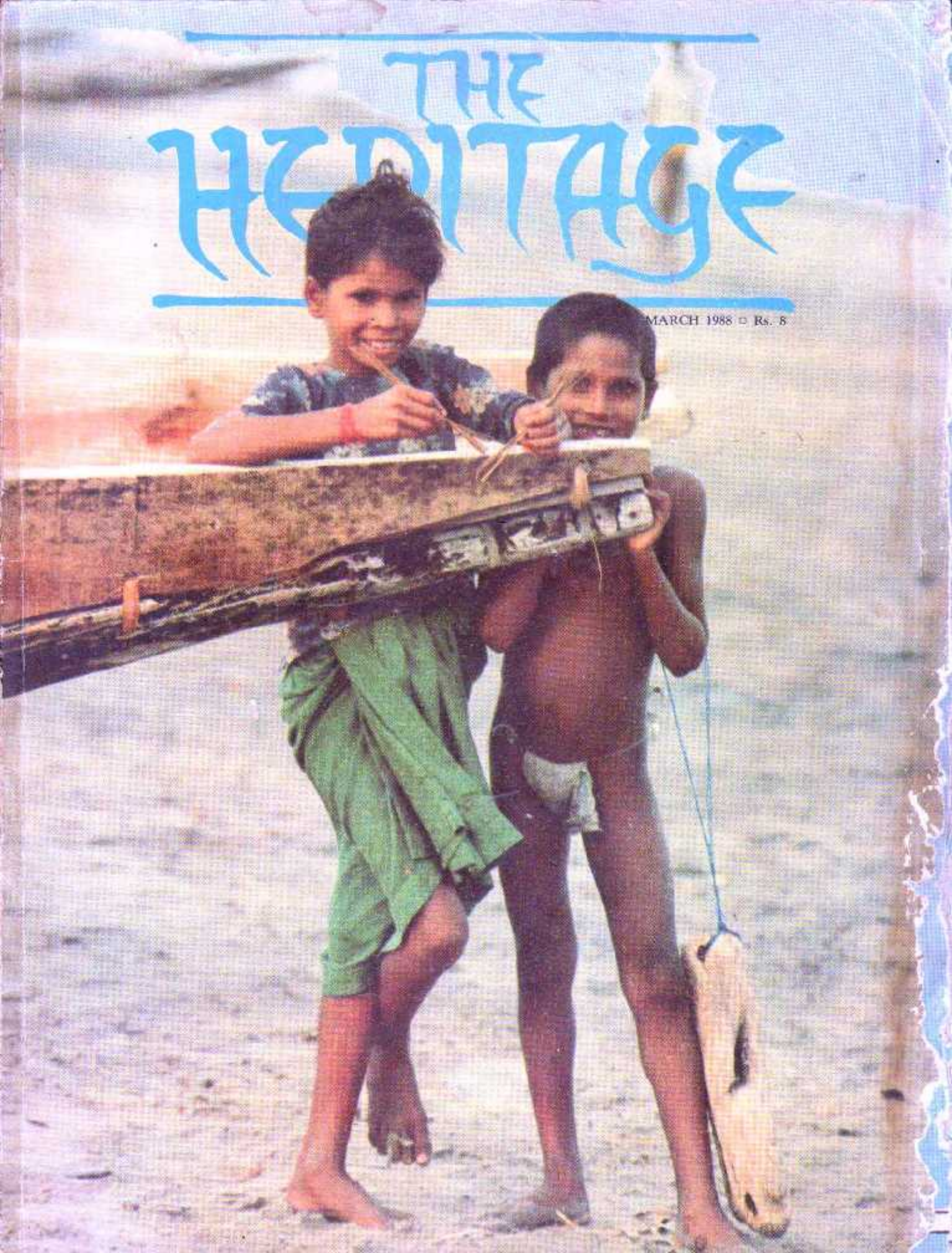
THE HERITAGE

MARCH 1988 □ Rs. 8



WHERE THE SKY AND THE SEA MEET

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An incredible stretch of backwaters. blue as far as the eye can see. nestling on a bay crested with salt pan hillocks and fringed with the emerald green of paddy fields and palmyra trees.

At twilight or early dawn, the sight of fishermen rowing their catamarans in the distance will make your heart beat faster for its sheer poetic beauty.

For water sports lover. Muthukadu promises pleasure and excitement.

Row or surf or merely relax in a boat - you have a lot to choose from.

Located on the way to Mamallapuram only 37 Kms. from Madras. Muthukadu is ideal for a weekend holiday.

The Director of Tourism
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THE HERITAGE

Features and Fiction for Today and Tomorrow

COVER:
The good old friend of the fisherfolk of the coastal India, the catamaran and its young beneficiaries (See photo feature in this issue) Picture: Viman

"CONGRATULATIONS"

You congratulated in your editorial (January '88) the two super powers for their willingness, at last, to restrict their destructive zeal, and you congratulated the anti-communal Muslim youths. Let us, very sincerely, congratulate you for the new features in and the new form of THE HERITAGE marked in the New Year issue. We hope, you will be able to keep up this standard, though we know how difficult it is. We are particularly thankful to you for the series on dreams. The first article in the January issue was highly educative.

Calcutta —**Jaishree Borua**

THE WORLD OF DREAMS

The fascinating series that began in the January '88 number is most welcome. The inaugural article in the series was not only absorbingly interesting, it made us think about a phenomenon which is so familiar to us and yet so unfamiliar! The author has the uncanny capacity for arousing questions in our mind in a most helpful way and also for giving us knowledge in a gentle style. We are beholden to him and we are grateful to you for making him take up such a subject.

New Delhi —**Vidya Narang**

We take our dreams for granted. I never knew that they contained so much significance. I hope, at some stage in the series, the author will explain the symbolism of the objects and incidents we dream.

Purnia —**Vishweshwar Maulik**

It appears from Devapriyo's excellent presentation of the subject that both West and East are governed by the same laws when it comes to dreams. It was a significant lesson from the first article. We look forward, with joy, to many more lessons.

Bangalore —**S. Jayaraman**

IDEAS AND EXPLORATIONS

That THE HERITAGE cares for our intellectual growth is a fact which brooks no doubt. But you have proved it more clearly by giving us the new page on the latest developments in the sphere of ideas.

Bhopal —**Mani Bajpayee**

THE FORGOTTEN TRIANGLE

The article (January '88) was an example in information combined with reflections. One of the reasons for my love of THE HERITAGE is, it introduces subjects without making them pedantic. Even the small item inserted, "The Hermitage on the Hill", was such a charming anecdote! Many tales of mystics are scattered over the country, on hill-tops, unknown villages and jungles. To focus on them whenever possible will be a service to the readers.

Kharagpur —**Rupendra Biswas**

I was posted at Cuttack and Bhubaneswar for

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SISIR DATTA

eight years and had chances to visit Udayagiri and Lalitgiri twice. But honestly, I enjoyed them more now—five years after my last visit there, when I read the article in THE HERITAGE. It is really surprising that while Buddhism was once such a widely prevailing faith in Kalinga, it totally disappeared. The article has outlined some most cogent reasons though the author has not chosen to assert his own view.

Hyderabad **—R. Subhas Rao**

The Ratnagiri article was read by me and my friends who share my copy, more than once. Apparently a report of a personal visit by the author, it stimulates a number of questions and ideas in our minds. We thank the author for presenting the puzzle of the triangle in such a way that he makes us share his own surprise, like a friend, philosopher and guide. We wish we have more young politicians in our country like Sheikh Matlub Ali who take such interest in our heritage.

Camp: Puri **—Vimal Dubey**

I was wondering why your esteemed magazine had not covered the Ratnagiri triangle so long. Reading it I realised how much of the heritage of our country remains beyond our knowledge.

Bhubaneswar **—Pravat Mishra**

RE-CREATION IS HIS JOY

The way THE HERITAGE is promoting translation of creative writing from different languages is commendable. It is in fitness of things that you should pay a tribute to Jai Ratan, the veteran translator whose example should inspire others.

Hubli **—Ram K. Desai**

In India we need some expert translators. Litterateurs like Jai Ratan are the trend-setters. I thank THE HERITAGE and Swapna Dutta for highlighting him.

Allahabad **—Lakshmi**

SANS THE GLAMOUR OF HISTORY

In the din created by the pretentious and the so-called conscience-keepers, the fame-hungry people and, above all, the pseudo-intellectuals, your editorial "Sans the Glamour of History: the Other Event" (December '87) on the hot topic of Sati came, if I may say through a cliche, as a whiff of fresh air. You have rightly pointed out, we must try to tackle the present rather than confront the whole past. We, the thinking people and the government, must try to do away with the evil part of the institution by making people realise that in our present culture it is not required. But should we, in our over-zealousness, destroy the memory of those who were great in a certain context of time? Will it not be denying the departed their due?

I hope the rabble-rousing hoi polloi will take note of the editorial.

Cuttack **—Basudev Pujari**

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THE HERITAGE

ECHOES OF WISH-FULFILMENT

It is not at all a pleasant task to disillusion a gentleman in his fond ideas or to point out that the paradise he has found for himself is not the wise man's, but it has become a painful necessity to do so when it concerns the Director General of Doordarshan, for his ideas concern us all.

The other night the Doordarshan broadcast, on its national network, a debate among some important men on the effect of the TV advertisements on the common people. Those who expressed their concern about the effect of the advertisements on the poorer population in particular—and they ironically included the former bureaucrat who ushered in the age of commercial ads on the Indian TV—sounded quite sure in their assessment of the situation. The TV ads, according to them, were harmful. Those who defended the ad policy—they included the D.G. and the chief executive of an advertising agency—understandably asserted that it was not harmful.

What, however, surprised us was an argument which the D.G. put forth. He said that recently, they have conducted a survey. Although its finding was yet to be published, he was good enough to divulge it which is, the ads do not produce any adverse effect on the poor people. The people see a commodity offered and then forget about it if they cannot afford it. That is all.

We can visualise the survey. The researcher goes to the slum, locates a woman and asks, "Do you see that damsel assuming wondrous dream-like forms as she changes into different luminous attires one after another?" "Yes," says the slum-dweller. "Do you feel tempted to buy such attires for yourself?" she is asked. "How can I? I can just make my both ends meet with what I or my husband earns!" she replies. "Does any longing for the attires remain in you?" she is asked. "No!" she says.

We wonder what else she could have said or if she could have ever said, "Yes, the longing remains; it results in disappointment; that breeds frustration and envy—and one day I find myself bursting into anger and violence!"

Our bureaucrats are among our best educated people and we expect them to be wiser. Such surveys can only scratch the surface; they cannot penetrate beneath a certain layer. The accumulative response of those who cannot touch a stuff offered through advertisements —advertisement made aggressive, arrogant and vulgar by a combination of sound and sight —cannot be determined through a collection of such answers. Even common sense should tell us more than what a thousand-page survey report can say in this regard.

The TV advertisements are designed to entice and to lure. Those who can buy the glorified stuff (the rich go shopping not to buy things but in hope of buying happiness), their temptation is momentarily satisfied; those who cannot, remain tempted. And this latter reality cannot be wished away by a report. Advertisers know better than the bureaucrats or the professional bureaus conducting a survey for a fee.

The style of the TV advertisements is embarrassing. How to explain it to their makers and their promoters? Imagine the 19th century London restaurant when the well-to-do customers, while relishing the various dishes spread on the table before them, also relished the poor folks, often travellers from villages, gathering around them and observing them eat! The situation is something nearer this—but with different results in a changed time.

But neither our embarrassment nor the effect of the ads on the poorer multitudes is the only cause for our being critical of the thing, its effect on the urban, well-to-do youth is worse. It is stimulating and pampering the hedonistic traits in them—to their own misfortune.

The fact that such advertisements are widely prevalent in the West (the commercials are confined to certain channels in multi-channelled broadcasting systems), should not have made an example for us. We cannot say that we were helpless before this trend. The truth is, in a country where the TV was launched newly, we could have decisively shunned this trend. Just as the West has set a bad example, we could have set a good example. The choice was ours. We let ourselves be carried away by the bad example. It is our lack of vision, courage and individuality. No use deceiving ourselves with survey reports. Such reports are echoes of our wish-fulfilment.

The road coiling up towards Badrinath.

B.R.T.F. men planning removal of obstacles caused by landslide.

THE ROAD TO KEDAR-BADRI

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

The old thrill of pilgrimage, when devotees travelled by foot to inaccessible regions, through untold hardships and risk, is perhaps lost forever. However, the spirit of pilgrimage, we are told by sages, does not get lost for those who have genuine aspiration and devotion in their hearts.

We do not know. But the form of pilgrimage has so radically changed that it could not but have affected the spirit—at least for most of the pilgrims. Devotees who have got the taste of an inner pilgrimage are a class apart.

This change in the form is obviously unavoidable. Since it is unavoidable, we should improve upon the change.

The road to Badrinath now available to us was a curse changed into blessings. The road had to be built to Manar Pass for the movement of our army, about 25 years ago, when the Chinese struck in that frontier. Afterwards the road was left open to the pilgrims. Well, all those who take advantage of the facility are not pilgrims, many even come in a picnic spirit and many are looking for a reasonably safe adventure, but such discriminations are irrelevant at the social level.

The traffic is on the increase, but one has to observe the panic writ large on the faces of the travellers when vehicles take a turn or when two vehicles have to cross each other. The road is narrow, with deep precipices on one side and stiff high hills on the other. A driver cannot afford to be slack or inalert even for a second. While demand on his concentration is too high, the passengers are on tenterhooks all the time. It is the same with the road to Kedarnath, from Rudraprayag to Gourikund.

It is true that accidents are rare, a pointer at the value of alert driving.

But when an accident occurs, it proves devastating. No medical attention can be expected immediately along those long stretches of desolate road.

The builders of these difficult roads who are also the vigilant sentries over them, the Border Road Task Force, do marvellous works. As a friend told me during my recent journey to these areas, "They are the soldiers who go on fighting all through the peace-time." Indeed, it is so. The promptness with which they clear the roads of gigantic landslides, rescue men and vehicles trapped and stranded, are examples in service and courage.

They can surely be entrusted with the task of broadening the road a bit, so that the travellers' minds are free enough to marvel at the Himalayan splendours. "The VIPs travel by helicopters; no politician speaks for a region where there are no votes or when the people concerned do not come from any particular constituency. Hence this situation," observed a gentleman at Joshimath.

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I, B. Viswanatha Reddi, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1st March 1988

B. VISWANATHA REDDI
Signature of the Publisher

THIS MONTH IN INDIAN HISTORY

March 1
1640: The British get the permission for opening trade in Madras.
1775: Treaty of Purandhar is signed between Nana Phadnavis and the British.
1908: Tata Iron & Steel Co., the first steel industry in India, is established.

March 2
1949: Smt. Sarojini Naidu dies.

March 3
1707: Prince Muazzam succeeded Aurangzeb as Baha dur Shah I.

March 4
1858: J.P. Walker sails from Calcutta with 200 convicts, mostly taken prisoner in Sepoy Mutiny, to start a new settlement in the Andaman Islands.
1879: Bethune College, the first women's college in the British Empire outside Great Britain to impart higher education to women, is established.
1950: The first Asian Games takes place in New Delhi.

March 5
1699: Maharaja Jai Singh II ascends the Amber throne.
1931: Gandhiji ends Civil Disobedience Movement as a sequel to Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

March 7
1835: Decision to promote European literature and science in India taken.

March 9
1858: Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar (II) is found guilty of complicity in Sepoy Mutiny and is exiled to Rangoon.

March 10
1922: Gandhiji arrested for the first time near Sabarmati Ashram.

March 11
1399: Timur on his way back recrosses the Indus after ransacking Northern India including Delhi.
1881: For the first time the statue of an Indian, Ram Nath Tagore, the youngest brother of Dwarka Nath Tagore, is publicly installed

YESTERDAY'S MOOD AS CAPTURED BY SHANKAR

From Shankar's Weekly, March 8, 1970, with permission.

in Calcutta Town Hall.

March 12

1930: Gandhiji starts his Dandi march from Sabarmati Ashram of Ahmedabad for the Salt Satyagraha.

1954: Sahitya Akademi is inaugurated.

March 13

1878: Vernacular Press Act is passed and the Amrita Bazar Patrika becomes an English newspaper the following day.

1940: Michael O'Dwyer, former Governor of Punjab, responsible for the Punjab atrocities in 1919, is shot dead in London by Udham Singh alias Muhammad Singh Azad.

1963: Arjuna Awards are announced for the first time for outstanding performance in various sports.

March 14

1689: Shivaji's son Sambhaji is tortured to death by Aurangzeb.

1931: India's first talkie film 'Alam Ara' is released in Bombay.

March 17

1769: East India Company impose crippling restrictions on weavers of Bengal to destroy textile and 'muslin' industries.

March 18

1915: Defence of India Act is passed.

1919: Rowlatt Act replaces the Defence of India Act of 1915, thereby suppressing civil and political liberties of Indians.

1944: Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) under Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose crosses Burma border into India.

March 19

1891: The 'Age of Consent' Bill on minimum age for marriage is passed.

March 20

1602: Dutch East India Co. is formed.

March 21

1791: British Army captures Bangalore from Tipu Sultan.

1836: The first public library is opened in Calcutta at 13 Esplanade Row which later becomes the National Library.

1921: Indian National Congress Flag is adopted.

March 22

1739: Nadir Shah enters Delhi and later orders a general massacre of the citizens of Delhi.

1942: Cripps Mission, under the leadership of Sir Stafford Cripps, arrives in India.

Japanese Navy and Air Force reach Port Blair during the World War II.

March 23

1757: Clive captures Chandernagar from the French.

1931: Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Sivram Rajguru are hanged.

1940: Resolution for Pakistan is adopted by Muslim League.

March 24

1855: The first long distance telegraphic message is transmitted from Calcutta to Agra.

1902: Anusilan Samity, a dedicated revolutionary organisation, is established in Bengal.

1946: The British Cabinet Mission headed by Lord Pethick Lawrence arrives in India.

1947: Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India appointed by the British monarch is installed.

March 28

1914: S.S. Komagata Maru sails from Hong Kong to Vancouver in Canada with 350 youths, mostly Sikhs, under Gurjeet Singh's leadership.

March 29

1857: The first shot of Sepoy Mutiny is fired by Mangal Pandey in Barrackpore near Calcutta.

March 30

1699: The Khalsa, the 'Pure' sect, is launched by the tenth Sikh Guru, Govind Singh.

March 31

1980: The last I.C.S. Officer Nirmal Mukherji retires from service.

ULTIMATE IN CATERING PLEASURE TO PEOPLE

Public hanging is growing popular in Pakistan.

MERRY AND ROUND

TV breeding obese kids, says UNICEF experts.

THE REWARD

An American millionaire offers $1,000 to girls who would remain virgins.

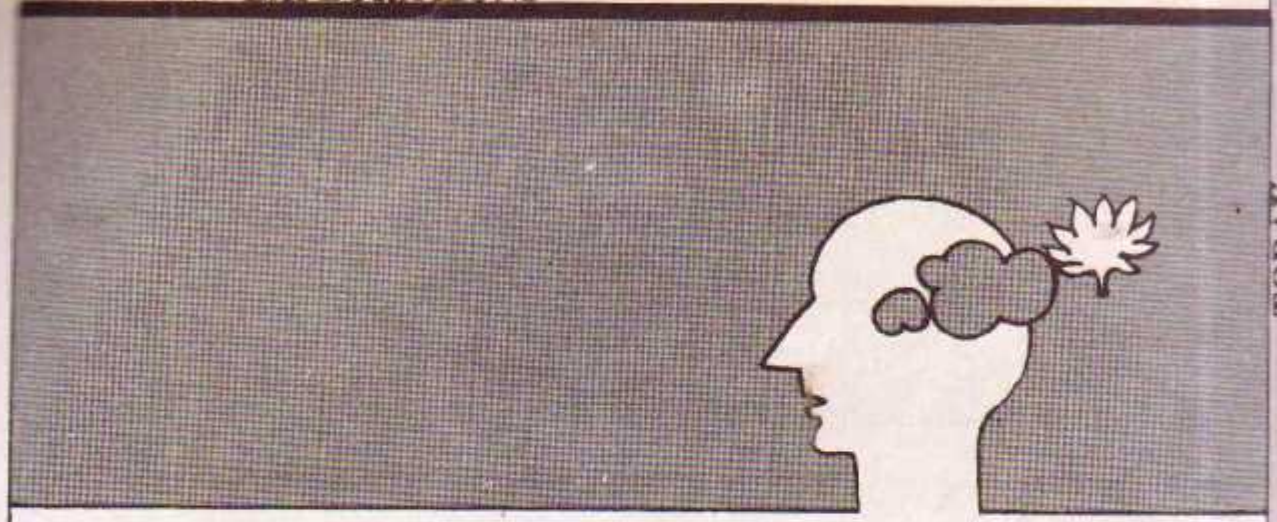
Some of the girls are remembering Andrew Marvell's *To His Coy Mistress* and are sighing:

Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity;

And your quaint honour turn to dust;
And into ashes all my lust.
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace.

THOUSAND VERSUS THE THOUSAND

Along with the news that 1000 babies will be born this year with AIDS virus, comes the news that the 1000th Test Tube baby is born.



WE ARE NOT ALONE IN THE UNIVERSE

"STARS like our sun seem to be ideal breeding grounds for life. The sun is a long-lived, stable star, with a fairly broad 'life zone' in which a wet planet can exist comfortably for thousands of millions of years while life evolves. Smaller, cooler stars live even longer—but their life zones are correspondingly narrower, decreasing the chance of finding a wet planet in just the right orbit. Bigger, hotter stars can have very broad life zones—but they go through their own life-cycles more quickly than cooler stars, leaving insufficient time for the process of evolution, which, on Earth, has taken so long to produce us and all the life around us.

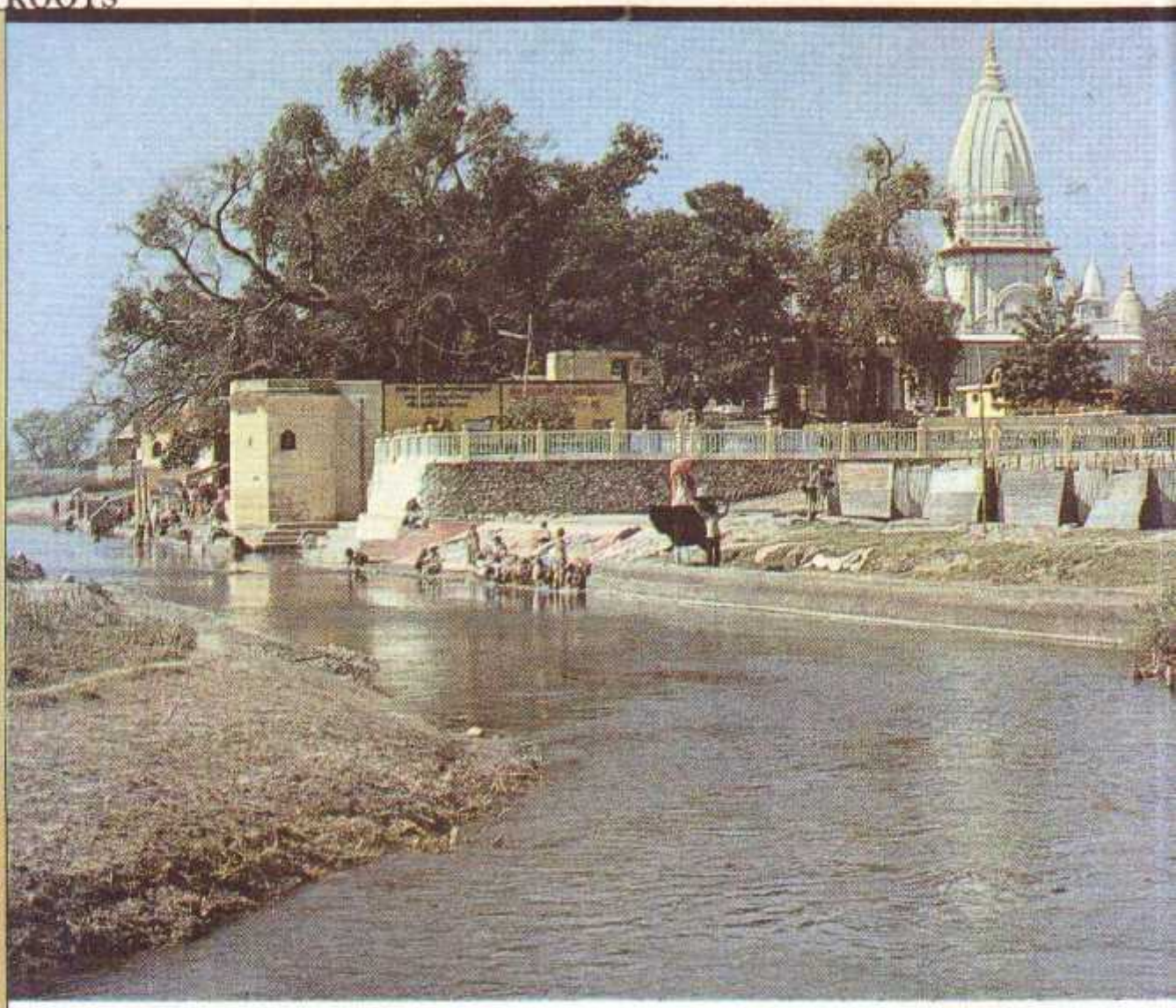
"And this is, perhaps, the happiest realization of all. Wherever stars like our sun exist, there ought to be planets like the Earth, with the key feature of free water running on their surfaces. So it may, indeed, be possible not just that life exists elsewhere in the universe, but that it lives on watery planets with blue skies and white clouds, rivers and trees, and surface temperatures in the range we are used to here on Earth. This, rather than the science fiction of methane-breathing monsters or intelligent crystalline life forms, inhabiting worlds with purple or green skies and lakes of liquid ammonia, seems to be the simplest interpretation of the evidence. If we are not alone in the universe, the air we breathe may be very similar to the air 'they' breathe," says Dr. John Gribbin, the American astrophysicist.

A MESSAGE FOR FUTURE PHYSICIANS

A programme to make the future physicians conscious of and utilise the influence of family, society and culture in treating a patient's illness is being experimented in the Harvard Medical School. This humanistic approach known as the New Pathway was born from the belief that modern physicians are becoming distanced from their patients. New medical breakthroughs and the expansion of scientific knowledge have left practically no time for compassion, intuition and ingenuity—"the trinity of doctorhood"—as Dr. Richard Selzer puts it.

So is the distinction generally made between science and humanities. "When we define humanism as a separate entity from bioscientific competence, we do ourselves a disservice," says Dr. Gordon Moore. "The two are as important as the front and back of the hand." Another eminent scholar, Dr. Allan M. Brandt agrees. "This is not just cultural window-dressing," he says. "Instead of telling students that a humanistic outlook is important, we're trying to get them thinking about the clinical utility of the range of issues that will bring a patient into their officers. It's a new model of effective therapeutics."

"The message to future physicians is quite clear—that mastery of technology is not the beginning and end of medicinal education. The practice of medicine will require you to navigate in the realm of values and ultimately to respond to more than what is on the chart," says David Rothman, Director of Columbia's Centre for the Study of Society and Medicine.



Daksha's Temple on the banks of Ganga.

KONKHAL: THE BIRTHPLACE OF MAN

Photographs by Vidyavrata

TODAY Konkhal is looked upon as a suburb of Hardwar, along with Jwalapur. But in mythical times Konkhal was as important as Hardwar and for a long time the two places together were known as Mayapuri.

According to mythology, at Konkhal began the creation of man. While Brahma created out of his consciousness sages Marichi, Angirasa, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Vasistha and Kratu, he created from his right thumb, Daksha. Literally Daksha means the capable and the dexterous. His being created out of Brahma's physical body, instead of his consciousness, may signify that with him was to begin the race dominated by physical consciousness.

The Yajna Seat and the Sivalinga.

Left:
A traditional painting showing Sati proceeding to Daksha Yajna.

Right:
Carrying Sati's body, Siva wanders.

GIVE CHILDREN THEIR BIRTHRIGHT

CONTRIBUTE LIBERALLY TO POLIOPLUS –

The Polio Eradication Programme

Do you know that a child dies somewhere every second—in that tiny span of time we take to breathe once? It dies of one of the killer diseases like Polio, measles, diphtheria, tuberculosis, whooping cough or tetanus.

Reason? Children depend completely on others—on their parents, their families, their society—for their survival. They need love, care and protection as much as food, clothing and shelter. But due to poverty or ignorance or both, children do not get them and, therefore, fall a prey to dangerous childhood diseases.

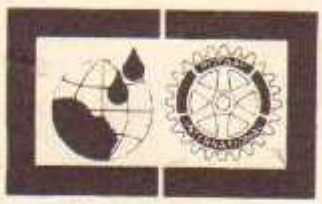
In our country alone, **Poliomyelitis or Polio,** as the disease is commonly known, **strikes around 275,000 children and kills about 30,000 of them every year. Every day at least 250 of them become handicapped for life. The number of children who die of vaccine-preventable diseases** of the kind **every day is 3,000.**

Can't one of them be some one close to you? And so, isn't it but just that Rotary expects you to join hands with it in its war against these dreadful diseases?

Rotary International is determined to fight Polio, also measles, diphtheria, tuberculosis, whooping cough and tetanus. It has embarked on a world-wide, U.S. $120 million, immunization programme named POLIOPLUS to provide all Polio vaccines to nationally approved campaigns in India and other countries of the world for upto 5 years consecutively.

We need your help in this mighty effort to save helpless children, millions of them, from pain, disease and death.

How can you help? With your **contributions,** of course. Please send them **by cheque or draft** drawn in favour of **the Rotary Club of Madras Southwest Charitable Trust** to the Trustee, The Rotary Club of Madras Southwest Charitable Trust, Chandamama Buildings, 188, N S K Salai, Vadapalani, Madras-600 026. The contributions are exempt from Income-Tax under Sec. 80-G of the Act.



Gujarati women on their way to the temple.

Siva and Parvati as Sati, depicted on the inner walls

Konkhal was the place assigned to Daksha. He married Prasuti, the woman emerging from the left thumb of Brahma. The first group of daughters to be born of Daksha and Prasuti were all different virtues and ideas such as Shraddha (Adoration), Lakshmi (Auspicious), Dhriti (the Sustaining), Tusti (Satisfaction), Medha (Genius), Buddhi (Intelligence), Lajja (Bashfulness), Shanti (Peace), Kirti (Worthy Deed), Kriya (Action), Kshyati (True Fame), Smriti (Memory), Preeti (Love), Kshama (Pardon), Anusuya (Absence of Illwill), etc. (According to another theory, Daksha himself turned into a woman temporarily and gave birth to them.)

They were to be the mothers of humanity.

Among them was Sati (Dedicated to Truth). She married Shiva, most probably against her father's wish. There are different legends to explain Daksha's dislike of Shiva, including an incident, when, at a function, everybody stood up to show respect to Daksha, but Shiva kept sitting.

Whatever that may be, Daksha was unkind enough to ignore Sati and Shiva when he invited all his other daughters and sons-in-law to a Yajna to be performed at Konkhal. Sati, however, learnt about the ritual from Sage Dadhicha. She was eager to be there. Shiva did not approve of her proposed visit to Daksha's palace uninvited. According to a legend, Sati argued with Shiva, asserting that at no time the doors of the parents' house could be shut against a daughter. Never should it be necessary for a daughter to wait for a formal invitation to visit her parents' house—an

Clockwise from top left

A part of Kumbha procession starting from the Daksha Temple.

Entrance into the Daksha Temple.

Obeisance at the Seat of the Yajna.

The site of Daksha-Yajna.

argument which became a firm tradition for all times.

So, Sati proceeded to Konkhal with a supernatural escort. She looked austere and ascetic, in contrast to her sisters well-adorned with ornaments! Daksha could not contain his wrath. He began by accusing Shiva of the latter's failure to prepare Sati fittingly for the occasion, but went on to heaping abuses on Shiva under an umpteen number of pretexts.

Sati tried to stop him again and again, but failed. Before the

Nandi overlooking the Seat of Yajna.

majestic and silent lookers-on, Sati felt terribly humiliated. Her anguish at having to hear such nonsense reached a point when she could not contain it any longer. Suddenly she jumped into the sacrificial fire and ended her life.

Her awe-struck escort ran to Shiva's abode and reported to him of the tragedy. The furious Shiva plucked a string from his knotted locks and dashed it on a rock. Out of it sprang Virabhadra, a dreadful being with numerous arms and heads. He rushed to the spot and destroyed the Yajna in no time. The guests fled. Daksha himself lost his head, later to be replaced by a goat's head.

