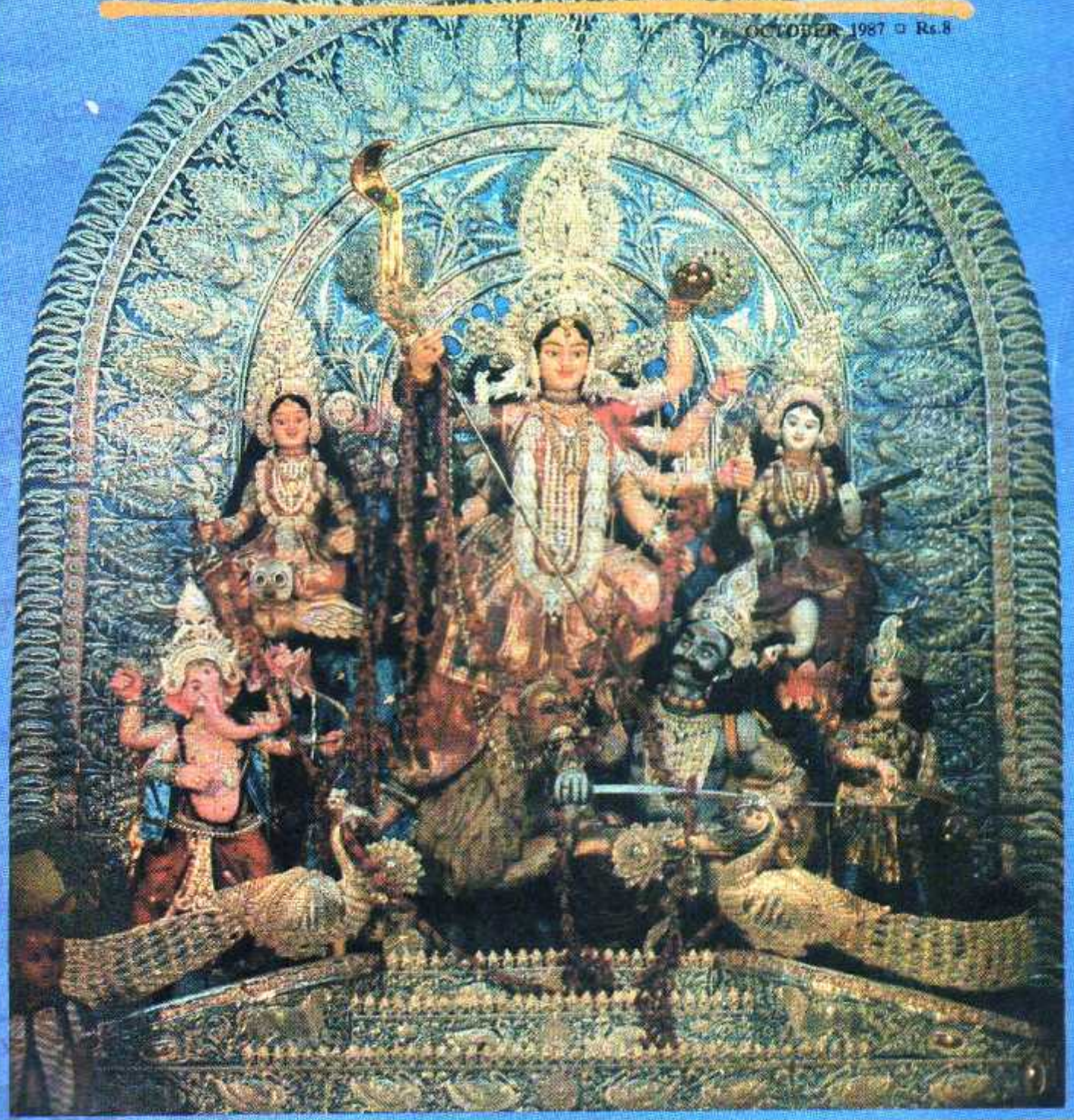
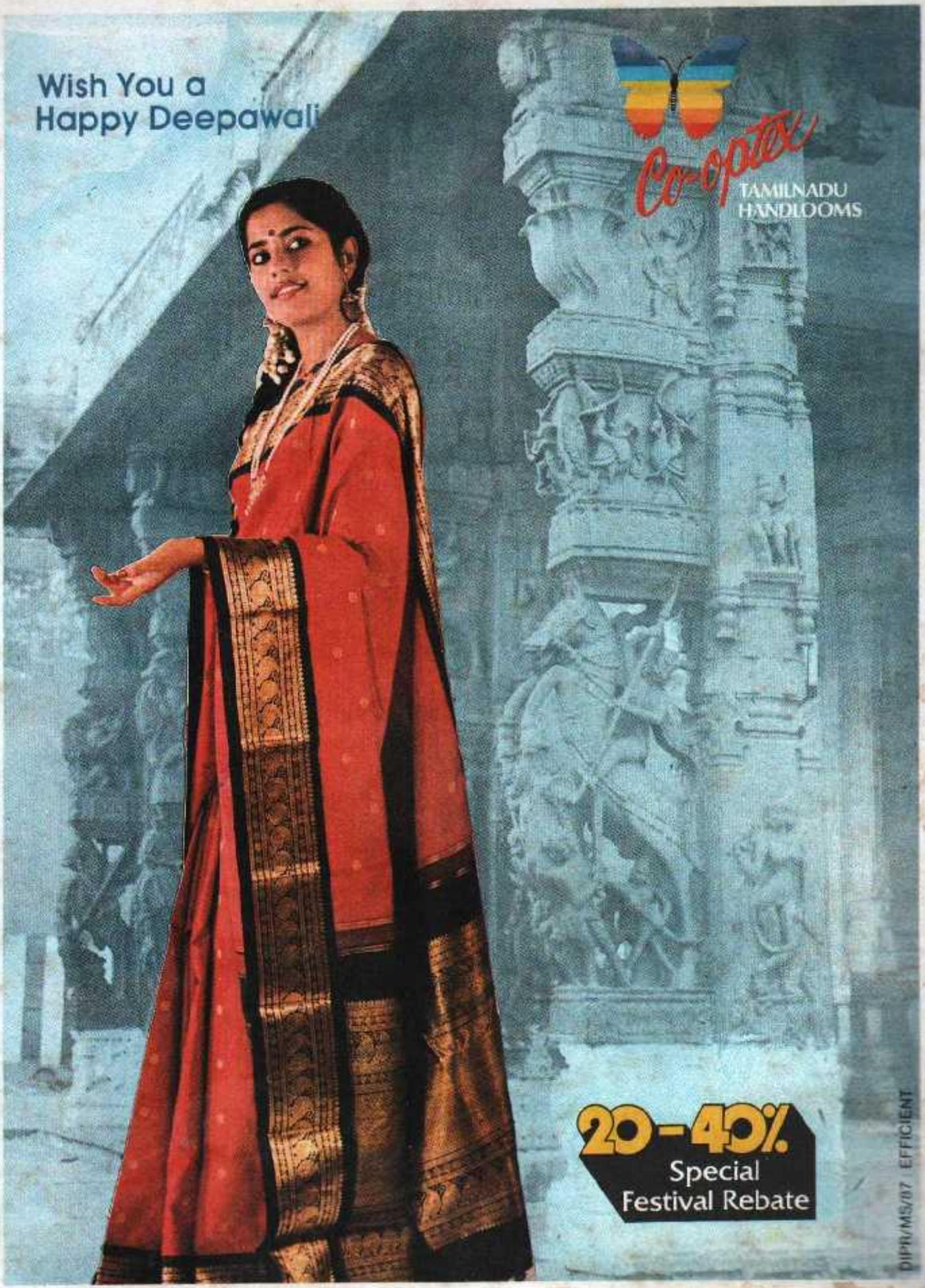
THE HERITAGE

OCTOBER 1987 ◻ Rs.8

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The traditional presentation of Mother Durga and the demon Mahishasura in Eastern India. This is also an occasion to invoke Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Ganesha. The charming platform and the backdrop are a specimen of the famous filigree work of Cuttack.
Photo: K.V. Ram Mohan Rao

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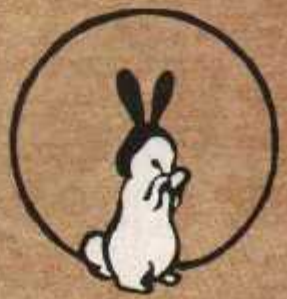


VIEWS AND VOICES

"THE CRISIS TODAY"

The August issue of THE HERITAGE was a veritable treasure house for the intelligent reader interested in culture and problems of higher life. Of particular interest to me was the article 'The Crisis Today', — a rare dialogue on the basic problem of our time, in which Dr. Karan Singh, Sisir Kumar Ghosh and Dr. D.P. Chatterjee were the learned participants. It was of a very high order, full of stimulating thoughts and challenging ideas regarding Man's future and our 'Swadharma' as Dr. Karan Singh put it.

Dr. Karan Singh has successfully brought out the fact of the 'globalisation of Consciousness'. Dr. Ghosh has emphasised the urgent need for the 'inwardisation of consciousness'. The truth of the matter is, as pointed out towards the end, that today human consciousness has to be simultaneously widened and deepened. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is indeed the means for that.

May I seek a clarification from Dr. Karan Singh? The learned doctor, with his global vision and experience, has repeatedly pointed out, that the days of Nation-states are over. He argues that today our Mother is Mother Earth and not just Mother India. I may be excused if I characterise this conclusion as too hasty. True, globe has shrunk into a village; but has man's spiritual awareness kept pace with that of the Vedic Rishi who spoke of *Yatra visvam bhavatyeka needam*? I very much doubt.

Man the individual, cannot by a sudden jump, reach the level of 'cosmic consciousness'. For all practical purposes, he requires certain intermediate steps like the family, society or community, nation, humanity, etc. Joint family may be crashing, but not family as such. Similarly community and nation also. What has to be transcended is chauvinism and not nationalism. Before man is able to identify himself with the nation, is it practicable to leap-frog into the global and the cosmic? Individuals may, but it will be a dangerous proposition for mankind. Man, sunk in selfishness and petty rivalry, has to graduate through the intermediate levels.

Trivandrum. **—P. Parameswaran,**
Director,
Bharatheeya Vichar Kendra.

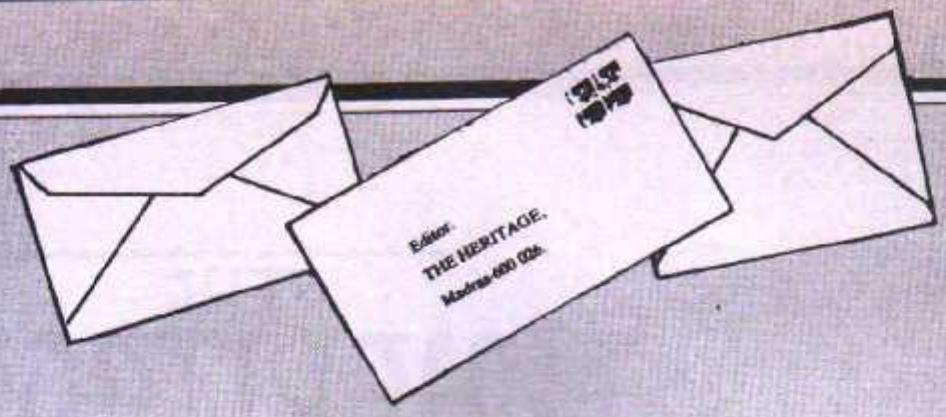
The article "The Crisis Today" was most timely. When the soul is lost, it is impossible to build a nation and march ahead. We have weathered through the onslaughts of time because of the spiritual and cultural strength built into the fabric of our land. Hence we must heed the warnings of Sri Aurobindo and Swami Vivekananda and hearken to the call of our spirit by growing 'inward'—or we perish.

Bombay. **—S.A. Srinivasa Sarma**

QUTUB-UD DIN'S CONQUEST OF DELHI

Kindly refer to the article "Jantar Mantar" by Dr. Surendra Sahai (August '87). The first sentence begins: "Since the conquest of Delhi in 1192 by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak. . . .". But the conquest of Delhi in 1192 was not by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak; it was by Muhammad Ghore. Qutub-ud-Din Aibak was the founder of the Slave Dynasty and he occupied Delhi in 1206.

Bhubaneswar. **—Srinibas Barik**



Why give to the "slave" the credit that is due to his master? At least my history teacher told me that Muhammad Ghori conquered Delhi in the early nineties of the 12th century. He brought in Aibak's name only when the young man succeeded Ghori. The young man must have been close at the dying conqueror's hand, but was he the conqueror of Delhi?

Delhi. **—Sujata Despande**

This is to point out an error in the article "Jantar Mantar". It is Muhammad Ghori, not Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, who conquered Delhi in 1192.

Kaitha Kandi. **—Pramoda K. Panda**

It is a fact that Qutub-ud-Din Aibak became the Sultan of Delhi in 1206, but he conquered Delhi, on behalf of his master, in 1192 or latest in 1193. After his victory at the Second Battle of Tarain in 1192, Muhammad Ghori returned to Khurasan, "leaving the conducting of the campaign in India in the hands of Qutub-ud-Din Aibak, his trusted slave and lieutenant. Qutub-ud-Din more than justified his master's confidence. In 1193 he occupied Delhi..." (A Dictionary of Indian History by Sachchidananda Bhattacharya, University of Calcutta, 1972)

—Editor

SCHOOL FOR POLITICIANS

Congratulations for your editorial "The Stripper Versus the Crook?" (August '87). We have the strange habit of adoring our politicians either as supermen or as villains. We forget that they emerge from the average men in the society, fined partly by ambition and partly by idealism. At special times idealism plays greater role in their life (as during the freedom struggle); at other times the element of ambition plays a greater role. This is what I have learnt from the editorial referred to and an earlier editorial, "Where the Thief is" (June '87). Being an average man the politician will act according to our expectation of him. If we expect him to bribe us (not necessarily in cash but in any other partial way) to get our vote, the gentleman has to collect enough money to oblige us and that has to be black money. Let us be honest about it. I quote from the earlier editorial: "As long as our behaviour does not change, the politician will not change."

A school for politicians—for the would-be legislators in particular—is a splendid idea. I fervently hope that it will not remain confined to the pages of the magazine, but will inspire a movement, in that direction.

Calcutta. **—P.K. Sen**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"Towards A New Awareness" by Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer published in our September '87 issue is a chapter from his book OUR COURTS ON TRIAL, just published by B. R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi and distributed by D. K. Publishers' Distributors, 1, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, New Delhi 110 002. (Rs. 75.00)

THE HERITAGE

KNOWING THE SPRING THROUGH THE AD

Once upon a time the Indian continent was distinguished for its experience of the six distinct seasons in a year. While our ancient literature gives eloquent evidence of this, even the octogenarians and nonagenarians present amidst us testify to their experiencing at least four distinct seasons, each with its unmistakable characteristics.

"One by one they proved elusive—the summer excepting—and in the north the winter," sighed an old man reminiscing over the lost cycle of good old seasons.

So far as the spring is concerned, we often know about its arrival in the way this character in a contemporary writer's story knew: "Spring had come to the town. Ravi learnt about the event from a quarter-page advertisement in the newspaper announcing the arrival of the season's garments in the leading departmental store of the town."

The unprecedented drought that has stunned us is a direct consequence of our brutality towards Nature. We know this. Even then an hour does not pass without some people further denuding the land of woods and what is perhaps worse, of our hills. A broken hill is perhaps among the most pathetic witnesses of man's barbarity, for, in principle, we can raise a forest, but never a hill—not even in a billion years! But some men continue to destroy the hills in an era when they can be easily spared. There can hardly be a greater shame than this.

Man's alienation from Nature—rather man alienating Nature from his life—has dangerous physical consequences, and this is a fact universally acknowledged. But it might have done greater havoc to our minds. The alienation from Nature has perhaps been the beginning of a chain of alienations—alienation of our sense of beauty from our attraction for glamour, of our love for peace from our pursuit of pleasure, of our inner self from our social and superficial identity.

But that is a different matter and a more subtle issue. Let us focus on the obvious aspect of the situation—that our alienating Nature from our life is bringing about our doom. Can't there be a moratorium on all such activities? Why don't our regional political leaders, who are ever ready to launch morchas and gheraos against their rival politicians, divert their attention for a decade to this problem? If they don't, why not the common educated people of every region grow alert enough to protect their ecology?

DEATH OF A GRAND OLD HABIT

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

Domestic pets like dogs, cats and birds "are excellent cure for heart and circulatory disorders," says a research paper read at the international symposium on the man-animal relationship at the Agricultural University in Uppasala. "Domestic pets had a salutary effect on the well-being of human beings, and they were, perhaps, the best means of making rich and sound the lives of persons living in sterile modern environment," the paper asserts.

Numerous are the stories of the devotion of the pets to their masters—in mythology and legends. Argos, the dog of Ulysses, was the first to recognise its master when he returned after many years of war and adventure. It died of sheer joy. The greatest example of man's love for his animal-companion in mythology is to be found in Yudhisthira's refusal to be admitted to heaven unless he was allowed to take with him the dog that had followed him faithfully along his great journey, the *Mahayatra*.

History too is no less resplendent with examples of loving relation between men and their pets. Sir Isaac Newton's dog, Diamond, upset a candle on his table reducing to ashes the savant's papers

documenting his scientific experiments of many years. "Oh Diamond, Diamond, thou little knowest the mischief thou hast done!" was all he said.

Newton certainly knew the value of a pet dog—perhaps an all-time proof of which is the famous "Dog of Montargis".

In 1371 a gentleman by the name of Aubry was found murdered in a forest. His dog, Dragon, snarled at and tried to attack one Richard of Macaire whenever it saw him. It managed to arouse suspicion in all the friends of Aubry that Richard could have been his murderer.

According to the legal tradition of the time, Richard was ordered to undergo a judicial combat with Dragon. Richard died, but not before confessing to his having murdered Aubry.

ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PRIMITIVE

All the animals that can be domesticated had been tamed by our ancestors at the twilight of civilisation. The 'civilised' man has not been able to add a single species to the list. By and by we have only lost our hold on them. In the households of the ancient Egyptian nobility baboons served as waiters. "The Chinese, during the reign of Kubla Khan, used lions on hunting expeditions," informs Isaac Asimov. "They trained the big cats to pursue and drag down massive animals from wild bulls to bears, and to stay with the kill until the hunters arrived."

The urban lifestyle is no doubt a great factor for man gradually giving up the habit of keeping pets. But what about a country like India the greater part of the population of which still remains spread over villages? There must be some deeper reason for the slow death of the once wide-spread habit.

THE UNFORGETTABLE LOOK

Born and brought up in a village (the nearest seasonal bus-stop was eight miles away and the nearest railway station twentysix miles), I lived amidst animals as much as human beings. Cattle, dogs, cats and a maina bird apart, we had a peacock that was moody but beautiful. I had brought up a mongoose that was ready to perform a variety of tricks the moment it was sure of an appreciative audience.

To this was added an unexpected trophy. Flood used to turn my sister's village into an island at intervals of some years. During one such havoc a tigress and her two cubs found refuge in a bushy frontier of the village. Probably they had fallen into the river in a landslide and, drifting from their forest, had been wandering for long, totally confused.

The tired tigress was killed in a simple operation. News came that I could have one of the cubs if I so desired. What greater excitement could be offered to a nine-year-old?

I reached my sister's village as fast as I could. The return journey was perhaps the proudest in my life, a villager carrying the cub in a basket on his head, it giving out its soft growl from time to time, excited dogs barking at it all the way.

After a few days of bewilderment, the cub began to get adjusted to the new environment. I can never forget the look with which it used to survey my face for minutes at a stretch. That was the sign of its developing faith in me—sign that made me uneasy. No doubt I loved it, but it was a possessive love, inseparable from a sense of pride. The cub did not understand that. Its demand was disarming. It was eager to repose its translucent faith in a suitable object and it was under the illusion that it was discovering it in me.

It died in a fight with a poisonous snake in our garden.

I am afraid, we are fast losing the natural quality conducive to nurturing pets. To have an animal in the house is to be continuously reminded of our lost traits of innocence and faith—a rather painful exercise—unless we succeed in contaminating them with our own conceit.

THE WAY OF NATURE IN OCTOBER

by Richard Pearson

The approach of October this year has not been happy, though two major festivals—Dusserah and Diwali—are in the offing. We have drought on several areas and flood on some other. Is it not time to ask ourselves how far such calamities related to man's irresponsible handling of Nature's wealth—our forests and hills?

Editor

IN an ancient book on *Pranayama*, it is said that one could have full effect and benefit of these life-giving exercises only if they are practised at the four auspicious periods of the earth's daily cycle around the sun: sunrise, noon, sunset and midnight.

It is equally interesting to observe the different moods of Nature at these hours. Indian musicians who composed the *ragas* were fully aware of these moods and accordingly chose specific period of the day or night to express and enhance the particular mood of the various *ragas*.

It seems as if the aspiration and hope we experience with the awakening of the consciousness at dawn slowly picks up the momentum till it reaches its full dynamism at the peak hour of the sun's glory at midday. Then, the rhythm of Nature changes to a peaceful repose settling on earth at sunset, and gradually ending in a meditative, self-absorbed yet active force of renewal at midnight.

The flowers too have their own rhythm of blossoming and fragrance. For, example, the common *hibiscus* opens with the dawn. The *Frangipani* or common "champa" blooms at noon. The fragrant jasmine chooses the quiet hour of the sunset and the *cannas* open just after midnight as if to give you the pleasant surprise of its glory. Of course, these four periods of time are just pointers towards a study encompassing the twenty-four hours of each day when different flowers choose their own particular hour of blossoming.

Human life is inextricably related to the rhythms of the cyclic movement of the earth and other forces of Nature which influence the earth, bringing climatic changes. Have you ever considered the effect of cloudless, dry and windless days offered by a desolate desert when even the sky looks parched and withered? Have you ever experienced the intense thirst for water, *for life* in the lifeless expanse of sand under the scorching sun? One loses even the sense of vitality.

In contrast to this, monsoon seems to represent perpetual life as it fecundates the land with luscious greenery of trees, grass, vegetables and fruits. Of course, the monsoon can be irregular and capricious causing a calamitous flood or drought. In India, one is philosophically reconciled to the three phases of life: creation, preservation and destruction, knowing that no creation is

The yellow silk-cotton tree (Cochlospermum religiosa), like the Frangipani is associated with temple gardens. The blossoms of this tree are the most golden of flowering trees!

—Photograph by Richard Pearson.

Well, don't forget to watch the migration of birds. You may see the beautiful, little green bee-eaters, sitting solitary on electric wires in the country-side, suddenly get together in little groups of five or a dozen and start their journey southward. They sing and dance in flight as they catch the myriads of insects brought out by rains.

possible without some sort of destruction. Death is only a part of the endless cycle of life.

The influence of seasonal climate or the moods of Nature inevitably influence the modes of human behaviour. There is a sort of intrinsic interrelationship between the two which poets, artists and musicians are especially conscious since they, being very sensitive, are deeply attuned to the way of Nature.

One of the many Hibiscus varieties. Notice the Swallow-tailed butterfly (Papilio) whose caterpillar usually feeds on the leaves of the Citrus family plants. It announces the arrival of the cooler months.

—Photograph by Vidyavrata

As autumn sets in with shorter days and longer nights, you may look for the water-birds which start arriving from as far as Siberia. You may hear the sounds of these birds "honking" through the night to keep track of the group. They cover immense distance without food or drink. By day we see their "V" formations, heading southward in seemingly effortless flight. We have a lesson to learn from their tenacity and endurance. ॐ

Saffron flowers from Kashmir, (Crocus sativus). The orange styles and stigmas at the centre of each flower are the esteemed colouring and flavouring Kesar.

—Photograph by Vidyavrata

Whether Shri B. Nagi Reddi's contribution to the society as the man who knows that the children speaking in twelve different languages smile in the same moonlit way (his Chandamama is published in twelve languages) is greater or it is greater in his role as a pioneer of our film industry, is a matter of happy controversy. There are several other facets of his life which are no less important. But to your editor, he is simply the man who fits into this section of our magazine: a man rare and unusual. An example of this quality of his: it is he who has sponsored THE HERITAGE and he is a doyen of the filmdom, but he has never questioned our decision to exclude the film from our contents!

MANY SHADES MAKE A RAINBOW

by B. Nagi Reddi

THERE were two lovers—a young man and a young woman. They would like to marry, but they were poor and they decided to wait till the young man returned from the town with some money earned and saved. "How wonderful it would be when you have been successful enough to return with a lakh of rupees!" cooed the young lady while bidding goodbye to her lover. Years passed—five years. The young lady sent several messages for her lover to return. At last he did return.

"How much could you save, dear?" asked the lady.

"That is why I was so hesitant to come back. A hundred rupees."

"But that is very close to our dream!" exclaimed the lady with joy.

Indeed, it is her love that made her see in a hundred rupees a close proximity to a lakh. If they had a lakh and no love, life would be a nightmare for both. And the irony is, many confuse a lakh to be love. It is too late by the time they are disillusioned. Surely, there are innumerable people more prosperous than I in money and means, but I will consider them as lucky as myself or luckier only if they have experienced the kind of trust and love Providence has bestowed on me through people around me.

I gratefully remember the trust with which my father sent me to Rangoon to look after our family export business when I was nineteen. He taught me three lessons which I have cherished throughout my life as the golden rules.

'Money, more than our needs, is a curse rather than a boon!'

'You can lose money but can't lose a man!'

'Indebtedness—within limits—teaches you humility!'

His trust in me became glaringly evident when he divided the family property, making my share less in value than the portions given to his other three sons. My friend and my guardian-angel, Chakrapani, asked him if he was not being unjust to me. With a benign smile my father confided to him, "I know I am giving him less. But that is because I am confident that he can make far better use of what he is receiving than the others."

How happy he would have been had he lived to see me justify his faith in me. He passed away when my film *Pathala Bhairavi*, which was to prove a super-hit, was under production.

I have referred to Chakrapani. It is through him that Providence taught me how loving and trusting men could be to one another. In my home state there is a popular saying that the Reddies and the Kammas are rival communities. Chakrapani hailed from the latter. Yet never we cared to be conscious of this fact, although we jointly launched so many ventures for over three decades from 1943 up to his death in 1975, during which not even once he asked me to show him the accounts. There was no probationary period in our friendship, no preliminary tests in trust put to each other. One day he walked into my press to get a book printed and just stuck on to me, not only emotionally but also literally, putting his children under my wife's care, for he was a widower. *Chandamama*, the unique experiment, perhaps the only children's magazine in the world to be published in more than a dozen languages commanding a readership of millions today, was his vision, his gift to me. It is said that chance is the pseudonym which God uses when he does not want to put down his signature. It was proved true at least once in my life, in my chance-meeting with Chakrapani.

I had no formal education beyond the High School as one day in 1930 I abruptly left my classes at the call of the freedom fighters. The Salt Satyagraha was on and the leaders to inspire us were the veteran patriots like K. Nageswara Rao and Smt. Durgabai (Deshmukh). But I believe there is no school more effective than life itself, with all those with whom you work as your

I happened to read the following article, in an earlier draft, nearly two years ago. He had originally written it for a small circle of friends. I felt tempted to publish it in THE HERITAGE with or without his permission. However, I checked myself. But now comes an occasion—as the Dada Saheb Phalke Award for 1986 goes to him—which I should not let slip by. I am sure, all who read the article will agree that I was justified in my desire to present this to them.

– Editor

teachers. Till I was fourteen I lived with my maternal grandfather at Pottipadu in Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh. He was a hard taskmaster and he would teach me the science of farming and the art of carrying

out all kinds of work with poise, including cleaning of the cattleshed. The village school had a teacher named Ramaraju who did not believe in sparing the rod and spoiling the child. Hence he used the rod liberally, but at the same time, he knew what would impart true education to a child. He made me get by heart the Telugu versions of the epics, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Bhagavatam*. Before gatherings of the village folk which included my proud grandfather, I would recite the verse to be followed by the teacher's explanations. Retrospectively I feel that those were the moments when the foundation of my life—the attitudes and ideas I were to develop and the philosophy that was to guide me—were being laid under the vigilant eyes of my primary teacher.

Speaking of life's philosophy, two great doctrines have been the guiding principles of my life. One is, "Kriya Sidhi Satve Bhavathi" which teaches that there is no substitute for hard work, be it for material success or for any higher attainment. But this philosophy is modified by the other one from the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Karamanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kadachana"; we have the right to action but no right to the fruit of the action as we desire it to be. Indeed, how much do we know of the laws governing our life and of the laws behind this creation that we should look upon our desires, our expectations, to be the proper measures of success? Desires are born out of our mind and our emotional cravings which are themselves avenues of ignorance. Our soul may have different aspirations. The soul paves its way through failures and success, through sorrows and joys, through anguish and ecstacy. I am grateful to my teacher Shri Narasimhulu Naidu, who while preparing me for admission into Muthialpet High School in George Town, acquainted me with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramatirtha. The light I received from the *Gita* has been reinforced by them.

I am beholden to numerous people in different fronts, but who else but my wife, my life's partner, could be the continuous source of my solace in moments of misfortune, my strength when I have most needed it? She is God's precious gift to me. A small instance will bring out not only the essence of her character, but also the quality of her influence on me: Once on being told that I will like to buy her the gift of a jewellery, she advised me to add a new machine to our press. How can a machine be a substitute for a jewellery? Her calm explanation was: "The jewellery will certainly not add to my appearance, but the machine will provide employment to at least one more hand in search of a job!"

When I receive an award or when people congratulate me for a certain "success", I remember a scene in a film by Charlie Chaplin. Standing by the roadside, he suddenly finds the passers-by offering him spontaneous salutes. Greatly surprised, he returns the salutes with warm smiles, but soon he grows suspicious about it and looks round. Lo and behold, behind him was situated a majestic statue of Abraham Lincoln!

Well, in Chaplin's case what was behind him was visible to the others but not visible to him. In my case what is behind me is visible to me though not visible to the others. Behind every 'success' of mine is the action and dedication of so many of my lieutenants, collaborators and workers. When one greets me, he greets them too. At least I silently transfer the greetings to them—some of whom have already departed to the world beyond. Like the varied colours making a rainbow, they have made my career. ☸

The Sacred Book of the DIVINE MOTHER

"THOU hast given me my form and Thou hast also given forms to Vishnu and Rudra. Who can sing Thy Glory?" says Brahma in 'Shri Shri Chandi' also known as 'Chandi Sapta Shati' or 'Devi Mahatmyam'.

The episodes narrated in the said scriptural work has this backdrop: Once a good-natured king named Surath, deprived of his kingdom, took shelter in the forest. It so happened that a merchant named Samadhi, who had been driven out of his home by the members of his family who coveted his wealth, meets him. The merchant, despite his humiliation by his own children, is full of concern for them. The king finds it rather curious. Both of them go to Sage Medha and ask him how can man get over such foolish attachments. The sage reveals to them the truth that it is by the Grace of Mahamaya, whose creatrix power is at the origin of everything including such illusions, that one can conquer such false emotions. The sage then narrates some events to show how the Power of Mahamaya had incarnated in a physical form to vanquish beings hostile to the good.

This framework of the book (King Surath and the merchant hearing the episodes from Sage Medha) as well as the main text have been presented by Sage Markandeya for the benefit of his disciple Kraustuki Bhaguri.

'Shri Shri Chandi' consists of thirteen chapters with 578 slokas. It is called 'Sapta Shati' because the slokas contain seven hundred hymns.

The major episode in the book concerns the tyranny perpetrated by the terrible demon Mahishasura—the gods reduced to a helpless lot before him—and his ultimate death in the hands of the great Goddess Mahamaya or Mahadevi, manifested as Durga. This is the episode which is remembered through numerous images (showing Goddess Durga killing the demon) in a large part of India.

Now, here is the abridged sequence of events from this most powerful miniature epic in Sanskrit:

Emergence and Advent of Goddess Durga

For a full hundred years did the gods, under the leadership of their king, Indra, fight Mahishasura, the King of the demons. Victorious over the gods, the demon-king at last took possession of heavens.

Led by Brahma, the gods met Shiva and Vishnu and narrated their plight. The three great Gods were wroth. From their faces marked by agitation was formed a mountain of luminous force.

The luminous force began taking the shape of a goddess. The power emanating from Shiva gave it the face, the power emerging from Yama, the god of Death, made her hair, power from Vishnu gave her strong arms, the power of the Moon God endowed her with breasts, the power offered by Indra, Varuna and Earth gave her the lower trunk, Brahma's power gave her legs, and the Sun God's emanations gave her the fingers. The power of Fire gave her three eyes and the emanations from the Deity of the Evening gave her the eye-brows. Several other gods gave her her other limbs and faculties.

Weapons too were specially created for her by the gods, and so did they adorn her with magnificent ornaments. While the ocean gave her a garland of lotuses, the Ocean of Milk offered her a necklace of gems. Himalaya, the Monarch of Mountains, gave her a lion to serve as her vehicle and Kubera gave her a jar of wonder elixir.

(Needless to say, the spirit of this newly formed Goddess was that of the eternal Mahamaya.)

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As the gods raised cries of joy, the goddess, seated on the lion, left her place of origin.

At her advent, creatures of all the three spheres gave out shouts of awe and wonder. That surprised Mahishasura. He looked from his citadel and saw the strange Goddess. At once he felt the impulse to put an end to her and accordingly, sent a huge army of demons under his able lieutenants.

•

The demons tried to attack her, but were dispelled by her weapons and her ferocious lions. From her breath were born numerous supernatural female warriors. They rushed upon the demons and beheaded them.

•

In their crazy excitement the trunks and heads of these demons kept dancing

separately! In that weird atmosphere the demon-generals met their end one after another.

•

At last came out Mahishasura himself, assuming the form of a terrible buffalo. He applied his horns against huge rocks and uprooted them and tossed them at Goddess Durga. His tail beat on the sea and splashed the waters high; his horns pierced the clouds, and created a turmoil in the sky.

•

As he came closer, Goddess Durga threw a noose round his neck. But he wriggled out of it by changing himself into a lion. Next he changed himself into a man and then into an elephant and once again into the form of a buffalo.

