

FROM THE EDITOR

OUR INNOCENTS ABROAD

The story of a certain gentleman-politician going to preside over a nudist meet, shedding his clothes in his car and walking into the hall all naked in honour of the nudists only to be greeted by nudists who had come well-dressed in his honour, is well known.

We Indians are behaving in the same fashion of this gentleman. We are shedding our clothes to make foreigners feel at home while their expectations are quite different. Here is the latest report on our behaviour, narrated by Shri M.P Pandit who was recently in Lorraine as a guest at an international seminar of Yoga:

"The organisers had arranged for two programmes at a local theatre. One of them was a showing of three documentaries with commentaries in French prepared and distributed by the Government of India. Our director, Mahesh had not seen these films personally but had taken it for granted that they would be educative. The first of these was 'I love India'. There was quite an eager assembly and we all looked forward to some elevating sights. But we were in for total disappointment. The documentary was full of scenes of tourists bathing in the waters of the Arabian sea on the shores of Goa; the women were as scantily clad as possible and there were plenty of close-ups. After running about on the beaches there were scenes of banquets in five-star hotels with wine bottles on the tables and obsequious waiters standing at attention. And more. Viewers were asked to study 'Indian Sexuality' and close-ups of sculptures from Khajuraho were lingeringly exhibited. By this time, half the theatre was empty. Myself and Dr. Singh hung our heads in shame. 'Is this India?' was a question shot at Dr. Singh by a lady. He shook his head and the questioner exclaimed, Thank God!

"We felt sad. How could such a film be circulated abroad? Maybe it was meant for attracting tourists. But it gives such a grotesque picture. The next day people told Mahesh how the documentary was 'abominable'. He felt frustrated. In the second documentary there was a total lack of synchronisation between the sound and the movement. The third one was good, life of an Indian Dancer."

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How was this possible? Who commissioned such pictures? Who passed them? Several factors must be at work behind the scene—possibly ranging from corrupt appeasement to a total failure of the faculty of imaginativeness. But what remains at the basis of the situation is an utter lack of sincerity for a cause. Even a dunderhead can see, when he has sincerity, that close-up of scantily clothed women is not the kind of stuff for which the Westerners would fall for India. They look to India that is India—her own heritage of culture and civilisation.

We carry in this issue an article by a retired foreign service man ("India's Cultural Diplomacy") which throws some light on the minds of his compatriots serving in our missions abroad. In your grammar book you must have read, as an illustration of the figure of speech, pun, the definition of a diplomat—that he is one who lies abroad for the good of his country. Once you have read the article, the punch of pun may disappear from the definition. It will appear, most of our diplomats lie abroad purely in the sense that they laze and so far as the second sense of the word is concerned, they lie at home about their achievements.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

COMING—THE DAY OF THE DOG

Charles Anderson Dana's famous 19th century definition of news, "When a dog bites a man that is not news, but when a man bites a dog, that is news," at last stands to be modified in the Indian context. Dog biting a man made headlines when a gentleman of Vasant Vihar, Delhi, was awarded suitable damage for suffering a totally uncalled for champing from his host's dog. In a similar situation a bitten soldier once injured the dog with his bayonet. When asked why did he not use the butt end of his gun, the man answered, "I would have done that if the dog would have bitten me with its tail."

Man's best friend—But not the other man's

It was the late cartoonist—columnist Emery Kelan's view that a pet dog expresses the hidden attitude of its master towards the visitor, particularly when the latter is a stranger to the dog. If the master is full of love for the visitor, the dog will never be tired of wagging its tail; if the master is only pretending to be good, but is nursing ill-will in his heart for the visitor, his dog will unfailingly transmit his hidden passion through its conduct. Dog, certainly, is man's best friend, but not the other 'man's.

Beware of me!

We have heard of the celebrated lawyer who was reluctant to enter the judge's compound adorned by a barking dog. When asked if he did not know that a barking dog does not bite, he observed, "My Lord, I know that, but does the dog know that?" The dog, indeed, does not know. Its master alone knows where it should stop. Some people no doubt relish their dogs causing discomfiture to others. Most of those who put up the legend "Beware of dogs" mean well, but there are at least some who mean "Beware of me!"; maybe unconsciously.

The subtle identity of oneself with one's dog can easily be discerned when the dog is humiliated or cursed or stolen by someone. Observe the royal chagrin that pervaded this advertisement in *The Mercurius Publicus of 1660*: "We must call upon you again for a black dog between a greyhound and a Spaneill, no white about him, only a streak on his breast and his taile a little bob'd. It is His Majesties owns Dog, and doubtless was stolen; for the Dog was not born nor bred in England and would never forsake his Master... Will they never leave robbing his Majesty? Must he not keep a Dog?"

The Day of the Dog

The day of the dog is coming—in a literal sense—assures a criminologist friend. With the growth of the friend in man, you cannot trust even your bodyguard unless it is a dog!

The Indian court's decision to award compensation for the victim of a dog-bite indirectly enhances the importance of dogs. This is perhaps a wider phenomenon. A Moscow weekly quotes a new notice put up in a Paris hotel that reads: "We allow dogs because they do not use the curtains to polish shoes; they do not collect teaspoons; they do not take away hotel sheets and serviettes; they like people; they only bring nice customers."

The day when a customer's credentials will be determined by how civilised a dog leads him to the counter may not be far.

