HERITAGE

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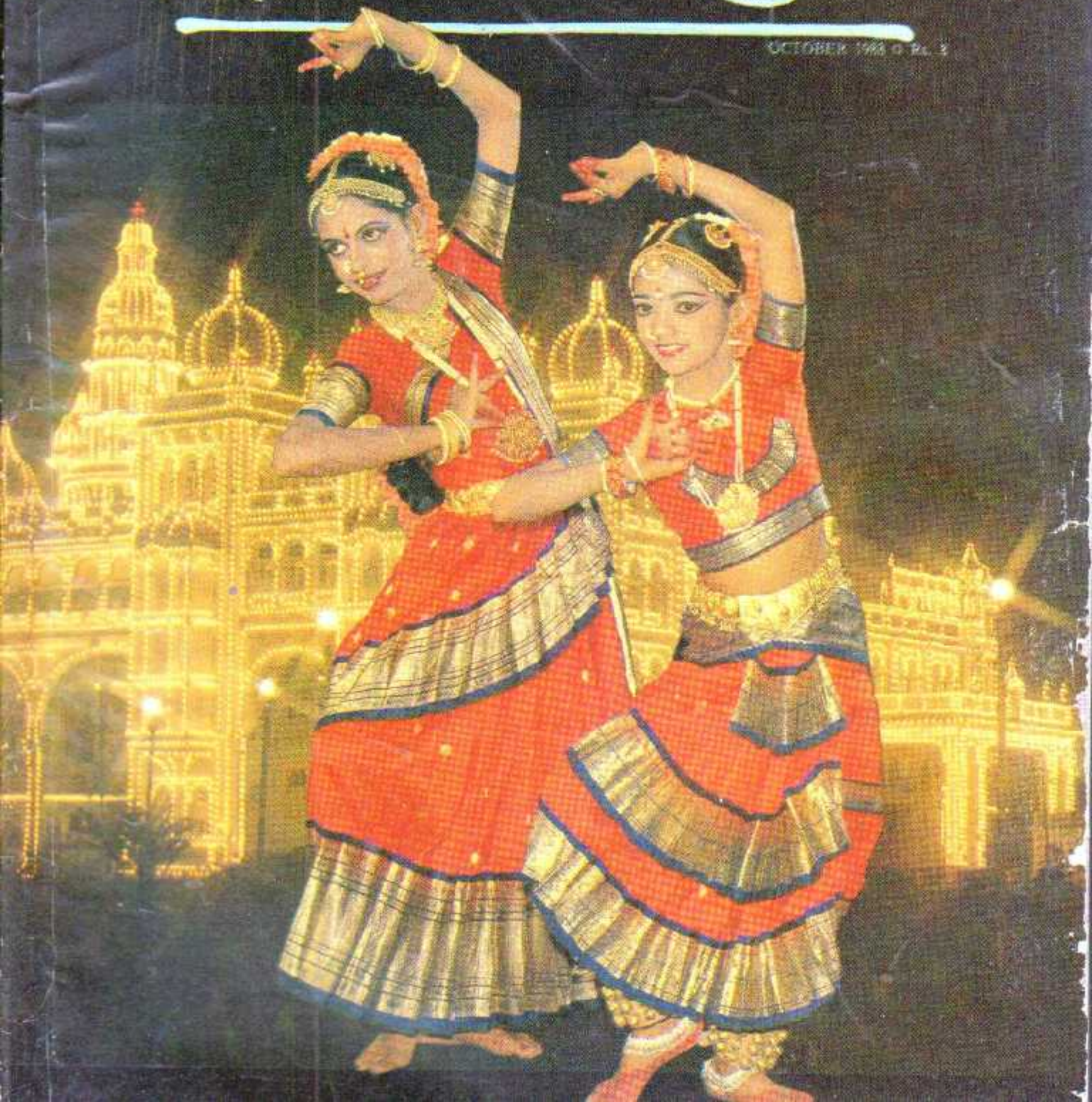

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THE HERITAGE

Features and Fiction for Today and Tomorrow

COVER

While Dusserah is observed all over India, in Mysore, the arena for the mythical battle between the Goddess and the demon, it is a special tradition. (See article in this issue). The festive dance for the occasion is by Dhiraj Chawda and the palace in the background is by S. Thippeswamy.

THE INDIAN MASONRY IN THE PAST

I have been a regular reader of THE HERITAGE from its very first issue and now I am also a subscriber. In the August '88 number (Accent on Pondicherry) I was pleasantly surprised to read something about the Indian masonry in the article "An Unexplored Mine of Indian History" by Vasundhara Filliozat.

I come from a village known as Karuppatti in Madurai district. The adjacent village is known as Irumbadi. I have heard since my younger days that jaggery was used for the construction of Thirumalai Naik Palace at Madurai and that while the same was prepared in our village, the iron melting for the Palace was done at Irumbadi. Thus the villages derived their names. (The names indicate the occupation of the villagers as producers of jaggery and molten iron—*Editor*). What now remains of the Palace, though said to be only a part, remind the visitors of the buildings of ancient Rome marked by grand pillars. I have also heard that Romans participated in the construction of the palace. Till now I had not found any confirmation of the legend regarding the names of the two villages. Now, reading the aforesaid article, I am convinced of the veracity of the legends.

May I request you to gather more information about the construction of the Naik Palace and publish them in your worthy magazine.

High Court,
Madras. **—(Justice) P.K. Sethuraman**

ACCENT ON PONDICHERRY

The August '88 number of THE HERITAGE was simply beautiful. The Accent on Pondicherry moved me deeply.

I note a reference to the Cripps' proposals. Actually a few liberal leaders including my granduncle Sir Sivaswamy, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jayakar and others wrote to Churchill. This letter led on to the Cripps Mission (it is documented in The Transfer of Power Volumes). And my granduncle depended on Doraiswamy Iyer (a) to get Sri Aurobindo's blessings and (b) to act as Sri Aurobindo's Emissary to the Congress leaders.

Madras **—A. Ranganathan**

The August number overwhelmed us. Never before had any journal put Pondicherry in such grand perspective. Although I have never been to Pondicherry, I imbibed the spirit of this place through this issue—an issue to be preserved forever.

Calcutta **—Subas Gangopadhyay**

In the August '88 issue with Accent on Pondicherry, the correct spelling of the town hall building is MAIRIE. Secondly, the photo at the left top in Page 34 shows a procession of Lord Shiva (Bhikshandavar) at Karaikal and not of Manakula Vinayagar at Pondicherry.

Pondicherry **—V. Rajagopalan**

WOULD-BE CONTRIBUTORS TO PLEASE NOTE

- All would-be contributors are expected to have studied the different sections of THE HERITAGE.
- Instead of sending complete articles, please send the themes of your work to the editor.
- Articles submitted must be type-written. Please give your address in the article itself even if a letter accompanies it.
- In view of the large number of submissions received, it is not practical to return articles that cannot be used unless they are accompanied by stamped self-addressed covers.

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Can a remote place of this country be so significant, so meaningful to our life today and for our life tomorrow? I did not know this until I read the August '88 issue of THE HERITAGE. It made many things clear to me. It is an issue rich in information, reflection and, what is most important, it gives us a vision for the future.

Vadodara —**Gopal K. Vyas**

"CAN INDIA SKIRT THE MACABRE OLYMPIC?"

The editorial in August '88 is so profound and it concerns such a fundamental question that I wish every educated Indian read it. As you have clearly said, it will be a sad day for humanity if India too joins the nuclear race to death. But for India to stand apart, despite its capacity to make bombs, requires Indians to be a people different from what they are today. India must not fall a victim to cheap and vulgar culture and easy politics. If it does, it will lose all capacity to look forward to a greater future which has to be a spiritual future.

Jamshedpur — **Dipankar**

SIGNIFICANCE OF HANUMAN'S STRENGTH

The series on the sacred trees and plants of India by Richard Pearson, supported by sketches of Bokul C. and photographs, interests me most. Kindly refer to the article on Arka in this series (July '88). It is mentioned that the flowers are offered to Hanuman who is the symbol of pure physical strength. But I feel that Hanuman is revered as the symbol of pure physcial strength utterly consecrated to the service of the Divine. This consecration is the most significant aspect of his strength

Pondicherry —**Ramakant Navelkar**

TEN OR ELEVEN INCARNATIONS?

With great interest I have read the article on Sringeri by Anup Kishore Das (July '88). The total number of the incarnations of Vishnu is ten. But the writer has stated it to be eleven, including the Buddha. Is it an errror?

Sambalpur —**Sukumar Bhoi**

The writer has only stated what has been shown in the reliefs of varied iconography in the temple at Sringeri. There eleven incarnations are depicted.

—**Editor**

THE VISION OF UNITY

I refer to the article on Sringeri. It is a great sense of the unity of India that made Adi Sankara establish four monasteries in four distinct directions of the country. And ages later, today we stand divided along the lines of religion.

Perhaps the four monasteries can play an important role in integrating our nation.

Bombay —**S. A. Srinivasa Sarma**

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THE HERITAGE

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Now that the Defamation Bill threatening the Freedom of the Press has been dropped, it is expected that both the Press and the people will make some dispassionate evaluation of the situation. The Government, having done something to deserve congratulations, can relax.

Neither the Government nor the Press is run by angels. They are run by parties or individuals who are ambitious and often envious of each other. Both, in their own ways, are directly linked to the people.

But there is an *institution* as the Government and an *institution* as the Press, above the parties and the individuals controlling them. There are ideals attached to these institutions which are independent of the people running them.

But, in a democracy, there is a fundamental difference between the two institutions in regard to the way in which they operate. When the parties or the individuals who run the Government fail in keeping up the ideal of the institution, they can be voted out by the people. If the Press falls from its ideal, no such remedial action is possible. In fact, the damage done by a bad Press can be far too subtle to be undone. (The only saving grace here is, a bad Government can affect all the people. The influence of a bad Press is limited.)

Since the people running the Press cannot be voted out of power, if a group of people running a Government at a given time find the Press to be running amuck with its freedom, it will naturally like to curb its freedom. It can do so by a number of means: threat, harassment, bribe, etc. etc. Perhaps a more civilised means is to do it through legislation.

That is what the present Government wished to do. And it seemed to have stirred up a hornet's nest. The Press has spared no pains to condemn the move. It has perhaps devoted more space to this chorus of condemnation than it had ever devoted to any other issue. No doubt, it has done so in its own interest, but in this case its own interest happens to be the interest of democracy in the larger sense. It is fortunate that the move affecting the freedom of the Press came at a normal time so that the Press could roar. Had it come, say, during an emergency, a faint mew is all it could have raised.

Nobody can deny the fact the Press in India has enjoyed wide freedom. At the same time few would dispute the fact that if it has not reduced that freedom to licence, it has not always used that freedom with conscience and prudence. The Press easily forgets the distinction between the man in power and the Government. In its bid to demolish the image of an individual, it does not draw a line between him and the *position* he occupies, a position somebody else occupied yesterday and somebody else will occupy tomorrow. Even more easily it forgets another subtle but vital line, the line between the individual as a politician and that very individual as a private person—as a father, as a son, as a man with his personal weaknesses or fancies which do not concern his politics or his public life.

The Press generally does not remember when it damages an important *position*, while attacking an individual. This is bad for the country, harmful to a reasonably dignified running of the Government.

During the last two decades there has been an unfortunate deterioration in the level of our social culture. There has also been a fat crop of glossy newsmagazines. (Is it a mere coincidence?) Instead of trying to arrest the aforesaid deterioration, these magazines have contributed to it. Some of them vie with one another in injecting titillation into their readers. When they fail to find enough sensation in the events around, they invent or exaggerate. They do so to sell more. To sell more means to get more advertisements which means to get more profit. There are other benefits too. Anybody who wields power can go about gathering benefits if he or she so wishes. And the newspaper and the magazine—particularly if it has a large circulation—is a power.

And Nature—millions of trees—are felled to serve the owner's lust for money and the reader's lust for gossip around politicians and film stars.

Thus, the reading habit of a new generation has been corrupted. Such readers look for ever more titillation, more and more sensation and the magazines must fulfil their demand or collapse. It is a vicious circle.

Coming to the issue of defamation, the Press should not claim any greater right to protection than an individual. Common sense tells us that if X brings an allegation against Y, it is the business of X to prove it. The Press should be prepared to be in the position of X and own up its obligation to prove its allegation. The Press has an inescapable responsibility towards the individual whose character or conduct it is questioning in the public. Indeed, that responsibility should be considered sacred.

How many times does the Press publicise as generously its own mistakes as it does the mistakes of others?

Although the issue in question was only defamation, the Press would do good to reflect on its own record in relation to the great power at its disposal—its freedom. Even if the Government of a time is obliged to refrain from passing a legislation to check the Press, nemesis can strike through some other unforeseen manner.

But if the Press is found wanting in performing its own duty and in discharging its responsibility, the remedy is not to curb its freedom. There must evolve a sound way for a continuous dialogue between the Press and the Government, between the Press and the people. The people involved in the Press themselves must make a continuous evaluation of their performance and at least some mutual criticism and self-criticism. They can call for a review of their performance from the intellectual elite of the country.

However irresponsible a section of the Press may prove, given the freedom, there will be always sane and sensible voices. Experience shows that the people respect newspapers and magazines projecting such voices and not the ones which simply command circulation. Besides, it is only the free Press that can expose a My Lai massacre or a Watergate or a Bofors. Once the freedom is gone, the Press may not be able to speak lies, but it will not be able to speak the truth either. Hence, the politicians must ensure the freedom of the Press at all cost—even at the cost of having to endure malice. No group of politicians can dream of ruling the country forever. For their temporary gain, they must not scrap an ideal which is far more important than their interest.

The freedom of the Press must be guaranteed even for a far greater reason. It is through freedom that an individual can give his best; you can meet a genius in an individual, not in a state machine. It is through freedom that mankind can evolve. Freedom is a truth of our soul.

Freedom of the spirit is a must and hence freedom of the Press. This is the most important thing to remember. We do not know how many people of the Press were protesting against the Defamation bill with this truth for their inspiration. We need not be very proud of the fact that the 'entire Press' was one on the protest front. Many of them were crying because they would lose their licence; they are not very serious about the real freedom because they do not believe in the freedom of the individual to retain his or her dignity.

THE THIRD CHILD

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

"This is the third time; I hope good luck lies in odd numbers. . . There is divinity in odd numbers, either in nativity, chance or death," said Shakespeare in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

In the East, 'Three' has always been a mystic and auspicious number. We have three great Gods, three modes of Nature (*Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas*) so on and so forth. But the governments today are not influenced by this. There is a growing tendency in several countries including ours to brand the third child as unwarranted, deserving to be deprived of at least some of the social benefits.

God planned a good earth. Even after Satan sabotaged it, God saw to it that good people outnumbered bad ones. He destroyed the whole towns of Sodom and Gomorrah when their residents grew vicious, but only after His angels whisked away to safety the solitary family that was good.

But that was at the infancy of humanity. Over the ages man has grown adult. He is capable of destroying himself without God's help, for Satan now remains distributed among more or less all.

It was nearly two hundred years ago—when few would have thought of population as a problem—Malthus cautioned, "Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical progression. Subsistence only increases in an arithmetical progression." (*The Principle of Population*, 1798). His theory that nature achieved a balance between population and subsistence through the decimating effects of war, famine and pestilence has been held up to much ridicule. But as time passes, Malthus tends to vindicate himself with a vengeance—thanks to man's propensity for helping nature in that direction.

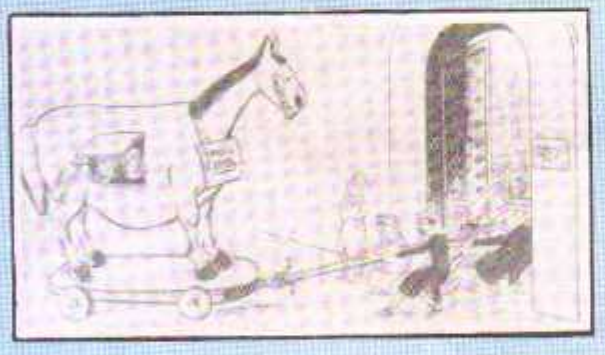
A European father once reported to me the reaction of his little son to a class explaining sex and procreation: "For shame! Is it that easy? I thought there was something really arduous and great behind my making!".

That is it. Every child, if we expect him to take himself seriously, ought to believe that there was really much behind his making—the parents' aspiration, a lot of care and preparation, love and expectation—not just a mechanical physical act. Indispensable though the family planning propaganda is, there is no doubt about the fact that it has knocked off the sort of mystery and sanctity which went with the institution of child-birth, particularly in India. No villager now argues against the drive saying that Mother Devaki had to wait till her eighth conception for Lord Krishna to incarnate!

While family planning has come to stay, what can be avoided at this stage is anything that would make the third child feel unwanted and guilty. Whip the parents by all means, but spare the child. We have already too much pessimism and anarchy among the new generation of kids. Let not the third child add to the situation by feeling himself a third class citizen. Once born, if born at all, let him grow as innocently as the little logician in this limerick:

"Two kids make the parents happy"
The family planning ad was observed by Bapi.
Said he, "My parents dear,
Must be four times happier,
For we are eight round kids altogether!"

YESTERDAY'S MOOD AS CAPTURED BY SHANKAR



Has the situation changed since the publication of this cartoon in ***Shankar's Weekly*** *in 1957?*

OCTOBER 1
1847 : Annie Besant born in London.
1854 : Postage stamps introduced in India.
1953 : Andhra Pradesh becomes a separate State.
1958 : India adopts metric system of weight.
1978 : The minimum marriageable age of a girl is raised from 15 years to 18 years and that of a boy from 18 to 21 years.
OCTOBER 2
1869 : Gandhiji is born.
1904 : Lal Bahadur Shastri is born.
1952 : Community Development Programme is launched.
OCTOBER 3
1831 : Mysore is taken over by the British.
1977 : Smt. Indira Gandhi arrested on corruption charges. This is the first instance of an ex-Prime Minister being arrested.
OCTOBER 6
1860 : Indian Penal Code is passed into law.
OCTOBER 8
1932 : Royal Indian Air Force is commissioned.
1936 : Munshi Premchand, the great Hindi writer, expires.
1979 : Jayaprakash Narayan expires.
OCTOBER 9
1877 : Pandit Gopa Bandhu Das is born.
1931 : Indian Air Force comes into existence.
1970 : Bhaba Atomic Research Centre in Bombay produces Uranium 233.
1976 : International Direct Dialling is introduced between Bombay and London.
OCTOBER 10
1539 : Guru Nanak expires at Kartarpur, now known as Dera Baba Nanak.
1756 : Clive sails from Madras with 5 men-of-war and five other vessels, with 900 European and 1500 Indian sepoys, to recapture Calcutta.
OCTOBER 11
1902 : Jayaprakash Narayan is born.
OCTOBER 12
1967 : The Working Committee of Jammu and Kash-

THIS MONTH IN INDIAN HISTORY

mir National Conference unanimously votes in favour of permanent accession of the State to India.

OCTOBER 13

1679 : A great storm in Masulipatam drowns 20,000 people.

OCTOBER 15

1542 : Emperor Akbar is born at Umarkot in Sind.

1676 : The British Crown authorises East India Company to mint two types of coins in Bombay, 'Rupee' and 'Pice'.

1686 : Aurangzeb captures Bijapur, bringing to an end the 170-year old independent Adil Shahi dynasty.

1932 : The first airline, 'Tata Airlines' is launched by the Tatas.

OCTOBER 16

1905 : Partition of Bengal announced by Lord Curzon.

1968 : Hargovind Khorana gets the Nobel Prize in Medicine & Physiology.

OCTOBER 17

1605 : Emperor Akbar dies.

1920 : Communist Party of India is formed in Tashkent.

OCTOBER 18

1980 : The first Himalayan Car Rally is flagged off from Brabourne Stadium of Bombay.

OCTOBER 20

1960 : The first All India mountaineering expedition conquers Ghunti Peak.

1962 : China attacks India and tries to penetrate through Arunachal Pradesh.

OCTOBER 21

1296 : Alauddin Khilji ascends the throne of Delhi after declaring himself the 'Sultan'.

1934 : Jayaprakash Narayan establishes Congress Socialist Party.

OCTOBER 22

1947 : Pakistani tribesmen invade Kashmir.

1962 : Bhakra Nangal Multipurpose River Valley Project, India's biggest, is dedicated to the nation by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

OCTOBER 23

1623 : Saint Tulsidas of Sri Ramacharitamanasa fame expires.

1764 : Mir Kasim is defeated in the battle of Buxar.

OCTOBER 24

1577 : Amritsar City is founded by the third Sikh Guru Ramdas.

1579 : Jesuit Father S.J. Thomas Stephens is the first Englishman to come to India. He arrives at Goa in a Portuguese ship.

1605 : Emperor Jehangir (Prince Salim) ascends the throne.

1851 : First telegraph line is opened between Calcutta and Diamond Harbour.

1984 : Metro Rail of Calcutta has its first commercial run between Esplanade and Bhowanipore stations, a distance of 4 km.

OCTOBER 25

1964 : The military tank produced at Avadi is named 'Vijayanta'.

1971 : National Committee for Science and Technology is set up.

OCTOBER 26

1962 : Consequent to Chinese invasion the President makes a Proclamation of Emergency for the first time.

1969 : Armstrong and Aldrin, the Apollo II astronauts who were the first men to land on the moon, arrive in Bombay.

OCTOBER 27 :

1947 : Maharaja Hari Singh of Kashmir signs the Instrument of Accession to India.

OCTOBER 28 :

1867 : Sister Nivedita is born in Ireland.

OCTOBER 29

1920 : Jamia Millia Islamia is established through the efforts of Zakir Hussain and Ali Jauhar.

OCTOBER 30

1883 : Swami Dayananda Saraswati expires.

1945 : India joined the United Nations (though still under the British rule).

OCTOBER 31

1875 : Vallabhbhai Patel is born.

1966 : Mihir Sen swims across the Panama Canal.

1984 : Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi is shot dead by her own security guards. Rajiv Gandhi is sworn in as the sixth Prime Minister.

The Unannounced Item In The Olympics Agenda

Truckloads of liquor arriving in the Olympic village.

"And here—hic—goes the gold—hic—to the champion-drinker!"

The Dispensable Item

The two well-known soccer teams were ready. So was the referee. But none had brought a football and hence the event could not take place.

Is football a must for the modern-day football matches?

Going Going...

New U.S. Air Force estimates show that the Star-wars will be much cheaper than originally estimated.

"This is our contribution. Once the Russians do their bit the whole big bang can be achieved cheaper than the fee at the electric crematorium.

The Pied Piper's Kindness

Ayatolla Khomeini has decreed that music and dance are no longer a crime in Iran.

They must of course sing and dance to the master's tune and follow to the inevitable.

MERCY KILLINGS INEVITABLE AFTER NUCLEAR ATTACK

Mercy killings would be almost inevitable among casualties of a major nuclear attack, according to a recent report of the British Medical Association. There would also have to be priorities to decide who should be helped and who should be left.

Although injured children would be a liability, as many as possible would be saved because denying them medical care would probably have "disastrous" effects on the morale of other survivors.

The elderly would have the least hope of emergency treatment, while workers with essential skills to maintain basic services would get priority.

The report says: "We see no categorical solution to the problem of mercy killings of survivors who would otherwise experience great suffering followed by certain death".

If mercy killings were felt necessary, the role of doctors would be to identify those who would otherwise die in severe pain.

However, the report adds: "The ethical and legal assumption should continue to be that deliberate termination of human life is not permitted".

Young adults and children would be treated in preference to older people. Sufferers of long-standing or chronic illnesses, such as diabetics, epileptics and haemophiliacs would probably not have priority, because the drugs they needed would eventually run out.

No treatment should be given for radiation sickness alone, and burns or blast casualties should not be given priority for treatment if they had been exposed to radiation, the report says.

"The plumber, the carpenter and the stone mason will have much more to offer after the bomb than the business executive, the civil servant and, even in some cases, the doctor", according to Professor James Payne, deputy chairman of the BMA board of science and education.

The report adds that doctors and nurses should not consider it a duty to risk their lives to help others in areas of high contamination.

Dr. John Dawson, head of the BMA's professional division emphasized that the report should not be interpreted as expressing any view of the politics of nuclear armament or disarmament.

However, a pressure group of doctors and health professionals, the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, said later: "This is a profoundly depressing report and we urge all health care workers to put their energies into preventing nuclear war by promoting nuclear disarmament".

The report is by a BMA working party, set up to examine the criteria for the selection of nuclear attack casualties for treatment. Thomson Prentice in *The Times*, London.

HUMAN BRAIN MODEL COMPUTER BY 1993

A trial model of a fifth-generation computer with functions similar to the human brain—such as understanding of languages and ability to draw inferences—will be ready in three years' time, the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry has said.

Officials of the Ministry said the Institute for New Generation Computer Technology (ICOT), will develop the trial model by the end of fiscal 1992, which ends in March 1993. It will have an operating speed some 500 times faster than that of existing computer systems, achieved by connecting 1,000 central processing units in parallel with each other to execute a single programme.

If the plan is realized as scheduled, the trial model will be the first computer in the world to have intellectual mechanisms including inference, memory, dialogue using natural languages, and programming, the official said.

The Ministry also plans to allow business corporations both at home and abroad to have access to patents and copyrights regarding development of the trial model, in return for a fee, the officials said.

The project has entered the third and final phase since fiscal 1987, they said.

The ICOT, co-sponsored by the Ministry and the private sector and including eight computer makers, has already finished developing the mechanism for an "inference" function and an intellectual data base system corresponding to the human memory mechanism, they said.

—Kyodo, Tokyo.

Buddha Temple at Bodh Gaya (the traditional Indian form)

Thai Temple at Bodh Gaya

Japan Dayjoko Pagoda, Bodh Gaya

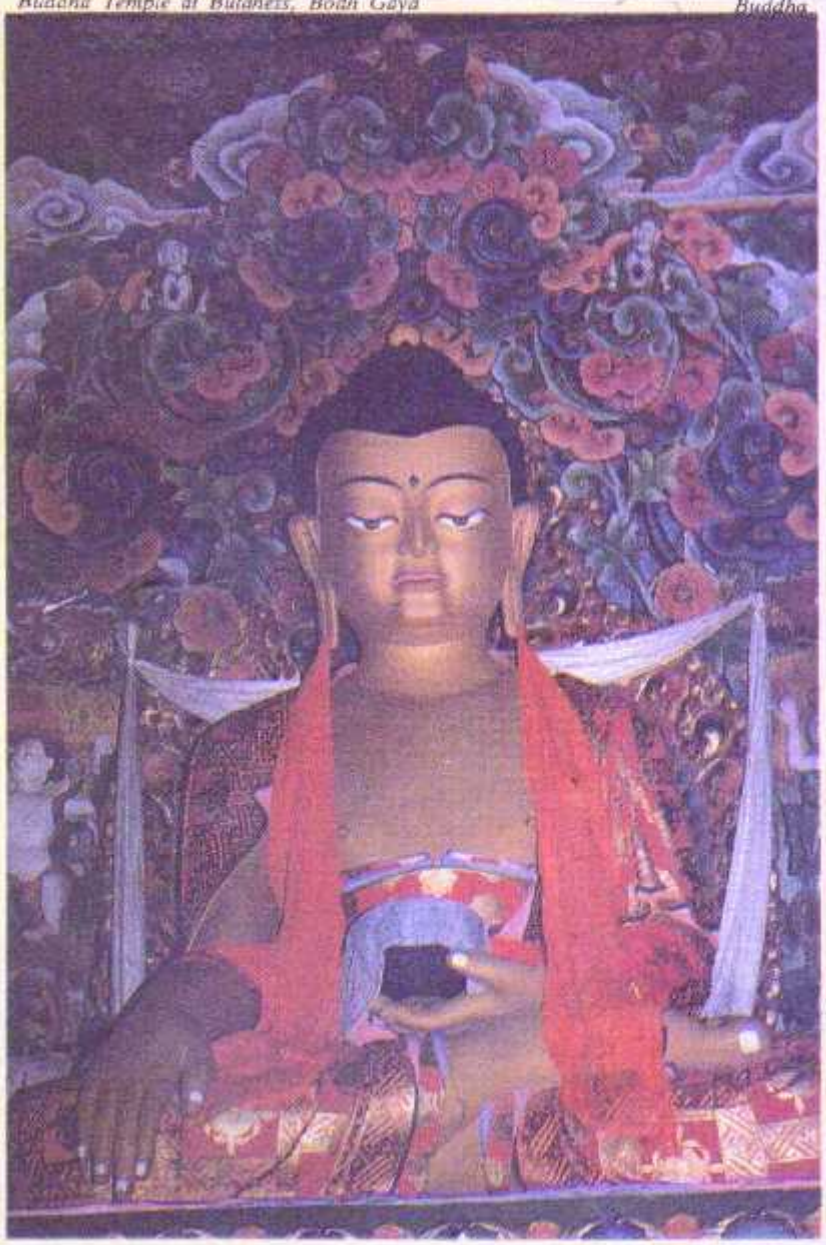
BODH GAYA :

WITNESS TO BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT

"And I, as a seeker after good, seeking for the incomparable state of peace supreme, wandering in the district of Magadha, arrived in due course at Uruvela, the market-town of Senani. .. Then I thought thus :

'Lovely indeed, O venerable one, is this spot of ground, charming is the forest grove, pleasant is the flowing river with sandy fords, and hard by the village where I can beg my food Suitable indeed is the place for spiritual exertion for those noble scions who desire to strive.' And I sat down there thinking that it was a suitable place for such exertion."

Buddha Temple at Butaness, Bodh Gaya



Buddha

Photographs by Timir Datta

THESE are the utterances of Lord Buddha culled and translated from the *Majjhima Nikaya* written originally in the Pali script.

So amid the sylvan surroundings of Uruvela, with the lovely Niranjana river flowing not far away, Gautama took his seat under the *peepal* (*Ficus religiosa*) tree and resolved calmly but solemnly: "...though my skin, my nerves, and my bones shall waste away and my life-

No tract of land was known as Bihar in ancient time. The Sanskrit word ***Bihara*** *connotes a collective residence of a number of Buddhist monks. The use of the word 'Bihar' to denote a territorial unit is rather of recent origin. Bhaktiar Khalji invaded Magadha in 1234 A.D., ransacked the great Odantapuri-Vihara which was situated at modern Bihar Shariff, and conquered a part of Magadha. He made the conquered land an administrative unit and named it Bihar.*

* * *

"Move from place to place, O bhikshus, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many." At his behest hundreds of shaven headed penniless bhikshus spread out in different parts of Asia either on foot or by boat overcoming all possible physical hazards. From the advice of the princely mendicant who practised what he taught in his long life of 80 years, our people received and accepted sacrifice and service as our national ideals. Adherence to the ideals through the practice of religion made them creative, dynamic, fearless and generous, and not fatalist and idle as we are now-a-days taught to believe.

—Swami Vedantananda: Foreword to ***Ancient Bihar.***

blood die. I will not leave this seat until I have attained Supreme Enlightenment."

Enlightenment came to him and he became the Buddha, the "Enlightened" and because of this sacred association, Uruvela situated to the south of Gaya in Bihar came to be known as Buddha Gaya or Bodh Gaya and the *peepal* as the Bodhi Tree. According to Ashokan inscription, the site where the Lord attained *Samma Sambuddh* was known in ancient times as Sambodhi and to the Buddhists it is sacred as Mahabodhi.

The great Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang has left a vivid account of numerous shrines and monuments erected all round the sacred spot and the splendour with which the city flourished in those olden days.

Ashoka is supposed to have visited Bodh Gaya in the tenth year after his coronation, according to Rock Edicts. He changed the *vihara yatras* or the pleasure travels practised by the earlier kings to *dharma yatras* or travels of piety. He also constructed a monastery which drew Buddhist pilgrims both from India and abroad. The king of Ceylon, Meghavarna had also built a monastery with the approval of Emperor Samudragupta.

It is well known that Emperor Ashoka had sent a sapling of the Bodhi Tree to Sri Lanka. When the original tree died around 6th century, a sapling of the tree at Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka was brought and planted where the sacred tree stood earlier.

Fa-hien, the Chinese traveller, who visited India in the fifth century found the place a dense forest. Then, in the seventh century, Sasanka, the king of Gauda, Central Bengal, because of his hostility towards the Buddhists, is said to have dug up and burnt the holy tree. The tree was

Another view of Main Temple

GLIMPSES OF

THE HERITAGE

NOVEMBER '88 NUMBER

ARE WE ALONE IN THE INFINITE UNIVERSE?

Speculation about the existence of living beings in the planets other than the Earth has recently become vibrant because of some scientists pointing at such possibility in regard to the Mars. A scholar in science and humanities, Prof. R.Y. Deshpande examines the issue.

MEDITATION AND MEDICINE :

Psychologist Dr. A.S.Dalal focuses on an issue of great importance.

CHITTORGARH :

The fort-city hallowed by the memory of three women—Padmini, Panna and Meera—legendary or historical, is described through his travel—by Manoj Das.

NIGHTMARES IN DREAMS:

Devapriyo leads us to find clues to the meaning of several fearful dreams.

THE HALFWAY HOUSE:

A gripping novel by the famed writer, Mridula Garg, bringing into life a forgotten type of freedom fighters.

SPLENDOURS OF TREES:

Photo Feature by Snehal Patel.

Reminiscences, features and stories of quality.

then replanted according to accounts left by Hieun Tsang, by Purnavarman, a local Raja of Magadha and supposed to be the last descendant of Ashoka.

The tree again fell down during the later part of the 19th century. Then two of its saplings were planted one in place of the old tree and the other a little farther away. The present Bodhi Tree, a descendant of the original, is only about a century old.

King Ashoka is believed to have erected a great shrine on the holy spot of enlightenment, but no remains of this shrine have survived the ravages of time. The temple has been renovated and restored on so many occasions that it is difficult to know its original form. However, from the description of Hieun Tsang, it seems that the temple that had existed in the 7th century A.D. was not much different in form and dimensions from the present one.

The Mahabodhi temple, unique in Buddhist architecture, consists of a pyramidal tower amidst a stupa and stands with an imposing height of about 165 feet. The richly carved porch forming the entrance to the temple is on the eastern side. Each of

An art inside Bhutan Pagoda, Bodh Gaya

New and old main shrines of Buddha

Image of the Buddha at New Japanese Pagoda

Buddha at Thai Temple

the four sides of the tower presents several tiers and niches, while the front face has a narrow opening for letting the light into the sanctum. A turret with four corners, each consisting a miniature replica of the main spire, rises from the base of the tower. Majestically rising against the serene blue sky the shrine dominates the landscape for miles around.

Some ancient Buddhist texts indicate that the original Mahabodhi temple stood enclosing the entire area including the holy spot and the Bodhi tree. The present shrine was constructed to the east of the blessed area and the tree. They are now found behind the temple.

In the shrine can be seen the beautiful gilded image of the Buddha in the earth touching posture (*Bhumi-sparsha mudra*) signifying enlightenment. On the northern side of the temple is a raised platform known as *Chankramana*, described as the 'Jewel Walk' (or 'Jewel Shrine') where the Buddha is supposed to have paced up and down while self-absorbed in deep contemplation.