The second part of the legend —Shiva wandering with Sati's body lying on his shoulder and Vishnu's *Sudarshana* cutting it asunder and the limbs falling at different places—is as well known as the first part of the legend.

Daksha was a strange character —and significant too. As the one with whom the humanity began, he carried within him the contradictions of human nature. He was powerful and capable and had the aspiration for knowledge and power, as is evident from his decision to perform the yajna, one of the first yajnas, if not the very first. At the same time he was marked by his overpowering ego—the greatest obstacle between man and Truth. It is this ego which blinded him to Siva —the Eternal. Although his offspring, Sati, realises Siva, he fails to take advantage of this divine intermediary and grows beyond his limitation, thanks to his arrogance. As a result he not only loses his head—symbolic of his failure to exercise his intelligence in the right direction, but also loses the off-spring (Sati dies), signifying the doom he brings about on the future. But that was perhaps inevitable—for the principle of ego could not have been forestalled if mankind was to be what it is, if the Play, the *Leela*, was to continue with man searching for the god he essentially himself is.

Daksha losing his head was the immediate consequence of his exercising his free-will, but choosing to do the wrong thing by that exercise. Thereafter he was endowed with a goat's head, the consequence of his choice. Children which he fathered after assuming this new personality —which is often described as the second Daksha or the second life of Daksha, were Krodha (Anger), Tamas (Inertia), Vikrita (Perversion) etc.

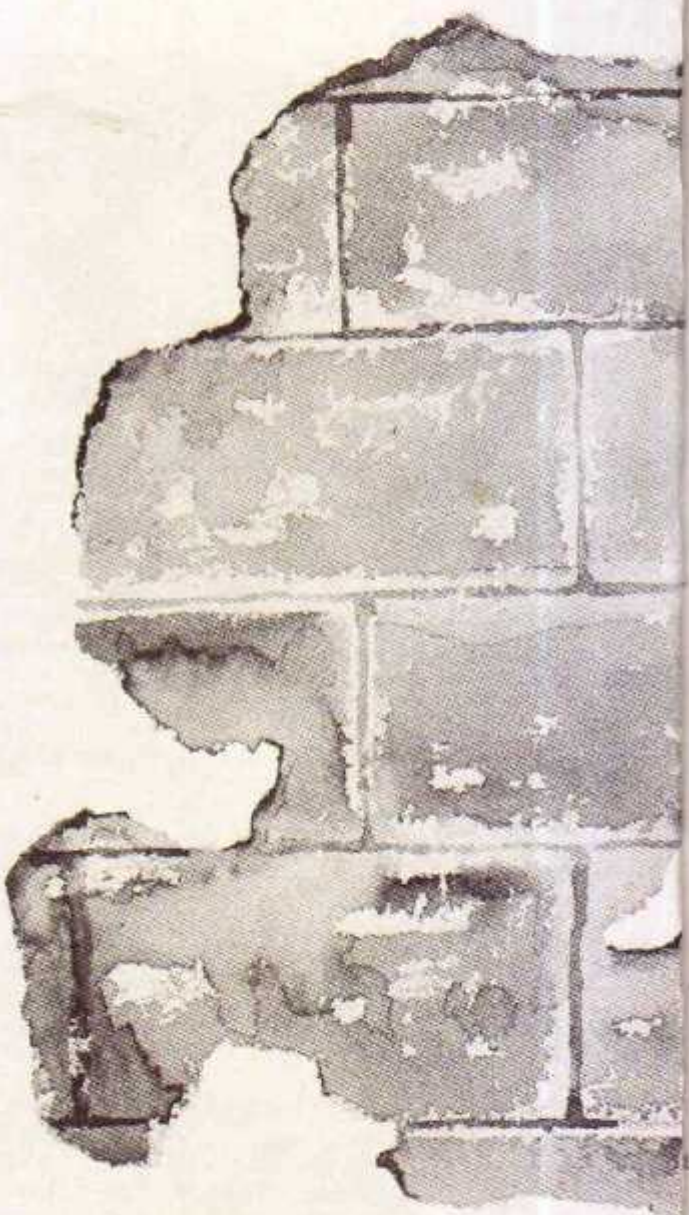
Konkhal has been a place associated with great sages from time immemorial. Lakshmana's son, Tuksha, is believed to have built his capital here. So many times shrines or monuments have been built in memory of Sati and the Yajna at the legendary site, but have been destroyed either by time or by vandals. Hardwar and Konkhal were plundered, among other invaders, by Tymur Lang.

The latest sage to have built her camp here was Anandamayee Ma. Her Samadhi is situated here. ⑤

BLOOD

by Kamala Das

When we were children,
My brother and I,
And always playing on the sands,
Drawing birds and animals,
Our great grandmother said one day,
You see this house of ours,
Now three hundred years old;
It's falling to little bits
Before our very eyes
The walls are cracked and torn
And moistened by the rains,
The tiles have fallen here and there,
The windows whine and groan,
And every night
The rats come out of holes
And scamper past our doors.
The snake-shrine is dark with weeds
And all the snake-gods in the shrine
Have lichen on their hoods
O it hurts me she cried,
Wiping a reddened eye,
For I love this house, it hurts me much
To watch it die.
When I grow old, I said,
And very very rich
I shall rebuild the fallen walls
And make new this ancient house.
My great grandmother
Touched my cheeks and smiled.
She was really simple.
Fed on God for years,
All her feasts were monotonous
For the only dish served was always God
And the rest mere condiments
She told us how she rode her elephant
When she was ten or eleven
Every Monday without fail
To the Siva shrine
And back to home again
And, told us of the jewel box

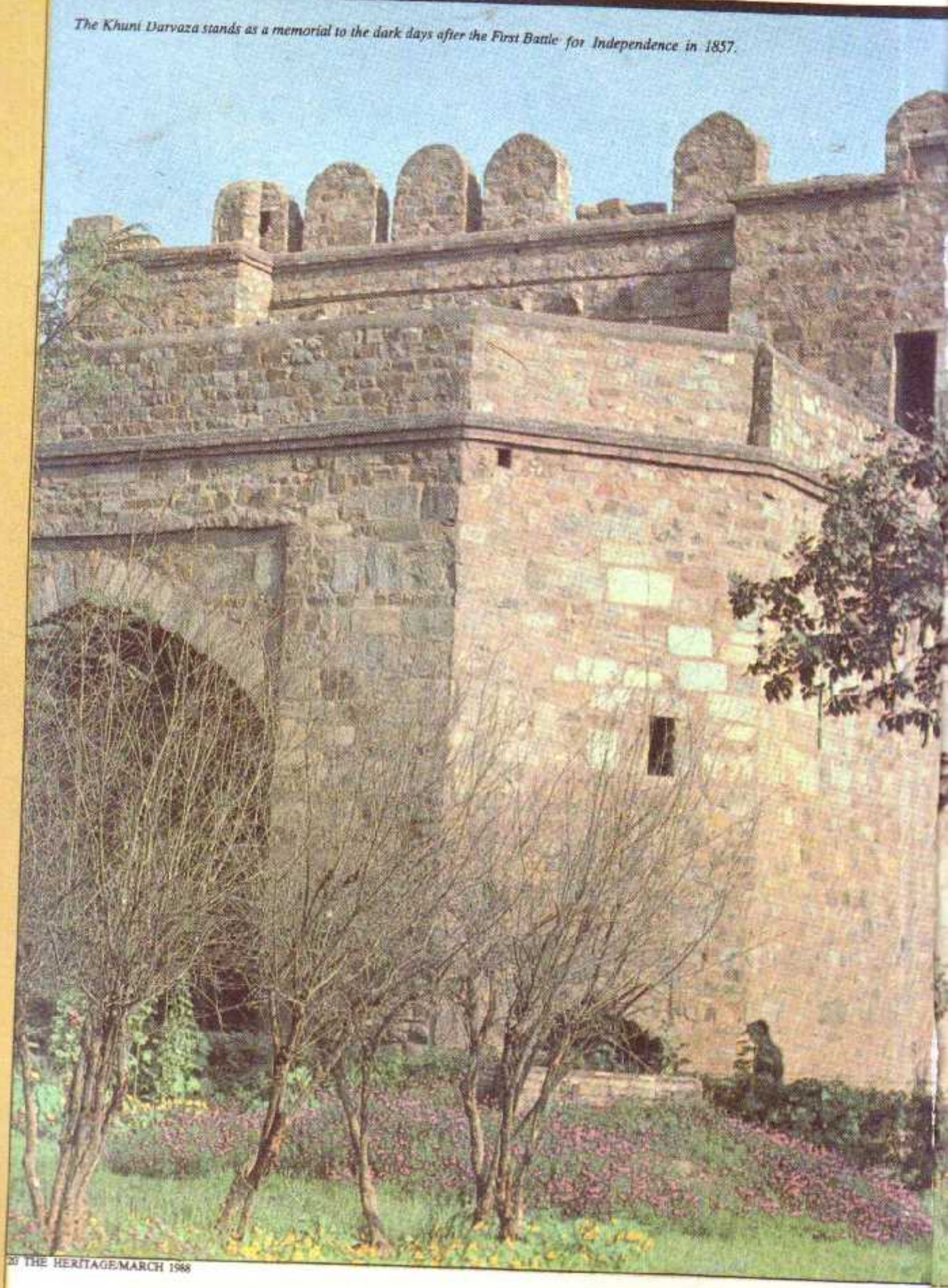


And the brocade from the north
And the perfumes and the oils
And the sandal for her breasts
And her marriage to a prince
Who loved her deeply for a lovely short year
And died of fever, in her arms.
She told us
That we had the oldest blood,
My brother and she and I,
The oldest blood in the world,
A blood thin and clear and fine
While in the veins of the always poor
And in the veins
Of the new-rich ones
Flowed a blood thick as gruel
And muddy as a ditch.
Finally she lay dying
In her eightysixth year,
A woman wearied by compromise,
Her legs quilted with arthritis
And with only a hard cough
For comfort;
I looked deep into her eyes,
Her poor bleary eyes,
And prayed that she would not grieve
So much about the house.
I had learnt by then
Most lessons of defeat,
Had found out that to grow rich
Was a difficult feat.
The house was crouching
On its elbows then
It looked that night in the pallid moon
So grotesque and alive.
When they burnt my great grandmother
Over logs of the mango tree
I looked once at the house
And then again and again
For I thought I saw the windows close
Like the closing of the eyes,
I thought I heard the pillars groan
and the dark rooms heave a sigh.
I set forth again
For other towns
Left the house with the shrine,
The sands,
The flowering shrubs
And the wide rabid mouth of the Arabian Sea.

* * *

I know the rats are running now
Across the darkened halls
They do not fear the dead
I know the white ants have reached my home
And have raised on walls
Strange totems of burial.
At night, in stillness,
From every town I live in
I hear the rattle of its death,
The noise of rafters creaking
And the window's whine.
I have let you down
Old house, I seek forgiveness;
O mother's mother's mother,
I have plucked your soul
Like a pip from a fruit
And have flung it into your pyre
Call me callous
Call me selfish
But do not blame my blood
So thin, so clear, so fine,
The oldest blood in the world
That remembers as it flows
All the gems and all the gold
And all the perfumes and the oils
And the stately
Elephant ride...

From: ***Kamala Das:*** *Collected Poems, Vol.1*



The Khuni Darvaza stands as a memorial to the dark days after the First Battle for Independence in 1857.

TALES OF TWO STREETS

The Street Of The Silversmiths

by Ruskin Bond **Photographs by Ganesh Saili**

ALTHOUGH it has seen hundreds of years of Moghul and later British rule, Chandni Chowk—Delhi's famed street of silversmiths—has not changed much in character even though its face now wears a slightly different look. It is still the heart of Old Delhi, still throbbing with vitality—even more so, perhaps, with the advent of the enterprising Punjabis.

The old buildings and landmarks are still evident, while the side-streets and lanes remain as narrow and tortuous as ever. Jewellers, cloth merchants, sweet sellers and importers of dried fruits may have changed identities but they were there in the past also. If, on a Sunday or holiday, the shops are closed, a great variety of wares will be displayed on the pavements—toys, silks and cottons, glassware, china, basketwork, furniture, carpets and perfumes—and the streets will be as busy as on any market day.

The frowning statue of Queen Victoria has gone, and so has the tram that used to crawl along the crowded thoroughfare at five miles an hour.

In the time of the Emperor Shah Jehan, chief architect of Old Delhi, Chandni Chowk was a wide avenue which extended from the Lahore Gate of the Red Fort to where the Fatehpuri Masjid stands. In the middle of the avenue flowed a pleasant watercourse—the channel from the West Jumna canal, built by Ali Mardan Khan, to supply the palace with water. This too has disappeared.

There were fine houses and gardens on either side of the Chowk in the days before the 1857 uprising. The remarkable Begum Samru had her town house in Chandni Chowk. She ruled her own small domain at Sardhana, near Meerut, where her husband, Walter Reinhardt,

A sweet shop with two hundred years of tradition.

Connaught Place, a shopper's dream!

a European soldier of fortune, had been given a *jagir* of land by Emperor Shah Alam. Her house today stands as the Central Bank.

Another family whose fortunes were closely linked with this part of Delhi was the Nehru Family. Pandit Gangadhar Nehru the Prime Minister's great great grandfather, was the *Kotwal* or officer-in-charge, of the police station in Chandni Chowk before 1857. A miniature painting of Pandit Gangadhar shows him wearing a Moghul court dress with a curved sword in his hand. He could easily have been mistaken for a Moghul nobleman had his features not been so distinctly Kashmiri. Their possessions were lost during the 1857 mutiny. Joining the exodus of refugees from Delhi the Nehrus moved to Agra. It was just as well. The British erected gallows in front of the *Kotwali* and hanged all those connected with the emperor's cause. Prince Dara, whose head was taken in a procession down the street, was one of them.

Chandni Chowk has often been called the richest street in Asia. Great treasures were hidden away in the shops of merchants and jewellers. With the repression that followed the 1857 uprising, the British sacked Delhi, just as it had been sacked over a hundred years previously by the Persian invader, Nadir Shah. It was from the balcony of the beautiful little Sonehri Masjid, overlooking the street, that Nadir Shah watched the massacre of Delhi's citizens. Over 30,000 people were killed, and much blood flowed through the wide streets of Chandni Chowk and Dariba. When Nadir Shah left Delhi 58 days later, he took with him a treasure estimated at upwards of thirty million sterling, including the famed Peacock Throne and the Kohinoor Diamond.

In spite of these and many other depredations, Chandni Chowk continued to be a great trading centre. One of the great merchant houses was that of Messrs. Kishan Chand and Sons, the firm that made the "Peacock Gown" worn by Lady Curzon at the Darbar Ball in 1903. It cost one thousand pounds. One of the firm's treasures was a large black marble table, brought from Agra, where it had once been in the possession of the Emperor Akbar. An American dealer offered two lakh rupees for it but the deal fell through. There is no trace left of that table today.

Chandni Chowk is steeped in history, associated with many famous people. Near the *Kotwali* is the Sisganj Gurdwara, erected to mark the traditional site of the martyrdom of the Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, who was killed by Aurangzeb. Further down the street is the Khuni Darvaza, Gate of Blood where the last of Nadir Shah's massacres took place. At one end of the street stands the Jain Temple, with its famed bird hospital; at the other end is the Fatehpuri Mosque, constructed by Fatehpuri Begum, one of the wives of Shah Jehan, in 1650. On the south side of the Mosque, a street leads to the Lal Kuan Bazaar, and on the north side another leads to the Lahore Gate and the smaller Sarhadi Mosque, built by another wife of Shah Jehan.

Greater Delhi is a city of tombs and ruins; it has seen the rise and fall of many dynasties. But there are no ruins in Chandni Chowk. The street of the silversmiths is indestructible, the heart of both the old and the new.

The Street Of The Red Well

The sun beats down on the sweltering city of Old Delhi. Not a breath of air stirs in the narrow, winding streets. This old walled city, now over three hundred years old, has no open spaces, no fountains, no sidewalks, no shady avenues. During the reign of the Emperor Shah Jehan, a canal ran down the centre of the main thoroughfare, Chandni Chowk, but the canal has long since been covered over, and the Jumna river, from which the water was channelled, lies beyond the Emperor's fort, the Red Fort of Delhi, where the Prime Minister speaks to the multitude every year on the Independence Day.

It is not water that I seek most, but shelter from the heat and glare of the overhead sun. I have chosen what is quite possibly the hottest day in May—the temperature over 105 degrees Fahrenheit—to go walking in search of—what is a story or perhaps an adventure. Or that is what I set out to do. The heat of the day has willed otherwise. I may be ready for an adventure, but no one else is interested. I am the only one walking the streets from choice.

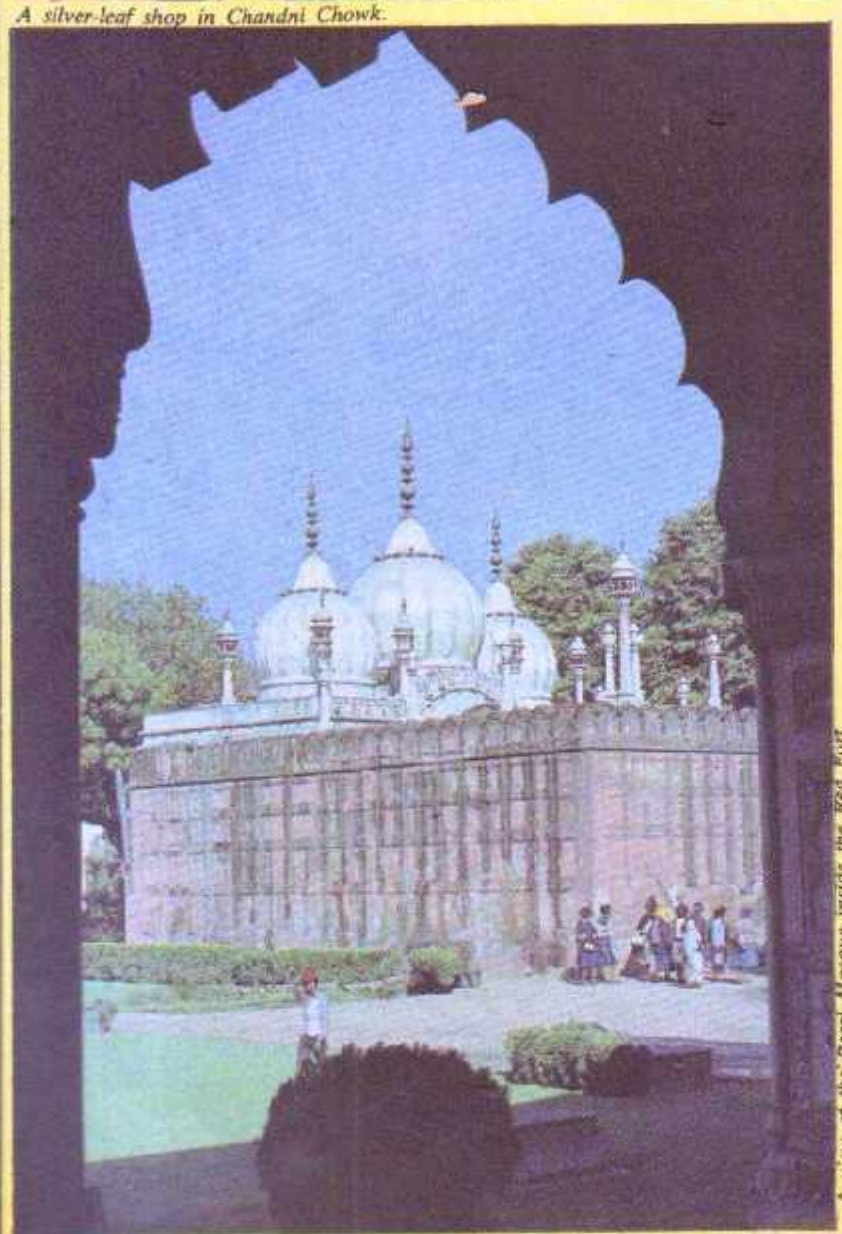
Shopkeepers nod drowsily beneath whirring ceiling-fans. The pavement barber has taken his customer into the shelter of an awning. A fortune-teller has decided that there is nothing to predict and has fallen asleep under the same awning. A vegetable-seller sprinkles water on his vegetables in a dispirited fashion. Those cauliflowers were fresh an hour ago; they look old already. Even the flies are drowsy. Instead of buzzing feverishly from place to place, they stagger about on tired legs.

It is the pigeons who have found all the coolest places. These birds have made the old city their own. New Delhi is for the crows who like to have a tree to sleep in, even if they take their meals from out-kitchens and verandas. But the pigeons prefer buildings and the older the buildings, the better. They are familiar with every cool alcove or shady recess in the crumbling walls of neglected mosques and mansions.

A fat, supercilious pigeon watches me from the window-ledge above a jeweller's shop. The pigeon's forebears settled here long before the British thought of taking Delhi. Conquerors have come and gone—Nadir Shah the Persian, Madhav Rao the Mahratta, Gulam Kadir the Rohilla—and generations of goldsmiths and silversmiths. Hindus and Muslims, have made and lost fortunes in the city, but nothing has disturbed the tranquil life of these pigeons. Their gentle cooing can always be heard when

A mid-day break in Chandni Chowk on a sultry day.

A silver-leaf shop in Chandni Chowk.



A view of the Pearl Mosque inside the Red Fort.

Bhagirath Palace that was once the residence of the famous Begum Samru of Sardhana.

there is a lull in the jagged symphony of traffic noise. How do they manage to sound so cool?

But here's welcome relief for humans—a shady corner in Lal Kuan Bazaar, (Street of the Red Well), where an old man provides drinking-water to thirsty wayfarers such as myself. His water is stored in a *surahi*, an earthenware jug which keeps the water sweet and cool. I bend down, cup my hands, and receive the sparkling liquid as my benefactor tilts the *surahi* towards me.

Lal Kuan. The Red Well. Of course it is no longer here. But the street still bears its name.

And I like to think that here, in the middle of the street, where a bullock has gone to sleep forcing the cyclists to make a detour, there was once a well made of dark red brick, where the water bubbled forth all day.

Imprisoned beneath the soil, held down by the crowded commercial houses of this old quarter, the water must still be there; it gives nourishment to an old peepul tree that grows beside a temple.

It is the only tree in the street. It juts out from the temple wall growing straight and tall, dwarfing the two-storey houses. One of its roots, breaking through the ground, has curled up to provide a smooth, well-worn seat.

And it is cool here, beneath the peepul. Even when there is no breeze, the slender heart-shaped leaves revolve prettily, creating their own currents of air. No wonder the sages of old found it a good tree to sit beneath. No wonder they called it sacred.

On the other side of the road, a tall iron doorway is set in a high wall. Doors like this were only built in the previous century, when a wealthy merchant's house had to be a miniature fortress as well as a residence. I cannot see over the wall and I would like to know what lies behind the door. Perhaps a side-street, perhaps a market, perhaps a garden, perhaps.....

The door opens; not easily, because it has been left closed for a long time, but slowly and with much complaint. And beyond the door there is only an empty courtyard, covered with rubble, the ruins of an old house. I am about to turn away when I hear a deep tremendous murmur.

It is the cooing of many pigeons.

But where are they?

I advance further into the ruin, and there, opening out in front of me, ready to receive me as the rabbit-hole was ready to receive Alice, is an old, disused well.

I peer down into its murky depths. It is dark, very dark, down there; but that is where the pigeons live, in the walls of this lost long-forgotten well shut away from the rest of the city.

I cannot see any water. So I drop a pebble over the side. It strikes the wall, and then, with a soft plop, touches water. At that instant there is a rush of air and a tremendous beating of wings, and flocks of pigeons—thirty or forty of them—fly out of the well, streak upwards, circle the building, and then falling into formation, wheel overhead, the sun gleaming white on their underwings.

I have discovered their secret. Now I know why they always look so cool, so refreshed, while we who walk the streets of Old Delhi do so with parched mouths and drooping limbs.

The pigeons are the only ones who still know about the Red Well.

The flower-sellers outside the Jain Hospital for Birds.

The Bell

by Champak Chatterji

HIS habit was grimy and frayed. On his face there was dust and the sag of a dull tired skin exposed to the sun and wind, hunger and thirst. He had searched all the land. He had crossed rivers and traversed through desert and forest. Now foot weary he had come to the mountains. His body felt as a parchment and the inside of his mouth was dry and full of one long deep thirst. He would have rested and driven the agony out of him but his eyes burned with a strange fever that moved him onward. Ahead lay the last of his journey which would bring fulfilment or defeat.

At the end of the day, he came to the pass in the great mountain wall. In the sun's last glimmer, he saw the small monastery below and climbed down the rough rock steps to enter its precincts. The monastery yard was empty and so was the single cell that opened on it. The traveller crossed the emptiness and went to the inner sanctum. All was silent and the interior dark save where an image shimmered gold in the light of a wick lamp. When his eyes had adjusted more, the traveller saw a deeper shadow in the darkness. A solitary old monk sat on the floor, his face gaunt and ageless in the half shadow half light.

The traveller bowed to the deity and touched the hem of the monk's garment. The eyes of the ancient were silent and deep. "I have come so that you might help me; give me what I have to seek," said the traveller. Eyes rested on him and in a voice out of the depths of the mountain, the monk answered. "You have come from afar seeking. You have searched but in vain. But first you must eat and rest. At night we shall meet again." The traveller washed and ate a little. Then slumber overcame his tired limbs. When he awoke, the air was cool and there were stars in the dark velvet of the sky.

The deep hours of the night began. Inside the prayer room the lamp was dim. The image was one of pale fire. The ancient took the traveller by the hand and sat him before the image. "Close your eyes," he said, "I shall now ring a bell and you must follow its sound to the uttermost with all your being till all is silent. Only then must you open your eyes. Remember to follow the sound with your ears and your mind. This is my only prayer and so it must be yours."

The traveller waited, his eyes closed. The old monk moved to the altar where a bell hung. There was but a single stroke—deep and hymnal. The walls of the prayer room caught and echoed it. Then the sound spread to the yard and the mountain wall outside—a resonance that multiplied a hundred, a thousand fold. Sound upon sound in reams, wave on wave, retreating and advancing. The traveller sat still, motionless like the flame and image and listened. The thunder and boom passed away, came the ringing, then the distant chimes and beyond still the careless raptures and whisperings. Then nothing but the inner sound deep and vibrant in him. Finally silence.

The traveller opened his eyes. His vision was one of restful fragrance. The dark penumbral chamber seemed filled with liquid light. He rose and came out under the stars. The mountains, the sable sky, the air, was full of that strange luminiscence. His own body was bathed in a glow.

The old monk was however gone. The traveller searched for him in the yard and beyond and then not finding him, went inside the prayer room again. The lamp burned dimmer. He poured a little butter on the wick. The flame climbed and on the wall where the shadows were steady the traveller saw himself. Old and gaunt, the shadow looked back at him, the shadow of the old monk.

The traveller, sat before the endless image and waited. Behind him he heard a footfall and looked. He saw a man enter foot weary and sore—yet with eyes full of search. The new traveller.

THE HERITAGE

GLIMPSES OF APRIL 1988 NUMBER

DHAULI:
The site of the great Kalinga War which altered the course of India's history.

LET US GIVE A CHANCE TO THE WRITERS IN PUNJAB:
From politicians to police, from people of goodwill to religious leaders—all have done their bit to bring peace to Punjab: Do writers have a role too? The veteran Punjabi writer, K.S. Duggal, makes a forceful plea.

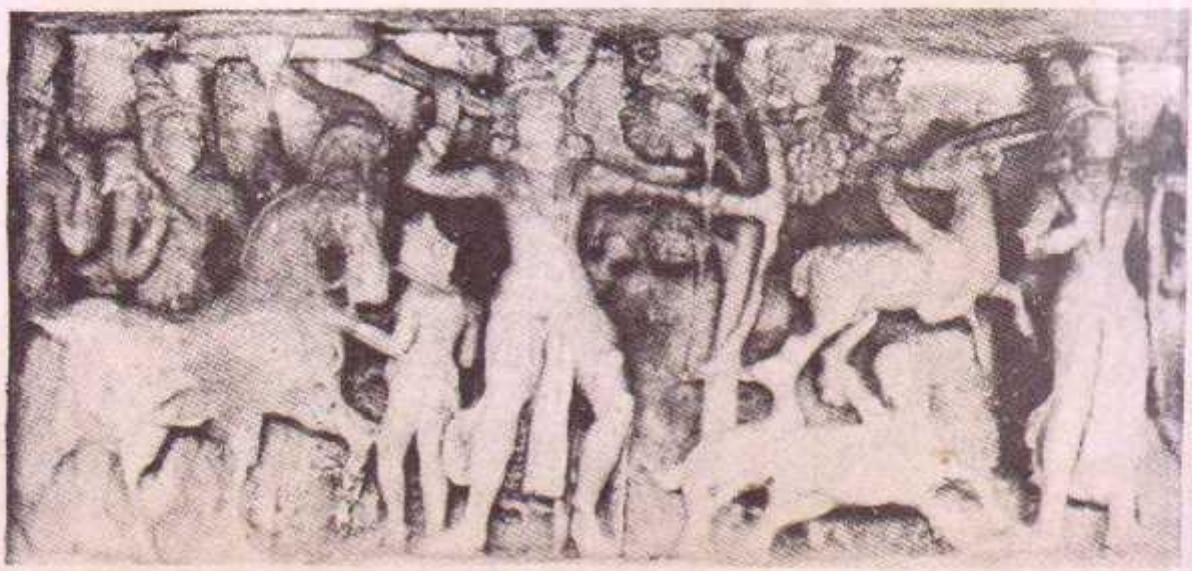
OUR MANY SELVES:
Dr. A.S. Dalal, the psychologist, shows a simple and practical way towards a harmonious personality, in the concluding part of the article. (The first part appears in this issue)

REVELATORY DREAMS:
Account of more prophetic dreams as well as puzzling dreams revealing things unknown.

BANGANGA:
Touching the Arabian Sea off the city of Bombay is this little-known retreat bearing the memory of Parasuram. By Geeta Kapadia.

LIGHT FROM THE PYRE:
A novelette figuring a typical Indian revolutionary—by Prema Nandakumar, as book feature.

STORIES AND OTHER FEATURES



Give and take!

HOLI:

THE FESTIVAL OF SPRING

by Sister Nivedita

Photographs by Liaquat Ali Bhatti

The most popular of legends on the origin of the Holi Festival goes back to the mythical era on the eve of the incarnation of Narasimha. The demon-king, Hiranyakashyipu, did his best to convert his little son Prahlada to his anti-Vishnu philosophy. Failing, the demon-king decided to destroy the boy. In that too, when various methods tried failed to yield result, he asked his sister the demoness Holika, to hold the boy in her lap. Suddenly fire would be put to her seat. She, by her magic, would emerge unscathed whereas the hapless child, held tight by her, would be consumed. But the reverse happened. The demoness was burnt to death. The child emerged unscathed. The festival celebrates this triumph of devotion and innocence over trickery. For ages when the Indian life remained slow-paced, the Holi, whatever be its origin and significance, helped the folks to shed their reservations and inhibitions and to come together in a spirit of abandon. Thus it had a great psychological role to play in the life of the community. In her Studies from an Eastern Home, Sister Nivedita gives her candid reflections on this joyous festival.

Dance before the commencement of polo; a tradition from the regal days.

ON full-moon of the beautiful month of *Phalgun*—that month when the *asoka* tree and the mango are in bloom, when the foliage buds of the leaf-almond are long and slender against the blue, and when the scarlet plumes of the *palash* stand out on its naked branches—occurs the Holi festival, or Dol-jatra of some long pre-Hindu people. Pre-Hindu they certainly were although Hinduism has done its best to absorb and assimilate the poetry they brought to it. For the asoka tree, they say, only blooms when the footfall is heard by it of a beautiful woman, and fragrance of mango-blossoms is one of the five arrows of Madan's bow—two morsels of the folk-lore that clearly belong to the spring and nature festival. Madan, the Indian Love, is always depicted as a young man, not as a child, who once upon a time went clad in flowers—nay, his very weapon was made of them. And as he wore it loose and unstrung beside his quiver, the eager bees hanging above it gave it its proper form of the bow. So at least we are told in Kalidas's immortal fragment. Wherever Madan is

An artiste of the royal dance troupe.

