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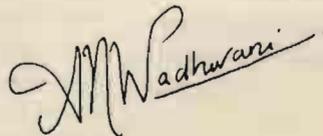
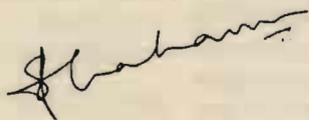
Repartee normally connotes a witty remark or response in a conversation. Here, it represents a response, even a reaction to a much larger conversationalist : the Media.

As students of mass media, we studied the dynamics of news. We found that as "information of general interest to the public", what is given priority in the average newspaper is usually the sordid, the destructive and extreme. Constantly subjected to such "news", the average individual probably finds it difficult to find faith and derive inspiration from society.

Repartee makes an attempt to shift the focus, if only briefly, to the more palatable, very real positive forces at work around us. We found several individuals who offered a strong counter-force to the trends of cynicism, materialism and confusion. These are people for whom ideals are very much alive, and for whom priorities clearly lie in personal commitment to issues that concern them.

Of course one can't go too far away from our "mediated reality" and we acknowledge this with original comment. Our spoofs and essays entertain as well as express the views of young media professionals to-be.

With Repartee, we hope to strike a responsive chord in our readers..... somewhere.



Contents

★ <i>A Political Vaccine against Poverty</i>	- Radhika Singh	3
★ <i>Maharathinama</i>	-Sabari Sarkar	4
★ <i>Where the Mind is Without Fear.....</i>	-Sanjeevani Bhelande/Tara Khurana	6
★ <i>On the Fairer Sex</i>	-Divya Malik/ Shalina Unni	7
★ <i>Moulding a Personal Dream</i>	- Shifalika Maitra	9
★ <i>Angels Tread Where Fools Fear to Go</i>	-Leena Yadav	10
★ <i>Going the Bihar Way</i>	-Neetu Srivastava	13
★ <i>Politics and Panache</i>	-Sonali Ghosh	14
★ <i>The Green Dream</i>	-Surabhi Sharma	16
★ <i>To Learn, With Love</i>	-Maneesha & Vaishali Gadekar	17
★ <i>The Great Divide</i>	-Sara Abraham & Madhuri Kamat	19
★ <i>Romancing the Stone at Khajurao</i>		20
★ <i>Scribes : No Sacrifice, This</i>	-Sangita Wadhvani	24
★ <i>Parliament News</i>	-Manjari Thakur	26
★ <i>East or West, B.E.S.T. is.....</i>	-Anupama Mandloi	28

A POLITICAL VACCINE AGAINST POVERTY

"A number of Third World countries are coming to recognize that the transplanting of capital-intensive, high technology from the industrialized nations into their very different cultural and social environment is not working well. In many cases... this approach has done more harm than good. Developing countries are therefore, turning towards the kind of "intermediate" technology than can better utilize their main assets of natural resources, land and large labor forces".

- Dr. Omo Fadaka

Why is it that nearly half a century after independence, India still has no solution to the problems of its vast majority of citizens? Why has the rural-urban divide become so deep? What is the basic root of such nation-wide discontent? Religion? Ideology? or Poverty?

Poverty, characterized by unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, disease and bad housing, is probably the ultimate 'cause' of so much discontent. India's rural population, a distinct majority, has long been viewed as a static mass; living wretched lives without such basic essentials as water. Their contribution to urban supermarkets is lapped up all too soon. But how many products of urban society have dived into rural realities, and tried to address the issue of national development at its roots?

Dr. Antia too grew up in the literate society of the city. He trained in the United States, where the 'American Dream' could have become a reality. But in 1975, he established the Foundation of Medical Research, in Bombay. As Director, he presides over this laboratory, devoted to advanced research in neurology, immunology and microbiology of leprosy.

In more ways than one, he is a pioneer in the field of research and health



programmes. His energies are largely directed to rural areas. "In India, all research is concentrated on cancer because it is more a rich man's disease than leprosy".

Dr. Antia has demonstrated that all deformities of the face in leprosy can be corrected through plastic surgery without general anesthesia or facilities of electricity or running water. Thus, the poor can be helped in no uncertain terms. The need for leprosy treatment is amply explained by the fact that in Bombay alone, there are one lakh leprosy patients.

The Foundation for Research in Community Health was established by Dr. Antia in 1975 to deliver health services and conduct field research. In the Raigad district of Coastal Maharashtra, the Mandwa Community health project was set up to "evolve a low cost community-based alternative health care system which reaches the poorest and encourages people's participation. Dr. Antia's drive and sustained efforts to reach the needy spring from sharp observations of the Indian medical set-up: "The divide between the rich and poor is widened as the rich have cornered medical technology. How else does one explain the fact that the operating cost of one CT Scanner in a big hospital is equivalent to the cost of basic medicine

provided to one and a half million people?"

The solution, according to Dr. Antia is a "political vaccine against poverty". He emphatically states that in India the middle class and elite today are victims of 'cultural enslavement', which is an embodiment of the 'West is Best' philosophy. For development we must be bereft of such 'mental slavery'.

"The people of the world are polarized towards the "need based" and the 'greed based' countries as opposed to 'developing' and 'developed nations'. The West (greed based) is looting the natural resources of our country and the remains are exploited by about 100 million Indians who survive by aping the West."

The ultimate objective of the rural projects undertaken by Dr. Antia's institution is therefore, to 'demystify' information given to the masses. "What everybody must know", says Dr. Antia, "is that every other person in the world is going to exploit you." The advantage of finding an amicable solution to the common man's problems in this field is that "there is no consumer resistance in health".

Dr. Antia, along with his team of scientists at the FRCH continue to strive to solve problems for people in rural areas with the technology available in cities. To cite a clear example they have taught villagers in coastal Maharashtra to sterilize water without using chemical vaccines and expensive equipment.

In our own small way it may be possible to reach out to the underprivileged; to "Help them to Help themselves".

Dr. Antia's motto in life is - "Make complicated things simple and if you see a problem - solve it!" Can that be too difficult?

- Radhika Singh.

Maharathinama

'Jatra' is a folk theatre from Bengal, where all the characters are stylised and speak in high flown language. One would think that such an ornate structure would be highly suitable for spoofing well known personalities who have a hyped-up media image.

(Sound of an alarm bell ringing slowly curtain raises)

SCENE I - Ageing Raja sitting on a slightly rickety throne, piles of "magapaper" have been stacked under one leg in an effort to make it less rickety. Raja Rittish's appearance looks a little dishevelled and dejected. The court soothsayer Pandit Prannoy sitting on the left of the throne strokes his sparse beard very thoughtfully.

Raja Rittish : Gaunt trees rainlashed on windy sweeping hills-rainlashed, weather-beaten and tired as I am now. The veteran of a hundred battles, will I be defeated now ?

Pundit Prannoy : My Lord ... Be calm. I can see it in my psychic eye that you will observe a lot in the near future.

Raja Rittish : No, no, no ! I do not want to be a mere *observer*. Do you not know seer, there is so much that I want to share with my subjects. I am like a *pot* which is filled to the brim with a lot of news, views and comments !

Pundit Prannoy : Yes, my lord. In my last *padayatra* round the kingdom, I met many who perceived you as an *illustrious* king. But my lord, now you should shift your eyes and thoughts to

the State Treasury and exercise your caution, before writing down this year's budget on the scroll.

(Enter State Treasurer, Rammohan, with a large turban on his head).

Raja Rittish : Ah! Speak of the treasurer and the treasurer appears.

Rammohan : My lord, I have come to you with a very grave problem.

Pundit Prannoy : Hmm... I had foreseen it! Raja do not *devalue* what Rammohan has to say.

Rammohan : My Lord, the state coffers will soon be empty. In such a situation, it would be wise to allow the princes of the NRI Kingdom to come here, with their cows and bullocks and help our poor farmers to grow more crops.

Raja Rittish (with a thunderous grunt of dislike) : The NRI princes can only enter the kingdom over my dead body. (Suddenly, the Raja's beloved daughter, Princess Shahana, rushes in with open hair - wearing a lot of native, ethnic jewellery).

Shahana : O Father, those Zamindars have again attacked the wretched of the earth, our farmers ... and now I am rushing there to help the sons of the soil fight for their rights.

Raja Rittish : But dear, won't your saree get soiled? Go in your chariot, daughter.

Shahana : Nooo, I shall go walking. I will not let any power on earth evict our brethren from their land and homes.

(Princess rushes out agitatedly, Treasurer follows brandishing his sword).

Pundit Prannoy : Hey Krishna! Where art thou?

SCENE II - A congregation of farmers and their families sitting. Princess Shahana standing amidst them, giving her oratory.

Shahana : Ye, brothers and sisters, we have to fight for our rights and break free from any domination. To make this place into a *City of Joy*, I have come to sit with you and help in your protests against the Zamindars. And I will also go across the river Narmada to meet Princess Medha of the Patkar Clan and ask her to help us

(Suddenly there is a commotion and State Treasurer, Rammohan, is seen coming towards the congregation with a group of NRI princes. Fear and foreboding on the crowd's faces and a frown on Shahana's).



NRI Prince : Ye, brothers and sisters, do not fear. We have come into your land to give you good food, good clothes and good homes. Just sell your cows, bullocks and your souls to us.

Rammohan : Listen to the NRI princes and no misfortune will befall you all.

(Apprehension among crowd).

Shahana (agitatedly) : Hey Krishna, where art thou?

(Out of nowhere, a youth with a heavenly smile and twinkling eyes, appears).

Youth (smiling) : O NRI Princes our kingdom does not need you. The people's souls belong to me - Ved Vyas knew and now B.R. Chopra Maharaj and Ramanand Sagar Maharaj know, that I reign in the hearts of the people. As long as I am present, I will solve all the problems of this kingdom. So all you devils in disguise..... VAMOOSE!

(He waves his flute in the air and the NRIs with Rammohan, vanish into thin air. Youth now turns to Shahana).

