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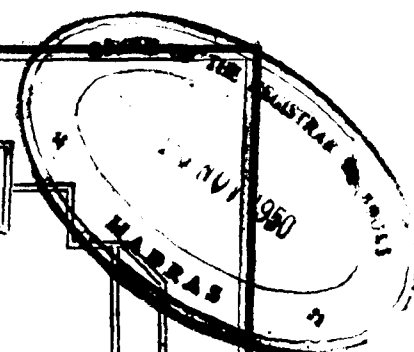
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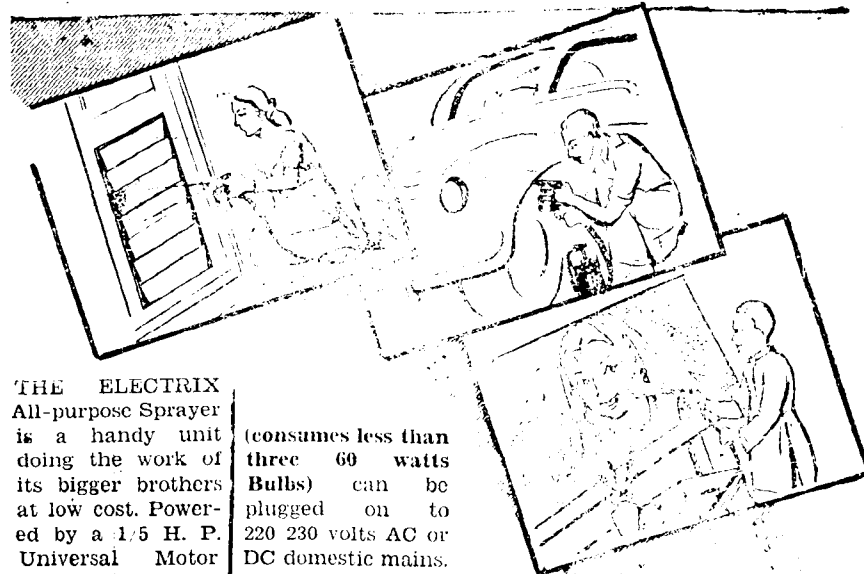
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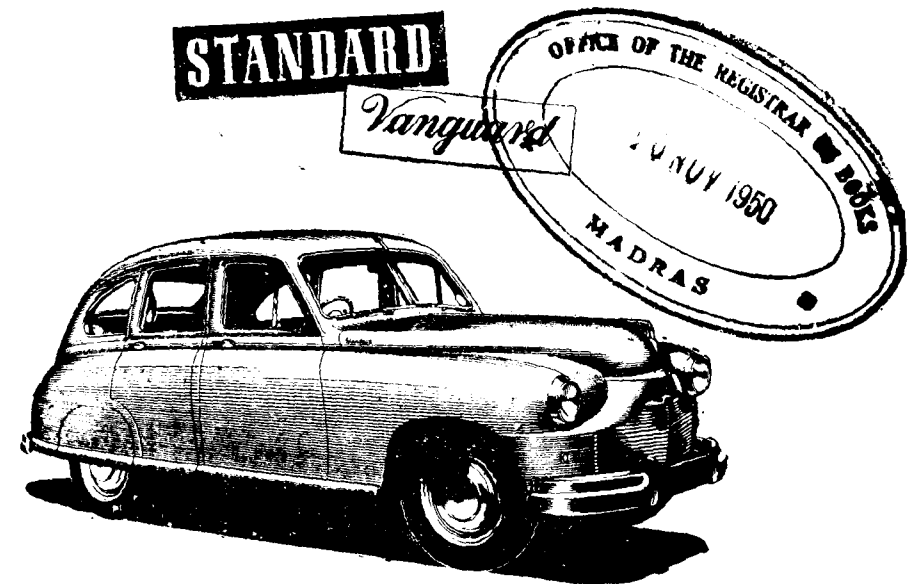
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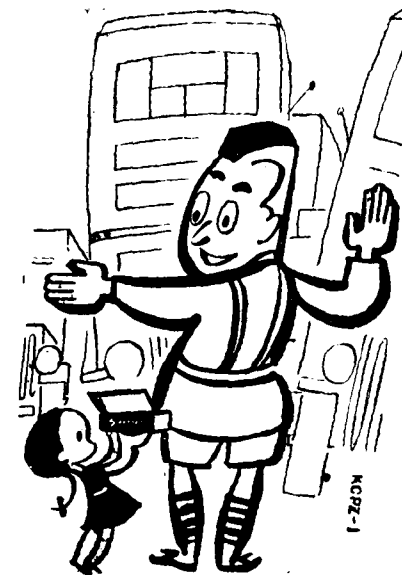
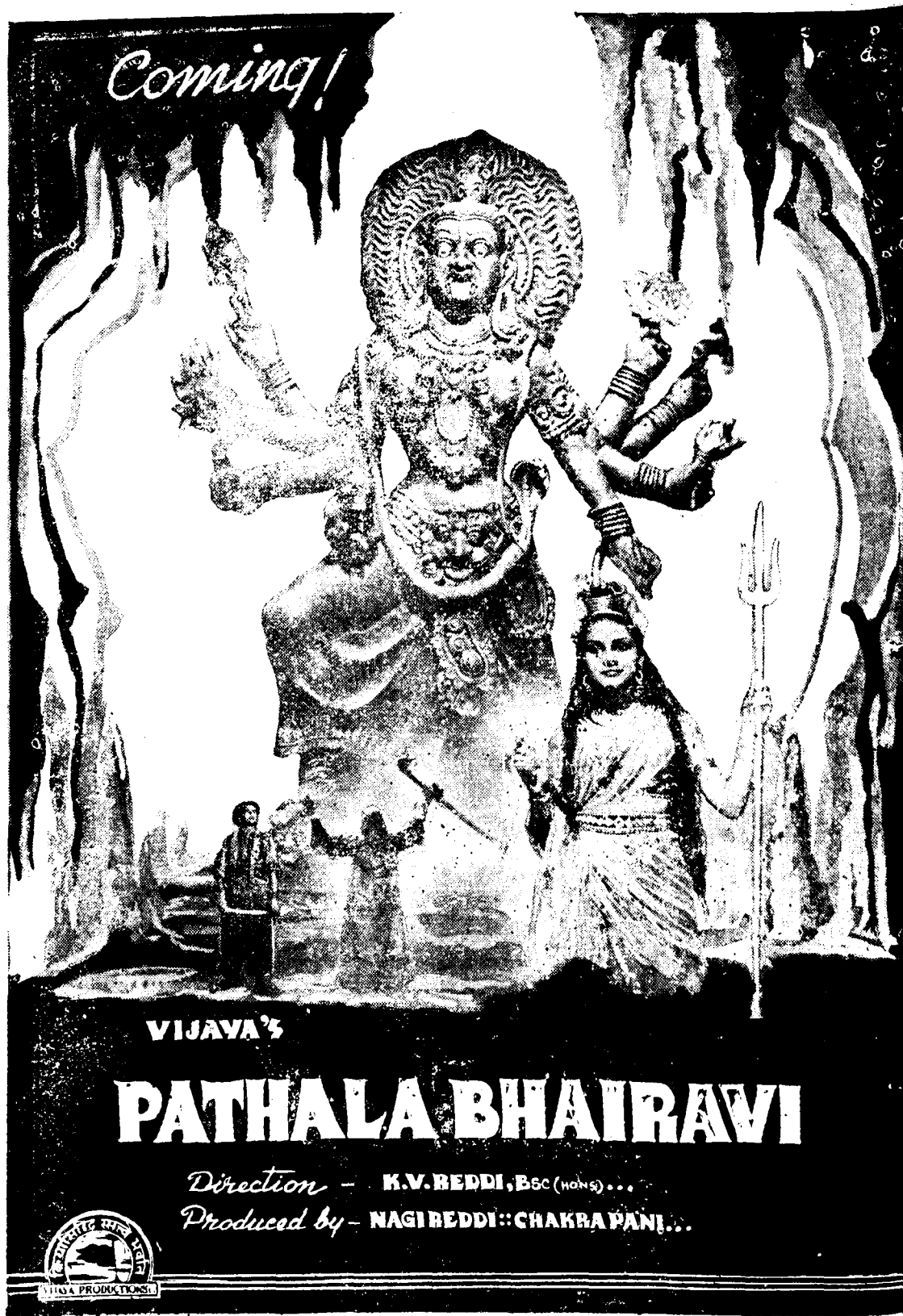
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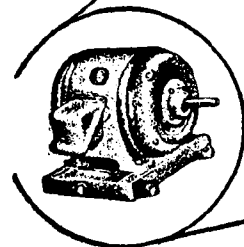
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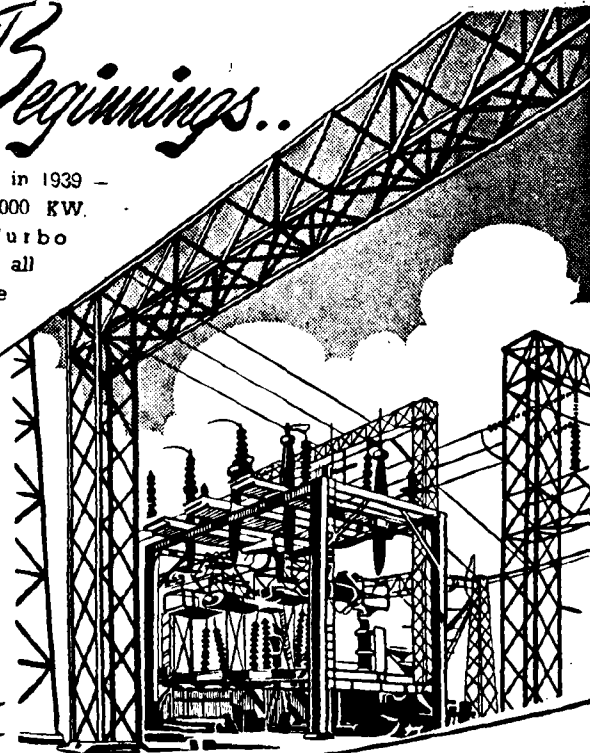
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## FROM POWER TO CORRUPTION

HAVING passed on from service to power, the Congress, the ruling party in the country, has registered lately a further change towards corruption and disintegration. The popular attitude to the Congress is no longer what it was three years ago. Then there was hope of great things to come. Now there is discontent, disillusionment and the beginning of hatred. The great name of Pandit Nehru, Prime Minister and titular leader of the Congress, retains still its magic hold on the millions. But he has ceased to be a figure commanding trust for strength. High principles are conceded to him by everybody. He asserts them quite frequently. But when it comes to applying them to practice, his will falters, and other hands deftly take charge of the situation and manipulate it in quite a different way. The Congress has assumed in public estimation the aspect of a house divided against itself. While Pandit Nehru has all the glory, power belongs to another group—a fascist group of inflexible determination to retain in its own hands the reins of control. It is this group which rules the country. The machinery of the Congress organisation is in its grip. Sardar Patel as its chief allows Pandit Nehru an illusion of mastery, and the Prime Minister, conscious of it, chafes, struggles and fights, and eventually gives way, while his masterful colleague continually decorates him with emblems of barren victory to assuage his pride.

Pandit Nehru is thus the prisoner of forces which he is unable to control. They control the Government while he covers them with the glamour of his own great name. This process cannot go on for ever, and people have begun to make a distinction between Nehru and the Congress, loving the leader and distrusting the institution. The curious destiny of bolstering up an organisation that has served its purpose has devolved on Nehru, and the tragic irony of it lies in the fact that it has foisted on him a reactionary role though he is the very reverse of a reactionary. There is a strange blend of loyalty to the Mahatma in Pandit Nehru's tortured clinging to the Congress, and to it must be attributed his lapse from the supreme summit of leadership where there should be no hesitation to break the mould when the soul has departed from it.

In this set-up, the evils of the Congress regime have been many, and its blessings negligible. It has failed to improve the condition of the people. It has destroyed the efficiency of the first-rate administrative machinery that it inherited. It has

replaced rules with nepotism. It has used its power, not with fairness and restraint, comprehensively for the benefit of all, but illiberally and at times meanly for the advancement of its own adherents. It has become exacting in the matter of taxation without showing any corresponding increase of benefit for the taxed. Its economic policies have wavered between opposite extremes and made a mess of trade and industry.

It is in the ministers and the legislators that the character of the regime is most faithfully illustrated. Apart from the exception that prove the rule, our legislators are a very depressing lot. Few of them are qualified by knowledge, wisdom or capacity for the posts they adorn. Many of them are renowned black-marketeers. No title nowadays conjures up in the public mind so much of contempt and detestation as that of M. L. A. No wonder, since so many of the M. L. As. have made themselves conspicuous as commission agents of corruption far more interested in making profit out of their positions than serving the public interest with diligence. As might be expected this type of legislator has given rise to corresponding specimens of ministers, particularly in the States. Congressmen that had rendered the greatest national service in the pre-office days are shoved out of the ministries as a rule. Preferment has gone to charlatans, clever vote-catchers, vicious communalists and sick men that ought to be compulsorily retired. These have destroyed in record time the enormous stock of public goodwill that the Congress had to its credit at the time of its assumption of office.

The press which should be the guardian of democratic liberties, is torn by jealousies and factions. The major part of the daily press is in wrong hands. Its prime concern is profit. It has allowed the prodigious corruption to go on without adequate remonstrance. In some parts of Andhra now, there is rapacious police raj, no security of life, and in some cases prisoners in police custody have been killed in cold blood. Yet not a word of what is going on appears in the great daily newspapers. Occasional criticism of the ministry's misdemeanours is confined to some of the so-called small papers which have less of the nervousness that pertains to the property sense, but the hand of official persecution has been laid heavy on these. It pays to support Government, and there is no end to the injury that touchy and unprincipled ministers can and do cause to the critical section of the press. The crusader for justice is a forlorn phenomenon in the press of independent India, which in the struggle for existence, or else the craze for gain, has shown marked preference for safe courses that are lucrative rather than strenuous duties that are risky, and the net result is that crooks that ought to be jailed adorn the seats of power with impunity.

If Godse killed Gandhi and was hanged for it, there are unhung pretenders of the Gandhian creed that stab him in the back every day by abusing from high positions the freedom and power he brought to the nation,—and are honoured for it with rose garlands from many a public platform.

# LUNAR



## *SOTTO VOCE* EPISODE

*Scene: Somewhere on the flat-faced moon bathed in ghostly twilight, known in the local dialect as "the blues."*

*Time: Indra has diplomatically retired from the Lunar Heaven, leaving the autochthonous Mitra-Varuna to boss the show.*

*Two lunar gods complete with aureole and airy high-heeled shoes, returning from a great party meet, greet each other.*

*First God: Mitra ki jai*

*Second God: Varuna ki jai*

*Both together: Mitra-Varuna ki-jai*

*F. G.: Well met, friend. We have seen great things happen.*

*S. G. (portentously): All's well that ends well.*

*F. G.: Amen! But it was a near shave, let me tell you. If the great gods Mitra and Varuna had not seen the imperative need for a firm accord, who knows, the unmentionable fiends of the deep might have risen in revolt and laid waste our fair Heaven.*

*S. G.: The fowls of the air are no less abominable, let me tell you, and they are far more agile in attack.*

*F. G.: But the gods themselves are dangerously divided, when what is needed is a united front. Look at that feather-weight Vayu whose bellyful of words blow about as lightly as his beard. I was afraid that out of sheer wantonness he might blow a gale.*

*S. G.: But Vayu means well. He is Varuna's loyal friend. You must not forget his yeoman services in the great fight against Indra. And his latest performance shows that words can be cushions as well as barbs.*

*F. G.: Oh, you mean he sang small. That was because Mitra the high-souled put the fear of God into him, let me tell you. He demanded the unconditional surrender of the malcontents and he*

*got it. That was a personal triumph, if ever there was one.*

*S. G. (with the suspicion of a smile): But you forget Varuna, who is fathomless as the ocean. They ask and ask. He smileth and is still.*

*F. G. (combatively): If you are suggesting that Varuna can stand up to the mighty Mitra in a fair fight, you are vastly mistaken.*

*S. G.: Don't fret yourself, friend. The days of knights-errant and single combats are gone, though Mitra in his ivory tower does not understand this. Great is the inertia of the gods and Varuna is her chosen vehicle.*

*(At this the first god lowers his head like a bull about to charge. Just then, following a streak of silvery laughter, there glides down a moon-beam and lands plump between them, a Sardonic Sprite armed with notebook and pencil.)*

*S. S.: Halt. I thought I had left sorrow and strife behind me with my vile body. But these gods are not exactly chummy with each other. It is clear that they have been corrupted by miasmas from the earth. Hullo, what's all the pother about?*

*F. G. & S. G. (simultaneously): And how the devil is that your concern?*

*S. S. (tapping his notebook): I am a journalist, as you see.*

F. G. & S. G.: We see nothing and we don't care who you are. You have no business here.

S. S. (drawling): How do you know?

F. G. & S. G.: But this is Heaven and (that thing in your hand shows clearly that you are an intruder. Besides, you have neither the aureole nor the airy shoes that proclaim the god.

S. S.: They will come by and by. I have applied for a permit for the regalia; reckoning by our human standards I take it I shall get it in a year or two.

F. G. & S. G. (both stepping back as if stung by a scorpion): Great Mitra-Varuna! This is a human!! We thought we were free from the invasion of that vermin at least.

S. S.: Hoity-toity! Keep a civil tongue in your head, will you? When they put me on this assignment I little thought that I would go so far only to meet such boors. But gee! what a mighty scoop all the same, if I could get back to dear old earth.

F. G. & S. G. (curiosity getting the better of them): But how did you manage to get here? We could never come down to earth.

S. S. (with a glance of pity): That is obvious. And it is lucky too—for us. The ghost of poor Malthus has been plaguing us for two hundred years telling us that we were scandalously overcrowded on our little planet and eating ourselves out of house and home. We don't want any gods clamouring for a share of the gruel, let me assure you.

F. G.: Rubbish, young man, we have *amrita*.

S. S. (looking them up and down): Ah, that explains the thick voice and the wild eye. Wait till our Congressmen get at you. Prohibition is a great device for keeping the unruly in check.

S. G. (angry, but disturbed by the assurance in the new-comer's manner): You forget yourself, impertinent mortal. What a pity that we could not keep Indra's thunderbolt when we sent him out.

S. S.: In our country—you know India that is Bharat—we have been far cleverer. We sent out the Britisher but we kept his jails and his police and his repressive laws. In fact we have vastly improved upon them. And you shall have shortly the benefits of British rule at second hand.

F. G.: Blaspheme not, fool. The gods are under the protection of Mitra-Varuna.

S. S.: Are those old fogeys still about? Our historians always spoke of them as defunct by the end of the Rig-Vedic period. But history is all lies anyway. It is we who make history, and (this was said with a *simpering modesty*) though it is I that say it, I am myself taking a hand in the process.

S. G.: How do you mean?

S. S.: It is clear that you have no newspapers here and no radio. Otherwise you could not have failed to hear of the great plans to take the moon by assault. For the nonce I regard myself as ambassador for mankind.

F. G. & S. G. (aghast): What?

S. S.: Yes, I give you fair notice that in a year or two we shall have our trans-planetary system of communications in full working order. And then, (speaking with vast deliberation) *the invasion will start*.

F. G. & S. G. (a great tremor in their voices): But what for? We have done you no ill.

S. S. (patronisingly): How naive you are, poor dears! How else are we to keep science growing and civilisation advancing? Our Alexanders (cry-babies) must have new worlds to conquer. And we propose to begin with the nearest.

S. G. (with a wily ingratiating smile): But surely the good people of Bharata Varsha will have none of this implety. They always feared the gods and obeyed the laws.

S. S.: My dear godling, you are very far behind the times. We now know as well as any Russian moujik that religion is the dope of the people. And the Ameri-

cans themselves are not more ardent worshippers of Progress than we are. No doubt we firmly believe that we have an invaluable message for humanity, but we are not quite clear what it is. However, by the time the occidental paratroopers have firmly established the sway of man on the moon our Nehru-Patel condominium will have sorted out our ideas on the subject and we shall be able to bring you the high consolations of Indian spirituality, twentieth century brand.

F. G. & S. G.: Ah, you have a Mitra-Varuna too, how very interesting! And you have presumably your own little problems. But they cannot be as bad as ours.

S. S.: But that is news to me—that the gods had troubles even before the jet shot me right into their midst. I had always pictured them as reclining on beds of asphodel.

F. G.: That was the kind of dream fantasy we indulged in when we harried poor Indra with our hit and run tactics. But we didn't suspect that he would so inconsiderately walk out upon us leaving on our hands such a kettle of fish,—(and he spat out the last two words viciously)—yes, fish.

S. G.: And fowl, too, don't forget the plagues.

S. S. (hastily, seeing they were about to quarrel again): Now, now, my pretty divinities, don't start pulling each other by the hair. What is all this talk of fish and fowl? In our part of the cosmos they are fodder for the carnivore. But from your evident distress, the roles seem to be reversed here.

F. G.: We too eat them—I mean we absorb their incorporeal essence when we can get them; which is not often. The fact is they have the greatest objection to being eaten. The perverse things don't appreciate the honour.

S. S.: But why should you wish to eat them incorporeally or otherwise? I thought you had your *amrita*?

F. G.: But you don't understand. We do it solely for their good. Look at these denizens of the deep. We want to lift them into the upper

air from the depths of their ignorance and sloth, to purge them of their grossness, to transform them into second-class gods. But they prefer to wallow in their mire.

S. G.: Now, don't start slandering the poor things which stay put in their appointed place in the lunar seas. They at least belong here, unlike the carrion-kites who come down out of their natural element only to rob and kill. Grabbing their prey, they fly away to their own lurid hell peopled by fiery phantoms. And they are so agile and plausible that, far from our being able to catch them, it is they that wheedle our young to take a fairy flight into outer space with them, and then they are irretrievably lost.

S. S.: This thing is getting more and more mysterious. Let the feathered rogues be for a moment; they are suspiciously like our Reds at home. But why can't you leave the creatures of the ocean in peace, whale and leviathan, shark and scuttle-fish? They don't interfere with you and it is clear they don't want you. It seems to me that here as in our own cubby-hole there is far too much meddling with other people's lives.

F. G.: But their pathetic contentment is really a pathological thing. And in the long run it might be dangerous for interstellar peace—of which our mighty Mitra regards himself as the custodian in a special sense. The ocean creatures have an archaic loyalty to the Lord of Ocean. They call it their religion. And if you tell them that all religion except that of Mitra-Varuna is an anachronism, ("Oh! The gods too have fallen for the secular State, I see," S. S. could not help ejaculating here) they nevertheless cling tenaciously to their way of life saying that it is their own.

S. S. (musing to himself): It sounds uncommonly like Nehruji trouncing the communalists.

S. G. (interrupting): My friend is guilty of excessive simplification. He and his faction are rather demoralised by the raids of the birds of ill omen. They seem to

think that the cadaver-hunters might bypass them and establish their empire over the fish. And in their innocence they imagine that by haling up the fish into the upper air by main force they will be preventing this calamity and earning the gratitude of the fish. The fish are more likely to curse them for depriving them of their natural defences. The harmless ones cast on the shore will wilt and die; the monsters of the deep, if they find they can breathe as easily above water as under it, might even join forces with the clawed marauders and hunt us poor gods out of existence.

S. S. (in a rage, his cynicism fallen from him for a moment): Ah, witless things, you are as pitiable in your fears as you are ridiculous in your ambitions. And while you alternate between day-dreams and nightmares, here is danger pouncing upon you in the shape of that spindle-legged barbarian who denies God as well as the godlings.

F. G. & S. G. (loftily): Tut, what can man do to us? We are immortal essences, the sword cannot cut us, neither can the fire burn.

S. S.: Essential stupidities, that is what you are, full of envy, hate and ill-will. If men were not such blunderers they would hardly waste powder and shot upon you. Indeed, now that I look at you closely, I am not so sure of your objective existence. You seem to me a mere simulacrum of man. But you caricature him wonderfully well, I must say. You in your pride imagine that you drove away Indra, but you are frightened to death of the hooting owl. Likewise man is out to conquer the universe, but his impulses, good and evil, trail after him and trip him up at every turn. You are distracted by internal feuds. But (recovering his sang-froid and reverting to badinage) you are not alone in

having two Kings in Brentford, as I have already told you. And you have a fifth column, too; the moon seems simply to swarm with the tribe.

(F. G. & S. G. look guiltily at each other and in a stage whisper ask: Has he by any chance discovered the skeleton in the cupboard?)

S. S.: Though you squeak and gibber I can quite make out what troubles you. Yes, I did meet on my way hosts of disembodied mortals whose holiday\* in Heaven is just drawing to a close. I told them of the proposed invasion of this inhospitable planet by their corporeal kin. And—what do you think?—they are agog with excitement and prowl about the bridge-heads and the jet ports, quietly sabotaging your ramshackle defences. It amused me and I burst out laughing—which I had not done for many a long day. It so aptly reminded me of the activities of our Congressmen in Madras.

And that word Madras multiplied itself on my ear, and there was a great rumble as of an army on the march. I woke up with a start to find the Self-Respect horde marching in triumphal procession along Mount Road, rending the sky with shouts of "Madras Ministry Vazhga!" Notwithstanding, I was thankful enough to find myself, not a ghost on the moon, but in good old Madras and with my poor battered carcase intact. I was not so thankful however for the notebook and pencil which stuck to me like burrs. And I took my vengeance on them and on the inoffensive reader by setting down this veracious account of a bad dream—which you will perhaps say is not much worse than the reality.

VIGNESWARA.

\* Virtuous men who have piled up merit go, it is well known, to the lunar Heaven, but when their store of punyam is exhausted come back to earth like a spent rocket—V.

Common-sense is often taken as the rule of ethics. But if it is analysed, if its dictates are taken one by one, the student will be astounded at the contradictions he finds. He will not be able to understand how common-sense orders diametrically opposite things in different countries and among different classes and sections in the same country. He will even find that the dictates of common-sense in the same country, in the same class and section, are often mutually incompatible.

—W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM.

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# BALANCE—SHEET OF FREEDOM

By T. T. KRISHNAMACHARI

FOUR years have passed since India assumed control of its Government. The eleven months before August 15, 1947 was however a period when the Congress had to share power with the Muslim League and Congress control over the machinery of Government was partial and to a large extent ineffective. No greater justification was needed for one agreeing to partition the country in June 1947 than the bitter experience our leaders had in their attempt to rule it in partnership with the League. In judging the achievements of the Congress or the lack of any achievement during the three years of their unfettered rule it cannot but be admitted that the condition of the country, political as well as economic, would have been far, far worse if it had been a case of Congress-League Government. Such of our leaders as seek to be wise after the event in condemning the acceptance of the Mountbatten Plan have not the vision to realise that if we had been compelled to share power with the Muslim League in the government of the country during these years the ill effects arising out of such a contingency would have been tenfold worse than the problems we have now to face as a result of the partition.

