THE HERITAGE

THE TTDC PACKAGE CONTAINS ... A LOT!

places, tours, hotels, motels, youth hostels ...

Places:
Tamilnadu – the window to the South – is a blend of the ancient and modern. Plenty of places for you to see in Tamil Nadu. From Madras, the capital and gateway to the South, no place is too far. Excellent road, rail and air services speed travellers to any point.

Tours:
Conducted tours are operated by TTDC with luxury coaches taking you from place to place. The tours include:

*Madras City Sight Seeing Tour *Sakthi Tour *Mamallapuram Tour *Tirupati Tour *Week End Tour *7-Day Tamilnadu Tour *7-Day South India Tour *Arupadai Veedu Tour (Lord Muruga Tour)

Hotels:
Hotel Tamil Nadu chain,offering traditional hospitality and modern comforts, is situated at Coimbatore, Madurai, Chidambaram, Kogenakkal, Kanniyakumari, Rameswaram, Thanjavur, Tiruchendur, Kodaikanal, Uthagamandalam, Yercaud and Anginar Area Transit Complex, Pichavaram, Tiruchirappalli.

Motels:
Motels Tamilnadu are located at Krishnagiri, Ranipet and Gundumpet.

Youth Hostels:
For youth and budget tourists, youth hostels located at Kogenakkal, Mamallapuram, Rameswaram, Pichavaram, Kanniyakumari, Kodaikanal, Uthagamandalam, Madurmalai and Yercaud.

V. BALAGURU
Chairman

For further details, please contact:

tamil Nadu tourism
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD.
V.S.T. Motor Buildings,
143, Anna Salai, Madras – 600 002.
Phone: 849803/849115 Grams: TAMILTOUR
Telex: MS-7575

DIPR 176/MS/87(R)

NOW AVAILABLE

SRI AUROBINDO'S
major works in a handy size, printed on Bible paper with hard cover and gold embossing in II vols.
(8,000 pgs.)
JUST FOR Rs. 325/-
(each vol. costs Rs. 29.55 when bought in a set.)
Please enclose Rs. 25/- towards postage and handling.

THE MOTHER'S
complete works in a handy size, printed on special paper with hard cover in
15 vols. (6,000 pgs.)
JUST FOR Rs. 325/-
(each vol. costs Rs. 21.70 when bought in set.)
Please enclose Rs. 25/- towards postage & handling.

☆ SPECIAL OFFER ☆

Ask for one or more books from the list given below for examination (which will be forwarded on request, accompanied with full payment in advance). If dissatisfied, we guarantee full refund (less M.O. charges), if the books are returned to us within a month in good condition.

SRI AUROBINDO

Title	No.of Pages	Cost Rs.
1. Essays on the Gita with Sanskrit text & translation H.B.	763	50.00
OR		
"do" P.B.	590	30.00
2. a. Bhakti yoga (The yoga of divine love)	164	14.00
b. Karma yoga (The yoga of divine works)	335	25.00
3. Sri Aurobindo came to me—by D.K. Roy	590	40.00

THE MOTHER

Title	No.of Pages	Cost Rs.
1. The great adventure—a diary for all times (selections from Her writings) more than 6000 sold in '86 alone.	P.B. 366	25.00
	H.B.	30.00
2. Prayers and meditations (pages from Her own diary. Good for Spiritual aspirants).	P.B. 420	20.00
	H.B. 420	30.00

For the above, send only MO or DD in favour of V A K—THE SPIRITUAL BOOKSHOP, Shri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry—605 002. (On orders above Rs.100/- postage will not be charged extra).

Space donated by :
BIHAR MERCANTILE UNION PVT. LTD.
15, Brabourne Road, Calcutta—700 001. Exporters of Quality Silk.

Sangeetha LIVE CASSETTES NEW RELEASES

The first licenced pre-recorded cassette manufacturers in south india

VOCAL

Dr. M. BALAMURALIKRISHNA - Kshetrajna Padams on Muvva Gopala - *6ECDB 111 • Thyagaraja Krithis *6MSC 6194 • *6MSC 6192 • *6MSC 6186 • 6MSC 6175 • *6ECDB 7126 • *6ECDB 7122 • *6ECDB 7112 • *6ECDB 7102 • *6ECDB 7096 • *6ECDB 7092 • 6ECDB 7049 • Vocal - 6MSC 6185 • *6ECDB 7089 • Raagam Thanam Pallavi - *6ECDB 7118 • Krithis on Vinayaka - *6MSC 6197 • Thillanas - 4MSC 4272 • Navavarna Krithis - *9ECDB 7086 • Dikshitar Krithis - *6ECDB 7158 •

Dr. M.L. VASANTHAKUMARI - Devi Kadambamala - *6MSC 6196 • Krithis on Sri Purandara Dasa - *6MSC 6193 • Bharathanatyam Songs - *6ECDB 7084 • Raagam Thanam Pallavi - *6ECDB 7145 • Vocal - 6ECDB 7076 • 6ECDB 7095 • 6ECDB 7097 •

MAHARAJAPURAM SANTHANAM - Krithis on Vinayaka - *6ECDB 7013 • Vocal - *6ECDB 7077 • 6ECDB 7124 •

BOMBAY SISTERS - Vocal - 6ECDB 7120 • Srirangam Pancharatna Krithis - 4ECDB 7289 • Swati Thirunal Krithis - 4MSC 4092 • Lalgudi Pancharatna Krithis - 4ECDB 7272 • Krithis of Srimath Venkataramana Bhagavatar - 4MSC 4207 •

S. JANAKI - Thyagaraja Krithis - 6ECDB 7099 •

D.K. JAYARAMAN - Vocal - 6ECDB 7059 •

T.N. SESHAGOPALAN - Vocal - *6ECDB 7094 •

S. RAMANATHAN - Vocal - 6ECDB 7105 • Navagraha Krithis - 6ECDB 7106 •

B.V. RAMAN B.V. LAKSHMANAN - Vocal - 6MSC 6131 • Pancharatna Krithis - *6ECDB 7116 •

V. RAMACHANDRAN - Vocal - 6MSC 6130 • *6MSC 6031 •

R. VEDAVELLI - Vocal - *6MSC 6025 • Padams & Javalis 6ECDB 7093 •

NOOKALA CHINNA SATYANARAYANA - Vocal - *6MSC 6102 • Music Lessons - *6MSC 6104 (Vol I) • *6MSC 6105 (Vol II)

INSTRUMENTAL

MANDOLIN - Master U. Srinivas - 6MSC 6201 • 6MSC 6189 • 6ECDB 7011 • *6ECDB 7020 • *6ECDB 7044 • *6ECDB 7057 • 6ECDB 7088 *6ECDB 7155 •

VIOLIN - Kunnakudi Vaidyanathan - 6MSC 6198 • Thillanas - 6MSC 6190 • *6ECDB 7085 *6ECDB 7083 • *6ECDB 7130 • A. Kanyakumari - *6MSC 1044 • Ganesh - Kumaresh - *6ECDB 7123 • T. Rukmini - 6MSC 1042 •

NADASWARAM - Thiruvizha R. Jaisankar - 6MSC 6200 • Kotiur Rajarathinam Pillai - 6MSC 6177 • 6ECDB 7098 • T. Shivalingam - 6ECDB 7196 • E.P. Kandaswami & E.P. Ganesan - 6MSC 6155 • T.E. Palani Swami - *6MSC 6081

SAXOPHONE - Kadri Gopalnath - *6ECDB 7014 • *6ECDB 7110 • Bhakti Vani on Saxophone - *6ECDB 7015 • Pancharatna Krithis - 4ECDB 7031 • Bhakthi Naada - 4ECDB 7188 • Utsava Sampradaya Krithis - *4MSC 4232 • Marathi Abhangs - *4MSC 4174 • Moodabidiri M.S. Gopalakrishna - *6MSC 6142 •

VIOLA - Dr. M. Balamuralikrishna - *6MSC 6121 • **GOTTU VADYAM** Ravi Kiran - *6ECDB 7101 •

FLUTE - Sikkil Sisters - *6ECDB 7121 • *6MSC 6052 • Prapancham Seetharam - *6ECDB 7128 • Raghu-Ravi - 6MSC 6005 • *6MSC 6157 • N. Kesi - *6MSC 6156 •

VEENA - Dr. Emani Sankara Sastry - 6ECDB 7113 • E. Gayathri - 6ECDB 7082 • *6MSC 6055 • Suma Sudhindra - 6MSC 6043 • *6MSC 6148 • Shanthi Rao - 6MSC 1011 • 6MSC 6069•

JALATHARANGAM - Anayampatti S. Dhandapani - 6ECDB 7091 • *6ECDB 7129 •

HARMONIUM - Palladam S. Venkataramana Rao - *6ECDB 7058 • *6MSC 6062 • 6MSC 6166 • Ustad Asgar Hussain Khan - *4MSC 4094 •

SITAR - Ustad Ahmed Hussain Khan - *6ECDB 7191 • *6MSC 6040 • M. Janardhan *6MSC 6032

THALAVADYA KATCHERY - T.H. Vinayakaram & Party *6ECDB 7193 •

THALAVADYAM - Dr. T.K. Murthy *6MSC 6103 •

WHISTLE - K. Siva Prasad - 4ECDB 7132 •

• STEREO

Available with all authorised Cassette/Record dealers

For Trade enquiries in Kerala
VIJAY MUSICALS
Kasaragod 670 121

Sangeetha LIVE CASSETTES
Produced and Marketed by
THE MASTER RECORDING COMPANY
P.B. No. 5096,
Madras-600 028
Phone: 71936 & 77326

For Trade enquiries in Tamil Nadu
M/s. CAPRI ASSOCIATES
10, Chari Street, T. Nagar
Madras-600 017 Phone: 444504

Stockist for Karnataka
SRI GURURAJA AGENCIES
No. 16, 1st Floor, 2nd Main Road
Seshadripuram, Bangalore

CONTENTS

FEBRUARY 1987 VOL. 3 NO. 2

THE HERITAGE

Features and Fiction for Today and Tomorrow

10. THE WAY OF NATURE: Richard Pearson. A guidance to our environment this month.
12. FESTIVAL: THE DESERT FESTIVAL OF JAISALMER: Jagpat Pal Singh. A carnival of colourful dances.
16. TRIBALS: KONDHS: A.C.Sahoo. They continue as children of Nature.
22. LITTLE KNOWN INDIA: BHIMLI: A.S.Pai. Fading memory of a colony.
25. POETRY: BIRD, ANT: Ayyappa Paniker
26. TODAY'S TOPIC: ANGER OVER TAJ MAHAL: Devapriyo. Symbolic of the danger to all great monuments.
29. FABLES AND PARABLES: THAT EXPLAINS
30. REFLECTIONS: INDIA AND WORLD LITERATURE: Lokesh Chandra. A dazzling array of facts
34. MYTHOLOGY: HISTORY AND HINDU MYTHOLOGY: Pradeep Bhattacharya. The two may be closer than realised.
36. NEW LEAF: A PARABLE OF THE PRIMEVAL NIGHT: Hema Aurora. A parable with an allegory.
38. BODY AND MIND: ARE YOU NORMAL: A.S. Dalal. An easy coup for examining ourselves.
42. NATURE: THE STORK MESSENGER: M. Krishnan. A tribute to the good old feathery friend.
44. THE OTHER EXPERIENCE: BAPU OF THE DURGAH: Dhananjay Desai. The quiet sentinel of spiritual peace.
46. CRAFTS: HANDICRAFTS OF RAJASTHAN: Bhisham Pal. A colourful heritage recounted.
50. ARTS: KOODIATTAM: Jiwan Pani. Light on the sole surviving Sanskrit drama tradition,
53. FICTION: WATERMAN NARAPPA: R.S. Mugali.
60. WHERE THE HEART IS: Sunita Jain.
62. THE EYES: Sneharashmi.
66. THE SPIRIT OF KASHI: Ishwar Sharan.
68. ROOTS: CHIDAMBARAM: N.S. Ramaswami. The seat of the Unique Nataraja Idol.

74. PHENOMENA AND CARTOONS.
76. HUMOUR: JUSTICE FROM THE HILL: 'M'.
78. SEVEN LIMERICKS.
81. BOOK FEATURE: KANNAKI'S ANKLET: K. Sreenivasan. A delightful comment on a modern craze.

Traditional painting of Rajasthan continuing in contemporary art and craft. (See article on the Handicrafts of Rajasthan). Photo by: Liaquat A. Bhatti.

Founder:
B. NAGI REDDI
Publisher & Mg. Editor:
B. VISWANATHA REDDI
Editor:
MANOJ DAS
Executive Advisors:
B.V. REDDI
B. VENKATRAMA REDDI
Art Consultant:
SISIR DATTA

EDITORIAL AND MANAGEMENT OFFICE:

Chandamama Buildings: Vadapalani, Madras-600 026. Tel: 423423, 421778, Telex: 041-347, Cables: 'CHANDAMAMA'. REGIONAL OFFICES: NEW DELHI: Flat No. F-5, Bhagat Singh Market, New Delhi-110 001. Phone: 345040. BOMBAY: 98 'Atlanta' 9th Floor, 209, Backby Reclamation, Nariman Point, Bombay-400 021. Phone: 223976. CALCUTTA: 'Kohinoor', Flat No. 9, 2nd Floor, 105, Park Street, Calcutta-700 016. Phone: 298677.

THE HERITAGE is published monthly by Chandamama Publications, 188 N.S.K. Salai, Vadapalani, Madras-600 026, India. Unauthorised reproductions in part or in whole, of any article, illustration and other materials published in THE HERITAGE without the written permission of the publisher is illegal and strictly forbidden. Any similarity between characters in the fiction published in THE HERITAGE and those dead or alive, is purely coincidental. Articles are to be addressed to the Editor, THE HERITAGE, Chandamama Buildings, Vadapalani, Madras-600 026. Unsolicited articles cannot be returned unless accompanied by self-addressed covers and postage. Articles published do not necessarily reflect the editorial views. Subscriptions are to be sent by M.O. or Demand Draft (drawn in favour of Dolton Agencies) to Dolton Agencies, Chandamama Buildings, Vadapalani, Madras-600 026. Subscribers are requested to notify change of address at least six weeks in advance. Subscription: Annual Rs.72.00. Overseas (by sea) U.S. $10, Singapore S.$21, U.K. £8, W.Germany D.M.30, and (by air) $30 / S.$40 / £20 / D.M. 75 respectively. (Rates are subject to change in freight.) Overseas subscription remittances are to be made in favour of Chandamama Publications, Vadapalani, Madras-600 026.

VIEWS AND VOICES

"A MANY-SPLENDOURED MEDIUM"

Here are five samples of many letters we receive expressing interest in the different aspects of THE HERITAGE

— Editor

THE OTHER EXPERIENCE

THE HERITAGE is a many-splendoured medium. From history to fiction, it has many sections. However, what is unique about it is the section, *The Other Experience*. If an editor has a conscientious stuff, he can always choose the best stories from many that are submitted. The same applies to other categories of articles. But to introduce a section like *The Other Experience* requires vision and to continue it requires real endeavour. Kindly do not discontinue this series. This has enlarged my idea of the forces which work behind our life.

Calcutta —Mrinal Ganguly

A CENTURY OF STORIES

As an avid reader of fiction I can assure you that more than a century of short stories and about a dozen novelettes you have published during last two years have more than satisfied me. Your selection—be they from established writers or new ones—was always excellent. How little we knew about the existence of such fictions in different Indian languages!

Madurai —Rupa Ramachandran

WHY NOT MORE FABLES?

My congratulations to you for completing two glorious years of publication. As a reader from the beginning I feel proud that my country has such a magazine and I have been a part of it—as one of its numerous buyers.

Fables and Parables for Adults particularly fascinates me. This has opened my eyes to the wisdom of antiquity embedded in precise stories. Vindusar has a singular knack, a charming style through which he gives emphasis on the right message without wasting words. Kindly convey my deep appreciation to him.

New Delhi —V.D. Bhagat

MY FIRST INTEREST

I may sound unusual, but the first thing I read in THE HERITAGE is the editorial. May I be allowed to repeat what the President of a cultural meeting at Bangalore said about your editorials—that they voice the Conscience of India.

Bangalore —S. Kulkarni

DR. MAHTAB'S MEMOIRS

We have received some warm comments on the

memoirs of Dr. Mahtab (Dec. '86). Our readers must have known that Dr. Mahtab passed away on the 2nd of January this year. He had sent his book to THE HERITAGE before its formal release in New Delhi on 25 November in a neat function attended by historians, freedom-fighters and others. His son, Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, Editor of ***The Prajatantra****, the influential Oriya newspaper founded by the late statesman wrote to the editor on 23 December '86 that Dr. Mahtab was much pleased with the publication of his memoirs in THE HERITAGE. In the passing of this "colossus" as he has been rightly described by several newspapers, THE HERITAGE lost a sincere well-wisher.*

—Editor

In the article "While Serving my Nation" (December '86) Dr. Mahtab refers to Shri C. Rajagopalachari as the Home Minister. To my knowledge he was never the Home Minister. He was the Governor-General of India. Will you kindly clarify?

Darbhanga —*R.P. Jaiswal*

Shri C. Rajagopalachari was the Home Minister in 1950-51 (When the new Constitution came to prevail) after serving as the last Governor-General during 1947-50.

—Editor

In the editorial note on Dr. Mahtab (Dec. '86) you say that he was the first Chief Minister (then called the Premier) of Orissa. But Gajapati Krishna Chandra and Shri Bishwanath Das had preceded him.

Phulbani —Purnenda Tripathy

The sentence in the editorial note must be read in full. It says that he was the first Chief Minister after independence.

—Editor

ELABORATE THE POINTS

THE HERITAGE changed our notion of what a magazine should be ... I have rarely missed any of your editorials. I read and re-read some of them. I feel that someone is speaking for a deeper sense in me, giving a direct insight of the truth. Sometimes you touch the very root of problems, but you are very brief. Please take up these issues and give us elaborate essays on them.

Visakhaptnam —Sanjay Kumar Das

A NEW APPROACH

The December '86 issue brought us a new experience. The questions you put to some renowned people and their answers and the article "Has Religion a Future?" were highly instructive—rather enlightening.

Belgaum —Sobha Sundaram

THE HERITAGE

THE PATHWAY TO GOD AND THE PATHWAY TO POWER

When we skip a fact or hide a necessary truth to avoid unpleasantness, it only results in more unpleasantness and falsehood in the long run. If we believe that truth will ultimately triumph — *Satyameva Jayate* — the sooner we face it the better.

In December an unexpected violence disfigured the charming face of Bangalore. It even spread to Mysore and some other places of Karnataka and had its echo in faraway Kashmir. What inspired it is a short story published in the Sunday literary page of the *Deccan Herald!* No short story in the world's literature had ever been credited or discredited with such an aftermath to its publication.

I read a number of editorials in different newspapers, some passing value-judgments on the short story in question as "poorly written", unworthy of making a furore, and at least one national newspaper sermonising on the responsibilities that go with the freedom of the press, taking the unfortunate *Deccan Herald* to task for negligence in discharging that duty, as if the publication of that short story reflected a serious editorial policy! The simple fact that such a 'slip' can creep into any newspaper, through the lack of alertness on the part of a single sub-editor, was surprisingly forgotten by this powerful compatriot.

Yes, it had happened through lack of alertness, not through any lack of literary taste. I have at last read the story — to my great anguish — for it is indeed a good story. It is about a Muslim boy who is physically and mentally deficient and who with his innocence amuses all in the village where Muslims and Hindus live in the usual rural harmony and where Muslims even contribute to the construction of the Hindu temple. He is the popular village idiot.

The story is a portrayal of an unfortunate lad. For sake of realism, he had to belong to one of the religious communities and he is shown to be a Muslim. It would have hardly altered the situation if he would have been placed in a Hindu or a Christian family. It is a human story and no reader can miss the empathy with which the character is drawn. The only 'blunder' the writer made was to christen the character by a holy name and only once, at the end of the story, to refer to him by the appelation by which the founder of Islam is known. (We do not know what the original Malayalam version of the word was.) In any case, no sensible reader can find any motive in it except a comment on the ways of the world. If irony was meant, then the parallel irony was there also in the name of the prostitute, Sita, one of the holiest of holy Hindu names, the personification of chastity!

The original version of the story must have been relatively well-known in Malayalam for it had won an award. It did not arouse any murmur in Kerala where 70% people are literates and Muslims form a considerable part of the population. But it did inflame violence in Bangalore, when, years later, it was published in English. A case which warranted, if at all, a few letters to the editor, took a heavy toll in terms of life, property and money — and left in its trail a memory of hatred and distrust.

Why? On the occasion of its publication in Malayalam people took the story as a story. On the

second occasion some people attributed to it a sense that was not there. In other words, it is not the story, but the minds of a few readers which was at the root of the violence. It is doubtful if even one per cent of those who protested against the publication had read or understood the story. This is the state of affairs in our society. A few exploit the religious, linguistic and regional sentiments of many. Religion, of course, comes most handy.

At the time of going to press, yet another development is brewing. A leader has given a call to his community to boycott the Republic Day because their sentiment has been wounded as the court order in regard to the Babri mosque at Ayodhya has gone in favour of the Hindus. Has the leader thought whose interest he is harming? Has he understood the far-reaching consequence of colouring his community as one that has no sentimental attachment to the national day?

Enough of claims and counter-claims with the show of muscle. Should we not leave certain issues to the court of law or to the process of compromise?

But the silver lines on the cloud too are distinct. A number of leading Muslims have condemned the aforesaid call.

Both Hindus and Muslims have to live together. Even an experiment like the formation of Pakistan at the terrible cost of massacres, murders and much more has not altered this fact! Both Hindus and Muslims will do well to rise above the mere forms of their religions and to respect the essence of religion which is man's aspiration for Truth. Let religion be the pathway to God, not the pathway to power or leadership.

Both Hindus and Muslims have so much to be proud of the creative heritage of India. No Muslim of today is responsible for what Babar or Aurangzeb had done any more than any Hindu is responsible for what Jai Chand had done. The Hindus must remember that if they claim to be the heirs to the tradition built by the Rishis of the Vedas and the Upanishads, they must be as secular and as Catholic as the sires were, for the ancients not only allowed totally divergent philosophies to thrive, but also accepted atheists like Charvaka and Javala as Rishis!

In fact anyone who looks upon India as his motherland, be he a Christian or a Muslim, is an heir to the tradition built by the Vedas, the Upanishads and the epics, for such works project the consciousness of India; they were formed long before the present concept of Hinduism came into being. The Hindus of today, simply because they are born in Hindu families, cannot claim a monopoly of this heritage.

Both Hindus and Muslims must fight the obscurantist rituals and practices in their folds and not pamper them. Both must look forward to a greater future. If not for truth, we all should at least strive for happiness. And that is not possible without a harmonious living. For a harmonious living, demagogues who cash in on cheap sentimentalism, who thrive on keeping alive hatred and suspicion, must be confronted by the intelligentsia — in all the religious communities.

I do not remember the author of a significant short story (Is it K.A. Abbas?) in which an ass is asked whether it was a Hindu or a Muslim. The ass replies that a Hindu could be an ass, as much as a Muslim can be an ass, but an ass can be neither a Hindu nor a Muslim!

Should we not justify the ass's assertion?

THE WAY OF NATURE— IN FEBRUARY

by RICHARD PEARSON

Launched in January, this feature will guide us to the changing wonders of Nature, month after month.

EACH thing is symbolic in Nature: whether it is the ever-inspiring height of the mountains beckoning us to climb higher and higher in the rungs of consciousness, or the tirelessly dashing waves of the joyous sea, beckoning us to march on ceaselessly forward in our journey to the supreme goal, or the green freshness of the rain-washed earth after the dire winter of apparent destruction and desolation. But in my view through all its varied manifestations the most secret lesson that Nature teaches us is its labour of love and the spontaneous joy of its selfless offering.

Maybe, it is a subjective interpretation and each one of us sees Nature through one's own crystal or coloured glass. One might even say that the mountains are too high, austere and aloof or even stern. And the boisterously dashing waves are too rebellious and threatening. But all will agree that Nature cheers us up most through its gifts of flowers. And yet, some will protest that roses have their equally repelling thorns!

Well, each feeling is true, but since the subjective approach is most intimately real to us and Nature does influence us in our feeling and thinking, as well as our ways of doing and being, let us see the most positive aspect of Nature and try to experience its beauty and delight. It is much more inspiring and uplifting to know that the darkest night hides in its bosom the most glorious dawn.

So, let us see what February has to offer us. First of all, it is the month of spring all over India. Looking all around us one cannot but be awakened to the intensity of this season's aspiration for blossoming forth fully. It is something that seizes you—the pleasant refreshing air with a gentle warmth, carrying the soft fragrance of the first blossoms of Nature. The sudden return of joy expressed through shiny, fresh, tender leaves and flowers on fruit trees, birds flocking with songs of joy or the butterflies flitting from flower to flower with their ceaseless pattern of exotic colours. "All Nature seems to be at a festival."

'Ashoka' *(Saraca)* gives its lovely flowers to announce the birth of a world without grief. Another tree for the King of fruits—the mango—is filled with blossoms. But the delight of all delights is in the 'Fairy Freshness' *(Haemotoxylon)*—so charming with its cascades of tiny fragrant blossoms. However if you are anxious for Nature's artistry of an endless variety of colours, forms and fragrance that can fill you with marvel, look for the 'Champa' trees *(Plumeria)*. We are told that there are twelve hundred varieties of Champa flowers, quite unique in their combination of colours, forms and fragrance. Hollylocks *(Althea)* are gardeners' delights—so tender, transparent and lovely in their ascending blossoms! So also are *Antirrhinums, Celosia* and others. And don't forget to look for the 'Rangoon creeper' *(Quisqualis)* loaded with white, pink and red flowers. 卐

1

Rangoon Creeper (Quisqualis Indica)

2

Photographs (1, 2 & 3) by: Gangaram Malwade (Pic. 4): by Richard Pearson.

3

Hollyhock (Althaea)

4

THE DESERT FESTIVAL

A newly organised festival revitalises and brings together the popular dance traditions of Rajasthan.

Text:
JAGPAT PAL SINGH

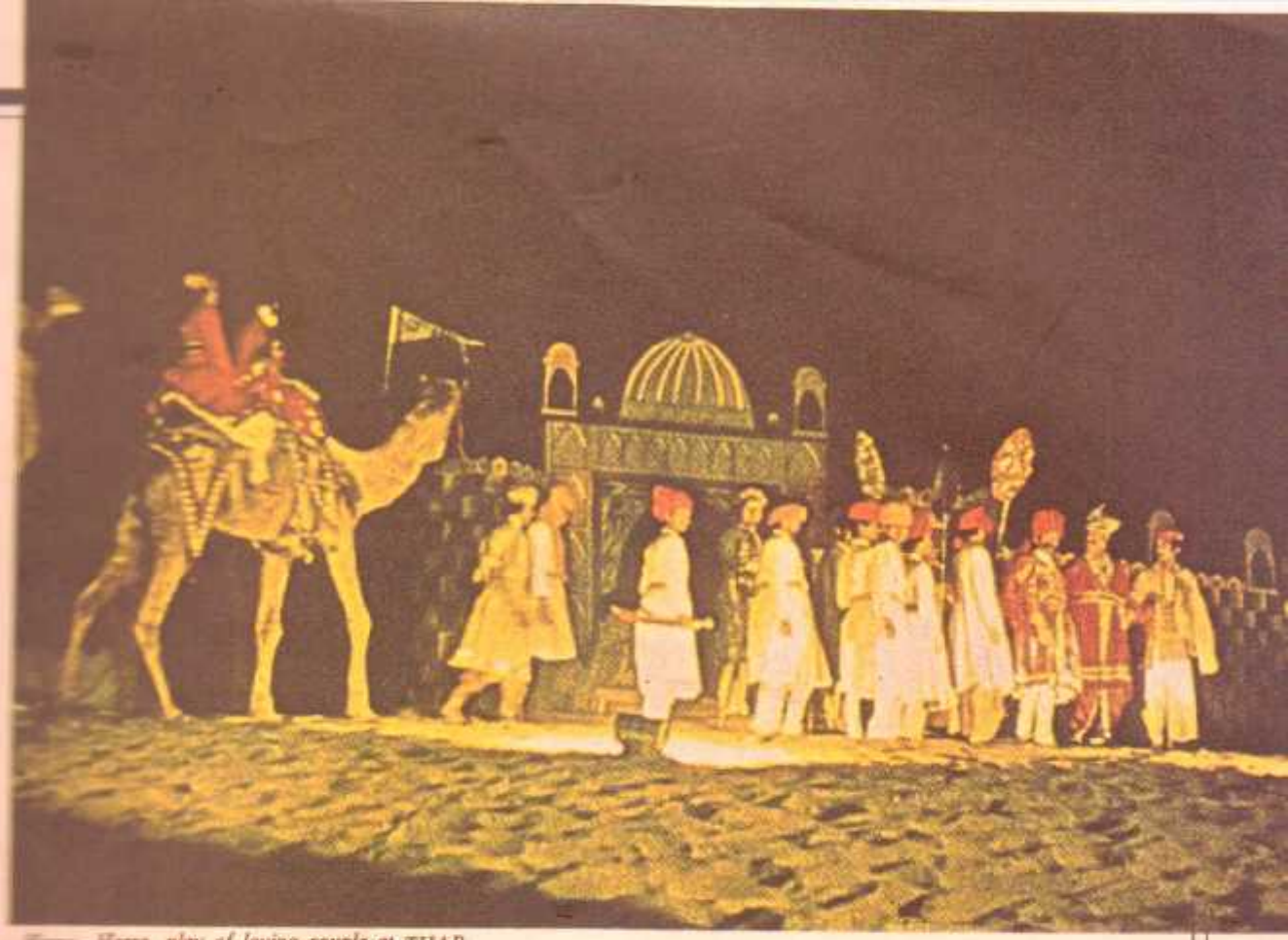
Photographs:
LIAQUAT A. BHATTI

IN February the sleepy and remote town of Jaisalmer wakes up to the sweet desert melodies and reverberates with swash-buckling dances to the tune of rich folk music. It is the time for festivities which lasts for three days, beginning on the first at dawn with the blowing of the trumpet known as *bankia*.

Gaily caparisoned camels march in a colourful procession carrying men dressed in resplendent uniforms and traditional turbans laced with gilt *zari*, dazzling threads. The camels entertain the audience by performing amusing feats like galloping, romping, dancing, kneeling and lying. The polo game from camel backs is a hilarious event and the players are elegantly donned in breeches and crimson turbans.

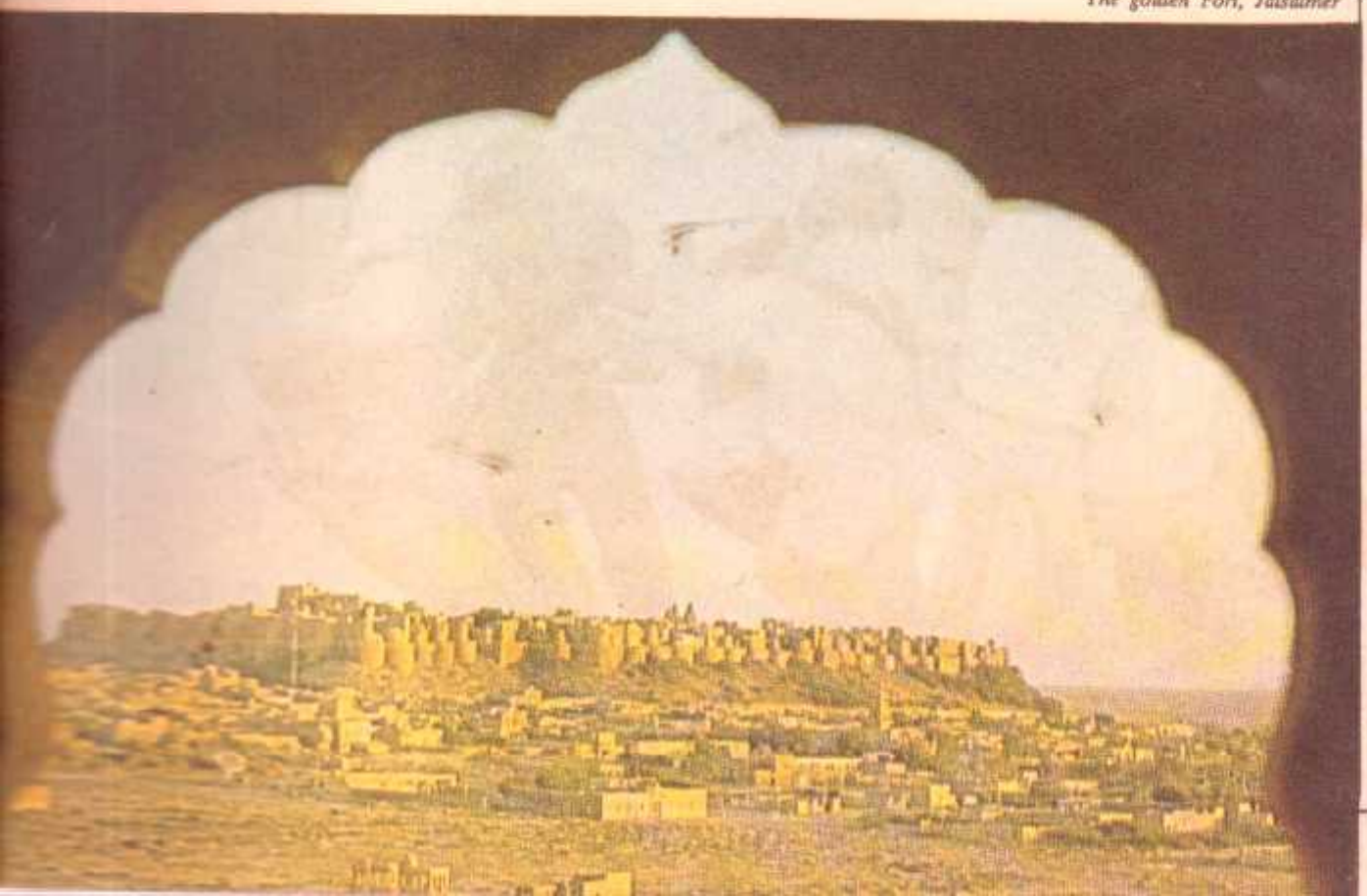
The musical chair event shared only by the ladies and the turban-tying competitions open for both

A Folk Dancer



Hamza—Heera, play of loving couple at THAR

The golden Fort, Jaisalmer



men and women are equally enjoyable.

