

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

APRIL 1985 • Rs 5

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K L Bhagat:
Rise And Fall?

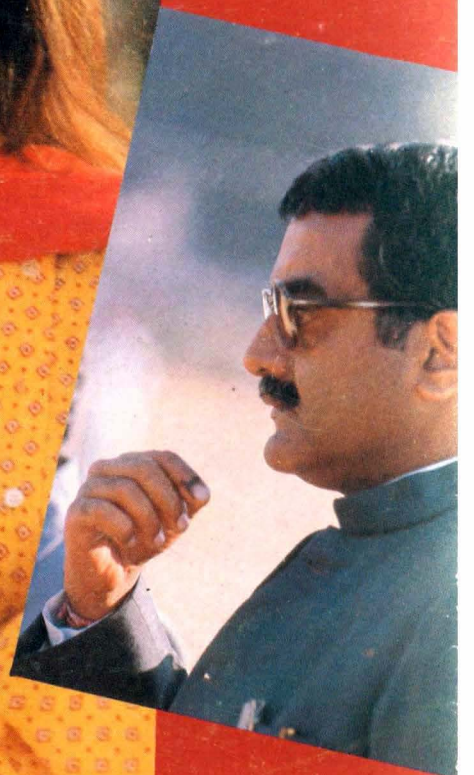
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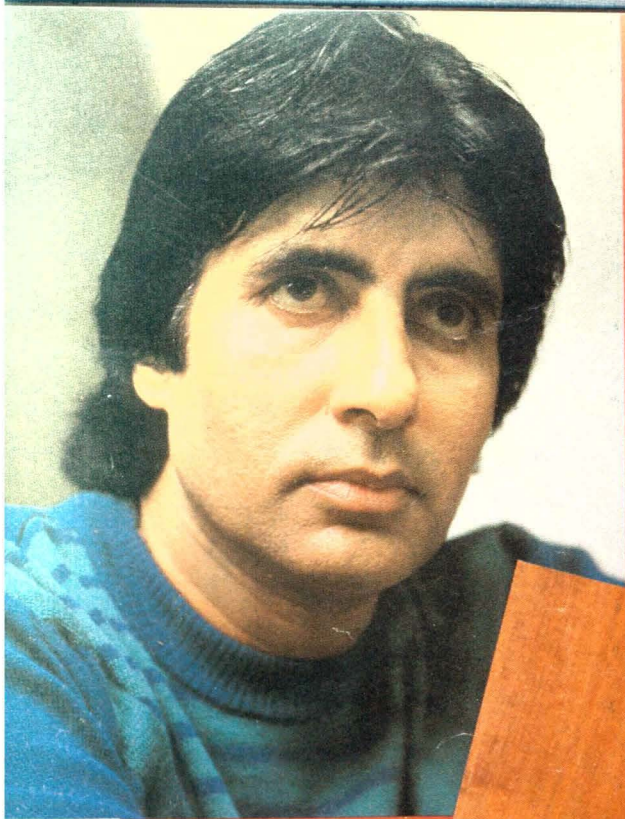
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THE 25 MOST POWERFUL



AMITABH BACHCHAN



N T RAMA RAO



R N GOENKA



A B VAJPAYEE



ARUN NANDA

PEOPLE IN INDIA





on the marquee

WHEN MR RONALD REAGAN, the US President, unveiled his 'Star Wars' strategic defence plan some two years ago, it was generally viewed as an exhortation to the computer generation to take America to even greater heights in technological achievements. For what the President was talking about was a system of defence which would destroy enemy nuclear warheads before they hit targets in the United States. Nobody, except possibly the Russians, doubted his sincerity then, as now, when the US President says he seeks the help of the scientific community to render nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete. Nobody doubts his sincerity when he says he wants to put the nuclear genie back into the bottle.

However, Mr Reagan's dogged pursuit of his strategic defence dream to the point of obtaining US \$26 billion for 'Star Wars' research from October 1, 1985, now threatens to turn the whole thing into a nightmare for mankind. For the system that may emerge as the end result of this research may well leave the space above clustered with weapons, gases, chemicals and lasers. But that is in 15 to 20 years, if ever this fantasy gets beyond the research stage. For now, tragically, there will be more nuclear weapons, the resumed Geneva talks notwithstanding.

One does not have to gaze into a crystal ball to foresee what the new Soviet leader, Mr Mikhail Gorbachov, will do in the face of Mr Reagan's 'Star Wars' initiative. Parity (better still, superiority) with the West in arms at all costs is an article of faith with the Soviets. And the Russians have given a credible demonstration of this faith for the whole world to see *and feel* over the last 40 years. In the event, the Russians may already be at work on some kind of 'Star Wars' system of their own. They may be engaged in developing devices for destroying space interceptors. And all defence systems are necessarily offensive, no matter what defensive capability is attributed to them. How are the Americans to react to such a 'threat' then? By developing counter-weapons?

Despite their superpower status militarily, the Russians live in fear. They live in fear of their own. They live in fear of the Chinese numbers. They live in fear of Japan's ingenuity. They live in fear of the Germans remembered. They live in fear of Islamic fundamentalism from across their borders. They live in fear of scarcities. But above all, they live in fear of American technological superiority. And even a minor success in the US research on 'Star Wars' projects could cause the Russians to react irrationally. Irrational Russian behaviour is the last thing anybody would want in this world full of nuclear weapons.

Estimates of what a 'Star Wars' system put into place will cost, range between US \$100 billion and US \$1,000 billion. A prohibitive price to pay even from God's own treasury. And there is more than an even chance that even American scientific genius will not take this project beyond the research stage. And then, it might not work at all, or work only partially. Are all these risks worth taking?

The publicity surrounding the nuclear arms reduction talks in Geneva has raised high hopes for nuclear sanity worldwide. The United States of America owes it to Americans and to peoples elsewhere in the world to give the negotiations a real chance to succeed. America can do this best by postponing the 'Star Wars' defence shield research project by a good five years. And by confidence and trust building with the new Soviet leader. Mr Reagan's offer to meet Mr Mikhail Gorbachov is a right step in this direction.

In a speech soon after he was elected the new leader of the USSR, Mr Gorbachov said that Russia wanted agreement with America at the Geneva talks, adding, 'the peoples of the world would sigh with relief'. The ordinary Russians particularly, Mr Gorbachov might have emphasised! For while the rulers of the USSR have managed to build a war machine of science-fiction dimensions, and have achieved parity with the military might of the West, this has been at the cost of neglect of everything else — the living standard of ordinary Russians is far, far below what a superpower ought to guarantee its citizens. Consumer products, even ordinary items like lipsticks, stockings and underwear, are obtainable only rarely, and that too with difficulty. This writer has seen long queues of women in Moscow waiting for a cosmetics shop to open: for a lipstick (imported from India!). How pathetic that an enlarged look-alike of the lipstick, and something that costs many million times more — the nuclear missile — is produced abundantly and paraded in the name of the Soviet people. If Mr Gorbachov is going to be any different from his predecessors, who have kept the Russians almost deliberately in this state of disgrace, then he really will have to begin negotiating seriously in Geneva. His comparative youth must enable him to realise a truth which has eluded his geriatric predecessors: The West has no will, not the energy, no basis for even contrived justification, no gold nor glory at stake, to invade, occupy or destroy Russia.

Mrs Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, has found Mr Gorbachov to be a man she could do business with. At Mr Chernenko's funeral last month, several visiting leaders, including our own Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, formed similar impressions. All governments know what this business must now be. Including our own.

R.V. Pandit



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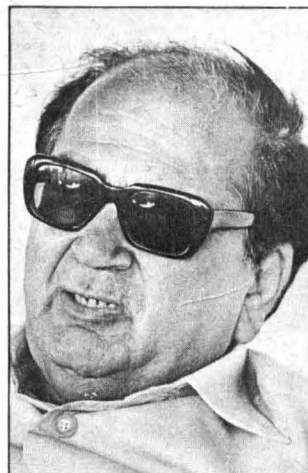
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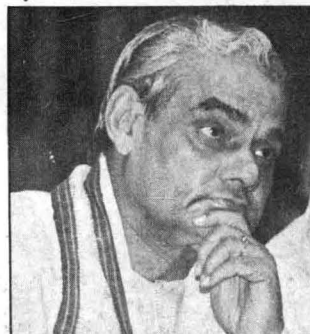
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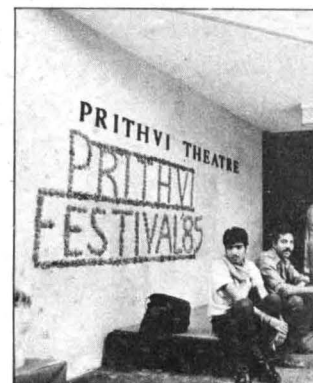
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LETTERS

The Forgotten Leader



Your cover story, *The Forgotten Leader* (February 1985) reflects the changes in the new political order. But is it not too early to conclude any definite variation in the style of functioning of the new government?

Promises abound whenever a new government takes over. The main point is how serious the new government is in implementing these promises.

Rajiv Gandhi is young and full of energy — so was Sanjay. Both of them have different personalities, totally unknown at the time of their entry into politics.

How could a man with completely unproven abilities still manage to convince the people of his clean image and fresh style?

The people of this country have always upheld the Nehrus. In spite of corruption, nepotism and inefficiency reaching a point of no return, we have accepted all of them as our only hope for keeping this diverse country united.

Chandrashekhar Kabra
Varanasi

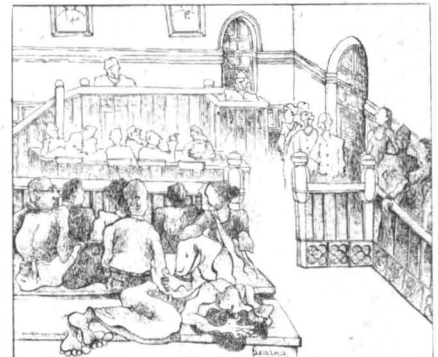
The Forgotten Leader was really a timely article. When the people of India (especially her own son) are gradually forgetting their 'beloved' leader, it came as a reminder. Every aspect was descriptive.

Vishanz Pinto
Madras

While Mrs Gandhi was definitely the go-getting type, Rajiv is far-seeing and cautious. He is certainly Mr Clean. Rajiv is new to his job but he has seen it all during his mother's regime — the trustworthy individuals and the charlatans. He has picked up the former diligently and thrown out the latter with courage and confidence.

J E Heerjibehdin
Bombay

Court Or Fish Market?



Hutokshi Doctor's *A Day At The Metropolitan Magistrate's Court* (February 1985) is slightly hyperbolic. Magistrate's Courts are nothing short of fish markets, lacking in decorum and decency. The magistrates, who take things lightly (perhaps bored with the monotonous routine), the briefless and underselling lawyers, the touts, the careless police, prostitutes, pimps, the corrupt court staff and the litigant public, all of them make the Magistrate's Court an institution that does not inspire awe and confidence.

C S Sharma
Rajahmundry

If I Were. . .

R V Pandit's bold article *If I Were* (February 1985) is very useful to every Indian.

I strongly believe that any country can be raised from poverty to plenty in a span of 20 years. This period is more than sufficient because a child born today attains the age of majority at 18 and gets franchise at the age of 21. I dream of a rich, powerful, self-sufficient India with a clean atmosphere. Rajiv Gandhi is the current hope of India and I am sure he knows what he is doing.

George Matthai
Secunderabad

LETTERS

MADHU MEHTA MISUNDERSTOOD

In Vidhushak's article (*Paper Tigers*, February 1985) on Madhu Mehta and the Hindustani Andolan, mention has been made of the New National Alternative (NNA) sponsored by the Hindustani Andolan. Unfortunately, it appears that Vidhushak has not understood what the NNA stands for, as the article is quite contrary to the actual position.

By definition, the creation of a national alternative implies an adverse reaction to the existing Opposition parties. Hence the contention that the NNA (or the Rashtriya Vikalpa Nirman Samiti) is a supporter of the BJP and Janata is absolutely incorrect. The RVNS has, of course, fully supported Lieutenant General S K Sinha (Retd), who contested as an Independent candidate from Patna, as the RVNS believes in assisting clean and competent persons to enter politics.

Nothing could be further from the truth than the statement that the RVNS ignores the corrupt practices of the Opposition parties. On the contrary, the RVNS has always maintain-



ed that, barring a few notable exceptions (like Ramakrishna Hegde in Karnataka) the dividing line between the

Congress (I) under Mrs Gandhi's leadership and the Opposition parties was indeed very thin!

In fact, practically every comment made about the RVNS in the article is either factually incorrect or positively distorted.

Finally, while only one question supposedly asked by the panel (at the Meet Your Candidate programme organised by the Hindustani Andolan) of the Congress (I) candidate for the South Bombay constituency has been mentioned in the article, it has been conveniently overlooked that equally demanding and tough questions were also asked of the Opposition candidates, R Rajda and J Mehta. We are sure that all those present at the meeting would agree that a most balanced and objective approach was followed without discrimination of any kind between the three candidates and their respective parties.

Naozer J Aga,
General Secretary
RVNS, Bombay

A Conspiracy Of Silence



A Conspiracy Of Silence (January 1985) was a thought-provoking article. For one shudders to think of the repercussions of the present set-up in the future, with the administration, police, judiciary and media all directing their guns in the direction of the Sikhs.

Because those in power labelled the Sikhs extremists, murderers and arsonists, a large section of the press backed the government. While newspapers carried bold headlines about Sikh extremism based on government versions,

nobody reported Hindu extremism. Only a report published by the *Transatlantic India Times*, a non-Sikh organisation, in December 1983, had the courage to go into the depths of the Punjab crisis and reveal the role of the Hindus.

Which newspaper reported that in Punjab, in February 1984, six *gurdwaras* were burnt, 17 Sikhs were forcibly shaved and burnt alive, that young Sikh girls were made to stand naked in the market-place? Is this the country for which our forefathers sacrificed their lives?

Manjeet Kaur
Bombay

As far as the Indian newsmagazines are concerned, the conspiracy of silence began four years ago. Why were the media silent when a large number of Hindus were butchered by Sikh extremists, when hit lists were prepared and exhibited in *gurdwaras*, when scores of Hindu temples were desecrated, when only Hindu businessmen were robbed in Punjab and when 90 per cent of the Punjab police helped the extremists in every manner?

And where were the PUCL and PUDR? No team ever visited the places of carnage in Punjab.

It is surprising that the media have awakened at last!

S P Baushi
Patiala

A magazine like *Imprint* should not pander to Sikh sentiments over the inevitable Operation Bluestar. The Golden Temple could only be polluted by the use of the holy place as a sanctuary for criminals guilty of murder in a systematic and well-organised manner, and not by the entry of our brave *jawans*.

The Sikh game of insurgency and the resulting distrust, unless checked forthwith, might make them lose their advantages. If the Hindus boycott them, that will be the end of their prosperity and business. A truncated Punjab would hardly suffice to maintain their present prosperity. And prosperity, which has turned some Sikhs into separationists, can disappear as quickly as it was attained.

Akshai C Bansal
Ghaziabad

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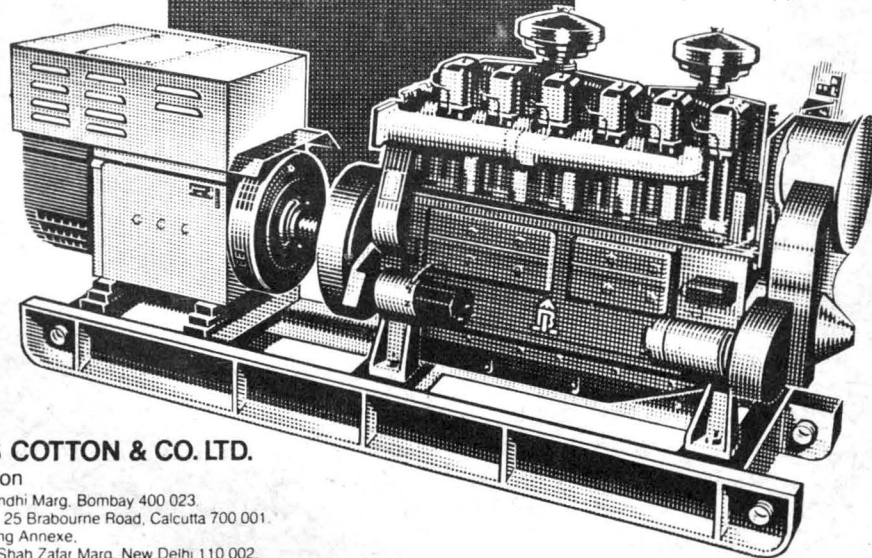
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THATCHER UNDER FIRE

Ronald Reagan, Clive Ponting, Salman Rushdie, Farrukh Dhondy and more.

MANY OF US in the UK whose faces have been getting longer and longer since 1979, found the corners of our mouths curling up this month in a manner unfamiliar since the coming to power of Mrs Thatcher.

The Iron Lady's armour was pierced by an arrow launched by 12 ordinary citizens, acting together as the jury in the political trial of the decade. Clive Ponting, a senior Ministry of Defence civil servant of impeccable pedigree, leaked documents concerning the sinking of the Argentine ship *General Belgrano* in the Falklands War, two years after the event, to a Labour MP. The documents not only showed that hundreds of Argentines might have been killed in a way contrary to the rules of fair play, but what was much worse by the standards of British democracy, that Mrs Thatcher's ministers had consistently lied to Parliament about the sinking ever since. Mr Ponting's defence to a charge under the long discredited Official Secrets Act was that no issue of national security was involved, and the jury agreed with him, despite being directed by the judge, himself without doubt following his own directions from on high, that the national interest was synonymous with the interests of the government of the day.

In the subsequent furore in the House of Commons, all responsibility was denied by Mrs Thatcher, who said that she had been on holiday at the time. She was soon retroactively join-



ed on that holiday by many of her ministers who hastily passed the buck from one to another until it came to rest in the unwashed hands of a junior minister, John Stanley, ideally fitted for the role of scapegoat because everyone — Tories, Opposition, civil servants and press — can't stand him. In the eyes of the country, however, Mrs Thatcher's image was tarnished and Labour at last reached neck and neck position with the government in the opinion polls in a post-Ponting protest. Mrs Thatcher's response was to bustle across the Atlantic to see her favourite President and to follow in Churchill's footsteps by addressing Congress. (This tactic usually helps a Western leader with

troubles at home although it topples as many Third World rulers.) But worse was to come for poor Mrs T. She had left behind in London an inept Chancellor, Nigel Lawson, babysitting for a sickly pound which had in recent weeks been plummeting towards the value of the dollar. No sooner had she and Mr Reagan concluded their public pronouncements of undying friendship and future mutual back-scratching, than Mr Reagan announced his desire to let the buoyant dollar find its own level. The result of this was that Mrs Thatcher's plane home and the pound, descended together and the whole trip was seen as a humiliation for her.

Fewer of us are smiling at this development, though, as we nervously await the onslaught of hundreds of thousands of dollar-happy American tourists this summer, eager to buy up our antiques, our paintings, our castles, and who knows, maybe our Royalty.

* * *

NOT THAT THERE isn't a lot of spending power around still within these shores. I attended an auction last week of some very ordinary suburban houses, hardly any of which went for under £80,000. One thing I noticed was the number of Asian buyers, and as another 'desirable North London residence' went under the hammer, I pondered on the fate of Asians in this country and how similar it was to that of the Jewish immigrants at the beginning of the century. The majority of Asians in this country are poor and struggling alongside the rest of the British working class; many Jews are still living in this way. Thousands, though, have

Lydia Lewis writes regularly for Imprint from London. She is a lawyer and political activist.

Salman Rushdie indulged in the popular Trotskyite ploy of attacking his own side. He attacked Camden Council, shouted 'racism' and implied that 'might was right'.

THATCHER UNDER FIRE

started small businesses, in the rag trade and in shops, as did the Jews, and when incredibly hard work pays off, they follow the Jews into the more affluent suburbs of North London and other cities, send their children to private schools, and often become in awe of them with their cool British ways. There are also a few Asian millionaires such as the Shivdasanis and Swraj Paul who could swap anecdotes with the Sieffs (of Marks and Spencer fame) and other Semitic success stories. But then I thought of the millionaire casualties such as Mahmud Sipra, Rajendra Sethia, Bernie Cornfeld, and wondered whether their falls would have been so spectacular and so total if they had been WASPs, because, at crunch time, how many Brits would help a rich Pak or a rich Yid in trouble?

* * *

ASIANS, unlike the Jews, have been slow to get into the world of television in this country, and it has only been in the last two or three years that there has been recognition of the need for programmes aimed specifically at minority audiences, such as Asians and Blacks. *Eastern Eye*, produced by London Weekend Television for Channel 4, is such a programme, imbued with a youthful earnestness and sense of purpose when dealing with serious matters, and with a giggling amateurishness when handling (sometimes literally) film stars and various trivia. Eighty-two per cent of Asians are meant to have watched at least one show and a third claim to watch every one. The present third series is to be the last because Farrukh Dhondy, new Commissioning Editor for multicultural programmes, has other plans. Jane Hewland, Executive Producer of the programme, says that the show's success is its magazine format, catering to different elements in the community, and not in presuming that, because Asians are a minority, they have exclusively

radical minority-type interests. She says that in the future, " 'Balanced' voices are out. 'Committed' voices are in."

In defence of the proposed changes, Tariq Ali describes *Eastern Eye* as 'generally pitched at the level of shallow reportage, of pulp and gossip magazines' and goes on to declare, "We need and deserve challenging, investigative reporting. We need documentaries that consider in-depth the ideas, the experience and concerns of our communities. . ."

I think Tariq's got it wrong this time, first of all because sometimes *Eastern Eye* does carry out this function already: in the last show I watched open-mouthed as interviewer Karan Thapar put Immigration Minister David Waddington through a mincer and then spread him all over the TV screen, as the Minister tried to wriggle out of allegations of racism in his department. And I think that many more Asians will have seen that wonderful sight because of the 'trivia' sandwiching it than if it had been part of a whole programme of serious concerns. Even Woodward and Bernstein needed the odd joke.

* * *

IF I HAD TO GUESS I would say that author Salman Rushdie would be on the side of Tariq Ali in the *Eastern Eye* debate. Mr Rushdie seems to have acquired some strange friends recently. He lives in the London Borough of Camden, which has one of the most actively socialist councils in the country, but which suffers from the twin problems of hundreds of homeless people and government curbs on house building and repairs. Camden has no choice other than to house its homeless, a disproportionate number of whom are Asian and Black, in temporary bed and breakfast 'hotels', run by unscrupulous private landlords. On November 20, Mrs Abdul Karim and her two children died in a fire in one

of these hotels. In protest hundreds of homeless families occupied Camden Town Hall. Camden Council understood their reaction but felt that the protest should be directed at the government and refused to house the campaigning families in priority over other less militant families who were living in similar, and sometimes worse, conditions. Enter Mr Rushdie who decided that the situation was all part of British institutionalised racism and who then indulged in the popular Trotskyite ploy of attacking his own side. As he wrote in the influential *Guardian* newspaper, "If the deaths of Mrs Karim and her children are to be treated as murders, then many of us would say that the murderers are to be found in Camden Town Hall." In the end, partly as a result of distorted publicity such as this, Camden Council caved in so that the occupying families, some of whom had only been waiting — albeit in horrible conditions — for a few weeks, are all to be housed before any other families, some of whom are also Asian. But the argument of people like Mr Rushdie is that direct action by the people should meet with success. Or in other words, might is right?

* * *

A POSTSCRIPT for those of you who are following the progress of AIDS in the UK. The panic and homophobia continue with new shock horror stories every day in the press. Now that it is believed, probably erroneously, that the virus is passed in saliva, London's firemen have demanded new equipment to be designed for artificial respiration because they say their men are at risk when performing the kiss of life on homosexual casualties. Meanwhile, other citizens are trying to take out insurance against, in the event of fire, being rescued and revived by a gay fireman.

◆

PAKISTAN LETTER

General Zia's referendum was a farce but his general election was not.

IT WAS an unusual election. You could walk down the main street of any town, and around many residential areas, and still not know Pakistan was going through its most important political process in eight years. There were no public meetings with speakers haranguing the government for real or imaginary wrongs, no buntings, loudspeakers or processions. The only indications were some scattered posters and occasional gatherings at street corners.

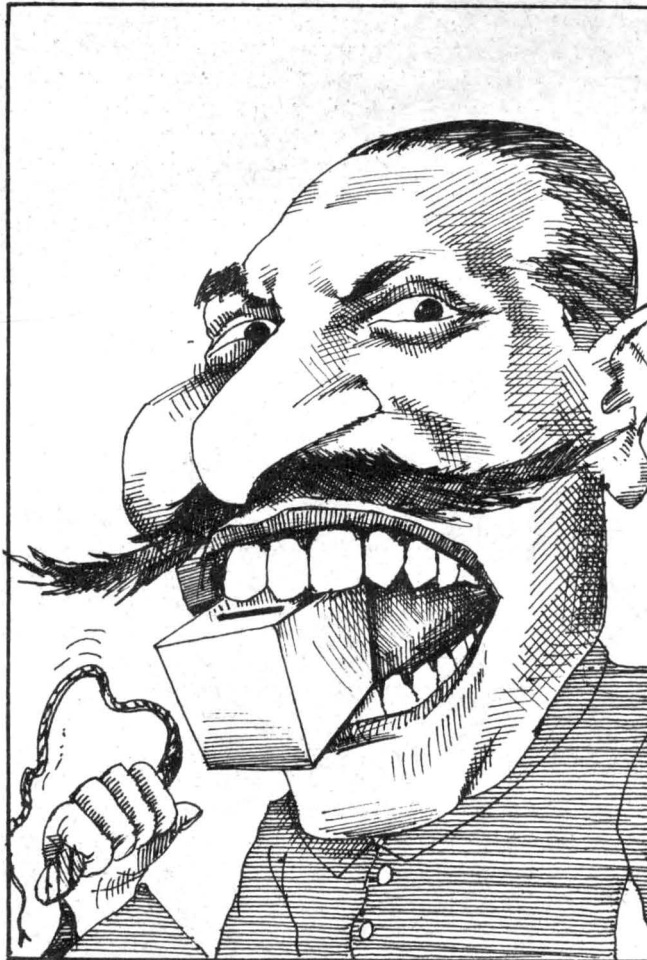
General Zia, first banning the participation of political parties, and then, shortly before polling date, permitting members to stand, but only as individuals, was virtually asking politicians to box with one hand. Predictably, leaders of the 11-party alliance, banded together as the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), called for a boycott. They were promptly jailed, along with anyone else who voiced similar views.

Tens of thousands must have been arrested. Several, not actually jailed or under house arrest, were restricted to their district or state. Cracked one politician, "Very soon we will need visas to travel to other provinces in Pakistan."

I had the bizarre experience of meeting someone briefly one evening to arrange a more substantial discussion the following day. First thing next morning I got a call from his son saying the person concerned had been hauled out of bed at two a m and locked up.

But the greatest confusion was over

Arun Chacko is Associate Editor of Boston's The World Paper. He was recently in Pakistan.



the Pakistani President's desire for a non-political election. "What the hell is a non-political election?" one senior commentator sniffed. "Elections are a political process.

"This process was merely initiated to somehow retain power," he added. "General Zia has repeatedly said that this was not an attempt to transfer power but to share it. But power shared with whom? The election has been largely confined to the loyalists — landowners, businessmen, Jamaat-i-Islami and one faction of the Muslim League (Pagaro group). This clearly explains General Zia's earlier self-confessed disinterest in the election result."

* * *

IT WAS NOT quite so simple. Even this limited democratic process raised considerable expectations among Pakistani nationalists and astute observers. To begin with, there was a reasonable turn-out for the National Assembly poll, though whether it was over 50 per cent, as claimed, is a bit hard to determine.

Contrary to the hopes of the MRD, the involvement of over 1,000 candidates — many of them powerful feudal lords and rich businessmen, all spending vast sums and appealing to local caste and *biradari* sentiments — was enough to bring some voters out.

Then, the result did indicate a free and fair poll, which was quickly and justifiably interpreted as an anti-government vote. Several Cabinet ministers like defence minister, Ali Ahmed Talpur, information minister, Raja Zafarul Haq and labour minister, Ghulam Dastgir, were thrashed. So were several provincial ministers. The Jamaat-i-Islami,

generally referred to as General Zia's B team, was really taken to the cleaners.

It was generally conceded that the first priority of most elected members would be to recover their investments, ranging from Rs five to 50 lakh, against the officially permissible expenditure of Rs 40,000. But there was also some hope that odd members, elected on their own, would not be complete tools of the military establishment.

To begin with, there were several banned party members who had flouted the MRD line, stood for election and won. Then there were independent floaters like Air Marshal Nur Khan (Retd) who could hardly be trusted to play footsie with the President

There is little doubt that 1985 will be a year of crisis for Pakistan. The anger of the mass of those long divorced from the military regime can no longer be concealed. The last word on the subject has not yet been said.

PAKISTAN LETTER

Finally, given the widespread impression that the December 19 personal referendum held by General Zia to ensure his continuance for five more years was a complete hoax, there was equally irrefutable evidence that the general election was not. Many elected representatives felt they were genuinely elected with some mandate from the people, while the President had none.

Even official sources privately conceded that the official claim of a 60 per cent plus referendum turn-out was wrong. Said one, "As a government servant I have to say it was 60 per cent; personally, I think it was more like 40 per cent. However, my mother in Sargodha is convinced it was no more than 15 per cent."

The old lady was undoubtedly right. Nowhere in Pakistan did any independent observer concede anything over 20 per cent. In fact, people were so disgusted at the outcome of the referendum, that even Zia supporters, like petty businessmen, turned against him. But the President nevertheless claimed that the highly suspect referendum gave him the authority to remain in office for another five years.

Given the implications of all this, Mushahid Hussain, Editor of Islamabad's *Muslim* wrote: "These people, elected on their own, are not beholden to the President or anybody else in officialdom for their election. They are unlikely to be the rubber stamp which some in the establishment were hoping for. In this new situation, it will be interesting to see the extent to which there will be genuine power sharing."

* * *

MEANWHILE, as Mushahid Hussain observed, "Political observers were quick to discern that the United States, our godfather, which had maintained an embarrassing silence on the referendum by not even sending a ritualistic message of congratulation to the President, was the first to welcome what was, on February 25, a

genuinely democratic exercise."

Said an official US spokesman, "As President Zia and the elected members of the new Assemblies approach their work, they will have the full sympathy and support of the United States. We applaud the success of these elections, and congratulate the government and people of Pakistan for this signal achievement."

US ambassador Dean Hinton, arguably one of the most powerful men in Pakistan, claimed to be very excited about the poll. Thereafter there was the bizarre spectacle of private receptions in his honour, where the newly elected representatives were introduced to him. Perhaps that was how it should be.

The American role in Pakistan's most recent brush with democracy was all too evident. Informed observers trace back the election decision to Vice-President George Bush's recent visit, after there was trouble passing military and economic aid to Pakistan through Congress.

Suddenly, during his visit, there were virtually simultaneous statements made by him and Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, about the resumption of the democratic process. And not long after came the announcement of partyless polls.

Perhaps the whole business was better explained by US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Robert Peck, to the American Foreign Affairs Subcommittee for Asian and Pacific Affairs: "I want to make clear today that the United States has a stake in this process," he declared. "Pakistan is a good friend and a close security partner. We also wish to see this process proceed in an orderly manner. We are very conscious of the serious external pressures on Pakistan as a result of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, and a large number of Afghans who have found refuge on Pakistani soil. This makes more difficult the complicated

political tasks which lie ahead."

* * *

BUT the post-election constitutional amendments might have dampened American enthusiasm. They have certainly undone whatever limited progress was made for a more representative government. General Zia has appropriated the right to appoint and dismiss everyone from the prime minister and defence chiefs to state governors who in turn appoint chief ministers. Informed Pakistani opinion is furious, and so are many National Assembly members including Air Marshal Nur Khan.

"It is a misnomer to call these amendments," fumed Professor Ghafoor Ahmed, the soft-spoken Vice-President of the Jamaat-i-Islami in an interview. "It is a new Constitution imposed on the country by a martial law regime, which has no right to even amend the 1973 Constitution passed by the then National Assembly.

"All powers — the judiciary, executive and legislature — have in fact been concentrated in the hands of the President, not only at the centre but also the four provinces. He is not really accountable to Parliament, and he is above the judiciary. Constitutional safeguards have been granted for his past, present and future actions.

"The new Constitution of 1985 has virtually made Parliament a debating society," he added. "Members of the Assembly will be very careful in their speeches because the sword of the President's authority, to dissolve the Assembly at his sole discretion, will always be hanging over their heads."

Given this reaction from a former Cabinet minister in Zia's government, the anger of the mass of those long divorced from the military regime can be gauged. Obviously, the last word on the subject has not been said. There is little doubt that 1985 will be a year of crisis for Pakistan.

◆

TIME TO PRIVATISE

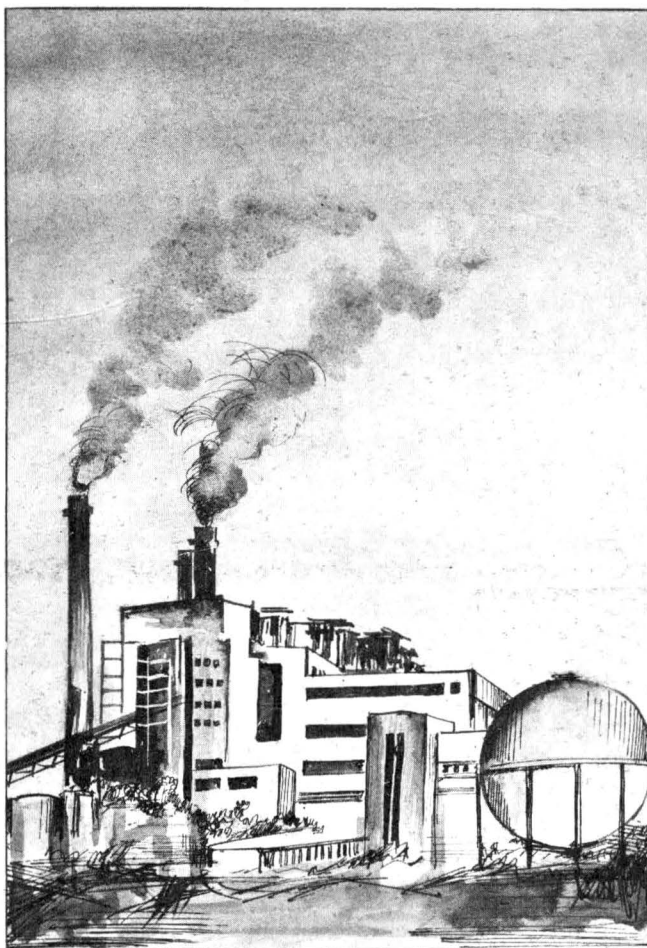
It is time we reversed the process of nationalisation and put our faith in privatisation.

'PRIVATISATION' is a word as much in currency in Europe today as 'nationalisation' was in the '60s. Only, the one is the antithesis of the other.

Privatisation is the process of loosening governmental controls on enterprise, a process in which the private citizen begins to have a greater say in the management of enterprises. Privatisation does not necessarily mean that the ownership of the public sector passes into private hands. When that happens, it is called de-nationalisation. As a process, privatisation covers a wider spectrum than just de-nationalisation. Privatisation refers to management, while de-nationalisation deals merely with ownership.

The concept of privatisation has already achieved wide legitimacy in Western Europe. Margaret Thatcher in England has adopted it with enthusiasm, and even in mildly socialist countries like West Germany, the idea is taking root. Lufthansa, the pride of the German public sector, is currently undergoing a highly controversial privatisation process. Bangladesh is a recent convert and even the fiercely socialist China has accepted the concept. Privatisation has already been implemented in Chinese agriculture and it is under way in the industrial sector as well. In India, some privatisation has taken place: private parties have taken over advertising on Doordarshan and the Maharashtra Housing Board has started owner management schemes. But in India, in most cases, the idea has still to catch on.

Subramaniam Swamy is a former member of the Harvard economics faculty. This is a regular column.



To Japan goes the credit for originating the concept of privatisation. For decades, the Japanese government-sponsored MITI set up industries with government funds and then, as these industries became firmly established, they were handed over for private management or ownership.

The Indian emphasis on the public sector has produced nothing but dissatisfaction. In every discussion on the public sector today, discontent becomes apparent. Even when the late prime minister, heir to the Nehru legacy and therefore champion of the public sector, addressed the chairmen of various public sector undertakings in 1983, she expressed acute distress

over the sector's performance. The fact is that there is a growing consensus in India that the bureaucracy cannot manage these enterprises. And if it did, only inefficiency and a squandering of resources would result.

This consensus has a sound empirical basis. A comparison of financial ratios to assess the performance of the public sector *vis-a-vis* the private sector provides a vivid contrast. Consider, for example, the net profit after taxes as a ratio of the capital employed. Even in the public sector's best year (1981-82), this ratio, (a good measure of the rate of profitability) for the public sector was only half that of the private sector.

It may be argued that the public sector does not aim to make profits and that its goal is to add to production. According to the ratio of value added to capital employed, the private sector again shows a far superior performance. The ratio for the public sector is just 0.356 while it is 0.492 for the private sector. And the gap between public and private sector performance is even wider if you take into account the fact that the public sector gets a number of advantages which are denied to the private sector. For example, loans to the public sector from nationalised banks bear a much lower interest rate than loans to the private sector. Property is acquired more easily for the public sector, and at lower rates of compensation. Moreover, if just three enterprises, the State Trading Corporation (STC), the Minerals and Materials Trading Corporation (MMTC) and the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) are excluded from the public sector, the gap in the

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The public sector has failed on every criterion. The private sector makes more profit, has better research and development and is more efficient.

TIME TO PRIVATISE

performance of the public and private sectors becomes amazingly wide.

Even in the matter of financing, the private sector in India is more self-reliant. The component of investment, which is measured by the gross fixed capital formation, financed by the internal resources of the enterprise, is 81 per cent for the private sector and just 26 per cent for the public sector.

I challenge protagonists of the public sector to produce just one criterion by which the public sector can be shown to be superior to the private sector in performance.

At cocktail parties, where stray thoughts proliferate, one sometimes hears that the public sector cannot be compared to the private because in the former, the investments have long gestation lags whereas the private sector investment portfolio consists of 'quickies'. Wrong again! If one considers any set of performance criteria for the same product with the same gestation lags — in the case of the public sector Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) and the private sector Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) or similarly, that of the Fertilizer Corporation of India (FCI) with Coromandel Fertilizers Limited (CFL) or even Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC) with Utkal Machinery Limited (UML) — the private sector comes out on top again. And the price for the product is set by the public sector.

Even in matters of research and development, innovation, patents and social welfare, the private sector is ahead in actual performance.

Therefore, we have to face the fact that the bureaucracy cannot manage an enterprise and that, wherever feasible, the process of privatisation should be initiated to achieve greater efficiency and performance.

As far as efficiency goes, there is much scope for improvement in the economy as a whole: public and private sectors. For example, in the Indian

economy, a total of 240,000 steel workers produce six million tonnes of steel. In South Korea, just 14,000 workers turn out nine million tonnes.

How is privatisation to be initiated in India? In my opinion, the process should be begun at three levels. First, some public sector industries should be de-nationalised outright; these include bakeries, five-star hotels, and the automobile and soft drink industries. Bureaucrats involved in the administration of these industries are misallocating their time. These industries belong in the private sector. Secondly, in the case of Doordarshan, Indian Airlines, AIR, and the coal and steel industries, about 35 per cent of the shares should be sold to the public with the provision that no single purchaser can own more than two per cent of the shares of the public sector company. For the media, Doordarshan and AIR, this will require a change in the law. But if such a share transfer is effected and these industries become the 'joint sector', greater accountability will be possible.

Thirdly, in enterprises such as telephones, post and telegraphs and highways, the state should allow the parallel activity of the private sector. The competition that will ensue will be healthy for both sectors. In the case of banks, there should be no further nationalisation, and the present 18 nationalised banks should be amalgamated into just four.

Industries like oil, chemicals and fertilizers can continue as they are at present.

By this process of privatisation, the government will receive a huge amount of resources — from the sale of shares, de-nationalisation etc, which should be invested wisely in agriculture, energy, transport and communications.

However, privatisation should not be adopted as a gimmick. It has to be part of a larger ideological commitment to a market economy. ♦

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MOTIVATION

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The 25 Most Powerful People In India

We asked a panel of distinguished observers to select the 25 people who really call the shots. They came up with some surprising rankings.

1 Rajiv Gandhi Top Of The Heap

All prime ministers are powerful, but they are not necessarily the most powerful people in the country. It is unlikely that Morarji Desai, Charan Singh or Lal Bahadur Shastri would have topped such a list during their lifetime.