The history of the economic malaise to which India is now

subject has its roots in the war period. Inflation in India was the direct result of the war and the fact is that the then Government had to aggravate the situation by straightforward currency inflation. Nevertheless it must be said that by the beginning of 1945 not only was a great portion of this additional currency immobilised by Government loans and the large Government balances with the Reserve Bank, but production all round had been maintained at a higher level. Besides this, the price level was kept reasonably under control, as during twenty months between 1943 and 1945 the price index rose only by 21 points. When Sir Archibald Rowlands took charge it did appear that, in spite of the severe strain put upon India's

economy by the enormous demands made on her to aid the war effort of the Anglo-Americans, India might emerge during the post-war period with a reasonably stable economy. My reference to the administration of Rowlands as Finance Minister has a great significance in relation to what was to happen to Indian economy in the post-war period. Whatever may be said against Sir Jeremy Raisman in respect of his acts in gearing India's economy to war effort, which was the



T. T. Krishnamachari

basis of all our later troubles, he was an undoubted expert in his field and subject to the overriding claims of his masters the British, he exhibited a great deal of courage and decision in defending and safeguarding India's interests. The amateurs came into their own in respect of steering the ship of the Indian economy when Rowlands took charge. His premature reversal of the Raisman policy in 1946 was dictated by his personal bias towards a laissez-faire economy and he got no guidance from the permanent servants in the ministries concerned, as there were perhaps few or probably none therein that were capable enough and tall enough to offer advice. The significance of the Rowlands regime was that it began the series of successive Finance Ministers who had no policy of their own, whose stature and influence in the country gave them no assistance and who above all had no expert guidance either from the permanent civil servants or from the advisers attached to the economic departments of the Government of India. It should be also noted that April 1946 was the period when the popular ministries came back to power in the Provinces now called the States. An unbiased examination of the personnel of these ministries reveals that while some of them contained figures whose political stature was impressive, nowhere in any of the ministries was to be found a person who had definite and clear ideas as to what he wanted to do in the



Sir Archibald Rowlands

Province or for that matter what he wanted to be done in the Centre in the matter of repairing India's war-damaged economy or the rebuilding of it to suit the needs and demands of the post-war world. The writer had opportunities of meeting all the Premiers of the Provinces and several of the provincial Finance Ministers together with their secretaries and advisers at conferences summoned in connection with the framing of the Constitution and the writer was not impressed by any person or group of persons as being equipped to pilot the administration in times of a crisis.

#### A Major Disaster

The Liaquat Ali episode in the administration of India's economy was one of the major disasters that India was subjected to in the post-war period. It does not want a former colleague in the legislature of Liaquat Ali Khan to say that since he assumed the de facto leadership of the League party in the Assembly he had exhibited rare political acumen and judgment but even during those periods he was singularly innocent of all knowledge of economics. He was said to be guided by an able permanent civil servant who however had no previous record of achievement except that he was the blue eyed boy of Sir Eric Coates, an extremely able and ruthless civil servant of the die-hard type. The administration of the Departments of Finance and Commerce during this period had a mogul touch about it, while in the Finance Department in particular the attempt to injure one and all in the Indian economy was pursued with an Aurangzebian tenacity. Certain sections of the legislature and of the public found much to glow over in the activities of this ministry, as it was not realised then that the danger that was being done in a variety of ways was not to an unpopular section of the Indian capitalists but to the entire economy of the country. It must be said that the veto of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru which could have been exercised was withheld on the advice of his economic adviser Dr. John Mathai.

#### Refugee Problem

In August 1947 the Congress assumed complete charge of the destinies of partitioned India under these circumstances. All types of partition give rise to new problems while they

more often than not do not solve the old problems. The separation of Burma in 1937 resulted in the addition of a new feature in the set-up of our foreign trade resulting in an adverse balance of trade to Burma of anything in the region of thirty crores per annum as we were importing rice, timber and oil from that country. The separation of Pakistan created problems for us in respect of securing supplies of jute, cotton, wheat, salt, gypsum, etc., and unless we could offset the value of these articles by supply to Pakistan of goods produced in India the trade deficit would be considerable. The major problem was the refugee problem whose impact on the Indian economy hit it all round. Even after three years this problem has not yet been solved, and it keeps on appearing at different places and in different garbs. Judging from the elaborate preparation and the still more elaborate expenditure incurred on transfers of population in Europe after the first world war, it does appear that India has done very well indeed in a comparatively short space of time and with meagre resources. But it is no use looking back with any satisfaction on what has been done as the problem keeps on recurring and the process of affording refuge and arranging for rehabilitation of the refugees is an endless one. It might even appear unsympathetic to express any satisfaction in respect of what has been done. It is scarcely possible to afford the refugee even a moiety of satisfaction under any circumstances in respect of the conditions in which he is now placed. In addition to this partly physical and partly psychological disability, the fact remains that the non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, West or East, belong to the better-off section of the population, largely the upper and lower middle section in what is now Pakistan. It is difficult enough to stem the increasingly rapid disappearance of middle classes in India, and in the circumstances it is barely possible to provide middle class amenities to the incoming refugees as well. The problem is made difficult by the fact that from the West there has been a large number of urban refugees and from the East the refugee population has been pronouncedly lower middle class, unaccustomed to anything but middle class type of employment. That we



Liaquat Ali Khan

cannot allow the refugees to remain unsatisfied goes without saying, but what has to be realised by the bulk of the permanent residents of India is that, seeking to make political capital out of refugee sufferings would only end in the destruction of all organised government, as no Government could ever afford even fifty per cent satisfaction to refugee demands. The question is undoubtedly of all-India importance. The attempt to deal with it even in the obviously unsatisfactory manner in which it has been done, has put back the economic development of the country by well over a decade. Unless the problem is politically isolated and treated on a non-controversial basis, political nihilists might benefit thereby but certainly not the refugees. It is surprising that political leaders seek to provide formulae and shortcut solutions for this baffling economic problem and urge the acceptance of their wild cat ideas. My intention in labelling this point is to show that the emergence of an unending refugee problem of great magnitude provides a major excuse for the Government's failure to concentrate its attention on the economic front.

#### Muddling Of Food Policy

The second major problem that the Congress Government had to face was the food problem. Pandits try to

prove by statistics that no food problem exists and it is one that is created by the bureaucracy. The insistence by a section of the people on a date being set after which no imports of food grains would be allowed, while it might incidentally have a psychological influence in augmenting food production—which I doubt—is mainly traceable to a belief that if there is to be no import the shortage now evident will somehow right itself. Such a view may be justified if taken by an amateur politician with no experience of practical life but no Government can seriously entertain the idea. The muddling of the food policy of Government during the days of the Food Membership of Jwala Prasad Srivastava is nothing compared with what has happened in Free India. A machinery for food control was slowly being forged and it looked as though our food resources might be built up in course of time, when, during Rajan Babu's tenure of office as Food Minister, the decision to decontrol was taken. From December 1947 till this day the food problem has been steadily worsening and prices of food grains, condiments, oil and all allied articles have risen steeply. Our food control machinery had broken down and could not be revived. Our food grain reserves or such as we had, have evaporated. Added to this we had in charge of the Food and Agricultural Ministry, after Rajan Babu left it, a person who was easily the most incompetent of all the ministers who have functioned after Free India came into being. While the Government has to be blamed in its collective capacity for the food muddle and the lack of increased production, the vested interests and the Press have consistently been generating climate of public opinion in which all types of food planning and food controls must inevitably fail. If the administrative machinery of control is woefully bad it does not go to show that controls are not necessary. To take one instance which operates against increase in food production, we see daily an increasing switching over from cultivation of food crops to cultivation of cash crops. Some glibly suggest that the procurement price of food crops should be raised without realising that with the irrational methods adopted by monopoly procurement, the cost of food grains to the consu-

mer is already inordinately high and any further increase in the price would cause riots and commotion. Powerful provincial vested interests have been able to get appreciable increases in the price of sugar cane and cotton, and with no system of licensing of the growth of cash crops the process of switching over from the food crops is bound to go on. It is also not realised that if the cultivation of food crops has at all to be subsidised, such subsidy cannot wholly come from the coffers of the Central Government but has to be got from those who profit enormously by growing cash crops.

#### Truckling To Pressure Groups

The muddle in the management of export import trade is the particular forte of the Central Government. Its history since 1947 has been a case of alternately opening the floodgates and completely closing them after a time. All of a sudden we get into a puritanical and ascetic mood and ban import of all types of articles on the ground that they are luxuries and after a time it is found that we are pumping in more money into the sterling pool and that price inflation is on the increase and an open general license for a larger list of goods results. In these circumstances the suggestion thrown up by the President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce that import control should be used to create a protective wall for Indian industries is interesting. The naive suggestion means that pressure groups should be able to influence particular limbs of Government to grant at their discretion special concessions to favoured industrialists without any enquiry by the Tariff Board or some such body and without any consultation of consumer interests. The suggestion follows the principle or the lack of it, underlying the grant of protection without enquiry recently to certain interests alleged to be manufacturing automobile parts. The public know that the direct result of such a type of protection was an all-round increase of nearly 300 per cent in the price of certain makes of automobile parts. As against this type of complaints, the Government is being blamed by a certain section for truckling to the capitalists for failure to nationalise key industries and for being unsympathetic to labour. In this connection

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the history of the Government-owned Hindustan aircraft factory is worth looking into. This factory produces everything except aircraft. But there is always some negotiation going on for manufacture of aeroplanes in conjunction with some well known foreign manufacturer or other. The management of this concern suffers by the nepotistic proclivities of the powers that be. The story of the Sindri fertiliser factory is equally illustrative of Governmental incompetence in the field of industrial management. Whenever a question is asked as to when the factory would commence production the answer is always "Within the next twelve months." A private factory in South India which has commenced production is languishing for lack of finance, for one thing because of the stupid policy of the Agricultural Ministry and their agents abroad in importing an enormous quantity of sulphate of ammonia all at once—it is said 400 thousand tons—and dumping it on the market at rates cheaper than the cost of production of this factory.

## Debate On Labour Front

Added to this is the debacle on the labour front. It is true that the Indian capitalist by and large would refuse labour a fair deal if he can possibly do so and get away with it. Practically all the textile companies made raids into their war-time reserves by declaring bonus shares which, though it did not affect the financial position of the textile companies, could have the effect of lowering the rate of dividends. It is natural that labour in these textile mills should want a share of such adventitious gains. The Government have, thanks to the initiative and energy of its Labour Minister, placed an impressive list of labour legislation on the statute book. But many items in the list,—the Employees Insurance Act and the Minimum wages Act, to cite only two instances—have not been put into operation. The machinery for working many of these measures is highly defective and in some cases the State Governments do not co-operate. But all his acts are not so blameless. The recent award of the Banks Tribunal would have serious repercussions on the growth of banking in India. The writer remembers that at the time when the Banking Companies Act was passed, he pleaded for

Central interference to ensure decent wages and treatment to bank employees. But the range of the findings of the Tribunal's award amazes the writer as it perhaps does others of his way of thinking. Naturally high judicial officers have no time to realise that what is one person's meat is another person's poison.

Could the Central Government be blamed for the phenomenal loss to national wealth by the recent Bombay textile strike? It is very difficult to say that it can be held responsible. All that a Government can do short of nationalising an industry is to provide for a tribunal to settle disputes between the management and labour, and once this method is unacceptable, any Government would become powerless; and the fact remains that while it can exercise some authority over the management it cannot do so against labour.

## Industrial Policy

The writer is not a great believer in the capitalist economy nor has he any use for the mixed economy advocated by erstwhile Socialists. But nationalisation of industries must have a purpose underlying its method of operation. A list determined in 1931 can have no validity today. The determining factors for Government intervention in this type of industry are inefficiency in production, unconscionable profit-taking by the management, misuse of the power of control of industries for political ends, persistent bad treatment of labour, and last but not least, addition to the resources of the Exchequer by taking over the profits from certain industries. The cautiously worded Industrial Policy Statement of Sir Ardeshir Dalal in April 1945 and the elaborately worded 1948 Statement of the Congress Ministry indicate that Government subscribe to some of the above mentioned canons in respect of nationalisation. But what action has been taken on these statements? Ardeshir Dalal created a lot of literature about industries by his panel reports. The Nehru Ministry has after all appointed a planning authority. But the 1947 proposal of two State-owned steel mills has been abandoned. The river valley schemes like Damodar and Hirakud which were to become *inter alia* the nucleus of industrialisation in their respective



Jairamdas Doulatram

areas are languishing except perhaps the Bakr-nongal scheme of the Punjab. Many other schemes which were in the survey stage in 1947 are not heard of. An Industries Control Bill ambitiously drawn up and defectively worded had suffered drastic mutilation in the select committee stage and even thereafter has been placed in cold storage. The Government are still able to control starting of new industries by their powers to control transfer of capital and import of raw materials and machinery. But the expansion of existing industries, specially the foreign controlled ones, in any direction desired by them cannot be prevented and is actually going on. On the financial side the Central Government balances with the Reserve Bank have been steadily dwindling from about 490 crores in September 1946 to a fraction of it today. But that is not all. While the Government have not been able to add to their loans portfolio as public response for Government loans has been poor all these three years, the Reserve Bank financing has materially increased by large additions the Bank's holding of Government securities in its issue branch.

#### A "Kamadhenu" Flogged

In the field of taxation there has been a slight lowering of taxation in the higher levels of income and the unproductive business profits-tax has been given up. But commodity taxation has risen steeply in the State

sphere. The lack of adequate technical knowledge on the part of the advisers of the State Economic Ministries and their not being alive to the mal-effects of a series of additions to indirect taxation on the economy, together with a mistaken impression on the part of the authorities that the institution of an enquiry into the working of taxes in response to popular demand is a sign of weakness, is likely to aggravate the existing economic distress. The sales tax which is a veritable Kamadhenu is being flogged to the bitter end in all States. No one seems to realise that this remunerative tax becomes highly regressive in a period of falling incomes and the history of the sales tax in Germany during the twenties illustrates this point.

#### Wrong Tools Chosen

What is the achievement of the Congress as against this formidable tale of misery? It has to be realised that the time factor has had a very important part to play in all this. Any new Government must have some time as its disposal without having to attend to a series of crisis factors, to formulate its economic policy and it must be admitted that the Central Government at any rate can effectively plead this as an excuse, while many of the State Governments cannot. But what can be said against the Central Government is that it chose its tools wrong. Barring the Prime Minister it has had nobody in its ranks with personality and drive, with capacity to at least sense the need for action if not to guide in economic matters. The key economic portfolios have been generally held by non-party men some of whom were outstandingly able. But by the nature and method of their choice they remain individuals owing their loyalty to the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister as the case may be instead of being part of a collective team held together by common objectives. Free India's first Finance Minister, though a diehard in his economic views, was a good enough politician to see the writing on the wall and strive to adjust himself to it. His successor was neither a politician nor a financial expert, and his economics gradually underwent a metamorphosis from his approval of Liaquat's Aurangzebian budget to his

complete alignment with Indian capitalist opinion in his last budget in February 1950 and his violent opposition to all economic planning. The less said the better about the other ministers in charge of economic portfolios. Why, the reader might ask, should Government remain in this stage of suspended animation. It is difficult for the writer, being a party man, to assign reasons. That the dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs is shared by the Prime Minister himself is indicated in his frequent pronouncements. That there is a lack of constructive talent in India that can be harnessed in service to the country has also to be admitted. India abounds in intellectuals some of whom are in their particular field second to none in the world. But why does it happen in critical times like the present that we find them voicing wrong views giving rise to wrong impressions at home and abroad? The writer saw recently an adverse comment by a correspondent of the *Hindustan Times* on the Indian Delegation to the Pacific Relations Conference held last month at Lucknow, and is quite willing to believe that



Shanmukham Chetti

the comment is well merited as the writer's own impressions of the conduct of the Indian Delegation at an unofficial international conference held in Delhi in December last were identical. It seems our intellectuals are still living in the days of subject India. Their attitude in such gather-

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ings is one best suited to the pre-1947 era, namely that attack is the best form of defence. For instance, we have in this country an impressive array of economists. A person like Prof. Gadgil of Poona will shine in any international gathering of economists. They are all good at analysing the economic condition in India and the world and in apportioning the blame for it. But few of them can offer any constructive approach to our problems. If that is the state of our intellectuals, no wonder we find that there is not adequate material to man the Governments, both in the Centre and in the States from amongst a democratic party where intellect except amongst the top leaders is viewed with suspicion and distrust.

Another reason for our lack of adequate effectiveness as a party is that our views on economic matters are either fluid, or where they are not, the groups holding opposing views are evenly matched in the Congress party. It is true that the capitalists have access to one section of the Congress and seek to exert the influence that such access affords. Why, it might be asked, should our capitalist friends be so anxious to influence the activities of Government when the Congress party in its pronouncements both as a party and as Government has allowed a fair amount of latitude for private enterprise? Why, it may be asked again, should not these friends concentrate in starting industries in the large field open to them? What interest can they have in creating a climate of opinion, in times of fluid economic conditions, adverse to saving and investment by the public? It may be that they hope to bring the Government to its knees and make it align itself on the side of capitalist economics, and even better than that, align itself entirely with U. S. A. in its foreign and domestic policies, or it may be like the Bourbons they have learnt nothing from history and are desperate enough to feel, "After us the deluge." But it matters little what takes place in their grey cells; what matters is that they seem to have enough influence in the right quarters to take advantage of the series of crises that this unfortunate country has to face one after another to neutralise all progress. The writer's experience of capitalists in Great Britain where there is no love lost

between them and the Socialist Government now functioning is that these capitalists think of the country's interests first and party interests later. The British capitalist from whose seed the Indian capitalist has sprung, has still much to teach his Indian counterpart. But what of the progressive section of the Congress party? It might be that it may not look as progressive as the Socialist party. It must be conceded the Congress Left lacks the refinement and the social graces of the Socialist party. But the progressive section of the Congress has the organisation and therefore the popular ear and no Congressman can tell the people that the Congress hopes to make India safe for the vested interests.

We have to our credit in the State sphere the tangible zamindari abolition and the less tangible prohibition of alcoholic drinks in some States. In the Central sphere we have demonstrated that it is possible to maintain an attitude of non-alignment with power blocs in our foreign policy and have placed India on the map of the world. From a negative point we have averted a war with Pakistan and have successfully maintained our ideal of a secular State. The Congress as a party might take credit for having given to the country a constitution which, in spite of some defects here and there, is nevertheless a great contribution to the future well-being of the country. But much still remains to be done. Our food problem would remain with us till we link land with the tiller and persuade him to achieve a balance between food crops and cash crops. A national spirit cannot be fully mobilised till education spreads to the masses. The interests of the country and the welfare of the masses must be the guiding features in framing our economic policies. A large dose of intelligence is needed in the running of the administration and the framing of policies to guide it. It is futile to shun the expert. In the complex world we live in, he has come to stay. No lasting good would result if in the democratic distrust of talent we man key institutions such as the Central Bank with safe non-entities. We have an enthusiastic leadership at the top. The enthusiasm must prevade lower down. Will it come to pass, might be the question. Why not?

## By FENNER BROCKWAY M. P.

INDEPENDENT INDIA has disappointed its supporters in many respects, but it has made at least one contribution to the world which has inspired its friends and which is justifiably a matter of pride to Indians themselves. I mean its championship of the rights of other peoples who have not yet won their freedom. The influence of Pandit Nehru and of the Indian delegation to the United Nations has always been used to this end.

The continued interest by India in the struggle against Imperialism encourages me to describe the political, social and economic conditions which I found in Africa during a recent visit. I went to Sudan, Uganda and Kenya. In Uganda and Kenya there are large Indian populations. In Sudan, Indians are rare, but politically the situation is important to India because in many ways the people form a link between Asia and Africa.

### Sudan

Sudan is as large as India, but it is mostly sandy desert and its total population is a mere eight million. The only cultivable areas are those which are fed by the waters of the Nile and the forest lands far to

the South. In the North the people are indistinguishable from the Arabs of Egypt and the Near East. In the South, they are Negroes. Between these two extremes there is a mixed race.

This is why I say that Sudan acts as a bridge between Asia and Africa. It is the mingling-place of races which have their origins in the two Continents. Culturally Sudan is associated with the Middle and Near East, yet its emotional identity with the peoples of Africa is strong.

The status of Sudan is unique. It is a *Con-Dominion*. That is to say, two external Powers—Britain and Egypt—are theoretically responsible for its administration. I say theoretically, because in practice the British dominate.

In my view the people of the Sudan are more fully prepared for independent self-government than the people of India were in 1946. The general economic level is higher, education is more wide-spread, and administrative experience is as extensive.

There is a Legislative Assembly of 95, of whom 65 are elected Sudanese. In addition, there are 7 Sudanese members of the Executive



Fenner Brockway M. P.

Council (out of 12), 8 Sudanese Under Secretaries (all) and 10 nominated Sudanese. In other words, 90 of the 95 members are Sudanese. Nevertheless, real authority rests with the British Governor and the British administration.

Sudan will gain its independence only when Britain and Egypt have come to an understanding about its future. Egypt wants to annex the country, or at least to federate it under the Egyptian Crown. For this reason the Government at Cairo has looked with an unkindly eye even upon the establishment of a Legislative Assembly and Council.

Britain, on the other hand, would be uneasy if Sudan were incorporated with Egypt. It has announced that Sudan will not be transferred to Egypt without the people themselves making the decision.

It is difficult to estimate what the Sudanese people would decide if they had the opportunity. Besides the National Front there is an Independence Front which is anti-Egyptian and which demands that Sudan should be entirely free both of Egypt and Britain. The Independence Front has the support of practically all the Sudanese members of the Legislative Assembly, but the adherents of Egypt boycotted the elections. In the towns the National Front has the greater support. In the villages, the Independence Front.

So long as the Sudanese remain divided there is little likelihood that they will gain the right to self-determination. I had long discussions with the leadership of both Fronts and urged that they should unite behind a demand for a popularly elected Constituent Assembly, leaving the decision about relations with Egypt to this body. The Executive of the Independence Front immediately accepted this proposal. The leadership of the National Front asked for time to consider it. The British and the Egyptian Governments will both probably regard the proposal as premature; but if the Sudanese would unite behind it, neither Government would be able to deny their claim long.

#### Uganda

In Uganda the political situation is very different. Uganda is a British Protectorate and has a curiously

mixed administration. There is a Uganda Government which is dominated by the British, but in the largest Province, Buganda, there is also an African King and Parliament, and in the other Provinces there are African Councils. In fact, however, the King and the Parliament have little power and a very dangerous vacuum exists between the administration and the people.

A significant change is taking place in most of the British colonies in Africa. The people used to be ruled by chiefs responsible to tribal meetings. Now the Chiefs have become paid administrators under the British and they are losing their *representative* authority. They are civil servants employed by the British rather than spokesmen of their own people.

The Buganda Parliament has a majority of these salaried chiefs as nominated members. Only a minority are elected by the people. The consequence is that Africans do not feel that even the "Native" Parliament is really theirs. The gulf between government and population is widened by the fact that, since the disturbances which broke out in Uganda in April last year, the major political and economic organisations have been banned.

The position is worsened by the fact that a serious cleavage also exists between the Indian and African populations in Uganda. The Indians have a virtual monopoly of trade, transport and industry, and the Africans resent this. My view is that the resentment is to a large extent unjustified because the Africans, whilst they are good agriculturists, have little experience of trade or technical qualifications for it. But the absence of co-operation between the two races is regrettable and must delay the progress towards democratic self-government.

The first needs in Uganda are recognition of the right of the people to form their own political and economic associations; the democratisation of the Buganda Parliament (including Indian participation) and its federation with the African Councils in the other Provinces; and an agreement between representatives of the Indian and African communities. I have set in motion pressures which I hope will

contribute towards the realisation of these aims.

#### Kenya

In Kenya, again, the position is distinct. This is a British colony where large numbers of Europeans have settled because the climate is suitable to them. Consequently there is a permanent population of the three races—African, Indian and European. The issue has yet to be decided whether Kenya will become another South Africa or a democratic society in which there is racial equality.

At present the economic and political structure is disquietingly like that of South Africa. The colour bar is strictly observed. Much of the best land has been confiscated from the Africans and given without compensation to European farmers. The African farmers and peasants are restricted to reserves. The three races are segregated in residential locations, in schools, hospitals, churches. I spent an hour finding a restaurant in Nairobi where I could take refreshments with African friends. There are no Africans on the Executive Council and only a small African and Indian representation in the Legislative Assembly.

And yet I am optimistic about the future of Kenya. I base my optimism on the close co-operation of the Indian and African communities and on the courageous stand which an influential European group is taking against racial discrimination. If this co-operation is supported by bold action by the British Colonial Office to end the colour bar, there is real hope that a democratic and equalitarian State will ultimately emerge in Kenya.

I desire to pay my tribute to the influence towards Indian-African co-operation which the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. A. B. Pant, is exerting in Kenya. He and leading Kenya Indians are now taking the initiative to bring about a similar co-operation in Uganda, and I know they have the support of Jawaharlal Nehru. The future of East Africa lies in great part in the hands of the Indian community which have made these countries their home. If they will act in the spirit of India's leaders, they can exert a decisive influence for a future in which racial equality is realised.

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By C. RAMASUBBAN

**I**N a modern Welfare State governmental activity in the socio-economic field is mainly directed towards conquering by persuasion, compulsion and legislation the tendency of people who have the good things of life, for appropriating them exclusively to their benefit or converting them exclusively to their profit. The problem of making the largest number of "haves" consistently act in the interest of the largest number of "have nots" is the greatest contemporary conundrum. When ways and means are found to solve this problem it will be discovered that a large scale interference with whole patterns of living is inevitable; indeed those who advocate new ideologies should always stress the social changes they will bring about. The fulness and effectiveness of enforcement of socio-economic equilibrium in any modern Welfare State will depend on the extent to which the State is prepared to demolish accepted modes of living and human conduct which breed large scale maladjustment, even if such modes have been sanctioned by religion, custom or practice.

#### Plethora Of Festivals

Viewed in this context, it will be found that the difficulties which beset the States in India are legion and are most exasperating. Let us take, for instance, the rationing of food and the control of short supply commodities. Rationing, to be effective and precise, requires accurate statistics based on normal conditions; the authorities in charge of rationing should be ensured the maintenance of normal conditions over any given period. But in our country where extra rations may be demanded and

drawn for a large number of festivals, and a larger number of rituals, ceremonies and events, the most carefully prepared statistics go wrong. The number of marriages that are likely to take place in a specific locality can never be estimated; and they are not even restricted to the community therein, for there is no law preventing an outsider from moving in just for celebrating a marriage, and demanding extra rations. While vital statistics might perhaps provide the Food Department with data to estimate the demand for rations relating to rituals connected with the births of children, and municipal surveyors may be able to forecast the probable numbers of house warmings in a locality during each month, no one but the family astrologer can envisage the numbers of ear-borings, tonsure shavings, thread marriages, pre-natal rituals, post puberty rituals, and such esoteric occasions as 'nuptials,' not to speak of monthly ceremonies, annual ceremonies, vows, and the like. As a State we are very very secular. As a people we are very very religious, when it is useful to be so—I mean, useful to ourselves, individually. We want the State to have all the power to regulate the supply to suit our demand, but we also want, in full measure, the power to create demands, unpredictable and unlimited. We feel that monopoly of power in the hands of the State is dangerous, partly because the State will aim at a form of ribbon development of society if uniform standards are aimed at, and partly because every member of the State feels like exercising a certain degree of power. The only way to avoid unhappiness will be to render everyone

powerless, but then we should all be slaves! This is most exasperating, like going round in circles. Don't you agree?

