

SPECIAL DIWALI ISSUE

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NOVEMBER 1985 • Rs 5

PUNJAB:
FAITH AND GRACE
PRODUCE A MIRACLE.
WHAT NOW?

**JUDGMENT AGAINST
JAGMOHAN**

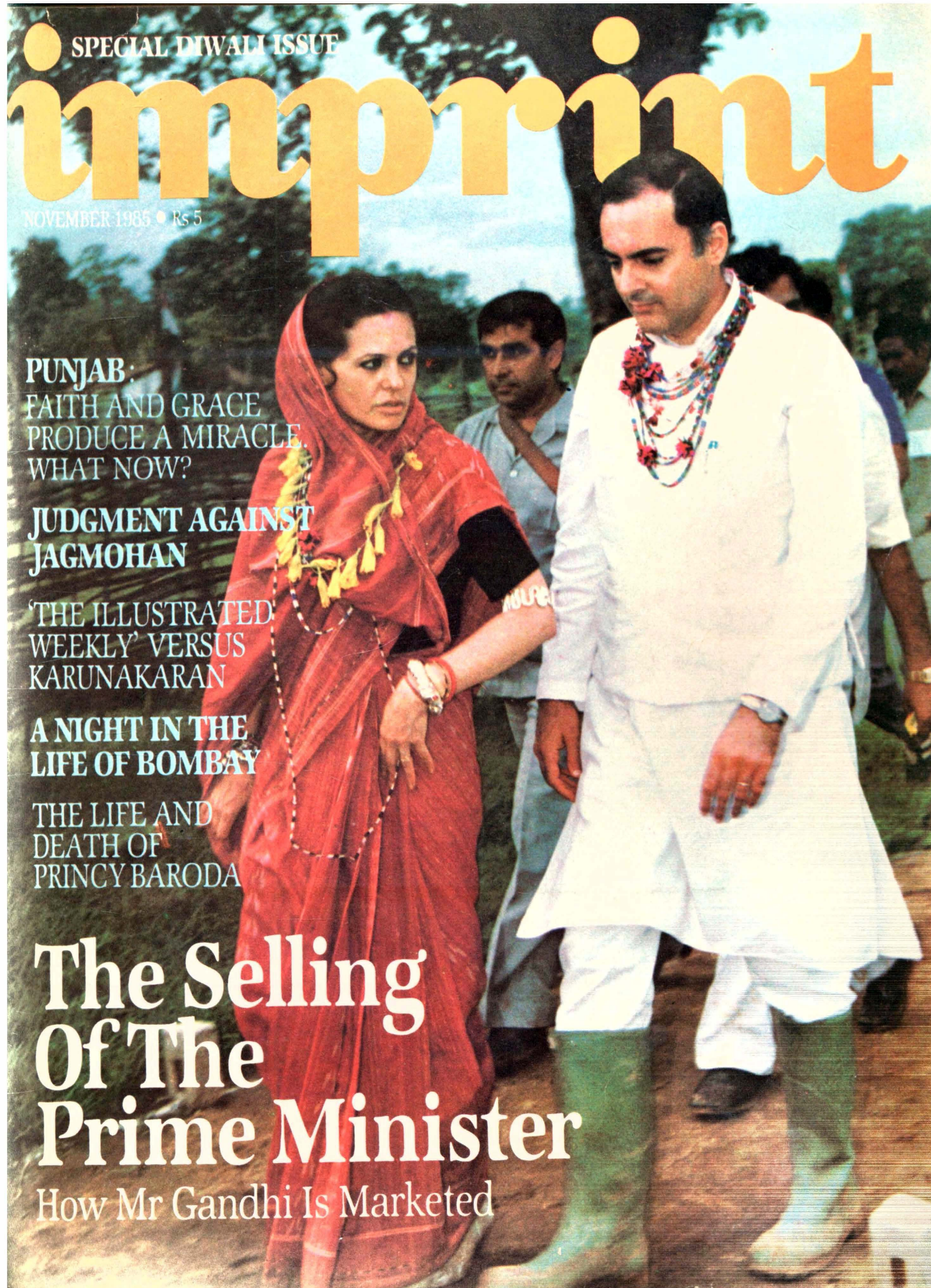
'THE ILLUSTRATED
WEEKLY' VERSUS
KARUNAKARAN

**A NIGHT IN THE
LIFE OF BOMBAY**

THE LIFE AND
DEATH OF
PRINCY BARODA

The Selling Of The Prime Minister

How Mr Gandhi Is Marketed





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ON THE MARQUEE

"THE PEOPLE OF JOIN ME in wishing you and your family members a very happy journey and glorious success during your visit abroad. May your endeavour as a messenger of peace and goodwill and as a spokesman of the non-aligned world be fruitful and satisfactory."

The above message was sent to Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, on October 13, on the eve of his voyage to Europe and America, and was flashed the following day on the front pages of some of our newspapers. No reward is offered for correctly filling in the dotted blank or for correctly guessing Who told columnist Kul-dip Nayar, "Extremism will not end until it has taken my life."

You are right to attribute the graciousness to Mr Surjit Singh Barnala, the Chief Minister of the Punjab, and the quote to Mr Harchand Singh Longowal. As he himself so accurately forecast, the extremists did take Longowal's life and extremism in the Punjab is indeed on the wane. Of course, you will guess straight away that

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1 November, 1985

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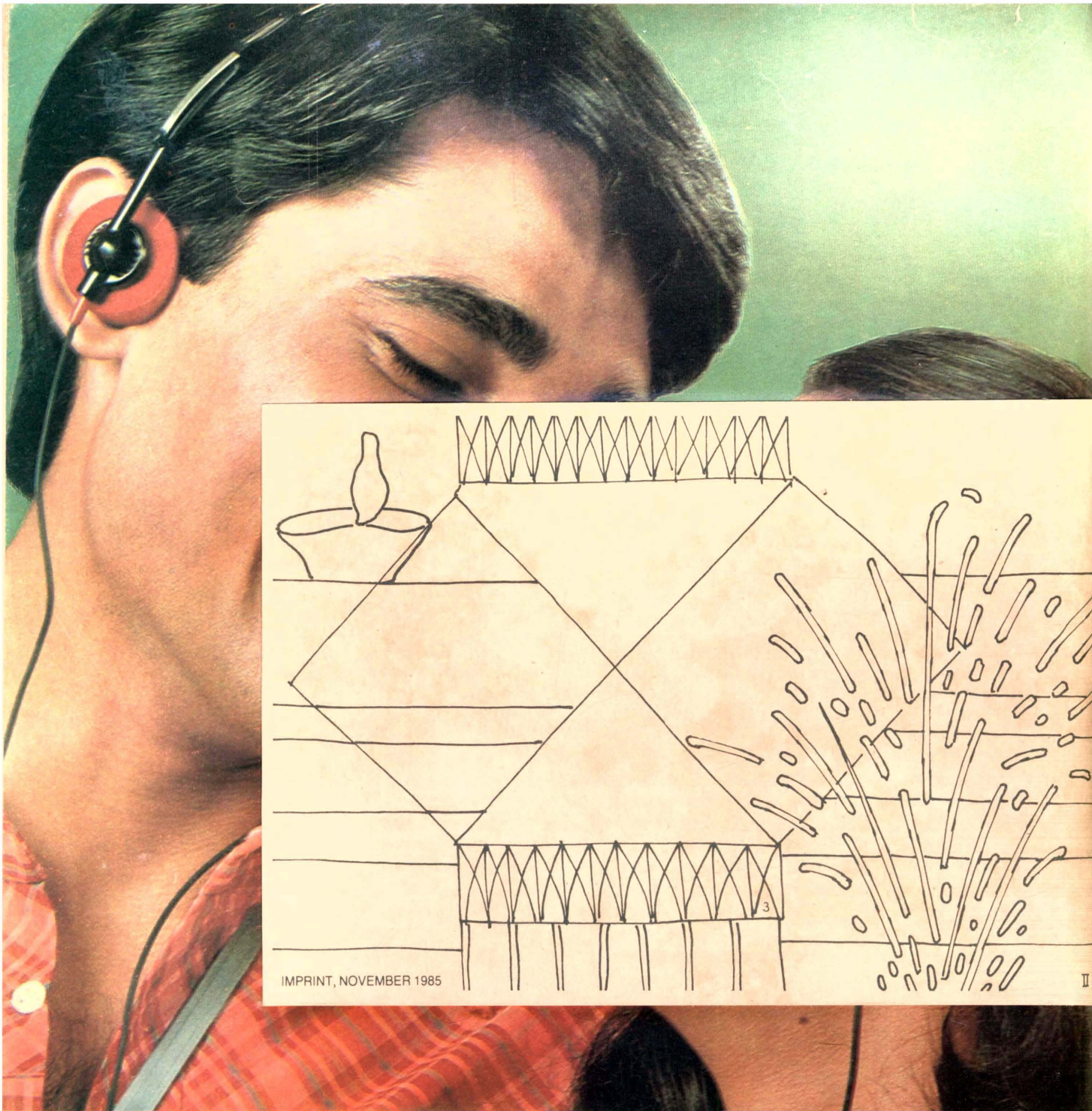


IMPRINT, NOVEMBER 1985

tudes of the past when now we accept, as we have to, that it is largely the goodwill displayed by Mr Gandhi, and to some extent good judgement of the Prime Minister and his aides, which has helped transform so dramatically the situation in the North.

I HAVE DWELT AT SUCH LENGTH on Mr Rajiv Gandhi's conciliatory stance, his goodwill, and good judgement, and recorded the nature and quality of public response to the most serious problem the Punjab had become, to highlight a more complex challenge to our maturity: Pakistan. Going by the Prime Minister's several recent statements about the threat posed by that country to India, and the glee with which most Indian newspapers are projecting it all, I am afraid the integrity of the Indian people, and the sagacity of our Prime Minister is on trial again. As we all know only too well, the head of government of even a tiny country can create hysteria because his fears will be amplified in no time. Already, Is Pakistan Preparing For War? is cover-story stuff for sensationalists. More sadly, our Chief of Army Staff has said in public that Pakistan may carry out a nuclear test in China to hide the fact of its acquisition (displaying an ignorance, in the process, of the new geopolitical realities in the world, and inviting an instant rebuttal from both China and Pakistan) — something he ought first to be thoroughly investigating in secrecy, and then, sending up the findings to his minister to act upon.

Perched precariously as the army junta is in Pakistan, they must cry wolf over India, exploit Islam, and take the people back to fundamentalism. They must acquire the atomic bomb, even if they can't build a nuclear power



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You are right to attribute the graciousness to Mr Surjit Singh Barnala, the Chief Minister of the Punjab, and the quote to Mr Harchand Singh Longowal. As he himself so accurately forecast, the extremists did take Longowal's life, and extremism in the Punjab is indeed on the wane. Of course, you will guess straight away that statements such as, *There was, unfortunately a slight mistake in drafting the terms of the Mathew Commission, but we will see that no Congress government will try and use that clause for its benefit* and then, again, *Punjab is ruled by Akalis. It is their responsibility to maintain law and order there. Punjab should progress and people should benefit. The government headed by Barnala is sure to achieve this*, are Mr Rajiv Gandhi's.

On the Cover this month, we remind you that this is Diwali. And Diwali is a festival of light, of renewal. We have quoted Chief Minister Barnala and Prime Minister Gandhi to emphasise the goodwill, for there could have been bitterness and darkness. We quote Longowal to remind ourselves how we sometimes allow bitterness and dark-

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ness to cloud our minds: until Mr Harchand Singh Longowal, on behalf of the Sikhs, accepted an understanding with the Prime Minister of India over the Punjab, Longowal was to us a troublemaker, a secessionist, a harbourer of terrorists. An enemy of India. And he was so treated, and incarcerated. After the Gandhi-Longowal accord was written, the Akali leader was called a great man, even a statesman. And the tributes we have lavished on the Sant upon his martyrdom now are so fulsome, so generous, so embarrassing. I say *embarrassing* deliberately, to drive home a point. How was it that so many of us, among the people of India, so mindlessly and abjectly accepted the official misjudgements and prejudices regarding the problem in the Punjab, about what was happening there, even when the government versions were often contradictory, and official descriptions of personalities involved were so patently untrue? Much of the tragedy of the Punjab and the injustice done to the Sikhs, and its consequences, could have been avoided if the goodwill we so enthusiastically applaud now was allowed to reign in our minds and hearts in 1984. The lapses of 1983 and 1984 become a telling indictment of our attitudes of the past when now we accept, as we have to, that it is largely the goodwill displayed by Mr Gandhi, and to some extent good judgement of the Prime Minister and his aides, which has helped transform so dramatically the situation in the North.

I HAVE DWELT AT SUCH LENGTH on Mr Rajiv Gandhi's conciliatory stance, his goodwill, and good judgement, and recorded the nature and quality of public response to the most serious problem the Punjab had become, to highlight a more complex challenge to our maturity: Pakistan. Going by the Prime Minister's several recent statements about the threat posed by that country to India, and the glee with which most Indian newspapers are projecting it all, I am afraid the integrity of the Indian people, and the sagacity of our Prime Minister is on trial again. As we all know only too well, the head of government of even a tiny country can create hysteria because his fears will be amplified in no time. Already, *Is Pakistan Preparing For War?* is cover-story stuff for sensationalists. More sadly, our Chief of Army Staff has said in public that Pakistan may carry out a nuclear test in China to hide the fact of its acquisition (displaying an ignorance, in the process, of the new geopolitical realities in the world, and inviting an instant rebuttal from both China and Pakistan) — something he ought first to be thoroughly investigating in secrecy, and then, sending up the findings to his minister to act upon.

Perched precariously as the army junta is in Pakistan, they must cry wolf over India, exploit Islam, and take the people back to fundamentalism. They must acquire the atomic bomb, even if they can't build a nuclear power

plant. They must secure self-determination for Kashmir (whatever the term self-determination means in Pakistan in view of the fact that in the state of Jammu & Kashmir elections are held regularly), when for their own people there has been mostly the boot. All this, and the fact that India has bashed the Pakistani army good and proper a few times, provides Pakistan the motivation to make mischief for India, and they do.

For this free, democratic, strong and confident nation there is no need to ferment convulsions. If Pakistan is making the bomb, or is very likely to make the bomb, and that is our conclusive assessment, then we must accept the related fact that such a capacity is a threat to India. Acting then on this knowledge, we must sit down with Pakistan daily till kingdom come to hammer out a bilateral nuclear disarmament treaty, with international guarantees. (And let no one harbour the misconception that the USA or the West is encouraging a Pakistani bomb. A Pakistani bomb is an Islamic bomb, and an Islamic bomb is already a Washington headache, and the international community, the USSR and China included, will be only too happy to associate with efforts directed at ensuring non-proliferation.) For three-and-a-half decades, from Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajiv Gandhi, India has preached to the East and West nuclear sanity, and pleaded passionately for arms control. Arms control negotiations are long, arduous, frustrating, painstaking. They are matters of the utmost import. India now deserves her very own counsel.

And if such treaty efforts fail, if Pakistan is found, after serious deliberation, to be shifty, or engaging in trickery, then let's blast that bloody bomb or whatever bomb-making facilities they have, anywhere in Pakistan, in a quite pre-emptive bash, and sink ours too, if we have any, to the bottom of some deep sea. And the world will sigh with relief — most of all the ordinary people of Pakistan and India. With this, India will add a new dimension to its maturity as a nation. From now on then, let Zia's bomb be Zia's nightmare.

If Pakistan is making the bomb, or is very likely to make the bomb, and that is our conclusive assessment, then we must accept the related fact that such a capacity is a threat to India. Acting then on this knowledge, we must sit down with Pakistan daily till kingdom come to hammer out a bilateral nuclear disarmament treaty, with international guarantees.

I have stated the universal truth in saying we are strong. And we must become even stronger, a natural national urge. But the natural path to strength is through confidence, through hard work, through the imaginative use of our resources. In exploiting the natural instinct of a free people to better their lot. In raising credibility. Not in crying wolf. Not in emphasising an enemy's imaginary strengths all the time. Not in raising false alarms. Pointing a finger to Pakistan all the time is negative. (In this connection, I cannot resist the temptation to point out that we have failed to produce a single infiltrator into the Punjab from Pakistan. We have failed to pin-point any of the training camps we say exist in Pakistan. Oh, and do not tell me dear New Delhi, you cannot find them, or that for some secret reason we are not documenting our 'catch'. And does anybody in New Delhi care to measure the damage to credibility words, words and mere words inevitably cause? The Defence Ministry should in fact be objecting to this equating of India with Pakistan — have we not generally given a good account of ourselves in all the armed conflicts we have been pressed into with Pakistan? Our current irresponsible conduct in this regard is creating a wrong image of our armed forces — an image of almost an inferior force, and this is psychologically affecting recruitment, and career esteem.)

Our Prime Minister is young, and inexperienced. He is a fast learner. But in New Delhi we have a sad history (almost a tradition until recently) of even members of the Political Affairs Committee making no contribution to vital decisions *even where* a Prime Minister has pleaded — "*Aap kuch toh kahiye* (you say something, at least)." If this dashing young Prime Minister of ours makes a misjudgement about Pakistan now, what do you think will be the response from within his government or from his party? And this is precisely where we, the people, matter. And our conscience matters. Our perceptions matter. Our experience of India matters. Our obligation as citizens matters.

Happy Diwali.

R.V. Pandit

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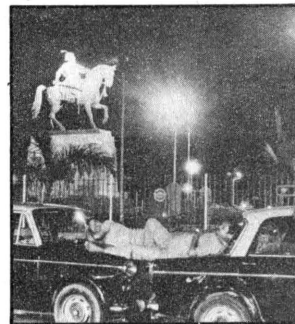
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LETTERS

Enigma



Before I finished reading your brilliant cover story (*Enigma*, October 1985) I saw a news item about a raid on the houses of some income tax officials. The raid uncovered a huge haul. In India, it is not uncommon to find the authorities themselves guilty of corruption. Apparently, this has become an accepted concept of culture, a way of life, even. And corruption seems to have the sanction and blessings of the higher-ups.

You might laud the honesty and integrity of V P Singh, but he is the wrong man for the right work, since no honest minister has survived in any ministry to date. He will not succeed in the stupendous task of unearthing black money. For how, then, would politicians finance elections? And how would they stay in power?

U S Iyer
Madras

Your cover story on the dark horse, Vishwanath Pratap Singh, and his impact on the Indian economy, was interesting. Within a short span of time he has proved to be a worthy minister.

However, his inaccessibility may prove to be harmful for the welfare of the country. The private sector plays an important role in India as Rs 54,000 crore are being allotted to it for the Seventh Five-Year Plan. Hence the Finance Minister needs to confer with industrialists.

E Ellango
Tirunelveli

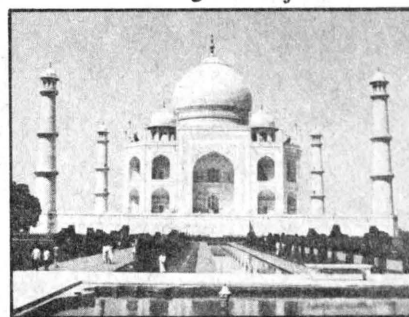
Officer And Gentleman

Shiraz Sidhva's article on Sam Manekshaw (*Officer And Gentleman*, October 1985) was very informative. I was surprised to find that behind the iron exterior is an honest and humble man.

Battles are won not only by strength but by men who can reach the hearts of soldiers and civilians alike. Our government should not fail to take the counsel of this veteran soldier.

Prabha Ravi
Bombay

Saving The Taj



The article *Saving The Taj Mahal* by Darryl D'Monte (October 1985) talks of the threats posed to the Taj by the Mathura oil refinery and from within Agra itself. The Taj Mahal is one of the wonders of the world and we must take immediate precautions to save it.

P Ramesh
Bombay

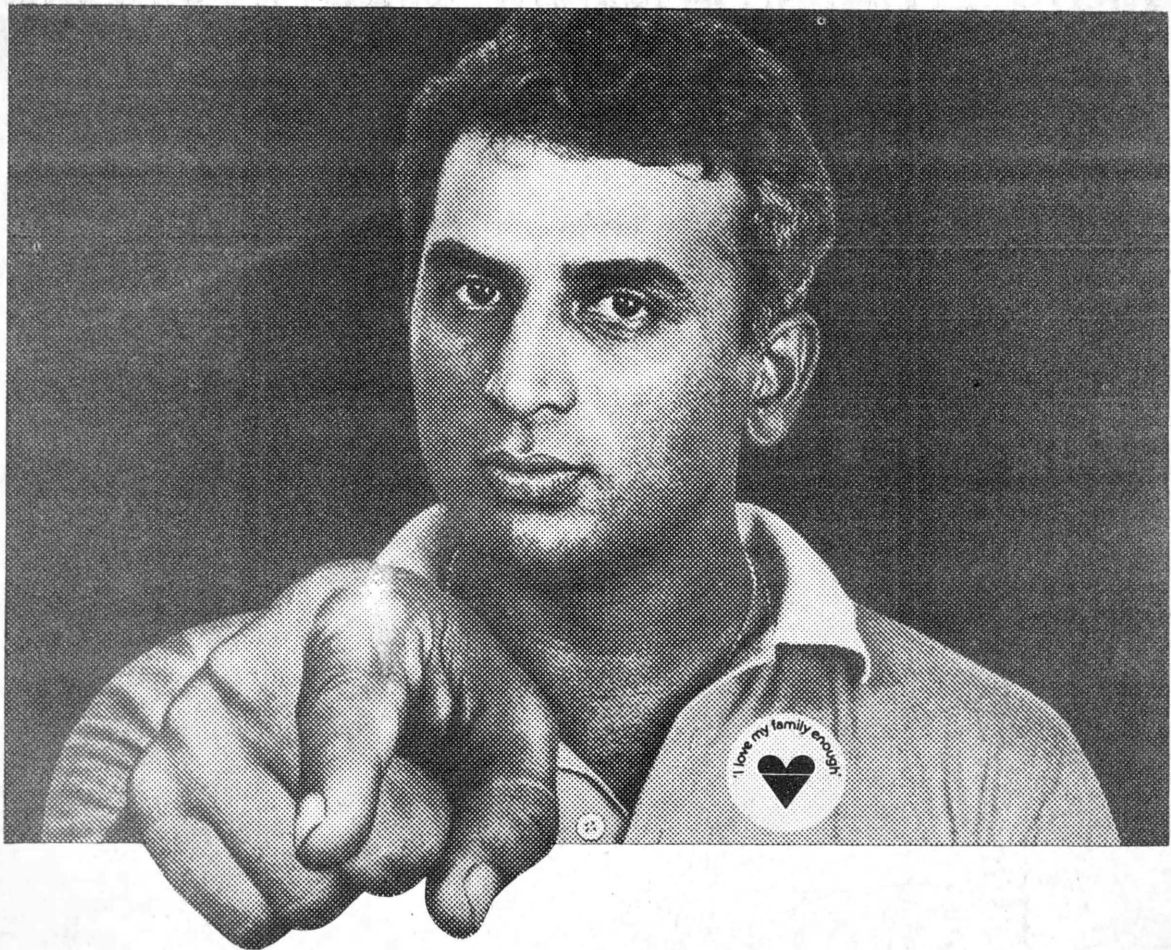
Dream Sellers

You have done a good job by exposing the 'dream sellers' (*Dream Sellers*, October 1985). Many innocent and ignorant people fall prey to these frauds every day.

I have written to several of them but every time they come up with one answer — 'send money first'. Some of them even claim to be operating through a chain of business associates throughout India. Though they are minting money illegally, the authorities do not seem to be at all interested in doing anything about it.

Arta Mishra
Cuttack

Sunil Gavaskar wants to know:



Do you love your family enough?

When I'm making runs, the more the better. But with children, it's different. You need to pay attention to them, educate them, play with them, love them. That's why I have only one. I can give him all the attention he needs — and believe me, life's a lot more fun. What about you? Do you love your family enough to plan it?



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THE COMPUTER CRAZE

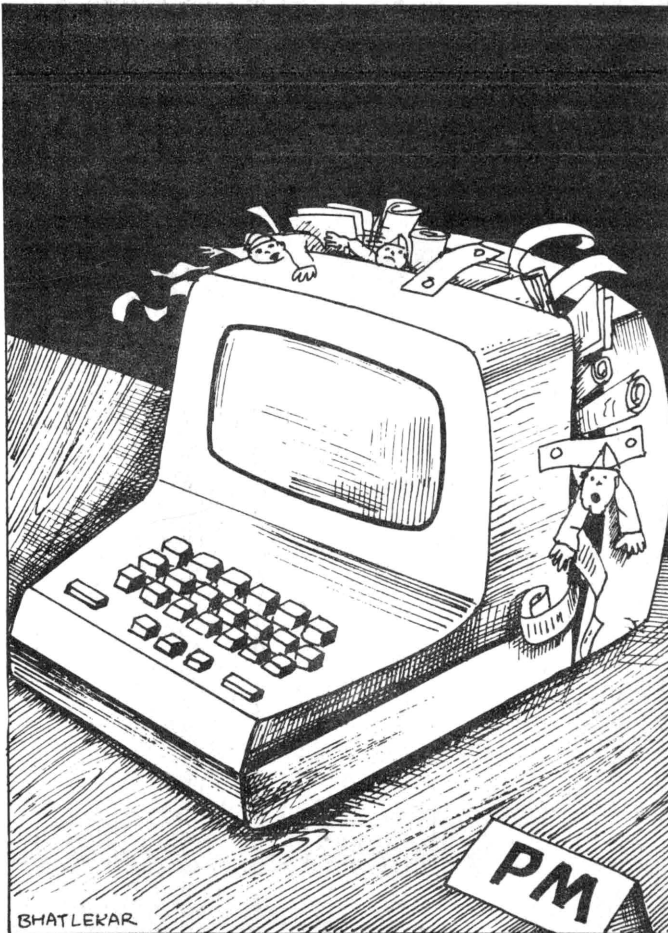
Doubts about the computer revolution and some home truths about Lanka.

THE computer industry in USA is in the doldrums, with many of the companies going out of business. This has surprised many observers who, only two years ago, thought that the computer boom was here to stay.

But the computer industry will pick up again in the US after some rationalisation in concepts regarding what the computer can and cannot do. The slump that the industry is presently experiencing is not unprecedented. The telephone industry went through a similar slump in the '20s. When the telephone first arrived, getting the instrument became a craze. After the first round, which saturated the first flush of demand, people began asking what use the telephone was if all one could do with it was call one's neighbour. That questioning led to the slump. But, soon enough, telephone companies revolutionised their business practices, and consumer services, which became available over the telephone, made it an instrument for the masses. The telephone industry boomed again, never to slump thereafter.

The computer industry in the US is experiencing the same cycle of events. In the first flush, it became a status symbol. There was a spate of buying, especially of personal computers (PC). Many companies pitched

Subramaniam Swamy, former member of the Lok Sabha, is a regular contributor to Imprint.



in to produce PCs. Computer shops opened everywhere.

But the boom didn't last. Most managements began to ask serious questions about the productivity of the personal computer. For instance: What does the personal computer do for the company's profits which could be done in other ways — and cheaper? The answer in the present context of development is: Very little.

The main constraint that US businesses are facing regarding personal computers, or even computers in general, is that computerisation is not sufficiently labour-saving. This one

fact has led to the agonising reappraisal of computers. Because of this reassessment even big companies, like Apple Computers Inc, are retrenching workers in a big way. The computer engineer in the US is, today, a sad figure.

India should learn some lessons from the experience of the United States. We have also gone gaga over computers. There are at least six companies that are at various stages of producing or assembling personal computers in India. No serious thought has been given to the demand side. But, as with the telephone in the late 19th century, personal computers are presently a status symbol with our elite.

Part of the craze for computers is due to the Prime Minister's off the cuff remarks about the need for computerisation.

His constant refrain of taking India into the twenty-first century and into the computer age, has pushed forward people's expectations by several decades. Ever since Rajiv Gandhi became General Secretary of the Congress (I), he has made his intentions quite clear: India was lagging behind in the application of modern technology and if he had anything to do with it, he would speed up modernisation in this respect.

The setting up of television transmitters all over the country and the use of video at functions such as *kisan sammelans*, were all part of the plan.

Lest it be misunderstood, I do not

It is ironic that the Tamils should be called secessionist. They are the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka while the Sinhalese arrived later, led by Vijay Singh, a Bihari king.

THE COMPUTER CRAZE

oppose computerisation. On the contrary, I am entirely in favour of a scientific and rational introduction of computers in the right areas. I favour computerisation whenever centralised decision-making is required, involving data from many centres. For instance, in airline and railway reservations, computerisation is a boon. It really boosts productivity. I would favour computerisation in banking where up to date information on balances arising out of transactions made in 50,000 branches can be collated.

In fact, computers are a real boon, not so much to the giant corporations as to the small industrialist. The small entrepreneur who has to supervise production, sales, accounts and bill-collecting, needs a computer. At present, all the details of these various operations float around in his head. The computer can systematise this, and give him the daily position on inventory, production cost, and bank balances. It can also give him the least cost combination on the purchase of raw materials.

Computers can also play an effective role in process control and optimisation. For instance, in petrochemicals, there has to be an optimum combination of temperature and ingredients. This the computer can control better than humans. Even in the automobile, the right combination of sparking, air and petrol can ensure maximum fuel efficiency. Small computers can be fixed in cars, and the owners can cover the cost in terms of fuel saved. Computers can also help in modelling processes and designs so that we can build better machines.

No, I am very much for the computer. What I am against is this abdication of the human mind in favour

of a computer. Unfortunately, that is what the Prime Minister is fostering — the word 'computer' as a mantra.

* * *

PEOPLE DON'T REALISE what is going on in Sri Lanka, or that the events there can have the gravest implications for the security of India. All that most people know is that there are two communities — the Sinhala and Tamil — and that they are killing each other. But the Sinhalese and Tamils are *not* killing each other. The Sinhalese are killing the Tamils. And the Tamil militants are killing Sri Lankan armed forces, and not innocent Sinhalese. There is a qualitative difference between shooting at armed forces and murdering ordinary citizens. So, it is entirely wrong to equate the two sides in this orgy of bloodshed.

Already, over 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils have escaped to Tamil Nadu and are living in refugee camps. This has caused a major unsettling effect on Tamil Nadu's polity.

The brutality of the Sinhalese was not provoked by the Tamils' desire for a separate state. The history of Sinhalese violence against the Tamils goes back to 1948, while the Tamil demand for a separate state called Eelam is as recent as 1976. In other words, the Tamil demand for Eelam arose as a result of the continuing harassment of the Tamil population by the majority Sinhala population, and not as secessionist adventurism.

In fact, it is ironic that the Tamils should be called secessionists. They are the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka, and the Eelam dynasty ruled Sri Lanka for centuries before the Biharis and Oriyas (Buddhists) decided, after the spiritual conquest of India by Adi Shankaracharya, to migrate to Sri Lanka. A Bihari king, Sri

Vijay Singh, led the hordes to the island. They became known as Singhala, and ultimately Sinhala. This is not my version of history. The Sinhalese proudly proclaim this heritage.

Therefore, it is ridiculous to call the Sri Lankan problem an ethnic one. It is a fight between two groups of former Indians, and only India can set it right.

It is unfortunate that Sri Lanka was separated from India in the first place. Till 1935, Sri Lanka was part of India. In that year, the British instituted a new Constitution to administratively separate Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon), and gave it full independence in 1948. The separation of Sri Lanka never had the sanction of the Indian people.

The case of Pakistan was quite different. The proposed partition of India and Pakistan was debated and then voted upon by the Congress Party's Working Committee.

Hence, it is now possible to raise the question of Sri Lanka's sovereignty legitimately.

But what is done is done. We cannot unscramble an omelette and restore the egg. But India has a responsibility towards that island. We have to effectively stop the merciless killing of the Tamils. We must use either reason, if that is possible, or force, if reason and negotiations will not work. But we must stop the killing. At present, India is employing neither reason nor force. But this state of affairs has made the Indian Tamils feel that North Indians are indifferent to the Tamilians' woes. If this feeling of alienation and resentment continues to fester, then there is a danger that the secessionist sentiments, which erupted in 1965 over the language issue, and became dormant in the '70s, may explode again. ♦

REMEMBERING INDIRA

She could be entirely gracious and utterly graceless.

FIRST MET Indira Gandhi in Allahabad, at a private lunch hosted by one of her aunts, Mrs Kalawati Madan. That was soon after she took over as India's Prime Minister. It was a sunny afternoon and all of us were seated in the backyard. Mrs Gandhi was relaxed and enquired about common relatives. She asked Dr S S Nehru about the qualities of Ganges water and talked about the United Nations and the Kashmir problem. My wife, who speaks only Kashmiri, stared at Mrs Gandhi's face, awe-struck.

Abruptly, Mrs Gandhi broke the line of dialogue and, looking at a pickle jar standing in a niche, asked Mrs Madan about the medium of pickling. She turned to my wife with a charm few can emulate, and asked her about the pickling medium that was used in Kashmir. My wife broke into an animated conversation on the subject. For a quarter of an hour, the political experts and dilettanti remained passive listeners to the discussion on pickles. My wife was charmed and recalled her encounter with Mrs Gandhi with a glow for the next 20 years.

I did not meet her again till she ceased to be the Prime Minister. But I addressed a few letters to her.

The declaration of Emergency in June 1975 turned the country into something resembling the German Third Reich. When the Emergency re-



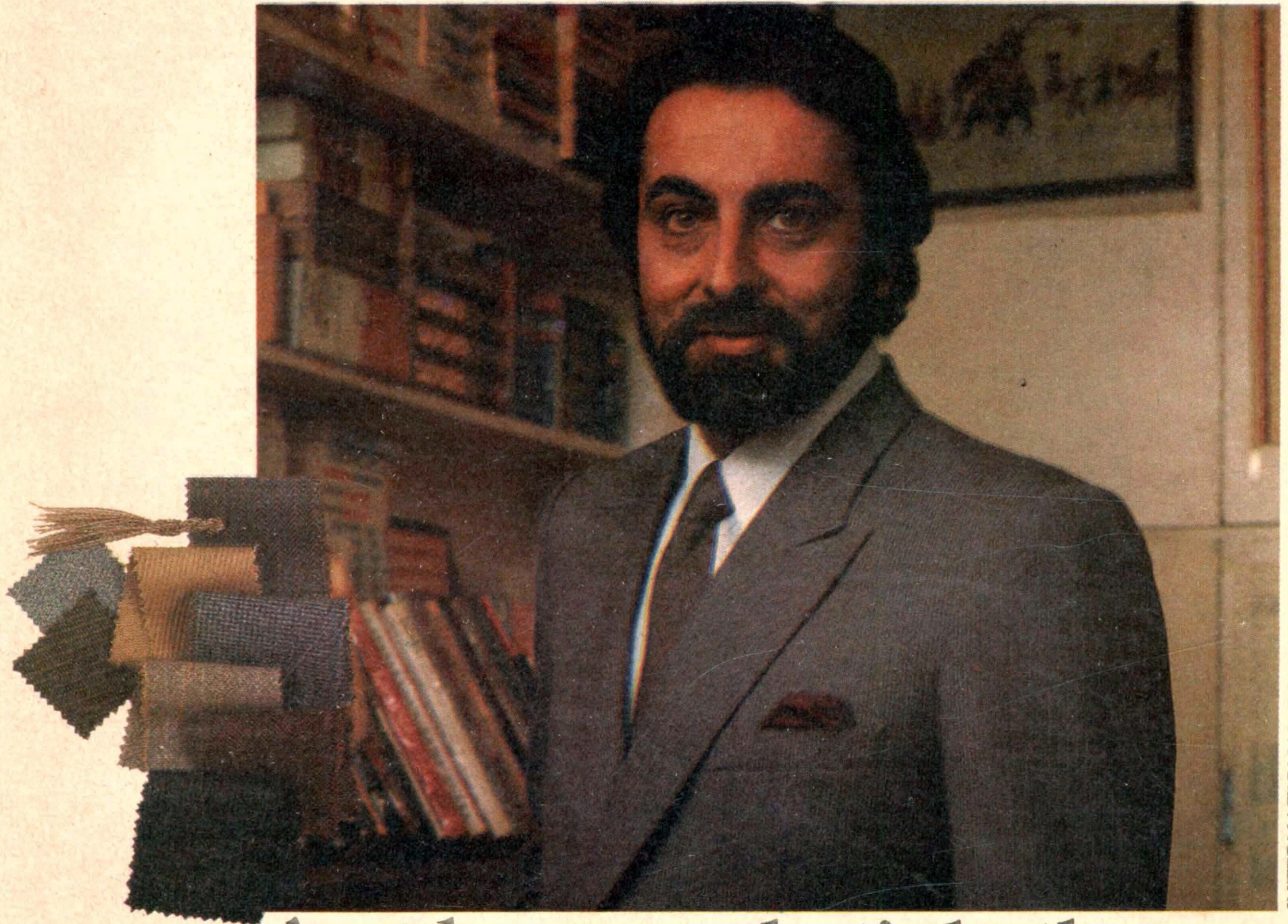
pressions were at their height, I went to Chandigarh on work. I stayed at the Mount View. Late at night, I saw some girls in the corridor. I learnt from one of the hotel employees that the state of Haryana had stopped paying salaries to female teachers, and that their salaries would be released only if they provided a volunteer for tubectomy. I learnt that most of the female teachers, whose salaries were withheld, were either too poor to live on their husbands' earnings alone, or were widows. A new class of touts had come into being to arrange volunteers for the operation, against sex

with their clients, and a commission for themselves. I felt restless and angry. The next day, September 17, I addressed a letter to Professor P N Dhar, then Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, whom I had known for long. Having described the situation in Chandigarh, I wrote: "I am writing this with a specific request to bring this fact to the notice of Mrs Gandhi. I am aware of the risk I am running by making this request. It may mean my liquidation, and the ruin of my unprovided family. But I am taking the risk by choice. I will not blame you for any fall-out of this letter to me. If I have to live out of jail, it is impossible for me to suffer young and respectable women trying to make their living by lending their groins under government compulsion. Never in history have women who are helpless been degraded under the real or supposed fiat of another woman who is powerful."

When I posted this letter I was nervous and feared a sudden midday or midnight knock that would announce the end of my freedom. There was no knock; no policeman ever came near my house. Around three weeks later I went to Chandigarh, staying at the same hotel. Making enquiries from my informer, I was told that the salaries had been released a fortnight ago. Returning to Delhi, I contacted Dhar who informed me that he had handed the letter to Mrs Gandhi, and that, while reading it, she had become pensive and

P N Duda is the author of a forthcoming book entitled Mrs Indira Gandhi: The Years Before Power.

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Mrs Gandhi fixed a chilling gaze in the foreground, looking through both of us as though we were invisible, making us feel how small, insignificant and obscure we were.

REMEMBERING INDIRA

tense, and directed her private staff to get the Haryana Chief Minister on the hotline. Dhar said he knew nothing beyond this.

This incident tempered my anger over the destruction of the democratic framework during the Emergency.

The Emergency ended. In less than a week I was disappointed with India's new power elite. Mrs Gandhi was power crazy, but possessed finesse; the new elite were more power crazy, but possessed no finesse. I felt unhappy about the various commissions of inquiry which hounded Mrs Gandhi in almost every Janata-ruled state. I read the reports of Justice Reddy and felt that, for a re-emergence of Mrs Gandhi, she would have to dissociate herself from Sanjay's past.

I made an appointment with Mrs Gandhi in mid-June 1979. She was living at 12, Willingdon Crescent. She received me on the verandah. She was relaxed and exuded charm. I reminded her about the pickles and the United Nations and she returned a winsome smile. She was happy to hear about my reactions to the Janata *raj* and tried to justify the Emergency with her stock arguments, though I remained unconvinced without saying so; she talked about the magnitude of Kanti Desai's money-making, and engaged in other small talk.

Moved by a genuine concern for public life — the Janata contrast having revealed no endearing picture — I tentatively suggested that it might be expedient to keep quiet over the Sanjay controversies on the pretext that the matters were *sub judice*. Abruptly, her facial curves changed; she gave me a ferocious stare, and demanded in Hindi: "Were all the people dead when I was in power who now come and talk to me about Sanjay? Sanjay has become an obsession with some,

and with the people who pose as intellectuals." She did not command me to go, but I did not wait. She did not move from her seat when I left. On my way back home I realised that I had met, not an erstwhile Prime Minister, but just a mother amongst millions of mothers.

Unable, however, to forget the experience, I wrote to her on June 27, 1979: "When the dust and dirt of politics will settle, and our generation will belong to the past, you may or may not be remembered as a politician or a statesman. But you have an assured place as the blindest and fondest mother in history."

Surprisingly, I received a letter from her: "...It is you who are blinded by the Goebbels type of propaganda campaign that has been, and is being, carried out against me and my family by certain powerful elements and by the media here and in the West. Fortunately more and more people are now waking up to the truth."

Reddy's term as the President of India was expiring and Mrs Gandhi, back in power in 1980, was confident of lodging anyone in Rashtrapati Bhavan. The Opposition persuaded Justice Khanna, the superseded judge for Chief Justiceship, to contest against Zail Singh, who was Mrs Gandhi's nominee. The result was predictable. Khanna's candidature was a token gesture by the Opposition. Zail Singh, shamelessly, made a statement that he was a nobody and was contesting because Mrs Gandhi desired him to contest.

Justice Beg issued a statement to the press saying that Justice Khanna had made no judicial contribution as a judge. I felt that the statement was in bad taste and addressed a letter to Beg: "With the standards adopted for Zail Singh's election, I think he should

survive only the term of the present government. A person who professes so much of unreasoning and robot-like loyalty to a party should, in fairness both to himself and the nation, cease to hold office if his patron government fails."

The small vanity of a pseudo-intellectual took charge of better judgement in me. I sent a copy of this letter to Mrs Gandhi.

A month after Zail Singh became the President of India, Justice Beg threw a party to meet the President and the Prime Minister. My wife and I were invited. My wife remembered her 'pickle-talk' with the Prime Minister two decades back, and was excited about meeting her again. At the party, Mrs Gandhi talked to a few people, turned her eyes to and against the motley crowd around her.

There was a table for eight, the rest of the crowd was expected to eat standing. Mrs Gandhi smiled at a few, exchanged pleasantries, nodding occasionally. My wife approached me to escort her to Mrs Gandhi. I did my best to discourage the idea. She insisted. Helpless, I approached Mrs Gandhi at the dining-table and told her: "Madam Prime Minister, my wife, who knows no politics, thinks you still remember her since you met at Kala Didi's house. She will feel very happy if you give her a diplomatic smile. She knows nothing about her husband's mis-thoughts." My wife folded her hands in reverence and awe. Mrs Gandhi fixed a chilling gaze in the foreground, looking through both of us as though we were made of invisible crystal sheets, making us feel how small, insignificant and obscure we were. I felt I was facing an icicle, cold, fearsome, unresponsive. We moved away, and once again, she was the old smiling Mrs Gandhi. ♦

The Selling Of The Prime Minister



MR CLEAN. A great conciliator. Inspiring leader. Twenty-first century visionary. Man of action. Brave. Dynamic. Charming. Self-assured. . . . These days, the appellations just stick to Rajiv Gandhi. It is difficult to find anyone with a bad thing to say about him, and only too easy to find former critics who've turned into enthusiastic admirers. Nearly everything that goes right has something to do with the Prime Minister: the Punjab accord, the Assam settlement, the tax cuts, the improving quality of Doordarshan and the greater sense of accountability among officials. Little seems to go wrong. And when it does, be sure that the Prime Minister either wasn't there or didn't know. When prices rise after the budget, the Finance Minister takes the responsibility. When Tamil leader Chandrabhasan is thrown out of the country, he is angry but understanding. "I'm sure the Prime Minister had no idea," he says. When the Delhi police pick up the authors of the People's Union for Democratic Rights' Punjab report, Justice Tarkunde is upset but patient. "It must have been done without the Prime

Minister's knowledge," he murmurs.