Sculptured motifs representing the miraculous blossoms which are said to have sprung under the Buddha's feet as he walked are also to be seen on the platform.

There is also what is known as the *Vajrasana* or the diamond seat on which Lord Buddha is supposed to have sat and meditated.

The *Animeshlochan Chaitya* near the temple marks the spot where the Buddha is supposed to have stood gazing in gratitude after enlightenment.

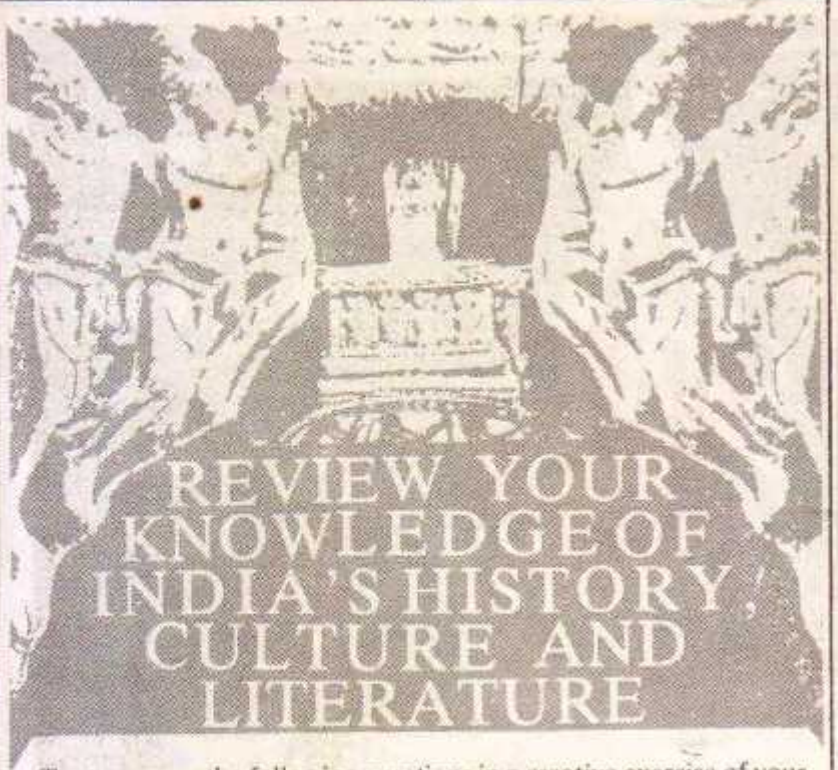
Richly carved stone railings are the remains at Bodh Gaya representing two periods of construction, the earlier dating back to the second century B.C. and the later the Gupta period.

In Bodh Gaya there is also a Tibetan monastery with an impressive *Dharma Chakra*.

Not far from the original shrine of Mahabodhi are the seven sacred sites, dear to the devotees where the Lord is said to have passed his seven weeks in the blissful state of enlightenment. Bodh Gaya which is considered today to be the cradle of Buddhism is not only a centre of pilgrimage for Buddhists but people of all faiths come to the place with a sense of wonder and devotion to have a glimpse of the holy spot and the tree. One remembers these lines from Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* :

"Sitting serene, with perfect Virtue walled
As is a stronghold by its gates and ramps;
Also the Sacred Tree——
——the Bodhi-Tree——
Amid that tumult stirred not, but each leaf
Glistened as still as when on moonlit eves
No zephyr spills the gathering gems of dew;
In the third watch,—
The earth being still, the hellish legions fled,
A soft-air breathing from the sinking moon—
Our Lord attained Samma Sambuddh."

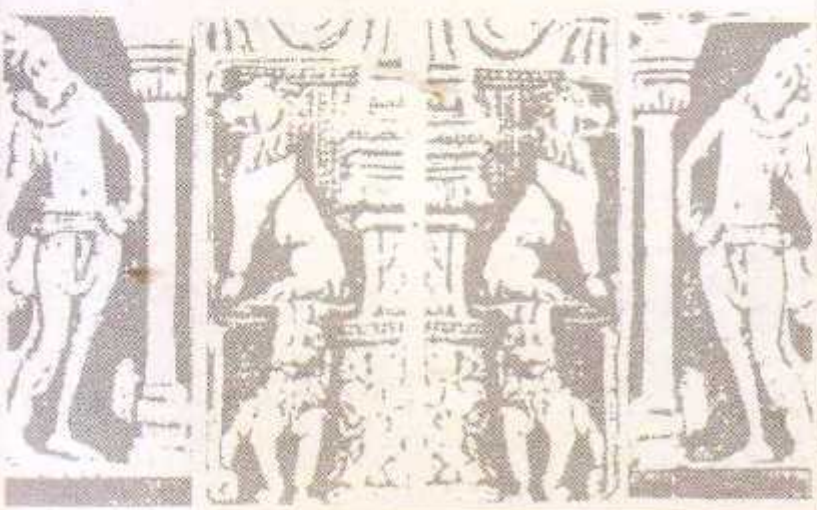
—A.K.D.



REVIEW YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF INDIA'S HISTORY, CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Try to answer the following questions in a creative exercise of your memory. Compare your answers with the ones given. Each correct answer carries ten marks. Award marks to yourself, strictly according to your performance.

1. Who had said *Delhi dur ast*—(Delhi is still far) which has become a popular saying?
2. What was the occasion?
3. Why did the utterance become memorable?
4. How did Shah Jahan's Peacock Throne disappear from India?
5. Where in India is a mosque known as *Poa Mecca* or the shrine that is credited with one-fourth (*Poa*) of the sanctity of Mecca?
6. Apart from the celebrated epic Ramayana, which other work is attributed to Valmiki?
7. Who was the great saint-poet whose dead body was miraculously changed into some flowers?
8. Who traced those spots of Brindavan associated with different deeds of Krishna?
9. Who revived worship in the shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath?
10. Which is the mountain on which the hero of Kalidasa's Meghadutam passed the period of his exile?



ASLEEP IN A BURNING HOUSE

by C.W. Leadbeater

The distinguished student of occult sciences not only narrates an interesting incident which he believes to be true, but also says what could have brought it about.

ONE very remarkable feature of these more recent examples is that the intervention seems so often to have been directed towards the helping or saving of children.

An interesting case which occurred in London only a few years ago was connected with the preservation of a child's life in the midst of a terrible fire, which broke out in a street near Holborn, and entirely destroyed two of the houses there. The flames had obtained such hold before they were discovered that the firemen were unable to save the houses, but they succeeded in rescuing all the inmates except two—an old woman who was suffocated by the smoke before

they could reach her, and a child about five years old, whose presence in the house had been forgotten in the hurry and excitement of the moment.

The mother of the child, it seems, was a friend or relative of the landlady of the house, and had left the little creature in her charge for the night, because she was herself obliged to go down to Colchester on business. It was not until every one else had been rescued, and the whole house was wrapped in flames, that the landlady remembered with a terrible pang the trust that had been confided to her. It seemed hopeless then to attempt to reach the garret where the child had been put to bed, but one of the firemen heroically resolved to make the desperate effort, and, after receiving minute directions as to the exact situation of the room, plunged in among the smoke and flame.

He found the child, and brought him forth entirely unharmed; but when he rejoined his comrades he had a very singular story to tell. He declared that when he reached the room he found it in flames, and most of the floor already fallen; but the fire had curved round the room towards the window in an unnatural and unaccountable manner, the like of which in all his experience he had never seen before, so that the corner in which the child lay was wholly untouched, although the very rafters of the fragment of floor on which his little crib stood were half burnt away. The child was naturally very much terrified, but the fireman distinctly and repeatedly declared that as at great risk he made his way towards him he saw a form like an Angel—here his exact words are given—a something "all gloriously white and silvery, bending over the bed and smoothing down the counterpane". He could not possibly have made any mistake about it, he said, for it was visible in a glare of light for some moments, and in fact, disappeared only when he was within a few feet of it.

Another curious feature of this story is that the child's mother found herself unable to sleep that night down at Colchester, but was constantly harassed by a strong feeling that something was wrong with her child, insomuch that at last she was compelled to rise and spend some time in earnest prayer that the little one might be protected from the danger which she instinctively felt to be hanging over him. The intervention was thus evidently an answer to prayer; a Theosophist, putting the same idea in more scientific phraseology, would say that her intense outpouring of love constituted a force which one of our invisible helpers was able to use for the rescue of her child from a terrible death. ❀

Extracted from *Invisible Helpers*. *Courtesy. The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar.*

GANAGAPUR—
ABODE OF LORD DATTATREY

by Manmohan Melville

ON the Bombay—Madras railway line, the drowsy, little station of Ganagapur, at the border of the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka, appears an hour after Solapur junction.

The platform is deserted. A few dogs lie asleep in the morning sun. Two coolies sit in the shadows smoking bidis.

From the train, however, an unexpected number of passengers alight onto the platform. Most of them are villagers—pilgrims carrying their cloth bundles or small suitcases—on their way to the town of Ganagapur, situated on the banks of the River Bhima.

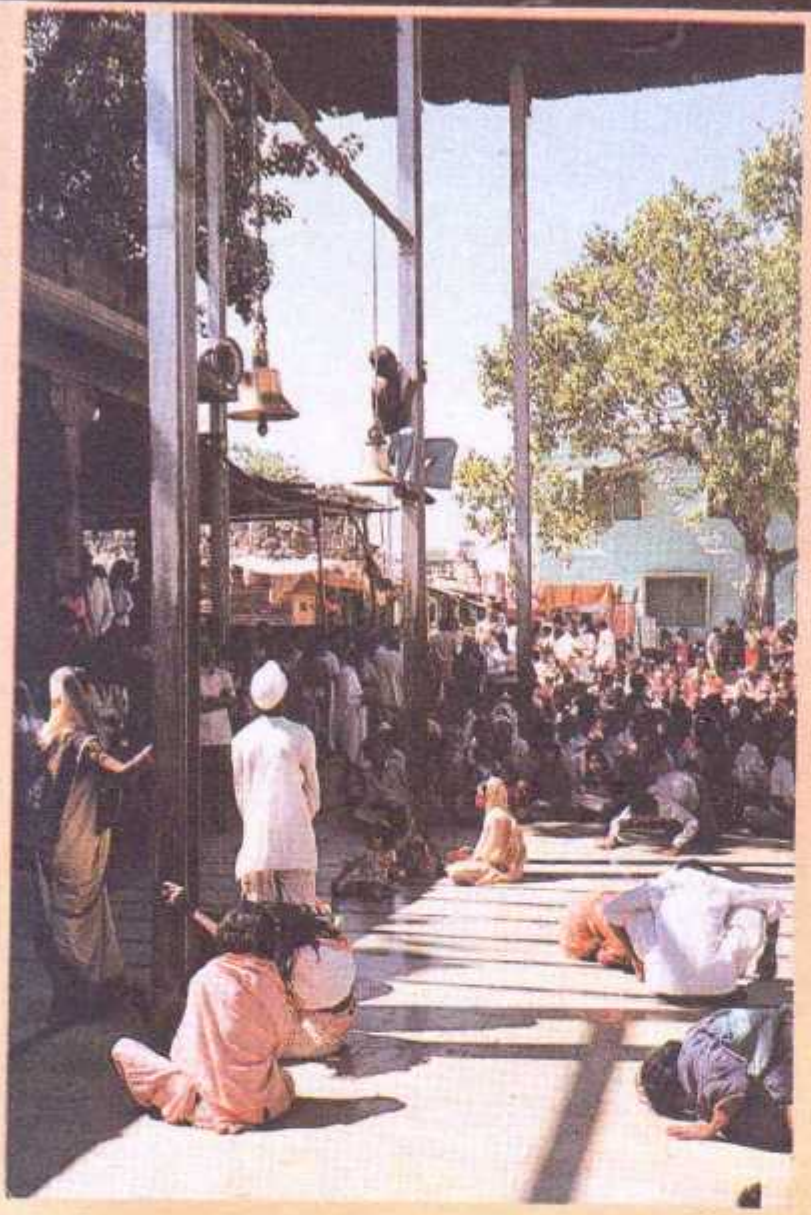
An hour's journey by bus will take us to the temple town of Ganagapur—the abode of Lord Dattatrey.

Lord Dattatrey—the three headed incarnation of the Hindu Trimurti—is a deity held in great esteem by the people of Maharashtra and of the northern parts of Karnataka.

The age-old story of Shri Dattatrey tells of a pious Brahmin couple who lived a life of great austerity. While the husband undertook severe forms of penance in the jungles, the wife, Anasuya, had a reputation for never turning away a beggar or holy man hungry from her house.

One day, in order to test her, the gods—Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh—took the forms of sadhus and appeared at the door of her hovel, while her husband was away in the forests.

Anasuya welcomed the sadhus and began to prepare a meal for them. But the sadhus said—"We have heard of your fame. We have heard that you never deny the request of a hungry beggar."



Their request to Anasuya was strange. They wanted her to feed them milk as a mother feeds her baby. Of course, this was said in order to test the faith of their devotee.

Anasuya, though disturbed by this unusual request, went silently into the kitchen. There she prayed to God to help her to overcome the problem. When she turned around, she saw to her amazement, that the three sadhus had been changed into three little infants by the power of her faith.

She re-entered the room and picked each of the little babies and fed them as a mother feeds her own baby. In this way her faith helped her to pass her test.

When her husband returned from the jungles in the evening, he was surprised to see three infants asleep on his wife's lap. At once the infants changed into their celestial forms and blessed the pious couple.

Anasuya however requested the three gods to remain in her house as her little infants. The gods were so pleased with the devoted lady that they agreed to be born to Anasuya in the form of the three headed incarnation—Dattatrey.

In the 14th century, the deity Shri Dattatrey is supposed to have been reincarnated twice—

Clockwise

* *The cobbled street that leads to the temple of Shri Datta*
* *Torchlight procession at the temple of Shri Datta. In the background is the silver palanquin. At left, the lady in the orange saree is believed to be 'possessed'*
* *Devotees under a sort of spell at the noon* ***aarti****. On the floor are the women somersaulters. The policeman's son clambers up the girder, while his father (in white) watches anxiously.*
* *A pilgrim performs pooja at the riverside. In the back-ground is the 'Sangam' of the Rivers Bhima and Amarja*
* *Temple pujaris before the deity Dattatrey*
* *A wayside shrine of Shri Datta. A devotee in a trance-like state*

once as Shri Vallabh Datta and later as Shri Gurunarasingh Saraswati Datta. It is the third incarnation—Shri Saraswati Datta—who is said to have resided in Ganagapur, and it is for this reason that the town is considered a place of pilgrimage.

Three kilometres to the west of the town of Ganagapur is the point where the River Bhima is met by the smaller tributary—the River Amarja. At this very spot, the sage Shri Saraswati Datta used to meditate and bathe, hence pilgrims consider it to be a holy place.

I take a tonga to the holy sangam. I descend the stone steps leading down to the river's edge. At this time of the year, the River Bhima is very shallow and one can wade across it at certain spots.

This, however, makes no difference to the crowds of pilgrims, who are performing their ablutions in the water. Some are performing little poojas by the riverside. A group of women pilgrims have rolled out coloured sarees to dry on the hot sand. Suddenly a group of horses, led by the tongawallahs, descend to the water's edge, where the animals quench their thirst. In the midst of all this, the pilgrims—lost in their own world—bathe and pray.

At the centre of the town of Ganagapur is a temple dedicated to Shri Saraswati Datta. Housed in the temple are the original sandals (*Padukas*) believed to be worn by Shri Datta. The temple is the main focus of the little town. Over the centuries, the deity has gained a reputation for combatting and driving out evil spirits and this is another reason why devotees with mental ailments visit Ganagapur from far and near.

A cobbled path lined by shops, selling flowers, temple offerings and religious artifacts, leads from the bus stop to the temple. Interspersed among these stalls are shops that cater to the daily needs of the villagers—of grocers, tailors and restaurants and tea-shops. In fact, the cobbled street forms the commercial heart of the town of Ganagapur.

The entrance to the temple is through an ornate archway rising about forty feet into the air—carved over with gods, goddesses and surmounted by the name of the local deity—"Shri Datta".

Inside the courtyard of the temple, an iron scaffolding—about thirty feet high—carries above it a roof of corrugated sheets to protect the worshippers from the fierce sun and the rains.

Aartis are performed in the temple twice a day—once at noon and again at sundown.

Both the *aartis* are witnessed by thousands of pilgrims who throng the courtyard; for the temple of Shri Datta is a place known to have a curative effect on the mentally deranged. The belief is that the presence of the deity at the time of the *aarti* drives out the demons possessing the victims.

It is late evening. The devotees begin to gather around the temple in anticipation of the *aarti*.

As the *aarti* begins, a stillness descends on the crowd in the courtyard. Inside the temple, the lamps are lit and the prayers begin; outside in the courtyard an uneasy change is taking place.

Somewhere in the crowd, a voice begins to chant loudly. A young woman begins to shake her head from side to side. In front of me, a lady rises and begins to sway with the music. Suddenly a young lad rises and begins to shudder violently, as though electric currents are flowing through his body. The crowd, quite used to these phenomena, parts and allows him to move about.

Another lady, in a bright orange saree, rises. She keeps her body ramrod straight—her arms by her side—and then begins to bounce up and down, up and down repeatedly—like an untiring kangaroo.

At the end of the *aarti*, the image of Shri Saraswati Datta and his sandals are taken out of the sanctum sanctorum. They are placed with reverence on a silver palanquin which is hoisted on the shoulders of the pujaris. A procession is formed. Priests carrying flaming torches lead the way. They are followed by the silver palanquin and then by a host of priests carrying a red, silk umbrella and ceremonial banners.

Round and round the courtyard the procession wends its way. All the while the musicians play and the priests chant—and all the while the possessed woman bounces in front of the palanquin—oblivious of the crowds.

At the end of the ceremony, I wander about in the courtyard. I see the young lad, who a little earlier was convulsing violently. Now he sleeps on the cool, stone floor, exhausted after his half-hour of possession. He is watched over by an elderly man—who turns out to be his father.

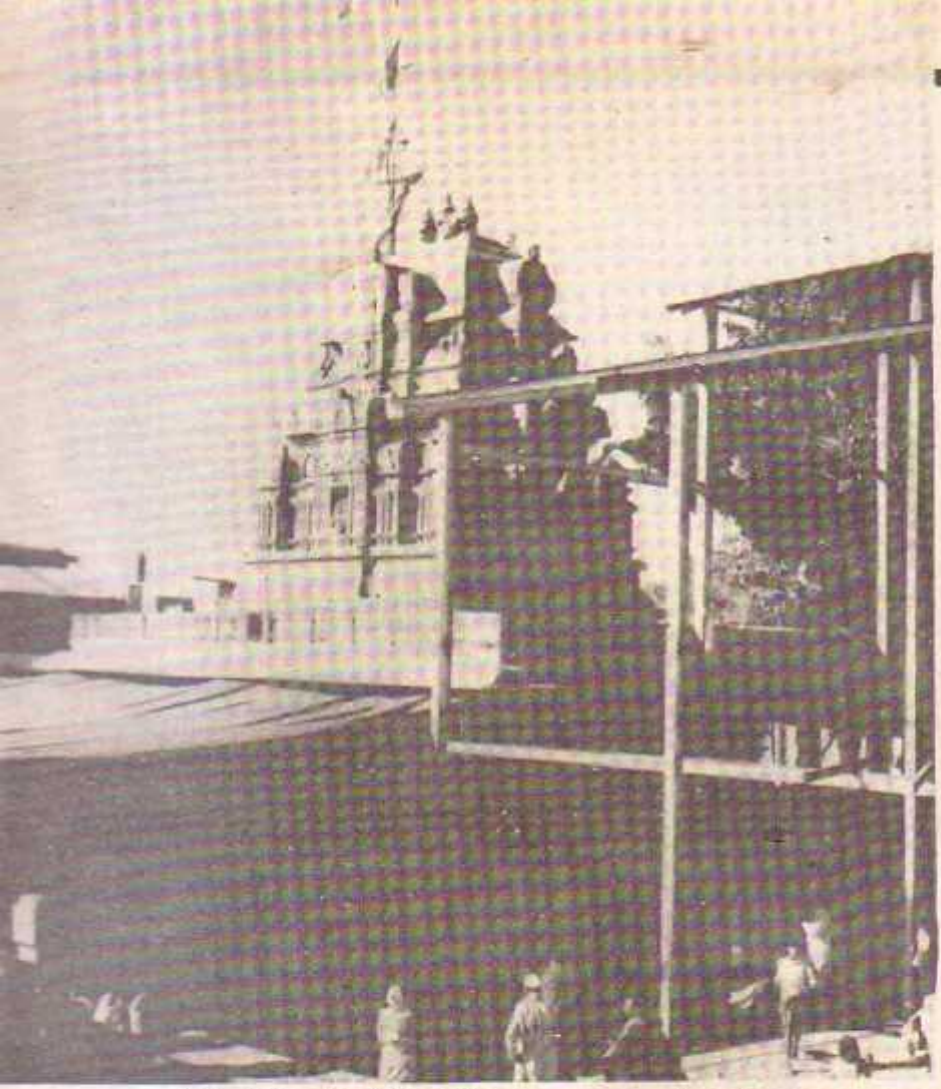
I begin talking to the father. He is a policeman from Solapur. His son is a college student.

Two years ago, he tells me, his son had his first attack of convulsions followed by bouts of erratic behaviour. The boy was taken for treatment to psychiatrists in Solapur and—later—in the city of Pune; but to no avail.

When a friend suggested that the boy be brought to Ganagapur, the father was at first sceptical, but finally agreed. The boy was brought to Ganagapur for the first time two years ago. He had stayed here a week attending the *aartis* in the temple and had gone home in a normal frame of mind.

Thereafter whenever he seems to lapse in his behaviour—which is about once in six months—his father accompanies him to the temple at Ganagapur.

This seems to be the typical sort of story most of the 'possessed' in Ganagapur have to offer. Most of these 'victims' are young women. Most are watched over by anxious relatives, as they go into their trances when the *aarti* starts, for fear that they may come to physical harm.



Inside the courtyard of the temple of Shri Datta

But rarely do they come to harm, the policeman tells me. It is as if some force is protecting them in the courtyard. I am a bit puzzled by this statement, but the next day when I attend the *aarti* at noon, I begin to understand what he meant.

At noon, the following day, I return to the temple of Shri Datta, in time for the *aarti*.

The *aarti* has not yet begun, but a crowd has already gathered—more dense than that of the last evening. I notice that a square area at the centre of the packed courtyard is left unoccupied.

As the *aarti* begins, some young women come forward into the clearing. They are villagers dressed in the traditional sarees worn in these regions. They sit on the floor and sway to some inner commands. One young man makes a repetitive wailing sound that seems like a cry of an animal. The policeman's son is also there jerking violently. The women their hair loose, shout and cry out. Some bang their heads on the floor.

Then suddenly one woman begins to somersault across the courtyard—slowly, at first, and then more rapidly. Another woman follows—and then another—at terrific speeds. There is something inhuman about their performance.

Soon the clearing, at the centre, is filled with women shooting across, doing rapid somersaults. They never look up to see where they are heading; and yet no two women ever collide. They whizz past, narrowly missing each other. Then I begin to understand what the policeman meant when he spoke of 'Divine Protection'.

Even as I muse about these sights, the policeman's son heads for one of the steel girders that support the roof. With five or six powerful thrusts of his legs, he clambers up the girder. As the crowds watch, he reaches the cross-girders above their heads.

There is no fear on his face. In fact, there is no emotion whatsoever on his features. He appears to be in a trance-like state.

He releases his hands and begins to walk across the beams. Slowly, at first, and then building up to a sort of frenzy. Soon he is prancing over the cross-beams—thirty feet above our heads.

The performances in the courtyard are eerie and hard to explain. Science has tried to give its reasons time and again.

Is it a form of mass hysteria that grips the vulnerable among the devotees? A release phenomenon of pent-up emotions of the human mind?

Is this the way these young women display their frustration over the individual problems which they face in their homes? Do the social norms of their strict society refuse to allow them to discuss their problems, and hence do they come to Ganagapur to release in a public exorcism their inner turmoils?

Or is it some sort of 'refreshing of the spirit?' A washing away of old guilt feelings before God and man? A primitive form of psychiatry which still seems to work for the simple villagers?

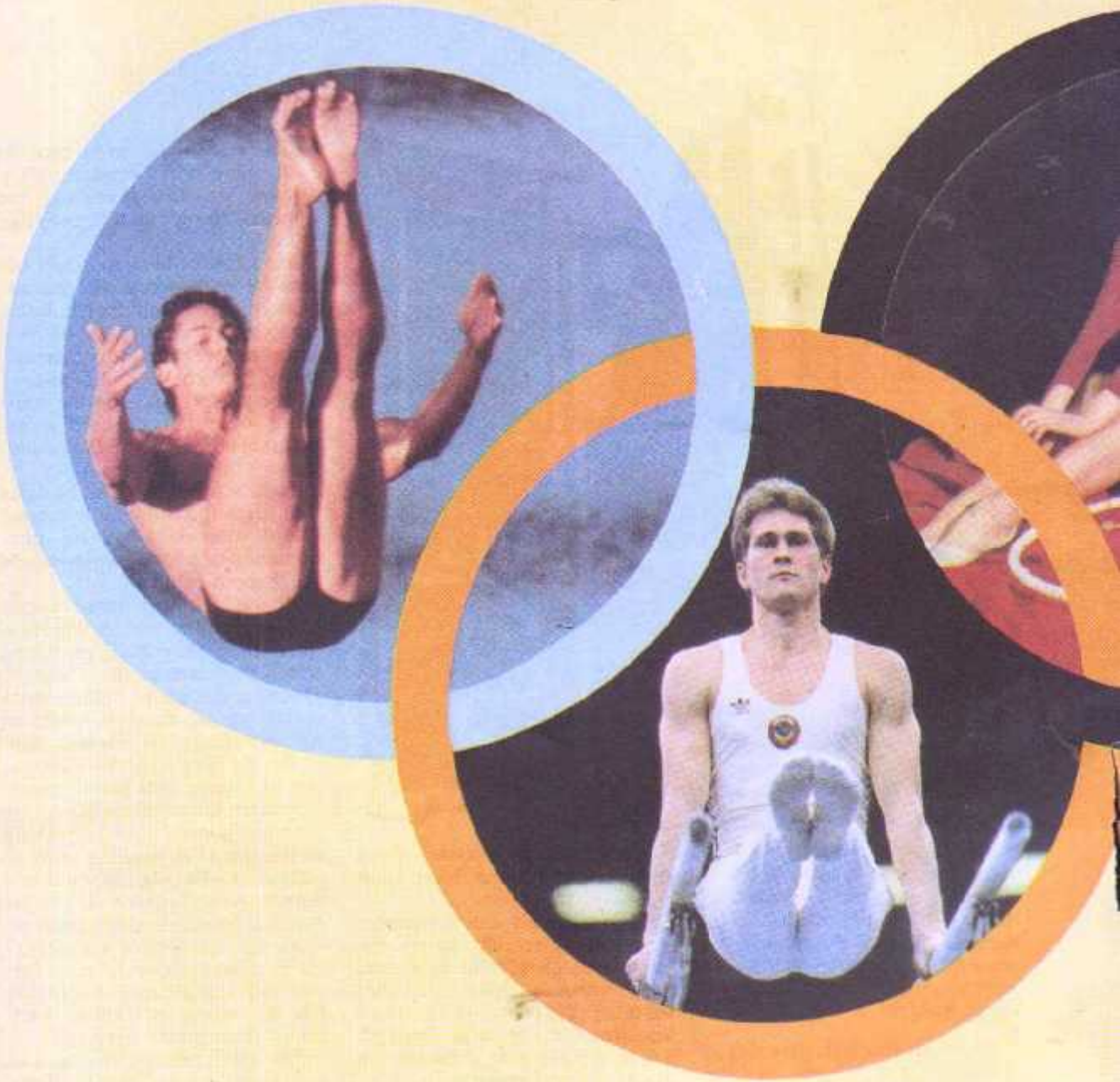
Of course, science puts forward a lot of theories, but finally has no answer to explain what really takes place here.

The *aarti* comes to an end. The policeman's son slithers down the pole. The women lie exhausted on the stone floor. The crowds begin to disperse. Soon the stillness of the afternoon engulfs the courtyard. I take a few more photographs of the deserted temple and courtyard and then wander off looking for a clean tea stall.

When I enter the stall, I see the policeman seated there.

I ask him where is his son.

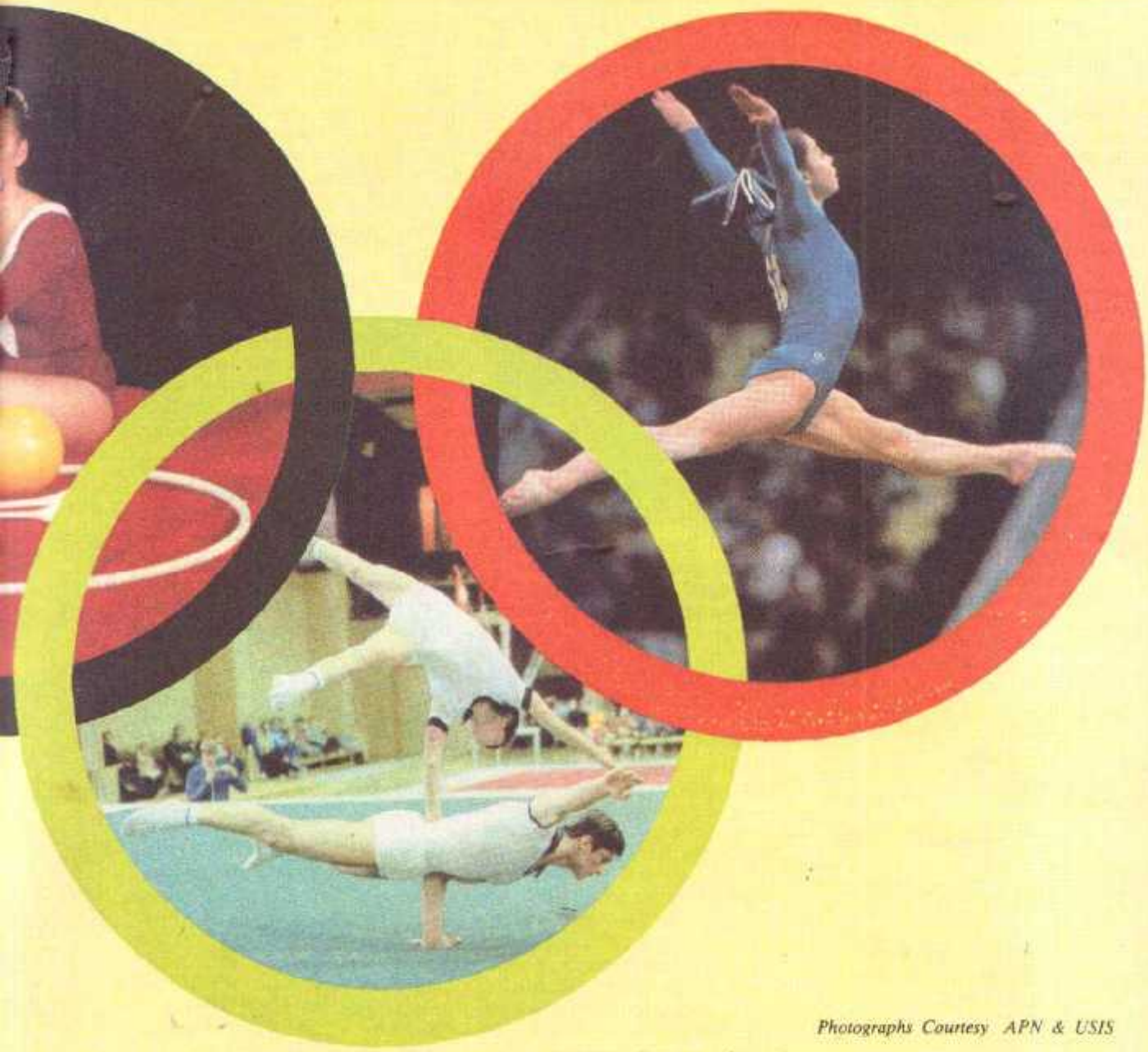
He puts his finger to his lips and points behind his chair. There, curled up in the corner of the stall, lies the young lad in a deep sleep. His chest heaves regularly. And on his face is a look of infinite peace.



PHILOSOPHY OF

This great institution of world brotherhood must be saved from politics reduced to terrorism, ambition reduced to fake achievement through drugs and racial prejudices.

"LET us export our oarsmen, our runners, our fencers. That is the Free Trade of the future. And the day it is introduced into Europe, the cause of Peace will have received a new and strong ally. It inspires me to touch upon another step I now propose and in it I shall ask that the help you have given me hitherto you will extend again, so that together we may attempt to realise, upon a basis suitable to the conditions of our modern life, the splendid and beneficent task of reviving the Olympic Games," announced a remarkable Frenchman, Baron Pierre de Coubertin on the 25th of November 1892, at a sports meet at Sorbonne University, Paris. He is justly credited with the revival of the Olympic Games which began at least 3,500 years ago and continued till A.D. 394.



Photographs Courtesy APN & USIS

THE OLYMPICS

by Visvavasu

Coubertin, no doubt, was inspired by a future marked by the spirit of fraternity and peace. But it cannot be said that a little blue face of envy did not peep from behind him. A German archaeologist, Ernst Curtius, had traced the buried Olympia in Athens between 1875 and 1881. That provoked Coubertin to write, "Germany has brought to light the ruins of Olympia; why should France not succeed in reviving its ancient glory?"

But this sentiment should be interpreted more as a spirit of healthy competition that was expected to characterise the new Olympics than envy. Can competitions of any kind ever promote fraternity and peace? That, of course, is a million dollar question. Does not experience show that competitions lead to more competitions—to rivalry, envy and at last to enmity? Can we, in regard to competition refute with a clear conscience Friedrich Engels' observation that "everybody competes in some way against everyone else and consequently each individual tries to push aside anyone whose existence is a barrier to his own advancement?" Engels might have said so with the decadent capitalistic societies and their economic life styles in view, but does not this psychology of com-

petition hold good even in regard to sports?

We cannot help pondering over this question though we should not come to an immediate conclusion. The promoters of the Olympics perhaps truly believe otherwise. In *An Illustrated History of The Olympics* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1975), Dick Schaap writes, "It has become a cliché to say that the Olympics generate international goodwill. Yet this cliché, like most, has a hard core of truth. There is something about competition on the athletic field, something about physical combat, that inevitably draws the competitors, the combatants, closer together. One athlete may admire another or even worship him, fear him or even hate him, but he cannot simply dismiss him. Empathy is unavoidable, and empathy, in time, leads to understanding.

"Understanding has been the keynote to the Olympic spirit ever since the ancient festival was revived in Athens in 1896. 'My most lasting memory' Ellery Clark, who represented the United States in the first modern Olympics, recalled several years later, 'is the fine spirit which underlay the games, the bringing together of the nations of the world on a common footing—the true ideal, in a realm of sport, of the brotherhood of man.'

