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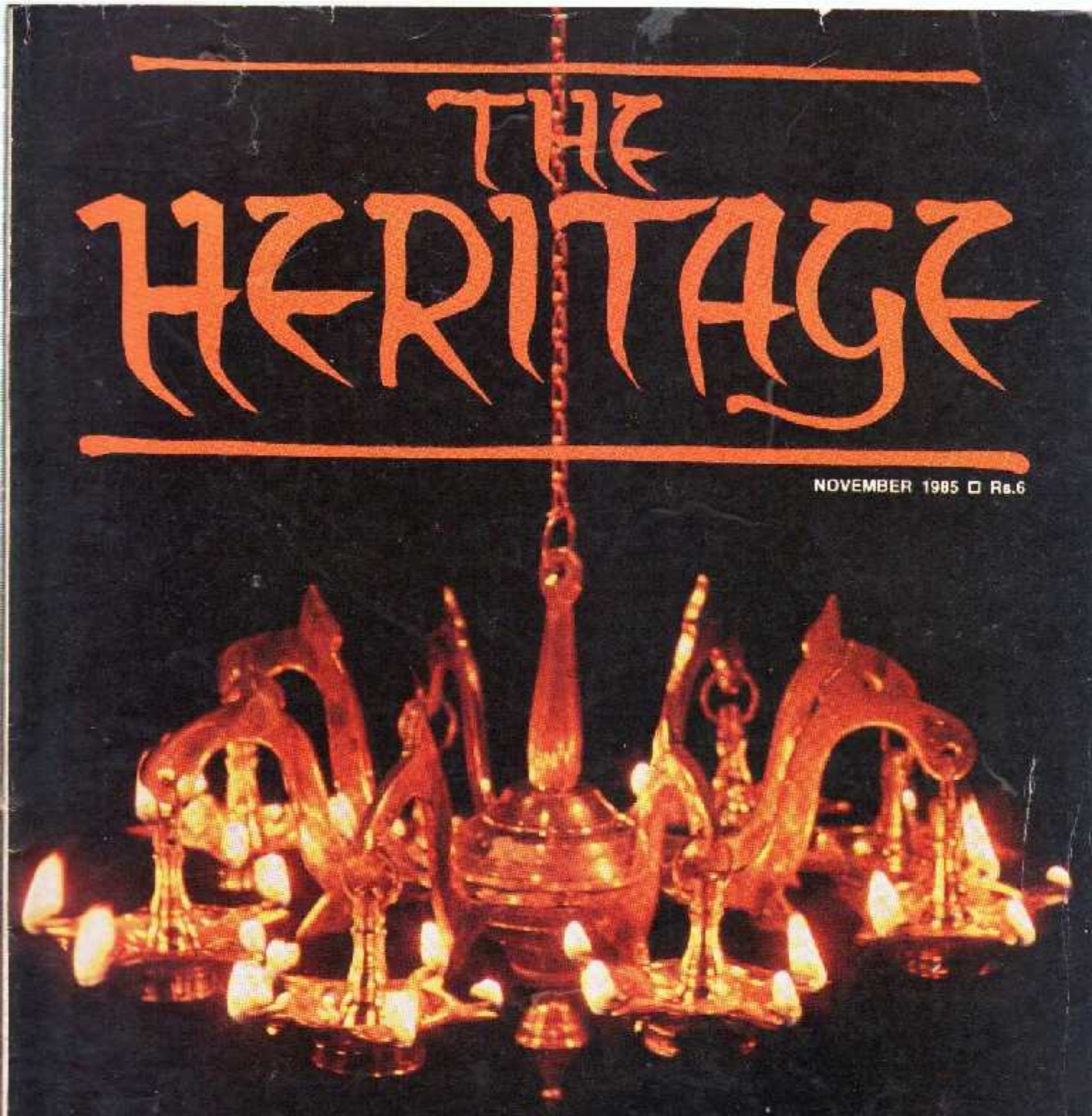

THE MOTHER'S PRESCRIPTION TO WARD OFF WORRY □

WHERE RIVERS MEET □ CAN HUMAN SOUL INCARNATE AS ANIMAL?

NEHRU THROUGH SHANKAR'S BRUSH □ PUSHKAR LAKE □

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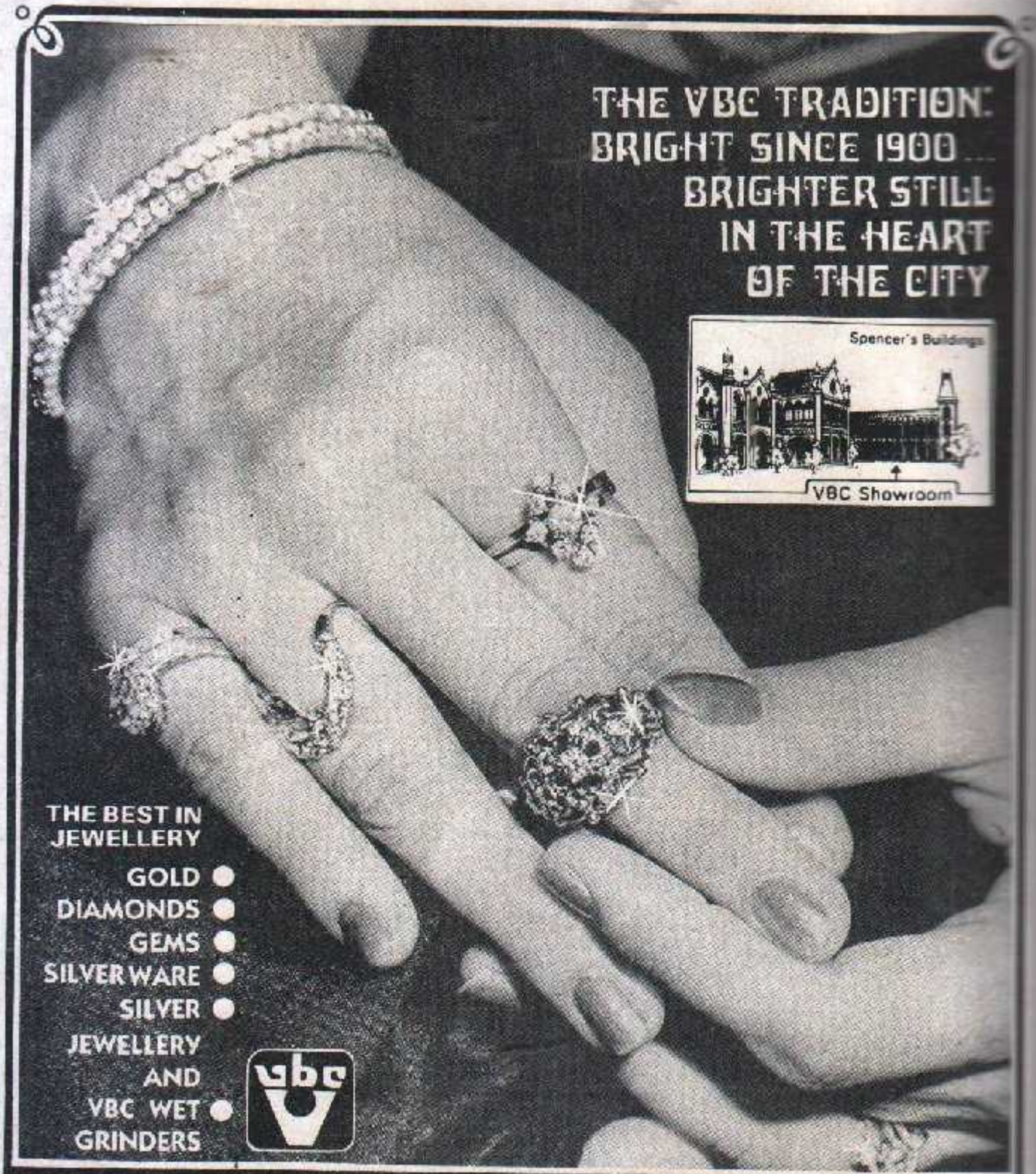

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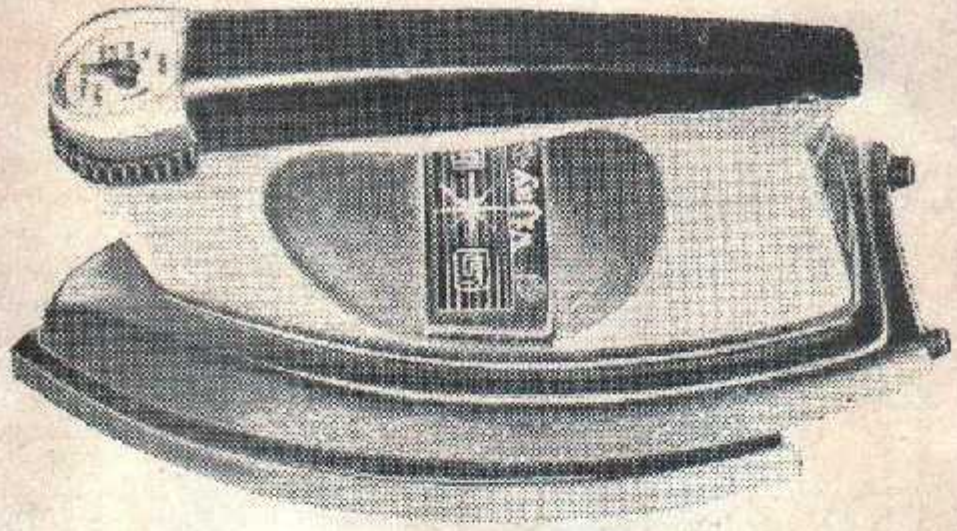

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THE TWILIGHT OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA: The legend and facts about the first Christian to set foot in India, the Apostle St.Thomas.

EVOLUTION OF INDIAN POLICE COSTUME: A fascinating study by B.V. Ranganathan

INDIA WINS INDEPENDENCE: THE TRAGIC POLICY OF DIVIDE AND QUIT: The concluding article of the exclusive series on India's long and eventful march towards freedom, by the historian Dr. M.N. Das.

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO WE NEED?: A probe into the phenomenon that is sleep, by Dr. Dilip Datta

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VIEWS

A Victory over Addiction

I remember the day I brought a copy of THE HERITAGE home. My younger brothers and sisters—they are an intelligent lot—would not even look at it. I felt disturbed, for they were all avid magazine readers. It did not take me long to realise that they had become addicted to the stuff the dangerous vendors in the field offer under elegant covers. Their minds refused to make place for healthy ideas, good stories and thought-provoking articles. But, I am happy to tell you that the clouds are dispersing. The light that is THE HERITAGE is infiltrating their minds. Yesterday, at different times, each one of the four asked me, "Who took away our copy of the September HERITAGE?"

New Delhi —*Virendra Mohan Vajpayee*

If the August issue was amazing for its wealth of information on the forgotten phases of India's struggle for freedom, the September issue has been remarkable for its variety and aesthetic appeal.

Bombay —*Manju Javeri*

Initially I was reluctant to spare time for THE HERITAGE. Now I go through this journal like gobbling up delicacies, pushing aside my previous favourites. THE HERITAGE is an extraordinary journal for the intelligentsia.

Rourkela —*Rudra Dutta Satpathi*

All members of the family, from the young to the old, are fond of THE HERITAGE as it provides mental food for all.

Bhubaneswar —*M.H. Rama*

THE HERITAGE is a marvellous achievement in the sense that it presents worthy subjects without making them heavy-reading.

Patna —*Durga Prasad*

Why don't you bring out THE HERITAGE twice a month?

Chirala —*M.C. Narvasa Raju*

Bali and Rangda

I liked the September issue very much. The article on Bali was superb.

Cuttack —*G.N. Das*

The caption of a picture in the article on Bali (September, P. 79) reads 'Rangola'. It should be *Rangda*. The article gave in a nutshell the essence of Balinese culture.

Madras —*Shyamala Mahadeva.*

Memory of the War

The article on the World War (September) reminded us of the momentous events of a recent past. The narration was vivid. The majesty of Churchill's speech still rings in my memory.

Madras —*R. Athmaraman*

Reading the article on the World War, I recalled the turbulent times, the stirring events and the great leaders of those days.

Kondithope —*S. Santhanam*

The picture of the Golden Temple published in our October issue (Page 44) was by VIDYAVRATA.

—*Editor*

November 1985 Vol.1 No.11 Rs.6

THE HERITAGE

Features and Fiction for Today and Tomorrow

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Executive Advisors: B.V. REDDI
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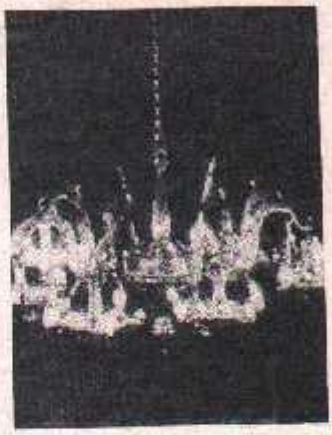

THE COVER: The antique chandlier symbolises the Festival of Light, *Deepavali*, the most prominent of the festivals in November. This issue also carries an article on *Deepas: Their Significance in Indian Culture*, by Devi Krishnan.

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PRELUDE

THE ONLY WAY TO OVERCOME WORRY: The Mother prescribes the spiritual yet most practical way to our victory over a persistent enemy. Culled from her answers to seekers.

MY INDIAN HERITAGE: Psychiatrist N.C. Surya reflects on certain vital issues of the Indian situation seen through the eye of a psychologist and felt through the heart of a philosopher.

WHERE RIVERS MEET: For a change, the renowned storyteller Ruskin Bond takes us on a journey to Nand Prayag, a charming resort nestling in the Himalayas.

THE ULTIMATE PRINCIPLE OF MUSIC: A senior officer in the Indian Police Service, Dr. Suresh Dey is basically a scholar. The article is the theme of his doctoral thesis.

THE CHESS-MASTER AND HIS MOVE: A stimulating extract from the celebrated Indo-Anglian novelist Raja Rao's forthcoming work—his longest novel.

FRAGRANCE OF A PRIMITIVE NIGHT: An absorbing story by Phanishwarnath "Renu," the well-known Hindi writer.

NEHRU THROUGH SHANKAR'S BRUSH: Remembering the statesman on his birth anniversary through a collection of cartoons by the inimitable Shankar, doyen of Indian political humour.

ANTIQUITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY: A sweeping survey of the surprising achievements of the Indian genius of yesterday, by Monisha Bobb supported by the celebrated Laxman's cartoons.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM: Launching an exclusive series on India's museums and archives, THE HERITAGE focuses on this important institution by Prof. N.R. Banerjee, author of book to be published on the subject, and the promising young author Swapna Datta, assigned to cover special aspects of the museum.

TIE AND DYE ART OF WESTERN ORISSA: Keshab Chandra Meher, an authority on the subject, highlights the feature on the art product popularly known as the Sambalpur Saree.

THE RAIN-MACHINE: Eminent author and film-maker K.A. Abbas sketches an absorbing satire on a situation of which he has the most intimate knowledge.

PUSHKAR: This is the time when this serene lake of mythical fame in Rajasthan will wear a festive look. An account by Tripti Pandey.

MAN AND ANIMAL BIRTH: Can a human soul migrate into an animal body? The intriguing question is discussed, through authentic illustration, by that able interpretor of the mystic lore, M.P. Pandit.

TOBACCO THE TERRIBLE: Dr. D.B. Bisht, previously the Director of JIPMER and now the Director General of Health Services, Govt. of India, exhorts against one of the most artificially developed dangerous habits.

THE HEROINE OF INDIAN SCIENCE: On the occasion of Indira Gandhi's birth anniversary, Dr. Debakanta Mishra, educationist and science-writer, makes an assessment of her role as a promoter of science in the country.

LION: V. Ananda Reddy traces the past and the present of this majestic beast, the Asiatic genre of which is now confined to the Gir Forest in Gujarat.

THE WRONG HEAVEN: A parable from Rabindranath Tagore, bearing a comment on the comforts of heaven vis-a-vis man's creative urge.

BULLDOZERS: A complete novella by Manoj Das

HUMOUR, LITERARY PANORAMA, FABLES AND PARABLES FOR ADULTS AND MORE.

THE HERITAGE

REFORMING EDUCATION

Cultivation of Calibans

"You taught me language; and my profit on't is, I know how to curse."

Thus spake Caliban in Shakespeare's *Tempest* and he spoke almost the last word on the use of education in the sense it prevails *today*, though he said so four centuries ago.

The educated people as a class do not inspire much respect among the masses. Education had not made them honest or noble. It had perhaps made them clever and they are anxious to pass on that cleverness to their children; their concern was to secure a lobster's ease of life in their old age. If they worship a Baba or a Swami after retirement, it rarely signifies a higher quest; it only betrays their eagerness to clutch the tail of the same elusive security on a different front.

In other words, they are a selfish lot.

Not in these words though, this was the verdict on the elite of the country your editor received from a small gathering of 'illiterate' villagers. They conceded that there were some honest, truthful and good people among the officers, lawyers or teachers. But their goodness was independent of their education.

"Some of our children, to provide for whose education we are labouring like donkeys, will not be different. They will only remind us, when we try to forget it, that we were really donkeys," said one.

The circle is vicious. If the educated people do not inspire trust in the masses, the teachers do not inspire respect in the students and the students themselves cut an extremely sorry figure before the common man.

With this scene of overwhelming cynicism for a backdrop, some people at the helm of affairs in this country are trying to reform education. Can their efforts meet with some success?

Two Aspects of Education

Education, broadly speaking, has two roles to play. First, it makes one 'literate', it qualifies one to earn as well as to contribute to the community in some way. In rare cases, it helps one to explore, discover or invent things of lasting consequence. The second role of education is in cultivating love for higher values in man, discovering to him his self which is greater than his physical frame, mental and intellectual calibre or social status.

Today any sensible man knows that all the academic qualifications and achievements are zero unless education plays its second role.

The question is, can any alteration or modification in our educational system make education effective in this sense? No, it cannot. But this need not alarm us. The truth is, the urge to grow towards light is inherent in man. Given a suitable environment, encouragement and opportunity, the evolutionary splendour hidden in him will spontaneously reveal itself.

The question that follows is, how far the system itself, however idealistic and psychologically sound, can create the necessary climate for this kind of progress? The campus is but a small fragment of the society and its impact on the student, as the time passes, becomes less and less prominent as the interaction between the student and the society becomes more rapid.

There is only one institution which can educate the child in this sense. That is the family. It is well known that the ideas and values a child imbibes during the first few years of his life are infinitely more important in this regard than all the theories he can learn later. **The plain truth is, no education in the true sense can be effective unless the family is re-educated, unless the parents change their attitude to children, unless they realise that in the ultimate analysis nothing can ensure their children true happiness, protection and strength but their allegiance to truth, nothing is true insurance for them but their trust in a higher consciousness inherent in themselves.**

Parents and guardians must resolve to educate themselves as the first step towards the education of their children.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

EDUCATING THE RURAL WORLD

A friend who had taken up educating adults in a village during his holiday met me the other day. To my question as to how his mission had fared, he began narrating Tolstoy's story of 'Three Hermits'—a missionary reaching a small island inhabited by three strange old men and passing on to them the right method of prayer and then sailing away—but the three men catching up with him, running on the waters, to inform him that they had forgotten the method and then going back to their island!

"I realised that the people I tried to educate were a hundred times wiser than I, only not conscious of their knowledge like the three hermits who were not conscious of their power. Although they did not know the method of writing or reading, we have no right to call them uneducated," he said.

This is one aspect of the situation—a tribute to the illiterate villager. There are other aspects. The old, pre-Independence concept of adult education must change. Except in tribal areas, there are numerous social service organisations today, private or governmental, to stand by the illiterates so that they are not cheated. In the changed situation, what is most important is not to literate the illiterate, but to see that the education and culture already inherent in him, be he literate or illiterate, are not destroyed. Misuse of politics has claimed or clouded much of these already, now the rest is at the mercy of powerful media making inroads into the rural world, mainly the TV. **Embracing thousands of villages by the audio-visual wave may be an achievement, but it involves a great responsibility. The programmes—every ad, every posture counts—must not set in a process of uneducation, must not promote dubious values, must not try to sell ideas that have corrupted the urban life-style.**

Based on an anecdote narrated by Sri Ramakrishna.

Retold by VINDUSAR

ERUDITION AT MIDSTREAM

Although the following story is widely known, its significance is often missed.

"How long will it take to reach the other bank?" the solitary passenger asked the lone boatman as they set out into the river.

"It should take half an hour or a little more or a little less depending on the course of wind and the current. I'll do my best to ply it as fast as I can in view of the gathering storm," said the boatman who at first had been reluctant to set out.

"Be quick!" commanded the passenger, a great pundit, who had insisted on being taken to the other side as he had been invited by the zamindar.

But the pundit was not in the habit of travelling in silence. He loved to talk. He was always accompanied by a few disciples or admirers to whom he lectured on great issues of philosophy.

"Have you studied the Upanishads, boatman?" the pundit, bored of silence, asked.

"Studied, sir? I'm as illiterate as my boat!"

"I see! What is your notion of Mayavada?"

"No notion, sir, I'd never heard the word!"

"I thought as much!" sighed the pundit. "I pity people like you. Half of your life is a waste without any knowledge of philosophy."

"I agree with you, sir, we uneducated folks are unfortunate," said the boatman. They were at the midstream.

"Do you have some idea about Advaita, Visisthadvaita and..."

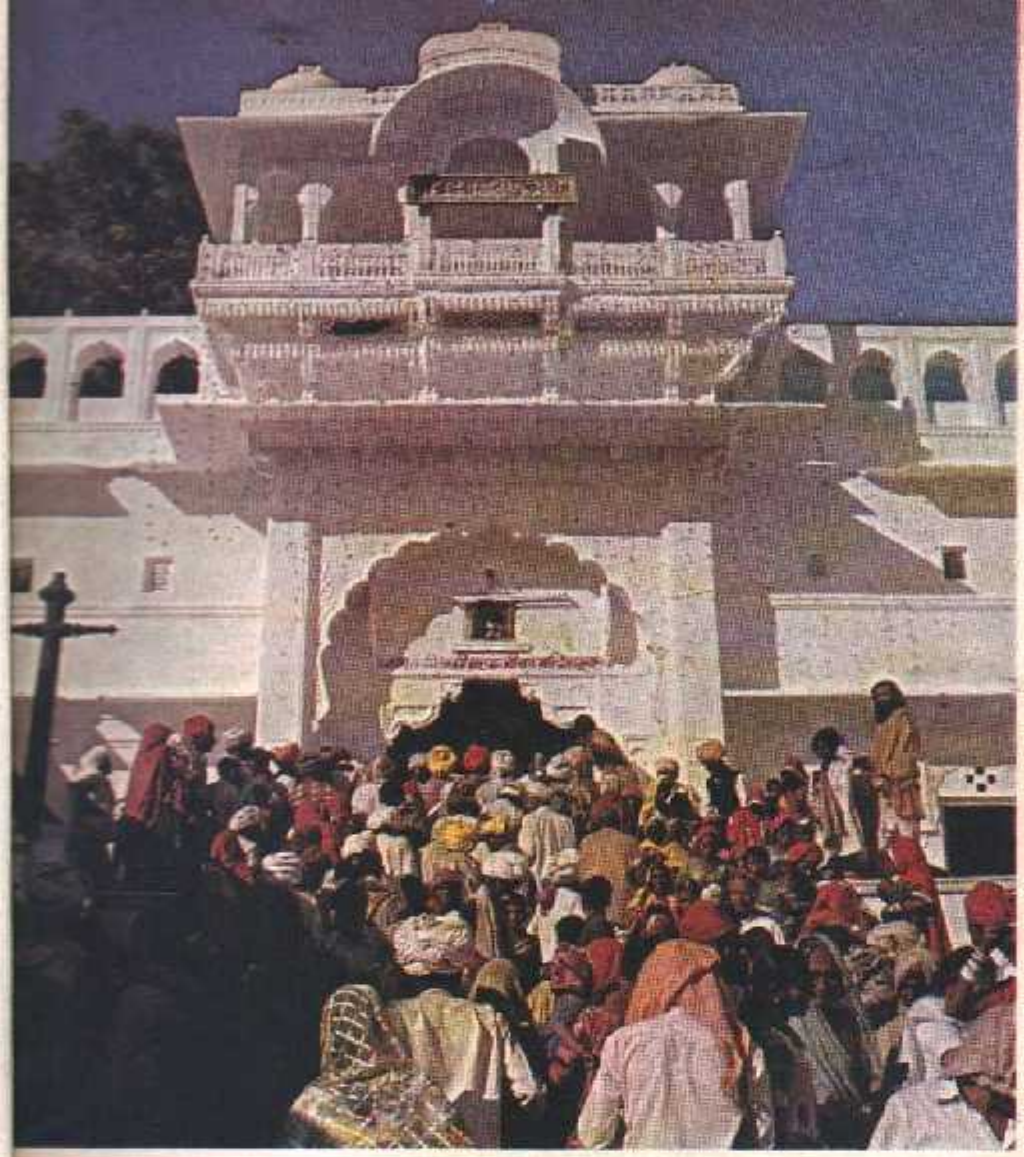
Suddenly a whirlwind broke out and rains came down in torrents. Despite all the efforts of the boatman to keep his boat steady, strong winds shook it violently.

"Sir, do you know swimming?" asked the boatman.

"Oh no!"

"In that case, sir, your whole life is a waste!" said the boatman. There was not the slightest irony in his voice, but great anxiety. Next moment the boat overturned. The boatman beat his strong arms and came ashore while the pundit, with all his knowledge of philosophy, went down into the terrible waters.

Knowledge is good, but that cannot carry one across the river of life—to safety. What is necessary is the simple faith in Providence. That alone keeps one afloat when the material support slips away.



LITTLE KNOWN INDIA

PUSHKAR

AN EXCLUSIVE EXPERIENCE

by TRIPTI PANDEY

The winding road from Ajmer running along the banks of the beautiful Anna Sagar Lake descends into a fascinating valley. Pushkar, one of the holiest of Hindu places of pilgrimage, lies on the serene banks of the lake, at the end of an eleven-kilometer meandering picturesque road from the city. Surrounded by hills on three sides, the little town is charged with a mystic spirit as verses from the Bhagavat Gita and Ramayana fill the morning air. It is believed that unless a pilgrim has a dip in this lake, he cannot realise in full the benefits of visiting the other four principal holy places in India, namely, Badrinath, Puri, Rameshwaram and Dwaraka.

According to the *Padma Purana*, Brahma, the Creator, once came down upon earth in order to destroy the terrible demon Vijra Nebha who was ceaselessly devouring the children of earth. He decided to perform a *yajna* and while passing over Pushkar, the lotus in his hand fell on three

Way to Brahma Temple

Pushkar Fair

Photographs: M.D. SHARMA

spots where water began to issue forth. These three spots came to be known as the Superior Pushkar, the Middle Pushkar and the Smaller Pushkar. And Brahma chose the first one for his *yajna*. The demon was dissolved by the power of the *yajna*.

As the sacrifice was supposed to have been performed in the month of *Kartik* (October-November), every year a host of pilgrims and devotees gather on the fifty-two ghats which surround the Pushkar lake, for a dip in its silvern waters. Of these ghats the Varah ghat is given special importance since it is believed that Brahma had bathed there after the performance of the *yajna*. In the recent past, in 1911, a separate ghat for women pilgrims was added by Queen Mary.

The uniqueness of Pushkar is that it is the only place in entire India with a temple dedicated to Lord Brahma. Surrounding this temple are some four hundred other ornate Hindu temples out of which the most popular ones are those dedicated to Savitri Mata, Badrinath, Varatji, Atmateshwara Mahadeva, Sriram Vaikuntha, Rangji and Beharijji.

Another interesting feature of Pushkar is that parallel to the religious fair there is held a cattle fair too. Years ago, when the devotees used to cover the long distance to Pushkar by camels, they found it convenient to sell and buy their camels at Pushkar only. This practice later grew into a full fair with the usual folk-theatre, magic shows, circus, bangle sellers, curio shops etc. The pilgrims, after completing their religious duties, walk into the fair for a bout of fun. They watch in a relaxed mood the camel-races, the bullock-races and the horse show, after a long afternoon of purchases or exchanges of articles.

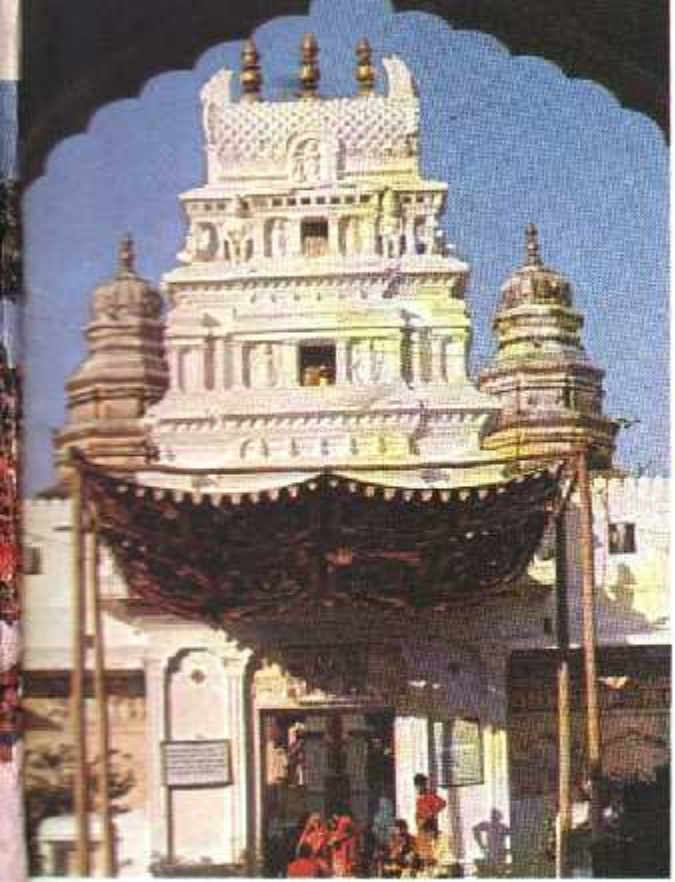
Slowly, the golden rays of the setting evening penetrate the dust clouds raised by the racing animals. The full-moon gradually but imperceptibly takes over the night. The pilgrims return to the lake and float on it hundreds of little earthen lamps. It was perhaps this breath-taking beauty of the lamps against the golden full-moon that attracted Emperor Jahangir again and again to this spot, for, he notes in his book, *Tajuk-i-Jahangire*, "Whilst at Ajmer I visited nine times the mausoleum of the revered Khwaja and fifteen times went to look at Pushkar lake..." 卐

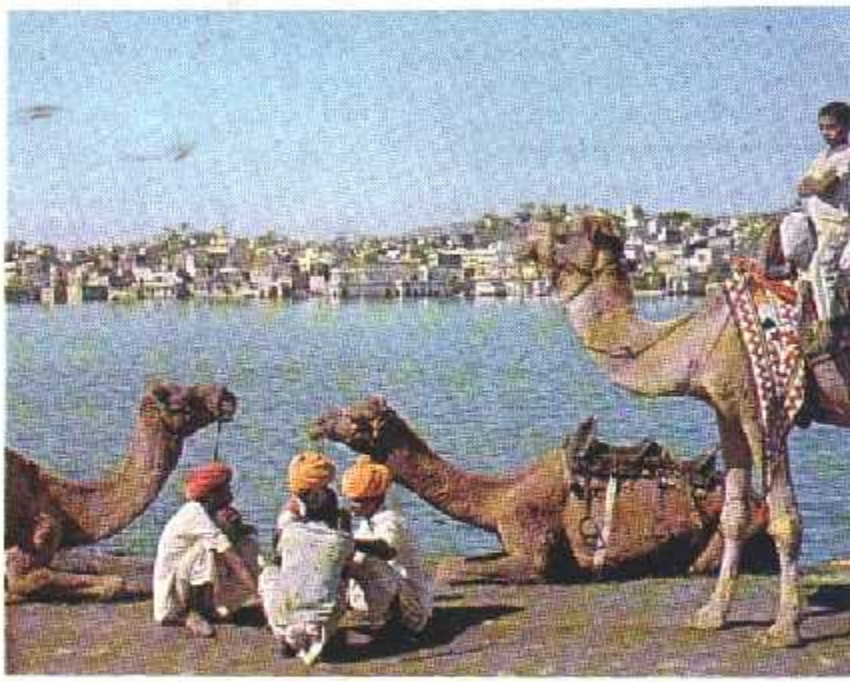
Top row from left: Dholr—Maru (competition at Pushkar); Varahu Temple; Rest at Pushkar Ghat.

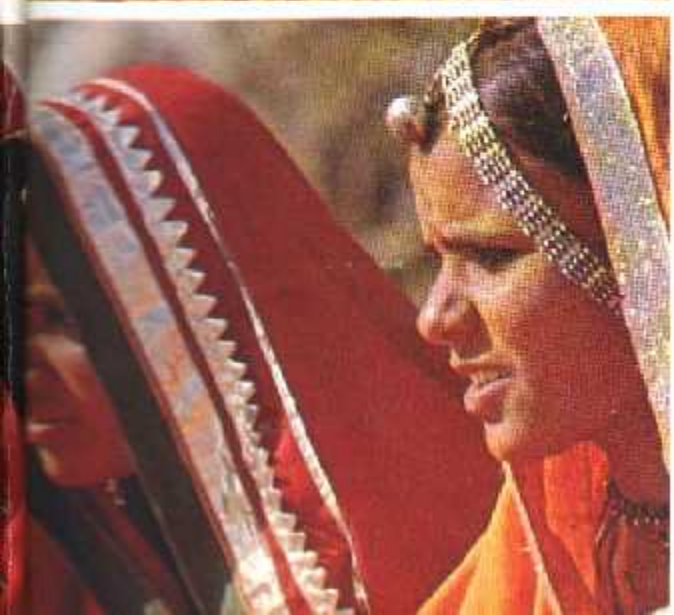
Centre: Ready for competition; Holi Bath.

Bottom: Heavy weight competition; Watching the competition; Marketing at Pushkar fair.

Photographs: M.D. SHARMA







where Rivers

It's a funny thing, but long before I arrive at a place I can usually tell whether I am going to like it or not. Thus, while I was still some twenty miles from the town of Pauri, I felt it was not going to be my sort of place; and sure enough, it wasn't. On the other hand, while Nandprayag was still out of sight, I knew I was going to like it. And I did.

Perhaps it's something on the wind—emanations of an atmosphere—that are carried to me well before I arrive at my destination! I can't really explain it. And no doubt it's silly to be prejudiced in advance. But it happens that way, and I mention the fact for what it's worth.

As for Nandprayag, perhaps I'd been there in some previous existence, because I felt I was nearing home as soon as we drove into this cheerful roadside hamlet, some little way above the Nandakini's confluence with the Alaknanda. A prayag is a meeting-place of two rivers, and since there are many rivers in Garhwal, all linking up to join either the Ganga or the Jumna, it follows that there are numerous prayags, in themselves places of pilgrimage as well as wayside halts en-route to the shrines at Kedarnath and Badrinath. Nowhere else in the Himalayas are there so many temples, sacred streams, holy places and holy men. Truly this is the kingdom of the Gods—so much so, that the mortal rulers of these mountain tracts have left but little mark of their own in the history of the region. Every little place is steeped in mythology. It is as though the Pandavas bestrode these mountains only yesterday! And perhaps they did, if we consider the premise that it isn't time that's passing—only you and I!

Some little way above Nandprayag's busy little bazaar is the Garhwal Mandal's rest house, perhaps the nicest of the rest houses in this area. It has a pretty garden surrounded by fruit trees and is some distance from the general hubbub of the main road.

Above it is the old pilgrim road, on which you walked, for let us remember that just over twenty years ago, if you were a pilgrim intent on finding salvation at Badrinath or Kedarnath, you went on foot all the way from Rishikesh—and in the process covered a few hundred miles in a couple of months. They had the time, they had the faith, they had the endurance. Illness and misadventure often dogged their footsteps, but what was a little suffering if at the end of it they arrived at the very portals of heaven? Some did not survive to make the return journey. Today's pilgrims may not be lacking in devotion, but most of them do expect to come home again.

Along the old pilgrim path are several handsome old houses, set amongst mango trees and the fronds of the papaya and banana. Higher up the hill the pine forests can be seen, but down here it is almost sub-tropical. Nandprayag is about 3,000 feet above sea level—a height at which the vegetation is usually quite lush, provided there is protection from the wind, as there is here.

In one of these double-storeyed houses lives Mr. Devki Nandan Vaishnav, scholar and recluse. He welcomes me into his home and plies me with food till I am close to bursting. He has a great love for his little corner of Garhwal and proudly shows me his collection of clippings concerning Nandprayag. One of them is from a book by Sister Nivedita. Writing in 1928, she had this to say:

"Nandprayag is a place that ought to be famous for its beauty and order. For a mile or two before reaching it we had noticed the superior character of the agriculture and even some careful gardening of fruits and vegetables. The peasantry also, sud-

by RUSKIN BOND

Meet

denly grew handsome not unlike the Kashmiris. The town itself is new, rebuilt since the Gohna Flood, and its temple stands far out across the fields on the shore of the Prayag. But in this short time, a wonderful energy has been at work on architectural carvings, and the little place is full of gemlike beauties. Its temple is dedicated to Naga Takshaka. As the road crosses the river, I noticed two or three old Pathan tombs, absolutely the only trace of Mohammedanism that we had seen north of Srinagar (Garhwal)."

Little has changed since Sister Nivedita's time, and there is still a small Pathan population in Nandprayag. In fact, when I called on Mr. Vaishnav, he was in the act of sending out Id greetings to his Muslim friends. Some of the [illegible] have disappeared [illegible] from new road [illegible] for the beautiful [illegible] by Sister Nivedi[illegible] learn that it had [illegible] by a mighty [illegible] when a cloudburst [illegible] at Belakuchi on the Alaknanda resulted in great destruction downstream.

Mr. Vaishnav remembers the time when he walked to Pauri to join the old Mezzmore mission school, where so many famous sons of Garhwal received their early education. It took him four days to get there. Now it is just four hours by bus. It was only after the Chinese invasion of 1962 that there was a rush of road-building in the hill districts of northern India. Before that, everyone walked and thought no thing of it.

Sitting alone that same evening in the little garden of the rest-house, I hear innumerable birds break out in song. Everything

Left above bottom: Drink the magical waters and be whole again!

Photographs: GANESH SAHA

Above & Middle: Picturesque Garhwali villages that cling to the hill-sides as if by pure will only!

Places of worship, in Garhwal, are simple and basic. Just like the people.

Places of worship, in Garhwal, are simple and basic. Just like the people.

any of them, because the trees are dark and the light is fading, but there is the rather melancholy call of the hill dove, the insistent ascending trill of the koel, and much shrieking, whistling and twittering that I am unable to assign to any particular species. Oh, that Salim Ali were here with me!

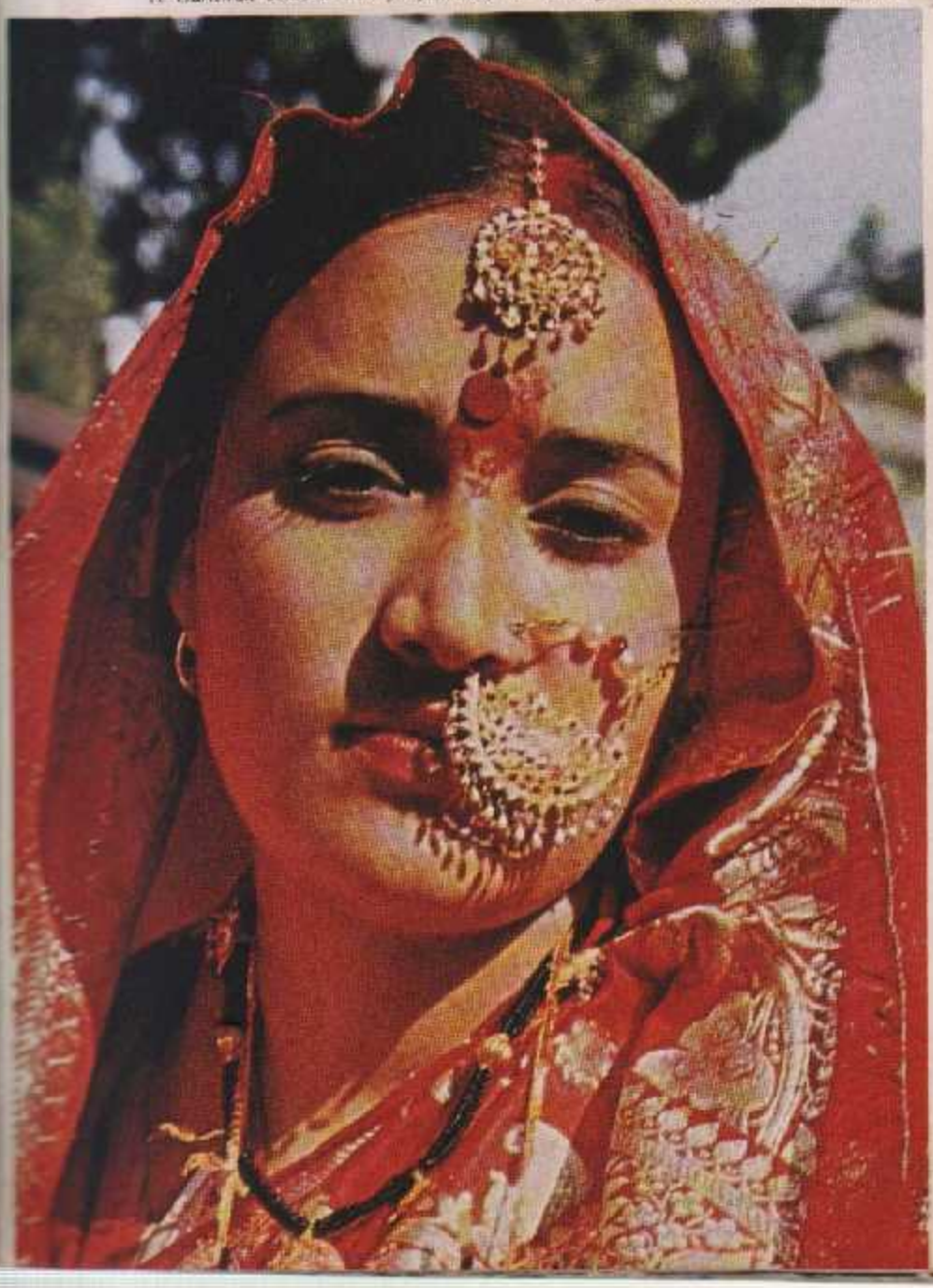
And now, once again, while I sit on the lawn surrounded by zinnias, I am assailed by that feeling of having been here before. Here, on this lush hillside, among the pomegranates and oleanders. Is it some childhood memory asserting itself? But as a child I came no further than Rishikesh. Nandprayag has some affinity with parts of the Doon valley before the Doon was submerged by a tidal wave of humanity; but in the Doon there is no great river running past your garden, and here there are two, and they are also part of this feeling of belonging. So perhaps, in some previous existence, I did come this way, a pilgrim or some sort of flower-person; or perhaps I lived and belonged here, which accounts for the familiarity. Who knows? And anyway, mysteries are more interesting than certainties.