#### Scarcity In The Midst Of Plenty

Our religious, social and cultural inhibitions are so formidable that even a powerful modern Welfare State is unable to avoid a raw deal in so vital a matter as food distribution. What about housing? We have plenty of land to build on all over the country, but not enough of it where we want to build, and each of us wants to build where everyone else wants to build, viz., the towns, (although all of us believe in boosting our villages) so that we create scarcity in the midst of plenty. But then, of course, our State is wholly responsible for what the people do, we shouldn't forget that. Our people are social animals and want all the good things of life, which, in a modern Welfare State, are available mostly where the State functions from, the City, so you can't blame them for wanting to acquire a place in the 'clan.' And once in the clan, they become 'clan conscious'! They build drawing rooms and dining rooms, pantries and sculleries, porticos, porches, garages and terraces, with large scale provision for births, marriages, funerals and posterity. The State would like to have more and more houses, by and large, of modest dimensions, but feels unable to hurt the feelings of those who plan large edifices, forgetting, of course, that the latter class cut deeply into the available commodities in short supply. It just lacks the initiative to draw the line between comfort and luxury, and fails to standardise house building development and limit it to happy economic living as opposed to vulgar exhibitionism! As for the people who build wild, they are guilty, not merely of frittering away limited material (and it is an elementary axiom in economics that wastage of raw

material whether by an individual or by the State is wastage of national wealth), but also planning to live dangerously! For, in the future set-up of this country, personal service is bound to be considered as the least attractive profession for any individual, and therefore the most expensive. And one that builds a large house depending for its proper upkeep on a large number of servants is definitely asking for trouble. Then why do they do so? Don't ask me, I feel very exasperated!

#### Cock-Eyed Standards

The real trouble with us of the country particularly in Madras State, is that, for the last fifty years we have been adopting very cock-eyed standards in most matters, and, although most of us are frugal, thrifty and intelligent, we have not realised how foolishly we are behaving. Perhaps the reason is that we have been overpowered by an atrophy of the intelligence and imagination. Sartorially, for instance, most of us know that it is uneconomic, aesthetically unsound and essentially unnecessary to continue to wear European costume embracing in its correct concomitants, eleven items, hat, coat, pant, shirt, collar, neck-tie, underwear, socks, garters and shoes (not including braces, or belt and waistcoat), and yet we die hard in the tradition. In upholding the tradition with watered-down and reduced concomitants, we have become drab (in 'we,' I include the top-notch high officials of State and leaders in business) with bush jackets and open collared shirts. We have handed the tradition to our teen-agers, and to our low income groups in whom the belief is ingrained that a smart turnout is ensured only by European costume, that personality with a Capital P depends only on such a rig-out, and that promotions and prosperity, both with Capital P, can be obtained only that way! As for



C. Ramasubban

our women, in Madras State, they never would permit going off the gold standard, or the diamond standard or the silk saree standard. Society and tradition demanded of them their steadfast adherence to those standards. And so it has come to pass that we have evolved, from the foregoing uneconomic standards, a level of wages and salary structure to which we cling in all our economic calculations and to which we peg our very socio-economic existence!

We all admit that our standard of output and productivity in every sphere of life is so uneconomic that we should produce more or perish. More work, harder work and unremitting work is what is wanted. And yet our productive activity is stopped for as many as twenty-nine holidays in the year (exclusive of Sundays) as compared with not more than seven observed in other Welfare States in the world. Of course we are very very secular and yet so deeply respectful of the religious background of our people that we do not mind the sacrifice of economic efficiency thereby. Is that not being cock-eyed?

#### Dual Culture

Can you therefore blame our young men—men from our schools, colleges and universities, many of them very poor, some of them not so very poor and just a few of them well-to-do for wanting to own each a pagoda tree, not merely shake it once a way along with others? Being the products of a dual culture, partly Indian and partly Anglo-Saxon, with a hybrid education of sorts, living in a world where moral values have no influence, and in a country where there was unity in diversity only in a historic sense, but not in the context of current events, and where no uniform standards exist in matters relating to the day-to-day existence of the average individual, the present generation of young men have no zest for life, none whatever for unremitting effort, nor view with equanimity the prospect of a relentless struggle against odds. Because, that, in fact, is what life is for them. To start with, the young man begins to realise that if he had been born in a caste, community or family different from his own, he might have had a better deal. Before he is out of his teens he often finds himself saddled with the res-

pensibility of having to maintain aged parents for whom no old age provision has been made, and other dependent relatives whom fate has thrown on him for succour and in both cases, the Welfare State cannot render him assistance. If he marries early, he finds he has been saddled with a family which he cannot maintain and the Welfare State has made no provision for. Or, as often happens, he feels he did not marry wisely, as his wife's male parent has no influence to leg him up. If, on the other hand, he does not marry, he is a social outcast or a family outcast. In a state of single existence he could, perhaps, accept a small salary and try to work his way up (even tearing through nepotism) but then he would have to depend on a public eating house for his food, which he obtains at high cost with plenty of adulteration, and cheap unwholesome diggings for lodging. The maintenance of paying guests and the selling of food for money is not practised as systematically among our people as in Western countries where the wage-earner and the small salaried worker has unlimited opportunities to live in comfort without having to run an establishment of his own. Habits of life and of food are so very different among us that development on the above lines will be impossible except after considerable standardisation. Each young man therefore prefers to find work in his own native district where his economic existence is assured with a reasonable measure of security. From the national point of view, this is just too bad, too bad indeed.

#### Anti-Social Items

The young men and young women of our State are all creatures of their environment, such as has been set for them by the efforts (or effortlessness) of the older generation. Their problems and ambitions are likely to be a little too questing and somewhat irreverent to the old, but an identification of interests is essential in the interests of national well-being and national economy; for, indeed, the greatest wealth of any nation consists in the full and effective canalisation of the efforts of youth. For this purpose it may be necessary, especially in a tradition-ridden country like ours, to demolish several accepted theories of life and thought and

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reconstruct them anew. The State should step in with courage and determination to eradicate everything which is offensive to the growth and development of the average man (I am not using the undefined term 'common man'). And there are, in this country, several items which can be classed as 'offensive' to average tastes and morals, and (under present short supply conditions) as 'anti-social.' As examples I would mention the celebration of marriages where huge shamianas are erected, thousands of guests are collected, entertained and fed, rich and costly presents are received and exhibited, and much advertising is made, as breeding class hatred of a bitter type. I should say that such exhibitions should be taxed heavily! Also the acquisition and wearing of costly apparel and jewellery. I would also mention the construction of large and stately dwelling houses, which again is a peculiar feature in this country inherited from the European settlers of the past century who found it necessary to impose on us those visible symbols of their affluence and superiority. Observant investigations will show that the inevitable result of permitting such edifices in future will be to endanger the psychological development of individuals less favourably placed in life and to breed in them a grudge against society.

#### Europeanised Living

It is fashionable among most of us to talk of improving the standard of living of the average man, pointing, of course, to the need for adherence to Anglo-Saxon standards in dress, housing, furniture, food and the enjoyment of leisure. We do not pause to think how wrong it is to assume foreign standards in such matters as being necessary or possible in the future economic set-up of the country for perhaps a generation to come. We also fail to realise that we are a poor country, poor in production, poor in conservation and poor in distribution (by the very size of our country and the complexity of our problems) poor in transport, poor in technical talent, poor in industrial progress, and poor in harnessing nature's resources to man's progress. European standards are therefore poison to us. They are also harmful to our needs and requirements. To a European in his country his clothing

habit involves the possession of only a few items of woollen fabrics with which he carries on under the dustless and sweatless conditions he lives in a cold climate. To an Indian, the European costume imposes on him the possession of several items of cotton clothing with an initial tailoring bill disproportionate to the cost of the cloth and with a continuous recurrent expenditure on laundrying, starching and ironing and a perpetual eye to creasing, as also the possession of suitable almerahs or wardrobes. Do we need all that in India? If we don't, someone has to tell the people so, and who could that someone be but the State? After all, ours is a Welfare State! Take furniture, again! Is it not because most of us wear European apparel that we consider that if a house is not furnished in European style, it is not up to standard? Just two generations ago, when our grandfathers moved about in dhoti and kudtha, any house with a few mats and a carpet was considered fully furnished. Perhaps a swing plank was thrown in as a luxury. As for spring cots and feather beds, they just didn't care for them, they were too straightbacked to need them. After all, these are not problems for the well-to-do; they can afford to buy European style of furniture and they like to have them. The problem is for the middle class man who makes a desperate attempt to keep to a standard, and finds that the effort makes a mighty big gash in his budget. It is to him that the economics of the whole matter is in fact very exasperating.

Indeed everything is exasperating from this angle, viz., that at each dividing line between one class of wage-earner and another there is a constant effort on the part of the individual below the line to emulate the individual above. It is at that level that class hatred and frustration exists. The only solution is to reduce standards right up at the top in order that avoidable waste of human effort on acquiring non-essentials may be eliminated, and standards may be reached which may be taken as applicable to a whole cross-section of the community. This is the solution which I advocate to overcome the exasperation one is bound to feel over our economy.

#### By POTHAN JOSEPH

MADAME ROLANDE is said to have cried: "Oh Liberty! What crimes are committed in thy name!" The future chronicler of India's current history may well devote a chapter on the exclamation: "Oh, Culture! What puerilities are perpetrated in thy name!" When Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru issued invitation cards for his daughter's wedding, it was in Roman script, a circumstance which made the orthodox wince and roused political busybodies to wonder whether it was a weak gesture extended to the proposition advanced by Subhas Chandra Bose that the language controversy which then had threatened to turn some leaders go berserk might be brought under control if without yammering about culture, we decided to draw upon the example of Turkey and introduce the Roman script with its short compass in place of the involved alphabets that were struggling for the national ticket. It was a casual incident in the controversy following the offer of hospitality on wedding day, but it slightly lifted the veil on the potentialities of Culture and Anarchy in India. The traditionalists decided that there shall be no lowering of the flag nor any deviation from their literary project for fusing India into a single pattern. Now reports after the

accession of Babu Purushottamdas Tandon as Rashtrapati in Swaraj Bhavan (*nec* Anand Bhavan) say that he has issued orders that Congress accounts should be re-cast in Shudha Hindi, with Devanagiri numerals in pristine form. The *hookum* can have no financial significance, because it is Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel who is earmarked for the role of life-treasurer for the Congress and his entries in his own books are said to be neither in Hindi nor in Gujarati, but in English, which carries the contamination of foreign figures and commercial abbreviations popularised by Western usage.

#### Storm In the Tea-Cup

It will be remembered that during the fight for installing Hindi as India's national language, there was a bitter skirmish in a forward salient to have it imposed upon future generations that Roman numerals should be cast out as part and parcel of the English language which the nation was finally renouncing (1965). As against the demand of the *Vairagis* that the Nagiri numerals alone should be recognised from January 26, as in the name plates of U. P. motor cars, there was the plea that English digits need not be compelled to quit India; but the Ironsides took the suggestion as a double insult



Pothan Joseph

because 1 to 10 had been also known as Arabic numerals. Gandhiji had no doubt in his first non-cooperation movement made the restoration of "Jaziratul-Arab" (the Island of Arabia) as part of the Khilafat, but then for the good fortune of Muslim nations held in effete leash, Kemal Pasha made his appearance and bundled out the Khalifa who for centuries had reigned as the vice-regent of God to the eventual detriment of the Islamic world. Opinion hardened against the unholy ancestry of the Arabic numerals which looked like being doomed when suddenly light broke on the murky scene in the Constituent Assembly. There were servants in the lobby ready to prove that the Arabic notations had really been interlopers, the figures in the first book of Arithmetic having their original home in no other place than India. National pride far from feeling wounded over the story of Arabian birth, quickly rallied and soared in glory with the news that the object of the fight belonged to the matrix of Indian culture. Immediately, the Gopalaswamy Iyengar—Munshi Pact (like the Lucknow Pact, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, and the Nehru-Liaquat Pact) came into being. The Roman numerals were legitimised and the 15-year Pact holding English in leasehold for the period was brought on record. All the same, there was some chafing among the zealots in the rear that the recognition of those Arabic digits had been a covert success for the Abul Kalam Azad School of Indian political philosophy. Babu Purushottamdas Tandon never reconciled himself to the philological recreancy under the special pleading of lawyers; and he has at the earliest opportunity ordered accountants in Congress House to fetch their quillpens and operate the witness of statistics on a fresh page in Devanagiri, irrespective of the distant handling of the purse-strings. It pleases him and it may do no harm to future readers of his biography. After the Allahabad report about the innovation, came a shriek from Delhi from Mr. K. M. Munshi, signatory of the Linguistic Pact, thus: "Much as I love my national language and my own local language, I want English to remain with us to enrich and vitalise them and in the wide embrace

of a world language to make us share kinship with the rest of the world." The Minister was addressing a Culture Group and he gave the facile advice that it would be criminal to ignore or neglect English in this country. English will probably survive without patronisation just as millcloth managed to prevail against khadi competition; the mill-owners themselves were the earliest clad in khadi making the best of both worlds. But the main point that drives me to the present subject which will remain both threadbare and evergreen for the next fifteen years of reprieve, is the urge to refute a common-place fallacy cheaply popularized (and I am sorry to say in the writings of Mahatma Gandhi himself) that the study of the English language and its use as a medium of administration and intercourse in India has resulted in creating an "ever-widening gulf" between the educated classes and the masses. It is specious assertion belied by the evidence of facts current at the height of Westernised education, indeed the Gandhian era itself. Let us glance at the past.

#### Enter The Indian 'Saheb'

Raja Ram Mohan Roy belauded the study of English before the Queen's Proclamation and the advent of Westernisation that marked the transition. It was crystal-clear that opportunities of service and distinction would come easier to Indian youth if they took to English in the four Universities then in existence: it would be like passing through the Golden Gate if young men were fortunate enough to secure education in Britain itself. The principal High Courts in India had English barristers arguing appeals and appearing on the Original Side, and for an Indian to emerge on the scene as a barrister was as good as an ascendant rebirth in his own lifetime, since he found himself quite a 'Saheb' able to swop stores about affairs at "home" and take bets on the boat-race in the company of real Britons: coxcombry beguiled them almost into the belief that they were members of the ruling race though still suffering from an inferiority-complex that as gay lads that they were not allowed in European clubs, let alone welcomed on dance nights. One of the earlier grievances of the England-returned, tailor-made sahib affecting Oxford accents was

that on account of mere colour-prejudice, he was being kept out of intimate foreign society, as if in other respects complete transformation had been registered in the composition of the new caste. They took pride in adopting European ways of life, a natural temptation in any country undergoing subjection, nor was it a novel experience for our fore-fathers who in the days of the Moghals cultivated the speech and attire of the Court. In the Sassoon Institute of Bombay, there is still the statue of a forebear in the family wearing oriental costume and turban though in Sir Victor Sassoon's time, Baghdadi blood was assumed to have undergone a corpuscular change, he himself turning into a toff fond of European society and surroundings which gave him the glamour and prestige associated with industrial tycoons of the ruling race who were also Empire-builders. When Surendranath Bannerjee, K. G. Gupta and R. C. Dutt ran away from home spurred by the glittering prospect of joining the heaven-born service, it was considered a sensation, and when Calcutta greeted them as conquering heroes on return waving dustless palms, they were freely taken for Sahebs; no one dare think of the new I. C. S. men in the same bracket as the scholars of the Calcutta University, their erstwhile class-mates. They were Sahebs; but when Surendranath Bannerjee resigned from the I. C. S. as an agitator, he was known as Babu Surendranath Bannerjee. A similar phenomenon was in progress in Bombay, Allahabad, Lahore and Madras where the England-returned gentry were taken for a new species who could not resume old Indian habits and who without the aid of a butler laying out fork and spoon might die of starvation and dishonour. Actually, within my memory, the arrival of a barrister after 3½ years in London "eating dinners", meant a gala day, and they by self-delusion disported themselves as members of a kind of pantomime over which it is impossible now to dwell in retrospect without being amused. I am quite prepared to concede that for the space of a generation, the spell remained; snobbery gripped even lawyers who had won their spurs in India so much so that they also plumed themselves in Bond Street suits, and sent their sons

to Eton and Harrow for them to become as good as the barrister and the magistrate who strutted in India with the air of majesty. At least 90% of the juveniles so scheduled for the role of brown sahebs in my opinion proved waste-products, and I always regard that it is the powerful influence of Gandhiji that rescued Pandit Jawaharlal from the risk of a tawdry career, as in the case of more than one contemporary endowed with wealth, social position and exotic learning. The very rumour that a grandee's European clothes were sent every week to Paris for wash enhanced admiration then, instead of ridicule as now. We may concede that there was an imbecile interregnum in our urban kaleidoscope in the turn of the century. Indeed, I can recall young barristers sauntering in top-hat and frock-coat to show off their pre-eminence, and I remember a particular individual being so bemused by his pomposity that he would refer to certain places in his Indian bourg as the Strand, the Embankment and Picadilly.

#### End Of The Cultural Nightmare

Since the educated classes and the Westernised Liberals, shaped and shopped out from London, were at the head of the Nationalist movement, the Congress Session itself had become like an annual parade of the tailor's dummies; they liked to speak in Gladstonian periods, imagining themselves to be the elect of the world. Gandhiji himself as a young man cultivated the habits of a fop in England and practised dancing in order to conform to type, thus establishing that the period under dispute when there was a wide gulf between the England-returned and home-keeping youth did exist, but for goodness' sake let us not attribute it to the havoc of the English language which has been described as the "language of slavery". The fault is not in the language which political slaves and sedulous apes found it convenient to use for personal advancement in a season of cultural nightmare. Let us now pause at the thirties of the century when the illusion completely vanished and the English-educated snobs found that it was not the English language that stood as the gulf between them and their less fortunate brethren but a mammoth system of shams and taboos and mimicry which

were conquered under a better sense of proportion. The 'Saheb' caste vanished inspite of the English language. The Indian lawyers emerging from our law colleges proved their mettle right and left, and strange as it may seem influences like the Home Rule movement had already brought all types of swanks to shed their lordliness and move nearer the masses. Nor is it true to say that the heart had been alienated in the case of early Indians who had made their bow as *ersatz* sahebs, as Superior Purzons in imitation of George Nathaniel Curzon. There was no Indian of his kind prouder of his culture or profounder in his knowledge of Sanskrit civilization than Romesh Chandra Dutt who lived as a pukka Saheb in his I. C. S. career. Today it is untrue to say that the Indian educated in English is stand-offish in the presence of his own kinsmen and his village folk; on the contrary I have observed them to be extremely solicitous and explanatory when it comes to a discussion of current events. The educated townsman is proud to converse in the common language and he learns much from rustic wisdom which he has learnt to honour, and I maintain there is now a process of mutual confidence and growing assimilation that makes nonsense of the obscurantist's thesis that the spread of the English language extends the so-called "unbridgeable gulf" between the intelligentsia and the millions who for their part have learnt how to know their friends and how the tremendous trifles and trumpery exhibitionism of a past-epoch have ceased to count. The truth of the matter is that there is no foreignness in language and culture and that a child educated for 10 years in any language masters it without what is vulgarly called de-nationalisation which in its best sense, I regard as inevitable in forming the world-type of citizenship that aspires for a World Government.

#### False National Pride

Limited experience in producing uniformity may give the appearance of promoting solidarity, and this problem in its linguistic phase had been studied closely by the organisers of the Russian Revolution including Lenin and Stalin. It is fashionable to hold them in scorn as subversionists, but the builders of the 1918 Revolu-

tion present a galaxy of creative Titans against whom prejudice over puppy questions like Korea and Formosa ought not to blind our eyes. Lenin, the master-builder, opposed the superficial proposition that the enforcement of a single language would cement Soviet solidarity, and he wrote an essay under the title "Is An Obligatory State Language Necessary"? His conclusion was that the steam-rolling process would be disastrous. He had no objection to any language being universal. After vigorous argument he asks the pundits of cultural coercion and linguistic integration:

"Who needs it? The Russian people, Russian democracy do not need it. They do not recognise any national oppression even 'in the interest of Russian culture and statehood.'"

That is why the Russian Marxists say that what is necessary is: the absence of an obligatory State language, while ensuring to the population schools with tuition in all the local languages, and including in the constitution a fundamental law that will declare invalid any privileges whatever for one of the nations and any violations of the rights of the national minorities.

Lenin was not content with the froth and foam of unity, and as for the theory of "Balkanisation" in the absence of a common language, the very use of the word is invariably a blunder. The language question is sensitive and what is called "Balkanisation" in South East Europe was the inevitable outcome of the dissolution of Turkish autocracy. The Indian Constitution no doubt envisages the end of 13 years as the time for Hindi as the official language, but it is really in the nature of a post-dated cheque on the Bank of Goodwill; if it is meant as a symbol of unity it carries with it the danger of turning into an apple of discord. Among the legacies of British Rule, is the possession of English as a thoroughly serviceable all-India medium and inter-provincial intercourse, whereas the half-fledged dialect now flourished against it is admittedly not mature enough for classical status, and several savants are busy coining words and polishing correct accents (as in the Osmania University for 25 years) in order to produce a code for country-wide

teaching, but in this processing of the language, non-Hindi speaking populations are shut out of creative contribution, as weary camp-followers. On the other hand, there is amongst us a live language (forget its Western genesis), a wide vocabulary, ready text-books, an army of teachers familiar with it, commercial usage to recommend it and the needs of science to justify it. The difference between knowledge and ignorance is ten years at school, said a Russian thinker; instead of utilizing the

machinery and the man-power we have at hand, false national pride makes many innate reactionaries throw spanners into the works. In the effort to reverse the movement, intangible forces are likely to come to the surface and then the cry that it is mere disruptionism will not avail against centrifugal tendencies released in recoil against vainglorious culture. Mr. Bernard Shaw once said that there is no such thing as the correct use of English, and that ultimately the language, becoming ubiquitous,

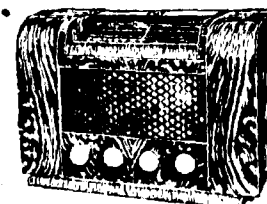
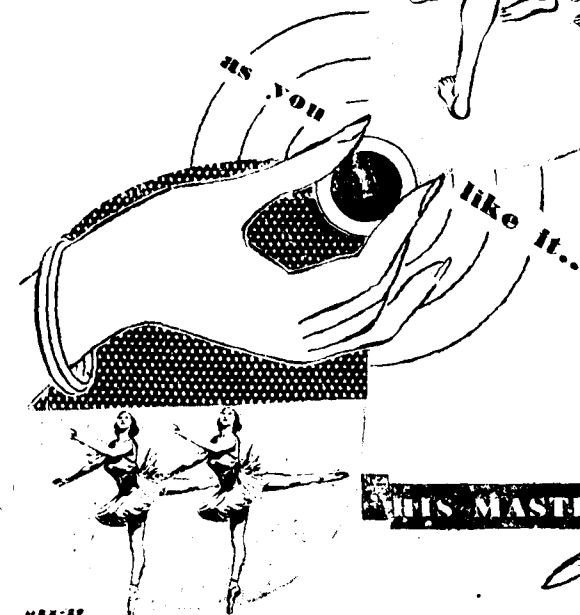


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may turn out to be a sort of "pidgin English"; certainly not a bad culmination if the objects of a language in its global sweep are understood to be easy intercourse rather than the preservation of professional particularisms. It is better to be in the tide than to breast the stream, short-breathed, and get washed into distant eddies.

Two years ago when I discussed the difficulties of a new master-language for India, an eminent friend in Delhi blurted out that the only way to get rid of the Madrasis in the Capital was to impose Hindi as the official language. I was taken aback since I considered English serviceable enough and fair to all besides giving us the dynamics of world contact. The same gentleman I met in Bombay recently in the third week of October. Reverting to the old subject, I asked him whether he had noticed how certain thinkers like Dr. K. N. Katju and Dr. C. R. Reddy, amongst others, held the view that Sanskrit should be revived and enthroned as the national

language of India, since it had All-India prestige, artistry and tremendous carrying power. But my friend shrugged his shoulders and said: "How is that an improvement? I am sure South Indians will quickly master Sanskrit and they will still rule the roost at the Centre."

#### "Profound Error"

Just as in the Middle East, I found that in Israel also English is maintained as the second language in schools for compulsory study, and listeners could not believe their ears when told that after our magnificent start, the idea was to proceed on the principle that English has to go in 15 years. Anyway, the main purpose of my present pleading has been to establish the falsity of the claim that prevalence of the English language would maintain "an ever widening gulf" between the classes and the masses. It is the kind of myth dear to the clannish mind: in Russian dialectics the whole thing is a "profound error."

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Quotations on application

# INDUSTRY IN THE WELFARE STATE

By S. PARTHASARATHY

**B**ARRING the politicians of the Wardha school, all other political parties appear to be united in the view that the industrial development of India should proceed on the pre-war pattern obtaining in the western countries. But the large scale industrialisation of the country on such a pattern cannot be had without seriously affecting the present structure of our society. It is impossible to confine industrial activities within a water-tight compartment. It is no good fondly hoping that Indian culture and tradition could be made to remain much as they are today. But some may ask what would be wrong if Indian culture and tradition went overboard. People like Pandit Nehru may think that this talk of Indian culture and tradition is just balderdash and that there is no better heaven to seek than the American industrial scenery.

But let us see what we have achieved socially by copying the western pattern of industrialisation. We have the slums, the promiscuous living, the sexy picture-houses, the gambling dens, the worker suffering from persecution mania the power-mad labour leader and the money-mad boss. Let us take the case of the worker. The segregated area in which he lives gives him no opportunity of coming into contact either with people in other walks of life or in other social grades. He has no opportu-

nity to imbibe Indian culture or to appreciate the nation's problems, except from a selfish viewpoint. If we could penetrate into his mind, his thoughts will rarely travel beyond his wants and his excitements. He, no doubt, rides a bicycle, smokes cigarettes, dons a coat, and drinks tea out of a cup. But so does the monkey in the circus. His life is a life lived at sub-human level. Perhaps, the picture is exaggerated, but it is still true of most workers in the bigger factories in urban areas. We will next take the case of the industrial boss. From dawn till dusk, he is seeking money and more money. His recreation is bridge at ten rupees a point or something more venal.

If I may be permitted to strike a personal note, most of the readers of this journal, I assume, will be South Indians. Their experience of a typical western type of industrial society

such as is found in Bombay may not be as intimate as mine. I have talked to the workers, the bosses and the intermediaries of industry. And I have even lived with some of them. During all their waking hours, the bosses and the intermediaries of industry, have never been able to switch off their minds from money and the problems connected with making it even for a few minutes. Some of them appear to possess charming manners and they display in their houses arti-



S. Parthasarathy



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cles and books which we normally associate with men of culture and taste. But they are there, merely as decorative features. Inherently, they are crude and vulgar. They have no interest in the abiding things of life, and their sole preoccupation is to make money regardless of all ethical codes.

India may remain a preponderately agricultural country. But its national character will be determined more by the character of its industrial society than by that of its rural society. For, the industrial unit has far greater economic value, and, as a consequence, greater political value. If the industrial worker and the industrial boss were both to continue to be innocent of culture and tradition, we may well imagine the future colour of our national character in the event of rapid industrialisation.

But a greater danger than that emanating from the worker and the boss threatens our national character. For, it is now agreed on all hands that big business is an unavoidable phenomenon in modern industrial development. We can no longer say that it is possible to build up our industrial structure by confining ourselves to cottage and medium sized industries. Big business brings in its wake the power-mad leader, who, not content with ruling the industrial society, is eager to rule the whole country also.