Youth : Beautiful lady, with fire in your heart and kindness in your eyes will you be my consort?

Shahana (shyly): O enchanting man.....but..... I am betrothed to Prince Javed.

Youth : What does it matter lovely princess - betrothals are made to be broken. Follow me....

(Youth walks ahead playing his flute, Shahana follows mesmerized. Crowd gapes at them in utter astonishment and bewilderment).

SCENE III - Raja sitting on his throne and counting tea leaves in a cup. Pundit Prannoy dozing in a corner.

Raja Rittish (to himself): One, two, three, four....five, six....really, these tea-leaves have such a good flavour

and colour....truly a *king's choice* (Hears sound of flute and looks up. Princess Shahana and youth walk into the court).

Youth : My Lord, your daughter has agreed to marry me - I am a prince from the Bharadwaj Clan.

Raja Rittish : I am very happy, O Prince from Bharadwaj clan, my throne is yours too.

(Youth glances at rickety throne and says): Thank you O King..... I do not want your throne, but my cousin from the Dharkar clan would be very happy to have it.

Pundit Prannoy : Well....so much has happened in *the kingdom this week* but, all's well that ends well.

(Sound of an alarm bell ringing.... slowly curtain falls).

- Sabari Sarkar

The S.C.M. Repertoire

(A comprehensive, up-to-date list of words, familiarity with which is guaranteed to boost chances of survival).

A : Apperceptive background; Acceptable, Attendance, Ad-nauseum, Assinine, Audacity, Anti-Americanisms,

B : Boring, BBC training programmes, Balaram, Broke (a recurring state much before the end of the month), Brilliant (translated : lousy).

C : Cliche, Conditioning, Cherry on top, Canteen Coffee, Co-ordination, Chalk-attacks (a unique part of the journalism syllabus), Colloquialisms (like "The dead body of the

deceased", Cartier-Bressen, Clods.

D : Dictatorship, Dramatics, Delinquents, Discipline, Dedication, Deadline.

E : Eureka! Elitist, Editing, Efficiency (lack of) Euphemisms (Marriage, Ad-films, Yuppiedom).

F : Film, Fidelity, Fools, Facile, Film Festivals, Focus (not to be confused with focus in cinema), Films Division.

G : Great American Dream, "Get me

coffee", Glittering Generalities, "Get your act together", "Getting old".

H : Hypothesis, Hope (to survive the making of the A.V.), High B.P., Heights (of ridiculousness), Hostel chai (a noted beverage), Howlers (unavoidable, first time goofups).

I : Imbecile, Ignorant, I Told You, Indoor-terrorism, Ineffective, Incredibly dumb, Incredulousness (normal expression on SCMITES' faces, especially when told they are not working hard enough), Image, Indianisms.

WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR.....

What is professional security? A regular salary? A network of professional 'contacts'? A Provident Fund? A car, a home, T.V. and V.C.R.? A sound insurance policy and holiday allowance?

Most of us are sure we want this thing called a 'future'. In fact, even much before the 'graduate' tag can be branded onto the bio-data, we have set our eyes on this faraway vision. This is what I want to do with my life. This is how much I will be able to afford. This is how proud mother will be.

Enter the clichéd rat race, and the rat values. The professional world has its own Bible; and one of its salient doctrines is to watch out for yourself. Be a smart operator and come out on top. In other words, carve a niche for yourself in whatever you have qualified and stay there - safe, healthy and happy.

"It is a fallacy to believe that rural life is dull and uneventful. There is so much vitality since the people have a culture of their own."

That "ideal" however, doesn't suffice for everybody; even those that have the whole package - salary, perks and status. They feel the lack of "something", so they may switch careers, and many do. That might seem perfectly sensible, and the 'vacancy' may be nicely plugged by another car. But

what about a management graduate throwing out a promising future in a large cooperation to live in a Gobar floored hut? An I.I.T., I.I.M. graduate kicking his job, regular family life, and future 'security' to live as a P.G., alone, to feed his soul? Or a doctor in Physics, from U.C.L.A. working for a labour union in Bombay?

All that studying; monetary investment, time and dedication - are these the dreams they had spun? Probably not. But they have gone beyond the limits of such socially sanctioned goals and stuck to it:

Anand is a management graduate from I.I.M. Calcutta. At 24, six years ago, he gave up a promising future in Asian Paints to work as a secretary of the Academy of Developmental Agencies at Kashele near Bombay. His work involves training the local villagers in various skills, like bamboo work, food processing, horticulture and watershed development. The Academy undertakes the task of marketing these products.

His home is a 'gobar' floored hut. Anand fetches his own water. He washes his own clothes, and in his words, "is happy to be living an independent life".

"It is a fallacy to believe that rural life is dull and uneventful. On the contrary, there is so much vitality since the people have a culture of their own. Though unlettered, the common people have immense inner strength and talk intelligently of 'Atma', 'Moksha' and

'Brahma'. They understand spirituality with clarity".

Anand sees his work as essentially "constructive", and that for him is a prospect itself. His meagre salary does not trouble him for the simple fact that "my financial responsibility is nominal" because he is single. Does that lead to the time honored idea that work that satisfies the soul and work that feeds the stomach are mutually exclusive?

Sudhindra Bhomik nods in disagreement. Forty-six year old Bhomik is an I.I.M. graduate. At 36 Bhomik, married with two children gave up a comfortable job in the private sector to devote his days to Hindustani vocal Indian classical music. He studies as well as teaches the art. At an age where most professionals look forward to the fruits of their consistent labour and life with the family, Bhomik lives as a paying guest and has been doing so far the last six years. This is part of his sacrifice to do what gratifies him, within. He says that for "true devotion to art, some sacrifice and hardship must be faced. It is then that one worships the art form as "one's only savior". He confirms by his own example, his belief that "as long as one earns enough to support the family, it is no hardship at all."

Mr. Vivek Monteiro's choice reveals the same conviction. A doctor in Physics, from the University of California, U.S.A. he is now working for labour unions in Bombay. These are the Mumbai Shamik Sangh and the Engineering Workers Union. He is the "frontman" of the

workforces, negotiating with the management on their behalf, drafting their letters, and taking charge of their legalese. He firmly believes that if the work force is mobilized to be self-reliant it is part of a larger endeavour toward a change in society at large.

But how did science lead to this occupation? "My stay in the U.S. introduced me to the leftist ideology, prevalent in small pockets, in the wake of the Vietnam War. Science helped me develop a scientific perspective.

I've been with the Union for 15 years and have been able to suitably support my wife and three children, though my eldest son's salary is a welcome contribution."

All the above individuals have been born and reared in typical elitist institutions, surrounded by capitalism and the upwardly mobile. What is rare is the fact that having "made it" in terms of qualification and even experience, they turned towards the most ignored but much exploited

"masses" : the villager, the labourer, the aspirant in the fine arts.

Learning from experience and living by learning becomes the leit motif of their lives. These are people who have not chosen from available options. They have created options for themselves.

- Tara Khurana
- Sanjeevani Bhelande

ON THE FAIRER SEX

*There are many worlds a man can choose to live in.
For a woman there exists only one - a world closed in
by perfecting mirrors of different sizes and varied shapes.
This, has been so, for many years now, from the time of
"SnowWhite and the Seven Dwarfs" and much before.*

Now suddenly, there comes along a man, who throwing to the winds his greased overalls, makes his way into her perfumed closet, steals her mascara, her rouge, her rose lipgloss and upsets the fairytale. But, not quite. Through the ages, in ugly ducklings and frog princes there has always lingered an ambition to be more beautiful.

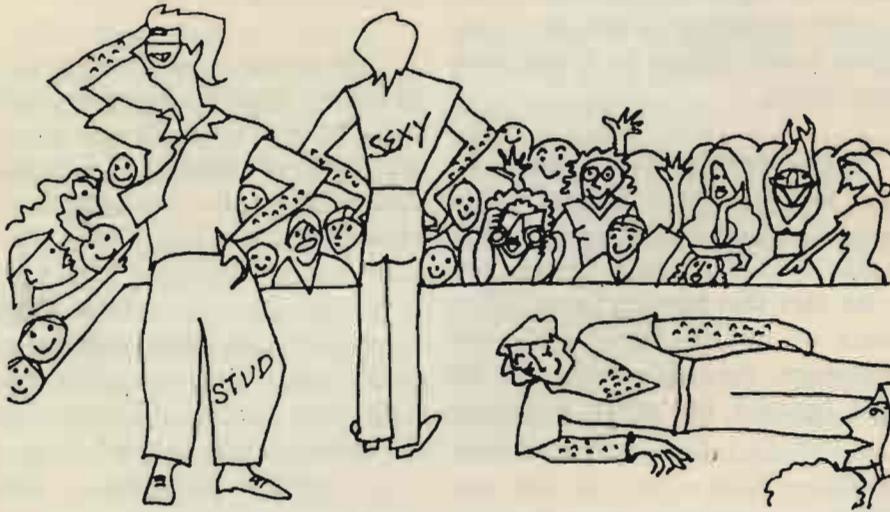
Today, the progeny of that beautiful male gaze invitingly at us from city street hoardings, posters, banners and glide seductively across our fluorescent screens, a few minutes before we settle down to view the evening news.

The image however remains the

same-macho, strong and protective. Apparently these beauties have yet to get over their workties and brief cases. No young man would be candid enough to admit that to be a model is one of his primary ambitions. Nine times out of ten, no, ten times out of ten, opportunities for modelling just happen to come his way... in the form of new age fairy god fathers like Hemant Trivedi... Rohit Khosla.

Even when this occurs it still remains a "part time" thing. These boys are still regular...working at "solid jobs" and all that stuff. Mark Robinson of the Kamasutra fame strongly objected to being called a full time model.