"Wait!" said the Goddess as she drank the elixir Kubera had given her. Then she jumped onto the demon-buffalo's back and drove her spear into him. Out of the buffalo's mouth emerged the demon, but only up to his waist. Looking at the wondrous figure of the Goddess, he remained stunned. The sword of Durga beheaded him.

•

At once the gods broke out into clamours of joy. They assembled before the Goddess and bowed down to her in gratitude.

"O compassionate Goddess, you could have destroyed the demons merely with your look. If, instead, you applied weapons on them, that is because their sins will be washed away thereby. That the surviving demons did not lose their sight despite viewing your luminous figure, it is because their eyes were blessed the moment they saw you!" said the gods among many other words of thanks to the Goddess. 'H'

THE HERITAGE

GLIMPSES OF NOVEMBER '87 NUMBER

A BACKWARD JOURNEY? "On 23rd February 1987 astronomers observed far in the night sky a greyish white glow of a star exploding... There have been five such recorded observations in history, the last being 383 years ago.

Has it any relevance to our earth or our concept of evolution? A nuclear physicist gives us the latest thinking in this field. By R. Y. Deshpande.

WHAT IS ACUPUNCTURE? The concluding part of the article tells us more about this ancient science.

HALEBID: Monuments of a Hoyshala capital that flourished over six hundred years ago.

PARABLE FROM RAJAJI

GREAT UNCLE RAJU'S VISIT: A sweet novelette by Prema Shastri as book feature.

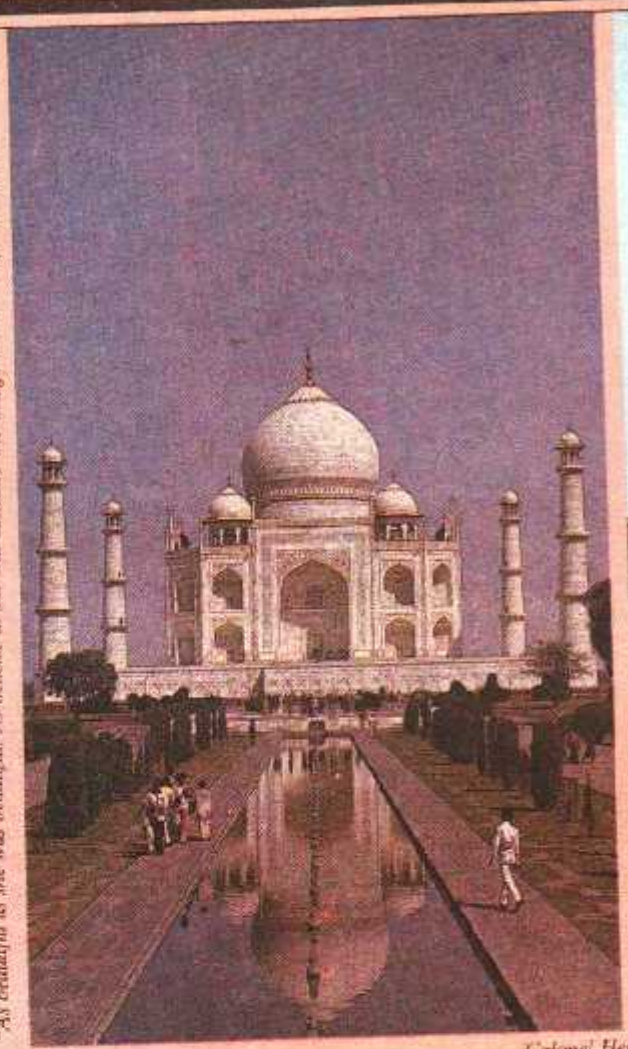
OTHER REGULAR FEATURES AND A BUNCH OF SHORT STORIES

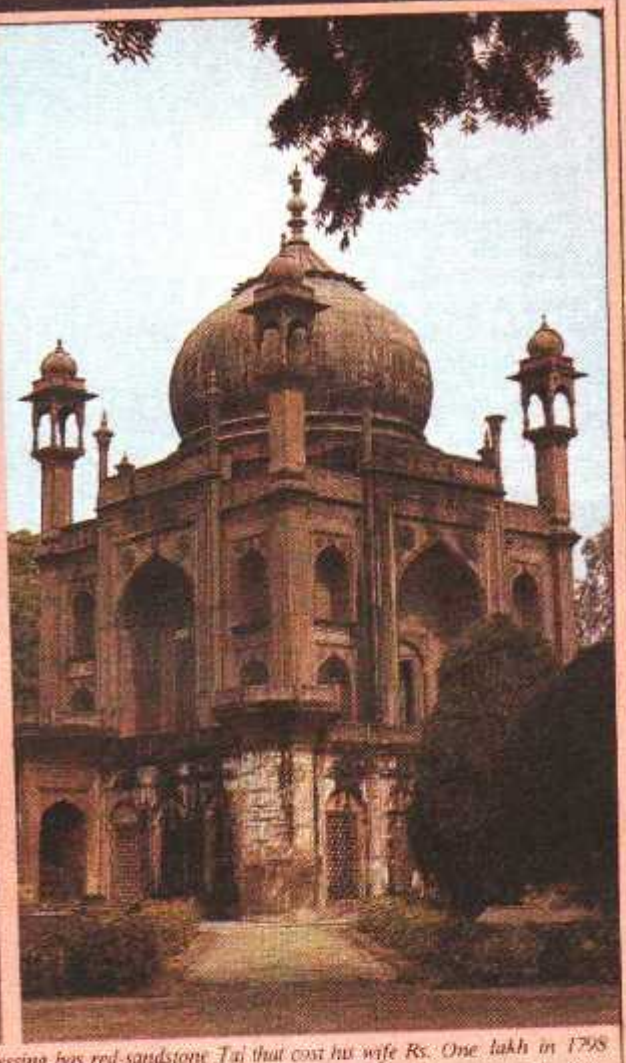
The gateway of the red-sandstone Fort built by Akbar the Great

WANDERINGS IN AGRA

by Ruskin Bond **Photos by Ganesh Saili**

"As beautiful as she was beautiful. As delicate as she was delicate, the image and soul of her beauty."





Colonel Hessing has red-sandstone Taj that cost his wife Rs. One lakh in 1798

THE cycle-rickshaw is the best way of getting about Agra. Its smooth gliding motion and leisurely rate of progress are in keeping with the pace of life in this old-world city. The rickshaw-boy juggles his way through the crowded bazaars, exchanging insults with tonga-drivers, pedestrians and other cyclists; but once on the broad Mall or Taj Road, his curses change to carefree song and he freewheels along the tree-lined avenues. Old colonial-style bungalows still stand in large compounds shaded by peepul, banyan, neem and jamun.

Looking up, I notice a number of bright paper kites that flutter, dip and swerve in the cloudless sky. I cannot recall seeing so many kites before.

"Is it a festival today?" I ask.

"No, sahib," says the rickshaw-boy, "not even a holiday."

"Then why so many kites?"

He does not even bother to look up. "You can see kites every day, sahib."

"I don't see them in Delhi."

"Ah, but Delhi is a busy place. In Agra, people still fly kites. There are kite-fights every Sunday, and heavy bets are sometimes placed on the outcome."

As we near the city, I notice kites stuck in trees or dangling from electric wires; but there are always others soaring up to take their place. I ask the rickshaw-boy to tell me something about the kite-fliers and the kite-makers, but the subject bores him.

"You had better see the Taj today, sahib."

"All right; take me to it. I can lunch afterwards."

It is difficult to view the Taj at noon. The sun strikes the white marble, and there is a great dazzle of reflected light. I stand there with averted eyes, looking at everything—the formal gardens, the surrounding walls of red sandstone, the winding river—everything except the monument I have come to see.

It is there, of course, very solid and real, perfectly preserved, with every jade, jasper or lapis lazuli playing its part in the overall design; and after a while I can shade my eyes and take in a vision of shimmering white marble. The light rises in waves from the paving-stones, and the squares of black and white marble create an effect of running water. Inside the chamber it is cool and dark but rather musty, and I waste no time in hurrying out again into the sunlight.

I walk the length of a gallery and turn with some relief to the river scene. The sluggish Jumna winds past Agra on its way to union with the Ganges. I know the Jumna well. I know it where it emerges from the foothills near Kalsi, cold and blue from the melting snows; I know it as it winds through fields of wheat

and sugar-cane and mustard, across the flat plains of Uttar Pradesh, sometimes placid, sometimes in flood. I know the river at Delhi. In the evening there will be many people.

"You must have seen people from almost every country in the world."

"That is so. They all come here to look at the Taj. Kings and Queens and Presidents and Prime Ministers and film stars and poor people too. And I look at them. In that way it isn't boring."

"Well, you have the Taj to thank for that."

He gazes thoughtfully at the shimmering monument. His eyes are accustomed to the sharp sunlight. He sees the Taj every day, but at this moment he is really looking at it, thinking about it, wondering what magic it must possess to attract people from all corners of the earth, to bring them here walking through his father's well-kept garden so that he can have something new and fresh to look at each day.

A cloud—a very small cloud—passes across the face of the sun; and in the softened light I too am able to look at the Taj without screwing up my eyes.

As the boy said, it does not change. Therein lies its beauty. For the effect on the traveller is the same today as it was three hundred years ago when Bernier wrote: "Nothing offends the eye...No part can be found that is not skilfully wrought, or that has not its peculiar beauty."

And so, for a few moments, this poem in marble is on view to two unimportant people—the itinerant writer and the gardener's boy.

We say nothing; there is really nothing to be said.

(But now, a few months later, when I try to recapture the essence of that day, it is not the monument that I remember most vividly. The Taj is there, of course; I still see it as a mirror for the sun. But what remains with me, more than anything else, is the passage of the river and the sharp flavour of the Ashok fruit.)

John Mildenhall was probably one of the first Europeans to be granted an audience with the great Moghul Emperor in 1603

In the afternoon I walk through the old bazaars which lie to the west of Akbar's great red sandstone fort, and I am not surprised to find a small street which is almost entirely taken up by kite-shops. Most of them sell the smaller, cheaper kites, but one small dark shop has in it a variety of odd and fantastic creations. Stepping inside, I find myself face to face with the doyen of Agra's kite-makers, Hosain Ali, a feeble old man whose long beard is dyed red with the juice of *mehndi* leaves. He has just finished making a new kite from bamboo, paper and thin silk, and it lies outside in the sun, firming up. It is a pale pink kite, with a small green tail.

The old man is soon talking to me, for he likes to talk and is not very busy. He complains that few people buy kites these days (I find this hard to believe), and tells me that I should have visited Agra twenty-five years ago, when kite-flying was the 'sport of kings' and even grown men found time to spend an hour or two every day with these gay, dancing strips of paper. Now, he says, everyone hurries, hurries in a heat of hope, and delicate things like kites and day-dreams are trampled underfoot.

"Once I made a wonderful kite," says Hosain Ali nostalgically. "It was unlike any kite seen in Agra. It had a number of small, very light paper discs trailing on a thin bamboo frame. At the end of each disc I fixed a sprig of grass, forming a balance on both sides. On the first and largest disc I painted a face and gave it eyes made of two small mirrors. The discs, which grew smaller from head to tail, gave the kite the appearance of a crawling serpent. It was difficult to get this great kite off the ground. Only I could manage it.

"Of course, everyone heard of the Dragon Kite I had made, and word went about that there was some magic in its making. A large crowd arrived on the *maidaan* to watch me fly the kite.

"At first the kite would not leave the ground. The discs made a sharp wailing sound, the sun was trapped in the little mirrors, my kite had eyes and tongue and a trailing silver tail. I felt it come alive in my hands. It rose from the ground, rose steeply into the sky, moving farther and farther away, with the sun still glinting in its dragon eyes. And when it went very high, it pulled fiercely on the twine, and my son had to help me with the reel.

"But still the kite pulled, determined to be free—yes, it had become a living thing—and at last the twine snapped, and the wind took the kite, took it over the rooftops and the waving trees and the river and the far hills forever. No one saw where it fell. Sahib, are you listening? The Dragon Kite is lost, but for you I'll make a bright new poem to fly."

"Make me one," I say, moved by his tale, or rather by the manner of its telling. "I will collect it tomorrow, before I leave Agra. Let it be a beautiful kite. I won't fly it. I'll hang it on my wall, and will not give it a chance to get away."

It is evening, and the winter sun comes slanting through the intricate branches of a banyan tree, as a cycle-rickshaw—a different one this time—brings me to a forgotten corner of Agra that I have always wanted to visit. This is the old Roman Catholic cemetery where so many early European travellers and adventurers lie buried.

Francis Ellis, a merchant in Agra, found a humbler memorial built by his heirs. It is of a less expensive yellow-sandstone.

Although it is quite probably the oldest Christian cemetery in northern India, it has none of that overgrown, crumbling look that is common to old cemeteries in monsoon lands. It is a bright, even cheerful place, and the jingle of tonga-bells and other street noises can be heard from any part of the grounds. The grass is cut,, the gravestones are kept clean, and most of the inscriptions are still readable.

The caretaker takes me straight to the oldest grave—this is the oldest known European grave in northern India—and it happens to be that of an Englishman, John Mildenhall. The lettering stands out clearly:

> 'Here lies John Mildenhall, Englishman, who left London in 1599 and travelling to India through Persia, reached Agra in 1605 and spoke with the Emperor Akbar. On a second visit in 1614 he fell ill at Lahore, died at Ajmere, and was buried here through the good offices of Thomas Kerridge Merchant.'

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Agra cemetery was considered blessed ground by Christians, and the dead were brought here from distant places. Thomas Kerridge must have put himself to considerable expense to bury his friend in Agra. Mildenhall was a romantic, who styled himself an envoy of Queen Elizabeth. Unfortunately he left no account of his travels, which are quoted in the writings of Purchas, another English merchant, who lies buried in the Protestant cemetery a couple of furlongs away.

Nearby is the grave of the Venetian, Jerome Veronio, who died at Lahore. According to some old records, he had a hand in designing the Taj, modelling it on Humayun's tomb in Delhi. There had for long been a belief that this 'architect' of the Taj lay buried in the cemetery, but no one knew where. Then in 1945, Father Hyacinth, Superior Regular of Agra, scraped the moss off a tombstone, revealing the simple epitaph: 'Here lies Jerome Veronio, who died at Lahore.'

Actually, there is no evidence that Veronio designed the Taj, and even if he had something to do with it, he was only one of a number of artists and architects who worked on its construction. The chief architect was Muhammed Sharif of Samarkand. Each drew a salary of one thousand rupees per month. Ismail Khan of Turkey was the dome-maker. A number of inlay-workers, sculptors and masons were Hindus, including Manohar Singh of Lahore and Mohan Lal of Kanauj, both famous inlay-workers.

A man of more authentic accomplishments was the Italian lapidary, Hortenzio Bronzoni, whose grave lies at a short distance from Veronio's. He died on 11th August, 1677. According to Tavernier, it was Bronzoni who cut the Koh-i-noor diamond; and, says Tavernier, 'he cut the stone very badly.'

Bronzoni is again mentioned as having manufactured a model ship of war for Aurangzeb, who had been annoyed by the depredations of Portuguese pirates and was anxious to create a navy. The ship was floated in a huge tank and was manoeuvred by a number of European artillerymen. It made a ridiculous sight and convinced the Emperor that a navy was out of the question.

There are over eighty old Armenian graves in the cemetery, but the only one that interests me is the tomb of Shah Nazar Khan, an expert in the art of moulding a heavy cannon. One of these, 'Zamzamah', earned a measure of immortality in Kipling's *Kim*; who holds Zamzamah, that "fire-breathing dragon", holds the Punjab; for the great green-bronze piece is always first of the conqueror's loot. The gun was 14.6 feet long, and is still at Lahore.

Other historic tombs lie scattered about the cemetery, but the most striking and curious of them is the grave of Colonel Jon Hessing, who died in 1803. It is a miniature Taj Mahal, built of red sandstone. Although small compared to a Mogul tomb, it is large for a Christian grave, and could easily accommodate a living family of moderate proportions. Hessing came to India from Holland, and was one of a colourful band of freelance soldiers (most of them deserters) who served in Sindhia's Mahratta army. Hessing, we are told, 'was a good, benevolent man, and a great soldier'. The tomb was built by his wife Alice who, it must be supposed, felt as tenderly towards the Colonel as Shah Jehan felt towards his queen. She could not afford marble. Even so, her 'Taj' cost a lakh of rupees.

Outside, in the street, people move about with casual unconcern. Street-vendors occupy the pavement, unwilling that their rivals should take advantage of a brief absence. In the banyan tree, the sparrows and bulbuls are settling down for the night. A kite lies entangled in the upper branches.

THE MUSEUM AT MADRAS

A reliable window to a nation's character is its museums and archives. We have already covered most of the major institutions in this category. Here is yet another.

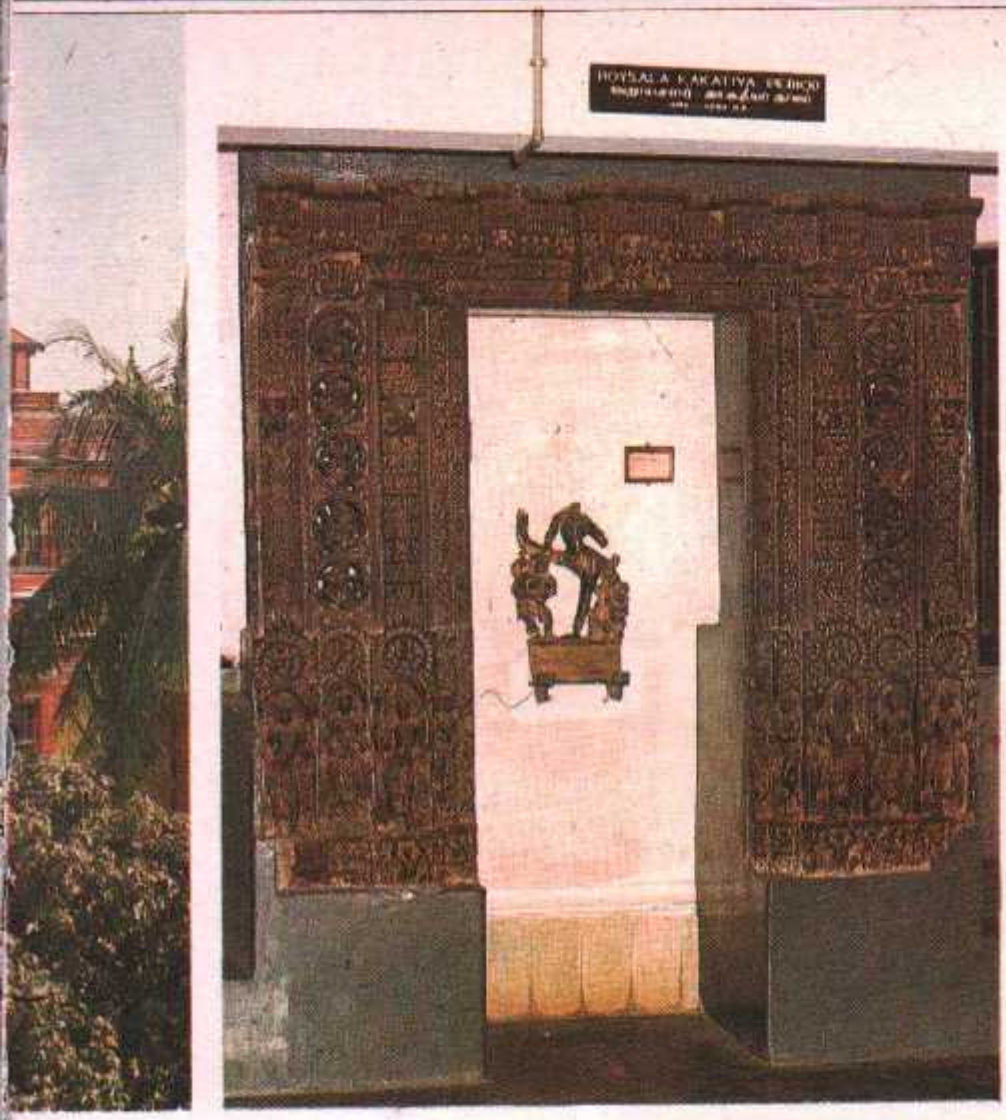
by N. Harinarayana

A view of The Museum complex —Front building

Bronze figure of Nataraja Chola Period—Tiruvalangadu. Harish

IT WAS way back in 1881. The Madras Museum had been already in existence for thirty years. "As a whole the Museum is perhaps the most popular institution in Madras," reported Surgeon George Bidie, then Superintendent of the Museum. A hundred years later, its popularity has not dimmed. Day after day, crowds of tourists, pilgrims, students, scholars, art lovers and nature enthusiasts throng its galleries, each entranced in his or her own way by the host of objects on display.

This Museum was set up in 1857 as a result of the persistent efforts of The Madras Literary Society an Auxiliary of the Asiatic Society of London. It was a terse note in the Fort St. George Gazette of April 29, 1851 which heralded its advent: "The



Carved doorway of a temple
Bellary
Hoysala period
(1100—1350 A.D.)
Harish

Photos Courtesy,
Government Museum, Madras.

Museum. at the College is open to all visitors, Fridays Sundays excepted, from 6 to 9 a.m. and 2 to 1/2 past 6 p.m."

The College was in the Fort St. George. In two years, the Museum outgrew the space avail-

'When winter comes' sculpture by Devi Prasad Roy Choudhry.

able there and had to shift to more copious accommodation in the Pantheon in Egmore. In its halcyon days, towards the end of the 18th Century, the Pantheon had been the banqueting hall of the East India Company. Later on, it was the 'Cutcherry'—as the office of the Collector was called then. There were sufficient number of buildings and enough space around the Pantheon in which to expand, and over a period of a century and a quarter, expand it did, adding building after building as its collections grew and it wanted to show them off to better effect in tune with the times. Its galleries are now spread over five buildings in the campus and a sixth is now in the offing to house a new Children's Museum.

It is through the New Exten-

Tripurasundara Chola sculpture.

Lingodbhava Chola sculpture.

sion Building constructed in 1939 that one enters the Museum. The first gallery which one encounters is the Sculpture Gallery recounting the story of Indian sculpture through carefully selected specimens from all ages and places and arranged systematically in chronological order. South Indian sculpture is shown on the ground floor, and the sculpture from the North is presented on the mezzanine floor. A walk down the gallery on the ground is a walk through the thousand years of the development of South Indian sculpture, of its plain unadorned beginning in the Pallava and Chalukya periods to the slender sinuous forms of the Chola times on to the stylised, much ornamented figures of the Vijayanagar and later periods. These are best illustrated by the sculptures of the Pallava Vishnu, the Chalukyan Ganesa, the Chola Ardhanarisvara, the Hoysala doorway and the recumbent figure of Ranganatha. Two fierce-looking Dwarapalakas of the Chalukyan period are on either side of the staircase leading to the mezzanine floor. On the mezzanine there are representative samples of sculpture of the Pala, the Gupta, the Gandhara periods etc. Besides sculptural pieces, the mezzanine floor contains specimens of inscriptions from the Asokan times onwards. Here one sees the gradual evolution of the scripts of the southern languages.

Further down, there is a compact gallery containing objects from Mohenja-Daro dating back to 2500 B.C. Here at once, one gets a glimpse of the great Indus Valley Civilisation which astonishes us by the range of the artefacts and ornaments it produced and the finish it gave them. There are samples of the actual bricks which went into the construction of the buildings and the drainage system of this ancient city. Here one also finds seals of steatite containing superb figures of animals and a strange writing yet to be deciphered, a set of weights made of well-polished stone, terracotta figurines, painted pottery of amazing variety and a reconstructed storage urn of clay—all characteristic of this civilisation.

Further down, there is a whole gallery devoted to the elements of temple architecture. If one wishes to know the lintels, the corbels, the capitals of pillars, the gargoyles and the images in the niches which make up our temple structurally, a visit to this gallery is the answer. One sees actual specimens of all these architectural features.

Next one goes to the Amaravati Gallery. Here are pieces of sculpture from one of the most glorious epochs of Indian art. In 1797, one Englishman, Colin Mallenzie, came upon a mound called Deepaladinne (the Hill of Lamps) at Amaravati, a village near Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. He had heard that the local people had dug into the mound and had come upon sculptured slabs. He saw the slabs and found that they contained exquisite sculptures. Over the next few decades, in stages, the mounds were dug into, and beautifully sculptured slabs were removed from them. Some of them were sent to London and were ultimately kept in the British Museum and are popularly referred to as Eliot Marbles. Others were taken to the Madras Museum and were displayed in this gallery in 1884. The most celebrated of these sculptures are the ones showing "The Subjugation of Nalagiri", "The King's Court", "the Translation of the Buddha's Bowl" and a slab depicting the stupa. In this gallery, a railing of the original stupa has been simulated with sculptures embedded in it to indicate the location of different types of sculptures. There are also sculptures from the other Buddhist sites of Jaggayyapeta and Goli.

The Jains were no less great as artists, and in the next gallery—the Jain Gallery—one sees glimpses of their achievements. Austerely-made, least-adorned, highly-polished, these sculptures of Mahavira and the Tirthankaras are fascinating. A massive figure of Mahavira has an awe-inspiring presence.

At this point of the New Extension Block, the art galleries end and the natural science galleries take over. One enters them through the General Zoology gallery which is dominated by a whale skeleton nearly 40' long, suspended from the ceiling. This exhibit was set up in 1874-75. It is the skeleton of a whale washed ashore near Mangalore in 1874. Such was the interest of the authorities in securing this specimen for the Museum in those days that the British India Steam Navigation Company brought the skeleton free of charge to Madras from Mangalore. At that time only two other whale skeletons in museums were known—one in Edinburgh and another in Paris. In the General Zoology Gallery, the skeletal parts of animals and birds are shown in recently-designed showcases. There is a well-designed Birds Gallery in which stuffed birds of different types are shown in builtin wall cases. Some birds are set against a background of their habitat. Beyond this, there is a Mammal Gallery consisting of stuffed specimens of a lion, tigers, a bear, deer, monkeys etc. A huge skeleton of an elephant is a striking exhibit in this gallery. This elephant was actually a wild elephant from Chengam which turned dangerous and was captured by the villagers and later died in captivity. Its height is 10' 6". Even in 1888, it was noticed in "Nature" the premier science journal, on the basis that "the Madras Museum now possesses the skeleton of the largest elephant ever killed in India" as reported then! There is also a Reptile Gallery in which different types of snakes, crocodiles, tortoises are exhibited. One interesting exhibit is a stuffed specimen of a crocodile found in the Cooum river in Madras about a decade back. Another gallery—the Foreign Mammals Gallery—features the specimen of a kangaroo.

The Geology Gallery has something of sentimental interest for this Museum which was started with a small collection of 1,100 objects, mostly geological gifted by the Madras Literary Society. Now the geological collection is a big representative one and is displayed in two sections of the Gallery, the Systematic and the Economic Geology sections: one explaining the classification of rocks and minerals belonging to various geological ages and another showing the economic uses of rocks and minerals. The exhibits which specially attract attention in this gallery are the specimens of quartz containing veins of gold, building stones, meteorites and fossils.

The Children's Gallery set up in a new wing of this building is designed attractively to tell to the children the story of the earth's origin, of prehistoric animals that roamed our planet thousands of years ago, of the development of transport over land, water and air and of the world of plants and animals. Showcases containing miniature models set against picturesque backgrounds are a feature of this gallery. The working models of trains and one of a telephone are special attractions of this gallery.

Top Court scene Amaravati 2nd Century A.D. Harish
Bottom "Subjugation of Nalagiri" Amaravati 2nd Century A.D. Harish

On the first floor of this building, there are galleries devoted to Botany, Philately, Fishes and Corals. The Botany Gallery is divided into two sections—the Systematic Botany Gallery and the Economic Botany Gallery. The Economic Botany Gallery has been recently renovated to bring out attractively the various uses of plants and their products. The Philately Gallery contains about 45,000 stamps from various countries of the world.

The next building which contains again a large number of galleries is called the Front Building. Here the Arms, the Anthropology, the Ethnology, the Musical Instruments and the Metalware Galleries are situated. The Madras Museum was one of the earliest to represent prehistoric archaeology and ethnology in its galleries. The first palaeolithic stone tools found in India was from Athirampakkam in Chengleput District. It was discovered in 1863 by Bruce Foote and acquired by the Museum in 1904 and is kept with the collection of the Museum. The Prehistoric Gallery also contains another important collection acquired in 1878 from J.W. Breeks. This collection consists of pottery, beads, ornaments, iron implements and bronze vases from the Nilgiris.

Adichanallur in the Tirunelveli District yielded in the last Century an astonishing variety of artefacts and tools of iron and copper. These tools and artefacts are remarkable for the sheer technical and artistic excellence that has gone into their making. These are also exhibited in the Prehistoric Gallery. Among the finds, there was a bronze figurine of a Mother Goddess. Being very rare, this is represented in the gallery by a plaster cast. The Roman finds from Arikkamedu are also shown in this gallery. It is on seeing the fragments of a Roman amphora in this Gallery that Sir Mortimer Wheeler began a series of excavations which uncovered a great deal of the history of contacts between South India and Rome. The arms

Hand axes Palaeolithic period 125,000-500,000 B.C. Harish

Bricks Mohenjo Daro 2500 B.C. 1 Large brick for covering drains 2 Building brick 3 Brick used as door socket. Harish

Indian elephant (Elaphas maximus) Chengam, North Arcot Dt., 1887 A.D.

exhibited in this gallery are mainly from the Tanjore Armoury and are of a great variety. The staircase leading to the first floor is decorated with a number of excellent wood carvings from Tamil Nadu, including decorated doorways and lintels.

The first floor of the building is notable for the excellently arranged Ethnology galleries depicting the mode of living of the tribals in South India through their tools, artefacts, ornaments, dresses and dwellings. The Todas, the Khonds, the Lambadis are some of the tribes depicted. The popular exhibit in the Ethnology Gallery is that of a series of Kondapalli toys, representing the court of Yama. In this gallery writing materials, traditional fire-making tools and tribal-bronzes and boomerangs are also exhibited.

Adjoining the Ethnology Gallery, a Gallery of Musical Instruments shows various types of percussion, wind and string instruments. The prominent exhibit here is the Panchamukha Vadyam used in the temples. It is a huge vessel made of bronze with five drums on the top. Another part of the first floor is devoted to the various types of metal objects of day-to-day life. Lamps, nut-crackers, utensils, plates and ritual vessels are displayed in this Gallery. Life size figures of Kathakali dancers showing the striking costumes worn by them are the dominant exhibits in another gallery in which there are also various types of folk toys and votive offerings. Puppetry is an important folk art in South India and specimens of these are shown in a small Puppet Gallery of this building.

The bronzes of Tamil Nadu are considered as the acme of artistic achievement. The icons of the Chola period from 9th to 12th Century A.D. especially are the toast of art connoisseurs anywhere. This Museum has the largest collection of such bronzes. A carefully made selection of these pieces is on display on two floors in the Bronze Gallery which was specially constructed for this purpose in 1963. The Gallery on the ground floor consists of two rows of showcases on either side containing Vaishnavite bronzes on the left and Saivite bronzes on the right and a

row of big bronzes are fixed on the pedestals in the middle. Three big figures of Nataraja face us as we enter the gallery. Each is from a different place and period and each has its own distinctive beauty. An image of Ardhanariswara right behind them is a Chola masterpiece. It is from Tiruvengadu in the Tanjore District and was part of a hoard dug up by chance from the earth and belongs to the 10th Century A.D. It is exquisite for the manner in which the masculine features of Parvati are fused into one image. For sheer artistic excellence, it is unsurpassed. This gallery is full of such masterpieces from the Pallava to the Vijayanagar and Nayak periods. On the mezzanine floor, there are Buddhist and Jain bronzes apart from some more figures of Nataraja and Saivite saints. The Numismatic Gallery in a small room on the first floor tells the story of coinage with particular reference to Indian coinage through metal casts of selected coins from the Museum collection.

A few of the finest bronzes have been separately presented in the National Art Gallery which is set up in a beautiful building of sandstone at a little distance from the Bronze Gallery. Monumental in appearance and standing apart from the other buildings in lone splendour, this building of the National Art Gallery is one of the most appreciated constructions in Madras. The Gallery itself is so named because it seeks to present within its compact space a view of our country's artistic heritage through a selection of art objects. This gallery was inaugurated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1951 on the occasion of the Museum's Centenary Celebrations.

The bronze image of Nataraja from Tiruvelangadu of Chingleput District is displayed in this gallery. This exquisite piece inspired the great French sculptor, Auguste Rodin, to write a paean of praise in *Arts Asiatic*, a French art journal in 1910. There is also a group of bronzes of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana in this Gallery from Vadakkuppanniyur, which are superb pieces of Chola art. Miniature paintings of Moghul and Rajasthan Schools and Tanjore paintings, Kalamkari hangings, ivory inlaid caskets, bidriware and wood carvings are also found in this Gallery.

Contemporary art collections also have found a place in this Museum. These are arranged in the Gallery of contemporary Art. Paintings of Ravi Varma, Durandhar, Jamini Roy, Nandalal Bose, Devi Prasad Roy Choudhry, K.C.S. Panicker, Sreenivasulu, Reddappa Naidu, Munuswamy are represented in the Gallery among the others. Modern sculptures of Devi Prasad Roy Choudhry, Pradosh Das Gupta, Dhanapal, Nandagopal and Janakiraman are on show here.