Presently the room-boy joins me for a chat on the lawn. He is in fact running the rest-house in the absence of the manager. A couch-

A headful of raddish is carried home.

Fields of paddy gambol with the winds or the monsoons empty the skies.

A Garhwali bride is dowry by herself as weddings are no extravagant affairs here.



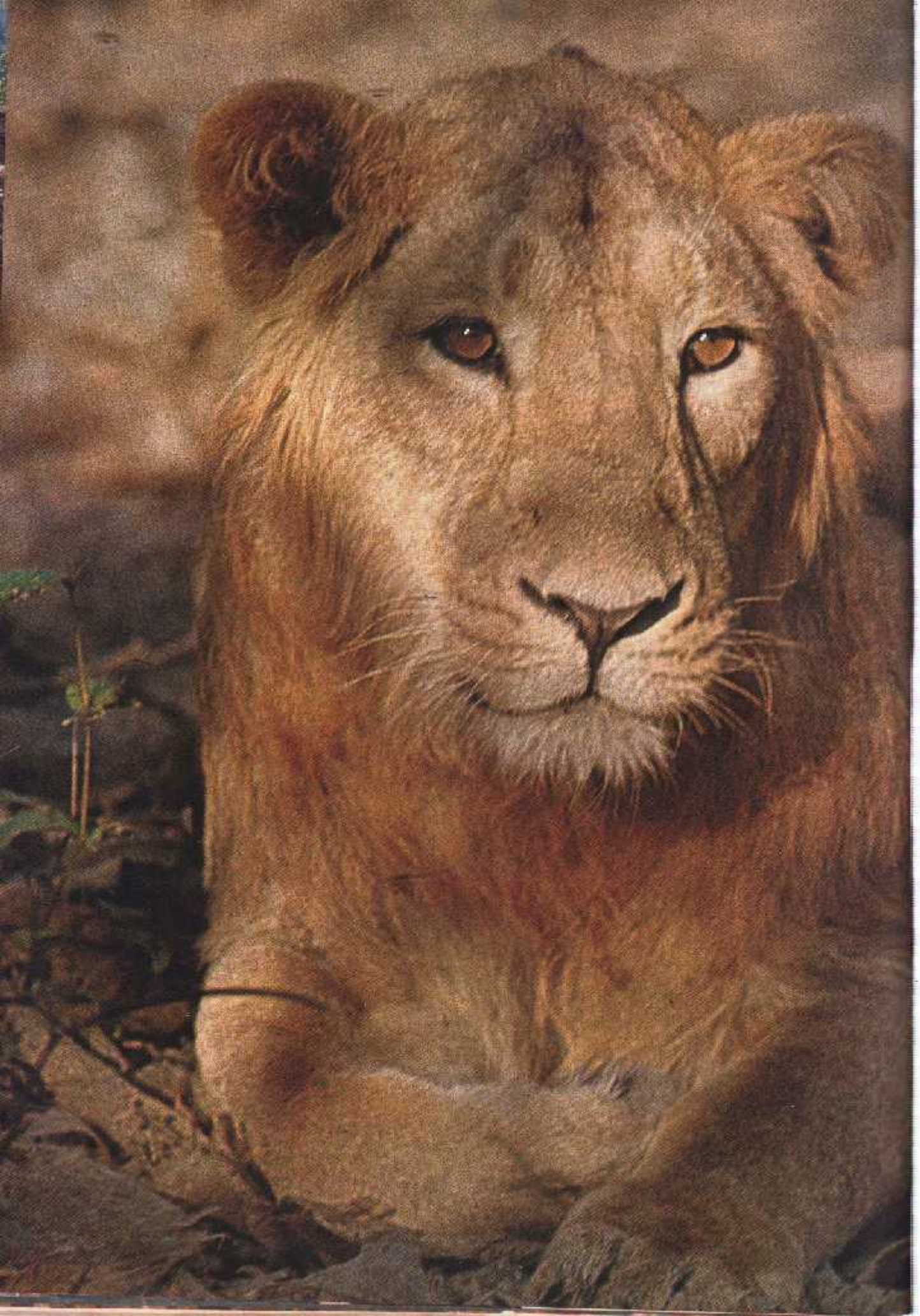
load of pilgrims is due at any moment, but until they arrive the place is empty and only the birds can be heard. His name is Janakpal and he tells me something about his village on the next mountain, where a leopard has been carrying off goats and cattle. He doesn't think much of the law protecting leopards: nothing can be done about it unless the leopard becomes a man-eater!

A shower of rain descends on us, and so do the pilgrims: Janakpal leaves me to attend to his duties. But I am not left alone for long. A youngster with a cup of tea appears. He wants me to take him to Mussoorie or Delhi. He is fed up, he says, with washing dishes in Nandprayag.

"You are better off here," I tell him sincerely. "In Mussoorie you will have twice as many dishes to wash. In Delhi, ten times as many."

"But there are cinemas there," he says, and I am left without an argument.

The rain stops and I go for a walk. The pilgrims keep to themselves, but the locals are always ready to talk. So I am not alone for long. I remember a saying (and it may have orginated in Garhwal), which goes: "All men are my friends. I have only to meet them." In the hills, where life still moves at a leisurely and civilized pace, one is constantly meeting them. 卐

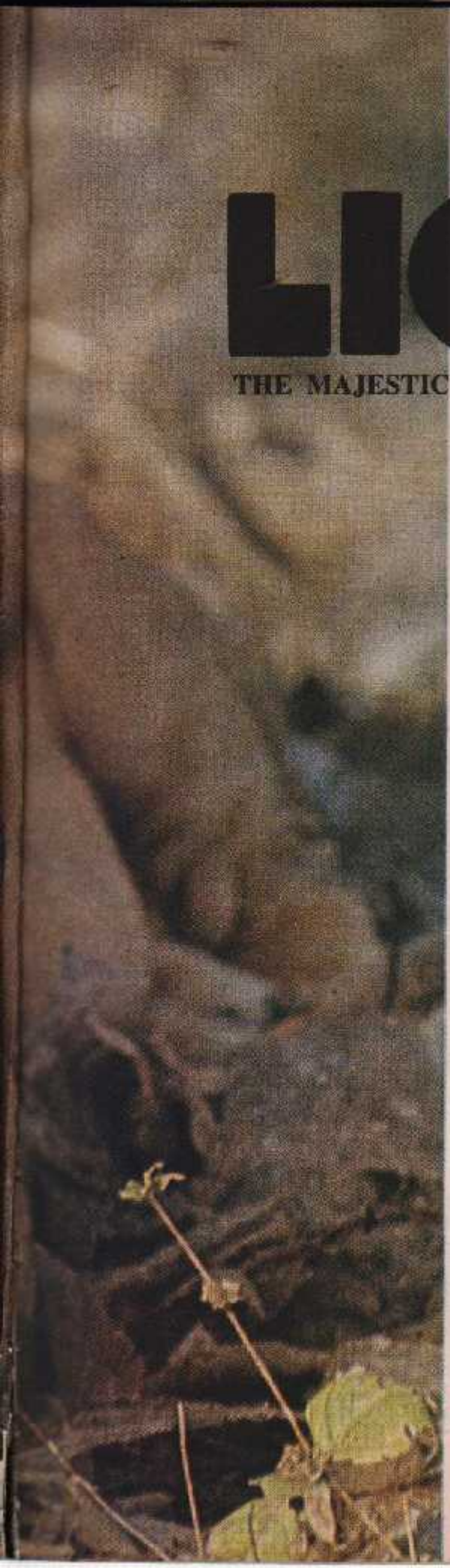


NATURE

by V. ANANDA REDDY

LION

THE MAJESTIC BEAST



Colour Photograph : C. HANUMANTHA RAO

Once upon a time the heavens and earth shook under the terror perpetrated by Mahishasura, the Buffalo Demon. He fought a fierce battle for a hundred years and drove the gods out of Amaravati, their capital city. They fled to Brahma seeking His protection. He guided them to Shiva and Vishnu, the Destroyer and the Protector.

When they heard of the invincible Mahisha, from the mouths of Vishnu and Shiva came forth blazing energies which combined and crystallised into Goddess Durga. The gods worshipped the mighty Form and offered to Her their own various weapons. And the terrible Goddess, blazing with weapons, mounted Her vehicle, the lion, offered to her by Himalaya. In the ensuing battle, the Goddess killed Mahisha, piercing him with Her trident. And all creatures in the triple worlds shouted, 'Victory!'

This narration from the *Markendeya Purana* shows the great esteem in which the lion has been held in the Hindu mythology since times immemorial. It has been always a symbol of power and nobility.

With its great strength and majestic bearing, no wonder the lion is looked upon as the king of beasts, believed to be respected by all the animals, except the giant elephants and rhinoceros which tend to ignore it. A signal roar from the lion and the jungle becomes still: the herds stop eating, get keyed up and get set to run for their life. When it shows up for a drink at the pool, all the other animals that may be drinking there withdraw leaving the place to the king. They return only after His Highness departs.

However, as a cub, the *panthera leo*, or the lion, is not much distinguishable from the other thirtysix species of the Family of Felidae in Order Carnivora. It sports distinct spotted pattern like that of the tiger or the jaguar and shares with them the other characteristics such as the stealth, the sharp retractable claws, the keen all-round senses and the strong jaws fitted with sharp teeth. It is only when the cub grows up that it is readily distinguishable by its tawny colour (ideal for camouflaging in the dry grass), black tuft at the tip of the tail and the lovely bushy mane in the male.

The mane which evinces a high degree of specialisation, is thick hair covering the head and neck and moving down to the shoulders and the fore-chest. It is fully grown not until the lion is five years old, making it look bigger and stronger. It can be blond, brown or black, but most are a mixture of these colours and it becomes darker as the lion ages. Its function is uncertain, but probably it is to soften the blows of his foes. Lions in captivity, however, grow finer and more

luxuriant mane than those in the wild state.

As the lion is more remarkable for strength than for speed, its shoulders and forelegs are very muscular giving it an immense power to clutch and pull down its prey. It has thirty teeth and some of them have special function. The four canine teeth are used to hold its prey, kill it and tear the meat; the four carnassial teeth are for cutting through tough skin and tendons. There are no teeth for chewing. So, the lion swallows its food in chunks.

A lion's span of life is twenty years, full development being attained at five years. A full-grown lion normally weighs up to 500 pounds and the lioness can go up to 300 pounds. The male's height is about three feet at the shoulder while the lioness is a bit smaller. The male's length is about ten feet, with a three-foot long tail. Normally, a lion eats about seventyfive pounds of meat in one meal and it has the strength to drag a 600 pound zebra, something even five men may find difficult to do. The principal prey-animals of a lion are the giraffe, the zebra, the antelope and wart-hog, although in times of scarcity it will eat anything from small rodents upwards and often even decomposed carcass. Occasionally, it might become a man-eater because of old age or injuries. Otherwise it avoids men.

The lion can live in cool climates as well as in the intense heat of semi-desert areas. It prefers to live in woodlands, grass plains and areas with thorny scrub trees and not in thick forests. It lives, in general, where it can get a good and regular supply of food and water.

Lions always live in prides which may include upto as many as thirtyfive members. Each pride has one to three adult males, several lionesses and cubs. It is not necessary that all of them should live together; some lions may hunt in one place while others hunt in different spots. However, when they meet they greet each other by rubbing cheeks.

Left: Lion—young male Right: Lioness with cub

As with all other groups of animals, each pride occupies a specific territory which can cover from 15 to 100 square miles depending upon the availability of food and water. And of course, like all other beasts lions also guard their territory very zealously. They warn intruders by roaring or by squirting a

MEN AND LION

Two Accounts from Legends and History

Androcles was a slave who escaped from his master and took shelter in a cave, deep in a forest. Towards the evening a huge lion came into the cave and stood face to face with Androcles. Instead of pouncing on him the lion held up its right paw. Androcles saw that its paw was bleeding. He extracted from it a large thorn and dressed it.

It so happened that the slave was recaptured and thrown in the Roman arena where he had to fight a hungry lion. When it was released from the cage, the starving lion gave a terrific roar and stalled, ready to leap on its victim. The spectators held their breath. The lion suddenly grew quiet and then conducted itself towards Androcles as if it were his pet. It had recognised its benefactor. It showed towards him gestures of love and gratitude.

Colour Photographs: C. HANUMANTHA RAO

mixture of scent and urine on bushes. Any outsider who dares to ignore the warning does so at its own risk!

Apart from the advantages of self-protection and procreation, the benefit of a pride is in hunting. The lions, slower in speed than most of their prey, need to hunt in a group and preferably at night when their eyes can see well.

The hunt begins with a grand roar. However, before the roar is given out, the lionesses who do the killing, sneak on the other side of the herd, the windward side, about a mile away, and keep in waiting. The terrific roar of the lion drives the prey-herd towards the waiting lionesses. As soon as the victim comes about thirty feet near, the lionesses rush out with incredible swiftness—a few giant bounds, and hurtling through the air is an animal missile that rarely misses its target. The smashing giant paw breaks the backbone of the doomed animal or the front paw is placed on the neck of the terror-stricken victim, while the other paw hits the face, jerking the head back and between them snapping the animal's neck.

Once the kill is made, a strict order of protocol is followed in the eating: first the lions, followed by the lionesses and last come the cubs who devour the left-over shreds of meat.

The story has many variations, though, the most popular are those related to St. Jerome and St. Gerasimus.

An historical instance of the lion's nobility is related to Sir George Davis, the English consul at Florence, who lived in the beginning of the 19th century. The Duke of Tuscany had many tamed lions but, there was one that could not be tamed. He had bought it off a Barbary captain, for it was a huge and wonderful beast and the Duke had fallen in love with it. But, however much he tried, he failed to subdue its temper.

One day, Sir Davis went to see the Duke's lions. As soon as he approached the unbroken beauty, the lion showed signs of joy and excitement. Sir Davis entered its cage and it immediately leaped on his shoulder, licking his face all over, like a puppy.

Sir George Davis later explained that it was he who had brought up the lion when it was a cub. As it grew up it became more and more unmanageable and even dangerous for the neighbours. So, he had sold it off to the Barbary captain.

That explained the unusual behaviour of the grand lion!

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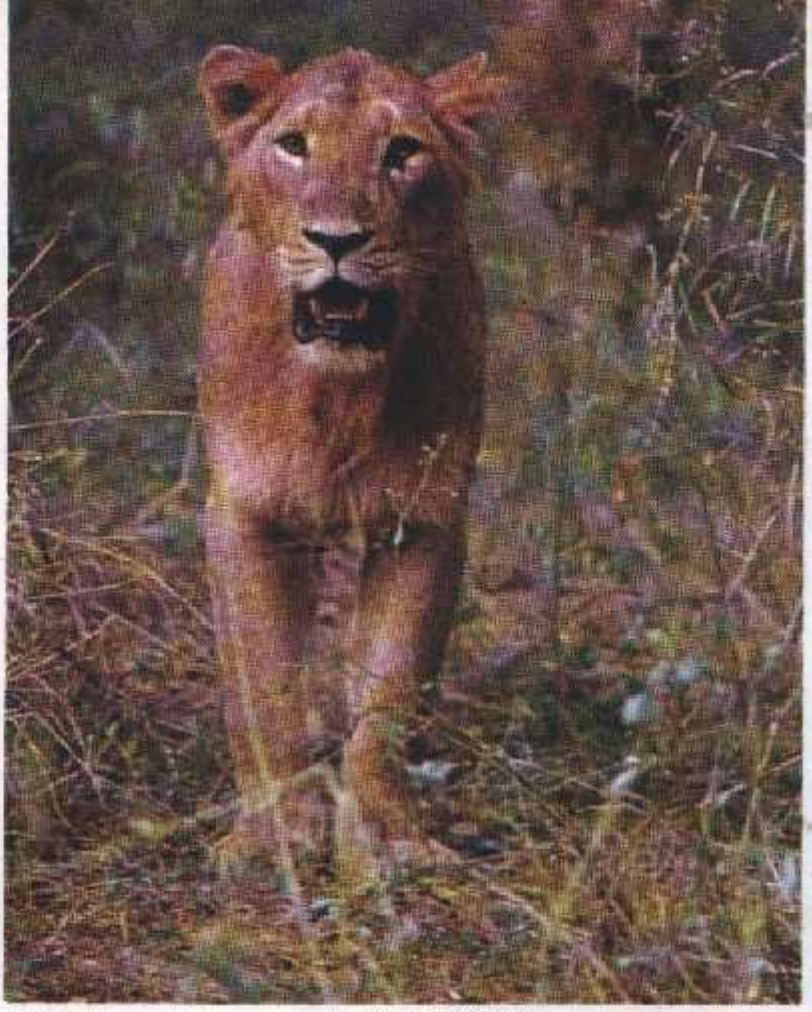

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Photographs: R.A. ACHARYA

When they are not hunting, the life in a pride is peaceful. The lions, very much like large contented house-cats, enjoy themselves drowsing away or sleeping for sixteen to twenty hours a day. Often they watch thoughtfully at the goings-on around them or sometimes get up and walk slowly to examine what they don't understand. They live a quiet life of about twenty years.

The lions do not have any restrictive breeding or mating season. After a pregnancy lasting 106 to 110 days, either two or three cubs are born, with eyes open and the coat spotted. They are then licked clean and dry and taken away to a shrub or niche for protection and care. They are in danger of the hyenas and the dominant lions who may kill the cubs when they intrude into the protocol order of eating. For about two months the cubs are fully on milk and then they are taken by their mother to share their first kill-meat. The lionesses do not usually have the next litter until the cubs are eighteen to twenty-four months, big enough to hunt and fend for themselves.

The juvenile male lions are often driven out of the pride when they are about two and half years old, for, they become potential rivals to the older males. The juvenile females are of course allowed to stay on in the pride to help in the hunt and to rear the future generations.

In ancient times, lions lived in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and India. But, in the passing of centuries, the numbers dwindled, because of 'heroic' deeds and hunting.

In about 1375 B.C. the Egyptian Pharaoh Amenhothes III hunted lions with a bow and arrow from a chariot and killed 102 lions! Saint Louis and his followers seem to have chased on horse back, during the Seventh Crusade, hundreds of lions and shot them with their cross-bows. The Moghul Emperors too were fond of spearing lions.

Even in the last century, there were plenty of lions in Mesopotamia, Persia and northern India. But, at present they are found majorly in Central and South Africa and in Gujarat, India, where they are protected. The most important sanctuary of the country, the Gir forest (Gujarat) is the only place where the Asiatic lion has been successfully saved. Being a natural environment, with all the graziers and the cattle around, it provides an ideal habitat for the Indian lion. However, the natural habitat too is facing the danger of fast destruction from poachers and the lion-species may face a crisis again unless proper measures are adopted to stop the rampage.

Lions in wild state are not normally a menace as can be seen in the Gir forest where people can watch them freely from a distance of twenty feet. The lions there have become quite used to the visitors and sometimes even hunt freely, stalking behind the parked cars.

In zoos too the lions thrive readily and, with tigers, they have produced offspring known as Tigons or Ligers, depending upon the male partner.

The practice of keeping lions in captivity and training them is centuries old. Pharaoh Ramses II is said to have taken a tame lion to the battlefield as a mascot. King Ashurbanipal (680 B.C.) caught fifteen young lions and nurtured them. The Roman Elegabales rode in a chariot pulled by lions. The last emperor of Ethiopia had a tame lion. Elsa of 'Born Free' and 'Living Free' fame is a magnificent example of how a lion can be tamed completely and even be 'humanised' to a certain extent. 卐

CRAFTS

by KESHAB CHANDRA MEHER

Tie and Dye Art of Western Orissa

THE STORY OF SAMBALPUR SAREE

Orissa, a land of exquisite handicrafts and artistic handlooms, leads the country in weaving artistry. The fascinating tie and dye sarees, very much in vogue now in Western Orissa, are famous in India and abroad as well. They are not only excellent in art and texture but also display a keen sense of colour combinations.

Orissa's celebrated traditional designs in textiles have been enriched by varied motifs from Nature and temple sculpture. The embellished designs are woven mainly by a couple of processes—the tie and dye method and the extra yarn stitching. Sarees, upholstery and dress materials of tie and dye work from Orissa, with intricate creepers, flowers, birds, animals and temple motifs in brilliant colour are used extensively by the rich as well as common people. If, in Orissa, and specially western Orissa, there grew up peerless craftsmanship in handloom weaving, it was because the weaver himself was an artist. His sensitivity to rhythm and colour, line and curve, size and shape makes him a perfect artist and designer. What he imagines he executes on the fabric. He is a Midas of Art who transmutes everything into golden beauty by the alchemic touch of his magic fingers.

The Meher weavers of Western Orissa specialise in a unique tie and dye work known as 'Bandha', which is recognised by connoisseurs as a work of intricate art. Nature, with its movements of clouds, the rains of the month of *Ashad*, distant mountains and

birds flying in the air, is pictorially imitated in the Bandha-style, on sarees, upholstery, wall-hangings etc. Whichever be the source of this art, it has reached its perfection in the hands of the Mehers of Sambalpur District and Sonepur sub-division of Balangir District. Forms akin to it have also been developed and appreciated in other countries like Japan, Persia, Africa, Latin America, Mexico, the United States of America and Switzerland. Von Marie-Louise Nabholz-Kartaschoff treats in her book *Ikatbewebe aus Sudeuropa* the tie and dye works of Switzerland and Southern Europe.

Unlike the tie and dye works of other regions in India, the motifs and designs of Western Orissa are infinite in number and every motif or design is categorised and has a special caption. No design goes without a name. It shows the creative mind of the Bandha weavers of this region.

This renowned Bandha tradition grew and sustained itself against the onslaughts of cheaper productions of mills and the negative influence of the West. The son, watching his father at work, gradually acquires the deftness and the skill of his father and grandfather. Then, attuning himself to this art, he develops a keen sensitiveness which results in new images and patterns. And thus, from ancient times the tradition of Bandha art was preserved giving aesthetic expression to thousands of novel motifs and designs which catered over the centuries to the need and taste of the customers all over the country and abroad.

Those who have seen the *Ath Phulia, Dasha Phulia, Butadar Kaptas, Bichitrapuri, Saktapuri, Rupashree* and other sarees of the kind, must have noticed how diverse are the designs on the *anchal* of the sarees. Motifs of *ghaghara, deuli lata* (creeper),

Photographs: Savya Sachi
Back ground Photograph: Author

fish, swan, deer, elephant, lion and lotus adorn the saree end and borders. Pictures other than these do not generally claim a place in the traditional Bandha art.

The Bandha of *ghaghara* is similar to the garlands on Lord Jagannath and Balabhadra, and it enhances greatly the beauty of the *anchal*. This Bandha motif is presented in black and white in equal proportion symbolising the chiaroscuro of sorrow and happiness of life.

The artist begins his pursuit with the *deuli* Bandha. The word *deuli* derives from an Odissi word meaning the temple of God. The artist therefore first weaves an argent temple, installing in it the muse of his art. It is only after worshipping the muse, goes the belief, that one can accomplish one's art faultlessly.

Then follows one artistic design after another. *Deuli* is immediately followed by a *lata* symbolising the slender body of a young maiden. Kalidas, in his *Kumara Sambhavam* describes his ideal of feminine beauty as "a soft-leaved creeper in gentle motion, bent with an agreeable load of ample flowers."

"Paryapta puspa stavaka-vanamra
Sancharini pallavini lateva."

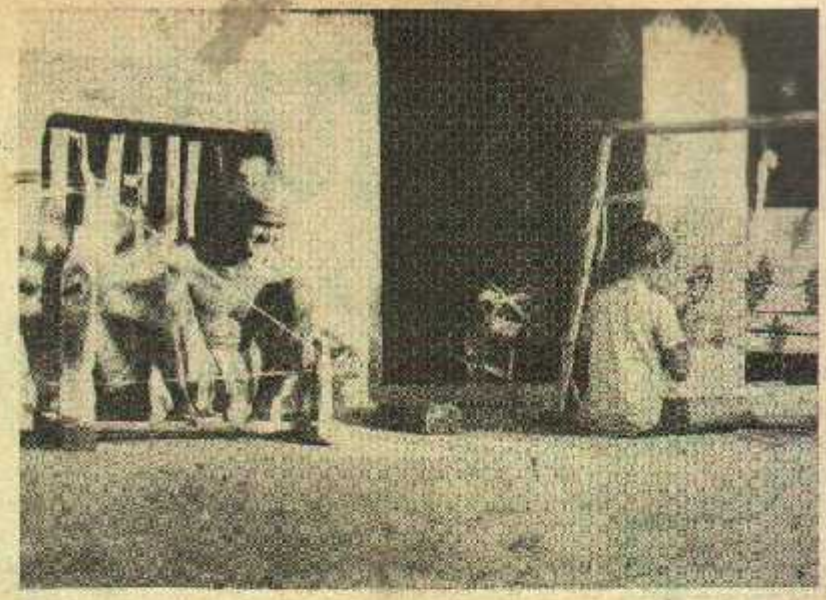
Moreover, the creeper also represents the wave of thoughts, and the flower in it symbolises the prime of a woman's youth.

The creeper design is followed by the fish design illustrating shoals of fish darting in different directions. It symbolises the Hindu idea of beauty implied in the word *Meenakshi*—the fish-eyed one. Fish is also the symbol of the first incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

In this manner the illustration of the antelope, the swan, the elephant and the lion are woven beautifully in the *anchal* representing respectively the Hindu ideal of feminine beauty in eyes,

Untieing of Bandha Knots

Top: Weaving in Progress
Centre: Colouring of Bandha yarn
Bottom: Preparation of Bandha yarn



Black & White Photographs: Debi Patnaik

voice, motion, waistline etc. Further details of these symbols can be had from the book *Odisara Bayana Kala* penned by the present author.

A lotus blossom is at the centre of all the designs. Having mythological associations and aesthetic suggestions, the lotus claims a central place in every Indian art motif. Brahman is supposed to be seated on a lotus along with Lakshmi. Lord Vishnu's face, eyes, navel, feet, and palms are usually compared with the lotus. Again, He is shown as holding a lotus in hand, implying His benediction.

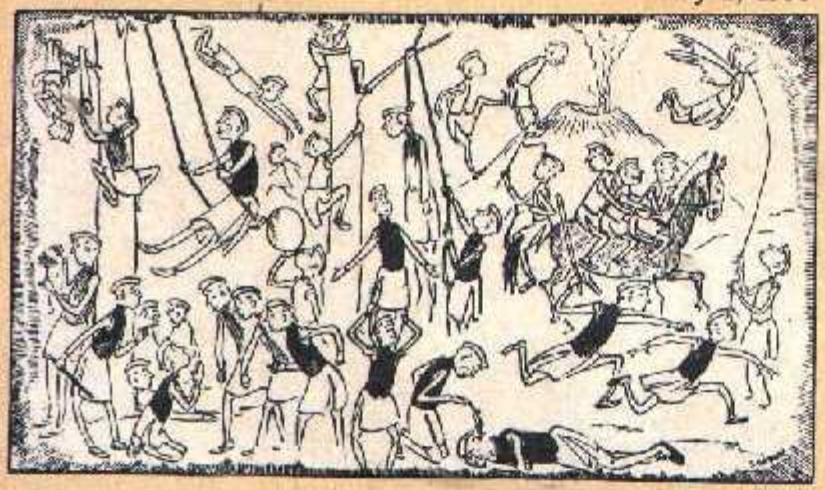
Bandha design maintains its uniqueness in many ways. First, the front and back are exactly the same of every motif—a thing quite impossible to do by the machines or other improved weaving devices like *Dobby, Jala, Jacquard*. Secondly, no extra yarn is needed for the different motifs of this art. Thirdly, its designs are many in number and each one is named.

Sarees like *Padmavati, Manihira, Manasi, Muktamala, Kumbha-Saudamini, Kadambini, Baghambari, Panchabati* and *Rupashree*, woven in the Bandha method are widely popular inside and outside Orissa. There is now a programme by the Central Government to encourage these weavers, and it is firmly hoped and believed that this art of Bandha and Western Orissa will receive an impetus through this scheme and that the Bandha weavers will recapture those creative impulses that vivified our heritage, and infuse them with a new inspiration and greater motifs. 卐

REMEMBRANCE

Nehru through Shankar's brush

THE MIND WITHIN July 2, 1950



Asked by a Rangoon pressman whether he suffered from internal conflicts, Nehru replied, "A person without internal conflict is a lunatic."

July 23, 1950

Truman scared to see Nehru as an angel of peace.

FALLEN IDOL August 20, 1950

Nehru has been 'perturbed' at the fading out from people's minds of the basic principles for which the Congress had all along stood. *Standing helpless is Congress President Pattabhi Sitaramayya.*

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU'S BIRTHDAY FALLS ON THE 14TH OF THIS MONTH

"Don't spare me Shankar!" said Jawaharlal Nehru when he inaugurated *Shankar's Weekly* in 1948 that unique journal of witty comments and cartoons, the product of the genius that is Shankar.

Shankar did not spare Nehru. Till the closure of his *Weekly* (a terrible loss for India's intelligentsia), he had drawn 1500 cartoons of Nehru, some complimentary and some critical, but all with that sure touch of dignity which only a subject like that could elicit and a cartoonist like Shankar could give.

"Jawaharlal Nehru enjoyed a hearty laugh—often at his own expense," reminisced Smt. Indira Gandhi in her forward to a selection of Shankar's cartoons on Nehru, *Spare me Not*, brought out by Children's Book Trust, New Delhi, another creation of Shankar. Yet we present our selection from this absorbing selection, with kind permission of Shankar and the Children's Book Trust.

—Editor.

YOU ASKED FOR IT December 2, 1951 January 6, 1952

Nehru was known for his temper. At the receiving end, among others, clockwise from bottom left: Acharya Kripalani, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Master Tara Singh, Ram Manohar Lohia, Asoka Mehta, and Jayaprakash Narayan.

Nehru declared in an election speech that he took the responsibility for every single failure or achievement of his government. *(Anti-clock wise) Left: Acharya Kripalani, Sampurnanand, C.B. Gupta, Dr Gopichand Bhargava and S.K. Patil. Right: Gulzarilal Nanda, Satyanarain Sinha, Prakasam, Devadas Gandhi, Jagjivan Ram, K.M. Munshi, Ravi Shankar Shukla and Purshottam Das Tandon.*

WANTED FIRE-FIGHTERS March 9, 1952 December 28, 1952

"My mind is afire with the vision of the future of India"— Nehru at Sindri.
Churchill, Truman and Stalin to the rescue.

Nehru opened the rare earth factory at Alwaye.
The atom bomb is not anybody's monopoly.
Looking on with concern are Truman, Churchill and Stalin.

THE CHARMER AND THE CHARMED May 3, 1953

Nehru stated at a public meeting that he was not opposed to the idea of linguistic states.

November 15, 1953

August 20, 1961

Playing the song of integration to the forces of disintegration.

February 6, 1955

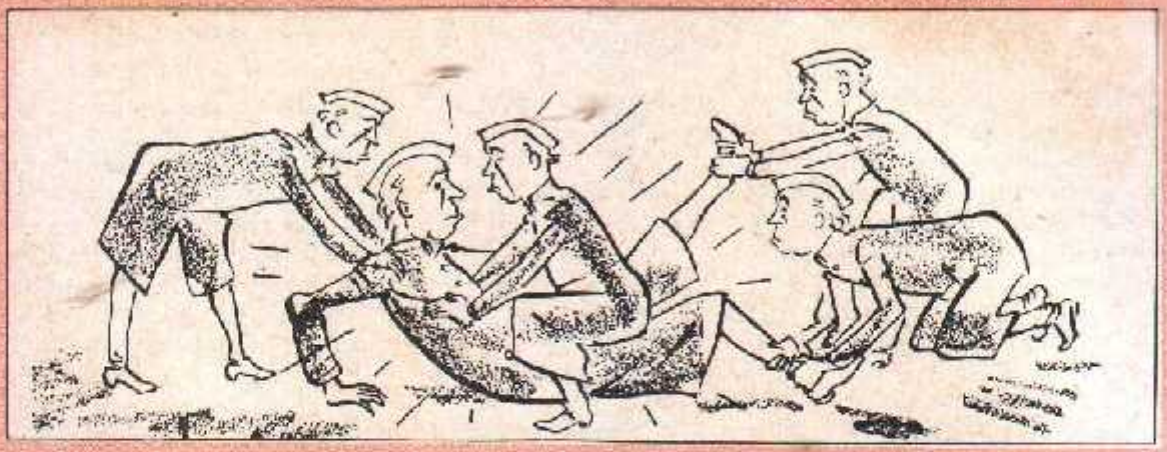
November 18, 1956

Nehru's birthday was observed as Children's Day. He thought for a moment he was a child.

BREATH OF PANCHSHILA October 13, 1957

Speaking in Japan, Nehru urged the banning of nuclear weapons.

October 20, 1957



Nehru says man must learn to control himself. Rather difficult task, that.

May 11, 1958

In 1958 Nehru threatened to retire from public life, but was persuaded not to by colleagues. Congress President Dhebar, followed by Cabinet colleagues Lal Bahadur Shastri, Satyanarain Sinha, and Krishna Menon. (Back row) Gulzari Lal Nanda, Swaran Singh, S.K. Patil, Jagjivan Ram, Morarji Desai and Govind Ballabh Pant.

December 7, 1958

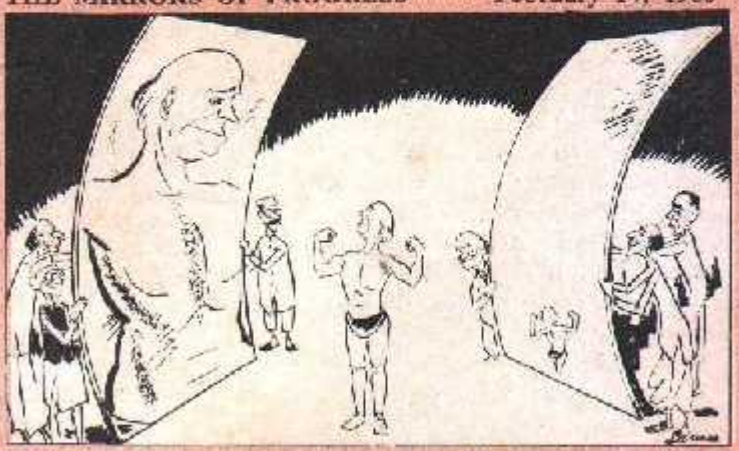
The world might try to bring about the marriage of science and spiritual quality—Prime Minister. Why not officiate?

December 6, 1959

Even the opposition parties (Dange, A.K. Gopalan, M.R. Masani, Acharya Kripalani and Asoka Mehta) respected and admired him.

THE MIRRORS OF PROGRESS

February 14, 1960



Achievements in various fields of development were reviewed at the inauguration of the new session of Parliament.

Left: Cabinet colleagues Krishna Menon, Morarji Desai and Gulzarilal Nanda Right: Opposition leaders Dange, Acharya Kripalani and M.R. Masani.

by Dr. N.C. SURYA

Since Independence there has been a great deal of exhortation, effort and expenditure directed towards Indianising something or the other: Indianising dress, language, industry, psychiatry and so on.

The content of an observation on variable material depends very much on the stand-point of the observer. I am a worker in the field of human interactions. The problems of harmony, disharmony, individual and collective, confront me in actual attempts at the rectification of the machinery involved in their solution: the machinery, parts and functions, forces and energies, fields of action and lines of direction and effect, purpose and economy, such is the concern of my work. Accident of personal circumstances had driven me to the portals of a medical college. Over thirty years of contact showed to me the limitations of the grossly mechanistic models of thought and practice to which medical science or at least its practitioners seemed tethered. The next twenty years revealed to me the tragedy of medical practice, not only in holding on to this model but, in cherishing it with suicidal delight long, long after the merely mechanistic model was being blown literally beyond the sky by other sciences. The socio-economic factors in this game of self-inflicted blindness require separate consideration.

I was forced to look into the question of what is an Indian, firstly by my clients who directly or indirectly related themselves and their sufferings to some Indian Scriptural sayings, and by the currently popular, culture-oriented fashion of psychiatric concern smuggling in words—Indian, Yoga etc.—and presenting the whole of Indian Scriptures as some sort of psychotherapeutic appendix of Freud, Jung, Pavlov, ECT, and so on, as the hall-mark of Indianisation. The patient uses or implies concepts like *Karma, Maya, Dharma*, God, Guru etc. and the psychiatrist works scientifically on the place of Yoga in Electro-Convulsive Therapy, on the psychotherapeutic effects of Krishna or on the curative Yogic postures in Catatonia as different from Catatonic postures in Yoga,—the definition of Yoga being as elastic as the grant given by the Indianising Foundation. (The reader may take a look at the poem, 'Hunting of the Snark', by Lewis Carrol, and then meet an Indian, desperately trying to Indianise himself! It may be tempting to define an Indian as one who is desperately trying to Indianise himself! Or better still, one who is frantically telling, exhorting, whipping and bribing every other Indian to Indianise himself!)

In this interesting maze of possibilities in the use of the word Indian, I was forced to search for tools necessary for my interactional use, not necessarily for absolute truths.

At an early stage of this search, I found that there was little resemblance between the strictly practical, personal, experimental and experiential approaches of Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo, and the bizarre medley of the professional pedlars of Indian Philosophy who profess to be propagating the teachings of the above persons. Once a Sufi happened to meet the Devil. The Devil was in a pose of utter relaxation, luxuriously lying down in a state of perfect rest and comfort. The Sufi wondered, and said, 'Friend Devil, how is it that you are idling your time. You are usually a very busy fellow. Have you no work?' The Devil replied: "Alas, it is too true. Since your dear disciples have taken on themselves the task of expounding and propagating your teachings to the four corners of the world, I find myself without a job, seeing that they have taken away all the burden of my work. It is very hard on me!" Well, the thing that struck me forcibly was that none of the above teachers were preoccupied with the business of Indianising anything or anybody. They meticulously used their bodies and their faculties to grow into a wider and greater harmony with the universe around and within. They never set out to create, maintain or perpetuate any tradition called, specifically, Indian. They occasionally commented on their experience and practice, and the results thereof, and opened the door to those who agreed to personally apprentice themselves and grow. For them the scriptural heritage was a platform to help to launch themselves into interactional growth, rather than an umbrella to shelter under or a costly mausoleum or a glossy philosophy to be entombed in. To engage the body in its totality in

My Indian Heritage

implementing the beliefs one holds and to modify body and belief to ever-newer and richer modes of expression, and never to be obsessed with fossilising a tradition were the hall-marks of the few but formidable Indians I looked to for guidance.

I venture to present a sample of the concepts that helped me. It is worthwhile noting that the words or concepts referred to are not nouns so much as verbs, ways of being and doing that act as catalysts operating on the body or person that opens himself to them.

A Guru or teacher covers the whole complex involved in the process of learning. There must be someone willing to learn, who is willing because he feels the need, acutely and seriously enough, to learn; the teacher who is both willing and equipped to teach the particular subject of learning; the content of the learning; and also, the material used as learning aids, of which time is a factor. When these factors constellate, the situation and process develop into what is known as the *Guru-Sishya* relationship. If the *Sishya* wanting to learn electricity hangs the picture of the professor of electromagnetics in his room, and then goes on to sell crockery for seven days of the week and does not do one single experiment as per syllabus, and makes someone else sign the attendance register, and by threatening the Guru gets an engineering degree, or if he wants to learn about electricity and then apprentices himself to a barber—well, it is learning of a kind, but not the kind referred to here. If you want to learn swimming, and you have no time or need or inclination to dip your foot even accidentally in water, and you have no time to do that, because you are selling the pictures of the Guru, and you are expounding his teachings on swimming, and you are engaged in telling everyone how your swimming teacher is better than all the swimming teachers of the world, then you should know your true vocation.

Kshetra—Kshetrajna, the Body and I, this Body-I complex is the basis of knowledge. All else flows from this dialectic nucleus. It does not require ages of *tapasya* to verify this simple fact—but there it is. Can anyone know more of himself or the world around except by what his body and its faculties bring to his awareness? This is the foundation of all epistemology. Reciting the *sloka* with reverence and expounding it to others without experiencing and expressing its implications is the foundation of chaos. *Suriram khalu dharma sadhanam*. Verily, this body is the instrument of harmony. The instrumental nature of the body has been emphasised by those great pioneers, the Vedic and Upanishadic Rishis and by the great line of the Sufi teachers. This instrument is to be used, studied and developed. That the body is a burdensome appendage mysteriously thrust on us and quickly to be got rid of by the seeker of *Mukti*, or that it is a gratuitous luxury to be condemned but enjoyed—these views are distortions that crept in at some stage, gaining respectability as religious dogma or as a mystical totem for the anthropologist's delight. The I-Body complex as a ceaselessly interacting dialectic unit in evolution—that is the explicit observation of Krishna in the Gita, the essence of the Upanishads. Thus, its insistence on the necessity for a long life, for the 'I' to realise, to make real, its implications in the body as fully as possible in one life, and for the recurring

appearance of the 'I', again and again till the evolutionary destiny of the I-Body complex stands revealed. The 'I' first becomes manifest in the human frame.

Skill in action is Yoga says Krishna. He also says that it is in the performance of your tasks that you will realise. Realise what? The essential knowledge, the knowledge of the interaction between yourself and your bodily instrument. Even in a simple machine like a car you can only learn its full possibilities by actually driving the car. You can only learn while doing. In all action there are two results—there is that which happens to the thing you are acting upon, and there is that which is happening to yourself and your body the actor in the process. Imagine a man driving his car to Madras to keep an appointment. Imagine him also as taking his eyes away from the dashboard, so to say from a constant awareness of what is happening to his own car. The car costs 50,000 rupees. So the driver has to pay some attention to the question of what is happening to his car irrespective of the appointment he has to keep in Madras. But the body has come to him gratis, free of charge. So he can do what he likes with it. He merrily crashes into other equally drunk vehicles, called persons, on the road, and writes a text-book on the psychology and philosophy of human conflict, wars, family quarrels and so on.