Throughout our interview with him, he reiterated the fact that he had a full time job with KLM. Sanjay Kohli the man who did the Pepsi and Moods condom commercials has a family business to run, while Rahul Roy took up modelling for fun and easy money - mind you, he still has his business passport. No Sir! these are not another set of your dumb blondes - (a phrase created by the masculine sex in the first place). Thus, in the light of such revelations, male models are quite dismayed at being associated with a lack of intelligence by the general public. Says, Gurpreet Singh "I do not do shows. I feel dumb, like a hanger displaying clothes. I guess it's better



for women because they enjoy looking pretty”.

The “beauty, without brains” and such allied clichés and maxims invented and so far associated with the female sex are apparently acquiring a more unisex form.

But, if dumb is not the image they want, then what is the image they strive for? Well, the image seems to be to not have an image. All these guys want to be seen as natural men. Says Sanjay Kohli, “Look, my shirt is still tucked out, I still eat Pav Bhaji at Santosh Sagar”. Rahul Roy, when asked about the image he projected on the catwalk, said, “Well, I express my personality - carefree, sexy.... don’t know whatever my natural image happens to be”. Mark Robinson too, seems to have joined this general movement towards nature.

The back to nature wave however does mercifully stop short of Adam.

When it comes to nudity male models do have some reservations. Says Sanjay Kohli “I have a good body so I’ll expose it. But it also depends on who the photographer is”. Here is an excerpt from an interview with Rahul Roy - “What do you think of the K. S campaign?”

“It made waves only because our society is hypocritically double faced. The ad only represents what is already there. Look at the ancient temple carvings. Look at our population. It is not exactly like everybody is a virtual virgin.” (Would you have done the ad?)

“Well, I would check out the set-up - who are the photographers. They must have some sophistication, I’m not into vulgarity”.

Mark Robinson too, gives photographers a great deal of importance. To him nudity (which incidentally

alludes only to that which is above the waist) is okay as long as it is done with “class”. This is the reason why he will pose for Kamasutra condoms but will categorically refuse to pose for VIP underwear. “Class” could also be the reason why he would not act in Hindi movies. Says Mark “Actually, now that you mention it, I would not mind acting in art films. But it would depend on my mood”. But like every journalist who harbours a secret desire to write a book, so it has been with every model who somewhere along the way has a longing to get on to the big screen. Acting is commonly viewed as something requiring greater “creativity” and is seen as less of a dumb thing to do.

Not that this implies that modelling does not take any creativity and skill at all. Models too have to plan a jetsetting social life so that they never look tired and always sound busy. They also have to choose the right clothes, catch up on the latest hairstyles in Europe and sacrifice precious evenings to a more noble cause - body building and after all this suffer the exploitation of penny pinching ad agencies.

Yet the trials and tribulations of the profession does not deter aspiring male studs. Many flock down to Bombay complete with ribbons, trinkets and curls hoping to be caught by the unfaltering eye of the camera. So girls, beware, the next time, you find your lipgloss or rouge missing, you know who’s using them.

- Divya Malik
- Shalina Unni

MOULDING A PERSONAL DREAM

When Anand Mohan Naik as an 8 year old, was asked what he would like to be when he grew up - 'A painter', he replied without hesitation. With the courage of his convictions and hard work this Gaurav Puraskar winner is today undoubtedly a painter and potter par excellence.

As a student of BPM high school, Khar, Mohan was the most sought after student in class - to draw maps, sketches and diagrams and how he loved it. He fared miserably in his other subjects for he had only one vocation in life his "art"; and his most prized possessions were his drawing book and paints. Luckily for him, his parents (his mother was a classical singer) encouraged his artistic pursuits and he was never asked to be a doctor or engineer.

Like all hopeful painters, Mohan too joined the J.J. School of Arts, but here he seemed a misfit because the strict curriculum and time table stifled him. He moved on to Shantiniketan, where he graduated in fine arts. He describes this period in his life as being most beautiful and exciting. He admired the works of Whistler, Paul Gauguin, Van Gogh and Turner, but evolved a distinct individualistic style.

Once Mohan returned to Bombay, he realized how different things were from what he had perceived; how his batchmates from JJ-who were "successful" had compromised and adopted a thoughtless, mercenary attitude. But Mohan was clear about one thing to him genuine appreciation of his work was far more important than wads of money. His work did

speak for itself : his exhibitions won rave reviews and he won a National award from the Lalit Kala Academy. At these exhibitions, it was a common sight to see Mohan gifting his works to people who truly appreciated them but could not afford the prices.

Mohan realized that in life art was not a necessity i.e. you would borrow money to see a doctor, but not to buy a painting. Yet he never felt the need to 'sell his soul or play joker' - as he puts it. "I just paint what I like for myself so why do I need the limelight?" he asks. His home is full of artefacts but lacks the comforts most people need. At this point he was fortunate to find a mate in Kirman who felt for him and his art strongly.

Somewhere down the line, Mohan also realized how important it was for him to impart his knowledge of art to the less fortunate, and he went about it in his own quiet, unobtrusive manner. He began by teaching art and craft to slum children in Chembur. Mohan loves children as he finds them innocent and far more receptive to new ideas than



adults. He taught them how learning could be fun and how they could even earn money via this. The children in turn doted on their 'dost'. He then moved on to Dharavi and here adults too joined his classes, and now he is a regular, accepted part of Asia's largest slum.

Mohan then came across some old Goan pots which were exquisite; but this art had now died out. He took it upon himself to revive the art and moved to Goa. Here he realized that the work suffered because there was no electric 'Bhatti' (kiln) and so he began teaching the potters how to work with cold ceramics. It was difficult to lift them out of their laziness but once he did, sales rose from 10,000 pieces in a year to 2 lakh pieces. Today these potters have received a new lease on life.

Mohan always spent his Sundays teaching little children in his building art, but one little girl never came because she was a spastic. Mohan then began devoting more time to helping her and similar spastic children to draw, and basically get their hand muscles under control. He held an exhibition of their works, and now these children wait throughout the week for Sunday.

Today Mohan is happy with what he is doing and that is what is important to him. He is firm about a few things in life : to never attend pseudo intellectual discussions but let his works speak for themselves; to never hike his prices so that only the rich can afford his works; and most important to never work for, or with, fools.

- Shifalika Maitra

The IHO : Angels Tread Where Fools Fear to Go

"To forget is a crime. To be lazy is a great crime. To neglect work and offer excuses is the greatest crime. Action without delay is the soul of efficiency." - I.H.O.

The Indian Health Organisation was founded on 7th April, 1982 (the World Health Day), by ten socially conscious doctors. It works for the service of the poor and oppressed, and thus aims to achieve the WHO goal of 'Health for all by 2000 A.D.' in India.

Its members consist of medical doctors, health personnel, medical students and professionals from other fields of the human sciences. In the 7 years of its existence, the IHO has been working for leprosy control and eradication, health services during natural catastrophes and in a big way, for the health hazards related to AIDS and the issue of prostitution.

The activities of the IHO have over the years, taken the shape of some

major projects - like the 'Saheli' project, which works for the prevention of AIDS among prostitutes, and other related social issues. Recognising that the issues related to prostitution are many-fold and complex, the IHO workers feel that, "except in our attempts to eliminate minor prostitution, forced prostitution and the Devdasi system, we do not appear to be explicit in our position against prostitution per se...maybe one day we could touch the inner spaces of these women, and then a change from

"99.5% of Doctors Refuse to Treat A.I.D.S."

Nothing about the seemingly ordinary person of Dr. Maniar suggests the pioneering spirit of a man with a mission. Yet, that is just what Dr. Janak K. Maniar is: one of the few Indian doctors engaged in a pitched battle against the deadly scourge that threatens to engulf India - The Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

What makes Dr. Maniar's work even more extraordinary is the fact that 99.5% of doctors in Bombay refuse to treat patients afflicted with the AIDS virus. Yet the doctor feels that he is not doing anything out of the ordinary and his responses to any questions about his work are extremely matter of fact. His dedication to duty would perhaps do even Hippocrates proud.

A skin and STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) specialist, Dr. Maniar treats AIDS patients at the GT Hospital and at the Municipal STD Clinic in the red light district of Kamathipura. According to Dr. Maniar, his being born and brought up in Bombay has greatly influenced his out-look and attitude as a person and as a doctor.

He studied in a Gujarati Medium School in Bombay and passed his Inter-Science exam from K.C. College. Upto this point in his life, he had never thought of becoming a doctor, because he never used to get those kind of marks. At this crucial exam however, his marks were good enough to get him into Grant Medical College. Thus he set out to become one of that succour giving tribe : a doctor.

Having graduated as a doctor, Dr. Maniar proceeded to do his post graduation from J.J. Hospital and thus became a Skin and STD specialist. In this capacity, he worked with prostitutes who came to the government hospital for treatment of various venereal diseases. This experience prompted his request to the government health authorities in 1985 for a posting at the Municipal STD Clinic in Kamathipura, because, as Dr. Maniar puts it, "This work had become a part and parcel of my life" Once AIDS was discovered, this too became an important part of his life.

within, the only true change, can neither be impossible nor remote”.

Headed by Dr. I.S. Gilada, the organisation has a group of extremely dedicated social workers assigned to many projects. The Saheli project works primarily for the prevention of AIDS among prostitutes by educating them and distributing free condoms amongst them.

The project works along these lines

- each social worker makes a few sahelis (friends) in a locality. These sahelis are in turn friends of other prostitutes. These chosen sahelis are given a stock supply of condoms to fulfill their needs as well as those of their friends. These sahelis are chosen with great care - either ‘madams’ or ‘used to be’ prostitutes or prostitutes with influence in the locality.