Celebrating Holi on the streets.

mentioned amongst the educated, Kalidas must needs be remembered, for his was the brain that gave the beautiful young archer his life-myth, and to his poem must all go who would learn of the impious faring forth together of Love and his comrade Spring to shoot at the heart of the Great God, and of the fate that befell their enterprise in the sacred grove of meditation. All the love of the Indian soil and Indian nature that must have spoken in the wild poetic souls of the earliest aborigines is here poured, together with his own thought and learning, into the crucible of a great Hindu poet, to form the poem of the birth of Kartik the War-Lord. But long before Kalidas took up his lute, the Indian feast of Eros had been Indianised, being interpreted as an incident in the idyll of the sporting of the child Krishna in the meadows of Brindavan. Nothing is so exquisite as this—the tale of the divine childhood as a cow-herd amongst the herd-boys and herd-girls beside the Jumna. At the age of eleven Krishna passes off the peasant stage for ever, but years after, when his forest-friends visit him in his palace, they refuse to recognise their old playmate whom they now see in kingly robes, and will not be satisfied till he has donned once more for them his childhood's crown of a peacock's feather, with flute and simple village garments, thus revealing himself again to their adoring love as the same Gopala they knew of old.

Everyone who knows anything of the village customs of the North-West has seen the place that swinging holds in the Indian peasant's conception of a festival. Boys and girls, young men and young women, like English rustics at a fair, swing and shout, applaud and deride each other, with never a suggestion of that dignity which we commonly associate with Oriental humanity. It is wonderful how easily, with a rope and a few bamboos and a wooden seat, a swing can be made for a frolic. But in the Himalayas, near every temple, we find swing-posts of deodar and stout iron chains. Clearly there was a time when the festival was celebrated everywhere, and since Brindavan must so obviously have known the giddy delight, it followed that a swinging ceremony became part of the religious ritual of the altar on the day of the Spring Feast. In other words, Hindustan, by means of the Krishna legend, had absorbed into itself, and in doing so, lent a greater dignity of interpretation to, the Festival of Love of the country folk....

Out in the streets meanwhile the boys are at war with passing pedestrians, all of whom are bound on this privileged day to submit to being pelted with red powder. Yellow powders are sometimes used, but this, say the best judges, is a mistake. The red alone is correct, symbolising the sand of the Jumna, all stained with the blood of the demons, whom Krishna, slew. The wild and boisterous, impatient of the priest's slow blessing, buy the powder straight from the shops and throw it. But gentler spirits wait, playing only with that which is duly offered and sanctified in worship. And great is the reward of their patience, for such is the virtue of the blest powder that it confers immunity, it is said, from all diseases of the season!

Here then in India to this day is played out every year the old-time drama of the peasant in the spring; played, too, in a fashion of which, however it may annoy the Philistine, neither the scholar nor the poet could bear to sacrifice a single point. The joy of simple peoples in the bridal of nature, and the festival of the great democracy of caste and sex—these are two impulses that have given birth to all carnivals and *Holi Pujas* that the world has even known. And behind, watching over them, suggesting a thought of poetry here, a touch of sanctity there, and working to moderate possible excess only by her own benign presence and her kindly tolerance, stands the ancient Mother-Church of Hinduism. There was a wonderful dramatic fitness in the fact that in the fulness of time it was on the full-moon of *Phalgun*, the day of the *Holi* festival, that Chaitanya, apostle of rapture, lover of the poor and lowly, the national saint and the preacher of democracy was born in Bengal.

CHANGING PASSION INTO LOVE SUBLIME

Holi assumes a very different tone at Barsana, a small town near Mathura, traditionally believed to be the birthplace of Radha, the mystic lover and adorer of Krishna. The women of Barsana come out in strength and challenge the menfolk of Nandagram, where Krishna had passed his eventful childhood, to throw colour on them! The menfolk accept the challenge and act the next day!

Of all the legends which have been set forward to explain the origin of Holi, the most intriguing one relates to the destruction and resurrection of Kamadeva or Madana. This ambitious God of Love had tried to inspire passion in the person of Lord Siva. He had shot his sweet but powerful arrow, which had never failed to achieve the desired result, at this ascetic God. But this time the result was most unexpected. A third eye opened up on the forehead of the meditative Siva. A jet of fire emanating from it reduced Kamadeva to ashes.

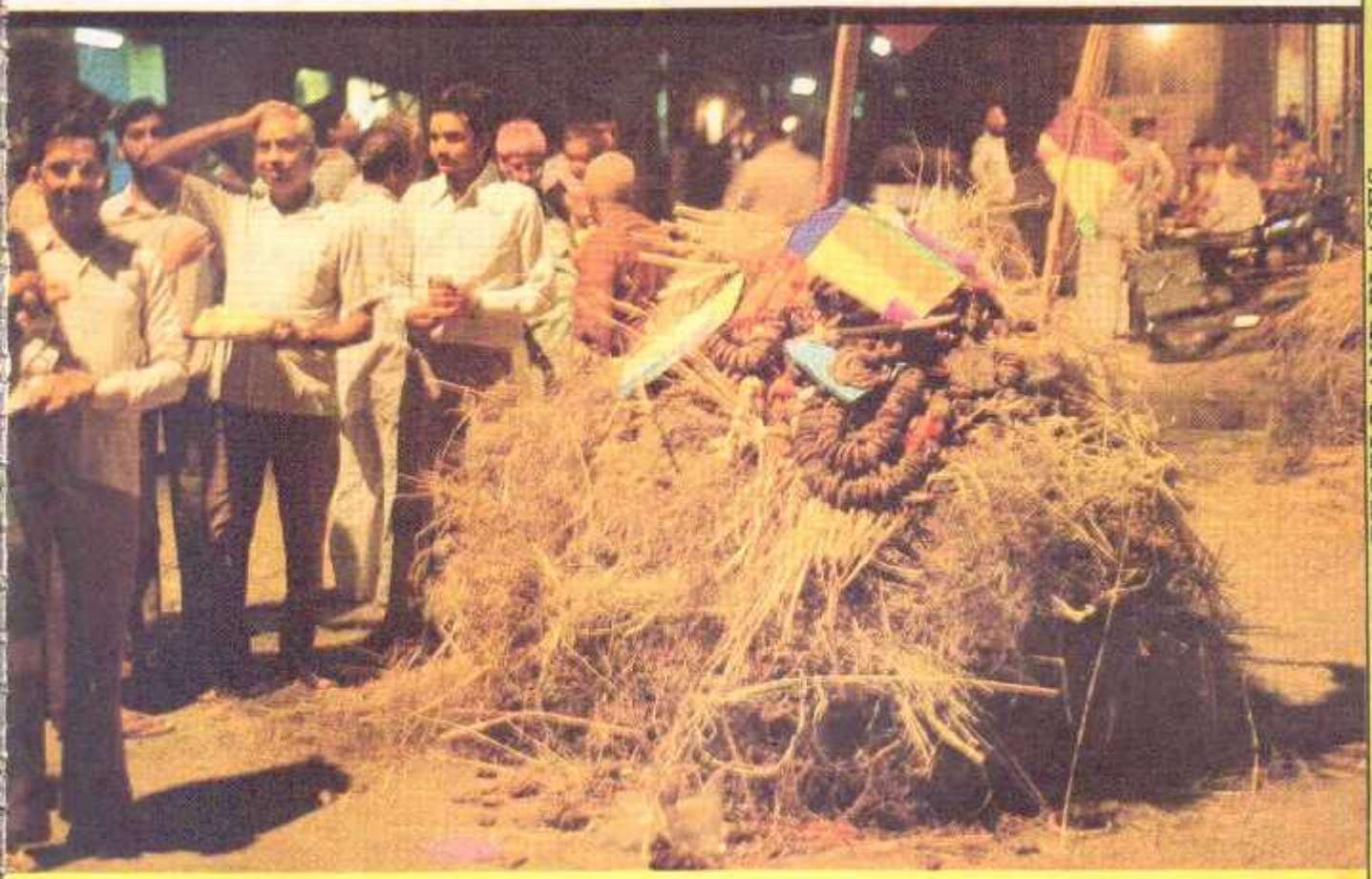
Kamadeva, of course, emerged from the ashes, when the Lord's compassion acted upon him, as Ananga—without a physical form. Fire is the mystic purifier. And the fire from Siva's eye would not only purify, but also transform. Perhaps the incident symbolises the transformation of raw passion into sublime love. What has happened at the plane of the gods, remains as a promise for men. Holi celebrates this possibility. The exuberant celebration of Holi itself is, in a way, a process of sublimation of unbridled enthusiasm into a social ritual.

SIDELIGHTS ON THE HOLI

by Hari Shankar Sharma

Before the finale, *Holika Dahan* or setting fire to Holi, is reached, the month-long festival beginning with the pitching of *Holi-Ka-Danda* (the staff of Holi), is marked by group dancing, singing and indulging in a variety of pranks and jokes.

Groups of youngsters would place a shining coin or a promissory note or a piece of jewellery (mostly counterfeit, to avoid risk) on the road. A passer-by would innocently try to pick it up, sure that no one was watching him. Suddenly the boys would emerge laughing from their hidings, shouting *Holi Hai Bhai Holi Hai* (It is Holi, brother, it is Holi) to the embar-



Devotees offering farewell to the demonness Holika before consigning it to flames.

Colours for sale.

(kettledrums) from the Tripolia summon all the chiefs and accompany them in procession to the Chaugan, their *Champ de Mars*..... the Rana passes an hour listening to the songs.... While the Rana and his chiefs are thus amused, the buffoons and itinerant groups mix with cavalcade, throw powder in their eyes or deluge their garments with the crimson solution."

It was customary in the princely states of Rajasthan and elsewhere to hold a Holi Durbar. Sir A.C. Lothian recalls, "The Holi durbar in Charkhari was one of the most amusing spectacles I was privileged to witness. The Maharaja, like a good-natured old Father Christmas, sat on a dais with his nobles and officials lined up alongside and in front of him. Just behind the dais there was an antiquated fire-engine operated by coolies with hand-pumps and two large barrels of red fluid. Whenever the Maharaja wished to show anyone special favour, he turned the nozzle of the fire-engine on him and drenched him in the red fluid. So the condition of the courtiers after an hour of this can well be imagined."

On the last day of *Phalgun*, at an hour appointed by the astrologer, the Holi, consisting of a stack or heap of cowdung cakes, fire wood, grass etc. is set to fire amidst great noise and rejoicing in each *Mohalla* (ward) usually at cross-roads. Ladies worship the Holi to ward off evil influences. Astrologers make forecasts for the year on the basis of the direction of the wind at the time.

TWINKLE TOES..... THE AMAZING SHRINKING DOG

by Kate Molloy

They used to call Betty Inwood's featherweight pet 'pint-sized.' But now she has slimmed down into a Babycham glass and is getting smaller every day.

FEATHERWEIGHT: Betty Inwood puts her dog Twinkle Toes on the scales. She weighs just 12 oz.

THEY used to call puppy Twinkle Toes pint-sized. But not any more. For the amazing, pocket-sized eight-week-old Pekinese is SHRINKING by the day. And now she slips easily into a Babycham glass. Twinkle Toes' owner Betty Inwood says that, any day now, her dwindling pet will fit into an eggcup.

The puppy is one of a miniature breed. But even by dog fanciers' standards, she is amazingly tiny. Her two brothers are three times her size already.

Twinkle Toes, at 2½ inches tall, weighs in at a featherweight (12 oz.). Brothers Snowboots and Snowstorm are already a sturdy 3lb, the normal weight of a miniature Pekinese.

Betty, who has bred Pekinese for 30 years, is baffled by her ever-diminishing pet. She said: "At first I thought my eyes were deceiving me. But as her coat gets bigger, she seems to shrink."

"Soon her coat will be too big for her. She can easily sit in a Babycham glass, but if you try her in anything else, she disappears. Her feet and legs are as small as my fingernail."

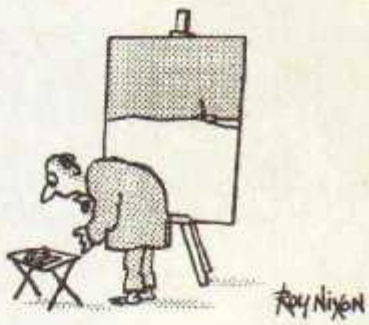
Betty, of Chesterfield, Derbyshire, has tried giving Twinkle Toes giant meals. The puppy jumps into the bowl, vanishes among the food, and happily munches it clean. But still she keeps on shrinking. Betty, a dog expert, says even a vet can't help.

She adds: "Because Twinkle Toes is so small I have to carry her around with me all the time. If I left her alone with her brothers, they would probably squash her."

"She sleeps in a tiny cabinet because her legs are not long enough to climb into a dog basket, and I can't let her out in case a cat gets hold of her."

Meanwhile, Twinkle Toes gets happily tinier. Betty said: "I just hope she doesn't disappear altogether. She's worth £250."

I'm sorry, madam, but a final demand for your gas bill hardly constitutes a threatening letter!



Oh hell! I've forgotten the green!

He's the recording angel

PUPPY LOVE: Twinkle Toes sits comfortably in a Babycham glass

THE GOOD OLD FRIEND OF THE FISHERFOLK

by Viman

How old is the relationship of man with the sea? As old as man's habitation along the sea-coast.

Fear and wonder must have marked the earliest phase of man's attitude towards the sea, but it could not have taken long for him to realise that the sea contained a variety of wealth for him.

The catamaran is a simple development over the primeval means he applied to explore the sea — launching a single log or a simple combination of two or three pieces of log. Even today the device does not possess any greater sophistication, though for ages it has been the most effective aid to the fisherfolk living along the coasts of India.

The catamaran, with little or no variation, is called *Pansi* in some coastal areas of Bengal and Orissa. Light, swift and handy, it is also hardy enough to withstand the rigours it encounters in constantly being lashed by the waves.

1. Taming the wood to pliability.
2. The three parts of the catamaran waiting to be joined.
3. The completed catamarans basking in the sun.
4. Ready for plying.
5. March into the sea.

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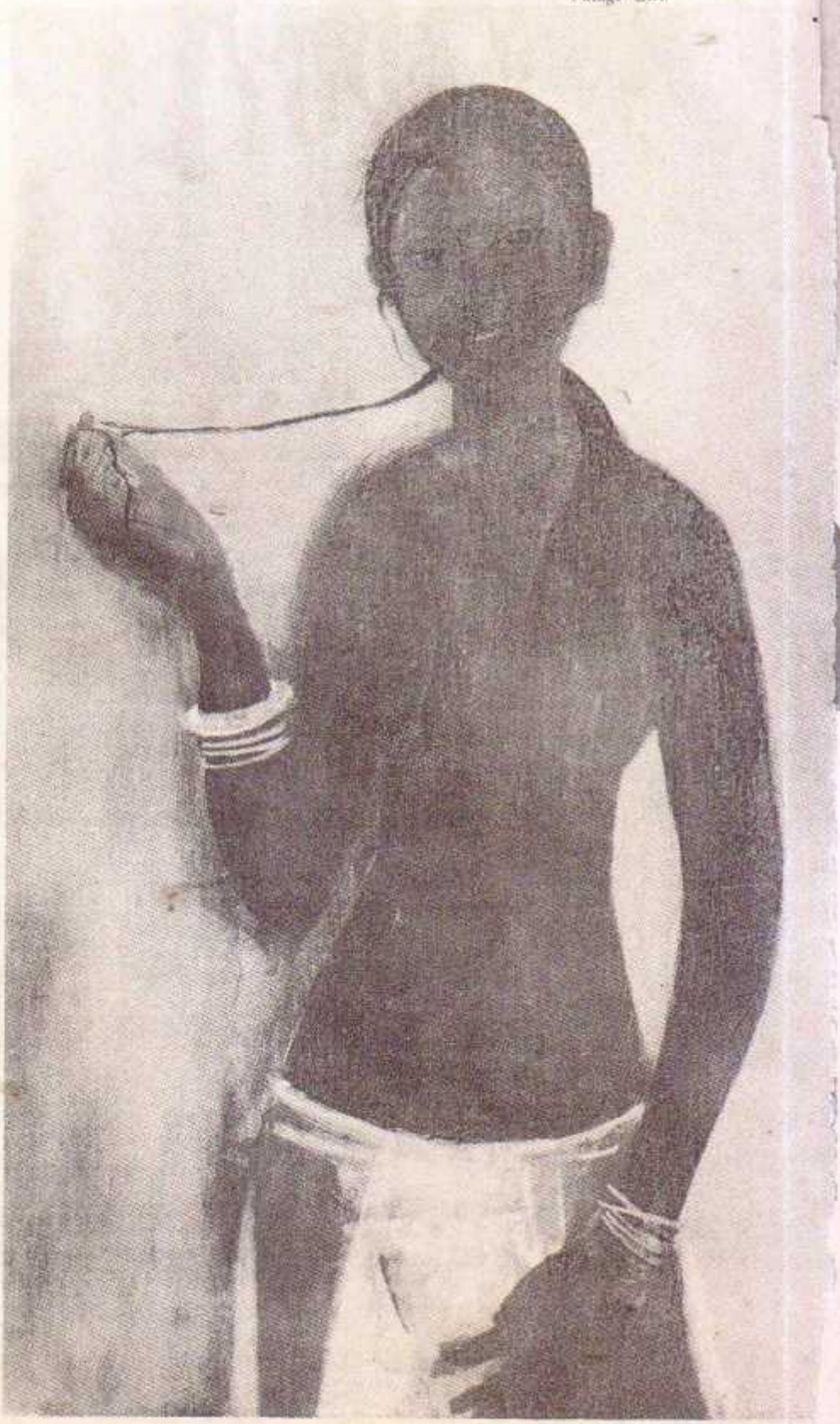
AMRITA SHER-GIL

by Varsha Das

THE period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was a very significant one for Indian Art. Miniature paintings were gradually losing their popularity. Already for several decades the British had been infusing the Indian mind and life with occidental education and culture; and lately, in order to re-establish the native ethos of Indian art, there had emerged the Bengal school of fine arts on the one hand and some powerful individual artists on the other. Among the latter Jamini Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore and Amrita Sher-Gil developed their own style and content, distinctly different from that of the artists of the Bengal school.

Amrita Sher-Gil was different from the other three in her family background in the sense that she was the daughter of an Indian father and a Hungarian mother. Her father Umrao Singh Sher-Gil belonged to a feudal

Village Girl.



Young Man with Apples.

Self-Portrait.

family of Majitha near Amritsar. He met Marie Antoinette, who came to India in 1911 with Princess Bamba, the granddaughter of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Umrao Singh's father had fought the British with the Sikhs, but later on joined hands with the British and was rewarded with the title of Raja and ample estates in Punjab.

Unlike his anglophile soldier father, Umrao Singh was deeply interested in philosophy and religion. A scholar in Sanskrit and Persian, he could speak five languages fluently. The handsome Umrao Singh was attracted by charming Marie Antoinette. Soon after marriage they went to Budapest where Marie's father was a government official. Amrita was born there on the 30th January 1913. A year later, in March 1914, was born another daughter, Indira.

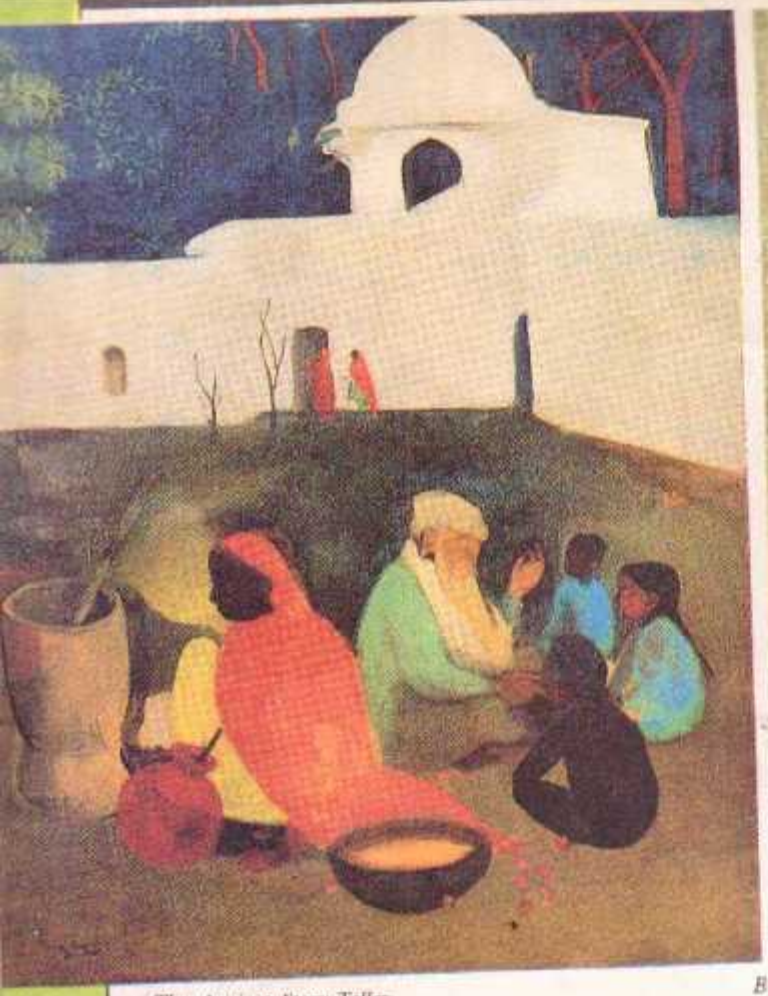
The children spent their childhood in Hungary. Amrita began to draw and paint from the age of five. Their life in Europe was not at all comfortable, for the first World War had generated widespread physical and economic insecurity. The Sher-Gil family decided to return to India in 1921. They settled down in Simla. Feeling that her children would get a better education in Europe, Marie took them to Italy in 1924. But Amrita hated her school in Florence. Eventually the children had to be brought back to Simla.

In 1927 Amrita's Indologist uncle came to India. Himself a painter once, admired the way Amrita pursued her drawing and painting. He suggested that the time was ripe for Amrita to draw from live models. Thus she began sketching and painting almost anything and everything she found around her.

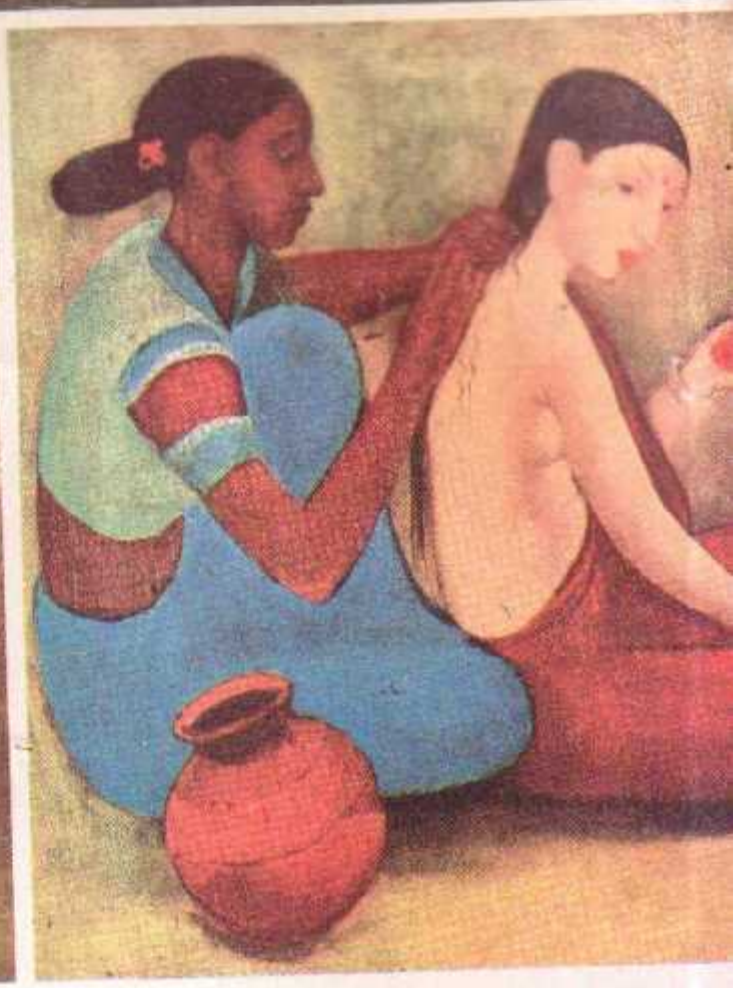
Pleased with her endeavour, Amrita's mother thought that Amrita should go once more to Europe, this time for a training in Art. The family thus set sail for Paris, the centre of European culture in those days. Amrita joined the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*. She sketched, drew and painted diligently during those years in Paris. She was attracted towards the paintings of Gauguin and Modigliani, the famous European painters of that period. Her association with them had a great impact on her own work.

All these years Amrita had been painting in water-colours and drawing with charcoal and pencil. In 1930 she began to use oil colours, and painted many oils, doing all kinds of subjects including still-lifes, portraits and self-portraits. Her academic competence soon received recognition. She won the Gold Medal in 1933 for her *Young Girls*.

"Though the self-portraits are mediocre as paintings, the personal image that Amrita projects is significant: she paints herself against a flaming red background, revealing her desire to assert the individuality of her character in a dramatic way. She painted with great speed, not



The Ancient Story-Teller.



Bride's Toilet

giving much thought to what she was doing, and usually got carried away by the very act of painting," says Vivan Sundaram, Amrita's nephew and a contemporary Indian painter.

In September 1934 Amrita wrote a letter to her parents saying: "You know that I have decided to return to India. Now I will give you my reasons.

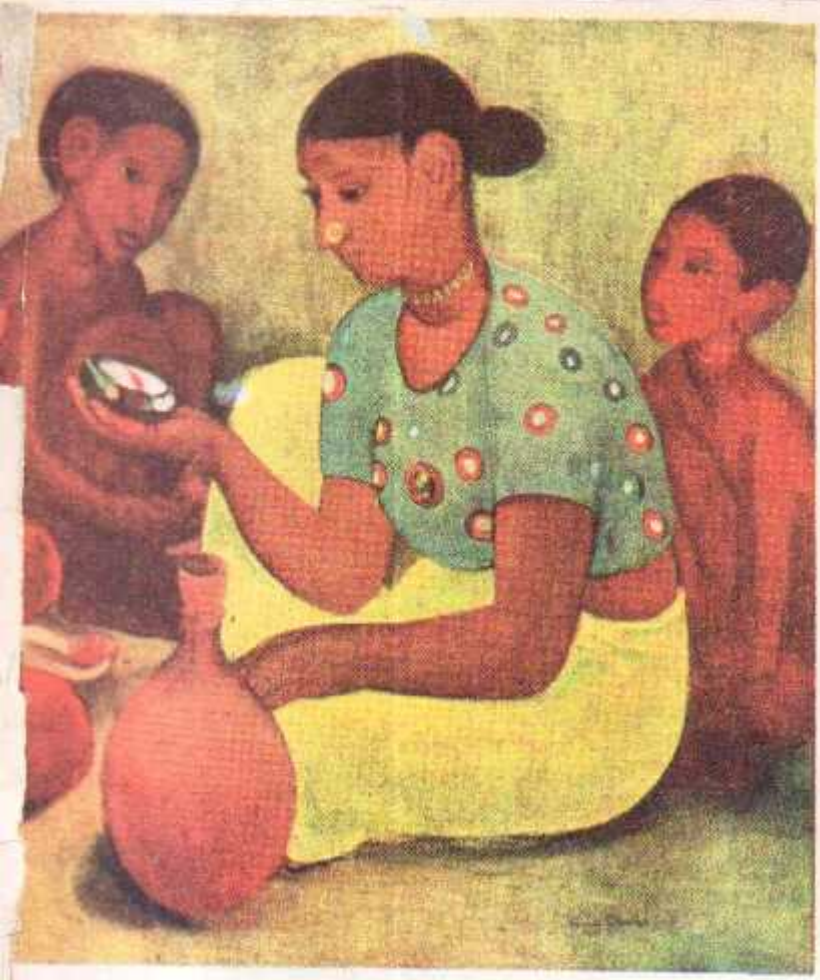
"I wish to return primarily in the interest of my artistic developments. I now need new sources of inspiration (and here you will perceive, Duci, how utterly mistaken you are when you speak of our lack of interest in India, in its culture, its people, its literature, all of which interest me profoundly and which I wish to get acquainted with, and I think I will find it in India). Our long stay in Europe has aided me to discover, as it were, India. Modern art has led me to the comprehension and appreciation of Indian painting and sculpture. It seems paradoxical, but I know for certain, that had we not come away to Europe, I should perhaps never have realised that a fresco from Ajanta or a small piece of sculpture in the Musee Guimet is worth more than the whole Rendissance! In short, how I wish to go back to appreciate India and its worth."

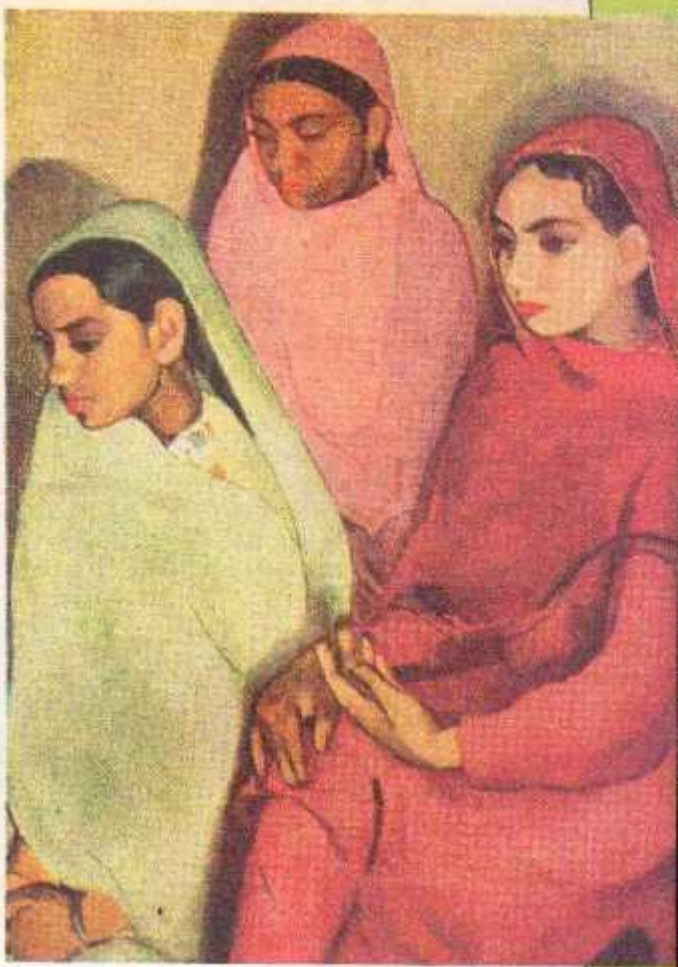
Towards the end of 1934 Amrita did return to India. After spending some time in her paternal house in Amritsar, she went to Simla. She got actively involved in the contemporary art activities of that town and of India. She began to paint portraits and that became a source of livelihood. She saw Indian poverty as a subject to paint. Her *Mother India*, *The Beggars*, *Woman with Sunflower* and *The Three Girls* belong to this period.

She used to participate in exhibitions and competitions in Europe. She continued doing the same in India. In September 1935 she was awarded a prize at the Simla Fine Arts Exhibition, but she declined it and while returning the prize money, she said,

"I should be glad to waive it in favour of some other more deserving artist, who, I have no doubt, would feel greatly honoured to receive such a distinction... And since my work—I am referring to the five pictures that were rejected and which incidentally were incomparably superior in every way to the five that were accepted—does not come up to the standard of the Simla Fine Arts Society, I shall in future be obliged to resign myself to exhibiting them merely at the Grand Salon, Paris, of which I happen to be an Associate...."

Amrita took keen interest in miniature paintings, she was impressed by the Rajput and Basohli artists. By this time it had become inevitable for her to learn more about Indian art and culture, to be able to get the feel of the soil and also to rejuvenate





Group of Three Girls.

her own creativity. She visited the Ajanta and Ellora caves. Ellora, she thought, was magnificent and Ajanta curiously subtle and fascinating. She also went to some towns in South India. On her return she painted the famous *The Bride's Toilet, The Brahmacharis* and *South Indian Villagers Going to Market.* In all these paintings her figures sit on the canvas with great ease and poise. Her colours and forms remind of her association with Gauguin. Just as Gauguin went to Martinique and Tahiti to discover himself, Amrita came to India. She once said that her painting underwent a change as soon as she put her foot on the Indian soil, not only in subject and spirit, but in technical expression becoming more fundamentally Indian.

In June 1938 Amrita went to Hungary and got married to her cousin Dr. Victor Egan. Her choice did not make her parents happy, but she was an individualist. She wanted to be independent of her parents. Marrying an Indian, she thought, meant leading a life of an 'ideal wife'! So she decided on Egan who would accept her as she was. She spent a whole year in Hungary after her marriage and continued painting. The works of this period were entirely European in style and mood.