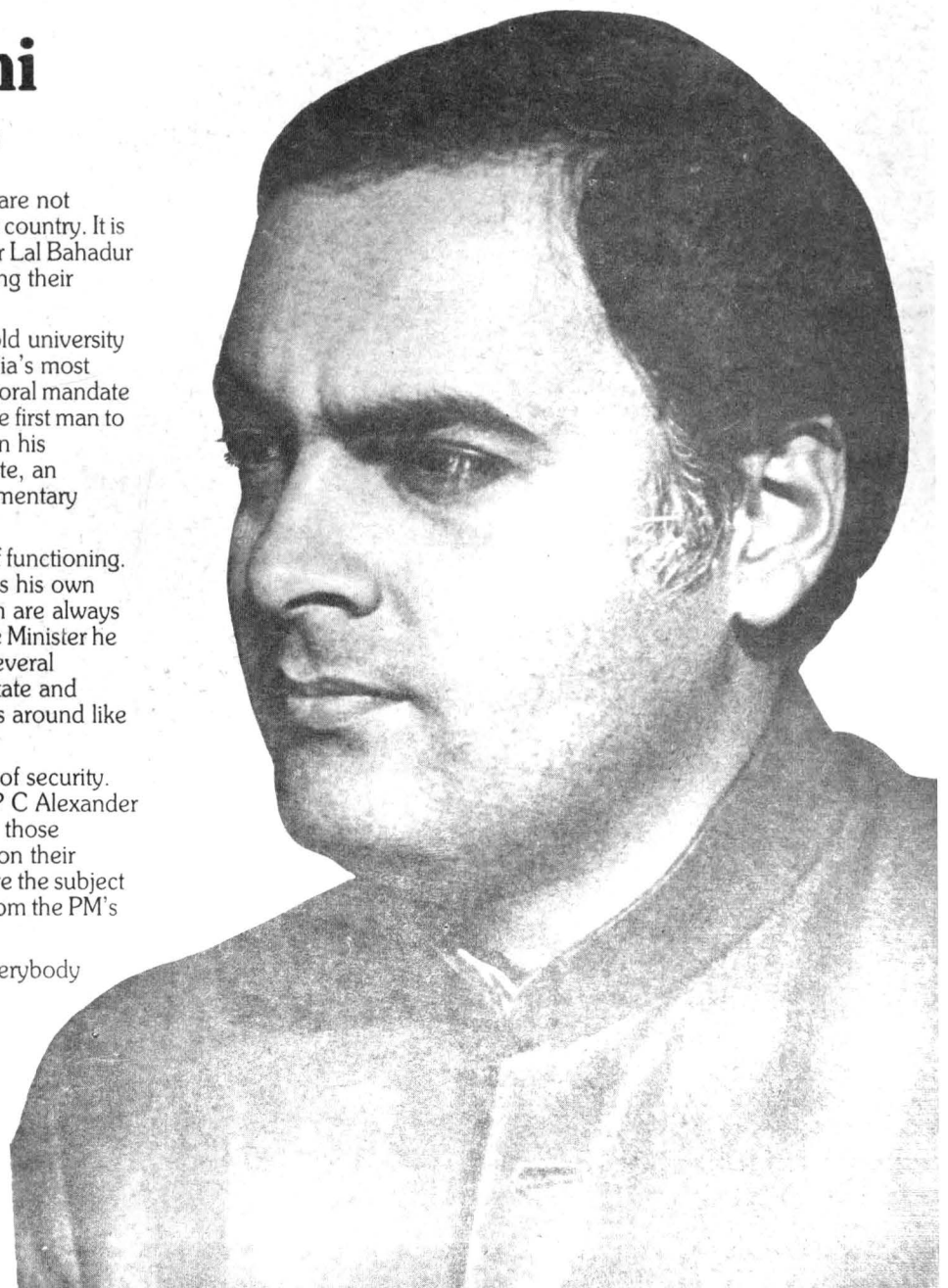
So, what makes Rajiv Gandhi, a 40-year-old university drop-out and former commercial pilot, India's most powerful man? Partly, it is the massive electoral mandate his party received last December: Rajiv is the first man to be able to persuade the electorate to return his candidates with over 50 per cent of the vote, an achievement without parallel in any parliamentary democracy.

And partly, it is his quiet but resolute style of functioning. Like his mother in her later years, he keeps his own counsel and ensures that those around him are always slightly insecure. In his five months as Prime Minister he has successfully replaced over 100 MPs, several hundred MLAs, several ministers at both state and central levels, and has moved civil servants around like pawns in a chess game.

His own advisors, too, have no guarantee of security. R K Dhawan was unceremoniously fired, P C Alexander eased out, and Arun Nehru humbled. And those industrialists who once prided themselves on their closeness to the centre now find that they are the subject of ugly rumours, some of which originate from the PM's men.

Like his mother, Rajiv rules by keeping everybody slightly off-balance.

Prime Minister of India (1984 -);
ed: Doon School,
Trinity College, Cambridge.
General Secretary, AICC (1983-84).
MP for Amethi (1981 -);
Pilot, Indian Airlines (1966-81).
Age: 40.



2 N T Rama Rao From Joke To Phenomenon

For the first year of his chief ministership, N T Rama Rao was a bit of a joke. "Do you know he wears saris to bed?" Indira Gandhi giggled to Tariq Ali. The press lampooned him mercilessly, focussing on his partiality to saffron, his claim to be the reincarnation of Lord Venkateswara and his poor English.

All the humour missed the point: NTR was an expression of local Andhra pride, and the more the North laughed at him, the stronger he seemed to get. Then Arun Nehru, Ram Lal, Bhaskara Rao and a few Telugu Desam dissidents decided that NTR could be toppled.

Not since the agitation that led to the creation of Andhra had Telugu pride been so wounded. NTR's supporters took to the streets, the man himself paraded his MLAs before Zail Singh and his aides told their tale of woe to the papers ("Democracy has been raped in the streets," he insisted somewhat graphically).

Finally, the centre saw the light. NTR was restored to his rightful perch as Lord of Andhras and since then, he's never looked back. Wherever he goes, his people mob him, and at every election they vote his candidates to office. This phenomenon led to his Telugu Desam emerging as the largest single Opposition party in the Lok Sabha (he promptly changed its name to Bharat Desam to reflect this new national stature), and now, he is stronger than any regional leader has ever been in India, with the possible exception of Sheikh Abdullah in his heyday.

Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh (1983-84 and 1984 -);
ed: Andhra Christian College, Guntur.
President, Telugu Desam (1981 -). Acted in 292 films (1949-82).
Sub-registrar, Madras Service Commission (1947).
Age: 62.



3 Arun Singh Executive Assistant To The PM

For many months, Arun Singh was the invisible man at Rajiv's Motilal Nehru Marg office. He shunned the press, had no political ambitions and kept a low profile.

Then Operation Bluestar, in which he played a key role, brought him into the limelight.

By early November, when Rajiv appointed him his Parliamentary Secretary, this former Calcutta executive, was one of the most famous men in the country. At that time, his name was coupled with Arun Nehru's. But while Nehru earned a reputation for insulting ministers and pursuing his own political ambitions, Singh continued to avoid publicity and perhaps as a result, is now far more powerful than Nehru ever had been.

What does Singh really do? He seems to have specific responsibilities but is nearly always at Rajiv's side, ready to provide information and to follow up on the PM's pronouncements. In a sense, his role is a cross between R K Dhawan's and P N Haksar's. Like both those men, he gives orders in the Prime Minister's name.

So far though, there have been no complaints about his behaviour. He annoyed army commanders during Bluestar and civil servants during the Delhi riots, but now is entirely discreet, and careful not to give offence. Nevertheless, nothing happens in Delhi without his knowing about it and he is now said to be at work on long-term plans to develop our economy, rationalise taxation and finance election expenditure for all parties out of state funds.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (1984 -);
ed: Doon School, St Catherine's College, Cambridge.
Metal Box (1966-71), Reckitt & Coleman (1971-82).
Age: 40.



4 M G Ramachandran The Chief Minister As God

M G Ramachandran is an exclusively Tamilian phenomenon. Where else would this balding, middle-aged, paunchy person be taken seriously as a matinee idol complete with oily black wig, shiny black moustache and clinging, tight T-shirt? Moreover, in which other region of the world would this unlikely matinee idol then find himself chief minister and uncrowned king?

The MGR saga has its origins in its hero's involvement in the formerly secessionist DMK. After DMK leader Annadurai died, MGR fell out with Karunanidhi, his successor, launched his own DMK faction and then, became Chief Minister in 1977.

Since then, he has ruled his fiefdom with an iron fist, ruthlessly suppressing dissent and promoting a former actress called Jayalalitha to a variety of party posts. Last year, disaster struck when MGR fell seriously ill and hovered between life and death. Periodically, rumours about his premature demise would grip Tamil Nadu and grief-stricken fans would promptly commit suicide.

Confounding all expectations, MGR recovered after a trip to the US, and is now back in the saddle. Dark rumours about his mental health remain, however. He has yet to speak in public and may have lost part of his memory. Some of his faculties though, are clearly intact. One of his first actions was to rehabilitate Jayalalitha who had been victimised by her enemies within the party during MGR's hospitalisation.

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu (1977 -);
ed: Elementary School, Anayadi.
Founder, AIADMK (October 1972).
Treasurer, DMK (1969-72), MLA (1967 -).
Age: 68.



5 V P Singh Cleaner Than The King

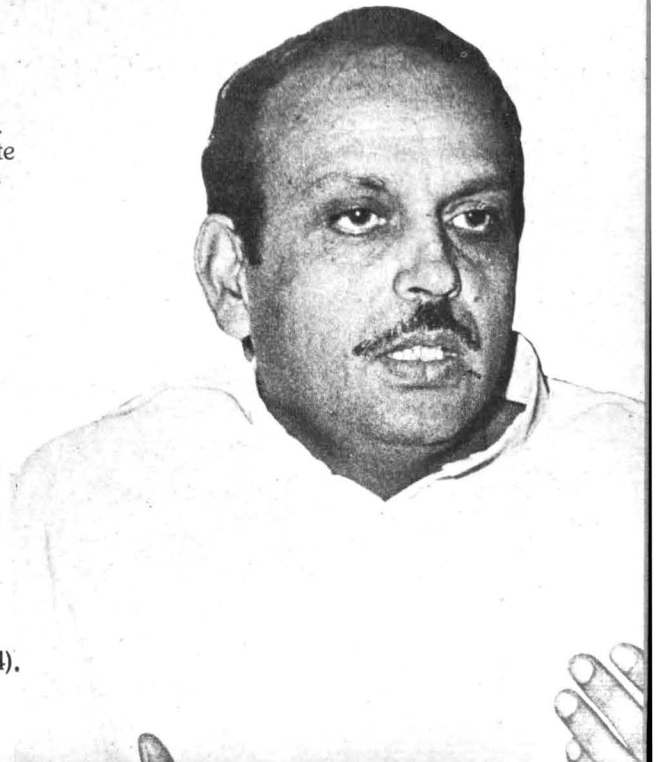
The finance minister is always one of the country's most powerful people. T.T Krishnamachari created Mundhra and Pranab Mukherjee helped create Dhirubhai Ambani. The power to grant industrial licences, to organise loans from nationalised banks and to order income-tax raids, resides in him.

Vishwanath Pratap Singh, the current incumbent, will, if his first three months in office are anything to go by, be more responsible in the exercise of this power than any of his predecessors. A spartan, puritanical sort, he is even more obsessed with seeming to be Mr Clean than his Prime Minister.

He will not allow industrialists to call him at home, refuses to meet businessmen individually unless civil servants are present, leads a simple, non-ostentatious life-style, and actively avoids those tycoons who Pranab Mukherjee had raised to greater affluence. And judging by his recent actions, such as the nationalisation of the excise duty on polyester yarn in February, he will undo many of Mukherjee's more dubious measures.

Singh's personal honesty is legendary. So is his finely developed sense of ethics. He resigned as Chief Minister of UP following a massacre by dacoits because he felt morally responsible.

Finance Minister of India (1985 -); ed: B A; LLB and B Sc.
President UPCC (1984-85), Union Minister of Commerce (1983-84).
Chief Minister of UP (1980-83), MP (1971-77; 1980 -),
Minister of State for Commerce (1976-77).
Whip, Congress Legislative Party, UP (1970-71).



6 R N Goenka The Last Press Baron

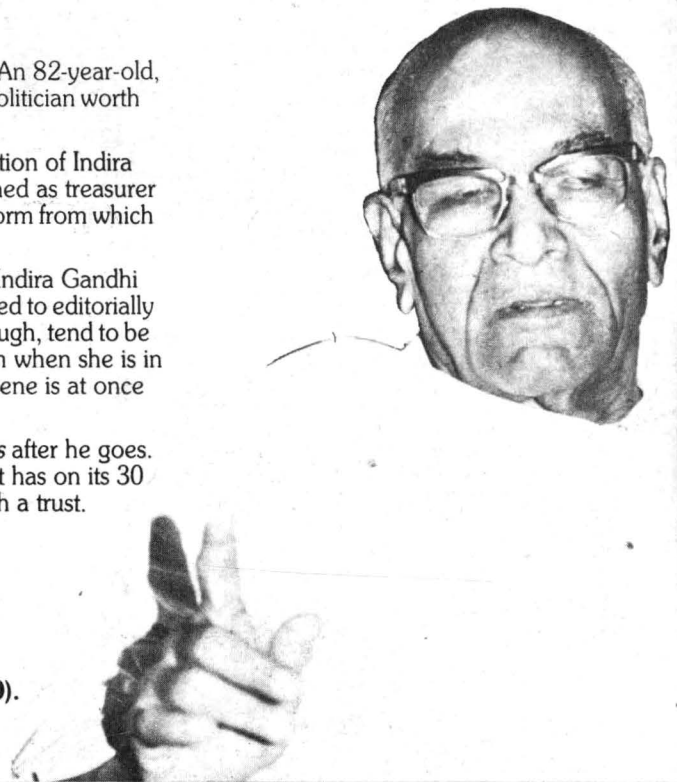
If Ram Nath Goenka did not exist, no novelist would dare invent him. An 82-year-old, acerbic, *dhoti-kurta* clad dynamo of a man, he has known every Indian politician worth knowing and fired every Indian editor worth hiring.

He helped create Kamaraj, played a behind-the-scenes role in the election of Indira Gandhi to the prime ministership, housed JP in his later years, functioned as treasurer of the Janata party in the 1977 campaign, and gave Arun Shourie a platform from which to launch his bitter attacks on Mrs Gandhi's second reign.

These days, Goenka is less interested in politics. He made peace with Indira Gandhi shortly before her assassination, supported Operation Bluestar and refused to editorially endorse any Opposition party before the 1984 elections. His friends, though, tend to be drawn from the RSS-BJP ranks. The Rajmata of Gwalior stays with him when she is in Bombay and each of Nanaji Deshmukh's statements on the national scene is at once accorded front page status by the *Indian Express's* 11 editions.

There is considerable speculation over what will happen to the *Express* after he goes. He has spoken about turning it over to a trust to consolidate the hold it has on its 30 million readers, but refuses to regard anyone as worthy of running such a trust.

Chairman, Express Newspapers (1932 -); ed: B A. MP (1971-77); Chairman PTI (1951). Managing Editor, Indian Express (1940-60). Member, Constituent Assembly (1940). Member, Madras Legislative Council (1920). Age: 82.



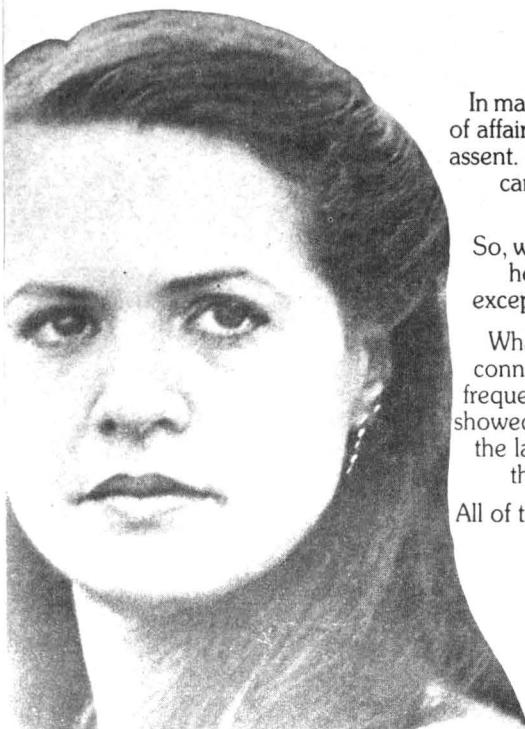
7 Sonia Gandhi The Italian Connection

In many ways, she is a model wife. Despite her closeness to her mother-in-law, she stayed out of affairs of state. Later, when her husband was asked to join politics, she refused to give her assent. When he insisted, she gave in and supported him to the hilt, even learning Hindi and campaigning in Amethi. Now, as Prime Minister's wife, she shuns the limelight, gives no interviews and attends only those official functions that she has to.

So, what makes this statuesque Italian, one of India's ten most powerful people? The answer: her husband. A quiet, resolute man who keeps his own counsel, Rajiv has always been exceptionally close to his wife, and is known to pay close attention to her views and opinions.

What use she has made of her power is difficult to say. Delhi is full of gossip about the Italian connection, about her family's connection with Snamprogetti, the Italian multinational that frequently wins government contracts. Four years ago, secret documents leaked to the press showed that the contract for the Thal Vaishet fertilizer plant was switched to Snamprogetti at the last moment. Once again, Sonia's involvement was discussed. Similarly, it is rumoured that, at least partly, R K Dhawan's ouster was her doing—the two had never got along.

All of this, however, is pure speculation, not backed by hard evidence. Sonia Gandhi clearly has the power. How she will use it, only time will tell.



**Private Citizen, ed: Language School, Cambridge.
Came to India in 1968 upon marriage.
Speaks Russian, French, Spanish, English, Hindi and Italian.
Learnt restoration of paintings at National Gallery.**

Age: 38.

8 Amitabh Bachchan From Star To Political Don

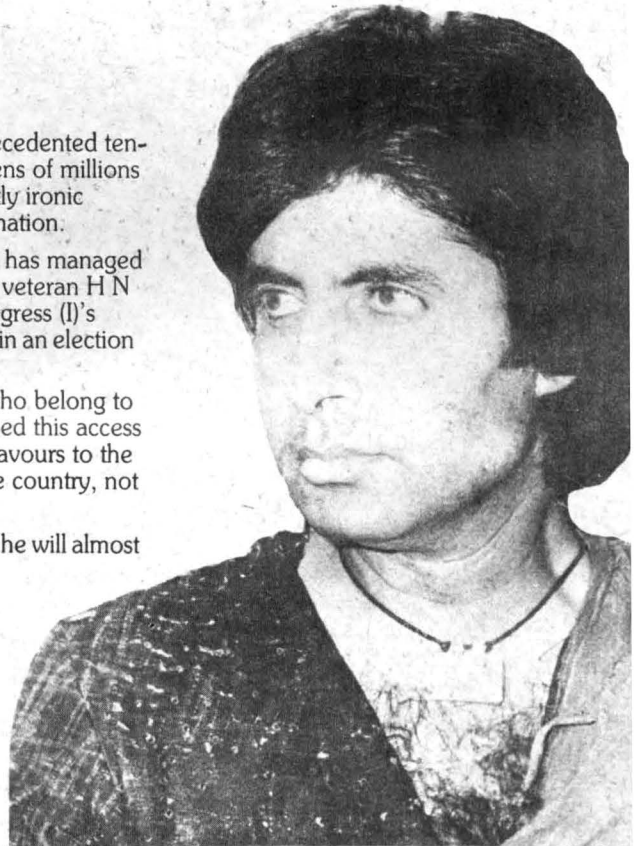
Indian cinema has never seen a star like Amitabh Bachchan. In his unprecedented ten-year reign at the top, he has acted in over 30 huge hits and influenced tens of millions of impressionable viewers. His hairstyle, his style of dress, his slow, slightly ironic dialogue delivery, and his angry young man persona have all swept the nation.

What makes Bachchan unique is that he is the only Hindi film actor who has managed to convert his on-screen charisma into real, political power. He defeated veteran H N Bahuguna in Allahabad by a landslide in December 1984 and is the Congress (I)'s second most popular campaign attraction in the North. Today, he would win an election from virtually any constituency in the Hindi belt.

A childhood friend of Rajiv Gandhi's, Bachchan is one of the few MPs who belong to the Prime Minister's inner circle, and who Rajiv actually trusts. He has used this access wisely. Unlike fellow film MP Sunil Dutt, who has promised all kinds of favours to the film industry, Bachchan takes the line that his loyalty is to the poor of the country, not to Bombay fat-cats, and refuses to use his influence.

By next year, he will be out of films and into politics full-time. At that stage, he will almost certainly emerge as a Major Political Figure.

Member of Parliament (1985 -);
ed: Sherwood College, Nainital, Kirori Mal College, Delhi.
Acted in several Hindi films including *Anand, Zanjeer, Dewaar, Sholay, Naseeb, Coolie, Namak Halal and Sharabi.*
Filmfare Awards for *Amar Akbar Antony* (1977) and *Don* (1978).
Age: 42.



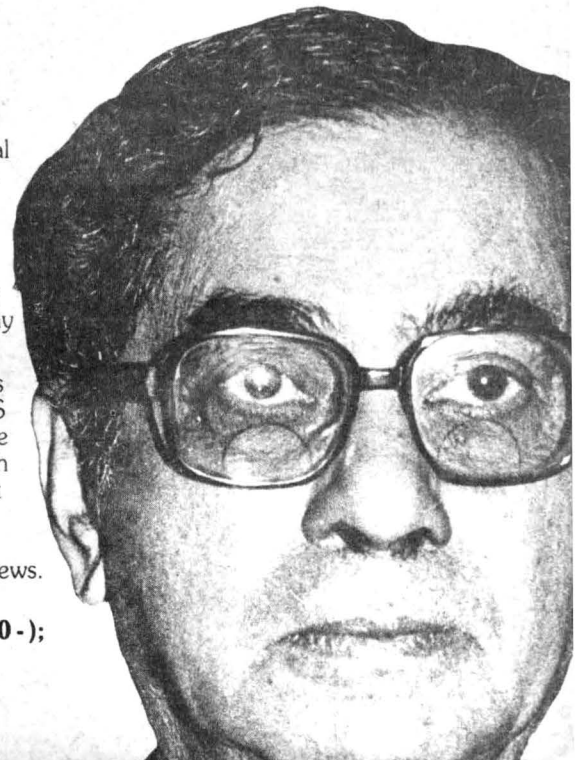
9 G Parthasarathy The Super Mandarin

Gopalaswamy Parthasarathy, Chairman of the Policy Planning Board of the External Affairs Ministry, and *de facto* foreign minister of India, is the archetypal mandarin. Unlike nearly everybody else in the corridors of power, he reports directly to the Prime Minister, is not accountable to Parliament, and owes his position entirely to merit, and not to a political base or a public school.

While Rajiv Gandhi has clear ideas about the economy and is fairly certain about the kind of internal policy he wants to follow, the complex world of diplomacy remains one where he is not entirely at ease. As a result, he relies on Parthasarathy for advice and guidance.

It is this factor that ensured a continuity in India's foreign policy. For, unlike his Prime Minister, Parthasarathy is openly pro-Soviet and has prevented the pro-US cultural biases of Rajiv's friends from influencing official policy. On subjects like relations with Sri Lanka, Parthasarathy does pretty much what he wants to, (much to the Sri Lankans' displeasure), and on others, like the non-aligned movement, it has been his influence that has determined India's stance. For instance, the government has come out on Argentina's side over the Falklands, despite our membership of the Commonwealth, largely because of Parthasarathy's own views.

Chairman, Policy Planning Committee, Foreign Ministry (1975-77; 1980 -);
ed: Presidency College, Madras; Wadham College, Oxford.
Vice - Chancellor, Jawaharlal Nehru University (1969-74). Permanent Representative to UN (1965-69); Ambassador to Indonesia, China and Pakistan (1957-65). Chief Editor, PTI (1951-53).
Age: 71.



10 Sai Baba The God With The Seiko Watches

Only in India would a jury of distinguished commentators decide that a godman was among the ten most powerful people in the country. Of course, Sai Baba is no *mere* godman. He has such unlikely followers as Sunil Gavaskar, Rishi Karanjia and Nani Palkhivala and hundreds of thousands of devotees swear that he *is* God.

The Baba claims to be a reincarnation of the Sai Baba of Shirdi, a turn of the century saint, many of whose followers are leery about the reincarnation claim. He speaks virtually no English, lectures on the oneness of existence and the ongoing cosmic drama and produces mounds of *vibhuti* (sacred ash), almost on demand.

His hold over his followers is total and such is his personal magnetism that few people who actually go and see him in person come away unimpressed. In recent years, he has had to cope with some bad *karma*, though. First, an American devotee (male) accused him of sexually fondling him and then, magician P C Sorcar managed to reproduce each and every one of his 'miracles'.

Such blasphemous behaviour may shock the Baba's believers but it does not sway them. Nor does the Baba's mysterious inability to materialise anything too large to be concealed in his palm alert them to the fact that perhaps All Is Not What It Seems!



Godman and Spiritual Leader;
ed: none.
Claims to be re-incarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi.

11 Y V Chandrachud Not Here, Not There

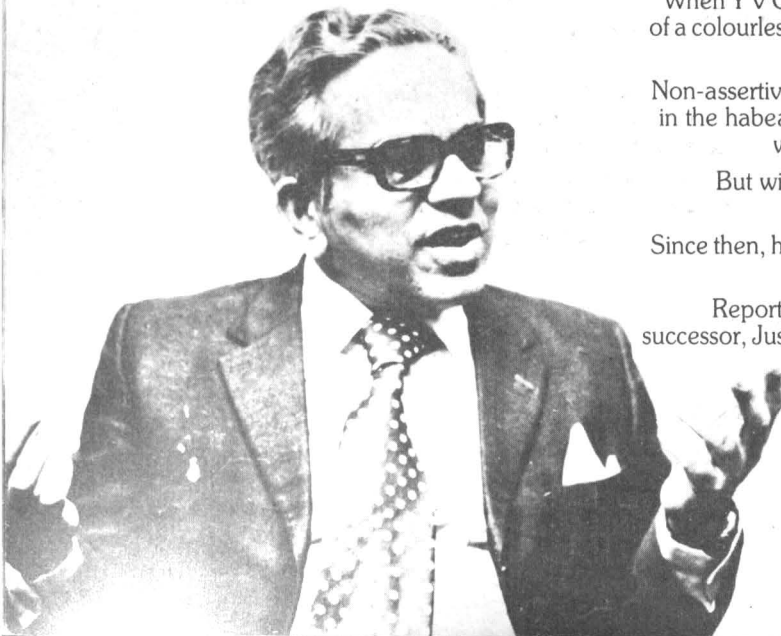
When Y V Chandrachud retires as Chief Justice next year it will be the end of a colourless career. With the longest tenure as Chief Justice, he will leave a Supreme Court divided by internal factionalism.

Non-assertive and weak, Chandrachud raised a storm with his judgement in the habeas corpus case during the Emergency. And predictably, there was an uproar when he was appointed Chief Justice in 1978.

But with a sudden change of heart he went on a public platform to apologise for his actions during the Emergency.

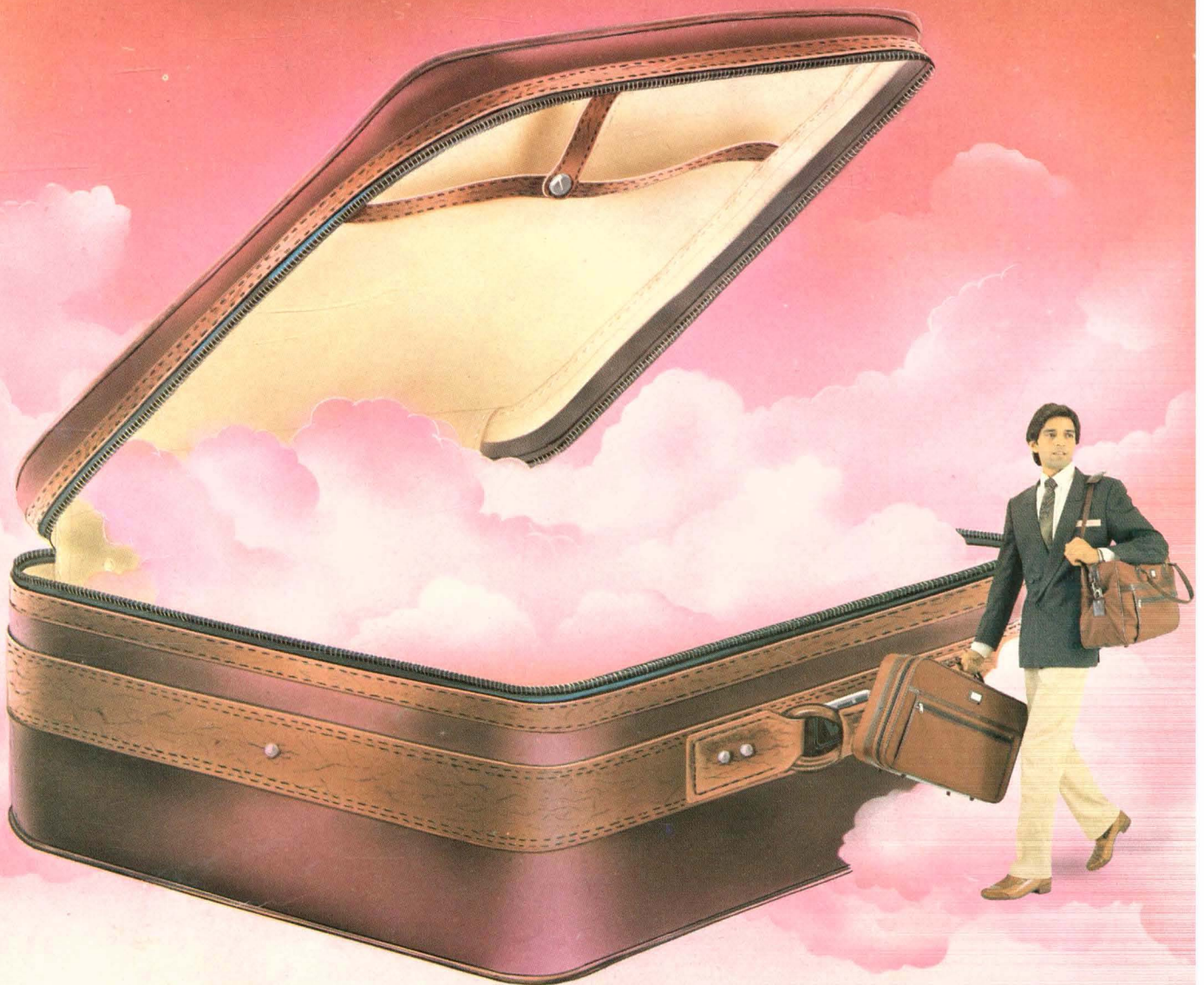
Since then, he has struck an uneasy balance between toeing the official line and taking more populist stances.

Reportedly there is considerable friction between him and his likely successor, Justice Bhagwati. With months to go for his retirement, things are likely to change.



Chief Justice of India (1978 -);
ed: BA, LLB.
Judge, Supreme Court (1972-78),
Judge, Bombay High Court (1961-72),
Member, Bombay Bar (1943-61).
Age: 64.

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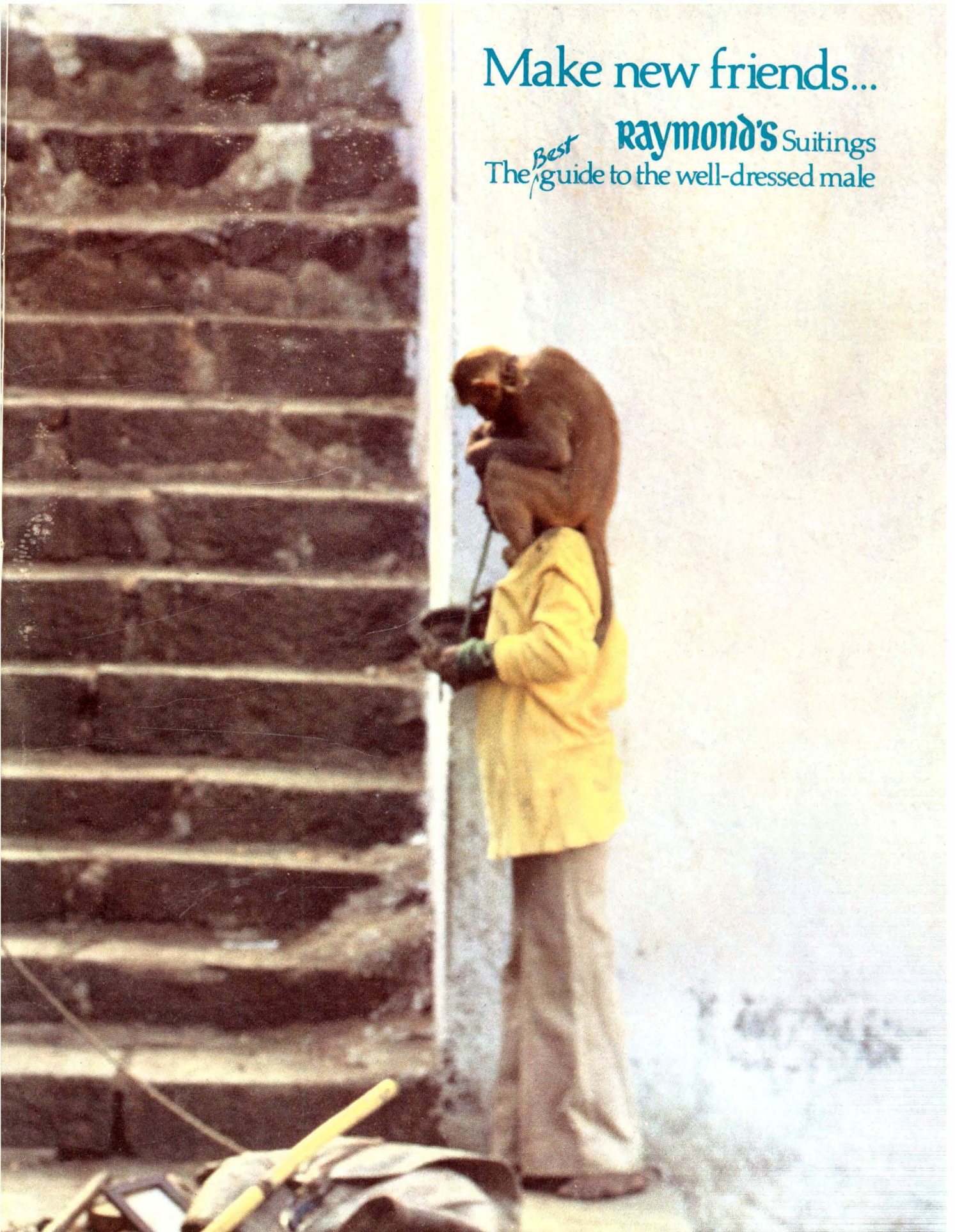
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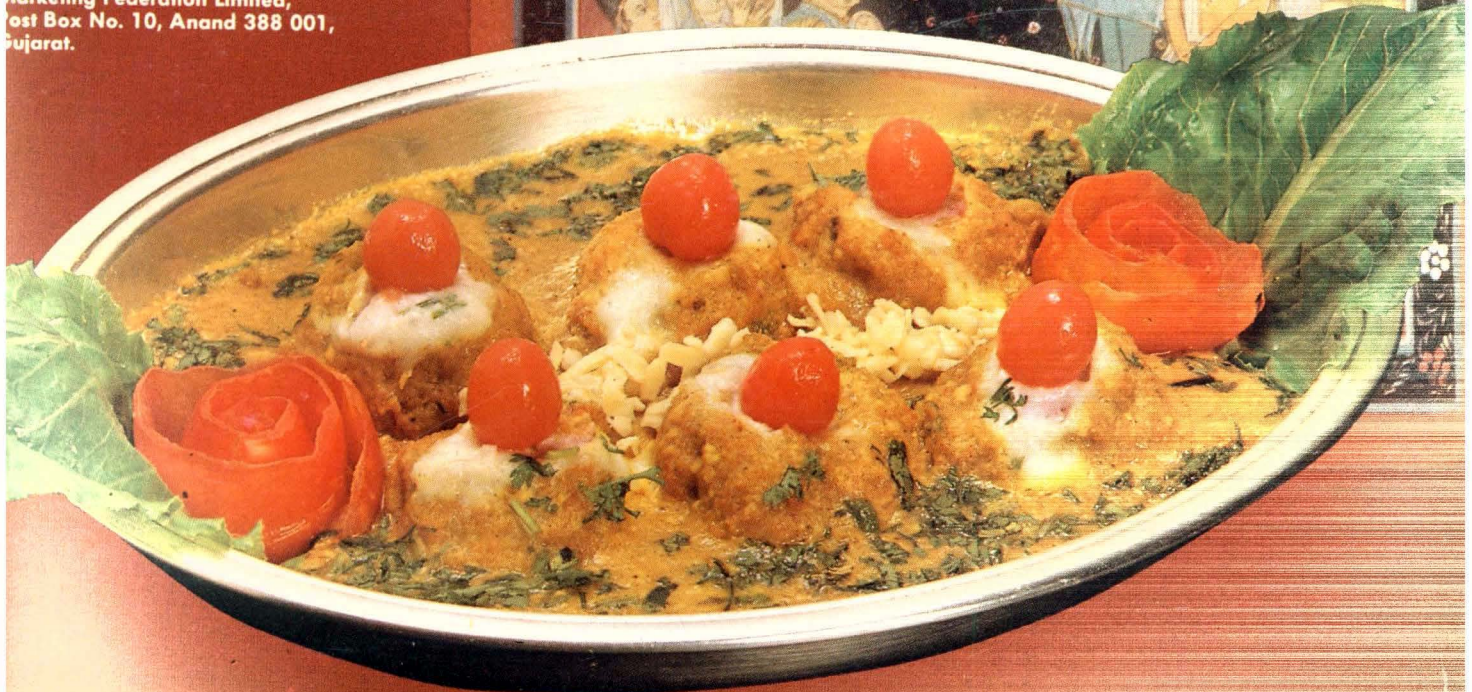


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12 Arun Nehru Minister For Power Or Without

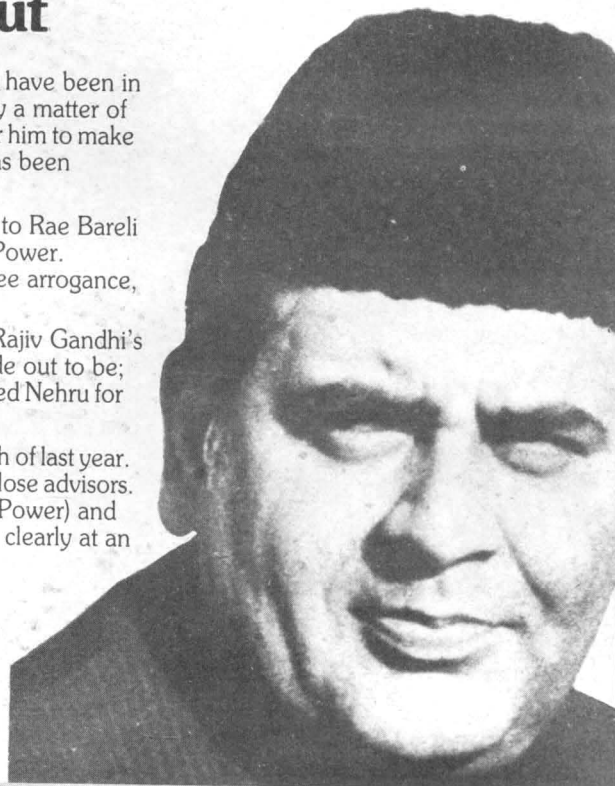
If this list had been compiled in December, Arun Nehru would probably have been in the top five. Three months later, the picture is less clear. Power is largely a matter of perceptions, and enough people still perceive Nehru as being powerful for him to make it to the top 15: but the number of those who say that his importance has been exaggerated is growing.

By now, everybody knows the Arun Nehru saga: Jenson and Nicholson to Rae Bareilly to Rajiv's gang to Congress (I) general secretary to Minister of State for Power. Everybody also knows about his overbearing manner ("Whenever you see arrogance, think of me," the wags joked) and his abrasive style.

But what nobody is sure about is this: where does Nehru now figure in Rajiv Gandhi's scheme of things? One view is that he was never as close as he was made out to be; that Rajiv needed a hatchet man to axe over 100 sitting MPs and simply used Nehru for this purpose. After the election, his usefulness was severely reduced.

Such an explanation is too simplistic: Rajiv clearly relied on Nehru for much of last year. Now, however, he seems to have no further need for extra-constitutional close advisors. Nehru has been placed in a crucial ministry (ironically, he is Minister for Power) and retains the Prime Minister's ear. But his old role as Court Chamberlain is clearly at an end.

Minister of State For Power;
ed: La Martiniere School and Christian College, Lucknow.
General Secretary, AICC (1984-85).
MP for Rae Bareilly (1980 -).
President, Jenson and Nicholson (1979 - 80).
Age: 40.



13 Jyoti Basu The Quiet Comrade

When the Left Front came to power in West Bengal in 1967, the chief minister was an ex-Congressman, Ajoy Mukherjee. Real power, however, resided in the deputy chief minister—Jyoti Basu.

Becoming Chief Minister in 1977, he has been able to keep the CPI (M) popularity running high in West Bengal for a decade. Silver-haired and bespectacled, Basu has the appearance of a retired government official. Yet recently, his government, especially his vociferous Finance Minister Ashoka Mitra, launched a tirade against the central government for refusing to allot sufficient funds to the state.

Yet, despite the communist debacle in Kerala, the red flag still looms large over the West Bengal horizon. The last municipal elections and the results of the general elections indicated an erosion in the CPI (M) popularity. But judging by the Bengalis' long record in tolerance—going through umpteen civic disasters—they won't let Basu down.