But all this is not as simple and mechanical as it sounds. For any social

worker to make one sahelis is itself a long process which may take months. Because of the social oppression, economic inferiority and the trauma they have faced, the prostitutes are highly skeptical and cautious with outsiders. They suspect the motives of anyone who tries to help. So the social worker has to visit and revisit, and over the months try and build an atmosphere of trust into the relationship. On these visits, condoms are regularly supplied and an attempt is made to encourage

Dr. Maniar’s study of AIDS was stimulated by his frequent travels overseas as a visiting professor, as well as the many seminars he attended abroad on the subject. He participated in the African AIDS workshop at Nairobi and twice visited Africa on a scholarship to observe the AIDS situation there. This decision to learn more about AIDS was a natural corollary of his sense of duty as a doctor towards his patients. As Dr. Maniar very matter of factly says “AIDS is a part of sexually transmitted diseases and so I feel it is my duty to know as much as possible about the disease and keep up with the latest developments.” He manages to do so by reading extensively and feels that doctors’ refusals to treat AIDS patients stems from their ignorance because few doctors bother to read about AIDS.

In his attempt to increase awareness about this disease, as well as to educate people, Dr. Maniar lectures at medical colleges, other degree colleges, besides talking to general practitioners consultants, factory workers, Lions, Rotarians etc.

His greatest challenge, however, is in educating prostitutes and their clients about the necessity for safe sex, as well as about AIDS and the methods of transmission of this deadly virus. He attempts to achieve this through his work at the Municipal STD clinic in Kamathipura. These attempts are highly commendable considering that 32% of prostitutes in Bombay are HIV-positive and that they constitute the highest risk group.

Besides working with AIDS patients at Kamathipura the doctor also treats AIDS patients daily at the GT hospital which has a 6-bed ward for them. While most doctors will not even touch AIDS patients with a 10 foot long bargepole, Dr. Maniar firmly believes that only simple basic precautions need to be taken when treating an AIDS patient; what he refers to as Barrier Nursing. He explains that there is a negative inborn feeling in doctors as far as AIDS is concerned which reminds one of the situation that existed 50 years ago with cancer research. However, Dr. Maniar fears the present day apathy because more than 6 years have passed and the situation shows no sign of improving.

The doctor claims that the work he is doing is like a drop in the ocean and much more needs to be done, yet the supposed minuteness of his contribution does not deter him from doing his bit. He is fighting against a deadly disease, ignorance and a lack of time and predicts with a despairing shake of his head, “If nothing is done to improve the situation, India will be the worst AIDS hit country in the next 5 years.”

A start has been made more crusaders are needed - more doctors like J.K. Maniar have to stand up and fight.

Deepika Bhardwaj

them to use condoms with every client.

There is however a catch - what do you threaten them with? - The loss of

"After meeting these girls - so young and yet without any laugh in their eyes - I don't know what Prostitute really means."

their lives..... Lives they themselves don't value too much - that they in fact feel deceived by? The social workers have succeeded to some extent in gaining the trust of their sahelis. Dr. Gilada told us, "We organise regular picnics for the sahelis and celebrate festivals like Rakshabandhan also." Sharda, a worker, told us, "It is touching to see these women - so scared to leave their locality at first. But once they know we can be trusted, you can see the joy in their eyes. Usually all one sees in their eyes is contempt and hatred."

The workers have also recognised another sensitive issue : the children of the prostitutes, a possession they value more than their own lives. These children are given the highest priority in the IHO's programmes on prostitution - related issues. As one worker stated, "If these children are given equal opportunities for education, on par with other children, they will not land up in prostitution (female children) or other criminalities (male children).

It is amazing to see how sensitive the workers are in these surroundings. The visits are made twice a day, six days a week; with each visit scheduled for a different area in Bombay.

The first thing that Sharda said was, "The word prostitute has so many negative connotations. But after meeting these girls - so young and yet without any laugh in their eyes - I don't know what Prostitute really means." The workers have a great deal of compassion and understanding of human nature, and most importantly the dedication to do something selflessly. Yes, selflessly in every sense of the word. They are not compensated very highly, though in just one day they receive the self-satisfaction very few of us can receive in a lifetime. With the kind of work they do, they are at risk of acquiring AIDS or some other disease themselves. Yet they feel that each moment of their time is spent fruitfully.

So involved have they become that they share a relationship with their sahelis that goes beyond the professional.

"If nothing is done to improve the situation, India will be the worst AIDS hit country in the next 5 years."

Sharda has tears in her eyes as one of her sahelis declares that she doesn't

want to live anymore. Neeta and Munna are ecstatic that one of their sahelis is soon to get married. Munna always has a joke to crack when he visits his sahelis.

But things are not all hunky dory. Each worker has his/her own life accompanied by personal problems. Over and above this are the emotional

"What do you threaten them with? - The loss of their lives..... Lives they themselves don't value too much - that they in fact feel deceived by? "

problems that come with their jobs and the kind of lives they are exposed to. Yet day after day, week after week, they still have a part of themselves to give away to others.

Bust inspite of this, they can still make the effort to remember the names of their sahelis and other small touches which make all the difference in a relationship. It is people like these, members of the IHO, who restore one's faith in the potential goodness of man.

- Leena Yadav.

Going the Bihar Way...

"Where are you from?" From my answer the reaction of the average Bombayite was no different from what I've encountered for as long as I can remember. Being a Bihari has spelt a distinct disadvantage for me. Often others embark on a pitying and patronising attitude and it is rather embarrassing to be able to hear the person thinking aloud. Occasions differ: sometimes one is subjected to the ordeal of an oral test where I've usually gritted my teeth and answered to the best of my knowledge; but most people have succeeded in suppressing their enthusiasm and indulged in more "secular" talk.

The very complexities of the state make it an analyst's nightmare: violence beyond belief, where you do not need a "Mandal" to start a caste war. Violence is no longer confined to its traditional victims, but is making its appearance in towns and cities, affecting the very perpetrators of it. The word 'Mafia' has become synonymous with Dhanbad. The law enforcing machinery is dismissed as a joke. It is almost impossible to differentiate between a politician and a criminal since corruption exists beyond redemption. People have lost their patience trying to understand Bihar, the "barbaric uncultured society". There is no pride or financial gain left in being a "cultural" person in Bihar.

But Bihar does not shyly withdraw and hide its ugliness. The average Bihari delights in criticising the state, in fact wears it like a badge and flaunts it.

The misgivings of an outsider are quite justified as the "P.R." of Bihar

seems to have done nothing to change it. Unprecedented skepticism is witnessed everytime there is something good that happens there. The usual question asked about the model city Jamshedpur is-how long will it stay that way? The implicit assumption is that Bihar will swallow it. The villager would prefer to sell his handicrafts in Delhi or elsewhere by claiming it to be from Gujarat. 'Made in Bihar' is a tag which even a Bihari is not ready to accept - he'll feel he is being taken for a ride.

"The image of Bihar has been shattered -so that any evil happening is termed as going the Bihari way."

Bihar has suffered and it is a discriminated state, but even in its pathos there is pride. The infamous Patna college has only a few intact glass panes but it produces the maximum number of IAS and IPS officers among Indian Colleges. One tragic irony is that in spite of abundant mineral resources, Bihar is one of the least industrialised states in the country. Though it was the first state to attract massive private investment by the Tatas, the Bihari ruling elite lacked the vision for economic transformation. Their historical background and inner squabbles reflected in their political behaviour and hampered development completely. Its fantastically rich soil lies fallow because of pending land reforms and the feudal powerfals would rather not make use of it.

But the image of Bihar has been

shattered to such an extent that any evil happening is termed as "going the Bihari way". The state seems to be a liability to the nation (or maybe the world). Somehow dehumanisation in other parts of the country does not evoke the kind of revulsion that Bihar manages to. Bihar continues to be haunted by the Bhagalpur blindings while West Bengal seems to have got used its 'Batala incident' where 4 medical lady officers were assaulted and one was even stoned to death. The atrocities on Harijans in Bihar become news not quite in the same way as similar atrocities committed down south. Caste divisions are not peculiar to the state but the caste feuds of Bihar are most infamous. The Bihari has also often been called lazy while Bihari workers have migrated to the gardens of Assam, in large numbers, and to places like Mauritius where the local language continues to be Bhojpuri. Even their language is a source of embarrassment. Any stereotype 'Bhaiya' is invariably speaking in the Bihari tone. Even the Ganga which should have been a boon to Bihar is a river of sorrow which bloats in the monsoons and brings all the upcountry scum with it.

But I am sure the Bihari will regenerate. The day will come when the mentality of the people will change to embarking on an industrial venture rather than going in for clerical jobs in the PWD or Irrigation department for the bribes these offer. Then perhaps journalists will stop asking for "Bihar to be saved from Biharis"

- Neetu Srivastava.

POLITICS AND PANACHE : The Brave New Whirl

The other day when I saw a bouffant bravely crying for attention among a sea of blunt cuts, waves of nostalgia swept over me for the not so recent eclectic 80's. It was a decade when fever green nail polish had not made way for leucoderma lipstick, when the Maruti was still a "people's car" and dancing at the 1900's did not mean dancing in the last century.

The eighties saw the return of the heirarchical rule with the Cong - I triumphing over the Janata Jamboree. However, it still took some months to convince the nation that Indira was no longer in an emergency to rule and in the interim period of confusion, we tied ourselves up in Bo-Derek braids.

Fashion, like the political situation, flared uncertainly for a while until we pedal-pushed our way out of the teething problems that every rider faces after an election. The new 'avtaar' of the Cong-I was best epitomized by the Asiad. P.T. Usha's four Golds in athletics put the Indians on the run to join the Aerobics Revolution. Screen dream Rekha put her mind and body into the modern equipped temples while mere mortals laboured at home with 'firangi' dumbbells- Pant! For the 'man on the run', the most important accessory was a 'Walkman'. Leg warmers and sweat were sported by all who had dress sense. After the Asiad, we no longer thought of Jenson and Nicholson when we thought of colour. Colour T.V. made red shoes and Hawaiian shirts (now constantly found at Fashion Street) as popular as the "phillum" stars on Vibgyor

'Chitrahaar'. Colour T.V. also turned luxury into necessity with instant coffee and instant noodles hitting the viewers with the unfailing regularity of a Trident missile. The 'Two-minute' culture however adapted itself well with the one birth a minute population of India and in true democratic fashion delivered India's first soap opera titled "Ho Hum, Log". (It is rumoured that the ruling dynasty much preferred to watch Dynasty on the video circuit).