Your body is the latest, most complex vehicle gifted to you at birth. It is your best, most precious birth-day gift. It has parts, powers, gears, brakes, carburettors and so on. It provides the support for the owner, called I. *Adhyatmajnana* means the knowledge of the body, the support of the Atma. Yet, by a sleight of hand all are driven to run after so-called search for and knowledge of the Atma which by definition requires no knowledge, and by this most mendacious interpretation, contrary to what Krishna explicitly states and implies, generations of Indian youth have identified the Indian Heritage as an impractical farce utterly unrelated to their daily life.

This bears repetition. This body is your first, your primary vehicle. Its driving needs to be learnt as much as the driving of any complex vehicle. You must know how to use your speech, your thoughts, your feelings, your sensations for navigating in the world around. The Buddha has made the most detailed study of the body in its totality and in infinitesimal detail.

The function called *Upadrashta*, the witness, is your dash-board. This function, can be developed, by *abhyasa* or practice. Looking at your own dash-board is the key-note of the Indian Heritage and of its exemplars. Looking at other's dash-boards is the basis of science.

The Indian Heritage drives me to bring the best out of myself.

Satyam, the concept of truth: That truth, Satyam, which also implies Ritam, Harmony, is a ceaseless process from truth to truth, and not a fossilised formulation is seen from the statement *Ritena Ritamapihitham:* this truth covered by that truth. Truth can never be for you other than what you and your body realise in their interaction to ever greater accuracy and harmony with the universe around. Is it a fault of the Indian Heritage if truth has become a moral value to be preached and advertised and rewarded in the office or market, rather than the very foundation of a healthy functioning.

The recognition of compassion as the basic law of life. Now, this word compassion must be taken literally—*Anukampa*—to vibrate with, to resonate. The word is quite different from pity, and love translated as *prema*, which word does not occur in the Gita, or the Upanishads as far as I know, and carries with it a flavour of the cinema-romance with it. Compassion is the universal law—the law of exchange of energies, the law of *yajna* or sacrifice, the law of resonance underlying all interaction without which this known universe is unthinkable. The awareness of this property is what makes it human. It is the energy behind all action. All the sense organs are mechanisms for mediating the law of compassion; the brain is a huge complex receiver, analyser, integrator and effector of this law of resonance. Whether the immense energies which the law of compassion makes available lead one to harmonious or chaotic action is the headache and starting point of inquiry. The more constricted one's personality, the more restricted the senses, the less compassionate one is likely to be; and the smaller the amount of energy available, and the more miserable and destructive one becomes.

The concept of *Desa, Kala, Patra*, of place, time and person offers a most useful frame of reference for determining the correctness or appropriateness of one's actions. If a person who has lost his job or his wife were to drop in on you for comfort and you were to recite to him the second chapter of the Gita and tell him that all is an illusion and that job and wife are merely transient reactions of the external body, you would be well advised not to blame it on the Indian Heritage if your friend flings a brick at your head.

The concept of *prajna*—steady aim as guide to action is a most potent factor for effective human action. A man without *prajna* is a rudderless boat, helplessly tossed on the ocean by every passing breeze, says Krishna. An aimless life is a worthless life says the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. *Prajna* is a central concept of the Buddha—introduce purpose into a purposeless world, and quite a few of the Buddhist treatment techniques are based on this, and I have found it most helpful. If you cannot help wandering restlessly about the room in a state of anxiety, your picking up things in the room and arranging the room or sweeping the floor will cut

your anxiety by half.

The concept of *Adhara* and *Adhikara*, of constitution and fitness: This is an aspect of personal and social functioning, neglect of which leads to much social and personal disorder. If one is a born genius in music it does not automatically give one the *Adhikara* to teach the piano if the fingers are twisted with arthritis. One of my acquaintances has a first class in mathematics, but is breaking down frequently at the post-graduate Institute where he just has not the *Adhara* to cope with the demands of the social milieu of the Institute and where he is without much support for his emotional dependence. His mathematical *Adhikara* would have borne better fruit as a teacher in a mofussil school.

The four major *Varnas*, translated crudely as hereditary castes draw attention to the four major modes of human expression of effective personality. Despite the exposition by Yudhisthira in his reply to the Python, Nahusha, stating that *Varna* can only be determined or assigned to a person after he is about fourteen years of age and also after taking into account his response to the educative processes, can one attribute this aberration to a fundamental defect of the Indian Heritage? It might be advantageous to the doctors if they took note of this concept of constitutional propensities in relation to health and disease.

Jalpa, Vitanda, Vada—the three modes of discourse draw attention to the fact that there are those whose sole object in discussion is to prove themselves right at any cost, those whose sole object is to prove the other fellow wrong at any cost, and those who see discussion as a mutual enlightenment on a common subject. This awareness had helped me greatly in modifying my modes of inter-personal interaction.

Some patient study of the personality of Krishna in the Mahabharata might give us an insight into the type of personality that exemplifies the dynamism of our heritage. The Indian Heritage deals directly with the processes of the human being, his health and his evolutionary destiny. No wonder Krishna said He is the Mantra and the Medicine. The Buddha referred to himself as, first of all, a Physician.

The best way, the most effective way, to turn young people away from all this treasure is systematically to thrust this heritage in the form of moral pills by the very people who have distinguished themselves by demonstrating that the Indian Heritage or its exemplars have absolutely no meaning for them in their daily life. If Hiranyakashyapa had wanted his son, Prahlada, not to think of Narayana, he could well have taken a lesson from our elders and daily asked his son to remember Narayana, worship Narayana, and obey Narayana. He would have soon found Prahlada at the local night-club for Rakshasas, squaffing alcohol and telling his buddies what an old bore of a father he has, and how loudly he talks of Narayana, even as he was putting a shady deal through, and getting up a lawsuit against his brother. But poor Hiranyakashyapa took his Indian Heritage too seriously and acted truly as he saw fit.

For me, an Indian is one who recognises that his whole knowledge of anything rests on the awareness of the world around and within provided by his body and its faculties, in their interaction with the 'I' inside and the world outside, and who systematically and effectively uses himself maximally towards the evolution of a more harmonious form and function. In fact, he will be impelled to do. Whether he will be a passive victim of this pressure or a willing participant in this game remains to be seen.

More catastrophic than the fission of the atom has been the fission that occurred between the I and its Body, this inseparable dialectic unity. The 'I', then goes to the temple or heaven, and the 'Body' goes to the doctor or the devil. Somewhere there is the saving link that can only be worked out under the compulsion of ontogenetic or phylogenetic evolution experienced by an individual.

The late Schumacher says that a so-called civilised man operates on the outside world with his limited perceptions and unlimited technology, and this he calls science. To deal with one's own body and self as a scientific instrument has not yet become fashionable, and that is exactly what all Indian Heritage is about.

Whether Krishna or Buddha or I said something or other is not so important as what you say, and how you give substance to what you say, and if you have found it necessary for navigating your vehicle.

To be an Indian is to be able to say 'I', and to take full responsibility for saying it, and to learn to make your complex body express what you say. Anyway, that is the foundation. That is the human being we talk about. My Indian Heritage makes me take one long look at the 'I'-less text-books of physiology and health which masquerade as the science of human health! Must you wonder at this state of mushrooming ill-health and insanity!

Indian Heritage is not a top-heavy pyramid encasing a venerable mummy, but is a dynamic launching ensemble for the conscious evolution of man to beyond man.

Indian Heritage is not just a museum of broken pots and arrow-heads of our ancestors, but is the log-book of those great voyagers of discovery and adventure on the ocean of life, who continue to live through us. The question is, are you a traveller, or are you a collector of glossy atlases?

This then, is My Indian Heritage which places Me squarely in the centre of a bit of evolving Earth called My Body, and which ceaselessly impels us both to ever fresh adventures of the embodied Spirit to evermore glorious combinations of Form and Function.

卐

The Mother, while explaining a passage from Sri Aurrobindo's Life Divine, spoke the following words which contain the spiritual solution to the problem of worry and anxiety. The passage she was explaining was a long one, but the lines on which she seems to have focused read: "The spiritual aspiration is innate in man; for he is, unlike the animal, aware of imperfection and limitation and feels that there is something to be attained beyond what he now is: this urge towards self-exceeding is not likely to ever die out totally in the race."

The main text is followed by two anecdotes and a few other words from the Mother given on different occasions. They stress the attitude that counters man's tendency to become gloomy.

The title is ours. ***Editor.***

THE ONLY WAY TO

It is obvious that what especially characterises man is this mental capacity of watching himself live. The animal lives spontaneously, automatically, and if it watches itself live, it must be to a very minute and insignificant degree, and that is why it is peaceful and does not worry. Even if an animal is suffering because of an accident or an illness, this suffering is reduced to a minimum by the fact that it does not observe it, does not project it in its consciousness and into the future, does not imagine things about its illness or its accident.

With man there has begun this perpetual worrying about what is going to happen, and this worry is the principal, if not the sole cause of his torment. With this objectivising consciousness there has begun anxiety, painful imaginations, worry, torment, anticipation of future catastrophes, with the result that most men—and not the least conscious, the most conscious—live in perpetual torment. Man is too conscious to be indifferent, he is not conscious enough to know what will happen. Truly it could be said without fear of making a mistake that of all earth's creatures he is the most miserable. The human being is used to being like that because it is an atavistic state which he has inherited from his ancestors, but it is truly a miserable condition. And it is only with this spiritual capacity of rising to a higher level and replacing the animal's unconsciousness by a spiritual superconsciousness that there comes into the being not only the capacity to see the goal of existence and to foresee the culmination of the effort but also a clear-sighted trust in a higher spiritual power to which one can surrender one's whole being, entrust oneself, give the responsibility for one's life and future and so abandon all worries.

Of course, it is impossible for man to fall back to the level of the animal and lose the consciousness he has acquired; therefore, for him there is only one means, one way to get out of this condition he is in, which I call a miserable one, and to emerge into a higher state where worry is replaced by a trusting surrender and the certitude of a luminous culmination—this way is to change the consciousness.

Truly speaking there is no condition more miserable than being responsible for an existence to which one doesn't have the key, that is, of which one doesn't have the threads that can guide and solve the problems. The animal sets itself no problems: it just lives. Its instinct drives it, it relies on a collective consciousness which has an innate knowledge and is higher than itself, but it is automatic, spontaneous, it has no need to will something and make an effort to bring it about, it is quite naturally like that, and as it is not responsible for its life, it does not worry. With man is born the sense of having to depend on himself, and as he does not have the necessary knowledge the result is a perpetual torment. This torment can come to an end only with a total surrender to a higher consciousness than his own to which he can totally entrust himself, hand over his worries and leave the care of guiding his life and organising everything.

How can a problem be solved when one doesn't have the necessary knowledge? And the unfortunate thing is that man believes that he has to resolve all the problems of his life, and he does not have the knowledge needed to do it. That is the source, the origin of all his troubles—that perpetual question, "What should I do?..." which is followed by another one still more acute, "What is going to happen?" and at the same time, more or less, the inability to answer.

That is why all spiritual disciplines begin with the necessity of surrendering all responsibility and relying on a higher principle. Otherwise peace is impossible.

And yet, consciousness has been given to man so that he can progress, can discover what he doesn't know, develop into what he has not yet become; and so it may be said that there is a higher state than that of an immobile and static peace: it is a trust total

enough for one to keep the will to progress, to preserve the effort for progress while ridding it of all anxiety, all care for results and consequences. This is one step ahead of the methods which may be called "quietist," which are founded on the rejection of all activity and a plunging into an immobility and inner silence, which forsake all life because it has been suddenly felt that without peace one can't have any inner realisation and, quite naturally, one thought that one couldn't have peace so long as one was living in outer conditions, in the state of anxiety in which problems are set and cannot be solved, for one does not have the knowledge to do so.

The next step is to face the problem, but with the calm and certitude of an absolute trust in the supreme Power which knows, and can make you act. And then, instead of abandoning action, one can act in a higher peace that is strong and dynamic.

This is what could be called a new aspect of the divine intervention in life, a new form of intervention of the divine forces in existence, a new aspect of spiritual realisation.

* * *

Amir was a prince of Khorasan, and he lived in a grand style. When he set out to war, three hundred camels would carry the pots and pans and plates for his kitchen.

One day he was taken prisoner by the Caliph Ismail. But misfortune does not exempt a man from hunger. So when Amir saw his chief cook nearby, he asked the good man to prepare a meal.

The cook had one piece of meat left which he put in a pot on the fire. Then he went to find some vegetables to give a little taste to the stew.

A passing dog sniffed at the meat and put his nose in the pot. Then, feeling the heat of the fire, he drew back sharply. But he was so clumsy that the pot stuck on his head and he ran off in a panic, unable to get rid of it.

Amir burst out laughing at the sight.

"Why," demanded the officer on guard, "are you laughing when you have every reason to be sad?"

But Amir showed him the dog streaking away from the camp and said, "I am laughing at the thought that this very morning it took three hundred camels to transport my kitchen and now one dog is enough to carry it all away!"

...we should give him credit for his light-heartedness. If he was able to joke in the midst of such serious difficulties, is it not in our power to smile in the face of lesser worries?

* * *

In Persia, there was a woman who used to sell honey. She had a very pleasant manner, and customers thronged around her stall. And the poet who tells her story declares that even if she had sold poison, people would still have bought it from her as if it were honey.

A sour-tempered man saw what a great profit she made from her sweet-wares and decided to take up the same trade.

So he set up a stall, but behind the rows of honey-pots his face was like vinegar. All those who came near were sullenly treated. And so everyone passed by, leaving him his wares. "Not even a fly ventured on his honey", says the poet. By evening he had still earned nothing. A woman noticed him and said to her husband, "A bitter face makes bitter honey."

Did the woman who sold honey smile only to attract customers? Let us rather hope that her cheerfulness came from her good nature. We are not in this world only to buy or sell; we should be here as comrades one to another. The good woman's customers felt that she was something more than a honey-seller: she was a cheerful citizen of the world.

* * *

You must never forget that you are much more helpful when you are quietly happy than when you become dramatic.

* * *

Depression is always the sign of an acute egoism. When you feel that it is coming near, tell yourself: "I am in a state of egoistic illness, I must cure myself of it."

* * *

Generally speaking, man is an animal who takes himself terribly seriously. To know how to smile at oneself in all circumstances, to smile at one's sorrows and disillusions, ambitions and sufferings, indignation and revolt—what a powerful weapon with which to overcome oneself!

* * *

Learn to smile always and in all circumstances; to smile at your sorrows as well as your joys, your sufferings as well as your hopes, for in a smile there is a sovereign power of self-mastery. 卐

With acknowledgments to Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, Pondicherry.

OVERCOME WORRY

ANTIQUITY OF SCIENCE

The image of India as a scientifically backward country came about in the last few centuries when there was a change in the conditions that had nurtured the spirit of scientific enquiry that existed in ancient and medieval India. This happened for very specific reasons.

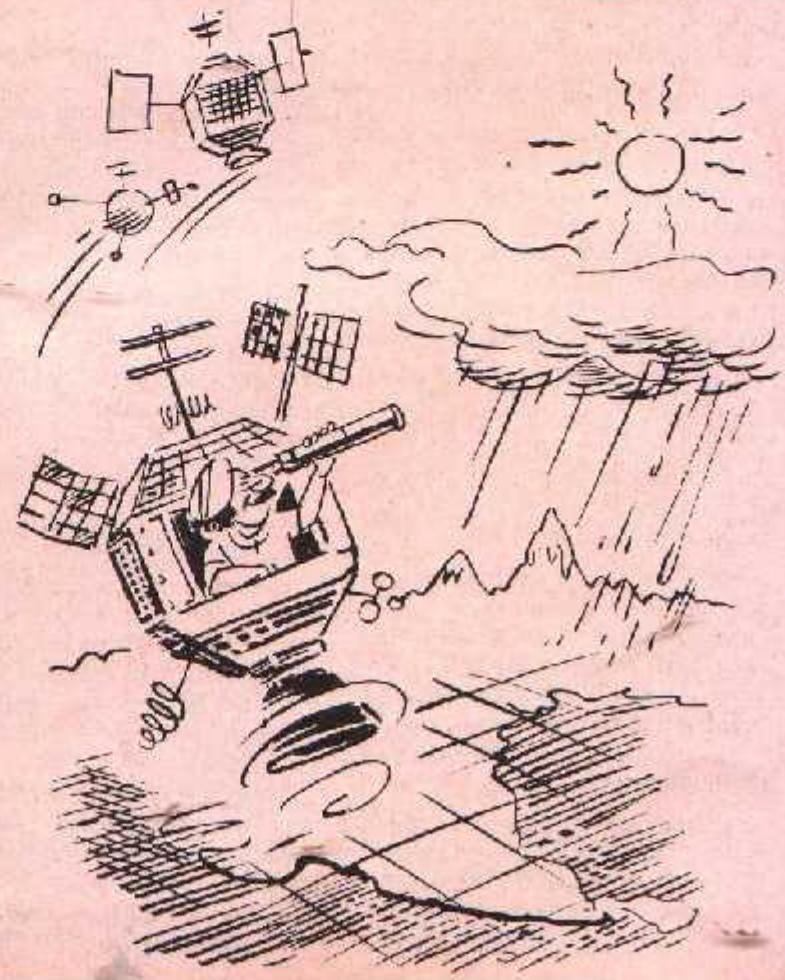
The chaos that resulted from the disintegration of the Mughal empire was a deterrent to research and technological progress and the two centuries of British rule that followed did little to foster the modernization of Indian industry. And so it was that in the last couple of centuries, India's past scientific contributions and achievements tended to be overlooked, and its future technological potential not recognized.

This technological and scientific potential came into its own after India became independent in 1947. Since then, there has been substantial growth in areas as varied as agriculture and electronics, medicine and physics in fields and laboratories across the nation. This scientific progress has not arisen out of a void. It is the logical result of India's history of technological discovery and innovation.

In India the spirit of scientific enquiry is as old as the country itself. At a time when Europe was inhabited by wandering tribes, a sophisticated, cosmopolitan society flourished in a well-planned town called Mohenjo Daro, in the valley of the Indus river. The people of Mohenjo Daro built a city that would be a credit to any modern town planner. Straight, wide streets ran from north to south and from east to west, crossing each other at regular intervals, dividing the town into clearly demarcated blocks. The main streets were sometimes as wide as 30 feet and were lined with double-storeyed houses built of kiln-baked bricks of a standard size. Bathrooms were connected to properly laid out drains. A consciousness of sanitation and hygiene are evident from the fact that sewage was carried away in covered drains lined with bricks. 'Manhole covers', also made of bricks, provided a means of cleaning the drains from time to time. Most of the larger houses in the city had their own wells besides those for the general public so that a constant supply of water was available.

The inhabitants of Mohenjo Daro were farmers and traders, craftsmen and labourers. The craftsmen produced well-made pottery which they decorated with floral and geometrical designs. Sometimes they drew birds and animals as well. They used clay and terracotta to make small figures of men and animals such as the elephant, the rhinoceros, the bull and the crocodile. The ingenious toys they made for their children included carts with wheels that moved—evidently models of similar wheeled carts that were in use at the time.

Sculpture in bronze was also well-known and it is obvious that they knew a great deal about working with metal. Archaeologists have found bronze mirrors, needles, knives and razors, and ornaments for men and women made of gold, silver and copper. Rings, necklaces, bangles and head-dresses were some of the ornaments that the people of Mohenjo Daro wore. Apart from jewellery and sculpted figures, they



by MONISHA BOBB

AND TECHNOLOGY

Cartoons by ***R.K. LAXMAN***

used metal to make kitchen utensils. These were also made of pottery and stone. Baked pottery was the most commonly used material for utensils and dishes. Craftsmen were particularly skilled at making beads of gold and silver, faience and semi-precious stones. The quality of these beads are reflections of highly developed processes that they had mastered.

The people of Mohenjo Daro wore garments of cotton and wool which they evidently wove themselves.

Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, Kalibangan, Lothal and Sukotada are some of the cities that comprised what is called the Indus Valley Civilization. Other settlements dating from this period existed beyond the valley itself, in places such as Alamgirpur in Uttar Pradesh and Rupar in the Punjab. Excavations are still continuing at some of these sites, but from the material that has been discovered so far, historians and archaeologists have been able to reconstruct a fairly clear picture of the life of the people. Much has still to be understood, but certain facts stand out clearly.

The people of the Indus Valley Civilization knew a great deal about mathematics since they were able to plan well-proportioned cities with definite architectural features. They used the plumbline in order to build double-storeyed structures. Their cities not only reveal an advanced standard of technical and engineering knowledge but their drainage system shows a strict enforcing of sanitation regulations. They had a sophisticated system of weights and measures and even the bricks with which they built their city were of uniform size, a fact that indicates a high degree of standardization in production. They cultivated the land and knew how to make the alloys of various metals. They were prosperous and lived under a well-organized municipal system.

So much we know. There is undoubtedly a great deal that is yet to be discovered. The people of the Indus Valley Civilization were literate as well as artistic but historians have not yet been able to decipher their script. When this is done we will have more knowledge about this highly developed civilization, one of the earliest known to mankind.

Apart from using complex mathematics for astronomical calculations, the Vedic people used arithmetic and geometry to build altars and sacrificial places to very precise specifications, systematically using right-angled triangles. They also studied the properties of squares, rectangles and circles and knew how to construct them to particular proportions. They set down formulae on problems such as calculating the diagonal of a square and the squaring of a circle.

They evolved an atomic theory which stated that atoms combine together to form molecules.

Another sphere of development at this time was in the field of medicine. Desiring to study the human body in detail, Vedic physicians practised dissection. Vedic treatises mention methods for dissecting corpses.

A great deal was known about herbs and their healing qualities. The treatment for leprosy which is used today dates back to Vedic times. In medicine, there was emphasis on the correct diet and doctors knew of the nervous system and the importance of the spinal cord.

The Vedic people knew how to weave and dye the cloth with which they clothed themselves. They used a variety of ornaments made of gold and silver, and were familiar with other metals as well. They enjoyed food and knew how to make an intoxicating drink called *soma*. They used several musical instruments and their pastimes included chariot racing and dicing. Education and literature developed considerably and social customs became firmly established. In fact, many of the social and religious rituals that came into being during this period, are still prevalent. Philosophy and religion form a major part of the Vedas and the subtlety of the thoughts and ideas expressed in them reveal a complex and sophisticated civilization.

The centuries just prior to the beginning of the Christian era under the rulers of the Maurya dynasty saw a flowering of statecraft, culture, trade, and science.

We have detailed information about the period in the *Arthashastra*, a treatise written by Kautilya, who was the chief minister in the court of Chandragupta Maurya, who conquered vast territories and established the dynasty that bears his name. His descendants enlarged the kingdom until it encompassed a major portion of India and Afghanistan to form a powerful empire. Kautilya helped them set up a form of government that would hold the empire together. He was a master of the art of politics. The highly centralized system that he created was the first imperial government machinery in India and one of the earliest in the world.

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* gives detailed information on the way the Mauryan government functioned. But that is not all. He writes of other activities of the time, mentioning social customs, warfare, agriculture, and commerce.

He mentions several devices that were used in warfare, specially mechanical ones called *yantras*. These refer to simple catapults and incendiary devices since the use of gunpowder had not yet come to India.

It is clear from Kautilya's writings that agriculture had developed to the point of employing artificial irrigation. Canals and reservoirs are mentioned, which must have needed great engineering skill to construct.

Among useful gadgets of daily use was a revolving water spray to cool the air during the summer.

There was, at this time, a great deal of interest in the development of the sciences of phonetics and grammar. The important contribution in the field is undoubtedly Panini's great Sanskrit grammar. After Panini, Sanskrit as a language did not change radically, although its vocabulary and literature continued to grow. Panini's work is a remarkable achievement and it has generally been recognized that such a detailed scientific grammar was unparalleled anywhere in the world until the nineteenth century.

The greatest of the Mauryan kings, Ashoka, began his reign by leading his armies in a series of wars of conquest in the traditional manner. However, he later turned his back on war and worked for the welfare of his people with a paternal benevolence which was remarkable for a ruler of the time. He constructed roads across the length and breadth of his empire, so that his capital at Pataliputra was easily accessible to every part of his dominion. The technical know-how necessary to survey the land and build these roads was obviously of a high level. Ashoka also set up shady wayside resting places for travellers and established hospitals and refuges for men and animals. Under his patronage medical knowledge grew, as did the study and care of animals.

Little remains of Ashoka's capital at Pataliputra. There are hardly any ruins, to tell us about the architecture and town planning of the Mauryan builders. However, Greek historians and travellers have mentioned the splendour of the Mauryan capital and refer to the fact that the palaces and buildings were made of wood. Ashoka's palace is supposed to have been so impressive that the Chinese traveller Fa-Hien believed it was built by spirits in the service of Ashoka. The carvings which surmount the Ashokan pillars make it clear that skilled craftsmen who knew a great deal about working with stone were very much part of the Mauryan scene. Each of these pillars has been made from a single block of hard stone, polished to perfection and engraved with Ashoka's edicts. A good deal of engineering expertise is evident in cutting these huge blocks and transporting them hundreds of miles from the quarry, sometimes to the top of a hill. They have withstood the ravages of time and can be seen in Delhi and in other places in India.

It was during this period that several stupas were built, to enshrine the relics of the Buddha. The most famous of these are at Bharhut and Sanchi.

As Buddhist monks began to be more organized, they set up monasteries to live in. They sought suitable locations and cut caves out of rocky hills in such places as the Barabar hills. Some of these caves were later decorated with carvings by the monks.

A few centuries later, shortly before and after the birth of Christ, workers in stone began to excavate and sculpt caves at what we know as Ajanta, Karle, Nasik, and Bhaja in western India. In the east, similar activity was in progress in Udaigiri and Khandagiri. Work on the stupa at Sanchi continued and during this period, the stupa was enlarged and its original wooden railing was replaced by one of sculpted stonework.

Although our knowledge of Mauryan art and architecture is fragmentary at best, there is enough information to conclude that Mauryan art and the technology reflected in it had reached an advanced stage.

During the centuries that followed, astronomy, mathematics and medicine continued to progress; new discoveries were made, new methods developed.

The names of two famous physicians have travelled through the centuries in texts which have preserved fragments of their teachings. Charaka wrote the *Charakasamhita*, a work that is considered the basis of the Ayurvedic system of medicine. Ayurveda, which means 'the science of life', is still practised in India. Charaka seems to have known that the heart is the controller of blood. He was aware that certain diseases are caused by germs, some of which he said were invisible to the naked eye. Charaka's work mentions the existence of hospitals and trained medical practitioners. It is evident from his writings that ancient Indian physicians and surgeons knew a great deal about the human body and the treatment of disease.

This view is reinforced by what we read of the art of surgery that existed at the time in the work of Susruta. Susruta's treatise, the *Susrutasamhita*, is held to be an outstanding contribution to medical literature.

Susruta evidently collected all that was known about surgery and put it down systematically. In his work, he recommends that students acquire skill by dissecting dead bodies and outlines a method by which the body should be prepared for dissection. Susruta also lists the instruments that a surgeon should have and suggests that each practitioner devises new instruments to suit his own particular needs, in addition to those which are already in use. Among the instruments he lists are forceps, knives, needles, probes and tubular instruments all of which a modern surgeon uses, though in a more refined form. Apart from dissection, Susruta suggests that apprentices practise on a variety of objects such as vegetables and leather bags filled with mud. He advises students to attain proficiency not only in surgery but also in complementary areas such as the stitching of wounds and in bandaging.

Susruta was also knowledgeable about plastic surgery. Here again, injuries received in battle, particularly to the ear and nose, are dealt with in a systematic way. Susruta lays down methods of dealing with damaged noses that are relevant to plastic surgery as it is practised today.

The decline and end of the Mauryan empire was followed by a period of confusion, when several small kingdoms took the place of a single imperial state. Then there arose another line of empire builders and they established what is called the Gupta dynasty.

During the Gupta period, traders carried Indian goods to distant countries. The demand for Indian goods expanded and so did trade and commerce. Prosperity followed this growth and soon, wealthy individuals and institutions were patronizing scholars and artists. A large number of scientific treatises were written at this time and scholars collated the information available to them, classifying contemporary knowledge skilfully and systematically.

Indian art and culture spread to neighbouring countries and so did Indian scientific knowledge. Knowledge from other parts of the world also found its way back to India and acted as a stimulus to further thought.

This period saw the birth of several mathematicians of genius, the most important of whom was Aryabhatta, in whose memory the first Indian Satellite was named. Aryabhatta lived around the fifth century A.D. His work in algebraic formulae is quite remarkable. He gave the value of Π as 3177/1250 or 3.1416, which is very close to the value assigned it today. He also wrote on other branches of mathematics. He laid down rules for determining square roots and cube roots, areas and volume. He understood the concept of sines. In the field of astronomy, he described methods by which to calculate the position of planets and knew the reason for the

eclipses of the sun and the moon and could forecast them accurately. He had discovered that the earth rotates on its axis and it and other planets move around the sun.

Other astronomer-mathematicians who made important contributions to the knowledge of this period were Latadeva, Varahamihira and Brahmagupta. All these mathematicians had powerful analytical minds and a complete understanding of numbers. Their contributions in algebra, geometry and arithmetic are outstanding.

Indian mathematicians were the first in history to use the concept of an empty space, called *shunya*, which later developed into the zero, now a vital part of mathematics. In fact, even the English numerals used today, which are commonly called Arabic numerals, actually originated in India. They were used in the edicts of Emperor Ashoka, centuries before there is any record of the Arabs having known of them. These numerals and the decimal system were transmitted by the Arabs from India to the rest of the world. Aryabhatta and Brahmagupta were both using the decimal system long before the Chinese or the Arabs were familiar with it. These are among India's great gifts to the world in the field of practical knowledge.

One of the major sources of information about the kings of the Gupta empire are the coins they minted. These beautiful gold coins are evidence of a high technical skill. Metallurgists also used their mastery to produce objects of copper and iron which are so well finished that they have withstood the wear of centuries and can still be seen in museums today.

The iron pillar at Mehrauli in Delhi, the 80-foot copper image of the Buddha at Nalanda and the 7½ foot Sultangunj Buddha statue in copper are some notable examples of the expertise of the metallurgists of this period.

At the time there was also an expansion in the mining industry. Records mention the mining of gold, silver, copper, lead, tin and iron, which were made into ornaments and more useful objects, such as vessels, and implements and, of course, all the paraphernalia of warfare.

The artisans who made these and other goods, such as wood and ivory carvings, paintings, pots, fabrics and so on, were organized into guilds and the members of a particular guild lived together in a separate part of town.

The guild system did not come into existence in Europe until the Middle Ages. In India, it was an established way of life at the start of the Christian era.

Much of this social and economic organization was to remain unchanged in the ensuing centuries of upheaval. Forms had been set and traditions established and those that followed were built upon these bases.

FAME—THE WHIMSICAL DAME

(Extracts from the address by Dr. V.K. Gokak at the Sahitya Akademi's Fellowship Bestowal Ceremony. The title is ours. —Editor)

Prof. Gokak observed in his speech: "It is said that the exercise of a critical literary judgment in such matters is not always infallible. A few literary instances are cited in this context. Abraham Cowley, an English poet, was the leading poet of his generation. But hardly half a century later, Pope asked the question in one of his poems: Who now reads Cowley? Byron was the idol of the lovers of poetry in his generation, not only in England but also in other European countries like France and Germany. It is difficult to find many lovers of Byron's poetry today.

On the other hand, there have been poets like Shelley, whose poetry was read by not more than thirty or forty readers in his life time. But there have been several Shelley Societies in many parts of the world after Shelley's death. Even Shakespeare was no great name in his own time. His reputation grew steadily and he was acknowledged as a great dramatist only two to three hundred years after his death. Bhavabhuti did not achieve immediate fame like Kalidasa. He had to hide his time consoling himself with the utterance: "Kaloyam Viravadhih Vipula Cha Prithivi".

There are other curious instances of poets being victimised by that universal destroyer 'Time'. Books on sciences like cookery have, for instance, survived for more than a thousand years. But great works of art like Ponna's *Bhuvanaika Ramabhyudaya* have been lost, for not a single manuscript has come down to us. Sometimes Time plays with the reputation of certain poets in a freakish manner. John Donne, whom Ben Johnson hailed as 'the first poet in the world for some things' was almost forgotten by the end of the 18th century. He had to wait for a hundred years or more to come into his own established position as a poet.

When we read about this precarious state of literary reputations, we feel that fame is a gamblesome game and the handmaid of chance."

HUMOUR

Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog

Good people all, of every sort,
Give ear unto my song;
And if you find it wondrous short,
It cannot hold you long.

In Islington there was a man
Of whom the world might say
That still a godly race he ran,
When'er he went to pray.

A kind and gentle heart he had,
To comfort friend and foes;
The naked every day he clad,
When he put on his clothes.

And in that town a dog was found,
As many dogs there be,
Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound
And cur of low degree.

This dog and man at first were friends;
But when a pique began,
The dog to gain his private ends,
Went mad and bit the man.

Around from all the neighbouring streets
The wondering people ran,
And swore the dog had lost his wits,
To bite so good a man.

The wound it seemed both sore and sad
To every Christian eye;
And while they swore the dog was mad,
They swore the man would die.

But soon a wonder came to light,
That showed the rogues they lied;
The man recovered of the bite;
The dog it was that died.

Oliver Goldsmith

SPECIAL FEATURE COMMEMORATING THE 1ST DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF SMT. INDIRA GANDHI

by Dr. DEBAKANTA MISHRA

THE HEROINE OF INDIAN SCIENCE

In an article entitled 'Science in India: Excellence in the midst of poverty' *Nature*, a British scientific journal of international repute, in its 12th April, 1984 issue observed:

"A country whose most notable products have traditionally been cheap textiles and leatherwear is suddenly making impressive gains in fields ranging from fibre optics and photo-voltaics to computer software and satellite communications... More and more Indian high-tech companies are challenging venerable western firms in a variety of areas. Nowhere has the competition been keener or India's success greater than in computers. Roughly twenty new computer firms have sprung up in India in the past decades, at least five of those companies have managed to gain a significant share of the lucrative world market for software support systems."

John Maddox, the editor of *Nature*, praises Mrs. Gandhi for her unique leadership in the field of science and technology. Like her father, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, she could well understand the role of science and technology as an effective tool for eradication of poverty and for planned and integrated development of India. Nehru initiated the building of a sound infrastructure which was further strengthened, improved, expanded and effectively utilized by Mrs. Gandhi to usher in the 'take-off' stage for India. Thus John Maddox describes her as the 'Heroine of Indian Science.'

Walt Whitman Rostow, who has been a classroom name since 1950s, when he first put forward his take-off theory of economic growth, visited India and declared that Indian economy has 'taken-off'—'take-off' being the crucial transitional stage between a stagnant, tradition-bound economy and a mature developed one, India, according to him, has demonstrated its take-off characteristics by first launching industrialisation through such industries as textiles and then through diversification into new lead sectors, such as chemicals and sophisticated engineering industries.

Even bitter critics like V.S. Naipaul, who considered India as an 'Area of Darkness' a few years ago, have changed their opinion in the meantime. Interviewed by Bernard Levin on behalf of B.B.C. in July 1983, Naipaul observed:

"I think the Indians are very active, very energetic; they have a great scientific revolution. Industrially they have done very well, and this is now bearing intellectual fruit."

Thus foreign experts and observers, who have witnessed the industrial revolution in their own countries and are now entering into the post-technocratic stage, have appreciated India's historic achievements under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi to make use of science and technology, for India's economic growth and development.

(ii)

Science and Technology as effective means for self-reliance

Like her illustrious father, Mrs. Gandhi understood that science is no magic wand. She knew that unless a scientific temper is built in the social environment and unless and until the people of India are intimately associated with the scientific and technological schemes being implemented in various parts of the country, science and technology will be utilised as mere tools of exploitation in the hands of the elite. In order to proceed in the path of self-reliance, she could well visualise the role of the Government to give adequate infrastructural, financial and bureaucratic assistance for science and technology to be people-oriented. Her attitude towards the role of science and technology as an effective tool for social and economic development of the country is very well summed up in the following lines:

"There are many divisions in our world. The most glaring is the disparity between the technologically developed and developing. The growth of science is said to be exponential. I wonder if we can even close the gap. Science and technology have become the means for economic power and also for military power. In an unequal world they are forces for domination and exploitation. The only way to avoid this is through the development of indigenous capabilities in science and technology in all communities and in all parts of the world and through growing international co-operation in science. Self-reliance is good for every country but for a country of our size and circumstances it is indispensable. It is the only basis on which there can be no exploitative co-operation. We can participate in such co-operation only to the extent that we are able to adapt and assimilate what we need from outside, while striving for original ideas and work ourselves. The guidance that we seek from science is how to enable men and women to use their own capabilities and inner resources to the utmost."

Ideals and concepts such as 'small is beautiful', 'appropriate technology', 'intermediate technology' and the like did not impress Mrs. Gandhi. She believed that the traditional technologies are to be improved by encouraging the innovative and entrepreneurial skills of our own countrymen. But simultaneously, in order to satisfy the wants and aspirations of our people, we have to import technologies from outside and modify the imported technologies to our advantage. She once commented: "Take-off does not mean a high per-capita income, not even a high level of investment; it means the ability to absorb new technology and put it to productive use."

The Scientific Policy resolution adopted by the Government was the historic contribution of her father. This policy has been operative since 1958. Technology Policy was Mrs. Gandhi's creation, which she placed before the nation in 1983. She believed that technology must be based on our own culture and personality. The statement underlines the premise that for a country of India's size and endowments, self-reliance is inescapable and that the use and development of technology must relate to the people's needs and aspirations. Simultaneously, she stressed that we have to take advantage of advances elsewhere to conserve our own time and resources as well as to aid the expansion and diversification of our technology.

She firmly believed that our scientists and technologists can prepare us for the future. They will find answers to the inherited and also the new problems. She hoped that our scientific leaders, on whose advice grants are given, will be sensitive to the young and non-conformist talent in their quest for new ideas in using knowledge. She wanted to strengthen University research as she very much desired the young scientists to be helped to shoulder some of the responsibilities for basic research. She declared that our technology policy will succeed only to the extent to which it evokes the enthusiasm and involvement of our scientists and technologists, and imbues the people as a whole with greater self-assurance and pride in national achievement. In fact, as Prof. M.G.K. Menon has very aptly remarked:

"Her personality contained in it the ancient philosophy and wisdom of India into which was integrated the modernity of Western liberal thought and aspects arising through the advancement of science and technology."

(iii)

Achievements

It is difficult to give a detailed account of India's scientific and technological progress during Mrs. Gandhi's leadership, spanning almost two decades. When she became Prime Minister in 1966, the country was begging the U.S. for more food. On her

death, eighteen years later, India enjoys record food stocks of twenty-two million tonnes and has become a net exporter of grain. The country's foreign exchange reserves were less than its borrowings from the IMF in 1966–67, so that net reserves were actually negative at minus Rs. 19 crore. On her death, the country's reserves stand at a healthy Rs. 2500 crore, having risen by Rs. 600 crore in the last six months. In 1947 the total installed capacity in India was about 200 MW. Today it is 36000 MW. Nearly twenty percent of the power we produce goes to our farmers and has contributed to our self-sufficiency in grain. Of the 5,60,000 towns and villages in India only 3000 had electricity in 1947. Today the number has risen to more than 3,00,000. During her rule India built up the *third largest technical work force in the world* which sent satellites into space and mastered nuclear explosions.

In the Global Energy Conference, Mrs. Gandhi stressed that urgent action is needed in the following areas:

(a) The application of new biological advances on biomass production, e.g., tissue culture, protoplast fusion, genetic engineering, nitrogen fixation, improved photosynthesis etc., particularly on lands not suitable for agriculture.
(b) Photochemical technique to produce hydrogen (basically from water) to be used as mobile fuel.
(c) Energy storage devices to make transportation less dependent on oil.
(d) Photovoltaic devices to provide electricity directly from sunlight costing 10 to 100 times less than today.
(e) Integrated energy systems to optimally meet a variety of needs.

She wanted to build an adequate infrastructure for R & D in the modern frontiers of science and technology such as microelectronics, biotechnology and genetic engineering. She was very much hopeful that we can simulate controlled fusion that generates energy from the sun and stars and we can find new ways to harness solar energy.

Our achievements in the recent past in various fields such as green revolution, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, space programme for human welfare, Antarctica expeditions, nationwide radio and TV networks, indigenous equipment for national defence, protection of environment, social forestry etc. need no elaboration to convince us that Indian science and technology can keep pace with the rapid developments in the developed countries, provided that there is resolute political will and determined leadership to foster a healthy environment for the creative abilities of gifted men of the country to flourish. In the critical phase of India's history Mrs. Gandhi's stewardship of the nation has paved the way for India to arrive at the 'take-off' stage and thence to make rapid strides to build a self-reliant and prosperous India.

(iv)

The Legacy

While delivering a speech on "Strengthening Planning to Solve Problems" in the Silver Jubilee Function of the Institute of Economics Growth, on November 16, 1983, Mrs. Gandhi said:

"The occasion is for reflection—to look back to take stock of what we have got and look forward on how far we have still to go. Between 1901 and 1946, our national income grew only at the rate of 1.2 per cent, the growth of agriculture was only 0.3 per cent per year and industrial production only two per cent. After Independence we launched our five year plan. From first to fifth plan, our industrial production increased by 6.1 per cent per year and the growth rate of national income was 3.5 per cent per annum. In the current sixth plan, launched after our return to Government, trying to make up for the preceding years of faltering and hesitations about long-term planning, the growth rate of national income is likely to average more than five per cent. These achievements are short of what we need, yet impressive compared to the historical experience of today's developed countries in the early stages of their development. In UK national income grew by two per cent between 1790 and 1820, in Germany, 2.7 per cent between 1850 and 1880 and in Japan and USA four per cent in comparable periods of their history."

Although she could realise that our progress was not too unsatisfactory, yet she never felt complacent. She tried her utmost to make use of all available human and natural resources to make India self-reliant. Recently she was laying greater emphasis on managerial and entrepreneurial activities so that innovative ideas of talented countrymen could be effectively and fully utilised for human welfare. In spite of her best of efforts there remains staggering unemployment and all-pervasive poverty in the country. Mrs. Gandhi wanted the fruits of development to be shared by every section of society. She wanted that proper infrastructure should be built and planned development through scientific and technological measures must associate people from all strata of society so that social justice will not be denied to our people. In the process, she has carried the country to a take-off stage. It is left to us to take care of all the establishments and institutions she has left behind and to expand them so that we can implement future plans to build a strong, united, happy and prosperous India—the India of her dreams.