The threat of another World War was looming in the air. Amrita and her husband were opposed to Fascism. They came back to India in 1939 via Sri Lanka and lived in the village of Saraya near Gorakhpur. They began to live a comfortable life but the surroundings were not inspiring or stimulating. She could hardly paint. She got suffocated in that small society and developed a fear complex. The very thought of facing a blank canvas frightened her. She could barely do four paintings during her stay at Saraya. These are *The Ancient Story Teller, The Swing, The Bride* and *Woman Resting on Charpoy.*

It was impossible for the couple to live any more in that claustrophobic place. In September 1941 they went to Lahore, culturally an active city. There were many writers, poets and artists who got together frequently and had stimulating discussions. Amrita could breathe a new life in Lahore.

But even before she could complete 29, her life came to a sudden end on the 5th December, 1941.

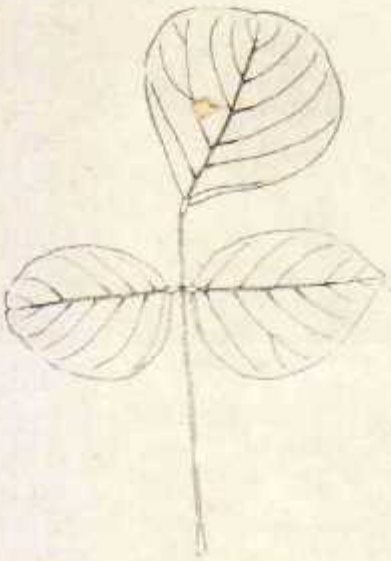
Even in such a short span of life Amrita could create a place for herself in the Indian art scene. Her sensuous forms, simplified and lyrical contours, strong palette with luminous greens, blues and vermilions and wide range of middle tones, firmly fixed compositions, and figures with a vital presence give Amrita a unique place in the history of contemporary Indian art. ☸

PALASH– THE FLAME OF THE FOREST

"The Palash on each crowded spray
Spreads out its wealth of scarlet bloom."

by Richard Pearson

A PLANT may have become sacred because it has fulfilled the needs of mankind over a long period of time, or because it is a favourite of the gods and has shared our human aspirations.



Leaves

Palash or Kesuda—*Butea frondosa*, is a small tree with bright orange-red clusters of flowers, each one resembling a parrot's beak. In Sanskrit, it is called *Kim Shuka*—meaning, 'are you a bird'? When you see these abundant clusters of brilliant flowers, they give an impression of being on fire. Hence the name, the Flame of the Forest. In Tamil it is called *Puvă-san*, meaning King of Trees.

Palash is mentioned in the Vedas, as a tree consecrated to the Moon. It is said that the tree emerged out of a falcon's feather saturated with the *soma rasa*, the drink of the gods, assuring immortality.

You will notice that this tree —like the Bilva—has tri-foliate leaves. Palash was hence used —and perhaps still is—for sacred rituals. The following uses of Palash are mentioned in the Vedas.

Its twigs were considered an auspicious fuel for the Sacred Fire, *Yajna*, and the Ghee or purified butter was poured on the fire from its folded leaf.

A twig of the tree was made into a stick to be held by the young Brahmin boys during their thread ceremony, *Yagnopavita*, while the priest chanted the mantras.

When the last tuft of hair was shaved and a Brahmin became a celibate, he was supposed to eat only the food placed on a Palash leaf. He had to carry the tri-foliate leaf with him to indicate that henceforward he was avowed to spiritual studies.

These leaves were also used in the ceremony when cows were blessed for giving good milk.

The flowers were offered to the gods and especially to Goddess Kali.

In times more recent than those of the Vedas—in 1757 —our Palash has given its name to the historic battle of Plassey, when Robert Clive defeated the French and the valiant Siraj-ud-Daula on a wet and swampy battlefield where these flowers were in full bloom.

This tree grows abundantly in the forests of the Coromandel, in

Flowers

the southern parts of India and in Bengal. The flowering season arrives by the end of February, in spring. Untimely rains in January or February may mar the full flowering of the Palash trees.

There is no richer experience than to stand near a Palash, exuberant with its beautiful blossoms, varying from the true scarlet (sindur) to bright orange and golden yellow flowers. Even the touch of the petals varies from a silky sheen to soft velvet.

I am reminded of the story of a king who sent out his four sons to look for this particular tree and asked them to describe it on their return. Each son gave a completely different description because he had seen it in a different season. The Palash, too, has several appearances or moods. And each one is striking for its unique beauty.

Palash: Beginning of Supramental Realisation

Several birds like mynas and parakeets visit this tree. In the south of India, where Palash grows around small ponds, we often find pure white egrets too.

In the middle of summer, April-May, the bare branches are full of silvery white to brown velvety pods, all hanging downwards. It is interesting to note how the whole of the flowering branch dries before the pods fall. This tree belongs to the Bean family. But the pod has only one seed placed at the end, while the rest of the pod looks like a wing or a propeller blade. When the pods fall, they twirl round and round in beautiful spiralling movements.

With the arrival of the rains, the new leaves appear, each shining like molten gold in the sunlight. The leaves, like the flowers, have a soft, velvety feel.

During the flowering season, the flowers are collected to make a dye, with the help of alum, lime or any alkali. The powder is used as "gulal" during the spring festival of "Holi". It is also used as "alta" for painting the hands and feet of a dancer. This colour however does not last long.

The dry leaves are collected to make disposable cups and dishes which are used in festivals, or even at railway and bus stations for serving beverages and food. The fresh leaves are also used as fodder for animals. They are astringent and tonic and, along with the flowers, may be used in decoction to cleanse the system.

Fibre from the roots and the inner bark is used for making ropes or is woven into rustic sandals.

The flat, bright red seeds are an insecticide; ground into a paste and mixed with honey to remove intestinal worms.

One remedy for "Dhoby's Itch", a form of herpes is to apply the powdered seed with fresh lemon skin. The seeds and even the bark, are one of the remedies for snake-bite. Note that the seed must be fresh since it soon dries up and loses its vitality.

Sketches by Bokul C. Fruit

The waxy gum, oozing from the natural cracks or artificial wounds in the bark, hardens into a ruby red, glassy resin, called Bengal Kino or Butea Gum. This is a powerful astringent and may be used for chronic diarrhoea and dysentery. It is also used in tanning and gives also a durable blue dye.

"Laksha Taru" is one more name for this tree of varied qualities, since it is the host of the lac insect. It produces the largest quantity of precious lac. But its quality, however, is second to that of the Kusum or Ceylon Oak.

As you may see, Nature attracts, surprises, seduces and serves at the same time.

THE PROPHETIC DREAMS

In the first article in this series we had briefly discussed the importance laid on dreams by ancient legends which constitute not a small part of man's history. In the second article we discussed the relativity of time and the magnified effects of external stimuli in dreams. This article recounts a few dreams which foretold the future.

by Devapriyo

"I DREAMED that I saw a lady in a red shawl with her back towards me... On her turning round, I found that I didn't know her and she said 'I am Miss Napier'

"All the time I was dressing next morning, I thought—what a preposterous thing to have so very distinct a dream about nothing! and why Miss Napier? For I have never heard of any Miss Napier. That same Friday night I read. After the reading, came into my retiring-room Miss Boyle and the lady in the red shawl whom they present as 'Miss Napier'!"

This is Charles Dickens, the great novelist, surprised by his novel experience!

There are many instances of dreams revealing events which by themselves are not important at all. Once this author, a day prior to his visit to a city, dreamt that as he checks into his hotel, the receptionist hands him over the key of a certain room. The author remembers the room number carved on the key-holder. Next day, on arrival at the hotel, he is handed over the key of the same room. We can, of course, dismiss this as a coincidence (the hotel had at least two hundred rooms), but if the dismissal seems rather unconvincing, we have to find out why the forces who know about the shape of things to come take pains to reveal the trivial!

Before we look into any possible answer to this question, let us remember that the list of prophetic dreams concerning grave matters is not very short! Sometimes, such dreams are made of symbolic scenes, but the dreamer, from the atmosphere created in his or her dream, does not remain guessing about its meaning. Calpurnia, the wife of Julius Caesar, as Shakespeare recreates Plutarch's history, is frightened by ominous dreams and screams in dream, "Help, ho, they murder Caesar!" It is a different matter that Caesar does not take her premonition seriously.

Let us have a hurried look at the prophetic dreams of the old world, as recorded by G.H. Miller in *The Dictionary of Dreams*:

"Pilate's wife, through the influence of a dream, advised her husband to have nothing to do with the conviction of Christ. But the gross materialism of the day laughed at dreams, as it echoed the voice and verdict of the multitude, "Crucify the Spirit, but let the flesh live." Barabbas, the robber, was set at liberty....

"The Emperor Marcian dreamed he saw the bow of the Hunnish conqueror break on the same night that Attila died."

"Plutarch relates how Augustus, while ill, through the dream of a friend, was persuaded to leave his tent, which a few hours after was captured by the enemy, and the bed whereon he had lain was pierced with the enemies' swords....

"Cicero relates the story of two travelling Arcadians who went to different lodgings—one to an inn, and the other to a private house. During the night the latter dreamed that his friend was begging for help. The dreamer awoke; but, thinking the matter unworthy of notice, went to sleep again. The second time he dreamed his friend

appeared, saying it would be too late, for he had already been murdered and his body hid in a cart, under manure. The cart was afterward sought for and the body found. Cicero also wrote, "If the gods love men they will certainly disclose their purposes to them in sleep."

An absorbing example of prophetic dream is given by the Mother in answer to a seeker's question:

"I know of a very interesting example. There was a time when in the newspaper *Le Matin*—it was a long time ago, you must have been very young—every day there was a little cartoon of a boy pointing to something—a kind of page-boy dressed like that—and always showing the date or something—a little cartoon. Now the gentleman in this story was travelling and he was staying in a big hotel, I do not remember in which town, and one night or early in the morning, very early, he had a dream. He saw this page-boy pointing to his funeral carriage—you know, when they take people to the ceremony, in Europe—and inviting him to step into it! He saw that and then in the morning when he was ready, he left his room which was on the top floor, and there, on the landing, the same boy, dressed in the same way, was pointing out the lift for him to go down. That gave him a shock. He refused and said, "No thank you." The lift fell and crashed, killing the people inside.

"He told me that he believed in dreams.

"It was a vision. He saw the boy, but instead of the lift, the boy was showing him his hearse. So when he saw the same gesture, the same boy—like the cartoon, you see—he said, "No thank you, I'll walk down", and the machine—it was one of those hydraulic lifts—broke and fell. It was right at the top. It was crushed to a pulp.

"My explanation is that an entity had forewarned him. The image of the page-boy seems to indicate that an intelligence, a consciousness had intervened; it does not seem to have been his own subconscient. Or it might be that his subconscient was aware and had seen in the subtle physical that this was going to happen. But why did his subconscient give him an image like that? I do not know. Perhaps something in the subconscient knew, because it was already there, it was already in the subtle physical. The accident already existed before it happened—the law of the accident.

"Obviously, there is always, in every case, some difference, sometimes a few hours—but that is the maximum—sometimes a few seconds. And very often, things tell you that they are there, and it takes them sometimes a few minutes, sometimes a few seconds to come into contact with your consciousness. Constantly, constantly I know what is going to happen, and for things that are of absolutely no interest —there is no advantage in knowing it beforehand, it changes nothing; but it exists, it is all around you. If your consciousness is wide enough, you know all that, for example, that a certain person is going to bring you a parcel, things like that. And it is like that every day. Or that a certain person is about to arrive. It is because the consciousness is extended, so it contacts things."

So, there are elements or forces who know the events to occur a little ahead of their physical occurrence, because like our thoughts preceding our actions, every event in the physical plane has been preceded by its formation in a subtle plane.

Premonitions come from such planes.

We need not be surprised when we dream of future happenings which are of no consequence. They are not meant to be revelations. In our sleep we just enter a plane or planes where things to happen in a near future have already been formulated. Often we forget what we see in such planes. Sometimes we remember.

But there are revelatory dreams or premonitive ones. Of them, later.

Cattle Egret (bulbulcus ibis) in nuptial livery.

"THE MEEK SHALL

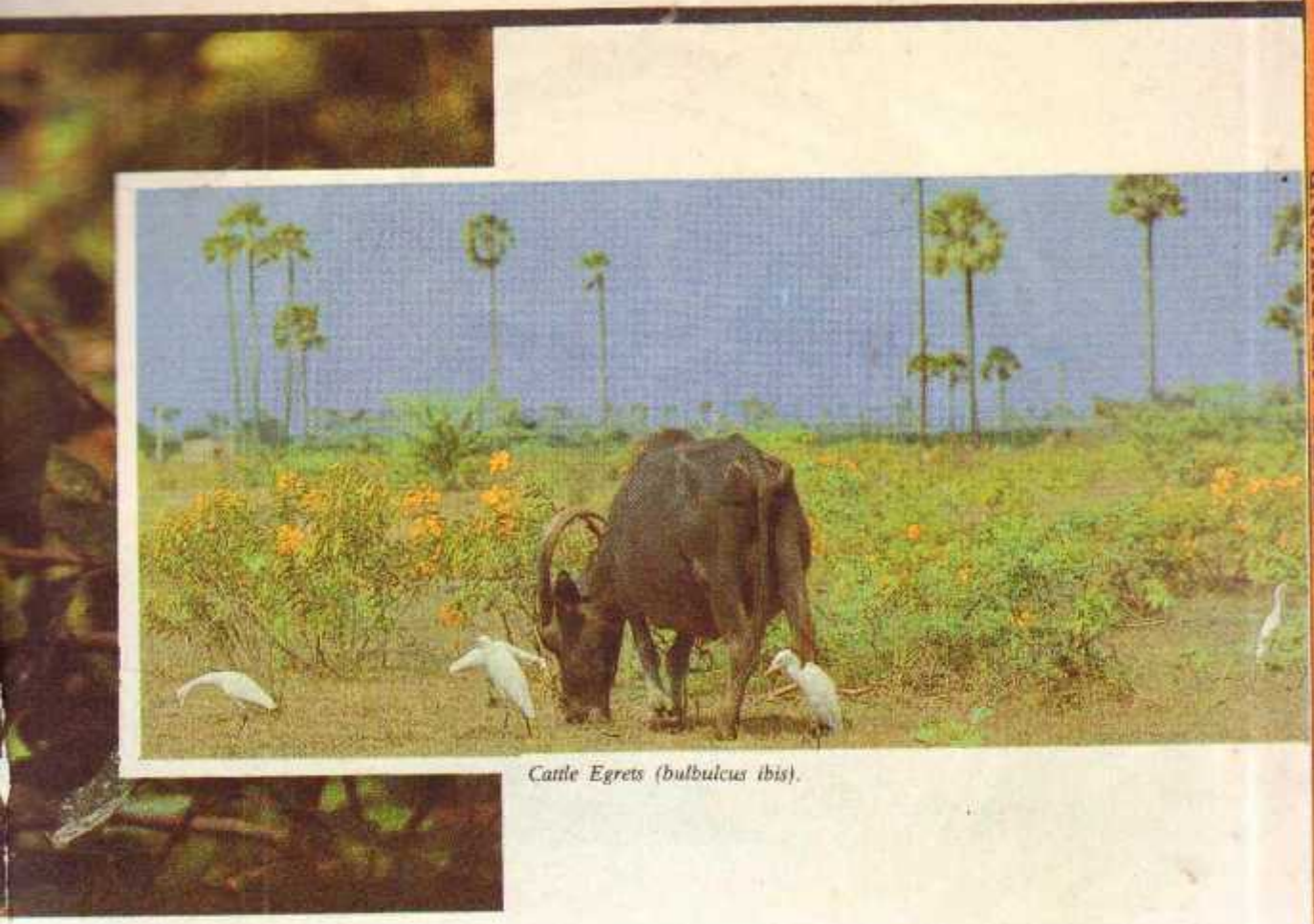
THE cattle egret is one of the few birds, like the crow and the parakeet, that is known to the teeming millions of our country-men who are wholly unaware of the wonderful heritage of birds and beasts that is ours. It is the dumpy white bird with a yellow beak and black legs that follows grazing cattle in the countryside, in a party or small flock.

[illegible]

livery of long, exquisitely delicate plumes that descend in a gauzy drape from their breast and lower back. The cattle egret does not develop these aigrettes, but it also puts on a special livery for the occasion that almost transforms it—the dull white plumage of its head, neck and upper back is replaced by a mantle of deep red-gold, and till it is through with raising and rearing its young, it retains this glowing mantle.

Cattle egrets are highly gregarious. They hop along after grazing cattle in a party, and often a grasshopper flushed from the ground vegetation by the ponderous hooves of a cow or buffalo which is missed by the bird near it is deftly caught in mid-leap and gobbled up by the next bird. It is not only cattle that they follow for the sake of quarry flushed from cover, but all heavy herbivores that favour open ground: in Assam they are the companions of wild buffaloes and rhinos, and in places even pigs moving in a sounder across a meadow.

They are strictly diurnal, and at nightfall they fly in a flock, flying fairly low and close together to some favoured tree, rowing their way through the darkening air steadily with laboured beats of their short, broad wings. They roost thickly together for the night, and if undisturbed will repair to the same roosting tree each evening for months on end, till they separate to breed, and after they are through with breeding, they will again foregather in a flock and spend the night in the same tree. Sometimes they bathe in shallow water, and may even do



Cattle Egrets (bulbulcus ibis).

NHERIT THE EARTH"

by M. Krishnan

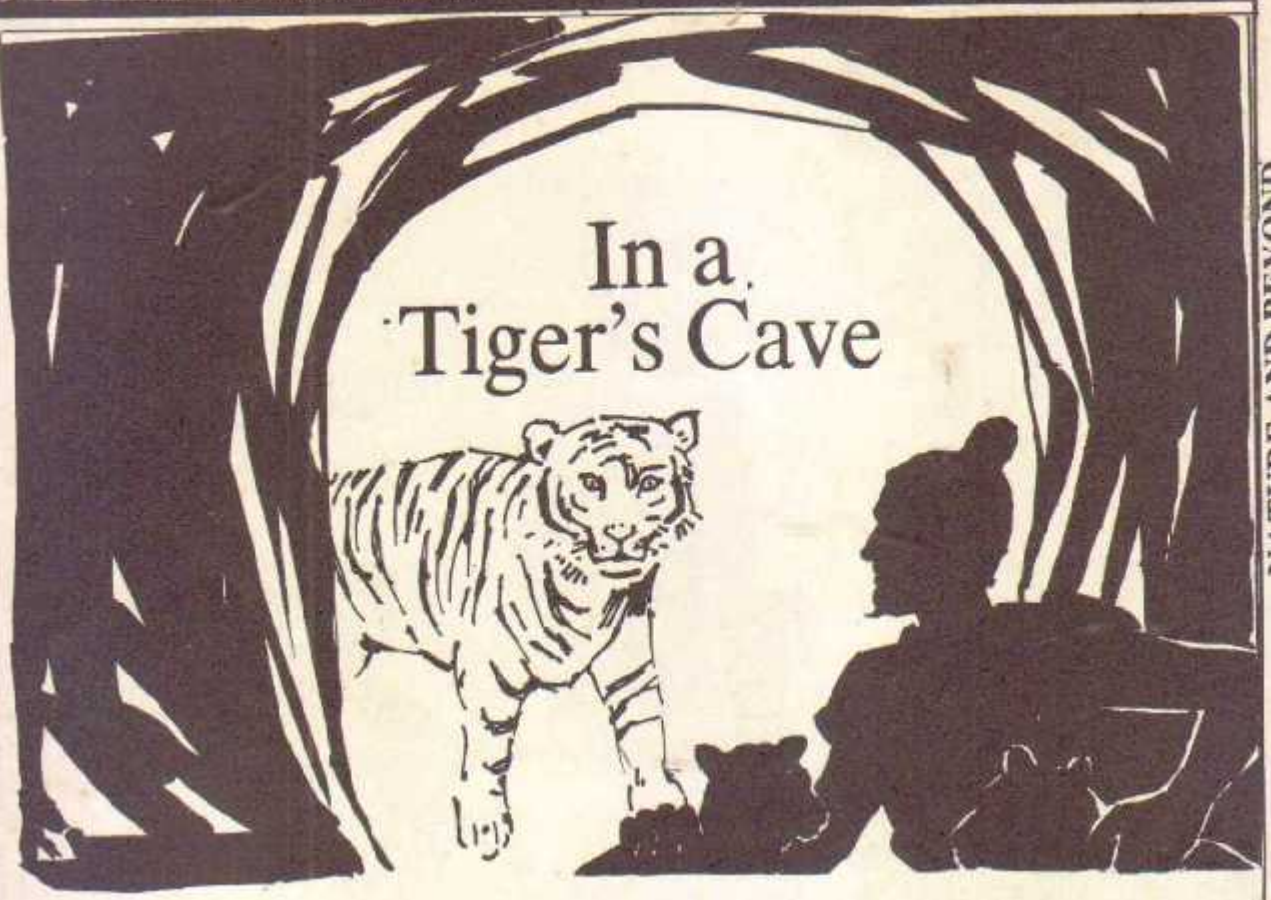
a little fishing, in a sizeable flock, 50 or 60 or even more together. It is not fish that is their main sustenance but insects of all kinds, including aquatic and waterside insects, and they also prey on other small creatures like tadpoles and little frogs—in addition, they pick ectoparasites like ticks, flies and leeches off cattle and the other herbivores with which they associate.

Only when breeding do they part from one another, to pair and nest, but even in this they are gregarious. They usually nest in a congested mixed heronry, along with water-birds like egrets and night herons, usually low down in the nesting tree and in leaf cover. Sometimes, a dozen pairs of cattle egrets or even more may nest by themselves in a tree far from water or near it, in a monospecific breeding colony.

So much for the humdrum life and habits of these far-from-spectacular birds, the last from which one would expect any outstanding feat. Many of our native water-birds are powerful and expert on the wing and capable of sustained flight over considerable distances—grey herons, large egrets, openbills and spoonbills, for instance—but they stay more or less in the same region, though not in the same place. They foregather every year at some established location to breed together in a crowded mixed heronry, and when their last broods are grown up, they fly away severally in parties to diverse feeding grounds which may be a hundred or even two hundred kilometres away from their breeding centre—however, that is about as far as they go.

But the commonplace, weak-flighted cattle egret has colonised countries beyond broad oceans. From Asia it reached Africa across the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, probably carried along on the prevailing winds which it could not resist to fly back to its near-by homeland (as birds stronger on the wing could have done). Anyway, it reached Africa and then soon settled down to stable associations with the domestic cattle and the great many wild herbivores of that vast country. And then, wind-borne and flapping, it crossed the Atlantic to colonise South America where it is now flourishing. Will it come back to Asia again across the Pacific? Apparently in a biological context passive resistance has an even greater power than Gandhiji realised.

In a Tiger's Cave



by Swami Rama

ONCE I was travelling all alone in Tarai Bhavar toward the mountains in Nepal. I was on my way to Katmandu, which is the capital of Nepal. I walked twenty to thirty miles each day. After sunset I would build a fire, meditate and then rest. I would begin walking again at four o'clock the next morning and walk until ten o'clock. Then I would sit near water under a tree through the middle part of the day and travel again from three-thirty until seven in the evening. I walked in my bare feet carrying a blanket, a tiger skin and a pot of water.

At about six o'clock one evening, I became tired and decided to take a short nap in a cave which was about two miles from the nearest road. I spread my blanket on the floor of the small cave because it was a little damp. As soon as I lay down and closed my eyes, I was pounced on by three little tiger cubs who made gentle cries and pawed at my body. They were hungry and thought that I was their mother. They must have been only twelve to fifteen days old. For a few minutes I lay there petting them. When I sat up, there was their mother standing at the entrance to the cave. First I feared that she would rush in and attack me, but then a strong feeling came from within: I thought, "I have no intention to hurt these cubs. If she leaves the entrance of the cave, I will go out." I picked up my blanket and pot of water. The mother tiger backed off from the entrance and I went out. When I had gone about fifteen yards from the entrance, the mother tiger calmly went in to join her babies.

Such experiences help one to control fear and give a glimpse of the unity that lies between animals and human beings. Animals can easily smell violence and fear. Then they become ferociously defensive. But when animals become friendly, they can be very protective and help human beings. One human being may desert another in danger, but animals rarely do so. The sense of self-preservation is of course very strong in all creatures, but animals are more dedicated lovers than human beings. Their friendship can be relied upon. It is unconditional, while relationships between people are full of conditions. We build walls around ourselves and lose touch with our own inner being and then with others. If the instinctive sensitivity for our relation to others is regained, we can become realized without much effort.

APARTHEID— The Twentieth Century Slavery

—by Dr. Brojendra Nath Banerjee

The author who holds a Master's degree from the Wheaton Graduate School (U.S.A.) was admitted to D.Litt. in Economics by the Calcutta University. He was a researcher with the Institute of Asian Economic Affairs, Tokyo. This article is an extract from his latest book, APARTHEID, A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY published by B.R.Publishing Corporation, 29/9 Shakti Nagar, Nangia Park, Delhi 110 007. Rs.125.00

LESS than one person in seven in South Africa is white. Yet the whites control the South African Government and all aspects of life by imposing statutory laws on the blacks. These laws are racial segregation and contemptuous discrimination. For one thing, the blacks are relegated to being slaves to the white fascists, who do not even try to understand that human beings are not cattle, sheep or pigs. That is the lesson all oppressors through history have failed to learn. In South Africa the blacks are the rightful nationals of their motherland; yet they have been forcefully transferred to semi-fertile or almost barren regions covering only thirteen per cent of the country's land area while the rest of the territory comprising the lands for agricultural prosperity and mining areas for precious metals—gold, diamond and uranium—belongs to the white oppressors. The racist policy has indeed relegated the blacks to "servile appendages" of the whites. The master and slave laws impose the most ignominious conditions of service on the blacks. The Pass Law is an obstacle to their freedom of movement and habitation. The discriminatory labour laws, separation of the facilities used by the white masters and others, and the restricted and inferior type of education and health-care for the blacks are other inequalities in the white dominated racial system of segregation.

The blacks have no authorised political voice; they are not even allowed to join political parties containing white members. Legislative powers are vested in the 177-member -parliament.

This house of assembly is chosen by whites who constitute less than 4.5 million in a population of thirty million blacks and is restricted to whites. Executive power is held by the president, the leader of the majority party of the parliament. Parliament is supreme, no court may invalidate its acts. The ultimate solution to the racial discrimination, according to a former British Prime Minister, was the grant of full political rights to the non white population—through a universal franchise at the national level.

Despite the fate of Hitler, Mussolini and Batista, the white minority government in South Africa thinks that tyranny will succeed there because it is practised by Afrikaners, a super breed. They too will learn that man is man and will resist all efforts to trample him and his spirit under the jackboot of tyranny. No amount of brutality has prevented the spirit of liberty from expressing itself. From its inception in 1948, the ideology of apartheid contained the seeds, not only of its own destruction, much more significantly the destruction of the status quo of white racial arrogance which has endured for over three centuries. The failure of apartheid to achieve its major objectives rigorous segregation of the republic's four main communities —blacks, coloureds, Indians and whites—with an inequitable basis of 7:1 and with a purely white central government—became increasingly manifest over the last forty years.

However, the more blatant its effects showed up and the less remote its chance of succeeding, the more determined were the defenders of apartheid and in their determination not to admit defeat, they turned increasingly to repression and to arming their state to its teeth. The racist regime of South Africa maintains a massive army of 90,000 as against 2,000 being claimed by the white minority government. The racist regime which has been supported by the United States of America and Great Britain, has been spending $ 5 million a day on the army while millions of children are starving to death in the same region.

While the white minority possessed the power to mobilise the weapons required of a police state to create a modern army and to develop the political machinery of a highly centralised state, it lacked the authority to influence, cajole and compel the majority Africans, coloureds and Indians to conform to the Afrikaner establishment's ideas for the future shape of the republic. Much of all this became fairly evident by 1974 when, with the collapse of the surrounding Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola, the then Prime Minister Mr. John Balthazzar Vorster, warned that South Africa had come to a dangerous cross-roads, and that change was imperative if white "survival" was to be assured. Four years later, no such fundamental changes had occurred, instead, the situation continued to get worse. It was left to his successor Mr. Piet W. Botha, to warn that "the nation had to adapt or die". But adapt to what and how? Botha remained silent on both these vital issues.

This did not mean, however, that he had no thoughtout plan. The problem he faced was that if he spelt out aloud what he actually had in mind—opposed to the generalities of his stated views—he risked losing the support of his Afrikaner electorate. It, therefore, became necessary for his own political survival, as well as for success of his plans, to work in stealth—never daring to say that he was, in fact, proposing to move away from the apartheid state towards something approximating what his liberal enemies had urged on him: Power sharing among the races. In terms of white politics, it did not matter that, by the 1980s, the majority of blacks in South Africa developed their own ideas about how power should be shared; what mattered was that reforms should be carried out stealthily and in "a controlled fashion", one step at a time, so that the impact of weakening the apartheid system, by degrees, did not become so frightening as to stampede the white electorates into the arms of the Afrikaner die-hards, the "Verkramptes". On the other hand, the fact of Botha not revealing his true intention caused many to doubt that he was seriously contemplating making any meaningful changes at all.

This was certainly the case with the majority of Africans. So what was Botha's plan? It is best summed up by Dr G.E. Leistner, Director of the African Institute:

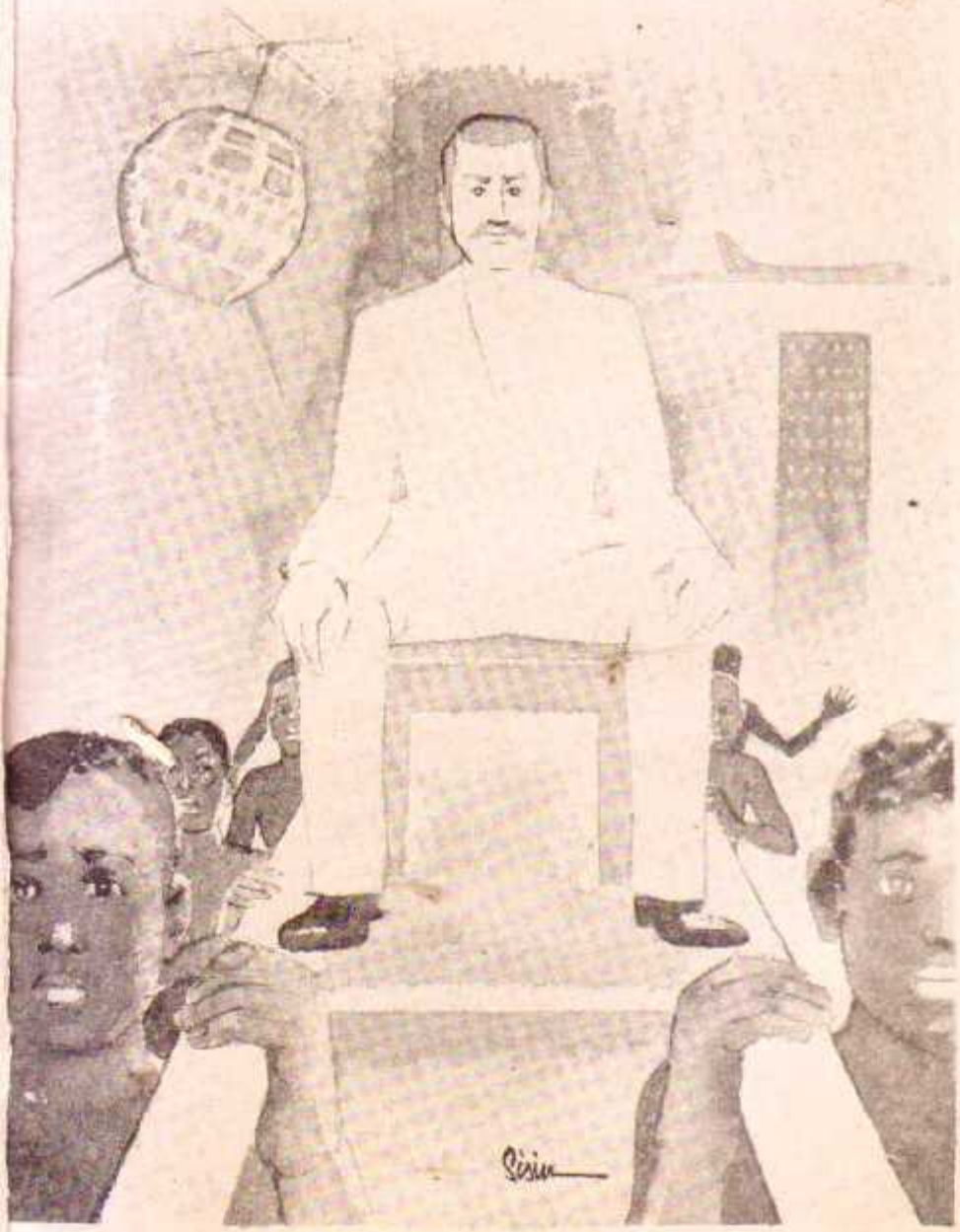
"South Africa is undergoing a slow and controlled revolution, ... those in charge have learned that ultimate solution for a living organism such as South Africa cannot be planned like, for instance, a hydroelectric scheme. What they are striving for is no longer the utopia of permanent white domination over the whole of South Africa, but rather a *modus operandi*, ensuring the Afrikaner of peace, prosperity and self determination in coexistence with many diverse other groups in the country."