"Demonstrations of international goodwill are sprinkled throughout Olympic history. In 1896, a gracious Greek lent a discus to Robert Garrett of the American team; Garrett, who had never seen an authentic discus before, promptly beat the Greeks at their own specialty. In 1904, a cheerful little Cuban, Felix Carvajal, charmed so many members of the United States squad with his wit and amiability that the Americans shared their food and quarters with him. In 1912, Hannes Kolehmainen, a Finnish runner, found the American athletes so friendly that he accepted an invitation to compete in the United States and, eventually, married an American girl. In 1936, a German broad jumper named Luz Long offered Jesse Owens the advice that helped the American Negro win the Olympic broad jump championship. And in 1960, young Cassius Clay, a boxer from Kentucky, spent so much time chatting and laughing with athletes from all over the world that he reigned as unofficial mayor of the Olympic Village in Rome.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin

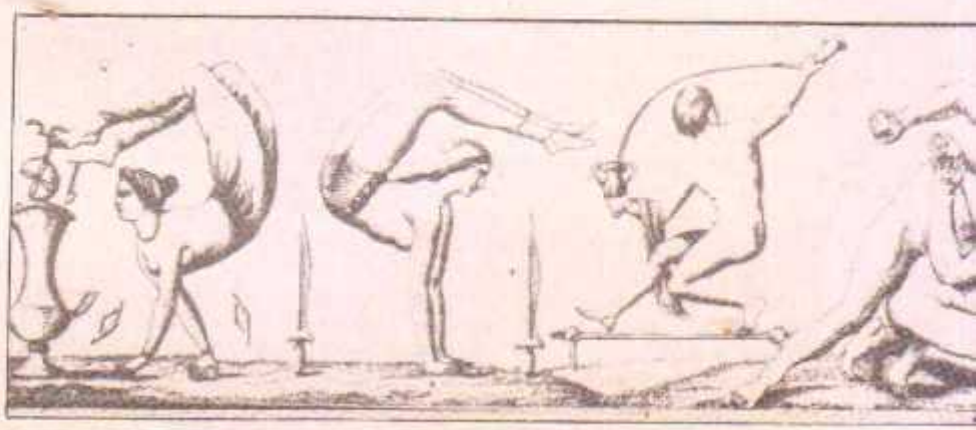
"One of the most stunning cases of mutual understanding sprang from the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne. Harold Connolly was a husky, handsome hammer throwing champion from the United States; Olga Fikotova was a sturdy, striking discus throwing champion from Czechoslovakia. They met and, despite the barriers of language and politics, fell in love. Olga spoke some English, and both enjoyed opera; they saw *Il Trovatore* together in Melbourne. She called him 'Mickey Mouse'; he called her 'Minnie Mouse.' In 1957, after the United States State Department helped cut Czechoslovakia's red tape, Olga Fikotova married Harold Connolly in Prague. 'The H-bomb overhangs us like a cloud of doom,' said *The New York Times* in an editorial. 'The subway during rush hours is almost impossible to endure. But Olga and Harold are in love, and the world does not say no to them.' From 1960 through 1968, the Connollys competed as United States team-mates.

"An equally dramatic example of cooperation— on a vastly different level— occurred during the 1960 Winter Olympics in Squaw Valley, California. Nikolai Sologubov, a sharp-featured Muscovite with a lean, muscular body and a shock of blond hair, helped win the Olympic ice hockey championship—for the United States.

"The United States had never before won the hockey title, but, following unexpected victories over Canada and the Soviet Union, the Americans had a chance to clinch the championship simply by defeating Czechoslovakia in their final game. After two periods, however, the Czechs led, 4-3. Playing in the thin air high in the Sierra Nevadas, the Americans looked almost lethargic.

"Then, during the intermission before the final period, Sologubov, who spoke no English, went to the United States dressing room and, through gestures, suggested that the Americans inhale oxygen. They did—and when they returned to the ice, revived and eager, they routed the Czechs, 9-4, and won the Olympic championship. With this helpful gesture, Nikolai Sologubov, now a captain in the Red Army, personally captured the spirit of the Olympic Games."

These are splendid examples indeed. And, happily, a few

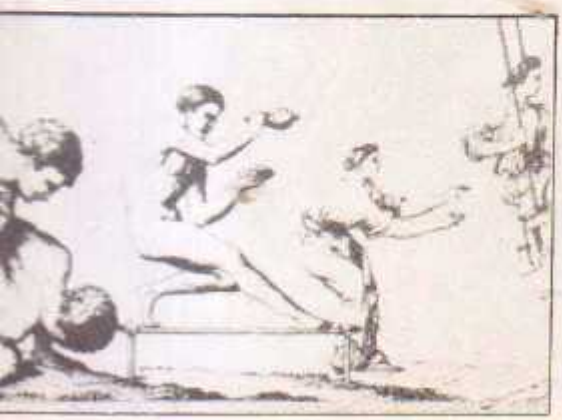


more similar examples can be added to the list. But can they outshine man's ugliness that gains prominence on such occasions? Let us begin with the case of Jesse Owens (1912-1980) the American black, grandson of a slave. He snubbed Adolf Hitler in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin by breaking a full dozen Olympic records, against the Fuehrer's theory of the white Aryan superiority. What happened then? President Franklin Roosevelt did not send him even a congratulatory telegram. He was no American Aryan, after all! (In 1968, in Mexico City, two American black athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, were expelled from the team because they raised their black-gloved fists on

Jesse Owens and Luz Long

the victory stand—as a protest against racial discrimination.)

Racial prejudice and politics have stalked the revived Olympics all the way. The dark presence of the latter, in the form of 'cold war', became conspicuous



THE OLYMPICS: VITAL INFORMATION

History: The Games originated in ancient Greece during festivals honouring the god Zeus. The first Olympics on record took place in 776 B.C., and the series was ended in 393 A.D. The Games were revived in 1896 by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a Frenchman.

Olympic Dates: The Olympic Games take place in the first year of a four-year period known as an ***Olympiad.*** *The Olympiads are numbered consecutively, beginning with the first modern Olympiad celebrated in 1896. The separate Winter Games are numbered as they are held, beginning with the first in 1924.*

Olympic Sites: The Games are awarded to specific cities, not countries, several years in advance of the scheduled date. Most of the modern Olympics have been staged in European cities.

Organisation: The International Olympic Committee, with headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, is the chief governing body. National committees direct activities within participating countries.

Prizes: The winner of each event receives a gold medal. Athletes finishing second and third win silver and bronze medals, respectively.

The Olympic Flame symbolises the continuity between the ancient and modern Games. During the early Olympics a sacred flame burned at the altar of Zeus. A modern version of the flame was adopted for the Berlin Games in 1936, and the tradition has been observed ever since. The torch used to kindle the flame is first lit by the sun's rays at Olympia, Greece, and then carried to the site of the Games by relays of runners. Ships and planes are used when necessary.

The Olympic Symbol consists of five rings or circles, linked together to represent the sporting friendship of all peoples. The rings also symbolize the five continents—Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and America (considered as one continent). Each ring is a different colour—blue, yellow, black, green and red.

The Olympic Flag displays the symbol of the five rings on a plain white background. The flag made its first official appearance in the 1920 Games at Antwerp, Belgium.

The Olympic Motto is ***Citius, Altius, Fortius,*** *Latin words meaning "faster, higher, braver." The modern interpretation of the motto is "swifter, higher, stronger," expressing the athlete's goal of running faster, jumping higher, and throwing more strongly. The motto was coined in 1895 by Father Didon, a French educator.*

The Olympic Creed reads as follows: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."

The Olympic Oath, recited by an athlete of the host country at the opening ceremony, declares: "In the name of all competitors I promise that we will take part in these Olympic Games, respecting and abiding by the rules which govern them, in the true spirit of sportsmanship, for the glory of sport and the honour of our teams." The oath and the creed were composed by Coubertin.

in 1952, the year the Soviet Union participated in the event for the first time. (Russia had last participated in 1912.)

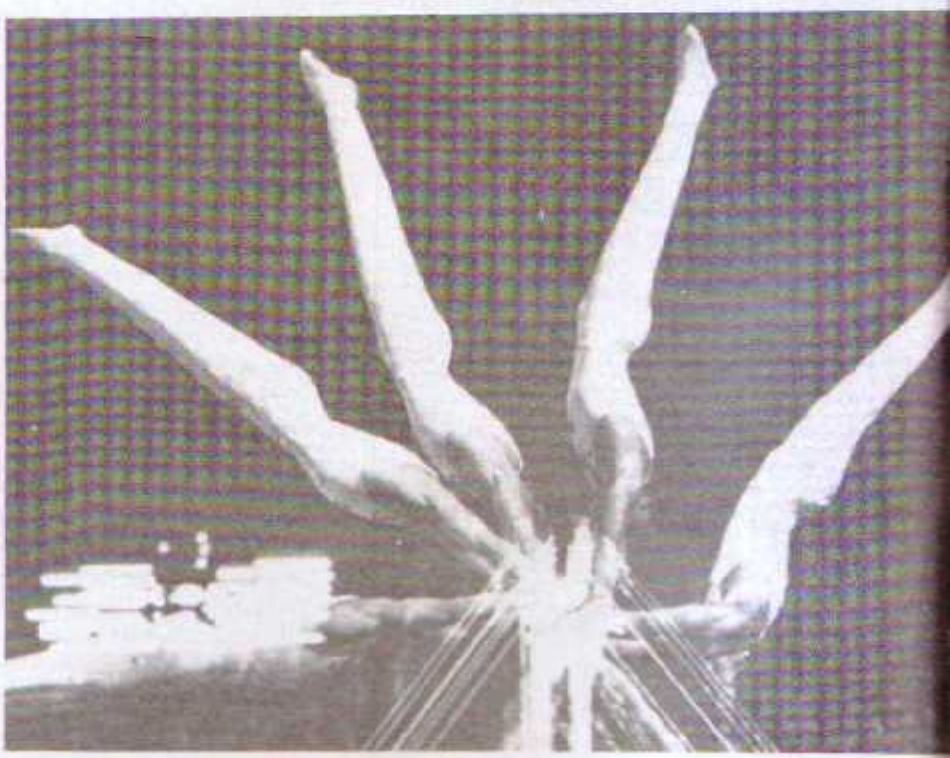
The most heinous manifestation of political conflict was witnessed in 1972 at the Munich Olympics. Taking advantage of the general atmosphere of trust, goodwill and relaxation, eight Palestinian terrorists infiltrated into the Israeli camp in the small hours of 5th September and murdered two athletes and took nine more as hostages. As a shocked world watched the developments, a gruesome shoot out broke out a day later at the airport to which the terrorists had gone with the hostages. The death toll was seventeen. The list tragically included all the hostages, five of the terrorists and a German policeman.

The Games were suspended for one day and then resumed under a cloud of melancholy. The impact of the event has been far greater than immediately suspected. It revealed how terrorism can act without the slightest consideration for any value; how it went directly against the very fundamental concept of human understanding on any front. The strict security arrangements made at the 1976 Olympics at Montreal indicated the terrible blow the spirit of sunshine which used to prevail on such occasions, had received.

Politics surfaced at Montreal when Canada refused to let Taiwan (the Republic of China) participate in the event. Taiwan withdrew, followed by a number of African teams who were protesting against the participation by New Zealand—because New Zealand's rugby team had played with the racist South African team.

The widest ever boycott in the annals of world sports events damaged the spirit of the Moscow Olympics of 1980, as the result of President Carter stopping the American team from joining it in protest against the Russian action in Afghanistan. Fiftyfour other countries participated in the boycott. The Soviet Union was to reciprocate the gesture in 1984. Under its leadership fifteen countries refrained from participating in the Los Angeles Olympics.

The current Seoul Olympics hold out many promises — the most noteworthy of them being

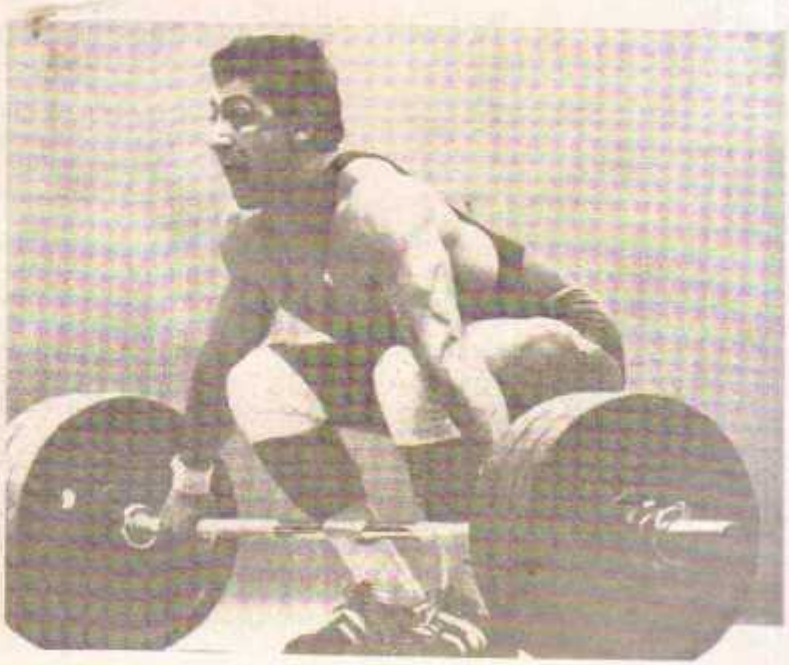


more significant participation by women. The ancient Greek Olympics not only forbade women to participate in the games, but also, under the threat of death, checked them even from witnessing the event. No wonder that the participants went naked. Women could, however, take part in the chariot race. Not that they could drive the chariots. They could only sit in them. That was enough; the laurel for the fastest driven chariot did not go to the man who drove it, but to the man or the woman (the owner) who sat in it!

Women began to participate in the Olympics in 1900, in Paris. The latest formidable enemy of the Olympic spirit is within the participant. According to an authentic report, almost 50 per cent among the foremost athletes are taking the help of artificial drugs to produce in themselves the kick at the right moment to excel their rivals. It is blatant cheating. But who cares? The 'gold' is all that matters. "Many experts believe that the only effective way to stop widespread cheating would be random testing at meets all over the world. The power of this system was illustrated last month when it was suddenly decreed that there would be random testing at a meet in Los Angeles. The dropout rate was so great that the shot-put and discus events had to be cancelled." *Newsweek*, 25 July 1988.

Politics, prejudices and drugs do the worst to damn the great Olympic spirit. Even then the four-yearly events must go on. There is nothing wrong in all the bizarre, all the false elements in man manifesting in the sports arena—for their existence is a naked reality. Needless to say, we cannot get over them by abandoning, avoiding or boycotting the Olympics. They will manifest elsewhere. The Olympics are still a long way from the cherished ideals, the aim of the competitors is not to achieve perfection in their disciplines; it is the ambition for individual fame or the eagerness to win credit for their countries, apart from the monetary and accessory gains, which seem to govern the attitude of most of the participants. There are exceptions, but few.

The public, the participants and the governments have to change much before the Olympics can serve the purpose of fraternity and peace. But it is a great forum for such possible achievements. ®



In this section we have published several articles on the theme of contentment in life written by psychologists. Let us now read a renowned spiritual teacher's prescription.

THE TECHNIQUE OF ENJOYMENT

by Swami Ranganathananda

THERE is some meaning in describing the Upanishads as *rahasya*, mystery. The Upanishads are profound, and only the seeker who is prepared to study them very seriously and intently can derive benefit from them. They are *rahasya* in this sense. Anybody and everybody cannot get the meaning out of them. The deep philosophy of the Upanishads is not revealed to the casual questioner; it is only revealed to the earnest inquirer who, with a ceaselessly questioning mind, is capable of penetrating the inmost depths of his being.

With our minds thus prepared, the Isa Upanishad, in its first verse, takes us at once to these secret depths of Truth:

Isaavaasyamidam sarvam yatkincha jagatyaam jagat;
Tena tyaktena bhujithah, ma grudhah kasyasvid dhanam—

'Whatever there is changeful in this ephemeral world, all that must be enveloped by the Lord. By this renunciation, support yourself. Do not covet the wealth of anyone.'

This is a very profound utterance, unequivocal, and yet extremely simple. The whole universe, it tells us, is filled with the spirit of God. And our experience of the manifold, of the sense world, must be seen in the light of this abiding truth. A bubble rises on a sheet of water, plays for an instant on the surface, and disappears. Whence did it come, what was it, and where did it go? From water it came; having come, it is water still; and unto water it returns at the end. The real nature of that momentary existence, the bubble, is water. Similarly, Brahman is the real nature of this world. Realise that; do not lose sight of that, caught up in the trivial waves of passing sense experience, says the verse. Change is here, death is here, in every phase of life; there is no steady base here on which we can safely erect the structure of our life; but look deeper, says the Upanishad, and you will see the deathless in the midst of death, the changeless in the midst of the many. This is the one great message of the Upanishads, the message of the immortal and imperishable Self behind the mortal and the perishable. Says the *Katha Upanishad* (V. 13):

> 'He is the eternal in the midst of the non-eternals, the principle of intelligence in all that are intelligent. He is One, yet fulfils the desires of the many. Those wise men who perceive Him as existing within their own self, to them belongs eternal peace, and to none else.'

If, then, we can see 'the eternal in the midst of the non-eternals', if we can envelop everything with the Lord, we shall understand the real nature of the universe. After that, the next step is, as this first verse of the *Isa Upanishad* tells us, renunciation of whatever is not real. In the language of Vedanta, there must be both a negation and an affirmation, if we are to enjoy this world. *Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*, 'by this renunciation, support yourself', says the verse. What supports us is not what we renounce, but what we possess and enjoy; and this verse tells us to enjoy the world through possessing God. This world is worth enjoying, and we should enjoy it with zest. Zest in life is expounded throughout the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads*. The great teachers who discovered these truths were not kill-joys, they were sweet and lovable men. Sri Ramakrishna was full of joy and Sri Krishna was full of joy. Jesus, too, was really a man of joy although later dogma made him a man of sorrows.

Before we can enjoy this world, however, we have to learn the technique of enjoyment. This technique is described in detail in the *Bhagavad Gita*, but here, in this first verse of the *Isa Upanishad*, the technique is summed up in that one word 'renunciation'. When Swami Vivekananda was in America, he met Professor Ingersoll, a man who was the terror of the theologians of the time; he was an agnostic and a great scholar and orator. In his *Inspired Talks*, Swami Vivekananda describes a conversation he had with Ingersoll (*Complete Works*, Vol. VII, Fifth Edition, p. 77).

Ingersoll once said to me: "I believe in making the most out of this world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of." I replied: "I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do, and I get more out of it. I *know* I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry; I know no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no duty, no bondage of wife and children and property. I can love all men and women. Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange this way and get ten thousandfold more out of it. Get every single drop."

This, then is the technique of enjoying life which this Upanishad proposed, leaving it to the *Bhagavad Gita* to develop all its practical implications. Says the *Bhagavad Gita* (II. 49):

Durena hyavaram karma buddhiyogaaddhananjaya;
Buddhau saranam anviccha krupanah phalahetavah—

'Work (done with selfish desire) is far inferior, O Arjuna,

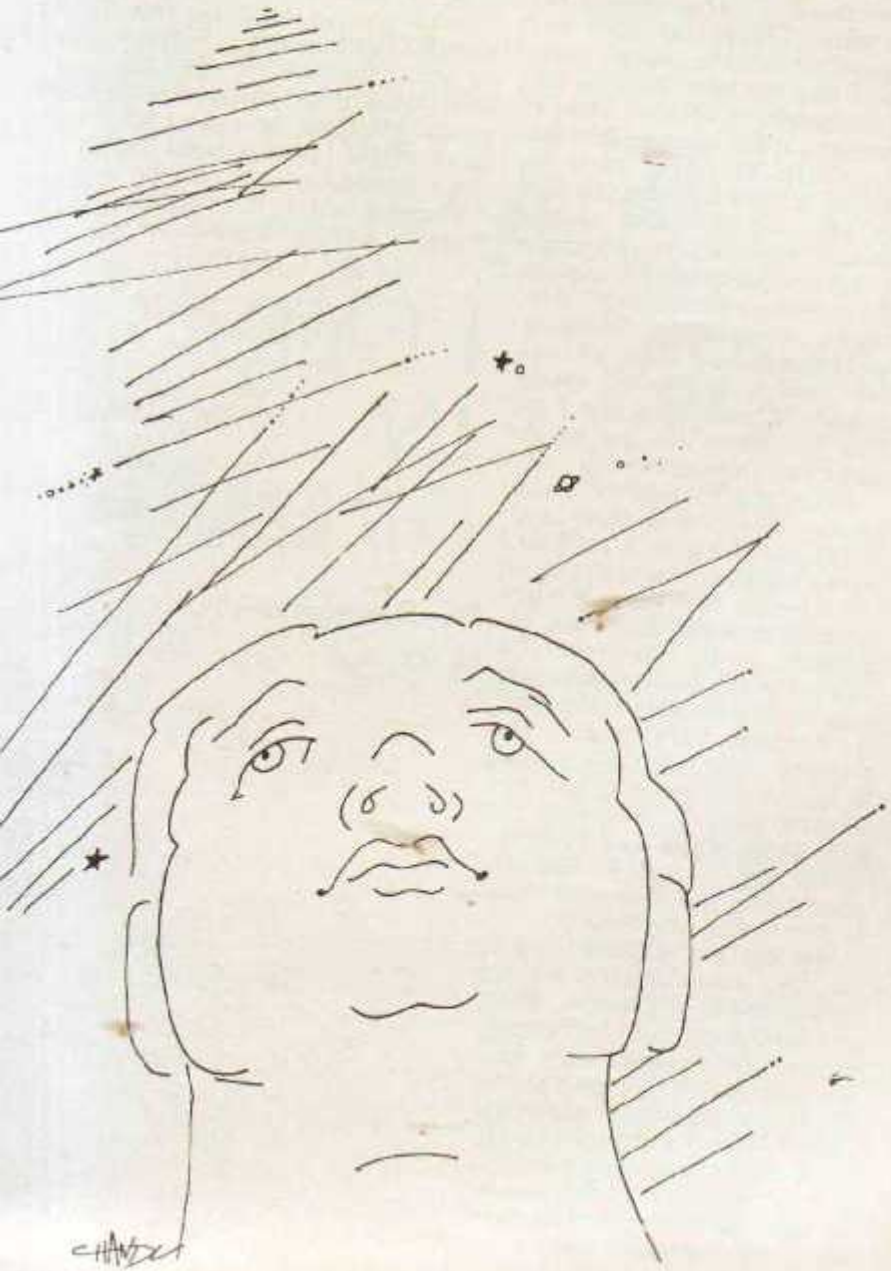
to that done with a detached reason. Take refuge in this detached reason. Small-minded are they who are motivated by selfish results.'

Renunciation is an eternal maxim in ethics as well as in spirituality. There is no true enjoyment except what is purified by renunciation. In our daily lives, in inter-personal relationships, we observe that we achieve the greatest joy not when we affirm ourselves, but when we deny ourselves. And in this teaching of the Upanishads, we have the explanation of this great truth. Through renunciation and detachment, we become identified with the immortal and divine Brahman which is the Self of all. We see, with our eyes and mind purified, this universe as the Brahman and renounce what our small separatist ego had conjured up. Thus, this renunciation is not a mere negation: it is a negation leading to a larger affirmation. The dialectics of the higher life, like the dialectics of evolution itself, proceeds through a series of negations and affirmations. It is the affirmative elements in this dialectic movement that constitute the positive content of joy in ethical and spiritual life.

Finally, this first verse of the *Isa Upanishad* says: *ma grudhah kasyasvid dhanam*—'Do not covet the wealth of another.' That is a very plain statement but it involves a number of ethical and spiritual values. Whatever you have gained by your honest labour, all moral and spiritual teachers say, that alone belongs to you; enjoy life with that, and do not covet what belongs to others. Sankaracharya, in one of his beautiful hymns, addressing man, says:

> 'O fool, give up this excessive desire for wealth; yoke your mind to the good and the true, and cultivate detachment. Whatever wealth you obtain by your own honest labour, with that learn to delight your mind and heart.'

Our hearts will ask: Is wealth evil? Are we to become mendicants? No, replied Sankaracharya, and adds: But yoke your mind to righteousness and cultivate dispassion. Take the mind away from what does not belong to you, what you have not earned yourself. Enjoy life with zest, with the fruits of your own honest labour, avoid covetousness, for it will lead to exploitation, which will destroy the moral life of both the exploiter and the exploited. Exploitation in any and every form must be avoided if you want to develop your spiritual nature, your ethical nature, which is the true aim of life. Remembering that it is by the dialectics of negation and affirmation that true joy in life is achieved, we approach wealth in a spirit of dedication, by negating the ego and its evaluations and affirming the universal value of Brahman. It is only when we become free from all spirit of selfish exploitation that we can truly enjoy life. The world is nothing but the blissful Brahman; and we are here to enjoy it. It is only when our eyes are purified by renunciation that the world will appear to us in its true form, as consisting of waves and waves of the bliss of Brahman. This is the true joy of life; it is growth, it is development, it is realisation for man. It is fulfilment, *purnata*, the goal of evolution itself.



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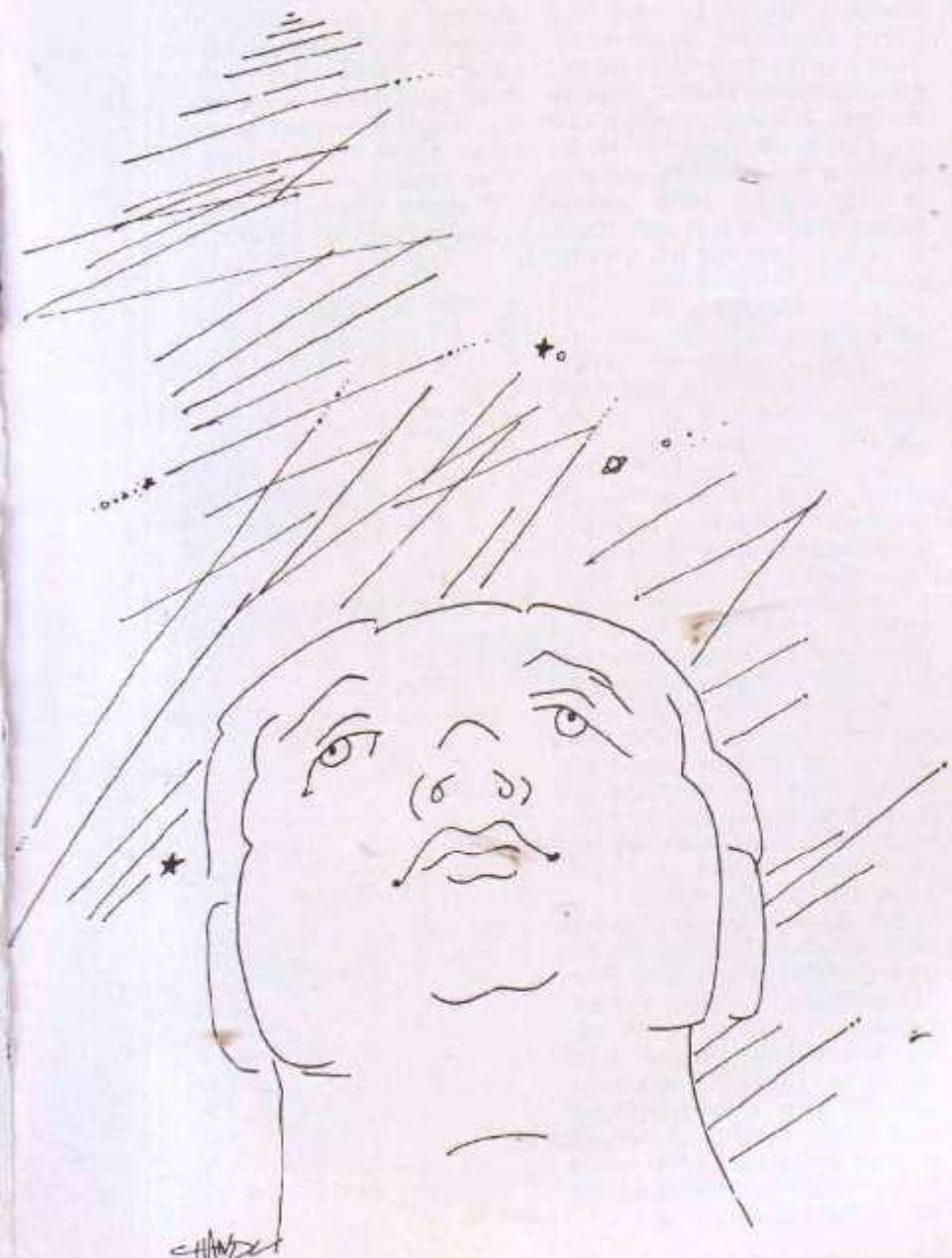

FLYING IN DREAMS

by Devapriyo

After giving us in brief the role dream has played in history and psychological and mystic account of the different kinds of dreams, the author now proceeds to tell us the meaning of specific dreams.

"I dreamt of astral bodies and imagined myself flying vast distances. This dream of flying high up in the air (without any appliance) has indeed been a frequent one throughout my life; and sometimes it has been vivid and realistic and the countryside seemed to lie underneath me in a vast panorama. I do not know how the modern interpreters of dreams, Freud and others, would interpret this dream."

Jawaharlal Nehru recounts this childhood experience of his in his autobiography. Left to the dream proper, the observations of an interpreter will be along these lines—as recorded by Dr. Montague Ullman (founder of the Dream Laboratory at the Maimonides Medical Centre in New York) and Nan Zimmerman (*Working with Dreams*, Hutchinson): (i) the dreamer is highly satisfied with something he has done or achieved or (ii) he feels competent, effective and powerful in relation to some recent happening in his life or (iii) he feels special and superior to others or (iv) he has just discovered some unusual ability in himself or (v) he feels sexually potent.

But, we must remember that the dream is a strictly subjective experience and each dream must be read in the light of incidents and experiences in the dreamer's life. J. F. Brown rightly reminds us in *The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behaviour* (McGraw Hill), "Dreams are not analysed by particular symbolic code, but are seen to be meaningful when one knows the past history of the patient, his present real situation, and his free associations to the details of the dream. Then using what is known of dream symbolism in general, the analyst is able to make interpretations."

The phase of life at which Jawaharlal Nehru dreamt of flying was the phase when he was fascinated by the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. He also read works like *Dhammapada* and books by Theosophists like Madame Blavatsky and had learnt about the astral body. That was the time when he was growing into an idealist. Thus, in his case, it is quite possible that the dream of flying stood for ambition, for a desire to rise high in life and to know greater things. What he says immediately before narrating his dreams, about his impression of great books, is important: "I did not understand much that was said but it all sounded very mysterious and fascinating and I felt that here was the key to the secrets of the universe."

According to legends Queen Maya Devi of Kapilavastu dreamt of flying to a region of snows and found herself lying on a wondrous bed when a white elephant approached her and entered her body. Her dream was interpreted by the scholars of her time as an indication that a great soul will be born to her. The scholars must have taken into account the queen's nature and mood to make this prophecy, but that alone would not be sufficient; they must have also applied their intuition and their knowledge of the future.

But this is a legend. Even in our life, similar dreams are not an impossible proposition. From psychological point of view, dreams are analysed only with the past and the present as the storehouse of clues. From mystic point of view a dream (though such dreams are rare) can also contain elements of the future, or indications of something subtle in the dreamer's life.

For example, someone dreams of flying towards the sun. He has no fear, but a serene feeling of humility, wonder and joy. What does it mean? Far from anything to do with sex, it means a psychic urge for true knowledge.

While flying in dreams one might encounter clouds and there is a fear in his mind. Eventually he comes out of the cloud. It may mean the possible obstacles he is likely to face in his progress towards a certain achievement. Whether the fear is in the dreamer's subconscious or whether it is an indication from "outside" or "above", is a matter on which the dreamer alone can shed light—if he is capable of analysing dreams through a careful survey of his own mood and other conditions.

To come back to the usual and ordinary level of dreams, it is

quite common to find oneself flying in dreams only to see next oneself falling down or waking up at the fear of falling down. What Freud has to say in such cases is quite sound:

"From the information thus obtained one must conclude that these dreams also reproduce impressions made in childhood—that is, that they refer to the games involving rapid motion which have such an extraordinary attraction for children. Where is the uncle who has never made a child fly by running with it across the room with outstretched arms, or has never played at falling with it by rocking it on his knee and then suddenly straightening his leg, or by lifting it above his head and suddenly pretending to withdraw his supporting hand? At such moments children shout with joy, and insatiably demand a repetition of the performance, especially if a little fright and dizziness are involved in the game; in after years they repeat their sensations in dreams, but in dreams they omit the hands that held them, so that now they are free to float or fall. We know that all small children have a fondness for such games as rocking and see-sawing; and if they see gymnastic performances at the circus their recollection of such games is refreshed. In some boys a hysterical attack will consist simply in the reproduction of such performances, which they accomplish with great dexterity. Not infrequently sexual sensations are excited by these games of movement, which are quite neutral in themselves. To express the matter in a few words: the "exciting" games of childhood are repeated in dreams of flying, falling, reeling and the like, but the voluptuous feelings are now transformed into anxiety. But, as every mother knows, the excited play of children often enough culminates in quarrelling and tears." (*The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*. The Modern Library.)

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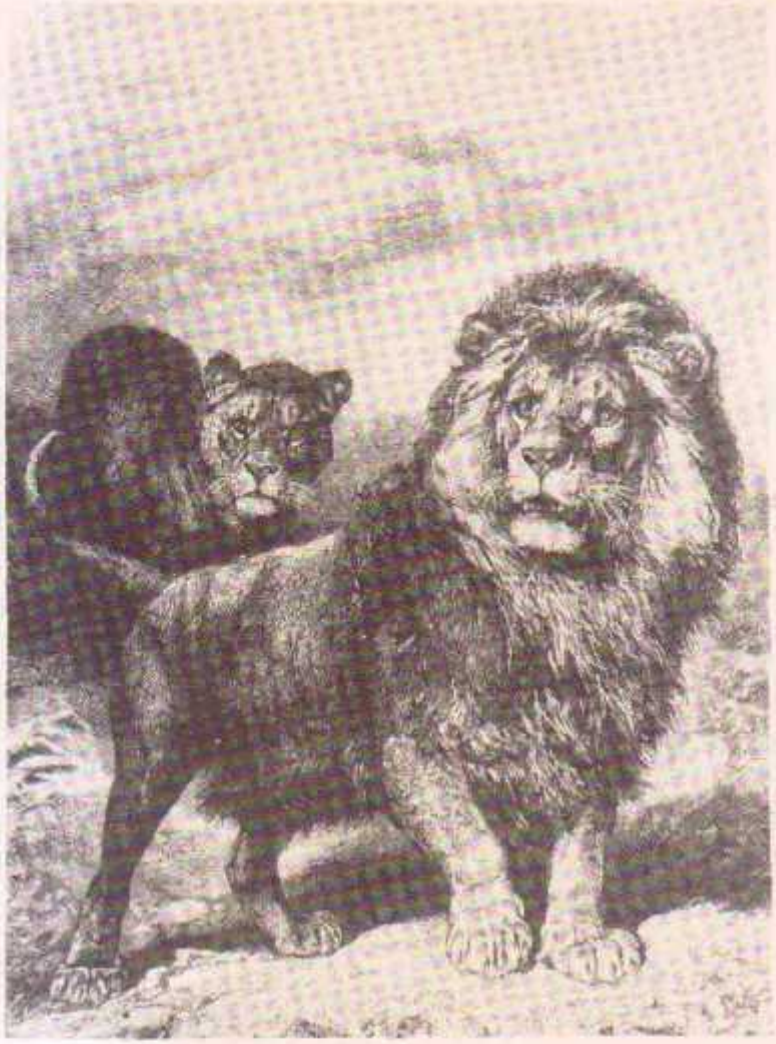


THE KING OF BEASTS

by M. Krishnan

AS pointed out by me in my notes on the tiger as our National Animal (in the issue for December '87), the lion has been acclaimed everywhere as the King of Beasts from time immemorial. It was only comparatively recently, early in this century, that some have questioned the claim, suggesting that the elephant, that is much bigger and stronger, merits the title better—as if bodily size and strength are the only criteria for determining kingship! If that were so, all the celebrated kings of history would have been deposed by the monstrous, near-moronic champion wrestlers of their courts.