Only 13 months ago, it was all quite different. The critics were out in force then. Rajiv Gandhi? Well, he's probably a decent enough fellow, they said, but he's a bit dull and childish. And little that Rajiv did seemed particularly bright or responsible. When he discussed the Punjab problem, he called the Akalis names and Bhindranwale 'an important religious leader'. When he commented on international relations, he invoked that old stand-by — The Foreign Hand. When he analysed South Asian affairs, he predicted wars with Pakistan that never came. And when, finally, his mother's assassination catapulted him to the Prime Minister's office, he seemed unable to control the riots that swept North India until it was almost too late.

The Rajiv Gandhi of October 1984 and the Rajiv Gandhi of November 1985 could well be two different people. Where one stumbled, the other flies. Where one confronted, the other conciliates. And the responses they evoke are also entirely different. While once the country wondered if the pre-October 1984 Rajiv had it in him to steer India

through its worst crisis since Independence, now the nation beams with pride as the new Rajiv talks about leading it to his favoured destination: the twenty-first century.

Obviously, the real Rajiv Gandhi needed to crawl out from under his mother's shadow. And equally obviously, high office has suited him more than anyone suspected it would. But, to make the transition from the old Rajiv to the new, to change his image so completely in just 13 months, he also needed a little help along the way. A TV policy that displayed him to best advantage. Press relations that either neutralised or converted the critics. A marketing strategy that won him elections and made sure that the Teflon coating stuck to his image.

Like all modern politicians the world over, he needed to be sold.

WHENEVER she was asked about government control of radio and TV, Mrs Indira Gandhi would look stern and roll out a standard response. The press, she would say solemnly, was destructive and irresponsible. It was run by vested interests which were inimical to

Until about three months after the Lok Sabha elections, the Congress-haters saw little reason to change their minds about the new Prime Minister. And he, in turn, kept up his mother's policy of treating journalists as troublesome. Then the walls broke, and he suddenly became much more accessible than she had ever been. Interviews were rarely refused, journalists were invited for informal consultations, individually and in small groups. If there was a

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...continue to praise Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for the radically different from the thus once again made it plain that he had joined the bandwagon of the professional Indira baiters who had suddenly found great virtue in his opinion distinct

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Addressing newsmen in Delhi: a more open atmosphere.

problem, it was that enough journalists didn't apply for interviews. "Sometimes," laments Sharada Prasad, "they presume the interview won't be granted and don't ask. But interviews are refused only because of time constraints or if the topic suggested is too trivial."

The accessibility removed many of the doubts about the Prime Minister. Most of the trappings of Indira Gandhi's Imperial Prime Ministership were dismantled, and journalists were no longer awed into resentment by the grandeur of the office. Dhiren Bhagat, who interviewed the Prime Minister recently for *The Spectator*, was struck by the air of easy informality that surrounded the man and his entourage. *The Illustrated Weekly's* Pritish Nandy, no Gandhi family groupie, was invited to see the Prime Minister, along with a group of 36 editors. He came back struck by the openness. "It's a much fresher atmosphere," he notes.

Accessibility alone isn't enough to win over a traditionally hostile and suspicious press corps. What journalists resented most about the empress, Indira Gandhi, was not that she rarely saw them; it was that she regarded their views as being of little conse-

quence. Not Rajiv Gandhi. At every meeting with an important editor, he listens. (Editors go to meet ministers as much to be listened to, as to listen.) And frequently, he *acts* on the basis of what he's been told or what he has read. For instance, everybody in Delhi press circles seems to believe that Shrikant Verma got the boot from his AICC office because Khushwant Singh wrote that Verma's attack on the PUDDR did the Prime Minister a grave disservice.

Lest anyone doubt that the Prime Minister cares what they write, his staff takes care to convert critical journalists. When the Left attacked the budget, several distinguished Leftist writers were invited to South Block by Arun Singh. A lengthy briefing and a detailed explanation followed. Nikhil Chakravartty, Editor of *Mainstream*, got the full treatment. Rajiv himself asked to see him. When he got there, he was surprised to find the Prime Minister ready and waiting to tell him about his faith in socialism, in nationalised industries and the like. Chakravartty heard him out. Finally, he said: "You have been misinformed. I have no great passion for nationalisation. My only point is that if you are going to shift to a market

economy, then why not be honest and say so instead of pretending that nothing has changed?"

Rajiv may not have convinced the Editor of *Mainstream*, but that he should have cared enough to try says something about the new media policies of this press-conscious Prime Minister. Other journalists who lack Chakravartty's eminence have had to push for meetings with Rajiv Gandhi, but even they have not been disappointed. At a dinner for women activists in New Delhi's Hyderabad House, fiery freelance writer, Sheela Barse, elbowed aside the other ladies and collared the Prime Minister. "I've come to Delhi to meet you," she told him. "And to tell you about the plight of children in jail and the juvenile justice system." If Rajiv Gandhi was taken aback by the direct approach, he did not show it. As the other dinner guests fretted, he stood with Barse and listened. Later, he arranged for her to visit the Law Ministry and ensured that her suggestions reached the right quarters.

WHY HAS ALL of this worked so well? Partly, of course, it is the contrast with Mrs Gandhi, and partly it is the appeal to journalistic egos. But it is also the 'open' media policy that his Secretariat has now adopted. When Indira Gandhi did talk to editors, she restricted herself to sympathetic heavyweights like Girilal Jain. Instead of enhancing her credibility with the press, this approach ended up damaging theirs. Rajiv has no charmed circle, no privileged coterie. As Mani Shankar Aiyar, his Joint Secretary (Information) says matter-of-factly: "If he has three hours, then he'd rather give half-an-hour to six different people than an hour-and-a-half each to two." Even his personal friends like Suman Dubey, Managing Editor of *India Today*, have been treated as professionals, on par with others.

There are some sceptics, however. Kuldip Nayar, the distinguished syndicated columnist, feels that the Prime Minister's consultations with the press lack the spirit of give-and-

take that characterised Lal Bahadur Shastri's attitude to editors. Nayar, who was Shastri's press aide, still remembers the controversy over the return of Haji Pir to Pakistan at Tashkent after the 1965 war. When nearly every editor opposed returning the territory, Shastri sent for them and explained his options: If he was going to demand concessions from Pakistan, he said, then he had to be prepared to give up something in return. The editors saw his point, and the editorials changed their stance.

"It is not the same with Rajiv," says Nayar. "He consults not so much to seek opinions as to blunt criticism." (Though, perhaps, he simply believes that it is wrong to involve the press in the decision-making process.) Compared to Mrs Gandhi, however, even this marks a great change. Nayar says he'll never forget the first meeting of editors and the Prime Minister that he attended in Mrs Gandhi's heyday in 1971. "Gentlemen," she began, in that dismissive but still combative tone, "I'm sorry to tell you that I don't read your papers. In any case, you only write what your proprietors tell you to." Predictably, it was downhill all the way after that.

There is one other factor that has helped Rajiv win the confidence of the editors of the English-language press. It is what Virendra Kapoor, Editor of the *Free Press Journal* calls the cultural factor. "Most editors come from the urban upper-middle class," he says, "and this class's perception of politicians is so low that anyone who simply does the job he was elected to do becomes a great hero. And what's more, Rajiv appears to be drawn from the same background as the rest of us. In that sense, editors see him as being one of us and are, therefore, much more sympathetic to him."

Kapoor's point is that the editors have suddenly discovered that a man who is very like them is in charge. Not only does he appear to share their cultural alignment, but he actually wants to meet them and seems to care what they think. Obviously, this

influences their perceptions of Rajiv.

Both Kapoor and Sharada Prasad also make one other important point. When a Prime Minister has a great image among readers, can the press really afford to attack him? Says Sharada Prasad: "The press leads but, more often than not, it is also led by public opinion." Adds Kapoor: "Many journalists find that they have to reflect what their readers believe." But what influences their readers' beliefs?

More and more, it is one other important medium: television.

CENTRAL to the selling of the Prime Minister is the role of television. The enormous propaganda value of TV has been widely appreciated for some years now. According to Inder Gujral, Information and Broadcasting Minister in Indira Gandhi's pre-Emergency Cabinet, the government seriously considered expanding the TV network in 1974, to derive the maximum propaganda advantage in the 1976 elections (which were eventually held in 1977). The proposal was rejected because in that pre-satellite era, it would have had to have been a microwave link, and that was prohibitively expensive. When Mrs Gandhi considered spending the money, nevertheless, the Planning Commission objected and, though she lost her famous temper with the then Planning Minister, D P Dhar (and according to Gujral, this incident led to his hasty exit from the Cabinet), she was finally persuaded that India could not afford the expense.

"It never occurred to us," says Gujral, "that we could go for colour." In the early '80s, the bright young men of the Rajiv Gandhi camp grasped this at once, and the cost of expanding the network came down because of satellites. This caused a total re-ordering of priorities. L K Advani, Information and Broadcasting Minister in the Janata Cabinet, recalls that TV was not a high priority when the Sixth Five-Year Plan was framed. "The entire allocation for TV expansion," he points out, "was only

Lest anyone doubt that the Prime Minister cares about what they write, his staff takes care to convert critical journalists. When the Left attacked the budget, the critics were invited to the Secretariat and a detailed explanation followed. Nikhil Chakravartty got called by the Prime Minister, personally.



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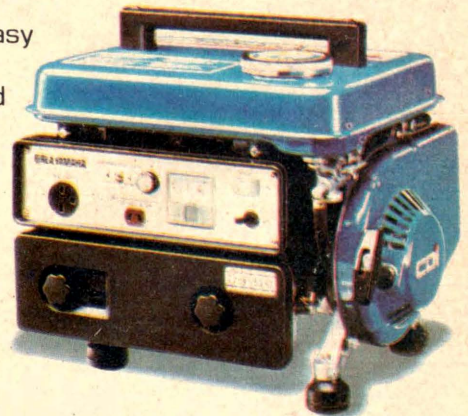
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THE TRANSFORMATION OF TV

The remarkable rise of a powerful medium.

WHILE THE FIGURES of the expansion of the TV network — which now reaches over 50 million people — speak for themselves, the qualitative increase in TV's effectiveness as a medium is a little more complex. From 1972 to 1983, TV reached all the metropolitan cities. Yet, it had nothing like the impact it has today. It never took off as a means of entertainment because it lacked the two advantages its principal competitor—the Hindi cinema—possessed: colour and watchable programming. Nor did it take off as a means of providing information because it was used in the most heavy-handed fashion for blatant propagandizing and lacked any credibility.

From 1983 onwards, all of this began to change. First came colour and then came the sponsored programmes. By 1985, TV had emerged as a viable alternative to the Hindi cinema, a development that left the latter reeling (see *Imprint*, August 1985). This sudden transformation greatly increased the esteem of TV in the minds of its viewers. It was no longer a boring black-and-white box, but a colourful, contemporary source of free entertainment. This change in the medium's image has been crucial for all marketing: whether of consumer goods or of politicians.

Many people had tried to convince Mrs Gandhi that her government's blatant propagandizing was counter-productive. Inder Gujral recalls how he tried to explain to her that, in a society where things were going wrong, a medium that refused to acknowledge this, would have no credibility when it tried to project her image. She failed to perceive this. ("When she dismissed me in 1975," remembers Gujral, "she told the Cabi-

net that I was credibility crazy.") Thus every news broadcast began with: 'The Prime Minister has said. . .' and no criticism was allowed.

Even after Rajiv Gandhi took over, this state of affairs continued for a while. The Opposition and the press attacked the new government for monopolising television. The government reacted by pointing out that Opposition leaders were given sufficient time in news broadcasts, cleverly side-stepping the fact that while the Prime Minister and his wife would be shown distributing largesse to flood-affected victims in Lucknow, for instance, the visits of Opposition leaders would rate only a routine mention.

Predictably, the argument failed to have the expected effect and matters were made worse by Rajiv Gandhi's answer to a question about giving radio and TV autonomy at the Washington Press Club. "We are not ready for it yet," he said.

Later, probably regretting having given the press an opportunity for criticism, he wrote a letter to the Information and Broadcasting Minister, V N Gadgil, which was leaked to the press. Television news read like hand-outs, he complained. And why was so much time spent on building up the image of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet? he asked.

The news did not show any perceptible change after the Prime Minister's letter, but Mr Gandhi's image did. The blame for the continuing propaganda on television was shifted from the Prime Minister and placed on the bureaucrats at Doordarshan who had no conception of how television was handled in a democracy.

Obviously, Rajiv Gandhi perceived what his mother could not: that television without credibility was not an

effective medium for propaganda. The blatant propagandizing of the Indira era has ended and criticism of the government is now aired. As Gujral has predicted, this has boosted Doordarshan's standing with its audience. And some of the new programmes have worked to enhance the government's image rather than detract from it. Viewers were surprised to find known government critics like Khushwant Singh included in discussions on Punjab. And for the first time, open criticism of official agencies like the police is being heard over television. But certainly the best advertisement for the new government has been *Janvani*. Says Mohammed Khan of Enterprise Advertising: "*Janvani* is a very powerful marketing tool. It shows that the government is accountable to the people."

In fact, so successful has it been that when former Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Ashok Gehlot, was dropped from the Cabinet, people immediately assumed that this was due to his miserable performance on *Janvani* shortly before.

What the programme has really managed to do is to make ministers seem accountable without their really being so. The standard ministerial response to complaints is: "We will look into the matter," and there is no evidence to suggest that any minister has actually been dropped on the basis of his television performance. Ironically, Uttar Pradesh, the home state of former Minister of State for Power, Arun Nehru, was unable to watch him on *Janvani* due to a power failure. That it was an accident seems unlikely, for most of the complaints on the programme concerned UP, a fact of which the then Chief Minister was fully aware. ♦

Rs 21 crore. Then, in late 1982, all of this changed with the political decision to expand the network." Rajiv Gandhi and his aides pushed for this expansion against the protestations of the then Finance Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, who opposed the expense. (When Rajiv finally came to power, Mukherjee faded into oblivion.)

The nature of the expansion was unprecedented. In the 15 years from 1959 to the end of 1983, only 41 TV transmitters were commissioned. From January 5, 1984, to September 13, 1985 — a space of 21 months — 132 TV transmitters were installed and commissioned. And while earlier, TV had been a more or less urban medium, many of the new transmitters reached a rural audience. For instance, the transmitter at Kodaikanal, installed on August 15, 1984, covered an area of 64 square kilometres and reached 196.23 lakh people of whom 134.96 lakh lived in the villages. The Gorakhpur transmitter, installed on August 13, 1984, covered 29.8 square kilometres and reached 161.95 lakh people, of whom 151.25 lakh were in the rural areas. The Ranchi transmitter, installed on September 26, 1984, reached 69.99 lakh people over 37.3 square kilometres of whom 57.17 lakh lived in the villages. The coverage of the urban areas was also now complete. Rare was the town without its own TV transmitter. Suddenly, TV had become a mass medium in the manner in which radio had reached out to the whole country in the mid-to late-'60s.

Now in this post-TV expansion era, the government's opinion-managers have an ideal means of bypassing the press (should they want to) and reaching out to the people directly. Sharada Prasad says it best: "TV viewership today has far overtaken the print media and any other source of information. Roughly 85 to 87 per cent of the population knows about events through TV. This has, conceivably, changed the nature of communication in this country."

The best illustration of Sharada Prasad's point is the impact that the

Prime Minister's own appearances on this vastly expanded television network have had. Says Prithvi Nandy: "He is going over the heads of the print media and appealing directly to the country on TV every evening." It helps also that he is, in Vinod Mehta's term, 'a TV natural': an accomplished television performer.

This accomplishment contrasts with the poor picture the pre-October 1984 Rajiv Gandhi made on television. During his period as Congress (I) General Secretary, his many TV appearances were as unmemorable as his mother's. And even after he became Prime Minister, his first three televised addresses to the nation met with a mixed response: he stumbled frequently and read out speeches in a dull monotone.

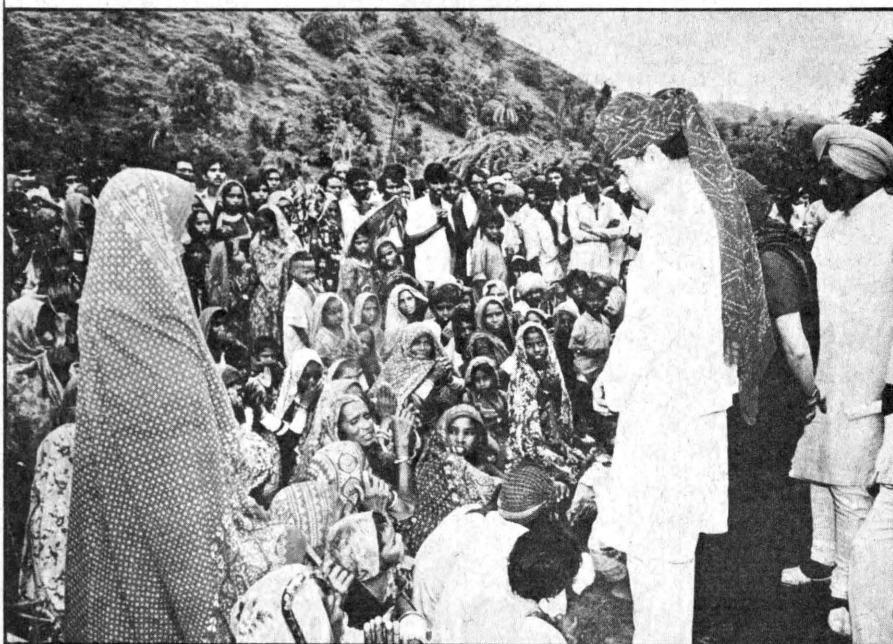
Mr Gandhi was not transformed into Mr Natural till a few months into his term. At that point, several significant and well thought out changes were made in the manner in which he was presented on TV, and it is these changes that led to his emergence as an accomplished performer.

The first of these changes was to start to exploit the full potential of TV. In Mrs Gandhi's time, TV coverage of the Prime Minister was dull and predictable: silent footage of her visit to a function, a city or a village, would be shown while a monotonous voice-over dutifully recounted her programme. The only times Indira Gandhi actually spoke on TV were either when she addressed the nation or when Doordarshan televised her speech to some gathering. As a consequence, she never came across as a real flesh and blood person on television.

For the first few months of Rajiv Gandhi's Prime Ministership, his TV appearances fitted this pattern. Then somebody realised that TV was, in Marshal McLuhan's term, a 'cool' medium: it did not lend itself to speech-making or to blatant propaganda. It needed a subtler, more visually-oriented approach: a soft sell. At this stage, non-visual mentions of

Rajiv Gandhi may well be 'a TV natural' but he was not transformed into an accomplished TV performer till a few months into his term. At that point, several changes were made in the manner in which he was presented on T.V. Mr Gandhi became Mr Natural after that.





Discovering India: performing for television?

the Prime Minister in news broadcasts were reduced, and TV was filled instead with visuals of Rajiv Gandhi. His foreign visits were accorded saturation coverage, and his tours of tribal areas were broadcast regularly. Crucial to the emergence of Rajiv Gandhi as a 'TV natural', was this shift away from heavy-handed mentions of the Prime Minister to a visual approach that just showed the Prime Minister in action without singing his praises. Somebody on the Prime Minister's staff had obviously learned from the example of another 'TV natural': Ronald Reagan. As his aide, Michael Deaver, once said, filling the screen with pretty pictures has much more impact than anything verbal.

Next, Rajiv Gandhi's image-builders realised that every time the Prime Minister read out an address on TV, he came across as stiff and wooden. So, he stopped reading (especially in Hindi, which he always stumbles over). If he did speak, it was extempore and, therefore, more natural. Then, his staff discovered that while he was not a very good orator, he was best in conversational situations where he could respond to questions. So, such situations were televised: his meeting with children, his lunches at

Press Clubs in Washington and Delhi and the like.

And finally, his Secretariat decided that his best TV appearances were those where he met the common people and spoke to them about their problems. So, the editing of the films of his visits to tribal areas was taken out of the hands of the ham-fisted hacks at Doordarshan and entrusted to the Secretariat. As a result, the better-edited films emphasised what one insider calls 'the candid camera' approach, showing the Prime Minister in situations that seemed natural and unstaged and yet displayed him to best advantage. As around eight hours of film were edited down to half-an-hour, it was easy to find enough 'natural' shots for the final programme.

"They are using TV very intelligently," rues Virendra Kapoor. "It's dangerous because TV has never been used so intelligently in India before." Iqbal Masud, the noted film and TV critic, has his own interpretation of the visits to the tribal areas. "They are not meant as much for the tribal areas as they are meant for the urban middle class," he says. Could it be that part of the intention is to create some good, image-boosting TV? This

may sound overly cynical but there are precedents for it. In the West, politicians nearly always consider the potential for TV exposure before embarking on any 'meet the people' exercises. Such factors as the vital possibilities of the area to be toured are also taken into account. (Rajiv has been fortunate in his choice of areas to visit. Places like Silent Valley and Rajasthan have tremendous visual appeal.)

"SOMEBODY IN DELHI," says veteran advertising man Kersy Katrak, "is obviously looking quite carefully at the way the media are managed, in a manner that has never been done before." That much seems clear. But, is the selling of the Prime Minister simply a case of better media management, or is there actually a marketing strategy behind all this? In other words, does it end at better handling of media, or is there a carefully thought out message that is sought to be put across?

"There is no doubt," says L K Advani, "that many of the things that Rajiv Gandhi says and does derive from a desire to build up his image." Kuldip Nayar agrees: "They are very concerned about projecting a certain image." Most people who feel that a marketing strategy exists, nearly always fall back on the same example: the Lok Sabha election campaign in 1984. There can be no doubt that it was one of the most successful campaigns in Indian electoral history, but it is also equally indisputable that it was the most cynical — a deliberate marketing exercise that bore little relation to the truth or to any larger conception of the country's interests.

The campaign worked on two levels. One was the advertising: large press ads, posters, video films, audio tapes and the like. The other was the politicking: the actual speeches made by Rajiv Gandhi. Both were tied closely together in the manner of a well co-ordinated marketing strategy. The advertising set the ball rolling by arousing subliminal fears of instability. It had headlines like *Will The Country's Border Be Moved To Your*

Doorstep? and illustrations of barbed wire, while the body copy included insidious suggestions such as: "Why should you feel uncomfortable riding in a taxi driven by a taxi driver who belongs to another state?"

Once the advertising had aroused subliminal insecurity and frightened people, the Prime Minister himself moved in with his speeches. The next step was to play on those fears and to name the Sikhs as the source of this instability. Rajiv Gandhi turned the 1973 Anandpur Saheb resolution into an election issue and all but branded the entire Akali party secessionist, thereby blurring the distinction between moderate and extremist Sikhs. As Kuldip Nayar says: "He made the election a referendum on the unity of India versus what he said were the secessionist tendencies of the Sikh community."

At a time when Sikhs all over India were frightened and alienated, he pointedly refrained from directly criticising the massacres that occurred in the aftermath of his mother's death. His only significant statement on the anti-Sikh riots came at a Delhi rally soon after the assassination. "When a big tree falls," he explained glibly, "the earth is bound to shake." In keeping with the cynical tone of the campaign, it was this speech that was videotaped and shown all around the country.

The Opposition was discredited in two stages. First, the advertising pointed to the 1977-79 Janata fiasco and sneered at people who went 'for an incredibly long walk'. Next came Rajiv Gandhi's own speeches which went a step further and linked the Opposition to Sikh secessionists. Khalistan supporters abroad were said to have visited India during the Janata government. Janata leaders were said to have consorted with Sikh extremists. And, the Prime Minister would tell his meetings, a member of the Opposition (a reference to P N Lekhi, who had resigned from the BJP) had actually volunteered to defend Sant Singh, the Sikh assassin of Mrs Gandhi! This same man, he would add, had also defended Godse.

All of this was irresponsible. Much of it was dishonest. Even Rajiv Gandhi couldn't have believed that Lekhi, who had been a child in 1948, had been Godse's lawyer. Nor is it likely that he believed all the things he said about the Sikhs. His actions in the months following the election ran counter to much of what he said during the campaign. He did announce an inquiry into the Delhi riots, made it clear that he didn't really think that all Akalis were Khalistanis, and actually negotiated on friendly terms with Sant Longowal, whom he had earlier painted as a dangerous secessionist.

The conclusion that the party and its leader fought a campaign that would work, rather than one that told the truth, is inescapable. Nobody in the Congress (I) will divulge much about the evolution of the strategy, but Arun Nanda of Rediffusion, the party's advertising agency, does concede that the ads and the speeches were planned as part of the same strategy. He also says that his agency spent months researching voting behaviour and used up hours of computer time in trying to identify the issues that the voters were really concerned with.

It was planned as a marketing blitz like, say, a campaign to sell Listerine — with all the modern computer techniques of twenty-first century management. Perhaps, the Congress (I) would have won anyway on the sympathy vote. But what is most striking is that the party wasn't willing to take that chance. To win, it would do virtually anything.

THE EXPERIENCE of the campaign suggests that Rajiv Gandhi and his aides are no dummies when it comes to working out a strategy that will sell. ("Oh, they certainly know what they are doing," Kersy Katrak, who has helped with two Janata campaigns, says with just a trace of envy.) But is there a strategy now? Is there a marketing message for the newly expanded media?

There is some evidence to suggest that the Prime Minister has not forgotten the marketing lessons of De-

The conclusion that the Congress (I) and its leaders fought a campaign that would work rather than one that told the truth is inescapable. It was planned as a marketing blitz and the consequences of its irresponsibility did not unduly worry the marketing boys.



POLITICS AND ADVERTISING

The links are older than they might appear.

THE BELIEF that advertising and politics have only recently mixed is a myth. Advertising agencies were used in the 1971 Lok Sabha campaign by the Congress. Recalls Inder Gujral, the slogan *Garibi Hatao*, was thought up at a meeting at which consultants from the ad world were present. It was shown to Mrs Gandhi, who didn't think it would work. So, it was tested on respondents in three areas: a city, a town and a village. Only after it elicited positive responses, did the party go with it. The same election saw the first use of audio tapes (to popularise songs about Mrs Gandhi) and 8 mm and 16 mm films.

Later, other parties also used advertising agencies. The most celebrated instance was Ulka's campaign for the Janata party in 1980. And in the 1984 elections, Trikaya did two campaigns: for Subramaniam Swamy and for the BJP; while the Janata hired its own ad agency.

Yet, it took Rajiv Gandhi and the Congress to move the ad-men to centre-stage. The controversial Congress (I) campaign, devised by Rediffusion for the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, attracted more attention than any of its predecessors for three reasons. Firstly, it was by far the most expensive campaign in Indian electoral history: the official figure is Rs 6 crore. Secondly, it was the first to use the modern technology of video and audio cassettes. And, finally, it broke with precedent in doing more than simply touting the virtues of its client — it appealed to subliminal fears of insecurity and instability.

No campaign for a political party has ever aroused so much controversy. The press, and the Congress (I)'s electoral opponents, regarded the advertising as needlessly divisive. And, within the advertising business itself, many respected figures thought that



Arun Nanda.

Rediffusion could have done a better job. Says Mohammed Khan of the Enterprise agency: "The Congress (I) would have won anyway. The campaign was crass. It lacked subtlety and class." Adds Kersy Katrak, the veteran ad-man: "It had just one message — play on fear."

Arun Nanda, Managing Director of Rediffusion, is unfazed by the criticism. He says that he positioned opinion research teams outside polling booths throughout the country. As soon as people had cast their votes, these teams asked them if they recalled the advertising, and whether it had met with their approval. "The results of those surveys," he says with some satisfaction, "were very favourable and very flattering to us."

Nanda is equally unfazed by the charge that he tried to sell the Congress (I) through fear. There had been instability in the country, he argues, and as the Congress (I) was the only party that was strong enough to handle the instability, it was only fair to point this out. As for the now-notorious line about feeling uncomfortable in a taxi driven by a taxi driver who belongs to another state, Nanda denies absolutely that this was

a reference to Sikhs. "Why should a person in Madras think of a Sikh when he reads that line?" he asks rhetorically. "He'll think of somebody from some other state."

Significantly, the alleged irresponsibility of the campaign is not a big issue with most ad-men. (Katrak is an exception.) Even Mohammed Khan, who disliked the campaign, wasn't worried by its ethics. The advertising world sees very little difference between selling a Prime Minister or selling a soap. "The techniques," says Sylvester da Cunha of the eponymous agency, "are much the same." (The stakes, of course, are higher. As Shrikant Verma, former AICC (I) General Secretary says: "If you don't like the soap, you can throw it away. But in the case of a Prime Minister, you are stuck with him for five years.")

Ad-men are more concerned by the technical aspects of the campaign. Most noteworthy was the research of the voting behaviour which preceded the campaign. Also significant was the fact that the advertising and the speeches were obviously planned in tandem. And perhaps most intriguing was the decision to focus the campaign on issues, not on personalities. Nanda will not explain the rationale behind that decision, but circumstances proved that it was the right one — the ads were planned before Mrs Gandhi's assassination: had they focussed on her, they would have had to redo the whole campaign!

Meanwhile, other parties are using sophisticated marketing techniques. Janata used Trikaya's Kersy Katrak and MARG, the market-research organisation, for the Karnataka poll. The BJP, too, is shopping around for an agency. And Rajiv Gandhi's government now seems determined to involve ad-men in most things: family planning, the Ganga project and more. ♦

ember 1984. Like Reagan, he too, has acquired a Teflon coating. Nothing bad seems to stick to him. And he is at the centre of everything good. One example is the Punjab settlement. Almost to the moment it all worked out, Governor Arjun Singh was the fall guy, the man who hadn't been able to solve the problem. And then, when it became clear that an understanding was on the cards, the Prime Minister moved to centre-stage. It was his settlement, and to prove it, he signed a Memorandum of Settlement with Harchand Singh Longowal. That the Memorandum set a dangerous precedent — should the Prime Minister of India sign such a document with the leader of a communal party? — was never an issue. To the government media, it became a peace treaty, a logical conclusion to the civil war images that he had evoked in December 1984.

By August, when a settlement to the long drawn out Assam problem seemed at hand, the desire to project the accord as a triumph for the Prime Minister became a little more blatant. The actual negotiations were conducted by Home Minister S B Chavan and Home Secretary R D Pradhan, and there was little doubt that the weary AASU leaders would finally call their agitation off. But in the second week of August, a new factor came into play. The accord had to be signed by the 15th, so that the Prime Minister could announce it during his Independence Day address at Red Fort. And so, the AASU representatives, Pradhan and Chavan sat up nights trying to settle minor points of dispute till, finally, they had an agreement early on the morning of the 15th. As soon as things were settled, the bleary-eyed negotiators woke up the Prime Minister who appeared to initial the accord (to which he is not a signatory) before the TV cameras. And sure enough, he was able to announce, live on national television, during his Independence Day speech, that the Assam problem had been settled. ("The haste has led," says Kuldip Nayar, "to various ambiguities in phraseology that have still to be re-

solved.")

The desire to associate the Prime Minister with his government's triumphs is backed by attempts to dissociate him from its failures. Once policies go wrong, he immediately distances himself from their evolution and implementation. The classic instance is the post-budget inflation for which V P Singh has now been made flak-catcher, even though the Prime Minister had earlier been showered with praise for the budget's other provisions. Says Nikhil Chakravarty: "At a Congress Parliamentary Party meeting, several MPs, angry about inflation, did not allow V P Singh to speak and shouted him down. Rajiv was present. He could have asked them to keep quiet — Mrs Gandhi would have done that. But he let them go on."

Rajiv Gandhi has also learned the value of gestures, particularly those that distance him from failure. When government control of Doordarshan (and his own starring role in each evening's programming) became an issue, he wrote a letter to the Information and Broadcasting Minister, echoing most public criticisms of Doordarshan. The haste with which this letter was released to news agencies by his Secretariat, and the fact that his letters to other ministers are never published, suggests that the intention was more to make a public gesture of dissociation. Little has changed on Doordarshan since that letter was written (though Harish Khanna, its Director-General says piously: "It will be our credo"), strengthening the suspicion that it was meant more for public consumption than for action.

Other gestures that demonstrate that he is not associated with everything that goes on in his government have also found favour. The story assiduously promoted by his aides, that he watches each *Janvani* programme has given him the image of a man of the people who, like them, judges the performance of his ministers by watching them deal with the public. (In fact, the Prime Minister told S Venkat Narayan recently that

The desire to associate the Prime Minister with his government's triumphs is backed by attempts to dissociate him from its failures. Once policies go wrong, he immediately distances himself from their evolution and implementation. The classic instance is the post-budget inflation.



WILL THE COUNTRY'S BORDER FINALLY BE MOVED TO YOUR DOORSTEP?



Will it some day become difficult, even impossible, to find an Indian among the millions of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, Goanites, Bengalis, Assamese and Tamilians?

Assam, Punjab

Barbed-wire fences which should be guarding national frontiers and interests are being put up between languages, between religions, between homes and between hearts. Whose interests are they guarding?

You know the faces. They put a knife through the country and carve out a niche for their cynical, disgruntled ambition disguised as public aspiration. They raise a flag and give this niche the name of a nation. They now breed and grow barbed-wire fences, watered with human blood.

But it's you who step out and bump into the fences and bleed while they cash your vote to buy their ticket to power.

Why should you smile uneasily at your next-door neighbour just because he belongs to another community or speaks another language?

Why should you feel uncomfortable riding in a taxi driven by a taxi

driver who belongs to another state?

But these faces, they can make it happen.

On the other hand, the Congress (I) has always stood for national interests, national boundaries and national unity.

And only the Congress (I) can cut away the fences.

Only the Congress (I) sees and treats the whole country as one.

And only the Congress (I) can stop India from disintegrating into small bits and pieces, fighting each other, and finally, possibly destroying each other.

You can survive only if India survives.

And only the Congress (I) can help India survive as one India.

So your survival depends on your vote.

Your vote can make all the difference.

Between survival and destruction.

Between unity and separation.

Your vote for the Congress (I).

INDIA COULD BE YOUR VOTE AWAY FROM UNITY OR SEPARATISM.



GIVE UNITY A HAND.

Illustration by Chaudhary Chaudhary. General Secretary, A.I.C.C., B-4, Aligarh Road, New Delhi 110011.

The election campaign: playing on fear.

he hasn't watched *Janvani*, and one of the programme's worst performers, Bansi Lal, got a promotion in the September reshuffle.) His behaviour on his televised tribal tours reinforces the man-of-the-people image. He is always on camera, righting wrongs committed by the local administration, upbraiding officials and ministers. It is needlessly cynical to suggest that he does all this for the TV cameras, but when you consider that hours of film are edited down to short half-an-hour broadcasts, and that such sequences are always retained in the final edit prepared by his Secretariat, the conclusion that there is a concern with image seems inescapable. Undeniably this image-consciousness has paid off—even the press now hails the Prime Minister's 'rediscovery of India'.

NO MARKETING STRATEGY, however expert in its conception, can sell a bad product for very long. And as ad-man Sylvester da Cunha notes: "Even the best image-builders cannot make people believe something that is clearly untrue." The key to the emergence of the post-October 1984 Rajiv Gandhi is that nobody has made him out to be what he is not. Most people who know him say that he is very like his image: a vulnerable, upper-middle class family guy with a common sense approach to things.

But, however attractive this image may seem now, there's no getting around two things. One, that till October 1984, the image was not finely tuned to reality, and two, that many of the attributes that now seem like

assets could well have turned into liabilities had they been badly projected.

Consider, for instance, his upper-middle class background and the approach to issues that it has clearly engendered in him. In a poor country, whose citizens live mainly in the villages and where, for over three decades, austerity has been a political fetish, the 'imported jeans' image could well have caused him to be perceived as a Prime Minister for the fat cats of the cities. Consider also, his family image that seems so appealing now. Central to this image is a foreign wife, one who is a Catholic in a country where religion has always been exploited. Consider next, his fabled common sense approach. It would have been only too easy for this to have come across as the dullness (as it probably did till October 1984), of a man who flunked his BA exams, particularly in view of the fact that his grandfather was an intellectual giant and his mother, the latter-day counterpart of Chanakya. And, finally, consider the issue that never took off: the dynastic succession that made an Avro pilot the leader of the world's most populous democratic nation.

The significant features of the projection of Rajiv Gandhi's image have been the neutralisation of the negative aspects of these attributes and the manner in which these same characteristics now seem like plus points. His upper-middle class background, for instance, has been turned into an advantage with a subtle shift in emphasis. He is projected not as a product of privilege, but as a man with a modern, technological vision, a twenty-first century perspective, and an understanding of management and computers. When, sometimes, this has not seemed entirely convincing — after the budget there was a feeling in some quarters that he was catering to the urban rich — corrective action has been taken at once. As soon as this criticism arose, he went off to tour the tribal areas and to hear the problems of the under-privileged. Still, there was no attempt to claim that he had always understood the tribals

and their problems — the tours were packaged, quite honestly, as a rediscovery of India.

The emergence of his family man image provides another instance of skillful image projection. Sensing that Sonia's Italian origins could become an election issue (the Rashtriya Sanjay Manch had already started blaming India's ills on a *videshi bahu*), an attempt was made to deliberately Indianise her. She turned in her Italian passport, learnt Hindi, and went off to Amethi every month. After he became Prime Minister, she was always seen by his side, wearing only saris. When he went abroad or toured the tribal areas, she went with him. And the only interview she has ever given has been to a Hindi magazine, in the course of which she said that she has always regarded herself as inferior to her husband and her mother-in-law.

Once Sonia's foreignness ceased to be an issue (and attempts to rake it up through the Snamprogetti connection have been miserable failures), the way was clear to play up the Prime Minister's image as a family man. Photographers were allowed into the Prime Minister's house and pictures of the Gandhi family at work and play were released. Most were, admittedly, meant for foreign consumption (Raghubir Singh's for *Life*, and Dilip Mehta's for *The Sunday Times*) but, inevitably, they found their way into the Indian glossies. (Raghubir Singh's pictures were used by *Frontline* after *Life* couldn't use them.) As Ian Jack noted in *The Sunday Times*, for the first time, India has a Prime Minister who seems happily married, and this has undeniably added to his appeal.

WHY DID the dynastic succession issue — always a live one in Sanjay's day — never really come to bother Rajiv? Partly, it was because, while Sanjay seemed obscenely eager to grab power, Rajiv always played the reluctant prince; somebody who never wanted to be Prime Minister or even to enter politics. When he did become Prime Minister, squashing all those stories

of reluctance, the outrage never boiled over because the price he had paid for his accession was constantly referred to. At first, it was the loss of his mother, and now it is the constant threat to his life. The brown-uniformed commandos, the bullet-proof screens and the platoons of armed men around his residence constantly reiterate the image of a family under siege. The overwhelming image of the Prime Ministership is not of a powerful throne, but of a brave man who has given up so much, and risks giving up much more, to lead this country.

Once Rajiv came to be seen in those terms, it followed that his intellectual credentials did not seem to be of great importance. And his publicity machine was never misguided enough to endow him with mythical qualities of brilliance and astuteness. Even the sycophants in the Congress (I), who had vied with each other to call Indira Gandhi 'the greatest leader the world has ever known', were stopped from saying the same sort of thing about Rajiv Gandhi. The only claims that were made on his behalf were that he was sincere and decent (which even his worst enemies do not seriously dispute), and that he had a conciliatory, pragmatic attitude to India's problems. (Dhiren Bhagat recalls that before his interview with the Prime Minister, a press aide suggested that he might like to talk about 'the politics of confrontation'.)

Thus, what had earlier seemed dullness, now came to be seen as a commonsensical, straightforward approach. And a country that had tired of the tortuous Machiavellian manoeuvrings of Indira Gandhi, saw great merit in this very ordinary openness. Virtually everything Rajiv did cemented this perception. Journalists were struck by his amiability. When he spoke to children on TV, he was friendly without being patronising; when pictures of him and his family appeared in magazines, he seemed an ordinary guy with a wife and children, not some distant leader; and when his aides said he checked on his ministers by watching *Janvani*, he seemed like the average Indian householder who

There is nothing, in itself, wrong with selling the Prime Minister. Image-building is a world-wide phenomenon, and rare is the political leader in the West who does not seek expert advice on how to project himself better. Even in India, the Opposition is trying to adopt the same techniques.



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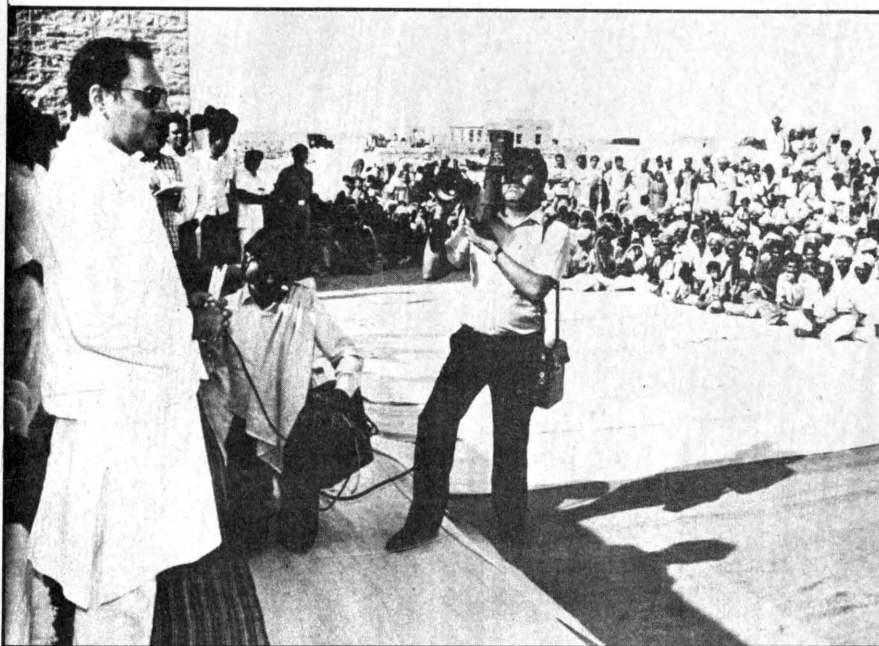
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MOTIVATION



Facing the cameras: a TV natural.

delighted in seeing the mighty squirm before ordinary people. After many years, Indians had a Prime Minister who seemed to be one of them — not some intellectual genius, not a new avatar of Joan of Arc, and not a crabby Gandhian.