Chief Minister of West Bengal (1977 -);
ed: BA; Bar-at-law.
Deputy Chief Minister (1967-68),
Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Home (1967-70).
Member, CPM Politburo (1964 -)
Leader of Opposition (1957-71).
Age: 60





14 K K Birla

The Public Birla

Krishna Kumar Birla's brother, Basant Kumar, may run the best Birla companies (Gwalior Rayon, Century, Hindalco and Kesoram), but K K remains the best known of the late G D Birla's sons.

Some of his companies (Texmaco and Zuari Agro-Chemicals, for instance) are extremely successful, but K K's high public profile is due to his political ambitions (he has been a member of the Rajya Sabha) and his ownership of *The Hindustan Times*, the capital's bestselling daily newspaper. He is the Birla who makes statements about government policy and who hob-nobs with prime ministers.

As a press baron, K K is non-interfering but ensures that the paper faithfully parrots the government line. When editors fall out with the government, they are fired. George Verghese and Khushwant Singh both left *The Hindustan Times* after Mrs Gandhi objected to them.

Such support of the government, added to his considerable financial clout, ensures that when K K Birla talks, people do as he says.

Industrialist;
ed: B A.

Chairman, The Birla Cotton Spinning & Weaving Mills Ltd, India Steamship Co Ltd, Ratnakar Shipping Co Ltd, Jiyajirao Cotton Mills Ltd, Zuari Agro-Chemicals Ltd. Director, The Oudh Sugar Mills Ltd. Proprietor, The Hindustan Times.
Age: 67.



15 JRD Tata

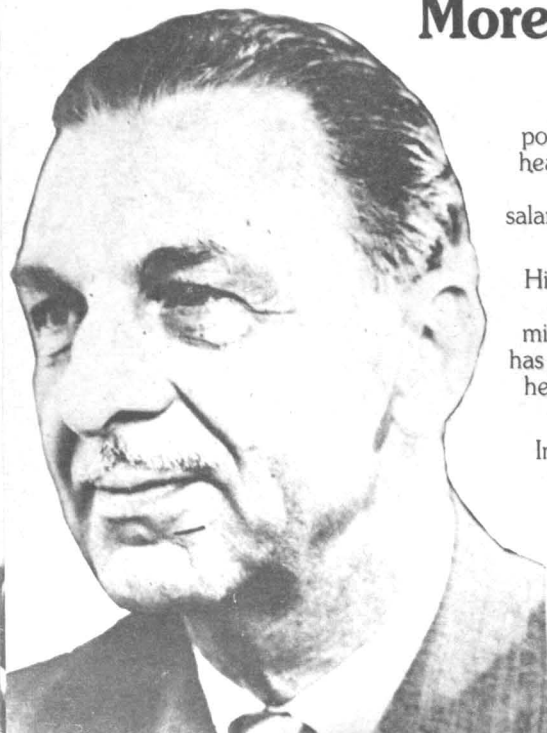
More A Trustee, Than An Industrialist

J R D Tata is the last of a nearly extinct breed of Indian industrialists: men who worked, not for the money, but for the satisfaction of building something for posterity. As the Chairman of Tata Sons and the titular head of the Tata group, he heads the largest industrial empire in the country. But J R D Tata is not a very rich man. He owns under one per cent of the shares of Tata Sons and lives on his salary. He has always seen himself as a trustee, never as an owner, and has worked only for the greater good.

His power comes from his stature. In 1947, Nehru sent for G D Birla and him and discussed the formation of the Planning Commission. Since then every prime minister (except for Morarji Desai) has deferred to him and respected his opinion. He has never had the flashy money-power of say Dhirubhai Ambani or Swraj Paul, but he has always enjoyed greater credibility, and has used it to speak for Indian industry as a whole and not just for his own companies.

In recent years, the cracks in the Tata empire have become evident. Many senior managers have asserted their own independence and the Chairman's personal relations with some of them have cooled. But JRD still remains India's leading industrialist and the authentic voice of the business community.

Industrialist;
ed: Cathedral School, Bombay.
Chairman, Tata Sons, Indian Hotels, and several other Tata companies. Former Chairman, Tata Steel (till 1985) and Air India (till 1978). First pilot to qualify in India.
Age : 80.



16 Sharad Joshi Farmers' Friend

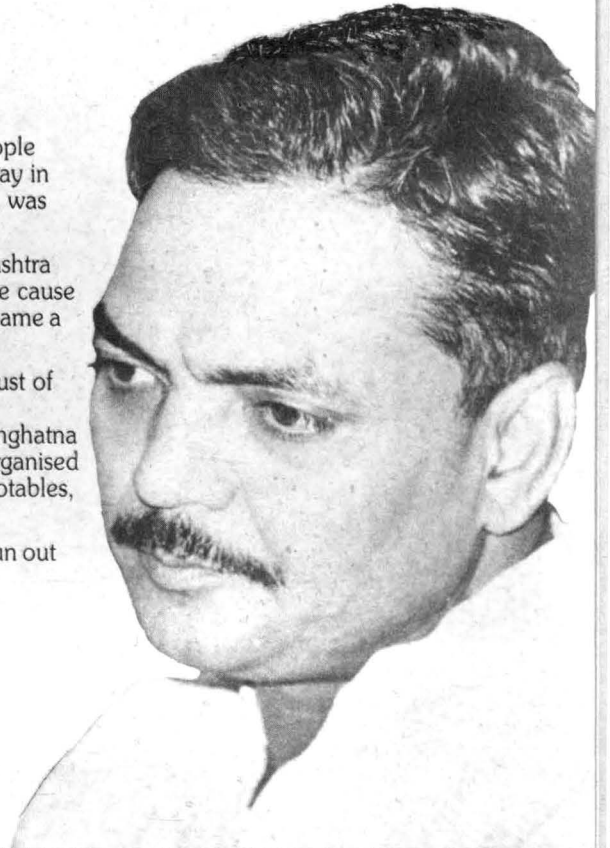
When Charan Singh gathered farmers at a rally on his birthday in 1978, people laughed. But when Sharad Joshi marched with a crowd of farmers to Bombay in 1980, people sat up and took notice. Often mistaken for a UN official, Joshi was formerly with the Universal Postal Union in Switzerland.

Returning to India in the late '70s he organised agriculturists in parts of Maharashtra and led their battle for remunerative prices. Criticised at times for fighting the cause of rich agriculturists and ignoring the landless labourers, Joshi nonetheless became a potent force in Maharashtra.

Apart from his thesis on Bharat and India, Joshi is characterised by his mistrust of politicians. Stressing the need to drive out the Congress (I), Joshi's Shetkari Sanghatna supported Opposition party candidates, in the recent elections. Sanghatna workers chased away Congress (I) politicians from their constituencies. The organised campaign succeeded in making a dent in the margins of several Congress (I) notables, such as Vasant Sathe.

Although Joshi plans to intensify his agitations for farmers, he seems to have run out of ideas for procuring his demands.

Peasant Leader;
ed: M Com, Bombay University.
Organised Shetkari Sanghatna (1980 -).
Chief, Information Division, Universal Postal Union (1968-76).
Member, Indian Postal Service (1958-67).
Age : 49.



17 Giani Zail Singh The Unknown Quantity

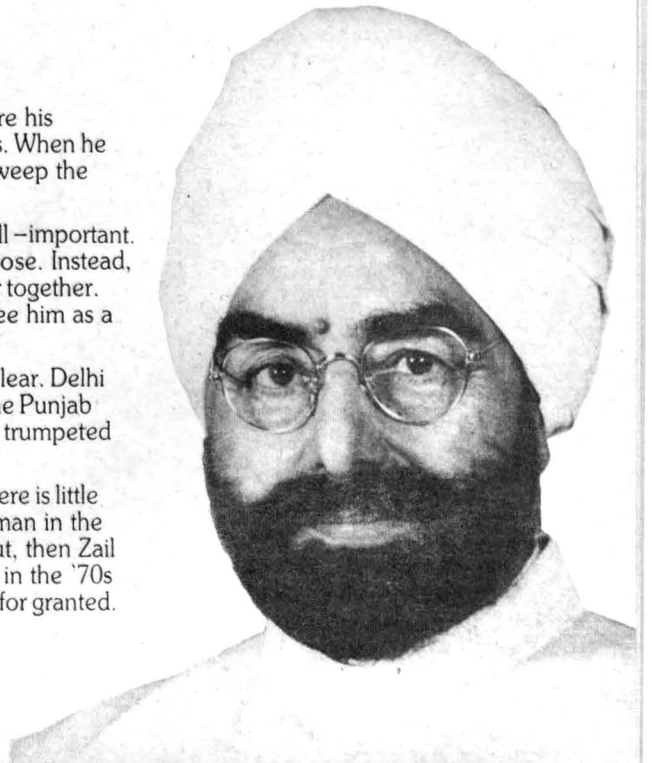
When he was Home Minister, Giani Zail Singh's twin claims to fame were his admiration for Adolf Hitler and his incessant interference in Punjab politics. When he became President, he announced that were Mrs Gandhi to ask him to sweep the floor, he would gladly do so.

Then came Operation Bluestar. Suddenly, Zail Singh's attitude became all-important. Had he spoken out against the Operation, all hell would have broken loose. Instead, he conducted himself with grace and dignity and brought both sides closer together. Since then, his stature has steadily risen and it is no longer possible to see him as a figure of fun.

The nature of Zail Singh's relationship with Rajiv Gandhi has never been clear. Delhi is rife with gossip that he is often critical of the government's handling of the Punjab situation. Certainly, the blind loyalty to Indira Gandhi that he constantly trumpeted has not entirely transferred itself to Rajiv.

The President's is a largely ceremonial job. When things are going well, there is little for him to do. But in times of crisis, he can become the most powerful man in the country (viz Sanjiva Reddy in 1979). Should such a situation come about, then Zail Singh's role could be crucial. And his record as chief minister of Punjab in the '70s suggests that he is a shrewd and astute politician who should not be taken for granted.

President of India (1982 -);
ed: No formal qualifications.
Home Minister (1980-82); Chief Minister of Punjab (1972-77);
President Punjab PCC (1966-72); Minister in PEPSU (1946-49).
Age : 68.



How We Chose Them

Imprint asked 35 perceptive observers of the Indian scene (13 journalists and 22 specialists in various fields) to select the most powerful people in India.

We gave each of them a ballot containing 50 names and asked them to grade each person on it in terms of his or her power status. Then, we computed all the results and came up with this list of the 25 who scored the highest. (A list of the 25 who didn't make it appears elsewhere in this issue.)

The panel was free to vote exactly as it liked, and to avoid any conflict, we made sure that none of the judges also appeared on the ballot. In some cases this was, admittedly, slightly unfair. For instance, R K Hegde, who acted as a judge, would almost certainly have made it onto the list of powerful people, otherwise. And while we included Dhirubhai Ambani on the ballot (though he did not make it to the top 25), we excluded R P Goenka on the grounds that one of the judges was his son, Harsh.

The judges were drawn from all over the country and there were some interesting regional variations in their responses.

For instance, Sonia Gandhi scored very highly in Delhi, but did poorly in the South. On the other hand, V P Singh did best in Bombay (perhaps because so many businessmen were among the Bombay judges). Arun Nanda, who lives in Bombay, did better in Delhi than in his own home town, and Verghese Kurien got extremely high scores in the South!

We were quite surprised by many of the responses. We had expected Rajiv Gandhi to come out tops, but had not counted on NTR coming second. Nor had we expected G Parthasarathy to score so highly (he got his highest ratings in Delhi, and, chauvinistically, in the South), and were startled when Sai Baba made it to the Top Ten.

There were some heartening signs, though. The Chief Justice of India made it to the Top Ten, while the Chief of the Army Staff only scraped in at 24. Obviously, Indian democracy is alive and well. And the high scores for NTR and MGR, despite the Northern origins of much of the panel, suggest that the South has established its political clout.

The Panel

Akbar Ahmed:

Vice-President, Rashtriya Sanjay Manch.

Rauf Ahmed:

Editor, *Movie* and *Ultra*.

Nusli Davar:

Financial analyst and writer.

Murli Deora:

MP and President, Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee.

Giri Deshingkar:

Defence expert, UN University.

Saryu Doshi:

Art historian and Editor, *Marg*.

T J S George:

Editorial Director, *Asiaweek*.

Harsh Goenka:

Managing Director, Ceat Tyres.

Pranay Gupta:

Author and journalist.

Ramakrishna Hegde:

Chief Minister, Karnataka.

B D Jatti:

Former vice-president of India.

J I S Kalra:

Columnist and writer.

M V Kamath:

Columnist.

Kersy Katrak:

Vice-Chairman, Trikaya Advertising.

Surinder Kapoor:

Managing Director, Bharat Gears.

Rajen Kilachand:

Chairman, Dodsal.

Harish Mahindra:

Chairman, Mahindra Ugine.

A K Malhotra:

Member, Oil and Natural Gas Commission.

Kadidal Manjappa:

Former chief minister, Karnataka.

Vinod Mehta:

Editor, *The Sunday Observer*.

Ashis Nandy:

Fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

Pritish Nandy:

Editor, *The Illustrated Weekly Of India*.

Ashok Row Kavi:

Chief, Bombay Bureau, *The Week*.

K F Rustamji:

Former director-general, Border Security Force.

Jehangir Sabavala:

Painter.

Viren Shah:

Chairman, Mukand Iron and Steel.

Vasant Sheth:

Chairman, Great Eastern Shipping.

Tavleen Singh:

Correspondent, *The Telegraph*.

K R Sundar Rajan:

Columnist.

Subramaniam Swamy:

Politician.

Dilip Thakore:

Editor, *Business World*.

Janardan Thakur:

Columnist and author.

G Thimmaiah:

Director, Institute for Social and Economic Change.

K P Unnikrishnan:

Congress (S) MP.

S Vaidyanathan:

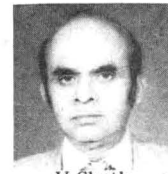
Former associate director, Intelligence Bureau.



R K Hegde



R Kilachand



V Sheth



S Swamy



P Nandy



P Gupta



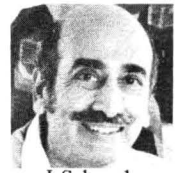
N Davar



K Katrak



M Deora



J Sabavala



R Ahmed



M Kamath

18 Datta Samant

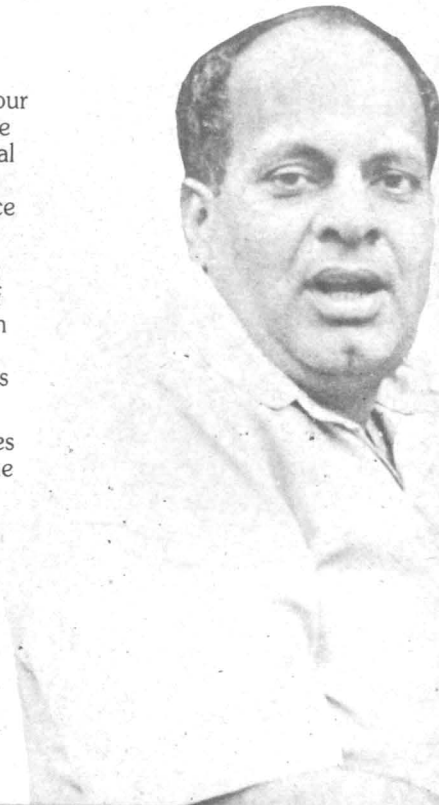
The Power To Disrupt

Datta Samant's power is due to his using the wrong methods in the right place. If he was a labour leader in Jabalpur, nobody would worry too much about him. But, as the most important trade union leader in Bombay, he is in a position to bring industry to a standstill in India's commercial capital. Even this would not be enough to guarantee him a place on this list if it wasn't for the methods he uses: violence, intimidation and total refusal to negotiate on the basis of balance sheets, facts and figures.

In recent years, Samant has been best known for two spectacular failures: the textile strike and the strike at the *Indian Express's* Bombay edition. But these are exceptions. Samant's list of successful or semi-successful agitations is a long one: Siemens, Murphy, Premier, Hindustan Lever and Godrej & Boyce to name a few. Nearly every one of these strikes has been accompanied by violence and stabbing incidents. In each case, Samant has made flat demands (i.e. Rs 400 extra for every worker), and has then refused to be swayed by reason.

Today, industrialists quake in their shoes when he enters their factories and many companies give in without even the semblance of a fight. And, despite the failure of his textile strike, the workers still love him: in 1984, he won a Lok Sabha seat from Bombay South Central, the heart of the textile district.

Labour Leader;
ed: MBBS, Bombay University.
MP, Bombay South Central (1984 -),
MLA (1967-84). Has organised many agitations including textile strike: longest
mass agitation in the world (1982-83).
Age : 52.



19 Balasaheb Deoras

All Hail The Chief

Of the men on this list, Balasaheb Deoras, the grim, forbidding head of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is probably the one with the lowest public profile. The RSS detests publicity, insists that it is merely a cultural organisation and consistently emphasises its 'quiet and peaceable nature'.

Several commissions of inquiry have not shared this view. The Narain Commission (on the Jamshedpur riots of 1979), the Vithayathil Commission (on the Tellicherry riots of 1971), the Reddy Commission (on the Ahmedabad riots of 1964) and the Madon Commission (on the Bhiwandi riots of 1970), all decided that the RSS played a role in provoking anti-Muslim violence.

Deoras, himself, does not share the RSS's old fascist zeal (his predecessor, Golwalkar, referred to Hitler's extermination of the Jews as 'a good lesson for us in Hindustan to learn and profit by') and has, in fact, initiated a soft line towards the Congress (I).

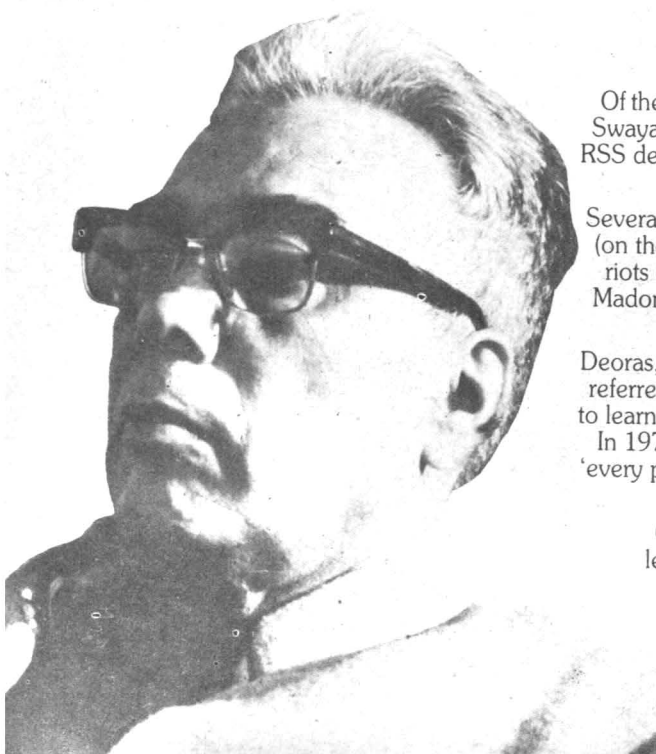
In 1977, he advised Janata to 'forgive and forget', and in 1980, he said there was 'every possibility' of the RSS co-operating with the Congress (I). Later that year, he praised Sanjay Gandhi.

Clearly, Deoras is not entirely in agreement with A B Vajpayee and the BJP leadership. And in the years ahead, the RSS may emerge as a Congress ally.

Sarsanghchalak, RSS (1973 -);
ed: B A, LLB.

General Secretary, RSS (1968-73),
Joint General Secretary (1947-68).

Arrested in 1948 when RSS was banned.
Age : 67.



The Second 25

The people our panel decided to exclude from the list.

Dhirubhai Ambani

Only a year ago, this flamboyant textile magnate would probably have made it to the top ten of our list. But since the fall of R K Dhawan and Pranab Mukherjee, Ambani's influence has waned.



H K L Bhagat

In the early days of the Lok Sabha session, Bhagat never left Rajiv's side and bragged about his influence. But now it all seems to be ending quite sadly for him.

Maulana Abdul Bukhari

The Shahi Imam of Jamma Masjid helped turn India's Muslims against Mrs Gandhi in 1977, but since then his political somersaults have ensured that he loses his credibility.



S B Chavan

By all accounts, the home minister should make it to a list of the 25 most powerful people. The fact that Chavan does not, says something about the manner in which he is perceived.

Manmohan Desai

He may be India's most consistently successful film-maker, but Desai lacks the power to sway the masses. Were he to break away from his banal formula, his films would flop.



Girilal Jain

He may be Editor of *The Times Of India*, India's most respected daily newspaper, but Jain is seen as lacking in real power to influence either his readers or the powers that be.

Pupul Jayakar

Without a doubt, Mrs Jayakar is the most powerful person on the cultural circuit. But just how important is the cultural circuit? Not very, it would seem.



L K Jha

One of India's most distinguished civil servants, Jha is an important member of the PM's think-tank, but he lacks the power to see that his recommendations are implemented.

R K Karanjia

Ten years ago, R K Karanjia would almost certainly have made it to the list. But the magazine boom has changed things and he is now, not very powerful.



Verghese Kurien

The controversy over Operation Flood continues, but Dr Kurien's power and influence have suffered only marginally. Nevertheless, he has slipped enough to not make it to our list.

Haji Mastaan

At one stage, he was the Godfather, controlling politicians and hoodlums alike. Now, Mastaan is washed up. His recent political career was also still-born and he has retired from politics.



Swraj Paul

Beant and Satwant saw to it that this expatriate millionaire's status at Safdarjang Road plummeted. He's not out yet, but the old rapport has gone.

Gulshan Rai

He is still India's most powerful film producer and distributor but clearly, the film industry doesn't seem to count for much: Rai came very low down on our list of 50.



Cho Ramaswamy

He has a fanatical following in the South and Cho can always be relied on for a laugh, but this is not enough for him to be regarded as truly powerful.

Ramoji Rao

Despite the fact that his *Eenadu* is read only in Andhra, Rao made it quite near the top of our list of the second 25. But then, if NTR made it to number two on the main list, this is understandable.



Charan Singh

It is hard to believe that just six years ago, this man was Prime Minister of India and that only four months ago, he was confident of defeating Rajiv Gandhi!

Jathedar Kirpal Singh

What influence the Jathedar of the Akal Takht has is directly attributable to the lack of political leadership within the Sikh community. With the Akalis out of jail, his influence will recede.



N Subramaniam

The Chairman of the Board of Direct Taxes has the authority to have anybody raided but despite this our jury gave Subramaniam an extremely low rating.

Vijay Tendulkar

He is probably India's best playwright and certainly its most influential. But Tendulkar's base is Maharashtra and he means relatively little in the rest of India.



Mark Tully

Interestingly, he got a higher rating than either Girilal Jain or R K Karanjia though he didn't make it to the top 25. This is a tribute to the BBC's credibility.

ALSO RAN:

C R Irani: Managing Director, *The Statesman*. • **R N Kao:** Former chief, RAW. • **M A M Ramaswamy:** Industrialist. **J Krishnamurthy:** Philosopher. • **Prafulla Mahanta and Bhriqu Phukan:** AASU leaders.

20 A B Vajpayee

Don't Start The Revival Without Me!

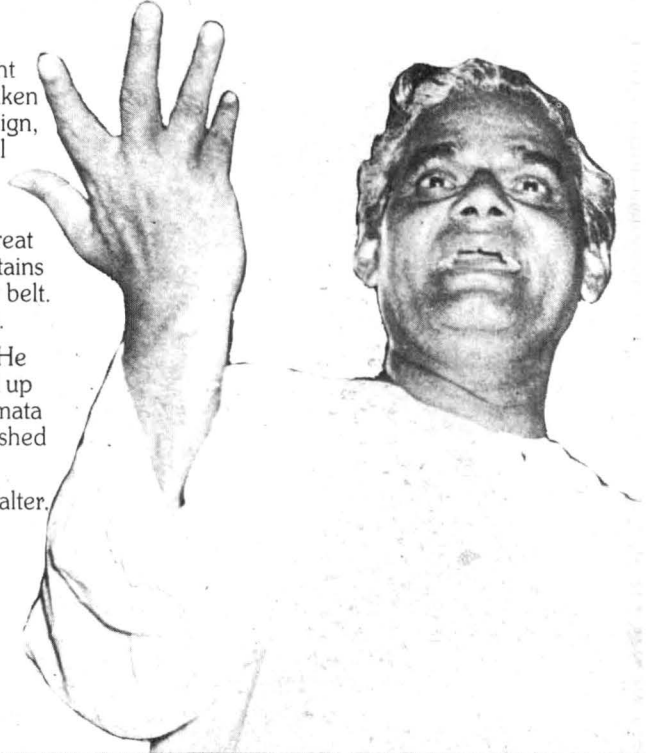
For nearly eight years now, Atal Behari Vajpayee has been India's most conspicuous Prime Minister-In-Waiting. Ever since the Janata government began to crack, his followers began their chant: "If only Vajpayee had taken over and left these old men behind!" Then, during Mrs Gandhi's second reign, the BJP adopted as slogan: "*Pradhan Mantri, Agli Baari; Atal Behari, Atal Behari.*"

Certainly, Vajpayee has many of the qualifications required for prime ministership. He is entirely honest, was an excellent foreign minister, is a great orator and always puts statesmanship before expediency. Moreover, he retains a strong following among the traders and small shop-keepers of the cow belt. His problem has been that his public image is still that of a Hindu leader.

Ironically, when there was a Hindu revival in 1984, he played it all wrong. He shunned expediency and refused to exploit anti-Sikh sentiment and ended up losing the Hindu vote to Rajiv Gandhi. And then, he hid behind the Rajmata of Gwalior's charisma and shifted constituencies to Gwalior only to be thrashed by the Maharajah.

Still, Vajpayee remains the Opposition's best bet. Should Rajiv begin to falter, he could well see his stature rise dramatically.

President, Bharatiya Janata Party (1980 -);
ed: M A (Literature).
Minister for External Affairs (1977-79),
MP (1967-84), President, Jana Sangh (1968-72),
Founder Member, Jana Sangh (1951-77).
Age : 58.



21 Manmohan Singh

Brilliance, Influence, And Integrity

Manmohan Singh is among India's most distinguished economists. He also belongs to that select band of international experts whose services are constantly in demand all over the world. If he wished, he could easily earn several hundred thousand dollars a year working for an international organisation or a multinational corporation.

Singh has, however, chosen to remain in India. He returned to lecture at Punjab University in 1957 after getting a starred First at Cambridge and has spent only three years (1966-69) abroad at UNCTAD, in New York.

His governmental career has taken him through every economic position of consequence, starting with economic advisor in 1971 and including the governorship of the Reserve Bank of India. In addition to his reputation for academic brilliance, his honesty and integrity are also legendary. During the Swraj Paul affair, he threatened to resign if the correct procedures, relating to the transfer of funds, were not followed.

He is sometimes seen as a 'Leftist' but this is too simplistic. A professional economist, he is too analytically rigorous to be swayed by any considerations other than those of economic equilibrium.

Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission (1985 -);
ed: Universities of Punjab, Cambridge and Oxford.
Governor, Reserve Bank of India (1982-85). Secretary,
Department of Economic Affairs (1976-80).
Member Secretary, Planning Commission (1980-82).
Chief Economic Advisor to Government (1972-76).
Professor, Delhi University (1969-71).
Age : 52.



22 P V Narasimha Rao Inscrutably Influential

For a man who came out of nowhere to occupy an important Cabinet portfolio in 1980, P V Narasimha Rao has played his cards exceedingly well. When Mrs Gandhi appointed him foreign minister in 1980, Rao's chief claim to fame was that he had been chief minister of Andhra Pradesh for a brief period from 1971-73. His tenure as Congress general secretary from 1974-77 had also been undistinguished.

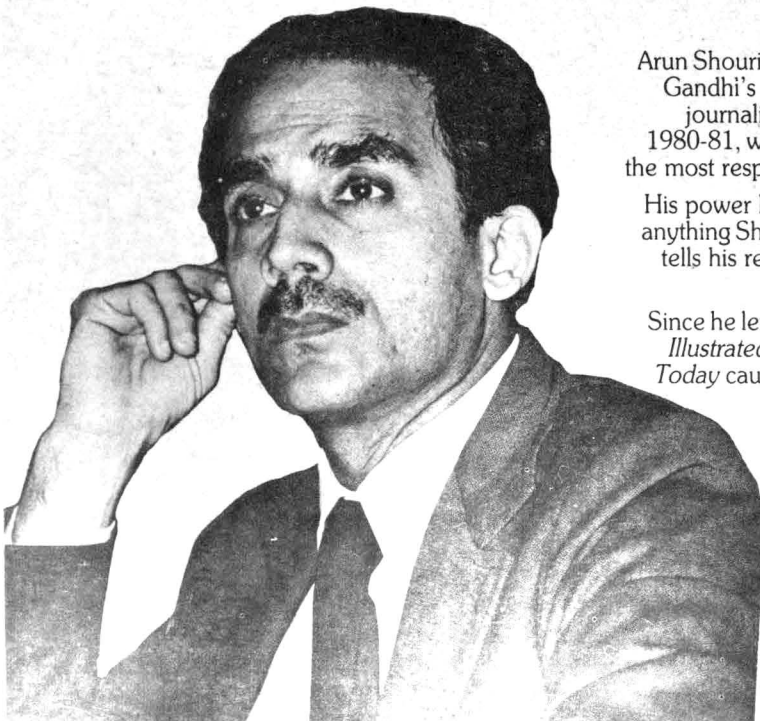
Since 1980, however, he has emerged as a major figure in his own right. He made a good foreign minister and won Rajiv Gandhi's confidence. As Defence Minister, he occupies a crucially important portfolio, given the high level of defence spending and Rajiv's own interest in the subject.

At present, Delhi is full of stories to the effect that he has made friends with G Parthasarathy and that the two of them have become a major power centre.

Defence Minister (1985 -);
ed: B Sc, LLB, Sahitya Ratna.
Home Minister (1984),
Foreign Minister (1980-84),
MP since 1977.
Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh (1971-73).
Andhra Cabinet (1962-73). MLA (1957-77).
Age : 63.



23 Arun Shourie The Journalist As Guru



Arun Shourie was not India's first investigative journalist. Nor was he Indira Gandhi's most vociferous opponent. He was, however, the first Indian journalist to be admired, read, trusted and *respected*. At his peak, in 1980-81, when he was in the process of toppling Antulay, he was perhaps the most respected man in India, at least among the urban middle classes.

His power has its roots in the respect he commands. People will believe anything Shourie tells them. And his non-investigative articles, in which he tells his readers what the country should do next, are perhaps the only widely read 'think pieces' in the country.

Since he left the *Indian Express* in 1982, he has used *India Today* and *The Illustrated Weekly* as twin platforms. His Nellie massacre story in *India Today* caused an international sensation and it is said that each time he writes for the *Weekly*, circulation shoots up by 20,000.

Writer;
ed: St Stephen's College, University of Syracuse.
Tata Administrative Services (1966-67), World Bank
(1967-72), Senior Fellow, ICSSR (1972).
Executive Editor, Indian Express Group (1979-82).
Winner of Magsaysay Award (1982).
Age: 43.

24 General A S Vaidya Gunning To Glory

What does General Vaidya do in his spare time?

He shoots, not people, but pictures, tends his garden and collects stamps. Unlikely pastimes for the Chief of Army Staff? Perhaps, but that is how the most decorated Indian soldier likes to relax.

Vaidya's appointment as Army Commander in 1983 caused a minor upset. General S K Sinha, who had been superseded by Vaidya, resigned in protest and went on to contest a Lok Sabha seat. And no more has been heard on the matter.

Significantly, Vaidya has been silent on the raging controversy over the use of the army for civilian purposes. With his past experience of fighting Naga rebels in the North-East, he is likely to have decided views on the subject.

While he is content with keeping a low profile at the moment, there is potential for power. If the trend of using the army for civilian purposes continues, the army chief will probably be the most powerful Indian in a few years.

Chief of the Army Staff (1983 -);
ed: Intermediate, Bombay University.
GOC-in-C, Eastern Command (1981-83).
Most decorated soldier since Independence.
Decorations include: MVC (1965), AVSM (1970),
MVC (1971), PVSM (1983).
Age: 58.



25 Arun Nanda Advertising Whizkid

Had it not been for Rediffusion's 'Whenever you see colour think of us' campaign for Jenson and Nicholson, Arun Nanda would probably never have featured in a list of powerful Indians. For when the Congress (I) needed an ad agency, ex-Jenson and Nicholson executive, Arun Nehru, thought naturally, of Arun Nanda.

"You have to believe in the product you're selling," says Nanda seriously. Talk about the enormously expensive Congress (I) campaign did not go too well with the clean government. And Nanda was dispatched to dispel the rumours. "We spent *only* six crores," the young, unassuming advertising whizkid asserts.

One of the topmost ad agencies in the country, Rediffusion has a small and select clientele. The Congress (I) campaign has boosted its image considerably. According to Nanda, post-election surveys indicated that the voters were considerably influenced by the advertisements—all full page messages of growing instability and power hungry Opposition parties.

Unfortunately, Nanda was not able to repeat his success in the Assembly elections. One of the reasons being the Opposition using his line of providing a new leadership for their own purposes. The setback notwithstanding, the third in the triumvirate of Aruns is likely to occupy prime space for some time.

Managing Director, Rediffusion (1973 -);
ed: Loyola College, Madras, IIM, Ahmedabad.
Branch Manager, MCM (1972).
Executive, Hindustan Thompson (1966-72).
Age: 41.



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H K L BHAGAT: RISE AND FALL?

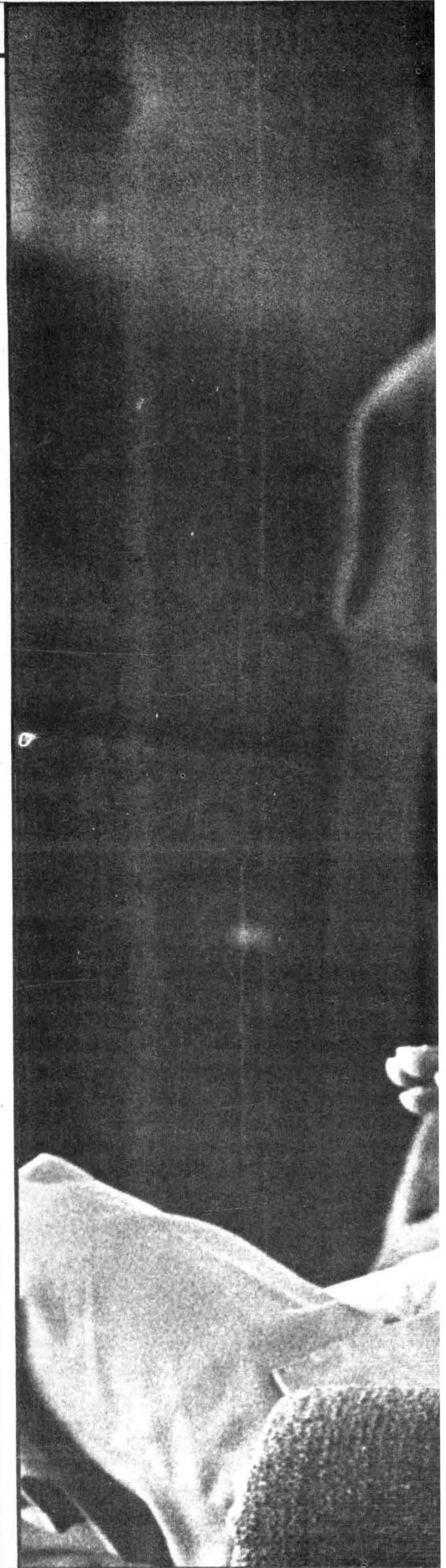
He rose from obscurity to the Cabinet. He laughed at allegations of complicity in the Delhi riots and retained his seat by three lakh votes. But, asks **RAJNI BAKSHI** is it all over for Bhagat?

HE DOES NOT have the look of a winner. But today, H K L Bhagat is a Cabinet minister, and virtually a household name. Bhagat 'arrived' on the public scene when Mrs Indira Gandhi made him minister of state for information and broadcasting in 1983. Suddenly he was given extensive coverage in the press and became a regular on Doordarshan news. Apart from the exposure all ministers of information and broadcasting receive, Bhagat seemed to attract more attention. The large dark glasses he has always worn, gave him a disreputable look. His slow, mumbling manner of speaking left many wondering how he got so far.

Long ago, when they were all students together in Lahore, Bhagat's contemporaries did not expect him to go very far. Over the next four decades, Har Krishan Lal patiently hacked away and rose through various positions in the Congress (I) to his first ministerial post in 1975. What seemed to others like sycophancy was what Bhagat proudly proclaimed to be his unflinching loyalty. Therefore, when 'Madam' Gandhi was out of power he was among those who stayed by her side, and today he claims to have fought in the 'movement' to restore her to power.

It was logical then, that five years after Mrs Gandhi's comeback, Bhagat should be at the forefront of the Congress (I) men who considered it their right to seek revenge for her murder. The investigation of the Delhi riots carried out by the People's Union for Civil Liberties and the People's Union for Democratic Rights, claimed that Bhagat had arranged for the release of miscreants arrested by the police in connection with the looting and killing. But this did not seem to affect Bhagat's position within the Congress (I). While two other Congress (I) MPs implicated in the anti-Sikh violence were denied Lok Sabha tickets, Bhagat was left undisturbed.

Rajni Bakshi, a frequent Imprint contributor, is on the Central Council of the PUCL.





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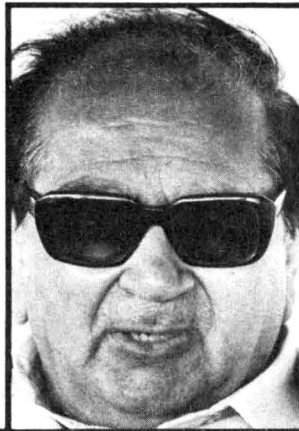
But as his campaign from the East Delhi constituency got under way he was confronted by a unique form of opposition. A front of several voluntary organisations known as the Jan Ekta Abhiyan (JEA) launched a campaign against Bhagat for his alleged involvement in the post-assassination violence. Since it was already a popular belief that Bhagat and his men were responsible for much of the carnage in the trans-Jamuna area, this campaign presented a formidable challenge.

Yet, Bhagat laughed all the way to Parliament, where he now has the distinction of being among those MPs who won with phenomenal margins: he won by over three lakh votes. And rumour has it that the votes in the last few ballot boxes were not counted in case Bhagat's victory margin exceeded the Prime Minister's.

Subsequently, however, it has begun to seem as though Bhagat's glory may be short-lived. By mid-February the capital was rife with rumours that Deepak Bhagat, H K L's son, had been implicated in the spy scandal and his factory had been raided. At one stage it was even said that Bhagat was under house arrest. To counter these rumours, Bhagat was shown on television, performing routine formal duties and he denied the allegation when contacted by reporters. But the doubts persist and the damage has been done.

Just where does H K L Bhagat stand in the government which promises to be 'clean'? What is the nature of his stronghold and how did he come to be implicated in the Delhi riots? Is he one of the rising or falling stars of the Congress (I)? Has he survived the challenge of the election only to be shot down in the dawn of his glory as a Cabinet minister?

BHAGAT WAS BORN 62 years ago, in Montgomery, which is now in Pakistan. Blinded in one eye at an early age, he has worn dark glasses for as long as his associates can remember. A contemporary of Inder Gujral and Mazhar Ali (father of Tariq Ali), Bhagat was an active participant in the student politics of pre-Partition Lahore. In those days, he was regarded



ALTHOUGH
implicated in the post-
assassination violence
Bhagat won a Lok
Sabha seat with a
phenomenal margin.
What has he done to
earn such success?

as a Leftist and was a founding member of the Punjab Students Federation which, in the late '30s, was dominated by the communists. But in 1941 Bhagat switched over to the Congress and, after Independence, went to work at building a strong future in politics.

While he possesses a law degree, Bhagat has never been known for his legal skills. However, he takes pride in the fact that he was one of the five advocates who represented Mrs Gandhi in the Supreme Court when she filed an appeal to the Allahabad High Court judgement. (The Allahabad High Court, in 1975 declared Mrs Gandhi's election from Rae Bareilly in 1971 invalid.) But Bhagat's forte has always been electoral politics, to which he has devoted most of his energy. By 1951, he was an MLA in the Delhi Assembly. By the mid-'50s he was also comfortably entrenched in the coterie that collected around the then all-powerful Mridula Sarabhai.

Long after Mridula Sarabhai fell out of favour with Nehru and ceased to be a centre of power, Bhagat and several others like him progressed within the Congress party. When the party split in 1969, he was one of its general secre-

taries. He stuck by Mrs Gandhi and chose the 'new' Congress and was awarded a Lok Sabha ticket from East Delhi in 1971.

In the landslide victory that ushered in the 'Indira era', Bhagat won a Parliamentary seat. Five years later, in 1975, he was made minister of state for works and housing. As a zealous worker and loyal follower of Mrs Gandhi, over the next decade, Bhagat was swept in and out of power along with his leader. For, as he himself now likes to say: "Minus Rajiv and Mrs Gandhi I would not even get 2,000 votes." Thus, Bhagat lost his East Delhi seat to Kishore Lal of the Janata in 1977 by a margin of about 1,32,000 and regained it in 1980 with a margin of about 85,000 votes.

YET, there was nothing then to presage the martyrdom of 'Madam' and the victory margin of over three lakh votes five years later.

What did Bhagat do to earn such success? What is the source of his power?