Perhaps it is the combination of a great mane and a tassel-tipped tail that contributes most to the lion's noble looks, but it has other royal features as well. For one thing, it is the most sociable of the great cats, the only one given to living and even hunting in a pride—and whoever heard of a king who had no attendant courtiers! Yes, the lion is the King of Beasts all right, but then which lion is that, the African or the Asiatic?

The African, I think, much the better known and much the more numerous. Even two centuries ago, when the Asiatic lion was still very much there in the drier and more open tracts of middle western Asia (including north-western India), it was the African lion that was celebrated so widely. May be taxonomists had not, by then, assigned the African lion (*Panthera leo leo*) as the nominate species and the Asiatic as a subspecies (*P. leo persica*), but that is hardly material—people knew where both kinds came from all right.

Earlier still, when Africa was the Dark Continent, naturally its lions were not so widely known and it was the Asiatic lion that was referred to in the Bible, in Samson's riddle, and also in Omar Khayyam :

"They say the lion and the lizard keep
The courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep"

—that could only have been the Asiatic lion. What about the lion of the fable of Androcles? But that was a fable.

Unlike all other great cats, the lion favours open, rather dry jungles, savannah country of which there is plenty in Africa, and is limited in Asia. Plains country in Asia has been so extensively occupied by humanity that there is little left for the animals.

The distinction between the African and Asiatic lions is based on slight anatomical differences, not readily discernible even to

the expert, by superficial looks. Once I had occasion to visit a zoo I knew well along with a foreign naturalist who was working on the Asiatic lion in the Gir sanctuary (as it was then—the only place in which the Asiatic lion was still to be found wild). There was a magnificent adult lion from Gir in a cage there, with a full, very dark mane, and I asked my companion if he could tell if it was from Africa or Gir. Being an expert he knew perfectly well that the right thing to say that it was hardly possible to distinguish between the two kinds by looks alone, and then venture a guarded opinion, adequately buffered with uncertainty. But being a man, and knowing not only that I knew he had specialised in the Asiatic lion but also that I already knew where that animal had come from, he promptly said it was African! Afterwards we discussed the motives that had led to this answer, and had a hearty laugh over it.

Sustained hunting and deprivation of territory by men led to the lion becoming extinct everywhere in Asia except in the Gir forests of Gujarat. Even in India, it was hunted to extinction in all its other habitats. Right from the time of the Great Moghuls, lion hunting was a sport much indulged in by the nobility, and even about a hundred years ago, a British army officer shot a great number of lions in north-west India. The saving of the animal in Gir is a saga of dedicated conservationist effort, but in recounting it frequently the person who initiated it and sustained it for quite a few years, the Nawab of Junagadh, is not mentioned. In the sixties it was feared that even in the Gir forests the lions, subsisting largely on buffaloes driven in to graze and dwindling in numbers, were endangered, but today they have been better protected and induced to hunt their natural prey (of which there is plenty in Gir) and for some years have been well established. My picture is of zoo lion, but it is authentically from Gir.

When the Lion Show was on at Gir (where lions are displayed in the open feeding on sacrificial buffalo baits, with no fence or moat between them and the onlooker) one could watch them from barely 7 metres away—something that cannot be done with other major predators. For some reason that no one has been able to explain, lions get quickly accustomed to near human presence and are quite tolerant of men. The one other wild mammal that goes even further and is credited with being positively friendly to men is the dolphin, and that is also something no one can explain. Not that lions, if provoked, will not attack men, and the provocation need not be physical but may be purely apprehensive—all wild animals, if they fear imminent harm to themselves by men will go for their aggressor—to borrow from a legal cliche much in use today, it is anticipatory self defence.

Rarely, lions have even turned man-eaters. Actually, the first great man-eater classic was not Corbett's *The Man-eaters of Kumaon* but the much earlier book by Patterson (who was a railroad engineer in Africa), *The Maneaters of Tsavo*. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about these two books, separated in time by nearly half a century, is that in the twenties the Madras University prescribed Patterson's book as a text for non-detailed study for the B.A. degree examination, and that in the sixties the same university conferred the same honour on Corbett, prescribing his book as a text for non-detailed study for the same degree!

THE LONE CHAMPION OF A TRADITION

Text and Photographs by Vidyavrata

70-year old Shrish Chandra Pal is believed to be the only surviving exponent of craft in the cultural milieu of Bengal which in days gone by, was practised by a widely popular school of painting. It also inspired one of the greatest artists of modern India, Jamini Roy, to evolve an exclusive form of painting.

Radha Krishna

Gaur and Nitai

The Kalighat Pat style has a history of over 200 years, if not more. Perhaps the style, in its pristine form, existed before the Kalighat temple came to prominence, but it got a boost with the popularity of the temple.

Here in the Bazar around the temple some artists got together and started painting of deities on hand-made paper. The brushes they used were made of hair of goats while the hues were pro-

A trainee at work

A trainee at work

Giving the finishing touch

duced by certain kinds of stones like Harital and Hingul which were mixed with glue.

"Folk painting, called *pats*, belonged to two main forms—scrolls of paper mounted on cloth and portraying legends, mythological episodes or moralities, and single sheets. The figures are flat and without background and are executed in tempera, less often in water colour. The brush work is free, economical, rhythmical and powerful. It was the two last-mentioned qualities that gave folk painting in the nineteenth century its distinctive feature of interest. The *pat* paintings of Kalighat, at this period a suburb of Calcutta, are outstanding for the bold sweep of the brush and plasticity of the figures."

(*West Bengal* by Sachindra Lal Ghosh, National Book Trust.)

The art flourished to such an extent and acquired such respectability that it became a status symbol to own a few Kalighat paintings. Its range widened with the passage of time and a new style known as "Baba" culture developed. Of course the components and instruments of the craft changed as did its theme. "Proper brushes and bottled colours became popular and Jamini Babu picked upon this style to put it on a sophisticated canvas. But, unfortunately, the printing machines adversely affected the craft and the trade as the people opted for printed pictures, compelling the craftsmen to take to clay modelling although I have still maintained the traditional style while I try to portray modern themes also," says Shri Pal.

Shri Pal is a national award winner of 1968 for his clay image of Durga; so intricate was the painting of jewellery on the image that Smt. Indira Gandhi mistook it for actual jewellery. Even a cursory glance at some of his works will convince one of the great beauty and distinctness of his style.

Shri Shrish Pal had thought of starting a school, but he felt discouraged on second thought. Who knows if the students would not have cursed him for teaching an art which would not enable them to earn a living?

Notwithstanding his misgivings, Shri Shrish Chandra Pal is hopeful that at least some members of his family will keep the tradition alive.

Shrish Chandra concentrating on a pat painting

DIVINITIES FROM CLAY

*"Fashioning of coloured clay images of deities and mundane figurines has been an important artistic activity for centuries. The modellers, mainly belonging to a hereditary class, were influenced by the new artistic awareness and have been breaking away from a fairly long tradition by designing the figures on deities after the classical Hindu pattern, often achieving remarkably beautiful results. Miniature figurines of groups of people in diverse activities in a realistic manner is another notable activity among clay modellers of Krishnagar in Nadia district, and these artifacts have a good market. Dolls and toys made of clay, wood and pith in folk art style by rural artisans are popular; especially those made by artisans in Bankura district receive appreciation from people not only in West Bengal but outside for their artistic quality. **Alpana** decorative designs executed by women with rice flour or chalk paste on floors or walls of homes and temples on occasions of auspicious ceremonies and rituals called **Bratas** (sacred undertakings) is still another distinctive artistic activity of the Bengalis. It consists of complicated linear designs with motifs that may have originally had connection with Tantric designs, but which at present are mainly intended to create forms of beauty. Such designs are sometimes worked out with coloured thread and needle on cotton quilts by artistically minded housewives."*

(***West Bengal** by Sachindra Lal Ghosh, National Book Trust.*)

RAMKINKER

by Varsha Das

Photographs
courtesy : Lalit Kala Akademi

THE imposing stone sculptures of semi-gods, *Yaksha* and *Yakshi*, outside the Reserve Bank of India, Delhi, stand there, as if,

Tonga in Oil, 1964-65

Yaksha in Stone

Yakshi in Stone

since time immemorial. They are overlooking one of the busiest streets of Delhi, with television and telecommunication towers as their neighbours, yet seem to have descended straight from the glorious past of India, cutting through various ages and layers of sensibilities. At times they seem oblivious to their surroundings, and at times like sorcerers, about to change the face of this world! The majestic presence of these *Yaksha* and *Yakshi* proclaims the name of their creator. He was fortunate to have been taken to Santiniketan in 1925, when he was just fifteen.

Born in a village, Jugipara, near Bankura in West Bengal in 1910, Ramkinker went to school at Bankura. It was Ramanand Chatterjee, the founder of the 'Modern Review' who noticed his talent and took him to Santiniketan for further studies at Kala Bhavan, the Art Department headed by Nandalal Bose. There Ramkinker learnt the techniques and styles of Bengal School, of which his teacher was a direct product. Besides learning his basics from the doyen, Ramkinker got a wide exposure to other foreign techniques of arts. He came in contact with the sculptors like Liza Von Pott, Madame Millward and an Englishman called Bateman. These progressive European sculptors used modern technique. They

Portrait of Vinodini in Oil, 1947

taught and worked at Kala Bhavan for a while, but respected the teaching norms of Santiniketan, which allowed freedom of thought and expression. The government art schools all over the country, established and headed as they were by the British, imposed neo-classic conventions of academic and realistic presentation. This imposition led to a kind of cultural renaissance in different parts of the country. Bengal took the lead.

Ramkinker was thus exposed to the arts of east and west. Fortunately, by temperament he was individualistic and passionate. He enjoyed experiments. Though he began to paint miniatures initially, he also worked in oils, tempera and water colours because they had larger scope for experimentation and expression. His oils moved "restlessly from portraiture to abstract design, from tragic vignettes to bold monumental works of great simplicity and grandeur". His portraits were never mere academic portrayal of a person. He interpreted personality on a canvas or

a paper through distortions or bold delineations. A portrait thus became an interpretative painting.

He was a spontaneous strong artist who invented his own style and mannerism. Art to him was inner compulsion, he created because he had to. There was no material reason or cause behind it. He never took to it as a saleable commodity. During his long creative span of life, the only commissioned work from the government was the sculpture of *Yaksha-Yakshi* mentioned earlier, and this too was at the fag end of his life.

When Ramkinker began to teach at Kala Bhavan, he was paid twelve rupees and eight annas per month. His needs were next to nothing. Later he became the head of the sculpture department and retired only in 1971. Ramkinker became more famous as a sculptor, but he was also "a vigorous painter, whose style, whether in oils, tempera or water colour ran parallel to his sculpture".

Due to his love of Nature he created sculptures which became an organic part of their surroundings. Due to the limited resources available at Kala Bhavan he used inexpensive and simple materials like cement, concrete, stone and clay. He could handle any medium with utmost ease as if they belonged to each other. His own basic qualities were strength and spontaneity and they found expression in his work.

His student, and a well-known art historian, the late Jaya Appasamy has written about him at many places. She knew the artist and his art very closely, at academic, intellectual and emotional levels. In one of her articles on him she says that Ramkinker's "sculptures have dual nature: firstly, a structural core which is interior and organic and shows itself in the organisation of forms; and secondly, an expressionistic quality which is baroque, buoyant and flowering. The surfaces of his sculpture and painting are always of interest." Ramkinker was the first Indian sculptor to make abstract compositions. All his contemporaries and predecessors created realistic, academic sculptures based on recognisable subject-matter, but Ramkinker distorted his figures

Threshers in Oil, 1943

The Mother in Oil, 1937-38

to make them more expressive. His subject-matter was always from the world around him.

Ramkinker was a man of this soil. Like his sculpture he too as if surged out of the earth! In January 1967, this writer had an opportunity to meet him in his thatched house in Santiniketan. His bare torso, dreamy but penetrating eyes, dishevelled hair, reverberating voice can never be forgotten. He poured a glass of water from an earthen pot lying in a corner, on the ground and on our request of showing some works, he picked up a bunch of papers from under the cot, dusted them and showed his water colours one after another—a galaxy of masterpieces!

Ramkinker's personality is aptly described by another of his students who is still teaching at Santiniketan. He is K.G. Subramanyan. The following excerpt is from his article written during Ramkinker's lifetime.

"He is probably one of the lone survivors of a lost tribe, the 'Khepa' Bauls or the mad mystics, an artist crazy with his art, lost so much in his search as to forget both his person and his product, not concerned in the least whether it brought him name or fame or success. This unconcern of his is so unlike the cultivated unconcern of the usual artist bohemian, who wears usual tears in his trousers and holes in his pockets and lives an ostentatiously dishevelled life; the most moving fact about Kinkerbabu is that there is not even a grain of affectation in him. Those who have been near to him to some extent, as I flatter myself I have been, know how transparently sincere his attitudes are and how guileless and disarming his corniest eccentricities. There is hardly any artist in India with the same facility for formal metamorphosis, the same moods of self-criticism and euphoria, the same single-minded devotion to his vocation as an artist, the same incorrigible lack of self-interest; it is a great pity that he is not known more than he is among Indian artists, leave alone the Indian public."

Picnic in Oil, 1938-39

Jaya Appasamy and K.G. Subramanyan have left little for anyone to say anything about Ramkinker. He was an open book, whom anyone could read, even an illiterate, provided one encountered him.

Ramkinker rarely used models or prior sketches. His penetrating eyes grasped the subject with all its intricacies, tangible or intangible, external and internal. The day C.F. Andrews died Tagore was in great grief. Ramkinker found him hunched over a table. This image was absorbed by the artist's mind with all its details, like expressions in those sorrowful eyes, wrinkles on the broad forehead, lines on the face, etc. Ramkinker sketched it as soon as he went to his room and later created a bronze bust of Tagore, an unparallel piece of art. This was executed in 1941 and is kept at Kala Bhavan.

The grounds of Kala Bhavan and Santiniketan have been fortunate to be adorned by Ramkinker's sculptures like 'Deepastambh' executed in 1936, 'Sujata', also in 1936; 'Santhal Family' in 1938 and others. All of them belong to that soil and that very sky, as inseparable entities of the trees and bushes around, created by a person who equally shared all that.

Ramkinker, besides painting and sculpting, also sang Rabindra Sangeet and played singing roles in Tagore's plays. In 1975, Visva Bharati made him Emeritus professor and conferred on him the title 'Deshikottam' in 1976. He became the Fellow of the Lalit Kala Akademi in 1976.

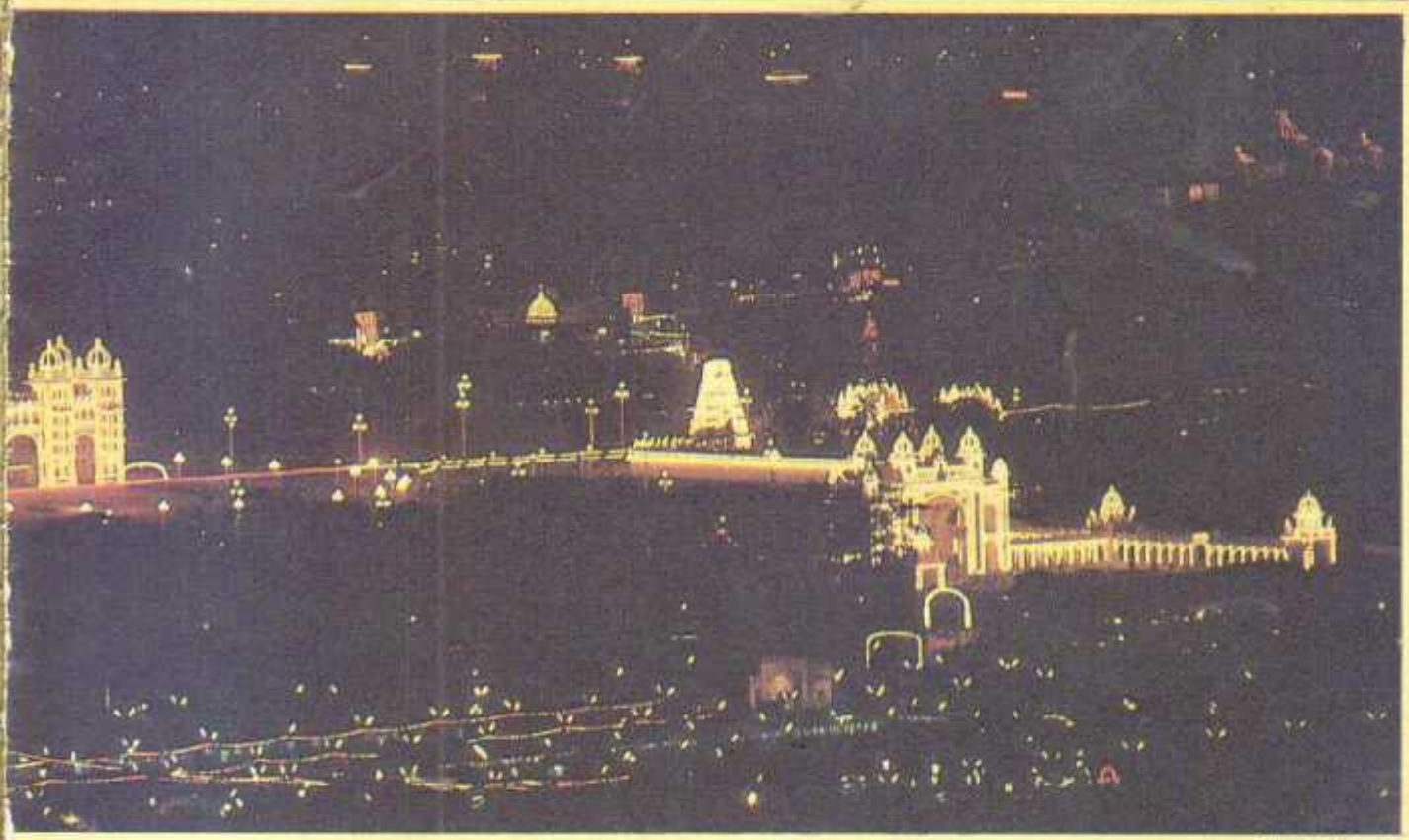
At the age of 70, he died of cerebral-thrombosis on the 1st August, 1980, at Santiniketan. A genuine personification of five fundamental elements merged into those, leaving behind some immortal creations.

Caparisoned elephant carrying the representative image of Chamundeswari

The festive city at night

THE

Decorated bulls in the procession



Dhiraj Chawda

MYSORE DUSSERAH

by N. Saraswathi

Photographs by S. Thippeswamy

Dhiraj Chawda

MYSORE, one of the finest cities of India, is often remembered for the great festival known as the Mysore Dusserah, although Dusserah is an important festival all over the country.

The city of Mysore is situated along 12° 18′ north latitude and 76° 42′ east longitude at the north-west base of the Chamundi Hills, and 2,525 feet above sea level. The city with its magnificent mansions, wide and clean roads and enchanting parks, is built in a valley formed by two ridges running north and south. The city enjoys a mild and equable climate.

Mysore has been a city remarkable for its peaceful atmosphere. Cases of communal disharmony are rare. The Dusserah provides an occasion for a renewal of this age-old harmony.

The origin of the festival is lost in a remote past. It has two aspects: the worship of Durga and the worship of the arms. The first celebrates the victory of Durga over [the *Vijayadasami*] the buffalo-demon Mahishasura, on the tenth day of a terrible fight. In the course of the fight she killed other demons too. Chanda and Munda were the two ferocious lieutenants of Mahishasura. It is on account of them that she came to be called Chamundeswari.

The second aspect of the festival indicates that it is in some way connected with the worship of Indra. Such features of the festival as the worship of the State Horse, State Cow, State Elephant appear to represent the worship offered to the respective appurtenances of Indra himself. They may also be connected with Durga herself.

The form of Durga popular in Mysore is the Chamundi form. The Goddess Chamundi is iden-

Folk dancers at the festival

Performers of a traditional dramatic item

A part of the procession

Dhiraj Chawda

Characters from the past brought alive

Dhiraj Chawda

A view of the Durbar

Dhiraj Chawda

Dhiraj Chawda

tified with Mahishasura Mardini, the name given to Durga as the destroyer of the demon Mahishasura. The destruction took place in Mysore and was accomplished by Durga in the form of Chamundi. Mahishasura Mardini is the tutelary Goddess of the Mysore Royal family.

The Dusserah festival is also known as Navaratri. It is a festival spread over ten nights. In the South, the first nine are called Navaratri and the tenth, *Vijayadasami*. On the ninth day is observed the *Ayudha Puja*, or the worship of weapons. On the tenth day, the ruler set out with his army to commemorate the glorious victory of the good over the evil. The Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi are worshipped on this day. The festival is also characterised by a display of hand-made dolls in different households.

The Wodeyars, the last ruling dynasty of Mysore in a way, continued the traditions of Vijayanagara. Maharaja Wodeyar I introduced the Dusserah festival in A.D. 1610 in a big way with great pomp and pageantry. It attained great popularity under Kanthirava Narasaraja Wodeyar and his successors.

Under Maharaja Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar, the last ruler of Mysore, the festival took place with great gusto On the first day, after invocation to the tutelary deity, Sree Chamundeswari, *Puja* was offered to Ganesha, followed by the investing of the silken thread *(kankana)* on the right hand of the ruler. Then *Puja* was offered to the Nine Planets (*Navagraha*), the royal throne and the state sword. The ruler sat on his throne and received greetings and gifts from his senior officers. Next the State Elephant and the State Horse offered obeisance and retired. The Durbaris (courtiers and nobility) then received floral gifts from the ruler.

In the evening also His Highness held court and the same course was followed.

From the second till the eighth day, the court was held only in the evenings, while all the religious ceremonies took place in the sanctum of the palace. The ninth day was devoted to the worship of *Ayudha* or the implements and select arms, the State Elephant, the State Horse, etc. This is the day when the Goddess of Wealth, Sri Lakshmi too was worshipped by the ruler and the *Chandi Homam*, the great sacrifice in honour of Chandi, was performed. At the end of the ceremony, the ruler took off the *Kankana*, the silken thread, on his right wrist.

On the tenth or the *Vijayadasami* day, the royal procession started from the palace with the Maharaja as its focal point. He sat on the *howdah* of the richly decorated elephant and the procession commenced with a 21-gun-salute. It moved slowly through the thronging crowd. It took almost three hours for the procession to reach the Bannimantap. There the Maharaja reviewed the assembled troops and offered puja to the Sami tree. As darkness fell, the torch-light parade was a sight to watch. The Sami tree represents Shakti, the chief attribute of Durga.

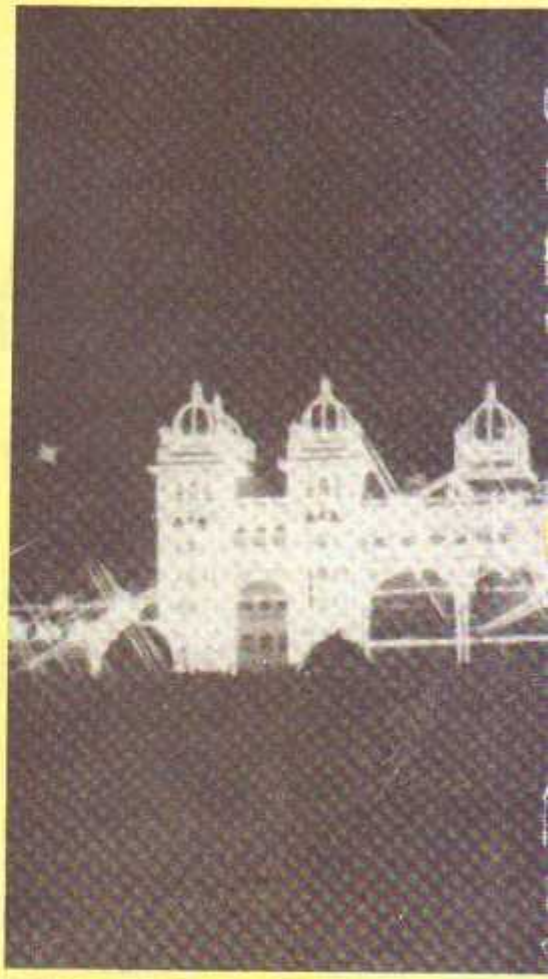
This concludes the celebrations. The whole city went festive during the period. It was a festival of the people and all the citizens, young and old, looked forward to it. It was an occasion for them to pray to their presiding goddess, Chamundeswari, for their welfare and to show respect to the Maharaja.

The Dusserah procession has been painted by Shri Y.Nagaraju on the Kalyan Mantap Walls, quite an ambitious undertaking when one realises that most of the people in that vast Canvas came for actual sittings. Perhaps this is the only complete and authentic reproduction left of the

Image of Mahishasura

The unique monolith: Nandi midway the hill

The procession starts from the shrine of the presiding Deity



THE CHAMUNDI HILLS

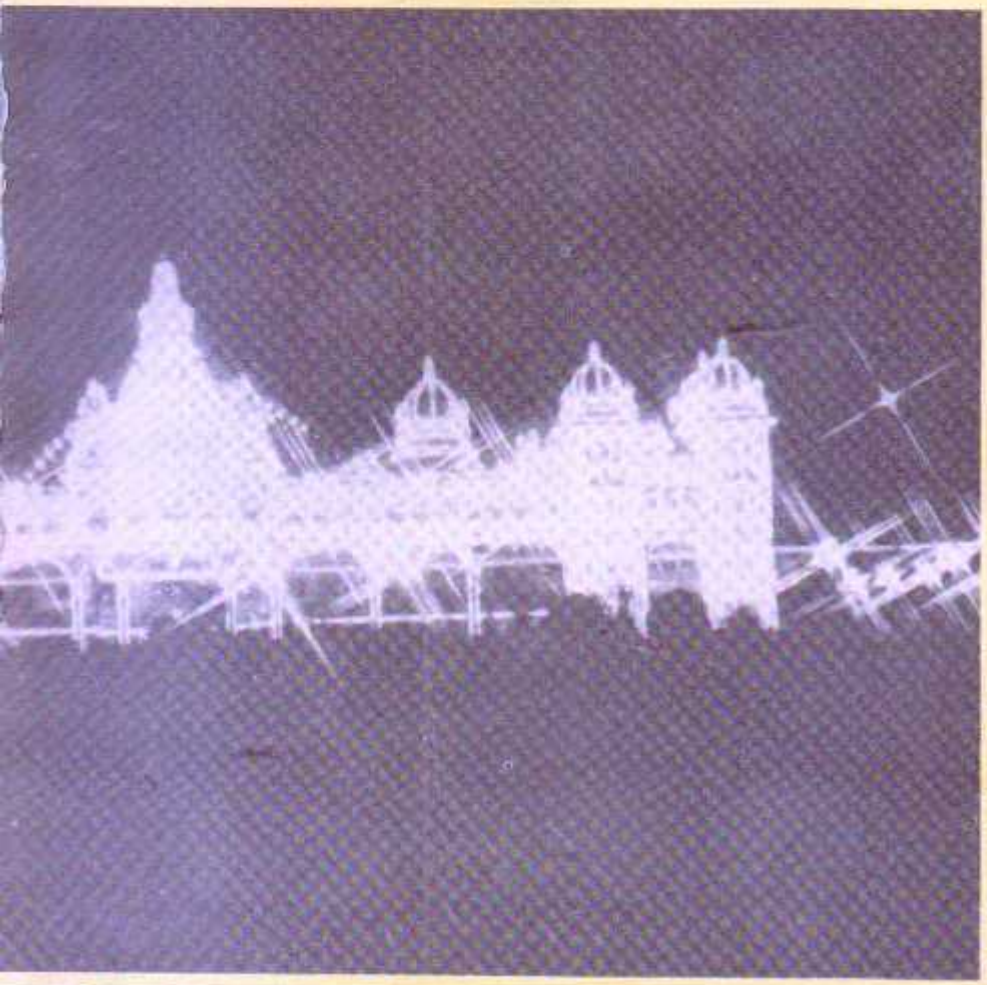
The Chamundi Hills stand two miles south-east of the city, rising to a height of 3,489 feet above the sea level. A flight of stone-steps constructed during the reign of Maharaja Mummadi Shri Krishnaraja Wodeyar leads to the top of the hill. Dodda Devaraja Wodeyar constructed the thousand stone-steps in A.D. 1659.

The city got its name Mahishuru, from Mahishasura, the buffalo-demon, who was vanquished by Durga. She dwells on the hill in the form of Goddess Chamunda. The Chamundeswari temple is one of the richest in the region. The complex contains a number of temples and monasteries. Today there are fine metalled roads leading to the temple. The Wodeyars bestowed numerous gifts on the institution. In 1573, Chamaraja Wodeyar IV, while worshipping there, escaped from being struck by lightning. Krishnaraja Wodeyar III built a gopura and gave a gold jewel, called the "Nakshtramalike", which had thirty Sanskrit verses inscribed on it. There are statues of this king and his consorts in the temple.

After two thirds of the way up is the figure of Nandi, the holy bull, cut out of a solid rock. The height of the figure is about 16 feet. It is gigantic in size, correct in proportion and highly impressive. This was installed by Dodda Devaraja Wodeyar in A.D.1664. Adorned with bells and jewels of stone, this monolithic bull is one of the finest examples of sculptures of the period.

On the top of the hill is a giant figure of Mahishasura. He is holding a sword and a snake.

The oldest structure, however, is the temple of Mahabaleshvara, also on the Chamundi Hills. Two epigraphs found in the precincts of the said temple go back to A.D. 950 and 1128. One of the inscriptions says that this sacred spot was known as Mobbelatirtha. This shows that more than 1000 years ago the hill was a sacred spot and Mobbela was a reference to probably Mahabala. The latter one states that Hoysala Vishnuvardhana donated gifts to the temple. The temple has undergone several renovations through the ages.

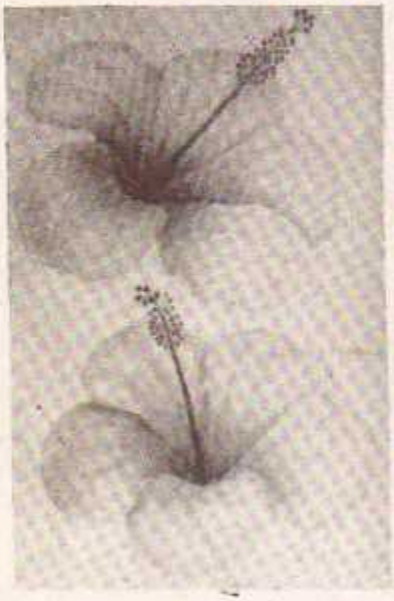


The palace at night during the festival

historic procession.

With the merger of the former Princely State with the Indian Union, the festival has acquired a rather secular tone. The city still goes festive and busy, but the activities have become more cultural, social and commercial, with lots of fun and frolic, than religious. The tradition of the procession is retained, with the image of Chamundeswari carried in the *howdah* on elephant back. It has now acquired a national character involving the government. Another development for which the government is to be congratulated is sports. Gone are the days when the sports were confined to wrestling in the presence of the Maharaja in the palace. Now we witness thousands of youngsters competing in several items like football, hockey, tennis and athletics.

The last Maharaja, His Highness Shri Jayachamarajendra Wodeyar, a great scholar and popular ruler, died with a dream of turning his palace into a museum and cultural centre. The Archaeological Department of the Karnataka State is trying to fulfil this dream.



JABA OR RED HIBISCUS

OFFERINGS FOR THE MOTHER GODDESS

by Richard Pearson

WHAT is tradition but the ordered expression, accepted over generations, of some truth of the spirit of the land. Culture, on the other hand, I believe, is a more definite expression through dance, drama, music, costume, cuisine and that subtle yet forceful instrument—language. Culture may be picked up, copied, learnt; whereas I feel that tradition is absorbed over years of contact or exposure.

To take an everyday example, the tying of mango leaves above the entrance of a new home or for the opening of a special event is something common in the South. With this custom has developed an automatic reverence for the Mango Tree which of course gives us its delicious fruit too. Even small saplings of Mango when growing spontaneously near large trees, would not usually be uprooted by villagers.

We are losing contact with tradition in its deeper sense: a hectic life spent in busy cities and above all the rapidity of existence are cutting us off from the natural contact with Mother Nature around us; We must keep time for true leisure which, I believe, is simply time spent to reunite Nature and Spirit.

* * *

This month we are going to meet an old familiar plant—the Common Red Hibiscus, *Jaba*. There are also many other Indian varieties of Hibiscus with different colours, both single and double, and even Hawaian varieties, now found growing everywhere. Besides, there are varieties of Hibiscus growing in the hills with white or mauve-lilac flowers. These varieties come from Persia and the Middle East. The Hawaian Hibiscus are recognisable by their larger flowers and leaves. The 'Syrian' Hibiscus have Hollyhock-like flowers and smaller leaves.

But the Common Red Hibiscus is still a strong favourite in gardens and temples; it has a striking red colour and numerous flowers blossom on the same plant throughout the year.

This plant is originally from China. Hence the name Chinese Shoe-plant (Botanical Name: *Hibiscus rosa sinensis)*, but it must have been brought over a long time ago since it is now a familiar plant all over the country and has recognised Sanskrit names like *Rudra pushpam* and *Japa* or *Jaba*.

The name Shoe-plant was a mystery to me until I learnt to my dismay that an old use in China was to crush the flowers to blacken leather and polish shoes. It is even used here as a tonic for the hair, for keeping it black and silky. In fact when the petals are bruised a violet black mark appears.

Let us have a closer look at this common flower. Notice the lustre of the petals as they catch the light of the sun. When we hold it near enough, we see that it has indeed a powerful "presence". Have you noticed the velvety red stigmas at the top of the flower? They give you the impression of a flower within a flower. These five little balls are borne by a long slender stalk that passes through the tube bearing the bright yellow pollen which bursts out of the numerous anthers. Some varieties of this flower have centres which are really so powerful they simply draw your attention towards a concentrated deep focal point which is the centre.

