THE HERITAGE

SEPTEMBER 1985 □ Rs. 6

MOODS AND MELODIES OF SUNRISE AND SUNSET

BALI □ ELLORA □ ART PLATES OF TANJORE □

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HOW DID WORLD WAR II BEGIN?

FICTION: FOUR SHORT STORIES AND A NOVELETTE

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INDIAN CONTINGENT
FOR THE 1984 OLYMPICS

THE HERITAGE

GLIMPSES OF OCTOBER'85 NUMBER

THE GREAT ESCAPE : Dr. Sisir Kumar Bose, who drove Netaji Subhas Chandra away from his internment, narrates the adventure. A complete book feature.

PURI AND SRI JAGANNATH : Story of the most strange Deity in the Hindu Pantheon by Sarat Chandra.

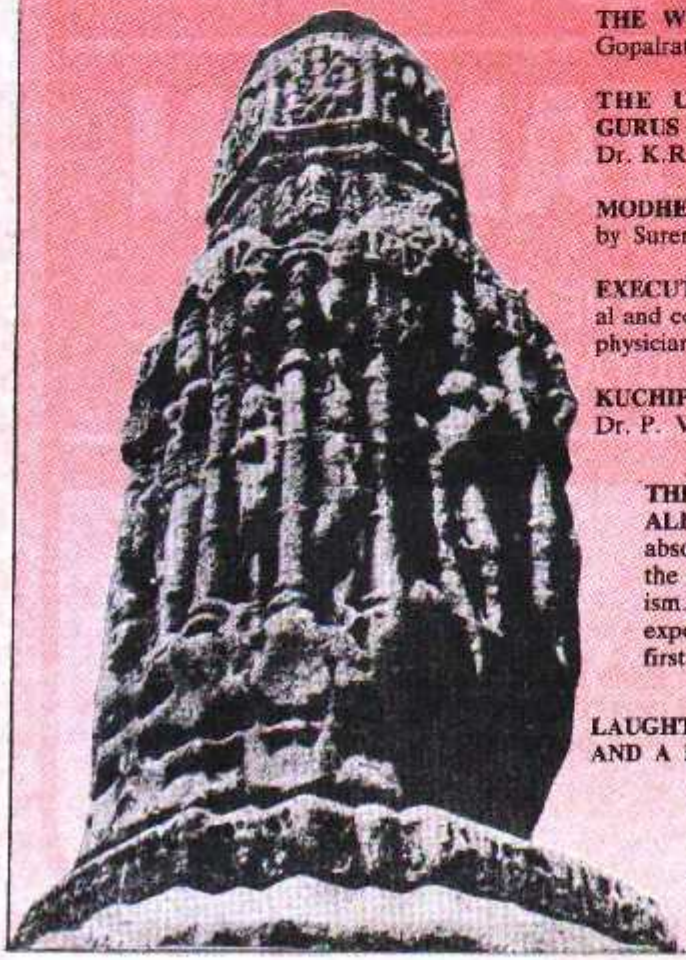
THE WORLD WAR II : How it ended, by M.D. Gopalrathnam

THE UNIQUE HERITAGE OF THE SIKH GURUS : A fresh and enlightened look into history by Dr. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar

MODHERA : Focus on a splendid place of pilgrimage, by Surendra Sahai

EXECUTIVE STRESS : How to get over it—a practical and constructive analysis of the issue by the famed physician Dr. K.P. Misra

KUCHIPUDI : Light on the beautiful dance form by Dr. P. Venugopala Rao



THE PRODIGIOUS LEADER MUHAMMAD ALI JINNAH: Dr. M.N. Das presents an absorbing research into the events that led to the emergence of this messiah of communalism. A secret letter of Churchill to Jinnah, exposing a conspiracy, brought to light for the first time.

LAUGHTER FROM CHINA, DUSSERA IN KULU AND A BUNCH OF SHORT STORIES

VIEWS

Introduction of poetry in THE HERITAGE has made me glad and sad at the same time. I am glad because I am a lover of poetry. I am sad—rather apprehensive—because I will not like to see a single page of THE HERITAGE being devoted to any stuff that is unworthy of this lofty publication. (I cannot say in a single letter what THE HERITAGE means to me and to so many of my friends!) To be frank, I find most of the poems written in English during the last three decades in India shallow. Often they are meaningless—and I am afraid meaningless even to their authors. Our best poetry is in our languages. I agree with your editorial comment that much will be lost in the process of translation. Even so it will be wise on your part to carry more translations and less poems written originally in English.

New Delhi — ***Vanu Prakash***

(THE HERITAGE will carry poetry only at intervals. As a policy, it will give importance to translations of poems by well-known poets in different Indian languages.

—Editor

My congratulations and best wishes to THE HERITAGE for providing the innumerable culture-thirsty readers with the right choice of articles every month. I am sure THE HERITAGE will grow into the proverbial banyan tree.

Madras — ***Shyamala Mahadevan***

Each issue of THE HERITAGE being a collector's item, the August issue was a special collector's item. I am sure, thousands of readers like me knew nothing about those remarkable episodes from the early uprisings against the British rule. I have read and re-read that article; I have felt amazed. The incident of that unknown girl shooting at the Company's murderous soldiers fully aware of the fate that awaited her brought tears to my eyes more than a century after her martyrdom. And who can forget that tribal hero, the last archer? Inspiring indeed was the narration of the Surat Congress proceedings left by Henry Nevinson. You have done a great service by uncovering for our generation these forgotten gems of our history.

Bombay — ***Vikram K. Joshi***

The August issue was the most excellent example of the use of research for journalism. I am referring to those invaluable articles on our freedom struggle during the last century.

Calcutta — ***Preeti Haldar***

All the three articles by Dr. M.N. Das in commemoration of the Congress Centenary have been highly readable and interesting. Can we expect more in that series?

Nagpur — ***Ravindra Sule***

(Yes, his next article is on the emergence of Jinnah. It contains little-known and unknown facts, and will appear in our October issue. —Editor)

THE HERITAGE has been an eye-opener for us. There are so many interesting things to know beyond politics and cinema!

Simla — ***A. Hamid***

In Emergence of Gandhi in National Politics *by Dr. M.N. Das(THE HERITAGE Aug'85)a sentence in the fifth paragraph reads: "Gokhale, to whom the future Mahatma was regarded as his political guru..." etc. We regret the intrusion of the words was and to.*

——Editor

September 1985 Vol. 1 No. 9 Rs. 6

THE COVER:
The sequence of sunrise and sunset are a sublime experience even though repeated billions of times.
This issue carries a photo-feature on them by Snehal Patel. Cover Photograph: Padmakar Sukhdev.

THE HERITAGE

Features and Fiction for Today and Tomorrow

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PRELUDE

MYTH EXPLODED: Dr. H.K. Mahtab, historian and astute politician (the first Chief Minister of Orissa after independence, Cabinet Minister at the Centre and Governor of Bombay) was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's collaborator in bringing about the merger of States. His personal reminiscences.

GROWING UP: In an exclusive article, His Royal Highness, Prince Philip, introduces an inspiring scheme for the welfare of the youth.

POETRY: A rare poem from Swami Vivekananda and another from a prominent contemporary Indo-Anglian poet, K.D. Sethna, form the second instalment of our offering in poetry.

ELLORA: R. Sengupta, ex-Director of the Archaeological Survey of India and an eminent authority on archaeology and sculpture, sheds light on the unique cave paintings.

MAGICAL MOMENTS: They are moments that arrive unpredictably. But it is worth trying to retain them. Philosopher-author J.B. Priestley samples them for us.

HOW DID THE WORLD WAR II BEGIN?: A look into the horrible episode that began one September more than forty years ago and shook the basis of man's faith in man.

THE REINCARNATE RINPOCHE: A fascinating account of the spirit of Lamaism, as it is practised, by Allam Srinivas.

THE TANJORE PLATE: A tradition of craftsmanship where art and utility have a harmonious meeting, explained by Devi Krishnan.

MOODS AND MELODIES OF SUNRISE AND SUNSET: A young photographer Snehal Patel's efforts at capturing the infinity's charm.

BALI: A bird's eye view of the life and legends of the island with a Hindu antiquity, described by Nehru as "the Morning of the World", by Manoj Das.

MAJOR THOMSON'S RUINS: Story of a strange character in a secluded setting—by Prof. Ram Kumar, a well-known Hindi fiction writer.

THE REAL PATIENT: A story of men and mice by the foremost Gujarati fiction writer, Pannalal Patel.

THE BLOOD: Story of a sacrifice at the altar of the insensitive world: by P. Raja, a lecturer in English and promising author.

WAITING FOR SUNRISE: A poignant portrayal of characters caught up in the whirlpool of realities—by the famed Hindi novelist Himanshu Joshi.

LITERARY PANORAMA, PHENOMENA, HUMOUR AND OTHER FEATURES.

THE HERITAGE

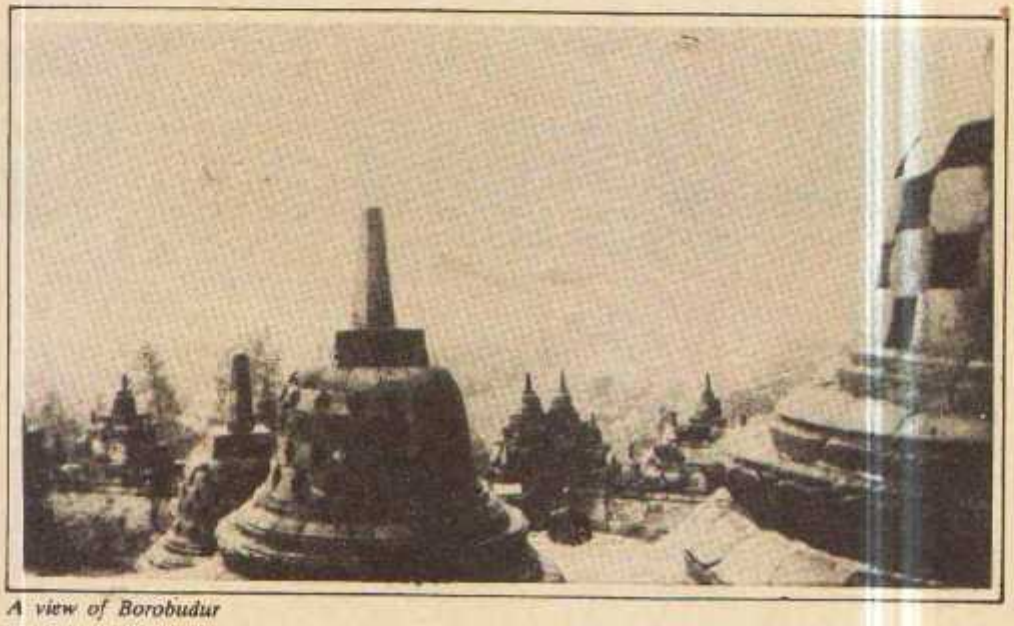
THE LATEST IN VANDALISM

This issue carries a travelogue-like feature on Bali. Needless to say, importance of Bali from the point of Indian culture abroad is too great to be covered by any single article. The entire Indonesian archipelago is full of ruins testifying to its unique relationship with India in the past.

A great monument to have resurrected from a long era of oblivion is Borobudur in Java, lately and most unexpectedly the target of an anarchist attack.

Way back in 1956, one summer evening, the wonder that is Borobudur had blossomed before my eyes. Indeed, it blossomed more than figuratively, for Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist monument, was designed to look like a lotus — the biggest lotus man's creative genius could have visualised.

Nostalgia led me to this marvellous signature of spirit



A view of Borobudur

on matter a year ago. I wished to see how it had emerged from a 25-million-dollor international project for its renovation, sponsored by the UNESCO. India had contributed to the fund and, in Japan, where a Buddha idol from Borobudur was temporarily on display, the fund-raising campaign became a festival.

About thirty kilometres off the erstwhile Indonesian capital, Jogjakarta, is spread the magnificent Borobudur amidst a vast expanse of lush fields and groves, overlooking volcano-studded horizons. The name Borobudur is derived from either **Vihara Buddha** or **Bhumisambharabhudara** ("the accumulation of virtue on the ten stages of Bodhisattva), as an inscription in Sanskrit found nearby indicates.

Borobudur, built in the A.D. eight century, was the highest cultural achievement of the Sailendra Dynasty. In its original form, it was a gigantic stupa with a dazzling jewel on its crown, a three-tiered parasol with golden discs, circular terraces with 33 dagobas, and below them, 1,500 coloured pancls portraying incidents from the Buddha's life, and 500 gilded images of the Buddha.

After dominating the religious life of Java for about two centuries, Borobudur faded into oblivion, almost total, as Central Java lost its political importance. Repeated volcanic eruptions obliged the people living around and taking care of the shrine to abandon their hamlets. Quakes damaged the monuments too. Much of Borobudur lay buried under earth, volcanic ashes and shrubs. Private builders found in it an easy and excellent quarry for their needs for choice stones. One or two local feudal lords are known to have exported generous gifts of the idols to their friends abroad.

Rediscovery of the buried marvel in the eighteenth century, primarily at the instance of Sir Stanford Raffles, was followed by haphazard repairs from time to time, until UNESCO decided to renovate it thoroughly.

Practically every slab from the affected parts of the shrine had to be removed and treated and then adjusted back to its pristine position. It looked elegant even to the eye of a layman, but what is important, the process of decay had been arrested.

And then a series of explosions shook the silent valley. Stones were tossed up and magnificent limbs of the idols rolled down to the ground. A large section of the monument lay shattered. As the American **Newsweek** puts it, "It withstood more than 1,000 years of monsoon rains, survived countless volcanic eruptions and still looked much better than its age would suggest. Then last week, nine explosions ripped through the Borobudur temple ... devastating in minutes what nature had failed to destroy in a millennium."

The destruction of a part of Borobudur seems to symbolise the destruction of a part of man's greatness, the greatness that once enabled him to embrace ideas that were lofty, irrespective of the direction from which they came, the greatness that made him transcend his geographical or cultural limitations, the greatness that brought minds and nations together.

They were "fanatics who have no sense of national pride," says President Suharto. That is obvious. But they were definitely worse. Borobudur cannot be identified with any bone of contention that is current. It symbolised nothing except the magnificence of man's spiritual aspiration that defies time and creed. Those who destroyed it were people possessed by the worst hostile propensity to demolish the beautiful, the innocent.

The sight of Borobudur, unlike most modern monuments, filled one with peace and serenity. To be able to resist its impact and draw a plan for its destruction and then plant bombs amidst those numerous meditative statues, must have needed super-demoniac capacity. Incidents like the shooting at the picture of Mona Lisa can be explained in terms of individual perversion. But a collective action against an inoffensive work of beauty defies explanation per known laws of abnormalcy.

Like new physical diseases (such as AIDS), is humanity developing new psychological syndromes?

The violence on Borobudar is more than a criminal phenomenon. Investigation, of course, will proceed along the usual lines, but psychologists and sociologists should not let the process end with meeting its legal goal alone.

POETRY

Swami Vivekananda rarely composed a poem. Once while in New York, Sister Nivedita told him, "O Lord, I want to drink at the fountain of peace. What I shall find there I don't know, but I am confident the time has come."

"Peace be with you," Swamiji told her calmly. "My peace is in you. Bring it to fruition."

That same evening he handed over to her a scrap of paper that contained this poem:

PEACE

Behold, it comes in might,
The power that is not power,
The light that is in darkness,
The shade in dazzling light.

It is joy that never spoke,
And grief unfelt, profound,
Immortal life unlived,
Eternal death unmourned.

It is not joy nor sorrow,
But that which is between,
It is not night nor morrow,
But that which joins them in.

It is sweet rest in music;
And pause in sacred art;
The silence between speaking;
Between two fits of passion—
It is the calm of heart.

It is beauty never seen,
And love that stands alone,
It is song that lives un-sung,
And knowledge never known.

It is death between two lives,
And lull between two storms,
The void whence rose creation,
And that where it returns.

To it the tear-drop goes,
To spread the smiling form
It is the Goal of Life,
And Peace—its only home!

—Swami Vivekananda

WHAT IS TRUTH

Age-long the query, 'What is truth?'
To catch on an ecstatic tongue
The answer that keeps men ever young,
Men lose their youth!

Wrinkling and gray, we lapse to the ground—
Eyes dim, mouth pale, hands helpless grown,
The answer that brings all rapture's tone
Is never found...

Never—until the eyelids drop,
The mouth falls silent suddenly;
Alone the hands, a blind dumb cry,
Are lifted up,

As though to explore strange voids of sleep
Hanging beyond all universe,
Calm spaces no astronomer's
Long glass can sweep—

Invisible infinity
Where dream, like perfect stars, the pure
And vast originals of the unsure
Time-throbs we see.

Waking in them a quiver of ruth
Those hands of hushful prayer below
Draw down to the heart a deathless glow—
And this is truth!

—K.D. Sethna

A DOG'S WAR

Based on an anecdote of Swami Rama Tirtha Retold by Vindusar.

A traveller took shelter in a guest-house which had only one room vacant. The solitary room was on the upper floor with a wide terrace.

The traveller had his pet dog with him. He ordered it to lie down outside, on the terrace.

The dog was most eager to enter its master's room, but the master would not let it do so. The obedient dog stayed outside, moaning out its mild protest.

In the morning the traveller had gone out for a moment leaving the doors half-closed when the dog stepped into it. It saw another dog entering the room from the opposite direction. Looking to its left, it saw yet another dog staring at it. To its right was a fourth dog.

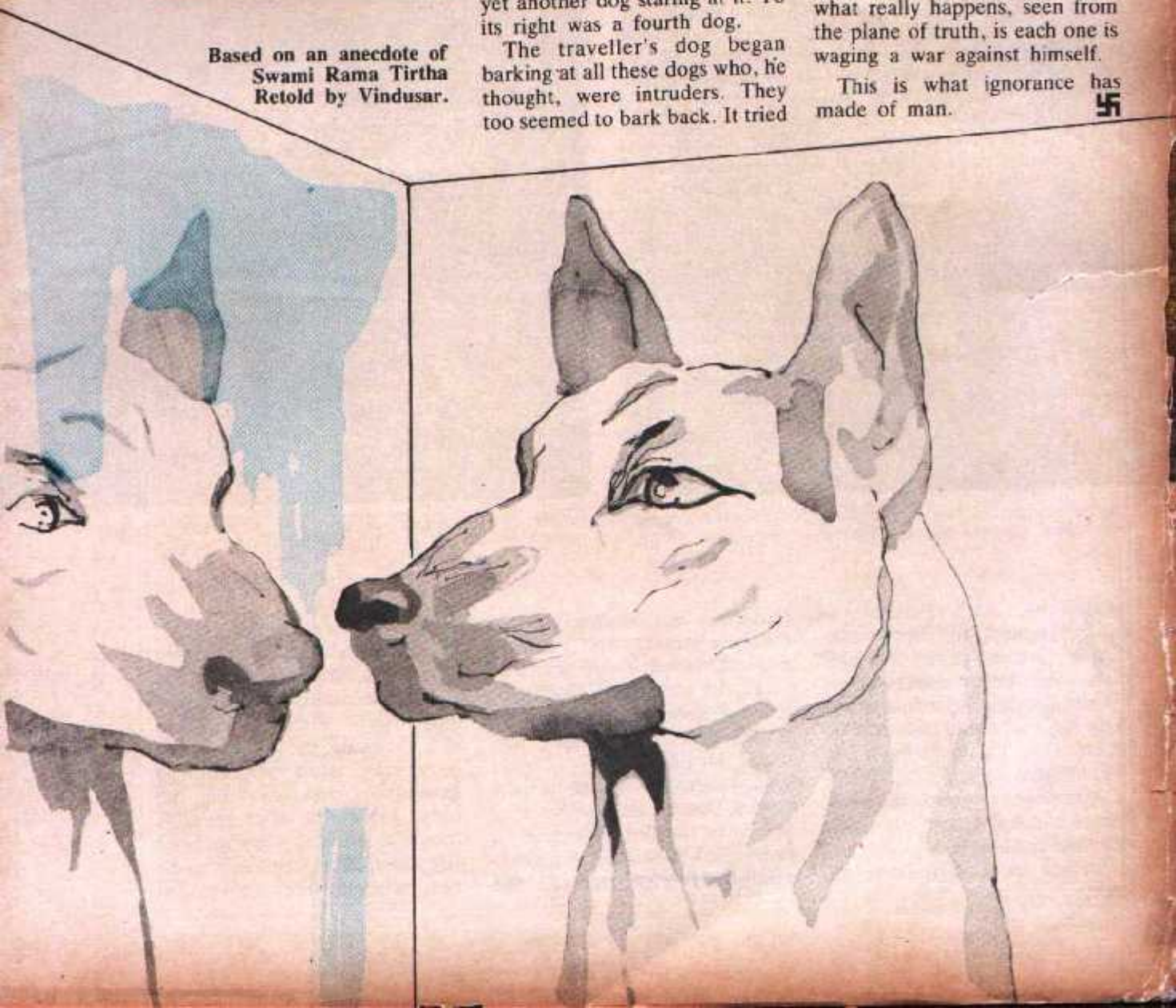
The traveller's dog began barking at all these dogs who, he thought, were intruders. They too seemed to bark back. It tried to pounce on one of the dogs. That one too seemed to do the same. In mad fury the dog ran from one dog to another, barking louder.

The traveller returned before long and gave it a whack and threw it out. Barking for a moment more as though to inform its master that his room was full of dogs, it fell silent.

Needless to say, the room had glasses aligned with the four walls. The dog was fighting with its own reflections—in fact with itself.

Such is the condition of man. In his ignorance he forgets that all are one—manifestations of a singular consciousness. When men fight among themselves, what really happens, seen from the plane of truth, is each one is waging a war against himself.

This is what ignorance has made of man. 卐



The Splendour

Jaina Cave no.32, east sub-shrine on first floor, a couple in adoration, note the beautiful figure of the female.

Ellora caves. Kailasa temple, paintings on the second layer and of a subsequent period.

The cave-temples of Ajanta and Ellora conjure up in the minds of art-lovers visions of exquisite specimens of Indian art. The Ajanta caves, celebrated for their ethereal paintings and equally striking sculptures create a compelling atmosphere of peace and beauty. At Ellora are sublime sculptures depicting the resurgent spirit of Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism. A deep religious harmony that was practised for about seven hundred years (6th to 13th c.), during the rule of Kalachuris, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas and others, pervades the place.

However, the artistic activity in the Deccan had begun long before in the 3rd century B.C. Patronised by rulers and encouraged by foreign traders, who donated large amounts of money, excavation work at the Ellora site had then begun. As the finds of Satavahana coins and antiquities (circa 1st century B.C.) indicate, the site was in the beginning used as camping ground for caravans using the route. In fact, the stone-age tools found at the site prove that the site was used for habitation much before even the excavation

# of Ellora Caves

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS : R. SENGUPTA

Kailasa temple. Siva as Nataraja painted below the lintel of the south door of the ***sabha-mandapa***

Jaina cave no.32, painting of flying couple in adoration in the clouds

works had begun. It was only centuries later that the site was selected as a Buddhist monastic establishment.

Among the thirtyfour numbered caves, starting from the southern end of Charanadri (as the Ellora hills were called in an inscription of 13th century A.D.) sixteen caves in the middle bearing numbers fourteen to twentynine are Brahmanical. The twelve Buddhist and five Jaina caves are apportioned to south and north sides respectively, though not necessarily following any chronological sequence.

Ellora caves are unparalleled in their cave-architecture. Never before has anyone dared to chisel out a complete temple of such massive dimensions with such minute details as the Kailasa temple. The ingenuity of the architect may well be appreciated when one considers the enormous mass of rock that had to be cleared to carve out a temple whose sculptured details and grandeur were not allowed to be obscured in the shadow of the pit. The whole temple was raised on a high plinth so that it could be viewed properly, and the walls of the basement were provided with gigantic sculptures

Top: Chaitya cave facade, flying figures to the right of the central chaitya-motif Bottom: Chaitya cave facade, details of sikhara of a shrine

of elephants, lions and other mythical animals known for their strength and power. In the Jaina temple, called Chota Kailasa (cave 30), only the *mukha-mandapa* was carved out as also was done in the case of the small shrine in front of Indra Sabha (cave 32).

In the play of strength and power deities were also used and their themes were carefully chosen and suitably arranged in the recesses of the temple. In between the lateral staircases, provided for reaching the main temple, there were two large panels depicting the two aspects of Shiva. In the one on the west, after killing the powerful elephant-demon Nilasura, Shiva takes off its skin to show his prowess, and by his side are Parvati and other deities who are overwhelmed with awe and respect. As if to depict the opposite aspect of his nature, Shiva is depicted in a deep meditative poise, bliss pervading his body. All the traces of turbulence and fury shown earlier in destroying the symbol of negation are completely erased. In a panel on the southern side of the plinth, his devotee Ravana, incensed with pride and power, tries to shake Mount Kailasa in order to show off his super-human power. At that time, Shiva and Parvati were relaxing on the top of Kailasa along with their usual retinue. When the shaking begins, the retinue is scared and starts running hither and thither. Even Parvati moves closer to Shiva and holds him tight. The entire panel beautifully portrays in chiaroscuro the reactions on the persons likened to human beings and on the distraught monkeys. But the power that had caused all these disturbances was easily controlled by Shiva who's shown as a solid rock of peace and power.

In another panel Goddess Durga has been depicted as slaying the buffalo-demon with effortless ease. The powerful charging beast is portrayed as the embodiment of evil whom the goddess destroys. In these and other similar myths is seen the

rise of the cult of Shakti who is symbolised as a six-rayed star. Vishnu is also shown as killing the demon-king Hiranyakasipu in the form of man-lion Narasimha. The king Hiranyakasipu had become intoxicated with power and refused to believe that Vishnu was omnipresent and that he could be present even in a column of stone. This particular aspect has a parallel in the Lingodbhavamurti of Shiva where the god comes out of a column.

There are, in fact, scores of sculptured panels depicting the exploits of Shiva, Vishnu and Devi as described in the Puranas, as also scenes of combat with the evil. These are punctuated by popular domestic themes such as Shiva's marriage with Parvati, Shiva playing dice with Parvati, Ravana worshipping Shiva etc. But in the eighth century, during the renaissance of Hinduism, all the principal cults were brought together in the *panchayatana* and *sanmata* form of worship.

In the Buddhist and Jaina caves there are no sculptures depicting narrative scenes as seen in the Brahmanical caves. But sculptures in those caves are also carved out in the same degree of perfection as in other caves. Bodhisattvas guard the door of the shrine in the Buddhist caves, attended by *ayudhapurusas* in the same manner as the *dvarapalas* do in the Brahmanical caves. The Jaina caves, however, do not have any attendants. As at Ajanta, Jambhala and Hariti are to be seen in the Buddhist caves also and in the Jaina caves at Ellora their counterparts, the deities Matanga and Siddhyaika, adorn the shrines—admirably proportioned and modelled those sculptures exude peace and prosperity. In some of the Brahmanical caves life-size sculptures of the *saptamatrikas* depicted as aristocratic ladies in toilet or fondling their children evoke aesthetic appreciation.

The paintings of Ellora have not received the attention they should. Though there are some obvious developments in style and also logical differences in

Ellora caves: General view of Buddhist caves excavated in the scarp of the hill

Front view of the chaitya cave no.10 ▲
Front view of the Buddhist monastery called Tin-Tal ▼

Kailasa temple, lowest layer of paintings depicting elephants in a pond

Left top: Cave no.21, sculpture of a female **chouri**-*bearer*

Left bottom: Cave no.34, interior view of the shrine showing the sculpture of the deity Parsvanatha

Side view of the Kailasa temple showing the caryatid animals at the bottom

Buddhist cave Tin-Tal, seven manusi Buddhas

terms of refinement between the paintings of Ajanta and Ellora, some of the Ellora paintings certainly rank high in their realm of artistic excellence. The criticism made about the ubiquitous clouds in the paintings does not appear to have been analysed sufficiently though much has been made of the forms and the mode of representation of clouds. The clouds, in fact, are copiously used in the Chalukyan sculptures at Aihole. The Chalukyan style and idiom of art should not be compared with those of the Vakatakas (as at Ajanta) and the apparent differences due to the rational process of developments in the context of other influences in that region should not come in the way of appreciating the well proportioned and modelled figures hovering in the domain of clouds.

In square or rectangular compartments heavenly figures float in weightlessness, sometimes playing on musical instruments or walking in adoration and carrying flowers for offering them to the deities. In the Jaina caves paintings were executed at different times by artists of varying skill. In cave 32 there are two distinct layers of paintings, the figures in the bottom layer being earlier are by far the best though only a few faces are visible now. The latter paintings on the ceiling of the porch of the Kailasa temple and in the Jaina cave 33, with the further-eye coming out, pointed nose etc., however, provide a link with the miniature paintings of western India. The paintings in the Buddhist caves when cleaned may yet provide important evidence in the development of styles, especially after those paintings at Ajanta. With these remnants of beautiful paintings and a vast array of splendid sculptures Ellora remains a veritable museum and a cultural centre of India.

Black & white photographs: Courtesy: Archaeological Survey of India

THE BRAHMINICAL CAVES

The Brahminical group at Ellora extends along to the west face of the hill for about half a mile, and consists of sixteen excavations numbered 13 to 29...

*The final type of Brahminical rock-cut architecture consists of one example only, the Kailasa (Siva's Paradise)... Instead of the underground halls which had hitherto been the practice, its creators threw aside all previous conventions and boldly undertook to reproduce in the virgin rock to a very large scale and in full detail a structural temple of the period. Truly has it been said, "the Indian artist had an extraordinarily developed plastic sense. No other people has ever dreamed of sculpting such great temples out of the solid rock as he has. Indeed, Indian architecture proceeds, not as ours, according to the principles of construction; it is rather conceived as an object cut out of a solid material as ivory figure might be." (Roger Fry, **"The Arts of Painting and Sculpture"***

When it is realized that the ground plan of the Kailasa approximates an area of that of the Parthenon at Athens, and that its height is one-and-half times that of the same Greek masterpiece, some idea of the magnitude of the undertaking maybe conceived... Once the Kailasa was conceived, its production became a matter of time, patience, and skilled labour, all of which appear to have been readily forthcoming. That it was an expression of exalted religious emotion is obvious but even this condition could not have made such a consummation possible, had it not also had the patronage of a ruler with unlimited resources and who was at the same time moved by the loftiest ideals. This monarch has been identified as Krishna I (757–783) of the Rashtrakuta dynasty of Malkhed...

THE BUDDHIST CAVES

The most notable production of the whole Buddhist series at Ellora, namely Chaitya Hall No. 10, commonly known as the Visvakarma, or "Lord of the Arts", as it has the reputation of being specially frequented by artisans particularly those of the carpenter caste... Inside it measures 85 feet by 44 feet, with a height of 34 feet. The central features of the hall, the stupa, manifests in its particular treatment a still further stage of development, showing that, although retaining the shape of a reliquary, it becomes a little more than a substantial foundation for the support of a large projecting shrine or niche, containing a seated figure of the Buddha. As a whole, the interior of the Visvakarma Chaitya hall marks a logical step in the evolution of the Buddhist house of prayer.

THE JAIN CAVES

The notable example of the Jain group, the Jaganath Sabha, is in general principles and in the treatment of its major parts, of the same character as the Indra Sabha, but without its regularity of plan... It is in the richly carved details and perfected finish, particularly of the pillars, all of which are elaborations of the cushion variety, that the Jain examples excel, and also in the precision and accuracy of the cutting generally... Moreover, as in many productions of the Jains, in spite of the beauty of the embellishment, or perhaps in some obscure way on account of it, there is a cold and impersonal feeling in the rock-cut halls...

—Percy Brown: ***Indian Architecture.***

Cave No: 32

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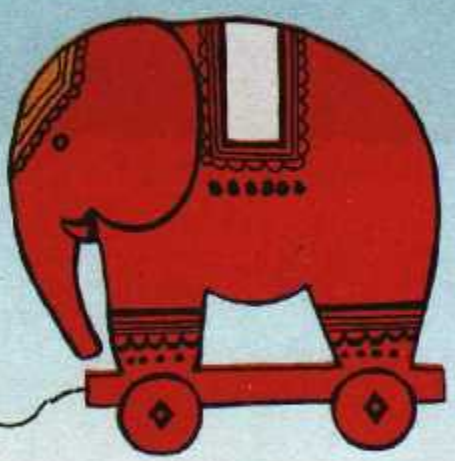


GROWING WITH CHANDAMAMA IS GROWING WITH LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE

Moods and Melodies of Sunrise and Sunset

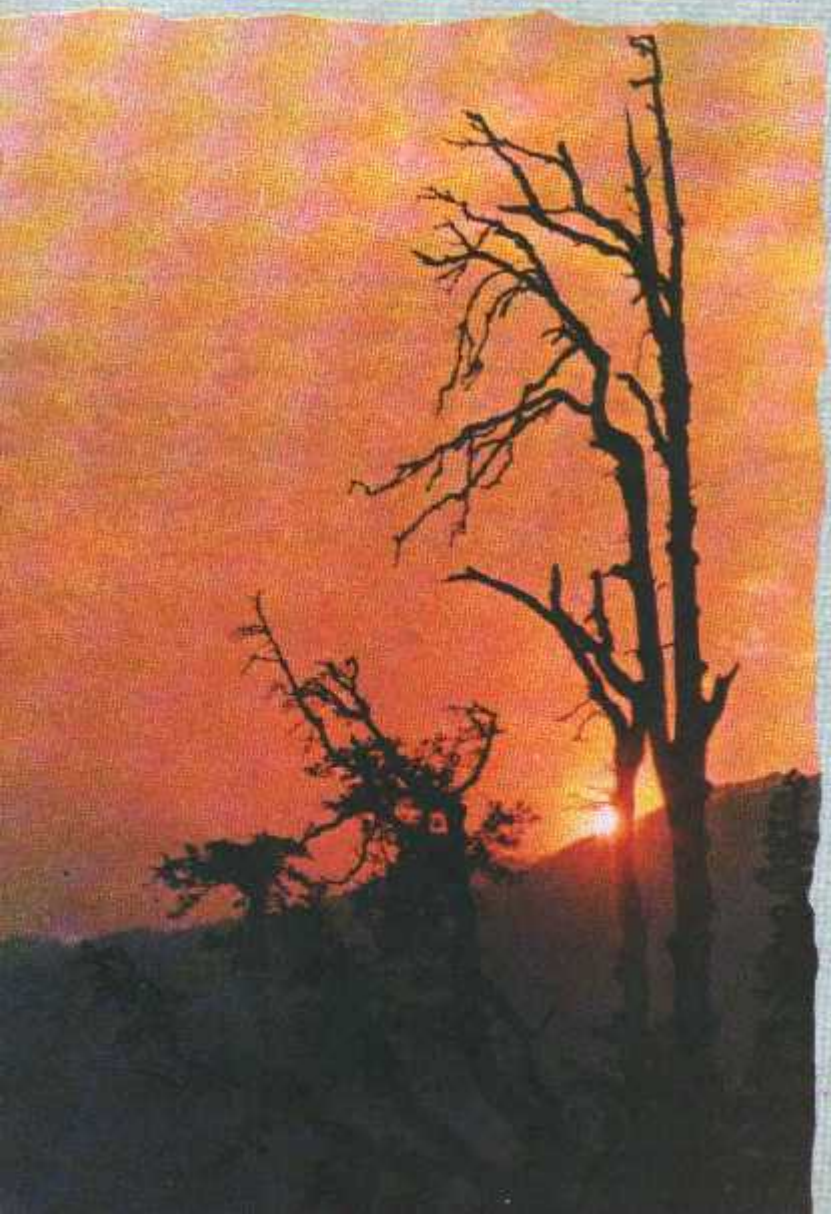
Photographs: SNEHAL PATEL

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

W. Wordsworth.

Moods and Melodies of Sunrise and Sunset

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar;
When I put out to sea...
—Tennyson.