In the moonlit night and against the backdrop of looming forts the mirthful desert people of Jaisalmer perform varieties of traditional and captivating dances.

Ghoomar: It is a highly rhythmic dance performed by a troupe clad in rustling silk attires. The dancers gracefully move in a circular form—each alternate performer facing inside—to the tune of *Ghoomar* song.

Gair: A dance performed by men wearing long, frilled gowns and scarlet turbans. Gradually the dance gains speed to the increasing pace of the drum-beats.

Kalbelia: This is usually performed by the *Kalbelia* (snake-charmer) brunettes and is one of the main attractions. The supple-bodied dancers sing and spin like enchantresses to the sweet notes of musical instruments like *Pungi* and *Khanjari*. The famous pair Gulabi and Mewa have given performances abroad during the Festivals of India.

Teratal: This is a supplicatory dance in adoration of the popular deity, Ramdevaji. While the men sing and play on folk instruments like *Tandoora, Khartal* and *Manjeeras*, the females dressed in yellow clothes perform to the music. The dancers hold swords between their teeth in the belief of gaining concentration.

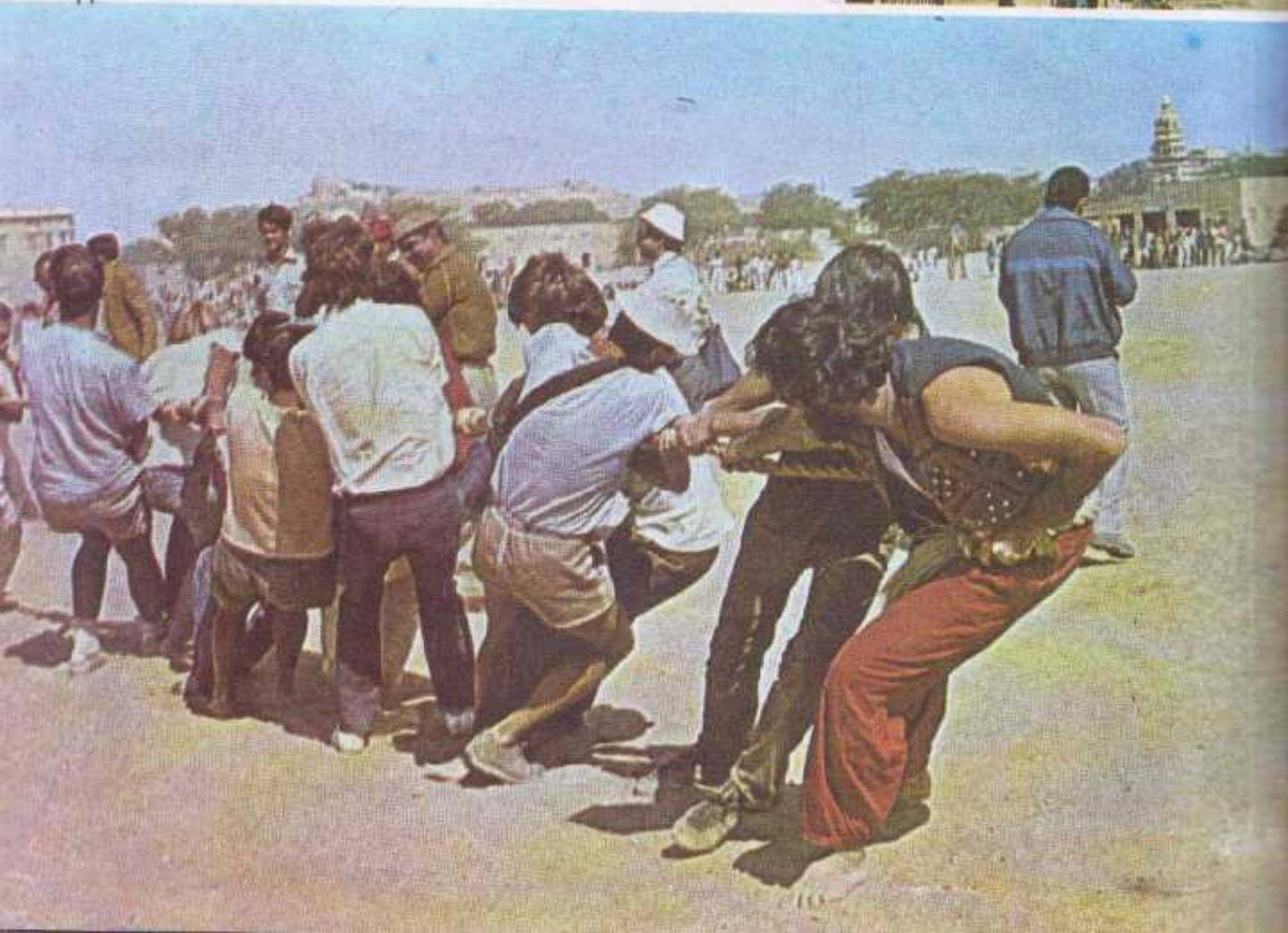
Chakari: The Kanjar tribe girls from Kota district perform this fast dance to the beats of *Dholak* and tunes of lively tribal songs. Even the men who play the drums perform acrobatic feats while they move about in excitement.

Kachhi-Ghori: This is performed by a male with the help of a dummy horse. The dancer wearing marital dress, dances to the accompaniment of music and song. He even sings in praise of his beloved.

Chari: A welcome dance usually performed by six females with perforated clay-pots on their

Lodurva Jain temple, Jaisalmer

Rope pulling game



Excercise

Gheomar Dance Artist

head. Lamps are kept burning in the pots.

Dhap: This dance form originating from the Shekhawati area is unique as the male dancers clad in female attires play on *Dhap* and dance in a circle. They also sing *Dhamels* (religious songs).

Bhavai: This is a spectacular show. The performer placing several pots on his head balances himself on sharp edges like broken glass and metal pieces. A romantic song is usually sung in the background while the dance is on.

Bhopa-Bhopi Dance: This is a duet song-and-dance. The *Bhopa* sings and plays the string instrument *Rawanhatha* as he dances. His female counterpart joins him in the singing.

Besides these interesting forms of dances the playing of a number of musical instruments is also one of the most important features of this desert festival. Some of these instruments are *Dhol* (drum), *Satara* (twin-flute), *Morchang* (Jew's harp), *Bhapang* (one string instrument), etc. The unusual improvised musical instruments proving the innovative skill of the simple desert people are the *Matka* or *Ghara* (earthen pitcher) which produces a sweet humming sound when air is blown into it and a long, hollow reed known as *Nad*.

The *Khartal* (pair of wooden frames) which are struck together to produce rhythmic notes is the favourite of the *Langas* and *Mangamars*, traditional folk musicians who usually dominate the scene.

The two days folk music programme comes to a grand finale with all the artistes gathering on the centre stage—which is an improvised one made of camel-carts tied in a row—and playing and singing their choicest melodies.

Then the festivities shift to Sam, noted for its rippled sand-dunes. The light and sound show against the background of make-shift forts and palaces is punctuated with scenes of love-legends, battle-fields, folk dances, camel caravans, etc. Light is flashed from concealed sources spread over the sand and the sound is usually pre-recorded. Generally with the enacting of a marriage procession followed by the spectacular display of fire-works the lively and eventful desert festival comes to a dramatic close. 卐

DONGRIA KONDHS OF ORISSA

Photographs by VIVEK VICKI

by Dr. ANANTA CHARAN SAHOO

ACCORDING to the Scheduled Tribes list as many as 62 different tribal groups are spread over 13 districts of Orissa. Among them the Kondhs numerically top the list, with a population of ten thousand. According to different stages of socio-economic development and cultural levels the Kondh tribe is divided into several communities such as Dongria Kondhs, Desia Kondhs and Jhadia Kondhs.

The Dongria Kondhs live in the Niyamgiri hill ranges situated at a high altitude with a cool and pleasant climate. Perennial streams, animals, birds and varieties of herbs, shrubs and trees are found in these hilly areas.

Unlike the other tribal communities the Dongria Kondhs are expert horticulturists. They grow plenty of fruit trees like banana, jackfruit, mango, pineapple, orange, lemon and lichi. They also do shifting cultivation on very steep hilly slopes and paddy is also irrigated on terraced lands.

There are strong and powerful traditional councils which control and enforce all their social conduct and laws.

The Kondhs speak a dialect of their own known as *Kui*. According to legends the Dongria Kondhs are the brothers of other Kondhs. A king known as Niyama Raja had settled them on these hills. Hence they have developed a social character peculiar to their legendary

ancestry.

The villages consist of a cluster of mud houses with thatched roofs. The number of households in a village varies from 10 to 55. The roof is so low that while entering the house one has to literally crawl into it. The main part in the house is called *Kulimunda*, which represents the ancestral spirit of the family and on festive occasions sacrifices are made to them for health and happiness.

The Dongria Kondhs are not health-conscious. They are not habituated to wash themselves nor brush their teeth regularly. They wash their clothes with the ashes of the banana tree and their houses usually look unkempt.

Their staple food is ragi gruel and rice of small millets like *Suan*, *Kangu* and *Kosoala*. On special occasions they take rice and meat. Their meal is supplemented by different fruits, roots and stems of Salape tree. A number of edible flowers and leaves are also relished. They also eat buffaloes, cows, pigs, goats, fowls and even porcupines. They are fond of rats and mice too. For beverage they prepare intoxicating drinks from Sago palm juice and Mahua flowers. Wine prepared from rice is in fact their most favourite drink

The Chieftain's daughter

Making of an wensi[1]

Household spilling out of the room

Trying the weapons

which is abundantly available both in winter and summer.

Both men and women use ornaments on ear, nose, neck, arm, wrist, waist, fingers, ankles and toes. The men put two rings, one on the left and other at the middle of the nose. Whereas the women put on three such rings, one on each side of the nose and another at the middle. Their ornaments are usually made of aluminium, brass and sometimes of silver, but gold is rarely used except by those economically well-to-do. The men keep long hair, neatly tied in knots and tucked with leaf-rolled cigarettes. The women wear white clothes with red border and the men use a long loin cloth. Both these dresses are woven by local Dombs and sold at very high price. The embroidery work on the napkins done by the girls are undoubtedly praise-worthy. The Dongria Kondh men are always proud of their convex-shape serpent knives and the brass pipes used for smoking tobacco leaves.

Besides the ornaments the only assets that these people possess are bamboo baskets, earthern pots and agricultural, hunting and fishing implements which are of ancient and crude types.

Cultivation and horticulture are the main source of livelihood of the Dongria Kondhs. However, till today they have not abandoned the most primitive way of gathering food by hunting and trapping birds and animals. They also collect various kinds of herbs, shrubs, roots, shoots, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds. They grow small millets like Kosola, Mandia, Suan, Kangu, etc. Among different pulses mention may be made of hill, black and horse grams. They also grow paddy and a number of them own pineapple, jackfruit and banana plantations. There are also tumeric fields and a small variety of chilly is abundantly grown on the hill slopes.

The farmers usually trade their plantations with the local Domb tribes for a meagre amount of money or for food to last a few days and some bottles of drink,

Towards the market

Dawn breaks before the dormitory

or in exchange of some cheap materials. On certain occasions the sacrificial animals like buffaloes, goats and chickens are received from the Dombs in exchange of plantations for about half a decade or even more. In the long run the Dongria Kondhs are the ultimate losers.

The ordinary livestocks of a family consists of cows, buffaloes, goats, pigs, sheep and fowls. It is interesting to note that they do not milch the cows. Most of these animals are brought up for sacrificial purposes and ceremonial food. Since their entire life and culture is associated with sacrifice it induces the local Dombs to be the wholesale suppliers of animals and this is one of the ways through which they exploit these simple people.

As Dongria Kondhs consider themselves the proud descendents of Niyama Raja, they do not go for wage earning. But within their own community they help each other without taking any payment. Sometimes all the villagers work in the field of well-to-do Dongria zamindars. For their labour no payment is made in cash, only some food and drinks are given. When the Dongria Kondhs help an individual in a laborious work like preparation of land, raising a hut or carrying something to distant places, a fixed amount is usually given to the community which is later spent in communal feasts. In comparison to males, the females are more hard-working and are expected to perform tedious work.

So far as the economic resources are concerned the Niyamgiri hill ranges are quite rich. Most of the economic problems are due to the local Dombs. The socio-psychological association and inter-relation with the Dombs put these innocent tribals into the spider's net. Attachment to traditional value lead the Don-

A ritual dance

In the process of pounding

gria Kondhs to depend on the Dombs and be exploited by them, despite the alternative Government sponsored credit facilities available to them. Expensive festive occasions, high price of brides, drinking habits and the laziness of the male folk are some of the factors responsible for their poverty.

The family is the smallest social unit among the Dongria Kondhs but the village forms the most important unit for many of their socio-cultural and religious activities. Besides, Mutha, a larger social unit is an important feature of their social organisation. The Mutha comprises a group of villages which are treated as administrative-cum-social units. The demarcation of Mutha-boundary, their interaction, co-operation and social restrictions are the striking features of the system.

The Girls' Youth Dormitory, locally known as *Addesbeta* plays an important role in the socio-cultural life of the tribe's young boys and girls. Here both boys and girls of different villages mix with one another and spend long nights within the limits of social rules. Different social sanctions concerned with marriage and pre-marital relationship keep the boys away from their education. Conflict, quarrel and tension among the Dongria Kondhs sometimes lead to fatal results. However, their simplicity, innocence and amicable nature dominate their lifestyle.

Marriage is an auspicious occasion and quite an expensive affair. The couple is eager to have a child for they believe that one of their ancestors is likely to be born. If a married woman does not conceive for a considerable period she is treated with traditional herbal medicines and is made to go through several magico-religious rites.

Dongria Kondhs are animists and polytheists and believe that a large number of supernatural beings control their society and life. Always they remain submissive and dutiful to the supernatural powers but invariably entertain some misgivings towards the malevolent spirits. Round the year in one way or the other they celebrate different magico-religious ceremonies and sacrifice different animals starting from chickens to buffaloes.

The sacrificial requirements vary from one deity to another. The manner of magico-religious performances differs according to the occasion. Specially the

Newly wedded couple

The author is an anthropologist who is now the Special Officer, D.K.D.A. at Chatikona. He is the author of several research papers on the Tribals of different regions of India.

Meriah or the human sacrifice which has now been substituted by buffaloes is quite expensive.

The local term for God is Penu. They recognise Dharani (Goddess Earth) as the Supreme Deity. A number of other gods and goddesses are represented by stone, wood, etc. Their ancestral spirit locally known as Dumba is expected to dwell in the main room of the house. A number of festivals are celebrated, more in winter season, just after the harvest period. The Meriah Parba, which is observed usually in the month of February-March at Mutha level is the biggest festival and is celebrated with much pomp and show.

The religious functionaries such as Jani, Bejuni, Pujhari and Gurumani are the intermediaries between the gods, goddesses, spirits and the Kondhs.

In the Dongria Kondh community both the traditional and the modern political councils function but the role of the former supercedes the latter. Leaders of the villages enjoy high status and prestige and exercise authority in getting things done. The authorities are guided by the customs, traditions and social sanctions and exercise power at four different levels, family, lineage, village and Mutha.

Each village has a political identity of its own. The leaders in the administrative network are of two types, sacerdotal and secular.

The Jani, the magico-religious specialist, is the formal head of the village. All important matters are brought to his notice for his consent and intervention. The post of Jani is hereditary. However, in exceptional cases this tradition is overlooked. He does not receive any remuneration for his services but during communal worship and sacrifices he is given a special share.

Higher is the position of the Mandal who is the authority over a number of villages. He takes decisions, arbitrates disputes and punishes the culprit. This post is also hereditary.

The Bishimajhi who is the assistant to Jani and Mandal, collects revenue both for land and forest. He is also authorised to collect subscriptions for all communal functions and celebrations. He is the treasurer of village funds but his services do not carry any remuneration. However, his special position and personality can not be ignored.

The Bariko is the messenger who is a man always from the local Domb community. If the Domb households are not there in a particular village then the villagers contact the nearby village where a suitable Domb is available for the purpose. The Bariko holds the key position by virtue of his caste traditions, role and special functions. His presence is necessary at all meetings and important occasions. He is paid either in cash or in kind. There are several other traditional positions.

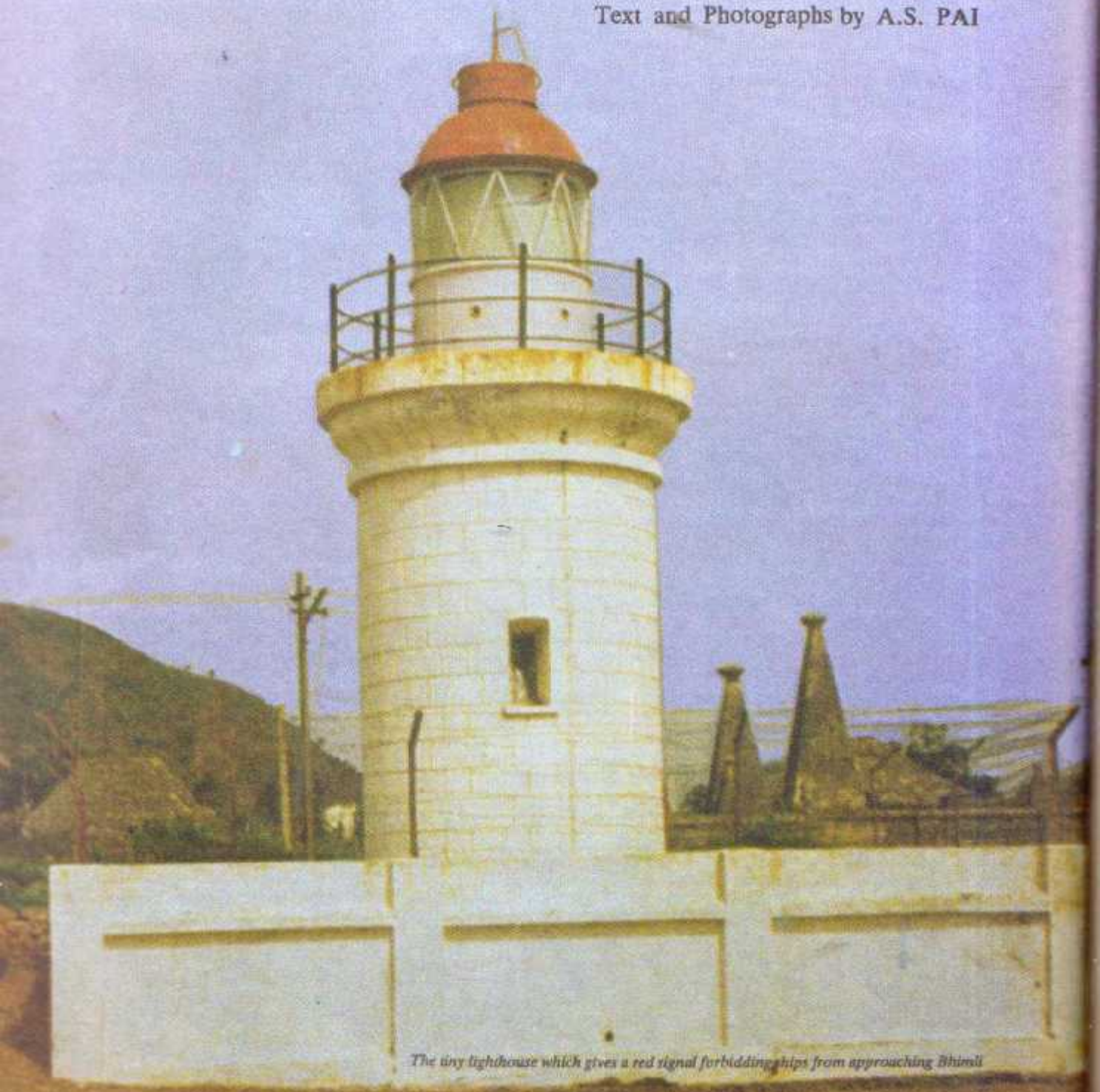
For disputes, decisions are taken in the presence of all the officials of the village. The guilty is punished both in cash and kind. After each meeting the leaders and officials enjoy the traditional drink. Punishments include strong rebuke, warning or threat. However, it is believed that supernatural punishment is severe and it is bound to visit the guilty. Dongria Kondhs are careful of their conduct as they are afraid of the divine retribution.

The dance, music, folklore, legends, songs, and even riddles and proverbs of the Dongria Kondhs not only reflect their love for natural beauty and surroundings but also their fine sense of humour. They love their own land, people, traditions and are mostly engrossed in cultural and ceremonial activities for which they have a passion. 卐

In the dormitory

SEARCH LIGHT ON BHIMLI

Text and Photographs by A.S. PAI



The tiny lighthouse which gives a red signal forbidding ships from approaching Bhimli

IT was not far from Visakhapatnam just an hour's joy-ride through a terrain of red hills encroached upon by sparse human settlements and interspersed by tall palm trees. Descending from the bus which stopped near an antique clock tower looking quite out of place, I walked down through a sloping lane, when most of the people were still asleep in their semi-thatched homes, and reached the sea-front. An awe-inspiring moment was that: the faint rumble of the sea seemed to echo the distant voice of some underworld revolution; nothing is perceptible on the land to the eyes except a few strange and vague silhouettes! I was mistaking substance for the shadow.

Just then, the tender sun began lighting up a weird setting on the shore with his orange rays: tattered remnants of a circular fort resembling a mini colosseum, a ghost warehouse building of some hundred rooms with high colonial arches, a cute and dwarfy lighthouse neighbouring a seaside cemetery and a cave temple atop the yonder hill. On the beach, the fishermen were busy, some flinging their nets in the shallow waters, some venturing into the sea in boats and some noosing a large ray fish and dragging it gleefully to the shore.

Who erected those strange buildings, when and why? Whose mortal remains are lying interned in those towering tombs obviously un-Indian? What prompted those foreign folk to come to this place to live and die here? The romance of this place began infecting me.

The full name of the place is Bheemunipatnam derived from a legend that it was here that the Pandava Prince Bheema had encountered and slayed Bakasura. But that is mythology; its written history begins somewhere in the 3rd century B.C. when it was a part of Kalinga empire. It formed a portion of the estate of the Andhra Kings of Vengi who succeeded the Mauryans. In the tides of history it passed on like a relay baton to the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Cholas of Tanjore, Gajapatis of Orissa and the Qutubshahis of Golconda. Krishnadevaraya had taken it in 1515. In the 17th century, it turned out to be a coveted settlement of the Dutch who established several factories along the Coromandal coast.

Pushing open the iron gate of the cemetery I stood amidst the graves. The inscriptions on them are in Roman script but not comprehensible to me. (I had to send a photograph to H. N. Buisman, First Secretary of the Embassy of Royal Netherlands and seek clarification.) One of these graves belongs to Mrs. Catherina Boellof, widow of a Dutch Resident Governor. Such tombs and those ruined factory buildings help to recall the days of the Dutch in this country.

They had come at the end of the sixteenth century spurred by their commercial and political rivalry with the Portuguese when, in 1585, Philip II closed the harbours of Spain and Portugal to commerce by the Dutch. Like Vasco da Gama, an adventurous Dutch navigator by name Cornelius Houtman doubled the Cape of Good Hope and came to India in 1596. Thus they came to know the claim of the Portuguese: "Konkan sea belongs to the King of Portugal and none aught to come here without his licence". Provoked by this arrogant stance, the Dutch immediately came in fleets of 60 ships each in 14 batches and the Arabian sea witnessed pitched battles between these two European contenders. A number of ships got burnt and sunk. The Dutch established their first Indian settlement at Tranquebar, 140 miles south-west of Madras. Further, they drove away the Portuguese

The mini colosseum

out of Colombo, captured Ceylon and later beseiged Amboyna, an island of the East Indies.

Between 1661 and 1664, the Dutch interfered in the quarrels among the Kerala princes at the request of a queen and in consequence wrested from the Portuguese all their settlements in the Malabar coast. The magnificent mansion called the Bolghatti palace which they built on the Vypin islands of Cochin is still to be found in good condition. Besides establishing themselves in Malabar, they put up their settlements on the east coast, one of them being Bhimli.

But the Dutch could not succeed in India for various reasons; they were in fact concentrating on Indonesia which yielded them huge quantities of spices. Gradually, they loosened their grip on their Indian enclaves. The knell over Dutch supremacy was finally sounded by Robert Clive in 1759. He attacked the Dutch at Chinsura in Bengal both by land and sea and forced them to an ignominious capitulation. Netherlands later entered into a treaty with England (in 1824) whereby she gave up her posts in India in consideration for England's giving up all territory in Sumatra.

Bhimli had been a prosperous nucleus of commerce and social activity during the sojourn of the Dutch, the days when *dwibhashis* (adepts in two languages) thrived as interpreters and brokers and when the migrant Dutch reported to Netherlands their experiences with an amazing, interminable, catalogue of tropical trees and fruits, diamonds and emeralds, birds and animals and a thousand other things.

Why did they choose Bhimli? An important consideration was its convenient situation in the strategy of eastern trade. They found that this place yielded iron ore which was in great demand in south-east Asia. They also procured other items like dye crops, tobacco and the *kalamkari* cloth. The factory records of the seventeenth century mention a bewildering variety of names of different types of clothes, including ready-made garments in which the Dutch transacted at Bhimli. The *Tapi* or skirt was widely used by both sexes in south-east Asia and the supplies went from Bhimli.

When the last Dutchman left the shores of Bhimli, the town began to go into decadence until it got a fresh lease of prosperity with the development of export trade in oilseeds and jute. But this was not to last long; Bhimli again lost its significance under the shadow of Visakhapatnam which made its debut as a major port and a booming industrial town.

Leaving the beach and the relics of the Dutch structures I trekked through the midst of small roadside shops and began an arduous climb on the hill, past the campus of a maze of ancient Hindu temples and an arch at the foothills. I proceeded slowly, halting at every terminus of the paved stone steps and savoured the charming view below. As I was reaching the pinnacle of the hill, a bird's-eye view of the little town was revealed: the Chittivalsa lagoon leaping back to its home in the sea like a shining silver ribbon; the medieval Dutch and modern Indian buildings rubbing shoulders with one another, pagodas of the temples and spires of the churches jutting above the palm fronds and the ever vibrant blue sea.

Bolghatti palace in Cochin—an example of Indo-Dutch mixture in architecture

A Dutch tomb

TWO POEMS FROM AYYAPPA PANIKAR:

Dr.K. Ayyappa Panikar, winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award for his poetry in Malayalam, is the Professor of English, University of Kerala, Trivandrum.

BIRD

Most birds I do not know.
But
This bird I know
That comes and
Perching on a flowery branch
Of the tree in my courtyard
Preens its wings,
And dropping a feather
Flies off.

When I call 'Tweet Tweet'
A look to say 'What an ignoramus!'
*And my response: 'You a **jnani!**'*

Again with a rise and fall of the tail
A flutter of wings
From one branch to another
And into the skies.
Ah, that is a bird.

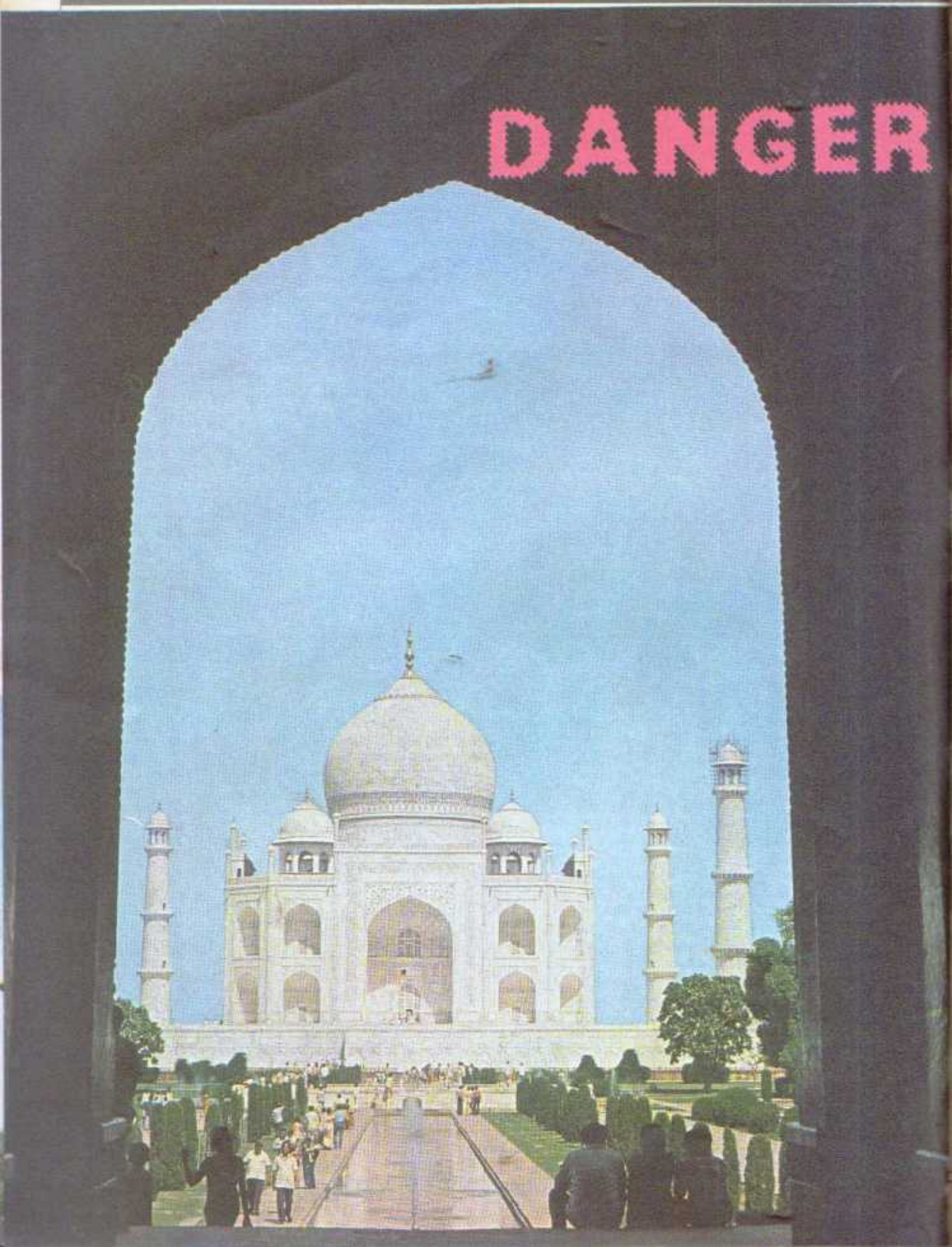
ANT

Where do these ants go?
Forward, no doubt;
They cannot go backward, can they?

That black line
On the wet wall of the bathroom:
That is all ants.
What a societal feeling!
Whom do they eat;
By whom are they eaten?
It is not what they eat
But how they eat
Which is said to be important.
But
We don't know how it is that they eat.
These ants
Where do they go
What do they eat
How do they eat
Little do we know.

Translated from Malayalam by S. MURALI

DANGER



LOOMS LARGE OVER THE TAJ

by DEVAPRIYO

The latest terrorist threat is only one of many threats to Taj and similar monuments, existing at different levels, from crude forms of vandalism to perversion and, even further, to satanic forces against harmony and beauty. But at the basis of many varieties of mischief lies a general insensitiveness to things of beauty in the potential vandals which, the author contends, can be got over at the early stage of education.

A despatch from Agra, published in the front page of a national daily, reads: "As part of the profoundly stepped up security arrangements against any possible terrorist threat to damage the sterling tourist attraction monument of India, the Taj Mahal of Agra, door-type metal detectors would soon be installed at its entrance. This would obviate the necessity of body search of tourists both Indian and foreign who descend on the city of Agra daily in their thousands to have a look at the medieval mausoleum, described as a verse in marble...

"A large posse of the Archaelogical Survey of India's own security personnel, armed police and intelligence personnel maintain a round-the-clock vigil inside and around the Taj.

"These are supplemented by the Jawans of Uttar Pradesh's Provincial Armed Constabulary, deployed near the river front, who do not allow people to venture near the monument from that side. In fact they have orders to shoot at if a stranger ignores their warning and edges close to it. Barbed wire fencing is coming up on the river Yamuna side to block out unauthorised persons. All inlets into the compounds, save the main gate, have been securely closed. The main entrance of the Taj is closed by 7-30 p.m., unlike as in the past when visitors could savour the moonlit beauty of the dreamy marble mausoleum well past midnight..."

Something is terribly wrong with the state of humanity. Something seems to have been murdered in consciousness itself of some or many human beings for them to think of destroying the Taj Mahal. The fear of the authorities is not unfounded. Only two years ago some people did destroy a part of the legendary Borobudur in Java with explosives.