The highest prayer we can offer is to take a pledge to dedicate ourselves to the causes for which this great leader of ours lived and for which she laid down her life. 卐

Fighting rider on leogyph 5C A.D.

Rajasthani armour 18C A.D.

Colour Photographs: Mrs.Swapna Dutta

by N.R. BANERJEE

The National Museum in New Delhi

The museum movement is rather young in India. While the British Museum in London, one of the world's greatest, goes back to 1753, it was only in 1814 that the first museum in India, called the Indian Museum, was set up in Calcutta. However, it was not until 1945 that the idea of a National Museum of art, archaeology and anthropology was seriously considered. In 1946 an elaborate scheme was drawn up for a National Museum by a Committee appointed by the Government of India under the chairmanship of the late Sir Maurice Gwyer, then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Delhi. The late Sir Mortimer Wheeler, in his capacity as Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India, provided the principal inspiration in this direction.

The fortunate circumstance of the high acclaim received by a large exhibition of Indian arts and crafts held at Burlington House in the winter months of 1947-48 inspired and encouraged the Government of India to exhibit them in Delhi upon their return, for the benefit of the people of India, before their dispersal to the lenders. The exhibition was organized at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in 1949. The idea that the same materials may be used as the nucleus of the National Museum then occurred to the authorities; and the Government of India succeeded in persuading the lenders to part with some of their loans for constituting the National Museum. This fact accounts for the high quality of the materials that were thus used to set up the then incipient National Museum at the Rashtrapati Bhavan till the museum had its own building. It was opened on 15th August, 1949.

Meanwhile, an impressive plot of land between the Maulana Azad Road and the Rajpath was ear-marked for the National Museum. The foundation stone of the museum was laid by the late Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on 12th May, 1955. A little over a third of the three-storeyed octagonal building with a central court (45% of the total planned lay-out) was handed over to the museum authorities in June, 1960. The initial displays were arranged in the course of about six months under the guidance of Dr. Grace Morley, as its first Director, and the museum itself was formally inaugurated by the then Vice-President of India, the late Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, on 18th December, 1960. It was thrown open to the public on the very next day. The displays of its ten departments, arranged in twentytwo galleries, cover a broad and truly national spectrum of the art, archaeology and anthropology of India, and even of foreign countries.

The museum was looked after by the Archaeological Survey of India, till 1957, when it was constituted as a separate department under the control of the Government of India.

National Museum, New Delhi

The exhibits can be divided into ten sections:

(i) Prehistory, (ii) Archaeology, (iii) Numismatics and Epigraphy, (iv) Miniature Paintings and Wall-Hangings, (v) Manuscripts, (vi) Central Asian Antiquities, Arms (viii) Decorative Arts and Textiles, (ix) Anthropology, and (x) Pre-Columbian and Western Arts.

Prehistory

The Department of Prehistory contains substantial remains of the Mohenjo-daro and Harappa civilizations apart from some tools of the Stone-Age in India. The copper figurine of the dancing girl from Mohenjo-daro is one of its most important possessions. All these materials have been lent to the museum by the Archaeological Survey of India.

Archaeology

The Department of Archaeology, which should, in fact, be properly designated as the Department of Sculptural Art, is distinguished by its collections of 32 bronzes from Nalanda (Bihar), 7 bronzes of the Buddha figure and 5 parasols from Phophnar (Madhya Pradesh), a large number of terracottas from Ahich-

chatra (Uttar Pradesh), numerous stuccos of the Gandhara school, and a large number of stone sculptures, representing the different schools of art in India from the Asokan age to the nineteenth century. Among the outstanding specimens in these collections is the famous life-like Asokan bull-capital from Rampurwa (Bihar), and the standing figure of the Buddha of the Gupta period from Mathura.

Numismatics and Epigraphy

Though the epigraphical collection is small, the collection of coins is rich and representative of all periods. Among the important specimens are those from the famous Bayana hoard of gold coins of the Gupta period, and the gold coins of the Jalan collection of Kushan, Medieval and Mughal coins, including *Mehrabies* of Akbar, and portrait and zodiacal coins of Jehangir (1605-1627); the Tarapore collection of coins of the Delhi Sultanates and of the Mughals; the Desikachari collection (more than 3000) of South Indian coins; the I. Mahadevan collection of Indian coins (more than 3000); and the Miss Sarla Nagu collection of Central Indian and State coins (more than 4000).

Miniature Paintings and Wall Hangings

The collection of the paintings is the largest and perhaps the richest representing all the schools and styles that emerged and flourished on Indian soil.

The principal collections comprise the Treasurywala collection (1947) of 2054 items, representing Mughal, Central Indian, Rajasthani, Pahari and Nepal Schools; the Imre Schwaiger collection (1948) of 117 Nepalese and Tibetan *thankas*, and Persian and Mughal paintings; the Ajit Ghosh collection (1949) of 70 paintings and drawings of the Bengal, Pahari, Mughal, Rajasthani, Company, South Indian, Malwa and Orissan schools; the Maharaja of Udaipur collection (1950) of 29 items comprising specimens of Mewar and Mughal Schools and a rare Deccani painting; the Gem Palace, Udaipur, collection (1950) of 41 items representing a series of Mewar *Ragmala* paintings; the Maharaja of Sangri collection (1962), purchased from Shri Naulakha of Calcutta, consisting of 168 paintings of the *Ramayana* theme in the Basohli style produced at Mandi; the Maharaja of Kishangarh collection (1963) of 46 items of masterly specimens of the Kishangarh school; Motichand Khazanchi collection (1963) of 226 specimens of Rajasthani, Western India, Malwa, Deccani and Mughal paintings including a number of rare pieces, and the Wazir Kartar Singh (Nurpur) collection (1975-76) of 102 rare specimens of the various Pahari Schools, and specially of the Nurpur school.

Manuscripts

The Department of Manuscripts, organised in 1948, houses manuscripts in the different languages of India bearing on history, art, science, religion, philosophy and narrative accounts and are broadly grouped under Arabic, Persian, Sanskritic and Dravidian systems.

Apart from the larger collections, important individual items have been acquired by the Museum from time to time. Among the larger collections are the Imre Schwaiger collection (1948) of 15 items of Persian manuscripts including a very rare copy of *Bostan-i-Sa'di* (illustrated) of the Sultanate period, a copy of *Gulistan-i-Sa'di* (unillustrated), and an illustrated copy each of *Shirin Khusrau* and *Mathnavi Maulana Rum;* the Jata Shankar Kauji Bhatt (of Rajkot) collection (1955) of 112 Sanskrit manuscripts on medicine, sciences and literature, respectively. Among the individual items, the most important are the illustrated Persian manuscripts of *Tuzuki-i-Jehangiri* and *Babur Nama* (Mughal), the Sanskrit manuscripts of *Mandu Kalpasutra* (Western Indian Style), *Prajnaparamita* and *Pancharaksha* (Newari script), and the Hindi manuscript of *Bihari Satsai* (illustrated in the Kangra style).

Central Asian Antiquities

The Department of Central Asian Antiquities is distinguished by a miscellany of diverse materials of the collections made by the late Sir Aurel Stein, an officer of the Archaeological Survey of India, in the course of three campaigns in 1900-1, 1906-8, and 1913-16 and ranges from the prehistoric times to A.D. 9th century. The diverse materials comprising wall-paintings, stuc-

Silken Banner by the pilgrims for offering at Stupas

Stucco Central Asia Head.

cos, wooden tablets bearing Kharoshthi inscriptions and silken banners and paintings were constituted into a museum in 1929. The collection shares its distinctive character with four other museums of the world, namely, (i) the British Museum, London, (ii) Musee Guimet, Paris, (iii) Museum fuer Indische Kunst, Berlin, and (iv) the Hermitage, Leningrad.

Arms

The Department of Arms organised in 1959 is the largest and best organised arms collection in India, and is distinguished alike by its number, variety and range of time.

The only major collection of arms and armour comprising 4882 items came as a gift from the Government of Andhra Pradesh in 1959, and contains, among others, a dagger of Aurangzeb, described in an inscription on it as a key to empires, a sword or *khanda* of Aurangzeb, and a dagger of Alam Akbar. Among other important personal weapons are those of Tipu Sultan and Nana Saheb.

Decorative Arts and Textiles

The Decorative Arts collection has a medley of jades, glassware, ivories, textiles, costumes, saris, carpets, inlaid *bidri* work, brass lamps and wooden sculptures including brackets, doorways, windows, shrines and among others, a chariot.

Among the larger collections are the Treasurywala collection (1947) of 63 wood carvings; the Imre Schwaiger collection (1948) of 116 items of textiles, 46 silver, jade and crystal objects, and 6 wood carvings; the Gulabchand collection of 22 pieces of textiles and 10 objects of jade; the Naulakha collection (1959) of 400 seals; and the Rani Rajwade (of Gwalior) collection of 600 objects comprising brass lamps, ritual objects, nut crackers, lime boxes, wood carvings and some textiles including a *patola sari* with Paithan border.

Anthropology

The Department of Anthropology houses the arts and crafts of tribal India and is distinguished by the unique collection made by the late Dr. Verrier Elwin, an English anthropologist who had made India his home (he died in 1964), comprising materials from Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. Among its many attractions is a collection of musical instruments (more than 200 items) recently gifted by Smt. Sharan Rani Backliwal of Delhi, displayed in a gallery named after the donor.

Pre-Columbian and Western Arts

The National Museum is distinct from other museums in its collection of Pre-Columbian materials from Mexico and Central America, received in two lots, in 1967 and 1974, as a gift from the late Nusli and Mrs. Alice Heeramanek of the United States in memory of Mr. Heeramanek's late father. Besides these are the Padmaja Naidu collection of 42 objects, mostly of Chinese and Japanese workmanship, gifted in 1975, and a small collection of 16 items gifted by Madame Krishna Riboud of Paris in 1972.

Periodical Exhibitions

Exhibitions serve many useful purposes. It can be easily recognised that the space at the disposal of even the National Museum is rather limited and rather static, whereas the collections keep on growing, as they must, till the stores get filled to capacity. It is neither necessary nor possible to display in the permanent galleries all or even a major part of the collections, for, such displays would be repetitive and monotonous. To anticipate a question on why must collections be made when they may not be displayed, it may be stated that every object has a distinct role in the history not merely of art, but of iconography and cultural ethos as the case may be. They are necessary for research and for understanding the technique and aesthetic standards and for interpretation thereof. Displays must, therefore, be selective and attractively and aesthetically arranged, may be provocatively sometimes, to encourage the visitors to probe, explore and discover and enjoy their endeavours. Exhibitions help the museum to bring out some of the materials, which, though important in themselves have not for some reason or

Vishnu, 11th century A.D.

Amaravati sculpture.

Central Asia stucco Mythical griffin.

Courtesy: Black & White Photographs—National Museum, New Delhi

Joseph & Jesus 17C A.D. (Goa)

The coronation of Rama 19C A.D. (Tanjore)

Colour Photographs: Mrs. Swapna Datta

other found place in the permanent galleries, for the benefit of the public in general as well as the researcher.

The National Museum has taken seriously to exhibitions. They enable its own staff to have a fresh look at its collections that have not been displayed at all or for a long time, render conservation measures to them, if necessary, and even to publish a catalogue or, leastways, a brochure with apt illustrations for the use and benefit of the public, on the specific themes chosen for the exhibition. Sometimes the preparatory work for an exhibition enables the museum to withdraw a few pieces from the permanent galleries and replace them with other specimens, introducing a fresh breeze into the gallery with a changed manner of display and a revised label, or new style of lighting or a different colour scheme of the background etc. Such changes are often necessary as otherwise the exhibits tend to become stale. The permanent displays are of a general nature in which a cross-section of art through the centuries can only be preserved.

The museum may even lend some of its specimens to other museums in the country for exhibiting them in their galleries for the purpose of filling a lacuna.

The National Museum has also been handling and despatching major exhibitions abroad as a part of Government's cultural exchange programme. This it has been doing now more intensively than before in collaboration with the newly set up organisation called Festival of India. The precise purpose of this organisation is to conceptualize and select exhibits for specific themes for major exhibitions of India's cultural and scientific heritage abroad.

Other Services to the Society

Apart from storing and conserving the nation's cultural and artistic heritage committed to its charge the National Museum holds regular film shows on all working days in its own auditorium on different aspects of the cultural heritage not merely of India but of the world in general.

Under its education programmes it has a Museo-bus fitted with a small number of exhibits, photographic blow-ups, pictorial presentations at different educational institutions.

It has also a regular programme of visits of school children to its galleries, as well as conducted tours and gallery talks for the general public. Its magnificent and well-stocked library is open to the public.

Its books and gifts shop caters to the need of the curios and souvenir collectors alike. Its Modelling Section turns out exquisite plaster casts and fibreglass copies of its art objects, and its Publications Section brings out prints of miniature paintings and picture post-cards for sale at the counter, besides bulletins and monographs on specific subjects, and brochures and posters on the exhibitions organised by it.

For the professionals, it holds regular courses of training in general museological practices as well as the highly specialized work of conservation of the varied categories of art objects from time to time in its well-equipped conservation laboratory.

The National Museum has attained international standards in all the branches of its activities within the short span of its existence. It fulfils commendably its role as a house of culture, of education, of enlightenment and entertainment of the mind and eye.

SOME EXCLUSIVE GLIMPSES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM

I have always considered museums to be wonderlands of sorts—a place where the past comes breathtakingly alive. It is like stepping into Yesterday, the Glorious Yesterday..

The National Museum at New Delhi contains an impressive array of objects that are exquisite, striking, interesting and intriguing—articles which stand for periods in history, and sculptures which portray legends, imparting to them the rare stamp of immortality.

As I step into this enchanted treasure house where, as it were, time stands still, my eyes fall upon and remain glued to the Amaravati sculptures of the Satavahana period. The Satavahanas were a powerful dynasty of kings who ruled over the entire Deccan between the 2nd century B.C. and A.D. 3rd century. Amaravati was their eastern seat. The great stupa of Amaravati was built during the later Satavahana period (A.D. 2nd — 3rd centuries) and was adorned with limestone reliefs depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha and surrounded by free-standing Buddha figures. They represent the peak of Satavahana art; they convey an intense vitality and a sense of movement.

Strangely enough, there are just four Amaravati sculptures in the National Museum and, that too, not our own. All sculptures belonging to the Amaravati stupa were carried away across the sea and given a distinctive place in the British Museum. The four in the Museum have been given to us on loan!

*One of these stupas portrays Sage Asita's visit to King Suddhodana. Another depicts the Buddha in a preaching attitude. It is interesting to note that the Buddha is shown not as a person but with the help of varied symbols such as his feet, the vase, the throne, the wheel, the tree, the parasol and so on. Other stupa-castings also depict scenes from the Buddha's life or portray Jataka stories. There is a particularly interesting one which depicts Maya Devi, the mother of the Buddha, at the Shalabhanjika festival, touching a sal tree. According to legend, the sal tree lowered its branches so that the expectant Queen might clasp them. The sculpture depicts the moment just before Prince Siddhartha was born. **The Mahavastu** states: "She (Maya Devi) coming to the Lumbini grove in play, leaned with her arm on a branch of the wavy-leafed sal tree and playfully stretched herself at the moment of giving birth to the Glorious One."*

The Ikshvakus, A.D. 2nd century, continued the great tradition of the Satavahanas and embellished the stupas at Nagarjunakonda with carvings similar to those found at Amaravati. In fact, the sculptures of Nagarjunakonda, which also depict scenes from the Buddha's life, seem to be even more vivid and beautiful than those of Amaravati. Here, once again, we find the same use of symbols. Prince Siddhartha is symbolised by footsteps on a silken garment. Another fragment shows the adoration of the turban by the devas in heaven. I kept staring at the delicately carved sculptures in breathless wonder, unmindful of time!

Another captivating gallery in the National Museum is the one containing the Central Asian Collection, which includes stucco-sculptures, terracottas, wall-paintings, banners, textiles, metal objects and wood carvings—all belonging to the period between A.D. 3rd and 11th centuries. According to Dr. Haesner, who is in charge of the Central Asian Department, the entire collection was brought to India by Sir Marc Aurel Stein between 1900–1916, in course of three separate expeditions. There used to be two separate ancient silk-routes—opened by the Chinese Emperor Wu-ti, way back in the 2nd century B.C.—through which silk from China was exported to the western part of the world. The sea-routes were not popular in those days and the people preferred to journey by land in spite of various hazards. Sir Marc is said to have followed the route once traversed by Huen Chang. Most of the objects brought by him were sent to the British Museum. Amongst those that are here, the Niya documents belonging to A.D. 3rd century deserve special mention. They are among the oldest antiquities that have been discovered and yet they look so well preserved because they lay buried in the sand for years. Written in the Kharosthi script, these were used either as personal letters or for business transactions.

A number of charming silk banners are also displayed among the Central Asia collection. They were carried by the travellers and pilgrims from all over Central Asia. They offered these banners at the various stupas along the silk-routes.

Amongst the stucco figures, two which specially attract attention are the figures of the 'Lady horseman rider', and 'The Griffin'. The former was found inside one of the graves at Astana and belongs to A.D. 7th–8th century. The latter, 'The Griffin'—a mythical animal which is said to protect the dead and ward off evil spirits was found just outside the graves at Astana.

But what seemed to me to be the most remarkable in this collection are the three enormous wall paintings of the legendary Emperor Fu-hsi and his consort Nu-wa, with long entwined serpentine bodies. These paintings were also found in the graves, right inside the coffins. Fu-hsi, with a mason's square in the left hand and Nu-wa with a pair of compasses in her right hand, are also said to be sky-gods. They were often represented in scenes of heaven during the Han dynasty (A.D. 7th–8th centuries). Fu-hsi was said to be a great mathematician and according to popular legends it was he who is supposed to have invented the Chinese script. The Central Asia collection is a rare one, found only in five other museums of the world—at London, Paris, Berlin, Leningrad and Tokyo.

One feels tempted to stay put at the National Museum, finding out more and yet more! But alas! it was closing time and for a moment I envied those who worked there, spending precious moments surrounded by beautiful objects which symbolise the wonder that was India!

—Swapna Dutta

The fragrance of a primitive night

No, he wouldn't be able to sleep—Karma knew it.

He never felt at home in a newly constructed brick house. The acrid smell of lime and fresh varnish would cause a pain to flare up behind his ear, a pain the size of a four-anna coin. It would keep throbbing all the time. The old railway stations on the old rail route—that was where he liked to be. Ancient, no doubt. But he could sleep soundly under their roof. Oh, hell! His nostrils had again started tingling.

Karma sneezed, its sound exploding in the new house.

The Babu was lying on a camp cot. "Karma, are you still awake?" he asked turning on his side.

"I won't be able to sleep here," Karma said, wiping his nose with his *gamcha*. "I knew it Babu."

"Nor can I." The Babu lighted a cigarette. "It's always like that with me. I miss my sleep under a new roof—the first night in any case."

Karma wanted to ask the Babu if he was also tormented by the smell of damp lime-wash in a new house. Did his jaw also throb with pain behind the ear? But the Babu had started singing under his breath.

Karma saw a pariah dog coming from the direction of the signal cabin. It stopped near the verandah. Karma watched it warily, trying to anticipate its next move. Raising its snout towards the Babu's cot, the dog sniffed in the air and then advanced. Karma knew the dog. It was a shoe-stealer. *Sala!* Did it really mean business? The dog turned towards Karma, again sniffed in the air and then trotted off in the direction of the passengers waiting-hall.

"Boy, what's your name?" the Babu asked him. "Karma, Karam Chand or Karmu?"

The question pleased Karma. It was the first time in the seven days they had been together that the Babu had shed his reserve.

"Babu, they call me Karma. That's my real name. But you know there are as many tongues as there are mouths. Netai Babu called me Karma, Ghosh Babu called me Krima while Singhji always addressed me as Kama. And as for Asghar Babu he always called me by the name of Karm. When in a gay mood, he would say 'Oh, my Karm, the living, walking symbol of my misdeeds!' But what's in a name, Babu? I'm what I'm."

"Where's your home? In the Santhal Parganas? In the district of Ranchi? Hazaribagh?"

Karma hesitated for a moment. When faced with such a question he put on an all-knowing look, as though he belonged to the whole world. "God is my *mai-bap*," he wanted to say. "And where my body happens to be that's where my home is." But he could not give such impish replies to the Babu.

A clever Babu indeed! Hadn't he guessed from Karma's name and the structure of his forehead where he hailed from? It was after a long time that he had come across a man as wise and clever as Gopal Babu.

"Babu," Karma said, "Gopal Babu also said the same. In fact it was Gopal Babu who gave me this name."

Gopal Babu's name triggered off memories that had till now remained dormant in his mind. "Gopal Babu said I was discovered in a wooden crate on a goods train coming from Assam. Without any tag, without any label. Unclaimed property!"

Lo and behold, the Babu had dozed off! Tch! He had to stop midway, leaving Gopal Babu's story incomplete. Oh, how he snored!

The pariah dog again appeared on the scene. It was the month of *Kartik*. The wretch must have gone after a bitch, the way it was panting. "So you want to sleep here?" Oh, how it smelled! "Tut, tut! Be gone!"

"Then what happened to your Gopal Babu?" The Babu had suddenly come awake.

Karma was still looking at the dog. It had climbed down the verandah, stopped, looked back, growled and then barking in a low key had disappeared into the ladies waiting-room.

"Babu, have you gone to sleep again?"

Yes, the Babu had again dozed off, snoring like a typical Babu. When the pointsman snored he sounded as if he was sawing wood, and Gopal Babu as if he was playing on a bagpipe. He snored in a perfectly well-modulated key.

The tinkle of the telegraph office, the bell of the railway station, the guard's whistle, the engine's bugle and the river-boat's hoot. And now the Babu's snoring...a medley of whistling sounds...

Karma tried hard but he could not extricate himself from the railway track. He struggled, writhed, cried, but his body remained glued to the track. The engine thundered past, tearing apart his legs and neck. He hurriedly collected his trunkless legs. Thank God, they were not his legs but Anthony Guard Saheb's pair of

by PHANISHWARNATH RENU

gumboots. But what had happened to his head? The dog was nibbling at his nose and ears.

"Karma!"

"Go away. Begone!"

"Karma, wake up, boy. Time to get the tea ready."

Karma got up, flustered. Dawn was breaking. After seeing the goods train through, the pointsman was coming back, revolving the bamboo circle. *Sala!* What a horrible dream. He had never had such a nightmare in all the twelve years of his life.

Karma was not an employee of the Railway Company. If he wanted to, he could easily get the job of a pointsman, a porter or a water vendor. If it came to that, he could easily get in by the back door. But his heart was not in it. He had never liked the Railway Company's blue shirt with an engine engraved on its brass buttons.

For that matter, Karma did not relish the idea of getting a regular job, be it with the Railways or any other agency. When they asked what he did for a living, he replied that he kept company with the Railway babus. A man who received no regular wages could not be termed an employee. Could he? Not by a long shot.

He had stayed with Gopal Babu for five years. After that he lived with many more *babus*. To tell their exact number he would have to count on his fingers. But one thing, he always lived with Relief Babus—not with those who were permanent fixtures at one railway station or the other and lived in railway quarters with their families.

Gopal Babu—what a gem of a man! The like of whom he would never come across again. Gopal Babu was Karma's friend, mentor, mother, all rolled into one. Karma was unclaimed goods, without any tab or label. Gopal Babu had taken delivery of him from the railway hospital and had then taken him under his wings. Karma accompanied him wherever he went and partook of the same food with him. But as the saying goes it is an ill wind that blows one no good. One fine morning Gopal Babu took it into his head to swap duties with a station *babu*. This was followed by another wild plunge. He got married. And what a wife! Was she a woman or a witch? The whole day Gopal Babu remained in full possession of his wits but as evening approached his heart started fluttering like a wounded sparrow. Sometimes at midnight when he went out to flag the special train through on her onward journey one felt that he had come from his quarters after stoking the boiler of a powerful Canadian locomotive.

Karma who used to sleep in the verandah of the Babu's quarters rarely had a full night's uninterrupted sleep. Gopal Babu's wife would start puffing and ranting. Then followed groans, cries, abuses, ending in an exchange of blows. At last when the Babu tried to escape from the house she would rush at him and pull him back by his hair. Then Karma hit upon a way of averting this rumpus. As the hour of midnight approached, he would start hammering on the door, shouting that the special train was due to pass through. But this strategem did not work for long. One day that harridan cried, "Drive away this bastard from

my sight! He is a thief! A t—h—i—e—f!"

From that day whenever Karma happened to pass by a railway quarter a thin voice would start ringing in his ears. "Thief! Bastard!" Before the year was out she had devoured Gopal Babu, flesh, bones and all. Gopal Babu who was tender like a flower. The thought brought tears to Karma's eyes.

A wandering mendicant, flowing water and a Relief Babu—they know no rest.

So soon as a Relief Babu returned to the Headquarters he would be urgently called back to replace such and such Babu at a particular station, who had suddenly taken ill. A Relief Babu had always to be on his toes. With even the best of luck, he could not hope to stay for more than three months at a stretch at one station. He carried his home in a wooden box. Here today, gone tomorrow.

Gopal Babu had himself put Karma onto Ghosh Babu, telling him that he was a good man and would take good care of him. But he could not pull on with Ghosh Babu for more than a month. He had a foul tongue and was given to abusing all the time. Otherwise he was a nice fellow, without any other fault. To talk filth had become a habit with him. Even today when he met Karma he greeted him with an abuse: "How are you, Karma, you son of a ...?"

Ram Babu too was not a bad sort either. He had a clean slate but one besetting sin—lust for women. Whichever station he was posted to he would call the pointsman, the porter or the sweeper aside and get into a huddle with him, talking to him in a tell-tale jargon. At night, under cover of darkness his shadowy figure was often found stalking around the godown, the ladies waiting-room or even the *zenana* lavatory. How despicable of him! Like a refrain he had only one sentence on his lips all the time: "Know of any good lay?" And then as Karma had feared, tragedy struck. A woman was his undoing. Last year on the Joghani line a Gorkha chopped off his body into two pieces with his *khukhri*. That did it. He was paid back right and proper for going after women.

In utter contrast to him, Singhji was very devout. He always carried the images of Ram, Sita and Lakshman with him in his bag. His day started at four in the morning when he took his bath and sat down to pray, ringing the bell all the time. Nobody was allowed to enter the sanctum where the images were installed, without a bath. A worshipper was required to take a bath everytime he wanted to enter the sanctum, which was hard on Karma, particularly in winter. "What sacrilege!" Singhji would suddenly scream. "You have again touched the image!". Didn't the Railway Company know better than to employ such oddities? No wonder Karma did not last long with him.

Then there was Sahu Babu, as generous as he was fond of the bottle. Once, roaring drunk at daytime, he had blithely given clearance to a goods train which collided with an oncoming train on the same track. Karma vividly remembered that when Sahu Babu realised the enormity of his blunder he made up for it by quickly downing one more bottle of country liquor. But surprisingly enough, he got away with it. The Railway Doctor declared that he had gone out of his mind.

But even on that night of the ghastly accident Karma did not have such a horrible dream as he had last night. Of course he had been a fool to have narrated the dream to the Railway Babu so early in the morning. It could be taken as an ill omen. The Babu was new on the job and Karma had yet to size him up, specially as to his temperament. Although they had been together for a week it was only last night that the Babu had opened out to him by asking a personal question or two. That had prompted Karma to unload the dream from his mind. As he handed him his morning cup of tea the words tumbled from his mouth, "Babu, last night I had a strange dream. The hurtling engine, my body glued to the rail track, my head on this side of the track and my legs on the other side. And there was Anthony Guard Saheb's pair of gumboots."

"What rot are you talking?" the Babu had barked at him. "Are you addicted to *ganja?*"

Karma was completely put out. How foolish of him! He shouldn't have talked to the Babu about his dream. Picking up the looking glass from the alcove he studied his face in it. Oh, God, what was wrong with his lips? They looked like the beak of a partridge.

"Karam Chand, what's wrong with you?"

Oh, there goes the bell. The train is coming and my pot of vegetables is still on the *chulha*. But what's going on here? Why is the shunting engine hauling this train? And what a thin whistle! Like a Santhali flute's sound. Si-i-i.

Karma had lived at the Maniharighat station too. It is a magnificent station, a huge affair, completely dwarfing the midget station of Amadpura.

Whenever he went to a new station, Karma liked to go out on a ramble to the countryside around. Without that he felt sort of bottled up. On his rambles he met many people, visited many places. He remembered the mangoes of Sonbasa, the fish of Kaluchak, the curds of Bhatota and the sugarcane of Kusiagram. But most of all he remembered the Maniharighat station. On one side, the land and on the other, a vast stretch of water. On one side, the train and on the other, a steamboat. Then there were fields, the blue waters and a white sandy stretch merging into the blue range of hills of Sahebgunj.

Karma had bathed in the holy waters of the Ganga for full four months. For four lives no curse would ever work on him.

No other station had such a beautiful name. Maniharighat. God bless the name.

Mastan Babu originally belonged to the labour class and started life as a coolie at the Maniharighat station. Soon he was overcome by despondency and lost interest in life. He grew a beard, kept long hair and turned a sadhu. He played on castanets and sang devotional songs. One *chillum* of *ganja* put enough strength in him to carry him through five cycles of devotional songs. Karma had picked up a few snatches of devotional songs but he never touched *ganja*. So when the Babu asked him if he had taken *ganja* his memory suddenly harked back to the days when he used to attend the devotee Babu's hymn-singing sessions.

Karma again took the looking glass from the alcove and looked at his face in it. He screwed up his eyes and baring his teeth in a smile he aped Mastan Babu. "Be happy!" he raised his hands to bless. "Keep your eyes and ears open. The earth also speaks and the trees and plants recognise people. Haven't you ever seen the crop singing and dancing? Or seen it crying on a dark moonless night? Ha, ha! Remain happy!"

He did not know that the Babu

was standing behind him watching his antics.

"So you dream even while standing," the Babu said, "and then you tell me that you don't smoke *ganja*."

True, he had been day dreaming. Mastan Babu's face had started growing bigger like a banyan tree and his mad laughter went ringing through the sky while whiffs of *ganja* smoke blew in the air. There was a tide in the Ganga. Far off, the hooter of a steamboat blew—long and drawn out.

"Serve the food," the Babu said. "Let me see what it tastes like. You drive me nuts."

The Babu swallowed the first morsel, smacked his lips and fixed his eyes on Karma's face. "It tastes nice," he said. The food had suddenly put him in good humour. "Who taught you to cook? Gopal Babu's wife?"

"You mean, *Bo-ma*?" Karma said. "Oh, no, she only knew how to abuse. Her tongue was so bitter that even the milk on the boil curdled. She was a vulgar woman."

"And who taught you to wag your tongue?"

Suddenly Karma remembered Mastan Babu's words. "Babu, who teaches whom?" he said looking very thoughtful. "The police station sets the pace of the town."

"Your spouse will deem herself lucky," the Babu said after a pause.

Karma decided that if the Babu's good mood lasted he would tell him Mastan Babu's story with a few songs thrown in for good measure.

"Babu, today I want to take sometime off."

"Why, are you going somewhere?"

Karma raised his hand and pointed his finger towards the door. "I'll go out and walk and walk and walk."

If only he could have somebody by his side.

"Your spouse will deem herself lucky," Babu's words rang in his ears.

Karma's wife. Warisganj station. The nomads camping in their tents outside the station. And that girl fast growing up into a woman, a nosegay scintillating in her nostril, her yellow teeth glinting scarlet red with tooth paint.

Karma lacked the courage to regale that lass with *halwa* and *puris*, prepared with his own loving hands. One day he had taken them to her, wrapped up in a sheet of newspaper. But he got soaking wet with perspiration and his nerve failed him at the last moment. What if the girl got scared and raised a cry that he was trying to seduce her with *halwa* and *puri*.

Even after he had crossed the railway yard the dog kept following him. Karma was annoyed. "Go back," he cried. "Don't stir out that far. Other dogs will pounce on you and tear you to bits. Go back! Go!"

The dog stopped and watched Karma walking along the narrow path cutting through the paddy fields. The ears of rice had not yet sprouted. Suddenly he remembered Chaudhry Babu's pregnant wife. It was said that the lady doctor had taken a photograph of the inside of her and proclaimed that she had twins in her womb.

The rains had been good that season. The paddy fields were still flooded with rain water. And what fishes!

Karma's body stiffened as his eyes fell on *magur* fish. For sometime he stood there watching them with bated breath and then he slowly squelched his way towards the abutment. The scales of the fish gleamed in the sun. The water which had looked like a solid sheet of glass suddenly rippled. Karma stood there fascinated. If only he could upturn the water like a sheet over one of the abutments...

"Hey! Hey! Stop wriggling and twisting. You are done for now. You can't escape. Karma is an old hand at this game."

Eight *magurs* and one *girayi*. All jet black. He could easily get three rupees for the lot at the Katihar fish market. Pleased, Karma securely tied the fish in his *gamcha*.

The palm tree gradually kept receding till, with the first whiff of smell, Karma realised that he was already in the village. His eyes alighted on a man who was tending his cabbage patch. His hair had gone gray but the muscles of his arms still rippled as he watered the field. They recognised each other. He was the man who had recently come to the

station to despatch his bag of brinjals.

"*Bhai*, what brings you here?" he asked Karma.

"I've come out for a walk in the countryside. Do you live in this village?"

The old man laughed and his thick bristly moustache quivered, reminding Karma of ticket collector Sattu Babu's old father.

A girl wearing a red sari came holding a hookah. Her cheeks puffed out as she blew at the *chillům* to keep the hookah going. She momentarily stopped on seeing Karma and then resumed her walk, picking her way through the cabbage patch.

"*Beti*, go back," the old man said. "We are coming to the house."

"Who's he, Babu?" the girl looked at Karma.

"The bear man."

"Hisht!"

Karma felt embarrassed and looked away. Did he really look like a bear man?

"You're Relief Babu's servant, aren't you?" the old man asked.

"No, not a servant. I just live with him. That's all."

"What do you mean live with him? How much are you paid?"

"Nothing. Why should he pay me for doing nothing?"

For a while the old man kept looking at Karma, forgetting that he was holding the stem of the hookah. "You mean nothing? You work gratis for him?"

He looked towards the courtyard. "Saraswatia!" he called out. "Send your mother down here..I've a wonderful fellow with me. Let her have a look at him."

An old woman who was standing behind the curtain quickly stepped across the door.

"Look at this young chap," the old man said. "He works for a handful of rice. Do they give you clothes also?" he turned to Karma.

"What's your name? Karmachand? A nice name, indeed. But you didn't tell me what you do for a living."

"Your brinjals look excellent," Karma said, evading the old man's question. "They must be delicious like ghee."

The old woman smiled. Her smile seemed to have revived Karma, sending a new surge of strength through his body.

"Stop rubbing the poor fellow the wrong way," she said turning to her husband. "Let him have a breather."

"What's there in your *gamcha*?" the old man asked. "Fish? For your Babu?"

"I just caught them on the way," Karma said.

"Saraswatia's mother," the old man turned to his wife. "Get some parched rice. Let our guest eat it with fish curry. It will go well with parched rice. Young man, for a change, sample the taste of fish curry cooked by other hands. Saraswatia's mother will cook it for you."

While he was eating, Karma heard someone asking the old woman, "Saraswatia's *ma* where has your guest come from?"

"From Katihar."

"Who is he?"

"A relative."

"Have never heard of any relative of yours at Katihar."

Karma looked up. Saraswatia was standing in the distance, blowing on a *chillum*, her cheeks looking round like sweet limes.

The old man asked in a voice oozing with affection, "Boy, what makes a man's voice travel through telephone poles? I just want to know that."

When he was about to leave the old woman stopped Karma. "Don't take the old man amiss," she said. "His son died in the bloom of youth. Since then he has become a little loose in the head."

"Come again someday."

"Regard it as your own home."

To Karma's surprise, the dog was still there, waiting for him. It expressed its joy by cutting a few capers and then bursting into speed.

When Karma entered the railway compound, he realised to his chagrin, that he had been diddled by the old man. Three rupees worth of *magur* fish was gone in exchange for a handful of parched rice, a helping of fish curry and a few honeyed words. He felt he had betrayed the Babu too. The sight of fish would have made him delirious with joy.

The other Babu had arrived with his family by the night train. The railway quarter which was usually quiet had suddenly burst into life. Karma's Babu would be leaving for the Headquarters by the morning train. Karma would go with him. And then onto Maniharighat.

Karma lay down to sleep though he knew sleep would not come easily to him, unlike the Babu who always slept like a log, having no particular attachment for any place...Come again some day...Regard it as your own home. The words kept echoing in Karma's mind but he did not know what to make of them. Did he have any home?

Suddenly a strange smell assailed his nostrils. He got up to find out where the smell was coming from and slowly walked across the platform, following the smell. As he stepped on to the rail track all the signals, home point and distant, suddenly blazed forth. A woman shrieked from one of the quarters, "Thief! Thief!" Karma fled, an engine in hot pursuit of him. And that nomad's daughter. He hid in her tent, Saraswatia burst into a hearty laughter, her golden hair and the smell of her unwashed body becoming one with Karma. Scared, he hid his face in Saraswatia's, no, her mother's lap.

"Karma, get up. Karma carry the luggage out."

Karma, who had been wallowing in a sea of smells got up, flustered and reached for his shirt.

The train came. The Babu hurriedly got into a carriage. Karma helped him with the luggage and then got into the servant's compartment.

"Have you put in all the luggage?" the Babu shouted to him from his carriage. "Are you sure you have left nothing behind?"

The engine whistled. Karma saw that the dog was sitting on the platform, whining, its eyes fixed on Karma. The dog looked so restless.

"Babu!"

"Yes?"

"I won't go."

Karma jumped down as the train started moving. He stumbled as his feet hit the platform. But the next moment he had steadied himself.

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Translated from the Hindi by JAI RATAN

SHORT STORY

by
KHWAJA
AHMAD
ABBAS

THE RAIN MACHINE

So far as the eye could see, it was the worst drought which had Uttar Pradesh in its grip.

Tanks and reservoirs were dry. Instead of water, they were criss-crossed by the dried lines of mud.

If you sought water in a deep well, you would see dead frogs and the skeletons of snakes. Everything had died for lack of rain.

But the deep tube-well of Thakur Harnam Singh was still working and yielding water. The electrically-driven water-pump drew out whatever water was there.

Everyone in the village got his or her ration of one pitcher or *balti* of water. Not a drop more, not a drop less. The Thakur was pragmatic in his generosity and charitable towards the water-starved people of his village. The ration was not even enough for washing faces, much less cleaning utensils. But still it was something!

Parvati was fifteen years old. It was her duty to put her pitcher at the head of the line. When her turn came, she would work the pump, her arms developing muscles, so hard was this exercise. She was to carry the pitcher on her head. For this extra labour, she received the first vessel of water.

Gurnam Singh, the only son of the Thakur, who was studying for his F.A., in an Intermediate College in Allahabad, had come back to the village because "Vacation" had been declared due to the severe drought. Having nothing to do the whole day, he would sit on the top of an old and crumbling out-house from where he had an opportunity to have a glimpse of all the maidens in the village going about their daytime chores. The conversation was mostly one-sided. He would tease the girls but hardly any one of them would have the courage to reply.

But, more than any one else, it was the youthful beauty of Parvati that fascinated the young Thakur. The young gallant was on the look-out for a suitable opportunity to talk *alone* to Parvati.

"Come here, girl," he would say when he found her alone. And, with his elbow, he would contact her delicate body. Embarrassed, she would run away with a frightened look.

One day he accosted Parvati. "Come here, Paro," he said, "come here and I will give you first class news!"

She kept herself at a distance, saying, "It is better if I don't come near you, you will touch me." She had not forgotten the liberties he had taken, and therefore she was on her guard, keeping a respectable distance between herself and the amorous young Thakur.

The Thakur Junior replied, "All right, you listen to me from there. Tell me, have you ever seen a cinema?"

"Yes, yes," she spoke with considerable enthusiasm. "Last year when the touring talkie came in the adjacent village, there I saw pictures that moved, talked and sang."

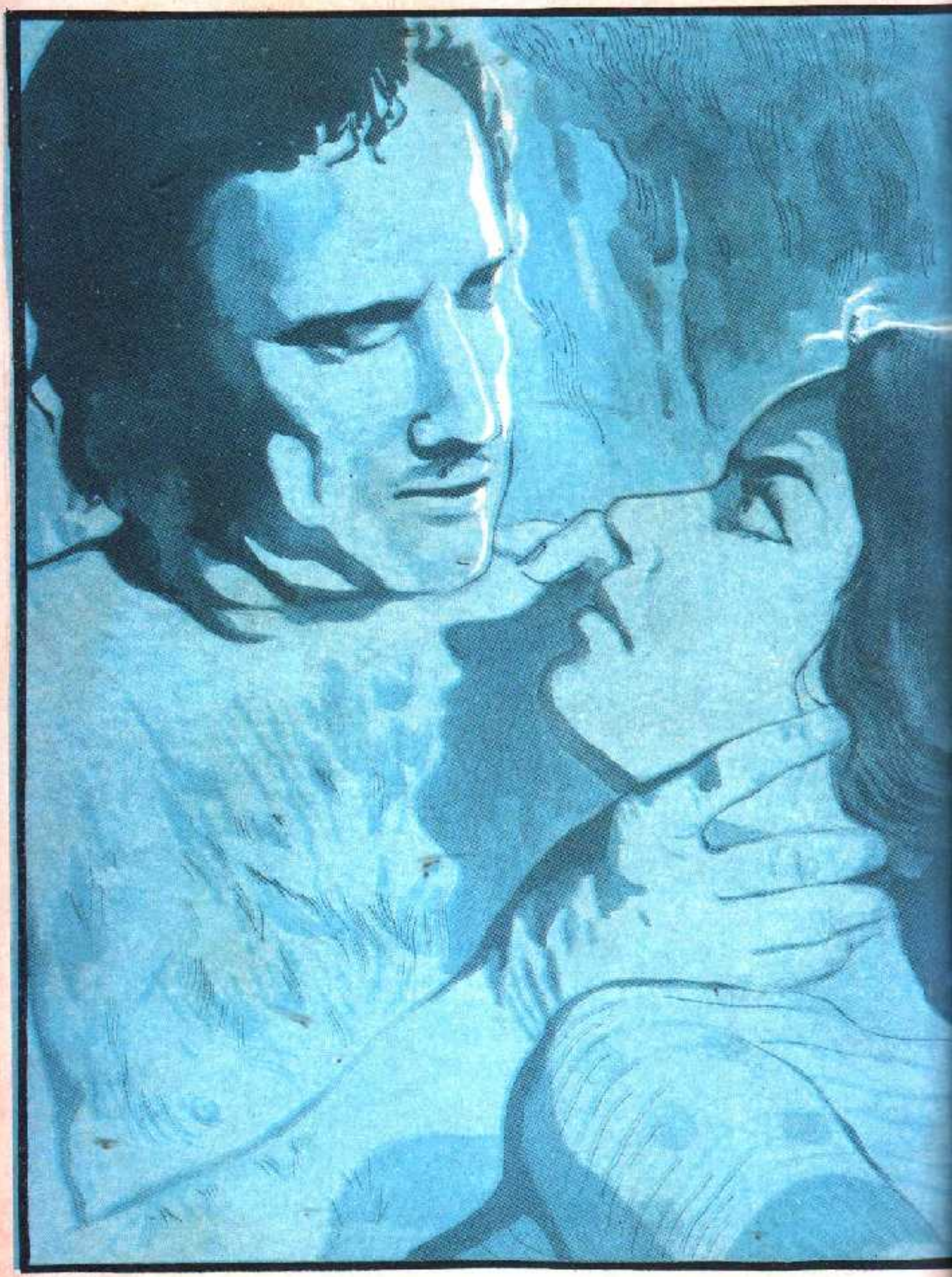
"Good," the young Thakur informed her, "then you will be the first to know that a Company that makes talkies is coming to our village. The work of making all the arrangements has been given to the *Baday* Thakur Saheb and he has left it all in my hands."