Today, unfortunately, our politicians are handicapped by the insufficiency of time at their disposal to think deeply over matters such as these. They think only of the greater accretion to the revenues of the State that will result from rapid industrialisation. The Planning Commission is set up to determine the further industries that should be started. The Labour Tribunals have been constituted so that production may not fall. But no one bestows any thought on the interaction of industrial development on our social life. In a country of free enterprise, to which proposition we have now descended from our lofty ideals, the profit motive will be the creative and operative force behind the industries. On the other hand, if we were to implement Pandit Nehru's idea of a Welfare State, the profit motive, though it may remain as one of the props for the continuance of an industry, will cease to be

of consequence in other ways. Once the profit motive is relegated to the background in our minds, then an industry ceases to be an economic organisation and becomes a social organisation. Any purposeful investigation into industry in a Welfare State should always be to find out (a) whether it serves a social want of the people, (b) whether it serves the people who constitute it, and (c) whether it produces goods with the maximum economic return. In the case of big business, these investigations become very essential from the national point of view. For, a big business is a social unit by itself with its own township and its other social institutions. The ethics and efficiency of big business will contribute largely to shaping the economy and character of the nation. And as we have said, big business inevitably brings forth leaders of men. The control over large finances and over large numbers of individuals will make these leaders either potential enemies of the State or its benefactors. In spite of possessing a democratic constitution, we may land ourselves in a totalitarian State. Even if the leader were not to concern himself directly with the politics of the State, he will still be tempted, by his wealth and power, to make stooges of the country's topmost politicians. If in planning our industries, we are not going to be concerned at this stage in offering a solution to the social problems that such planning might create, we run the risk of allowing the State to be ruled not by the representatives of the people but by the leaders of the more influential but smaller section of them—the industrial society.

Various solutions present themselves to one's mind of the foregoing problems. Firstly, we should avoid concentration of industries. Secondly, workers in industry should not be segregated but must be made to live with other cross-sections of society, in order that they may not develop a one-track mind. Thirdly, cultural education should be taught compulsorily to all industrial workers. Fourthly, the right to manage an industry should be made to depend not on mere control of capital but on possession of sound technical and managerial qualifications. Fifthly, whatever section of the industry, big business becomes unavoidable,

ownership and control must be vested in the State though the actual management may be carried on in the same manner as now. These are by no means exhaustive of the measures that we should take if our industrial policy should not run counter to our idea of a Welfare State. But to postpone the issue is to postpone the Welfare State. If industry is to be a human organisation, the worker and the boss should both be human. Man will not be human if he lacks culture. Cultured education is therefore the vital need of the hour. If Pandit Nehru can conceive of a culture which is superior to the Indian culture, let him by all means introduce it. By merely destroying Indian culture we will not be creating anything in its place.

All the distressing things we see today around us should be attributed to the diminishing cultural outlook of our educated men. A truly cultural attitude will result in an attitude of unselfishness and of love towards fellowmen. Black marketing, corruption and communal hate can have no place in a cultured nation. But then it sounds tragic when one is obliged to remind the leaders of our people of these simple truths.

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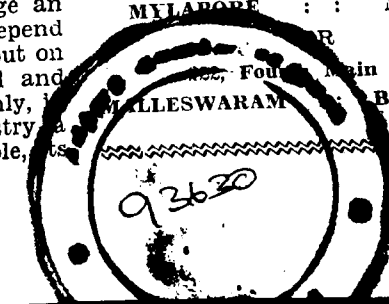
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By JAMES H. COUSINS

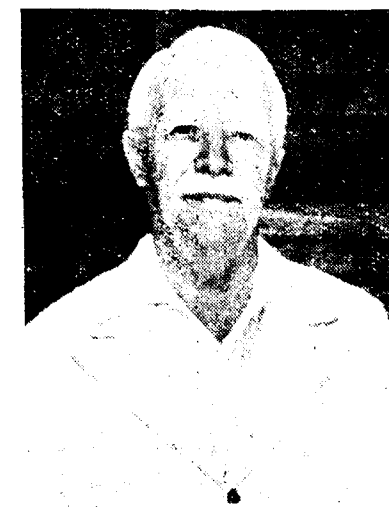
THE word "taste," like many other words in the amazing conglomeration called the English language, has gathered around itself a number of related meanings, from the Shakespearean use of it to denote sensual enjoyment, to its idealistic office as "the faculty by which the mind perceives the beautiful," as Chambers puts it.

The difference between these two extreme uses of the word is not just the difference between the senses and the mind. Actually, neither can exist without the other. There can be no enjoyment sensual or super-sensual, without mental recognition of the fact that one is enjoying oneself. It would be a waste of valuable time to tell one's favourite joke to a sound sleeper; or to expect a repetition of one's enjoyment of a well-made cup of coffee from a wash-hand basin if part or all of the cup of coffee were poured into it. Similarly, while nothing can be said to be real to an individual save to the extent to which it is realised by the mind, the realisation of beauty by its appropriate mental faculty cannot be reached apart from some object that embodies the characteristics which call up in the mind the response to which the term beauty has come to be applied.

The whole range of human character between the sensist and the aesthete

takes its variety and interest from the proportion of the intermixture of the sensuous and the aesthetic in an individual's nature. But the interest is not simply academic, or a matter for laboratory study and a paper before a learned body. It has implications and applications that go to the root of individual action and group organisation. This arises from the fact that sense-satisfaction and the perception of beauty operate in two opposed directions. Sense-satisfaction has a habit-forming tendency, and in the extreme may become an enslaver. It is never satisfied with its satisfaction; and by continued unsatisfied satisfaction tends gradually to dull and ultimately to deaden its own instruments.

The perception of beauty is likewise forever unsatisfied. But there is a difference between it and sense-satisfaction. If it is not the freakish and specialised taste that is one-eyed and restricted in its attention, but is the developed all-round perception of beauty, it does not bind but liberates. We shall give a friendly *namaste* to the collector of willow-pattern crockery (I once suffered from the disease myself) or Japanese prints (I suffered from it also until friends caught the infection and denuded my collection), as one who has experienced some degree of aesthetical conversion, and turn-



James H. Cousins

ed his back to an extent on Shakespearean sensuality; but we shall open all our doors to the man or woman of catholic aesthetical taste of whom it might be written:

Because I have loved Beauty for the sake

Of Beauty alone, nor ever yet mistook

For her true self the loveliest, wisest book,

Or anything the hand of man can make,

Or Kinchinjunga's peak, or Leman lake,

But all man's local zealotry forsook;  
On every path for hint of her I look,

And from all boughs her rumouring blossom shake.

Traitor to all allegiances of mind,  
Truant from every house and school and mart,

Apostate from all scriptures save her tome,

I follow Beauty down each veering wind,

From land, from faith, from all but one great heart

Exiled—with Beauty's universe for home.

The foregoing is a counsel of imperfection on the one hand, and a counsel of perfection on the other; and as perfection is a matter which poets keep us reminded of, but which is only thinkable beyond "the pairs of opposites" that nature provides for our provocation and encouragement in life, we shall find ourselves, according to the tint and tone of our temperament and the pros and cons of our whereabouts, drawn in this or that direction, and sometimes simultaneously and complexly in both. We shall miss much of the adventure and pleasurable excitement of life if we are wholly denied the spur of imperfection, especially as we see it on the heels of our friends; but we should miss with tragic completeness the interpretative glow and savour of life if we are deaf and blind and unresponsive to the masked and shaded perfection that forever allures and forever eludes us.

I think I once wrote: "Blessed be hindrances; they are our greatest helps." Today, without being pessimistic—which I couldn't be if I tried

--or merely paradoxical, which is the verbal sport of the quick but shallow mind--after a generation of frustrated struggle for the cultivation of taste through education, I am more inclined to exclaim: "Confounded be helps: they are our greatest hindrances." We do not appear to be able to get away from a system that has put the ulterior motive of gain, individual, social or national, which is always discriminative, in place of the wealth of the spirit on which all phases of personal and collective affluence finally depend. I remember reading long ago an essay called "Lantern Bearers" by Robert Louis Stevenson, in which he said that "No man lives in the external truth, among salts and acids, but in the warm, phantasmagoric chamber of his brain, with the painted windows and the storied walls." This was a pictorial way of putting my own experience. I knew that, figuratively speaking, objective walls may have ears; but I knew also that the walls of my imagination had also figurative mouths through which to say something in verse or prose about the colours and communications of the figurative eyes and ears.

This experience is obviously that of the artist; and the experience of the artist is a collaboration of creation and appreciation, out of which the at present not too common faculty of taste is generated. Let us distinguish. When we think of art we have in mind works of art. We cannot crystallise Stevenson's salts or decant his acids from the abstraction we refer to as art. But an object of art may conceivably yield both in an inartistic laboratory analysis. A work of art is not art in the Platonic archetypal sense, as a sun is not a universe from which numerous solar systems may be evolved. At most a work of art is as the persona (mask) of the Greek drama or the Malabar dance of long ago, that fixed a mood or a character while the individual behind the mask passed on and assumed another. The artist may have created his work with such verisimilitude that we may exclaim, "How living it is!" But the statue or the picture, or any other artistic creation, is a sarcophagus of art—though it may be, paradoxically, the burial place of that which cannot die. And in the longevity which genius can confer on inanimate things like canvas and paper and colour and

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stone and metal there may be stimulation to our own inborn creative impulse according to the measure of our responsiveness to the qualities expressed in the work of art.

The seed thought of this homily on art appreciation, otherwise taste, was dropped into my head, as it had been at previous times, in the presence of accomplished art, this time when I saw the copies of the mural paintings in Lepakshi Temple exhibited in Egmore Museum recently. The interest and pleasure of the fine crowd of men and women, old and young, moved me once again to a strong desire that such records of a past era of art-creation should be permanently on view in Madras. In this, a State of 40 million people was long ago shown the way to cultural consciousness by a little State of 6 million people, when in 1934 the Sri Chitralayam was opened at Trivandrum, and developed a floor showing copies of wall paintings from long B. C. in northern India to recent times in south India. These include two rooms given to copies of paintings in the little temple of Somapallayam in Madanapalle Taluk which scholars take to have been built and decorated by the hands that built and decorated Lepakshi temple. Much history, religious, artistic and political, is involved in these cultural reliques, whose originals are rapidly perishing through neglect and climate. On coming across these murals 15 years ago, and realising their unique value in the cultural renaissance of India, I caused a commission of experts in the archaeological, aesthetical and historical aspects of the place to study it on the spot and make reports. These I had intended to publish with photographs but have not had the opportunity of doing so. I am prepared to place the materials at the disposal of some authorised person or body for publication. I understand

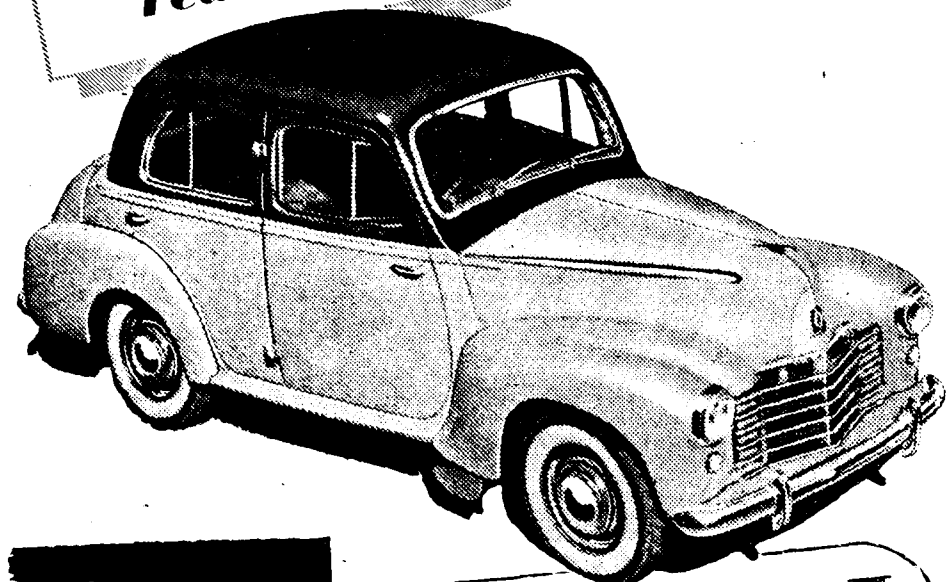
there is a similar intention as regards the Lepakshi copies. It seems to me that the two associated places should be published in one volume. It would make an invaluable thesis for a doctorate of the University of Madras.

The mention of the public and permanent exhibition of the copies of the Lepakshi murals (and why should not duplicates of the Somapallayam copies go with them) involves accommodation. Surely it is time, now that foreign obscurantism is out of the way, to create in so vast and important a city as Madras a centre in which such records of past genius and skill would be free for the edification and pleasure of the tens of thousands who would make the ascent towards taste in visiting a public picture-gallery, even as lakhs of village and small-town people pass through the Chitrasala at Mysore, particularly at festival times like the Dasara. Of course such a gallery would not be restricted to the art of the past or to the State terrain. With these would be associated the various historical stages of art in India from the cave paintings of the Nerbuhha Valley to a selection of the finest works of living artists. There is plenty of available material, and still more will be at hand when the copying of the frescoes of Conjeevaram (Kanchipuram) and south-eastern temples is carried out. What is needed is a place, together with knowledge of the subject and artistic intelligence in selection, grouping and hanging. Compared with other places in this respect, Madras is a disgrace both in regard to quantity and quality. Apart from the aesthetical qualities involved in an art-centre, patriotic pride in indigenous artistic achievement should stir the authorities and persons of means to take immediate and long steps towards so urgently needed and so beneficent an end.

The really great newspaper is one which its readers regard as a public institution. If they get angry when it goes wrong, if they feel entitled to upbraid it for its shortcomings, if they look upon it as the logical forum in which to air their grievances or expound their formulae for the millennium—then the newspaper is a vitally functioning element in the society. Only a virile editorial page can give it such a status.—**ALAN BARTIL.**

Character is a subtle affair and has many shades and sides to it. It is not a thing to be much talked about, but rather to be felt. It is the slow deposit of past actions and ideals. It is for each man his most precious possession, and so it is for that latest growth of time, the newspaper. Fundamentally it implies honesty, cleanliness, courage, fairness, a sense of duty to the reader and the community.—**C. P. SCOTT.**

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# THE UNFAILING LIGHT

By K. CHANDRASEKHARAN

IT is a forenoon in the month of Ashadah. The sun has not yet crossed the meridian, though its brilliance and heat are sufficient to augur soon the arrival of rain-bearing clouds on the eastern margin. The river Cauveri, with her seasonal grace and fullness, meanders her way to merge herself with the vaster expanse of the sea. The air becomes tense with a stillness implying something of an unknown and unknowable cause of tranquility all round.

A grove of cocoanut palms, rustling in the breeze nestles close to the river where it makes a slight curve and a pause in grateful memory of the unsurpassed intellects and talents, which once adorned the village of Tiruvisalur. A private garden or a treasure trove of fragrant blossoms once, but now left forlorn to receive an overgrowth of prickly plants and forbidding weeds of all malicious kinds, beckons the visitor with a warning as to the dangers of gardens becoming grave yards in man's own life-time, if unguarded and unpruned.

In the sequestered but none-the-less significant corner of nature's own domain, the Acharyaswami of Kamakoti-peatam has selected his favourite spot for meditations. He sits facing the east under a *parijata* tree which has almost got bent in the shape of an arbour owing to the thickly interlacing arms of wild creepers. His straight posture and indifference to creeping insects and reptiles assure one

of the inner *nirodha* or control enabling him to be lost to living surroundings. His meditations cease, and in a quick change of pose he gets on to his legs. A stray visitor or two, getting scent of his solitary resort intrude on him with their prostrations. From those large eyes of his, the Swami radiates a look of inescapable peace. A smile follows after a steady, immaculate gaze from the eyes, honouring the humblest of devotees falling at his feet. The little plate or basket of plantain-fruits and oranges placed by the devotee at his feet receives the pressure of his palm. His staff in hand, he slightly drops a shoulder, and a delicate poise of his head rejuvenates the gazer to wish for more and more of the *bhanga* in that standing posture of his. An inquiring twitch of the mouth is formed, and it indicates that the silence has ended. Samskrita is the language he employs for communication, till actually his morning puja of the Deity is over. A gesture or two occasionally accompany his mellifluous mono-syllables in Sanskrita, in order to put the non-Samskrita-knowing visitor at perfect mental ease. But everything is done without ado or delay as the Acharyaswami has to perform his elaborate worship of the Deity before a waiting audience anxious for his *darshana*.

Therefore he dismissed the devotee with the presentation to him of an orange or other fruit from the pile



K. Chandrasekharan

at his feet, and walks away with unexpected rapidity of steps. His movements are light and nimble reminding one of the encased soul of his, having unsheathed itself from many a fold of depressing lower existence. He is soon lost to the inquisitive eyes.

Day in and day out visitors from all parts of the country crowd in his presence. He is never inaccessible to anyone. Every one, the old dame seeking him for strength to live, the middle-aged housewife fervently hoping to save her home by his grace, the little child innocently trying to know why the Acharyaswami immeasurably loves flowers and honey in order to pour them on the Linga, the elderly house-holder broken by misfortune and in search of an unction to his soul, the scholar waiting to be recognized by the head of a Mutt known for his great Samskrita scholarship—all receive their ample fulfilments from him. The Acharyaswami's memory, being what it is, keeps every bit of rich thought and fresh anecdote of a higher life it has come across. His princely heart knows no bounds in its desire to inspire minds and hearts within reach, to overcome pettinesses and failings within. His message is always clear to the various groups, composing our social polity, not to forsake their duties.

The Acharyaswami has had his youth like many others prone to the zest of a new learning. English fascinated him just as his own mother tongue of Kannada ever enlivens him. He speaks Tamil, Telugu and Hindi as if to the languages born. He has now reached his fifties, and vigorous discipline in austerities has invested him with a vital strength to show the beacon-light of knowledge to distant, wearied travellers on the up-hill road. His travels, far and wide, on foot and in palanquin, have made him conversant with human woes, as well as modern trends of thought and activities. He is not easily disappointed at any mighty blow to our traditional outlook on life. Rather he believes in the surviving quality of Truth despite wilful wreckages all round. Changes of a cataclysmic nature do not make him lose hope or forsake faith in the much trodden path of our ancients towards complete renunciation. However much secular authority might

make inroads into religious institutions, the Acharyaswami feels no great chagrin at any of these antagonistic activities. He remains as sweet as ever discussing problems facing others and life in general during these days of unceasing economic struggle.

But there is a severe course of austerities which our Acharyaswami occasionally chalks out for himself. In this he seeks no precedent or counsel of others to follow. He does what strikes him as proper. If intense activity awaits him, he plunges into unbidden silence in preparation. And what a Silence? People can hardly imagine the strict inhibitions to which he forces his mind, only erstwhile devoted to meeting and greeting thousands in a day. No sign would escape his eyes by way of communication, no movement of his lips in approval or disapproval of a thing, no gesticulation calculated to exhort or inform others, no thought of the morrow or the day after—every muscle and fibre of his body reposes as in eternal inactivity. His presence too becomes inaccessible. No longer the extra saffron clothes cover him. He is dressed in utter simplicity, having on his body only a bit of a loin-cloth. But all the more radiant of form he appears. Like a tongue of fire leaping from ashes, he stands with his small figure in balanced *bhanga*s all over from head to foot. He is a sight then for the Blessed. The lustrous eyes move very little and an abiding depth gets reflected in them.

You feel transformed into a different individual altogether in that presence. The flame-like apparition is only for a moment or two visible. For us sooner he appears than he disappears into his own enveloping Silences. Prying eyes in vain peer behind closed doors through chinks. Sometimes, unstified curiosity too does not get baffled in its attempts. Another vision then will be ready to meet such eyes. The Acharyaswami is now sitting with his legs folded Gandhi-like on one side, and writing with his finger on a spread bed of grains. Samskrit Nagari characters form and reform on the grain-spread, and the Mahavakyas and terse sayings of the Upanishads leave impressions on them and get erased within the wink of an eye. His palms join in heaping up the grains into little mounds and again spreading them all

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level, as if in absorbed child's play.

Well, where does he lead us by his severe austerities and sudden silences? The answer cannot be given by anyone. If spiritual meanings are inevitably traced as the origins of his doings, then the questioner must be prepared for disappointments by acts of a non-spiritual nature, when the Acharyaswami thoroughly engages you to do this and do that in this normal life of yours. There are persons averse to looking beyond the near. The physical presence blinds them to the unlimited sources of intuition lying beyond and reachable only through channels pertaining to the spirit. The Acharyaswami's fasts, baths and vows of silence seem distracting enough to a matter-of-fact individual. Yet he himself, when he recollects how bountiful of speech the Acharyaswami used to be, feels a perplexity at his resolve to freeze himself up all on a sudden. Why, why does he do all this? A faint answer no doubt the understanding heart knows, and that is, the soul of the master tries to regain its fountain-head of spirituality only by *tapas* done in solitude and silence. His coming again and again into our midst is also for his own self-integration. He dwells on the eternal problems facing all life on earth. Yet he recedes at the sight of action and thought leading to perennial enthronement of the Self. He reminds us then of the sea with its waves beating and lapping on the shore but ever withdrawing to its own depths after every contacting of the earth. He is ready to shun all secular authority if power is exercised in irregular ways. But he leaves no bitterness to linger in memory when unbending arrogance assails the citadel of his austerities. He throws out no rebuke at the philistine or the unbeliever. He deems no life as anything but God's own little spark seeking to join the great flame from whence it has been released for a sojourn here below. His message is installed on the concept of the oneness of all life. He speaks with a clear sight of the same oneness of all life (Advaitam). He laughs and chats



The Acharyaswami Of  
Sri Kamakotipeetam

often not affected by the reactions of his own speeches on others. He forgets recalcitrants unwilling to surrender their ego in his own temple, dedicated to the utter annihilation of the Self.

Unfatigued he leads us on to loftiness undreamt of before. He moves us as much by his liquid eyes as by his unobtrusive simplicity. He fertilizes rivulet-like everything around to its very roots. His presence pervades our entire being with a sense of utter relief to us, as when the sea breeze starts blowing and refreshing us on a hot midsummer noon. He is ever radiating hope like sunlight, despite passing clouds of modernistic unbelief hiding him from view in our daily life. The cloud cannot remain darkening the horizon for ever. Either it spreads in order to dissolve into rain, flooding the landscape with water, or is borne by monsoon gusts to a more distant destination. The unfailing light shines unshaken, gladdening intellectuals, enthusing pioneers of thought, invading the security of non-conformists and interposing between vast stretches of gloom of Godlessness on one side and narrow sectarianism on the other.

# THE SILENT REVOLUTION

By Mrs. SABAR PARTHASARATHY

**T**HIS century has seen so many radical changes, brought about at the cost of such blood-shed and so many upheavals, that the silent revolution which England has undergone in the last twenty years sometimes passes unnoticed. In the England of the thirties many had expected it, but few had expected that it would materialise in so short a time. The great changes in England's past like the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, each covered an extended period, so that the results in each case could only be observed long after the period of change was over. On the other hand, the recent social and economic revolution that has most recently taken place in the country was telescoped between the second world war and the four or five years that bring us to 1950, and thus enables us to observe its effects in our own time.

The chief characteristic of this revolution and the chief difference one notices between the Britain of 1932-to-1936 and the Britain of today, is the disappearance of a particular class of people and a particular way of life. In 1936, one could still see in London's fashionable residential areas, like Belgraveia and Bayswater, mansions built for patriarchs of commerce in which to rear families of ten and



Mrs. Sabar Parthasarathy

twelve, and to command platoons of servants. In the years of the bombing of London, not a few of these great houses were shattered and some quite flattened out. Close on the heels of the physical impact of the war, came the steep increase in income-tax of the post-war years, so that most of the houses of this type that continued to exist after the war, could no longer be kept up and run by those who owned them, and had to be converted into flats—not as convenient as modern flats, but retaining a certain atmosphere which can still be sensed by those who live in them. With the disappearance or metamorphosis of these stately old houses, the leisured life of pre-war days enjoyed by their owners, became a thing of the past. Again, except for those in large hotels and restaurants, servants as a class have almost disappeared—or rather have changed into an almost professional group. Today, every one has so much to do and so much that one has to do *one's-self*, that London is more than ever a city of ever-hurrying footsteps and Britain is fast becoming a country of individuals, who are able to combine many different aspects of life in one day. A woman, for example, besides being wife and mother has to be cook and hostess,

often carrying out all these duties side by side with those imposed on her by a career of her own or at least part-time work; a man is not only a wage-earner but chief handy-man of the household and sometimes, even the nurse. The spheres of work of men and women tend to overlap more and more, with the result that there is a greater sense of companionship between men and women, both within the family and in the outside world.

In the past, Britain was regarded with some justice as a land where striking inequalities existed in the distribution of incomes. Today, both social forces and Government policy are producing a society in which there are relatively few people with very large incomes, where there are many more people in the middle group of income and where relatively few people live precariously on unduly small incomes. Britain's biggest net income group in 1949 comprised people with between £250 and £500 a year. The lowest income group, those earning between £135 and £150 a year, showed a sharp decline to half the number of the

previous year. At the other extreme, heavy income tax and surtax charges have weeded out thousands of people with incomes of £6,000 net a year, leaving a bare 86 individuals in this group. These revolutionary shifts in the economic sphere are reflected in the increasing sense of equality, seen and felt in the social sphere.

To some extent, the last war has been responsible for much of the levelling process quietly but subtly taking place in the country; but in fundamentals, the changes are the result of plans made with much deliberation and carried out with much care. Rationing, the regulation of working hours in almost every walk of life, compulsory education, social insurance and the National Health Scheme have altered the life of the large majority of people in Britain, specially in the towns. The shop assistant who stands behind the counter in the morning, serving you as a customer, meets you on equal terms at lunch in a nearby restaurant, because he or she has the same lunch-hour break as you have; the waitress who then attends on you both as her

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customers, may sit beside you on the bus in the afternoon because that may be the day-off to which she is entitled and which she takes as regularly as you do your outing in the evening.

A change that I am sure everybody would agree is most welcome and most cheering is that which I noticed time and again—the happy healthy children of 1949. As a student in England in the thirties, I had worked in two or three University settlements during the vacations and had seen children in the dock and factory areas—stunted, white-faced youngsters who roamed the streets, regardless of any one, defiant of the law, considered a nuisance to others. Under a system in which every one counts and the child most of all, there is a striking contrast. Free orange juice and nourishing extras in babyhood, free medical attention, free and compulsory education with milk and a midday lunch in school, holiday camps, and evening clubs have brought about a change seen most clearly in the children of the very same areas in London's County Council schools—seen in their happier, rounder faces, keener eyes and sturdier bodies.