When *some* people take to anarchy and vandalism of this kind, we can reasonably suspect that something has grievously gone wrong with *many*. A disease may be evident only in a few symptoms, but the disease itself may pervade the whole person. Same is the case with what manifests in a section of humanity.

Those who have turned anarchic to the extent of planning destruction of such monuments, are obviously deprived of several human qualities. The most prominent among the lackings is the absence of any love for beauty. If ever they are to be cured of such awful lackings, efforts must be made to foster an aesthetic sense in the entire youth population. Our education policy-makers must think of ways to cultivate the sense of beauty, the attitude to appreciate objects that are sublime, at the very primary stage. At the moment it is just not done, though it is more important than many other subjects which are taught.

Such a sense can not only deter deliberate planned attacks on things of beauty—for a few perverts cannot go all along to do such things unless they receive collaboration from more people—but also can deter the other kinds of vandals, those who inscribe their names on monu-

ments or disfigure them in other ways or steal pieces of a structure as mementos.

Such a sense can go even a longer way—to stop entrepreneurs from reckless construction of factories polluting the atmosphere around delicate monuments of art, bringing about their decay.

"What is fabulous about this monument, dear? There is more architectural planning behind our multi-storeyed building than what could be here!"

This was a comment heard in the precincts of the Taj, when it was in the news as one of the twenty-nine cultural and natural sites recently added to the UNESCO's world heritage list.

The other news that has flashed in the trail of the UNESCO decision is the success of the anti-pollution measures in bringing down the sulphur dioxide concentration around the Taj by 75 per cent.

So, the Taj appears to have survived an imminent threat which was in no way less awful than the first ever threat to its existence that had loomed large over it more than a century ago, in the months following the great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. The imaginative leadership of the East India Company had planned to pull the monument down brick by brick and sell away the marbles to partly compensate for the loss caused to the Company by the Mutiny. But the Crown took over India's adminstration before the Company could put its plan to execution and the Taj was spared the strangest extinction to any monument in history.

Saving the Taj is a commendable action. But one wonders if something much more subtle and fundamental is not threatened with doom of extinction. The comment to which reference was made may not have—and let us hope does not have—much significance. But do people today really wonder at the Taj in the same way as the people in times gone by used to wonder?

Let us sample two observations from the last century.

"People who have seen it constantly during the greater part of their lives, never tire of seeing it again and again. Artists despair of representing it on canvas; and in truth no drawing that can be made, no account that can be given, will do justice to it. There is almost equal difficulty in analysing the reasons why it appears so exceedingly beautiful. Doubtless, the colouring is one important cause. The marble which, in that dry climate, is but little sullied by the stains of time and at a short distance seems, in the sunlight, to be pure as a snow-wreath, the liquid blue of the sky in the cloudless winter season, the sombre green of the funeral cypresses, contribute to the effect, which every one feels but none can fully explain. There must, however, be other and higher causes...When all nature is hushed, a sentiment arises of solitude in the pale presence of the monument, until the historic dead ascend in dim procession before the imagination, and a feeling of awe mingles with a sense of the overpowering beauty of the scene."—*India in 1880*. Sir Richard Temple.

Let us now look at the world's first great war correspondent William Howard Russell's *My Diary in India 1858-59:*

"The moon had just risen on the right, and I was about sinking back in my gharry, having ordered the driver to proceed to the Artillery Quarters, when suddenly my eye rested on a dome of dazzling whiteness—so white, so clear, so sharp, that, for the instant, one might be pardoned for fancying that the crest of an Alp had thrust itself through the baked crust of this arid India. Four glittering pinnacles shooting up beside it, completed the notion of the rounded summit of Mont Blanc flanked by its own aiguilles. The whole vision disappeared in a moment as the vehicle whisked round the corner, but I knew that I had seen that Pearl of architecture, the wonder of the world—the Taj of Agra...

"Here is a dream in marble. Here is the Taj—solid, palpable, permanent; but who can, with pen or pencil, convey to him who has not seen it the exquisite delight with which the structure imbues the mind at its first glance—the proportions and the beauty of this strange loveliness which rises up in the Indian waste as some tall palm springs up by the fountain in a barren wilderness! It is wrong to call it a dream in marble; it is a thought—an idea—a conception of tenderness—a sigh, as it were, of external devotion and heroic love, caught and imbued which such immortality as the earth can give. **Well was it said to me by one who loves not India or her races—'If the people of this land really built the Taj, the sooner we English leave the country the better. We have no business to live here and claim to be their masters."**

The question is, do we have the mood or capacity to experience the Taj in the way a Sir Richard or a William Russell experienced? Nobody can deny that the skyline blinded by skyscrapers and the sky itself stuffed by filth do to a monument of this nature what a market hullabaloo does to a song of solitude. But man can even overcome the environmental distractions and look at a work of art with the eye of wonder if his aesthetic perception has not been destroyed or damaged.

How far is our psychological climate free from pollution to appreciate the subtle beauty and harmony exuded by those age-old masterpeices? Have not the false and bizarre values propagated by certain kinds of films, literature and music perverted our natural response to beauty?

Hasn't the total doom that the nuclear threat holds out made us subconsciously cynical towards the creative achievements of humanity?

We can see the Taj Mahal as a dream in marble only if we can retain the capacity for dreaming dreams instead of surrendering ourselves to dreaming nightmares. 卐

That Explains

Retold by VINDUSAR

ONCE upon a time there was a king who was a man of great compassion.

One day he was passing through a village when he saw a boy who had just then caught a pigeon. As the boy held the pigeon tightly in his grip, the pigeon fluttered its wings desperately, trying to get away.

"Hello boy, don't you see how distressed the pigeon is? Should you not set it at liberty?" the king asked the boy.

"Why should I? Did I not catch it myself after waiting for a long time and applying all my wit?" replied the boy who did not recognise the king.

"Will you sell it to me?" asked the king.

The boy thought it over. "Well ..er.. if I get a good price," he said, looking at the king with expectations.

The king handed out a gold coin. The boy goggled his eyes with disbelief. A gold coin for a pigeon! He lost no time in handing over the bird to the king.

By then a few villagers had seen the king. They alerted others. A crowd collected in no time. Some greeted the king with awe from distance and some prostrated themselves to him. The king climbed a grass-covered mound and released the bird from his folded palms.

The pigeon flew away, flapping its wings as fast as it could. The people clapped their hands. The king felt delighted, partly because the pigeon's flight into freedom was exciting and partly because the crowd's appreciation of his good deed was thrilling.

"Have any of you kept a pigeon or a dove in bondage?" he asked.

At first there was silence. Then a farmer said, "My lord, I have a dove with me."

"Bring it along," said the king. The farmer fetched it. The king gave him a gold coin and set it free.

The king then galloped away while the crowd sang his glory behind him. Back in the palace the king asked his minister to announce that whoever had a captive bird could surrender it to the king for a price. In a week's time fifteen birds were received. The king chose a day when he climbed to his roof and set the birds free. A small crowd of courtiers and commoners applauded it. More or less an equal number of birds were surrendered to him the next week. As the king climbed to the palace roof, the court-poet recited a verse he had composed to hail this ideal act of the king. The gathering applauded the flight of the bird.

It became a weekly ceremony.

Months passed and the king's guru paid his annual visit to the palace. He witnessed the ceremony. The king expected a kind word from him; but he only said, as if to himself, "That explains!"

"That explains what, sir?" asked the king hesitatingly.

The guru did not answer him, but next day he asked him to put in a disguise and accompany him to the forest. The king saw several villagers busy setting nets or trying to catch birds through other methods. In the process a number of birds got killed and even more birds were injured.

"This is the price the birds must pay for you to receive applause as a compassionate king!" observed the guru. "I saw this yesterday on my way to you and was intrigued."

"Sir, but I meant well! I meant to free the captive birds and..."

The guru kept quiet and said, "Are you sure you had no hankering for praise? My boy, so many subtle laws are at work. True compassion is divine. But most of the acts of charity are acts of ego, though under veil. Such acts, because they are inspired by ego, give rise to falsehood. You must analyse yourself mercilessly. Only acts of kindness emanating from pure consciousness can be truly effective."

卐

INDIA

Roots and laurels, life and land, time and vision, creations and continuities: from them arose the literature of India. It was the purest voice of her deeps, the dream of her reason, the dust of her ways and the waters of her rivers, the blue embrace of her seas and skies, born of leaves soaked in the dew of dawns since the days of the Rigveda. On the other hand, the civilisation of ancient Greece was nurtured within city walls. The word *civilisation* itself derives from Latin *civitas* 'city', *civis* 'citizen', cognat to Sanskrit *shiva*, according to Webster's New International Dictionary. Modern civilisation has its cradles of brick and mortar. However, in India, Man's spirit and the spirit of the Universe are one. Man and the world are one great truth. How can we divide the bud and the blossom. The blue incense of heart and word reverberates into *Agni*, the fire of our being, determining the dynamism of becoming. *Agni* is the very first word of the Rigveda, the very first work of Indo-European languages. In Minkowski's phenomenology, Agni become a participation in a flowing onward. The waves thus generated, which at once are sonorous and silent, become the voice of a poet on the threshold of being. Our primaeval poem, our *ādi-kavya*, the Rāmāyana welled forth at the grievous sight of the death of a love-lorn avian couple shot by a hunter. A new metrical measure surged forth in all spontaneity from the anguish and agony of the bird falling dead. The ephemeral *shloka* of Vālmīki became the perennial *shloka* of Indian literature. Primal pain was a perennial poem. The leaves, the bird, the air, the falling, the forlorn forest had opened up inside the whole being of a nation. Ever since, Ramayana has become the lyric of men of Asia from Siberia to Indonesia.

The first echoes of India in the Hellenic world are in Homer in the eighth century B.C. Homer's epic poem had inspired the young prince Alexander, before power became his lifelong mistress. There was no sharp distinction in the Greek mind between myth and history. The gods lived on in Greek minds, unfolding ever new adventures. The tutor of Alexander was Aristotle himself. A kinsman of Aristotle, Kallisthenes, accompanied Alexander on his expedition to India. Sir William suggests that through him, the Nyāya system of logic influenced Aristotle. The philosopher Pythagoras, who swayed Greek intellectual life from the 6th century B.C. onwards, transmitted Indian ideas. It was commonly held among the Greeks that India was the land of wisdom; for instance by the noted author Alexander Polyhistor (ca. 70 B.C.), Apuleius (ca. 150

AND WORLD LITERATURE

PROF. LOKESH CHANDRA

A.D.) and Philostratos (early 3rd century). The popular satirist Lukianos (Lucian, 2nd century A.D.) in his "Runaways", lets the Goddess of Philosophy tell Jupiter that she first descended upon "the Indians, the mightiest nation upon earth". The legend of Alexander and the Brahmins exemplified the changing attitudes in the Hellenic world: wise men outweigh political persons. The interflow of literary ideas and motifs between India and the Hellenic world was a continuous process.

The rebirth of pagan antiquity in 15th century Italy was the restoration of the memory and imagination of European man. Renewal and reason became catalysts for a new world order. The Renaissance arose from the mythical deeps of European time. The first mention of Europe is in the Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* in the 8th cent B.C. The word 'Europe' itself was born out of the myth of the young princess Europa who was carried away by Zeus disguised. Zeus was worshipped as the master of gods and men throughout the entire Hellenic world. The origin of Zeus was unknown to the Greeks themselves. Europe had to wait for 2,300 years to know the origins of Zeus, when Sanskrit was discovered by Sir William Jones in the February of 1786 as "more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity". Three years later (1789) Jones translated the drama Sākuntala by Kālidāsa into English. It awakened the highest degree of enthusiasm of leading poets of Germany like Herder and Goethe. In 1802 the German poet Friedrich Schlegel expected from India "the unfolding of the history of the primeval world which up till now is shrouded in darkness": The Indo-European roots of Europe became her new vitality.

For centuries, European grammarians had been trying to find the etymologies of Greek and Latin words like *theos, divine* from Semitic roots, but in vain. They came to be discovered in 1816 when Franz Bopp published his comparative study of Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Persian and German languages. His scientific investigations laid the firm foundations of the concept of 'evolution' of languages. Three decades later appeared the great Sanskrit-German Dictionary from Leningrad, and 'evolution' within language had been firmly established. This linguistic concept of 'evolution' dominated the intellectual climate of Europe. Out of it was to come Darwin's theory of organic evolution, in the *Origin of Species* which was published seven years after the Sanskrit-German Dictionary. The Linguistic transparency of Sanskrit thus gave birth to the scientific concept of Evolution.

The early 19th century was

INDIA

involved with Roots. The discovery of Sanskrit as the prime language and its development led several nations to realise the primacy of their languages. The National Revival in Czechoslovakia, from about 1775 to 1850, was a great social movement characterised above all by a national consciousness on the part of the people, and a drive for economic and cultural independence. Feudalism was abolished in 1781. As a result, former serfs could now move to the towns and their children could study. Around this time Dobrovsky (1753-1829) wrote a definitive grammar of Czech, the language of his people. The existence of linguistic connection between Czech and the ancient and perfect Sanskrit was a great encouragement to the oppressed nation in its efforts to improve its language. Czechs pointed out the close affinity of their language with Sanskrit. They cited the sentence: *stara matra dati medu* (Czech) = *sthavirā matā dadāti madhu* (Sanskrit). Thus were laid the foundations of modern Czech literature.

The Bulgarians were also inspired by the fact that their language was closer to Sanskrit than any language known to them. In the 9th century Cyril had declared "The people are naked without books". To remedy it, the brothers Cyril and Methodius created the Cyrillic script for the Bulgarian language. The German secular and clerical feudal rulers came to regard their work as a serious obstacle to their policy of assimilation of the Slav tribes. The German clergy brought forward the 'Three Language Doctrine' according to which Church services could be held only in Hebrew, Greek and Latin. The dedicated work of Cyril and Methodius triumphed in the use of old Bulgarian as a language of the church. A thousand years later in the 19th century, Rakovsky, a pioneer of Bulgarian independence, celebrated the rising tide of Bulgarian self-assertion in the Day of Script and Literature. It continues to be held to this day. Rakovsky prided in the connection of Bulgarian and Sanskrit: OB. *synu* was exactly Sanskrit *sūnu*, OB. *dini* was Sanskrit *dina*, and OB. *trichu* preserved the declensional suffix of Sht. *trishu*. This sensitivity was voiced in poignant words by the late H.E. Mrs. Lyudmila Zhivkova: "Here, on Indian land, Thracian art feels more at home than anywhere else outside of Bulgaria. Here one can tangibly feel the parallel, the similarity, and the generic closeness in the symbolic nature of Thracian and Indian art during the 1st and 2nd centuries B.C., the closeness between the symbols, imagery, and ideas in the thinking of Thracians and the people of Bharat, their common belief in the unity of the world". The rise of modern Bulgarian literature was a concomitant of the new self-respect that the Bulgarian language gained in the preceding century.

Let us come back to Asia. For a thousand years the most brilliant minds of China transcreated Buddhist literature from Sanskrit into Chinese. About 3,000 works have come down to us, alive in the stream of life. It is a complex flow from sign to eye, from eye to world: the aroma of an entire civilisation is deeply affected. Hsüan-tsang the Prince of Pilgrims to India, translated into Chinese the Prajñāpāramitā in 600 scrolls. To give an idea of its immensity, I may quote the price of its modern reproduction which is Rs 1,12,000. When the Chinese Emperor got to see the work he said: "Looking at these Buddhist works is like gazing at the sky or sea. They are so lofty that one cannot measure their height, so profound that one cannot plumb their depths." Majority of these sūtras were engraved on stone over a period of one thousand years (A.D. 605-1627) for conservation.

The entry of Buddhist literature into Japan was their identification with the central axis of human advance. The new voice was a unity of man, nature, art and divine where echoes of each were repeated at different levels of consciousness. Buddhism opened up unfathomed universes of thought. They devloped counterpoints of stimulating intuitions in the writings of Japanese masters. Under the impetus of Buddhist culture, all the poetry that had been written in Japan up to the 8th century was made accessible in the anthology of *Manyoshu* "Collection of Myriad leaves". The Japanese alphabet *Iroha* is a Buddhist poem based on the Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra:

Iro ha nihohedo chiri nuru wo.
Colours, gleam as they may,
How they blow away!
Waga yo tare so tsune naramu
Who in this world of ours lasts for aye?
Wuwi no oku-yama kyo koete
The deep mountains of ephemeral life
We've crossed this day,
Asaki yume miji ehi mo sezu.
No more shallow dreams we see
Nor shall we inebriate be.

AND WORLD LITERATURE

The Japanese dictionaries are quite often arranged according to the Iroha poem, and thus it is integral to Japanese education. The whole art of Japanese poetry is saturated with Zen that emphasises the significance of *mu-shin* or 'no-mind' where we find infinite treasures of the Collective Conscious and Cosmic Conscious. Bashō one of the greatest of Japanese poets, is touched by the fleeting perfume of life. In his haiku poems curves have to become angles, but it is like a small stone basin that contains water to rinse and purify one's mouth before entering a temple. The poesy of Saigyō (1118-90) celebrates ethereal beauty and meta-phenomenal existence wherein the Buddhist valorisation of nature is evident. A verse of Saigyō on hermit's hut is a celebration of the poet's almost erotic rendezvous with moonlight that drips in through the torn and tumbledown hut of grass:

So I spend the night
In bed with the moon,
That steals in through the gaps
In my little hut's reed roof,

The union of the poet and moon is the fragility and permeability of life. Wooed by the wind the petals fall: *kaze sasou hana no yukue wa*. The phenomenal forms are the very being of the Absolute. The bold simplicity and essential structure of Japanese literature has an inner, guiding force that echoes forms and fantasies of India.

Magnificent monuments of Indian gnosis and speculation were translated with painstaking accuracy into Tibetan. A new Tibetan literary language was created by the lotsavas out of a primitive dialect. A Royal Commission was constituted to give birth to a sophisticated language. Special rules were promulgated by King Thrisong (Khri-Ldesrong-btsan) in A.D. 826 and they have been followed ever since. From the 9th to the 13th century, 4569 works were translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Little by little a brilliant literature was born. A literary and exegetical movement lit the flame of intellectual life. The aura of the unparalleled transmission is sung in a Tibetan marriage carol: As the bride is led into her new home, her new relations sing: "Oh bride! bring us asupiciousness as the translators of yore did when they blessed Tibet with the deep dharma" Tibetan translations of thousands of sūtras and their commentaries introduced a renaissance in the Land of Snows, which was a marvel in the unending exploration of the transcendent and the transitory. From the feel of her shadows and the voices of her spaces, have sprung the literatures in Mongolian and Machurian languages: they holy Kanjur and Tanjur. As the young generation of Europe and America seeks new syndromes, the multiple expressions of Tibetan literature become the new bread of their being.

From the snowy north to the sunny and languid climes of South East Asia, alongside the spacious majesty of Angkor Vat or Borobudur, where monument follows on monument, masonry masses mingle into fantastic flowering of the jungle, or pagodas moulder in picturesque decay, are thousands of poems and prose work, forgotten in palm-leaf manuscripts. The Rāmāyana Kakawin in ancient Indonesia, though based on the terse and obstruse Sanskrit Bhattikāvya, has become the frozen music of words in the flow of the genius of the Indonesian Poet Yogishvara. To this day it is in the deeps of Indonesian soul. Quickened and kindled by inspiration from India, Srilanka, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, Indonesia and and other countries of South East Asia have developed their independent intellectual life, with patterns of great variety to be cherished and admired.

The friendship of peoples also vibrates in the rich and brilliant vocabulary of cognate words, words which are historic arabesques in our context: a simple Sanskrit word *etat* 'this' lives to this day in Russian as *yetot*, *madhu* as *myod* 'honey', *māmsa* as *myaso* 'meat'. In the end of the last century, Slavonic languages were striving to gain their position against French and German, which were then languages of the nobility and the intelligentsia, of status and science. In this struggle, the Slavonic tongues realised that they were closer to Ancient India than any other European language and hence as respectable as any. In their evening shadows they had found a thundering voice in Sanskrit, a new right to be full-fledged languages.

The great Mauryan emperor Ashoka sent missionaries all over the then-known world to spread the gospel of Peace and Compassion. Today our indefatigable young friend Dr A.K. Maurya has brought together minds from several nations to ponder over shared horizons, as we seek investiture in the subtle and tender summons of life and letters, to be at the primal source of all with which the coming century shall flower. 卐

HISTORY AND

"THE Mahabharata: Myth & Reality", "The Ramayana: "Myth or Reality", "The Search for Lanka", "Retrieval of History from Puranic Myths" are some of the recent books published on Hindu Mythology seeking to establish that a substratum of fact underlies the overlay of myth and fantasy which appear to baffle the reader who wishes to glean some insights into our ancient history through the enormous corpus of our epics and puranas. After all, if Schliemann could discover the buried ruins of Troy by following the hints in the Iliad, why should our archaeologists disdain to treat the Mahabharata and the Ramayana as recording historical events and use the data in the text to excavate the sites mentioned in them? The two most authoritative attempts in this long neglected area have been Dr Gauri Lad's thesis *Archaeology and The Mahabharata* (Deccan College, Pune, 1978) and Dr H. D. Sankalia's *Ramayana: Myth or Reality* (Macmillan, 1980).

There is, however, an older and very different approach which offers rich material to anyone interested in mythology. Way back around 300 B.C. in the court of King Cassander of Macedonia there lived a remarkably innovative scholar named Euhemerus, who was the first one to look at his own peoples' mythology, as something other than religious material. A fairly well-travelled man, he had possibly come into contact with the Phoenicians who sought historical bases for their myths. In his *Sacred History* Euhemerus asserted that the Greek gods were orginally heroes and conquerors deeply venerated by their subjects. The Romans followed this tradition consciously in deifying Romulus, the founder of Rome, and their emperors, besides worshipping ancestors much in the same way as Hindus do puja to the "pitris". A good example of Euhemerus' approach is the career of Hercules. Here was a hero who performed feats of such magnitude that he was lifted up to the heavens, and worshipped as a god. The argument is that this holds true of all the gods. In other words, the manner in which Zeus fought his father Kronos and took over the kingship of heaven; the fights Zeus had with Hera culminating in her being hung in chains; the ranging of the gods and goddesses on opposite sides in the war over Ilium; all are actual events which have subsequently received the heightened touch of a poet's imagination and been transmuted into myth. Robert Graves studies this at length in his unparalleled study of the Greek Myths (published by Penguin Books) and argues that Zeus was the leader of the invading Dorians whose marriage with Hera shows the conquest of the original inhabitants of the Ionian isles who were worshippers of the Mother Goddess. The stories of Hera's rebellions record the actual insurrections by the local people against the conquerors. Zeus himself usurped his father's throne by slaying him with the help of aborigines (the giants with hundred hands each) who had been imprisoned by Kronos. Kronos' swallowing of his children represents his refusal to give in to his wife Rhea's cult in which the King had to die every year. He, thus, sought to supplant a matriarchal agricultural culture by his matriarchal culture of nomadic herdsmen.

Let us see what happens if we apply Euhemerusim to our Puranic mythology. As a watershed we take the Great Deluge, archaeological proof of which has been found at UR in Persia as having occurred around 3000 B.C. This area comprising modern Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan comprised the centre of our ancient civilization. The five sons of Chakshusa Manu, Atyarit Janantpati (whence the Arrats of Armenia), Abhimanyu, Ur (who established the city of the same name), Pur (whence Persia), Taporat (whence Tapurai, now called Mazanderan) and Ur's son Angira (whence Angora/Ankara in Turkey) invaded this region. That is why Persian mythology calls them Ahriman, the pain-inflictors, the satanic host. Abhimanyu built Susha, the oldest city in the world probably, and is called Memnon in Homer's Odyssey, who came to help the Trojans with his army of Sushians. The eastern province of Persia called Sattagydia was Satyalok and Mount Demavand was Vaikuntha.

The gigantic fish which is said to have saved Manu and his ark in the deluge is nothing but a race of excellent seafaring folk. After the deluge, Varuna the son of Aditi and Kashyap, re-excavated Susha and re-populated it. He drained the land of the water by digging canals, and began living in Mesopotamia/Elam with his brothers, known as the 12 Adityas. Hence Varuna is known as the lord of the waters, and is a major deity in the Vedas. It was he who founded the Sumerian Civilization. His brother Vivasvan founded the Aryan civilization in Bharatavarsha, while his brothers spread over Egypt, Ara-

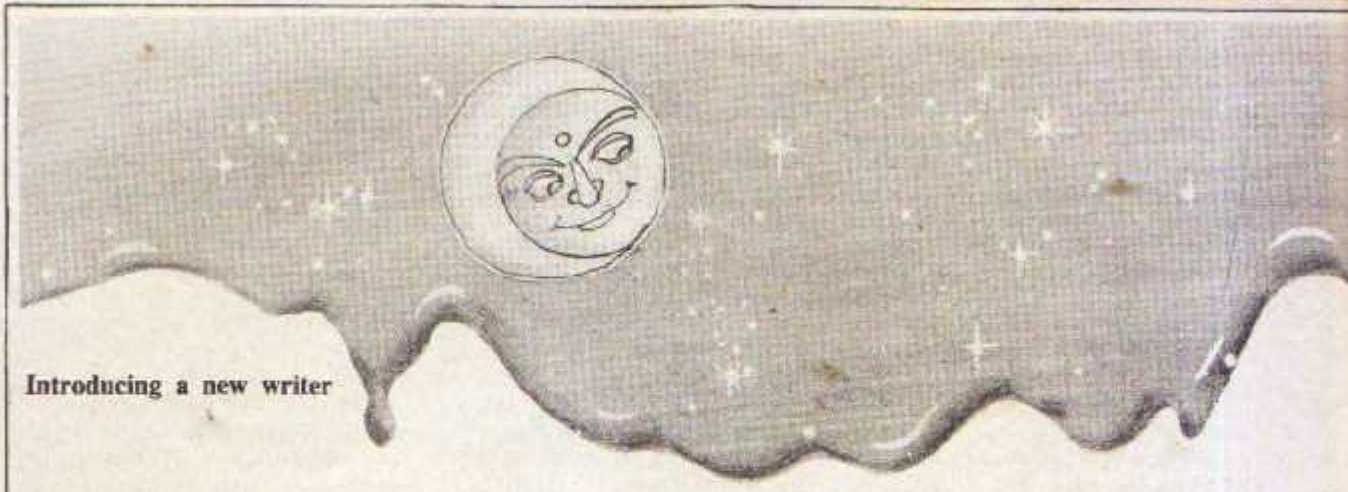
bia, China, Tibet etc. and formed the race of the Devas. Susha was renamed Amaravati or Indrapuri. The Persian Gulf was Kshirsagar and the land just above it was Srinas (Sheeshtan of the Persians) where Varuna dwelt. Vivasvan's son Yama is the Jamshed of Persian myths who made his kingdom in a region devoid of life owing to the deluge, because of which it was called Naraka and he was known as the lord of the dead. This was possibly the provine Apvart (Azerbaizan).

The most interesting interpretation we can get is from the story about the Narasimha avatara. The Caspii tribe inhabited the shores of the Caspian Sea (our Kashyap rishi). Their king was Hiranyakashipu, so named because he had found gold-mines in the Persian salt desert (then called Nandanvana). His brother, Hiranyaksha ruled Babylonia, and the two of them defeated the Devas and established the worship of Ashur (hence the Assyrian people). After the death of Hiranyaksha, (possibly at the hands of the bar-worshipping people of Norway who had helped Varuna reclaim Elam after the floods) Babylonia was conquered by Nrig, a son of Vaivasvat Manu, known also as Narsiman and featured as the winged lion with a man's face on the Assyrian ruins. It was Nrig who came to the rescue of Prahlad, a friend of the Devas, and slew Hiranyakashipu. We know that Nrig was Yama's nephew, and there is the story of his being turned into a lizard by a curse. It is significant that the throne of Yama-Jamshed is carved with the figures of a lion and a lizard. The latter represented the Negritos (from Nrig) and the former the Assyrians. The myth of the lizard is explained as the banishment of Nrig by Vaan of Armenia to Girgis in Northern Turkey, also known as Karavoguz (dry well). The reason behind this was the gifting of a stolen cow to a Brahmin. Land is also called "go". Nrig had driven away the priest-kings of Media (the descendants of Shukra, priest of the Asurs) and given the land to the people of Vashishtha. Hence the Shukras and the Asurs attacked him and drove him into Karavoguz-Girgis (figured forth as his being turned into a lizard or "girgiti" in a dry well).

Indra was the greatest of the heroes among the Devas. Born in Tapuria (then Atri's Tapobhumi) also called Aryanemvaejo, the original home of the Aryans, their "lost paradise" or Vaikuntha, he not only ingratiated himself with Varuna, Vishnu and Vivasvan-Surya, but allied himself to the Daityas by marrying their King Pulom's daughter Shachi. He called the Adityas by a new name: Devas, and his kingdom Devabhumi, and allied himself with the Babylonians against the Daityas of Asia Minor. Indra got Varuna's son Narada to write hymns in his praise, and he was followed by other sages. Other Devas followed suit, and thus the Vedas were written. It was Indra who carried out the ambitious Vishnu's plans of capturing the gold-mines of the Daityas by beguiling the generous and simple minded Bali. The peace-loving and aging Varuna was thrust into the background more and more as these two Adityas waged the Deva-asura wars.

According to another interpretation formulated by Pandit Dwarka Prasad Mishra, the Devas were inhabitants of Tibet and China, who kept interfering at strategic moments in the history of Bharatvarsha to keep their control established. His interpretation has been carried out to its logical culmination in Shri Guru Dutt's superb novelisation of the Mahabharata in 5 parts. Acharya Chatursen in *Vayam Rakshamah* has presented what is possibly the most detailed and daring application of euhemerism to the Puranic sagas and the story of Ravana. Somewhat analogous is J.P. Singhal's "The Sphinx Speaks". A different approach is that of Narendra Kohli in his 5 part novelisation of the Ramayana, where he shows Rama as a prince who deliberately goes into exile in order to break the growing tyranny of the non-Aryan Ravana and provide succour to the suffering poor dwelling in forests and in the south of India, with the help of the Devas living in Himalayan fastnesses. The extreme example of this approach is what we may term as Daniken-ism. This is the application of Erich von Daniken's theories of gods being visitors from outer space to our myths. Thereby the Devas become spacemen belonging to vastly advanced civilizations gifting the Pandavas or Rama with space-age weapons for ensuring the victory and survival of their chosen "superior" race created through genetic engineering (interbreeding with chosen earthly women as in the birth of the Pandavas and similar stories). Thus they seek to explain the "reality" of air-borne vehicles described in the Puranas and the use of missiles of terrifying destructive power in the wars described therein. Such thinking is quite popular in the West even today as we can see in the range of the Marvel Comics series devoted to Greek gods as heroes and to serializations of Daniken's ideas in terms of occidental mythology in America. 卐

HINDU MYTHOLOGY



Introducing a new writer

A PARABLE OF THE PRIMEVAL NIGHT

LONG, long ago, at the beginning of creation, as dawn blossomed into day, men sang hymns of joy and gratitude, birds chirped merrily and the whole earth clothed herself in beauty to greet her Lord—the mighty Sun, the inexhaustible source of life and light.

But as soon as the Sun started to set, the children of the Earth, frightened of the dark, retreated into their caves only to emerge on the following day. For them Night was something evil which hid the visage of their Lord—the Sun. Each evening as she descended on Earth, Night saw people fleeing from her in terror. Fear stalked everywhere and the earth was plunged in a dark and abysmal gloom, but for a few fires bravely piercing the darkness here and there.

Poor Night! She who wanted so much to love and to be loved! Wasn't she the bringer of peace and rest? Wasn't it because of her that men could sleep after a day of hard labour? She, who wanted so much to soothe pain and suffering, was nothing but a source of terror. And the more she brooded on her sorrowful thoughts the more her visage darkened and frightened the people.

One evening, while strolling under the immensities of the solitary skies her gaze fell on the happy smile of a little child. Bandits and thieves being her usual companions, Night was startled. "Why was the child so happy?" And as she looked around, she saw the Moon which had just risen and was bathing the whole atmosphere in her tender and mysterious light. "But why didn't I think of it before?" wondered Night. "If somebody can help me, it is obviously the moon. Lovers are attracted by her romantic charm, poets and writers extol her mystic beauty and she throws a net of enchantment over children. Surely, she will come to my aid!" But how to approach the Moon? Like a beautiful damsel she was haughty and capricious!

One evening when the Moon was all round and smiling and surely in a good humour, Night approached her and said, "Sublime goddess, if you grace the skies with your presence each evening your glory will be reflected on me and men won't find me fearful." The Moon gave her an amused look and replied, "I would love to help you, but it is the Sun who gives me my robes of light. Without him I am nothing!" And the Moon went away throwing a brief smile at Night.

With tears in her eyes and despair in her heart Night retreated into her darker self and fell into a deep melancholy. Was she destined to remain always alone and unloved? No, she would not accept defeat. But what could she do? Deck herself with flowers? She was so dark that nobody would even notice them. She decided to pay a visit to her brother, Day, and ask him what made him so elegant and full of verve. The next morning, Night lingered a little to be able to speak to her brother. But to her astonishment she found him wane and unhappy. "What's the matter?" exclaimed Night. "Why have you such a pale and unhappy look?" "I am waiting for the Sun," replied Day. "Without him I cannot be happy and beautiful!"

Her hopes were dashed again. Had Fate decided to test her beyond her capacity? No, she told herself firmly, she cannot thus remain in pain and despair. She would try again. She had to find a way out of her predicament. Would she dare visit the Sun, Lord of the Universe? She, all darkness, He, all Light! But this was her last hope!