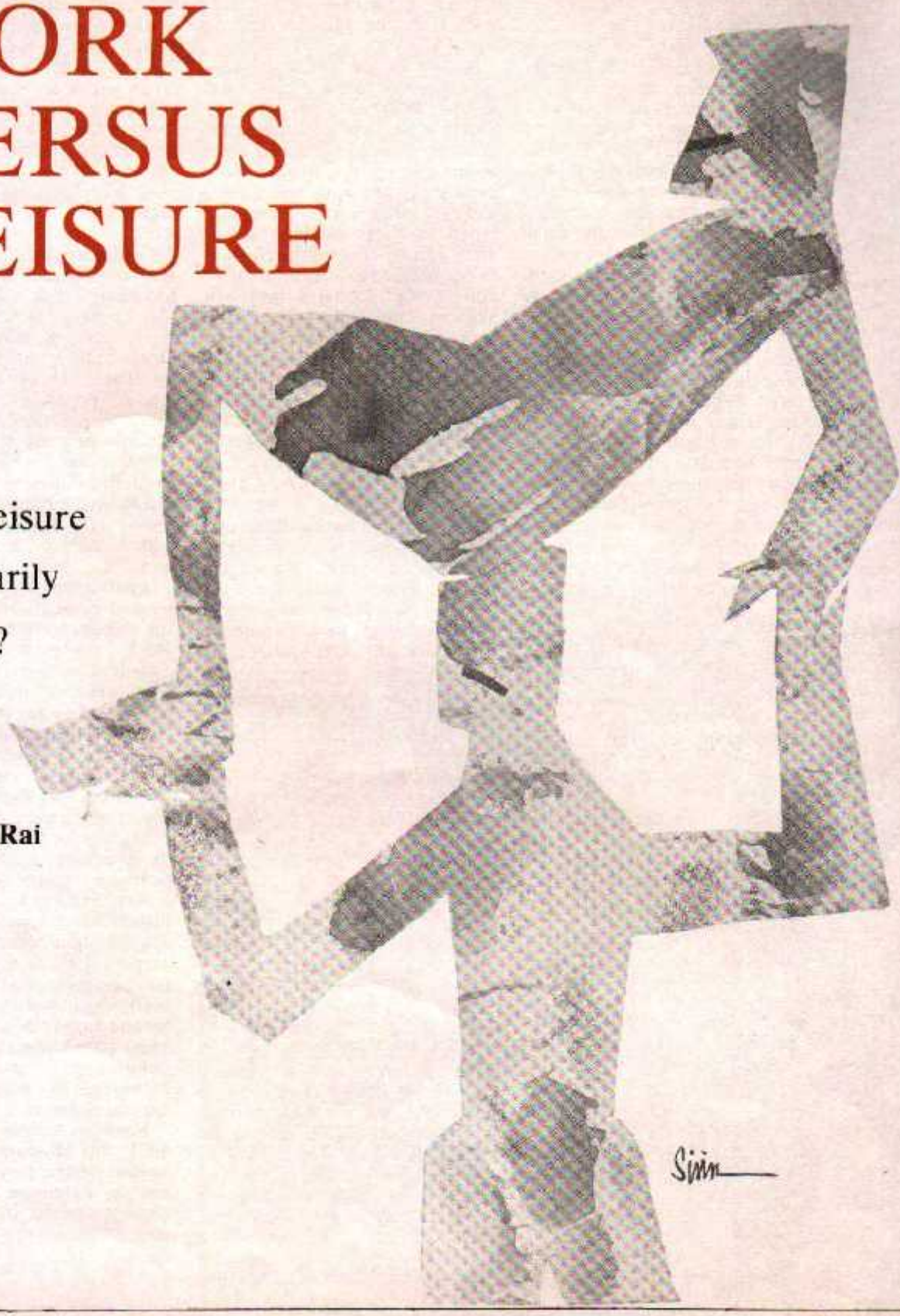
Apart from being known for what it presents in its galleries, this Museum is famous for its work in preserving antiquities and in disseminating knowledge of culture and natural sciences. It has a well-equipped Chemical Conservation Laboratory for preserving antiquities. It was the first museum to set up such a laboratory way back in 1931. The Museum Theatre is well-known in Madras for its architecture and its excellent accoustics and is nearly a century old. The Centenary Exhibition Hall was the first gallery set up in the city for artists to hold exhibitions of their works. Lectures, exhibitions, seminars and films-shows, are regularly organised by this Museum for the benefit of the public. The Museum is known for its range of publications in art, archaeology, anthropology, numismatics and natural sciences.

From its simple beginnings in 1851, this Museum has grown to be one of the premier museums for its extensive collection of objects and its intensive activities.

Nagaraja Ajanta
5th Century A.D.
(Plastercast) Harish

"Translation of the Buddha's bowl" Amaravati 2nd Century A.D.

WORK VERSUS LEISURE



Is the leisure necessarily a boon?

by Ajay Rai

MR. B is a senior executive in a business organisation, always 'overloaded' with work. He goes to the office around 11 in the morning, attends a few important meetings, comes back home, bathes, dresses, goes to his club (unless there is some 'important' party to attend to) and stays there till the wee hours of the morning. Comes home, sleeps and is again ready for the day. He is rather senior in the organisational hierarchy, so he can get away from doing much work ('My job is to direct') and has more time at his disposal to do nothing than is good for his health. He spends this leisure time attending parties—cocktails, clubs, video shows—and is awfully busy and tired doing nothing.

This is not true of all executives since the situation is not as bad as it looks, but each one of them is involved with it in some way or the other.

We *are* getting more and more time for our leisure than what our ancestors did a few decades back. We *are* spending this leisure time in more and more useless and unproductive activities. Those who have crossed over the bridge are suffering, those who are heading for it, shall.

The conflict of work and leisure is becoming more and more important and complex than we realise today. It is also central to the theme of the Utopian society. If work provides us with the means to sustain ourselves, leisure gives us the breathing spell. Work is very seldom free from outer compulsions, leisure is almost always so. And only when a society reaches a stage when work achieves all the values normally associated with leisure, and leisure, of work, can it be said to have achieved the ultimate—The Utopian Society.

Let us take it from the beginning.

None of the early civilisations seem to have liked work. The Greeks found it a curse. Aristotle went to the extent of saying: "All paid employment absorbs and degrades the mind." According to Homer, God hated mankind and out of spite condemned men to labour. Work was what brutalised the mind. It was painful and humiliating, though necessary. The Romans, following the Greeks, thought the same. The early Hebrew found work a dismal drudgery—to be suffered as punishment for the original sin. Though Christianity was to give the world much of the work ethics we know today, in its early stages it looked down upon work. Jesus Christ saying. "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" was interpreted as a teaching against work though Christ was explaining a certain attitude of surrender and was speaking to would-be followers.

If in the early Hindu society each work had a highly developed identity of its own with a specialising but flexible hereditary skill developed to perform it. Society was compartmentalised at a latest stage on the basis of birth and one did what one was destined to do. The worker became the dependent and servant of this social structure.

The modern work ethics can be traced back to the advent of Calvinism, which saw work as a virtue and profit making as an obeisance to god. It saw as everybody's duty to see work that brought him and to society the greatest returns; and soon the secular religion of work was born. If capitalism saw work as its central theme, communism was not far behind. Marx saw through work the realisation of a society of Total Men—the Perfect Men. And the Fascists saw it as social duty. In fact in work was seen man's confirmation of himself against Nature.

But today these societies have become leisure societies. Take for example the most representative of them—the USA—which consumes a lot more than it produces. With a population merely 6% of the world's, it yet consumes over 40% of its resources. This includes well over a third of the world's tin, over a fourth of its steel, phosphate, potash and nitrogenous fertilisers, about a fifth of its cotton, and about half of its newsprint and synthetic rubber.

By the year 2000, using a conservative estimate, the world's population will stand at 5.5 billion. If each one of them decided to live like the average American, it would require apart from ten times today's total production, over 75 times as much iron and zinc as is now annually extracted, 100 times as much copper, 200 times as much lead, and 250 times tin. From where would all these come?

As one American says: **"Ours is not only the richest and the most powerful civilisation that ever existed, but also one of the most uneasy both without and within...** The monster we have called into existence must be looked after, and he is more demanding of time and attention than the creations of any other civilization... **We are mounted on a tiger and it is hard to imagine how we might dismount."**

In some form or the other, all societies on earth are heading for this most immediate ultimate goal—leisure. I am not trying to ignore the sufferings of some societies in terms of unemployment, underemployment and poverty. But the fact remains that given the choice and the chance, man is choosing leisure

more often than he did only a decade back. Instead of following the earlier dictums like "Pleasure out of work" and "Six days thou shalt labour and do all thy work" man is fighting for a shorter period of work per week so that he has more time for leisure.

As has been estimated, it won't be long when society would be offering three alternatives to each working adult: (1) Working for less time per week, or (2) Taking more and longer vacation per year, or (3) Taking early retirement.

Once we overcome the catastrophe created by unemployment and population explosion which should be a thing of the immediate future—we will head straight for what specialists have been predicting all along—the leisure society, where "2% of the population working in the factory and on the farm will be able to produce all the goods and food that the other 98% can possibly consume." Its industry, consisting of films, TV, magazines, video, etc, is already expanding as never before. Ways which can help people being entertained and enjoy life become more and more important. **And as technologies from these societies spread, so does their concept of leisure.** In all the Indian metropolitan cities exposed as they are to the western influence most effectively—the youth, the first prey, are becoming increasingly addicted to drugs, video, films, TV, etc. Though most of the country is still untouched by this evil, such days are numbered. As the TV becomes more and more popular, as the programmes and the channels offered increase, the other elements of the phenomenon will follow. We will then face the impact most painfully. For that is what the Western countries are feeling. Almost as if they have been **cursed by some unknown, faceless monster who is giving them more and more free time and then offering meaningless things for them to do—and then enjoying the resulting madness.**

Why is it that leisure is not bringing the expected happiness? As Max Gunther in *The Weekenders* says, "The magic aura of good living eludes people today, the evidence does not show that their problems can be solved automatically by lengthening the span of their workless time. The problems have their roots elsewhere."

Where is this 'elsewhere'? **Where do the problems originate? The answer lies with the essential nature of man.** Once he joins the leisure seeking herd (herd, because providing leisure to individuals is not worth the trouble) he loses his individuality. **He hates responsibilities. He hates the problems of life. And to escape from these he gets closer and closer to leisure, which essentially has nothing to offer in terms of meaningful activities.** If it is felt more acutely in societies like those of the USA, and is increasingly being felt in the USSR also that mere increase of leisure time is not conducive to a good, meaningful life, it is only a question of time when it would be felt the world over.

It has been so from the beginning of history. Nations have achieved material greatness—only to fall in the lap of leisure, decay and eventual destruction. Consider the ancient Spartans, known for their capacity to endure much without showing it. Aristotle in his 'Politica' says, "The Spartans remained secure as long as they were at war; they collapsed as soon as they acquired an empire. They did not know how to use the leisure that peace brought."

History repeated itself in the case of the great Roman Empire—the greatest in its time. As long as the Romans were fighting to make their empire, all was fine. Kingdoms upon kingdoms fell at their feet—without their working too much for it. Soon they had a vast empire and time to enjoy the fruits of these conquests. By the time Nero came, the Romans were enjoying 176 holidays a year! Still closer to our time was the Mughal Empire which, once having reached its zenith, whiled away its glory through wine, women and waywardness. And all this could be 'achieved' because they had more leisure at their disposal which they mistook to be freedom from work.

True, the situation is not as bad as to invite alarm. But it won't be long before the inertia of what these countries began some decades back wears off and they disappear in their own quagmire. Unless of course something drastic does happen. What is the alternative? Is it to go back to the dictate:"Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her way, and be wise" or, "If any would not work, neither should he eat?"

What has happened to the Western society and what would happen to our own if nothing is done about it is the crisis which the contradiction connected with work and leisure has created.

As we see in the leisure societies, **instead of using the leisure period to recharge their mental 'batteries' so that they can be more truly productive, they are using leisure as an end in itself, heaving** a sigh of relief once it is over, "We are glad our vacation is over, now we can rest up by going back to work."

It is this contradiction which needs to be tackled. This in fact is the barometer which tells us when to sit up and face reality.

It is easy to condemn, but the fact remains that all of us long for a life of prosperity, peace and fulfilment, the true good life. But—and we are back to where we began—none of these are available in the leisure societies.

From the beginning of history, man has desired for a life which has all the basic ingredients of a perfect life. And from the beginning of history, man has failed to achieve it. Why?

There have been kings—political, industrial, commercial, religious—who decided to make their empires the best in the world. They succeeded in carving out vast empires, but failed miserably when it came to improving the quality of life. They conquered. they prospered, they

We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all that we need to make us really happy is something to be enthusiastic about.

—Charles Kingsley

died. The true good life eluded them, as it did those who preceded or followed them.

There were intellectual giants who went into the basics of what makes up the perfect life. They thought, they described, they ignored and were soon forgotten.

Let us take some classic examples.

The first among these is the Utopian society of Plato. Though he did not coin the word, his is probably the first most exhaustive description of a perfect society. "The groundwork of Plato's Utopia, accordingly, is the simple agricultural life, the growing of wheat, barley, olives and grapes."

We have some striking resemblance to this in our contemporary life. The material prosperity which can result only in cities pulls us away from our villages to the cities. We work madly to achieve prosperity. And having achieved it, want for ourselves the simplicity of the village life! Is it because materialism has very limited satisfaction? Obviously so. "When I was a kid, I figured like everyone else does that the more money I had, the more things I would possess and be happier.... I was lucky. I obtained the material things when I was relatively young. And it didn't take long to figure out what a ridiculous goal that was... I guess what I'm looking for after all these hectic years is a fairly simple life," is the statement of a 'successful' man.

Plato espoused the theme of "necessities of life for all". He saw the special skills and talents which all did not have in equal measure but which were needed to produce specialised goods and services. What his utopian society required for its existence was (1) ample agricultural base and (2) controlling of population.

Then there was Sir Thomas More, who coined the word Utopia. More was a social revolutionary of the true order. He saw many evils in the society of his time, the period of the 16th century when Henry VIII ruled England. He detested the social wrongs of his country, the corruption of the clergy, the sufferings of the poor, the destruction of wars and the luxurious living of the few at the cost of the majority.

It was more as an angry reaction to all this that he thought of an alternative where none of the shortcomings of this society existed. The result was the Utopia which had only the good things of life. Like Plato's, More's Utopia also had agriculture as the base on which society flourished. He went so far as to describe the location of the society of perfect bliss. It was located on a crescent shaped island, made of farm land and 54 cities. There was complete cooperation among those who lived in this land. Each trade was as important as the other. If a farmer needed funds, all he had to do was to approach the magistrate, who gave him the necessary funds. More however failed to describe the mechanism which would make such a system work.

More thought that 'fear of lack causes covetousness and greed in man; also pride which counts it a glorious thing to surpass and excel others in the superfluous and vain ostentation of things. But this kind of vice among the Utopian can have no place. The basic problems of human nature were to be sorted out before anybody could be permitted in the Utopia. Just how this was possible, More had nothing much to offer. Predictably More's ideas could never be implemented and met the same fate which all the utopias of the past had met.

Communism recognises—as did the other utopias—that man's basic desire is to be happy and that happiness comes only with universal prosperity. Marx even went to the extent of describing the concept of 'the total man', giving the impression of how human nature itself could be changed. The changed man—the total man—was so contented with his life that he was fully unselfish and considerate towards others.

Human nature has never been an easy thing to describe. Thus **the concept of changing human nature through a mere change of circumstance of social relationship was flawed from the beginning.** Each person wants the freedom to do what he wants to do. He resists compulsion of any kind. Each dislikes authority which goes against his wishes. Each wants the good things of life—as far as possible without actually working for it. This is a contradiction faced by every utopian philosopher.

The communists have tried to solve it by tackling the question of environment. They feel that the environment makes the human nature. Thus, by changing the environment, human nature would be changed automatically. For example, destroy the concept of private property and you would have destroyed greed, envy, status-seeking, etc. Des-

troy the concept of work as the degradation of mind and you would have destroyed the basic laziness. Communism saw the replacement of the sweat and toil and privation and suffering of the present by a world of happiness and joy, a world filled with all the physical and other necessities of life, because "under communism men will work to the best of their abilities simply because men will delight in creative endeavour." As time has proved once again, nothing is so simple.

The environment does not create the evil aspects of human nature. It is at best the channel through which man's shortcomings manifest themselves. Removal of one environment would only make man adjust to that which replaces the destroyed environment.

It may be worthwhile to think in terms of moral and ethical dimensions of human nature. Only then we would be able to create the necessary mental conclusion which in turn would achieve the desired result. But then are we not advocating the same thing, changing of human nature to achieve utopia?

It is not surprising that the single most important reason which has made human utopias impossible is their inherent dictatorial tendencies. To evolve "a set of habits, a fresh scale of values, a different set of relationships and institutions and... an alteration of the physical and mental characteristics of the people chosen," each utopia tries to impose its will on all human activities and behaviour in all their dimensions through an order which is too airtight and strict and inflexible to allow for any change or development. And with no potential for change and development, each utopia became a closed society which either never existed or if it did, decayed in no time.

Does it mean that no human utopia is possible?

Each society has to satisfy the basic needs and aspirations of man to be ultimately called an utopia. They become thus the focal points which can make the existence of an utopian society a reality.

The basic problem is that our civilization, which is a civilization of machines, can teach man everything except how to be a man.

—Andre Malraux

Basic physical needs we all know. Food, shelter and clothing. There may be a number of variations in the way these are satisfied but they are the centres around which all our basic needs exist.

And basic aspirations? Look at the nature of man as an individual and not as a member of his society. He has this basic desire—this craving—to dream, to think, to play, to know. And why does he want to do all these? Because he wants to fulfil his responsibility towards his calling, that inner commandment which must be obeyed. Otherwise the man as an individual dies and just the member of his society—his outer crust—remains for whom greed, selfishness and lust are the driving forces.

The inner calling. The work. It is work which brings out the best within us. But what kind of work are we talking about? Is it that which brings us prosperity and material gains? Partly, for money too is important (and if it is dirty, it is only because we make it so). But the basic quality of the work is the intrinsic satisfaction we feel by just doing it—money or no money.

Each one of us has that something in us which cries to be taken out and given shape. **It is in our nature to want to change the world around us, to make things and to do things, and to want to do them as best we can.** When we cannot do this, the decay sets in and slowly, but steadily, the individuality which makes us what we are—or what we should be—starts dying. Once we fail to preserve our individuality, there remains no hope for us to succeed in preserving our identity as members of our societies. For both are related and interdependent. Ultimately what remains is the outer, apparently healthy, shell and the mindlessness becomes the kind of poison for which there is no panacea.

We can avoid it only when leisure gains the same seriousness of purpose which work has today and rises above and beyond the superficial, meaningless level of modern greed, corruption and decay.

Work. And Leisure. How different they are. Yet how similar they can be. If leisure has the uniqueness of an activity completely free from outer compulsions work is almost always decided by them. **Not unless work is free from outer compulsions and leisure becomes as fulfilling and satisfying as work, not unless work and leisure can replace each other without in any way affecting our attitude towards life, not unless leisure achieves all the values of work, and work of leisure, can we hope to be happy and free.**

And if such a thing does happen—we would have achieved our utopia.

by SOCHI ROUTROY

The latest recipient of the Jnanpith Award for 1986 SOCHI ROUTROY is an epoch-making poet in Oriya in the true sense of the term, an inspired innovator in form, a wizard in diction and above all else, a promoter of new ideas and possibilities in Oriya poetry. Here is one of his poems (from *Pandulipi* a book to which the Jnanpith has referred), though much is lost in translation.

THE BALANCE

Hopes of revival gone,
In mad divining rapt,
Values upset,
Have I lost my balance
Home, or wilderness,
Who would say:

A restless stream
Hungering for the sea,
In a constant search
For lower, and yet lower levels,
I meander:
Farther and farther still,
In a bewildering maze of time and space,
Incompatible with myself.
A firm foot
On the solid earth planted,
For the next step, an uncertain pause;
One eye upon a routined world,
And the other at tangent to the stars;
Where is the still centre of an eddying earth,
The lone flutist
That calls the tune to the ring-dance unending.

In the haze of a narrow vision,
The fish-eye target scarcely spied,
Who would lend the seer's lamp
To stop my random quests?

If it's Fate's decree
That my everyday life
Mustn't run parallel to my heart's desire,
Why complain?

At right angles, it shall be,
Impinge my days,
And crumble to dust in a relentless war.

Rather than third-rate poetics,
Or an idle peace,
A fighter's creed shall be mine;
The twin shafts of a rebel spirit
and withering satire;
My armoury.

The unthinking rabble,
An eager animal crowd
Heading for holy places
In quest of easy salvation:—
Contemptible cowards,
Mere onlookers,
At the end of a bout dispersing,
Yet thirsting for excitement anew.

But one boon I seek—
Only a foot of land
To rest my uncertain step.

From 'Pandulipi'

The tenth article in the series introducing different drama forms of India.

PRAHLAAD-NAATAK: A THEATRE OF LIBERATED REALITY

by Jiwan Pani

I couldn't take my eyes off the demon. Although fearsome, proud and ruthless, he was a riot of colour. And when he spoke, it was as though thunder had forsaken its voice and chosen the song-bird's lilt.... A murderous chase: the demon in pursuit of his very young son. Languid, deliberate, dance-like as it was, the chase wanted nothing for excitement. May I liken the pursuer to a vast tornado grabbing at a sprightly rainbow? .... Pointing at a pillar 'on-stage', the demon roared at his son: "If your god be omnipresent, is he then within that pillar too?" "Why yes, for certain!" the boy replied. And the demon, incensed, knocked down the pillar where God immanent abode. From the debris arose, thunderously roaring, gloriously maned, a being half-man, half-lion. A candle-flame mocked by the light of the sun, the demon was quickly overcome, his belly ripped open by savage claws.

That was the climactic scene of a performance of *Prahlaad-naatak*, a fascinating form of traditional theatre prevalent in the southern part of Orissa, especially the district of Ganjam. There are now just around half a dozen groups performing *Prahlaad-naatak*, which has only one play in its repertoire. The performance of one group differs, of course, from that of another in the use of dialogue and song, but the plot remains the same. Theatre forms with one-play repertoires are not uncommon in India. The multiform *Raamleelaa* of North India, *Krishnaattam* and *Mudiettu* of Kerala, *Krishna-paarijaata* and *Saangyaabaalyaa* of Karnataka and *Dashaavatar* of Goa are some of the major forms which belong to this category. One wonders what really is so abiding in such forms of traditional theatre—that the same play performed countless times over hundreds of years neither loses any of its appeal nor becomes out of date. Many of these plays, judged as literature, are unimpressive—often loosely structured. The text of such a play gives no clue to its performance; in the Indian theatrical tradition there is always a gap between the structure of a play and its performance. For instance, with reference to *Koodiaattam*, a highly stylized temple theatre of Kerala closest to the Sanskrit dramatic tradition, a play running into, say, forty printed pages may take more than fifteen days' performance, each day's performance lasting six to eight hours. This would be unthinkable in a realistic, dialogue-centred theatre. *Prahlaad-naatak* is not as elaborate as *Koodiaattam*, but the same principle applies to it.

Raja Ramakrishna Chhotray, an Oriya feudatory ruler of

The tiered platform used in PRAHLAAD-NAATAK. Prahlaada executes fascinating dance movements while going up and down the steps of the platform. In this scene Prahlaada entreats his father to let him worship Vishnu.

Photos : Courtesy Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.

Jalantar state, now in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh is believed to have conceived first the performatory form of *Prahlaad-naatak* a hundred years ago. The first play was written by Gopinath Parichha, a poet and playwright who received generous partronage from the raja. As a gesture of gratitude the playwright not only dedicated the work to the raja but also ascribed its authorship to him. The manuscript of this play was secured in 1938 by the Madras Oriental Manuscript Library, and has now been published by the Cultural Affairs Department of the Government of Orissa.

The climactic scene of PRAHLAAD-NAATAK. Nrisimha incarnation of Vishnu tearing open the belly of Hiranyakashipu, the egoistic demon.

Within a few years of its birth, *Prahlaad-naatak* became so popular that the rajas of neighbouring states were inspired to write other versions of the play. It is not known whether the rajas themselves wrote these versions or had them written by poets and playwrights patronized by them. Some of these versions were also published years ago. The original play and its later versions all abound in song, interspersed with prose dialogue. There are more than a hundred songs which different characters sing during the performance, making *Prahlaad-naatak* highly operatic in character. No matter which version, the plot remains the same, based on the myth of *Nrisimha-avataara*, the man-lion incarnation of Vishnu.

A dramatic scene. Under the orders of Hiranyakashipu, the Brahmins are persuading Prahlaada not to worship Vishnu. They also threaten to torture him if he does not agree to the proposal.

The Nrisimha myth has inspired other forms of Indian traditional theatre too, but *Prahlaad-naatak* is the only form of theatre which has no play in its repertoire but that on the Nrisimha theme.

A realistic theatre is perhaps inadequate to handle such a theme; a stylized one may, on the other hand, bring out the myth's nuances. The forms of traditional theatre mentioned above are all highly stylized and therefore not unequal to the demands of the theme. The stylization scheme of one form differs, of course, from that of the others; acting style, make-up and costume are thus very dissimilar. In Indian theatrical tradition make-up and costume are regarded as aspects of the art of acting, and are jointly known as *aahaaryaabhinaya*.

Of the forms of traditional theatre which have in their repertoires plays based on the Nrisimha theme, *Prahlaad-naatak* and *Therukoothu* have the most stylized *aahaaryaabhinaya*. The latter form, evolved much earlier, is likely to have influenced the former in this respect. Although there are many dissimilarities, both use heavy and suggestive facial make-up for the male characters and rather realistic light make-up for the female. Again, male characters in both forms wear on their shoulders wing-like decorations and of all

the major characters only Nrisimha wears a mask.

Music is the life-breath of *Prahlaad-naatak*. It not only provides the base but also determines the dramatic structure. Both vocal and instrumental music is used at appropriate places to intensify the dramatic effect. The percussive music helps the *abhinaya* to acquire a choreographic character. Dialogues winged with music take the emotive intent farther than realistic delivery. Complex emotions which cannot be verbalized are adequately and admirably communicated through music. *Prahlaad-naatak* draws heavily upon the traditional music of Orissa, which, though influenced by both the Carnatic and Hindustani systems of music, has a distinctive character all its own.

Since music dominates *Prahlaad-naatak*, the director (also the conductor) must be a good vocalist who knows and can sing all the songs in the play. More often than not, the director himself acts as *gaahaka* (from the Sanskrit *gaayaka*—'singer')—not quite a character in the drama, yet the pivot on which the performance turns. Primarily, the *gaahaka* is the leader of the chorus, but also acts as interpreter, commentator and conductor. Although, usually, the *gaahaka* does not wear any specified costume or make-up, he has specific songs and dialogues. He sings eulogies of gods, narrates events preceding a dramatic situation just before it is presented—events pertinent to the plot but not enacted. At times, it is the *gaahaka* who speaks the asides of a character and comments on his or her mood and thoughts. He is entrusted with the responsibility of explaining to lay spectators the cryptic, pithy dialogues. The *gaahaka's* role runs more or less parallel to that of the *sutradhaar* of the *Ankiaanat* (*Bhaavanaa*) theatre of Assam, but the *sutradhaar* appears on the stage and has a specific costume and make-up.

Prahlaad-naatak, like many other forms of traditional theatre in India, is not performed in a hall but in the open air and on level ground. A must for the performance is a five or six-tiered wooden platform some six feet high. The top of the platform has an area of about six feet by four, on which the throne of Hiranyakashipu is placed. The platform is usually collapsible and easily erected before and dismantled after a show. An area of about thirty feet square, or even less—the acting area—is enclosed with ropes in front of the platform. To the left, twenty feet from the platform, a hollow structure representing the pillar Hiranyakashipu smote is kept. The musicians, led by the *gaahaka*, take their places to the right of the acting area, close to the platform. The orchestra usually comprises of three instruments—a harmonium, *pakhaawaj* (a drum with two faces, also called *mardala*) and *gini* (a pair of small cymbals). A few groups have now started using instruments like the violin and trumpet, adding a touch of glamour to their orchestras, but these exotics do not enhance the appeal of the music.

A performance of *Prahlaad-naatak* begins with an invocation, *Ganesha-vandanaa*, whereby the elephant-headed God Ganesha (literally, 'God of the Masses') is eulogized. Many other traditional Indian theatre performances begin with the *Ganesha-vandanaa* too, since it is believed that the god removes all obstacles, especially those hindering aesthetic enjoyment. The *vandanaa* is sung by the chorus led by the *gaahaka*, who then tells the audience that he will soon present the play and, in advance, begs the audience to pardon any inadvertent mistake. He proceeds to tell the story. The curiosity of the spectators is not dampened but aroused by this; most of them know the story anyway, based as it is on popular myth.

These preliminaries over, the play proper begins, each sequence announced with a flourish of the orchestra. The dialogues are often sung, the refrain taken up by the chorus. After each passage the drum breaks forth; and to the varied percussive pattern, the actor executes dance-like movements. Singing is taken up again at the end of the dance passage. The virile and vigorous dance of Hiranyakashipu, especially on the steps of the tiered platform, is a treat to the eyes. In contrast Prahlaada, played by a boy between nine and twelve years of age, dances with lyrical grace. Apart from a few minor characters, all sing and dance; versatility therefore is a must for a *Prahlaad-naatak* actor. As in many other traditional dramatic forms of India, female characters are played by male actors.

HIRANYAKASHIPU with complete make-up and costume. Mark the wing-like decoration attached to each shoulder. Such decorations, but totally different in design, are worn by the Therukoothu and Veethi-naatakam actors.

Orissa's Chhau Dance led by Bhagavan Sahu (age 70)

Krishnanattam (Kerala) Classical Dance.

CULTURAL FETE

Review of a festival organised by South Zone Cultural Centre

THE finest forms of culture, be it literature, music, dance, sculpture or painting, were born in solitude—in the solitude of the creator's inspiration as well as in a certain environmental solitude. Thus Valmiki's epic was written in Dandakaranya and Vyasa wrote in the quietude of Badrikashram. The great classical dances of India were born out of the artiste's devotion and urge to offer his art to the Deity, mostly inside the temple. The same applies to music and sculpture.

But every art form is also a *natural* communication. It springs out of the artist's creative delight and floods the minds of others with a variation of the same delight.

But can such art forms be enjoyed collectively by 'motley crowds'? This is a question which lurks in the minds of many people. Sometimes it is pronounced, but often prudence keeps one silent about it.

Mohiniattam (Kerala) Classical Dance

Dummy Horse, Folk-dance (T.Nadu)—Thanjavur Party.

Dhanurvidya, Folk-dance (Andhra Pradesh) artistes awaiting their turn.

FOR THE MASSES

CAN IT BE PURPOSEFUL?

by Devapriyo

Photographs by Vidyavrata

A rural scene. By—Laxma Gaud—Bangalore (35 cm x 57 cm)

Pooja-Nrutya By—G.S. Shenoy—Bangalore (90 cm × 90 cm) Photo courtesy SZCC

It has not been long when Zonal Cultural Centres were formed in India mainly to promote national integration through culture and to carry the joys of many-splendoured cultural heritage of India to the masses. One of the centres is the South Zone Cultural Centre with its headquarters at Thanjavur. The Centre has been keeping very active and one of its activities has been to organise festivals where not only dance and music are presented before large audiences, but also art exhibitions are organised. One such festival took place in Pondicherry, spread over three days in August.

Frankly, this writer had his own reservations about such displays before mixed gatherings. Is it not carrying the spirit of democracy and socialism a bit too far? Do the masses appreciate classical dances and music, or rare forms of ritualistic arts?

The festival at Pondicherry was spread over six venues (seven, if we include the exhibition of paintings at the Town Hall), simultaneously presenting items both classical and folk. The response of the "motley crowd" had to be observed to be believed. Thousands sat or stood in silence appreciating the performances – and even craving for more when an evening's programme was over! Amidst them one could feel how purely academic was the question whether or not they appreciated such fine arts. It was obvious that most of them *enjoyed* the performances more than many of the so called sophisticated people do.

I woke up to the fact that these are the people who have continued to appreciate the Ramayana and the Mahabharata with all their subtleties and philosophy. It was foolish of me to have any doubts about their capacity to appreciate good art. Many of the artistes also come from the common people of India. Indeed, in matters of culture there was no 'motley crowd' Culture was inherent in the masses. Many belonging to the upper strata of the society have spoilt their cultural roots, but not the masses.

The South Zone Cultural Centre, like any other zonal centre, "is also striving to preserve and develop several vanishing art forms," said the bright young director of the Centre, Mrs. Sheela Priya. I had the feeling that bringing these vanishing arts to the people is the best way to preserve them. No degree of governmental patronage, without support from the people, can preserve any art form except in the museum.

I was pleasantly surprised to see even the painting exhibition attracting a large number of villagers. In days to come, they could be the real patrons of even the modern art.

The programmes were divided between classical and folk arts, but the emphasis was on the folk. Among the classical dances presented were Bharata Natyam Kuchipudi, Kathakali, Mohiniattam, Krishnanattam,etc., and in music were different instrumental and vocal items presented by some of the well-known artistes. In the folk features, Tamil Nadu's Dummy Horse Dance—a Maratha amusement first cultivated at Thanjavur and assimilated in Tamil folk tradition, was attractive for the sound effect of hooves produced by wooden stilts.

A puppet-dance with a difference is Bommalattam, where the human actors perform and not the puppets. Then there was the martial art of the Tamil people, Silambattam, believed to have been practised by the mighty Bhima.

Pondicherry presented Karagam, the performers showing intricate feats with vessels vertically piled on their heads.

From Andhra Pradesh came the Veeranatyam of the East Godavari district, the dancers carrying torches in their mouths. In Thappeta Gullu of Srikakulam one saw the performers singing themselves and beating metal drums fixed on their chests.

Karnataka presented Dollu Kunitha generally practised by the Kuruba tribe. Among other troupes from this state were the players of Katthi Varase (sword dance) and Donne Varase (club play) and Thogalu Bombe Atta—a fine theatrical play with leather puppets and Pandari Bhajane—a dance performed by the devotees of Pandarinath, an image of Krishna.

Kerala was represented by Velakali, the martial dance of the Nair Community, Paratanthira, a ritual dance performed before Bhagavathi temples, Kanniyarkali, a fast moving ancient dance and *Theyyam*, a significant dance showing man's aspiration to transcend himself.

