in the past. Also, it would appear that the government is now dominated by reckless juveniles, spineless hangers-on, and senile men. How else could any government of a thriving democracy even contemplate drafting a law like the utterly *mala fide* piece the Defamation Bill 1988 is? The Bill was rammed through the Lok Sabha in less than two days. Despite Opposition protests, no time was allowed to consider the merits of the Bill. Editors and journalists who are most affected by it, were not given a chance to comment on the provisions of the Bill, between the time it was introduced in the House and passed by the brute Congress majority. The way this whole affair has been handled and the outcry it has sparked off in the country is a clear indication that the government is now isolated; it no more has the sensitivity or the faculty to feel the pulse of the people. The Defamation Bill 1988, as passed by the Lok Sabha recently, will not become a law of the land; it will not enter the statute book in its present form.

The haste with which the presiding officers of the Lok Sabha allowed the speedy passage of the Bill also raises questions about these presiding officers' independence and motives. The rulings Mr Balram Jahkar has given in the recent past, whenever scandals involving the ruling party are mentioned in the House, raise questions of Jahkar's integrity. Mr Balram Jahkar, the Speaker, has hitherto escaped media scrutiny because of the high office of dignity that he occupies. But his links to the notorious Hinduja's are now the subject of much talk and some investigation. His frequent trips to the USA (our Embassy in Washington is mostly kept in the dark) have raised questions which the media will undoubtedly investigate. Whom does Mr Jahkar see on his trips to Washington? Who fixes the appointments for him in the US capital when our Embassy is not taken into confidence? Why? Well, you can, here, see how handy the Defamation Bill can become to scare off the media if it wants to investigate Jahkar.

Not that the laws we already have on defamation are inadequate. They are, if properly enforced, adequate laws. A case in which the present writer himself is involved with the publishers of *Bombay* magazine, a publication of the "India Today" group, will illustrate this. This writer is maliciously maligned in the August 22 – September 6, 1988 issue of *Bombay*. His publishing 'empire', though prosperous (publishing eight monthly magazines; substantial profits in 14 out of 16 years; a substantial tax-payer in 14 out of 16 years of existence; a payer of bonus to all its staff numbering nearly 150 for all the years of the firms' existence; the staff is not unionised!), is called "terminally ill" by the publishing firm which also publishes *India Today*. For redress, I have found the present defamation laws adequate, and accordingly, I am moving the Courts for appropriate reliefs against *Bombay* magazine and its publishers, Living Media Ltd. Anybody, any politician, having a cause to believe that he has been defamed can take recourse to existing laws. We do not need the draconian Defamation Bill 1988 to protect us. On the contrary, its drafting and enacting defames us, the people, and protects scoundrels in the government, to protect whom — let us not chide ourselves — the Bill was framed, and rushed through the Lok Sabha.

\* \* \*

**THE COVER STORY** for this month is a product of much thought and anguish. And considerable investigation. The article calls a spade a spade: no words are minced in telling the story of corruption and the corruptors as it stands. Originally, this story on corruption was scheduled for the August 1988 issue of *Imprint*. However, for reasons that a reading of the story will reveal, the feature was postponed, and the August issue of *Imprint* scrapped.\* *Imprint* takes full responsibility for what appears on the ensuing pages. And as you will read for yourself, it is written in anguish, not anger. It is written to warn us about ourselves.

In concluding the On the Marquee column in the July issue of *Imprint*, I had asked, and I quote:

If Mr Rajiv Gandhi and his Ministers care to read recent history — what has happened in Burma, and in many countries of Africa — they will effortlessly realise that one-man-rule with toadies in tow eventually comes to a no good end. But, do they read? Do they ever learn? And the Indian people, do they want them to learn, or to teach them? Already, the gulf that divides *him* and *them* is hurting the country. And the gulf that divides *them* and *us* is something our system will not be able to withstand for much longer. But who cares?

Since that reference to Burma was made — it was intentional and with a certain knowledge (when not one person was killed, no riots had taken place) — several thousand Burmese have been killed in riots in Burma and elsewhere in that country. Two governments have fallen. Chaos prevail. The former ruler — Gen Ne Win — has fled Rangoon. His successor lasted for barely 17 days! I hope we will not bring about such a situation in India with our own hands. It is to alert us against this danger and that possibility that I have written what has preceded, and in the Cover Story which follows.

\* Subscribers are being compensated by extending their current subscriptions by one month. ◆



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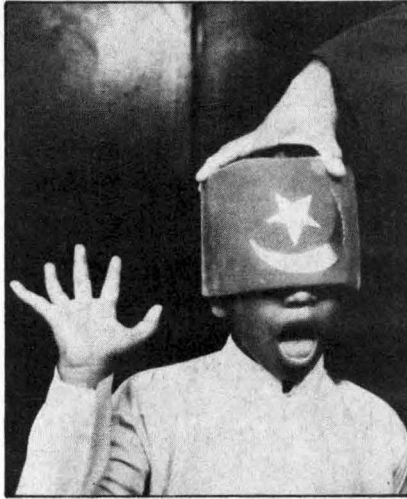
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## LETTERS

### Religious Fanaticism



This is with reference to the article 'The Islamisation Gambit' (Imprint, July '88). While the rest of the world is forging ahead in every field, breaking away from restricted and constrained minds towards broader and liberal horizons, Pakistan and Bangladesh are getting ensconced in religious fundamentalism. When one religion is as good as the other, with their basic goals more or less the same, why this separatist attitude? Primitive and punitive measures, and narrow and blind faith, only serve to destroy and pervert the human mind and create a reign of terror.

Ruling through fear and terror is only a short-term measure. The discipline it instills is only physical, not mental. Fanaticism in today's progressive world will only lead to retrogression, which will ultimately end in the solitary confinement of a nation, and freedom for its people will be just another word in the dictionary.

P N Banerji  
Meerut

### A Clarification

Flipping through the May issue of your magazine recently, I was shocked to see that in an article on the protagonists of Khalistan abroad, you have published a photograph of Dr Gurdial Singh Dhillon, MP, former Lok Sabha Speaker, and till recently,

Union Agriculture Minister. It is a great insult not only to a veteran freedom fighter and an associate of Gandhiji, but also to all Sikhs and nationalist Congressmen, both communities of which Dr Dhillon is a proud and honoured member. Being an old reader of your esteemed magazine, I am sure that you do not consider all Sikhs Khalistan supporters or worshippers of the deity of destruction. You have probably mistaken Dr Dhillon for his more sinister namesake Ganga Singh Dhillon, the leader of the Khalistan supporters in the US. But that still does not let you off the hook. Not being able to distinguish between a patriotic and selfless Congressman, who has undergone long



*Dr Gurdial Singh Dhillon.*

terms of imprisonment during the Freedom Struggle and represented the nation abroad with distinction, and a self-serving traitor to the country of his birth and his own community, brings you no credit.

I think Dr Dhillon deserves an apology and I hope you will publish my letter. The image and prestige of your magazine call for nothing less.

Mandeep Singh Bajwa  
Joint Secretary  
Punjab Pradesh Youth  
Congress (I)

*Dr Gurdial Singh Dhillon's photograph was inadvertently used instead of Mr Ganga Singh Dhillon's. Any anguish or embarrassment this may have caused Dr Gurdial Singh Dhillon is deeply regretted - Ed.*



4



**"LET'S NOT BE SUCH BLOODY FOOLS":** An account of how we have accepted corruption as a way of life, despite the fact that the incidence of corruption is increasing and each new scandal is rocking the nation ever more violently. By R V PANDIT.

*Cover illustration: Sisir Datta.*

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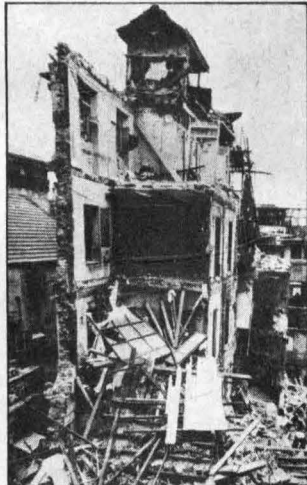
**A BELEAGUERED ACCORD:** The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, now a year old, has scarcely achieved the goals envisaged by both President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. K S VENKATESWARAN analyses the logistics of the Accord and questions India's stand on Sri Lanka.

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**AS I LAY DYING:** An evocative essay by renowned author AUBREY MENEN.

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**FUTURE SHOCK?:** India's first-ever National Housing Policy, announced last year, appears to be urban and profit oriented and will scarcely



ameliorate the lot of the millions of rural homeless in India, says JAI SEN in this critique of the Policy.

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**THE HEALING TOUCH:** SHYAMALA NATARAJ visits Alampundi, near Madras, to profile the astonishing phenomenon of mobile leprosy clinics run by two paramedic missionaries.

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**GOOD TIMES, BAD TIMES:** Have the recent innovations on Doordarshan — more objectivity in current affairs programmes, more clippings and a teleprompter in the news telecast, a livelier weather bulletin, etc — really improved the overall quality of this official medium? Several celebrities proffer their views

while Doordarshan Director General Bhaskar Ghosh speaks to ONKAR SINGH.

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**THE WRITING ON THE WALL:** While the world leaps into the 21st century, frenzied development defaces the earth. Noted jour-



nalist M V KAMATH examines the alarming prognosis of the globe's environment by the Worldwatch Institute.

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**AIDS: THE MODERN-DAY PLAGUE:** There is, in India today, a tragic lack of information about AIDS, says PADMA PRAKASH, that fosters confused social perceptions and fears.

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**A POTTER'S TALE:** MOIN QAZI profiles the fresh lease of life given to Bhadravati's

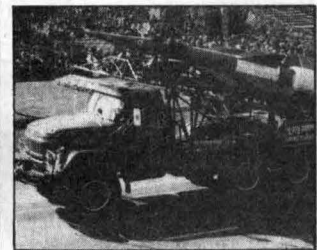
traditional potters, with the establishment of the Gramodaya Sangh.

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**A LOST LEGACY:** GITA ARAVAMUDAN profiles Kerala's traditional, but almost forgotten, martial art form — Kalarippayattu.

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**THE INDIAN BLUNDER:** "How India lost all its wars" — an extract from defence expert RAVI RIKHYE's latest book, "The War That Never Was", in which the author puts forth a fascinat-



ing, albeit unconventional, proposition that in a war, victory must be defined in terms of a favourable strategic outcome and not of casualties incurred and territory captured.

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**REFLECTIONS IN A GOLDEN EYE:** A D MODDIE reminisces over the perfect tranquillity that can be found at Bhimtal.

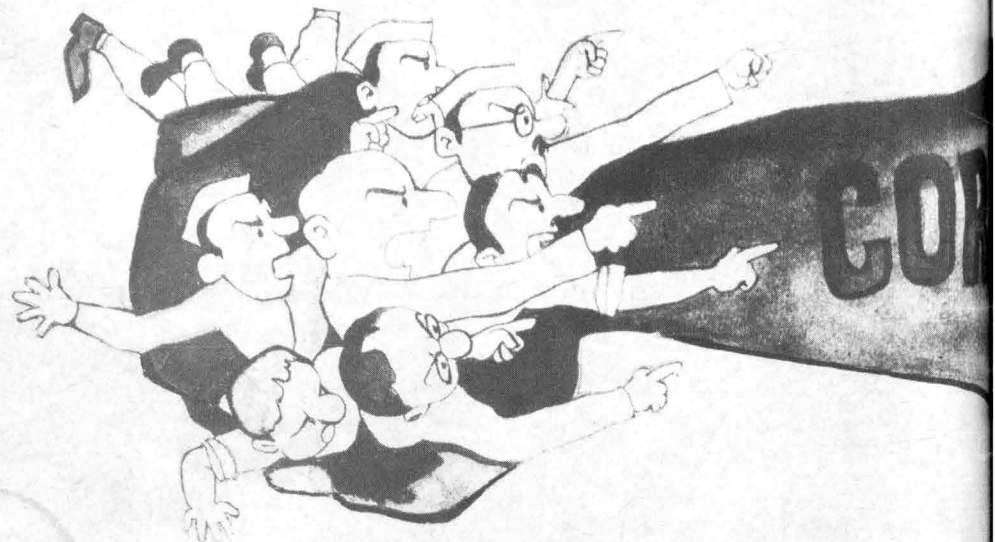
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**THE LAST PARADE:** A touching short story by C L PROUDFOOT.



# LET'S NOT BE SUCH BLOODY FOOLS...

By R V Pandit



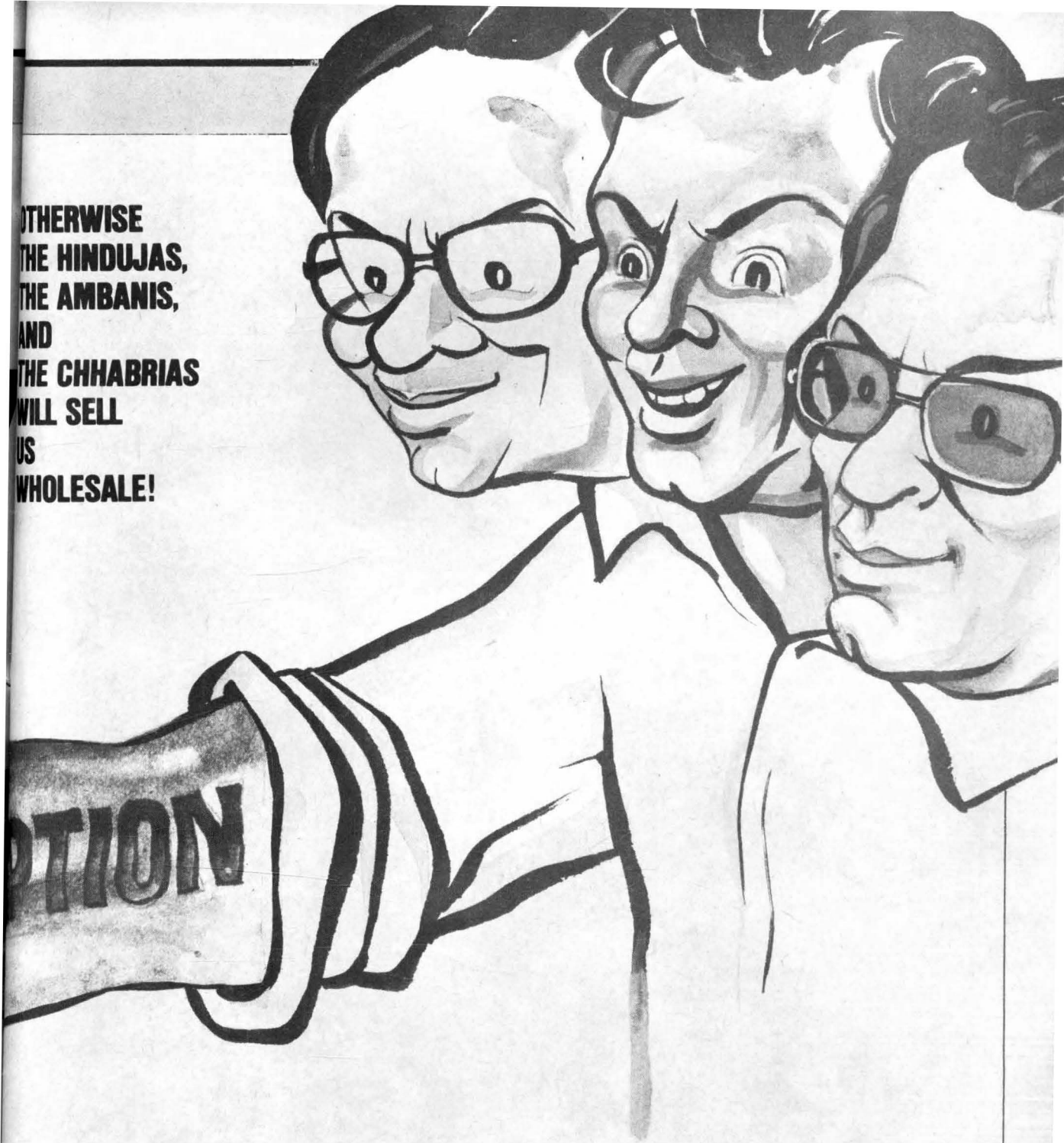
**YOU ARE A HOUSEHOLDER.**

And you want to buy a television, or a washing machine, a two-wheeler or a car. You plan for this purchase, you save: sometimes, you borrow a little. But you know the source of this money. Often, a relative, or a neighbour, why, even the government, will want to know how you paid for it, and how you happened to have that money.

You are a professional — a tax con-



**OTHERWISE  
THE HINDUJAS,  
THE AMBANIS,  
AND  
THE CHHABRIAS  
WILL SELL  
US  
WHOLESALE!**



sultant, a physician or a mechanic. You want to buy a PC, an X-ray machine or some welding tools. You plan. You save. Sometimes, you even borrow a little. In the accounting you do for the State, you mention, when required, what the source of your money for the purchase was.

You are a businessman, a budding industrialist or a tycoon, and why not! You need to buy space. Or you want to set up a factory. Or build a

plant. A lot of planning and garnering of resources precedes: you go to your shareholders, to your bank, to the financial institutions for the money. And, at every stage, you are accountable for the money. You are accountable to your shareholders, to your bank, to the financial institutions, and even to your workers. Above all, you are accountable to the State. In a society governed by the rule of law, you are required to, and

you do, account to numerous State agencies for the monies you have obtained, spent, or hold. Most of you do this, often grudgingly, but you do it all the same because the laws which govern us require you to do so.

Bigger than any undertaking you can even visualise, or big business can even contemplate, is an enterprise exclusively controlled by politicians, "servants of the people", and which is beyond the pale of the laws of the

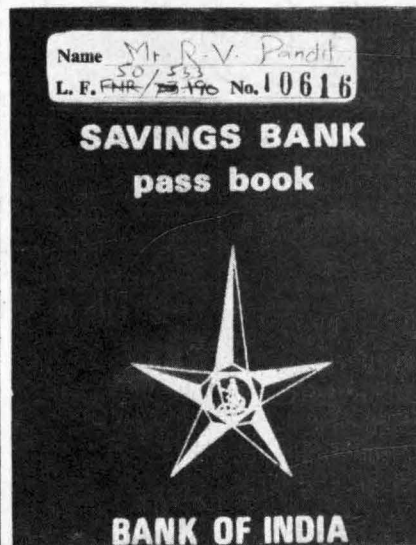


## COVER STORY

country which govern us. This undertaking, the General Elections, the enterprise that is finally concerned with deciding who rules over you and me and 800 million other Indians, is staged every 5-6 years since Independence in 1947; it is a gargantuan exercise. In terms of manpower employed, resources mobilised, and above all, monies spent, this is truly a mammoth undertaking — bigger, as we have stated earlier, than any other enterprise big business or the State ever mounts.

**M**ORE THAN 50,000 jeeps and a few hundred thousand vehicles of other kinds are pressed on to the roads and they criss-cross the 500-odd parliamentary constituencies on behalf of some 5,000 aspirants to power for weeks before the General Elections are actually held. Hundreds of millions of leaflets, and many millions of posters are printed for the extravaganza and distributed or pasted all over the country. Banners by the lakhs are hoisted. Flags go up; walls are painted; hundreds of thousands of loudspeakers blare out loud exhortations and extravagant promises. There are warnings, and pleas too: "They are out to destroy us"; "Beware!" and "Please Vote for Me"; "Please Don't Vote for Him"; "Please Vote for Us". The air is filled with expectation; there is heightened activity in every nook and corner of India. VIPs and VVIPs come and go: many arrive in entourages which would have been the envy of potentates of the past; some come in whirling machines from the sky and promptly fly away into the blue yonder. Wonderful. But all this costs money. The political parties involved in this undertaking for capturing power, to rule over you and me, spend more than Rs 1,000 crore on a General Election. As the largest and the most deeply entrenched-in-power political party in the country, the Congress Party contests almost all the 500-odd Parliamentary seats and spends something like Rs 600 crore on a General Election. Big money, by any yardstick.

Yet, nobody accounts for the bulk of the monies they spend (legally, a candidate for election to Parliament can only spend Rs 1,50,000). That is not all. The Congress Party spends an additional Rs 1,000 crore at least, once every 5 years or so, on contesting elections to State Assemblies in all the States of the Union. Yet, there is no accountability for all the monies they spend. Nobody discloses the source of that money. There are no proper accounts. There is no audit. There is no accountability. From where does the money come? Nobody knows.



**Y**ET, EVERYBODY KNOWS. "Galli galli mein shor hain, Rajiv Gandhi chor hain," a six-year old girl recently sing-songed on a live children's programme (to mark Mr Gandhi's grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru's 23rd death anniversary!) from the AIR, Patna. You must ponder over the disgraceful implications of what the child spontaneously recited. As a citizen of India, I am ashamed and scandalised that my country's Prime Minister is called a thief. My shame is tinged with agony since I realise that the child obviously learnt those scandalous lines from her elders. I also realise that Mr Gandhi has attracted this slander largely because the Party he heads does not account

as to where and how the monstrous sums of money it spends come from. Inevitably, the undeniable conclusion you arrive at is that the money comes from corruption and bribery. From leakages in State funds. From stealing.

**A** YEAR OR SO before he died, I had an occasion to discuss corruption with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Friends of Acharya Kripalani were complaining that the Congress Party had spent a crore of rupees (during those days!) of slush funds on Krishna Menon's campaign to defeat Kripalani in the Bombay North-east constituency. D F Karaka, in his weekly, *Current*, had dragged Nehru's name into all this, and I was upset. Hence a brief exchange on the subject with Jawaharlal Nehru. "And how much of that crore am I supposed to have stacked away?" he asked, in jest. Without causing me the embarrassment of having to say anything or remain silent, Nehru went on to explain how elections and democracy were interlinked and how he wished citizens and business entities would contribute to deserving candidates to fight elections so as to avoid the kind of slander Menon's alleged expenses had attracted. He said something of John Kennedy's famous speech, "Ask what you can do for America." This conversation, and the accounts of the American tradition of 'US\$ 100 to US\$ 1,000 per plate election fund raising dinners' I had read about, made a deep impression on me, and once I was able to, I began making small political contributions to those candidates for Parliament I liked. I maintained a Savings Bank account, and from this account drew crossed Account Payee cheques of varying sums of money towards election expenses of candidates I felt would serve the public cause. Armed with my Bank Pass Book, I have discussed the question of elections and corruption with almost all important office holders since Jawaharlal Nehru. From these discussions, I have drawn the conclu-



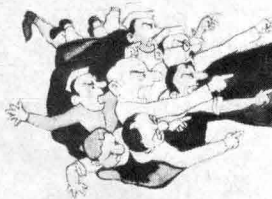
sion that most politicians are not interested in honest money funding for elections. Honest money entails accountability. Honest money restricts spending within legally sanctioned limits (which are ridiculously low). Honest money leaves little scope for the candidate to steal from election funds. Honest money funding is limiting. While the politicians want money for election, more importantly, they want money for themselves — to spend, to hoard, to get rich. And this they can do only if the source of money is black.

In my quest for honest money funding for elections, I have also come across politicians who genuinely doubt that our citizens, howsoever well-off they may be, will open their purse strings to fund candidates without wanting anything but the public good in return. Some doubt that State funding, if that is adopted here, will work or that we have adequate resources to resort to State funding of elections. “*Are bhai koi nahi dega chequese. Aap to pagal hain,*” was the general refrain.

And, of course, there is a point there. We are, largely, a nation of cowards and opportunists; selfish and unconcerned as to our civic responsibilities. Forty-five years of freedom have made us only licentious, not responsible. We are corrupt. And strive to make corruption as pervasive as possible.

**A**ND HOW WELL we have succeeded! The party of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru is now universally held to be corrupt; its leader, the grandson of Jawaharlal Nehru, called a thief. But, in fact, the Congress Party is not the lone object of such widely-held and derogatory perception. Other political parties and most other political leaders are similarly viewed. And not without reason. No political party, no political leader, fully, or even substantially, accounts for the monies and wealth they acquire and spend.

And nobody asks “Why?” Nobody



asks how the Congress Party maintains a vast organisation in New Delhi and well-oiled party machinery in the State capitals of the country. Emisaries of this political party frequent-

**We are, largely, a nation of cowards and opportunists; selfish and unconcerned as to our civic responsibilities. Forty-five years of freedom have made us only licentious, not responsible. We are corrupt.**

ly travel by special planes and chartered helicopters when commercial flights are available. But no questions are asked. Everybody knows that Mahatma Gandhi’s four-anna-paying-members vanished soon after he was felled: now the members don’t give: they only take. Most members of other parties are no better. Maybe because they are smaller in numbers and currently without access to power, they have fewer opportunities to extort or to steal.

The corruption in quest of political office and the corruption in the mechanics of survival in power has thoroughly vitiated our lives and our times. It has sullied our institutions. Sadly, corruption on this widespread

scale began soon after the Union Jack was finally lowered. People from villages and towns and cities who had participated in the struggle for freedom now flocked to the seats of Congress power to claim what they conceived as their dues. “I was in jail in ’42. I need this. I need that”; “I organised this *prabhat pheri* and that *hartal*, and, of course, you remember the demonstration I led where I lost my cap — I need a permit and my nephew needs a job,” was the new refrain. The great race for patronage and favours was on. How quickly this race for gaining undue advantage had gathered momentum and how very serious the problem of *baksheesh* had become in the very first year of freedom is tellingly illustrated by a true story a renowned former Civil Servant tells. A distinguished Gandhian, a patriot and a freedom fighter, in 1947, became an important Minister in B G Kher’s first post-Independence ministry in the then State of Bombay. An equally distinguished civil servant was his Secretary. In just a few months of holding the high office as an important Minister, the good man openly vowed before the civil servant that he would not contest in the Assembly elections which were to be held next. He was disillusioned. People he knew as comrades and colleagues in the movement for freedom now harassed him for unreasonable favours. “They claimed, almost as a right, what was not mine to give, nor theirs to take,” the tormented man grieved. True to his word, he did not contest election again. But lesser men stayed on.



**T**HE STRUGGLERS for our freedom were not the only ones to clamour for rewards. Farmers and traders and businessmen, too, staked their claims. The role the Birlas played in tutoring the politician and the bureaucrat in the fashioning of the permit-licence-quota Raj is too well-known to bear elaboration here. The corrupt politician groomed to become the corrupt minister, and, in turn, the corrupt minister set about seducing the bureaucrat. Salaries of civil servants, who were until then accustomed to a certain standard of living, were frozen, and in some cases, even reduced to penurious levels; all this was done, of course, in the name of the people, in the name of the Mahatma, of socialism, of equality, and what not. And all this at a time when the cost of living was rising explosively.\*

**N**OT UNNATURALLY, many bureaucrats became accessories to ministerial corruption or turned into yes-men. The more steadfast and moral among them shut their eyes or improvised the theory of ministerial prerogatives. The lower ranks were even more demoralised. Their gods had fallen — the heroes of freedom were into hush-hush money — and there were not many clean and upright functionaries above them to look up to. And their salaries, too, were pegged at less than a living wage. Thus it came to pass that the State pretended that it paid its workers a good wage, and the *babus* began to pretend that they diligently worked for the State. Thus, working habits

\* In 1966, H R Gokhale, a Judge of the Bombay High Court, resigned offering inadequate remuneration as the reason for quitting. Perhaps as a symbol of what we have done to ourselves, Mr Gokhale weaved his path to power in New Delhi and into Mrs Indira Gandhi's cabinet. Again, as a symbol of our moral bankruptcy, he originated policies vis-à-vis the judiciary that he had denounced earlier. Perhaps, as poetic justice, and as is nature's wont, Mr Gokhale was, soon thereafter, defeated at the hustings, and died a disgraced man.

suffered. Discipline suffered. Work suffered. The State reacted by hiring more people. That, in turn, only compounded the mess: more people began to do less and less.

Over the years, the inevitable has happened; natural consequences have followed. Today you cannot even buy a long-distance railway ticket without greasing the teller's palm. Nobody moves a file in any centre of administration without a *baksheesh*; no official disposes off the most urgent and deserving of proposals speedily without *speed* money. Most licences are pegged at a premium. Worse, justice is no more just. Inevitably,

**The corrupt politician groomed to become the corrupt minister, and in turn the corrupt minister set about seducing the bureaucrat. Salaries of civil servants were frozen and in some cases reduced to penurious levels.**

too, we are all paying a price for this self-inflicted degradation. "Nothing moves," we all moan. "Nobody does anything right anymore," we grumble. "Where is justice," we intone with pious hurt. *Baksheesh*, *speed* money, donations, contributions, *haftas*, and other similar considerations have replaced what little satisfaction the wretched government servant (the big private-sector employee is no better in most Groups these days) now gets from his work, where, once, honest hardwork was its own reward.

"Who is not corrupt," we triumphantly ask. "Did you read about that corruption in the Pentagon?" we snidely counter. "Corruption," Mrs

Indira Gandhi once publicly intoned, "is an international phenomenon." It is, and, perhaps, it will remain so. Greed is universal. But the world-at-large is not my country, and presently, not my concern. India is.

**T**HINK OF ANY problem our society or the country is facing today, analyse it, and you will inevitably conclude, and rightly, that corruption is at the root of the problem. Prices are high. *Corruption is the cause.* Quality is bad. *Corruption is the cause.* Roads are pockmarked. *Corruption is the cause.* Nobody does a good job. *Corruption is the cause.* Hospitals kill. *Corruption is the cause.* Power-failures put homes in darkness, businesses into bankruptcy. *Corruption is the cause.* Cloth is expensive. *Corruption is the cause.* Bridges collapse. *Corruption is the cause.* Educational standards have fallen. *Corruption is the cause.* We have no law and order. *Corruption is the cause.* People die from poisoning, through food, through drink, through medicines. *Corruption is the cause.* The list is endless. The very foundation of our nation, of our society, is now threatened. *And corruption is the cause.*

Consider some national events of only the recent past. Consider the Fairfax hiring and the Thakkar-Natarajan Commission of Inquiry. The nation's highest investigative agencies and a commission of inquiry of two Supreme Court judges who sat on it for ten months were unable to answer simple questions: Who hired Fairfax? How? Why? Who paid? What laws of the land were violated in the process? The CBI investigations and the appointment of the Thakkar-Natarajan Commission of Inquiry were meant to answer these questions. They did not. As a consequence, the credibility of the CBI suffered. The credibility of the Supreme Court justices suffered. The prestige of the Supreme Court was lowered. The Congress Party was fractured, giving us all V P Singh in a new garb. But the government survived — an inept government

survived. Dhirubhai Ambani, who really caused it all, thrives! How does this happen? *Corruption*.

More than 300 persons died of cholera and gastroenteritis in New Delhi, the nation's capital. Filthy slums surround Delhi. They do not have even elementary sanitation; the water is contaminated. The filthy water people have to drink comes from hand-pumps. The pumps are sunk only 20 feet deep, and thus pump out not water, but sewage. How does this happen? *Corruption*.

**C**ONSIDER our involvement in Sri Lanka where we are now bogged down in a quagmire; consider the recently introduced Defamation Bill; consider the government's inability to impose law and order in the Punjab; consider even the Prime Minister's recent refusal to meet Andhra MPs and MLAs which led to the *lathi*-charge and tear-gassing of the legislators near the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi, and examine these problems in the light of all the charges of corruption which have been levelled against the Prime Minister, their timing, his embarrassment, his discomfiture, and you will see a connection between these problems and corruption.

Yet, as long as the political parties need money, and they do not get it by way of individual subscriptions or contributions, the political parties will be corrupt. The politicians will be corrupt. And there will always be corruptors waiting, at the right moment, to strike.

Much of such strikes are at the country's cost.

**B**Y THE TIME this magazine hits the news-stands in early September, Ambani's Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd's mega debenture issue would have raised something like Rs 600 crore from the capital market in the biggest private sector money raising exercise the country has seen. For a new company which, strictly speaking, does not even have an in-

dustrial licence for the projects it proposes to undertake, this Rs 600 crore issue was truly remarkable. But then, everything about the Ambanis is extraordinary.

Reliance Industries Ltd, the promoters of the new company, have themselves not issued an audited balance-sheet since December 1986! And the investors to the issue had very little information, but lot of publicity and promises. And tall claims.

Has anybody other than the Ambanis ever received permission to raise debentures for a new company in a manner allowed to RPL? No.

Is anybody likely to get similar permission? Unlikely.

The Indian stock-market crash of 1986 was brought about by speculative practices by what newspapers call "company sources" of Reliance. The company is notorious for the half-truths it publishes, and the false claims it makes. Some of the claims the company made in its recent advertising to lure the investors would have landed Dhirubhai and sons in serious trouble with the money market and fiscal authorities in every money capital of the world. A debenture issue of the kind Ambanis promoted here would not have been allowed in London, New York, Tokyo, Paris or Frankfurt for lack of investor protection.

But then, as I have stated earlier, the Ambanis are not ordinary business people. Just 3 years ago, Mr Rajiv Gandhi was privately branding them as mafia; he had put them on his list of demons to be demolished. Now, as Mr Gandhi and his government face mounting crises, Ambani and sons get what they want. An interesting relationship, that.

As we have pointed out earlier, Reliance Petrochemicals Ltd does not even have an industrial licence; and, as such, it will not need for the next 15-20 months the Rs 600 crore it has been allowed to raise. What will the Ambanis do with the money? The Congress Party will have to go to

the polls in the next 15 months or so. And they will need money. Because of the many scandals involving payoffs abroad or from abroad, that source of money will be used more cautiously in the future. Will you be surprised if the Ambanis go to the rescue of the Great Party?

Mr Ambani and Reliance have a record of doing what they choose to, in violation of the laws, and getting out of it unpunished. This they manage to achieve through means too well-known to readers of newspapers and magazines (sudden transfers of officials who even mutely challenge the Ambanis; extension of term of office of the friendly guys, etc) to bear repeating here.

A conservative estimate this writer has made indicates that the government has given away to Reliance Industries Ltd, in the last 12 months, something like Rs 500 crore in almost discretionary benefits.

The Great Party, the party of the Mahatma, must, then, receive its dues. It will. In the meantime, you will pay more and more for the metre of cloth you will buy. "Cloth is expensive. *Corruption is the cause*," -- but have I not said that earlier?

**C**ONSIDER, for a moment, what Manu Chhabria and his brother Kishore are doing in the country. Manu is an NRI. As an NRI, he buys abroad foreign stakes in Indian companies, and keeps those stakes abroad. "So what is wrong with that?" you will ask.

Chhabria borrows money from international banks at 9 per cent to 10 per cent interest to buy the stakes foreign entities own in the FERA companies.

Thus, he has bought a stake in Dunlop, a stake in Shaw Wallace, a stake in Mather & Platt, and a stake in Hindustan Dorr-Oliver. Together, the investment is in the range of US\$ 100 million. On this US\$ 100 million, Chhabria must pay an interest of US\$ 9 million to US\$ 10 million per year. But his returns on these investments,



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by way of dividends, which are repatriable, will amount, at best, to only about US\$ 1 million nett per year.

How will Chhabria make up the US\$ 8 million to US\$ 9 million he will lose every year on these investments? Now, if you were an officer of the government, a Minister in any of the economic ministries in New Delhi, or a member of Rajiv Gandhi's entourage, would you not ask this question?

Would you not investigate why Manu Chhabria is making these guaranteedly money-losing investments?

And if you did — you will discover that the companies in which Chhabria has bought stakes are being, or will be, systematically milked. You will discover that sales will be made in the black. You will discover that some of the black-money will be paid in black as bribes. You will discover that most of that money will go abroad through *hawala* deals. And a shameless government allows all this. A shameless government encourages bribing and allows all this. Thus, the stakes in the FERA companies which could have fallen in India-based resident companies with roots and all in the soil of India, with commitment to India only, fall in NRI hands, and stay abroad. The government facilitates such transactions for pieces of silver.

Remember the Shaw Wallace takeover by Chhabria? The whole government knew that Chhabria and a partner had borrowed US\$ 26 million for the deal. The then Revenue Secretary wanted institutions to buy Shaw Wallace shares in the market so as to raise government stake in the company to 51 per cent, and thus thwart the evil designs of Chhabria on the company — of milking it and transferring black-money back to where the dollars come from. But another Secretary to the government thwarted the Revenue Secretary! And not that R V Pandit is the only guy around here who understands these nefarious games scoundrels play. A former Controller of Foreign Exchange in the

Reserve Bank of India was well aware of this illegal transfer of wealth from India, and, in fact, suggested to the government suitable ways and means to plug the plunder. But, of course, the government has just not done anything positive. Most of our businessmen also know of what the Chhabrias and others like them are doing. But then, do you throw stones if you live in a glass-house? Well, so much for upholding the national interest.

Shall we, now, move on to Bofors and the Hindujas?

**N**O TRANSACTION BETWEEN our government and a commercial party abroad has attracted as much controversy, or caused as much loss (in foreign exchange) to the country, as the purchase of guns and ammunition from Bofors AB, the Swedish arms manufacturers. For untruths told, for truths withheld, for cover-ups made, and for the destabilisation of the government caused, there is no parallel to the Bofors scandal in our post-Independence history. Understandably, the sums involved were large — the 155-mm Howitzer deal we made with the Swedes entailed an outlay of US\$ 1.3 billion, or about Rs 1,820 crore. Arms deals are frequently cloak-and-dagger deals, often shady, and expectedly involve large sums of money in commissions, bribes and *speed* money. In the case of our purchase of guns from Bofors, something to the tune of Rs 160 crore is involved. There is now, despite the earlier claims and disclaimers, no doubt whatsoever that large sums of monies have changed hands for securing the gun deal. And there is no doubt whatsoever that the Hindujas were the middlemen — the corruptors in the Bofors deal. 'We are vegetarians. On moral grounds we do not even deal in meat products, in tobacco, in spirits, leave alone arms,' is the usual Hinduja boloney. Yet it is precisely in connection with arms and ammunition that the Hinduja name is being mentioned more and more even outside India. A Hinduja firm, Alcaria,

was until two months ago involved in litigation with an Iranian, a Parvez Lavi, in the US Federal Court in Brooklyn, New York, over the alleged failure of Lavi to supply bomb fuses to the Iranian Air Force! Parmanand Investments and Trading Company (PITCO), founded by the Hinduja gang of four, for consecrating the memory of Parmanand, their late father, was the conduit to Mont Blanc, Lotus and Tulip for substantial sums of money from Bofors AB as commissions on the deal with India. Yet, not a single investigating agency of the Government of India has cared to investigate the Hindujas. Look, friends and my countrymen, look at our situation. The bright hope we all thought Rajiv Gandhi represented has gone; for the last two-and-a-half years the government is paralysed — its energies devoted solely to fighting for its survival in face of many charges of corruption. The Opposition is obsessed only with corruption and Bofors and issues on which it can embarrass the government. The law and order situation is deteriorating speedily; the upholders of law and order themselves increasingly feature in reports of lawlessness — in corruption, in gang rapes, in frame-ups, in drunkenness, in faked encounters of the criminal kind. Vultures have realised the precarious position in which Mr Rajiv Gandhi and his colleagues in the party and the government have landed themselves, and are exploiting the situation to the hilt — decisions not in the national interest are taken by interested parties, frequently to favour this or that businessman at the cost of the exchequer, often in the name of Rajiv Gandhi. But the investigating agencies are doing nothing to check this. Corruption has numbed them. Perhaps many top chaps in the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) have no brains — possibly, they were promoted to those top positions for reasons other than merit. Or they are just doing

nobody else's bidding. How else can one explain the degrading fact that after all the rocking the Bofors scandal has subjected New Delhi, the government and the country to, we have yet not hauled up the Hinduja brothers and their accomplices in New Delhi? How disgraceful that the investigative agencies were unable to link Hinduja brothers even PITCO for the Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) appointed to investigate the Bofors gun deal with Iran? If the investigative agencies were supposed to find the truth and were competent, honest and unafraid of corrupt authority (as investigative agencies were, for example, in the Bofors investigations and numerous other investigations in other democracies) they would have drawn a clear picture of the Hinduja brothers, somewhat on the following lines, for the JPC and the government to act upon:

Settled in Tehran since the early fifties, Parmanand Hinduja, the father, was in the dry fruits business. In later years, as the present generation was growing, they got into distribution and dubbing of Hindi films into Farsi and Arabic for the Iran and the middle-east market. Raj Kapoor's *Sangam* was their first big hit, followed by *Bobby*. Somewhere in the seventies, the brothers came into contact with Princess Ashraf, the twin sister of the Shah of Iran.

