

FROM THE EDITOR

BROAD IS THE WAY TO HELL

Some enterprising theatre-owners offered an alternative to the International Film Festival in Delhi. They organised an erotic film festival and boldly trumpeted its run. Newspapers paid them tribute by publicising their 'bold' hoardings.

"What is wrong with erotic cinema? Wasn't there erotic literature in plenty?" ask some people. In all ages there were people who preferred such stuff and there are people belonging to this category today and such people will be also there tomorrow. Why not let them go to hell if they wish to? they say.

There is a difference. Books, however vulgar, are read individually. A film is witnessed collectively. A public exhibition of vulgarity has its impact on the society. It damages seriousness and sanctity in human relationship. It has been observed that once two persons have shared and enjoyed an obscene joke, their relationship immediately passes on to a different plane. Father and son openly sharing a magazine containing vulgar materials are no longer in the same delicate or dignified plane of relationship.

People enjoying low stuff together, publicly, lose respect for one another. These are psychological laws which cannot be altered by elegant legends or mouthful words like "new trends".

Added to this are the other implications: one low fancy leading to other similar things. We cannot afford to forget that vulgarity and violence are two sides of the same coin. And, needless to say, there is nothing modern or progressive about it unless we call the drug-culture modern or progressive because it came from the West.

And the West is tired of them; it is looking up to India or elsewhere for alternative values.

Mischief in culture is done step by step. That the erotic film festival went unchallenged by public opinion, is a sad sign. The proverbial camel has thrust its head into the tent; it will gradually bring the whole of itself in and kick the host out of the tent. The ministers, the city-fathers, the police cannot do much about it; only the public can if they care to.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

A WOULD-BE OTHELLO AND AN IAGO WITH A DIFFERENCE!

Whenever I hear—and I hear frequently—that the kids today are growing intelligent incredibly fast, I am reminded of William Alingham's famous question: "Where do all the loving children go to?/Are the stupid people all they grow to?"

Are the kids today truly more intelligent than we were in our grand young days? As it is, like the physical development, the speed of psychological development is more perceptible in a child than in a grown-up man. The modern child develops faster for the simple reason that he is exposed to revolutionary developments in science and technology undreamt of by any past generation of children. (Who knows if a far greater factor was not in operation? Like a dying lamp giving out a brighter flicker, the human mind on the brink of bankruptcy might be snowing the signs of a dazzling upheaval!)

I am sorry, but I feel hardly impressed by these young smarties talking like the live versions of pocket-edition science encyclopaedias and looking as elegant. But some of them are more than that. They are endowed with a commendable knack for creative mischief and that is quite fascinating. Let me share with you an instance that is not very old and till now considered private, before it migrates into the pages of joke books.

Lily (names are fictitious) was and is a charming young lady. Many a sigh of disappointment was heaved when she chose Pravin for her husband.

Pravin, of course, is a handsome and budding young entrepreneur. The match was hailed ideal, but Pravin, I suspect, did not find it easy to forget the fact that Lily had once several suitors some of whom were by no means inferior to him. Probably he was a bit unsure whether Lily had dedicated her whole heart to him or had kept a nook of it for Kumar and a corner for Jay—particularly for Jay who was as close to Lily's family as a family doctor. He was their family doctor!

Lily felt lonely in their new posh flat. Hence they brought Pravin's five-year niece Sweety to live with them. She looked like a bouquet of flowers and chirped like a covey of birds and frolicked as uncontrollably as a full dozen squirrels.

To cut short the story—Pravin was returning home, tired after an overnight flight, when he ran into Sweety. The little nymph, emerging from the lift, was heading towards her school bus.

She stopped for a hug from Pravin and instantly whispered an earthquake into his heart: "Hi, Uncle, last evening auntie spoke to Jay while she was in her panties and bra!"

The bus honked and Sweety ran away.

Pravin missed his floor twice, first letting the lift reach the top and then the basement. Finally when he found his way to his flat, he was no better than a damp sand-bag.

"Anything wrong?"

Pravin parried Lily's question, but his emotions were showing like the punched cheeks of a vanquished wrestler. Under some pretext he kept out of his home the whole day all the while experiencing the combustible nature of the human heart. He parked his car before Sweety's nursery wall before the bus could collect her.

"Hi, Uncle," cooed Sweety settling down beside him. "Do you know what happened yesterday? Auntie had just disrobed in the bathroom when the telephone rang. She was expecting your call. She dashed out and took the phone—with almost nothing on, you know! But it was Jay on the other side. Auntie looked so funny!"

Pravin felt like taking it out on the infant terrible for his day's anguish, but he also felt grateful. Sweety could very well have left the second part of the episode unsaid!

I agree with Pravin that the girl has a rare sense of drama if she had suspended the denouement consciously, but I don't agree with his observation that she is a phenomenon special to the modern times. She has her rival in the Katha-Sarit-Sagara. A little boy, maltreated by his step-mother, mutters in the hearing of his father, "I've two fathers; when one comes, the other goes!" The father is intrigued and the scared step-mother behaves very kindly towards the boy. The boy is pleased. Next day, as the father is entering the house, the boy mutters, pointing at a mirror that reflects the man, "I've two fathers. When one comes in, the other looks like going out!" The father feels relieved!

However, we have no reason to feel flattered with the phenomenal intelligence of our children. Intelligence by itself is a quality, but not a virtue. It ensures neither goodness nor happiness.

Besides, the formidable tradition of false values built up by the older generations will soon corrupt this promising trait in the vulnerable young. It seems the latter has no future unless it can totally break away from the dammed former. But can it? How?