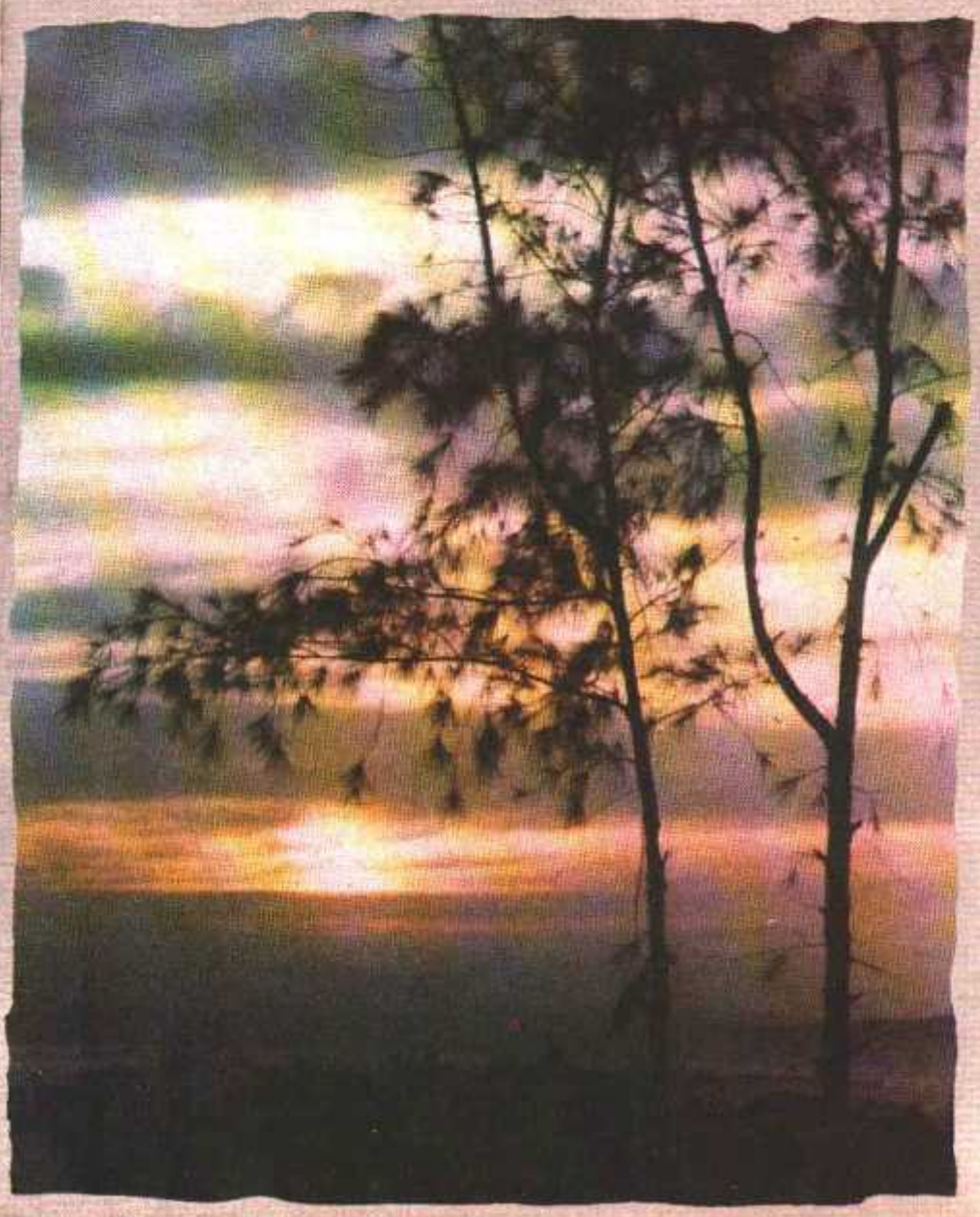


And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
Her beautiful bold brow.
—Lord Tennyson.

'Tis the sunset of life gives me mystical lore,
And coming events cast their shadows before.
—Thomas Campbell.

A golden evening, when the thoughtful sun
Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees
That bend down to their green companion
And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these
And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God,—
Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod.

—Sri Aurobindo.



Suns, that set, may rise again;
But if once we lose this light,
'Tis with us perpetual night.

—S. Johnson.

There is a wisdom like a brooding Sun,
A Bliss in the heart's crypt grown fiery white,
The heart of a world in which all hearts are one,
A silence on the mountains of delight.

—Sri Aurobindo.

THE HERITAGE

THE LATEST IN VANDALISM

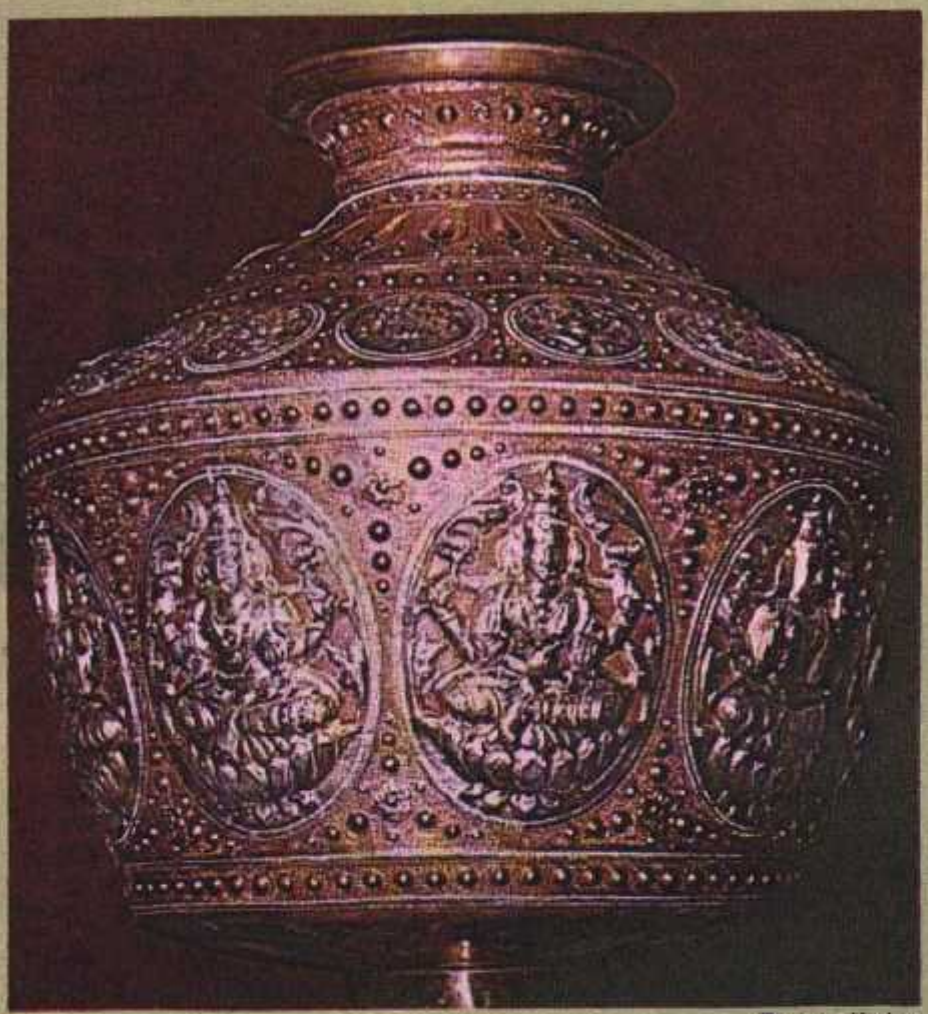
This issue carries a travelogue-like feature on Bali. Needless to say. importance of Bali from the point of Indian culture abroad is too great to be covered by any single article. The entire Indonesian archipelago is full of ruins testifying to its unique relationship with India in the past.

A great monument to have resurrected from a long era of oblivion is Borobudur in Java, lately and most unexpectedly the target of an anarchist attack.

Way back in 1956, one summer evening, the wonder that is Borobudur had blossomed before my eyes. Indeed, it blossomed more than figuratively, for Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist monument, was designed to look like a lotus — the biggest lotus man's creative genius could have visualised.

Nostalgia led me to this marvellous signature of spirit

A view of Borobudur



Tanjore Kodam

THE ART-PLATES OF TANJORE

Tanjore, the ancient royal city of the Cholas, the Nayaks and the Mahrattas is on the main line of the Southern Railway, 350 kilometres south of Madras and is set amidst the vast deltaic tract of the Cauvery known as the "rice-bowl" and "garden" of the South. As the capital of a succession of ancient Hindu Dynasties and in later ages, one of the chief political, literary and religious centres of the South, the city is full of interesting associations.

Thanjavur or Tanjore, derives its name from Tanjan—an Asura who, according to local legend, devastated the neighbourhood and was killed by Goddess Anandavalli and Vishnu. Tanjan's dying request was that the city should be named after him and it was granted.

Tanjore was built by the great King Raja Raja Chola who came to the throne in A.D. 985 and his son Rajendra Choladeva I, whose reign ended in A.D. 1035. The interval of fifty years covers the period of the most decisive Chola supremacy over other Tamil powers and was marked by conquests of the eastern Chalukya Kingdom of Vengi to the furthermost Laccadives and the Maldives.

The rulers of Tanjore were not only mighty conquerors but were ardent lovers of arts and crafts. Besides being great builders of temples, they nurtured many handicrafts which occupy the pride of place in the world of arts and crafts. This story is of special interest in as much as the handicrafts developed appear to be of native growth and to have moved

by DEVI KRISHNAN

Tanjore Plate with inscription of Lord Nataraja

Model of finished plates

through a long course of natural evolution.

Of all the crafts associated with Tanjore, the most popular and interesting is the art of making brass plates, encrusted with silver and copper designs. These are called Tanjore Art-Plates which are particularly attractive as luxuriant wall decorations and door panels. Usually religious scenes and motifs are depicted in these plates, but nowadays floral and animal designs are also depicted, and articles like bowls, flower vases *kodams* and tumblers are made with these designs. The workmanship is much appreciated since it involves great skill in inscribing minute details.

According to T.N. Mukhĕrji the earliest surviving example of such work dates back to about fifty years before the birth of Christ. A silver patera and a gold casket were discovered by Masan at the beginning of the last century at the site of the Buddhist excavations near Jalalabad. The casket is a fine specimen of repousse work and engraved with figures of gods and birds; it has its upper and lower edges studded with rubies alternating with curly ornamentation. The craftmanship, though apparently Indian, seems to have some Greek influence. The Indian origin is confirmed by the representation of lotus motifs in a conventionalised form at the bottom of the casket.

Repousse work has been practised widely throughout India. Punjab and Kashmir have long been traditional centres for such work in flat relief, the common designs being shawl patterns depicting floral and chinar trees. Gujerat, Lucknow, Jaipur, Tanjore, Coconada and Trichinopoly in the South were also justly famous for the art of hammering on gold or silver sheets to form flowers and leaves in relief on the objects to be decorated.

It is also said that the art of damascening or "Koft-gari" work which has its origin in ancient Damascus from where it might have travelled to India, probably through Iran and Afganistan, has certain similarities to Tanjore Art-Plate work.

According to Birdwood this art was practised in a few centres of Kashmir, Gujerat, Punjab and also in the Nizam's dominion where the popular name of the craft was "Koft work". According to *Indian Art* 1903, centres of Bidri production existed in Lucknow, Mursidabad and Kashmir, but whether the metal art work of Tanjore developed as a refinement of Bidri is uncertain. The oral tradition is unanimous that the art has a foreign origin in the sense that it was a copy of en-

Base plate—highly polished

Basic design plate or OS plate

graved copper pots manufactured elsewhere. However, there is no doubt that the craftmanship reflects the South Indian genius of the artisans of the Kammala community and that the immediate origin of the Tanjore Plates should be ascribed to King Saraboji (A.D. 1712 to 1728) and his Tanjore artisans during the eighteenth century.

Thirtha Yatra Lavanya, a poetic memoir written in Marathi, describes how King Saraboji found this type of art work called Bidri in Benaras, where he had been on a religious pilgrimage. He brought a few specimens of this plate and made the local Kammalas imitate the artistic beauty and workmanship of Bidri plates.

During his reign he encouraged art work in which gold and silver were inlaid on copper plates; the patterns were mainly floral. In Tanjore, however, the craftsmen substituted encrusting work for the inlay which afforded them ample scope for depicting their gods and goddesses. The usual method was to encrust copper and silver over brass plate. These plates were called "Gangi Jamni" either because they were made in imitation of articles made in Gaya, Jamuna basin, or because they are combined of two colours of white (silver) and golden or copper which are symbolic of the waters of Ganges and Jamuna. In fashioning these plates four types of craftsmen worked as a team. One was an expert hand metal-worker, the other a skilled jeweller, the third an expert diamond setter and the fourth was good in delicate metal work. This team of Kammalas made the art-plate, substituting encrusting for inlay work and thus evolved the now famous Art-Plates of Tanjore.

Originally, during Saraboji's time, the practice of Tanjore Art-plate making was confined to a few families who belonged to Kammala community and who

Bottom: The lead dyes (male & female), copper sheet, impression punches of different motifs and sizes.

jealously guarded the secrets of their technique. A story is concurrent amongst artisans that a Visvakarma declined to teach the craft to his own son-in-law. The son-in-law was determined to learn the art, so he entered the *patarai* (workshop) while the father-in-law was away, and while he was engaged in handling the tools, the father-in-law returned. Enraged at the son-in-law's conduct, he took a hammer and injured the right forefinger of the son-in-law, so that the latter could never use such tools again. Though now the attitude is changing, the craft remains the monopoly of the Kammalas and is confined to their family tradition. It is practised as a household industry. The front verandah of the house serves as the workshop. No work is usually given to the women, but boys are taken for assistance.

When I visited Tanjore to see the process of making these famous art-plates, Mr. Natarajan, the master craftsman, explained the process in detail. Mr. Natarajan, is a state awardee, a director of the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation and has been selected by the Govt. of India to demonstrate this art at the Frankfurt exhibition. When I visited him at Tanjore he was working on a large plate of thirty inches diameter. It has absorbed 200 grams of silver for its designs. Three different types of designs are being worked out on the plate and it will take him about a fortnight to finish it. The cost will come to Rs. 3,000/- The smaller plates vary from Rs. 30 to Rs. 3,000/-. Besides the art-plates, *kodams* (goblets), key-chains, *chumbus*, tumblers, *panchapatrams* etc. are also made. Many of the industrial houses and shopkeepers give key-chains as new year and festival tokens to customers and plenty of orders have been received for these items, said Mr. Natarajan. This master craftsman has also made a beautiful chariot (miniature) for the exhibition. The chariot is made of brass and embossed with silver designs.

The process of making art-plates falls into four phases. First, the preparation of the base plate; secondly, the preparation of the basic design plate or the OS plate, as it is technically called; thirdly, the casting of the dyes to prepare the relief sheet and finally fixing it on the base plate and giving the final finish and polish.

The artisan first buys the copper or brass sheet and cuts it to size according to the required shape. The metal worker then sinks a circular middle depression on these plates leaving a raised margin all round the rim at the periphery. After polishing, the base plate is ready.

The preparation of the OS plate comes next. A thick copper

The sheet is cut according to the size sof the plate

sheet is cut and firmly fixed on an asphalted bed with a wooden base. The asphalt is a kind of wax which will melt at slight heating. The copper sheet is fixed on the asphalt bed by heating the bed with a blow pipe. Heavy weights are sometimes placed to fix it firmly. The craftsman now traces out the design on the plate by using a metallic tracer. He engraves the outline by using a punch and hammer. The metallic sheet is removed from the asphalt bed by slight heating and then cleaned. Working generally on the background of the design he makes the main relief sharp and clear using several types of fine punches and chisels.

The next stage is to cast the dyes. Two dyes, called male and female dyes, are cast, one for the front and the other for the reverse side of the OS plate which is set on a smooth sand bed with a clay border. The surface of the OS plate is covered with lime and melted lead is poured slowly on it. When the lead is cooled, it preserves the details of the designs on its surface. Silver or copper sheets are obtained ready-made from the market, to required shape, put in between the male and female dyes and pressed to get the impression. Care is taken not to break the sheets. By such pressing any number of relief sheets can be obtained.

The next stage in the craft sequence is to encrust the relief sheets on the base plate. For this purpose the base plate is firmly fixed on the asphlat bed exposing the working surface. The artisan marks out the area of the primary and subsidiary reliefs with great accuracy. The contours of the designs are then marked on the plate with an impression punch which has the particular motif needed for the plate. When the impression punch is pressed with proper interspace and is hammered on, a deep depression of the motif is obtained on the plate. The artisan keeps several impression punches of different motifs and sizes.

Next, the artisan cuts the recesses along the lines with lozenge-shaped sharp-edged punches. The grooves cut in the plate are slighty slanting so that small ridges are formed above the grooves for the relief sheets to be encrusted into the grooves and rivetted by punching on the other side. This is called encrusting.

The hollow depressions at the back of the relief sheets are now filled with wax and the sheets are placed on the marked place and rivetted at the back.

Then the final touches are given. The plate is removed from the asphalt, washed with dilute sulphuric acid and soap-nut powder and brushed with soft brush. The final product is brilliant and

THE DAY NETAJI'S ROOM WAS FOUND EMPTY HE WAS ALREADY FAR AWAY BEYOND THE INDIAN FRONTIERS

THE YOUNG MAN WHO RISKED DRIVING HIM OUT OF THE CITY WAS HIS NEPHEW, SISIR.

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Top: The relic sheets are being fixed into the baseplate
Middle: The lead dyes—male and female dyes
Bottom: Fixing the relic sheets

magnificent.

The normal channel of marketing these products is through the Tanjore Art-Plate Manufacturers Co-operative Society. The aim of the society is not only to improve the art-metal industry but also to regenerate the economic well-being of the artisans. The Government of Tamil Nadu gives loan to the artisans to help them buy shares in the society. The society purchases from the members their products, executes orders placed with them by various outside bodies and various Government sales departments and emporia throughout the country, and distributes the orders to the various craftsmen.

Although these measures have to some extent stabilised the economy of this handicraft, it has not solved all the problems. When stocks accumulate, the society suspends further purchases, with the result that the artisans have to go to middlemen for marketing their products. Further, the society does not advance any loans to the artisans to buy raw material like silver and copper which are rising in price day by day. The middlemen being jewellers and businessmen are not engaged in marketing on a full time basis. Also, they do not provide working capital to the artisans. Whenever they have a big order they contact the artisans, place the orders and all they do is to give fifteen to twenty percent advance, which is cut from the final payment.

So, the craftsmen and the small manufacturers are not stable in their marketing and production. Now and then there is a lull. I saw many of the small workshops idling without work. Only persons with relatively large capital thrive.

According to the craftsmen, if the Co-operative Society could advance raw materials to artisans and also give part of the anticipated price of the product as wages for the labour it would help them a lot. Secondly, they feel that the working capital of the Co-operative Society should be increased. Thirdly, exports should be further promoted. At present sixtyfive percent of the products are exported but there is scope for improvement. If these points are taken care of, the artisans can look forward to better sales and a better life.

1. The base plate. After sinking a circular portion it is highly polished.
2. The OS plate, or the basic design plate—(Black & White)
3. The Male and the Female dyes. The silver and copper sheets shown at the side are used for pressing between the dyes to get the impressions. (Colour and Black & White)
4. Encrusting the relief sheets on the base plate and doing the final Nagas work. (Colour and Black & White)
5. The finished products. (Colour and Black & White).

The dramatic changes, that industrialisation and scientific development have brought to virtually every community in the world, have also created particular difficulties for young people in the process of growing up. The traditional social patterns are disappearing, or have already disappeared, to be replaced by a system of academic education designed to fit young people for life in a predominantly technological, urban/industrial world.

This probably makes rational sense but life is about much more than careers and technology. Young people need to develop their characters and those human qualities which allow communities to be friendly and civilised rather than violent and unscrupulous. These qualities cannot be taught like grammar or mathematics, they have to be acquired from the precept and example set by parents and adults, and also from personal experience.

The ancient Egyptians knew that the human brain was divided into two semi-independent lobes. Modern science has established that, in general terms, the left half of the brain is concerned with rational factors while the right half is the seat of aesthetic and emotional concepts. Modern education concentrates on the useful subjects, such as mathematics and science, which means that all the development is taking place in the left brain, while the right brain remains in a state of vacuum. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that so many otherwise well-educated young people seem to have behavioural difficulties or tend towards extremes in politics or religion. The fact is that these are merely signs that the education of their right brains has been woefully neglected. As the satisfactory working of the whole human system depends on a proper balance between the two halves of the brain, this lack of balance is obviously very undesirable.

These signs of a lop-sided

NOT BY CAREERS AND TECHNOLOGY ALONE GROWING UP

by PRINCE PHILIP, THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Few have reflected on the problems of youth as has His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, in this International Year of the Youth. The following article, an exclusive contribution to THE HERITAGE, informs us of the scheme sponsored by him.

Limitless is the scope for development of talent in the youth. The Duke of Edinburgh Awards will go a long way in encouraging constructive traits in the youth.

In India the Award Programme has been in operation since its adoption in the early 1960s by the Doon School and Mayo College. Award Authorities also now exist in the Nilgiris, Bombay, Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, Madurai, Bhagalpur, Darjeeling, and in many other schools and colleges. The National Cadet Corps too have recently been authorised as a National Operating Authority. Plans are now being formulated for the co-ordination of the programme on an all-India basis and a major new initiative is about to be launched to expand the availability of the Award Programme to young people throughout India.

Editor

brain seldom seem to be quite so evident among smaller and rural communities. This suggests that exposure to the facts and beauties of the natural world and the respect this creates for the wonders of life seems to have an important influence on the development of the right brain. But even that is not enough. Over the centuries humanity has discovered that people have to value certain principles if community as well as personal life is to be at all satisfactory. In most communities these values are enshrined in their religious doctrine and young people picked up these values in the course of conforming to the social customs of their elders. Where this no longer takes place, the young are bound to be influenced by other factors, the most obvious being the radio, TV and the written word.

It was against this background that my old Headmaster at Gordonstoun, Dr. Kurt Hahn, developed his ideas for a more balanced system of education. While putting just as much emphasis on academic subjects, he organised the extra-curricular, non-academic, activities so that both halves of the brain were equally stimulated. Out of this general principle grew the idea of a scheme of awards for individual improvement and achievement in non-academic subjects. These were eventually refined down to four broad groups:—expeditions in wild country, with the object of developing a spirit of adventure; rescue service, such as life-saving and service in the community, with the object of sense of responsibility for others; hobbies and creative activity through the acquisition of manual or cultural skills, with the object of developing a sense of creativity; and the attainment of certain standards in sport or physical recreation, with the object of matching the fitness of the body to the fitness of the mind. Every participant is required to choose one option

from each section.

The syllabus for each option is set by an appropriate expert body which also arranges the assessment of each participant. This has the added advantage that it brings young people into contact with adults, other than their parents and teachers, on the basis of a shared interest in a particular activity. This opportunity for contact between young people and the wider community is sadly lacking in many urban situations.

In order to provide challenges appropriate to the capacities of different age groups, 3 levels of Award—Bronze, Silver and Gold—are available for age range of 14—25 years. These four sections at the three levels eventually formed the basis of what came to be known as the D of E Award Scheme. One or two refinements have since been added. For example, an extra condition for a Gold Award is participation in a residential course lasting the equivalent of a long weekend.

Founded in 1956, the scheme was soon adopted in several Commonwealth countries, and has subsequently spread to over 40 others, under a variety of titles. This international development was certainly not envisaged when we started, but it is now becoming obvious that the scheme has a much wider application than we anticipated. As the list of National Award Authorities steadily lengthens, it would appear that the framework of the scheme complements the activities of many youth organisations and schools.

It seems that the most attractive features of the scheme are that it provides a very wide choice within each of the four sections and therefore gives experience of individual freedom of decision; it encourages personal endeavour and improvement without competition and recognises all, and not only the top, achievers; it provides a mixed experience of non-academic subjects to balance the academic curriculum; it mobilises a large number of adult advisors and assessors in passing on their skills, knowledge and attitudes, and therefore brings many more adults into contact with the younger generation; and, as it is usable by all schools, voluntary youth organisations and employers, it provides a valuable link between them.

The pattern of participation varies greatly from country to country. In some cases participation is centered on schools, in others the voluntary youth organisations have taken the lead. There are also instances of the development of rural and village groups of participants, and in recent years in Britain there has been a growth in the number of co-operation projects between industrial companies for their employees.

At the start of the International Year of Youth [1985] the countries that are operating the Duke of Edinburgh Award Programme are:

Britain, Angolla, Antigua, Ascension Isl, Australia, Barbados, Bermuda, Br.Virgin Isls, Brunei, Canada, Cayman Isls, Dominica, Falkland Isls, Fiji, Gibraltar, Grenada, Hong Kong, India, Jamaica, Mauritius, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, St. Helena, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia, St.Vincent, Solomon Isls, Tristan da Cunha, Tuvalu.

Some countries operate the scheme as President's Award:

The Gambia, Kenya, Malta, Trinidad & Tobago, Vanuatu, Zimbabwe.

In addition, there are countries that use a variety of titles:

USA: The Congressional Award; Jordan: The Crown Prince Award; Ghana: The Head of State Award; Sri Lanka: The National Youth Award; Swaziland: The Prince Makhosini Award; Saudi Arabia: The Saudi Arabian Award: Seychelles: The Seychelles Youth Award and Uganda: The Source of the Nile Award.

All these schemes are linked together through membership of the recently formed International Forum. In order to maintain comparability between the different schemes so that participants can move freely from one scheme to another, the Forum adopted the following principles as a basis for membership:

Participation by young people to be voluntary, without discrimination as to sex, colour or creed.

The age range of participants to be 14—25 years.

The basic structure of the program to be four mandatory sections; Service, Expeditions, Skills and Physical Recreation; and three levels of Award; Bronze, Silver and Gold.

The minimum time requirement for the completion of each award for direct entries to be 6, 12 and 18 months.

Within these principles each Award Authority is free to develop programs adapted to their particular national conditions.

Exactly how effective these schemes have been in achieving the original objective is very hard to assess. It is easy enough to lay down what academic standards an engineer needs to have attained in order to be able to practise as a professional, but it is much more difficult to assess what factors are necessary to ensure that he is a conscientious engineer, an honest citizen and a good parent. All that can be said is that a very great number of young people, who have taken part in schemes and won awards in many different parts of the world, have testified how much it has helped them to grow up.

by Dr. HAREKRUSHNA MAHTAB

MYTH EXPLODED

In order to maintain their empire in India the British Government went on building several lines of defence to fight back the force of nationalism which was bidding to make India free, the first line being the Muslim question; the second, the scheduled castes and the tribes, and third, the Indian Princes. By the time the Government of India Act, 1935, was passed by the British Parliament the Princes of India had already been raised to the artificial status of sovereigns by mere legal and political fiction. When the political reform of Indian administration was under examination after several sessions of round-table conference, a committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of Butler to record what the position of the Princes would be in the set up of Indian administration.

The Report of the Indian States Committee 1928–29, presided over by Sir Harcourt Butler, took considerable pains to justify the existence of the States and protection thereof on legal, constitutional and moral grounds. To one who reads the Report now, it will be extremely amazing to find how human ingenuity can be worked up to reasons for the most unreasonable policies and actions. In one place the Report says, "It is generally agreed that the States are *sui generis*, that there is no parallel to their position in history, that they are governed by a body of conventions and usages not quite like anything in the world." Conventions and usages could have been gradually established towards elimination of the problem of double suzerainty, but on the contrary, as a definite policy the conventions and usages were developed in order to convert even small zamindars into Princes claiming sovereignty ultimately. Even fair-minded Englishmen today will blush to read the following portion of the Report:

Sardar Patel arrives at the Dubar Hall, Jaipur to inaugurate the Greater Rajasthan Union on March 30, 1949. Among those who appear in the picture are H.H. The Maharaja of Jaipur and H.H. The Maharaja of Kotah.

"If any Government in the nature of a Dominion Government should be constituted in British India such a Government would clearly be a new Government resting on a new and written constitution. The contingency has not arisen, we are not directly concerned with it; the relation of the States to such a Government would raise questions of law and policy which we cannot now and here foreshadow in details. We feel bound however to draw attention to the really grave apprehension of the Princes on this score, and to record our strong opinion that in view of the historical nature of the relationship between the Paramount Power and the Princes the latter should not be transferred without their own agreement to a relationship with a new Government in British India re-

Sardar Patel with the Maharaja of Baroda (Jan'49)

Sardar Patel with H.H. The Maharaja of Mysore at the Mysore Garden party in Feb'49.

Maj. Gen. Chaudhari, Sardar Patel, H.E.H. The Nizam of Hyderabad and Shri V. Shankar at Kings Kothi Palace, Hyderbad in Feb'49.

sponsible to an Indian Legislature."

Had India agreed to remain as a Dominion under the British, the nightmare of securing the agreement of the Princes for forming a united India would have haunted the Indian Government all along without any result. Most certainly the consent would not have been obtained and India, instead of being one country, would have been divided into several countries. It is on this basis of the consent of the Princes being treated as a condition precedent to their joining India that the problem of States was being foisted on the Indian leaders into their demand for independence. The problem of States was considered as a major one next to the Hindu-Muslim problem. India decided to have independence with Hindu-Muslim problem unsolved, the result of which was the creation of another State in India. It was fondly hoped by those who were opposing Indian independence that the States also would create a similar problem as the communalist Muslim League succeeded in doing, but fortunately, that did not happen.

Fortunately for India there were astute politicians in the States who could see through the game and took steps to thwart the effort of the British to obstruct India's freedom. As soon as the report of the Butler Committee was published, there was flutter in the circle of the politically conscious sections of the people in the Princely States. Meetings were held at several places, questioning the recommendations of the Butler Committee. But, the British Parliament was in no mood to pay any heed to such murmurs.

But, there was a snag in the whole plan of the British which their statesman had not been able to anticipate. That was the possible repercussion of introduction of representative Governments in British India, in the States under the individual rule of the Princes. After all, people of India are the same whether they are in the territory marked out as British India or in what is marked as Princely States. The administrative boundary cannot make any difference in the feeling and outlook of the people towards the nature of the administration under which they live. This is the reason why mass movements burst in several Princely States as soon as popular ministries were formed in the provinces under the Government of India Act 1935. The movement in the Princely States of Orissa was perhaps the most vigorous in character. In one of

MEETING HIS EXALTED HIGHNESS

Hyderabad, as large in size as France, was ruled by the Nizam. The dynasty had been founded by Chin Qilich Khan, or Asaf Jah, who was appointed the Subedar of the Deccan in 1713, with the title 'Nizam-ul-Mulk' or the Controller of the Realm. That was soon after Aurangzeb's death when the Mughal Empire was cracking.

By and by the Nizams grew potentates. Here is Sir John Malcolm's first-hand account of the Nizam's treatment of the people:

"....The different quotas to be paid by each inhabitant had been fixed; and every species of torture was then being inflicted to enforce them. Men and women, poor and rich, were suffering promiscuously. Some had heavy muskets fastened to their ears; some large stones upon their breasts; whilst others had their fingers pinched with hot pincers. Their cries of agony and declaration of inability to pay appeared only to whet the appetite of their tormentors."

On the eve of India's independence the Nizam dreamt of acquiring for his State a sovereign status. His henchmen launched a brutal attack on people who aspired to merge with India. The condition went from bad to worse even after India's independence. However, the Nizam agreed to a "Standstill Agreement" with the Government of India during the tenure of which the latter was to be represented by an Agent-General. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India's Dy. Prime Minister and Minister in charge of the States, appointed the veteran politician, lawyer and outstanding author K.M. Munshi to the post. An extract from Dr. Munshi's account:

"As Agent-General of India in Hyderabad, one of my first official duties was to call on Nizam VII, His Exalted Highness Mir Osman Ali Khan, the seventh ruler of the Asaf Jahi dynasty.

On January 9, 1948, accompanied by Mir Laik Ali, the Prime Minister of Hyderabad, I drove to the King Kothi. The Kothi is a collection of several ugly houses which are occupied by the Nizam, his extensive harem and his Arab guards, with a high wall surrounding them.

The thought of meeting the Nizam, the world's richest and most extraordinary man in actual flesh and blood, was mildly exciting.

As we stepped out of the car, I saw a thin old man with a stoop standing on the verandah. He was wearing a faded fez, a moth-eaten muffler, an old ***sherwani*** *and a* ***pyjama*** *which had last been pressed when they had first come out of the tailor's shop. It was difficult for me to place this man correctly. But Laik Ali's very low and respectful bow in the appropriate Hyderabad style left no room for doubt. I stood in the presence of the Exalted.*

The Nizam greeted me with a conventional and tired smile and shook me by the hand. We then stepped into a shabby, shapeless room, littered with faded statueites and ornamental vases in auction-room disorder. The atmosphere was reminiscent of a bye-gone age; of Dupleix, Bussey, Wellesley and Chandu Lal; a strange world of fossils with which the fundamental rights, sovereign republics and economic justice in which I was soaked at the time, had nothing whatsoever to do."

The End of an Era, *Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1957.*

the small states, a British Military Officer who was the political agent, was killed by a mob. The oppression and humiliation which people in the States were helplessly tolerating so long became intolerable as soon as their kith and kin in the neighbouring districts in British India began enjoying full freedom under a popular ministry. The movement was so great that at last the All India States People's Conference appointed a committee of enquiry to go into the grievances of the people in the Orissa States. The Committee, chaired by this writer, recommended that the Princely system should be abolished and their *Sanads* should be cancelled, thus making them Zamindars as they were before their status went up and up under the British indulgence.

In spite of all these, the Independence of India Act, 1947, which recognised independence of India and Pakistan, also provided for the lapse of Paramountcy of the British crown over the so-called sovereign Indian States without passing that on to the succeeding independent States of India and Pakistan. Thus, when India became free in 1947, hundreds of small and big territories under the Indian Princes became free to join India or Pakistan or form themselves into groups and remain independent of India and Pakistan. They might as well enter into treaties with any other country if they so liked. The institution of Paramountcy is a legal fiction created by the British to maintain their hold in a foreign land without appearing to be authoritarian. Prof. Leon Duguit says in his *Law in the Modern State:*

"Like most legal institutions under which European civilisation has developed, sovereignty goes back to its origin to Roman Law. During the Feudal period it was almost completely eclipsed. Its appearance is a modern phenomenon. It was the action of lawyers who mingled royal powers with the Roman Imperius and feudal Lordship to make the sovereign power of modern law."

But the British Empire in India surpassed the Roman Empire of Europe in creating the fiction of Paramountcy over Sovereignty. It may appear to be ludicrous today, when the empires are all gone, but it was solemnly pro-

vided in the Government of India Act, 1935, in Section 311:

"Indian States include any territory whether described as State and an Estate, a Jagir or otherwise belonging to or under the suzerainty of a ruler who is under the suzerainty of his Majesty and not being a part of British India."

The illusion of double sovereignty, one under the other, was created in order to make a compromise with the professed faith in Rule of Law in democracy and at the same time to secure the loyal services of a number of Indian Princes to maintain the empire in this distant land.