Princess Ashraf, as is well-known by now, was, then, a wheeler-dealer; some say she acted on her own, others describe her as the Shah's plenipotentiary. The Hinduja brothers and Princess Ashraf began to get involved in deals between India and Iran.

This was the time when Mrs Indira Gandhi and the Government of India were concerned over the high cost of importing oil from Iran. This was the time when India was interested in keeping Iran neutral in her rivalry with Pakistan. Mrs Gandhi had met and charmed the Shah. Soon, we were

not only exporting sugar, transmission towers, some engineering goods and other commodities, but we were also talking of Kudremukh with Iranian assistance.

The Hinduja brothers were middlemen in this deal. Active from the Iranian side were three Rashidian brothers — Assadullah, Saleh and Ali. The Rashidians owned a bank in Iran — the Bank of Teheran. Remember the US\$ 10.6 million that Mr Shankaran Nair, then Director of RAW, took out from the Reserve Bank of India and deposited in a Swiss bank account? That was the first major Hinduja commission from India.

The Hinduja brothers, by this time, were also getting involved in more areas of business in Iran. The most important activity, next to oil, was in arms and ammunition. Inevitably, the Hinduja brothers became agents for several well-known foreign manufacturers who also traded in arms and armament. By this time, the trade between India and Iran had also increased.

Professor D P Chattopadhyaya was the Commerce Minister in Indira Gandhi's government. He controlled the State Trading Corporation (STC). The STC had the monopoly for importing oil from Iran and for exporting commodities to that country. The Congress Party needed funds. The STC route was used for earning commissions, keeping aside cuts. Things had not come to the disgraceful stage that they have today, and Mrs Gandhi, at least, was still coy about making money openly from foreign deals. But Chattopadhyaya was willing to do anything for his leader and for the Party. Hence RAW was brought in — RAW which was unaccountable for anything to anybody except to the Prime Minister.

**S**OMEWHERE IN 1975 Mrs Gandhi was disturbed over the claims of friendship with

her which the Hinduja brothers were making abroad. She felt that they were "talking too much". Around this time, a very interesting thing happened. The Rashidian brothers suspected that the Hinduja brothers were double-crossing both the Iranians and Indians as far as commissions were involved. They were telling each side that the other wanted so much *more* commission while actually pocketing the difference themselves. Assadullah Rashidian was a childhood friend of the Shah. In fact, Mossadegh, in the fifties, with the Shah in exile, was about to execute him when the CIA intervened and saved him. Assadullah also came to know Mrs Gandhi rather well. He came to Delhi and complained to Mrs Gandhi about the Hinduja brothers. "Why do you need the Hinduja brothers to deal with Iran? Deal directly with us," was probably his message. That was that, and the Hinduja brothers were out.

Time passed by. Mrs Gandhi and her government were dislodged in the 1977 General Elections and Morarji Desai became the Prime Minister of India. The Hinduja brothers got around to V Shankar, Morarji's Principal Secretary, and persuaded Morarji to make his first trip abroad as Prime Minister to Iran. Such a visit was in our interest, but the Hinduja brothers tried to derive mileage for themselves from the trip. They could now prove to the Shah that they had strong links with New Delhi: not only to Mrs Gandhi, but also to Morarji Desai. And they used this to further their interests in Iran: in trading, as commission agents, as money-lenders, and as illegal transferers of funds from Iran to tax-havens abroad. Somewhere around this time they bought the Nitro-Nobel stake in Indian Detonators Ltd and through this deal came in contact with Lennart Bylock who, though a Swede, resided in Geneva and looked after Nobel Industries' over-



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seas interests. For one reason or the other, the Hindujas did not publicise their interest in Nitro-Nobel, but it was soon to become obvious: Bylock, acting for Nitro-Nobel, called M Vardarajan, the co-founder of the Indian company, and told him that he had to step down as Chairman of IDL Chemicals Ltd (formerly Indian Detonators Ltd), 40 per cent of which Nitro-Nobel owned. Interestingly, Murli Deora, the Congress (I) MP, and later, M J Pherwani (now Chairman of Unit Trust of India) were brought in on the Board of Directors, where Deora's began to be the assertive voice.

This was also the time when the Shah of Iran, in pursuance of his grand design to make his country a supreme power in West Asia and the Gulf, launched a massive programme of arming his country, and simultaneously of building substantial financial stakes in the powerful corporations of Europe, especially those involved in armaments. The Shah was making good investments, but also ensuring that he had control over arms supplies to the countries in the area where he had political rivals. It was thus that he acquired for Iran a 25 per cent stake in Krupp, the arms makers to Hitler. He also acquired substantial stakes in Flick of Germany, the tank manufacturers; in Daimler-Benz, and in Nobel Industries of Sweden. Nobel already had a substantial presence in Iran. In many of these deals, Assadullah Rashidian had played a banker's role. Assadullah was a friend also of Princess Ashraf, and Princess Ashraf is reported to have made commissions in many of these transactions. Through their association with Princess Ashraf, the Hindujas got involved as distributors or agents for some of these companies — certainly for Nobel, and the Swedish ordnance manufacturer, Bofors.

In the meantime too, the Hin-

dujas were making money. From petty traders, they had graduated into businesses worth some US\$ 50 to US\$ 60 million. The Hindujas are an ambitious bunch. They began to use their position in Iran to cultivate people in power in New Delhi. Because Mrs Gandhi had by now spurned them, they cultivated P V Narasimha Rao and Balram Jahkar. For Narasimha Rao, they built a planetarium — the Hinduja Pratap Rudra Planetarium — in Warangal, Andhra Pradesh. For Jahkar, they offered to build a Rs 5 crore Non-Aligned Parliamentary Centre in Delhi, but Mrs Gandhi stopped the project. A gentleman — but unfortunately a spineless man, the Hindujas used Narasimha for name dropping and for contacts. But Jahkar is another kind of man. Ambitious, Jahkar is a rich man who wants to get richer. He used the Hinduja connection as much as the Hindujas use Jahkar. When Jahkar goes to the USA, and he goes there quite frequently for a Speaker of the Indian Parliament, his appointments to people in power there are made by Ted Sorensen — an aide to the late President John F Kennedy. Richard Helms, the former US Ambassador to Iran, and a former Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is just one of the many Americans Jahkar has met through the Hinduja connection.

In the early eighties, India was planning to buy 155-mm Howitzers to match long-range guns acquired by Pakistan. French guns were preferred. But the Hindujas, through their political connections, lobbied for guns from Bofors. Hindujas had already acted as middlemen for the German HDW submarines which India had contracted to buy.

There are five recipients of commissions in the Bofors deal with India: Svenska, which has received 3.20 per cent commission; AE

Services, which has received 3 per cent commission; Lotus, which has received 1 per cent commission; Tulip, which has received 1.6 per cent commission, and Mont Blanc, which has received 0.14 per cent commission. A total of 8.40 per cent or Sek 506,550 million, or approximately Rs 152 crore (depending on what date you make the foreign exchange conversion), on an outlay of US\$ 1,300 million for the entire deal.

We have reasons to believe that Svenska had the Hindujas, and elements from Bofors as well as elements of Olaf Palme's Party as partners; AE Services was a Hinduja front, with an Indian partner, and Mont Blanc, Tulip and Lotus — all parts of PITCO — and a Hinduja outfit. The capital structure of Svenska and AE Services is in line with Hinduja's parsimonious traditions — the corpus of their much touted Hinduja Foundation is only Rs 75,000 — and secrecy. Mont Blanc, we have reasons to believe, had Mr Lennart Bylock as the beneficiary; and the Hindujas are the beneficiaries of Tulip and Lotus. Lotus, *Kamal* in Hindi, is the name of Prakash Hinduja's wife. Tulip is the favourite flower, we have learnt, of Madhu, wife of Srichand Hinduja. Lennart Bylock has lived most of his life at 21 Quai Mont-Blanc in Geneva!

We have reason to believe that the Hindujas have taken New Delhi for a big ride in this deal. Just as in the German HDW deal where they double-crossed two prominent political persons by telling one that they had paid the commission — kickback — in a secret Swiss account to the other, in this Bofors deal they have also double-crossed New Delhi. The Svenska and the PITCO commissions have gone almost entirely to the Hindujas and to Swedes; the AE Services commission, a comparatively small sum, is shared with a political connection of New Delhi. On top of

all this, we have reason to believe that at the time the Bofors deal was made, the Hindujas had a stake in Nobel Industries — the owners of Bofors AB (Nobel Industries had acquired Bofors in 1982); we have reason to believe that the stake that Iran held in Nobel Industries had somehow passed into Hinduja hands. So really, only the Hindujas have benefitted most from the deal.

We'd like to proceed on the above lines, and haul up the Hindujas for questioning. Unfortunately, we will have to question the Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, Mr Arun Nehru, Mr Balram Jhakar, Mr P V Narasimha Rao, Mr Murli Deora, Mr S K Bhatnagar, some former and currently serving army officers, and Mr V P Singh about this whole deal with Bofors.

The Hinduja Foundation runs the P D Hinduja National Hospital and Medical Research Centre in Bombay. This establishment is not known for any research in medicine. Yet, it has managed to import duty-free some Rs 20 crore worth of American medical equipment. There are reports that at least some items thus imported have found their way into private Hinduja establishments in Bombay. Obviously, some important persons in Delhi helped the Hindujas obtain the Indian Council of Medical Research recommendation for the duty-free import. The hospital, today, is run almost on commercial lines. There is also this matter of Mr Amitabh Bachchan's substantial donation to the hospital for which he has claimed a tax-deduction.

But will the intelligence agencies muster sufficient courage to act on these lines? If they do, Bofors will no more remain a controversy. Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, who is trapped in a cage of his own making, will come out as no more corrupt than politicians before him; he may even shine by comparison

with some of his erstwhile and present colleagues if the truth and nothing but the whole truth is allowed to come out. Such an initiative by the intelligence agencies will bring to an end the harrowing experience we have been going through for the last two-and-a-half years. It will bring to book those NRI elements who use this country only as a milch cow. Above all, it will bring some credibility to the intelligence agencies.

**O**UR NEWSPAPERS are currently reporting the trial in Moscow of Mr Yuri Churbanov, Brezhnev's son-in-law, on charges of bribery and corruption. Mr Churbanov, a Law Ministry official, can get the death sentence. Our newspapers are currently also reporting the trial in Seoul of Chun Kyung Hwan, the brother of the recently retired South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan: he is accused of embezzling US\$ 10 million from a government developmental agency, and faces a fine of US\$ 5 million and hard labour jail term for seven years. A Japanese Prime Minister, Takeuchi Tanaka, was made to quit office a few years ago for accepting a bribe on behalf of his Party from Lockheed Corporation, and jailed. Nixon was made to quit the Presidency; and so was Agnew (Nixon's Vice President) before him. Yizhtak Rabin, as the Prime Minister of Israel, had to quit because his wife had US\$ 2,000 in her Washington DC bank account which the couple had opened and operated while Yizhtak Rabin was serving as the Israeli Ambassador in Washington. Several top administration officials in the USA, UK, West Germany, Japan, France and Australia are serving jail sentences for wrongdoing of a variety we do not even take cognizance of in India. Several top businessmen and industrialists in these countries have had to pay hundreds of millions of dollars in fines and serve jail sentences for what can be termed only as misdemeanours if compared to what grave offences we commit here and

still go scot-free. Yet, no politician is disgraced here, nor prosecuted successfully and jailed. Since Hari Mundhra of the early sixties, no businessman has been successfully prosecuted, fined and jailed. Why? *Corruption is the reason.* The politicians in power are so dishonest that they dare not ever take action against their corrupt colleagues or against defrauding businessmen, and corrupt officials. Fine. But in the process we are becoming an incompetent, soft State. And that will lead us to chaos. That will ultimately put us on the road to Rangoon — the kind of revolt that has now gripped Burma is the direct consequence of autocracy, corruption, one-party domination, incompetence. Of policies and actions which create frustration among a large section of the people. So let us think. Contemplate as to what we are doing to our country, with our own hands. Think what corruption and the corruptors are doing to our country. Hound them. Hound their protectors and their accomplices and their beneficiaries. Otherwise Burma will happen here just as surely as the revolt has finally happened there. To avoid that fate, as a starter, let us as citizens accept the responsibility that citizenship of a democracy entails. Let us recognise that politics needs competent people; let us recognise that they need money for electioneering, and for sustenance while in office. Good citizenship demands that we devise a system which prohibits exclusive careers in politics; and encourage the good and the competent among our people to come forward to preside over our destiny for periods of, say 5 to 10 years, as national service. But for this we must also devise a system of honouring those who serve well, and punishing those who fail us, or profit from national service. As a first step towards all this, we must stop pretending that all is well, because you are more concerned about yourself. Only then we will have stopped being such bloody fools. ♦



## ANALYSIS

**A** YEAR MAY NOT BE a long enough interval to assess the durability of an international agreement. But given the circumstances under which the much-publicised Accord between India and Sri Lanka was signed, it is sufficiently long to assess whether at least the main objectives of the Accord have been achieved. Barring official spokesmen, most observers seem to be agreed that they have not.

Perhaps the clearest indication of the Accord's failure is to be found in the fact that, for all the rhetoric accompanying its coming into force, peace in Sri Lanka remains as elusive as ever. Indeed, it would hardly be an

on the document (see **Imprint**, October 1987). Their cautionary remarks, alas, were brushed aside with customary brusqueness by all the all-knowing denizens of South Block whose pacomania has in recent months been matched only by their imperious arrogance.

The Accord is without precedent in international intercourse and is fraught with grave dangers. It contemplates surrender of national sovereignty on a scale unknown in recent times. It is also fundamentally flawed in that, contrary to all accepted norms, it permits an unconscionable degree of interference by one country (India) in another's (Sri Lanka's) in-

at the root of the upheavals in the island — is purely and simply an internal matter which falls within the exclusive competence of the Sri Lankan government. It is true, of course, that one of the combatants, namely the Tamils, has some historical association with India, but is that sufficient to justify India's leap into the fray?

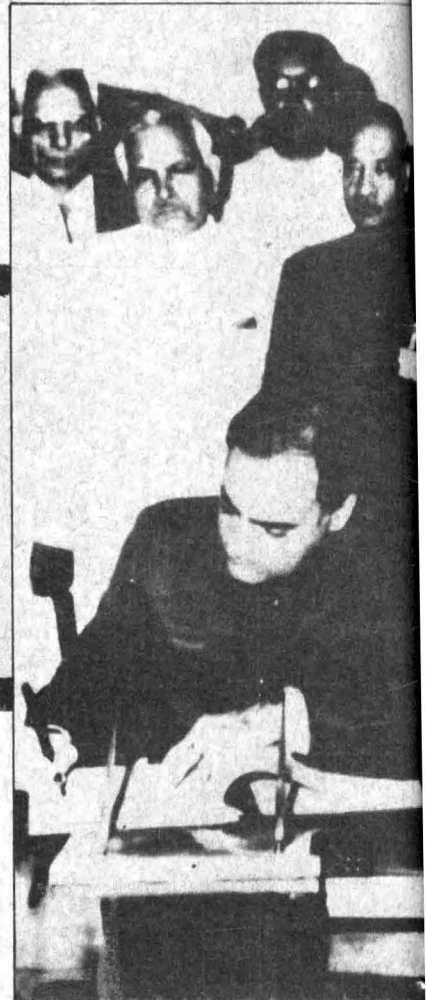
# A Beleaguered Accord

exaggeration to say that parts of that troubled island have actually seen an upswing in violence since President Jayewardene and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi set their hands to the document some 13 months ago. Besides, many of the vital clauses of the Accord remain unimplemented or only partially implemented, thus making a mockery of the strict time-frame which the architects of the arrangements had clearly conceived of as pivotal in bringing about any meaningful results.

Evidently, it needed no special powers of clairvoyance to see that the Accord was foredoomed to failure. Many, in fact — both in politics and in the media — had predicted as much even before the ink had dried

internal affairs. Little wonder, then, that it has come in for sharp criticism from several quarters. The actual working of the Accord has more than justified that criticism.

**ANY DISCUSSION** of the Accord, in order to be meaningful, must, of necessity, address the fundamental issue of the legitimacy of India's stand on the Sri Lankan question. Put bluntly, how justified is India in getting embroiled gratuitously in what is clearly a domestic problem facing her troubled southern neighbour? The ravings and rantings of official apologists and political rabble-rousers notwithstanding, the fact remains that the ethnic conflict between the Tamils and the Sinhalese — which lies



Hardly. For one thing, these Tamils, it needs to be remembered, are, on their own volition, either Sri Lankan citizens or subjects who are bound by the laws of that country and whose nexus with India is at best an emotional one. For another, if mere historical association is to form the basis on which the Sri Lankan problem is to be resolved, then the Sinhalese

ese can invoke the same argument with equal plausibility. For, like the Tamils, they too owe their origins to India, albeit the northern part of the country. Indeed, as one writer pithily observed, "If one goes back far enough, just about everyone's ancestors must have come from somewhere else."



India's intervention in Sri Lanka is also assailable on grounds of double standards. For a country whose sensitivity to criticism of its own treatment of minorities has almost passed into a byword, and whose leaders spare no effort to castigate any attempt, real or imagined, at foreign intervention in the country's domestic affairs, its incursion into Sri

Lanka is indefensible. Critics have rightly compared the situation in Sri Lanka to that in the Punjab and asked, much to New Delhi's embarrassment, as to how the Indian government would have reacted if Pakistan had chosen to undertake a similar adventurism in that troubled state. Further comment is unnecessary.

Even the argument of national security, invoked by those who seek to equate the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka with that in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) over a decade and a half ago, falls by the wayside. For, unlike on that occasion when India was flanked on either side by a hostile and menacing neighbour, the Sri

right-wing UNP regime under Jayewardene, has been drifting away from India's sphere of influence and was moving towards the power axis of Western imperialism. Sri Lanka's open economic policy, her desperation to crush the Tamil freedom movement, her fear of India's hegemonic dominance in the region, propelled Jayewardene to drift closer to Western imperialism. Such a drift of a neighbouring country, whose strategic importance is considerable, has irritated India. . . . Therefore, an Accord of peace and friendship with Sri Lanka, to bring the island back into India's sphere of influence. . . . became an imperative need for India."

The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord, signed a year ago, has come in for sharp criticism from several quarters, and seems foredoomed to failure. Vital clauses of this Accord remain unimplemented while Indian 'interference' in Sri Lanka's internal affairs is seen as both questionable and hypocritical. K S VENKATESWARAN analyses India's stand on and participation in the Sri Lankan situation, and the legitimacy of the LTTE's 'liberation struggle'.

Lankan situation held out few, if any, serious security implications for India. Indeed, it would be a gratuitous insult to the country's vastly superior defence forces to suggest that the rumblings in that tiny island would have endangered Indian national security.

**TRUTH TO BE TOLD**, the real reasons for the Indian action *vis-a-vis* Sri Lanka are to be found elsewhere. These have been summed up rather succinctly — if laced with a liberal dose of radical rhetoric which is best ignored — by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in a recent document put out by the organisation's Political Committee: "Sri Lanka, since the assumption to power of the

While no one can grudge us our geopolitical aspirations, it is the manner in which we have gone about fulfilling them that is questionable. The hypocritical posturing which characterised New Delhi's exertions on the Accord was bad enough, but much worse was the disclosure — which came as late as April this year — that Rajiv Gandhi and his advisers had agreed secretly to pay large sums of "ransom" money to the LTTE in order to secure its consent to the Accord. The government's subsequent attempt at explaining away the payments as "aid" to rehabilitate the cadres of that militant organisation was as unconvincing as it was dishonest.

What is more surprising about the



whole affair, though, is the apparent ease with which the Sri Lankan government acquiesced in India's manoeuvring. It strains one's credulity to imagine that as shrewd and seasoned a politician as President Jayewardene could not have recognised the dangerous implications that the terms of the Accord hold out for his country. Surely, he could not have been unaware, for instance, of the ominous portents that a massive deployment of foreign troops on Sri Lankan soil could carry, given the experience of similar exercises (eg Vietnam, Afghanistan) in the recent past, even if ostensibly to help the host country "keep the peace".

**ONE EXPLANATION** proffered by several commentators for this act of apparent aberration by Jayewardene is that, in doing what he did, the President was actuated by certain domestic compulsions. With the fanatic Janatha Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) stepping up its murderous activities in the south of the island — a development which was as worrisome as the activities of the Tamil separatists — Jayewardene, it is said, actually welcomed the prospect of Indian troops taking charge of the operations in the north and east of the country to contain the Tamils so that his own security forces could concentrate on the south — a strategy which, in the event, worked even better than expected because the odium (and burden) of ruthlessly suppressing the vastly increased insurgent activities of the LTTE in recent months fell squarely on the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), with predictable results. That, of course, does not detract from the fact that the Accord itself is fraught with grave dangers for Sri Lanka, whatever the temporary gains.

**AS EVENTS HAVE** unfolded, it is becoming clear that from the point of view of the costs incurred, too, the Indian adventurism in Sri Lanka is deserving of severe condemnation.

## THE CHARGESHEET

Extracts from Amnesty International's allegations of human rights violations by the IPKF in Sri Lanka.

**AFTER ITS FORCES** had entered Sri Lanka, the IPKF faced increasing charges of human rights violations, notably after it started its military offensive to disarm the LTTE. Many of these allegations were made by the LTTE itself and most could not be substantiated, being hard to have been corroborated by independent observers. Nevertheless, several first-hand and independent reports became available of such violations. In particular, members of the IPKF were accused of raping Tamil women and of deliberately killing dozens of unarmed Tamil civilians, among them elderly people, women and children. Even though Indian government spokesmen said that those killed were members of the LTTE or civilians who had been killed in "crossfire", evidence mounted that in several cases the victims were non-combatant civilians apparently shot without provocation or in reprisal for the killing of IPKF men by the LTTE. No such complaints were made against the IPKF, however, during their most recent military operation in February, when they conducted a major search operation for LTTE members in Batticaloa.

For example, on the night of Octo-

ber 12-13, Indian commandos descended by helicopter to capture an LTTE base near Jaffna University campus at Kokuvil, two miles from Jaffna, in the course of a major Indian military operation launched to obtain control of the Jaffna peninsula from the LTTE. Twenty-nine Indian commandos were reported shot dead by the LTTE, but several others fled and allegedly killed an estimated 40 non-combatant Tamil civilians living in the area. Relatives of the victims said that several IPKF soldiers took refuge in nearby houses and shot inhabitants at point-blank range, including women, children and an elderly couple, shot on October 13, in their homes at Pirampaday Lane, Kokuvil.

Allegations that Indian forces deliberately killed non-combatant civilians were also made in the Indian press. On October 27, for example, Indian forces launched their first aerial attack on the LTTE stronghold of Chavakachcheri. An Indian journalist present in the area reported that the IPKF had deliberately struck at civilian targets. At least 20 civilians were reported killed and witnesses were reported as saying that many of the victims were non-combatant civilians

Both in terms of the drain on the country's strained financial resources and, no less important, in terms of the cost in human lives, India has been paying an unconscionably heavy price. Apart from the clandestine remittances made by the government to the LTTE and other Tamil groups (Mr Pirabhakaran, leader of the LTTE, alone is reported to have received over Rs 2 crore until March 1988 in addition to at least Rs 4 crore from the Tamil Nadu government headed by the late Chief Minister

M G Ramachandran), not to mention the expenses incurred in their training, there is the actual cost of the IPKF military operations in Sri Lanka which New Delhi has had to underwrite. Justice V R Krishna Iyer, in an article published last April, cites a finance ministry estimate of Rs 300 crore on this account plus a recurring expenditure of Rs 5 crore a day. "Other estimates," observes Justice Iyer, "place the amount much higher, which means that the Indian taxpayer is being burdened beyond his ability."

shot at the local market.

**IN EASTERN SRI LANKA** Tamils as well as Muslims were alleged to be victims of such indiscriminate or reprisal killings. In many cases, there were conflicting reports about the nature of these killings and who carried them out and specific allegations were difficult to confirm because of denial of access to outsiders. For example, the local citizens' committee was denied access to the village of Kaluwanchikudy, 16 miles south of Batticaloa, to investigate allegations that 14 civilians had been killed in reprisal by the IPKF after four IPKF soldiers had been killed on October 23 in a landmine explosion. An Indian government spokesman claimed that only three people had been killed, and in fighting, not as a measure of reprisal. But, an independent observer present in the village said that Indian soldiers had got out of control, and that civilians had been killed.

The Indian government assumed responsibility for one of these alleged extrajudicial killings: on November 22 it court martialled a soldier who had the previous day killed two Muslims and wounded five others when he fired on a crowd near the Trincomalee clocktower. The Sri Lanka government has been investigating conflicting reports of another incident in which at least 25 Muslim civilians were shot dead in the eastern village

Indeed, the issue of costs raises many a pertinent but hitherto unanswered question. One writer in *The Sunday Observer* catalogues them comprehensively: "How much has India spent while intervening in the Lankan domestic situation and, more importantly, where do these funds come from? How much do we spend on providing sanctuary to and nurturing the then fledgling Tamil militant groups on Indian shores? How much did we spend on our Big Brother games and all that fly-by-night diplo-

of Ottamawadi on December 2. The IPKF maintained the victims were killed in crossfire, but residents said villagers were indiscriminately killed after nine Indian soldiers had been killed in an LTTE ambush. To Amnesty International's knowledge, this is the only instance of a Sri Lankan government investigation into IPKF activities. And in no instance, it seems, has an impartial body attempted to carry out investigations into these and other alleged IPKF killings.

There have also been an increasing number of allegations that lower ranking IPKF personnel had raped Tamil women. Several dozen Tamil women, some of whom needed hospital treatment, have testified on oath that they were raped by IPKF personnel, for example in Kondavil East in the north and in Sathurkodanan and Morakkadanchenai villages in eastern Sri Lanka. Several of these allegations have been investigated by the IPKF itself, although the Indian government continued to deny any such charges. But in December 1987 a local magistrate reportedly found the IPKF responsible for seven cases of rape. In January 1988, moreover, four Indian soldiers were discharged and sentenced by an Indian court martial to one year's imprisonment for raping Tamil women.

The Indian government has since ordered an inquiry into the allegations of human rights violations by the IPKF — Ed.

macy of the likes of Romesh Bhandari? How much money did we spend on each of the five major groups and how much do we still spend on the supporters of the Accord? What was the amount we spent on arming the groups and then training them in camps spread over the country? How much did we spend on keeping tabs on them and then what did we spend on breaking them up? What did we spend on the whole Thimpu exercise? Even a liberal audit on this will reveal that at least for the past five years —

since the ethnic war began in Sri Lanka after the 1983 riots — India has been spending a tidy sum every month on the whole affair, and it is unlikely any of the books show this."

**EQUALLY IMPORTANT** is the cost in human terms. There are, first, the casualties on the Indian side. Several hundred at least of the IPKF members can be safely said to have died and a few thousand seriously injured as a result of the mindless violence unleashed by the Tamil militants. Then there are the casualties on the Sri Lankan side which include both the militants and innocent civilians who unwittingly became victims of the IPKF operations. While accurate figures of these casualties are not available, reliable estimates place the number at well over two thousand.

Nor is that all. Much worse is the opprobrium that has been heaped on the Indian government for the several acts of wanton and reckless human rights abuses allegedly indulged in by the IPKF. The LTTE has described these in graphic detail in a widely-circulated pamphlet entitled *Indian Military Offensive: Pirabhakaran's Point of View* which characterises the IPKF behaviour as "callous and ruthless with total disregard for human lives and property." According to the organisation, "(the) aerial raid (s) by helicopter gunships caused severe devastation. (In) several areas the troops went in, tortured and massacred innocent civilians. . . Even (the) elderly and children were tortured. Houses and shops were plundered. Hospitals, schools and temples were bombarded. Troops stormed the Jaffna hospital and massacred a large number of (the) sick and injured. In this offensive operation, several hundreds of innocent Tamil civilians were senselessly done to death and hundreds of them sustained injuries primarily due to indiscriminate shelling. Many of the injured died without treatment."

These charges, coming as they do from the LTTE, may be taken with



## ANALYSIS

a pinch of salt. One may even question the LTTE's credentials to make those charges considering its own sordid record of savagery and scant respect for human rights. The LTTE, alas, is not alone in making those charges. Independent corroboration for the IPKF's deviances has come from such non-partisan sources as Amnesty International which, in a recent report, has strongly indicted the Force for a number of serious human rights violations (*see box*). The Indian government, characteristically, at first responded to those allegations with a bald denial, dubbing them as "fabricated and unfair". Later it ordered a probe into Amnesty's allegations of IPKF violations of human rights.

**TURNING BRIEFLY TO** the merits of the conflict itself, it is worth examining how justified the Tamils are in their demands *vis-a-vis* the Sri Lankan government. Most discussions on the subject, in India at any rate, have tended to take it for granted that the Tamils have an unanswerable case for an independent homeland and that Colombo, by not conceding that demand, has been acting in an unreasonable manner. Is this premise valid?

I think not. Harsh as it may seem, any objective and dispassionate analysis of the situation in Sri Lanka will indicate that it is the attitude of the Tamils — or, more accurately, their strident representatives, notably the LTTE — that is singularly unreasonable. Sadly, the injection of such highly emotive, loaded catch-phrases as "the right to self-determination", "liberation struggle", etc, into the debate has served to cloud the real issues and present them in a totally distorted perspective to the lay reader or listener — a process which politicians on either side have only too merrily exploited to their narrow advantage.

It is generally agreed that the origins of the present conflict lie in an

entrenched view among the Tamils that they are being systematically discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese population — a feeling which, paradoxically, the Sinhalese, in turn have been harbouring *vis-a-vis* the Tamils for years. It needs to be noticed, in this context, that racially there are few real differences between the two communities, although frequent derogatory allusions, especially by the Tamils, to the "racist" Jaye-

which he published a report which repays study. Sieghart's observations on the discrimination issue are particularly instructive: "Among (the many misperceptions of fact) is a widespread belief, held by the Sinhalese and Tamils in equal measure, that the other group enjoys some special and inequitable privileges. For this... there is, with one exception, no foundation in fact. A recent discussion paper by the respected Marga



**IPKF: Alleged human rights violations.**

wardene government (which is Sinhala-dominated) would give one a contrary impression. But how justified are these charges of discrimination?

**NOT SO LONG AGO**, the eminent English human rights expert, Paul Sieghart, undertook a mission to Sri Lanka on behalf of the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva, and its British Section, *Justice*, following

Institute shows that there are no statistically significant differences between the two communities in any of the critical social and economic indicators — infant mortality, nutritional status, life expectancy, literacy rate, educational index, average income of households, ownership of consumer durables, or unemployment rate. In none of these respects is either of the two communities collectively disad-

vantaged in relation to the other, and the grievances voiced about them are in fact quite illusory.”

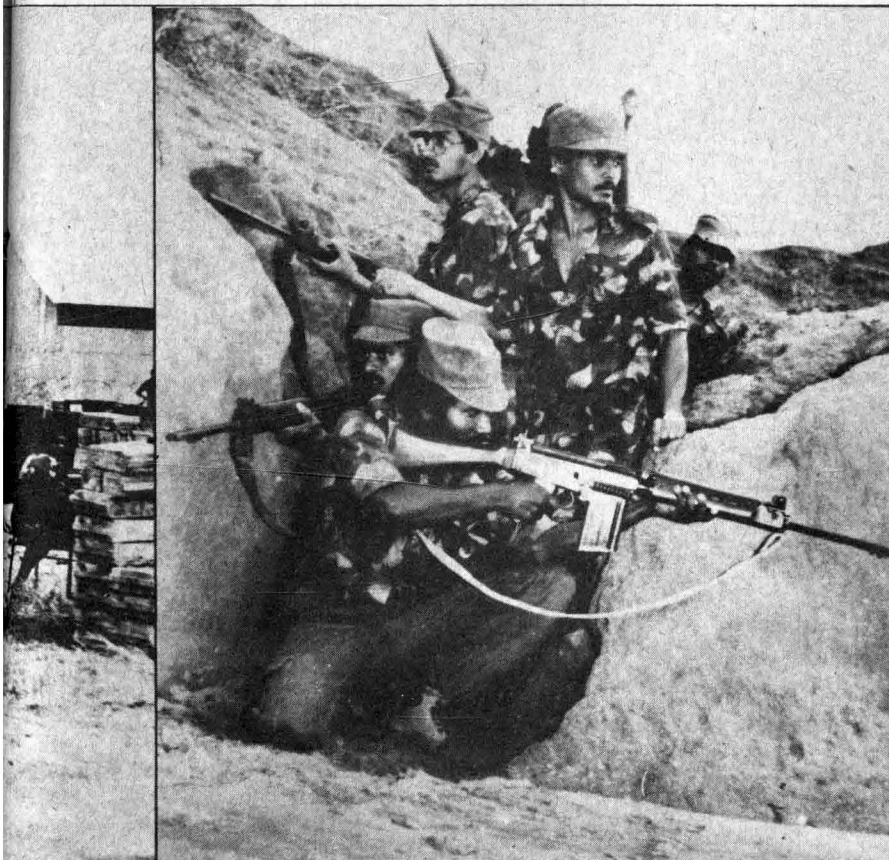
The only exception, according to Sieghart, relates to the provision of tertiary education – an area in which, largely for climatic reasons, the Tamils had traditionally enjoyed a distinct edge over the Sinhalese, enabling them to corner a disproportionate share of administrative, professional and clerical jobs, much to the envy

Even assuming that an element of discrimination, perceived rather than real, does exist against the Tamils, does that justify the community's demand for secession from Sri Lanka? Certainly not. As citizens or subjects of that country, they, like everyone else, are clearly bound to obey the laws of the land while retaining their right – adequately guaranteed by the Sri Lankan Constitution – to peacefully ventilate their grievances before

**IT IS TYPICAL** of an organisation like the LTTE to characterise the Tamil agitation as “a national liberation struggle, a struggle for self-determination”. Therein lies a vital clue to the organisation's ideological moorings – a fact which deserves more attention than has been accorded in any discussion on the subject. For it is this organisation, claiming as it does an exclusive right to represent the entire Tamil community in Sri Lanka, which will dominate any future arrangement that may be worked out as part of the devolution plan envisaged for the island. It is a measure of the success of the LTTE's propaganda exercises that its highfalutin' rhetoric about freedom and democracy has concealed its real character as a typical Marxist outfit, whose leaders are out to grab power by any means, fair or foul.

Enough evidence has by now accumulated to identify the LTTE's inspirational and material supporters. The respected *Swiss Press Review and News Report* revealed, as far back as October 1984, that the organisation was “being helped by a number of Soviet surrogates, including the PLO, Libya and North Korea. Arms have been sent by all of them, and the most recent development is the introduction of a Tamil radio station which happens to be located on a North Korean freighter cruising in international waters of north-eastern Sri Lanka.” And yet how often has this aspect been highlighted in the Indian media which lost no opportunity to excoriate President Jayewardene for allegedly seeking Israeli assistance in dealing with the Tamil insurgency some months ago? New Delhi's own hysterical reaction at that time not only revealed double standards, but was tantamount to asserting a new Munroe Doctrine.

**PROOF OF THE LTTE leadership's** scant regard for democratic norms comes, if proof was needed, from its continued and vigorous opposition to the proposal for a referendum in



*The fighting continues. . .*

of the Sinhalese. To correct this imbalance, the Sri Lankan government, soon after independence from the British, introduced a “quota system” to regulate admission to institutions of higher learning. “Not unnaturally, the Tamils have perceived this as a form of discrimination against them, though it was in fact designed as ‘affirmative action’ to rectify an existing imbalance.”

the appropriate authorities. It is a flagrant and unconscionable abuse of that right to make such unreasonable and outrageous demands as would have the effect of dismembering the country. How many of those in India today who vociferously support the cause of a separate Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka would countenance the idea, say, of a Khalistan or a Gorkhaland?



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LTTE: "Reluctant to test electoral waters".

the eastern province of Sri Lanka to be held prior to that region's proposed merger with the north as envisaged in the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord. The organisation has similarly shown a marked reluctance to participate in the provincial council elections in the north and east, even as it claims widespread, indeed overwhelming, support among the inhabitants of those regions. As A S Abraham points out in a recent article in *The Times of India*, "If the claim is genuine, it has nothing to fear from an election. Should it win the election handsomely, it will have every right to take office. On the other hand, should it not do as well as its rivals, which include the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) as well as some other militant Tamil bodies, it will have to co-operate with them. The LTTE is reluctant to test the electoral waters, while yet seeking to ensure that in

any post-election set-up it will be the party that counts."

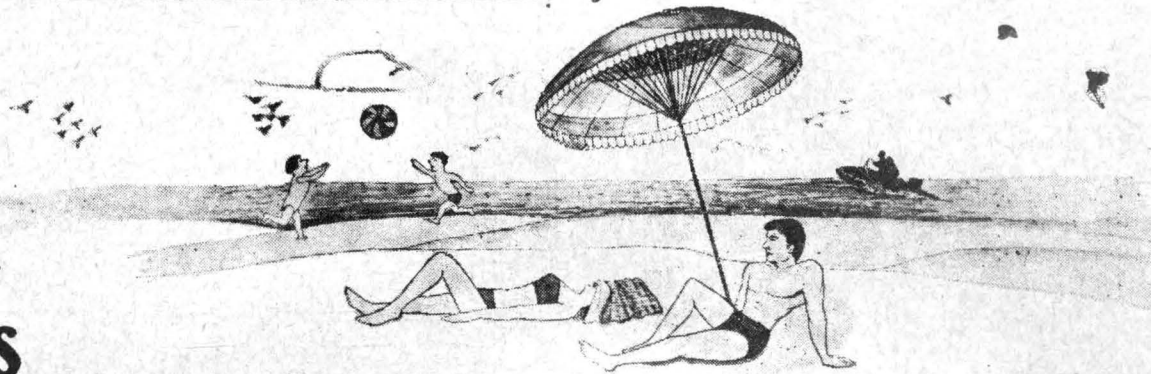
The other militant organisations are no different either. The People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE), for instance, headed by Uma Maheshwaran — who has enjoyed New Delhi's patronage even as the LTTE fell out of favour — has openly pledged to wage "a long-term struggle to overthrow President Jayewardene's government and establish a Marxist state with the help of progressive Sinhalese forces." The human rights records of these organisations, of course, make horrendous reading. PLOTE, for instance, is known to have terrorised entire villages under its control (including many in Tamil Nadu) whenever anyone has dared to question its violent activities, and Uma Maheshwaran personally has been accused by the sister of one of his former aides, Sivaneswaran, of

liquidating the latter and at least 285 Tamil youths who had joined the organisation. Given this background, it is not difficult to imagine the shape of things to come should these self-styled "leaders" of the Tamil community ever occupy the reins of power in Jaffna.