Although Orissa does not belong to the South Zone, it sent two groups of remarkable folk-artistes. One of them could dance standing on high steps attached to two bamboos each. The other was Chhau dance group.

I felt convinced that the Zonal Cultural Centres can contribute much to the need of bringing the performing and other arts closer to the people if it works with this zeal and quality of organisation. The organisers could give an opportunity to the people living far away from the temple of Guruvayoor to witness an exclusive votive dance like Krishnanattam (of course on the condition that the troupe will perform in a temple arena only), beautiful and evocative. This is a sample of possiblities which a Government sponsored institution can explore if the officials concerned are imaginative.

It is one of our hopes to rescue the people's attention being claimed and consumed by bad cinema. Of course it holds many other promises.

One has only to grow older to become more tolerant. I see no fault that I might not have committed myself.

—*Goethe*

सीतायनम्
SITAYANA

K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

SITA'S SAGA SUBLIME

SITAYANA by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Published by V. Sadanand.Samata Books. 10 Kamaraj Bhavan, 573, Mount Road, Madras– 600 006. Price Rs.250.00.

Do inspirations for the poetry of epic dimensions still descend on creative minds? Has Valmiki's Ramayana scope and clues in it, still unexplored or unexhausted, to inspire 660 pages of poetry in 1987? Can there be yet another approach to the great story after Kamban's, Tulsidas's, Kalidasa's and Bhavabhuti's, not to mention of numerous other poets and dramatists?

Such questions are bound to come up when one sees the latest work by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sitayana*.

First, on the question of inspiration, let us have a look at the poet's experience, stated in a very simple way:

"Days, weeks passed. While I had a vague notion that *Sitayana* would be a Bridge in Seven Spans beginning with 'Mithila' and ending with 'Ashrama', I didn't know how exactly to begin. One day, however, leaving out the 'beginning' to begin itself at the appropriate time, I plunged—*in medias res* fashion—into Dandaka and found it easier to wade my way through the 'Aranya'. And 'Atri and Anasuya' (although in Valmiki this episode comes at the end of 'Ayodhya') became an auspicious start. Then the encounter with the monster, Viradha; the meeting with the Sages Sarabhanga and Sutikshna; the unusual argument between Sita and Rama about ceaseless punitive action against the Rakshasas in Dandaka; and the round of visits to the Ashramas.

"Suddenly, on 19 March 1983, just before dawn, the first lines on 'Mithila' came to me in a dream-state, and I got up and wrote them down:

The famed philosopher-king, Janaka,
paid obeisance to the Bard
of the Worlds, Narada, as he floated
into Mithila's domain..."

As one reads along, one becomes absorbed and feels a quiet delight which can come only from poetry written with pure love for its subject. It is the story of the Ramayana viewed with Sita as the centre. But the Earth-born Sita is much more than a great character:

Of womanhood I write, of the travail
and glory of motherhood;
of Prakriti and her infinite modes
and unceasing variety;

It is an experience to observe how the vibrant spell and splendour of this diction never wanes throughout this latest epic in English. The moving story of Sita—the truth incarnate that emerged from the earth and was nurtured by the seer-king who combined in him all the qualities of an ideal father (indeed his name was Janaka), who was then placed in the care of Rama, none other than Vishnu's incarnation and who inspite of all this could be stolen away by the chief of the hostile forces, and who after her heroic rescue was lost to mankind (if we are to accept the *Uttarakanda* as a part of the epic), is an all-time comment on the way of the world. Once again we realise that the story is ever new when we come to the end of the last Canto of the *Sitayana*, preceding the Epilogue:

Ten thousand cycles of hibernation,
birth, growth, flowering, fruition,
and fall, and once more winter! But the Earth
renews itself, and endures.

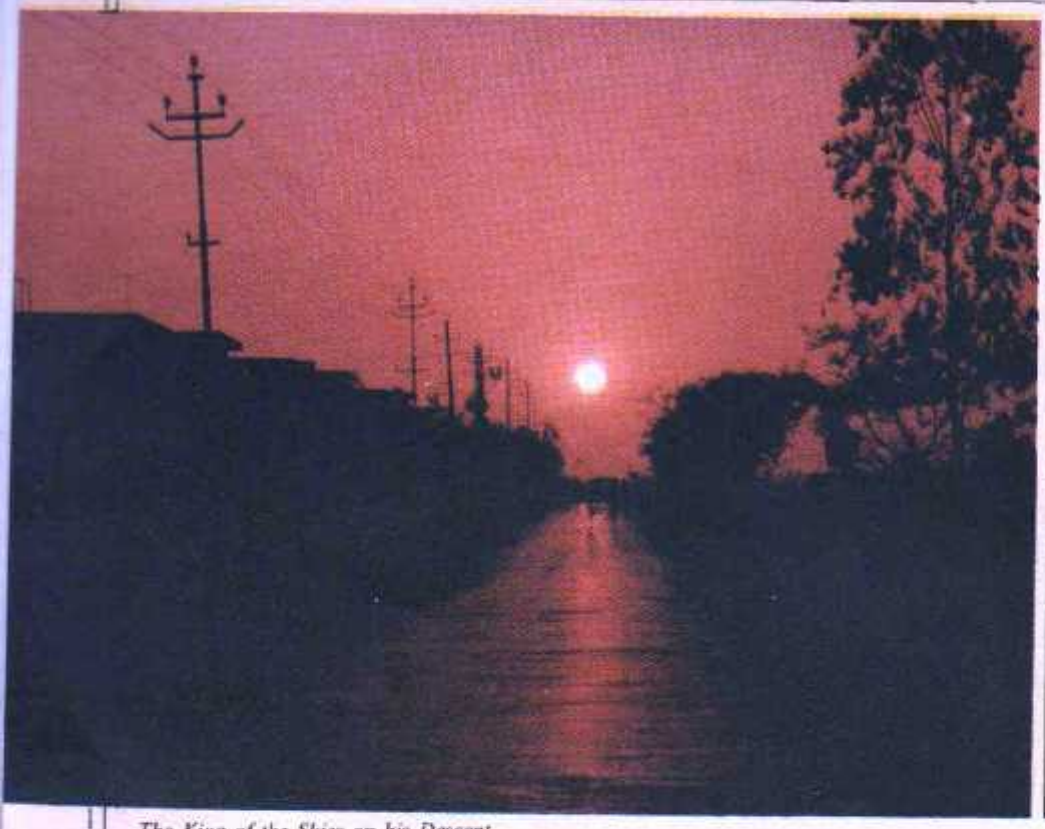
The Earth never tires or stales
or despairs,
for the pulses of Sita's
heart of compassion sustain
and foster
our evolving Life Divine.

It may serve a purpose, to end this write-up on a personal note. In 1970 this reviewer saw the author working day and night on his biography of Sri Aurobindo so that it could be published on time for Sri Aurobindo's Birth Centenary in 1972. And this work included typewriting the manuscript, preparing the elaborate Index and reading the proofsheets. One of his eyes was practically defunct. "I don't mind," he told me, "I must finish this offering." From his tone I had the feeling that he thought the work to be his last.

After that he wrote the biography of the Mother which brought him the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1980. Then, in 1982 was published his English translation of the Sundara Kanda of the Ramayana, *The Epic Beautiful*. Now (1987) we have the *Sitayana*. These apart from several minor works. Dr. Iyengar will be 80 in April next year.

I need not say in many words the 'purpose' I had in mind. Isn't this savant, this doyen of Indo-Anglian literary criticism an example and an inspiration for the other builders of the realm of gold?

'M'



The King of the Skies on his Descent

The Sun taking position for the blockade

SUNSET

WHEN the godly King of the skies, red and huge, surveys the world with a final look before descending behind the mountains or seas, a very strange mood can envelop our minds. It is the time for prayer, for chanting of Gayatri or just squattmg on the soft sands on the beach and forget the world. It always inspired the artists and poets.

To a keen observer each sunset looks different from the other. Some evenings the ominous clouds conceal the magnificent spectacle. On some evenings the Sun appears dull and chequered while on others he looks perfectly round and cheerful. A piece of cloud lit red by the Sun and a garland of cranes flying across wide expanse above, a frail boat floating near the horizon--add richly to the beauty of sunset.

Sometimes it is not just the Sun but his sweeping rays which produce magical effects on the waves of the seas or sands of the deserts. It can just transform a hard tar road into a wonder stream. It can make the water appear sacred in bright saffron colour inducing us to take a dip and go to the temple. The shadows are frighteningly long. These magical effects change from day to day. Apart from the cloud-formations and dust and moving objects, the position of the Sun undergoes a change everyday. It is good to remember that the Sun never sets on the same spot except for two days in a year. He moves in a semi circular path from North to-South and back.

I had the good fortune to witness a very special sunset, not long ago. I slowed down my car at a road junction on my way to the Lakshmi Tek in Belgaum, to give enough space for the oncoming bullock-cart. Instinctively I gazed at the western sky. What a fantastic scene there! The Sun was descending. In a few minutes he will actually block the road which was sloping toward the East. So where the Sun finally disappears the road has its peak height. My God, he will practically block the road or so it seems and what a riot he will raise with the complexion of the road! I quickly took my camera (which I always carry with me—

End of the magic

ON THE ROAD

by B.V. Subba Rao

you never know!) and took position praying that no vehicle will obstruct my view of the cosmic scene.

I could see the Sun taking a curvacious route becoming redder and redder with passage of every minute flooding the earth with his long rays like the powerful beams of search-lights. The effect was stunning. The road suddenly appeared like a flowing red stream. I captured him right away. Now he stood a few feet from the peak of the road exactly at right angles. So the bend is over. He will come down straight. Another click.

Then it happened, he did block the road standing defiantly and barring all traffic. Some cyclists and a few pedestrians seemed 'alighting' straight from the Sun on the road!

Now the blockade is total. Again I captured him in this surreptitious act. He looked disconcertingly at me for finding him out and in moments, disappeared. The funniest part of it is at the time of the descent and moments after his disappearance there appeared to be more light than before. This could perhaps be due to the play of the reflections of light and absence of long shadows.

I was not prepared for the spectacle. I never expected such a fantastic scene just on an ordinary road. I did not even check up if there is the right kind of film in the camera which by itself was of course not adequate for the purpose. Why, I did not even focus with care. Apperture and speed were as they had been earlier set. So I was not sure of my pictures. I planned another visit the next evening. Fortune knocks at our doors only once. This time I was well-equipped and prepared. But at the exact moment a rickety old city bus bulging with passengers and coughing up lots of smoke stopped in front of me. I waited breathlessly. It started but proceeded in the direction of the Sun. I cursed myself.

After four days I went again forgetting the fundamentals of astronomy. The sunset was a few feet away from the road obstructed completely by the nearby buildings. Only two chances in a year!

It is not just an unforgettable scene for me. It was a thrilling experience.

IBRAHIM KAKA

Mahadevbhai Desai was a very close associate of Mahatma Gandhi and was his secretary for several years. He passed away in 1942. The following article is based on a poignant incident of his childhood narrated by him in Gujarati. The incident has a special relevance today.

"THE GOOD old Ibrahim Kaka is no more, but I can never forget him. I know his grave and many times when I look at it I cannot help shedding tears. When I pass by the graveyard the words I had spoken to him as a child come back to me and I say, 'Ibrahim Kaka, are you sleeping.

by Dhananjay Desai

or awake?' Well, I don't think he can sleep. I know that he is awake even in his everlasting sleep," writes Mahadevbhai.

Mahadev was a child then. His father was a farmer though he was also a Sanskrit Pundit. They had for their neighbour a Muslim named Ibrahim. He was a weaver, but he also earned a part of his living as a farmer. His lands lay next to those of the Desais. Naturally there was a close relationship between the two families. Mahadev called the neighbour Ibrahim Kaka (uncle Ibrahim) because his father and Ibrahim loved each other like two brothers. Ibrahim loved Mahadev like his own son.

Ibrahim was a pious Muslim, but he took more care than Mahadev's family did to see that none of the religious taboos of his Brahmin neighbour was violated.

Many times, when their crops were almost ready, Mahadev's father and Ibrahim kept the watch by turns and thus saved a lot of their time and energy. Mahadev often used to visit the farm early in the morning. Ibrahim would then fill the boy's pockets with tender cucumber and give him a ripe, delicious melon from his own farm. On every visit to the farm, Mahadev would shout, "Ibrahim Kaka, are you awake?"

Ibrahim would get up immediately and meet Mahadev with choice fruits from his own farm. Ibrahim was a Muslim and Mahadev a Brahmin. Ibrahim was very careful to see that the Brahmin boy didn't eat anything directly from his hand. Such disciplines never came in the way of their relationship. Mahadev was the youngest of his parent's three sons and Ibrahim loved him the most.

During the mango season, Ibrahim would pluck the first ripe mango from the tree, wrap it up in a piece of cloth and slip it into the young Mahadev's pocket. Mahadev would sniff the mango and dance with joy, saying, "Ibrahim Kaka, you are really very sweet!" Ibrahim was fond of jaggery and his speech also had the sweetness of jaggery. So Mahadev often teased Ibrahim by calling him "Uncle Sweet". Ibrahim would pretend to chase him but Mahadev would run faster and escape.

Many times, Ibrahim would go to Mahadev with a dish of *Chapati* in hand at the time of lunch and tell him, "Mahadev, go and find out if your mother has prepared any good vegetable." Mahadev would run to the kitchen and come back with a dish loaded with vegetables, pickles and some other delicacies. Ibrahim ate them with obvious relish and Mahadev would enthusiastically replenish his dish before he had finished the first serving. Such child-like expression of Mahadev's unselfish love often brought tears to his eyes but he never kissed the boy because he was always conscious of the fact that Mahadev was the son of a Brahmin, though Mahadev was hardly aware that Ibrahim belonged to a different faith.

Years rolled by and the two families came closer. In the meantime, Mahadev had lost his father. So Mahadev and his brothers looked upon Ibrahim as their guardian and they would not take any important decision without consulting him. Ibrahim too loved them even more than before.

Then one day something unexpected happened—out of an ordinary incident.

The cattle of the Hindus strayed into the Muslim graveyard and damaged the trees and plants grown there. This enraged some Muslims and they thrashed the cowherd boy. Soon one thing led to another and created an uproar in the small village. Hindus and Muslims polarised in opposite camps. Nerves grew tense and both the sides were ready for a fight with sticks as weapons.

Ibrahim too was there, with his sons and grandsons. He tried his best to bring about peace and reconciliation between the two sides, but it was of no avail. Mahadev's brothers were also there. In fact, the entire male population of the village was there, arrayed like enemies on a battle-field. The women at home passed anxious moments anticipating violence to break out.

Late in the afternoon Mahadev came back from his school. He was puzzled by what he saw: the streets were deserted and the doors of every house were closed; uneasy silence prevailed. His mother told him all that had taken place.

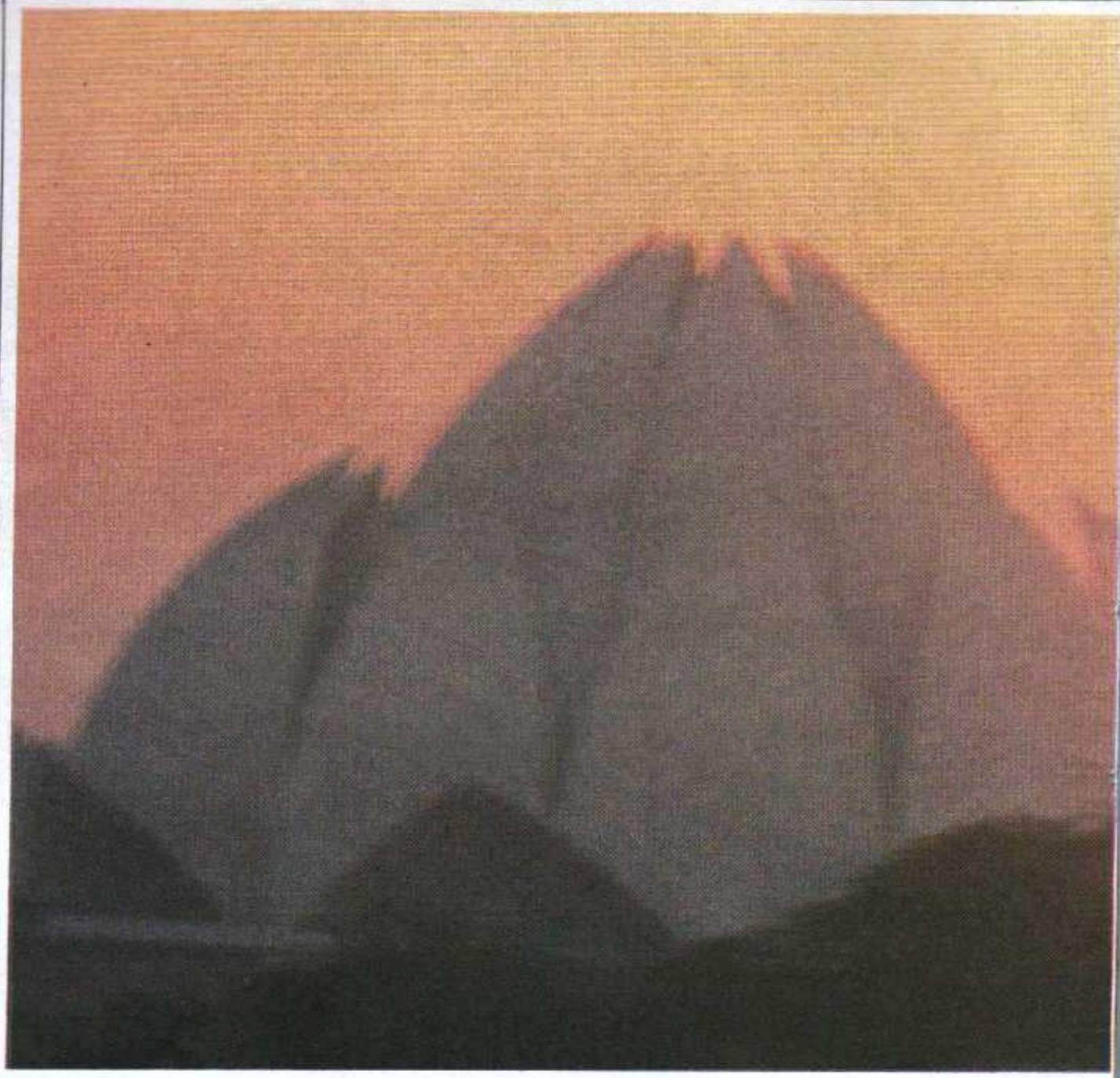
Meanwhile tempers ran high and the fight between the two communities was about to commence.

Mahadev was still a young boy. So his mother persuaded him to stay at home. But he was too hot-headed to follow her advice. He straightaway ran to join the fight.

Once on the scene Mahadev's eyes fell on Ibrahim Kaka, who along with all the male members of his family, was standing with the Muslims. For a moment, he could not believe it. He was perplexed. But then, perhaps the next moment, he ran towards Ibrahim and asked, "Ibrahim Kaka, on whose side are you? Ours or theirs?" Ibrahim did not take any time to decide. His mind was made up in a flash. He immediately asked for a stick from his son and followed Mahadev, telling his sons, "His father is no more. It is my duty to be on his side. You may remain where you are."

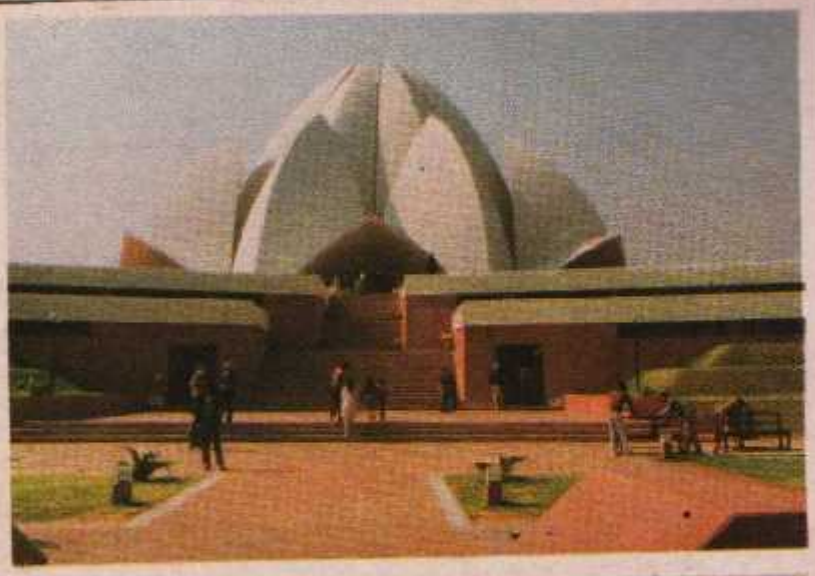
His gesture worked like a wet blanket on the enthusiasm of the would-be fighters. They felt ashamed of themselves. The crowd melted away within minutes.

Everybody went home in silence. Mahadev and his brothers too went home, following Ibrahim Kaka. ⑮



A UNIVERSAL

Bahai Faith was founded by Baha'u'llah after the execution of his forerunner Bab (original name Mirza Ali Muhammad) in 1850. It is a faith which emphasises that the Divine revelation has not ended with any one great soul, but is progressive and continuous. The Divine command for this age is to unify humanity. Persecuted in its own region of origin, the Bahai finds support in many countries in the West and the East. In New Delhi we recently saw the inauguration of their international spiritual citadel in a novel architectural form. — *Editor.*



HOUSE OF WORSHIP

by Ranjana Kackar

THE crowds, from far and near, come swarming in—braving the chilly winter winds or beating the scorching sun—for a closer look at this 20th Century marvel in marble. While an expression of awe and appreciation is easily discernible on some faces, reverence is writ large on others as they bend down to bow and touch the steps with their forehead in a typically Indian gesture. Peace, serenity and joy soon take over, for no man or woman has remained unaffected

LIGHTS FROM THE

To be a Bahai simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and to try to serve it; work for universal peace and universal brotherhood.

—Abdu'l Baha

Justice is the freedom of man from superstition and imitation, so that he may discern the Manifestation of God with the eye of Oneness, and consider all affairs with keen sight.

—Baha'u'llah

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted by His Glory! and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His divine Manifestation.

—Baha'u'llah

Likewise the divine religions of the holy Manifestations of God are in reality one though in name and nomenclature they differ. Man must be a lover of the light no matter from what day-spring it may appear. He must be a lover of the rose no matter in what soil it may be growing. He must be a seeker of the truth no matter from what source it comes. Attachment to the lantern is not loving the light... Absolute verities no matter in what book they be recorded must be accepted. The strife between religions, nations, and races arises from misunderstanding.

—Abdu'l Baha

Faith in God, and knowledge of Him, cannot be fully attained except...by practising *all that He hath commanded...*

—Baha'u'llah

In the Bahai Cause arts, science and all crafts are counted as worship. The man who makes a piece of notepaper to the best of his ability, conscientiously, concentrating all his forces on perfecting it, is giving praise to God. All effort and exertion put forth by man from the fulness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. Service is prayer.

—Abdu'l Baha

The people of Baha must serve the Lord with wisdom, teach others by their lives, and manifest the Light of God in their deeds. The effect of deeds

or untouched by either its physical or its spiritual glory.

Undoubtedly, what attracts one initially to this lotus shaped new House of Worship is the architectural splendour, the grandeur of the shining marble all pure white, the majesty of the dome, the breathtaking beauty of each petal clearly standing out surrounded by pools of clear water depicting its leaves that make it currently, the world's most talked about building. But at close quarters the serene surroundings and the rarefied atmosphere of the central circular auditorium fill one with a spiritual fragrance, that casts its spell. Public chatter instantly and automatically gives way to a golden silence that makes communion with the Almighty a strictly personal affair.

In the hallowed precincts there are no images or photographs, or facilities for ceremonies or rituals. Only the sacred scriptures of all revealed religions find place and reverence. This, coupled with a most effective use of light and water, the two fundamental elements responsible for the ornamentation of this 'House of Worship', makes it a unique, pacifying experience that beckons one to come here again and again.

This 'Mother Temple' of the Bahais which opened its portals, last winter, to people of all ages, nationalities, faith, colour, caste or creed, is the seventh in the chain of 'Houses of Worship' now girdling the earth. It is inspired by the lotus—the national flower of India which has also been inseparably associated with religion—be it Islam, Buddhism, Zorastrianism or Hinduism. In fact, Lord Vishnu, the Operator of Creation carries it in his hand as a symbol of peace and prosperity. Hence, in the context of the subcontinent's rich and diverse cultural heritage the architect's design—'an architecture of allegory and symbol'—has been an apt choice, an illuminated discovery emerging from a long and arduous journey across India.

The choice was not easy. As Fariburz Sabha, the Canada based Iranian architect, himself a Bahai, says, "To raise an edifice and create an atmosphere within it which will contain in its depth the secret of the Greatest Name and reflect its majesty was a challenging commission and a great task." Hence, it is easy to believe his claim that divine guidance showed the way at every step and stage. Expanding on his 'destined' choice Sabha adds further. "The Lotus not only has an association with all the religions of India but is probably the most perfect flower in the whole world. It is symmetrical, it is exquisitely beautiful. And how does it grow? It grows in a swamp and raises its head out of the slime—absolutely clean and perfect." Thus it reminds man that he too can attain spiritual purity while yet living in the materialistic world.

The task of giving shape to the

BAHAI DOCTRINE

is in truth more powerful than that of words.
—Baha'u'llah

However much a man may progress, yet he is imperfect, because there is always a point ahead of him. No sooner does he look up towards that point than he becomes dissatisfied with his own condition, and aspires to attain that. Praising one's own self is the sign of selfishness.
—Abdu'l Baha

Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of mankind. Without truthfulness, progress and success in all the worlds are impossible for a soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the other divine qualities will also become realized.
—Abdu'l Baha

Turning the face towards God brings healing to the body, the mind and the soul.
—Abdu'l Baha

Humanity is like a bird with its two wings—the one is male, the other female. Unless both wings are strong and impelled by some common force, the bird cannot fly heavenwards. According to the spirit of this age, women must advance and fulfil their mission in all departments of life, becoming equal to men. They must be on the same level as men and enjoy equal rights. This is one of the fundamental principles of Baha'u'llah.
—Abdu'l Baha

Religion should unite all hearts and cause wars and disputes to vanish from the face of the earth; it should give birth to spirituality, and bring light and life to each heart. If religion becomes a cause of dislike, hatred and division, it would be better to be without it, and to withdraw from such a religion would be a truly religious act...
—Abdu'l Baha

Know thou that in every age and dispensation all divine ordinances are changed and transformed according to the requirement of the time, except the law of Love, which, like a fountain, always flows and is never overtaken by change.
—Baha'u'llah

concept was equally challenging and difficult. The complexity of the design is such that there is not a single straight line in the building. Everything being in curvature makes each measurement a complicated procedure. Many firsts, therefore, had to be achieved in the process of translating a dream into reality, particularly, in the underdeveloped technical aspects, made possible by meticulous studies, concentrated efforts, quality control, supervision and, as Sheheryar Noorjediyan, Maintenance Manager of the temple, reiterates, divine grace and guidance. Explains E. Hussaini—an associate of Sabha, "You may imagine how difficult it is to concrete shells just 13 cm thick and 25 metres high! In one continuous operation, round the clock, during monsoon or in peak summer when temperatures soar beyond 45° celsius."

Built on a 26 acre plot in the green belt area of New Delhi, purchased way back in 1953, the temple complex, occupying only 2 acres of land consists of the main House of Worship and the ancillary block which houses the reception centre, the library and the administrative building. The temple proper comprises a basement to accommodate the electrical and plumbing services, and a lotus shaped superstructure to house the assembly area.

All round the lotus are walkways with beautifully carved balustrade, bridges and stairs which surround the nine pools representing the floating leaves of the lotus. Significantly, number nine is sacred to Bahais as the Bahai faith is said to embody in itself the nine major faiths of the world. In order to symbolise this, each component of the temple is repeated nine times. The pools, apart from servicing an obvious aesthetic function, also help in the ventilation process of the building.

The lotus has three sets of leaves or petals, all made out of thin concrete shells. The outermost set of nine petals called the 'entrance leaves' open outwards and form the nine entrances all around the outer annular hall. The next set of nine petals called the 'outer leaves' point inwards. The entrance and outer leaves together cover the outer hall. The third set of nine petals called the 'inner leaves' appear to be partly closed. Only the tips open out, somewhat like a partly opened bud. This position, which rises above the rest, forms the main structure housing the central hall. Near the top where the leaves separate out, nine radial beams provide the necessary lateral support. Since the lotus is open at the top, a glass and steel roof at the level of radial beams provides protection from rain and facilitates entry of natural light into the auditorium. Below the entrance leaves and outer leaves rise nine massive arches in a ring through each one of which is a row of steps in red sandstone leading into the main marble floored hall with rows of

marble and wood benches.

The Faith's international outlook and the concept of One World—One Faith is not merely for preaching and has been put into practice during the raising of the edifice itself. While the architect is an Iranian Bahai, the structural firm was British. An Indian firm participated as construction partners. The Bahai volunteers who supervised—devoting one to ten years—came from all over the world. Even the funds for this Mother Temple were raised—voluntarily—from Bahais the world over.

The human element apart, the materials used, too consist of all that is best internationally. The petals of the lotus in white concrete have used specially graded dolomite aggregates from the Alwar Mines near Delhi and White Silica sand from Jaipur. The white cement used is from Korea. The marble was quarried from the Mount Pentilikon Mines of Greece and thereafter sent to Italy, where each panel was cut to the required size and shape before transporting them to the site in Delhi.

Quite clearly a lot remains to be done in and around. The landscaping of the surrounding areas has started in right earnest with even a nursery coming up to feed the gardens with saplings all year round. More important are the auxiliary institutions, all for humanitarian purposes such as schools, hospitals, orphanages, homes for old people and to provide loving care for the deprived and the distressed. As Arun Sinha, Assistant Co-ordinator of House of Worship Activities explains, "A Bahai prayer is complete only when accompanied by selfless social service." It is this factor of devoted voluntary service which has been responsible for the successful adherence to a tight budgetary outlay (Rs. 10 crores) and time schedule.

The work of volunteers has today changed considerably. The main task comprises of helping visitors—in explaining the complexity of the structure, the difficulties faced during construction and, in the absence of any clergy, the essence of the Faith. The job is performed in utter humility and selflessness thus fulfilling the twofold responsibility of one's own spiritual progress as well as the creation of an environment conducive to the progress of society.

The temple has already found acceptance as a monument of importance and is included in official tours for tourists. Busloads of uniformed school children too have been daily visitors. However, argues Sheharyar, "This is not just a tourist spot. The feelings, the behaviour is different. We find manifestation of reverence not found elsewhere." Its inclusion for Festival of India at Russia has gladdened the hearts further. He, like all other Bahais, is convinced that this building is destined to change our religious outlook and fulfil our religious destiny. Firm believers of "Vasudaiva Kutumbakam"—the whole world is my family, they feel that this House of Worship will pave the way for the coming together of the people. In a world devoured by the scourge of communalism and narrow materialism the Bahai House of Worship stands as a reminder to all mankind of their common origin, their common destiny and their essential unity.

We sit out on the bench soaking in the ethereal beauty of the place with a setting sun in the distant horizon. Soon innumerable lights come alive all around transforming it into a virtual fairyland. All heads are held high and hands go up in a gesture of thanksgiving as the choir chants hymns sans accompaniment inspiring the soul and transcending socio-historic barriers.

CASE OF THE FANTASTIC MEMORY

A merchant once sought to obtain character references about a man with whom he was about to do business. The source he went to knew that the man was not reliable but did not wish to say so openly. His answer accomplished both ends: "There are people who have the ability to remember things which happened a year ago. A person of much better memory is able to remember things that took place two years ago and even before. But the person you ask about has such a fantastic memory, he remembers things that have never taken place."

WHAT IS MAN?

Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick spoke about a conversation between an astronomer and a philosopher. Said the astronomer, "Astronomically speaking, what is man?" The question is understandable. When we think of the staggering dimensions of the universe; when we contemplate the number of stars and galaxies, it is understandable to ask, "Astronomically speaking, what is man?"

The philosopher thought for a moment and answered, "Astronomically speaking, man is the astronomer."

THE MAN ATOP THE HILL THE MAN MIDWAY THE HILL AND THE CLIMBERS

Retold by Vindusar

TWO young scholars were climbing the hill. Midway the hill, in a cave, lived a savant. They must meet him.

But the savant's cave was not their final goal. The savant had promised to lead them to the top of the hill. There, in a hut, lived a sage. The savant was to introduce the young men to the sage. They would like to be blessed by him.

Two other persons who were climbing the hill at the same time were a shepherd and an elderly man. The shepherd was leading his flock of sheep and a few pigs. One of his pigs had been injured and walked with great difficulty. The shepherd thrashed it from time to time so that it would walk faster. But that only added to the pig's plight. The shepherd too was much troubled on account of that pig. It had to check the speed of the other beasts.

Suddenly the old man asked the shepherd, "Will you let me carry the pig up till you reach your destination?"

"Who stops you from doing that?" said the shepherd.

The old man stooped and lifted the pig to his shoulders and walked on quietly. But one could see, that was not easy for him do so. The two young men observed that he had an unusual bearing, calm and dignified.

Of the two young men, one was an adept at reading the thoughts of men. He observed the shepherd. He looked at them and smiled meaningfully. It conveyed what he thought of the old man: "The're fools, but no fool like an old fool!"

The second young man had learnt the art of reading the feelings of an animal. He looked at the pig's half-closed eyes. Instantly he knew that the pig had forgotten its trouble. It had no sense of gratitude either. In other words, it felt nothing!

The two scholars reached the savant's cave. When they were relaxed, they narrated the incident to the savant. One of them said, "I wonder if the old man did any good to either the shepherd or even the pig. The shepherd, in fact, was laughing at him. The pig felt nothing."

"And, even if he lessened the difficulty of one of them, he increased his own difficulty in climbing. Objectively speaking, it was necessary, for one had to suffer anyway!" said the second young man.

