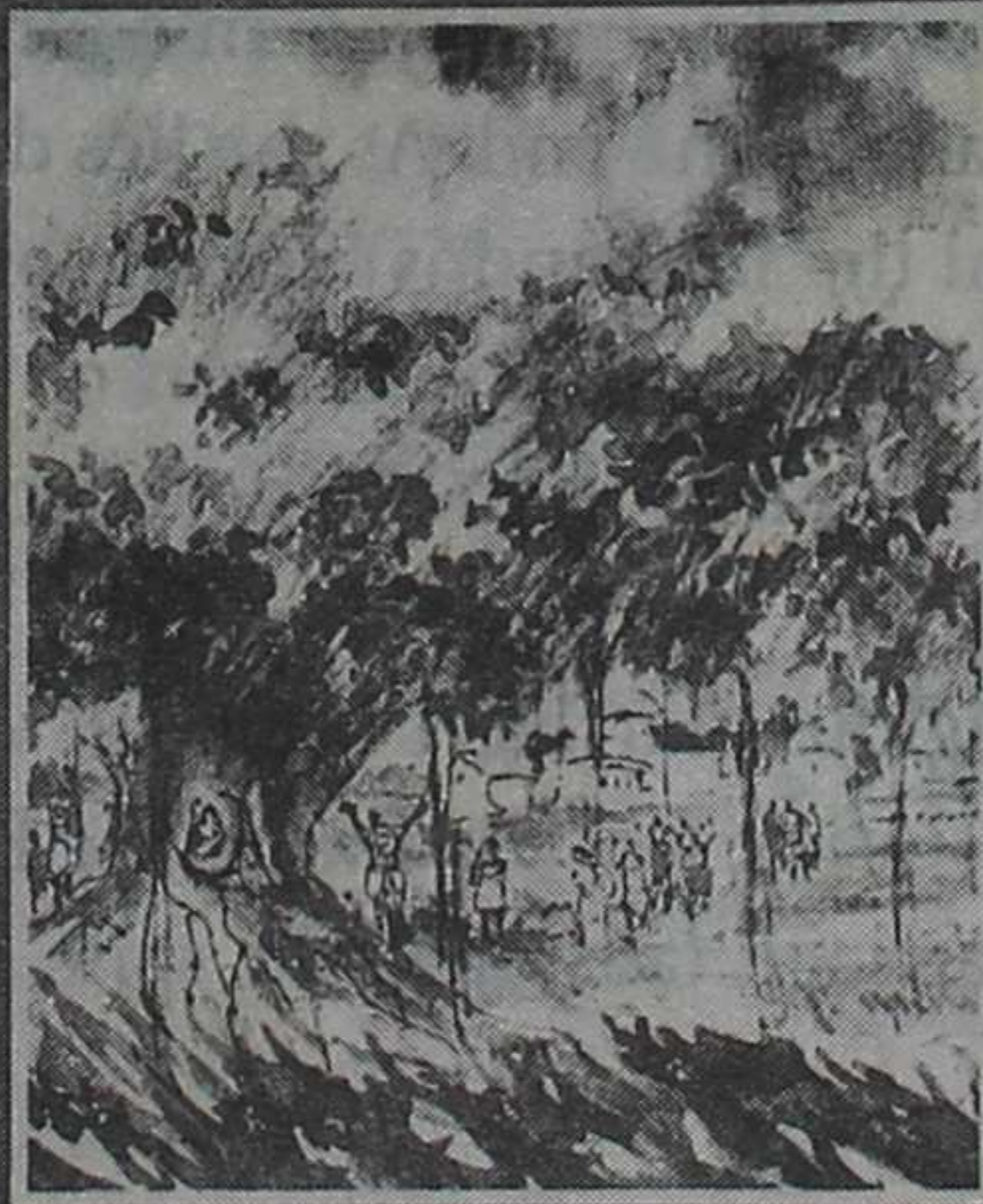


miserably. In this search for significance many of Das' characters affirm more than anything else their right to exist, to be accepted as they are. In 'The Concubine' some ambitious would-be journalists decide to expose a campaigner for the local ex-prince as his father's concubine. Instead of smothering her in shame the accusation made by them during a meeting only pleases her. They have publicly recognised her significance! Little wonder that the would-be journalists decide to give up investigative journalism.

This is almost emblematic of Das' world. His stories are not forays into the under or overgrowth of the soul. He is not even overly interested in depicting the complexities of relationships. His is a world of vignettes which illustrate the given pluralities of life that people have to accept, conditions of life which can perhaps never be explained but

FAREWELL TO A GHOST MANOJ DAS



'Manoj Das... will certainly take a place on my shelves beside the stories of Narayan. I imagine Orissa is far from Malgudi, but there is the same quality in his stories, with perhaps an added 'mystery'
Graham Greene

which you have to come to terms with. A politician who once loses his dhoti when he runs from a girl's room meets her years later

and she returns his carefully preserved clothing as well as his sense of honour to him. No questions, no analyses. And the politician now feels able to retire from public life. Acknowledgement of unrealised possibilities has a weight equivalent to real experience.

Ultimately, though they do not lack humour, though the stories to a large extent manage to engage your sympathies, they retain a certain distance and remain but charming. They can and do slip into a naive idealism. The reader will catch him/herself saying that if only things were like this now...as if they were so once! Das' language doesn't work all the time either but perhaps that adds to his charm. Definitely a writer and a book worth reading.

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