Bhagat has spent most of his political career in nurturing Delhi as a power base of sorts. From 1972 onwards he virtually ruled the local Congress (I) machinery as president of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee (DPCC). Bhagat has been known to claim credit for the groundwork which led to the Congress (I) victory in the Delhi municipal elections in 1983 and provided the 'turnaround' in the Congress (I) electoral fortunes after the Andhra-Karnataka debacles.

Over the ten years that he controlled the DPCC, Bhagat became a major distributor of Congress (I) patronage to the common man of Delhi. As his staffers proudly proclaim, people from all walks of life 'need' Bhagat's help. But those who are most needy and often pitifully dependant on such help have been the primary focus of Bhagat's political strategy. For such people constitute the bulk of the East Delhi constituency.

Long before Trilokpuri became associated with mass murder, it was a Bhagat stronghold. Like dozens of such colonies, Trilokpuri sprang up

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during the Emergency as a result of the large scale demolition of slums within Delhi. Known as 'resettlement colonies', these clusters of makeshift houses are just 'transplanted slums', says Inder Mohan, a social worker who has been active in that area for several years.

In 1977 these displaced people hated the Congress (I) for the demolition of their homes within the city and for the various excesses of the Emergency. But Kishore Lal, the Janata MP from 1977 to 1980, proved even more unsatisfactory, and he was replaced by Bhagat in 1980.

Learning from the mistakes of the past, Bhagat did not allow the next five years to be wasted. He saw to it that the most basic amenities and services, provided to the residents by the government, appeared as the direct favours of the Congress (I). The land on which thousands have built huts or semi-permanent structures, has been successfully projected as the biggest boon granted them by the Congress (I).

Since the residents do not have any legal right of occupation, the fear of eviction has been the cause of a deep insecurity from the outset. Confronted by the demolition squads of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), residents of the resettlement colonies have often sought the assistance of 'Bhagat-ji'. In many cases, victims of the demolition squads directly approached Mrs Gandhi, who almost always responded sympathetically. Therefore, regardless of political affiliation or convictions, residents of these colonies commonly express eternal gratitude to 'Indiraji' for the land on which they have built their homes. In the small wooden sheds that serve as shops in the bylanes of these colonies, Mrs Gandhi's pictures now hang beside those of Hindu deities.

Over the last five years, Congress (I) workers in the area have created the impression that by making the residents of some of these colonies 'licensees' it has given them ownership of the land they occupy. In fact, says Inder Mohan, who is also an office-bearer of the PUCL, a licensee is neither an owner nor a tenant, with virtually no protection against eviction.



BHAGAT DID NOT repeat the mistakes of the Emergency. By granting licences to some of the residents he has earned himself the reputation of a saviour.

But perceptions and impressions, not legalities, matter in this constituency.

And how are perceptions formed in this dusty, crowded world of narrow lanes and open, overflowing drains where no services and facilities can be taken for granted? Perceptions are largely influenced by the local *pradhan*.

Bashiruddin is one such *pradhan* who controls a small pocket of Nandnagri. He lives in two adjoining one-room tenements. A Congress (I) banner decorates the entrance to his home. In the lane outside flies the tricolour with a hand imprinted in the centre. Recruited into the Congress (I) by Bhagat, Bashiruddin now stays in regular touch with his mentor and this, in turn, enables Bhagat to play the role of a saviour of sorts. Bashiruddin is essentially a conduit for almost all benefits rightfully due to the people from the government, whether it is a loan under the mass loan scheme, or electricity or water connections. Even the DDA officials in the area deal directly with him, though he occupies no elected or appointed post. Those who do not enjoy Bashiruddin's protection and support usually cannot evade eviction or even hope to get an individual elec-

tricity connection.

Unlike many of Bhagat's other functionaries, Bashiruddin does not have the image of a *goonda*. As one of his neighbours and regular clients says, "At least he doesn't take money for the work he does, like the others." Not all *pradhans* who work under Bhagat's umbrella, are in the social worker mould. Bhagat's functionaries are often of the petty criminal and slum lord variety.

Virendra Sharma, alias Negi, belongs to the second category. According to workers of the Jan Ekta Abhiyan, Negi wields a sizeable amount of muscle power and is a force to reckon with in the Krishna Nagar area. Negi was recently arrested for assaulting a Sikh police officer, whom Negi accused of being an extremist and a Khalistani. But Negi was soon released and it is not clear whether legal action against him will be pursued.

The various *pradhans* provide their constituents with access to Bhagat and vice versa. They even provide transport and guidance to a large number of agitated people who wish to take their grievances and demands to Bhagat.

To understand how Bhagat came to be linked with the riots, one has to look at the scruffy young faces in the crowd that collects outside Bhagat's house every morning. These youths, who have a somewhat belligerent style, bear an unnerving similarity to those who were described as the perpetrators of the most gruesome crimes against innocents during the Delhi riots.

These were the miscreants who Bhagat allegedly had released from the Shadhra Thana during the riots. In the bylanes where some of the brutal crimes were committed, fear and complicity combine to produce a peculiar silence. Most people are now only willing to identify the culprits as an amorphous mob that came from 'outside'. Bashiruddin, for example, expressed dismay at what happened and then passed on the buck to the 'outsiders'. He was willing to acknowledge that some fellow party workers 'may have' participated in the violence. But, he added hastily, there was a great deal of natural anger against the Sikhs.

Some residents cautiously acknowl-

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edge the involvement of local Congress (I) *goondas*. But these cautious admissions are still circumscribed by the pressure of needs. Says one Hindu woman of Nandnagri: "Everyone believes that Bhagat and the police are responsible (for the violence) but the political awareness is very low here and it's all a matter of benefits — who can get us more."

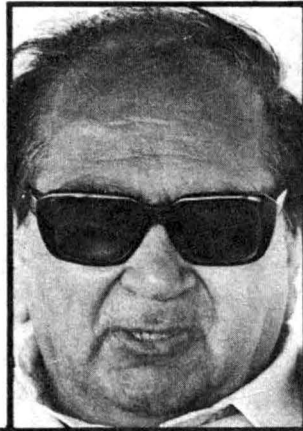
Ironically, Bhagat's popularity was probably boosted by allegations that he supported the crimes against Sikhs and helped the murderers. After all, these mass murderers also provided essential services and benefits in that constituency. And, in exchange for an unspecified amount of money and benefits from Bhagat, a man like Bashiruddin ensures that his *mohallah* supports the Congress (I).

"The *pradhans* have been set up by the Congress (I)," says Inder Mohan. "And they have now learnt how communalisation of politics can be used to further strengthen their hold."

Vimla Sethi, a lecturer in Politics at Delhi University who took part in some of the processions, believes that the voting was also influenced by the people's instinct for self-preservation. All those involved in the actual violence had a vested interest in ensuring that Bhagat returned to power and prevented any legal action being taken against them. Victims of the violence had to live with the implications of a popular Congress (I) slogan in that area: "*Jeetenge to peetenge, harenge to marenge*." "There was a genuine fear that if the Congress (I) lost there would be more trouble," says Sethi.

Moreover, even Sikhs shared the feeling that only the Congress (I) could procure benefits for them. Many of them are staunch supporters of the Congress (I), and just as grateful to Mrs Gandhi as their neighbours, for the land they occupy.

Besides, only the Congress had an extensive organisation in that area — lumpen, criminal or otherwise. Two of Bhagat's principal opponents did not offer much of a fight. Bhram Prakash, an old Jat leader and former Congressman who contested as an independent, was perceived to have been virtually out of active politics for several years.



IN HIS MORNING
'darbar' favour-seekers
come to woo him,
others to thank him.
His constituents refuse
to see him as a
perpetrator of
violence.

Kishore Lal, the Janata candidate, unsuccessfully battled the unpopularity he earned during his term as MP from this constituency.

Asked to explain the election result, Kishore Lal alleged that Bhagat won by large-scale rigging. "People swear they voted for us but there are only a handful of votes (in those booths). If Hindu communalism was a factor then how did he get votes from Muslims and Sikhs? There was no support for Bhagat from traditional Congressmen. He held no public meetings and there were not more than 200 people at his street corner meetings. All old Congressmen were supporting us. He had no organisation." But Lal has no documentary evidence to prove that there was rigging and he has not filed any formal complaint with the Election Commission.

The claim that he had no organisation is irrelevant to Bhagat. He interprets his victory in grander, historical terms.

"In my view, election victories are never a personal victory. People vote for the programmes, policies and leadership of a party. These elections were a warm, though tearful, tribute to Mrs

Gandhi and a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. I believe this is the reason for my victory and there is no sycophancy in this. . ."

The Bhagat camp's attitude towards the PUCL and PUDR is marked by contempt and anger. The civil liberties organisations are dismissed as being nonsensical, CIA-supported mischief makers who only spout Opposition propaganda. "They (members of the PUCL) wouldn't even win a single booth if they stood for elections," is a common 'joke' in the Bhagat camp.

WHEN THE ATTACKS on the Sikhs began, Bhagat claims, he was among the first people on the scene — helping the victims, not their attackers. As Bhagat tells it, he is even now helping to rehabilitate the victims. But the demands on Bhagat's ostensibly benevolent attention are manifold.

Every morning a crowd collects at Bhagat's bungalow where a *darbar* is held. The favour-seekers come from all directions. There are '*sudhar samitis*' (improvement committees) from the resettlement colonies, asking for Bhagat's intervention against a demolition squad or demanding electricity and water connections. There are individuals, like an orphaned boy of 14, who hoped that 'Bhagatji' would help him get admission in a government school. There are also delegations of those whose work has been done by Bhagat and who come to thank him with garlands and rousing cheers.

In this setting it is not possible to mention the campaign against Bhagat without being ridiculed. Raksha Rani Sareen of Gandhi Nagar, a trans-Jamuna colony, introduces herself as a freedom fighter, social worker, and president of the Congress (I) women's wing in her area. According to Raksha Rani, there is only goodwill for Bhagat: "It (East Delhi) is a low standard area and she (Mrs Gandhi) was everyone's mother, so everyone was angry. But there are many cases and many proceedings on against the culprits. Bhagatji refuses to help in these cases. But we don't know where they (killers) came from and where they went!"

Balwender Singh, a Sikh from Tri-

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lokpuri who was also present at Bhagat's *darbar*, predictably disagrees with Raksha Rani. Singh and thousands of others like him know just who the killers are. Singh and his fellow victims must live with the fact that those who created hell on earth for them are roaming free and proud. Yet, he must come to Bhagat to repeat a request for an inquiry into the riots and for better relief measures for the victims. For, as one of the Sikhs attending Bhagat's *darbar* said, even the most valiant efforts of voluntary bodies like the Nagrik Ekta Manch cannot compare with the kind of aid Bhagat could provide.

So, the crowds continue to flock to what one of Bhagat's staffers describes as a 'temple where the wants of all are fulfilled'. But all wants are not fulfilled. The elaborate network of links cannot deliver all the goods to everyone. To the dissatisfied, the recent rumours were an affirmation of their conviction that Bhagat is 'shady' and out of step with the 'clean' style of Rajiv Gandhi.

To Raksha Rani and others like her, the rumours are merely an attempt by Bhagat's enemies to malign him. Exactly how the rumours were initiated, no one knows for sure. But in the first week of February it seemed as though the spy scandal rocking the Delhi bureaucracy would also unsettle Bhagat. Considering that the newspapers had not, in the earlier stages, reported the rumour, its proliferation was remarkable. It was common conversation in Delhi homes that Bhagat's house had been raided by the Intelligence Bureau and that he was being held under house arrest. There was further speculation that Deepak Bhagat was involved in favour-peddling with various foreign companies and could thus be implicated in the spy case. According to one version of the story, Deepak Bhagat's factory had been raided in this connection.

Another Delhi rumour concerned a Bhagat relative who had allegedly been caught at Palam airport security with a handbag full of currency notes. According to this story, security officials at once recalled his check-in baggage and found that it too was full of money.



CHARGES OF large-scale corruption are now being levelled at Bhagat from within the Congress (I). Will he survive them?

At the passenger's insistence, ("The money is for the party") the security men called up Bhagat who instructed them to 'let him go and to release the money'. But, goes the story, an alert police official double-checked with 'PM's house' and was told to confiscate the currency.

Bhagat's response to these allegations has been that they are the work of mischief makers and deserve no attention. After first refusing to even make a formal denial, Bhagat stated emphatically that neither he nor his son nor any relative has been raided. But it is significant that when Bhagat issued a denial to the Delhi press, he felt the need to add a message to his constituents that he would shortly be providing water and electricity connections for all.

In Delhi's gossip-ridden political world, facts rarely matter: only perceptions do. And the rumours have done Bhagat's stature and reputation considerable damage. His opponents insist that were the rumours without foundation, then they would have been officially denied by the government.

These developments acquire an added significance in view of the opposition which Bhagat faces from some quarters of the Congress (I). Several Delhi Congress (I) leaders are said to have serious differences with Bhagat. A group of Delhi Congress (I) members

was scheduled to meet Mrs Gandhi on October 31, with a formal memorandum enumerating the variety of allegations against Bhagat, including charges of large-scale corruption.

Bhagat appears to have added to his own troubles by allegedly opposing K C Pant's candidature from the New Delhi constituency. Pant is said to have lodged a formal complaint against Bhagat with the party headquarters. This is an allegation which Bhagat vigorously denies, pointing out that he addressed four public meetings in Pant's constituency. Though Bhagat's denials on this issue are most emphatic, the animosity he betrays indicates that there is a tangible tension between the two politicians.

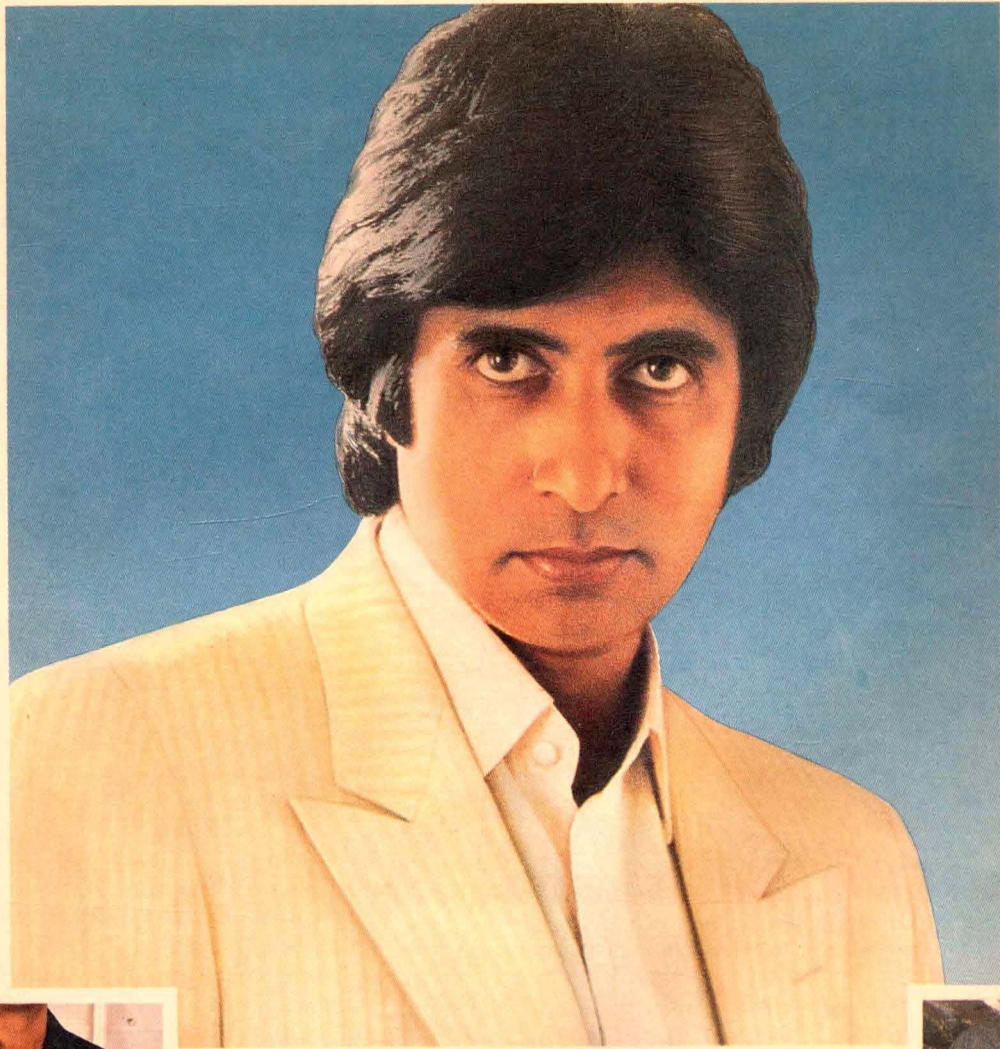
The Delhi political grape-vine has lately noted a marked increase in Pant's standing and a corresponding decline in Bhagat's position. The general view is that Bhagat may have been just the candidate for rallying Hindu sentiments after the carnage, but that he could eventually prove a liability as Rajiv Gandhi's campaign for a 'clean image' gathers momentum.

As Bhagat himself points out, the work he does in his constituency could be done by anyone who enjoys the backing of the ruling party. In this respect, few people are indispensable to Rajiv Gandhi. Bhagat is no exception.

Many of Bhagat's critics feel that as long as the government kept up its hysteria over Punjab, his position was secure. But now, with the release of the Akali leaders, and with talk of an inquiry into all Punjab-related violence, the tide has turned. The Congress (I) has no more elections left to fight and less and less use for the likes of Bhagat. Certainly, his continued presence in the government while an inquiry into the riots was in progress, would be a considerable embarrassment.

Bhagat's rating as a 'clean' or 'unclean' politician appears to have little value for his constituents, many of whom benefit from the questionable activities of his *pradhans*. But should it become an obstacle to efforts to polish the Congress (I) image, Bhagat will find his glory short-lived and his stupendous victory will become a matter of merely academic interest. ♦

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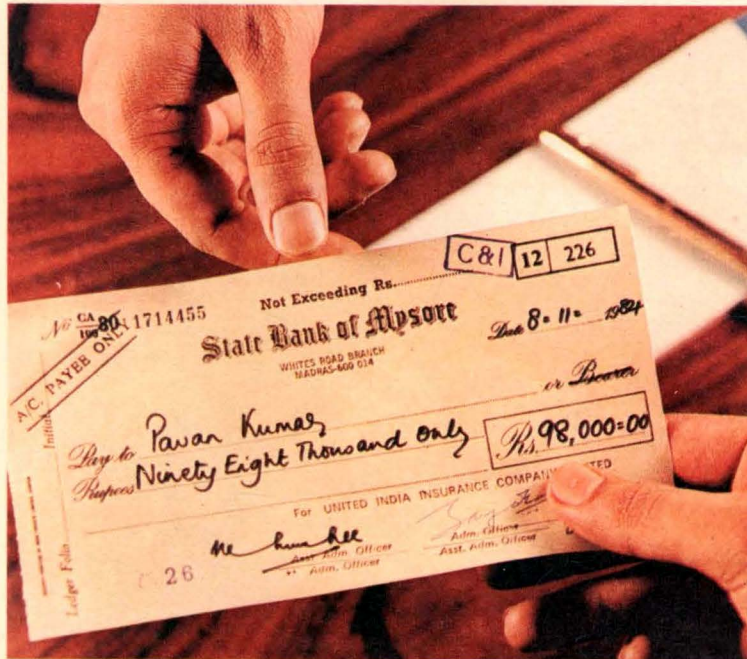
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RAY CAVE RULES!

As Managing Editor of 'Time' he decides what 31 million readers all over the world need to know.

BY JUDITH ADLER HENNESSEE

LAST SPRING Ray Cave took a ten-day red carpet swing through the Middle East, where he was wined, dined, and escorted about as if he were an envoy from the White House. His companions on this expedition were Henry A Grunwald, Editor in Chief of all Time Inc magazines, and Richard Duncan, Chief of Correspondents. *Time* was summiting with world leaders.

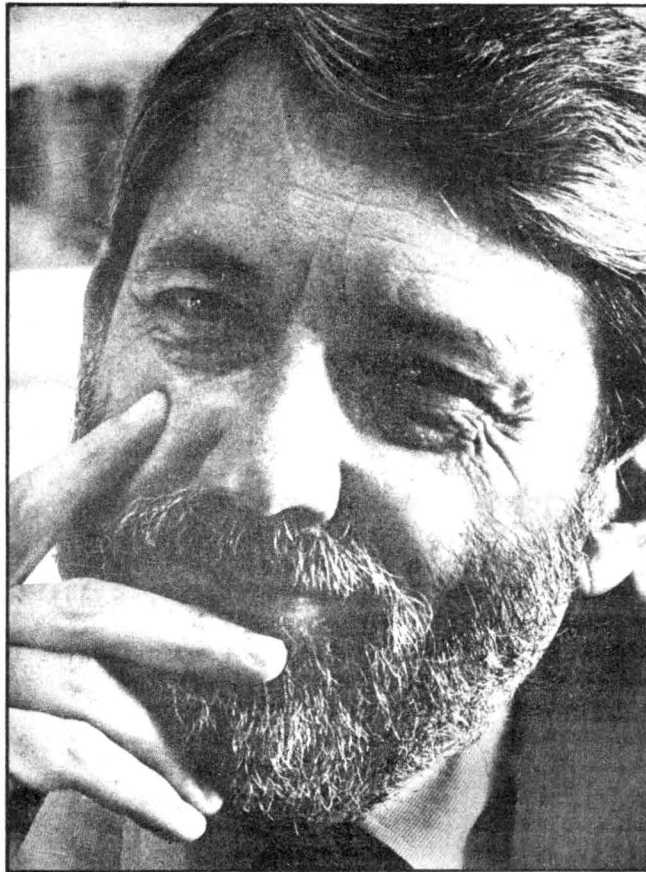
The first leader was Hussein, King of Jordan, who met with the *Time* party late in the afternoon in his private quarters. They sipped Turkish coffee from a gold service and talked about the dressing-down Hussein had given the

US Congress for refusing him military aid. The king had just come back from army manoeuvres and was still wearing his uniform and gun. The next day they flew to Damascus to see President Assad, who had not given an interview to an American journalist for over a year. The Syrians are always difficult in these situations. They don't promise. They lead you to believe. After two days the *Time* men still believed, but they were also due in Cairo, and Henry Grunwald, the ranking member, began practising his own diplomacy.

Stay until tomorrow, the Syrians said.

Why should we? Grunwald wanted to know.

Assad has a bad cold and it is not appropriate that he meet with you, the Syrians explained.



I, too, have a bad cold, Grunwald said.

What about tomorrow? the Syrians said.

We have to leave, Grunwald said.

What about tonight? the Syrians said.

After the meeting, Syrian militia escorts, sirens screaming, chaperoned the party to the airport and *Time's* chartered Learjet. Egyptian officials met them in Cairo at two a.m.

Cairo was a disappointment. The US ambassador, President Mubarak's closest advisor, and Muslim fundamentalists all briefed them, and *Time Inc* gave a reception at the Nile Hilton for the dip-

lomatic community, but Mubarak stood them up. A Libyan plane had bombed Omdurman, and he had to make an emergency trip to the Sudan. These things happen.

The next stop was Tel Aviv, where there was a dinner party attended by a roomful of generals, political and Intelligence people, and Dorin Frankfurt, Israel's foremost dress designer. In Jerusalem the following day they breakfasted with Defence Minister Moshe Arons and lunched with Prime Minister Shamir. In Haifa, they dined with Yitzhak Rabin, then were taken up in a helicopter to view the war in Lebanon. The general in charge briefed them, and an Israeli pilot flew them through gaps in the mountains in a thick fog. "I think we need more practice flying in the fog,"

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the pilot said to the co-pilot. Two days later Cave was back in his office at the Time & Life Building. "We do this periodically," he says. "At least every 18 months."

WHEN *Time* people describe *Time*, they tend to use exalted metaphors. Sometimes they compare it to feudal Germany, with editorial duchies and principalities, where Ray Cave is the Holy Roman Emperor and Henry Grunwald the Pope; sometimes it's the Vatican, with the writers as low-level priests, Cave a cardinal, and Henry Grunwald the Pope. Grunwald is always the Pope.

Cave's title is actually 'Managing Editor'. He presides over hundreds of lesser editors, writers, reporters, correspondents, researchers, and a huge support staff — the army that produces *Time*, the flagship of the Time Inc empire (*Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*, *Money*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Discover*, Time-Life Books, HBO, various cable companies, etc). *Time* briefs the country on the week's events, outlines moral issues, reviews the books its editors think worth reading, the plays, movies, and various art events worth taking in.

Time grew enormously powerful under its founder, the late Henry Luce. The magazine championed Luce's vision of the American Century, of noble capitalists leading a virtuous nation, of Chiang Kai-shek triumphing over the forces of darkness. Ideologically impure stories were rewritten to conform to Luce's agenda. (The distinctive style of writing — *Time*-ese — was parodied by Wolcott Gibbs: "Backward ran sentences until reeled the mind.") In the early '50s, Luce was instrumental in persuading Eisenhower to run for the presidency, and then in electing him. Joe Kennedy spent years courting Luce for favourable coverage of his son, and John Kennedy continued to woo *Time* reporters once he was in the White House.

Television, which has pre-empted the art of news digestion, eroded *Time*'s sphere of influence. Hodding Carter, State Department spokesman under Jimmy Carter and now a TV commentator himself, says, "I have ceased to think about it." But the magazine can still provide a miserable Monday to a lot of people in Washington, and in places where local newspapers rely on wire stories rather than their own reporting, people read *Time* the way Americans abroad read the *International Herald Tribune*. The magazine also publishes four overseas editions, which give the rest of the world, in Cave's words, 'a window into America'.

Time has accommodated itself to the changing demands of its readers. Television is one of the reasons Ray Cave was chosen to be Managing Editor in 1977. His greatest strength is visual; he knows about pictures and colour. "Television builds your audience for you," says Cave. "Journalists think you've got to be first, because they were trained in the newspaper business. Our role is different. We are not supposed to discover things. If you write about the deficit before anyone knows about it, people won't read it. When it's

on the front page of *The New York Times* and in the 'Style' section of the *Washington Post*, then you can begin to move."

RAY CAVE is five feet 11 inches tall, weighs 180 pounds ('on my good days'), and has sea-grey eyes that light up when he talks about competing with *Newsweek*, the country's perennial number-two newsmagazine. He has a short, neat beard that he likes to stroke, and a scratchy bass voice with a southern accent. Sartorially, he is nondescript; you would never guess from his clothes that his salary exceeds \$200,000 a year. When you first meet him he's stiff and pompous: it takes him a while to unbend. He is intensely private, and he rather likes being mysterious. "It's a form of one-upmanship," a friend explains. Cave says he's shy.

He is divorced and lives with Patricia Ryan, the Managing Editor of *People* magazine, whom he met when they both worked at *Sports Illustrated*. In the male stronghold that is Time Inc, she is the only female managing editor. The two are ambitious workaholics. With their hours, the only person

who could live with either of them is the other one. Cave, who has a finely calibrated sense of irony, says, "It's probably good grounds for a relationship. You never have a chance to fight." Neither of them is a regular on the party circuit, and they don't show up in gossip columns. "I'm not essentially a very social animal. Perhaps I should be," says Cave. "But you have to budget your time, decide what you are good at and not. There are a lot of cocktail parties a man can do without."

He gets around more than he lets on. In the space of a few weeks he had breakfast with Mayor Dianne Feinstein, lunch with the Reverend Jerry Falwell, and dinner with Henry Kissinger. He was at the Academy Awards last year, where he became so enamoured of Shirley MacLaine that he decided to do a cover

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SHIRLEY MACLAINE
AND PUT HER ON
THE COVER. CAVE
GETS AROUND.**

story on her.

Most of his social life is arranged through *Time*. "Ray is not very comfortable at parties. He has a hard time with small talk. He is not in control of that situation. He is good meeting important people in a very structured setting," says writer Frank Deford, who has known Cave since 1959, when they were both working for the Baltimore *Evening Sun*. "He's a leader," a loyal employee says. "There's a magnetic field around him." But it's really a wall, and few people get past it. "He can be biting and sarcastic. He doesn't suffer fools gladly, and people are afraid of him," says another writer.

The *Time* world is legendary for its patronage, free corporate liquor, and seductive expense accounts. After late-night closings on summer Fridays, even middle-level people are provided with a car and driver for the trip out to the Hamptons. But, for all this largesse, the atmosphere is heavy. The magazine is run like the army, with orders channelled through levels of the hierarchy. Cave's editors find it easier to say yes than to argue with him. His power is symbolised

MEDIA

by the squawk box on his desk, which is ceremoniously transferred to the next-in-command when Cave is away. The box is hooked up to the offices of senior people. "When the light goes on, you jump," an editor says.

Outside the office Ray Cave is a charming raconteur who loves to sit around with writers and talk about the good old days when he was an editor at *Sports Illustrated*. For fun he goes salmon fishing in Scotland, and in the summer he buries himself in the Maine woods with a stack of books. "I am the ultimate amateur when it comes to fishing," he says in his self-deprecatory way. In the office he is a sombre, fiercely concentrated manager who makes the trains run on time and sometimes goes home in the middle of the night. He walks through the halls, thinking, without saying hello to anyone.

Cave calls himself a 'magazine-maker', a technician. On Thursdays and Fridays, total-immersion days at *Time*, when the magazine is being put together, he spends endless hours in a conference room (the sign on the door reads, 'Cave's Chaos') staring at layouts and pictures until it seems that his eyes are going to fall out of his head. Should the Pope be in the 'People' section? Or would that be disrespectful to religion? Should the 'World' section lead with Thatcher or the CIA? Does the picture of Robert Redford look as if he had only one leg? And the ads. The oil-company ad has to be moved — it's facing a story on oil. When everything is going smoothly, there's a nagging fear that the world is too quiet. Something terrible is going to happen over the weekend: Nicaragua will blow up, or Colonel Qaddafi will declare war on someone, and the magazine will have to be ripped apart at the last minute. Late at night when everyone is getting silly, Cave cuts a story to fit the layout and says, "All the news that fits, we print."

"RAY likes to be first," says Stefan Kanfer, Senior Editor of the 'back of the book' (everything other than national and international news and business). "He's a general's son. He wants the feeling of having the best division in the army." Cave was in fact an army brat, the stepson of a West Pointer who retired as a general (his father, a lawyer in Tacoma, Washington, was killed when Cave was three). He spent most of his childhood moving from one army base to another. A month before his 15th birthday, he enrolled in a small college, St John's in Annapolis, Maryland, which offered an unorthodox curriculum combining 'great books' and small seminars. His first newspaper job was on a county weekly, typing social notes. When he was 21 the army drafted him and sent him to Japan and Korea to work in the counter-Intelligence corps. "It was just like journalism," he says. "Investigating, assessing human behaviour and motivation, getting facts, separating facts from duplicity."

Cave sees journalism as a calling. "Journalists want to make the world better," he asserts. "That's why they go into it." After he got out of the army he worked his way up through the ranks at the Baltimore *Evening Sun* as police

reporter, rewrite man, investigative reporter, and assistant city editor. Then *Sports Illustrated* offered him the chance to come to New York and work for Time Inc. "When he came to *SI* he didn't know a basketball from a hockey puck. Ray does what is necessary," says Frank Deford. "It didn't take him long to realise he wanted to be an editor. "I never thought I could be a really successful writer," Cave remembers.

At *Sports Illustrated*, where he spent 17 years, Cave had a reputation for being tough and ambitious. "Ray left nothing to chance," says Mark Mulvoy, who is now the Managing Editor there. "He was a driven man. When he was in charge of arrangements for covering a fight in Las Vegas, he had about 25 pages of the game plan with maps. He had the route for the writer to the little room he wrote in, the logistics for everything — 12 minutes after this happens, you go there. Except for an act of God, there was no way you could screw up. You even knew where the bathrooms were."

In 1974 Cave lost the race to become managing editor of *Sports Illustrated*, but it was a temporary setback. Two years later he moved to *Time* as assistant managing editor. In 1977 he was vying for the top spot there. Hedley Donovan, then the editor in chief of all Time Inc magazines, was preparing for his retirement and arranging for an orderly succession. Henry Grunwald was the managing editor of *Time*, and would be chosen to replace Donovan. Jason McManus, a Rhodes scholar and one of *Time*'s most skilled and popular editors, was Grunwald's heir apparent. He had been at *Time* for 15 years, and everyone expected him to win, wanted him to win. Donovan, with the advice and consent of Grunwald, chose Cave. The atmosphere was glacial when he took over.

Ray Cave had been Managing Editor of *Time* for a little over a year when reports of the Jonestown massacre began filtering into the magazine. It was an incredible story: a strange cult, simple people taken over the edge by a charismatic leader, mass suicide. Ed Kosner, then Cave's counterpart at *Newsweek*, got it right away. *Newsweek* sent squadrons of reporters to Guyana to cover the story. At *Time*, Cave was resisting. It was Thanksgiving week. There would be late charges, premiums to the printer for holiday overtime. Jonestown, he thought, was just an ugly little incident. A few dozen dead people didn't necessarily make a cover. Besides, he already had a cover — the Muppets.

Editors were running around saying that Cave had no news sense, and what could you expect from an outlander, an interloper from *Sports Illustrated*, of all places, and who cared about all the colour and visual stuff that Ray was so good at? By midweek the dozens of dead had become hundreds; the full horror of the story was emerging, and senior editors were hammering down the door. At *Time*, where deference is the prevailing etiquette, hammering down the door is no small thing. But it is also virtually impossible to fall on your face there. "Alarm bells go off," says

**CAVE WENT
BADLY WRONG ON
THE JONESTOWN
MASSACRE. HE
DECIDED TO PUT
THE MUPPETS ON
THE COVER. THEN,
WHEN THE FULL
HORROR EMERGED,
HE REALISED HIS
MISTAKE. BUT IT WAS
TOO LATE TO DO
A GOOD STORY.**

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Cave. "I was protected at both levels. I could go upstairs to the editor in chief. And they always make you feel you decided. 'It's up to you,' they say, 'but there's a problem.' So between the underlings and the overlings, I arrive at this brilliant conclusion." Cave scrapped the Muppets, but *Time* was caught flat-footed; it hadn't sent enough correspondents, and the reporting wasn't there. *Time* had only nine pages. *Newsweek* had 26 pages. "They overdid it," says a *Time* editor. "Twenty-six pages is the apocalypse."

Ray Cave's news judgement may have been rocky when he started, but his approach has been commercially successful. In his seven years as Managing Editor he has seen three editors of *Newsweek* replaced and has made *Time* the hot book on Madison Avenue. He has also produced four of the six bestselling issues of *Time* since 1960. When the publisher called down to say that *Newsweek* was running two weeks of excerpts from Haldeman's memoirs and how could *Time* keep from getting buried, Cave came up with covers of Cheryl Tiegs, the new Supermodel, and Muhammad Ali, who had just lost his title in a stunning defeat to Leon

Spinks. The Tiegs cover made No 6 on *Time*'s bestseller list, and Ali sold in the top 15. "Ray is a barometer of Middle America," a *Time* writer says. "He understands what they are thinking and what they want to know."

Cave has a knack for life-style stories, for picking up on whatever is simmering in the back of the collective American head. He has produced a string of covers explaining national obsessions: Cats, Cholesterol, Bad Backs, The New Baby Boom, Ice-cream. For Cats he called in writer J D Reed and Senior Editor Bill Ewald. "He sat there silently, stroking his beard," says Reed. "All of a sudden he said, 'Cats.' Cats? Then he launched into a speech that summed up the entire cover. 'Everywhere I turn there are cats. In cartoons, on TV, on the best-seller list. Why? What's going on with cats?'"

BUT THERE IS soft and there is runny, and one finds division in the ranks about these trendy covers. Lowest-common-denominator journalism, Cave's detractors call it. Life-styles lack moral resonance. Before Ray Cave, *Time* had ignored pop culture for decades. In 1961 a cover appeared on camping (the kind you do out of doors), and in 1965, roughly ten years late, there was a cover on rock 'n' roll. Sex didn't make it until 1964, and the Beatles went unacknowledged until 1967. Almost all of the 'soft' covers were solemn theme stories about society: Is God Dead? The Pill. The Hippies. The Sex Explosion. The Cooling of America. Is God Coming Back to Life? Some members of the Old Guard, who cut their teeth on communism and Charles de Gaulle, think the place has gone downhill. (*Time* takes itself very, very seriously.) Ice-cream, referred to in some quarters as 'Ray's Great Ice-Cream Scoop', was pretty thin. The Michael Jackson cover didn't make much of an effort to explore why a large part of American society has

taken as its icon a sexually ambiguous, religious vegetarian who seems to have nothing in his head and can't talk. These stories are all right for a general-interest magazine, but did *Time* become a national institution in order to tell the world that America has a thing about cats?

"It's news," says Cave. "News is what interests and involves the society we live in. Anything that is a framework to talk about what we are as a nation, our aspirations as a people, that story will reveal something about us. Bad Backs was a bestselling cover in 1980. Babies was one of the best-selling covers we ever had. It depends on how narrowly you choose to define news."

LATE one Thursday afternoon, the phone in Cave's office rings. It is Henry Anatole Grunwald (sometimes known as Henry the Anatollah), calling down from the 34th floor. The 34th floor, where the ceiling in the hall is paved with bronze, copper, and silver printing plates of old *Time*, *Life*, *Fortune*, *Money*, *People*, *Discover*, and *Sports Illustrated* covers, is the power floor. There are legends about Grunwald, who spent nine years as managing editor (1968-77). The most dramatic story has him sweeping into the office one night after the opera, wearing his cape and dictating an entire cover story off the top of his head. "I wish it were true," he says. "I've never owned a cape. I always wanted to, but felt I didn't have the build. Almost certainly I have not dictated a cover story."

This afternoon Grunwald is calling about Central America, the lead story in 'Nation', for which Cave has allotted seven columns plus a box on the *contras* in Nicaragua and what might happen if they don't get aid. "He is most pleased that we are doing the *contras*," says Cave. Grunwald is particularly interested in policy stories, domestic and foreign, and wants to make sure that the ending of the story adequately

represents the administration's view that there can't be a negotiated settlement with guerrillas. "The Sandinistas are in trouble, and therefore Henry wants to hear it," says an editor.

Grunwald, man-about-town and friend of Henry Kissinger, is the intellectual overseer of the magazine, the man who keeps it on the right political track. The track is Republican and hawkish. Pro Big Business. Ever conscious of the communist threat. "We try to be evenhanded," says Grunwald. "I consider myself a centrist all across the board. I'm hawkish in some things. I have said in speeches that toughness needs to be defined in more sophisticated ways. If anyone wants to call me a hawk, I don't mind."

A former *Time* editor remarks that Cave and Grunwald 'would not be found at the same eating club', and while this rings true, their relationship is nevertheless complementary. "Henry worries about what people ought to know; Ray worries about what people want to know," an editor says.

The crusading spirit that animated *Time* under Henry Luce has been checked under Grunwald. *Time* made its last

CAVE
SPECIALISES IN THE
'SOFT' COVER. HE
KNOWS WHAT
MIDDLE AMERICA IS
THINKING: CATS,
CHOLESTEROL, BAD
BACKS, THE BABY
BOOM, ICE-CREAM,
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MEDIA

extreme stand reporting on Vietnam. The managing editor during that period had the stories rewritten so that *Time* sounded like an arm of the Pentagon. The new order, Donovan and Grunwald, opened up *Time* and defanged it. *Time*'s Watergate reporting was model journalism.

Cave made *Time* look good, and, following *Newsweek*'s example, he threw out the traditional anonymous voice on news stories; *Time* no longer made oracular pronouncements. Cave brought in new writers and moved others around, turning over special projects and entire issues to them. Japan. Children of War. Prisons. Editors at *Newsweek* mock *Time* for its pomposity and self-importance, but when their covers are the same, *Time* always sells better than *Newsweek*. *Newsweek*, which has a younger and more liberal audience, frequently runs more adventurous pieces and the editors jump faster on breaking stories, but they tend to rush to judgement. They killed off Brezhnev months before he was ready to go.

When *Time* and *Newsweek* report the same story the same week there are noticeable differences in language and focus. With the elections only eight days away last fall, *Time* went with a seven-page cover story, *Mind Your Manners! The New Concern With Civility*, profiling the etiquette columnist Miss Manners. *Newsweek*'s cover, *Land-slide!* focussed on the campaign and the elections. Last June, when the President suddenly announced his willingness to talk to the Russians, *Time* was openly admiring of his 'pragmatism'. Reagan was a 'wily chess player'. "After

his deft performance last week," the magazine noted, "neither the Soviets nor Walter Mondale can credibly label him a warmonger." *Newsweek*'s more sceptical piece, *The Politics Of Summitry*, questioned Reagan's 'call-me-peaceable' stance and tied his turnabout to the Senate's reluctance to vote more money for arms.

Time is almost always ahead of *Newsweek* in news-stand sales, getting between 56 and 60 per cent of the market. *Time* estimates that since Cave took command, *Newsweek* has won the news-stand battle only 21 times. *Newsweek* figures 38 times. Either way, it isn't much, but *Newsweek*'s circulation and advertising revenues are up, and it had more ad pages than *Time* in the first six months of 1984.

Cave has been Managing Editor for seven years, which is approximately the length of time it takes for managing editors at Time Inc to run out of steam. Rumours about his replacement are already circulating. Henry Grunwald is due to retire in another few years, and the executive shuffle will begin. No one knows who will replace Grunwald. Jason McManus, who lost out to Cave for the managing editor job in 1977 and who is now Time Inc's Corporate Editor, is one candidate, and, of course, Cave is another.