The recommendation of the State People Enquiry Committee was pursued by the Government of Orissa when it came under a representative rule in 1946 under the 1935 Act. To counter the effort of the Orissa Government the Princely States of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh joined together to form the Eastern States Union with their own constitution with a President, Prime Minister and Secretariat located at Rayagarah. The 'Prime Minister' of the 'Union' began to correspond with the Chief Minister of Orissa asserting certain claims of the Orissa States. It was claimed that the buses plying from Cuttack to Sambalpur must obtain permits from all the Princely States intervening between Cuttack and Sambalpur. The 'Union' further proceeded to unite with Hyderabad and form a separate strong entity. This had the support of the political department. When this was known from the intermediaries, the Government of India and the Government of Orissa decided to take some firm measures. The opportunity arose when lawlessness in a small state of Nilgiri in Orissa was organised by the Raja's men, mostly Adivasis, with the help of the Eastern States Union's armed police and it spread to the neighbouring Balasore district. The Government of Orissa intervened and sent armed forces to compel the ruler to hand over the

Author with Sardar Patel

administration of his state to the District Magistrate of Balasore which he helplessly did. With regard to the problem of Princes, the All India State People's Conference and also the Government of India considered merger of the states in the provinces was impossible and impractical. But Orissa Government insisted upon it and effective steps were taken accordingly. When the Eastern States Union started negotiating with Hyderabad, Sardar Patel, the Union Home Minister, became furious and serious. He was invited to Orissa to discuss the problem with Orissa Government. He came and called a conference of the Orissa rulers to meet him at Cuttack. Durga Das writes in his book, *From Curzon to Nehru and After:*

"The integration of the Princely States with the rest of India was not planned in advance. Patel told me it was the result of fortuitous circumstances which were helped by the wave of nationalism in which the Princes were caught up. To this, however, may be added the prestige and authority of Patel himself. The merger of the smaller States began in Orissa by accident and the process spread from there to other areas.

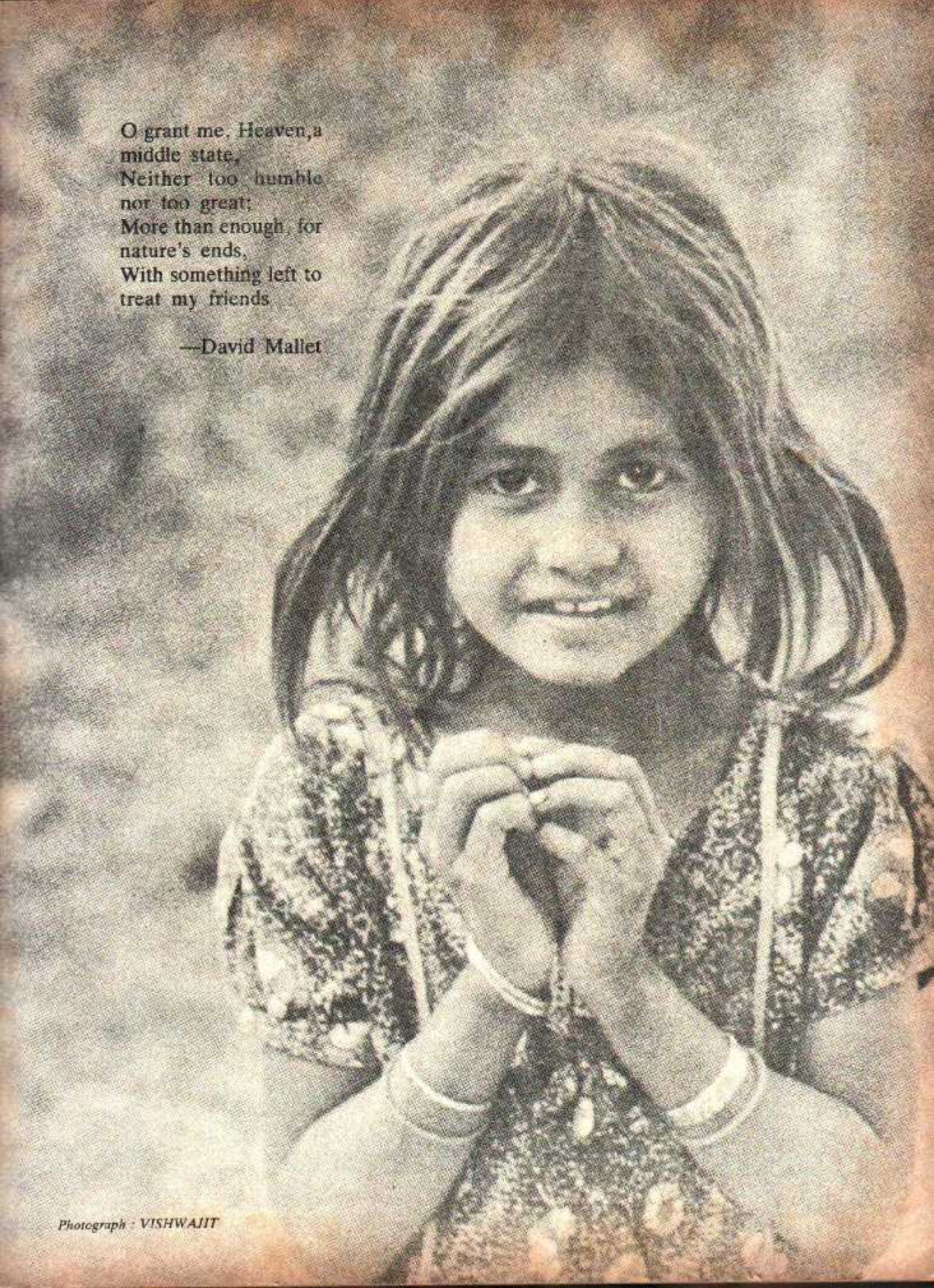
"Narrating the story of the first merger, Patel told me that the idea had originated with Hare Krushna Mahtab, who formed in 1938 the State Praja Mandal, an organisation of the people living in the States of Orissa. This Orissa Congress leader proposed that the small States be merged with the provinces under British administration and the States People Conference appointed a committee with Mahtab as its Chairman to study the proposal in relation to Orissa. The committee recommended that the States be brought under the provincial Government as reforms in them, while they maintained their separateness, would have no value. Mahtab took up this matter with Cripps when he came to India in 1942. The Political Department agreed that this was the only feasible solution of the problem but did nothing about it. When India became independent, the British departed leaving the States as they were. Mahtab convinced Gandhi and Patel of the soundness of his scheme and he suggested to Patel in November 1947 that he should set the process in motion in Orissa.

"V.P. Menon, on the contrary proposed to Patel that a system of joint control, leaving some administrative powers in the hands of the Princes, should be evolved. Mahtab objected, saying this would only cause confusion and insisted that complete merger was the only solution. Patel agreed, and when the two leaders met in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar the entire memorandum relating to the merger of States was redrafted with the help of the Chief Secretary of the Provincial Government and what is more, reprinted overnight.

"The next day, when the rulers of Orissa conferred with Patel and Mahtab, they referred to the earlier memorandum of association which had been sent to them. Patel and Mahtab disowned knowledge of it. Patel then told the rulers, 'If you do not accept our proposal, I do not take responsibility for law and order in your States. You take care of yourself.' As the Praja Mandal leaders were ready to overthrow the Princes and effect merger by force, the rulers accepted the new scheme. Thus the first merger of States went through without a single incident in Orissa, to be followed in Chattisgarh, where the States were merged with the Central Provinces." 卐

O grant me, Heaven, a
middle state,
Neither too humble
nor too great;
More than enough, for
nature's ends,
With something left to
treat my friends.

—David Mallet



Photograph : VISHWAJIT

BODY

GOOD

A PREVENTIVE PHYSICAL

In our two earlier issues (March and April '85) we discussed the various aspects of good and bad postures. Since prevention is always better than cure, we propose to examine, in this issue, what preventive measures can be taken, so that the growing children may have a healthy start and develop their bodies in a more perfect and harmonious manner. In the next issue we will discuss the role of rest as well as the correct use of feet in this regard. In our subsequent issues we shall discuss the remedial exercises for various postural defects.

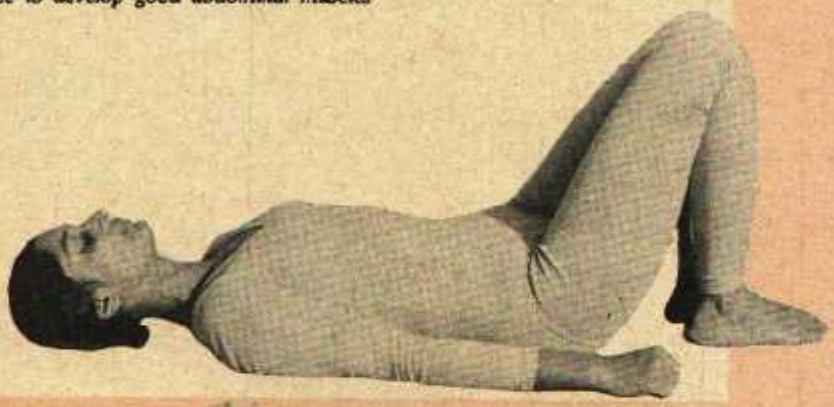
While prescribing the preventive programme, the following four points must be kept in mind. These are:

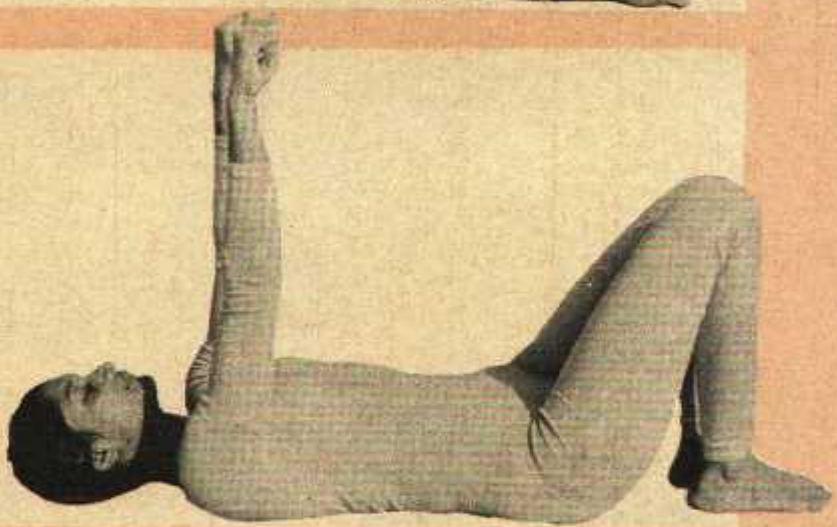
1. Children must be taught what is correct posture in sitting, standing, walking and in daily activities.
2. The correction must be maintained.
3. Habit of exercises in corrected position must be constantly stressed.
4. There must be a firm fixing of the corrected habits.

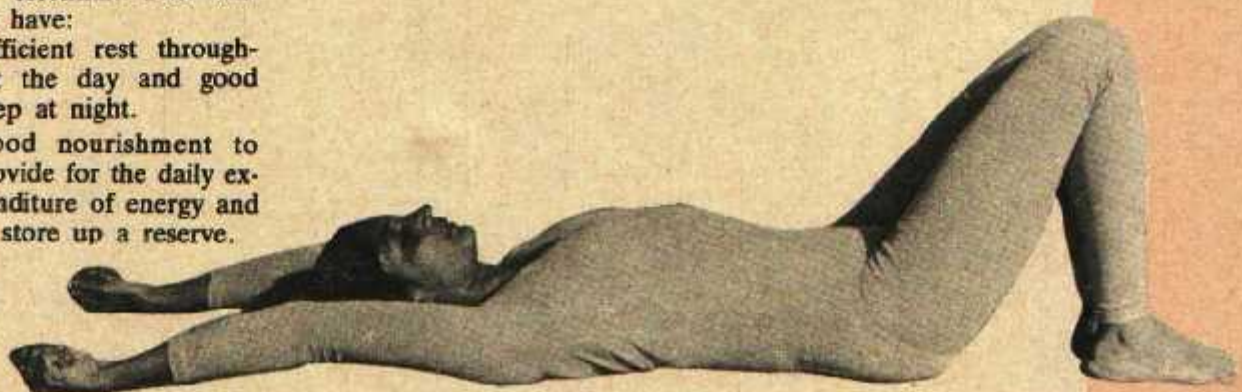
One of the outstanding characteristics of the children needing corrective work is the lack of organic and skeletal development. Good muscle tone and vitality usually go hand in hand. To develop the body as a whole, the following four things are absolutely essential. The children must have:

1. Sufficient rest throughout the day and good sleep at night.
2. Good nourishment to provide for the daily expenditure of energy and to store up a reserve.

Exercise to develop good abdominal muscles



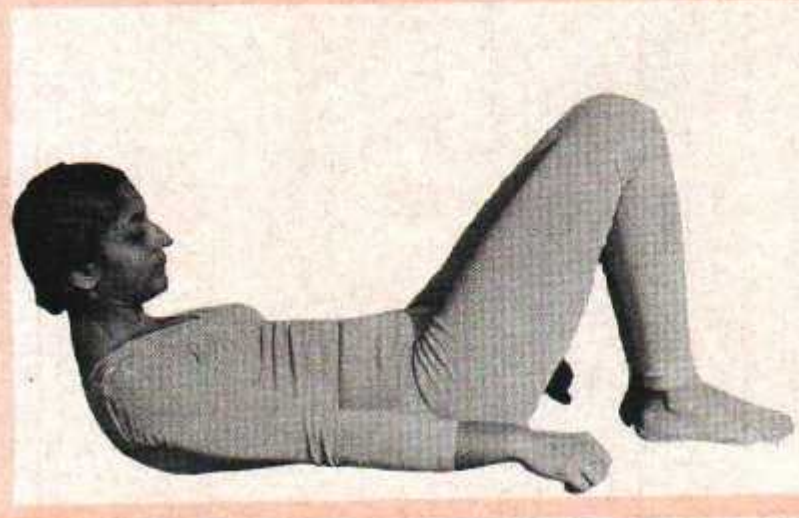




POSTURE

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

by PRANAB KUMAR BHATTACHARYA



3. Controlled and properly supervised activities so that the breaking down process of the body tissues is not more than it can be built up.
4. Exercises to strengthen the weaker muscles and stretch the shortened groups, so that the body develops as symmetrically as possible, while still promoting general body tone.

For a healthy posture, the abdominal muscles play a very important role. The following exercises will help to develop good abdominal muscles.

1. The child lies down on the back, keeping his feet near the hips, with the knees together and pointing upward. The hands stretch down, close to the body, with fists closed. He then presses the lower back close to the floor by tilting his pelvis. Holding his back in this position, he slowly raises his hands while breathing in and places his hands on the floor above his head. He then lowers his hands to the starting position while breathing out. Throughout the entire movement the lower back must be kept pressed to the floor.
2. Keeping the body in the same position as above, the child slowly brings his knees to his chest, raising his hips off the floor by pressing his hands on the ground. All this while he is breathing in. He then lowers his legs to the starting position while breathing out. It will be very good if the child can raise the hips so much that his knees come by

the sides of the two ears. He then lowers his hips slowly, vertebra by vertebra.

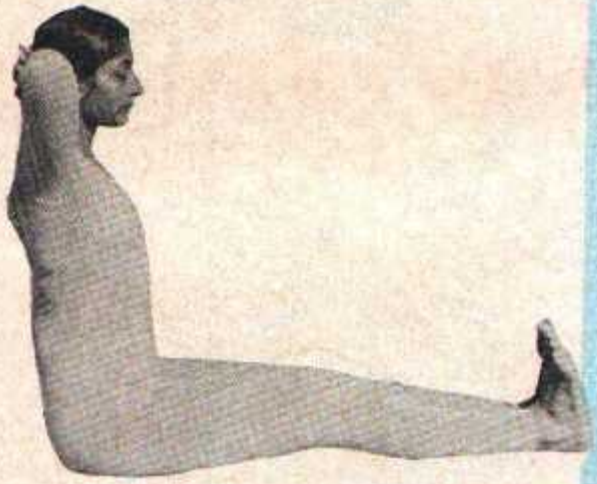
3. From the same starting position the child raises his head shoulders and upto the midback, while breathing out, holds the position momentarily and then lowers slowly while breathing in.

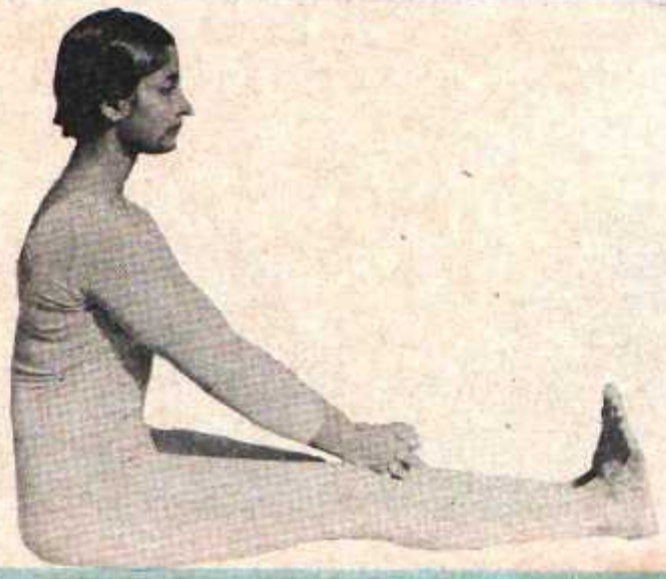
The following two exercises will give a feel to the child of what correct posture is in the standing position.

1. The child stands with his back to the wall—with his heels, hips, shoulders and head against the wall. He then slides his hand in the space between the wall and his lumbar spine. The fit is usually quite loose. In an attempt to make the fit more tight he tries to press the lower back against his hand. In doing this he automatically corrects his posture, i.e., he draws in the abdomen, lifts the chest and assumes a better position. His next task is to walk away from the wall and maintain his correct posture.
2. The child faces the wall and touches his toes to it. In good posture the chest touches the wall, but the nose is an inch away from it. To prevent a drawing back of the hips, the hands are placed in front of the thighs and a distance of the width of the hand only must be maintained between the thighs and the wall. This will demand the alignment of the body in a correct position and he will sense it.

To alleviate the common fault of bending at the waist rather than bending at the hips, the following exercise must be done.

Exercise to alleviate the common fault of bending at the waist rather than bending at the hips

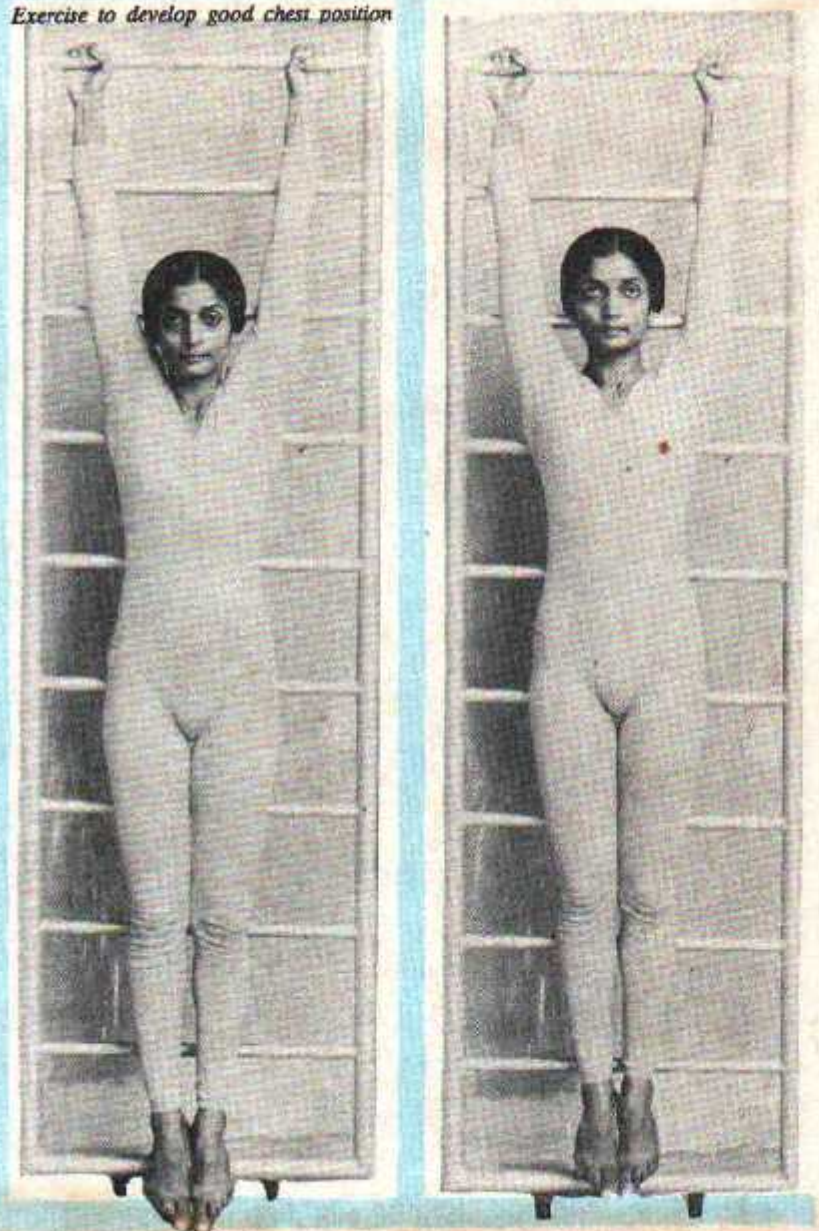




This exercise also stretches the muscles of the calves, back of thighs, lower back, muscles of the chest; makes the shoulders more supple; and contracts the muscles of the upper back and posterior neck.

Sit on the floor with legs together and stretched forward. Toes curled inward. Hold the body as tall as possible. Clasp the hand with interlaced fingers on the legs. Keep the hands straight. Then raise slowly the clasped hands over the head. Lower the hands behind the head, open the heels of the hands, turn the palms and place the interlaced fingers and palms against the head. Now bring the elbows as far back as possible. Hold for a few seconds and repeat the whole thing.

Exercise to develop good chest position



To develop a good chest position and to stretch the spine vertically, passive and active hanging from an overhead bar is recommended. To do this, hang from an overhead bar, with the hands kept about thirty inches apart and relax. This is passive hanging. For active hanging, keep the hands straight and pull the body and the chest a few inches upward from the shoulders. Keep the head well back and the chin in. The instructor presses against the convexity, if the dorsal curve is exaggerated.

Correct breathing must be taught to the children. The children should be taught that the inspiratory movement is controlled largely by the position of the head and trunk. When the head is erect and the ribs are elevated, the air flows into the lungs easily. The expiratory movement must be done by drawing in of the abdomen. This abdominal position must always be stressed. Ordinary type of breathings make abdominal protrusion. Children must be taught that an active expiration is followed by an involuntary inspiration. 卐

TEXT : ALLAM SRINIVAS
PHOTOGRAPHS : RAJEEV AHAL

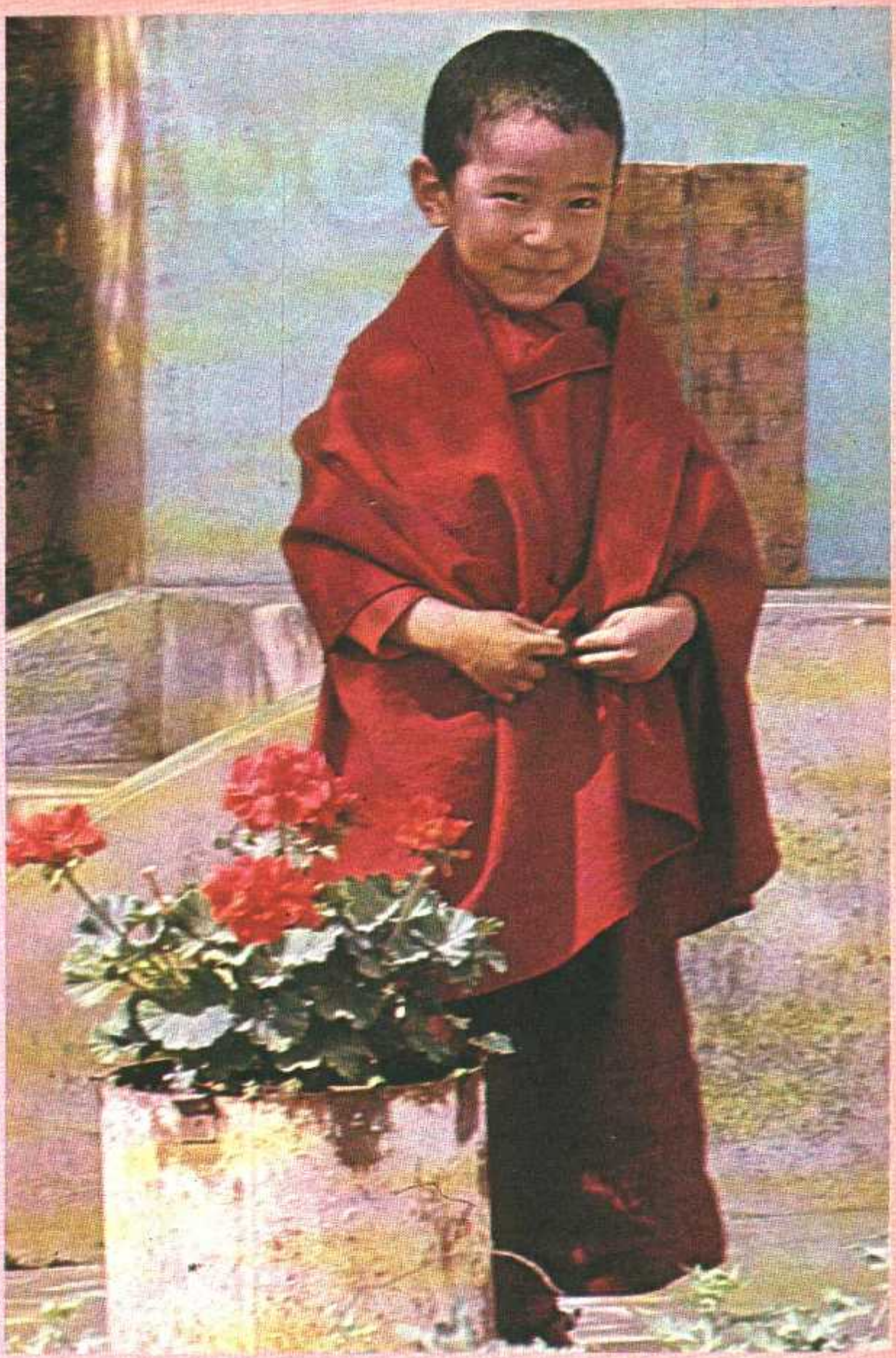
THE REINCARNATE RINPOCHE

The Spirit of Lamaism

In recent times man's scientific interests have diverted him from religious pursuits. Religion, too, is much maligned by vested interests. There are, however, mysteries in certain religious disciplines which cannot be dismissed as unscientific. Perhaps, they have their own brand of science.

Lamaism, the form of Buddhism followed by the Tibetans, is one of such disciplines. Those Tibetans who are uprooted from their soil, guard their religious practices even most zealously. Some of their traditions are mystifying to modern minds, but they make fascinating studies.

Situated in the midst of the



Shedup-Nyima (Rinpoche) -4 years

extremely picturesque Kangra Valley of Himachal, with a backdrop of the mighty Dhauladhar mountains, the Tashizong monastery can be approached from Chandigarh (via Nangal)—a distance of about 279 kilometres. The nearest broadgauge railway station, Pathankot, is a mere 131 kilometres away. The dusty road leading to the monastery breaks off from the Kangra—Baijnath stretch of the highway at a beautiful bridge one kilometre short of Paprola village. This motorable road, right till the gates of the monastery, is a half kilometre walk and takes one to the very base of Dhauladhar range.

The refugees from Tibet who settled there are a subsect of the Karmapa sect. Its founder Tusum Kyenpa (A.D. 1110–1193) was a native of Kham, from the district of Tao (To-afu) in Tibet, and first founded the Karma seat, east of river Nagimuchi in Kham, in the year A.D. 1147. The order owes its name to a black hat of 'Dakinis' hair in which are brought together all the works of all the Buddhas.

Our story begins with their eighth Rinpoche (the king) lying on his death-bed. His name is Danju Niyma. He is the one who chose the place and built the Tashizong monastery. The king is 49 years old and on the last phase of his journey of life. The throne would soon be vacant; a successor has to be chosen. The depressed and grief-stricken subjects turn to the Jalwang Karmapa who resides in Sikkim. He is their saviour and guide in times of distress and in moments when the path is obscured. He points to the successor—the reincarnation of their previous head.

Two doctrines which have been an intrinsic character of Buddhism are the beliefs in the cycle of karma and the faith in reincarnation. In this doctrine the spirit of the dead head lama is always reborn in a child who has to be found out and installed in the vacant chair of the head lama.

Lamas—the most revered lamas—are supposed to be the incarnation of Lord Avalokiteshwara—Tibet's patron Boddhisattva (and Predecessor of King Sangsten Gampo who started lamaism). Historians and anthropologists speak of Tibet as an ecclesiastical state, for, Dalai Lama is not Avalokiteshwara's direct incarnation repeated every time. He is the reincarnation of the historical figure he was in the preceding life, a link in the chain which leads back to a deity in mythological times (Lord Avalokiteshwara). The first Dalai Lama, Gedun Trup (A.D. 1391–1474), was the fifty first reincarnation. The teacher Droniton, Atisa's disciple (eleventh century) is the fortyfifth. The dogma is hard to explain, but the texts say that each succeeding Dalai Lama was the incarnation of his historical predecessor and not directly of Avalokiteshwara. With the abbots of Drigung, the karma 'black hat' succession claims to have started the system of successive reincarnation of the same person, which was later adopted by the Dalai and the Panchen Lamas. Its representatives reign to this day, recognizing a related line of incarnate hierarchy starting with Trakpa Sengge (A.D. 1283–1349).

When the agonised Lamas reached the residence of Jalwang Karmapa, they were welcomed by the words, "There is a small village, called Bundhilla, in Assam. There reside a couple by the name of Larsang Tsering (father) and Kalsang Choeden (mother). Exactly fortynine days from the day your king died they will be blessed by a son. He is your future ruler. Go, search and find him." The omniscient knew why they had come and had a ready solution for them.

Even the way of choosing and electing the successor has succumbed to the power of time. In the olden days the usual practice was to ascertain the names of all the infants who have been born under miraculous portents just after the death of the deceased lama. And with prayer and worship to ballot a selected list of names which were written by a committee of lamas on slips of paper and put into a golden jug. Amid prayers was drawn one of these, which would be the name of the new incarnation. This was specifically done by the 117 selected Lamas. As, after the Chinese agression, the Peking court was believed to influence the selection under such circumstances, the state oracle of Nachun has latterly superseded this old practice. The recent Grand Lamas have been selected by this oracle.

This process, this ideology of

Temple (Tashizong)

reincarnation and the belief in the Jalwang Karmapa is not the whim of instinct and impulse. It is not something individual or recent for its roots can be traced back to the times when this subsect came into existence. At least that's what the scriptures say. But unlike the mythological legends of reincarnation inherent in different religions (even in this community) our story is based on facts and has proof.

After meeting the Jalwang Karmapa in Sikkim, three respected lamas were appointed to go in search of the new Rinpoche. The journey was physically tiring, but mentally satisfying. As one of them said, "We had to go through the dense forests, climb mountains, cross rivers but our happiness lay in the harmony between the mind and the soul. We were looking for our king, our lord."

They reached the village. Lo and behold!—it happened once more. One more event could go down as history in the scriptures. They found the child—in the same conditions—as had been prophesied. The parents were told about the whole thing. They believed. They were not lamas nor did they follow Lamaism but were reverent Buddhists who respected the principle and philosophy of reincarnation in their own simple and straightforward manner.

As the future Rinpoche was still too young it was rational to leave the child under the care of motherly love and affection. When he was two years old, he was brought to the monastery with pomp and gaiety. Then followed six days of festivities in jubilation of the home-coming of their king which included ceremonial rituals and rites. The child remained with his parents for another year in the monastery itself. When he reached the age of three, he was crowned. He became the ninth Rinpoche and another series of succession was complete.

Today the Rinpoche is four years old. He stays in the house

Shedup-Niyma (Rinpoche)

built right above the main temple on the highest point of the hill. His parents are staying in the monastery but the mother is not allowed to meet him as rules don't allow women to enter the building. The mother says, "The seperation is not painful, for, my son has got the position and reached the place where the Buddha wanted him to be."

He is still young and has a lot to learn about the subtleties of his religion, the socio-political infrastructure and his duties. Hence he is being taken care of by two guardians appointed by the Dorzong Rinpoche (the second in command of the monastery). Their work is not difficult. For their king's powers are great, his awakening is of the highest class and his inspiration is via Lord Buddha himself. He will learn on his own. The great Buddha will guide him. And truly, the young Rinpoche has been showing signs to prove them right. His features at birth were distinctively Assamese. But in the two years at Tashizong he has developed more of lamaistic physical traits. Today he looks like a lama. He has also been able to know the names of his guardians and other important people without being told.

As I entered the room to take blessing and to satiate my curiosity, I saw him sitting in the posture that Buddha himself was in when he attained *siddhi* under the tree of awakening. Silent, sedate, his whole attention withdrawn, concentrating inwardly, his eyes still and piercing and looking through and beyond me, he seemed far away. I could feel the mystique, the charm and the force that held me rooted. As I

Budha

bent to touch his feet, he extended his arm and blessed me. It was the only movement on his part.

The inhabitants of the surrounding village are confident and sure about the validity and the truth of the story. Their faith is absolute. But basically he is human for one can see him smile, blush and hold that inquisitive, innocent and totally child-like expression in his eyes. Except that he has an aura, a vague magnetism and a fire that beholds one.

Can this era of reasoning and logic explain the facts and the story? Here is a theory—original in form and structure but borrowed in individual elements. The Jalwang Karmapa is a saint. A saint of that order possesses supernatural powers as ESP, heightened intuition etc. As to the upbringing of the child there are three factors which may be responsible individually or interacting collectively. They are: auto-suggestion, hetero-suggestion and bio-feedback. All the three have been proved scientifically as in case of hypnotism, mesmerism and also in fields of surgery and medicine. The child, realizing that he is to become the king, may force himself, consciously or unconsciously, and absorb new ideas and thoughts. The child's brain is not raw and immature as people tend to believe and the subconscious is capable of quite a few surprising results. And the curious, adventurous nature of the child only helps in this case. The people around him—the chief lamas, the guardians etc.—all have accepted him as their king. Their minds and the subconscious act upon the sensitive and mouldable character of the child. Lastly, the effect of bio-feedback—in this case the influence of the departed souls of previous Rinpoches, Karmapas and Lamas—the child may not act as he is expected to. Does the whole event seem more rational and less amazing? If it does, the mist of magic, charisma and surprise is dispelled. If it doesn't—well, there's always hope. 卐

THE PRACTICE OF RELIGION

Once long ago there was a famous lama whose name was Drom. One day he saw a man making a long circuit round a stupa. 'Look,' he said, 'it is quite a good thing that you walk round a stupa. But it would be better to practise religion.'

'Well, I had better read a holy book then,' the man said to himself. And so he started laboriously reading from a book till one day Drom happened to see him again.

'Reading from a holy book is no doubt very good.' Drom said. 'But it would be better still if you would practise religion.'

And the man thought: 'Even recitation is no good. How about meditation?'

Before long, Drom saw him in meditation and said: 'It is no doubt very good to meditate. But it would really be better if you would practise religion.'

"Pray, what then do you mean by practising religion?' the bewildered man replied.

'Turn your mind away from the forms of this wordly life,' Drom told him. 'Turn your mind towards religion.'

— The Dalai Lama
My Land and My people

THE YOGI AND THE TIGER

Our experiences are not limited to physical, mental or emotional encounters. This series gives authentic narrations of a different dimension of human experience.