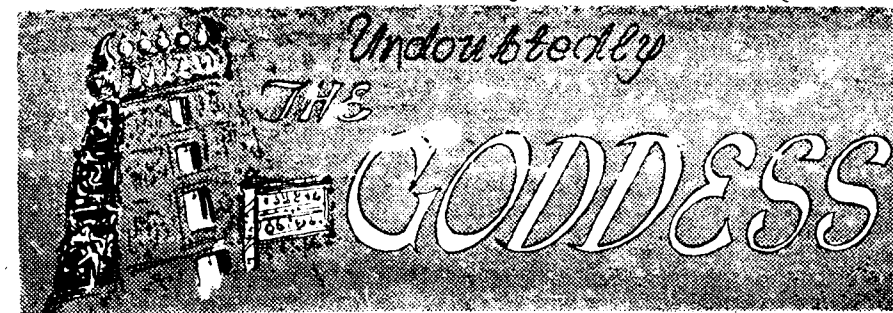
In the homes of the not-so poor, too, life has changed considerably for the youngsters. During my first visit to England, children in middle class and well-to-do homes were still kept very much in their place. Victorian ideas that when present, they should be seen and not heard, and that they had to give way to elders, still ruled the day. In 1949, I found things very different—London's streets were never so full of youngsters of all ages, and they were both seen and heard. They accompany their parents almost everywhere—on buses, in shops and restaurants, on their walks in the evening. Flat-life and the lack of domestic help means that mothers have to wheel their little ones about with them on their shopping expeditions and other domestic business, and fathers have to take them out in their free hours. The children of England are far more in the picture now than ever before, and they certainly are the prettiest part of the picture!

At the other end of the scale, I was struck by the large number of older people one sees in Britain to-day.

They enjoy their well-earned leisure in greater comfort and with a greater sense of security than the old men and women of 15 or 20 years ago. State old-age pensions seem to have made all the difference to them. Another type of person whom one meets more frequently in the streets in 1949, than one did 10 or 12 years ago, is the unfortunately handicapped cripple, who is now able to wheel himself along in a cleverly contrived motor-chair, even in London's heavy traffic. The changed circumstances of life of men and women in both these groups, give one the striking impression that the community as a whole has acknowledged its obligation to those members least able to help themselves and thereby killed a large number of its own fears and worries.

In many respects, life in England has become less formal and more practical than it was before the war. Comfort and convenience count far more than ceremony and prestige; of course, this difference in the attitude to life sometimes results in slacker standards—to take one small but obvious example, the dirtier streets of any large town. But quite clearly and definitely, the human element has won the day. Everywhere, particularly among the younger generation, who grew up during the war, one senses the feeling that they have already missed so much in life, that they cannot wait for a heaven in the future, but must have it here and now. One might say that as a consequence, there is less thinking and more living in Britain to-day than ever before.

Thus the old order changes. A significant revolution is taking place in Britain almost unperceived and with the minimum of class disharmony. The most hopeful and encouraging aspect of this silent revolution of our times, is the fact that the people as a whole acquiesce in the policy that brings about these fundamental changes, even though it may affect some adversely. Education, in the widest sense of the term, is responsible for this acquiescence; only a people who realise to the full, both their duties as well as their rights, can accept and even accelerate economic and social changes of such a far-reaching nature. In this remarkable revelation, Britain's silent revolution teaches the world its greatest lesson.



By JOHN HAMPSON

(To Madame Sophia Wadia)

THE money brought back from Madras by Yellan frightened them all, there seemed so much of it. His mother felt fearful. Every time a shadow came near the hovel where they lived on the outskirts of the town, she would cast her timid eyes to the earth, expecting the gruff-voiced anger of a policeman demanding her first-born that he might be taken off to jail.

The moneylender was paid. Not at once, for time was needed to discuss the matter very carefully. Rakkamma had her way; for all her gentleness she had a great hatred of the swarthy moneylender who waited for his clients by the cross-road. One day she had seen him following an old man, striking him with a long staff and abusing him viciously. This must never happen to her husband. She had gone to the temple, taking tribute for Minakshi, Siva's consort. Her mind was made up, she did not rest until the idea had been planted in the minds of her husband and her sons. The moneylender tried to cheat them, but the younger son, Viran, now too old for the grain store keeper to employ, had gone with his father. Viran was bright, he could add up in a way which entertained everyone, so quick and nimble were his fingers and wits. It was he who saw the moneylender's design, he it was who prevented his father from being cheated.

The money would go quickly, Rakkamma knew. At first its plenty had seemed unbelievable. What could be done? Yellan was indifferent; when it was all gone he would go back to Madras and earn more. But Rakkamma did not suppose the gods would send them so much money a

second time. Besides, the white people were leaving India. One could go into town, through the bazaar and round the bathing tank and not see a single white-skinned person there these days. Viran and her husband nodded: indeed, it was true.

But Yellan laughed. In Madras there were hundreds of Europeans. Why, you could even see the fat pink Western women riding about on bicycles. "Hush, my son," Rakkamma said, scandalised. She did not at all care for some of the stories the young man had brought back from his travels. Madras seemed to her a very evil place, she was fearful lest Viran should set out for the fabulous city. Had she not spent weary months pining for her first-born? Well she knew many of the youths and boys who set out for the great city were swallowed up, never seen or heard of again! Even now, though he had been back home for several months people still came to enquire if Yellan had encountered their missing relatives on his travels. He was scornful of such simple creatures: as well look for a grain of rice on the *maidan* as search for a missing son in that vast seaport.

He was a great strong youth soon to be married, his little wife, the pretty Ratni, would keep him from straying. But the younger son was light and delicate, his limbs were fragile and he had been worked too hard by his late employer. And though his mother urged food on him, too soon each mealtime his hand would lift in formal rejection of the good fare with which she hoped to fatten him.

He never tired of Yellan's stories. He knew some of them so well by now

that he could surely tell them to himself. Yellan was good-humoured; he liked boasting of all he had seen and done in Madras, it made him feel so much more important and experienced than any of his family or his friends. Not all of his stories were believed however; some were far from probable, especially those concerning a strange white race who were to be found in Madras. These god-like creatures were so rich and peculiar that they behaved in ways which no reasonable person could believe. What person in these days threw handfuls of money among a group of children? And who would drop whole rupees into a beggar's bowl?

But Viran believed his brother; he even believed in the story of the friend of Yellan, a rickshaw boy, who had been given a couple of tenrupee notes by one of these extraordinary white men. "It is foolishness," his father pronounced, shrugging his shoulders, the white people were undoubtedly queer, but not in his experience, so strange as his son made out. Such idle tales were dangerous, Rakkamma thought. She wished at times, in spite of their present prosperity, that her elder son had stayed quietly at home.

Nearly all the money was spent on buying a *jutka*. What a beautiful object it was, freshly painted, each of the side panels of the vehicle decorated with bunches of flowers. The little pony, so skinny and spirited, was Viran's special pride. His brother, while he would never let him drive the cart, was well content that he should water the pony and forage for cut grass each day in the false dawn. Viran helped to keep the cart clean and sparkling. He went every morning to the great railway station to take his brother food. The next great event was the coming of Yellan's bride to the hovel.

But before Rakkamma had got used to having a daughter-in-law to fetch and carry for her, her first-born was dead. The hovel, where all had been so prosperous, became a place of mourning and woe. The last few coins brought from Madras, served Yellan to the funeral pyre. They carried him grandly shoulder-high like some princeling, clad in the spoil of his travels, a black European jacket, and a white scarf bound tightly round his throat, supporting his sagging

jaw. Never had there been such a procession from the hamlet before; a drummer and a piper escorted him mournfully, the mourners carrying torches. Viran could see that the neighbours were impressed by the splendours of his brother's last journey. Mournful sounds came with erratic, staccato harshness from drum and pipe. But for his ghastly pallor, Yellan might have been drowsing, instead of dead under the flower-festooned umbrella. But he would tell no more tales of splendour and wealth. No answering sparkle came from his half-open eyes to challenge the brilliance of the torches as he was borne to the place of burning.

STEPPING out into the courtyard of the station the Englishman paused to lift sun-shielding hand to eyes. He had been told what to expect. He could feed, sleep, and eat at the railway station if he wished; there was of course the usual club, but that would be a last resort, for the more he saw of clubs in India, the less he liked them. From the crowd of eager *jutka* drivers who timidly formed a semicircle round him, he selected a skinny youth, clad in a butcher-blue shirt, a meagre *dhoti* of unbleached cotton, with more unbleached cotton wound in an imposing turban on his head. He spoke to the boy, who answered him with a torrent of words, teeth flashing. The Englishman shrugged. Odd a place of this kind, so famous and vaunted among Indians, was not infested by guides! If one did not want them they were there, but now today when he would have welcomed one of the tribe, none had turned up. Oh well, the *jutka* boy would know where to take him, no doubt! This was a place of pilgrimage holy enough to draw pilgrims by the thousands; its erotic sculpture, its thousand-pillared hall surely attracted the few white travellers who ever came so far south as this. By the aid of a small let-down step, the Englishman clambered awkwardly into the hooded cart. The lad fixed a brass rail into place, snatched the sackful of cut green grass from the feeding pony and slung it quickly and neatly under the cart. It was pretty clean, the Englishman noted with satisfaction, though the roll of sackcloth which the driver pushed towards his reclining elbow

seemed a far more dubious proposition. It might be all right, but one never knew who had squatted in such vehicles before. Best not to think about this! The pony, for all its scragginess, was young and spirited; its coat shone, and it tossed its head with the flaunting plume as snorting, it trotted out into the roadway.

The boy glanced back at his patron, smiling brilliantly. He had come to the station daily with the cart for several weeks now, but he had never been patronised by a white man before. He had taken offerings to the fish-eyed goddess, and now she had rewarded him surely with one of those queer wealthy people of whom his brother had told him. He felt elated. This man had stood gaping in the sunlight, had chosen him out of several older, more experienced *jutka* men; chosen him swiftly, without pause or hesitation.

The Englishman smiled, pleased and touched by some indefinable quality in the youthful driver. The pony trotted sturdily, the iron-clad wheels of the cart bounced and clattered on the metalled roadway. Soon, looking beyond the driver, the Englishman saw two enormous *gopurams* in the distance. He grunted with satisfaction; these must be the tallest of the nine famous gateways to the great temple which the goddess Parvati shared with Lord Siva. The young driver evidently knew his job. How uncomfortable his cart was though—comfort was a quality which appeared a matter of indifference for most Indians. The shaking and jolting was perhaps of benefit to the liver: one could at least hope this much!

The narrow streets became steadily more crowded as they neared the temple which, if he had been told correctly, formed the very heart of this city. The Englishman felt

pleased he had made the long journey south, for already he sensed that here was something which he had not previously experienced in all his wanderings.

They had reached the outer wall of the temple enclosure. The boy unhooked the brass rail, let down the step. With his feet on the ground, the man looked about him, trying to spot someone in the slow-moving throng who looked as though English might be one of his accomplishments.

Meanwhile the boy, not doubting the goddess, hitched his pony to the temple wall among others waiting. There the crowd was varied enough in

all conscience. Here was India, with costumes showing that the wearers had come from as far north as Bengal. There were hill people, swarms of pilgrims, religious mendicants carrying bowl and staff, but in all the passers-by, not one who looked specially suitable for questioning in English. He waited uncertainly, wondering what he had better do. The boy now stood by his elbow. The man mopped his brow, suddenly knowing that all was well, that the boy understood his unspoken

wishes and would stay patiently till the moment came when he was no longer needed. Already the pony had resumed feeding.

GAINING the road away from the temple, the Englishman paused to stare at the scene. The gateway opposite, he supposed, was that of the goddess, every inch of the vast pile was covered in sculptured figures, all of them painted in bright colours. Done for a recent festival perhaps? Rather, he thought, consequent on the temple's obvious prosperity. He had seen many temples coloured in a similar fashion, but they had all been comparatively small, whilst this place



John Hampson

was vast. He looked again at the people coming and going, a surging kaleidoscope of colour, sunlight and shadow. In the dust of the roadway, moving jerkily towards him, was the grey figure of a rolling man; filth coated his entire body and limbs as he rolled over and over. Such a sight was an obvious commonplace here, for no one seemed to take any interest in the grotesque and dusty figure; the passers-by merely walked round him. A band of men, with scalp locks curled into small buns, clad in long and flowing rags almost the colour of salmon, moved past him thoughtfully, armed with the bowl and staff of the religious beggars.

Passing through the gateway, followed by the boy, he paused again, looking about him. Here were shops and merchants. So far all was well, but before he had gone much further he would need to remove his shoes. All the people here seemed to go barefoot, the probability was that he would quickly find himself on sacred ground and so give offence. Better take the precaution at once. As he discarded his shoes, the boy picked them up. They were met presently by a tall man clad in a *dhoti*, wearing a metal badge slung on his naked breast.

Soon the guide had led them out into the great courtyard. After the cool stone floors of the long corridors, the paving stones were like fire under the Englishman's feet. There was little shade anywhere; the guide who had been on the point of making his way home when he encountered the white man, hurried on ahead, talking as he went. The Englishman, having come specially to see the famous temple, was determined that the sun should not prevent him. Across the quadrangle was a narrow strip of almost black shade. Reaching its cool stones he paused to rest his burning feet. This part of the temple enclosure was practically deserted; he felt a wish to rest, but at his heels was the boy, while ahead waited the guide.

They progressed from courtyard to courtyard. The guide, for all his fluency, knew very little English, and that little made a long rigmarole learnt parrot fashion for the occasional white visitor. The lotus tank, the treasure house, the *lingam*, the little open shrines of Subrahmanya

and Ganesh, the thousand-pillar *mantapam*, the erotic sculpture—"They play games": indeed they did, agreed the visitor, who would have liked to spend more time over the fantastic figures making up the magnificent columns. The great hall, so exquisite, was ill lit and untidy, parts of it being shut off in order to form store rooms and granaries. It was one of the most elegant and majestic halls in all the various temple cities visited, but what a muddle, how dusty and forsaken it looked! It was cut off from the rest of the buildings by a great iron grill, with a doorkeeper on guard to exact payment from all who wished to visit its splendours: Was it ever open to the thousands of poor pilgrims who yearly visited this great place of pilgrimage? He would never know, for the guide was unable to answer any of his many questions.

Back in the main corridor again he was led to a hole in the wall from where he could glimpse the roof of the *vimana* which none but caste Hindus were allowed to enter, appearing like a huge mound of solid gold it flashed and glittered in angry emulation of the noonday sun.

Back where they had encountered him, the guide, having received his fee and a tip, departed.

The white man walked slowly down the long dark corridor, in no hurry either to put on his shoes or to reach the crowded sun-drenched street. He looked at his watch. It was later than he thought, but even so there would be ample time when he reached the railway station for him to eat and rest.

He paused again by the outer court where the little shops stood. The scene was fascinating in all its colour and movement. Quite near him a group of peasants, a family perhaps, lay curled together in sleep. Near them squatted an armless beggar, a tin can slung over an upraised stump of flesh; a little further on a woman crouched over a sack piled high with flower petals, her fingers flew swiftly making garlands. Each moment, each step brought sights new and strange, for him to pause and consider.

No one took any notice of him, even the beggars here did not bother to importune him. This temple had flourished long before the Europeans



had come to India, it still flourished, its gods potent, its priests powerful. Endlessly the worshippers came and went, open-eyed yet uncurious. The Englishman's sense of isolation suddenly deepened. Holding out his hand for his shoes, he crouched awkwardly and put them on.

By the time they got back to the station, he felt tired and jaded; once again he had allowed himself to see too much, to do too much. His mouth was dry, and his skin felt shrivelled.

**G**ETTING down from the cart, he made his way to the booking office followed by the boy. The clerk at the ticket window who spoke excellent English, willingly agreed to act as interpreter for the traveller. He spoke to the boy, whose answer made him give an explosive laugh. "He says, sir, you will give him rupees twenty!" Then he laughed again. The Englishman's jaw dropped. "But that's absurd," he protested. The clerk nodded. "It is foolishness. He is foolish, the boy: I have told him so."

A crowd was collecting now. Other *jutka* drivers, some loiterers, had gathered round curiously, all of them talking loudly. The ticket-seller shrugged, grimacing expressively.

"A policeman will come soon," he assured the traveller.

"No policeman is needed. I don't want to cheat the boy, but I can't let him cheat me either. What is the legal fare?"

He felt unhappy. There was some tiresome muddle he felt certain. How could the lad expect twenty rupees? Why, it was preposterous! Patiently the ticket-seller questioned both man and boy, learning the time the *jutka* had been engaged, the distance it had travelled. In his opinion a third of what the lad asked would be handsome payment.

"Tell him I'll pay him seven rupees," the white man offered, drawing money from his pocket; but at the sum named the boy backed rapidly away, uttering protestations, his thin hands flapping.

#### FREEDOM'S BATTLES

The battles for freedom were fought by the oppressed, those who wanted new liberties, against those who had privileges to defend. In the long and virtually continuous battle for freedom, however, classes that were fighting against oppression at one stage sided with the enemies of freedom when victory was won and new privileges were to be defended.—Erich Fromm.

"These boys are very ignorant, very stupid, sir," said the ticket-seller, shrugging nervously. "He says he will not take rupees seven. He must be quite foolish, he speaks of the goddess. I think we must send for a policeman, sir."

"The goddess? Parvati?"

"Minakshi, sir," the ticket-seller corrected gently.

The goddess? What had he to do with the goddess? The Englishman began to wonder whether he was suffering from a touch of the sun.

By now a policeman had come. The noise of voices rose and fell. Little idiot, thought the man, looking coldly at the officious policeman who now clutched the weeping boy by the elbow. Again the tinkling laugh came from the ticket-seller:

"The goddess, sir, he says, promised him as a fare a strange white man who would make him a present over and above the lawful charge!"

The Englishman's face cleared. Selecting a bright new five rupee note, he placed it on top of the rejected money, then extended his palm to the lad. A smile came through the tears, then the lad bending low made as though to touch the white man's feet. Now the onlookers, the ticket-seller, even the policeman smiled. The Englishman smiled too, as the boy cupped his hands for the money. Bowing low again, still smiling, the boy backed rapidly out of the booking hall and so vanished. The onlookers turned away. The policeman, lingering for an expected tip, got it, and he too disappeared.

"Perhaps he thought me an American?" the Englishman wondered aloud.

"Yes, sir," the ticket-seller nodded, shrugging. The goddess was very powerful; still, in his opinion, all the white people were mad, therefore it was always best to pretend agreement with them. He began to praise the goddess, but the white man had gone.

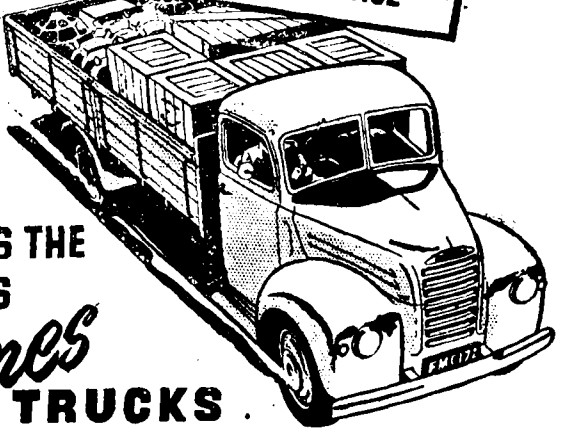
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# PAINTED TIGERS

By MANJERI S. ISVARAN

KHALIL and I are great friends. When all or most of our other friendships have gone overboard that between us has prospered. We were together at College for four years and took our Bachelor's degree with distinction. Khalil won a second class in English and a first in History and Urdu, and by a striking chance or coincidence I too was placed in the same classes, my second language being Sanskrit. When the parting of our ways came and we stood before the Senate House, proud in our academic caps and gowns, after the convocation, bidding good-bye to our Alma Mater, we were not sure what careers we were going to choose, what life had in store for us. We exchanged solemn promises that we would keep in touch with each other whatever the kind of profession that fell to our lot. And I was not a little surprised when I heard from him, a few months later, that he had entered the Police Department as an officer. Preposterous, I said to myself, Khalil a member of the Police Force! For he was a poet by temperament, an artist in his exquisite gestures, a very handsome chap, slim and athletic-looking, but without an athlete's strength. Was such a one fit for the tracking down of malefactors and the keeping of law and order in the land? Preposterous, I exclaimed again. But there he was, and there, he said, he proposed to stay put. How deceptive are appearances! Of one thing, however, I was certain. Khalil could only be Khalil, a poet by temperament, an artist in his gestures, and no calling he adopted, policing or pedagogy, would alter his essential nature. Here is an extract, as evidence, from a letter of his written to me in between the exercise of a vocation which had the baton and the bayonet for its background: "I have been of late

reading selected verses of some leading Urdu poets like Galib and Amir which ought to be translated in English and from English into Tamil. More than half their beauty lies in the language and the mode of singing the verse, but some of the ideas are very good though Urdu poetry rests mainly on odd, filigree fancies. One poet Dos asks: 'What's the good of a heaven in which there are *huris* (female angels) a million years old?' Another poet says: 'Harassed by life I cry for death, but if death too fails to give peace, where else shall I go?' The poet Galib is more or less untranslatable. At one place he refers to the belief of the Muslims that there are two angels accompanying each person all along, recording all that he does, good and bad, and placing it before God on the Judgment Day: 'We are convicted on the written statement of your angels, but was there any witness (at the time of writing) to give evidence that what the angels wrote was correct?' With the same intense interest with which he pursued his poetic studies he took his police duties very conscientiously, studying the minds of criminals minutely, searching for motives behind actions, the impact of chance and circumstance on human conduct. Three years had passed since we parted that day before the Senate House, and as a fixed desk in an office and a pay day had no attraction for my restless spirit, I had knocked about a lot, going places in northern India, plunging myself boldly into the hazards of free-lance journalism, as a prentice step to authorship, and it was when I had returned south again to settle myself to work on an ambitious novel that I heard from Khalil. He wanted me to spend a couple of weeks with him—to take a real holiday after my wander-

ings. He was unmarried still (this to a mischievous enquiry of mine) and I had the run of his house. No doubt I would find his cops a little obsequious, but I wouldn't mind it, would I? I responded to his invitation at once.

I expected to find Khalil changed, physically of course, due to outdoor work, but I found him the same slim fellow he had been, handsome as ever, his handsomeness set off by a becoming seriousness. We flew into a hearty embrace. We reminisced over olden days, talking of a hundred things, of a couple of fellows in our set, not very bright, who had managed to get into the Civil Service—pulled up to the peak point in the *viva voce*, Khalil remarked aciduously—but what interested him most was another contemporary of ours (with pots of money but little brains) who had gone west and come back with a degree from the University of Glasgow and then turned into a film director. According to Khalil this one was the most famous product of our College, its distinguished alumnus. For he discovered newer and newer stars, beyond an astronomer's ken! Then suddenly, in a voice I almost failed to recognize, he rapped out: "Man is an animal, will always be an animal."

There was a moment's pause during which I looked at him closely, thinking that while we conversed, he was actually following in his subconscious the trends of a case he might at the moment be investigating.

"Man is an animal," he repeated categorically.

"That's no new discovery, dear Columbus," I said laughing. "But what's its relevance just now?"

He was silent for a space.

I wanted to get to the bottom of this his sudden seriousness, yet to tease him. So I started to rattle off: "What a piece of work is a man!

how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving, how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! . . ."

"In form and moving a tiger, a painted tiger," Khalil interrupted; "in action an atrocious killer, and Shakespeare never met this creature, of course," he finished off.

Yes, as I had anticipated, it was a case from his crime-book. My interest was whetted.

"It's hardly a story, really," Khalil said; "it's an illustration of the fact that man is not always noble in reason, that his cunning is infinite." And forthwith he launched upon the

narration of the details of an incident, seemingly commonplace, but fraught with tragedy. It is Khalil's story and I set it down here putting the facts in the order in which he related them to me. As a writer I am not under any strain to invent, to create characters, and having created them and finding their company congenial tend to linger with them and become tiresome thereby, or if they hang heavy on my hands devise speedy ways, unknown even to the *deus ex machina*, to

be rid of them. For once I am free of the agonies of creation. I have only to transmit, not to transfigure. It is Khalil's story.

THIS shocking event happened in Vellore, the capital of the North Arcot District, whose historicity and certain topographical features provoked a wag to describe it by negatives: A Fort without a garrison, a River without water, a Temple without an image. To these, other wags from time to time have added their own amusing observations, but the first three have not been excelled for their precise and picturesque qualities, are quoted by tourist and social chronicler alike, and by their popula-



Manjeri S. Isvaran

ritely, one surmises, might have found their place in Baedeker. The Fort holds a training school for the Madras Police. After completing his training it was in the town of Vellore that Khalil entered upon his duties as an officer. The incident occurred during the second year of his official life, and it was the first sanguinary case he had to deal with.

**M**UHARRAM was half-way up. It was the fifth day of the ten-day festival. All over the town the *imam bars* were active; the *alams* of silver and copper and brass shone solemnly; and the *taziyahs*—bamboo structures decorated with tinsel symbolizing the tomb of the Prophet's grandson killed at Karbala—presented a sight at once pleasing and holy. Here was seen a procession moving slowly along, an *alam*—a hand fixed to a pole held aloft by a youth in the middle of it, his gait tottering as though he were overcome with acute sorrow, tottering to the tune of a voice crying *Ali! Hassan! Hussain!* and a chorus picking up the mournful refrain. There greeted the view the gayer side of the ceremony, the merry carnival spirit,—men old and young fencing with swords and staves, lusty fellows got up in all sorts of quaint disguises—imps besmeared with lampblack and oil, tigers barred brown and yellow prancing and capering to the beat of drums. With fun and drollery the day declined and when twilight fell the *ashur khanahs* resounded to the chant of *fatiha*s, the walls with their drapery of black bearing texts from the Quran deepened their sombre tone, and the incense in the braziers ascended in smoky spirals, wrapping in fragrance the grief for the martyrs that the years renewed.

It was the fifth day of the festival, a Wednesday afternoon. Lively were the bazaars, the sweetmeat shops did a roaring trade, hillocks of *nukhal* were knocked off by the minute. Stragglers and revellers swarmed the streets.

As was usual with him every year, Umar had taken out a licence to go about as a tiger. He was a watchman in the town's biggest godown for rice. He was a hefty fellow in his middle thirties, with a broad face of the colour of bronze, red eyes, and a moustache like a burning bush twirled

militantly at the ends. His boast was that he could balance two big-sized lemons at the point of the twirls and walk briskly without making them fall. His head was clean-shaven, his neck with its wad of fat at the nape was thick-set, his arms were powerful, his chest bristled hirsute, his beetling eye-brows met at the bridge of his nose which was blunt; he seemed to have derived from the bull and the baboon. An animal vitality exuded from every pore of his body. Among the watchmen in the locality he had the reputation of a terror: the coolies male and female in the dealer's yard dreaded him, they couldn't secrete even a handful of rice while winnowing and sorting, so penetrating was his surveillance. A black cat was his constant companion, supplementing his work by keeping the godown free of rats. He had a great fondness for this feline of the species, it recognized him when he dressed up as a tiger, and Umar declared that it understood its special kinship with him, at this deepest level, for ten days in the year. There was a menace in his movement, a perpetual sneer on his lips. His was not a happy life. His wife was dead. There was no child. His old mother kept house for him. She told him that one of the forbears on his father's side had the mark of a tiger's paw on his right shoulder, stamped in the flesh and the skin had not grown to efface it. He was born with the wondrous mark on the first day of their sacred month. From then on the men of the family who played the Muharram tiger came to have certain privileges. Their eminence was unquestioned. The Big Bazaar Road was their exclusive orbit. And no other tiger, big or small, could pass to the right of the anointed ones. It was all so exciting to listen to and it excited Umar more when his mother recounted to him how this ancestor with the sign of the paw had, once, while striding as a tiger during the festival, pounced upon a goat which had crossed his path, lifted it up with one bite at its throat and strode along, and the poor animal had bleated itself to death dangling from between his teeth. It was thrilling.