Next morning, the Sun was surprised to see a mass of darkness rushing towards him. Night flung herself at his feet and told him about her vain attempts in search of beauty and love. Her eyes, pools of despair, gazed at

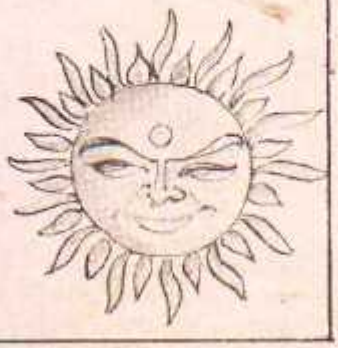
by HEMA AURORA

him with longing. "My Lord," she whispered, her voice chocked with tears. "You are the giver of life and light and beauty. Please help me."

"My child," replied the Sun, "Don't weep, from this day onwards, Earth will know that you too belong to me." With these words the Sun reached down and drew Night into his arms and kissed her softly on her forehead. And Night felt the marvellous joy of light pulsating through her whole being. Light coursed in her and bloomed into flowers of light—and the Stars were born.

And this embrace transfigured Night and made her beautiful.

On Earth men gazed with wonder and awe at the Stars which dazzled and blazed in the sky. They came out to the open. And Night, clothed in Stars—contented herself with dreaming of her Lord—the Sun. 卐



THE HERITAGE

GLIMPSES OF MARCH NUMBER

COMPUTER:
TODAY AND TOMORROW
What is it—Genii or the Genius? The growing computer-culture has far greater impact on our life than realised. Light on this important topic of today—in the Indian context—by Prof. R.Rajagopalan

LIFE: A REHEARSAL : A moving novel by Vishnu Prabhakar translated into English by Jai Ratan.

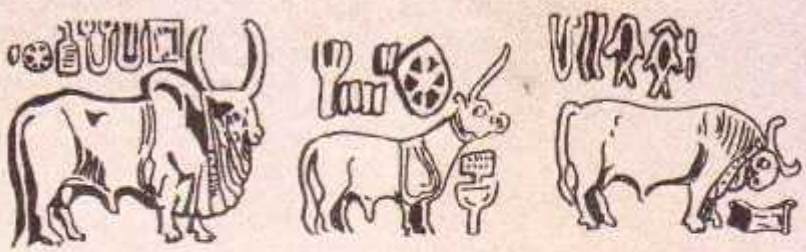
MOHENJODARO: First-hand account as well as historical background of this great archaeological site—by N.S.Ramaswami

CHITAL: Focus on this fascinating creature of Nature by the Naturalist M.Krishnan.

ROME IN INDIAN EPICS: Do the Italian cities Rome and Ravenna bear the memory of Rama and Ravana? by Bhagwat Swarup Goel.

INNOVATIONS IN CLASSICAL DANCE: by Oopalee Operajita.

Four Short Stories and other features.



ARE YOU NORMAL?

by Dr. A.S. DALAL

"My suit is pale yellow. My nationality is French, and my normality has been often subject to question"
Tennessee Williams: *Camino Real*

A WOMAN manifests the following physical and psychological symptoms: loss of appetite, sleeplessness, headache, apathy, lack of energy, a melancholic mood and withdrawal (avoidance of social contacts). From the ordinary point of view, her condition is decidedly abnormal. From a psychiatric viewpoint, however, whether her condition would be regarded as abnormal or not depends on several factors. First of all, what has brought about her symptoms? If, for example, the cause of her symptoms has been a catastrophic event, such as the death of her child, her condition would be regarded as a normal grief reaction. On the other hand, if her symptoms have been caused by a less stressful event, such as the departure of her husband for a sojourn overseas, she would be diagnosed as suffering from a depressive reaction. If the precipitating cause of the symptoms is something minor or trivial, such as the death of her cat, her condition would be indicative of a more serious disturbance, probably bordering on a psychotic depression.

Stress Tolerance and Resilience

Therefore, one factor to be considered in determining whether a person is normal or not is the person's level of stress tolerance. How much stress can the person bear without developing symptoms? Given sufficient stress, *any* person will develop symptoms and even reach the point of breakdown. This fact was demonstrated in an incident of World War II which, being classified information, never became public knowledge, but was narrated by a patient to his psychoanalyst. A troop of American soldiers who had been exposed to severe and prolonged combat stress suffered a hundred per cent psychiatric casualty: each and every soldier among the troops had a breakdown. Thus no one is totally immune to psychological disturbances. However, a normal person can take the ordinary stresses of life without developing significant symptoms. In other words, a normal person has a certain degree of psychological resistance which enables him to withstand normal stress, just as a healthy person with adequate resistance can expose himself to microbes to a certain extent without catching an illness.

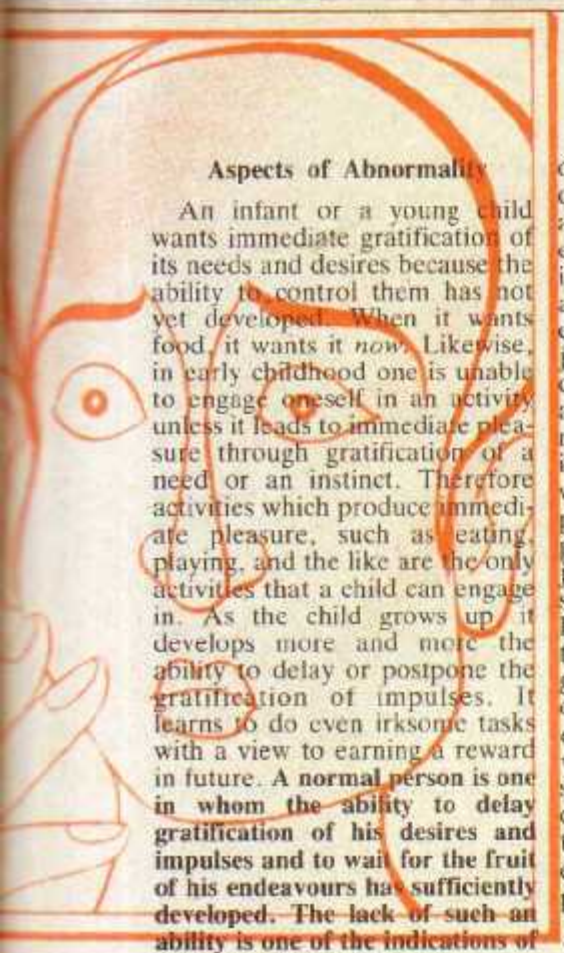
To return to the example of the woman given above, besides the cause of her symptoms, it is necessary to know how long she has been suffering from these symptoms and whether the symptoms are becoming less and less evident day by day. If her symptoms were brought about by a severe stress such as the death of her child, and if the symptoms last for some days, her condition would be regarded as a normal grief reaction. If, however, the death of her child took place several months ago, and her symptoms have persisted with almost the same intensity her condition would be regarded as abnormal. Thus a second criterion of normality is a person's degree of resilience or the rapidity with which one can recover from a disturbance. Of course, the time taken for recovery depends on the nature and severity of the disturbance.

Repression and Suppression

An author has portrayed a character who once remonstrated at the top of his voice: "Don't you see how calm I am?" The character illustrates the psychological naivete of one who lacks insight into his emotional state. When such a lack of awareness pertains to certain impulses which one is ashamed or afraid of, it is often associated with a state of repression. The impulses are unconsciously repressed so that the person is not aware of having those impulses. Repression is thus a defensive mechanism which protects a person from an awareness of impulses which he cannot acknowledge as existing in him. Repression is an unhealthy defense because it produces physical and psychological symptoms. Even when no visible symptoms are produced, it creates a state of inner tension.

Repression should be distinguished from suppression. The former is unconscious: the person is unaware of the impulse which is being repressed as well as of the fact that he is repressing it. Suppression, on the other hand, consists in consciously controlling an impulse of which one is aware. If the suppression is prolonged and involves strong impulses, it too produces tension and may even lead to some symptoms, but these are not as disabling as the symptoms caused by repression.

A normal person is one who has adequate insight into his impulses and feelings which he had learnt to express, control or sublimate as appropriate, and is therefore free from marked repression.



Aspects of Abnormality

An infant or a young child wants immediate gratification of its needs and desires because the ability to control them has not yet developed. When it wants food, it wants it *now*. Likewise, in early childhood one is unable to engage oneself in an activity unless it leads to immediate pleasure through gratification of a need or an instinct. Therefore activities which produce immediate pleasure, such as eating, playing, and the like are the only activities that a child can engage in. As the child grows up, it develops more and more the ability to delay or postpone the gratification of impulses. It learns to do even irksome tasks with a view to earning a reward in future. **A normal person is one in whom the ability to delay gratification of his desires and impulses and to wait for the fruit of his endeavours has sufficiently developed. The lack of such an ability is one of the indications of psychological immaturity.**

A person's functioning and achievement in the field of work (or study, if he is a student) constitute some of the best measures of his psychological state. If the functioning and achievement are not commensurate with one's intelligence, education and skills, a psychological disturbance can be suspected, unless there are other factors such as poor health, physical handicap, lack of opportunity, etc. to account for the low functioning or under-achievement.

The area of interpersonal relations is another good index of one's psychological functioning. A normal person is able to enter into meaningful, enduring and relatively conflict-free relationships with others. If a person is incapable of relating to others except briefly, on a superficial or in an exploitative way, it is indicative of psychological immaturity.

Our perceptions of people and events are always coloured to some extent by our feelings or emotions. Consequently, there is often misperception, if not a distortion, in our view of things and persons. Projection is an extreme form of misperception in which what one sees in another person does not really exist in that person but is projected on to the person because of the way the perceiver feels about the other person. The most extreme form of projection is exemplified by the paranoid who suffers from delusions of persecution, believing that people are plotting against him. Projections lead not only to interpersonal conflicts but also to psychological disturbances in oneself in the form of suspicion, anger, guilt, jealousy, etc. Though everybody tends to project to some extent, a normal person is one who has learnt to some extent to suspend one's judgement of others and to verify one's perceptions thereby being free from an exaggerated tendency towards projection.

Regulation of Basic Drives and Impulses

The great majority of psychological disturbances are related to the basic drives and impulses. Freud, for instance, traced all neuroses to the impulses of sex and aggression. According to one authority, about fifty per cent of psycho-somatic illnesses (that is, bodily compaints based on psychological factors) are related to anger. Sex and aggression may not be the fundamental impulses as Freud maintained, but they are certainly two of the most important drives that one has to learn to handle in a healthy manner if one is to maintain a normal psychological state. This means neither repressing the impulse nor giving it unbridled expression.

Abnormalities related to aggression are not as well recognised by the average person as those related to the sexual impulse. Repression of the aggressive drive leads to passivity which may express itself in a passive-dependant or a passive-aggressive personality disorder. The former is characterised by lack of assertion, obsequiousness and servility, and may be associated with certain psychosometic complaints. A passive-aggressive person is one who is outwardly compliant but expresses aggression in indirect and devious ways which resemble the violence of a seemingly non-violent person.

Uncontrolled expression of the aggressive drive also leads to certain psychosometic complaints as well as to a personality disorder. Such a person, described in psychiatry as suffering from an Explosive Personality Disorder, has a short fuse and blows up his lid at slight provocations or frustrations. He is like a child who has not outgrown the stage of temper tantrams.

Mark of Maturity

One of the marks of psychological maturity is age-appropriate autonomy or psycho-social independence. One is born totally dependant on those around, but as one grows up, one develops progressive independence, that is, the ability to make one's own decisions, look after oneself, meet one's own needs, etc. A well-known psychiatrist has traced all psychological disturbances to the feeling of dependency on others as the starting point. For, in different persons, the feeling of dependency leads to different symptoms such as depression, hostility, anxiety, passivity, poor self-esteem, etc. all of which undermine one's psychcological well-being and may escalacate into full-blown psychiatric disturbances. A normal person therefore, is one who has achieved autonomy which is appropriate for his age, health and socio-economic status. It should be borne in mind that what is deemed appropriate autonomy differs from culture to culture. For example, in the American culture the normal age at which one attains autonomy with regard to economic independence is significantly lower than in the Indian culture.

Symptoms and Diagnosis

The presence or absence of symptoms is the most frequently

used criterion to determine the condition of a person. This follows the medical model according to which a person who manifest symptoms such as fever, headache, etc. is sick, whereas one who is symptom-free is healthy or normal. The psychological model is somewhat different. As was pointed out in discussing the hypothetical case of the woman at the beginning of this article, it is necessary to take into account several factors in determining whether a person, who is manifesting some symptoms, is normal or not. In other words, the mere presence of psychological symptoms does not make a person abnormal. On the other hand, the absence of symptoms does not necessarily indicate that a person is normal. For normality and abnormality, from a psychological viewpoint, depend primarily on what some psychologists call ego-strength, which is reflected in a number of characteristics, such as degree of stress tolerance, resilience, degree of repression, etc. which have been mentioned above. A person who is deemed to lack adequate ego-strength on the basis of these characteristics is not normal even if, due to absence of outer stresses in his life, he manifests no significant symptoms. Such a person is not normal because he cannot tolerate much stress, has difficulty getting along with people or avoids people, tends to function poorly at work, lacks a sense of autonomy and tends to be dependant, has a low self-esteem and lacks a feeling of psychological well-being.

Assessment of Symptoms

What about a person with a well-developed ego who manifests symptoms? (In psychology ego means the self of an individual.) As stated previously, everyone — however strong — has a breaking point which constitutes his threshold of stress tolerance. So if the stresses of life exceed one's threshold of tolerance, even a person with excellent ego-strength will develop symptoms. Moreover, from time to time, everybody suffers from minor and temporary symptoms of stress in the form of anxiety (for example, before a job interview), depression (such as after failing in an examination), heart palpitations when frightened or angry, tension headache (perhaps after an argument with somebody), etc. Such minor and transient symptoms are quite normal. It is only when symptoms reach a certain level of severity or are persistent and chronic that a person is said to be not normal.

How severe or persistent must symptoms be before a person is regarded as suffering from an abnormal condition? This is usually determined subjectively by means of a clinical interview with an experienced professional. However, in some cases which are not clear-cut, a psychological test is administered to assess the extent and severity of symptoms. Psychological tests of various types have been devised for assessing symptoms and disorders such as anxiety, depression, hysteria, schizophrenia, psychosometic illness, etc. The following is an example of a simple self-scoring test for gauging a person's level of stress and tension. (Adapted from James Farquar: "Stress and How to Cope With It", *The Stanford Magazine*, Fall/Winter, 1977, p. 51) To take the test, one reads each statement and circles one of the numbers (2, 1, or 0) as appropriate. The total score is obtained by adding up all the circled numbers.

	Often	A few time a week	Rarely
1. I feel tense, anxious, or have nervous indigestion.	2	1	0
2. People at work/home arouse my tension.	2	1	0
3. I eat/drink/smoke in response to tension.	2	1	0
4. I have tension or migraine headaches, or pain in the neck or shoulders, or insomnia.	2	1	0
5. I can't turn off my thoughts at night or on weekends long enough to feel relaxed and refreshed the next day.	2	1	0
6. I find it difficult to concentrate on what I'm doing because of worrying about other things.	2	1	0
7. I take tranquilizers (or other drugs) to relax.	2	1	0
8. I have a difficult time finding enough time to relax.	2	1	0
9. Once I find the time, it is hard for me to relax.		Yes 1	No 0
10. My workday is made up of many deadlines.		Yes 1	No 0

Total Score

Score	Tension level
14-18	Considerably above average
10-13	Above average
6-9	Average
3-5	Below average
0-2	Considerably below average.

A person's stress level is normal if his total score falls within the average range (6-9)

Beyond Normality

The term "Normal" literally means conforming to a norm or a standard. In psychiatry the norm is the average. So to be normal in respect of any particular symptom (such as anxiety, tension, depression, etc.) is to fall within what is regarded as the average range of the symptom in the population at large. Deviation from the normal or the average is regarded as abnormal. However, the deviation can be above the average as well as below it. Therefore an abnormal person can be sub-normal or super-normal. The difference between these two is easy to understand with regard to a symptom. Thus, with reference to the test just cited, those whose scores are above the average-range are the sub-normal—those to whom the term abnormal usually refers to, whereas those whose scores are below the average are the super-normal. This distinction between the sub-normal and the super-normal exists also with regard to psychological development but is not generally recognised even among mental health professionals. What is the nature of this distinction? This is a subject for another article.

DO YOU BELONG TO THIS GREAT CLASS?

Few people know Britain's famous eccentrics as well as American psychologist, David Weeks, who has made a two-year study of people he calls "happily obsessed", reports UPI

Mr. Weeks, principal clinical psychologist at Scotland's Royal Edinburgh Hospital, has studied 130 such people who help give Britain a reputation for people who seem slightly dotty.

One such person is the Potato Inspector who, Mr. Weeks found, exists on potatoes and chocolate bars but remains healthy. Or the man who installs automatic bank telling machines but dresses like Robin Hood.

Mr. Weeks started his study in 1984 by putting up signs in Edinburgh pubs and grocery stores saying "eccentric"? If you feel that you are or might be" contact him.

He has now interviewed and tested, certified, self-confessed eccentrics all across Britian. Mr. Week says eccentricity is not a mental illness, but "just a different lifestyle from the normal." But he says his study has applications for treating schizophrenic and neurotic patients because it "sheds light on a different type of mental process."

"Eccentrics are people happily obsessed with one or two subjects and their curiosity knows no bounds," he said. "They generally are very opinionated and very original and creative. They feel they are fighting against society."

Mr. Weeks, (42), now wants to conduct a similar study in the USA to see if American eccentrics follow the same pattern as in Britain. His British study, conducted with research assistant, Miss Kate Ward, turned up people like these:

—A man in his mid-60s who taught yoga and meditations to his restaurant staff to help them cope with customers.

—A man who broadcast his own poems over a C.B. radio "because he wanted to bring culture to people".

—A social worker who dropped out of society to live in a cave, but went back to living in a cottage after he remarried his third wife.

Mr. Weeks said he has found eccentrics have a number of general traits in common they are curious, introverted, often were an only child or eldest child with a strict up-bringing. They received much attention but are non-competitive as far as society is concerned. They enjoy solitary exercises and feel the rest of the world is mundane and they feel different from others.

"They feel ahead of their time and have a higher I.Q. than the average. They generally have several marriages and have different eating and sleeping habits than the usual."

Despite their odd behaviour, he says some 75% of the 130 British eccentrics he interviewed hold down regular jobs—many in professional and managerial positions—although "they can be hard to work with as far as their colleagues are concerned."

THE STORK MESSENGER

By M. KRISHNAN

FROM remote times men have remarked on the seasonal arrival of avian visitors to their land, but migration as a recurrent movement from the breeding homelands of birds to far away winter feeding grounds and back, was recognized by Western science only about two centuries ago. This biblical quotation will testify to men having noticed seasonal bird arrivals ages ago: "the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming"-the 'turtle' here refers to the turtle dove. But people did not know where they came from, or where they went. Gilbert White, the naturalist of Selborne records in 1789 that the disappearance of swallows in winter in England was thought to be due to their having gone into retreats to hibernate!

For this reason, it is truly remarkable that in the oldest extant Tamil occasional verse (about 17 centuries old), there is mention of the migrant white stork sojourning at Kanyakumari and departing northward on its homeward flight. Further, in these poems there are some acute observations on the habits of flamingos (also recognized as migrants), the truth of which Western science came to know only comparatively recently.

To translate classical Tamil into English, with its syntax, prosody, poetic conventions and allusions all so utterly different, is no service to the literature of either language. I am well aware of the degradation that the terse power of old Tamil suffers when rendered into English, but must translate at least one poem to substantiate the truth of its natural history. I have an excuse for this disservice to my mother tongue: it is not something I am doing now, but already done: I translated this poem as my contribution to an international stork symposium in Europe, about a year ago!

The migration of the European white stork (Ciconia ciconia) has long been studied. It breeds in spring, and when winter sets in, foregathers in strength and sets out in vast flights (of over a thousand even) southwards to less bitterly cold shores. India is one of its wintering grounds, but by the time it arrives in our country, the flocks are much smaller: from about two dozen to about a hundred may be seen together as passage migrants, but once it settles down in its sojourn grounds it is no longer in flocks but in pairs and small parties. It certainly does come as far south as Kanyakumari, though it is virtually unknown in Sri Lanka.

We do not know the names of some old Tamil poets whose works are now available to us only as occasional verses in anthologies compiled long, long ago. We call such a man "The poet of ..." and add the name of his native place if we know it-- if not, we add the first line of his verse. All that we know about the poet who wrote this address to the stork messenger is that he lived about 16 or 17 centuries ago and belonged to a village called Saththimuththam (in the Thanjavur district): so we call him the poet of that village, Saththimuththa-p-pulavar. Only this one verse of his survives and it is brief, but generations of Tamil scholars have hailed it as an authentic masterpiece, and as long as classical Tamil survives he will not be forgotten.

Now for his address: this rendering is totally literal, except for the need to bridge syntactical differences between Tamil and English.

O stork! O stork! O red-legged stork!

O red-legged stork with coral beak sharp as the split palmyra sprout!

Should you and your mate, after sojourning
at the southern waters of Kanyakumari,
turn northward in your flight,
half at the tank of my village of Saththimuththam:
and there seek out my wife

White Storks

within our wet-walled leaking thatch,
listening to the gecko's whinnying voice
for augury of my return,
and tell her that you saw this poor wretch
in Madurai, city of our Pandyan king!,
grown thin with no cover of clothing against the north-wind,
hugging his torso with his arms,
clasping his body with up-bent legs,
barely existing,
like the snake within its basket!

The description of the bird is unmistakable. The white stork is the only migrant stork that comes so far south, and the only one with a sharply tapering coral red beak and red legs-- the sprout of the palmyra, split, boiled and eaten in the countryside, is the precise size and shape of the white stork's beak. Scholars acclaim the poem for the power of its description of the poet's plight, but it is no less remarkable for its natural history.

I shall not attempt ot translate the verses addressed to the flamingo, also as a messenger and also with knowledge of its being migratory: they, too, are occasional verses and are among the oldest surviving Tamil poems: in them the flamingo is requested, on its homeward flight, to deliver messages addressed to the patrons of these poets, adulatory messages not worth further mention.

However, the description of the bird is notewothy—incidentally, the old Tamil name for the flamingo is 'arasai-annam', 'king swan' closely translated, and the Hindi name for it even today is identical, 'raj hans'. One verse speaks of the flamingo feeding on minute prey in the silt of the shallows at Kanyakumari: I myself have seen flamingos there. The structure of the flamingo's hockey-stick bill (Lewis Carrol thinks of it as a long-handled croquet mallet) at the end of the very long, sinuous neck is such that it can feed only on minute prey, immersing its head upside-down in shallow water: a series of close-set plates within the mandibles filter the silt pumped into the mouth by the bird, and the water goes out of this sieve and the tiny organisms on which it subsists are retained.

Another address to the flamingo describes this mode of feeding, with the bird's head immersed in the water on its long, twisted neck. It compares the feeding flamingo, with the blush of red in its plumage, to a kavi-robed hermit ('kavi' is the salmonpink colour favoured by such men) standing leaning on the twisted stick usually carried by ascetics formely—a strong stick, probably the stem of some liana, with an open twist to its length, very like the sinuous neck of the feeding flamingo. 卐

India still has mystics and seekers who are not bound to any bondage imposed by institutionalised religions.

by DHANANJAY DESAI

The author's translations and articles have previously appeared in THE HERITAGE. He is the Principal of an Arts and Commerce College in Gujarat.

THE BAPU OF

EVERYBODY calls him 'Bapu'. I know the real name of this Muslim fakir, staunch without being fanatical, pious without being intolerant, but I do not know if he will like my disclosing his name and address. Hence I keep my knowledge of such things confined to the editor.

Bapu exemplifies the true teachings of Islam, which is basically a religion of submission to the Will of God, a creed of brotherhood and peace. He lives without the thought of tomorrow for he has resigned his will to that of Allah and anybody who goes to him in search of solace is warmly received, irrespective of any consideration of caste and creed or social status.

I have known him intimately for the past seven years and unlike in the old adage, familiarity has bred deeper love and greater reverence for the man who has now become an inalienable part of my life. When I am in sorrow he is my solace, when I am in a dilemma, he is my guide, when an important decision is to be taken, I do not do it without consulting him.

But he is neither learned nor intellectual. He cannot read a word of English. He does not preach and he is a man of few words, a simple, extremely unassuming man of God. He has few belongings and fewer needs. He has only one meal a day after the mid-day Namaz, beside a cup of tea and light breakfast after the morning Namaz. He always insists on sitting on the floor, and never uses a cot.

I was introduced to him by a friend, a staunch Hindu, who believes that his wife had been saved from death by Bapu's occult powers. She was ailing from a strange illness and though he tried many doctors of different disciplines and even a reputed hypnotist, her health continued to deteriorate till they gave up hopes for her life. In desperation, my friend went to Bapu. He diagnosed that she was victim of black magic and he sat out to cure her and soon she was on way to recovery. Today after years, she is in the pink of health. The grateful couple do not miss to seek his blessings on any important occasion in their life. About two years ago, when their son was to be given the sacred thread, the Muslim fakir was invited to bless the boy as he was undergoing the ceremony before sacrificial fire to the chant of vedic verses among an assembly of Brahmins!

One day I received a message that my father was ill. I caught the earliest bus. When I saw my father, my worst fears were confirmed. He was semi-unconscious and his memory, extraordinarily sharp even in old age, was badly affected. I decided to go back to my place of work, take an indefinite leave and return on the same day by afternoon.

After reaching the town, the first thing I did was to go to a Durgah—the place where a Muslim saint is buried—where 'Bapu' lives. I related to him the nature of my father's illness, and when he remained silent, I broke down into tears, for I had known by experience that Bapu's silence on such occasion was ominous. Some three years before this episode, I had requested Bapu to help my mother who was very ill. But he kept mum and when I insisted, his words were evasive. My mother never recovered and she passed away a year later. When I came to know Bapu

THE DURGAH

found that all was normal with his heart.

He has an unerring pre-vision of things to come and power to heal the wounds where it can be done without disturbing some higher laws, but he shuns publicity and ascribes his achievements to the grace of Allah or his guru! He has the spontaneous humility of a true saint to admit his limitations. When after a bereavement in the family, I asked him if he knew of the impending death, he immediately replied, "No, not till the illness took a turn for the worst and she was taken to the hospital."

more closely, I knew that when he felt that the problem placed before him was beyond solution, he remained silent.

When he saw me in tears, he said that he would do his best and I should not worry. When I went to him again before going to board the bus, he said, "Keep your poise. Don't worry and leave things in the hands of God. When you reach home, you'd see your father sipping tea." I had not taken his last sentence in a literal sense. I realised that there was little difference between the literal and the figurative in Bapu's words when, on reaching home, I found my father sipping tea indeed! But it proved to be the first and last major illness in my father's life.

A few months before this, a doctor friend had suggested that a cardiogram of my father should be taken since he strongly suspected some disorder of the heart when he examined him. I consulted Bapu and he said it was not necessary since there was nothing wrong with his heart—and once again he proved correct when on the day before my father passed away, a cardiogram of his heart was taken and it was

I respect Bapu the occultist, who can at times work wonders, but it is Bapu, the man of God, with his child-like innocence and simplicity, a man of transparent purity and single-pointed dedication to spiritual pursuit who compels my reverence. But his spirituality is not a day-as-dust asceticism: its austerity and extreme renunciation are imbued with deep compassion for man and intense love of God. And perhaps that is why I find in him not merely a philosopher and guide, but a beloved friend.

Bapu is a staunch Muslim, scrupulously praying five times a day and observing strict fast during the entire month of Ramzan. Thursday is the most important day at this Durgah—and not the Friday, the conventionally holy day of the Muslims—and in the evening one finds many Hindus cracking a coconut before the Durgah!

The Durgah where Bapu lives is as extraordinary as the man himself. A Muslim saint, Mastana Shah, who passed away a few decades ago lies buried there in an humble, unostentatious tomb. But the moment you enter the gate, you feel powerful atmosphere within its walls charged with peace and solace.

Once my wife and I decided to go to the Durgah with an offering of coconut, but for one reason or the other we had to cancel it at the last moment. So we tucked away the coconut in a safe place. But when we looked at it the next morning it was neatly cracked round its entire middle girth. The first time I took it as an accident; when it happened again, I asked Bapu who explained that it was the evidence that Mastana Shah had accepted our offering!

Mastana Shah was perhaps a Sufi, whose burning zeal for the Lord had destroyed the narrowing boundaries of institutionalised religion, and it was not unusual to find him going out on his steed, reciting Sanskrit hymns and a long tilak across his forehead! He knew English, Sanskrit, Arabic and some other languages and visited my town from time to time, his appearance being as mysterious as his disappearance. His most faithful follower was a Hindu potter, who lies entombed beside him, venerated even by the Muslim devotees of Mastana Shah, and as loyal to his master after death as he was during his life.

If you go to the Durgah, you will find a stockily built Hindu clad in dhoti, spending almost all his time there. If you ask him, he will tell you that once, some years ago, he had a severe heart-attack and it was the sheer grace of Mastana Shah, whom he had seen as a child, that saved him. After his recovery, he retired from business and in gratitude, spending his time in the Durgah, in prayers and telling of beads and even observing fasts during the Ramzan—without of course forgetting to take a holy dip in the Ganga whenever he can! 卐

THE HANDICRAFTS OF RAJASTHAN

Bedspread

Camel

Phad Painting

RAJASTHAN, popularly called the 'Treasure trove of Indian Handicrafts' has been able to preserve its artistic heritage despite several ups and downs. This has played an important role in the economy of the State. Be it metal craft, ivory carving, woodwork, jewellery, textile printing, tie and dye or leather embroidery, Rajasthani craftsman adorns it with exquisite workmanship and superb artistry. These handicrafts are not only valuable earners of foreign exchange but also the interpreters of the country's art and culture to the people of other lands.

The history of handicrafts in Rajasthan can be traced to the remote days when man made stone tools. Implements like hand-axes, cleavers, choppers, large clactoman flakes and huge pebble cores have been recovered from various parts of the State.

Excavations at Kalibangan reveal that Rajasthan had been an important centre of the ceramic

by H. BHISHAM PAL

Lt. Col. H. Bhisham Pal is the author of several works including The Temples of Rajasthan and Central Police Organisation in India. He is stationed at New Delhi.

Leather Kupi

industry. The paintings on the ancient pottery from Kalibangan bear close affinity and resemblance with Harapan designs; the contemporary potters of Rajasthan were fully aware of the Indus Valley ceramic handicrafts and industry. According to Dr. Mortimer Wheeler, it was probably Rajasthan which supplied copper to Indus Valley at one stage. The tradition of having black paintings on red surface of pottery in Bikaner region survived upto the beginning of the Christian Era as is evident from the excavations at Rangmahal. Some of these pottery designs are prevalent even today.

The colossal 'Yaksha' statue of Noh exhibits the superb craftsmanship of the Rajasthani sculptors and architects. Artists were also trained in the promotion of the plastic arts. Dungarpur became an important centre for casting bronzes. Some master artists of the place were assigned the job of preparing the colossal Jain bronzes which later adorned the temples in Achalgarh. Excavations at Rangmahal revealed the use of woven fabrics of both coarse and fine quality. The other excavations have also thrown light on the handicrafts, such as painted and glazed pottery, bead industry, bangles, tools, etc. The clay modelling art has its antiquity extending to the days of the Indus Valley culture at Kalibangan.

A glimpse of the textiles and garments in ancient Rajasthan can also be had from the contemporary sculptures and terracottas. The use of Lahange can be traced back to the Kushan period. In the Shiva Parvati terracotta plaque from Rangmahal belonging to late Kushan or early Gupta period, we notice Parvati putting on garments with parallel folds probably depicted under the Dandhara influence like the prominent moustaches on the face of the Krishna in contemporary Govardhanadhara relief from the same place. In the Dona-Lila plaque from Rangmahal can be seen the beautiful skirt of the milk-maid whereas Krishna puts on a typical *dhoti* reaching the knees as a member of the rural community. Similarly the use of *Odhani* (veil) as an upper garment on the head can well be attested by a number of post-Gupta (5th-6th Century A.D.) sculptures from Udaipur-Dungarpur region recently discovered by an archaeologist, R.C. Agrawal. The Bikaner terracotta presents a graphic picture of bodices with long sleeves resembling close-fitting jackets. Men used to put on simple *dhotis* as lower garments, in use in Rajasthan even today.

The period from the 12th to 17th centuries was mainly occupied by internal rivalries among the Rajput princes and clashes with the formidable Mughals. Hence there was hardly any time to think of patronising the craftsmen involved in the development of handicrafts in Rajasthan. But with subsequent social intercourse between the two, the atmosphere changed. The traditional handicrafts of Rajasthan began to feel the impact of Muslim culture and art. When Prince Karan of Mewar visited the Mughal court in 1615, a rich dress of honour consisting of various pieces of jewellery was presented to him on behalf of Queen Nurjahan. *Khulasai Shahjehan-Nama* lists them as a Sarpanch, Balaband and Urbasi Murussa. Similarly, the exchange of gift of bejewelled ornaments among Mughal and Rajput nobles was the order of the day. Portraits of Rajput rulers in their palaces and museums reveal a decorative taste in the ornaments worn by them. The head decoration and ornaments mentioned by Muslim observers consisted of *turra Sarpanch, Balaband, dugdugi, Joseph Totah Peeh* and pearl necklaces. It is difficult to assess how far the two cultures influenced each other in designing of the jewellery and other objects of handicrafts. The designs of nose-pin and other ornaments as painted in the Bhagvata Dasham Skanda in the picture gallery of Jaipur was the result of frequent mixing of the Rajput and Mughal people. A marked difference in style and design was evident in the aristocratic and common people of the time.