And the young Thakur continued, "A whole new township will be established for them. It will be like making arrangements for a regular army."

"Wherefrom will you get water for them all?" That was the big worry for Parvati.

"*Arree*, they—the big ones—don't drink water! They will bring large numbers of what they drink—whisky, brandy, rum and beer—to quench their thirst. The machine that manufactures ice will also be with them, and hundreds of bottles of soda-lemonade and Coca Cola and Mangola will come for them."

"But, don't they bathe sometimes?" Parvati raised another question. "They will need water for that!"



"*Arree*, what good is our tube-well then? I will reserve its water for them."

Parvati knew the water in the tube-well was becoming depleted. So she asked, "But what about the needs of the village-folk?"

To which the young Thakur replied, "Have we not saved the well for them? But priority is priority. Do we think of our guests or the ungrateful villagers?...

"I am worried only for you. So far as you are concerned, you will be allowed one pitcher of water. Along with that I will appoint you to a good position in the Company. You take charge of the water problem. You fill as many pitchers as you can and the Company will pay you three rupees—and not a pie less will be your wage."

"But, *Chhotay* Thakur Saheb," pleaded Parvati, "if the village-folk are hungry and thirsty, how can I be happy and contented?"

"You speak like one of those leaders at election time," said the young Thakur, as if he had solved the water problem. "If you are worried about others, then I have a solution to their problem also. Get a girl from each family to fetch water for the Company-wallahs."

"But," Parvati blurted out what was on her mind, "What will they do with the three rupees—eat them or drink them?"

"We will think of that too. Surely, every question must have an answer. But you be happy that we have got an opportunity to serve big stars like Betaab Achchan. Aradhna will also be there. They are making a new kind of film for which they need the background of our village."

Meanwhile, the Thakur had created a veritable city of tents and *chholdaris*. Even small sign-boards in English and Hindi were fixed outside each tent. The biggest and the best tent was for Betaab Achchan and another one of equal size was marked "Miss Aradhna". The third big tent was for Director Gulfaam and the producer Anokhe Lal. The rest had to share their tents with at least three others.

So the next day, the whole unit reached the railway station in a reserved bogey. There were, to be exact, 203 persons—men, women and children—in the group. Also, the Junior Technicians, Production Assistants, Spot-Boys, Electricians, Lightsmen, not to mention the personal servants of all except the Heroine, whose *ayah*, Hair-dresser and Make-up man would come with her in a plane. The three mile *kachcha* road from the station to the Thakur's *haveli* was made *pucca* for the film unit. Also water was sprinkled on the road for the convenience of the stars and the senior technicians.

"Now, listen carefully. The 'Big' Thakur Saheb has got the whole contract from the Production Manager. But what can the old man do? So he has entrusted the whole work to me. I have made plans for economizing on everything—thus we will get a lakh as nett profit which will be shared on a 50:50 basis with the Production Manager. So it is a godsend for me. I can make a nett profit which will help me to become a producer of films. So be prepared for the big occasion. Betaab Achchan will be there, and so will be Aradhna. But they are producing a new kind of film called ART film—they say that Betaab Achchan should get the National Award. The background must be a real village. And our village has been selected as the typical village.

"The Producer has convinced Achchan that in this *filum*, he will get the 'Rashtrapati Award' and his name and fame will go round the world. Besides, his price will be doubled—from five lakhs to ten lakhs."

"What says you? Betaab Achchan gets five lakhs for one picture?"

"*Haan*".

"Who is *Rashtra-pati* and what is the best actor?"

"The *Rashtra-pati*—is the father of our *desh*. He is the biggest person in the whole country. The hero is that one in a *filum* who saves the *heroine* from the hands of the villain."

"I understand—like you, *Chhotay* Thakur!"

The next day, Betaab Achchan, Aradhna, the Producer and his Director-Writer Gulfaam, the Cameraman and the personal servants of the hero and the heroine reached Palankote air-strip, fifty kilometres from the village. A dozen cars were there. The cars were borrowed (and in one case hired) and included an old Rolls Royce which belonged to the Raja of Banpore. But a Rolls is a Rolls, whatever its condition. So Betaab Achchan, Aradhna and Producer Anokhe Lal were accommodated in the Rolls. The rest of the group took the cheaper cars—old Fiats and Ambassadors. As they reached the village, they were received by the waiting young women who applied *tilak* on the forehead of Betaab and Aradhna.

They were also garlanded and the still-cameramen and some of the photographers from the film magazines took photos.

The film company's programme started the next day, but it progressed very slowly. Both Betaab and Aradhna slept till eight o'clock. Bath and breakfast took one hour. Then they started dressing in the fancy silks and brocades which were supposed to represent a village youth and a village damsel.

Meanwhile, Parvati was counting the pitchers and *balties* which were filled at the pump and then carried by the girls to the tents for pouring them into big drums. Only Parvati was paid three rupees while the rest of the girls got only two rupees per *ghara* or *balti*. Thanks to *Chhotay* Thakur, she was differently treated. Moreover, she was the leader of all the *ghara*-carriers in the village!

Parvati got three rupees daily for supplying water to the three tents of the Hero, the Heroine and the Director and Producer. The Hero and Heroine got four *gharas* each and the Producer and Director got six *gharas* for their combined requirements. Parvati did all this work assiduously, and when she received three rupees every evening, she felt that she had earned her day's work.

She kept counting her own pitchers, and also the pitchers and *balties* carried by the others to fill the big drums in the *Filum Kampani's* tents. So all the time she was busy with the work of counting the pitchers and *balties*. She did not have time for the Company's shooting work.

The boys and girls of the village soon joined the boys and girls of the film unit and danced to the beat of drums. One day Paro overheard Producer Anokhe Lal telling the Junior Thakur, "If I knew your boys and girls are such good dancers, I would not have brought at all the *axe-tras* from the city."

The village folk were happy and surprised when, at the end of the day, they got three rupees and willingly put their thumb-impressions on the Company's receipts—but these receipts were for fifteen rupees. But the village crowd, whether they got any money or not, liked to dance.

One day Parvati gave fifteen rupees to her mother. "This is what the *Kampani-wallahs* have given for

my five-days work. Nice people they are, aren't they?"

"That's good," said her mother, "but beware of these city-folk who may give you money and also sweet talk, but they may prove to be worse than thieves and robbers."

"Oh, mother, you unnecessarily suspect these people. Tell me, what they haven't got and what have we, that they will steal or rob from us?"

"I know them well. Some of them may be after your 'honour'! That is more than gold and silver."

That day, as she went into the Producer's tent, Director Gulfaam had gone out for shooting, but the Producer Anokhe Lal was sleeping, under a silk sheet. So Parvati tip-toed to the bath-room and there upturned the *ghara* in the big drum. The noise was so much that Anokhe Lal suddenly got up. Then she tip-toed into the tent, and now the Seth Saheb had one of his eyes open to assess the body of the young village maiden. But the flap of the tent was down, so he could only get a silhouette of Parvati. However he got a flattering image of Parvati, and gave her 'pass' marks. So he shouted for his servant and told him to awaken him at 7.30 a.m. and to leave the flap open then, so that he could see the face of the water-carrier woman or girl.

The next day when Parvati arrived with her *ghara*, Seth Saheb was not only awake but was seated at the breakfast table. After Gulfaam had gone for shooting, Seth Saheb cleaned his spectacles and took the issue of "Screen" magazine. He was not English-educated, but saw the "Screen" every week since the paper had started publishing colour photos.

When she entered the tent and went straight into the bath-room to unload her heavy *ghara*, he had a chance to study her face and figure. She was evidently a virgin. Her face was ordinary but she would do.

When she was going back he put away the "Screen" and directly asked her, "Eh, girl, what is your name?"

"*Ji*, Parvati," she cut her reply short, and held the flap of the tent.

"Parvati, that is a good name," replied the Seth, "What is your age?"

"What is that, Sir? I am an illiterate girl." She was too young and shy. Her shyness added to her desirability.

The Seth was not willing to cut short his conversation and said, "I mean in what year were you born?"

"That I know not. My mother tells me I was born during the rainy season. The whole earth was flooded."

And saying that, Parvati went away. The Seth called his personal servant.

"Chhidoo! Find out in what year the village was surrounded by flood-waters."

After an hour, the servant brought the reply, "A pandit who lives in the temple tells me, after consulting his *janam patris*, that there was a flood fifteen years ago. The most recent flood was in '77."

"I have found out! That's all. You can go now."

"Seth Saheb, what have you found out?"

"Doesn't matter," the Seth wanted to dismiss the cheeky servant. "I wanted to know the conditions in the village."

The servant withdrew, but looked back through the over-turned flap. The Seth was examining himself in the shaving mirror.

When shaving yesterday he had seen some white hair. He must shave early in the morning, he decided. So he called Chhidoo and asked him for hot water for an elaborate shave.

Having shaved his beard, he turned his attention to his moustache. Today he took a long time in applying the dye. Having blackened the moustache and the white hair at the bottom of the moustache he curled them up.

Bring any girl now, and she would not think him to be older than thirty! He smiled as he thought of this standing before the mirror, and hastily removed the hair-dye lest someone saw his secret process of transformation.

When Parvati came to drop her second instalment of water in the big drum, she saw the son of Seth Saheb, staring at her.

"*Chhotay* Seth Saheb!" She joined her two hands in *namaskar* as she made her exit.

"We are the solitary Seth in this Company—no question of *Chhotay* Seth. We are the only Seth here."

"*Achcha*, Seth Saheb," she joined her hands and did *namaskar*.

The next day, Seth Saheb got up early and, having shaved, sat at the breakfast table, waiting for the girl.

When Parvati had finished her chore, she came out in the big tent where the Seth was looking at her. "*Namastay*, Sethji," she said.

"Wait, girl, for a minute. I want to talk to you." The Seth was anything but subtle.

"Sethji, what shall I talk? I don't know how to talk."

"We will teach you to talk."

"Sit down here," he pointed to the extra chair for visitors who came to see him.

"I don't know how to sit on that," she said pointing to the high chair, and sat down on the ground nearest to the open exit. "I can sit only like this." And she sprawled on the dust-covered floor. She put her *ghara* between herself and the Seth.

So the Seth decided to talk about that pitcher. "Tell me, how much does a *ghara* like that cost in your village?"

She laughed outright at the question.

"A *ghara* like this one doesn't cost us anything in our village," she replied. "The potter gives us any *ghara* we want, *free*. We bring water to his hut."

The economy of this barter-system did not make any sense to the Seth who knew all about the shares going up and down in Stock Exchange.

"All right, how much does the Thakur Saheb pay you for pouring water in the big drum in our bath-room?"

"He pays me three rupees for all the *gharas*," replied Parvati.

"How many *gharas* do you bring to fill our big drum?"

"Ten above twenty!" she said.

"That wily old Thakur charges us a rupee per *ghara*."

Then the thought occurred to him: This is downright exploitation of the people! But, he himself was getting vouchers signed for ten rupees for every rupee that was paid to the village people. This was done to make black money. The car which was taken on hire for hundred rupees, they got a receipt for five hundred rupees. This was the Film Industry where black was white! Why worry about the villagers if they were willingly agreeable to their exploitation?

So he changed the topic. "From where do you get water? This is the season of drought. All your tanks and wells are dry."

"We get water from the Thakur Saheb's *bijli ka kuwaan!* The whole village gets one *ghara* per family. Against that we have all to work free in Thakur Saheb's fields at the time of harvest."

"Small fish is eaten by the bigger fish," said the Seth Saheb, "the bigger fish is eaten by the still bigger fish."

"*Chhi-chhi*—you eat fishes! Don't talk to us about eating fish. We are

all vegetarians."

"Tell me for how long has the drought lasted in your village?"

"In the last season, there were no rains. If such dry weather continues, then famine is certain. People will depart for the cities. Some people have already left."

"Do you think that you can get bread and water freely in the cities?" the Seth interjected.

"Yes, at least water they can get. There is such a big ocean around Bombay."

"What will you give us if we produce rain tomorrow?"

"If it rains I will bring you *prasad* from the temple."

"We get *prasad* from temples of which we are trustees. Anything else?"

"We have got nothing."

"You have got everything!" Saying this the Seth took his chair forward, while his eyes were focused on her.

In a rare defensive gesture Paro kept her *ghara* more prominently between herself and the Seth Saheb.

Her mother's words were ringing in her ears.

In the Seth's eyes there was a devilish glint. He was prepared to pounce on her.

Parvati got up and went out.

As she went out, she shouted over her shoulders, "Sethji, first we will see your rainfall created by a machine! Then ask for whatever you want."

Returning home, she told her mother what the Company's Seth was saying.

"*Arree*, these city-folk know how to bewitch poor people like us," she said. "This cinema itself is a kind of magic. Otherwise, how can pictures of men and women move, talk, sing and dance? It is all magic."

The next day...

When the sun set, the compound of Thakur Harnam Singh was glittering as if the moon itself had come down to earth.

On all sides electric lights had been fixed.

When the cameraman shouted through his megaphone, "All lights!" the lights came on and turned the night into day. On top were the pipes which were perforated with holes, to sprinkle water in simulation of rainfall.

When Parvati went into the tent to pour the last *ghara* in the huge drum, she saw the Seth sitting on a chair twirling his moustache.

When she was going out, he called out, "Today, our Rain-Machine is ready!"

"But, so far even one drop has not come out of your Rain-Machine," she shot back.

"It will work, it will work! After all, it's a machine. Takes time to come, not one drop, but a thousand drops—a million drops! Then you will have to admit our powerful magic!"

"Yes—then I will admit the power of your magic," came her reply.

"Remember your words. When the rain falls you will have to give us what is ours."

The pipe of the Rain-Machine was fixed to the pump of the Thakur Saheb's tube-well. Through this pipe, the Rain-Machine would suck the water from the tube-well, and take it up to all the tubes which would force the water to come down through its myriad holes. Then would come artificial rainfall.

Hero: Betaab Achchan.

Heroine: Aradhna

Fighter character-actor: Firqan.

Character-actress: Sulbha Devi.

Villain and Comedian.

Dance Director: Bijen and his six assistants.

Two hundred dancers.

All were looking up at the pipes. When the rain begins to fall, then they will have to start dancing all of which had been well-rehearsed.

Director Gulfaam, wearing his rain-coat, was also looking up, while talking to cameraman Bhole Ram who was standing near his camera which was also 'wearing' a waterproof cover.

The engine of the Rain-Machine started with a great noise.

Director Gulfaam began the count-down, through his megaphone.

"Two minutes to go.

"One and a half minutes.

"One minute. All ready?

"Thirty seconds.

"Camera rolls!" The cameraman started his camera. "Rolling," he said through his megaphone.

"Twenty seconds.

"Ten seconds.

"Five seconds.

"Four seconds.

"Three seconds.

"Two seconds.

"One second.

"R-A-I-N!"

The voice of Director Gulfaam reverberated through the megaphone and the loud-speakers with great force—but there was no rain! Instead, two or three drops of muddy water fell on his rain-coat.

"Lights off!" thundered the cameraman. "Electrician! See what is wrong with the Rain-Machine."

"The Machine is all right. But the water in the tube-well seems to have dried up!" replied the man in-charge of the Rain-Machine.

The engine was switched off.

From the sky a streak of lightning flashed through the darkness of the night. Seconds later there was the peal of thunder.

Taking advantage of darkness, Parvati had been pulled into the Seth's tent.

It was pitch dark. But he didn't need even a torch-light.

His lips, burning with desire, found the mouth of Parvati.

But Parvati was a village-girl. There was considerable power in her youthful arms. She had only the *ghara* with her. She brought it down on the head of the Seth.

There was the sound of the pitcher breaking into pieces; for a second the unexpected impact of the earthenware stupefied the amorous Seth And Parvati was out of his grip. Meanwhile, there was a flash of lightning. For a moment the tent was illuminated by the flash. The Seth had lost his wig and his hairless polished head was seen, with a thin streak of blood!—a fearful and repulsive sight. The flash of lightning lasted for a second or two and then the tent was plunged in darkness. The peal of thunder was heard again. Simultaneously, there was a gust of wind through the open flap of the tent which took the Seth's wig to God knows where.

At that moment the Rain-Machine started.

But it was the Rain-Machine of God!

Director Gulfaam shouted through the megaphone.

"Lights! Camera roll! Playback start. Betaab...Aradhna...Everybody dance!"

Four or five hundred people—men, women and children—were dancing because Nature had started the Rain-Machine.

The rhythm of the dance became faster and faster—and ultimately Director Gulfaam and cameraman Bhole Ram also joined in the dance.

Only one man was not dancing. With a towel covering his bald pate, he was searching for his wig which was blown off by the gust of wind, and had now fallen in the commode!

(Translated from the Urdu by the Author).

by RAJA RAO

This is an extract from Raja Rao's most important novel to date, to be published next month, to which he devoted a decade. It is a metaphysical work rooted in Indian tradition, ideals and sensibility.

THE CHESSMASTER AND HIS MOVES

The telephone rang. It was the Rani Sahiba from London. She said she missed me, as if I were her eldest son. How could this be?' she asked and answered it herself. 'You must have been a son in my past life, and maybe Jaya's brother.' (I thought to myself, this she says either as a paradigm or a subterfuge. What if Jayalakshmi were my wife?) 'Everybody in the family, even Sitalakshmi and Padu, feel the same, though they would not say it in the same language,' added the good Rani Sahiba, her English halting, and she would bring in a Sanskrit or Hindi expression to replace the word she did not remember. Indeed the wonder was, I felt she was my mother the moment I saw her, though I never felt any ancient connection with the Raja Sahib. 'How could you?' she had said to me once in Calcutta, when she had come to visit her daughter. 'My husband is sold to money, to power. You, you are dharmic, dedicated to the Truth.' She saw me thus more than I was, maybe not so much for myself, but for Jayalakshmi. 'Come back to us soon,' said the Rani Sahiba, and added, as an after thought, 'Jaya sends you her love.' Her love indeed, I said to myself, angry, very angry, not at Jaya but with the Rani Sahiba. How can one send love when love only is all there is. You remember the good Diotima, the teacher of Socrates, had told him, Love loves love. Yes, that is it. It had no biological disgust, no Robert-seeking, no death wish, no eschatological anguish. Who was Jaya anyway? Who indeed? Did I know her?

When Suzanne and Michel returned, it was as if she were walking on bubbles, her footsteps were so light and free. Her face too was puckered in mischievous twists, and she remarked loudly: 'Oh, this Michel of yours, he never stops teasing.'

'Do I?' asked Michel looking very innocent, sneezing and snivelling.

'He says, imagine Andromaque making a potato soup, for an algorist as they might have said, in medieval times. How do you like that?'

'It is indeed funny, Michel, because we seem to live the past and the present simultaneously,' I said, 'without knowing which is which. Did the walls of Jericho crumble three thousand five hundred years before Christ and you, Ben Job, did you see the massacre of the Maccabees, and do you remember the Roman centurions at the gladiator displays when you were visiting Rome, and then again, in your slow upward move towards Polish Ukrainian frontier, now persecuted by the Slavs and by the Avors, did you Ben Hashim Levi, did you find your fibres so strengthened, you could laugh when you might weep or weep when you should laugh?—'

'Like Freud, you mean.'

'Yes, that modern Moses, he knew he was Moses himself, and his monotheism was an archaeological search for the bones and pots of the mind—all men talk to God on Mount Sinai—'

'Strange coming from you!'

'Why not, Michel? Truth knows no geography. Whether it is Mount Meru, the centre of the universe, and to be placed somewhere on the Mongol-China frontier, or Mount Sinai, the centre of the Judaic world, it matters little: We only speak to God from our Mount Sinai, and God says: I am that which I am, which means, you hear your own echo and think God with beard, and woolly white hair, riding on a chariot of clouds, says it. Oh no, Moses said to himself: I am that which I am, and thus preceded Socrates!

'And, brother, what were you doing then, on the Mongol steppes—Counting our cattle, racing horses, playing chess and seeking the land of the Sun. So that when I came to India, the same I, about the same time more or less, while you wandered down to Egypt and became

Ben Shem. I started singing hymns to the glory of the Sun, Savitur, and the Brahmins chant it to this day, as your people still remember the day of atonement. Thus my argument is: The past is the present, and we hear the karma of a million years, millions on millions of years—'

'And so?'

'A Jew is always a Jew—'

'And so?'

'And so, my friend, come nearer. I will whisper a secret to you.' And like when the head-Brahmin, after three days of the high and low of Vedic chants and of assiduous Agni-worship, the music stilled, the assembled guests thoughtful and inward turned, calls you to come nearer and amidst that momentous silence, puts his mouth to your ear and repeats the *Gayatri*, that great hymn on Savitur, to the young lad, at *upanayanam*, I said, in deliberate statement: 'Michel, the real dialogue in the world is not between the East and the West, but between, but between you and me, between the Brahmin and the Rabbi.' Michel closed his eyes, as if in reminiscence of something (or may be thought of Moses and the Sinai), and slowly opening them again, he remarked, 'You are probably right.'

'Historically,' I continued, 'of course I am right. How else could it be. The Greeks you understand are our little brothers, the Zoroastrians, a little older than them, and of course the Hittites may be just a little older than the Iranians again. You see it, as you read the Vedas and decipher which is the oldest, the most proto-Indo-European, and you immediately see, the non-dual the oldest. And thus the further you go away from the non-dualism—(that is: First there was the non-existent, etc., as one of the oldest Vedic texts say) the closer you come to non-history. Therefore let us, my friend, leave the Greeks, of whom the Western man is so proud, to us, the Indians. We would know how to deal with them. In fact, a great Jewish scholar justly remarked, the Greeks were Orientals.'

'But what about your Chinese?'

'They are the Asian Europeans—their mind works at the pragmatic, the horizontal level, like those of the Hebrews.'

'Why not, sir?'

'Why not, sir. Let us forget to what race we belong—we are all bastards. There are only two races of men: those that look the horizontal way, the way of infinity. And those that look vertically the creatures of dissolution, the zero way. The argument therefore, my friend is just this: Does the vertical—'

And here Suzanne intervened and asked: 'Do you want salt in the soup, or not?'

'There, there that's the horizontal way. Yes, please put some salt in. Your great philosopher Buber, the author of *I and Thou*, has already said it. The I exists because of the Thou.'

'You don't agree with him then?'

'How could anybody prove me—' I said sitting up, and laying my hand on my chest, proud. I was of course acting, and saw myself acting as man.

'The vertical dissolves, and in dissolving, like with Heisenberg, the particle jumps, beyond time, beyond space. That is also what the Buddhists say.'

'So, dissolution is creation—'

'And the horizontal—'

'The continuance, the continuance of what you suppose is, where it is not, for what is is just what is and hath no continuance.'

'Because—because?'

'Because continuance implies time and time as physics will tell you today is mental—'

'Thus, you say—'

'I say, the horizontal, the expression of the vertical, as in the park *d'enfant*, down at the Luxembourg, you could see, the balancing plank, must go up and come down—it cannot stay as infinity.' I stopped here and added, 'The expression cannot be the expressed. Which comes first?'

'The Brahmin or the Jew?' asked Michel, laughing.

'The answer is yours,' I said, and seating, laid myself down. Suzanne never knew what had happened. I gave her Christ back to the Jew, and took Andromaque away from her. The tragedy was complete. And so too the soup, if one could say. The soup was delicious. I had tears of gratitude flowing down my eyes. 'Oh, Suzanne,' I said, 'you have put so much love into it, O, *merci, merci*.'

'You are thankful for such small gestures of kindness,' she answered.

'You do not know what this soup represents. It is indeed the food of the gods. And thank you again.'

'By the way,' said Suzanne. 'Have you called Mireille, about your sister?'

'What about?'

'You, *monsieur*,' she teased, 'you

in your abstractions forget your sister is finally coming in three days, that is on Monday, and she needs a place to stay.'

'I am sorry, Suzanne, I thought you and Mireille were looking after that. Why not telephone to Mireille anyway. If she is not at home you can call Jean-Pierre at his office.'

So Suzanne called Mireille and had their feminine talk—about the accommodation for my sister, the new clothes Mireille had bought for her children, and the 'young man she was going with.' I supposed all this, as I heard just a phrase here and there. 'No, there is Michel Girome here. They are talking of Moses and all that.'

'Ask her, what's the arrangement for my sister.'

Suzanne turned towards me, and explained that my sister would stay for a few days with Mireille, 'to get acclimatized.' This suited me for where was I going to find an apartment big enough for my father and my sister. In Paris, it is so difficult to find any apartment even for the Parisians. A hundred thousand people, statistics said, change rooms everyday, with their babies and their babies' backsides' remains, as someone told me at the Institute. Thus Abbe Pierre and the fight against *bidonville*, Abbe Pierre, the Gandhi of the French, as somebody wrote. So where to go to find an apartment for my sister. And hotel was out of the question. The foreign exchange she got did not suffice even for a miserable hotel room. So, what were we going to do? And like a good Indian, I said: Let us see. For everything resolves itself one way or the other. Kurukshetra has always an end. The great Bhishma will lie on the bed of arrows, Dharmaraja will weep and yet make war, and Karna the bravest will be defeated.

And the hundred thousand dead will be revived by some sage like Bhagiratha who will, once again, bring the Ganges slowly down from Siva's head. 'The Seine there will resolve all problems,' I said to Suzanne and went back to Michel. He too ate his soup like a glutton. Our arguments had given us hunger.

'But,' said Suzanne, 'I must now go to Mama and give her her insulin injection.'

'Thank you, Suzanne. And tell your Mama I will come and see her as soon as I can get out of bed.'

'Don't you worry. She knows how to wait. "I have waited for your Shiv for twenty-five years," she always says. I could see Suzanne was only trying to affirm her own position. Of course, Michel was all right for an afternoon outing, to go and buy leeks at Madame Toussaints, but Shiv, that's a different order of things. He is something different from every Frenchman, every European. Isn't that so Mireille?

'Tell your mother, she will like my sister—even more.' This certainly disturbed Suzanne.

'Not a million Umas can make one Siva,' she remarked, trying to put on her hat.

'But you don't know my sister,' I replied.

'Oh, a woman knows from here, at the solar plexus, that is where we know. We know from our *ventre*,' she remarked, and started to go.

'I must also go,' said Michel. 'At the C.N.R.S. they will wonder what has happened to me.'

'Wait a little while,' pleaded Suzanne. 'And keep Shiv company. It is so rare for him to be ever so free from his beloved numbers. I think he should marry a number,' she added, as she walked towards the door.

'What number should he my bride?' I asked, laughing.

'I already know,' answered Suzanne. 'I have done some numerology. Your number is nine. So marry nine.'

'It's such a wonderful number, it is the last integer. So that the next number must have a zero. Hence nine is the harbinger of zero. Thus victory to nine, victory to the harbinger of Nirvana. Nine, the swallow that announces the spring.'

'And what is ten then?' asked Michel.

'The horizontal. From nine you could go back to zero, or go forward to infinity. Till nine then is India, and since numbers came from India, India is zero, one to nine—'

'And the holy land of Israel,' sang Michel, as though from a psalm.

'The holy land of Israel is—is the infinity. The Buddha always says for the endless, the infinite, as many sands as there are on the Ganges—*Ganga nre* etc.—but you could say, as many sands as there are on the deserts of Sinai—'

'So, the Buddha and Jew meet.'

'Of course. The Buddha started with suffering. So did the Jew. Moses had ten commandments, the Buddha had just eight. Moses talked of God, the Buddha of Dharma. When you start from man, my friend, you run down the road to infinity. Man plus is infinity. Man minus is zero. Thus till the last man is saved, no Jew will be saved. And the Buddha according to some is living in the Land of Bliss, in Sukhavati, waiting to attain Nirvana not only when all the men will have reached salvation, but all plants, birds. All creatures.'

'Then we are not so different, are we?' Michel asked to console himself.

'Alas, my friend, we are. Nagarajuna, the great Buddhist philosopher, the St. Aquinas of Buddhism, he went back to the Upanishadic non-duality, to *sunya*, to zero. And then came Shankara, whose only concern was—'

'Was what?'

'The Truth.' I was exhausted with so much talk. I lay myself back and closed my eyes as if to rest. Michel slowly rose, took his beret, and said, when he saw me open my eyes:

'So, what divides us, then?'

'God,' I answered. I had said everything. Michel, laughing remarked: 'You know I am an atheist.'

'So am I.'

'Thus, we are in agreement.'

'No. For somewhere you go towards St. Marx and his paradise. I do not even go towards my Gobi. The Chinese are building their atomic plants there. I stay in my Benares, in my mind. Where two streams meet, the Varuna and the Asi and dissolve one another, is Benares. Benares is where I am not.'

'Then who is there?'

'No one.'

'And nothing.'

'Yes. No-thing, *pas rien, mais pas des choses*,' I said, confirming my definition of the ultimate, 'not infinity, but the non-infinite and yet not the finite.'

'Oh, la la,' said Michel, throwing his beret in the air and catching it back. 'That's pure charabia.'

'Words, my friend, are not objects, they are pointers.'

'Pointers to what?'

'To meaning.'

'Then there are many meanings.'

'But the meaning behind meaning is what?' I asked boldly, sitting up again.

'I do not know,' said Michel.

'It is not the meaning of the thing—'

'But?'

'Meaning itself, that is Knowledge, *Jnana*. To know is only to illumine.'

'Illumine what?' asked Michel, serious and silent again.

'There is no what before illumination—'

'And after illumination, then?'

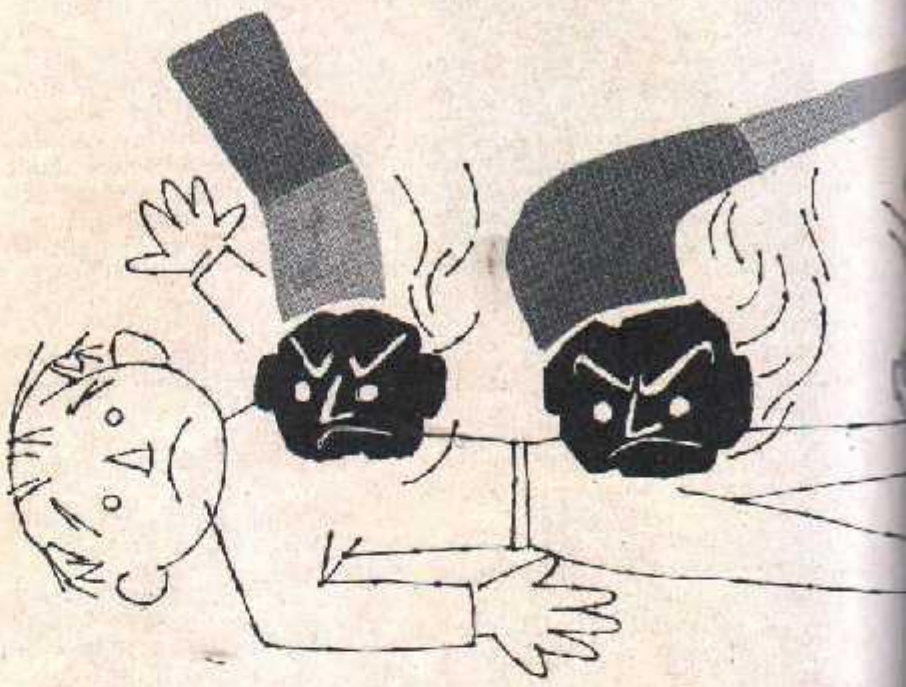
'There is only illumination,' I answered, and felt a great sense of peace. The Jew by his questioning had driven me to my Manasarovara. Drinking that sweet water, I fell asleep. And sleep itself, what is it but the Ganga water. Thus back again to: First there was water. *That* the mermanic kind, the pure alchemy, Faust never knew. Which explained their Hitler, and our Gandhi. Water just is—*ap*. 卐

TOBACCO

HEALTH

by Dr. D.B. BISHT

Is it we who smoke? Is it not rather the vampire of tobacco that smokes away our vitality? A veteran physician briefs us about this "Captain of Death" and how to ward it off.



The tale of tobacco is not only a tale of man's yearning for momentary pleasure leading to addiction, lifelong misery and often premature death, but interwoven in this tale are the tales of human intrigue, corporate power, exploitation and global hypocrisy.

It was Christopher Columbus (1451–1506), the Italian navigator, who first saw some Cubans smoking their pipes. However, in those civilizations the practice was perhaps confined to socio-cultural rituals and sometimes it was used to ward off certain illnesses.

In the 16th century, Jean Nicot, the French Ambassador to Lisbon, sent grounded tobacco powder to the Queen of France for the treatment of her migraine. And the active ingredient of tobacco, 'Nicotine', is known after him.

The story of Sir Walter Raleigh (1552–1618), soldier, explorer and historian, the favourite of Queen Elizabeth, who popularized smoking in Britain, is well-known. Perhaps he escaped being the first victim of smoking when King James himself is credited with the famous denouncement of smoking:

> "A custom loathsome to the eye,
> hateful to the nose,
> harmful to the brain,
> and dangerous to the lungs."

And yet, during the epidemic of plague in London, school boys at Eton had to smoke every morning to ward off plague!

Use of tobacco in different forms has depended largely on the fashions of the day. For example, during the eighteenth century, snuff almost replaced pipe and it was not uncommon to find delicately decorated snuff boxes adorning the pockets and purses of princes, priests and pirates.

It was during the Mughal times that hookah and chillum became the status symbols of the high society. To this day they adorn the houses of Zamindars and the ex-Chowdhris of rural India.

However, the harmful effects of smoking became obvious centuries ago. Ramazzani, the famous Italian physician, who is rightly known as the father of occupational health, warned his nation about the health hazards of smoking by identifying higher morbidity and mortality amongst the factory workers who were smokers. Unfortunately, his observations and recommendations were set aside by those who wielded social, economic and political power and perhaps this frustration led him to say, "Sweet smell of gain makes the smell of tobacco less perceptible!" Alas! the truth of the statement holds good even today.

It was the nineteenth century which saw the emergence of cigarettes as the main form of smoking. Perhaps the greatest boost to cigarette smoking was given by the stars and starlets of Hollywood. Humphry Bogart would have been a lesser hero for many but for the way he smoked a cigarette dangling between his lips. That he died of esophageal cancer as a result of smoking, did not make any difference to his audience.

THE TERRIBLE

It has now been well established that smoking and other forms of the use of tobacco are responsible for numerous kinds of human misery. Today the world produces about four trillions of cigarettes and the smokers spend 700 billion rupees, which incidentally is more than the entire layout of our national Sixth Five Year Plan. Many of the tobacco companies no doubt are earning more and more profits.

THE DANGERS:

Let me briefly enumerate the harmful effects of tobacco smoking.

1. It is known that a smoker has far lesser chances of enjoying good health and greater chances of dying prematurely, compared to a non-smoker. It is estimated that when a young man starts smoking at the age of twentyfive, he has shortened his life by approximately eight years when sixtyfive.
2. Smoking is responsible for crippling diseases such as chronic bronchitis and lung cancer.
3. Smoking is responsible for the vast increase in the cardiac deaths due to coronary heart diseases.
4. Tobacco is mostly responsible for the cancer of mouth, the commonest cancer in our country.
5. It has been found that cancers of all types are more common amongst smokers than among non-smokers.
6. Smoking vastly increases the vascular complications in women, particularly those who are on contraceptive pills.
7. It has been found that smoking during pregnancy lowers the weight of the newborn and is responsible for increased infantile mortality.
8. In certain occupations like mining, farming and in factories where fumes are produced, smoking either precipitates or promotes the occupational pulmonary diseases.

Smoking has been rightly named as the modern 'Captain of Death', particularly in the Western countries.

HARMFUL SUBSTANCES:

What is it in tobacco that is responsible for so many diseases? Tobacco leaf has about 1,400 known chemical ingredients. However, the harmful substances can be broadly classified into three groups.

1. Toxic substances in the tobacco smoke which have the capacity of either initiating or promoting cancer or both. These are mostly confined to the tar portion of the smoke.
2. Irritant gases which are mostly oxides of carbon, nitrogen, hydrogen and cyanide. Carbon monoxide is the most important of these.
3. Nicotine—this has the most powerful effect on brain and blood vessels and perhaps it is this substance which leads to dependence and addiction.

The contents of the individual substances largely depend upon the tobacco leaf and on the process of curing the tobacco.

Having realized that high tar and high nicotine are responsible for the higher morbidity due to tobacco smoking, many countries, particularly in the West, are having legislations wherein only low tar or low nicotine cigarettes are allowed to be manufactured and marketed.

Having realized that tobacco is the 'Captain of Death' and that the tobacco companies which promote smoking are the 'Merchants of Death', the World Health Organization had put its recommendations to the various governments of both the developed and developing countries.

The fourth World Congress of Smoking and Health was held in Stockholm in June 1979. It was attended by delegates from sixtyeight countries. It was at this conference that a clearer picture of smoking pattern as it exists in the world had emerged. It was identified that in developed countries various measures like education, legislations and a change in social and cultural behaviour of communities have contained the rising trend in the number of persons who smoked and in the amount of smoking as well. In India about seventyfive per cent of men in the North as well as South-East region were found to be smokers. In the West, however, only fifty per cent smoked. The form of smoking varied in each area. The North preferred chillum and hookah while South-East *chutta* and the West *bidi (World Smoking and Health*, Vol.5 No.1).

Unfortunately, in the developing countries, smoking habit was galloping at a very rapid rate. The young and the student communities in the developing countries of Asia and Africa together with the new-rich are increasingly taking to cigarettes. Besides, more and more women the world over are falling victims to this disastrous habit. There is a great need, therefore, to contain and curtail this evil spreading in an epidemic form.

In India, we have made it mandatory on the part of cigarette manufacturers to print the Statutory Warning: Cigarette smoking is injurious to health.

SMOKING AND HEALTH IN INDIA

*India is the third biggest producer of tobacco in the world with eighty per cent of the tobacco grown being consumed locally, mostly in traditional form (**bidi**, hookah, **chutta**, etc.). Tobacco chewing and the taking of snuff are also practised.*

*According to recent estimates, eighty thousand million cigarettes and 675 thousand million **bidis** are produced annually. The number of cigarettes produced per adult, which was one hundred in 1950, rose to one hundred and ninety in 1970 and remained at around that level in the 1970s. The number of **bidis** produced per adult, around a thousand in 1950, suddenly increased to fifteen hundred in 1976–77.*

*In the rural areas, various indigenous forms of smoking are practised. Cigarette smoking tends to predominate in the cities, particularly among white-collar workers. Urban blue-collar workers usually smoke **bidis**, although the younger ones prefer cigarettes. In men, the proportion of smokers shows both occupational and regional variation. Generally speaking, women do not smoke except in the lower socio-economic group. More than a third of male smokers take to smoking before age twenty.*

*Cigarette and **bidi** manufacturers advertise their products vigorously.*

Governmental action for smoking control comprises:

—legislation making health warnings compulsory on all cigarette packets;

—prohibition of smoking in buses, theatres, and cinemas;

—ban on juvenile smoking in some States.

—Smoking and Health in Asia
WHO Chronicle, 36(4): 156–159 (1982)

YOUNG PEOPLE AND SMOKING

A worldwide campaign is on to educate people about the serious health hazards (including heart attacks) caused by cigarette smoking. While more and more adults are quitting smoking, unfortunately, more students and children, especially girls, in advanced Western countries are taking to the bad habit. This is a matter of serious concern. By a study of the problem the reasons for young people taking to smoking have been ascertained.

Young people usually begin to face pressure to smoke between the ages of ten to fifteen. This is the age when children move away from their parents and families and get closer to their friends. This is also the time when they begin to rebel against adult authority and are willing to take more risks. Knowing this may help parents to understand some of the reasons why children start to smoke.

Some of the reasons are:

1. *A feeling that smoking is fashionable and will enable admission to higher strata of society.*
2. *Easy availability at home of smoking materials like cigarettes, lighters, ash-trays, etc*
3. *Exposure to smoking at home.*
4. *Smoking is a show-piece method of indicating virility.*
5. *Influence of advertising.*

A first step, therefore, to prevent young people from taking to smoking is that smoking should not be allowed at home either by the inmates or visitors. If this step is taken children will come to know that smoking will not be accepted by their parents or elders who may be living with them.

*Courtesy: **Heart News**, July, 1982.*

This is also to be printed with the advertisements and depicted in the hoardings.

HOW TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM:

The question arises—how should we proceed in the direction of combating this habit?

Medicalization of the problem and taking effective measures by the health-teams has not shown and is not likely to show the desirable results.

The problem, therefore, has to be tackled at the socio-economic and political levels. Unfortunately, many developing countries have neither appropriate legislations nor the means to enforce them even if such legislations were enacted. It is not surprising, therefore, that international companies are publicising private pressure advertisements to promote smoking in the developing countries and are making huge profits. On the other hand many developing countries depend upon tobacco leaf as one of the main sources of foreign currency earning.

India produced approximately 455.6 million kilos of tobacco from 428.2 thousand hectares in 1980–81 and plans are afoot to increase the production further.