Umar glanced momentarily at his shoulder for the mark of the claws, he knew it was not there, still he stole a fleeting look, it was a pleasing illu-

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sion which filled him with pride and exalted him in his own eyes. Magnificent in his muscular vigour, painted bright in brown and yellow stripes he stalked out of Big Bazaar with the drums pounding in front of him and a crowd of excited boys and youths trailing behind. The sun at the zenith beat down furiously. He had played for a couple of hours before the opulent shops and the trophies he had won—clothes as fine as gossamer, *rumals* in all the rainbow colours—fluttered like banners, knotted one above the other, from the tops of two poles which were carried on either side of him. He felt thirsty. Stopping at a stall he drank a big glass of sherbet. The beverage was as cool as melons. He was refreshed. He was disturbed. Disturbed because melons reminded him of soft, sweet things. He thought of Angur. She was just seventeen. He had heard about her from a carter who knew something of his lonely life. An exceedingly pretty creature now at the height of her feminine charms. Her father kept a small teashop in Arni. He only had to make a bold approach to him, money achieved everything, and carry the bunch of grapes—Angur—off. There was nothing sinister in his appearance, Umar felt, to repel a young woman. Except his slightly red eyes. But that was natural. And perhaps his bushy moustache twirled at the ends. But that he could trim to a soft outline. Angur was disturbing. Once this mood was on one it was hell to get quit of it. Y'Allah, the drums were a blessing. Their blaring shattered his mood. Plenty of time to dream of her, he consoled himself, and switched his false tail swaying his hips as he stalked ahead. The day was yet young, other parts of the town were waiting to see his prowess.

He entered the Gymkhana Road, making a bullock jib, followed by the crowd which swelled at every step from the straying alleys and byways. Half a mile beyond, along the road, lay the New Market, a recent centre of business. It was the purlieu which had shed its dirt thanks to the expansion of the town. He thought of the bullock that had jibbed and it made him smile. Suppose he were a real tiger, a real tiger . . . His cogitation was cut short by a smarting of his eyes: he saw at a knife's throw

against him a tiger enter the road from an alley. Quite a throng accompanied it. But the drummers were absent. He wondered. Presently they shot to view. They must have been heating the drumheads over a small fire got up in the lane. Came a flourish and then a hush.

Umar's lips twitched. His eyes went redder. It was Karim, the filthy charcoalburner. And the cub that trotted by his side was his brat. What effrontery! He made a sign to his drummers to stop. They stopped. The crowd behind him stopped.

The offending tiger drew nearer. Six steps more and it walked deliberately to the right.

Umar turned a somersault, leaping back the stretch of a yard. His brown and yellow stripes fused in one rippling streak of resentment.

Face to face Umar and Karim held each other's eyes. Slowly the strip in the road widened between the two, wide enough to resolve the deadlock.

The hush broke into a hum.

Then there was a brief parley: a man from either side meeting and arguing.

To Umar it was a calculated insult that could be wiped out only in blood. It was a trespass against his august person, a deep-designed plan to besmirch his prestige. It was a challenge to the divine right of tigers held by his family through the generations. And that from a petty charcoalburner. The impudent fool.

But Karim took a firm stand. He didn't believe in the mark of the paw. For aught he knew it might be a hoax. It was the credulity of folks that perpetuated a myth. Let anyone hold out, he didn't care a tinker's curse. Yet, recognition of the right was not the real issue. Karim knew. And Umar knew too.

Unconditional apology or fight, said Umar's man arrogantly.

Fight, replied Karim's medium with equal arrogance.

The plenipotentiaries parted, glowering at each other.

But there were not persons wanting on both sides who wished for a friendly pow-wow, who didn't like to see the good spirit of sport marred by an undue seriousness. None, however, had the tact or courage to suggest a soft method that would turn away wrath. Beside the powerful Umar Karim was a ridiculous runt; he really



was being harebrained; the contest could never be on equal terms, it would mean only one thing: abject defeat for him. But weak people once they are roused are generally uncontrollable; they go the whole hog of their passion, poor objects of pathos or derision.

**T**ANTARA . . . Taratantara, suddenly burst the roll of the drums. Like taut coils of spring released the two tigers sprang forward to the centre of the space that had been promptly cleared. With one blow of his fist which could fell an ox Umar could have knocked down Karim but that would be giving short shrift to the game and depriving the spectators of their legitimate excitement. So he minced his steps, leaping lightly from side to side, when his adversary closed in on him, with intent to tire him out. In the course of one such swift evasion, he had the delight of bringing the fellow on his knees; the crowd tittered. Umar was executing an artist's most inimitable touches; his gross, uncouth frame flowed into sinuous curves and graces; pawing and mauling the air and switching his tail jerkily like a fly-whisk, he danced a strange, primeval dance that seemed to foreshadow stranger marvels. He allowed himself to be chased round in circles, scooting and crawling; the audience forgot the grave import of the fight, it was genuinely mock, they felt, and relaxed themselves to the full, roaring with joy at the antics displayed. And then came the transition with such amazing speed. Turning on his opponent Umar had him locked in his arms, tight like a nut in the jaw of a spanner. His teeth were bared in a snarl. Quick as he hugged him he hurled him back quickly, but though a runt Karim didn't topple over, with hands bespread like wings he kept his balance, his feet firmly planted on the ground. The onlookers held their breath. The fight had opened its most thrilling phase. Straight and sharp, the tigers clutched and parted to close with each other in a fearful, final grip; they had changed into ravening beasts of the jungle, snarling and growling. The drums thundered. The audience that had cheered wildly a moment before hushed its shouts, it became a smouldering mass of silent frenzy: drawn faces, glittering eyes,

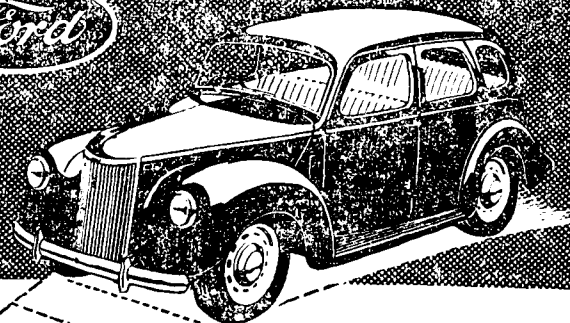
compressed lips, abutting chins, distended nostrils bespoke a horror that fascinated. It was collective hyperaesthesia at its highest, giving itself with orgiastic pleasure to the spectacle of gory deeds. They struggled, they rolled, the two tigers lumped together, their brindled bodies growing dull with the dust of the road. Worked up, the crowd narrowed its circle and was in time to see Karim put his mouth to the ear of Umar and Umar's grip on the arms of his antagonist suddenly slacken and Karim fasten his teeth on Umar's throat and bite deep into his larynx. There broke an awful sound, between a growl and a shriek, then all was still. Only for a little. The mask of madness slipped from the face of the rabble. The strain sobered down. It separated itself into human beings, aware of their individual inadequacies of mind and heart. Death had decided the combat. And before death they felt guilty and afraid. They exchanged mute looks of terror, whispered comments. The chicken-hearted slunk away without waiting to see Umar's men seize Karim and make fast his hands with twisted scarves. But it was not necessary. Karim stood at the spot, gazing at the lifeless body of his victim with icy indifference. His son, the pathetic cub, clung weeping to him. The police appeared on the scene . . .

"And now begins your part in the affair," I said to Khalil, eager for the elucidation of the strangeness of the tragedy.

"Yes, my part, my duty," he continued, "as far as two fellow-mortals were concerned, one dead and the other as good as dead. For the crime was plain. But Karim didn't defend himself. He refused to. From the moment he was under arrest till the end of his trial, he maintained the same icy indifference. What do you make of it?"

"It was murder in cold blood, and there surely must have been a motive for it."

"Motive. Yes. But it couldn't be established. No overwhelming proof. Playing Muharram tigers the two men in their frenzy had changed from the fake to the real and in a maniacal fit one had killed the other. It was treated as culpable homicide not amounting to murder and Karim got ten years' hard."

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"But the motive which was not proved? And what was it that Karim murmured in the ear of Umar that unnerved the latter and let his throat to the fatal bite of his rival?"

"Yes, the motive," Khalil said, in a professional note, "the motive which was of no use to the police. I had it out from Karim when I visited him in the condemned cell. He said that if Umar were to rise from the grave he would kill him again. He would gladly do it. Even if he were to hang for it. Ayesha was a strapping fine girl whom Karim was to have married, but two days before the *nikka* Umar had prevailed upon her parents to give her to him and had succeeded. It was a great blow to Karim. But he lived through his bitterness and disappointment knowing that Ayesha was fond of him for they had played together as little children and had been affianced in the cradle, but her parents were poor and were won over by Umar's money. Karim however would have reconciled himself to his disappointment if Umar had kept Ayesha well. But he was a brute, jealous and suspicious; he and his

witch of a mother led the girl a dog's life: not a day of peace in the three years of her married life and she had died in great suffering. And although he had taken a wife unto himself Karim couldn't forget Ayesha and his bitterness and anger against Umar flared up after Ayesha's death. And when he heard that Umar was planning to marry again he couldn't stand it for no woman born could live with that swine tied to him as wife. And that was what he hissed in Umar's ear, that the teashop keeper in Arni had married off his daughter, thus staggering him."

"He had a cunning brain, had the charcoalburner," I broke in; "to have pitched upon Muharram! Perhaps he looked forward to a martyr's death."

"Martyrdom! Bah!" cried Khalil. "Man is an animal, there's no crime on earth that he will not justify. But it's a great pity, it's the knout, the lash, the gallows that make life possible."

I sat mumchance hearing that paradox of my friend, a poet by temperament, a policeman by profession.

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# MEET BHANUMATHI

By *SANTHA RUNGACHARY*

SOMETIME ago a friend of mine, one of those smart young blades who refuse to entertain any illusions about the state of our film industry, remarked with earnest bitterness that there was nothing wrong with South Indian films that a really clever actress could not cure to some extent. The pity, he felt, was that there wasn't a single actress with two ideas in her head to knock together. I wish he had been with me when I visited a certain pretty young owner of a pretty little house in Mambalam. I think his perspective would have undergone a distinct sea-change.

I don't know if you know the house. It stands on a quiet street which is flanked on either side by residences belonging to respectable solicitors and doctors. If you behave a little out of the ordinary in such a street, you would be noticed and commented upon. There is a Gurkha watchman at the gate. He sits under a tree in an attitude proclaiming his complete awareness of his own importance as the buffer between an admiring populace and the hottest bet in town, to use an American phrase.

In India, as in almost every other country, film stars have a peculiar halo of glamour all their own, a glamour perhaps more in the imagination of the public than in the lives of the actors and actresses themselves. They seem the living fulfillment of our fondest dreams, to belong to some special world of our own making, a world of flash and lustre, something like the brave world which we used to dream of when we were young, and reality and illusion were queerly mixed up together. The whisper of notoriety about this world, of vulgar looking cars and painted faces and whisky-breathing men of low thinking and lower morals and the stories

told in hushed voices of the indelicate price to be paid for having one's shadow projected on the screen, somehow only makes this world of make-believe seem nearer to us, as something more human than a fairy land of magic peopled by transcendent beings. And once in a while, in an awfully revealing moment, when we read in a rag somewhere that a once-famous actress had died in a hovel of starvation after having plied a prostitute's trade during her last consumptive years, we feel a cold shudder as if a ghost had trampled on our dead faces and get a glimpse of one of the most illuminating allegories of our present day life.

I had always imagined that a film star was a kind of a flame with a cluster of moths round it, bees round a honey-pot, all behaving alike and all wanting the same. There would be attendants and clear reflections in long-stemmed glasses and heavy draperies and golden curtains and music and laughter and high-toned gaiety and low-toned importunity.

There was nothing of that sort at the house in Mambalam I visited the other day. There was only the Gurkha watchman who sat under the tree and watched me approaching with an indifferent stare.

"Is this Srimathi Bhanumathi's house?" I asked anxiously.

"Name?" he said nonchalantly.

I gave him my card.

Within a few moments a scrawny, thin youth ushered me into a heavily furnished drawing room done up in blue, green and red. And before I could take my bearings, there was the lady of the house herself graciously welcoming me. That completed my disillusionment. For here was no fairy of winsome looks and pretty frowning surrounded by infatuated

admirers, here was none of the tinsel and gorgeousness calculated to take the fancy of the rabble, nothing in the least enigmatic or elusive, none of that flippant pretty sophistication which is supposed to make old men young again, but a comely, highly intelligent looking young woman who smiled pleasantly at me and bade me take a seat. She was strikingly unadorned with jewels and trinkets and the hue of colour on her cheeks came from no pot bought across a counter. She was dressed in a combination of blue and green and sat on the sofa not in an attitude of studied grace but much as I myself like to sit on a sofa, leaning forward with her arms on her knees. Her hair was dishevelled as if she had just risen from bed and had not bothered to set herself right. And I realized then with a shock that the cinema is turning from a refuge for the morally impoverished to a profession with rules and regulations, routine and system and a code of conduct and principles as rigid and strait-laced and as governed by common sense as any found in the more mundane careers which the unimaginative follow. Bhanumathi is perhaps one of the first to set the new fashion but there is no doubt that the old type of actress is a fast dying institution. Brows are now coming to be as much of a sell as bosoms. It is going to spell annihilation to the glamour of films, which is perhaps just as well, for with glamour will go the garishness, the tawdriness and the sham. Acting is at last coming into its own. It is a matter for rejoicing in the interests of art but I think the old unearthly spell, its vulgar witchery and obscure enchantment deserve some tears from us. It is the same in the West. Mae West, though still kicking and lustily alive, is fast becoming a memory while the public lauds June Allyson who has reportedly found the right recipe for making marriage and film career mix together. But there are still people in America—and not all of them senile either—who remember with tears in their eyes the hours of enchantment they had had sitting in the gallery watching the gambols of that idol of millions, Young Mae. There is one thing to be said of Man. With all his susceptibilities for the absorption of the worst, his blindness and oftentimes baseness, he never lets a beauti-

ful thing he has loved perish. He might learn to think differently, to wear new spectacles but at the back of his common little mind is a little door which he occasionally unlocks and peeps into an enthralling garden of memories.

My very first impression of Srimathi Bhanumathi could be summarised in the one word—wholesome. I would not call her beautiful. Her physiognomy is neither chiselled nor erratically charming. It is a pleasant face, an intelligent face, the kind of face I can look at for a long time without either getting excited or feeling tired, the kind of face I would like my sister to have. It is a face curiously devoid of warmth in a way. Bhanumathi, I think, would never do anything silly or foolish, she would keep her head under all circumstances and be completely mistress of any situation. There is nothing of the vamp about her. And her figure goes with her face, a little on the buxom side, a well-rounded figure, the figure of a woman, not one of those slim-flanked specimens which are so much the rage now. Neither her face nor her body would launch a thousand ships but they have together launched more than a hundred thousand feet of celluloid which in itself is no mean achievement.

I asked her: "Is it possible to reach the top of the ladder in films if one has merely beauty?"

She instantly shook her head.

"It is impossible," she said. "Of course you can manage to stay for some time on the middle rung but the top, never. Take me, for instance," she said frankly, "you cannot call me beautiful, can you? So if people like my pictures it is not for my beauty. When I acted in my first picture, *Varavikrayam*, I was thirteen and looked so serious and smiled so rarely that they gave me the role of the elder sister and made Pushpavalli who was certainly more than twenty at that time, my younger sister. And even then people liked me. No, there is something other than mere beauty which an actress has to have if she is to become successful, and what is more important, *stay* successful."

"Talent?"

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, "that of course, first. And next to that, character."

"I thought," I said blandly, "that was more a hindrance than a help?"

"I know," she said, "many people think so, but I wish some of them would bother to come and watch us at work in a film studio. They would be surprised. The atmosphere in a studio is a hundred times saner, healthier and more wholesome than in some of the women's college hostels I could mention."

She rather had me there. Ever since my grandfather's time when the first of the emancipated braved taunts and sneers and pursed lips to fit themselves for the fray with their life-long enemy, Man, there have been scandals about dark doings in women's hostels, and people still haven't got used to them.

"You cannot imagine," continued Bhanumathi, "how strict the rules of behaviour are in a studio. Why, an extra will never be allowed to address a star directly. And, moreover, everybody is too busy to do anything but mind his own business and get his work done as quickly as possible. We work by the clock. An afternoon wasted would mean the loss of a few hundreds or thousands of rupees."

"What happens when somebody falls sick?"

"Well, all that has to be taken in the stride," she said. "And it is. For instance, I have now excused myself for two days because I have a touch of malaria but I feel awfully guilty and unhappy because I am holding up production. You cannot imagine what a tremendous thing it is to finish a picture as planned. It doesn't happen often, in fact, it happens rarely, but when it does, it is wonderful. And everybody is so much occupied with getting it over and done with, they think of little else."

"Then the whispers and rumours of, shall I say free living and free loving among film folk are just malicious gossip?" I felt rather caddish asking this question for I have always believed that the two subjects that should be avoided as general topics of conversation in any company are Love and Religion. They are, to my mind, the two absolute realities which concern only Man and his Maker and which it is folly to try to flatten out under general rules and dos and donts. But I think it is high time people came to know the real facts about the condi-

tions of living and ways of doing which obtain in our film industry for the film is fast becoming a force in the public life of the country. The general impression among the people seems to be that film studios are dens of iniquity, licentiousness and vice and that by and large the only way a film actress can lift herself up the ladder of fame and fortune is by permitting producers and directors to lay her. I am not informed of what a film star's life was say ten years ago but Srimathi Bhanumathi has convinced me that today it is possible to pursue the acting profession with dignity and decency. By the very nature of their work and the hours they have to keep, actors and actresses are thrown into more intimate contact with each other than in some other professions like teaching and law. But almost all their work is carried on under the blinding glare of arc lights and in the presence of people who are more concerned with angles and expressions, close-ups and make-ups, dialogues and the shooting schedule than about their personal life. Their critical eyes spell death to sentimental abstraction. All this combined with a twelve-hour or fourteen-hour day of work just cancels out any desire or inclination for lighthearted banter or dallying.

"And as for what some actresses do at home," said Bhanumathi with a shrug, "why that sort of thing should be associated with film work, I cannot imagine. Does it not happen everywhere?"

"It isn't true, then, that here the opportunities are greater?"

"No," she said firmly and with conviction, "less, if anything."

And she ought to know. For Bhanumathi has been in the film business for the past twelve years and more now; her formative age was spent in front of a camera, her education was ruined because of the demands made on her time by her work and her private life subjected to scrutiny by the curious as well as the malicious. She ought to know because without having any of that potent, resistless, unpurchasable quality of genius in anything she does, she has had to work her way up by sheer push and merit. Hard work and a cold determination have got her to where she is now and so she ought to know. And at the end



Srimathi Bhanumathi

of twelve years of inflexibly directed pursuit she stands now at the top of the profession in the South, an unchallenged mistress of her art and though surrounded by every allure-ment to relaxation of moral standards she has yet retained a nature unsullied by dissipation and a temperament at once uncomplicated and direct.

"There is really very little of that immorality which the public imagines in the lives of people who work in film studios," she said. "But there is one thing in plenty and that is jealousy."

I am not surprised that she is the target of that projection of the worst in us. Because she is obviously and without doubt one of those people who are bound to succeed at whatever they put their hands to. There is in her a coldness of purpose, a will to achieve and a capacity for an un-emotional application to hard work. The lackadaisical airs of lassitude and ennui she adopts sometimes are mere-

ly a rather childish substitute for modesty. They do not deceive anyone. I do not for a moment believe fame and success were thrust upon her as she herself claims. Nor that she so dislikes her work that, if allowed by the public, she would retire this very day and cultivate her bit of land and take care of her cows. For it is almost a matter of mathematics that you cannot work hard at something—as Bhanumathi certainly has worked hard—you dislike nor, less, that you can achieve a not inconsiderable success in it without being not merely attached to it but passionately fond of it. It might be true indeed that she is fed up to her eye teeth with the whole business—as who wouldn't be, for you can have too much of a good thing at times—in which case what she needs is just a long and restful holiday.

"I will work for five years more," she said, "and then I will retire."

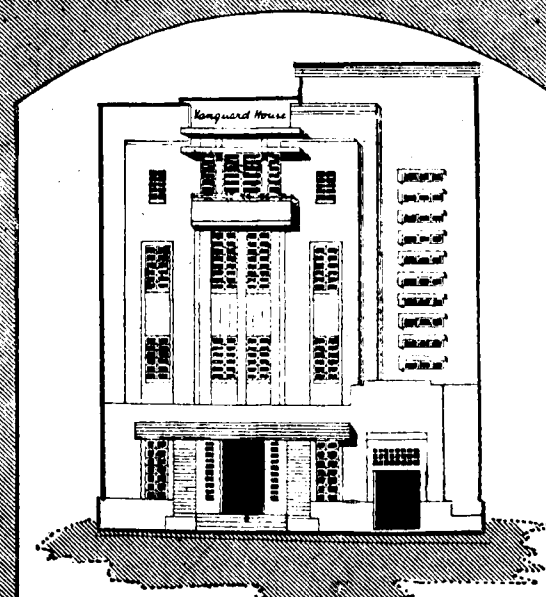
"You say you want to stay at home and be an old-fashioned wife," I asked her. "Why haven't you then been consistent and raised a large family? You have only one son, I believe?"

"I have had no time," she pleaded with the first suspicion of humour in her eye.

In the past half a decade we have seen so many young actresses make their debut on the screen and while public expectation ran high, quietly disappear into the abyss of obscurity with never a ripple to show what had happened to them. They have come and gone like meteors, flashes, puff balls of evanescence and left a naive public shaken. It is a great relief therefore to see a young woman like Srimathi Bhanumathi so firmly keeping her head at normal size above the swirling waters of film life and remaining one of the most intelligent film actresses of the South Indian screen and retaining in private life a character eminently unpretentious, shrewd and sensible. Some people would perhaps call her vain. Why not? She has enough to be proud about, I should think....Have you?

Man is willing to accept woman as an equal, as a man in skirts, as an angel, a devil, a baby-face, a machine, an instrument, a bosom, a womb, a pair of legs, a servant, an encyclopaedia, an ideal or an obscenity; the one thing he won't accept her as is a human being, a real human being of the feminine sex.

—Dorothy L. Sayers.



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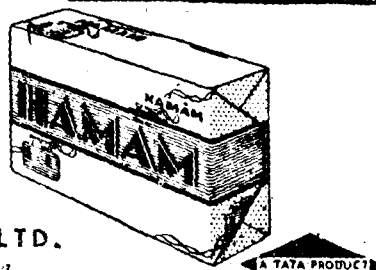
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By B. APPASAMY

WHEN Mr. Pothan Joseph and I were asked to go on a press delegation to the new Republic of Israel for a fortnight, we had little expectation of visiting Europe. But accidents happen even on conducted tours and we faced a problem when we were told at Karachi airport that there was no room for us on the plane to Lydda and that we should have to wait a week for the next one. Now, Israel is not recognised by its Arab neighbours and it is impossible to enter Israel through Damascus or Cairo. There is only one other way of entry, i.e., through Rome. Rather than linger aimlessly in Karachi (we had no visa for Pakistan) or return to India, we decided to fly to Rome. The B.O.A.C. plane left at 8 p.m. and after a sweltering halt at Bahrein on the Persian Gulf at midnight we reached Farouk airport near Cairo at dawn and left again after breakfast. Below us was the panorama of the Nile delta and then the great seaport of Alexandria. As we flew over the mountainous island of Crete we recalled the great German airborne operation of the last war when the remnants of the Allied and Greek armies were cut to pieces and driven out of Crete by Germany's only parachute division. The B. O. A. C. plane glided over the foot of Italy and pass-

ed above the western coast to Rome.

Here our troubles began. We had no visas for Italy. The Consul at Karachi had airily replied to our request by saying that it was not necessary if our stay was short. In fact, it is possible to get police permission to stay for a few days if the passenger can show that he is in transit. But we had no plane bookings to Lydda. We had sent a cable to the Israel authorities in the hope that they would instruct their own airline—EL AL—to issue tickets at Rome. But we did not know that we were on the eve of the Jewish New Year when every kind of activity is suspended for a few days. Our only hope was the Indian Embassy and we telephoned them. An official came down and was immediately helpful.

He persuaded EL AL to issue provisional tickets and drove us to Rome and found us a centrally situated hotel. He advised us to do a little sightseeing and wait for two days till the Israeli Legation opened for business. Our hotel was an old mansion probably built two centuries ago and the rooms and decorations were spacious and elegant. Rome has been a living city for two thousand years or more and it inherits roads, buildings, palaces and fountains which make it one of the most



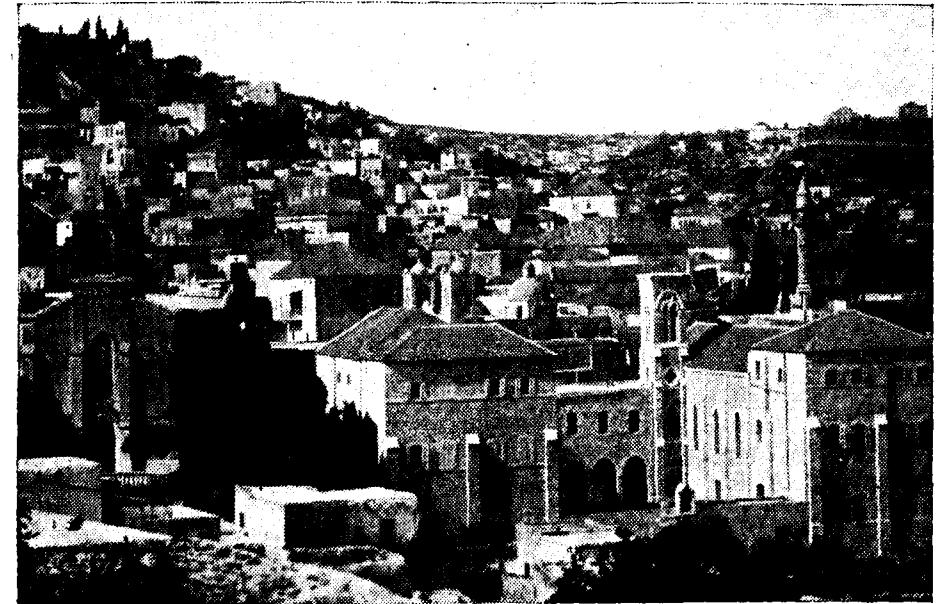
B. Appasamy

impressive in Europe. It is not surprising that Rome should be a conservative, Catholic city and to the more progressive industrial people of northern Italy it must appear that Rome is the heart of Italian reaction. This year is Holy Year and thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the world had gone to visit the great churches and get a glimpse of the Pope himself at the Cathedral of St. Peter's. The morning after our arrival we duly set out to see the sights. If Mussolini had improved the train services in Italy, De Gasperi, the present Prime Minister, has done wonders for the buses and trams. The great churches of Rome are built on the sites of old Roman temples and palaces and their architecture is Romanesque. The Church of Santa Maria Maggiore is, for example, on the Esquiline Hill and its beautiful and simple construction stands in contrast with the rather second-rate

painting and sculpture it is embellished with. Leaving the church, we drove to the India Embassy where the Ambassador, Mr. B. R. Sen received us and told us of his recent visit to Yugoslavia where he met Marshal Tito. The Embassy is housed on two floors of a fine suburban building faced with marble—marble and stone are the common building materials of Rome. We then set out for the Vatican and found it thronged with pilgrims; Italian peasant women dressed in black and students from Germany and America mingled under the vast dome of St. Peter's. Services were going on in all the chapels and the pilgrims could make their confessions in all the languages of Europe. The Vatican, it appears, has made special arrangements for the pilgrims so that they come on concessional rates. The sensational announcement that the authentic bones of St. Peter have been found



Liberation of Rome during the last war. A section of the crowd near the Colosseum when Allied troops entered Rome on June 4, 1944.



