

FROM THE EDITOR

Ours is an age of paradox. We have built wonderful cities; we have also built bombs to match them—to reduce them to rubble in the twinkling of an eye. Man, in this era, is more conscious of his right and dignity than ever; yet the signs of chaos and anarchy too are more prominent than ever.

No wonder that such a bewildering situation should prove a fertile ground for the growth of cynicism. And cynicism has many tentacles— among them vulgarity with a varnish-touch—to suffocate humanity or squeeze vitality out of it.

Indeed, there is hardly any doubt about the fact that we are passing through an evolutionary crisis. Our mind, brain, intellectual calibre and prudence are perhaps not enough to tide us over the crisis. The question is, should man let himself be swept by the deadly current or should he try to tap some hidden strength within that might mean a new birth for him?

We believe that man's future had not evolved only to disappear like the dinosaur, leaving a faint contour on a layer of stone that the skyscrapers would have become in the future, nor is he destined to go up in smoke of a self-inflicted holocaust.

It is not for such an end that Avatars and prophets frequented humanity through the ages. It is not for such an end that man had dreams, visions and manifold inspirations in arts and aesthetic endeavours.

We believe that man's future will not be the culmination of all that is bad in him, but of all that is good in him.

Further we believe that India has a significant role to play in moulding a meaningful future for man. THE HERITAGE will strive to project all that is good and glorious, creative and ennobling. Even when it will be critical of a situation or an event or a human trait, it will be so keeping its faith alive and strong.

Our heritage is not a matter of the past, it is the stuff from which we work out our todays, as much as the tomorrows will be built out of the todays.

Anything that is past is certainly not a part of the heritage—but only such elements that have been a force behind the making of all that is best in the present. The concept of the new and the old as it applies to fashion and furniture or as we understand it according to chronology and calendar, does not hold good in the case of such forces. The sun does not cease to be magnificent for its fabulous age. (In fact, we have just begun to guess how much the sun can mean for our future!) Through the ages there have been sun-rises in human consciousness too. They are much more important than the will-o-the-wisps of titillating stuffs so systematically flashed to dazzle us.

There are adventures in consciousness undertaken at present too—in art, literature, ideas and—last but not the least—spirituality. We have to take note of them if we wish to live a greater life. And unless we live a greater life, we cannot lead our society beyond the whirlpool of petty events and interests which it is so miserably caught.

THE HERITAGE is a promise. The fulfillment will depend on you. It is a challenge thrown at our people for them to prove that they care for thoughtful, creative and imaginative reading, that they would like to place amidst their families or institutions fiction and features of taste and dignity.

We hope that, the people of this great country will not fail the endeavour.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

"It is under the civilized rule of the Queen and the people of England that we meet here together, hindered by none, freely allowed to speak our minds without the least fear or hesitation. Such a thing is possible under British rule, under British rule only."

Today it may not be easy to speculate who said this and when. This is an excerpt from the Presidential address of W.C. Bonnerjee at the founding of Indian National Congress on the 25th of December 1885.

We know how rapidly the situation changed. As soon as the Congress began speaking its new mind without hesitation, the mask of benevolence fell off the Raj. The same would have happened for any colonial rule.

In this issue one of India's leading historians recapitulates the situation that prevailed during the birth of the Congress. We expect to publish a few more such fascinating glimpses of the early phase of the Congress during its current Centenary Year.

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Thus Flows the Ganga is the feature in our section devoted to the roots of our culture. It recounts a not-too-widely known legend from the mythology to remind us why the Ganga is sacred.

The religious sanctity of the Ganga may be a matter of faith, but a certain physical quality of its water was mystifying till the other day. Germs did not survive in its self-purifying flow and its water preserved in thousands of Indian homes did not grow easily stale. Before any scientific research could succeed in unravelling the mystery, man has succeeded in destroying this age-old quality of the Ganga.

A report says, "Hardwar, the holy gateway to Shiva's abode in Kedarnath and Vishnu's in Badrinath, is rapidly turning into a vast slum. Worse still, the stretch of the sacred Ganga coursing through this important pilgrimage town is being made into a sewer into which vast amounts of all types of wastes, from industrial to domestic, are discharged daily.

"Added to this is the heavy deforestation in the Shivalik forests, resulting in soil erosion and massive silting, the surface run-off which pours into the Ganga during monsoons.

"A phenomenon which is increasing at an alarming rate is the discharge of untreated toxic industrial effluents into the Ganga at various points....

"The Ganga, after coursing through the Garhwal Himalayas as the Bhagirathi and at Devprayag as the Alakananda, descends on the plains at Hardwar, which was anciently known as Gangadwar for this very reason. Ironically, from the moment the sacred river touches the plains at Hardwar it is desecrated with industrial and sewerage waste at almost all points, with Uttar Pradesh contributing the largest share—more than 55 per cent—of the total urban industrial pollution load of the basin."—The Hindusthan Times.

We have a law, "The Water Pollution and Control Act, 1978." We have also a department of environment to ensure that the industries treat their noxious effluents to render them harmless before discharging them into the rivers.

But the rules are just not observed. We are not only spoiling a glorious heritage, but also maiming the future. All the benefits that industries concerned should bring us can never compensate for the loss.

It is heartening that a private organisation of responsible citizens, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has undertaken, as one of its pilot projects, to assist in the effort to cleanse, the Ganga and the Yamuna. We agree with their declaration that "today, more than ever, there is an urgent need for action. A need for all of us to come together.... to pool our resources... and, if necessary, to fight to preserve what is rightfully ours."

We wish the Trust all success.