Whatever happens, it is as certain as anything can be that Cave will be rotated upstairs to some office in the 34th floor empyrean. If that office is Grunwald's, the outlander from *Sports Illustrated* with his cat covers and his knack for picking the right picture will have been vindicated. It's not Henry Luce's way, but it works. ♦

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Kumbh Mela



RAGHURIR SINGH

THE GHOSTS

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THREE OF US sit at a three-legged table in a small room tucked away at the top of a *chawl* in Bombay, preparing to commune with the dead. Mr Warick, middle-aged bank clerk, places his hands on the table and channelises his psychic energy to summon, from the astral world, the spirits of his grandmother and father. Twice every week, for 15 years, Mr Warick has spoken to, and received messages from, the spirit world.

Beside him sits Mrs Rishi, planchette medium, who began her sojourn into the fascinating world of astral projections – clairvoyance, clairaudience and spiritual trances – many decades ago, in the days when the Life After Death Society flourished, and when an interest in psychic phenomena swept the world.

As for me, this is my first encounter with the occult. And filled with Colin Wilson's tales of poltergeists and ectoplasmic materialisations, fraudulent mediums and fake seances, I am determined to see through every hoax.

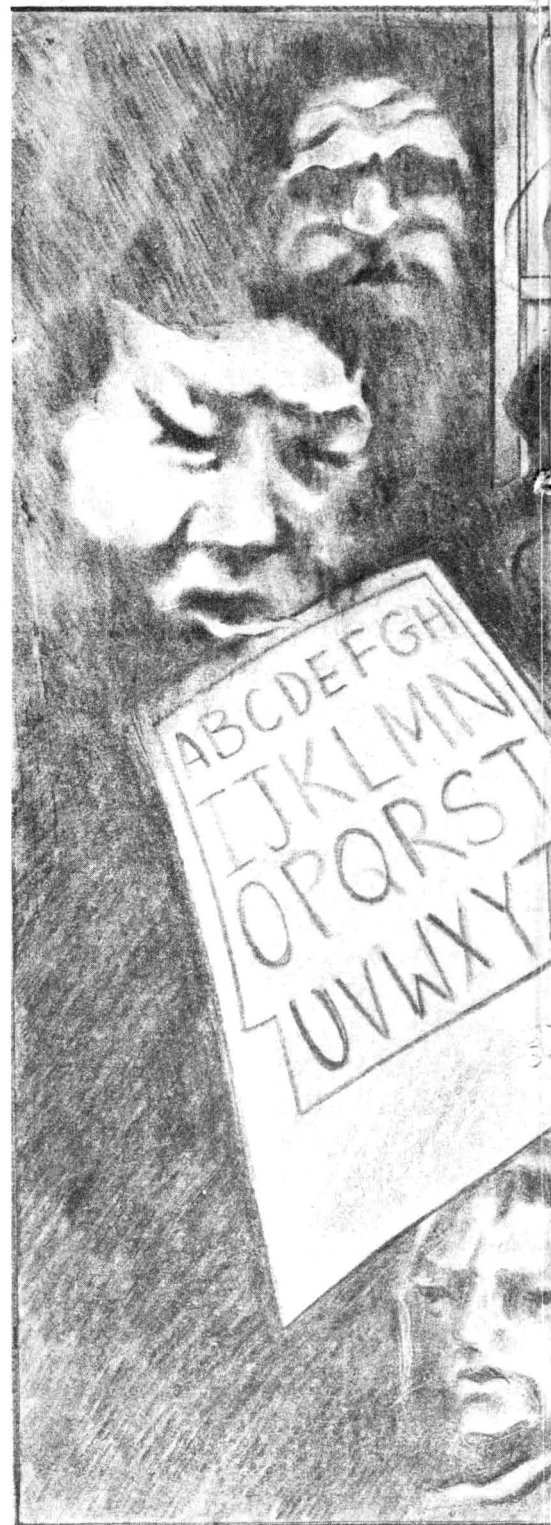
The table begins to shift. Then it tilts towards Warick. No big deal, I tell myself, his hands are on it. The table tilts more vigorously. *Dadima* has arrived. The pointer stands ready on the Marathi ouija-board. Warick begins: "Namaste, *Dadima*!" *Dadima* spells out, rapidly, a greeting in return. During the next few minutes, Warick holds the most trivial conversation with

Dadima. Among her first sentences is a reference to me: "You have a guest today. She is welcome." Warick translates, as his hand, lightly poised on the wooden pointer, moves over the board. I look grateful, and feeling welcome, draw my chair closer, listening to Warick murmur about his work at the bank, his mother's ill-health, mutual friends and relatives. *Dadima* responds quickly, the pointer rolling from one letter of the alphabet to the next, to the vowels, and back to base.

I wait for a great revelation, some portent of doom, some proof of precognition. Nothing of the sort happens. Warick seems content with the trivial.

He bids *Dadima* goodnight and proceeds to call up 'Daddy'. Daddy, too, slips in at the now-dark window behind the table with seeming ease. He communicates in English. The same little pleasantries are exchanged. Then comes this masterpiece of precognition: "Mummy is nursing the pupys." Daddy's spelling is, obviously, not so good. Warick smiles and nods in assent, telling him about the little puppies.

In the middle of this dining-table chatter, a little girl bursts in, and, not even pausing to witness this everyday psychical phenomenon, disappears somewhere. No silence fills this room. Instead, sounds of traffic and Lata or Asha's trembling voice from someone's radio. It seems incredible that a man can converse thus with the spirits of his relatives twice a week or more, for 15 years. What brought him, through the years of youth, and now into middle age, to this ouija-board on the top



Hutokshi Doctor is on the staff of Imprint. Her last feature was on the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in February 1985.

WHO TALK



of an Opera House *chawli*? How did this bachelor bank clerk, the sort of man you see eating bananas every lunch-time in the commercial areas of the city, lose the scepticism of youth and come to believe in the reality of the spirit world? How does this trivial communication help? To all these questions, Warick placidly replies: "Those who die are always with us. If you have a problem, they will give you a message. Sometimes, in ways you do not know, they will solve the problem for you." His is a belief that will not be questioned, let alone be shaken. .

ALL THREE OF US now place our hands on the table. Mrs Rishi cautions: "It looks very easy, but it can be dangerous also." Visions of Linda Blair in *The Exorcist* flash through my mind. That was the closest I ever got to the occult. "Think," says Mrs Rishi. I think furiously of my grandfather. At last the table shifts, tilts towards Warick. "Are you the same spirit she is thinking of?" The table tilts in assent.

Mrs Rishi pulls out the English ouija-board and she and I together place our fingertips on the pointer. I am instructed to ask simple questions. The spirit, if it is indeed his spirit, spells out its name: P-A-P-A goes the pointer, indecisively (that was what I called my grandfather). Then his name: H-O-M-I (that was what he called himself) and then his full name. Mrs Rishi coaxes the spirit. "Come on *baba*," she says gently. "This girl is so eager to know about your world." Slowly and hesitantly, the spirit spells out my name, the place where he lived and died, confides that it is on the fifth plane, but refuses to describe it. All the while I get the feeling that every answer has been dredged up from a misty, half-forgotten past.

Mrs Rishi knew none of the facts that were spelt out on the board. If anyone was moving that pointer, it had to be me. But I *wasn't* moving it.

The spirit has no message for me or

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my family, but promises to communicate with me another day. Mrs Rishi asks the spirit to leave. The pointer rests at the bottom of the white board. We begin to lift our fingers. Then, with renewed vigour, the pointer shoots up to the alphabet again to spell out the most uncanny message of the evening. It zips to M-Y then back – then to D-U-W-A. Mrs Rishi repeats, uncomprehendingly, “My *duwa*?” The pointer shoots to “Yes,” then circles that word, then is still.

To Mr Warick and Mrs Rishi, this last message makes no sense. To me, it is all too clear. It means “My blessings,” a phrase commonly used by Parsis of an older generation. I know this is something my grandfather would have said in farewell. And yet, it was the message that jogged my memory and not the other way around. Most of the messages that were spelt out by the pointer that evening were facts I had known. Only the last message, this message that came with so much certitude, came as a shot from the dark.

I leave Warick and Mrs Rishi sitting by the dark window at their three-legged table. They will continue to communicate with the astral world. Mrs Rishi will hold her regular conversation with her husband and his first wife, her spiritual guides. Or perhaps, some other curious people will climb up the four long flights of stairs this evening – bereaved parents perhaps, or lonely children, or parted lovers – to all of whom one brief message at the ouija-board will bring hope. And, more often than not, belief.

I walk down the four long flights of stairs with an undue clatter. Like a solitary cyclist on a dark road – jangling his bell.

I T IS TWILIGHT. In the kindergarten class at a school in South Bombay, a small group of people prepare for their weekly seance, settling down in two circles: the inner circle or the Love Link, and the outer, where I am seated. The door is locked, the windows fastened. Some light filters in through the ventilators.

Mr and Mrs K (they hate publicity and their Psychic Development Society is very private) lead the group. Together, they have been studying life after death for almost 45 years. Both

of them semi-trance mediums, their interest in the subject is mainly academic, and their communication restricted to their own spiritual guides (except for rare occasions when other spirits in the astral world are directed to the medium through the guide). Their seances are held in an effort to “understand life after death, so that we are prepared and equipped for it, to find out what we must do in this life to lead a better one in the next world, and to remove the fear of death which haunts every human being.”

Though personal messages are rarely conveyed, Mrs K sometimes receives messages from people who have died violently and suddenly, their spirits seeking to contact relatives and friends in this world. Less than a month after the death of Rumi and Vispi Bhavnagri, in an accident on the Bombay-Poona Highway in 1980, Mrs K received a message from the spirits of the two brothers. Word spread through the Parsi network and at the next seance, Mr and Mrs Bhavnagri waited to hear from their sons. That evening the Bhavnagris left with the sure knowledge that it was, indeed, their sons they had spoken to. They left, almost happy, reassured that death is not an end.

There is a young girl here this evening, barely over 20, sitting clasping her knees in the outer circle. She lost her fiancé a year ago. That was when she began attending these seances. And when she began to discover and channelise her own psychic powers. Already, she can communicate with her own spiritual guide, through the spirits, finding out more about the world her fiancé has entered. She says she has learnt acceptance. She says she has found peace. There is a young, bearded man too, this evening, who came here a sceptic, three years ago, and who stayed, week after week, delving deeper into the mysteries of a world beyond our limited perception.

A middle-aged lady, now part of the inner circle, attended her first seance in 1978, when she received, through Mrs K, a message from her niece who died in the plane crash on New Year's Day. Even after the girl's parents stopped attending these seances, the aunt continued to come, not so much now to communicate with her niece but because, to her, the



astral world has become as real as this one.

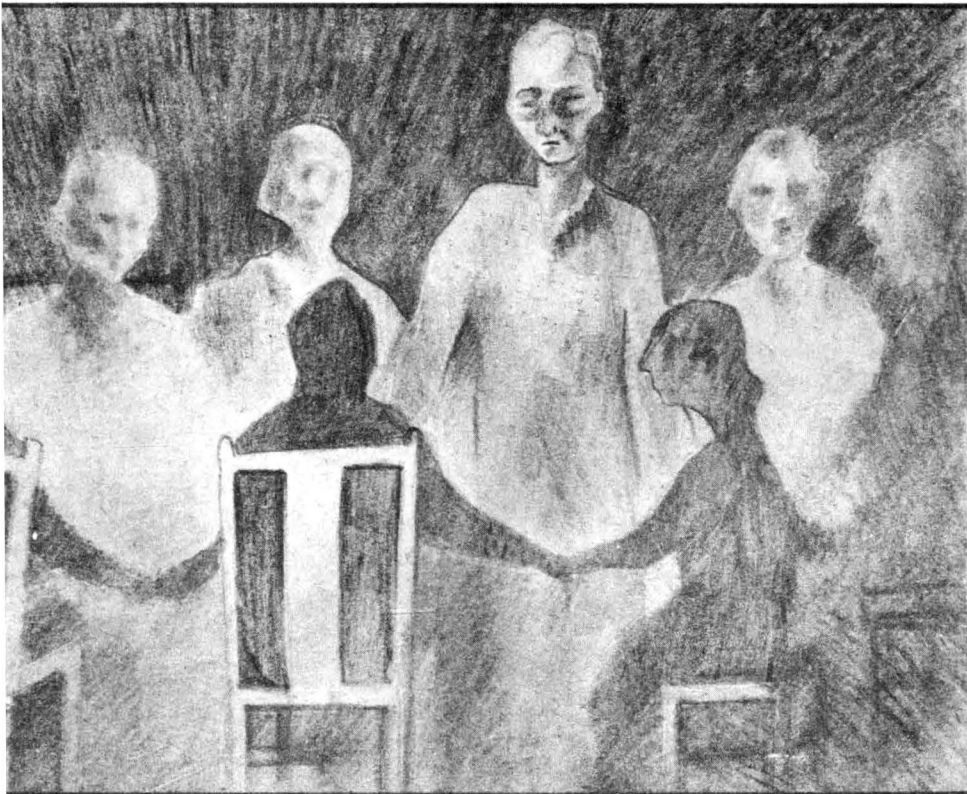
And chattering away in the inner circle is an ebullient woman who turns every conversation back to her idol – Madame Blavatsky.

THE INNER CIRCLE links hands and sings a *bhajan* to set off the vibrations into the astral world. Mr K rises, says a brief prayer for God's blessings as they prepare to reach out to the astral world. The group then prays for the sick and ailing, and as they concentrate I see Mrs K's body begin to shake, her arms vibrating at an uncanny speed.

A chant of *Om* goes up in the darkness, the voices of the two mediums dominating. As the chant dies away, Mrs K takes it up alone, the sound, in all its power, reverberating in the large classroom with a clutter of Jacks and Jills and Hansels and Gretels, and white furry kittens witnessing the strange rites of the occult.

I sit with my feet firmly on the cold floor, my hands in my lap, palms up, 'so that the power can flow'.

There is a deep silence while the group concentrates. In the darkness, I can see only silhouettes. Suddenly, Mrs K begins to speak: “Good evening,



my children! It is a lovely evening. Today I am going to speak to you about honesty. There is so much chaos in the world today. In the old days. . .” Her voice comes strong. Her speech is accented. She begins to move around. The phenomenon has begun. Mrs K is in a semi-trance and the woman speaking through her is Mrs K’s long-time spiritual guide. She breaks off, walks towards the young-girl in the outer circle, takes her hands. “Cheer up, my child. You are here in this world to fulfil your duty which you are only now beginning to understand.” Then she gives a personal message to two others.

She is before me, gripping my hands, greeting me, welcoming me. “I know you have been waiting a long time to find out what goes on here, and now that you are here, you are nervous, but not convinced.” She tells me that my mind is ‘logical’, that arguments never convince me and that I must not be hasty about drawing any conclusions. This goes on awhile, interspersed with “Do you understand me, child?” I want to ask this spirit that speaks to me for some irrefutable evidence of the existence of the spirit world, something that would strengthen doubt into certitude or re-

place it with belief. But all I do is nod in trepidation as she stands over me in the darkness, speaking with such authority, so different from the silver-haired, gentle woman I had seen before.

Mid-sentence, she falters, and immediately the group takes up the chant of *Om*. The power flows back and she speaks for a short while before returning to her seat. She draws in her breath sharply and then is silent.

We wait. The headlights of cars move across the ceiling and walls. An eerie giggle announces the arrival of Mr K’s guiding spirit. I do not know what human form this spirit once took, but, quite irrationally, I see him as a South Indian professor of science and maths. He is addressed as ‘Sir’. Sir invites questions – his time, this evening, is limited. No personal questions are asked of this spirit – only philosophical queries or queries about the nature of the spirit world.

“Sir, what are elementals?” enquires the young girl and Sir explains that they are the nature spirits of earth, air, fire and water, often mischievous and impish, that are, like us, bodies of energy that flow about. “Do the elementals know your spiritual guide? Can they impersonate the guide? Why

do they mock you and jeer at you?” she asks. And I visualise this girl, attractive, just out of college, going off into a trance, speaking to a fiancé who will never return and yet always be there, contending with imps and gnomes and sylphs and I wonder whether, in her discovery of psychic phenomena, she has really found peace.

“Is there anything else?” Sir asks. There is: a question about the nature of time in the astral planes (chronological time does not exist there, only psychological time); a question about the location of the astral world (it is here, intermingling with the physical world, though intangible, invisible, inaudible, just different states of matter co-existing); about the correlation between destiny and free will (man’s life is like the journey of a stylus through the single, winding groove on a gramophone record. The stylus can move laterally in the groove, but it must move onward to the end. The minute lateral movements represent free will, the inevitable journey to the end is man’s destiny).

Sir’s descriptions and the other spirit’s discourse on honesty, even the personal messages, did not come as revelations, but they were fascinating nonetheless. The personality, voice and inflexions of the two mediums changed, but not drastically.

But I am tense now. We have been almost two hours in the darkness, the sound of *Om* welling up at intervals. There is the anxiety of obeying Mr K’s instructions, of not disturbing the aura and blocking the phenomenon by any height or excess of emotion; the uncomfortable knowledge that I am the only sceptic among the still figures of these believers. And there is the anxiety of holding on to that scepticism.

“The power is dissipating,” says Sir. We wait. We hear that brief, eerie laugh again. Mr K covers his face with his hands. The spirit has gone.

Out in the cool night, I watch the sitters disperse – back to the everyday world with its limitations of time and space and knowledge and ability. I watch Mr and Mrs K drive away – just an ordinary, middle-aged Parsi couple. I recall Mr K saying that once the desire for knowledge seizes you, you are

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caught up in a whirlpool, that there is no question of fearing the alien force that seizes you during a seance. Psychic powers are like electricity — if you don't know how to use it, you could get hurt. He is full of little analogies. But this man is not floundering. To every question he has an answer. And he is convincing.

DARKNESS AGAIN. Inside the assembly hall of a school. Only this time the darkness is not contrived. The lights have failed and while candles are lighted all around the hall, three guitars, one flute and 200 lusty voices join to render love songs to Jesus. The ecstatic faces of some 200 members of the Charismatic Renewal are lit up as candles are waxed onto interspersing empty chairs. The Charismatic Renewal is a recent movement within the Church which stresses the importance of the Holy Spirit, the third in the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. It is a movement that has spread rapidly, taking a hold over Christian youth in particular. It emphasises a restoration of 'charismatic' or spiritual gifts — among them the gift of healing, of tongues, of prophecy, miracles, discernment and deliverance from evil spirits. With the emphasis on these gifts which are mentioned in the Bible, a new kind of spiritualism has swept the Church.

When the Charismatics praise the Lord, there is no restraint. Now, in this candle-lit room, lusty voices are singing, people are standing up and saying: "Jesus! Alzira loves you." "Jesus! Diane loves you." "Jesus! Nazareth loves you." At the end of it all, an old man with sunken cheeks arises and says loudly: "Jesus! Judas loves you." An un-Christian giggle comes from somewhere behind me. This ritual is followed by another. Hands reach out to clasp mine — "I love you, sister. Praise the Lord!" says everyone around me as I stand there looking embarrassed. Friendly hands grip my shoulders and shake me. Kisses are planted on my red cheeks. "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

Everybody is exhorted to praise the Lord together — arms are flung up — bodies are prostrated. Voices grow louder and louder until people are actually shrieking. Miriam, a skinny,

plain girl who spent an hour arranging the chairs for the meeting, has an ecstatic look on her face as she shouts: "I love you, Jesus! I love you, Jesus! Praise Jesus! Praise Jesus!" "You are the joy of my life! You are the love of my life!" says another young girl, face screwed up in concentration. Behind me, somebody begins to pray loudly in tongues. It does not sound like gibberish — it is too fluent. This is a prayer form which, the Charismatics believe, is a direct address from the human spirit — not the intellect, not the mind, not the heart — to the divine. Those who pray in tongues, while not knowing what they are saying, believe they have been baptised by the Holy Spirit. One Charismatic said to me: "I have been honed by suffering to an exquisite refinement. I am a spiritual work of art."

When the frenzy of worship is done, a volunteer, Parsi by birth and Christian by conversion, walks up to the mike and begins to pray: "Jesus, you are the only light! Only you can take the darkness away. . ." And the lights come on, and shouts of "Praise the Lord!" go up again and the volunteer smiles a blissful, divine smile, as though he has wrought a miracle, and walks humbly away.

AT ONE SUCH Charismatic meeting, six years ago, Trevor Lewis, exorcist, was 'touched' by Jesus. Trevor received, all at once, several gifts — the gift of tongues, of discernment, of healing, and the gift of casting away evil spirits.

Now, demons, evil spirits, and the possessed, flock to a small, bare room, up two steep flights of dark stairs, in an alley in Bombay's Fountain area. A small sticker bearing a cross and an up-raised forefinger, proclaiming 'Jesus One Way' is pasted on the door. Inside, there is an abundance of crucifixes and pictures of Jesus, and one of Mary, four deck-chairs and one red armchair wherein the possessed sit. In this room the exorcist fights the forces of Lucifer — the Kings of Anger, Hatred, Jealousy, Lust — that come here in the form of several-headed dragons breathing fire, and serpents. And here he fights all the lesser demons that come to intercede in the prayer sessions held in this room by Trevor and his friends.



"They come here," he says, airily pointing to the two wide-open windows. "They come to torment us; to prevent the work of the Lord; they come to assist the spirits that possess people. But with the blood of Jesus, with the strength of Jesus, I cast them out."

I stare at the windows and then at the frail, wan little woman who sits, this afternoon, in the red armchair beneath a crucifix, in a blue sari, wearing a long *mangalsutra*, dozing. Now and then she looks around in boredom and leans across to whisper the extent of her drowsiness into her husband's ear. She doesn't look as though she's possessed — she only looks washed-out.

Trevor, caught up in his descriptions of the evil forces he contends with, chatters on. He introduces me to Sanjay, a young Maharashtrian who was delivered of 3,388 spirits last October in this little room. When the spirits left Sanjay, after a session that lasted four hours, Jesus 'touched' Sanjay and gave him the gift of visions and prophecy.



Sanjay can, as a result, see the demons peeking in at the window. He can also see Jesus – and the Lord – entering. Sanjay offers his ‘testimony’ – he tells me about the fits he suffered for several years, about the failure of doctors to effect a cure, about the chickens his parents beheaded at Kali’s shrines, about the Bengali exorcist who stuffed cotton wicks soaked in oil into his ears and nostrils, then set fire to them in an effort to scorch out the evil spirits.

Sanjay is also a medium. Trevor pulls out sheets of paper written over by Sanjay in a trance – actually written by the evil spirits that still possess him from time to time. Besides the phenomenon of automatic writing, the spirits sometimes speak through him in varying voices. There is one series written by a set of spirits that called themselves Kaachi, Maachi, Naachi, Saachi and so on. To the question, “Who sent you?” they reply: “Lucifer.” To the question, “Why?” they reply: “To torment you.” “To enjoy your suffering,” “To prevent the intercession.” To the ques-

tion, “What do you know about me?” they enumerate all Trevor’s gifts and also reply: “Past to present.” Then Kaachi, Naachi, Maachi and Company go into paroxysms of laughter: “Haha-ha! Heeheehee,” reads Trevor.

There are other scraps of paper, with the same scrawling, barely legible, writing. On Mahashivratri night, Kali, Shiva and Vishnu arrived in this room and spoke through Sanjay. “They are all demons, posing as Gods,” says Trevor. Every other deity too, is in reality, a demon. “So India is a nation of demon-worshippers?” I ask. “Yes,” says Trevor simply. “Jesus is the only god – the only true god.”

AFTER ALL THIS, I am thankful when the exorcism begins. Manju, the little woman who is possessed, rouses herself from slumber. She has, her husband Ramesh informs, been possessed for 13 years. There are times when she rolls across the floor, screaming, tearing her clothes off – and nothing has helped. This is her third session with Trevor, and the spirit within her has been somewhat weakened.

Trevor opens a little white bottle, presumably holy water, and keeps it ready. He stands before Manju, who sits back in the red armchair – very calm. Sanjay and two other young men stand around her and they begin a background chant: “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, holy blood of Jesus, precious blood of Jesus. . .” Trevor’s voice slices through the chant: “I anoint you with the holy blood of Jesus; in the name of Jesus I command you to leave this body. . .” Manju yawns.

For several minutes she sits yawning deeply and blinking her sleepy eyes. Then she begins to shift around, looks distressed and begins to tug at Trevor’s hand, then pulls it off violently, opens her mouth and gasps and twists as all five men hold her down in the chair.

The chant grows louder: “In the name of Jesus I *torture* you – I *torment* you – I *torment* you – you *burn* with the blood of Jesus.” Bucking, twisting, mouth wide open, she screams deep-throated screams. Then “*Chod de, chod de!*” in a hoarse voice. A few minutes pass, then she slumps over one arm of the chair and retches, gasps, retches and a

thin trickle of white saliva and phlegm begins to drip from her mouth, hanging open. Somebody brings a scorched *kadai* with one handle and holds it under her mouth. The trickle continues with the gasping retches. Still she squirms and writhes. Her eyes are closed. Eventually, she slumps back, exhausted. The chant dies down.

“Trevor be careful, there’s a demon behind the wall,” Sanjay points to the windows. “Jesus has come. He’s sitting in that chair.” When Manju opens her eyes, glazed, they take her across to the chair where Jesus is sitting. The Lord joins us in the room. “He has come to see.”

“What is Jesus doing?”

“He is consoling her.”

“What is Jesus doing now?”

“He is holding her neck.”

As soon as this is said, Manju, her eyes still glazed, clasps her neck and begins to scream again – the white trickle starts again. Trevor lets Jesus do the work. Finally he walks over and lays his hands on her head, commands the spirit to leave the body in peace till the next encounter. Slowly, Manju grows quieter, then she sees Sanjay beside her and turning towards him, stares daggers at him and makes clawing gestures at him, as though she would gouge him. Sanjay stares back at her calmly.

Finally, Manju is her old self again. She nods at her husband. She wants to leave. I take a copy of the New Testament which is pressed upon me, smile weakly at Trevor who says, “See how the personality changed,” and leave this room with Jesus staring down sorrowfully from every wall, with the Lord watching, with demons crowded menacingly at the windows, with the pale, worn-out, possessed woman, with all these apostles in the ministry of deliverance.

Outside, there is the reassuring hum of sewing machines. Downstairs, a group of gamblers are absorbed in their game. I glance up at the second-floor window. Like every other. No dragons, no serpents, no horned demons. Only, up on the wall, there’s another sticker – ‘Jesus One Way’.

AT THE END of these three brief encounters, I am left with just a host of questions. Is death an

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end? If it isn't, is there a world beyond? And if there is a world beyond, is it inconceivable that some people can make contact with it? Are Trevor Lewis and Sanjay conjuring up, only in their imaginations, a world of demons and evil spirits? And how do you believe that Jesus and the Lord are present at the exorcism of a tired little woman in an alley in Bombay? Did I, with some subconscious energy, move the pointer on the ouija-board, and were the mediums at the seance enacting some subconscious vision? Or, is it all real?

Stories of fraudulent mediums abound. Fluorescent trumpets have been known to float across rooms apparently untouched by human hands, but mediums have been known to carry them across darkened rooms to create the illusion. White muslin has been used to simulate the ectoplasmic materialisation of spirits. And Houdini, who investigated many mediums for fraud, disclosed that they offered payment for collusion.

And yet, mediums the world over,

have conveyed messages that could only have been known by the dead person and the sitter at a seance, and dozens of ectoplasmic materialisations of recognisable dead people have occurred at various seances. Is this just a form of hypnotism, and was the violent frenzy I witnessed in Manju during the exorcism only a fit triggered off by the chanting of prayers? With his insistence on Jesus as the only saviour and graphic images of the world of evil, Trevor (and his apostles) seemed rather incredible.

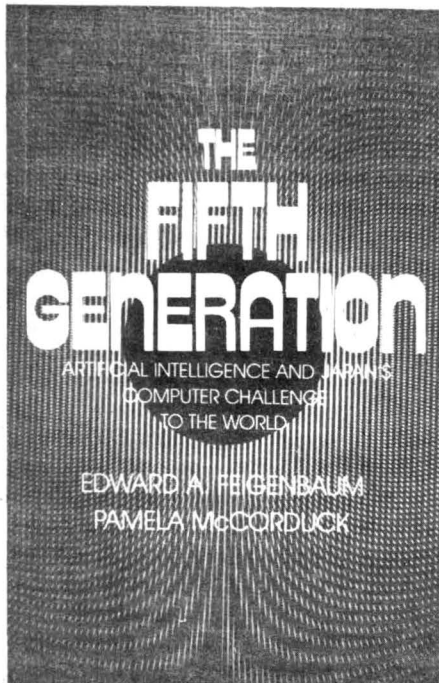
And yet, I am convinced that none of the phenomena I witnessed were deliberately engineered. Mrs Rishi and Mr and Mrs K are out to prove nothing and con no one. Mrs Rishi herself communicates with her dead husband for half an hour every morning and the Ks have held their seances for decades now, totally convincing many people, like the Bhavnagris, of the authenticity of the communication.

The psychic phenomena that occur at a seance are not produced by the conscious human will. But what still

remains unknown is whether these phenomena are produced by some subconscious *human* force or by some *external* powers. But whatever that force be, it is something that needs to be investigated, not dismissed as inconceivable and therefore, nonexistent. Nor is it a force to be tampered with. An ominous warning came from Trevor Lewis, who said: "You sit at a planchette and you say — 'Any good and holy spirit passing by, come to our help.' And the spirit comes and helps you. And then it helps itself." And there are others who say, "In the end you will have to believe." And there is Mr K who believes that at some future stage, communication with the astral world will be as simple as switching on a transistor.

Until such a time, however, until we possess unassailable evidence of the existence of the astral world, psychic phenomena will continue to provide proof for those who want to believe, and raise doubts for those who want to doubt. ♦

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DID SHAKESPEARE EXIST?

UNLESS one is teaching English, one's acquaintance with the Bard gets more and more distant these days. Not many of the great man's plays are being staged by amateur theatrical groups. His sonnets are not prescribed in textbooks any more. Hence nothing was further from my mind than him when I went to see a physiotherapist who was supposed to prescribe exercises that would cure my spondylitis. (Frankly I feel that the only way to get rid of your backaches is to get rid of your backbone. How I envy our present day sycophants!) My physiotherapist turned out to be a Dr John Milton. Inevitably I had to introduce myself as Wil Shakespeare. We got on famously after that, though my backache is still where it was — in the back.

As far as the identity mystery is concerned, Shakespeare has the distinction of coming next only to Jack the Ripper. Who really was William and who exactly was Jack? There is no more fertile area for detective work. It is no surprise that even royalty has made its appearance among the suspects. There are people who have said that it was actually Queen Elizabeth who wrote the plays! (That could make Shakespeare, Bacon and Marlowe, all three turn in their graves!) There are also people who have hazarded the opinion that it was Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, who was really Jack the Ripper!

The latest book questioning his authorship is *The Mysterious William Shakespeare, The Myth And The Reality* by Charlton Ogburn. Ogburn is an ex-sleuth from USA, having worked for some years in the military Intelligence and then for over a decade in the State Department. Impeccable credentials, I suppose, for a speculative romp into Shakespeariana. Ogburn contends that the plays and the sonnets were written by an aristocrat alias Wil-

'Who was Jack the Ripper?' The literary world's version of this famous whodunit is 'Who really wrote Shakespeare's plays?' There are as many answers as there are literary detectives. Even royalty has made its appearance among the suspects. Some have actually implied it was Queen Elizabeth who wrote the plays!

liam Shakespeare. The aristocrat was no other than the Earl of Oxford. How could a footman holding horses at the Globe have written *Lear* and *Hamlet*? Surely someone who delighted two monarchs and thousands of readers and theatre-goers must have left some impress upon the chronicles of the age? "But does anyone identified as Shakespeare the writer ever put in an appearance?" he asks. "Does anyone, during the years when he was alive, ever claim to know him? Why should Shakespeare's name as a dramatist never appear in print or even be heard, so far as we can tell, until 15 or 16 of the plays we know as his have appeared, when suddenly he is hailed as the best of his nation in both comedy and tragedy?"

There is nothing intrinsically new in all this. Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, has for long been a contender to the literary throne. So have Marlowe and Bacon and William Stanley, the sixth Earl of Derby. A coincidence helps Oxford. His muse dried up when Shakespeare's plays started appearing. Obviously his energies got diverted to writing drama. Elementary, my dear

Watson! And the argument has always been the same. How does one reconcile the great literature that he produced with his commonplace upbringing and education? Once you take that line, you are liable to forget, (or deliberately choose to do so) all evidence to the contrary, for example, Ben Jonson's own contribution to the First Folio of the plays in 1623, or the evidence of John Heminge and Henry Condell, people who had acted with Shakespeare and who signed the foreword to the First Folio.

The most repugnant aspect of Ogburn's book is its postulate that the low-born could never have climbed to these empyrean heights. It had to be aristocratic spawn that could write so well. After all wasn't Tolstoy a count and Byron a peer? So it had to be Oxford who wrote the plays and the sonnets! Never mind if the Earl murdered a cook called Thomas Brinknell, had a homosexual affair with his page-boy, Orache, and seduced Anne Vavasor. Versatile fellow! Unfortunately his versatility did not extend to the written page in any appreciable manner. No, this was not the man who wrote *Lear* and *Hamlet* or even *Cymbeline*. I would much rather hark back to David Masson's assessment over a century ago. Shakespeare, he said, saw the world as, "on the whole, gracious and likeable. . . with manifest rule of good and evil and a power of calm and beneficent order through all its perturbations; and Shakespeare's own preferences and affinities in it are for what is high, divine, beautiful, honourable, lovely and of good report."

In the end one wants to ask the Bard:

"What is your substance, whereof are you made
That millions of strange shadows
on you tend."

In a recent book, *Facts And Fallacies*, edited by Chris Morgan and David Langford, some interesting quotes against Shakespeare have been given. Walt Whitman: "Shakespeare's comedies are altogether non-acceptable to America and democracy." George Bernard Shaw's diatribe is memorable: "With the single exception of Homer, there is no eminent writer, not even Sir Walter Scott, whom I can despise so entirely as I despise Shakespeare when I measure my mind against his. . . It would positively be a relief to dig him up and throw stones at him." And lastly comes someone called Gene Simmons belonging to a rock group called Kiss, who evidently cannot get to grips with the language. This rock group guy says: "I think Shakespeare is shit! He may have been a genius for his time, but I just can't relate to that stuff. 'Thee' and 'thou' — the guy sounds like a faggot."

Shakespeare is, of course, no stranger to such scurrilous attacks. The first one had come from the pen of Robert Greene about 400 years ago in 1592 which said, "There is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers". . . who 'supposes he is well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you' and who 'is in his own conceit the only Shake-scene in a country'. All scholars agree that this was an attack on the Bard when his literary career had just about started.

FROM ALL THIS to our own mundane journalism is just a shift of scene. I spent a Sunday morning going through *Sunday* (February 3 to 9). The magazine has an almost in-built advantage over others in that it starts with three regular features. First comes the *Dateline* by M J Akbar where a light, feathery touch is in evidence. It is followed by Khushwant Singh's *Sweet And Sour* column, effervescent and evanescent, and then comes Kuldip Nayar's heavyweight prose. But this issue left much to be desired. The cover story: *Bureaucrat, Diplomat, In-*

How our journalists abuse the English language! They misuse words, mangle images, murder grammar, mix metaphors and even get names wrong! Just look at the February 3 issue of 'Sunday' magazine! With its awkward constructions, its poor English and its heavyweight prose it leaves much to be desired.

dustrialist, *Spy* says that a 'businessman, who has been known as the fountainhead of corruption in the past ten years, sailed through the special gate'. . . Sorry. Fountains spout but they do not sail. A fountainhead, incidentally, means 'original source of water'. You can't have the Gaumukhi sailing down the Ganges.

The writer is obviously fond of gates, because later we have: "Unimaginative rules of the government lay open the bureaucratic portals for corrupt influences." 'Bureaucratic portals' is especially awkward when you remember that the word 'bureaucracy' itself derives from 'bureau', i.e. a writing desk, which has drawers, but no doors.

Equally awkward is the sentence, "Political patronage is the opiate of the bureaucracy." The word 'opiate' is an exceptionally poor choice here, but then without it there would not have been a take-off on Karl Marx! Still later we have: "M O Mathai tried to become the overlord of government affairs." Now you can become an overlord of government, I suppose, but not of government affairs or love affairs. Affairs do not brook overlords.

The next article on *The Decline And Fall Of The Indian Bureaucrat*

also has its quota of poor English. It will be a sad day, we are told, 'if civil servants take their tasks without involvement'. Before one can digest that, we have on the next page: "The socialist pattern of the budget was left to such a man to frame and pilot in the Parliament." One does not want to nag but one may mention that while patterns could perhaps be framed, they can hardly be piloted. On page 19, we have: "It was a common talk of permitraj. . ." The article 'a' makes a hash of grammar in that sentence. What is absolutely unpardonable in this article, however, is that the names of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant figure as 'Ballavbhai Patel', if you please, and Pantji as 'Ballav Pant' (page 17).

Worse follows on page 57 where we are told that 'police-public relations has not made much headway as it ought to have', when the plural 'have' and 'they' respectively should have been used instead of the words italicised above. A few lines later we are told about 'sermonising given to the police'. It is a queer language, English, and while sermons certainly are 'given', 'sermonising' is not. You normally sermonise 'to' someone, and no giving is involved.

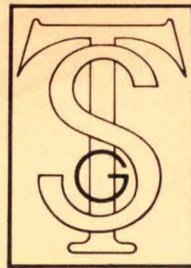
A piece on page 54 entitled *Congress (I) Wins Over Critic* starts with: "Two years ago, even the thought would have been blasphemy. But politics is best spoken in the present tense." Both sentences are grammatically incorrect. In the latter, you need to insert the preposition 'of' after 'spoken'. In the earlier one the writer has obviously used 'blasphemy' when what he meant was 'sacrilege', a violation of anything sacred. 'Blasphemy' is the word for impious talk, profanity. You blaspheme only through the spoken word and not through thought. Sinful thoughts, blasphemous words and sacrilegious deeds — as good a motto as any for our late-20th century *Kalyug*.

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INTERVIEWER'S DIARY

BY BEHRAM CONTRACTOR

I HAVE NEVER interviewed a prime minister, probably because prime ministers give interviews only to foreign correspondents and, for some unexplained reason, Mr Rusi Karanjia. But I have interviewed three ex-prime ministers and at least one future prime minister.

Ever since he has stopped being a prime minister, Morarji Desai has been easy to interview. All you have to do is go to his Marine Drive flat and ask him questions. Of course, he may answer your questions with counter-questions (a favourite Morarji ploy), but he is always available for interviews. In fact, Desai told me once: "Now that I am not prime minister, I have time, and you can meet me any time you like. If I become prime minister again, then you will have to get an appointment, since, naturally, I will be busy."

I have always met Desai in his bedroom. Outside, in the corridor, I would remove my shoes, then enter. Desai would be half-sitting, half-reclining on the bed, reading, and he would not look up or greet the caller till he had finished what he was reading. I would be sitting on the other bed in the room, waiting for him to finish. Once I wrote that I was sitting on the other bed and Desai corrected my copy: "That is not a bed, that is a settee."

Chowdhary Charan Singh was the other ex-prime minister I interviewed (he was not half as philosophical about losing his prime ministership as Desai was). I met him at his daughter's house in New Delhi, sitting on a white-sheeted mattress in the drawing-room (it is strange how many ex-prime ministers spend their remaining years sitting on beds and mattresses), and he gave me a detailed history of

Behram Contractor, former executive editor of Mid-day is probably better known as Busybee.

He has interviewed them all. Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, A B Vajpayee, A R Antulay, and more. Now Behram Contractor puts down on paper all the amusing details he left out of the original articles.



Morarji Desai answers every question with a counter-question but at least he is always available. And then he helps correct your English.

the rise and fall of the Janata. He seemed like a man who had been betrayed by everybody and all the time I had this feeling that I was talking to King Lear. If there was any justice in the world, I thought, he should have been given at least as much time as prime minister as Desai had been.