FEW OF THOSE who feel that the Prime Minister has been marketed seem to think that there is anything wrong in this. Even BJP leader, L K Advani, objects only to the lies told during the election campaign and to 'the misuse of radio and TV' (a familiar complaint). "We would like to hire advertising agencies and to spend more on projecting ourselves," he says candidly of the BJP, "but we lack the resources." There is none of the outrage that there is in the USA about Ronald Reagan's manipulation of the media because, unlike Reagan, Rajiv is not perceived as having acted to obscure reality. All he has done is use the mass media more skillfully and, perhaps, package his actions better. ("There's nothing wrong with gestures," says the *New York Times's* Steven R Weisman. "Don't forget that Mahatma Gandhi's salt march was also a grand gesture.")

There is, however, some concern over how long all of this will work. Inder Gujral points to his experiences with radio when he was Information and Broadcasting Minister in Mrs Gandhi's government. "We used radio for propaganda, to promote the government's image," he admits. "It may have been improper but, of course, we did it. But," says Gujral, "the same radio that worked so well for us from 1969 to 1972 had stopped working by 1974 when the JP movement spread. And by 1975, when the Emergency was declared, it had stopped working totally.

"Don't forget that radio in 1969 was like TV in 1984. It had just spread all over the country and had tremendous novelty value. People were extremely influenced by it. Unfortunately, novelty value cannot last. After a while, people become immune to a medium's blandishments. That is what happened to us. And so, by 1974, it just didn't work any longer. I have a feeling that in a couple of years, this government will face the same situation with TV."

There are, in fact, uncomfortable parallels with the post-1969 Indira Gandhi. She, too, changed her image from being the *gungi gudiya* that

Kamaraj and the Syndicate had thought she was and emerged — after a series of grand populist gestures — as the nation's hope for the future. In 1971 she, too, won a Lok Sabha election by a landslide, and when, that winter, she won the war with Pakistan, she seemed unstoppable.

At that time, the country looked for populism, dynamism and charisma. Now, it needs hope; the values it cherishes are honesty, decency and conciliation. Just as Indira Gandhi was right for her times, so Rajiv is right for these times. But public perceptions do alter — in Mrs Gandhi's case, the image had tattered by 1973 — and the novelty value wears off. Rajiv has been sold much better than his mother ever was, and he is probably the sincere, decent man he is perceived as (whereas her populism was only skin-deep), so his popularity will probably last longer. But there are lessons for him in the experience of his mother.

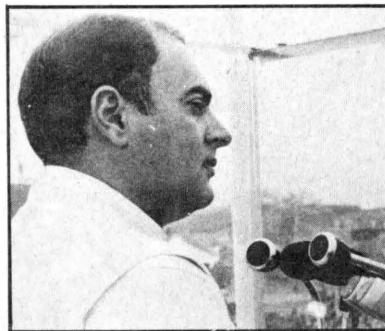
There is a second problem. The Prime Minister's image as a decent, ordinary guy who believes in conciliation, works best as a contrast to the imperial, confrontationist style of his mother. And so far, his major triumphs have come when his government has cleaned up the messes that Mrs Gandhi's government left behind: Sri Lankan relations, Assam and Punjab. But as Nikhil Chakravarty points out, "There is only Kashmir left now. I'm sure he will clean that up, but what happens afterwards?"

At that stage, when everything has been cleared, Rajiv Gandhi will at last have dispensed with the legacy his mother left him. Then, when he is on his own, will come the real test of his image. ♦

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Grace and faith produce a miracle in the PUNJAB

What now?



BY R V PANDIT

FROM AS LONG AGO as when the Sikhs emerged a majority community in the Punjab, the Akalis have wanted power, which the Congress was unwilling to even share with them. The electoral battle in the Punjab, as indeed the tragic confrontation of the last few years, was a struggle for power between the Congress (I) and the Akali Dal. And all elections in the Punjab have been fought by these two parties to gain power, and the ambitions of the rival contenders were no different in September 1985.

It is possible that the Congress (I), dominated by an aware and conciliatory Mr Rajiv Gandhi, went into the fray this time with more sobriety. But there is nothing to substantiate the canard that the defeat of the Congress (I)

was self-designed — if such a thing was at all possible in a volatile climate and where the electorate is large and widely dispersed.

True, the Congress (I) candidates had to campaign in a sensitive and difficult security environment. But after Harchand Singh Longowal's assassination, and the call to boycott the elections by the so-called United Akali Dal, the environment was even more insecure and difficult for the Akalis. In fact, the Congress (I) had an advantage in the state: their party president is the country's Prime Minister, which gave them prestige and facilitated the mobility of their leaders and candidates. And Mr Rajiv Gandhi has himself made more electioneering forays into the Punjab than the head of a national party would have normally under-



Just a few more votes to the Congress (I) in some constituencies where the Akalis have won by small margins, and the outcome in the Punjab would have been altogether different. And possibly catastrophic for the country.

taken in a state election.

Congress (I) apologists say that the party wanted the Akalis to win and hence it put up weak candidates. Not true. (And certainly undesirable in a democracy.) Of the six General Secretaries of the Congress (I) in the Punjab the party fielded, four lost. Of the three Vice-Presidents, two lost. Are General Secretaries and Vice-Presidents of the Congress (I) such nobodies?

The people of the Punjab voted for the Akalis and against the Congress (I) to protest against Operation Blue-star and its aftermath. They voted against the army presence in their towns and villages. They voted against the party in power at the Centre. In this protest vote, many Hindus voted with their Sikh neighbours, and wherever a

Congress (I) candidate deserved to win on personal merit, the Sikhs voted Congress (I) as in the case of R S Sparrow and the former Lok Sabha Speaker G S Dhillon.

The people of the Punjab realised that the Congress (I) politicians in the state were spineless pawns in the hands of Darbara Singh and Zail Singh (in his former role as the power-broker in the state) and later were mindlessly subservient to the political machinations of Mrs Indira Gandhi. This subservience required relegation to some extent at least of Punjab's interests and aspirations. In the elections, the people have voted against cynicism, and booted out those aspirants who had been known to have a tainted past. They have brought in people who are more likely to be able and willing to deal with the economic and emotional

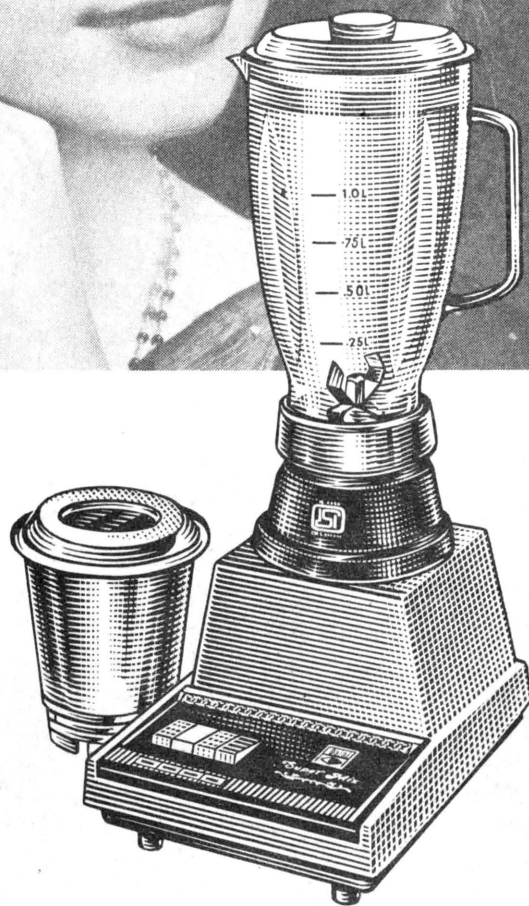
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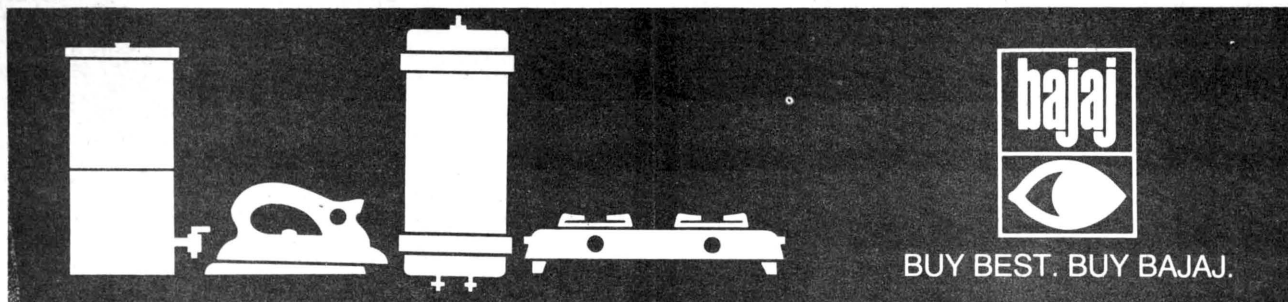
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IN-DEPTH

In the affairs of nations,
just as in the affairs of men,
goodwill and due
contrition generate grace,
and not infrequently,
a path paved with grace
leads to a miracle.



problems of the unsettled people of the Punjab.

Yet, the Congress (I) could have won. If more Hindus had exercised their franchise, if the traditional supporters of the Congress (I) among the Sikhs had voted for their party's candidates, if the Hindus were not driven to despair over the hurt and humiliation of their brothers and sisters — the Sikhs — the Congress (I) could have won. Just a few hundred more votes to the Congress (I) in some constituencies where the Akalis have won by small margins, and the outcome in the Punjab would have been altogether different. And possibly catastrophic for the country. For overall, only 43,408 more voters favoured the Akalis (giving them 72 seats in the British-style first-past-the-post electoral system, and the Congress (I) only 32 seats) who secured 26,30,696 votes as against 25,87,288 who cast their votes for the Congress (I). In the event, it was a miracle the Akalis won.

In the affairs of nations, just as in the affairs of men, goodwill and due contrition generate grace, and not infrequently a path paved with grace leads to a miracle. After his initial embroilment in the Punjab which was highly irregular and irresponsible (because he was then only the General Secretary of the Congress (I) and had no position whatsoever in the government), and which undoubtedly contributed to the mounting of Operation Bluestar and its many consequences, Mr Rajiv Gandhi has, however, soon after becoming the Prime Minister of India, allowed his decency and common sense (and not cunning which is the elixir of politicians) to shape his Punjab strategy. When you consider that this was the son whose mother was assassinated, and hate is the opium which soothes the sycophants and the unthinking who are the main clientele of Indian leaders, talking to Harchand Singh Longowal was Mr Gandhi's extraordinary act of faith, as it must have been for Sant Longowal too, who then was only recently released from a long and traumatic detention. Such an effort, and revealed goodwill and grace, deserved an extraordinary outcome — a miracle — and that is exactly what eventually happened as the outcome of the elections in the Punjab. India, and Mr Rajiv Gandhi, deserved nothing less.

What now?

The Akalis are where they always wanted to be: in power. The astute Mr Arjun Singh and a completely floored Surjit Singh Barnala are getting on as if they are long time members of some Cantonment Club. Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister, has forgotten that the Congress (I) has a Pradesh Committee in the Punjab. Well, let him. But what about the substantial problems? What about the rehabili-

tation of the disturbed and the unsettled? What about the young who are frustrated enough to be drugged on slogans and adventure? What about a law and order machinery for the state? What about the security forces on the border? What about the state's economy, the burgeoning stock piles of grain, the industrialisation? What about power and water? (What a different significance power and water have even in the villages of the Punjab when in the rest of India water means drinking water and power means a light or a fan!) What about Prakash Singh Badal? What about Akali unity? What about the Akal Takht? And what about the Hindus of the Punjab who are showing magnanimity to their Sikh brethren? And how should we in the rest of India react to the emergence of a communal party to power? How can we help a Sikh government in Chandigarh strengthen the secular character of India in the face of an Akali party in power which is communal by composition, if not in outlook?

The challenges ahead will not only need goodwill and grace, but much wisdom and patience. And generosity from the Centre.

IN THE PUNJAB ITSELF, the victory and the installation of the Akali government have raised high expectations. "Barnala will get anything Barnala asks," a Hindu hotelier says confidently, adding he voted for the Akalis. "Now, we are getting power for 20 hours a day," Sardar Sarup Singh, the headman of Maloya village in the union territory of Chandigarh tells me, and adds, "What we need now is crop insurance." "No, I am not afraid of violence or terrorism. There will be none now," an acquaintance declares.

The Centre does not appear to be worried about several hundred Sikh youths being released. One may, therefore, assume that New Delhi's perception of the threat to security posed by those detained has now changed. When Mr. Arjun Singh ordered the release of a large number of youngsters in June, the parents and guardians of those to be released were spoken to, making them aware of the problems the youths had created and the responsibility the parents had for their wards, and this has worked. But those being released now, and to be released later have suffered longer detentions, and possibly harassment, if not worse. New Delhi and Chandigarh ought to work out a debriefing procedure and where necessary speedily offer job and readjustment opportunities. In this context, the rehabilitation of the victims of the North India riots is crucial — a mental block from the Sikh psyche needs to be at once lifted.

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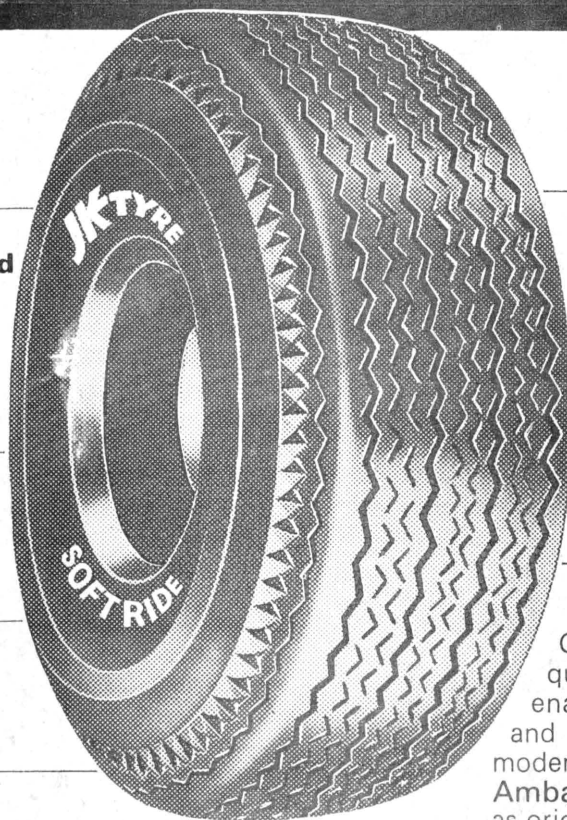
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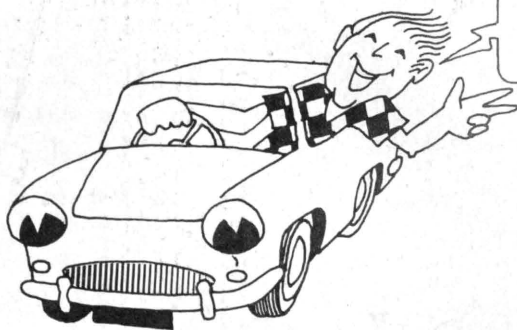
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IN-DEPTH

Mr Surjit Singh Barnala must provide an outlet for Mr Badal's enormous energy and capacity, because any infighting in the Akali party now, will have consequences beyond the Punjab.



The problem of the unemployed young, especially the educated, is not a Punjab problem only, but here the work ethic is finely built into the Punjabi ethos, and doing nothing tantamounts to being nothing. And that is an unacceptable state to be in, for a proud people. The Punjab today needs two or three massive, manpower-oriented, and economically viable projects. An urban renewal project, as suggested by Rahul Singh in the *Indian Express*, has vast employment potential and is economically feasible (neglect always costs more than repair). Sometime, somewhere, we will have to build an elevated, super highway, and the Punjab could be as good a testing ground for our imagination and skills as any. (In this connection, the building of the new Haryana capital could not have come about at a more opportune time.) The Punjab, with proper planning, could be producing vegetables and meat for the Middle East. Canning, of quality, has vast possibilities as one can see from shelves of supermarkets all over the world. There is scope for fisheries development which is totally untapped. And considering that between United States and Australia the two countries export more than US\$ 100 million worth of packaged wheat crispies and bran cereals; and that Taiwan and South Korea export almost that much to Africa and Middle East alone in parts and auxiliaries of automobiles of third country makes, the opportunities abound.

A major casualty of the Punjab divide is the police. The involvement of police in settling private scores through violence, in corruption, in smuggling, and in politics has seriously affected the authority and effectiveness of the force. In many instances, the policeman is a prime suspect in acts of terror, and in murders. Fortunately, there are signs the new government is very much aware of this problem and if the recent high level transfers and new appointments are any indication, the administration may be on the right track too. Some of the recent police behaviour in the Punjab is influenced by the behaviour of the outside forces deployed, and that has not been exactly exemplary (except during the elections when the *bandobast* and the discipline were perfect), and there is need to ensure that the Punjab police alone are entrusted the responsibility for law and order in the state.

Until quite recently serving in the armed forces on the border with Pakistan was almost like camping in a friend's farmhouse — so warm was the reception the soldiers received from the Sikhs settled in villages near the border. Suddenly, in the aftermath of Operation Bluestar, hostility, fear and suspicion have replaced the earlier *bonhomie*. The wounds are real. The hurt is deep. The perception is differ-

ent. In earlier years, villagers lustily cheered a soldier with a booty — now he is a smuggler, a drug pedlar, a mercenary. This slide must end. The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and the Punjab government must act together to raise the standing of the army to traditional esteem. The exercise may also hasten a clean-up in the armed forces, where warranted.

There is a general impression in the state, vehemently shared by the non-Sikhs, that the Punjab was deliberately neglected in the last two years. ("How come suddenly we have power now?" is a constant retort of villagers.) New Delhi has a particular responsibility to erase the "Okay, we will teach you" image it has acquired by adjustments where due. There is no denying that the legitimate requirements of the Punjab were not receiving fair consideration in the court of Mrs Indira Gandhi. But the state too cannot harp on this for long now: it must draw up practical, viable plans for boosting the economy, for better storage and distribution of grain, for diversification of crops, for industrialisation. Small industries often hold more potential for employment and for economic returns. Despite high unemployment all over our country, there is a shortage of carpenters, electricians, drivers, masons, painters and, simply, hard-working manual workers. The Punjabi work ethic accepts Punjabi women as cleaners, broom in hand, at Heathrow Airport (where they have a virtual monopoly) in the UK. Here, in our own country, there are a large number of openings in service industries where the jobs are of less menial nature but for which there are no takers. What an opportunity for employment!

There are countries in the world — Japan and South Korea — with less water resources and less natural power generation potential, for example, than India. But there the water and power consumption for agriculture is three times higher than in the Punjab. Human ingenuity and will have intervened. So the problem of water and power in the Punjab is not insoluble.

"ARE YOU SATISFIED you have a government of your own now?" I ask a grand old man in Thas-
kar village outside Chandigarh. There is no answer. After some effort, I draw out a response: He is worried the Akalis will quarrel. More precisely, he is worried, and unhappy that Prakash Singh Badal has not joined the government.

The former Chief Minister is sulking. He talks of his lifelong association with the Akali Dal, and describes his step by step rise from a village activist to panchayat, to district,

IN-DEPTH

Nehru kept central to his thinking the promise of plenty the Punjab held for India. Some such vision is needed in New Delhi now to deal with the Punjab in the months and years ahead.



to legislature, to ministership and to the last post he held and which now is denied to him by his own party.

"Under what circumstances will you join the Barnala Cabinet?"

"This is my government. Where is the question of joining it?"

"The Akalis need to be united. The expectations are high. . ."

"We are united."

He talks of starting a school somewhere for 'character building'. Clearly, the big man needs and deserves something big to do. Mr Barnala realises that tension in the party can render the government ineffective even before it is set on course. In Jawaharlal Nehru's time, Bhabha's Chairmanship of the Atomic Energy Commission had unusual clout and importance in the public mind because of Bhabha's personality and the importance of atomic energy. There are parallels in the Punjab situation today. Badal too has that kind of personality, and power and water, the importance. There must be other areas for glory, and service. But what is important is that Mr Badal must find an outlet for his enormous energy and capability. And ego. And Mr Surjit Singh Barnala must open up such an opportunity. Infighting in the Akali party at the present time has consequences beyond the Dal and the Punjab.

EVER SINCE A CATHOLIC, John F Kennedy, became the President of the United States of America in 1960, the world has moved past its phobia about a Church-State axis, and the little fallout we have had here from that American experience has helped improve our perception too of the religion/State relationship. No doubt, the relationship between the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) and the Akali Dal is close, and more. The Akalis are funded by the SGPC. And the SGPC is exclusively Sikh, exclusively religious. And that makes the Akali Dal communal; it does not even confer membership on Sikhs who trim their beards.

In a country with the size and diversity of India, secularism is a practical necessity. It is honest. It is the best guarantee of religious freedom and identity in this subcontinent. The percentage of people who use and exploit religion for political jockeying increases as inversely the percentage of people who are true believers decreases — a sad worldwide phenomenon. What, then, is the Akali future in a secular India?

In a sensitive situation where a religion has shaped a political party and catapulted it into power, the Akalis and

the high priests of SGPC owe it to their motherland to fashion a political set-up which must become more and more secular. Sikhs (and Hindus) whose hearts tick with the excitement of India must think, initially, more and more of a Punjabi Dal to realise the potential of the Punjab. Akali Dal is too narrow and too small a platform for the genius of the Punjab.

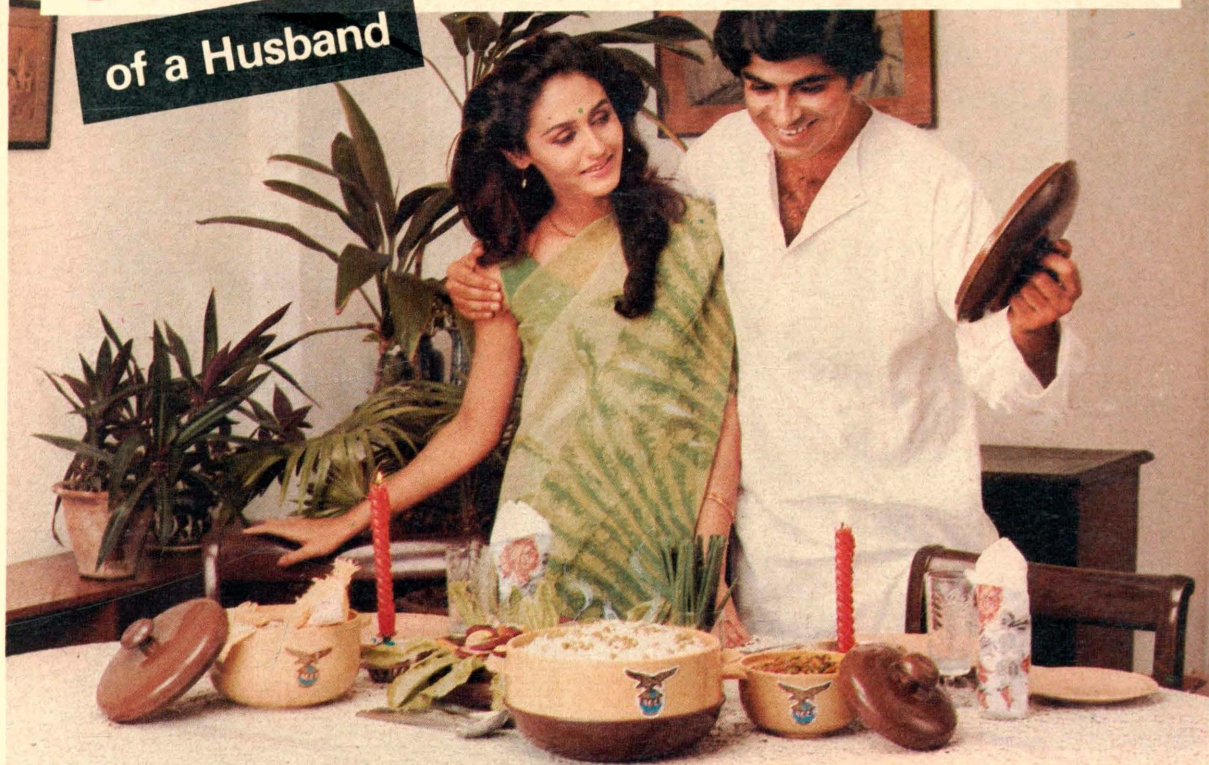
The induction of some Hindu legislators in the Barnala Cabinet is on the cards. This should not be a mere gesture. The concern the Hindus have projected for the acceptance of the Sikh reality in the Punjab calls for a matching response. People from the Hindu community must be given positions of power in the administration which are commensurate with their strength and status.

When the cranky old Pratap Singh Kairon was routinely harassing Jawaharlal Nehru with long shopping lists for the Punjab and frequently upsetting the then Prime Minister with crude displays of power through high-handedness and nepotism, generating calls for his ouster in the Parliament and outside (the Chief Minister had to go finally, in 1964, when the Das Commission appointed by New Delhi held him guilty of irregularities), Nehru kept central to his thinking the promise of plenty the Punjab held for India, and the need to build a strong, and psychologically sound Punjab. He sold to his countrymen his vision of green fields, and excited the people around him over even the tiny and primitive mechanical workshops which were then sprouting up in the backyards of homes in places like Batala and Ludhiana. Some such vision is needed in New Delhi now to deal with the Punjab in the months and years ahead.

The Sikhs are not an easy people to deal with. We should not be surprised if they choose to rebuild the Akal Takht after dismantling it when what that undertaking would cost could comfortably house all Sikh victims of the Delhi riots over which there is so much Sikh chest-beating. And there will be violence, and also some terrorism in the Punjab. Violence has been there, always. But we will have to learn to resist the temptation to put the 'terrorist' tag on all murders and assassinations. The Sikhs are notorious for killing over women and land, often within their families. At the same time, we should be absolutely clear that there will be no special treatment or considerations on the lines of the extremely foolish and dangerous concessions we have allowed in Jammu and Kashmir. As I said near where I began, goodwill, patience, generosity and wisdom are required to deal with the Punjab. But that is really not too much to do, in the context of the security and safety of our country. ♦

CONFESSIONS

of a Husband



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And that made me and my *biwi* *maha khush*, because once I was home from office we had all the time in the world together.

No interruptions for heating. No deserting me on the dining table to get a *garam chappati*.

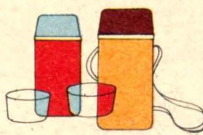
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It sure has put the *masala* back into our marriage!!"

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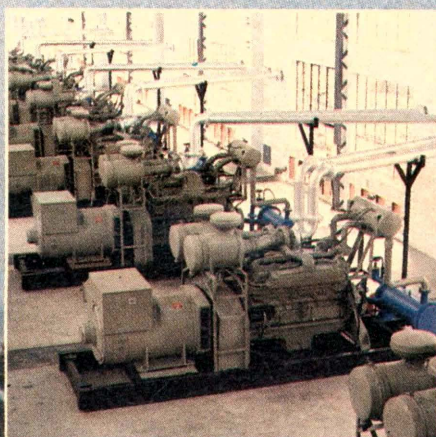
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JUDGMENT AGAINST JAGMOHAN

BY R V PANDIT

Last month's Supreme Court judgment in the *Indian Express* Case is as damning as a judgment can possibly be. The country is waiting...



IN THE RECORDS of the Supreme Court of India, the Writ Petition Numbers 535-39 of 1980, stand in the name of Express Newspapers Private Ltd, Petitioner No. 1; the Indian Express Newspapers (Bombay) Private Ltd, Petitioner No 2; Ram Nath Goenka, Petitioner No 3; Nihal Singh, the (then) Editor-in-Chief of the *Indian Express*, Petitioner No 4; and Romesh Thapar, the Editor of *Seminar* which was then published from the Indian Express Buildings, New Delhi, Petitioner No 5;

Versus

Union of India, Respondent No 1; Shri Jagmohan, the (then) Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Respondent No 2; the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Respondent No 3; The Zonal Engineer (Buildings), the Municipal Cor-

poration, Delhi, Respondent No 4; and the Land & Development Officer, Ministry of Works and Housing, Government of India, New Delhi, Respondent No 5. But a careful reading of the lucid, 60,000-word judgment delivered by Justice A P Sen and concurred in by Justice E S Venkataramiah and Justice R B Misra on October 7, 1985, makes it obvious the case was really between Mr Jagmohan, the then Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, and Mr Ram Nath Goenka, and his Indian Express group of newspapers. The judgment declared the actions of

Lieutenant Governor Jagmohan in the case to be "not *bona fide* in the ordinary course of official business or for securing justice but were actuated with an ulterior and extraneous purpose and were wholly *mala fide* and politically motivated."

So, what was the case?

In 1949, the Government of India demarcated ten plots on the Mathura Road (now Bahadurshah Zafar Marg), as press area. On May 26, 1954, an agreement of lease was signed between the Government of India and Express Newspapers Private Ltd, New Delhi, allocating plot numbers 9 and 10, measuring 5,705 square yards, to the Indian Express group. *The Times Of India* group, *National Herald*, *Patriot* and several other newspaper groups were also allotted plots in the demarcated area, and they all have built

buildings there.

When construction was started on the Express plots, an underground sewer line was found to be running diagonally across plots 9 and 10, rendering 2,740 square yards west of the drain unusable for construction.

At the time the agreement of lease was signed and the construction began in the press area, there were no restrictions on the area you could build. In fact the lease required the Express to build from edge-to-edge on the two plots upto a height of 60 feet, and five floors — a FAR (Floor Area Ratio) of 500. However, there was no such thing as FAR in those days. So it was this discovery of the sewer line on plots 9 and 10 which in fact restricted the area Express could build on.

A registered indenture of lease, supplemental leases, agreements etc followed representations from the Indian Express group, and the first Express Building rose on the site of plots 9 and 10 in March 1958, and this was followed by another, smaller building in February 1980 after the Express secured permission of the Government of India to shift the sewer line outside the plots area, to enable them to build an additional building on their own land. Many modifications were made in the original lease agreement but all this was done at several levels in the offices of the Chief Commissioner of Delhi (thereafter in the Delhi Development Authority), and in the Government of India, Ministry of Works and Housing. In 1978, during the Janata regime, Mr Goenka obtained a FAR of 360 for additions and alterations to the existing building, and for a new building on plots 9 and 10. This FAR was granted after several reviews and after the Express Group had convinced the government that what they were asking for was not unreasonable in light of the original agreement of lease and because they were launching a new Hindi daily, which they subsequently did. Mr Ram Nath Goenka was a MP and a consequential member of the ruling Congress party when the original lease was

On February 17, 1980, Mr Jagmohan bounced back on the capital scene as the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. On that very day, and the day after, and the day after...

secured, and a political celebrity and an authentic Emergency hero when permission to build the second building was secured, but there is no evidence whatsoever of him using anything but legitimate representation to obtain for construction the usable area the original lease had granted to his publishing firm.

There is no need here to recall the respective roles played by the Indian Express group of newspapers, Mr Ram Nath Goenka, and Mr Jagmohan, the Vice-Chairman, then, of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in the nasty months of the Emergency. It is mentioned here because on February 17, 1980, soon after Mrs Indira Gandhi emerged victorious after the brief Janata interlude, Mr Jagmohan bounced back on the capital scene as the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

FEBRUARY 17, 1980, was a Sunday, but on that very day, in the evening, Mr Jagmohan, the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, summoned the Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and called for the files relating to the construction of the new Express Building (the 4-storey building was completed by February 1980) on plots 9 and 10. On the 18th morning, the files were made available to the Lieutenant Governor. Files from the DDA were made available to him on the 20th. On February 29, 1980, the Municipal Commissioner even caused locks on the office door and cupboards of the Zonal Engineer

(Buildings) of the Municipal Corporation to be broken open to take away some files to Mr Jagmohan. On March 1, the Lieutenant Governor convened a press conference to allege that the new building of the Indian Express was in contravention of law in several respects. At the press conference he also threatened that the building might have to be demolished. He also announced a formation of a three-man committee of his subordinate officials to inquire into the matter and report back to him within *three days*. The proceedings of the press conference were broadcast on AIR and telecast on Delhi Doordarshan, showing some pictures of the Express Buildings, within two hours of the conference. Also on the same day, March 1, although he had no access to the files relating to the new Indian Express building (as they were removed from there as previously described), the Zonal Engineer (Buildings) served a notice on the Express Newspapers Private Ltd, to show cause why action should not be taken for demolition of the Express Building, under provisions of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, relating to unauthorised construction. (So hastily was the notice written that it had to be withdrawn in ten days as it was found to be referring to an agreement that had already been superceded.) On March 4, 1980, a press note was issued by the Lieutenant Governor and sent by special courier to all newspaper offices in Delhi to justify his actions relating to Indian Express since assuming his new office. On March 7, files from the Ministry of Works & Housing, relating to Indian Express, were made available to the Lieutenant Governor.

On March 10, 1980, the Engineer Officer in the Land & Development Office, Ministry of Works & Housing, Government of India, issued a notice of re-entry upon forfeiture on Express Newspapers Private Ltd, New Delhi, claiming that there were many breaches of the agreement of lease.

Space does not permit a detailed description of the pains taken and the zeal shown by Mr Jagmohan, to

set things right in New Delhi, but it will suffice, I think, to record that on March 12, 1980, the Lieutenant Governor convened another press conference to recite a justification of what he was doing. Two days later, on March 14, 1980, Mr Jagmohan, the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, wrote the following letter to Mr P C Sethi, the Minister for Works & Housing, Government of India, New Delhi, to confirm the good work:

CONFIDENTIAL
D.O. No. 60/LG/80
March 14, 1980.

Dear Shri P C Sethi,

I am enclosing, for your information, a copy of the Enquiry Report in respect of the Indian Express Building. Some action may be necessary at the Ministry's end.

I am seeking legal opinion to ascertain as to what action can be taken at this stage to salvage the situation created by irregularities and illegalities committed in this case. I will write to you further in the matter.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,
Sd/- (Jagmohan)

Shri P C Sethi,
Minister for Works & Housing
Nirman Bhawan,
New Delhi.

Encl: Enquiry Report

FACED WITH the show cause and the threat of demolition Notices, Goenka (and others) petitioned the Supreme Court citing Union of India, Mr Jagmohan and others as respondents and claiming the two Notices issued were wholly *mala fide* and politically motivated and, as such, illegal. Justice Sen described best, in the course of his judgment, what followed: "The case has seen many twists and turns. The hearing commenced on April 27, 1982 and was concluded on September 22, 1983, with intermittent breaks. I regret to say that the ambivalent attitude adopted by respondent No 1, the Union of India, and the hostility of respondent No 2 (Mr Jagmohan) prolonged the hearings which lasted as many as 43 days. This has resulted in a colossal waste

...Mr
Jagmohan's actions
were not for securing
justice but
were actuated with
ulterior and
extraneous
purpose.

of public money and valuable time of the Court." (Name in the bracket is mine — RVP.) What followed included "the strange phenomenon when hearing was resumed on November 4, 1982, of the Union of India speaking

A Good Connection

The original agreement of lease between the Government of India and Express Newspapers Ltd, allocating plot numbers 9 and 10 on Mathura Road (now Bahadurshah Zafar Marg), New Delhi, to the newspaper was signed by the late Feroze Gandhi, father of Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister, on behalf of Express Newspapers Ltd, in his capacity as the Managing Director of the newspaper company. Originally, plot numbers 1 and 2 of the area demarcated as the press area, were allotted to Indian Express, but Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, requested Ram Nath Goenka to accept plot numbers 9 and 10 instead of plots 1 and 2 as Nehru was keen to construct the Gandhi Memorial Hall (the Pyare Lal Bhawan) on plots 1 and 2.

It is as if to test the sincerity of a good man's son and a great man's grandson that two minor incidents from the past where the two were incidentally involved, have now presented a major opportunity for the progeny to act.

— RVP

through the voice of the learned counsel for respondent No 2" (which the Court did not permit). During the long proceedings of the case, Mr L N Sinha, the Attorney General of the Government of India demitted his office and Mr K Parasaran was appointed the Attorney General. Mr Parasaran emphatically contended at all times that Mr Jagmohan was a complete stranger and did not represent the Government of India, the lessor of the land to Express Newspapers Private Ltd.

Many more twists and turns followed in the proceedings, and efforts were made to establish that the permission given to the Express Newspapers group during the Janata government to extend the FAR to 360 was exceptional and illegal. More efforts were made to malign the Minister for Works & Housing, Government of India, and indeed, the whole Ministry. The Court has dwelt at length on all the submissions of the two sides. Importantly,

"The petitioners have pleaded the facts with sufficient degree of particularity tending to show that the impugned notices were wholly *mala fide* and politically motivated: *mala fide*, because the impugned notice of re-entry upon forfeiture of lease dated March 10, 1980, issued by the Engineer Officer, Land & Development Office under cl 5 of the indenture of lease dated March 17, 1958 for alleged breach of cls 2(14) and 2(5) — which in fact were never committed — and the notice dated March 1, 1980 by the Zonal Engineer (Buildings), City Zone, Municipal Corporation, for demolition of new Express Building where the printing press is installed, under ss 343 and 344 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act were really intended and meant to bring about the stoppage of the publication of the *Indian Express* which has throughout been critical of the government in power whenever it went wrong on a matter of policy or principle. Also, *mala fide* because they constitute misuse of powers in bad faith. Use of power for a purpose

other than the one for which the power is conferred is *mala fide* use of power."

Also, "In the facts and circumstances, I am constrained to hold that the impugned notices dated March 1, 1980 and March 10, 1980, were not issued *bona fide* in the ordinary course of official business for implementation of the law or for securing justice but were actuated with an ulterior and extraneous purpose and thus were wholly *mala fide* and politically motivated."

And, "The entire case of the Union of India as well as the other respondents as presented before us is that under the Master Plan an FAR exceeding 300 was totally prohibited for any commercial area including the Mathura Road Commercial complex. This is factually wrong."

Wrong, I may add, because the DDA itself has sold plots by public auction on Asaf Ali Road where a FAR of 400 has been allowed and a FAR of 500 has been allowed to the Hyatt Regency Hotel at the Bhikaji Cama Place on the Ring Road, New Delhi.

Proceeding, the Court observed, "It must, therefore, be held that the permission granted by Sikander Bakht, the then Minister for Works & Housing for the construction of the new Express Building with an increased FAR of 360 with a double basement for installation of the printing press was not in violation of the Master Plan for Delhi or the Zonal Development Plan for D-II area or the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Buildings) Bye-laws, 1959 inasmuch as *ex facie* bye-law 26 read with 25(2)(IV-B) was not applicable to the press area on the Mathura Road."

Wrote Justice J Venkataramiah, "I agree that Shri Jagmohan, Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, the second respondent herein, has taken undue interest in getting the impugned notices issued to the 1st petitioner (Express Newspapers Private Ltd) and his action which has come up for consideration in this case is not consistent with the normal standards of administration. I am satisfied that the said

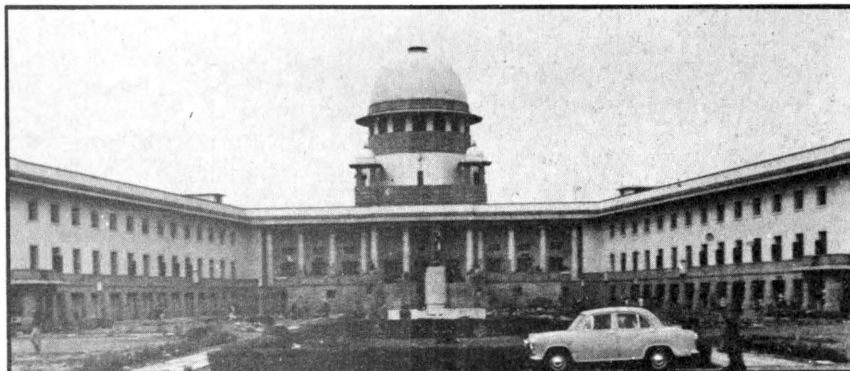
In the face of such an indictment, can Jagmohan hold on to an even more gilded *gadi*? And is the President still pleased? Please!

notices were issued by the authorities concerned under the pressure of the second respondent (Mr Jagmohan). The question whether the notices should be issued or not does not appear to have been considered independently by the concerned administrative authorities before issuing them. Shri Lal Narain Sinha, the learned counsel for the Union government has submitted that the Lieutenant Governor was a total stranger to the lease and had no sort of right or power under the lease deed to set in motion any action against the lessees. He has further submitted that the land leased under the lease deed being *nazul* land is exclusively owned by the Union government and the powers delegated to the former Chief Commissioner of Delhi under the lease deed were no longer exercisable by the present Lieutenant Governor of Delhi. Shri Lal Narain Sinha, learned counsel for the Union of India, specifically stated that on the date on which action was initiated in this case by the Lieutenant

Governor against the petitioners, the Lieutenant Governor had acted without authority or power. The claim of the Lieutenant Governor that he was the agent of the Union government in regard to the lease in question and that he could take the steps he had taken under the lease thus stands repudiated. It is unfortunate that the Lieutenant Governor persisted in justifying his action even after the learned counsel for the Union of India had disowned all the actions of the Lieutenant Governor. . . . "The material available in this case is sufficient to hold that the impugned notices suffer from arbitrariness and non-application of mind. . ." (Names in the brackets are mine — RVP.)

SO, THERE WE ARE. On almost each count, the Union of India and particularly the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, Mr Jagmohan, are found to have acted wholly *mala fide* and politically motivated. The political motivation is obvious.

In their petitions, the Indian Express Group of Newspapers and Mr R N Goenka had alleged personal vendetta as Mr Jagmohan's motivation for the two Notices issued. The Court has said that the Notices were issued by the authorities concerned under pressure from the Lieutenant Governor. In view of what the learned judges have said, and what is, in the circumstances left unsaid, Mr Jagmohan stands indicted. The Supreme Court has identified the culprit and exposed the *mala fide* motives behind the harassment of the newspaper group and its proprietor.



What must follow now? Mr Jagmohan, who was the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, is now in an even more responsible position — a constitutional functionary — the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir. Since he has now been held guilty of wholly *mala fide* and politically motivated actions 'not consistent with the normal standards of administration', what must follow now? Clearly, Mr Jagmohan must go — he should have gone on October 7, 1985, the day the judgment in this case was delivered by the Supreme Court. In the judgment, awarded with costs against the Union of India and Mr Jagmohan, there is scope for the Express and Mr Goenka to file a suit against Jagmohan for damages. But the mischief the Supreme Court has unearthed goes beyond personal considerations. It is the subversion of a high office and the *mala fide* use of even higher government machinery that is at the heart of the matter.