Dr Leistner, a person of some authority, must be taken seriously. If indeed, Botha was following the tactics described by Dr Leistner (and others) the question is whether it is possible to control South Africa's revolution from the top; that is, by the white minority establishment—the same group that had misled itself into believing that it was possible to impose an apartheid system —also from the top. At any rate, one must assume that the attempt is going to be made. Quite irrespective of what is actually proposed, the fact of the attempt being made at all is an admission that apartheid—even in the diluted form it has begun to take in some of its aspects in more recent years—is not working, and that it cannot be made to work. There is plenty of evidence from official sources and statements by significant Afrikaner spokesmen to show that this is understood, at least, by the circle around the white authority.

Despite various gestures and gimmicks designed to give the impression of bending the colour bar, the regime in Pretoria continued to deepen and enlarge its fascist hold over the country and its majority black people. The latter remained political out-

castes in their own country. A detailed study published in Johannesburg in August 1982 revealed the core features of apartheid and how an extensive population removal programme dispossessed millions of blacks and made them aliens in their own homeland. Already more than four million people had been evicted from their homes and lands from eighty-seven per cent of the country officially regarded as white, and thrown into ten small "homelands" or Bantustan which together constitute thirteen per cent of South Africa's land area.

These uprooted blacks needed to work in mines and factories and farms, including tens of thousands of boys and girls below 10 who were picked up from the "homelands" or other clearly demarcated ghettos and made to work from dawn to dusk on less than even starvation wages. In any case, every black had not only to have a pass in order to exist but a permit in order to be anywhere at all. Some 2,000 people are prosecuted daily for the slightest violation of these and a whole set of other barbaric regulations. The idea patently was to deprive the blacks of basic human rights—citizenship including all political rights in their own country and at the same time keep them on tap as a reservoir of virtually free labour.



In 1982 over 4,400 people had been convicted under the Suppression of Communism Act and other provisions. Since 1981, mass protests and demonstrations against apartheid led to the conviction of 44,300 people, of whom 8,200 were less than eighteen years old. According to a study conducted at the University of Cape Town eight million men and women had been arrested or prosecuted under the Pass Law. Laws empowering the government to arrest people without trial had led to the indefinite detention of thousands. Under the 90-day detention provision of 1963 and a series of other laws that followed some 3,600 people had been detained without trial. The law of 1967, which provided for indefinite detention under the Terrorist Act, led to the detention of many more.

In February 1981, South African prison population stood at 1,04,622, about 38.4 per cent more than the jails could accommodate. It is estimated that about 450 political prisoners were served with life sentence on Robben Island. While detention without trial constitutes a violation of human rights; it is the treatment meted out to the detainees that would shame the most ardent fascist. Several had died while in detention or soon after release from it. Others had come out paralysed or mentally broken. The heinous murder of Steve Siko (caused by brain damage resulting from severe blows to the head) exposed by the exiled South African journalist Donald Wood, and the inquest of Neil Agett for sixty hours at the deceased's own request were only two of the instances of the cruelty inflicted on the detainees. A report submitted to the UN Centre Against Apartheid listed the methods for tortures employed by the minority fascist regime.

The question of Habeas Corpus for the African blacks does not arise. Ruthless oppression of human rights is the cornerstone of apartheid. The intensification of police raids made every African a suspect. An atmosphere of fear and terror has been all pervasive. Recounting her experi-

ences as a detainee, Winnie Mandela, wife of the imprisoned black leader Nelson Mandela, said: "Detention means that midnight knock when all almost is quiet. It means blinding torches shone simultaneously through every window of your house before the door is kicked open. It means the exclusive right the Security Branch has to read each and every letter in the house, no matter how personal it might be. It means paging through each and every book on your shelves, lifting carpets, looking under beds, lifting sleeping children.... It means you no longer have the right to answer your telephone should a call come through... It means your seizure at dawn dragged away from little children screaming and clinging to your skirt, imploring the white men dragging mummy to leave her alone."

The devastating effects of apartheid on the human psyche cannot be ignored. So all freedom loving nations that have struggled for the preservation of human rights and dignity irrespective of race or colour should isolate and ostracise the fascist Pretoria minority white Government. The Indian Government recognised Nelson Mandela as the symbol of mankind's struggle against oppression when it bestowed on him the coveted Jawaharlal Nehru Award for Peace and International Understanding in 1979. The 69 year-old Mandela serving his prison sentence since 1962, has not allowed his spirit to be broken down. Though his voice is prevented from reaching the people (for under the law it is illegal to quote or make reference to statements made by those who are on the liquidator's list) Mandela has managed to smuggle messages out of the prison imploring his people to carry on the struggle. His letter to the Secretary of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations thanking the Indian Government for the singular honour conferred on him took a year and a half to reach New Delhi.

About forty years ago India imposed sanctions against the Pretoria Government. It is true that the blacks themselves must fight their own battles, international support has an important role to play in sustaining the morale of these indomitable people. As Winnie Mandela said: "When I was confined and restricted, I got my inspiration from the very knowledge that one is not alone. The knowledge that the struggle is an international struggle for the dignity of man and that you are part of this family of man—this alone sustains you." Winnie Mandela risked her life to defy South African incidence on apartheid even in medical emergency. She refused to be admitted to a segregated hospital for blacks, even though she was in intense pain and doctors warned that she might die if she did not have an emergency operation "within hours". Winnie Mandela was suffering from a large abscess in her leg which had infected her system and caused her to collapse. The doctors feared it might lead to a cardiac arrest. But when they would not admit her to the hospital for whites where she was examined and insisted that she should go to a black hospital for the operation, Winnie Mandela refused and demanded to be driven back to the town where she lived under a government banishment, about thirty-five miles away.

After urgent representations by her lawyer to the Minister of Law and Order, Mr. Louis Le Grange, she was finally granted a special relaxation of her banishment order to enable her to fly to Johannesburg where she entered a private clinic which admits all races. The operation was performed there

"I was damned if I was going into their second class hospitals," she said angrily from her hospital bed. "I told them I would rather go home and perform my own surgery."

She undertook a one-person defiance campaign against the apartheid laws and general segregation practices even since the government banished her to the hamlet of Brandfort, in the heart of the deeply conservative Orange Free State Province. She defiantly used all the whites-only facilities in the little town to which she was restricted and refused to use entrances in the shops marked for blacks.

The conservative white townsfolk and farmers from the surrounding countryside, nonplussed by her boldness when they were accustomed to blacks being submissive; at first petitioned the Minister of Police to move her to another town but when he refused they resigned themselves to an uncomfortable acceptance of her defiant ways. Winnie Mandela's leg had been troubling her for some time, but she declined to go to the only doctor in the little town because he saw his non-white patients during separate hours for blacks after his normal consulting hours each day. Without treatment, the leg condition worsened, festered and swelled badly.

Within a few days, as the infection spread through her system, Winnie Mandela collapsed in the tiny matchbox house in Brandfort's black township where she lived. Her lawyer, Mr. Piet De Waal took her to the large University Hospital where doctors examined her and decided she needed an urgent operation because an infected leg could cause a fatal thrombosis. But they told Winnie she would have to go to Bloemfontein's Pelonomi Hospital, which was for blacks. She refused.

The doctor of the Province's Hospital Services, Jan Kruger told her she could have a private room at Pelonomi and that a team of surgeons from the white hospital would perform the operation, but Winnie remained adamant. She told the director of the hospital that in no circumstances would she enter the segregated hospital and then asked an agitated Mr. De Waal to drive her back to Brandfort. Back in her matchbox house she went to bed where she remained alone and was unable to move. Next morning the local doctor whom she had refused to see earlier, called on her at her lawyer's office urging and afterwards spoke on the telephone to the Minister's office, saying he considered Winnie Mandela's life to be in danger. The Minister eventually allowed Winnie Mandela to fly to Johannesburg, which was her hometown before the banishment order was issued against her in 1976.

A major uproar broke out among South Africa's medical

profession in the wake of startling disclosure that blood donated by black people was not used for white patients and was stored separately. The controversy burst into the open when the South African Blood Transfusion Service admitted they did not supply black blood on white patients—but blood from whites was used on black people. Furthermore, the transfusion service stored blood from black donors separate from white donor's blood. All blood was also labelled according to the donor's race. Despite this overtly "blood segregational" policy the transfusion service claimed that their policy was not connected to the apartheid laws in the country. All were lies and white lies. Still they admitted: "A certain amount of white blood goes to blacks but for medical reasons no black blood goes to whites. The blood segregation policy has shocked and angered prominent doctors and medical organisations.... Those white people are prepared to use the hearts and kidneys of blacks without any qualms."

Apartheid laws are even in jails of South Africa. The only blacks exempt from the ban would be nurse-maids looking after white children. It cost 70,000 rands (about $40,000) to put up the fences and boards. Black traffic policemen were employed as "relations officers" whose jobs were to explain in a "nice" way to their fellow blacks, that they were not allowed in the parks.

Even food in South African condemned prison is graded according to the race of the prisoner. The condemned man's last meal was subject to apartheid. Before being hanged, the white prisoner would get a whole roast chicken. The black prisoner would get half a chicken. Strangely enough from the time they were condemned, the blacks would get the same food as the whites—except for the last meal. It was like a kind of reaffirmation of apartheid up to the final moment before the gallows. "On average about seven a week are hanged and you hear it all, every week, hear them walking to the gallows, always singing, usually in Xhosa or Zulu, stamping their feet with every step."

"Sometimes there would be a young voice in the group, quivering with fear, and the older voices sustain it, lift it up. Then you would hear, muffled... of death. But the singing would go on to the end."

This was how a white South African poet, Mr. Breyten Bach, who was freed after seven years in prison in May 1983 for clandestine activities against the Pretoria regime's apartheid system of racial laws, spoke in anguish and pain about the treatment of lifeterm prisoners and condemned men in Pretoria's maximum security prison. He added: "One prisoner who always sings alone in Pretoria's maximum security prison is Dimitri Tsafendas, the Greek immigrant who was declared insane and sentenced to life imprisonment for stabbing Prime Minister Henstrik Verwoero to death in 1956.

"Every Friday night at precisely the same time, Mr. Tsafendas sings 'Sarie Marais', the ballad from the Boer war, followed by 'Roll out the Barrie'. Then he is silent for another week. He was subjected to a daily ritual of hate for killing the architect of apartheid. His food is routinely spat in or scattered on the cell door and his bucket overturned. He served the first two years of his sentence in solitary confinement in a cell, six feet by nine feet by twenty-two feet deep. It is like being at the bottom of a well. The depth emphasises the narrow confine. You can touch both sides of the wall with your outstretched arms and the only space is upward. At the top is an opening onto a catwalk so the wardens can look down on you any time."

Another field of apartheid is education. One of the Afrikaner nationalist government's first action after coming to power in 1948 was to take over all the Christian mission-run schools for blacks and stop further black entry into what were called the "Open Universities". The government was determined that African education should be rooted in tribal culture. Tribal people were seen as less a threat to "white civilisation". It instituted a state-run "Bantu Education" system, with a curriculum different from the white schools and built tribal universities in remote rural areas. The apartheid government started permitting the private schools to reverse that process. The members may be miniscule when set against a black population of thirty million but a government that had always been hypersensitive to the emergence of a black elite must be aware of their potential significance. Nearly the whole of the African National Congress leadership, made up of people, educated at the old mission schools at Fort Hare University before the government took over black leadership potential, was stunned after the introduction of "Bantu Education". Now a new group of young people with the self-assurance that a good education brings is beginning to emerge.

THE VOICE SILENCED

Sicelo Godfrey Dhlomo was only a small voice in the wilderness of South-African politics, but for a few minutes in December millions of American television viewers heard him speak. Identified simply as "Godfrey", a 17 year-old Soweto schoolboy, he was one of a dozen young South Africans —including the daughters of both jailed African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela and South African State President P.W. Botha—featured in "Children of Apartheid", a CBS News documentary. With coolly detached anger, Dhlomo told of being detained and, he said, tortured by police for his political activities. Ever since then, he had been on the run from the police. A CBS interviewer asked him if he thought his life was in danger. "Yes, it is," he said. "I might be arrested or eliminated at any time."

Last week Dhlomo's body was found in an open field near Soweto, with a single bullet through the head. Police confirmed that only days before his death, the young man had been identified from taped CBS footage.

—NEWSWEEK, February '88.

K. D. Sethna has published two books of research in ancient Indian history: The Problem of Aryan Origins and Karpasa in Prehistoric India—A Chronological and Cultural Clue. In both he has tried along various lines to counter the current theory of an Aryan invasion of North India in c. 1500 B.C. As a result the Rigveda in its earliest parts gets dated about a 1000 years anterior to the Harappa Culture of c. 2500-1500 B.C. and the latter is seen as at once a derivative, a development and a deviation from the former. In a forthcoming study, Ancient India in a New Light, he proposes for serious consideration a revision of the historical perspective of the period after Alexander's invasion of India in 326 B.C. Such a revision would involve a huge amount of reinterpretation covering in detail more than a thousand years earlier and almost the same length of time later—a highly heretical venture in the eyes of established scholarship. In the following article the author gives a short account of his thesis and some of the reasons possible to adduce in support of it.

Was Chandragupta Maurya The-

by K.D. Sethna

SOON after Alexander the Great crossed the Indus in 326 B.C. he came into touch with a young adventurer whom his historians named Sandrocottus (Chandragupta) and who a little later became king of the people called the Prasii (*Prachya*, "Easterners") and ruled from the capital city Palibothra (Pataliputra). On Alexander's death at Babylon in 323 B.C. his empire was divided among his generals. The eastern part of it fell to the lot of Seleucus Nicator. Seleucus, essaying to march in the steps of his master, attempted to penetrate into India in *c.* 305 B.C. Sandrocottus foiled his plan. The two struck a friendly treaty and the Greek king sent Megasthenes as his ambassador to the court of Sandrocottus. Megasthenes who stayed at Palibothra for several years wrote a book entitled *Indica*. The original of it is lost but a substantial amount of its diverse information has come down to us in the works of later Greek and Roman writers.

Modern scholars of ancient Indian history sought to answer the question, "Who was Sandrocottus?" Inspired by the Indian equivalent of the name, the Frenchman de Guignes and the Englishman Sir William Jones independently answered: "Chandragupta Maurya." Their answer was regarded as most plausible. Some time later, the scholar James Prinsep succeeded in deciphering a large number of edicts on rocks and stone-pillars, in one of which the name "Asoka" appeared as their king-author. When historians, who knew from those old Indian documents, the Puranas, Asoka Vardhana as the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya, found in Rock Edict XIII what looked very impressively like the names of five Greek successors of Alexander, they felt certain that de Guignes and Jones had made the correct identification. The identification came to be hailed as "the sheet-anchor of ancient Indian chronology" by all historians of repute.

However, a few dissident voices from India—often quite learned yet insufficiently discriminative, rigorous and thoroughgoing—have been raised in the name of the very Puranas where Asoka Vardhana figures. Connected with the dynastic lists enumerated in these documents is a chronology that has been traditional in India. This chronology speaks of a Kaliyuga commencing in 3102 B.C. and puts, on the evidence of the epic Mahabharata, the Bharata War 36 years earlier and dates the

"Sandrocottus" of The Greeks ?

THE PRESENT-DAY VIEW AND THE ANCIENT INDIAN TRADITION

various dynasties from the birth of Parikshit, the grand-nephew of King Yudhisthira, in the year of the Bharata War: 3138 B.C.

What importance should we attach to those dynastic lists and this chronology which are concerned centrally with the kings of Magadha whose capital was Pataliputra? The inordinate reign-lengths allotted to many kings are rightly disbelieved Scholars like Raychaudhuri and Pradhan have disputed certain dynasty-sequences and strongly questioned whether some of the royal lines reigned in Magadha. All these points may be admitted as well as that parts of the documents are either incomplete or corrupt. But when we concentrate on the sheer drive of the chronology towards the commencement of the last Magadhan dynasty mentioned—that of the Guptas—we strike upon a most significant coincidence.

What that coincidence is will become evident on our counting the years from the posited initial epoch: 3138 B.C. There are two modes of Puranic calculation. One is a series of "intervals"; the other a number of alleged movements of the "Seven Rishis", the stars of the constellation Great Bear. Let us look at the intervals first. They are formulated in the reverse order, from the later happening to the earlier. There is also a peculiarity of verbal construction. Thus we have the phrase *mahapadm-antare*, leading back to Parikshit's birth and connoting conventionally: "at an interval of Mahapadma", which is meaningless, for Mahapadma marks in the sentence concerned one extreme of an interval. In Sanskrit grammar a *bahuvrihi*, an adjectival compound, is permitted as a replacement of an apparently regular genitive (*shashthi-tat-purusha*). *Bahuvri-*

hi here would give the connotation: "at an interval from Mahapadma." Similarly the expression *mahanand-abhishek-antam* cannot present us with "the end of Mahananda's coronation." To save itself from being nonsense it must signify "Mahananda's coronation at the end"—literally, "(the time) Mahananda-coronation-ended". As is clear from the Purana-context, Mahapadma and Mahanánda are the same king, the founder of the dynasty of nine Nandas, a father and eight sons. So the interval in question is back to the birth of Parikshit from the period of this founder.

The interval has several versions in the Puranas: 1015, 1050, 1115, 1500 years. To distinguish the correct from the corrupt versions, we must have recourse to the total duration of whatever dynasties ruled in Magadha between the Bharata War and the beginning of Mahapadma's reign. Most Puranas run them as follows: Barhadrathas 1000 years, Pradyotas 138, Sisunagas 362. The sum is exactly 1500 years. Hence we get the Nandas at (3138-1500=) 1638 B.C. As the Nandas are usually said to have lasted for 100 years, the next dynasty's founder, the Chandragupta Maurya of the choice made by de Guignes and Jones for Sandrocottus, appears in 1538 B.C. "Ridiculous!" one may exclaim. And we need not disagree, for we are not holding a brief for all Puranic dates. The significant coincidence to which we have alluded emphatically is the end-product of the traditional-Puranic chronology. Let us reach it before we let modern scholars condemn the whole of the ancient Indian time-scheme.

The next set of intervals touches on the Puloma-Andhras, known to our historians as the Satavahanas who succeeded the post-Mauryan Sungas and Kanvas. According to the Matsya Purana (271.39), from the Puloma-Andhras back to Mahapadma there is an interval of 836 years. In the next verse an interval equal to the sum of this number and the one which relates to Parikshit's birth and to Mahapadma is counted "from (the time) Andhra-ended"—that is, the time with the Andhras at its end—back "to (the time of) Parikshit" (*andhr-antad a-parikshitah*). Consequently the Andhra dynasty would begin for the Puranas in (3138-1500-836=) 802 B.C.

What about its close? The Puranas record for the full run of the dynasty five different durations: 300,411,412,456,460. Which of them is to be chosen?

Here the Puranas' alternative system of calculation may be looked at. The Seven Rishis are said to execute a cycle of 27 centuries by staying for 100 years in each of the 27 lunar asterisms of the ecliptic. We learn that 75 years before the Kaliyuga—that is, in (3102+75=) 3177 B.C.—they entered the asterism Magha for a stay of one century—that is, down to 3077 B.C. This implies that Magha was the asterism at the time of Parikshit's birth in 3138 B.C.

Now both the Vayu Purana (90.423) and the Brahmanda Purana (II.24.234) say that the Seven Rishis who were in Magha at the time of Parikshit will be in the 24th century in a part of the Andhras (*andhramse*). Another version of the same verse uses the word *andhrante* and appears to put in that century the end of the Andhras. But this word can surely be a *bahuvrihi*, and the whole phrase, with the word construed like the earlier *andhr-antad* as an adjectival compound, can read: "the 24th century having the Andhras at its end" or "in its end." With "in" rather than "at" this version chimes with the other and equally means that when 2400 years passed after 3177 B.C. the Andhra dynasty had already started. Thus we come down to a little before (3177–2400=) 777 B.C. for its commencement, a result not inconsistent with our previously found 802 B.C. since "a little before" easily allows a span of 25 years.

The Brahmanda (III.74.230) again says that the asterism whose guardians are the Pitris (Ancestors)—namely, Magha—and which was associated with the time of Parikshit follows once more after the 27th century "amongst the very Andhras" (*andhranantu*). A variant here as well as in the Matsya of *andhranantu* is *andhran-ante*, a Prakritism for *andhranam-ante*, which can be translated as either "at the end of the Andhras" or "in the end..." The second rendering would be in keeping with the substance of the other form of the Brahmanda verse. And both the forms, putting the 27th century in the terminal portion of the Andhras, balance the verses which put the 24th century in the initial portion.

So we get the Andhras starting before (3177–2400=) 777 B.C. and ending after (3177–2700=) 477 B.C., thus covering more than 300 years and thereby excluding the lowest of the five durations traceable in the Puranas.

The remaining alternative lengths—411, 412, 456, 460—bring us down from the Puranic starting-point of the Andhras—802 B.C.—to 391, 390, 346, 342 B.C. From the Andhras to the next imperial dynasty of Magadha, the Guptas whose beginning is referred to, no immediate succession is suggested. As if to fill the time-gap, the Puranas string together a number of non-Magadhan local kingdoms as more or less contemporaneous which appear to have survived the downfall of the Andhras and continued for a duration which is not satisfactorily computable. That there was a time-gap of some length or other is seen from the modern historical picture also. The usual year of the end of the Satavahanas for historians today is 225 or 227 A.D. and the Guptas are commenced in 320 A.D., the starting-point of the Gupta Era which is said to have been initiated by Chandragupta I, founder of the Imperial Guptas. According to an inscription discovered by Pandit Bhagwanlal Indrajit, the re-

publican clan of the Lichchhavis is likely to have held Pataliputra prior to the advent of the Guptas. This supposition tallies well with the information we have from the marriage-celebrating gold coins of Chandragupta I and the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of his son Samudragupta that the family-founder married a daughter of the Lichchhavis, Kumaradevi. The establishment of Gupta rule in Magadha seems to have been at least partly the consequence of the rise in both political and social status due to the marriage.

What length the Puranas may have intended for the time-gap is not directly important. It is the interval itself which is of importance. For then the next king-name for Magadhan Pataliputra is Chandragupta I of the Imperial Guptas some years after 391, 390, 346 or 342 B.C. This is bound to ring a bell in our minds. Do we not have the Sandrocottus of the Greeks ascending the throne of Palibothra in the immediate post-Alexandrine period: that is, at some point between Alexander's exit in late 325 B.C. and Seleucus's appearance at the Indus in *c.*305 B.C. when Sandrocottus was already the king of Palibothra?

Here stands the coincidence which we have designated "most significant". Whatever we may say, by way of scepticism, about fixing the Kaliyuga's start in 3102 B.C. or the Bharata War's occurrence in 3138 B.C. or the coronation of Mahapadma Nanda in 1638 B.C. or the beginning of the Mauryas in 1538 B.C., we cannot help being struck by the precision with which the traditional-Puranic chronology can lead us to synchronise Chandragupta I instead of Chandragupta Maurya with Sandrocottus.

No doubt, we have to examine critically the circumstances the historians of Alexander narrate before Sandrocottus's mounting the Palibothran throne—circumstances bringing in another king of the Indian interior named Xandrames. We have to refute the common belief that Xandrames was the immediate predecessor of Sandrocottus on this throne. At the moment it should suffice to stress that nowhere is he explicitly connected with Palibothra and that the proponents of the Mauryan Chandragupta have not yet found any Indian name credibly echoing "Xandrames" for the throne of that city before him. We may with justification take sharp notice of the synchronism we reach not long after the Puranic termination of the Andhras. On the strength of it we may ask: "Could India's own sense of her history in what we know as the post-Alexandrine epoch be dismissed as erroneous just because it is at loggerheads with the modern reconstruction of it?"

2

The situation we have sketched is bound to raise the query: "Does Megasthenes, who lived at the court of Sandrocottus, support the Purana-prompted conclusion?" And it is indeed very pertinent to ask further: "Has he gathered from Indian sources any chronological information which would solve in favour of the Puranas the problem of the two Chandraguptas?" But the scrutiny of the momentous evidence of Megasthenes would land us in a wide terrain and the impatient modern historian is sure to pull out in the form of a trump-card the date generally accepted of the Gupta Era: 320 A.D. He will fix us with a gimlet-eye and demand: "Do we not gather indubitably from the famous Arab traveller and scientist Alberuni (1030 A.D.) that the Gupta Era started 241 years after the Saka Era of 78 A.D.? The completion of 241 years from 78 A.D. would give us the running year 320 A.D. How can the Imperial Guptas begin their dynasty nearly 600 years earlier?"

If one is going to swear by Alberuni, one must know exactly what he has written. Actually his words, introducing the interval of 241 years, read: "As regards the Gupta-Kala, people say that the Guptas were wicked, powerful people, and that when they ceased to exist this date was used as the epoch of an era" (Sachau, *Alberuni's India*, II, p. 7). Obviously, Alberuni implies that the Gupta Era of 320 A.D. was started to celebrate not the beginning but the close of a dynasty which had come to be disliked!

Of course, we can try to make out that Alberuni was handing down a capital confusion because the word *kala* in Sanskrit indicates both "era" and "death" or "destruction". But this would be unjustified ingenuity: for it is not impossible that an era should begin at the end of either a dynasty or a person's life. Frequently, in both epigraphy and literature the Saka Era of 78 A.D. has itself been looked upon as marking the end of the Sakas or of a Saka king (*E.g.*, *Epigraphia Indica*, XXI, p. 144; Appendix. No. 150, p. 27). Alberuni too regards it in the same way (*op. cit.*, p.6), as presumably did all his contemporaries. And they may be right: we are not certain yet as to who founded this era or why. It is not called "Saka" until nearly 500 years after its foundation. Our historians suppose the two Saka lines of Western India—the Kshaharatas and the Kardamakas—to have been the cause of

its name by using it, although themselves never calling it "Saka". The credit of founding it is usually given to Kanishka I, and his own successors are said to have followed it namelessly; but Kanishka and his successors were not Sakas: they were Kushanas, whom Indian books term Tusharas, Tukharas, Turushkas. Hence the reason for the name remains dubious on the hypothesis of modern historians. The old tradition, reported by Alberuni, of the Sakas ending with it cannot be brushed aside.

A persistent Jain tradition counts the Vikrama Era of 57 B.C. from the death of the legendary Vikramaditya to commemorate his hallowed name. Most of the eight Govindapala records of the 12th century A.D. and two inscriptions of Asokachalla and one of Jaysena—all from Bengal—are dated from the cessation or destruction of a reign.

There is nothing to show that Alberuni did not mean what he said. The sole explicit allusion in all literature to the establishment of the Gupta Era of 320 A.D. and to its relation to the Gupta dynasty forces us to date the founder of this dynasty, as well as the positive era installed by him and followed by his successors, a number of centuries previous to 320 A.D. But, going backwards, where can we stop except at Sandrocottus for our non-Mauryan Chandragupta? As far as Chandragupta I is concerned, Alberuni rules out the modern chronology and thereby buttresses the ancient Indian.

3

The most clinching argument against the modern chronology can be based on sheer logic and common sense. Paradoxically it arises from the most fundamental criticism the historians of our day have made of the old time-scheme. Their criticism may be summed up from the material found in J.B. Fleet's article in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1911, pp. 476ff and his contribution "Hindu Chronology" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th Edition, Vol. XII, p. 497. We may frame it thus:

"Around *c.* 400 A.D. Indian astronomers realised the need to have a specified reckoning with a definite initial occasion. They found the required occasion in what a backward computation by them gave as a conjunction in 3102 B.C. of the sun, the moon and the five then-known planets at the first point of the Zodiacal sign Mesha (Aries). The reckoning thus devised was subsequently identified with the Kaliyuga of which the Puranas speak. The identification is first seen, though without the actual name, in the astronomer Aryabhatta in 499 A.D. By then the Puranic pundits must have adjusted India's traditional history to the new date, fixed the time for the Kaliyuga's close companion, the Bharata War, and constructed a whole long chronology. The acceptance of the new date must have become universal by 634 A.D., for in that year we have the public use of it in the Aihole Inscription of King Pulakesin II dating itself in the Kaliyuga Era side by side with the Saka Era and referring to the Bharata War. But, as the former era is not a real historical one, the entire system of dates the Puranic pundits deduced from it and from the Bharata War for events is arbitrary. All the ages they have assigned to the various dynasties of the past have no historical value."

Before I come to the central flaw in this picture I may ask in passing whether 3102 B.C. was a date new-fangled after 400 A.D. or part of an old tradition. Even in the days of the Greek ambassador Megasthenes, traditional history had a hoary antiquity for the Indian mind. Pliny (VI. XXI.4-5), Arrian (*Indica* I.IX) and Solinus (52.5), reporting Megasthenes, quote the Indians as saying that the line of kings in India—before Alexander and Sandrocottus—went back by more than 6000 years. In such a chronological scheme the

Kaliyuga, 36 years after the birth of Parikshit, could easily start in an age fairly remote from the days of Megasthenes and, if the Imperial Guptas of Magadha commenced between 325 and 305 B.C., the Kaliyuga must, by the Puranic dynasty-lengths, start in 3102 B.C. So there is a *prima facie* case for believing that the date favoured by Indian astronomers existed much earlier than *c.* 400 A.D.

Now for the central flaw, an amazing implication of the modern criticism of the old chronology. If the old chronology was cooked up some time after 400 A.D. and was already in public use by 634 A.D., then according to the chronology of modern historians the Puranic pundits who did the cooking-up lived face to face with the Imperial Guptas, whose period by the modern chronology is counted from 320 to 570 A.D. But we have seen that the Indian time-scheme, the work of those very pundits, must begin the Imperial Guptas between 325 and 305 B.C. Hence we have the ridiculous situation that the pundits put contemporaneous kings more than 600 years before their own time!

Surely, there is a limit even to the lack of the historical sense we may attribute to Indian chronologists. Critics of the Puranic

time-scheme would definitely overshoot the mark by asking us to believe that any Indian living day after day under a particular king could be mad enough to push publicly the same monarch back in history by over six centuries. Here is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the modern criticism and of the chronology currently accepted.

4

What we have to conclude is clear:

Since the Indian chronology, using the Kaliyuga and closely connecting it with the Bharata War in a considerably ancient time, was undoubtedly in vogue in the centuries immediately preceding 634 A.D., the Imperial Guptas could never have ruled during them.

If they cannot be placed in this period, they must have ended, as Alberuni reports, by 320 A.D. —with whatever little breaks in their rule over one locality or another during their length of nearly 650 years from about the time Alexander left India—late 325 B.C.

If they ended thus, their dynasty with Chandragupta I at its head must have started in the age of Megasthenes when there flourished at Palibothra (Pataliputra) the dynasty-founder Sandrocottus who was some Chandragupta on the Magadhan throne.

And only by the Imperial Gupta dynasty's starting in this age could the Puranic pundits of the period 400-634 A.D.—or of any other period following the age of Megasthenes—be contemporaneous with whatever kings would belong to that period.

Consequently, whether or not we credit the entire corpus of ancient dates calculated by Indian chronology, the commencement which that chronology has to make of the Imperial Guptas with Chandragupta I practically on the heels of Alexander's invasion and to coincide it in time with the coronation of Sandrocottus of Palibothra, must be absolutely correct.

All these conclusions must drive our historians into an unescapable predicament.

They are sure to harp on the merits of their own elaborately worked-out time-scheme coping not only with the Guptas but also with their predecessors and successors. They will challenge the disturber of their time-scheme to pick holes in it. Of course, anybody choosing the old chronology in respect of the Guptas will have to search for defects in the new and reinterpret a lot of things, at the centre of which sit the Asokan edicts apparently as firm in their time-indications as the rocks and the stone-pillars on which they are inscribed.