**IN THIS TANGLED** skein of happenings, the least enviable place is occupied by President Jayewardene. A much-misunderstood man, this octogenarian statesman, who has changed the face of Sri Lanka with his imaginative economic policies since he came to power a decade ago, has so far weathered the storm admirably. His handling of the ethnic problem has, despite the strong, often vituperative, criticism emanating from diverse sources, been characterised by a judicious mix of firmness and accommodation — a policy that has, while saving the country from disintegration and chaos, allowed enough room for a genuine national dialogue about possible reforms for greater regional autonomy.

The next few months, alas, are likely to present far greater difficulties for Jayewardene than he has been used to facing in the past, given the growing domestic pressures on him. Apart from the impending parliamentary and presidential elections — the latter being crucial to his own continuance in office, should he decide to go in for another term — Jayewardene is also under considerable pressure to see that the terms of the Accord he (somewhat rashly) signed with India are kept without a further postponement of deadlines — a task made all the more difficult by the escalating Sinhalese resistance to the Accord. Whether or not he will be able to withstand those pressures will depend on a number of factors, not the least of which is the degree and consistency of support New Delhi extends to him. One can only hope that wiser counsel will prevail in South Block, the past blunders of its denizens notwithstanding. ♦

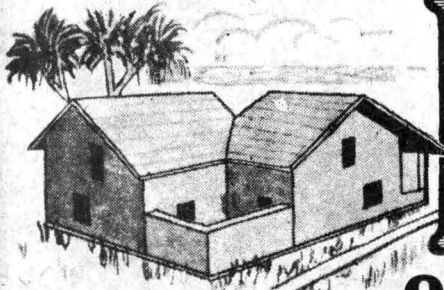
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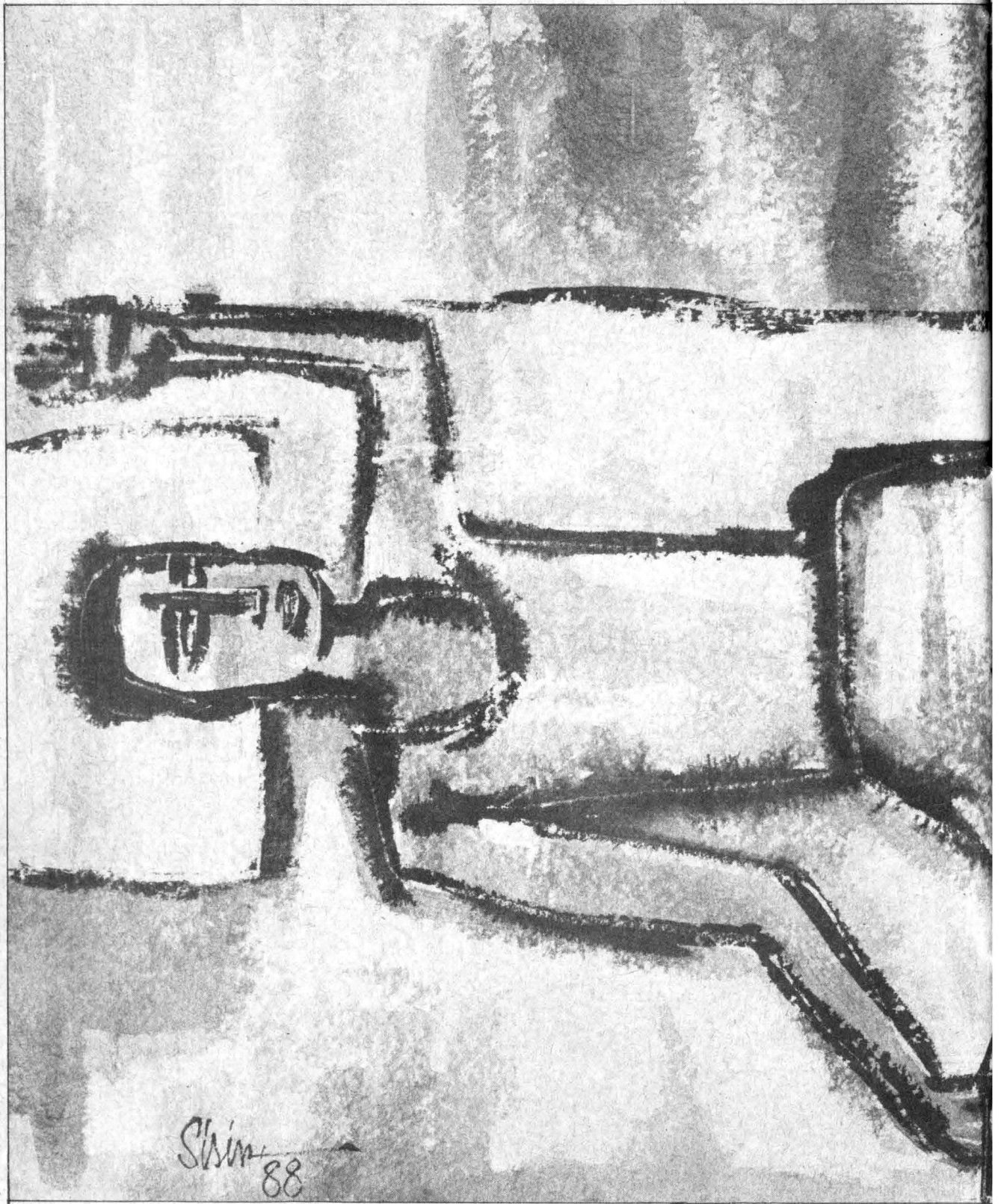
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ESSAY



By Aubrey Menen



## AS I LAY DYING...

A year ago, celebrated writer and novelist Aubrey Menen, fell ill with cancer, at the age of 75. When his doctors seemed to concur with his own premonition of an impending death, Menen decided to go back over a lifetime of reading to see what his favourite authors had to say about dying.

On these pages, AUBREY MENEN, now cured, narrates his rediscovery of Hegel, St Augustine, Gray, and other all-time greats.

**I WAS CONVERTED** to the Roman Catholic faith while approaching my fortieth year. There was a lot about it that I did not understand. I was living in Italy, so I went to the Vatican itself. My instruction was taken in hand by the famous Monsignor O'Flaherty. He said that there was a lot about it that the Vatican did not understand either. He was an Irishman who, during the Second World War (which had finished some five years earlier), had hidden Jews in the Pope's palace to save them from death in Hitler's concentration camps. We spent a month talking and strolling about the Vatican, looking at its glorious art and discussing the doings of the far-from-glorious human race.

I explained that I needed religion as much as I needed clothes. True, one could go about morally naked; Hitler and the SS had done just that. I wanted to come in from the cold.

At the end of the month he took me one evening to the Sistine Chapel



when it was closed to the public. He switched on the lights and we sat on the steps of the papal altar, looking up at Michelangelo's marvellous ceiling. O'Flaherty said he would receive me into the Church if I promised one thing: I was a writer with an international audience. I must promise that I would never write anything which would shake the faith of a simple old peasant woman. I promised.

So, if you are a simple old peasant woman, read no further.

**I AM NOW 76.** I know that the Christian religion may be a good thing to live by, but it is quite useless to die by, I know, because I have spent a long year dying.

Here, deep in the south of India, while writing my twenty-third book, I was struck down by cancer. It invaded my mouth. Absorbed in my work, I neglected it until I could not open my jaws sufficiently enough to eat. I was on the point of slowly starving to death when I went to the nationally-known specialist in cancer, Dr Krishnan Nair. He and his team of doctors examined me. Courteous as they were, I gathered that there was little hope that I would live. I had left it all too late.

However, Dr Krishnan Nair did his best. I was given an intensive 15-day dose of gamma-ray treatment. It left me flat in bed for weeks; tottering about Trivandrum for months. My doctor warned me not to wander far from any hospital to which I could be rushed to ease my final hours on this earth.

I lay on what was, in all probability, my death-bed. I rehearsed in my mind, as a good Catholic should, my sins. I rehearsed and rehearsed them as I found I was enjoying them all over again; nearly as much as I had enjoyed them when younger and actually sinning in the flesh.

This, I reflected, between bursts of appalling pain, was something Monsignor O'Flaherty had never warned me about. Plainly, I would soon die and go to Hell, just like the Damned in the vast painting by

Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel; to which we had our backs when sitting on the steps of the papal altar.

**YES. BUT THE TROUBLE WAS I** did not believe in Hell. Where was it? The great and good St Augustine had said that the earth was hollow, with it there. The earth isn't hollow. Where was Heaven? The Vatican vaguely points to the sky. That far-from-great-and-good Khrushchev had said that it wasn't. His cosmonauts had gone up to have a look and there wasn't an angel to be seen. Beside my bed was the Italian text of Dante's epic poem — *La Divina Commedia*. To keep my mind from enjoying my sins, I read it. If anybody knew Hell, he did.

I don't know what Dante is like when he is read in an English translation. In Italian, he is vivid, frank, and often funny. (One of his devils, for instance, torments sinners by farting at them!) After a few Cantos, it was quite plain to me that Dante did not believe in Hell either. He was an author. For every admirer an author makes, he makes 10 enemies. Dante had enjoyed himself by inventing a hell for them to suffer in. So would I, if I had his talent.

Did he believe in Heaven? I turned to his *Paradiso*, and I wondered. . . He is being conducted into the presence of God. . . Is he awed? . . . Not a bit. Once again, he is an author. Authors never stop talking about themselves, just as I am doing now. He chats away to his guide about a quarrel he has with some monks and also of his dislike of Pope Boniface VIII.\* If God (*if* there is a God) actually met Dante in Heaven (*if* there *is* a Heaven), I suspect He would have had considerable difficulty in getting a word in edgewise.

**I PUT DANTE ASIDE.** As I lay on my bed, I looked through the window onto the beautifully-tended garden of the astonishingly quiet hotel my friend and companion Graham Hall had found for me in the very heart of

\*Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, *Canto XX*.

Trivandrum. I saw the bougainvillea, the hibiscus and the mousantha. I remembered I was in India, the land of the *Upanishads*. I had written a book about my experiment with meditation, called *The Space Within the Heart*; perhaps the *Upanishads* would help.

A copy of the 13 principal ones was on my bookshelves. I turned hopefully to the *Katha Upanishad*, the one in which the little boy Naciketas actually meets Yama, the God of Death. What had Yama to say to me as I lay, in my turn, dying?

Yama, I think, would have a great career if he went in for Indian politics. He is marvellous at avoiding the issue. Here is what he says (you can almost hear it coming over the badly-tuned public address system) in answer to the boy's direct question about what happens after death: "The knowing self is never born, nor does he die at any time. If the slayer thinks he slays, if the slain thinks he is slain, both of them do not understand. He neither slays, nor is slain."\*

Well, this sort of thing might do for T S Eliot. I recalled that he was much impressed by it: he maintained that in his end was his beginning.\* As for me, dying with cancer in the mouth, I knew perfectly well which was which, or, to use a phrase of Eliot's countrymen, I knew my arse from my elbow. One does, dying. So far as I was concerned, I suspected that the sage Yajnavalkya would be one of those wiseacres who visited me and sat at my bedside talking hot air and eating the grapes which other visitors had brought me.

**I FELT THAT I** was losing my grip: I was about to embark on that voyage to the country from whose bourne, no traveller, according to Hamlet, returns. I wanted a guidebook.

I remembered that St Augustine had played as large a part in my conversion to Christianity as Monsignor O'Flaherty. I made up my mind to

\*Katha Upanishad I 2.18, 19.

\*T S Eliot, *Four Quartets*: Burnt Norton.



read him again. Graham Hall had asked Mr John, the Librarian of the University of Kerala, to lend me books. He had readily agreed, provided they could be found for me. His problem was that a beneficent government had given him funds to buy a great number of books but not enough to buy shelves on which to stack them. Thousands of books were piled on the floor. The problem was solved by the charming young Assistant Librarian, Mary Mani, who maintained her remarkable good looks amidst all that dust, holding that she actually liked finding books.

She found St Augustine's *City of God* for me. He has always been my favourite saint. His sins, like mine, were scarlet; but I have not his courage to boast about them. I had read his *Confessions* in which he tells us his mother was as anxious as any Indian parent to marry him off, and had, in his own words, "torn my whore from my side as a hindrance to my marriage. My heart which clave to her was torn and bleeding."\* His mother succeeded in getting him married, but, "I, being not so much a lover of marriage as a slave to lust, procured another whore." A confirmed bachelor all my life, St Augustine was the saint for me.

Now that my life was ending, what had he to say to help me? Would my death be followed in due course by my resurrection? Mary Mani provided me with a bookrest on which I could perch his massive *City of God*, a book which, as I have said, I had read in part before I went to the Vatican. Now I read it with greater care. Imagine my astonishment when I read, with the clear eyes of a man reading perhaps for the last time a favourite book, that Augustine thought the whole idea completely incredible: "It is incredible that Jesus Christ should have risen in the flesh and ascended with flesh into Heaven: it is incredible that the world should believe such a thing. It is incredible that a very few men, of mean birth and the lowest

\*St Augustine, *Confessions* Book VI.



rank, should have been able to persuade the world of so incredible a thing." In other words, "it ain't necessarily so", as the black preacher sings in Cole Porter's famous song.

St Augustine's solution isn't very reassuring to an old man with a murderous pain in his ear: He says that, like him, we should believe in medical miracles. He quotes several he had personally witnessed, including a fistula cured solely by prayer.

I dimly remembered something I had read long ago about miracles but had put aside. Could Mary find me Edward Gibbon's *Letters*? She could; it arrived. I had, in the years gone by, read through his *Decline and Fall* twice! Here, in a letter to Richard Hurd, he is even more smoothly devastating: "This age indeed, to whom the gift of miracles has been refused, is apt to wonder at the indifference with which they were received by the ancient world. Instead of the instant terror, lasting conviction and implicit obedience we might rationally expect, the Jews as well as the Gentiles conducted themselves as though they neither remembered nor believed in the miracles to which they were witnesses."

On my sick bed, I found no answer to that. Now, not by a miracle, but by Dr Krishnan Nair's gamma-ray machine, I am cured. Yet I still cannot find an answer to Gibbon's argument.

**I LOOKED OUT OF** the window again at the garden, the palm trees, the flowers and the blue sky. Well, I was still alive, and if I had to die, Kerala was a beautiful place to die in. Had not Baudelaire written a perfect poem to a Malabar girl, advising her to stay where she was and not go to ugly, cold Europe?\*(He had, although not a soul in Kerala seems to know

\* *St Augustine, City of God Book XXII, Section 5.*

\**Edward Gibbon, The Letters of Edward Gibbon, Vol I; p 33; ed: J E Norton, London 1956.*

\**Charles Baudelaire, Les Fleurs du Mal: A Une Malabaraise.*

it.) What had one of my favourite poets, cynic and dandy as he was, to say about death? His *Fleurs du Mal* was among my books. I read a poem in it. . . He is dying. He dies. "What!" he exclaims, "Is that *all*?" He is furious. "Onwards!" he cries. "What does it matter if we're going to Hell or Heaven? Let's get on with it and hope we'll find something *new*."\*

That was all very well for Baudelaire, but I needed something to calm me besides Dr Nair's painkiller. I asked Mary for Thomas Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*. She produced an edition which upset all the ideas about the poem that I had had since I was a schoolboy. Thomas Gray was *not* being respectably sad and gloomy about death, not at least when he first wrote the poem. An earlier version had been discovered. It is now at Eton College. He was thoroughly happy that he would soon be lying in that churchyard: "No more with

Reason and thyself at strife  
Give anxious cares and endless wishes  
room  
But thro' the cool sequester'd Vale  
of Life  
Pursue the silent Tenor of thy  
Doom."\*

So, when the curfew tolls the knell of my parting day in Trivandrum, should I, as they carry me towards the cemetery, be happy? A memory of Byron, another of my favourite poets, occurred to me. When the pains in my head had been very bad, I had often thought of committing suicide; a recollection of something he once wrote had put me off. What was it now? Mary found the book.

On January 28, 1817, he wrote to his friend Thomas Moore: "I should, many a good day, have blown my brains out. But for the recollection that it would have given pleasure to my mother-in-law, and even then, if I could have been certain to haunt. . ."

\**Charles Baudelaire, La Reve d'un Curieux.*  
\**Thomas Gray, Gray and Collins: Poetical Works; p 103-4; ed: Roger Lonsdale, Oxford 1977.*

But no. Byron had already made up his mind. On September 3, 1811, from Newstead Abbey he wrote to – "My dear Hodgson, I will have nothing to do with your immortality: we are miserable enough in this life without the absurdity of speculating upon another. If men are to live why die at all? And if they die, why disturb the sound sleep that knows no waking?"\*

**AFTER ALL**, I thought, as I lay dying, we are born to die, aren't we? Now, where had I got that from? Ah, Hegel. Years ago I had read much of Hegel but I stopped telling anybody I was doing it because they would instantly decide that I was a Communist and a Marxist. It was no use telling them that Karl Marx had said that Hegel only made sense if you stood him on his head.

Meantime, the infallible Mary produced Hegel. And I found the passage that has haunted me: "The true view is that life, as Life, involves the germ of death, and the finite being, rather radically self-contradictory, involves its own self-suppression."\*

I did not have to stand Hegel on his head, or even to stand on my own to understand that. I picked up Augustine's *City of God* again; there was exactly the same devastating thought. "For no sooner," says the Christian saint, "do we begin to live in the dying body than we begin to move ceaselessly towards death."\*

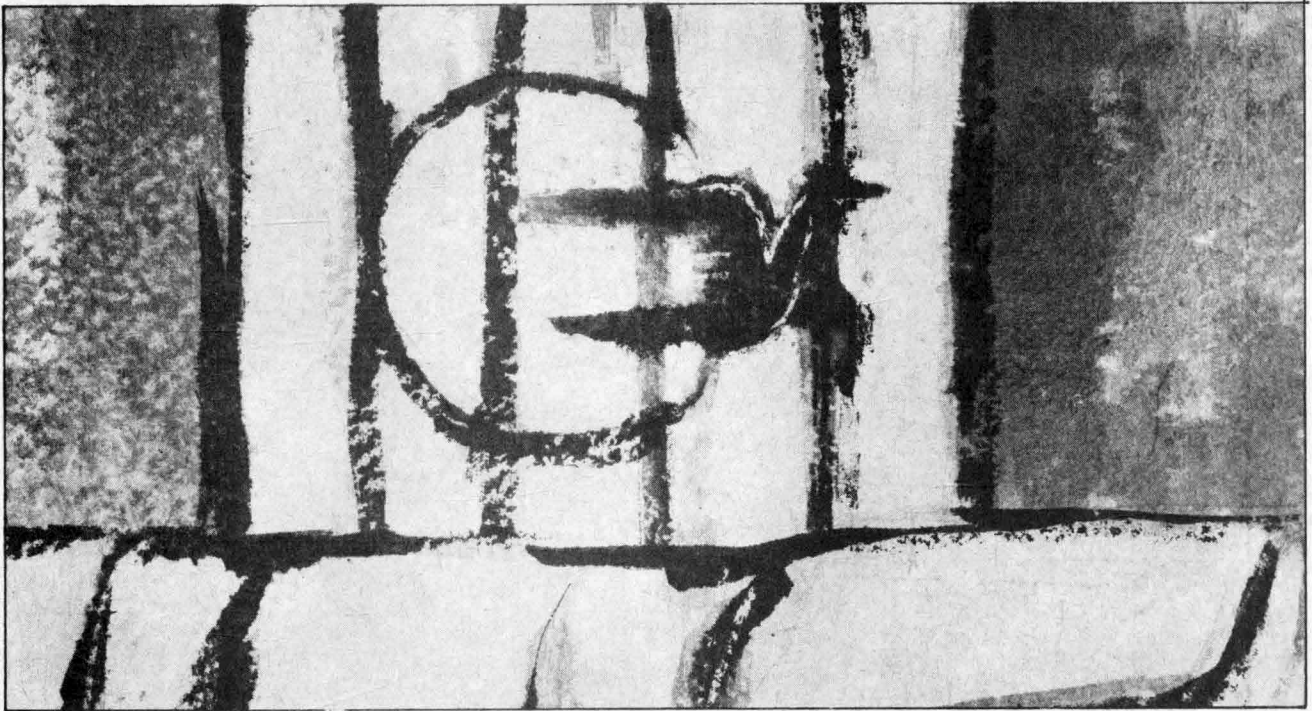
That was all very fine and large and philosophical, but here I was dying, and I was not philosophical at all. I didn't like it.

**I MADE UP MY MIND** to put all these morbid thoughts aside. If die I must, there was one problem I would like to clear up. When I was converted,

\**Byron, Lord Byron: Select Letters and Journals; p 52; ed: Leslie A Marchand, London 1982.*

\**Hegel, from The Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences; translated in The Logic of Hegel, Oxford, 1892.*

\**St Augustine, City of God; p 419; translator: Marcus Dods, New York, 1950.*



the Vatican had several jokes and witticisms about their historic blunder in condemning Galileo for saying that the earth went round the sun. (It is no longer a problem: the Vatican knows to its financial ruin that it is the Pope who goes round the earth.) I wanted to know what really happened at that trial. Galileo, I knew, never muttered: "But it still moves." He was never tortured. Could Mary find me what he had written?

She could. But the book fell open on her bookrest as though turned by an invisible hand. In his third letter on sunspots, he casually throws off this: "Our special hatred of death need not render our fragility odious. Why should we wish to become less mutable?"\*

"Struldbruggs!" I exclaimed. "Struldbruggs." Next day, a beautiful edition of *Gulliver's Travels* was on my reading desk, one illustrated by Rex Whistler. I turned to the chapter about the island of Luggnagg where the Struldbruggs had learned how to live for ever: "Happy people," ex-

\*Galileo, Third Letter on Sunspots, 1612; publ. 1613.

claims Gulliver, "where every child has a chance of being immortal! Happy people who have masters ready to instruct them in the wisdom of all former ages!"

I was over 70; I had a great deal of the wisdom of the ages packed in my elderly brain. I would have more if I reached 80.

**OR WOULD I?** Gulliver had learnt the truth. After four-score years the Struldbruggs "were opiniative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative . . . They had no remembrance of anything but what they had learned and observed in their youth and middle-age, and even that, very imperfectly."

I closed the book. I swore that if Dr Krishnan Nair did in fact save me, I would count to 10 slowly before I said, "As Mahatma Gandhi said to me when I met him. . ."

Well, I was ready to go, if go I must, and I must go. I relaxed. There was the matter of my scarlet sins — should I be sorry for them? Once more I recalled my highly improper love affairs. Some verses in a play by Moliere kept echoing in my head, but

imperfectly. I asked Graham Hall to find an old notebook in my luggage where I had written them down. I would have had to quote it here in French had not Mary found me a superb translation. It is by Morris Bishop from *The Misanthrope*. I hope someone will read it at my funeral: "If the King should offer me

Paris his great city,  
If he said the price would be  
That I'd leave my pretty,  
I would tell the King Henri:  
Keep your Paris, leave me be,  
I prefer my pretty sweet  
I prefer my pretty."\*

It may sound silly to say that I had to learn how to die in order to understand that it was loving that made life worth living. But that's it. That's how it is. Or, as Walt Whitman, a sinner like myself, put it: "Has anyone supposed it is lucky to be born? I hasten to inform him that it is just as lucky to die and I know it."\* ♦

\*Moliere, *Le Misanthrope*; translator: Morris Bishop.

\*Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: Song of Myself, Section 7*.



**T**HERE IS TODAY in Parliament, currently tabled for discussion, a measure which has hardly been looked at by most people, but which is going to profoundly affect the lives of almost every man and woman in the country. Called the National Housing Policy (NHP), it has been ignored by most or at best regarded as "a good thing" since, "after all, there should be a policy in this area; it's a sign of progress." A few may have been a little disturbed by the controversy and criticism around both the content of the Policy and the manner in which it was drafted over the past year or so, but for many, the fact that it has been prepared is itself a constructive step.

But the Policy is not at all the innocuous document many have taken it to be. It is a sophisticated and cruel fraud which will, if approved and allowed to come into force, significantly worsen what is already an inhuman housing situation for the majority in our country, especially when taken along with other related measures in forestry, industry, water, energy and this year's Union Budget in general. The conditions of a small section, the upwardly mobile segment of the middle class, will improve; those of the vast majority will worsen. Is this the Policy that the country should have, after 41 years of Independence, as the first-ever policy in the field? This is a question that every thinking person should be asking, and in particular, members of every political party — especially the ruling party.

Before examining the NHP, it is necessary to clarify that a policy like this does not exist by itself — the very nature of housing connected as it is to almost every sphere of life. It is not just the NHP that has to be examined and understood. The reality is that some of the most important thrusts contained in the Policy *have already been incorporated* through various legislative actions. These include the National Housing Bank Act, passed in November 1987, and the

### NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY:

# FUTURE SHOCK?

India's first-ever National Housing Policy (NHP) was finalised after much discussion and debate, in early December last year, in a hurried attempt to coincide with the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The Policy is, however, totally urban-industrial and profit-oriented, says JAI SEN, furthering the interests of builders and industry. Additionally, welfare-oriented schemes notwithstanding, the NHP seeks to eliminate traditional rights of access to subsistence resources in rural areas. What is the NHP all about? A critique of the Policy's measures and implications.

very wide raft of proposals for housing, credit, and household consumer goods, as well as incentives and subsidies for various industries, that were contained in the Union Budget for 1988-89. Even more recent have been the Amendment to the Delhi Rent Control Act (which is seen as a model for similar Bills elsewhere), new laws in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, etc, regarding 'encroachment', and so on. In other words, much of 'the policy' is already in place.

This seems highly illogical especially when the Government of India

has been trumpeting, here and especially abroad, at the countless conferences held last year — the so-called International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) — that "India's National Housing Policy is being finalised on the basis of widespread debate and discussion" *when most of the critical policy options had already been closed*. The NHP needs to be understood for what it is: a statement of the essential *larger* policy directions the government wants to take, much of which is between the lines in the Policy document, and





also a public relations exercise, giving out what the government thinks people would like to know and making it seem as if the subject has been coherently handled.

**THE NHP IS** a classic example of this. With the government declaring since January 1987 – the start of the IYSH – that it was ‘very soon’ going to announce a policy, the stage was set: the government was clearly *for* the suffering homeless. With this illusion, and with regular speeches at all the seminars and conferences dur-

ing 1987, the last of four drafts of the NHP was pushed to the Cabinet in early December 1987 (replete with a full-page display of the IYSH symbol), with the notion of announcing it to the world during the IYSH. At least part of the reason why it took 12 months to reach this stage, was that the draft NHP was opposed by many people, including the National Campaign for Housing Rights’ (NCHR), who found it highly objectionable both in content and style of preparation (it was highly partisan to the builders’ body), and also de-

ceitful to the public and the state governments. (The latter were asked, in May 1987, to approve the *second* version of the Policy when they had only been shown the first; it looked much the same but had 16 major changes!)

Rather than the government, it was the NCHR that widely distributed copies of each successive draft of the Policy and attempted to raise public debate on the subject. This took place during an intensive six-month period from July to December 1987 in the public interest, but also





*Housing: a fundamental human need and right.*

partly triggered off by a specific invitation from the concerned Minister, Mohsina Kidwai, to submit recommendations to the government. Public discussion took place in many parts of the country, from village and *basti* upto state and national levels, and ultimately led to the preparation not just of 'alternative proposals' but, since the government's proposals were found to be *fundamentally* faulty, of a new framework of principles. These were put together in the form of a 'Framework for a Democratic Housing Policy', submitted to the public and the government in December 1987, and then again in March this year.

This debate led to a number of people taking independent but critical positions on the subject. These included an all-Party letter to the Prime Minister in August 1987, on the need for wider circulation and debate, and condemnation of the then still-draft Policy, by senior MPs from most parties (including the Congress (I)), at a Parliamentarians' debate, also held in August 1987. Over 10,000 letters and telegrams poured in from eminent people such as Justice V R Krishna Iyer, the Deputy Mayor of Calcutta, Mani Sanyal, and several others.

**The NHP is totally urban-industrial and profit-oriented. It is a policy which is fundamentally oriented towards faithfully expanding and consolidating the 'housing market' and furthering the interests of builders and industry. It provides for 'the poor' only insofar as they can fit into its plan of affordability.**

Articles by H V Bijlani, ex-Chairman, HUDCO, Sayed Shafi, ex-Chief Architect, Delhi, and many independent journalists were published. A Position Paper "inspired by the NCHR" was disseminated by a group of eminent scientists based in Bangalore — Scientists and Engineers for Peace and Development — comprised of leading think-

ers such as Prof Satish Dhawan, Prof A K N Reddy and others.

However, along with opposition, there was applause from the industrial and commercial lobbies as well as demands for the Policy's *immediate* implementation. The December version which was marked 'secret' (in hand) *was never made public by the government*; instead, a new and substantially re-worked version was tabled in Parliament five months later in May 1988, on the last day of the Budget Session; it was perhaps no coincidence that, in the intervening time, there had been intensive consultations with industry (for the Budget); that the 'new' Policy was brought in line with the Budget's tune; and that the IYSH symbol was missing!

**IN A COUNTRY WITH** nearly half its population still under the poverty line and with over three-quarters living in rural areas, the basic thrust of the NHP is *totally urban-industrial and profit-oriented*, any professed concern for the homeless or the rural poor notwithstanding. It is a policy which is fundamentally oriented towards faithfully expanding and consolidating the 'housing market' and furthering the interests of builders and industry. It provides for 'the poor' only insofar as they can fit into its plan of affordability. It treats housing purely as an area for financial investment and profit, and through a wide and skilful framework of subsidies, incentives, and programmes in the housing field, it decisively throws open the country to industrial and commercial exploitation.

With the facile argument that "they have not worked" and are therefore 'obstacles', it proposes dilution or deletion of the 'social legislations' of the past four decades that have mediated in the massive social and economic inequalities that exist in our country and which can only be addressed in this way. It proposes (though without ever saying it) that "the market will provide." All this is

proclaimed in the name of 'the poor, the homeless', and an elaborate list is dutifully given of 'priority areas': (a) Scheduled Castes and Tribes and freed bonded labour; (b) Rural landless labour including artisans; (c) Widows, single women and woman-headed households, etc. With occasional sops thrown in, such as "luxury housing is being sought to be controlled through suitable fiscal measures", it proceeds with the grand if absurd assumption that all households of the country (including, of course, its 'priority' sections) have savings and therefore what is needed now is credit and consumer goods so that they can mortgage what they have and then buy and build, and build and buy. . .

The Policy, and in particular the Budget, has, however, taken great care to provide some 'concrete' schemes with a welfare orientation — such as the continued distribution of house sites in rural areas, an increased provision of drinking water, and a highly populist promise of a single-point electrical connection in every village house (overlooking the fact that electricity reaches less than half the country), and fair-price shops for building materials (*nirman kendras*) in every district, starting with a hundred shops during the current year. All this appears sound in principle, but will need to be seen as part of a much broader thrust. These are not merely welfare measures; they are also foundations for a vigorous penetration of commercial goods and services, and part of a sophisticated public relations exercise, where the public (and especially the beneficiary sections) is made to feel that 'something is being done' — and as a result, is pacified. This is a standard political use of housing all over the world, and in our country too, especially in the southern states. It is not as if no benefits accrue; but that those benefits should be evaluated in terms of whom they reach, what actually needs to be done, and existing conditions.

Apart from the obvious conclusion that the poor (read 'the major-



*Inhuman housing conditions: need for change.*

**With occasional sops thrown in, the NHP proceeds with the grand if absurd assumption that all households of the country have savings and therefore what is needed now is credit and consumer goods so that they can mortgage what they have and then buy and build, and build and buy. . .**

ity') will not be able to enjoy any of the material benefits, what are the further consequences of such policy measures, taken as a whole?

**THE IMPLICATIONS** for rural areas are, in many senses, the most important, not only because three-quarters of the country live in such areas but

because the entire resource base of the country will be affected. Here, it is important to appreciate that while the Policy document itself has only one, very crude, badly-constructed page of suggestions for rural areas, a wide range of initiatives in 'rural development' are already underway as part of other areas of policy, and have also formed the core of the current Union Budget. (Prepared by the Ministry for *Urban Development*, the earlier drafts of the Policy had virtually no mention of this vital question, which raised a storm about its value as a 'national' policy.)

It is also essential to understand that, as distinct from the 'cash economy' in urban areas, where almost *everything* (including housing) is calculated in terms of money, *over half of all 'housing activity'* (house-building and maintenance, fetching of firewood, fodder, water, etc) in rural areas takes place *without money ever coming into the picture*. Instead, it draws directly on the bio-mass. Whether this is good or bad, is a separate question; this is the reality that prevails today, will prevail for decades, and which the Housing Policy should address. It does so — but in a highly negative and disruptive fashion.



## SPECIAL REPORT



*Increasing commercialisation of basic resources.*

The proposed policy measures encourage a greater and more subsidised extraction of 'raw materials' by industries, for the production of commercial goods and services. This, along with similar measures in other policy areas will lead to increasing commercialisation of basic resources such as wood, bamboo, thatch (now classified as 'agricultural waste'), and make them inaccessible to the people for whom they are essential subsistence resources. Experience shows it is also grossly unjust competition: for instance, in Maharashtra, bamboo is already made available by the government to pulp and paper industries at 60 paise *per tonne*, whereas it is available at *eight thousand times that cost* to the common person in the rural areas — Rs 16 *per piece*. The same is true of wood, and now increasingly, of all other 'raw materials'. The centuries-old dependence on these resources for housing and other subsistence purposes, is thus decisively shattered — and no economically or culturally viable alternative is proposed. The vast majority, already poor, is further marginalised and impoverished. Yet, this has attracted little or no attention from those who are directly concerned with 'housing'

**This is just one more burden added to the widespread phenomenon of displacement for 'planned development', affecting lakhs of people every year, and of the general poverty, internal colonisation and underdevelopment to which vast areas of our country are subjected.**

— be they technocrats in government or professionals such as architects, engineers, and economists — who continue with their myopic and narrow-minded view of housing as being concerned with buildings and the 'housing problem' with the construction of more buildings, ie, more business for their professions and the industries

they are wedded to.

**IT IS IN THIS LIGHT** that the Policy's concrete proposals need to be seen: as, for instance, the seemingly attractive proposal, now widely advertised, of *nirman kendras* (building centres). The idea appears to be sensible: standardised materials at fair prices. But what does this really mean? It is merely the industrial extraction, processing and sale of the *same* resources that people had so far got free from the forests and fields. Their age-old right of access will disappear, since the resources will now be saleable. The majority will be left with nothing; the conditions of their housing will immeasurably worsen. Only a small minority, the land-owning classes, stand to gain. It is a bizarre (if predictable) scenario.

There are further steps in this scenario, no less bizarre and even more tragic. Left with a situation where their traditional rights of access and use are eliminated, the victims of this process are being necessarily *forced* to re-assert their rights of access in order to house themselves — and the government is reacting harshly, prodded and pushed by the contractors and industries who have been given the license to extract. There are reports from all over the country of confrontations with the forest police, raids by the police on forest-dwellers, police firings and killings, mass evictions, apart from bans being placed on such dwellers to upgrade their homes. This is just one more burden added to the already widespread phenomenon of displacement for 'planned development' (dams, mines, power stations, etc) now affecting lakhs of people every year, and of the general poverty, internal colonisation and under-development to which vast areas of our country are subjected. And the NHP is seen to be further concretising the situation.

Neither has the Policy anything to say on the even more fundamental reality of the essential homelessness of women — who have no clear rights

to either their natal or their parental homes, and who can be and are, evicted at will or subjected to constant violence, with the threat of eviction. And given the character of the Policy, it will come as no surprise that instead of tackling this basic issue at the *policy* level – when it had been specifically raised by the NCHR, the Joint Women's Programme and many other organisations in the country – the Ministry has reportedly preferred to issue only an order, just as the NHP was put before Parliament, this year. According to a Ministry letter, an order was sent to all state governments that henceforth, all titles are to be made jointly in the name of the wife and husband. This was officially stated to be the result of an Under Secretary hearing at a seminar in Port Blair in April.

This, then, is the kind of future that is proposed by the National Housing Policy, in its various incarnations, in this 41st year of Independence. A similar scenario can be projected for the *urban* areas: a scenario which is in many senses an intensification of the disaster we already see around us.

Land values and the costs of building materials will rise; purchase and rents will be completely out of reach. What is already true of Bombay, and Delhi to some extent, will substantially and inexorably, spread. More and more people will be forced into slums – and into the 'illegal existence' which has been a common feature of cities for some decades, but which is a newer phenomenon in rural areas. More and more demolitions and evictions will take place, with all their inhuman violence, leading to further confrontation with the forces of law and order; black-market operations; 'protection' by anti-socials; exploitation, etc. Over the past seven years, no less than six states and Delhi, have passed new laws and amendments giving greater powers to the police to deal with 'unauthorised construction and settlement': Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maha-



*Urban housing: forcing people into 'illegal existence'.*

**More and more people will be forced into slums and into 'illegal existence'. More and more demolitions and evictions will take place, with all their inhuman violence, leading to further confrontation with the forces of law and order; black-market operations; 'protection' by anti-socials; exploitation, etc.**

rashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, and Goa; West Bengal is currently considering such a 'law' for Calcutta. It is a wave that is sweeping the country, almost unnoticed. As 'law-and-order' actions by the State increase, so will resistance and counter-action by the people. This, in turn, will result in harsher measures being

adopted, severely eroding the concept of democracy.

Public reaction to the NHP and the problem of housing has been largely scattered, anonymous and somewhat disorganised, but current moods are changing. A recent example is the agitation in Karnataka by the people of Kusnor, in Dharwad District, against the handing over of vast tracts (75,000 acres) of common land and bamboo groves by the government to Karnataka Pulpwood Ltd, a joint-sector company with a Birla concern – the Harihar Polyfibres Factory. As a result of this move, over 5 lakh people have been denied access to grazing land, fuel, manure, and other subsistence resources, including building materials. This struggle has reached the Supreme Court, raising fundamental issues.

Similarly, there have been other instances: an intense agitation in Assam over the eviction of 60,000 tribal 'forest encroachers' during 1987 (the Year of the Homeless); deepening resistance in Delhi to police firings and demolitions of *jhopadis*; a growing struggle against the repeated evictions in Madhya Pradesh to build the Singrauli Thermal Power Project, and countless other examples. These, in



## SPECIAL REPORT



*NHP ignores the essential homelessness of women.*

turn, constitute only the tip of the iceberg — of the deeper underlying struggle that people are forced to wage against an increasingly hostile, disruptive and ambitious political economy.

And, what of the middle class towards whom these measures are supposedly directed? The NHP appears to enable *households* to improve their lives — in reality, it sets the stage for commercial and industrial exploitation, a hike in taxes notwithstanding. This has, in fact, been the subject of a subtle but significant change in the Policy from earlier drafts: from an emphasis on making housing an industry, and thereby benefiting (middle-class) households, to a more 'populist' stance of supposedly *directly* benefiting these households.