In his role as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Jagmohan, holds a Constitutional office, and is sworn to uphold the Constitution — in fact, that is his function. In light of what the highest Court in the country has discovered about the Governor while he was the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi, can Mr Jagmohan be trusted to fulfil his obligations under the Constitution?*

THE CONSTITUTION of India is a bare document. Respect for its provisions, adherence to its spirit is what enlivens it and makes it the nation-sustaining force it is. Conventions strengthen and sanctify it. Mr Pratap Singh Kairon, the then Chief Minister of the Punjab, resigned on June 14, 1964, within minutes of reading press accounts of the Das Commission's report finding Kairon guilty of some irregularities. And just four months earlier, Mr Sanjeeva Reddy had resigned as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, soon after the Supreme Court had passed strictures against him in the Kurnool transport case. The allegation against Reddy, accepted by the Supreme Court, was

Since Jagmohan has shown scant respect for conventions and lesser still for the judgment against him, he must attract the scrutiny of the President.

that he had retaliated for the political defeat his candidates had suffered in Kurnool district, by selecting certain transport routes in that particular area for nationalisation. Mr Reddy chose not to challenge the allegations when the case came up to the Supreme Court. In the case of Kairon, the Das Commission, which was appointed by the Government of India to investigate several charges of irregularities, found that the Chief Minister had pro-

*By a sheer coincidence, elsewhere in the magazine we are publishing an excerpt, *A Tale Of Two Governors* by reporter Tavleen Singh, from the book *The Governor: Sage Or Saboteur*. The account we have published, deals with the functioning of Governor B K Nehru and his successor, Jagmohan, in 1983-84, in the sensitive state of Jammu and Kashmir in the face of a political crisis, and the Congress (I)'s efforts from New Delhi to topple the duly-elected government of Dr Farooq Abdullah. Mr B K Nehru stuck to his Constitutional role and obligations, and refused to act as the agent of New Delhi. B K Nehru was, of course, eased out.

Singh writes: "Jagmohan was the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi at the time he was selected for Kashmir, and in the many years he spent in the capital, he had acquired a reputation for two things — for being a very efficient administrator who got things done at top speed, and for being an utterly pliant bureaucrat. He was regarded as a sort of hatchet man, and it was this side of his reputation that preceded him to Kashmir — so that from the day he settled into Raj Bhavan in April 1984, most politically aware Kashmiris began a sort of waiting game to see when he would strike."

Mr Jagmohan struck on July 2, 1985.

— RVP

moted the interests of his relatives in some administrative matters.

Both Pratap Singh Kairon and Sanjeeva Reddy were elected chief ministers, and they enjoyed majorities in their respective legislature parties when they resigned. There is no provision in the Constitution for the Chief Minister to resign when he enjoys a majority. But conventions are the life-lines of a democracy. The two Chief Ministers cited above, upheld the highest traditions.

The role of the Governor is different from that of the Chief Minister. The Governor is a Constitutional functionary. He is sworn to uphold the Constitution. He serves at the pleasure of the chief upholder of the Constitution—the President.

Can the President's pleasure continue in the face of such a serious indictment of his appointee?

In the judgment, the Supreme Court has referred to Mr Jagmohan's efforts to arrogate to himself powers which really belong to the Government of India. This was a deliberate attack on the federal structure of India, and the government has an obligation to go into the make-up of people in authority who consciously go against an accepted national purpose.

"The people expect much from the Supreme Court," the President has said — two days after the judgment I have dwelt upon was delivered by the Supreme Court, while presenting a 'plaque of honour' to Chief Justice P N Bhagwati at a function organised by the International Bar Association in New Delhi — "as whatever was laid down by the Supreme Court became a binding principle of law to be followed by the people in the country till it was suitably amended by the Parliament."

Since Mr Jagmohan has shown scant respect for conventions and very little for the severe judgment against him by the highest court of the country, he must attract scrutiny by the President. Any such exercise can lead to only one conclusion: Mr Jagmohan, the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir now, must go. ♦



CONTEMPT

The 'Weekly' Vs

It promises to become the most celebrated media story of 1985.

FEW ISSUES can have involved the judiciary, the legislature and the press in such a close, head-on confrontation. Few articles can have shaken up the political structure of a state with such ease. Or exposed the judiciary to such sustained criticism.

A Chief Minister who is asked to resign. A powerful editor who is made to apologise. A judge who has refused to say anything for himself. Telephone linesmen who seem to hold the fate of a government in the columns of their humble Fault Dockets. A state in ferment. The press in a dilemma. The truth, as always shadowy and, perhaps, unverifiable.

Yes, there seems no doubt at all, the case of Kerala Chief Minister, K Karunakaran versus *The Illustrated Weekly Of India* has lit a fire that nobody seems able to douse. Drama, high drama, indeed.

THE FIRST SOFT rumblings began as long ago as May 25, 1985. Balakrishna Pillai, the then Electricity Minister of Kerala,

Shirin Mehta is the Managing Editor of Imprint. Her last article was Dream Sellers in the October issue of Imprint.

gave a speech at a meeting of the Kerala Congress. Out of the 40 press people present, seven reported that the speech was seditious. They said Pillai had asked Kerala to resort to a Punjab-type agitation if it was to receive any attention from the Centre. It was unseemly for a man holding a Cabinet post to make statements which went against his oath of office, they concluded.

Pillai denied the press reports. But things had already begun moving in a different direction. The Congress (I) — partners with Pillai's Kerala Congress in the coalition — condemned his 'anti-national' stand; an outraged Chief Minister, Karunakaran, demanded an explanation; the Kerala Congress issued a feeble protest, drawing on its past record to strengthen its claims, swearing that the press had misquoted Pillai. When Karunakaran rejected Pillai's explanation, it became clear he was angling for a public apology — something that Pillai was not prepared to give. The only alternative was for Pillai to resign. Things came to a head when K C Chandy, son of Madhya Pradesh Governor, K M Chandy, filed a petition against Balakrishna Pillai,

asserting that he had incited the public to revolt and resort to terrorist tactics.

On June 5, Justice Radhakrishna Menon, while admitting Chandy's petition in the Kerala High Court, made certain remarks about Pillai's conduct. If, the judge stated, the charge in the petition was violative of a minister's oath of office, then that minister ought to step down of his own accord.

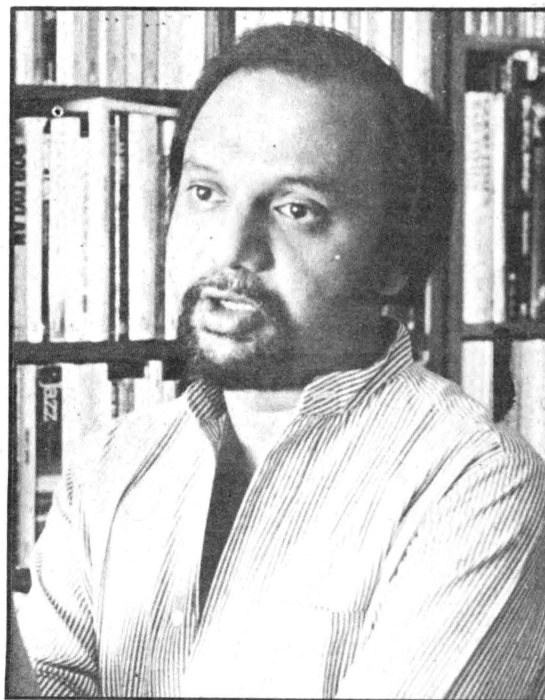
That afternoon itself, Pillai resigned. He went quietly. His resignation saved the crumbling coalition, restored Pillai's lost 'honour' and strengthened the Kerala Congress's position in the ministry.

NONE OF THE ABOVE was, in itself, sufficient to cause even a mild political tremor. Kerala's history, after all, runs along a basic pattern: ministers can come and go, it is the coalition that must go on forever.

Then, things changed. In its July 7-13 issue, *The Illustrated Weekly Of India* carried an article on the Pillai case by its Kerala correspondent, Venu Menon. The article traced the sequence of events that led to Pillai's

OR EXPOSÉ? K Karunakaran

A determined Editor versus
an angry Chief Minister.



resignation, talked of how Pillai had grown into a local hero overnight and was accompanied by an interview with him. Perhaps nobody at the *Weekly* realised that their article would create such a furor. Certainly, they did not guess that it would land them in such trouble.

Within a day of the *Weekly* hitting the stands, Dr Vincent Panikulanga, Secretary of the Public Interest Law Society, had slapped a petition on the magazine for contempt of court. The article was found objectionable for the following statements: "If Balakrishna Pillai's anxiety to resign is suspicious, so too Judge Radhakrishna Menon's impulse to make adverse observations, while admitting the petition, casts doubts about the impartiality of the judiciary. Already the capital is agog with loud whispers about the telephone conversation Chief Minister Karunakaran is believed to have had with Justice Radhakrishna Menon at 9 p m from Cliff House, the CM's official residence, the night before the judge's remarks came." And for the last sentence: "If Chief Minister Karunakaran's affinity with Judge Radhakrishna Menon is not mythical,

then the day of judgement might prolong itself on one pretext or other. The verdict on sedition may be a while now."

Section 2(C) of the Contempt of Court Act clearly defines criminal contempt as 'the publication... of any matter or the doing of any other thing whatsoever which scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower, the authority of any court'. So, the *Weekly* statement which read 'casts doubts on the impartiality of the judiciary' would according to the provisions of the above-mentioned Act be held in contempt of court. But, that was not all. Truth or justification, by itself, is not a defence in contempt proceedings, as in proceedings for defamation. Which put the *Weekly* in a bind. For, even if the statement — that a call was made from the Chief Minister's house to the judge's — could be proved to be true, the *Weekly* was still in contempt under the stated definition.

The issue was blown up by the Kerala press. Banner headlines in the dailies recorded the progress of the case. Most papers took the stance that the magazine was in deep trouble. Few lawyers in Kerala were will-

ing to defend it. The general opinion seemed to be that there was no way out for the *Weekly* — except to apologise.

Pritish Nandy, the dapper Editor of the *Weekly*, does not reflect the tension of those dark days when he says: "We were in a bind. Our correspondent had got the news about the phone call from an extremely reliable source, close to the Chief Minister, who was present when the call was made. But we couldn't disclose his name. Nor could we disclose the names of the other two politicians who had verified the claim for us. There seemed to be no way out."

So, the *Weekly* apologised: in court on July 30, in the pages of *The Times Of India* and *The Illustrated Weekly* on August 12 and 25, respectively. The court accepted the apology and let off Venu Menon with a fine of Rs 1,000.

And, at that point, matters remained for some time to come.

ONE MONTH LATER, it was all out again in the full glare of publicity. The dailies went to town with their headlines, the politicians screamed themselves hoarse



I had all the merits of a martyr. One moment he was railing under the stigma of treason. The next he had turned into a political martyr galvanizing the people whom he won. Former Electricity Minister K Balakrishna Pillai had checked his Congress membership. At least for the moment.

Days after his shock resignation from the cabinet on June 5, following an entry into a controversial speech, Pillai began wheeling through several forces in the state, addressing his popularity. With welcome and surprise, he was welcomed by the public. In some like Kottayam, his home constituency, he was welcomed with a hero's welcome. The hero was undoubtedly overwhelming. The hero seemed to pop out of the woodwork to greet the man.

The Kerala Congress (K) did not relinquish the minister's chair to avoid in sudden political isolation was a sign hard to lose for the Congress leadership. And the minister of retreating Chief Minister Karunakaran now seemed to have been somewhat of a maverick. It only served to single out one member among numerous others in the cabinet for special attention.

But the backstage scenario was more than a little murky. The minister's move was in the High Court. A charge of sedition, headed by Pillai, was a Congress-I functionary. Pillai had made a statement to the effect that he was not a member of the Congress-I. He also had the combined ill-will of several leading newspapers whose reporters had made a joint declaration that Pillai had made a statement to the effect that he was not a member of the Congress-I.

Pillai's speech in Cochin in May 25, 1978, reportedly called for a Punjab-like agitation against the Congress Government in Kerala. His speech in Cochin in May 25, 1978, reportedly called for a Punjab-like agitation against the Congress Government in Kerala.

TRoubled TIMES

POLITICS/VENU MENON

At a public meeting some weeks ago, Kerala's electricity minister Balakrishna Pillai called for a Punjab-like agitation if the Centre continued to treat Kerala in a slap-shod manner. The rather tasteless statement promptly embroiled Chief Minister K Karunakaran's shaky ministry in fresh controversy. Intensifying the bitter warfare between the Congress-I and another constituent of the ruling front, the Kerala Congress.

Venu Menon reports on the controversy and its overtones for the beleaguered ministry.



Finance Minister K M Muttu, dagger drawn

Pillai shortly denied ever having said anything of the kind reported in the press. He claimed he merely said Kerala would have to fight to have its demands met and that states like Punjab and Assam, too, for a while, had got concessions from the Centre. Pillai added that he had not advocated a Punjab-like agitation against the Centre. The sections of the press concerned quickly corrected. Reports of several leading newspapers who were present on the occasion when Pillai addressed the party function at Cochin refuted Pillai's denial. Pillai had said much more than what was

reported. They said nothing that amounted to their reports. The report was with a heavy dose of Congress-I leaders' candidness. Pillai's 'sedition' protest. The Youth Congress president, Kartikeyan, set off a telegram to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi seeking his intervention in the face of 'open and national positions of the Kerala Congress'. Chief Minister Karunakaran, too, expressed outrage. KPCV Chief, Padmanabhan, demanded the Congress-I government. A.C.C. General Secretary A. K. Antony issued for the nation a written statement. Pillai's broken house for Pillai. Through the media, the leader of Kerala Congress Chairman and Revenue Minister P. J. Joseph attempted to set the record straight. He said the Kerala Congress had never contemplated Punjab-type agitation against the Centre and that Pillai had misinterpreted Pillai had only said the Punjab, where there were agitations should not have been allowed the military camp factory provided a line to Kerala.

A theory of subtle enmity between Congress-I and Kerala Congress leaders, between the Chief Minister and the Kerala Congress, between party leaders within the four walls of each party, but resolution about the discussions. Since Karunakaran began substantiating about the enmity, a letter demanding an explanation from the beleaguered Electricity Minister and proceeded to reject the explanations. Clearly, the Chief Minister was baiting Pillai. He was baiting for a moment and a public apology from the Kerala Congress leader. Pillai, hating his political innocence, was in no mind to back down for a public apology. The only other option was resignation. Karunakaran had given a statement that he had no intention of resigning. He had no intention of resigning.

But he had to do it without falling a little below to the conditions of the resignation and not displease. Just when the KPCV came down to the last man, Karunakaran Pillai's exit and the Chief Minister had seemed his political position to threaten Pillai and Karunakaran. Kerala Congress, were came within a short a petition filed against Pillai in the High Court by a Congress-I functionary from Palai. The petitioner, A.C.C. Secretary K M Chandu, Governor of Madhya Pradesh, wanted to see justice. Pillai had in his Cochin speech sought to incite the public to agitate and wage a terrorist war against the Union of India. Clearly, the theory of association, claims that the phrase 'Punjab-like agitation' or 'slap-shod manner' was a reference to the Punjab. The petitioner and his own inquiries confirm the newspaper reports and that Pillai's speech was a violation of the oath of office of a minister and it

The first *Weekly* article was found to be in contempt of court for casting doubts on the impartiality of the judiciary. The issue blew up and Pritish Nandy was forced to apologise.

plaint was also noted in an entry made in the Subscriber's Fault Card — the document into which all complaints are eventually listed. The *Weekly's* conclusion was bland, non-committal: "Both the Trivandrum numbers (recorded in Fault Docket F-08981) i.e. 65953 and 62051, belong to Chief Minister K Karunakaran and are installed at his official residence, Cliff House. The Cochin number, 31670, belongs to Justice K Radhakrishna Menon."

"Circumstantial evidence, you understand," says Pritish Nandy. "Nowhere in the article have we stated that the Chief Minister called up the judge, personally. We are only saying we have such and such documents and though we are already in contempt of court for the same issue, we feel if we have some evidence, it is not in public interest to suppress it. So, we went ahead and printed it. We didn't expect such a hue and cry."

Despite the understatement, Nandy cannot really have been surprised by the consequences of his action. On Sunday, September 22, the *Weekly* hit the headlines again. Karunakaran was unavailable for comment. In fact, he was nowhere on the scene: he didn't attend the Assembly on Saturday and was 'unwell' all of Sunday. The judge, Radhakrishna Menon, had already embarked on a vow of silence which he has kept to this day. A bewildered Posts and Telegraphs department, besieged by snooping press hounds — who wanted to know if the documents were genuine — took refuge in bureaucratese: "We are looking into it." The tension was at an all-time high: Would anyone be able to prove conclusively that the documents were true? If so, who?

As if on cue, in stepped Professor K V Thomas, Congress (I) MP, and a protégé of Karunakaran. One by one, he called up newspaper offices and invited their correspondents over. According to the *Indian Express*, he insisted that the findings be carried as the results of their reporter's investigation. R Venu, their correspondent, refused. Ultimately, Venu was allowed to attribute the findings of

over the issue, contempt proceedings were sought to be revived. The *Weekly* had done it again.

Even before the September 22-28 issue of the magazine had hit the stands, there were rumours that it was going to contain some vital evidence to support the allegation that a phone call was made by the CM to the judge's house. The press awaited the arrival of the *Weekly* anxiously. Karunakaran himself, disappeared for 48 hours, from Friday — the day before the issue was to appear. There was speculation that this particular issue would be banned in Kerala.

But, on Saturday, September 21, the *Weekly* did hit the stands in Kerala, as usual. The predictable furore erupted. Vincent Panikulangara, who had filed the first complaint, slapped another petition for contempt within hours of its arrival. The local press was agog — but nobody wanted to print the item for fear of inviting contempt proceedings against themselves. Panikulangara's petition gave them the ideal oppor-

tunity. They used the contempt petition as a peg to lead into what the *Weekly* had said.

What the *Weekly* had said was essentially simple — and carefully worded. Its earlier article, it stated, was said to be in contempt of court for alleging that the Chief Minister had tried to influence a judge of the High Court in the Balakrishna Pillai case. Now, it had some circumstantial evidence. This evidence was in the form of two documents: one, the Subscriber's Fault Card of Justice Radhakrishna Menon's telephone; the other, a Fault Docket.

In precise form the article stated that the Fault Docket contained evidence that, on the night of June 4, at 20 40 hours, the test desk at Cochin had received a complaint about the telephone number 31670 from number 65953 in Trivandrum. Sixteen minutes later, another Trivandrum number, 62051, complained about the same Cochin number. The complaint was duly entered in Fault Docket number F-08981. This same com-

Thomas's research, to him.

No matter how Professor Thomas may have gone about his self-appointed task, he certainly succeeded in casting doubts on the authenticity of the documents. He explained in painstaking detail how the telephone complaint system worked. He said: 1) The Fault Docket reproduced by the *Weekly* was a forgery. A Fault Docket with the same serial number (F-08981) had already been used on December 20, 1984, to record a quite different complaint. 2) After April 1985 the DMT Ernakulam had not issued any F-series dockets at all. (All F-series dockets issued in 1985, before April, have serial numbers beginning with 20, 21, 22, 23, etc.) Besides, the Professor reasoned, the Subscriber's Fault Card reproduced by the *Weekly* had 'Cochin Telephones' printed on it. All telephone documents went out with the stamp 'Ernakulam Telephones'. And what about the fact that all Fault Dockets had to have follow-up entries in the tell-tale and tally sheets? No such entries were there to substantiate the *Weekly's* documents. Regrettably, there was no other conclusion but that the documents were forged.

The press jumped into the story with frenzy, now. On Monday, September 23, *Mathrubhumi's* headline read: *Documents Forged?*; *Manorama* echoed: *Documents Forged* with no attempt to argue otherwise; the *Indian Express*, more cautious, announced: *Congress (I) MP Claims Weekly Documents Forged*. Clearly, battle lines had been drawn, sides had been taken and objectivity had been an early casualty.

The bearded, jovial City Correspondent for the *Indian Express*, R Venu, is still charged by the atmosphere of those days. Things were tense, exciting. "Thomas's allegations had a lot of face value credibility," he confides now. "But the point is, could we believe him? Didn't we also have an obligation, considering he was a biased party, to check his side of the story? So, that's what I did first. The actual checking of the *Weekly's* documents could come later."

The second Weekly article produced documentary evidence to support the first. But, it soon became evident, it was to land its editor into even deeper trouble.

IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

IN DEFENCE OF TRUTH

Vital evidence in support of an article about the Balakrishna Pillai episode has now been obtained by the Weekly

Public interest which proves that a few hours before Justice Radhakrishna Menon made the remarks mentioned earlier, frantic efforts were being made by someone in Chief Minister Karunakaran's residence in Trivandrum to contact the residence of Justice Radhakrishna Menon in Cochin on the night of June 4, as stated in our report.

The evidence is contained in a Subscriber's Fault Card and a Fault Docket which have now come into the Weekly's possession. These are two innocuous looking documents which form part of the routine paper work of the telephone department. The Subscriber's Fault Card is a log of complaints of any particular telephone connection with details of correctional measures taken to effect it in the index of that connection's malfunction. The Fault Docket is a notation of any complaint received by the Telephone Department from a local or STD subscriber. The Fault Docket has a serial number and the complaint noted in the docket is later entered in the Fault Card of the relevant telephone connection.

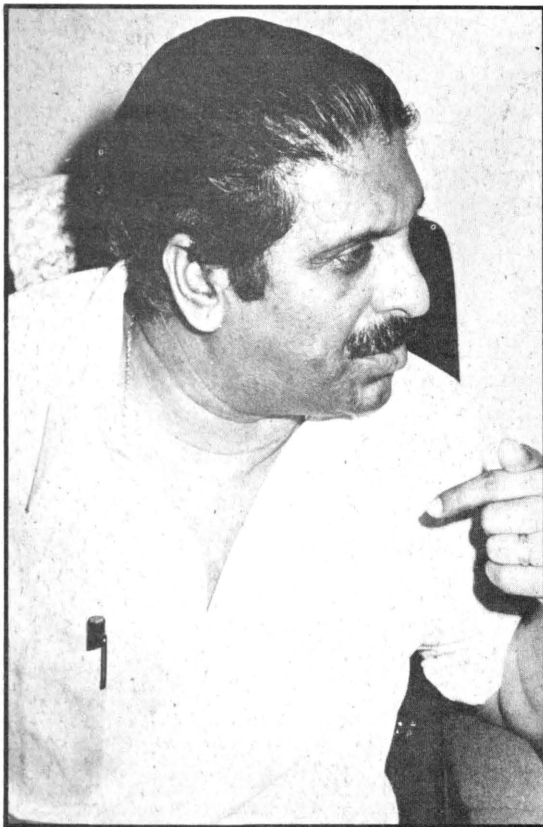
Therefore sequentially, when a complaint is received at the test section of a central telephone exchange, Fault Dockets are prepared by operators containing de-

MEANWHILE, the shock waves created by the newspaper items had begun to shake Karunakaran's fragile coalition. By Monday, September 23, the Chief Minister had finally emerged to deny he had called the judge. But the Opposition was not appeased. E K Nayanar, Opposition leader, was strident in his demand that the Chief Minister step down — at least till such time as the charges were disproved. CPI leader, P K Vasudevan Nair, pressed for an inquiry into the whole affair: not only was the CM implicated, he stated, but also the judiciary. An increasingly irritated Karunakaran found his protests being drowned in the tide of indignation. In a press conference he asked reporters, with no trace of irony: "Where is the reason for me to resign? If I were to resign on the basis of every newspaper report, I'd have had to resign several times by now."

By Tuesday, Karunakaran was ready to claim finally, on the floor of the Assembly, that the documents were 'false' and that the *Weekly* re-

port was 'baseless and untrue'. Resign, persisted the Opposition. "If there is even one per cent of truth in the allegation," the Chief Minister said, "I will quit." Increasingly, the issue was beginning to revolve around the plausibility of the documents. Increasingly, the Post and Telegraphs department's role in clearing up the mess was becoming vital. But from their side there was only a stubborn silence.

The press did not exactly cover itself in glory, either. Papers like the *Malayala Manorama* and *Mathrubhumi*, pro-Congress (I) papers had already taken the stand that the documents were false and had swallowed Thomas's version whole. The *Indian Express* held out. Daily, R Venu's individual reports on Thomas's allegations were printed and it was discovered that not all of what he had said was true. For instance, many Subscriber's Fault Cards were still printed with 'Cochin Telephones' on them; that the *Weekly's* Fault Docket entry was not found in the tell-tale or



Balakrishna Pillai, who was at the centre of the whole controversy, seems to have faded out of sight. But political pundits claim he may not be as out of it as he claims.

tally sheets was not in itself an uncommon occurrence — the Post and Telegraphs department was not very meticulous in keeping records; and lastly, the fact that an F-series number was used after April 1985 should not have come as a great surprise — Fault Dockets were used like rough paper in the telephone department and nobody really took care to see they were used up in series, in any case! It was pretty damaging evidence, to the bulk of Thomas's reasoning.

On Wednesday, the political and press dramas were reduced as the excitement shifted to the Telephones department. After four long days of total silence, N R Hiregange, General Manager, Telephones, Trivandrum, issued a press statement that created instant confusion. "A perusal of the records reveals that the telephone number referred to as faulty has not been entered in the docket, tally sheet or tell-tale sheet." He, however, admitted that the current Subscriber's Fault Card of Justice Radha-

krishna Menon 'is missing'.

The statement seemed to imply two things. One, that the P & T department had a Fault Docket with the same number as the *Weekly's* (in which case the *Weekly's* document was false). Two, that the relevant Subscriber's Fault Card (SFC) was 'missing' (in which case, the SFC printed by the *Weekly* was the original). If, as the statement implied, one of the *Weekly's* documents was true and the other false, where did that leave the case? Who was 'right' and who was 'wrong'? Nothing further was explained.

So, the newspapers changed their stance. If the Subscriber's Fault Card was genuine, could not the Fault Docket be, too? In addition, Venu's investigations at the P & T department had revealed that Fault Dockets were often printed in duplicate or triplicate. In the circumstances, it was entirely likely that the *Weekly's* docket as well as the P & T department's docket (both with the same serial number) were genuine. In which case, the

Weekly had a case and a point.

Now, anything seemed possible. Certainly, no one could say any longer, in clear-cut terms, "This is true and this isn't."

It was at this time, surprisingly, that R Venu started to feel the documents might not be genuine. . .

"DON'T get me wrong," says Venu with a smile. "When I started out I genuinely believed the documents were true. But, strangely, just as I started investigating Thomas's claims, I began to have my doubts."

As he started snooping around the phone department, he found that telephone officials would snigger at the Fault Docket the *Weekly* had printed. Apparently, the test desk is so used to filling in dockets with minimum attention that they are, more often than not, left incomplete. Nobody, the P & T officials assured Venu, would fill in a Fault Docket with such meticulous care, with all the details recorded.

In itself, of course, this meant nothing. But when Venu bumped into a friend of his who ran a printing press, he began to have his own doubts. The friend told Venu that a man called Ganapatty Aiyar from the P & T department had approached him to print dockets with specific numbers. He had refused. But there was absolutely no doubt at all that someone from the P & T department was going around, trying to get bogus Fault Dockets printed. This was a startling claim. Venu did his own research and found there was a Ganapatty Aiyar who worked in the Information Service of the P & T.

From this point on, the story gets murkier and depends really on who you choose to believe.

In one version, R Venu, investigative reporter with a passion, confronts Aiyar with what he knows. Aiyar confesses all — including his *modus operandi*. When he (Aiyar) discovered that the *Weekly* was looking for evidence, he was on the alert. Stealing the Subscriber's Fault Card from the cabinet where they were all kept —

unlocked — he got a colleague to fill in an entry for him on it. In the place where a genuine Fault Docket number was to be written, he made one up.

Armed with the evidence, he approached Pritish Nandy on July 27 — to show him that there was a way to prove the point the *Weekly* had made. What he hadn't bargained for was the fact that Nandy would want further evidence. Fine, Nandy told him in effect. If you can get the Subscriber's Fault Card for us, you can certainly get us the Fault Docket as well.

But the Fault Docket was the tricky part. Because he had already filled out a made-up number, Aiyar was forced to print a docket with the same number. For which he had to approach Venu's friend. Who, in turn, told Venu. Meanwhile, convinced that the CM's complaint entry would be in grave doubt, Aiyar made another genuine complaint about the judge's phone for which corroborative entries can be found in the tell-tale and the tally sheets. The issue was now totally confused. How could anyone cast doubt on the entry in question if all the other entries on the SFC were genuine?

Venu sits back, pleased. There is a lot that is left unsaid. A lot of links that can be worked out. For instance, Ganapatty Aiyar is known to have Congress (A) leanings. Recently, the Home Minister Vyalar Ravi, also Congress (A), had nearly been ousted by Karunakaran. Would it not be in his interests to plant evidence on the *Weekly* through Aiyar? It was all so simple — Aiyar would do anything for a price, and his actions had nearly toppled an insecure coalition.

There are so many people who are against Karunakaran, Venu insists. Any of them could have used Aiyar to do their dirty work. For it was well-known that Aiyar would do anything for money. By his own admission, he'd been paid Rs 10,000 to do the job though he wouldn't disclose who had paid him.

Venu's version has a lot of face-value credibility. But then, so did Thomas's claims — until they were sought to be disproved.

If N R Hiregange, General Manager, Telephones, is willing to testify in court that no two Fault Dockets can be the same, then the *Weekly* is in trouble. But so far he has kept quiet.



NOW for another version.

"Our informant was *not* Ganapatty Aiyar," Pritish Nandy claims. "True, he did approach us right at the beginning with the Subscriber's Fault Card but we did not get our evidence from him. We got it from another source and later cross-checked the whole story from a third person in the P & T department."

The *Weekly*'s version matches Venu's on a few salient points. Both agree that Aiyar was the one to make the first move, the first to offer 'conclusive' evidence. But there the similarities end. Nandy claims that Aiyar tried to sell them the evidence for Rs 10,000. "Of course, we refused. We didn't trust him, we didn't want his help and we were certainly not going to pay anybody for any evidence," Nandy says now.

The news that the Chief Minister had called the judge, Nandy explains, had been given to the *Weekly* by some very reliable sources in the Kerala Cabinet. The allegation, as had

been explained earlier, was thrice cross-checked. But the article had been held to be in contempt and the *Weekly* forced to apologise. The same sources later came back to Nandy: they now had documentary proof — which they could make available to the *Weekly* — to support the earlier statement.

Pritish Nandy is emphatic. "We trust those sources. In the past, they have been responsible for giving us a lot of inside information — none of which has been proved to be false. Sure, we took a risk in printing it. But, if you believe you are right, if you are sitting on documents that can provide circumstantial evidence to support a point and if you believe the documents to be genuine — what does an editor do? Does he take the risk — or hold back? We decided to print it all."

The *Weekly*'s version is very different. After Ganapatty Aiyar had approached them, they got the SFC through their own sources. In both cases, the SFCs were identical. The

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Fault Docket was obtained later — but even that is understandable. In a department where Fault Dockets are treated like rough paper and not carefully stacked, anyone looking for a particular Fault Docket would require a lot of time to get it out. So they waited — almost a month. And when they got the documents they checked them out with several people in the P & T. Everyone agreed that they were authentic. Therefore, believing in their authenticity, convinced that they had more evidence to support their initial statement — the *Weekly* printed them.

"You know, two things make us feel we were right to print," Pritish Nandy says with a gleam in his eyes. "One, was Karunakaran's attitude all through the thing: he kept quiet, then he said the documents were false. . . but he refused to sue us for defamation. If he's so sure why doesn't he go ahead? Two, the P & T department has still not issued an authoritative statement to the effect that the documents are forged. What are they scared of? They have nothing to lose! Unless someone is keeping the pressure on them to keep quiet. Even the attempt of certain interested individuals to persuade the court to once again get us for contempt seems to be faltering. We have passed no comment on the judiciary — all we have published is the evidence of some attempts made from the CM's residence to contact the judge's. We have not commented on whether they are true or not."

The issue now seems to be: where does freedom of the press end? Is it in the interest of the nation to suppress evidence that may be a vital link in proving at least a part of an allegation? Was the actual printing of the documents sensationalistic and irresponsible? Can it ever conclusively be proved in a court of law that the documents are genuine or forged?

KERALITES are a passionate people. They believe in issues. They argue energetically if they think you are wrong. Even if you are right. Few of them dispute

that Karunakaran has a sullied political record. Yes, they concede, it is not unlikely that their Chief Minister tried to influence a judge. But — they still don't believe the *Weekly*, and give little or no credence to the documents. On one point everyone stands firm: the documents are forged.

But are they? Can it ever conclusively be proved one way or another? Karunakaran's smug laughing voice on the telephone is gleeful: "That's just it! It cannot be proved to be true or false because anyone can phone in a complaint from anywhere and say they are calling from my house." Obviously, the tight-rope walk of uncertainty is over for him. His voice indicates the issue is more or less forgotten. Then, almost as an afterthought, he continues piously: "But I will say this — even if one person's truth can be proved, I am prepared to quit."

Pritish Nandy is more judicious. "Either the documents are proved to be true — or else false. If they are false then they might attempt to slam us for forgery. If they are genuine they might attempt to slam us for theft — the possession of the documents (legally the P & T's). Either way it's going to be a tough point to prove. The only ones who can condemn us are the P & T's department — but they have refused to do so, so far."

Ultimately the responsibility seems to have been dumped at the P & T's door. (Karunakaran had already said: "If documents are missing from their department, let them deal with it.") Mr N R Hiregange, the General Manager, Telephones, is a small nervous man who removes and puts on his spectacles as he explains his points. He seems almost incapable of carrying the burden.

It is true that a Fault Docket of exactly the same number is in his possession? Mr Hiregange ponders the question seriously — then nods. Is it possible for there to be another Fault Docket with the same number anywhere else in the department? In other words, is the claim that dockets can be printed in duplicate, true? Mr Hiregange knits his brows, ponders

the question with renewed enthusiasm, mentally editing his reply (after all the case is *sub judice*) before he says: "It is entirely improbable from my experience that any other such docket can exist."

The sentence has enormous import. If the P & T department claims to have a docket of the same number as the *Weekly*'s and is willing to testify in court that no other similar docket can exist, then the *Weekly*'s document seems less likely to be genuine.

Unless the docket in the P & T's possession is a forgery. . .

THE SAGA will continue. Pritish Nandy seems determined to defend himself. Karunakaran has taken the stand that as the *Weekly* was found to be in contempt once and as the new documents are obvious forgeries, there is nothing left for him to prove. This is not a stand that the *Weekly* will let him get away with. After Karunakaran told *Sunday* what he thought of the matter, and of Nandy's *Weekly*, ("At one time *The Illustrated Weekly* was considered a great magazine,") Nandy promptly issued a statement calling the *Sunday* interview 'a colourful blend of abuse, anger and falsehood', and challenged Karunakaran to appoint a Commission of Inquiry into the issue. The Chief Minister, in turn, announced that he was quite prepared to face such an inquiry, but made no move to appoint a Commission of Inquiry.

And so it goes. Where it will all end, nobody can tell. Karunakaran refuses to prove that the documents are bogus ("Why should I take the trouble to prove their genuineness?") and it seems equally impossible to prove beyond all doubt that they are genuine. The final questions in this continuing saga, however, go beyond the authenticity of the issue. They relate to freedom and responsibility. How far should the press go? Is the law of contempt too restrictive? Should papers trust anonymous sources? Perhaps the time has come for an open debate on these vital questions. ♦

THE LAW RELATING TO CONTEMPT

What you *can* say about a judge.

BY K S VENKATESWARAN

WITH the initiation of fresh proceedings for contempt of court against *The Illustrated Weekly Of India* for publishing certain documents which, according to the periodical, showed that an attempt was made to influence a High Court judge in the curious case of the State Electricity Minister, R Balakrishna Pillai, questions have been raised as to both the parameters of, and the rationale behind the existing law on contempt of court in India.

The object underlying the contempt jurisdiction of a court of law is not so much to vindicate the dignity of the court or the person of the judge, but to prevent undue interference in the administration of justice. Put differently, the law of contempt has, as its rationale, the protection of the seat of justice rather than the occupant of that seat. Towards this end, several rules have been evolved by the courts in the past, although the law of contempt is believed to have been transformed into its modern form only in 1765, as a result of a decision rendered by Chief Justice Wilmut in England in the landmark case of *R Vs Almon*.

Contempt of court has broadly been classified into two categories:

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civil and criminal contempt. While 'civil' contempt consists of disobedience of the orders and processes of a court, 'criminal' contempt deals with words or acts which obstruct, or tend to obstruct, the administration of justice. Since it is the latter category that has invariably raised problems for the mass media and thus brought them into conflict with the courts, it would be instructive to focus attention on this branch of the law.

In India, the law on contempt is governed by a statutory enactment, the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971. Section 2(c) of the Act defines criminal contempt as "the publication (whether by words, spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise) of any matter or the doing of any other thing whatsoever which: 1) scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower, the authority of any court; 2) prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with, the due course of of any judicial proceeding; 3) interferes, or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner."

This provision strikes a delicate balance between two conflicting interests — the freedom of speech and expression of every citizen on the one hand, and the preservation of the

authority and dignity of courts as dispensers of justice, on the other. Since contempt of court is punishable with imprisonment (apart from fine), the provision also touches upon another valuable right of the citizen — the right to personal liberty.

The Constitution takes into account the dilemma posed by such a power. While guaranteeing the freedom of speech and expression as a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a), the Constitution also provides, in Article 19(2), that this right could be circumscribed by 'reasonable restrictions' imposed *inter alia* by the law of contempt. It was, of course, left to the courts to determine what restrictions were reasonable.

Apart from the Contempt of Courts Act, Article 129 of the Constitution provides that the Supreme Court, being a Court of Record, shall have the power to punish for contempt of itself, while Article 215 clothes the High Courts with an identical power. These powers are, it is worth noting, exercisable summarily, so that proceedings for contempt do not have to conform strictly to the long drawn out, time-consuming procedure of an ordinary trial.

What is striking about these provisions is that, though innocuous by themselves, they do not indicate precisely, the situations that would attract the opprobrium of the law of

contempt. By far the most common complaint among journalists, for example, has been what they perceive as the 'vagueness' and general nature of these provisions, which leave a frighteningly vast degree of discretion to judges. Though the element of discretion does loom large, it is seldom realised that the exercise of this discretion is not altogether unfettered. Apart from the sense of judicial self-restraint which forms the mental make-up of every judge, one of the most potent checks on the exercise of discretionary powers is the value attached to precedents in the common law system followed by us. To ascertain, therefore, whether a given set of facts would attract contempt proceedings, it would be more meaningful to turn to the actual manner in which judges have, in the past, exercised their powers in similar, if not identical, circumstances.

Perhaps the most fundamental rule governing the exercise of the contempt jurisdiction is that courts will be extremely circumspect and sparing in their use of the power to commit for contempt. As Lord Atkin, one of the most celebrated judges of this century, said: "Justice is not a cloistered virtue: she must be allowed to suffer the scrutiny and respectful, even though outspoken, comments of ordinary men." In a passage that has since become a classic exposition of the rule on the subject, the judge laid down, as far back as 1936, the parameters of public comment on judicial matters:

"Whether the authority and position of an individual judge, or the due administration of justice, is concerned, no wrong is committed by any member of the public who exercises freely the ordinary right of criticising temperately and fairly, in good faith, in private or in public, any episode in the administration of justice. The path of criticism is a public way. The wrong-headed are also permitted to err therein. Provided that members of the public abstain from imputing improper motives to those taking part in the administration of justice and are genuinely exercising a right of cri-

ticism and not acting in malice or attempting to impair the administration of justice, they are immune."

Consistent with this principle, for instance, the Privy Council in England (whose decisions were binding in India until Independence and which, even today, have a strong persuasive value in our courts) held that no contempt was committed by a person who, in pursuance of a letter written by the Chief Justice of a colony to a newspaper, had replied in the same newspaper, holding up the Chief Justice to public ridicule in the grossest manner, calling him 'an utterly incompetent judge', 'a shirker of his work', and suggesting that it would be a pro-

Chief Justice Beg initiated contempt proceedings against *The Times Of India* for a news report that criticised his judgment in an Emergency-era case.

vidential thing if he were to die.

NEARER HOME, the attitude of judges to contempt has been, by and large, liberal, and in conformity with the practice in England. Barring a few isolated instances, courts have generally tended to avoid being over-sensitive to criticism, preferring to exercise their powers only in cases where there has been a substantial interference with the course of justice. In 1970, for instance, when the veteran communist, E M S Namboodiripad, launched a frontal attack on the judiciary by calling it 'an instrument of oppression' and by opining that judges 'were guided and dominated by class hatred, class interests and class prejudices, instinctively favouring the rich against the poor', the Supreme Court was

compelled to take a serious view and hold Namboodiripad guilty of contempt. The basis underlying this decision was, obviously, that such comments were bound to seriously shake the confidence of the people in the judiciary and thereby impair the due administration of justice.

On the other hand, when Chief Justice M H Beg (whose elevation to that office was as controversial as his performance on the Bench) initiated contempt proceedings against *The Times Of India* in 1978 for a news item which was critical of his judgment in the Habeas Corpus case during the Emergency, the Supreme Court, by a majority of 2:1, found no difficulty in dropping the proceedings, Beg's protestations notwithstanding. The same fate befell a companion matter against the *Indian Express* wherein an article, criticising a proposal by Beg to formulate a code of ethics for judges, commented tartly: "So adverse has been the criticism (against the code) that the Supreme Court judges, some of whom had prepared the draft code, have disowned it." Beg's view that this comment, besides being factually incorrect, also suggested that the judges lacked the moral courage to stand by what they had done, was negated by his colleagues, Justices Krishna Iyer and Kailasam.

Equally, if not more, important is the other aspect of the contempt jurisdiction, namely, the *sub judice* rule which prevents public comment on pending matters. The basis of the rule is to be found in the principle that nothing is more incumbent upon courts of justice than to preserve their proceedings from being misrepresented, nor anything of more pernicious consequence than to prejudice the minds of the public against persons concerned as parties in cases that are pending adjudication.

As in the case of scandalous attacks on judges, the test to be applied in all cases of comment on pending proceedings is not whether the publication of the words complained against does interfere, but whether it *tends* to interfere, with the due course

of justice. An action for contempt on the *sub judice* rule should, therefore, show that the publication is clearly intended, or at least calculated, to prejudice the pending trial. Justice Frankfurter, the distinguished American judge, explained the rationale behind this rule: "If men, including judges and journalists, were angels, there would be no problem of contempt. Angelic judges would be undisturbed by extraneous influence and the journalists would not seek to influence them. The power to punish for contempt of court is a safeguard, not for judges or persons, but for the function they exercise."

In this area of the law, too, the Indian courts have adopted a generally sensible approach. They have asserted that merely because a certain matter has become the subject of pending proceedings, it does not mean that people forthwith lose all their rights to comment on the matter. The freedom to comment in such cases is impaired only when the comment is of such a nature as to adversely affect or obstruct the course of the pending proceedings or the due administration of justice. Accordingly, when A K Sen (the present Law Minister) and some others were cited for contempt in 1970 for discussing the legal merits of the 1969 Congress party split — which was the subject matter of pending proceedings — the Supreme Court held that no contempt was committed as, apart from the split being a matter of national importance, Sen's comments were not calculated to obstruct or interfere with the course of justice. On the other hand, when A K Gopalan alleged that he saw communists being stabbed during a *bandh* in Kerala in 1968, he was held guilty of contempt because a trial was pending on the matter and there was every likelihood of the trial being prejudiced by such remarks.

