

FROM THE EDITOR

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS?

THE HERITAGE receives numerous congratulatory letters and numerous cautions.

One of the letters belonging to the latter category we have just received says: "Readers are generally not students and they care for magazines when in light mood, in their bed-rooms, or while travelling or taking rest. Frankly, my wife does not read the magazine because it does not have women's column... I took the magazine to our officers' library. They said, it is serious reading."

The letter means well. The reader says how sad he feels when he sees that some of his friends appreciate the magazine, but feel reluctant to spend money on it. They would rather buy magazines which are easy-reading and "interesting". He feels concerned about the future of THE HERITAGE.

We are not so much worried about the future of THE HERITAGE as much about the future of the educated people of India. We have said it earlier and we say again—that their reading habit has been sabotaged. What is "interesting" is a relative experience. What is interesting to the lower self in man is not interesting to a slightly higher self in him. The unfortunate thing is, the current range of popular publications have created the impression that all that is necessary is to feel titillated, amused for a while—to look upon magazines as mere items of mild stimulation like a cheroot or a peg of drink.

In the process the reader, unconsciously and rapidly, reduces himself to a lesser being than what he really is. He becomes addicted to the cheaper reading stuff. The higher regions of his self lie uncared for and they dry up. As a result the whole personality is affected. The person concerned hardly realises it.

THE HERITAGE does not mean to be a mere companion in travelling or in the bed-room (for all magazines need not be the same) although it can very well be that too, unless the destination of one's travel or one's bed-room is a very bad place.

But does THE HERITAGE make serious reading? It is surprising that some 'officers' should think so. Every issue of THE HERITAGE contains a bunch of fiction—short stories and often a novella. Then there are features like 'The Other Experience', 'Fables and Parables for Adults', etc. At least this part of the content, already a considerable part, should be found interesting! Even the features appearing under 'Nature', 'Roots', 'Little-Known India' and the highly helpful articles on popular psychology under 'Body and Mind' can hardly be termed serious. Yes, there are some reflective articles. But even on that front half of them are topical, not just philosophical.

In spite of this if some educated people found THE HERITAGE serious, it is a serious matter indeed. We are afraid, the vendors of spurious stuff have taken a heavy toll of the aesthetic taste and the sense of values of a big chunk of the socially and economically lucky lot of the country.

We do not see the aesthetic or intellectual needs of the women as different from those of men. We do not believe that they should be interested in a magazine only if it has a page or so on knitting, cooking, etc. This is insulting to them. They may learn these useful chores by all means, but for them to find a magazine uninteresting because of the absence of such items reveals a deplorable state of affairs.

We do not expect that our readers should read THE HERITAGE alone and no other magazine. But one's interest in THE HERITAGE is a sign of the fact that one is interested in one's whole self, not just in the superficial self. It is very easy for us to make a commercial magazine with sensational writing, diluting facts with gossip, interspersed with vulgar illustrations and to open sections that are useful in a utilitarian sense. But such a step will defeat the very cause of THE HERITAGE. This

magazine was launched as a protest against the modern myth that no magazine sells unless it is blessed by politics and cinema. Life's interests are not that limited. To revive the habit of healthy and intelligent reading is its mission. If it fails, you and we know for whom" the bell tolls!

Let us not forget the need for good literature for today and for tomorrow. Let us contribute to keeping alive a good magazine.

We have not lost heart; we ask our well-wishers not to lose heart.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

SO MANY FACES

If there is mismanagement in food distribution and some people protest against it by refraining from taking food altogether, that is to say, going on a hunger strike, it is nothing funny. But if some people choose to protest against the situation by over-eating, it is funny.

If there is some problem regarding the Government policy towards the alcoholic beverages and some people protest against it by refraining from taking the beverage, it is nothing funny. But if some gentlemen protest against such a situation by threatening to go to drunk, it will not only be funny, but comical. And if some people threaten to demonstrate their drunkenness before the nation's guests, you will agree that it is farcical a farce that can only occur in the imagination-of a humorist.

Indeed, the reality is fast catching up with the wildest imagination of any creative humorist. On the eve of the SAARC at Bangalore, some gentlemen convened a Press Conference and threatened to appear drunk before the foreign heads of state unless drinks were made cheaper for them.

A big event always reveals many sides of our character. I happened to be at Bangalore thrice recently, once about a month before the SAARC and again before a week and for a third time just two or three days before the event. As I drove from the Airport with a friend on the first occasion, I found him all agog with ideas and schemes to beautify the city, for he was one of those entrusted with the task. As the Dy. Conservator of Forests, he was in charge of the project, Greening of Bangalore, and now he was keen to install lush plants all along the roads. He drove slowly and would have liked to identify almost every plant that had come up — if I had patience enough. He was in love with his work and proud of it. He praised the Karnataka Government, and the Central Government (ruled by different parties) and the City Corporation for their co-operation with his own department and the readiness of his own superiors to do everything to beautify the city.

I prayed to Lord that either India should have many such officers who do not find fault with others at the earliest opportunity and are happy with their work or we should have one after another important occasions when the best qualities of our people come to the fore.

Then there was a loud shriek from a veteran politician who, I thought, was tired and retired long ago. "Those guests who are coming are heads of poor States. Why to spend so much for them?"

Surely, we need not spend much on show, but the veteran's logic amazed me. I hope, he does not apply different yardsticks in his own conduct towards his wealthy relatives and poor relatives.

On my second visit I saw the airport crowded with security men. And the city too. Most of them had nothing to do but stand and stare. What a massive waste of man power! For the uncertainty created by a handful of terrorists, the nation has to pay.

But that is a different matter. On my third visit, I drove from Mysore straight to an office just opposite the Vidhan Soudha. So many people had told me that the city was spruced up, every department was alert, everything was tense and at least temporarily efficient.

It was urgently necessary for me to ring up a friend in the city. I went to the public Call Office at the Post Office close to the High Court. "Sorry, the telephone is out of order for the last two days. You may try the other public telephone in the central hall of the High Court building." I ran there. "Try

the telephone at the Post Office, " said an official there. "But the Post Office telephone is out of order for two days!" I said in exasperation.

He looked at me philosophically. "This one is out of order for two months. Instead of repairing, they have locked the cabin."

This was within yards of the SAARC. We are a large nation and a strange one. We have many faces.