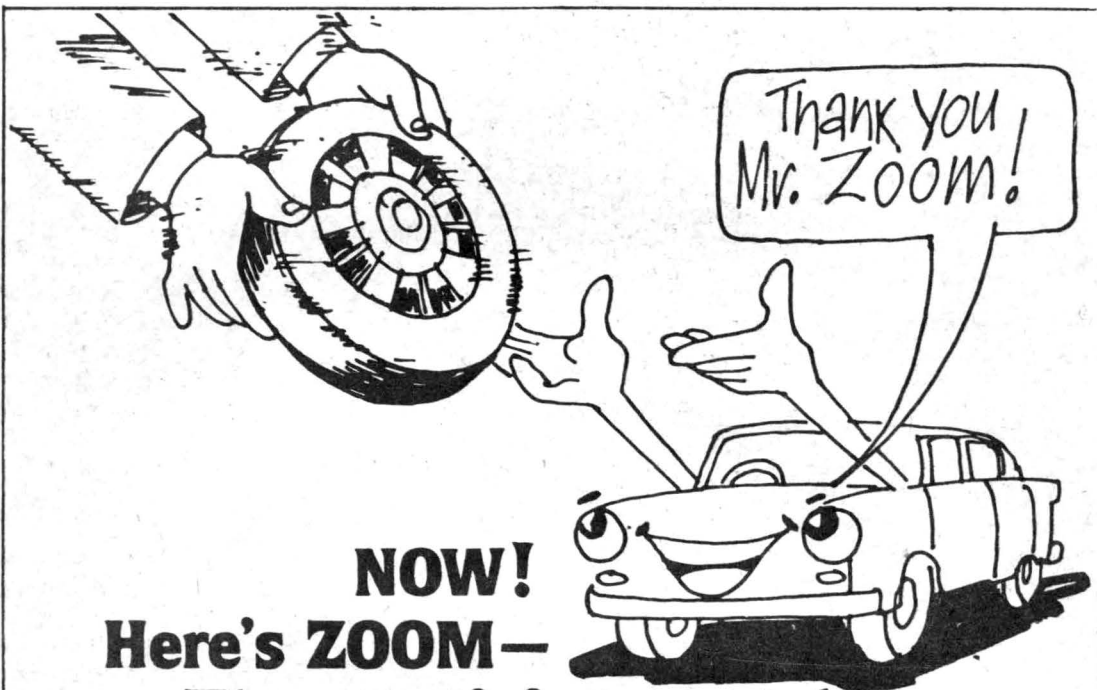
I met Indira Gandhi also when she was an ex-prime minister, during the Janata rule. It was her first time out of Delhi, after her defeat. She had been to Paunar to see Acharya Vinoba Bhave and was returning to Delhi by a regular Indian Airlines flight via Bombay and Santa Cruz. As usual, the flight had been delayed and I met her past midnight at Santa Cruz.

She came out with the other passengers, then walked into the terminal building. A few late-nighters recognised her, but most people were unaware that Mrs Gandhi was there. It was a little embarrassing, but I went to her, introduced myself, and said: "I would like to talk to you." Mrs Gandhi replied: "You are talking to me."

One question-answer I recall distinctly. I asked her if she intended to continue in politics. Mrs Gandhi replied: "If by politics you mean going after office and standing for elections, definitely no. But if by politics you mean serving the people, I will continue to do so for the rest of my life."

Famous last words.

When Nehru was the prime minister, I was not big enough to interview him, I could only cover his meetings. I covered Nehru inaugurating the first atomic reactor at Trombay and one sentence from that inaugural speech keeps coming back to mind. There had been some criticism about money being spent on reactors and other nuclear facilities when there were more earthly projects to



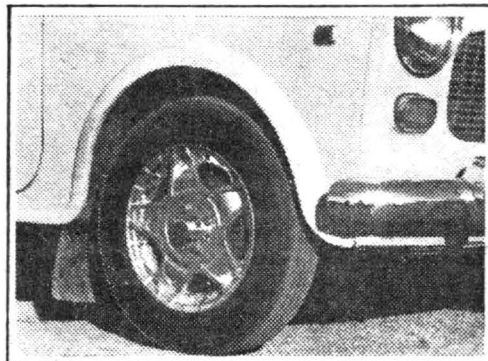
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undertake. Nehru replied: "We cannot allow tomorrow to slip from our hands by getting too involved in the petty problems of today." It was a totally unrehearsed, spontaneous statement, the sort that Panditji was capable of on occasion.

Sanjay Gandhi had none of these flourishes. I talked to him one late evening during the Emergency and most of the time he talked about the need to clean the city, grow trees, etc. Compared to the present Prime Minister, he was at a marked disadvantage, having neither the Doon School tie-up nor computers.

Menaka Gandhi was different, a bit of a spitfire. The interview was at the flat of some friends of her family at Colaba. The same afternoon, Indira Gandhi was accompanying the President of India and reviewing the navy off the Gateway of India. The junior Mrs Gandhi could not be bothered. She had decided to contest Rajiv Gandhi. From a bookshelf in the host's house, she took out an illustrated volume on the life and times of Sanjay Gandhi. Then she pointed out photograph after photograph: "Put Rajiv in the place of Sanjay in the pictures and you will find the scenario being repeated. The same people around him, the same politicians, hangers-on. There was nobody to advise Sanjay in those days on what was happening and there is nobody to advise poor Rajiv now."

If the prime ministership had not fallen in Rajiv Gandhi's lap as it did, I do believe she would have given him a tough fight.

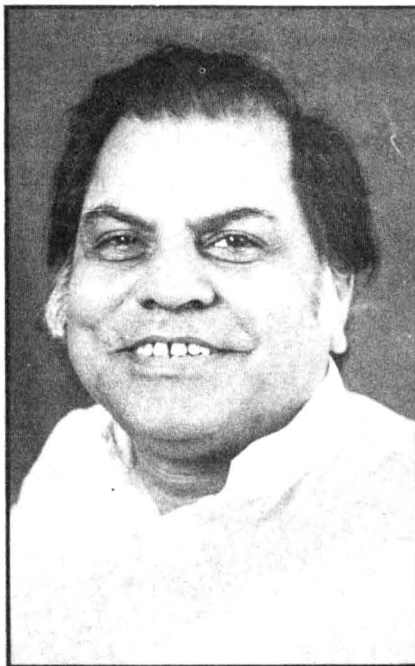
P RIME MINISTERS and prime ministers' families (I once interviewed Lal Bahadur Shastri's wife) apart, there have been several national leaders I have interviewed over the years. I had once set myself the task of publishing an interview with one national leader every Sunday and by the Thursday before that, I had to find one, interview him and write the interview. So I ran through all the chief ministers of Maharashtra.

As subject for an interview, there were few to beat Antulay, though he had this irritating habit of first dictat-

ing the question to you, then dictating the answer, all the time sitting next to you and watching you take it down in painful longhand. He also kept digging into your thigh, stressing points that he considered important.

Babasaheb Bhosale was all jokes (it is said that he laughed himself out of office). He was not bothered about what you wrote or how you quoted him. He was particular that his picture should come out well (*Sunday* magazine had made him conscious of this by publishing on its cover a most odious photograph, a close-up of the face with a red tongue curling out). Often, on the Monday after the interview came out, he would ring you up, thank you for a good interview, then add: "But the photograph could have been better."

Bhosale should have been more careful about what he said. In one interview, he gave me details about the swimming-pool he was planning in the backyard of Varsha. That brought half of envious Bombay on his back. In



Antulay would always dig his finger into your thigh. But, as his successor Bhosale pointed out, among his many qualifications was that he was a dwarf.

another interview, he gave me reasons why he had decided not to use the Japanese Toyota that his predecessor, Antulay, had acquired as the official car of the chief minister. He explained: "You know, the Toyota is a very low car and it is difficult for me to fit into it. For Antulay, it was all right, he is a dwarf."

Even when he stepped down (or was made to step down) as chief minister, he continued to provide interesting copy, including the interview where he stated he would like to use his experience and contacts as a former chief minister to start a marriage bureau. It was around this time that he started organising what came to be known as the dinner meetings at the Ritz for the dissidents or loyalists in the party or whatever they styled themselves as. So, one morning, he rang me up and asked me to suggest the menu for the dinner. "Give me both vegetarian and non-vegetarian selection," he said.

Interviews with Vasantrao Patil have been much more sober. He is a sober person. Also, extremely courteous. After the first time I put into print an interview with him, he rang me up and said: "Thank you for the propaganda."

But an interview with his wife, Shalini Patil, was more interesting. She was recuperating from a bout of spondylitis in the VVIP suite of the St George Hospital in Bombay. She sat in the bed with the surgical collar round her neck, the sari carefully covering her head, and told the photographer: "Make me look ill, but not too ill."

Sharad Pawar was ex-chief minister by the time I interviewed him. Still, as leader of the Opposition in Maharashtra, he was residing in his official bungalow on Narayan Dabholkar Road. Most of these official bungalows have a transit camp air about them. Policemen sit on the verandahs, reading Marathi newspapers. The furniture is very government office type, straight-backed chairs and functional desks, numbered and initialled in white paint and accounted for. If the occupant belongs to the Congress(I), then there are several pictures of Indira Gandhi, with or without the occupant. If the occupant is an Oppo-

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sition party member, then there are no pictures. The Opposition is a godless society. There is invariably a hat stand in a corner, a relic of the days when British officials were housed in the same bungalows. Only railway retiring rooms and ministerial bungalows have these hat stands now.

Officials and clerks occupy the front portion of the house. Occasionally, from the rear, come noises of the minister's family and odours of their kitchen. The family is normally large, all transplanted from the minister's native village or district town to Malabar Hill.

Most interviews are fixed in the early hours of the morning. The PA to the minister, or the *netaji*, asks you to take a seat. "The minister is in the bathroom," you are informed. (Once I called on Vajpayee in New Delhi one early morning and his PA informed me: "Mr Vajpayee is being given his bath.") Then the minister enters, talcum powdered and smelling strongly of cologne. Some of them, like Ramrao Adik, would be wearing a red rose and carrying a *paan masala* tin in their hands.

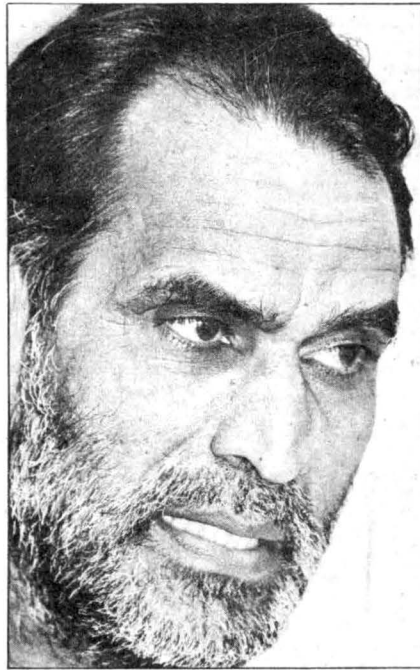
THE DELHI LEADERS, when they visit Bombay, stay in government guest houses, which, in any case, look like ministerial bungalows. I met Bahuguna, that prince among defectors, at one of these. It was a sleazy-looking place and during the interview, Bahuguna complained to the manager about his bath water not being hot. He also complained about how Mrs Gandhi had taken him back into the party and then neglected him, making it impossible for him to remain there. Mrs Gandhi, it seems, came personally to his residence to request him to rejoin the party. Bahuguna explained it all dramatically. "I had just come home and was removing my pyjamas when they told me that Mrs Gandhi had arrived and was in the drawing-room. I quickly retied my pyjamas and went out." All this Bahuguna said while lifting his *khadi kurta* and showing me his pyjamas and the strings that he had untied and then retied.

Since then, every time I

read about Bahuguna (which is not so often these days), I see him lifting his *kurta*.

The Opposition (Janata), of course, began and ended with Jayaprakash Narayan. Once he had recovered to some extent from his illness and was lodged in Seth Ram Nath Goenka's Express Towers penthouse (though the place is too spartan to be described as a penthouse), he had enough time to meet and talk to journalists. Unfortunately, he was too good a human being to provide good copy. So, like his speeches, most of his interviews were vague and general. He also had this habit of turning interviews into dictations of long statements. You opened your pad (I have yet to interview somebody on a tape-recorder and I am too old now to change my habits) and wrote verbatim. Then he made you read it again, corrected a word here and there.

The day Jayaprakash Narayan left Express Towers finally to return to his native Patna and die there, I had my



The interesting thing about Chandrashekhar is that he is always eating. At one a.m. it is dinner and at four p.m., it is lunch. Both are called 'roti'.

last interview with him. He was sitting in a wheelchair, waiting to be taken down in the lift and driven to the airport. Nani Palkhivala had just met him and it seemed there were no more goodbyes left. So I approached him and took down his last long statement. As there was no chair nearby, I knelt down in front of him, my ear close to him (his voice had turned very feeble by then) and carefully took down every word that he dictated (knowing that I would have to read it back to him). A photographer took a picture and later presented it to me. It shows me kneeling in front of JP, as though I were taking his blessings. It is something I have not, and would never do with any politician, not even JP. Though if I had to, I think JP Narayan would be the only politician I would accept.

Every time I have interviewed Chandrashekhar, on whom, one might say, JP's mantle rightly falls, he has been surrounded by people, party workers, young industrialists playing at politics, students. During the interview, they all put in points of their own, laugh at his blunt remarks (consciously blunt, I think). Also, every time I have met him, Chandrashekhar has been having a late meal, either lunch at four p.m. (*roti*, he calls it) or dinner at one a.m. (also *roti*, he calls it). Hence, I have developed this image of Chandrashekhar, his feet calloused with miles of walking during his half *Bharatyatra* (that now seems to be a total waste of energy), large hands breaking *roti*. And, frankly, I do not recall anything he may have said in all the interviews.

Of Dr Subramaniam Swamy, I remember everything. The man makes no bones of requiring a bit of publicity. First, his secretary in Bombay rings up to inform you that Dr Swamy would be in town on a particular day and could he fix up an appointment for you. Next, Dr Swamy walks into the office one morning, immaculate as ever in his white dhoti. I recall the time he walked into my office. "Yes?" I enquired. "I have come to be interviewed," Dr Swamy said. I appreciate such candour. He also makes good copy, provided you do not use everything he tells you.

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Another Janata MP who used to make good copy was Piloo Mody. Interviewing him was as easy as playing a game. You had to give him the name of a politician, friend or foe. Then Mody, right there, on the dot, would provide you with a one- or two-liner on the gentleman. Then you give him another name.

Compared to him, Raj Narain is a bit of a buffoon. Only once have I interviewed him. We had just gone through the preliminary questions and were settling down, when Narain announced that the interview had ended and got up and left.

S M I Aseer, the former Maharashtra Congress (I) chief, has also, sometimes, been portrayed as a buffoon. He is not quite that and the blame for the incorrect image, I admit, goes to me. I had gone one early morning to interview Aseer and was taken to his private quarters. Displayed prominently in the room was a stand with Aseer's shoes. I counted 26 pairs, plus one that Aseer was wearing. The photographer took a

photograph of the lot and I obtained from their owner some comments on how fond he was of shoes and how he had a pair for every occasion. After the whole thing appeared in print, Aseer made things a little worse for himself by giving a follow-up interview to *India Today's* Coomi Kapoor where he also talked about his clothes and his fancy haircut. "In Ahmednagar, when I was a student, the barbers used to advertise an Aseer cut," he told her.

The Rajmatas of Jaipur and Gwalior provided complete contrasts. Gayatri Devi behaved like the Rajmata which she undoubtedly is. To almost every question I put to her, she said: "Why bring up that matter? Nobody is interested in it." And half the scheduled interview time was spent by her dressing up and getting ready for the photographer. Then she decided to sit under a table lamp, half her face in shadow. The poor press photographer, used as he was to taking pictures of Jagjivan Ram and the like, did not know what was happening.

Mrs Scindia, on the other hand, was all enthusiasm and ready to talk about everything from the toy train made of solid gold that travelled around her husband's dining-table, carrying after-dinner liqueurs to her days among ladies of easy virtue in the Tihar Jail.

And a word about Ram Jethmalani, who it is always a pleasure to interview. Because, before you settle down to work, he always pours you a peg of good Scotch.

To go back to the beginning. As I mentioned earlier, I have never interviewed a prime minister in office. But I have, besides ex-prime ministers, interviewed at least one future prime minister. The first time I met Atal Behari Vajpayee, I had breakfast with him. Later that day I sat down to type. My copy began: "This week I had breakfast with the future prime minister of India." Future at that time, looked like 1985. Now it will be at least 1990, perhaps longer, possibly never.



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THE HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL CONNECTION

The list of HBS alumni reads like a Who's Who of the corporate world. What makes HBS turn out super-managers? Or do they go to HBS because they are super-managers to begin with?

THE NORMALLY recalcitrant Union Finance Minister, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, who has rarely opened the doors of his plush North Block office to businessmen who jet into Delhi for the ostensible purpose of paying him an informal visit, recently agreed to preside at the *Economic Times* and Harvard Business School Association awards function held in New Delhi. And the corporate community had every reason to boost its flagging morale, for not only did the low-key minister agree to give away the prizes at a glittering ceremony, but he also decided to break his silence by expressing some candid opinions on mismanagement in the public and private sectors.

Undoubtedly, Singh had picked on the perfect occasion and the perfect audience to describe the role of managerial efficiency in developing the Indian economy. The Harvard Business School Association's awards for excellence in 'corporate performance' had been billed last year as the most prestigious in the field of management. And, congregated in New Delhi, to witness this year's presentations, were among the most qualified businessmen in the country — alumni of the Harvard Business School. Did the Finance Minister agree to make an appearance

Anuradha Mahindra, a freelance writer, last wrote about Kiron Thakur Singh in Imprint, August 1984.

because he was keen to express his approval of this educated and qualified business group? Or did he merely happen to pick up the fact that a large handful of the HBS crew also happened to belong to the top echelons of the corporate world? Whatever the case may be, it seems that the Business School types were among the first men who succeeded in attracting this hard-to-get minister's attention.

Who are these men? The list of Harvard Business School-educated managers and industrialists reads like a corporate Who's Who. Most of the alumni are distinguished businessmen who head multinationals, large public limited companies and family-owned enterprises. They include A N Haksar, Chairman emeritus of ITC Ltd, Gurucharan Das of Richardson Hindustan, N M Desai of Larsen and Toubro, Vasant Sheth of the Great Eastern Shipping Corporation, Viren Shah of Mukand Iron and Steel, Ratan Tata of Tatas, Bansi Dhar and Vinay Bharat Ram of DCM, Rahul Bajaj of Bajaj Auto, Tanil Kilachand of Polychem Ltd and Nadir Godrej of Godrej Soaps. Special mention should be made of P Chidambaram, a Madras-based MBA, who made it to Parliament in the recent elections.

ALTHOUGH the Harvard Business School education seems to be a common factor in uniting these bigwigs, their career graphs indicate

different trends, depending on whether they are hereditary managers, professionals or one-time entrepreneurs who have made it into the mainstream of Indian business. At what point in their careers did these businessmen decide to go to Business School? And how did it help them to climb up the corporate ladder? Apart from Haksar, Bajaj, Kilachand and Godrej, all the others attended classes at the Harvard Business School only after they had attained top positions in their companies. Being steeped in the everyday affairs of business, these executives could justify attending only 13 weeks at Harvard Business School, and hence went in for the Advanced Management Programme instead of the two-year MBA. Haksar, who happens to be the senior-most member on this list, was probably way ahead of his time when he decided to earn a Harvard MBA as early as 1948. Perhaps one of the reasons was that he couldn't count on a family business to give him a ready-made managerial position and the accompanying prestige.

But, given the nature of the business environment today, the hereditary managers like Bajaj, Kilachand and Godrej did well to start their careers armed with a highly respected business degree — the Master of Business Administration. In fact, they view their two years at Harvard quite seriously. "It is useful to have a business school education," says Nadir Godrej rather



The dean's house: on Memorial Drive at the Harvard Business School.

plainly. Godrej, who is Director of Godrej Soaps, a chemical and cosmetics firm, is also a qualified chemical engineer from both Stanford and MIT. Kilachand, who belongs to one of the oldest business families in Bombay, saw the importance of an actual business education, because as a History and Law graduate from Cambridge he was unfamiliar with general business techniques. Rahul Bajaj, who heads Bajaj Auto, the flagship company in the Bajaj group, preferred not to use his father's established business reputation to gain a top managerial position. He went to HBS in 1962 and four years after his graduation, made it as chief executive of Bajaj Auto on his own merit. Certainly, all three of these men would have been in a position to inherit their heady titles by sheer virtue of their name. But the fact is they realised that familial clout is no longer a durable asset. Merit and qualifications are required more and more to keep a business secure. Well-oiled political networks have proved unreliable sources of strength. Besides, tangible skills are

essential to ward off non-resident takeovers, win succession battles and grab market share. It is hardly surprising that, in this competitive business climate, even well-established businessmen considered it worthwhile to fly across the Continent and attend the Advanced Management Programme at the Harvard Business School.

Ratan Tata who succeeded his eminent uncle, JRD, as Chairman of Tata Industries in 1981, would have done so even without going through the AMP at Harvard. However, he attaches great importance to his Business School experience. "There are several tangible skills that I picked up and the most important ones were in the areas of marketing and organisational behaviour," says Tata. Harvard Business School researchers were shrewd enough to realise that businessmen of Tata's cadre and distinction, all over the world, would flock to short-term courses that familiarised them with the latest business techniques. The 13- and 14-week Advanced Management Programme and the Programme for Man-

agement Development were designed to suit this purpose. In fact, today they have earned the reputation of being the most popular executive education programmes at Harvard. The AMP is designed for top-drawer executives who have had 20 to 25 years' experience in a company. The PMD sessions, on the other hand, cater to middle managers whose future responsibilities will require a wider range of skills and knowledge.

Viren Shah, Chairman of Mukand Iron and ex-MP, who is doubtful about the actual benefits of classroom learning, views his stint at HBS in a unique perspective. "In a broad sense, I might say I went there looking for general concepts with which I might better understand my own experience." And, according to Shah, some of the things he wanted to understand were "the problems of being well-established. . . . I thought a stint at the Business School might help!"

If one of the problems Shah had in mind was a self-concept blown out of proportion by success, the AMP at Har-

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vard was the right course to attend. According to Tata, who registered for the programme in 1975, after having studied Business Administration for only a year at Cornell, "The curriculum at HBS was very humbling even for seasoned executives. We were all cut down to size."

Tata has no doubts about the value of attending a high pressure course at Harvard. "I was there to work and learn and took it very seriously." Perhaps Tata is so positive about his Harvard degree because he had been keen to make it there ever since his undergraduate days at Cornell where he studied architecture. "I always intended to go to Harvard for an MBA but found that I couldn't spare two years to do so." However, other AMP graduates like Gurucharan Das of Richardson Hindustan and Vasant Sheth of Great Eastern Shipping prefer to see their 13 weeks at HBS as a sabbatical from the nitty-gritty of corporate life rather than an actual business education. "I couldn't justify going back to college in the middle of my career to do literature, so I decided that the next best thing to do was business," says Das, who spent two summers (in 1982 and 1983) at the Business School, primarily to take time off from the real world of business. "I wanted to interact in an environment which is different to being on the job," he adds. But being a part-time writer, Das felt that the nicer thing about returning to Harvard (he also did his undergraduate degree at Harvard), was the access to the cultural life.

Vasant Sheth seems to share Gurucharan Das's detachment to the reputable management skills imparted at Harvard Business School. "It was a good change especially at a time when the Janata government was falling apart," he says, stressing that the course mainly refreshed his attitude to business. However, Sheth does give credit to the AMP for having revived his entrepreneurial spirit.

Irrespective of what each individual executive may stand to gain from this top-notch business school, what they all end up getting, no matter what, is a professional stamp. Other perquisites that come with the AMP package include the eligibility to belong to the world-wide network of one of the most



**"I WENT TO HBS
because I needed to
understand the
problems of being
well-established"
— Viren Shah**

elite business school alumni in the world.

But, one of the reasons why AMPs enjoy such prestige is that they 'piggy-back' off the reputation built around the Harvard MBA. It is really the rigorous MBA curriculum which positions Harvard Business School in its exclusive niche within the international business school market. For two arduous years, the MBA candidate is put through the learning drill. At the end of it, he obtains that legendary piece of paper which certifies that the holder knows more than others about almost everything there is to know about business. If one were to judge by the placement statistics of Harvard MBAs, this statement would hardly sound like an exaggeration. Harvard boasts that 3,500 of its MBAs head US corporations and they include 19 per cent of the top three officers of the *Fortune 500* companies. In India, the Harvard MBA is a relatively scarce commodity, numbering only 40 out of a total alumni body of 200. Among them Ajit Haksar is not only one of the first MBAs but also the first to reach the chairmanship of a multinational mammoth. Other Indian MBAs from Harvard are scattered around the country as top managers and respected directors of family-owned companies or public limited accounting, advertising and

consulting firms. Some graduates of HBS have also chosen to make their way into non-business fields such as research, education or for that matter, government.

DESPITE THE impressive careers of businessmen who have studied in the hallowed classrooms of Harvard Business School, there is a great deal of criticism brewing against them. The American corporate sector itself bemoans the fact that Harvard MBAs are far too aggressive, too ambitious and above all, far too expensive. HBS, however, regards all such denouncements as signs of its eminence. Founded in 1908, the school prides itself on being one of the oldest in the nation, as well as probably the richest (its endowment is \$100 million), the best equipped (its 50,000 volumes form the world's largest business library) and the most prestigious.

All around, the stress is on learning and performance and no other efforts can help students to earn the coveted degree — Master of Business Administration. They spend two years attending lectures inside Harvard's handsome, Georgian brick buildings that stand on the banks of the Charles River. In the first year itself, the students analyse as many as 400 cases in the fields of finance, control, marketing and production management. "I knew nothing about business when I first went to Harvard," claims Naaz Rovshen who is a BSc from Stanford but found it worth his while to cross over to the East Coast for an MBA from Harvard. Rovshen, who has recently switched to a new job as Vice-President of the high-profile United Breweries group, adds that the MBA was also very useful because he came from a broad liberal arts background. According to him, the fundamental value of the Harvard MBA is that it develops one's problem-solving abilities. And this, he believes, is largely due to the fact that Harvard teaches almost entirely in the case method which it pioneered in 1924.

Most Harvard MBAs who return to family businesses in India, tend to bring back a hard-headed pragmatism with them. Tanil Kilachand who is Executive Director of Polychem, a profitable, family-backed firm, lauds the practical orientation of the case

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method. According to him, it is the intensity of the course which succeeds in placing a Harvard MBA almost five years ahead of somebody else. "It is the sheer number of cases analysed that helps to hammer business language and methodology into the students' minds to the extent that it becomes an intuitive process," he explains.

In comparison, the AMPs end up studying only one quarter of the number of cases that the MBAs do. Yet, some of the short-course graduates perceive hardly any difference between the two degrees. Vasant Sheth, who was surprised that the AMP turned out to be more work than fun, puts its rhetorically, "Is there any difference between them (MBAs and AMPs)?" When this question was posed to MBA Tanil Kilachand, he replied in the negative: "There is not much difference because the central person in both programmes is the case study."

As Chairman of his own company, perhaps no one was in a more appropriate position to nominate himself as an AMP candidate than Vasant Sheth. The shipping industry was going through a recession and Sheth saw no better way to float through it than by taking a refuelling course at the Harvard Business School. Although this *grand école* of general management does little to create entrepreneurial inclinations, it did not endanger Sheth's pioneering spirit which guided him to purchase his first ship, *Jag Vijay*, in 1948. As a self-made magnate, Sheth's advice to dynamic young managers who inherit large business empires is both sound and interesting. "I have been telling a lot of MBAs that instead of stepping into your father's shoes, if I were you, I would start something totally independent and make a name for myself first." And it is only after they have done so that Sheth would consider it appropriate for qualified scions to occupy their 'Big Daddy's' chairs. But, of late, Harvard Business School has been accused of stifling whatever entrepreneurial spirit its students may possess. Nadir Godrej admits that his two years at the school did not really strike entrepreneurial chords in him. "The only inventive work I did was on the research and development side where I brought out a new plant growth chemical."



**"THE ONLY inventive work I did was on the research and development side. It struck no entrepreneurial chords."
— Nadir Godrej**

IF ANYONE is qualified enough to take a guess why Harvard breeds general managers and not entrepreneurs, it is the HBS professors themselves. Robert Hayes and William Abernathy, who jointly wrote a feature on the subject in the *Harvard Business Review* state, "Our managers still earn high marks for their skill in improving short-term efficiency, but their counterparts in Japan and America have started to question America's entrepreneurial imagination and willingness to make risky, long-term investments."

Are the Harvard MBAs just unwilling to start out from scratch? Or is it that they are such die-hard achievers that only the 'fast track' to success appeals to their ambitious natures? What does the placement profile of Indian Harvard MBAs reveal?

It seems to confirm the fact that unless they are assured of a spiralling professional career, few Indian HBS graduates return to their homeland. They prefer to hedge their bets on Wall Street where the going salary for a bright HBS man can shoot up as high as \$59,000 per annum. On the other hand, almost all Harvard MBAs with a family business in India realise that a professional degree put together with inherited clout is a sure formula for success.

Pradip P Shah, Chief of Operations at the Housing Development Finance Corporation happens to be one of the few professionals who went against this trend: he returned to his job within the company after completing his MBA in 1981. "HDFC is not owned or controlled by a single group or entity. It is run entirely by professionals. I came back because I had put in a lot of work in 1977 when the company started, and I knew I could continue from there." As a highly successful professional, Gurucharan Das is an enthusiastic crusader for the cause of professionalism. "Family-run business firms should recruit more graduates from management institutions," he suggests. "Why is it that they (business school graduates) prefer to join RHL or Levers instead of joining the Singhania or Birlas? I feel very upset when people don't allow professional managers to rise in their own companies," he adds. Perhaps the Singhania were aware of such criticism growing against their family-oriented business style, since they have been progressive enough to employ four Harvard AMPs in directorial positions.

All said and done, both professional and hereditary managers ultimately realise the basic merit in the Harvard Business School education. Just as long as HBS men develop the capacity to identify their problems, analyse them and choose the optimum course of action, they will not fail to 'crack cases' even in the real world. The skills to decipher a balance sheet and assess technological innovations are then regarded only as by-products of the Harvard education. Perhaps that is why graduates of the school's various courses find it difficult to rattle off the actual academic material they have grasped. Describing their experience at the Harvard Business School, they can say less about what they learned and more about how they changed. Looking at the high level positions a large number of them enjoy, this change seems to be primarily towards the development of their capacity for leadership.

HOWEVER, back in the real world of business, leadership roles do not come as easily as
(Continued on page 75)

THE HBS WHO'S WHO



Rahul Bajaj

ASHOK ADVANI: President and Vice Chairman, Blue Star Ltd, MBA.

ROHINTON AGA: Chairman and Managing Director, Thermax Pvt Ltd, PMD.

M V ARUNACHALAM: Director, Carborundum Universal Ltd, AMP.

RAHUL BAJAJ: Chairman and Managing Director, Bajaj Auto Ltd, MBA.

RANJI BHANDARI: Managing Director, JMA Industries Ltd, AMP.

VINAY BHARAT RAM: Director, DCM Ltd, PMD.

GURUCHARAN DAS: Managing Director, Richardson Hindustan, AMP.

V A DATAR: President, Vulcan Laval Ltd, AMP.

N M DESAI: Chairman, Larsen and Toubro Ltd, AMP.

BANSI DHAR: Director, DCM Ltd, AMP.

N B GODREJ: Director, Godrej Soaps Ltd, MBA.

AJIT N HAKSAR: Chairman Emeritus, ITC Ltd, MBA.

TANIL KILACHAND: Executive Director, Polychem Ltd, MBA.

SHRENIK LALBHAI: Managing Director, Anil Starch Products Ltd, MBA.

ANIL MALHOTRA: Member, ONGC, AMP.

SATISH PANDIT: Executive Director, Peico Electronics, SMP.

JAGDISH PARIKH: Managing Director, Lee and Muirhead Pvt Ltd, MBA.

NAAZ ROVSHEN: Vice-President, United Breweries, MBA.

SUBROTO SENGUPTA: Vice Chairman, Clarion Advertising Ltd, AMP.

PRAFULL ANUBHAI: Chairman and Managing Director, Rustom Mills and Industries Ltd, PMD.

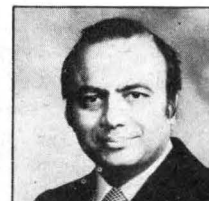
VIREN SHAH: Chairman and Managing Director, Mukand Iron and Steel Ltd, AMP.

VASANT SHETH: Chairman, Great Eastern Shipping Co Ltd, AMP.

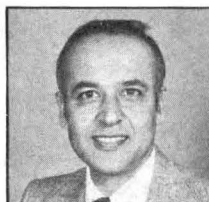
VIJAYPAT SINGHANIA: Chairman, Raymond Woollen Mills, AMP.

PRAKASH TANDON: former chairman, Hindustan Lever, AMP.

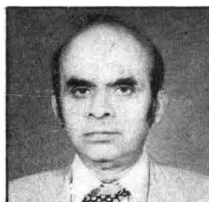
RATAN TATA: Chairman, Tata Industries Ltd, AMP.



Jagdish Parikh



Naaz Rovshen



Vasant Sheth



Ratan Tata

HOW TO GET TO HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

EVERY YEAR over 7,000 hopeful men and women apply to the Harvard Business School for the two-year MBA course. But only 785 of them actually make it to the windowless, amphitheatre-like classrooms of HBS. How does Harvard select the best and the brightest from the large number of people who apply?

Admissions to the Harvard Business School's MBA programme, as well as to its other educational programmes, is highly competitive. The basic policy of the Admission Board is to select those men and women who possess three sets of attributes — intellectual capacity, demonstrated management potential and personal characteristics — which

equip them for careers in management.

Evaluation in the first area, intellectual capacity, is based on undergraduate grades, Graduate Management Admissions Test (GMAT) scores, and graduate work, if any. The Board is more interested in the quality of the work done than in the specific course taken.

Secondly, the Board is interested in demonstrated management potential. A few applicants are able to provide sufficient evidence of their administrative skills through summer and part-time work experience and extra-curricular activities while at college. However, the Board generally prefers some full-time work history. In fact, almost 95 per cent of the students admitted

recently have had two or more years of full-time work experience after college.

Finally, the Admission Board looks for personal characteristics such as maturity, leadership, interpersonal skills, ethical standards, goal orientation and motivation. Personal integrity and responsible decision-making are of special interest.

If MBA candidates come to the school armed with this qualified résumé, perhaps Naaz Rovshen is right in saying, "It is the MBA admissions policy, more than the programme, which is outstanding at Harvard. The kind of people they let in are achievers who will succeed no matter what." ♦

(Continued from page 73)

the ones conjured up in the classrooms. Many young MBAs have to slog hard before corporations reward them with enviable positions. In many cases, the delays cause frustration and disappointment. In others, they create a restlessness to find leadership in spheres outside corporate affairs. Three enterprising young MBAs answered that restlessness by joining together to form the Harvard Business School Association of India. Mahesh Nathwani, Anand Mahindra and Pradip Shah unanimously believe that the Association will help initiate greater interaction not only between the alumni, but the business community at large. Mahesh Nathwani's idealism takes him one step further. He believes that the Association could be activated to perform the function of a 'coherent business lobby looking after business interests in the country'. According to the 31-year-old Chairman of a group of manufacturing and exporting companies, "There is virtually nobody who takes an united stand from the business point of view without taking into account a community, or an independent business group point of view." Gurucharan Das, on the other hand, maintains that the HBSAI is too small a body, at present, to have any substantial influence in the country. But, given the tenacity with which Harvard Business School men pursue their goals, perhaps Nathwani's dreams will come true.

It is obvious that the Harvard Business School Association has positioned itself as a serious working body instead of an old boys' club. And given the result-oriented mind set of the HBS alumni, this would be more than necessary to attract them to participate actively in its programmes. Says Naaz Rovshen, who finds little time to keep in touch with his classmates except for the regular X'mas mail, "The interaction will be limited to actually doing business with each other. There is no time for anything else." In most cases, whether it is the AMPs or the MBAs, the interest to keep in touch with classmates is determined by the underlying motivation to initiate profitable business transactions with them. Nadir Godrej is a conscientious alumnus who plans to return to the HBS campus for his tenth reunion in order to 'active-



"THE MOST important skills I picked up were in the areas of marketing and organisational behaviour."
— Ratan Tata

ly look for business tie-ups'. Even Ratan Tata, who claims to be a poor alumnus, realises the importance of developing personal contacts and friendships that the AMP provides him. However, he is also quick to clarify that this was not what prompted him to go to the elite business school.

Vasant Sheth is one of the only AMPs or, for that matter, one of the few Harvard men, who is reluctant to place importance on Business School contacts. He assesses the issue in objective numerical terms, "It is a combination of contact, idea and track record that gets a business off the ground. Contact is 10 per cent, idea 30 per cent and track record 50 per cent." Despite this scepticism about generating business on the strength of contacts, Sheth says he tried to do business with six classmates, but succeeded only with two.

If keeping in touch with classroom chums is going to be adulterated by ulterior business-connected motives, do real bonds ever develop between Harvard Business School alumni? Will the HBSAI ever conduct a meeting where fraternising is first on the agenda? And even if it does, will these fast track executives ever allow fruitless nostalgia to take over their dynamic goal-oriented minds? It is fine to talk about keeping contacts with successful

alumni alive, but the Harvard Business School network can hardly allow itself to turn into an opportunistic mafia. What it could do instead is exploit and extend the ambivalent bond between students that exists in the Business School classrooms. On the one hand, there is peer pressure which inculcates a competitive spirit within the group, yet, on the other hand, there is co-operation in classroom discussions which leads to a combined effort in analysing common problems.

The competitive spirit is already visible in the Indian market-place where companies are constantly aiming to double and treble turnovers over a single generation. And considering the fact that Harvard Business School men run quite a few of the growth-oriented companies, one can only assume that they have a hand in setting this trend. As far as the element of co-operation is concerned, it can be transplanted from the classroom to the executive desk by inducing this distinguished and educated group of businessmen to discuss and analyse some of their problems together. Formal bodies such as the Indian Merchant's Chamber and FICCI already exist to serve that need. However, if the Harvard Business School network was to organise itself, it could be more effective than any of its counterparts. IMC and FICCI are both losing credibility due to inbred administrative structures and intense politicking. The HBSAI, however, could carve a niche unto itself as the only organisation with a homogeneous professional base and a 'learnt' capacity for rigorous and objective analysis of economic issues.

The body has already started on the right foot by creating awards for excellence in 'corporate performance' which not only gives it the position of a standard-setting body but also, one that is considered objective and apolitical. (The winners of the awards are chosen on the basis of sound quantitative and qualitative analysis by a panel of four judges.)

In the following years, if the association succeeds in getting the HBS tycoons to put their heads together on 'cases' of larger national interest, then perhaps at the future pre-budget award functions, it will be the finance ministers who will do the listening. ♦

EXTRACT

ADVENTURES IN THE SCREEN TRADE

The Inside Story. About Stars. About
Hollywood. About Dustin Hoffman.
Goldman Should Know. He Is America's
Hottest Script-Writer.

BY WILLIAM GOLDMAN

WHO IS a star? is not as easy to answer as you may think.

Example: Back in the late '60s, *Life* magazine, then a weekly, had a performer on its cover who they said was the biggest movie star in the world. I was meeting that day with the head of one of the biggest studios. I asked if he'd seen *Life*. He said he hadn't. I told him what I've just told you. And then I asked if he'd care to guess who the performer was.

"Newman," he said.

No.

"McQueen?"

A pause now. "Can't be Poitier."

I agreed. It wasn't.

Now a long pause. Then, in a burst: "Oh shit, what's the matter with me. I'm not thinking — John Wayne."

The Duke was not on the cover.

The situation was now getting the least bit uncomfortable. "If it's a woman it's either Streisand or Julie Andrews."

I said it was a man. And then, before things got too sticky, I gave the answer. (It was Eastwood.)

And he replied after some thought, "They claim Eastwood? Eastwood's the biggest star?" Finally, after another pause, he nodded. "They're right."

The point being that if a studio giant couldn't guess the biggest star in his business, the territory is a bit murkier than most of us would imagine.

A lot of it has to do with playing hunches.

Example: In the early '70s, two big Broadway musicals were made into movies. *Cabaret* starred Liza Minnelli and was a big hit. *Fiddler On The Roof* starred Topol and took in twice as much money. But the prevailing wisdom was this: Minnelli was a brand-new star, Topol was carried by the property. Nothing much happened to his film career, but Minnelli starred in several big-budget failures until the disaster of *New York, New York* sent her scurrying back to the theatre, where she is a star — the biggest, perhaps, on Broadway.

But in movies, the answer to "Who is a star?" is "It's whoever one studio executive with 'go' power thinks is a star and will underwrite with a start date." (A superstar is someone they'll

all kill for. . . .)

HOW DO STARS happen? Invariably, by mistake.

And invariably that mistake is committed by another performer who is a bigger name at the box office. You may think of Robert Redford as a force of nature, but if Marlon Brando or Steve McQueen or Warren Beatty had said yes to the part of the Sundance Kid, Redford might well have remained what one studio executive told me he was when talk of hiring him first came up: "He's just another California blond — throw a stick at Malibu, you'll hit six of him."

If Albert Finney had agreed to play the title role in *Lawrence Of Arabia*, Peter O'Toole wouldn't have happened. If Kirk Douglas had played *Cat Ballou*, forget about Lee Marvin.

Montgomery Clift deserves special mention.

A recent biography of Clift reports that he turned down, in one short stretch, four roles: the William Holden part in *Sunset Boulevard*, the James Dean part in *East Of Eden*, the Paul Newman part in *Somebody Up There Likes Me*, and the Brando part in *On The Waterfront*. These were all crucial

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Clint Eastwood: the biggest star in the world in the '60s?

roles in their careers — would these wonderful actors have become stars if Clift had given the thumbs-up sign?

Hard to say for sure.

It's easy to say, though, that without the aid and assistance of George Raft, there is no Humphrey Bogart. I know that's hard to believe today, since Bogart has become such a revered cult figure. But he scuffled for a decade or more in second-rate stuff. *High Sierra* began the turnaround, a part that Raft rejected.

Then came *The Maltese Falcon*. Raft didn't want to play Sam Spade because he didn't trust the first-time-out director, John Huston.

Finally, *Casablanca*. Would you have enjoyed that great entertainment as much with George Raft and Hedy

Lamarr? Or Ronald Reagan and Ann Sheridan? They were all approached for the parts.

Stars happen when they have a major role in a major hit. If they're not lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time, it's back to the cattle calls and unemployment lines — or worse: television.

