

FROM THE EDITOR

THE FUTURE

"The Future is something which everyone reaches at the rate of sixty minutes an hour, whatever he does, whatever he is," wrote C.S. Lewis, the celebrated English critic. Apparently innocent and humorous, the statement was depressing. It was cynical of all figurative use of the term future, of all the hopes for the fulfilment of man's dreams for a sensible tomorrow, be it the 21st century or a century thereafter.

Today we have reached a stage when we can doubt if man will reach a future even at the rate of sixty minutes an hour. There may not be man to reach anywhere.

The nuclear bomb may become the immediate cause to finish off man, but it cannot be the cause. The cause is man himself—at least the so-called elite among men. The consciousness which goes on adulterating food inflicting diseases on thousands, the consciousness which harasses others through corruption, black marketing or hoarding, mistaking profit for prosperity and satisfaction of greed for happiness, the consciousness which exploits the people by titillating them with sex and violence and the consciousness which submits itself first willy-nilly and then quite willingly to this kind of exploitation, the consciousness which promotes pollution and destroys Nature, the consciousness that learns to develop a sinister apathy with which to bear the conduct of terrorists who kill innocent people and then flee for their own dear life, is also the consciousness which makes the nuclear bomb and, in a bid to lighten its own burden of guilt encourages a country of half-fed multitudes (like Pakistan for a concrete example) to make the bomb and obliges its neighbour, also a country of half-fed multitudes, to wonder if it too should not make one.

It appears that the Evolutionary Nisus is fed up with man. It is eager to finish man off through the action of a select few politicians and scientists. Otherwise instead of hitching their wagons to stars, these people would not hitch their wagons to star wars.

As we had once said earlier, it is only mankind superior in culture, thought and conduct that can subdue the tyranny of the wicked and the ignorant in politics, science, trade and culture, and justify the great course of evolution and march into a worthy future.

We have to be more conscious of frontiers between culture and anarchy, we have to remember that anything that is put to tune is not music, anything that is written down is not literature, anything that is screened or staged is not art. We have to resist the advent of anti-culture by a determined exercise of our will to live meaningfully and with dignity. The mediocre few holding the bombs are possessed by a kind of blind spirits. They can be dispossessed only by an enlightened humanity.

We present in this issue reflections of five persons distinguished in their fields on the future of man. After an interval, we propose to focus on the topic even more elaborately and from more angles.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

SLUMP OF THE CENTURY!

Are you aware of the latest great event in the realm of the stars? Is it the German astronomer Dr. Kurt Birkle detecting a 'Super Nova' type that can emit light up to a hundred million times the intensity of the Sun? Is it the intrusion of a 'foreign' planet in our solar system that is instigating Neptune and Uranus to slightly deviate from their regular course?

No, it is thousands of stars being christened by a Canadian "Professor of Astronomy". One who pays him a moderate sum of thirty dollars gets a star named after him or her. On receipt of the amount, the professor sends the customer a map of the sky showing the situation of the remote star that now bears the customer's name!

The professor, of course, has made it clear in his advertisement seeking star-buyers that the transaction has no legal validity. But the caution did not deter the seekers of starhood to rush to him. He had already obliged thousands of them and has enhanced the fee to thirtyfive dollars.

In olden days it required much more than thirty or thirtyfive dollars to earn the starhood. We have the Saptarshi group of stars—representing seven great sages who had to their credit aeons of askesis. Then there is Dhruva—the Pole Star. He was originally a prince who, insulted by his step-mother in front of his cypher father, left for the forest and meditated on God. Don't believe that a few years of meditation alone earned him the starhood. One day, while he was walking with a sage, feeling a little proud of his spiritual realisations, the sage pointed out a grassy mound to him at a dense nook of the forest and asked him if he knew what it contained. Upon Dhruva replying in the negative, the sage informed him that the mound consisted of the skeletons of Dhruva himself—for umpteen times in his previous incarnations, he sat there in trance and left his body there.

How easy the Canadian professor has made the job that took Dhruva numerous incarnations to achieve! While the value of all the commodities has sky-rocketed between yesterday and today, the value of stars has made an earthward dive. Undoubtedly the slump of the century.

Otto Rank, the psychologist, speaks of four ways through which man tries to satisfy his urge for immortality. They are developing faith in the continuity of the soul, leaving offspring to continue one's line, aligning oneself with some 'chosen' group that could lay claim to some sort of eternal truth, or by dedicating oneself to some creative or scientific pursuit and believing that the result of such labours will survive one.

Otto Rank, of course, does not dismiss the possibility of some cosmic truth lying behind man's adamant attraction for immortality. He is concerned only with the psychological manifestations of the urge. But mystics would say that the human consciousness being truly immortal, the external symptoms of this secret awareness of immortality could be not four but myriad.

Exporting one's name to the safety of the star is, obviously yet another symptom to be added to the list. This, however, is a promising proposition and, we hope, an international convention to take the business out of the Canadian professor's hands and to parcel out space for each country (with an extra portion reserved for the permanent members of the UN Security Council) is not far.

The problem is, the supply of known stars may fall short of the demand, for as the tension and insecurity on the earth increases, demand for stars would increase too. More and more affluent people would like to make the stars their alter ego—shining bright and undisturbed forever while the earth civilisations get washed away in the nuclear drain. Like old coffins being dislodged making room for the dead, the stars might be made to shed their old names in order to wear brand new ones.

The alternative solution is to determine the longevity of the stars and price them accordingly. I know at least one aged wealthy lady who refused to be tricked into buying a car because she knows—a knowledge which she shares with a privileged few—that the world's petrol stock was not going to last long. The same law of psychology will work to deter some customers from going for certain stars which were likely to be extinct in a few million billion years.

Man has already been using the stars for long. Some of the Christian saints are known by the style of stars that adorn them. The star was the insignia of every order of Knighthood. In 1861 Queen Victoria instituted the "Most Excellent Order of the Star of India" to please the royal native rulers. We also honour the celestial bodies by calling our film artistes stars. Astronomical stars influencing our

destiny may be a myth, but the Hollywood, Madras, or Bombay stars influencing many a destiny is an undeniable reality.

What a pity that the twinkle twinkle little stars know nothing of their worth!