Swami Nigamananda Saraswati, a renowned yogi of eastern India, was born in 1880, in a village in Bengal. His earlier name was Nalinikanta.

Soon after his marriage, the young Nalinikanta went to Narainpur, to serve as a clerk in a feudal estate. His wife was living with his parents, far away.

One night, while Nalinikanta was absorbed in his files in his solitary apartment, the lamp on his table grew dim. He looked up. To his great astonishment, he saw his wife standing before him. She looked gloomy.

"What is this? What brought you here suddenly?" Nalinikanta was about to ask.

But what he saw as his wife disappeared. He realised that it was a phantom vision.

Later he learnt that his wife had died exactly at the time she appeared before him.

After he had gone through the first impact of the tragedy, a stubborn curiosity overtook him: Cant't he communicate with his wife's spirit?

What began as a curiosity of this nature soon launched him into a deeper quest. He became a yogi and later a guru with wide influence.

What follows is an account left by him while describing Trataka yoga that helps one acquire great power through visual concentration.This happened at the early phase of his life as a seeker:

"Mesmerism practised in the West is nothing but a small aspect of the Trataka... The difference between Mesmerism and the Trataka is, the Mesmerist does not know the fact of the phenomenon whereas the Trataka-yogi knows all that he is doing and all that is happening in the person on whom he is applying his power.

"One who masters the Trataka can easily humble even violent animals. One day I was wandering with the great soul who taught me yoga, amidst a forest. All on a sudden a tiger appeared before us.

"While I got panicky, the yogi took position in front of me and gazed at the eyes of the tiger.

"The tiger seemed to have lost the power to advance. It stood still, but for its tail which it kept swaying.

"As long as the yogi's eyes remained fixed on the tiger's, the tiger was obliged to remain in the same position. Then the yogi removed his eyes from the tiger's eyes. At once the beast turned and ran away into the interiors of the forest. It did not look back.

"The Yogi taught me the Trataka later....." 卐

HIMALAYA
ENCOUNTERS WITH ETERNITY

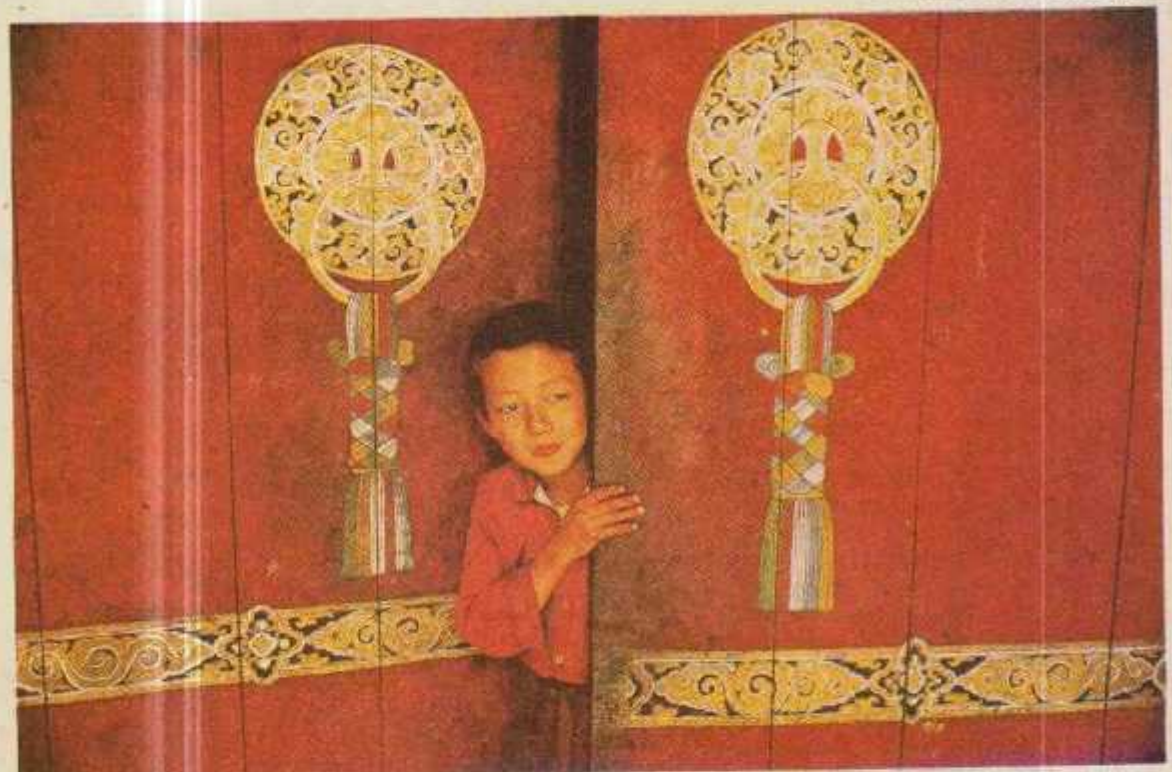
"Among the mountains I am the Himalaya," said Sri Krishna in the *Gita*. Kalidasa called the Himalaya *Devatatma*, the God-souled. And when a modern author summarises its significance in the following words, he only echoes what every Indian believes:

"To the peoples of the south, a thousand and five hundred miles away, to the men of the sea coast, to the dwellers of the desert land of Rajputana no less than to the inhabitants of the Gangetic valley, the Himalayas have been the symbol of India. The majesty of the snow-clad peaks, visible from afar, the inaccessibility of even the lesser ranges, the mysteries of the gigantic glaciers and the magnificence of the great rivers that emerge from its gorges have combined to give to the Himalayas a majesty which no other mountain range anywhere can claim." (*The Himalayas in Indian Life* by K.M. Panikkar)

In the past only hermits and sages in quest of divine solitude explored the mysterious Himalayas. Pilgrims trekked as far as the sacred Kedarnath and Badrinath.

Ashvin Mehta was introduced to the Himalaya quite suddenly and without any effort of his own. He recollects, "In my thoughts it was an area as remote as the Arctic, or even the moon, and existed only in books. Reading at the time for my master's degree in science, I was invited by Swami Anand, whom I barely knew, to join him in the mountains, where he spent almost eight months out of each year. More than thirty years have passed since that casual offer, and I have forgotten all the details of my maiden trip—not only to Himalaya but also to anywhere beyond 200 km. of my home town, Bombay. What I vividly remember; however, and expect to remember all my life, is the sight and touch of the swift and silent waters of the Ganga as it enters the plains from the Shivalik hills near Rishikesh; the fragrant pine forests scintillating with the brilliant orange and yellow and blue of minivets and Himalayan magpies; and, of course, the first view of snow mountains from the 3000-meter-high Deoban peak near Chakrata. The mountains seemed to float in the misty blue sky of early spring and were unbelievably high. Apart from clouds or stars, I have never seen anything on earth that high before. There was also an indefinable but very palpable presence, awesome and overwhelmingly beautiful at the same time. The experience was stunning, but I felt that I had known Himalaya for a long time. It was like

77 Colour Photographs by Ashvin Mehta
Introduction by Maurice Herzog
Thames and Hudson



meeting an old friend and not a stranger."

Thereafter Ashvin Mehta has responded to the call of the Himalaya again and again. If he has loved the God-souled mountain, the mountain has unfurled to him several petals of its inexhaustible splendour. The work under notice is the splendid result.

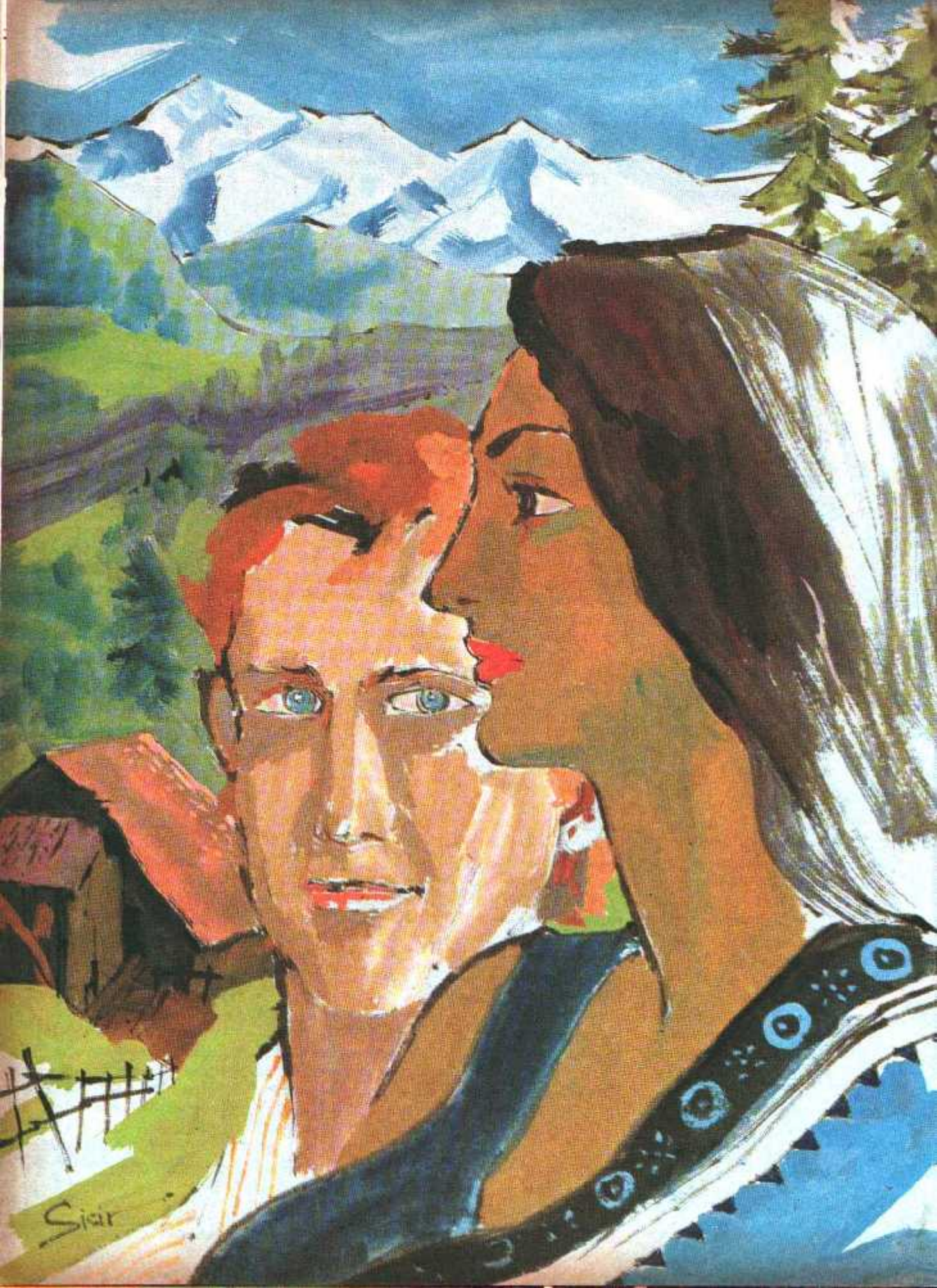
The children of the great mountain too have imbibed something of the nobility of their divine sentinel. As Ashvin Mehta reminisces, "I am at a loss to portray through photography, which is essentially a visual art, the personal warmth and concern of many unknown people whom I met during my travels. Together they form an important aspect of Himalaya and show the inner fibre of a people nurtured by the greatest mountains on the face of our planet, and untouched by industrial society. In particular, I can never forget a Gujjar woman in Kashmir, who appeared from nowhere just to warn me against wild bears and advised me where to pitch my tents; another old woman in Garhwal who bade me a tearful farewell after a night's stay in her hut and stuffed all my pockets with plums; a poor Nepali farmer who shared with me—the seventh member of his family—the 30 square feet of dry ground under a leaky roof; a ten-year-old girl who lovingly snatched away my primulas and insisted that the first flowers of the season must be offered to the village deity; my youthful and exuberant guide in Kulu, who made me cross, without ice-axe or rope, slippery ice-tongues leading straight to the river flowing 1000m. below; and a Buddhist pilgrim in Lahul, who bade me drink his only cup of Tibetan tea when I was wet, cold and frozen. I wish I could portray all this in my photographs!"

Even if he has not portrayed all this in his photographs, what he has given makes an unforgettable experience. "Going through" the volume is not the correct expression, it is rather meditating on the book—one feels like going on a guided tour of a sublime nature—a tour in visions, the guide being a most imaginative and sensitive spirit. The 77 colour photographs are an assortment of the glimpses of mountain and men, monuments human and natural, moods of nature, all taken from highly selective points of view.

Maurice Herzog's introduction is an excellent piece of literature—at once simple, factual and poignant. "A true journey is a mutation. Once marked by it you can never be the same as you were before," he says.

Even this volume should enable its reader-beholder to experience some degree of mutation.

—Devaprio.


Sicar

SHORT STORY

by RAM KUMAR

MAJOR THOMSON'S RUINS

Madhu momentarily stopped in her tracks as her eyes fell on two foreign-looking young men sitting in the temple courtyard, their arms clasped round their pulled up knees. They were gazing at the Kasar Devi mountain range stretched in front of them. She had never seen them before, the only person who was seen around being the temple priest. She could clearly see the face of one of them. He had a rather youngish face, had curly auburn hair, looked taller than his companion and seemed to be reflecting over something. The other man's face was partially covered by the shadow of a nearby tree. So she could not make out his features except that he looked very fair. Their presence aroused Madhu's curiosity and she thought of going into the temple and enquiring about them from the priest. But then she changed her mind and walking at a leisurely pace climbed down to the maidan below.

She had set out from home for a stroll upto Dinapani which would give her a good view of the Binsar mountain. She would also take in her stride the ruins of Major Thomson's bungalow. From the top she could command a view of the village in the valley below with its huts and their shiny tin roofs. But the unexpected presence of these two young men in such a remote place was almost an event and she decided to go back home and tell her parents about it.

Her father and mother were, as usual, sitting in the verandah, still and inert, like images carved in stone. The news caused them no surprise, aroused no curiosity. Later she learnt from the chowkidar that recently the priest had put up two small rooms at the back of the temple which he let out to visitors to augment his income. These two foreign visitors, as she learnt from him, had come from Leh. One of them walked with a limp but that did not deter him from walking long distances which he did with ease.

Madhu felt peeved at herself. Why was her mind so exercised over two strangers? She had been spending her summers in this place for the last seven or eight years. The same house, the same garden. And the same breeze sighing through the pines, the ground under them thick with dry pine needles. The pine forests stretched far into the distance ending near the approaches to Nanda Devi and Trishul. Her exodus to the hills had become a regular feature which she thought would be unending.

But on seeing these people Madhu felt that her summer sojourn this time was going to be different. Maybe it was only her imagination at work. But all the same she felt that there was something in the air. Who were these people? Where had they come from? What had brought them here? And how long were they going to stay here?

Three days later they themselves called at her house.

"Forgive us for coming like this, unannounced," the taller of the two said. "The priest had told us about you. We thought we should make a courtesy call." There was a smile on the man's face.

Ramnath, Madhu's father was standing in the door, unable to decide whether to ask them to come in or make them sit in the verandah and then dismiss them after a while.

"Please come in," he said at last, slightly parting the curtain. A stale smell was wafting from their clothes, making him fall back a step.

They sat down on the sofa without any inhibition. Ramnath saw that the Tall-One walked with a slight limp.

"Would you like to have tea?"

They nodded in assent.

The pale rays of the setting sun coming through the window were shedding a faint light in the room.

"You have a beautiful house."

"It's not mine. It belongs to a friend. He rarely visits this place." Ramnath gave a faint smile.

They both smiled.

"Some Englishman must have constructed this bungalow." The Tall-One's gaze travelled round the room.

"Yes, no Indian would ever care to live in this wilderness."

"At that time this place must have been infested with wild animals."

"Maybe man-eaters too."

Parting the curtain Madhu cast a fleeting glimpse at the visitors—a staid gaze but unmistakably inquisitive.

"Come, Madhu," her father said as he saw her standing in the door. "You know who they are, of course. They are staying in the temple."

Madhu did not seem to have heard her father. Only a part of what he spoke usually seemed to reach her ears. He had got accustomed to it. He did not mind repeating himself a

number of times in order to catch her ear.

She settled down in an easy chair, holding a half-knitted sweater in her hands. She looked at them intently but her gaze appeared merely to skim the surface.

"What's happened to your leg?" she suddenly asked the Tall-One.

"I had an accident," the young man smiled. "The bones did not join properly. But it does not hurt while walking."

"You people do have guts," Ramnath said. "One really wonders how you manage to stay in such lonely places, far from home. And tell me, why do you take to such a life?"

"It's a matter of habit." They both laughed.

"You don't know the language of our place and you don't have much money either to throw away. And then there's always one epidemic or the other not to talk of the weather. And the people..."

Madhu cast a disapproving look at her father. She did not like his becoming friendly with them at the very first meeting. Ramnath caught her hint. He never failed her in such matters.

"We don't have any trouble on that score," the Tall-One said. "People are helpful and forthcoming. When I was in Leh the owner of the hotel I was staying in refused to charge me for the last ten days of my stay there."

The servant came in with tea. Madhu put aside her knitting and started pouring tea. In spite of their refusal she heaped their plates with toast, monkey nuts and *mathri*.

The other man was silent most of the time. It was the Tall-One who did all the talking. "We won't have to cook our dinner," the Tall-One said looking at Madhu. "It's more than we can cope with."

Madhu kept knitting without raising her head even once. She did not even take tea.

"What are you knitting?"

Madhu laughed. Then she stopped knitting and raising her head looked steadily at the Tall-One. "A frock for the doll," she said. Lifting her knitting needles she showed him her handiwork—small socks, a cap and a coat. "I make them for the doll and her consort. Just wait, I'll show you." She walked upto an almirah and taking out a box, she pulled up a chair and sat down by the side of the Tall-One. One by one she eagerly showed him the contents of the box—sweaters, caps, frocks, socks, mufflers, all of them in a variety of colours.

"Beautiful indeed. Nobody can say that they are hand-made. But where are the dolls?"

"Do you think I'm a child that I should play with dolls? I only knit dresses for them."

Ramnath was silent, with a slight frown on his face. The Tall-One's companion examined the garments carefully putting them back into the box one by one. A doubt crossed Madhu's mind. Was he dumb? But then she concluded that if he were dumb they would have told her about it. The Tall-One had not been shy to speak of his lameness.

Madhu offered the Tall-One a sweater as a present from her. "No, no, I couldn't have it," the man said. "It has cost you so much labour." At her insistence he at last accepted it.

On Ramnath's asking, the Tall-One reluctantly came out with some facts about his life. From his childhood he had been fond of travelling. He did not like big cities. After the accident and as soon as he got paid for his insurance claim he booked his passage by sea. For many years he had been consumed by a desire to visit Tibet which desire he feared would never be fulfilled. So he had done the next best thing by spending six months at Dharamsala among the Tibetans. From there he had gone to Leh and now he was thinking of spending two or three months at this place. Where would he go from here? Well, he had no idea; he had yet to make up his mind. His friend, however, would go to South India and from there back home. As for himself, he was in no hurry to leave India. "Maybe I'll never go home again," he said, "I like it here." He took out a bundle of *biris* and extracting one from it thoughtfully lighted it.

Madhu happened to glance towards the door and saw her mother's face peeping from behind the curtain. She did not come in nor did she move away from there. She just kept gazing at them as if mystified.

When they were gone she complained that Madhu had no sense of discrimination. "You call in all sorts of people," she said. "They could be charlatans, even hoodlums!" But Madhu was not impressed. She just shrugged off her mother's doubts.

Madhu had gone out for a brief afternoon stroll when she saw them sitting on the stone abutment running along the temple precincts, talking to each other. She gave a start, for after that evening visit she had almost forgotten their existence.

The Tall-One climbed down from the abutment and greeted her with a smile. "Going somewhere?" he asked.

"Nowhere in particular. I'm just out for a walk. So you people live here?"

"Yes, it's a very quiet place. Won't you come in?"

She stood there undecided. A flag was fluttering from the pinnacle of the temple. Marigolds flanked the abutment on one side and there was a profusion of sunflowers on the other.

"We can offer you tea."

"I don't drink tea." Passing through the gate she entered the temple precincts. Behind the temple there were two rooms as if made out of the jutting mountain rocks. There was a small verandah in front covered with a tin roof under which lay a wooden chair which the Tall-One pushed towards Madhu. They sat down on the bare floor in front of Madhu. From where she sat she could look into the room through the open door. There was a solitary window in the wall through which blasts of wind blew into the verandah. There were two sleeping bags spread on the floor. A stove lay in a corner and a few soiled utensils by its side. A few old clothes were hanging from nails fixed in the wall. Their smell floated into the verandah when the wind died a little.

"So this is your room?"

"Yes," the Tall-One laughed. "We pay ten rupees a month towards its rent."

Madhu's eyes flitted over the small garden and down the slope merging into the motor road. On the other side the mountain sloped down to a sprawling valley, studded with tin-roofed huts and small farms along which ran a sparkling stream. At one end of the valley began a jungle of deodars. The afternoon was so quiet that even a faint sound was lost in it.

"Yesterday we had gone to the stream. Its water is icy cold. But we managed to wash our clothes and even had a dip in the water. In fact we have bathed thrice in the stream." The Tall-One lighted a *biri*. His blue jeans were on the verge of giving way at the knees. He was wearing an ochre-coloured shirt. His freshly washed auburn hair looked bright.

"You don't go there?"

"Where?" She looked at him startled.

He smiled. "I mean the stream. Whose water is so cold."

"I get tired while climbing up. So I avoid going there."

The other hippie, his back resting against the wall, was gazing at Madhu.

"Don't you feel cold at night?" she asked.

"We have spread dry grass under our sleeping bags. If it gets too cold we close the door."

Madhu felt that one could be more comfortable and at home in a small room than in a five-roomed bungalow. Here one never felt lonely. These two must be spending the night talking till late hours.

"Father said that you must come and dine with us one day."

"It'll be such a bother to you."

"I'll tell you the day."

All morning Madhu had frantically searched for her old jeans. She had looked into some old boxes and then rummaged through some almirahs. Her mother was surprised and no less annoyed. Why did she suddenly need the jeans after so many years?

Madhu had put on weight. She had to strain and stretch to squeeze herself into the jeans.

"Do they look all right, Ma?" she had asked, examining her reflection in the mirror. "I don't look like a clown, do I?"

"No, Madhu, these fit you well," her mother had said in a hearty voice. "Maybe you have lost the habit and feel uncomfortable in them."

"I've become a bit fat. That's why they are tight on me." She looked a little lost as if helpless for not being able to shackle the flying years so that her mother had to reassure her again that there was nothing wrong with her appearance.

Her mother had been mending father's socks. She put them aside and looked at Madhu. "These boys look a nice lot," she said. "I can see that they come from good families. A pity, that one has gone lame at his age. He looks so young."

"We shall call them for dinner one day," Madhu said. She was sitting with her mother in the garden, with closed eyes.

"Madhu, this year you have completely neglected your garden. Look, all the flowers have withered."

"What's the point in tending them? They would in any case wither when I'm gone." Shoving her hands in her jean pockets Madhu walked upto the other end of the garden from where she could see the khud below. Mother would never understand. In fact she seemed never to want to understand. Far away, the shingles of roofs were scintillating under the rays of the sun.

Her mother held Madhu with her gaze as she stood there leaning over the garden railing. This thirty-two year old daughter of hers, about whose future she could read so little, how would fate deal with her? One day she had seen streaks of white in her hair and it had sent a shiver through her body. "Madhu, perhaps some insect is crawling in your hair," she had said, plucking a gray hair from her head and adding, "Oh it's nothing—just a stray gray hair."

"No, Amma, my hair have already started graying," Madhu had said in a quiet voice. "I've plucked quite a few." Then she had started laughing.

The clouds started gathering in the afternoon and there was a heavy downpour in the evening. They were coming for dinner. Madhu had been agog since morning and she had done all the cooking herself. Ramnath and his wife had sensed her excitement though they had kept their thoughts to themselves.

Madhu had tidied up the drawing room and in the evening she had lighted the fireplace, making the room cosy and warm.

They arrived punctually at seven. They were wearing freshly washed clothes though some streaks of dirt still shone here and there. They had brought a bouquet of marigolds for Madhu which the Tall-One ceremoniously presented to her with a bow.

"We don't have anything else," he said with an apologetic laugh, exposing his yellow teeth.

Madhu was wearing a blue chiffon sari and a sleeveless blouse. She had powdered her face, put a *bindi* on her forehead and tucked a small flower in the bun of her hair. Her mother wordlessly noticed all this and some signs of anxiety lingered on her face as if she was trying to suppress her feelings.

Ramnath was engaged in talking with the other hippie, drawing out from him his experiences of India. Compared to the Tall-One, he was a man of few words, grave and ponderous and seemed to be lost in himself most of the time. But Ramnath was able to gather from him some thing more about the Tall-One. The young man, he learnt, came of a very well-to-do family. But true to his convictions in which his eccentricities had played a large part, he had completely cut himself off from this family. He had even gone to the extent of returning the money his father had sent him.

"One day he was almost drowned when we were in Leh," the Tall-One's companion said. "We had gone to see a monastery across the river Sindhu. On our way back, instead of crossing over the bridge we just kept walking on hoping that there would be another bridge further up. We had walked about ten kilometres when we learnt that there was no other bridge over the river. Then my friend suggested that we should swim across the river. The water was very cold and the current was very swift. And to add to our trouble the stones at the bottom of the river were covered with moss making them very slippery. We were wading through the river, carefully watching each step, holding our shoes in one hand and our cameras in the other. The water came upto our necks and I refused to go any further. But he just kept laughing and tried to prod me on. Luckily for us, some villagers came to our rescue and took us across on their mules."

The Tall-One, who was listening to the episode, laughed. "He's a coward you know," he said.

"One should be careful," Ramnath said in a grave voice. "You could have broken your bones."

"One can break one's bones even at home," the Tall-One rejoined.

Madhu's mother, though apparently watching everything, seemed to have withdrawn into her shell. Whenever her gaze strayed over her daughter's face she hastily withdrew it and started looking the other way. This year Madhu had set her face against going to the hills. She said that she could bear the heat of the plains but not anymore the stillness and loneliness of the hills. In the end she had relented and accompanied her parents. She recalled that it was ten years ago that she had first visited this place. But it was now that she had suddenly become conscious of the passage of time—as if during this long period she had drifted from one life into another without being aware of the transition. As she sat there she felt as if she had seen an image in the leaping flames of the fireplace and held her breath.

"*Beti*, we may as well start with the soup," her father said.

Madhu got up wordlessly. It was still raining and the raindrops came pattering over the tin roof.

Asking the servant to bring in

soup she went to her room where a dim lamp was burning. Parting the curtain she opened the window and looked out. A sharp wind was blowing and the branches of the deodars were swaying wildly as if to break away from their trunks. Lightning streaked past in the sky, momentarily showing the mountains pitted against it. Closing the window she raised the wick of the lamp and looked at her reflection in the mirror. Then she suddenly extinguished the lamp. She felt a twinge of hatred for herself and was then overwhelmed by self-pity. How could she let herself go like this? It made her angry. She heard her father calling her and she returned to the drawing room.

The guests were sitting in front of the fireplace. She felt reassured. She thought that her mother was trying to read her mind. She had an uncanny knack of delving into her inner thoughts. One glance and she knew what was passing in her mind.

"Is the soup all right?" she asked the guests, trying to put her mother's mind at ease.

"It's delicious," the Tall-One said. "It's after ages that we are tasting such nice soup."

"Madhu has prepared it. In fact she has done all the cooking," her mother said.

"I've forgotten everything," Madhu said. "I had to consult the servant even to add salt." She laughed and picked up her knitting.

"Why don't you knit sweaters and socks for the children?" the Tall-One asked.

Madhu suddenly stopped knitting and gave the Tall-One a startled look. "Children? But where are the children?"

The Tall-One laughed. "I mean the children of the poor," he said. "Let some deserving ones benefit from your labour."

Mother felt uneasy. She thought the subject was taking a painful turn. There was a loud thunder which shook the whole house. "Would the rain never cease?..."

The servant came and said that the table had been laid.

After three days of incessant rain the sky suddenly cleared and the morning looked washed and clean. The breeze had turned nippy and bracing. Feeling at peace with the world, Madhu decided to make a trip to Dinapani and had some sandwiches packed in a box.

Outside the gate of her house there was a narrow level patch of land called 'the maidan' where the villagers had set up some grocery shops and the like. The shopkeepers knew Madhu and would greet her as she passed. She was particularly fond of Puran, the ten-year old son of the man who ran a tea stall. The boy had big eyes set in an innocent looking face which aroused her compassion. She would stop to talk to him and fondle his head and often brought books and clothes for him. Once she had told her father that she would like to take the boy along with her to the plains but her father was reluctant to take on the responsibility.

The boy, dozing on a bench outside the stall, rose to his feet and smiled as she passed. "How are you Puran?" she said. "Come tomorrow. This time I've a coat for you."

Having gone to Dinapani many times she was quite familiar with the way and could cover it blindfolded. Half way through there was a thick deodar forest. The embankment consisting of rocks running along the forest was covered with moss. She would sit on one of the rocks for a breather. From there she could look beyond the valley and glimpse the meandering road etched against the mountain side and a solitary bus nosing its way along it. At that height and so far away from the road she would feel alienated from life.

But that day her mind was light and limpid like the clear blue sky above. As she trudged along she could have fleeting glimpses of a snow-covered mountain peak from turnings on the way. But she could command a full view of the mountain range only from the top of the hill where Major Thomson's bungalow was once located. She was particularly fond of this spot and did not fail to visit it when she came this way. The swift, lilting wind blowing over the place drove away her fatigue from climbing to the top. One day while walking through the ruins she had discovered a broken tobacco pipe lying between the stones. She had brought it home with her as a memento, sure that it must have belonged to Major Thomson.

In the distance she could see people trudging along the path carrying heavy loads on their back. She could see some houses huddled together and small herds of cows, looking so tiny from the mountain height, leisurely grazing near the houses. Everything looked bright and cheerful. No, that day the cobwebs of her mind had not succeeded in entangling her roaming thoughts in their gossamer labyrinths. A contented smile played across her face. She was feeling free, so full of abandon.

All of a sudden she stopped walking. Right below her, the Tall-One was sitting alone on a rock, his back towards her. Her first impulse was to retrace her steps for she was in no mood to talk to anyone. She stood there wondering how he could have come so far away by himself. What had happened to his companion? Then she saw the man rising to his feet and hoisting his bag over his shoulder. She climbed down and walked upto him.

"A beautiful day for an outing!" he said.

"Hasn't your friend come?" she asked.

"He has gone to town to collect his letters." He laughed. "Even in this forsaken place he keeps looking for letters."

"And you?"

"I?... Whenever I get a letter I feel like throwing it away, unread."

"Have you ever climbed to the top of this hill?" she asked. And when he shook his head she said with gusto, "From nowhere else can you get such a glorious and unbroken view of the snowline. A long time back one Major Thomson used to live here."

"Oh, I see! A Major you said?" the Tall-One's eyebrows went up in surprise. "I didn't know that."

"I fear the climb may prove too stiff for you."

"No, I think I can manage it. I'll climb very slowly."

There was a flat terrain on top of the hill with small clusters of pines along it. At the other end one could see a crumbling wall with many gaps in it. There were debris strewn along it. One could also see a tin roof hanging down from the higher part of the wall. From the road below one could hardly imagine that the wind here could be so strong and gusty.

"It must have been forty or fifty years ago" Madhu said pointing towards the ruins. "People say that the Major went away to fight in the last War and never returned. Nobody knew whether he died or settled down in England. For a few years the chowkidar kept watch over his bungalow. But how long could he keep going without a salary? By and by he started stripping the bungalow of its contents. First to go were the fixtures. They were taken away by the villagers—even the window and door frames. After some years the ruins will also vanish and people may

forget that once Major Thomson's bungalow stood at this place."

"And his family? What about his family?"

"He never married. Even if he had some relative living, would he ever care to come to this desolate place? Nobody ever showed up here."

Pummelled by blasts of the gusty wind the Tall-One stood there surveying the ruins.

"A strange place indeed," he said. "What he must have felt living here, so far away from human habitation! And, in the first place, what was it that induced him to live here?"

They sat down under a pine tree. A mist had risen and some clouds had gathered near the horizon partially blotting out the snowline. The Tall-One lighted a *biri*. His expression was usually open and carefree, his face wreathed in a faint smile. But now he had become thoughtful. Madhu cast a swift glance at him but she did not like to break his reverie. She kept gazing at the mountain of Binsar which rose sheer in front of her.

"It's a strange place," he said in a faint voice as if coming out of his reverie. "And its history must also be equally strange. From the road one could never think that there could be a flat land like this on top of this hill."

Far away, behind, the ruins of Major Thomson's bungalow some snowy peaks stood brooding against the horizon. Madhu watched them fascinated. But the Tall-One seemed to be oblivious of them.

"You see that pine forest over there?" Madhu said. "There is a small hamlet just beyond the forest which goes by the name of Binsar. It consists of eight or nine bungalows most of which have remained unoccupied except the last one in which a family known to us lives. I had visited them a couple of years ago and had felt that I had come to the other end of the world."

The Tall-One was intently looking at Madhu though he did not seem to have any interest in what she was telling him. He was never inquisitive and made do with whatever information was doled out to him or what he observed around him.

"Sometimes I also feel like travelling," Madhu continued. "Just to go places. When my interest in one place flags I would hitch my bag over my shoulder and start off. I shouldn't be bound down to one place, I tell myself. But in our country such a thing is not possible for women."

"Your father told me that you teach in a girl s school."

It seemed she had not heard him.

"When you are in the mountains aren't you reminded of your home, your friends, your childhood? Don't you feel lonely?" she asked.

"That's why I'm here," he replied. "Just to forget all those things. To get rid of them."

"But can you get rid of them in

this manner?" Madhu asked in a grave voice.

The Tall-One's eyes roved over the snow-line, absorbing the scene in mute admiration. He guessed that the peak in front of him should be Nandadevi. He had seen it before.

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Madhu was sitting in the verandah

taking her morning cup of tea when she saw the other hippie approaching her house. Accustomed to seeing them together, his coming alone struck a rather odd note. Maybe he had come to ask for something. She had not seen them for the past two days.

Her father got up from his chair and pushing the other chair towards the visitor invited him to have a cup of tea.

The young man stood still, looking lost.

"Why are you standing? Won't you sit down?"

"Do you know anything about my friend? He is missing since day before." He sat down in the chair looking very worried.

"*Arre!*" Madhu's father said in alarm, almost rising from his chair. "You mean since the last two days?"

"He went out in the morning and that's the last I saw of him. He has not returned since then."

Madhu looked at his face. It looked cold and frozen like a slab of ice. Madhu's mother cast an agitated look at her daughter.

"Has he taken his bag along?"

"No, he hasn't. If he had taken his things with him there would have been no cause for worry."

"He didn't have a word with you before leaving?" Madhu's father resumed his seat. "Did he say anything about visiting some nearby place?"

"He sometimes talked of visiting Badrinath. But we had planned to go there together."

The tea in the cups had gone cold. The sunlight sprawled on the lawn in front. "What can I do?" The young man said in a feeble voice as if speaking to himself.

"I think we must report this to the police. They will act as they think best."

"The police will do nothing," the young man said giving Madhu's father a doubtful look. "They will only harass me—ask me all sorts of silly questions. I think I must keep clear of the police."

"He could have met with an accident," Madhu said. "His foot could have slipped while out on a walk. He may be lying unconscious somewhere. We must make a search."