Nazareth

gave added meaning to the pilgrimage. Meanwhile, Italy profits from the incursion of batches of tourists and the power of the Vatican increases in the Government. Stalin may once have asked: How many armed divisions has the Pope? But he is now finding that in Italy at least the papacy is the bulwark against Communism.

On the third day of our stay in Rome, we heard from the Israeli Legation that arrangements had been made for us to fly to Lydda. From Lydda where we were received by members of the Israel Press and the Public Information Office, we were taken to Tel-Aviv, the biggest city in Israel—about three lakhs of people—which was once a small fishing village and an appendage of the seaport of Jaffa. The three centres of importance in Israel are Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa, but Jerusalem's historic and religious associations are so great that the Government and the Parliament have now moved there, though it stands perilously on the border.

Jerusalem is ancient even when compared with Rome. The Roman Legions under Titus destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A. D. and the Emperor Hadrian built a Roman city on its ruins. But Jerusalem has been, in its four thousand years of history, des-

troyed and rebuilt many times. The dispersion of the Jews dates from the wreck of Jerusalem by Titus but some Jews always remained and the scattered Jews whether in Russia or Spain never forgot Jerusalem. For centuries, at the time of the Passover Feast, they solemnly uttered the words "next year in Jerusalem" and many of them returned in their old age to die on the sacred soil. In the last fifty years the Jews have built the new city of Jerusalem which is nine times the size of the Old City now held by Transjordan. In the fighting of 1948, there was a bitter struggle for Jerusalem and the city bears the scars in the shape of shattered homes and churches. The Arabs destroyed all the twenty-seven synagogues in the Old City and drove out the Jews. We were therefore not able to enter the Old City or visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. But we were able to visit Mount Zion which is on the fringe of the Old City. There is a chapel built by the Crusaders on the site of the house where Christ and his disciples ate the Last Supper. In the sixteenth century the Moslems claimed to have found below this chapel the Tomb of David and they drove out the Christian monks and turned the whole building into a mosque. Today, the Arabs are

in their turn driven out and the Jews weep at the Tomb of David since they can no longer visit the Wailing Wall in the Old City.

To the Jews of today there is another vault of more immediate significance. Here are preserved the ashes of some of those millions of Jews who were destroyed by Hitler and also the bloody fragments of the sacred Jewish scriptures which were torn up by the Nazis. Nobody who enters this terrible museum can escape the feeling that the new Jerusalem has risen on the bones of the martyrs who were killed simply because they were Jews.

Religion is very much alive in Israel. To the Jew, the Christian and Muslim faiths must appear as modern heresies just as to the Hindu who stands on the Vedas and the Upanishads, Buddhism and Jainism are no more than reform movements. To the Jew, the Books of Moses and the sayings of the Prophets are the core of the Scripture and Jerusalem is the city where the Ark of the Covenant is buried below the buildings of the last thousand years.

Oddly enough, the religious parties of Israel, though they are small, have

acquired prominence in the present Government because they hold the balance of power in the present coalition. The two main parties are Left Labour parties—Mapai and Mapam. The latter, without being Communist, feels that the Soviet bloc is more progressive than the Anglo-American. Mapai rules, but it depends on the support of several small religious parties with the result that the Sabbath and feastdays are strictly observed. The life of the very orthodox Jew is hedged by many taboos, rules and prohibitions and modern life would be impossible if all these were enforced. Nevertheless, religious laws and the Mosaic doctrines are widely studied. Israel has not yet a constitution and one of the main problems it will have to face when it comes to making one, is to decide how far the State can be secular. But no Jew, whether agnostic or liberal, can deny the importance of Jerusalem. On a low hill in the centre of the city is a quiet garden where there is a memorial to Theodore Herzl, the pioneer of the Zionist Movement. Any day you will see a procession of Jews standing bare-headed in memory of the man who fought to restore Jerusalem to the Jews.



The Jaffa Gate In Jerusalem.

# Thoughts Of Other Days

By Dr. K. SANKARAN

MY adolescent idea of a telling dress was an open coat with a collar and tie, whatever the swathe below, be it dhoti or trousers and when father during one of his periodical visits gave some cloth to be stitched by a Madras tailor—mofussal tailors were still grossly utilitarian, considering shapeliness and cut very much of secondary importance so long as the thing did not hurt in the arm holes and had a generous margin for future expansion—it was entirely my brain wave to give private instructions to have the coats cut with open collars. When I went home and triumphantly produced the garments, father considerably concealed his dismay and chagrin but had new ones stitched for his needs in his own respectable closed neck pattern. In his snow white dhoti and snow white turban with the gold border peeping in and out of the folds and his closed coat, he looked what he was, a respectable and effective personality, as I now in shamed retrospect assess values, but in those days my eyes had a warp born of a missionary schooling. A coat and a cap were insisted upon in my school in boyhood and mother insisted upon the earrings and bangle and properly plaited hair but no one bothered about a

covering for the feet and we marched in the mis-scavenged streets of scorching Madras bejewelled in ears and arms, a pigtail swinging behind, a grimy felt cap firmly planted askew to present its flying off and streaming with perspiration underneath the coat and shirt. Strangely enough the Mahamadan boy had always kept to his credal muslin jubba or achkan and the fez or skull cap. On high days he would glitter with gold filigree in cap and waist coat and pull out of its arm hole a magnificent silk handkerchief to my great admiration. On inspection days when boys were asked to come 'properly' dressed, the varieties of apparel were legion; some came with 'knicker-bocker' suits, others in golden pith turbans with tails flapping behind; bejewelled caps went with coats of flowered furniture satin.

But the poor boy who could put forth none other than his ordinary weather beaten covering would look with a vague sense of separateness from the glamorous side of life. Those were days long before the era when the words 'proletariat' and 'bourgeois' and the conceit that all wealth was predatory had come into vogue. To have the head cropped was distinctly Christian and taboo. A tuft on the head enjoined on the Hindu was an



Dr. K. Sankaran

emphatic antithesis to the shaven crown of the 'true believer'. A hirsute face, a matter of doctrine with the Moslem, was consequent on "face-shaving" having been anathematised as associated with the stage and ergo, with the devil. The hat was totally beyond the pale.

What used to strike us in the eye as the acme of incongruity was the Salvation Army way of affecting Indian clothes in orange colour and red. Aided by its band, it was no doubt effective in gathering the evening



crowd in Broadway corner. That authentic milk-white Europeans with coppery hair and eyes as of cats in

tint, scions of the class whom we aligned with the Gandharva for wealth, power and greatness should so forswear their high degree as to don 'native' clothes and sing songs and discourse in common market Tamil, albeit with accents scattered wildly about, interfered with normality much too devastatingly. Luscious and unsavoury episodes from puranas relating to the Hindu gods and heroes were often brought out in discourse to contrast with the purity of life of their own Master. The crowd heard them in a stillness whose protesting import was lost on the salvationists, for white men were white and there was an unbridgable chasm between them and the black men who lived in the 'Black town'. A Hindu soap-box orator sometimes appeared as a counter-blast at a short distance away opposite to the Y.M.C.A., and hurt feelings found vent in a shower of hard-to-be-obtained pice on his outspread cloth.

Accustomed as we were to all manner of eccentricities in apparel, from the Gudu-Gudu-pandi, the Indian motley harbinging to the sound of his high pitched rattle all manner of Jais and good fortunes with the first gleam of mornings, the gipsy women with their spangled skirts and brass jewelry, vending needles and combs and the Marwari ladies in Sowcarpet bouncing their skirt flounces a yard ahead of them, their tummies bare and overflowing in unrestrained good living, but faces modestly covered with veil in purdah, we were quite excited by the Chinaman and the Pathan. The foreignness in their mien apart from the strange dress touched some discordant chord within us. The Pathan was too stalwart and fierce for us to take any liberties with, but we pursued the Chinaman close on his heels in merciless baiting of the stranger. To think of it—what enterprise, what adventure should be inset within the bones of the 'heathen Chinese' to wander with his pack into the farthest corners of a distant foreign land in the wake of a nebulous profit but certain mischievous attention from the urchins. I myself have had a taste of such attention from children in the interior of Hitler's Germany, being mistaken for an Abyssinian soon after Mussolini's conquest of that land. That experience apart, I could sense the converse

of the picture of the lone peddling Chinaman only in such strange places as Port Soudan and Djibiti where Indians, especially Sindhis, had been trading even in days when cannibalism was rife. One Sindbad of this kind, speaking Somali like the native born narrated a story of how his father traded with the cannibals in days of yore through their medicine-men. The vendors and customers never came within half a mile of each other. The wares glass beads, knives and such like were spread in the open with a stick or a half stick or two sticks planted in front as indicators of prices in terms of the local barter material and the merchants marched back to a safe distance for cover. The medicine-man gave the signal for the wildmen to come over. They bargained by removing one or the half of a stick in front of the desired object to indicate the counter offer. Back they went while the vendors returned either to close with the offer or to bargain further. This oscillation in the range of a mile went on until trade for the day ended. The intrepidity and enterprise of Indians has been in no wise less than that of any other nation, Arab or Jew or the Venetian of the middle ages.

Digressing a little more, the furthest I have known of aching fellowship in alien lands was in Mauritius 25 years ago, when stepping underneath a spread awning in front of a small fuel depot against a sudden drizzle, I tried a little Tamil with the person in charge in whom I thought I saw affinities with my native land, in spite of the skirts she wore. The welcome was immediate and torrential although in somewhat tarnished Tamil, for the woman was second in generation from the original migrant who was her mother. Her own children could endorse the welcome only in grins and Creol, the language of the workers in the land. Her memory was sharp on what she had heard from her mother of the sacred Conjeevaram and Chidambaram and Thiruvannamalai and the wonderful fabrics and brassware of those parts. Her delight in having authentic information of these lands of her forbears, so unreachably far away recalled forcefully Israel in bonds in the country of the Pharaohs thinking of the promised land flowing with milk and honey.

Those of us who were admitted in

college days into the outer frontiers of European domestic life in the 'At Homes' in professors' houses and had



simpered inanities with Mrs. Professor, brought with us a glamour for curtains, table cloths and crotons in pots and went about in an aura of genteelity for some time, sipping coffee delicately, nibbling dosais as though they were biscuits.

The first world war, however, changed the face of many things. The march of events and the pursuit of employments in the northern parts of India had jolted old world settings and stagnant pools of prejudice and usage. No longer was a daily shave or a cropped head correlated with Christian leanings. Neither did a hat nor even a cigarette betoken contractual terms with the evil one. A visit to foreign lands had, quite a while ago, ceased to require expiatory pilgrimage to Benares before one could choose a partner in his natal caste. Sleek European habiliments had come very much into vogue. Appreciation

of good English material and good cut in clothes synchronised with pride in the set of the coat over the shoulders and of creases in trousers. Revolutionary as these changes were in the south, the translation of the 'advanced' in North India was truly as of Nick Bottom. Orthodox Indian names were truncated to crude imitation of English sounds. A Mr. Dey of Bengal with a light complexion who implied in conduct and deportment at least a mixed European parentage, to his own discomfiture and the confusion of the public over whom he officered, was honoured by the Government with a Rai Sahebdom in an unwitting but telling irony.

The wheel of time once again rolled and crashed this time into the Gandhian era of starkness and reality with a bonfire of foreign clothes and fine feathers. Colleges were emptied and the charka enthroned in drawing rooms. The coarse hand spun khadi cloth and the pert self assertiveness of the Gandhi cap revolutionised clothes; and this revolution was only a surface symbol of a cataclysm of change within in the basic outlook which precipitated into manhood a nation which had been in swaddling clothes for many generations. The white purity of khadi in those days—in the twenties of the century—was a reflection of greater things; a sincerity, a tolerance, a gentleness combined with strength born of the realisation of the common bond of slavery and of tears underlying the diversities of this country of great dimensions. The awakening was still nebulous—our masters looked upon these changes as passing phases although they struck at the tap root of Manchester's vested interests, aided by the collapse of an overboosted rupee, a culmination of the inequalities foisted on us by our erstwhile rulers, at the close of the first world war. Many set-backs and failings had to be waded through still. The Dandi march provoked only mirth initially in the West which perceived in it an analogy of the adventure of Don Quixote with the wind mill and an enterprising Parisian gave diversion to his cafe with salt cruets of the naked fakir with a hole in the place of the 'juttu.'

The charka which graced the centre of the household in the first

baptismal period soon however moved to the back room and thence to the lumber. Secondhand dishonest enthusiasms petered out even amongst those who moved about as leaders of men and the thakli which took the place of the charka served only as an ostentatious pretence on public occasions. Austerity of faith had given place to worship of the graven image.

Where we are now in the matter of dress, no one can posit despite official hints and predilections. Is it the khadi jubba and dhoti with its variation of the achkan and Jodhpur trousers with the Gandhi cap? Is it the sophisticated simplicity of bush coats and bush shirts or will it be the loose muslin kamiz and loose wide pantaloons combined with gleaming hair set with comb and cosmetics to advertisement finish by Andhra youths? Will shirts and shorts prove irresistible as the most suitable apparel for a hardworking nation toiling for its food and clothing? Will European habiliments which infused so much the idea of smartness a generation ago continue to any extent? Whatever may evolve as the permanent thing in future as masculine dress it is at present in a maelstrom of flux in sympathy with the social, political and economic uncertainties afflicting the country. The purely feminine which strictly conformed to caste-enjoined modes of wearing saris in my early days and graded its superlative only in terms of jewelry and richness of material, has however stolen a march over the male in this matter, for it has already set itself to a simpler, a saner and a more aesthetic non-denominational pattern.

The culmination of wisdom may not be in the set of one's clothes, and fashions sprout as weeds in monsoon time. But few will gainsay that a sense of well-being and ease of manner seeps unconsciously into one's deportment with good clothes, well cut, in the mode of the times. In these days of nerve strains and complexes, one at least of the many elements making for defeatism will be eliminated if a dependable frame of standards in clothing gets established, so that those of us who are neither film stars nor celebrities can conform to them and nose our life's ways unhampered.



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*Inserted by: Public Relations Officer,  
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# THE BARREN FIELD

By "VINOD"

WHEN I went home for my holidays I generally spent most of my time with an old gentleman, Vengu Iyer by name, who was the Nestor of our village. Though in age not far past three score he had by a favourable mental equipment gathered the experience of a century. From his earliest boyhood he had never left the village for a single day and being a man of easy means had had time to look about him and understand many things which we in these days of hurry have scarcely time to notice. He took a great fancy to me from my childhood as I was almost the only urchin in the place who was not boisterously impolite towards him. Moreover I had an inordinate love of stories—all sorts of them, true or untrue, natural or monstrous. And he had a natural gift for story-telling. For my age I must have had a wonderfully sympathetic bent of mind to attend upon the old man dutifully on the fine evenings when he generally went out for a walk, and listen patiently and with real interest to all his talk.

Our walk was always along the white winding countryroad that ran past our village separated from it by only a little murmuring brook which was dry for six months in the year. On the other side of the road and separated from it by an irrigation channel were the village lands, one vast sea of waving corn unbroken, as far as the eye could reach, by tree or house or empty waste. Cut into innumerable symmetrical little blocks showing a very wealth of divided interests, that vast expanse of green was the most glowing testimony to man's patience and invention. We always liked to sit on a small culvert at a turn of the road, that connected the two channels on either side of it and sent a tertiary stream therefrom that divided the village in two almost equal halves and served to irrigate the major portion of it. Sitting there cross-legged with his knotted stick laid across his knee the old man

used to gaze into the far horizon leaning his face on his hands hours together. I took good care to disturb him, for I knew he thinking of the days long past, of fair faces he had known and the things he had seen long ago seemed such a pity to break in his mental holiday.

One evening, after such an interval of silence, the old man tapped me on the back and pointing with his stick asked me, "Do you see that barren field on the other side of Nanu's 'Thiruppakkadal' with that small palm leaning over it?" I looked in the direction of his stick and saw he was pointing towards a big triangular in shape, covering an acre and a half and thickly grown with weeds and nettles studded with a profusion of blood-red flowers that moved in the evening breeze with a passionate abandon. It seemed to be singing a dirge of happy far-off things and days of ago. It was the one ugly spot on the smiling face of Nature and I always wondered how it was that the owner was so blind and the village indifferent as to tolerate this eyesore. I nodded in response to the old man's query and said, "Oh, you mean Nagarajan. I wonder whether he can tell me why it is thus neglected." And I was going to say more, but the old man checked me with a wave of the hand and said, "That was just what I was going to say. That field was not always as it is now. In fact it was the most fertile even in this fertile village. But a sin brought the curse of God and you see it in its naked poverty. Much interested by this mysterious prelude, I settled down beside him to listen to the story.

"Forty years ago, it seems even far away now, there lived in our village a Brahmin, Ranga Iyer by name, who had three stalwart sons. He had a house in the village. He knew the two mudwalls still helplessly at the sun at the east

of our street; that was once his house. He had, besides, only this field Nagarajan. But he was a determined man and he had obedient sons. And every year he provided for all the wants of his family from the yield of this one field.

He never employed outside labour; he could not afford it. And even if he could he would not have done it. The whole annual work from breaking the sod to reaping the harvest was done by him and his sons; he did not allow his Brahmin dignity to stand in the way. On fine summer mornings I have seen him and his sons, spade in hand, digging with long swinging sweeps in narrow strips, levelling inequalities, raising the bund and making it fast, destroying ant-hills and rat-holes mercilessly, working on till the sun was high in the heavens and perspiration ran down their noses in little streams. They glowed with pride in their power of arm which was able to quell unruly Nature, and being simple men who always did as they felt, the taunts of the village worthies who did not know their own fields from their neighbours' did them no harm.

These taunts were much more virulent when the manuring season began. The thrifty family possessed a small cart and two diminutive bullocks, bought with the savings of many years, which were of great value at this time. Into this open cart, with its sides boarded up with broad bamboo *thatitis* the strong-chested sons would shovel in the refuse that had collected in the backyard in the course of the year, and when the cart was full the father would sit on the beam and drive the cart to the field with contemptuous disregard of the sneers of the elders and the howls of the village brats. He knew that these fools would realise their folly only when the floods came and made the channels impassable for the manure carts. But his field would be fed full, the manure spread in even little heaps throughout its length and breadth like soldiers in the line of battle ready for the coming water. And his simple heart glowed at the prospect.

It was the coming of the water that was the greatest event in the village life. What hubbub and excitement and turmoil would be there; what running about and shouting and hallooing; what swinging of spades

and shovels! The village, at all other times disunited, was then united in its efforts to woo the coy 'Ganga' from the mother river to the rivulet that fed our fields. On the long moon-lit nights before the onset of the monsoon the village headman would march to the mouth of the river and set his hundreds of men to work cleaning the silted sand-locked mouth of the water-course. When the other mirasdars sent their *pannaiyals* to dig, Ranga Iyer went with his three sons and took the lead in the digging not only by virtue of his Brahminhood but also because he loved the work with a passionate love; and so did his brawny sons. Egged on by their example the *pannaiyals* forgot their servitude for the moment and dug on with long sweeps of the flashing spade till the pale twilight of the early dawn fell on their cheeks. And when the water came along tripping like the daughter of the morn there would rise up a great huzza, and the clamorous sound of songs and carols and mad frolic rent the air. Though the great landowners, Seshu of Seshu's and the man of millions Sitaramier, might be present it was Ranga Iyer who was the hero of the hour. For the water for which the men had yearned and the women had prayed for many a long night, the water that was at last come in answer to that call would first enter the village only through Ranga Iyer's Nagarajan. It was the *mudal-madu* field of the village. And when his field was full and the water dashed in little billows against the hillocks of manure overcoming their coy resistance by the gentle pressure of love, then Ranga Iyer was happy.

Thenceforth for about three months it was a strenuous time for the village. In the keen morning air you might see a hundred head of cattle, small and big, strong and weak, honest and vicious, being driven to the fields by young lads whose spirits rose with the smell of the rotting hay; strong brawny men carried the obtuse country plough on their shoulders and heartily cursed and kicked the boys by turns for their unruly pranks. Once the teams were harnessed, the sloven of course forced between two strong and earnest pairs to unwilling activity, the day's work began. With head bent low and stolid will the little oxen moved laboriously up and down

the heavy track, urged on by occasional flicks of the switch but more by the sustaining snatches of song with which the lads saluted the morning sun. Like hungry children biting at the teats of the mother they ripped open the bosom of the earth and the mother was glad—from her un-staunched wounds flowed milk and honey.

Of all the fields it was Nagarajan that was ploughed most deep and most often. There had been originally a slight difficulty. The shastras forbid a Brahmin to put his hand to the plough, you know; they ought to be occupied more with worshipping God with the gifts of the plough, with fruit and flowers and the corn that gives life. Therefore Ranga Iyer had to find a boy of some other caste to drive the team in the field. But he drew the line there. He argued that the act was forbidden simply because it involved switching the oxen. So, if that necessary cruelty was left to the hired boy, he and his sons could lawfully help to plough the field sufficiently deep by pressing the plough-handle down by turns. The boy was not of much use there, he was too young. Thus dividing sin from profit Ranga Iyer and his sons ploughed their field better than most of the *pannaiyals* and ryots of the village did theirs, because those did only other people's work for wages; their enthusiasm was in their belly.

In the same satisfactory way went on the sowing and the transplanting, the weeding and the levelling and the thousand and one operations that make the agriculturist more pre-occupied with the work of sustaining life than most of his fellow men. To every little detail attended Ranga Iyer with his willing sons personally. He felt a quiet delight in doing it. To any one who approached him with respect and questioned him sincerely he opened out fully; he expanded with considerable natural eloquence on the life that it was possible for every

right-thinking man to lead. He launched into the rationale of the thing with verve, explaining how in the Krita and Treta yugas, the Brahmin's function had been to learn and beg respectively, how in the Kali Yuga he was and could still remain a teacher but the teaching should be about the facts of life. He had been told that the men over the water in far-away *seemais* had been able to make carriages run without horses and to speak to their friends through wires. It was evidently the work of the Brahmins of those parts. And in his unsophisticated way he talked like the man of inspiration, unconsciously quoting the words of scripture: "He is the true Brahmin who, armed with the knowledge that gives life, urges his brethren on in the battle against ignorance and brings them victorious to the goal." And with great simplicity he applied this to the agriculturist's life, and showed how the ignorant Sudra and the ill-treated Panchama had had for ages the sole care of the life-giving mother earth, how the Brahmin had neglected his primary function of imparting life by not applying his alert brain to finding out the guarded secrets of the mother which she gives after infinite endeavour only to the earnest. And he generally wound up this unusually long discourse by saying humbly that he was an ignorant man and ought not to dictate to others but for himself he felt that it was the best life and he was trying to live up to it.

But I really think there must have been some mysterious fascination in that particular field of his to keep him chained almost perpetually to its side. Even after the transplanting was complete and the minor operations were all done and the ears shot up with avid delight in the vigour of their green opulence he would still be hovering about them most of the day. And most of the night-time he generally spent in the loft that he



had put up in a corner of the field. If any one questioned him out of lazy curiosity he gave an evasive reply—that he was there to see that the water was kept at the proper level or to frighten away the rats and the insects; and the vacuity of the reply would send them away with a very poor opinion of his wits. But to me who was his confidant his passion for the voiceless life he had evoked from the bosom of earth was very evident. Occasionally he coaxed me on warm summer nights to his loft in the field. He made me as comfortable as one could possibly be in that limited space, and would himself sit up, saying that he would sleep later. But when I woke up (as I sometimes did) in the course of the night I generally found him sitting up and gazing dreamily at the sky or into the far horizon; and to my sleepy queries he would reply in an abstracted voice that he was looking at the *thumbai* flowers nodding their heads in coy delight under the ardent gaze of the moon and stars; and he would murmur that the blades of grass were held in the close embrace of their lover the night wind. His body was aquiver with that exquisite thrill and his eyes filled with tears. I turned on my side and slept with a vague feeling of happiness nestling at my heart, for I had seen on the dim verge of eternity a soul overflowing with the poetry of life.

But when, generally at three o'clock, he woke me up to go home there was no trace of poetry about him. He was all hurry and I was all unwillingness. The balmy morning wind held me in thrall and clogged my footsteps with its Lethe-like charm. But he was very importunate and always dragged me out and towards home in that unusual hour. Indeed he was generally so hasty and upset that I too unconsciously caught the infection and woke up at three o'clock with a start. One day we had both overslept ourselves. When Ranga Iyer woke up he was all in a sweat. He muttered a quick prayer, 'Forgive me, Nagaraja!' and sprang upon the bund with me. At the same moment I saw or fancied I saw almost beneath his foot a glint as of muffled lightning. But it was again dark in a trice.

We reached the road and sat down for a while, he was in evident need of

rest. And when he was calmer he spoke. "This day we have offended Nagarajan greatly; out of his clemency he has spared us. Have you noticed the little hillock by the stooping palm at the corner of our field, covered with the *Onangodi* creeper? Nagarajan, the serpent-deity of this field, lives there. And he lived there in the days of my father, and of his father and of his father before him, for ever so long back as memory can go. He is the lord of this field and we hold it from him in fealty. It is only at night between 3 and 4 o'clock that he claims his property when he goes out for his food; and no man may see him then; woe be to him who would pry on him, for he will be his Death. It is by his grace that we have been spared today"; and he concluded fervently, bowing his head, "Thank the Lord, my child." I did indeed thank the Lord for the prudence He taught me; for from that day till the time of which I shall speak I did not step into that field after night-fall.

But Ranga Iyer never let my unwillingness deter him. He almost always spent his nights in the field by himself or with one or other of his sons. And in times of scarcity of water this was essential. The stream that fed the village branched off a river six miles away to the west and irrigated in its course about eighty villages before it came to ours. Naturally when water was scarce those nearer the mouth had a prior claim and they availed themselves of it, unless they were too indolent or too weak. Therefore getting the necessary water to our fields—water without which the young blades were as downcast as babes who had lost their mother—required great courage and manoeuvring skill. Very often the lascars maintained by the P. W. D. at the entrance to keep the screw-shutters and regulate the flow of water in the channel had to be bribed lavishly, and that too in competition with villages, many of them riotously opulent, that were fed by rival channels. Often, again, the watchmen in the upper villages had to be hoodwinked; and when the attempt was discovered, regular skirmishes followed ending sometimes in the splitting of skulls and the consequent enriching of the Police.

In these struggles the Ranga Iyer

family was always in the forefront in spite of their small interest. For, were they not the owners of the *nudal madai* field? Indeed, this fact brought them very often into disagreeable collision with the other mirasdars of the village, with the man of millions, Sitaramier, in particular. The latter could not bear the idea that he, the lord of five hundred acres in the village, about three-fourths of it in fact, should have to await the convenience of this *appam vadai* family. If they took it into their heads to refuse to allow the water to pass through their field into his, he would have to spend hundreds of rupees to get any water at all in times of scarcity. This thought galled him like a fresh arrow every time it crossed his mind. He tried by every means to secure Nagarajan for himself, but in vain. He offered a fair price, then an exorbitant price and then a price that simply made the hair stand on end and convinced the villagers that Ranga Iyer was a fool not to take it. But Ranga Iyer would not budge.