By the mid 80's India had reached the year 2000. It was time to project a clean image to the world and this was achieved when the liberalized policies saw a hundred washing machine arrive in urban homes. India was no longer a Welfare State but ambush-oops ambition and acquisition become the name of the game. The new economic policy gave rise to a new breed, as upwardly mobile as their Maruti cars, the 'Yippies'. This breed redefined the word 'ostentatious' with gold chains and china silk. They were also seen in doggy baggies (pants that look like balloons) to hide all the flaws that their dinners at China Garden had endowed them with.

While India kept it's eye westward to solve it's economic problems, the fashion scene became "desi" with a vengeance. The upper crust asked for a 'Ravissant' rather than a 'YSL', and preferred a Graviera to a Cardin. The middle class also switched to Garden silk in favour of Hong Kong chiffon. Rural chic entered the cat-walk when Bina Ramani discovered Hauz Khas and Pupul Jayakar invented the Apna Utsav. Ghagra-cholis no longer smell of the 'muluk' and 'you know what' but were heavily decked up with memories and proud peacocks. These socialite peacocks were no longer afraid to wear what looked suspiciously like cow-bells dangling from their necks.

The Bofors Boom made its impact on desi Bloomingdales everywhere. Among the most popular inspirations of the time was the 'dhoti pant', which

was a light, unpretentious garment as large as a Swiss bank account. Theme parties had also come to stay. The country's leading socialities (of the soap and Sharjah fame) hosted the first "Bofors Politician" party while her rival (of pottery etc.) hosted the 'Fair Facts about Bofors' extravaganza.

If politicians had made it big, could religion be far behind? Though the V.P. Singh government remained secular (if a mite casteist) for a while and seranaded neutral fashions like imitation fur, they were upstaged by the saffron surge that hit the country at poll-time. Closet saffronites now aired their sarees in public and Osho cassettes gave way to a more vitriolic popstar called "Sadhvi Rithambara".

India looked towards it's ancient (read Hindu) past for inspiration and made Ram and Rath much more popular than "Rahim and Mecca".

The Saffron Fever soon faded after the elections and a sense of 'deja-vu' prevailed with the Cong-I again wielding it's wits. Until the slack economy could benefit from the radical reform, Indians had to take the path of austerity. Designers promptly assisted. The mini (evolved from the maxi, then midi) which had made a brief appearance in the 80's enters the 90's stretched beyond imagination - like the I.M.F's generosity.

At the time of going into print, the fashion scene in India seems to flutuate as much as the magazine format of

"The Illustrated Weekly". The question today is should we remain as patriotic as we were in the 80's or go completely Western (read American)? The ethnic vs. synthetic war is comtantly waged in shop windows as in the Bombayite's mind. The result? One has the eastatic experience of looking like an MTV clone or Khadi dandy. But more likely, we will be discovering our own charms through the Western eye. Right Charles and Diana? Now that the "Better Dead than Red" T-shirts have become extinct, perhaps a more global green will take its place. Knowing India, it shall declare 'a middle path' and say "why to worry, it is all in the Karma-Cola!"

- Sonali Ghosh

The S.C.M. Repertoire (contd.)

J : Jeroo, Joe, Jitters, Journalism practicals (a chance to learn by trial and error), Juvenile.

K : Key Lighting, Kurosawa (as used as an example of determination in shooting).

L : Lateral thinking, Latent lust, Lighting Level of script, Lackadaisical, Lack of (motivation/insight/creativity).

M : Mediocrity, money (a dirty word) but essential for everything), Makeshift job, Mediated reality, Mass culture, "Making it", Miracle (any effects achieved by Ray, etc.) Mis-en-Scene, Morons, Montage.

N : Nonsense (apt description for all early drafts of A.V. script), Nice (rare adjective), Neo-colonialism, No-leave, No excuses.

O : "O.K." (translated: good), Organisation (a supposed panacea to all SCM ills), Oriental Philosophy (Zen), "Off the top of your mind" (a check on recall capacity), "ofo".

P : Pies, Puddings (will creep into SCM tummies sometime) Poverty, Practical - 1) a once a week session which often results in dysphoria; 2) an attitude that allows one to meet deadline demands, Plagiarism.

Q : Quarrels (over a fantastic range of things), Quiver, Quotations (often read out in film lectures for the power of expression only such great filmmakers are endowed with).

R : RE - (Script, shoot, think, design, observe, write), Rubbish, Rot, Ridiculous, Resonance, Research (the more the safer).

S : Substandard, Stereotype, So-called, Sacrifice, Socialism, Silly, Spiel, Sexual Sell, Superficiality, Stupid, , Sacrilege (to think you can aspire to be like Goddard.)

T : Twits, Tension, Tungsten Light, Tremble, Terrible prints (of great films), Touches (that make the photo), Tamasha.

U : Unclear, Useless, Underexposed, Ultimate, "U"-phemisms.

V : Venom, Vacant upper-storeys, Versatility, Verbatim.

W : (Arre) Wah!, Wonderful, Weddings (and a 6 week honeymoon for Siddharth), Weak (as in photography or scripting), Week end (a full-filled, exciting unit of time still unknown).

X : X-amples (your work is no better than a Doordarshan Serial), Xeroxes (where would the SCM-ite be without them?)

Y : Yester years (In the 60s), Yuppie, ("Your group is the only one that")

Z : ZZZZZ..... (certain classes that are so inspiring, one enters one's subconscious).

THE GREEN DREAM

Green is the way to be. If you do not have even a tinge of green in your words, you are out. More often than not, its only those with a tinge of green that one hears loud and clear in heated discussions in air-conditioned rooms on global warming, or expressing deep concern for the disappearing whale whilst sitting in a Japanese Car. The opening words of the article should be changed to 'a tinge of green is the way to be'.

These Gruppies are all over our cities, (Gruppies refers to the green yuppies). They are concerned about the environment. This article does not want to investigate this concern, but is seeking to see the link, or the lack of this link between the lifestyle of the Gruppies and their concern.

It is the city folk, more specifically the top 10% of the cities, whose lifestyles are intrinsically destructive in nature. High consumerism, a complete de-linking from natural resources, and a very high consumption level of finished product is creating a situation wherein limited resources are being exhausted. The fallout of this environmental destruction is suffered most by those who are already living at a subsistence level. An environmental movement wherein these people are missing becomes meaningless and basically cannot be called a movement. It becomes more of a trend or a fad. Thus, one hears the slogan 'Clean Bombay, Green Bombay' all over the city

What the 'Clean Bombay, Green Bombay' "movement" means is that the slums of Bombay should be thrown

out of the city and parks and trees grown in that space. That is environmental concern. Equating environment with a tree and a flower and not taking people into consideration is an extremely narrow way of looking at things.

As part of the 'I love Mumbai' bonanza, saplings were distributed free of cost to all those who were keen to green the city. These were distributed in the months of March and April, months in which the poor saplings would have to fight against all odds to survive. Such symbolic acts to show one's environmentalism (the latest and most colourful of the isms) amount to just tokenism.

Tokenism is taken to its extreme when a company like RCF (Rashtriya Chemical Fertilisers), which spews out poisonous gases into the air, and is termed as "an enemy of the environment", sponsors jeeps for the 'Save the Western Ghats movement', in 1989. The onus of environmental destruction is always put on something else, someone else. As long as being an environmentalist means supporting a movement far off from oneself, everything is okay. The moment it means changing one's own way of life, things get a little sticky and unacceptable. Kisan Mehta, an environmentalist, likes to use the term 'Nimbiyism' to describe this - not in my backyard!

Thus, ceaseless felling of trees is the result of the tribals' lack of understanding about trees and their stealing of twigs from the forest. But it is never the result of the paper industry

It is the tinges of green people whom one must be wary of. They are the ones who will save the trees of Bombay but will not question a dam being built because it will provide them their electricity.

wiping off entire bamboo forests in both Karnataka and Maharashtra. It is easy to put the blame on the tribal, he has no power, Fingers cannot be pointed at the Paper Industry; it is needed! As long as the slogan raising against cutting down forests exists, all is okay. Why this is happening is a question these slogan raisers would seldom want to face upto.

The crux of environmental destruction is the kind of development being followed. The other important issue involved is the control of resources. The people whose very existence depends upon these natural resources have no power over them; it is the elite who have both political and economic power, who decide what is to be done with these resources. They will sanction permission to Union Carbide to set up a plant but they won't be amongst the families wiped out in a gas leak. Strangely enough, people from this group of persons with economic and political power are turning green. Green to the extent of using ozone friendly deodorants or hugging a tree in their neat garden. A serious questioning and

probing into the entire status quo is never done, precisely because it is not a movement but a fad.

This fad has side-tracked all the serious and genuine movements that are taking place in pockets of the country. Movements begun at the grass root levels, involving the people who are most affected, and which are attempting to raise crucial questions.

Their involvement does not limit itself to making a forest, a reserved forest, to protect exotic animals and birds, but they also see the very blatant link between the survival of tribal and peasant communities and the preservation of forests. All the complexities involved cannot be ignored, symbolic acts of showing one's concern do not mean anything.

The Environment Minister Mr.

Kamal Nath, when he came into office, proudly announced to the media that he had stopped smoking. From changing fur caps of prime ministers and the saving of Munna the bear of the Festival of India fame by the previous environment minister, to the new environment minister stopping his smoking. That seems to be the extent of the movement, whilst the Narmada Sagar, Sardar Sarovar and the Tehri Dam projects continue. It is unfair to expect anything from Mr. Kamal Nath who states loud and clear, "I am not an environmentalist, I am a politician". At least he does not claim to be green or in the process of turning green.

It is the tinges of green people whom one must be wary of. They are the ones who will save the trees of Bombay but will not question a dam being built because it will provide them

their electricity. They will worry about the fuel reserves of the world drying up, but would never think about using the public transport system because their cars are always available.