Her suggestion set all of them thinking.

"We must ask those shopkeepers below," Madhu's father said.

The young man fixed Madhu with his gaze. "That afternoon when he met you near the ruins of Major Thomson's bungalow did he say anything about going to some other place?"

Madhu started thinking. That afternoon was still very vivid in her mind. "I don't remember exactly," she replied. "But he said that if he had to settle down somewhere for good he would choose to build a cottage on that hill."

The young man swallowed down some tea. The verandah lay steeped in stillness. Madhu's father lighted a cigarette.

"We must make a search," Madhu repeated. "There could have been an accident. It could be his bad leg. He would be so helpless if his foot slipped and he had a fracture."

It seemed nobody was willing to believe her. She got up and went into the house.

"I don't even know him well," the young man said. "I happened to meet him at Dharamsala. From there we went together to Leh and then came here." He seemed to be talking in self-defence.

In Madhu's absence her father seemed to have lost interest in the Tall-One.

"How do you wish to proceed in the matter?" he asked the young man.

"I...I?" he gave Madhu's father a startled look. "What can I do? I'll be leaving this place in a day or two."

They did not know when Madhu came out. They saw her standing in the door.

"I'm sure there has been a mishap," she said. "Whenever I saw him walking with that limp I feared that there could be an accident." Madhu looked sad.

"But where can we look for him?" the young man said in an agitated voice. "It would be hopeless in these mountains."

Another hush fell on the verandah. The morning sunlight looked anemic as it spread over the lawn.

"I'm leaving by the night bus." The young man placed a small attache case in a corner of the verandah and then removed a big bag from his shoulder.

"These belong to him," he said. "If he returns please give them to him." He wiped the perspiration from his forehead with his sleeve.

"But..." Madhu's father hesitated.

"He has got your Delhi address. If he does not come here he is most likely to meet you at Delhi. I'm sure he'll call on you there."

Madhu's father did not want to get involved in the complication. Left to himself he would have certainly washed his hands of the affair. "Please sit down. I'll call my daughter," he said.

But Madhu was already standing in the door, dolefully looking at the bag and the attache case.

"I can't take his things with me," the young man said. "I'm afraid I may not meet him again." 卐

Translated from the Hindi by JAIRATAN

An aged man, whom Abraham hospitably invited to his tent, refused to join him in prayer to the one spiritual God. Learning that he was a fire-worshipper, Abraham drove him from his door. That night God appeared to Abraham in a vision and said: "I have borne with that ignorant man for seventy years; could you not have patiently suffered him one night?"

The Talmud.

And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?

Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

—Exodus

The Real Patient

While Dr. Vasant was looking at the X-ray plate, Natavarlal was observing the doctor's face, and his wife Sunita was staring at the plate.

"There is nothing wrong, absolutely nothing. I told you so from the beginning, didn't I?" said the doctor.

"Have you examined her thoroughly, doctor?" asked Natavarlal.

"Certainly!" Then he smiled and said, "Don't you know the saying that a doctor cares more for his patients than a man for his wife?"

"Is it necessary to consult a specialist?"

"Well, if you want to... I don't mind it. In fact, I can give you a note to anyone you would like to go to." Then, as he stood up to go, he said to Sunita, "You must get all right soon. Why do you make us all worried for you?"

The patient was young and

by PANNALAL PATEL

well-dressed and, but for a look of sadness in her eyes, she seemed perfectly healthy. "What can I do? I can't help it," she replied.

"Natavar, I think you brought her to me on the very next day after your wedding, isn't it? Sunita, do you remember?"

Sunita merely lowered her eyes in answer, while Natavar said, "Yes, but that was just a headache."

"Well, that is how it all begins." The doctor then looked at Sunita and said consolingly, "There is nothing wrong with you. All you need to do is to get rid of the idea that you are ill."

During his long years of practice, Dr. Vasant had come across thousands of patients, but he had never come across one who ailed without any illness. Sunita was the first such case. He had tried all kinds of cures, including psychological ones, but nothing helped, and she was getting worse every day. All this had upset her husband and now he was too worried to attend to his business properly.

Dr. Vasant, like many other doctors before him, could not diagnose Sunita's illness. But at the end of six months of treatment, a solution suddenly dawned on him one day. The doctor normally was exuberant and talkative, but today as he entered the hospital, he looked serious and absorbed. Without exchanging a word of greetings with anyone, he made straight for the telephone and gave a ring to his specialist-friend. "Yes, it is the husband who is a patient, but not in the sense you mean. Anyway, the question now is to treat him. I don't have any solution at the moment, but I will find it out. I shall let you know when I do."

Before he left the hospital that morning he gave a ring to Natavar and asked him to see him in the evening.

When Natavar arrived in the evening, the doctor looked up at him and said, "Hello!"

Natavar was in no mood to respond to his cheerful smile. "Excuse me doctor, but you see, I am like a drowning man trying to catch at a straw."

"Well, what's the matter?" asked the doctor.

"You see, doctor, I never meant to distrust your ability but—"

The doctor interrupted him by bursting into a laugh. "Never mind. I have myself seen an expert in this connection."

"I see; but I consulted two others also."

Then the doctor got annoyed and said, "I can't understand why you are squandering away your money." He paused for a moment before resuming, "I can cure Sunita in a week. How much will you pay me for it?"

"Doctor, don't I know that money is not important for you? Yet I'll..."

"My friend, money is important for everybody. It is only you who do not value it."

The doctor suddenly realised that a lot of patients were waiting for him. "Natavar, you have to stay here. You send a message home that you are ill and the doctor says you can't return home." He instructed Natavar and got ready to leave the room.

Natavar was at a loss to understand anything. The doctor added, "Do as I ask you to. I shall explain everything later!" He showed Natavar a room and said, "Go there and lie down on the cot. Don't forget that you were a good actor during your college days."

Natavar got up reluctantly, wondering, "What is he driving at? What does he mean by treating me for my wife's illness?"

As anticipated, Sunita rang up the doctor in ten minutes. He asked the nurse, Ganga, to receive the call and to say that she should ring back after two minutes. When he was rung up again, he instructed the nurse to repeat the same answer. When the third telephone call came Ganga said that the doctor would himself talk to her in a moment.

Sunita waited for long, five tiring minutes counting every second that passed. Then she

became too impatient and called for the chauffeur, Daji. Before he arrived, she got the ring. "I was busy with a patient," the doctor said in a leisurely tone. He paused to listen to her and then said, "Yes, I am talking about Natavar.I don't know what exactly is the matter with him. But don't worry... It is not necessary for you to come over. It might only make your illness worse. I am here to look after him... Well, if you insist on it, I don't mind it. Natavar has brought quite an elaborate prescription for you. If you come over I'll give you your medicine."

He then went to Natavar's room. Natavar partly surprised and partly baffled asked what all this was about. Instead of explaining anything, the doctor merely took out a cigarette and lit it. He had scarcely started smoking when Sunita arrived in the car. The doctor immediately got up, threw off the cigarette, requested Natavar to play his role and asked Ganga to prepare an injection. He started shouting orders to his nurse and compounder in a hurried tone, "Ganga, Bachubhai, be quick." When Sunita entered the hospital, she could hear Natavar crying from his room, "Doctor, I am dying... I can't bear it any longer..."

She rushed to the room in panic and called out, "Doctor!" But the doctor gestured her to keep quiet and to wait in the nearby room, and then closed the door of Natavar's room.

She watched with growing anxiety the silent, shuffling movement of the nurse and the compounder, and it all added to her anguish. As the terrifying silence was broken intermittently by Natavar's screams her heart beat faster and she was gripped by fear.

When the doctor did not come out even after ten minutes she rushed to the door, and, at that very moment the door was opened and she bumped into the doctor. He was reluctant to permit her to enter Natavar's room. Sunita accepted his verdict and meekly followed him to his room. When she inquired about Natavar he replied, "If he is properly cared for, he should be all right within a week."

"Within a week?"

"Yes. But if you don't look after him properly, it maybe months or even years."

"But I am there to look after him."

"Then it's all right."

"If you don't mind, I will come and stay here till he recovers."

"Don't take all that trouble, otherwise you might aggravate your own illness. In fact, you will be helping Natavar to recover if you yourself get better. He worries about you so much..." Then he called his compounder, wrote out a prescription for Sunita and handing it over to him, said, "Prepare this for Sunita."

"But you have already given me medicine for today."

"But this one is according to the prescription of Dr. Mehta whom Natavar consulted this morning."

"He is worrying too much about me and, I think, that has made him sick."

All that the doctor had written in the prescription was, "Water with colour". So the compounder got confused. He came back and asked, "What is this, doctor? I can't read it."

The doctor got up with a start, for he was afraid that his secret might be divulged, and said, "Come on! I will show it to you". He accompanied him to the dispensing room and said, "Add some fruit-salt." He immediately returned to Sunita. "Don't worry. He should get all right within a week."

As she was about to leave, the doctor advised her: "Please take care of yourself. You should be perfectly all right in two days... Please arrange to send tiffin for Natavar... in case he feels like eating, he can have something."

Just before leaving she asked him, "If you don't mind, I should like to have a look at Natavar."

"My God! you have been seeing him all these months and still you want to have a look at Natavar! In any case, it's of little use now. He is almost unconscious."

The doctor led her to Natavar's room, slowly opened the door for Sunita. She saw him sleeping, with his entire body covered, and felt somewhat relieved.

After she left, the doctor called out, "Natavar, come out now!" When Natavar came out the doctor was rollicking with laughter.

Natavar said, "Well, I can't understand what all this is about. It looks like some fantastic storybook stuff. I don't know how Sunita can be cured by my falling sick."

"Have faith in me."

"But please explain it to me. I am afraid I'll really fall sick if I continue like this."

"I wish you had."

"Doctor, please explain."

But the doctor evaded his question. When he asked the doctor if he would permit him to see Sunita, he firmly refused.

In the meantime, Natavar heard the horn of his car. He told the doctor, "Doctor, that may be a call for you. Sunita must have fallen ill because of this shock."

"Don't worry. Now you'd better go to your room."

The car arrived and the doctor saw Sunita walking out of it, quite energetically, with a tiffin-carrier in her hand.

When she was going back the doctor consoled her by saying, "You don't have to worry about him. And don't disturb him by giving me a ring at night. If it's necessary, I will ring you up."

When she asked him about the diet to be given to Natavar, he replied, "Anything he likes. But don't leave it entirely to the cook. Please supervise over him, even if he must prepare it."

"Don't worry, I myself will cook for him."

After she left, he took the tiffin-carrier to Natavar and said, "Now, have your meal to your full!"

While they were eating, the doctor remarked, "Do you find any change in the food?"

Natavar had overheard the conversation between Dr. Vasant and Sunita, so he said, "I never knew that Sunita was such an expert cook."

The next morning he asked the doctor if he could speak to her over the telephone. The doctor replied, "She has already rung me up. In fact, she should be coming here any moment!"

Sunita came. She too was eager to see Natavar. But at first, the doctor refused. Then he relented and said, "All right. But mind you, just a look to convince yourself that he is there and hasn't run away with another woman!"

The doctor slightly opened the door and when Sunita saw Natavar sitting on the cot and drinking tea, she was overjoyed. The doctor said, "Now don't insist on seeing him any more." After a while he asked her, "How did you feel last night?"

"I had a good sleep; only in the morning there was a little pain."

"Good. Continue taking that medicine and you should be all right in two days... Please remember not to exert too much, otherwise there may be a relapse."

"Don't worry. In fact, the more I work, the better I feel," replied Sunita as she left.

The doctor had originaliy wanted Natavar to stay in the hospital for ten days. But then he felt that it would be too cruel to keep Natavar and Sunita apart for so long. So he changed his mind and allowed them to see each other, but only after having strictly instructed Natavar to talk all the time about his illness, and never of hers. After a week, Natavar was allowed to return home. As he was about to leave, the doctor reminded him, "Never forget that a woman is not a lifeless toy, she is made up of solid flesh and blood."

"I can understand all that. But it doesn't solve the mystery. How did I come in the way of Sunita's recovery?"

"I am surprised that even now you can't understand such a simple thing. You provided her with all the possible physical comforts—servants and cook and car and what not—so that she ended up almost as an invalid. To add to all that, you took care of her as if she were a baby. Don't you know that it is woman's nature to take care of others than be cared for? Don't you know that every woman is primarily a mother and a wife only afterwards? You are at the root of her illness. I still remember, in the beginning she was reluctant to take any treatment, and it was you who forced it on her. It was your valetudinarian attitude which ruined her. You did not allow her to look after even her own self. Then what the devil do you expect of her but to fall ill?"

Before he could speak further, the doctor saw Sunita's car coming. He paused for a moment and then gave him parting instructions, "Don't take care of her. Let her take care of you."

They saw her walking out of the car and to his room with the agility of a butterfly. The doctor heaved a sigh of satisfaction.

Sunita invited him to tea, but he merely smiled with a sense of achievement and said, "No, not now". Natavar gave him a grateful look and said, "All right, doctor".

The car whisked off into distace, but the doctor could see, as he stood lost in thought, Sunita waving at him her handkerchief and Natavar his hand. 卐

Translated from the Gujarati by DHANANJAY DESAI.

THE HORSE AND THE TROUSERS

In 1896, Edward, Prince of Wales, owned a horse named Persimmon which he had entered to run in the famed English Derby. Although it had rained on Derby Day and the track was heavy with mud, the American jockey, johnny Watts, gave Prince Edward's horse a fine ride. In a thundering home-stretch drive he piloted Persimmon across the finish line, a winner.

The Prince of Wales was so thrilled by that victory, that he ignored his royal station by leaving the royal box and sloshing through the mud to congratulate his jockey. Along the way, the elastic strap on his trouser leg, under the instep, suddenly snapped. Unembarrased, the Prince of Wales ripped off the broken strap, and turned up the bottom of his trousers so as not to muddy them.

The next day, a revolution in male attire style swept all London. Men appeared everywhere sporting an odd new fashion—trouser bottoms turned up. That style innovation spread throughout the world.

Thus it happened that a horse race was responsible for the universally prevalent trouser cuff.

Mac Davis: **Sports Shorts**

Minnal belonged to God. It was a present to Seelan from Him. That was what Seelan believed.

It was a year ago that Seelan was blessed with the boon. His parents were away at work—his father some where in the town obeying the orders of a contractor with brick in one hand and a trowel in the other, and his mother somewhere running after cows and buffaloes supporting a bamboo basket by her hip. Seelan looked after the house, one among the few small huts on one side of the paddy field. While most of his playmates were sent to the nearby village school, at least for the free food they ate at noon, Seelan was deprived of even that privilege. Being the only son of his poor parents he was constantly needed by his mother to assist her in her work.

The second her basket was heavy with cowdung the mother rushed to the backyard of the hut, emptied the basket under the drum-stick tree very near to the place where dried leaves, groundnut shells, pieces of hay and husks of grain were hoarded for proper use in making the cowdung cake.

Thereafter it was Seelan's concern.

Smiling at her son, she resumed her hunt for cowdung, with the hope that by the time she came back to empty the basket again, Seelan would have made the first load into cakes.

Seelan, with the knowledge he had gained through every-day experience, made a well-proportioned mixture of dried leaves, groundnut shells, pieces of hay and husks of grain. Taking a handful of cowdung he rolled the mixture into a ball and when there was enough of it, he dashed it against the ground or against the trunk of the tree or whichever place he found convenient and beat it to shape. And in a day he made hundreds of round cakes. They would be ready for sale within three or four days, if the sun didn't play his game of hide and seek.

While at work he sang the folk-songs that his mother had taught him to lighten the burden of labour. And sometimes when the songs failed him, he thought of his poor mother running after cattle, sweating all the time under the blistering sun just for the sake of a bowl of rice. Mumbling curses on his drunkard father who every night managed to find the hut merely to get his 'sound' sleep, Seelan would resume his work with tears glistening on his bony cheeks. Then he would forget his father and his struggling mother to find delight in making greenish-brown moons out of cowdung. "God every night makes one and I in the morning make hundreds," he would exclaim in joy.

On one such afternoon when Seelan was busy making cowdung moons, he heard the sky-rending cry of an eagle from above. He threw his head back to look up and see what was wrong. But before his eyes could spot the crier, he heard something fall with a thud onto the dung-heap, splashing his face and bare torso with dung. In his blinded confusion, he heard the soft whispering of the bird.

Seelan hastily wiped his eyelids and face with his forearm and peered into the newly made hollow in the dung heap. To his great astonishment he saw a nestling struggling to release itself.

He jumped towards the nearby

by P. RAJA

The Blood

pot of water and hurriedly put his hands inside, shaking them clean. Then he rushed towards the dung-heap, meticulously parted the dung and finally rescued the prisoner.

It was a week old chicken.

He washed his hands again and cleaned the chicken, now and then soaking his fingers in water.

Seelan was very sure that it belonged to none in the neighbourhood. He felt, since it had fallen from above, that it was a gift to him from God. He forgot the eagle that had disappeared with a shrill cry. With the chicken standing by him shivering, Seelan addressed it, saying:

"You are lucky. Had you not chosen this dungheap to fall on...you wouldn't have been standing as you do now."

"Shieu...shieu," responded the chicken, perhaps in agreement with his words.

From that day the chicken lived with Seelan. Whatever he ate, be it cold rice or *iddli* or even porridge, the chicken had its share. It accompanied him wherever he went, be it the temple of Goddess Kali or the lonely spots where he eased himself. While he was at work, the chicken too made itself busy with the tiny worms that wriggled in the dung. And whenever Seelan was free he took the chicken in his left hand and pawed it affectionately with his right, kissed its tiny head and tinier beak and like a young mother with her new-born, talked softly to it.

The chicken too reciprocated his love by never parting with him even for a second. And at night it huddled close to his warm naked chest and slept with him peacefully. In short, Seelan and the chicken were the happiest of friends on Planet Earth.

"How shall I call you?" Seelan asked the chicken.

It remained silent. He asked his mother how to know its sex.

"You want to know how? It will take at least five months from the day of its birth. If in the fifth month it crows, it is a cock. And if it does not bother to do so, you can be sure it is a hen," said his mother scrupulously.

Seelan was in a fix. How can he name the chicken without making sure of its sex? He was immersed in his thoughts. And all on a sudden he beamed with joy as if he had found a 25 paise coin on the road.

"*Amma!* We'll call it Minnal, for the chick came like lightning from the sky in a flash!" Seelan said.

His mother agreed with a smile. "Very cleverly named, my son!" Patting her son on his back, she said, "Now the question of sex does not arise."

Seelan for the first time in his life felt that apart from his affectionate mother, he had someone else to claim his own. Like a child born after ten or fifteen years of marriage, Minnal was nursed with great care and Seelan showered his love in every possible way from the depth of his heart.

Now the five or ten paise coin his mother used to give Seelan for buying a piece of groundnut cake or a small paper-cone of peanuts or a small measure of fried rice went towards sharing with Minnal. Seelan found immense joy in feeding his friend.

And when the coin came into his hand in the evenings, Seelan, all smiles, would show his acquisition to his friend with pride, and the next minute, he was at Chettiyar's goodies-centre, a stone's throw from his hut. He always preferred to buy fried rice, not only because the Chettiyar gave good quantity of it when compared to other goodies but also because Minnal was fond of it. His trouser pocket half-stuffed with rice, Seelan would run into the backyard of the hut, all the time holding up his pocket from the bottom.

Raising up both his hands like a black-magician conjuring the spirits, he would utter some unintelligible words like *om, cream, reem, preem, sreem.*

Minnal, thus invoked to his side, would eagerly await the shower of fried rice. Then like a wanton monkey on a tree he would jump up and down; and the fried rice would make its way out through the small holes in Seelan's pocket, and scatter on the muddy floor. Minnal with immense gusto would gobble them up.

Minnal grew up to be a hen.

The cocks in the village came to mate with her. But they were invariably beaten up and chased away. Seelan couldn't tolerate his friend being pecked at on her head or suffer any sort of injury done to her.

And one day when his mother saw him being harsh to a cock, she reprimanded him and said shyly: "They are just playing. Allow them to play with Minnal. You know, she will present you with her eggs."

The very thought of eggs made him allow Minnal to play with her mates. But wherever she was and whatever was her game, she always flew straight into his arms when he called her. Only heaven knew how she managed to understand her name and respond to it. Above all she always made it a point to lay her eggs inside the hut.

Seelan's mother was very happy, for each egg fetched her an extra fifty paise. Now she could buy a piece of dried-fish and fry it as a side-dish to the cold rice. And Seelan's goodies too went up in quality at times.

The rainy season came and with it longer spells of hunger. Rain may be a blessing to agriculturists and horticulturists. But to the poor, especially those who can find no work during this season, it was a curse. This was the time when Seelan's family really suffered most. His father whiled away most of his time sitting on the *pyol* of the hut and almost entirely

depended on his wife. When there was nothing to eat in the house, he absconded and neither his wife nor his son ever made any attempt to trace him.

A veritable believer in the maxim, "Where there is a will, there is a way," Seelan's mother usually in this season switched over from dung-collecting to doing household chores in the town. She would do any work that her conscience allowed—from cleaning the kitchen utensils to splitting firewood for fuel.

She went in the morning and returned at dusk with some money or cooked rice mixed with sauce or dried *dosai* or stale bread or whatever her employers gave her in return for the work extracted. And Seelan always awaited her arrival eagerly with the big fat friend in his arms to share whatever his mother brought with her.

One evening she didn't turn up at the expected hour. Perhaps the heavy downpour of rain that started in the evening had held her up. That was how he consoled himself when his anxiety increased. Dreaming of some delicious food that his mother might bring with her, he lay down and curled up.

It was late at night. Seelan woke up with a start to the touch of a cold hand. He blinked, rubbed his eyes and saw in the dim flame of the oil lamp his mother standing before him drenched from head to toe. Water was dripping from her whole body. With a wide smile, she raised her right hand that held a bulging cloth-bag above her hand. Then she brought her left fist very close to Seelan's eyes and opened it. On her palm lay two wet two-rupee notes.

Seelan raised his eyebrows and a smile of hope lit his face.

"I don't know, Amma, when I went to sleep," he said.

She knew the answer, not 'when' but 'why'. It was because of hunger.

While changing her sari, she said, "Look into the bag, Seela. There is something special for you."

Seelan probed into the bag and took out a paper parcel. He untied the thread greedily.

"Hm... chapattis!" He began eating. Munching a mouthful of it, he asked his mother in a mumbling voice why she was late.

"Lucky day, Seela. I have been lucky today. Morning, I washed clothes in a house and swept their big garden. Afternoon, I ground seven measures of rice and blackgram in a canteen and cleaned the kitchen utensils, plates and tumblers. And the reward is two measures of rice, four rupees and three chapattis...our problems are over from today... from tomorrow I'll go to work in the canteen. It is a little far. But that doesn't matter. There will be good food for us and some money too to buy new clothes for the coming Kaliamman festival."

There was a ray of hope on her face. Seelan was very much busy with his chapattis. A good number of pieces went to Minnal too.

"Amma! What about you?" Seelan asked his mother, taking the last chapattis in both his hands and attempting to tear it in halves.

"I ha..ha..ha.." her answer was interrupted by a sneeze. Many more followed. She blew her nose in the hem of her sari and said, "I had enough. In the canteen they gave me *iddlies*."

The usual shrill chirping noise of the cicadas and the croaking of frogs in the fields disturbed the quiet of the night. That night Seelan's mother too had her share of noise to contribute.

Covering herself with an old and torn bed-cover, she wriggled on the mat like a worm on hot sand, all the time coughing. Now and then she disturbed Seelan's sleep and the hen cackled.

At dawn there was not much coughing. But Seelan could very well hear her moanings. He had never seen his mother sleep after sunrise. But unusually on that day she didn't wake up even after the sun behind the murky clouds had illumined the land.

Seelan was uneasy. At last he decided to wake his mother up. He touched her to shake off her sleep but he drew back his hand like one who has touched a live coal. She had high temperature.

He ran to the neighbouring hut. "Akka! Amma has fever!" Seelan said in a sorrow-stricken tone.

"I'll come in a minute," the woman said.

In about ten minutes the woman came to the hut with a small aluminium cup filled with dark bitter medicine extracted from herbs found abundantly in the fields.

"Devaki! Drink this. It will drive away your fever..." the woman said. "I'll cook rice gruel for you."

The woman lit the oven and asked for rice.

She was very helpful to Seelan's mother. The fever went on for four days. The two measures of rice and the two two-rupee notes were made much use of. But the fever and cough remained with her though the country medicine played its part in not letting them get worse.

Seelan waited for Sunday. Sundays brought into the little village, a white-coated doctor and two white-gowned nurses in a yellow van. They gave a lot of white pills free. Seelan had heard the villagers claim that the white pills cured all kinds of diseases.

Sunday came. And with it the expected van. Seelan's mother was given an injection and a small paper-cone of tablets. And the doctor did not forget to advise her to take nutritious fruits and nourishing drinks.

But all that Seelan could do was to go to the Kali temple and pray for his mother.

"Kaliyatha! Restore health to my mother. In turn I'll give you my hair.. I will allow my hair to grow long and have it shaved off in your temple."

It had been ten days since Devaki fell ill. There was some improvement in her health. But she had not enough strength to stand.

The pots in the hut were completely empty. So were the two stomachs. There was not a single leaf left in the drum-stick tree.

The neighbours had the will to help them. But as they were poor there was little they could do except express their sympathy in unison. At last an old man casually suggested to him:

Your hen may fetch you some fifteen to twenty rupees in the town. Your mother, after that severe illness, should not have an empty stomach. When she regains her health and goes to work, she will buy for you as many hens as you want."

The advice of the old man brought tears to Seelan's eyes.

The understanding old man patted Seelan's back affectionately and said: "Well! Decide who is more important."

That night Seelan didn't have a wink of sleep. His heart laden with sorrow, he tossed incessantly on his mat. He felt a tug-of-war going on in him. He wished that his useless father might come with a few measures of rice. But he also knew that his father must have heard of his wife's illness and would never dare to come; he would consider it a

criminal waste of time to sit on the *pyol* of the house for nothing.

The day dawned miserably and with a heavy downpour. Seelan decided who was more important.

A year of intimate friendship gave way to seven years of affection and love.

Determined once for all, Seelan got up and looked at his mother curled up on her mat and fast asleep. He didn't disturb her. He knew pretty well that sleep was the only boon that God gives to the poor when the worries of poverty are temporarily forgotten.

Seelan wore a filthy old sack which rose in a peak above his head and fell to his knees, under which he kept Minnal tightly in his arms. Protecting her from the rain and giving her all his warmth and love, the began his journey. He was crying silently. Kissing her little head and her broad wings and talking to her all the way, he entered the poultry farm in the town.

"This hen is for sale," said Seelan to the man in the poultry.

"We do not buy but only sell here," came the curt reply.

Seelan was disappointed. He had the hope that by selling Minnal to the poultry farm he could come later to buy her back when his mother had enough money. He was prepared to forgo his new clothes for Kaliamman festival.

His heart was bursting with pain as he went about crying at the top of his voice "Kozhi...kozhi.." in the streets of the town. He was the only creature moving about on the street in that rain and had to outshout the downpour. A keen damp wind howled away and gave the trees that stood on either side of the street no rest.

His call was at last answered. A middle-aged man came out of a house and bade Seelan come in.

He took the hen in his hands in an attempt to find out her weight.

"How much?" asked the man.

"Twenty rupees."

"Twenty rupees!" exclaimed the man. He mumbled to himself: "Twenty rupees for this big fat hen. It's cheap."

But anything that came so cheap made him suspicious the so he backed out:

"Well! But does she belong to you? Or have you stolen her?"

The unexpected question baffled Seelan. It brought a stream of tears to his eyes. He wanted to say it belonged to God. But the words were arrested in his throat... Finally he managed to say: "I have not stolen it."

The man shot his next question. This time a foolish one. "Why are you selling it?"

"To buy medicine and food for my bed-ridden mother," Seelan said sheepishly and broke into sobs.

The man was touched by his sobbing. "All right. All right!" he said consolingly, "Don't cry. I'll buy the hen." He went in.

Seelan for the first time in his life perceived what a twenty rupee note looked like. He received it with both his hands. But the sorrow of parting with his friend Minnal dimmed the joy of possessing a twenty-rupee note.

It was only then the man saw the hen standing with her legs untied.

"Oh! Oh! What the hell? Where is the cord that tied the hen's legs? Hold her. Hold her lest she should fly away," shouted the man.

"She will never, Sir, as long as I am by her side," responded Seelan.

The man was really astonished to see the hen without fetters and yet making no effort to escape. He found it unbelievable but did not want to hold the boy for long.

"Well! Go to the backyard with her. I'll be there in a few minutes," said the man.

At the backyard of the house, Seelan stood in the cowshed and removed his sack drenched to its very fibre.

Seelan looked at Minnal that sat comfortably in his arms. Those were the last minutes of their friendship. A sudden wind slammed the backyard door of the house shut. Distracted by the sound, Seelan heaved a sigh and then mumbled to his Minnal, "You were mine. Now you belong to the man of this house."

The backyard door creaked open and out came the man with a sharp kitchen knife, and a vessel.

Seelan was shocked. He stood as if turned to stone. The rain from the sky stopped but there was a downpour from Seelan's eyes. He felt his heart thundering.

He came back to his senses when he heard the man shout: "Kill the hen." Seeing Seelan's tear-soaked cheeks, he consoled: "Thinking of your mother! Don't worry, my boy, God is there... And when you have prepared the chicken ready for the kitchen, you can have a few *iddlies* from my wife for your mother... But flay the skin well and remove its intestines before you hand it over to my wife..."

"No..no..," Seelan screamed. "I can't kill my hen."

The man gave a sharp, searching look. "What? Can't kill the hen!" He yelled. "Then why the hell did you take a twenty rupee note from me? Your hen is not worth that much money. The amount includes the labour charges for killing the hen and cleaning its flesh."

"But you didn't tell me that when you gave me the money." His voice was a pleading whine.

"Impertinent... You poor fellows are not to be pitied. Impertinent... Either kill the hen or give me back my money and get lost with your hen." The man roared and left.

Seelan's heart was bursting with pain. He thought that he would not survive his sorrow. He looked at the knife. It reminded him once again of his starving mother. And the twenty-rupee note in his left hand seemed to say: "Seela! I am here to help you for a week at least."

Seelan was hesitating to take the knife in his hand. But he was forced to when he heard a shrewd voice from the kitchen.

"Is it ready?"

The frightening tone did not permit him to remain silent. Taking the knife he said, "It will be ready."

Tears blurring his vision, he looked at Minnal. As if she understood the situation Minnal squatted on her legs. Seelan saw a divine glow in her eyes.

With shivering hands, he brought the sharp edge of the knife very close to Minnal's neck.

She didn't make the least sound. Instead she closed her eyelids and stretched her neck to make Seelan's work easier.

Holding the twenty rupee note in between his teeth, he grabbed Minnal's neck with his left hand. Then closing his eyes in agony he began the bloody affair.

While in action, the sharp knife did more than it was expected to do. It gashed Seelan's left palm.

The excruciating pain made him open his eyes. He realized that he was holding the bleeding head of his Minnal in his palm. He slowly opened his hand. The severed head opened its beak in a yawn and closed it forever.

He looked at his new wound.

He was unable to distinguish his blood from Minnal's.

MAGICAL

All my life, I now realise, I have been nourished and secretly sustained by certain moments that have always seemed to me to be magical. If I have completed the tasks and shouldered the burdens all the way, finishing the marches without handing over my rifle and pack or dropping out, it is neither conscience nor energy that has kept me going but the memory and the hope of this magic. It has visited me before; it will come again. Sooner or later I would taste the honey-dew once more. And if this is to have a romantic temperament, then I have a romantic temperament. If there is immaturity here, then I am still immature in my seventy-first year.

But here I shall fire a few rounds in the direction of the enemy camp. People who in their confident maturity reject this magic, who have instant 'nothing-but' explanations of everything, are either kept going by their vanity—and the vanity of severely rational persons is astounding—or not sustained at all, existing hungrily in despair, seeking power at all costs, trying various brutal excesses, or stiffening into automata. I can imagine an age, in which this magic has been explained away, that would cover the world with zombies all manipulated and directed by power-maniacs. In such an age, power and organisation and machinery would be everything, poetry would be nothing. How far off is it?

Sometimes I have wondered the seemingly inexplicable *rages* of the young, violently destructive now in so many different countries, might not be explained by the non-arrival of these magical moments. Something expected, promised at birth, is missing. Where among all these prompt deliveries of Grade-A pasteurised is the milk of paradise? However, it is true that for one lad who is breaking windows there are a hundred, not mentioned in the papers, who never pick up a brick. And it is not for me to say that our Pop culture never brings its magical moments. But what is certain is that it does not attempt the grand and sublime, which is what we cry out for in our youth. On the other hand, it is equally certain that whenever the Eroica or the Choral Symphony is being performed, the cousins of the brick-throwing lads will be there, if necessary standing for hours. The contemporary scene is now so wide and complicated that anything can be proved from it. I must return to myself.

Describing an innings by Jessop, Neville Cardus wrote: "He at once took the game out of the prison of cause and effect." That is what these moments have always done for me. That is why they are magic. Two and two suddenly make 25. In a flash they add another dimension to existence. They award us, for as long as they last, a bonus, huge, irrational, glorious. We win a prize from God knows where. It isn't earned and deserved: that would be justice or fair-dealing, a decent cause producing a satisfactory effect; whereas this is magic. It belongs to the fairytale world, in which the idlest of the three lads in the forest meets the princess, and hardly anything that happens could be explained by experts writing in the weekly journals. Indeed, the moments are entirely beyond the reach of experts, who, I am convinced, never experience them. They favour the woolly-minded, of whom, I am proud to declare, I am one. Brush away all wool, give yourself a first-rate razor-sharp intellect, and you will go far, and probably a hell of a long way from this magic. This is one reason why men who have arrived where they have always wanted to be are impressive but not much fun to be with, so that their women so often look depressed. Whatever they may say, women believe in a magical world. They are seen in the prison of cause and effect only on visiting days.

It is my experience that these moments arrive as and when they choose. They cannot be summoned, nor even induced, beckoned. But of course some circumstances are more favourable than others. It is just possible I might be visited by one of these moments while reading a report on the tinplate industry, or a list of arthritic patients in Bedfordshire, but all odds are heavily against it. On the other hand, I have found the arts most generous with these magical moments and this is one good reason—there are several others, mark you—for hanging around with them. If this last phrase suggests an absence of painstaking study, anxious application, then it is doing what I intended it to do. I suspect—though of course I am

by J.B. PRIESTLEY

MOMENTS

writing within the limits of my own temperament—that you have to hold yourself a bit loosely, not bothering about cultural improvement, for the magic to work.

In the long run, which is where I am now, music has worked best for me though when I was younger I think literature and drama were neck-and-neck with it. The visual arts have given me enormous enjoyment—and indeed I am a bit of a holiday painter myself—but for some reason obscure to me they have rarely brought me these magical moments. Perhaps my ear provides a shorter cut to enchantment than my eye. Certainly music may do the trick when it is far below its highest level. Let nobody imagine I have to wait for Bach's B Minor Mass or Beethoven's late quartets. To give the first example that occurs to me—and I could offer dozens—in the opening movements of his Cello Concerto and his D Minor Symphony, Dvorak makes his woodwind trail after his main themes—they are like sunlit wisps of dissolving cloud—and to this day the magic has not utterly faded from them. Again, listening recently to a new recording of Elgar's First Symphony (which I had long thought I didn't care for), I found that with the muted trombones at the end of the third movement, the *Adagio*, the sudden magic seemed almost luminous as if the gods walked the earth again. Enough, enough!