WHAT ABOUT comments made on pending matters in ignorance of the fact that they were pending? No less a person than Jawaharlal Nehru was embroiled in such a situation in 1958, when he

commented on the disruptive and divisive nature of the DMK party's agitation in Tamil Nadu, even as cases arising out of the agitation were pending in the courts. The court held that Nehru could not be charged with contempt in such circumstances. The position has, of course, now been settled conclusively by the Contempt of Courts Act itself which lays down, in Section 3, that no person should be held guilty of contempt for commenting on pending matters if, at the time of publication of the words complained of, he had 'no reasonable grounds for believing' that the proceedings were pending.

The 1971 Act also introduced cer-

Is it fair to fetter the press from discharging one of its fundamental obligations to society? The time has come for us in India to address ourselves to this question.

tain other salutary changes. For instance, it gave protection to innocent publishers and distributors from criminal contempts (other than scandalising the courts) if they had no reason to believe that judicial proceedings were pending at the time. It also permitted a fair and accurate publication of proceedings in court (except where such publication was prohibited) without attracting the penalty of contempt. More important, it laid down that a sentence of imprisonment would not be imposed on a contemnor unless 'the contempt is of such a nature that it substantially interferes with, or tends to interfere with, the due course of justice'. The Act also sought to confine punishment for contempt to a maximum fine of Rs 2,000 or imprisonment for six months.

The 1971 Act also prescribed a limitation of one year, within which all contempt proceedings have to be initiated. Another welcome change it introduced related to the laying down of an elaborate procedure for hearing contempt cases by certain kinds of benches, as also for appeals. Finally, it affirmed explicitly that judges, magistrates and other persons acting judicially, could also be found guilty of contempt of their own courts.

GIVEN the widespread criticism, especially by members of the journalistic fraternity, that the law of contempt as it exists today is far too stringent and hardly conducive to the exposure of corruption and impropriety among judicial personnel, the question widely posed in recent times is: Is it fair to thus fetter the press from discharging one of its fundamental obligations to society? One answer to that question is provided by the Shawcross Committee which faced the issue squarely in England as far back as 1959. "Clearly," said the Committee, "if someone wishes in good faith to make a charge of partiality or corruption against a judge, he ought to have the opportunity of making it; but we do not consider the press to be the appropriate organ for this purpose. We consider that he should be able to do so by a letter to the Lord Chancellor or to his Member of Parliament without fear of punishment, and would deplore the use of the law of contempt to prevent him from doing so. The charge could then be considered either administratively or in the House of Commons or the House of Lords."

Not many in India will, of course, agree with this proposal. But then, the time has come for those concerned with the freedom of the press to mobilise professional and public opinion towards evolving a more satisfactory machinery for investigating cases of corruption and bias in the judiciary, while ensuring that the institution is protected from vicious attacks that may tend to weaken the people's confidence in it. And the sooner, the better. ♦

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IN THE NIGHT

They are the creatures of the night. As the rest of Bombay downs its shutters and sleeps off the rigours of the day, their world comes to life. SHIRAZ SIDHVA meets the people who work at night.

EVERY EVENING, Mahendar Singh leaves his cramped, airless quarters in Dharavi to journey across Bombay to Chowpatty Beach. It is now 17 years since, as a boy, he left his village near Mathura to seek a living on these sands. And yet, he has never watched a sunset here. For, by the time the crowded local train belches him out at Charni Road station, the last slice of sun has been swallowed by the ebbing tide; the lights of Malabar Hill and Nariman Point have come on, as if obeying a single switch. By the time his plastic sandals make it to the shore, the rush-hour madness has abated, the city has calmed down.

Less than an hour ago, the children whirling on makeshift merry-go-rounds and building castles in the sand, have been tugged away by weary parents; the lovers, arms entwined,

wend homeward. The sea is a blanket of night, besmirched by moonlight and neonlight. For a brief while, the cacophony of the crowd relents to the soothing whisper of the surf as it breaks against the shore.

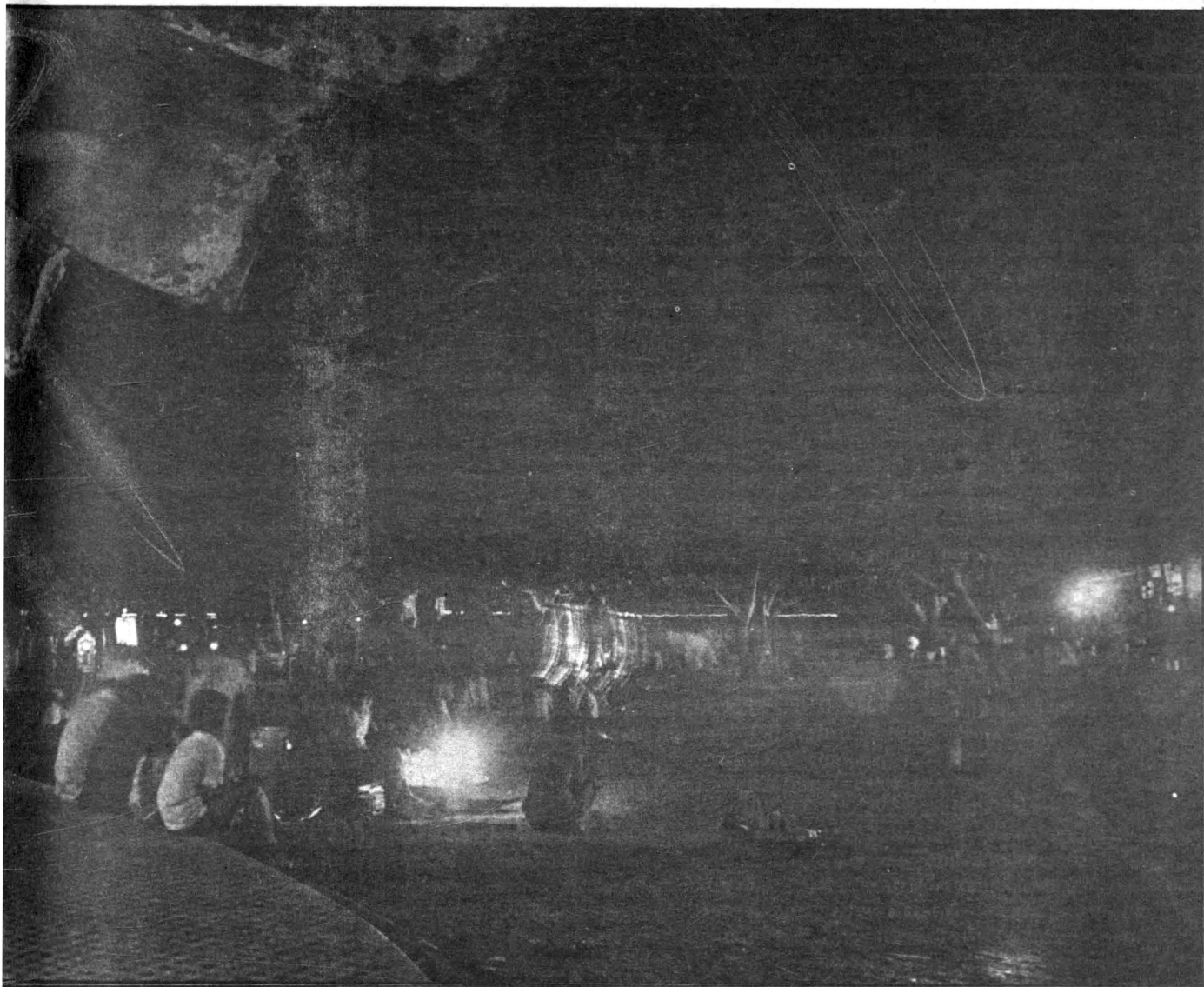
Suddenly, the beach is blotched with hundreds of men. They are all dressed like Mahendar Singh, in loose terrycot bush-shirts and white pyjamas, a folded cloth thrown over one shoulder, a grimy bottle of oil in one hand. Like crabs scabbling for food, these creatures of the night descend upon these sands to earn their daily bread.

And then the darkness is filled with sounds of rhythmic slapping and pummelling, as Singh and his fellowmen lean over prostrate bodies to pinch and roll glistening mounds of flesh or bags of bone. A pillow is moulded out of sand, the cloth that

is their trademark spread out, and the masseurs set to work. For as little as a fiver, they will rub oil into heavy heads or massage tired feet; for a tenner, they will soothe every muscle in the body with their therapeutic touch.

Beads of sweat dot Singh's forehead as he kneels astride a bare back, greased palms slithering dextrously in all directions. The man being massaged grunts with satisfaction as he feels the tension slip away. He has stripped to his underwear. But there are others around who won't even loosen their ties. Like the Gujarati gentleman with the gold-rimmed glasses, briefcase clutched firmly in one hand. He could be waiting for a bus, were he not flat on the sand. "I don't come here for fun. I have just been at a philosophical discourse," he says, as if to establish his respectability.





"These people are better than most orthopaedists." His aching ankles will be better now. "These people are not appreciated because they charge so little. But they know the art."

There was a time, as late as five years ago, when Singh's 'art' used to get him more custom than he could handle. All he had to do was stand under a certain tree at the fringe of the beach and his regular clientele would know where to find him. Now, many futile hours are spent roaming the beach, smoking *bidi* after *bidi*, waiting and watching for someone to beckon him. Long ago, an uncle had sent him a postcard calling him to Bombay. This was a profession that required little skill or investment to begin with. So what if it meant burning night into day?

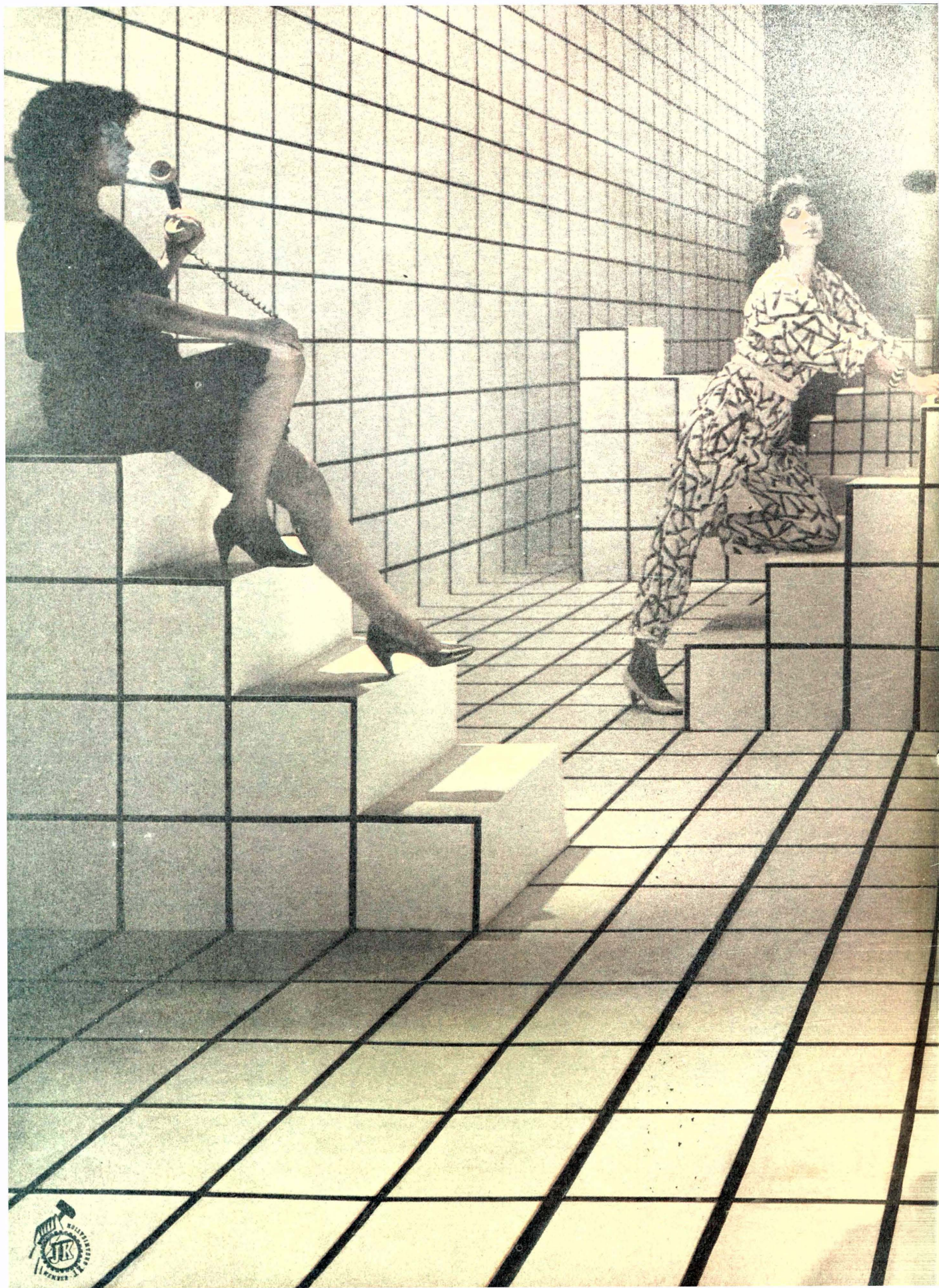
But things were different then — the *bada sahibs* in chauffeur-driven

cars seldom frequent the beach now. There are no more generous tips, no home visits to the skyscrapers nearby, where the *chowkidars* would be instructed to escort him up, and from where he could see the lights of Chowpatty below. Two nights ago, he had barely made enough to pay for his cup of tea and *pao* in the morning.

But Mahendar Singh is clear about one thing. However bad the situation, he will never operate on the lower part of the beach, where the gentle waves lap against the shore. There, in the darkness, he whispers, embarrassed, all sorts of things go on, and *malishwallahs* are required to pander to perversions. No, he wouldn't soil his hands, not even if it meant that he could send more money to his wife and children, in the village.

A cool breeze rustles the leaves of

the trees on the upper, ostensibly more respectable, part of the beach. Here, shadowy figures lurk in the night, and that is why, analyses Singh, the *bada sahibs* stay away. A woman in a *mangalsutra* and a white sari, large *bindi* on forehead, crosses our path. She seems the epitome of respectability, as if any minute her children will come home to her after school. In fact, Pushpa's children are asleep under a tree nearby, and in the day she cares for them like any other mother. But when darkness falls, she stalks the beach for men who will rent her time. Men who need a shoulder to cry on, a woman to be with under the trees. But not sex. This is not Falkland Road. A squeeze here, a kiss there, an attentive ear, but nothing more than that, she insists. She is no whore, like Lakshmi there, out for some fun, while her husband





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BEING THERE

from wives whose husbands passed up home-cooked food for Kanhaiyalal's *pao-bhaji*. Here in Bombay, people staying at the Taj and Natraj hotels never leave the city before sampling his wares. Even Indira Gandhi knew all about him, and dozens of reporters have interviewed him, he tells you, dramatically.

He thinks nothing of standing all night, in the heat of the kerosene *chulha*. "*Do roti to kamani padti hai*," he says with a shrug. Still more butter is slapped onto the *tawa* and mopped up with halves of *pao*. Rivulets of the golden yellow butter trickle into the vegetables, and plates are emptied with amazing alacrity. Beside the master chef, a boy washes piles of spoons and saucers with water from a drum. Kanhaiyalal is immune to the stink and the cockroaches on the kerb.

Even the British used to patronise him, he recalls. But then the people were more genteel, and the police did not harass a man trying hard to make an honest living. In the recent past, he has often had his stuff confiscated because he has refused to line their pockets, but each time a well-wisher has rescued him from ruin. "*Mera dharm hai, karm karke roti khana*," he philosophises.

There was a time when he sold *pao-bhaji* at one paisa; now, though his prices have increased a thousand-fold, he only makes enough to get by. "Mine is a business that wouldn't thrive by day," he says. "So I am compelled to work at night."

His neighbour, Hriday Narain Mishra, the *kulfiwallah*, insists he couldn't change his routine even if he tried. "For 25 years, I have slept by day and worked by night, and it is difficult to alter that." He complains of the unruly crowd that Khau Galli seems to attract these days. There was never any trouble in the past, but drunken brawls are a common occurrence now. "At night, only the scum of the earth loiter about. And people like us have no option. There is no other road, so we walk this one," he sighs, echoing Mahendar Singh's very words.

The metallic clang of the spoon on Kanhaiyalal's *tawa* echoes in the night; the all-pervasive stink of the gutter mingles with the aroma of roasting *papads*. The eating and drinking goes on, a drunk lies flat on his face in the gutter. A signboard painter, perched high on a scaffolding, is giving finishing touches to a face. In the day, the sun would fade the colours even before they dried.

AT LION GATE the 3 o'clock siren has just gone off. On Coast Guard ship *Kirpan*, sailors in khaki shorts ready the vessel for a sortie. There has been a tip-off from headquarters; in the next half-hour they should cut across the choppy sea to Janjira.

The sea is rough on this gusty night. The radar in the vessel's control room is carefully watched; it warns of hidden buoys that could damage the ship in case of a collision. And soon, the lights of the harbour and its ships are left behind, as the vessel plunges into the inky darkness.

Two nights ago, Chauhan and five sailors had set out to intercept a dhow from Dubai. They had been told that gold bricks were being smuggled in. But though there was a thorough search, all they found were reams of waste paper being imported from the Gulf.

Another time, they had been luckier. As they stealthily approached a foreign vessel, lights out, engines at low speed to cut out the sound, they noticed a small fishing boat making away with some loot. Four shots were fired in the air, and through a microphone, the smugglers were warned that they should surrender to avoid further complications. A search of the larger ship revealed further booty. It felt good to be congratulated by the Finance Minister himself when he heard of the haul. And to see their names in the papers.

But on a routine night like this, there is only hope, no promise of action. With a burst of speed, the boat heads into the night. On the deck, the Indian Navy flag flutters in the cool wind, but in the boiler room down-

stairs, it is unbearably warm.

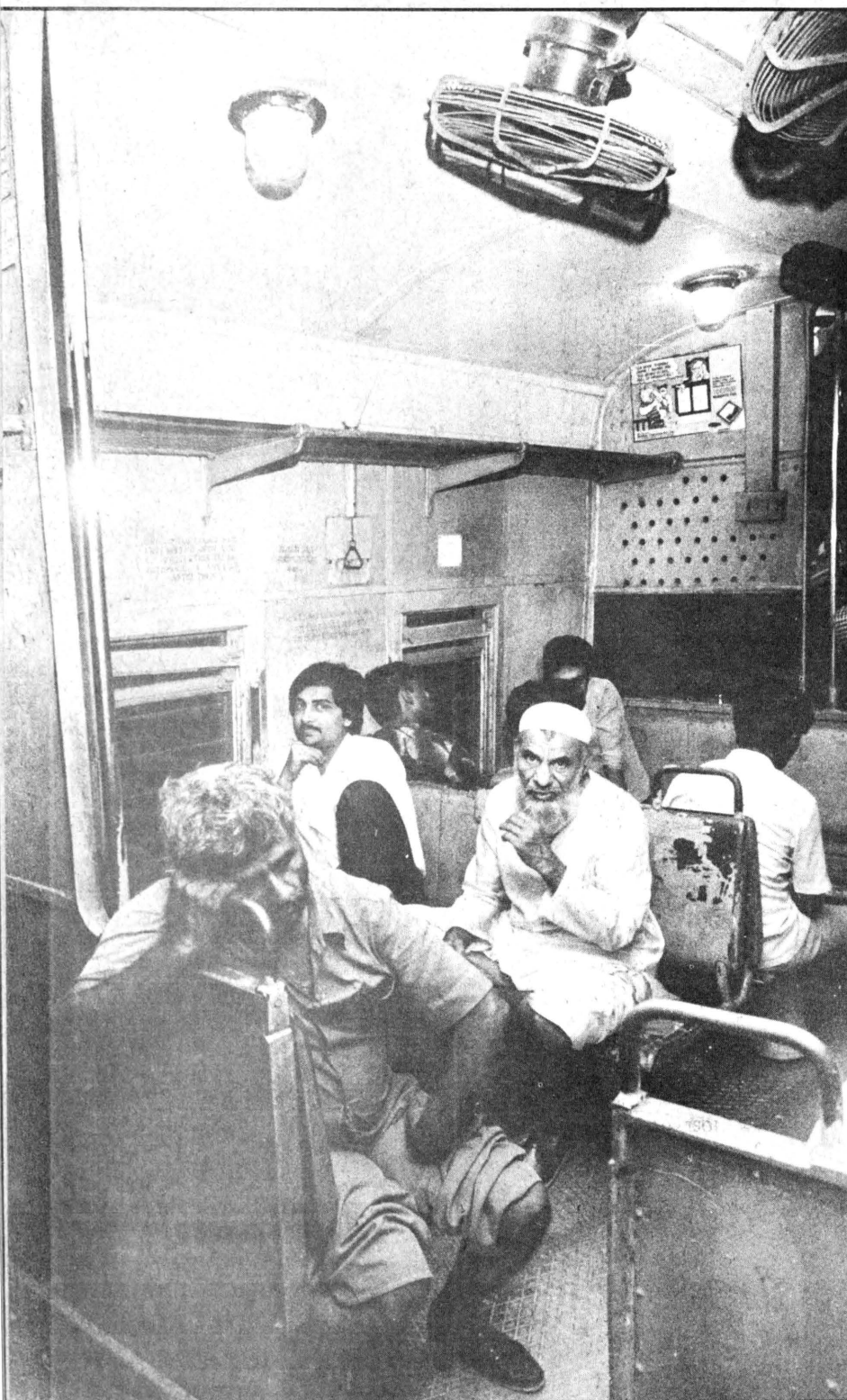
The tip-off turns out to be a false alarm. The sea is stark and deserted for miles. Last week, Chauhan had held out for two nights and a day, but had returned empty-handed. No wonder he wishes his deputation to the Coast Guard would end soon.

True, there was some excitement each time they approached a dubious dhow. But the smugglers seldom retaliated — there had been only one shoot-out in the last year. Routine searches were such a bore — the cargo manifest was gone through, the hold searched inside out. And when some contraband was found, the crew would be rounded up and locked in a cabin before the Customs men took over. He was trained to be a sailor, having risen to the grade of first-class officer the hard way. Chauhan would much rather be back in the navy.

"For us, there is no difference between night and day," he says. "Our bodies are immune to minor subtleties like these. For years, we have worked round the clock." The boat heads back towards its parent ship. Waves surge and course around it as the helmsman steers it. It has proved a futile trip.

Back at the *Kirpan*, the ship's cook is readying breakfast for the crew. An aroma of omelettes and toasted bread wafts through the galley. A bugle blows somewhere. In no time now, the sun will surface.

YOU LEAVE the docks for Churchgate station. Tankers sloshing with the morning's milk supply traverse the streets. It is 5.30 a.m. Time for John to take the early morning train. As he hurries to the station from his place of work down the road, he talks of the rock stars he likes listening to. He would not exchange his job as a drummer at the restaurant by the sea, for anything. And he doesn't mind staying up all night. Of course, he doesn't normally stay out this late — today some friends stopped by for a drink after he had finished with the band. The others in the group work in the day as well, so they can't afford to



Creatures of the night: taking the train home.

fool around like he can. But the night is always full of surprises, and the people he meets at the restaurant are the only friends he has. No, he does not mind relaxing in the day. And on his day off, he does not see the need to leave his favourite armchair. "I

take my baby's lessons," he smiles. "And give myself the luxury of tucking him into bed."

At Marine Lines, Santosh, the night nurse, has just hopped onto the train. For five years now, she has been staying up all night, caring for a senile

invalid who is also an insomniac like herself. True, she started doing this job because she needed the money, but now she cannot sleep at night even if she tries.

Sitting up in the dark, you find your thoughts straying wildly, she tells you. You conjure up images that you could not possibly have in the day. At times, you find that you are talking to yourself to break the silence. No, you should only be a night-hawk if you must.

The train is full by now. As it clatters along picking up more people at each station, you are surprised at the number of night creatures that scramble on. Workers, repairmen, nurses. A pink glow in the sky heralds a new day, the birds begin to chirp.

At Chowpatty, the first rays of the sun have rudely awakened Mahendar Singh from his catnap. He begins his early morning trudge to the station. In an hour, he will crawl under a sheet in his darkened hovel to resume his interrupted sleep.

Not a rat stirs under Grant Road Bridge. The men have gone home, satisfied with the night of merry-making. One of them sleeps on a *tawaif's* lap as she runs her fingers through his hair. She awakens him before she retires to the recesses of her room.

Kanhaiyalal and the rest of Khau Galli are asleep. It is perhaps the only time of day when the streets of Bhuleshwar wear a deserted look. Mohammed Sharif parks his taxi under a tree and climbs the stairs of a dilapidated *chawl* in Byculla. By the time Santosh has hailed an auto at Andheri station and got home, in time to see her children off to school, Abdul Karim and his horse are in deep slumber.

By now, the sun has bathed Bombay. And the darkness has receded quite as suddenly as it had come. The creatures of the night have run for cover. Another of their days has gone. ♦

A TALE OF TWO GOVERNORS

The sordid tale of the midnight manoeuvres in Raj Bhavan that toppled Farooq Abdullah's government and revealed the partisan political interests of the Governor.



B K Nehru.

RAJ BHAVAN is situated above Srinagar on a hillside called Chashm-e-Shahi overlooking the city, and therefore has the aura of holding itself aloof from the noise and turmoil of local politics. Even at the height of the 1983 election campaign, when the harangues of politicians could be heard late into the night, Raj Bhavan seemed to remain apart, almost a separate entity. Those reporters or politicians who went up to see the Governor, B K Nehru, often came away with the impression that he liked the distance between himself and the elections, to be literal as well as metaphorical.

This was not an attitude that won Governor Nehru many friends

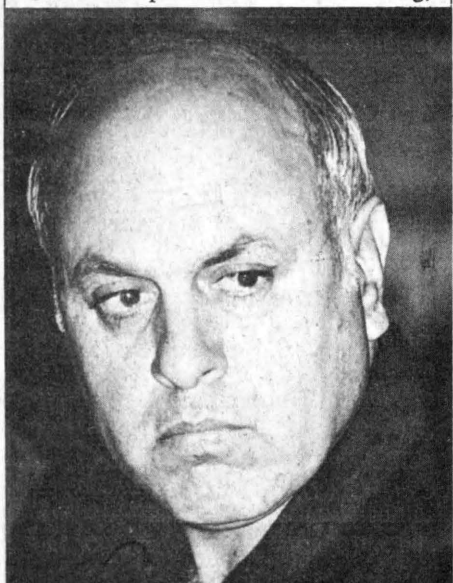


Jagmohan.

This article is extracted from The Governor: Sage Or Saboteur, with the permission of Roli Books International, the publishers.

in the Congress (I), however, and pretty early into the election campaign he is believed to have incurred the displeasure of Delhi. To understand how Farooq Abdullah was dismissed and the roles that Nehru and Jagmohan, who succeeded Nehru as Governor, respectively played in the year that he was in power, it is necessary to begin at the beginning: the installation of Dr Abdullah as Chief Minister.

For over two years before the old Sheikh died, there had been speculation about who would succeed him. There were those who believed that his son-in-law, G M Shah, who had also been a political comrade all along,



Farooq Abdullah.

was the natural heir, especially since after the 1975 Accord he had even participated in the government. At the same time, Shah had a reputation for being corrupt and ruthless and was hugely unpopular. Hereditary democracy had by this time become fashionable in Delhi and since the Sheikh had not really spent much time on building up his party, the only other alternative appeared to be his eldest son, Farooq.

The Sheikh decided, however, to consult the people as he had always done in the past and, on a sunny Friday in July 1981, after saying his prayers as usual at the Hazratbal shrine, he turned to the crowd that

had gathered around him and said that he was growing old and needed to hand over the reins to someone younger. "Can you think of anyone?" he asked. Someone in the crowd shouted 'Farooq' and — since it was apparently the answer the Sheikh wanted to hear — the crowd took up the chant.

So, a few weeks later, on August 21, before a vast public rally in Srinagar's Iqbal Park, Farooq Abdullah was virtually given a public coronation. "This crown that I am placing on your head is made of thorns," said Sheikh Abdullah in front of the assembled crowd. "You are young, Dr Farooq Abdullah, young enough to face the challenges of life, and I pray that God gives you the courage to fulfil your responsibilities to these people whom I have nurtured with such pride, and to whom I have given the best years of my life."

The crowd roared 'Ameen', but the Sheikh's emotional speech and the mass approval that it provoked did not settle the issue. The son-in-law went into a deep sulk and when, at a later date, Dr Abdullah was inducted into the government, Shah resigned — or was made to do so, according to his supporters.

WHEN THE SHEIKH died in September 1982, the matter of the succession had not yet been completely settled. The aggrieved Shah still had enough support in the party to be able to make trouble if the legislature party were allowed to meet and choose their leader according to normal procedure. Shah's supporters claimed that he had over 30 legislators on his side, out of a total of 47. Whether that is true or not, it is certain that he was a presence to reckon with.

If Dr Abdullah was to be made Chief Minister with the least possible fuss, then it would have to be done with some help from the Governor and from Delhi. Sheikh Abdullah died shortly after noon on the afternoon of September 9, 1982, but his death was not announced for several hours. The explanation offered later

was that arrangements needed to be made to prevent an overwhelming number of mourners from pouring into Srinagar, but it was during these few hours that hectic political activity took place. Under instructions from Delhi (according to leaders of both political groups) Governor Nehru met three senior leaders of the National Conference who assured him that Dr Abdullah had the majority support, and on the basis of that he decided to swear him in as Chief Minister. There are some who feel that there was nothing at all irregular about what he did since, because of Kashmir's special history, the Governor is always, to some extent, a political agent of the Centre. This is not, however, a rationale shared by L K Jha who was Governor of the state from 1973-81. "I would say that, legally speaking, the Governor of Kashmir has a more restrained political role than in other states," he says, "because, whereas in other states the fact that the Governor is bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers is merely a matter of convention, in J & K this is spelled out in so many words in the Constitution itself."

To quote Article 35(2) of the Kashmir Constitution: "All functions of the Governor except those under Sections 36, 38 and 92 shall be exercised by him only on the advice of the Council of Ministers." Clause (3) of the same article adds: "The question whether any, and if so, what, advice was tendered by ministers to the Governor shall not be inquired into in any court."

Articles 36 and 38 relate to the appointment of ministers and deputy ministers and say only that they will be appointed by the Governor on the Chief Minister's advice. Article 92 deals with the breakdown of constitutional machinery.

Despite the Governor's role having been spelt out in black and white in the Constitution, the practice has been for the Governor to play an unnecessarily active role on behalf of Delhi. Perhaps this tradition is rooted in a situation analysed aptly by the *Sadar-i-Riyasat* of Kashmir, Dr Karan

Singh, in his autobiography: "Indeed it would be correct to say that the basic difference between Sheikh Abdullah and me lay in the fact that while he looked upon himself as a Kashmiri who happened to find himself in India, I considered myself an Indian who happened to find himself in Kashmir."

After the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah's government in 1953, the Centre ruled Kashmir from Delhi through its puppets and minions in Srinagar. Kashmir has thus, over the years, got used to not just Governors who are agents of Delhi but even Chief Ministers. In view of this, no eyebrows were raised when Nehru, with the blessings of Delhi, permitted the slightly irregular swearing-in of Dr Abdullah. Once he became Chief Minister, Raj Bhavan appears to have adopted a paternalistic, slightly indulgent attitude towards Abdullah, and Nehru is said to have often advised him in his dealings with Delhi. When the National Conference and the Congress (I) were trying to hammer out an electoral agreement before the state elections in June 1983, Nehru did his best to try and assist the process.

A civil servant who worked for Dr Abdullah recalls an evening when he was summoned to Raj Bhavan during the negotiations between the Congress (I) and the National Conference. Over deliciously spiced Kashmiri kebabs and long, iced drinks, the Governor broached the subject of the negotiations, suggesting that his guest try and influence the Chief Minister to do the 'right thing' — which, in his opinion, was an electoral alliance with the Congress (I). When the civil servant said that Abdullah was perhaps being forced to listen to some people in his party who did not want an alliance, the Governor replied with some irritation: "I know he is listening to them, but why does he have to? Why doesn't he listen to us?"

However, it must be said here that although Governor Nehru may have tried occasionally to interfere in the political process where he felt that it would help the state's stability, when it came to the crunch he made it ab-

solutely clear that he was a Governor and not a political agent of the Central government.

The crunch began with the state elections in June 1983. Once the brief honeymoon between the National Conference and the Congress (I) ended with the breakdown of the talks in Delhi, it became clear that it was going to be open war and that the election would be bitterly fought.

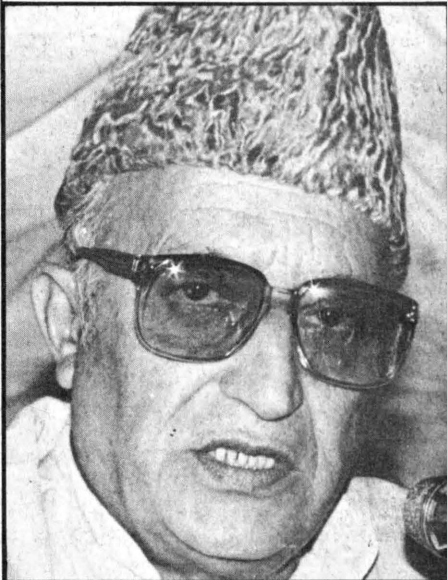
The Congress (I) had money, Mrs Gandhi and the might of the Central government behind it, but the National Conference had the memory of Sheikh Abdullah. The old Lion of Kashmir who, for over two decades, had symbolised the state's political identity, had barely been dead six months when the elections were announced. The Sheikh's simple grey marble grave on the banks of the Dal Lake was festooned, once the campaign began, with red and white National Conference banners and flags. Couplets from the poet Iqbal and quotations from the Sheikh himself exhorted the people of Kashmir to nurture the National Conference as their own precious tree of independence and individuality, and pretty early into the campaign it became clear to most impartial observers that this election, at least, would be won by Sheikh Abdullah for his son.

THINGS, however, were different in Jammu, where the Bharatiya Janata Party seemed to suddenly collapse in its former bastion, on account of inner dissensions and a general spirit of defeat. The Congress (I) instantly filled the vacuum and adopted BJP tactics, as if realising that the quickest way to Jammu's heart could only be through resorting to the age-old tactic of pitting Hindu against Muslim.

Farooq Abdullah added to the fears of this part of the province by ending 50 years of hostility between his party and the pro-Plebiscite Awami Action Committee of Maulvi Farooq. Jammu's worst suspicions were confirmed, and the Congress (I) took full advantage. Senior party leaders flew in from Delhi with warnings of

the dangers of voting for the National Conference. "In the Valley the red National Conference flag now flies side by side with the green flag of Maulvi Farooq," they would say, while others issued dire warnings about the proposed Resettlement Bill: "A Kashmiri Hindu girl loses her rights to property if she marries someone from outside the state, but foreigners (Pakistanis) will be permitted to come back to the state if they can prove that they originally came from Kashmir. Muslims will be pouring across the border."

"The message quickly went home, as communal messages always do,



G M Shah.

and within the first few days of the campaign it became clear that the Congress (I) was going to sweep the polls in Jammu and the National Conference would have to settle for the remaining seats in the Valley and Ladakh to secure a majority in the Assembly. In fact, Dr Abdullah realised that he could not afford to lose a single seat in the Valley. A certain bitterness and desperation thus crept into the campaigns of both parties.

Farooq Abdullah responded to Congress (I) communalism in Jammu with National Conference communalism in the Valley. Controversies arose over several of his public speeches, including one in which he seemed to

imply that those Hindus who 'kept looking beyond Lakhampur' (the last border town between Kashmir and Punjab) would suffer. The press, in particular the Delhi papers, blew up every such statement made by the National Conference, while playing down similar statements made in reverse by the Congress (I) in Jammu. (The role of the press during the Kashmir elections was, in fact, so partisan that it later became the subject of a Press Council inquiry.) It has to be said here that Congress (I) leaders in Delhi could well have been misled by the press reportage of the elections. By the time they realised that they had miscalculated their strength, it was too late to do anything but turn to that last resort — violence. A Congress (I) leader who did not approve of his party's strat-

for himself and so was the Deputy Election Commissioner. Considering that in states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh or West Bengal three people dead in electoral strife would be considered a bagatelle, the arrival of these high-powered gentlemen from Delhi can only be interpreted as pressure tactics.

Nehru remained unmoved and aloof. He tended to avoid meeting the press to discuss his views on the subject, but during one of his rare, off-the-record interviews with a group of journalists (including this author) he only said: "Yes, the election has been communalised both here and in Jammu. This is unfortunate." On the Congress (I) allegations that the National Conference was creating violence, he said that he believed the allegations were exaggerated.

with considerable tension in the air.

Despite this, polling was peaceful, barring a few incidents of violence in Srinagar. Nobody from the Congress (I) made any allegations that polling had been unfair till the results started coming out. In the words of Dr Abdullah's Education Minister, Mohammad Shafi: "The newspapers on June 6 reported no rigging. On the afternoon of the polling day, even Door-darshan Srinagar could not help presenting a news report on the polling in which all those who were interviewed by the television staff said that the polling was orderly, peaceful and without any intimidation. All India Radio, in the first news bulletins, said the polling had been orderly and peaceful. No Opposition leader, including those belonging to the Congress (I), could say that there was rigging anywhere."

The allegations of rigging began when it became clear that Farooq Abdullah was going to form the government, and their purpose was to get the Governor into the fray at last. For nearly three months after Farooq Abdullah was sworn in, the dramatics over 'rigging' continued. Arun Nehru, one Mrs Gandhi's chief advisors on Kashmir, produced a boxful of ballot-papers in Parliament, and Jagdish Tytler, on another occasion, tried to garland one of the National Conference MPs (also newly elected) with more ballot-papers. Additional pressure was sought to be put on the government by frequent trips up to Srinagar by aides such as Arun Nehru and Makhan Lal Fotedar.

Raj Bhavan, however, remained tranquil and distant. According to a former aide of B K Nehru, "There were complaints constantly from the Congress (I) about this, that and the other, but Mr Nehru was just not the sort of person to succumb to that kind of pressure."

When the rigging charges did not stick, and the Governor did not respond as Delhi would have liked him to, the Congress (I) decided to start working on another strategy to get rid of Farooq Abdullah, for by now it was clear that he was not going to be

The purpose of the Congress (I)'s vituperative campaign was to compell Governor B K Nehru to act in a partisan manner. But, though allegations of violence became a daily routine, and the country was made to believe that the state was burning, Nehru remained unmoved and aloof.



egy, actually told a reporter of *Sunday* that the plan was to create some kind of violence, and this was reported in the magazine before the Congress (I) office was burned down in a fire that still remains a mystery.

The Congress (I) campaign became more and more vituperative, with allegations of violence becoming a daily routine. These would get reported in the Delhi newspapers, invariably under bold front-page headlines so that, although the toll of the Kashmir elections was three people dead (one of whom slipped off a roof while watching an election rally), the rest of the country was made to believe that the state was burning.

This gave the Centre the necessary leverage to start putting pressure on the Governor. The Home Secretary was sent up to examine the situation

The pressure upon him to act in a partisan manner increased with every passing day, as it became clearer that Farooq Abdullah was going to win the elections. The final blow to the Congress (I) was when, at their grand finale, Mrs Gandhi's public meeting in Iqbal Park, only a few hundred people came to listen to the Prime Minister. This was practically the last meeting before campaigning ended and it was evident that Mrs Gandhi was furious with her party for having placed her in such an embarrassing situation. During the course of her speech, she tried to cover up by saying that she knew that people had been unable to come because the National Conference had terrorised them into staying away. There were a few incidents of stone-throwing at the meeting, and the campaign ended

allowed to stay. Not only had he got on the wrong side of the Congress (I) by first refusing to make an electoral alliance and then going on to win, but he was really beginning to get out of hand, in Delhi's opinion, on account of his 'hobnobbing with the Opposition'.

In the middle of the election campaign, Abdullah had taken time off on May 27 to attend the Opposition conclave called by N T Rama Rao in Vijayawada. Once he was Chief Minister, he went a step further by organising an Opposition meeting in Srinagar itself. At this stage, according to one civil servant, Governor Nehru did try to put in a word of advice and suggested to him, through the civil servant, that his future did not lie with the Opposition parties. "Nehru seemed to realise," says the civil servant, "that this would put Dr Abdullah on a line of direct confrontation with the Centre and it would not be good for him in the end. To Nehru's credit, he mentioned it once and left it at that. He did nothing more."

THE OPPOSITION conclave scheduled for October 1983 was the last nail in Farooq Abdullah's coffin, as far as Delhi was concerned, and the signals from the Centre to the State Congress (I) leaders were absolutely clear: the Chief Minister would have to go, no matter how this was done. In September, G M Shah, Abdullah's estranged brother-in-law, announced that he had never really retired from politics and he was back in business as of now. Shortly afterwards, on October 3, nine National Conference members opposed Dr Abdullah's decision to have an Opposition conclave in Srinagar, and two days later Shah and seven other dissidents were expelled from primary membership of the National Conference.

Shah reacted by announcing that he was going to launch a campaign against his brother-in-law, whom he accused of supporting Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism, but then he exposed his Congress (I) connections

by also attacking the holding of the Opposition parties' meeting in Srinagar.

The Opposition parties' meeting was held in the first week of October and a few days afterwards, at a cricket match between the West Indies and India in Srinagar; some members of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Jamiat-e-Tulba shouted anti-India slogans. It was the perfect cue for the Congress (I) to begin the second phase of their attack on the Abdullah government: the rigging charge was replaced by accusations of anti-nationalism. On October 15, the Congress (I) chief in Kashmir, Mufti Syed, made a statement in which he described the situation in Kashmir as 'alarming and most disturbing'. More significantly, he called upon the Governor to use his constitutional authority and act

cided to organise a *bandh* in Jammu to protest against the 'failures of the government'. The protest marches led to violence and the police had to fire several rounds of teargas before the crowd could be brought under control. Several arrests were made and among those arrested were 11 Congress (I) legislators. After the Jammu *bandh* a poster appeared on the walls of the city, issued by the General Secretary of the PCC (I) which urged the people to support the Congress (I) campaign till the state government was got rid of. If further proof was needed of Congress (I) intentions, it came from Rajiv Gandhi who, at a public meeting in Srinagar, three days after the Jammu *bandh*, hinted at 'firm Central action' as the situation in J & K was 'dangerous and intolerable'.



Further proof of the Congress (I)'s intentions to topple the state government came from Rajiv Gandhi who, at a public meeting in Srinagar, hinted at 'firm Central action', as the situation in J & K was 'dangerous and intolerable'.

promptly. The Governor did not respond, and the Congress (I) campaign became increasingly strident. At the Bombay session of the AICC (I) on October 20, Congress (I) leaders even went so far as to say that the incident at the cricket match was a consequence of speeches made at the Opposition parties' meeting.

The war between the Centre and the Kashmir government had really begun in earnest now. On October 28, Mufti Syed announced that Dr Abdullah had lost his grip on the administration, and that law and order had broken down.

The Congress (I) then proceeded to make sure that the law and order situation did break down, so that the Governor would be left with no choice but to declare Governor's rule. On November 7, the Congress (I) de-

After this there were continued incidents of 'law and order breakdown' — all of them, without exception, connected with Congress (I) demonstrations. On December 14, the demonstrations were further stepped up and Congress (I) workers protested in Anantnag, Baramulla, Pulwama, Badgam and Kupwara, at the end of which it was claimed that 348 Congress (I) workers were injured in police lathi charges and 100 were arrested.