Replied the savant, "Whoever be the old man, he acted to forestall a future suffering."

"Whose?" asked the young man.

"His own. He would have remembered the scene and would have suffered from the fact that he did not do anything to assuage the pig's travail or even the poor shepherd's. He must have been an extremely noble man, a man of delicate conscience," said the savant.

The two scholars appreciated the savant's observation.

Late in the afternoon they climbed the rest of the hill and reached the sage's hut. To their great surprise, the young men saw that he was none other than the old man who carried the pig.

They talked for sometime on various issues. But before taking leave of him, the young seekers could not help asking him, "Sir, what exactly was your motive in carrying the injured pig uphill? Is it to reduce the shepherd's botheration? Is it to relieve the pig of its pain? Or is it to satisfy your own conscience?"

The sage blinked at them. He did not remember a thing.

The three visitors came out. "What a fool I was to interpret his action even in glowing terms! Does one remember one's breathing process? It just happens!" commented the savant. ☸

UNUSUAL EVENTS WERE QUITE USUAL WITH ANANDAMOYIMA

An instance of THOUGHT-POWER

by Gurudas Banerjee

THERE have been many mystics, yogis and saints who, by dint of their endeavour, had liberated themselves. But few are they who, having liberated themselves from the bondage of ignorance, can also liberate others. She is certainly one such. She remains constantly in the Satchidananda consciousness. So said Sri Aurobindo about Anandamoyi Ma.

Among the multitude of devotees and admirers who would go to pay their respects to Ma Anandamoyi could be counted such dignitaries as Jawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi.

As a general rule, Anandamoyi obviously avoided betraying her spiritual achievements to others. But when asked about her true identity, whether she was a yogini, or a bibhuti, or a saint, she had frankly and confidently admitted once or twice, "I am Purnasvarup Narayan," that is, I am He, I am He, I am He.

The meeting of two great personalities have always attracted the interest of the public.

Once Anandamoyi came to meet the Mother at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. It was an unforgettable moment for those present. The two looked into each other's eyes for quite some time. Both seem to have gone into trance. Then Anandamoyi told the Mother, in Bengali, "I too am your child." Both gave flowers to each other. It is reported that when she was asked by her disciples to tell them what she thought of the Mother, Anandamoyi had said, "She is Mahalakshmi incarnate."

Anandamoyi had undergone severe rounds of yoga disciplines before and after her marriage. "After doing the daily, regular chores of a middle class housewife, I passed sleepless nights practising austere tapasya," she recounted to her close confidant and attendant Srimati Gurupriya Devi, who wrote down her gospels. "I passed through various and strange states of being, both of the body and consciousness." An important event during this time was the descent of Mahakali into Anandamoyi. Indeed, how else could she be called the Mother of ecstasy unless this goddess had found her abode in Ma. For, as Sri Aurobindo says about Kali, "without her even *Ananda* would lose the flaming joy of its most absolute intensities." Ma Anandamoyi relates enthusiastically, "Just imagine! the great and mighty Kali, sitting on my lap like a child, in a child's form." She further explains, "I was at that time living in the Adyashakti consciousness."

She was born in a village named Kheora, Tripura district, on 30 April 1896. She did not let out any cry when she was born. When told about this later, she explained, "Why should I weep? I was then looking at a mango tree through the window!" She could remember everything of her childhood. When she became a grown up girl—called Nirmala—she one day suddenly asked her mother, "On the 13th day of this body's advent (*avirbhava*) your father-in-law came to see you, isn't it?" Her mother was wonder-struck, she remembered it, yes, it was true. Anandamoyi always referred to herself in the third person. Thus instead of saying "I" she would say "this body"

Nirmala was about three years of age when her mother took her to a neighbour's house where someone was singing *kirtan*. Shortly the baby seemed to fall asleep. The mother whispered, "Why are you sleeping? Listen to the song." Years after that day, Nirmala reminded her mother about this. Still later she had explained to her disciples that her mother had mistakenly considered her trance-like state as

somnolence. "Just as I go in trance now, I did the same then, even in those days of childhood." The mother never understood the condition of her little one; her nature was a mystery to her. She regularly observed that while sitting for meals, her daughter became absent-minded, she would be staring into vacant space without eating. Her mother scolded her often for this strange behaviour of hers. But the child would not say anything, she remained mute. Later on, she told her disciples, "Now that I can speak, I am telling you, actually I was seeing gods and goddesses. They appeared and disappeared, one after another. To me that was more interesting than eating."

Ma Anandamoyi, advised her devotees to observe silence now and then. A disciple asked her one day about the process. She showed him a guaranteed and unfailing technique by which he could lock his mouth. After learning this method he observed silence the following Sunday. He was very successful. In fact, so successful that on Monday also—try as he might—he could not utter a single word. He was a man of high position. And in his office he was sitting in this helpless condition, people waiting outside with files and papers. It was a very embarrassing situation. A friend of his rushed to Ma Anandamoyi and brought her to his office room. "You were too eager to learn the process of remaining silent, but you forgot to learn how to undo it." So saying, she helped him to come out of his predicament.

She was married off at the early age of about 13. She preferred to be more of an attendant than a wife of the man. She never ignored her husband and served him with zeal, but she kept some distance in certain matters. Her husband would observe, "She is my wife only in name, actually she is a brahmacharini, a celibate."

However, the husband, Ramani Mohan Chakraborty, was all along a doubting Thomas. Now and then he would put her to test. For example, once he told her, "Can you keep burning coal on your body, without feeling pain or burning sensation?" She directly picked up a red coal from the oven and did not cry out in pain. But of course there appeared marks of burn. The devotees questioned, "Why the marks, please, if there were no burns?" She patiently explained, "This body and the coal are of the same physical world, and their interaction will have the natural consequences. Only I withdrew my consciousness from the spot; so I did not feel anything."

All the same, her husband kept up an attitude of doubt and disbelief. Once or twice she cautioned him in plain words, "Do not put to test this body." It did not work. Since Ma Anandamoyi was having difficulty in doing all the works of the household by herself, a certain gentleman, a family friend used to bring powdered spices, so that

she would be spared the trouble of pulverising them herself. One day he brought the powdered spices which included powdered chillies. Her husband told Ma Anandamoyi, "Look here, you say that nothing really hurts you. Well, suppose you took raw powdered chillies, won't you feel anything?" She replied, "All right, since you've got this idea, I could try. Let me see what happens. I will see, and you people would also see." "Mind you, you must not wince, you must not grimace, nor should there be any drop of water flowing from your blessed eyes! Is that clear?" her husband further dictated.

Without wasting words, she grabbed a handful of chilly powder and just gulped it. She sat there quietly as though nothing had happened, but her husband began to have colic pain followed by fever. It was of course Anandamoyi who attended on him. Expert doctors were called to examine and treat the patient, but to no avail. For eighteen or nineteen days she nursed him, day and night, without having any proper rest for herself. When his condition became very critical the relatives started weeping. In this dire condition the patient sat up once with some difficulty. At last Anandamoyi spoke, "How many times did I tell you, do not put to test this body." He replied, "All right, I'll never do it again." Anandamoyi then washed some puffed rice (*chiura*) and made him drink only the water, because anything else he could not take. Gradually his health took a turn for the better.

I should like to mention here that Anandamoyi was not teaching him a lesson. He had to suffer because of natural consequence of his crude demand. Only, in this case, somehow the Karmic process was set to motion at some speed.

As an instance of her thought-power, I should like to mention here one incident. She was then in Shahbaag, East Bengal. That day, from early morning she chose to remain alone in the attic, absorbed in a samadhi mood. A perceptible luminosity emanated from her body. Meanwhile her husband brought in with him two friends. One of whom was a photographer named Sashi, the other man was called Jyotishdada. By that time the light had started to shrink back and concentrated itself particularly in the centre of the forehead. Ma was brought out and made to sit on the floor to be photographed. She was still in that semi-conscious state, unable to open her eyes fully. Shashi used several plates one after the other, but in vain. However, the last one was a success. When the print was ready, two remarkable facts became apparent. One was that a round mark was seen in the centre of the forehead. And a clear reflection or image of the other man, Jyotishdada, was seen behind Ma, although at the moment of clicking absolutely nobody was near her. When she was questioned about this, she clarified, "At the time when the photo was being taken, the thought of Jyotish rose in my mind." So this inner reflection took on a very definite form and had appeared on the plate.

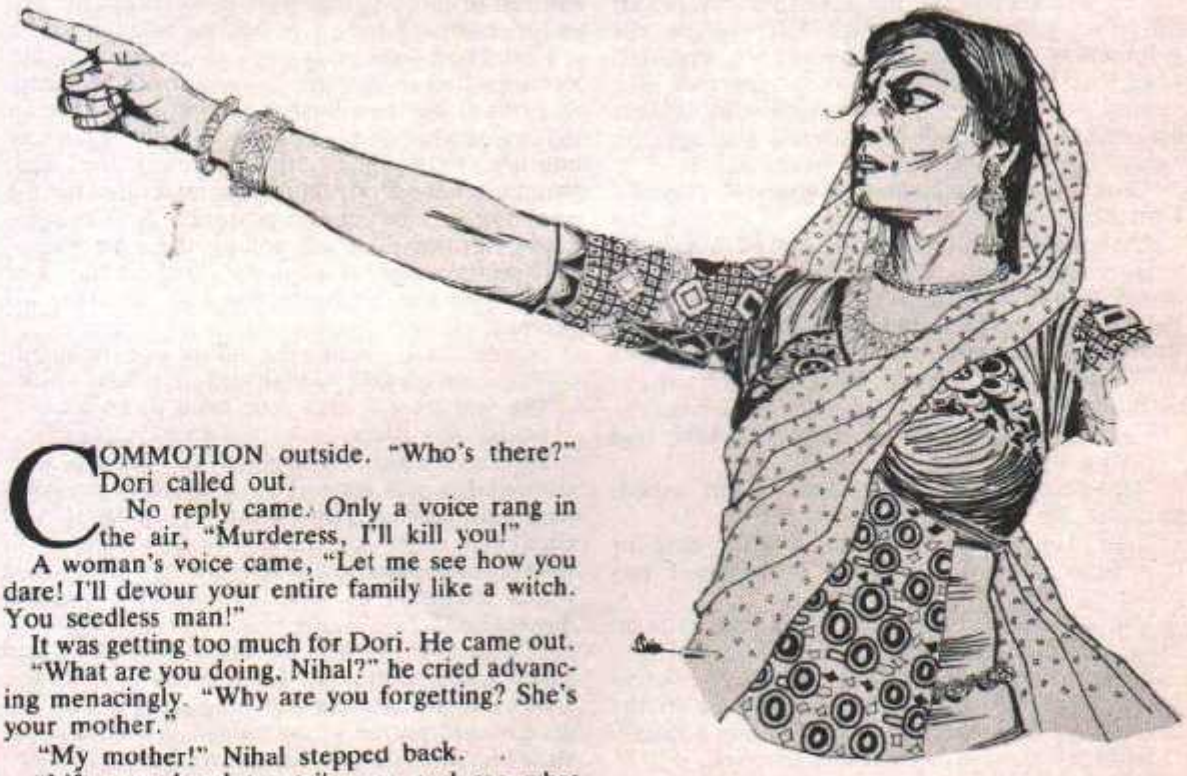
We who live in this ancient land, we can have the privilege of saying that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in philosophy, science or technology. ⑤

Love and death of a rustic woman—a story by a brilliant writer who passed away untimely.

GADAL

by Rangey Raghav

Translated from Hindi by Jai Ratan



COMMOTION outside. "Who's there?" Dori called out.

No reply came. Only a voice rang in the air, "Murderess, I'll kill you!"

A woman's voice came, "Let me see how you dare! I'll devour your entire family like a witch. You seedless man!"

It was getting too much for Dori. He came out.

"What are you doing, Nihal?" he cried advancing menacingly. "Why are you forgetting? She's your mother."

"My mother!" Nihal stepped back.

"Lift your hand to strike me and see what happens!" the woman snarled. "You idler, I'll make cats go for your nose. What do you take me

for? Don't forget I'm not your purchased woman."

"Bhabi!" Dori cried, "how you babble! Come to your senses."

He advanced and then turning his head he looked at the people standing around. "Go, all of you, go!" he cried.

Nihal fell back and the people soon melted away.

As if dazed, Dori stood under the thatched roof, holding its pole for support. The woman sat there defiantly, her eyes still blazing fire.

"I know," she said. "Nihal doesn't have the guts. You prompted him, *devar*."

"Yes, Gadal," Dori said in a subdued voice. "It was my doing."

Gadal became tense. "Why did you do it?" she asked.

Dori was silent. A tremor ran through his body.

He was a tall and hefty fifty years old Gujarati shepherd. His moustache had turned salt and pepper and his head almost touched the thatched ceiling as he stood there, leaning against the pole. The dim light of the clay lamp was falling over his broad scraggy shoulders. He was wearing a vest, stuffed with cotton and his dhoti stretching back in trim folds as it touched his knees was tucked at the back. His hand stiffly resting against the pole, he stood there looking bewildered.

The woman rose to her feet. She was about forty-five years old. Though fair, yet in the glimmering of declining age her complexion looked a bit blotched. From appearance she looked quite agile. Given to hard work all her life, although her body had sagged with age, yet her agility had not deserted her.

"Don't you feel ashamed of yourself, Gadal?" Dori said.

"Ashamed of what?" Gadal asked him.

Dori stood silent, at a loss for a reply when he heard a voice coming from upstairs. "Not she," the voice said. "Only those who have a sense of shame can feel ashamed."

"Nihal!" Dori roared. "Keep quiet!"

A hush fell over the room.

"Why did you call me here?" Gadal said breaking the silence.

"Have you eaten your food?" Dori asked, parrying her question.

"No," Gadal replied, "where was the time for it? These scoundrels waylaid me while I was returning from the fields."

"Nihal!" Dori called out. "Ask your wife to bring her mother-in-law some food."

A woman's voice, loaded with malice came from inside. "*Arre*, now she's a woman of the Lohar clan. Will she relish poor Kharia's *rotis*?"

Some women sitting outside smirked.

"Are you listening, Parameswari?" Nihal cried. "The world is laughing at us. You have tarnished the Kharia clan's fair name."

- 2 -

Gunna was only fifty-five when death overtook him, leaving Gadal a widow. Gadal's eldest son, Nihal was getting on to be thirty. His wife, Dulla's, elder son was seven years old, the second was four and the third, a daughter, was still a suckling babe. Nihal's two sisters Champa and Chameli were respectively married in the families of Jhaj and Biswara villages and their children were old enough to crawl on their knees in the dust. Nihal's youngest brother, Narain, was twenty-two years old and his wife was now the mother of a second child.

The same Gadal had gone away, leaving a large family behind and had married a thirty-two years old shepherd of the Lohar clan, with whom she was now openly living.

Dori was Gunna's younger brother. His wife and children had died, leaving him to eke out a lonely existence. Gunna had asked him to remarry, but he had preferred to plough a lonely furrow. He ate from Gadal's kitchen. He gave his earnings to her, regarding her children as his own. Nihal doted on his uncle. The Kharia shepherds regarded themselves as superior to Lohars.

Gadal's new husband, Moni, a widower, had a large family. Without taking Gadal's age into account, he married her just because she was a Kharia woman. He thought she would stay put in his house without creating any fuss. He was also in need of a competent woman to kindle the fire in his *chulha* and she was just the woman for it.

Gadal had gone away early in the morning but her sons had forced her to come back the same day. Moni, her new husband didn't even have an inkling of what had happened. His bhabi blithely churned butter-milk, stretching out her legs. Wouldn't have Dulla, Nihal's wife derided her for adopting such outlandish postures? And imagine Gadal throwing herself among these people!

It was midnight. Gadal was lying on the floor while Dori was sitting by her side, smoking his chelum.

"Gadal!" Dori broke the stillness of the night.

"Yes, what's it?" Gadal said in a faint voice.

"So you took it into your head to go away?"

Gadal was silent.

Dori spoke again, "All go away. One day your sister-in-law was gone. Then your three nephews were gone one after another. Next it was Bhaiyya's turn. But the way you left...well, nobody ever departed in that manner. The whole world laughs at us. You know that of course, don't you?"

"*Devar*, I'm not be bothered by what the world says," Gadal muttered. "Let it laugh for all I care. I was fourteen years old when your brother first set his eyes on me in my village. You had come with him, carrying an oil-smeared wooden staff, to carry me away. You had accompanied him, hadn't you? And didn't I go with him? You may be thinking Gadal is now past her age. What need

has she for a husband? But do you know why I left?"

"No."

"You must be thinking now that Gadal is gone, all your comforts are gone with her. You won't be able to have two meals a day according to your taste. You knew your daughter-in-law would not slave for you. Well, you stood by your brother and me. And in return I also stood by you. Tell me, am I speaking lies?"

"No, Gadal, I never said so."

"That's all there's to it, *devar*. Now who's there whom I can call my own over here? My man is dead. I drudged for him while he lived and because of him I showed deference to the other members of his family. Now that my master is gone why should I put up with all this rigmarole? These boys, these daughters-in-law? No, I refuse to slave for them."

"But aren't they your children? Even a cat goes round seven houses in search of food for her young ones. And you are a human. Why has your affection suddenly run dry?"

"And may I ask why has yours? Why didn't you marry again?"

"Because I could always lean against you for support."

"Coward! It was your brother who died but it was his sons who performed his last rites. When all was over couldn't you keep me in your house? For the sake of my belly I had to cross another man's threshold. You forced me to it. I'll blow into the *chulha* when I have someone to claim as my own. I am not such a low-down that I should waste my elbow-grease on doing household chores while others jingle their ankle bells. I'll fill my belly only when I have obtained the right price for it. Mark my word, *devar*. You lay low all the time and suddenly woke up to it when a blow flattened out your family's nose. You never thought of your family's prestige when your daughters-in-law tried to cow me down by giving me defiant looks. No, *devar*, the die is always loaded against a helpless woman."

"Gadal," Dori said in a strained voice, "I was afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Gadal, I'm advancing in years. I feared people would heap ridicule on me. That your sons would think Uncle lived in sin with their mother and that was the reason he did not feel the need to marry again. Gadal, it would have brought a bad name to *Bhaiyya* also."

"Oh, how you talk!" Gadal said. "Did you ever care for your brother? When my father-in-law died, your brother fed the whole community. It was only after the guests had been fed that he put a glass of water to his lips. And how many people did you invite at your *Bhaiyya's* death ceremony? Not more than twenty-five. But why such a small number? You trotted out the plea that the War being on, there was a restriction on the number of guests. That the police would haul you up if the number exceeded twenty-five. You coward! I refuse to live in the house of cowards."

Suddenly Dori's tone changed. "Can you go and live under another man's roof while I'm still alive?"

"Yes, I can."

"Say it again!" Dori stood up.

"I'm prepared to say it a hundred times, Lala." Gadal said. She was still lying on the ground.

Dori advanced towards her.

"Come!" Gadal hissed.

Dori stopped in his tracks. Gadal watched him. Dori sat down. Gadal held him with her steady stare. Then she laughed. "So you want to marry me, *devar?*" she said. "But do you have the guts, *devar?* You know my new man. He is a *man*.I must tell you that. Sometimes I feel I've again got your *Bhaiyya* in him. And you?" she paused. "Call yourself a man? Does a man ever whine before a woman? If you had made bold and beaten me up, I would have said here is a man for me. He regards me as his own. I'll live in his house."

Dori sat there watching her with a blank expression. The night deepened. Spreading out the end of her *lehnga*, Gadal covered her body with it. Dori started dozing.

- 3 -

Sitting in the vestibule, Dulla took a yawn. "So the Maharani has returned?" she said. "Where did you spend the night?"

Venus had disappeared. Dawn was breaking. The bullocks had risen to their feet. There was a chill in the air.

"Don't put on airs," pat came Gadal's retort. "I've daughters of your age. Going by our new relationship, I'm your younger sister-in-law for my man is younger to you in age. I'm your sister-in-law, not your doormat. Should I repeat it?"

Dulla got non-plussed. Moni had just woken up. "Where had you been?" he asked angrily.

Gadal pulled the veil over her face. "They took me away by force," she said, but the tone of her voice did not change. "I escaped at the first

opportunity."

Moni's voice suddenly softened. His father came in, driving the cattle before him. Moni got up to go out.

"Where are you off to?" Gadal asked him.

"To tend the field."

"First decide about me," Gadal said.

Dulla stood aghast at the demeanour of that middle-aged woman.

"What decision?" Moni asked. He looked so subdued before that woman.

"Have I come here to live with you or to drudge in your house?" Gadal asked. "We are only two of us. We can live apart and eat separately." Without waiting for his answer, she continued: "I don't mind parting with a share of our earning but no joint system for me."

Moni stood before her as if dazed.

Dulla came out, tense with anger. "Speak up, *devar*," she said. "Why have you suddenly lost your tongue? Have you brought a sister-in-law for me or a mother-in-law? Why don't you answer me? Look don't take me for granted. I'm not so inept that I can't turn the *roti* on the iron plate. I'm the tough type. No, I won't stand her tongue-lashing—understand? My mother gave birth to me after eating the burnt earth of the *chulha*. Yes, I must tell you that."

"Are you my co-wife to talk like that?" Gadal glared at Dulla "You may have eaten the scorched earth scraped from the oven. So what? Does that turn you into a witch that you should devour the entire family? Take it easy. Live here I must. Your *rotis* are not so brittle that they will stick in my throat unless I eat them with a block of gur."

Gadal's diatribes had made Moni speechless. He quietly went out.

The afternoon was upon them. Dulla was working at the spinning wheel. Narain came. "Anybody there?" he called from outside.

Dulla pulled down her veil. "Who's calling?" she asked.

Narain swallowed hard. "Gadal's son," he replied.

Dulla laughed behind her veil. "Elder or younger?"

"Younger."

"How many are you?"

"It may be any number," Gadal said coming out. "How does it concern you?"

"*Arre*, here she comes!" Dulla ran in.

"*Amma*, is she your elder sister-in-law?" Narain asked.

"What has brought you here? First tell me that," Gadal said impatiently.

"*Amma*, I've come to collect punitive money from you," Narain said advancing.

"Stay where you are!" Gadal said.

Just then Moni returned, holding *lota* and string. He saw Gadal's bracelets and necklace lying in front of Narain.

"Is that enough to cover the fine?" he heard Gadal asking Narain. "Now don't show up here again," she added. "None of you. I'll lodge a report with the police that at the instance of their wives my sons have usurped all my trinkets and turned me out of the house."

Narain's face turned dark. Picking up the ornaments he walked away. Moni's mind was filled with apprehension as he watched Narain going away.

"Have you seen it, *devar?*" Dulla complained. "My sister-in-law has thrown away her jewellery. At last the knee has turned towards the stomach. She will go and sit in four places and earn enough to build a brick platform in front of her son's house. I warn you. You are a simple man. You can't understand a woman's guiles. Her's is a regular business."

Gadal laughed. "You're indeed smart, *Jethani* (elder sister-in-law)," she said. "It must be the custom of the women of your family to ask the new man to buy off the old husband. Gadal knows how to live as the full-fledged mistress of the house. Is that clear to you? Not as a slave but as a mistress. I'll slave for my husband. But for others I care two hoots. Understand? But who are you to poke your nose in my affairs, may I know?"

Dulla looked daggers at Gadal and went away stamping her feet.

"Don't talk big," Moni said. "No more of this bragging. Learn to live like a *bahu* in the house."

"Telling me?" Gadal smiled. "*Arre*, you were not even born then, dear! I know everything. I've done nothing which could go against the norms of the community. If you find me transgressing the rules laid down by the community, pull me up for it. Pull me up a thousand times. But I refuse to be imposed upon by a woman who behaves like a co-wife."

"Should I give you a taste of my beating?" Moni swayed his head in anger.

Gadal laughed. Going into the vestibule she got engrossed in work.

- 4 -

The cold wind had sharpened. Sitting under the thatched roof, Dori was smoking the hookah. Getting bored with smoking, he put the chelum upside down and sat there staring into vacancy.

Nihal returned from the field. Tying the bullocks he gave them fodder and turned to Dori. "*Kaka!*" he said.

Dori was lost in thought. It seemed he had not heard Nihal.

"*Kaka!*" Nihal raised his voice.

Dori looked up startled. "What's it? Did you ask me something?"

"If I don't ask you whom else will I ask? I couldn't meet you the whole day. Chimman was telling me that you spent the whole day near Manmoji hermit's sacred fire. Is that true?"

"Yes, son, I had been there."

"What took you there?"

"Just like that, son. I felt like going there."

"The bania's man had come from town. He said he must have his dues. He was so insistent. We almost came to blows."

"You must be careful, son. No one ever gets on the wrong side of the broomstick."

Nihal picked up the chelum and raked the cowdung cakes for some embers. Placing them in the chelum, he returned puffing at it.

"I didn't go there," he said. "It would have ended in broken heads. I sent Narain instead.

"Sent where?" Dori looked up, alarmed.

"To that infamous woman—the blot on our family."

"You mean your mother?"

"I don't know why you are so partial to her. You never get angry with her. I won't call her mother. No, not that woman."

"Son, you may not call her your mother but the whole world knows her as your mother. While a man is living people name his wife after him and after him as his son's mother. It's how things have always been."

"You are right, *Kaka*,you are right," Nihal muttered in anger. "But you have not asked me the reason why I sent Narain to her."

"Yes, son, you haven't told me about it. Tell me, why did you send Narain to her?"

"To get the punishment money from her. But before I could call the panchayat she forestalled me by flinging her jewellery at me."

Dori smiled. "She wanted to incriminate us as defaulters for not having called the panchayat to dole out justice to her. She wanted to tell them that we wanted to drive her away from home. Did Narain bring the money?"

"Yes."

Dori became thoughtful.

"May I go and meet her?" Nihal asked.

"No, son. She has gone away in anger. That's the only reason. Have you had your food?"

"No."

"Then first go and have your meal."

Nihal went away but Dori kept sitting there. The night's darkness came from behind the evening like a curtain of black suddenly descending over everything.

The musical sound of *dhola* floated down to them from somewhere in the distance. Dori got up to go.

"Has *Kaka* had his food?" Nihal asked his wife.

"No, not yet."

Nihal came out. Dori was not there. "*Kaka!*"he called out and set out in search of him.

Chiranji, the priest of the Hanuman temple was closing the temple door.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" he asked Nihal.

"I touch your feet, Panditji," Nihal made his obeisance to the priest. "Did you see *Kaka* somewhere around here?" he asked the priest.

"*Arre*, he is listening to *dhola*. I saw him there only a short while ago."

When Nihal returned with his uncle, Dori's body was burning with fever.

"It's nothing"' Dori said. "Just an exposure, I think." He stretched himself on the narrow cot and pulled up his legs. "No food for me," he said. "I don't feel like eating tonight."

Nihal stood leaning over Dori's cot.

"*Arre*, just think of it, son," Dori mumbled, I've heard *dhola* after such a long time. Last time I heard it at *Bhaiyya's* wedding and after that tonight."

Nihal looked intently at Dori. His eyes closed, he was mumbling under his breath.

- 5 -

The day had declined into evening. Moni was sitting outside his house. Gadal came out with a *thali* heaped with hot crisp *rotis* and a large helping of mango chutney and placed it before Moni.

"They taste so nice," Moni said. "Very tasty indeed."

Gadal sat down by his side. "Why don't you marry again?" she asked. "A woman in keeping with your age?"

Moni gave her a quizzical look. "Is even cooking for one person too much of a bother for you?" he asked.

"No, it's not that," Gadal replied. "You must be thinking I'm asking for a co-wife. But can one trust a man? My age is declining. I wish you had a child while I'm alive. If not, I could at least have the pleasure of ruling over a woman."

Moni laughed. "Then say that—that you want to have a woman at hand to fight with. As I see, you still long for some excitement in life."

As Moni finished eating, Gadal brought him a hookah. Then she sat down to her meal behind a wall.

"*Arre*, where are you going at this odd hour?" she heard Moni asking a passerby.

"Some urgent work, Moni," the reply came. "Peshkar Saheb has called me."

Gadal recognised the man. He was Giriraj Gawaria, from her own village. He must have

stolen Peshkar's cow.

"Why so late at night?" Moni asked. "Come, sit down, have a pull at the hookah."

The man could not resist the temptation. Gadal picked up her second roti from the *thali* and breaking a morsel from it put it in her mouth.

"Have you heard it?" Giriraj said, taking a pull at the hookah.

"What?"

"Gadal's *devar*, Dori, is dead."

Gadal stopped eating. She quickly washed down the food in her mouth with a drink of water from the *lota* and perked up her ears. Her heart started pounding hard.

"How did he die?" Moni asked. "He was quite hale and hearty."

"He caught a bad chill."

Gadal came out from behind the wall "Giriraj!" she called.

"*Kaka*, while dying your name was on his lips" Giriraj said. "A good man indeed."

Gadal stood petrified.

Giriraj went away.

"Are you listening?" Gadal asked.

"Yes, woman, what's it?"

"I must go."

"Go where?"

"You know it."

"But what for?"

"My *devar* is dead, you know."

"*Devar*? He was no longer your *devar*!"

Gadal laughed, its resonance reverberating around her. "He will remain my *devar* in my next life too. Had he not shown such indifference to me these feet would have never crossed his threshold. He turned cold towards me and I took it out on him. I tried to pay him back in the same coin." Her voice hardened as she spoke.

"You can't go," Moni said.

"Why not?" Gadal said. "Can you stop me from going? *Arre*, even my own sons, the flesh of my flesh can't stand in my way. Now what's left to me? The man I had the pleasure of imposing upon is gone. But who are you to stop me? I came here of my own sweet will. It's for me to decide whether to stay or not to stay. You have not purchased me with money, have you? I've indulged long enough—the bitter things you have said to me. Had you been in my house I would have plucked your tongue out!"

"Oh, stop bragging!" Catching her by her hair, Moni pushed her into the house. Placing his cot across the door, he lay down on it and started smoking his hookah.

Gadal started sobbing. But her sobs coming in a low key did not reach up to Moni. Today Gadal's heart was flowing out in the form of tears.

The third quarter of the night was gone. Moni had started snoring noisily. With all her strength Gadal lifted a corner of her thatched roof and wriggling out through the aperture like a serpent, she jumped out to the other side of the house.

- 6 -

Greatly agitated, Moni was thirsting for action. But he lacked the courage to rush to Gadal's village, brandishing his lathi and bring her back by force. How he wished he could break the wretch's legs. Dulla made fun of him, saying that his darling spouse' had decamped, leaving him high and dry, and tarnishing his name into the bargain. But he could do nothing about it except seethe within himself. When the other shepherds came to know about it, they tried to make light of the whole thing. "Why do you want to have bloodshed over a woman past her prime?" they said. "She had cost you nothing. Only two meals a day and she paid for it by cooking for you."

Moni would flare up. Giriraj had apprised him of the whole thing. He learnt what had transpired when she returned to her village.

When she reached her village she found the Patel sitting in their house. "I warn you, don't step into this house!" Nihal had thundered at her. "Why have you returned?"

The Patel had given her a startled look. "Yes, what have you come for?" he had repeated the question.

Gadal sat down at the door. She said, "When I was a young girl my *Devar* had come to my village armed with a lathi along with my husband. I had kept looking at his hands. What a man he was! I thought I would live in peace under his protection for the rest of my life. Tell me, Patel, when he could not take me under his wings after my husband's death what other course was left for me? And see what happened to him when I was gone. *Kaka* has gone within two days of my departure. Would I have lived with him could things have come to such a pass?"

The Patel said, "*Bahu*, but you never took the fact into account that you had grown-up sons and daughters."

"You have a point there," Gadal said "I was indeed conscious of this fact. But it was a question of prestige against age. He had hurt my pride and I had a grudge against my *devar*. But that is over now. Here is my son, ask him if I have in any manner contravened the customs of our community. If I have, take action against me as enjoined by our customs. Haul me over the coals. I will vindicate myself before the panchayat. I only ask one thing: when my sons spat on the community's face why did you connive at it then?"

"When was it?" the Patel looked at her in surprise.

"You know it, of course. Who will know it if not the Patel? Only twenty-five men were invited to the feast given in connection with my husband's death."

"Are you mad?" the Patel said. "Don't you know this is the law laid down by the government?"

"Law!" Gadal gave a contemptuous laugh; "Patel, you can see the law in actual practice

everywhere. They carry away others' cattle in broad daylight and nothing is done about it. Did the law apply only in my husband's case? Or maybe my sons thought why waste good money over a man who was gone for good. Cowards!"

Nihal thundered, "Cowards! You call us cowards? And what are you? A lioness?" "Yes, I'm a lioness!" Gadal shook with rage. Have you the courage to do my bidding? Have you?"

"What bidding?"

"Go and invite every member of the community to *Kaka's* death ceremony. Invite all of them to join in the feast."

Nihal stood there as if transfixed. "And what about the police?" he muttered at last.

"So you have shown yourself in your true colours," Gadal said.

"This woman is talking through her head," the Patel said. "She doesn't understand the gravity of what she is saying. And what if there is firing?"

"You custodians of dharma have ruined the country," Gadal said. "It is because of you that the whole land is gone to rack and ruin. There's no hope now. You are all cowards."

"Should I take it upon myself?" she said after a pause.

"You?" Nihal looked at her in bewilderment.

"Yes, I'll fill the breach," Gadal said. "My name was on his lips when he was breathing his last. It's incumbent upon me to make the arrangements."

Moni was astounded. Giriraj had told him that the arrangements were in full swing under Gadal's supervision. Everything was being done on a large scale. Gadal, it was rumoured, had bribed the police inspector. He would cock a blind eye at the goings-on. People said she had not felt her husband's loss so much as she had Dori's.

Moni's heart was filled with venom. " Gadal, I'll not let you have things your own way," he muttered to himself. "I'm not Gola's son if I allow things to run their smooth course. You may have bribed the local police but their is a higher authority whose writ runs over the whole place. I'll complain to him."