Flowers too have their own energy patterns, certain flowers have little energy value by themselves; they seem to exist more as a group; this flower is an absolute separate dynamo of power, it draws you in from the edge of the petals to the centre and brings you out again into a new dimension!

What is also unique is the fact that the flower can, when plucked, remain quite fresh all day without being kept in water. It is in fact averse to water. Drops of water sprinkled on the petals tend to remain and leave permanent blue-black spots on the firm yet delicate surface. Unfortunately the red flowered Hibiscus remains only for a day, though one white variety keeps its flowers for two, if not three days. It is still a mystery to me how the White Hibiscus is more lasting than the red one since usually it is the red coloured variety of any particular flower that is hardiest.

The flowers open with the sunlight and usually close at dusk. You will notice however that the pollen emerges from the anthers about an hour or so after the flower has opened. If you pluck a mature bud before it is due to bloom and leave it in water, it will open faithfully the next day—but it will be about half its normal size!

The red flowered Hibiscus rarely develops fruit and seeds. There are other coloured Hibiscus which do give fruits when pollinated. The dry pod resembles that of Ladies-finger, but is much shorter. If the seeds are germinated, plants grow up and several of them bear *red* flowers. Besides, even on other Hibiscus plants with double flowers or colours other than red, one occasionally sees a single red flower appear. All this seems to indicate that the red flowered type is the original forerunner of other kinds of Hibiscus that came later.

Since the flower is a symbol of power it is commonly used for worship. In Bengal it seems no worship of Goddess Kali is complete without this flower. Sri Ramakrishna is said to have collected red flowers from a plant bearing only white flowers. Such was his intense aspiration and flaming love for Mother Kali that even the flowers changed colour so as to be offered before the Divine Mother!

If you grow Hibiscus in your garden you will notice too that it is very sensitive and responds with a speed that staggers the thought and surprises the feelings! How often will you see it reflect your aspiration, by flowering on special days for instance.

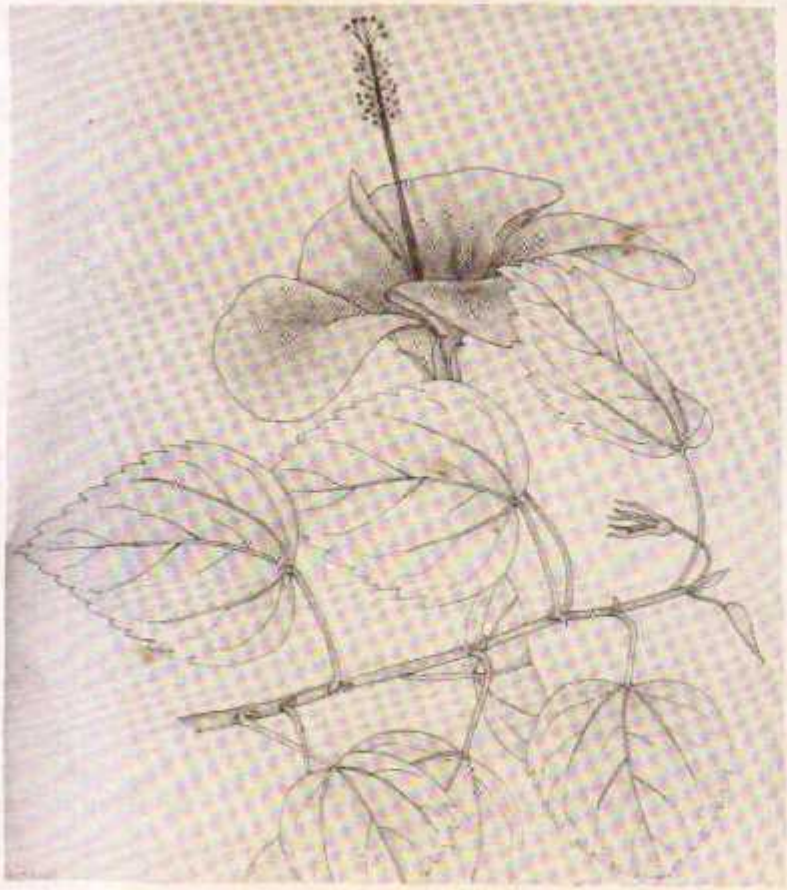
The Hibiscus group as a whole are well-known for the fibres given by the bark. That is why it is always advisable to cut a stem and not try to break it off, since the bark is very resistent.

The plant is also medicinally useful. The fresh flowers are soaked in hot water and the decoction is given as a soothing or cooling drink in case of fevers or for mucus conjestion in the chest. They may also be put in syrup and lemon juice and left in the sun. The liquid extract is a beautiful red colour. Paste of the fresh flowers may be applied to boils and swellings. In China and the Philippines the flowers are eaten raw or pickled for they contain a high percentage of phosphorus besides a good quantity of musilage. The dye from the flowers is used for colouring hair, eye-brows, food and liquor.

The leaves are used to make a decoction which is both soothing and mildly laxative. Externally the decoction is rubbed on the body during fever. The leaves may also be used as fodder and contain a good amount of carotene.

In Mysore certain diseases of cattle are treated with the roots of the Hibiscus plant. The fresh root is said to have a sweet sour taste and a decoction of the root, after its bark is removed, is used as a remedy for cough.

To conclude, we have a lot to learn and absorb from the Common Red Hibiscus. And in days to come I feel that the different varieties of Hibiscus will come to occupy a place of honour comparable to that given to Roses and Orchids so as to cleanse and chasten our mental and emotive 'atmosphere' and add another aesthetic touch to our parks and gardens. 卐



Sketches by Bokul C. Photograph by Gangaram Malwade

A typical mountain scene—it is still unspoilt

A village elder with an axe on his shoulder

An old Juang woman

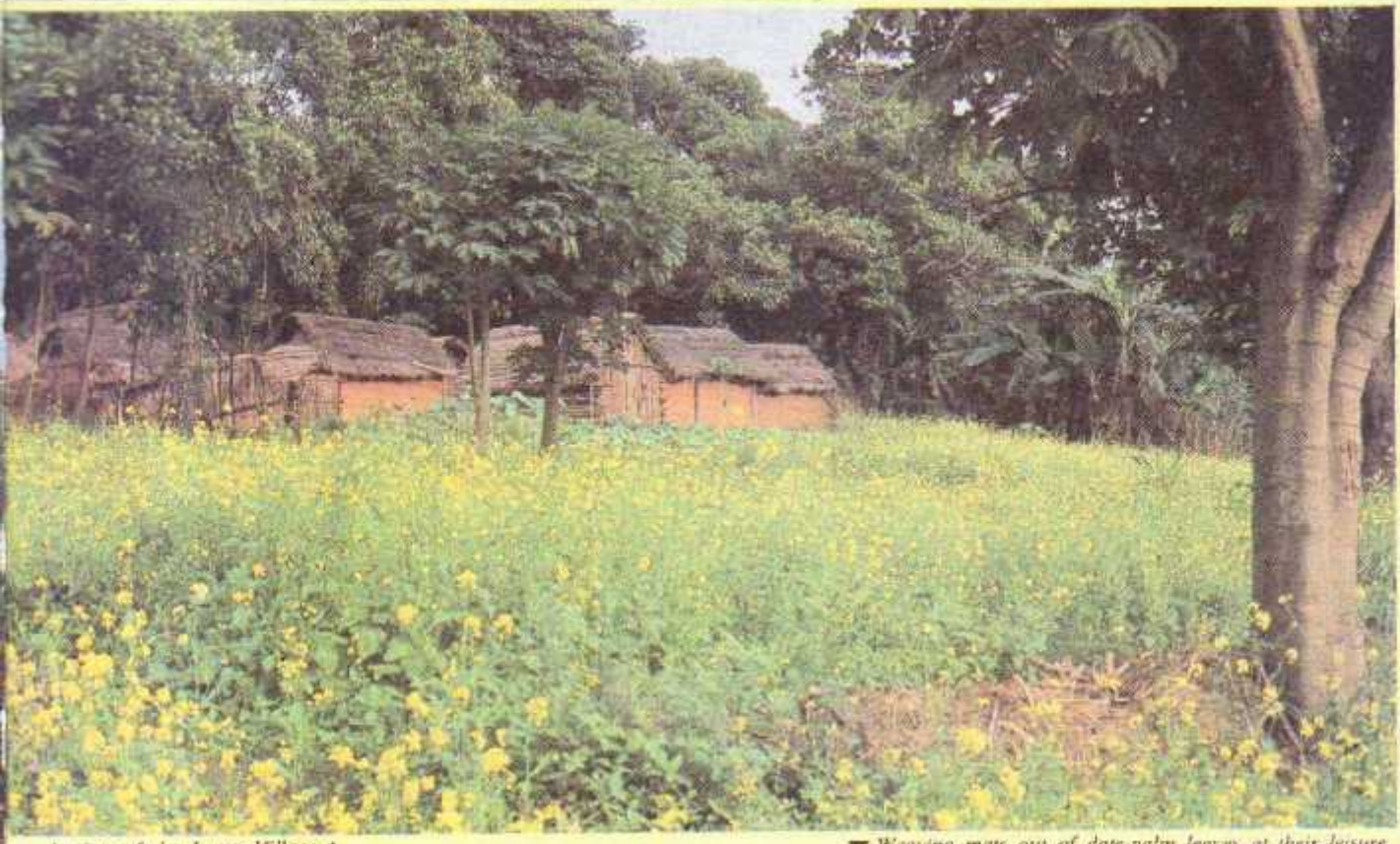
SHORT statured and lean, the Juang ('Man' in this tribal language), have the usual strong and agile bodies of hill tribes, with projecting cheek and jaw bones that make their faces broad and square, noses somewhat flat and broad at the root, eyes well-formed and attractive though not deep set, with hair black and straight, and a complexion varying from rich brown to

More than a mere rural calm—a sense of contentment still pervades their hamlets.

TUCKED AWAY IN REMOTENESS

THE JUANGS

by K.V. Jayaram



A view of the Juang Village ▲

▼ Weaving mats out of date-palm leaves at their leisure

black. They possess a quiet pride born of a religious belief that they are racially superior to all other human tribes. They understand Oriya but speak it in its pidgin form called Juang, a dialect that is grouped as Mundari.

The birthplace of this once leaf-wearing aborigines is Gonasika, in Keonjhar district of Orissa. In olden days, according to legends the infants of the tribe were taken away for annual sacrifice to a deity. The first born of every Juang family thus became prey to this ritual. Many of them fled to the forests and hills of neighbouring Pal-lahara and Dhenkanal. A second wave migrated there during the Bhuyan rebellion in 1861, when the Juangs naturally, supported some of the Bhuyans against the Raja. A third reason was the tribal ostracism the members would face when they violated certain community taboos.

Due to the comparative isolation that the Keonjhar hills provide, those of this tribe still here have retained much of their original ways unlike the immigrants in Pal-lahara and Dhenkanal. The Juangs trace their roots to a mythical couple, Rusi and Rusiani, created by the Sun-god—*Dharma Devata* along with the Earth. They lived at Rusitnagar, a hillock near Gonasika, while the rest of the world was not firm enough for habitation. The *Devata* realised that the only way to make the earth firm was to sprinkle the blood of Rusi's child. Rusi reluctantly agreed to lure his son to a spot where a tiger was to kill him, when he would be bathing without his bow and arrows to defend himself. The plan materialised. The tiger then dragged the sacrificial body all over the earth solidifying it. Another legend is that the Juangs were born from seven sons and daughters of Rusi, a sage, and a demon girl who fell in love with him and married him *Dharma Devata* advised Rusi to slaughter Kapila the cow and sprinkle its blood on the earth which was still floating and so not stable enough for habitation. But Rusi could not desist eating the sacrificed cow and burying its head. From the nostrils of the stealthily buried cow-head sprang the sacred river Baitarini; then the Juangs lost the mystic strength of their word and willpower, their wishes no longer came true; their forests depleted of wild game, fruits, roots and tubers; hunger and poverty came to stay.

A typical Juang village of Keonjhar is approached by a tortuous and narrow path along the higher slopes of hills and forests. The huts are partly hidden under ever-hanging branches of mango and jackfruit trees. Village is their largest corporate group, with formally recognised territory, comprising uncultivated *Toila* land and a forest. The average population is 20 to 30 families, 100 to 150 people, a uni-clan settlement. But the Juangs are not permanent dwellers, as it is not considered auspicious to live long in one place. Though the main reason seems to be the method of farming they still employ—slash and burn pattern of shifting cultivation—there are other reasons: shortage of cultivable land, frequent deaths, pestilence, fires, crop failures, sorcery and witchcraft leading to quarrels, and sheer monotony of life.

When the site for a new settlement is selected, the *Nagam*, the priest (*Naigam* in Sanskrit means one who interprets the scriptures) first clears a plot of land in the proposed site, plasters it with cowdung and water, propitiates forest and ancestral deities and spirits offering them rice and a rooster, and leaves these offerings there for a night, in a hole dug for them. If the cock is alive next morning the site is auspicious. Another way is by placing three piles of three grains of raw rice one above the other two, in each pile; the three represent the health of the village, that of their cattle and the future harvest. The piles are covered first with a brass grain-measure then a basket and finally a larger basket; the baskets are sealed with cowdung against insects. If the next morning they are found intact, the site is good. Predictions by a man in trance is a third method of divination, but rarely resorted to.

The site is cleared in the first two months of the year after harvest. On an auspicious day the *Nagam* installs the sacred pillars: first for his own house, then for that of the *Padhan*, the headman, and lastly for the rest. The houses are also built in this order, all helping one another. In the centre comes up the *Majang*, used chiefly as dormitory for the unmarried boys and girls, and naturally raised by them. When all this is done, the *Nagam* installs the sacred monolith of the village deity, *Gramsiri*, in front of the *Majang*. House-warming then follows for all together.

The typical house is a cubical 15 by 8 feet up to 30 by 10 feet for a family of three or four. The walls are made of wooden poles vertically juxtaposed and plastered with a doughy mixture of cowdung and mud, leaving only a small low entrance. The roof is thatched with wild grass. Cattle sheds are built close to the sleeping room, pigs and goats are kept in a wooden stockade. Functionally, the house has three areas: *Daala*, storeroom on a raised wooden platform, facing it the hearth, *Ukusang*, used as kitchen etc. and in between is *Kolang*, a small partitioned area used as living and bedroom, where a few mats and wooden blocks for pillows are the only furnishings.

Household goods and appliances are: a few cooking pots, earthen jars and dried gourds, aluminium or brass plates and vessels, a few bamboo baskets, a pair of carrying poles with strings, four or five axes of different sizes, two or three sickles, a plough, a yoke, some hoes, sticks for digging roots and tubers, a pestle, a stone for grinding, bows and arrows and a few traps and fishing rods.

As semi-nomads the Juangs subsisted on fruits, roots and tubers; and even now, due to

THE DAY OF DEVIATION

The year 1871 was a bad one for the tribal people. In central India British officials were forcing the Baigas to commit the sin of lacerating the breasts of Mother Earth with the plough, thus throwing them into a psychological confusion from which they have never fully recovered. In Orissa other officials were persuading the Juangs to change their custom. A meeting was held and some two thousand pieces of cloth were distributed, after which the leaves were gathered in a heap and burnt. 'Persuasion' continued and a majority of Juangs took to putting on filthy rags instead of the beautiful and hygienic leaf-dress.

The futility of introducing the outward garb of civilization without doing anything to insuil its spirit is seen in the effect this had on the Juangs, who still look back to the day when the sacred leaves were burnt as a conquered nation might recall the day of its defeat.

Since that time, the Juangs say, Sat—the spirit of truth and religion; the power to live safely in a world of hostile magic—has left the tribe. Tigers attack the cattle with impunity and the offended earth gives but a scanty crop.

This may seem odd today but to force improvement on very simple people without at the same time having an adequate programme of development to make their lives fuller, richer and happier can be disastrous and I was deeply disturbed by what I saw in the Juang hills and wrote strongly about it.

The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin

THE BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE

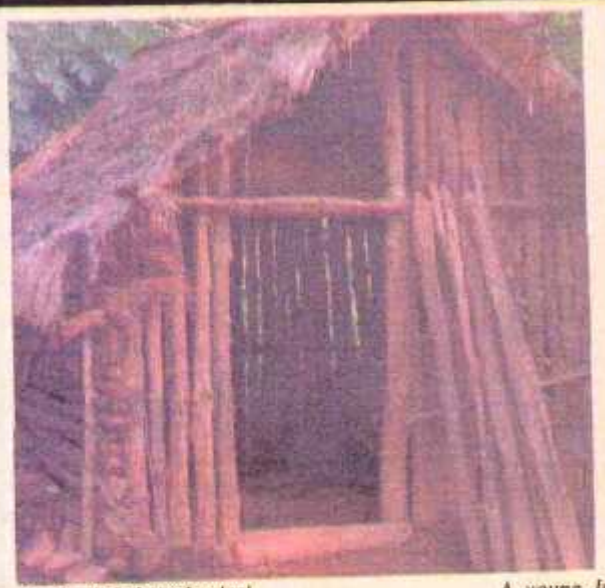
Two things about the Juangs stirred me very deeply. One was their poverty, the other their grace and beauty as displayed in their 'animal ballet'. To see a typical Juang village one had to go to the highest uplands of Keonjhar. Here were some of the most picturesque hamlets in peninsular India, comparable only to the enchanting Bondo villages of the Koraput Hills. Each village stood self-contained within a large fence in a site chosen not only for convenience but also for beauty. The houses, little huts of mud with red walls, were either in a huddle on top of one another or neatly arranged in narrow streets. Near-by were well-kept sheds for goats and cattle. In the centre of the village was an open space used for a dancing-ground in front of the often imposing village dormitory or club, the Darbar, where the unmarried youths slept and the elders assembled on all important occasions. The people were comparatively prosperous.

The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin

their slash and burn pattern of shifting cultivation, their settlements cannot be large. In the small family plot are grown maize, mustard, tobacco and chillies. Cash crops like Ragi, mustard and such oilseeds are bartered for rice which, though they consider it their ideal food, is scarce due to uncertain rainfall and ravages of wild animals. Fruits and mushrooms with roots and edible flora are common food in monsoon. All meats, except those of bear, snake, tiger and vulture are welcome. Poultry, goats and pigs are used in sacrificial rituals and for guests. Surplus meat is stored after smoking or drying in the sun. Rice is boiled into a gruel and drunk, items made from cereals grown in their fields, and vegetables like pumpkin, gourd and greens boiled with a little turmeric paste, salt and mustard are the dishes. Juangs take two meals daily. Cakes are made for special occasions from maize flour and mango kernel.

Drunkenness is their bane. *Mohua* liquor, considered sacred, perhaps due to its medicinal effects, is used for rituals and festivities. *Khajuri*, the date-palm liquor, is consumed three to four times daily as beverage and for entertaining guests. Liquor is especially used to mitigate quarrels and disputes. Rice-beer, maize and cereal liquor, toddy from date and sago trees, and of course tobacco smoked or chewed with lime—are the needs and luxuries.

Illnesses and diseases are treated in the primitive fashion by sorcerers and not even herbs or other oral medicines are known. The Juangs are animists; for them spirits reside in every corner and cranny of the hostile nature that surrounds them and deserve to be held in awe, in addition to the supreme being, *Dharma Devata*, and the other important deity *Basumata*, earth. Then there is the *Gramsiri*, the village god, and *Thanpati*, the spirit of the region. There are two deities of drums, *Bhima Badma* and his consort *Kanchuni*



A stockaded cattle shed

A young Juang woman wearing her single-piece dress, with her children

A Juang belle in her traditional attire

who live inside the big drums. Ancestral spirits live inside the house in the store area, and if disgruntled, may kill cattle, damage crops and cause pestilence. Ancestral spirits must be specially consulted before finalising marriages. Deaths are attributed to sorcery, wrath of these deities or spirits.

Generally monogamous Juang code permits polygamy in case of a barren wife. Inter-clan marriage is taboo; between *Bandhu* or clans of relatives is ideal. The dormitory life provides scope for free mixing of boys and girls of *Bandhu* class and may result in a form of love marriage called *Mana Mani*. The form more widely practised, however, is *Digar Kania*, the marriage by capture, which is economical for the groom. The bride is dragged or lifted with her consent from the dancing ground, bathing ghat, jungle or on her way to the market or a fair. The ceremony takes place in the bride's village after the bride value is paid: 5 to 6 measures of paddy and rice, a chicken, five to six pieces of cloth for the bride's relatives, a few bottles of liquor and a small amount of cash.

A new born is christened within three to four months. Names of ancestors are commonly preferred but ones derived from names of trees, flowers and tubers, birds and animals and week days also are taken. The first hair-cutting of boys and the nose piercing of girls are done without any ritual; nor are there any puberty rites.

The dormitory or the *Majang* is the centre of social life. It houses all boys and girls after a certain age, till they are married. The village god is installed in the form of a monolith in its front. The village functionary, *Tandakar*, acts as guardian and adviser. Every age-group has clearly defined responsibilities and collectively must suffer any failure of duty by any one of them. Education consists of folklore, customs, *Changu* rhythms, manners and moral codes. Life-style is very democratic, the basic principle is participation and discipline tempered by a lot of fun, where dance and music are the main forms of activity. A sense of rhythm pervades all festivals and dances are built around the world of birds, animals or village life and myths. It is also the only record of their history and traditions. *Changu*, dance sessions, are thus the seed of their social life and records of their history and tradition.

Inmates of the *Majang* are free to pursue amorous activities but under the stern eye of the *Tandakar*, the warden who ensures that no moral code is trangressed. As a result, in spite of free mixing of boys and girls morality among them is very high.

In order to feed the boys and girls there is a plot of land marked out for the *Majang* and cultivated by the children themselves. In addition, after harvest small measures of paddy are collected from each family for feeding the visitors and widowers of the village who are accommodated here, since Juang houses are meant only for the immediate family. Married youths live separately.

It is also the meeting place for the community after the day's labours for gossip and recreation. It serves as the court-house of the village, and as the Panchayat premises. In case of major offences the fine is in kind—rice, goat, or liquor.

In spite of changes forced by circumstances the Juangs have clung to their traditions. Apparently the choice is for harmonious life in natural surroundings and simplicity. One feels that more than a mere rural calm, a sense of order, beauty, integrity and contentment pervades the air.

... and Zeus would have smiled
if he saw this Galaxy

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THE MAN WITH TWO LIVES

by Nolini Kanta Gupta

Yogi and scholar, Nolini Kanta Gupta recounts and interprets a story from the ***Yoga Vasistha.***

ONCE upon a time there lived on the banks of the holy Ganges a sadhu, an elderly saintly person. He had a hut and passed his time in sadhana, that is to say, in meditation and study of scriptures and bhajan at times. He was going out once a day to get alms from the villages for his daily food. He had a companion also who used to come and visit him from time to time and stay for a while. He was also a religious aspirant. One of their daily rites was to take a bath in the Ganges early in the morning. I suppose they used to do the Suryanamaskara and then after the little ceremony come back to the hut for other morning practices.

So one day they went to the Ganges as usual. They went down into the river and started their bath. The friend of the sadhu was also by the side and he took his usual dip in the water. But strange! what has happened? He does not find himself in the Ganges water nor anywhere near it. He was somewhere else, in the midst of a woodland scene and nearby a path or a road stretching out. He looked about and found, it was an unknown place and none was there. He looked at himself: he was a young man, not the oldish person that he was. He was confused and did not know what to do, where to go. All on a sudden he saw at the end of the path an elephant and a large number of people around. The elephant was moving forward, almost rushing towards him. He was terribly frightened, his limbs benumbed, he could not stir from the place. The elephant came straight to him, took him in its trunk and placed him quietly on its back. Oh! there was a jubilant cry and acclamation: Here is our King, here is our King, the people shouted. Our poor newly-made king was absolutely dumbfounded; he was taken to the royal palace and entertained and ceremoniously made the king of the kingdom. The custom of the royal family of the place was that on the death of the king, if there were no issue, the king would be chosen just in the way it was done now. The royal elephant was to be sent out and the first person it met and seized was to be their king. The last king had a daughter and so she was given in marriage to the new king. The new king gradually accepted and settled in his kingly life: he forgot all about the past, he remembered only that he was the king, he had a queen whom he loved, and a kingdom to rule. Indeed he proved himself a very capable ruler—he was very kind, very just and very strong also. And he brought peace and plenty into his country. When any of the neighbouring princes out of jealousy or rivalry tried to attack him, he was always ready to hit back, and he was always a victor in his battles, he would also win over his enemies by persuasion and by his diplomatic skill. His kingdom was prosperous, his people happy. In this way he ruled for many many years and his name spread abroad as a very great king.

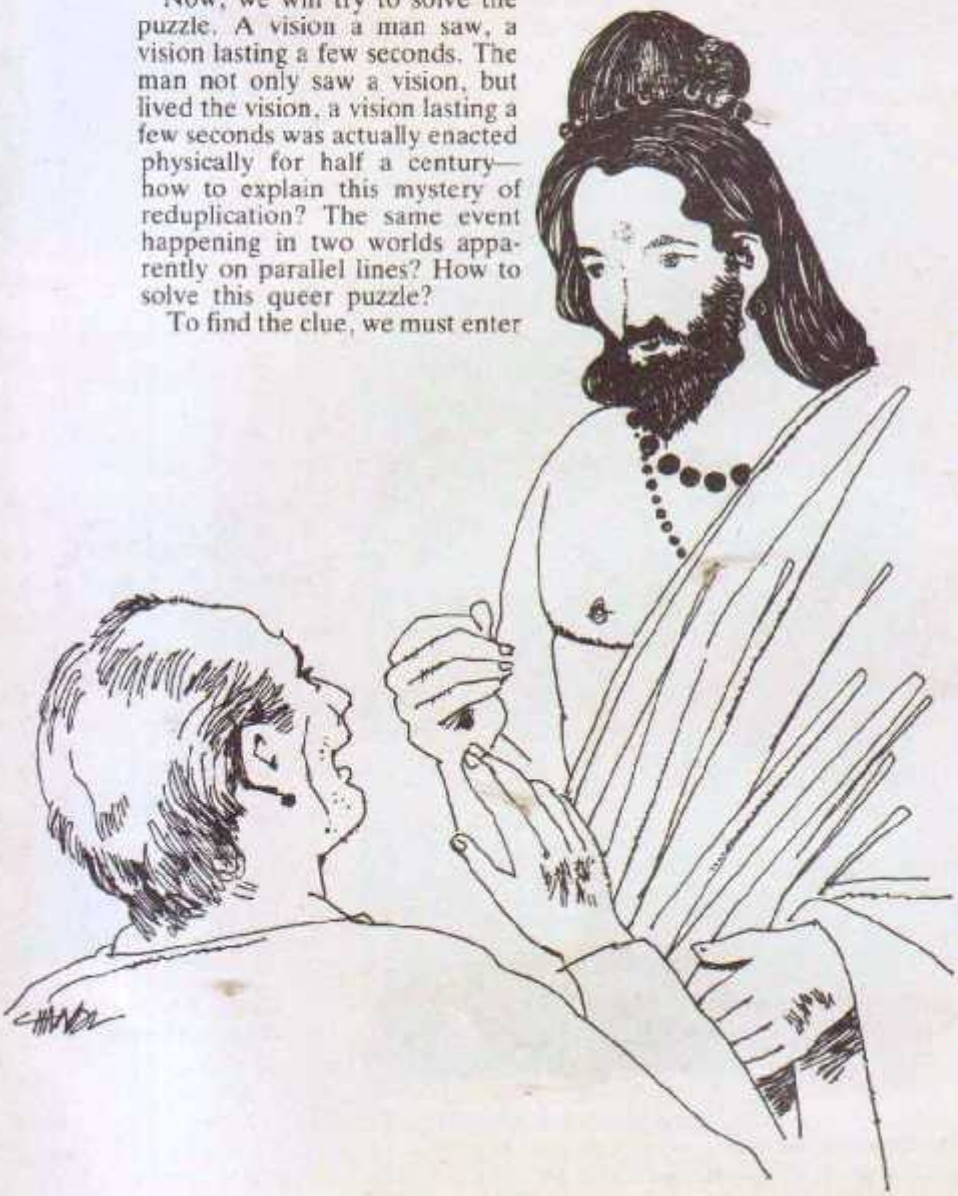
He became old and he said: I am old, I should retire, do penance and take to the hermit life. He had a son and he announced that the son should now be the ruling prince. He handed over the charge to the prince in the midst of jubilation and a big ceremony. Soon after, the king fell ill, he was now very very old, and the doctors could not do or did not do anything. So he passed away in peace and tranquillity, our dear old friend. He was taken to the burning ghat in a big procession and a huge concourse of people assembled to attend the ceremony. Everybody mourned: Oh! what a great king he was and what a kind king. In the end the ashes were gathered and thrown in the Ganges.

But what has happened? What is this? As the ashes were thrown into the Ganges, out from the water came the man who had dived into it for his bath along with his sadhu friend—the king, transformed, came back into his old self. He looked around, it was all familiar to him, the whole past flashed back in a moment. He was bewildered, he remembered he was taking his bath and dipped into the water. Was it all a dream, this long kingly life, a hallucination? He then turned to his friend who was by his side standing in the water and asked him how long he had been under water. His friend answered a little surprised, "Why? a few seconds only. You just dipped in and came out." Strange, very strange! So the two friends came back to the hut and there the late king told the whole story to his friend the sadhu. Both of them were discussing about the mystery trying to find out a sense—was it all a bizarre fantasy? At this time their attention was drawn to a man coming towards them, who looked like a tired traveller walking slowly dragging his legs and dusty and bedraggled. He came to them and sat down and said, "I am a traveller from a far country, I would like to have your hospitality and take rest." When he had rested and was refreshed, he said, "You know, I am coming from the famous country of that famous king who recently died. I just attended the grand funeral ceremony." The sadhu and his friend were naturally greatly interested and asked about the king. The

visitor narrated the story of the king, the same as I narrated to you. He also said, the king was made king but none knew from where and how he came there, but he was a great king and just passed away. Now the sadhu exclaimed, "Now look, he is the king." He, the king? How? So the whole story was repeated again. Then the traveller said, "How could it be? It was not a mere imagination! The king, the kingdom, all that? If you do not believe me, come with me, see the country where he ruled; his queen and his son the new king are all there still and they are building a mausoleum." All began to compare notes. It was a puzzle and bewilderment. This is the story.

Now, we will try to solve the puzzle. A vision a man saw, a vision lasting a few seconds. The man not only saw a vision, but lived the vision, a vision lasting a few seconds was actually enacted physically for half a century—how to explain this mystery of reduplication? The same event happening in two worlds apparently on parallel lines? How to solve this queer puzzle?

To find the clue, we must enter into a different plane of consciousness. We are familiar with our physical consciousness in contact with and dealing with physical things, material objects and happenings. We are familiar also with our mental consciousness dealing with thoughts and ideas and rational views and perceptions. Now there is a third mode of consciousness, we call it the occult consciousness, that takes us into a domain that is somewhat away from and behind these two other more superficial external worlds. Now whatever happens physically does not die out after the happening or disappear as a thing of the past. But it is recorded, a replica retained or enacted in a subtle world. Within this physical atmosphere of the earth there is as it were a subtle atmosphere—a magnetic tape, in modern language, which goes on reproducing whatever is going on in the other atmosphere of the earth. It is like the production of a film. So all the events that we observe as living phenomena upon the earth are there in the subtle world rolled up as in a microfilm. But the strangest part of the thing is that not only the present happenings are recorded, but the things of the future have also been recorded there as a kind of flashback—not only things that will happen but also have the chance or possibility of happening. All possibles, all possible lines of future history have been forestalled there in that realm. It is a huge cosmic museum or library as it were. But because of its massiveness and immensity it is not a confusion but an absolutely organised information centre kept in perfect order. The Mother once spoke of this occult cosmic library. In order to know anything of the past what an immense amount of trouble and labour our historians have to put forth, literally dig into the past, old writings, old inscriptions, fossils, all they have to ransack just for one bit of the past. And of that little bit also one could not be sure. But the Mother said, here is a ready-made library containing all the information, all absolutely authentic, for it is earth's self-recorded information. We only have to go into the library, take a ladder, mount up to the rack where the required record lies. We have to take out the microfilm, unroll it and see the whole story enacted before us. Naturally you must acquire the skill to enter into this domain, secure a pass from proper authorities—that also means an adventure.



Now, what happened to the man who had a dip in the Ganges, is that he suddenly came in contact with such an unrolling film and somehow got identified with the story and himself became its hero. The actual happening had taken half a century, but recorded in the microfilm of the occult consciousness it took only a few seconds to roll out.

I suppose this explanation will make the puzzle somewhat understandable to you.

Bougainvillaea

BONSAI

TREE IN A TEACUP

by Debranjan Chatterjee

Photographs : Norman Dowsett (Jr)

WHAT is bonsai? It is not as it is commonly believed, a tree turned dwarf or merely a plant grown in a shallow pot, although the Japanese word *bonsai* means just that,—"Bon" meaning a shallow container and "Sai" meaning a plant. Bonsai is an art worked with plants grown in a shallow pot to capture the moods of nature in a surprisingly limited space. It may give one the impression of a forest in trees no bigger than your table ruler. It is designed to express the beauty of nature by all kinds of phenomena imaginable. It may suggest for instance, a tree overhanging cliffs, or a tree swept by the wind. It may also suggest the struggle of a tree against the vagaries of nature which is rarely to be found among trees growing naturally in fields. In a sense bonsai can be compared with the Japanese Haiku, a miniature poem of seventeen syllables.

The Peepal

The Banyan

Aderium Obesum

Gulmohar

Oleander

Haiku expresses with a minimum of words a vast wealth of poetic creation. In this sense both bonsai and Haiku have something in common: a method of embracing much in little.

The art originated in China probably more than a thousand years ago. Big trees were trained to grow in shallow pots—in miniature shapes. The oldest record of bonsai in Japan is found in a Japanese scroll painting dating back to the 13th century. Like every other art this one also has

undergone several phases of development. The 19th century bonsai cultivators, for instance, took pleasure in cultivating grotesque and disproportionate oddities and the true sense of art was ignored. In recent years in Japan regular exhibitions are held where fine specimens of bonsai are collected from all parts of the country.

There are four important sections in a bonsai as in all plants: trunks, branches, leaves and rootage.

Trunks. The trunk constitutes the very basis of a tree. It is therefore the most important part of bonsai. At one time the bonsai-makers used to manipulate the growth of the trunk out of all proportions by making the trunk too small as compared to the height of the tree or they twisted the trunk unnaturally like a screw. What is required is a sense of balance and naturalness. The trunk of a good bonsai should taper gradually towards the top. A trunk which has been chopped off to reduce the height is unsuited for bonsai treatment.

Branches. Almost all trees have thick branches which divide at the top into a large network of dense twigs. These branches turn and twist in all directions. Bonsai requires a careful pruning of the branches from time to time so that the tree looks beautiful from all sides. Left to themselves the branches are liable to develop too thick a crown to be in harmony with the trunk.

Leaves. A healthy bonsai should have healthy leaves. In fact the colour of the leaves indicates the health of a tree. It is therefore important to give the plant plenty of sunlight and expose it to the open air. The bonsai are normally hardy plants and they are as a rule kept outdoors round the year. Only occasionally they are brought indoors for appreciation or decoration.