Today the fad is green. In a year or two, a new colour will be in and green will be forgotten (unless of course the earth explodes in our own faces, thanks to all that we are doing to it). The seriousness of the issues involved have not sunk in and the fad has become the butt of ridicule. In the same way perhaps as feminism is seen as a joke by many today.

The colours, the isms, they keep changing. The issues, the conflicts, the degradation, remains.

- Surabhi Sharma

TO LEARN, WITH LOVE

Attending school can be an ordeal, even for young children at the kindergarten level. Yet the Balwadi or pre school at Jaiphalwadi installs a feeling of interest and willing participation among all the students who attend it. Located in a settlement behind the Armed Police quarters at Tardeo, the school consists of just one large room and a small office space. The young preschoolers attending the school live in the surrounding Jaiphalwadi settlement.

The school is one of the five balwadis begun by Apnalaya - a non profit voluntary organisation. This was part of Apnalaya's programme to begin schools for children living in low socio-economic areas. Yet the programme is not merely one where the volunteers work without the assistance of community members. It bases all its ideals on the philosophy of participation. The community members must see the need for the work themselves, and Apnalaya supplies the helping hand. Sometimes Apnalaya

itself identifies the needs and then provides the guidance and assistance.

The school at Jaiphalwadi was started in 1975 and today it has two great achievements to its name. Besides helping in the academic development of young children, it has also helped to train teachers. In 1977, Apnalaya started a training workshop for would be teachers and today at least 1000 teachers from different organisations have been trained under the programme. The



workshop is held at least twice a year. Sometimes more than two workshops are held, depending on the time, space and availability of teachers. The teachers who conduct the workshop are teachers of the balwadis themselves. This training helps to spread the growth of balwadis in other slum areas. Women and girls who have no training experience are also trained. This helps to generate a means of income for these teachers.

The director of Apnalaya is Ms. Leena Joshi, a forthright lady who prefers to do a minimal amount of talking and much work. The success of her programmes is tremendous - besides balwadis, Apnalaya also runs health centres and other programmes. The balwadis are looked after by Rita, who heads the child development organisation under which the balwadis are categorised.

The balwadis begin at 9 in the morning and classes start with a half an hour of physical exercise. The children run around in a huge circle which the teacher plays some music with the makeshift instruments. As the tempo increase, the pace increases and finally at a feverish pitch, the teacher shouts "God". The children then sit cross-legged and pretend to be Gods. Or she shouts "demon" and they pace around the room like demons with tongues hanging out, and making loud noises. The routine is so enjoyable that even the few onlookers who have come to observe the day's work are enraptured.

The children are most uninhibited by the viewers. The teachers explain that very often observers come from various organisation to watch the day's proceedings and the children merely continue their work, not the least bit

self-conscious.

A little later, it is time to do some creative work and the material is brought out. Most of the teaching aids are made from household wastes and the children love playing with it. If flash cards with different pictures are held up, the children excitedly shout out the names and say a few words about each. The children are most eager to come to school and the highlight of their day comes late in the afternoon when after lunch, the children are given magazines to read. Although their reading skills are elementary, the pictures and the colours enthrall them.

The parents are happy that their children have a place to spend the morning. They feel that instead of just whiling their time away playing in the streets, the children now come to the school and do some concrete work. Besides this, the health of their children is constantly monitored. Every month the children are weighed, and twice a year they have a full medical check-up.

The traditional school objective of 'just coming to school to study' is not followed here. The children have a happier and more creative environment to function in. The teachers' understanding and support further helps to sustain their interest to study and do some creative work. A humble and yet, not-so-small beginning.

- Maneesha & Vaishali Gadekar

THE GREAT DIVIDE

Today, in India, religion has become one of the most debated topics engulfing us. A loud and shrill debate centres around two points of view : 'religious' and 'secularist'. The two are seen as opposing notions; an either - or situation. You can be religious or else you must be secular. However, after speaking to a number of young people, rather than these clear-cut, black and white divisions, we sensed their overlap in the peculiarly Indian lifestyle we have. And it is this overlap we would like to highlight.

As Mark Tully has pointed out, this division is influenced by a Western style of thinking which sees the two concepts as mutually exclusive. The division has now been translated into political terms. Our political parties are categorised by their loyalties to either one of the sides of this division. In the recent national elections, this distinction was forced into the limelight. The BJP, fighting on the plank of Ayodhya and the Ram Janmabhoomi, equated its vow of building the shrine with true religiosity. It was perhaps, the party which propagated this message most overtly. However other parties like the Muslim League, IUML, etc. have been equally participatory, though their actions were less publicized by the media. On the other hand, there are those like the Congress (I) who adopt the mantle of secularism and who are thus also responsible for perpetuating the divide. The message that reaches the people through this scenario is that one must perforce be either religious - and therefore, a supporter of the BJP/Muslim League, etc. - or a secularist who votes for the Congress (I). A view shared by the electorate as well : "I blame the BJP for the politization of religion - they have divided our society", Zeenat Ali,

an 18 - year old voter.

Religion being a central part of Indian life, the political debate has moved to a personal plane. People are being forced to take a stand on the issue - either believing in one side or the other. It is generally believed that the 'masses' are religious, while the 'elite' are secularists. The former are considered gullible enough to be exploited, while the latter are blessed with the intelligence not to be : "Slogans get to uneducated people very fast," as one college student saw it. The elite, educated, upper-class also believe that they have the solution to the shrine imbroglio. Their magic mantra is education. So many of us echo the sentiments of vaidehi Prabhakar, a post-graduate student - "We need to educate the masses that religion is only one way of attaining your God." This minority, who by their own admission do not go regularly to shrines, would like to dictate the course of action to be adopted for the preservation of shrines.

In actuality, we might notice that the masses are as capable of being secular as we are. This is borne out by the fact that in Ayodhya itself, Hindu and Muslim residents continue to live in close proximity and harmony even, while elsewhere deaths due to communal violence mount. In other places around the country too, people who happen to belong to different religions continue to live together. As Deepa, a sweeper, said, "We are actually living next to each other. Both communities exist." Even in our own environment, all of us from a wide variety of religious backgrounds continue to mingle together. It should make us pause to think why we hear little or nothing about such people. About

Bhairava for example, a cook, who believes that "only if everyone thinks about it in their own minds can something be done to reduce religious conflict".

What we do hear is determined largely by media coverage. The emphasis, especially in the print media, has been on individual political parties and the positions they adopt. Even this coverage remains incomplete - there is no attempt to judge those who took up religion in the elections by their actual governance later; for example, the BJP - ruled states.

It is also assumed that the Indian voter is being exploited through these threats of religiosity. The same voter however, is hailed every five years (or sooner) by the press for his electoral wisdom in choosing a 'secular' party. The parameters of judging a government should be : its performance and its ability to deliver on the issues on which it fought elections. This is ignored though, for the polemics of speeches, attendance at rallies and the violence that is instigated by these parties. While the latter are important issues, they are only part of a more complete picture.

With the political parties trying to establish and reinforce the divide between religious and secularist, each of the two sides is trying to equate its own beliefs with nationalism and patriotism. Perhaps under such circumstances what we need to remember is that it is people who ultimately make up the nation. And are not the large majority of people in India living as both religious and as secular individuals.

- Madhuri Kamat & Sara Abraham.