- 7 -

The festivity was reaching its crescendo. Guests sat down in batches to eat. As one batch finished its place was taken by another batch. Sweet rolls were frying in huge cauldrons and were served sizzling hot, dripping with ghee. Nihal and Narain had sold their grains at inflated rates during the War and had filled their coffers with silver coins and currency notes. The money had now come handy to meet the expenses of the feast. Things were done on such a magnificent scale that Nihal had thought nothing of running up a debt with the Bohra trader. That day people in Dang said that the entire credit for it went to Gadal. As for her sons, they had thrown the sponge but Gadal saw the thing through. "Is the law above the community?" she had kept repeating.

Utterly exhausted, Gadal was sitting among the women when she saw someone resembling a policeman moving in the crowd. She came out to investigate. Nihal was standing before a man with bowed head.

"What's the matter, Diwanji?" she boldly advanced towards the man.

The man felt flustered at the sight of a woman facing him so brazenly.

"He says the proceedings must stop," Nihal said.

"Why?" Gadal gave the man an apprehensive look.

"The Police Inspector's orders," Diwanji said in a soft voice.

"But I've taken Daroghaji's tacit permission," Gadal said, indicating thereby that she had already greased the Daroghaji's palm.

"I know it," Diwanji said. "Daroghaji is willing to connive at it but someone has reported the matter to the senior police officer. Daroghaji will have to take official notice of the goings-on here. He has sent word that the crowd should disperse before he comes on his round. Otherwise he would have to take recourse to the law."

It set Gadal thinking. Who could have complained to the higher authorities?. But no name came to her mind.

"Daroghaji should have thought of it before," she said. "How can I turn away the guests at this stage? Diwanji, you also sit down and you shall be served. I shall face the consequences, come what may. I'll send word to Daroghaji. Why should he take the trouble of coming over? He's the Raja of this place."

Diwanji said, "He's an employee of the Sarkar and may lose his job for dereliction of duty. He'll surely show up."

"Then let him come," Gadal said in a sharp voice. "Once a man gives word he cannot go back on it. I can't ask my guests to go away without eating."

Narain was worried. Diwanji had warned him that all of them may be put under arrest. "You must not defy the government," he said.

"*Arre*, is the government above the commun-

ity?" Gadal said seething with anger. "We can't give up our dharma for the sake of the government."

Three batches had already eaten. This was the fourth and the last. Nihal peered into the dark. "Narain, hurry up. This is the last batch isn't it?"

Standing under the shadow of a thatched hut Gadal called out to Nihal. He came and stood before her.

"Are you scared?" she asked him. Moving his tongue over his dry lips he said, "No."

"Nihal, you must not bring dishonour to my motherhood," Gadal said. "Your uncle had regarded you as his son and he refused to marry a second time. Remember, he had no one else whom he could call his own."

Nihal bowed his head.

A boy came running. "Grandma!" he cried.

"Yes, what's it?" Gadal looked at him apprehensively.

"The police is coming! It's armed!"

Nihal gave Gadal a meaningful look.

"I think it will not take this batch long to finish," Gadal said.

"But will the police stay away that long? They may not agree to it."

"But we must stop them. Block their way if necessary."

"They have guns."

"Nihal, we too have guns. There is no shortage of guns in Dang."

"But what shall we eat afterwards?"

"We leave that to God."

The police van blew its horn. Nihal advanced to meet the van. The Darogha climbed down from the van. "Is there a feast going on here?" he asked.

Nihal was stunned. The man had accepted bribe from him and now he even refused to recognise him.

"Yes, we are entertaining guests," Nihal said.

"Are there more than twenty-five people?"

"Daroghaji, we never count the heads when we invite people to eat."

"But you can't break the law and get away with it."

"The government's laws were made yesterday but the community's laws were there from the very beginning. We are more concerned with the community."

"Then I must arrest you."

"Nihal!" It was Gadal calling her son. Nihal went to her.

"We must stop them at any cost till the batch has finished eating," Gadal said.

"Then?"

"After that we shall hustle them out by the back door. If any guest is caught, it will bring bad name to our family."

"But there is no stopping them. They may resort to firing."

"Don't be afraid of that. I have posted Narain on the roof. He is there with four men armed with guns."

Nihal trembled. He looked so harried. "We have only muzzle-loaders!" he said, "while they have rifles."

"Come what may, the last batch must eat."

"And then?"

"Then you all try to scamper away."

Suddenly the lantern went out. There was sound of firing coming through the darkness. Out of the darkness came Gadal's shrill voice, "You must swear by me. No one must get up without eating." But no one was thinking of eating. They were all in a desperate hurry to rush out. Somebody shrieked and fell. There was a stampede near the exit at the back.

When all were gone Gadal climbed up to the roof. "Son!" she called out for Nihal.

Even in that commotion every fibre of Nihal's body tingled as he dutifully responded to his mother's call. Even in that chaos her voice sounded so mellow and soft.

"Nihal, you must swear by your mother's womb where I nurtured you, that you will not wait here a moment longer and will make a bid to escape with Narain and the children."

"And you?"

"Don't worry about me. I can see your uncle is beckoning me."

It was no time to argue. Gadal took a loaded gun from a man who was standing by her side. "Go, all of you go!" she cried.

The youngmen caught in the coils of family attachment were lost in darkness.

Gadal pressed the trigger. Someone cried and fell. She laughed a sinister laugh. It went ringing in the air.

The Darogha was taken aback at the sound. But where were the men? The policemen rushed up to the roof. One of them fired. The bullet hit Gadal in her stomach.

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The battle was over. Gadal was lying drenched in blood. The policemen had gathered round her.

Coming up, the Darogha peered in the dark. "I see nobody here," he said.

"Hazoor," a policeman said, "A woman—it's a woman!"

Proceeding towards the gathered policemen the Darogha bent down to examine the woman. "Who are you?" he asked.

Gadal smiled and said in a faint voice, "My task is accomplished, Daroghaji. My soul is now at peace."

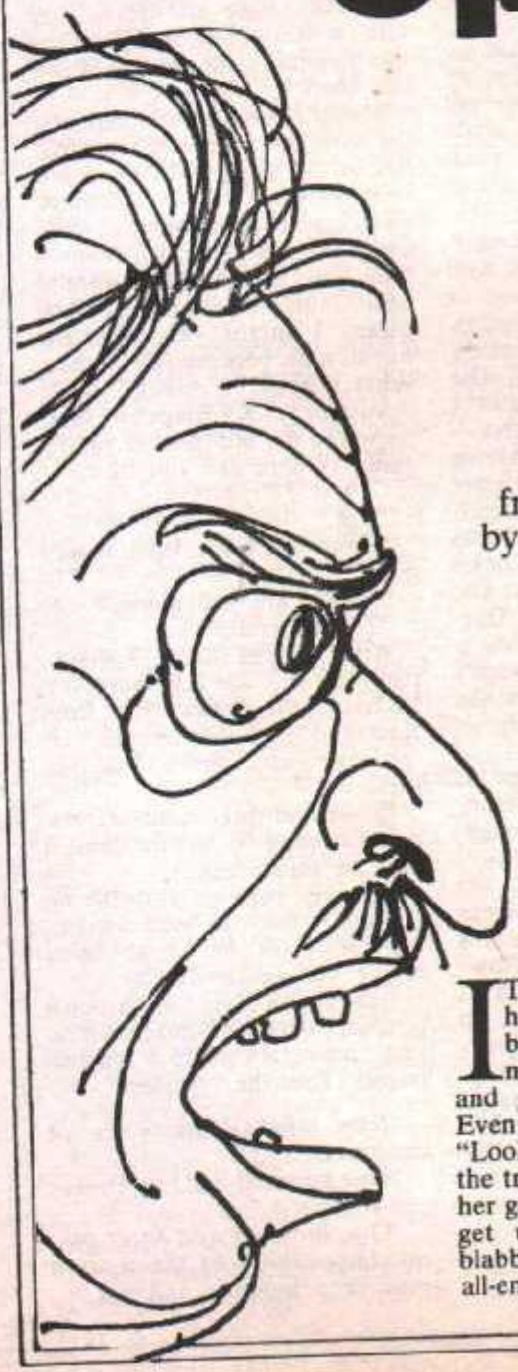
"But who are you?" the Darogha said testily.

Gadal said in a still feebler voice, "One who could not bear to live without me even for a day, I'm his..."

Her head tumbled to one side. There was a smile on her face—a smile, faint and ephemeral, like a lantern that shines in darkness for an instant and then goes out.

Difference of Opinion

by Uroob



Translated
from Malayalam
by K.P.K. Menon.

IT IS not easy to find a husband who would get up before sunrise on a very cold morning in a winter month and get ready for a journey. Even so, my wife woke me up: "Look here, it's almost time for the train, Oh my gods!" May all her gods be damned. I just can't get up. I murmured: "Don't blabber at midnight." Yet, that all-enduring wife made me open my eyes: "Look here; it's almost time for the train, Oh my gods!"

Reviling at all the imaginary powers from God to the devil, I got up. True, it was time for the train's arrival. Drinking a cup of coffee hurriedly prepared by my wife, I started, carrying a bundle.

What a chill wind! I must be at Ottapalam that day—I had a case. Let me tell you, if you are a man, you must never go to the court. Once entangled in the wheel of law, you will have to do your penance in the railway station on such wretched mornings, leaving a just married young wife alone at home.

When I reached the station, an unpunctual cock crowed once somewhere in the railway quarters—surely a cock which had gone to sleep very early.

I managed to buy a ticket, suffering a fairly hard push from a gentleman with an impressive check turban and an even more impressive moustache, while the pungent smell of attar emitted by his wife's body assailed my nostrils.

I tried to go to the platform through the third class waiting-room. I was slowly moving towards the train. Suddenly I heard a cry from behind: "Stop, you man there, stop!"

I looked back. "Stop!" The caller shouted again. I obeyed him. He elbowed his way towards me in a huff.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"My upper cloth."

"Your upper cloth?"

"Yes, give me my upper cloth."

"Is it my business to look after

your upper cloth?"

"It is there, on your shoulder."

He proved correct. On my upper cloth rested another. In the rush, the crooked handle of my umbrella had snatched his upper cloth. I was ashamed at having got angry with him. Returning his property to him, I said: "It was unintentional, you know!"

"It doesn't matter. Now, where are you going?" he asked like an old acquaintance. I told him my destination.

"Excellent!" he continued, "I'm also going to Ottapalam. Don't you know Choyi? First class ophthalmic physician. After the sad demise of Murungayil Chaspu Vaidya there has not been another doctor like Choyi. If you are a man, believe me, he will give light to a blind eye."

I had managed to get into the train. Behind me was Choyi's admirer. He had no intention of leaving me. Such things are bound to happen when one starts on a wretched morning.

I entered the compartment and looked around. On one side sat the turbaned gentleman who had given me a taste of his push, carrying on a gurgling conversation with his wife who continued to exhale a pungent smell. The lady listened with rapt attention; she paid equal attention to removing the outer covering of fried Bengal gram and eating it. Her nose-ring studded with white stones and sitting over a large area of her face like a cap shone with great brilliance.

On the nearby bench lay a young man. His left hand adorned with a wrist-watch rested on his breast like an object to be exhibited. Marking time with the other hand he was singing "Abhi aayega, abhi aayega." His music made me realise that the gentleman's push had not been so painful after all. It would seem that the youth was crying out his repentance for a sin of his former life. Such encounters are inevitable when one starts on a journey on such a wretched morning.

Nearby sat a pious Muslim. A rosary of glass beads was turning in his hand. He was chanting hymns to God. Moving away a little, he said, "You can sit here, my boy!"

"That's right," said the man who accompanied me. "I can sit here and you too can." We sat down. He took his upper cloth from his shoulder and placed it on his lap. Then he turned to me:

"Your native place?"

I told him.

"Your occupation?"

I told him.

When he learnt that I had no children he wanted to know my wife's age and how long we had been married. He even made enquiries about her looks. I felt embarrassed. But by the grace of God I had a brain-wave. "Do you have children?" I asked.

"Yes, yes," he answered with enthusiasm, "there are five of them, three girls and two boys. The eldest is a schoolmaster. The second is in the army. The third is a girl, her husband a Panicker from Pulamanthol—Padmanabha Panicker, that is his name. The two younger girls are still unmarried. They are eighteen and sixteen. Good looks don't count for much. Luck's what matters. The youngest one has a complaint in the eye. During the last sowing season, a small stick hit her eye. That's how the trouble began. Now she can't open it. So I thought of seeing the physician, Choyi ..." Kannappan Nair—that was his name—had no intention to stop.

The train whistled and started. The volume of the gentleman's speech grew louder than the sound of the train. The singer quite oblivious of the effect of his performance on his fellow-passengers, was in ecstasy. This and worse mishaps are sure to befall one who starts on a journey on such a wretched morning.

Kannappan Nair had not completed the recital of even the first canto of his personal epic. He showed great enthusiasm in continuing his recital. I felt depressed at the same rate.

What a breeze! I closed the window of the compartment. In a level voice Kannappan Nair extolled the glories of old times and lamented the degradation that had set in. His childhood, youth, love—he had once been in love—marriage, wedded life, the affluence of the family in former days, its present misfortune—all figured in the recital. His sweeping review covered the histories and stories of many an individual and family. Now and then he would place a pinch of snuff before his nose and draw it in with a stertorous sound. That was a relief to me; he could not talk then.

The turbaned gentleman and the musician were in their activities in full swing. The train left behind two or three stations. Even then Kannappan Nair's narration was gathering momentum. I was afraid that if I were to endure this till we reached Ottapalam I might renounce the world and become an ascetic. What was to be done!

Suddenly Kannappan Nair turned to the old Muslim gentleman: "Where are you from?"

"Who? I?"

"Yes."

"From the North. From Kasargode."

"Where are you going?"

"To Shoranur."

After a brief pause, Kannappan Nair shot his next question: "What is the railway fare from Kasaragode to Shoranur?"

"Four and three quarter rupees."

"Four and three quarter? No, no, that can't be. At the most it may be three rupees."

"Three rupees should be enough," the old man smiled, "but it won't be at Shoranur where you get down."

Kannappan Nair took a pinch of snuff, placed it before his nose and once again made a raucous sound. Then he resumed:

"Now what is the price of coconuts there?"

"One hundred and fifty rupees per thousand."

"One hundred and fifty? No, no, impossible. At the most it may be a hundred and ten."

"A hundred and ten will do. But you won't get a thousand nuts."

By then the singer's song had reached its crescendo. And the voice of the turbaned gentleman had risen to match it.

The train stopped at the Pallippuram station. I opened the window and looked out. Dawn had not yet broken. A chill breeze blew in and made me shiver. In the distance was seen a tiny light from a cottage on the hill-side, like a *tilak* on the forehead of a deity. From a temple not far off came the solemn sound of the blowing of a conch. I felt a little elated.

We had yet another co-passenger. He looked greatly excited, a suitcase in hand, a bundle held close to his chest, an umbrella under his arm, a towel tied round his head. He was somewhat fat.

He made a thorough survey of the compartment turning thrice round. He went up to the turbaned gentleman, but distended his nostrils and drew in his breath and then came away. Turning round once more he threw a look full of disgust at the singer. He came to the bench opposite ours and turned round once again. By that time the train had whistled.

The newcomer took a relaxed breath. He pushed the suitcase below the bench and placed the bundle on the upper berth. The umbrella was deposited in a corner. He then stood close to the old Muslim gentleman and Kannappan Nair. "May I squeeze in here?" he asked Kannappan Nair!

"Certainly" said Kannappan Nair who had been observing him keenly, and he moved away a little. The Muslim gentleman moved to a corner. The newcomer sat down.

"Where are you going?" Kannappan Nair began.

"To Shoranur. I have to go to Shoranur, don't you understand?"

"So your house is at Pallippuram?"

"Yes, yes, a mile and a half from the station, don't you understand?"

"Yes," looking as if he had made up his mind on something, he continued, "Name?"

"Kittun Kurup. I belong to the Champrath family. Do you know it? You would know if you are acquainted with Pallippuram, don't you understand?"

Kurup opened his chewing packet and placed it in his lap. Looking much surprised, Kannappan Nair asked, "You belong to Champrath? God, God!"

The great debate in non-stop talking had begun. They tried to vie with each other in gurgling out floods of words. A deluge seemed imminent. The turbaned gentleman and his wife were completely outdone. But the singer continued his performance. The Muslim passenger bent down and closed his ears.

But what could be done? Such things would happen if one started on a journey on such a wretched morning!

Several social, political and economic problems of Pallippuram and the neighbourhood were getting their thorough attention. Finally, Kannappan Nair was heard asking, "What is the present state of Kanthratu Mama, Kurup?"

"What could I say about their state? It is steadily on the rise. They get one lakh measures of paddy as lease-rent, don't you understand?"

"One lakh!"

"Yes, one lakh. All this is because of the luck of that Moosu Nambudiri, don't you understand?"

"That cannot be," Kannappan Nair expressed his dissent. "Maybe seventy-five thousand."

"Who said so? One lakh. Not a grain less, don't you understand?"

"No, no. Put it at eighty thousand at the most, it can't be more. It can't be as if their income was equal to Chathath Mama's."

"Are you to decide it?" Kurup did not yield. "Do you equate the wealth of Kanthratu Mama and Chathath? Your Chathath Mama! All the wealth of Chathath is not equal to a grass basket of Kanthratu. Don't you understand?"

"Mind you, don't talk about what you don't know." Kannappan Nair became spirited. "This Kanthratu sprouted only yesterday. That's not the state of Chathath. They are old zamindars. If you scrape together everything, Kauthratu may have eighty-two thousand; not a grain more."

Kurup took his packet of chewing materials from the fold of his dhoti and placed it on the bench. He untied the towel round his head and tied it round his waist. His exposed bald head shone like an egg-shell. He

turned towards Kannappan Nair like a mad bull. "Let me tell you this, you shouldn't talk about things of which you know nothing, don't you understand? Eighty two-thousand, phew! Are the account of the paddy of Chathath in your hands?"

"Are they in your hands?"

"Yes, they are in my hands. They are zamindars of my area; don't you understand?"

"What of that? You may worship them. One lakh measure of paddy!"

"Listen to me, it is one lakh!"

"No, it cannot be. Eighty-two thousand at the most."

"I said one lakh!"

"Eighty-two thousand!"

"One lakh!"

"Eighty-two thousand!"

"Don't talk nonsense, don't you understand?"

"Shut up, fellow."

"What did you say?" Kurup got up; so did Kannappan Nair. They got ready for a fight. The old Muslim gentleman got up and held Kurup's hand which was about to rise. "My dear young men, did you go crazy?" On account of the high pitch of the song, the old man's words were not clearly heard. He turned to the young singer, "My son, will you please stop for a few moments? You will do a lot of good. What filth you sing!"

The young man stopped.

"You cannot stop me, no not even your creator, don't you understand?" said Kurup, looking daggers at Nair.

"If you don't stop, you will lose the skin on your cheek," said Nair.

The old man stood between them. "Control yourself a little. For heaven's sake control yourself. Let any son of the devil have plenty of money. How does it concern you? Let some one have not a lakh but five lakhs. O God, must there be such madness in the world even now?"

We too now tried to cool them down. Luckily the train reached Shoranur. Kurup, in a state of high excitement, took his suitcase and bundle and umbrella and alighted from the train. Even as he was walking away he was screaming: "Eighty-two thousand! Ass! What does the fellow know, don't you understand?"

The turbaned gentleman and his wife, as though frightened, also got down.

As the train began running, Kannappan Nair asked me: "Had you ever seen an impertinent fellow like that, sir? When there is a difference of opinion does one get ready to exchange blows with the other man? What do you think?"

"Me?" I asked.

"Who else?"

"I think that on such a wretched morning no one should start on a journey."

The old Muslim gentleman burst out laughing. The singer cleared his voice, ready to resume his concert. ⊛

RELATIVITY

The famous dramatist and critic, Alfred Polgar, emphasized the importance of the individual through the following story:

A sergeant said of a soldier in a foxhole: "Never mind him, so long as we can save our squadron." The lieutenant said: "Never mind that squadron, as long as we can save our platoon." The captain said: "The platoon doesn't matter, as long as we can save the rest of the company." The colonel said: "Never mind the company, as long as we can save the rest of the regiment." The brigadier was interested only in saving the rest of the brigade, while the general wanted only to save his army.

"The army doesn't matter," said the leader of the country. "as long as we can save the world." And God said: "The world doesn't matter, as long as the universe isn't destroyed, too."... "The universe doesn't matter," said the mother of the soldier in the foxhole, "as long as I get my son safely home."

THE RAJASTHANI PAINTING

by Anup Kishore Das **Photographs: Liaquat Ali Bhatti**

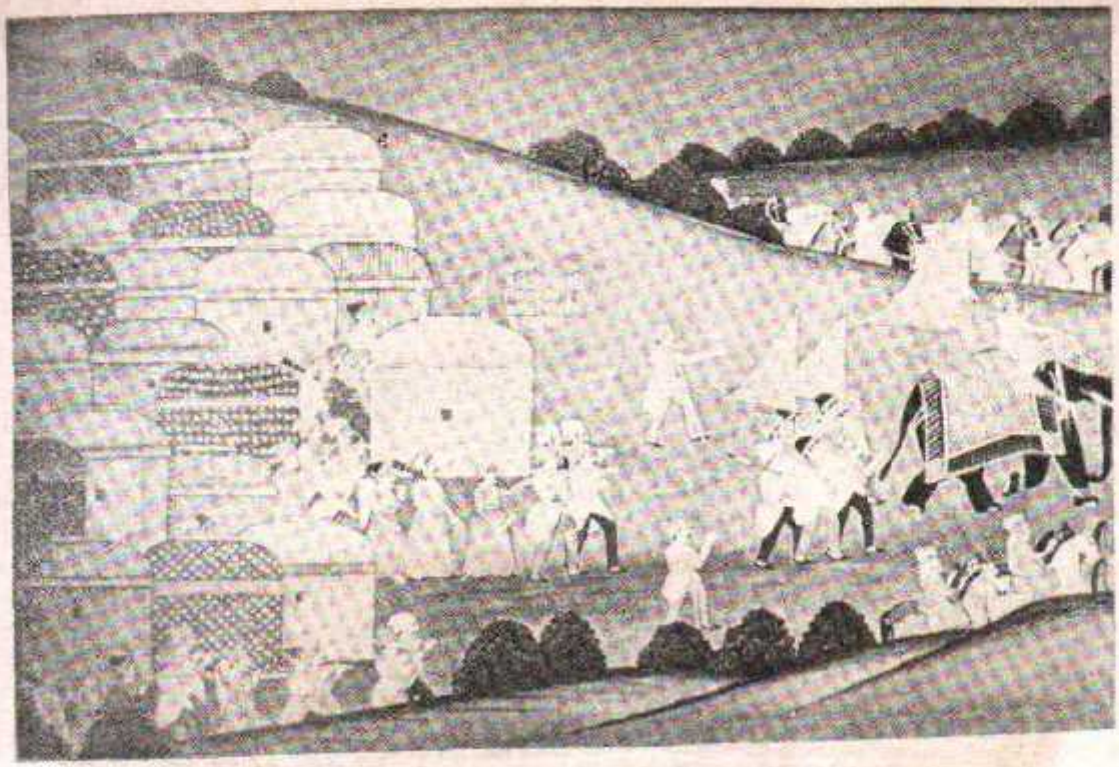
The school of art where the Hindu motifs are magnificently executed by Muslim artists.

"THE beginnings of Rajput painting can be traced to the classical painting in the centuries of its disintegration and re-absorption into folk-art....its emergence at the courts of Rajput princes is due to their rivalry in patronage of the arts with the Muslim overlords in the Deccan and Delhi during the sixteenth century," observes Dr. Stella Kramrisch, a well-known authority on Indian art.

The Rajput style of painting was practised by various distinct schools, Rajasthani and Pahari being the main two. The Rajasthani School flourished under the patronage of the feudal lords, notably of Udaipur, Chawand, Chitor, Mewar, Bikaner, Jaipur,

Ivory Painting.

Birth of Christ.



Consorts of Krishna on a journey— from a Bhagavata Purana set painted by Hukuma in 1792.

Jodhpur and some other adjoining states of the Rajputana, from the end of the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century.

Economics too had a role to play in the emergence of art in Rajasthan. The duty levied by the feudal lords on the goods in regular transit and the trade in general were good sources of income. Consequently they were able to recruit artists which included even those who had left the court of Delhi. These artists, many of whom were Muslims, became soon adepts at executing Hindu religious themes for their new patrons. Thus Rajasthani painting could be said to be the creative product of a continuous trade and cultural movement.

Rajasthan, for more than a thousand years, is known to be one of the most conservative regions of India. Its art has remained almost unaffected except for a slight Mughal influence at a later period. "We wonder at the persistence of tradition in the art of Egypt; it is scarcely less remarkable that the Hindus,

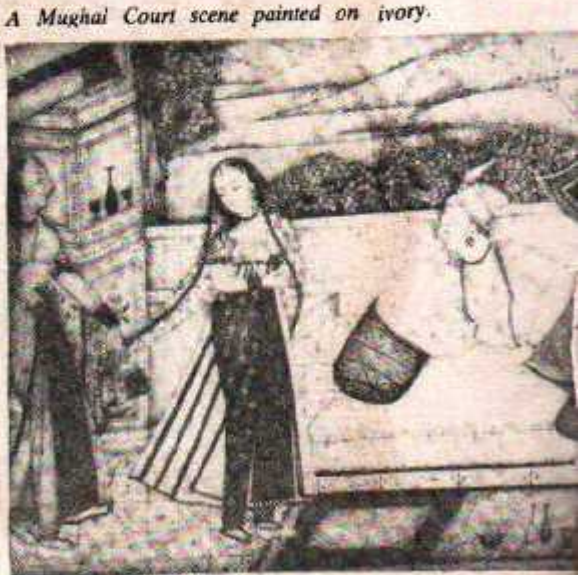
Rajasthani couple on a camel.

through centuries of religious evolution and of warfare should have been able to preserve almost to our own time so much of grandeur that belongs to the art of the period of their supreme achievement," says Ananda Coomaraswamy of Rajput painting.

Mughal painting was primarily aristocratic and individualistic in nature glorifying the exploits and vanity of the royalties and depicting that which appealed to them most. The magnificence of the court, the revelry of the harem, elephant and camel fights, scenes of hunting and portraiture of the royal patrons were some of the themes commonly depicted by the artists.

Rajasthani painting, unlike the Mughal art, was more homely and full of warmth reflecting the land, the atmosphere and the

A Mughal Court scene painted on ivory.



ANANDA COOMARASWAMY ON RAJPUT ART

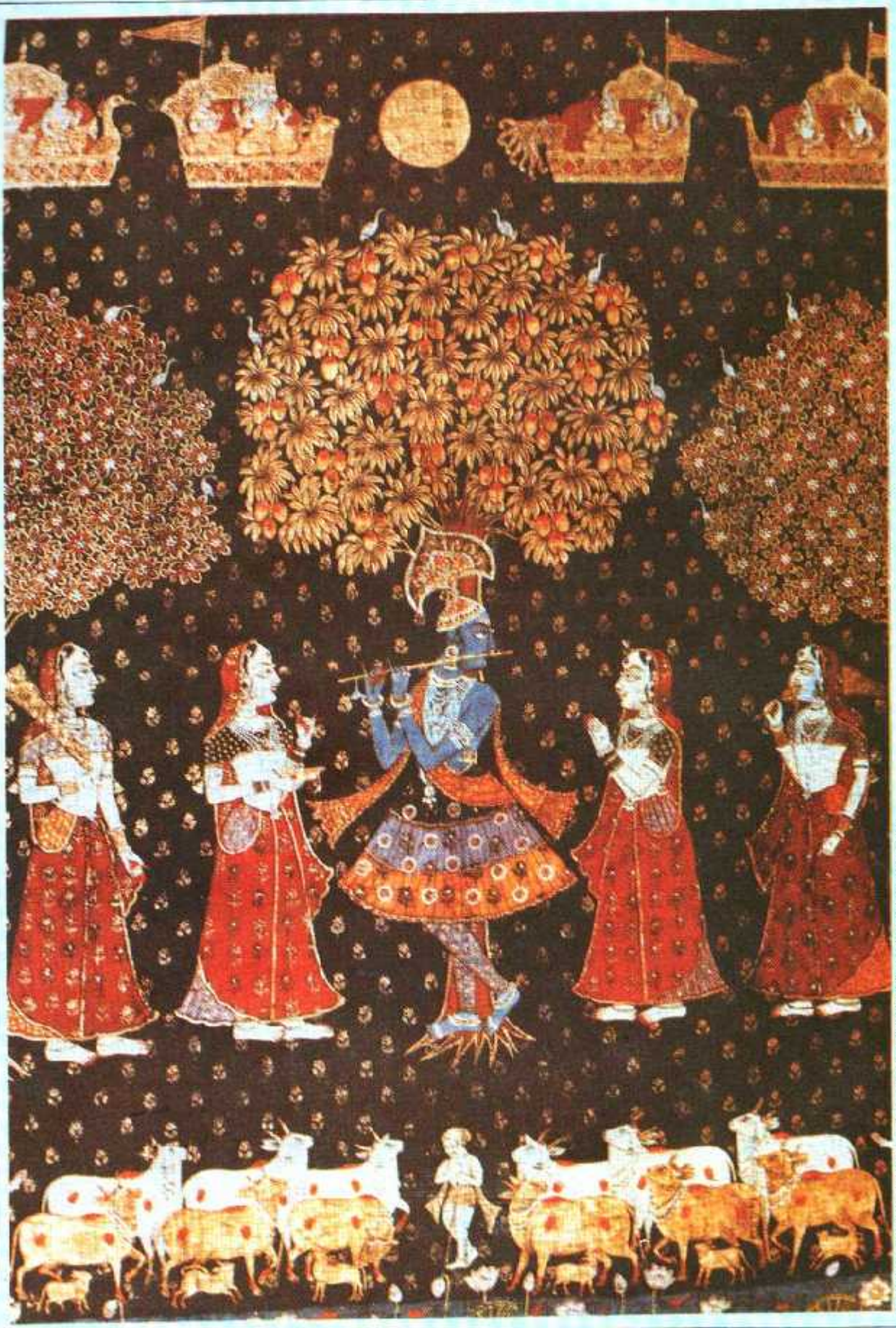
These works are an immediate expression of the Hindu view of life. Here is that distinct, sharp and wiry bounding line which Blake, most Indian of modern Western minds, regarded as the golden rule of art and life. A line so deliberate so self-confident; so full of wonder at the beauty of the world, especially the beauty of women, and at the same time so austere, could not be a sudden achievement, nor depend on the brilliance of a single personality. It is the product of a whole civilization, and of aristocratic traditions protected by hieratic sanction. In this work there is no room for cleverness; too haughty to admire ingenuity, too distinguished to affect a calligraphic elegance, or to feel the smallest interest in any attempt to create an illusion of modelling, it is an art both proud and passionate and very reserved. It is sometimes said that the Indians have left no history, but what else than history is any work of traditional art? Of such art we can at least say that it is not a product of chance, but is determined by antecedent racial karma, and cannot be detached from the life it expresses. These drawings answer for us a whole series of questions as to what manner of life they sought to praise. From these heads, so serene, so confidently poised, from these sensitive expressive hands, these white and gold and coloured muslins we can reconstruct, as it were from the buried fragments of an ancient textile, the whole pattern of the Rajput civilization—simple, aristocratic, generous, and self-sufficient. No other evidence than this is needed to establish the magnificence of that old Hindu world that is vanishing before our eyes at the present day in a tornado of education and reform.

people, their nature and their religious fervour. It was more "in tune with a throbbing life around, simple, with a direct appeal, deeply religious and mystic, true interpreters of phases of Nature in her moods in spring and in rain and emotions in man, bird and beast with a universal love for both the animate and the inanimate... ... in short, themes whose appeal goes direct to the heart of peasant and nobleman alike."

Some of the themes vividly depicted by these paintings showing the spirit of religious fervour and dedication are the sports of child Krishna, episodes from Rama's life and the Mahabharata, the symbolic love of Radha and Krishna in number of moods and situations, love of Nala and Damayanti, romances around the traditional idealised heroes and heroines (*Nayakas* and *Nayikas*) and the triumph of Chandi (Durga). The paintings also present through picturesque forms the seasonal songs (*Baramasa*) the musical modes (Ragas and Raginis), various emotional states such as the longing of the lady separated from her lover (*Proshitabhartrika*), the pride of the wronged wife (*Khandita*), the eager and expectant beloved (*Vasakasajjika*), so on and so forth.

It seems, in its earliest phase Rajasthani painting was a regional adaptation of West Indian manuscript painting. As a result of constant internal warfare which marks the history of Rajputana, valuable treasures and manuscripts either got lost or destroyed. The series of twenty-four Raginis (the full number should be thirty-six) is claimed to be the oldest known Rajput painting.

These Rajasthani manuscript illustrations are unique for their decisive draughtsmanship, glowing colours harmoniously combined with definite outlines. A characteristic feature is the representations of decorative colourful textile designs and floating, transparent drapery. A beautiful rhythmic movement as



A pitchwai cloth painting of Krishna playing the flute. (18th Century).

Painting of Radha-Krishna.

Prithviraj with Samyukta on horse back.

if of a dance animates the unique composition of the period.

The seventeenth century Rajasthani painting is much more sophisticated, the compositions being no longer simple and straight and the colours though more variegated are less vibrant. But it retained its identity which lay primarily in its rhythmic composition of blending of colours, in its symbolism and in the expressive figures.

Besides being lyrical this school of painting is highly symbolic, it aims at recounting a story through visual images and symbols where the objects of the story, men, women, birds, etc. are only symbols and are not intended to be represented according to laws of Nature. The expression of various moods, sentiments, emotions, etc. are significantly done through the constituents of the painted surface in terms of space and volume, line and colour. The painting in fact emphasises its formal character, rather than explaining the meaning of the story it portrays.

The Rajasthani School of Painting in the 18th—19th centuries started the practice of portraiture varying from small black and white miniatures to coloured life-size works. The great majority of these paintings are that of Rajput Princes and local worthies. At this stage one cannot ignore the impact that the Mughal School had already started making on the world of Indian art. Its impact was most immediately felt on the Rajput painting, gradually blurring some of its pristine characteristics.