A week later, there were more demonstrations, this time to protest against the deterioration of law and order. Congress (I) workers stoned the Jammu and Kashmir Bank in Pattan and the DC's office in Kupwara, and stopped traffic in Bijbehara. Policemen were injured in the incidents and had to resort to teargassing to

control the crowds. All this 'violence' built up to a massive attack on Farooq Abdullah at the Calcutta session of the AICC(I) on December 27, at which several members demanded that the government be dismissed.

UNFORTUNATELY for the Congress (I), however, the smell of teargas and the sounds of violence appeared not to have reached the serene heights of Raj Bhavan. Governor Nehru remained unconvinced that there was any genuine breakdown of law and order and so, on December 26, Mufti Syed, for the first time, openly attacked him for not using his constitutional discretion to solve the political situation in the state. The Congress (I) by this time had no qualms about putting their cards on the table.

wolf and cry for help, which for them means Central intervention and for us toppling a democratically elected government which has still five-and-a-half years to go."

Dr Abdullah also alleged that vast amounts of money were being sent up to the state to purchase MLAs as a final resort. But the overriding need of the hour was for a pliable Governor to assist the Congress (I) in its objective. Clearly, Nehru would have to go. So, while on the one hand efforts continued to find the 13 MLAs that the Congress (I) needed to topple the Abdullah government, at the same time moves began to find a new Governor for Kashmir.

In January, despite a meeting between Mrs Gandhi and Farooq Abdullah, which briefly allowed the hope of a reprieve, the Congress (I)'s

conclusion without making the obvious move of transferring Nehru. Just before Republic Day, 1984, Dr Abdullah and the Governor were summoned to Delhi for a meeting with the Prime Minister. She is then said to have consulted both Nehru and her former aide, P N Haksar, both of whom advised her not to topple the government and to let the Chief Minister off with a warning instead.

When the Kashmir Congress (I) leaders heard what the Governor's counsel was, they became even more adamant that if they were going to get rid of the Abdullah government, they would first have to get rid of the Governor. Shortly afterwards, Nehru was called to Delhi and informed that he was being transferred to Gujarat, and a few weeks later, Dr Abdullah was informed by the Home Minister, P C Sethi, that Jagmohan was being sent as Governor to Srinagar.

Three days after Mrs Gandhi briefed the Cabinet committee on the Kashmir situation, a memorandum was handed to the President, asking him to intervene in Kashmir because there had been 'a systematic assault on all patriotic forces'.



THE CENTRE had played its last card. It now became clear that it was no longer a question of whether the government was going to be toppled by Delhi, but when.

Jagmohan was the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi at the time he was selected for Kashmir, and in the many years he spent in the capital, he had acquired a reputation for two things — for being a very efficient administrator who got things done at top speed, and for being an utterly pliant bureaucrat. He was regarded as a sort of hatchet man, and it was this side of his reputation that preceded him to Kashmir — so that from the day he settled into Raj Bhavan in April 1984, most politically aware Kashmiris began a sort of waiting game to see when he would strike.

He arrived in the Valley at the end of spring, just before the holy month of Ramzan during which most Kashmiris fast and pray. The tourists began to pour in almost as if to make up for the summer before, when elections had ruined the season. For a while even those who were certain that Jagmohan had been sent up for only one purpose began to hope that perhaps he would wait till the season

On January 3, Farooq Abdullah held a press conference at Kashmir House in Delhi, at which he said that violence was being engineered in his state to create a situation in which a demand could be made for his government to be toppled. He said that the Congress (I) leaders had started alleging that the situation in Kashmir was similar to that in Punjab (this is in the days before Operation Bluestar, we should remember), and he pointed out that in 1983 not a single occasion had arisen in which there had to be police firing. Not a single teaching day had been lost, there were no problems on the labour front, no highway hold-ups, no bank robberies and no communal trouble. "The perfidious strategy of the Congress (I) in J & K does not end there. They violate law, create disturbances, cry

destabilising campaign continued. January 14 was declared 'Protest Day' and demonstrations were organised in 12 towns in the Valley; predictably, they turned violent and the police had to fire at the crowds to control them. Three people were killed and over 400 policemen injured in the violence.

Delhi now had adequate reason for 'a very serious view' to be taken of the Kashmir situation. On January 20, Mrs Gandhi met with her Cabinet committee to examine the problem, and three days later Congress (I) members, led by two Union ministers, handed a memorandum to the President, asking him to intervene in Kashmir because there had been 'a systematic assault on all patriotic forces'.

Still, Mrs Gandhi appears to have been prepared to push matters to a

was over before disrupting the peace. This was not to be, however, for it was not holiday time for either G M Shah or the Congress (I). In the weeks before Id there was hectic political activity in Delhi and Srinagar, with Mufti Syed doing a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing. When some journalists enquired what all the activity was about, he is reported to have replied that they were preparing 'a nice Id present for Farooq Abdullah'.

The Chief Minister, for his part, despite being aware of the purpose for which Jagmohan was sent to Srinagar, appears to have been blissfully unaware of the machinations that were afoot. One of the reasons for his over-confidence was that a lot of people still believed that even those MLAs who were known to be Shah's men would not defect, for fear of public anger. Dr Abdullah was also basically a political innocent, an heir who had inherited politics rather than grown up with it and his political naivety was so great that two days before the 'coup' he had a nice friendly dinner with one of the MLAs who were among the 12 who defected on July 2. In fact, while the MLAs were gathering with G M Shah to discuss the final moves, Dr Abdullah was on his way to Pahalgam on a motorcycle. In the populist style of functioning for which he was both loved and laughed at, he was chasing a truck carrying stolen timber. After giving his security guards the slip, he proceeded to Pahalgam for dinner with some friends at the Woodstock Hotel, and by the time he got back to Srinagar around midnight, his goose had been cooked.

ON THE NIGHT of July 1, there was not much sleep to be had at Raj Bhavan. The Governor had known for several days what was being planned and had already received a letter dated June 28 from 13 MLAs, announcing their defection. According to one of his aides, the defectors — who for obvious reasons were terrified to move around in the daytime — had bundled themselves into cars and driven to Raj Bhavan

shortly before midnight on July 1 itself. The Governor sent them off to hide somewhere else as it disturbed even his sense of propriety to have them spend the night under his protection.

He then began preparations for the coup. Farooq Abdullah was a popular leader and if the people woke up in the morning to find that they were being ruled yet again at the behest of Delhi, there was every likelihood of trouble. Telephone calls were made to the Army Commander, General M L Chibber, so that the army could be put on alert. The Commanders of the Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were also put on guard, but the Governor appears to have been worried that all the troops in Kashmir would not be able to control the situ-



Farooq Abdullah, a political innocent, was blissfully unaware of the machinations that were afoot. While the defecting MLAs were gathering with GM Shah to discuss their final moves, Abdullah was on a motorcycle, chasing a truck carrying stolen timber.

ation. Accordingly, after a few hotline telephone calls to Delhi, it was arranged that two battalions of the Madhya Pradesh Special Armed Force (SAF), whose speciality is anti-dacoity operations, also be flown into Srinagar before dawn. Even Jagmohan's supporters cannot deny that it was illegal for him to send for the para-military troops while there was still a Chief Minister ruling the state. The first plane-load of SAF troops arrived just before Dr Abdullah was summoned to Raj Bhavan the following morning.

Before dawn on July 2, 13 MLAs, accompanied by G M Shah, arrived at Raj Bhavan. They were Hisamudin Bandey (Hazratbal), Munshi Habib-Ullah (Kargil), Talib Hussain (Rajouri), Dr Mehboob Beg (Sarnal), Sheikh Abdul Jabbar (Lar), Sona Ullah Dar (Pulwama), Ghulam Hassan Mir (Gul-

marg), Mohammed Khalil Jowhar (Bandipora), Hakim Mohammad Yasin (Khan Sahib), Mohammed Dildar Mir (Rafiabad), Ali Mohammed Naik (an Independent from Tral) and two women who had been nominated by Dr Abdullah himself, Khemlata Wakhloo and Gurbachan Kumari Rana.

While the defecting MLAs were having tea and biscuits at Raj Bhavan, the Chief Minister received a telephone call from Abdul Ghani Lone, Chairman of the People's Conference and also an MLA, warning him that several MLAs had defected and were already at Raj Bhavan. Dr Abdullah says that he was still trying to decide whether the story was true or not when he received another telephone call. This time it was Governor Jagmohan himself, who informed him

that 13 of his MLAs had defected and he had thereby lost his majority in the Legislative Assembly as his strength in the House had now come down to 35.

Dr Abdullah drove straight to Raj Bhavan where the Governor informed him that the defectors were all in the next room. In *My Dismissal* he writes: "I did not want to see the faces of all those who had deceived me, and betrayed the trust my people and I had put in them. While discussing the next move, Jagmohan told me that he would not like to hand over the government to G M Shah, because he (the Governor) had reports about the activities of Shah and also about his ruthlessness and everything else. I told the Governor that I was still the Chief Minister and he had to go by my advice. At this stage he said that

he felt that Governor's rule would be the most appropriate thing for the state, and the Legislative Assembly should be put in suspended animation."

According to Dr Abdullah, General Chibber was also at Raj Bhavan and in the General's presence Abdullah informed the Governor that he was still Chief Minister and his advice was therefore binding. There are those who agree with Jagmohan's argument that he did not have to go by the Chief Minister's advice since he had already dismissed him. In fact, however, the letter of dismissal, although written earlier, reached the Chief Minister's residence after he met the Governor. In any case, Kashmir has a clear precedent in such matters which Jagmohan should have followed had his intentions been honour-

funds for the staff to be paid without a budget being passed."

Had Delhi been interested in the legal and constitutional position, however, there would have been no need to get rid of Nehru.

Farooq Abdullah summoned an urgent Cabinet meeting as soon as he got home, and his colleagues arrived in time to discuss the Governor's letter stating that Farooq Abdullah no longer enjoyed the majority support of the state Assembly and had therefore forfeited the right to continue as Chief Minister.

Since Kashmir was the only state at that point to have an anti-defection law, which the Sheikh had introduced in his last years — some say out of insecurity — Dr Abdullah and his Cabinet decided, after considering the matter, that it would be better to first

In his answer to the Governor's letter, Dr Abdullah said: "In the latter part of the letter you have referred to a discussion which you had with me early this morning that I advised you to impose the Governor's rule under Section 92 of the Constitution.

"No doubt we discussed alternatives, but all those options are available on my failure to show that I enjoy confidence of the legislature which can be demonstrated on the floor of the House. I therefore reiterate that the Assembly be summoned forthwith so that on my failure to demonstrate confidence of the House we can next consider the options available to us under the Constitution. I, on behalf of my Cabinet, would request you to accept our advice of dissolving the Legislative Assembly so that we go back to our people."

Jagmohan later said that had Dr Abdullah advised dissolution of the Assembly and Governor's rule he would have done this immediately, but instead he had been advised to call the Assembly and he could not do this. This is patently an excuse that makes little or no sense; if there is any doubt about the majority of a Chief Minister then the place for him to resolve it is surely the legislature and not Raj Bhavan. The Governor's Committee of 1971 in fact made a specific recommendation to this effect: "As a general proposition it may be stated that, as far as possible, the verdict as to majority support claimed by a Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers should be left to the legislature, and that it is only if the responsible government cannot be maintained without doing violence to correct constitutional practice that the Governor should resort to Article 356 of the Constitution."

In Jagmohan's case, the truth is that he himself would have liked a spell of Governor's rule. He is an administrator par excellence, and nothing would have given him greater pleasure than to rule Kashmir. But he had to pay the price of behaving like a political agent. All day he tried to persuade Delhi that Governor's rule

Nothing would have given Jagmohan more pleasure than to impose Governor's rule. Though he tried to persuade Delhi about it, his mentors categorically refused. At the end of the day, Jagmohan had to sack Dr Abdullah and install Shah as Chief Minister.



able.

In 1977, when the Congress (I) withdrew support from Sheikh Abdullah, he was left with a government consisting of three ministers and himself; nevertheless, Governor Jha felt that, legally, he was bound to accept the Sheikh's advice. When Dr Abdullah was dismissed he still headed the largest single party in the legislature, so Jagmohan should have been all the more obliged to take his advice. Here is what Jha has to say about 1977: "I came to Delhi and consulted Morarji (then PM) who very correctly took the position that I should follow the legal position; so I consulted the Law Minister who agreed that legally and constitutionally, the situation was one in which Governor's rule was the only way in which you could carry on administration so as to have the

test their strength on the floor of the House. In retrospect, now that the Centre also has an anti-defection law, it can be said that the J & K law was defective because it did not bargain for a split in the party or specify what constituted a split. Under the present Central government law, at least one-third of the party has to defect before it is considered a split; it is therefore indisputable that the Congress (I) has been supporting a government of defectors, since ten out of 47 does not constitute one-third.

The J & K anti-defection law does provide for disqualification of those members who defy a party whip, so the Cabinet felt that they would be able to prove their majority without the necessity of Governor's rule and the ordering of fresh elections barely 18 months after they had been held.

would be the best alternative and would prevent any possible trouble. However, his mentors in Delhi are believed to have told him quite categorically that this was out of the question, since it would mean elections in six months and neither Shah nor the Congress (I) could face the electorate with any sort of hope at all. In fact, the whole purpose of waiting for the magic number of 12 (including the two nominated members) to defect was to add them to the one Independent and the 26 Congress (I) MLAs, so as to give the new government the barest majority of 39 in a House of 76.

At the end of the day, Jagmohan had no choice but to sack Dr Abdullah and install Shah as Chief Minister. The Raj Bhavan press release issued that evening declared: "The Governor, being satisfied that Shri G M Shah enjoyed the confidence of the majority of the MLAs, invited him to form the government, subject to the condition that he would again prove his majority on the floor of the House within one month from the date of assuming office. The Governor also asked him to submit a list of the members of his Council of Ministers who are to be sworn in. Pursuant to this, a letter recommending 14 names, besides himself, for being sworn in, was received by the Governor and accordingly the oath of office in secrecy was administered to them."

Every defector was found qualified enough to become a minister, which pointed unmistakably to the motives of each; and while the new government and Chief Minister cowered in their houses, too afraid to face the public wrath, the city of Srinagar was turned into a war zone. Jagmohan got his chance to rule for at least one month till the Assembly met, and in that month there was curfew almost every day. While para-military troops with machine-guns roamed the streets announcing on loudspeakers that anybody breaking curfew regulations would be shot, Jagmohan, in an Orwellian mode befitting 1984, persistently denied that there was any curfew. When troops

patrolling the empty streets tried to stop reporters getting to the airport and they appealed to the Governor for curfew passes, he said simply: "Curfew? There's no curfew. We are only taking a few precautionary measures." But the Governor's new-speak fooled only himself because pretty early in the Chief Minister's career, Shah — whose nickname Gul means 'flower' — began to be called Gul-e-Curfew (Curfew Blossom).

KASHMIRI DEMOCRACY chalked up yet another incredible first when the time came for the Assembly to meet and for Shah to prove his majority on July 31, 1984. For the first time in the democratic history of India, the Speaker of the House, Wali Mohammed Itoo, was picked up by commandos and physi-



When Dr Abdullah was sacked, the new government and Chief Minister G M Shah cowered in their homes, unable to face the public wrath. Srinagar was turned into a war zone, with para-military troops roaming the streets announcing that anyone who broke curfew regulations would be shot.

cally thrown out of the legislature for insisting that the first item of business should be the vote of confidence and not item number two which was 'removal of the Speaker'.

It was feared that Itoo might use his powers to consider the 12 defectors as defectors and not allow them to vote. Not only was he kicked out but another Speaker was instantly elected in his place, although the Constitution states quite clearly that a new Speaker cannot be elected without prior notice to the Governor. As if this were not enough, two MLAs from among Dr Abdullah's supporters, Bhim Singh and Ghani Lone, were arrested on their way to the Assembly. According to Bhim Singh, he was physically dragged out of a van and then roughed up by policemen. Since the new government could not risk

attending the Assembly for the first time under the gaze of the public it was supposed to represent, total curfew had to be declared in Srinagar. National Conference MLAs wrote to Jagmohan to protest against these blatant violations of all democratic norms, but he chose to do nothing.

It took Jagmohan six months to realise that Shah was incompetent and corrupt and that he was destroying the state's administration. To the Governor's credit, he did make sure that Shah did not resort to rigging to get his son, Muzaffar, elected as the MP from Srinagar during the Lok Sabha elections in December. Jagmohan personally summoned officials who were trying to help Shah and warned them that he was interested in a completely fair election. Farooq Abdullah's candidates won all three

seats in the Valley, a fair indication of what would happen if democracy were restored.

Apologists for the Centre's role in Kashmir spout a variety of allegations to support the dismissal of the government — that Farooq Abdullah was anti-national, incompetent, a playboy, a demagogue and so on and so forth. Even if these charges, and more, were true, does it give Delhi the right to dismiss a legally elected Chief Minister? To anybody who values Indian democracy, the answer cannot be in the affirmative. In the not-too-distant future, Shah's government will probably fall and democracy will be restored; but even if this happens soon, the scars of July 1984 will take years to fade. The damage done to the already battered political psyche of Kashmir is irreparable. ♦

GIRLS' HOME

The Umarkhadi Remand Home houses young girls convicted of crimes. And those who've been abandoned.

By Bhawna Somaya

I FIRST WENT to the Umarkhadi Remand Home in 1979. I worked for a film magazine then and had been assigned a piece on one of the film industry's most astounding confidence tricks. A young girl had gone from producer to producer claiming that she was the actress Neetu Singh's secretary. Her *modus operandi* was always the same. She would rush into a producer's office, introduce herself as Neetu's secretary, collect the money owed to Neetu by the producer, rush out and disappear. In a business where most transactions are conducted in cash and without written receipts, it was a confidence trick that couldn't go wrong in the short run. Eventually, of course, the producers met up with Neetu, compared notes and realised that they had been had. The next time the girl appeared at a producer's office, she was nabbed and turned over to the police.

She ended up at the Umarkhadi Remand Home and my editor sent me to interview her there. The Chief Superintendent of the Home was not keen on letting me see her. After some persuasion, he agreed to give me five minutes alone in his office.

The girl was ushered in, I explained what I wanted to talk about and waited for her reaction. It never came. She was sullen, withdrawn and uncommunicative. She refused to say a word or even meet my eye.

In a few minutes it was all over. The Chief Superintendent re-entered his office, saw that the interview was not a success, and ushered the girl out at once. I never got my interview, never wrote the article and never saw her again.

NOW, six years later, I am back at the Umarkhadi Home. The girl has since been released, the Chief Superintendent I met then has moved on, and the new incumbent is reluctant to let me talk to his inmates or write about the Home.

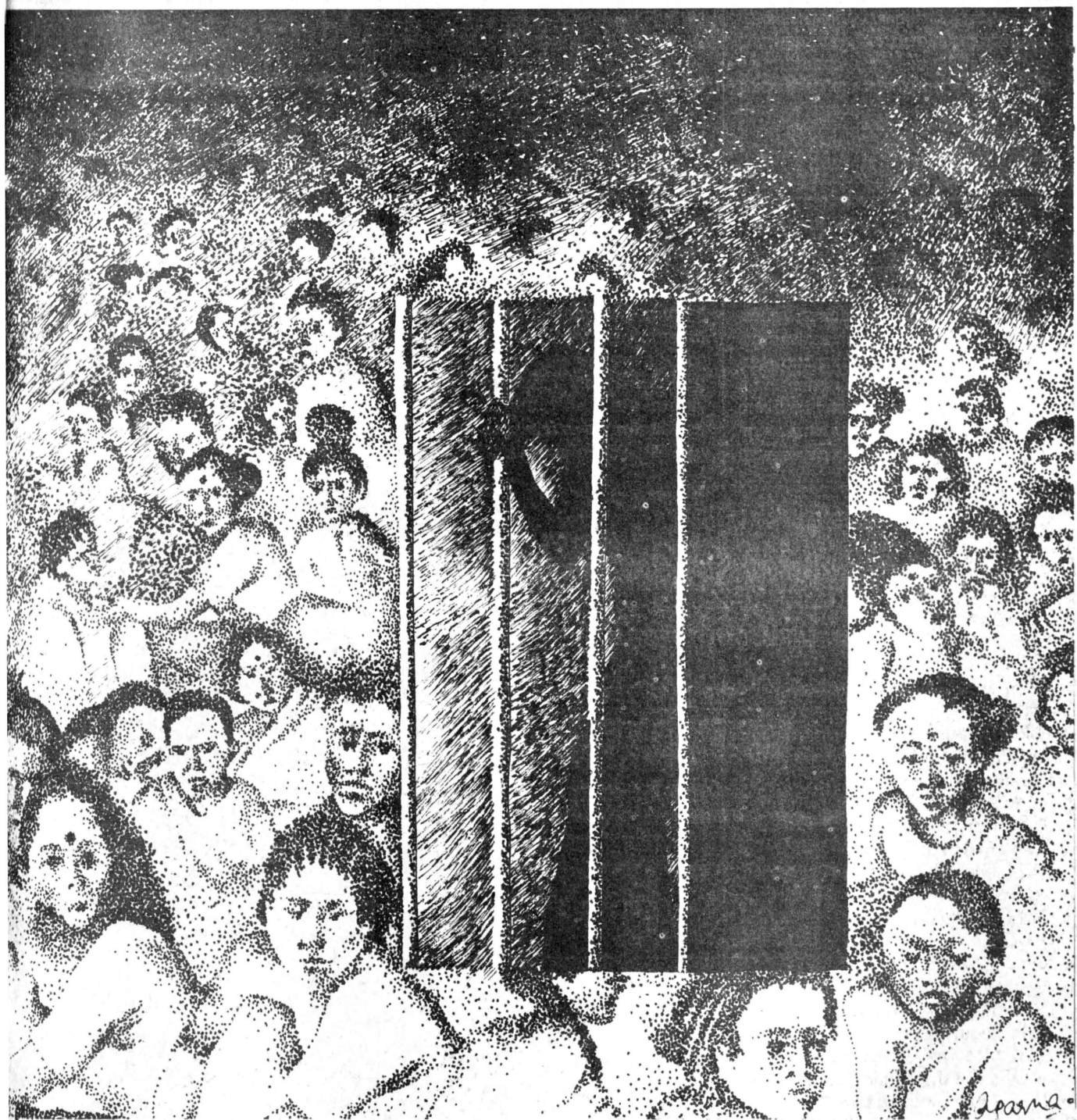
I persist. I try and persuade Mr Kulkarni, the new Chief Superintendent, to let me wander around the premises and talk to the girls. A dark, bespectacled Maharashtrian, Kulkarni has grave reservations about my piece. But he does, finally, agree to let me meet the Superintendent of the girl's wing, Miss Deshpande, and asks her to take me around the Home. It is not what I had hoped for but it is some-

thing nevertheless.

MISS DESHPANDE is around 40. She is painfully thin, has her hair tied in a plait, and speaks in a voice that is reedy but commanding nevertheless. In her white embroidered sari, she looks like a strict Maharashtrian housewife. She has spent 13 years at various reform institutions and has been at Umarmkhadi for the last five. She lives in the Home itself, goes out only on week-



Bhawna Somaya has just been appointed an Editor of Movie magazine.



ends and avoids wearing brightly coloured saris because the girls in her care are issued only dull white ones.

Miss Deshpande's is an unusual job. In some ways, the Umarchadi Home is a prison. Many of its inmates are convicted for crimes — soliciting, fraud, picking pockets and the like — but are too young (under 21 for girls, 18 for boys) to be housed in jails. Such people, Miss Deshpande tells me, the Home 'tries to rehabilitate and not punish'. But the juvenile de-

linquents comprise only one part of the inmates. Umarchadi is also a home for girls with no other place to go: girls who've run away from home and whose parents have not yet been traced, girls who've been caught begging, girls whose parents mistreated them, and so on. Such girls have committed no crime, yet such is the system that both runaways and criminals must live together.

Miss Deshpande's office is the only one in the building to boast the

luxury of a fan. The room is dominated by a huge wooden table, covered with a blue table-cloth, and a yellow vase with cheap plastic flowers. In one corner is a steel Godrej cupboard in which she stores linen, clothes and steel utensils. The Superintendent dumps her register on the table as we enter the office and settles down to chat.

We have hardly begun to talk when Sulbha, a girl who joined the Home the preceding day, enters the office

to collect her uniform from the Superintendent. Miss Deshpande tries to be gentle. "Try one of these blouses," she tells Sulbha. "See which one fits you." Sulbha takes the blouses but doesn't say a word. Then, as silently as she had entered, she turns around and leaves.

I am reminded of my 1979 visit to Umarkhadi. Are all the girls sullen and silent? Miss Deshpande sighs. "No. But some are." Sulbha hasn't spoken a word to anybody since she joined the Home. "Many girls are like that when they first come here. Often, they don't know anything about their own lives. Some don't even know that they are pregnant. Sulbha, for instance, she's pregnant and doesn't know it."

In a few minutes, Sulbha is back. I look closely at this fair-skinned Nepali girl whose pretty features give nothing away. What keeps her so quiet? Miss Deshpande tries her hand at conversation again. "Sulbha, do you know that you are pregnant?"

Silence.

"Did you sleep well last night?"

No reply.

"Are you hungry, Sulbha?"

No response.

Finally, Miss Deshpande gives up. As Sulbha stares blankly at the wall, Miss Deshpande makes her sit on a stool and carefully scrutinises her clothes, her hair and her nails.

Sulbha leaves as she had entered, silently.

SULBHA is an exception. The girls do talk. Most, in fact, long for some contact with the outside world. When Miss Deshpande and I leave her office, I am mobbed by curious children of all ages. The mobbing follows a pattern. Generally, the children try their hardest to attract my attention. When I do cut through the cacophony of voices and talk to one particular girl, I find that the girl has nothing to say. She fidgets shyly, stammers and suddenly clams up. At first I am surprised, but later I realise what the problem is. The children long to meet outsiders but when they do start talking to them,

they find they've forgotten how to talk.

Still, a little persistence pays off. Slowly, I manage to draw them out. Lakshmi, a 'senior student', talks first about Ganesh, the Home's youngest inhabitant. He is only two years old. He was found abandoned on a footpath and sent to Umarkhadi: now he's been adopted by the entire girls' section. "He's the happiest person here because he is too young to remember his home or his parents," Lakshmi tells me.

Her own story is a sad one. She fell in love with a boy who her parents disapproved of. She continued to meet him, much to their anger. Finally,

THE prostitutes are a breed apart. Most of them look distinctly out of place in the Maharashtrian ethos of Umarkhadi. They would—I suspect—much rather be back on Falkland Road.

ly, they threw her out of the house and, ironically, the boy refused to marry her too. With no place to go to she ended up at the Home. Now she's forgotten the boy — "I don't remember his face, I don't remember his voice" — but her parents still refuse to take her back.

Many of the Home's inmates are girls who have been abandoned or disowned by their parents. Pratibha, 10, ran away from home to meet Hema Malini. A policeman found her and she was sent to Umarkhadi. Her parents don't want her back and she has yet to meet Hema. ("We asked Hema if she would come to the

Home," the Superintendent tells me. "She said she didn't have the time.") Chhaya, 8, was abandoned by an aunt — "She told me she was taking me to buy vegetables and left me here." Liza, 17, was raped by her father the day after her mother died. Sita, 18, eloped with Rohit, her neighbour's son. They didn't get married, fell out with their families and ended up in separate remand homes.

Some of the other girls have got mixed up with criminals. Rashmi, 5, was a pickpocket. Her sister, Mohini, 7, was involved with a gang of smugglers. None of the girls will readily admit to any criminal activity, however. Salma, 6, blurts out: "I robbed a purse," and then quickly changes her story: "No, no, I found the purse on the road. No, a rich man gave it to me. But these people caught me and brought me here. I'm no thief..." Her voice trails off, the lies end, abruptly.

The prostitutes are a breed apart. Most of them are Nepalis and look distinctly out of place in the Maharashtrian ethos of Umarkhadi. Many of them are quite attractive and all of them — even the younger ones — are far more mature than the other girls. They are not allowed make-up, but they manage to look different nevertheless, with stick-on *bindis* and nice saris. They keep to themselves, avoid the girls and most — I suspect — would much rather be back on Falkland Road or wherever they were picked up from.

THE DAY I visit the ground-floor canteen where the girls have lunch is a special day. A generous donor has sent *dhoklas*, *laddoos* and *patras* for the children. Normally, they would eat only dal, *roti* and vegetables. Miss Deshpande takes a mouthful of everything before the girls eat it. It is a Remand Home rule that she try everything herself and see that it is palatable. As the hungry children — drawn by the lunch bell — rush in and sit down, Miss Deshpande tells me that she tries to avoid eating with the children. The food is not bad (I can see that myself), she explains.

VIGNETTES

But if she eats it too, then there's less to go around, so she cooks her own food.

She is a formidable lady. There is a no-nonsense air about her, and yet there can be no doubt that the children have enormous affection for her. They crowd around her calling her *Bai Sahib* and she seems to genuinely care about their well-being. Soon after she came to the Home, she realised that the children's biggest problem was that they had no contact with the outside world. So, every weekend when she went out shopping, she began to take some girls with her. All went well for a while. Then, one weekend, a girl tried to run away. Miss Deshpande got frantic. If she ran after the girl, the others might escape. And yet, she couldn't really let her get away. Eventually, of course, the girl was caught and Miss Deshpande heaved a sigh of relief. But that day, she learnt her lesson. No more outings for the girls.

It can't be a very nice life inside the high walls of Umarchadi. The girls follow a routine that is rigidly regimented. They sleep 80 to a room, in large, high-ceilinged dormitories. They don't have beds — they get sheets — and they don't have pillows — they fold some clothes under their heads. A bell wakes them up and they rush for the toilets. As there are only three toilets for 160 girls, the scramble has to be seen to be believed. The situation is a little better when it comes to bathrooms. There are seven of them — but there isn't enough water for them to bathe.

After the scramble for ablutions, the girls rush down for a morning assembly at 9 a.m. This, Miss Deshpande tells me, is the only time when the girls can meet the boys from the male wing. Prayers are followed by classes. It is a little like a bargain basement imitation of a girls' public school: there are no classrooms at all. The girls return to their dormitories for lessons. There is no syllabus. The classes consist of children of all ages and all they learn is reading, writing and arithmetic. The object of the exercise seems less to educate and

more to keep them busy.

Lessons are followed by lunch and lunch by a brief rest period. Then come some craft classes and, at 4 p.m., some fruit (they don't get milk or tea). After fruit, they take turns at having baths (most haven't managed to bathe in the mornings), eat a light dinner (many save up their fruit from the afternoon and eat it now), watch TV and go to sleep at night.

It is not a life with highs and lows: everything is routine. There is nothing to look forward to and each day is exactly like the one that preceded it. Obviously, a certain amount of frustration is inevitable. I hear about Sadhana, a waif-like child who has

FREQUENTLY people who have no connection with the children claim to be parents. A couple who said they were looking for an amnesic daughter were in the flesh trade.

taken to crawling into other girl's beds and fondling their breasts. Lesbianism, I assume, is not uncommon in the closed environment of the Home. Miss Deshpande disagrees. "There's hardly any," she insists.

But what about Sadhana, then?

"She's a special case. She has a complicated sex urge." She pauses. "She was raped by two men when she was eight."

There's always more than meets the eye at the Remand Home.

HOW DOES A CHILD leave the Remand Home? One way — for those not involved in any crime — is to be reclaimed by parents.

And indeed, 'parents' do visit the home to claim the children.

Outside the Head Superintendent's office, I see an old woman weeping hysterically. "I've lost my granddaughter," she shouts. "She's here but they are not willing to let me see her. Perhaps they've killed her. Maybe they've murdered her." Her hysteria increases with each sentence.

I am shocked. Why won't they let her see her granddaughter? Surely the children need to return to their homes? And yet, this woman seems to have been prevented from reclaiming her granddaughter! I am even more shocked by the attitude of the watchman who watches her languidly.

"Do you think you are in a cinema hall?" he shouts at the old woman. The woman screams some more. He is unmoved by the dramatics and speaks to her harshly. And then, noticing my shocked expression, turns to me with an apologetic shake of his head. "You mustn't believe their stories *memsaab*. Lots of people come here and tell lies."

Chief Superintendent Kulkarni echoes the same view when I tell him about the incident. Frequently, people who have no connection with the children come to the Home and claim to be parents. Take, for instance, a hysterical young woman who came to see him claiming she had lost her baby. She looked around the Home and claimed finally to have identified her daughter — a fat child with long hair. There was just one problem. That girl's parents had already been traced — they lived in Dharwar.

Or, take the case of the prosperous-looking couple who came to locate their 12-year-old amnesic daughter. The problem was that they had no daughter. They ran a child prostitution racket and the Home seemed the cheapest source of merchandise.

It is a sad world. Many of those who say they want to help the children only want to exploit them.

EVERYBODY involved with the running of the Home tells me that the children are happy. Miss Deshpande goes so far as to claim

that they are all one big happy family. This claim is difficult to sustain: if they are so happy, then why are they always trying to run away? Miss Deshpande has herself just told me about an escape attempt that occurred two nights ago. Two girls broke the roof of the terrace and jumped onto the top of the next building. They got as far as a mile away before somebody caught them and brought them back ("They are always caught," Miss Deshpande says with grim satisfaction).

Conditions at the Home are also far from hygienic. The squalor hits you when you enter Umarchadi. There is an open gutter at the side of the building and the stench can be overpowering. Inside the Home, many of the rooms smell and the odour of stale urine can be pervasive. There is a certain insensitivity about the manner in which soap is handed out, too. Miss Deshpande complains that she has only 20 cakes of Life-buoy soap to distribute among her 120 girls every week. So, if a girl asks for more soap because she has her periods, then she has to be personally examined by the matron before any more soap is forthcoming. "It may seem crude," says Miss Deshpande, "but what can one do when one functions on a tight budget?"

Considering the conditions, how happy can the girls be? The authorities at Umarchadi avoid giving a straight answer, but when they're pressed, they all take the same line: they are much better off here than they were outside. Some of them, I am told again and again, were straightforward criminals before they came to the Home. Many were pickpockets. Some of the girls were prostitutes. (It's much worse in the case of the boys: some have committed murder.) In such cases, the Remand Home functions as a kind of jail. And compared to most Indian jails, it is probably very comfortable.

But that's only part of the story. What about all the other girls I met? Girls who had been abandoned by their parents; girls who had run away from home; and girls with no homes

to go to? What about poor Ganesh, who is only two years old? None of them have committed any crime. Is it right to lock them up in these conditions?

Miss Deshpande seems to think it is. "At least we give them two meals a day and a roof over their heads! Would they get that outside?" She does concede that they may not be happy but, to her, their stubborn refusal to appreciate the Home's generosity is a cause for righteous indignation. "They are not even grateful. Most of them come from homes where they don't even get a single meal for days. The problem," she explains, "is that we need some re-

IF YOU PICK UP an abandoned child and give her a meal, she is better off than she was before. But that doesn't mean that what you are doing for her is anywhere near enough.

strictions and these children resent that."

Her argument is, of course, entirely specious. If you pick up an abandoned child from the footpath and give her a meal, she is better off than she was before you found her. But that doesn't mean that what you are doing for her is enough. Or that you can afford to pat yourself on the back for having bettered her lot. Growing children have certain needs — education, hygienic surroundings, freedom to develop as individuals, and so on — and until an institution has fulfilled those needs, it has no right to get self-righteous.

On the other hand, I do see her point. The government spends Rs 75 a month on every child. This is not a lot but it is more than most of their parents would have spent on them. In a poor country, where nearly everybody is worse off than he or she should be, is it right to single out the Remand Home?

By the time I leave the Home, I'm not sure what to think. I remember my 1979 visit and accept that not all the girls seem as stilled and uncommunicative as that girl had seemed then. On the other hand, I can't help but wonder what will happen to the girls when they grow up and leave the Home. Will they ever be able to adjust to the real world? The authorities seem to think that marriage is the universal panacea. According to them, all the girls become extremely happy and well-adjusted once they get married. Why, Miss Deshpande enthuses, she can tell me about a child prostitute who they nursed back to health and happiness. Now she's married and has two lovely children. "Once the girls find husbands," she continues, "they are reformed and well-adjusted."

I find it difficult to share their confidence. In a conservative country like India, how many men are going to marry girls who have criminal backgrounds or even those who've been abandoned by their parents? Obviously, the girls have to settle for whatever they get. It is not a comforting thought. For most of these girls, life will never be truly happy.

I am thinking all this as I leave the Home when suddenly I feel a tug at my sari. It is Sadhana, the waif-like child who, Miss Deshpande had told me, had been raped when she was very young. She touches my midriff and keeps a tight hold on my sari. "You are like my mother," she says plaintively. "You look just like her. Take me with you. Don't leave me here." It seems heartless to tell her the truth. That I wouldn't be allowed to take her away even if I wanted to. Finally, I brush her hand away and leave. It's easy to be harsh after a day at the Remand Home. ♦

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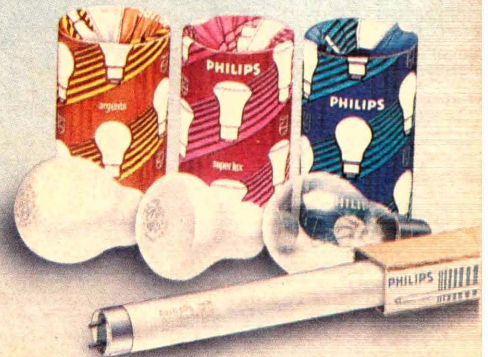
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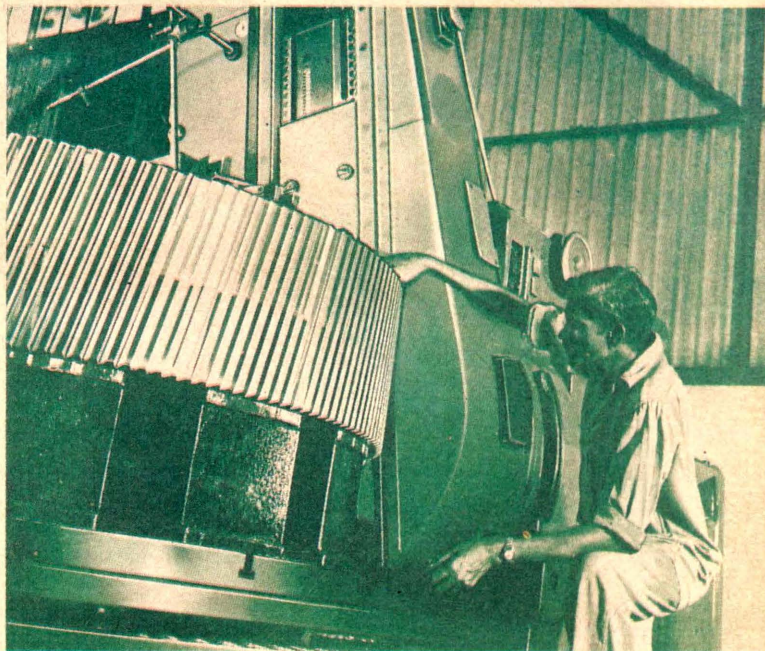
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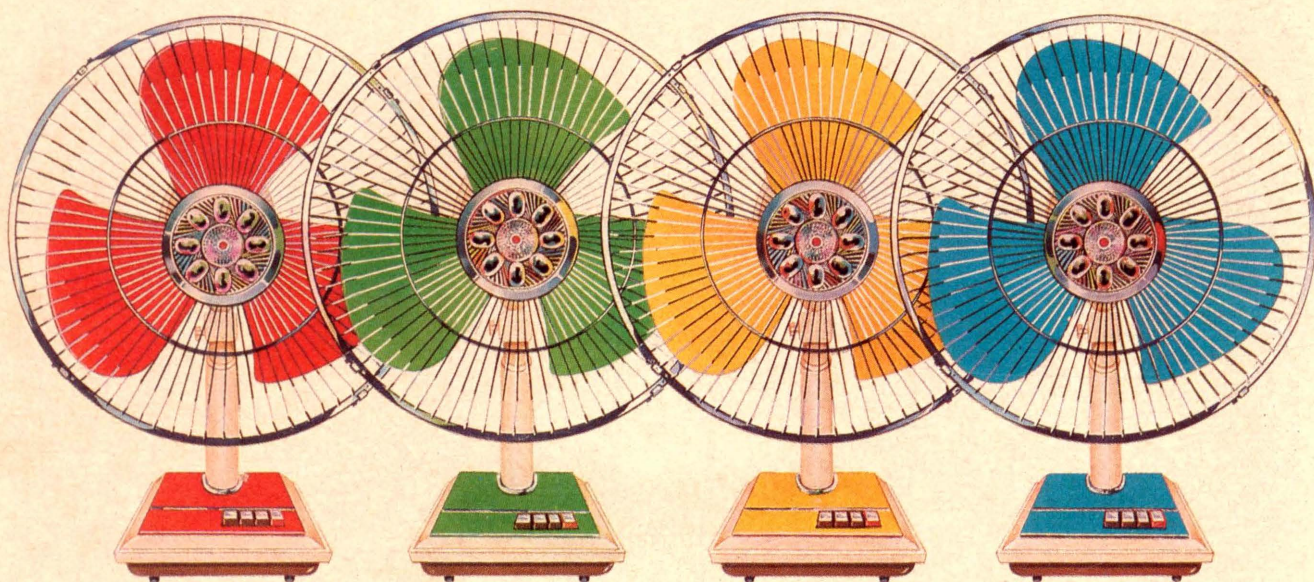
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A CRITIC WITH A LEFT-WING PERSPECTIVE

"Intellectuals are experts in legitimisation."

— Gramsci

I WAS INITIALLY ASKED to write a piece on 'Being a critic with a Left-wing perspective'. I hesitated for two reasons. First, I wonder if my perspective can be called Left-wing. Praful Bidwai is our best Left-wing critic. Left-wing, too (generally) are the writers in *Economic And Political Weekly*, *Mainstream* and *Seminar*. Ashis Nandy is New Left, perhaps — his *Intimate Enemy* is certainly the best iconoclastic work I have read in recent years. Arun Shourie is our best Tory critic — though he might denounce this label. (Just having fun, Arun. But a joke is at least a half truth.)

My point is that these critics — the best perhaps that India has produced in this century and whom I respect deeply, despite differences — can, if pushed, point to some framework of reference, ideology, parameters or philosophy. I find it difficult to do so. Once Shyam Benegal challenged me: "What are your parameters?" Chidananda Dasgupta's commentary on something I wrote, graciously conceded I was 'readable' but also said that I didn't seem to have a standpoint. Ashish Rajadhyaksha, whose heavily 'parametered' book on Ritwik Ghatak I had both praised and criticised, was more aggressive: "Well, what is your standpoint? Or do you just want to sparkle intermittently?" The latter is not a bad ambition

Iqbal Masud, the distinguished critic and commentator, wrote a column on this subject at the suggestion of Imprint.

but I don't think I achieve that, too.

Well, yielding to this multi-pronged attack, I have decided to examine my 'perspective'. To my surprise, I find it is not an ordered affair at all but a mix of matters of birth, environment (which means religion and specific life-opportunities), education, friends, books and job.