Not only do these edicts suggest five post-Alexandrine Greek kings as Asoka's contemporaries. One of them at Kandahar has also an Asokan message in Greek along with an Aramaic version. Since the discovery of this bilingual, another in Greek alone and two more in only Aramaic with Asokan contexts have come to light. Can these records be dislodged from the middle of the third century B.C.?

One must certainly attempt the herculean task, but modern historians have first to realise their own responsibility. Unable to get out of the predicament we have posed they must listen to all that can be set forth to add to its logicality a practical proof. The proof would come primarily from a close inspection of the *Indica* of Megasthenes which can show a background of conditions, both psychological and religious, against which the Asoka of the edicts would be most improbable, if not impossible, around 250 B.C.

An attack on what we have proposed for Gupta chronology will be welcome when the whole case gets stated. What will be regretted is a high-handed ignoring of it because it flies so flagrantly in the face of long-accepted doctrine. Let us hope there will be no refusal to grant the Themistoclean claim: "Strike, but hear!"

THE WORLD OF DREAMS

Do you sometimes wake up with a jolt—on dreaming that you have fallen from your bedstead or any high place? Some wisemen say that this fear has its origin in the fear of falling from the tree nursed by our ape-ancestors.

Is this true?

Answer to this and numerous similar questions would have been found by you when you have followed the series, "The World of Dreams" (that began with Januaray '88 number) completely. This is an exhaustive treatment of the subject in the lights of mysticism and psychology.

Our Many Faces

"I look over the various parts of my character with perplexity. I recognize that I am made up of several persons and that the person who at the moment has the upper hand will inevitably give place to another. But which is the real one? All of them or none?"

Somerset Maugham

IT is just a little over a hundred years since Robert Louis Stevenson wrote his well-known novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886. During these past nearly hundred years, we have witnessed the birth and growth of Psychology as an independent branch of knowledge. The new science has thrown considerable light on the nature of the human personality, both in its normal functioning as well as in its numerous aberrant manifestations, including such instances as that of Jekyll and Hyde.

The Divided Self

One of the chief discoveries of psychology is the fact that the human personality is not made of one piece but is a complex phenomenon consisting of diverse elements, just like the body which is made up of many parts, organs and systems. But unlike the parts of the body, which can be objectively studied, the elements making up the personality can be perceived only through introspection or inferred from outward behaviour. Since introspection is subjective—one cannot introspect into another person's mind—and inference from outward behaviour is necessarily based on one's implicit or explicit theoretical conceptions of human nature, there are different theories regarding the structure of personality and its dynamics. However, aside from any theory regarding the make-up of the human personality, one fundamental fact about human nature, universally corroborated by the experience of every human being, is that there is a conflict among the elements which constitute our nature. Our self is not only multiple but also divided within itself.

Id, Ego, Super-Ego

Among modern theories regarding the structure of personality, the most comprehensive and most widely held theory is that of Sigmund Freud. According to Freud, a new-born infant is governed by only one psychological element, which he called the id, consisting of the various instincts

THE DIVIDED SELF AND ITS MALADIES

by Dr. A.S. Dalal

and impulses. The id, says Freud, follows the pleasure principle; that is, it is motivated solely by the pleasure which is obtained through the gratification of its instincts and impulses. As the infant grows up, two other psychological elements develop and become part of its personality—the ego and the super-ego.

The ego consists of the various mental faculties such as perception, conception, memory, thinking, planning, control and regulation of impulses, etc. which enable a person to deal with the outside world of reality. Whereas the id is dominated by the pleasure principle, the ego is governed by the reality principle; that is, it seeks to grasp, conform to or obtain mastery over the world of reality. The sole task of the ego is to come to grips with the external world on which the individual depends for the gratification of his id instincts and impulses. One who lacks an adequately developed ego is ill-equipped to deal with the outside world in a way that would lead to the satisfaction of his internal needs.

During the first few years of its life, the infant is entirely dependent on its parents—or parent-surrogates, if the natural parents are absent—for the satisfaction of its needs. Therefore the parents are the most important part of the external world with which the infant has to come to terms if it is to have its needs satisfied. The id impulses which govern an infant are therefore modified by the moral injunctions of its parents. The infant, according to Freud, introjects the parental injunctions, that is, makes them part of its own internal self, thereby developing what Freud calls the super-ego, and what in common parlance is known as conscience. The super-ego is the restrictive, controlling force acting over the id impulses. Whereas the id is driven by the pleasure principle, and the ego is subservient to the reality principle, the super-ego expresses the norms, mores and values of the parents and of the society in which an infant grows up.

Child, Adult, Parent

Dr. Eric Berne, founder of Transactional Analysis, has formulated a more concrete and practical theory of personality structure which is analogous to that of Freud. According to Berne, there are three basic psychological states—Child, Adult and Parent—which exist in all people. These psychological states are the result of all the experiences from the time of birth—and perhaps even prior to birth—which are indelibly recorded and stored within the individual as in a computer. The Child state is one in which an individual is moved by or acts according to one's feelings. The Adult state is characterised by a rational and detached view of things, as a result of which an individual weighs the pros and cons, and acts according to the dictates of reason. The Parent state reflects chiefly the rules and admonitions that the individual was subjected to by the parents or parent substitutes during the early years of his growth. When an individual is dominated by the Parent state, one tends to be judgemental, self-righteous, critical or punitive.

Healthy Personality

Freud derived his theory regarding the structure of personality from the study of patients suffering from psychological disturbances. According to Freud, all psychological disturbances are caused by the unconscious conflicts between the id and the super-ego. The aim of Freudian psychoanalytic treatment is to impart to the patient an insight into the origin and nature of the unconscious conflicts, and thereby enable the conscious ego to assume charge, replacing the unconscious drives of the id on the one hand, and the equally unconscious inhibitions of the super-ego on the other. From the viewpoint of Berne's Transactional Analysis, too, psychological health is a state in which the

Adult plays the leading role, examining the voices of both the Child and the Parent instead of being blindly dominated by either of them.

Freud's and Berne's views are similar regarding the healthy way of dealing with the instinctive drives and impulses which Freud attributes to the id and which according to Berne, are part of the Child. Both Freud and Berne maintain that the rational aspect of the personality—the ego or the Adult—needs to use, direct or sublimate the energies of the id or the Child towards constructive and creative activities as well as for joy and pleasure. With regard to the super-ego, Freud views it as an entirely negative and archaic force which must be progressively outgrown through the development of the ego From Berne's viewpoint, however, though the Parent is archaic, all that comes from it is not necessarily to be shunned. Berne seems to say after Carlyle that one should follow one's conscience but one should first see that it is not the conscience of an ass. The Adult, in Emerson's words, "must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but examine if it be goodness."

Psychosis

Many psychological disturbances can be very well understood in terms of Freud's tripartite view of personality structure. The extreme forms of psychological disturbances—the various psychoses or insanities—are characterised by the psychotic individual at the mercy of id and super-ego forces. In the majority of persons who have a psychotic breakdown, it is found that they lack a well-developed ego, so that even minor stresses cause a good deal of psychological disturbance. The term "schizophrenia", which literally means "split personality" is the major type of such disorders. A schizophrenic with a split personality is quite different from someone with a multiple personality, such as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Schizophrenia, as just stated, is characterised by a breakdown of the ego. Therefore a schizophrenic suffers from marked deficits in the various ego functions, especially those related to judgement and control of impulses, resulting not only in poor judgement and impulsiveness, but also, in extreme cases, to delusions of one kind or another. In some cases, even perceptual functions are affected, leading to auditory or visual hallucinations. On the other hand, in a multiple personality—of which there are only rare cases—the ego functions are intact; the person has normal perceptual and cognitive abilities and does not suffer from hallucinations or delusions. But the various features which constitute the personality, namely, beliefs, attitudes, feelings and sentiments, values, habits, etc., change dramatically from time to time, so that the individual becomes a totally different person with a different identity which is completely oblivious of the other identity. Thus in a multiple personality, there is more than one independent ego, each of which exercises normal ego functions, free from the kind of ego deficits which are found in a schizophrenic.

Psychoneurosis

Psychoneurosis, a commoner and less severe type of psychological disturbance as compared to psychosis, is explicable in terms of Freud's theory as the result of an overpowering super-ego. The ego of the psychoneurotic is not as defective and fragile as that of a psychotic, but is not strong enough to control and regulate the id impulses. However, because of the repressive force of a powerful super-ego, the id impulses are not acted out in behaviour. The ego, which is thus pulled by the two opposite forces of the id and the super-ego, uses various unconscious "defence mechanisms", such as repression, obsessive-compulsive behaviour, rationalisation, etc. in an attempt to resolve the conflict. Depending upon the nature of the id impulses, of the super-ego and the kind of defence mechanisms employed, different types of psychoneuroses are produced, such as hysteria, anxiety neurosis, neurotic depression, obsessive-compulsive neurosis, etc.

Psychopathic Personality

Psychosis and psychoneurosis are two of the three major categories of psychiatric disturbances. The third major category is that of personality disorders. Unlike psychosis and psychoneurosis which produce internal disturbances, personality disorders chiefly affect conduct or behaviour, and are therefore also referred to as conduct or character disorders. One of the chief types of personality disorders is that of the psychopathic personality.

Psychopathic personality disorder, which manifests itself in marked and persistent anti-social behaviour such as crime, cruelty, exploitation of others, etc., is, from the psychoanalytic viewpoint, the opposite of a psychoneurotic disorder. As has been previously stated, psychoneurosis is characterised by the presence of a powerful super-ego, leading to strong inner conflicts and anxiety. In psychopathy, on the other hand, there is an under-developed super-ego or its virtual absence. Consequently, a psychopathic person acts out his id impulses without experiencing significant inner conflict or anxiety. He is therefore not so much of a disturbance to himself as to others. As it has been wittily remarked, whereas a psychoneurotic is someone who is bothered, a psychopath is someone who is bothersome.

Psychopathy is not easily amenable to treatment, for whereas the inordinate super-ego associated with psychoneurosis can be modified by fostering the development of the ego, it is extremely difficult to inculcate a

super-ego in someone who has failed to develop it during the first few years of life. Moreover, anxiety—the force which generally motivates a psychologically disturbed person to seek treatment—is lacking or absent in a psychopath.

Preventing the Maladies

Prevention generally refers to measures taken before a disturbance develops. Such measures, technically called primary prevention, can be adopted mainly during a person's early childhood by those who are responsible for a child's upbringing. For, there is a consensus among leading personality theorists that the basic formation of the personality takes place during the first few years of childhood. By the time a child attains the age of five or so, the seeds of disturbances, which may manifest in later life, have already been sown, and in many cases can be easily discerned. Subsequent to these early years of childhood, prevention consists in measures which would control or overcome the overt early symptoms of disturbances which have already begun to manifest. Such measures, referred to as secondary prevention, are aimed at dealing with the early manifestations of a disturbance before it becomes full-blown, chronic or disabling.

Primary Prevention

Measures for primary prevention to be adopted by parents and other adults responsible for the upbringing of a child consist essentially in fostering the growth of what Freud calls the ego. For, as stated previously, a healthy personality is one in which the ego is in charge as the leader and master of the household, neither inundated and overwhelmed by uncontrollable id impulses on the one hand, nor stifled and maimed by an overriding and harsh super-ego on the other. The initial growth of the ego takes place spontaneously as a result of the process of maturation, and consists in the development of various sensory-motor, perceptual and conceptual abilities. Experiences such as these provided by the Montessori and other systems of kindergarten education are considerable help in this phase of development. All experiences at home and outside which foster the child's physical, emotional and mental development serve to build up and strengthen the ego. The most congenial soil for the development of a strong ego is the parents' unconditional love; it gives the child a sense of security, self-confidence and a positive self-image without which the ego becomes crippled and stunted in its growth. Love, however, must not turn into pampering and permissiveness, for an important aspect of ego, development consists in learning to control and regulate id impulses. The child therefore needs to receive an enlightened and consistent discipline that defines healthy channels and appropriate limits for the expression of a child's energies and impulses. On the other hand, if the discipline is over-strict, the child is apt to develop an overly restrictive and punitive super-ego which, too, weakens the ego, and gives rise to excessive conflict, anxiety, fear and guilt.

Personality in Adulthood

The influence of parents on the formation of a child's personality becomes less and less as the child grows up. Other influences, such as those of playmates and other peers, teachers at school, society at large, and, above all, the events and experiences of life play an increasing role and modify the basic personality structure which was formed during the first five or six years of life. While the external influences just mentioned continue to operate throughout the life of the individual, affecting the personality for better or worse, the individual's own choices and actions based on his free-will assume a progressively greater importance in moulding the personality as the individual grows up and acquires independence. How can the grown-up individual combat the negative influences of early childhood and of later life so as not to succumb to a psychological malady? How can the conflicts of the divided self be resolved? These questions will be dealt with in the second part of this article.

To conclude in the next issue)

Poet Terhume recollects the first-ever time he became conscious of the many selves of man: once when he was a little child, his mother left for the neighbour's house leaving him alone at home. There was a slab of sweet on a sheif. The mother had warned the boy against eating it. Nevertheless, by the time the mother was back, the boy was there all right, but not the slab of sweet. "What happened to the sweet?" asked the mother. "I ate it," confessed the little one, "but, believe me, mother, while I was eating it, I was also weeping."

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"Don't smell them. We can offer it at the temple," said Kamala. She meant the temple at their native village, their present destination.

Seshan did not have to lift the flower to his nose. The heady fragrance filled the compartment. It brought back memories of childhood and youth, spent at Madurai. The street house at Naicker New Street, where his father carried on a lawyer's practice, the high-rise Krishnan Temple on North Masi Street with flower sellers at the entrance, all came back to him in a rush.

"We should not have sold our house at Madurai," remarked Kamala, as though she could read his thoughts. "How come you are so sentimental this early in the day?" he teased her. "You know very well that there was no point in keeping the old house, trying to rent it out. And we needed the money badly for Tara's wedding."

"Do you know the price it would fetch today? We sold it for a song," Kamala shot back. Ten years ago it fetched a princely amount of ninety thousand. Seshan was fully aware that its present market value would be ten times that. But was there any price at all, he wondered, for the associations the house held, the house built by his father, who spent forty years of his life, within its walls? But sentiments are worth nothing in rupee value, which was the only tangible thing one depended on always. Has our life all along been a running after power and material comforts? Seshan brooded. His father left his village home and his parents behind to set up a successful practice at Madurai. Seshan had in turn left his father and his home at Madurai to pursue a successful career in the Government as an IAS officer. But was Madurai his real home? Or was it Venkatavaradapuram, his village on the banks of the Tamraparani? Mere thought of the village sent a thrill through Seshan. He was visiting it after nearly twenty years!

"Kadambur Poli ..... Kadambur Poli ..... ," the vendor's cry broke his reverie. "Look Kamala ..... They still sell Poli at Kadambur," he exclaimed. At eight in the morning whoever would imagine consuming Polies! But this station, for years associated with Polies, an alien sweet in this area, continued to put them up for sale.

"Madurai and further down south there is practically no change at all," Kamala agreed "Even the stations look as sleepy as ever." Seshan wondered whether his village too would be the same as he knew it.

They alighted swiftly at Thalayoothu Station, as they knew that the train would stop barely for a couple of minutes. Engaging one of the bullock carts, they set out on the mud roads. There were patches of gravel here and there. But the road on the embankment between the lush green fields on one side and the tank on the other did not have even a single tree to provide shelter from the sun blazing down mercilessly upon them.

"I heard that there are buses to the village," Seshan enquired of the driver who seemed to be in his teens.

"There are buses from Tirunelveli, Sir. But they stop on the other side of the river. I would take the cart right across the river bed."

So, even this had not changed.

Fortunately there was not much water in the river. Seshan alighted and waded through knee-deep water, while Kamala sat in the cart, anxiously clutching their baggage.

At his first look at his beloved village, Seshan's heart sank! What had happened? Where were all the people? Why were so many houses bolted and locked? And a number of them had even started crumbling into ruins!

It was just one long street, the Agraharam, with the temple at one end and the river at the other. Right in the middle of the road was the old well, whose walls had fallen into repair. He bade the cart stop in front of his house.

Finding it locked, he walked across to Ramu uncle's house. The old man came out and greeted him with visible pleasure. "I expected you to take a taxi from Tirunelveli. Didn't you find the ride tiring?" He was full of genuine concern.

"No. I rather liked the ride. It was like old times," Seshan assured him.

The old man, having been informed about their arrival, had got their house cleaned and tidied. As he opened the massive wooden door, he informed them that they could come over to his house for their breakfast, lunch and dinner. "You need not try to cook," he said.

Anyway Kamala had not been planning to cook during this visit, which according to their plans, should be a week-long at the most. Perhaps they could pay Ramu uncle a couple of hundreds when they left, for his hospitality. Seshan felt physically and emotionally weak as he sat on the wooden swing in the big hall. "Why are all the houses closed?" was his first question.

"That is a good question," Ramu uncle guffawed, "especially from you. Yours was the first family to leave this village. Soon everybody thought his son should be a doctor, an engineer, a lawyer and an IAS and families have moved out bit by bit. First the sons went. Once they were

settled in cities, the parents followed them. Right now there are just four houses open, mine, Kesavan's, Echamma's and the Kovil Iyengar's. We have not left because there is no place for us to go."

Seshan remembered with a slight embarrassment that Ramu uncle had an only son, who passed away in his teens. Kesava Mama had a bunch of daughters, five or probably six, after whom came the much longed for son. Echamma. The old widow. She was said to have been married at the age of four and widowed at six. She had never left her maternal home. Her life had been one long baby-sitting of nieces and nephews and nursing of her aged parents. Seshan remembered her as a lady bent double with age, hard of hearing and with a failing eyesight.

"How come Echamma did not go away to stay with her nephews?" Seshan queried.

With Ramu uncle this was obviously a sore point. "That is what gratitude means today. No one wants to take care of old people," he spat out.

"What does Echamma do for an income?" Seshan need not have asked.

"Her lunch is the prasadam she gets from the temple, which the Kovil Iyengar is kind enough to give her. She has only some gruel at night, which my wife gives," replied Ramu uncle.

Kamala, in the meanwhile, had gone in search of the bathroom. Finding no water there, she was further distressed to find no rope either to draw water from the well.

"I cannot bathe at the river. What shall I do now?" she presented her problem to Seshan. Ramu uncle took her with him to have her bath at his house, where he promised to provide her with hot water.

Seshan started exploring his ancestral home. Every pillar and every rafter, every nook and corner held sweet memories of his early childhood. It was like travelling back in a time machine. It was on this verandah that granny would make the children sit around her in a semi-circle and place balls of curd rice in their palms. A dot of "Keeraikuzhambu", the pungent sauce mixed with mashed greens, would adorn the top of the white ball of curd rice. The flavour, even the thought of it, made his mouth water.

It was from this dark and dingy kitchen that all the tempting smells would emanate. Especially on festival days when sweets were made with jaggery.

No more sweets any way. Detection of diabetes ten years back had put an end to all sweet things—of life too! Seshan wondered. Kamala could have at least prepared the 'Keeraikuzhambu' as it used to be made here. Born and brought up in Madras, she used to turn her nose up at such rural concoctions. She never bothered to get the recipe, which her mother-in-law might have gladly imparted.

Seshan checked himself for such carping. After all Kamala was a good wife, trying to keep him happy and contented. She had given him three lovely children and had seen to it that they had all the necessary accomplishments. Their eldest son carried on a flourishing medical practice at Madras. The daughter, married happily, was conducting Bharatha Natyam and Carnatic Music classes at Cincinnati.

The younger son, Mukund, had run into problems, though not for any fault of his. By the time he grew up he had found the avenues of higher education barred against him. Seshan winced as he thought of it even now, the young boy crying out through tears of frustration, "Why father? Why should I be condemned because of my birth? Is it a sin to be born a Brahmin? Why should the stigma of "forward community" push me backward? Why don't you DO something?"

The eldest son Gopal, senior to him by ten years had been lucky to land a seat in the Medical College in Delhi. When it was Mukund's turn to take up college studies, Seshan was unexpectedly transferred to Madras and had tried to admit Mukund in a college in Madras. The reservation policy had undermined the lad's chances of pursuing an engineer's career. Mukund rebelled, sulked for a whole year, studied with a vengeance and topped the list at the IIT Entrance Exam. Even at the end of five years, when he passed out, still at the top of his class, the raging fire in his heart had not died down.

"I have no future here. Why should I shed my sweat and blood for a land which looks upon me as an alien and would do everything to stunt my growth?" he demanded. Thus did set forth one of the angry young sons of the soil to look for a future in alien lands. Mukund was now one of the few at the top of a multinational firm dealing in computers. Based in New York, he flew in with his family once in four or five years to spend a week or two with his parents.

Seshan sighed and opened his bags to take out a towel to go to the river.

The dip in the river was refreshing as it ever used to be. The water, only slightly cooler than body temperature, caressed his limbs lovingly and he had a strange feeling of being cleansed.

Ramu uncle's wife Champa had always been a good cook. The Chundakkai Vatral Kuzhambu and the Keerai almost brought tears to his eyes.

"The vegetables are as tasty as they were years ago," he remarked. Champa was also known for her sharp tongue. "The same soil, the same water, the same hands to cook. Taste naturally does not change. But people do change and how!" Whether she meant it as a criticism of him, Seshan could not be sure.

The lunch over, Seshan sat on the swing in his house and waited for his tenant Chollamuthu. The latter arrived with his entire family. He had brought a basketful of vegetables, a bag of groundnuts and a mudpot of ghee as his offerings to his landlord. Seshan was shocked to see the shrivelled and white haired old man sitting in front of him and shedding tears. They had been playmates, climbing trees, jumping into the river, running after calves, not very long ago. Seshan was surprised to learn that the teenager who drove them from the station was Chollamuthu's grandson.

"His mother died in labour, before we could take her to Tirunelveli by cart. My son was bitten by a snake. And I am left behind to look after this boy and his brothers and sisters," sobbed he in sorrow that remained painfully fresh through the years.

Seshan was speechless. How was he going to tell this sick old friend that he had come to sell the land which was their only bond of relationship? Seshan did need the money rather badly. His retirement found him with a couple of lakhs which were suddenly found insufficient to get him a decent roof above his head in Madras.

True, his son Gopal lived in a spacious modern bungalow which served as his consultation clinic as well. But this had been given to him by his father-in-law. Kamala would not dream of sharing the kitchen with her daughter-in-law. Why blame Kamala again? Seshan himself needed his privacy and would rather stay alone. To supplement his life-time savings, and buy a single bedroom flat, in a decent locality, Seshan had decided to sell his ancestral land in the village. He had also planned to sell this old dilapidated house, if he could find a buyer.

But how would he explain all these to this old man, whose only means of livelihood was the soil he tilled for another?

Seshan's visit to Kesava Mama's house later in the afternoon was equally distressing. Reclining on a dirty bed and sweating under a torn punkah, the old man was a picture of misery. His only son had taken up residence in Tirunelveli and was living there with his wife and children. Kesava Mama's second daughter had been widowed and had returned with three children. The fourth daughter was the only earning member, who had a job as a teacher in Tirunelveli. Seshan was taken aback when the girl walked in dripping wet from knee downwards. "She wades through the river, to take the bus from the opposite bank. She carries a set of dry clothes which she wears on the other side. If there are floods she spends sometimes even a week at my cousin's house at Tirunelveli. We cannot afford to live in the town. So we stay here, hoping that the river would always run knee-deep," Kesava Mama related in a hoarse whisper.

"Why hasn't a bridge been built?" enquired Seshan, realising immediately the foolishness of his question. It was Ramu uncle who replied, "When the BDO came to survey this village there were not even two hundred inhabitants in Agraharam and Edakkudi put together. Everybody had migrated. The old, the disabled and a few sick children were left behind. The BDO was convinced that it was not worth building a bridge for this dwindling community. Nor did he recommend electrification of the village. But it is a vicious circle. No people, no facilities. No facilities, no people," he ended bitterly.

At dusk Seshan entered the temple, a small stone structure reportedly built by the king who gifted the village to the learned Brahmin, who was the founder of the Agraharam. All the inhabitants were the descendants of this common ancestor. Hence everybody was a blood relation of everyone else in the village. With marriages among first and second cousins, uncles, nieces, etc. the relationships had become too complicated to keep track of. Seshan recollected with amusement the horror with which the elders discovered that a couple united in a marriage arranged by the elders themselves, bore an awkward relationship of aunt and nephew, four times removed though. It was too late to do anything about it.

The sanctum was dark, and the idol was barely visible in silhouette in the lamplight. The jasmine string adorned the deity. The fragrance of flowers, camphor mixed with the pungent mustiness of dark corners and cockroaches, assailed Seshan's nostrils. He peered closely to locate the beautiful icon of Krishna, the Utsava Murthy.

The Archaka told in a calm tone, "The icon was stolen and was recovered after three years, at Bombay. The case is still going on and our Krishna is in Police custody."

"The temple was burgled again and all the silver vessels and gold ornaments were taken away. Nothing was found," added Ramu uncle matter-of-factly. That accounted for the use of copper vessels to serve the sacred water, instead of the customary silver ones.

"Even to my knowledge there are at least twenty of our children living in America. If each one of them were to send a couple of thousands, we could restore the temple to its old status. Until then our Lord shall share our poverty with us," Ramu uncle sounded forlorn!

"This I can certainly do uncle. I shall collect the address of all our relations and send an appeal to them," Seshan sounded enthusiastic.

"And entrust the money and the task to me, I suppose," growled Ramu uncle. "After all am I not the youngest and healthiest person on the spot!"

Seshan was overcome by shame and fell silent. A little later he recovered himself enough to say, "Knowledge has been the only wealth we ever cherished. In pursuit of that we have had to go to the ends of earth."

"Knowledge? May be. But not always. After knowledge what? You want power. You want comforts. You have become too soft. Endurance and sacrifice are not the virtues of the present generations. Their physical horizons have widened. But their mental horizon has shrunk to such an extent that even a joint family has become an anachronism. Myself, my wife, my children, my home. That is the philosophy."

It would have been impertinent and hypocritical to deny these allegations. Seshan hung his head.

The following days at the village and at Tirunelveli in a quest for a prospective buyer, brought home to Seshan further revelations. 'Civilisation' was but a river's breadth away. Tantalisingly it eluded this pathetic village where time had stood still. Deserted by its youth and its intelligentsia, it was only a question of time before Venkatavaradapuram crumbled into dust and vanished from the face of the earth. Its green fields and flowing river would have to wait probably centuries, before humanity returned to partake of their plenty.

Kamala was getting restlesss. One week at this God-forsaken corner had left her bored to tears. She missed her club, the T.V., the long telephone conversations with her friends,the glossy magazines and above all the ever rotating fan. Seshan, to his surprise, realised that he did not at all miss his official bustle, his daily routine of decision making, the recurrent cocktail and the week-end bridge parties. In fact he had not missed even the newspaper.

A decision had been made. He would not sell the land. Kamala could neither understand nor appreciate this. She was still muttering when she climbed into the bullock cart and headed for the station. Before crossing the river once again, Seshan climbed out. Kamala jumped out after him. She was too scared to sit in the cart as it dipped and rose in the river bed.

Seshan pointed at the stately Banyan tree under which he had run about and played just so many years ago. "What a wonderful tree it is, do you see Kamala? It does have very strong roots under the soil to support the trunk. But once it spreads its branches, the roots come down from above and provide renewed support to the structure. What a glorious creation!"

Kamala wore a puzzled look on her face. She certainly could not follow his thought or his sudden botanical outburst. It would take time to break the news to her. She may or may not subscribe to his ideas. She would in all probability refuse to accompany him back to his new life on the native soil.

But Seshan would tell her by and by of the urge he felt to rejuvenate, strengthen and support his home, which was here, on the abandoned bank of the Tamraparani. Gripping Kamala's hand he stepped into the water and started to wade across the river.

It was a wintry season. The temperature was below zero. A well-clad gentleman was coming down from the Himalayas to the plains. He met an old man, almost bare-bodied, making his way towards a high Himalayan shrine. "Old man," said the gentleman well-protected from cold, "How can you walk up in this cold? What is your secret?"

"You see," replied the old man cheerfully. "My heart got there first without bothering about the weather. It is easy for the rest of me to follow it."

The Vampire City

by Rajeswari Rajan

THE city was very big and very beautiful and it held many cherished memories for me. I had been only ten years old when I last visited it, and my impressions were hazy fragments of lots and lots of sunshine, of huge open fields where my cousins played football, of multi-storeyed buildings, of fun and laughter and dogs barking...

The city seemed to have grown with the years into greater glory. I was taken aback by its sheer beauty, the generous roads set off by a lovely double canopy of trees, green parks moulding themselves to the natural ups and downs of the landscape, exquisite architecture very tastefully touched up in pastel shades, neatly arranged residential blocks each with its own little market ultra-modern superbazars where almost every thing was available... it could all have been the handiwork of Viswakarma himself!

I stayed in a nice flat in a multi-storeyed complex with my aunt and cousins. The vegetable vendor came every morning to our door and the balloon-seller came every evening to the tiny little park in the centre of the multi-storeyed complex which also served as playground for the children living there. We went almost every evening for a stroll in that park before we sat down for a steaming hot cup of coffee before the television.

That was another thing that struck me. Almost every house had a television, which seemed to reflect their quite high standard of living. In fact, I came across very little blatant poverty, and there were almost no beggars on the streets, contrary to what foreign tourists' photographs often depicted.

I travelled by the chartered bus which dropped my uncle and myself at his office from where I had better access to the places of work which had brought me to the city. The chartered bus was a convenience most office-goers availed of in order to avoid the infrequency and crowds of the public buses, and the city being quite large, travelling by car turned out rather expensive. Though my stay in the city would be short, I used the chartered bus, more upon my uncle's insistence, for he wanted to be sure of my safe return with him, though I would have preferred a little more leverage to move around in the city. Anyway, I was by now familiar with the faces that travelled by the bus everyday up and down the city and could almost point out where who got in or off and at what time. I even managed to pick up a conversation (quite a feat in that rather uncommunicative lot) with one lady who had been travelling by that bus to her office for the past ten years.

That day the driver announced that he would not be bringing the bus that evening and we'd have to find our own way back home. The reaction of the lady was surprising. She was all fluttered and nervous and even went up to the extent of thinking of applying for leave for the day! I was more amused than puzzled and asked her the reason.

"I'm scared," she said.

"Scared? Of what?"

"I don't know..."

"What will happen if you go home on your own?"

"I don't know..."

"Then why are you scared?"

"I don't know..."

And she was not the only one. The whole bus began buzzing with fevered voices as to what alternative arrangements could be made and my uncle told me in a voice that brooked no arguments that I would have to report at his office at least fifteen minutes before closing time. So that he would be assured that we went back home together.

That evening, as we sipped our hot coffee and listened to soft ghazals on the cassette, my cousins recounted story after story about terrifying incidents that had occurred in the city in its lurid past. Stories about murders in broad daylight, about merciless eve-teasings, about two nurses being raped and murdered in an empty bus by the driver and conductor, about a man travelling in a bus seen to have blood in his pocket which was later discovered to be dripping from a severed hand of a woman he had cut off for the rings on its fingers...! To me it was fascinating as much as it was horrifying, and I could have been listening to one of the ghost stories in *Believe It or Not!*

The next morning in the chartered bus I felt like a horse with blinkers on. The usual song played over the loud-speaker in the bus jarred in my ears and the tiny view of the city that I got through my window tired me. The urge for adventure was too much to contain and I decided my mind. I made up a story to my uncle about some extra load of work whence a colleague would drop me back home. My uncle was reluctant but I gave him no choice.

* * * *

Winter had settled elegantly over the city retiring from the day's toil. The soft mist glowed in the orange light of the sodium vapour lamps. A gust of wind blew the leaves at my feet and I

suddenly felt free and alive. I inhaled deeply of the late evening air and an exquisite sensation of buoyancy overwhelmed me.

Not many people were around but I did not feel alone. The scene seemed right out of a picture book or a movie—an old man wrapped in a muffler stopped to light a cigarette under a lamp and a mother hurried her child on, almost dragging it along, the headlights of a passing car illuminated for an instant a boy huddled on the sidewalk covered in an old shawl, a cyclist pedalled furiously by, his head bent forward against the wind...

I thought I should give my hosts the credit for some concern about my safety. There was no telephone booth in sight, and most of the nearby houses were set in the interiors of lovely gardens and I was skeptical about walking down their dark drives and requesting the use of their telephone.