The large size sketches and line-drawings of the Rajasthani School show that it was primarily a mural art. Large murals are found in the palaces of Jaipur, Udaipur and Bikaner.

The signed specimens of the Mughal series of paintings are the result of the spirit of emulation prevailing in the court and the patronage of the emperors and the nobles which brought out the personality of each artist.

The Rajasthani painter continued the tradition of the past, experiencing the joy of presenting a variety of themes already dealt by numerous predecessors but always ever fresh in their charm and inviting depiction all over again. It is a rare occasion when the artist individualised himself and put his stamp by inscribing his name. The nostalgic themes survived. The beautiful creations are still there and have become immortal but the creator has effaced himself, such was their humility and dedication to the art. ॐ

When Moses threw the wand into the Red Sea, the sea, quite contrary to the expected miracle, did not divide itself to leave a dry passage for the Jews. Not until the first man had jumped into the sea did the promised miracle happen and the waves recede.

—Jewish Legend

WHAT IS ACUPUNCTURE?

by Dhruva

ONCE upon a time, a long time ago, perhaps about the time the Vedas were being compiled in India and the Great Pyramid was being built in Egypt, there was a great Emperor in China. His name was Huang Ti, the Yellow Emperor.

One day the Yellow Emperor called his Court Physician, Chi Po to him and said, 'It is my duty to take care of my people. I who collect taxes from them find myself afflicted by not being able to compensate them for their labour. I am so unhappy that my people are sick'.

'I desire therefore that the employment of remedies and stone needles stop so that the injuries caused by them can be avoided. The rule and method of Acupuncture should be established. Only by using finely-made needles can we circulate the energy of the meridians, can the Blood and Vitality be harmonised and the energy of the Yin and Yang meridians be smoothly joined.

'I order that this method be transmitted to all future generations forever. It should be made easy to practice, easy to memorize. I desire that the laws concerning it be clearly defined so that I can write a book on Acupuncture and Moxibustion. I wish to hear it explained.' "

The *Huangti Nei Jing*, the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine is the Bible of Acupuncture. In cryptic and sometimes rather difficult language it describes all the laws of Acupuncture, laws which are still followed today by thousands of acupuncturists and traditional physicians of the Chinese school all over the world. It was composed in eighteen sections which are themselves a compilation of a long oral tradition. This oral tradition dates back to perhaps 3000 B.C. for there are references in the book to astronomical events which took place then.

As well, the 'finely-made' needles to which the Yellow Emperor refers could only be manufactured when metals were smelted, probably copper. The evidence seems to point to the fact that this was discovered in China around 3000 B.C.

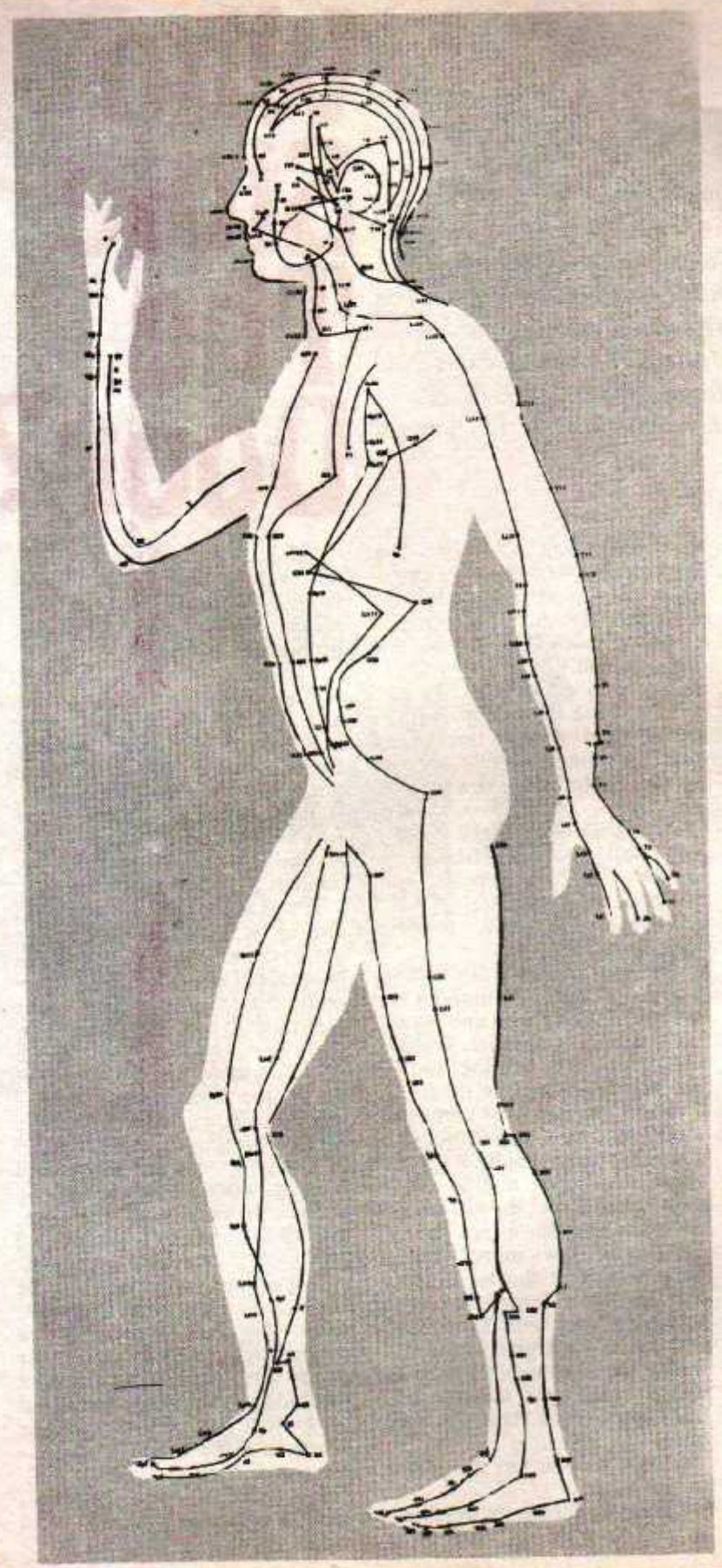
The book was probably written in its present form as late as 250 B.C. It should be understood that writing something down was considered in ancient China to be a sacred act. If something was written, it was considered to be eternal truth.

This adherence to a vision of eternal principles is essential to the full practice of Chinese Medicine. In this the Chinese are close to Ayurveda which, in its own way, states similar laws though often in different symbolism. In the modern time it is only in Homoeopathy that we find an attempt to re-discover something of the sense of Law that is behind the traditional therapeutic systems.

It is true that because of centuries of degeneration from a sense of higher Law in the practice of healing Hahnemann was extremely impatient with theories of illness and disease. Yet, in practice, he has probably done more than any other single person to draw our attention to simple principles of the energetic action in diseases and in medicines. What we wish to do here is to resurrect some of these principles as stated in traditional Chinese Medicine. We hope that we can give you some sense of the elegance of vision on which the Chinese Physician has for centuries based his therapeutic efforts. As in all traditions (homoeopathic included) there are perversions and misunderstandings; there are, to use a vocabulary from the Nei Jing itself, inferior and superior physicians.

The first thing that the Yellow Emperor says is that it is his duty to take care of his people. We cannot help being reminded of the first line in Hahnemann's 'Organon of Medicine'.

"The physicians high and *only*



Dhruva, an American by birth, has been living in Auroville, India, for about fifteen years. He is a practising acupuncturist and osteopath, interested in the possibilities of a full integration of therapeutic methods.

mission is to restore the sick to health, to cure, as it is termed."

The sense of identity with the suffering of those around one and the feeling that there must be something to about it is the basis of any true therapeutic work. This profound and noble emotion begins China's most revered medical treatise. To be a true physician we must have the capacity to bear not only our own difficulties and trials, but those of others for they are but reflections of our own.

In the next paragraph the Yellow Emperor makes clear that he is familiar with the problem recently labelled by Ivan Illich 'iatrogenic disease', that is, disease caused by physicians in their efforts to treat. He has seen that the medicines and stone needles then being used were causing as many problems perhaps as they were solving. He wants this stopped through the establishment of 'the rule and method of Acupuncture'. He decides that the only way is to use the fine-made needles of metal. He then mentions three actions which the needles can have. Most of the rest of this article will be a discussion of these three actions.

To appear in the next issue.
(To conclude)

Who Stole The Door?

Richard P. Feynman, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Physics (1965) and one of the greatest theoretical physicists, is also a man of a rare sense of humour. The following is an extract from his memoirs Surely You're Joking, billed as "Adventure's of a Curious Character", just published in India by Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd., 5, General Patters Road, Madras 600 002.

The incidents recorded here go back to Feynman's student days at MIT.

I often listened to my room-mates—they were both seniors—studying for their theoretical physics course. One day they were working pretty hard on something that seemed pretty clear to me, so I said, "Why don't you use the Baronallai's equation?"

"What's that!" they exclaimed. "What are you talking about!"

I explained to them what I meant and how it worked in this case, and it solved the problem. It turned out it was Bernoulli's equation that I meant, but I had read all this stuff in the encyclopedia without talking to anybody about it, so I didn't know how to pronounce anything.

But my room-mates were very excited, and from then on they discussed their physics problems with me—I wasn't so lucky with many of them—and the next year, when I took the course, I advanced rapidly. That was a very good way to get educated, working on the senior problems and learning how to pronounce things.

I liked to go to a place called the Raymor and Playmore Ballroom—two ballrooms that were connected together—on Tuesday nights. My fraternity brothers didn't go to these "open" dances; they preferred their own dances, where the girls they brought were upper crust ones they had met "properly". I didn't care, when I met somebody, where they were from, or what their background was, so I would go to these dances—even though my fraternity brothers disapproved (I was a junior by this time, and they couldn't stop me)—and I had a very good time.

One time I danced with a certain girl a few times, and didn't say much. Finally, she said to me, "Who hants vewwy nice-ee."

I couldn't quite make it out—she had some difficulty in speech—but I thought she said, "You dance very nicely."

"Thank you," I said. "It's been an honour."

We went over to a table where a friend of hers had found a boy she was dancing with and we sat, the four of us, together. One girl was very hard of hearing, and the other girl was nearly deaf.

When the two girls conversed they would do a large amount of signalling very rapidly back and forth, and grunt a little bit. It didn't bother me; the girl danced well, and she was a nice person.

After a few more dances, we're sitting at the table again, and there's a large amount of signalling back and forth, back and forth, back and forth, until finally she says something to me which I gathered means, she'd like us to take them to some hotel.

I ask the other guy if he wants to go.

"What do they want us to go to this hotel *for*?" he asks.

"Hell, I don't know. We didn't talk well enough!" But I don't *have* to know. It's just fun, seeing what's going to happen; it's an adventure!

The other guy's afraid, so he says no. So I take the two girls in a taxi to the hotel, and discover that there's a dance organized by the deaf and dumb, believe it or not. They all belonged to a club. It turns out many of them can feel the rhythm enough to dance to the music and applaud the band at the end of each number.

It was very, very interesting! I felt as if I was in a foreign country and couldn't speak the language: I could speak, but nobody could hear me. Everybody was talking with signs to everybody else, and I couldn't understand anything! I asked my girl to teach me some signs and I learned a few, like you learn a foreign language, just for fun.

Everyone was so happy and relaxed with each other, making jokes and smiling all the time; they didn't seem to have any real difficulty of any kind communicating with each other. It was the same as with any other language, except for one thing: as they're making signs to each other, their heads were always turning from one side to the other. I realized what that was. When someone wants to make a side remark or interrupt you, he can't yell, "Hey, Jack!" He can only make a signal, which you won't catch unless you're in the habit of

by Richard P. Feynman

looking around all the time.

They were completely comfortable with each other. It was *my* problem to be comfortable. It was a wonderful experience.

The dance went on for a long time, and when it closed down we went to a cafeteria. They were all ordering things by pointing to them. I remember somebody asking in signs, "Where-are-you-from?" and my girl spelling out "N-e-w Y-o-r-k." I still remember a guy signing to me "Good sport!"—he holds his thumb up, and then touches an imaginary lapel, for "sport." It's a nice system.

Everybody was sitting around, making jokes, and getting me into their world very nicely. I wanted to buy a bottle of milk, so I went up to the guy at the counter and mouthed the word "milk" without saying anything.

The guy didn't understand.

I made the symbol for "milk," which is two fists moving as if you're milking a cow, and he didn't catch that either.

I tried to point the sign that showed the price of milk, but he still didn't catch on.

Finally, some stranger nearby ordered milk, and I pointed to it.

"Oh! Milk!" he said, as I nodded my head yes.

He handed me the bottle, and I said, "Thank you very much!"

"You SON of a GUN!" he said, smiling.

I often liked to play tricks on people when I was at MIT. One

time, in mechanical drawing class, some joker picked up a French curve (a piece of plastic for drawing smooth curves—a curly, funny-looking thing) and said, "I wonder if the curves on this thing have some special formula?"

I thought for a moment and said, "Sure they do. The curves are very special curves. Lemme show ya," and I picked up my French curve and began to turn it slowly. "The French curve is made so that at the lowest point on each curve, no matter how you turn it, the tangent is horizontal."

All the guys in the class were holding their French curve up at different angles, holding their pencil up to it at the lowest point and laying it along, and discovering that, sure enough, the tangent is horizontal. They were all excited by this "discovery"—even though they had already gone through a certain amount of calculus and had already "learned" that the derivative (tangent) of the minimum (lowest point) of *any* curve is zero (horizontal). They didn't put two and two together. They didn't even know what they "knew."

I don't know what's the matter with people: they don't learn by understanding; they learn by some other way—by rote, or something. Their knowledge is so fragile!

I did the same kind of trick four years later at Princeton when I was talking with an experienced character, an assistant of Einstein, who was surely working with gravity all the time. I gave him a problem: You blast off in a rocket which has a clock on board, and there's a clock on the ground. The idea is that you have to be back when the clock on the ground says one hour has passed. Now you want it so that when you come back, your clock is as far ahead as possible. According to Einstein, if you go very high, your clock will go faster, because the higher something is in a gravitational field, the faster its clock goes. But if you try to go too high, since you've only got an hour, you have to go so fast to get there that the speed slows your clock down. So you can't go too high. The question is, exactly what programme of speed and height should you make so that you get the maximum time on your clock?

This assistant of Einstein worked on it for quite a bit before he realized that the answer is the real motion of matter. If you shoot something up in a normal way, so that the time it takes the shell to go up and come down is an hour, that's the correct motion. It's the fundamental principle of Einstein's gravity—that is, what's called the "proper time" is at a maximum for the actual curve. But when I put it to him, about a rocket with a clock, he didn't recognize it. It was just like the guys in mechanical drawing class, but this time it wasn't dumb freshmen. So this kind of fragility is, in fact, fairly common, even with more learned people.

When I was a junior or senior I used to eat at a certain restaurant in Boston. I went there by myself, often on successive evenings. People got to know me, and I had the same waitress all the time.

I noticed that they were always in a hurry, rushing around, so one day, just for fun, I left my tip, which was usually ten cents (normal for those days), in two nickels, under two glasses: I filled each glass to the very top, dropped a nickel in, and with a card over it, turned it over so it was upside down on the table. Then I slipped out the card (no water leaks out because no air can come in—the rim is too close to the table for that).

I put the tip under two glasses because I knew they were always in a hurry. If the tip was a dime in one glass, the waitress, in her haste to get the table ready for the next customer, would pick up the glass, the water would spill out, and that would be the end of it. But after she does that with the first glass, what the hell is she going to do with the second one? She can't just have the nerve to lift it up now!

On the way out I said to my waitress, "Be careful, Sue. There's something funny about the glasses you gave me—they're filled in on the top, and there's a hole on the bottom!"

The next day I came back, and I had a new waitress. My regular waitress wouldn't have anything to do with me. "Sue's very angry at you," my new waitress said. "After she picked up the first glass and water went all over the place, she called the boss out. They studied it a little bit, but they couldn't spend all day figuring out what to do, so they finally picked up the other one, and water went out *again*, all over the floor. It was a terrible mess; Sue slipped later in the water. They're *all* mad at you."

I laughed.

She said, "It's not funny! How would *you* like it if someone did that to you—what would *you* do?"

"I'd get a soup plate and then slide the glass very carefully over to the edge of the table, and let the water run into the soup plate—it doesn't have to run onto the floor. Then I'd take the nickel out."

"Oh, that's a good idea," she said.

That evening I left my tip under a coffee cup, which I left upside down on the table.

The next night I came and I had the same new waitress.

"What's the idea of leaving the cup upside down last time?"

"Well, I thought that even though you were in a hurry, you'd have to go back into the kitchen and get a soup plate; then you'd have to *slooooowly* and carefully slide the cup over to the edge of the table..."

"I *did* that," she complained, "but there was no *water* in it!"

My masterpiece of mischief happened at the fraternity. One morning I woke up very early, about five o'clock, and couldn't go back to sleep, so I went downstairs from the sleeping rooms and discovered some signs

hanging on strings which said things like "DOOR! DOOR! WHO STOLE THE DOOR?" I saw that some one had taken a door off its hinges, and in its place they hung a sign that said, "PLEASE CLOSE THE DOOR!"—the sign that used to be on the door that was missing.

I immediately figured out what the idea was. In that room a guy named Pete Bernays and a couple of other guys liked to work very hard, and always wanted it quiet. If you wandered into their room looking for something, or to ask them how they did problem such and such, when you would leave you would always hear these guys scream, "Please close the door!"

Somebody had gotten tired of this, no doubt, and had taken the door off. Now this room, it so happened, had two doors, the way it was built, so I got an idea: I took the other door off its hinges, carried it downstairs, and hid it in the basement behind the oil tank. Then I quietly went back upstairs and went to bed.

Later in the morning I made believe I woke up and came downstairs a little late. The other guys were milling around, and Pete and his friends were all upset: The doors to their room were missing, and they had to study, blah, blah, blah, blah. I was coming down the stairs and they said, "Feynman! Did you take the doors?"

"Oh, yeah!" I said. "*I* took the door. You can see the scratches on my knuckles here, that I got when my hands scraped against the wall as I was carrying it down into the basement."

They weren't satisfied with my answer; in fact, they didn't believe me.

The guys who took the first door had left so many clues—the handwriting on the signs, for instance—that they were soon found out. My idea was that when it was found out who stole the first door, everybody would think they also stole the other door. It worked perfectly: The guys who took the first door were pummelled and tortured and worked on by everybody, until finally, with much pain and difficulty, they convinced their tormentors that they had only taken one door, unbelievable as it might be.

I listened to all this, and I was happy.

The other door stayed missing for a whole week, and it became more and more important to the guys who were trying to study in that room that the other door be found.

Finally, in order to solve the problem, the president of the fraternity says at the dinner table, "We have to solve this problem of the other door. I haven't been able to solve the problem myself, so I would like suggestions from the rest of you as to how to straighten this out, because Pete and the others are trying to study."

Somebody makes a suggestion, then someone else.

After a little while, I get up and make a suggestion. "All right," I say in a sarcastic voice, "whoever you are who stole the door, we know you're wonderful. You're so *clever!* We can't figure out *who* you are, so you must be some sort of supergenius. You don't have to tell us who you are; all we want to know is where the door is. So if you will leave a note somewhere, telling us where the door is, we will honour you and admit *forever* that you are a super-marvel, that you are so *smart* that you could take the other door without our being able to figure out who you are. But for God's sake, just leave the note somewhere, and we will be forever grateful to you for it."

The next guy makes his suggestion: "I have another idea," he says. "I think that you, as president, should ask each man on his word of honour towards the fraternity to say whether he took the door or not."

The president says, "That's a *very* good idea. On the fraternity word of honour!" So he goes around the table, and asks each guy, one by one: "Jack, did *you* take the door?"

"No, sir, I did not take the door."

"Tim, did *you* take the door?"

"No, sir! I did not take the door!"

"Maurice, did *you* take the door?"

"No, I did not take the door, sir."

"Feynman, did *you* take the door?"

"Yeah, *I* took the door."

"Cut it out, Feynman; this is *serious*! Sam! Did *you* take the door..."—it went all the way around. Everyone was *shocked*. There must be some real *rat* in the fraternity who didn't respect the fraternity's word of honour!

That night I left a note with a little picture of the oil tank and the door next to it, and the next day they found the door and put it back.

Sometime later I finally admitted to taking the other door, and I was accused by everybody of lying. They couldn't remember what I had said. All they could remember was their conclusion after the president of the fraternity had gone around the table and asked everybody, that nobody admitted taking the door. The idea they remembered, but not the words.

People often think I'm a faker, but I'm usually honest, in a certain way—in such a way that often nobody believes me! ⑤

CAN OUR WATER BIRDS SURVIVE HUMAN AGGRESSION?

NESTING, AGAIN

by M. Krishnan

THIS column began in January with an account of the communal nesting of water-birds and now, in due season, it has come round again to their nesting, for it is in this month that many begin to breed—and some are almost through with breeding. This almost apologetic reflection is no attempt at justifying a repetition, but is necessary because any statement on when our water-birds breed has to be highly circumspect. Having studied their arduous breeding enterprise for decades, I sometimes wonder if there is any beginning or end to it.

It would help to consider this question with reference to some well known mixed heronries in different parts of the country, and the rainfall and geomorphology of those locations. Naturally, the main subject of such an inquiry, the water-birds, must be of the same kind in all the different locations. The birds commonly breeding together in nesting colonies are cormorants of all three kinds, herons and egrets of many kinds, the white ibis, the spoonbill, the open-billed stork and in most places the painted stork.

In the Ranganathittoo sanctuary of Karnataka, at Srirangapatna, there are all these except the grey heron and the painted stork, breeding together in trees in small islets in the deep, fast-flowing Kaveri. Here, practically all the birds have nested by mid-July, even earlier in most years, and their breeding enterprise (usually covering three months or a little more) is concluded by mid-October.

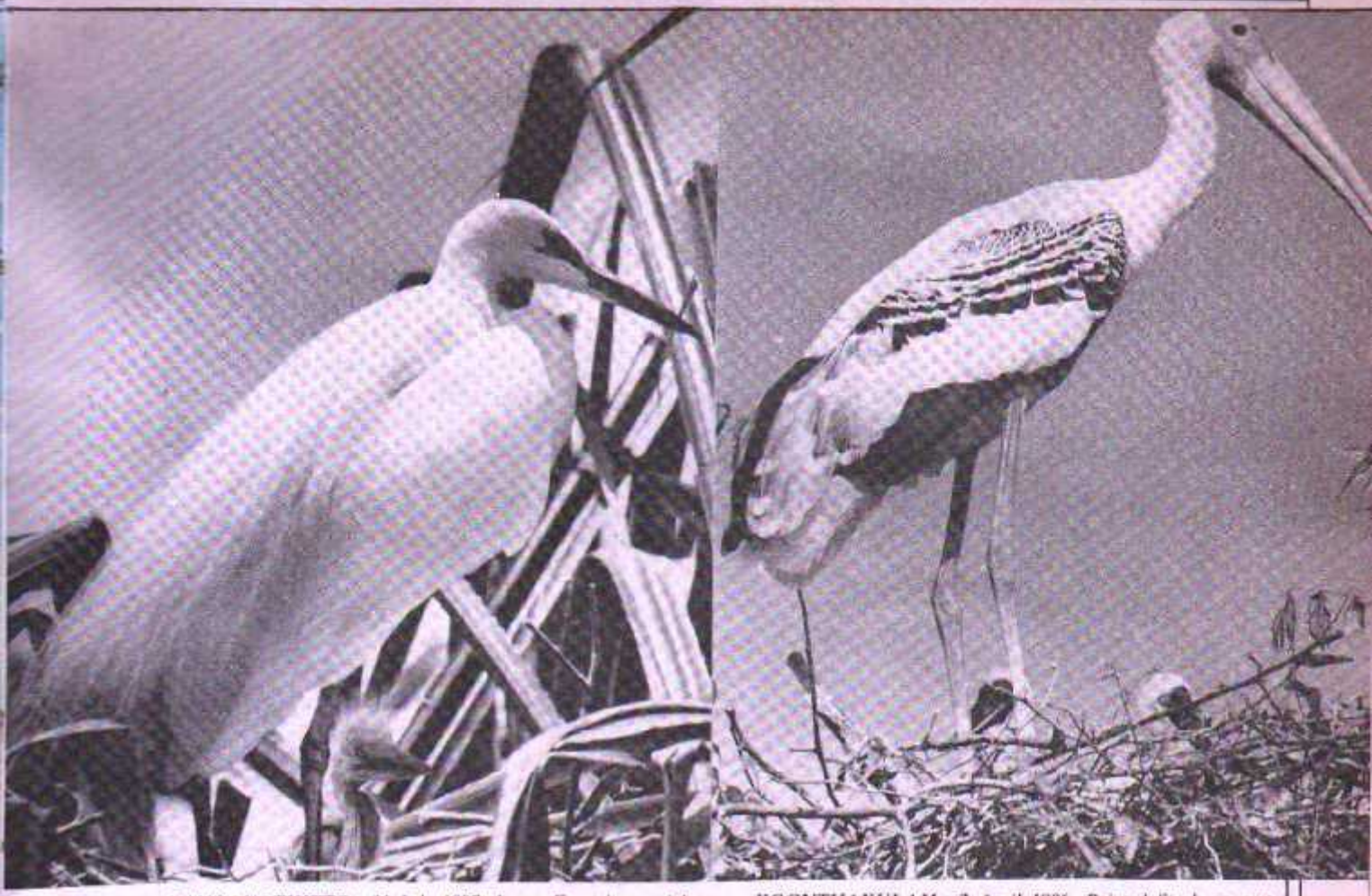
Vedanthangal and Karikili, in the lowlands of the Chinglepet district of Tamil Nadu, have the nesting colony in village tanks, close to the great Madurantakam Tank. All the breeding birds of Ranganathittoo are also here, and the grey heron in addition. Nesting commences about mid-October and the season is over by February.

At the largest and best-known water-bird sanctuary in Asia, the Keoladeo Ghana at Bharatpur in Rajasthan, besides all the birds of Vedanthangal there are a great number of painted storks. The Ghana is also in the low-lying plains and the birds nest in trees standing in a vast, shallow waterspread with their boles partly submerged. Here, too, nesting begins about October and is over by January though the breeding birds stay on for some time after their breeding is concluded to feed, along with thousands of migrants arriving to the Ghana about December.

In all these centres breeding commences with, or towards the end of, the south-west monsoon which sets in, in all these locations, about July.

In the Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram areas, also in the coastal plains (as Chinglepet also is) there are mixed heronries in village tanks (in the Ramanathapuram area) and also right inside waterside villages (as at Koonthakulam, 30 km from Tirunelveli town). Here too, especially in Tirunelveli, there is some rainfall during the south-west monsoon, but it is the north-east monsoon that inundates the parched land. In these nesting centres, breeding commences after the north-east monsoon is over or almost over, in December-January, and is sustained right until May.

A consideration of what has been detailed so far discloses no obvious trend in the nesting of these birds at first sight. So, let us take a closer, second look. In none of these widely separated colonies is there any breeding in May and June, so that there *is* a break, not at any particular location (for in each the birds breed only for a little over three months in the year) but taking them all together.



RANGANATHITTO : 21 July 1987. Large Egret in nuptial plumage on nest with nestling : nesting could not have been later than 1 July.

KOONTHAKULAM : 2 April 1986. Painted Stork on nest with nestlings. Breeding could not have ended sooner than the end of April when the nestlings would be able to fly.

Most of these water-birds (herons, egrets, the white ibis, the spoonbill and the storks) are waders or waterside hunters. A few (the cormorants and the darter, and where it nests at a mixed heronry, as at Koonthakulam, the grey pelican) seek their prey in deeper water, swimming and diving. However, no great depth of water is needed by them: they may be seen feeding actively in the middle, where the water is only 2 metres or less in depth, while waders are hunting in the peripheral shallows. All water-birds subsist only on animal prey, though a very few may also take in some plant food. They feed on small animals, such as aquatic insects, molluscs, crustaceans, fish and frogs and tadpoles.

How many of them depend mainly on their home-water for sustenance when nesting in trees standing in a tank or lake? At Bharatpur, where there are few other waterspreads around, they feed mainly in the vast, shallow lake that is their home-water. It is not only the local nesting birds that feed in this lake: thousands of migrants also come here in the cold weather to feed.

In all the other breeding centres I know, the birds feed mainly or even solely in prey-rich waterspreads away from their nesting colony, even miles away, flighting out to feed several times each day. An important factor conditioning this question of when water-birds nest is that all of them need plenty of food to get into breeding condition (it is only then that they nest) and to rear their broods.

Nesting depends, then, mainly on there being prey-rich waters not too far from the nesting colony: there are other factors, such as the availability of suitable nesting trees and also of nesting material (thorny dry twigs, unarmed twigs, and green twigs) in the vicinity. However, it seems to be the availability of plenty of food for some months that mainly influences the breeding of these birds. And prey-rich shallows depend not only on the rains, but also on the land that receives the rain. For example, sandy soil that retains no water cannot provide such waterspreads, and perhaps clayey soil also cannot for different reasons. Therefore the topography of the neighbourhood of nesting colonies is a vital factor affecting the breeding of these birds. And this, unlike rainfall or the breeding of the small fry on which water-birds feed, is not something uninfluenced by human activities, or largely uninfluenced. The reclamation of marshes and lowlands for human settlements, cultivation or industries, can and will profoundly influence the survival of our water-birds. Do our governments, at any level, give any thought to this?

THE GUARANTEED SOLUTION

People who sleep eight hours on an average during a day and a night would have slept 25 years when they are 75 years of age, says a report.

All the burning problems of today will be solved if the present generation could do it at a stretch.

HITLER'S ONLY SELF-PORTRAIT

Adolf Hitler's only self-portrait has been discovered by West German historian Werner Maser.

His ONLY self-portrait is at Auschwitz. All others are masks.

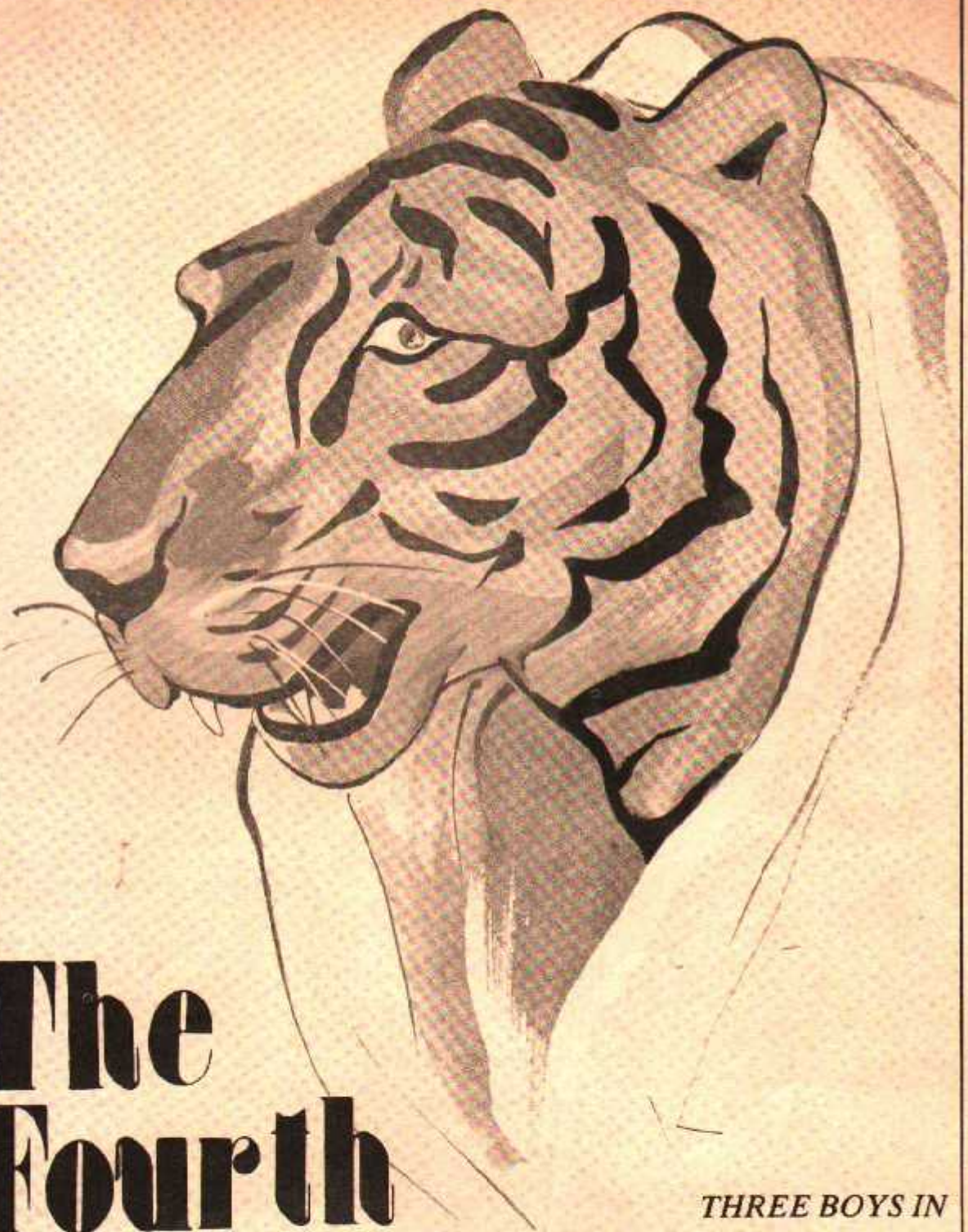
HEALTHIER OF THE TWO

Wheat and grass are being sold at the same price per kg. in drought-hit Saurashtra.

DRINKING ON THE DECLINE

Britons are growing more and more sober, their drinking habit gradually falling.