Ain-I-Akbari reveals the presence of skilled workers in the palace of the Mughal King Akbar. Being a connoisseur of art he regularly supervised the work of artists and rewarded them to produce the best out of their talents. The artists included were makers of *barids* in gold and silver for sword belts, engravers, sculptors, lapedaries and painters. These very artists taught their art to other skilled workers which later on were patronised by the Rajput rulers in

their States.

Maharaja Man Singh, a great lover of art, was credited with bringing the artists to start this industry. Jaipur and Jodhpur were the two centres where the craftsmen excelled in the art of manufacturing jewellery and other fanciful handicrafts. These handicrafts are not only renowned in India but throughout the world. Jaipur School of Art established in 1866 has been responsible in bringing out the new designs in pottery making. As a result Jaipur pottery is known for its excellence throughout the world. In A.D.1820 Maharaja of Alwar invited Karim Ahmed a book-binder to make a fine binding for a copy of the *Gulistan* of Sheikh Sadi, prepared by Agha Mirza of Delhi. This masterpiece has a pretty border in coloured outline with painted leaves of the book in different designs in gold pattern.

The artistic heritage patronised by the Rajput rulers and Mughal emperors and nurtured with devotion and skill by the craftsmen, received a setback during the British suzerainty and degenerated virtually into non-existence. The situation worsened with the large-scale migration of Muslim craftsmen to Pakistan after the partition of the country. The trend of employing artisans on fixed salary or contract basis was started by rich patrons.

The traditional handicrafts of Rajasthan survived and developed because they were regarded as material symbols of Rajasthan's unique cultural ethos. According to Mrs. Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya, "In India, the handicrafts have an importance of their own. They express the great tradition and cultural heritage of our country. It is obvious that in the old days beauty and utility were never divorced as in the present age. Every article turned out was the creative expression of its maker and brought him the exaltation of fulfilment. No matter how common its use, how humble the surroundings, the article in use had to be beautiful. Our pots and pans, our mats and blankets, were work of art, not merely of use. Over thousands of years, these multitude of processes, shapes and colours were evolved into perfection.

With the initiative of the national government, these crafts were revived with the setting up of the All India Handicrafts Board at New Delhi and the Rajasthan Small Scale Industries Corporation at Jaipur. The Handicrafts Board made all out efforts for reorienting the outlook and training of craftsmen and encouraged production. Special attention was paid to better designing and suitable marketing facilities. The artists making their mark in their respective fields are also being honoured at national level. Many artists of Rajasthan adorned this list. Prominent among them are Ram Prasad Soni, Shravan Lal Misra, Kudrat Singh, Kripal Singh Shekhwat, Hisammudin Ustad, Imitiaz Ali, Dindayal, etc.

The Small Industries Corporation of Rajasthan has created a sense of security of work among the artisans and augmented their incomes. Almost every craft is practised and marketed in Rajasthan and the tradition has been so nurtured by the craftsmen that their products win the acclaim and appreciation from all. The Corporation has been rendering all possible help and assistance to them.

The magic of the rich, colourful and variegated ancient handicrafts of Rajasthan still haunt us. But changing time demands the will to experiment in new designs with the same patience, love of skill and the predilection for beauty that had characterised the old craftsmen. They have also to guard and maintain their basic role in overall perspective from the onslaught of modern mechanisation. There is no denying the fact that the handicrafts of Rajasthan are being partially submerged under the rising influence of industrialisation. The real significance of handicrafts lies in the novelty and surprise in each object.

Sir George Birdwood rightly observed, "In India everything is hand-wrought and everything, down to the cheapest tools or earthen vessel, is therefore more or less a work of art." Sustam J. Mehta remarks, "If the industrial arts and handicraft of India reached a state of almost near perfection, the very fact that they have survived so long all the vicissitudes to which they must have been subjected, was no doubt greatly due to the encouragement afforded by the powerful and even petty princes and rulers, and the aesthetic inclinations of the common people."

Koodiaattam performance in a Koothambalam. The scene is : Raavana abducting Seeta. Two stage-hands are holding torches so that the facial expression of Raavana in this highly dramatic scene can be clearly seen by the audience.

THE SOLE SURVIVIN

Photos: Courtesy Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.

Jataayu, the bird which fought with Raavana to save Seeta, but was killed by the demon king.

One of the most experienced Chaakyaar actor : Mani Maadhava Chaakyaar.

Mani Maadhava Chaakyaar doing a highly stylized passage of mime.

SANSKRIT THEATRE

After the article on the Indian concept of theatre in general (January '87), the author now begins introducing the different theatre traditions of India, beginning with *Koodiaattam* of Kerala.

by JIWAN PANI

ONE accustomed to the dialogue-centred theatre of today can hardly imagine that a single page of a play, containing about 200 words, may take more than two hours for enactment. But that is what happens in a highly stylized theatre like *Koodiaattam* of Kerala. Here the performance structure is seldom dictated by the literary structure of the play. This age-old theatre tradition, closest to the ancient concept of *naatya*, is perhaps the only surviving Sanskrit theatre which regarded theatrical presentation as a form of visual *Kaavya* (the long narrative poem that blends poetry with fiction).

In fact, ancient Indian thinkers were of the opinion that poetry manifests itself in may forms and basically at three levels. Poetry of the literary level, expressed through words, is *vaachya kavitaa*. The *shraavya* form of poetry is manifested at the aural level and is expressed through musical notes sounded either by the vocal chord or by a musical instrument. The *drishya kavitaa* appeals at the visual level and is primarily expressed through such movements of human body which create dynamic images in the space. The other forms of visual poetry may either be expressed through colours (painting) or through shapes (sculpture). Each form of poetry used to inspire and enrich other forms. Often, newer dimensions of poetry were being explored through transformation of the poetry of one level into that of other levels, or through their blending.

Of the various forms of poetry, dance was being considered as something special, because like Susanne Langer, the ancient Indian thinkers could see its unique character. For instance, while a sculpture exists in space, music exists in time; but dance exists simultaneously in space and in time. Dance has also the capability of transforming literary and musical forms of poetry into appropriate and highly evocative visual images. Therefore, *naatya*, the traditional theatre of India, chose dance to be its most powerful expression, so that various forms of poetry are integrated into a unified whole and the theatrical language becomes polyvalent as well as multidimensional. When in this language a story is narrated it becomes *drishya kaavya*, of which one of the brilliant examples is *Koodiaattam*.

It is difficult to say definitely when exactly *Koodiaattam* originated. The Tamil epic, *Silaappadikaaram*, written during the early centuries A.D, by *Ilaango Aadigal*, a prince turned ascetic, referes to *Chaakyaar-Koothu* which is not very much different from *Koodiaattam*. In fact, people of two communities of Kerala have been traditionally performing this theatre down the centuries. They are the *Chaakyaars* and the *Naambiaars*. While the actors belong to the *Chaakyaar* community, the actresses and the musicians belong to the *Naambiaar* community. A woman belonging to the latter community is called *Naangyaar*. In the theatre tradition under discussion, when an actor presents a solo performance, it is generally called *Chaakyaar-Koothu*. If an actress presents such a solo performance it is called *Naangyaar-Koothu*. When both actors and actresses combine to present a performance it is called *Koodiaattam* which literally means 'dancing together'.

Traditionally, *Koodiaattam* is performed in a *Koothambalam*, a specially constructed theatre hall in the precincts of a temple. In some temples as in Irinjaalkuda, Trichur, Kitangur, and Guruvaayur, the *Koothambalam* is a permanent structure. In other temples a suitable place is turned into a stage for presenting the performance. The stage is so constructed that the actors face the deity.

In A.D. 10th century some major changes in the presentational style of *Koodiaattam* was introduced by Kulashekhara, a King of Perumal dynasty. He was not only a great patron and connoisseur of theatre but also a playwright. His two plays *Subhadraa-dhananjaya* and *Tapatisamvarana* claim important place in the traditional repertoire of *Koodiaattam* even now. Kulashekhara had a far sight. He could sense that the Sanskrit language was gradually receding from the masses and unless some effective steps were taken, this rich tradition would sink into oblivion. He therefore introduced the stock-character *Vidooshaka* who not only gives in Malayalam a gist of the dialogues spoken by different characters but also punctuates the thematic structure with wit and humour. The problem of com-

mon people not fully understanding the dialogues in Sanskrit was thus solved and the addition of wit and humour made the presentation more interesting. The *vidooshaka* thus became a pivotal character in *Koodiaattam* performance. According to tradition, the *vidooshaka*, when on the stage, has all the liberty to criticize any one, however powerful person he or she may be in the society. None should feel offended with his satirical remarks. Thus being absolutely assured, he fearlessly rips open the corrupt practices of the society with his gimlet-satire. For instance, while the preliminaries are being performed before the play proper begins, the *vidooshaka* appearing on the stage says that in ancient times there were four main aims of life : *dharma* (religion), *artha* (wealth), *kaama* (healthy fulfilment of passionate desires), and *moksha* (liberation) which now should be substituted by *vinoda* (indulgence in sensual pleasures), *vanchanaa* (deception), *ashana* (indulgence in eating palatables), and *raajasevaa* (servile submission to the ruling authorities). When he elaborates each of these aims of life drawing examples from the present day society and punching it with biting satire, the audience has moments of great mirth. The shape that Kulashekhara gave to the *Koodiaattam* performance, remains more or less unchanged down the ten centuries.

The performance of *Koodiaattam* moves in a majestic and leisurely pace. One full play to be presented with its preliminaries may take a few days to several weeks.

On the performance days the stage inside the *Koothambalam* is tastefully decorated with green leaves of coconut and banana trees and red silk. On the centre of the front stage the traditional lamp with three thick wicks is kept lighted all throughout the performance. After taking the make-up and wearing the costumes, the actors and actresses reverently invoke the blessings of gods and gurus. The drummers then play on the huge pitcher-shaped drum called *mizhaavu*. A *naangiar* sings invocatory songs eulogizing Lord Ganapati, the remover of all obstacles ; Saraswati the goddess of wisdom and all arts ; and Lord Shiva, the cosmic dancer. After the invocation, a *Naambiaar* brings some holy water and sprinkles it on the stage to purify it. He then recites the *naandi*, which gives the gist of the play or of the act to be presented. After *naandi* is over, *Sutradhaara* which literally means the holder of strings, appears on the stage and recites some verses. He also dances. At times, this part of the preliminaries is dropped and *nirvahana* begins just after *naandi*. *Nirvahana* is dramatically interesting and has thematic relevance for the performance to follow. Two stage-hands hold an improvised curtain behind which the hero of the play stands. The musical instruments start playing and the curtain is gradually removed. The actor dances for some time and then through highly stylized mime narrates the part of the story that precedes the incidents of the scene about to be presented. Often *nirvahana* is performed in three phases, known as *anukrama*, *samkshepa*, and *vivarana*. After the *nirvahana*, the *vidooshaka* comes to the stage.

All these preliminaries may take two to five days. At times the *vidooshaka's* performance alone may take two to three consecutive nights. The duration of the performance varies from three to six hours. Usually *Koodiaattam* is performed from 9 P.M to 3 A.M.

The play proper is also a long drawn affair. The text of the play only provides the foundation over which the huge superstructure of stylized performance is built. The dialogues, whether in prose or in verse, are delivered very slowly in a recitative manner. The utterance of each word is often prolonged since whatever is spoken is delineated through hand gestures. Again, the stylized gestural mime brings out different levels of meaning contained in a poetic expression. According to Sanskrit poetics there are three levels of expression. The lowest level is *abhidhaa* (referencial), that is, the literal meaning. The next higher level is *lakshanaa*, the metaphorical meaning. The highest level of poetic expression is *vyanjanaa* which being symbolic is highly suggestive and evocative. All these three levels of verbal expressions are made visual in *Koodiaattam* performance through incredibly evocative gestural miming. The theatre takes the art of mime to such a great height that the performance celebrates the space of the stage with a multi-dimensional language. The *Chaakyaar* actors through years of *saadhanaa* achieve not only a high degree of dexterity in the movement of hands using different *mudraas* with remarkable grace, but also a complete mastery over facial muscles and movement of eyes. The art of miming in this form of theatre is so evolved that a whole scene with its appropriate atmosphere can be depicted by an actor unaided by any king of setting or stage property. For example, in the first act of *Subhadraadhananjaya*, Arjuna, the hero, at the end of his pilgrimage comes to a sacred forest named *Prabhaasteertha* where animals and insects live in peaceful coexistence. Nothing harms them. He sees a moth flying over blazing flames, but it does not get burnt. A young deer is suckled by a tigress. A very young elephant touches the jaw of a lion by its small and delicate trunk thinking the mouth of the lion a lotus. And a snake lulls a mangoose to sleep by licking it. The entire scene with such minute details is depicted by *Koodiaattam* actor through facial expression and movement of eyes sumptuously aided by hand gestures. Only a form of theatre in which the art of mime is so subtle can present a visual *kaavya* with all its richness. 卐

A character from the rural India of the forties recreated by an eminent Kannada writer—winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award.

WATERMAN NARAPPA

by R.S. MUGALI

(Translated from *Kannada* by Sri. K. SAMPATHGIRI RAO)

MUDDABBEHALLI, a *taluk* headquarters town in Vijayapuram district, was only a big village. Though removed from the railway station by some twenty miles, it was removed from civilisation by hundreds of miles. A court and some offices are there with some officials and even graduates but they are islands surrounded by a sea of ignorance. Lately a few buses ply to this village, and sound their horns announcing progress. In the wake of the advent of the buses have sprung up some tea-shops and cigarette kioshi, catering to different communities, and providing

for the symbols of civilised existence. One of these shops is dedicated to the Radio goddess, and invites people to see and hear her.

In such a village was a lawyer of the name of Bhagavanta Rao; Waterman Narappa arrived at his house. Naturally this raises the question whence he came: and indeed Narappa's advent was something that attracted notice. Bhagavanta Rao was a noted lawyer, and his constant appearance in villages had spread his fame far and wide. In any big criminal case he was certain to be the Defence Counsel. Those who were accused of murder took refuge in his forensic skill. Once he went to a village in connection with a murder case. The headman of the village had made elaborate arrangements for his dinner and stay. But no cook was available. There was none to be found among the Brahmins of the place. Bhagavanta Rao was to camp there for four or five days. Just about that time Narappa came to the village to call upon the headman. He was not a professional cook or water-carrier but was handy at all jobs at a pinch. He readily agreed to go to the rescue of his life-long friend, the headman. The lawyer was greatly pleased with his efficient services. His preparations were delicious and the lawyer even acknowledged that his success in argument before the presiding Magistrate was indeed the result of the tasty *rasam* Narappa had served him.

One night he was taking rest, quite tired after a day's hard intellectual work. He proposed to return to Muddabbehalli the next day. He was reclining on an easy chair with legs outstretched before the village *chavadi*. It was a bright moonlit night. Suddenly a brighter idea struck Bhagavanta Rao, and looking at the headman who was sitting near, he said: "Look here, we shall have parched rice and curd tonight. Send for four or five pots of curd." The headman heartily welcomed this chance of arranging a farewell dinner as suggested. But soon a shadow passed over his face as it was doubtful if he could secure curds so late at night. Immediately servants were sent round, but, as luck would have it, no curd pots were available.

Only an old woman had two pots in her keeping—it was found after some investigation and research. The village headman went to the old woman himself but she would not part with the curd. She said that they had to be delivered to someone the next day and in any case she was not going to open a curd pot on a Monday. The real reason must have been that she feared she would get nothing in return from the headman. The headman returned disappointed. The lawyer awaiting the headman's return had dozed off on the easy chair and probably had dreams of parched rice and curd! Narappa who was silent all this while broke in: "Wait; I shall bring curd," and taking a couple of rupees from the lawyer's clerk went to the same old woman. He did not at first refer to the object of his visit. He spoke of himself as an astrologer, hinted at the birth of a grandson to the old woman and thus paved his way into her favour. The old woman was charmed with his talk, bristling as it was with proverbs and wise sayings and looked upon him as almost an angel. After talking of this and that, he said, "You, see revered lady, you have always curd pots though they may be scarce in other houses." "Yes, I have two, sir" owned up the old woman. "Then please give them to me," said he, and with this he took out the two rupees tucked in the cloth round his waist, and jingled them on the floor. The old woman's mouth watered at the sight of the coins. "But today is Monday, sir," she murmurred. Narappa led the old woman outside the hut, showed her the full moon in the sky and said, "Look, Monday is past and Tuesday has come. It is past midnight. Take my word, lady, I am an astrologer." And thus Narappa wheedled the two curd pots out of the old dame and, carrying them on both his shoulders returned to the *chavadi* like Hanuman carrying Rama and Lakshmana. The lawyer, who had just got out of his doze, and the headman who was waiting restlessly were greatly surprised at his success. Next morning when Bhagavanta Rao was leaving the village, he invited Narappa, "Narappa, come with me, and stay in my house." Somehow Narappa was tired of his own village and he felt that the lawyer would be of help to him. So Narappa readily fell in with the proposal and after a few days went and settled down in Bhagavanta Rao's house.

(2)

The arrival of Narappa brought great relief to Bhagavanta Rao in many ways. Muddabbehalli was notorious for its water scarcity. The wells of the village were mostly situated on its outskirts and people had to undertake long pilgrimages (as to Tirupati) to fetch water. If there was sufficient rain the tank would fill and the wells too would get their supply of water. But if the rains failed, it was a different story. Instead of water one found frogs and crabs in the wells. In the past, they say, the village was well stocked with water as in the Malnad regions. But water seems to have become scarce with the advent of modern people. And so it was a common sight to see ladies from all house-holds, high and low, the lawyer's as well as his clerk's, undertaking their daily trek to distant wells. As Bhagavanta Rao prospered in his profession, he arranged for his supply of water through professional water-carriers. But still the ladies of the household were not entirely exempt from the drudgery. After Narappa came, he fetched all the water himself without allowing any one else to take any trouble in the matter.

Moreover Bhagavanta Rao had married a second time only two years ago and he was loth to expose his charming wife to this sordid task. His elder sister was a widow, and had been living for a long time past in his household. She was attending to kitchen work with the help of the new daughter-in-law. So Narappa became Waterman Narappa! Bhagavanta Rao had two children by his first wife—a boy four years old and a girl of two. He had employed the services of a person only to look after them and play with them. He felt that his second wife might not take so kindly to his first wife's children. Somehow he had persuaded himself that a man employed on a salary would take adequate care of them. As time passed, he realised that this was a vain expectation. The man employed by Bhagavanta Rao was just doing mercenary work. But the atmosphere changed with the advent of Narappa into the household. The children took to him very affectionately and would not be seperated from him. As soon as Narappa's daily task of fetching water was done, he spent his time with the children, playing, talking, and sight-seeing in their company. They were very fond of his interesting talk and fine story-telling. And Bhagavanta Rao's second wife Susheela Bai, who had entered the house with apprehensions because of the presence of step children, was delighted by the ways and demeanour of Narappa. Thus Narappa became a favourite of all.

He looked a happy soul and a fine jolly fellow. But this was only on the surface. Whoever suspected the thousand torments that troubled his inner life! Only some features of his daily life caused some surprise to the people in the house. As soon as he got up early in the morning he would go round the Tulasi plant muttering some prayers. He had installed an image of Hanuman. He would sit in front of the image offering prayers, slap his cheeks by way of repentance, and offer devout prostrations to the image. Often he was heard giving vent to heavy sighs. After a cup of tea, he would smoke a beedi, and get ready for his task of carrying water from the well. He was lank and thin of build but his limbs were firm and pliant like stalks of bamboo. It was a sight to see him hurrying back with a springing gait from the well carrying two pots of water. His body was dark and his face was a shade darker. And excessive smoking had rendered his lips particularly black. Only when he laughed and made others laugh, his shining rows of white teeth exposed his purity and character. Later, he wore a woollen piece of cloth and brought a few pots for the use of those who observed ceremonial purity. All this would be over by noon. And then he would have his cold water bath at a well, and, with his clothes dripping with water, he would visit the temple of Hanuman in front of the village, pour a pot of water on the image, go round the temple, offer prostrations and return to the house in the blazing sun. By that time Bhagavanta Rao would have had his dinner and gone to the court. Every day he had his food along with the ladies of the house—a late and cold meal. The lawyer had often remonstrated with him, out of sincere affection, to have his food earlier. He told him sternly to finish his ablutions and worship, earlier and join him at dinner. But to no purpose. Narappa's was an iron will and his customs were inflexible. One day, returning from the Hanuman temple with bare feet and parched with thirst, he leaned against a wall and sank down. Susheela Bai who was seeing this felt greatly sad. Half in fun, and half in sorrow, she said to him: "Look here, Narappa, you go to the Hanuman temple every day without fail and pour water on Hanuman. But what has he given you in return ?" Narappa was roused by these words and he spoke with some warmth, "What you say, madam, is not untrue. I wash him every day with water. He was not softened towards me. What else? He is a piece of stone and I am another! But, see, we must suffer our Fate. Has not the saint sung—

Can a man who flies from one place to another,
flee from the effects of his past Karma ?
The mountain peacock, shedding
tears, can hardly soften the hunter's heart.'

Susheela Bai rejoined 'True enough' and laughed.

Narappa used to have a nap for about an hour after dinner. After a wash, he would take out the bundle containing his old papers, documents and song books, and pore over them. His brothers had wasted the ancestral property. A few good bits of land which had been mortgaged were likely to come back to his possession. He had begged Bhagavanta Rao to help him secure these properties, and the lawyer had said, "Let us see." If he could get this much of help in return for all his services, he considered himself well-rewarded, and lived in that hope. Towards evening, clients returning from the court or other friends would gather in front of Bhagavanta Rao's house. After taking his tea, Narappa would sit with the children and entertain them with his endless stories and encyclopaedic talk. He had perhaps studied up only to three or four primary classes in the village school, but the traditional idiom of the Kannada language was at his command and flowed from his lips like a perennial current. His humour was remarkable. He had suffered his fill of disappointment and sorrow, and had acquired the art of glossing them over with a veneer of humour. It was not the profound realisation of Vedantic truths; it was merely an intellec-

tual rebound to the ironies of Fate of which he had been a victim.

All kinds of people made up to him and engaged him in talk. Ningappa was among those who got into his company. Ningappa was fond of litigation in courts and, though he lost his lands as a result of it, his fondness for courts had not left him. Narappa knew all about him. Once Ningappa asked him, "Narappa, I am wondering when I shall get back my fortune." "Shall I tell you when?" replied Narappa laughing. "This sun must rise in the West and set in the East: the stream in front of your village must turn back its course. Then you shall regain your fortune. Even the Bombay High Court Judge cannot rub off the line of Fate engraved on your forehead. You have heard the story of Kunti's sons, haven't you? It is like that. Somehow, anyhow, Kunti's sons shall not have their kingdom, as the saying goes. It is the same with us. Who owns anything for ever on this earth, Ningappa? You gain a span and lose a yard—all gone to the dust." Ningappa was gaping with wonder at this torrent of words. Still he would not give up expressing his optimism. "But, Narappa, our village astrologer is a knowing man. He also said that my lands would be redeemed and come back to me by the New Year's Day. Then we shall raise crops and you must come to partake of the produce." Narappa could not restrain his laughter. "O, yes. It is by eating such produce that I have been reduced to this condition. Isn't it like carrying bags to fetch the grain seen in a dream ? Dear fellow, please bid good-bye to the courts, and start on a pilgrimage. Go to Srisailam and other holy places."

Narappa had some knowledge of herbs. He prepared his own medicines for personal ailments. People too came to him for treatment. It was a free dispensary. More than his recipes, his wise and humorous talk helped in effecting many cures. Once a lad who had been stung by a scorpion came howling with pain. Narappa could not help laughing on seeing him. He performed his incantations, spat on one side, pinched the boy hard and asked him, "Has the pain decreased ?" "O God, it is burning: the pain is increasing," wailed the young man. "What ?" exclaimed Narappa in disgust. "Burning—is it ? Is your body a lump of firewood ? You who cannot put up with a little sting of a scorpion, how are you going to manage a family tomorrow, my young fellow ?" The bystanders burst into laughter in which the unfortunate young man could not help joining. Narappa's chaffing helped to alleviate the pain, and people's confidence in his curative powers increased.

Narappa's treks to fetch water became less frequent in the evenings. He brought just four or five pots of water when it was absolutely necessary. His evenings were usually spent in lonely walks to the neighbouring village. A mile from Muddabbehalli, near the village of Muddanahalli, there is a field. It is surrounded by trees. It appears a devotee had a dream that God Venkateswara of Tirupati was hidden in the rock. Since then worship was being offered to that stone. Some devotees had put up a platform there. There Narappa used to go and sit in peace. He used to offer his prayers to Lord Venkateswara for happiness and peace in life. One evening, as the sun was setting, its golden rays suffused the whole land as if a light yellow cloth had been spread over the earth. The leaves were fluttering and dancing in the gentle breeze. Just then a young husband and wife, with their child, from Muddanahalli came to offer their worship to Lord Venkatesa. They offered their prayer for fulfilment of their cherished desires. They took some of the ash and charcoal bits lying about and smeared them on their faces and the child's and went back satisfied and happy. Narappa was watching the scene from his seat; but he was so demure and glum that they did not feel like engaging him in conversation. After going a few paces, the wife asked, "Who was that?" "Well, who knows?" answered the husband, "maybe a Sanyasi." Narappa overheard this conversation. He was touched to the quick. Controlling himself with some effort till the visitors reached a safe distance, he jumped down and exclaimed, standing in front of the stone, "Yes. I am a Sanyasi—only, a Sanyasi with wife and children," and he fell to sobbing loudly. The picture of his family came vividly before his eyes. The wife whom he did not want, the child who was blind, and his own miserable self made up his family, and made his life an unending agony. He was enveloped in darkness. He sighed heavily, then pulled himself together. Folding his hands in prayer before Lord Venkatesa, he said, "It is a dreary wilderness. But I have hardened myself. Death is the end anyhow, and then, I shall have release," he prayed. He then trudged back to the village.

(3)

Narappa had grown to be a favourite in the village. If anything impossible had to be done, Narappa could be depended upon to do it. He became the trusted counsellor of Bhagavanta Rao. His first wife's children had grown on Narappa's lap, and took more to him than to their step-mother. Thus passed eight or ten years. Susheela became mother of a boy and girl and the children were growing. Somehow they did not take kindly to Narappa. But Narappa was equally eager to play with all the children. Love of children was part of his nature. But in spite of him, differences showed up. Susheela Bai got the idea that he was fonder of her step-children than of her own, which was not true, but she didn't

give expression to it for the fear of offending her husband. The innocent children had, by their behaviour, only strengthened the notion of Susheela Bai.

Once Narappa went on a visit to his village after a long interval. To the first wife's children the home lost its charm in his absence. They were remembering him at every turn. It happened that the boy took ill with fever. Susheela Bai sat near him and did all she could to nurse him. But he was not feeling comfortable and was calling for Narappa every now and then. It was an unbearable situation for Susheela Bai. "Whatever I do, these children are not pleased," she said with tears in her eyes. "Why so?" asked Bhagavanta Rao. "Why? Because of that incarnation of your first wife whom you have brought into the house," said Susheela Bai in a moment of indiscretion. "Ah! Who may that be?" asked the lawyer with some annoyance. "Who else, but Narappa, the dirty Narappa," answered the lady. The lawyer was deeply disturbed. He hemmed and hawed but didn't know what to say. "One should not use these words against such a person," was all he said mildly. But the lady did not stop there. "Well, what is past is past. All this is because you have admitted him into the household. You have no idea of the differences created by him. Only those who suffer can understand. I can swear by God that he has not so much as touched any of my children," proceeded Susheela Bai piping the usual tune of the jealous second wife. The lawyer's heart sank. He knew that the lemon of jealousy had entered his household. He uttered a few conventional words of comfort, and left the place on the pretext of some business.

Narappa returned from his village after four days. What he experienced in the village had cast a gloom on him: his cheerfulness was gone. Still he tried to recapture something of his buoyant temperament. He heard about the illness of the eldest boy; but naturally he had no idea of other things that had happened. But somehow he gradually realised there was a change in the demeanour of the lady of the house. He didn't however mind anything else and became absorbed in his duties as usual. The lawyer's daughter by his first wife was now fourteen; and the problem of her marriage became a source of anxiety to her father. After a prolonged search in many quarters, he at last decided on a match for his daughter, the dowry to be paid being two thousand rupees. The boy was a graduate and had an income from his property of about a thousand a year. Narappa was as pleased as Bhagavanta Rao at this choice. He was happy that the girl whom he had brought up was going into a good household. He decided that the marriage should be performed with all due grandeur and he assured the lawyer of his best services to make the occasion a grand success.

The marriage was fixed to take place in the middle of May in the month of Vaisakha. This was the first big celebration in the lawyer's house and preparations for it went on for two or three months. But the lawyer was filled with anxiety in regard to one particular matter. The wells in the village were drying up. The rains had failed this season. The village tank had breached and a great deal of water had been lost. Everyone was afraid of water-scarcity such as had not been seen for ten or twelve years past. The girl had grown up, and putting off the marriage was out of the question. And neither the lawyer nor his friends liked the idea of having it celebrated in Tirupati or a far-off place quietly. If a noted lawyer like Bhagavanta Rao did not celebrate his daughter's marriage in his own home-town, it would not redound to his glory. This social aspect of the matter led to the decision that the marriage should be performed in the village itself. One day the lawyer called Narappa into his room to take counsel with him regarding the problem of water. Narappa also agreed that the marriage should be performed in the village. "But how shall we provide for water?" asked Bhagavanta Rao. "You leave that to me," assured Narappa. "Anyhow I have earned the name of Waterman Narappa. I shall see how much 'water' there is in me." The lawyer felt encouraged by this assurance. He knew well the capabilities of Narappa. So he said, "All right" without further thought. Somehow, Susheela Bai came to know what had passed between her husband and Narappa. That very night she put the other side of the case before her husband in the privacy of their room. "What does that Narappa brag about? There is not a drop of water in any village well. What is there for him to draw? One's eyes are filled with water before one can get enough water for one's daily needs." "But," said the lawyer, "don't you know the prowess of Narappa?" "O, Yes. I know all about it. Drinking tea and smoking beedies, he has a strong chest indeed. He gasps ten times before bringing home a pot of water. You don't understand these things. Later we shall be exposed to disgrace in the public eye," said the lady. "Then where do you think we should celebrate the marriage?" "Somewhere, say Yalagur, for instance, and have a quiet function." The lawyer was greatly disturbed. He thought there was the malice of the step-mother behind all this. "Yes, yes, what matters it to you where the marriage is celebrated?" said the lawyer with undisguised disgust. And at this the lady wept and moistened all the sheets on which she lay.

May had begun. Only fifteen days were left for the marriage. The friends and relations of the lawyer began to arrive. The spacious residence of the lawyer was crowded with women and children, like a motor lorry on the day of a village fair. A thatched pandal was erected in front of the house and it was being decorated like Indra's

Palace-hall. But the water situation grew alarming day by day. There were queues of pots before every well in the village. There was a small vessel or cup accompanying each pot. People kept awake far into the night awaiting their turn. The placid life of the village seemed to hum with activity on this account. Water provided the sole topic of conversation. The summer was growing hotter but there was no indication of rain. When the skies were overcast and streaks of lightning appeared, "Yes; it may rain," said the optimistic lawyer. But the lightning was like a mocking smile. "What shall we do? If there is no water at all, how indeed can you fetch any," said Bhagavanta Rao in anxious tones to Narappa eight days before the marriage. "Don't you worry, sir. Has not Sarvajna, the wise poet, said, "The one who does things without talk follows the best way?" The lawyer was obliged to be silent. To the wise sayings quoted by Narappa, what could indeed be added? But he was at a loss to know what stunt this modern Sarvajna was up to in the present crisis.

Narappa visited the surrounding villages within a radius of two or three miles, just as he visited Muddannahalli daily. About two miles off there was a big well with plenty of water. It was near the roadside. This turned out to be very convenient. Narappa secured four bullock carts and four pairs of bullocks, enlisted the services of eight to ten boys who used to carry water for the villagers, and, equipped with huge metallic pots, put them into the carts, went to the well at 4 a.m. and returned with the rattling and gurgling noise of water pots by 8 a.m. to the village. There were still two days for the marriage. The previous night Bhagavanta Rao went to bed and the nightmare of water-scarcity oppressed him. Waking up next morning, behold! there was water and any quantity of it in the house. He was astonished. He said, "Bravo! Narappa!" "Nobody should waste water. Everyone should realise what it means to Narappa to fetch all this water," mildly appealed Bhagavanta Rao to every one in the house. "No, no," rejoined Narappa, "No one should think of my trouble. This is a marriage. Let every one spill as much water as he or she chooses. I shall replenish all you need," said Narappa like one inspired. It filled all with admiration for his prowess. In this drama of the marriage celebration, Narappa was the hero, and he became the centre of admiration by his extraordinary capacity for work.

The celebration was a great success. The lawyer's joy knew no bounds. "Truly he is Waterman Narappa," was the universal chorus of appreciation. "I have justified my existence," said Narappa to himself, immensely gratified by all this praise.

(4)

A month went by after the marriage; and the feast usually held to mark the end of the month was also celebrated. By that time the rains had come and the wells were filled with water. Narappa's burden was somewhat lightened. The marriage pandal was removed; the festoons of green mango leaves, which lent colour and grace to the auspicious occasion, were now withered and dried up and consigned to the dung heap.