How far and with what complex and depth the arts interact with life, we do not know, though some brave writers—Proust, for instance—have refused to avoid the subject. It may be that people who know and care nothing about the arts have known as many magical moments as the rest of us have—perhaps even more if they happen to be introverts living in lonely places. (But probably far fewer if they happen to be ambitious politicians, editors of sensational newspapers, brisk salesmen, New York taxi drivers.) There seems to me no difference in quality between the moments coming by way of the arts and those that arrive, quite unexpectedly, in our ordinary daily life. These are more remarkable than the immensely heightened moments of travel, of which most of us could furnish examples—and perhaps too often do. In my life I have suddenly known the greatest happiness always when *there was no apparent reason for it*—when out of nowhere there came floating up the great bubble. I shall never forget walking once, some years ago, along Piccadilly and across Leicester Square in a blinding snowstorm, which made walking difficult and did not seem to me at all picturesque and romantic, and yet I walked the whole way in a kind of ecstasy, as if in another world, magical and immortal. And there was no reason for it at all, not the tiniest scrap of any possible cause.

It is the same, at least in my experience, with personal relationships. I have never needed any help from manuals on how to get rich in the private commerce between the sexes; but even so, I think we are now inclined to make too much out of the bedroom scenes in our love stories. It is my experience that even in love the magical moments come when they please, often when we are wearing all our clothes and are far from the bedroom. I can remember a moment of complete insight and perfect understanding, as if one had been given the freedom of a strange continent, that arrived in a dreary little teashop near the ministry from which I had extracted the lady of my choice. There were not even any words, just a meeting of eyes above the teacups, but a magical meeting, in which there was the promise of many happy years, an unearned bonus if there ever was one.

So long as we experience these moments, we live in a magical world. (And don't let anybody talk you out of it, boy.) I was arguing the other day with a clever young man who said that we are machines—extraordinarily elaborate, intricate, delicate, subtle—but machines. I said that we weren't so long as we remained open-ended, with one end open to the collective unconscious, the whole heritage of earth life, and the other open to influences beyond our understanding. And perhaps, it is when we are suddenly opened a little more at either end that two and two seem to make 25, another dimension is added, we taste the honey-dew, and all is magical. Of course the moments do not arrive as often as they did, but I soldier on in the belief that I have not yet used up my ration, that there are still a few more to come. *(Courtesy, New Statesman).* 卐

HOW DID THE WORLD WAR II BEGIN????

by M.D. GOPALRATHNAM

Forty years ago the bloodiest, costliest war—World War II-came to an end. How did it begin? How did the sombre war-clouds gather? What foul and furious winds assembled them? How did the dreadful thunderbolt finally strike?

Youths of the present generation, save such of those who have studied European history, may not be altogether familiar with the series of strange, sinister and singular events that inexorably led to the great World War II forty-five years ago, to be exact—on September 3, 1939. To recall those memorable episodes is to live through an extraordinary experience. These events, ever-absorbing and all-arresting are chronicled here as they unfolded as a macabre melodrama, with the whole globe as the amphitheatre. A power-crazy and land-hungry megalomaniac is the arch-villain who started it all, and a stocky, stubborn, intrepid and indomitable leader is the hero who challenged him.

It was in January, 1933 that Adolf Hitler, an Austrian tramp, metamorphosed into a fiery demagogue and a dynamic leader of the fascist Nazi party, became the Chancellor of the German Reich. It did not take him long to consolidate his power as the supreme Fuhrer, trample over the constitutional government and feverishly rearm Germany in all spheres-ground, air and sea—in violation of the Treaty of Versailles (1919) concluded at the end of World War I. Only one statesman in the whole of Europe saw through Hitler's plans for ruthless expansion: it was Winston Churchill, then without office and only a member of the House of Commons in Britain, who warned: "Germany already at this moment has an illegal air force rapidly approaching equality with our own. The German air force will this time next year be in fact at least as strong as our own or even stronger... By the end of 1936, it will be nearly 50% stronger and in 1937 nearly double..."

But these ominous warnings went unheard and unheeded. Lloyd George, the veteran statesman talked of the magnificent armies of Czechoslovakia and Poland to checkmate Germany. Sir Herbert Samuel, the Liberal leader labelled Churchill as a scaremonger. "This is rather the language of a Malay running amuck," he bantered. "It is rather the language of blind and causeless panic." Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin stoutly denying Churchill's allegations remarked, "Germany's strength is not 50% of our strength" but, very soon, he had to eat his words and frankly admit that he had been completely wrong in his estimate of German military strength.

Paradoxically enough, open, fierce aggression was not at first unleashed by Hitler, but by Italy's Duce, Benito Mussolini (later Hitler's accomplice), who in July 1935 made a bloody conquest of hapless Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). This unprovoked assault did not evoke any stern reaction from Britain or France and thus further encouraged Hitler in his reckless adventures. In March 1936, breaking the Versailles Treaty again, he sent his troops across the Rhine and occupied Rhineland, a tiny demilitarised territory but industrially most covetable. France did not resist the move and England's Prime Minister, Baldwin,

Churchill inspecting bomb damage at Bristol in March 1941

CARPETS
DOKHARA PALACE

The Times of India
ESTABLISHED 1838

BRITAIN DECLARES WAR ON GERMANY

Mr. Chamberlain

ANGLO-FRENCH ULTIMATUM REJECTED BY REICH

ALL ENGLAND GREETS MR. CHAMBERLAIN'S DECISION; PARLIAMENT'S APPROVAL

NEW WAR CABINET INCLUDES MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL

KING GEORGE'S CALL TO THE EMPIRE TO FIGHT FOR PRINCIPLE

NOT ALONE

A Nazi parade in Nuremberg: Adolf Hitler (right) surrounded by members of S.A., gives Nazi salute.

preferred to look the other way. Churchill's eloquence condemning this aggression in Parliament rose to majestic heights: "The government simply cannot make up their minds, or they cannot get the Prime Minister to make up his mind. So they go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all-powerful to be impotent. So we go on preparing for more months and years—precious, perhaps vital, to the greatness of Britain—for the locusts to eat."

During the whole of 1937, Hitler was waiting in the wings, always augmenting his forces and consolidating his alliance with Mussolini. And the German ambassador in London, Von Ribbentrop, dared to speak bluntly to Churchill: "War is inevitable. There is no way out. The Fuhrer is resolved. Nothing will stop him." Churchill's passionate plea to the British Government for a military alliance of European democracies fell on deaf ears.

The year 1938 found Hitler overweening, arrogant and bellicose. His forces smashed into Austria on March 11, overrunning that country in just one day and on March 13, Austria was declared a province of the 'German Reich'. Even Joseph Stalin, the Russian Head of State, who was all along a passive onlooker, was not a little disconcerted by this audacious invasion. He suggested a Four-Power Conference to discuss moves to prevent further Nazi aggression. Neville Chamberlain, who in the meantime had replaced Baldwin as the Prime Minister of England, turned down this proposal, observing that all that Germany had done was to unite itself with another German-speaking region. Churchill, however, continued to give vent to his dire forebodings: "For five years, I have talked to this House on these matters—not with great success. I have watched this famous island decending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on, there are only flagstones and a little farther on still, these break beneath your feet... Now is the time at last to rouse the nation. Perhaps it is the last time it can be roused with a chance of preventing war or with a chance of coming through to victory, should our efforts to prevent war fail." But he was again branded a mighty bore, a sabre-rattler and a frightened fool.

Between April and September, 1938, the strength of the German army further increased and an imperious Hitler now demanded that the German-inhabited province of Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia should be made over to Germany, threatening immediate invasion

Mussolini with his sons Bruno (left) and Vittorio (right)

for the ostensible purpose of protecting German nationals there. The visibly unnerved Chamberlain, Prime Minister of England, personally flew to Berlin on September 15, to appease the German dictator. But Hitler defiantly bellowed: "300 Sudetens have been killed and the thing has to be settled at once. I do not care whether there is a world war or not. I am prepared to risk a world war rather than allow this to drag on." Chamberlain was placed in a frightful dilemma. Along with Leon Blum, the French Premier, he exerted pressure on the Czechs to yield to Hitler's terms and Czechs had to comply with the agreement reached. Chamberlain, bringing this historic Munich agreement with him to London, one rainy afternoon (September 30, 1938) exclaimed rapturously, "Peace! Peace at last! Peace in our times! Peace with honour!" In the House of Commons, he harangued: "How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is

A grim Prime Minister Churchill walks through the ruins of Coventry.

'God bless your brave hearts,' Churchill said, and later: 'Their houses are low but their hearts are high.'

Homecoming—Austrian-born Hitler leads the Nazis into his native land in March 1938.

A Nazi rally at Nuremberg after Hitler had become the German Chancellor.

that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here, because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing."

Hitler's triumphant troops marched in, occupying 11,000 square miles of Czechoslovakia, exiling its President, Eduard Benes. With seething sarcasm, Churchill described the deal: "One pound was demanded at the pistol-point. When it was given, two pounds were demanded at the pistol-point. Finally, the dictator consented to take one pound, seventeen shillings and six pence and the rest in promises of goodwill for the future." As before, he was shrugged off as a crank, while Chamberlain and the French Foreign Minister, Daladier, the architects of Munich sell-out were hailed as heroes. Later, however, the word 'Munich' went into the dictionary as a synonym for 'cowardly surrender'.

The peace that the much-blazoned Munich agreement brought was only a brief chimerical interlude. Barely six months after his annexation of Sudetenland, on the pretext of Czech persecution of Germans, Hitler gobbled up the rest of Czechoslovakia, while Mussolini annexed the tiny, helpless Albania with an uneasy Chamberlain displaying a seemingly indifferent attitude. "All is over. Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into darkness... This is only the beginning of the

Premier Stalin with German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop.

SRI AUROBINDO ON WORLD WAR II

We feel that not only is this a battle waged in just self-defence and in defence of the nations threatened with the world-domination of Germany and the Nazi system of life, but that it is a defence of civilisation and its highest attained social, cultural and spiritual values and of the whole future of humanity.

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It is a struggle for the liberty of mankind to develop, for conditions in which men have freedom and room to think and act according to the light in them and grow in the Truth, grow in the Spirit. There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one side wins, there will be an end of all such freedom and hope of light and truth and the work that has to be done will be subjected to conditions which would make it humanly impossible; there will be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise. If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs, this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have been created in which there will be a chance for the Ideal to grow, for the Divine Work to be done, for the spiritual Truth for which we stand to establish itself on the earth. Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura.

From a letter

bitter cup which will be proferred to us year by year," so declaimed Churchill, called by his critics as the 'Prophet of Doom', in the British Parliament.

Hitler now turned his eyes menacingly on neighbouring Poland and clamoured for the return of the 'Free City' of Danzig and provision of an extra-territorial corridor across Poland from Germany. Nazi propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, visiting Danzig, said that the city joining the Reich was inevitable and any power trying to prevent it would make a mistake because Germany was unlike some other states whose destinies were in the hands of weak men.

With his next target as Poland, Hitler was naturally averse to having hostile nations on both sides, east and west. Hence he made a sudden surprise tactical move in August 1939, when he concluded a mutual trade and non-aggression pact with Stalin which shattered Poland's hopes of getting any help from Russia. That distressed nation therefore rushed to the arms of Britain and both signed a military alliance. At long last, the British Premier, Chamberlain, decided to resist rather than appease and warned Hitler that there must be a peaceful and freely negotiated solution of the Polish question. France closed her German frontier; rationing began in Germany; Britain, France, Germany and Poland were nearly fully mobilised.

But, nothing would move Hitler from the pre-destined path of destruction he had to tread. On August 29, Hitler demanded that a Polish negotiator should come within 24 hours with full powers to act. Closely following up, on the fateful day of September 1, 1939, and without any formal declaration of war, Hitler's forces marched into Poland. Britain and France demanded their immediate withdrawal and resumption of negotiations. In response to this, Hitler donned his war-uniform and exclaimed: "I will not take it off until victory is ours or I shall not live to see the end." On September 3, at 9 A.M., Britain at last issued an ultimatum to Germany that it should draw back its forces from Poland before 11 A.M., or else the two nations would be in a state of war. A similar French ultimatum was also issued. At 11.15 hours, Chamberlain broadcast to his nation: "This country is at war with Germany. May God bless you all and may He defend the right!" and went before the people to bewail—"Everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I believed in during my public life has crashed into ruins!" 卐

FROM CHAMBERLAIN

There is only one thing left for me to do: that is, to devote what strength and powers that I have to forwarding the victory of the cause for which we have to sacrifice so much... I trust I may live to see the day when Hitlerism has been destroyed and a liberated Europe has been re-established.

FROM CHURCHILL

You ask, What is our policy? I will say: It is to wage war by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never suspassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory—victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror; victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.

For Better Hearing

The list of gifts President Reagan has received during last year, released recently, shows that his well-wishers have presented him four hearing aids.

The well-wishers probably wished him to hear the inaugural sound of nuclear explosion in one of his favourite aid-loaded Asian countries and the inevitable ecohes in its neighbouring countries.

Cockroaches—the Hope for the Future

Legions of cockroaches have settled in the Capitol Hill, the house of the U.S. Congress. Mr. Silvio Conte, a Congressman, has called for a war to destroy them.

What Mr. Conte does not realise is, cockroaches are the only creatures likely to survive a nuclear war. Their choice of the Capitol Hill is significant.

Darker Nights

Some Middle East countries have banned *The Arabian Nights*. No wonder, now that voyages into far darker nights are launched.

Vegetarianism to Rescue

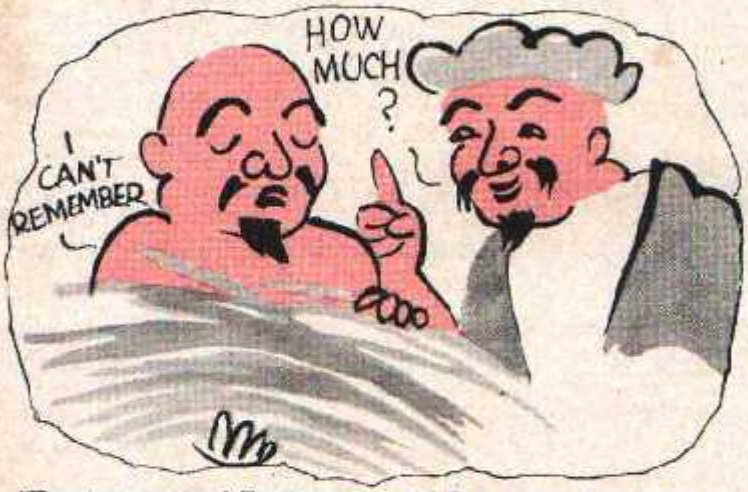
Mr. Jeremy Eversholt of Britain who defied a red traffic signal, was chased and caught by a police sergeant. But Mr. Eversholt bit the sergeant on the neck.

His defence in the court is, he could not have done it because he is a vegetarian!

TALES FROM RURAL JAPAN

How a people laugh reveals much. Here are some selected anecdotes from the wide Japanese folklore.

While organised structure and logical unity form the basic principles of Western literature, Japanese literature tries to minimise the role of the intellect and attempts to portray the rhythm and flow of life. In line with the same principles, the Japanese comic theorists such as Okura Toraaki, have emphasised that comedy should be delightful rather than funny and, "to be superb and moving is even better... Everything ends in pathos." As Chamberlain writes in his ***Things Japanese****, "Japanese fun does not in the very faintest degree resemble French esprit, that child born of pure intellect and social refinement... Shall we compare it with the grim mixture which we Northerners call humour, the grotesque suffused with the pathetic?... It is more like...the old Roman saturnalia—the broad jest, the outrageous pun, the practical joke, the loud guffaw...baffoonery and tomfoolery, high jinks of every sort." In brief, Japanese humour is more humane, devoid of any personal animus or spitefulness or irony.*



"Forget-me-grasses! Forget-me-grasses! Buy some; they are very cheap today," shouted the flower-seller as he ran across the street. A visitor to the town stopped the young seller and asked, "What's the speciality of this grass, tell me, my boy?" "Sir, everyone here knows that when you smell this grass you'll forget all your problems—the hunger of poverty, the pain of injustice, the cold of winter—everything!" "How wonderful!" exclaimed the stranger. "I'd like to buy a bunch—how much is it?" "Sir... I'm sorry... I have forgotten!"

A monk was caught plucking a fowl. "Aren't you ashamed of such an act?" asked a passer-by. "It's not my fault. It wanted to become a monk and it requested me to shave it!" replied the monk.

The thief was caught red-handed. Not knowing how to escape from the house, he stood with his arms outstretched on the wall and told the master of the house, who was standing in front of him, "Sir, I'm only your shadow!"

It was the dusky hour when the man entered the dark house. As he groped in the darkness, he stepped on a hatchet which he promptly picked up and hid under his coat. A little later, when his eyes got accustomed to the darkness of the room, he saw that a few people were sitting in the hall, looking at him. He felt ashamed for his act, but, he could neither keep the hatchet nor put it back in its place.

Soon, another person entered the hall and started groping in the darkness. The first person walked to him, took out the hatchet from under his coat and giving it to him, said, "Keep this under your coat. You'll see better in the darkness. Luckily, I had learnt this secret from a hermit."

"Can I borrow your tea-kettle for an hour?" asked the neighbour. The lady replied, "I'm sorry, I can't lend it, for it is most attached to my household. I'd suggest, you come and make your tea here in my house."

A week later, the lady approached the neighbour, asking for a ladder. "Surely you can use it," said the neighbour. "But, you see, as it does not like leaving this house, you climb on it here itself—if you don't mind!"

After many days of hunting, the thief was caught. It was decided to execute him.

"What is your last wish?" asked the executioner.

"Let me sing my death-song," replied the thief and he sang:

"At this time
How I would regret
To leave this world,
Had I not known from the first
That I must die."

"It's a lie! It's a song by the famous poet Ota Dokan!" shouted an on looker.

"Yes, this is my last theft," replied the thief.

The intoxicated father returned home and on seeing his son, said, "Son, you have got three heads and I can't give my house to such a hideous person."

"I don't mind it. In any case I do not want to own a house that goes round and round and round like this one," replied the son, as drunk.

"Will you do me a favour?" asked the friend.

"Surely, what's it?"

"Can you lend me 500 yen?" asked the friend.

"Surely. Can I in turn ask of you a favour?"

"Surely, what's it?" asked the friend.

"Could you please cancel your request?"

JOURNEY INTO "THE MORNING OF THE WORLD" BALI

In Bali I saw the only happy large community I have seen in my life.
*—Geoffrey Gorer, **Bali and Angkor**, 1936.*

In December a grand festival, called the Bali Yatra, is held on the banks of the river Mahanadi on the outskirts of the city of Cuttack. According to a legend this celebrates the annual expeditions to the island of Bali by the Indian merchants of yore.

There is no evidence in history of Hindus converting others to their religion. Yet the only country that had entirely taken to Hinduism was Bali. (Today, of its 2.5 million people, 95% are Hindus.) The movement must have been spontaneous. Exemplary must have been the ideals set and expositions made by the early Hindu travellers to Bali, some two thousand years ago. Very little is known about them. Take for example the case of one Sri Markandeya, the founder of or the first priest at Besakih Temple, Bali's oldest shrine—adored as the Mother Temple—situated midway up the dreaded volcanic mountain Gunung Agung. The volcano had once erupted long ago. Then, for the second time it erupted in A.D. 91, spewing a terrible flow of death and destruction. "The earth trembled; rains fell continuously for days and nights and there was darkness," says a record.

And it was during this period when the island lay prostrate to the thundering Mount Agung that God descended for the first time on Bali, asserts the oldest legend of the island. He became three divine Beings and the greatest of them, to be worshipped as Hyang Mahadewa or Siwa Mahadewa, settled on Mount Agung.

Does the legend symbolise the advent of some zealous Hindu explorers in the island? Did they—among them Sri Markandeya—give a mystic interpretation to the catastrophe? One does not know, and there is little hope of future research revealing much.

However, if India knew Bali most intimately in a remote past, the West hardly knew about it until the thirties of this century. Then, in a short time, it became a tourist craze. In 1937 a Mexican painter and scholar Miguel Coverrubias observed in his book, *Bali*, that subsequently became a classic of a sort, "No longer will the curious Balinese of the remote mountain villages, still unaccustomed to the sight of whites, crowd around their cars to stare silently at the 'exotic' long-nosed, yellow-haired foreigners in their midst. But even when all the Balinese will have learned to wear shirts, to beg, lie, steal, and prostitute themselves to satisfy new needs, the tourists will continue to come to Bali to see the sights, snapping pictures frantically, dashing from temple to temple, back to the hotel for meals, and on to watch rites and dances staged for them. The Balinese will be, to the tourists, guides, chauffeurs, and bellboys to be tipped, dancers on salary, curio-dealers, and tropical beauties to be photographed blouseless for a fee."

The ominous prediction has come true in all its external ferocity, but not quite in spirit. The Balinese have not prosti-

by MANOJ DAS

have been obliged to stand at a wrong place, but its personality was bound to impress you. And as one enters Denpasar, Bali's capital, one is likely to be more influenced in one's mood by such sculptured beings, some old and some new, than by crowds who look so insignificant before them. They are characters, human, divine and otherwise, from the Hindu epics. Innumerable Balinese institutions and shops are named after them.

There is nothing more helpful in a travel than having a kind and intelligent companion. And I had with me Jagir Singh Riar from Singapore, younger in age, but a guardian in spirit and who, I suspect, accompanied me moved by sheer sympathy for an absent-minded friend. Thus, I could become a traveller with a total abandon.

And that is exactly the mood one needs—a mood of giving oneself up to the environment, when driving from the airport into Denpasar. Warbling sea and unspoilt fields escort you for quite some time before handing

tuted themselves any more than any other country solicitous of tourists. It is still "The Morning of the World", as Nehru described it, though a clouded morning. Something of the ancient serenity still dominates the atmosphere of Bali. I felt it the moment I came out of the plane. The ornately carved stone guardian staring at the disembarking passengers might

Left: Legong dancer
Centre: Tari Tamulilingan, Bali
Right: Balinese 'Janur' (young coconut leaves) arrangements using fruits as temple offerings

you over to quiet suburban hamlets.

One of course does not visit Bali for sake of Denpasar, a beautiful city marred by unplanned commercialism. Bali is to be seen in her interior regions—some of which are as picturesque as they are fabulous.

The most ancient Balinese village that retains its pristine lifestyle is Tenganan—supposed to be the home of a community that has retained the pre-Hindu culture. (Are they really pre-Hindu as the current literature on Bali terms them? Their God is Indra!) Till 1972 it was not even possible to ascertain its population, for no outsider was allowed into the village. However, now they let their births and deaths be recorded and don't grudge visitors. They are nearly 300 families. No couple has more than two children, I was informed. One who marries in a family outside the village is obliged to build his house outside the village wall.

The villagers, since time immemorial, have owned a large area of land tilled by people of other villages. The land was given to them by the King of Bedaulu in a queer circumstance. The king lost his favourite horse and announced a reward for anyone who could bring news of it to him. The chief of the village located the dead horse. When the king offered him a reward, he asked to be given land as far as the air was pervaded by the smell of the dead horse.

The king's minister accompanied the chief to determine the area. No matter how far they walked, the smell persisted. Tired, the minister let the chief have the land as far as he could see and went back to the king.

After the minister left, the chief quietly removed a piece of rotten horse-flesh he had tucked in the hollow of his walking stick.

The Balinese dance, like the classical dance of India, seems to have originated in temples. The *Pendet* or the sacred dance is performed as an offering to the Deities. The age of the dancer does not count here, as in the case of the *Devadasi*. The *Pendet* is a must during a festival, the dancers performing it while holding offerings in their hands.

The other sacred dance is the *Rejang*. This is generally danced by a score or two of young girls.

They hold on to one another and, encircling a shrine, dance in a slow rhythm.

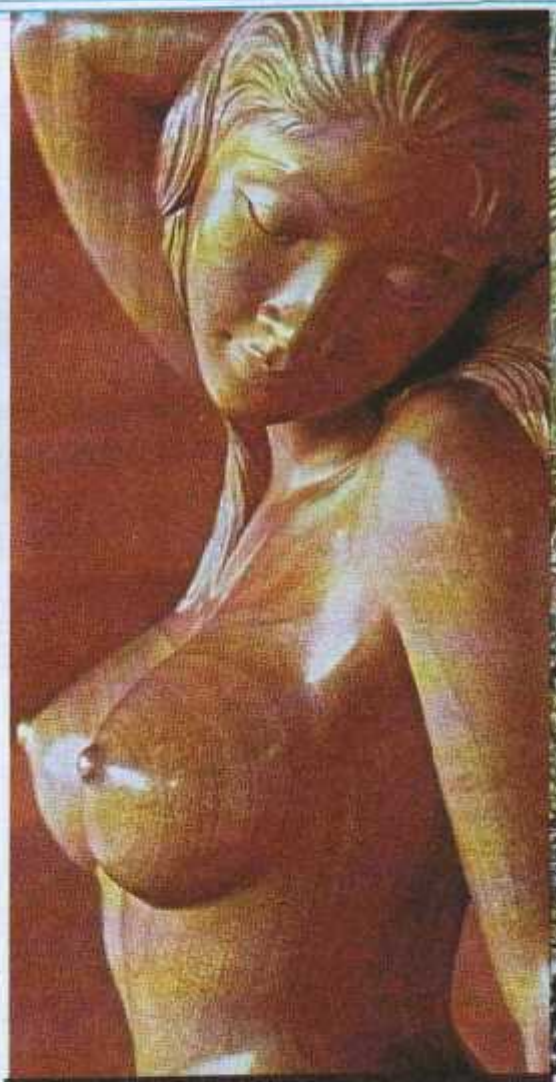
Tourism had begun taking toll of these sacred dances. Instead of carrying offerings for the gods, some Pendet dancers danced for valued guests or tourists, offering flowers to them. A seminar on the subject in 1971 forbade performance of the sacred dances for entertainment though it is difficult to say how strictly the recommendation is followed.

The other two kinds of Balinese dances are Trance dances and *Baris*. Pre-adolescent girls perform the Trance dances *(Sanghyang Dedari)*, bending over burning braziers and inhaling their pungent smell. They invoke the nymphs of celestial spheres and soon appear to have been possessed by them. They dance as if in a trance, while the musicians sing, "Flying down from heaven, they fly in spirals, fly down..."

Still in trance, the girls dance certain intricate movements standing on the shoulders of the male bearers. They dance without any previous practice—for it is the nymphs who dance through them.

The *Baris* dances are composed on heroic themes. Numerous motifs spring from the Hindu epics. The most famous of them is the Monkey Dance in which hundreds of people participate, for it depicts the great war between Rama's *Vanara* soldiers and the demons of Ravana. Perhaps the next in popularity is a dance depicting conflict between the *Barong*, a tiger-like

Above: Kesuk Dance, Bali
Opp. Page: Top left: Balinese woodcarving
Top right: Stone carving of Balinese temple guardian
Bottom left: Legong—Keraton dancer
Bottom Right: The Trimoorthy—Vishnu, Siva, Brahma—High Priest, Author, Priest



creature symbolising the beneficent occult spirit, and *Rangola*, a monstrous being standing for the evil.

We had checked into what claimed to be the oldest European hotel in Bali, founded by the Dutch, with spacious halls, rooms and lawns unlike those in newer hotels. The claim had some attraction for tourists. I wish I too could bask in that glory, but the episodes of the Dutch conquest of this peace-loving, innocent land were too poignant to be forgotten. Groups of men, women and children would walk into the Dutch camps, led by their princes, armed with swords, heedless of warnings from the enemy, only to be massacred by cannon balls. Before the invaders entered their towns, thousands of men and women, of the nobility in particular, stabbed themselves to death in order to avoid subjugation.

On our way to the Besakih temple we saw two or three cremation grounds and cremation towers. The Balinese believe in the 5-elements ((*Panchabhuta)* as well as the reincarnation theories.

"Balinese death-rites can be very simple and inexpensive... A corpse can be cremated and its soul released quite quickly, cheaply, and without much fuss still following the necessary basics and resulting in proper release of the soul. But, and this is a very important 'but', there is a pervasive belief that no expense must be spared in this final send-off of the soul...

"And so, every family will do its best to provide as grand and glorious a cremation as it can afford—perhaps more than it can afford—in terms of both money and time.

"Now, even a medium-large cremation may cost the equivalent of thousands of U.S. dollars, severely taxing the family resources, and it may require the

Garuda—Bangli Temple

Barong Dance—Barong and Hanuman

There is some controversy regarding the origin of the word 'Bali' itself. Perhaps it is based on the word 'Bali', sacrifice, or more likely, associated with one of the Hindu kings of ancient mythology. It seems to me that there could well be a link with the Raja Bali of the Puranas who was banished by Vishnu in his Vamana Avatar to live in the underworld. Java and Bali are indeed the 'underworld' geographically vis a vis India, located as they are well south of the Equator. The names in Bali and indeed even in other parts of Indonesia that are Muslims, are largely Sanskrit based.

Thus the girls are called Pushpawati, Chandrawati, Kusumawati and Padmawati, while the boys have names like Mahendra, Rajendra and Yoga. The shops in Bali have evocative names which could with advantage be adopted in Connaught Circus—Raj Yamuno, Eka Linga, Surya Kenchana, Devi Sitha, Dharma Sutra.

*—Dr. Karan Singh: "Bali: A Writer's Journal", **The Indian Author**, Annual 1982.*

services of hundreds of people over a period of weeks or even months. Therefore it is very common amongst the poorer people merely to buy the corpse in the village cemetery, after a relatively simple and inexpensive ceremony of symbolic preparation and cleansing. The family then waits until it can accumulate sufficient funds for a properly grand cremation.

"Alternatively, if some other wealthier family in the village or a very important member of the community schedules a large and fine cremation at some future date, the poorer family may ask to join the big ceremony, with relatively little expense to itself. It is not unknown for dozens, even hundreds, of bodies to join in the shared glory of a particularly important, or rich person's cremation. For this reason some years may elapse between the death of a person and his cremation, perhaps even a decade or more. During this time the soul never strays far from the body and may bother the family in various ways as it seeks total release toward God. Every family of every caste tries to cremate its dead as soon as possible, but this can only be accomplished if the family is wealthy." Fred B. Eiseman, Jr. : *Cremation in Bali.*

Dead bodies of the wealthy or the noble are interned in a sarcophagus, cut from a tree-trunk, carved into the shape of a cow or a bull or a lion or a deer. Fire consumes the body along with the sarcophagus. The many-tiered cremation towers represent the universe—its different planes.

Also on the way to Besakih is the Gua Lawah or the Bat Cave, one of the six holy shrines of Bali. The Cave's ceiling and the outer walls are entirely covered by bats, thousands of them. From time to time they are visited by a colossal python.

Lovely and smooth is the way to the legendary Besakih temple. It was a clouded day. The great Mount Agung looked grim and mysterious. A dozen or two visitors and worshippers thronging the steps were too small a crowd to disturb the serene silence of the majestic and picturesque setting, the abode of the Hindu Trinity, symbolically represented in the temple.

Besakih—The mother temple

Vishnu temple in Bangli

CONVERSION—THE BALINESE EXPERIMENT

Typical is the story of Pan Luting, a convert village headman who had helped the missionaries to increase their fold. He repented, claiming he had been deceived, and being a ***topeng*** *actor of repute, in his performances of masked dramas he now never misses an opportunity to poke fun at the missionaries and to express his joy at not being a Christian any longer. Another soul was lost to the missionaries when a young convert discovered that the veneral disease he suffered from did not disappear when he pronounced the magic formula: "I believe in Jesus Christ," as he had thought it would. Again, a convert who felt himself at the point of death quickly renounced his new faith when the village medicine-man refused to treat him, claiming that his magic would be of no avail to a Christian. He recovered and it is needless to say that he held a great offering feast of* ***thanksgiving****. Stories such as these are repeated endlessly in Bali, but perhaps the best illustration of the superficiality of the convictions of the new Christians is the following conversation between a young convert and an enlightened official:*

"Why did you renounce your religion?"

"Because I believe!"

"Believe what?"

"I believe in Jesus Christ."

"Who is he?"

"That Tuan (European) with the black coat that comes often from Lombok."

Miguel Coverrubias: BALI (Oxford in Asia Paperbacks)

The biggest ritual ceremony at this Mother Temple takes place once every hundred years. Called the *Ekadasa Rudra,* eleven powers of Nature are invoked and offered obeisance on the occasion.

The last ceremony was to take place in 1963. The date fixed by astrologers was disregarded by President Sukarno who advanced it to 8 March, so that a favourite visiting dignitary could see the celebration.

Suddenly the mountain shook and a sound, beginning on a subdued note, grew terrific.

The volcano burst, sending lava and boulders to a height of fifty thousand feet. Thousands died and the falling lava turned large cultivable areas into wasteland.

The date of the ceremony meant to appease the spirit of the mountain had been advanced for non-religious reasons. The spirit of Agung was not prepared to pardon the impudence.

Surprisingly, the temple stood unshaken.

The disrupted ceremony was held sixteen years later, in March 1979.

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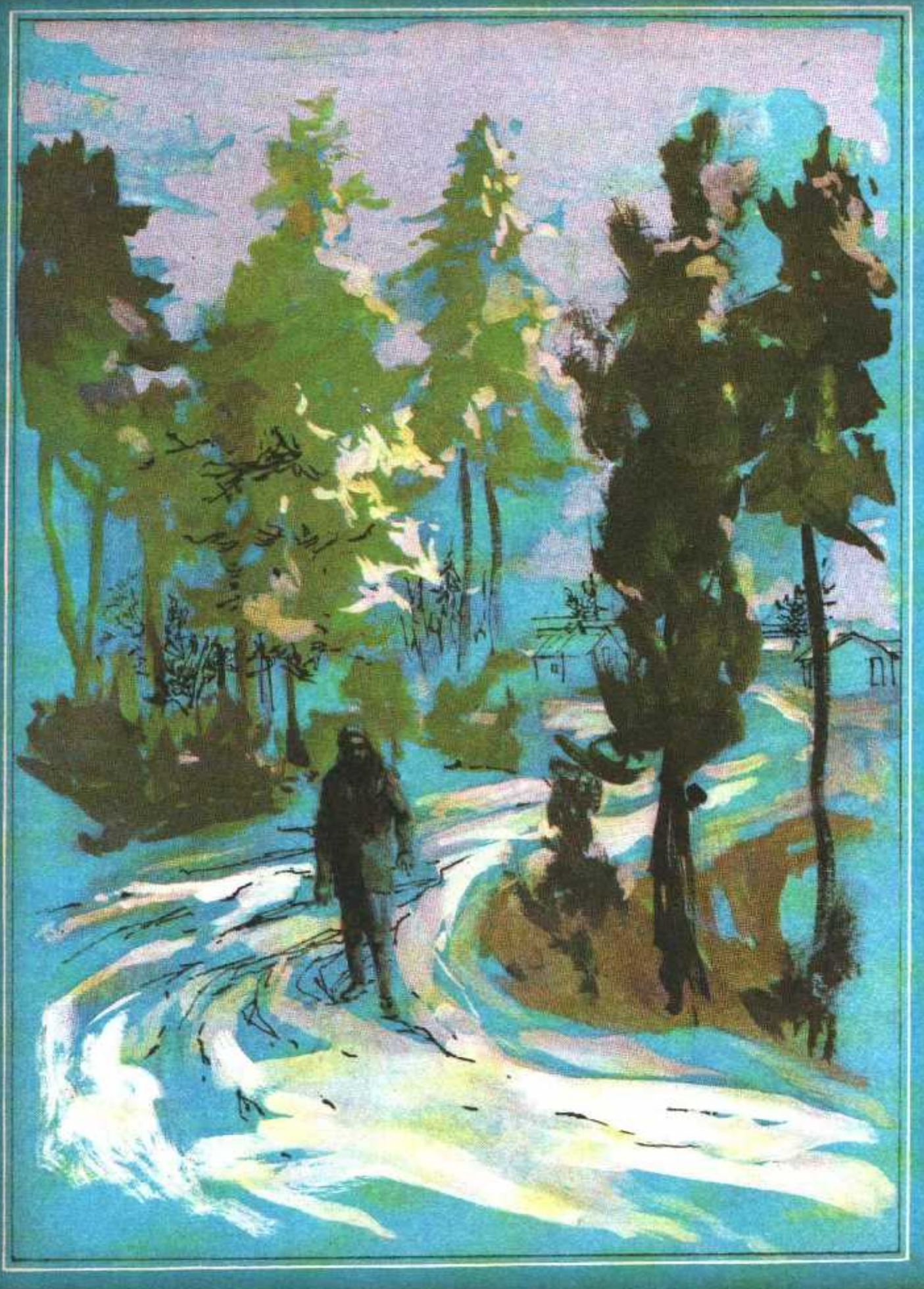


NOVELETTE

by HIMANSHU JOSHI
Translated from Hindi
by JAI RATAN

WAITING FOR SUNRISE

"Kaka, we can't carry on like this."