Surely not due to the lack of the opportunity for "the rapturous, wild, and ineffable pleasure of drinking at somebody else's expense," to quote Henry S. Leigh.



The Fourth Friend

THREE BOYS IN DARKNESS AND DELUGE SUDDENLY MEET ***THE FOURTH FRIEND***

A Novelette by Manoj Das

Sisir

The Fourth Friend

A Novelette by
Manoj Das

The background of the story is a village in Eastern India, one of those numerous villages which were remote from a railway station or a bus-stop in the fifties of this century when, what to speak of TVs, even transistor radio sets were unknown.

Ramu, Jay and Shekhar were so engrossed in their discussion that they hardly knew when the wind had begun to grow colder and the darkness thicker. They had just witnessed the first ever cinema show in their life. It was a touring cinema that had camped at Devla, the site of the biggest weekly market in the region. It was the Dusserah time. The Great Grand Circus too camped in the market, but one just could not grab at both the opportunities. The circus had come earlier and both Ramu and Shekhar had seen it. Hence they had led Jay to the cinema.

The show had left Jay, the youngest of the trio, just mystified. He had seen several performances of opera in the courtyard of the village primary school and even a play presented on a stage with a pair of mermaid-painted screens closing and parting off and on. He had found out that some invisible hand was pulling the string and

there was nothing really magical about the phenomenon. But the way of the cinema evaded his wit. How on earth could a plain white sheet change into a meadow or a mountain in the twinkling of an eye? How could strong wind sway the trees and even whisk away the *duparta* of a singing damsel and almost gag a handsome young man with it a furlong away while no member of the audience felt even a puff of it?

"No, Jay, there is no mantra or tantra behind it," Ramu's voice carried a sort of authority. He was sure that what his teacher called science made such things possible. The theory put forth by the teacher was not the only source of his conviction; there was his first-hand experience behind it.

It happened the previous year. Two men from the town, one of them carrying a huge box on his head, visited their village. They would just open the box, fix a glistening black disc on it and link it to a needle that looked like the tongue of a steel snake. Lo and behold, the disc will keep on circling and the box will give out songs—by both male and female voices.

"It is the miracle of the machine," the villagers were told. All but Ramu's grandmother believed it. That night the men from the town found shelter in Ramu's house, tired after playing the gramophone at several houses for a small fee per song. At midnight, when all were soundly asleep, Grandma shook Ramu awake. Both went near the box, Grandma carrying some foodstuff in two plates. "Now, my son and my daughter, come out and eat. We promise, nobody will know of this. Come out, my children, enough of hiding."

Grandma was sure that the box hid a couple of midgets. She patted on the box and cajoled the tiny singers to come out under complete assurance of secrecy, till its owners woke up and swore that the box contained no living creature of any size.

Grandma retreated in silence, but it was not known whether or not her idea changed. Ramu, however, was quite modern and logical in outlook. Once, in the weekly market, he had seen a toy dance when wound. If a plastic toy could dance when wound, why can't a wooden box sing when wound, or, for that matter, some pictures of men and women both dance and sing, when wound behind the screen?

"Who does not react to winding? Don't you leap and howl, when the teacher winds your ears?" observed Shekhar. Before Ramu had answered him, a blood-curdling cry from the nearby village surprised them. There were sounds of conch-shell, generally blown to warn people of flood or earthquake or fire. This was followed by strange noises, a mixture of several human voices, thudding sound of heavy things collapsing on water, and barking, bleating, bellows and moos.

The three friends came to a halt and pricked their ears. "What's this?" Jay who had stopped talking since witnessing the talkie, asked in a whisper. But Ramu and Shekhar appeared too stupefied to answer. The very next moment they were lashed by a terrific wind, very cold and sharp. Hardly had they come closer, holding on to one another with Jay in the middle, gushing water engulfed them. Its level went higher and higher rapidly as they plodded through it in the direction of their village, Vikrampur, as fast as they could.

Shekhar was the first to fall apart as a twisted branch snapped his hold on Jay.

"Ramu! Don't let Jay slip away. It is flood, you know!" was Shekhar's parting message.

Ramu clung on to Jay as tightly as he could, but his limbs were growing numb. "Where are you going, Shekhar?" Ramu asked, trying to locate him. But the darkness proved too thick to be pierced by his eyes. Besides, it had begun to drizzle. The wind was howling and hissing. Ramu could hear Shekhar's voice, but could not make out what his message was. He, of course, knew well that he could not expect a proper answer to this question, for Shekhar was being swept away by the current and was not going anywhere by himself.

There was a string of lightning followed by cracks of thunder. In trying to clasp Ramu in a more dependable manner, Jay slackened his grip and slipped off instantly.

"Jay, Jay, where are you?"

But all Ramu could hear was a whimper. By then the level of water had reached his chest. Lightning had given him the vague feeling that if the world had not come to an end already, everything in it was fast heading towards an end, passing by him. The floating lumps he saw were more than mere house-tops or uprooted trees; they were buffaloes, cows and perhaps men and women.

Once—that was sixty years ago—a flood had carried away his grandfather, then a young man, two miles away, and dumped him atop a temple that luckily had a flat roof, amidst a couple and their daughter, a girl of marriageable age. Grandpa considered himself luckier when a year later the girl became his bride.

As Grandpa would punctuate his narration with puffs of smoke from his old hookah gurgling like a pampered cat, Ramu would wonder why such floods with such sweet results in store should not occur when he was returning from the school or, better still, when he was being forced to proceed to the school!

Now, neck-deep in whirling waters, Ramu did not find the flood that funny. He thanked the heavens that he was not as frightened as he should be. Grandpa was right when he said that at moments of crisis often a secret vault of courage opens up in one's heart.

Ramu found it harder and harder to wade through the water. The earth under his feet seemed to be shifting; the current was pushing him westward. There was of course no reason why he should not have gone westward, for it was in that direction that his village lay. But to be carried by the flood was hardly a decent way to reach one's destination!

Ramu fought against the current and inched towards a leaning banian tree.

"Who is that? Ramu?"

Shekhar's voice had never sounded sweeter. "Yes, yes!" responded Ramu, holding on to a hanging shoot of the banian tree. "Is Jay with you?" he asked, beginning to climb the tree.

"How can he be with both I and you? Was he not clinging to you? Well, if you lost him, he may be just lost forever!"

"Oh no!" Ramu hopped on to a bigger branch and was pretty close to Shekhar.

"Jay!" shouted Shekhar.

"Shekhar! I'm here," Jay's voice was faint. It came from yards away.

"Excellent. You're brave. Don't fear," shouted Shekhar.

"Ramu is here too. He has just climbed the tree," said Jay with some relief.

"But, Jay, I'm here not there! It's good someone else is there. Don't worry. We'll come together as soon as it's morning. Meanwhile, Jay, climb to the top-branch; the water is still rising," Ramu and Shekhar out-shouted the wind's whistling and other noises.

An hour passed during which the level of water continued to rise; but the atmosphere was growing quieter. Wails and shrieks from distant villages and the sound of conch-shells had stopped. There was no more barking or bellowing, though from time to time moaning of dogs could be heard.

"She—khar!" Ramu's voice cracked and made the gap between the two syllables very prominent. He gave a shake to Shekhar.

"Hss!" Shekhar slowly pointed his finger at the mango tree, to be more precise, at the shape that hung on to the lower branch. "D'you think that is a man?" he asked in a whisper.

"Maybe a woman," Ramu observed thoughtfully. "Or, or, or..." He began to stammer the very next moment.

"It is neither a man nor a woman."

"Maybe a calf or a colt."

"Fool! Do calves or colts climb trees?"

"Could it be a ghost then?" Ramu sounded positively alarmed.

"Ghosts are not affected by flood."

"Then?"

There was silence. Neither Shekhar nor Ramu seemed to be in a mood to end it. They kept looking alternately at the dark tree-mate of Jay, at Jay, and at each other.

"Shekhar!"

"Yes!"

"Is that a ti... ti... tiger?"

"Right."

"What is it doing there?"

"What are we doing here?"

"I mean, how can it be here? We don't have tigers in villages!"

"It must have been driven by flood from the forests!"

"Shekhar, is Jay alive?"

"He is and he will remain alive as long as the tiger has not grown hungry."

Shekhar had just finished delivering his very thoughtful observation when there was a sudden gust of wind, accompanied by a fresh tide of flood. The banian tree was caught in a temporary whirlpool. It spinned like the village priest when possessed by spirits and was swept towards the mango tree. Ramu and Shekhar clasped the trunk of the tree with one hand each and clasped each other with their remaining two hands.

Soon their tree smoothly leaned over the mango tree and stopped moving farther. They were very close to Jay—and not far from the tiger who was eyeing the development with curiosity. In the light of the dawn his eyes looked no brighter than the last two stars in the clouded eastern horizon.

Ramu and Shekhar had a simultaneous inspiration to jump into the water. But that was also the moment for them to realise how dearly they loved Jay. They just could not leave Jay, who hardly knew swimming, to the tiger's mercy.

"Jay, are you alive?" Shekhar asked in the manner of eliciting a secret.

A shivering Jay opened his eyes which he had kept shut from the moment he had known who his inmate on the tree was. Now his cheeks puffed up and the eyes bulged out; he was ready to give out a howl.

Alas poor Jay! A no less greater menace than the tiger was now staring him in the face. A large cobra was climbing the tree swiftly. Its fearful head was only two feet away from Jay's face.

Jay shut his eyes once again. But something unexpected happened.

The tiger struck the serpent at lightning speed with one of his forelegs. The serpent flew into an eddy yards away and disappeared.

But Jay was in no state of mind to appreciate the tiger's gesture. He had swooned away. As Ramu and Shekhar looked on, his grip of the branches became slackened. He was about to tumble down.

And he did tumble down!

It was now Ramu's and Shekhar's turn to shut their eyes. Only for a moment, of course. When they opened them, they saw to their horror the first part of their anticipation already come true; the same to happen to the second part was a matter of moments, they were sure. Jay had fallen on the tiger; the tiger, however, was yet to clamp his teeth on him.

Jay lay sprawled, his head practically resting on the tiger's chest. Ramu and Shekhar were not sure, but it appeared as if the tiger lent one of its forelegs to protect Jay from a fall. What is more, the tiger, through his look at Ramu and Shekhar, seemed to suggest that they ought to take charge of their friend!

Ramu and Shekhar exchanged meaningful glances. As yet they did not dare to open their mouths.

Shekhar was nearer to Jay. After a few silent efforts Shekhar straightened his right arm and, uncertain of what would wake up Jay, planted a slap of moderate force on his right cheek.

That achieved the objective. Jay opened his eyes and blinked at them. His was already a bewildered look Hence they knew what will happen when he realised in whose embrace he lay.

And that is what happened. Jay woke up to the unusual warmth and softness of his haven and remembered the face that had thrown him into a swoon. He strained his neck and saw the face just over his own.

He gave out a shriek and closed his eyes again.

Once the silence had been broken, both Ramu and Shekhar found their voices simultaneously. "Jay!" they

called out. Their subdued voices clearly disapproved of Jay's fear. They would not like the gentlemanly tiger to feel offended in any way.

"Look here, Jay, he is good, as good as any of us," said Shekhar.

"Yes. But for his courtesy, by this time you would be lost in the flood or land up in..."

"... his tummy!" Shekhar completed Ramu's statement.

They looked at the tiger, who, they expected, would be happy at their acknowledging his nobility. The tiger yawned.

Jay sat up and slowly moved away from the tiger. Ramu and Shekhar helped him to come over to their tree.

The two trees were in the process of getting more and more closely interlocked. Current below and wind above made their branches entangled. In their long silence Ramu, Shekhar and Jay too had begun to feel that they were no longer three friends, but four.

The sun was struggling hard to shine through the clouds which looked fearful. The familiar landscape had suddenly become alien to them. All this happened while they were waking up to the thrill of conquering something most fearful!

"What should we do?" asked Jay.

"I don't think it's time to do anything," said Ramu. Tiny creases on his brows convinced his friends that he was indeed thinking.

"Who says there is nothing to do? Look there." Shekhar broke a dry twig and threw it with force. The stick did not go far, but Ramu and Jay identified the object Shekhar had in mind. It was a small boat, empty. It was drifting towards them.

They smiled after many hours, but the smiles were short-lived, for the boat took a sudden turn, avoiding them by half a furlong of muddy water.

"But we cannot let it give us the slip!" said Ramu and, without consulting his friends, jumped into the water and swam towards the boat.

His friends looked on with bated breath as Ramu grabbed the boat and boarded it. Within minutes Ramu brought the boat near the entwined trees, with the help of the bamboo pole he had found inside the boat.

As Shekhar and Jay leaned forward and stretched their hands and took hold of the boat, Ramu left the pole and picked up a fish from the boat. "There are two more, all dead. They must have jumped into the boat in panic."

"I cannot eat a raw fish!" Jay protested, almost on the verge of tears. Ramu and Shekhar understood how hungry he was.

"You need not, Jay. We will soon reach our village. You know, flood does not enter Vikrampur. All the food in the village will be intact for you to devour. This is for the new friend of ours—yours in particular."

Ramu held out the fish to the tiger who raised his right forepaw, obviously in appreciation of the offering.

Ramu placed the fish near his mouth. The tiger clamped his jaws immediately on it. A shiver ran through Jay's spine. A moment ago the tiger could have done the same to him.

The other two fishes were offered to the tiger by Shekhar and Jay, respectively. The tiger looked at each of the three friends separately in recognition of their gestures.

"Now we must leave!" Ramu, still on the boat, said. Shekhar and Jay descended into the boat.

The tiger was trying to stand up. He gave out a soft growl.

"How can we leave him behind?" asked Jay. He was more fluent than ever.

His question did not surprise either Shekhar or Ramu. It was in the process of formulation in their minds too.

"Will you like to come with us?" Ramu asked the tiger, showing the boat. The tiger instantly jumped into it.

The boat lurched, but Ramu steadied it with a masterly handling of the pole.

"Where to go now?" he asked.

"To our village, of course!" Jay sounded impatient.

"Don't you understand what Ramu means?" Shekhar told Jay in a mild scolding.

Jay understood. They just cannot walk into Vikrampur with a tiger for their guest! The village has put up with floods beforehand, but never with a tiger.

"I've an idea. Why not we keep our friend in the Devi temple?" said Jay.

"Why not!" Ramu responded thoughtfully.

"The idea!" exclaimed Shekhar excitedly.

The Devi temple lay deserted since the idol was stolen a year ago. Nobody visited it. Besides, the temple was situated outside the locality, at a corner of the village. It should prove an ideal shelter for their very special guest.

"One thing we have to guard against is people seeing our friend. They will kill him," said Shekhar.

"But killing tigers is forbidden. Didn't the headmaster tell us about it while explaining the story of three wizard friends who revived a tiger?"

Memory of the story, of course, dampened their excitement for a moment. One friend had assembled the scattered bones of a tiger dead long ago; the other friend had restored to it its flesh and blood; and as soon as the third friend had breathed life into it, the tiger pounced upon them.

But this tiger was surely different!

"As soon as the water recedes, we must inform the collector about our friend. The collector is camping at Devla, I know," Ramu added.

Shekhar and Jay agreed with Ramu. Shekhar made a second pole out of a shoot of the banian tree. It was easy to ply the boat pushing two poles.

The tiger and Jay stood at the centre of the boat. Luckily, the atmosphere was foggy and they took care to avoid coming closer to a couple of other boats plying at some distance or floating thatches or trees with people. Their voyage was through submerged paddy fields.

With the help of a stick, Jay drew on board a cotton shawl that was drifting away from a sinking thatch. He squeezed water out of the shawl and covered the tiger with it, save his head and tail.

He looked more gentlemanly than any gentleman they had known.

"If we can manage to hide these two things of the friend from any looker-on, then all will go well," he said, pointing at the tiger's two ends.

Luck favoured them. When their boat touched the village on the temple side, there was not a soul around to take note of them. The tiger, conscious of the dignity bestowed on him by the shawl, walked gently with them.

The temple door remained unlocked since the deity's disappearance. The sanctum sanctorum and the outer chamber where the devotees gathered, were two sections of a single structure. The outer chamber had a couple of narrow windows although the sanctum sanctorum had none.

"Let the friend rest here. We must hurry home. Our mothers must be so anxious about us," said Ramu. Jay and Shekhar nodded.

They realised how right Ramu was as soon as they approached their houses. Their mothers, announced of their advent, rushed out with open arms; fathers smiled and heaved sighs of relief and discussed among themselves how to call back those kinsmen who had fanned out in search of them.

The flash flood and the sky threatening a downpour kept all the elders busy. The boys had enough privacy to discuss their great charge when they assembled after their meals.

"What about feeding the friend?" they now asked one another—and each one brought out a hidden item from his pocket. Ramu had secured a banana, Shekhar a cucumber and Jay a pouchful of parched rice.

"Not a word about the friend to anybody!" Ramu told Jay. Shekhar had already warned Jay on the point. The two elder boys did not think it necessary to warn each other.

They shut the temple door tight. As the tiger walked towards them into the outer chamber, they laid out their gifts before him, Jay pouring out the parched rice on the floor.

The tiger sniffed the banana and the cucumber, in a detached way, but made use of the parched rice. However, he played with the fruits for a while, shuttling them between his two forepaws.

"I understand. The friend does not relish vegetables. To secure food for him is going to be a problem," observed Shekhar.

"Yes, and we must face the problem bravely," said Jay. He sounded braver than his age, size and his past would justify, but he had surely added much to his stature during the past few hours! It was plain common-sense

for Ramu and Shekhar that very few people in the world could have dropped right into a tiger's embrace and come out unscathed and very few could have the courage to wrap a tiger in a shawl.

"We must get him meat—of a lamb or a goat or a fowl," said Ramu gravely. He knew that he was being a visionary. They had never seen a lamb save its picture in a book; Vaishnavites as they were, most of the villagers considered even a mention of the chicken an act verging on sin and that of egg, sin proper.

But Pitubai the old widow living in a lonely hut, had a pair of goats and a kid-goat too.

"We have to sacrifice one of Pitubai's goats to the friend," said Ramu with a certain authority, suggesting that there were moments when you could not but commit a small crime for a lofty cause. "Preferably the kid-goat," he added.

The idea was exciting, but Shekhar and Jay kept silent for a moment.

"How do we go about it?" Jay asked.

"How? Well, are we not men? Can't we bag a kid-goat?"

Ramu's forceful question told his friends that the time for hesitation was past; they were the friends of the tiger. To a certain degree they must act like tigers.

As they came out into the open and locked the temple door, they saw Ghanu, popularly called Ghanu Goonda, observing them from behind a bush. They did not like it, for they did not like Ghanu Goonda. He used to be a mere watchman in the Zamindar's kutchery before the abolition of the Zamindari system. But he exercised greater power than the Naib, the Zamindar's real agent in the area. Ghanu Goonda still had some connection with the Zamindar family and he paid visits to them in the town where they had settled down.

However, before they had tried to hide themselves from Ghanu's gaze, Ghanu seemed eager to hide himself.

It was a clouded sunset when they spotted the nanny-goat suckling the kid-goat not far from the temple. They looked at one another. There was no time to lose.

"How to go about it?" Jay repeated his question.

"It is easy," answered Ramu like a past master in the business. "We have to gag it and also cover it as much as possible and then carry it into the temple. The tiger will do the rest."

"With what to gag it?" asked Jay.

"With your shorts, of course!" answered Ramu.

"With my shorts?" Jay was on the verge of tears.

"With whose then? You don't expect we the elders to undress before you!" Ramu was very grave.

Jay began to run. Ramu and Shekhar were not eager to stop him. They seemed to relish the respite from the gruesome task ahead.

But Jay was back within minutes. He had brought from the temple the shawl used by the tiger.

Now there was no argument for delaying the action.

"All you have to do is trap the kid at once. Now, go along. I'll keep a watch on our surrounding and warn you in case anybody comes this way," said Ramu.

"Ramu, better you and Jay do it. I'll keep the necessary watch," said Shekhar.

"Come on, let's all do it together and finish with it." Jay's proposal seemed sound and sensible. Holding the shawl like a shield before them, the hunters took careful steps and then pounced upon the kid-goat. But the nanny goat and the kid-goat moved away just a little. As a result the hunters were flat on their chests on the damp ground.

"I've a question," said Jay. "We may feed our friend with the kid-goat today. But what about tomorrow? Well, I've an idea too!"

"What's it?"

"We let the kid live, but steal its mother's milk."

"Wonderful!" Shekhar and Ramu exclaimed, patting Jay on the back.

"When it comes to milk, I can always bring some from home," said Shekhar. That was a proposition easier than having to milk the goat.

Ramu brought some milk and Shekhar arranged for some cooked rice by evening. They mixed the two items in an earthen pot and offered it to the tiger. The tiger finished the dish, albeit reluctantly.

Next day they succeeded in catching a good number of fish by placing a basket-net at one of the outlets for receding floodwater. The tiger ate only a few of them. He had begun to look weak.

The waters were disappearing very fast. It should be possible for Jay to go to his maternal uncle's village, Sumanpur and consult Bipin. Though a marriage-broker now, Bipin was the only man in the region who knew something about tigers, for he had once worked in a zoo. Jay's maternal grandmother who had been detained here, was eager to get back home. To accompany her as one of her escorts would be a good plea for Jay to proceed to Sumanpur.

Sumanpur was only five miles away, but it became past mid-day when the grandmother's party reached the destination, even though they had set out early in the morning. They had to cover a mile by a dinghy and for the rest, either plod through mud or take to detours.

Jay lost no time in locating Bipin. It was not difficult to engage him in a conversation either. But it was well nigh impossible to elicit any useful information from him. Any mention of tiger would immediately inspire him to narrate one of his fabulous encounters with those dangerous inmates of the zoo.

"One evening a tiger—a Royal Bengal one at that—jumped the zoo and entered the Lat Sahib's compound. The durwan fainted at his sight; the household servants followed suit and in no time the tiger was found right inside the Lat Sahib's bedroom.

"I was running behind the beast. Before he had pounced on the lolling Mem Sahib I jumped onto his back and twisted both his ears, twisted his tail and made him run back to the streets. Traffic came to a halt. Spellbound passers-by watched me and my beast as we headed towards the zoo, myself riding the tiger all the way," Bipin reminisced.

"What did you give him to eat after that?" Jay brought the question of the tiger's diet at every opportunity.

"Eat? The Lat Sahib threw a banquet in my honour. I could hardly eat half of the dishes. They were to give me a gold medal, of the size of the full moon. In fact, the Lat Sahib had already sent a telegram to London. But India won freedom and the Sahibs suddenly left the country."

Jay felt like weeping. Must he return to his village only to report to his friends that his mission was a total failure?

But there was a silver lining in the cloud. Bipin himself was paying a visit to Vikrampur. Maybe, Jay thought, Shekhar and Ramu will agree to take him into confidence and put their problem straightaway before him. Maybe, with his help and recommendation they could even arrange a permanent place for their friend in the zoo. They won't mind Bipin riding the tiger all the way to the town, if the tiger did not mind it.

Jay persuaded his grandmother and his uncles and aunts to let him return home next day in the morning, in Bipin's company, as their other companion, the Chowkidar of Vikrampur, had reasons to stay on till the afternoon.

On the way Jay learnt the mission Bipin had at Vikrampur.

A crisis had arisen in the Naib's household. The Naib's granddaughter, Shakuntala, had been married when aged seven. A young lady that she was now, she must go to her husband's house. The husband had arrived to take her with him, but he refused to enter the house unless given a new bicycle. He camped in the Naib's verandah, which, of course, was quite broad and his in-laws hung a tarpaulin to protect him from wind and splashes of rain. He had consistently refused to look at Shakuntala, even when she brought him his breakfast, lunch and dinner regularly.

"He had been already given a bicycle when he became a teacher in the primary school. His father-in-law does not understand why he should be given one again. In fact, the good old Naib was ready to give him a milch cow. The young man spoilt everything. Luckily he has been detained because of the flood. As the one who had brought about the marriage, I've a crucial role to play," Bipin said, keeping his plan a mystery.

"What would you do uncle? And by the way, how do you feed a tiger who refuses to enter his father-in-law's house?"

"What should I do? Heh, heh! Whatever I do, Jay, such a situation will not arise when I fix a bride for you. You ought to grow up fast!"

Jay's question still remained unanswered!

They reached Vikrampur a little before noon, for they had walked faster. Jay broke away from Bipin and ran towards the temple.

The door was wide open. He was sure that Ramu and Shekhar were inside. He rushed in. He found nobody in the outer chamber. He peeped into the sanctum sanctorum. It takes time for the eyes to see through darkness. Jay waited.

But where was the tiger?

But someone was lying in a corner. A terrifying question was forming in Jay's mind. Had the tiger, in a sudden spurt of hunger, eaten up either of his friends and flattened the other and run away?

Jay tiptoed towards the man. To his utter surprise he recognised him to be Ghanu Goonda. And he was holding something in his arms. It was the deity of the temple—supposed to have been stolen a year ago!

But where were his friends? Jay rushed out, circled the temple and shouted for them. He entered the temple once again and called, "Ghanu Uncle!" Then it occurred to him that he must inform the Naib, the leader of the village, of Ghanu's condition and the surprising event of the deity's reappearance.

He began to run towards the Naib's house. But he was stopped by Bhola, the grocer's son, who stood amidst a group of women and children. "Don't go in that direction, you fool!"

"Why? Will you tell me what has happened? I was away at Sumanpur."

The opportunity to narrate the great event to someone totally ignorant of it so excited Bhola that he could hardly say a single thing coherently. All Jay understood was, a huge man-eater was out on a murderous spree and that youngsters were forbidden to go beyond that limit!

"Where are Ramu and Shekhar?" Bhola was not sure, but he said thoughtfully, "Maybe already eaten up by the tiger!"

Jay swept Bhola aside and ran forward. He saw Bipin retreating from the direction of the Naib's house, panting and sweating.

"Bipin Uncle! You're the only man to have ever ridden a tiger. Come, let us take charge of the tiger. They may not allow me to go near the friend unless accompanied by you!" Jay said pleadingly.

But Bipin was in great haste. He was soon lost amidst the women and children.

Jay resumed running forward.

"You boy! Are you crazy?" A number of elderly people who had gathered in front of the primary school shouted at Jay. Finally it was the headmaster who stepped forward and stopped Jay.

"Sir, where is the tiger?" Jay asked impatiently. "Please tell me sir, for I was away."

"Have patience, Jay! Patience is a great virtue. The tiger has entered the Naib's house. He drove the Naib's grandson-in-law, into the house. We don't know what the beast has done to him. He was a brave budding teacher, mind you."

"O God!" Jay was beginning to weep.

"Don't panic, sonny, courage is a great virtue. I'm here to protect you. Besides Virdas the gunman, famous as Virdas the jackal-killer, has already arrived. He should be able to put an end to the terror soon."

"The gunman? Do you mean to say they are going to kill the friend?"

"The friend? Who? Whose?"

But Jay was not there to satisfy the bewildered headmaster's query. He had made a dash towards the Naib's verandah.

"You boy!"
"Jay!"
"You madcap!"

A dozen voices, some subdued, some loud, but all of them marked by anxiety and despair, tried to stop him. A flitting glimpse of the house-top revealed to him Virdas kneeling on the roof and thrusting the barrel of his gun through a hole made on the thatch. He was flanked by two sons of the old Naib.

"Please don't shoot!" shouted Jay at the pitch of his voice. He was already on the Naib's verandah. There was nobody there to stop him. The door was open. He stepped in. Right across the door sat the tiger. He stood up at Jay's voice. Close to the wall opposite the tiger, on a large wooden chest sat the grandson-in-law. His wife stood in front of him, her arm thrown wide, obviously to protect her husband's precious life from the tiger or at least to sacrifice her own first.

"No, no, believe me, sister Shakuntala, my friend will do no harm to your husband even if he claims a third bicycle!"

Jay knelt down and put his arms around the tiger's neck and looked up. Through a round hole he saw the mouth of the barrel and the eyes of the gun-man.

"Gun-man, sir, please save your bullet. And, you uncles on the roof, will you please ask Ramu and Shekhar to come here? Please! I assure you, this tiger is a friend!" Jay could not stop his tears any longer.

"He is hungry. sister Shakuntala, can you fetch some milk?" he said between his sobs.

Shakuntala withdrew her extended arms and looked over her shoulder at her husband. As she began to move towards the door opening into the kitchen, the husband promptly descended from the wooden chest and followed her.

Now there were murmurs in the verandah. They were noises of awe and disbelief. Somebody was whimpering.

"Who's crying? Has the tiger really harmed anybody?" Jay asked with anxiety.

The crying stopped and the crier peeped through the door. She was Jay's mother, upset and puzzled over her son's conduct.

"Mother, don't you see I'm hale and hearty? But has the tiger harmed anybody?"

The mother nodded to indicate that the tiger had not done any such thing.

Suddenly many voices were heard; among them were distinctly alien accents. And they were followed by the most welcome voices of Shekhar and Ramu.

Jay sprang up. Instantly the tiger too sprang up. At the door appeared a surprised but smiling young man, well-dressed though carrying patches of mud all over his body. The tiger came rushing—in the process scaring the smart young man—to the man behind him.

"O my Timpu! How much I have looked for you!" The stranger who sported an impressive moustache, curled upward, said to the tiger exactly in the manner the mothers of Jay, Ramu and Shekhar had told them.

Soon the old Naib came forward and warmly received the smart young man. Shekhar and Ramu, still panting, hugged Jay. From them Jay understood that the young man was the collector who camped at Devla bazar.

The collector lifted Jay by the way of congratulating him for his bravery and for saving the tiger from certain death. Two police sepoys brought a cage to the spot. At an instruction from the stranger with curled moustache, the tiger quietly entered the cage.

The collector was offered the solitary chair in the Naib's household. The stranger who was the tiger-tamer of the Great Grand Circus, sat near the cage, feeding the tiger with some cake-like food he had brought. The sepoys and the two other members of the party sat on the floor. All were treated to tender coconut water.

Shekhar and Ramu hurriedly narrated to Jay all that had happened: Suddenly out of the temple the tiger rushed towards the Naib's house, driving the sulking grandson-in-law into the house—and followed him too. From some distance Ramu and Shekhar observed the great panic. Women had begun wailing. All were sure that the tiger had made short work of the grandson-in-law. Soon, of course careful surveys from safe distances showed that the tiger did nothing but sit and look at the trembling young man protected by his wife. However, when Ramu and Shekhar heard hurried discussions on summoning Virdas and on other possible ways of killing the tiger, they concluded that the only way they could save their friend was to seek the camping collector's help.

And they made a beeline for Devla, running through knee-deep water most of the way, covering two hours' distance in an hour. Not only the collector, but also the manager and the tiger-tamer of the circus were there, discussing the missing tiger. The flash flood had come just when the tiger was performing on the arena.

The party started for Vikrampur by jeep, Ramu and Shekhar experiencing their maiden ride in an automobile.

"But why did the friend leave the temple and why is Ghanu Goonda lying inside it, holding the lost image of Devi?" asked Jay.

"Lost image of Devi? Ghanu Goonda?" By then crowds had surrounded the caged tiger and the trio. Jay's question intrigued them. At the Naib's direction some of them ran to the temple. Ghanu Goonda was still lying unconscious. On recovery, he confessed before the collector to his crime. He had dislodged the deity from Her seat. But suspecting that the village elders may decide to search all the houses, had hid the image in a hole in the darkest nook of the sanctum sanctorum itself. He now intended shifting it to the town, particularly when he found the three boys getting interested in the deserted temple.

But no sooner had he removed the slab that covered the hole and brought out the image than he saw the tiger emerging from another corner of the room. He was sure that it was the wrath of the goddess that had taken that terrible form and was about to wreak vengeance on him. He did not know what happened thereafter.

Ghanu was put under arrest.

Meanwhile Bipin whispered some words to the Naib which brightened up the old man's face. The whisper soon became a loud enough rumour: the grandson-in-law had renounced his demand for a new bicycle—which in fact was not his demand but his father's. How many husbands were blessed with wives who would intercede between them and tigers? This is the question he threw to the wide world which included his father and the tribe of similar fathers. His pride in his wife soon became so loud in chaste literary prose characteristic of a budding teacher that Shakuntala who had braved the tiger not long ago, was now hiding from her own people in embarrassment.

The young collector suddenly climbed the solitary chair which, because of its doddering condition, had to be held tight by Bipin and Virdas on both sides.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" said, the collector, assuming a special tone which he had kept in reserve till then, "Jay, Ramu and Shekhar are the pride not only of your village, or of Devla area or even of our district or this state, but of the whole country. Jay's valour and the presence of mind of Ramu and Shekhar will remain imprinted in golden letters in the pages of, of..."

The Naib's son held out a glass of fresh tender coconut water at this point. The collector took a sip of it and resumed, "In the pages of the history of Vikrampur if it is ever written."

Bipin and Virdas temporarily released the chair of their grip and clapped their hands. The crowd got the clue and applauded generously. The collector, after a very broad smile, silenced the applause by waving his arms and said again, "Ladies and gentlemen, for your information, the Great Grand Circus had announced a reward of two hundred rupees for the person or persons who would give them any information about their tiger leading to its recovery. That amount goes to Ramu and Shekhar. And I as the collector have the pleasure of rewarding Jay with a hundred rupees for his exemplary courage. Ladies and gentlemen, I need hardly say that their virtues cannot be measured in terms of rewards. They are just three great boys!"

The collector descended from the chair and sat down in it and finished the rest of the coconut water. The crowd, quite overwhelmed, raised a thunderous shout of "Haribol!"—glory to God.

Ramu and Shekhar joined the two sepoys and Virdas and Bipin in carrying the cage to the jeep waiting a mile away. Jay fell short in height and was content to walk under the cage. Three-fourth of the village folk followed them. When the cage was placed on the trailor and the jeep was ready to leave, someone commented, "Look, how the tiger's eyes are fixed on his three friends."

Jay, Ramu and Shekhar had to make tremendous efforts to suppress their tears, for they supposed crying would not be in keeping with their status.

THE END

Printed by B.V. REDDI at Prasad Process Pvt. Ltd., 188 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.

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