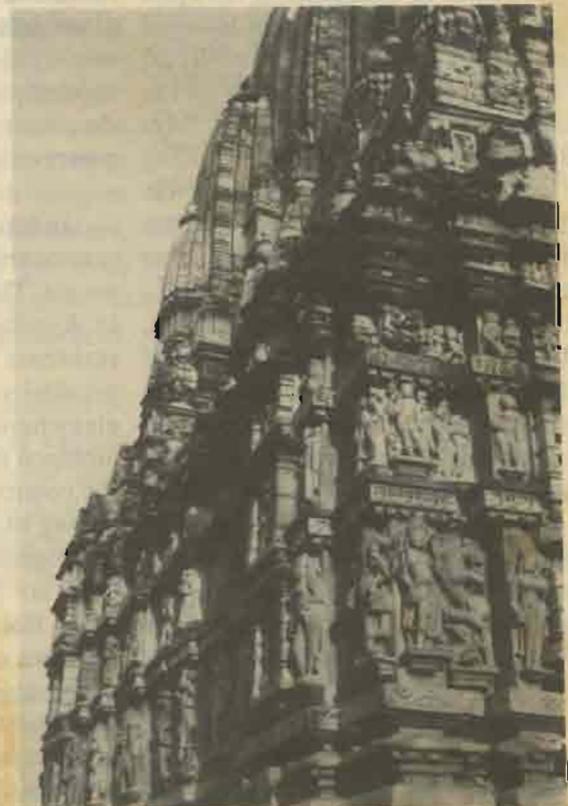
ROMANCING THE STONE AT KHAJURAO



Nisha Mehta



Surabhi Shama





Geeta Sawhny



Kiron Bellani



Leena Yadav



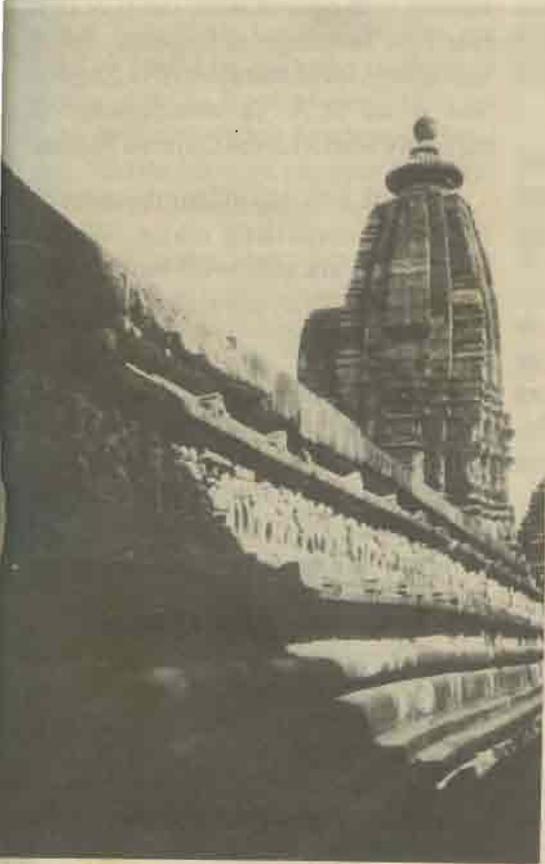
Nisha Mehta



Kiron Bellani



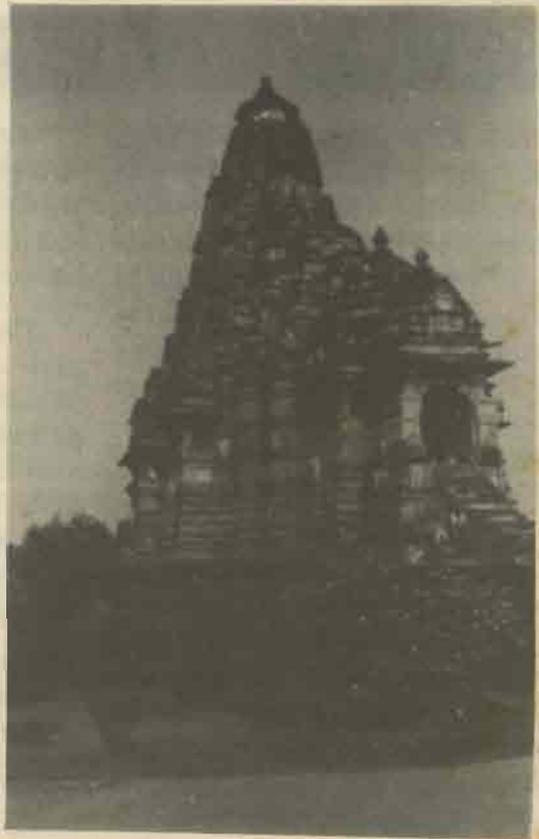
Rasika Batra



Ninaz Khodaiji



Anupama Mandloi



Radhika Singh

SCRIBES : NO SACRIFICE, THIS

IT WAS THE SUMMER of 1983, when Gandhiji crumbled to the ground from the bullets of his assailant, uttering "Oh my God," As he fell, larger than life, in an expansive cinema hall in Osaka; no eyes blinked. The strains of 'Raghupati Raaghava Raajaram' drifted in with the credit titles, and slowly, the audience rose from their seats to leave. They moved slowly, quietly, in the same attitude as that of people at a live funeral.

One man sat perfectly still; his head bent over his arms, which were folded over the top of the seat in front of him. From his bronze coloured hair, one could tell he was 'white'. Even if he had managed to conceal his tears, he couldn't hide his obvious anguish. He was deeply affected by what we in India are, constantly witnessing today - the Cult of Violence.

On October 30, four journalists came under a sudden attack from a group of Shiv Sainiks. They had expressed their own indignance against the Shiv Sena in peaceful terms; a 'dharna'. Their main message was that the attack on the Mahanagat office wasn't justified.

While the journalists lay at the KEM hospital, recovering, the fourth estate revolted uniformly against the "heinous" act. Then, like all issues soon die to make place for new front-page concerns, this incident too was relegated to it's place in history. After a month or so, Milind Khandekar, Sheila Rawail, Manimala and Rajan Chauhan recovered physical strength and returned to their areas.

But as future media persons, can we help thinking about these "scribes?" What did the violence mean to them? Had it affected their idealism about the power of the pen?

Three out of the four journalists were available for comment. They responded unhesitantly and coherently, quite undaunted by the past. Says Milind Khandekar : "I was not at all surprised by the violence, because I saw the way they were behaving in the morcha. I got hit on my head and back; but I expected it."

Khandekar is only twenty one, and his home city is Indore. His first language is Marathi, although he is a Hindi journalist.

"Yes, I had always planned to become a journalist. I graduated in Science from the Devi Ahilya University, after which I went to Delhi, to join the nine month practical Times of India training course."

After the course, he worked with "Dopahar" and was quite "happy". He joined the morcha on October 30, just as any other journalist. Why was he a relative newcomer in the field, targeted by the Sena?

"I was not the target. I was just a random journalist whom they saw at the morcha. My ideals? They are not at all affected. In fact, I am more idealistic now. I feel I have a better understanding of what journalism is all about."

As far as the publicity goes, Khandekar says he wasn't very pleased by it - "I am not happy for publicity of

this kind, where I haven't achieved anything. My parents at first, were quite scared for me. They asked me not to continue in this line. But I explained to them that it was all right; there was no need to be afraid."

Sheila Rawal, twenty six years old, is from Bombay. She is an inadvertent journalist; her mother had pointed out an ad in the papers, and she enrolled herself in a course with the S.N.D.T. Her first language is Gujarati, but at her college level, she studied in English. She is an M.A. in economics, and currently works for the Gujarati Femina.

"I took half day off for the morcha, for basic journalistic ethics. When I saw five to six tall, well-built people attacking Milind, my natural reaction was to save him."

In hospital, she was so fed up of prowling visitors (one drunk Sena man also came at night) that she asked permission to go home and did; in two days. During the actual crisis, when people could have helped, they froze:

"I am not saying this because I was hurt. There's not just one Sheila in the world. This kind of thing could happen to anyone. The people did absolutely nothing. That was really sad."

As for her family, she recalls that her father, mother, brother and sister arrived at the hospital, alarmed. But recovering, her father said : "Keep it up. I am very proud of you."

That did feel nice, but only for that moment. Otherwise, the publicity didn't give her any sense of heroism. Some

reporters were able to extract an interview on the sly, posing as friends while she was at KEM. Otherwise, she avoided all sensationalism: "Many people get beaten up everyday. I was only written about because I am a journalist."

She also does not fear the power of Mr. Thackeray or his men: "I don't believe anyone can kill you unless you are fated to die. In fact, just yesterday, I went to interview Mr. Thackeray. One of my questions was about the Mahanagar incident, and he suddenly asked 'where are those girls who got hurt?' I told him that one of them is sitting right in front of you! Then he tried to justify what happened. But I say, 'chatta maro ya chopper se maro' - violence is still violence."

During the identification parade where she had to point out her attackers her friends told her not to bother telling. But she went both the times again demonstrating that the issue went beyond the incident. It was a case of social justice.

Both Milind Khandekar and Sheila Rawal do not have any activist background. Their involvement in the violence occurred quite incidentally.

Ms. Manimala, however (to quote the Times of India) is "well known for her exposes of the nexus between criminals and politicians." Battles against the perpetrations of corruption exploitation and violence have characterized most of the 28 years of her life. She is the recipient of the PUCL 'India Today'. Human Rights Journalism award and three Fellowships : (one from the Times : which is aimed at studying the effects of Hindi journalism on society).

"When Milind was attacked. I instinctively tried to save the boy. When they attacked me. I was unconscious and I had no time to think. But the attackers themselves were young boys. They were not violent by their own nature but were victims of Thackeray's speeches. So in effect we were victimized by victims."

At the hospital, many representatives of the government offered her financial assistance, but she refused blankly. Instead she told them to do something about the violence : the law-keeping machinery, which was so weak.

Any fear for her future is out : "I have been beaten up by the Bihar police, by goodas in Delhi, by the Rajasthan police - several people (laughs). In the Bodhgaya land struggle in Gaya district, Bihar. I led the 'Chatra Yuva Sangha Vahini Movement'. This was against the head pujari called 'Mant' who had captured the land of 120 villages; making so many familiar landless. The capture had a full-pledged machinery of 5,000.

***"If you want to be read
by a society, you
should read society
- read all the different
sections of it."***

In that struggle, I lost my teeth, and my spine was broken. In the last Shiv Sena case only another bone got hurt, my mandible (jaw bone) was broken. The doctors have tried to put it together by plastic surgery; but there are gaps where the broken pieces of bone are not going to be filled."

Elaborating on the recent attack,

she says that the police were no different from the Shiv Sena "Of course the police in Bombay are more active than the police in other states. But where the Sena people are : they are totally sided with them. Had the experience led to any new views on her profession?"

"It's no use changing views, we were not on the road as journalists. We were just citizens - responsible citizens; reacting to violence, which is taking society against humanity. This is not a unique struggle. Everywhere you look you find struggles. Take the poor people on the footpath. They are fighting everyday, all the time against death. If they can struggle then why can't we? We, who are in a better position; and who derive all our strength and whatever we eat from the laboured class. We take everything from these poor hard workers."

In her many determined 'struggles' with injustice, she has met with strong positive results. She decided to be a journalist only after her first major back injury, when she felt she wouldn't have the same physical strength to fight as an activist. And her career as a journalist has been no less daunting. "When I was posted in Jaipur, with Navbharat Times, there was a minister who had got his daughter married when she was a child. The women's organizations tried to protest against such child marriage. I wrote a piece against the act. It led to a large movement with marches, demonstrations, and girls from schools and colleges taking to the streets. Within one month, two of the Rajasthan ministers had to resign.

"Then at Ranchi, one dacoit was guilty of more than a dozen crimes

against women, and nobody had dared to write against him in the press. When I did, he attempted to kidnap my younger sister, who lived in a hostel. She was discovered after one week, by a powerful movement of colleges who also took to active demonstrations. Scores of girls were out, marching on the streets". Were all members of her family involved in the cause of social justice?

"Yes, Their professions may be different, but they are all responsible,

conscientious people. One sister is an advocate, where the whole court system is corrupt. But corruption is everywhere - what can you do? Of course, in journalism, corruption is much less. Because if you lie about something, the truth will come out sooner or later. When you are a journalist, your main aim shouldn't be marketing the newspaper. We are not just selling information, we're shaping the future of the country. A newspaper is not like any other commodity. If you want to be read by a society, you should read

society - read all the different sections of it."