The low light of glass chandeliers looked beautiful and inviting through the glass doors of a hotel. The doorman was dressed in the typical turban and costume of the days of Indian kings and he bowed slightly as he held the doors open for me. I asked him about the telephone and he pointed to another beautifully carved wooden doorway. When I went inside I felt as though I had by mistake stepped into some forbidden fairyland.

Several low tables were artfully arranged in the room which was enveloped in the golden flicker of candles placed each next to a flower vase with a single rose on every table. The faces and rich dresses of the men and women at the tables shimmered and gleamed enigmatically in the gentle throw of candlelight. In one corner, in a cushioned enclosure sat a ghazal singer and some musicians, all in the purest of white, singing a crooning melody that added to the dreamlike quality of the scene. Silent figures in similar attire as the doorman moved like shadows between the tables, bending occasionally to whisper to someone seated. No voice, in fact, spoke above a whisper, if at all, and I was slowly losing all sense of reality, when a man in an impeccable three-piece suit turned up from nowhere behind me and enquired whether he could be of any help.

I had to pay thrice the usual for two wrong number calls and I ultimately gave up and decided not to waste any more time getting home. I asked the man which bus I could take to my place and where the nearest stop was. He was not very sure but said I could walk up to an adjacent road and take the second turn on the left from where I could take a bus to a central stage where I could change buses to go to my destination. Uncertainty put me a little off balance, and I asked him if he could kindly allow someone to just walk me up to the bus-stand or at least come to the road and point out the way but he politely refused saying that he could spare no one as they were all on duty.

As I walked by the posh cars parked on the pavement, my mind went back to that dimly lit dreamland and I thought how perfectly that scene fit into my Utopian image of this city. The roads were more deserted than when I had left them. I quickened my steps slightly and avoided the stares of the few passers-by who probably did not normally see a lone girl walking on the city roads that late. Well, India still had quite some way to go on the way on women's progress, I reasoned.

The second turning on the left seemed darker than usual and to my mind the stray figures on the road, some standing in groups and smoking, some seated under lampposts and some hurrying faceless along, took on a sinister aspect. I attributed it to the dramatic imaginativeness of my mind, but I could not ward off the unbidden but slow filtering into my mind of those stories my cousins had related.

The bus was about to move off and I just managed to find out that it went somewhere near where I stayed. Without second thought I jumped on, determined that I should at least get out of this area. While I did so I noticed an old man climbed in behind me. He must have heard me enquire of the conductor where I had to get off, for he turned to me and assured me that the bus went quite near where I stayed. I looked around and saw that I was the only woman in the bus except for an old lady who sat with her husband three seats away. The old man, he would have easily been seventy, seemed also to notice the fact. More passengers got on at the next stop, all men, and suddenly the old man got up from his seat and came and sat in the empty seat beside me. I moved closer to the window. He turned to me and said,

"Don't worry, I'll tell you where you have to get off. It's just two stops after mine." Then, lowering his voice, he bent toward me. "You see, it's not safe for girls to travel alone at this time of the night. That's why I came and sat next to you."

Looking into his kindly twinkling eyes I felt myself softening, and smiled my thanks at what I took to be his old fashioned need to protect women. He seemed encouraged by my smile, and told me that he was a music teacher on his way to take vocal lessons in Hindustani classical for a lady who was already an M.A. in music.

"I don't know how she got her degree," he said, "She does not know anything of music! And she is a lecturer in the music college!!"

I was surprised that he should be travelling so late in the evening to such a distance for an hour of music tuition, and did not hide my surprise.

"Taking tuitions is my full-time occupation after I retired, so I have to adjust to the timings of those I teach, but I don't mind it. I love music and like to teach others. Do you know,I have evolved a fantastic pattern to teach music so that even those with no sense of music but who are willing to learn can pick up the techniques very easily..."

There was something so simple and charming and unassuming about the old man and his words that I warmed up to him in no time at all. Throughout our travel he chattered on about his life and family. He told me that he knew to play the sitar, the sarod and the violin and he used to be a Hindustani classical vocalist as well until he lost his voice in an illness, but he still taught vocal music with his harmonium. When I told him that I played Carnatic music on the veena, he became thrilled and went on about how beautiful and dignified classical music was and how he loved the veena best of all for its unique majesty mixed with sweetness. He told me about his little granddaughter who was learning to play the violin from another master because she was too naughty to learn it from her own grandfather. He told me about his various gurus, about his little successes as a performing musician, even showed me an old volume of a magazine which had featured him playing on his sitar. We had a lively discussion about the merits and demerits of various musicians and I'm sure I'd never spent a more interesting half-hour during my stay in that city.

"Ah, this is where I get off. You get down at the second stop from here and you will be in your place, P ——Nagar..."

"This bus does not go to P —— Nagar." I turned to the passenger who said that. "It will turn off in the next road..."

A sudden pang went through me. I looked for the conductor and asked him where I should get off to go to P —— Nagar.

"This bus does not go there. You should have got off two stops earlier and caught another bus..."

He turned away and went down the aisle. I felt numb all over. I heard the old man's voice, "But I thought this bus went there, it used to go there..."

He still had one foot on the steps. He then called to me,

"You don't worry, ma. You get down here with me. I will see to it that you reach your place."

I didn't think I had much of a choice. I got down. The bus moved off.

The place was totally strange to me. And night made it stranger still. The shutters were down on shops. On the pavement lay figures covered with dirty, torn bedsheets or shawls. There was hardly any traffic, and the stray autos that went past were all occupied. I had not the vaguest notion which direction I should take.

"Come," said the old man and began walking. I followed him with hesitant steps, a few paces behind. But then the old man walked so rapidly that I found myself almost running to keep up with him.

"I'll take an auto to my place," I panted in the double effort of keeping my pace up and panic down.

"No, no, absolutely no." The old man did not even pause in his stride, "I don't trust these auto fellows at all nowadays. And you are a girl, going alone, at this time of the night...No, no, don't worry, I know this area very well. I have lived here for twenty-five years before I shifted to the other place. I'll walk with you right up to your house and drop you, then I will come back to my tuition..."

"Where do you have to go to take tuition?"

"It's on our way. If you will just wait for a minute I will leave my bag there—it's little heavy, you see, and I am getting old—then I will walk with you to your place...."

We turned from the main road into a dark alley. As we walked down, the darkness seemed to stretch on. It was a still night with not the slightest trace of breeze and the road we walked on was almost deserted. The silence was getting oppressive. A cycle rickshaw came toward us bearing two men in a drunken stupor. My heart began galloping and I nearly jumped out of my skin when a door banged somewhere. Almost inevitably, all those stories I had heard the previous evening loomed enormous before my fleeing mind.

The old man walking so rapidly ahead now appeared like some mysterious Pied Piper luring me on into an unknown, dangerous destiny. I suddenly felt an utter fool to so blindly follow a stranger in this alien city in the ghostly hours of a treacherous night. It occurred to me that those blood-curdling stories I had heard could not be altogether false. What if this man leading me ostensibly toward my home was not merely old but a murderer or thief in disguise? Or he could even be part of some gang which specialised in luring lone girls into dark corners of the city and doing God knows what with them...!!! Then I thought of my bus travel and the lovely conversation I had with this old man and felt ashamed of my thoughts... But nevertheless, the thoughts persisted... Even if he was all that he claimed to be, it was still a fact that an 'old' man and a girl were walking alone down a dark and deserted road which did not even have working street lights and who knows what might just turn up at the next corner? Suppose we were accosted by some 'goondas'..., this wasn't a movie so that the hero would spring up from some rooftop and dash to our rescue! Anyway, how to know that I was being led in the right direction, assuming of course, that the old man did know his way around the area? I had absolutely no way of finding out, for not a soul was about except for an occasional cyclist or rickshaw puller who passed by but whom I was too scared to stop.

I stole a look at the old man as he passed under the light of an open window. What I saw sent a sudden shiver through me. The light had fallen upon his face from one side and created an eerie, ghastly effect which was accentuated by the deep lines age had drawn. I sensed the stormy panic

rising inexorably from the depths of my being. Snatches of remembered conversation came banging into my head...

"I'm scared..."

"Of what?..."

"I don't know..."

"What will happen..."

"I don't know..."

"Why scared..."

"I don't know..."

The harsh scream of an auto's brakes rushing almost into us...I completely lost all balance of mind...

"Auto!"

The old man halted in surprise and turned.

"What...?"

"I'll take an auto home..."

"But..."

I did not hear what he said, I was already running madly towards the auto which had screeched to a halt some yards ahead. It was luckily empty.

"P ———Nagar..."

My breath came out in gulps. The auto-driver was taking aeons to reply. I looked back and the old man was walking towards me...

"Why are you taking an auto, my girl? P ———Nagar is very near here. I told you I will walk with you right up to your house. It is no problem for me at all. And again I am telling you, taking an auto alone this time of the night in this city...I don't like it..."

I was in no frame of mind to heed his words. I looked towards the auto-driver with desperation in my eyes.

"Ten rupees."

I was willing to give over to him my entire savings account. I jumped into the seat.

"Are you sure?..."

The old man had a worried expression on his face which vaguely registered in my mind but which I was in no mood to consider.

"It's all right, really, I'll manage. Driver let's go."

The auto whirred into a noisy start and swerved onto a main road. The last I remember is the old man holding his bag, standing alone on that road in the lonely night and staring after the auto.

The auto had barely crossed twenty yards when the familiarity of the buildings struck me. Before I could comprehend, the auto came to a stop outside the multi-storeyed complex which I recognised to be my house, P———Nagar. I had barely been fifteen seconds inside that auto. The driver insisted that I pay up the ten rupees I had agreed upon. I was too dazed to argue.

I knew that I could run back those twenty-odd yards and possibly locate the old man. But even as I knew that he would be gone, the fear that had me in its clutching grip still held my feet from venturing out into the black night. I groped blindly for my flat.

The paranoia slowly ebbed out of my system. Why were these tears in my eyes? Uncontrollable torrents of tears, racking my body in shuddering sobs... "Damned!!!," I wanted to scream, "Damned be this city...!!! Damned my becoming so de-humanised that I would rather believe a machine than the kindness of an old man...!!!"

Suddenly the parks and architecture seemed the cunning creations of scheming minds that wanted to skilfully hide under its illusionary image the homelessness of those shrouded figures sleeping on the pavement. The winter seemed like a shrouded web that trapped the wide roads in its cold mesh. I remembered the huge houses set in the dark interiors of their gardens and I knew that if something had happened to me outside their gates and I had screamed my lungs out they would not even hear me, let alone lift their fingers to help.

And those people who lived in their neat little residential blocks, who took an evening stroll in their little park before settling in front of the TV with their hot cups of coffee! They had willingly accepted the view through the window of the chartered bus to be their only world. Had they deliberately or was it under some compulsion where this was the easy way out? When, how, why, did this inhuman mechanisation of minds happen...? The answer seemed as forbidding as it was difficult to come by.

But something died inside me that night, a certain love for the spirit of life. For it is so easy to suspect and so difficult to trust, and in those moments of suspicion of that nameless old man who loves music, who lives somewhere in the darkness of this alien city, and who showed me such genuine kindness, I had perhaps lost the capacity to trust!

In a small town lived a holy man. He was a bore no doubt, but perfectly moral and a teacher who was never tired of imparting lessons and taking the townsfolk to task for not leading a religiously sound life.

Then he died. Some of his admirers went to a spiritist and asked him to show them a glimpse of the old man—what he was doing in the other world. The spiritist did his abracadabra; there flashed before the holy man's admirers the vision of the old man in the company of a voluptuous blonde. "Good Heavens, is this the kind of reward he has received after a strict life on earth!"

"Fools!" shouted the old man from the other world. "Did I not tell you innumerable times not to be deceived by appearance? She is not my reward; I am given to her as her punishment!!"

The Astrologer

by Kasthuri Sreenivasan

DR. NARAYANAN was listening to the radio, waiting for the nine o'clock news. His wife Lakshmi was pottering in the kitchen. The servants had gone home and the children were in bed. Everything was quiet and peaceful.

Suddenly, there was a crash. "What was that?" exclaimed Lakshmi as she came out of the kitchen.

"Sounds as if a coconut had fallen from one of the trees and on to the tiles," Dr. Narayanan said.

"But we harvested all the coconuts only a few days ago!" replied Lakshmi. "And there is no wind this evening."

There was another crash on the roof and they could hear the object—whatever it was—rolling down on the tiles and falling on the ground with a dull thud.

"Let us find out," Narayanan rose, picked up a torch, opened the front door and went out.

"Please be careful," his wife called out after him. She had had a bad dream the previous night and was getting nervous. But still, she walked to the front door and peeped out. Her husband was flashing the torch in various directions in the darkness.

Just then, there was a shower of stones—about five or six—in quick succession and some of them rolled down and fell in the garden. "Come in! Please come in!" Lakshmi called out in panic.

There was a gentle rustling of the wind in the leaves of the coconut trees that made a noise. The wind stopped as suddenly as it had started and again there was silence.

Dr. Narayanan came in with a couple of stones in his hand. "These are what caused it," he exhibited them to his wife as if they were trophies from a contest.

"Where could they have come from?"

"It is obvious someone had projected them on to our roof, for stones, by themselves, have no power of mobility," the doctor was a rationalist and he believed in logical explanations.

"But who would want to throw stones at us?" Lakshmi was bewildered as well as frightened.

"May be the boys next door," said the doctor. The house on their left was occupied by a group of students who were noisy and played music at all hours of the night and the doctor had on occasions spoken to them about it, with very little effect. "Those boys are up to anything."

"But the college is closed and the house is empty!"

"Then it must be the people behind us, your friend Mrs. Ramani."

"I wouldn't put it past her!" said Lakshmi. "As you know, their servant has been pinching coconuts from our garden."

The Ramanis and the Narayanans had never got on well. Mr. Ramani owned a big shop in town selling all sorts of things and had made a lot of money. The two houses backed on to each other with a fence separating the two kitchen gardens. There had been frequent complaints and counter-complaints based mainly on the evidence of the servants.

"We will deal with it in the morning," said Dr. Narayanan as another stone fell on the roof.

They waited for some more time and no further stones came. Then, they went to bed. Needless to say, Lakshmi found it very difficult to go off to sleep that night.

The next morning, the doctor inspected the damage. Some ten tiles had been broken, one glass pane had come loose and he could collect about six stones in

the garden. Before going to his surgery, he telephoned his friend the superintendent of police about the previous night's incidents.

An inspector called round later in the morning, examined the damage, looked at the stones that had been collected, walked round the house and finally, questioned Lakshmi about it.

"Tell me Mrs. Narayanan, do you suspect anyone?" he asked. "Has anybody a grudge against you or your husband?"

"I can't think of anyone," confessed Lakshmi. "Unless it is the people behind us. Their servants have been taking away our coconuts and I have complained to Mrs. Ramani about it. May be it is one of their servants. I can't think of anyone else."

"Don't worry Madam," the inspector was encouraging. "I shall frighten the servants a bit and I am sure it will not happen again."

With that assurance, he went round and questioned the servants, enquired if any suspicious looking characters were seen in the neighbourhood the previous evening and if anyone else had heard any noise the previous night. He drew a blank of course. But when he went to Mrs. Ramani, she was very aggressive.

"They are always complaining about our servants," she exclaimed. "Just because he is a doctor, they think they are superior to us. After all, my husband is only a merchant. But I can tell you, my husband can afford to employ half-dozen doctors like him. Nor do we depend on their coconuts for our chutney!"

"But did you hear anything, any noises last night?" the inspector persisted.

"We heard one or two thuds at about nine o'clock," she confessed. "But we didn't think anything of it. Frankly, I think it must be one of his disgruntled patients."

The inspector could not find out anything. He decided it was a stray drunk passing by and went off to make his report.

That evening, Lakshmi finished chores in the kitchen early and joined her husband. "Don't worry, nothing will happen," her husband assured her. "Whoever it was would have been warned by the visit of the inspector." But all the same, he did not turn the radio on as usual for the nine o'clock news, but kept looking at his watch.

Promptly, at five minutes to nine p.m. the first stone fell. The doctor, who had his torch ready, went out though Lakshmi pleaded with him to stay indoors. "You might be hit," she cried.

"Don't worry, I shall catch the blighters this time!"

He went to the back of the house, towards Ramani's and shouted, "Come on, you coward, whoever you are! Come out into the open instead of throwing stones from behind the trees!"

The response was another stone which rolled down the roof and landed at his feet. Lakshmi stood on the back doorstep wringing her hands and imploring her husband to come inside.

Hearing the commotion at the back, Mr. Ramani came out too and flashed his torch across the fence. The two beams crossed and the neighbours recognised each other.

"Please don't shout! You are disturbing the entire neighbourhood," the merchant cried out.

"Then stop throwing stones on my roof!" the doctor shouted back.

Just then, a shower of stones landed in quick succession and they all rolled down and fell near the doctor.

"There you are!" the doctor shouted.

"Doctor, do you mind if I come over and discuss this matter?" Ramani made a conciliatory move.

"There is nothing to discuss!" the doctor shouted back in anger. "Stop this nonsense or I will see you go to gaol!" And he walked back into the house.

When the same thing happened the next two nights, the Narayanans were convinced that their neighbour was responsible. The stones generally started falling at nine p.m. and stopped by about nine thirty. No one was hurt and the damage was of a minor nature. Lakshmi was getting extremely nervous and jittery and talked about leaving the neighbourhood and of sending the children away. She could not sleep at nights and listened to her husband snoring comfortably with anxiety and fear.

The doctor considered the whole thing as a bad joke, had the tiles repaired and made a written complaint to the police. A picket was posted at his request and two policemen patrolled the house as well as the neighbourhood. But the stones kept falling though there was no one anywhere within a 'stone's throw' of the doctor's house, according to the policemen.

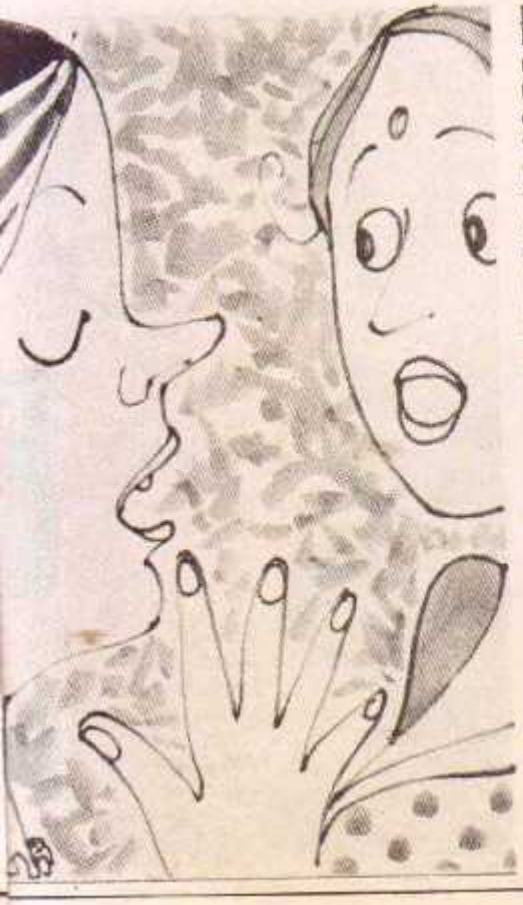
Such an unusual occurrence could not go on in the town without other people coming to know about it. The servants gossipped in the bazaar, Mr. Ramani gave a highly coloured version to all his customers in the shop, neighbours told their friends and soon, it was the talk of the town. In the morning, people congregated in front of the doctor's house and watched him inspect

the damage and collect the stones. People of course had their own explanations for the occurrence. There was the haunted house theory, the neighbourly quarrels theory and the disgruntled patients theory. Some even said that the doctor was doing it himself in order to get some publicity. Some good samaritans, disgusted with the injustice of it all, got together and broke the window panes in Mr. Ramani's house.

The feud—which had so far been vocal—was now activated into a court case. The local newspaper published an article with a photograph of the doctor's house and ended with the question, "Are the stones an act of God or the devil?"

But when a national newspaper got hold of the story, the Narayanans acquired a somewhat doubtful reputation. The opposition in the legislature—not to be outdone by the press—moved an adjournment motion in the assembly 'to consider the failure of the Government and the callous negligence of the police department to provide safety and security to a harassed family.' The result of all this was that Lakshmi became a nervous wreck. She was afraid to go out, ashamed to meet her friends, and unable to sleep at night. Her husband prescribed a tonic and some tranquillisers, but they were not of much help.

After the adjournment motion in the assembly, the police really got to work. A platoon was stationed in the vicinity for patrolling at night. Powerful search lights were rigged up from various corners to see where the stones were coming from; even a photographer with a powerful camera was drafted to photograph the stones. But while people could see the stones falling on the roof with the aid of search lights, the photographic plates were blank. For the first time, the word 'supernatural' was used in connection with these incidents.



It was at this point that the police asked for the services of Professor Kannan of the local university. He had a minor reputation as an investigator of the occult. He spent a few nights in the doctor's house, prepared a plan of the roof, marked the tiles that were broken on different nights with a red pencil as well as the points on the ground where the stones had fallen to determine the direction of the flight of the stones. He weighed the stones, calculated the possible velocity in order to find out the distance from which they must have been projected, and so on. Before giving his official report to the police, he discussed his conclusions with Dr. Narayanan.

"The first thing is to realise that the stones are not coming from any particular direction, but from everywhere," he said. "Secondly, some of the stones at any rate are quite heavy and could not have been projected by human hands—not without some form of motive power. Yet, none of them have pierced the roof though one would have expected it from their weight and speed. And no one has been hurt though you have been wandering round the garden while they were falling. Taking all these factors into account, I can only come to one conclusion."

"And what is that?" Narayanan enquired.

"That it is the work of a sorcerer, intended to annoy and harass you, but not to harm you seriously. He has been using poltergeists for the purpose."

"You don't believe in all that rubbish, do you?" asked the astounded doctor.

"The mistake that we scientists make is in believing that logic and reason can explain all phenomena. The Newtonian universe, even the Einsteinean universe, is bounded by the laws of physical science. But perhaps there are other universes of which we are not yet aware and whose laws of operation we do not know. We are only just beginning to perceive them though we do not understand them as yet."

"I don't believe it!" the doctor persisted.

"But what other explanation can there be?"

"The fact that something is beyond our understanding does not necessarily mean that an illogical or superstitious explanation is the right answer," the doctor insisted.

"I am not asking you to accept anything," said the professor. "I am merely suggesting that you should get a sorcerer to perform certain ceremonies to neutralise the effect. I am also thinking of your wife who is likely to have a nervous breakdown if this thing continues. And if the stones stop falling, then we have gone another step towards finding an explanation."

"Rubbish!" Narayanan shouted.

"I suggest Dr. Narayanan, that one of the necessary virtues of a scientist is humility," said the professor before he departed.

While Dr. Narayanan was an aggressive rationalist, Lakshmi had always believed in the supernatural. She had worshipped her family deities, visited the temples

regularly and observed fasts on religious days. All her childhood memories in her mother's home about haunted houses, ghosts and possessed women came back to her now. But she was nevertheless bewildered. She could not imagine whom they could have offended that such a calamity should befall them. Also, she did not know to whom she should turn for advice. Many of her friends were away and some at least gave her a wide berth after the mysterious events and the publicity of the past few weeks. She had long since ceased to believe that the Ramanis had anything to do with it. So, in her anxiety, fear and distress, she turned to Mrs. Ramani in whom she discovered a kindred soul with sympathy and understanding.

It started with a smile across the back fence when she saw her on the other side of the garden accidentally. There they chatted shy, timid and reserved at first. But soon, there was all the newfound enthusiasm when animosity turns to friendship. After a few days, Lakshmi confided her fears to her new friend and what the university professor had told them.

"The men with all their power and wisdom have failed to solve your problem," said Mrs. Ramani. "Let us see if we women can't put a stop to these stones." Then, she lowered her voice though no one was listening to them. "There is a sorcerer I know who can help you. He is really an astrologer, casts your horoscope, fixes auspicious days for weddings and so on. But he has extra-ordinary powers. If we consult him, he will know what to do. I will take you to him; but don't tell your husband."

So, one afternoon when the doctor was on his rounds and Mr. Ramani was busy in his shop, the two ladies made a clandestine trip to a dusty, narrow and crowded part of the town where the astrologer lived. They were received by a small boy and asked to sit on a none too clean mat, a few feet away from the astrologer. He stared at Lakshmi with his piercing eyes for a few seconds. Lakshmi averted her glance and looked at the floor.

"At last, you have come!" said the astrologer. Lakshmi did not feel that the statement required an answer.

"The power of the police and the wisdom of science have failed to help you. So you have come to seek my help."

"Yes," Lakshmi almost whispered.

"The stones are falling on your house, because your husband has no belief. He is arrogant in his ignorance. Let him believe, let him learn to respect people and the stones will stop."

"We are willing to perform any ceremonies that are necessary, and meet the expenditure," Lakshmi ventured.

"Expenditure!" the astrologer almost shouted. "All you care about is money! Do you think a few paltry rupees are going to satisfy me? I tell you the stones will go on until your husband acknowledges the power of the supernatural!"

"Do you mean you have caused the stones to fall on our house?" asked the astonished Lakshmi.

"Who else? Your husband ridiculed me in public, called me a charlatan. So, I just wanted to demonstrate my powers."

"Could you not stop them for my sake? For the sake of my children?" pleaded Lakshmi.

"No! your husband must come to me. He pooh-poohed my powers. Now, he must acknowledge them in public."

Lakshmi was a great believer in the occult and the supernatural, but she was also a loyal wife. "Then, we shall go to someone else," she said.

On their way back, Mrs. Ramani commented, "I think your husband should visit him."

"But you know what my husband is!"

And they were both silent.

When Lakshmi broached the subject of the astrologer, Dr. Narayanan's reactions were predictable. He thoroughly cross-examined her about her visit and came to the conclusion that the astrologer was responsible for the mischief and should be sent to gaol. He made another complaint to the police, this time accusing the astrologer as the culprit. But when the police questioned him, the sorcerer spoke in riddles.

"The doctor brought it on himself," he said. "I am merely an agency for bringing home to him, the effects of his arrogance and disbelief."

"But did you throw the stones?"

"No, I did not throw them myself; but I caused them to fall on his house."

"How did you do it?"

"How do you fire a bullet from a gun?"

"Will you stop the stones from falling in the future?"

"Yes, provided the doctor recognises my powers."

After that statement, the police had no other option but to prosecute him 'for harassing Dr.

Narayanan and his family by causing stones to fall on his house by some unknown means'. But the inspector explained to the astrologer that he was merely carrying out his duties and was convinced of the powers of the astrologer.

In course of time, the case came up for hearing, before Judge Menon, a young and progressive judge who gave a lot of freedom to the defence. Because of the publicity that had preceded the case, the court was crowded with newspaper correspondents as well as the public.

When the prosecution had presented their case, the defence lawyer stood up and addressed the judge. "Your honour," he pleaded. "The prosecution case rests solely on the statements of the defendant. There has been nothing underhand or perfidious in the behaviour of my client. Dr. Narayanan had called him a charlatan and an adventurer who made money on the credibility of the masses—a statement highly damaging to my client's reputation. Now-a-days, it has become the fashion for the so-called scientists to decry phenomena which are beyond their comprehension. Instead of admitting the limitations of their own deductive knowledge, they merely abuse those who have advanced beyond the confines of modern science. But in spite of such abuse, my client did not go to court. He merely wanted to prove to Dr. Narayanan that there were still many things in this world which are beyond his knowledge or understanding. And the only way of proving anything like that was through an experiment that could not be disproved. While the doctor might have been inconvenienced to a certain extent, no one has been hurt and there is no serious damage done to property. You might say it was just a super-scientific experiment. Now that the 'experiment' has been proved successful, my client has decided to stop the falling of stones as from tonight. I submit it is unfair to be prosecuted just because a man wanted to prove that he wasn't a charlatan."

"Tell me Mr. Iyer," asked the judge. "Do you yourself believe in this 'super-scientific' phenomenon as you call it?"

"Your honour, my belief or disbelief, has nothing to do with it. I am here to defend a person who I consider has been wrongly accused. It is for the police to prove that the stones were in fact projected by a human hand."

"Can he demonstrate his powers here?" the judge persisted. "Can he make the stones fall on the court house for example?"

Mr. Iyer had a private consultation with his client and after some whispering, the astrologer produced two envelopes from his pocket which the lawyer handed over to the judge. They were marked 'one' and 'two'.

"Your honour, my client says that he does not want to disturb the security and dignity of this court by making stones fall on it. But in order that you may be convinced of his powers, he has handed over to you, two envelopes marked 'one' and 'two'. He suggests that you might open them at the appropriate time."

Just then, an express telegram was brought to the judge. He opened it quickly—since he was expecting it and was happy to learn that his wife had given birth to a baby boy. He was all smiles.

The astrologer whispered to his lawyer and Mr. Iyer in turn spoke to the judge. "Your honour, you may kindly open the envelope marked number 'one'."

The judge was amazed to read, "You have a son now. He was born at five a.m. this morning, under the star Scorpio."

"How did this man get the news even ahead of the telegram?" the judge wondered aloud. "This is most uncanny. Or, was it an inspired guess?"

The public prosecutor stood up. "Sir, may I be permitted to see the contents of the telegram since it seems to have become a part of the case now?" he asked.

The judge passed on the telegram as well as the envelope to the public prosecutor. As soon as he had read them, he made a submission to the court. "Your honour, while I may offer you my congratulations in my private capacity, I must at the same time protest that irrelevant and immaterial factors are being introduced into this case which is a simple one of harassing a respectable citizen and his family and causing them mental anguish. Mrs. Narayanan is a nervous wreck; her husband has been forced to take time off from his practice to attend to the care of his family....."

But the judge cut him short. "The astrologer says that his intention was merely to demonstrate his powers to the doctor who had accused him of being a charlatan," he said. "He has certainly demonstrated them to the satisfaction of this court.

"By the envelope marked number one," said Mr. Iyer.

"Exactly!" echoed the judge.

"Your honour!" pleaded the public prosecutor. "I consider the powers of the astrologer or the contents of the envelope to be quite irrelevant to the matter at issue before this court."

"Mr. Prosecutor," the judge interrupted again. "Don't you realise that we are in the presence of a super-human power which we should try to understand....."

With those words, the judge collapsed in his seat. His body slumped and people crowded round him trying to find out what had happened. The authoritative voice of Dr. Narayanan took over. "He has fainted. Make room for the doctor; let him have some air!" With those words he pushed the people away, went to the judge and examined him. Lawyers, the police and the visitors stood around in groups and whispered to each other. After a couple of minutes, the doctor stood up and exclaimed, "My God! He's dead!"

There was pandemonium in the court room. Everyone turned to the astrologer who was still in the witness box.

"Should we now open the second envelope?" Someone asked in a shaky tone.

All remained silent and grim. They included the astrologer.

The Gown

by Giriraj Kishore

Well-known Hindi writer and recipient of Bharatendra Purashkar, the author is Head of the Centre for Creative Writing at I.I.T. Kanpur.

Translated from Hindi by Prajapati Sah

Yet another angle to east-west encounter, amusing but unusual. Perhaps Sunitaji is an attitude to be met frequently though in different degrees.

As she opened the door to enter the room, Sunitaji glanced at Kanta. Kanta said, her voice barely above a whisper, "Let's knock, Amma."

Sunitaji didn't care for the suggestion. She threw the door wide open and marched into the room. Corley stood before the mirror in a slip, her hair tied into a ball with a black ribbon, the base-cream still wet on her face. "Oh ... oh," she exclaimed as she grabbed the kimono which lay on a stool near her. Tension clouded her face. Kanta still stood at the door, looking away. Corley flashed a smile and uttered a 'Please' in her German accent and waited expectantly. Kanta had to intervene again, "Let's go, Amma. Let Auntie dress."

Sunitaji ignored the remark and addressed herself to Corley, "You are among your own people now. We can be more free with each other, can't we? You are so free with men, anyway."

"What is she saying?" Corley asked Kanta in her inadequate English.

Kanta went red in the face. She had to interpret to Corley what her mother had said. Corley's eyes seemed to narrow for a moment, but the very next moment she looked at Sunitaji in disbelief and smiled:

"In my country we want as much privacy for dressing up as for making love," she said in her broken English.

Kanta felt deeply embarrassed. "What's Corley saying?" Sunitaji demanded.

Kanta burst out, "Why don't you understand, Amma? Let her dress. What pleasure does it give you to sit here and embarrass her?"

Sunitaji was indifferent, "I am in no mood for a lecture from you. Tell me, what did she say?"

Kanta lost control. She swung towards the door. "You stay here if you want to. I am leaving."

Corley looked on silently. Kanta's outburst had singed her face. The eyes stood drawn in their sockets.