Rootage. A well-shaped rootage lends a special charm to bonsai, suggesting stability and age. The ideal rootage is usually found in a bonsai raised from the seedling in a pot. But with judicious care one can develop healthy rootage from a cutting also. While transplanting a bonsai care is taken to arrange the roots in waves in such a way that they are partly exposed above the soil.

Not all trees are suited for bonsai. Trees with very large flowers are considered unsuitable. Bonsai flowers are admired not for their size but for their elegance and rich colours and delicate fragrance. Similarly, trees bearing large fruit are also avoided. For bonsai one should choose a tree whose fruit, leaves and flowers will harmonise with its size.

Bonsai culture is the art of growing trees in trays containing no more soil than is absolutely necessary. It is an art that demands not only scientific observation but also much care and affection. It is almost a miracle that a miniature copy of a towering giant can be kept alive literally for centuries in a small pot. In Japan a bonsai of over 300 years of age is still alive. This has been possible due to religious and untiring efforts. There are five or six important factors in bonsai cultivation: soil, transplantation, pruning, manuring and prevention of disease and of harmful insects.

Soil. Normal garden soil may very well be used for bonsai. But this soil needs to be sieved at least three times through different size of sieves with meshes of 1.5 mm., 6 mm. and 12 mm. The soil is first sifted through a sieve with 1.5 mm. meshes so as to reject the too fine soil which may clog the drainage of the pot. The soil that remains in the sieve is then sifted through a sieve with 6 mm. meshes to collect the granular earth. Lastly, the remaining soil is passed through a sieve with 12 mm. meshes to collect the medium grains of earth. The large grains of earth that remain in the sieve is also collected. Thus we get three kinds of soil —of fine, medium and large grains. The large grained soil is put at the very bottom of the pot. The pot is then half filled with medium grains of earth and the tree is planted. Lastly, the soil consisting of small grains is placed at the top to give the container a pleasing look.

Transplantation. A small quantity of soil in a shallow container soon loses all its nourishing power. It becomes therefore necessary to change the soil to prevent the plant from suffering malnutrition. While transplanting the bonsai in the fresh soil it is also necessary to prune the unnecessary growth of hair-roots. If untrimmed, the hair-roots become too massive which ultimately prevent the absorption of fertilizers and even lift the soil above the rim of the pot.

Some bonsai are suited for spring and others for autumn transplantation. But generally, the best time for bonsai repotting is just when the plant awakes from its winter inactivity. It is risky to prune the roots before winter. Root pruning is done very judiciously: the young plants are root-pruned freely while the old ones only slightly. The foliage of a plant grows in proportion to the quantity of its roots.

Manuring. Needless to say that regular manuring is very important in bonsai cultivation because the plant has to thrive in a minimum quantity of soil. But too much manuring is likely to be harmful. Animal and vegetable manure of slow effect is preferable to chemical fertilizers. Oil cake, bone-dust and wood-ash are considered very efficacious.

Diseases and pests. Like all living things, bonsai is also affected by diseases and is often attacked by pests. It often suffers from fungus attacks. Spraying the plant with good fungicides can be helpful. One important rule to keep the bonsai healthy is to daily wash the leaves to prevent dust from accumulating on them. This can easily be done by regularly washing the plant with a small hand spray. If too badly affected by insects, insecticides may be sprayed on the leaves.

Finally, one must choose correct pots for bonsai. The loveliest bonsai will lose much of its beauty if planted in an unsuitable pot. The bonsai pots should never be of such colours and shapes as to divert one's attention from the plant to the container. On the contrary, the pot should help to emphasise the elegance of the bonsai. For this reason they should be of sober colours and complementary shapes.

MEETING P.G.WODEHOUSE

by P. Lal

"I never was interested in politics. I'm quite unable to work up any kind of belligerent feeling. Just as I'm about to feel belligerent about some country I meet a decent sort of chap. We go out together and lose any fighting thoughts or feelings." This is what P.G. Wodehouse said over the radio, in course of the five broadcasts he made in 1941, while held by the Germans. These few words excepting, his talks were non-political. But this observation was enough to infuriate his countrymen. It was perhaps natural at a bizarre time. Wodehouse should have continued to rot in a Nazi jail rather than come out of it and oblige his captors by agreeing to broadcast over their radio.

But time is the greatest healer. The anguish over Wodehouse's war-time conduct is a memory. He con-

tinues to make us smile and laugh and grin and smirk and simper ... and you can add more synonyms.

Prof. P. Lal, the well-known poet, essayist, editor and a visiting Professor to several American Universities met Wodehouse in the early sixties. This article is contained in his latest publication ***Personalities****, (Writers Workshop, 162/92, Lake Gardens, Calcutta-700 045).*

BEFORE I came to the meeting, which took place at his Long Island estate, a little bit of background material needs to be supplied.

On a sunny Sunday morning, July 21, 1940, the internment order for P.G. Wodehouse came from the German Kommandatur's office. The Germans had occupied the cathedral town of Le Touquet on May 22. While the German corporal waited, Wodehouse wondered what one needed to pack on his way to the prison camp. According to his biographer David Jasen, through whose kindness my meeting with the "Performing Flea" of English literature was arranged, Wodehouse hurriedly pulled out a suitcase and shoved in the following articles: pipes, tobacco, pencils, pads of paper, a pair of shoes, six pairs of socks, a razor, soap, underclothing, one pullover sweater, a couple of cardigans, Tennyson's poems, the Complete Works of Shakespeare, and half a pound of tea. Thrice-blessed Wodehouse, whom three realms obey, doth Shakespeare take with half a pound of tea.

In the great haste, he forgot to take his passport. Naturally. There was no Jeeves to help.

In the French prison, his name was entered in a large book —"Widehorse"—with the words "Crime ... Anglais" after it. The cell measured twelve feet by eight, and had a window and bed at the far end. After a week here, the internees were removed in cattle trucks to a prison camp in Liege in Belgium.

In his third broadcast over the German radio, Wodehouse explained what happened next. "It was as if one had got to a party too early. Everything was in confusion, particularly the arrangements for feeding us. These had been entrusted to one of those sketchy thinkers, the sort of man who goes about looking surprised when errors and omissions are pointed out to him, and saying, 'I never thought of that.' A dreamy, absent-minded chap, probably a poet, he had overlooked the fact that internees eat.

"He must have had a bad moment when we all streamed into the barracks square and lined up, licking our lips. Here, it suddenly must have struck him like a blow, were eight hundred men who were going to live mostly on soup, and while he rather thought he knew where to lay his hands on a little soup, if he hunted around a bit, he had completely forgotten that you have to have something to put the stuff in.

'Golly, yes,' he said, when this was drawn to his attention. 'I see what you mean. One ought to have bowls or something, oughtn't one? I suppose they couldn't just go to the cauldrons and lap?'

"No, we couldn't just go to the cauldrons and lap. For one thing, we would burn our tongues, and for another the quick swallowers would get more than their fair share. It was due to our own resourcefulness that the problem was finally solved. At the back of the barrack yard there was an enormous rubbish heap into which Belgian soldiers through the ages had been dumping old mess tins, cups, with bits chipped off them, bottles, kettles, and containers for motor oil. We dug these out, gave them a wash and brush up, and there we were.

"I had the good fortune to secure one of the motor oil containers. It added to the taste of soup just that little something which the others hadn't got."

This is not the place to go into the furore which Wodehouse's broadcasts created in England. All because he had said something to the effect that he was "quite unable to work up any kind of belligerent feeling about this war." His books were banned from the public libraries. In 1945 George Orwell wrote an impassioned defence of Wodehouse, trying to show how he was not really a quisling, that the Germans did not really censor his broadcasts, but relied on his reputation as a gentle jester of the English Establishment to do whatever propaganda they thought was sufficient for their purposes.

The immediate reactions were—in such cases they always are—violent. William Conner came out with a virulent condemnation on the B.B.C. Home Service at the request of the Minister of Information, Duff Cooper :

"Do you know Dulwich, Mr. Wodehouse? Of course you do. It is in the suburbs of London where you went to school. It was there one night not very long ago, Mr. Wodehouse, and something happened that might interest you, who feel so calm and imperturbable about this war."

"It was a peaceful night. Soft and gentle until the quiet was splintered as a thousand pounds of explosive hit the ground with appalling violence."

"It was soon silent again. Near me under five, fifteen, fifty tons of rubble lay human beings.

"Most of them dead. Some of them alive. A few of them dying.

"Your countrymen, Mr. Wodehouse...

"You should have been there, Mr. Wodehouse—with your impartiality, your reasonableness and perhaps even one of your famous little jokes.

"Goodnight."

"And goodnight to you, Mr. Pelham... Grenville... Wodehouse."

"It was an act of folly," remarked Malcolm Muggeridge ab-

out Wodehouse's political naivete later. "But it was a product of his peculiar temperament. It wasn't that he was other-worldly, or unworldly, so much as that he was a-worldly; a born neutral in relation to the conflicts, individual and collective, which afflict mankind."

He is now 84. I met him two years ago. He was still the charming, a-worldly, pipe-puffing, tea-at-four English gentleman. He became an American citizen on December 16, 1955. He hasn't lived in England since 1934, and the last time he was there was in 1939 when Oxford University awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature. "You can't cross old trails... After all, I've lived over here for many years now," he said in 1955. "I just wanted to make it official. It's like being asked to join a very good club."

But it's a funny, isolated club in Remsenburg, Long Island, far from crowds and urban confusion, nestling in acres and acres of property that Wodehouse acquired with his oodles of royalties from books and plays (he has written musicals in collaboration with Guy Bolton, who lives almost next door, on another, slightly less sprawling estate). "The garden," remarks David Jasen in a classic understatement, "especially in the summer, is a picturesque place for meditation." It is more wood than garden, and as our car came up the driveway to his house, I saw him in the distance, a remarkably trim figure against a backdrop of elms. He was returning after taking his two dogs, handsome spaniels, for a walk.

He wore a worsted coat with small black-and-white checks, light brown trousers, and striped grey-and-brown tie. He was puffing contentedly at his pipe—I never saw him desert that all through the afternoon—and his pink cheeks, pink bald head and ears literally glowed affability. Jasen had briefed me on certain don'ts; I mustn't ask for autographs (we were carrying a load of Jeeves books with us in the

hope that he would autograph them for the eternal delectation of me and my familial brood of Wodehouse fans).

From the way his face radiated cherubic happiness, I couldn't imagine what ice there was to break.

Gems from Wodehouse

Chumps always make the best husbands. When you marry, Sally, grab a chump. Tap his forehead first, and if it rings solid, don't hesitate. All the unhappy marriages come from the husbands having brains. What good are brains to a man? They only unsettle him.

—*The Adventures of Sally.*

'Alf Todd,' said Ukridge, soaring to an impressive burst of imagery, 'has about as much chance as a one-armed blind man in a dark room trying to shove a pound of melted butter into a wild cat's left ear with a red-hot needle.'

—*Ukridge.*

He felt like a man who, chasing rainbows, has had one of them suddenly turn and bite him in the leg.

—*Wodehouse at Work.*

He spoke with a certain what-is-it in his voice, and I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being gruntled.

—*The Code of the Woosters.*

It was one of those parties where you cough twice before you speak, and then decide not to say it after all.

He was aware he had many Indian readers. "I wonder why," he mused. I quoted Muggeridge's witticism about the last Englishman left in the world being an Indian, but I don't think it registered.

"Quite extraordinary," he said, while a very genteel housekeeper brought tea for us, "you know, I receive clippings from Indians who write about me in College magazines and newspapers... There was one by an Englishman which was very good and which appeared in one of your illustrated journals." He was referring to the excellent appreciation by Verrier Elwin titled "Bertie Wooster: Dark Blue" which has since appeared in a collection of Elwin's essays called *Motley*.

"What do you people find in me?" he asked. I mumbled something about style, the fascination of a remote set-up, and the inexplicable appeal of Bertie Wooster for all undergrades and the magnetism of Jeeves for all mysoginists suffering from inferiority complexes generated by the conspicuous absence of superior attendants in their homes.

This didn't register also, and I saw Jasen glance at me worriedly.

"Have a scone," Wodehouse offered, and Jasen quickly suggested—after we had finished tea—a walk through the woods.

Wodehouse was delighted. So delighted, in fact, that he posed for photographs. Jasen had warned me that he loathed cameras and was very touchy about shutter-happy visitors. He also inscribed the books, looking very pleased that so many hard covers had been brought and saying as much. We hadn't the heart, as we drove away, to tell him that they were part of remaindered stock selling at 30 cents each in most New York bookshops.

He would not know. He hasn't once been to New York City—a hundred miles to the west—since he settled in Remsenburg in 1955.

BIRD STILL ON A SOARING ROCK

by Ashok Vajpeyi

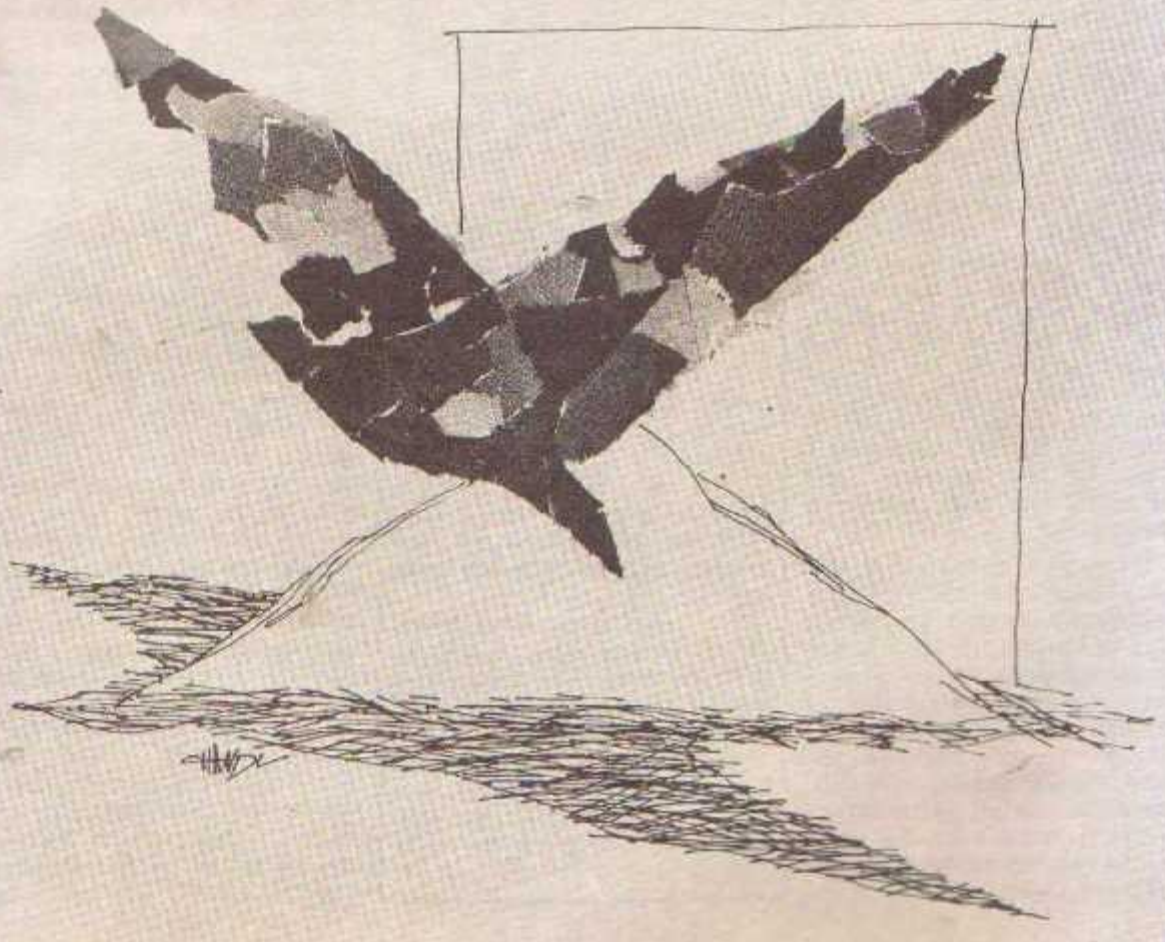
The rock wants to fly
like the bird
In the sky
across the valley
and see the frolic
and touch the world
over there.

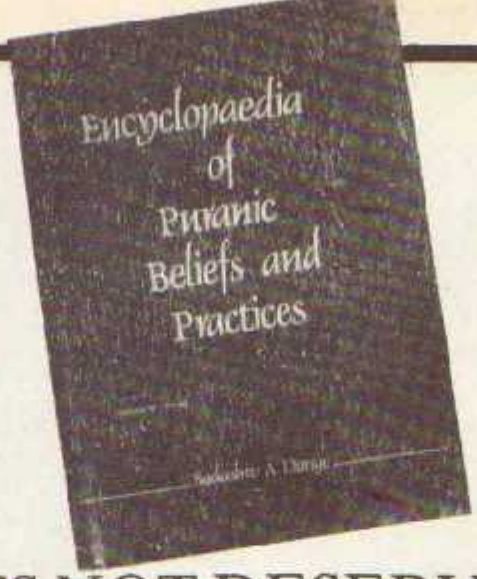
But the bird doesn't want
to change places
with the rock and
stay still for centuries
gazing at the blue sky
and other rocks.

And yet the bird is
still
like the rock.

The rock is soaring
like the bird.

A bird in flight
is and is not
sitting still
on the rock.





GIFTS NOT DESERVED CAN BE DANGEROUS

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF PURANIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES (Five Volumes) by Sadashiv Ambadas Dange. Navrang, R-B 7 Inderpuri, New Delhi-12. Each volume Rs .325.00

If some British scholars were the pioneers in compiling explanations of ancient Indian Puranic subjects, in recent times Indians have taken over this task. There have been quite a number of encyclopaedias and dictionaries of Indian culture and mythology.

The author-compiler of the work under review, the former Bhandarkar Professor of Sanskrit, Bombay University, has done a job with a difference. Culled from the eighteen main Puranas, here is a comprehensive and authentic presentation of basic beliefs and rituals which have governed the mainstream of Indian life for thousands of years.

In describing the practices, the compiler cites the appropriate passages from the ancient texts and that makes his discussion more substantial. Some of the topics are discussed elaborately. For example, the Gifts (*Dana*) in Vol.11. The gradations of the gifts tell us a lot about the ideals and needs of a bygone age. Also, the principles to be remembered in giving the gifts are of great sociological importance: "*Dana* is enjoined to be given only to persons that deserve it. It is said that *dana* given to one who is not deserving is like giving the daily food meant for a cow to a donkey. (*Skandha Purana*) If a person not deserving *dana* accepts it, he gets ruined."

It would seem there had developed a specific discipline for giving *dana*. The *Agni Purana* fixes different months for giving different kinds of *dana*. Most of the *danas* were to be given at the completion of a certain vow (*Vrata*), or in memory of the departed as a part of funeral rites and at the auspicious planetary situations.

The work should be a source of inspiration and starting point for research in many ancient institutions. The *Agni Purana* extolls the gift of a lamp. It also contains that one who steals a lamp becomes dumb or is reduced to a dunce and after death goes to hell. It shows the importance of lamp which perhaps assumes some symbolic significance.

The eight kinds of marriage that prevailed in India of yore makes interesting reading:

"The main types of marriage are said to be eight; namely—(1) *Brahma*, in which the girl is ritually given to a suitable person who has good family background and possesses good moral character; (2) *Daiva*, where the girl is given to a priest officiating at a sacrifice; (3) *Arsa* in which the girl is given to a person of qualities mentioned above, along with a pair of cow and bull; (4) *Prajapatya*, in which a girl is given to a person who asks for her, (5) *Ghandharva* where the bride and the bride-groom settle the marriage with mutual consent; (6) *Asura* where the girl is given for money; it is the lower type. (7) *Rakshasa*, wherein the bride is forcibly taken away in a fight; (8) *Paisaca*, where she is taken away with torture or deception..."

The work explains certain items through illustrations, for example, the meaning of *Mudra*, a symbolic positioning of hands and palms.

We are sure, this series of volumes will go a long way in helping research scholars and Indologists to find information and references on most of the important subjects relating to the Indian tradition.

Ganga—The Hero

Ganga's Interpreter

FOR GANGA AND HIS TRIBE

HE was obviously excited—the ten year old urchin spotting the camera in my hand. Normally he would hesitate to come so close to me, but his curiosity helped him tide over his fear. I was amused. I wanted to enjoy an easy conversation with him but he knew only Kannada which I do not.

"Phuto?" he asked me, now sure that I will understand him.

That is volumes of language. I was delighted.

"Yes," I nodded my head and asked, "do you want me to take your photo?" Of course it was my eyes and hands that spoke.

He considered the suggestion seriously. I was checking my camera. By the time I looked up for him, I saw him running away like a race-horse.

I was disappointed. He was so excited; the next moment he chose to vanish! But I was not kept hanging in suspense for long. He soon reappeared with an extra loose shirt, obviously his only shirt. And he was not alone. He had brought his younger brother and sister on the scene. He was intelligent. He had also brought along with him an interpreter, a charming twelve-year old daughter of my neighbour, an officer in a bank whose second tongue is Kannada.

The girl explained to me that he wants all of them to be photographed. He cannot pay anything at all, but he would do anything for me, any service, absolutely free. I was delighted.

"But Uncle he wants that he should look like Raj Kumar," added the interpreter.

"Raj... who?" I was intrigued.

"Raj Kumar. You know, the famous hero in Kannada films."

I was flabbergasted. I assured him that he would surely look like the famous actor when he grows up, but not right then.

We started. He took total control of the situation. He was directing every shot. After getting nine or ten shots he abruptly called off the shooting programme. I asked him why. The girl told me. Some other boys were approaching us and he did not want any competition. He was also reluctant to give the 'big officer saheb' too much trouble. The second consideration, of course, was routine diplomacy.

Poised for the event

Ganga's Brother

Ganga's Sister

THE PLEASURES OF UNSOLICITED PHOTOGRAPHY

by B.V. Subba Rao

When I returned from the club in the evening, he was already waiting for me.

He displayed a broad smile. "Phuto?" I asked him.

He shook his head negatively and tried to make me understand him, but in vain. Then he suddenly said in Telugu, "Any work Sir?".

I stared at him in disbelief.

"Just shout for me from your door, Ganga! Ganga! I will be here!" I wanted to ask him how he picked up Telugu at a place where very few Telugu families resided. But he was already gone.

After a week I got the pictures. I purchased a cheap but tough album and arranged all the prints in it and handed it over to Ganga.

I cannot adequately describe his expression as he kept gazing at the photos one after another.

"For me... permanently?" His voice was choked with emotion.

"For you... permanently." I replied. He stood there without his shirt, an urchin with the album in his hands. He wanted to say so much by way of thanks, but due to the language difficulty he could not. I patted him on his back. He smiled that divine smile only absolute purity of heart can produce. Then he ran away.

I have never enjoyed photography as much as I did the day he took that small album from me. It is an agonisingly haunting pleasure. Agonising, because such a brilliant boy, daring and dashing in every respect, knowing perfect manners, has only one shirt or an apology for it to wear. There is no chance for him to go to school. His father is an alcoholic and his mother a sickly maid-servant. He has to work and earn.

Ganga gave me the taste of a new joy.

Now, as a matter of habit, I take my camera wherever I go. Invariably I notice the curious looks of boys like him, their eyes urging me to take their pictures. I invariably oblige; and they treasure the prints. They hardly know what their faces will look like—for most of them do not have mirrors in their slums.

And the thrill I feel when they run away with their pictures!

Under the impression that they were left out.

MY LOST DOLLAR

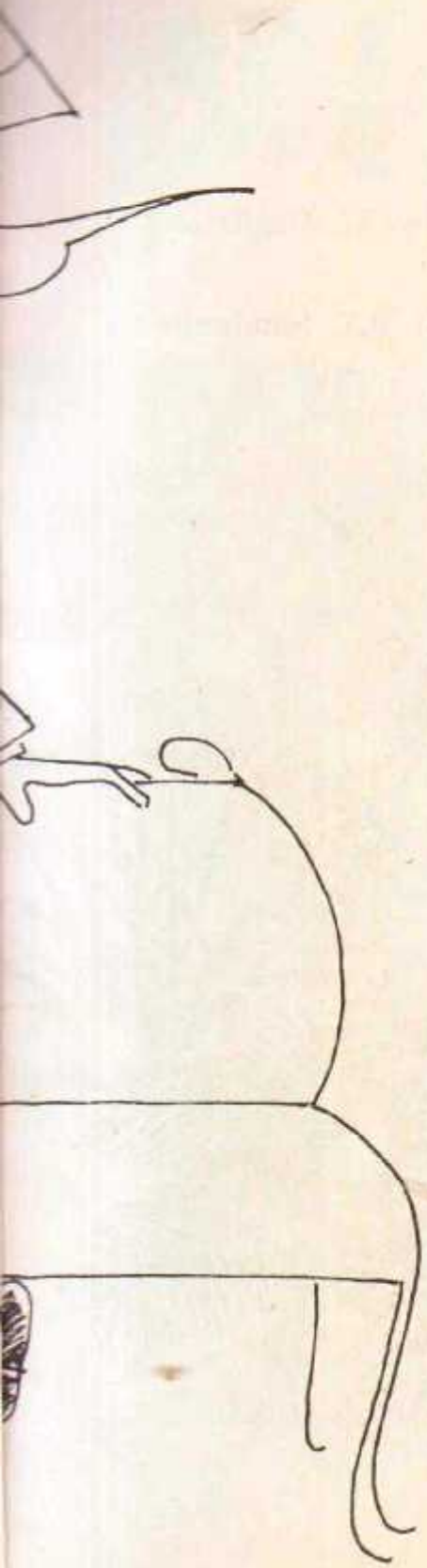
by Stephen Leacock

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be; For loan often loses both itself and friend," says Polonius in Shakespeare's Hamlet. But Leacock did not lose his friend, luckily.

MY friend Todd owes me a dollar. He has owed it to me for twelve months, and I fear there is little prospect of his ever returning it. I can realise whenever I meet him that he has forgotten that he owes me a dollar. He meets me in the same frank friendly way as always. My dollar has clean gone out of his mind. I see that I shall never get it back.

On the other hand I know that I shall remember all my life that Todd owes me a dollar. It will make no difference, I trust, to our friendship, but I shall never be able to forget it. I don't know how it is with other people; but if any man borrows a dollar from me I carry the recollection of it to the grave.

Let me relate what happened. Todd borrowed this dollar last year on the 8th of April (I mention the date in case this should ever meet Todd's eye), just as he was about to leave for Bermuda. He needed a dollar in change to pay his taxi; and I lent it to him. It happened quite simply and naturally. I hardly realized it till it was all over. He merely said, 'Let me have a dollar, will you!' And I said, 'Certainly. Is a dollar enough?' I believe, in fact I know, that when Todd took that dollar he meant



to pay for it.

He sent me a note from Hamilton, Bermuda. I thought when I opened it that the dollar would be in it. But it wasn't. He merely said that the temperature was up to nearly 100. The figure misled me for a moment.

Todd came back in three weeks. I met him at the train—not because of the dollar, but because I really esteem him. I felt it would be nice for him to see someone waiting for him on the platform after being away for three weeks. I said, 'Let's take a taxi up to the Club.' But he answered, 'No, let's walk.'

We spent the evening together, talking about Bermuda. I was thinking of the dollar but of course I didn't refer to it. One simply can't. I asked him what currency is used in Bermuda, and whether the *American* Dollar goes at par. I put a slight emphasis on the American Dollar, but found again that I could not bring myself to make any reference to it.

It took me some time (I see Todd practically every day at my Club) to realise that he had completely forgotten the dollar. I asked him one day what his trip cost him and he said that he kept no accounts. A little later I asked him if he felt settled down after his trip, and he said that he had practically forgotten about it. So I knew it was all over.

In all this I bear Todd no grudge. I have simply added him to the list of men who owe me a dollar and who have forgotten it. There are quite a few of them now. I make no difference in my demeanour to them, but I only wish that I could forget.

I meet Todd very frequently. Only two nights ago I met him out at dinner and he was talking, apparently without self-consciousness, about Poland. He said that Poland would never pay her debts. You'd think a thing like that would have reminded him, wouldn't you? But it didn't seem to.

But meantime a thought—a rather painful thought—has begun to come into my mind at intervals. It is this. If Todd owes me a dollar and has forgotten it, it is possible—indeed it is theoretically probable—that there must be men to whom I owe a dollar which I have forgotten. There may be a list of them. The more I think of it the less I like it, because I am quite sure that if I had once forgotten a dollar, I should never pay it, on this side of the grave.

If there are such men I want them to speak out. Not all at once: but in reasonable numbers, and as far as may be in alphabetical order, and I will immediately write their names down on paper. I don't count here men who may have lent me an odd dollar over a bridge table: and I am not thinking (indeed I am taking care not to think) of the man who lent me thirty cents to pay for a bottle of plain soda in the Detroit Athletic Club last month. I always find that there's nothing like plain soda after a tiring ride across the Canadian frontier, and that man who advanced that thirty cents knows exactly why I felt that I had done enough for him. But if any man ever lent me a dollar to pay for a taxi when I was starting for Bermuda, I want to pay it.

More than that: I want to start a general movement, a *Back To Honesty* movement, for paying all these odd dollars that are borrowed in moments of expansion. Let us remember that the greatest nations were built up on the rock basis of absolute honesty.

In conclusion may I say that I do particularly ask that no reader of this book will be careless enough to leave this copy round where it might be seen by Major Todd, of the University Club of Montreal. ®

AIR

by K. Alagirisami

Translated from Tamil by P.S. Sundaram

THERE were in that street perhaps a hundred houses. But only one of them had a *pial*, the traditional raised platforms on either side of the entrance. A few others had them too, but since those were enclosed by bars you could not take them into account. The majority of the houses were in the new style, without adjuncts.

To the children in the neighbourhood that cool platform was as an oasis in a desert. When they came out of their houses there was no place else for

three quarters of a mile where they could take shelter. So all the time some five or six children would be playing there. And what play can you have without making a noise? The more the joy the greater the din. Then someone would burst out of the house. But, day after day when his efforts to drive out the children were frustrated, his wrath rose to fever heat. He would seize the nearest kids and beat them. Those he could not reach he berated soundly. The *pial* would then be free.

But for how long?

The minute his head was turned, the children would be back. As for blows, threats and abuse they couldn't care less. Those too, they must have thought, were part of the fun.

The man who rented the house was biding his time to put an end to this nuisance once and for all. To pull down at least one child, beat it up unconscious and trample upon it was his long-cherished ambition. That would be a balm to his hurt, a draught to quench his ire. At least for a few days after that he would have peace.

One day he had no work. He was confined to his house. He was alone, and yet not alone. An eager expectancy of the children kept him company.

In due course the children came. Four of them came swinging their hands. Two little girls came with two little babies. They left the babes in a corner of the *pial* and straightaway started their play.

They forgot the world. Their joy was boundless. Their echoing laughter and clapping of hands filled the street. The man within biding his time leapt out like a tiger and gave a kick to a little boy which landed him in the street. He seized a little girl by her hair. The other children seeing this fled for their lives. The boy on the street started to sob and limped his way home.

The tenant transferred the girl's hair from his right hand to his left. He rapped out ten to fifteen times, "Don't you dare to come again", "Don't you dare to come again". And everytime, with a blow on her cheek which raised sparks. That five-year old girl must have been stunned. She could not even cry, only her face acquired a terrible twist. If a man passing on the street had not interfered and separated them she might well have been beaten to death.

Only when she was released and started homewards did she seem to realise that she had been beaten. Then her cheek began to burn. Then yelling she reached her home, just four houses ahead. Her left cheek was by now swollen, her left eye became red like a burning torch. When her mother came out and asked, "What's this, what's this?" she wouldn't tell her. No words arose. The shock of the blows and the dread that her mother would beat her for going out to play without permission, combined to make her dumb. She could only weep.

"Wretched devil! Whatever I say you must run into the street! You deserve all this and more," said the mother.

Some playmate of hers must have beaten her, she thought. She went into the street to find out what had happened. She turned this way and that and found nothing. The street was as usual. She went back. "Wretched devil! Who beat you? Why don't you tell?" she hissed.

Even then the child said nothing.

"Let your father come. I shall get you tied to

the pillar. Only then will you stay at home," she threatened, and seizing the child's hair with her right hand dragged her inside. She hurled her where the baby was lying and herself disappeared into the smoke of the kitchen.

By then Karpakam's fear had gone. She stopped crying. Only the baby cried now because of the kitchen smoke. Karpakam tried to amuse it, wanted to stop its crying. She tried hard but the baby was not taken in. Who knew what was bothering its "innards"? And on top of that this huge smoke, enough to hide a full-grown man! And to that swirling smoke the only escape seemed to be into their nostrils. They were obviously suffocating. If only Karpakam could get out! But if she did, she knew, her mother would wring her neck and throw her into the fire. Karpakam decided to take the baby near the door so that they could both breathe a little more freely. But there they were assailed by the smoke from the neighbouring house. Only, it was not so dense as the one from inside their own.

She sat in that narrow space and looked at the bit of sky that she could see. She sat and looked, and yearned—not for the wide open sky, only for the *pial*. "From tomorrow that *pial* is barred. If I go I shall be slapped till my cheeks swell to bursting. And when I come back Mother will beat me. What will I do now? How will I survive all this?"

From the day she could go out into the street, that *pial* had given her fresh air and light and so joy to her life. Now it had gone for ever. And with it had gone air and life's joy. She had sometimes wondered why her house had not been built with a *pial*. And why did it have to be so far away from the street and in a corner? Now she was angry with her father for this. Today when he comes for his meal she will ask him. She would cry and sulk and make him put up a *pial*. After all he was fond of her—he would not deny her this. So she would put up with the smoke a short while more.

* * *

Vedagiri, Karpakam's father, was not the one to put up *pials*, whatever else he put up with! For three hundred and sixtyfive days in the year he put up with one meal a day. After a service of fourteen years he was drawing a salary of forty-eight rupees a month as an employee in a cloth-shop at a corner of Mandavali, three furlongs from his house. Ten rupees out of his salary went towards his house rent. Yes, ten rupees. If in the metropolis of Madras there was a 'house' for a rent of ten rupees, there is no need to expatiate on its amenities.

Vedagiri's house was just one room. Within that room a corner served as kitchen. In the rainy season you were hard put to find a spot for sleeping where the roof did not leak. In summer, every now and then, would fall from the tiles with a dull thud one scorpion after another. The only window was the door. Since the water pump was in a tiny courtyard right there, the place was always wet. The pump and the courtyard were common to all the five or six families in different sections of the house each paying a rent of ten or fifteen rupees. Any noise in any section or room was heard in all the others, just as any smoke in any of their kitchens spread all over and lost itself in the common air and sky.

In this place Vedagari's wife had given birth to Karpakam and four other children. Of them only Karpakam and the baby had survived.

* * *

When Vedagiri first came to that house, immediately after his marriage, things were not so bad. He had bagged, for a rent of ten rupees, not only the portion he now occupied but also a small adjoining room. But when a new city sprang up all round with towering buildings, like an enormous python, the place he occupied appreciated in rent. Land values went up six to seven times and the rent also increased.