If we realize that eighty per cent of the tobacco is consumed within the country then the onus of responsibility falls upon us and political leaders to take appropriate measures to see that this does not harm the health of the millions of our countrymen.

We shall have to adopt a national policy based on sound socio-economic foundations and take measures at different levels of governmental agencies with the departments of agriculture, social welfare, labour, health and finance and associate other national, social, cultural and religious voluntary organizations with it so that the evil of smoking and the use of tobacco can be controlled and perhaps eliminated totally to ensure better health for our coming generations.

ARTS

by Dr. SURESH DEY

The Ultimate Principle of Music

The story of music provides a fascinating perspective of the eternal struggle and aspiration of mankind to reach higher and higher levels of perfection in artistic creativity as well as in the integral realisation of the Supreme Reality. In the Indian philosophical context, Nāda Brahman is worshipped by Gods and men alike, as the life-energy of all beings, the highest sentience, the eternal bliss. Advaita Vedantins consider the world as a transformation of the Supreme Brahman. However, according to the philosophy of music, the ultimate Nāda or Nāda Brahman is the veritable foundation of the universe. It is the eternal Causal Sound, the continuing Power or Shakti which pervades and upholds the whole cosmos. It is no wonder that Beethoven regarded music as a revelation higher than all wisdom and philosophy.

Dr Arnold Bake, the renowned musicologist, has rightly observed that it is impossible to divorce Indian music from the whole structure of Indian culture and philosophy with which it is interwoven in a number of ways from the earliest times. A remarkable feature of Indian culture is its ability to integrate many different and seemingly divergent tendencies against the background of a unifying philosophical thought. It has been unanimously accepted by the great interpreters of Indian scriptures that, at the beginning of the creation of the universe, the luminous bud of mantras, starting from Omkāra, blossomed and created the fourteen worlds, which are the petals of its flower. It is the fragrance of its pollen which is Existence *(Sat)*, Consciousness *(Chit)*, Bliss *(Ānanda)* which fills the three worlds with eternal delight.

After the great dissolution (Mahāpralaya) Brahmā, the lotus-born, appeared in the centre of the thousand-petalled lotus which crowned the stem issuing from the

The three drawings are by the famous artist Gauranga Charan, following the classical description of the Ragas.

RAGA DEEPAK

When the light of the lamp was extinguished, in the darkness of the room the powerful person was desirous of dallying with the young girl. But the lustres of her crest jewel served as a light. This is Deepak Raga.

navel of Bhagavān Nārāyana, lying in His majestic form in the causal ocean. Thereafter, He meditated upon the creation of a universe suited to the age or time *(Kāla)* and became immersed in 'Samādhi' (highest yogic ecstasy), achieved through the yoga of meditation upon Nāda-Brahmanmayee. It was then that Veda, which is described as Shabda Brahman or Nāda Brahman, appeared of itself in the firmament of His heart, and, issuing out with His breath, incarnated and assumed four visible forms corresponding to Rik, Yajur, Sāma, and Atharva and stood before Him. After learning the principles of creation, preservation and destruction from the mouths of those incarnate Shrutis, Lord Brahmā set about His work of creating the phenomenal world.

In this holy backdrop of Indian culture, there is nothing strange in the fact that the *Sangeetaratnākara*, the famous musical treatise of the thirteenth century, begins with a detailed cosmogony, gradually narrowing its scope to the human body and the stages of pregnancy from month to month, before it gets down to what we should consider the subject of music proper. To the Indian people interested in deep contemplative study, music is not an isolated phenomenon, but one that is "directly and inextricably linked with philosophy and religion", and therefore it is of cosmic importance.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, while amplifying the verses of *Soma stavarāja* has described that the three worlds are but the dancing hall of Lord Shiva. The king of the great dancers is the Supreme Lord Himself. The audience, actors and the stage are evolved and ordered by the Supreme Lord from within His own Self in association with His own Shakti. Rabindranath Tagore naturally reflects upon this great hall of music (Sangeet, in the Indian context, consists of the three great arts of vocal music, instrumental music and dancing), while offering his prayers in his *Gitānjali:*

"I am here to sing thee songs.
In this hall of thine I have a corner seat.
In thy world I have no work to do; my useless
life can only break out in tunes without a purpose.

When the hour strikes for thy silent worship
at the dark temple of midnight, command me, my master,

RAGINI DHANASHRI

This beautiful girl in separation having a complexion like that of the green grass, having pale cheeks, is painting the portrait of her lord. Her breasts are washed by the flow of the tears from her eyes. This is Ragini Dhanashri.

to stand before thee to sing.
When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned, honour me, commanding my presence."

In the *Sangeetaratnākara* we find several illuminating flashes of the highest philosophy of life, before its author, Shārngadeva enters into the details of musicology. For example, on the origination of the human body, he has mentioned about the 'Linga Sharira' which is of the form of a configuration of the subtle elements, sense organs and vital breaths. The unborn Creator *(Aja)* is described as having created this world for the experience of the living beings. Dr. C. Kunhan Raja has appended his remarks in the footnotes of his English translation (of *Sangeetaratnakara* written in Sanskrit) saying that the doctrine propounded in this ambitious and memorable classic is that the world and man's life in it are not evils, though they may be the result of man's previous actions, described as "beginningless karmas" by Shārngadeva. Having got entangled in the cycle of life and death, the only method of release is to live through the course. Thus according to this commentator, Shārngadeva's conception of the world is more as means for man's emancipation than a dreadful net in which human beings are trapped.

While discussing about *Nāda, Shruti* and *Svara,* Shārngadeva takes the cue from the Tāntrik scholars, grammarian philosophers and the ancient musicologists. He has said that *Ātman,* desiring to speak or sing, stirs up the mind. The mind strikes the fire of *Prāna-Shakti* of the self abiding in the human body. Fire and Wind are the subtler constituents of the body, the earlier stages in the material evolution.

Thereafter, the wind abiding in the *Brahman-granthi,* rising along the upward paths, manifests the sound successively in the navel, the heart, the throat, the head and the mouth. *Brahman-granthi* is that subtle point in the body at which the two important *nādis,* Idā and Pingalā meet the Susumnā nādi. This has a very important role in the awakening of the somnolent (coiled up) Divine Energy which is well known as 'Kundalini Shakti', according to our Tantra scriptures. Nāda occupying the five vital positions of the human body assumes the five names respectively. In the navel, Nāda is very subtle *(atisuksma),* in the heart it is subtle *(suksma),* in the throat it is developed or manifest *(Pusta* or *Vyakta),* in the head it is undeveloped or unmanifest *(apusta* or *Avyakta),* in the mouth it is artificial *(Krirrima).*

According to our celebrated musicologists, 'Na' is the synonym of *Prāna,* or *Prānashakti* and 'Da' is the synonym of fire *Agni,* heat-energy or *tāpa shakti.* Nāda is produced by a holy conjunction of these two fundamental energies. In this symbolism fire or the heat-energy can be equated with *tapas* or *tapah-shakti,* which stands for the eternal yogic aspiration of mankind. It is the fire of *Suddhi* (inner purification and *tapasya* (askesis or penance) which leads to the eternal Sun of Truth *(Satya-Surya).* It is interesting to note that in slokas 126 and 127 of *Sangeetaratnākara, Prāna* has been equated with the Sun. *Prāna-Vāyu* or the vital air of the life-force is the intenser condition of *Ākāha* or ether. Nāda produced in the heart *(mandra),* in the throat *(madhya)* or in the head *(tāra)* has twenty two varieties. That means there are twenty two Shrutis in each of the three musical scales, 'Mandra', 'Madhya' and 'Tāra'. Each of these varieties of super-fine musical sound is called *Shruti* (microtone) since it is heard by the human beings (derived from the Sanskrit root *Shru,* to hear). These twenty two Shrutis are produced in each of the three positions (heart, throat and head) on account of twenty two subtle *nādis* in each of these three positions strung in different pitches. The Shrutis fall under the category of *Ahata Nāda*

because they are cognizable sound units belonging to the phenomenal world of ours, as against the *Anāhata Nāda* which is a highly subtle state of causal sound waiting for its manifestation.

The word *Vāk* connotes the idea of voice or sound and this sound manifests itself in four main aspects viz., *Parā* (Transcendental), *Kāraha* (Causal), *Suksma* (Subtle) and *Sthula* (Gross). According to Sir John Woodroffe, *Parā Vāk* is the causal stress which, in terms of *pratyaya* (mental apprehension), is the cosmic ideation (Sristi Kalpanā) of Isvara or the Supreme Divinity. *Pashyanti Vāk* is *Vāk* actually going forth as *Iksana* (Seeing), producing or manifesting as *suksma ... Madhyamā Vāk* or *Hiranyagarbha Shabda* is the *matrikā* state of *Shabda*, as it exists in man prior to its gross manifestation as the *Varnas* in spoken ordinary speech called *Vaikhari Vāk*. In the Rik Veda, Sarasvati (V.43.11) is called *Pāviravi* or daughter of Lightning, that is of the great *Vajra* which sustains the worlds.... and this, according to Sāyanāchārya is *Mādhyamiki Vāk*.

Thus the various treatises on music have described that when the current of vital air or *Prāna-Vāyu* comes in contact with the will power or *icchā-shakti*, there originates a vibration *(spandana)*, resulting in very subtle audible sound, which is called *Anāhata Nāda*. Then gradually it becomes grosser and grosser, and manifests at last through the vocal chord (or the musical instruments), and this is known as *Āhata Nāda*.

As regards *Anāhata Nāda*, it can be said that it relates to the *Mādhyamiki Vāk*, which, according to Swāmi Pratyagātmānanda Saraswati, is the "axis spanda" upon which all kinds of causal 'spanda' must revolve, whether it be for the process of evolution or involution... and, also the two other higher stages of *Vāk*, viz., *'Pashyanti'* and *Parā*. That is why it is usually described as unmanifested causal sound. Indian metaphysics of Sound asserts that the sound emanated from the monosyllabic musical mantra, OM (A..U..M) represents as nearly as possible that all-enveloping Harmony in the midst of the disharmony, dissonances and differences of the disjointed and discordant *'Vaikhari'* sounds of the universe which is a cauldron of immense varieties of sounds... and that it can also be heard provided one develops a yogic ear or extrasensory perception for the same. As a man can never see his own face except through a mirror and then, even only as a reflection, so also the *Pranava Mantra*, Omkāra which is the *Parā Shabda* and the *Parama Nāda*, can be heard only in echoes and not in original. Even this echo-perception is a matter of extraordinary grace which may be bestowed upon the sincere *'sādhaka'* by the All-merciful Nāda Brahman, depending upon the stage of *'sādhanā'* and *'samskāra'*.

RAGINI JAYATISHRI

Ragini Jayatishri with her swelling breasts having a golden complexion, with beautiful and expressive eyes is holding a Veena in her fair hands. The great Munis say that she is sung in the early hours of the morning.

Sound or the Word has three aspects, *shabda* (sound), *artha* (meaning) and *prutyaya* (cognition). There are numerous kinds of sound and each sound has a meaning, vibration and frequency. Sound is Energy and this Energy is both static and dynamic. There are numerous brain centres which produce different kinds of amplitude and frequencies. From these combinations, particular patterns of energy are produced, which, when condensed, take the form of gross matter. Thus, according to various saints like Swāmi Shivānanda and Swāmi Hariprēmānanda Saraswati, the whole *mantra shastra* is based on this Sound-principle. Those who are familiar with Albert Einstein's formula $E = mc^2$ will understand the implications more clearly. The Law of Conservation of Energy states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed. Energy can not only change from one form to another, but mass and energy too are interconvertible. AUM composed of three basic sound units is extensively believed to have supernatural powers, "quintessentially linked to the Divine". If sound is analysed somewhat like light, it is seen to consist of vibrations which are frequencies of energy radiated or transmitted plus resonance effects. Vibrations can play a crucial role in all biosystems. A sustained high C note on a violin can smash a glass. It has now been fairly established that music has growth effects on plants and therapeutic effects on man. All these show that mantric sound cannot be dismissed lightly.

According to the *Agama Shāstra*, Lord Nādatanu (Nādeshwara Shankar) is believed to have disclosed before His spiritual consort, Pārvati that of all Yogas 'Nādānusandhāna' is the best. According to the Muslim saints, the world evolved from Sound into form. The Holy Bible also says:

"In the beginning was
the word and the word
was
with God and the word
was God".

The Story of the sacred *lilā* between Lord Sri Krishna and Shri Rādhā and other Gopis of Vrindāvan has been very beautifully described in the Hindu scriptures and eulogised by the Vaisnava poets. When Lord Krishna, the Divine flute player, played his flute (representing the supreme Nāda), the Gopinis (representing the ordinary senses) forgot their husbands and homes (i.e. the external reality) and they danced around the charming flute-player with unbounded ecstasy, devotion and celestial love. Due to their sincere devotion and burning aspiration to be united with the *Parama Purusa*, the process of *Nādānusandhāna* started by the spiritual aspirants (represented by the Gopinis of Vrindāvan) was culminated and consummated in their holy communion with Lord Sri Krishna. Sri Aurobindo has said that generally all forms are symbols. "This body of ours is a symbol of our real being and every thing is a symbol of some higher reality." In this sense OM, the primordial Nāda is both a symbol as well as the highest manifestation of the Supreme Reality. In this context, the eternal aspiration of the human soul has been described very beautifully in the immortal epic *Savitri*:

"O Word, cry out the immortal litany...

O Sun-Word, thou shalt raise the earth-soul to Light
And bring down God into the lives of men..."

卐

Tagore was an unwearied champion of the aesthetic development of man. He called art the language of personality. This parable delicately puts forth a plea for the strange necessity—to create.

Idle, useless, he could never keep a job for long. But, oh, the endless whims and fancies!

In small wooden frames he would create lovely little shell patterns: a flight of birds; an uneven landscape, with cows grazing in the fields; a hillock with a fountain; or a lonely track lost in the faraway horizon.

In the family circle humiliation piled high. At times he himself resolved to get rid of his wayward ways. But fancy would not let him.

II

There are boys who neglect their studies during the whole year and yet manage to pass the examinations. So it was with our man.

All his life he had done nothing useful. And yet at the end of it he was told that he had to go to Heaven.

Even so Fate dogged him. By

by RABINDRANATH TAGORE

THE WRONG HEAVEN

mistake he was dumped in a part of Paradise meant for Busy Folks.

There all the time the men cried out: "No time to rest!" The women wailed: "Ah, there is so much to be done!" "Lord, how tired one feels!" So they moaned, all the while bathed in a secret glow of self-satisfaction. "After so much work one feels a little exhausted," that happy grouse was the only music to be heard.

Our born idler could find no place where he could fit in. He walked the streets absent-mindedly, only to hold up the traffic. When he spread his tunic it was only to be told that it was a cornfield and that seeds had already been sown and he had to move away. Always the misfit, the outsider.

III

Everyday a very, very busy girl used to come to the Heavenly Fountain to fetch water. Her feet ran along the road like the sharp notes of *a sitar*. Her hair had been done in a hasty knot, the loose locks fell across her brow, maybe to pry into the mystery of her eyes.

When the girl passed by, our little fellow happened to be there, silent like a tree by a waterfall.

Looking through the palace window a princess might feel pity for a roadside beggar. So it was with this girl. "Alas, have you nothing to do?" she asked in sad surprise.

"Well, here there is no time to do any work," answered the unemployed man with a sigh.

The girl did not understand. "Would you like to take some work off me?" she inquired.

"That's what I am here for."

"What work would you like to do?"

"Give me one of the pitchers that you are carrying to the fountain."

"What will you do with a pitcher—draw water?"

"No, I shall draw some patterns."

"Patterns? I really have no time to waste on patterns," replied the girl, a little annoyed.

But how long can a busy person hold out against an idler?

Everyday they met near the fountain and the request would be repeated: "Give me one of your pitchers. I shall draw some patterns on it."

At last she had to yield. The man had his way.

Soon a mystic maze of lines and colours spread all over the pitcher, rich and strange.

When it was completed, she took it up, turned it round and round. Finally, raising her eyebrows, she asked; "What does it *mean?*" "Oh, it means nothing," the man readily agreed.

The girl left.

But at night, when others had gone to bed, she, the silent one, got up, lighted the lamp and looked at the pitcher once again. She looked at it from all sides. This was the first time that she had come across something that had no meaning, no use.

Next day when she came to the fountain her feet had lost their wonted rapid run. She looked absent-minded, thinking without purpose, without meaning.

The fellow was still there.

"What do you want?" she asked in a tired voice.

"I want some work from you."

"What work?"

"If you allow, I shall weave a few coloured strings into a ribbon to bind your hair."

"What's the need for it?"

"None whatsoever, none at all," the man was quick to agree.

In the end the many-coloured ribbon was ready. And from then on she began to spend a great deal of her time before the mirror doing her hair. The work suffered, the hours passed.

IV

For the first time in that busy Heaven gaps appeared—gaps filled with tears and songs.

The Heavenly Elders were puzzled. Such a thing had never happened. They met in council.

The Heavenly Messenger who had brought the good-for-nothing man there confessed his mistake: "I have brought the wrong person to the right place."

The man was brought before the council.

"I am afraid," said the Chief of the Elders, "you have to go back to the world from where you came."

"I am willing," he answered, as he tied his satchel in which he kept his brushes and colours round his waist.

"I too will go with him," said the girl.

The Chief of the Elders felt totally lost.

This was the first time that something had happened that just did not make sense. 卐

(Translated from Bengali by SISIR KUMAR GHOSE)

by M.P. PANDIT

I have often wondered what is the element of truth in the innumerable Puranic legends about men being cast back into animal births either as a result of their own karma or because of some curse of an enraged god or Rishi. For we can be sure that behind all that is said and described in the ancient Puranas there is some core of truth somewhere, whatever may be the hyperbole or the embellishment indulged in to appeal to the popular mind.

Thus it is said that a royal sage Bharata, in spite of all the religious merit he had acquired, had to be born a deer for the simple reason that he came to conceive an inordinate attachment to a deer which he brought up as a foundling. A prince of the house of Sudas was, for no fault of his own, cursed by Vasishta to be born as an ogre eating human flesh. The curse was undeserved and it acted as a boomerang in as much as the man so condemned took his revenge by neatly eating up all the hundred sons of the sage. That is, however, another story. Now is it really possible for a being, a soul, who has arrived at the human level in Creation to go back, to regress in the scale of natural evolution? Or are all these accounts simply didactic stories to instil fear into credulous minds and keep men to the righteous path?

We are assured on good authority that the normal line of soul-development is upward. A soul that has once reached the human stage does not go back to a lower level, curse or no curse. It is after a series of countless births—over eighty lakhs, say the Tantras—that the soul is brought up to the human gradation and it is inconceivable that the economy of Nature could permit a sudden turn-back, a retrogression after such an aeonic labour. But Nature is vast and elastic in her operations and we cannot bind her to too rigid a logical course either. There may be deviations under exceptional conditions.

Sri Aurobindo concedes one or two possible conditions under which a human soul may take an animal birth. Discussing the question, he points out that for a soul in the animal order to make a transition to the human, means a conversion of consciousness, a conversion radical enough to enable it to inhabit a human tenement and answer to the demands of Nature at that level. Now it may happen that in some cases the conversion of consciousness has not been deep enough and the being, after a tentative probing embodiment in the human organism, may find that its conversion is not as complete as required to give it the needed security of tenure under the new conditions. In that case it may go back to its own habitat to perfect its change and qualify fully for a secure human assumption.

Another likely condition is when the being has certain strong animal propensities which stick to it even after leaving the body and will not be shed in the normal course. They demand a satisfaction of fulfilment in their own kind and it is under such circumstances that the soul or, more correctly, a part of its vital personality attaches itself to a proper animal form and exhausts itself. Thus one with excessive greed for food may cling to a pig, one with inordinate sexual desire to a goat, one with a strong streak of unsatiated cruelty to a hyena, and so on. In all cases there is a loose holding of the animal body by the soul or part of it, till the karma is worked out and the soul freed to proceed on its way to the place of rest.

Barring such cases, we do not envisage the possibility of a human soul being relegated to the animal birth in the normal course. So far it is entirely rational and satisfying to my intelligence. But there is another class of phenomena which has intrigued me.

And that is the tradition that *Mahapurushas*, highly evolved or even perfected beings, choose to take animal forms and roam on the earth. This is not just an old wives' tale. There is unimpeachable testimony to these happenings even in our modern age. No less an exalted spiritual figure than Sri Ramana Maharshi has testified to this fact more than once. During the days when he lived in the caves on the hill of Arunachala—long before the present Ashram was formed—wild beasts like tigers and leopards, untamed creatures like

MAN AND ANIMAL BIRTH

serpents and mongooses, were regular frequenters of that region. And if human visitors would take fright and seek to harm them, the Maharshi used to ask them to desist, saying that the beasts would do no harm if only they were left alone. And besides, he added significantly, there were many *Siddha Purushas* living on the hills who came to see him assuming those forms.

Or to take yet another instance. In his interesting biography of Yogiraj Gambhirnath, a remarkable Natha Yogi who closed his earthly career in 1917, Prof. Akshaya Kumar Banerjea—a knowledgeable writer with a keen philosophical mind—records in connection with animals one notable incident narrated by the Yogi long after it had taken place.

"The Yogiraj incidentally mentioned that they were not always ferocious creatures, but that sometimes saints with extraordinary yogic powers moved on earth in the shape of serpents, tigers, etc. Different saints might have different reasons for assuming such bodies, but it was a fact that they did so. He referred to an event which he experienced on the bank of the Narmada. In the course of his journey in that region one particular spot attracted him. He found an empty cottage there. He entered it and was absorbed in meditation. The next morning a big serpent of extraordinary nature appeared before him, fixed its gaze upon him for some time, and then respectfully crept round him and went away. The sight of the serpent produced an inexplicable spiritual effect upon his mind and he passed into the state of trance. The second morning also the same serpent appeared and behaved in the same way and he obtained the same experience. This was repeated on the third morning as well. On that day a *Brahmachari* arrived and told him that he was the permanent occupant of the cottage. Of course he was not displeased with him for his occupying of the cottage in his absence. In the course of conversation the *Brahmachari* informed him that an extraordinary *Mahatma* with spiritual attainments of a supremely high order was residing in that locality in the body of a serpent and that the *Brahmachari* had been dwelling in that cottage for twelve years in a prayerful and meditative mood with a view to having a darshan of the *Mahatma!*

"The Yogiraj told the disciples that this was not an exceptional incident and that there were many such *Mahatmas* dwelling in subhuman forms voluntarily or compulsorily for various reasons. He came across many such *Mahatmas*. He referred to his meeting some yogis living and moving in the guise of tigers."

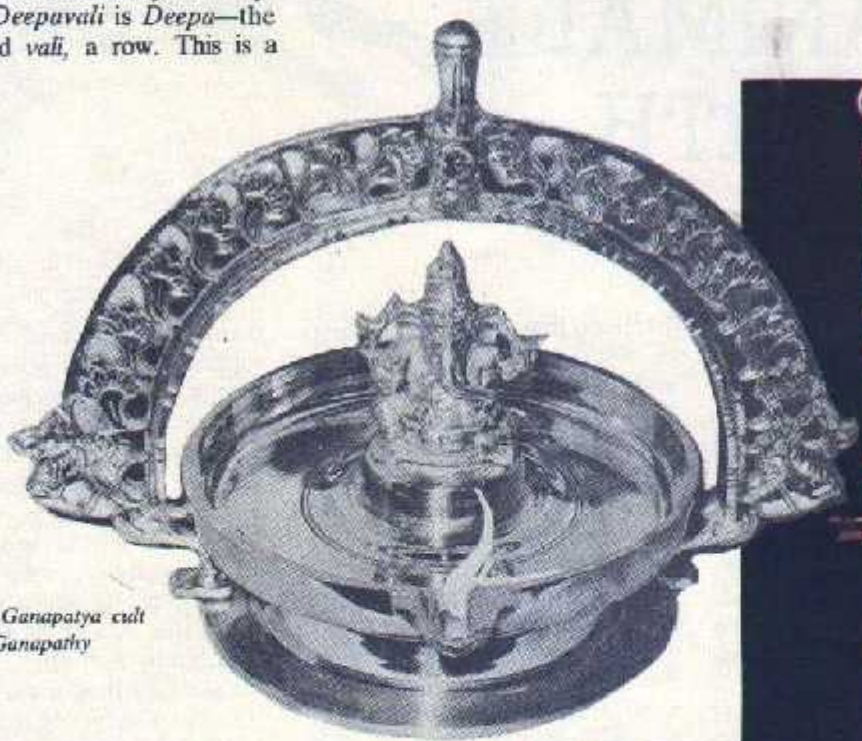
Many questions arise.

In the first place, could all these things be really possible? I asked this to the Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. She says they are quite possible. Possibility conceded, what are the impelling factors, reasons 'voluntary or compulsory'? Why should beings, who have reached the top of the human evolutionary ladder and are freed from all moorings in the lower Nature, choose or be chosen to take subhuman embodiments? Could it be that only so it is possible to effect radical changes in those orders of animal creation? Just as the Divine comes down or sends His emanations in human form to work out crucial turns in the evolutionary progression of man, are animal embodiments similarly chosen to consciously work out similar difficulties and effect in the animal life changes necessitated by the general advance in evolutionary Nature? Or could it be that certain developed beings are entrusted with different kingdoms in the animal creation? I do not know. 卐

DEEPAS

THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN INDIAN CULTURE

The *Deepa* or the lamp comes into its own during the Festival of Lights—*Deepavali* or *Diwali*, which is celebrated throughout our country. The etymon of *Deepavali* is *Deepa*—the lamp, and *vali*, a row. This is a four day festival and the principal deity of worship is Goddess Lakshmi—the goddess of enlightenment, also called Deepalakshmi. Every kind of lamp finds a place in this festival, since it is a sacred token of devotion, supplication and benediction.



Lamps of Ganapatya cult depicting Ganapathy

During Deepavali, homes and business establishments are lit with multicoloured lights which adorn every corner of the building. This duty is never neglected, for it is said that Goddess Lakshmi avoids all dwellings where there are no lights to welcome her.

There is an interesting legend about a poor family, which becomes rich overnight by the grace of Goddess Lakshmi.

A king had four daughters. The youngest of all incurred the wrath of her father by stating that she owed all her wealth to God and God alone. Whereas, the other three daughters, being worldly-wise, praised their father, and thus tickled his vanity. The king, infuriated by the youngest daughter's attitude, got her married to a poor man and banished the couple from his kingdom.

After a few days, the couple made their home in a nearby forest. The wife, on the very first day, enjoins her husband never to return home empty-handed. Every day, the poor husband managed to bring home something or the other. But, one day, he failed to get anything. Cursing his ill luck, he was trudging home when he saw a dead snake. Recollecting his wife's injunctions he took the dead snake home. The wife, angry with her hus-

Text and Photographs:
by DEVI KRISHNAN

band, threw away the snake.

Meanwhile, the king of that land, who was hunting in that forest, went for a bath in the nearby river, leaving his invaluable pearl necklace on the bank. Mistaking it for a long worm, a crow swooped down and picked up the necklace and flew away. When it came near the hut of the poor couple, it saw the dead snake. Dropping the pearl necklace near the hut, it picked up the dead snake and continued on its flight.

The loss of the necklace aggrieved the king and he made an announcement that a rich reward would be given to anyone who found and delivered the necklace to the king. The couple who had found the necklace took it to the king. But, instead of the reward, they requested the king to pass a decree forbidding all illuminations on the night of Deepavali throughout his kingdom, with the exception of their own hut.

The king, amused by their simple request, readily granted it. Out of the slender savings that they had, the wife managed to light *deepas* in their hut on the night of Deepavali. Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, sailing through the kingdom, was surprised to see the whole kingdom enveloped in darkness. However, to her joy, she found the lone hut in the forest, all illuminated. She entered the hut and blessed the couple. They became prosperous and remained rich all their life, while ill luck dogged for a whole year the king and his subjects who had not illuminated their houses with the *deepas* on Diwali.

The origin of the lamp can be traced back to the primitive man. One of the earliest discoveries of man by which his progress is measured is the discovery of fire, and fire is synonymous with light. Of course, long before this important discovery, there was the "eternal ball of fire" and its tremendous radiance as well as the permanent sources of illumination—the moon and the stars.

Infinite are the sources of light and many esoteric explanations have been offered about their origin and significance. Poets have sung about them, freely

Gajalakshmi Lamps—
Lamps of Vaishnava cult

indulging in fancy and allegory, while philosophers have drawn parallels between light and life, and between lamps and living beings.

The flaming sacrificial altar in the ashramas was the focus of faith during the Vedic times. It has witnessed great philosophic discussions which produced the *Brahmanas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Samhitas*. The cultural tradition of ancient India has thus its genesis in the spark of the *Yajna-Vadi*. This spark later assumed the form of a lamp.

The lamp is a favourite theme in ancient literature, folklore, and sculpture. The carvings at Amaravati and Borabudur depict various types of lamps. The lamp which lighted the face of Mahamaya, the Buddha's mother, is immortalised in stone in a scene known as the 'Dream Scene'.

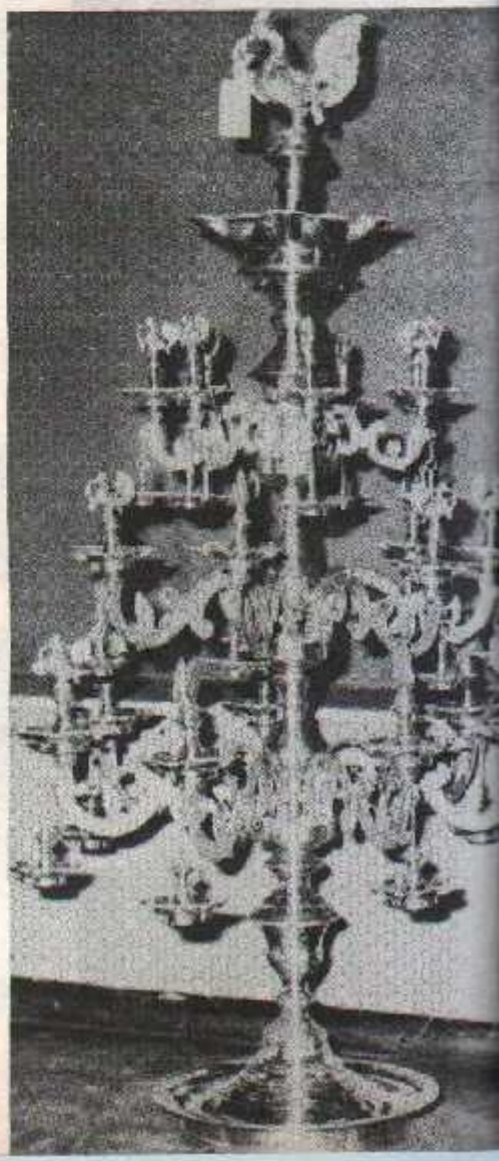
Our ancestors associated the lamp with almost all the important events and activities of man's transitory existence on earth. The birth of a child was greeted with a lamp and it was with it that warriors were given a send-off, and the triumphant armies, returning from the battle-field, were welcomed. It was the lamp that served as a companion to the departing souls. Being the medium by which the deity in the temple could be clearly seen, the lamp acquired a great spiritual and religious importance. Consequently, it became the mainstay of the artist too, for, once its august function was gratefully accepted it was but natural that he should try to adorn it with beauty and grace.

At first the traditional *deepas* in India were made of stone and shell. Later came the innovation of terracotta and metal lamps. Ramayana and Mahabharata have numerous references to lamps of gold and precious stones. To begin with, the body of the lamp was bowl-shaped. Later, emulating the decorations of various temples, the artist wrought lamps in the shape of trees, animals and birds.

The lamps in use at present can be said to belong to five main cults: In Saiva lamps, the motifs of *Nandi*, *Naga* and sometimes *Kirtimukha* are predominant. In Vaishnava lamps the emblems displayed are *Sankha*, *Chakra*, *Gada*, *Padma*, *Garuda* etc., which are closely connected with Lord Vishnu. As Lakshmi is the principal goddess of the Vaishnavas, one can see lavish craftsmanship on Gajalakshmi lamps. The lamps of the Ganapatya cult mostly represent Ganesha, and the Surya lamps are as magnificent as the Sun Temple at Konarak in Orissa. The Shaktas worship Shakti and the manifestations of Shakta lamps are Kali, Bhairavi etc.

Lamps can be divided into two distinct groups: the lamps used for common household purposes and the lamps meant for votive use. The lamps for household use were simple or elaborate, depending upon the financial status of the householder, and they were made in brass. Of the two types of household lamps, the *Vrindavan Deepas* were used in courtyards, while the *Samai Deepas* were meant for individual rooms. Sometimes, these lamps were made in the form of gods and goddesses, in sitting or standing poses, with a beak at the side for holding the wick.

Hanging lamps and chain lamps were usually fashioned in bird and beast motifs. The



Photographs from left: Arati Lamp; Deepa Lakshmi; Decorative lamps used in Temples.

elephant and the lion also seem to have vied with each other for the most prominent place on the lampstand. Sometimes, a lamp took the shape of a lady performing a beautiful dance *mudra*, the hair-style and the dress being beautifully done up. Siphon arrangements were sometimes introduced in hanging lamps which were specially designed for hanging from arches above the doors or windows and from roof-caves projecting into a courtyard.

The votive lamps are of different types. Small lamps used for everyday prayer are called *Niranjana* lamps, while lamps for offerings are called *Archana* lamps. Prayer lamps are called *Arati* lamps and the *Nanda Deepa* is the eternal lamp which illumines the inner sanctuary of the temple. Also used to adorn the inner sanctuary are the *Deepalakshmi* lamps shaped in the form of graceful women. Adorning the courtyard of the temple stands the *Deepa Stambha*, with its rows of light that enhance the temple atmosphere.

There are several designs in lamps meant for consecration. The picturesque motifs on these lamps are the *Kalia* and the *Pancharati*. The *arati* has about one to two hundred and fifty wicks fed by ghee. The symbolic meaning of *arati* is that the little flame represents the soul of the devotee seeking to be united with the Supreme Being. The prayers chanted to the accompaniment of *arati* are our invaluable cultural asset, which enrich our literature and music.

Another type of Arati Lamp

Apart from these lamps, there are the *Akasa Deepas* which are hung high on Deepavali day and are supposed to guide the visitors through the dark night. The *Dough* lamps which are specially used for worship on the *Amavasya* of the month of *Ashadha*, have a special significance as it is the day when one pays homage to all the lamps used in the household throughout the year.

The lamps of North India are mainly of brass, with a high perforated dome in geometrical patterns. When the lamp is lit at night, the designed perforations throw a pattern of light and shade on the ceiling, adding a mellowness to the atmosphere of the room. In the harems of the Mughal period it was the practice to have small baths filled with scented water and their brims decorated with a multitude of little lamps, covered with silken veils, as though to compete with the muslin-clad bathing beauties enjoying the bath. The gaiety of the entire scene was enhanced when the veiled damsels, playing with the lamps, threw them about as balls. From this sport it can be inferred that these lamps were gyroscopic in consideration.

The idea of lamp-dance was developed in Mathura, in Uttar Pradesh. After the celebrations of Holi, an exquisite folk dance, called *Charakala*, was performed for three consecutive days. A wooden cage housing a lamp is placed on top of a *Kalasa*. A beautiful girl, well-versed in dance, takes the urn-lamp on her head and with lighted lamps in her hand, performs a graceful dance, executing various intricate movements. The lamp-dance is supposed to be a ritual to hasten the arrival of spring.

Punjab has its own lamp-dance called *Jago*, performed during marriages. A sealed, bedecked, coloured urn carries pentagonal lamps on it. A *Suvasini* from the bridegroom's side carries it on her head, and the woman from the bride's side moves around her with rhythmical steps to the accompaniment of music. Gujarat too has its lamp-dance called *Garba*, performed during Diwali.

The offering of lamps has deep roots in Indian tradition. Pilgrims who visit holy places, make a point to light a lamp after sunset and to float it down the river in a bowl made of dry leaf. In Benaras, it is usually done during Diwali, and it is a wonderful sight to see the lamps carried on the bosom of the dark waters.

During times of danger and difficulty the aborigines too offer a lamp to their deity. The lamps offered by them are always out of the ordinary. Specially beautiful are the lamps lit during the Festival of Lights, which set the tribal settlements aglow in golden hue.

Not only in rituals, but also in medicine lamps play an important role. Indian medical science tells us that in the room in which a child is born, a lamp should be so placed that its light is reflected from the mother's face on to the child's.

The *Kamasutra* which gives details of making a bride beautiful on the bridal night, describes how the bridal chamber should be suffused in a soft, tranquillising glow.

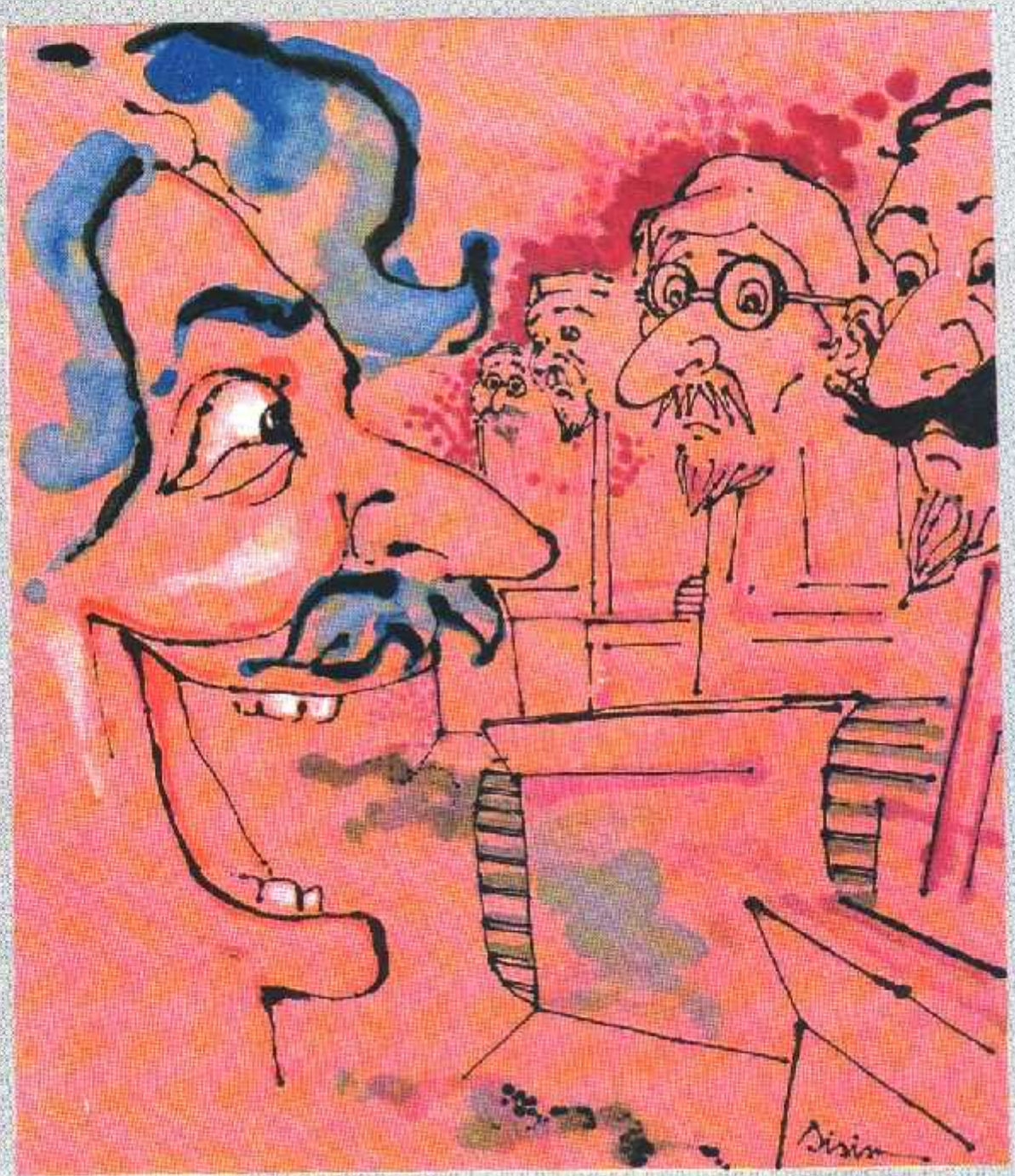
There is also a system of reading omens from lamps. Coloured tongues of flame indicate danger and loss of wealth, a dying flame portends destruction, a white flame indicates war, and a black flame indicates death.

The *Deepa Sastra* lays down the rules of lighting a lamp. It also prescribes how and when ghee should be poured and what type of wick is to be used. The significance of *deepa* is so deeply rooted in our life that it has become by itself a science cum art in Indian culture.

A NOVELLA

by MANOJ DAS

BULLDOZERS



Spring had come to the town. Ravi learnt about the event from a quarter-page advertisement in the newspaper announcing the arrival of the season's garments in the leading departmental store of the town.

He looked at the old banian tree outside the window. It stood sprinkled with tender sunbeams. Its tiny sprouts rose upward like a thousand green flames.

Only a year ago the banian tree recorded a greater impact of the spring. There was then a cluster of trees forming an ever-green fraternity and continuously swapping birds among themselves. During the last spring they had even brought on loan a pair or so of cuckoos from some forest.

The trees had been felled, one after another, giving way to a "Military" Non-Vegetarian Hotel, a drug store, and a "Yoga and Massage" parlour.

The disappearance of the trees had coincided with the dissolution of Ravi's several cherished dreams.

But the banian tree right behind the Roy Sadan had survived, as had Ravi's dream of a home for himself.

And his dream had just got a boost. Geeta had discovered that her grandpa had left her a fortune of nine thousand rupees. Over the year Ravi himself had saved a thousand. One could certainly afford to dream of a home with a total of ten thousand rupees safely deposited in the city's central post office.

Although the memory of his home in a faraway village licked away by flood often haunted him, he nurtured no specific urge for owning a new home until a few months ago. But once the urge had been generated, the Sadan had begun to look alien to him.

To be appointed as the secretary-cum-librarian of Roy Sadan or, to be accurate, Roy-Digamvari Sanskruti-Sadan-Pathagar—the Roys being its founders and Digamvari, a variation of Kali, their family deity—at a salary of rupees two hundred a month—was no mean achievement when one remembered how many graduates and Master's degree holders kept on knocking vainly on the doors of over-populated offices. He had managed to save almost fifty per cent of his salary, although that had meant living under-nourished, using the pair of sandals sparingly, and managing with only two sets of clothes.