REMAINING a star over a period of time is a different story altogether — a story of talent and intelligence.

Dudley Moore, from the beginning, was gifted and bright. Twenty years ago, he and three of his college peers were the sensation of the Broadway season in the revue *Beyond The Fringe*. Moore was then and is now a tremen-

dous musician — pianist, composer — in addition to his charm as a performer.

But with all that, nothing much happened to him.

He made some movies in England — lead roles — but they stiffed. He came to America eventually and it was still the same story: too short, too 'special', no chance. The best he got was a good supporting role in *Foul Play*. But Chevy Chase was the romantic lead in that movie. If you had said, back in 1978, that Dudley Moore could be a romantic lead, they would have locked you out of The Bistro.

Then George Segal left *10*. Just before shooting, he walked the picture. With no time to waste, Blake Edwards chose Moore to replace him.

10 was a smash. Dudley Moore was

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Dudley Moore: if George hadn't walked out of 10, would he be a star?

a star.

At least that's what the backers of *Arthur* thought. And *Arthur* turned out to be even a bigger hit than *10*, so obviously they were right, right?

Sorry.

Arthur opened, but barely. It was, as they say in the business, 'soft'. But *Arthur* had, as they also say in the business, 'legs'. Word of mouth was wonderful, audiences kept coming in increasing numbers. It became, along with *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and *Superman II*, one of that summer's sensations. Moore was no star after *10*. (Miss Derek probably had at least a little something to do with its success.)

But he sure is now. . . .

“ADD ONE-THIRD for the shit.” This is a Hollywood expression I have heard used mainly by production managers. Production managers, sometimes called line producers, are at the heart of any

film. They are the men who make out the schedules, do the budgeting, and are on call every hour of every day, both before and during and after shooting. When there is a crisis, the man who must solve it is the production manager.

The expression refers to the actual cost of having a star on a film.

Stars, like Madison Avenue buses, never go out alone. There is, always, 'the entourage'. Marilyn Monroe toward the end, and Elizabeth Taylor at her peak, were famous for the number of people they added to the pay-roll. Secretaries, chauffeurs, hairdressers, make-up specialists, still others to care for their costumes, acting coaches, masseurs, various gurus, on and on.

Suppose the picture already has hired, say, make-up personnel. There is a certain standard ritual that follows. The production manager — and these men live and die by trying to stay within budget — will be contacted by

the make-up specialist for the star. "Sorry, love to have you, but we've already got our people." Fine. Then the make-up specialist contacts the star or the star's agent and explains, often tearfully, that deep as is his (or her) devotion to the star, much as he (or she) would love to continue the association, the studio says no.

There will then be more phone calls, often rising in pitch. The small battle will go on until the preordained result: the star's make-up specialist will be hired, and at a much greater salary than they ordinarily command because the star insists on it. Therefore, there will be salaries paid for double (or triple) make-up personnel, many of whom end up with nothing to do.

Why production managers bother to engage in these little wars I can't say — because the studio rarely backs them up. Day after day, the production manager gets pasted. I suppose they hang in because they care. And maybe someday, some glorious future morning, they'll win one.

Beyond the entourage are the 'perks'. These can include the question of how much the star will get per week for spending money. (Thousands is the answer.) And how many free plane tickets will the star get from location to home? And how many of the entourage will also get plane tickets? And maybe the star already owns a trailer. And would like it a lot if you would rent the trailer. Fine, the trailer is rented. These things may not seem like much, but they are infinite in number. (Agents, often to justify their percentage when all they really do for a big star is make a phone call, are geniuses when it comes to devising new things to ask for. Which they can then tell their clients have never been gotten before. More than one star has used the same word to me in describing this perk or that: "It's precedential," they say.)

One must also never forget the top technicians. Some stars, as we'll see, have partner-producers; well, they go on the pay-roll. Or a pet cinematographer without whom they don't show. Or a friend who is a musician and will get paid a ton for any minimal assistance he may contribute to the composer.

EXTRACT

STORIES OF STAR misbehaviour have been a part of the Hollywood legend, I suppose, from the time Florence Lawrence first got billing. When they occur, they spread through the community with amazing speed. One is apt to hear the latest anecdote half a dozen times within a day of its taking place. Here are four. (I have named names in only two, not because I delight in being 'hinty', but because the performers involved have recently died.)

One: A crucial beach scene is being shot. A cabin has been built on the sand and the weather, for reasons of plot, has to be brilliant sunshine. The set-up involves the male star of the picture.

The first day — fog. No shooting at all. Just a lot of frustration and a great waste of money.

The second day — fog. Again no shooting, and now the frustration is turning sour. The whole crew is sulking, the director is being eaten alive by the studio over costs.

The third day — yes, fog again, but this time it seems to be lighter. And as the hours drag on, at long, long last, there seems to be a definite chance to shoot. If the fog will only continue to burn away.

Hours pass. The sky is definitely brightening and the crew races for position. They stare at the sky, literally praying for sunshine.

Finally the sun breaks through for a moment — and precisely at that moment the male star jumps into a dune buggy and goes for a long ride down the beach. The entire crew turns toward the director and on their faces he sees their message: Do something.

The director, helpless, turns away from the crew, stares out at the ocean, and cannot stop the tears of frustration from streaming down his face. (He swore, as he stood there, never to work with a star again.)

The sun goes away, the fog returns. So does the male star half an hour later. He hops out of the dune buggy and can't understand why everyone seems so unhappy. . . .

Two: Rehearsals of *Marathon Man* in New York. Dustin Hoffman and Roy Scheider are about to rehearse their first scene together. Hoffman has the vehicle role and is the more import-



Roy Scheider: amazingly patient with the childish Hoffman.

ant of the two, but Scheider, coming off the lead in *Jaws*, is not chopped liver.

In the story, they play brothers. Hoffman is a graduate student. Scheider, whom he adores and thinks is in the oil business, actually works for the government as a killer and a spy.

Hoffman has just been brutally mugged in the park. He has written this to Scheider. Scheider suspects it was not an accident — bad guys are trying to get at him by threatening his kid brother. So he comes down from Washington to visit.

It's night, and Hoffman is asleep. Suddenly, he realises he's not alone in his apartment, so he grabs a flashlight from his bed table and points it around the room, trying to catch the intruder. As he does this, he has a line of dialogue: HOFFMAN (very James Cagney): "I got a gun, you make a move, I'll blow your ass to Shanghai."

Okay, rehearsal. A mock set is prepared. Hoffman lies down, closes his eyes, Scheider mimes opening a door, bangs his foot down to indicate the

closing of the door, and Hoffman springs awake, mimes getting the flashlight, and says his Shanghai line.

Then rehearsals stop.

Hoffman says to hold it and he turns to the director, John Schlesinger, and tells him that he thinks it wrong for his character to have a flashlight in his bed table.

Schlesinger tells him we'll get to it later, let's continue rehearsing the scene, please.

Hoffman shakes his head. The character that he is playing, he feels, would not have a flashlight by his bed.

Now, if this had not been a star complaining, Schlesinger or any director would have told him that they were wasting rehearsal time, which was gold, since most movies don't bother with rehearsal. (The studios don't like it, they can't see rushes the next day, they consider it a waste of money. I think they're wrong — rehearsals *save* money, because you can work out problems without the intense pressure of a crew standing around doing nothing. Studios are, in this case, like the

EXTRACT



Al Pacino: normally quite professional, but he does lose his cool.

late Sam Goldwyn, who used to creep to the writer's building on the lot and was unhappy if he didn't hear typewriters clicking.)

But Dustin Hoffman is very much a star, and he has to be dealt with. Scheider stands quietly in the imaginary doorway, waiting.

A lot of people have flashlights by their bed tables, Schlesinger tries.

Hoffman isn't playing a lot of people, he is playing Babe and Babe wouldn't have a flashlight by his bed table.

Schlesinger makes another attempt: You've just been mugged, you're upset, you're taking precautions.

No sale.

Now a practical assault from the director: We need the effect of the flashlight beam bouncing off the walls to add interest to the scene.

Hoffman replies there won't be any scene worth anything if he can't play it, and he can't justify the goddamn flashlight.

Through all this, silent and waiting, stands Scheider.

And that is probably my strongest memory of the situation — it took an hour, by the way — Scheider, waiting quietly, a perfect gentleman through it all.

Now, as stated, rehearsals are meant to deal with problems. And Hoffman is not only one of the best actors we have, he is also known to be a perfectionist. And may be in his preparations he really couldn't figure out why his character would have a flashlight in his bed table.

But that sure wasn't my feeling in the rehearsal hall at the end of the day. Rather it was this: Hoffman was perfectly able to justify anything, he is that skilled; in my opinion, he didn't want the flashlight because he was afraid his fans would think him chicken.

I believed that then and still do. But that is the kind of thing one dares not mention to a star.

THREE: A movie is shooting on a Hollywood sound stage and the female star is number one in the world. By half past nine, the first set-

up is ready. The star is in her trailer and the second assistant director goes about one of his functions: delivering the talent from the trailer to the set.

He knocks on the trailer door and says, "Ready." Pause. Then the star's hairdresser appears in the doorway and says the star is not ready. (Rule of thumb: Female stars are closer to their hairdressers and make-up people than to anyone else on the set. Male stars tend to buddy around with their make-up and wardrobe personnel.)

Anyway, the second assistant returns to the set with his message: The Lady is not coming. The director is sitting in his chair, waiting. They decide to give her a few minutes.

A few minutes pass. Now the first assistant director knocks on the trailer door. Again the hairdresser appears and says the same thing. The first goes back to the director and tells him: "She won't come out." (I think, by the way, that this may be my favourite star story. Sure, it's outrageous, but eventually it gets funny and, strangely, human.)

Now the director sits in his chair and begins to ponder. She won't come out: Why?

The obvious answer hits him: script trouble; she doesn't like the scene she's going to play. He contemplates that awhile. He opens the screenplay, reads the sequence — she has told him she likes the sequence.

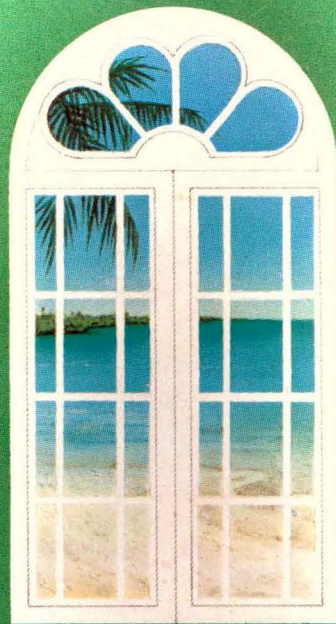
Can't be script trouble.

He thinks some more. Of course, he could have gone to the trailer himself at this point, but he felt that would be wrong. First of all, there's protocol going against it — it's not his job to escort talent to the set. The director is boss on the set. That's where he belongs. Beyond protocol there lies the subtle and always shifting balance of power. If he goes to get her now, he's giving in. Just a little, but still. And if he gives in a little today, who knows how much he'll have to give in tomorrow.

But dammit, why won't she come out?

She's *the* female star, and not unknown for outbursts, but this is not the kind of thing she ordinarily does.

And now the real answer comes clear: She won't come out because of his not letting her see the dailies. They had had words about the problem be-



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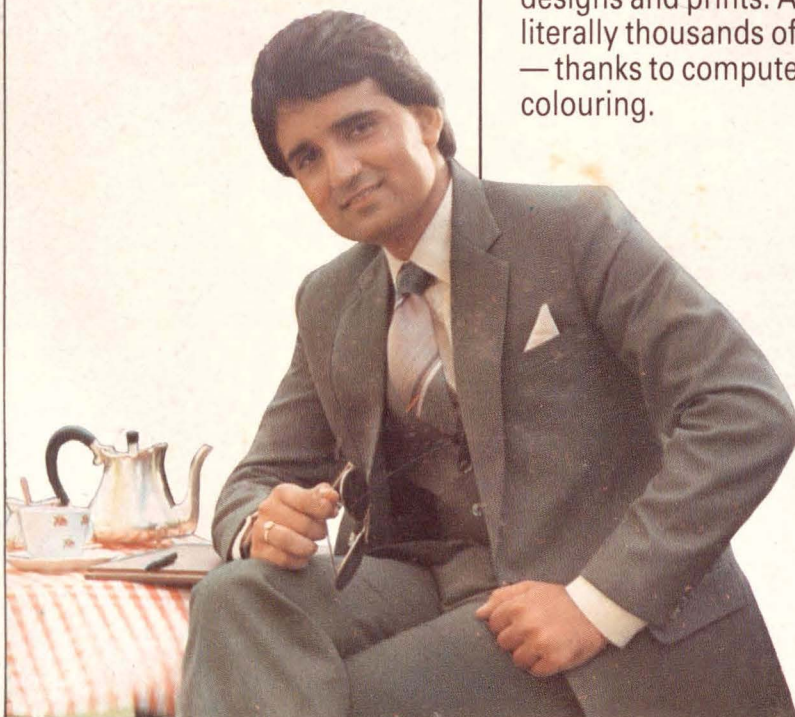
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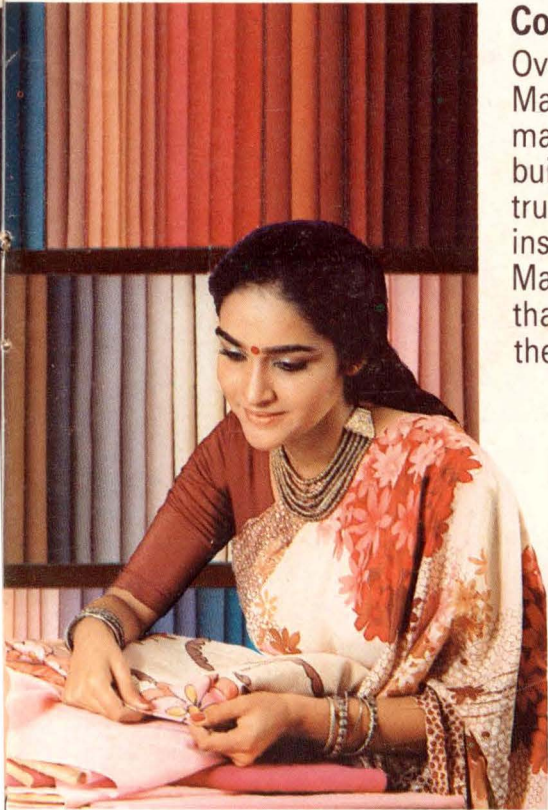
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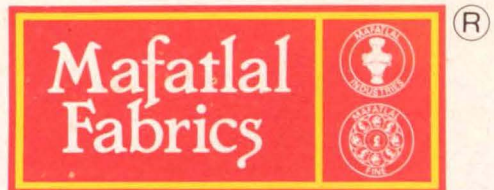
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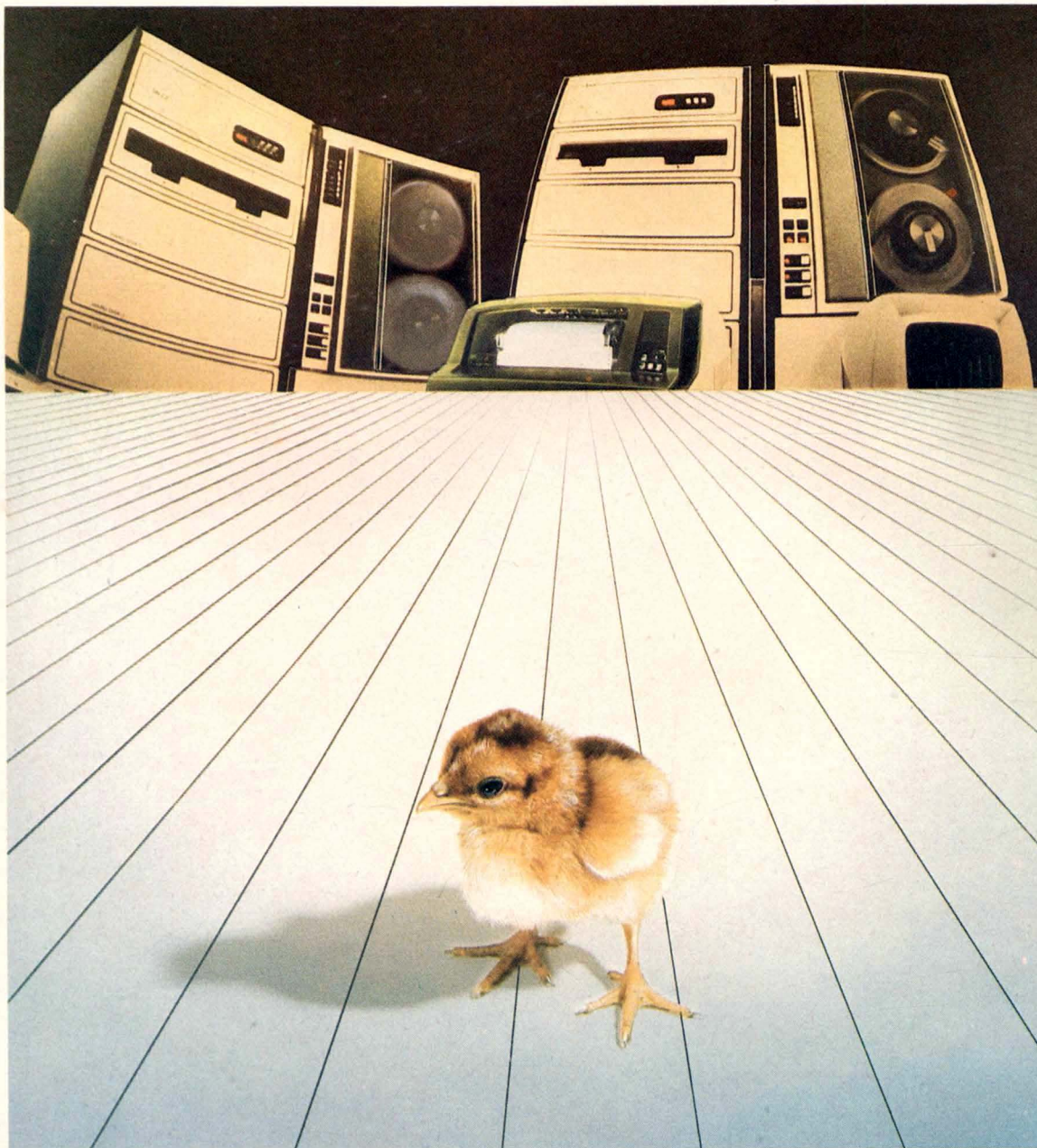
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fore shooting. She always saw dailies to her pictures, but he didn't want her to.

For the following reason: As famous as she is, she is insecure about her looks, and after viewing dailies the first week, she is notorious for having the cameraman fired.

The director didn't want to deal with that problem, so before he took the picture, when they met, he suggested that she be the cameraman. She said she didn't know how. He told her, well, let's hire the best man available who *does* know how and let him do his job.

She asked are you saying I can't see dailies?

He replied that that was the case.

Now, she is powerful and he could have been discarded. But she gave in. Because (1) she wanted him to do the picture and (2) he was young and hot and he didn't care if he did the picture or not.

Time is passing. Word reaches the picture's production office that nothing is going on. The star is entrenched in her dressing-room and won't budge. The production office calls the head of the studio. The head of the studio calls his top vice-president and says go handle this.

So the top vice-president goes to the trailer and knocks, announcing himself, and opens the door — except he can't, because now it's locked.

And from inside comes the voice of the hairdresser saying the star is not ready and won't come out.

The top vice-president trots back to the office of the studio head and the studio head himself decides to get everything back on track.

But she won't unlock the door for him either. There is only the voice of the hairdresser saying, "Not now."

At which point the head of the studio, his top vice-president, the production manager of the movie, and various other notables gather around the director, who is sitting as before, waiting in his chair.

Roughly, their message is this: It's your ass if you can't get her out of her trailer and onto the set. So the director goes to the trailer and knocks, giving his name.

Go away.

It's me, he says; let's talk.



Sylvester Stallone: \$ 10 million is cheap!

Long, long pause. Then there is the sound of the door being unlocked and the hairdresser opens it and beckons and the director goes warily inside.

Where his star is silently crying her eyes out. As he moves toward her she falls into his arms and collapses, wailing now. He holds her — for five minutes he stands there with her limp in his arms, weeping out of control.

And in those five minutes the director realises that he has been wrong about the script and wrong about the dailies. This kind of grief can only be caused by one thing. Her marriage had shattered. She had been secretly seeing another performer and obviously her husband had found out and her husband had guided her career and now it

was all *ppfft*.

The director tries to calm her. "It's all right. Just take it easy. I'm on your side. We can talk about it. Whatever you tell me, I'm on your team, believe that." On and on he goes and on and on she cries. But eventually the sobs lessen; she is regaining at least the start of control.

He holds her, gently reassuring her. Finally, she is able to talk. He asks her if she feels up to going into the problem.

She nods.

Good, he says, what happened?

And then, haltingly, she gives the secret to her torment. Her toy poodle died the night before.

The director, an animal lover, tells

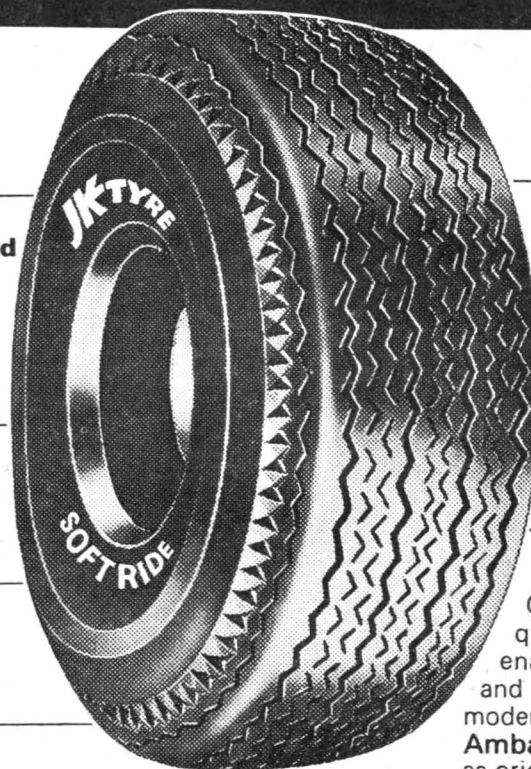
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Dustin Hoffman: spoilt, childish and extremely selfish.

her he understands.

No, you don't, she says; you don't understand at all. He died eating.

Now she is crying again but able to talk. And her poodle did not die of kibble or Ken-L-Ration. Rather, as a treat, she had given him a great big juicy lamb chop for dinner and gone away and let him enjoy it.

The dog, apparently overcome with its good fortune, enjoyed it too quickly. He choked on the bone and nothing the star or her veterinarian did could bring him back. Not only has the star lost her pet, it's her fault — she had no business giving it a lamb chop in the first place.

The next little while the star and director talked about the dog and what a loss it was, and the director remembers thinking that all the terms they used were as if they were talking of a dead child. It was insane, but it was undeniably sad. Or it was sad, but it was undeniably insane.

Eventually, he got her to leave the trailer. But it was hours before the make-up people could hide the damage done to her face by her tears. . . .

THERE WERE NO TEARS shed in this fourth and last behaviour story. It was angry and it made many newspapers. The story was never denied. That doesn't make it any less gossipy, but it does suggest that the incident may well have happened.

The surprising thing to me is that it concerned that most professional of stage stars, Al Pacino. Of all the stars, he is the one who most consistently returns to the theatre and whom I find consistently brilliant. Theatre is still run on fairly strict lines: If you're late or you miss performances, word spreads immediately, almost always to the detriment of the show, sometimes damaging it to the point of closing.

Anyway, Pacino was making *Author! Author!* and the company was shooting an exterior scene in Gloucester, Massachusetts. In the winter.

The windchill factor was way below.

The whole crew was ready for the shot. Ready and waiting. Pacino stayed in his trailer for over an hour. When he finally emerged, he walked into the set-up and decided he didn't like the lighting. Something about it reminded

him of the lighting from an earlier film of his, *Cruising*. He wanted the lighting changed.

Arthur Hiller, as gentlemanly a director as any now operating, exploded. He told Pacino he was thoughtless and that a hundred people had been waiting in subfreezing weather. He said all this strongly.

Pacino responded strongly in kind, told Hiller off, gathered up his entourage, then plunged into his limousine and was gone. (He returned hours later, when it was no longer possible to do the shot.)

Now, I have no idea what this action cost the film. Maybe 100,000 dollars. I would think at least 50. Whatever it set the picture back, you can bank that the money was not made up for out of Al Pacino's multimillion-dollar salary.

Temperamental stars affect screenwriters only tangentially. On occasion, if a star is too difficult, a studio may choose not to get involved with him even though he or she may be ideal for the script you've written. More often, if a poisonous atmosphere invades the sound stage, if crucial people are not speaking to each other except through intermediaries the quality of the film can be affected. This is no law — some of the happiest sets produced the unhappiest results, and vice versa. It may not hurt your movie, but it probably won't do it a whole lot of good either.

Some stars do misbehave, in infinite ways, but always for the same reason: They do it because they can. . . .

BURT REYNOLDS and Clint Eastwood are not just the biggest stars in America (and probably the world), they are a good deal more. With the results of the 1981 Quigley poll, they are setting popularity records that far exceed Gable or Cooper or Grant or just about any other movie star.

Reynolds was voted the top star for the fourth consecutive year. Only Bing Crosby had held the number-one spot longer — he had lasted five years — and the way Reynolds's career is going, I will be surprised if he doesn't tie Crosby when the 1982 results are available.

Eastwood's record is equally remarkable: he has now been one of the top ten stars for 14 years in a row.

EXTRACT

John Wayne has held a consistent hold on the public's fancy longer — 16 years. But since Eastwood seems more at ease with himself than any other star, again, I will be surprised if he doesn't surpass Wayne three years down the line. Reynolds and Eastwood are genuinely phenomenal.

So, in a somewhat different way, is Sylvester Stallone. The success of *Rocky* (then without the Roman numeral) lifted him from as much obscurity as any talented actor wants to deal with, to the top popularity spot in the country — he was number one in 1977.

Then came *FIST*, a big-budget film and a disappointment. Followed by *Paradise Alley* (which he also directed) — a disaster, but at least a low-budget one. Then *Rocky II*. And this past year, two films: *Nighthawks* was another big-budget film and another disappointment. Most recently, *Victory* — expensive and a total wipeout. The 1982 Quigley poll doesn't even list Stallone in the top 25 stars, much less the top ten. And what is his reward for this career in which he has demonstrated four times in his last five outings that there are no multitudes waiting out there to receive him?

Ten million dollars. For that is the amount Stallone is being paid to write, direct, and star in *Rocky III*. Have you ever heard such madness? Can you believe that figure? Probably the largest amount of money ever paid a performer in the entire history of the civilized world. Isn't that insanity?

Me, I think it's a steal.

To try and make sense of that, I must now deal with the major exception that I mentioned earlier.

WHAT IS the major exception? Well... it's... it's something.

I mean it's there, it's just hard to isolate. And 'something' may be about as close as I'm going to come.

Paul Newman, in discussing the careers of European versus American stars, put it this way: "One of the difficult things is that American filmgoers seem less able and willing to accept actors or actresses in a wide variety of roles — they get something they hook on to and they like, and that's what they want to see."

In the case of Stallone, they could care less about him as a labour leader

or a soccer goalie. But let him be Rocky Balboa, the pug, and they'll stand happily in line for hours.

As I am writing this chapter, it is March and *Rocky III* won't be out till summer. I haven't seen it, haven't heard boo about it. But I don't just think it's going to be a hit, I wouldn't be surprised if it turned out to be bigger than the original. My reason isn't logical, but of all the sequels of recent years, *Rocky II* came closer to being a remake than any other. It was the same song, second verse, except this time the final decision of the fight was different. My guess is that Stallone, being the shrewd and skilled writer that he is, will ring in some innovations this time. (By the time this book comes out, *Rocky III* will probably be on cable, but I won't change this paragraph under any conditions. So we'll see what kind of studio executive I'd make.)

And though Stallone may be an extreme example, the same kind of point can be made about our two biggest stars. Eastwood has to beat up on people. When he doesn't, as in *The Beguiled* or the more recent and very sweet *Bronco Billy*, a film that he also directed, the audience is considerably smaller. *Bronco Billy*, for example, attracted less than a third of the audience than the Eastwood film that preceded it, *Any Which Way You Can*. Clint Eastwood is really only Clint Eastwood when he's the toughest guy on the block.

And Reynolds, in the four years he's been at the top, is only Reynolds when he can get his hands on the wheel of a car and have extraordinary adventures. When he acts an ordinary guy (*Starting Over*) or Cary Grant (*Rough Cut, Paternity*), forget it.

One final extreme example. In the four years of his self-imposed retirement, Steve McQueen was getting unreal offers. A million a week for three weeks in two different movies, back-to-back. Six million for a month and a half's work. He was the international star. Well, during that time he made one movie, *An Enemy Of The People* — and no one would book it. (I think it tried a run somewhere — maybe Minneapolis — and expired before the first fortnight.)

The public didn't want McQueen in

Ibsen, for Chrissakes. They wanted bang-bang pictures, they had no interest in seeing him act.

I'm sure McQueen knew that before he started *An Enemy Of The People*. Just as I'm sure Reynolds knows where his power lies. So why does he keep trying to expand his scope, why isn't he satisfied just doing Smokey?

I don't know Reynolds, but I've followed his career enough to be positive of this. He's serious. He got his first stage part in 1956 and was good enough a year later to get cast in a major revival of *Mister Roberts* at New York's City Centre. And he was good enough a few years after that to get one of the top roles in *Look, We've Come Through* by Hugh Wheeler, a writer who was good enough to win not one but three Tony awards.

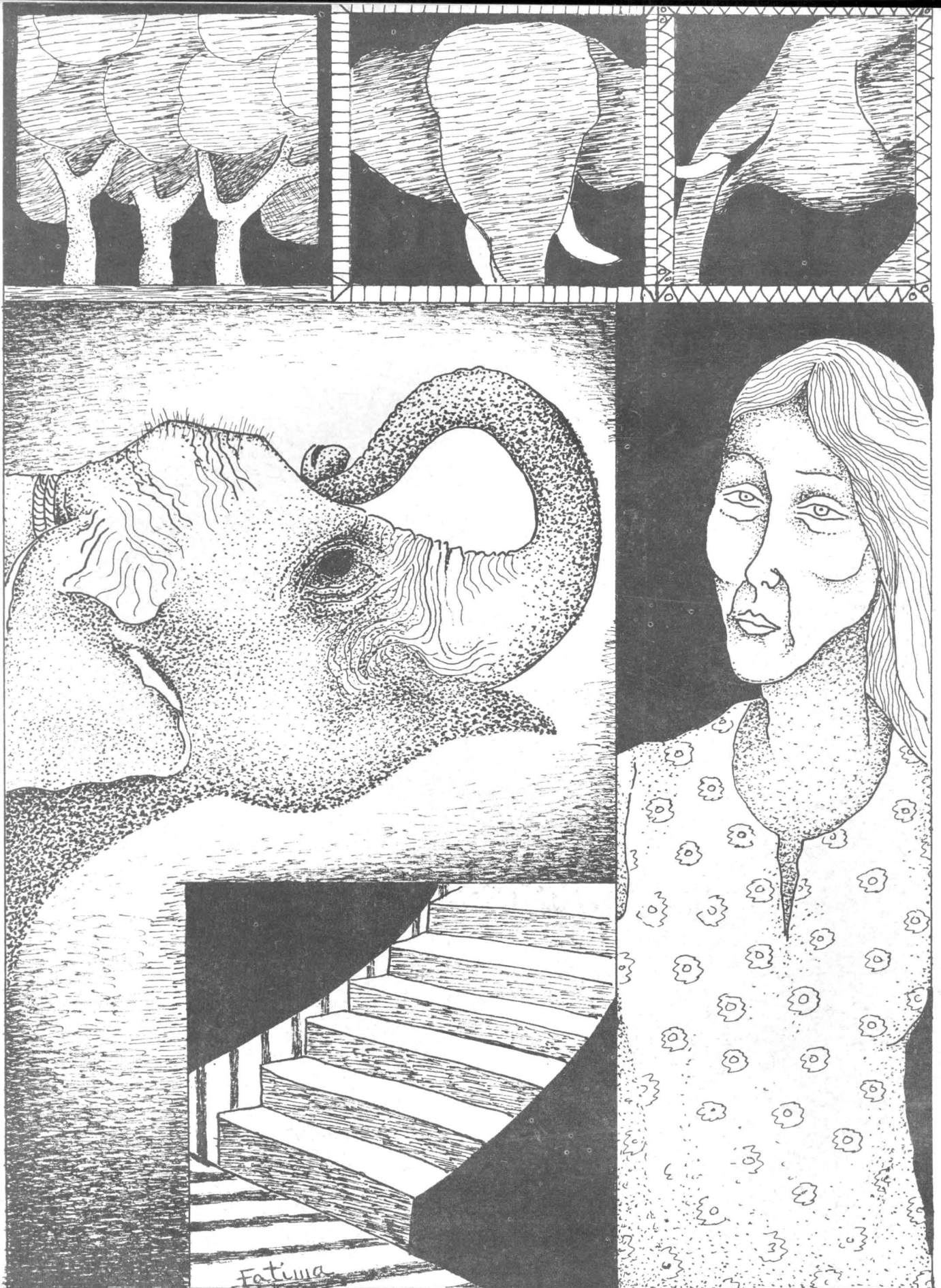
And look what Reynolds has been through. All those dreary TV series — *Riverboat, Hawk, Dan August*. And look at his earlier film doozies — *Navajo Joe* and *Sam Whiskey* and *Shark!* He was damn near two decades in the wilderness, doing crap because he had to; now, when he doesn't have to, why shouldn't he do what he pleases?

So there is this strange 'something', this nerve that is struck simultaneously in audiences all around the world. And when that happens, it's like discovering a vein of gold. Which is, of course, wonderful. But which also makes for a certain nervousness, because no one can predict the richness of the vein, or its breadth, or its depth, or when it will run dry...

So, with the major exception aside, stars are essentially meaningless. Studio executives know this — they know that the picture is the star.

But they are paying four million plus to Dustin Hoffman to appear in *Tootsie*. Of Hoffman's last three films, *Agatha* and *Straight Time* were disasters. The other was *Kramer Vs Kramer*, for which he deserved every award he got. But don't tell me the picture would have stiffed if Redford or Nicholson had played the lead. The picture was the star. To repeat, studio executives know that to be true. They absolutely, positively, one hundred percent in their heart of hearts, in the dark nights of the souls, they know it.

They just don't believe it, that's all...



FICTION

Partly Living

By Nisha da Cunha

AND WE GOT TO CLARE ROAD in Madras without much trouble, the trouble really began when we realised we had to go in at the gate and face what we had to face, not just feel we had achieved something getting to Clare Road in Madras without turning back. It was a large house set in a great garden and the garden had two mango trees, two *chikoo* trees, one *champak* tree, one guava tree and no grass at all. It was a garden of dust, no grass, only dust and a mangy bitch with two tiny pups in the dust, but by then we had reached four marble steps to a deep verandah with two cane chairs and a table and a swing. The swing swung gently as though someone had just got up from it or it had a life of its own because no leaf stirred. And we climbed the four steps and waited on the verandah hoping nothing more was expected of us, but then the silence was very quiet so we called out "Alison" and waited and then called "Alison" again and an upstairs shutter creaked and a voice called "Yes – who is it? Is it someone for me?" and we said, "It's us" and she said, "Who is us?" And then when we said who we were, there was a silence, and then a kind of muffled joyous shout and coming down the steps sort of sounds and the front door opened and it was indeed Alison. She hugged us and we kissed her and we wanted terribly to cry because though it was Alison it was Alison as she might have looked at 60 which is alright if you are 60 or even 50. She was painfully thin and pale and her hair in a long blonde-streaked-with-grey plait with some dirty string tied at the end of it. She wore a loose housecoat, cheap flowered cotton with all the colour washed out of it except a faint lilac, it looked grubby and so did her thin neck and her bare blue-veined feet.

And she said, "How did you come, how could you know I needed you to come, and after all these years, and I knew this morning that something good was going to happen but I couldn't have dreamt anything as good as you coming." And we felt stupid and ashamed and sad and thought of all the years between when we might have tried to come, before – before this happened to Alison this looking 60 when she was our age. And of course then we said the wrong thing. We asked her to come with us, now, at once with us, we were stupid and should have realised she wasn't a stray puppy we could feed and bathe and make well

Nisha da Cunha teaches English at Bombay's St Xavier's College.

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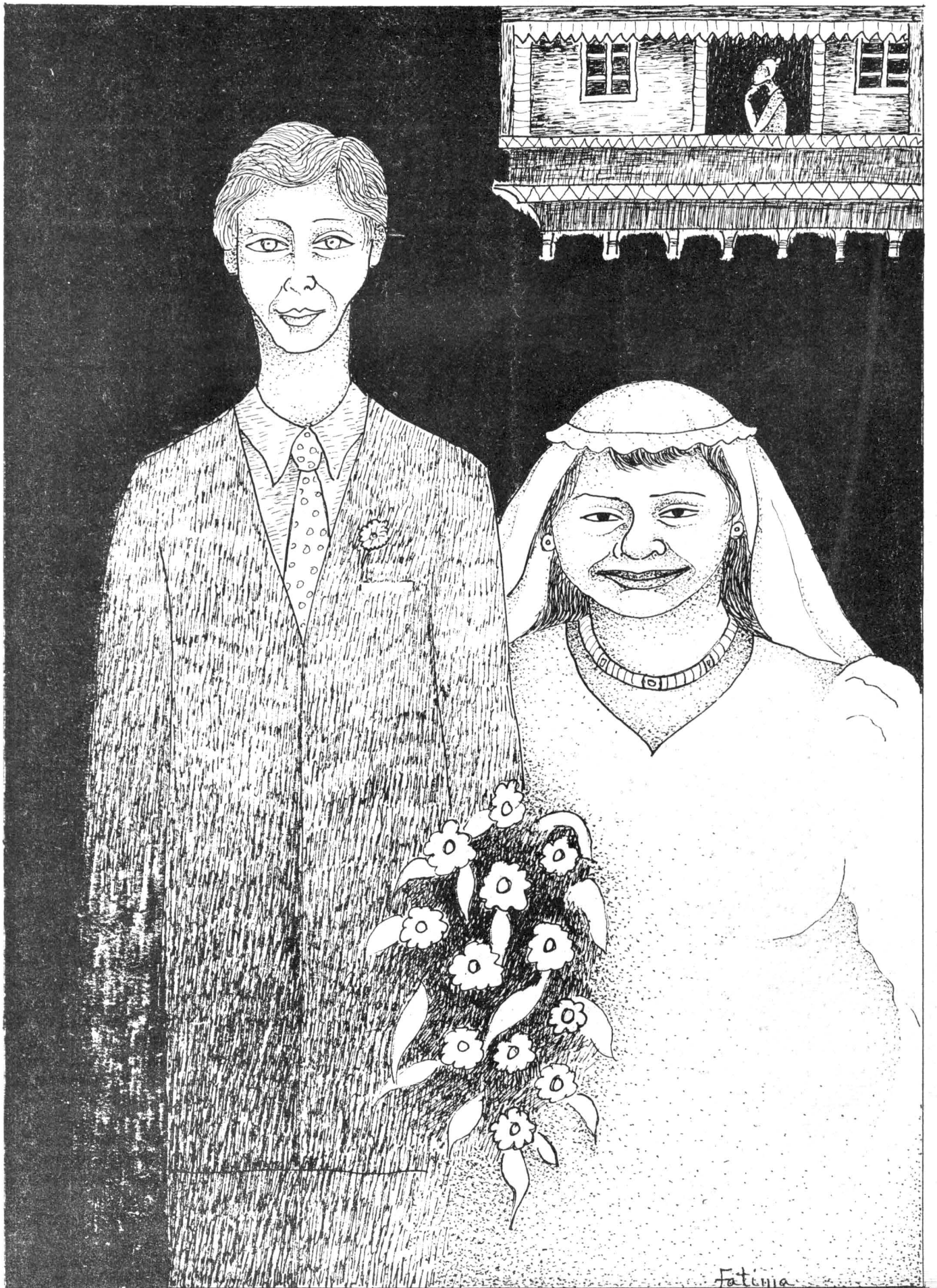
again just because we loved her and felt so sorry for her. And she seemed cross for a while, and hurt, and said, "Come with you? How do you mean? This is my home, people don't just leave home. I mean they live there and they die there," but she thanked us, and we asked her if she was alone and she said yes, except for Vishnu. We daren't ask her who Vishnu was, we hoped so much that it was a child, and she said, "Would you like to see Vishnu?" and we said yes, and she took us down the steps into the garden and round to the back of the house where there were four large stables and she called out "Vishnu," and then "Vishnu" again, and out of one of the stables came a large old elephant, ungainly and wrinkled the same colour as the dust which was everywhere. He came straight to her and touched her most lovingly over and over with his trunk and she stroked him and spoke to him and he looked immense and she so tiny next to him. We were shocked because it meant everything we'd heard was true and also shocked because she was so very small next to Vishnu and she had said, they were alone now, just the elephant and Alison.