Vedagiri complained he couldn't afford more than ten rupees. In that case, arbitrated the owner, he could have only the kitchen. Grateful that he had not been kicked out, Vedagiri decided to contract his family into the kitchen and vacate the adjoining room. Karpakam was born after that. From the day she was born she knew only the kitchen—she did not know a *pial* or a road, a tree or a maidan. The expansion of the city and the increase in its population were for her great disasters. The responsibility for her imprisonment in that dark kitchen can be laid squarely on the shoulders of the city and its people!

II

Vedagiri came from the cloth-shop for his midday meal. Hardly had he set foot in his house when his wife poured out the tale of Karpakam's being beaten up. He took the child out into the light and examined her. When he saw the red and swollen cheek tears came into his eyes.

"This devil won't stay in the house for a minute," spat her mother. "I asked her to mind the child, but the moment my back was turned she was off. She just disappeared. My mind will rest only when you burn her alive."

"That will do," he said, "mind your business." Her mouth shut, he carried the child inside and asked her tenderly, "Who did this?"

Karpakam told him what had happened.

What could he do to the man who had beaten her? It was his *pial*. Any child who went and played there did so at its own peril. But then was Vedagiri to tie up the little girl as his wife wished? "O you poor thing," he said, "what sins must have been yours in the past that you were born to me!" He made her sit next to him while he ate. When he himself could not stay in that room for a full hour in peace on the one day in a week he did not

have to go to his work, how could he expect Karpakam to be confined to it day in and day out, for years?

He could find no way to solve this problem of freedom for his daughter.

As a tiny sop he took her with him when he went to his shop, bought an anna's worth of *pakodis* at a tea stall, and sent her home with it. On her way back Karpakam saw children playing as usual on the *pial*. But she was not going to join them. She went straight home.

From that day began Karpakam's imprisonment. She was not to step out of the house, her mother ordered. At best she could stand at the door and look at the street for a little while. She was not permitted to take a step beyond. Even the street common to everybody was out of bounds for her. As cars, taxis and cycles were plying constantly even on that street, her mother warned her that she should not go there.

Day and night she dreamed only of the *pial*. Her house too should have had a *pial* facing the street. When will her father build one? When she asked him, he gave her no answer—just laughed. When she persisted, he said, "Child, what can you understand? If we had the means to build *pials* and houses, would we be here?" He said some more meaningless things—she just couldn't make him out. After four or five days the desire arose to again to the old *pial* and play there, never mind the blows. But that small wish did not last long. Fear overcame desire. She decided to stay where she was in that lightless, airless room, oppressed by smoke. There was for her now a dearth of air as well as of food. Famished but roaming free, she had been a bag of air as the sages say we all are. Now she was a bag without air. She gasped for breath.

As the days passed, darkness spread on her face. Her eyes sank, her body withered. She could not eat properly. Her mother confining her to the house, the baby for ever screaming, her father putting her off with excuses for not building a *pial*—all seemed to her so many demons and deaths come to kill her. Her patience was at an end. From a mild girl she grew rebellious. One day, without her mother's knowledge, she ran away to the old *pial*.

III

To Vedagiri brooding over it for days suddenly a way appeared. Supremely pleased with it he went home. He decided to choose an auspicious day and put Karpakam to school in the next street. Though she had to cross a road, the school was quite near. She would also get a midday meal free. He thought that good days had dawned for Karpakam and shared that thought with his wife. His wife agreed with him that this would be one way of curbing her errancy.

"The only way to put an end to her waywardness is to send her to school," she said. "Who can look after her all the time? Let her join the school and leave me in peace!"

On the day chosen Vedagiri took her to school. They admitted her. He had to pay a rupee as admission fee. There was no other expense. He told the teacher that he would get the books for her in four or five days. Then he said to Karpakam, "As soon as school is over you must come home straight. Come back with the neighbouring children. There are buses and cars on the road. Be careful, Karpakam." And with that he went to his shop.

This was indeed a new era in Karpakam's life. She liked to go to school even on holidays. She no longer longed for a *pial* in the house. She went to school punctually and returned punctually. Her parents heaved a sigh of relief at the solution to a serious problem.

Karpakam's joy overflowed at her new freedom. To go to school was a pleasure to her. She used to wish everyday that after five in the evening instead of going straight home she might wander somewhere. Having got pleasure after pain, she wished to add to that pleasure.

One day an old memory revived. She remembered how seven or eight months back her father and mother had taken her to San Thome beach, how, as far as eyes could reach, there was plenty of ground for play, and how cool the breeze was. To her San Thome beach seemed to be the final, the supreme end of life. There were no walls there. You could go where you wanted without let or hindrance. There were no smoke—instead only the breeze and joy to your heart's content.

Thinking on all this Karpakam counted the minutes until school should be over. As soon as the bell rang, she rushed out with her bag, the first pupil to emerge. She gave the slip to the neighbouring children, stepped into the street and walked briskly towards the main road. When she got there she turned the corner and walked towards the beach. Confident that no one had noticed her, and gazing at the lovely buildings, she walked slowly drinking the beauty around her sip by sip. Whatever she saw was so beautiful, so wonderful, so enchanting. What a lot of terraced mansions, how many trees, how many flowers! What a lot of huge buses! She was angry with her parents that they did not bring her everyday to see these sights. Now, when she was neither with father nor mother, how freely she could wander among these things!

Karpakam walked along taking her time. There was a red flower in a bungalow visible through the iron bars enclosing the compound. She plucked it. Her joy was inexpressible. She felt as though the entire road was hers. She knew nothing about the world. If she had known, she would have thought that that too was all hers.

She kept on walking, her eyes taking in the four quarters.

THE LAST RITES

by Himanshu Joshi

Translated from Hindi by V.K. Joshi

"HEY! Why do you weep now? Have you lost your senses? He is gone. Think about these innocent ones. At least, think about the guests."

"Today is the thirteenth day. Don't shed your tears. If you don't perform the last rites with a composed mind, the departed one won't be delivered from the *pret-yoni*, his ghostly existence."

"It's almost midday now. Where is Tulsya's wife?" The voices were restless.

Madhuli pressed her lips which had turned blue. She began wiping away her tears. She came in the *chawk*, the courtyard, with her children, her veil pulled low over her face, a torn sari, a tattered blouse.

"Bahu, don't look on like that! Get the things ready. It'll be late otherwise. The ritual must take place before midday, if we are to be faithful to the scriptures."

Madhuli knew that the departed soul keeps wandering hungry for want of obsequies which must take place in the morning hours.

She collected herself somehow and then folding her hands, said, "What preparations are there to make, revered ones? Just offer something symbolic. Perform the last rites. You're the priests, the guardian spirits of the family. Do something to make his soul join those of his ancestors. Give your protection to these orphaned children. I haven't anything with me to give you." Madhuli pressed her quivering lips and closed her eyes.

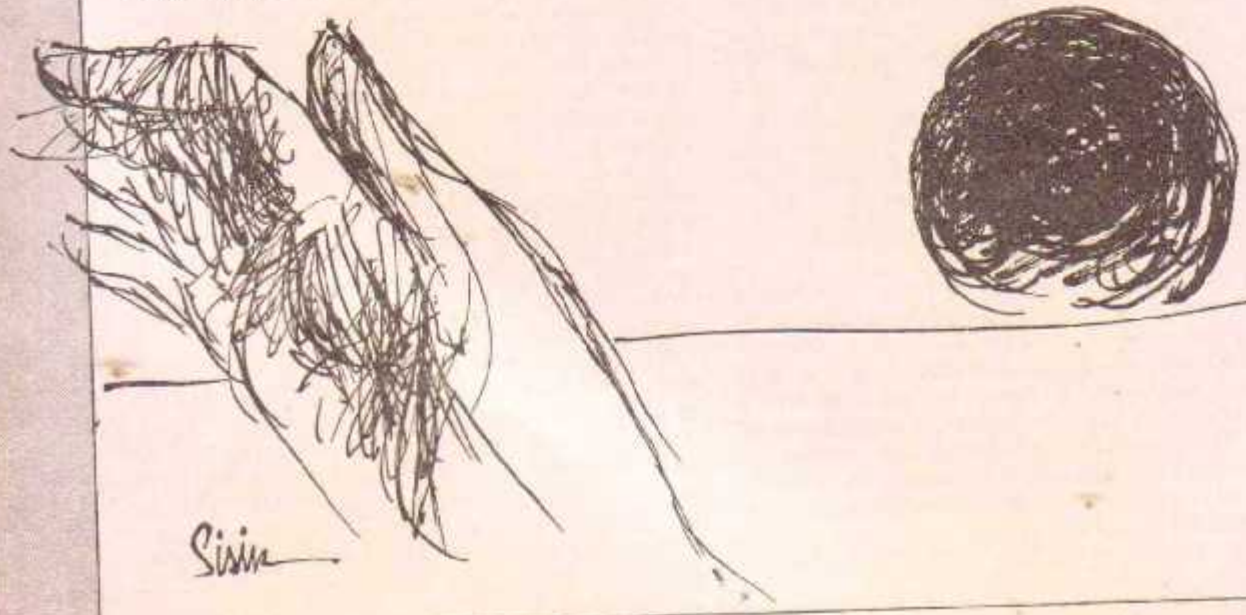
Filled with contempt and surprise they glanced at her.

"How does it matter, Bahu!" The old elderly priest passed his hand over his grey beard that, because of smoking tobacco, had turned yellow like dried-up grass.

"If you don't have enough then let it be so. Do whatever is within your resources. We have to help him join his ancestors. Feed the Brahmins. Give at least, one rupee and four annas. Offer puja at the feet of some virgin girls. Give some grass to a heifer. What more is needed? One could, however, spend any amount in the last rites. By giving here you shall get there. That is what the Puranas say." He had told his wife that he would be back before sunlight had spread over the courtyard. The possibility of going back home with an empty stomach from a last rite ceremony was unthought of, but now...

"Revered sirs, it's beyond my resources to fulfil the obligations prescribed by the Puranas. In fact, I'm left with nothing. The children haven't eaten for the past three days." Madhuli couldn't contain her tears.

All through his life Tulsya, the departed one, had been slogging. He shared the pleasures and



pains of others. He helped all. But none is going to have him delivered now! He had to be taken away without a shroud. Would he even be left without the last rites?

Some of the priests were getting annoyed. Restlessly, they had been looking around and passing their palms over their sunken stomachs, and began tightening their loose *dhotis* around their waists.

Madhuli went inside and lay down in a dark corner, sobbing.

"Madhu! Madhu!" A distant grandma—who had come to express her condolences— shook her. "The *karma* wick has almost dried up. It has been burning all these days. If it blows out on this thirteenth day after the dear one's death, it'll be the most unfortunate thing! What will the people say? You have children too. How the souls of the innocent ones would feel?"

"There isn't any oil now, grandma. Not even a few drops." Madhuli managed to utter.

"It doesn't matter at all, borrow a bowlful from some neighbour. Get up now. Is this the time for weeping? The Brahmins are here," said the grandma.

Madhuli looked around at the crumbling walls, looked up at the flimsy, thatched ceiling through which the sun's rays were filling that dark musty room. She let out a deep sigh. Rubbed her lids that looked like the red *booronjh* flowers. Holding a dented bowl she entered the neighbour's house from the back door.

"Madhuli, bahu, what has brought you here? Have the people sat down to eat? Have you come to get some utensils?" The lady of the neighbourhood looked at her sympathetically. She bemoaned Madhuli's ill-fate, and said that Madhuli wasn't even old enough to have to put up with such a malevolent fate.

Head bowed, eyes lowered, Madhuli kept standing.

"Why have you come here, bahu?"

"Mother-in-law..." haltingly she uttered.

"Speak out... speak out."

"Lend me some oil. The *karma* wick is about to blow out. The Brahmins have been sitting in the courtyard." Her throat choked.

"So, the rites haven't yet been performed?" Biting her lips, she added, "The Brahmins seem to have lost their reasoning power! What have they been doing till now?"

Madhuli stood silent.

"I haven't any oil today," breaking the silence told the lady. "From last Saturday we have not cooked in oil. The day before, I had to squeeze out some oil from the canister for doing up the hair of the children. But I must tell you—" stopping momentarily, she said, "the neighbour above had brought some oil from the market the day before. It wouldn't be a big thing for her if she gave you a little. Wouldn't the neighbours be of even this much help?"

Madhuli remained standing there, uncertain for a few moments. Then she walked up towards the next house. The dented bowl was still in her hand. From a distance she could make out that the door was secured by a thick chain. Her heart missed a few beats. She was about to turn back.

"Madhuli!"

She turned. Sabi's mother was planting capsicum.

Madhuli went up to the field.

She was sad and lost and that surprised Sabi's mother much. "How are you here, Madhuli? Have the last rites been performed?" she asked, curious.

"No, aunt."

"Why?"

"Aunt... Something urgent has brought me here."

"You must tell me then." She looked agog with curiosity.

"Aunt—lend me some oil. I'll give it back soon. The *karma* wick is about to blow out."

"Haa! But where is the oil?" Lowering her voice, she said again, "Sabi's father had bought some from the shop. It's all finished now. I can take out some from the pan if a few drops are still left." Her face looked twisted. She was evidently annoyed with herself for having invited an avoidable burden.

"Even a little would serve the purpose. I'll split the wick," said Madhuli in a faint, submissive tone.

The aunt threw down the hoe and covered her head with the shawl. Tightening the string of the rough petticoat round her bulging waist, she walked toward the house. She said, "You haven't performed the last rites till now? It's almost midday! O my child, how slow you are! Go, get the rites performed immediately and save yourself from perdition. So far as the Brahmins are concerned, they are interested only in the monetary tribute they will recieve."

Silently Madhuli walked back home with a little oil. But she wasn't very sure how long the wick would keep burning with that much.

Suddenly she stopped. The cursed thing had happened. The whole house was in a turmoil. Madhuli saw that the wick had blown out just a moment ago. There was only a long streak of smoke instead of a flickering flame. The female relatives and acquaintances were talking in whispers. Like the Brahmins were debating. What penance could or couldn't be prescribed for such occurrences? The logomachy was growing fierce.

Madhuli stood transfixed, the little oil she had brought splattered over her soiled sari.

"What will happen now, mother?" She embraced her dim-eyed mother. She trembled, but couldn't utter a word. Then, wiping her eyes, she burst out, "You accursed one, ill-fate has struck you. Weep over your *karma* now."

"What will happen now?" the old woman asked the Brahmins, checking her emotions.

"What is there to be done?" said the oldest priest, gathering with a finger his sweat from his forehead and sprinkling it over the wall. "The blowing out of the last-rite wick is very inauspi-

cious, Madhuli's mother. So far as I know, even the pundits of Kashi and Gaya are ignorant of any way out of such a situation. I haven't any idea if some of these young scholars know of any remedy." He glanced at his young rivals, contemptuously.

"What is to be done now?" The old woman wiped her bleary eyes. She made a vain attempt at reading the feelings and expressions of the revered.

"Madhuli's mother, the Puranas say that at least five cows must be given away and puja at the feet of five virgins must be performed."

"Will the ill-fate be overcome by this? Nothing else is needed...?" asked the old woman, anxious to save herself from the *Kumbhipak* hell.

"You can give more!" Laughing through his hollow mouth, the old priest observed, "You're an experienced and munificent woman. You understand these matters well. You have been to holy places. There is no limit to charity. But see, it's midday now. If the rites are not performed before sunset, then even if you perform rituals for seven lives, the departed soul won't benefit. Do you understand?"

Standing at the gate, Madhuli had been listening to them. She called her mother inside and asked what was to be done now.

"You have got to do that much. The rites have got to be observed. How can the poor Brahmins help it? The scriptures don't prescribe anything less than what they have been telling."

Without the rites her husband's soul must be wandering hither and thither in despair. The Brahmins have been sitting at the door. Many well-wishers too are here. The children are restless with hunger.

Her vision blurred.

"Take out whatever money you have with you, my daughter. You have got to do it now. The unlucky one must have left something for you."

"Nothing, mother! Neither money nor anything else." Biting her dry withered lips, said Madhuli again, "What could he have left? He couldn't even take a shroud with him. He didn't even have wood for burning at the pyre."

The old woman shut her eyes as if she had been drained of all power of hearing and seeing. Standing quietly there, she kept scratching the dry hair of her grandson who had been snuggling up against her.

"I must go and get the things from neighbours, Mother. Look after these children till I return."

The mother kept on staring ahead.

"And, look here!" Turning a little, Madhuli said in one breath, "Bring into the courtyard Pradhan Uncle's heifer. We'll hold on the tail. It'll serve the purpose. Don't forget to pluck some *darim* leaves. Tell the Brahmins that I'd be back after having arranged the things for the rites. Keep giving them tobacco for smoking. I'll be back soon... soon..."

She ran in the direction of Pradhan's house. But he was away in the next village. She went around some other houses. For hours she ran from pillar to post, but to no avail.

With all hope she went to Mani Havildarin, the rich woman of the village. She had once quarrelled with Mani over cutting grass. But are not small things overlooked on such occasions?

Not only sympathy and condolences, kept pouring from the mouth of the Havildarin, but also tears drizzled in her eyes. Waving her hand, she even condemned the laws of Destiny. But, when it came to lending money, she flatly refused saying that her purse had remained empty for long

Much time had been wasted. Where to go now? What to do? She stood at the crossing, completely confounded. The sun was rapidly rolling on. The shadows were lengthening. The hungry Brahmins must be cursing her. The mother must be looking at the doors again and again. At the courtyard the borrowed heifer must be hungry and thirsty.

A thought flashed across her mind. Why not go to Kanshi's shop? He might show some consideration. Even the wild tiger is said to give help in such circumstances. Even a demon is turned into a momentary angel.

Willy-nilly, she walked towards Kanshi's shop, quite far. She happened to remember how Kanshi would goggle at her when she was a new bride. With her yellow *pichora*, blue *ghaghara* and ringing anklets when she went about with others to pick wood in the jungle, he would stand at the bridge on some pretext and stare at her. But when she cursed his seven generations, his face had fallen. Since that day he never had the courage to look at her.

"Kanshi Das...!" said Madhuli hesitantly, pulling down her veil even further.

Looking at her oddly, Kanshi said, "Do you need something?"

"I've come seeking help. My husband's last rites are to be performed today. The day is about to set. Sooner or later I'll return all your money. I'll work in your fields. I can deliver grass and wood at your house if you ask me. If that is not enough, I'll pawn all my utensils. If even those aren't enough, I'll give away my children to the *hurkiyas*—the entertainers—but, I won't die with your loan. Fate has been bad for me here, but I'm not going to damn my after life.I'll be obliged to you forever." Her eyes swam in tears. She went on repeating those things, looking distraught.

Kanshi kept looking at her face. Passing his tongue over his thin, drawn lips, surveying her body despite her age.

"What do you want?" he asked in a choked voice.

"Some money and rice and a piece of red starched cloth for the rites," she said her eyes lowered.

"Come in..." he said.

Perplexed, Madhuli kept standing as if she hadn't heard anything.

"Sit inside comfortably. I'll pack the things in no time. Tell me again. Red cloth, rice... Don't

get nervous. Come into the shop." He tore off noisily the red cloth from a roll.

Then he weighed rice in the rusted balance and poured it into the spread-out fold of her sari. Put a little more with his cupped hands. Then, smiling, looked at her. But Madhuli's eyes were fixed on the ground.

He counted the coins and put them into the red cloth. He pushed the bundle towards her.

Madhuli had just extended her hands for picking up the bundle when, all of a sudden, Kanshi clasped them. With a jerk, he pulled her and threw his arms round her.

"Aree... aree..." she shouted.

The rice spilled out as the light knot of the sari's fold got untied. "Keep quiet. Don't make a noise." He tried to clamp her mouth with his palm.

But shrieking, Madhuli tried to free herself. "Fiend! Demon!" She hissed like a snake. But his grasp had tightened further.

Madhuli felt choked up. Then she sank her sharp teeth into Kanshi's wrist. Kanshi winced in pain. His hold round her waist loosened. Despite all efforts to balance himself, Kanshi struck against a tea crate and fell prostrate on the floor.

Madhuli tried to jump over a rice sack and a couple of canisters. Her feet were entangled in her torn sari and with a bang she hit the floor. By the time she reached the door, she had a tingling sensation in the forehead. Panting and trembling she made a tremendous effort to face Kanshi. "Come near me now! Step forward and I'll scorch your face. Demon! Fiend!" Hereyesflashed anger instead of tears.

Her old sari was torn at several places in the tussle. Its tattered ends were fluttering in the breeze. Her knee began to bleed. But she was oblivious of everything. She walked on. Where? She wasn't aware of herself. Her heart was still pounding loudly. The body was still shaking. Her eyes were still smouldering like embers.

She felt like ending her own life. It'll end all her troubles. How will she survive among such demons? How long? But what will happen to the children?

She heard the blast of a rock being dynamited. She stopped. She saw some labourers with thick ropes round the waists hanging in the air, absorbed in digging a tunnel with their crowbars. Her husband must have worked in the same way, she thought, as she observed the scene.

It was then she happened to notice the overseer. Putting her head at his feet, she burst into tears, "I'm an unlucky one, sir."

He stepped back. "What's the matter? What's this, jamadar?" he asked, surprised.

"Sir, this is Tulsya's wife," the jamadar explained in a low voice.

"Who is Tulsya?"

"The one who was blown up with the mine at the corner rock about a fortnight ago and whose corpse couldn't be identified.

"Oh!" Looking through the binoculars, the sahib said, "I get it now! I moved up the case the day before." He scratched his head. "Wait. It wouldn't be more than six months or a year at the maximum. If the body is considered identified, you'll be given compensation. You know, his body was found in the river. That makes the issue complicated."

"Sir, the sun is about to set..." She began to weep.

"Don't lose heart. The jamadar will inform you as soon as the news is received!"

"Sir, sir," Madhuli's weeping became louder. But the officer walked away.

Her hair was all tousled. Wild like one possessed, she began running home.

The sun was sinking behind the hills.

Comments were going round the village. Many things were being said. Some were sorry about her: but, some others were laughing. "Arre it has become dark! What sort of an unfaithful woman she is! The succubus hasn't done anything about the rites!"

As soon as she stepped on the threshold still unsteady, she realised that the cursing Brahmins had mostly gone away. They might even have performed the last rites of the living! The relatives and the acquaintances had left the house. A few Brahmins were standing at the corner, quite annoyed, ready to depart, with folded upper clothes over their shoulders and bundles under their arms. "It doesn't take much time to understand. In fact, Tulsya might have committed suicide because of this woman. Rites! We wouldn't be surprised if she had already eloped with someone!"

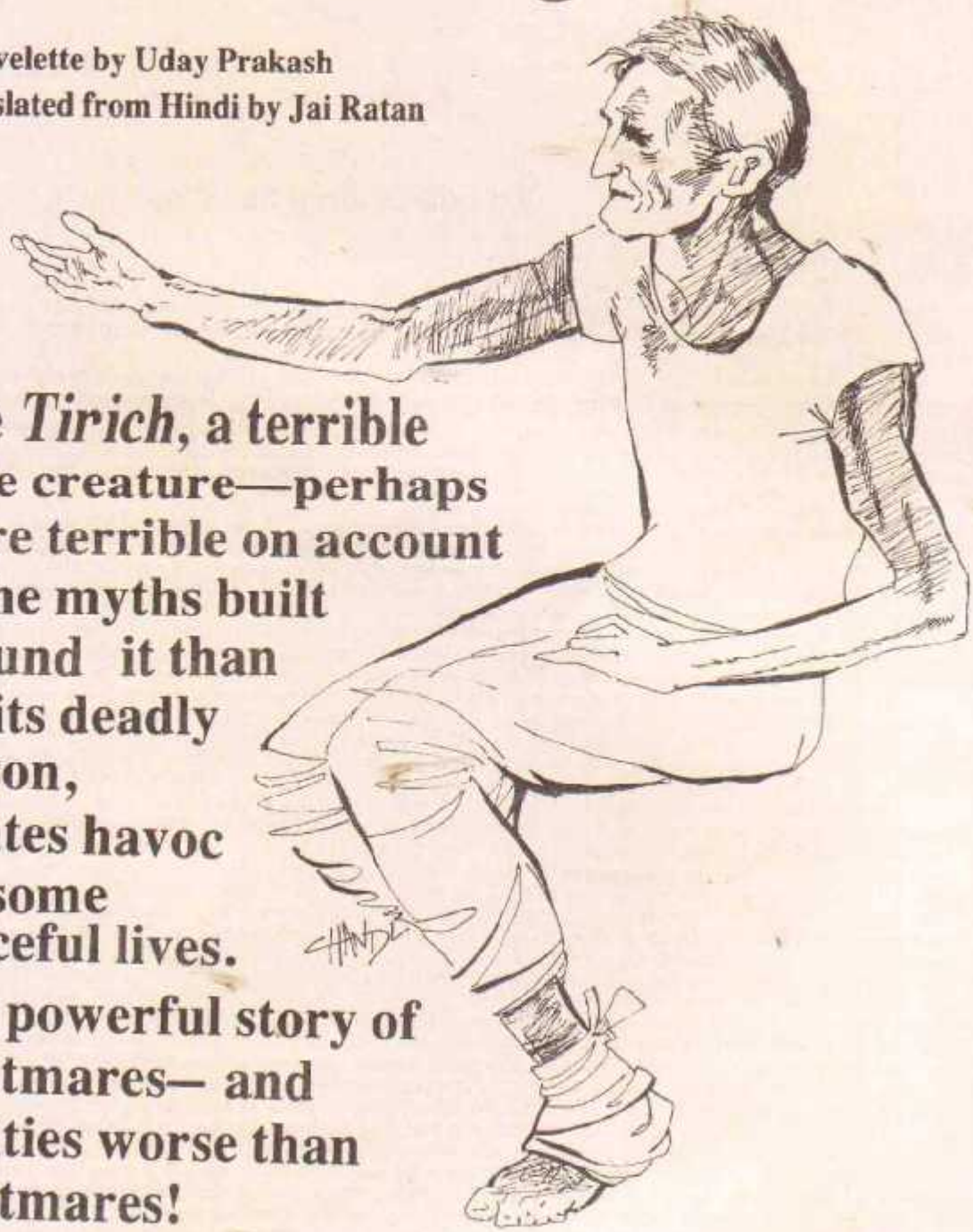
Madhuli covered her ears with her palms and closed her eyes. Entering the house, she slammed the doors shut and bolted it. For a long time she lay sobbing! When the neighbourhood and then the whole village had gone to sleep, she opened the door. Holding the hands of the children, she walked toward the river.

It was a cold dark night. The noisily blowing icy winds were biting into the body. Like a serpent the river was flowing on—foaming, burbling and jumping over the white chalk hills. Madhuli stood at its fearful bank that resembled a cremation ghat. Filling the small cupped palms with water, stood her three innocent and naked children. Shivering like straws, with their eyes closed, they offered water to the sun that had set long back. They performed the rites, offering clay balls instead of rice and for the gift of a cow, they held to the tail of a clay cow.

"O Goddess Ganga. Be a witness. O You Eternal One. You the Omniscient, only you... you..." Folding her shaking hands together, she put her head at the feet of that clay cow.

The Wild Lizard

A Novelette by Uday Prakash
Translated from Hindi by Jai Ratan



The *Tirich*, a terrible little creature—perhaps more terrible on account of the myths built around it than for its deadly poison, creates havoc in some peaceful lives.

A powerful story of nightmares— and realities worse than nightmares!

The Wild Lizard

by Uday Prakash

Translated from Hindi by Jai Ratan

This incident has a bearing on Father. It also relates to my dreams and to the city, particularly with the inherent fear, peculiar to a city.

Father was then nearing fifty-five. He had a lean and thin body and his hair was the colour of corn-cob fibres as if his head was covered with cotton. He thought much and spoke little. When he spoke, it was such a welcome change for us as if he was letting out a breath which he had been holding back for a long time. At the same time we held him in great awe. He was such a mystery for us, children. We thought he held the key to all the wisdom of the world and could speak all the languages known to mankind. We believed the whole world knew him and like us, held him in awe.

We were proud of being his children.

At long intervals, once in six months or so, he would take us out for a walk in the evening. Before stepping out of the house he would stuff his mouth with tobacco which precluded him from talking. His silence was so ponderous, full of grave import and mysterious that we were duly impressed and felt proud of him all the more. On the way if our sister wanted to ask him a question, I would try to put her off or supply an answer in place of Father so as to avert the necessity of his speaking.

For that matter this task was not only cumbersome but equally hazardous. If I erred in my reply Father would have to open his mouth to speak which, it appeared, was not a pleasant job for him. Besides squirting out the tobacco juice, he had to traverse a huge distance to emerge from the world in which he lived even while walking. Also, our sister's questions were generally of the pedestrian type, not worthy of much attention. For instance, she would like to know the name of the bird she had seen sitting on the withered branch of a tree in front. Being familiar with most of the birds I would promptly tell her that it was a magpie, adding for her enlightenment that it was considered auspicious to see a magpie on the Dussehra Day. I would go all out to save Father the necessity of speaking so that he could devote all his time to brooding.

My mother and I strove hard to see to it that Father lived happily and in peace in his own world and was not in any way forced to come out of it. It was a world replete with mysteries for us. Father would resolve many of our day to day problems while remaining entrenched in that world of his. For instance, when the question of my school fee cropped up in the beginning of the month, the last glass disappeared mysteriously from our kitchen. We didn't mind for we were accustomed to drinking water from a *lota*. Father remained stubbornly silent for two days and Mother was convinced that Father had conveniently forgotten about my school fee or perhaps it was beyond him to solve a problem of such magnitude. But no, on the third day, very early in the morning, he handed me an envelope containing a letter and asked me to deliver it to Dr. Pant in the city. To my surprise, the doctor regaled me with sherbet and then taking me into the inner apartment of his house, introduced me to his son and gave me three hundred-rupee notes.

We were indeed proud of Father. We loved him though our love was tinged with fear. With him so close to us we felt secure as if we were living in a fortress, having ramparts made of red granite and deep moats running around the fortress. Our house looked so invincible against any kind of onslaught.

Although himself a force to reckon with he did not seem to be immune from the vagaries of fortune. One evening when we returned home after a stroll we found Father's ankle heavily bandaged. Soon after many people of the village came to meet him. We learnt that Father had been bitten by a tirich, a species of highly poisonous lizards running wild in the forests. We knew to our horror that a tirich-bite could prove fatal.

As the evening advanced more people came and sat in the courtyard under the dim lantern light, surrounding Father, a village barber who had come from the adjoining village among them. He claimed that he could exorcise the lizard's poison from the body with castor seeds and cowdung cake ash.

I had once seen a tirich. In the afternoon sun it had emerged from within the crevices of hard rocks and had come down to drink water from the pond below.

At that time Thanu was with me and he told me that it was the fabulous wild lizard known as tirich and was a hundred times more poisonous than a cobra. A cobra attacked only when provoked but a tirich chased you no sooner than it caught your eye. One should never run in a straight line to escape it but only in circles.

According to Thanu, a running man does not leave only footmarks on the ground, he also leaves his body odour behind and the tirich follows this trail. Thanu further said that while running away from a tirich a man should first run in short steps and then take long strides in order to confuse the tirich. It would wander off course in quest of that odour, giving the man a chance to increase the distance between him and the reptile.

We learnt two more facts about the tirich. No sooner it bites a man it rushes off to urinate somewhere and then lies down in its own urine. If a tirich resorts to this action its victim is doomed. In order to escape death the man should himself take a dip in a pond, a river or in a well before the reptile lies down in its own urine. Or he should immediately try to kill the reptile.

Secondly, a tirich only runs to bite a man after it has exchanged glances with him. On seeing a tirich, a man should avoid looking into its eyes. As soon as a tirich exchanges glances with a man it registers his body odour in its nervous system and then gives him a chase. Even if a man runs round the entire earth the tirich keeps pursuing him.

When quite young, like all children, I was also mighty scared of a tirich. There were only two figures appearing in my nightmares—a tirich or an elephant. The elephant would get tired of running after me and I would save myself by climbing up a tree or I would start flying. But a tirich!—oh, I would get caught in a maze of snares. I would merrily be walking along in my dream when it would suddenly confront me as if out of the blue. It had no specific beat beyond which it would not go. It could appear anywhere, anytime. Not that it was to be found only in the crevices of a rock, or behind an old disintegrating building or near a bush. It could chance upon me in the bazaar, in the cinema hall, in a shop, or even in my own room.

In my dream I would try hard not to exchange glances with the tirich. But it would look so eerily at me that I couldn't help looking into its eyes. And then its entire expression would change. It would give me a chase and I would run and run and run. I would even run in circles and then run taking long strides. I would jump and try to fly. I would climb up a high place—a tree or a cliff. But in spite of my best efforts I could never give it the slip. To my dismay, I found it to be very wily, shrewd, clever and dangerous. I thought it knew me under my very skin. The very look of recognition in its eyes pronounced me to be its worst enemy and it went after me by divining the turns and twists of my mind.

It was my worst nightmare—most horrendous, painful, harrowing and one which left me completely limp on waking up from my dreadful dream. My lungs would swell and I would be drenched in perspiration, almost on the verge of a horrible death. I would scream, cry, call out to Father, Thanu or Mother. And then I would suddenly realise that it was only a dream. But what a dream! Was it the kind of death that I would ultimately meet? I wouldn't call it death—it amounted to slaughter at the hands of a tirich.

I had gradually learnt the hard way that on a critical occasion such as this my voice was my most potent weapon. But as ill-luck would have it, I would remember this weapon only at the very last moment when the reptile was about to pounce upon me. I would be in the throes of death when my breath would change into a rattling sound. I would feel I was no longer standing on *terra firma* but was suspended in mid-air and my last moment had arrived. It was only then that I would remember the weapon of my last resort. I would start muttering and making guttural sounds and on the strength of those sounds come out of that dream.

Sometimes Mother would ask what was happening to me. But I did not have the language to describe my experience. In the end I would content myself by telling her that it was a horrible dream, leaving it to her imagination to gauge the depth of that horror.

* * *

I was feeling apprehensive. I had a foreboding that the same tirich that came in my dreams had bitten Father. The only redeeming feature was that soon after the reptile had bitten Father he had chased it and killed it. But I feared that he had not killed it at once and it might have grovelled in its urine before dying. But I was not worrying excessively on that account. On the other hand, I was having a sense of relief, nay, even a sense of happiness. In the first place, Father had killed the nefarious thing and in the second place, my most dangerous foe, with whom I had been familiar for so long was dead and gone. Now I could merrily go about walking in my dreams and even whistling as my mood caught me.

That evening people kept thronging our courtyard till far into the night. The process of casting the spell from Father's body was under way. They had even cut open his wound, allowing the blood to flow out after which they had applied potassium permanganate to the wound. I was satisfied.

The next morning Father had to go to the city to attend the court in connection with the hearing of a case against summons. About two kilometres from our village there was a bus service which took people to the city. There were only two or three services in the course of the whole day which meant that the buses came at long intervals. As Father gained the road he saw a tractor bound for the city. As the people on the tractor knew him they gave him a lift. It suited him. The tractor would reach the city in a matter of two hours or so, much before the court's opening time.