**IT IS NOT AS IF** alternatives to this scenario are not possible or feasible. It is a question firstly of political

*vision*, of what one wants to see happen, and how; and secondly, of political *commitment*. Let me cite two examples: the laws which conferred housing rights on the refugees in West Bengal, Delhi and Punjab; and the more recent law passed and implemented in Madhya Pradesh in 1984, conferring legal title on all landless people in urban areas who had been forced to live in unauthorised settlements. While certainly limited in many ways, these laws broke necessary ground and provided a new future for a large number of people. As did the Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act and the Rent Control Act, now described and blamed for all the evils we see in housing conditions. These laws were brought in at certain stages in our country's development, with the larger vision of offsetting the gross existing social and economic imbalances. Again, while certainly limited and flawed, their weaknesses need to be examin-

ed in terms of their applicability and benefit to the poor.

The IYSH was supposedly a year when the governments of the world agreed that they would commit themselves to restructuring their housing economics. India, moreover, was a member of the UN Commission for Human Rights which, in 1986 and 1987, passed strong resolutions expressing its "deep concern... that millions (all over the world) do not enjoy the right to housing" and calling upon all States to ensure this right during the IYSH. In 1986, the National Campaign for Housing Rights demanded that housing be made a fundamental right. This has since been proposed by many others in the country at seminars, conferences and conventions; by former President Giani Zail Singh, and recently, by President R Venkataraman, as "the undeniable right of all citizens." What has been the response of the government to this proposal so far? Mohsina Kidwai declared in Parliament on May 6, that she "rejected the demand for amending the Constitution to make the right to have a house (*sic*) a fundamental right," stating that "we do not want to raise false hopes among the people."

Housing, as the NCHR has widely argued, is not just buildings, or four walls and a roof: it must be sensed and understood as a fundamental human need and right. Today in India — and this can perhaps be applied on a global basis too — housing represents the struggle of all people for a secure place to live in dignity; for the access to and control of the basic resources which are necessary to achieve this. Within this framework, the NHP and allied measures can be interpreted as instruments that serve not to widen the access to housing for all, but instead, to tighten control in the hands of a few. Far from interpreting its constitutional, political and moral mandate to use housing as a means of promoting liberty, equality and justice, the government appears to have chosen the opposite. ♦

# THE HEALING TOUCH

Alampundi, 200 kms from Madras, is a small village where clinics travel to patients instead of vice versa. Even more astonishingly, the disease that is sought to be treated and cured here is leprosy, and the healers – Shanti and Arul – are European missionaries, not doctors. SHYAMALA NATARAJ profiles a unique and caring attitude towards a stigmatised affliction.



*Early detection, early cure, warns Shanti.*

**T**HE SUN IS not yet up. Alampundi has never looked as beautiful as in the dawning light, a scant half-a-dozen people walking its bylanes in the soft blue haze, little

diamond drops tickling bare feet as they cut across the fields. In less than an hour, the village will be caught in the throes of another summer day in the heat bowl that is Tamil Nadu.

Farmers will idle in their verandas alternately cursing and pleading with the stubborn rain gods, and women will smack little children to sleep for want of the afternoon meal. But now



## FEATURE

there is peace. And hope comes easy.

On the main road which links the village to Madras — 200 kms to the north — and the temple town of Tiruvannamalai — 35 kms south — the soft squish of cycle tyres is punctuated by an occasional cough. Brother Shanti, a Belgian missionary, catches cold easily, but his gouty foot presses the pedals firmly on their way to Sem-

medu — a little village eight kilometres south of Alampundi — where the day's leprosy clinic is to be held.

Just before veering off into the rutted tracks that lead to the village, we stop at a teashop. The hot sweet tea is freshly brewed, but the *vadas* we refuse are leftovers from the night before. Fifteen minutes later the clinic is open.

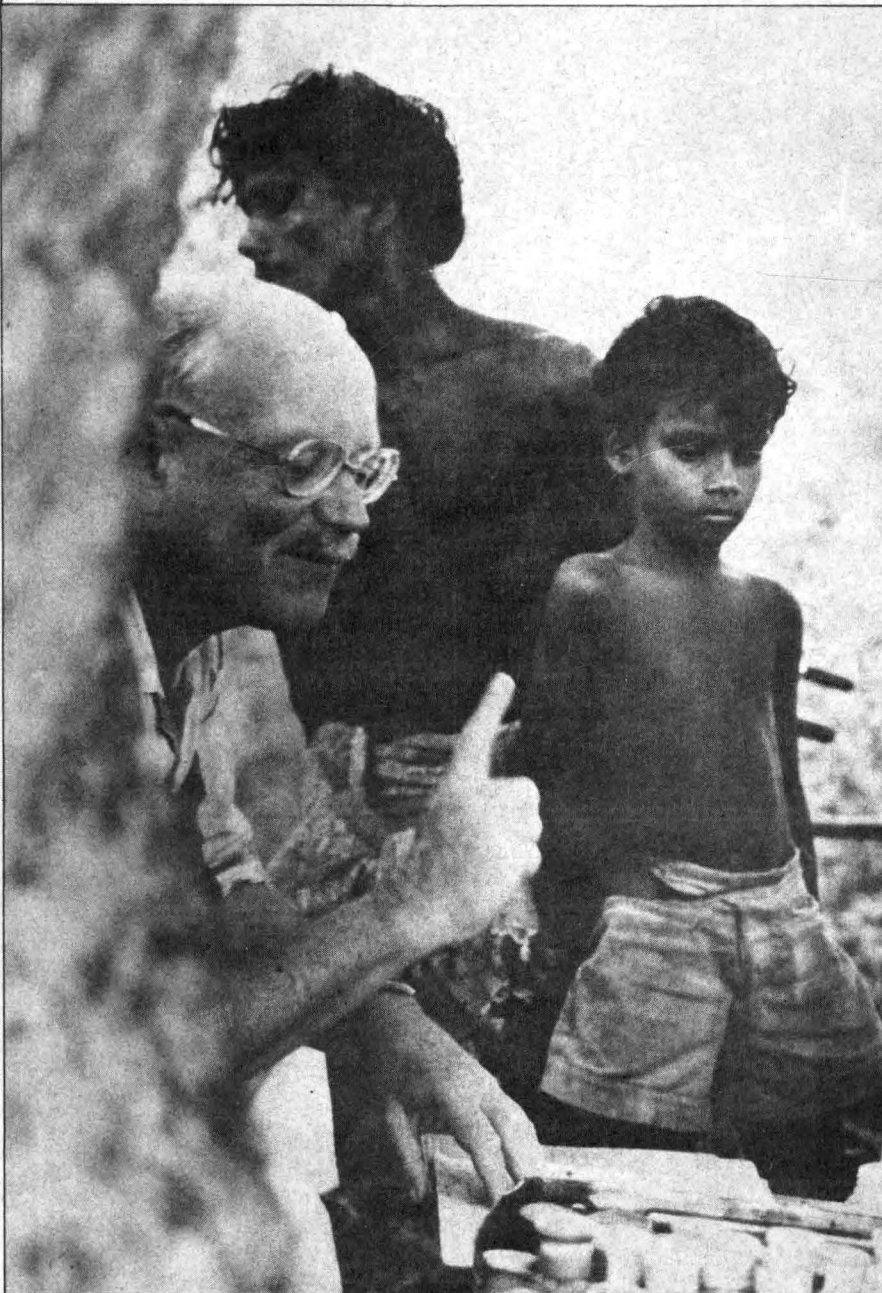
The camp is pitched in the shade of an enormous tamarind tree at the crossroads, a little beyond the village. The gravel paths lead to seven or eight villages and settlements within 10 kms of Semmedu. Though it is barely six in the morning, people have started converging and the trickle will swell to a steady crowd in the next couple of hours or so, with old patients coming for their monthly check-ups and new ones pleading for 'injections' that will cure them of real or imagined ills.

The informality of the setting is in startling contrast to the efficiency and precision with which Shanti and his team of two helpers go about their job. Brother Viswasan, tall and lanky, a gentle smile in his deep brown eyes, has settled himself on a bare patch of ground some yards away from where Shanti presides comfortably on a low-slung branch of the tree. Viswasan's small tin trunk is empty of the cobbler's tools that mark his trade. Repairing, resoling and making footwear for patients is an integral part of leprosy treatment.

Jagannathan, the last member of the team, is small and spectacled. His natty trousers and shirt are evidence of his father's skill as a tailor at Reddiarpalayam, a settlement next to Alampundi. Jagannathan's movements are quick, his speech is hurried, his voice a rising falsetto, yet his fingers are surprisingly gentle when examining a wound or applying a dressing.

**MORE PATIENTS ARRIVE.** Ramaya, a landowner from the village next to Semmedu, is a familiar figure. Unusually tall and well-built for a native of these parts, his handsome figure projects a peculiar virility. The disease has left no mark on him and knowledge of his affliction deters no one as leprosy is common here. Most people can trace evidence of the disease to someone in the family.

Ranganaike is only 20. She is married to a school-master in Sathyamangalam, some four kms from Alampundi. She has a two-year old son. The family is among the affluent class



*Brother Shanti: personal attention to one and all.*

in their village; she has even studied up to the eighth standard. Strangely, there is no history of leprosy in her immediate family. Her lips tremble as she speaks and ready tears fill her eyes: "I noticed a small light brown patch on my forearm which felt numb. So I immediately came to Shanti — he's treating me." Her husband has accompanied her on this visit. He is tall and thin, and obviously nervous. But his sensitive features lighten as Shanti reassures him: "This is a non-infectious form of the disease. She will be well in six months."

There is quite a crowd now; people wait their turn, chatting unselfconsciously among themselves or occasionally ribbing Shanti good-humouredly. Many are old friends. They have been coming to the clinic on and off for five years or longer. Some cases go back even further.

Lakshmiamma is from one of the neighbouring hamlets. She must be in her late thirties. "I remember my sister was married the year Indiraamma's father (Pandit Nehru) died. I must have been about eight or ten then." Her voice is cracked, her figure bent almost double. When she looks up at you it is with some effort. And you realise how cruel the disease can be if it is left unchecked for a while. Her nose has been eaten away to a stub with two openings marking the nostrils. There are no eyebrows or eyelashes left. The lips are cracked and white in places. Her hands have been reduced to mere stumps. The heel of one foot is bound with a dirty piece of gauze. Both feet are strapped into shapeless pieces of leather-soled rubber.

Shanti recalls his first meeting with her some 20 years ago: "I found her cowering in her hut when I was on one of my earliest door-to-door surveys of patients in this area. Her parents had died and none of her relatives wanted to keep her. She must have been about 12. Even at that time she must have had the disease for some years."

Lakshmiamma still has nobody. But regular treatment has halted the

progress of the disease though it is too far gone to be completely cured. Even today, most villagers avoid her, but she has learnt to take it in her stride. Her sister who is settled in the same village helps her with some money. "I take it one day at a time. And I have my friends who keep my spirits up. Like Shanti here." Her smile in his direction is unmistakably

tender.

#### **YES, SHANTI IS NO STRANGER.**

Yet, despite the obvious deep affection the villagers hold him in, there is an unmistakable hint of a barrier which keeps them from accepting him totally. Perhaps it is because he is European. Not even 25 summers in the harsh heat of Alampundi have



*Mobile leprosy clinics: fulfilling local needs.*



## FEATURE

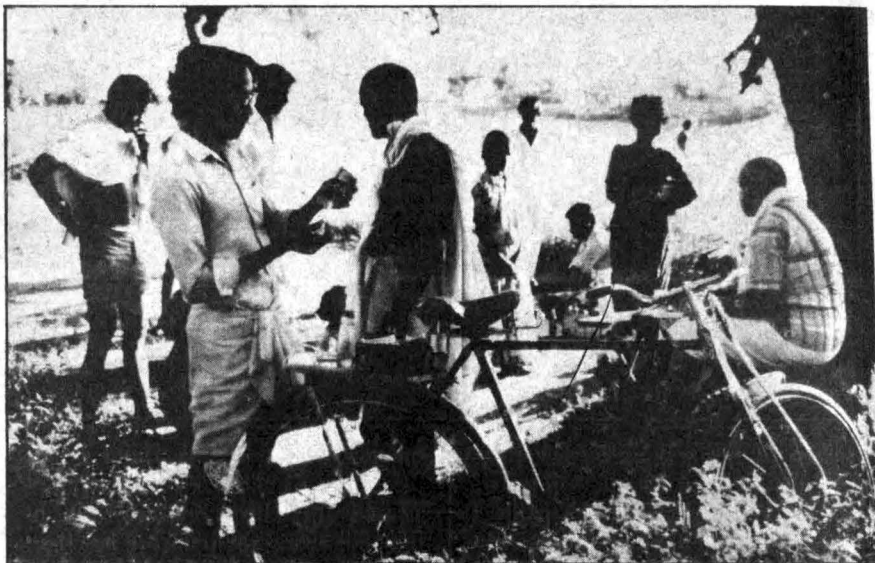
tanned his skin to more than a brick-red. His eyes are blue and a host of laugh lines stand ready to crinkle at the corners. If the halo that fringes his balding head is pure silver, gold gleams in his moustache.

He was 35 when he arrived at Alampundi from France, the headquarters of the Order of the Little Brothers of Jesus. He is, however, Belgian by birth. When he talks of his family it is with a curious detachment: "My father was a school-teacher. I remember he used to beat me most in class." He recalls his mother as having been the person who held her four children together. With both his parents dead, "there is not that much contact." His brother, "an artiste who does some sculpture and some pottery," came to Alampundi on a visit. Two days was all he stayed. Obviously the charms that hold Shanti to the place had no effect on him.

"I always knew I wanted to be a priest. So I joined the Order after completing philosophy in college. They sent me here. Now this is *home*." After a gap of nine years, Shanti went home last year. A few weeks before he left, the evenings would find him working on a leather bag he needed for the journey. "Before coming to India, I was in Sri Lanka. I worked as a cobbler for six years!" The experience shows in the result. A shiny pair of black terylene trousers (bought second-hand) and a non-committal terrycot shirt complete his travel kit. "What do I need more fancy clothes for? Here I have enough *lungis* and shirts to get by. I never have to wear trousers. It's a good life," he avers.

Shanti is, however, not the only European in Alampundi. Two others arrived with him but Brother Micheal returned a few years ago to head the Order. That left Brother Arul, originally French, to help Shanti with his health-care activities. He, like Shanti, is a naturalised Indian, and is reputedly the better doctor of the two though Shanti shares a rapport with the villagers that Arul finds hard to match.

Shanti speaks Tamil with enviable



*A laudable mission with high success rates.*

fluency in the local idiom, yet traces of the soft Belgian lisp remain. When he switches to English, which is not often, his typically Gaelic gestures and shrugs of the shoulder convey more than the words which sound as though he were deliberately 'thrying' to soften the harsh 'thones' of the English language.

**FIVE OR SIX SMALL KIDS** have come with their parents. All of them sport school uniforms — dark blue shorts and white shirts. None wear shoes or slippers. Two of the youngsters have obviously come for the first time. One mother points out a pale shiny patch, the size of a 50 paise coin, on her son's calf. Shanti picks up a fallen twig and, asking the boy to close his eyes, lightly moves it on the surface of the patch. The boy denies feeling it. And another case of leprosy is confirmed, the third one today. The other child is only suffering from a bout of 'flu and diarrhoea. A quick survey of his assortment of pills, and Shanti packs some in a little piece of paper, accepts a rupee from the man accompanying the child and turns to the next case.

India has about one-quarter of the world's population of 15 million lepers; Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal showing the

highest incidence of the disease. The National Leprosy Eradication Programme aims at its total eradication by 2000 AD and a wide network of leprosy control units, in both urban and rural areas, now offers free treatment to patients.

Leprosy itself can affect only 5 per cent of the population; the rest being naturally immune to the disease. Yet, the nature of immunity has not been identified, nor a vaccine been developed to give protection against the disease.

Also called Hansen's disease after its discoverer, leprosy is caused by a bacteria and only 15 per cent cases are infectious. "Unfortunately, these may show no obvious physical traces and may unconsciously be passed on to people," warns Dr Natesan, Deputy Director of the Leprosy Eradication Programme in Tamil Nadu.

Though leprosy is not hereditary, it obviously affects those with a history of the disease in the family more easily. "This is principally due to close contact and greater chances of infection," Natesan explains. "There is really no evidence that it affects one class of people more easily than the other. Perhaps better-informed people seek treatment earlier, and are therefore cured in a matter of months before anybody even realises that they are

suffering from leprosy.”

**INDEED LEPROSY TREATMENT** has made remarkable strides. With the availability of the multi-drug-and-vitamin treatment, even infectious patients are taken off the course in a couple of years. With non-infectious patients, the cure takes only six months. Earlier Dapsone was the only drug available, while today, it is given in combination with Rifampicin and Clofazimine for infectious cases. For others only Rifampicin is prescribed. “The cure is usually total and the patient need only come for occasional check-ups,” Dr Natesan explains.

Early symptoms include a pale red discolouration of the skin, and a change in texture on any part of the body. The patch may be raised or flat; dry, shiny or smooth. In some cases, it may be a well-demarcated area on the skin which does not react to intense heat or pain; in others, there may be no patch at all — only a loss of sensation in certain areas of the body. “All skin patches, of course, are not leprosy. But it is wiser to have a check-up in case there is a newly-developed pale patch on the body,” Dr Natesan advises.

Most deformities are caused because the disease damages certain nerves and patients develop claw hands or experience difficulty in walking. The ulcers on the other hand, which eat away the skin and bones in many cases, are not caused by the leprosy germ. What happens often is that the loss of sensation in certain parts of the body prevents patients from recognising and treating injuries which fester into incurable ulcers.

Complications occur when ulcers or other flesh wounds are present. “In villages, no amount of warning helps. A woman still lifts a red-hot pot off the stove with bare fingers, gets second-degree burns, ignores them for want of sensation, and the wound turns septic,” Arul bemoans. In fact, a majority of leprosy cases suffer from such ulcers. Shrugs Arul, “We can only supply footwear and warn them to always use it to avoid the danger of

## Leprosy Laws in India

Despite its universal recognition as a curable disease, laws against leprosy patients are still biased. For instance:

\* Some states have laws preventing leprosy patients from inheriting property.

\* The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 allows people to divorce spouses who have leprosy.

\* Leprosy patients are not allowed to rent a house to live in.

\* The Motor Vehicles Act in some states does not allow leprosy patients to have a driver's license.

\* The Prevention of Beggars Act has a special provision for arresting and sending to beggar houses, any leprosy patient found begging.

cuts or infection.” But who has ever heard of a villager wearing shoes to work? And so the casualties continue, realisation dawning only when the ulcer refuses to heal and gets septic.

**DOCTORS, OF COURSE**, are not easy to come by in the villages. While Alampundi is barely 200 kms away from Madras, is situated on the main road, and is a panchayat headquarters, the only government-run primary health centre for the more than forty villages around is perpetually short of doctors. Located at Sathyamangalam, the centre has been assigned one doctor and two nurses besides a couple of *ayahs*. Checked over a two-month period, the doctor was never at the centre, one of the two nurses was on a leave of absence for a year while the other paid a cursory visit for a couple of hours before it closed for the day. The only other doctors are private, often charging upto Rs 20 per consultation — a sum beyond the reach of most villagers. Besides, even these doctors are in Gingee, a small town some 10 kms away.

Till Shanti and Arul arrived on the

scene, leprosy patients in the area had to walk 40 kms to the Christian Medical College Hospital at Vellore for good treatment. Recalls Srinivasan, a farmer in Alampundi whose father had the disease: “He used to take about a week to go and come back. His feet were affected, you see. And of course there weren't many buses then.” And while neither Shanti nor Arul have studied medicine, their para-medical training, coupled with years of experience, has given them a knowledge of the field that few qualified doctors can boast of.

Of course, when they started, the clinics were nowhere as well-organised as they are now: “We would treat leprosy cases as and when we spotted them. For a long time we had to go to the patients' homes to persuade them to take the medicine. Only over the years have the villagers realised that the disease is not a curse and can be successfully treated, even cured.” The clinics are held four times a week — Monday mornings in Alampundi, in nearby villages on the other three days. The centres are chosen so that they are accessible to as many surrounding settlements as possible. Arul and Shanti are in charge of about 40 villages in the area, covering a population of close to 50,000 people. At each centre, other than Alampundi, the clinic is a monthly affair: “Things are now so settled that this frequency is suitable.”

Most of their patients, naturally, are from Alampundi itself or nearby villages — more friends than strangers. And that probably explains why payments are often in the form of a bagful of shelled groundnuts in summer, a pot of home-combed honey or even a couple of green melons. “Sometimes there is so much groundnut, we make oil out of it. In the sugarcane harvesting season, we get a year's supply of jaggery, much more useful and tasty than money.” When either Shanti or Arul need water fetched in the mornings, a dozen willing hands volunteer to carry it from the public tap across the street. “That is the joy of



## FEATURE

working here. Medicine is only part of the relationship."

**ALAMPUNDI AND THE** surrounding villages are primarily agricultural. Yet the only evidence of modern technology is a smattering of electricity-run irrigation pump sets. In many fields, water is still drawn with a pulley-and-rope arrangement by two buffaloes who are walked up and down a slope leading to a well. It is then emptied into little canals that criss-cross the fields in a succession of miniature waterways. Here children wash their hands and bottoms with equal felicity, sail paper boats or simply splash in their refreshing coolness.

Children who do go to school are first-generation students. Though school is free and admission easy, there are only two government-run colleges for the 75-odd villages and small towns around. And admissions are almost impossible. If Alampundi has only one graduate who is still unemployed, there is a growing number of them, all supposedly literate since they have gone through school, and all contemptuous of working on the land which they affirm as being fit "only for illiterates." There are, however, no industries in the area. Recognising this frustrating backwardness, Shanti has started a community centre which runs a weaving unit, a social forestry programme, a polio clinic and an adult education centre.

Both Shanti and Arul have gone 'native' well. Shanti's curt monosyllabic exterior veils an extensive knowledge of medicine, local medical practices, and surprisingly, a delightfully ironic sense of humour. And if Shanti gossips with the villagers or plays dominoes and 'Scotland Yard' with the children after a self-cooked meal of boiled rice, *sambar* and curd, Arul is absorbed in designing *kolams*. The traditional rice-flour patterns that are drawn at the entrances to all South Indian homes have inspired Arul to paint them on the mud walls

of their thatched home which is built in the typical village fashion with a central courtyard open to the sky.

**STRANGELY ENOUGH**, it was an Indian who invited them here. Sometime in the 1930s, Dr Jagadesan, a professor of English at the Annamalai University, discovered he was suffering from leprosy. When the University threw him out, he approached Mahatma Gandhi for help. Gandhiji said: "You are educated, you are well-off and you come from an area where leprosy is widespread. Why don't you do something about it!"

Thus inspired, Dr Jagadesan undertook to collect funds and help in the form of para-medical personnel. When he realised that getting money was easy but not many Indians were willing to work with lepers, he appealed to religious missions abroad. And Alampundi got its first *vellaikara* (white men). And, incidentally, its first built-up toilet.

Both Shanti and Arul are paid a monthly salary of Rs 600 by Dr Jagadesan who is officially their employer. Both are also reluctant to talk about him except to raise their eyebrows expressively; especially when we discuss the meagre payment which must take care of all their expenses. Shanti grins infectiously: "As you can see, we have no great expenses. But a lot of the time, we even have to buy medicines out of this fund because Dr Jagadesan doesn't realise that there are more patients than can be covered by his monthly supply of pills." But Shanti and Arul are not complaining; in fact, they have even started a daily clinic in the evenings at Alampundi itself which Arul runs.

He treats the villagers for all sorts of illnesses in this clinic which consists of two tiny rooms on the main road at the entrance to the village. For two hours every evening, Arul sees patients here, helped by a nurse and a male assistant, both of whom have been trained by him. Payments range from 50 paise coins to two

rupees as no one can afford more.

If Arul feels a case merits more attention, he advises the patient to visit the nearest government hospital. Often, he arranges for the visit, even paying the expenses out of his own pocket. Indeed, the entire clinic is run at the expense of the two priests: "We are helped with donations by kind friends both in India and abroad." Even then they can barely manage. "More room would be nice," muses Arul in a spare moment in the cramped examination room of the clinic. His *kolams* painted on the wall or cut out of coloured paper and pasted on, are one cheering aspect; the other — the genuine warmth and concern his assistants show the patients.

**THE PERSONAL ATTENTION**, care and concern has wrought many 'miracles'. Look at the statistics: When Shanti and Arul started work, there were 40 leprosy cases per 1,000 people in the area; today, the figure is 1.8 per 1,000. And fast falling.

Also vanishing are age-old prejudices against leprosy patients. Since the disease is so widespread, it is common to find the woman of the house cooking, cleaning and caring for her family despite suffering from leprosy. "Of course it can be infectious, but the moral support a patient receives here is beyond the humane capacity of a city-dweller." As Shanti speaks, a young, huskily-built man runs up to him; he is dressed only in a loin-cloth and has come straight from the field. "This chap has a mild form of the disease but he is engaged to be married. The only condition the girls' parents made was that he be cured before the wedding. He'll be okay soon," Shanti assures.

On that note, the day's clinic at Semmedu closes. As we cycle back, the sun burns on our backs, and we are bathed in sweat. But there is a touching sense of togetherness — of caring and of joy. Something Shanti and Arul wouldn't trade for anything else in the world. ♦

**DOORDARSHAN****GOOD TIMES,  
BAD TIMES**

Not so long ago, Doordarshan was synonymous with boredom: TV times were indeed, dull times. Constrained at the very outset, by being an official medium, and by a marked dearth of professional talent, Doordarshan fare was appallingly insipid. Subsequent commercialisation and sponsorship turned Mandi House into a veritable jungle where only the fittest (and definitely not the best) survived. An occasional 'Buniyaad', 'Nukkad' or 'Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi' lifted television programmes from the mire they had sunk in. News telecasts continued to be lacklustre, popular current affairs programmes like 'Janwani' and 'Newsline' were discontinued arbitrarily, and indifferent serials – be they patriotic, religious, 'entertaining', or 'educative' – occupied prime-time slots, turn by boring turn. The audience, of course, had no choice; it simply watched anything that came its way.

Today, Doordarshan seems to be looking up. News telecasts are much more interesting, interspersed with visual clips, regional correspondents and crisper weather bulletins. The welcome liberalisation that has characterised political and current affairs programmes like 'Focus' and 'Aaj Kal', has finally, lent a degree of credibility to the medium. Issues such as dowry deaths, widespread violence (in Bihar), the Gorkhaland movement, the Bofors imbroglio, Opposition unity, etc – hitherto considered taboo or sacrosanct – have been tackled with an unexpected degree of objectivity. The new Director General, Doordarshan, Mr Bhaskar Ghosh, has undoubtedly made his mark.

How do television audiences react to these changes? Do they perceive them as (mere) cosmetic face-lifts or as a much-needed boost to flagging creativity? On these pages, we present divergent opinions from media celebrities, on the Doordarshan melting pot – what they see, why they see (it) and what they would like to see; plus a quick assessment of DD's new, revamped image.

ONKAR SINGH interviews Khushwant Singh, Ramesh Sharma, Rajeev Mehrotra, Mrinal Pande and Siddharth Basu in Delhi; while SANJAY A SAYANI talks to Deepika Chikhliya, Manmohan Desai, Pearl Padamsee, Kundan Shah, Kavita Chowdhry, Nari Hira, Shobha Dé, Amit Khanna and Behram Contractor in Bombay.



# TELEVISION

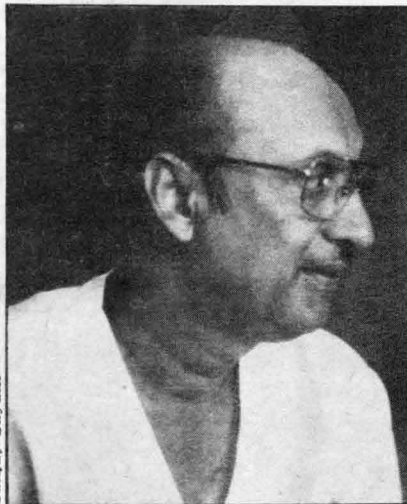
## DEEPIKA CHIKHLIA



Sanjay Sayani

**I WOULD LIKE TO SEE** down-to-earth serials such as Tariq Shah's serial recently shown on Doordarshan. Or some really good comedy stuff like *Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi*. But I don't really have time to keep up with TV programmes due to my busy schedule.

## MANMOHAN DESAI



Sanjay Sayani

**I SEE ONLY** *Chhaya Geet* these days because I like music with visual appeal. Earlier on, I watched *Buniyaad* and *Tamas*, both superb serials — the stuff I'd like to watch on the tube. Of course, if I could see an MKD film every week on TV it would be too good to be true. (*Laughs loudly.*)

## PEARL PADAMSEE



Sanjay Sayani

**I WAS AWAY** for a long time in the US, and when I came back, the monsoons were on and the reception on my set was very bad. In any case, by the time the programmes go on air (late evening), I have my rehearsals, so TV's kind of out for me. In fact, I can't really recall seeing any worthwhile programme on TV before I went to the States. What I would like to see is good, solid, truthful reporting on current affairs in skilfully-made programmes.

## KUNDAN SHAH



Sanjay Sayani

**I WATCH 'FOCUS'** time and again, because I like the immediacy of the

programme. TV, I feel, is basically a medium of communication, of which entertainment is a part. Today, unfortunately, entertainment has become more important while communication is still weak. Therefore, you can't be as honest or relevant, as is significantly needed for TV. Again, TV in India doesn't belong to the government but to a private party — the Congress (I).

## KAVITA CHOWDHRY

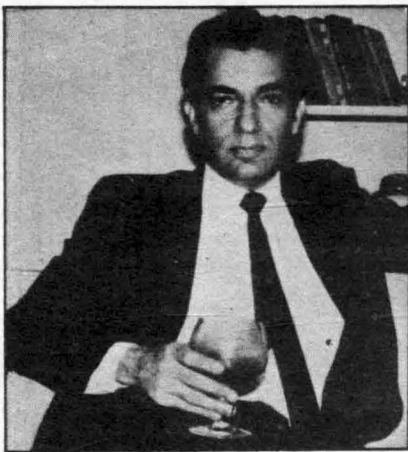


**I HAVE BEEN** really busy for a long, long time now. In fact, it was only some days ago that I was a little free and saw *Aaj Kal*. It was very good. Though one doesn't like to see poverty-based programmes, it had excellent reportage. I also liked *Puran* because it had an interesting storyline, was well-made and well-directed. You see, programmes like *Aaj Kal* are good because they relate to happenings throughout the country and make you really sit up.

## NARI HIRA

**I DON'T WATCH TV** at all, except for the two seconds when I am seeing a video film and have to switch channels. I find *everything* on TV boring.

What I would really like to see is a very good news programme with



lots of visual cuts rather than just the newsreader's face. Imagine, people like Dan Rather, Walter Cronkite and Peter Jennings are superstars in the US, yet during their 30-minute news broadcasts, for which they get paid millions of dollars, they are visible for barely three minutes. So, unless there is a big catastrophe, I'd rather wait for news and read it in the newspapers the next day. Television's notion of a visual is that of Rajiv Gandhi, and I have seen a lot of him.

#### AMIT KHANNA



I HAVE BEEN WORKING very erratically for the last two months, but I have seen *Udaan* and *Intezaar*, and I think, out of the present lot of serials,

these two were competently made. There was a certain element of authenticity in *Udaan* even if it was stretched a bit too far, while *Intezaar* reminds me of a small-town newspaper with its little vignettes of daily life — it has a good ambience.

I'd definitely like to see a well-presented news show, something like *News at Nine*, or *The David Frost Show*. This should be DD's first priority.

#### SHOBHA DE



I WATCH THE NEWS mainly because hardly any of the serials are worth watching. However, *Intezaar* and *Udaan* were good (even if one missed a couple of episodes, no problem). They were well-crafted, intelligently made and engrossing.

What I'd like to see is something less asinine than what's being dished out on the tube. But, to confess, if I didn't have to write a column on TV (in *The Sunday Observer*), I wouldn't watch it. As a matter of fact, I never did in the past, and never will in future if I stop my column. Television here really doesn't interest me at all.

#### BEHRAM CONTRACTOR

WELL, WHILE IT WAS ON, and I was at home, I watched *Sunil Gavaskar Presents*, which I liked quite a lot. Then, I used to watch *Ek Shunya*



Jitendra Arya

*Shunya*, whenever I found the time. I found it very funny — unintentionally funny that is! The kind of programmes I would like to see are some of the top-drawer Pakistani TV plays. In fact, I think we should send our programmes across the border, and vice versa. Rather than exchanging programmes with other nations, we should do so with our neighbours.

#### KHUSHWANT SINGH



Vikas Vats

I DON'T OWN a television set and I rarely watch TV. Yet, I normally keep track of sports events on television; I watch cricket, hockey and tennis, even when I don't understand what the hell is going on. I have managed to see sports coverage — very professional and well-done — on a fairly regular basis.

I did see some current affairs programmes recently and found a distinct improvement. In fact, from whatever little I have seen of TV programmes, I have found them more authentic



and objective than one would normally expect from an official (govt) medium. I gather that some programmes have even had Opposition members as participants – for instance, ministers and Opposition members have been grilled on Doordarshan's *Janwani*. Opposition members were also grilled on the recent programmes on Bofors (which I missed). All this has been for the good. For, as and when the Opposition's point of view is included in programmes of national importance, it lends some credibility to the government. I wish they would feature some Punjab terrorists on the national hook-up so that various issues could be examined (and questions asked) by people like me. It would be of tremendous advantage to the masses. I, for one, do not accept the government's version (on Punjab), such as the finding of terrorists' letters or the unearthing of assassination plots, being publicised.

But I certainly admit that since the new DG, Doordarshan, took over, things have taken a turn for the better. He has brought about a distinct change in the professional attitudes of his organisation, particularly on matters of public interest.

## SIDDHARTH BASU



Vikas Vats/Roving Eye

**AS FAR AS NEWS PRESENTATION** is concerned, I must admit that it has become a lot more slick with a lot more visual coverage and international clippings, a better logo, music,

## "DD has greater credibility today"

Bhaskar Ghosh, Director General, Doordarshan, speaks to ONKAR SINGH.

**Imprint: What priorities had you in mind when you took over as Director General (DG)?**

**Ghosh.** My first and foremost aim was, and still is, to ensure that we telecast good programmes. We would like to telecast absorbing, interesting and well-made programmes which force people to stay home and watch television. These programmes would be based on good research, have depth, and be able to provide information which is worth one's while.

**When television was introduced in 1959 in India, the government made a policy statement saying that television would attempt to entertain the people while keeping the basic need to educate them in mind. Is this policy still valid?**

Yes, the policy continues to be the same even today. When it was initiated, its basic direction was towards using TV as a means to reach the rural areas. TV as an instrument of change in the process of development was the basic concept behind SITE. Upgrah Doordarshan is an extension of SITE which has proved to be a thumping success.

**Does the policy of Doordarshan differ from DG to DG?**

No, it doesn't. The Director General is only an instrument through which policy is implemented after being formulated by the ministry.

**What are the pressures you face as DG?**

There are lots of them and of various kinds. Things don't always work out as they should – meeting deadlines for instance. Often things that should not have been overlooked, have however, been rejected. It is difficult to pin anything down in this medium. Since the power and reach of the small screen is very great, we also have a greater number of problems.



**How often do you face political pressures?**

To date, barring, of course, the rescheduling of the Hindi bulletin of Parliament News, I haven't faced any. Nobody has given me directions as to what I should or should not do. True, people *have* said "Please see that this event is covered," etc, but no one has said that "It *must* be covered." Decisions are taken purely on a merit basis.

**Is there any liberalisation in the overall policy of Doordarshan, inasmuch as taboo topics (such as Bofors) have been covered on the national hook-up?**

No, there is no question of liberalisation. We are merely trying to be more professional in our current affairs' programmes. We have not only touched upon Bofors, but have also dealt with touchy subjects like the Allahabad elections, dowry deaths, etc. We have also had programmes on subjects like disarmament.

**Don't such programmes cost a lot of money?**

So long as the programmes are framed within the parameters of Doordarshan policy, and have been executed well, it does not matter how much money is spent. We are ready to meet costs if programmes are well-made. As far as payments/commissions are concerned, I would not say that the sky is the limit, but certainly we pay well enough to ensure that those who do these programmes do not suffer.

**Do you not agree that programmes like the one on Bofors could be made by you because, as the official medium, you had better access?**

I do not deny that. We could rope in General Maya Das, Gen Sundarji, Win Chadha, Ram Jethmalani, V P Singh. . . all in one group. We are trying to give more and more coverage to the Opposition.

If you watch *Focus* and *Aaj Kal*, you will find a definite change in our outlook. Doordarshan has greater credibility today, nobody can now accuse us of a pro-government bias.

**There is talk about making Doordarshan a professional organisation. Yet it seems to be touchy over covering hard news, like crime. . .**

Not at all. We are covering what is possible. We shall buy what is wanted by us.

**Charges of favouritism in clearing sponsored serials have been continually levied against Doordarshan. Why is this so?**

There is no question of favouring anyone. Perhaps serial-makers from Bombay get clearance faster because their work is excellent, but this does not mean that people from other centres do not get work. Everybody is treated on the basis of merit.

**Sometime ago, it was made known that Doordarshan would soon go in for production (Central Production Unit) of television serials in order to have greater control over serial makers. Is Doordarshan enlisting 1,000 producers to achieve the same end? You are free to draw your own con-**

**clusions. At the moment, we have sponsored programmes and shall continue to have them for some time. Frankly speaking, I don't like sponsored programmes because the reasons for which these programmes are sponsored by the advertisers have nothing whatsoever to do with artistic quality — they are purely commercial in nature. Before sponsoring a programme, the company concerned goes through the economics of sponsoring, and only when it is satisfied that it would be worth it, does it sponsor the programme. Many producers have come to me complaining that they are not getting sponsors because most private companies are looking for something like *Ramayan*, *Buniyaad*, etc. As I want to discourage such a tendency, Doordarshan will have to produce more and more programmes in future. We shall place three different products before the companies and ask them to sponsor one. If they don't, they will not be allowed to advertise.**

**Are we ready to have a private channel?**

We sometimes get swayed by what is happening in the West; we get so impressed by what they do that we become desperate to foist those ideas onto our network. It is good to open one's mind to what is happening around, but one must, at the same time, find out what is relevant. There is no point in following a thing blindly. Everyone talks of autonomy for Doordarshan, but few realise that we have functional autonomy within specified limits, just as the newspapers have functional autonomy within editorial guidelines.

**A number of private television companies which came into being recently, pulled down their shutters because they did not find business good enough. Is it true that you are trying to promote individuals instead of companies because they are more pliable?**

No. And it is incorrect to say that

television companies — the private ones — have folded up because of any change in our policy. We are not trying to promote individuals from whom we can get the kind of work required for our network; these individuals are big names in their own respective fields. The companies have folded up because they started business on the presumption that Doordarshan would buy what they produced! Why should Doordarshan buy *whatever* they produce? Do you buy what you don't want? If anybody starts a business where there is only a single buyer, he is bound to fail.