The second reason I hesitated was that the exercise could become an exercise in egotism. But, as the cynic said, be sure you have got something to be egotistical about. One cannot define one's perspective without being egotistical.

American sophisticated 'Left' criticism began with Edmund Wilson's '40s book *To The Finland Station* — a classic of world Left criticism. Matthiessen, another Leftist, said: "The proper place for a thinker is where the battle is being fought. The critic's prime responsibility is to keep open the life-giving communication between art and society." Matthiessen also held that literature and criticism are nourished by the very same experiences out of which economic, material and social conflict are generated.

Such views later came — after the '40s and '50s — to be treated as oversimplifications. In the '60s and '70s rose the structuralists and the 'metaphysicians' who seemed to paraphrase a famous remark of Mallarmé, that if the world exists at all, it must have ended in or as a book and once in a book, then the world is left behind forever. The oppositioned movements in the '60s and '70s used technical and difficult rhetoric which was as isolating as the humanism of old.

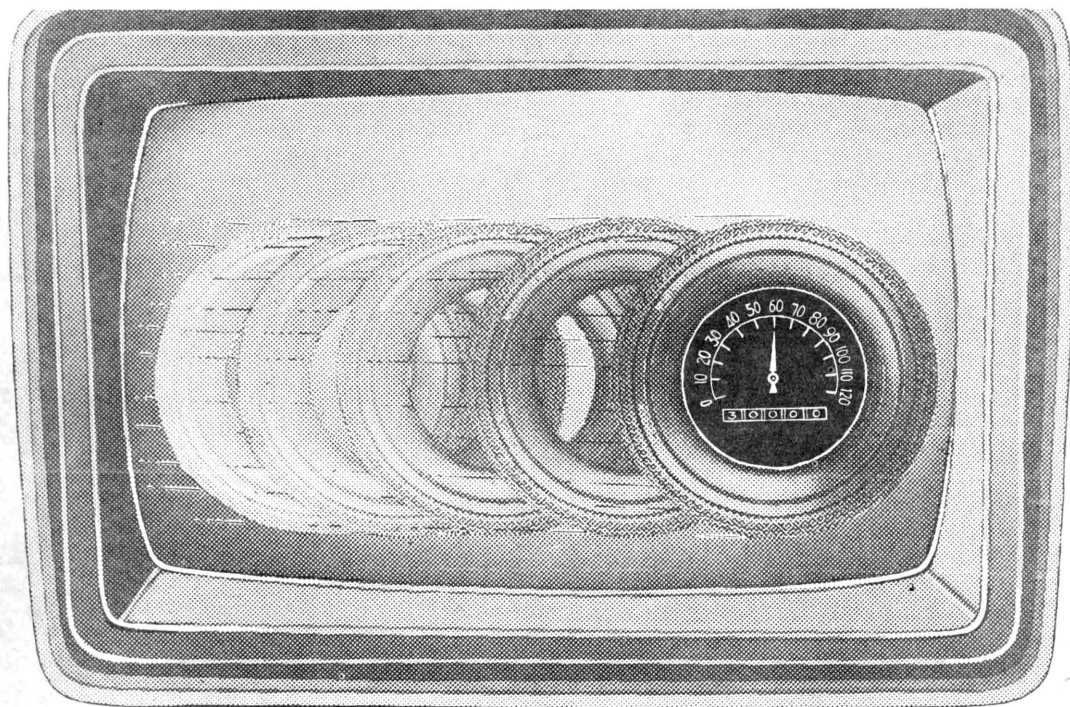


At this stage, I must make two further points. One, in developing countries, it is not easy for a critic to assume a position of icy or even aware objectivity *vis-à-vis* social reality. Too many fragments of his birth culture lie around him. Second, the need for a responsible critic of the popular arts is greater in developing countries.

It's better to talk about the personal background of my perspective in the third person.

The critic grew up in a middle class Muslim family in the South in the '30s and '40s. This meant two things. The home was orthodox Muslim and Khilafatist i.e. against the British in a pan-Islamic spectrum. But the schools through which he passed gradually became Hindu-Brahmin dominated. As he grew up he found most of these Brahmins to be communists or fellow travellers.

The Muslim spectrum. Hali and Iqbal more than Ghalib or Mir Taqi Mir affected him. Somewhere in Forster's *Passage To India*, a gathering of educated middle class Muslims recite/read/discuss poetry whose twin



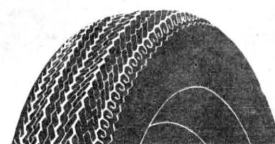
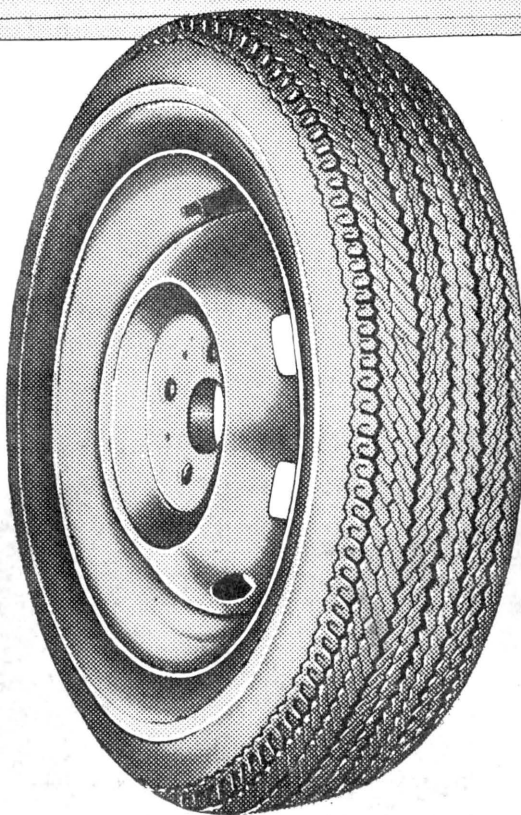
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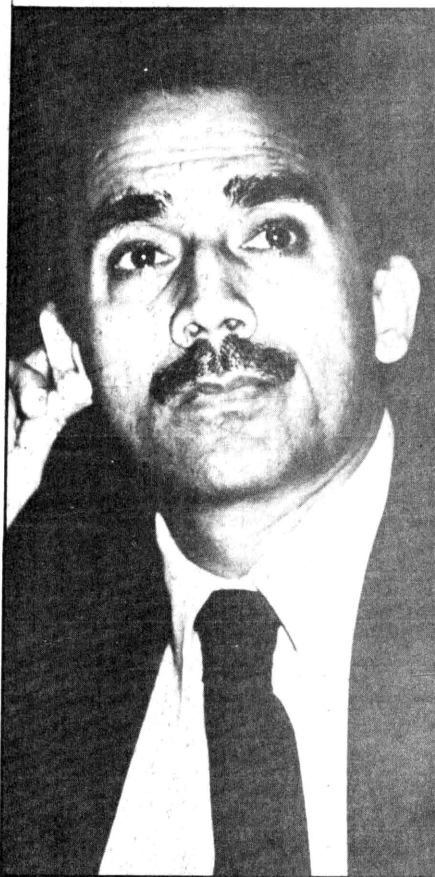
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The critic was unhappy about the admonitory tone of Girilal Jain's and Arun Shourie's addresses to the Sikhs in the last two years. Both had facts at their disposal but did not know what it felt like to be in a minority.

said: You really don't understand, do you? You think, to quote Arun Shourie, this 'separateness will lead to separation'. Of course, that danger is always there. One part of this critic is bound to the idea of indivisibility, the uniqueness, the absolute centrality of Indianness to one's life. But would you deny the specific density of individual minority cultures? At the deepest level is that not what the Sikhs and the Sri Lankan Tamils are fighting for? Here we walk on the razor's edge between 'autonomy' (acceptable to the critic) and 'self-rule' (not acceptable). The critic will not agree that the one inevitably leads to the other.

That's why the critic felt unhappy about the admonitory tone of Girilal Jain's and Arun Shourie's addresses to the Sikhs in the last two years. Both had a wealth of fact and reasoning at their disposal — but not the vital knowledge or experience of what it felt to be in a minority. To say, as Shourie did, "Everyone attempts deals with Bhindranwale, with Syedna, with the Shahi Imam in Delhi, with this Jagadguru or that. Our much vaunted secularism does not keep us from attempting and consummating these deals. But it does prevent us from coming to the aid of the Asghar Ali Engineers of each tradition," was not wrong. These are admirable sentiments. But one cannot divorce them from their context — the pre-Bluestar fevered atmosphere. To the Sikhs, it seemed the voice of the dominant culture — a liberal, humanist culture — but still a dominant culture. Such liberalism validates the culture, the culture validates the humanist, the critic — and the whole enterprise validates the State, even though, personally, the 'mainstream' critic may anathematize the State.

This critic's point is that even in 'oppositional' criticism there can be a 'majority' and a 'minority' culture. Even a Leftist 'majority man' can be strangely insensitive to what strikes a 'minority man' like a punch on the nose. Let me give you a concrete instance. In a review of Satyadev Dubey's *Adha Chauthal* whose theme was the urban uprooting and a reclaiming of a mofussil Hindu youth, the critic had referred to a scene at the end. Here, the girl who has been made pregnant and then rejected by the 'hero' says she is going away with another man to do constructive work in the North-East. Given the thrust of the play and the context of the remark, the critic had concluded that the reference was to the 'Sanskritisation' plan of the North-East by the RSS.

The reaction to the review by three independent readers was interesting. One was of a colleague of the critic in college in the '40s, now a distinguished executive; the other was of Debashish Mukherjee, critic and journalist; the third was of Sunil Shanbag, who acted in the play. Their identical reaction was: you have read too much into the play.

Whether the critic was right or wrong is not the question. Politically and ideologically, perhaps, all four are broadly on the same spectrum. But on a question which indirectly affects the minorities, a nuance of difference is immediately apparent. The same nuance could have been observed on TV in the post-Punjab poll debate between Inder Malhotra and Prem Bhatia on the one side and General Arora and Khushwant Singh on the other.

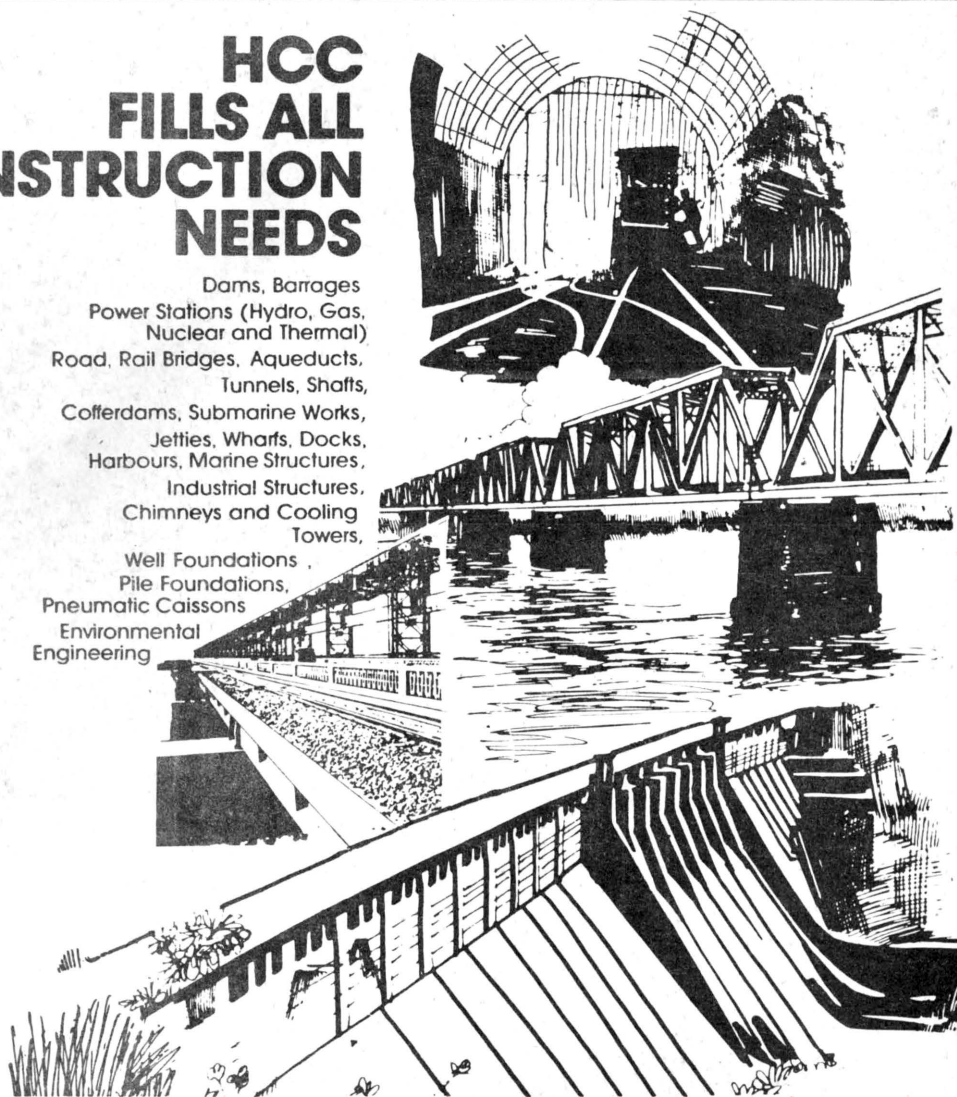
The critic does not worry about this difference of perception. This is part of genuine secularism. You cannot help the Asghar Ali Engineers

themes are the 'decay of Islam and the brevity of love'. How perspicacious, how true of popular Urdu poetry! The critic read with a beating heart of the advance of Islam and with a sinking one of its long-drawn, mournful retreat. He now looks back on this phase with amusement. But two attitudes have never left him. One, he could never restrict himself to thinking only within the confines of India's 'ancient and comfortless shores'. He came to love the Palestinians as well as the Sri Lankan Tamils and to hate their enemies with equal fervour. Second, mentally and morally, if not always, as the Marxists say *in praxis*, he was on the side of the wretched of the earth, what he thought were the victims of history. As a child he did not see Muslims as conquerors but as the beaten ones — both by history and their own self-delusion. This perspective made him instinctively go to the side of the Sikhs who were persecuted, the Harijans who were beaten, the tribals whose lands were taken away.

So, later, when people questioned him about his 'Muslim identity' he

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THE CONSTRUCTIVE FORCE IN THE NATION'S PROGRESS.

PADMAJA

The hedonism of 'Utsav' is the exact counterpart of Rajiv Gandhi's 'Let's all have a ball' theory of consumerism. Far-fetched? Perhaps. But, that, after all, is the job of the critic.

from the outside. He has to win the confidence of the masses, constituting the minority, on his own. Read his reports on the devastation caused to the minorities and the Dalits in the recent Gujarat riots.

Now, to talk about this critic's Leftism. He fell into the 'oppositional' camp on a reading of Jack London's novel *The Iron Heel* (published in the early years of this century), when he was just 17, a purple and no-holds barred account of an apocalyptic struggle between the rich and the exploited in America. A reading of *The Communist Manifesto* in the '40s completed the damage to middle class culture. His communist friends helped. So did the critic's 34-year service in the Income Tax Department. What better education in the total supremacy of the capitalist class, the total supineness of the State! The critic's Leftism was not diluted, but confirmed, by his bureaucratic experience.

The critic believes that Marxism (despite Kolakowski's powerful attack) provides the best tools for analysis of current society. He also believes that a Marxism which does not offend the religious cultures of this country — whether minority or majority — offers the best hope of a secular and socialist order. The critic can hear cynical laughter. But, even at 62, after having seen secularism and socialism rebuffed most of his life, he still believes that the day of Marxism with a human face will come. At the very least, there is no alternative to Marxism as the most genuine and effective instrument of political mobilisation of Indians.

Before that, Marxists (all Marxists — not merely the fringe ones) and Leftists will have to overcome two problems. One, of working in a capitalist state with a mighty police-mili-

tary machine. This critic is today free to voice his dissent — but only to a limited extent. His articles, along with others, have been cut during the Punjab emergency. All Leftist critics operate within an economic and social framework, a system of discourse which runs counter to what they are trying to say. This partly accounts for much of the tentativeness and incompleteness of the critic's own writing. But this is a struggle that must be waged even if it cannot be won. Second, Leftist critics must regain a warmth, a moral fervour over and above 'scientific objectivity'. When Arun Shourie refers to 'traditionalists' and 'reformers', he forgets that 'traditionalists' command not mere 'traditional' respect but 'moral' respect from the masses. It should be the ambition of Leftists to replace traditionalists as centres of moral power. This may take the form of grass roots activity, of taking a courageous stand on specific issues, of ensuring a high standard of personal morality. It's because we fight shy of using (and of acting on a belief in) words like 'courage', 'duty' and 'honour' that Leftists are in a state of disarray.

Finally, this critic is an observer of popular culture. The critic fell in love with popular cinema and drama in the '30s and '40s, while at the same time remaining in love with Proust, Joyce, Eliot, Pound *et al* in literature. This 'contradiction' (if any), too, is part of his perspective. But while the critic believes that there is a 'popular culture' in the sense of narration, signs and symbols which are immediately available to the masses, he also believes that this structure is being misused both by the 'private sector' and 'the government' to establish hegemony over and tranquilise the Indian



people. The critic noticed an interesting sequence in Girish Karnad's *Utsav*. The splendiferous Rekha takes off all her glittering jewellery and puts it in the little clay cart of Charudutt (her lover's) child. She also gives away her colourful clothes to his wife in exchange for the latter's humble garments. What does all this signify? Self abnegation? No. Wealth has only changed hands but lust for it has not been destroyed. The critic thought of that great scene in *Sant Tukaram* where the Sant catches his family looking foolish in the finery given by the king. In shame and embarrassment, the finery is returned.

Utsav is a fine film. But the critic found in the hedonism of this film an exact counterpart of Rajiv Gandhi's, 'Let's all have a ball' theory of consumerism. Far-fetched? Perhaps. But what, after all, is the job of a critic? "To provide resistance to theory, to open it up towards historical reality, towards society, towards human needs and interests, to point out those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside the interpretative area."

THE STRANGE LIFE AND STRANGER DEATH OF PRINCY BARODA

He was born 40 years ago into wealth and power. Born a gilded youth, he died a tarnished relic. **SUNIL SETHI** writes about the doomed life of a man 'trapped between galaxies'.

THE HOUSE was called Je t'aime, in the village of Haut-de-Cagnes outside Nice. And on a perfect Mediterranean morning in May, its aristocratic owner, Princy, lay sprawled on his pink bedsheets upstairs, with his throat slit. There were no signs of intruders or violence or struggle; nothing in the house had been touched or removed. A kitchen knife, two sharp cuts beneath his jawline and carefully-lit candles that had burnt out long ago — these were the symbols attendant upon the mysterious death last summer

of Princy Baroda, 40-year-old scion of one of the oldest, wealthiest, still-powerful princely families of India.

The Times recorded the event in a four-line agency flash, but French tabloids went to town clamouring about 'ritual suicide'. It was a sign of the changed times that the media should become inattentive and misinformed about the death of a young man whose family had dominated the social scene in Paris through the '50s and '60s, providing yards of enthralling copy. It was equally possible that

Sunil Sethi was formerly on the staff of India Today. This article originally appeared in the Tatler, July-August 1985.



Princy, miscast in the role he was forced to play, misplaced in the wrong corner of the world, in the end simply mislaid his own life.

FOR MOST of his life, Princy had been put on show to the Western world, a living image of the unreal world of Indian princes, long after that world had ceased to exist in India. Princy wasn't even his real name.

He was born Sayajirao Pratapsingh Gaekwad on March

13, 1945, two years before Independence, in the vast 8,135-square mile princely state of Baroda, one of the premier princely states, to which the British accorded a 21-gun salute on ceremonial occasions. His father was the reigning Maharajah Pratapsingh, a man of autocratic temper but otherwise weak, especially in affairs of the heart. Lunacy and a great liberal tradition were enjoined in Princy's paternal ancestry. One of his father's forbears was disposed to poisoning off rivals with ground diamonds in their drinks; when he attempted the trick on the British resident, he was deposed. After his abdication in 1881, Sayaji-

rao III, his successor, transformed the state into a wonder of progress and enlightened development.

When Princy's father, Pratapsingh, ascended the throne in 1939, he was already a much-married man with seven grown-up children. No doubt the Baroda lineage would have progressed peaceably had he not met, at a race meeting at the Bombay Turf Club in 1943, Sita Devi, a South Indian princess, married to a minor rajah in the heart of the South. Dusky, glamorous, capricious, her brittle charm and forthright style affected the Maharajah deeply. He fell in love, and she committed an act unheard of among Indian women of noble birth in the '40s: she divorced her husband to marry Baroda. Two years later, their only child, Princy, was born.

Having conquered Baroda and certified her favoured status by acquiring a grand portrait of herself seated on a monstrous gold throne, the new Maharani set out to conquer the glittering shores of Europe. The gaming tables of Monte Carlo were already littered with the remnants of India's princely fortunes. Royal Indian bucks, schooled at Eton and Harrow, were riding across English polo fields and pining for French actresses. Names like Cooch Behar, Jaipur and Gwalior were well-known on the season's social lists. As the Mountbattens were readying themselves to leave for India for the transfer of power, Sita Devi of

Everyone flocked to their parties where champagne sprang from golden urns, and the famous set of George III candelabra was always lit and women servants in silk saris slept outside the Maharani's bedroom.

Baroda landed in Paris to launch herself into the *haut monde*. Two-year-old Princy went everywhere with her: a long summer in Monte Carlo, weekends at the London flat, the winter at the Palace Hotel in St Moritz.

Swathed in brocade and bejewelled, he was sometimes wheeled out to be displayed to his mother's guests in her apartment overlooking the Parc Monceau. It must have been a tumultuous start in life for the little boy.

BACK HOME in India, during that blisteringly hot summer of 1947, the country was being savagely partitioned prior to Independence and the princely states were being forced to merge into geographical unions that would eventually make up the map of modern India. Pratapsingh of Baroda had earlier endorsed the plan. But when the moment came to actually merge Baroda state in May 1948, he refused; in fact, he wasn't there. Also found missing were large sums of money and priceless jewellery which had been transferred from the state treasury to Europe to meet the extravagances of Sita Devi. The hoard was fabu-

lous: there were pearl-studded carpets and huge ceremonial anklets of solid gold for processional elephants, several famous diamonds including one known as the Star of the South, a massive seven-strand necklace with each pearl the size of a pigeon's egg, and a mammoth diamond necklace which was said to have belonged to Napoleon Bonaparte.

The missing Baroda fortune became a political *cause célèbre*. Pratapsingh, now living permanently in Paris with his wife and Princy, was forced to abdicate and return some of the heirlooms to Baroda. Only six strands of the seven-strand pearl necklace were returned to India together with other valuables. But in Paris, it was commonly rumoured that it was not Pratapsingh but Sita Devi who held on to the Baroda cache.

If this was true, it was possibly this that led to an estrangement between husband and wife. Or perhaps it was Sita Devi's mounting expenses, her insatiable appetite for the good life and her reckless social style that finally terminated the marriage. They were legally separated in 1956; but the Maharajah never returned to India. His oldest son, Fatehsinghrao Gaekwad, had succeeded him in Baroda. Pratapsingh lived a lonely, quiet life in London till his death in the summer of 1968. In his later years he used to drive a Mini around London, and could often be seen drinking beer alone on Sunday afternoons in a pub behind St George's Hospital.

THERE WERE NO SUCH austerities for Sita Devi and Princy in Paris, happily ensconced in another lavish apartment in Neuilly. From the gilded sanctuary of his mother's green-and-gold drawing-room, the boy would step into the chauffeur-driven white Rolls and coast along the Bois du Boulogne in search of children to play with. Sometimes he brought them home, where they would be fed delicious South Indian curries and perfectly ripe mangoes by an army of servants in traditional uniform.

As a precocious teenager he became his mother's constant companion, her only living memory of the golden heyday in India. He was her plaything, her defence against the scandalous past. "Princy was brought up as an object," says Baron Pourbay, a Paris-based Belgian banker who had known both mother and son from the moment they hit the high life in Europe. "He wasn't prepared to face this century; he was trapped, poor boy, not between two worlds but between galaxies."

As a young man in the '50s, he squired his mother everywhere. He learnt some things fast: to be addressed as 'Your Highness' by her in public; to pose for portraits in Indian costume with a long turban mounted with emeralds and a brocade coat flashing ruby and diamond buttons; to command Roger, the *maitre d'hôtel* at Maxim's, perfectly. They made an odd, exotic couple in Parisian cafe society. Everyone flocked to their parties where champagne sprang from golden urns, and the famous set of George III candelabra was always lit and women servants in silk saris slept



Princy with Sita Devi: his mother's constant companion.

outside the Maharani's bedroom to be summoned any minute. Chilean millionaire Arturo Lopez, Woolworth heiress Barbara Hutton, Baron Alexis Rede, ex-Queen Soraya of Iran and Caprice and Andrea Badrutt, owners of the Palace Hotel in St Moritz, all adored and were, in turn, adored by Princy and his mother. "Arturo Lopez took her everywhere," recalls Jimmy Douglas, a well-known American socialite who still lives in Paris. "He called her his 'black pearl'." "She was very beautiful, of course, and well-known for her jewels," says Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, "but there were some of us who felt she wasn't quite genuine."

Indeed, there seemed something pushy and vulgar about her; the story of how she acquired the jewels was never quite forgotten. Jimmy Douglas once invited her to dinner and apparently infuriated her by not serving Dom Pérignon. "Next morning she rang to say she was curing her hangover with a bottle of Dom Pérignon, which I thought was quite a funny line."

P RINCY was doing fine: he had the charm, the open-faced, dark-haired good looks, social fluency and inherited wealth that the smart set counted upon in the early '60s. Everyone remembers him as sympathetic, intelligent, generous and lovable. And always ready for a night out on the town. As the decade began to turn itself inside out and grow raffish at the edges, its dangers appealed to Princy. He flung himself headlong into the new nightlife. "Castel's, Jimmy's, Régine's, Le Sept, Princy was there night after night. It was the only thing he could do well," says Patrice Calmettes, a French photographer who knew him well.

His love of dressing up never abated. Several times he was mugged on Paris streets for the family jewels he enjoyed flashing. He shed his brocade coats for equally flamboyant Western costume. Nicholas Armstrong, a businessman working for Sir Nicholas Sekers's textile company in Paris at the time, remembers running into Princy all the time, most notably in hot pants and a floor-length mink coat. Jimmy Douglas was startled when he invited Princy to lunch at Wilton's in London. "He arrived in a bright saffron silk jacket and parrot green pants. We got him in on the argument that it was his national costume. But he wouldn't stay. He said he had to rush to have his hair done to be photographed for the cover of *Queen* magazine." Already the royal parade was turning into a tacky charade, the razzle of the maharajahs degenerating into the fag end of drag.

His yearning to be a star made the sexual crossing from up-market exotica to downright Bohemian easier. The Dark Prince romped it as King of Camp, astride an elephant to the Alcazar discotheque to cut a record (it was called *Just For Fun*). "He dyed his hair in streaks of pink and green long before the punks came," says Douce François, Arturo Lopez's niece, who had known him since childhood. Princy came out of the closet when even the sexually confident French were behaving like coat hangers. As a young man he had nurtured a fantasy of running away to Corsica with an especially close girl-friend. But Corsica proved an illusion.

I NDIA, HOWEVER, proved to be the cruellest mirage. Since his arrival in Paris as a child, Princy had returned to India only once, when he accompanied his father's dead body for its cremation in Baroda in 1968. The intensity of the heat, the complexity of the ritual, the endless faces of a family he had never known, passed in a haze before his uncomprehending eyes. A few years later, in France, the images shimmered before his eyes, gradually growing into the ultimate fantasy fused with deep personal longing. In 1974, Princy prepared to return to India with the idea of marrying an Indian girl, a proposition that greatly appealed to his mother.

Operating long distance she had, in fact, set up a

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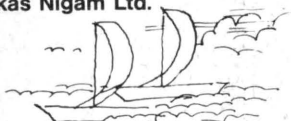
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LIVING

liaison between Princy and a distant relative of the royal family of Burdwan. As a companion, Princy took along his current French boy-friend. "He took up one of the best suites at the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay, recruited a whole bunch of little Indian boys dressed in silk who followed him around everywhere, and threw terrible tantrums when the hotel's coffee shop could not serve him champagne at three o'clock in the morning," remembers Usha Rathore, a granddaughter of the Maharajah of Burdwan and second cousin of the girl Princy was supposed to marry. Younger members of the Burdwan family were appalled that the engagement ceremony actually took place. "Princy seemed delighted at the thought of having an Indian wife," says Rathore, "and used to say that she would have to conform strictly to Indian standards in Paris. He would never have let her leave the house. I mean, it was bizarre, the whole situation. He thought it a complete gas."

Whether his fiancée, on discovering who she was expected to marry, called it off or whether Princy backed out, the engagement was broken. But he hung around Bombay for a while and travelled in India, French boy-friend in tow. Poorna Devi, a princess of Morvi, remembers meeting him at a Shipwreck party at Bombay's fashionable Malabar Hill. "He was very good-looking. He had beautiful hands. But he didn't look outlandish. I mean, it's difficult to look outlandish in Bombay after Paris and London."

P RINCY'S TRIP to India was no *tour de force*. After its failure, France seemed more depressing, especially when, soon afterwards, his mother suffered her first stroke. Ministering to her needs became more difficult for Princy as her social life deteriorated, and her sickness made her demanding, cantankerous, eager for his attention. There was also evidence of less money. Niloufer Crites, a beautiful Paris-based Persian aristocrat, remembers befriending them and visiting the ailing Sita Devi in 1978: "Obviously, the grand days were over. There were one or two servants around and I was impressed to notice that one of them was massaging the Maharani's feet. But later, when I went to India myself, I realised the scene was no different from visiting run-down royalty there."

Princy drifted through it, with few permanent friends or relationships, 'meeting only the lower class, hairdresser types', says Jimmy Douglas. Patrice Calmettes was invited to dinner when the 'old woman', as Princy called her, was in bed and was aghast to find that many of the other guests were transvestites. Princy, heavily made-up, was wearing a garment resembling a sari. The poppers and posh nightclubs and pep pills of the early '70s had given way to drugs, drag and outright dross.

In 1977, Princy bought the ten-roomed house in the South of France called *Je t'aime*. In an attempt to escape from his mother and be in the sun, he began to live there for longer spells.

There was little that interested him in the social life of



Pratapsingh with Sita Devi: well-known for their jewels.

Paris, and he preferred his own company. For a while he found work as a bartender at *Le Pigeonnier*, a gay nightclub in St Tropez. *Je t'aime* became his permanent residence. He only went up to Paris twice a year to visit his mother who suffered three further strokes. Recent financial troubles suggest that he may have had to sell *Je t'aime* to go and live in a flat in Monte Carlo.

Baron Pourbaix, Princy and his mother's close confidant, admits that Princy may have been a little depressed, though he disputes the suicide story. "Well," he says in his refined English accent, "naturally life can be a little depressing when you are 40. And you were once the son of a king, you have beautiful jewels, and you were fêted because you were young."

So far there is no evidence that Princy did not take his own life. His last futile gesture seems to have been lighting the candles and drawing the curtains at *Je t'aime* in the realisation that he was the doomed progeny of cross-cultural pollination, a feverish flash dancer whirling against the dervishes of time.

If East is East and West is West, is self-flagellation the best?

In the apartment in Neuilly, Sita Devi still lives on. She is paralysed, can speak only a little, move only a little. She has not been told yet of Princy's death. She can barely hear.

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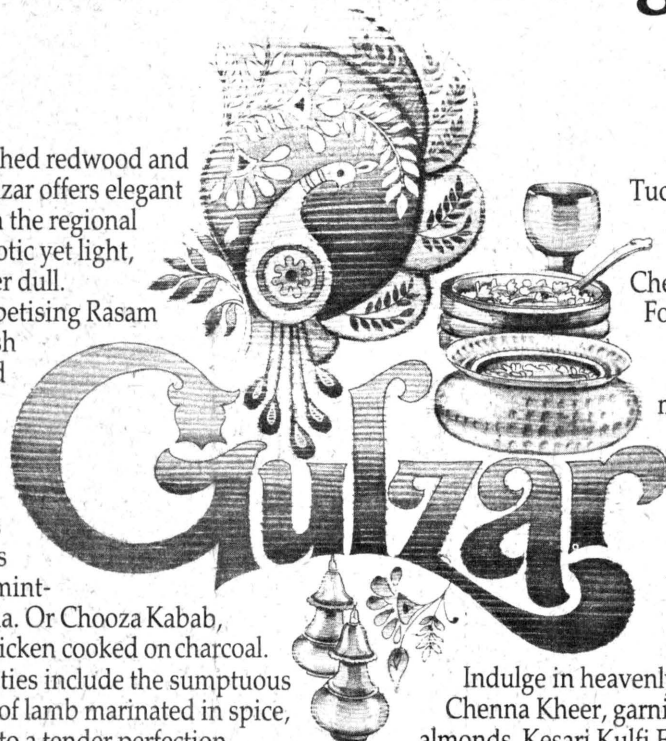
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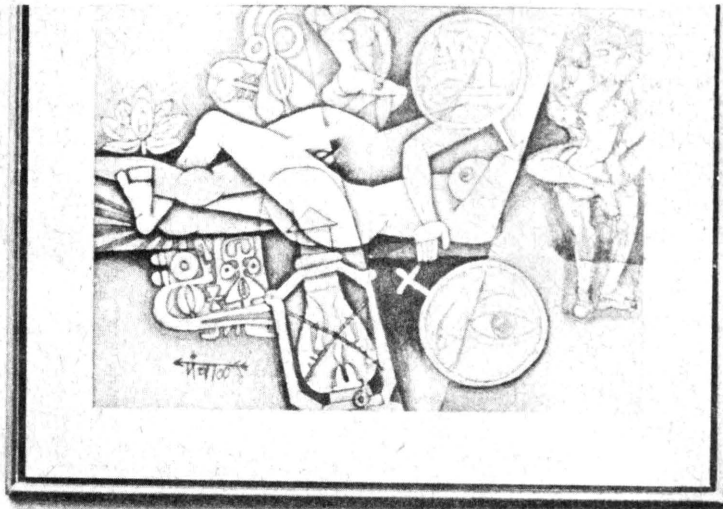
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INTERVIEW

This month, New Delhi hosts the World Congress of Sexuality, a prestigious international conference that will be attended by such well-known sexologists as Shere Hite. The man behind the conference is Dr Prakash Kothari, India's best-qualified sexologist.

In a field dominated by quacks and frauds, Kothari is one of the few men to have studied Indian sexual behaviour and examined the myths that abound about sex in India. In this exclusive interview, he talks about his work and his experiences.



NAILING THE MYTHS

BY MALA SAHNI

Imprint: *I'd like to start by telling you how different your office is from what I'd imagined it to be. I thought it would be dark, sleazy and, given the nature of your work, undercover. But it's bright, cheerful and full of these modern-looking gadgets. What are they?*

Dr Kothari: This is a video recorder, that's a projector. I've got over 6,000 slides. My *modus operandi* is a little different. I've modified the Masters and Johnson method to suit conditions here. Because, when I came here from abroad, after attending the M & J workshops, I was confronted with many problems. I have devised a new model where, on the first day, I take the patient's detailed history. Whatever I say, I tape-record. Of course, the client's permission is sought, and the permission itself is tape-recorded, so that you remain out of the law's clutches. After the client goes back, I replay the whole story. Depending



INTERVIEW

on what I decide, I discuss the line of treatment.

Is it true that you are one of India's few sexologists? I mean how do you describe yourself?

I'm a physician. Specialised in sexual medicine. I'm a consultant physician. I did my medical graduation. Then I did my PhD. And I'm perhaps the only person on earth to do my PhD on male orgasm. Then I was certified as a sex therapist by the American Association of Sex Educators, Counsellors and Therapists.

What kind of problems do patients bring to you?

Well, in males, the most common one in order of importance would be premature ejaculation. Early orgasmic response. The next would be erectile dysfunction — so-called impotence. And the next would be delayed orgasmic response. That is known as retarded ejaculation.

Could you give me a breakdown of how many men suffer from the first ailment — that is, premature ejaculation?

It is very difficult to do so. I'll tell you why. Because those who come to me sometimes have their problems combined. There are so many men who have an erection, but just prior to penetration, they discharge. They can be grouped under premature ejaculation as well as impotence. Because the definition of impotence means that a man has to penetrate. So far, whatever definitions have been given are not correct.

But why have I been given the impression that the biggest problem facing Indian males is impotence?

No, this is a myth. Propagated by some physicians.

What about women, what kind of problems do they bring to you?

Well, these are the physical problems that I'm narrating to you. Mainly, their problem would be lack of sexual desire. Second, would be orgasmic dysfunction. And third

would be vaginismus — the contraction of the outer one-third of the vaginal musculature while attempting the sex act itself, or by the anticipation of the sex act.

I suppose that's only faced by young brides.

Oh no, oh no, it could be primary as well as secondary. It could occur in those women who've had a normal sex life also.

And what about adolescents? They come to you, too?

You see, there are groups of patients. One thing that is very common in our country is anxiety. It may be situational or constitutional, whether the patient is young or old. The problem is psychological or organic — the common thing is anxiety. Far more than the Americans, for instance. Now the adolescents — they have misconceptions about semen, penis size, masturbation. This group can be helped in one session, or two.

Do people come to you with venereal diseases, as well?

Yes, they are referred to me after the venereal disease, if the patient develops a problem. I don't treat the disease, though. That's done by a dermatologist.

The next group comprises those patients whose insecurities run deep. After repeated failures, some people lose their self-esteem. They may become depressed. They may have severe anxiety. I mean symptoms of total depression, which might even spread to other psycho-pathological conditions. The next group of patients is where the sex therapy is contra-indicative. That is, if the patient's depressions are very deep. If their marital hostilities are malignant, if their defences are rigid, and if their paranoia is pervasive, they need more analytical or mental therapy, prior to implementing sex therapy.

The next group of patients is those with sex-related problems, that is, sex and heart disease, sex and liver disease, sex and venereal disease, sex and vasectomy, sex and epilepsy,

sex and drugs.

What is sex and heart disease?

Doctors usually say that after heart disease, people ask, "What should we do, Doc? Shall we go ahead with sex?" Doctors usually reply, "Well, you can go ahead, but you can do it within limits." There's no limit in sex. Moreover, most men and women have read that when a man or woman reaches a climax, the blood pressure doubles, the pulse rate doubles. And our Indian women are very helpful, very kind and considerate, so they say, "Baba, you do it with care." I mean, they say this in good faith, but it has got adverse effects on the patient himself. The man has desire, he has an erection but, just prior to penetration, he develops severe anxiety, and loses his erection. As a result, being disheartened, he will be less able to cope next time.

So, how would you treat a man like that?

I would treat him in two ways. Number one, I would take a detailed history, find out the focus of the anxiety. I would send him for a basic electrocardiogram, with a stress-test, take his readings while he is doing his exercise. If he can do that comfortably or, if this facility is not available, then if a man can walk for about half-an-hour without developing any chest pain or abnormal pulse rate, then he can safely indulge in sexual activity. Then I would tell him how many people have died during sexual intercourse: one in 200. That could have happened even otherwise, while the patient is going somewhere or while walking.

However, I would tell him that there are a few precautions he would need to take. Number one, he must have regular physical exercise. So, sexual intercourse may not be as unusual an event. Number two, he should avoid an elaborate meal or a bout of alcohol prior to the sex act, because the heart will have to work double. Number three, it would be advisable to indulge in sexual activity

in the morning, because he is less tired. Number four, he should initially perform in the female-above position, so he has to exert less. Number five, he should keep a nitro-glycerine tablet ready,

Do homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals come to you, too?
They do, they are referred to me.

If a gay man comes to you and says, "I want to become a heterosexual," is it possible to change him?
If at all there is a will, there is a way.

Have you had cases like that?
Not one, a number of them.

And they have led perfectly normal heterosexual lives after that?
Absolutely.

How would you change the man? Would you give him therapy, would you psycho-analyse him?
It takes about one-and-a-half years or so. The therapy involves lots of fantasy. I would simply ask him to masturbate, first with the male figure. Then, when he's about to reach orgasm, he brings a figure of a female.

A photograph?
In his mind, and you will agree with me that fantasies are more colourful than reality. Then, gradually, one steps ahead. And ultimately — this is known as switch-therapy — you just switch them at the time of orgasm. Then, gradually, you can work it more and more, with fantasies, and fix them up.

Is that all? You've changed* homosexuals to heterosexuals like that?
That's all. Nothing else. I've even found out whether their testosterone values are low or high, because Kolodny and others reported from USA that homosexuals have got low testosterone levels, but my readings did not coincide with that.

You mean, physically there is no

difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals?
No.

In your opinion, what turns a man into a homosexual? Is it nature or nurture?
Well, I would not like to put my finger on it. I thought initially that perhaps if the mother is too dominant and if the father is weak and detached, it could be like this...

That is the old theory?
That is the old theory. The next four

"I hope we get a God-given immunity. But if AIDS comes to India, I can't imagine the consequences."

cases were entirely different. I mean I couldn't put my finger on it.

So, is it safe to say that people are still groping in the dark?
Yes, no one has proper answers.

Have you treated any lesbians?
Two.

And with success?
Yes. But, as I mentioned earlier, there are two things which are very important. Number one is knowledge of sex and sexuality, and number two is that a physician needs to be comfortable with his own sexuality. Suppose I'm handling a patient who is guilty about masturbation, if I have got my own hang-ups about masturbation, how the hell am I going to treat them?

So, are you saying you're guilty about being a lesbian?

No, I'm not very comfortable with lesbians, or with homosexuals. Of course, at times I'm left with no alternative because there is no one else to handle them. Now, in such situations, I do take them. But by and large, I try to avoid it because, to be honest, every case that comes to me, does reflect on my personality.

Now that you mentioned it, I'd like to know, when people come to you with sex-related problems, does it reflect on or affect your own sex life?
No. I'll tell you why. Before taking



up this particular speciality I did my training with SAR, what is known as sexual attitude reassessment. Plus, there are other courses in which you decondition yourself.

But when you are showing these fantasies to people — or these erotic pictures — do you ever find yourself getting aroused or excited or involved?