After the month's celebrations, there was an unexpected incident. The gold necklace of Susheela Bai was missing. On the day of the feast numerous people, including strangers, had assembled for dinner. It seems Susheela Bai had worn the necklace on that day, and, after polishing it, kept it on the platform in the worship-room in the evening and gone out as someone called her. She forgot all about the necklace. Next day when she was placing all the jewels and valuables back in her box, she noticed with a shock that the necklace was missing. Immediately she ran to her husband and told him about it. Everyone in the house came to know about the loss. It was a valuable jewel, eight to ten tolas in weight. Who could have taken it?. And then it was placed in the worship-room where servants or strangers had no access! Everyone was trying to solve the problem of the missing necklace. Suspicion moved and lighted for a moment on every possible person. Narappa was also greatly worried when he heard about the loss. But in his usual manner he consoled the lady, "Why do you worry, madam? I shall trace it for you; the master himself may have hidden it from you in a mood of fun." This attempt to make Susheela Bai laugh did not succeed. Two or three days passed but still there was no trace of the necklace. One day while the master was at dinner, Susheela Bai broached the topic. Narappa had gone to the temple. Susheela Bai seemed bent on bringing the matter to a head. "I feel that someone who is well-acquainted with the house has taken it," she insinuated. "Whom do you mean?" asked the lawyer. Instead of answering directly she said, "The man who enjoys your utmost confidence." "Ah, who may that be?" asked the lawyer with some warmth. "Who else?" rejoined the lady, and just at this moment unfortunately Narappa returned home. Susheela Bai did not notice this but went on. "Narappa, your trusted Narappa," she said with some scorn in her voice. These words fell on Narappa's ears; he was startled and sat up to listen. The lawyer was also dismayed. "What! You mean Narappa is the thief? Your head has gone wrong," said he raising his voice. Susheela Bai, with a tearful face, persisted, "Yes, I am always wrong, but that day when I left the necklace in the worship-room, Narappa was filling the vessels with water in that very place."

She advanced this evidence. "Enough of your words," said the lawyer with anger and went to his room.

By then Narappa, burning with resentment at the conversation he had overheard, had gone to the backyard of the house. He was shocked beyond words. He was terribly pained that in this house they talked about him in this manner. Later, he retired to his room, wrapped himself up and rested. The lady sent word, through servants, calling him to dinner. He pleaded indisposition and excused himself.

"What need of food for him after securing a precious necklace! Well, only we who talk about it make fools of ourselves," she groused. That night was indeed a night of agony for Narappa. In the morning Narappa went to the lawyer's room and said abruptly, "Please give me leave." Greatly surprised, the lawyer asked, "Why? What for?" "I want to go," replied Narappa. The lawyer made Narappa sit down and talked it over with him. Without assigning any definite reason, Narappa begged for permission to leave. The lawyer obstinately refused to grant his request. Knowing that Narappa's reason for leaving might be that he was the victim of an undeserved suspicion, the lawyer reassured him, "Don't take these things so seriously. I am here with you."

Two or three days passed. Susheela Bai, with conventional insincerity, asked him not to leave. But Narappa suddenly packed up his things, and went one morning to the lawyer's room and said, "Don't stop me any more; I am going with pleasure. I was the child of your affection all these twelve years." Saying this, he offered his prostrations to the lawyer. The lawyer was visibly moved. Tears trickled down from his eyes. He said in a husky voice, "Well, then, good-bye. I may recover the necklace; but how shall I get one like you!"

Narappa went into the house and took leave of Susheela Bai and the lawyer's sister. "Give me your blessings," he said. "I have served you as Hanuman served Sita. If I have done any wrong, pray forget it," and left them. He embraced the children whom he had reared up and bade farewell to them. They sobbed at the separation. Taking up his things he passed the front door. The neighbours who looked on were greatly moved. One of them asked, "Where are you going, Narappa?" "Where else? I am going to the place wherefrom I came? All things have sometime or other to get back whence they came. If the village monkey strays into the town, won't it be beaten back with sticks?" And joking in this strain he went on his way. A number of people followed him for some distance.

On the day that Narappa left, Susheela Bai may have dined to her heart's content. But not one soul in Muddabbehalli relished his or her meal.

卐

THE STORY OF
A TUMULTUOUS TIME
A FICTION PROJECTING
A THREE-DIMENSIONAL
TRANSITION IN
INDIA'S RECENT HISTORY

CYCLONES

To be published
this month

Order your copy from

STERLING PUBLISHERS

L-10 GREEN PARK EXTN.
NEW DELHI 110 016

It was my last day in Switzerland. I spent the morning in depositing my baggage at Koening, my travel agent, and in taking care of the last minute shopping. It was lunch time, and I was hungry. I wanted to have my last lunch of Birchermuesli — the fruit-cereal and nut dish which only the Swiss know how to prepare.

The vegetarian restaurant where I wanted to eat was at a small distance from Bahnhofstrasse. I turned into the residential section off the main road in order to reach the restaurant. Ordinarily, as I walked the Zurich streets I thought about my home in New Delhi, but that day I noticed everything around me more sharply.

I knew I would miss Adliswil, the small town where I lived, and the aroma of chocolate from the chocolate factory permeating the valley — also, the heart breakingly beautiful sunrise and sunset over the Alps. Still, I was glad to be going home because I had been lonesome in Switzerland. I did not know enough German, and could never talk to people I met away from my office.

As I reached the street corner, I noticed the extra lush geraniums in the window-box of a house to my left. The rich red of the geraniums made the yellow shutters more intensely golden. Suddenly I heard a child's footsteps behind me.

"Miss..." A boy of about ten was addressing me eagerly. He was excited or very shy or both. His face was flushed as he caught up with me.

"Miss," he said again, "please come to our house for a minute..."

I thought I must have aroused his family's curiosity because of my Indian dress; but I was surprised that the boy spoke in English, and so clearly.

"But dear..." I tried to get out of whatever he had in mind. "Oh, please do come, Miss. My sister is from India. She will be very happy to meet you."

I did not know what the boy meant by his sister being from India, but I followed him. The door was held open by a large and pleasant-looking woman, wearing a neatly tailored suit.

"Come in, please," she said. "I am sorry we made you stop like that, but Hans and Bina saw you go past our house and... do come in and sit down a moment."

The house gleamed with freshly waxed floors, and oriental carpets. The Austrian lace curtains in the windows of the living room made the room airy and full of light.

"I am Mrs. Muller," the lady was saying. "Where are you from, India, Miss...?

"Aruna Joshi is my name. I am from New Delhi."

"The Capital! Well. I have never been to India but my daughter is from Lucknow." As she said this, a girl of about twelve walked in carrying a tray of glasses bubbly with coca-cola. The girl wore a navy-blue pleated skirt and an embroidered white blouse. She was dark, and had large liquid eyes. Her long black hair was neatly braided into two plaits edged with white ribbon.

"Miss Joshi, this is Bina, our daughter." Mrs. Muller introduced her to me.

"Hello, Bina," I said.

"M'm." The girl curtsied, and left the room as if to let Mrs. Muller explain the mystery of her presence in a Swiss home.

"Miss Joshi, we adopted Bina two years ago through a mission in the U.S.A. I had always wanted a daughter, but after Hans was born I could not have any more children. My husband is in the army. We visited America a couple of years ago and learnt there the possibility of adopting an Indian child. The idea appealed to us and we like Bina."

"Has she adjusted to your way of life.?" I asked.

"Well, almost. It was really not very difficult, for, even in India, Bina lived in a mission. Her parents had given her to the mission to be brought up as a Christian."

"Are her parents alive?"

"Yes, of course. Her mother is a nurse and her father works in some factory. But they have nine children..."

"Do they know where Bina is..."

"Yes, Miss Joshi. In this type of adoption, children are not weaned away from their parents. Her parents know about us. In fact, that is why I wanted to talk to an Indian lady, and have Bina meet some Indians occasionally. You see, we do not want her to forget India and grow away from her culture. But her parents never answer any of the letters we write or she writes to them. It seems they don't want to have anything to do with her." Mrs. Muller looked unhappy and sounded helpless.

"That's rather strange though..." I said.

"Not really," she said. "I am sure they feel that Bina would be happier if she forgot about her past links. But they do not understand that because she is a girl, her problems will be many more when she grows up. We can share our lives, home, and love with her but later, when she is older, she will need people of her own country... Here she is likely to remain lonely. Could you suggest someone who can teach Bina Hindi and whatever else she needs to know about herself as an Indian. Teach her also how to wear a sari...? Can you help us?" Mrs. Muller looked at me pleadingly.

"I wish I had known you and Bina earlier. I have been in Adliswil for almost a year, but today is my last day in your country. I don't know of any other Indian woman or family..."

"Well, I'll keep on trying. We love Bina and we want her to be happy. We want her to have the type of education that would help her in being

useful as an Indian. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Doctors are always useful, Mrs. Muller. Can she take up medicine?"

"Oh dear, I am afraid not. She is far behind her age group in studies, for she has to learn German and French first. And then, a degree in Medicine costs a fortune in our country..."

"Nursing?" I suggested, conscious of the time. It was nearly two in the afternoon, and I still had to meet my friends and take leave of my colleagues.

I tried to talk to Bina when Mrs. Muller left us for a few minutes. Bina was very quiet; in fact, unnaturally quiet for a girl of her age.

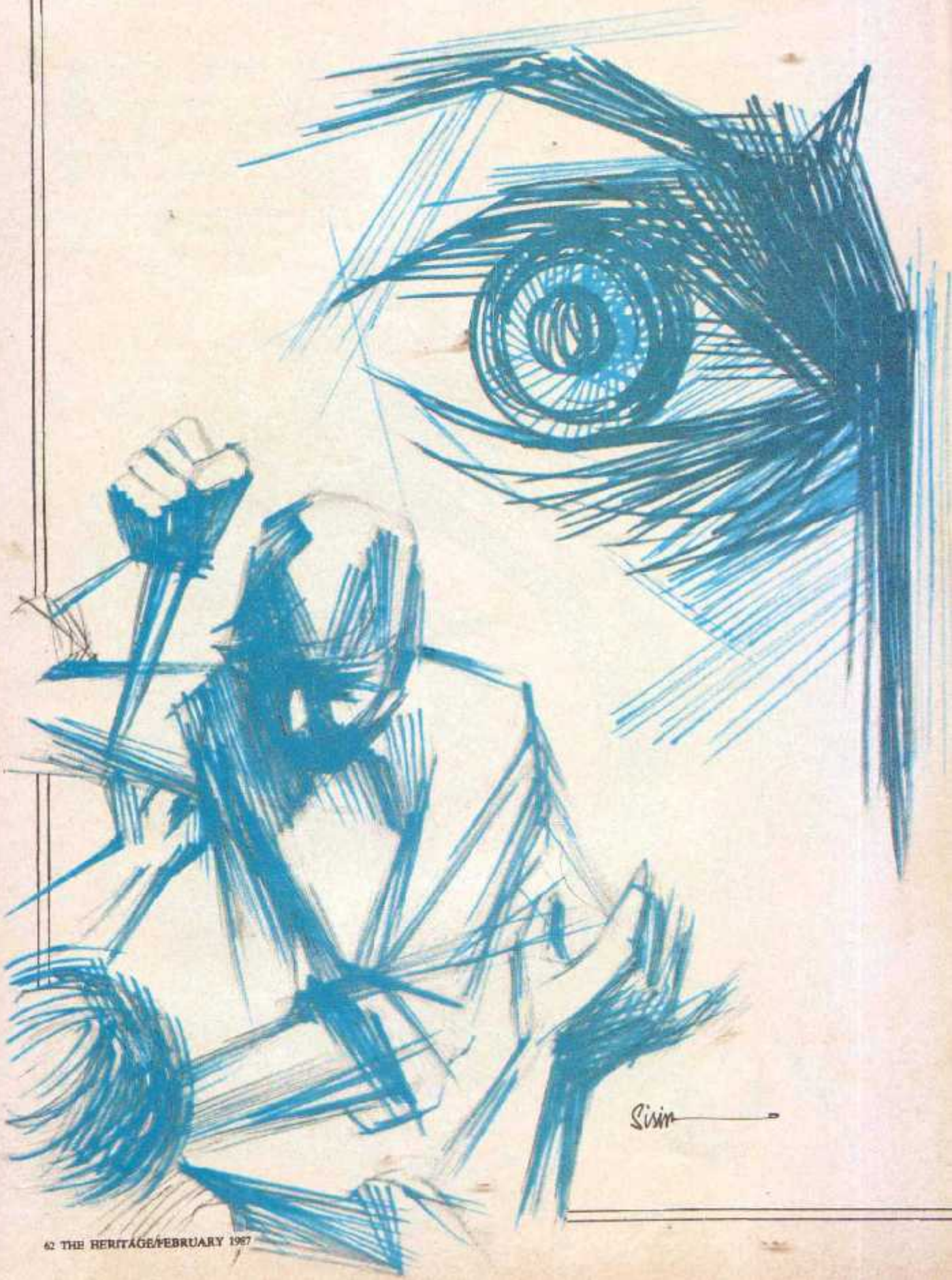
"Are you happy, dear? Do you have a message for anyone. I'll be in India tomorrow..." As I said this, the girl looked up.

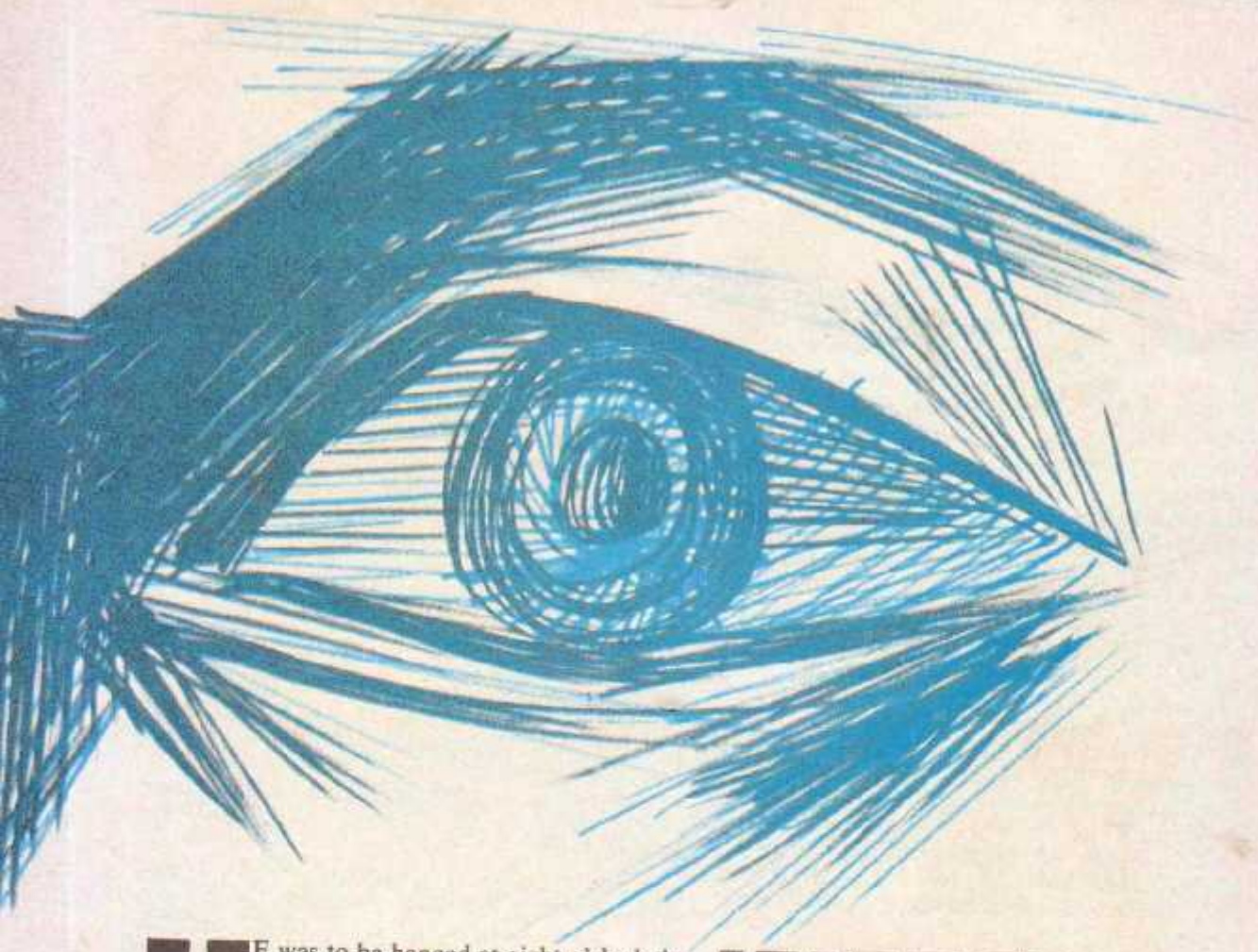
There was a lone furtive tear in her large eyes, but she shook her head. "No, Miss, there are no messages."

卐

Where The Heart is

by SUNITA JAIN


Sivin



THE EYES

by SNEHARASHMI

Sneharashmi is the pseudonym of Shri Jinabhai Desai, a renowned Gujarati poet and short story writer.

Translated from Gujarati by DHANANJAY DESAI

HE was to be hanged at eight o'clock the following morning. Imagine a person, young and very healthy, sitting just next to you: and tell me how would you feel when you knew that he would be making a sudden exit from this world. My mind was full of such thoughts throughout the day. "How will he feel when he thinks that this will be his last night on earth, that he will no more see these stars shining like myriad eyes of love, and these flowers, fragile as the heart's emotions, and these creepers and birds? What will be his thoughts during the night? And what will he feel when at dawn he recalls that he has seen his last sunset?" I even felt myself weighed down under the smothering wing of death—of all—destroying Time itself.

Every day he was taken out for a walk for an hour and a half in the evening. I used to accompany him. Ironically the place near the gallows was really lovely—it was so beautiful that even the dying man would carry with him its sweet memory to the next world. There was a beautiful road lined with Neem trees, and on each side there was a small garden full of roses and jasmine flowers.

It was surprising that man could grow such beautiful things right at the doorstep of Death! But is it not possible that such beauty might

inspire more horror in the heart of a man who is going to be hanged? Probably the very man who put up the gallows there had done it with a different motive! It is impossible to fathom man's mind!

I didn't think that he would like to go out for a walk that day. As he was hardly to live for another fifteen hours what was the point in taking care of the body? But he came out at the fixed hour. He gave me a smile and said, "Manubhai, shall we go out for a stroll?"

I said with a heavy heart, "Yes, if you so like."

"Otherwise how are we going to digest our food?"

I remained silent. This man is going to die tomorrow, I thought, and yet he bothers to digest his food! When he saw that I had become thoughtful, he said, "Well, Manubhai, what are you thinking about? You think I am a fool to take so much care of the body? But it's not so. Why should we give so much importance to death? After all death exists because we think of it but the moment you stop thinking about it, it ceases to matter."

His control over his feelings was really astonishing and I felt so small, so weak in his presence! All the phrases I had composed to console him slipped away from me. I said, "Jerambhai, yes, it is true. Happiness and sorrow are creations of the human mind. Excuse me for asking such a question, but tell me—I ask you because I cannot help it—what are you thinking now?"

"I don't allow myself to think much. Of course when Kiki came to see me in the morning, it almost broke my heart. Man can bear anything—but the last visit of his child...God must have seen that man mocks at death and that is why he created love. But let us not bother about all this. I have expelled all thoughts from my mind. I don't at all think of tomorrow and you won't believe it, but it has given me such peace of mind. If I were in your place I too would not believe it. But it's very true. Each dawn brings a fresh crop of problems; don't you think it's a nice thing to know that you are entering a state where all this fades away forever?"

"Jerambhai, I cannot see it that way. If I am told that I will be seeing the sun tomorrow for the last time, I will be very much perplexed."

"Why should you feel so? Surely that day is inevitable for all, and you may well not get any prior notice. Here, at least, you know that you are going to die. Then why not understand and be prepared for it? And the sun is not meant only for you!"

His detachment was amazing and it went a long way to fortify my mind. For many days I had been puzzled about one thing. Jeram was a very quiet, cultured man, and I was at a complete loss to understand how such a person could commit a murder. But I had not dared to ask him as yet. However today I felt that I should ask him not merely because I was curious to know, but because I thought that it was my duty to do so. How can a man who would hardly lose his temper nevertheless murder a man? And for what? I had heard of innocent persons being hanged. Is it not possible, I thought, that the same thing is happening before my eyes? I mustered my courage and asked, "Jerambhai, I should like to know the whole episode."

Well, there is nothing much to tell. But, Manubhai, since you desire to know it, I will tell you in brief:

I was transferred from Harangam to Nani Khed. Sharada, Kiki and myself reached the new place. The teachers had made all the arrangements for us before we were there. It didn't take us long to be nicely settled. After three or four days, Naren once came to my house. I had never seen him before, but his very sight created in me a strange feeling of disgust. There was something so awfully nauseating in his eyes! Of course I talked with him, because if I didn't, it would look very impolite, but now and again I was trying to look away from his eyes. After he had left, Sharada said with a somewhat pale face, 'His eyes were really horrible! And that ghoulish, scorching look!' I had also felt the same way; but she was convalescing and I was afraid that it would unnecessarily make her imagine a thousand things. So I replied: 'Some people have beautiful eyes while others have ugly ones, some have bright eyes, others have pale ones, but it is of no significance to others. After all, eyes don't affect us in any way, do they?'

'Well, I don't know, but they somehow frightened me.' Her face which was already pale due to illness, became more pale.

Don't think that I am superstitious. I had never believed in ghosts nor ever put my trust in hypnotism. So I had no reason to think any longer about Naren's eyes. But Sharada who had not fully recovered from her weakness was evidently becoming more and more uneasy. She would

wake up at night and feel as if somebody was staring at her! I tried to persuade her not to get frightened, but she could not get any peace of mind.

One day when we teachers were chit chatting, the subject of eyes came up. Somebody said: 'There are two kinds of eyes in the world, evil and benevolent, and both of them affect our life.'

"Another teacher tried to refute him. 'This is merely superstition. There cannot be any difference between eyes and eyes. The function of the eye is to see, whether the sight is good or bad; to believe that the eyes can do anything more is sheer stupidity.'

The first teacher replied, 'Well, you may not believe me, but take the example of this Naren. Why are women afraid of him?

I interrupted, 'Who is Naren? Did you say that women were afraid of him?'"

'Yes, People think he is a vampire. I don't know if it is true, but it is said that till now he must have killed about half a dozen women. If any new beautiful woman comes here and he goes and visits her—I don't know what happens but she dies a slow agonizing death.'

I was shocked. But just the next moment I got annoyed and told myself, 'An educated person like me should be ashamed to be a victim of such supersition.'

However I could not help brooding over it.

I concealed this from Sharada, but somehow I felt that Sharada was getting more and more emaciated day by day. First I thought that the climate of that village did not suit her and so I decided that she should have a change for a few days. I told Sharada about it. My leave was sanctioned in the meantime, and we began to prepare for the journey. But just a day before our departure Sharada became awfully disconsolate. She would often say, 'Oh, somebody is tormenting me.' Her pain became unbearable. I lost all control over my senses. I don't know why, but straightaway I rushed to Naren's house. He was in the back portion of the house, and I saw him making a bier of green bamboos. I flew into an uncontrollable rage. I remembered the discussion among my colleagues. Since then I had heard so many similar stories about him. When I saw him making a bier all alone, I felt that all that I was told about him was true: I was convinced that he was performing an act of black magic. I didn't even pause to think for a moment; I simply swooped on him. He looked at me—with the same eyes! I had become absolutely reckless. I felt as if I was seeing in those eyes the corpse of Sharada burning on the funeral pyre. I stabbed him in the heart with the knife that was lying there to cut bamboos. But even then his eyes looked so disgusting and I could not help thrusting my knife into them. I did not even realize that I had committed a murder. I was almost mad, and when I came home I saw Kiki weeping before the dead body of Sharada. Before I was arrested somebody came and told me that just half an hour before I had murdered him, Naren's eleven-year-old daughter had died; and, because he was feared and shunned by the community nobody had come to assist him. You can well understand my feeling when I received this news. I wish I never knew why Naren was preparing that bier.

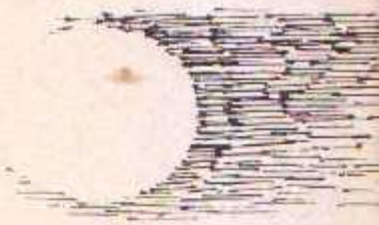
This in brief is my story. You are free to form your own judgment. Today I am paying the price with my life, for my crime but even now I am unable to determine what the truth is. If somebody can explain to me the mystery of those eyes, I am prepared to pay the same price seven times over again... even now I can feel those eyes looking at me."

Was it merely Jeram's illusion? Is it not likely that under the effect of that illusion Jeram killed a sorrowing, socially condemned father? And is it not possible that when he sat making that bier Naren's mind was full of tender thoughts and affectionate sentiments for his daughter?

I could not sleep during the night. But Jeram was composed as ever. In the morning he told me from his cell, "Manubhai, this is the last morning. Isn't it very beautiful?"

I wondered at the strength of his mind. He went on, "Manubhai, don't you think that in a way death was a very good thing to happen to Naren? He had nothing to attract him to the world. Men used to keep away from him and women feared even his shadow. His wife had run away with a Pathan many years ago and even his only daughter, Poori, was dead. In this situation, perhaps death was a welcome relief. And those eyes! Today, when I am right under the shadow of death, I cannot help having a very disquieting thought... is it not possible that his distracted eyes were searching for something of his wife?... Well I am perhaps soon going to find an answer to all my problems and that may put my turbulent mind at rest."

I heard the footsteps of a batch of armed policemen. I felt as if hundreds of eyes were simultaneously staring at Jeram's cell.. and my heart shuddered. 卐



by ISHWAR SHARAN

YEARS ago at a Paris quayside cafe I was told a story by a stranger. He was India-returned, given to drink and grand gestures, and said that the onus of proof for his tale lay with me, the doubter. During the last century, he claimed, when the British were repairing the Varanasi ghats,' they removed a large block of stone and found an old man sitting behind it. He had long ropes of hair and nails like horns that curled away from his fingers and toes. When he opened his eyes, he stared hard at the British officer, then asked: Has Rama come back from the forest yet?

The officer had no answer for this question, but he was not a fool either. He saluted and closed the cavern again, leaving the ancient-of-days undisturbed inside it.

This anecdote heard on the left bank of the Seine has brought me here to the right bank of the Ganga. I would prove the story true, but, Varanasi being the city it is, I would also not prove it. I am beleaguered and awed by its unreconcilable dualities. And I am affronted by this filthy holy river. I believe I would incur sin, not remove it, by bathing in these murky, fetid waters.

I am aware that my impious thoughts are not those of the faithful who approach these hallowed steps. Nor am I one to say that their faith is inferior to my reason. Certainly it is purifying for them and, for me, an edifying wonder. I have decided that Kashi is really a place in the mind, a radiant part of the psyche. For this reason it may be called the oldest city in the world. Damascus, officially older, may claim a place in history but not in the heart.

I watch the pilgrims flow into the river and the sun rise over the far sandbank. I am a stranger here, not a tourist but a traveller who has slept in more ill-made beds than George Washington. By experience I am inured to surprises, though still foolish enough to seek the wherefore of contradictions.

Why, if Vishwanath be a generous and all-

THE SPIRIT OF KASHI

pervading lord, are his priests the most greedy and narrow-minded of their tribe? Why is this city of famous renunciants still more famous for its whores? Why must the dead barter for a place on Manikarnika ghat with a drunken and rapacious Dom raja? Why is Kashi, known for paan and milk sweets, now known for heroin and called Needle City of Asia? Why are these sacred steps I sit on a public latrine?

Of course why is not always a sincere or valid question. It is often what spoiled children ask when they don't get their own way. And it has seldom led to understanding, which I would have above all things given the insight.

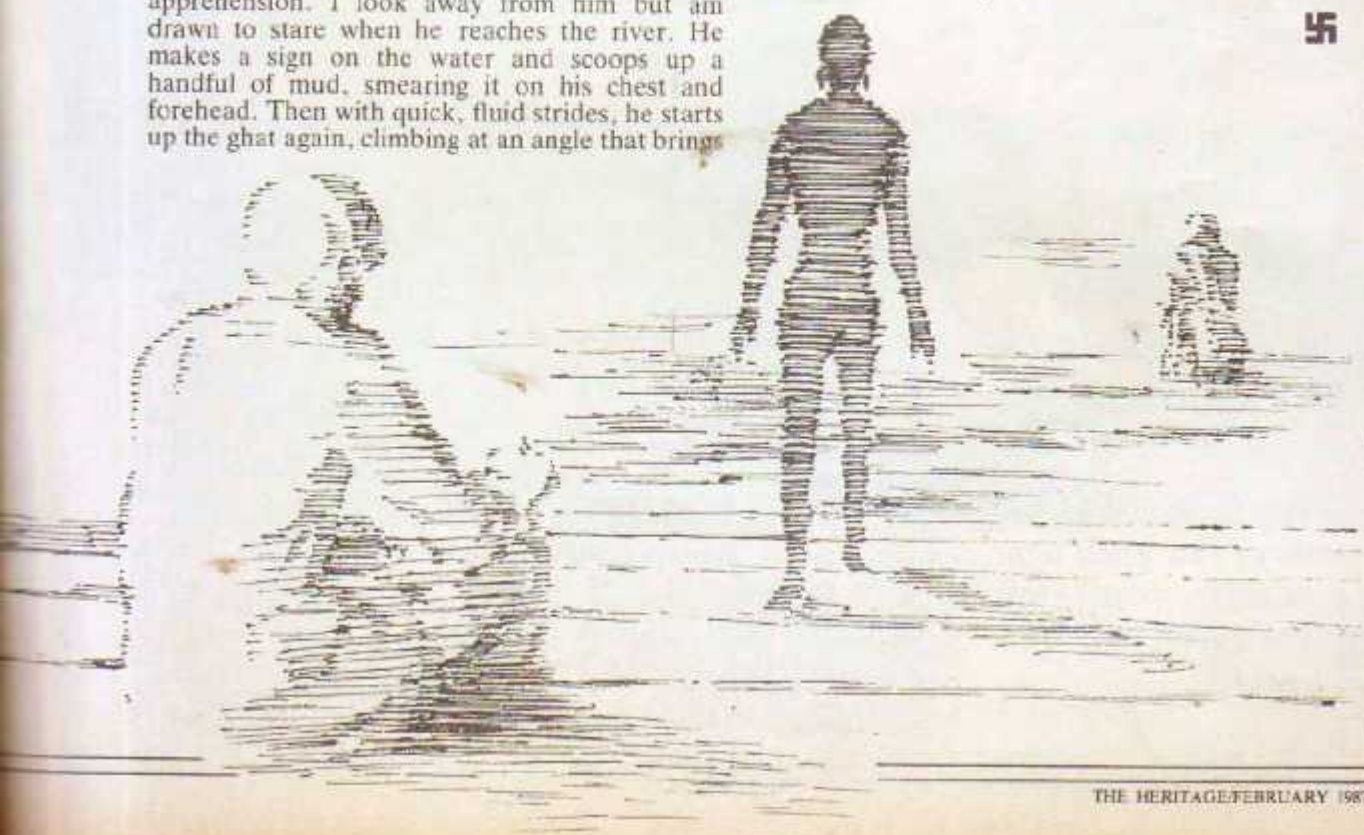
The sun, risen, is instantly oppressive as it burns into the early day. The pilgrims continue to bathe, pray, and disperse, only to be replaced by more pilgrims from this vast, overpopulated land. I leave my critical thoughts to god—if there be a god—and start up the steps to a tea-shop. As I climb there is a hush and parting of the crowd as a tall dark man descends to the river. He is dressed in gold earrings and dreadlocks and is majestic in his nakedness. He scans the crowd with bright obsidian eyes, absorbing each person and detail in it. When these eyes meet mine, I am filled with apprehension. I look away from him but am drawn to stare when he reaches the river. He makes a sign on the water and scoops up a handful of mud, smearing it on his chest and forehead. Then with quick, fluid strides, he starts up the ghat again, climbing at an angle that brings him directly towards me. I begin to tremble with excitement. He is glittering wet, though he did not enter the water. When we are abreast, he stops long enough to repeat Rama's name in my ear, in a clear, melodious voice. I am shocked by this intimacy—for it is an intimacy like none other I have known.

I would follow this man clothed in sky and sun but he is already gone like a zephyr wind. His virile words have divided my mind and given, in the cleaving, a previously unknown peace. And in this happy space is conceived an idea which I, cynical and worldly-wise, could not possibly bear before. It is that there is such a thing as grace, even in this age, even for my nuclear generation.

I go down to the river and remove my clothes. My crude foreign manners and pale skin no longer estrange me from this mother-water. I do not know how to praise her in Sanskrit, but when I immerse myself in the life-giving current, dead lines of Blake rise and are born again in sweet liberty:

He who bends to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

卐



CHIDAMBARAM

by N.S. RAMASWAMI

The veteran journalist and author has made a special study of places and monuments of antiquity.

The Kumbabhishekam of this great temple takes place this month after over thirty years.

IT is evening. Devotees are gathering in numbers in the hall outside the sanctum. On time the gate is opened, and they stream in into the presence. In front of them is an oblong shrine in two parts. In style the shrine resembles the Bhimaratha in Mamallapuram. To the devotees right there is another shrine, also oblong in architecture. The devotees look on as the evening services in the temple of Sri Nataraja in Chidambaram (Tamilnad) are beginning. Worship is also being offered in the adjacent shrine of Sri Govindaraja. As the lighted rituals are in train, the percipient devotee realises and feels that here is a great moment in their life though the moment which recurs every day of the year.