**The news telecasts, current affairs' programmes, etc, appear to have taken a turn for the better; what about serials and films?**

Yes, there is a definite improvement in the quality of our programmes. As far as the news telecast is concerned, it is much more professional. We are also trying to show more visuals to break the monotony. Soon, we shall introduce our own correspondents to do the reporting.

A lot has been said and written about the quality of films that we telecast and the serials that go on the national hook-up. Generally, the bulk of the controversy is kicked up by those whose serials have either been rejected at the initial stages or whose pilots were not found good enough. Such people go to the press and make all sorts of allegations — including that of money changing hands for the approval of serials. By and large, the quality of the serials is fairly good, and although one wishes that almost all the serials were of the same class, that cannot be.

Even if we look at commercial cinema, we find that while some pictures prove to be superhits with the masses, others flop at the box-office. The same is true of serials. As far as the films shown on TV are concerned, Doordarshan has very little choice — we have to buy films which are available in the market, or rather, which are made available to us.



# TELEVISION

and the use of a teleprompter. Indeed, in the last 1½ years, there have been major changes. The satellite interlink has made news coverage more effective. However, whatever little changes are obvious to us, are merely cosmetic and do not lend much credibility to Doordarshan as such. The producers are still as paranoid as they used to be a decade ago; they don't know where and when they might tread on either the ruling party's or someone else's toes. This attitude must change.

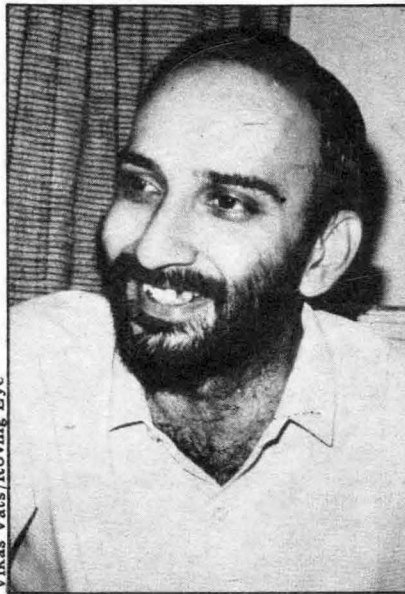
I think we have to put an end to the 'newsreaders' who come and merely read out news to you. All over the world you have people who are *involved* in the news gathering process — television correspondents who come and present the news. That is called newscasting, and for it, the concept of part-time newsreaders must go. Either they have to be full-time employees of Doordarshan or be involved in producing and telecasting programmes before they can stake their claim for newscasting.

As for *Focus*, I must say that there is certainly more variety and openness. Some of the *Focus* programmes produced by Ramesh Sharma were exceptional — both in quality as well as in presentation. While some of the programmes that PTI has been churning out are good, there are others which were bad, like the one on the African Fund. The subject was not a very inspired one, the background was the same blue thing. Occasionally, there have been some good human interest programmes as well — something at which Vinod Dua is very good. I personally feel that Vinod is not good at hard-news analysis. If he keeps doing programmes like the second part on Bofors, and the one on Kalahandi — where he got self-righteous in the most absurd manner — he is going to lose credibility so fast that his present image, his so-called independent stand, will vanish very soon. As for Amarjit's programme, *Bund File*, it was exceptional. The restraint that Amarjit used in that

documentary was very good: he waited patiently to get answers from his interviewee.

If you look at television programmes, you will find that even after viewing programmes day in and day out, you cannot decipher Doordarshan's policy in a number of matters. Doordarshan is still in the middle of *forming* a policy. And, with regard to their serials, it looks like they are clearing a backlog. Few serials are well-made — *Udaan* was good upto a certain point except when it became sentimental; *Intezaar* is boring. Its characters are all too good to be true. One is just forced to see a serial for the sake of seeing one.

## RAJIV MEHROTRA



Vikas Vats/Roving Eye

**WHEN I WAS A** newsreader, I invariably found it difficult to read out news which was not entirely accurate. Often I had to read out on the national network that a particular *bandh* was a complete flop, when, while driving through the streets of Delhi, I had discovered otherwise. I now think we are dishing out fewer falsehoods on the national network. We may still not be telling *the whole*

*truth* but, by and large, there is some semblance of truth in it. Whatever you may think of the standard of news presentation, what is more important is that we are telling fewer lies to our viewers.

Five years ago we did not have programmes like *Focus* on Doordarshan, but we are now tackling issues once considered taboo. This is a healthy sign which must be welcomed. We have people like Vinod Dua and Ramesh Sharma doing a good job and trying to build up their credibility. Vinod may not have great credibility as far as the elite English press is concerned, but for the ordinary masses, he has established his credentials of being a good TV news correspondent.

However, the serials telecast on the national hook-up are appalling, outrageous, and ridiculous. The quality of these serials has proved one thing in favour of Doordarshan — that privatisation has not helped in improving their quality. I strongly believe that there is not enough intellectual material available to meet the programming needs of Doordarshan. True, Doordarshan has planned certain initiatives, but I don't know whether government control is the answer. We need to provide better training to the people if we want to improve the quality of the programmes.

## MRINAL PANDE

**AS FAR AS NEWS** presentation is concerned, it is a lot better now, both slick and good. However, I will reserve my comments about its credibility — unless both AIR and Doordarshan are handed over to autonomous bodies, the pro-government tilt is bound to be there.

As for the serials that are currently being telecast, most are very poor in quality. False entertainment is being offered to the millions of viewers, who don't have much of a choice



Vikas Vats

other than to watch Doordarshan programmes, in the absence of competition. The higher viewership might well be because of this:

As far as women-oriented serials are concerned, by and large, serials being passed off as pro-women serials have nothing to do with women's topics or problems. Clever serial-makers merely give the whole thing a little twist and make the serial *look like* one dealing with women's topics. For instance *Hakke Bakke* was supposed to be a serial promoting family planning — I don't know what kind of family planning they propagated, showing as they did, two extremes — one family which did not have any children, and the other which had five. Moreover, this sort of line-of-action exists in almost every serial although viewers are not fooled by such tricks.

A serial which one can say was above average was *Udaan*. I liked the treatment of the subject. The other serial which kept me spellbound was *Stree*. Some of the episodes were simply exceptional; especially the one dealing with the Adivasi woman. But, at the same time, showing such serials, whether they deal with the life of a successful woman-officer or not, does not negate the three-dimensional social realities. Soon after the serial is over, one sees a woman, be she a mother, sister or a wife, scrubbing pots in the kitchen while the man lords over her.

Doordarshan has, from time to time, shown some good films, but at the same time, it has also telecast films of a very low standard. As the quality of the films telecast differs sharply from film to film, they have no definite policy — they should declare that they are going all out for entertainment and they don't care about social values... or vice-versa. Or else, they should set up certain guidelines and control the quality of the films that are being telecast on the national hook-up.

I did not see the programme on Bofors, but I did subsequently see the one on elections. Though it was done professionally, I must say that I was totally disenchanted with it. While I do agree that the programme's compere has to take a certain stand, I must add that a fair opportunity must be given to both sides. There *has* to be a balance, for if one side is given more time to explain and the other is given less, the programme naturally loses its credibility.

### RAMESH SHARMA



Vikas Vats

**IF WE GO BY** technical finesse, there has been a tremendous improvement in the news telecasts — for instance, the coverage of Operation

Black Thunder with on-the-spot reporting at Amritsar was very good. Credit must also be given to the Doordarshan authorities for toning down the pro-government bias substantially. All this goes to show that somebody somewhere is thinking seriously. Yet, a lot more needs to be done to improve the standard and quality of the newscast: more on-the-spot reportage needs to be introduced; visuals need to be increased. They *are* showing graphics, pictures, and I hope they will soon be able to put out news for the sake of *news* and not for propaganda purposes. This will take time.

Given the circumstances, given the set-up that we have, I think we should be grateful for such small mercies, especially since the telecasting of serials displays a decline in quality. This might have something to do with the tendency to increase broadcast timings without creating the necessary infrastructure; but why should telecast timings be increased when there are no quality programmes to show? The programmes that are telecast in the name of comedies on the national network are not even fit to be telecast on Channel Two.

As for *Focus*, although I do some programmes myself and therefore, may be biased, there are instances when we were allowed to tackle subjects which a few years ago nobody in Doordarshan would have considered touching. Programmes on the violence in Bihar, the Gorkhaland movement and Opposition unity... would have been taboo on DD. Fortunately now, nobody tells us what to do and what not to do, because it is only when opposing views are shown with equal fervour that people believe what you say. (Perhaps this is the reason why the Bofors programme clicked with the masses.) You could not have expected a better programme than the one on Bofors from a government-controlled medium. The very fact that words like 'commission', 'bribes', etc. were used on Doordarshan is symbolic. We must use this freedom to open the doors more. ♦



## ENVIRONMENT

**E**VERY YEAR, for the last five years, the Washington DC-based Worldwatch Institute has been carefully monitoring the earth's vital signs and issuing a report on the State of the World. The Institute must have got the idea from the annual State of the Union message that the President of the United States sends to the Congress informing it of how the country is progressing. The Worldwatch Institute's State of the World message, however, is addressed not just to one country, but to whoever is listening anywhere and everywhere. It is, in the opinion of many environmentalists, the most significant message to

grounds. Listen to this:

The earth's forests are shrinking, its deserts expanding and its soil eroding — all at record rates. Each year thousands of plant and animal species disappear, many before they are named or catalogued. The ozone layer in the upper atmosphere that protects us from ultra-violet radiation is thinning. The very temperature of the earth appears to be rising, posing a threat of unknown dimensions. . . Time is short since the deterioration of some life-support systems appears to be accelerating. . . Should one dismiss this as fear

cluding the Soviet Union, shows some 31 million hectares of damaged forests, an area the size of West Germany.

If that is not frightening, what is? Brown errs on the side of moderation; he is not the shepherd boy crying 'wolf' for the fun of it. The wolf is already here in our midst. The earth is in danger. Its vital signs are showing signs of collapse.

**IT IS FOLLY**, Brown suggests, for one country to pretend indifference when another country is in trouble. This Mother Ship, this Earth, belongs to all its sons, and what presently



# The Writing On The Wall

be delivered to those who care — including thinking people in all continents and climes.

This year's State of the World message is somewhat frightening. As the message says: "We have, in effect, given the earth a physical examination, checking its vital signs. The readings are not reassuring."

In previous years, the Worldwatch Institute had, on the basis of evidence, hypothesized as to where the world was heading, with a certain amount of hesitance, as if not quite sure of its own findings.

Today, on the basis of accumulated evidence, the Institute's opinions are firmed up; it feels it is on surer

mongering? Should we take the Worldwatch Institute seriously? Are we being led down the garden path? Notes the Institute's Director, Lester R Brown, in his introductory essay:

. . . In 1983 we debated whether to report that a West German forest survey had found some 8 per cent of that nation's forests showing signs of damage, possibly from air pollution and acid rain. That discovery, though disturbing, seemed little cause for international alarm. Today, over half of West Germany's forests are damaged, and the link to air pollutants is all but conclusive. The most recent tally for Europe, ex-

hurts one country will, in the long run, hurt all. There is no German or American or Chinese sky; the earth may be parcelled out among nationalities, but not so the atmosphere. When there is a high concentration of carbon-dioxide in the upper atmosphere, the whole earth will heat up. And when that happens, inevitably the ice-caps will melt, the seas rise, and coastal lands get submerged, whether in Europe, Asia or Africa. A team of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute at Massachusetts recently calculated that, at the current rate of warming, the state of Massachusetts alone would lose from 7,500 to 10,000 acres of land to the sea. Not much, one might

argue, but what about coastal cities in Holland, or say, cities like Cairo and Bombay? In an address to the UN General Assembly in October 1987, Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, President of the Maldives, wondered what would happen to its 1,196 islands, some of them barely two metres above sea-level, if the threatened rise in sea-level took place. As he put it: "We did not contribute to the impending catastrophe to our nation and alone we cannot save ourselves." The Maldivians certainly cannot. Their problem is not theirs alone. On this earth, all of us sink or swim together.

Human activity anywhere in the

earth is in danger: its vital systems are showing signs of collapse. Forests are shrinking, deserts expanding and soil eroding — all at record rates. Each year thousands of animal and plant species disappear. The scenario, as predicted confidently by this year's State of the World Report issued by the Worldwatch Institute, is alarmingly ominous. Noted journalist M V KAMATH on the state of the world today.

world affects people everywhere on earth. Damage cannot be localised. Almost all our problems, however, can, in the ultimate analysis, be traced to two human activities: population growth and energy use. The more rapid the growth of population, the more rapid the depletion of natural resources. Experts had suspected, for example, that with the population increase in India in the last 40 years on a scale that has never before been experienced, there would be a depletion of forest cover. The scale of depletion was feared but not actually realised. It was only when India turned to satellite photography that scientists discovered a far more rapid forest loss





than had been previously estimated. Between 1972 and 1975, and 1980 and 1982, India lost 9 million hectares of tree cover, or roughly 1.3 million hectares per year. At this rate, India will lose most of its remaining 31 million hectares of forests by the end of the century if nothing is done meanwhile. And the people to do that "something" are us, not the Martians.

So damaging is the population explosion that the best available estimates on forest cover in 76 tropical countries indicate that 11 million hectares of forests are being cleared each year. Obviously, land clearing for agriculture — always a good excuse — is the principal claimant, followed by commercial logging, firewood gathering and, in Latin America, conversion to pasture for cattle ranching. The less the tree cover, the less

excess of new soil formation. Worldwide, an estimated 26 billion tonnes are either being washed or blown off cropland each year. No wonder year by year farmers need to purchase more and more fertilisers at enormous costs. What else can we expect when the most natural fertilisers are wasted?

Brown has been ringing his alarm bells with a persistence worthy of a Nobel prize, but is anyone listening? In 1982 India's remaining forestland could sustain an annual harvest of only 39 million tonnes of wood, far below the estimated fuelwood demand of 133 million tonnes. The gap of 94 million tonnes was closed either by over-cutting, thus compromising future forest production, or by burning cowdung, which compromised future soil fertility. What is the answer to the problem? Population control,

acidic, and 1,800 lakes are nearly lifeless. In Canada, 140 acidified lakes are devoid of fish. In Eastern US, some 9,000 lakes are threatened, 3,000 lakes east of the Mississippi are acid-altered, and 212 lakes in the Adirondack Mountains are devoid of fish. If this is what man can do to fish, soon we will find out what man can do to man. In the end, man may be called upon to pay the supreme penalty, the last species to vanish from the earth as a result of his own folly.

**WHAT CAN WE DO** to escape future calamity? Several solutions are available, but first and foremost, man has to live within his means. He has to use natural resources such as wind and water, sun and organic waste for energy. The positive aspect of the State of the World message is that good work is already being done in these areas. Take wind power, for example. Already, the tiny country of Denmark is leading the world in developing intermediate-scale, grid-connected wind turbines, an industry that did not exist before the '80s, but the sales of which have now risen to over \$ 500 million (Rs 685 crore). Starting in the '70s, Denmark launched on a programme to build on its historical experience with wind-power technology. Less than \$ 10 million of annual government funding was used to develop improved blades, rotors and braking systems. The R&D has paid good dividends: no coal to burn, no fossil fuels to pollute the air; the wind is free, only waiting to be harnessed. It is a victory for common sense. Not many countries in the world can boast of rivers to dam, to obtain hydro-electricity, but which country is free of winds?

Where water is available in abundance naturally, burning fossil fuels would be a crime. Latin American countries have come to appreciate it more than any other. In 1986 Venezuela completed the Guri Dam, the largest in the world, with a 10,000 MW-capacity that can produce as much electricity as 10 large nuclear-

**H**uman activity anywhere in the world affects people everywhere on earth. Damage cannot be localised. Almost all our problems, however, can, in the ultimate analysis, be traced to two human activities: population growth and energy use. The more rapid the growth of population, the more rapid the depletion of natural resources.

the rains; the less the rains, the greater the desertification; and the greater the desertification, the greater the chances of famine. That, indeed, is the explanation for the great famine of Ethiopia which is still exacting its toll in human — and cattle — lives.

Another consequence of declining tree cover, of course, is accelerated soil erosion. Over millions of years, the earth has built up a soil bank, several inches, if not feet deep, over its surface. With trees cut down for a variety of reasons, rains have been washing away the rich top soil — a life-sustaining layer whose importance is only now being realised. A 1982 survey of soil erosion in the US showed that farmers are annually losing more than 2 billion tonnes of top soil in

naturally. But India's population keeps growing alarmingly.

Fossil burning has another damaging side-effect: the release of sulphur, nitrogen and hydrocarbons into the air, which, combined with moisture, produce acid rains which then fall on earth and raise the acidity of lakes and destroy their aquatic life. The more the emissions into the air — especially in the developed countries — the more the damage to the lakes. Sweden was the first country to report lifeless lakes, but other Scandinavian countries soon followed suit. Consider this: In Finland, of the 107 lakes surveyed near Helsinki in 1984, half were either severely acidified or projected to lose all their fish. In Sweden, all bodies of fresh water are now

power plants. Brazil is in the process of building a hydro-electric plant with 20 per cent more capacity than the Guri. The 12,600 MW Itaipu Dam in Brazil is five miles long, and half as high as the Empire State Building in New York; the very blueprint being exciting.

Then, of course, there is biomass. Biomass, as the name implies, is derived directly or indirectly from plant photosynthesis and is a versatile fuel source capable of providing high-quality, gaseous liquid and solid fuels as well as electricity. Its primary sources are forestry and wood-processing residues, crop residues and animal wastes, all of which were usually discarded because the technology for making use of them economically had not been developed. Not so any more. Since 1983, four US utilities have built waste-wood burning power plants, each able to generate more than 45 MW of electricity. And what the US can do, so can India. Indeed, India leads in the production of fuel-wood.

Actually, the Union Camp Corporation at Virginia, USA, was the first to use pulp waste and peanutshells to generate power as early as 1937. Since then others have got into the act. One company in Florida uses pulp waste and bark, another uses forest residues, and a third, mill residues, while a company in California uses orchard prunings and a company in Louisiana uses rice husks. For that matter, a 10.5 MW plant has been operating in Punjab all the year round, burning 20 tonnes of rice husk *per hour*. As the world's second largest rice-grower, India produces some 18 million tonnes of husks annually, enough to justify investment in a 500 MW plant running on rice husk. That, of course, presuming that *all* the 18 million tonnes would be available on a continuous basis at any one of half-a-dozen places.

**THUS, THE POINT IS** to make the maximum use of any agricultural produce that can remotely be called

"waste". For example, a major source of energy is bagasse, obtained from sugarcane after the juice has been extracted. In the face of falling sugar prices, Hawaiian millers went in for generating electricity from bagasse. The Hawaiian sugar industry started selling electricity in the late '70s, and in 1985 supplied 58 per cent of the power on Kauai and 33 per cent on Hawaii. Sugar companies have now installed at least 750 MW of capacity to burn bagasse, and researchers at Princeton University, USA, estimate that globally some 50,000 MW of gas turbine co-generation units could be supported with the 1985 level of sugar

ing electricity with gas-turbine co-generation units is lower than for most central-station alternatives, but no doubt this will have to be tested in Indian conditions.

And what other agriculture produce would be useful as biomass? The list includes coconut shells (India, surely, has enough of them), cotton stalks and ginning waste, peanut and other nut shells, fruit pits, coffee and other seed hulls, and various sources of straw and fibre. Surely India is not poor in these resources; it is obvious that what is missing is good organisation and planning.

But what India surely has in abun-



*Forest destruction: an ecological disaster.*

production, in the light of recent advances in gas-turbine technology. In more than 70 developing countries that grow sugarcane – including India – commercial use of gas turbines could provide as much electricity as the utilities in these nations now generate with oil! This is indeed something for Vasant Dada Patil to mull over! Maharashtra has one of the largest sugarcane producing units in India, and what the sugar co-operatives could do can only be guessed. It would seem that the cost of generat-

dance is the sun. And what is most heartening is that many techniques do exist at present to collect, concentrate and convert solar radiation into useful energy. The most basic is one which uses collectors to absorb relatively low-temperature heat and then transfers it to water or air, while somewhat more complicated are the technologies that concentrate sunlight in higher temperatures capable of producing steam or electricity. But the most sophisticated technology is the one which turns sunshine into elec-



## ENVIRONMENT

tricity through photovoltaic cells. What comes as a surprise is that there are four million solar-water heaters presently functioning in Japan alone, while in the remote Northwestern region of Australia, as many as 37 per cent of households rely on such systems. According to the State of the World Report, through the mid-'80s, the world's largest collector-market was the United States, especially in the sun belt. In Cyprus, private industry has installed solar-water heaters on 90 per cent of the houses. And for that matter, in Jaipur, one understands, solar-cookers have become so popular that most middle-class homes have them.

Described above are means to use natural resources in order to lessen the dependency on fossil-fuel burning which produces carbon-dioxide, that, in turn, has many disastrous effects. But that is only one part of the problem. The real problem is to limit the world population to manageable proportions so that the demand for food, shelter and other necessities does not get out of hand. The more the people, the greater the poverty and the heavier the demand on primary fuels like wood. It should come as no surprise that the demand for wood in the total energy needs in developing countries is as inordinately high as 71 per cent in Kenya, 93 per cent in Malawi, 82 per cent in Nigeria, 74 per cent in Sudan, 92 per cent in Tanzania, 94 per cent in Nepal, 50 per cent in Indonesia, and 33 per cent in India. The preservation of forests and saving of land from degradation in these countries, remains the major issue of the day.

The cutting down of trees has been the major reason why North India is so prone to floods every year. According to knowledgeable sources, flooding has worsened in India because of large-scale destruction of forest cover. Researchers at the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, estimate that the flood-prone areas in India now total 59 million hectares, more than double a government estimate for the late

**A larger share of the earth's plant and animal life will probably disappear in our lifetime than was lost in the mass extinction which included the disappearance of the dinosaur 65 million years ago. If nothing else, that should make us stop and think.**

'60s. It has also been noted that between 1913 and 1978 — a period of 65 years — the peak flood-level of the Brahmaputra at one monitoring point rose an average of 30.5 centimetres *per decade*, or nearly 2 metres over the entire period. The Report quotes the researchers as saying: "We are no longer dealing with disaster events but disaster processes." For the cutting of trees leads to another kind of calamity: wind erosion of the top soil. The Report states, that in India alone, wind erosion has degraded an estimated 13 million hectares. A frightening thought.

**THE TRAGEDY IS THAT** these calamities are seldom noticed, and if noticed, they seldom register. It would come as a surprise — if not as a shock — to realise that a larger share of the earth's plant and animal life will probably disappear in our lifetime than was lost in the mass extinction which included the disappearance of the dinosaur 65 million years ago. If nothing else, that should make us stop and think. Already biologists are saying that as many as 2,000 species of mammals, reptiles and birds will have to be bred in captivity to escape extinction as natural ecosystems are cleared and fragmented.

Reading the State of the World Report, one begins to wonder whether the Worldwatch Institute has got its facts right. As stated, they are fright-

ening. None of the facts have ever been challenged as they are mostly from official sources. Isolated, the facts don't make much sense; taken together, they assume meaning and relevance. And the enormity of man's crimes against the earth looms on the horizon. What comes through in the Report is the close intertwining of our lives and activities, crossing national boundaries. Says the Report:

As increasing human numbers and advancing technologies have expanded the scale of human activity, we find ourselves in a new era, one in which the environmental effects of economic activities spill far beyond national boundaries. Governments assume responsibility for supplying energy at home but not for the acid rain that destroys forests in nearby countries. . . Deforestation in Nepal can aggravate flooding in Bangladesh. The manufacture of chlorofluorocarbons in Japan can influence skin cancer rates in Argentina. . . The world is now facing a crisis of government resulting from the mismatch between international and sometimes global environmental consequences of domestic economic policies and the national interests that shape these policies. Unless this can be remedied by creating new international institutions or by expanding the authority of existing ones, no mechanism will exist to promote responsible behaviour. To leave processes that will directly influence the future habitability of the planet to chance is risky beyond reason.

Risky beyond reason, indeed. The peoples of the world cannot afford to take such risks. The stakes are high: the very survival of mankind, let alone lesser species. The Worldwatch Institute's *State of the World Report* is a ringing call to international cooperative action. In that alone, it is clear, lies the salvation of mankind. All else is folly. ♦

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## CONTROVERSY

**O**N JUNE 19, A 38-YEAR OLD woman who had been a prostitute for over 20 years died, agonised and lonely, at the J J Hospital, Bombay. The event would have gone unnoticed and unreported but for the fact that she was a victim of what has been called the modern-day plague, AIDS. She was the second victim to die in Bombay, and yet another from the 'high-risk' group which includes prostitutes, haemophiliacs, homosexuals and drug users. Every newspaper carried the news in big, bold headlines — many printed photographs of the body being handled by gloved and masked attendants. No attempt was made to mask the features of the dead woman — a courtesy which is normally accorded to photographs of this sort.

Since March, this woman had been shunted from doctor to doctor. Her condition deteriorated; she began to need blood transfusions. It was only when she failed to respond to any form of therapy that someone thought of directing her to a doctor who conducted the ELISA test which proved positive. Only then was she referred to the J J Hospital's approved AIDS referral centre. She had spent Rs 40,000 by then. But worse followed — she wasn't admitted to the hospital despite the fact that the other diagnostic procedures confirmed that she was suffering from the AIDS complex. After much persuasion she was admitted to an isolation ward, where she was reluctantly given the minimum of care and left well alone except for a friend. Even in death she



*June 19, J J Hospital, Bombay: prostitute dies of AIDS.*

# AIDS — THE MODERN-DAY PLAGUE

## By Padma Prakash



was not allowed a semblance of dignity. The body lay in the morgue for 24 hours before a post-mortem was performed.

Her death has sparked off a major debate among the various authorities concerned with the disease in the city. The Bombay Municipal Corporation declared that they had not been informed of the case before the patient died, and that this constituted a contravention of its rules. The doctor in charge of the AIDS surveillance centre argued that the delay was because the results of the confirmatory tests (conducted by the National Institute of Virology, Pune) were obtained only a day before the woman died. He also disputed the earlier report that the woman had had difficulty in getting admission to the hospital and that the staff had refused to attend to her. This could not be true, he argued, because the staff were 'educated' about AIDS. Nevertheless, the post-mortem was delayed because nobody knew how to conduct such an operation, nor were they aware of the precautions to be taken. Finally, doctors who conducted the post-mortem, not only wore gloves and masks, but some attendants even wore goggles — because the AIDS virus is mistakenly believed to be transmitted through saliva and eye fluids.

This second AIDS death in Bombay sharply illustrates the prevalent medical and social attitudes to the disease in India. There is a tragic lack of information on procedures to be followed. In this atmosphere of ignorance, several myths about the disease are gaining ground, some without any medical basis and others as yet disputed.

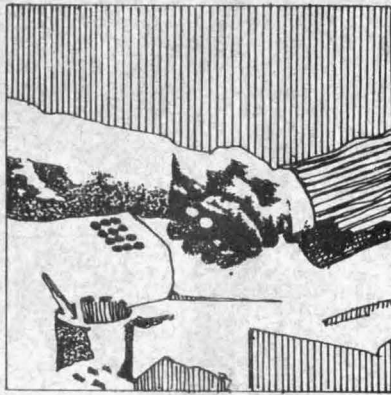
On the one hand are the attempts to legislate and lay down rules and procedures; on the other are the moralistic exhortations aimed at 'educating' the public. They are both rooted in a confused perception of the disease that tends to distort and limit a real understanding which may help the victims. This perception dictates that AIDS is a 'lifestyle' disease.

AIDS is a dead-end street which has made its way, inexorably, to the seedier streams of Indian society, leading to predictable responses. These take the shape of distorted truths and flagrant myths, arising from a tragic lack of information even among medical circles. This confused social perception destroys any approach towards containing the disease, says PADMA PRAKASH, and fosters alarmist fears.



## FACTS ABOUT AIDS

A basic guide to vital information about AIDS, brought out by the Indian Health Organisation.

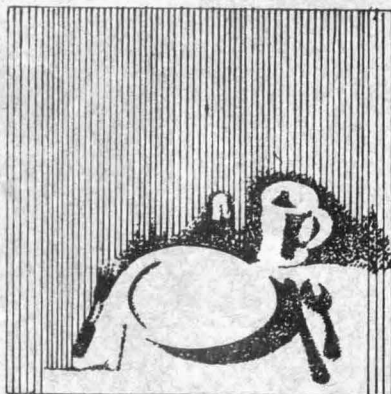


*This is not an introduction to AIDS.*

### What is AIDS?

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome – causes the body to lose its natural defences against disease. The body then becomes open to attack by a whole set of illnesses – ranging from mild infections to life-threatening conditions.

Some people with AIDS develop a rare form of pneumonia, *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia (PCP), caused by an organism that has no ill effect on healthy people. Others develop Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), a cancer that affects the skin and lining of the blood vessels, and may spread throughout the body. Also, unusual bacterial and fungal infections are often found in persons who have AIDS.

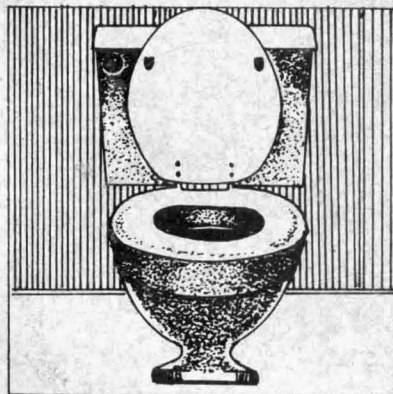


*This is not a setting for AIDS.*

### Who gets AIDS?

Researchers agree that all people are not at risk of AIDS. AIDS has occurred within specific groups of people. More than half of AIDS patients are gay or bisexual men between the ages of 25 and 40, prostitutes and eunuchs. Some patients are heterosexual men and women who share needles to inject drugs. A very few are haemophiliacs (persons with hereditary blood clotting problems) who require the injection of a blood product. Then, there was cases of children who apparently have contracted AIDS.

Blood donors are at no risk of getting AIDS and no one should refuse to receive a blood transfusion if it's medically indicated. The chance of developing AIDS from a blood transfusion is so low that any risk is greatly offset by the benefits.



*This won't lift the lid on AIDS.*

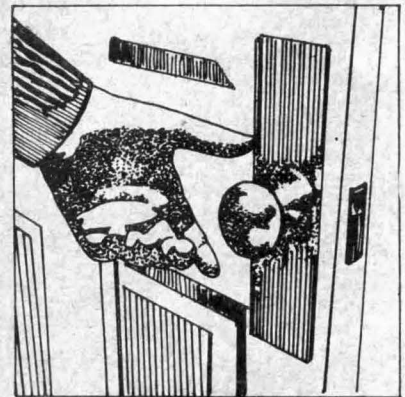
### What causes AIDS?

We know for sure what causes AIDS. Antibodies to a recently discovered virus (HTLV-III/LAV) have been found in the blood of most AIDS patients. It is not known whether this virus is the direct cause of AIDS, or is a result of having a damaged immune system. But further research will hopefully lead to drugs for treatment and prevention of AIDS.

All current scientific research indicates that AIDS is associated with intimate sexual activity that involves the repeated exchange of certain body fluids, and with sharing needles to inject drugs. There is *no evidence* that AIDS is spread by

- toilet seats, bathtubs or showers
- handshakes or other nonsexual physical contact

- dishes, utensils or food handled by a person with AIDS
- doorknobs, linens, clothing or other articles touched by a person with AIDS
- sneezing, coughing or spitting
- being around a person with AIDS – *even if contact is daily!*



*This won't open the door to AIDS.*

### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained tiredness combined with headache, dizziness or lightheadedness
  - continued fever or night sweats
  - weight loss of more than 10 pounds which is not due to dieting or increased physical activity
  - swollen glands in the neck, armpits or groin
  - heavy, dry cough that is not from smoking and has lasted too long to be a cold or flu
  - thrush (a thick whitish coating of the tongue or throat), which may be accompanied by a sore throat
  - shortness of breath
  - bruising more easily than normal
  - purple or discoloured growths (patches) on the skin, possibly first seen on the ankles and legs, or the mucous membranes inside the mouth
  - unexplained bleeding from any body opening or from growths on the skin or mucous membranes.
- Remember, other illnesses can have the same symptoms. However, if such symptoms persist, consult a physician.

It affects those who are themselves outside the boundaries of respectable society and/or who live 'differently'. In other words, "it's their own fault." Logically then, any approach to containing the disease must stress the importance of a proper lifestyle, draw rigid demarcations between respectable society and the 'other', and strictly codify the manner and mode of interaction between the two. And, running through this are the prejudices in society.

**IT IS IN THIS LIGHT** that the medical and social responses to the disease in India can be best understood. In the last six months the government has issued a variety of notifications regarding AIDS. The earliest response was to isolate the disease carriers — the foreigners. But because a blanket directive on monitoring foreigners would cause all sorts of problems, the focus was narrowed to students. This resulted in the directives for screening foreign students. All foreign students were to undergo a test for AIDS. If the tests were positive, the students were to be deported — this, even though the ELISA test which is used initially, does not confirm a carrier, leave alone someone with the disease. This caused a general panic and the government was forced to modify the circular later. Currently, all new admissions are to be screened and those showing a positive reaction to the test will be deported. However, foreigners on projects and missions and journalists are to be excluded.

But more controversial than any of these measures was the proposal which originated from the Indian Council of Medical Research, one which Dr A S Paintal, its director-general, has been vociferously promoting. He has proposed that 'sex with foreigners' be banned by legislation. ("Beware," he warns, "if you are an Indian going to a hotel room with a man of another skin colour, then you will be punished.") According to Paintal this is the surest way of interrupting the transmission of the

virus. Surprisingly, the government appears to be giving it enough consideration to support Paintal's proposal for a debate on the possibility of introducing such a legislation. And this when the law ministry (and several others) have pointed out that such a legislation would infringe upon Article 21 of the Constitution which provides for the right to privacy. If such a law was ever enacted, the State would have the authority to monitor and direct private mores and sexual behaviour. However, some legal experts whom Paintal has apparently convinced, see things differently. They argue that when the safety of the State is at stake it is perfectly valid to suspend personal liberties.

The secretary to the health ministry has gone on record as saying that the ministry was not against the suggestion if it helped to control AIDS. In fact the health ministry has announced that it proposes to formulate a law to allow for the screening of all NRIs coming to India for a visit as well as Indians back home after a long stay abroad. The ministry also plans to revive its 'educational' campaign, introduced two years ago, but on a much lower key so as not to cause panic. The 'at risk' group has been identified in India as being 'heterosexual promiscuous men and women' rather than homosexuals. The ministry's ideas on public education are of course, none too imaginative. The last campaign comprised advertisements which only caused panic.

**A DIFFERENT KIND** of 'education' is being suggested by some others. A good example is B K Bannerji's article in *The Times of India* which represents a growing trend towards promoting lifestyle correctives. According to him, the basic cause of AIDS goes beyond the virus. It is "sex perversion", he writes, which is responsible for the disease. But sex education alone will not help. "Sex is not a problem of the intellect. . . It is a powerful passion, and more information. . . is

bound to inflame it." Homosexuality is one such 'perversion' for which the feminist movement has been partly responsible. Moreover, it is because homosexuality entails a constant strain on the mind and the body — because the individual is constantly trying to overcome his weakness and conform to the norms of the overwhelming majority "which alone bears the mark of social responsibility" — that there is a breakdown of the body's immune system which manifests itself in the AIDS syndrome. He concludes by exhorting his reader to build "his own immune defence system by natural means" even while waiting for long-term measures. Thus, conforming to the norm and evolving an appropriate lifestyle comprise the bedrock of all measures to combat AIDS.

Given all this, it is not surprising, therefore, that nobody has thought of support systems for the victims of AIDS — whether they be prostitutes or homosexuals or drug addicts. The manner in which the AIDS victim died at the J J Hospital is a case in point. Often it is this 'high risk' group, as a consequence of its having abandoned social norms, that has no social support such as a family. The loneliness of an AIDS patient lying in an isolated ward, with little or no help, waiting for death, has been captured by a section of the Western media. This raises a pertinent question: if the risk group in this disease had not been the 'outcasts' and 'aberrations' of society, then would the social and medical responses have been different?

**UNDOUBTEDLY. THIS IS A** historical fact. Every disease in history has been specific to a certain period and its course has been characteristic of the age — whether it is plague, small pox or cholera. Even as these diseases devastated populations, they also had a profound effect on history. In each age it is the social response to the disease which has influenced the medical response. This social response is dependent on who society perceives



# "An AIDS virus can be destroyed by soap and water..."

Dr I S Gilada who runs the AIDS clinic at J J Hospital, Bombay, speaks to SHEKHAR GHOSH.

**Imprint: How does the AIDS virus actually work to destroy the immunity of the system?**

**Dr Gilada:** As is well known, white blood cells (WBCs) are responsible for the body's immune system. A WBC has T- and B-cells. Whenever an outside organism attacks our system, T-cells are the first to be aware of it. They (the T-cells) then induce B-cells to form antibodies or antigens to deal with the particular intruder. The antibodies consequently destroy the germs and our immunity towards infection is restored. Once these B-cells have done their job, it is the T-cells again which 'order' the B-cells to stop producing antibodies. The AIDS virus, for reasons still unknown, goes straight for the T-cells in the WBCs. You could almost say that the virus 'compromises' the T-cells. It not only destroys their power to induce B-cells thus preventing the formation of antibodies — but also 'befriends' these T-cells, receiving sustenance from them in order to multiply themselves. The T-cells thus become the breeding ground of the AIDS virus.

**What are the foolproof methods to diagnose the presence of an AIDS virus in a patient?**

If the Enzyme Linked Immuno Sorbent Assay (ELISA) test is positive three times, the Western Blot test is then performed on the blood sample. A positive Western Blot confirms the presence of the virus. These tests determine the number of T-cells in the blood. AIDS victims have a lower count of T-cells in the blood. Once the 3 factors — history, symptoms and positive tests — are established, the patient can be said to be either a full-blown AIDS case or have an AIDS Related Complex (ARC). In cases where patients exhibit none of the requisite symptoms (see box) but shows up positive as far as the

history and tests go, he or she is termed a "healthy carrier".

**What is the gestation period for the AIDS virus?**

Well, the gestation period is of two kinds. One, the period a victim takes to develop a test positive since the day he or she has contracted the AIDS virus — ranging from 6 weeks to 6 months. The second period includes the time taken for a patient to develop signs and symptoms after the induction of the virus in his system — anything from 8 months to a period of 7 years. However, this particular period could be even longer than 7 years since the disease was only really discovered in 1981. The prostitute who died of AIDS in Bombay recently, claimed to have abstained from sexual relations for the last seven years. As clinicians, we had to take her word for it, which means that she could have contracted AIDS in 1980 or 1981, or even earlier.

**Once the presence of the virus is confirmed, what is the manner of treatment adopted?**

A specific anti-AIDS treatment is not available anywhere. The only drug being used all over the world is Azekylthiamide (AZT). This drug can prolong the life of an AIDS victim for a few months, but it can also stop acting at any time. Patients are also treated for 'opportunistic infections'. As is well known, AIDS does not *kill* a person, it destroys the immunity process, the body then becoming highly susceptible to influenza, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, pneumonia, malaria, etc. Any of these 'opportunistic diseases' can prove fatal for an AIDS victim.