"Why?" Gangi Kaka looked up, surprised.

"No, we have had enough of it." Deva angrily waved his hand in the air. "There's a limit to everything."

Gangi Kaka removed his white boat-shaped cloth cap from his bald head and placed it on his knee. Gently rubbing his bald head with his hand, he gave Deva an apprehensive look. His lips moved to speak and then clenched tight without speaking.

A noise drifted towards them from the front verandah, punctuated by the whimpering of children. One could hear the stamping of foot on the raw wooden floor as if someone was writhing in pain.

"Deva, I had not even thought in my dreams that we would fall on such evil times," Gangi Kaka broke his silence. "We must stand by each other, eat sparingly and put a bold face against troubles—that's the only way that we can survive. But whom to tell, here everything is in such a sorry mess." Gangi Kaka suddenly fell silent.

"I did my utmost as you had asked me to. Just to keep things going," Deva said. "But did it help? Harki dispossessed Devi of his three most fertile parcels of land. The *surpunch* told blatant lies. Could one be more corrupt, more unfair? They openly sided with the other fellow. I saw everything but kept my peace. Ani Singh diverts water from the irrigation channel to his fields at night. And I can do nothing about it except watch helplessly. The *danim* tree is ours, as everyone knows. And yet his wife brazen-facedly carries away its fruit. What do I get out of it though I slave day and night? Our Loki's mother is lying ill. But not even a few drops of milk have gone down her throat. I wonder if she even knows what milk tastes like. The younger *Bahu* is always partial to her own children at the cost of mine. Don't I know? She's always hard on my kids." There was more hurt than anger in Deva's voice.

"The younger *Bahu* gives soft wheat chapatis to her children and black chapatis made from coarse gram fall to the lot of my children. They are hard and leathery like the bark of trees." Deva went on in a halting voice. "It may be the other's fault but my children always come in for the blame. It's they who invariably get the beating. It's out of respect for you that I keep my mouth shut. Otherwise this house would have gone to rack and ruin long ago. Loki's mother says that she will leave us and go to stay with her parents. She is right. Nobody has any sympathy for her except me; I only say a soft word to her. Nobody even cares to give her a drop of water." Deva was carried away by his own feelings.

"Nobody differentiates between children," Kaka mumbled. "Unlike the five fingers they are considered to be alike. Neither big nor small. It does not behove the younger *Bahu* to be so callous."

"The senior *Bahu's* parents have sent her gifts of clothes. Day before yesterday Piplati's Mathura brought the things for her. The younger *Bahu* insists that she must also get a share of them as a matter of right. They had such a big row over it this morning."

Gangi Kaka could clearly see that the dice was loaded against the senior *Bahu* and his sympathy lay with her. "She is an unfortunate woman," he said. "A widow. Why should one be hostile to her? If her poor brother scrapes and scrounges to save some money to buy her clothes it is a sin to filch clothes from her. There couldn't be a bigger sin." The very thought of it seemed to have pained him and he trailed into silence.

The noise outside continued. It was getting on his nerves, making it difficult for him to sit there. He got up and went away.

As Gangi Kaka passed by the younger *Bahu* pulled the veil over her face and hitching up her child against her waist proceeded towards the kitchen. The fire in the *chulha* had died. The rice in the pot had burnt down and had started giving out a pungent smell. The middle *Bahu*, Loki's mother, kept sitting there, suckling her child. She had only pulled down her *anchal* out of shyness.

Tears sparkled in the senior *Bahu's* eyes. Then they flowed down her cheeks like a summer shower. She cried silently, wiping away her tears with her tattered *anchal*. The noise had suddenly subsided with Kaka's presence.

"*Bahu*, you are the eldest of them all, aren't you?" Gangi Kaka stood there looking into vacancy as if searching for something there. "As such you should show the greatest forbearance of them all. If the younger *Bahu* is demanding clothes give them to her. I'll have another set of clothes stitched for you." Kaka sounded tired and sad. "Being the senior *Bahu* you are like a mother-in-law them," Kaka continued. They

are so ignorant. Just like children. Had the younger *Bahu* some grey matter in her head would she have behaved in such a foolish manner?"

The senior *Bahu* retired into her room, wiping her running nose. She came out carrying a bundle of clothes which she had taken out of her wooden box and placed it before Kaka.

Before Kaka could pick up the bundle to give it to the younger *Bahu* Nandu swooped over it like a hawk. "We are not beggars, Kaka. We don't want alms."

"What are you saying?" Gangi Kaka looked at him in surprise. "Stupid, give and take in the family doesn't mean begging."

"Yes, it amounts to begging. Yes, it does." Nandu lifted the bundle and threw it up in the air. It landed in a corner. Gangi Kaka looked at Nandu, stunned. He stood still there for sometime as if rooted to the ground. Then he picked up his staff and went away to the *panchayat ghar*.

He stayed away from home the whole day, aimlessly knocking about from place to place. In the evening when he returned home, feeling his way in the dark with his staff, he found the house lying silent as if in mourning. There was no light in the house.

Deva explained the situation. The younger *Bahu* had had a tiff with the senior *Bahu* and in anger had cast those clothes into the fire. At this the senior *Bahu* had started crying, falling down in a faint. She had come to only a short while ago.

He placed the singed clothes before Kaka for him to see.

Gangi Kaka's mouth fell open.

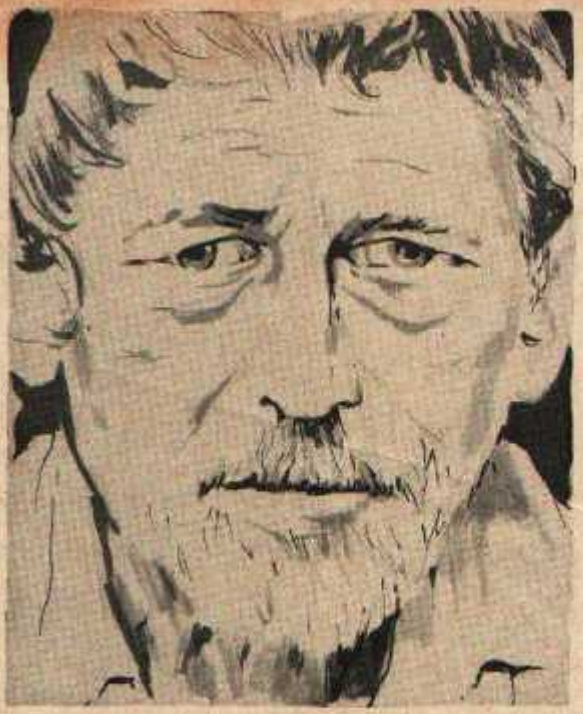
Gangi Kaka had never been to a temple all his life Nor did he ever keep a fast or go on a pilgrimage. He never reflected on what was meant by virtue and sin. If somebody asked him for a favour he helped him without any sense of obligation. This was worship for him and piety too.

As long as Permanand Pandit lived he followed him blindly like the thread following the needle. Service was service. It brooked no distinction between day and night, between today and tomorrow or between a full stomach or an empty one. He obeyed Permanand unquestioningly, taking what he said for gospel truth. He considered a great boon to have the privilege of being his follower.

The *Firingis* were ruling over the country. Permanand issued the ukase: "Spin yarn, wear hand-spun cloth." Gangi Kaka immediately took to wearing *khadi*. Permanand Pandit said: "We shall not rest till our country is freed. We shall fight the *Firingis* till our last breath." From that day onwards Gangi Kaka knew no rest. He waged a ceaseless struggle against the *Firingis*. He did not not know who a *Firingi* was and what he looked like. He had no need to know these things. It was enough for him that these were Permanand Pandit's orders, and it was incumbent upon him to obey. Pandit always spoke the truth.

One day Permanand Pandit said: "In this world nothing belongs to us. There is no such thing as this is mine and that is thine." He followed his mentor to the letter.

Leaving his aged parents weeping behind, he went from door to door, carrying the message of freedom. He slept where the night overtook him and ate when he felt hungry. If he could not get food he took God's name and went to sleep on an empty stomach, after



taking a drink of water.

It was the year 1912. The 'Quit India' movement had been launched. It was a call to 'do or die'. Permanand Pandit was arrested at Haldwani. And Gangi Kaka also found his way into the jail along with him.

In the jail Permanand Pandit went on hunger strike for 25 days. Gangi Kaka went one better by not accepting food for 26 days.

On the 15th August when the country gained freedom Permanand Pandit called Gangi Kaka and said: "Ganganand, the struggle is over. We have trounced the *Firingis* and they have departed from our country. As you can see, our war against them has come to an end. It's time for you to go back home."

It was only then that the thought of home occurred to Gangi Kaka. He also remembered his aged parents.

But as he reached home he found everything in ruins. His parents had departed from this world a long time back. Before dying they could not even fulfil their desire to have a last look at their son.

Just after one year of Independence, Permanand Pandit died of heart failure leaving Gangi Kaka lone and forlorn in this world. The needle was broken and lost in some fathomless layer of darkness. Where could the thread go by itself?

He called the three orphaned children of his late *Bhabi* (sister-in-law) to live with him. It was like starting a new life.

"Ganganand, you are still young," his friends would say. "Why don't you marry and set up a home of your own?"

Gangi Kaka would laugh. "It's enough if I can bring up these three children," he would say. "What good is a marriage going to do me? I can renounce the world any time."

"But even now aren't you leading the life of a sannyasi?"

Hearing this Gangi Kaka would laugh like an innocent child.

TWO

Permanand Pandit was dead and gone but he was still living in spirit for Gangi Kaka. Even after his death Kaka abided by all his behests. Pandit used to say, "There's no such thing as caste. Harijans and the upper castes are all alike." All his life Gangi Kaka adhered to this test. Caste barriers had no meaning for him.

When he openly ate with the artisans and blacksmiths of Dhankot and Bhigara eyebrows went up and people castigated him for his unpardonable indiscretion. Some looked at him with contempt and even threatened to ex-communicate him from their fold: they would not allow him to eat and smoke with them. But he did not care. He did not even take notice of what people were saying against him. He dug a small hole in front of his house from which he scooped out water to drink.

When his three adopted children grew up and the time of their marriage came he did not show any discrimination as to caste. If the girl was good he just accepted her irrespective of her caste.

He did not care for his appearance; sometimes his clothes hung in tatters about his body. And as before he did not shirk work and laboured hard day and night.

If the *Patwari* tyrannised over the peasants he stood before him in defiance. If the forest patrolman tried to be fresh with the village women when they went into the jungle, he went after him with some men from the village and dealt with him right and proper. He was conspicuously present in the marriage processions of the untouchables and went to the succour of the oppressed, regarding such a family as his own and planting himself in their midst like a sheltering banyan tree.

He led a family life of sorts, managing with odds and ends and confining himself to bare necessities. He never coveted money and did not care to save. And he never regretted it.

When Anand, the eldest of his nephews, passed away he could not get over the shock for months and went about like one demented. He gave shelter to his widow under his own roof and did all he could to make her life comfortable.

He had Deva and Nandu educated upto the middle standard in the school at Piplati. He thought nothing of privations to make them 'two-eyed', as he called it. Even in his declining years he tilled his field and did not put away the spinning wheel. He believed in living by the sweat of his brow.

THREE

Gangi Kaka could not sleep the whole night. His mind was in turmoil. A few months before his death Permanand Pandit had said, "Ganga, the war is over. The Britishers have lost." But Ganga felt that though the Britishers had been vanquished the battle was still waging. Tara could not even have one meal a day. Her hearth remained cold most of the time. Bhavani's promising son, Diggu, could not go to school for he had no money to buy books for him. Rudia, the blacksmith, was cremated without a shroud. The *Patwari's* high-handedness knew no bounds. He put innocent people behind bars at the flimsiest pretext. In this wide world there was hardly a safe place where man could keep his body and soul together.

As for himself, he had built his small dwelling with great difficulty, like a sparrow building its nest laboriously by collecting one straw after another. In the process only acrimony and apathy had fallen to his lot. If brother did not stand by a brother what could one expect from others?

Gangi Kaka felt a strange vacuity getting over him. He felt extremely despondent, as if life had lost all meaning for him.

As he got up in the morning he called for Deva. "I'm feeling sore over the younger *Bahu's* behaviour yesterday," he said. "She exceeded all limits without any provocation. Does one ever burn clothes like this? And brand new clothes at that? A token of someone's deep affection. Who knows what sentiments lay behind them. Anyone in the house could have worn them. Why burn them? The senior *Bahu*, a widow, must have felt terribly bad about it."

Deva sat there listening to Gangi Kaka with bowed head.

"Deva, I had only one desire," Kaka continued, "that you should be able to stand on your own feet. That you should all be able to live together in peace. But now I feel I have all along been chasing a mirage. You are two able-bodied brothers, capable of making a good living and yet you feel that a widowed sister-in-law is a burden on you. If you think she is a mote in your eyes what regard can you have for others? Deva, I see my hopes crashing before my eyes. My dreams lie shattered—both inside and outside the house. The condition of the blacksmiths of Dhankot has not changed in any way. They are as badly off as they were during the British time. Even today they cannot get two meals after working the whole day. The zamindars and their underling, the *thokdars*, still exploit them." Kaka sighed deeply.

After a pause he said, "Now I realise that Permanand Pandit was wrong. He used to say that our country will prosper the moment the *Firingis* turned their back on us. That rivers of milk will flow and nobody will go hungry. That everyone will have the right to live his life the way he wants to live it. But has anybody earned that right to live?"

Gangi Kaka's voice became strained. He said, "The other day the *Patwari* beat Mallu Ram to death while others watched. No one even whimpered in protest."

Deva heard him in silence.

"Deva, I feel so disheartened. Everything looks desolate and dark to me."

Kaka was going to get up when the chain on his door clanged. Rupdev, the village *Pradhan*, came in looking flustered. "Ganga Da, something terrible has happened?"

"Why, what's happened?"

"The *Patwari* has hauled up our Ghanna on the charge of unlawfully felling deodar trees. Just now the peon came with the papers. He said that Ghanna would be put in the lock-up." The *Pradhan* narrated all this in one breath.

"But if I'm not mistaken, Kheemsingh had taken the contract of these trees."

"Yes, that he did."

"And I remember all those trees were marked in the presence of the patrolman, the *Patwari* and the ranger."

"The people from our village were also present on the scene," the *Pradhan* said.

"Then how has your Ghanna been dragged into it?"

"Last March he fell out with the contractor over the question of diverting water to his fields. Maybe he has poisoned the *Patwari's* ears against Ghanna. And now he is having it out on the poor fellow."

"But when Ghanna has not cut down the trees how can they arrest him? We are not dumb-driven cattle that they can twist our tails any way they like. We shall demand justice in the government's court."

Gangi Kaka followed the *Pradhan* out of the room, tapping his staff on the ground.

"Why are you taking your *chaddar* with you?" Deva asked Gangi Kaka. "Are you going to some other village?"

But Gangi Kaka made no reply.

FOUR

When Kaka did not show up for four days they started getting worried. He should have returned the same evening and now there were so many days gone.

"He might have strayed towards Chalsi Patti," someone conjectured.

"Or he could have taken ill. Last time too it had happened like that. As soon as he stepped out into the cold, his gout flared up. They carried him home on their shoulder. He lay inert in bed for three months like a dumb feeble creature."

"In the dense jungle of Dayarani one has to reckon against the menace of the prowling leopard. The marauder has specially an eye for old men and children. It pounces upon them the moment it sees them."

"Kaka is weak. He could have fallen by the wayside. It doesn't take time for an over-ripe fruit to fall off."

"Yes, I'm really getting apprehensive. He could have fallen in a gorge in the dark. Or while crossing the brook."

There were as many surmises as there were tongues.

Winter had set in. The waters along the banks of the rivers and ponds had started freezing. In the morning the land lay covered with frost. It appeared as if someone had sprinkled white sugar over the earth.

The wind pierced the body like a sharp instrument. Deva had been out, reconnoitering the entire path flanked by deodar trees. He had also walked down the river bank far out of the village. If Kaka was drowned surely his dead body would be washed ashore. Along the way he had also made anxious enquiries in the neighbouring areas.

But Deva's mind seemed to be in some other world. He had a hunch that even if Kaka were alive he would be reluctant to return home. What he had witnessed in the house the other day had filled his mind with dejection. He had seen Kaka's face suddenly turning pale. After that nobody had seen Kaka playing with children or chatting with friends. He seemed to have withdrawn into his shell. Even his talk with the *Pradhan* seemed to lack coherence.

One day, last month, Deva had seen Kaka taking down his spinning wheel from the loft and dusting it. It was a gift from Permanand Pandit. Even now people remembered that Kaka used to spin yarn before the break of dawn and recite Bapu's favourite hymn, 'Vaishnav Jan'. He observed fasts on Tuesdays. But after he took to working in the fields he had become lax in the observance of these rituals. So, Deva was surprised to see Kaka tinkering with the spinning wheel after such a long lapse of time.

As Deva went in he saw that the spinning wheel which Kaka had dusted and cleaned was lying unused. Alongside it lay a bundle of Kaka's old clothes.

They were old and tattered *khadi* clothes. There was also a packet of dog-eared papers, gone yellow with age, the writing on them faded and undecipherable. Under the garments lay a tri-colour flag, neatly folded. The figure of the spinning wheel was imprinted on it in the centre.

Deva came out after carefully re-packing the things. More people had gone out in search of Kaka and had not yet returned.

Some people were sitting in the courtyard. They had come from other villages and had stopped to have a puff on the hookah. One of them told Deva that he had seen Kaka at Lohaghat. Leaning on his staff, he was plodding his way along the high road leading to the court. He was panting and looked worried.

Deva could not understand what had taken Kaka to Lohaghat. Normally, his beat did not lie beyond Dharamkot. How had he strayed to Lohaghat?

Deva rushed away to Lohaghat. But Kaka was not there. He seemed to have left the place before Deva reached there.

Then Deva learnt to his dismay that Kaka had fallen foul of some local people. The zamindars and their underlings had forcibly taken away some land of the Harijans and blacksmiths of the place. They had even blocked the way to the grazing fields, posing a serious problem for these people; they didn't know where to take their cattle for grazing.

Kaka wanted to commission a *panchayat*. It was said that this led to an open skirmish with the men of the zamindars. The *Patwari* and the *Peshkar* sided with the Zamindar. Gangi Kaka as a last resort, went to the court at Lohaghat and openly declared that if the land was not restored to its rightful owners it would lead to serious consequences. Whatever the cost, he wanted to see to it that justice was done. If he failed to get justice at the *sarkar's* court he would supplicate before the shrine of the gods so that their curse falls on the evil-doers.

FIVE

When Deva reached Dhankot he was confronted with a strange spectacle.

Kaka was sitting in the courtyard on a threadbare mat under a plum tree, his feet covered with bandages. They said that while he was walking in the dark his foot had slipped in the mud in front of Shivia's courtyard. They had applied salt and raw turmeric paste on his wound. It had given him some relief and the swelling had also subsided a little.

"Kaka, let's go home," Deva said.

Kaka kept staring at him for a while. "Deva, this is

also like a home to me," he said at last. "When I went to jail under Gandhi Baba's orders I had decided in my mind that the entire country was my 'home'. It was then that I had taken a vow that I would not marry and set up a home. Water stagnates by remaining in one place. It breeds weeds and moss. It is my feeling that the love of wordly possessions makes a man blind. To remain stuck in one place like a wooden peg can prove injurious to man. And tell me, Deva, how much life remains to me?"

"But Kaka..." Deva looked concerned.

"But what? Now you are a grown up man, wise and shrewd. Nandu is also no longer a child. You must live amicably together sharing each other's joys and sorrows. Of course, people do have differences. When there are many pots lying together at one place they do rattle against one another. But differences, if any, should be settled privately without outsiders getting wind of them. As the saying goes, one breaks a piece of jaggery from the whole block without removing it from the bag. Anand's wife is a widow. An unfortunate woman, without any props. You must take her under your wings. See to it that the cart of family life moves on smoothly without wobbling. By depending on others a man becomes a cripple..." Kaka kept mumbling to himself.

"Kaka, Nandu is still a callow youth," Deva said. "One should not mind it if he says something nasty."

Kaka laughed. "Nobody minds a child," he said. "He has yet to learn. The hard knocks of life will make him wise as he grows."

Deva said no more.

When Deva returned home alone, looking a defeated man, they were struck dumb. Home was not home without Kaka. The senior *Bahu* did not take her food that night. After her husband's death Kaka's presence had been a great solace to her. But today she suddenly felt that the roof that had provided her shelter against wind and rain had suddenly been whisked away from over her head.

Kaka's absence also saddened the children.

SIX

There was again trouble at Dhankot—it was a regular brawl.

When Hardut who lived in Assi Patti brought them the news they got greatly agitated.

The blacksmiths had declared that they would not work in the Zamindar's fields. They would not sharpen ploughs or mend scythes and shovels. They would not even bring gifts on the occasion of marriages and naming ceremonies. The case that the blacksmiths had filed at the Lohaghat court last month would soon be coming up for hearing.

Gangi Kaka was giving them all the help that he could.

He had grown a beard and had taken a vow at Viandhura's shrine that he would not shave till justice was done to these oppressed people.

The shopkeepers had retaliated by refusing to give rations on loan from their shops. Kirpal Singh threatened the blacksmiths that if they were the sons of their fathers they should forthwith return their loans in full along with interest. He demanded every single pie back.

The situation was getting explosive which unnerved the *Patwari* and the *Peshkar*. They feared lest the whole thing should boomerang on them. Word had gone round that they had brazen-facedly accepted heavy bribes from the zamindars.

Kaka had circulated this news right upto Pithoraghat, Lohaghat and even the headquarters at Almorah. The local newspaper had also splashed the news of these black deeds.

The bazaar of Dhura remained closed for a day to record its sympathy with the blacksmiths. And when the children of the middle school at Haldikhet also went on strike the Tahsildar and even the Deputy Collector had perforce to take notice of these developments.

At their intervention the zamindars reluctantly agreed to restore the usurped land to the blacksmiths. They had also to give the right of passage to the pasturage.

SEVEN

While this victory enhanced Gangi Kaka's prestige, opening up new vistas before him, it also sowed thorns in his path. His adversaries thought of new ways to avenge their defeat. Now Deva's name was also tagged on with that of the *Pradhan's* son on the charge of illegal felling of trees.

The news caused Kaka no surprise. On the contrary it made him laugh like a child.

After getting Nandu drunk on local liquor the *Thakurs* of Thoowa gave him a good beating. They made sure that the news was carried to Kaka. Nor did they forget to bring home the fact to Kaka that they would contrive to confiscate his land in lieu of the loan he had taken from Kisan Singh in order to release Jagua blacksmith's land from the Zamindar.

Kaka started taking only one meal a day.

On the 30th of January he did not even take a sip of water the whole day.

In the evening he collected the children and the old men of the neighbourhood around him and spoke to them thus:

"Till now I was under the impression that we have achieved swaraj. But now the feeling is gaining over me that we have yet to achieve it, and it will be a long time coming. This is the *Patwari's* regime. And that of the Zamindar and his underlings. Here there is no place for the poor and the oppressed. One tills the field and someone else gathers the crop. We sweat it out in the field while idle hands lay claim to its ownership. Where should those who have no land nor any means of livelihood go? When we go down to the plains to seek work we have to put up with all sorts of humiliation. In spite of that we are denied our legitimate wages. The less I talk of what happens to our women and daughters the better.

"When I think of the whole matter I am driven to the conclusion that the fault is more ours than theirs. If we allow them to maltreat us they will not balk at doing so. They would get away with impunity even by refusing to pay our hard-earned wages. How is it that the bus driver managed to seduce and carry away blacksmith Padhiya's young daughter to Bareilly? Why have we not been able to trace Sobania's dead body till now? Why was Bhownaram forced to till Master Budhanand's land for the rest of his life just because he had taken a loan of ten rupees from him? And when he died Budhanand did not even provide a shroud for his dead body."

Most of what Kaka had said went over his listeners' heads. But whether they understood him or not they knew what he was saying was meant for their good.

But where had Kaka, who looked so naive and simple, learnt this lore? All his life he had trudged behind Permanand Pandit like a dumb cattle, holding his bag. Lean and thin, his clothes stained with dust, people heard him, wide-eyed, wondering where he got his strength from to talk such fire and brimstone.

In the evening he would call the poor children to his house and teach them the three Rs by writing the letters and figures on black slates. "This is the only way they can acquire knowledge," he would say. "And knowledge means power."

Kaka would collect funds by begging to buy pencils and paper for children whose parents were too poor to buy these things from their own pockets. In winter when most of the people descended to the plains to earn a livelihood Kaka would go from house to house to look after decrepit men and women and young children who had been left behind to guard the houses. Sometimes it became quite a job to dispose of the dead body of an old man that had turned stiff in the cold. But Kaka always rose to the occasion. Nobody felt neglected while Kaka was there.

EIGHT

The month of December was only half way through. It had been snowing incessantly for the past four days. The fields, trees, shrubs and the paths were covered with a white mantle of snow, an unusually heavy snowfall which people thought bode well for a bumper wheat crop.

One could see a shadowy figure walking towards the village along the narrow, meandering goat path which from a distance looked like a long piece of string, gone limp with dampness. The pedestrian was walking cautiously, watching his steps from sinking into the snow.

The sun had set. A thick fog was slowly slipping down from the top of the hills into the dark valley below. The trembling bushes, the leafless stumps of trees and in the distance the snow-clad hills were imperceptibly merging into the sky. The rare sun, when it did come out, looked lifeless and ghostly pale.

People were sitting in their houses, behind closed doors, warming their freezing bodies before the fire. Thin, wispy columns of smoke spiralling from a few houses were the only indications that there were people living in them. There was hardly any light anywhere—only a pervading darkness.

"Thuck, Thuck!" Someone pounded on the thick deodar door. A muffled, fear-stricken voice as if coming out of a cave cried, "Who's there?"

"It's I," It was a tremulous voice coming over the breeze like a sigh.

She abruptly fell back as she removed the thick log fixed against the wooden door. "Oh, is it you?" It was her father-in-law. She quickly pulled down the *anchal* of her head, covering her face. She was finding it difficult to hide her nakedness behind her tattered clothes which hung limply from her body.

"*Bahu!*" Brushing off the snow from his clothes he came in and stood in the verandah, water dripping from his rough-looking shoes made by the village cobbler. He was shivering with cold. As he breathed, his breath changed into steam.

"I was on my way to Piplati," he said, "and I thought I would stop to enquire about the children."

There was a fire burning in the iron pan. The senior *Bahu* spread a tattered piece of sack cloth near the fire for him to sit down and warm himself against the fire. Then she retired to a corner and stood there as if withdrawn into herself.

"While going to the *Terai* Nandu had told me that you have all apportioned the house between yourselves." Kaka settled down on the sack cloth.

"Yes, the younger *Bahu* insisted on it," the senior *Bahu* replied. "There was no other way out for Nandu except acquiescing."

"Did you get your share?"

The senior *Bahu* was silent.

"When did he go to the *Terai*?"

"On the fifteenth of last month."

"Why didn't you go with him? You could have basked in the sun. You could have also earned some money by pounding paddy and by cutting grass. That would have seen you through this difficult time."

When he still failed to draw her out, he said as if explaining to himself, "Yes, you did well by not going, I think. There would have been no one there to stand by you. And how could you have put up a thatched roof by yourself to live under? Have you got something to live on?" he asked as if as an after-thought. "You must have laid by some stock of grain and things like that?"

"Yesterday Thool-da brought me some grain from my parent's home."

For her night meal the senior *Bahu* had prepared

four thick chapatis of coarse grain. Thool-da had also brought with him four sheaves of spinach. She had made a vegetable dish of sort from this by adding some chopped red chillis to it.

"I hear Nandu had tricked you by not dividing the house in three equal parts," Kaka said. "And when Deva objected, I'm told he came down heavily upon him." Kaka laboriously worked his old teeth on the thick black *roti* which had become stiff like the bark of a tree.

The senior *Bahu* was still silent. She seemed to lack words to express herself.

"They are tough and hardy and can fend for themselves," Kaka said. "It's about you that I'm worried. How long will you be able to carry on like this? You have still a long life stretching before you—bleak and barren like a rocky mountain. How will you manage to live among these fiends? You should have got everything recorded in black and white. But now the game seems to be up."

The senior *Bahu* placed the *anchal* over her eyes.

"As I can see, they must have deprived you even of your share of the arable land. Now they may go one better and deny you the apple and apricot trees. But I do hope they have returned your ornaments and trinkets."

"No." The senior *Bahu* started sobbing.

"I never imagined that those wretches could be so heartless," Kaka groaned. "I go to all corners of the world fighting for justice and now I find that the worst butchery is being perpetrated in my own house." Kaka's faded eyes became dark with anger.

"Let those people return from the *Terai*. I'll have the property partitioned anew. An elder sister-in-law is like a mother. They are so many of them. Can't even one of them come forward and volunteer to take care of you?" Gangi Kaka found it difficult to swallow his food. He washed his hands, wiped his moustache and got up from near the fire.

"Don't worry, as long as I live you'll not lack food. I'll have my pension transferred in your name. That money will be enough to provide you with food. It seems it was only the other day Anand had said that he would have two more rooms added to the house—one for my meditation and prayer and the other for guests. But the wretch gave us the slip and left us for ever."

A cold mist seemed to have clouded Kaka's eyes.

NINE

"The chances of Kaka's surviving look very bleak," someone brought the message to the village.

Some urgent work had taken Kaka to the *Terai* and there he had come down with fever. He was already a bundle of bones and on top of that this fever...

Kaka remained confined to bed for many months. Although apparently without any resources yet he seemed to lack nothing. He somehow managed to carry on even without money. Wherever he went he was received with open arms. People flocked around him to nurse him back to health.

After one month when he was able to take thin dal gruel and had gained sufficient strength, Mansingh, the local *vaid*, carried him on his shoulders to Banbasa where the *vaid's* family ministered to him day and night. It was said that Mansingh's and Gangi Kaka's fathers were like brothers to each other.

When Kaka was able to walk about, the call of the hills again took possession of him. Dhankot's Mohinia had gone to the *Terai* to buy dry fodder for his cows. He gave Kaka a ride home on his Bhutia horse.

All this while Kaka had been only physically present in the *Terai:* his mind was always wandering elsewhere. During his illness the news had travelled to him that a feud had again broken out between the zamindars and people of Dhankot. This time the trouble had started over the common land. The jungles of Dhunidhaar had been cleared by the blacksmiths. It was they who had reclaimed the land, filled up holes, manured the land and planted apple and pear saplings on it. They had also levelled up the slopes making them suitable for step-farming. But the zamindars claimed that since the reclaimed land was in the proximity of their own lands they had the first right over it.

In the night they had let lose their cattle over the common land who ravaged all the saplings that the blacksmiths had freshly planted there. Kaka's face tingled with rage at this high-handedness.

Though in no condition to bear the hazard of such an arduous journey, yet when the tumbling and falling Kaka made it to Dhankot people gathered round him in the twinkling of an eye and their dead faces suddenly lit up with hope. "Kaka has come! Kaka is here!" Waves of excitement rippled through the village.

Crawling with great difficulty, Kisni's grand-mother came into the courtyard to meet Kaka. "We have arranged a prayer meeting for you at Teonra-bhai's yard. We had prayed to God that if Kaka returned to his village unscathed we shall fly the ochre flag at the Phataksheela fair." A thin film of tears trembled over the old woman's eyelids.

"Kinna has stopped going to school," Umea seamstress's middle son, Dilip, lisped in his childish drawl.

Kaka took him in his lap and kissed him.

"Kaka, everybody says..." Birli, who had just returned from her in-law's suddenly stopped midway.

"What do they say?" Gangi Kaka asked.

"That though a Brahmin Gangi Kaka lives with the blacksmiths."

"Let them say what they like," Kaka laughed like a child. "But tell me, are blacksmiths not human beings?"

They explained how the zamindars had uprooted all the saplings and then came with *lathis* to beat them up. Kaka's expression turned grave and he sat lost in thought for a long time.

Illness had sapped his strength and he was now not capable of doing a lot of running about as he did in the past. But even now he loathed sitting idle. The least he could do was to file an application in the court.

He contended that the land that the blacksmiths had reclaimed was common land, having no title. The blacksmiths had cleared the land in question and then tilled it. In consequence they had the first claim to this land. Besides, they were landless; they did not possess even two arms-length of land of their own. They eked a miserable existence by working on others' land. The zamindars and their underlings had lavish means of their own. They were prosperous and could easily go to the court. On the other hand the poor blacksmiths had no means of legal redress. They just didn't have the

money to spend on court cases. After a day's back-breaking labour they could not even afford to have a full meal. At which other door than the *sarkar's* could they knock to place their grievances? This was the burden of his application.

But the government's court had no heart and it merely said that the law must take its own course. What these people feared most came to pass. Their case was sent up to the higher court at Lohaghat.

Even in broad daylight the day seemed to have darkened for Kaka.

As soon as he regained more strength he went from hamlet to hamlet, tapping his staff, to collect money, bit by bit, to fight the case. He also visited his own village to ask his fellow villagers for their mite.

The senior *Bahu* did not even have rags to hide her nakedness. Somebody had told Kaka that Nandu had pinched from her even her meagre belongings. When she remonstrated with him he ran to beat her with the stick he used to drive the cattle. If people had not intervened he would have even gone to the extent of killing her. It could have ended in a calamity. The senior *Bahu* could not stoop so low as to work in others' fields and earn money to buy food. It was a question of the family's prestige. If Deva had not come to her rescue by rendering her a little help she would have hanged herself, so utterly desperate her condition had become.

Seeing Gangi Kaka standing in the courtyard she went and fell at his feet like a bundle of dirty clothes.

Kaka looked at her dumbfounded. In the last few months she had become thin like a thorn. Her eyes looked lustreless and there were dark patches on her face.

"Woman, don't be foolish," Kaka said, seeing her lying at his feet.

In reply the senior *Bahu* started sobbing.

"I had sent you money—my pension money. Didn't you get it?"

Kaka sent for Nandu.

"If the *Bahu* becomes a derelict in my life-time, I shudder to think what will befall her when I'm gone. Instead of giving this hapless woman a lion's share you have even pounced upon her legitimate dues like a vulture. If you are unfair to your own kith and kin what goodness can one expect from you? You will not even find a place in hell. I had sent her some money from my pension but you have made fast with that also."

Just then Deva came in sight. He was returning from the field, carrying a shovel and a sickle on his shoulder.