Chidambaram, called Tillai in Tamil literature, is the supreme, the exalted, temple of temples in Tamilnad. It is also notable for the shrine of Lord Vishnu as Sri Govindaraja, so near that of Sri Nataraja. The origins of the Siva

A view of Northern Gopuram of the Temple from the water tank. A carving of urdhva tandav pose of Lord Siva on the pillar base. *Photographs by VIDYAVRATA.*

The Chidambaram Temple of the Nataraja (Siva Deity) temple. Photo courtesy: Tamilnadu Tourism Department.

shrine are lost in the mists of antiquity; the Vishnu shrine is nearly as old. It is important to realise this fact. While Chidambaram is regarded essentially as a Siva temple, it is, in fact, also a centre of pilgrimage for the Vaishnavas and the Sakthas. In a word, it is a temple of universal Hinduism.

Showing the carvings on the temple walls Photographs by VIDYAVRATA.

It is a universal temple also in the sense that, as has been the way with Hinduism down the centuries, superb art embellishes the supreme piety that is instinctive in these fanes. From the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, from Rajasthan to Assam, the Hindu artist has lavished his greatest gifts on the Houses of God, so that many a temple of sanctity is also a jewelled art. In this country, until recent times, art has always been at the service of religion. This is one of the fundamental facts on Indian culture Seeking identity with the Supreme Soul, the individual Soul has searched for the means by worshipping the Maker in surroundings suitable to His splendour. Nearby all the great Hindu monuments are temples; the palaces and such like are of later creation. Man's needs come only after those of God have been satisfied.

Even among a galaxy of temples embellished by supreme art Chidambaram is exceptional because the concept of the divinity enshrined is unique to the Tamil genius and has called forth some of the finest expressions of Tamil mysticism and literature. The Nayanmars, or the Saivaite saints, impassioned in their outpourings, now of devotion, now of mysticism, now of self-introspection, have sung and thought the temple into the hearts of millions not in India alone but also in northern Sri Lanka. The temple has four majestic gopuras in the cardinal directions, and tradition says that each of the four Nayanmars entered the temple, in his time, through one of the gopuras.

Dry analysis of this temple's features is difficult because there is God's plenty by way of high philosophy, tradition, art and devotion. Where should one begin? With the temple's traditional origins, with the concept of the Lord of Dance, or Nataraja, which is enshrined here, with the sages who have sung of its glories, with the kings and nobles who have embellished it from time to time, with the so called "common people" who have been sustaining it in these degenerate days? But, perhaps, it is best to begin with the temple's traditional origins.

It must have begun as a small shrine on the banks of a tank. Two saints, Vyagrapada and Patanjali, are said to have worshipped the Lord in a shrine, now represented by the Sri Mulanatha shrine, in the second *prakara*. There have been many Patanjalis in ancient Indian lore, and if this Patanjali was the author of the *Mahabhashya*, and a contemporary of Pushyamitra Sunga, the temple must have been in existence in the second century B.C. According to tradition, the builder of the temple's nucleus was Simhavarman or Hiranyavarman, said to be a Chola, who was king of Gaudadesa, or Bengal. His date is given as the fifth century A.D. There are obvious discrepancies in this tradition, but it can be safely assumed that the original temple was in existence centuries before the Christian era.

From very early times, the concept of the Dancing Lord became associated with this temple. The Dance of Siva appears in Tamil literature from the Sangam days, perhaps beginning with *Kalittogai*, and continues through *Silappadhikaram, Tirumular, Karaikkal Ammaiyar*, the four great Nayanmars, Cheraman Perumal, Pattinatthar, Nambi Andar Nambi, Sekkizhar. This is a noble bead-roll of saints and poets, testifying to the fact that the Lord as Dancer had been a concept that has appealed powerfully to the Tamil soul. This is so far good reason; when

the Lord dances, He tramples down evil and delusion. The concept also inspired some of the finest achievements of the Indian artistic genius, the Chola bronze images of the Dancing Lord. There is scarcely a temple in Tamilnad without one, and if American millionaires can have their way their museums and "foundations" too will not be without one. Truly, the Lord has conquered the world!

As the centuries passed, the original small temple gradually grew into its present gigantic size. Apart from the two shrines in the main sanctum, there are innumerable others, many so huge that they are independent temples in themselves; for example, the shrine of the Goddess and that of Subramania, the latter lovingly called "Pandya Nayakam". There is a lovely tank. There are five mandapas or halls, in this temple called "sabhas"

The sanctum of Sri Nataraja is in two parts. The Chit Sabha is the Holy of Holies, but the adjoining Kanaka Sabha is also regarded as part of it. In the former is the celebrated "Chidambaram secret". It consists of a string of gold *bilva* leaves, with a black curtain covering it. This curtain stands for ignorance. It is lifted three times a day. Behind it is the Lord in the form of ether; that is to say, the formless Lord. Chidambaram is one of the five "Pancha bootha" shrines. The other elements of nature are represented in the temples of Sri Ekambaranatha in Kanchi, of Sri Kalahastisvara in Kalahasti, of Sri Jambukesvara in Tiruvanaikkaval, and of Sri Arunachala in Tiruvannamalai. (There are some variations in the list). In the adjoining Kanaka Sabha there is a crystal Linga presented by Sri Adi Sankara. There are also processional bronze images of Sri Nataraja and Goddess Sivakamasundari and an emeraged image of the Lord.

It is these images that the devotees worship as the soul stirring rituals are in progress. In every temple, as the big lighted lamp, its design laid down in the scriptural texts and handed down the centuries, is waved before the Lord, there is an uplifting of spirit, an ennobling of the soul. Here, in Chidambaram, as the flickering flame lights up the images, the sense of glory of Hinduism, pride in the achievements of our traditions, the realisation that what is being performed now was performed before the eyes of our far distant ancestors, suffuse the devotee. This is an occasion too deep even for tears of joy.

The adjoining shrine of Sri Govindaraja is mentioned for the first time in the hymns of Tirumangai Alvar, of the eighth century. Another Alvar, Kulasekhara, a king who was Vaishnavaite saint, has also sung of Him.

Outside the temple, a few furlongs away, is the temple of Tillai Kali. Tradition states that the Lord defeated Kali in a dancing contest and directed Her to take Her place on the outskirts of the town. Pilgrims to Chidambaram are enjoined to worship at this temple. Its earliest surviving inscriptions are of the thirteenth century. It is certainly much older.

Within the vast Nataraja temple there are three other "sabhas"; the Deva, the Nritta and the Raja. The second is built in the form of a chariot. So is the Raja. It was in the Raja that the second greatest event in the history of the temple occurred.

The first, probably early in the eleventh century, had been a dramatic one. The "Thevaram" hymns had been sung by three of the Nayanmars, Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar, in the seventh and eighth centuries. They had been lost in course of time. One day a Chola King, probably Rajaraja I (985—1014), heard one of the hymns being recited in the Tiruvarur temple. Entranced by it, he asked whether there were

A view of the dancing hall

One of fresco paintings on the walls of the temple depicting Siva as Nataraja

any others. He was told they had been lost. He set out to find them. Tradition assigns some supernatural elements, but ultimately he found survivals of the hymns in a room adjoining the Sri Nataraja shrine in Chidambaram. (This room is pointed out to pilgrims). Nambi Andar Nambi codified them and the hymns of some other saints into eleven books. What the *Thevaram* means to devotees it is impossible to estimate.

The twelfth book is the *Periya Puranam* of Sekkizhar, of the twelfth century. He was minister to a later Chola, who asked him to compose a work on the sixty-three Nayanmars. He went to Chidambaram and set to work in the Raja Sabha. The Lord Himself gave him the first word, "Ulakelam". When the work was completed, the Chola came to Chidambaram and celebrated its inauguration as few books have been. Chidambaram, it was said, became a second Kailasa.

Sekkizhar was a minister of the Crown; another devotee was a humble Harijan. Nandanar resolved to worship the Lord, though he faced many difficulties. Overcoming them, he came to Chidambaram when the Lord directed the temple priests to take him into the temple. He did so and was not seen thereafter; he had merged with the Lord.

Another minister, but of the Pandyas, is also intimately associated with the temple. Manikkavachagar sang his masterpiece of mysticism, *Tiruvachagam*. According to tradition, Lord Sundaresvara of Madurai appeared before him as an old man and asked him to sing a "kovai", a literary form. The saint sang the "Tirukkovai". The Lord Himself took it down as he dictated it. He added at the end that it was in the writing of the Lord of Chidambaram and placed the manuscript in the sanctum. When the priests saw it, they asked the saint to explain it. Pointing to the image, he said that He was the explanation. He became merged with the Lord.

Such are among the superb literary associations of the temple, a tradition which continued in the nineteenth century through Ramalingar. If tradition is superb, the art is breathtaking. The four gopuras of Chidambaram are each a masterpiece. Each was built at different times, but each is of seven storeys. On two of them are carved sculptural panels of the dance forms as prescribed by Bharata in his *Natya Sastra*. Elsewhere in the temple, in the shrine of the Goddess and in the Raja Sabha, there are panels of dance and song. This is preeminently the temple of the Dancing Lord.

The Cholas, the most magnificent of south Indian dynasties, were particularly devoted to the Lord, their family Deity. Some of them gilded the main shrine with gold. So did a Pandya in the thirteenth century. A Chola presented a precious stone he had received as tribute from the King of Kambuja (in Indo-China). Yet another Chola devoted to the temple all the tribute he had received in the tenth year of his reign.

Everywhere, every inch of the vast temple, is instinct with piety, history and art. The generations of men have added and rebuilt from time to time. It is perhaps the main sanctum and its surroundings that breathe the Chola ethos powerfully. As the temple bells ring, as the lighted lamps are waved, it is not difficult to believe that we are living in the reign of Rajaraja I. Chola. (This scene is depicted in a famous Thanjavur mural). Perhaps Nambi Andar Nambi follows in his retinue. We go to Chidambaram to worship Sri Nataraja, Sri Govindaraja and Tillai Kali, but we also go there to pay a tribute to the Cholas. What would the mystic lore and with it Indian culture, be without the *Thevaram* and the *Periya Puranam!*. Where would we be without the Chidambaram temples!

卐

One of the many intricately carved pillars
Photograph by VIDYAVRATA

...one carving depicting a dance pose

Closeup view of a horse in the dancing hall

THE TIME TO DIE

An Egyptian musician, Adel Mustafa, died of joy when he was informed that his request for installing a telephone in his house had been granted!

A better time to die than to die later.

BACKWARD REINCARNATION?

A monkey has created terror among the women and girls in the town by "molesting" and at times biting them, reports UNI.

The monkey tugged at the clothes of some of his victims. The people say that "the creature has the soul of a frustrated lover and is therefore attacking women."

OUR ASPIRATION

India is the 11th poorest country in the World, says the World Bank report.

We will make up for the narrow miss and belong to the first ten!

HEROICALLY MAD

"Nonsense" is no unparliamentary word, ruled the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

The Hon'ble Members may find inspiration in John Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*:

Doeg, though without knowing how or why,
Made still a blund'ring kind of melody;
Spurr'd boldly on, and dash'd through thick and thin,
Through sense and nonsense, never out nor in;
Free from all meaning, whether good or bad,
And in one word, heroically mad.

WITHOUT COMMENT

A much-loved 85-year old black nurse shocked the rural community of Ficksburg, in South Africa's Orange Free State Province.

When, Ms. Christina Jwar, affectionately known as Mama Jwar, disappeared for a few days, worried neighbours contacted the police, who found her lying ill in her home.

Friends rushed her to the women's ward of a local hospital, and waited while she was being undressed. That was when 'she' was exposed. He was a male!

Mama Jwar died soon afterwards, apparently after a heart attack. *The Sunday Times* which told the story, quoted an official as having said: "We believe the shock of 'her' true identity being revealed could have killed 'her'."

"She can't watch food commercials when she's slimming"

"We did have it but we've lost it."

"And here is the weather—those of a nervous disposition should now go and make a cup of tea"

"Do we have to go through this everytime we negotiate a wage increase?"

"It's nice to have you home again—I'm sorry I lost my temper"

"Why don't you laugh if it tastes funny?"

THE day began with great excitement and hullabaloo. But like the morning clouds they faded fast. It was one of the early Elections after India won Independence. Democracy had not grown mature enough to bring forth clashes and bloodshed galore on the day people exercised their franchise. The phenomenon of box-snatching was yet to be heard. By mid-day, the Presiding Officer of the polling booth had already gone over to bargain for a rooster. Volunteers of both the parties looked as exhausted as women in their post-delivery noons. They lay scattered and exchanged smokes and agreed that both the candidates had equal chances.

Dhrupad, the candidate of the Janata-Janardan (i.e. "Mob is God") Party, appreciated the situation. Indeed, the campaigns had been equally keen, just like a combat between a pair of goats, where the world's wisest referee would fail to point out the winner. One had to bear with the suspense.

But Dhrupad was a man of dynamic enterprise. He surveyed the houses nearby again. No, they had all been thoroughly combed. But when his eyes swung on to the elegant bungalow on the hill not far away, he sighed. The bungalow contained three precious votes, but they seemed to be beyond the reach of mortals. Three votes! They could surely decide one's fate!

But how to face the man—rather his woman—on the hill? Prof. Hyphen was a renowned scientist and a more renowned angry old man. Madame Hyphen was no less renowned a scientist, but her reputation as an angry old woman had far surpassed that of her husband. Because the Government of their native land could not gag a neighbour's pup who was found barking at the illustrious couple in great fun, the Hyphens, in protest, had renounced their citizenship and had adopted India.

Of course, Madame Hyphen's Anglo-Indian maid, Mrs. Kajori, was a kind, old woman. Perhaps she could help him, thought Dhrupad. In any case, three votes in this particular circumstances were too precious to be left without an attempt at bagging them.

Dhrupad took the risk. He drove up and switched off his car at safe distance and walked up to the veranda as quietly as possible, sweating quite a bit and shivering a bit too.

No sooner had he pressed the calling bell than was heard a veritable thunder: "Who is that?"

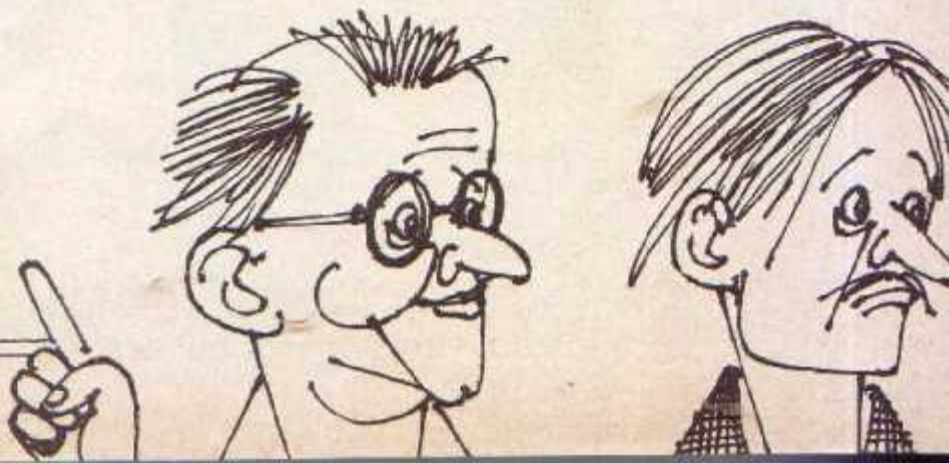
A minute later a tiny white head on a huge black overcoat confronted him through the window: "Who are you? What is your business here? Seeking job? No scope. Collecting contributions? I don't give. Anything else? Be quick!"

Dhrupad greeted the Professor with an impressive show of humility and narrated the purpose of his visit. The Professor appeared quite pleased at the prospect of his exercising a cardinal right as a citizen of this land and said, "Certainly, young man, certainly. What could be a happier thing than participating in the great experiment in democracy in this great country? We will go and since the name of your Party is 'Mob is God', we will vote for you."

"What nonsense!" screamed a human siren. "Our going out is out of the question, young man, you may now leave us." Madame Hyphen pulled back the Professor with a clean grip over his shoulder. With undiminished pleasure the Professor waved at Dhrupad, saying, "That is right, young man, our going out is out of the question. You may leave us in peace. Peace is the thing we need."

Dhrupad retreated with a sigh. At the gate, however, he ran into Mrs. Kajori. The kind old lady comforted him and advised him to wait.

Mrs. Kajori, indeed, acted like a snake-charmer. In a few minutes the couple quietly coiled



JUSTICE FROM THE HILL

into Dhrupad's car, followed by Mrs. Kajori.

Dhrupad drove down the hill, experiencing his proudest moment in driving.

"Stop!" commanded Mrs. Kajori. It was in front of a famous confectionery. She whispered to Dhrupad: "The couple, as you know, seldom care to come down the hill. Buying cakes, however, is Madame Hyphen's only weakness. Our car has been out of order for sometime. It is in order to avail of a drive to and fro that Madame agreed to oblige you.

Inside the shop Prof. Hyphen showed as much enthusiasm in selecting the cakes as Madame Hyphen showed in rejecting them. When both of them were exhausted, it was Mrs. Kajori's choice that prevailed.

"O God, I have forgotten my purse!" declared the Professor.

"You are silly, Professor, silly!" Madame Hyphen almost broke down.

"Shut up, darling!" The old Professor too appeared on the verge of breaking down.

But the anxious Dhrupad did not permit the dialogue to proceed further. "Let me have the honour of paying up," he said and, gathering a little more courage, added, "All geniuses are forgetful, Sir, ha ha!" and he paid up.

"Do not forget to collect the amount from us when we are back, young man, and thank you very much, and by the way, all geniuses are not forgetful. I am not," said Madame Hyphen.

They resumed their journey. At last when the three voters alighted before the polling booth, Dhrupad reminded them once more about his symbol and his name on the ballot-box. (In those days each candidate had his or her separate box). "Thank you, young man, we will remember," assured the Professor as they entered the booth. A small crowd greeted them with amazement variously recorded on their faces.

Half an hour later Dhrupad concluded the second part of his proud driving and stopped in front of the Professor's bungalow and opened the door for his passengers to get down and with a final show of humility, said, "I am really grateful to you, sir, for your kindness!" The Professor shook hands with him. "It is all right," he said, "I am glad having cast my vote in favour of you—the candidate of 'Mob is God' Party".

"And I am grateful to you too, Madam." Dhrupad turned to Madame Hyphen.

"Thank you, but, young man, to speak the truth—and mind you I never care to speak anything but truth—I have voted for the other candidate. It is a simple code of conduct I follow: I do not repeat what my husband does. In matters of research too I do his opposite, as the world knows. The Professor had agreed to this before I agreed to marry him. Isn't it so, darling?" Madame Hyphen leaned on her husband and the Professor kissed her. The couple entered their bungalow.

Dhrupad looked on vacantly at their disappearing shadows, himself feeling as pale as a shadow. How sportingly Madame Hyphen neutralised his solitary gain! Oh no, he remembered: after all, Mrs. Kajori's vote must have gone in his favour.

"Well, thank you Mrs. Kajori, you have no doubt voted for me, haven't you?" he asked.

"Of course, my son, I have," she said enthusiastically and then lowering her voice, she supplemented, "I have voted for you as well as for the other chap."

"How was that possible?" asked a mystified Dhrupad.

The old lady sported a most genial smile. "It is like this, my son: Lord has said, love all, hasn't He? So, I tore the paper into two equal parts and put them in both the boxes. It was clever of me, wasn't it?" the old lady asked with a bright twinkle.

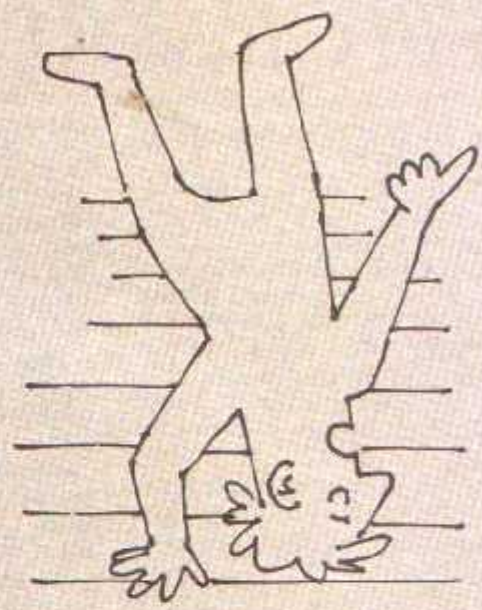
Dhrupad sighed and left. He sighed once again passing by the famous confectionery.

"M"

Sisir

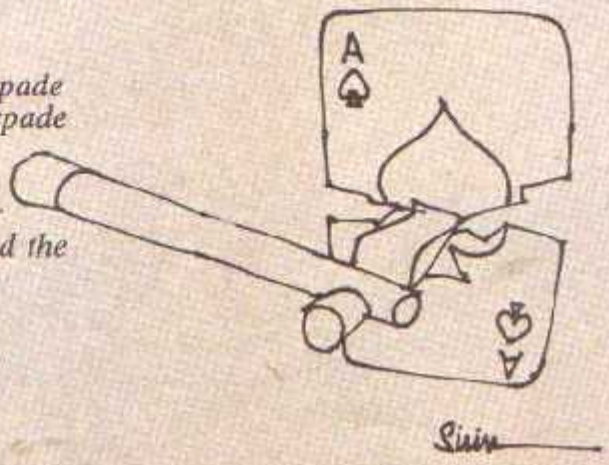
SEVEN LIMERICKS

There was a grammarian whose observations were sharp
But once he fell down the stairs with a bump.
His dying declaration
Was this epoch-making contribution:
'Down' is superfluous with 'falling' for there is nothing as falling up!



"A barking dog does not bite"
Read a proof-reader and felt very bright.
Braving into a barking brute
Badly mauled, he cried out,
"What an error was there in the manuscript!"

That it is dangerous to call a spade a spade
Was obvious when a spade called a spade a spade
In a lamentable temper
The called one destroyed the caller
For the caller was a playing card and the called one a hacking blade.

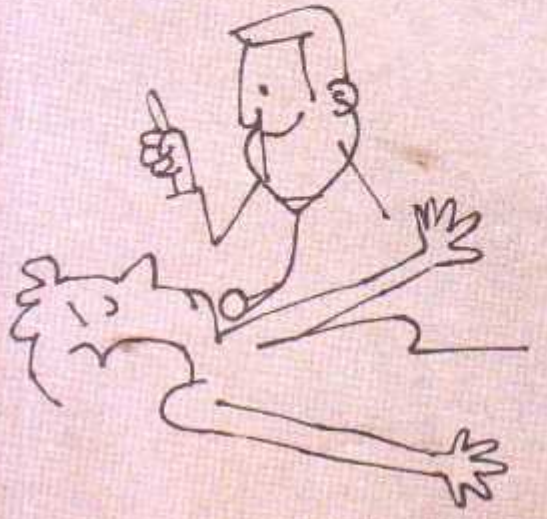


FROM DEVAPRIYO

The millionaire chided his idle sonny,
"Don't you know that time is money?"
"I know it, father,
But I know farther,
That money is good time," yawning, replied the bonny.

Knocking on the door he asked, "Who is there?"
"It is I," said the toilet-user,
"I see, is it I?
That means, my, my!
I am already inside!" said the absent-minded professor.

"What cannot be cured must be endured,
Explain," commanded the teacher self-assured.
Fumbled a pupil, "Er—er
It is like this, sir,
We are enduring on though it is half an hour past the last period!"

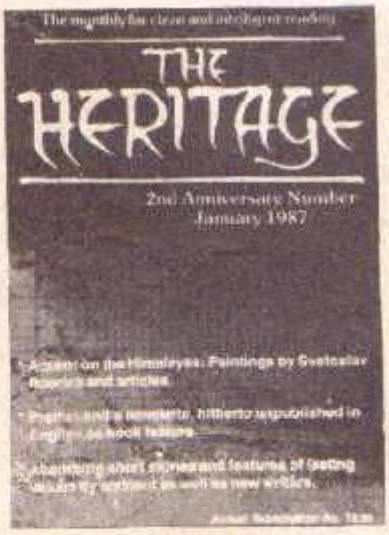


Boasted an old lady before an ultra-modern doctor,
"Had never any disease although I am eight-four."
Said the doc, "It is
A disease not to have any disease!"
And the shocked old lady was soon no more.

No society gossip,
no sensational blow-ups, yet...

Nearly 70% of Heritage readers fall in the upper income group of over Rs 2000 per month. Two thirds are male. The average age is 28 years.

– from an IMRB survey conducted in Oct 1986



It's an unusual magazine. It has a vision – for today and tomorrow.

It features ancient cities and contemporary fiction, culture and scientific developments, instead of filmstar interviews and political gossip. And it has found a growing readership, an IMRB survey reveals. Professionals, executives and their families, are reading The Heritage in depth – 40% from cover to cover, 42% more than half the magazine.

More than 80% of The Heritage readers are reading an issue more than once

And over 90% are slowly building their own Heritage collection.

Isn't it time you discovered why?

CMP 2149

THE HERITAGE

So much in store, month after month.

Kannaki's Anklet

Kannaki — Courtesy DIPR

Introduction

This is an amusing story set in the backdrop of one of the current crazes of the affluent and the underlying irony in the situation.

However, in order to appreciate it better, we must know who Kannaki is.

Kannaki is one of the most powerful woman characters in the literature of the world. She figures in the immortal Tamil epic *Silappadikaram* by Ilango Adigal, the prince-turned ascetic who lived in the 2nd century B.C., if not earlier.

Poignant is the story of the epic: In the city of the Puhar (Pumpuhar), the capital of the Chola Kings, lived a couple, Kovalan and Kannaki, the former the son of a nobleman held in high esteem by the court and the latter the daughter of a prosperous seafaring merchant

They lived happily. Ideal was their love for each other.

But the doom of their union lay hidden in the person of a girl, Madhavi, who was growing up into a charming damsel and a highly gifted danseuse.

She was launched into her career as a courtesan with a dance perfo rmance before the king. As the custom went, the garland she received from the

king was offered for a price: the customer to buy it would become the courtesan's first lover.

Kovalan could not resist the temptation to buy the garland.

He was duly received by Madhavi. But what ought to have been a casual affair proved to be lasting. Madhavi, no doubt, was fascinating with all her beauty and art, but what is more, she loved Kovalan truly and unlike an ordinary courtesan, looked upon him as her husband. Kovalan forgot his wife, his home, and his business enterprises. He was hardly aware of the fact that he was getting poorer. In fact, his sudden disenchantment with Madhavi came at a stage when he was already in the red.

No external factor brought about the disenchantment. It was a psychological change — probably the outcome of a sense of guilt at neglecting the faithful Kannaki and a doubt, unfounded thought, in Madhavi's faithfulness. It came to the surface on a festive day when he sang some nostalgic songs and Madhavi did the mistake of singing in the same vein. Her mood was interpreted by Kovalan as a longing for some other lover. He deserted her and returned to Kannaki.

Kannaki, who had been reduced to a wreck pining for Kovalan, welcomed him. If he was broke to the wide, she had a pair of precious anklets that ought to yield him capital enough for a new venture in commerce.

But Kovalan must go over to the distant city to begin his life anew. The two start for Madurai. After an arduous journey they are delighted to reach their destination. But their joy is short lived. An anklet has been stolen from the palace. When Kovalan tries to sell Kannaki's anklet to a goldsmith who was the thief, the latter reports to the king that the thief had been found! The king orders Kovalan to be put to death. The order is executed forthwith.

Kannaki's anguish knows no bound when she comes to know of her husband's fate.

"Is there no god? Is there no god in this country? Can there be a god in a land where the sword of the king is used for the murder of innocent strangers? Is there no god, no god?" she bursts out. Along the city streets she goes challenging the people to answer her and standing before the palace, she dares the king to answer her. She proves, with the other anklet of the pair, that her husband had been falsely accused and wrongly killed.

Never had a Pandya King done such injustice. On realising the gravity of his error, the king collapsed and died. The queen followed suit.

But Kannaki's wrath was yet to be satiated. She plucked her left breast and hurled it at the city and cursed that the city be destroyed by a holocaust. To the God of Fire, however, she said, "Spare the religious, honest men, cows, truthful women, cripples, old men and children."

The poet informs us, "And the city of Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas whose chariots were invincible, instantly went up in flames and smoke."

— Editor

Kannaki . Courtesy - Tamilnadu Tourism Department

Kannaki's Anklet

by KASTHURI SREENIVASAN

(An amusing novella of our times)

Kannaki's Anklet

(An amusing novella of our times)

by KASTHURI SREENIVASAN

Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan White were having their breakfast in the Madura Hotel and glancing through the tourist literature about the historic city of Madurai. One of the brochures was somewhat unusual; it was not from the Hotel lobby or from any of the tourist agencies, but had been given to them by their guide, Mohan. It related to the story of Silappadhikaram—the Story of the Anklet—and it ended with the words. "What happened to Kannaki's Anklet?"

Mr. Jonathan White (Jr) was the curator of a museum in Laughing Waters (Mississippi), a wealthy agricultural town, but with great pretensions to international culture. Ever since the neighbouring city of Little Falls got a Nataraja reputed to be of the 10th Century, the cultural elite of Laughing Waters had been smarting under an inferiority complex and have been urging their own curator to do something about it. So, Mr. White was in India to see what he could find to rival the Nataraja of Little Falls.

The Whites had read the pamphlet the previous night. They had been greatly fascinated by the tragic story of Kovalan and Kannaki and had been intrigued by the question. The story had all the ingredients of history, romance and antiquity. Certainly, the Anklet would out-rival the Nataraja, if it could be found and authenticated.

"Mohan is not the run of the mill guide," Julia White commented over her toast and marmalade. "He is extremely knowledgeable and we are lucky to have got him. He can make us feel the historicity of this place right away."

Mr. White took an indigestion pill before he answered her. "Yes, he is a very clever fellow. But I wonder, what did happen to the Anklet? Only if we could locate it, it would be as important as the discovery of Venus de Milo."

"Oh, Jonathan!" his wife chided him affectionately. "Here is a beautiful and tragic story, and all you can think of is, 'What happened to the Anklet?' Does it matter?"

"It does, dear, it does. Don't you see, if I could find it, I will acquire an international reputation? It is not like just buying a stolen idol, which is what that fellow in Little Falls has done. It will be a great archaeological as well as a historical discovery and Laughing Waters will get its status symbol. After all, that is why the museum committee has paid for this trip!"

Their discussion was interrupted by the arrival of Mohan, a pleasant-looking young man with polite and friendly manners, with a very deep knowledge of and love for the city of his birth. His conversation was full of wit and wisdom and the Whites were very impressed by it.

"Good Morning, Sir." Mohan shook hands with Mr. White and turned to Julia. "A very good morning to you Julia; I hope you slept well." He smiled at her with easy informality as he sat down in the vacant chair. The affable Americans were happy—Mr. White because of the respect shown to him and Julia, because she liked the attention of attractive young men. Mohan threw in an occasional 'professor' or 'doctor' in addressing Mr. White which pleased the curator enormously.

"Would you like some coffee?" Julia asked.

"No, thank you Julia," Mohan replied. "I have just had my breakfast. My mother makes excellent coffee, much better than what you get here at six rupees per cup. I would like to invite you both to my home sometime before you leave Madurai."

"Isn't that wonderful?" cried Julia. "I sure would like to try your mother's coffee!"

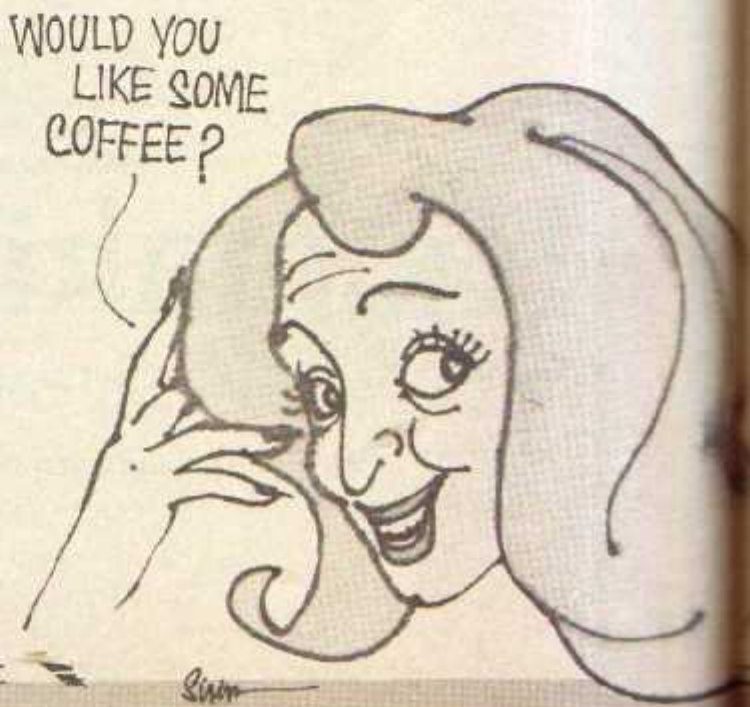
"So, what are your plans for this morning?" Mohan became the professional guide. "We could go to the thousand pillar hall, visit the hill temple of Alagar. Or, if you feel up to it, we could motor down to Periar Game Sanctuary and have a look at the elephants, bison and other creatures."

"I think we will take things easy this morning," Julia announced. "Wander round the Palace, take some photographs, and perhaps do a bit of shopping."

"You are the boss," said Mohan with a smile.

"I was ingtrigued by tht pamphlet of yours," Mr. White returned to the topic of his interest. Anklet. How is it that it is not mentioned in any of the official brochures?"

"As a matter of fact, it is," Mohan replied. He picked up one of the more voluminous folders and turned the pages. "Ah, here it is!" and read the appropriate passage.