On the way they alluded to the mishap with Father at which he pulled up his dhoti and showed them the spot on his ankle where the tirich had bitten him. Pandit Ram Avtar was also going to the city by the same tractor. He told Father that the main characteristic of tirich poison was that it started taking effect twenty-four hours after the bite. He advised Father not to be complacent about it and take it for granted that all was well with him. The people accompanying Father drew his attention to another blunder on his part. According to them, he had done the right thing in killing the tirich but he should not have left the dead body alone. He should have burnt it there and then. They maintained that the dew that fell at night under moonlight had the properties of nectar and often insects and reptiles taken for dead regained life under the moon's light. Such reptiles on getting revived were out for revenge.

Father's companions on the tractor feared lest the tirich should revive in the night and after making water lie down in it. If such a thing came to pass, the poison would start playing havoc with Father's body exactly after twenty-four hours of the bite. They advised Father that he would do well to go back immediately and if with

luck, the tirich's dead body was still there he should burn it and reduce it to ashes.

But Father was adamant. He must attend the court for he was being summoned for the third time and if he failed to show up this time they would issue an unbailable warrant against him. The hearing related to his house in which he was presently living as a tenant. He had been a defaulter with his lawyer in the last two appearances and if the lawyer was careless this time and the judge got prejudiced against him, his own lawyer could connive in obtaining a decree against him.

Father was indeed in a quandary. But luckily for him Pandit Ram Avtar was also a *vaid*. Apart from preparing horoscopes and delving into the almanac he had a profound knowledge of medicinal plants and herbs. He assured Father that all was not lost. He could still appear at the court in connection with his case and also escape the consequences of the tirich's fatal bite. Pandit Ram Avtar told Father that according to the legendary Charak's formula poison killed poison. If he could obtain in good time the seeds of *dhatura* (thorn apple) he could prepare a concoction for him which could serve as an antidote to the tirich's poisonous bite.

The tractor made a brief halt at the next village named Samapur where they were able to locate some *dhatura* plants in an oil-seller's field. The *dhatura* seeds of the plant were finely powdered and boiled by adding an old copper coin to the mixture till it was reduced to a jelly-like paste. The concoction was extremely bitter and therefore Father washed it down with some tea to dilute its bitter taste. And that was that. To everyone's great relief, they had been able to avert a serious crisis.

Suddenly I recalled the third characteristic of tirich poison a couple of hours after Father had left for the city. It had some similarity with a serpentine trait which eventually led to the invention of the camera.

It was believed that while dying at the hands of a man, the serpent would have a last close look at its murderer and his image would get imprinted on the inner film of its eyes.

It often happened that another pair of serpents appeared on the scene subsequent to the serpent's death and recognised its murderer from the image imprinted on the dead serpent's retina. Thereafter, the entire tribe of serpents went in search of the murderer and avenged their companion's death.

A similar thing would have happened in Father's case and some other tirich would surely get a clue of the murderer by looking into the dead tirich's eyes. I felt sorry for Father. Why had he not given thought to this aspect of the matter? Oh, how grieviously he had erred! He should have completely shattered the tirich's eyes with a stone. But now it was too late for that. Father had gone to the city and now, as a dutiful son, it devolved upon me to make a search for the dead tirich in that vast jungle.

Taking with me a bottle of kerosene, a box of matches and a thick rod I set out for the jungle along with Thanu in search of the dead reptile.

We searched high and low but in vain. Thanu was disappointed.

Then I suddenly realised that I was very familiar with the whole locale. Every single tree here was known to me. It was here in my dream that I had several times made a bid to escape from a tirich. I looked around completely baffled. Yes, it was the very place I had been seeing in my dreams. A narrow nullah took off from here and flowed towards the south. There was a big boulder overlooking the nullah along which a big acacia tree grew. It had a big beehive in its branches. Looking at the tree one would think that it must be many centuries old. I knew the gray boulder very well. It remained half submerged in the water of the nullah during the rains. After the rains when the water receded, the crevices of the boulder were filled with mud from which all kinds of vegetation sprouted. A thin layer of moss covered the top of the boulder. A tirich lived in the uppermost crevice of this boulder. Thanu thought it was all a figment of my imagination. But the nullah was very much there and so were the acacia tree and the boulder. And lo and behold! A tirich was lying dead on the ground, a little away from the boulder. It was the same tirich that had been haunting me in my dreams and had now become Father's bane. A thrill of joy mixed with a spirit of vengeance coursed through my body.

Thanu and I duly burnt the tirich, its stench filling the air. I felt like shrieking. But I curbed my feelings lest I should come awake and all this should turn into a dream.

It was here that a tirich had chased me several times in my dreams. It was indeed surprising that in spite of having known its haunt for such a long time I had made no attempt to venture here and do it in.

Today I was feeling so buoyant with happiness.

Pandit Ram Avtar had told us that the tractor had crossed the city octroi post at about quarter to ten. They had to stop there for a short while to pay the toll tax and Father had availed of this opportunity to get down from the tractor and go some distance to make water. On returning he had complained of a slight reeling sensation in his head. He had taken that *dhatura* concoction about one and a half hours before. The tractor had left him in the city at about five minutes to ten. Mr. Nandlal, the schoolmaster of Palra village who was with Father on the tractor had told us that when Father got down from the tractor outside the Minerva Talkies he had complained that his throat was feeling parched. He was also looking agitated because he did not know the way to the city courts and he was chary of asking the people about it. It was not in his nature to accost strangers.

Another difficulty with Father was that though he could easily remember country paths he lost all sense of direction on city roads. He went to the city only on rare occasions. If at all he had to go, he would keep on postponing the visit till the last moment. On many occasions he left for the city, bag and baggage, and then returned from the bus-stand. He would say that he had missed the bus although we knew that nothing of the sort had happened. Father must have seen the bus coming and just at the nick of time he must have sat down somewhere by the roadside to make water. Or he might have gone to the paan-shop to buy a paan. Then noticing that the bus was just going to start he might have lingered at the shop a wee bit longer making a dash for the bus when it had actually started moving and then giving up in despair after running a few steps. In doing so, he must be labouring under the illusion that he had missed the bus due to no fault of his. While we were under the impression that by now he must have reached the city he would fling a surprise at us by mounting a retreat. Such was Father!

So at about seven minutes past ten Father got down near Minerva Talkies, or right in front of the Singh Watch Company to be more exact. And from that time onward till six in the evening, we have only a hazy idea of Father's movements and activities, most of them based on conjecture and what we could gather from people after cursory inquiries. After one's death, specially if the death is unexpected and takes place under unusual circumstances one can assemble this sort of information. The details may be hazy or imprecise but the outline is generally more or less correct. So this is how things went with Father on Wednesday, the 17th May, 1972 from ten in the morning to six in the evening.

According to Mr. Nandlal of Palra village as soon as Father got down from the tractor, he complained of a parched throat. Before this when he had got down from the tractor near the octroi post to relieve himself he had said something about a faint reeling sensation in his head. Which meant that the *dhatura* concoction had started doing its job. As it is, it was now two hours that he had consumed the concoction. It is my surmise that on reaching the city two hours after consuming the thing, Father must have felt awfully thirsty and he must have gone to some nearby wayside eating-house for a drink of water to assuage his thirst. But as was his habit, he must have stood outside the eating-house, undecided, apparently making up his mind whether to ask for water or not. He told us that once when in the city he had asked for a glass of water from an eating-house, the servant had turned him away, hurling an abuse after him. Father was extremely sensitive in such matters. He must have suppressed his thirst and moved away from there.

It is not known what Father did between ten-fifteen to about 11 o'clock. There is no information available on this point. For that matter nothing untoward seems to have happened during that period of which one could take notice. In a city no one cares to know who is going on a road and why. However, I am inclined to think that meanwhile Father must have asked someone the way to the courts and it must have occurred to him once he was there he would ask his lawyer, S.N. Agarwal for some water. The people from whom he had asked the way to the courts must have shrugged him off or they might have given him vague directions which must have only added to Father's confusion. Such things do happen in a city where people are always in a hurry.

It is my surmise that during this period of three quarters of an hour, the *dhatura* concoction must have worked further on Father's mind. The heat of May and the thirst must have, if anything, aggravated his condition. His feet must have faltered and it would be no surprise if his head had again started reeling.

At eleven Father had entered the State Bank of India situated on Deshbandhu Marg. As to why he went there, one can think of no precise reason. Ramesh Dutt of our village is a clerk in the Land Development Cooperative Bank. It is possible that while passing by only the word 'Bank' had registered on his mind and he had mistakenly entered the State Bank. He had gone without water till then and he must have thought that he would ask Ramesh Dutt for a glass of water and also the way to the courts. He would also tell him in passing that his head was reeling. And in addition, that last evening he had been bitten by a tirich. It transpired that at that time the State Bank cashier, Agnihotri, was checking the Cash Register. He had 28 thousand rupees in currency notes lying on his table in small wads. It must have been two or three minutes past eleven when Father entered the bank. His face was smeared with dust and must have looked terrifying. It is said he had muttered something to Agnihotri in a loud voice which had scared him out of his wits. Ordinarily, people cannot reach a cashier's table easily, much less a person with Father's appearance. Agnihotri had maintained that if he had seen Father a minute or two in advance of his walking in, he would not have felt as scared as he did. But at that time he was engrossed in checking his Cash Register. He looked up as Father blurted out something and a shiver ran down his spine on seeing Father standing before his table. He shrieked and rang the bell resting on his table.

According to the bank peons, two chowkidars and some other employees of the bank suddenly became alert on hearing the cashier's shriek and ran towards him. By that time a Nepalese chowkidar had overpowered Father. He dragged him towards the common room, raining blows on him. A peon named Ram Kishore, aged about forty-five or so thought that a drunkard had barged his way into the bank or it could also be a lunatic. Since he was on duty at the main entrance, the Manager could have charge-sheeted him for dereliction of duty But as it happened, while Father was being beaten he started talking in English which only increased the peon's

suspicion. Mr. Mehta, the Assistant Branch Manager whose attention had been drawn by this hullabaloo instructed his men to thoroughly search Father before letting him off.

According to the peon, Ram Kishore, Father's face had assumed a terrifying look. It was smeared with dust and he was smelling of vomit. The peons denied that he was given a beating. But according to Bunna, who had his shop right opposite the bank's main entrance maintained that when Father emerged from the bank at about eleven-thirty his clothes were torn and there was a gash on his lower lip from which he was bleeding. His eyes were swollen and there were dark circles under them which were fast turning blue.

After that, that is from eleven-thirty till one o'clock there is no information as to where Father went and what he did. Yes, Bunna, the aforesaid man who had his shop in front of the bank entrance, came up with another piece of information even though he was not quite explicit about it. Maybe he had been intimidated by the employees of the bank not to reveal the facts. He said that on emerging from the bank perhaps (he was laying much emphasis on the word 'perhaps') Father had complained that he had been deprived of his papers and cash by the bank employees. Bunna said perhaps Father had actually meant something else and had not been able to express himself properly due to his injured lip. He was salivating heavily and did not seem to be in his proper frame of mind.

My own conjecture is that by that time the concoction had completely befuddled Father's brain though Pandit Ram Avtar vehemently refuted this point. His plea was that on the occasion of the Holi festival people drink *bhang* laced with *dhatura* seeds and it does not have any deleterious effect on the human brain. Nobody turns mad on that account. At least no such thing had come to his knowledge. According to him the tirich poison had now started affecting Father's brain. Or it could as well be that he had received a head injury while the Nepalese chowkidar and other bank employees were belabouring him and the mental shock had unhinged his mind. But to my mind, Father was fairly normal in his mind at that time and was trying hard to get out of the city. Maybe it had occurred to him to go back to the bank and retrieve his papers and money but his nerve had failed him at the last moment. Besides, he might have been scared too. It was for the first time in his life that he had come in for such a beating which had rendered him incapable of thinking coherently. From his very childhood Father had remained lean and thin and had off and on manifested symptoms of appendicitis. Or maybe by then the poison had taken such a strong hold of his mind that it had started wandering, precluding the capacity to dwell on one point for long. Thoughts rose in his mind like water bubbles and vanished before he could grasp them clearly. Perhaps that also accounted for his walking about aimlessly. Knowing Father as I did, I could guess that even in this welter of mental chaos, and howsoever nebulous in its concept, his foremost thought was to return to his village with the least delay.

Father had reached the police station at about quarter past one. The police station is on the outskirts of the city in the vicinity of the Circuit House and very close to the Victory Pillar. The surprising part of the whole thing is that the courts are not far from the police station and if Father wanted to, he could have easily walked that distance to the courts. Now that he had come as far as the police station did he still think of making it to the courts? But there was a snag—all his papers relating to his case were missing.

The Station House Officer, Raghvendra Pratap Singh said that it was about fifteen minutes past one and he was preparing to have his lunch which was brought to him from home. For lunch he had *parathas* and *karelas* which he heartily disliked. He was wondering what to do with these *karelas* when he saw Father coming in. There was no shirt on his back and his trousers were also torn. It appeared he had had a fall or had hit against some vehicle. At that time there was only one constable present at the police station—Jagadhar Prasad Sharma—who thought that a beggar had walked into the police station. But before he could stop him, he had reached the SHO's table. The officer was already in a bad mood on account of those darned *karelas*. He was so resentful of his wife. Even in the course of their 13 years of wedded life she had not learnt about her husband's likes and dislikes in food which was indeed most exasperating. He had just taken the first bite of his food when in walked Father. His face was covered with vomit and also from the shoulders downwards his body was exuding a powerful stench. When he asked Father what was he doing there he made some reply of which the SHO failed to make any head or tail. Subsequently the SHO deeply regretted at not having probed into the matter. If he had known that the man was from the village Vaheli and was a *pradhan* and a retired school teacher he would have certainly detained him at the police station for a couple of hours till he was in a fit condition to take care of himself. Or he would have sent him to the hospital. But he took him for a madman and thought that he had walked in seeing him eating. So he asked the constable in a huff to do his job, who taking a hint from his officer threw Father out of the room. The constable said that he had not beaten Father. He had noticed that Father's lower lip was badly cut and there were scratches on his chin which could have resulted from a fall. His elbows were also grazed. Surely, he must have had a serious mishap somewhere.

Nobody could tell where Father had wandered about for an hour and a half after leaving the police station. It is difficult to say whether in the course of the day since his arrival in the city in the morning he had drunk water or not. It seems to be a remote possibility. It is quite likely that by that time his brain had become so addled that he could not even envisage the necessity of drinking water to quench his thirst. Now that he had somehow managed to reach the police station, even in that mental darkness, despite the ravages of the intoxicant, he must have feebly felt the necessity of making it to his village or at least lodging a report about the loss of his papers and money. To get to the crux of the matter he had perhaps to contend against so many odds, all of them bewildering in the extreme. Father was not only fighting against the poison of the tirich but was also deeply absorbed in thinking of ways and means to save his house. Perhaps in that state of his mind he had begun to think that what was happening was merely a dream and as such he must have made a valiant attempt to get out of it.

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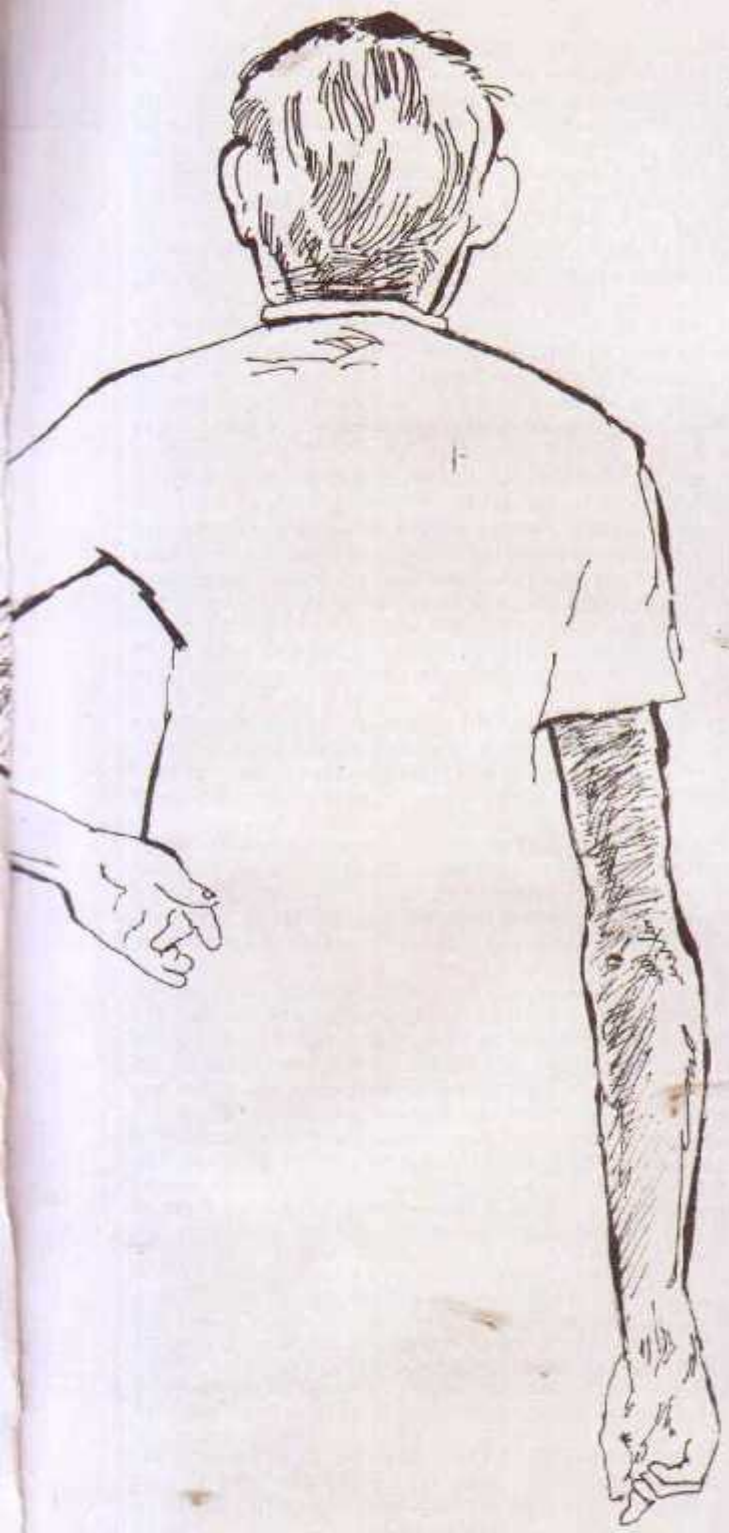
At about two-fifteen Father was seen dragging his feet in the posh Itwari Colony situated on the northern skirts of the city. It is inhabited by jewellers, PWD contractors, businessmen, retired government officials and



the like. Some affluent newspapermen and poets have also their houses in this colony. The place has always remained peaceful and quiet. To see Father wandering about in the colony in that state seemed to have created some stir. He was only wearing an underwear, not a stitch of any other cloth covering his body. The string of his striped underwear had probably broken and he was all the time hitching up his underwear with his left hand. They all thought a madman had strayed into their colony. He would often stop in his tracks and start hurling abuses in the air. Later on Mr. Soni, a retired tehsildar and presently the special correspondent of the leading local newspaper and the poet Satendra Thapliyal, also a resident of the colony said that they had carefully listened to what the man was saying. They were not abuses but he was only repeatedly saying in English, "I'm Ram Swarath Prasad, an ex-school headmaster and head pradhan of village Vaheli." The poet Thapliyal was greatly pained at what was happening to a good man before his very eyes. But unfortunately he had immediately to leave for Delhi to attend a special musical programme organised by the American Embassy. Mr. Soni said that he felt sorry for the man. Some boys of the colony were after him and he severely rebuked them for harassing a poor man in this manner but they flung back at him the retort that he was no poor man but a scoundrel who had an eye on the goldsmith Ram Ratan Saraf's wife and sister-in-law and had come here with an evil design to molest them. Mr. Soni said that he was inclined to believe the boys for the man really looked like a *badmash* and could be up to any mischief. The boys kept harassing him while he persisted in telling them that he was Ram Swarath Prasad, ex-school headmaster...

On a rough calculation Father must have walked a distance of 30 to 32 kilometres from the time he got down from the tractor near Minerva Talkies in the morning till he reached Itwari Colony through a circuitous route covering Deshbandhu Marg, the Circuit House, Victory Pillar and the police station. The way to Itwari Colony did not lie in a straight line and he had to make many detours and diversions to reach it. Being a little demented, Father could have easily wandered off course making the situation worse confounded. As for the charge against Father that he had some evil design against those two women and which allegation had passed muster with Mr. Soni, one can only surmise that he must have gone to those women to ask for a drink of water or to enquire about the way to the road leading to Vaheli village. As generally happens in the case of demented people, Father must have had his lucid moments. But seeing a dreadful figure hovering so close to them these women must have panicked. As it is, the injury on his right eyebrow from which blood had been trickling down into his eye must have taken place in Itwari Colony. As reports went street-urchins had been pelting stones at him for sheer fun.

But the place where Father received the most grievous hurt is not far from Itwari Colony. Those urchins had been following Father right from Itwari Colony and they had been joined by some bigger boys on the way. They had ultimately cornered him on a vacant plot of land near National Restaurant, a cheap eating place. A boy named Satte, who worked in the restaurant told us that Father had made a terrible mistake which had cost

him dearly. In anger, he had started throwing stones at his tormentors and one of those stones had hit an eight-year old boy named Vishi Agarwal and the doctor had to put many stitches to his wound. According to Satte, after that the crowd adopted a most threatening attitude towards Father, ending in indiscriminate stone-throwing at him. Sardar Satnam Singh, the proprietor of National Restaurant told us that at that time Father was only wearing an underwear. The rib cage of his chest was clearly showing and the gray hair on his chest had got ruffled. His stomach had shrivelled and his body was covered with dust. Blood was oozing from his right eyebrow and the lower lip. "How could I know that he was a simple, straight-forward and a responsible man of means?" Satnam Singh said regretfully.

Hari, the hotel boy, who washed cups and plates said that in between Father was roundly abusing the crowd, calling it a gang of rascals and all that. But I am positive he could not have used such language. We had never heard him bringing such filthy words to his lips.

Knowing Father as I did, I could say with utmost conviction that Father felt that what was happening was not real; that it was a phantasmagoria, the events coming thick and fast in a weird and incoherent order.

He must have thought it was all incredible nonsense, that he had never come to the city, that he had not been bitten by a tirich, that a tirich had, in fact, no existence, that it was nothing but a silly superstition invented by an idle brain. As for the *dhatura* concoction, it was so ridiculous indeed. Imagine, going in search of a shrub in an oilman's field of all blooming places.

I can imagine Father must also be having quite often that labyrinthine, subterranean, unending dream which so frequently visited me in my sleep. Like son, like father—we had so much in common.

To cut the matter short, Father must have realised once for all that it was all a fantasy, something unreal and imaginary and he was trying to wriggle out of it. In the process, it would be no wonder if he had even used abusive language, hoping that he may be able to take flight out of this fantasy on the wings of strong and provocative words. As Sardar Satnam Singh said—and his servants added in corroboration of their master's statement—Father had been badly mauled at that place. The stones and bricks had hit him on his temple, forehead, the back and other parts of his body. Sanjay, the twenty-two year old son of the road contractor, Arora, had beaten Father with an iron rod. According to Satte, the hotel boy, so much beating would have killed a man on the spot.

The thought that Father must have become insensate to all this pain gave me great comfort and restored my runaway breathing to its normal rhythm. I was convinced that Father must be labouring under the illusion that he was only having a dream and as soon as he woke up from it, all would be well with him. On opening his eyes he would find Mother sweeping the courtyard or his eyes would land on me, on my younger brother and sister as we lay asleep on the floor by the side of his bed.

As I look afresh at the whole thing I can't help thinking that there must have been a strong reason why Father had started throwing stones at those boys. He must have felt that he was casting these stones in a dream and they were not going to hurt any of those boys. Perhaps he was keenly waiting for one of those stones to shatter one of the boy's brain which would give him a terrible jolt and wake him up out of his nightmare which would then lie reduced to smithreens before his eyes, allowing the light of the world of reality to invade his mind from all sides.

The occasion was also marked by a strange coincidence. Pandit Kanghai Ram, the sarpanch of our village panchayat and Father's childhood friend happened to be passing by the National Restaurant at that time. He was in a rickshaw and was in a hurry to reach the next crossing from where he had to catch a bus bound for our village. Sitting in his rickshaw he heard some hullabaloo and then learnt that a person was being beaten by the crowd. He was in half a mind to stop the rickshaw and find out for himself what this rumpus was about but changed his mind on learning that it was a Pakistani spy who had been caught poisoning the public water reservoir. Just then Pandit Kanghai Ram saw his bus coming in the distance and asked the rickshaw-puller to hurry up to enable him to catch the oncoming bus. It was the last bus going in the direction of his village and he did not want to miss it. If the bus had come a little later he would have got down from his rickshaw to enquire and would have certainly recognised Father. The government roadway buses generally run half hour or forty-five minutes behind schedule but as ill-luck would have it this bus was running on time.

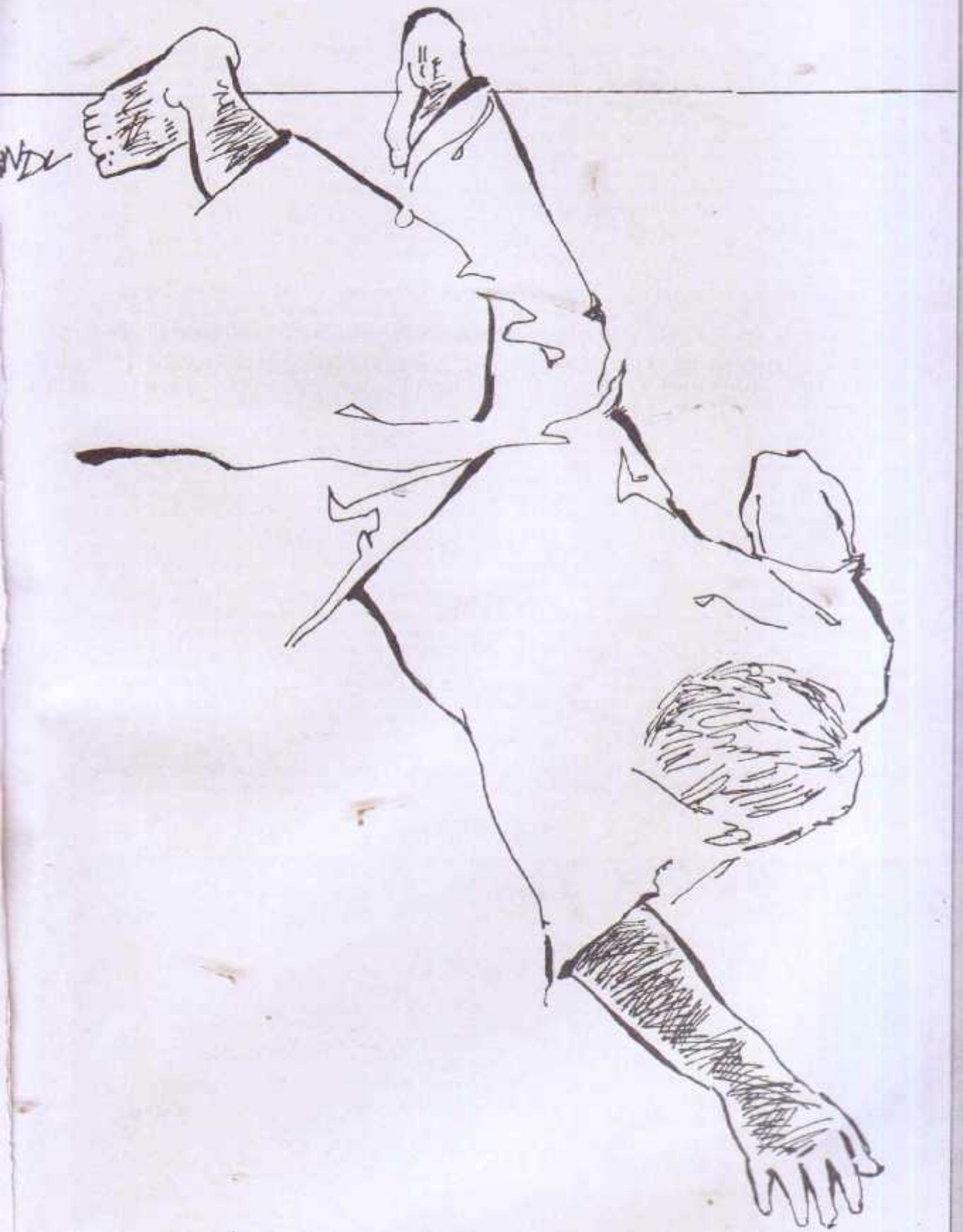
* * *

According to Satnam Singh, the crowd in front of the National Restaurant dispersed only when Father showed no sign of getting up from the ground. A big stone had hit him on his temple and he had started bleeding from his mouth. He had also been hurt in his head. Satnam Singh further said that when Father did not stir for a long time, one of the boys remarked that he must be dead. When Father did not move even after fifteen minutes of the dispersal of the crowd Satnam Singh asked his servant to sprinkle water on Father's face. If he had only passed out the cold water may revive him. But Satte was afraid of the police and Satnam Singh himself poured a bucketful of water on Father's face. Since he had splashed water over him from a distance the ground under his body had become slushy, and had clung to his body.

Both Satnam Singh and Satte had maintained that Father had kept lying there till five. The police had not appeared on the scene till then. Fearing that he may get involved in the rigmarole of *panchnama* and all that Satnam closed his restaurant and went away to the Delite Cinema to see the film, *Aan Milo Sajna*.

It was going on to be six when Father thrust his head into Ganeshwa cobbler's small hovel. There was a line of small hovels ranged along the footpath of the Civil Lines occupied by cobblers. Ganeshwa was from our village and lived in one of those hovels. Originally, he lived in an isolated colony of our village across the village pond.

As Father shoved his head into Ganeshwa's small cabin-like hovel the fellow got terribly scared. Father was stark naked. Even his underwear was missing from his body. Father was looking so grotesque and horrible that Ganeshwa failed to recognise him and ran out of his hovel in panic, raising an alarm which brought out the other cobblers from their hovels. In no time a crowd gathered outside Ganeshwa's hovel. They found Father



half reclining on a heap of broken shoes, strips of raw hide and pieces of rubber. His head was limply resting against the wall. His breathing was slow and laboured. He was pulled out of the hovel onto the footpath. It was only then that Ganeshwa recognised Father. It was said that he shouted into his ear but there was no response. A long time after he just mumbled, 'Ram Swarath Prasad' and 'Vaheli'. And then he again lapsed into silence.

Father had died around quarter past six. Date: 17 May 1972. About twenty-four hours earlier he had been bitten by a tirich in the jungle. Twenty-four hours earlier could Father anticipate his death in this manner?

The police arranged to get Father's dead body placed in the morgue. The post-mortem revealed fracture of bones in many places. His left eye was completely shattered. His collar-bone was broken. His death had occurred due to mental shock and excessive bleeding. According to the medical report his stomach was empty which meant that he must have vomited out that *dhatura* concoction before it could prove fatal.

Thanu asserts that he has unequivocally made his point that nobody can survive a tirich's bite. This particular tirich had done its miraculous job exactly twenty-four hours after it bit Father. Pandit Ram Avtar was also of the same view. Perhaps he wanted to convince himself that the administration of *dhatura* seeds had nothing to do with Father's death.

It is my surmise that in the end when Ganeshwa shouted into Father's ear he woke up from his dream. He must have seen me, Mother, my brother and my younger sister. Then he must have taken his tooth-pick and proceeded towards the river where he must have washed his face with the cold river water, rinsed his mouth and wiped out that terrible dream from his mind. The thought of going to the court must have been uppermost in his mind, to the exclusion of everything else. He was all the time worrying about our house.

But at this juncture I wish to say something about my own dream which troubles me so frequently in my sleep. It goes something like this: Walking along the village path and then along the abutments I at last find myself in the jungle. I look at the nullah and then my gaze travels to the acacia tree growing along its bank. My eyes linger over the gray boulder which remains submerged under water during the rains. I suddenly find a tirich lying dead on the boulder and a ripple of joy surges through my body. So it is dead at last! I pick up a stone and crash it repeatedly on the dead body reducing it to pulp. Thanu is standing by my side, holding a bottle of kerosene. He has also got a matchbox. Then I suddenly find that I am not standing on the boulder. Thanu is also not there nor is there a jungle. I am in fact in the city. My clothes are soiled and dirty and in tatters. They are almost falling apart. My cheekbones stand out and my hair is unkempt and dishevelled. I am feeling thirsty. I try to speak. Perhaps I want to know the way to my village, Vaheli. Then there is suddenly an uproar all around me. Bells toll, thousands of bells. I run.

I run for my very life and start panting. My lungs swell. I walk with teetering steps and then in long strides. I try to fly but the crowd is almost going to overtake me. A strange, heavy breeze benumbs my senses. I feel the last gasp of death. And then that fateful moment arrives which will mark the end of my life...

I cry. I try to run away. Even in my sleep my whole body is drenched in perspiration. I try to speak at the top of my voice to wake myself up. I resolutely want to believe that it is just a dream and as soon as I open my eyes everything will be all right. I try to open my eyes wide and look deep down into the dream and then into the far distance. But before I can do that the fateful moment is upon me....

Mother looks at me through the window. Then she comes in, fondles my forehead and covers me up with a quilt. I am left alone to fend for myself. To save myself from my own dissolution. I cringe, I cry, I run to save myself from death.

Mother says I am still in the habit of shrieking and muttering in my sleep. But I wish to ask her—and this question keeps tantalising me all the time—why don't I dream about the tirich any more?

THE END

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ANSWERS TO PANORAMA QUERY

1. Saint Nizamuddin.
2. When he was informed that Sultan Ghiasuddin was about to enter Delhi after his expedition to Bengal.
3. Because he could not really enter Delhi. A huge pavilion raised to receive him collapsed on him, killing him on the spot.
4. In 1738 the Persian invader Nadir Shah took it away.
5. At Hajo, 24 km from Gauhati.
6. *Adbhuta Ramayana*. It narrates the childhood story of Sita.
7. Guru Nanak.
8. Sri Chaitanya Dev.
9. Sankaracharya.
10. Ramagiri.

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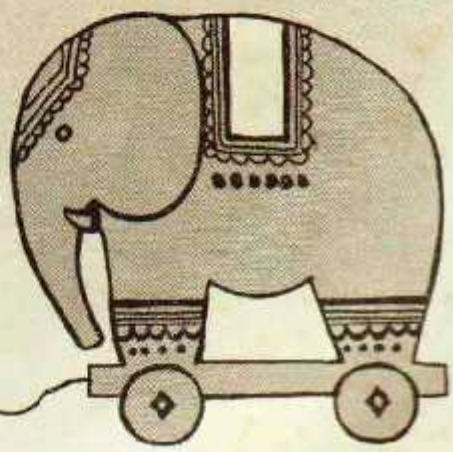

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