He could have earned a few more chips through journalism. The editor of *Simhanad*, a local daily, had proposed to appoint him as a reporter for the functions taking place at the Sadan. But he forfeited the chance when, at a press conference convened by the local Women's Service Society to meet the visiting president of the newly formed "I.A.S. Officers' Wives' Association", he asked, imitating the flare and form of the veterans in the profession, "Well, Madam, can the country look upon your association as the precursor of such future bodies as the I.A.S. Officers' Husbands' or Mothers-in-law's Association?"

Ravi had only desired to impress the editor of the *Simhanad*. But his question proved a wet blanket to the enthusiasm of that noble tribe of wives. The editor did not repeat his offer.

The year had wrought remarkable changes in the Sadan. The auditorium had been renovated and the number of books in the library had gone up. New wings, including a dormitory and guest-rooms had been added.

The only portion of the Sadan left unaltered was the room Ravi occupied. It was on the upper floor, adjoining the library. Its small balcony jutting out towards the meadow once overlooked a small pool abounding in frogs. In his early days, when he would slowly fall asleep while browsing through a book, the croaking frogs would take over the command of his receding consciousness from the learned author. Consequently he had developed respect for these harmless creatures. Once in a while a bright big frog with protruding eyes came hopping into the hall and Ravi saw nothing amiss in it. In fact, it looked like a dignified bespectacled member of the audience.

But the pool had been filled up, destroying the frogs or driving them to an uncertain destiny.

The banian tree looked remorseful at the death of the pool. Its reflection in the water used to add so much to its personality!

The frogs were inseparably associated with the very first meeting that had taken place in the Sadan under Ravi's supervision.

It was a quiet evening. A hand-pulled rickshaw stopped before the Sadan. The old man to emerge from it won Ravi's respect almost instantly.

The gentleman scanned Ravi from foot to head. Men of that hoary generation did not just begin talking to a stranger without first regarding him carefully.

"You're Ravi, are you? A message for you," the gentleman announced solemnly. The slip he brought bore an instruction from Roy Sahib, the Managing Trustee of the Sadan, to allow Shri Rabindra Mohan Das, "the venerable teacher of countless asses whom he changed into famous men," to use the hall for an evening, free of charge.

Dasji fixed the date and then surveyed the hall.

"It is to hold a condolence meeting for the noble soul, Pranmohan, you know! Do you think one hundred and fifty chairs will suffice? Or should we be ready with, say, fifty more?" Dasji looked at Ravi, eager to enrol his collaboration in his enterprise.

Ravi tried to recollect if he had heard of the late noble soul.

"Thousands must have grown enlightened by Pranmohan's letters to the editors. Some of his letters could have bred revolutions on a more fertile soil. But when it comes to organising a condolence for him, it must be a lonely myself to do it," Dasji observed with anguish while leaving the Sadan.

Ravi felt awfully guilty, partly for his ignorance of the great letter-to-the-editor-writer, and partly for his personal share in the ungrateful conduct of the public.

"I am at your disposal, Sir. Please tell me what is to be done and it will be done!" said Ravi assuringly. "And, I've no doubt that the elite of the town will make up for their lapse by turning out in their hundreds."

"In that case should we not be ready with fifty or a hundred more chairs?" Dasji's face was bright and his voice vibrant.

The sudden surge of enthusiasm in Dasji was transmitted to his walking stick which he raised high in an unsuccessful bid to dislodge a pigeon settled on the portrait of Roy Bahadur Vikramsingh Roy, Roy Sahib's grandfather.

"I did a wise thing by requesting Prof. Prem Naik to act as the chief speaker, didn't I? What a speaker our Prem is! A volcano of chaste idioms. You have heard him, haven't you?"

"I'm afraid, I haven't." Ravi was apologetic.

"You ought to hear him then. He is teaching English

at the Govt. College. But, do you know?—students from the two private colleges sneak into his class for the privilege of listening to him. He is only a lecturer, but he is universally known as Professor Prem! I wonder how long the local students will be able to enjoy the luxury of his teaching."

"Why, Sir, is he about to retire?"

Dasji laughed. "He has been a lecturer only for a year. He was of course well-known even as a student—the winner of the first prize in the inter-college debate. The thing is, he is ambitious. He is not likely to rest until he has bagged a greater trophy for his talent—I mean a more important position."

Next day Prof. Prem announced himself to Ravi. It was unexpected. Ravi felt honoured. Tall and smart, Prem sported a girlish smile and furrowed his way into others' attention. But his laughter gave Ravi a bizarre feeling.

"I would like to ascertain Pranmohan's position in relation to the great writers of his genre, beginning with Junius!"

Prem looked askance at Ravi for a lightning second—a look of contempt for Ravi's doubtless ignorance of Junius.

"Most of Pranmohan's letters, I understand, were published in dailies which we do not have filed in our library. But his earlier pieces—and Dasji describes them as his masterpieces—can be found in some old volumes of the *Weekly Lily*," Ravi informed the elegant scholar and, with some strenuous effort, dug out of the wooden shelves some moth-eaten volumes of the weekly.

But Prem would not touch them until Ravi had dusted them off. He then leaned over them and took hurried notes, looking at his watch the every other minute.

"May I borrow your umbrella?" he asked, casting a glance at the sky through the window. "It might rain."

Next moment he was on the road, waving the umbrella and signalling a rickshaw to halt.

Ravi spent a restless night. Ratan, the servant, was too young and weak to wield the long broom. Ravi took it upon himself to demolish the numerous spiders' webs spread under the roof and scare away the cockroaches and lizards from all over the walls. He tried each fan and light. He sat in all the chairs, one after another. To be on the safe side, he made Ratan clean the hundred chairs in reserve in the store-room.

Even then he felt a shiver whenever he remembered that four-line announcements about the meeting had appeared in two of the newspapers and Dasji had entrusted one of his old students with the task of cyclostyling a few hundred leaflets and distributing them. What if even a twentieth part of the total readership of the two papers turned up?

By noon a nervous Ravi had decided to pray to God to take charge of the situation.

It would have been indecent to ask Dasji to leave any money with him to buy a bouquet for the presidential table. He collected a bunch of flowers and crotons from Roy Sahib's garden and arranged them in his own tumbler.

The day had been cloudy from the start. Late in the afternoon it began to drizzle. That gave Ravi some courage. The weather should stand in the way of the crowd becoming unmanageable.

A hand-pulled rickshaw drew close to the steps of the hall. Ravi hurried out. The rickshaw-puller raised the curtain and Ravi was ready to help Dasji get down.

But the one to emerge was a young lady. She had brought a garland and a framed photograph of the late Pranmohan, wrapped in cloth.

"I am Shri Rabindra Mohan Das's grand-daughter, Geeta."

Ravi received the photograph and the garland and guided her into the hall.

"It is nice you came early. You can have a look at the arrangements and tell me frankly if anything has slipped off my mind. We have still an hour and a half. It should be all right if your grandfather arrives even at six. You know what they call Indian punctuality, don't you? I should not be surprised if half the audience doesn't turn up until half past six!" Ravi tried to be easy.

After a thoughtful pause he added, "I wish at least some one I know—I must confess I know very few in the town—arrives a little early so that I can brief him to second my proposal for Dasji to take the chair."

"But grandpa is not coming. He is down with fever since last night. The temperature is still on the rise. I should not have left him alone, but he compelled me to come here," explained Geeta.

Ravi's enthusiasm was dampened.

"I don't know how we are going to manage the business! Who will preside over the meeting? Who will speak? There is hardly any time left! Well, Geeta—I should perhaps address you as Geeta Devi—I hope you can make the introductory speech, throwing the platform open to speakers from the audience."

"I should swoon right away!" Geeta giggled with a touch of melancholy. "But grandpa has sent his written address. He has suggested that you ask Roy Sahib to preside. And he has asked me to request you or Prem Babu to read out his address."

I hope Roy Sahib comes on time," Ravi's tone betrayed nervousness. "And Prof. Prem Naik too. I had forgotten about him." He paced between the dais and the entrance, peeping at the street again and again.

"Prem Babu will come," Geeta said confidently. Ravi thought that he noticed a faint blush. But he was not sure.

The atmosphere was gloomy and the drizzle frequently changed into brief showers. From the hills beyond the town came rumblings of thunder.

Ravi was pacing up and down faster. At 6 P.M. he went out and stood under the arch at the entrance. At 6.15 he braved the drizzle and confronted a group of hurrying pedestrians and enquired if they were looking for the meeting place.

No, they were not.

TWO

At last, at 7 P.M. Ravi retreated into the hall and stammered out before an embarrassed Geeta who sat quiet in a chair in the first row, "I'm afraid, it has been a fiasco."

After a minute's awkward silence during which the sound of the rain grew prominent, Ravi observed again, "Isn't it rather surprising that even Prof. Prem Naik should fail to turn up?"

Geeta looked over her shoulder at the gate.

Ravi hit upon a diversion. "Do you know what I

think, Geeta, I mean, Geeta Devi? We can proceed with the programme. If people do not turn up, they are to blame. What on earth can prevent us from doing what we have decided to do?" Ravi sounded rebellious.

In a fit of zeal he climbed the dais.

"What do I care if there is no one else?" he demanded. His voice subdued the howling of the wind.

On Geeta's face sadness changed into surprise and then to a smile.

Ravi once touched Dasji's manuscript to his forehead and began reading aloud:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your choosing me to preside over this meeting called to pay homage to the memory of my dearest friend, Pranmohan, I thank you again for gathering in such a large number despite the unhelpful mood of nature.

"Brothers and sisters, this small man had anticipated your choice of him for the chair, his only qualification for the honour being his life-long association, a rare privilege for anyone, with that great soul to whose sacred memory we have gathered here to offer our tears.

"Would you believe, my friends, that I changed my heart into a rock so that it does not fail me while I make revelation after revelation? Look at me, friends, and tell me if I look like nursing any desire to live longer. I know, I shall depart soon, in fact as soon as my friend and mentor, Pranmohan, has been able to arrange a small berth for me in that unknown sphere where he now dwells. Ladies and gentlemen, believe me, I shall depart without a murmur, without any regret, when the call comes!

"You have known Pranmohan as the greatest letter-to-the-editor-writer of the age. How many journals—daily, weekly or monthly—were there in which he had not been published? How many topics were there upon which he had not thrown the splendour of his prudence?"

Ravi felt charmed by his own voice. For a moment he had had the delusion that numerous voices buzzed in warm appreciation of his speech. But he realised that they were the cordial croaking of the frogs who had taken position along the walls, hiding under the chairs.

But all was not delusion; there was Geeta to hear him with rapt attention, diverting her gaze from his face only when he looked at her.

He continued:

"Ladies and gentlemen! I ask you to harden your hearts so that you can bear the impact of the shockers I am going to explode. Ready? Take it: Can you imagine how many of Pranmohan's letters remained unpublished? I can see signs of disbelief and sadness in your eyes. Well, this is in fitness of things. Countrymen, brothers and sisters! Time has come for us to shed tears—of remorse and repentance. Come on, let us be sad, let us feel flabbergasted. I must put it on record that during his last days, if he wrote ten letters, only one saw the light of the day, that too, often abridged and censored. But, I assure you friends, the world would have been a far better place to live in had all his letters been published!

"Let me cite an instance to substantiate my point: At the height of the war in Vietnam he had proposed that a large fleet of planes fly crisscross over the battered land spraying liquid sedative into all her rivers, lakes, pools and wells. Let the warring parties be put to sleep—the sweet, sweet, sleep!

"Alas! Not one of the five dailies and weeklies to which we posted the letter—myself making out copies and affixing postage to them—proved sensible enough to publish it.

"There was a time when we two, seated in a hand-pulled rickshaw, would proceed to meet the editors—there were only three or four of them in those days and all of them gentlemen—and push the letters personally into their hands. We would follow it up by another round of visits. But we grew old and gone was our familiar rickshaw puller. How smart and fast was he! He should make a brilliant astronaut, if reborn.

"Here is yet another shocker, my friends: Pranmohan had evolved an astoundingly simple solution for the problem of youth-unrest. Even that received no publicity. But here are you at last—the people. And here am I to deliver his profound message, even if my action results in my arrest, for the ideal I am going to make public might transgress the current law."

Ravi paused and looked at Geeta. She looked positively scared.

"Pranmohan's message was that the only way—I assert—the only way to put an end to the youth-unrest was to reintroduce the custom of child-marriage. He meant it to be compulsory. Get your sons married while they are between the age 7 and 11 and your daughters between 1 and 5 and see for yourself how things change! By the time they are in the college, they won't be romancing about themselves: but would keep alert looking for fellow-students who would make suitable fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law for their offspring.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am ready to assert at the peak of my voice that had it been put into practice, it would radically change the situation and give the nation a new order of youth—absolutely fatherly and motherly.

"Pranmohan! My friend! Not only the newspapers failed to appreciate you, but, woe to me, even the very youth, worrying over whose future you got into the habit of drinking cups of coffee at night, hardly cared to know you!

"My dear friend, Pranmohan! It was an ill-omened moment, the other evening, when some Satanic planet presided over the destiny of the generation of the aged, that you were out for a stroll. A member of a group of young cyclists sporting an obscene hairdo and demoniac whiskers cut back from his cheeks, gave a vulgar nudge to a young female pedestrian and was escaping with his gang. But you, Pranmohan!—I am so proud of you, my friend—you sprang like a roaring lion and stretched out your arms determined to stop the rowdies.

"Like a solitary rock you stood against the flow of vulgarity! Had those young men stopped, you would have treated them to some kindly advice, or, maybe, led them to your residence and given a new turn to their life, inspiring them with a choice bunch of your old letters-to-the-editor!

"But, alas, far from applying their brakes, the cyclists gave you a rude push and sped away.

"You fell down. And what a fall that was, my friend! With you fell the sanctity of age, fell all that was good and godly in man!

"You took to bed, and a week later emerged an altogether different man. You who were the very synonym of patience and modesty, now, at the fag end of your life, stood up as the champion of a revolution!

To resist the impudence and tyranny of the youth, you gave the clarion call for a nation-wide awakening of the old. I still remember the evening when you dictated your letter on this theme, your face glowing like that of a messiah.

"But, pardon me, O departed spirit! And pardon me all of you, his admirers, if I confess that I refrained from posting that letter to any newspaper. I had lost faith in the editors.

"After that shocking blow from those rowdies, Pranmohan's condition marked a rapid deterioration. He was down with high fever. It was then that I bluffed him for the first time in my life; I told him that the manifesto was about to be flashed in all the papers. But its content had already leaked out and had caused an unprecedented stir. No longer was it necessary to convene a national conference of the aged as a prelude to the proposed direct action, for, the male youths had already grown panic-stricken. They ran for their lives the moment they saw any of the militant aged.

"I assured him further that under the direct supervision of the vigilant old, young ladies were now flitting along the roads as freely as butterflies. One of the original slogans coined by Pranmohan called for a united front between old men and young women.

"Pranmohan! How great was your happiness! With an angelic smile you confided to me that you had nothing for the youth but love. By and by you developed a faith that a delegation of the repentant youth would soon appear before you for tendering their apology. Indeed, were you not already throwing frequent glances at the road expecting them? At last, one rainy afternoon, upon a flock of buffaloes entering your compound, you suddenly concluded that the youth leaders had arrived, and told me, 'Das! Here they come, anxious to apologise. Should I be rude and refuse to budge? What is your advice?'

"I said that it won't be wise to yield so easily. They ought to roast in fire of repentance for some more time and Pranmohan should hide from their sight.

"Pranmohan! You were weak. Even then you toddled away, holding on to the wall. I discovered you crouching behind the well, after I had driven away the buffaloes. During the next week—that was to be your last week on the earth—you often sighed and said, 'They must have gone away terribly disappointed. I should have let them see me and obtain my pardon.'

"You told me, a day before your death, 'Das! If I have brought about a change of heart in the male youth, I should consider the achievement a fitting climax to my long career as a letter-to-the editor-writer. What do you say?' 'What doubt is there, my brother!' I replied. Then, after a pause, you said suddenly, 'And let this climax mark the end of my career.'

"Many years ago, Pranmohan, you had once threatened to stop writing letters. But I had succeeded in persuading you not to. This time I only sighed and kept quiet. You fixed your foggy eyes on me and asked, 'Das! Do you remember?' I nodded.

"Ladies and gentlemen, you must be dying to know what was it about which Pranmohan jogged my memory. Perhaps I ought to give it out for the sake of history, after all!

"And here is the untold story of Pranmohan's first inspiration to compose a letter to the editor.

"The road that is now flanked by rows of modern buildings was only a desolate stretch half a century ago. Not far from Pranmohan's lodge could be seen a long thatched roof accommodating a newly founded girl's school, with a charming young lady for its headmistress. Let us say, her name was Miss Mandakini.

You will excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, but decorum forbids me to disclose her real name.

"Pranmohan, who had married at nine and had become a widower at fourteen, developed in his heart, but mind you—only in his heart—a love for Mandakini. For a full year did he bear with the smouldering passion before he sat down to compose a love letter addressed to the lady. But the perfectionist that he was, he was far from satisfied with the essay.

"With the double purpose of maturing his hand at writing letters and bringing his name to Miss Mandakini's notice, he took an imaginative step. Those were days when a monstrous chap regularly stationed himself at the crossroads not far from the girl's school, earning his livelihood by castrating young bulls dragged to the spot. No wonder that the tender-hearted students and their teachers should receive repeated shocks at the heart-rending bellows from the horrified young bulls.

"Pranmohan wrote a letter to a now defunct Weekly, pointing out in no uncertain terms the utter impropriety of such a crude institution continuing to function in the neighbourhood of as delicate a thing as a girls' school.

"I can, at a slight effort, still revive in my memory the thrill we felt the day we saw the letter in print. We were sure that within hours of its publication the cruel castrator would be gone, bag and baggage.

"But, alas, he did not budge.

"However, far from losing heart, Pranmohan continued writing letters with a vengeance, exposing a variety of defects and diseases of the society. Months changed into years. He wrote numerous letters; but his first letter—the love letter to Miss Mandakini—remained incomplete. Time and again he made attempts at touching it up and posting it, but shyness stood in the way.

"Ten years later suddenly Miss Mandakini passed away. It was a bolt from the blue. God would not have grudged a little place in the most comfortable area of heaven for that sweet little soul. Said the disheartened Pranmohan, 'No more shall I write letters to the editors!' I consoled him, saying, 'My brother, who can say that Providence did not remove Miss Mandakini so that your letter-writing genius bloomed fully? If, consequent to your love, she had married you and bestowed upon you a family, could you continue in your mission? Don't you grieve, my brother, but march on undaunted on the solemn path you have chosen.

"Pranmohan agreed to comply with my request and I felt honoured.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I have hardly anything more to say once I have broadcast this precious secret of my beloved friend's life. I thank you again for the patient hearing you gave me. Come, let us observe a minute's silence praying for peace to the departed soul."

Ravi stood in grim silence for a minute before changing his position. The croaking of the frogs now sounded louder. There had been a brief though heavy shower. But it was slowing down and its rhythm was appreciated by a thousand crickets scattered in the grass around the hall.

Ravi removed Pranmohan's portrait from the chair and descended from the dais.

"You read it so well! I had forgotten that there was not a soul excepting myself listening to you," Geeta commented with a grateful smile. Her voice was vibrant.

Ravi blushed. "Indeed, there were moments when I slipped into the delusion that I was addressing a packed hall," he confessed.

They came out to the verandah. Geeta stretched her hand and felt the rain.

"I'm sorry, I can't give you an umbrella. Mine was taken away by Professor Prem!"

Geeta's face paled. Ravi had the strange feeling that he relished her discomfiture. But the feeling was instantly wiped by an impulse to help her.

"Wait, I'll call a rickshaw for you."

Ravi looked for Ratan. But Ratan lay coiled in a corner, asleep, a couple of cockroaches settled on the soiled linen covering him.

Ravi braved into the drizzle and soon returned with a rickshaw. Geeta got in. Ravi hurriedly locked the hall and said, "Can I allow you to go alone in this dark rainy night? Certainly not!" And he too got in.

They sat in silence, with Pranmohan's picture as the partition between them. A tattered screen made out of a gunny bag sprayed their faces while protecting them from the rain. The rickshaw-puller swore alternately against the rain-god and the city-fathers, while furiously pedalling through the gurgling little torrents.

And, to Ravi, his swearing sounded as sweet as a lullaby. Because of her hair-oil Geeta smelled like his mother. The cosy interior of the rickshaw reminded him of his lost home and many small dreams of childhood. Ravi closed his eyes in a peaceful drowse.

At the end of a blind alley, the rickshaw stopped close to the verandah of a tile-roofed house. The landlady came out with a lantern.

Geeta opened her small bag in a hurry. But Ravi stopped her. "I must return by the same vehicle. How, can you pay him off?" he said as he followed Geeta into, Dasji's room.

Dasji was tossing on the bed. But he became still when he saw Geeta and Ravi.

"Did everything go well?" he asked, his eyes fixed on Ravi.

"I should think so," stammered out Ravi.

"Prem read out my speech impressively, did he?"

"In fact, I read it. Prof. Prem failed to turn up." Ravi said without any hesitation.

Dasji resumed tossing.

THREE

Ravi could see a patch of blue straightaway from his bed. Its colour told him the time. Sunbeams gleamed through the clouds and he realised that it was already late in the morning.

It was a few minutes past eight when Ravi stood on the cracked brick-steps leading to the verandah of Prem's house. A telegram-courier who arrived simultaneously knocked on the door.

Prem emerged.

"O these wires, the bother!" he frowned and then, catching sight of Ravi, welcomed him in with a gratified smile.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't attend your function. I was about to step out. But then came the news!" Prem grew serious while uttering the last few words.

"News?"

"You seem surprised! I was under the impression that you are here, like so many others before you, to congratulate me!"

"I'm here for my umbrella," Ravi sounded quite mean to himself. "But what's the news, anyway?"

Prem passed a hurried glance on the telegrams and passed them on to Ravi.

One of the two messages bore just one word: "Congratulations". The other one read: "Hearty congratulations for your heroic entry into the Indian Administrative Service (Stop) We pray Almighty God to shower choicest blessings on your head and give your muscles strength to whitewash the face of the motherland and prove that this is as good as Indian Civil Service of British days of which my heaven-gone uncle was a member. Mrs. Singh and daughter Vasanti join me in greeting you. Kuver Singh."

"They are among those anxious to hand over their daughters to me." Prem laughed and took back the telegrams.

"But you've already decided on your bride, haven't you?"

"What is the hurry? Surely, I'm yet to sail by many a beautiful face!"

"No doubt, Premji, but I was under the impression that you have endeared yourself to Dasji and, pardon my frankness, his grand-daughter too, and that..."

"I had set my heart upon Geeta! Well, my friend, I must say that Geeta is a sweet girl and I should have chosen her for my spouse were I to end up in life in a goody goody position like that of a college teacher. But I propose to opt for the foreign service." Prem dramatically lowered his voice and added, "And a beautiful wife is a must for a career of that kind, you know!"

"Do you mean to say that Geeta is not beautiful?" Ravi demanded with some irritation.

"Tut, tut, my friend, I appreciate your agitation. There are beauties and beauties. Geeta should look charming as a nun, but quite hopeless as a diplomat's wife."

"I better make a move." Ravi was about to leave his seat.

"But I've something really important to tell you." Prem took Ravi's hand in his grip.

"Somehow I feel that you can be trusted. Would you mind telling Mr. Das, as politely as possible, that if at all he had any dream, sorry, and desire, to have me for his grandson-in-law, he would do good to forget it?"

"He is ill."

"Is he? I should call upon him. No, perhaps I should not. A meeting might prove embarrassing."

Ravi got his hand free rather rudely and stood up.

"Wait a minute. Here is your umbrella, but as your well-wisher let me tell you that it is time you bought a new one." Prem's lips curled, displaying a kind of smile that seemed quite familiar to Ravi. He soon remembered a picture in a book of fables. Prem's smile resembled the sneer of a certain wolf which had just hoodwinked a lamb.

A sense of despair overwhelmed Ravi as soon as he was at Dasji's residence, late in the afternoon. Twilight had settled down in the lane while the sun still shone over the greater part of the town. The two-room apartment Dasji had taken on rent had been carved out of a bigger house with the help of a worn-out bamboo partition.

"Come in, Prem, come in," shouted Dasji as soon as he saw Ravi.

"Dada! It is not Prem, but Ravi Babu of Roy Sadan." Geeta sounded a bit stern.

"Oh! But Ravi too is a nice young man. Well, Ravi, can you inform Prem about my sickness?" Dasji said imploringly. "He will come rushing."

"Do not worry, Dada, Ravi Babu will do the needful," Geeta assured the ailing old man, brushing his forehead softly with her fingers.

Half an hour later Dasji had fallen asleep. Geeta and Ravi sat on the verandah.

"I had decided to hold my peace on the subject, but one ought to be truthful, after all. I should have confided this to Dasji alone. But, I hope, you are strong and brave enough to stand the shock even better than Dasji. The unpleasant tiding can be broken to him later, part by part," Ravi completed the prelude and felt a bit relieved.

Geeta looked surprised and anxious. "What is it about, Ravi Babu? Did you by any chance meet the physician? Anything alarming about Dada?"

"Not at all, Geeta, rather Geeta Devi..."

"Please call me Geeta."

"Well, Geeta, it is not about your Dada, but yourself, I'm extremely sorry to say. It is unfortunate. But Prof. Prem has decided not to marry you," Ravi said in one breath, blushing to death in the process, and without looking at Geeta.

"It was none of my business to broach this subject had Prof. Prem not entrusted me with the task of passing on his unkind decision to your grandpa. The news reached him only last evening that he is among those selected for the I.A.S. and he who has a very high opinion of himself, now thinks that he deserves, I do not know how to put it..."

"A better bride."

"Well, it amounts to that though I know how foolish it is of him to think that you were not good enough. My heart breaks..."

"Please don't break it, Ravi Babu, it is entirely unnecessary," Geeta cut in. "No doubt he had given Dada the impression that he yearned to marry me. Dada never sought my view, but was overjoyed at the prospect and for the first and the last time in his life committed what he himself thought to be a sin. He approached an examiner—his ex-student—with a request to evaluate Prem's papers liberally. And do you know what the examiner did? He instantly increased the marks from 45 to 60, but to a delighted grandpa, he then whispered, 'Sir! I've complied with your request. I too have a request to make. Never in future repeat your pet advice that we ought to be truthful.' That was too hard a slap for Dada. I should not be surprised if that had something to do with his illness."

"I'm so sorry!"

"But I am happy that his illusion is broken."

"I have a question, if you don't mind. You never—what they say—loved him, or did you?" Ravi stole a look at her.

"I disliked him."

"Oh! I'm so happy," Ravi checked any further outburst and added, "though I don't know why!"

"I'm nevertheless a bit surprised. Prem used to lend me books, often with a letter inside, I never replied though. And he wrote such ringing phrases! What might be the source of his inspiration when he was positively untrue?"

"He wrote—what they say—love letters, did he?"

"He certainly meant them to be. By what other name

can one describe stuff like this?" Geeta instantly fetched a sample.

The letter addressed her as "Geeta dear" and after a sentimental prologue, went on to assert, "Yourself and myself will have to be somewhat mixed up together... I could not stop it if I wished; no one can stop it. Like the Ganges, it just keeps rolling along. Let it roll on full flood, inexorable, irresistible, benignant, to broader lands and better days."

Ravi suddenly stopped and looked around and asked with excitement, "Can I borrow this?" He laid his hand on Dasji's old bicycle.

Geeta was intrigued.

He was gone.

Dasji had woken up. Geeta went in. She had just finished giving him his medicine when Ravi reappeared, a bulky book in hand and a face beaming with triumph.

Geeta came out to the verandah.

"Look here, Geeta, you asked me if there was any other name for such stuff but 'love letter'. There is. Plagiarism. It was not Prof. Prem, but Sir Winston Churchill in the house of Commons on the 20th of August 1940, who said what you made me read a moment ago. All Prem did was to substitute 'yourself and myself' for the British Empire and the United States, and 'the Ganges' for the Mississippi! Luckily I had happened to read this only the other day. Now I have no hesitation in declaring that Prem Naik is a fraud, a blackguard, a snob, a loafer, a ..."

"Do not waste your vocabulary on him, Ravi Babu, I am thankful to Providence that the mischief is over."

Ravi stopped embarrassed.

Suddenly a loudspeaker began to blare from the opposite direction. The sound, coming like volleys from a cannon tore to pieces the tranquillity of the blind alley

"*Hum, hum,* we both are locked in a room!" announced the hero and the heroine agreed, raising jolly echoes of *hum hum.*

Dasji gave out a shriek of disgust. Ravi and Geeta rushed in. He was trying to plug his ears with his fingers.

"I will go and stop the noise," Ravi said confidently and made a dash into the road.

It was a newly opened club and the evening marked the beginning of a week-long cultural programme.

"*Hum, hum,* we both are locked in a room...cked in a room...cked in a room..."

The needle had got stuck to a curve on the record and half a line of the song was repeating for the umpteenth time. Nobody bothered.

His hands pressed to his ears, Ravi asked the first young man he saw wearing the look of a power that be to shut down the loud-speaker.

"Which song do you demand?" the young man asked, raising his voice over the noise.

Ravi pushed the young man aside and entered a wing-room and switched off the amplifier.

The young man blinked, wiping his snotty nose. Soon several members of his tribe popped up and demanded to know what caused the disturbing silence!

"Look here, my friends, to hear a song is your right, but others have a right not to hear it. Play the record by all means, but without the loudspeaker," Ravi was sure that he sounded reasonable.

"As if we haven't obtained a licence for the loudspeaker!"

"This is a cultural activity, dear!"

"If you don't love songs, you are hardly better than a brute!"

"And who are you, uncle, to push me aside—take recourse to violence?"

Ravi's fond hope that he would be able to persuade the group to mend its idea of culture got shattered. Meanwhile someone switched on the amplifier and raised the volume.

"Are you not doing far greater violence to us with your noise than I could have done to you with a slight push?" Ravi now tried to look menacing.

"Violence, eh? Tomorrow you will describe a lover's kiss as violence! And, sonny, who is violating the law?? We who are playing innocent love songs or you who are trying to prevent us from exercising our lawful right?"

"Push for push!"

They pushed Ravi down to the street.

FOUR

For a moment Ravi stood benumbed. With a reeling sensation still in his head, he started running towards the bazar. Before long he was inside a shop which rented out microphone-sets.

"Who sanctions the use of loudspeakers in public?" he queried.

"The Police Sahib's office; just a matter of formality."

"And how long can one use it at night?"

"Till 10 P.M. But we can go on. Who cares! Tell me when you need them. We supply gramophone and records free of charge. We have the latest hits, including *Hum, hum!*"

The Police Sahib's office was only a few blocks away.

"How do you issue blanket permissions for the use of loudspeakers without ascertaining whether the people around relish the noise or not? Perhaps someone is sick, someone is busy with his study, someone is keen on practising music himself! What right have you to stab at their moods?" he shouted at the solitary clerk sitting behind a counter.

The man offered him a printed form.

"What the hell do I do with this?"

The clerk reluctantly brought out his hearing aid and, plugging it to his ear, fixed his gaze on Ravi. Upon Ravi pouring out his grievance again, he advised him to go to the police station.

"Our business is to sanction the use, it is for them to control the use," he uttered in the manner of giving out one of creation's original secrets and took off his hearing aid before Ravi could ask anything more.

The police station was not far either. But the officer-in-charge was away at his residence, for a cup of tea.

"Go straight. Turn to your right, go left, then right, left, right, left. There you are, right in front of the boss's residence," informed a constable charitably.

Ravi followed the direction.

Upon the table was a jumble of files. And upon the jumble rocked a pair of booted legs. The boss sat sunk into his chair, hardly visible but for his face which he had focused on two subordinates standing at attention. His moustache resembled a catapult from which he was shooting forth words.

Suddenly a thousand geese began to cackle. It was the loudspeaker again and somewhere close by.

"Ah!" muttered the officer. He had already closed his eyes. "This is my favourite ditty. The chap knows how to croon."

He half looked at Ravi whose face was under shade, and ordered, "Run and tell those bastards to raise the volume!"

Ravi was in a funk.

"Has the municipality dumped all its night-soil in your ears? Run, I say!"

Ravi retraced his steps and was soon on the road. He could, however, hear a faint surprise emitted by the officer, "Who was that? Was he not our Constable Jhandoo?"

Ravi surveyed the area and realised that the officer's house was situated behind the very club he had come to complain against.

It was past ten at night when Ravi waddled up to Geeta's verandah. The blast from the club was still going strong and, through the window, he could see Dasji's agonised face.

Geeta came out dragging a chair along. She offered it to Ravi and sat down on a mat spread in a patch of moonlight.

They sat silent until the noise stopped. Geeta peeped in. "Dada has fallen asleep," she observed.

"Geeta! We must change to a new house, beyond the reach of these loudspeakers. There should be plenty of moonlight and an acre of jasmines instead of a lone plant."

Geeta giggled.

And that woke Ravi up to the madness in his reverie.

"I'm sorry. I mean we should find a new house for you."

"I was amused because you too were using ringing phrases."

"But, believe me, Geeta, I did not steal them from Sir Winston Churchill. In fact, I was hardly aware of what I was saying."

Geeta laughed again. Ravi realised that there was no irony in her laugh. He joined her.

"Man is mortal!" was the observation Roy Sahib made with a yawn when Ravi reported to him of Dasji's illness.

"You have stated such a great truth, Sir! At seventyfive Dasji might prove it any day," said Ravi.

"Seventyfive? In any other civilized country a teacher of life-long dedication like him would have been worshipped like a sacred bull. But in this country merit has no greater place than garbage."

Roy Sahib paused and continued, "Take my case. Although people continue to call me Roy Sahib, I abandoned that title conferred by the British Raj on the very day India became independent, on 15 August 1947—sending a shock-wave across the world of Roy Sahibs and Roy Bahadurs. Had the British continued—don't think that a man of my patriotic dispositions could really wish for it—I would have been knighted by this time. But did a national government ever think of giving me a native title for the beautiful British one I so readily sacrificed?"

"Pity, sir!" Ravi mumbled out wryly.

"And is it not for the sake of the country that I chose to remain *Ajanma Brahmachari*—a celibate right since birth?" The mystic in Roy Sahib seemed to have been aroused.

"Right since birth, sir?" Ravi asked, groping for some comment.

"But I nurse no grudge against the country for all my sacrifices going unsung. I live for others. You say that Dasji is seventyfive. Why not we give him a public reception?"

"An exciting idea, Sir!" Ravi was delighted.

Things moved fast. In Roy Sahib's mind one idea led to another a brighter one. At first he had visualised a modest reception for the venerable teacher on behalf of his old students. But soon the plan went through a sea-change. The general election was approaching. Roy Sahib suddenly began toying with the idea of being sponsored by the ruling party as a candidate for the Parliament and decided to use the occasion to appease an influential minister.

Dasji was convalescing when Ravi, blushing to the root of his ears, broke the news of the proposed public reception. He had the feeling that the news acted like a tonic in restoring Dasji to health, tiding him over the shock of Prem's treachery.

The function, of course, could not be held on Dasji's birthday, for the minister was busy. Ravi had to undergo the embarrassment of explaining the situation to Dasji.

Soon Roy Sahib's interest went over to the chief minister.

The date, naturally, had to be postponed twice more to suit the extremely busy leader's programme.

Roy Sahib had asked Ravi to write out a tribute to Dasji which Ravi had done with great care and after repeated consultations with the shy Geeta. But whenever he went to meet Roy Sahib with the script, he found him busy, surrounded by unfamiliar faces. At other times Roy Sahib looked strained and absent-minded. Ravi had to retreat time and again.

At last came the appointed day. Even then Ravi found no opportunity to talk to Roy Sahib. However, he took it upon himself to prepare Dasji for the function and to lead him to the hall.

Geeta brought out an old silk *dhoti* and a *kurta* which, under her care, had long withstood the attack of worms, and obliged her grandpa to put them on. Ravi made one more dash to Roy Sahib house to see if a car could be made available for Dasji's ceremonial arrival at the reception.

But it was neither possible to see Roy Sahib nor to talk to any of his new confidants. They were flitting and scuttling about all agog, for the chief minister, before attending the reception, was coming for tea with Roy Sahib.

Uniformed students led by their smart teachers from the school bearing Roy Sahib's father's name had started thronging the hall when Ravi left to fetch Dasji. Groups of employees of Roy Sahib's business concerns were also in the process of streaming in. The second half of the day had been declared a holiday for them.

The management of the function had been taken over by the Public Relations Department of the Government.

By the time Ravi returned with Dasji in a rickshaw, the hall was already packed to capacity except for a few seats in the first row reserved for the VIPs. Ravi led Dasji through the crowd which was scrambling for the small packets of peanuts Roy Sahib, in keeping with the tradition of his generosity, had arranged for the students.

Ravi showed Dasji a front seat, innocent of the eye-brows raised by the Public Relations Officer. He was flanked by press reporters none of whom had any reason to know him. They looked restive even though they had secured their peanut packets.

The boys at the back broke into applause. Those nearer to the passage stood up. The chief minister, all smiles, greeted the gathering with folded hands, judiciously alternating his look between the left and the right. Broad and unmistakable was the passage leading to the dais. Still Roy Sahib continued to show the minister the way using his right hand as an arrow, stooping as if in anticipation of a missile to hit his head.

The minister and his party, which included a rose-skinned Westerner, climbed the dais. The applause petered out. But the minister continued greeting the people a minute longer.

A group of school girls materialised on the stage and garlanded the minister, his secretary who sat close by him, Roy Sahib, the foreigner, as well as the dandy who was adjusting the microphone. The minister caught hold of one of the girls and patted her on the back paternally and the foreigner took a snap of the sweet scene. The girl's schoolmates applauded the event and a jolly spirit set in.

Ravi, sweating with anxiety, thought it was high time Dasji was ushered into the dais. But there was no vacant chair up there.

The framed tribute was still in his custody. He made bold to sneak into the dais in order to hand it over to Roy Sahib. But Roy Sahib had just walked up to the microphone and begun his address of welcome. It was awkward to keep standing behind the galaxy of guests. Ravi did not dare to place the tribute on the table upon which the minister's hands were busy crushing rose petals picked from the heap of garlands.

He placed it on Roy Sahib's chair and slipped back.

Roy Sahib made a brief speech expressing his profound gratefulness to the chief minister for whom this was the seventh engagement since his arrival in the town a few hours ago. Roy Sahib then called upon the luminous son of the land to enlighten the audience, and himself retired to his seat. With bated breath Ravi saw him quietly and absentmindedly removing the tribute to the floor and joining others in applauding the minister who stood up with an impressive show of taking up a challenge.

Of course, there would be a time when Dasji would be called up—most probably by the minister—Ravi assured himself.

The minister coughed and smiled, coughed again and smiled again, and asked the audience whether it would like him to speak in his mother-tongue or in English. Most of the people shouted out their votes in favour of the mother-tongue.

"But doesn't our constitution ask us to take special note of the sentiments of the minority? So, I resolve to speak in the English," said the beaming minister.

There was applause. Roy Sahib, who had perhaps missed the point, sat glum. But the minister leaned towards him. "Didn't you catch the joke?" he asked in a whisper. Roy Sahib made an effort at laughing. With a wink at all, the minister added, "And I will do so particularly for the august respected foreigner friend who is here amidst us, to, what d' you say, grace the occasion!"

The foreigner nodded in appreciation.

"Ladies and gentlemen, my dear brothers and sisters, my friends, colleagues, and my beloved sons and daughters, I will deliver my oration for the boys and girls, not for the large men and women, I mean the adults and elders. You will be wonderful to hear that I have not read very much English, but only sufficient for the enough. It is by my will power I speak it. I do mistakes and sins in English but all ladies and gentlemen do mistakes and sins! A month ago I was given a very very great congratulation by men and women of another town—crores of them—I mean thousands and hundreds. On the leaflets they printed T for C. I

became Thief Minister. I corrected. They were shameful and they printed again. This time they printed S for M. I became Chief Sinister. No time to correct! I laughed as you laugh now. Mistake, mistake everywhere. Man is mistake, machine is mistake—there was a mistake in my car today which lated me. World is mistake. God is mistake."

The audience roared with laughter. But the minister was in a philosophic mood.

"Who knew one day I will become Chief Minister?" he asked closing his left eye. Then he closed the right one but flashed open the left and provided the answer himself, "None but God in the sky. When I was arrested accused of seduction my family thought I will be massacred. Seduction was historic crime..."

The secretary leaned forward and whispered to the minister.

"Yes, yes, what d'you say, sedition." The minister corrected himself sportively and gave an account of the painful time he had lived through before the country became free and he found himself overnight turned into a man of destiny.

He concluded, "I am always happy to be amidst the masses and today I am very glad and very very happy to exchange views with you on this august occasion of...of...of..."

The secretary stood up and whispered again and the minister concluded, "of my visit."

The minister was already late for his next appointment and he and his entourage trooped out, amidst prolonged applause and a few catcalls and whistling.

"You wove such a spell!" Roy Sahib was heard complimenting the minister.

To Ravi the party looked like a huge bulldozer advancing upon him. He would have given out a scream had the illusion lasted a second longer.

Ravi threw his arms around Dasji and steered him into a sidelane. Ratan managed to secure a rickshaw. Ravi experienced the silence of a sepulchre as the rickshaw pushed through the jostling jolly crowd.

Geeta would have loved to attend the reception. But neither Dasji nor Ravi had proposed her accompanying them. She came running when the rickshaw slowed down. She helped Dasji get down, but was surprised that he carried not even a garland with him.

Inside Dasji's room Geeta surveyed their faces and did not dare to ask a thing. "I'll prepare tea for you." She excused herself.

No sooner had Geeta left the room than Ravi buried his face in his palms and broke down.

"It is a cruel cruel world and I'm so helpless! The other day I failed to stop a mere loudspeaker from tormenting you. And today I had to suffer your humiliation." Ravi swallowed a sob. "It was worse than cold-blooded murder, sir!"

"Calm down, boy. You won't understand how much I've gained from the experience." Dasji said reassuringly, relaxing in his bed and patting Ravi on the head. He sounded surprisingly calm.

"I don't understand, sir!" Ravi sounded bitter.

"Is it not a highly precious blow to my ego? Where is the escape from suffering as long as one expects praise or recognition from one's fellow beings for one's so-called achievements? Either one must grow wise enough to transcend such stupidity or providence must pull one up through shocks of disillusionment."

"The first thing I must do tomorrow is to resign my post at the Sadan," said Ravi, wiping his face.

