

FROM THE EDITOR

THE OTHER CULPRIT

"The vicious effect of films picturing violence in detail on impressionable minds has been the subject of serious concern for some time now, but unfortunately no effective step has been taken so far to curb the growing tendency of a section of film industry to cash in on human weakness... When this upsets a young man, already vulnerably disturbed, the society cannot be completely absolved from sharing the responsibility of the resulting tragedy," says a recent judgment (13 May 1988) of the Supreme Court on a case of double murder committed partly under the influence of a film as the investigation established.

The part of the judgment which pronounces the accused guilty and awards him life-imprisonment, will be Executed by the proper authorities. But who will punish the society, the institution responsible for allowing the criminal propensity in the unfortunate accused to be stimulated?

Thus, the other culprit, the society, will go scot free.

At a higher plane of realities, it is a fact that neither an individual nor an institution can escape the consequences of Karma. The society *is* being punished. The vulgar film hoardings flanking the roads through which we have to pass, the air of impertinence that invades offices and houses which you have to suffer, are punishments for our tolerating, if not supporting, the anarchial trends in films and journalism set by the vested-interest. Anybody who knows that a certain art or a medium of communication is being exploited with the sole motive of making money for the entrepreneurs, and yet co-operates with it, is responsible for this state of affairs. In case of a film, beginning with the director to the newspaper which prints its advertisement, the reviewer who writes in such a way that ostensibly critical of the vulgarity and the violence, he in fact invites the reader to relish the content instead of ignoring the film, are promoters of the criminal trend. It is a fine way of escape to say that the trends we are witnessing in India are in tune with a worldwide development. By 'worldwide' we of course mean the West. We forget or ignore two things while giving out these excuses: (1) The Western world claims to be neither happier nor wiser by its surrender to these trends. (2) In India we had a cultural base so strong and so comprehensive that it could provide infinite scope for experiments and entertainments without our allowing some merchants to "cash in on human weakness".

A social alertness is the only answer. An unceasing crusade by those who understand the implications of this significant judgment by the Supreme Court can certainly help. Let us not ignore the fact that though the Supreme Court cannot punish us, it pronounces us guilty.

For a long time we were resigned to inertia; now we have become active—violently active. Action is better than inertia, true, but it is difficult to say if blind action or action by the blind is better than the state of blindness proper. Inertia seems to have left our hands and-legs, but not our eyes.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

WHEN DID YOU LAUGH LAST?

Maybe you laughed yesterday, or maybe even an hour ago. That is fine. But what inspired the laughter? If it is humour, not malice, you are noble and lucky, for we have more and more malice, less and less humour.

The day *Shankar's Weekly* closed down was a sad day for the intelligentsia of India. It was a unique magazine. I wonder if there has been any magazine in the world with so much of politics through cartoons and so little rancour. (THE HERITAGE is reproducing cartoons from it partly because of nostalgia and partly because of their relevance.) It is true that Shankar's interest went over to children, to organising dolls museum contests and publications for them. But that could not have been the reason for the closure of Shankar's Weekly. The intelligentsia of India were growing solemn. They failed to appreciate humour. And the politicians were so self-conscious that they saw an ogre where there was only their shadow.

Humour bowed out, leaving the field to impolite satire, to be followed by slanders. It was a vicious circle. The slandered developed a thicker skin, the slanderer kept on sharpening his lance.

The casualty was the decent art of humour. It is still there, but gasping for breath.

Capacity for healthy laughter includes one's capacity to laugh at oneself. Nothing is a greater antidote to one's ego than this capacity; and it is worth remembering that nothing causes greater misery than one's pompous ego.

Cartoons published in newspapers are generally topical. Hence they are a sort of record of events and changes over a period of time. The cartoonist's difference from the other reporters is, he promises to make us laugh over an event. If arousing anger or hatred is his motive, then there are more suitable ways to achieve that end than drawing cartoons.

In this issue we reproduce some pieces from a recent compilation of cartoons by the country's foremost cartoonists. Let us look at them and judge the state of affairs in the realm of Indian humour.