We went back to the verandah and we sat on the cane chairs and Alison sat on the swing. After a while she said, "Only Vishnu's left — all the others died because Ram died, they really did die of love for him but Vishnu's waiting for me, I shouldn't think he'll have very long to wait now. But really he is wonderful. I'd hate him to go first because then I'd have to worry about what to do and maybe where to go. I can't go back to England there's nobody left, and here I'm alright except every so often when I get rather ill, and then I know what to do I just go to this hospital and they look after me and Vishnu waits for me — elephants must have wonderful memories because sometimes I'm ill for rather a long time but he waits and doesn't seem to hold it against me — he's always very loving in his welcome home again. Do you want to see my house?" Downstairs there was a large living-room and all the walls were covered with photographs and drawings and paintings of elephants and everywhere except the kitchen had elephants. Up the stairs

and in the bedroom it was all pen and ink or sepia or charcoal or photographs of elephants. It was staggering it was frightening, because it was an obsessed feeling just this creature everywhere. In the bedroom there was a large four-poster bed, beautiful old brass and every wall every table was elephants. "Ram did all the paintings and all the sketches and the photographs are by me, do you remember when I first came to India I could hardly hold a box camera?" We went down again and we sat on the chairs and the swing and she said she knew we were worrying but we were not to worry because though it all seemed rather lonely, she'd had rather good times in her life, and really awful times as well — of course. "Remember David? Oh it was so super being married to David and all those children it was odd though wasn't it how whenever I loved a man I was always left with masses of stuff left from his earlier life like David's five children and Ram's four elephants. It was strange David wanting to marry me but what fun we'd had. I was younger than three of his children and holidays in Skye we had seemed to own the island and we all chased the sheep and always laughed rather a lot, that was nice I can't remember laughing very much later in my life. And that was ten years of my life and David fell in love with Susan, had we met Susan? She wasn't very nice with the children, but I suppose David must have loved her because he chucked us all up for her. It was shattering for me because really I wasn't equipped to do anything, a job or anything. And then I came to India. It was awful till I came south and started learning dancing and started photographing things and then decided on elephants, stone-sculptured ones till I met Ram. Ram owned four, he hired them out for processions and marriages, and he loves his elephants and they adored him and really I fell in love with Ram because really, only a really good man could be so loved by those elephants. Really they would stop feeding if ever he went anywhere and that's why we never could go on a holiday. He liked my photographs and said I ought to start on real ones now, like his, and use them in a book and he'd help me.

And then he found me this house and I found the brass four-poster bed and he moved in and of course, the elephants and we built the stables. The only problem was he was married and his wife made an awful fuss which was a pity since she did not like Ram and did not like sharing him with elephants and you had to realise that, already don't you know it, you couldn't dream of having Ram unless you shared his elephants, you just couldn't have him alone and you couldn't be jealous. Of course people weren't very nice to me, in fact they were very rude, called me dreadful things but we were very happy and I hardly left the house and garden except for once when Ram took me to a temple near the sea and the elephants in stone were incredible and we were very happy. His wife was on a pilgrimage and we were carefree and only sometimes worried about the elephants at home. And then a few days before we were to return Ram picked up a nasty rusty nail deep in his foot and didn't tell me about it — it was very bad and he was in great pain and he died. When I got back of course everybody blamed me and I was very lonely; but I couldn't go away because you don't just lock up and leave four elephants all alone even though your life seems all finished — I mean you do see, don't you?" And we mumbled some things knowing we'd probably have left.

"So while there's Vishnu I'll be here. I just hope he dies first so he's not left all by himself. I get rather tired sometimes and I long for Ram and the life we had together but there's nothing to be done about that — it's over. When will you come again? Don't leave it too long. It's so good to see you — will you come again, or is it all too awful? I mean the dust and these chairs — but there is Vishnu and the trees and we could have chats on this verandah, the swing was Ram's favourite place. Sometimes when nobody has been on it, it sways, it has a life of its own — but come, promise to come, now that you know I'm here — promise? Remember Caitlin Thomas? Left-over life to kill — I am partly living — promise to come." We were such liars. We promised.



Fatima

FICTION

Love Story

I GREW UP IN BYCULLA. I am fat, I have always been fat, even after everything was over and everything that was likely to happen to me was over, I remained fat, perhaps I got fatter – I don't know. Also I have seldom met anyone as plain as I am plain. And dark. Not interesting dark, just ordinary smudgy dark that you can do nothing about. Since the rest of my family are rather fair it has caused a lot of interested speculation, also some gossip among those that way inclined, but Mum said I must have taken after an odd aunt somewhere along the line. I should have liked to have met her since she was so sorely maligned. I went through school and college looking awful and my hair looked awful and my legs in school skirts looked unspeakable. But my Mum always said "Beryl is the nice one, Beryl is my girl." Since my sister Audrey never seemed to mind this remark of my Mum I realised it was not all that important to be nice. Anyway Audrey didn't mind anything very much, she was the lucky one. Audrey was very pretty.

In my first year of college I met Nicky. Nicky was like a story-book, he was very tall, he was very beautiful. There was really no other way to describe him even if you could dislike him. He was completely beautiful even in his first year in college. Of course he looked steadily better and better. At the end of the first term in college the Social Service League went on a camp to Gujarat to build a road and help with wells. Anyway I went and Nicky went. For three weeks we worked very hard and learned a lot of useful things. All day we were at work on that road and in the evening there was a great sense of tiredness and a sense of having done something. Sometimes we were allowed to go for walks and I would go off on my own and sometimes Nicky asked if he could come with me. We didn't talk much. Of course I loved him right from then but tried not to think about it much, it seemed so impossible with me so fat and plain and he being as I said so extraordinarily beautiful. When the camp was over Nicky got dysentery very bad and had to go to hospital. He lived with his aunt as his family lived in Goa. I found out that he was in a hospital called Messina, a beautiful place most unlike a hospital, set in wonderful gardens with incredible masses of trees and bird-sounds and marvellous stairways and marble floors, and I went one day to see him with Shakespeare's sonnets and grapes, he had told me once

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that he hated cut flowers. He was really very ill and very thin and said "I waited for you to come and now you are here." I was so charmed that he should say this that I stopped feeling fat and plain and never did again with him till I looked in the mirror. I went to see him every day and read the sonnets which he loved and thought that if the poet had written nothing else he would still have been the greatest poet and one day Nicky said that would I like to live in Goa – his home was there on an island called Piedade and it was very beautiful or would I miss Bombay too much? I said nobody misses home for just a holiday and he said he hadn't meant just for a holiday but something more permanent, when we got married and for a while I thought I would die I wanted it so much and so badly but then I thought I am so fat and plain how can he think like this and maybe it's because he had been so ill. But after he was well he came home and asked my Mum if he could marry me after we were through with college. I think my Mum was shocked and fell in love with him too, that first time. He looked so clean, and, well, unusual in our awful house with its dreadful curtains and breakfast crumbs still on the table and egg stains on the table-cloth and the salt cellars like elves and the awful pictures from calendars framed on the walls. My Mum was also flabbergasted and couldn't believe her ears or my luck and called me a 'dark one' and said we were too young, still babies, only 17 and said we would have to wait and see for at least another three years. My Dad didn't say anything but then he never does. Audrey just stared at me when she wasn't staring at Nicky and later I found her lying on her bed crying.

Every summer Nicky went home to Goa and I would drag myself around for over two months trying to lose weight, taking summer courses in 'feature writing and photography' and missing Nicky. After our third year we both got jobs, he in a bank and I teaching children at St Anne's and counselling classes in the evening. Nicky did a managerial course in the evenings and was tired all the time. After a year when Nicky's bank sent him to their branch in Panjim he said, "Do you

think you could possibly marry me?" I heard my own voice asking simply, "When?"

We got married in Piedade and my parents and Audrey came down for the wedding. It was a beautiful affair and the whole of Goa seemed to be there. The family home was beautiful and I loved the idea of the ferry every day. At the wedding I looked a lot worse than I normally do. This was a pity as I disappointed so many people in not suddenly transforming myself for such an occasion and my wedding dress with all its priceless old lace should really have been worn by Audrey, (in any case most of the guests and the family thought and said quite loudly that Audrey must surely be 'our Nicky's bride'). On my wedding day I must confess to having felt a cold deliberate dislike of Audrey. She could not still understand how Nicky could possibly want to marry me and still felt that at this, the eleventh hour, he would realise his dreadful mistake and everything would be alright again. I started growing my hair and I got a job in a local school as I didn't want to sit on the *balcao* with Nicky's mother every evening waiting for Nicky. She did this. Nicky's mother was beautiful and delicate like her son and she adored her son. She did not even like me. I think she was ashamed of me. She could not understand what had possessed Nicky wanting to marry me. She often asked me odd questions about Audrey as though there were a mix-up and this could be set right. Audrey would have understood her point of view and they would have liked each other. My mother-in-law had an odd mind that found a stretch of uninterrupted green lawn boring to the eye, she wanted little flower beds to 'break the monotony', she said. Then there was a wonderful flowering *gulumohur* tree outside our bedroom that was our great joy. Maybe we spoke of it too much, she was the kind of woman who could become jealous of a tree and so she said she was considering having it cut down because it made her sneeze in the mornings. That's quite a decision but she was like that, her own flaming *gulumohur* very wide spreading, very orange. How could you cut down a tree that looked like an

absolute miracle every day just because you thought it made you sneeze? But Nicky said his mother was like that, always had been, always somehow got rid of things one got too fond of, like stray kittens or puppies. It was a wonder she allowed him to have Beryl, I thought. I began to be afraid of Nicky's mother.

When our child Natasha was born, named after Nicky's favourite heroine, Nicky bought a motor cycle and he'd ride it onto the ferry and on Sundays quite soon when Natasha was old enough the three of us would go on picnics for the whole day. Nicky's mother did not like these 'entirely selfish outings' as she called them. One day when my hair was quite long and Natasha two years old, Nicky said we were going to an old lighthouse and fort he remembered as a child. We could swim and take the child. That morning his mother said particularly awful things about the danger and accidents and the selfishness and why couldn't we ever stay home and how Nicky had never been like this before he got married and how everything was awful now. We left with the morning almost ruined but it soon turned out a beautiful day – one of the best and we forgot about her and then Nicky thanked me for putting up with her and for making his life so happy, and we swam and collected some good shells and Natasha laughed a lot. Then we started for home. It was a lovely evening, the sky a lovely lemon yellow and we sang silly songs and Nicky looked a lovely brown with salt still on his skin and hair.

I had Natasha on my lap and my arms around Nicky's waist and suddenly out of a perfectly clear road a lorry appeared with steel girders and pipes and Nicky's voice shouting "Jump quick," to jump with Natasha and I think I must have because we were both unhurt but Nicky went straight into the rods and one went straight into his stomach and intestines. Only he did not die. He didn't die for 52 days, which means he lived for 52 days. Impossibly he went on living. He was in the Ribander hospital and he could not be moved, so for six weeks and three operations he was in that hospital which overlooks a stretch of water

FICTION

with Piedade so near and so far. And I stayed with him. Nicky's mother would not come to the hospital and she told me and everyone else that I had murdered him, killed her son, that I had wanted the motor cycle; I wanted the Sunday picnics, I wanted him to be happy and I had killed him. I, of course, had felt this, moments after the accident, that I had killed him or why hadn't we all died? That would have been merciful, bearable, but this 52 days of living and struggling and lingering was much worse than dying, if I had known how to do it I would really have helped him to die in that hospital which so cruelly looks out at his beloved Piedade, nearly all the windows look out at the island. His face looked terrible, very bloated and stayed bruised with all sorts of tubes and needles inserted into his arms and feet. It was terrible to see him like that. For a long time at first he was in a coma and he came out of it and started to get well but then he caught an in-

fection and then developed pneumonia and then he died. But before that he asked me what I would do since we had been so perfectly happy together, and I said how could he die now after living for 52 days and all that suffering? And he said that he knew he was going to die and minded terribly because of me. And everyone around said he should have died on the spot. Anyone else would have — it was a pity he had been so fit and strong. But I'm glad he had those 52 days because I had just 52 days to prepare for a life without him. I could not have managed if he had died without those days. If he had died then at the accident I would not have lived for Natasha or for me. I would have died. But in the end he died, nothing could stop him. His bank was very kind and gave me a job back in Bombay. Now Natasha is three and I feel 83 and Natasha has fits of screaming at nursery school because she's still stuck at the point of the accident. "Where is Papa?" And I am called from

the bank and Natasha stops screaming and I wish the scream in me that has not stopped since Nicky died would stop. And Natasha says "But where is he?" and I say, as we have been taught, and because she is so little "Darling, Jesus took him" and she says "I hate him, I hate him." And "Sh sh sh," says everyone but she says what I feel too. I hate him or anyone else who decided it was time for him to die. And they say I'll marry again because I'm so young. But I won't — no one would do after Nicky — who wants a second best anyway. And I won't because only a Nicky would marry someone as fat and plain and dark as I still am, taking after some aunt somewhere — I must have, but bless her, Nicky married me and not Audrey. I never went back to Piedade to wait on any *balcao* with the rest of them. I wait here in Byculla for Nicky to find me and say "I waited for you to come, and now you are here."



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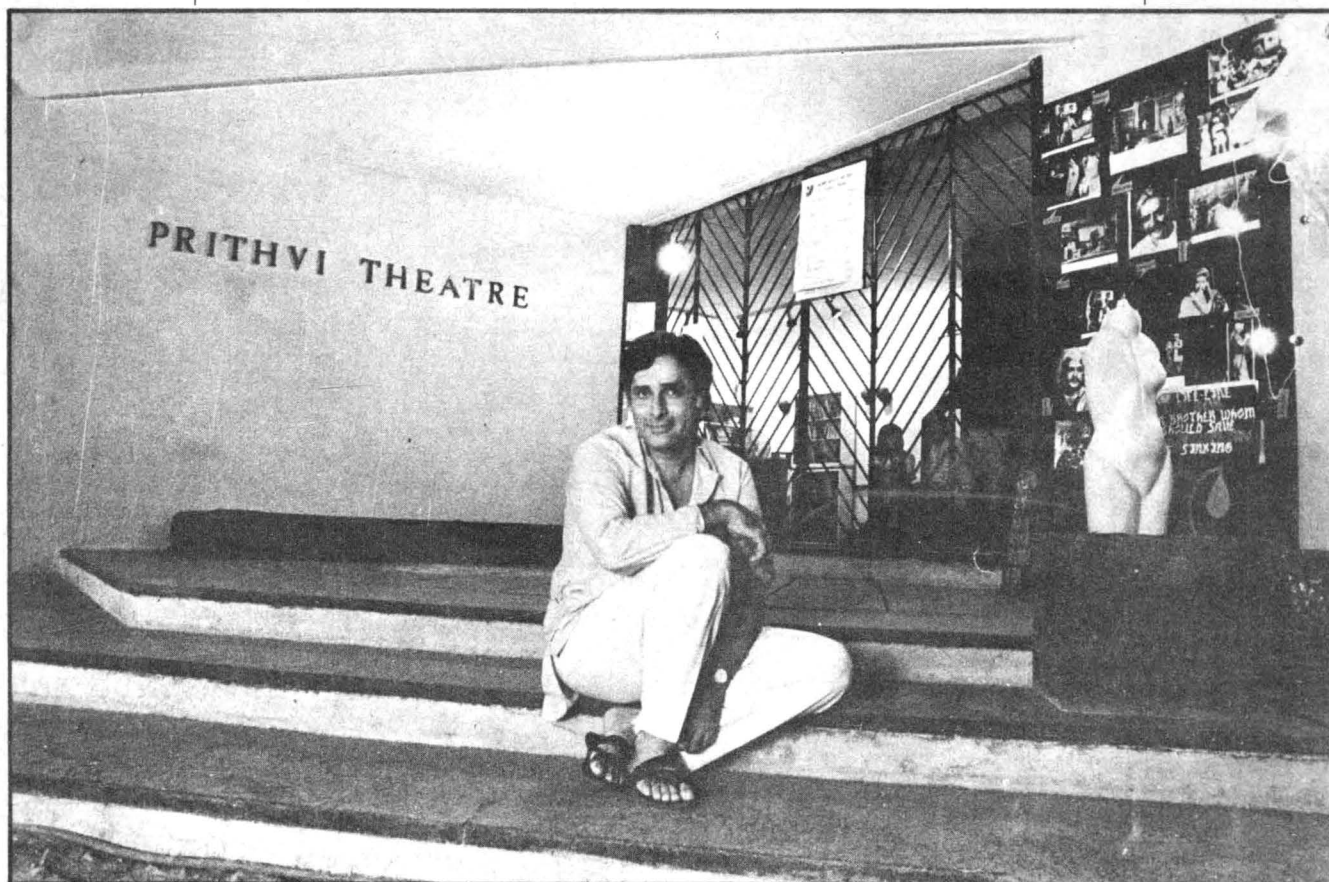
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THEATRE

SAGA OF A THEATRE



Despite all its trials and tribulations, Bombay's Prithvi Theatre has become a super success. And it seems set to stay that way.

BY AMRITA SHAH

WAY BACK, IN 1978, on a cool November evening, a small theatre came into existence in a far-flung suburb of Bombay.

The event would probably have gone unnoticed, but for the fact that it was built by a popular film actor and his English wife. They were there that evening, Shashi Kapoor and Jennifer.

With them were old-timers like K A Abbas, Premnath and Inder Raj Anand, all members of the defunct Prithvi Theatres — the company Prithviraj Kapoor ran for 16 years — and a host of budding theatre personalities.

It was an evening of nostalgia and hope. Nostalgia, because Prithviraj's youngest son had fulfilled his father's lifelong ambition of creating a place to

Amrita Shah is an Imprint staffer. Her last feature was on Delhi's intellectual network.

THEATRE

promote good theatre. And hope, for at last, Bombay had an auditorium where quality non-Marathi theatre could take root.

The first night was a success. The play, *Udhwastha Dharmashala* was well-received. The young actors – Naseeruddin Shah, a struggling film actor and Om Puri, a nonentity from the Film and Television Institute of India – gave impressive performances. And optimism ran high that night.

In the months that followed, however, some of the optimism dried up. The audience turn-out was miserably low. As late as mid-1979, Satyadev Dubey's Theatre Unit was staging *Aur Tota Bola* for an audience of eight. Dinesh Thakur, whose company ANK opened at Prithvi with Badal Sircar's *Baaki Itihaas*, remembers how they even played to an audience of five, at times.

The doubts that had been expressed when Prithvi started seemed to have some basis. It appeared that there was not enough of an audience for quality theatre in Bombay. Or, at the very least, not enough people were willing to travel miles away from the city to an auditorium where even parking was a problem.

ON MARCH 3, this year, the same play, *Udhwastha Dharmashala* was staged again. Like the first show, this one was a success. And once again, the air was filled with hope. But this time there were reasons to be optimistic. Prithvi had survived all its set-backs and emerged stronger. Financial difficulties, differences between the management and leading directors, the scandal over the Prithvi Cafe and, of course, the loss of Jennifer who had guided Prithvi from its very inception – it had coasted through it all.

Then again, Prithvi had proved beyond expectations that there was a demand for good drama in Bombay. The minor problems – of distance, location, parking – which had seemed so enormous earlier were now accepted by people without complaint. The tiny auditorium was packed throughout the month-long annual festival this year. Moreover, Prithvi had become a centre for the art film industry. Virtually every actor of any talent to have emerged on the screen in the last six

years had performed at Prithvi. Apart from Om Puri and Naseeruddin Shah, there were Amrish Puri, Anupam Kher, Shafi Inamdar, Ravi Baswani, Swaroop Sampat, Soni Razdan, K K Raina, Supriya Pathak – the list is endless. And several of the film industry's top stars – including Shabana Azmi and Amjad Khan – had satisfied their urge to return to theatre by performing at Prithvi.

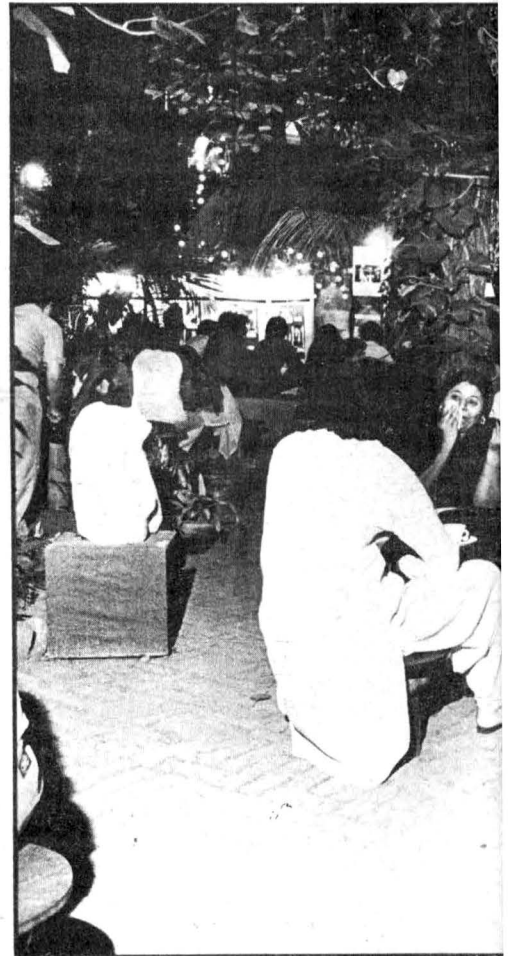
Before Prithvi was built, Hindi theatre existed in a kind of vacuum. Auditoriums were perennially booked by commercially successful Parsi-Gujarati or English drama companies. Smaller, less affluent groups could only avail of the Chhabildas school hall in Dadar which was not really a theatre at all.

So, when Prithvi was started, there were many takers. Theatre groups such as Majma (Om Puri and Naseeruddin Shah), Dinesh Thakur's ANK, Nadira Babbar's Ekjut, Mahendra Joshi's Avantar and Yaatri took to performing there regularly. Predictably, though, a daring venture like Prithvi was bound to run into financial difficulties, when at an absurdly low hiring charge, it was offering the hall with all its facilities. The losses on running costs alone amounted to Rs 60,000 annually. The groups were not doing much better. "The total collections of our first six shows was Rs 2,000," recalls Dinesh Thakur, "and our expenses – Rs 6,000."

Then towards the end of 1979, Thakur decided to stage *Hai Mera Dil*, a light, frothy comedy, even though he did not like the script. Somehow it clicked with the audience, and for the first time in its history, tickets sold out. Prithvi was caught unawares with its success – there was not even a 'House Full' board at the theatre to put up when the show sold out!

Others also took to staging more popular plays. Shafi Inamdar who made his debut at Prithvi in a Hindi translation of Peter Shaffer's *Equus* explains his decision to change tracks: "I decided to do other plays because my aim was to develop an audience and get more people to see us perform."

The gamble paid off to some extent. For when Thakur, after doing popular comedies for a few years, put up *Baaki Itihaas* again, it proved extremely successful. But undeniably some of the



groups got into the rut of only doing plays which had a mass appeal. In the latter years, crowd-pullers such as Pearl Padamsee and Burjor Patel, too, began to make inroads into Prithvi.

The first to opt out of Prithvi's growing success was Satyadev Dubey. One of Prithvi's regular performers, he protested against the theatre's regulation of a flat rate for tickets and ranted about its commercialisation. Finally, with characteristic pomposity, he announced his decision to quit Prithvi forever. That was over two years ago.

Last year, Naseeruddin Shah took a similar decision. In view of Shah's long association with Prithvi, the film press blew up the affair. Shah's contention was that the theatre was badly managed and that the practice of keeping late-comers out was problematic for the performers as the former invariably kicked up a fuss outside.

Shashi Kapoor's son, Kunal, feels the latter accusation is unfair. According to him Shah was so keen to implement the late-comers' regulation that

THEATRE



IT WAS THE CAFE THAT STARTED THE gossip. Film magazines alleged that it had turned into a hashish den and a pick-up joint. And that drunken brawls were regular occurrences.

he installed his own secretary – a well-built man – to physically prevent late-comers from entering. “And he was always the first to offer to go to the police station when they got too rowdy,” he adds.

Others say, however, that the quarrel arose out of personality clashes. There seems to be some substance in the claim, for while Naseeruddin Shah accused Kunal Kapoor of behaving in a high-handed manner, Kunal maintained that Shah could not get along with Prithvi’s former manager, Dharamsey Merchant. Shashi Kapoor meanwhile offered his own explanation to *Star & Style*. “Naseer is a frustrated person on a big ego trip,” he said. Whatever the reason, the dispute resulted in Prithvi losing one of its oldest associates.

PERHAPS what makes Prithvi unique is the theatre itself and its ambience. Designed by Ved Segan, the pocket-sized theatre has superb acoustics. “Aesthetically, too, it is lovely,” admits Bhanu Bharti, ex-director of the Shri Ram Centre for Art and Culture, which is probably why the badly-conceived Tata theatre, despite being in the centre of the city, did not affect Prithvi’s popularity.

An air of informality hangs about the theatre. In the early days it was not unusual to find Naseeruddin Shah and Tom Alter selling tickets for the evening show or to see Dinesh and Minakshi Thakur rehearsing their lines over the stone tables at the adjoining garden cafe.

And in 1981, with adman Prahlad

Kakkar taking charge of the cafe, providing an assortment of seafood fare and Irish coffee, Prithvi acquired a new clientele of food lovers.

Unfortunately, it is this very ambience of informality that attracted a lot of flak. With the closure of the acting course at the FTII, would-be film stars had begun to view theatre as a launching pad for their *filmi* ambitions. Prithvi, the home of Hindi theatre in tinsel town, was, by extension, the place to hang around. Talent scouts were known to frequent the place and the hope of being noticed was ever-present. In the process, the cafe began to acquire a rather dubious reputation. “The place smells of hash,” said *Current*. *Stardust* went further, calling it a hash and pick-up joint and claiming that there were regular drunken brawls on the premises.

Undeniably, there have been a couple of scuffles at the cafe and on one occasion a slightly inebriated gentleman even interrupted a play with his typically *filmi* “Wah-wahs!” Film journalists complain constantly of being besieged by youngsters asking for write-ups. But by and large the cafe’s dubious reputation doesn’t seem to have affected the theatre’s popularity. Shows still sell out and the cafe still overflows with diners every night.

THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE for nurturing Prithvi was, undoubtedly, Jennifer. Whereas earlier, she had remained behind the scenes, content to design her husband’s film costumes and to be the perfect wife and mother, she really came into her own with Prithvi.

Born and brought up on theatre, she passionately wanted to encourage professional theatre in India. At all times, one could see her darting around Prithvi, barefoot, files under one arm. When groups suffered losses she would say matter of factly, “You just have to go on.”

She had great plans for Prithvi and Indian theatre. “I want to see actors living on their acting – through theatre, films and television,” she had said. She had hoped some day to have an in-home repertory company with leading directors and actors on the pay-roll.

But some time in 1982, her health began to deteriorate and she had to be

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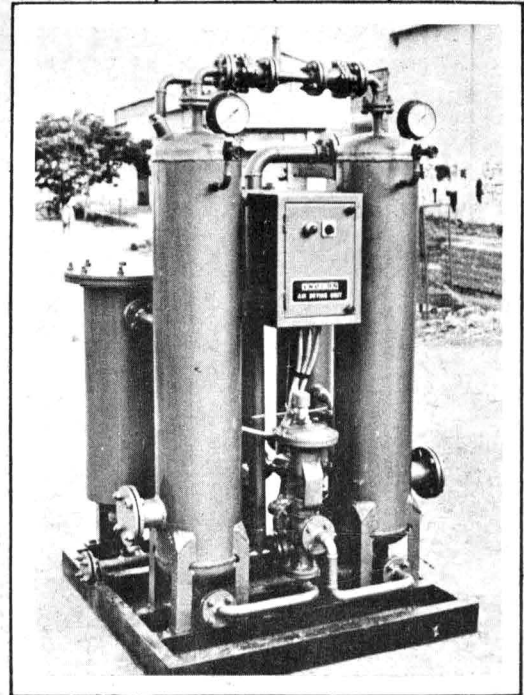
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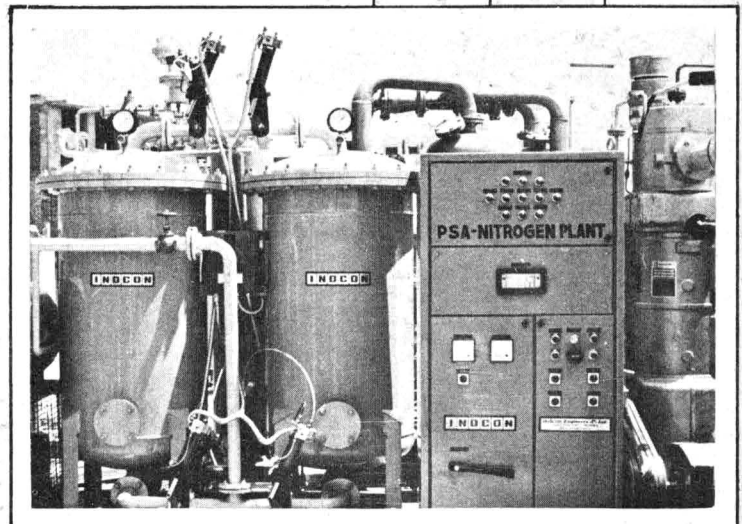
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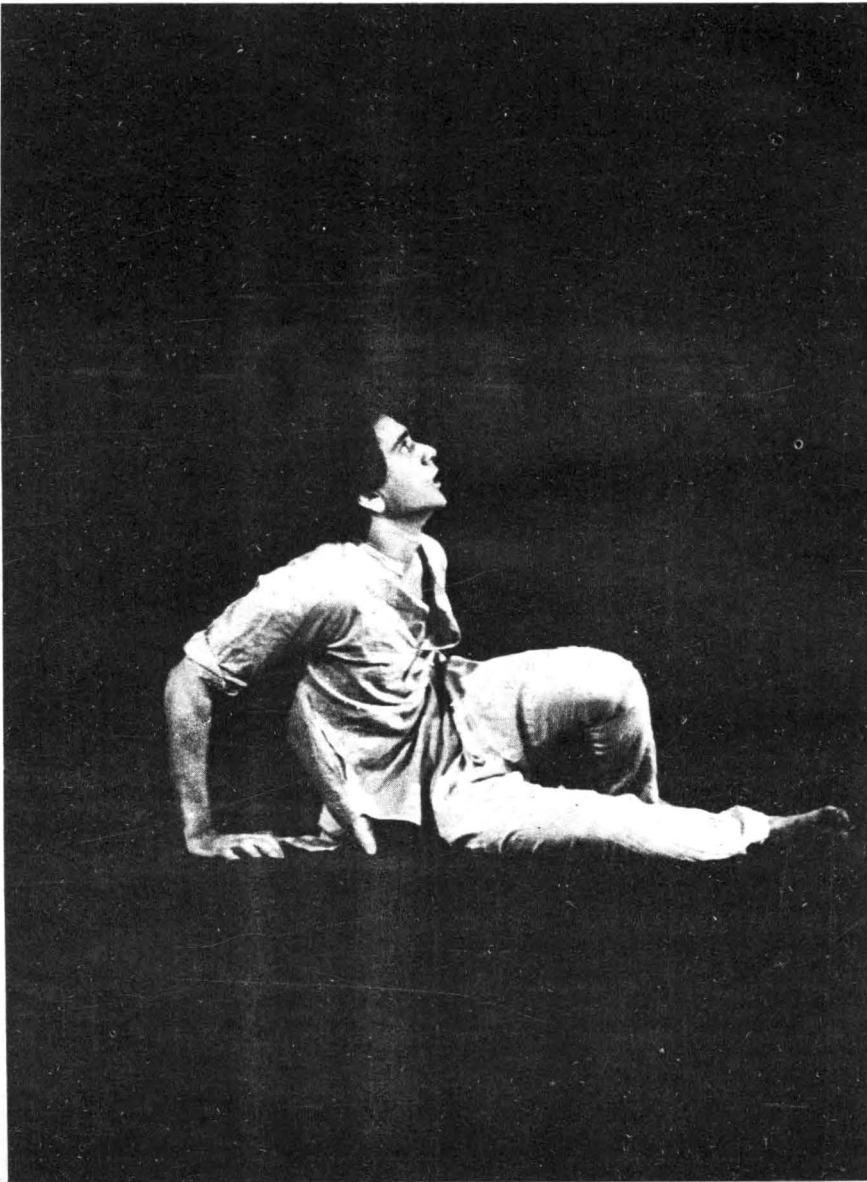
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THEATRE



'EKSHUF', A HINDI TRANSLATION OF 'EQUUS' was performed often at Prithvi. But troupes soon realised that to do well they would have to put up more accessible plays.

removed to hospital. By late 1983, she was well enough to return for Prithvi's first annual festival. It was a 16-day long festival with the regular Prithvi groups performing. *Shehnais* played every evening and the place was dotted with coloured lights. It was a big success and Prithvi recovered the past year's losses. Unfortunately, it was the only Prithvi festival Jennifer was to witness.

The next year she was back in hos-

pital but, characteristically, still worrying about Prithvi. The next festival was due in November, but she was adamant that it should be bigger and include groups from all over India. Kunal, who was managing the theatre in his mother's absence, was keen that it should be held on schedule. By August, however, it was obvious that the second festival would end up being a repetition of the first one. Jennifer wrote letters from the hospital insisting that it

should be cancelled. And Kunal, with great reluctance, agreed to postpone it to February this year. It was just as well, because Jennifer died in September 1984.

But Prithvi didn't fall to pieces as expected. Kunal slipped effortlessly into the gap his mother's death had created and assumed charge. Earlier the trustees were Shashi and Jennifer; now they are Shashi and Kunal. Prithvi remained in the family. Kunal first turned his attention to the approaching festival. Vazir Sultan had offered to sponsor it and Air India agreed to fly Jennifer's parents, the Kendals, down for it.

And when replies came in from theatre groups he was relieved to find that at least six non-Bombay groups had agreed to take part.

Bhanu Bharti brought a group of tribals from Udaipur to stage his colourful production, *Pashu Gayatri*. Manipur's leading theatre company Kalakshetra participated along with one from Bengal. Well-known directors like Sankara Pillai and Habeeb Tanveer arrived with their troupes. And as the highpoint of the festival, Tendulkar's *Ghashiram Kotwal* was performed.

It lasted for a month with almost every show selling out. There was music and dance along with the plays. Leading directors described it as an event that would go far in creating an appreciation of theatre. And yet, there were murmurs of protest. Why was Prithvi doling out dates to commercial groups? Why were amateur groups for whom Prithvi was the only platform being sidelined? And most importantly, why were mediocre, popular plays being performed increasingly with serious experimental theatre taking a back seat?

"Prithvi was built to encourage professionals," says Kunal in the tone in which his mother had once declared: "Amateur theatre to me is anathema!" And if in the process some bad plays are put up, it is a small compromise, he feels.

Considering the success of the recent festival which combined the mediocre and the good, it seems certain that the theatre is on its way to achieving what it set out to do — six years ago.



Bejan Daruwalla's Predictions

For the period from April 15 to May 15.



ARIES: March 21 to April 20: Mercury regains direct motion in

your sign on the 17th, making for travel, business, funds and commission, as possible sources of income and finance. Before May 1, a killing can be expected. The next fortnight, May 1 to May 15, avoid hassles in buying, selling, even bargaining. Journeys and puissant creativity were meant just for you. A personal issue can be resolved after a misunderstanding.



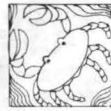
TAURUS: April 21 to May 21: Sun-Saturn opposition on May

15, makes this a see-saw month. You will be torn between divergent trends and opinions. Legal issues, perhaps involving partnerships or ties, will crop up. Also, you will be in a particularly belligerent mood, and may strike out viciously. On the plus side, the new moon in your sign, means new beginnings. Hobbies, romance, ill-health, and clashes at various levels are foretold.



GEMINI: May 22 to June 21: Sun - Neptune trine or happy

formation indicates a social whirl, exceptionally heavy expenses (specially in May), ill-health, a job switch or scenic change - both physical and mental. Your enemies will be out to do you in. Platonic, as well as purely physical, relationships are predicted for you. April 15 to May 15 is a restless period and the pull of contraries is very noticeable.



CANCER: June 22 to July 22: The trick is to neglect hurts,

slights, fancied wounds - in short, have a tough hide! You will most certainly circulate, be ambitious and vociferous, have a bout with your lady love, stand in the glare of publicity, and go in for self-promotion rather openly! Friends, supporters, well-wishers will try to help you but, they too, have their limitations. Jealousy will catch you by the throat, if you are not wary.



LEO: July 23 to August 23: Venus turns direct on the 25th,

helping you slightly in your travel, profession and business. But you are advised not to play for high stakes. Work hard, as enthusiasm is not a good enough substitute for insight in human relationships. Keep your options open. The Sun-Jupiter square on May 6, signifies many changes in your profession or business, and here, despite Venus, the pressures will really be turned on!



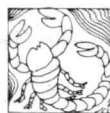
VIRGO: August 24 to September 23: Mercury-Venus conjunction

on the 18th takes place in your house of finance and loans and funds. It could mean a promotion or a job, if unemployed. Religious ceremonies, the launch of a pet project, and an overhaul of goals and values, are the salient features of the month. If any sort of collaboration is intended, it should go through by September. Your love life will pick up.



LIBRA: September 24 to October 23: The moon's first

quarter signifies the old will be replaced by the new on many different planes. The behaviour of partners, and probably your better half, could upset you and, in turn, you will retaliate. Best to have poise and tact. For those in business, an eye on funds is very essential. There could be a money-squeeze, as debtors might not return money they have borrowed. A newsy month.



SCORPIO: October 24 to November 22:

There are two different areas of interest which could converge this month. Firstly, a carry-over of the accent on job and funds of the last month; and secondly, the severance of a tie, a link, a partnership. People could infuriate and enrage you by their eccentric behaviour and thoughtlessness, and you aren't one to tolerate fools gladly. Your rivals will be out to get you.



SAGITTARIUS: November 23 to December 21: Except for ill-

health and perhaps a few posers for employed Sagittarians, this is a good month. Your creative pursuits of the last month, could fructify. Mercury-Jupiter sextile holds opportunities for you in travel, contacts, contracts, or business deals. A practical, no-nonsense attitude in business is best. 'Talk less, work more' is the astro message for you.



CAPRICORN: December 22 to January 20: Bouquets and

brickbats! Venus-Mars sextile stands for home, house, renovation and decoration, courtship, children, creative ventures, spills and thrills. You will entertain and be entertained, and quite a few of you will get engaged or married. As the Sun opposes Saturn expect a few jolts in love too! I suppose that makes it interesting - but uneven! You will be in a mood to take chances.



AQUARIUS: January 21 to February 18:

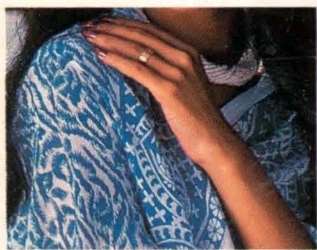
The full moon focusses on home, house, renovation, decoration, buying, selling, sales, commission, electronics and chemicals - quite a range to pick and choose from! Your domestic appercart could take more than one somersault. The health of parents, in-laws and elders could cause concern. Architects, engineers, house brokers, agents, artists and horticulturists will win plaudits.



PISCES: February 19 to March 20: Last month's


trend of food, finance and family will be manifest once again. Those in advertising, travel, trade and painting, music and poetry, will excel their rivals and walk away with the rewards. If there are last-minute cancellations or postponements, do take it sportingly. Sun-Neptune trine or happy formation does signify at least one minor/major wish fulfilment. ♦

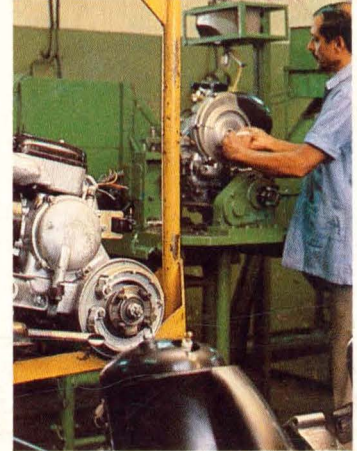
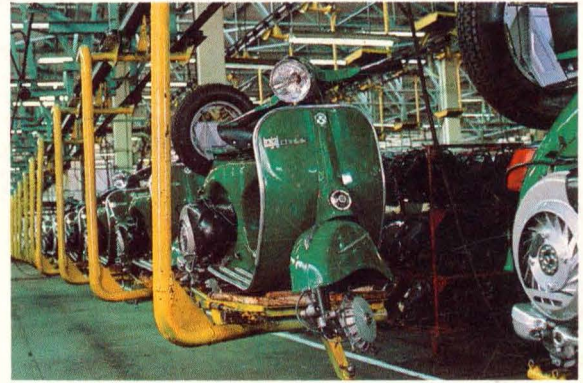
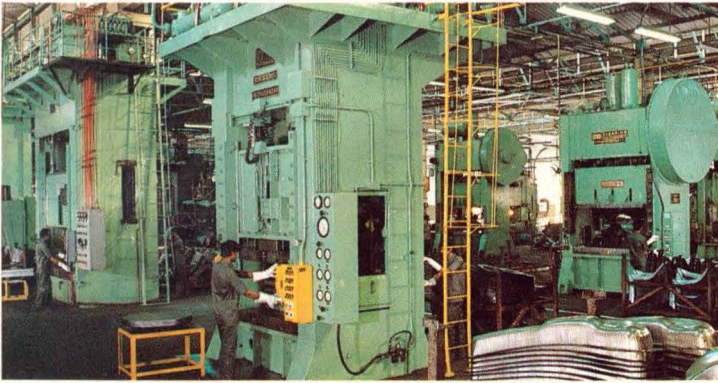
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