Then Sitaramier brought indirect pressure to bear upon him by the weight of his local and social influence. Being by reason of his wealth the leader of the village, he made a satellite of his bring a dozen charges against Ranga Iyer in the caste panchayat—that the Brahmin Ranga Iyer was one day actually seen driving the plough contrary to the injunctions of the shastras, that on another day he was seen beating with his own hands the Pariah boy whom he employed occasionally for field-work, that on the day when he had to perform his father's ceremony, he got up the cocoanut tree in his back-garden for gathering nuts, though the village tree-tapper was the proper man to do it; and so on and so forth *ad lib*. The court, being all of one mind, that of the President, solemnly pronounced that Ranga Iyer, by his unbrahminly deeds, had forfeited his Brahmin privileges, and excommunicated him forthwith, conveniently forgetting that Ranga Iyer had been doing uncensured for umpteen years the very things for which he now stood condemned.

The hot bloods of the village felt the panchayat's injustice keenly and urged Ranga Iyer to right himself by taking legal action against his perse-

cutors. But Ranga Iyer had a deep distrust of the law and its devious ways; he had always felt that the instrument which punished rogues could not be entirely free from the taint of their wickedness. Moreover he, strange to say, did not care a fig for the solemn verdict of our ecclesiastical court. To some one who questioned him on the subject he replied laughingly that the panchayat's ban did not prevent his digesting his food thoroughly or going to sleep soundly; that he had never cared for the opinion of the village rogues; that he would get Brahmins from other villages to partake of the ceremonial feast at the *shraddhas* he had performed; and even if they refused to come the *pitrs* would be amply satisfied with his humble offerings; it would be the greatest sin to think of satisfying them through the pot-bellied humbugs of the village who danced like beggar-dogs to the tune of a rich charlatan.

Such active and open hostility so emphatically announced goaded Sitaramier to violent fury. And from the depth of his hatred came an inspiration. He was one of the members of the taluk board. And it appeared to him that what could not be achieved by threats of sacerdotal sanction might be easily procured by bureaucratic intrigue. He persuaded the tahsildar that it was essential for the welfare of the village that Ranga Iyer's field should be Government property so that the water supply in times of scarcity could be regulated for the village by Government agency established there. And under the accommodating aegis of the Land Acquisition Act he caused it to be proclaimed in the District Gazette that Survey No. X. Y. Z. was to be acquired for a public purpose.

Ranga Iyer was alarmed and at his wit's end. He did not know what to do. He knew that Sitaramier was the cause of the mischief but he was too proud to petition for his intercession; he knew, besides, that it would be hopeless to look for mercy from that purse-proud man. He approached all the officials from the Village Munsiff to the District Collector who represent Government in the eyes of the villagers. Some of them were harsh, but most of them indifferent, and all of them disposed to think that a poor man who had only two lemons to

show as the token of his goodwill could not have a just cause.

The award was announced in due course. And it represented about three-fourths of the fair price which Sitaramier had offered for the field in the first instance. And Sitaramier gloated over Ranga Iyer's misery and observed triumphantly to his admiring conclave that God was just and greedy crows were rightly served. Ranga Iyer's sons got disgusted at this mockery of justice and tried to induce their father to leave the accursed village and go away with them to the town near by. But he could not bear to leave Nagarajan, though it had left him, and so they went without him.

Then a great temptation came upon him. Some fellows who had a chronic itch for litigation suggested that as the land was not put to the use for which it had been acquired and Sitaramier had by some unholy compromise obtained possession of it, he could appeal against the acquisition. And the suggestion, made carelessly, caught like a forest fire. He who had dreaded courts like poison was now seen wandering perpetually in the corridors, first of the Munsiff's court and then of the Subordinate Judge's court and at last, of the High Court, aimlessly and with an abstracted look on his face, a bundle of ragged papers under his arm, and a lean purse, which grew leaner every day, tied round his waist. He lost the case in all the courts and he lost the award-money with it. One fine morning he found himself a pauper with no hopes to feed him. Loth to approach his honest, hard-working sons, he slunk back to the village shame-faced, miserable.

Some people derided the unfortunate man and not a few inflicted on him that unnecessary cruelty—advice. But a few, of whom I had the honour to be one, mindful of the man's simple goodness and single-mindedness, gave him shelter and food. And I for one would have liked him to live with me till his death.

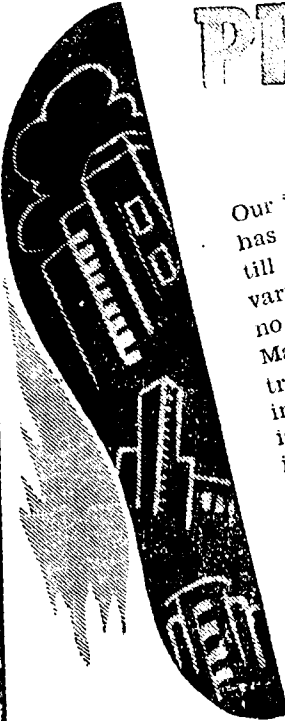
But he was restless. Hour in, hour out, I have seen him wandering with a wistful look towards Nagarajan and sitting on the bund and gazing at it, tears rolling down his cheeks. Its fascination for him seemed to increase day by day. Many a time did I step behind him noiselessly and find him addressing the field with all the indul-

gent tenderness of a mother for her froward child. He would piteously ask, "Oh Naga, did I ever serve you selfishly? Was I not ever mindful of your dignity and power? Did I not dedicate my life to your service? Then how is it that you have forsaken me? Or is it some sin of mine that is now visited on me? But I have never been consciously unjust to any man. Oh God, my troubles are hard to bear." And he would weep. When I advanced and laid a caressing hand on his arm he started like a guilty thing surprised. He would hastily wipe away his tears with the back of his hand and with a foolish deprecating smile murmur, "There is something gone wrong within my head. I am always feeling giddy and foolish now." But his reserve would soon melt before my friendliness and he would say in a husky voice, "Friend, the only thing now left for me in life is to sit all day long on this bank and envy the gay parrots swooping down on the gold-tipped corn." I tried to induce him to forget his misery by gentle words and satiric words. But all my efforts were thrown away.

Suddenly one morning he formed a strange resolution. He told me he could no longer live but in daily sight of his field. His courage and resolution (what he called his pride) had departed with Lakshmi. And he did not see why he should not seek employment under Sitaramier as *karyam*, since then he would have some interest in life and need not live on charity; and, what was more important, he could then look after his beloved field as before. I tried in vain to dissuade him; I knew his strength and heart were broken and he was rushing into the arms of death. But what must be must be, you know.

So, that very day he sought out his old enemy and offered him his services; and his offer was gladly accepted, as Sitaramier knew the will-power of the man and could guess what a driving force he could be in the village economy. Moreover, Sitaramier was distinguished by that thick-skinned obtuseness which is the comfortable adjunct of wealth; and was not at all perturbed at having to deal with a man who had defied him up to the highest court in the land and whom, in the words of straight-speaking men, he had cheated like a cur. Time in its imperturbable way

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throws its deadening pall on feelings that had once waxed strong. So a more or less satisfactory bargain was struck by which Ranga Iyer, for five kalams of paddy and one rupee a month, became Sitaramier's local *karyam*.

But you know the Tamil proverb that moist clay and burnt clay will never mix. Even so it was with our friend and his new master. The rich man did not at all like his servant mooning about Nagarajan perpetually. There were five hundred acres besides to look after, as he pompously told him. And he observed to his friends with an air of superiority that a man, whatever else he may not have, must have a sense of proportion. Ranga Iyer in his comatose apathy did not much resent the rich man's superciliousness. But as his heart was not in the work things did not pan out as well as Sitaramier had expected; and Sitaramier grew discontented and began to murmur against the laziness of paid servants who, he observed pathetically, seemed to have no conscience at all.

As if to aggravate the situation, there fell on the land that year one of the greatest droughts that had ever witnessed man's misery. It was the year of great famine, when meat-eaters ate ravenously whatever they could find raw and the Brahmins themselves fed on roots and leaves.

Good mother Kaveri who always comes to her children in the plains with hands full of plenty never came to us at all that year. The whole work of cultivation was held up; and people were dying in thousands.

When things were in this state there came a whisper of water in the great river. No one believed it, (no one, of course, does believe such things) but many a man's nights were made feverish with uneasy dreams. And Sitaramier in his indolent way began to murmur. He wanted to know what use there was in having *karyastas* if they were not able to get water sufficient for the cultivation of even a few acres. He made moan that others were more favoured than he in having alert men who were worth their money. And he managed to make Ranga Iyer feel the taunt pretty keenly.

But it was not so much the employer's taunt as some strange impulse within him that was the

cause of Ranga Iyer's unusual excitement at this time—in fact I had never seen him so moved after his prosperous days. But he did not tell me what it was and I did not press him.

One day at evenfall he and I were as usual sitting on this very spot and talking of Nagarajan. In a low troubled tone he said, "This is the first time within living memory that Nagarajan will lie fallow for want of water. What is the world coming to, I wonder!" And we were talking dispiritedly about the deterioration of things in general when the talk of two labourers coming towards us from the east attracted our attention. "It is a good thing that we have at least water to drink," said one. "Yes" replied the other, "and you would not have had it either if your fool of a headman had persisted in watering the fields without filling the tank. I am glad that the village was sensible enough to take my advice." He was the older of the two, evidently the wise man of his village. And he who had first spoken agreed and said, "Yes, yes, our headman is a fool, there is no denying it. He must be cast out at the next panchayat, and we will vote you instead." By this time they had come to where we were sitting and out of idle curiosity I asked them, "What village are you?" They said, "Poongur," and passed on.

A few minutes passed and I had fallen into a dull reverie when Ranga Iyer slapped me vigorously on the back and announced, "My boy, I have an idea." Somewhat interested I sat up. "Nagarajan has heard my prayer, I must believe. For here is the way to water Nagarajan and make him yield his full crop, king of all paddy-fields as ever." I did not understand what he meant. He was annoyed at my thick-headedness. "How is it that your brain goes to work so slowly this evening? Don't you see that Poongur is only five miles from here and it is the easiest thing in the world for two enterprising men to tap its high-lying tank and flood our broad field. The run is as smooth as an inclined plane." And his whole body was in a tremble as he said so.

I was aghast at the audacity of the idea. I kept silent, but he was restless; he moved to and fro with jerky steps; then stopped before me abruptly and asked, "Will you come?" I vaguely asked, "When?" "This very

night," was the reply. I did not know what to say. His was a horribly cruel proposal to deprive some hundreds of souls of the elemental necessity of life simply to satisfy the whim of a half-mad man. But firmness based on moral conviction has never been my strong point. I could not speak out straight and strong. So, when I pleaded with him, I, like the fool that I was, did not bring home to him the monstrousness of the suggestion. With a hopelessly erring intuition I sought to warn him by the fear of consequences. I pointed out that we might be caught in the act and that meant certain death; that even if we were not caught we would never be able to bring that little water to our field all the way from Poongoor, the dry porous channel would suck it up like a sponge. But all my arguments were thrown away. I think today that the man as he stood before me was really mad. There was a strange glint in his eye which I have never seen before or after, nor do I ever want to see it again on this side of the grave. But the man dominated me. He was strong and I was weak and I succumbed.

It was a dark tempestuous night on which we started on our eerie errand. We carried each a spade and a shovel. Lest others should see us and suspect our intention we did not take the road but walked along the channel-bed. The air was oppressive with the heat of mouldy vegetation. The wind moaned through the trees which cast their gaunt shadows along our path making the darkness doubly dark. The rushes on either side of the channel perpetually rustled under the movement of uneasy night-life. Away in the open fields the jackal howled its long and dismal note and the owl replied from the rustling branches overhead. We occasionally happened upon a *sarai* crossing the channel in its leisurely way and this brought my heart jumping into my mouth. I was normally accounted a brave man, but that night I was strangely nervous and many a time wished silently that I had never ventured on this mad prank. What frightened me more than the mysterious night-life around me was the man walking before me with long swinging strides, his lips set and his mind evidently thinking strange thoughts. I was wondering what

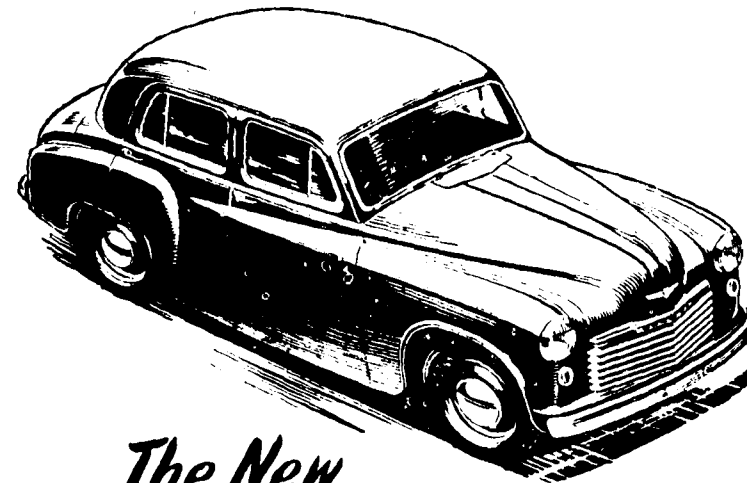
would be the end of it all when suddenly without the least warning we stumbled upon a funeral-pyre. The watchman had gone to sleep letting the pyre slide almost into the channel under the convulsive movements of the burning body, and the half-charred trunk lay right across the water-course. This startled me terribly and it was with difficulty that I repressed a shriek which would have brought a whole village about our ears.

Shortly after midnight we reached Poongur. The village was sleeping soundly and I felt as guilty as a man who was about to commit child-slaughter. We crept on warily without making the least noise and came to the tank which stood on a high level. Bidding me by a sign of the hand stay where I was Ranga Iyer crept round the tank. He returned after a few minutes and whispered, "The fools have not even set a watch." We then began our nefarious work which was mere child's play. We made a hole, one foot by one foot, in the wall at a point where the bund sloped straight down into a channel that was connected with ours, and the water galloped down with the force of a miniature mountain-torrent. Fortunately it did not make as much noise as I had feared; the slope was not very long. In a few minutes water, two-foot deep, was racing along our thirsty stream.

And then we started back. Ranga Iyer wanted to return by the same route but I positively refused; the sight of that half-burnt body lying across the channel haunted me. We struck a compromise, he running down the channel and I taking the foot-path that ran along the dry fields almost parallel to it, only a few yards away.

Ranga Iyer seemed like a man possessed. He raced along with the running water, muttering to himself words that sounded strangely like endearments. He occasionally ran in front of the water and turning to it held out his hands and called to it cooingly to come on. I did not know whether to laugh or to weep, but I was determined to see it to the bitter end and so I kept pace with him. When we came near the funeral pyre I firmly shut my eyes though I was fifty yards away; and still that half-burnt body danced before me in the glow of the dying embers.

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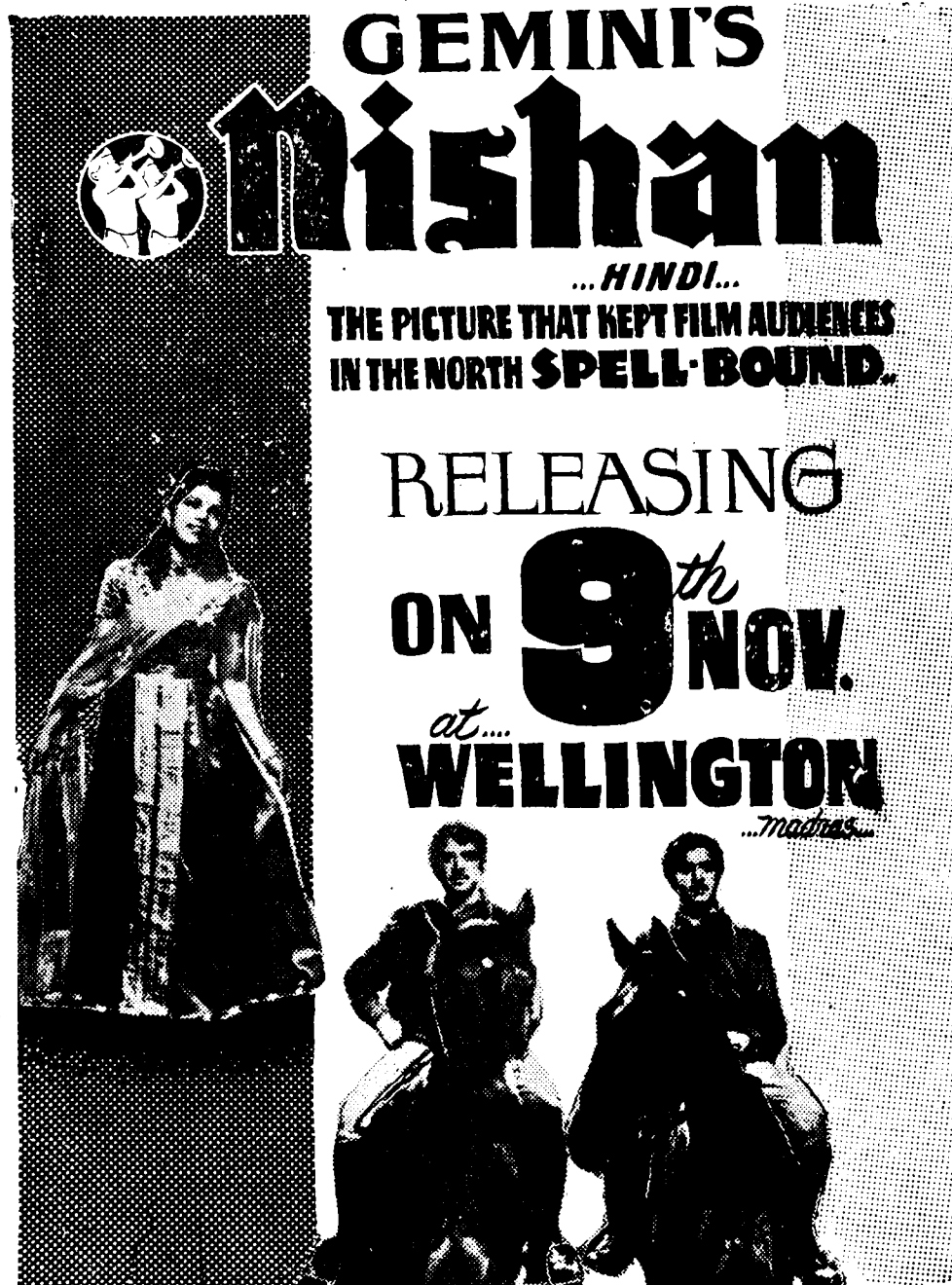
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At last we came to this culvert and Ranga Iyer and I with a few sweeps of the spade cleared the channel mouth and the water raced along. Feeling weary I stopped and sat here. But Ranga Iyer was off. He went with the water dancing and singing and cutting wild capers and calling to his dear Nagarajan, his beloved Nagarajan, to come and drink his fill and be satisfied. He opened the *madai*, and when the frothy water rushed into his field with all the joy of a school-boy entering the playground Ranga Iyer's happiness knew no bounds. He leapt into the field and fell on his face and raised his arms in prayer. In that instant something that glittered in the starlight like the crack of a golden whip sprang at him and fastened on his neck. He heaved a loud groan and cried, "Oh, Naga, forgive my madness. Thee I have offended and I must die," and rolled over. I recollected it was three o' clock and my heart stopped with a click. I fainted.

When I came to in the dim light of early morning with an anticipatory sense of wretchedness I instinctively looked in the direction of Naga-

rajan. There he lay, his head upon the bund of the field he had loved more than life. And as I looked a gleaming snake, about a cubit long, slowly unwound itself from his neck and standing erect on its tail cast a long and steady look at me, (that look haunts me still), then slid from the lifeless body and disappeared.

I returned a changed man to the village to tell a story none believed. But from that day Nagarajan bore not a single ear of corn. Lakshmi had departed with Ranga Iyer's life. And Sitaramier, after a few years' struggle, gave up the cultivation of the field in disgust. It has ever since remained in this unkempt condition, overgrown with nettles as you see."

The sun was sliding down the horizon in its purple haze when we rose up to go home. As the old man dusted his uppercloth and adjusted it on his shoulders he observed in his simple way, "Greed kills, my boy. Remember that. And the snake people love not unrighteousness. Rangan would have killed a village; and life must pay the penalty for life. That is the eternal law."

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# Introducing OUR WRITERS AND ARTISTS

**Vighneswara:** Made his bow in the first number of SWATANTRA, nearly five years ago, and his weekly appearance since, without a single break, has been a joy to many. Equally at home in classical Sanskrit literature and the literatures of the West, he can step aside from these, and watch, quite detached, his own writings which combine ginger and ambrosia.

**Dr. James H. Cousins:** Poet, literary and art critic. A volume of his collected poems has been issued by the Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar. He has given of his best to India. At eighty he retains the clear-sightedness of mind that he possessed half a century ago. "I have discovered," he said recently, "the Fourth Organum and I am trying to make an exhaustive study of it."

**S. Parthasarathy:** Trained for law, he practised as an advocate for some years. Then he took to business where he has built up for himself a very distinguished position. Has an architectural mind with a flair for building and planning. Combines great practical sagacity with a detached outlook of cultural and spiritual refinement.

**Fenner Brockway:** Member, British House of Commons. A progressive intellectual. Has been Liberal, Pacifist, Labour, Leftist, Socialist. A gentleman of wide and varied interests. Has written about India as also about the American political scene, and half a dozen years ago wrote "A German Diary."

**T. T. Krishnamachari:** Member, Union Parliament. Renounced a lucrative career in business to enter

politics. One of the drafters of India's Constitution. Fond of books. Has one of the finest libraries in the country. Extremely well informed on financial and economic matters.

**John Hampson:** Distinguished English novelist and literary critic. Came to India in February 1948. His visit to Madras, on the invitation of the Provincial Government, was in connection with the study of juvenile delinquency. His six months' stay in India, he says, provided him with notes for a travel book and several short stories, one of which "Undoubtedly the Goddess" appears in this Annual Number of SWATANTRA. Has written many novels. In a new edition of one of them William Plomer writes thus of him: "The general flavour of his work is what may be called very English—because of its subject matter, its sobriety and directness, and its discovery of deep and unsentimental tenderness; it is also very personal, not because of any intrusiveness on the part of the author, but because nobody has written about the same themes in the same way."

**Pothan Joseph:** He looks at sixty amiable, comfortable and prosperous. You could never put him in a niche. It would be like trying to describe the rainbow in one colour. He wields a pen of which Cabinet ministers have stood in awe. Has held a record number of jobs: 26 so far. Knows his Bible inside out. His friends are strewn all over India, from Kashmir to Cape Comorin. Has ever remained faithful to the Shakespearean injunction: Above all, to thine own self be true.

**Manjeri S. Isvaran:** Famous short story writer. Some of his best stories

have appeared in SWATANTRA. Has a unique mastery of English, with a very delicate sense of the artistry of words. His hobby is the bringing out of masterpieces of beauty in print.

**K. Chandrasekharan:** A man of taste. Has a fine knowledge of Carnatic music and Indian classical dance. His metier in writing is the serious short story of which he has produced two excellent volumes in Tamil. As a critic of arts and letters his judgments are tempered by moderation and politeness.

**Mrs. Sabar Parthasarathy:** Principal, Ethiraj College for Women. An Oxford graduate in English literature and education. Independent by temperament. An efficient administrator and disciplinarian. Has also served in the Madras Educational Service in the capacity of Lecturer in English in Queen Mary's College where she was well known for her intolerance of flippancy and warm appreciation of hard work and serious application to study, in her pupils.

**C. Ramasubban:** Senior officer of the Imperial Bank of India. A hater of shams. Given to relentless denunciation of high-placed humbugs.

**Dr. K. Sankaran:** Retired officer of the Public Health Department. An artist to the finger tips. Fond of gardening. Shy, with an aversion for publicity. Writes under a pen-name exclusively for SWATANTRA, and has now allowed his own name to be printed after considerable persuasion. Has a gift of phrasing of extraordinary grace and charm.

**Mrs. Santha Rungachary:** Familiar to readers of SWATANTRA, Santha has struck out a path, all her own, in her writings which reveal daring, freshness, originality and intellectual vigour.

**B. Appasamy:** Visited Israel this year as a member of the Indian Press Dele-

gation. A descriptive writer of first-rate objectivity.

**"Vinod":** A writer of many years' standing, who has contrived not to publish a book so far. He has written on every topic under the Sun for bread and was once young enough to entertain literary ambitions; as may be seen from his story in this Annual and a few other fugitive things that SWATANTRA hopes to extract from him. Anonymity, originally imposed by vocational austerity, has become almost a disease with him; he is a man of many aliases.

**Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury:** Designed cover page for SWATANTRA Annual this year and last year. Principal, School of Arts and Crafts, Madras, for twenty years. A centre of inspiration for things artistic, he is unsurpassed for sense of colour and rhythm. Wrestler, musician, sculptor, painter, inventor and designer, he is a many-sided genius with the status and renown of a national institution.

**K. C. S. Paniker:** Remarkable for his infinite variety of artistic output. Some 100 paintings and sketches by him were exhibited two months ago in the School of Arts, Madras, and drew a large and appreciative crowd. He is true to life in his artistic effort, and as one critic remarks, there is "colour, pattern and a wholesome earthiness of atmosphere" in his paintings.

**Raja Ram:** A talented young artist apprehending the beauty of line and light and shade. Wields a nimble brush and has a never-flagging zest to learn. All the top-pieces in this special issue of SWATANTRA are his work.

**M. G. K. Gokhale:** A product of the Andhra Jateeya Kalasala, he later learnt art under Roy Chowdhury. Known for his strength of line and rhythm. A traditionalist turned rebel, his penchant is for subjects historical. Now it is "People's" art. Worked in various journals and is now doing art direction of a film studio. He is also one of the front-rank story-writers in Telugu.

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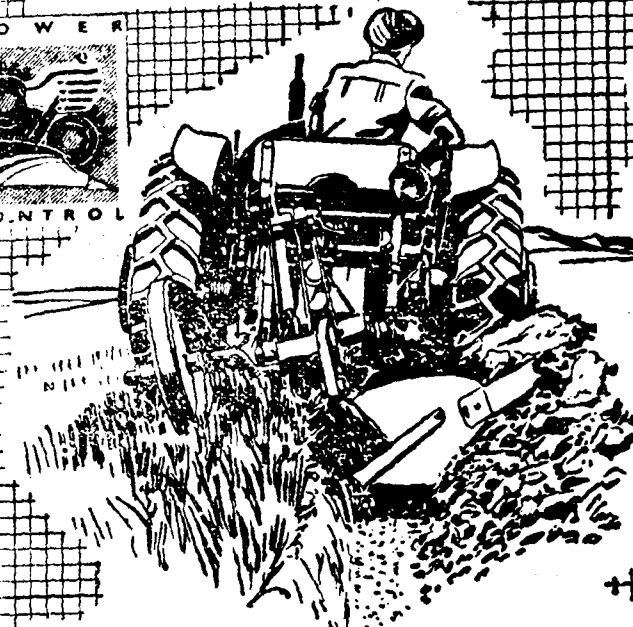


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