

FROM THE EDITOR

BHARAT BANDH!

One of the few phrases that is proving difficult to stomach is *Bharat Bandh*. Those who use the term enthusiastically are the kind of people who do not find anything unpalatable with the name "hot dog" for the food they eat.

Does Bharat consist of shops and trucks and rickshaws that when we oblige them to stop functioning, Bharat is shut down? *Bharat Bandh* is a phrase insulting to Bharat Varsha.

A staggering amount of hypocrisy and self-deception are thriving under this phrase. It does not require any cleverness to predict the statements the Bandhists and the anti-Bandhists will make the day after—the Bandhists will hail it as a great success feigning a benevolent innocence of the possibility of any other estimate of the situation and will congratulate themselves and thank you and I for making it so; the anti-Bandhists will butter their words with a liberal amount of chuckle and pronounce the event to be a stark failure.

And, of course, there will be that part of our Press not committed to this party or that which will say that it was a 'partial success'!

The parties concerned have something to flatter themselves by. The Bandhists would be pleased with their 'achievement'; the anti-Bandhists with their 'achievement' in foiling it. But at whose cost and what cost do they find such satisfactions? What really happens? A day's default in work involves crores of rupees of national loss. But let us forget that. What is really painful is the total irrational and tyrannical treatment and violence to which the common people are subjected. Those politicians who speak that their form of protest through Bandh is 'non-violent' are either liars or too ignorant to see the reality. Thousands of men, women and children are stranded on the railway platform or the bus-terminus, bearing with innumerable inconveniences; patients proceeding to hospitals are detained midway resulting in death and irreparable damage; distressed relatives rushing to attend to near ones on deathbed fail to reach on time, thereby having to bear forever an anguish which nothing can compensate, the rickshaw-puller, the cobbler, the poor vendor who depend entirely on their daily earning starve, an auto-driver who had been emotionally moved to carry an old woman who was under a vow to perform a puja in a certain temple is beaten up. Must the organisers of such Bandhs still add insult to injury by calling their action non-violent?

Certain kinds of protest had been formulated during the colonial days and they are associated with some hallowed names. That does not entitle the present-day politicians to make a patent of these modes of protest for their satisfaction and for benefit of the rowdies. To repeat a certain practice despite a total change in circumstances, without any true assessment of its impact on the people, is not only bankruptcy in imagination, but also a demonstration of blatant arrogance and cruelty. This must stop and the politicians should evolve some new forms of protest.

When a certain organisation or a trade union launches a march or goes on strike, it is within its right and the step is often necessary, provided it is spontaneous. But no organisation or political party has a right to impose a 'strike' on the nation. Any political party which thrives by the rule of democracy cannot claim a right to deprive the common citizens of their most fundamental rights—their free movement, their access to food or treatment. But that is exactly what the Bandhists do. And they know it; they know that most of those who seem to have responded to their call have done so out of sheer fear. Still they continue in their ritual.

Dear politicians, please sit down and formulate some other means of protest, where your target is not the common man and the nation, Bharat. If you have some wish left in you for setting

yourself free from delusions, some new idea for serving your purpose without confronting the common man should not defy your capacity.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

LURE OF THE FALSE NIGHTINGALE

Isaac Asimov informs us that the newspaper, *Free Press*, offered 120 households of the city of Detroit \$500 each if the inmates of the house would refrain from watching television for a month. Ninety-three of the families flatly declined the offer. Eventually only six families entered the 'test'. They survived the month all right, but the survey showed that they felt "depressed, bored and nervous" at times.

An example of how total man's surrender to new ways of lifestyle can be!

In his article that appears in this issue, Prof. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar reflects on the situation created by technology's invasion of our life. Appropriately, he reminds us of the fabled nightingale which used to bring solace to a monarch, its subsequent replacement by a mechanical nightingale and the aftermath.

Nature and the right human relationship have been the traditional antidotes to depression, boredom and nervousness since times immemorial in the life of the average man. Television is taking their place, but deceptively. It will make man its slave in return for continuous entertainment and information, but is most likely to make him less and less of a natural man.

This is a situation in which mere reflection is not enough. We must stop this drift in our own life. Howsoever entertaining or informative the TV programmes may be, they are no substitutes for our reading and reflecting on a work of worth, for the warmth of human relationship and our remaining! in meditative solitude at certain moments in our life.