Kaka stopped him and said in a voice choked with emotion, "Were your mother living would you have turned her out of the house to beg in the streets? If tomorrow my old limbs refuse to obey me, will you also show me the door? If one of your sisters had become a widow would you have treated her so ruthlessly? If our Anand had been living today he would have readily gone to the help of one in need. He himself remained illiterate but he made great sacrifices to have you educated. He made you two-eyed. And look how miserable you have made his wife. I wonder how can you have the heart to sit in the kitchen and eat while she is starving? You are nothing short of a devil." Kaka started crying like a child.

"How can I eat in a house where such cruelty is rampant?" Kaka got up and walked away. He had never looked so dejected ever before. He felt so weak and helpless that he could not even walk properly.

TEN

Kaka had been at Dhankot only for five days when he saw Deva standing in the door, looking very morose.

"When did you come?"

"Just now."

Deva's worried look was disconcerting. "Is everything all right, back home?" Kaka asked.

"Yes, all is well," Deva replied listlessly and sat down on the tattered mat, looking very glum.

There were some people sitting around Kaka. They had been having a serious discussion about the land in dispute. The date of the hearing was drawing near.

When the evening approached and Kaka still did not take any notice of Deva he lost his patience. He took Kaka behind the hut where he could have a word with him alone. "Something serious has happened, Kaka," he said.

"Why, what's happened?" Kaka asked in alarm.

"Last night the senior *Bahu* took her own life. She hanged herself from a tree. The *Patwari* is away at Chalthi to attend a relative's marriage. He will not return before the morning. Her dead body is still hanging from the tree."

Aghast, Kaka looked at Deva wide-eyed.

Then composing himself he said, "I knew it was going to happen one day. Yes, I knew." He sat down on the ground placing his hand on his forehead. He sat there a long time with closed eyes.

"Has anybody come to investigate?" he asked breaking the oppressive silence.

"Not till I was there."

"I know nothing is going to happen till the *Patwari* comes," Kaka mumbled as if talking to himself.

"The body is in the same condition," Deva said, looking very gloomy.

In the dark Kaka had difficulty in finding his way. But he must return to the village the same night even if his legs caved under his body. They improvised a torch for him with dried pine leaves. Guided by its dim light he reached his village at midnight, blindly stumbling over the uneven goat path.

The whole village had gathered near the dead body. They had lighted a fire and had kept reciting *paura* the whole night. The *Patwari* could appear on the scene any moment and then they would have to face his intimidating presence.

The atmosphere was charged with fear. They did not know how the investigation would go. The *Patwari* was capable of asking the most incriminating questions. He could brand anybody a culprit and clap him into the jail. It could spell ruin for the entire village.

Kaka's presence was reassuring. Now the *Patwari* would not be able to indulge in unbridled harassment. Kaka was held in great esteem. Nobody could take undue liberties in his presence, much less resort to frivolous charges.

The most worried person among them was the *Pradhan*. His son was already involved upto the neck on the charge of stealing deodar trees. Close on its heels had come another calamity. What turn it would take was beyond anybody's prediction.

Having gained notoriety as a man of questionable morals, the people were all the more apprehensive of the *Patwari*. Even otherwise, a visit by a *Patwari* and a policeman was considered ominous. But this *Patwari* beat everybody else in this regard. The very sight of him was enough to strike terror in the people's hearts. And worse still, it was openly said that he accepted bribes. He was also given to boozing on country liquor. And he had an eye for women.

"Kaka, now what's the way out?" Pitambar Dutt looked down-hearted.

"Kaka, our village is fast going to rack and ruin," Tikaram sighed.

The senior *Bahu's* brother had just come from his village. He was sitting under a tree, shedding tears.

Nandu's wife was reluctant to come out of the house while Nandu himself was trying to keep himself out of the people's gaze.

It was not yet dawn when they saw the *Patwari*, Dharam Singh, with his assistant, Hariballabh, standing before them like Satan incarnate. The rope of his handcuffs was peeping out of his bag. The assistant was carrying a double-barrel gun over his shoulder and a red bandolier of cartridges around his neck.

Patia Khayala was standing behind the *Patwari* dutifully holding the *Patwari's* bedroll over his head. In his right hand the *Patwari* was revolving a thick and smoothly polished staff, its head covered with black leather.

Seeing the *Patwari* they all stood up and surrounded him from all sides.

"When did the death take place?"

Tearing through the crowd, the *Pradhan* came forward on trembling feet.

"*Sarkar*, the night before. In the early hours of the night."

The *Patwari* clenched his lips in a characteristic manner and revolving his staff more swiftly stared at the dead body hanging from the tree.

There was a stillness of the graveyard. They all looked open-mouthed at the *Patwari*, waiting for his oracle.

"Her clothes are tattered, all the threads are apart. I can see some scratches on her feet. It seems those *haramzadas* had to struggle hard to tie the rope round her neck."

"*Hazoor*, it's not like that," Jodh Singh said in a cringing voice. "She has hanged herself, a foolish woman that she was. She was tired of life..."

He had not finished speaking when, as if out of the blue, the *Patwari's* staff fell bang on his bare head.

"Oh!" Holding his head, Jodh Singh sat down on the ground. Stars shone before his eyes.

"I can see nail marks on her throat. It appears she put up a violent tussle with her assailants." The *Patwari* went near the hanging body and had a fleeting look at it.

They all stood there with bated breaths.

"Cut off the rope and let the dead body fall to the ground," the *Patwari* ordered, casting a supercilious glance at those standing by.

Rup Ram ran off with the speed of a bullet and entering Deva's house, returned with a long knife.

Cutting off the rope they held the dead body and gently eased it down on the grass. Like a hunting dog the *Patwari* went round the body, surveying it from all sides. "Remove the cloth! Turn it upside down! Straighten it a bit! Now turn it the other way," he kept passing intructions.

He had lighted a cigarette and closing his eyes, he was letting off smoke as if it was helping him to delve into some profound mystery. Suddenly he opened his eyes and said, "It appears those dirty dogs had assaulted her criminally and then hanged her dead body on the tree".

"Ram, Ram! Shiv, Shiv!" Maniram Pandit lifted his folded hands towards the sky. "In *Parmeshwar's name*, don't heap this sacrilege on us. The people of this village are no doubt poor but they are not wicked. And this woman was very pious, a veritable Devi. So virtuous that she would not even cast an eye on another man."

His remarks angered the *Patwari*. "Shut up!" he thundered at Maniram Pandit. "You hypocrite!" he prodded his ribs with his staff. "*Sala*! You're telling me? One look at her dangling body and even a fool would know what kind of saints live in this village."

Gangi Kaka who had all along been watching the goings-on sitting behind, came forward and tried to pacify the people.

Hot tea in a big bronze *lota* came for the *Patwari* from the *Pradhan's* house.

Pouring the tea in an over-sized brass tumbler the *Patwari* blew on the tea repeatedly and then gingerly took the tumbler to his lips. The tea was still very hot.

"Had she some feud with anybody regarding money or land?" he asked.

"No." They all shook their heads in unison.

"Any quarrels?"

"No."

"Then was this woman soft in her head that she swung from a tree?" The *Patwari* looked as if he was trying to control his mounting anger.

"Let's have a *panchayatnama* and then cremate the body," Gangi Kaka suggested breaking a long silence.

"Pandit Kaka, you are a wiseman and command respect because of your years. You should of course know that it is not proper to burn the body without investigation. Tomorrow there can be some complications. Why do you forget that we have yet to establish whether it is a case of suicide or murder?"

Kaka wanted to tell him that it was not a case of murder or suicide. She had died of starvation. She could not procure two morsels of food for her empty stomach and had given up the ghost. But after thinking over the matter for a while he said, "*Patwariji*, this unfortunate woman suffered all her life and now even in her death her body is being defiled instead of being sanctified according to our hallowed rites."

"Pandit Kaka, don't forget that one has to abide by the law. If you try to interfere, it will only mean trouble in carrying out my duty. It is to your good that you keep your mouth shut. Let the police do its job."

Till the afternoon the stalemate continued and uncertainty hung over the whole affair. If the *Patwari* had been duly bribed the problem would have resolved by itself. At last it became clear that the body would have to be taken to the hospital at Lohaghat for post-mortem. It was not possible to to let the matter drift any longer. The body had already started decomposing. One could not go near it because of the stench.

The *Patwari's* orders were no less imperative than

the decision of the highest court of the land. Hence, the people of the village wrapped up the dead body in a thick, coarse piece of cloth and dangling it from a strong wooden pole set out for Lohaghat.

ELEVEN

After cutting up the body the doctors pronounced their verdict: it was a clear case of suicide of which there were unmistakable indications. The body was entrusted to her relatives.

After consigning the body to the flames at Rikhesar when they returned to their village they were confronted with a new problem.

The *Patwari* had started the investigations afresh. He wanted to go to the root of the matter.

How did the deceased's husband, Anand, die at such a young age? What was the cause of his death?

According to him this formed the key question of the whole investigation. He also wanted to know in particular if there was any enmity against her or against any member of her family going back to the past generations.

Someone had told the *Patwari* that in the past there had been no love lost between Sadanand's and Kaka's family. They had once tried to involve Kaka in a trumped up charge that he had tried to sell off a woman. But this episode had long since been forgotten.

On hearing this the *Patwari* jumped in his shoes. "So the cat is out of the bag!" he said gleefully. "*Pradhanji*, what have you to say to that?"

Pradhan, the poor fellow, had no comment to offer

Before the night was out Sadanand was post haste hauled up from his village, Devidhura.

Banging his staff on the ground, the *Patwari* said, "So you had a running feud with Gangi Kaka's family?"

Sadanand stood before the *Patwari* with folded hands. "My benefactor," he said, "Gangi Kaka is the embodiment of virtue, very much like the gods. Nobody can have any enmity with him."

"I hear you had pulled him up on some serious charge."

"Oh, it's an old, old matter. Long since buried in the past. It dates back to the time when Thool-da was living. There was some misunderstanding but everything was cleared up the very third day. And that was the end of it."

"But I've heard something different. It is said that your Thool-da had held out a threat that he would wreak vengeance on Gangi Kaka."

"*Hazoor*, he might have blurted it out in the heat of the moment without meaning it. It often happens like that. But that was twenty-five or twenty-six years ago."

Whack! The *Patwari's* staff struck against Sadanand's back. "You son of a bitch! One can take revenge even after a hundred years. Can it be ruled out that you too had a hand in Anand's death. It is quite likely that you had secretly threatened him and he died of the fear. It is said that he was found dead in bed at night. Afterwards, in league with others you have also harassed his widow. Is there anything impossible about it?" The *Patwari* spat on the ground and made a wry face. "You are all the progeny of Satan. You can be upto anything. As if I don't know. I hear the other day you had given a shoe beating to the vaccinator of Devidhura."

The *Patwari* turned to his peon. "Handcuff this rogue! Take him down and lock him up in the cattle godown. He is a murderer!"

For full one week most of the villagers came in for the *Patwari's* attention. Each one of them was given a good thrashing and branded as a culprit.

He kept at this game till his pockets were lined with money.

Gangi Kaka held his peace. But as soon as the period of mourning was over he barged in at the *Patwari's* house.

"*Sarkar*, will your atrocities ever come to an end?" he asked.

"Pandit Kaka, what are you talking about?" The *Patwari* gave a thin smile and edged closer to him. "Kaka, you're like a father to me."

Kaka swallowed his anger and said panting, "God has been unkind to me. Dharam Singh, I wish I were not a good man but the Devil. Then I would have torn your body apart and gobbled it up." Kaka's lips trembled and his eyes sparked fire.

Suppressing his anger he said, "Go away, go away at once! Otherwise, there's going to be a carnage. I don't want that people..."

Seeing Kaka in such high temper the *Patwari* lost his nerve.

"If you had a trace of humanity left in you, you would not have been so heartless." He gave the *Patwari* a contemptuous look and walked out.

"Did we go to the jail so that these wolves should take over our government?" he asked himself. "Was it for this that we had sacrificed our all?"

Dejected, Kaka again took to his bed and could not leave it for days.

TWELVE

"Shall we take the senior *Bahu's* ashes to Hardwar?" Deva asked in a hesitating voice.

Kaka looked at him wordlessly.

"I have heard that a few days before her death the senior *Bahu* had told Lachman's Aunt..."

"I know everything, Debu," Kaka said as if cut to the quick. "I know everything. Yes, every bit of it. As long as that unfortunate woman lived you kept tormenting her. You didn't even deign to give her a morsel of food, not even in a moment of forgetfulness. She was asked to live in a dark hovel not fit even to lodge an animal. Even if she had one soul to call her own in this wide world she would not have died in such ignominy. And the irony of it, now, you want to take her ashes to Hardwar. Why, are the brooks and streams of this place in any way less sacred? It's the water of these streams that flows to Hardwar. And besides; will she get salvation if her ashes are carried to Hardwar? She got her salvation the very day she tied a rope round her neck, through your good offices. Throw these dead bones in some nearby stream. They are now no more than dust."

Kaka sat silent for sometime and then said, "There is no animal more ferocious than man. If only this world were worth living in."

Kaka closed his eyes and sat still as if he had gone into a trance.

THIRTEEN

The verdict of the Lohaghat court had gone against the zamindars which only resulted in making the matter more complicated. They went on appeal to the higher court at Pithoragarh.

Kaka feared that these disgruntled zamindars may even take the law into their own hands and retaliate through a show of force. He had warned his people that since the *Patwari* was hand in glove with the zamindars the dice was heavily loaded against them; it was futile to expect justice.

Every day they laid new traps to entangle the old and feeble Kaka. In place of *Pradhan's* son Dhanna, they now tried to charge Deva with the theft of those deodar trees. They had gone to the extent of enlisting Dhanna's support in the role of an eye-witness. They had also tutored some more people to give adverse evidence against Deva to the effect that they had themselves seen Deva felling those trees under cover of darkness.

All this was in the air making the prospects bleak for Kaka when one morning the people saw the *Patwari* and his peon surrounding Deva's house.

Deva was caught unaware. He could not understand what was going on.

He was forced out of his bed and as soon as he stepped out of his door the handcuffs were promptly clamped on his wrists.

"What's my fault?" he asked, astounded. "Tell me, what's all this going on here?"

"*Haramzada*!" the peon kicked him with his heavy boot. "Asking me what's your fault? You should have first asked that father of yours before committing that murder."

The peon gave Deva another kick and he fell headlong on the hard stones of the boundary line, cutting his lips badly. Drops of blood fell from his mouth. Then the *Patwari* rained blows on his half naked body with his staff and Deva started trembling. His wrists being handcuffed he could not even wipe his face. The rope of the handcuffs had turned red.

There was an uproar in the village. Terrified, men and women and the children ran into the courtyard, leaving their work.

"*Sarkar*, what wrong has our Deva committed?" the old *Pradhan* asked, mustering up courage.

"The scoundrel! What innocent looks he has! I won't be surprised if he has also a hand in Jyoti Pershad's murder. The workers were agitated because of a supposed cut in their wages. I am told Deva had been inciting them. The night Jyoti Pershad was murdered in his farm house. I understand Deva was present on the scene of the crime. Apart from the murder a huge amount, Rs. 18,000/- or so, is also missing."

"But in those particular days he did not go to the *Terai* at all," the *Pradhan* ventured to say with folded hands.

"*Abe*, he had gone there in winter, hadn't he? *Sala!* He was there for a little over three months," the *Patwari* rejoined.

Deva was dragged away to Lohaghat police station where he was locked up like cattle. His wife and the children started wailing.

When Kaka reached Lohaghat he learnt that they had shifted Deva to Nainital for further interrogation.

FOURTEEN

Looking like a lost creature, when Kaka returned to his village, Deva's children ran up and clung to him. Kaka had not imagined that there could be thunder and lightning in a clear blue sky.

He called Nandu at night and said, "Nandia, now you are the eldest in the family. You are all in all here—the eldest and the youngest. You have to take Deva's children under your protection. Let them not feel like derelicts now that their father is not by their side. You must step into their father's shoes. You must first feed his children and then yours. It is not injustice against Deva but against all of us. If he is implicated falsely and hanged, it will be a stigma against all of us. The marauder will enter our houses, one by one, and spare none of us." Kaka's voice choked.

Deva's wife started crying and it was only then that Kaka came to himself.

"*Bahu*, why are you crying?" he said. "We are all still there to help you. You will see as sure as I'm standing here that our Deva returns unharmed."

Deva's wife placed everything that she had—money, jewellery, clothes—before Kaka. The children had silver bangles, thin as a piece of string, round their wrists. She also removed them from their wrists and placed them before Kaka. "This is all I have," she said. "Please get him released from the clutches of the police." Tears streamed down her eyes.

Kaka could break but he would never bend. Early next morning he was seen going out of the village, looking very determined and grim.

FIFTEEN

He had just reached Dhankot when people gathered round him.

"Kaka, a grave injustice has been done to Deva," they said. "It's downright tyranny. Devils rule here."

Kaka was silent.

"But, Kaka, you had said that now justice will be done to the poor. That our days will take a turn for the better. But what kind of justice is this? Here one is not even allowed to weep."

"Deva is not alone in this," Kaka said. "There are thousands of other Devas who are suffering because of the folly of others. They are hanged without any compunction."

"Now you must withdraw yourself from the rough and tumble of life and take God's name. Nothing has changed for us. Such cruelties were inflicted on us in the past and there is no reprieve for us in the present. For all we know the same story will continue in the future. It is because of this that the *Patwari* and the police are embroiling you into trouble. Don't think that we are unthinking animals. We understand everything."

Kaka smiled. "I'm a nonentity," he said. "But somebody will have to raise his voice against this injustice. It was Haria and now it is Deva who has been victimised in his place. But does that make any difference? Someone has to be sacrificed."

After a pause Kaka continued, "It's not a battle between caste and dharma. It's a battle between vice and virtue. We had also fought against the *Firingis* in the same manner."

"But Kaka, why should you burn your fingers in others' fire?" Budhram who was sitting a little apart from others asked.

"The difference between mine and thine is only notional, son. Permanand Pandit had no child of his own. Then for whom did he wage this war all his life? For whom did he face the blows of the police and rot in jail? Will you ever be able to understand this riddle?"

Kaka lapsed into silence.

SIXTEEN

When the judgment of the court at Pithoragarh also went in favour of the blacksmiths the ground slipped from under the feet of the zamindars.

They decided to take the case to the higher court at Nainital. This posed a serious problem to the blacksmiths. They had no money to fight out the case and meet the court expenses.

Gangi Kaka called a meeting and suggested that they should strive for a compromise through the *panch*. This suited the zamindars fine and they immediately acceded to Gangi Kaka's request.

Two arbiters were nominated by each contending party. Har Singh, the Assistant School Master and the shopkeeper Pan Singh represented the zamindars while Jwala Dutt and Urbasanker were nominated on the *panchayat* by the blacksmiths of Dhankot. By common consent Mani Pandit was nominated to preside over the *panchayat.*

The *panchayat* sat for three days but it could not come to any conclusive decision. The zamindars were adamant. They were not prepared to return the disputed land to the blacksmiths at any cost.

Kaka lost his patience. "They are also human beings, made of flesh and blood," he said. "They have also the right to exist. Had you been in place of these blacksmiths what would you have done? The right of passage for the cattle is granted not only by the government but by God also. It is the hallowed traditon. These people are without any land. They live on your crumbs. If they can also have a stake in the common land how is it going to harm you? You have the whole mountain range to yourself. Why are you denying them a small parcel of land?"

"We don't want the blacksmiths living next door to us," Moti Singh Bungial retorted.

"Then let them reclaim the land in front. It's quite some distance from your habitation. Even their shadow will not fall on you."

"Kaka, your brain has gone senile. You have lost the capacity to think," Nath Singh flared up. "That's why you are talking so senselessly. You are always inciting these fellows against us. They should not become too big for their shoes. And do not blame us if something drastic happens and nobody is able to trace their dead bodies."

Gangi Kaka, as always, greeted the threat with a laugh. "Son, one who tries to gobble up everything in the end does not even get a bite of it. You must have some fear of God."

In the end the verdict went in favour of the zamindars. They had bribed Mani Pandit. His mind seemed to have run berserk. He not only denied the land to the blacksmiths but also raked up old issues, whereby they were required to pay back imaginary loans forthwith.

The zamindars forcefully possessed all the land which the blacksmiths had taken so much pains to reclaim. When on top of that they were also denied the right of passage for the cattle Gangi Kaka again went straight to the court at Lohaghat.

He appeared before the Deputy Collector with folded hands. "*Hazoor*, you are our saviour," he supplicated before him, "the blacksmiths are in a wretched state. How can they bear the court expenses when they don't even have a paisa? When they don't have a stitch of cloth to cover their naked bodies? At whose door should they knock for redress, if not yours? The zamindars are determined to do their worst. Next, they are going to kick at their bellies. If these poor people are not restored the land then I will sprinkle kerosene on my body before your very eyes and immolate myself."

The Deputy Collector was alarmed at Kaka's threatening mood. It was rumoured that he had come in for censure from the higher-ups for mis handling the rioting incident at Pul Hindola. Therefore as a token of his earnestness he promptly ordered the Tahsildar of Champawat to study the situation and report back to him.

The Tahsildar examined the whole thing on the spot and prevailed upon the zamindars to release the land in favour of the blacksmiths.

They waived off their claim on the disputed land under duress but at the same time they became still more hostile to the blacksmiths and Gangi Kaka. They thirsted for his blood.

As an aftermath, they filed cases *en masse* against the blacksmiths for return of their loans. On getting orders from the court they went all out to auction off even the meanest possessions of the blacksmiths such as spoons and ladels towards partial realisation of their loans.

SEVENTEEN

Gangi Kaka utilised all his savings to seek Deva's release but it bore no result. He made many trips to Nainital which also proved fruitless.

Those who had a hand in the murder strutted about with not a care in the world while the innocent ones were being treated as sacrificial lambs to be slaughtered at the altar. People said that the murder had been committed by another Deva who hailed from Talla Charal but the police had implicated their poor Deva as it bore a grudge against Gangi Kaka.

The police had also laid the charge of dacoity and theft against Deva and made out a case against him.

In the court Deva only said: "I have committed no murder. Nor any theft. But I don't have the money to fight out my case."

The case dragged on for two years.

In the end he was absolved of the murder but he was awarded three and a quarter years rigorous imprisonment on the charge of theft.

He did not have the wherewithal to file an appeal in the higher court. Nor had he any sympathisers and friends in high places who could come to his rescue. He had no other course left open to him except to submit tamely to his fate and complete his term behind the prison walls.

EIGHTEEN

Some unknown people had done Gangi Kaka to death last night.

The news spread through the region like wild fire.

The farmers behind their plough ran towards the village, leaving their work incomplete. The hired labour who were employed on daily wages, gave up their jobs midway. The women who went to the jungle to collect grass and wood retraced their steps on hearing the news. The school did not open. The grocers closed their shops.

Yesterday night Kaka was returning from Balka when, it was said, some persons waylaid him and killed him after forcing him into a hovel.

In the morning they had discovered his body, drenched in blood, under a *Kafil* tree by the bank of the Chowbatia river.

Previous to this, many attempts had been made on Kaka's life, the last being in December in the lonely dark valley of Bhisola. Luckily, he had managed to escape but the hatchet blow kept troubling his shoulder for many months.

Kaka's death cast a gloom not only in Dhankot but in the entire region around. Not only in the day but at night also many hearths remained cold.

Hundreds of people followed his bier. In the lonely cremation ground a huge pyre was lit.

All his life Kaka had worked with dedication for others.

He was not a man but a god in the disguise of a man.

Kaka never thought of self-interest.

His murder will not go unavenged.

A noble soul, he was too good for this world.

By departing from their midst he has orphaned the people. Who will now fight their battles for them?

As the pyre was lit the mourners burst out crying.

NINETEEN

When Deva returned to the village after completing his term he was a changed man. A thick growth of beard, a stern look, and inflamed eyes.

The rigours of a three and a quarter years in jail had taught him a lot. Conniving at injustice was tantamount to encouraging injustice. While working the grindstone and pounding the bamboo he had learnt this lesson to a nicety.

He went straight to Dhankot.

Curious eyes drew near to have a closer look.

Deva, Kaka used to sleep in this dilapidated hut.

We have carefully preserved his clothes.

This is the brass *thali* from which he ate.

Three days before his death he was heard telling Uncle Chandan that his body was not going to last long. Perhaps he had a premonition of his death. He had gone back to his village and met all the members of his family. He had specially singled out the children for his affection.

His dream of *Ram Raj* has remained unfulfilled. He often said that now Ravana was ruling over Ayodhya.

Since last year he had started eating very little. He often went without food for two days at a stretch.

Deva, everyone knows who has killed Kaka. But no one dares speak out of fear.

"But whose fear?" Deva laughed uproriously. "You are afraid even after bearing such tyranny? Can there be anything worse than this?"

What did Deva mean? They all gaped at him in bewilderment.

"Tell me, who has done Kaka to death? I say, tell me. I ask you openly, from the village platform, to the beat of the drum, at the top of my voice!"

They all listened to him, stunned.

For a while he stood there looking at their surprised, petrified faces as if he was searching for something there.

Then he composed himself and said, "Kaka was a saint, a *Parmahansa*. He was too good to be an inhabitant of this world. But the blood coursing through our veins has not turned into stagnant water of the pond. Those who will not let us live in peace we will also make their lives a hell. Why was Kaka killed? What was his crime? Why was I clapped into jail to rot there although I had committed no crime? Why do they tyrannise over you, day after day. Why did Kamlu Kaka's children die crying for a morsel of food? These are the questions that demand an answer from us. We must think over them. I am here to render you whatever help I can. You stand by me and in return I promise you your salvation. Even if I have to stake my life for it you will not find me wanting..."

Seeing Deva in such fury a chill fear gripped his listeners.

On returning home Deva did not talk with his children. Nor did he accost his wife. Entrusting the responsibilities of the home to Nandu, he tied a shroud round his head and stepped into the night in search of the morning.

THE END

A Warning on Synonyms

Call a woman a kitten, but never a cat;
You can call her a mouse, cannot call her a rat;
Call a woman a chicken, but never a hen!
Or you surely will not be her caller again.
You can call her a duck, cannot call her a goose;
You can call her a deer, but never a moose;
You can call her a lamb, but never a sheep;
Economic she likes, but you can't call her cheap.
You can say she's a vision, can't say she's a sight.
And no woman is skinny, she's slender and slight!
If she should burn you up, say she sets you afire;
And you'll always be welcome, you tricky old liar.

—**John Donovon,** *Saturday Evening Post*, **1946.**

QUIZ

TRY TO FIND OUT
24 FEMALE CHARACTERS
FROM THE RAMAYANA

P	G	N	M	G	A	N	G	A	K	Z	N	O	A	K	U
O	O	S	A	M	K	A	R	T	I	M	U	S	R	C	L
Z	J	O	O	U	Z	T	S	O	A	M	R	N	A	T	A
K	A	R	A	T	K	I	P	N	Q	I	J	H	H	A	B
Q	B	C	E	A	R	E	D	K	T	X	A	Y	T	K	A
A	T	A	R	A	J	A	S	A	T	H	P	N	N	M	A
A	O	I	B	L	V	S	K	I	K	N	A	T	A	Z	K
L	N	A	R	I	P	E	I	A	O	S	H	R	M	F	A
I	S	U	T	A	E	K	N	T	H	F	A	J	S	S	D
N	E	R	S	R	D	A	Y	L	A	S	U	A	K	A	A
A	M	K	T	U	P	O	T	O	S	H	O	N	U	N	T
S	D	I	I	R	Y	N	D	K	T	N	A	R	O	A	R
A	D	M	U	A	M	A	P	N	B	Z	M	L	V	J	Q
R	L	S	P	A	K	O	N	T	A	I	U	P	Y	N	R
U	T	K	E	Z	T	S	T	M	L	M	Q	S	P	A	A
S	P	O	K	T	R	I	J	A	T	A	U	O	N	K	L

GANGA
SUMITRA
KAUSALYA
KAIKEYI
SITA
SANTA
JARATA
SURPANAKHA
MANDODARI
TARA
SARAMA
TRIJATA
SABARI
ANUSUYA
AHALYA
MANDAVI
URMILA
SRITAKEERTI
MANTHARA
ANJANA
TADAKA
NAUKESI
ROMA
SURASA

WHO SAID THIS AND WHEN?

1. Who made these two memorable statements on mistakes?
   "The only things one never regrets are one's mistakes."
   "Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes."

2. This conversation took place between a gentleman who was accustomed to have the last laugh in every dialogue, and his wife. Who formed the couple?
   The Husband: "Isn't it true, my dear, that male judgment is superior to female judgment?"
   The Wife : "Of course, dear! After all, you married me and I you."

3. Which is the acknowledged shortest poem in English?

Answers:
1. Oscar Wilde.
2. George Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Shaw. This is one of the rare occasions when Shaw was quietly outwitted.
3. Adam
   Had'em
   This is the one according to the **Oxford Dictionary of Quotations.** But this three-word verse has a longer title which is, "On the Antiquity of Microbes".

NEWS

In ancient India, probably in the pre-Dravidian period, traders and adventurers crossed the seas to Indonesia and Pacific Islands and even to the Latin American countries referred to as "Bhadrasvavarsa", "Siddhapura" and "Pataladesa" in the ancient astronomical texts and inscriptions, according to Mr. Balaram Chakrabarti, Deputy Programme Adviser of the National Service Scheme Regional Centre in Calcutta.

Speaking at the Indian Museum Exhibition Hall on "The Forgotten Links between Mayan, Peruvian and Indian Cultures", he said there were striking similarities between these civilizations which proved the ancient links.

Mr. Chakrabarti said cocos cultivation had been brought over to India by the Pacific people. Indus Valley seals depict the Latin American domestic animal, the llama. The Pallava architecture in South India has a lot in common with that of Peru. In South America, images of deities resembling Kali and Shiva have been located. The Mahabharata describes how the Mayan architects built the Pandava palace at Indraprastha. The Surya Siddhanta, a new school of astronomy, was said to have been propounded by an Asura named Maya. Both Indians and Amerindians have the Swastika symbol and the circumambulation ritual.

A great feat in Carnatic music was achieved by Ravi Kiran, a young musician of seventeen years. He played on the musical instrument *gottuvadyam* continuously for twenty-four hours.

It was not a competition of any sort. It was done as thanksgiving to lord Padmanabha, the deity whom the musician has been worshipping since his childhood. The ragas and swaras and songs gushed forth without break and admirers and the boy's father Mr. M. Narasimhan kept watch right through.

He started playing at 7 a.m. one Friday at Padmanabhaswami temple in Adyar, Madras, and continued till 7 a.m. on Saturday, ending with Mangalam. Throughout the 24 hours Ravi Kiran did not get up even once for recess.

A 21-year old Canadian student, Miss Saloni Negi, who wanted to visit relatives in India and who had been refused a seat on the Air-India Jumbo jet that crashed recently near the Irish Coast, said, "I must be the luckiest person alive!"

"It's very upsetting to know that someone was sitting in the seat I wanted and gave up his life so that I could live."

A mysterious disease has driven over 60 children below 10 blind in the border area of Keran in the Kashmir Valley. The disease spread like wild fire in the area.

One theory was that the agent responsible could be some sort of poisonous gas which the Pakistani armed forces might have used experimentally during recent army exercises on the Pakistani side of the Line of Actual Control.

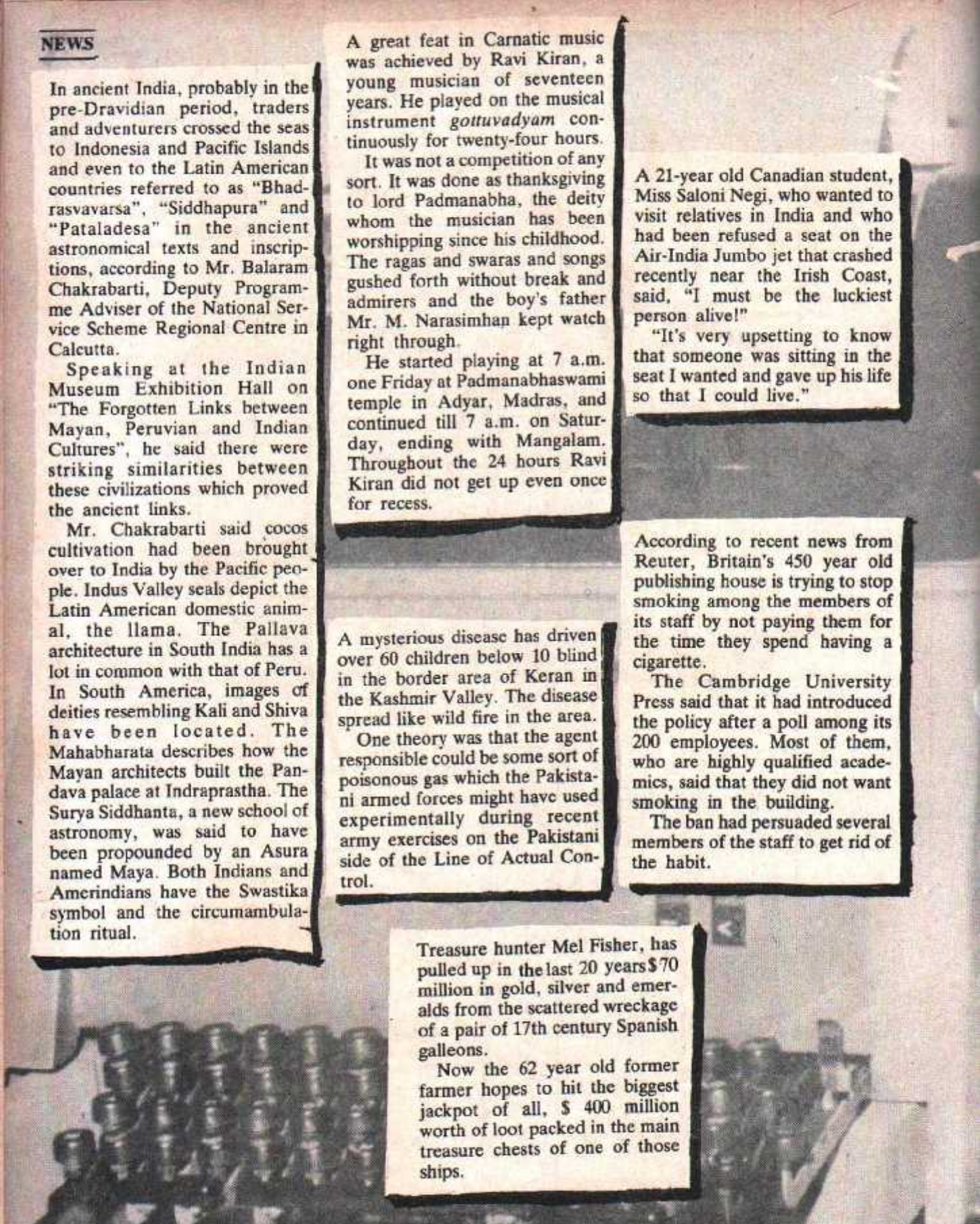
According to recent news from Reuter, Britain's 450 year old publishing house is trying to stop smoking among the members of its staff by not paying them for the time they spend having a cigarette.

The Cambridge University Press said that it had introduced the policy after a poll among its 200 employees. Most of them, who are highly qualified academics, said that they did not want smoking in the building.

The ban had persuaded several members of the staff to get rid of the habit.

Treasure hunter Mel Fisher, has pulled up in the last 20 years $70 million in gold, silver and emeralds from the scattered wreckage of a pair of 17th century Spanish galleons.

Now the 62 year old former farmer hopes to hit the biggest jackpot of all, $ 400 million worth of loot packed in the main treasure chests of one of those ships.



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Quite a chiller!

GOLDEN EAGLE

Mineral Water