**Is it absolutely necessary to quarantine all AIDS patients?**

Definitely not. Confirmed AIDS patients can even go about their work



as usual. However, during the later stage of the disease, it is preferable to keep these patients in isolation as far as possible. Not because *they* will infect others, but because their low immunity makes them extremely prone to infections transmitted by other patients. Sometimes, even doctors can infect an AIDS victim.

**Homosexuals and prostitutes are the most commonly-known 'high-risk' carriers. . .**

Yes, homosexuals and prostitutes seem to be the most vulnerable to the disease. The rectal lining, being a single-layered column of epithelial cells, is more prone to rupture and tear in the case of homosexuals. In the case of prostitutes, the vaginal wall is often suffused with minor open wounds through which the virus may be transferred.

According to a survey we undertook a year ago, three high-risk cases of AIDS were discovered out of every 250 prostitutes; 50 cases out of a 100 showing up on the positive test.

So approximately 1-1½ per cent of Bombay's one lakh prostitutes suffer from AIDS or ARC.

**How many of these cases were detected?**

In Bombay 54 to 60 cases were confirmed; out of which 15 were admitted to my clinic. In India, out of the 1,20,000 tests conducted, 364 were found positive.

**Is there enough awareness of AIDS in India?**

I have been concerned about AIDS since 1985. I tried my best to draw the government's attention to the dangers posed by AIDS, but to no avail. *Time* magazine had, in fact, quoted the Indian government as having said that it had other priorities, since there was not a single case of AIDS in India. Then when AIDS cases were diagnosed, the government initiated education programmes, which, in my opinion, did more harm than good. Their campaigns were alarmist in nature, and caused a sharp panic. We had people coming to us with ridiculous notions about AIDS: "Doctor, won't donating blood be responsible for getting AIDS?" They didn't even know what a transfusion entailed. What we needed then – and still do – was to organise three kinds of campaigns – one for the high-risk group, one for the lay person and one for the medical profession.

AIDS victims can also be categorised as those who are at risk to the public health – prostitutes or professional blood donors; and those who are a risk to personal health – AIDS patients who have contracted the disease through casual sexual flings or blood transfusion.

**What measures has the AIDS clinic at the J J Hospital taken to increase awareness among doctors and the public?**

It is a sad fact that many doctors are not aware of all the facets of the disease. Some fear a decrease in their clientele because of the taboos attached to the disease. Private hospitals like Breach Candy, Jaslok, etc, in Bombay are even known to hide the

fact that they have AIDS patients. The AIDS clinic at J J, inaugurated on March 5, 1986, has been organising seminars, debates and educational campaigns for doctors, nurses, other medical staff and the public. We distribute pamphlets, hold exhibitions, we go to different AIDS-risk areas to increase awareness of the disease among the inhabitants. We also try to destroy the numerous existing myths. No other hospital in Bombay bothers about AIDS.

**What about adequate funding for such campaigns and for the treatment of AIDS?**

Considering the magnitude of the disease, I would say we *don't* have sufficient funds.

**Dr A S Paintal, Director, ICMR, has said that there is no dearth of money available for combating AIDS. . .**

Well, in a way, he is right. You see, in India, where Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) affect the highest number of patients, the budgetary allocation for the same was the least – till 1985-86, the total budget for STD was a mere Rs 20 lakh. Since the advent of AIDS, this allocation was increased to Rs 3 crore. But the manner in which this money is being used is awful. The 35 AIDS centres in the country are given Rs 1 lakh per annum, all kits are provided free (to these clinics), likewise the services of the staff (borrowed from other departments). Yet, what do we get out of all this? A mere confirmation of AIDS in a patient – whether a test is positive or not. There is no follow-up. Besides, *one* AIDS test costs Rs 500 today, when the actual cost, in fact, should not exceed Rs 50 per test. This escalation in cost is due to haphazard planning. Furthermore, no records are maintained (of the tests being done by different medical agencies). Not only are the sample patients not informed whether the tests are positive or not, there is also no pre- and post-AIDS counselling without which this entire 'expenditure bonanza' is futile.

**Dr Paintal has called for a legisla-**

**tion that bans sex with foreigners and NRIs. . .**

That was a foolish thing to say. You can't compel anyone not to have sex. And even if such a law is passed, it can never be implemented successfully. Can you have a bug under every bed? Instead, we should have a law that prevents those people who do not have a valid certificate that proclaims them AIDS-free from entering India.

**Why is there such a middle-class morality being thrust upon the disease? Do you think that doctors should talk about promiscuity and abstinence?**

I personally believe that a doctor has no right to interfere in the personal affairs of an individual. And how can one determine the degree of promiscuity? I would, however, recommend care in people's sexual habits. Basic precautions like using condoms, cleanliness and hygiene, etc, can go a long way in the prevention of AIDS. It is interesting to note moreover, that unlike some other viruses which are highly resistant, an AIDS virus can be completely destroyed by mere soap and water, since it is extremely fragile. Another important point – spouses should practise fidelity; this will reduce the chances of contracting AIDS. (*sic*)

**What do you feel can be done to diffuse the social ostracism, the enormous stigma that is attached to AIDS?**

Yes, AIDS is becoming almost like leprosy. This ostracism is totally uncalled for. To mitigate this, the mode of contracting the virus should not be revealed, and the identity of the patient should be kept secret. At the same time, I would strongly recommend that every prostitute in the country carry a health or an identity card, which would make it easy for the public and doctors to keep tabs. This practice would restore public confidence and ensure a monitoring of the rate of increase of the disease. And finally, I think it is the State's responsibility to rehabilitate AIDS victims, and dole out "survival wages".



## CONTROVERSY

as being in danger from the disease. Cholera, for example, was seen as a disease of the urban poor in the London of the 18th century. The medical response to consumption (tuberculosis) was influenced by who was afflicted – the delicate upper-class woman consumptive had to be coddled and cared for; the working-class woman suffering from the same was considered robust enough to get over it with little or no help.

In more recent times heart diseases, perceived as afflicting only the upper/middle classes have received far more intense attention from the medical profession than, say, skin diseases. Leprosy, long seen as a disease afflicting the 'unclean' – in body and mind – and especially the Third World, did not receive enough medical attention until recently. Similarly, in the early years of the 20th century, syphilis caused a major dilemma for the American medical establishment. Like AIDS, it could kill; it had no available treatment and it became associated with deviant behaviour. Thousands of prostitutes were arrested and confined in an effort to control its spread. Attempts were made to curtail the rights of citizens, to restrict any relationship not sanctioned by society.

Social response to AIDS in India is also influenced by another factor – the availability of information. For instance, the definition of the 'at risk' group appears to have been made more on the basis of information from Western countries. But this need not be true of other countries. In the US, the largest single group affected were homosexuals and it was dubbed by the media as a 'gay plague', as a take-off on the epidemic of the bubonic plague of the 14th century. Race was another risk factor, with over 40 per cent of the affected being Hispanics or Blacks. The sex ratio was 16:1 favouring the males. It was also found to be affecting heterosexuals and haemophiliacs who had received intravenous blood transfusions containing a clotting factor.

**On the one hand are the attempts to legislate and lay down rules and procedures; on the other are the moralistic exhortations aimed at 'educating' the public.**

**IN AFRICA**, on the other hand, AIDS does not show the same pattern. The sex ratio here is 1:1, that is, men and women are equally at risk. AIDS was identified in Africa among heterosexuals. The mode of transmission of the disease may also be different, and some researchers believe that AIDS may have been misclassified as a venereal disease. They point out that what is known about the transmission mechanism is that infection results when the virus is directly introduced into the blood stream. In the under-developed countries of Africa, where health services are inadequate, hypodermic needles may be routinely re-used and constitute a potential source of infection. Cultural practices like cliterodectomy may also encourage the transmission of infection. Since a large number of women are affected, African countries have to cope with the more complex problems posed by AIDS patients giving birth to children who are almost always infected.

As yet there is insufficient information about the pattern of the spread of the disease in India. Upto the end of April, about one lakh persons have been screened for AIDS. Of these, 256 Indians and 49 foreigners were found to be seropositive by the Centre for AIDS Research and Control (CARC) in Pune. Of the Indians, 95 were prostitutes in remand homes, 66 heterosexually 'promiscuous' men, 55 heterosexually 'promiscuous' women, five blood donors and one blood recipient. But this is really no indication of a pattern because

the screening was carried out only on a limited population predetermined to be 'at risk'.

In other words, because AIDS has been socially perceived to be a disease affecting the 'sexually promiscuous' (whatever that means, for it has never been defined) in India, it has acquired a certain social stigma which is itself a reflection of social anxieties about long-standing institutions such as the family. This, in turn, has meant that the health authorities too, have limited their interventions and investigations to a section of society, towards which social attitudes have always been ambiguous. This only reinforces the notion that AIDS, like venereal diseases, is mainly found to affect prostitutes or those who have had contact with them. And because health authorities confine their activities to this group, they find a high proportion who are either carriers or potential patients, thus reinforcing the existing social perception.

**THERE IS, HOWEVER**, an alternative hypothesis about AIDS and its transmission which has largely been discarded. Taking into account what is known of the disease in Africa, Asia and in the US, this hypothesis posits that the disease is rooted in poverty, malnutrition and over-crowding. AIDS, as the name indicates, is not a single entity but a multiplicity of opportunistic diseases. These may be diarrhoea, pneumonia, an intermittent fever of unknown origin, vaginal bleeding and in fact, every disease complex possible. As these are fairly common health problems in developing countries and among the poor and the underprivileged in industrialised countries, the immune systems are already overloaded by these infections. In this situation, the AIDS virus finds a hospitable environment and undermines the immune system further. Needless to say, health interventions based on this perception of the disease are bound to be different, and consequently, unsatisfactory or inadequate. ♦

**S**IXTY KILOMETRES FROM Chandrapur in Maharashtra lies the small village of Bhadravati. Ignorance and poverty once stalked its haunted lanes, and social ills became so deeply entrenched that its population could hardly look forward to a decent future.

The village once boasted of craftsmen who fashioned exquisite designs out of ordinary, local red clay, re-

presenting a tradition which had survived the onslaught of time. However, with the competition from rival modern industries, the craft was ebbing towards extinction. It was a novel project that saved the craft and changed the course of the economic life of the Bhadravati people.

A new awakening has now grown in the inhabitants of this place, and their ancient skills are once again on

full display. Today, the art of modelling is vibrantly alive in the town and provides a good example of economic resurgence.

Bhadravati has given birth to a co-operative project — the Gramodaya Sangh — which can serve as an ideal model for rural development programmes in the country as it provides a successful picture of the fusion of traditional craftsmanship and modern

# A POTTER'S TALE



Bhadravati, a small village in Maharashtra and once a potter's paradise, has today acquired a fresh lease of life with the establishment of a co-operative project, the Gramodaya Sangh. This venture has rehabilitated the traditional and master craftsmen whose skills were ebbing towards extinction with the advent of industrialisation. MOIN QAZI on rural handicrafts of Bhadravati.



# HANDICRAFTS

technology for the enhancement of the economic status and artistic talent of a community.

But, not so long ago, Bhadravati pottery was eclipsed by the phase of economic gloom through which the country's handicraft industry had been passing in the early fifties. Industrialisation and the rise of the machine-made product jolted the trade and made livelihood increasingly difficult for the traditional artisans. The impact was so great that many had to fold their trades and move to cities for better prospects.

True, traditional crafts could have easily survived but for the wrong diagnosis of the crisis in which they had fallen, which led to wrong prescriptions that, far from curing the ills afflicting the rural community, multiplied its woes. A concerned few, however, rightly diagnosed the problems of the village community as having arisen mainly due to its inability to cope with the industrialised sector, and thus advocated the need for upgrading native rural skills in order to bring them in tune with the needs of a wider society.

**THE BHADRAVATI POTTER'S** woes mainly resulted on account of their inability to withstand the competition from the large-scale industries of the cities which, with advanced production techniques and organised marketing outlets, had stolen the demand for traditional crafts. Innovation was thus vital for the Bhadravati potter. It is a known fact that nearly all economic development involves experiment and change, or, at least, the imitation of somebody else's change or the utilisation of somebody else's experiment. Countries become richer largely because people are always adopting new methods, learning new techniques, acquiring new skills, discovering new ways of achieving old ends, adapting their lives to meet new socio-economic conditions. Nothing is more vital to development than a high propensity to innovate, a high level of willingness to accept and

initiate change.

In Bhadravati, there had been a heavy emphasis on custom and tradition. Naturally, the road to success, too, was normally through growing old in conformity. But such ignorance and resistance to change led to economic gloom. Other than innovation, and even for innovation, modernisation was the answer to the problems of the town. But it would be possible only if somebody trained in the advanced techniques of pottery would take up the task of imparting higher skills to the artisans. Luckily for the people of Bhadravati, this messiah arrived in time. The craft had begun to lose the local market's support and only the last flickers of the art were alive when Mr S K Mirmira, a trained and qualified ceramist, undertook the task of reviving it. He ignited the glowing embers with renewed zeal, and, in a short period, resurrected the dying craft to its original glory.

**MR MIRMIRA**, the main technical

expert of the Bhadravati co-operative, is a highly qualified and experienced ceramist. A postgraduate in science, he has done extensive research in pottery and ceramics over the years. He was the technical adviser for pottery to the Khadi & Village Industries Commission for a number of years. He further underwent training for about two years in Japan, in the production of porcelain items with Indian raw materials. On his return, he undertook research work and was able to manufacture thin translucent porcelain. He was later provided with a scholarship by the Commonwealth Foundation, London, for a six-month course in heavy clay technology.

On his return from the United Kingdom, Mirmira conducted a number of field trials to introduce clay flooring tiles and mechanised bricks, following which he went to Tanzania as an adviser to help establish that country's pottery industry.

All these experiences have helped Mirmira in evolving and perfecting



*Clay moulding: an intricate task.*

ceramic techniques and working out new compositions of chemicals and dyes which have all been put to good use in the production process at Bhadravati. Mirmira, who was closely associated with Mr J C Kumarappa (a pioneer in rural technology), feels that the popularisation of the art of ceramics has saved the potters of many villages from being bereft. The introduction of glazing, one of the most important components of ceramics, has been instrumental in this. Earlier, it had not caught up with the artisans because, apart from being an expensive process, they believed it went against their religious taboos — they felt that glazing involved the synthesis of egg shells and bones of cows and other animals. However, as Mirmira and others helped correct their ignorance, awareness grew among the people and they began to think along enlightened lines. An introduction to glazing techniques opened a new chapter for the potters.

This is not to say that Mirmira

sought to jazz-up the ancient craft. Instead, Mirmira, who has worked for the development of the art and craft of the traditional potters in Bhadravati for the last 40 years, came to Bhadravati in 1955 to *revive* the once-popular, traditional craft. He began innovative experiments with the 36 potter families that remained. His efforts gave new life to them and they began rebuilding the tintured canvas of their craft. The results were slow to come, but the craft began to re-emerge in the old form. The creative energy of the potters had grown weak but had still not become blunt; Mirmira rekindled the flame which was slowly burning out but had still not disappeared.

**PRODUCTION CONTINUES** to be done mostly with the traditional potter's-wheel; local red clay being kneaded with the hands. Today, the clay is also chemically modified with reagents, chemicals, etc. There is also a wider range of items manufactured;

whereas the traditional items of pots, red bricks and country-roof tiles continue to be made by the hundreds, utility items, like pickle jars and bowls, as well as novelty items, are being crafted. Production has now been achieved on a large scale, and new designs are also being constantly introduced to keep the products in line with the changing market preferences.

The market for the simpler products is mostly confined to the town itself and the surrounding local areas with the glazed products commanding a good market in the neighbouring districts where they are sold through retail outlets. Besides, the Gramodaya Sangh holds an exhibition-cum-sale at Nagpur and Bombay annually. The Bombay exhibition has been of great help in the marketing of expensive items which include glazed, hand-painted porcelain pottery. The exhibition has also provided an opportunity to the Gramodaya Sangh for publicising its programme of rural development; all the national newspapers have provided extensive coverage to the exhibition and the noteworthy work of the Sangh.

Bhadravati is now a changed place. Under the aegis of the Gramodaya Sangh, a number of small co-operative societies have been set up, each engaged in the production of a different form of pottery. A scientific process of training is also being followed whereby the native skills are upgraded to bring them in line with latest advances in the field. Moreover, the new chemicals and pigments discovered by modern science have been utilised for enhancement of the durability of the products and for providing variety in both form and design. The aim is not merely to achieve perfection in the quality of the product, but also to refine its aesthetic beauty.

**HANDICRAFTS UNDOUBTEDLY** carry great aesthetic value; this is especially true of pottery because it is reminiscent of a cultural tradition that has survived from times immemorial. In fact, some of the clay



*Surviving the onslaught of industrialisation.*



**A**T 7.30 IN THE MORNING, the hot, summer air has already wrapped Trivandrum in its suffocating embrace. In a corner of the city, within the high walls of a *kalari* (arena), several young men clad in simple loin cloths, their well-oiled bodies glistening with sweat, go through their rigorous daily exercises; the juniors – the eight and ten-year olds – having finished their basic exercises, are hurried off to school.

Two seniors, proudly wearing mud stains, take the centre of the simple mud-floored arena. After touching the feet of their *gurukkal* (teacher), Sri Govindan Kutty, they pick up their *cheruvatis* (swords) and start fighting. Their battle is a joy to watch as their agile bodies flow from one movement into another. Finally, they retire, exhausted, into a corner while another young man takes the floor. He walks from one end to the other and back, lifting one leg after the other in strong graceful movements, almost like a dancer limbering up.

But it's eight o'clock now, and the young men have to stop. After quickly paying obeisance to the *pothara* (prayer corner) and their *gurukkal*, they have to bathe and change and get ready for work. Although they may cherish their hours at the *kalari*, those hours no longer constitute the pattern of their lives as they did those of their ancestors. These young men are *not* warriors training for battle, they are only honing their bodies and their minds, perhaps to face the petty, everyday battles of life. A few months ago, dressed in all their shimmering finery, they staged mock battles for the inaugural ceremony of the National Filmotsav, and before that, they were in London and Paris, at the glamorous Festival of India venues. But today, after their bout on the mud floor of the *kalari*, they have to return to the grind of earning their daily bread in mundane little offices.

**KALARIPPAYATTU IS** a discipline which concentrates on total physical control. Obviously, since they share the same roots, yoga and *payattu*



## KALARIPPAYATTU: A LOST LEGACY?

Kalaripayattu – Kerala's unique and traditional martial art – has been rendered almost obsolete. A discipline which concentrates on total physical control, fostering dexterity, agility and special skills in handling weapons, Kalaripayattu is today recognised and revived only during cultural festivals here and abroad. GITA ARAVAMUDAN profiles a fascinating yet forgotten art.

## FEATURE

have much in common. Like the yogi, the *payattu* practitioner spends many years disciplining the body by putting it through a very specific routine; it includes massages, flexibility exercises and routines which emphasise muscle co-ordination and control and, above all, develop extremely quick reflexes. This kind of training was, of course, invaluable in a battlefield where an individual's physical prowess counted and warriors adhered to certain rules of conduct. In such situations, an ability to leap into the air, out of an opponent's reach, and come slashing down on him with a sword, or to twist and move rapidly away from a determined attacker, was literally a matter of life and death.

Often, this kind of training proved invaluable even in every day life, during those troubled times. There is that almost apocryphal tale of the legendary beauty, Unniarcha, who was attacked by several male enemies while she was on her way to the temple. The story goes that she reacted instantly, pulling out the long, flexible *Urumi* (dagger) that she habitually wore around her waist, and slew her surprised attackers.

When the *payattu* practitioners use certain poses, like the elephant or the horse stance, apart from achieving muscle control, they also instantly put their bodies into a state of alertness. By imitating animals, they mentally tune themselves to the special qualities of those animals after whom the stances are named; strength, ferocity, nimbleness, stealth, and all the other strategies of offence and defence which wild animals have perfected over centuries of hunting and being hunted, have all been carefully observed and incorporated into the training of the *payattu* artiste.

Kalaripayattu is thus a discipline which conditions a person, both physically and mentally, to react fast, keep the body totally flexible and to have complete control over every action. Although physical strength is fostered, the accent is on dexterity of movement and skill in handling special weapons. There are stories of *payattu* practitioners routing enemies with just the cloth traditionally carried over the shoulder; in the hands of a trained warrior, the cloth could be more lethal than a sword. Even the *vatti* or stick, twirled rapidly over the

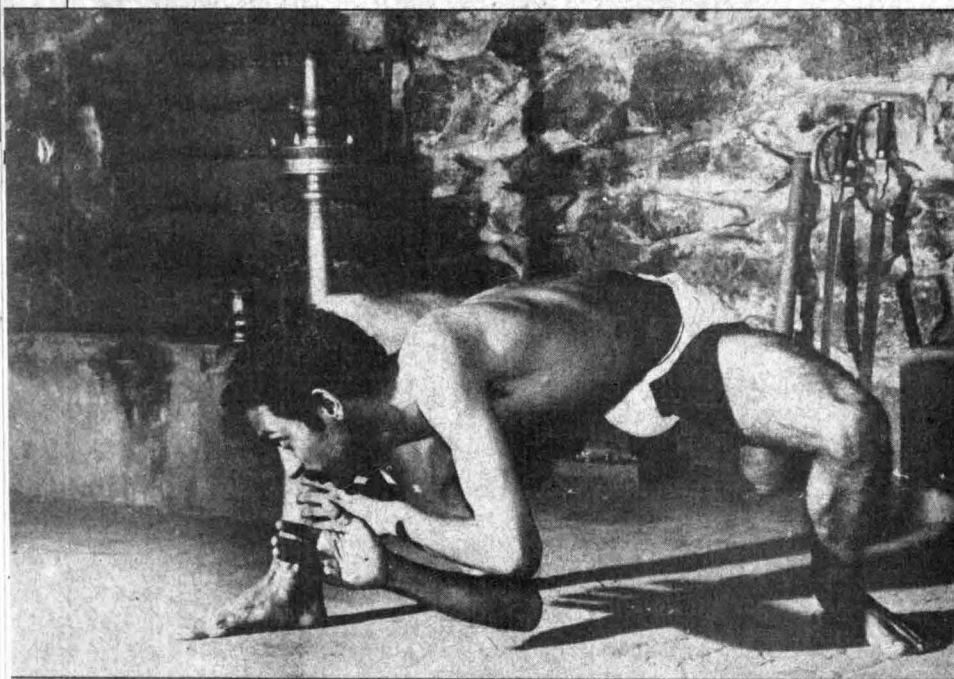
head, can be converted, by him, into an umbrella for protection against the sun and rain.

Some of the most commonly used actions in Kalaripayattu are the leaps and twists, the rapid, well-disciplined hand and foot movements and the seemingly still stances. On the battlefield, the leaps and twists helped as evasion as well as attack tactics. These, co-ordinated with the hand and foot movements, optimise the use of the specially developed weapons which Kalaripayattu artistes use with such consummate ease.

**ALTHOUGH THE TRAINEES** are put through all the exercises and are taught to use all the weapons, as they progress, they tend to specialise. Thus, a person of great physical strength might choose the *Gada* (sword) as his weapon while a smaller, more dextrous warrior might prefer a dagger.

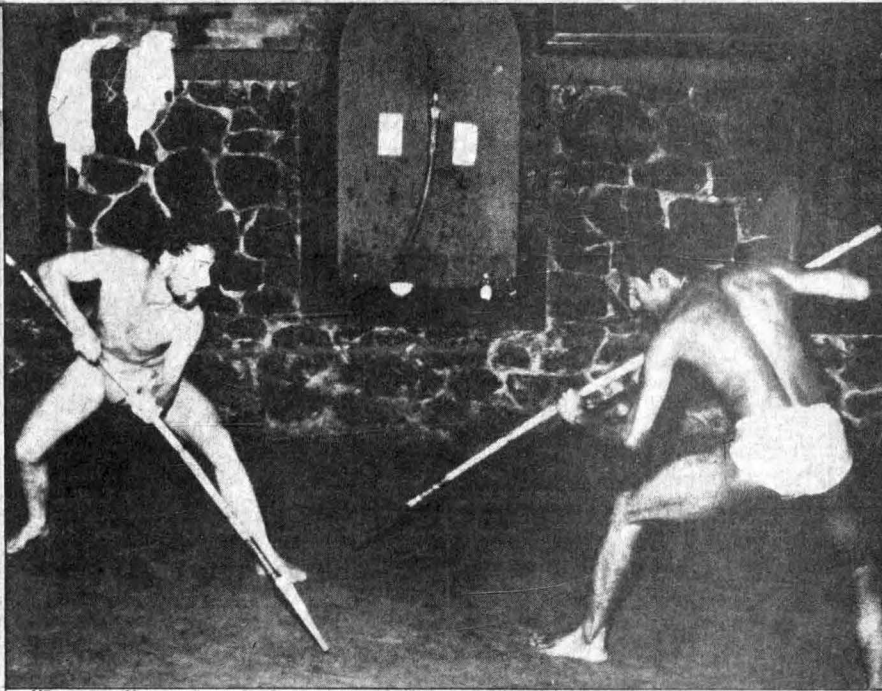
Some weapons like the *Gada*, originally used in *kalaris*, have become practically extinct. Professor Zarrilli, of the University of Wisconsin, who has spent several years studying Kalaripayattu in Kerala, says that the weapon now in use is a kind of pseudo-British sword. There are few artistes these days who are strong enough to handle the heavy, unwieldy *Gada*; similarly, there are very few who specialise in the long, flexible double-edged *Urumi*. In days of yore, the dagger was perhaps one of the most dreaded weapons as *payattu* practitioners were particularly skilled in driving it lethally into the vulnerable parts of the body, which they had been trained to locate.

Today, Kalaripayattu is of no practical use as a discipline of martial arts. . . in fact it went obsolete when the British arrived with their guns. As a system of physical training, however, it remains quite unparalleled; as a discipline borne of the soil and in tune with its environment, it incorporates certain attitudes and philosophies, which, to the Indian mind, are familiar and comfortable. A Kalaripayattu display is quite a colourful event, during which trim, slim young



*Kalaripayattu: total physical control.*





"Payattu" artistes: dexterity is the key.

men and women make incredible leaps into the air, twist, turn, crouch and attack each other with lethal weapons. Their movements are so well co-ordinated and graceful that the display more often than not looks like a spectacular ballet performance.

Like other fragments of our much-vaunted cultural heritage, Kalaripayattu is slowly sinking into oblivion. Every once in a while, this unique martial art of Kerala is catapulted onto centre stage at some international festival venue, but when it comes to giving sustained financial support and encouragement, there seem to be very few patrons.

**GURUKKAL GOVINDAN KUTTY**, who runs the CVN Kalari, situated inside the historic East Fort at Trivandrum, has practically dedicated his entire life to keeping this art form alive. It is a family tradition — his own father, CV Narayanan Nair, was a disciple of the famous Kottakal Kanaran Gurukkal, and when Kutty talks about Kalaripayattu, his eyes glow. But ask him about the encouragement he has received from official sources or organisations and you can see the bitterness creep in. In the 30-odd years he has spent running his *kalari* at

Trivandrum, he has submitted many, many blueprints to the government for inculcating this special form of physical exercise into the curriculum of not just sports schools, but also ordinary government schools. "Everyone is very encouraging when I submit proposals," he says, "but when it comes to actually putting them into practice, something comes in the way — political interference, in-fighting between various schools of Kalaripayattu. . . Each person who runs an institution claims his method of training is the best, and finally, the government is confused. They don't have a clear idea as to what they should look for, and so the idea is shelved. It does not really affect me. I run an independent institution without any government aid. But, unless the government provides some encouragement, this art may not survive much longer."

Ironically, Gurukkal Kutty's father fared better (at Tellicherry) in the 1920s when the British were in power. Kalaripayattu had earlier been outlawed in the nineteenth century after the legendary Pazhassi Raja nearly defeated the Duke of Wellington. Once the ban was lifted, the eighteen-year old Narayanan Nair worked hard to revive the *kalari*s which had once blos-

somed in the area; he even managed to get Kalaripayattu incorporated in the curriculum of two government schools.

Kutty is not so fortunate. Kalaripayattu, as it is practised today, is the modified version of a system of martial arts which evolved around the twelfth century. Some of the techniques, however, date much further back. . . perhaps to the Dhanurveda and the Ayurveda, which codify the Indian systems of war and medicine. Milena Salvini, in an article in *Karate Magazine*, described it thus: "Relying on the spiritual and philosophic traditions of Hinduism, the discipline of Kalaripayattu is a path towards a profound knowledge of the human body and of the utilisation of its energy; it is also a still-living witness to the code of life and honour of the warrior Nairs."

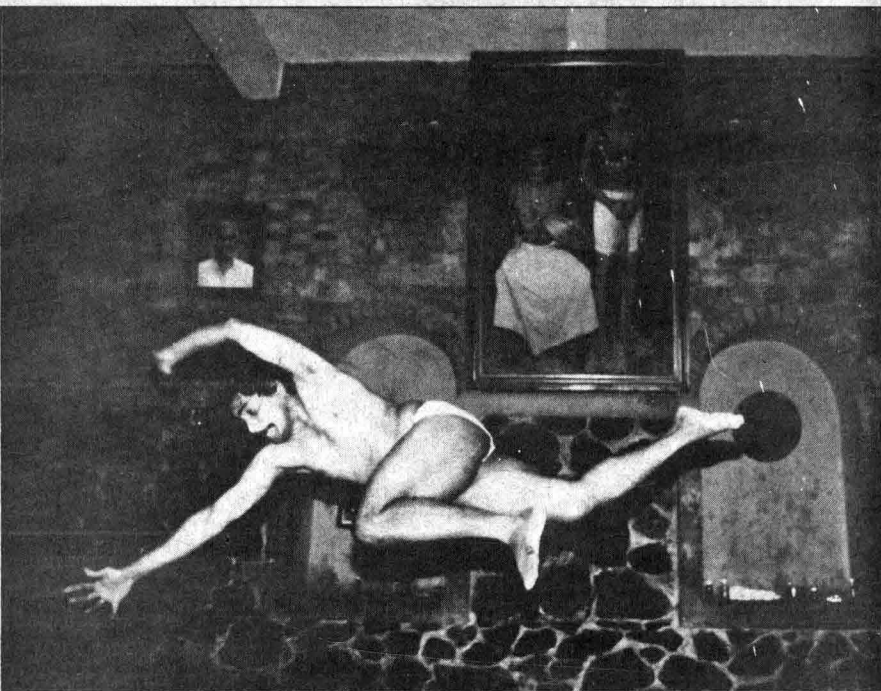
**IT WAS IN THE** sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that Kalaripayattu really came into its own. Traditionally, war had been the preoccupation of the Nair caste, and it was during this period, when many wars raged between the small local chieftains, that *payattu* training became essential for survival. Even those who did not actually go into battle had to train themselves in order to ward off attackers who might come to plunder their villages and fields. The *gurus* and their *shishyas* (students) continued to guard the villages and maintain law-and-order during times of peace. Although their great dexterity and technical skill failed to be effective when faced with the superior might of British cannons, the warriors drew much admiration: ". . . These Nairs, when they are seven years of age, are sent to schools where they are taught many tricks of nimbleness and dexterity; they teach them to dance and turn about and twist on the ground, to take royal leaps and other leaps; and this they learn twice a day as long as they become so loose-jointed and supple that they can turn their bodies contrary to nature. And when they are fully accomplished in this, they teach them to play with the

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weapon to which they are most inclined, some with bows and arrows, some with poles to become spearmen, but most with swords and bucklers. . .” Duarte Barbarosa (16th Century).

In the beginning of the present century, after the lifting of the ban, *kalaris* began to operate again in the North Malabar region. They are now eclectic institutions, training young men and women from all castes and communities, who have not yet reached the age of puberty. Some of the *gurukkals* were innovative and farsighted: Gurukkal Keeleri Kunhi Nannan began training young men and women to perform circus feats. That's how Tellicherry became the breeding ground for circus artistes; more than 90 per cent of Indian circus artistes in those pioneering days hailed from this region. Somehow, the *kalari* has its roots here. In fact, legend has it that some of the *gurukkals* migrated across the Asian continent and started training disciples in Japan. So, it is possible that kung fu and karate might have originated from the *kalaris* of Kerala although these martial arts perform a different function: “. . . Unlike many of the East Asian martial arts which developed as esoteric or specialised refinements removed from combat readiness, Kalarippayattu displays, even today, its heritage as a discipline for the training of combat-ready soldiers.” — Philip Zarilli & Adam Oliensis (*Blackbelt Magazine*).

**ANOTHER SPIN-OFF** of the *kalari* is the *parampara chikilsa*, or ‘traditional treatment’, which is an integral part of the discipline. The *gurukkal* is a repository of various kinds of knowledge. Apart from being skilled in martial-art techniques, he also has a thorough understanding of the human body and its various systems. As a warrior, he knows the *marmas* or ‘vulnerable parts’ which should be attacked or defended; as a physician he knows how these *marmas* should be cared for. Every year, for a fortnight, the trainees are given *uzhichil* or a special massage with medicated oils. Often, the *gurukkal* himself massages his stu-



*Leaps and twists: the most commonly used stances.*

dent, using both his hands and feet, in the traditional manner. He knows exactly how much pressure to apply where, and, in the process, attempts to relieve the body of its various physical blocks and disorders.

The *uzhichil* and other forms of treatment practised at the *kalari*, including the *sukha chikitsa* — a thorough overhauling of the entire body — find their application in everyday life. In fact, in Trivandrum, Gurukkal Govindan Kutty says that, financially, his dispensary is much more paying than his *kalari*. “If I were to give up practising *chikitsa*,” he says, examining the tiny dislocated wrist of a three-year old, “I would have to close my institution.”

**THE GURUKKAL IS DESPONDENT** about the future of Kalarippayattu in Kerala. “You see,” he says sadly, “I think that ultimately Kalarippayattu will be found only outside Kerala.” He talks of the many young students and researchers who come from all over the world, spend months training at his institute, and return to start classes of their own in various parts of the world. “But here, at home, we have not been able to persuade any agency to put this kind of physical train-

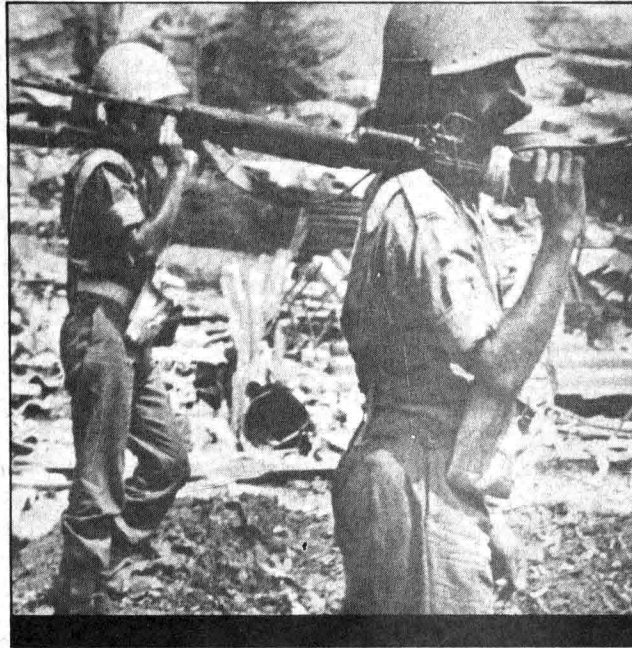
ing into practical use,” he bemoans.

Foreign observers and practitioners of Kalarippayattu are fascinated by the singular combination of mental and physical control which is taught at the *kalaris*. They find the interaction between the *gurukkal* and his students very beautiful, for the student is patiently taught by his perceptor to overcome his personal physical and mental blocks and develop in his *own* way. How valuable such an atmosphere would be in our various sports training institutions where the tenor of the relationship between coaches and their trainees is determined by short-term material gains.

And, as I admire a beautiful Japanese advertisement showing Satyanarayan kicking a ball high in the air in an action which would do a football hero proud, I wonder why this is. Given proper encouragement and orientation, can the *kalaris* of Kerala not produce gymnasts of international standing? Can the superb physical conditioning techniques of the *kalari* not be used in sports training institutions? In military institutions? In schools of theatre and dance? The possibilities seem immense. . . but perhaps they will always remain just possibilities. ♦



# The Indian Blunder



“India has lost all its wars” – the proposition seems incredible. But, says RAVI RIKHYE in his latest book, “The War That Never Was,” victory has to be defined in terms of a favourable strategic outcome, and not of casualties incurred and territory captured.

On these pages, Rikhye provides a detailed, if unconventional, analysis of India’s strategic failures since 1947 and the advantages subsequently lost in the 1962, 1965 and 1971 wars.

**T**HE PROPOSITION that we have lost all our wars may seem incredible. Everyone knows that 1947-48 was a favourable stalemate, 1962 was a loss, 1965 was a favourable stalemate and 1971 was an outright victory.

The problem is, how do we define “victory”?

Is it by the number of enemies killed? Then the Americans won in Vietnam, because they killed 10 times as many Vietnamese as the Vietnamese killed Americans.

Is it by the amount of equipment destroyed? Then the Germans must have won World War II, because they destroyed more tanks, ships, and aircraft of the Allies than the reverse.

Is it by amount of territory captured? Then the Arabs lost the 1973 war because Egypt’s gains across the canal were more than offset by Israel’s gains against Syria and in its counter-attack across the canal.

Now clearly none of these propositions is correct. The Americans lost in Vietnam, the Germans lost World War II, and the Israelis were defeated in 1973.

*Extracted from “The War That Never Was” by Ravi Rikhye, Chanakya Publications. Rs 125.*

Victory has to be defined not in terms of casualties or territory, but in terms of a favourable strategic outcome. Where there is no such outcome even an ostensible stalemate can actually imply a defeat.

Take 1947-48 first. What was India’s strategic aim? There seems to have been none, but a reasonable strategic aim would have been the recovery of our territory in Jammu and Kashmir and the elimination of Pakistan as a strategic threat.

Before the war started, we had all of Jammu and Kashmir. We are told that Jammu and Kashmir’s legal ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, signed a treaty acceding to India.

Here we should not worry about little things like did the Maharaja really sign, or are the documents forgeries, or did he sign of his own free will, after due deliberation of his and his subjects’ best interests, or wouldn’t it have been fairer to give the inhabitants a free vote. Defending North-west India, once an adversary is sitting on the Indus, is tough enough, defending it once that same adversary is also sitting astride the Chenab and Ravi, is impossible. Nehru was wrong to have agreed to Partition, but even he had the sense to see that Kashmir

could not be let go.

A very minor point. My critics often say the reason I demand the reunification of Pakistan and India is that I hanker after the loss of West Punjab, where my family comes from. Well, I was eight months old when I left West Punjab, so it is difficult to see what I would be hankering after. My question is, why do we not question the determination of the government to hold onto Kashmir in terms of the hankering of the Nehru dynasty after *their* homeland? Why is dying for Kashmir reasonable, but dying for West Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and the NWFP not satisfactorily explained? Perhaps if a Punjabi had been India’s first Prime Minister he would have given away Kashmir and kept West Punjab. Perhaps if a Southerner had been the country’s first Prime Minister he would have given away *both* Punjab and Kashmir. Who can tell?