"That would be unwise, my boy. The job provides you with a roof over your head. The salary you receive is not to be spurned considering the plight of millions in this country. What is more, the work is not exacting. You can devote yourself to some creative pursuit. But, yes, if you get a lecturership, that should be fine. And Ravi..."

"Sir?"

"Why not help Geeta to appear for her M.A.? Both of you can serve in some college and be reasonably comfortable in life."

Geeta had just come in with tea. Taken aback at her grandfather's suggestion, she was leaving in a hurry. But Dasji stopped her with a gesture.

"My intuition says that you should make a happy couple. You can take it from me, Ravi, any young man should be lucky to have Geeta for his wife. And listen, Geeta, Ravi is a gem among men."

They sat motionless listening to the wind's long monologue. Dasji fell asleep. An hour later Ravi took leave of Geeta in silence.

Dasji's death was discovered in the morning. The physician who examined the body said that he had died peacefully in sleep sometime around midnight.

FIVE

It was like an Arabian Night's genii transforming Roy Sadan. A number of rooms both in the ground and the upper floors which stood in their skeletons, roofless for years, were made ready for use in a few days.

The power that activated the genii was the Women's Service Society.

The WSS had invited a famous drama-troupe from the city for raising funds for a proposed orphanage, through charity shows. The troupe was to perform in the town for three nights and the WSS found to their dismay that the Town Hall had been booked by others.

A delegation of the WSS headed by its president, Mrs. Lall, the District Magistrate's wife, met Roy Sahib.

"You alone can save us!" said Mrs. Lall who on that occasion looked like the personification of a popular film song.

Roy Sahib looked thrilled as well as nervous. He lowered his head and said in a poignant tone befitting the saviour of damsels in distress. "If you need my life, I shall gladly take it out and give you." He made a gesture of taking out something from his breast pocket.

Mrs. Lall's eyes, which never took anything short of a complete conquest, glittered like mother-of-pearl buttons.

"Why do you fear when I am here?" was Roy Sahib's final message.

It was sheer negligence that had left the building incomplete. The large fund for the institution that Roy Sahib's father had deposited in the bank kept swelling.

Construction and reconstruction began on a war-footing. The hall remained closed to the public and the book-cases in the library were covered with tarpaulin. Ravi was enjoying a paid holiday. He devoted his time to searching for a small plot of land where to build a home. He and Geeta were never tired of discussing its location, size and shape.

Ravi had inherited Dasji's old bicycle. He explored every part of the town. And he surveyed every house

upon which his eyes fell. There were houses which appeared as crisp and light as packets of biscuits. There were others as mysterious as beehives.

And Lachman, the town's lone broker in the business, showed him half a dozen houses put up for sale. Ravi, of course, would reject most and approve only parts of the rest.

Ravi went to bed thinking of a house and saw houses of a variety of shape and size in dream. The experience was not always pleasant. Once he opened the door of his huge house and just stopped short of falling down headlong, for the house was floating on clouds. He woke up with a fearful palpitation of heart.

Another time, during a mid-day nap, he found himself in a dwelling that was a combination of a cave and a hut. Geeta went out to fetch water and suddenly Ravi remembered that the house was situated in a forest and, the very next moment, he could hear the roar of a tiger. He rushed out into the wood, crying out for Geeta at the peak of his voice. The tiger's roar was growing louder.

"Why are you growling, Babuji?" Ratan woke him up. But he could still hear the tiger's roar! It was the noise of a bulldozer at work below.

After the leading members of the WSS had push-sold most of the tickets, the remainder was deposited with Ravi for selling at the window-counter. Ravi, himself an orphan, felt inspired to work for the cause of an orphanage.

He had arranged to squeeze in an extra seat which he proposed to offer to Geeta. But she refused to come.

"I must remember Dada's last advice and devote all my time to preparing for my M.A. exams. I must qualify myself to help sustain the home you are going to build."

"Don't be so kind in your words, Geeta, the house is yours, with the money your Dada has left for you."

"I am glad that I will be yours with all my belongings."

"Words fail me, Geeta, but mine is an amazing luck. For a mere clerk to marry a girl like you..."

"I am marrying you, not a clerk."

"It is just incredible,," Ravi muttered and words indeed did fail him thereafter.

On the day of the dramatic performance Ravi sat for three hours at a stretch selling tickets. If he would have felt tired, the possibility was forestalled by Mrs. Lall suddenly appearing behind him and pouring into a plastic cup steaming tea and a liquid smile which mixed with the drink so well that Ravi could almost make out the improvement in its taste due to it. He could have sat through the whole night, but the last ticket had been sold an hour before the show began.

It was *Abhijnana Shakuntalam* that the troupe presented on the first night. That was followed by an Indian version of *As you like it*. The third night's presentation, exclusive for the members of the WSS, was a tragedy written by the troupe's director. The auditorium, full to capacity by elegantly dressed ladies, looked like a garden, beautiful and innocent, only a hundred times more fragrant.

But something strange began to happen at the third act. A giggle originated somewhere at the middle of the front row and like a summer fire in a thatched hamlet, swept across the entire auditorium.

The artistes looked perplexed. Not only was the director seen peeping through the wings, but also the sweet little heroine, supposed to be on the verge of death, blinked in an effort to find out if there was anything grossly wrong with her clothes. The actor playing the doctor grew so nervous that he examined her while the earpieces of his stethoscope still clung to his neck.

Before the hero's monologue—a masterly essay in melancholy—had ended, the dismayed director whistled the curtain drop.

And, after a final peal of laughter, the audience dispersed.

Mrs. Lall called Ravi aside. "The troupe is leaving early in the morning. Please see them off. Here is the packet containing their due. I have already sorted out things with them this afternoon," she said.

Ravi reported at her bungalow the next day in the evening. A few leading members of the WSS were taking leave of her.

"Did everything go all right with their departure?" asked Mrs. Lall as soon as she was alone with Ravi.

"Yes, madam, except that they hardly talked. They were somewhat sad. One thing they asked me again and again was what went wrong with their tragedy that the audience had such a mirthful time. But I could not not satisfy them," Ravi confessed.

Mrs. Lall looked depressed. She concentrated on the account.

Ravi was served with a cool drink. But he mustered courage to make it clear that his thirst would not be quenched unless he knew what the troupe had to depart without knowing.

"Well, then, you are the only one to ask me about it and you deserve an explanation. Would you believe? It was only a hanky, rather the absence of a hanky, that rocked the tragedy," Mrs. Lall observed and she went on unravelling the mystery.

She, like the others, knew that they were going to witness a grim tragedy. She had come prepared to sit glum and allow her emotions a couple of hours' strain. However she was not ready to make a nasal pronouncement of her reaction at the earliest opportunity. She sat solemnly calm while hankies of various hues were fast eclipsing the faces around her, sighs fast tending to grow into sobs as the cruel hand of fate began tearing the hero and the heroine apart.

"You know Miss Chamoli—don't you?—your Roy Sahib's niece, always bright in looks, dim in wit though, notorious for her readiness to imitate others. It is a pity that she looked upon me as a model. She had already unfurled her lovely hanky and was waiting for me to begin using mine.

"My eyes fell on her face and I read her impatience. A surge of laughter bubbling up from within shook me. Hurriedly I opened my vanity bag for my hanky. But, woe to me. I had forgotten it at home. Only if I had been in a saree! But alas, I was in salwar and kameej. There was nothing with which I could hide my face.

"Chamoli concluded that there was cause enough for a laugh and she at once made a desperate effort at laughing which, combined with her long readiness for weeping, gave her face a sort of weird look.

"Imagine my helplessness! I looked at a dear friend, who, I thought, should share my plight and that would tone down my predicament. But she was one of those blithe spirits who, once given to laughter, became uncontrollable. And she always contaminated others with her devastating mirth. To my horror, I soon found

the process at work!

"The drama was fast heading towards climax, with the hero and the heroine badly beaten by a hailstorm of misfortunes. But, instead of sympathising with them, we were behaving monstrously, as if gloating over their fate. How tragic for a tragedy! But the situation was beyond anybody's control. Some in the audience cackled because of their fear that not to do so would be unfashionable. But I wonder if most of us who were splitting our sides were not possessed by some mischievous spook!

"And you must have observed how fast the audience dispersed once the curtain dropped—nobody daring to tarry or enquire what caused the great explosion, each managing to throw a knowing smile at the others. I felt ashamed, guilty and undone. That explains why I too left in a hurry.

"But, believe me, back at home, I was on the verge of tears looking at the hanky—the villain of the episode—that lay on my dressing table."

SIX

It was February and there was a spurt in the elite's love for culture, for the Government grants to organisations had to be 'utilised' before the financial year ended in March.

The first to approach Roy Sahib for availing of the Sadan was the Government-sponsored Sahitya Sabha, which, for a change, had decided to hold a 'national seminar' away from the capital, in collaboration with the premier literary organisation of the state, Sanskriti Samsad.

The secretary of the Sabha and his Personal Assistant came to camp in the Sadan a fortnight before the seminar. A reception committee had been formed with Roy Sahib as the chairman and the editor of the Daily *Simhanad* as the secretary. To his great elation, Ravi had been made the office-secretary.

For Ravi it was the fulfilment of a dream. Who knew that a day would dawn when he would not only behold a hundred writers, but also mingle with them in a sense host them?

While the names of most of the invitees were quite familiar to him, he had visualised the luminous faces of some of them as they emerged from their works. He adored and loved them. Life was not going to be the same once he had come in personal contact with them.

The first batch of guests arrived at the crack of dawn two days before the function. The Samsad had provided Ravi with half a dozen volunteers, all budding local writers.

They were expecting Poet Tandav Gupta, the thundering voice of an assured revolution, and Dr. Verma, the distinguished critic, among a few less known invitees. While strolling on the station platform, a volunteer was reciting some inspiring lines from Tandav: "Beware of me, get off the rail, I come! I come!! the Frontier Mail!"

The Mail steamed in. The volunteers adjusted their badges and assumed stiff postures to make themselves conspicuous.

The gigantic Dr. Verma emerged like a buffalo from a herd of cattle. But it was not easy to spot the revolutionary poet. The volunteers ran along the platform, pausing before every alighting passenger who smacked remotely of revolution.

But, at last, when the poet was traced, the volunteers were shocked out of their wit. His face looked impressive in pictures, detached from the trunk. Now he was found to be a fork in trousers, with a spinning toy for a head. While greeting him, Ravi's hope in a future revolution got a shattering blow.

Dr. Verma gave a pat on Ravi's back. "My wife got down at the previous station at the demand of some of our ardent admirers. They will return her to me tomorrow. I hope, you have reserved a double room for me."

Dr. Verma got into the waiting van.

The poet who walked behind him was seen fuming. "Snob! The fellow should be bled white!" he was heard muttering, his eyes sunk deep into their sockets giving out spooky glows.

"The revolutionary poet is inspired," a volunteer remarked in a whisper.

But the poet had been drained of his spirit by the time he slumped into the van, looking like a lantern with wicks reduced to the minimum. He lighted a *bidi*.

By night the guest-rooms of the Sadan were full. Delegates who arrived the next day were accommodated in other bungalows and hotels. Although by then the entire staff of the Sahitya Sabha had arrived, Ravi had become the king-pin of the organisation. He had hardly any time to meet Geeta. Waves of experience overwhelmed him as he met the celebrities one after another. He never missed the profound significance that lay hidden behind the conduct and utterances of the delegates.

For example, he took note of the disarming frankness of Prof. Shah, who, when introduced by a friend to another delegate as one of the authorities on comparative Indian languages, corrected the friend in a tone of serene detachment, saying, "In fact, the only authority!"

And when he saw the famous author of historical novels who had so movingly described the fall of great

civilizations devoting fortyfive minutes to save with a dye the lustre of hair on a head that had begun to resemble the tortoise, he took it as a demonstration of the author's creative love for relics.

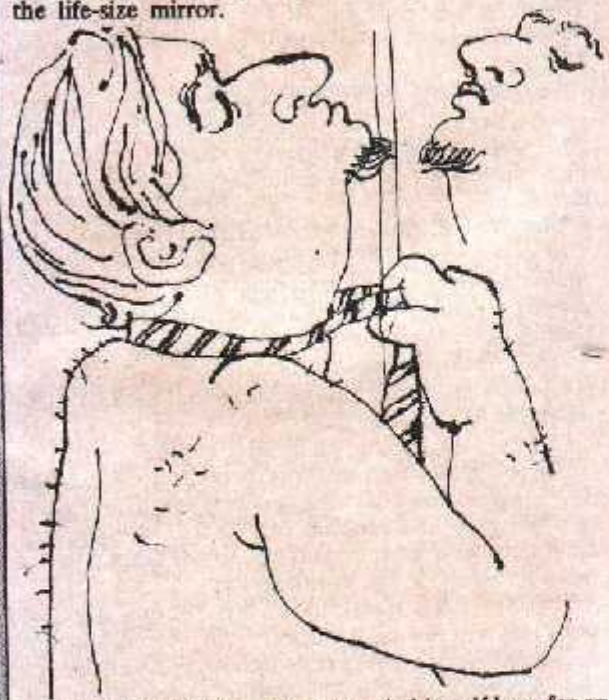
The toughest challenge to Ravi's capacity to see things in their proper light had come from Dr. Verma on the very day of his arrival. Evening had just set in. Dr. Verma had ordered for a particular soap and Ravi had it sent upstairs to his room through Ratan.

All the other guests were out. The little Ratan ran down the stairs, out of breath and bristling all over, the tooth-paste still in his hand.

"What is the matter, Ratan, as if you saw an ogre!"

Ratan nodded, confirming the guess.

Curious, Ravi went up and peeped into Dr. Verma's room. The great critic was in the nude but for a necktie which he was busy adjusting, surveying his reflection in the life-size mirror.



"A critic is a critic. He must strip himself bare for an unsparing scrutiny," Ravi explained the phenomenon to himself.

The inaugural session began well with music students of the girls' school presenting a well-rehearsed chorus. The serenity of the atmosphere was intensified by the microphone giving out ominous sounds like distant thunder-claps when the secretary of the reception committee rose to request the President of the Sahitya Sabha to take the chair. The president had evidently a genuine love for the chair towards which he made a bee-line, stumbling against two other chairs and toppling one—and unruffled by all that at the age of eighty.

The light on the dais was not adequate for the president's dimming eye-sight. But he had brought a torchlight which he focused on the sheaf of papers running into twenty foolscap pages and introduced the subject, "The role of literature in a changing society", by defining not only literature and changing society, but also the very concept of 'role'!

Ravi hoped that by the time the seminar concludes he would have been sufficiently enlightened to fulfil his own aspiration for becoming a writer in a small way.

While the president continued with his address, interrupted only by the ants in the garland, the audience grouped itself into twos and threes, the members leaning towards one another and talking. Ravi was charmed by their eagerness to discuss the issues raised by the president. And, while showing a fresh entrant into a chair, he heard a middle-aged lady asking her slim young neighbour who sat as charmingly packed as a perfume bottle, "Do you combine poetry with journalism as I do?" and the addressee replying with a look curled into ridicule, "I combine 'ell with' ell!"

Ravi was disappointed. He changed his station and heard a local old lady notorious for a loose tongue leaning forward and asking the brunette seated in the first row, pointing a finger at Dr. Verma who for some undisclosed reason occupied a seat on the dais, now clothed with a vengeance, "That is Verma—isn't he?—who leaves behind immortal tales of scandal wherever he goes! Devil knows what is there in that gorilla for we women to fall for him!"

"Don Juan is no myth, you know!" replied the young lady.

Ravi's face paled, for, he knew that the young lady was none other than Dr. Verma's wife.

"You are not exactly dying to hear those blah blah, are you?" Ravi was taken aback. The whisper was from the charming little lady who combined 'ell with 'ell.

"I desire to speak to you." She gave Ravi a delicate nudge. As they went out together, a number of delegates including the *bidi*—smoking revolutionary poet were seen gazing at them.

She did not stop on the verandah but got down and went into the dimly lighted lawn.

"I am Malli." She extended her hand. Ravi held it and gave it an awkward shake, feeling thrilled and guilty.

"My name is Ravi. I am Office-Secretary to the Reception Committee."

"A poet?"

"Well, no!"

"A dancer, I bet. Haven't I seen you in Uday Shankar's troupe?"

Ravi was uncertain if he should feel flattered, but he knew that he ought to disillusion her.

"These long-winding talks always tell on my nerves. I am having 'ell of a headache," she said, no more interested in Ravi's creative self.

"Should I fetch some medicine?" Ravi showed anxiety.

"A tin of cigarettes. This is my brand." She held out an empty tin.

Ravi felt depressed. If he looked like a poet or a member of Uday Shankar's troupe, he should have been entrusted with some more purposeful task.

By the time he returned with the cigarette tin the inaugural session had been concluded. The delegates moved about in clusters, the largest of them formed around Malli.

She stretched her hand without looking at Ravi and he was obliged to hand over the cigarette tin to her, embarrassed.

"Thanks. Pay you later," she chirped, cocking an eye-brow at him.

A young professor broke away from the cluster and anxiously enquired of Ravi, "She writes in English, does she? Fiction or poetry?"

Before Ravi had said anything, Malli announced her need of a matchbox. The young professor offered her his cigarette-lighter, saying, "I should translate some of your pieces into my language. They are so wonderful!"

Dr. Verma read his lead paper on the main theme of the seminar.

But he read little and spoke extempore for the greater part. It was, indeed, a treat to hear and see him speak. Each word he uttered was a bead of pearl and each sentence as well-knit as a necklace. His smiles and gestures served as excellent side-dishes to the food for thought he so generously and effortlessly whipped out. He stood like a magician and continued weaving such fascinating webs of ideas around himself that it was hard for Ravi to believe that only two days ago he stood with nothing but a necktie!

The lecture went on smoothly till a sparrow's nest in a hidden hollow of a beam got dislodged by the continuous running of the fan, resulting in a shower of grass and straw on the heads of the president and the speaker. A nervous young bird descended fluttering and settled down on the elaborate hairdo of a lady in the first row and refused to budge. There was a hilarious uproar and Dr. Verma looked crestfallen.

"Mr. President, this is a message from heaven, an *akash vani*, that you should cry a halt to Dr. Verma's rhetoric and allow others to speak," shouted Badal Singh, the novelist.

There was laughter again. Ravi was surprised that the learned audience had taken Dr. Verma's oration so lightly.

The president, while chewing his *pun*, gave a broad smile and tried to pacify the protester as well as the speaker. But Dr. Verma was trembling with rage and it proved to be an incredibly short process for the very personification of suavity to be reduced to a grinning ghost. He snapped his folder and muttered something, but luckily he had moved away from the microphone. Ravi, however, could clearly hear a couple of four-letter words flowing from the very lips which only a minute ago, poured pearls of wisdom.

It was Badal Singh's turn to speak.

"Dr. Verma quoted Aristotle to tell us that man is a social animal. If Dr. Verma is a specimen, we can safely conclude that the more social one was the more of an animal one was. Badal Singh chuckled.

There was a thunderous laughter from one section of the audience and angry protests from another.

The president stood up with an effort. "Calm down, ladies and gentlemen," he said. "On behalf of Aristotle I can assure the seminar that the great Greek's idea behind that famous statement was quite different. Mr. Singh! Will you please withdraw your childish remark?"

"Gladly, Mr. President, provided Dr. Verma withdraws his beastly attack on me which he carries on with a missionary zeal through various publications," said Badal Singh.

"We are not here to consider someone's private grievance," shouted one of Dr. Verma's friends

"I have made my grievance public," shouted back Singh.

Pandemonium broke out. Unable to bear it, Ravi headed towards the door. Mrs. Verma was coming in. Ravi stepped aside, but she too stepped to the same side. Then they moved simultaneously in the other direction.

Mrs. Verma tittered. Ravi laughed nervously.

"Do you know Freud's observation on this human tendency of a person stepping aside in the same direction as the other person until finally both stop facing each other?" asked Mrs. Verma.

"No." Ravi was apologetic.

"Concealed erotic motive under the mask of awkwardness!!"

"I beg your pardon, madam, I merely..."

"Never mind. We are not responsible for what that naughty Jew observed!" she said with a twinkle of deep understanding and waddled into the hall, swinging her vanity bag in a graceful rhythm, and if Ravi was not mistaken, very softly whistling too.

Till then Ravi almost pitied Mrs. Verma. He had been told that she was a student of Dr. Verma and that the middle-aged professor, a widower, had beguiled her into marrying him. Now Ravi's idea about her changed so suddenly that its impact was staggering.

SEVEN

"Most of our fiction claiming to reflect the social change is trash. The society claimed to be real is moonshine, the yarn the authors spin is rotten," someone asserted to the accompaniment of shouts and counter-shouts of "Hear! Hear!" and "Never! Never!"

Two or three muncipal workers who were clearing a ditch nearby had been intrigued by the hullabaloo and were straining their necks to peep in.

"What is this fight about, Babuji?" the elderly one of them asked Ravi, who had come out to the verandah.

"They are discussing fiction, that is to say, novels and stories. Or tales—so far as you are concerned."

"Tales, you say, Babuji? But tales are tales. Why should these gentlemen come to blows over them?" dended the man.

"But there are tales and tales. Some writers do not write well. They must be told!"

"If one could write better or sing better, do you believe he won't do that? What use taking him to task?

Of course, you learned folks know better!"

The man led his gang away.

The third day was to be devoted to contemporary poetry and criticism in the context of the social change. But the proceedings ran into rough weather almost from the start. The main speaker was Prof. Imroj who wrote in English. As soon as he said, "You all know, I am a surrealist poet," someone observed in a grim voice, "No, we don't!"

Prof. Imroj, however, did not care and continued in a high-flown style, often fixing a knowing look as though on an invisible audience suspended under the roof which appreciated him better. But as soon as he finished, Mishra, a critic, asserted point blank that so far as poetry is concerned one could not write it in any language but his mother-tongue. "It would be different if under some unusual circumstance English had become someone's language from his infancy. But you have circulated your bio-data. Yours was not. Hence your poetry is fakery and you have no right to speak on Indian poetry."

"How then are my poems published abroad?" Imroj fumbled out a challenge.

"Let me tell you how. You often put down a word without knowing its exact connotation. The reader in the West is intrigued. He instantly imagines a mystic significance in the use. There! You have hoodwinked him," insisted Mishra.

"Whatever be the language, if the inspiration chooses to visit me through that medium..."

Tandav Gupta, the revolutionary poet, scrambled to his feet and hurled away his half burnt *bidi*, and interrupted Imroj, "You cannot deceive us with such claptraps. I have been a poet for twentyfive years and all I have known is agitation!"

"You mean, you have never known what is inspiration?" asked a baffled poet.

"Who said I haven't? I have known that to be a bourgeois cliche to smother reason to death!" hollered Tandav, making a chop in the air with his pen.

"Hear! Hear!" a small colony of his *bidi*-smoking local followers cheered him.

Several delegates sprang to their feet. Strong words were suitably accompanied by menacing gestures.

The situation was getting out of control. The president who was chewing the cud of his *pan* signalled Ravi to come near him. Ravi obeyed. The president's mouth, however, was full of red liquid and when he spoke raising his chin high so that the water did not spill out, all Ravi could hear was the gurgle of rice boiling and see what looked like a miniature slaughter house. The kind president understood Ravi's plight. He relieved himself in a highly original way hiding his act from the audience, and whispered, "Arrange the lunch as soon as possible."

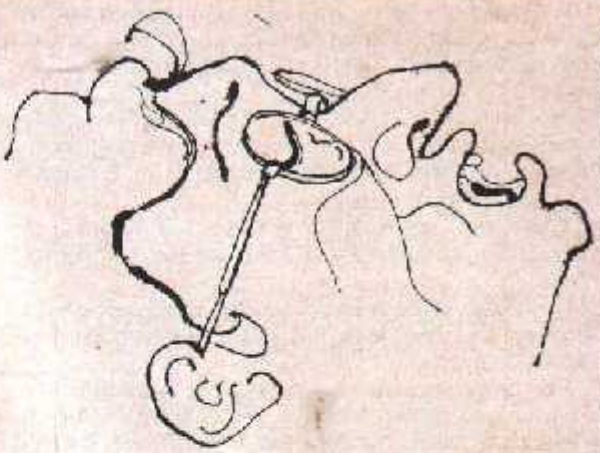
Calm returned unexpectedly. The vivacious Miss Malli had taken her stand on the dais.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" she said in a crunchy style, "I have been hearing fourteen different languages since yesterday."

Brows were raised, for the business had been carried on in English only.

"I mean fourteen different English languages!" Malli exploded the suspense.

The bewildered delegates soon found their voices and cheered the lady. The climate took a turn for the better.



"Tandav insists that there is no inspiration, but agitation. It is either inspiration, or agitation. I say, why not steer clear of both the words? Let us call it X. But since the simple X smacks of maths, why not we call it X-piration?"

There were some cheering yells. Even Tandav Gupta sat resigned to her frivolity.

"Speaking of surrealism, we all have in us a bit of the surrealist, quite a big chunk of it belonging to our president. While climbing the dais I saw such a sublime surrealistic act of his which, I bet, neither Breton nor Dali could have imagined. They had managed to disfigure Mona Lisa by adding a pair of moustache to her face. Our president, no doubt under the supreme surrealistic X-piration, divested the vase of the flowers and deposited his sputum in it." Malli bowed to the president and bowed out of the dais.

The stormy applause and titter were still on when she sought Ravi out and said, "I must leave in a few minutes. Will you please arrange for my T.A. immediately?"

The president seemed too willing to give the necessary sanction. The accountant took Malli's signature on a bill form and paid her up.

It was not until the accountant had begun paying others' bills at night that the furore was to be made. Who had invited Malli? Neither the Sabha nor its collaborator, the Samsad. The president, too considerate towards his accountant, blamed Ravi for having obtained his sanction for the payment. The accountant, full of respect for the president, did the same. Ravi proposed to make good the loss. The matter, however, was not pursued.

Lunch was announced. Ravi came out to the open. It was a calm and clouded noon. Inside the stormy hall Ravi had forgotten that there was a world outside quite unaffected by what the delegates resolved about the fate and future of inspiration. The cool breeze, a gaggle of geese led by a carefree boy, a ruminating cow, a covey of wavering patridge, were unusually beautiful and reassuring.

The valedictory session in the evening was well attended, graced by the state's minister for cultural affairs and his wife—the latter the author of a hard-cover book on Indian cookery.

It was for Roy Sahib, as the chairman of the reception committee, to propose the vote of thanks. He read out his address drafted by the Sabha's secretary.

The microphone failed while he was in the final part of his address. But it started functioning just when he had finished and taken a step back, almost inviting him to say a few words extempore.

"Before I sit down, I would like to refer to someone's comment that the writers were not conducting themselves as brothers. I say, what are they if not brothers? Are they brother-in-laws?"

There was laughter. Roy Sahib felt inspired to repeat, "That is exactly what I ask, are they brother-in-laws?"

Roy Sahib made several *namastes* in acknowledging the applause and took his seat. The function was declared over.

Roy Sahib spent some time bidding farewell to the minister and taking leave of the delegates some of whom congratulated him, saying, "We will ever cherish in our memory your remarkable epigram—what are we if not brothers, brother-in-laws?"

Roy Sahib bared his teeth with humility.

Because of the ministerial couple visit a special set of vases, a table-cloth and a flask had been brought from Roy Sahib's mansion. Ravi carried them to Roy Sahib's car. But Roy Sahib asked him to get in.

"So, all is well that ends well! Well, well, very well," Roy Sahib mused, "You worked very hard, I hear. That is like a good son of a good father. How did you like the valedictory function?"

"It went off well, sir!"

"Hm. I mean, my speech. How did it go? They were all amused! Some of them shook hands with me with so much love that my hand is aching!"

"I liked your speech, sir, except that..."

The car had reached Roy Sahib's house. Roy Sahib led Ravi into his study.

"What is it that you disliked in my speech?" he demanded.

"I disliked nothing, sir, but you should have said brothers-in-law rather than brother-in-laws!"

"Should have I?" Roy Sahib grew extremely grave. "Pull a dictionary and see!"

There were varieties of dictionaries arranged in two rows. Ravi opened a popular one.

"It does not mention the plural of the word, sir."

"That only means that the plural of the word should be made in the natural way, by adding an 's' at the end! Common sense."

Ravi kept quiet.

"But, for your own satisfaction, you can consult that bigger dictionary in ten volumes."

Ravi pulled out the relevant volume.

"Here they give the plural. It is, sir, as I said!"

"Hm. Now, will you look into that dictionary of American English?"

Ravi saw and kept quiet. Roy Sahib understood.

"Why are the Americans so proud of their handling of the English language if they can't make it brother-in-laws?" wondered a much anguished Roy Sahib.

Ravi restored the volume to its row.

"That means, those fellows, the swarm of vipers, laughed because of my error!" Roy Sahib was assuming an abominable tone, unfamiliar to Ravi. His face was swelling up. Ravi feared that he was going to weep. Inching towards the door, he made a hurried bow and left.

After the last batch of the delegates had departed, Ravi spent a whole afternoon with Geeta, telling her about his total disenchantment with the world of intellectuals.

"Don't give yourself up to such prejudices. One may be great as a writer or thinker, and small as a man. We should recognise his greatness alone and shut our eyes to his weaknesses," Geeta argued with him.

"In any case, I just cannot stand another event like this," Ravi said with a gesture of finality.

EIGHT

But Ravi's mood changed when, the next day, Roy Sahib called him and asked him to proceed to the city to buy books worth five thousand rupees for the Sadan Library.

"From the interest of the deposit, we can henceforth spend this much every year for expanding the library. Here is a small list I have prepared. For the rest, I leave it to your choice."

There was no trace of any anguish in him. Ravi felt much relieved.

For Ravi, wending his way through bookracks, occasionally knocking some titles down, was a thrill next only to his romance with Geeta.

It was night when he reached the city. In the morning, the balcony of his hotel presented a commanding urban view. The building across the city sported an elegant signboard: "Douglas and Duggal, Building Architects."

Ravi found the signboard tantalizing. He stepped in soon after the durwan had taken position.

Ravi was helloed by a suave young man with a magnetic smile who showed him into a chair which, wrapped up in cushion, looked somewhat voluptuous.

"It is a small query about building a house. I wonder if you undertake..." Ravi felt nervous.

"Of course, we do, gentleman, we do, although we are not undertakers, ha! ha!"

"I am a villager, I have no idea about your charges."

"I always exhort my men never to be deceived by appearance. The village is the future of this ancient country. It is the village that has both dream and money. Coffee or cool drink?"

Ravi felt overwhelmed. "You have read my mind. I have dreamt of a house half a dozen times. And I should not deny the fact that I have a little money. It is not exactly mine, but..."

"Goddess Lakshmi's Ha! Ha!! Haven't I read your mind again? See, although I took birth in a city and spent years in cities like London, New York and Tokyo—I understand village India, don't I? Coffee or cool drink?"

"If I could have some idea about the expense..."

"Nothing to worry on that score. Although ours is one of India's, in fact Asia's premier firms, our range of rates is quite wide, between two and five per cent of the total budget, depending on the plan. In your case, please allow me another reading of your mind—it should figure out to something, say five thousand, if it is a residential house!"

"Heh heh, I don't mind spending even a little more—say, six thousand. The rest I can keep for buying the land," Ravi announced with great satisfaction.

The young man's face brightened up.

"I admit defeat, sir, and never before had I been so

happy with a defeat! Your budget, this means, is between four and five lakhs. That should make an excellent bungalow. I am ready to drive down and see the site myself. You see, the bungalow must fit into the landscape. We are not just architects, but artistes. Each rupee of the six thousand you are to give me for my design is a challenge to me. That is how I look at it. Yes! Coffee or cool drink, sir? And, of course, we can be entrusted with the construction too."

Ravi stood up. "I shall be back soon," he muttered as he hurried out without looking back.

He drank a soda on a footpath and wiped his sweat. "Every cloud has a silver lining. I was no doubt a fool. but the experience should make such a nice joke to tell Geeta!" he laughed and tried to be happy. And he forgot all about it once he was in the book-shop.

"Could you get all the books I had listed?" Roy Sahib queried. He sat discussing education with two of the teachers of his school.

"Almost all, sir."

"I am particularly interested in one—the first title in my list. Got it?"

"No, sir."

"You should have looked for it. I had underlined it in red, hadn't I?

"Sir, there is no book as *Ibid.*"

"What!" Roy Sahib flared up. "I bet, I've come across the name a thousand times and here you are, telling me to my face that there is no *Ibid.* Next you will say there is no *Iliad*, only because you have never heard of it!"

"*Ibid* is as famous as Taj Mahal, sir," observed one of the teachers.

"My father possessed a copy of *Ibid*, sir, published by one of those foreign '& companies'. But it was eaten up by white ants," said the other.

"And you have the cheek to say..." Roy Sahib's voice was choked.

"Sir, there is no book as *Ibid*, just as there is no author as *Anon*. They are..."

"Get out!" Roy Sahib screamed. "I had never met with such impudence!"

Ravi left. Within an hour his letter of resignation reached Roy Sahib who sent his clerk to talk to him. Ravi agreed to stay on for a week.

Ravi resolved to meet the broker before meeting Geeta.

"If you are serious, there is a complete house available instantly for the price of a match-box," informed Lachman. And he led Ravi into a lane in the suburb.

It was a plain-looking house on a small compound with two rooms on the ground and one upstairs, new, though built by raw hands. The owner, a descendant of the once prosperous Pundits by whom the lane was known, was in debt and needed nine thousand rupees immediately to save some other indispensable property going off in auction.

"Such an opportunity comes only once in a century!" the broker confided to Ravi. "This lane is fast growing important. Tomorrow you can offer this very house for twentyfive thousand and a dozen shop-keepers would jump to their feet."

It was necessary for the owner to receive the money within two days. "Take a receipt and occupy the house. Registration can wait," the broker advised.

Ravi was excited. He met Natbar Pundit, the owner, and felt that the man was honest.

His mood, however, received a setback when he met Geeta. She had been down with fever. But she readily signed the paper for drawing her money from the post office.

"Geeta! Won't you even have a look at the house before consenting to buy it?"

"How often does the Indian bride see her would-be husband's house?" High temperature gave Geeta a free flow of words.

"Very well. Let me prepare the house for you. I shall lead you there only after our marriage which must take place on the earliest auspicious day," Ravi declared fervently.

Geeta blushed even in her fever.

Ravi had no time to attend upon Geeta. That, in any case, was not necessary. The landlady and her daughter were like a mother and a sister to her.

Money changed hands before the evening and the grateful Natbar Pundit handed over the key to Ravi.

Behind the house was an open patch of land and an old *Neem* tree. The sky was mildly cloudy, a prominent rainbow marked Ravi's boundary at the back, the rainbow gave the dirty water the romance of a fairytale river.

"If Geeta approves of it, I shall name the house Rainbow." Ravi decided. He wanted to relax and roll on the floor. But there will be a time for that—he assured himself. Now he must fix up the date for their marriage.

Nathar Pundit, an uncle to all by nature, consulted the almanac. But the planets did not approve of any marriage before three months.

Ravi hit upon the idea of marriage by registration. At first Geeta looked unsure. But she yielded.

It was a simple affair after the office hours, the registrar assuming a double-paternal role to the satisfaction of both the sides. While Natbar Pundit acted as Ravi's guardian, Geeta's affectionate landlady obliged the couple to pass the night at her house and fed them sumptuously. She and her daughter shed tears when, the next day, Geeta and Ravi boarded a rickshaw to proceed to their new home.

It was the happiest and the most glorious moment in Ravi's life. The rickshaw was slow, but he did not mind it. Groups of people were talking excitedly, but he did not hear them. He continued to gaze at Geeta who sat silent, wrapped up in a shawl. It did not matter if the rickshaw drove on and on for eternity—Ravi assured himself—for he had already arrived at his true destination.

Of course, he must find out a lecturer's post for himself in some private college, failing, a few tuitions, to manage the life's grosser part.

"I forgot to tell you that I propose to name the house Rainbow. Do you approve of it?" Ravi asked, still submerged in reverie.

Geeta smiled.

The rickshaw took a turn to enter the lane, but could not proceed.

"What is happening here?" asked Geeta, giving Ravi a nudge. There was a large crowd, quiet, but tense. Ravi woke up to the noise he dreaded, the noise of the bulldozers. There were two of them at work at the lane's end. Before he could build a link between one perception and the next, a tall crane dangling a gigantic iron boulder hit the upper story of his new-found home.

The tiny building cracked and looked like an infant's face about to cry.

"But that is my Rainbow!" shouted Ravi at the top of his voice and was going to jump down. But he felt Geeta leaning against him. She had fainted.

Ravi was anxious to rush towards the house and stop the bulldozers from wreaking further havoc. But he could not leave Geeta to herself.

The crowd looked baffled and sad. In subdued growls many swore against the demolition squad; some even clenched their fist. But that is all they did. There were armed police protecting the squad.

"Stop bulldozing my house. I am just going to occupy it. Look, here is my wife," Ravi screamed. "We were married only last evening. My suitcase contains the certificate. You can't destroy a newly-wed couple's home like that!"

A police officer, a pistol in his waist-belt and a whistle hanging from his neck, came wading towards the rickshaw.

"We have orders to demolish unauthorised constructions. We must do our duty. You should understand!" he said in a laconic tone.

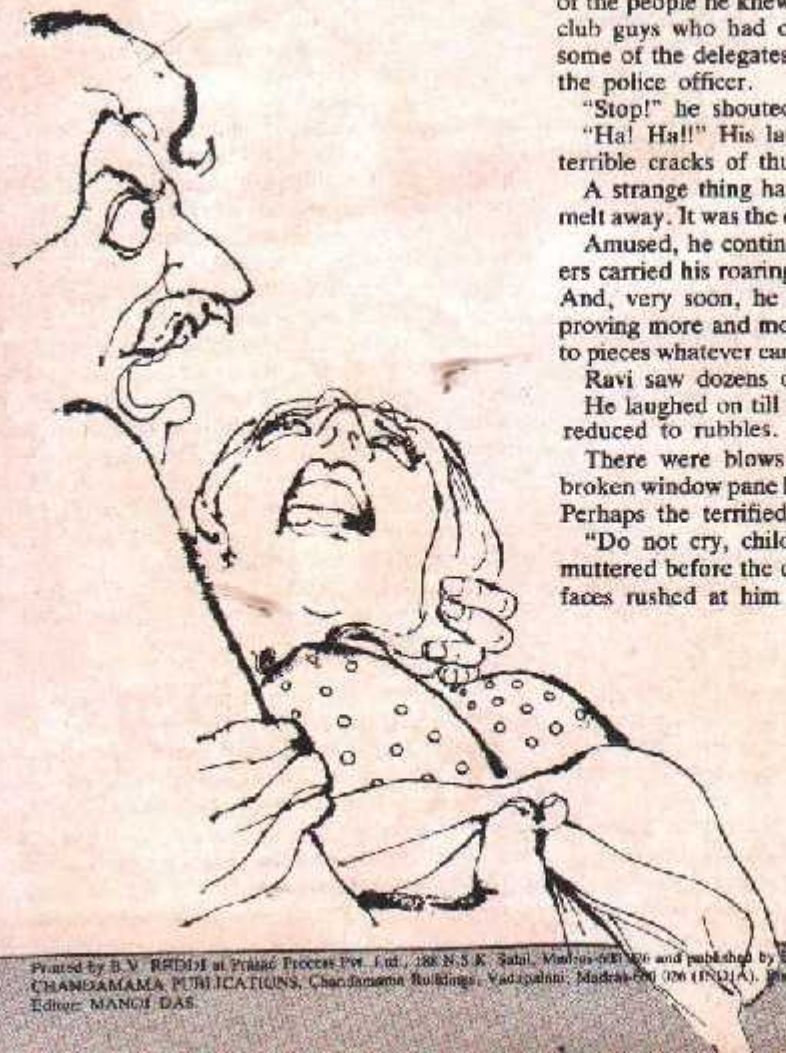
"Where is Nathar Pundit?" Ravi demanded.

"Under arrest for obstructing our work. I'm sorry," said the officer and he beat his baton on the handle of the rickshaw, ordering the rickshaw-puller to back out.

"Behave yourself, officer!" roared Ravi.

"Yes, don't dangle your dirty stick!" shouted a few other voices from the crowd.

The officer looked surprised. For a few seconds his nervous fingers played on his pistol. But he managed a grin.



"Have I been rude to any? I am here to maintain law and order. I have armed police with me. But I am not eager to use them." He looked at Ravi. "You can surely appeal to the proper authority. But I should advise you to take care of the lady first. Can I help you with an ambulance? We have one here for emergency."

The officer whistled. Geeta was duly carried into the ambulance and Ravi followed. He looked at Rainbow once more. Not much of the upper floor was left. The *Neem* tree, smeared in dust, looked like a ghost.

"It is devastating, it is murder!" Ravi cried out. The ambulance started.

Geeta's landlady and her daughter rushed to the hospital in the evening. They stopped short of wailing. Geeta was in the intensive-care ward. Ravi was not in a position to enlighten them about her condition except reporting that she suffered from what the doctors termed as neurogenic shock, over and above her fever.

At midnight a bit of the moon escaped the clouds. Ravi slipped away from the hospital.

All was quiet around the Sadan, the little Ratan lying asleep on the verandah. Ravi opened and entered the hall. There were a dozen microphones, loudspeakers, and dry battery cells stored inside, awaiting use in Roy Sahib's election campaign.

Using the ladder he managed to project the loudspeakers out through the skylights. He arranged the microphones in a cluster and switched them on.

He stood before the cluster and shut his eyes for a moment. He saw a procession of bulldozers heading towards him. They had human faces, with drooping moustachios and French-cut beards, resembling some of the people he knew, including Prof. Prem Naik, the club guys who had once flattened him on the road, some of the delegates to the seminar, Roy Sahib, and the police officer.

"Stop!" he shouted. The bulldozers stopped.

"Ha! Ha!!" His laughter, magnified, sounded like terrible cracks of thunder.

A strange thing happened; the bulldozers began to melt away. It was the effect of his laughter, he was sure.

Amused, he continued to laugh. Twelve loudspeakers carried his roaring laughter in different directions. And, very soon, he was thrilled to see his laughter proving more and more formidable and blowing away to pieces whatever came in the way of its rolling waves.

Ravi saw dozens of buildings crumbling down.

He laughed on till everything around him had been reduced to rubbles.

There were blows against the door. Through the broken window pane he could make out several figures. Perhaps the terrified Ratan was crying.

"Do not cry, child, I mean no harm to you," he muttered before the door crashed open and unfamiliar faces rushed at him and he fell down unconscious.

THE END

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