Sunitaji was unaffected. She was now busy playing with the zip on Corley's vanity bag. Corley stood with the kimono loosely wrapped around her, her bare legs exposed underneath. They had moved a little when Sunitaji picked up the vanity bag but made no further effort. Corley's lips, too, made to speak but no words came out. Kanta's exit had made any communication with Sunitaji impossible.

Sunitaji put down the vanity bag and picked up the two lipsticks lying on the dressing table. Apprehensive that she might put them to her lips, Corley again spluttered a "please", her face a picture of helplessness. Sunitaji was sampling the colours of the lipsticks on the back of her hand. She put down one on the table and held on to the other. Then she called out to Kanta.

Still agitated, Kanta appeared at the door. Before Corley could say anything, Sunitaji announced, "Tell Corley I'm taking this lipstick."

Kanta was severe, "For shame, Amma, Uncle has brought you almost everything, now you want Auntie's lipstick too! What'll she think! Indian beggars!"

Sunitaji didn't like her intervention. She shouted, "When I need your advice, I'll ask for it. It's not a diamond I'm asking for, just a bare, four-anna lipstick. I have dinners to attend with your papa and I need a light shade. They don't make these shades here. Otherwise, who's bothered? I don't need a thing."

Kanta couldn't check herself, "If it's a four-anna lipstick why don't you get it from the shop? You won't get it for a hundred rupees here."

The base-cream had dried on Corley's face and white cracks showed. Her legs were sweating. She forestalled further exchanges by, "Please, Kanta, I'm held up."

Kanta took hold of Sunitaji's arm and tried to drag her out, "Let's go, Amma. How long will Auntie stand like this? You never feel a thing. She isn't like you, buying vegetables in petticoats and hollering at children half-clothed."

Sunitaji spoke as she struggled to free her arm, "She doesn't mind Rajkumar, ... He's not going to marry her without my permission, is he?" The latter part came as an afterthought.

Kanta dragged her out of the room. Corley bolted the door, held her head between her hands and let out a sigh. Then she took off the kimono and proceeded to towel and powder herself.

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When Corley came out, Rajkumar had joined Sunitaji and Kanta. Kanta was quite agitated, "Why don't you try to understand, Amma? Even if they get married Auntie just can't live like an Indian daughter-in-law."

Rajkumar just laughed. Corley greeted Sunitaji with a transparent smile. Kanta put on a smile too. Passing her hand through Rajkumar's, Corley said something in German and Rajkumar burst out laughing. Kanta's face melted into a soft, natural smile but Sunitaji stayed glum. Rajkumar interpreted Corley to Sunitaji: "Do you know Bhabhi what she is saying?"

Sunitaji raised her eyebrows in a question. After a moment's pause, Rajkumar continued in the same laughing tone:

"She says that Indian woman are very-er-very—what's the word? ... I mean—very ..."

"Stupid and uncivilized ... that's what she would say, wouldn't she? Just because I walked into her room. A home is a home after all."

"Oh, come on, Bhabhi, don't be so touchy. I was hunting for the Hindi word for her German. She meant naive and bold, I mean, unspoiled, natural, you know."

A thin smile danced on Sunitaji's face as she cast a soft glance at Corley, who reciprocated. Sunitaji immediately turned her attention to Kanta and complained, "And here's this girl Kanta, letting loose all her dogs and devils on me as if I am a country bum from nowhere. As if I never went to college and never go to meetings and parties. Ain't I the wife of a Deputy Secretary? I ask you. What does this girl take me for—a village booby?"

Rajkumar took her by both her hands and said, "Of course, Bhabhi, you even go to ball dances. Come, let's take the floor."

Sunitaji feigned annoyance, "For shame, I'm not of the age for your pranks. I go to no ball dances! Have some consideration for age."

But Rajkumar had dragged her onto the "floor" and was already waltzing to and fro. Corley and Kanta burst out laughing. Unable to resist, Sunitaji allowed herself to be dragged around. The two kids had also emerged from somewhere and were now applauding Sunitaji, who kept up with a stream of objections, "Is there no shame left in you? Behaving like this in front of children .."

Having spun her a few times, Rajkumar released Sunitaji and looked towards Corley, "Now, if you permit, Bhabhi, may I dance with my future wife and your sister-in-law?"

Sunitaji could take no more. Suddenly, she flared up, "I'll not allow such indecent behaviour in my house. There are children to think of. Wife, indeed! A wife without a wedding!"

Rajkumar lost some of his aplomb. In a tone of sweet reasonableness he said, "I didn't mean to annoy you, Bhabhi, if you don't like it, there'll be no dance. I was joking, anyway."

Corely knew something was amiss and her face showed it. She wanted to know. Rajkumar explained: "No dancing when elders are present—not good manners." Corley wanted to say something but thought better of it. She just smiled.

Kanta stood watching. Rajkumar looked around uncertainly for a while, then said, "Bhabhi, we're going out for a stroll." He was a little withdrawn, the edge of his temper slightly frayed. Sunitaji turned her face away. Kanta winked hinting that they should slip away quietly. Rajkumar looked at Corley. The two were about to get up when Sunitaji spoke. "Alone?" She asked drily.

Rajkumar turned to Kanta, who winked again. She reinforced it with a jerk of her head to indicate "Go at once." But Rajkumar hesitated. "Fact is, Corley can't stand our food. I thought I'd take her out to a restaurant."

Her face flushed, Sunitaji retorted with some vehemence, "We give her the best we can, but we can't offer her food that is prohibited in this house!"

The look that this provoked from Rajkumar caused Corley to shrink back a little but Sunitaji looked equally defiant. Rajkumar looked at her for a moment. Then began softly, "If it is not convenient for you to ..." He recovered suddenly and continued, " ... you'll still have to put up with us for a few days, won't you?"

All their faces had lost colour. Kanta tried to change the topic. "Uncle, if you must go, make it quick or you'll be returning late." Rajkumar addressed himself to Corley, "Let's hurry, Corley. We must return before Bhai Sahib is back."

Corley felt trapped. She spoke in German: "Yes, let's go. It's not me, anyway, who's holding up. It's you and your sister-in-law." And she walked ahead.

Watching them go, Sunitaji pursed her lips and said, "I have some shopping to do too. I'll go with you."

Kanta tried to say something but Sunitaji offered no opportunity. She hurried to her room and called out to the children, "Get ready quickly, both of you. We're going with Uncle." Rajkumar looked at Kanta, who looked shaken. Rajkumar tried to be natural, "Go on Kanta, you get ready too."

When Kanta declined, Rajkumar protested with a laugh, "No danger to our privacy if you come along too."

Kanta relented and went off to her room to get ready.

Rajkumar stood wordlessly for a moment while Corley watched him. Then the two pulled themselves a couple of chairs and sat down waiting.

"These people are greatly attached to you, aren't they? Everyone is coming with us."

"No one wanted to come with me when I was here alone. So it must be you," Rajkumar laughed.

Corley laughed too. A moment later she was serious. "You'd said, we'd go around the country. It'll be great fun. But it looks we won't have much money left with so many presents to give. Even your own clothes. My watch is promised to your niece. Sunitaji wants my lipstick."

Rajkumar jerked his head towards her. Then laughed. "Tell her that you'll give it to her when you go." He paused. "But why should she want it? It's a used one."

Corley smiled. A little later she added, "Indian boys must keep the whole household happy, mustn't they?"

Though Rajkumar laughed again, the muscles on his face had tightened.

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Sunitaji was all dressed up. There was a touch of rouge on the cheeks. For a moment Rajkumar's face wore a naughty look. He teased, "Honestly, Bhabhi, no memsahiba can beat you today."

Sunitaji smiled as though by mistake. The tone was serious, "Still, my company seems to embarrass you, doesn't it? As if I were half-dressed. Not even four years with Corley and you've already forgotten all the years you lived with us since your childhood. You always used to say ..."

She turned her face away.

Rajkumar chose to ignore the remark and called out to Kanta and the kids. "Kanta, Rajani, Rajesh ... hurry up, will you? We're getting late."

Corley was quiet. Sunitaji looked towards her and asked Rajkumar with a laugh: "Have you asked Corley? You may have to explain later."

Rajkumar was going to make a retort but Corley forestalled him: "What's your Bhabhi saying about me?"

Rajkumar told her, "Bhabhi thinks I should ask my girl too and avoid risking our marriage."

Corley smiled. "I didn't imagine such a thought could occur to them," she said.

Kanta, Rajani and Rajesh were all ready. Kanta was dressed plainly.

In Connaught Place, Sunitaji cast a side-glance at Rajkumar and said, "If you like we can make ourselves scarce."

Kanta could not let go the opportunity. She rejoined at once, "If you cared so much, you should have stayed at home."

Sunitaji raised her voice, "Am I the only one to come? Weren't you the first one to get ready?" Nodding towards Rajkumar and Corley, she continued, "They are love-birds, here today, gone tomorrow, but you have to live with us. Why do you always side with your uncle?"

Kanta was almost in tears. Corley's face seemed clouded. Rajani and Rajesh were looking at the fountain-pens in a pavement shop. Rajkumar wanted to say something in retort to Sunitaji but instead spoke to Kanta:

"Oh, come on, Kanta, don't take it so seriously. You can't take offence at what your mummy says, can you? She's Mummy, after all."

Sunitaji, who was looking away, immediately added, "She cares no more for us than you do." Rajkumar fell silent. The two kids came running, a pen in each one's hands, and started tugging at Sunitaji, "Please, Mummy, can we have these pens?"

"I don't have money for such things. You should ask your Papa," and she flicked a passing glance at Rajkumar. Rajkumar did not return the glance but asked the kids, "How much are they?"

"Two rupees each."

Rajkumar was taking out the money when Sunitaji said in a subdued voice, "If you must present them pens, buy some respectable ones, not these two-rupee jotters."

Kanta addressed herself to Rajkumar, "What's the use of buying them expensive ones? They lose them at the rate of one a day."

Sunitaji looked daggers at Kanta, "When you needed one you got an Eversharp. As though only you like nice things. These two are beggars, are they?"

Kanta was ready with a rejoinder but Rajkumar defused the situation with, "Oh, never mind. We'll buy them Eversharp too."

"No, no it's not necessary ...." Sunitaji protested.

Everyone fell silent. Corley was irritated. She said something in German to Rajkumar whose response was to look helpless. Then he spoke a few soft words. Corley seemed to understand. Everyone walked on silently for a little while.

Then Corley wanted some tissue hankies. Rajkumar told Kanta to help Corley to buy some from a nearby shop. Before Kanta could proceed with Corley, Sunitaji intervened again. "What does she want tissue hankies for? Isn't cloth good enough?"

Rajkumar tried to explain, "Corley has a cold. She uses only tissue hankies. Using the same hankies over and over again isn't sanitary."

Sunitaji cast a strange look at Rajkumar, "I have had cold too. Not once, but hundreds of times! No doctor ever prescribed a disposable handkerchief. Isn't that what a handkerchief is for? Blow and wipe, blow and wipe."

Rajkumar signalled the two to go ahead and they went off. He told Kanta to meet them at the Coffee House. Sunitaji now kept up a silent stride. The kids were worried about their fountain-pens. Rajkumar was sweet to them, "In a moment, dears." Sunitaji cast a stern glance at the kids and then resumed the stride.

"Corley has her birthday the day after. What should I give her?" Rajkumar inquired in a soft tone.

"We, too, will give Auntie a present." The kids piped in.

"Sure, sure," Rajkumar said, trying to quieten them.

"How should I know?" Sunitaji was terse. "Never received one myself. Buy what you like!"

They reached the pen shop. Rajkumar got the kids their pens. Out of the shop, the kids once again chorused, "Uncle, let's buy a birthday present for Auntie." Rajkumar glanced towards Sunitaji but she was lost elsewhere.

The kids repeated the request. "What'd you like to buy?" Rajkumar asked them.

"A sandalwood lamp," said Rajani. Rajesh wanted to buy a painting.

"No, dears, we must buy something which Auntie can easily take with her."

"She can collect them later, on the way back," suggested Rajani. Rajkumar had no argument.

A few steps on, Sunitaji spoke up, "Beyond me to understand why you should spend so much money on her. They are all the same—these girls. Will ditch you one day. Right now she knows your brother is a Deputy Secretary so she's lapping it up. What good is it anyway to have a bride no one in the house can even talk to? One must think of the family honour too."

Rajkumar's eyes flashed for a moment. He tried hard to hold himself, yet couldn't help blurting out, "What are you saying, Bhabhi?" Sunitaji shrank looking at his face. The two kids looked from mother to uncle and uncle to mother. When they reached the gift-shop, Rajesh looked at Rajani. Rajani shook her head.

Corley and Kanta were already at the Coffee House, laughing away heartily. Rajkumar asked Corley in German, "Got the handkerchiefs?"

Corley was childlike in her laughter. "Kanta took me to Jantar Mantar. We climbed the planets there." Rajkumar laughed too.

Later he asked Sunitaji, "What'll you have, Bhabhi?"

"You entertain Corley. I prefer my home cooking." Though Corley didn't follow the conversation, she was no longer laughing.

"Have something—tea, coffee, *dosa*—" Rajkumar was rather formal.

"I have had enough ..." Sunitaji said looking at the kids.

Rajesh was insistent, "Uncle, let's first buy presents for Auntie."

"Yes, sure, but let's eat something first."

"The shops will be closed by then," said Rajesh, looking at Rajani.

"How much do you need? I'll give you the money now."

"Hundred rupees each," Rajani said rather crudely.

Kanta objected, "Hundred rupees each! You have any idea how much is a hundred rupees?"

Rajkumar took out a hundred rupee note and gave it to Rajani. "Fifty for each of you. You believe me now?"

"Ask Amma for money if you want to give Auntie presents. Why do you ask Uncle?" Kanta said. Rajkumar just smiled.

Sunitaji ignored Kanta. She took the note and stuffed it in her purse. "Come, let me keep it for you. You'll lose it in no time." Then added after a pause, "So you turned out to be the lucky ones. Even if only to buy presents for Corley, you at least got a hundred rupees."

Rajkumar had moved away a little distance to talk to Corley. So Kanta could protest, "What are you saying, Amma? What hasn't Uncle got for you—record-player, automatic toaster, watches, electric shaver, kitchen machine—you name it."

"He may have got the whole world for me, but I know only this: I asked him for only one thing and I never got it."

"Amma, it wasn't possible to bring a refrigerator. How many times has he explained it to you, and you keep going on and on about it."

It looked as if Sunitaji would burst. Just then Rajkumar came and spoke to her, "If you don't mind, Bhabhi, I'll go and get Corley something to eat. Time for her dinner. Don't take it any other way, please! Here's some money. Get something for the children to eat." He handed out twenty-five rupees to Sunitaji. She put them in her purse and turned her face away. Rajkumar told Kanta, "We'll be back in an hour" and left with Corley.

Sunitaji watched the taxi go as she commented, "There's a limit to shamelessness."

Kanta looked away as the kids turned to their mother and demanded, "Amma, our money, please!"

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Corley and Rajkumar were both still in their room. Sunitaji told Kanta, "Go and call your uncle; breakfast is waiting."

Kanta grumbled, "Must be coming. Papa called out a minute ago." Mr. Bagchi was puffing away at his cigar.

'No manners whatsoever, and call themselves Westernized! The two of them are having a ball inside while the elder brother cools his heels outside. For shame! And leaving us like that in the town yesterday, putting me out of pocket by a hundred rupees!"

Kanta was quick to point out, "Hundred rupees in pocket or out of pocket, Amma?"

"Oh God, can't one open one's mouth in this house without being corrected? Waiting to pounce on you the moment you speak, that's how it is! Cheeky things! Who paid for his education, now?"

"No need to be so impatient," Mr. Bagchi interceded, "they will be down in a minute. After all you're going to have a European sister-in-law. Won't that add to your status!"

"Enough about my status! You add to yours if you want to. A fine Deputy Secretary you are! Can't manage your own brother! Who is going to pay for this, I ask you!" She turned on Kanta, "Now it's Auntie, Auntie all the time. I should like to see you when no man accepts you in marriage. I'll put you out there in the sun in the spinster's quarters to rot."

Kanta fled. Mr. Bagchi made a polite observation to Sunitaji, "I think you should not talk like that to children. It ..."

"Don't you meddle with this! You have done enough damage by sending him abroad. Now you are after my children. You keep your Deputy Secretaryship to your office, do you understand?"

"No need to fly off like that! If I am a Deputy Secretary today, it is because of the good luck you brought me. I have always thought of you as my Dame Luck." Mr. Bagchi spoke with a vacant expression on his face.

"Save all this useless talk. One should look to one's work—that's what I say." There was a little colour on her face.

"And you are absolutely right, my dear," Mr. Bagchi went back to his dead cigar.

Sunitaji now went off herself to fetch Rajkumar. He and Corley were ready. Hand in hand, they were feigning some dance steps and laughing happily. "That fatty really had his partner in trouble last night," Rajkumar was saying, "you know, he went like this, and this ..." He demonstrated.

"And they were a yard apart for his fat middle. When you have a middle like that, I'll be finished with you," Corley was saying.

Near the door they quickly parted. Sunitaji smartly dashed away from the door.

At breakfast, Sunitaji hardly spoke a word. Mr. Bagchi was interrogating Corley.

"Did you like India?"

Corley flashed her eyes and nodded.

"Would you like to settle down in India?"

Every bit like an Indian girl, Corley smiled and glanced at Rajkumar.

"Delhi, Calcutta and Bombay are nice," she attempted in her broken English.

"And how to do you find this Indian specimen?" Mr. Bagchi pointed to Rajkumar.

Corley made a wry face and shrugged. Mr. Bagchi fell silent with a 'H'm'. Kanta and Rajkumar laughed out loud. Sunitaji maintained a serious countenance, except for glances at her husband and Rajkumar. Corley too received a couple of them.

By and large, the breakfast was a serious affair. Corley broke the silence with an occasional utterance to Rajkumar. Mr. Bagchi, after receiving a signal from Sunitaji, had fallen totally silent.

Breakfast had hardly finished when Mrs. Verma, a friend of Sunitaji, dropped in, lending some cheer to Sunitaji's aspect. She had brought two of her kids along. They all pulled themselves chairs near the table. Corley glanced at Rajkumar, who used German to explain to her that this was nothing extraordinary.

Kanta got some additional cups and saucers for the kids. Corley was bored. With her face turned away from the rest, she kept up her small talk with Rajkumar, punctuated with occasional laughs in which Rajkumar also joined. As he laughed, Rajkumar's eyes travelled from face to face. Sunitaji didn't like this side-talk.

"If you don't mind, we'll withdraw ..." Mr. Bagchi said.

"So you too are Westernized! Mrs. Verma is here calling on us, and you want to withdraw!"

Mr. Bagchi quickly returned to his cigar.

Mrs. Verma spoke to Sunitaji, "Won't you introduce me to your future sister-in-law? Today we are actually calling on her. She is a beautician, you said."

Sunitaji twisted her lips in distaste but spread them in a smile the next moment. "My friend, Mrs. Verma," she introduced her to Rajkumar, "she has come to see Corley."

Rajkumar transmitted the message to Corley, "Mrs. Verma. She wants to have her skin treated."

"None but Him can treat this hide," Corley laughed aloud. Mrs. Verma's face lost colour. Sunitaji frowned.

Rajkumar entreated Corley, "Don't refuse, please. I beg of you. Don't give Bhabhi another cause for displeasure."

Corley shrugged her shoulders and gave up. "As you wish," she said.

Mrs. Verma misinterpreted the shrug: "Well, I can't claim to have a soft skin like hers. My skin may indeed leave scratches on her hands," she said.

Rajkumar was first taken aback, then tried to explain it to Mrs. Verma, "Corley says a soft skin doesn't need treatment. You have a soft skin."

"Soft, indeed. My husband says it is like the surface of a dried up pond."

Sunitaji disagreed, "That description fits my skin better than yours. By comparison, yours is soft indeed."

"So you have joined forces with them too! Why should you bother anyway? Your sister-in-law will transform you into her own likeness soon."

"Don't take her remark too seriously, Mrs. Verma," Mr. Bagchi said in measured tones, "Mrs. Bagchi has a lighthearted disposition."

Everyone enjoyed this. Mr. Bagchi kept munching his dead cigar in a contemplative mood.

Sunitaji looked at Corley but spoke to Rajkumar, "Tell Corley to give her the skin treatment."

Corley went into her room and returned after about a quarter of an hour to call Mrs. Verma. The kids also wanted to join her. Asking them to follow her, Mrs. Verma asked Sunitaji, "I hope she won't mind giving it to them too."

"Of course not. Why should she?"

Corley looked at Rajkumar. He looked a little agitated. He spoke in the same mood, "Do it today, but no more skin treatments. I will tell Bhabhi. It can't go on like this."

"What's the matter," Sunitaji wanted to know.

"Nothing much. Corley says her stock of creams is almost finished. It doesn't help to have the skin treatment done just once, anyway. It takes a four-week course to make a difference."

This was not to Sunitaji's liking. As soon as Mrs. Verma disappeared, she opened up:

"All time is work-time, if I want to help someone. Why make excuses, I say? If I did tell a few friends, it was only to sing her praise, but, God forbid, that I should open my mouth again!"

Rajkumar preferred not to offer any explanation and sat silent. Sunitaji got up and disappeared into the house. Mr. Bagchi left his seat to walk to Rajkumar, placed a hand on his shoulder, and continued on his way to his room. Kanta laughed. Rajkumar, too, smiled; then fell silent again.

Half an hour later Corley, her sleeves upturned, emerged with the three clients, their faces looking soft and smooth. She said to Rajkumar, "She is saying something about coming tomorrow with her sisters. I couldn't quite make out."

Rajkumar's face showed disgust. "How can that be? Tomorrow is your birthday. Anyhow, we shall see."

Sunitaji had reappeared and stood behind the others. Mrs. Verma spoke to her, "She's such a nice person; not a trace of her importance. Massaged our faces ever so nicely. How soft is the skin! Yes?" She offered Sunitaji her cheek for a touch. Sunitaji extended a finger.

"Gram-flour in mustard oil does as much," she commented.

"I'll bring both my sisters and niece tomorrow," said Mrs. Verma. Sunitaji, on the point of saying, "No" ended up saying, "Yes, sure."

"But, Bhabhi, tomorrow is her birthday. Can't we have it some other day? She has to arrange for the creams too." Rajkumar intervened.

Although Sunitaji did not speak, she did not like his intervention. Mrs. Verma was the one to speak. "A few minutes is all it takes. As for the creams, we can bring them if she tells us what is needed."

Rajkumar got up and walked away with Corley. Sunitaji watched them with rising anger.

"Your brother-in-law is perhaps not the same anymore," Mrs. Verma suggested quietly.

"It used to be "Bhabhi, Bhabhi" all the time before he went to Germany. Everything for Bhabhi! Fact is, even now he can't open his mouth in my presence. But colour tells! We aren't fair as her!" Her agitation had not abated.

"Couldn't be more correct. So, when should I bring them? The younger niece, you know, is a bit on the darker side. If she could only give her five or six days, she'd be able to find a husband. I am sure they must be taking the massage regularly in their childhood—how else could they be so fair? And, anyway, a skill used for someone's good is a skill well-used, don't you think?"

"None of my business," Sunitaji heaved. "To hell with them."

As she left, Mrs. Verma announced, "I shall be here the day after."

Sunitaji kept quiet.

* * *

At breakfast the next day, when Rajkumar announced that everyone was invited to Corley's birthday dinner that evening, Kanta stood up and sang "Happy Birthday" for Corley. The kids joined in.

Wearing his usual profoundly contemplative look, Mr. Bagchi clapped away. As Corley stood up to receive the felicitations, Sunitaji made an exit. Both Rajkumar and Corley saw, but turned their eyes away.

Breakfast over, Rajkumar approached Sunitaji, "What shall we give Corley? Let's go and get something."

Turning her face away, Sunitaji said, "I don't feel well. You two can go."

"May Kanta go with us?" Rajkumar asked.

"What for?" Her looks a little hardened, Sunitaji moved away.

So just the two of them went to shop for Corley's gift. On the way, Corley inquired:

"When are we going back to Hamburg?"

"Next week," Rajkumar was looking straight ahead.

"My mother has grown so fond of you. She must be missing you a lot."

Rajkumar was silent. Corley snuggled close to him and spoke in a low voice:

"I want to dance today, Rajkumar. We have hardly danced since we left Germany."

"All right," Rajkumar said softly.

* * *

Mr. Bagchi was back from the office early. The kids could hardly be contained. Rajani had presented Corley a pair of embroidered shoes, Rajesh a chikan scarf. She had liked them greatly.

Sunitaji hadn't dressed up. Rajkumar went up to her room and asked, "Aren't you getting ready, Bhabhi?"

Sunitaji looked at him, then jerked her head away.

Rajkumar stood waiting. "I'm not well," Sunitaji said after a while.

Rajkumar felt his temper rise. Controlling himself, he said softly, "Please, Bhabhi. Corley will feel bad."

Without looking at him, Sunitaji said, "I can't help it. The birthday won't wait for me, will it?"

Rajkumar came away, his lips quivering.

Back in his room, Kanta was pressing Corley to put on Indian dress. She was holding in her hands the Banarasi sari set Rajkumar had presented Corley. Corley looked appealingly at Rajkumar, who tried to persuade Kanta, "Some other day, Kanta. Let her wear her own dress today."

Meanwhile the two kids also came in and were even more insistent, "We shall put the sari on her. Auntie is an Indian now."

Mr. Bagchi, who walked in just this moment, backed the kids. "Let her wear a sari today, Mr. Rajkumar. We'll all love it."

"I hope you don't mind," Rajkumar said to Corley as he left the room.

Kanta put the sari. Sunitaji didn't so much as peep in. Corley looked almost grim. As they came out, Rajkumar whispered into Corley's ears, "I'm terribly sorry, Corley; you won't be able to dance, but you do look a princess today."

Corley laughed. "But where's your Bhabhi?" she inquired.

"She's not well," said Rajkumar tonelessly.

** ** **

Corley was finding it hard to manage the sari. Her walk had been reduced to a stagger.Passers-by stared wide-eyed at her. She felt extremely self-conscious. At every step she looked around to see if anyone was watching her. If she did catch someone smiling in her direction, she went red in the face.

Mr. Bagchi sat with his cigar between his teeth. Kanta sat next to Corley and was giving vent to her curiosity about German youth. Rajani and Rajesh wanted ice-cream. Every now and then Rajkumar would say something funny and everybody laughed. But there were moments in between when Rajkumar lapsed into glum silence.

When the kids were not looking, Mr. Bagchi had appropriated a piece of roasted chicken from Rajkumar's plate. It had not escaped Corley's eyes. Next time, she asked Mr. Bagchi for some more roasted chicken.

"Oh, no. I am a strict vegetarian," Mr. Bagchi explained.

Rajkumar did some more explaining to Corley in German. She smiled. So did Kanta.

Rajkumar and Corley returned in a taxi. "I'm really very sorry," Rajkumar said on the way, "you couldn't have your birthday the way you wanted."

She looked at him and said reassuringly, "Don't worry about it. We'll make up for it in Hamburg next week. We'll dance for the birthday and we'll dance for the engagement ring."

They laughed. Rajkumar drew her closer and said, "It amazes me to see how much you can take." Corley laughed again.

** ** **

Sunitaji was still awake when they returned home, but she pretended to sleep. Hearing them, she turned over a couple of times but said nothing. When everyone had retired to their rooms, she sat up and looked around. And then lay down again. She stayed quiet when Mr. Bagchi entered the room.

He bent down to look at her. Her eyes were closed. He asked in a low voice:

"Are you asleep?"

Sunitaji made no reply. Mr. Bagchi spoke again:

"Are you angry?"

"Who cares if I am angry?" She flared up suddenly. Mr. Bagchi staggered back. Recovering, he said, "Why do you say that? I .... I ..."

"Don't blabber. Your brother and his flame have turned this house into a flaming hell. How long will I keep quiet? There are grown-up children in the house and she sleeps without a stitch on, the shameless slut! Not a thought how it would affect the children if the gown were to be displaced a little! And what a gown! Pure Dacca muslin! Your darling daughter wants one too like it. Amma, I want a gown like Auntie's!" she mimicked.

Mr. Bagchi tried to make a feeble protest."Now,dear! How can you say such a thing? You know very well a sari too can get displaced sometimes when one is sleeping."

Sunitaji was annoyed. "This is a new habit of yours, contradicting me at every step."

"Don't be angry, dear. I was only trying to say that she couldn't be sleeping stark naked. There must be some mistake." Mr. Bagchi looked at her inquiringly.

"You mean I am telling a lie?" Sunitaji's voice had become sharp.

"No, of course not. I was only...."

Sunitaji cut him short, "I don't want to hear a word more. You can see with your own eyes some day."

Mr. Bagchi was stammering. "I ... I ... didn't mean it that way. I was only saying that they are really very decent people ..."

"Enough. Go to bed now. I am the only indecent person here, am I not?"

He wanted to say something, but Sunitaji turned over. He had to keep quiet, his face soft as pulp.

** ** **

Sunitaji was an early riser. She found herself things to do in the house. Things to move back and forth, up and down.

That morning, as Rajkumar came out of his room, he found Sunitaji sitting outside his room.

"What's up, Bhabhi?"

"I'm up. At your service. Will serve bed-tea, if you are ready."

Rajkumar laughed, waited for a minute, then said:

"I'm going to the airport. A friend is coming from Germany."

She looked up sharply, "Staying here?"

"No. Hotel."

"He can stay here if you like. I have no problems." Rajkumar just laughed.

Sunitaji said loudly enough for everyone to hear, "But Corley, of course, will want bed-tea. Won't she?"

Rajkumar was still laughing, "Oh, she's Kumbhakarna incarnate, Bhabhi. Won't be up for another hour and half. Told me last night to wake her up to go to the airport. This morning simply turned over and went to sleep. What can you do with such a person?"

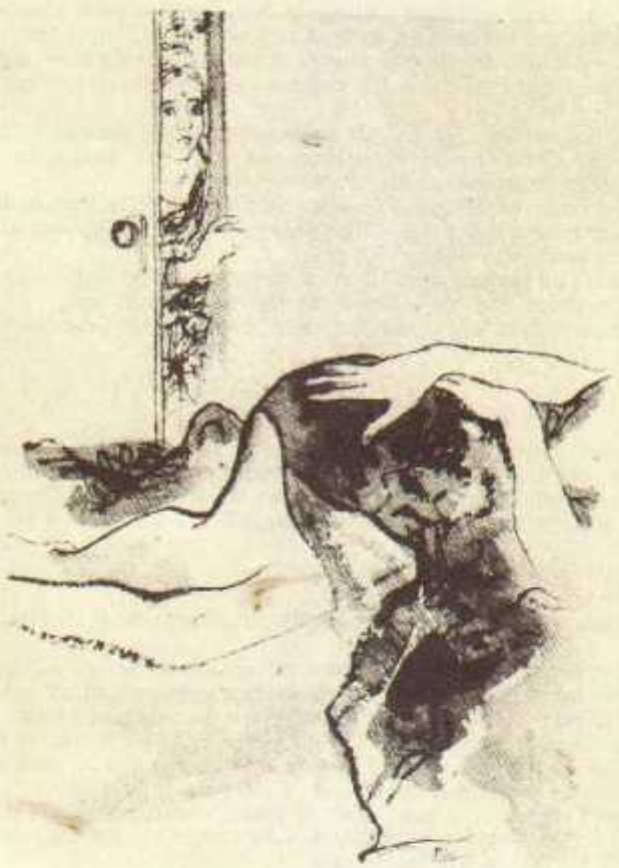
Sunitaji was not interested. She marched into the kitchen saying, "I should take the kettle off then. On again after an hour and a half. No matter. Always at your service."

Rajkumar left quietly.

Sunitaji was back in the verandah. She stood thinking a moment. Then went out. After a few minutes, she returned with Mr. Bagchi, suppressed emotion clouding her face. Leaving Mr. Bagchi to wait in the verandah she entered Corley's room, and was back in a minute. She took Mr. Bagchi by the hand and dragged him.

"Come and see," she said in a forceful whisper.

Mr. Bagchi protested as he went.



Outside the door, Sunitaji stopped, "Have a peep and see for yourself!"

"See what?" Mr. Bagchi's eyes had narrowed. His face was a welter of emotions.

Sunitaji took a peep herself.

"Ah, turned over, have you?" She muttered.

Promptly she walked back into the room, displaced a corner of the gown, and was out again. Mr. Bagchi watched the whole proceedings through the slightly open door.

"See?" she asked.

Mr. Bagchi made no reply. Puffing energetically at the cigar he started pacing the verandah.

THE END

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