We started with all of Kashmir as legally acceded to India, but when the war ended, on December 31, 1948, somehow we found ourselves with just all of Jammu, two-thirds of Srinagar, and one-third of the Northern districts.

That doesn’t look like a stalemate,

## EXTRACT

it looks like a defeat.

Unless, of course, we confront the thief in the night, and tell him: "I have saved all my gold, most of my silver, and you have raped only two of my three daughters, so I must reckon that neither of us has gained anything".

Far from Pakistan being eliminated as a strategic threat, its victory in capturing substantial parts of Kashmir has given it the strength to grow and to continue fighting for the next 40 years. That's no stalemate.

**ABOUT 1962, THERE** is no dispute: we lost, and that's all there is to it. A third of Ladakh came under Chinese occupation. The Chinese took over 400 Indian troops prisoner, largely from 4 Infantry Division. They had the Indians running to the plains, and then magnanimously made a unilateral withdrawal, making India look like total incompetent fools in the eyes of the world; worse, dependent on Chinese charity and goodwill to get back their territory in the North-east.

1965 appears to be a fair case of a stalemate: if the Pakistanis had made some headway in Khem Karan, then we had made equal headway in the Sialkot sector. Later I will explain why I account 1965 a defeat, and let the reader judge.

Surely 1971 was a great victory, but was it?

**CONSIDER THE COURSE** of events post 1971.

We certainly defeated the Pakistani Army in East Pakistan and took 93,000 prisoner, the largest bag since World War II for a single, multiple corps action. But did we weaken Pakistan in any way? No. Rather, we aided Pakistan by getting rid of its turbulent Eastern Wing, which would have seceded some day in any event.

Suddenly Pakistan became more compact, more homogenous, surer of its identity. With its identity based not just on the amorphous appeal of religion, but also on a concrete, easily understood geographical territory, it

became stronger.

During the Bangladesh crisis, scholars mightily laboured to show how the Western Wing had thrived on looting the Eastern Wing. By that criterion, the Eastern Wing should be booming economically, and the Western Wing limping along, denied of its surplus revenue and foreign exchange. Instead, the Eastern component is known as the international basket-case, and in the West, prosperity has reached the degree that you need Rs 800 a month to get a servant in Karachi or elsewhere. The Pakistani Rupee, in case anyone is interested in these minutiae, has the same black-market value as the Indian Rupee. So that is 800 real rupees, not what the government says is a Rupee.

Pakistan should never again have been a military threat, but somehow it had, by 1973, eroded the margin of superiority that we enjoyed prior to the war. Of course, India has recovered that margin, even increased it, but that has been by spending much more on defence.

Pakistan not only survived another 16 years after the 1971 war, but continues to thrive. And soon, one day, when it gets the bomb, its survival will be ensured for another 50 years.

We should have had a pleasant neighbour in Bangladesh; instead, the level of hostility between the new nation and India is as high, if not higher, than was the case between the two wings of Pakistan. Then, the energies of the Pakistan Bengalis went in hating the West Punjabis. Now their energies go in hating all Indians.

In 1971, before the outbreak of the Civil War, East Pakistan had one four-brigade division of the Pakistan Army. That was the extent of the threat we faced. Today Bangladesh maintains five divisions and 14 brigades against India.

In 1971, before Pakistan's second partition, the politics of the East were tied with the politics of the West. Now that the East has become an independent actor, we find another player in the subcontinent nations against India. That, however, is not

the full extent of the damage caused to India. Earlier, the US and China had a single chance to influence Pakistan; now they have two chances — twice as many opportunities because Pakistan is now two.

**CAN THIS BE CALLED** a victory?

We liberated 70 million Bengalis and gave them their own country. But we liberated not one Indian under Pakistani occupation, nor one square mile of our territory under China's occupation. That is a defeat and no arguments about it.

Nor can we console ourselves with hairsplitting logic about how we never intended to do this or that. In the game of power, all that counts are your results. Your intentions are there simply to keep you warm and pious when you have actually lost. So saying we never intended to liberate Kashmir is a big lie: nothing that General K P Candeth did in 1971 on the Western front makes any sense at all unless we accept that liberation of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir was his aim.

The difference between what happened to General Candeth and to General Aurora is simple. In the latter's case, the Americans had no interest in seeing East Pakistan survive, and the Chinese had no strength to help Islamabad. In General Candeth's case, the Government of India did not have the courage to stand up to the United States and liberate Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. One General had the backing of his government because it was put to no great test. The other was let down because backing him required great courage, and this the government lacked.

Now let's take a look at the four wars from a slightly different perspective than is usual in India.

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### 1947-48

**IN 1949 INDIA** planned to recover its losses in Kashmir. We had over 4,00,000 men under arms at this time — three times more than Pakistan — as well as clear superiority in the air. It had taken our generals 16 long



months to get the hang of things. But nonetheless, not an unreasonable period considering the experience of other armies, and hardly surprising seeing that the Indian Army at Independence had only three brigadier-rank officers with command experience.

The critic can say that Pakistan was in even worse shape, so how did it manage to hang on to what it had seized at the start? India, at least, got more or less three divisions complete and most of the logistics and training bases of the joint Indian Army. If we had three experienced brigadiers, Pakistan had none, and not even a division with any semblance of completeness. That Pakistan had to rely so much on its undisciplined, murderous tribals is probably less a reflection of its clever strategy to show the world it was not informed and that genuine native tribals were doing the fighting than a realistic appraisal of its army's limits.

The Army's performance, or lack of performance, is irrelevant to our analysis. Our point is, simply, that given its numerical superiority and the advantage of a long war, the Army would eventually have prevailed and won back all of Kashmir. The spring offensive would have been launched in April 1949, and probably, by September or October of that year, the issue would have clinched irrevocably in our favour.

Can we imagine our world without the all-pervasive, all-encompassing problem of a divided Kashmir? No, because we have lived with this wound for so long that we have come to look upon it as our natural condition.

With all Kashmir in our hands, the history of post-Independence India should be different.

Alas, it was not to be, and a cease-fire was rung down. Why?

Because Pandit Nehru, that great and lovable leader of our nation, gave in to his need to maintain his internationalist image as a man of reason, a man of peace; a man open to negotiate any issue, even the territory of

his country.

Nowhere did he think that the perpetuated division of Kashmir would cripple India in the years to come, physically and emotionally.

The need to maintain his image must take precedence over the nation.

## 1962

**IN 1962 INDIA LOST.** But it could have won. How?

Simply by refusing to accept the Chinese unilateral cease-fire. Simply by uttering the words: "The Government of India is determined to go on fighting till every inch of its soil is freed from enemy occupation."

But would that not have prolonged the war? A war that we could not have won because we were already defeated?

No. Because, with the onset of the hard winter, the Chinese would have had to retire. They could not maintain their troops on the snowy, Southern side of the Himalayas as they had outrun their communications in their rapid advance into India. Their entire winter policy for Tibet, to this day, calls for leaving the bare minimum forward, and withdrawing the rest to warm, permanent bases till the spring. Even in the warm weather they maintain only a third of a unit up: a regiment will post a battalion forward, and the rest will remain in comfortable quarters till required.

There was no way in which China could have maintained 20,000 troops inside India through the winter, relying on a couple of temporary one-tonne roads for supply.

A setback is not a defeat. The Russians retreated 1,000 kilometres across their own country, suffering the heaviest casualties in the history of war. But they managed to stabilise the front and return to take Berlin.

A defeat is in the mind: if you do not give in, you can never be defeated.

The fighting for Thagla Ridge began in September 1962. By the time of the cease-fire, over 36 infantry battalions were in the theatre, the equivalent of four divisions. The Tha-

par plan for the defence of the Northeast, formulated in 1959, required three divisions for a sure defence of this sensitive area. Now India had the equivalent of four, plus the equivalent of an independent armoured brigade waiting on the South bank of the Brahmaputra in case the Chinese crossed into the Indian plains.

The Chinese had perhaps the equivalent of four regiments (one and one-third divisions) against India along the Western axis (Bomdila), and elements of a division against the Eastern axis (Walong). A Chinese division was much lighter in terms of engineers, transport and artillery.

Most important, India had a very fine air force of 500 combat aircraft, totally outclassing anything China possessed or anything it could operate out of Tibet.

Even though we had superiority on the ground, we gave in. And the Air Force was never used. Why? Because the Americans told us that we should not provoke the far superior, totally non-existent, Chinese air force. **Our Hunters and Gnats** would have ripped the Chinese MiG-15s and MiG-17s to pieces, and our Canberras would have pounded their attack into the ground. Every tonne of fuel and ordnance required by the Chinese air force had to be brought across 2,000-kilometres of mountain road. We operated from large, well-connected bases in Eastern India. How long could the Chinese have even flown against us, leave alone fight?

Our magnificent Air Force, however, was stood down, and the army milled around putting more and more troops into the Northeast will. Within a year, there were eight large divisions in place.

We are not trotting out all the old, well-justified criticisms of the Army and the higher command, about how they failed India before the attack and how they bungled the defence of Towang. This has all been thrashed out before.

We accept that everyone did a bad job before the war and when it broke out. Our point is simply this: even

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after all the setbacks, all the disasters, India could have made a realistic assessment of the adversary, its limits, and our strength. We had only to keep our nerve, or at least recover it, after the initial setbacks.

Had the Army been told to go on fighting, it would have done so. After all, death is all a soldier faces, and for a soldier there are fates a lot worse than death.

The Army, however, was not told to continue. The Air Force was not ordered into action. No one ordered the bombing of Lhasa, Gyanste, Shigatse. There was no Lt Col Doolittle on our side, to make a symbolic – but what a symbol – raid on China. No one determinedly got together a naval task force to sail off Canton and to lob a few shells at that city. Nothing was done, substantial or symbolic, except a grateful acceptance of the cease-fire by a wholly shaken leadership, and by a Nehru so destroyed that he was broken and dead not long after.

### 1965

**THE 1965 WAR**, we are told, was a draw. I had, earlier, even gone as far as to say that actually it was a victory, because Pakistan wanted to take Kashmir, or at least a substantial part of Indian Kashmir, whereas India wanted only to defend itself. So Pakistan failed and we succeeded. They were defeated but we were victorious. Or so I believed for a long time.

Sometimes it happens that a piece of information in your possession is later assessed very differently, because you are looking at the entire matter from a different perspective. Talking to the Army after the 1965 war, I learnt that troops at the front had noticed that Pakistan's firing rates for its artillery, and its air sorties, had started to fall off a few days before the cease-fire. This information was not correctly assessed at the time, because no one really studied the Pakistan-US military relationship, or knew how the US dealt with its smaller allies to prevent them from drag-

ging it into a war not of its choice. It was obvious that the firing rates were falling off at a time when India was threatening Lahore and Sialkot because Pakistan's ammunition was running out.

The US had embargoed military supplies to both countries on the outbreak of war. As Pakistan was at least 70 per cent equipped with American arms, this was a very severe blow. As India had perhaps 5 per cent American arms, this was of absolutely no consequence. So no fresh supplies were reaching Pakistan with the possible exception of some minor, clandestine shipments from Iran.

It was the Americans' practice to give its ally the capability of resisting an enemy attack for about two weeks. After that, should it be deemed necessary, the US would arrive with its own forces. Its allies were, in effect, to maintain just trip-wire forces.

With the Pakistanis running out of ammunition, but with India just getting into its stride, this was the time to press the attack and go for broke. The first of the mountain divisions from the Northeast had come up. The 23 Mountain Division out of Rangia and its lead brigade had just entered action on the outskirts of Lahore. Whereas Pakistan's strength was declining, ours was increasing.

Instead of stepping up the offensive, we again accepted a cease-fire, this time pressurised by the Soviets. And brave little Shastri, the man who surprised the Pakistanis by crossing the international frontier in retaliation for the attack of the Pakistan 7 Infantry Division at Chhamb-Akhnur, went to negotiate with Ayub Khan at Tashkent.

Shastri had no particular need, like Nehru and his successors, of being seen as a man of peace. He was not addressing any international community. But he was an Indian. And the one thing you can count on is an Indian giving up when he is ahead.

An English sports commentator once said that the Indians were unique in the world in that they could always

be counted on to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

There is something about being an Indian that enables us all to make the most heroic of sacrifices, and then, when our goal is just within actual reach, we collapse all over the place.

Have you ever seen a street argument in India? Say two scooter drivers are involved in a collision with each other, but neither is hurt. It may clearly be the fault of one, but the inevitable crowd that gathers from nowhere will, after listening in great detail to the arguments of both sides, insist on a compromise. The man who is right may not see the need for a compromise, but should he persist in refusing one, the crowd will turn hostile to side with the guilty party.

Whatever happened leading up to the accident, whoever was innocent or guilty, there *has* to be a compromise, you have to compromise or you're violating the tacit rules that we Indians live by.

**THIS IS WHY IT** is so easy to talk us into compromising, even when we have no reason to compromise, when doing so is against our own interests. India cannot go that last extra mile, grit its teeth and to hell with everyone, we'll do what's right for us. It's so much easier to simply punch the other guy in the nose, break his tooth in retaliation for the bloody nose he has given you, to make your point, assuage your wounded ego, and then go home to brag about how you defeated the other, than to stand there and slog it out till he falls.

When we realise how close we were to victory in 1965, then what we suffered was a defeat.

I am perfectly aware that the Pakistanis on their side feel betrayed by Ayub Khan. They feel that they were going to win and that there was no need to go in for talks.

When we say India was going to win, it is because of objective analysis, not because we wish to boost India.

At that time, Pakistan had its 12



Division in Kashmir, 7 Division in Chhamb, hastily raised 6 Armoured Division and 9 Division as reserves located in the Sialkot sector, 15 Division at Sialkot, 10 Division at Lahore, 11 Division at Kasur along with a crack 1 Armoured Division nearby, 8 Division in Sind, and 14 Division in East Pakistan. The 11 Division, like the 6 Armoured, had been hastily raised. The two armoured divisions on strength belied the reality that Pakistan had actually converted its 106 Independent Armoured Brigade into a division by breaking out reserve tanks without US permission, by diluting tank crews in other regiments and by incorporating its self-propelled tank destroyers into new armoured regiments. This hodge-podge arrangement meant that Pakistan's armour was much less effective than a seasoned armoured division and an independent armoured brigade.

Pakistan's 7 Division had to be pulled back to the Sialkot-Lahore sector when Indian XI corps crossed the international frontier in the Punjab: Pakistan had to forget its plan to reach Akhnur and cut the Jammu-Akhnur Poonch road. Its 6 Armoured Division and 15 Infantry Division were opposing the advance of Indian I Corps from Kathua-Samba. Its 10 Division was opposing the advance of Indian 15 Division out of Amritsar. Its 8 Division was opposing Indian 11 Division in the desert, plus an independent brigade. That left its reconstituted 7 and previously uncommitted 9 Divisions as reserves, and the 1 Armoured and 11 Infantry Division opposed by Indian 4 Division and 2 Independent Armoured Brigade.

Because Pakistan had almost reached Akhnur and because it had made a shallow penetration at Khem Karan, it could delude itself that it was winning. Particularly since its Navy had just smacked the nose of the much more powerful Indian Navy by shelling Dwarka, and its compact, efficient air force had inflicted disproportionate casualties on the larger, more diffuse, and still under raising Indian Air Force.

**BUT NOW LET'S LOOK** at the line-up from the Indian side.

In the North we had our 3 Infantry Division out of Leh, which could spare two brigades to attack Pakistan's Northern areas. In Kashmir we had our larger 19 and 25 Divisions compared to just one large division for Pakistan.

In the stretch between Akhnur and Pathankot we had no less than five divisions, equal to half of Pakistan's entire army. These divisions were 10 Division (Akhnur), 26 Division (Jammu) and I Corps with 1 Armoured, 6 Mountain and 14 Divisions. Plus Jammu held the 3 Independent Armoured Brigade. In the Punjab we had three divisions and an independent armoured brigade under XI Corps; 15 and 4 Mountain Divisions have already been mentioned; plus we had 7 Division at Ferozepur. But another division, 23 Mountain, had moved up and was entering action. And Pakistan had virtually lost its 1 Armoured Division at Khem Karan. India had nine divisions including one armoured and two independent armoured brigades between Akhnur and Ferozepur. Pakistan had left six divisions including one armoured.

India also had the equivalent of another division in loose brigades, one under formation, and seven mountain divisions in the East. Of these seven, at least one, 8 Division, could have been spared without weakening the Northeast defences. Whereas in 1959 three divisions had been postulated for a firm defence, withdrawing 8 Division would have left India with six divisions.

This would have given an effective one armoured and ten infantry divisions, plus one armoured brigade (leaving aside 2 (I) Armoured Brigade which we deduct on account of casualties, as we have deducted Pakistan I Armoured Division). On Pakistan's side there were one armoured and five infantry divisions.

If we assign an infantry division a value of 1, an armoured division a value of 3, and the independent armoured brigade a value of 2 (as being

more than half as strong as an armoured division) we get a total of 15 for India and 8 for Pakistan. Using Lancaster's equation, we square each side's combat power and get 225 for India and 64 for Pakistan, or a 3.5 to 1 superiority.

Assume further that after another two weeks of fighting, India loses the equivalent of three infantry divisions and an independent armoured brigade, whereas Pakistan loses two infantry divisions and half its remaining armoured division. (India's losses would be greater because we were attacking.) Then India's combat power reduces to 100 and Pakistan's to 20, or a five to one superiority. In the next two weeks this would have meant the end of Pakistan.

Our crude model supposes India attacks equally in the Sialkot and Lahore sectors. But if India had concentrated its forces in one, the favourable outcome would come sooner than the four additional weeks of war we have estimated.

It is true that by the end of the three weeks' fighting we were running low on ammunition. But Pakistan was in worse shape because it started with only two weeks' stocks. So we were better off relatively. And because we had much more force to begin with, a downward slide in efficiency due to losses, ammunition shortages and inadequacy of equipment would hurt Pakistan more than us.

Meanwhile, the Navy could have made its attacks against Pakistan. As for the IAF, the greater number of aircraft it lost was of no consequence: we had over 500 combat aircraft to Pakistan's 170. Every single Pakistani aircraft lost was irreplaceable, but we had plenty more in stock. By the time the numbers became something like 90 to 350 for India, Pakistan would have lost the air battle.

Yet, none of this was going to happen overnight. The two countries had been at war for a little over two weeks, and probably another two weeks would have been required for the state of attrition described above to come about on land and in the air.

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So give another two weeks after that, say six weeks in all, and Lahore and Sialkot would surely have fallen.

But of course, when we barely managed to hold out psychologically in a two-week war, with an extra few days added for the initial defence of Chhamb-Akhnur, then there was no question of a six-week war.

**ANALYSING THE 1971** war presents special problems because we have no access to the actual strategic plan used for the West.

Consider, nonetheless, the situation in the West as of December 16, 1971 while the cease-fire in the East was being signed.

Pakistan had 12 divisions in its West, disposed as follows:

Uri-Tithwal sector: 12 Division (over strength)

Poonch-Akhnur sector: 23 Division (over strength)

Sialkot sector: 8 and 15 Divisions, 2 and 8 (I) Armoured Brigades, elements of 6 Armoured Division

Lahore sector: 10 and 11 Divisions, 3 (I) Armoured Brigade

Sind/Multan: 18 and 33 Divisions  
Southern Strike Force: 1 Armoured and 7 Division

Northern Strike Force: 6 Armoured Division (-) and one-third of 17 Division.

The Northern Strike Force was held up trying to slow the Indian drive on Shakergarh town and was not free for action elsewhere. One brigade of 6 Armoured Division was already engaged on the Basanter River against 16 (I) Brigade, a clash between several squadrons on each side, wrongly described by an over-enthusiastic Indian press as the biggest tank battle since World War II.

The 17 Division had already given up brigades to 23 Division for the Chhamb assault and to IV Corps (Lahore) to strengthen the defences there. It had only one uncommitted brigade left. Since the Indians were grinding forward by sheer force, not only would all of the remaining Northern Strike Force become committed, troops would have had to be pul-

led down from Kashmir and up from Lahore to hold the Indian attack once Shakergarh fell.

Pakistan's only free reserves at this time were in the Southern Strike Force. The 1 Armoured and 7 Divisions were fresh and uncommitted. Nominally, 33 Division was also under this force, but it had detached a brigade for Sind, to aid 18 Division, and another was reinforcing the Multan sector defences, held primarily by 105 (I) and 25 (I) Brigades from Sulimanke and Bhawalpur respectively.

### **NOW CONSIDER INDIA'S** line up:

North: 3 Division at Leh, with two brigades to spare.

Uri-Tithwal: 19 Division, almost equal in size to Pakistan's 12 Division

Poonch-Rajouri-Mendhar: 25 Division (over strength)

Two other brigades on the line north of Akhnur

Akhnur-Jammu: 10 Division (over strength) and 26 Division, 3 (I) Armoured Brigade

Sialkot: 36, 39, 54 Divisions, with 2, 14 and 16 (I) Brigades

Amritsar-Ferozepur: 7, 14 and 15 Divisions plus ad hoc armoured brigade

Fazilka (Foxtrot Sector): 1 Armoured and (-) Division plus three brigades.

Desert: 11 and 12 Divisions plus two brigades.

To summarise, we had 15 divisions of which one (3 Division out of Leh) was partially oriented towards China, to Pakistan's 12. Pakistan's Southern Strike Force was intact, and it was slightly better off in that our answer to the strike force, 1 Armoured and 9 was not a homogenous or a cross trained force. HQ II Corps, which controlled the two Indian divisions on the date of the Eastern cease-fire had actually come back to the West after having spent the better part of the year in Eastern Command, preparing for, and then participating in the Bangladesh campaign. The 9 Division was normally based at Ranchi as a counter to Pakistan's 14 Division

in the East.

Against that however, India's Foxtrot Sector held more than a division's worth of troops. A lot of India's strength just does not show up as divisions, but it is viable combat strength anyway.

The Indian Army has always obtained fewer divisions for a given number of men than Pakistan because (1) our territory is larger, implying more line of communication troops and (2) we tend to have an enormous number of less than division-sized units, such as independent brigades, independent battalions and ad hoc task forces.

For example, though officially India had four armoured brigades during the 1971 war, actually it had 5, because (as mentioned earlier) one ad hoc brigade was constituted from spare odds and ends. These were available to us because we had more armoured regiments than Pakistan.

Similarly, Foxtrot Sector was actually a division plus, though it did not appear as such because it was not given a divisional flag. In the Western armies it would have been given a divisional number so that at least the Army would not confuse itself.

The GOC of Foxtrot Sector was a Major General. He had under his command, or available to him 67 (I) Brigade at Fazilka, 51 Parachute Brigade at Ganganagar, and 163 Brigade out of Leh at Suratgarh. Additionally, he had an ad hoc force consisting of three engineer regiments and two infantry battalions at Abohar (though General K P Candeth says it was one, not two infantry battalions). This is not a recommended use of engineers, a scarce and precious commodity in a shooting war, but being fully trained as infantry, in emergencies they can be so used.

So Foxtrot Sector was actually equivalent to an over strength division, and we should not be surprised to learn one day that there were even more troops available, floating around somewhere or the other.

**IF WE HAD EXAMINED** the map on



the outbreak of the war, the way the Army would want us to look at the map, we would have seen the odd brigade or two and our 1 Armoured Division in the Fazilka Abohar area, whereas on Pakistan's side was its full II Corps out of Multan with 1 Armoured and 33 Divisions. So the situation would have appeared much to our disadvantage, particularly because the front here is wide open to large-scale armoured movement.

During the war, when Pakistan's 7 Division failed to appear in the J & K sector, its normal war station, there was alarm in the Western Command: this division could have moved southward to join Pakistan II Corps, to make a powerful force for an attack against Fazilka southward, thus neutralising our Sialkot push.

We have noted that equality on the ground existed before 7 Division actually moved southward. The Army, which appeared to be taking a risk in leaving such a vital area of Punjab/Rajasthan so lightly covered, was actually not risking anything.

Now consider the way events in battle wreck the best-laid plans. With 7 Division joining Pakistan II Corps, we were at a definite disadvantage. But when Pakistan learnt of Indian 12 Division's proposed attack towards Islamgarh and Tanot, it faced a serious problem: against India's desert force of two divisions and two independent brigades it had available only one division out of Hyderabad.

Its 16<sup>th</sup> Division was earmarked as a reserve for this vast sector, but 16 Division was in East Pakistan, sent there in March 1971 to help stem the revolt. The 33 Division had been hurriedly raised in a period of six months to replace this division. It had, however, to do dual duty as a reserve and as a partner of Armoured Division. A brigade from it was detached to throw off the attack of Indian 12 Division. Then a brigade went to reinforce Pakistan's 18 Division which was slowly giving way against the Indian 11 Division's advance along the Khokrapar Naya Chor axis.

So we may guess that Pakistan's

7 Division, trained for years to operate in Kashmir, had to be sent southward to face the Foxtrot Sector. The Army may not have wanted the Indian public to see a division on the Foxtrot Sector, but Pakistan GHQ saw it and a vital reinforcement for Poonch was diverted. This had its repercussions in Poonch sector where, it will be recalled, the Pakistan Army failed to break through despite much effort. The 7 Division would have made the difference between stalemate and victory.

\* \* \*

**TO RETURN TO THE** main argument: at the time of the Eastern cease-fire, India had a clear superiority in the West, partially because it had started moving troops from the Eastern to the Western theatre. Thus, India was quite capable of continuing the war. Further reinforcements would have come if required: chief among these were 4 Division and 6 Division. (4 Division has always been part of the general reserves available to the Indian Army and 6 Division, while nominally assigned to the Western UP border, is always available to the West because the terrain in its area is so extreme that a single independent brigade can protect the area.)

In addition to these two divisions were two more: 8 and 57 Divisions, the Northeast counter-insurgency formations, which had participated in the war as part of IV Corps on East Pakistan's easternmost flank.

Undoubtedly, time was needed to shift them to the West. India did a fairly efficient job of rapidly transferring about 20,000 troops from HQ II Corps, HQ 9 Division, three brigades, plus tank and artillery regiments. At the most, three weeks would have been required for shifting four additional divisions.

With the equivalent of 20 divisions to Pakistan's 12, the war in the West could have been over in the short order.

It can be seen that we had superiority on the ground. What about at

sea and in the air?

**THE INDIAN NAVY'S** raid on Karachi had, we know from subsequent Pakistani accounts, totally demoralised the Pakistanis. A simultaneous raid on Gwader, Pakistan's main submarine base, was called off even as the attacking task force was underway, partly because of the loss of INS Khukri to a Pakistani submarine. Had this raid been reconstituted, and later perhaps two infantry battalions landed in Pakistan's extreme west, its demoralisation with regard to its sea flank would have been complete.

Similarly, the Indian Air Force. The true count for our losses was over 95 compared to 72 all types for the PAF. That still left us 700 combat aircraft and additional reinforcements available from the Soviet Union.

Pakistan was reduced to about 250 aircraft. Its reinforcements, from Jordan and Libya, were insignificant: 10 F-104s from the former, and five F-5As from the latter. Saudi Arabia sent perhaps two C-130 transports. To this day no satisfactory explanation exists for Col Gaddafi's dispatch of the F-5As. Not being a PAF type, the transfer was pointless. A few of his Mirages, on the other hand, would have been most welcome.

India had an enormous reservoir of military force available to destroy Pakistan. What was missing was the will.

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1971

**IT IS MY BELIEF THAT** the 1971 War had three vital objectives, of which only one was the liberation of East Pakistan. The other two were the liberation of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and the destruction of Pakistan's war potential for 20 years, thus establishing India's supremacy once and for all.

It is my belief that with the liberation achieved, the government abandoned the other two objectives because of American pressure, and that the pressure itself was a bluff.

My evidence comes from a variety

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of apparently disconnected facts, but which yield a connected pattern on closer examination. Consider some of them.

The Army had budgeted for 40,000 casualties, easily three times those incurred in two weeks of fighting. Obviously a longer war was expected.

Lt-Gen K P Candeth's entire plan for the Sialkot sector, where India deployed five infantry divisions and three independent armoured brigades, makes sense only if we assume that he intended XI and XV Corps to eliminate the entire Sialkot salient, prior to turning north to outflank Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. In conjunction with frontal attacks by 19 and 25 Divisions in Kashmir, this would have cracked the front and POK would have fallen.

The Kashmir divisions more or less stood by defensively, letting the Pakistanis do the attacking. This makes no sense unless the idea was to let the Pakistanis expend their strength before India launched a counter-offensive.

Southern Command launched a large, corps-sized force into Sind. Its objectives were exceptionally clear: to cut the line of communication between Karachi and Lahore at two points, Hyderabad City and Rahim Yar Khan. The secondary objectives which we must not mistake for the primary ones, were to draw down Pakistani reserves from all over Pakistan, thus easing the task of Indian troops advancing in other sectors, and to occupy as much of Sind as possible, to exchange for possible losses elsewhere.

**THE INDIAN XI CORPS** defending Punjab, with greater strength than the opposing Pakistan IV Corps, contented itself with a defensive role, making no move to attack Pakistan. This makes no sense unless we again say that the objective was to conserve our strength before attacking the enormously strong Lahore defences, allowing breakthroughs to be made at other points, namely in the North by I and XV Corps and in the South

by Southern Command.

Negotiations to end the fighting in the East were being mooted by Farman Ali, East Pakistan's governor, as early as December 10, after the fall of Jessore. By December 12 the process was in full swing because it was clear that Pakistan could not hold out.

The cease-fire was signed on December 16. Yet every single major Indian formation from Ferozepur to Uri and its counterpart on Pakistan's side was getting ready for major offensives on December 17 and 19. As the war in the East wound down, both sides planned to step up the war in the West.

Pakistan had reduced its air sorties to the minimum required to defend its air bases. It had, from the start of the war, kept four squadrons in reserve. Now it even shipped aircraft to Iran to protect them from the war ranging Indian marauders. Concurrently, it avoided committing its two armoured divisions. Clearly, it was conserving forces for an anticipated long war.

Even as Washington was demanding assurances that India had no territorial objectives in Kashmir, India while quite willing to reassure Washington that it had no designs on Pakistan, steadily refused to provide any guarantees on Kashmir and limit our options there. Considering that we took the possibility of American and Chinese intervention very seriously, our refusal to defuse this point with Washington, which had accepted that we would detach the Eastern wing, makes no sense unless we had plans to recover Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

**WHAT IS THE ARMY'S** reaction to my thesis? Consistent rejection at the senior flag officer level, and a "makes sense, but no one tells us *anything*" reaction from other officers.

Senior military men and civilians refute my contention as follows:

India's strategy was offensive-defensive. This means that we had strategic defensive goals – the defence of our territory – and nothing else. To-

wards this end, we launched limited counter-offensives to (1) keep the adversary off balance, and (2) gain territory for the inevitable exchanges during subsequent negotiations. We cannot let him hit us first because that gives him the initiative, and we cannot stop him from taking some ground somewhere. Thus the offensive-defensive strategy.

Our grand strategy was strictly limited to liberating East Pakistan.

We continued fighting in the West and planning for a continuation of the war only to prevent Pakistan from undertaking any last minute adventure in the West in retaliation for the loss of the East wing.

As we had no wider aims, there was no question of giving in to American pressure. In fact, American claims that we had objectives in the West are so manifestly untrue that Washington must have had other, malafide, objectives in sending the *Enterprise*, such as helping the Pakistan Army in the East, or at least, covering a withdrawal. If America did not ultimately intervene it was because we

- moved too fast
- the Soviets deterred the 7th Fleet
- Washington had the good sense not to intervene

or some combination of the above.

**THE COUNTER EXPLANATION** sounds reasonable, in the quiet, low-key, intelligent manner that Indian decision-makers like to be perceived.

Our reply is:

If we lacked objectives in the West, why did we act in a manner calculated to make the Pakistanis believe that we were about to attack there? India had crossed the international frontier in the East on November 21, 1971, without provoking a Pakistani attack in the West. Pakistan had, after all, realised right from 1947 that it could not defend its Eastern wing without a counter-offensive in the West.

**So why did this counter-offensive not come on November 21? Clearly, the Pakistanis, at least, were willing**



to separate the issue of war in the East and a possible response in the West.

We know this kind of separation has been a recurring theme in Pakistani strategic thought.

— In 1947-48, both sides limited fighting to Kashmir.

— In 1965 Pakistan attacked Kashmir, again assuming that India would, on previous precedent, keep the conflict confined and would not cross the international frontier. Pakistan was proved wrong on one hand, because India attacked Sialkot and Lahore. On the other hand, however, it was proved correct: India made no move against East Pakistan, despite the nine divisions available to the Eastern Command compared to Pakistan's single division out of Dacca.

— In 1971, the involvement of the Indian armed forces, mainly the BSF and the Army, in the rebellion in the East became overt from about May, but Pakistan did not retaliate, for example, by sending infiltrators into Kashmir or making probes in the desert.

Thus war in the West was avoidable. Clearly Pakistan hoped to avoid war, remaining quiet for 13 days while several Indian brigades established strong positions inside East Pakistan.

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**THERE WAS NO NEED** to attack in the West just to prevent reinforcement of the East. Pakistan GHQ had already refused General Niazi's requests for two more divisions when the tenor of India's build-up became clear. With only 12 divisions left in the West, including two (17 and 33 Divisions) raised in extremely hurried fashion, for Pakistan to further weaken the West by reinforcing the East was to tempt India into attacking. Further, the naval blockade of East Pakistan was already in place in November. Reinforcement from the air could have provided only troops with their individual weapons. And, had India found it necessary, it would

have mounted an air blockade of the East after the war began on November 21. Remember, Pakistan was outnumbered about ten to one in the air in the East, which contributed significantly to the rapidity of our victory.

If our strategy was offensive-defensive, then why did we not also attack in Kashmir and Punjab, instead of limiting our offensive to the Pathankot sector? This requires further amplification.

It may be easily accepted that we have to pre-empt Pakistan by attacking Pathankot. The 50-kilometre deep corridor is too shallow to absorb a Pakistani first strike. Equally acceptable is the proposition that India must attack in the desert to obtain territory for further negotiation and to force dispersal of Pakistani reserves.

But then why did we not attack from Chhamb? Chhamb is so hard to hold that only an immediate swift attack towards Marala can protect it. Just as we cannot prevent Pakistan from gaining some ground wherever it attacks, Pakistan must lose ground wherever we attack. An offensive-defensive strategy requires us to attack all across the front.

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**THIS SAD HISTORY** of wrong strategic decisions, missed opportunities, and serious lack of will in the highest leadership is bad enough, but there are three other examples where hesitation and confusion at the top has led to incalculable consequences.

In 1975, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was assassinated. Though Mrs Indira Gandhi first considered intervention and though the Army alerted three divisions, in the end the government hesitated and the moment passed. The result: our chance to keep Bangladesh in our camp vanished. India would have been fully justified in intervening under the same doctrine that lets the Soviet Union intervene in Poland and Afghanistan and the Americans intervene in Nicaragua and Grenada. In 1984, Mrs Gandhi had decided on intervention in Sri Lanka. Troop ships began loading

out 54 Division from Vishakapatnam for the sea-borne invasion, and 50 (I) Parachute Brigade was ready for a combined parachute and air landed insertion. Mrs Gandhi hesitated, again losing the moment. Later, problems in the Punjab and her death put to an end all hopes for an effective Indian intervention. The result: escalating ethnic violence, increased foreign intervention on our borders, a real possibility that Sri Lanka will break up, and an increase in the tensions in Tamil Nadu in particular and the South in general. While she did go through with Operation Meghdoot, the Siachin operation, it was a side show, kept localised for fear of escalation, and resulted in nothing except an endless drain of resources and an average of 60 casualties a month for the last three years.

In 1986, a small Chinese troop detachment intruded into our territory in the Sumdruchung Valley. A few months later we panicked at the possibility of Pakistani intervention in the Punjab where an actual Chinese aggression had taken place. But did Delhi want to hear about it, talk about it, do something about it? No, Delhi is doing its best to sweep the whole thing under the carpet. In October 1986 a brigade with the rest of a division behind it was concentrated to evict the Chinese. Since the Chinese positions cannot be defended, probably their troops would have evacuated had we politely asked them to leave. Instead, the attack was postponed repeatedly, until finally it was given up altogether. All the wrong signals have been conveyed to Beijing. China knows it can push us around, and the betting is that this is exactly what it plans to do.

We have already made some general comments about India's inability to make that little extra effort to ensure success. Aside from the lack of will, however, in all the security crises mentioned, there have been very serious misperceptions of adversary behaviour. Why do we go on repeating these mistakes?

Because we lack a Red Team. ♦



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MR. NUSLIN WADIA  
CHAIRMAN

## CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT 108TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

In my statement to the shareholders last year I had said that "...I am optimistic that the prospects of your Company for the current year will be better than last year. However, I make this statement on the assumption that no extraneous factors or unnecessary impediments are placed in our path". The note of optimism was subsequently justified by the good performance of the Company both in the Textile Division and in the DMT Division for the year ended March 1988. The DMT plant produced efficiently and at high throughput. The Textile Division also performed reasonably well though the margins were squeezed because of enormous increases in the cost of raw materials. During the year ended March 1988 the prices of cotton have more than doubled and the cost of polyester fibre and filament have virtually remained unchanged. On the other hand the prices of cotton fabrics have increased by about 15% only and prices of synthetic textiles have re-

mained at or below their old levels due to fierce competition making it impossible for the mills to pass on the exorbitant cost increases on cotton and other inputs to the consumer. Because of the continuous modernisation of its plant and equipment and the efficient running of the mills, we have been able to increase exports considerably and are less dependent on the difficult domestic market. Total exports amounted to Rs 32.16 crore for the year under review, an increase of about 30% over the previous year.

The textile industry today is in considerable difficulty; expert reports on its working and the reports of the results of well known and established textile groups support this contention. The offtake of cloth was lower in 1987 than in the previous years, and simultaneously the margins were under constant pressure. The prospects for the current year, though not any brighter, could improve in view of the good monsoon we all expect this year. This will, hopefully, reduce the cost of one raw material, cotton, from the very high levels it has climbed to presently. It is also expected to improve the demand for cloth. However, despite the Government having given substantial concession by reducing the excise duty on polyester fibre and filament, the prices have not gone down, but are now at higher levels than those prevailing last year.

The DMT Division has, during the first four months of this year, produced at full capacity. The plant is operating very efficiently and this, in turn, limits any major contribution management can make to the division's profit. It is, at this time that the "extraneous factors or unnecessary impediments" to which I had referred in my statement last year have affected us and have put the DMT operations in serious difficulty. I therefore consider it my duty to narrate to the shareholders

the sequence of events which have created the current situation.

Paraxylene constitutes the single largest cost element in the manufacture of DMT. The price of paraxylene at the end of 1987 and the beginning of 1988 averaged \$410 per tonne which at the then prevailing import duty of 85% worked out to a landed cost of Rs 10,200 per tonne. Thereafter the international price of paraxylene rose relentlessly till it reached a level of \$680 per tonne. Yet, on March 2nd 1988, just two days after the budget, the Government raised the import duty on paraxylene from 85% to 120%. This increase coupled with the rise in the international price of paraxylene and a fall in the rupee has taken its landed cost from Rs 10,200 to a staggering level of over Rs 21,000 today – a jump of over 105%. What is relevant is the fact that out of the total increase of about Rs 11,000, as much as Rs 7,000 is accounted for by the increase in import duty.