"Oh yes," Mr. White responded with satisfaction, now that he was sure of the authenticity of the story. "But tell me, what did happen to the Anklet?"

Mohan was enthusiastic about the question. "To me, a native and a lover of this great city, the high drama that Kannaki enacted in the palace of the Pandya King is the most important and significant event in its the long history. I don't know how she strikes you, professor, but to me, she is not just a helpless woman seeking justice for the death of her husband or a divine Goddess enforcing vengeance on an unjust ruler. To me, she is a social reformer rousing the people to fight tyranny and injustice; she is the personification of the chastity and courage of Indian womanhood....."

"My! My!' Aren't you eloquent?" Julia laughed.

"Sorry Julia," Mohan said somewhat crest-fallen. "I am afraid I get carried away every time Kannaki's name is mentioned."

"Tell me, is this mere mythology or is there any historical evidence for the authenticity of the story?"

"It is as historical as, say, St. Thomas, one of the apostles who came to India in the A.D. first century." Mohan knew that the Whites were very religious and any allusion to Christianity was sure to receive their sympathy. And he gave a whole lot of references—one or two of which were familiar to Mrs. White— and the couple were duly impressed.

"You know, in our country, there will be half-a-dozen universitites offering fellowships and doctorates for doing research on Kannaki's Anklet. And there will be treasure-hunters trying to locate it."

"Yes, I can quite understand it," Mohan said almost to himself. "You are a go-ahead nation; you do everything in a big way. But in India too, we have been at it in a quiet way, not with any fanfare or trumpets, but almost secretly."

Mr. White pricked up his ears. Perhaps, there was material here for an article for his museum journal or maybe there was even something more. "Can you tell me about it?" he asked.

"Are you really interested, Mr. White? Not just as a tourist, but as a historian and an archaeologist?"

"Yes, as I told you, I am the curator of a well-known museum in Mississippi. I am interested—I may say more than just interested—in history and objects of historical significance and worth. My interest is—shall we say—professional."

Julia was watching her husband; she knew the symptoms. When he was on the trail of something big, he went after it with cunning and a single-minded determination. The desire to own Kannaki's Anklet—if it existed—was on him now; to feel the sparkle of gold and precious stones, to hear it jingle with the rubies inside it, to feel its contours, but above all, to feel the historic presence of a great relic—the emotional compulsion was on him now. Julia knew that nothing she could say or do would deter him from the path he had chosen.

"I see," Mohan said slowly. "If you are so keen, then I suggest that we carry on this conversation in the privacy of your room rather than in public."

TWO

Mr. White called for his bill, initialled it and the three of them went up to their suite on the second floor. While the men seated themselves in the sitting room, Julia disappeared into the bedroom to do odd jobs.

"You see, Mr. White," Mohan began. "In your country, if you have knowledge that could be economically exploited or which will bring you a reputation, there are various means of protection such as patenting, trade marks and copyright acts. But these things in India are of recent origin. The traditional method has always been to keep such knowledge a secret and whisper it to your son when you are on your death bed. So, even ordinary knowledge has acquired a mystery and is often associated with magic or the supernatural. What we have to do is to remove such cobwebs and get to the core of knowledge."

"Yes, but tell me about the Anklet," Mr. White was impatient.

"It is essential for you to understand the background of that knowledge and that it is not always based on logic and reason as in your country, but on subjective factors."

"I can appreciate that," Mr. White realised that he had to let Mohan tell his story in his own way.

"Alright, I will start from the beginning," Mohan continued. "You know from the story of the Anklet that as soon as Kannaki broke upon her Anklet and red rubies were spilt on the floor of the hall, the king realised his terrible mistake and committed suicide."

"Yes, I know that much."

"Well, that is where our story really begins. Some of it is guess, of course, but there is enough evidence for what I am going to tell you. When she saw the king die and the queen follow suit, Kannaki threw away the Anklet and walked out to lead the revolution that was breaking out in the city. She had no more use for the ornament. There was utter confusion in the palace itself with everyone running helter-skelter and trying to hide, for fear of repraisals. But the guard who had let Kannaki into the palace in the first place saw the Anklet lying on the floor, picked it up and ran after our heroine and handed it to her.

"Keep it," she said, and after a moment, she turned to him.'Keep it as a token of loyal service. Many generations later, your descendants will benefit from it.' and walked away."

"Have you proof of all this?" Mr. White wanted to know.

"Let me complete the story, Mr. White, " Mohan answered with a notion to inspire patience in his listener. "The guard knew it was too valuable to be kept in his poor home in those troubled times. There was only one way to preserve a treasure in those days and that was to bury it underground. That was exactly what my ancestor did."

"Your ancestor! My God!" Mr. White exclaimed.

"Yes, you might well say 'My God!; for unfortunately, the story does not end there. The Anklet was like a lucky charm; no one dared unearth it, but the family prospered. My ancestors became leading officials, poets at the court of the Pandyan Kings, and well-known and prosperous in many ways. But generation after

generation, they preserved the secret of the Anklet, made sure that it was safe, but never removed it from its hiding place, until the 16th century."

"What happened?" Mr. White's curiosity was at fever pitch.

"You see, my ancestor at that time had no sons—at least not legitimate ones. And he was not sure whether he should reveal such a secret as the Anklet had now become, to his illegitimate son, and whether the young man was worthy of such a trust. So, on his death bed, he called his son and said, 'I have a great knowledge to confide to you, my son. It is concerned with the great heroine Kannaki whom we have always worshipped as our family deity. A treasure belonging to her has been in our possession and we have been guarding it. I am now going to entrust it in your keeping."

'I shall try to be worthy of it, father.' he replied.

'I hope so,' the old man sighed. 'If you are worthy of it, you will solve the puzzle I am going to give you and know where it is. But if you cannot, pass on the puzzle to your son. Maybe, one of your descendants will be worthy of it.

"So, you see Mr. White, that is how I happen to be in possession of the secret." Mohan paused.

"Have you solved the puzzle?" Mr. White's eager eyes glowed with excitement. "Perhaps, I can help you to solve it!"

Mohan smiled. "I'm afraid you couldn't, not in a hundred years." Then, he explained, "You see, it needs a knowledge of topography of this city in the sixteenth century as well as familiarity with local history and literature."

"Have you solved it?"

"Yes and no," said Mohan. "I have got the approximate location. But the exact spot has to be located by a process of elimination. It is like an American auction. Each time you eliminate a spot, the chances become greater."

"Can you at least translate the puzzle for me?"

"Certainly," Mohan recited the puzzle.

"'Between Kannaki's eyes and Pandyan's might;
From the Buddha's shrine, ten paces to the right;
Stand and worship the morning sun,
Beneath your head is the treasure, my son.'"

"What the hell is all that supposed to mean?" Mr. White cried, his impatience rising.

"The solution to the puzzle depends on a correct interpretation of each of the four lines."

"I wish you would tell me where the Anklet is buried without beating about the bush," Mr. White betrayed acute impatience.

"You see, Mr. White," Mohan explained. "If I were to tell you where it is, you would have to take my word for it. Your first thought would be, 'is it a forgery or an imitation?' You would not be convinced of the authenticity of the article you were getting. I am therefore trying to give you the historic as well as the personal background so that you will know its value. And the people who come to see it will be impressed by the romantic story of its discovery. It is even more interesting than the finding of Tutankhamen's treasure in Egypt."

Mr. White saw the genuine concern in Mohan's eyes, his desire that he should be believed. "Alright, explain the puzzle to me," he asked.

"Kannaki's eyes have been compared to lotus blossoms in literature. Lotus as you know, flowers in tanks or ponds. Pandyan's might was represented by his flag which had a fish for its symbol. And fish is plentiful in the river Vaigai. It was therefore obvious to me that the place referred to must be between the river and a pond, not too far from each other."

"So far, your logic is clear."

"Next, I had to locate a Buddha's shrine. This was more difficult because Buddhism had ceased to flourish

in Madurai from about the fifth century A.D. though some Hindus worshipped the Buddha as one of the Hindu Gods. I went through all the available records and literary works prior to the sixteenth century in order to locate a Buddha shrine between the river and a tank. After years of frustration and hard work, came upon a reference to a small idol of the Buddha under a tamarind tree on the banks of the river and only about fifty metres from a Lotus pond."

"This beats James Bond!" exclaimed Mr. White. He was now really interested and excited.

Mohan continued. "Ten paces to the right of the shrine and I faced the morning sun, that is, towards the east. And really Mr. White, at that moment, I felt truly elated. I was back in the sixteenth century, at the death bed of my ancestor and knew I had discharged my debt to him. I had justified the trust and had washed away the stigma of illegitimacy that had dogged my family for ten generations."

There were tears in Mohan's eyes. Julia who had been listening and who had come in to hear the last part of the story went to him, put her arms round him like a mother, "Poor boy!" she cried. "What a struggle to establish the right to your inheritance! But it must have been a moment of fulfilment."

Mohan wiped his eyes. "Yes, thank you Julia. It was a moment of fulfilment, but it was also the beginning of frustration. For what was a place of worship in the sixteenth century is at present a burial ground. Almost every bit of earth has been dug up in the last few centuries and if anyone had come across the precious Anklet, they would not have realised its importance and value, but merely melted it down to make ornaments for their womenfolk."

"So, we are back to square one," said Mr. White.

"Not quite," Mohan smiled. "You see, the shrine of the Buddha—though in ruins—has not been destroyed or desecrated. We Hindus have a great reverence for deities even other people's deities. Further, I did not at first realise the significance of the last line in the puzzle. 'Beneath your head is the treasure my son.' Now, when you face the morning sun, your own shadow is thrown back and the shadow of your head—I realised after many months of heart-searching—is thrown back towards the west and your head covers the pedestal of the Buddha. It was then that I knew that the Anklet must be under the statue. My ancestor was a clever man and he knew that if he hid something under the statue of an idol, no one dare disturb it."

"Have you..... er .....verified your hypothesis?" Mr. White asked.

"No," said Mohan. "To me, the knowledge was sufficient. When it came to the point, it seemed like sacrilege to disturb something that had been buried for twenty centuries."

"Then why have you told me all this, if you are not willing to unearth it and..... benefit from it?"

"I don't know," Mohan spoke almost to himself. "If I did unearth it, what would I do with it? It is too important a find and the government will take it away from me. The scholars will question its authenticity. There will be a controversy and some at least will call me a fraud and an impostor. But as it is, I have the satisfaction of guarding Kannaki's treasure just as my ancestors have done, for the past two thousand years. It will still be in the family, so to speak." Mohan gave a rueful smile.

It was Juila who took the initiative now, as so often before. "Poor Mohan!" she went and sat by him and patted him on the shoulder. "You are suffering from a conflict of emotions. You do not know what to do; you cannot make up your mind. I can understand and sympathise with your problem. But don't you see, you have no right—no moral right—to keep such a valuable treasure hidden from the public eye? Think of the thousands—may be millions, if it happens to find its way to the United States—to whom it would give pleasure! And your name will go down in antiquerian history as famous as Elgin who discovered the Greek marbles. And your fortune would be made. You will no longer have to work as a miserable guide showing ignorant tourists round your fascinating city, day after day."

"You are very kind Julia," Mohan cried. "But I am confused and frightened. I have spent many years of my life trying to solve the family puzzle and now that I have solved it, it has left me with a feeling of apprehension."

"You don't have to worry one damn bit," Mr. White assured the young man. He was like a hunter stalking

in Madurai from about the fifth century A.D. though some Hindus worshipped the Buddha as one of the Hindu Gods. I went through all the available records and literary works prior to the sixteenth century in order to locate a Buddha shrine between the river and a tank. After years of frustration and hard work, came upon a reference to a small idol of the Buddha under a tamarind tree on the banks of the river and only about fifty metres from a Lotus pond."

"This beats James Bond!" exclaimed Mr. White. He was now really interested and excited.

Mohan continued. "Ten paces to the right of the shrine and I faced the morning sun, that is, towards the east. And really Mr. White, at that moment. I felt truly elated. I was back in the sixteenth century, at the death bed of my ancestor and knew I had discharged my debt to him. I had justified the trust and had washed away the stigma of illegitimacy that had dogged my family for ten generations."

There were tears in Mohan's eyes. Julia who had been listening and who had come in to hear the last part of the story went to him, put her arms round him like a mother, "Poor boy!" she cried. "What a struggle to establish the right to your inheritance! But it must have been a moment of fulfilment."

Mohan wiped his eyes. "Yes, thank you Julia. It was a moment of fulfilment, but it was also the beginning of frustration. For what was a place of worship in the sixteenth century is at present a burial ground. Almost every bit of earth has been dug up in the last few centuries and if anyone had come across the precious Anklet, they would not have realised its importance and value, but merely melted it down to make ornaments for their womenfolk."

"So, we are back to square one," said Mr. White.

"Not quite," Mohan smiled. "You see, the shrine of the Buddha—though in ruins—has not been destroyed or desecrated. We Hindus have a great reverence for deities even other people's deities. Further, I did not at first realise the significance of the last line in the puzzle. 'Beneath your head is the treasure my son.' Now, when you face the morning sun, your own shadow is thrown back and the shadow of your head—I realised after many months of heart-searching—is thrown back towards the west and your head covers the pedestal of the Buddha. It was then that I knew that the Anklet must be under the statue. My ancestor was a clever man and he knew that if he hid something under the statue of an idol, no one dare disturb it."

"Have you..... er .....verified your hypothesis?" Mr. White asked.

"No," said Mohan. "To me, the knowledge was sufficient. When it came to the point, it seemed like sacrilege to disturb something that had been buried for twenty centuries."

"Then why have you told me all this, if you are not willing to unearth it and..... benefit from it?"

"I don't know," Mohan spoke almost to himself. "If I did unearth it, what would I do with it? It is too important a find and the government will take it away from me. The scholars will question its authenticity. There will be a controversy and some at least will call me a fraud and an impostor. But as it is, I have the satisfaction of guarding Kannaki's treasure just as my ancestors have done, for the past two thousand years. It will still be in the family, so to speak." Mohan gave a rueful smile.

It was Juila who took the initiative now, as so often before. "Poor Mohan!" she went and sat by him and patted him on the shoulder. "You are suffering from a conflict of emotions. You do not know what to do; you cannot make up your mind. I can understand and sympathise with your problem. But don't you see, you have no right—no moral right—to keep such a valuable treasure hidden from the public eye? Think of the thousands—may be millions, if it happens to find its way to the United States—to whom it would give pleasure! And your name will go down in antiquerian history as famous as Elgin who discovered the Greek marbles. And your fortune would be made. You will no longer have to work as a miserable guide showing ignorant tourists round your fascinating city, day after day."

"You are very kind Julia," Mohan cried. "But I am confused and frightened. I have spent many years of my life trying to solve the family puzzle and now that I have solved it, it has left me with a feeling of apprehension."

"You don't have to worry one damn bit," Mr. White assured the young man. He was like a hunter stalking

his prey; now that he was in for the kill, he wasn't going to lose it. "You take me to the Buddha shrine, dig out the Anklet and I shall see you are suitably rewarded. And what is more, I will send you an invitation—with the compliments of the Museum Sub-Committee of Laughing Waters—to come to the States and tell your fascinating story about the Anklet. All expenses paid of course. There will be newspaper articles, radio and T V interviews, publicity galore, and all the money that goes with it."

"You mean I can get to the U.S.?" Mohan asked excitedly. "Can I settle down there and become a citizen of your great country?"

"I don't see why not," Mr. White assured him. "For the service that you have done for my museum and to humanity in general, I can keep you there until you get the green card."

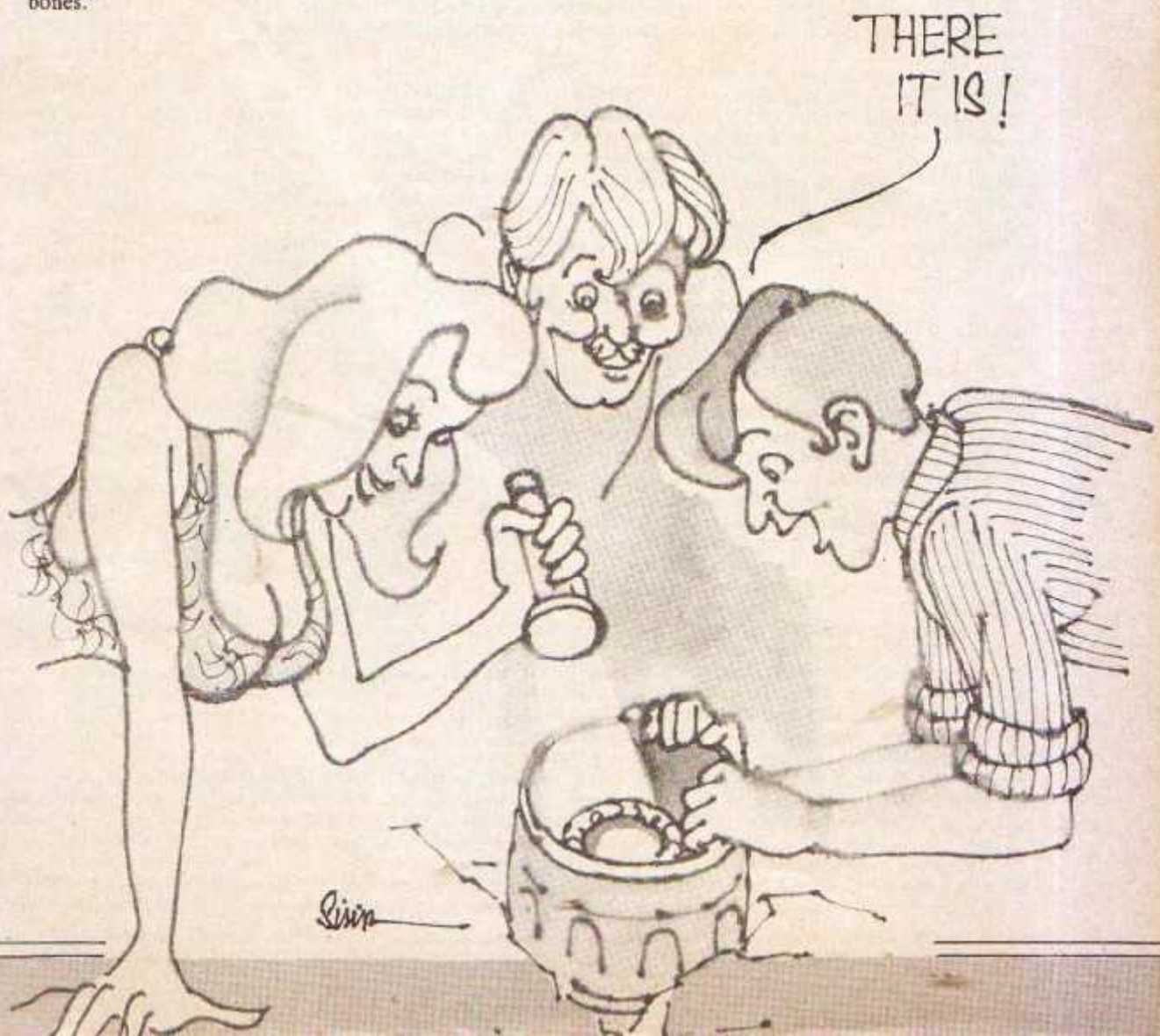
At last Mohan was persuaded. For a substantial sum of money—fifty percent to be paid on the spot and the balance immediately after the discovery of the Anklet—Mohan agreed to unearth it for them. For one who was so emotionally upset, he proved to be an expert negotiator when it came to bargaining. "I hope you realise I am not doing it for the money, Julia," he kept saying as he pocketed the money. "I am doing it in the interests of humanity as Dr. White said and so that the Anklet might have an honoured and prominent home, instead of lying amidst the bones and skeletons in the burial ground."

THREE.....

At ten O'clock that night, Mohan picked them up from the hotel. He was driving himself. As Mr. White settled into the front seat beside the driver and Julia at the back, Mohan remarked. "I hope you are not nervous about visiting a burial ground at night, Julia."

"I enjoy visiting cemeteries," she replied.

"But this won't be like a neatly kept cemetery with flowers and funny epitaphs as in your country," Mohan replied. "We don't bury people very deep and not in coffins either. You will have to pick your way through the bones."



"I don't suppose it is any more eerie than the inside of the pyramids," said Julia.

"You have the balance of the money, Mr. White?"

"You bet!" the curator replied as he showed a packet containing currency notes.

They parked the car on a lonely path near the banks of the river and got out. The darkness of the night, the rustle of wind in the branches of the huge tamarind trees, the slow moving waters of the river, the scattered bones, made the atmosphere somewhat ghost-like. Mohan produced a small torch and asked Julia to hold it while he got out a pick-axe and a shovel from the boot. They walked through the tamarind grove. The skulls and the white bones shone in the faint light of the torch as they walked. Julia shivered a bit though the night was warm. "My goodness!" she exclaimed as they saw a jackal run away from a newly dug grave.

"It won't be long now," Mohan whispered encouragingly. "There is the lotus pond which is overgrown with weeds and here is the shrine of the Buddha."

Julia shone the torch at the stone platform; the statue of the Buddha—meditating with eternal calm, if weather beaten over centuries—came into view.

Putting down the pick-axe and the shovel, Mohan tried to move the statue from its pedestal. But it was too heavy and Mr. White had to give him a hand before it could be shifted. The stone pedestal was equally heavy. But after about ten minutes of hard work by the men, it was also out of the way and Mohan began to dig the ground beneath the pedestal and remove the thin mortar that covered it. Mr. White helped him by removing the stones. About a foot underground, the pick-axe came upon something hard and Mohan dug round it with feverish haste while Mr. White began to shovel the earth.

"There it is!" Mohan exclaimed. "A stone Jar!" As Mohan removed it from the earth and opened it, Julia shone the torch and the Anklet came into view.

Mohan removed it with reverence, placed it in front of the now lop-sided Buddha and prostrated himself before it. But Mr. White seized it with eager and impatient hands, like a miser counting his money, and inspected it with the practised eye of a connoisseur.

"Beautiful! Beautiful!" he exclaimed. "But it is heavy."

"It should be," whispered Mohan. "It is not hollow; it has rubies inside so that it can jingle as the lady walks."

"Can we open it and see?" Mr. White wanted to know.

"I wouldn't advise it, Doctor," said Mohan. "The last time it was opened, a king committed suicide and a kingdom fell."

Mr. White shook it. There was a dull sound like the hitting of stones against metal.

Mohan was crying. "I am parting with perhaps the most precious treasure in India," he said. "A treasure that has been in the keeping of my family for nearly two thousand years."

"My boy! When I exhibit your treasure in my museum in Laughing Waters, Mississippi, I will be the most famous man in the antiquarian world. And you will be by my side. And here is my part of the bargain." He handed Mohan a packet a currency notes which he examined in the light of the torch, and put it inside his pocket.

Julia who had been silent and somewhat nervous, said, "Let's get out of here!"

The Anklet was placed inside the stone jar and Mr. White carried it. "Shouldn't we replace the idol?" he asked.

"We have committed a great sacrilege," Mohan said. "Replacing the statue will not wash away our sins. Besides, it will take too long."

They had not gone about twenty yards when a powerful beam of light shone in their faces. "Stop, whoever you are!" an authoritative voice said as it came near.

They could discern two tall figures in Khaki uniforms.

"Oh! My God! The police!" Mohan whispered and tried to run, but one of the figures caught hold of him easily. "Any more nonsense from you and you will be sorry," said the man who had caught hold of Mohan. In his holster was a revolver which he now brought out. Mohan stood there shivering.

"Your name please," asked the other man with the powerful torch.

"I am Jonathan white and this is my wife. We are from Laughing Waters, Mississippi. You will find my name in any Encyclopedia of Archaeology. We are respectable citizens and I demand....."

"And I demand that you hand over the stone jar you are holding, to my colleague here," the man shouted. "Unless of course you want to go with me to the police station and face a charge."

"What am I accused of?" Mr. White demanded with a show of confidence he did not feel.

"Of desecrating ancient and protected monuments, of stealing and trying to smuggle rare, valuable and antique objects out of the country. As a curator of a museum from Laughing Waters, Mississippi, you should know what the punishment is for such crimes."

"Who are you?" Mr. White demanded.

"We are from the intelligence wing of the Government of India. We have been detailed to be on the lookout for smugglers of rare objects. For your information, I can tell you that your hotel room was bugged and your conversation with this fellow has been recorded."

Mr. White quietly handed over the stone jar.

"Ay, you!" the policeman shouted to Mohan. "You had better hand over the packet that is bulging in your pocket before it burns a hole there." Mohan did as he was told. "You should also drop these people at the hotel and report to B-4 Police Station first thing tomorrow morning.

"Yes sir! Thank you, sir!" Mohan almost whispered.

Then the policeman with the torch turned to the couple. "You may go now," he said. "And be thankful you have got off so lightly this time. Next time we catch you, it will be three years R.I. Now, beat it."

The couple began walking to the car and Mohan followed them. They got in silently and Mohan drove. There didn't seem any need for conversation. As they got out of the car in front of the hotel, Mohan asked them, "I presume you won't be wanting my services in the morning."

"No, no, thank you," said a tired Mr. White as they walked into the lobby.

EPILOGUE

The two 'policemen' went to the shrine, filled the hole made by Mohan while digging for the Anklet, replaced the pedestal and the statue in the original place.

As they dusted themselves and walked away with the stone jar containing the Anklet, one of them asked the other, "What do we do with this trinket now?"

"We wait for Mohan; he will have to make up another puzzle, find another place to hide it, and the most important, find another sucker to buy it, as the Americans say."

THE END

THE PROMISED LAND

Step by step my investigation of blindness led me into the industrial world. And what a world it is! I must face unflinchingly a world of facts—a world of misery and degradation, of blindness, crookedness, and sin, a world struggling against the elements, against the unknown, against itself. How reconcile this world of fact with the bright world of my imagining? My darkness had been filled with the light of intelligence, and, behold, the outer day-lit world was stumbling and groping in social blindness. At first I was not unhappy; but deeper study restored my confidence. By learning the sufferings and burdens of men, I became aware as never before of the life-power that has survived the forces of darkness—the power which, though never completely victorious, is continuously conquering. The very fact that we are still here carrying on the contest against the hosts of annihilation proves that on the whole the battle has gone for humanity. The world's great heart has proved equal to the prodigious undertaking which God set it. Rebuffed, but always persevering; self-reproached, but ever regaining faith; undaunted, tenacious, the heart of man labours towards immeasurably distant goals. Discouraged not by difficulties without, or the anguish of ages within, the heart listens to a secret voice that whispers: "Be not dismayed; in the future lies the Promised Land."

—Helen Keller

Printed by B.V. REDDI at Prasad Process Pvt. Ltd., 168 N.S.K. Salai, Madras-600 026 and published by B. VISWANATHA REDDI on behalf of CHANDAMAMA PUBLICATIONS, Chandamama Buildings, Vadapalani, Madras-600 026 (INDIA). Photo typesetting: Prasad Process Pvt. Ltd., Editor: MANOJ DAS.

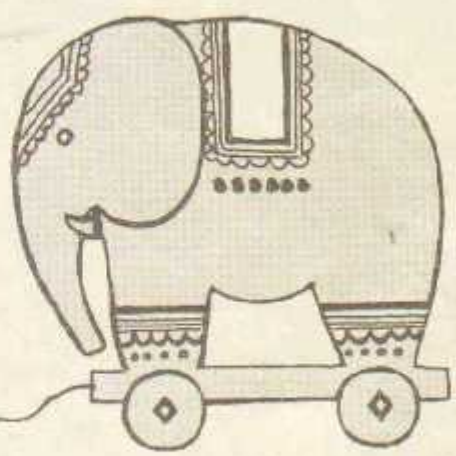
A magazine for the young that is read by 94,00,000 grown-ups!

CHANDAMAMA

That is what the National Readership Survey reveals. Add to this the magazine's target-readership, the children, and it will be a figure to remember. But Chandamama's pride does not rest on the figure. Published in thirteen languages of India including Sanskrit, it is a force of unity among India's young, a magazine that interprets the legends and episodes of the past in order to help the reader understand the present and prepare for the future.

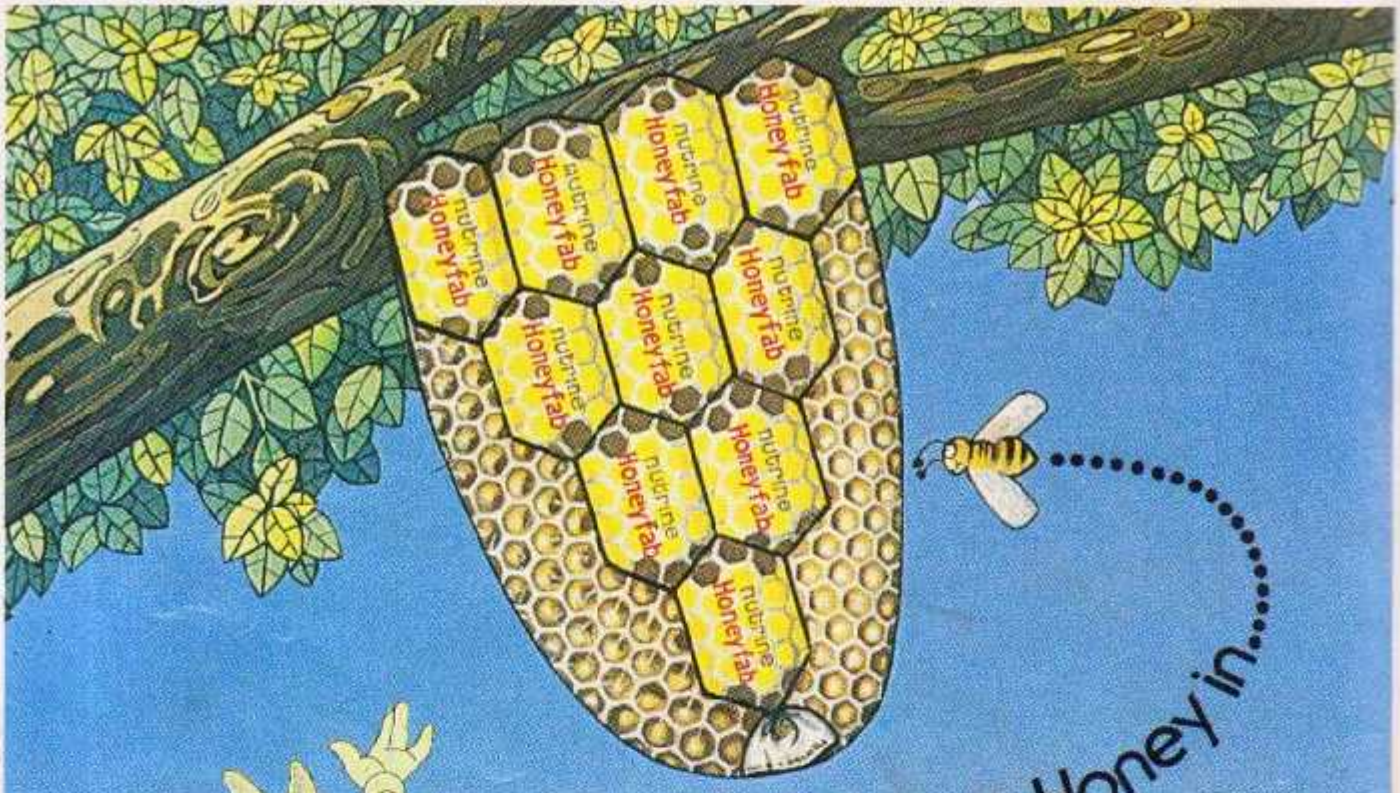
Chandamama is also a mission and a service.

Its BRAILLE edition, published in four languages, reaches tens of thousands of blind—free of charge.



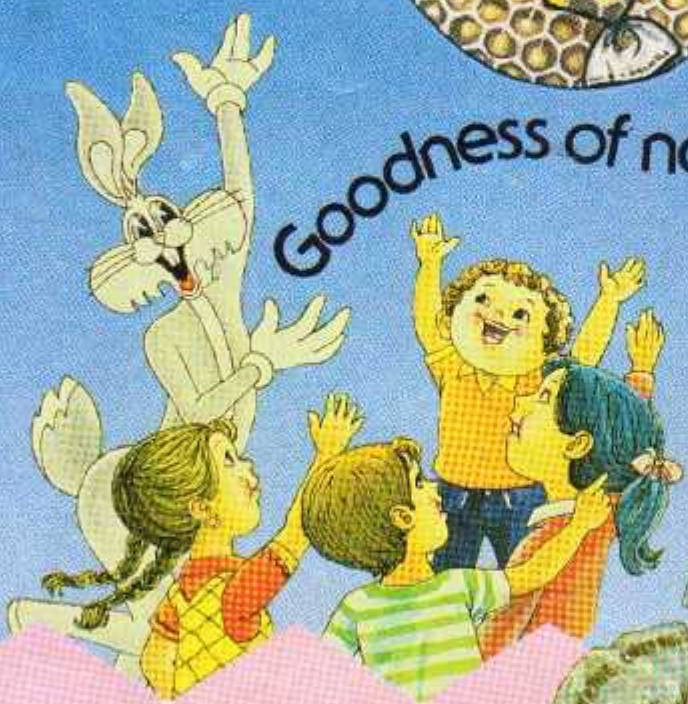
GROWING WITH CHANDAMAMA IS GROWING WITH LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE

Regd. No. TN/MS(S)/317



Goodness of nature's Honey in.....

nutrine Honeyfab



nutrine Honeyfab

Delicious naturally!

nutrine India's largest selling sweets

Nutrine Confectionery Co. Pvt. Ltd., Chittoor, A.P.

CLARION/NC/3637