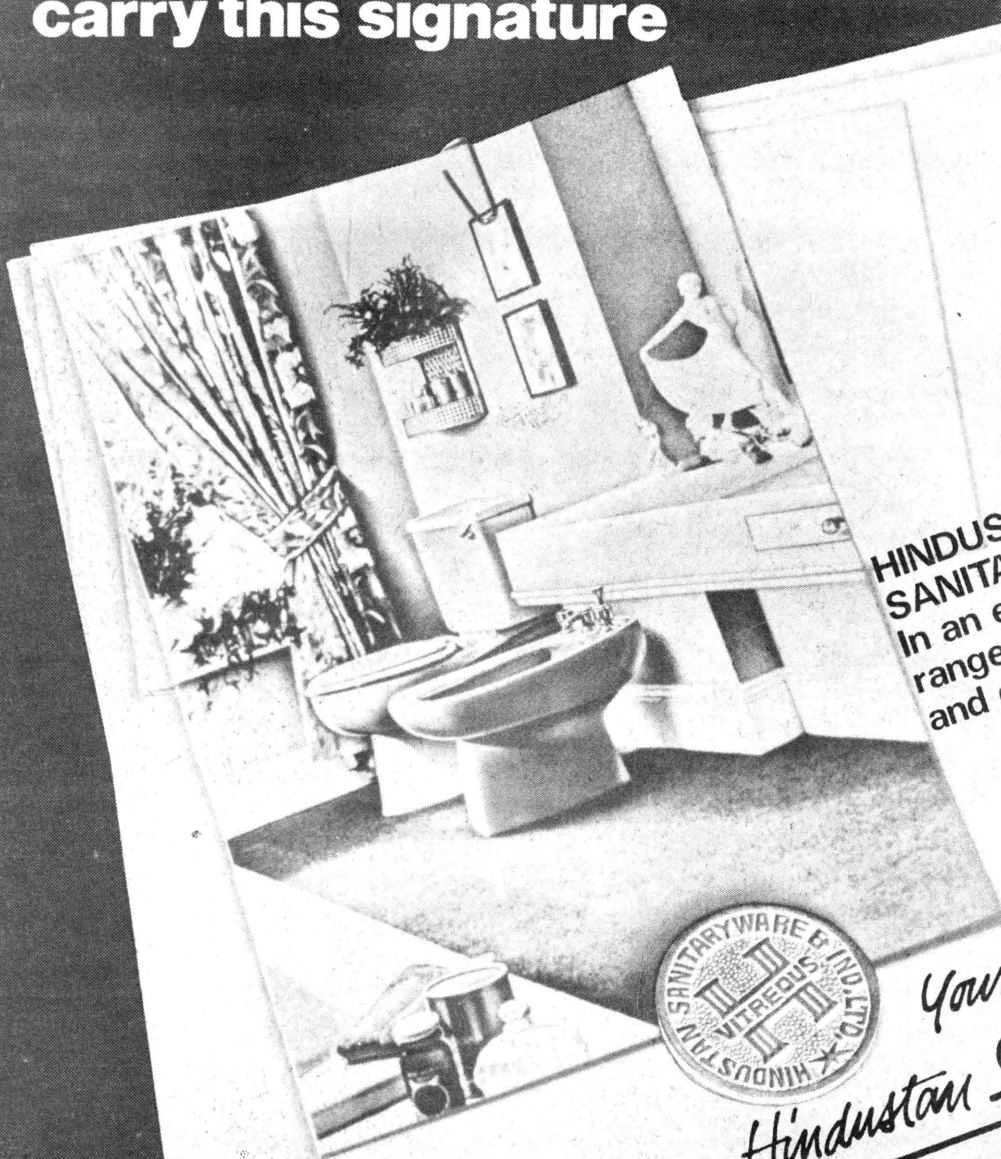
No. Because, as I mentioned to you, if you're deconditioned, those things don't come into play at all. I don't show them any films. I don't show any erotic pictures. I ask them to fantasise.

So, the video here is not to show people films?

No, no, no. I mainly show them some of my own films, like sexual myths unmasked.

Masters and Johnson used fantasy?

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INTERVIEW

Surrogate partners?

Once upon a time, not any more.

Could we talk about average Indian sexual practices? The first question: How many times a day does the normal Indian male have sex? Once, twice, thrice?

Well, one thing we must remember is that what is important is the quality of the relationship and not quantity. What is important is how you do it, and not how much you do. Sexual pleasure is not a performance to be gauged.

But haven't you taken an average?

Yes, I agree with you, I haven't yet. But then there are so many men who prefer masturbation to intercourse. Now, how can you then ask a question about frequency of sexual encounters — what does it cover?

Yes, but most people are brought up to believe that masturbation leads to madness or blindness or whatever.

These misconceptions are prevalent despite the fact that there is no basis in medical history. And this superstition is still encountered today.

Not on such a widespread level.

Absolutely widespread level. Even among the highly-educated ones. You ask ten doctors, "Is masturbation beneficial or harmful?" I'm sure they will not say that it's beneficial. But it is beneficial, because it trains the neurological system to respond; it prevents venereal diseases and unwanted pregnancy; also, if masturbation were suppressed, sexual crimes would increase.

If you say coitus and masturbation are comparable sensations, how would you place oral sex?

It depends upon the individual. There are some people who like it more.

How many Indian couples indulge in oral sex?

Well, oral sex is reasonably common.

Is it increasing?

Yes, it is. It is being accepted.

In what class — strata?

Slum-dwellers, the middle class?

No, oral sex is more common in the affluent, educated areas.

What about cunnilingus?

Fellatio is more common.

Cunnilingus is a little less common, because somehow, Indian men feel they are superior.

And does the Indian man prefer oral sex?

Yes, some do. They have no sex but oral sex. Yes.

Would you call that a deviation?

Oh no, that's a normal phenomenon. You will be surprised to know that oral sex was advised by Vatsayana 1,600 years ago.

Both fellatio and cunnilingus?

No, he advised a woman to indulge in oral sex, when a man is tired after union.

There are two myths that prevail in India, both contradictory: one is that the Indian man is sexually frightened of women, he's timid, impotent. The other is that he is a sadist, he is rough, treats his partner badly. Which one is true?

Both are myths. He's not frightened. Perhaps he's frightened of the sex act. Whether he'll be able to perform or not. He feels he's masturbated quite a lot. He doesn't know whether he'll be able to perform at all.

Is he sexually aggressive?

No. Perhaps he doesn't know how to arouse a partner.

Is it true that kissing is not a very common Indian practice? Do the lower classes kiss at all?

Oh yes. The only thing is that people are not aware about foreplay. Forget about foreplay. What is more important is afterplay.

Since Indians are so confused about

sex, how is it that we have such a population problem?

Because, to produce a child, you don't require intellect. You have to have desire, and an erection.

What percentage of Indian women masturbate?

I have no statistics, but certainly less than males.

What percentage of men masturbate?

I would say, most men masturbate. About 90 per cent. But these are approximate figures. But ask a person to define masturbation. There are some women who reach orgasm by fantasies.

You've seen a case like that?

Yes. This definition needs to be corrected. Masturbation is intentional self-stimulation, done by oneself, to oneself, and which may or may not be pursued to the point of orgasm. So, in this sense, most women masturbate.

What are the possibilities of AIDS coming to India?

If it comes to India, we've had it. And, in fact, we must take proper precautions.

Like what? What can we do?

Well, every traveller should be warned to be careful when abroad. When we haven't been able to control family planning, this would be impossible to control.

What are you doing in your capacity?

I've just been to Australia, as a keynote speaker and I've got some material from there. On the management of AIDS. Here, hardly anything is being done. That's very unfortunate.

But don't you think you could write to the government, or do something? Or, do you feel Indians have some God-given immunity to it?

I hope we get God-given immunity for our family planning problems. But if AIDS comes to India, I can't imagine the consequences! ♦



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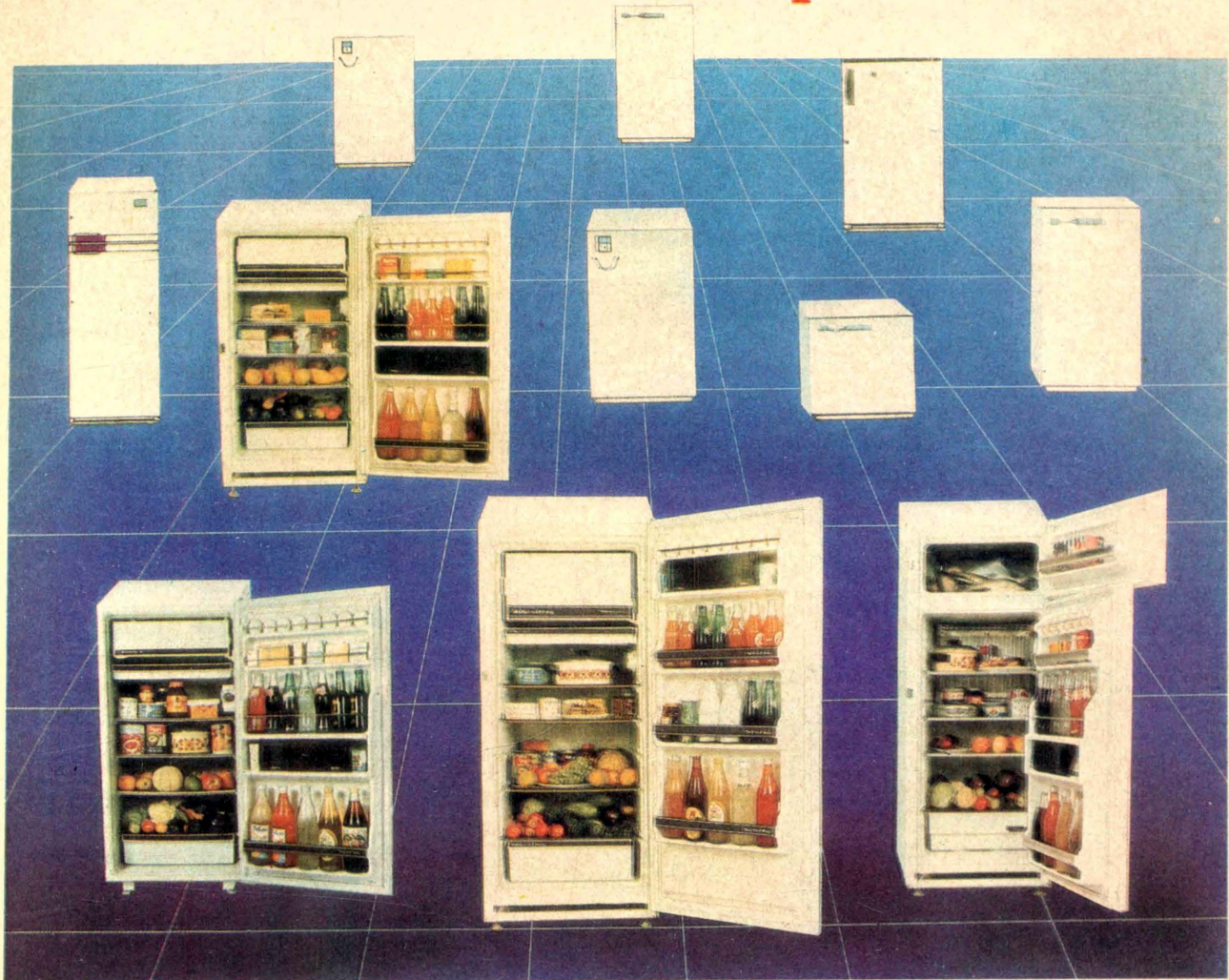
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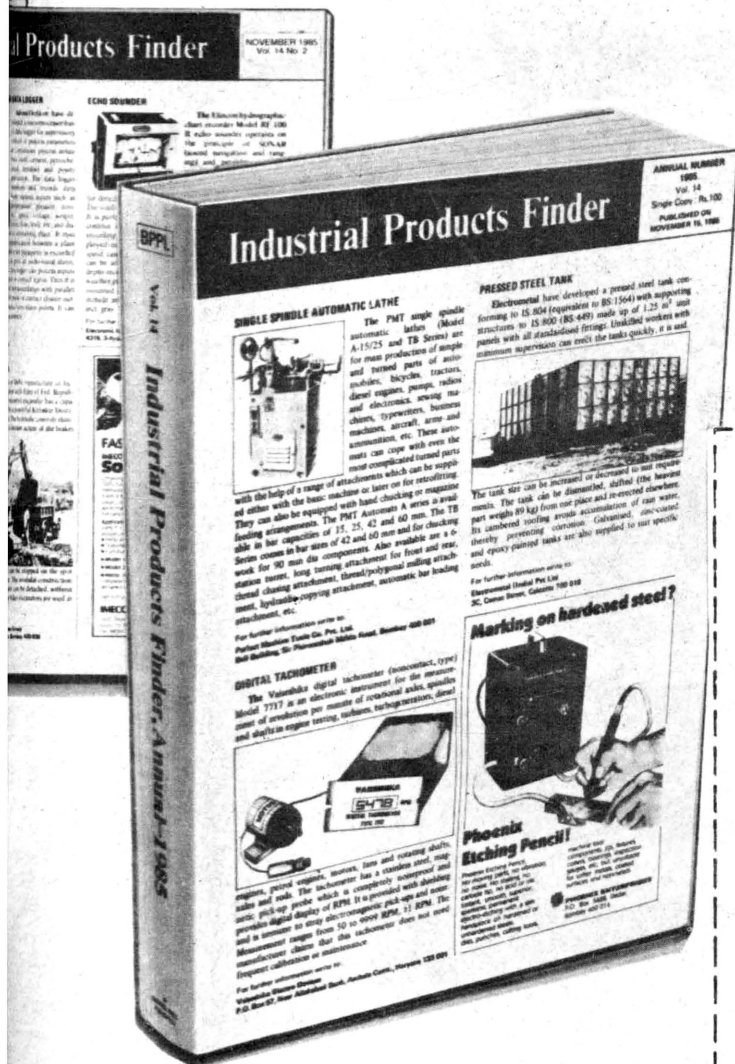
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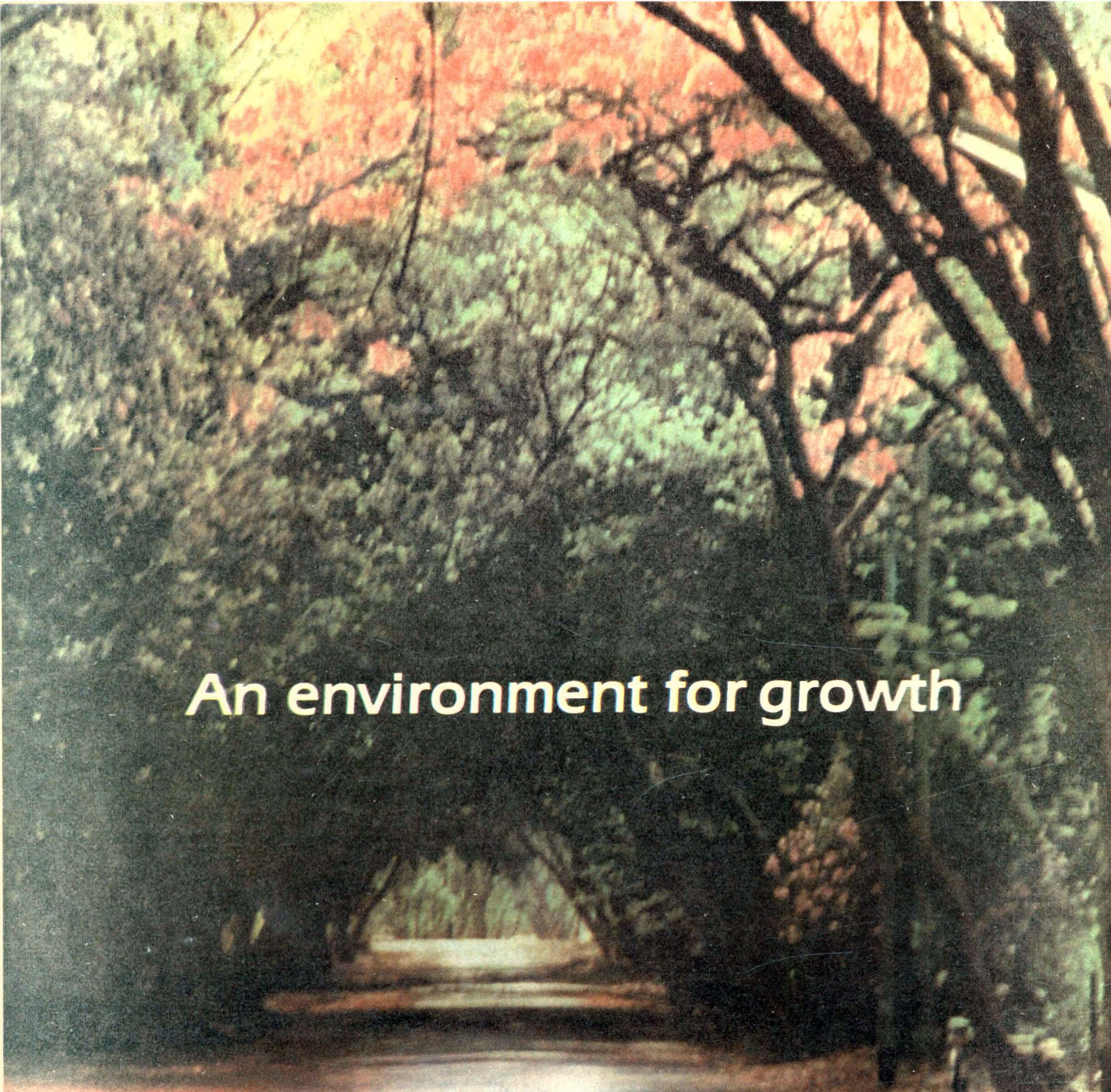
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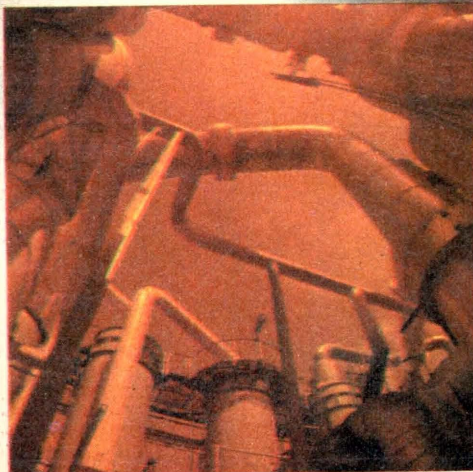
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KOREAN IMAGES

KETAKI SHETH's experiences of South Korea.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS on these pages are predominantly images of urban South Korea, taken in the capital city, Seoul, and the southern harbour town, Pusan. They offer urban glimpses of a country which, although highly industrialised, comprises vast areas of cultivated rural landscape and verdant pine and birch forests interspersed with craggy mountains. In fact, Korea derives its name from 'Koryo' meaning high and clear, symbolic of the country's rugged peaks.

The four pictures in this selection were all taken at public places and except for the photograph of the faces at the soccer match, are not in-

dicative of an event or specific happening. Like any other major metropolis, Seoul (population ten million), is typified by its congested high-rise appearance and its focus on art, commerce, politics and education. The city is also referred to as the 'Phoenix city' because, out of the ashes and rubble caused by four invading armies in 1953, emerged a modern metropolis in an amazingly short period of time. Now, more than 30 years later, the city bears few scars of the past and is caught up in the feverish activity of maintaining its image as the 'economic miracle of our times'. But the tension of war-torn



Korea is evident even in its contemporary face. Streets are still manned by soldiers; student demonstrations are still met with strict resistance, and the American presence is very obviously felt and seen. With the North Korean border just a few miles north of the capital city, South Korea continues to live in a state of perpetual vigilance.

But, despite the gun-toting soldiers that line the main boulevards of both cities, photographing on the streets is an extremely pleasant experience. There is undoubtedly the language problem; but the camera becomes a



sort of interpreter-mediator in such situations, dissolving the barrier between strangers. Koreans, themselves, love to photograph and be photographed, particularly besides national monuments, on temple premises and on family excursions. Unlike other cosmopolitan centres in the West, particularly those with the tempo of Seoul, in Korea the camera does not seem to be an invader. Here, hostility or resentment on the part of people is rare. Even photographing something as private and awkward as a woman preening herself in a beauty parlour can become as congenial as

conversing with a bunch of school-girls in a canteen. There is the initial shyness, then the curiosity, followed by peals of laughter. Once again, the camera penetrates the veneer, and the encounter becomes a memorable one.

So, also, with soldiers. Moving away from the photographer's angle of vision would be a natural reaction on the part of the soldiers. But caught during their leisure hours — at temple premises, beaches on Sunday afternoons or at bars and eating places reminiscent of Indian *dhabas* — they are friendly and unreserved. And stripped of their function of serving

the state, there is an uncanny innocence and awkward shyness on their faces close-up, reminding one that the uniform is simply their job.

The accompanying photographs have attempted to freeze moments of urban Korea, stripped of its nationalistic and working garb. A Korea that is far from the gadgets, the fashions, the high-tech and the miracle prescriptions for countries wanting to pursue similar goals. Perhaps, it is this showpiece Korea that even Koreans want to escape from when they savour those Sunday afternoons in the park. ♦



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The look says sleek

Clean, elegant lines. Polyurethane bumpers and steering wheel. Wraparound tail lights. A smooth paint finish. Ribbed upholstery.

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- Who on earth is Dr. Cesare Rossi?
- Why is the Magsaysay Award this year given to Murlidhar Devidas Amte?
- When was Anand Amritraj born?
- Where did H.T. Parekh receive his instruction in Banking and Finance?
- Which companies is Bhaskar Mitter a director of?

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WHO'S WHO IN INDIA

A-Design 85

Imprint, November 1985 : 111

PHOTOGRAPHY



*Images of urban South Korea:
a woman preens herself inside
a beauty parlour.*

*Families escaping to the beach
on a Sunday afternoon.*



REMEMBERING THE BOMB

I don't see why I should be
called upon
to notice the birthday of
the atom bomb?
Read about August '45 and
all that stuff
of Oppie and Teller and the
nuclear buffs
and watch the lighting ritual
on the telly
of 40 candles on the
A-bomb's belly?

ANNIVERSARIES have suddenly become very popular with American magazines. They almost substitute for memorial services. A blow by blow account of the facts, a review of the chronological timescape with a stop-watch, as it were, a little mournful rumination, and a sermon at the end, ensure collective catharsis. So Vietnam was remembered in April, a decade after the war. And now these tomes on the atomic bomb. I wonder if the gas chambers ever got their due and whether there were any 40th anniversary issues to recall the first train to Auschwitz or the first time Zyklon-B issued through gas vents? But, for the American media, August 6 and 9 were not just the anniversaries of two cities demolished and over 200,000 civilians killed. It was the 40th anniversary of American guilt.

This has been a year of muffled trumpets and funeral wreaths, of gatherings of survivors, a year of the mournful handshake and the sombre nod. After all, it is 40 years since the war ended. So we are confronted with a resurrection of ghosts. Earlier this year, at Bergen-Belsen, in northern Germany, and Buchenwald in East

Keki Daruwalla is India's foremost English language poet. This is a regular column.

**This has been a
year of muffled
trumpets and
funeral wreaths.
It is 40 years since
Hiroshima and
the American
magazines are
devoting pages
and pages to the
anniversary.**

Germany, there had been big commemorative services. On April 29, a thin crowd of 5,000 gathered at Dachau to recall the 40th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp there, and to place wreaths on a monument bearing the sign 'Never Again'.

Newsweek made out a brilliant 30-page report from the collective memoirs of six people. A scientist who played a part in building the bomb, another who loaded it aboard the B-29 bomber named *Enola Gay*, a navigator, and Japanese survivors of the blast, formed the team. We all know now that survivors are known as *hibakusha*, the bomb lepers. The reportage was meticulous. Kaz Tanaka, 18, looked up at the sky and waved at the bomber calling out "Hi, angel!" A second later, the blast occurred.

Mundane facts about what A was saying to B prior to 8.16 in the morning serve a purpose. A city brushes its teeth and rinses its mouth in the morning, has its breakfast and goes to office and factory and school, when suddenly WHAM! The city disappears. Against the backdrop of the disaster that is to come, the ordinariness of their chores gets back-lit with an eerie luminescence. Perhaps this

kind of journalism makes you realise that tomorrow, as you are digging into your rather crusty morning toast, a bomb may put an end to everything around you — just like that — without cause or warning or portents.

There were the bomb victims who found themselves in the middle of the inferno, the air itself almost on fire. "Motes of dust as big as grains of rice were dancing red and orange in a fierce white light." And then Misao, a 15-year-old girl, was lying buried 'in the matchwood beams and the rice paper windows of her home'. There are other details, of course, like a clock's hands freezing at 8.16 in the morning, Misao's sister being vaporised along with the others who were close to where the bomb fell. For she was at the heart of the *Pika-doun* — a word meaning flash-boom, specially coined after the blast. The sister had become one with the mushroom cloud. Other survivors "walked like somnambulists; arms thrust forward to keep their burns from brushing against their sides. Sheets of skin trailed from their fingertips. Their hair stood in spikes, held up by a mixture of sweat, dust and dried blood. Their features had been burnt away; their eyes had melted in their sockets and noses and mouths had been reduced to open holes. Women's backs were marked with intricate patterns, the flash had tattooed the designs from their kimonos onto their flesh."

Sizzling writing this, both sensitive and brutal, superbly researched, accurate to the last tattoo-mark. As fine a piece of journalism as one is likely to encounter anywhere. And yet ...

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fellow fell
at 8.15 or 9.15 or 12?

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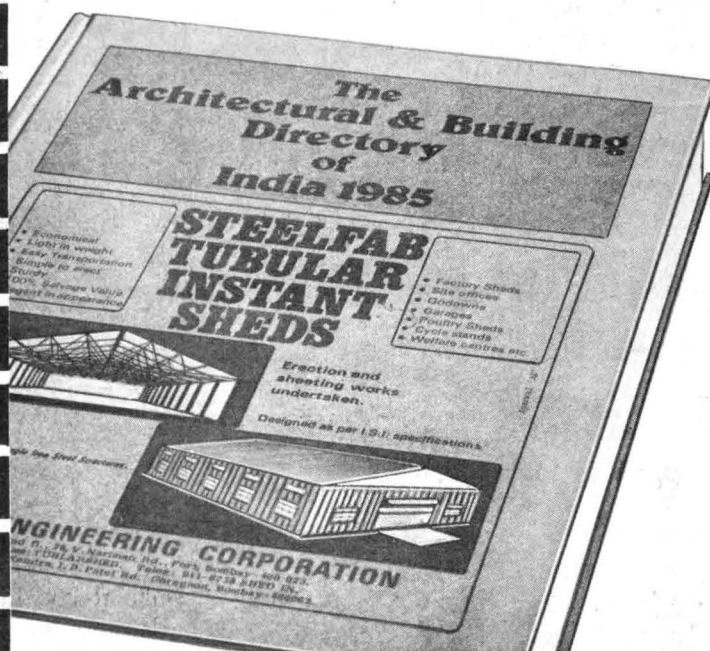
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If Kaz was watering
geraniums, or
lying in bed or standing at
the door?
Or whether a girl was
emptying a rubbish bin,
if that terrible fire-wind
was to take off with her
kimono and her skin?
Does it matter, the precise
landscape and scene
where exactly a cloud had
flecked the skies
when the heat made a jelly
of her eyes?
Whether a raven croaked or
a canary sang
When the atomic age was
born with a bang?

Sometimes you read *Time* with a sense of *déjà vu*. You've read it all already in *Newsweek*! The first section, *A Fire In The Sky*, is packed with detail like the *Newsweek* write-up, except that the photographs were very graphic. Both, incidentally, hardly mentioned Nagasaki. The city has lost out on publicity merely because it got bombed three days later. Never mind if the script was the same — what was written about Hiroshima was also written about this city. Then comes a section, *A Mythic World*, a saga of the atom from a peaceable study of the ultimate structure of matter to the fearful desolation of Hiroshima.

A historic interview with Nixon follows, and then an excellent section entitled *A Vision Of Ourselves* which tells us how literature and the arts have come to grips with the atomic age, from Auden's description of our times as 'The Age of Anxiety' to Alex Grey's painting *Nuclear Crucifixion*, which shows Christ hanging limp, cruciform against a mushroom cloud.

But ultimately, all American writing on the A-bomb moves towards one overwhelming question: Were Hiroshima and Nagasaki necessary?

The reasons advanced for dropping the bombs are: that Japan was going

**Had the Japanese
invented the
bomb first, they
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it. But the
Americans used
it, and they will
have to live with
that for a
hundred years to
come.**

to deploy two million soldiers and that even schoolgirls were being taught hand-to-hand fighting; that the Manhattan project had cost two billion dollars. (Surely you can't let that kind of money go down the drain! You have to use the product! Makes sound economic sense.) The third argument is nebulous and more involved. Since, in July 1945, at Potsdam, President Truman had secured a pledge from Stalin to enter the war against Japan, he used the bomb a few weeks later to pre-empt any further Russian gains in the Far East. Besides, politicians did not know about the fall-out and radiation effects of the bomb. To them it was no more morally repulsive than, say, the fire-bombing of Tokyo.

It is easy to judge others and cast the first stone. It is easier to be nasty, brutish and unfair to the Americans.

Since the days of the cannibals,
not a very far cry
from our own days— (how
time *does* fly!)
Victors light the fires and the
vanquished fry.
The sword overcame the
samurai.

You were winning, so you
drove it to the hilt.
Fine! Why then this national
fiesta of guilt,
with 25 pages in *Newsweek*
and 30 more in *Time*

As if you guys had committed
some crime!
And all this talk of innocence
and loss
after Hiroshima at Los Alamos.

Had the Japanese or the Germans invented the bomb first, they would never have hesitated in using it. But the Americans used it, and they will have to live with that. For a hundred years to come, they will have to fend off attacks from the outraged morality of future generations of Americans. Arguments that had there been no Pearl Harbour there would have been no Hiroshima, cannot cut any ice. In August 1945, the dimensions changed. One entered another league. Hiroshima or Nagasaki cannot be compared to Coventry or Dresden, which were turned to rubble by massive air raids during the war. A nice little homicidal sport war suddenly became a threat to all life on the planet!

Today, a Trident sub will carry as much destructive power as 25 World War IIs. National guilt has no place in a void. It must relate to the present. The preparations going on for the Star Wars make nonsense of such guilt. Not that other members of the nuclear club are angels either.

Yet, it is the reaction of people that restores faith. If, in Hiroshima, street cars stopped at 8.15 a.m., and 1,500 doves were released, and Mayor Takeshi Araki urged the superpowers to abolish nuclear weapons, the goal being 'No More Hiroshimas', the American public was not far behind. Hundreds of groups in the States held their own memorials for the bomb. The entire Pentagon was said to have been encircled by a ribbon of peace and 2,500 banners to boot. In about 370 American cities, artists were painting silhouettes on sidewalks, reminders of those victims who were vaporised by the blast. With this kind of public reaction, there is still hope. The planet can still be saved. ♦

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COMPUTERS



BY MICHAEL CRICHTON

ALL THAT JARGON

It's really not so difficult to figure out what bits, bytes, floppy disks and microchips are all about.

ALL THIS TALK of RAM and AROM, bits and bytes, single and double density, buffers and peripherals. . . It's enough to drive anyone away whimpering.

But cooks don't think twice about the extensive vocabulary of the kitchen. Sports fans wield a vast jargon; incredible specialised knowledge is needed to follow a football game. Everybody knows at least 50 terms for automobile anatomy. An ordinary home stereo has at least 40 specialised terms, most of them printed on the outside controls, but nobody's put off by stereos.

Of course, we've had years to assimilate all this. And we've forgotten that 30 years ago, when 'hi-fi' was new, most people were dismayed by the specialised new terminology.

Computer jargon is neither extensive nor forbidding. It's just new, and it takes time. After a few months, new computer users find themselves chattering away happily about RAM and ROM — and it actually means something to them!

Byte

A computer is just a bunch of on/off switches. How does it use these switches to store information such as words, letters, and numbers?

A computer requires many on/off switches — or bits — to identify one letter of the alphabet. But the computer must deal with more than just the alphabet. It must handle numbers from zero to nine, punctuation marks, and many other symbols. A computer

actually uses eight switches to store a single piece of information. With eight switches, a computer can handle any of 256 symbols.

Thus for a computer, the unit of information storage is a group of eight switches working together. These eight bits are called a byte. One letter of the alphabet stored in the computer takes one byte.

The capacity of the computer to hold information is measured in bytes. This measurement is usually in thousands of bytes, or kilobytes, represented by the letter 'K'. A computer with the memory to store 64,000 bytes is referred to as a 64K computer.

Floppy Disk

Floppy disks are the most common storage medium for small computers. Think of them as audio cassettes pressed flat, like records. They're roughly as durable as audio cassettes.

Experts warn you to treat floppies with care: they shouldn't be bent, exposed to extreme temperature, dust, liquids, or electromagnetic radiation. Mail or airport security checks may injure them. As a result, anxious beginners handle floppies as if they were made of glass.

Yet in practice, floppies tolerate substantial abuse. Even if you smear your greasy fingers on the centre hole, jam them into the disk drive, and dribble cigarette ash on them, they'll probably still work. You can mail them and take them on airplanes with no problem. They're not really so fragile.

However, like audio cassettes, *they fail without warning*. One minute

you're playing your favourite audio tape in your car; the next minute, you're untangling a snarl of brown ribbon. Floppy disks often show the same unpredictability. Therefore, you should always have a back-up copy of any important disk.

A friend of mine had six months of small-business accounts on one disk. The disk was lying next to the keyboard when he knocked his gin and tonic over on it one evening, soaking the disk. He had no back-up copy. Result: night after night retyping the data into the computer.

Every computer user has his own disaster story. The lesson is simple. Make a back-up copy of anything you care about. Keep your copies separate from the originals. It's not a bad idea to make two back-ups of important disks.

Disks come in single- or double-density varieties. This simply refers to how densely the data can be laid down on them.

Disks have an internal architecture that involves sectors and tracks. Forget about all that unless you plan serious programming. Your machine will *format* a new disk to its specific requirements automatically; you don't need to involve yourself in the details. Leave that to your machine and your disk.

The term 'diskette' is meaningless. The first mylar disks for computer storage were 14 inches in diameter, so when the eight-inch version was introduced, they were called diskettes. Then 5¼-inch disks were introduced, and *they* were called diskettes. Now Sony has come out with a new 3½-inch diskette. It seems time sim-

Michael Crichton is a bestselling novelist and film director. His novels include The Andromeda Strain and Congo.

Beginners are often confused about where information is stored: on the disk or in memory. Actually, information can be swapped back and forth between the disk and the memory.

ply to call everything a disk. Why use a longer word when a short one will do?

Finally, a most troublesome piece of computer jargon is the word 'boot'. The term has a historical rationale, but nowadays to boot a disk or a system usually means to insert the disk and turn the computer on.

Laser Disk

Laser disks were originally invented for recording photographic information, but they have enormous data-storage capacity as well. One laser disk the size of an LP record can store a billion words, which is more than the average person will read in his entire life.

Programmes have been written to enable computers to control laser disk recorders. Such combinations of computer and laser disk offer considerable potential. As I write this, arcade games are starting to use laser disks to provide photographic-quality images for the gamer as he swoops, bombs, and torpedoes his way through life.

But more serious applications of the laser disk lie further in the future. At the moment, there are problems with disk manufacture, and playback equipment is expensive. And the programming challenges presented by such enormous storage capacity are, to say the least, daunting.

Floppy Disk Drive

Think of a disk drive as a precise, high-speed tape deck. Like a tape deck in a hi-fi, it's mechanical, and therefore the component in a computer system most likely to fail. Intermittent disk drive trouble is an unavoidable part of modern computer life.

Because the computer itself usually works flawlessly, drive trouble is very noticeable. Beginners take it much too seriously when the computer squeaks and complains of an

I/O ERROR.

There's a skill to getting a cranky disk drive to load a programme — a mixture of patience and body English. You have to learn it.

Hard Disk Drive

Hard disk drives are closed boxes the size of ordinary drives. The disks are sealed inside. Because hard drives are sealed, they are untroubled by dust, grime, and the sloppiness of human operators. They are built with much closer tolerances between the drive head and the disk itself. This allows a hard drive to store an enormous amount of information, and to retrieve it rapidly.

Like any piece of precision mechanical equipment, hard drives are expensive — one may cost as much as the computer itself. Nevertheless, hard drives are increasingly common and soon will be standard on all but the smallest, cheapest computers.

Memory

We are not accustomed to dealing with machines with memories. The very idea of machine memory, and the associated jargon, gives beginners trouble.

To begin with, there are three kinds of memory.

Random Access Memory, or RAM, is memory that is available to the user. Think of RAM as lots of little cubbyholes in the computer, each capable of storing a single number or letter of the alphabet. Small computers have from 16K to 256K of RAM, meaning they have 16,000 to 256,000 cubbyholes.

RAM is temporary memory. You get to fill those cubbyholes up, but whatever you put into them will be stored only as long as the power is on. If the electricity goes, all the information in RAM goes, too.

Disks can hold information, too. A single side of a 5¼-inch floppy disk

will hold at least 140K — equivalent to about 70 typewritten pages. Thus, in most computer systems, the disk holds far more information than will fit into the computer memory at a single time.

The computer communicates with the disk; information can be swapped back and forth between the disk and the memory. Beginners are invariably confused about where information is in the system — is it on the disk, or in memory, or both? The distinction is important, because if the power is turned off, information on the disk is preserved but information in memory is lost.

A friend of mine spent all of one Saturday afternoon entering accounts for his small business. After three hours, the house lights flickered briefly — and he had to start all over. He didn't realise that simply entering data from the keyboard doesn't preserve it.

The trouble is that once entered, the data *looks* quite permanent. You can move through it, manipulate it, push it and pull it like taffy. It's difficult to accept that it's only temporarily there.

Most programmes allow you to save your data quickly on the disk at the press of a key, and keep right on going where you left off. Experienced users do this every 15 minutes or so. That way, if the power dies, you only lose the last 15 minutes of work.

It also gets you into the habit of frequently saving work. It's extremely common for someone to get lost in his work, do a satisfying few hours, pat himself on the back, and flick the machine off — only to realise he forgot to save his work at the end of the session.

Another friend powered up her machine and loaded in a couple of chapters of her new novel from the disk. She was just beginning to work when the power went off. The infor-

The design of the computer, its so-called architecture, is determined by the way the various microchips are linked together. Each chip has a different function: adding memory, providing languages or running the disk drive.

mation was gone. She spent the next hour tearing her hair out over the loss of her precious chapters. Finally, she sat down to rewrite it — and discovered that it was still on the disk. All that torn hair for nothing. The information was safe all along.

Thus a beginner must proceed carefully for a while, until he develops a 'feel' for where information is.

Two ideas seem to be troublesome:

First, although disk and memory can communicate, they're separate. You must instruct them to communicate. They don't do it automatically.

And second, when you load or save information on a disk, you're copying it, not transferring it. Beginners think that when the information is loaded from the disk to memory, it is somehow removed from the disk and placed in memory. It's not. The loaded information is still on the disk. Similarly, when you save information to the disk from memory, it is still retained in memory. You've just copied the memory onto the disk.

The interaction of memory and disk is like Xeroxing, not like mailing.

The second kind of 'machine memory' is ROM, or Read-Only Memory. ROM is memory that has been permanently filled: cubbyholes stuffed with letters and then sealed in the factory. It's confusing to call ROM a form of memory at all, since it's so different from RAM. You can't use ROM for your programmes, and losing electrical power will not destroy information in ROM.

Read-Only Memory exists only for the use of the machine. ROM contains internal administrative programmes such as languages and operating systems. Since ROM is for the machine only, I recommend that you forget about it. Only the rank novice announces proudly, "I've got 40K of ROM!"

The third kind of memory is buffer memory. It's a special variety of

RAM. Buffers exist between the main memory and the disk, and sometimes between the main memory and the printer or some other peripheral device. You can dump the contents of the main memory into the buffer, and then the printer will print out whatever is in the buffer, freeing you to continue working on new information in the main memory.

Most users end up wanting more Random Access Memory. The history of small computers has been characterised by increasing amounts of RAM. The earliest machines had only 4K; most machines are now sold with at least 16K, and many users feel unhappy without at least 64K. What's it all for?

In the first place, the machines rarely allow the user all the RAM. Besides their own ROM, computers frequently eat into RAM for such tasks as running the disk drives, handling additional languages, or connecting to peripheral equipment. A disk drive may consume 10K of RAM; a language interpreter another 10K. A page of graphics may require 8K, and animation 16K. At this rate, 64K of RAM disappears fast.

Furthermore, as users become accustomed to their machines, they begin to want simultaneous processing. When you start using a word processor, you find it's a wonderful time-saver. But after you've typed in your text, you must wait while the machine checks spelling. Then you must wait while it prints out your pages. You forget that the whole procedure is many times faster than you could ever do it before. All this waiting around for the machine gets on your nerves. You start to wonder why the machine can't simultaneously check spelling and print out while you keep typing.

Or if you're working with graphics, you wonder why you can't have more detailed images, in more colours, drawn faster. If you're programming,

you want more English-like languages.

Whatever the reason, you end up wanting more memory. And machines with 512K to 1,000K of RAM will soon be commonplace.

Microchip

If you remove the cover from any desk-top computer, you will see a green plastic board with lots of tiny black rectangles plugged into it. These black rectangles are microchips.

Each chip has a different function. The largest one is probably the microprocessor — the chip that does the actual computing work. Surrounding chips add memory, provide languages, run the disk drives, and so on. Microchips are identified by the code numbers stamped on them. Some chips are standard parts employed in many computers. Others are specially manufactured for a particular computer.

The design of the computer, its so-called architecture, is determined by the way the various microchips are linked together. You're looking at the architecture on a gross level.

Actually, the black rectangles are not the microchips themselves, but a plastic or ceramic covering. If you were to break open one of these coverings, you'd find inside a little silvery flake of silicon, a third of the size of the black rectangle. This is the actual chip. Dozens of fine wires run out from the chip to the prongs that plug the chip into the green board.

You'd need a powerful microscope to see that the silvery surface of the chip is etched in complex patterns. These patterns allow the chip to perform the function of thousands and thousands of electronic components.

Thus, when you remove the cover of a computer, you actually see the equivalent of an aerial view of a city — you can see the basic layout of streets and buildings, but the real level of everyday hustle and bustle occurs on far too small a scale to see. ♦

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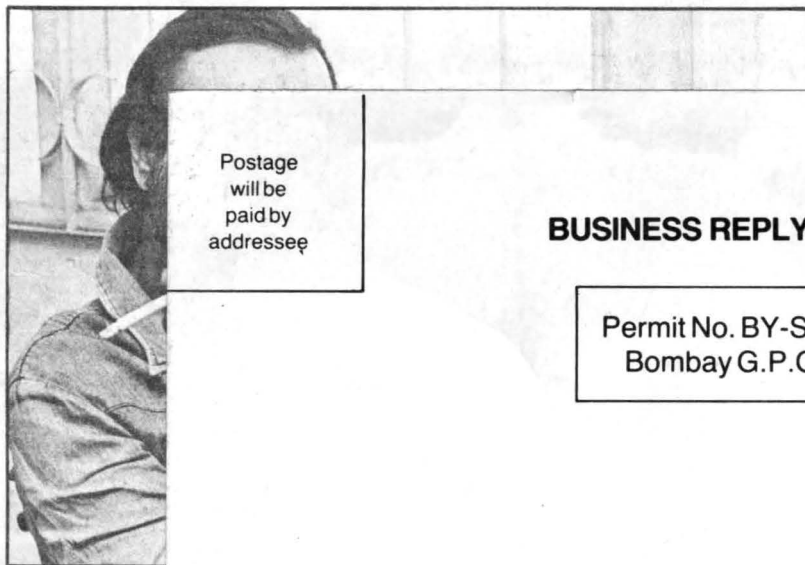


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