In order to offset the immediate effect of the duty increase your Company began to take a deposit of Rs 2,500 per tonne from polyester manufacturers with an assurance that this would be given up when the Government rectified the mistake, for we truly believe it was owing to an error of calculation that the duty was increased. Meanwhile, we made a representation to the Government with complete facts and all relevant figures indicating how the new levies had rendered the manufacture of DMT unviable, and pleaded with the Government to reconsider the additional duty it had levied. The Government requested that pending consideration of our submissions the deposit of Rs 2,500 should be stopped.

After several representations were made by the Company, the Government decided to refer the question to the Bureau of Industrial



Costs & Prices. The Bureau, we are informed, after a detailed review recommended that the duty on imported paraxylene should be reduced to approximately 45%. This was presumably done to equalise the cost of imported paraxylene with that domestically produced for captive consumption. The Bureau's recommendation has been with the Government for some time and we still hope that a decision to implement this recommendation will soon be taken. In the meantime, your Company has continued manufacturing DMT and selling it at the unrealistic price of Rs 21,000 per tonne, a price which I may point out, was fixed in October 1985 and not raised since.

You may wonder as to how and why your company alone is affected by this steep rise in Import Duty on paraxylene when it is not the sole manufacturer of DMT and PTA in the country. The answer is that the other manufacturers of DMT and PTA all have captive plants for the manufacture of paraxylene, and are either already self-sufficient in paraxylene, or will be so very shortly, and therefore will not need to import at all. Thus it is only Bombay Dyeing which will continue to suffer the effect of the steep increase in the Import Duty.

Shareholders and in fact the general public interested in the industrial progress of the country may ask why we had not taken steps to manufacture paraxylene? The answer is that the Government did not permit us to do so. As early as 1979 we had applied to the Government to allow us to manufacture the paraxylene we need but were told that it is reserved for the public sector and that Bharat Petroleum at Trombay would manufacture it. This seemed logical since only public sector units manufactured paraxylene, adjacent to refineries where naphtha was available. Eight long years have passed but Bharat Petroleum's proposed plant inside its refinery is still under consideration.

Paraxylene is not the only petrochemical for which the international prices have escalated in recent months. The Government, recognising the enormous increase in the international prices of products such as PVC, HDPE, LDPE and PP substantially reduced duties on these products in the budget to offset such increases.

Further, as, recently as May 1988, the duty on ethylene glycol, another raw material used in the manufacture of polyester was reduced from 155% to 90%. However, in similar circumstances, the duty on paraxylene, instead of being reduced, has been sharply increased.

In the last budget the Government, in order to reduce the price of polyester fabrics to the consumer, had effected an excise duty reduction of Rs 30,000 per tonne on polyester filament yarn and Rs 10,000 per tonne on polyester fibre. The increase in the cost of paraxylene ultimately affects the cost of manufacture of polyester and is therefore in conflict with Government's intention of reducing polyester prices in order to make fabrics cheaper for the general consumer.

I persist in the belief that the Government will consider the BICP recommendation of reducing duty on paraxylene by a quantum that will make it available to us at the same price as to other producers of DMT and PTA. We have resisted increasing the price of DMT for several months now; in fact, not raised it, as I pointed out earlier, from 1985. If we have to raise the price of DMT, we would be doing so with the greatest reluctance because we firmly believe that a price increase is not the solution, is infla-

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**Based on the present price of naphtha supplied by Government refineries, the estimated cost of manufacturing paraxylene in India is approximately Rs 12,000 per tonne. In contrast the present landed cost of imported paraxylene is over Rs 21,000 per tonne which is what we pay. This difference makes only Bombay Dyeing a high cost producer of DMT and places it at a substantial disadvantage compared to its competitors, and that too through no fault of its own and despite the efficiency of its operation.**

**What we are asking is not just a reduction in paraxylene duty to compensate for the increase in its input cost. What we legitimately claim is that paraxylene should be made available to us at the same cost as to all other producers of DMT and PTA.**

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tionary and has a snowballing effect.

The polyester industry has shown remarkable growth in the last year, which is expected to be maintained at least for the next few years. This will further stimulate the demand for DMT and PTA. We have signed an agreement with M/s. Huels Troisdorf to expand our DMT plant to the economic size specified by Government (100,000 tonnes per annum) using the most up-to-date technology available in the world. This technology is being currently applied in the expansion of existing plants in industrially advanced countries, as well as in the construction of new plants. It is this latest technology that will enable us to implement the expansion at a very favourable capital and foreign exchange cost per installed tonne.

The Company continues with its policy of modernising its textile plants and is planning the installation of the latest Air Jet Weaving Machines at its Spring Mills. It is also installing the latest energy saving equipment at its processing works and additional machinery for further diversifying its product range.

I am happy that on the basis of the results that have been achieved, your Board has decided to recommend a dividend of 30% for the 12 month period as compared to 22% for the previous 18 month period.

The results of the year have been only possible through the devotion to duty and competence of our workers, staff and managers, and I am indeed proud of the way in which they have managed the affairs of your Company. My colleagues on the Board continue to guide the destiny of your Company and to them I am specially grateful. Last but by no means least, dear shareholders, we are all grateful to you for your continued support, trust and confidence in your Company's board and management.

12th August, 1988 NUSLI N. WADIA  
CHAIRMAN

(THIS DOES NOT PURPORT TO BE THE PROCEEDINGS OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING)

**I**T IS LATE APRIL, still spring. The mauve jacaranda, planted by my daughter and myself 20 years ago, is not yet in flower, heralding the warm summer. Nor has the brain-fever bird, another forerunner of summer, begun its long, monotonous call, like a continuous pecking on the mind in the heat. One bird-call too far! The earth of the garden is still dark and damp after two afternoons of glorious showers accompanied by thunder in the hills, like the drums of Himalayan gods. Those showers have produced one of Nature's many miracles: from nowhere the first pink crocus shoots out of the ground. With subsequent showers, there will be joyous banks of them — Nature's renewable automation.

After a cool night, my cottage "Savera" opens to a bright, balmy morning; the sun lighting leaf and flower under a pale blue sky. Another blessed day begins, of colour, of bird-song, of wind in the trees, of a calm in the hills; an ideal environment of the early *rishis* for my morning yoga. After tea, a walk in the garden, watching sprightly white tits flit from flower-bed to branch and back again. Such winged packages of sweetness; such vitality in miniature form which only God and the Japanese can fashion. Once, in June, when the red trichoma were in bloom outside my glass-paned study, another beautiful winged miniature marvel, a silly sun-bird flew into my study, trying to get at the flower through the glass-pane.

After it was trapped behind a shelf of books, I held in my hand, thrilled, this little fluttering, fearful creature. In seconds it whizzed out, to freedom and open space, leaving me dumb with happiness. I had held in my hand, at last, a beautiful piece of living vitality, its heart and wings beating for life and liberty. Birds may be prey, but not obsequious slaves, as men are.

My hot bath comes from an old *hamam* — an economic energy technology which goes back at least a century, and gives me hot water in half-an-hour while I do my yoga, with little twigs, dry leaves and waste paper; a costless fuel in an age which talks of an energy crisis, produces diabolical nuclear plants and calls it "progress". It has had two repairs in 20 years; a far better record than any modern gadget. I don't have to hew wood; I only carry a bucket of water. And then I am ready for a good simple breakfast over a newspaper days old...

So what? I have been into the interior mountains for a month or more, without newspapers; and returned to find the world very much as I left it; the same political antics, the same human foibles, the same high-intensity babble. But, thank God, with so many rapacious, even terrorist governments around, the press is still largely free.

Later, my old historical view of governments is confirmed in reading Toynbee: "It is a well-known social law that when and where the Govern-

ment is incompetent or corrupt or high-handed or malevolent, or is vicious in all these ways, or in several of them, at once, the subject's chance of prosperity depends on his escaping the Government's notice or failing to excite the Government's cupidity. In these adverse social circumstances, the normal values of the physical environment are inverted. When the Government is immoderately rapacious in 'taking up that' which it 'laid not down and reaping that' which it 'did not sow', the fertile field actually yields less sustenance to the cultivator than some patch of stony ground which is beneath the notice of the tax-farmer. . . ." The last wish of a retired man and the ancient injunction of a Chinese philosopher coincide: Stay away from governments. These days, when governments penetrate like the winter wind, one must add a rider — as far as possible.

These days, I am wading through Toynbee's 10 volumes of the history of civilisations. Even fast, selective reading plunges one into the vast, heaving Pacific of human civilisations, over 20 of them in 5,000 years. Most have had some relations with each other; others rose and fell mysteriously in isolation, like those of the Mayas and Incas. How do civilisations rise and fall? Toynbee's panoramic thesis of Challenge and Response is a fascinating exploration. There is the stimulus in challenges of climate, of harsh environments, of new grounds, of blows and pressures, and of penali-

# REFLECTIONS IN A GOLDEN EYE

A D MODDIE muses on his days in Bhimtal.



sation and persecutions, to which societies respond, one way or another.

Apart from familiar history – the hammer and tongs of the big battalions, the kingdom and empire-makers – two things interest me, in particular. Firstly, how, in so many cases, overseas migrations seem to provide higher challenges and produce higher civilised achievements than in the home country. All the way from the earlier Scandinavian migration to Iceland, producing higher literature (the Saga) and a higher polity, to America since the seventeenth century. Toynbee does not mention the Chola migration to S E Asia, Borobuder and Java, yet another instance. Educationists in America are now trying to figure out how Asian students do so well. The same challenge? Secondly, ironically, is the incapacity of the early Celts and Teutons, before the axe, to cope with the challenge of those vast primeval forests in Northern latitudes. They just sat on sand and rock and grass. What a devilish over-kill response to the phenomenon of forests in the last hundred years! Our contemporary civilisation may be known later as the first to destroy its ecological habitats with its warped values and its devastating technology. One senses these things more sharply in Bhimtal than in Bombay, where one is closer to Nature and closer to the self; both high elements of many past civilisations, especially in Asia.

It is strange to be reminded in this secular age, that the one universal survival kit of 'fossil' societies (as Toynbee calls them) has been religion – witness the Jews, the Zorastrians, the Abyssinian branch of Christianity, among others. Religion seems to have been the fountain-head of these societies, when all the world's currents beat about them, left them isolated, conquered or persecuted. If Toynbee had written after 1970, he would have found the Jews a unique fossil; a fossil come to vigorous life to take up a 3,000-year challenge. Again, after 1970, he might have been exercised to explain the long response of the

poor in the world to the challenge of development posed by the rich!

After Toynbee and a solar-cooked lunch, the afternoon in a hammock – the most appropriate gift for a retired man – with the music of Gluck and Mozart from a Walkman. Ecclesiastes was right: "Too much study is an affliction of the flesh"! The hammock is strung in the shade between a laden plum tree and a pear tree struggling to bear fruit; both within three yards of each other, on the same soil, in the same micro climate. Nature's eccentricities are infinite. A friend came and took a cutting of a mauve burlea, planted it in his land a mile away, and, to his disappointment, it produced white flowers. He then had to take some soil from my garden to get it to grow mauve flowers once again.

Swinging in my hammock, I am one with the branches of the silver oak swaying in the breeze. We are kindred spirits. Under the same pale blue sky, I'm surrounded by colours in a green landscape. All kinds of birds feed avidly on layer upon layer of golden tassels of the Australian oak. It must be rich in bird food. The white petal and red-heart bauhinia flowered branches shoot out into space and invite the bees. Those flowered branches leap skywards, as if reaching out to the soul of Sam, my brother-in-law, whose ashes were buried at its roots 20 years ago. Below there is a bed of orange African lilies; at the boundary, the blood-red *semul* flowers float in the air on leafless branches. And to climax this bliss there is the eloquent music of Gluck and Mozart, bringing the spirit and the recollections of Central Europe, half-a-world and a whole civilisation away. It is hard to believe I am swinging in the hills near Central Asia; the gap being bridged by the Far-Eastern Japanese technology of a Sony Walkman, a product of this decade.

Yes, bliss is it this afternoon to be alive, in suspended space. Suddenly, there is a jerk, and before I know it – a crash! I and the hammock are in

disarray on the ground, near a heap of manure. The nylon chord, exposed to many seasons, gave way. But the Walkman plays on, more durable than the chord. Mozart was not at all amused.

We return from an evening lake-side walk, after visiting an old English Celt, washed up on the shores of Bhimtal lake. I tell him I was amazed to have read the Celts once swept down as far as Italy and Anatolia, before the Romans pushed them back to their Northern lands. He tells me their failure of response to the challenge was disunity, and that when the Romans conquered the first Irish village, they were delighted to find the Irish king in the bag so easily; when they captured the second Irish village, they were somewhat perplexed to find another Irish king there! The Pathans of the North.

As we return to the cottage in the glow of a half-moon, a bright star keeps popping through the oak branches. Its presence in the heavens will not be denied. Amidst a million stars strewn by an absent-minded jeweller, Venus, this night is like the Kohinoor – bright, brilliant and majestic. At bed-time I read the amazing story in *Reader's Digest* of how a young workaholic, a Canadian drop-out, discovered with his naked eyes, a telescope and an astrograph, a Supernova – the first sighted since the great Tycho Brahe, a Danish astronomer, 400 years ago. And that, in isolation on top of a mountain in Chile, He pointed the telescope to the Large Magellanic Cloud, the Milky Way's closest companion, the winds roaring past him at 65 mph in a storm which tore at the roof. Exposing the plate in a dark-room below, he was confused by a large blotch, which he first thought was "one hell of a flaw". But there was indeed a glittering point at magnitude 5° South, some 170,000 light years away. It was an astronomer's dream come true: "You know," he said, "we're part of the galaxy."

And so ends another day at Bhimtal. And another night begins. ♦

# THE TATA ENGINEERING & LOCOMOTIVE COMPANY LIMITED

## Statement of the Chairman, Mr. S. Moolgaokar, for the year 1987-88

During 1987-88, your Company has shown resilience and has wiped out the poor financial results of 1986-87 with record levels of production and a sales turnover of over Rs. 1,400 crores. Profits improved due to all-round better utilisation of our plants, tight control on inventories and cost savings on all fronts. Out of 56,168 vehicles sold (11% more than in the previous year), 8,830 were in the Light Commercial Vehicle segment which we entered only a couple of years ago. Self-reliant growth (in hitherto untapped segments of the market) is our answer to the squeeze imposed on our profit margins by inflation and consequent increases in all costs.

### CAPTURING LIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLE MARKETS

Way back in the fifties, Telco was the last manufacturer to enter the Medium and Heavy Commercial Vehicle scene. Today, we are India's largest producers in this field and we have a major share of the market. Now our 407 and 608 Light Commercial Vehicles are capturing an increasing share of this market. In just two years, they have gained a substantially higher market share than any of the LCVs built with foreign collaboration. The reliability, safety and easy maintainability provided by our LCVs are the result of careful attention paid to these essentials by our engineers and a total indigenisation programme which has yielded vehicles that do not cost the customer more when foreign currencies appreciate and for which spare parts are readily available at reasonable prices.

In 1986-87, we sold 5,045 LCVs. Last year, sales were 8,830 and this year, we expect to cross 15,000. These vehicles will contribute, in increasing measure, to the future profits of the Company.

### THE LONG-AWAITED TATAMOBILE

The 206 pick-up we are now launching, incorporates some of the most recent developments in automotive technology. These vehicles have been extensively tested under severe conditions all over the country to secure valuable feedback before finalising our design. As a result, not only has the product been refined considerably, but our engineers have reaped invaluable experience on this category of product.

Export markets have shown interest in the 206 pick-up—which belongs to one of the fastest growing segments in the automobile market worldwide. Within India also, there will be numerous applications for which this vehicle will be ideally suited. At the forthcoming Annual General Meeting, we will display yet another new model, for which there should be an assured market.

### BUILDING AN AUTOMOBILE

For introducing new vehicles, apart from organising production facilities and training our personnel, we have to develop suppliers. Barring a few established ancillary sources, it takes considerable time to develop suppliers for the kind of sophisticated components our new generation of vehicles need. We, therefore, have no option but to make our suppliers succeed.

In Telco, we also design and build most of the capital equipment we need for volume production of modern vehicles. We are the only automakers in India who design and produce heavy press tools and special purpose machine tools. This adds to the complexity of our task but makes it possible to respond quickly to the varying needs of our customers and thus sustain our growth.

The pool of technical talent engaged in our various activities constantly interacts with our vehicle designers. A vehicle concept is thus developed by the vehicle design engineers through an intensive cross-flow of information from the marketing, testing, engineering, production and service functions. It is this simultaneous engineering that has permitted us to speed up the introduction of new vehicles. The traditional sequential procedure would have added years to the product introduction cycle. The best ideas available internationally, with those from our engineers in different disciplines, as also our suppliers and customers, contribute to the final design. I am not saying this is the easiest way to bring out a new vehicle. It would have been simpler to assemble vehicles from kits designed and manufactured abroad. I am convinced, however, that this—sometimes painful—approach is the best for the future of our Company and for the growth of this vital industry.



## A PLEA ON BEHALF OF THE INDUSTRY

India's road transport industry is getting throttled because of the very meagre ploughback of funds into building and maintaining roads. I have made a case earlier for some reasonable percentage of the revenues generated by road transport being allocated for the development and upkeep of roads. To make up for years of neglect, at least two-thirds of the revenues arising from road transport must be ploughed back into road building and maintenance. There seems no other way to prevent the collapse of road transportation in critical sectors.

Our far-from-adequate road transportation system is likely to break down, sooner rather than later, because it is clogged with old, poorly maintained vehicles which have been flogged mercilessly beyond any reasonable expectation of their useful life. Spurious parts of suspect quality are used to keep these vehicles on the roads, where they are a danger to everyone. A progressively reducing maximum age limit for vehicles must be mandated by the Government to maintain some semblance of order on the roadways. They must also come down heavily on suppliers and distributors of substandard automobile parts. There should be no mercy shown to those who make profits at the risk of lives.

Another area which requires active Government intervention is the creation of an economic policy framework which encourages self-reliance in the automobile industry. Unfortunately for our industry, piecemeal policy announcements, without a central thrust for indigenisation, have resulted in high priority being accorded to protecting manufacturers who still import a significant proportion of their vehicles. Would the cause of self-reliance not be better served by giving additional incentives to indigenous manufacturers who take the risks and expend the efforts to design products on their own.

## OLD TIES RENEWED

Much of what Telco is today, we owe to the technology, values and perfectionism we imbibed from Daimler-Benz during the collaboration we had with them from 1954 to 1969. Daimler-Benz continues to be one of the truly great business enterprises in the world. We have always treasured our long-standing ties with them.

Now an opportunity has presented itself for Daimler-Benz and Telco to join hands again, for the manufacture of a special class of Daimler-Benz commercial vehicles. We are proud to have been identified by Daimler-Benz to be one out of only two plants outside Germany, where they will consider making these world-concept trucks. Details of the proposal are being thoroughly studied. The project should bring substantial foreign exchange earnings for our country and make available advanced technical know-how for our Company.

## CONTINUITY OF MANAGEMENT

Mr. N.A. Palkhivala has been urging the Board, for some time now, to relieve him of his responsibilities as Telco's Deputy Chairman. His contribution to our Company has been invaluable and remains irreplaceable. In view of the growing demands on his time, Mr. Palkhivala has persuaded us that he cannot continue to devote the time he has so generously allotted for our Company all these years. While he will continue to make his counsel and guidance available as a Director on the Board of our Company, he has insisted on relinquishing the office of Deputy Chairman. I am sure I speak on behalf of all shareholders and members of the Telco family when I thank Mr. Palkhivala for what he has done for our Company.

Mr. Ratan Tata has been appointed as Executive Deputy Chairman of Telco. Mr. Ratan Tata is Chairman of Tata Industries and of several other units in the Tata Group. He has had top-level exposure to a number of companies, several of which he has strategically directed towards businesses in high-technology industries. As such, he is well equipped to help Telco chart its course in the coming years. I have no doubt that Mr. Tata's management capabilities will complement the strengths of Telco's solidly-competent management team and so provide the Company with the right leadership for the future. I believe he will be the correct choice for succeeding me as the Chairman of Telco.

## ENSURING SUSTAINED GROWTH

Telco's capabilities today are the result of years of quiet gestation. Over this long period, we have built assets, both physical and human, that are irreplaceable. It would be near impossible, at today's costs and with the slim returns available in the automobile industry, to re-create the modern plants Telco has built and rejuvenated over decades (so that they have grown younger instead of older). Much less would it be possible to find a ready-made substitute for the wealth of technical and managerial skills that have been developed by our people: skills with which they can independently design vehicles and build manufacturing plants which bear international comparison. These are the true ingredients of sustained corporate growth and they have been built into the essence of Telco.

For the improvement in the performance of the Company in the year that is just over, and for the prospects of better performance to follow, we have our employees to thank. It is they, working together, who have built Telco. And it is they who will help the Company acquire a role of greater prominence in the exciting and challenging years that lie ahead.

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

FICTION



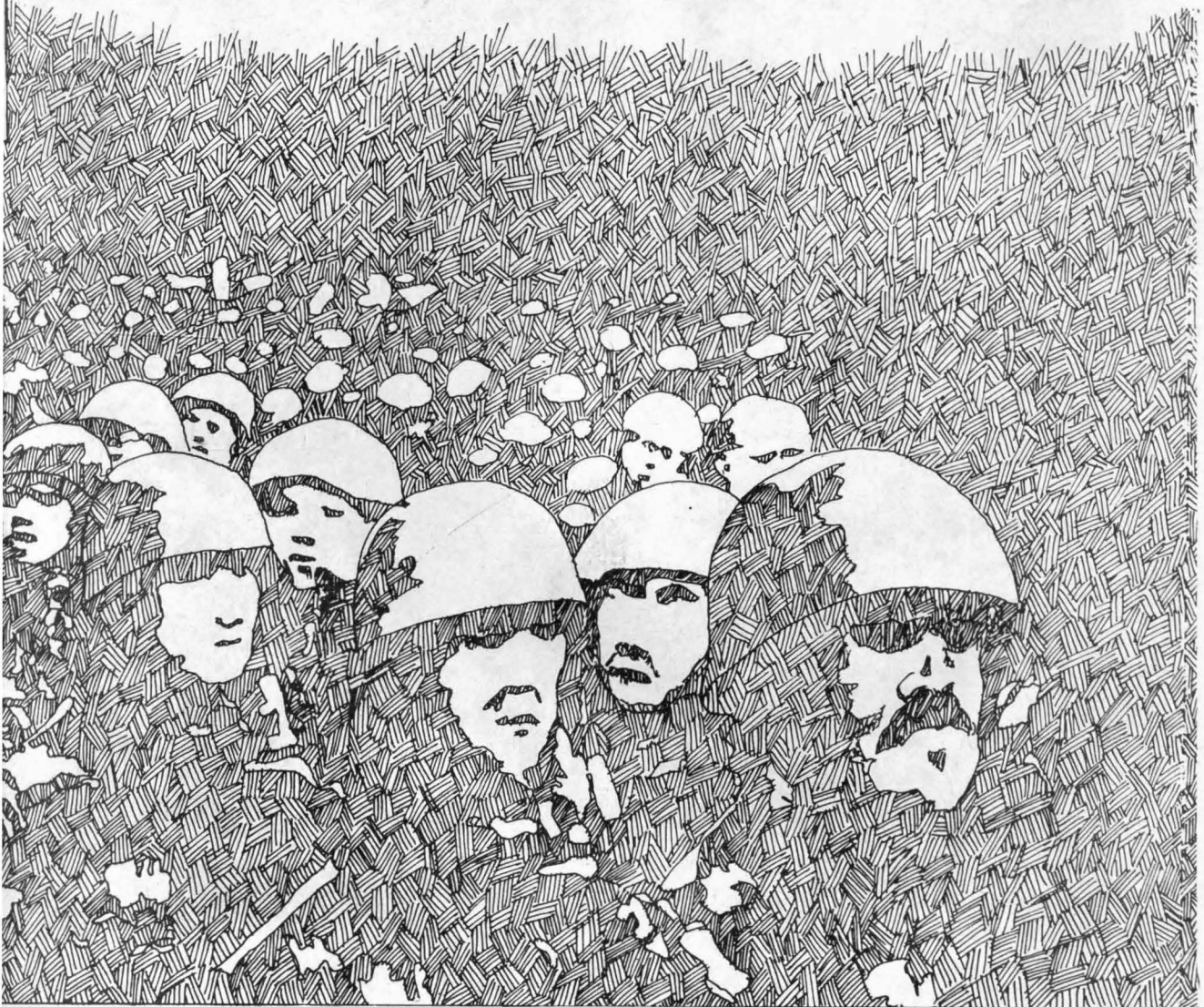


# THE LAST PARADE

**C**OLONEL JOHN GRIFFIN, DSO, MC, strode across the training area accompanied by Major Harry Hargreaves, GSO II of The Jungle Warfare Training Centre (JWTC), both wearing the dark-green lanyard of the Maratha Light Infantry around their collars. But while the GII sported a rifle-green beret with the distinctive red and green feathered hackle of the MLI, the Commandant wore a regulation peaked-cap with the red band of the General Staff. It was an acceptable penchant of senior officers to select dependable staff officers from their own regiments when they assumed appointments where reliance had to be placed on trusted young shoulders. Griffin had been a Company

Commander in Eritrea in 1942; the two Maratha battalions there having fought the Italians with distinction. And Harry had joined his company as a subaltern just before the Battle of Keren.

The JWTC was located at Chhindwara in Central India, and now, two years after the conclusion of hostilities with Japan, was due to be closed down. Its last incumbents were a Jat battalion and a British unit – the Suffolk Regiment – training for internal security duties in Malaya. Griffin watched various squads at work under their instructors – unarmed combat, combat and concealment, night navigation, laying of *panji* pits (trenches planted with



## FICTION

sharpened bamboo stakes, located on jungle trails and camouflaged). The August sun beat down through the suffocating monsoon humidity which bathed everyone in perspiration. In the incandescent glare, the Commandant smiled in recollection of those earlier days when it was considered fatal for Britishers to be out in the midday sun without sun topees. They had started the War wearing mandatory pith helmets, but British Tommies in the furnace heat of the Western Desert soon switched to side-caps, or no caps at all. And, unaccountably, none of them died of sunstroke! It was all a question of acclimatisation.

**BACK IN THE OFFICE** under a lazily-turning fan, Sgt Seton brought in the day's *dak* – orders, instructions, circulars, a few letters. Even in the dowdy uniform of the Women's Auxiliary Corps, Kay Seton contrived to look trim and feminine; Griffin found her methodical and efficient. The WAC (I) was also being disbanded, and when the JWTC finally wound up in October, many members of its staff would doff their wartime uniforms and return to Civvy Street. Kay's home was in Jabalpur where her father was a Superintendent in the Central Ordnance Depot with 25 years service. 'Jub' was only three hours away, so she often spent weekends at home. In Chhindwara, she shared a hutment with three other girls, but spent much of her off-duty time at the Commandant's bungalow with Mrs Griffin, to whom she had become very attached. With no children of their own, the Griffins had taken to Kay as soon as she had been posted to the Centre, and Kay often wondered why. . . . Till one day, she saw a photograph newly-placed on the mantle-piece: of a young girl wearing the uniform of the British Auxiliary Transport Services, bearing a remarkable resemblance to herself. "Our daughter, Beatrice," explained Eleanor Griffin. "She was in the ATS, serving with an Ack-Ack Battery at Dover when she was killed. Our only child."

The two women had many things in common; both played the piano and shared a love for music and flowers. "When I go home next month to get our house ready, please look after John. And play the piano for him sometimes. If you ever think of coming to England, Kay dear, we will be ever so happy to have you in our home. We are going to need a daughter as we grow older," Eleanor requested Kay.

Eleanor left in mid-June before the rains, and Kay soon received a long letter telling her about the Griffin home and ending with instructions to look after John and a renewed invitation to 'come home', an invitation which was to be reiterated in subsequent letters.

"But England is not your home," said Harry, with whom she had discussed the letters.

Kay remained thoughtful. "How do you know whether the Anglo-Indians will be accepted after India gets Independence? A lot of the Railway families in Jabalpur are migrating to England and Australia. Mum has been talking



about it but Dad is not too keen. What about you, Harry?"

"Not for me, thank you. We were brought up on this fantasy about England being our home. But while on service overseas, whenever I thought of home, it was not England which I had never seen, but Bombay where I had grown up and our family lived. When the British officers sang nostalgic songs in the Mess about 'Old Father Thames' and 'The Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond', I couldn't relate. I thought of Colaba Causeway and Apollo Bunder – my boyhood haunts – and got awfully homesick. I guess we learnt the truth of that old adage about home being where the heart is."

**EARLY NEXT DAY**, Col Griffin visited the large open ground in the centre of town for a rehearsal of the Independence Day parade, together with the Collector and the Superintendent of Police. In attendance were GII Major Hargreaves, and Subedar Major Raojirao Shinde, who had been one of Griffin's platoon commanders at Keren. Orchestrating the rehearsal was the Chief Administrative Officer, Lieut Col Richpal Singh Randhawa, of the Sikh Regiment. There were to be two parades: on the evening of August 14, the eve of Independence Day, the British flag would be ceremoniously lowered during the Beating of Retreat; and early in the morning of August 15, the Indian Tricolour would be raised in its place – both ceremonies signifying the transfer of government. Besides the Jats and Suffolks, there were two companies of the Armed Constabulary on parade with the Police brass-band in attendance. The rehearsal was followed by a criticism conference after which everyone returned to the day's routine.



The parades at Chhindwara were incomparable to the pomp and pageantry which attended those in Delhi and other main cities, but their significance was nonetheless identical and intensely moving. The thousands who had come on foot and in bullock-carts from Chaurali, Parasia, and other smaller villages, occupied two sides of the *maidan*, a gaily-coloured, chattering but orderly mass; the third side was kept open for the movement of troops, while the fourth was reserved for civil and military personnel and their families. The Commandant and the Collector were seated to the right of the raised saluting base, in front of which was a tall flagstaff with the Union Jack moving lazily in the evening breeze of that fourteenth of August 1947; flying for the last time in India as the Symbol of the Empire. The troops were drawn up on the far side opposite the saluting base, the Suffolks on the Right of the Line, the Jats next, and then the two companies of the Constabulary. And to the rear, was the Police band, resplendent in their colourful ceremonial uniform.

The parade came to attention and Presented Arms in a General Salute, the Collector made an address – moving, appropriate and, mercifully, brief. The pipes and drums of the Jat battalion gave a display of marching, counter-marching and slow marching – with pipe laments, bugle fanfares and drum calls – and then retired behind the band under loud applause and ‘wah-wahs’ from the spectators. The Commanding Officer of the Suffolks and his Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) then marched up to the flagstaff and the RSM started undoing the retaining knot of the cord. Buglers from both battalions marched forward and drew up in front of the parade, which was brought to Attention and Presented Arms, the band playing “God Save the Queen” in fulsome diapason while everybody stood in silent respect. After the last notes of the British anthem echoed to the roll of the bass drum, massed buglers sounded Retreat and all military personnel saluted as the Union Jack was slowly lowered, for the last time.

**FOR INDIANS**, it was a solemn yet exhilarating occasion, the end of foreign rule, however benign; for Britishers, it was a poignant moment, marking the end of 200 years of the Raj. The RSM folded the flag and handed it to his CO who marched in slow time to the Saluting Base and deposited it with the seniormost British Officer present, Col Griffin. As the CO and the RSM returned to their places in the parade, the band entered softly into the opening bars of that beautiful hymn so dear to English hearts and a favourite of Mahatma Gandhi’s – “Abide With Me”. For those who knew its title, the hymn must have had another connotation in addition to the spiritual one; the dawn of Independence brought the astounding realisation to many Indians, that though they hated British overlordship, they would welcome them as friends.

The British battalion shouldered arms, turned right and prepared to march off parade; they stepped out smartly to

their Regimental March in a column of threes, wheeled left, and on reaching the base line, turned left again into Review Order, pausing to dress the lines for the March Past. As they commenced the graceful glissade of the slow March, the band played “Auld Lang Syne”. Their Indian comrades then Presented Arms in a final salute, both remembering the many years of association as Brothers-in-Arms in countless other parades, on fields of sport and a hundred battlefields from the arid hills of the Northwestern Frontier to China, Gallipoli and France; from Malaya and Burma to the Western Desert, North Africa and Italy... It was a moment crowded with memories, and the late-evening sun glistened suspiciously on the eyelashes of many gallant soldiers. As the Suffolks neared the Saluting Base, the band reverted to quick tempo, and the British Army marched smartly out of Indian history.

Next morning – Independence Day – everything was much the same as the day before, except that the crowd was bigger and gayer. The Indian battalion now held pride of place on the Right of Line and the men of the Suffolk Regiment were among the spectators. Furthermore, there was no flag at the head of the mast. When the parade was called to Attention, the Commanding Officer and Subedar Major of the Jats marched up to the Saluting Base where Colonel Griffin handed over a folded Indian Tricolour, which then was carried to the flagstaff in slow time and attached to the cords. Then came the greatest moment of the day – when the National Flag was raised solemnly to the top of the mast. The parade Presented Arms and the Indian National Anthem was played for the *first* time. To those who understood the stirring words of Tagore’s “Jana Gana Mana”, the moment was especially moving; surely the most significant in their lives. Once more the Collector spoke, his address a mixture of solemnity and joy. The troops and constabulary marched past and saluted the flag, the parade dismissed and people thronged to the foot of the flagstaff where they laid their garlands of jasmin and marigold with reverent *namaskars*. Many prayed with tears streaming down their faces.

**IN THE WAKE OF** Partition came the terrible holocaust and the sad transmigration of population between India and Pakistan. Chhindwara became a backwater as the Indian Army was called into action; an army battle-weary from six years of campaigning in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Italy; disrupted by a grave officer shortage caused by the return of British officers to England and the subsequent division of the Armed Forces. Then came the Close Down order for the Jungle Warfare Training Centre one fine day, and Griffin made ready to hand over command before leaving India on retirement. After the official farewells, he called his personal staff together for a private goodbye – Richpal Singh Randhawa, Hargreaves and Raojirao Shinde. There was much nostalgic reminiscing and many humorous anecdotes that had them roaring with

## FICTION

laughter. There was also some heavy imbibing, and, for the first time, Harry saw Griffin get sedately drunk.

Hargreaves was to drive the Colonel down to Itarsi Junction where he would catch the Mail train to Bombay, his two Orderlies leaving a day earlier with the heavy baggage. The night before leaving, Kay and Harry dined with Griffin, after which Harry walked her back home. "Griff asked me to go to England and live with them," said Kay. "I think Eleanor has been at him. I've spoken to Dad and Mum about it and they think it would be a good break for me. I'm very tempted."

Harry felt a sudden pain yet managed to smile. "Well, I'm glad for you, but sorry for myself. You know, I have a crush on you. I was hoping perhaps it would develop into something deeper. That one day. . ."

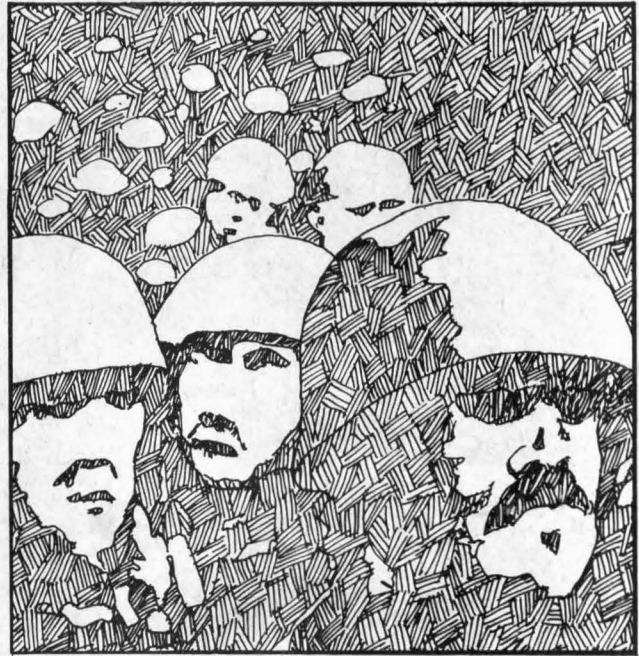
She laughed softly, squeezed his arm gently. "Harry dear, I like you very much indeed. But I haven't given marriage any serious thought yet. Anyway, you deserve someone better." They reached the gate of her quarters; she leaned up and kissed him quickly, and ran inside.

**THAT NIGHT**, Griffin sat in the coolness of his verandah for a long time, listening to the song of the crickets and the dismal honk of a nightjar. Next morning, in his anxiety to depart without any fuss and having said all his good-byes, he started out very early; nevertheless a large group of officers and civilians were waiting at the JWTC gate to bid him Godspeed. Hargreaves was at the wheel of the open jeep with the driver, Sepoy Thangaraj, seated at the back. Except for small talk, there was no conversation till they stopped for a quick pack-breakfast at the roadside before starting up the rugged *ghat* section. Griffin had taken over the wheel and there were long silences as they negotiated the more dangerous sectors. They reached a clear stretch, and as the Colonel changed into top gear, he smiled: "I'm afraid we got a bit pissed last night, Harry. Got a bit maudlin about my affection for the men, eh? *In vino veritas* and all that."

"It was a special occasion, Sir. And we all feel the same about the men."

"I love India, Harry. I would like nothing better than to stay on here. But Eleanor has always looked forward to settling down in our own home. And I owe her that for all the lonely years she's spent looking after me. Ah well, it has been a wonderful experience, and we will always have our memories. . ."

Griffin relapsed into silence as they entered another section of the *ghat*, the road beginning to climb and twist. Glancing at him occasionally, Harry observed a faraway look of deep sadness in his eyes. Perhaps the Colonel was reliving his three decades in the Indian Army — days of comradeship, stern yet fatherly discipline, hard living, hard playing, deep feelings of regimental tradition, the joy of soldiering with loyal, willing and ever cheerful men between whom there were strong bonds of friendship and affection,



grief over friends killed in action; all the wonderful things that made service with Indian troops such a rare privilege. These were his for all time. . .

**A HEAVILY-LADEN TRUCK** came careening wildly around a bend from the opposite direction; Griffin braked and swerved to his left to avoid it; the near-side wheels of the jeep slipped over the edge of the road and the vehicle fell down the hillside, turned over twice and crashed to a halt against a rocky outcrop. Harry was shaken and stunned. After a moment he crawled out and sat down to regain his senses. His left leg throbbed with pain and he saw that it was bent awkwardly. Thangaraj had been thrown clear and was giddily swaying down the slope. Colonel Griffin was still at the wheel of the overturned vehicle, silent and still, his head twisted unnaturally. Harry gasped as a sudden stab of pain hit him and he passed out.

He regained consciousness in the small Military Hospital. Richpal Singh and Raojirao Shinde were on one side of his cot, Kay on the other, holding his hand.

"Griff was killed on the spot," Richpal informed him. Harry groaned as the horror of the tragedy registered. "Oh Christ! He didn't want to go back, Rich. Griff *wanted* to stay in India."

"Well, his wish has been granted. God rest his soul."

There was a silence of deep sadness, broken by Richpal: "The Doc says your knee has been badly dislocated, but you should be okay in a couple of weeks, if you take it easy."

"When is the funeral?"

"This evening. Must push off now, Harry. Still have to complete all the arrangements. . ."



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