The M.Sc., M.Ed., L.L.B. from Patna University may be limited in her use of the English language, her first language being Hindi. But her message, combined with all the other journalists, is quite loud and clear. Where violence is concerned none of them are spineless

- Sangita Wadhvani

Parliament News

The house of parliament assembled at Sophia College, S.C.M. hall for its monsoon session. There was a break of two months in the parliamentary proceedings as mid-term polls were held.

All the newly elected M.P's were in a boisterous mood - everybody was happy to be a part of the parliament. The speaker Ms. Jeroo Mulla took her seat exactly two hours after the parliament had assembled. Ms. Dilnaaz Toorkey, deputy speaker, was seated next to her. Mr. Sidharth Bhatia of the Independent was, as is his general custom, present in the Press Box. Mr. P. Sainath, chairperson of the Experts Committee, was one of the first to be seated.

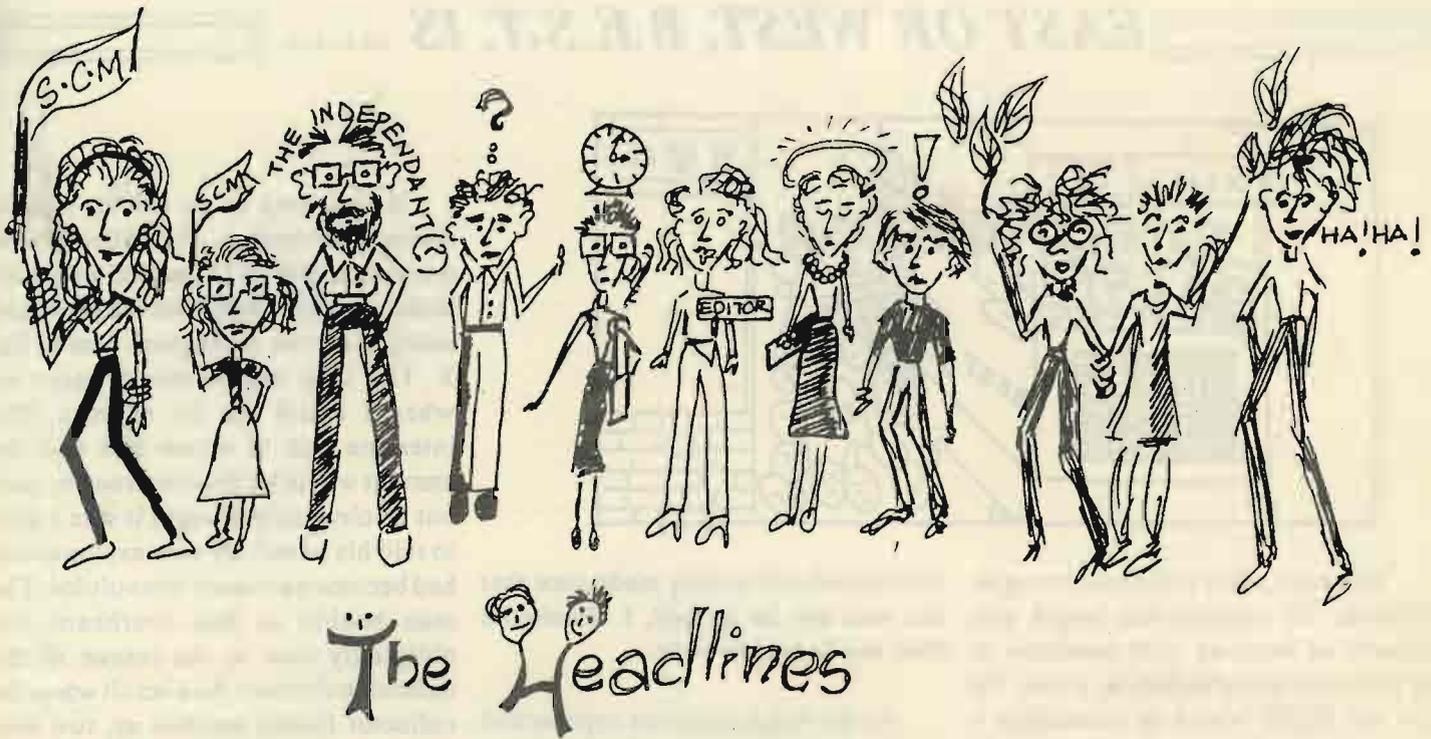
The Lagards, led by Ms. Ninaz

Khodaiji, arrived after the house was called to order. The Utopians were seated on the first bench, the Non-Mutables on the far left side, the Reactionaries in the back row and the Green Brigade next to the Non-Mutables.

Ms. Mulla then announced the topic, which was 'Poverty in the 21st century'. The M.P. who opened the debate was Ms. Maheep Dhillon from Delhi, who (as is her habit) started by questioning the statement. She said, "On behalf of the Non-Mutables, I would like to know how poverty in the 21st century is any different from poverty in any other century - for example, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th etc. What I mean is, is poverty always restricted to one century?" By this time, the thumping of desks had begun. The Utopians, who had answers to all questions, replied, "Look, the

whole question isn't about who went where to do what. Everybody knows what poverty is. To quote an example..." "When I had gone to Taiwan...." This last came from Ms. Sangita Wadhvani, M.P from Pedder Road. The thumping of desks grew too loud to hear any more. The Conventional lobby was very silent and thoughtful. When asked to speak, Ms. Madhuri Baldwa said, "Poverty is everybody's problem; we have to live with it," and sat down. The Reactionary lobby was fuming by this time, and without being invited to the podium, Ms. Anupama Mandloi began to speak - "Why is poverty so irrelevant to all of you? That is exactly what is wrong with our mind set; we think everything is cool...."

The tension in the room was palpable when Ms. Nandini Munshi, M.P. from



Ranchi tried to be a voice of reason, "Poverty has been existing and will remain existing for a long, long time to come. It is also a state of mind." An uproar followed this statement. The fighting became intense and Mr. P. Sainath, in all his dignity, was not consulted on the issue. As the speaker is allergic to noise, she stomped out. This was followed by two minutes of silence in the hall, after which the parliament broke up for lunch.

The M.P's resumed the debate after lunch and the atmosphere was one of satisfaction. This was so because all the M.P's had boycotted the canteen food and ate lunch at the 3 star restaurant Mathura, just across the road.

The M.P from Shivaji Park arrived after lunch, with a passive expression on her face - Ms. Madhuri Kamat, the

only M.P belonging to the 'Sanyasis' party. This ideology believes in being above the ordinary human being, by ignoring weak emotions like anger and lies. The speaker Ms. Mulla called the house to order when she noticed that Ms. Sabina Sood, M.P. from Simla, was asleep. This led to the dismissal of the M.P. for the next two sittings. This time, the debate was opened by an M.P. from Juhu, Ms. Vaishali Gadekar, belonging to the Green Brigade. The uniqueness about her election was that she was elected along with her sister for the same constituency. Ms. Gadekar spoke firmly, "Nana has made a film on this issue. And Amol too has tackled this issue in one of his movies. I wish the media could do something about it..." This led to a hiss from the M.P. next to her Ms. Sara Abraham from Worli. While Ms. Gadekar was making her statement, Ms, Neetu Shrivastava

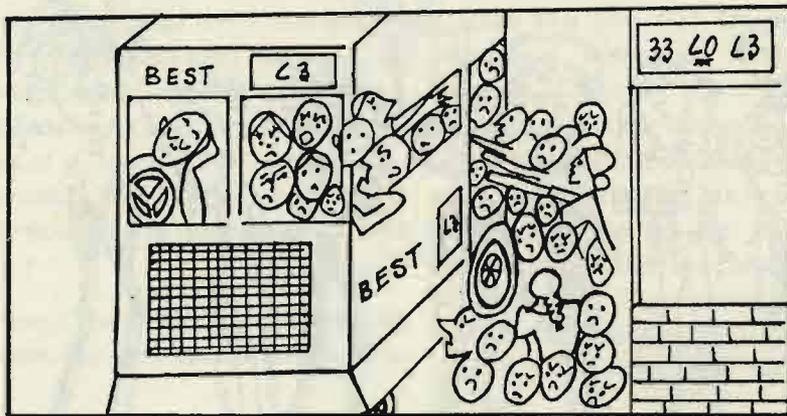
in her fiery Dhanbad accent said, "Look, we are not concerned with what happens to Nana and Amol. What happens to poverty..."

The khadi clad M.P. from Andheri said, "Madam Speaker, why are we speaking about such inane things? There is much more to poverty." The long-legged. Anu Aggarwal look alike M.P. from Sion said, "Oh...ha, ha !" And laughter prevailed.

The chairperson started urging the M.P's at this point, "Come on...A bill has to be passed..." This echoed through the night and into the next day as the M.P's could reach no agreement on the clauses. The M.P's were very tired after a whole day of argument but finally came to one mutual agreement - they all decided to 'Walk out'.

- Manjari Thakur.

EAST OR WEST, B.E.S.T. IS



There are a few pitfalls of being an SCmite. To traverse the length and breadth of Bombay with economy at its present state of inflation, is one. To use the BEST which is sometimes a true test of patience and willpower, is another.

On one such occasion when Rasika and myself embarked on an assignment with our usual cool and elan, we blundered into an absurd set of circumstances. It was on our return from Juhu, (which any reasonable human being will agree is quite some distance from Breach Candy) that our poise gave way.

We were directed to a bus stand armed with the relevant bus numbers. As we waited for deliverance, my dear friend developed this sudden urge to peep in at a clothes exhibition, confident that the bus would take its own sweet time. Unfortunately No. 83 came speeding along sending us scurrying onto the pavement in a bid to save our previous lives. It was followed by a string of other buses. I yelled for my

dear friend and having made sure that she was not far behind, I clambered onto my luxury vehicle.

As the ticket collector approached me I looked towards Rasika to pay my fare. You see, all I possessed in terms of Indian currency was 25p. My dear friend was not visible by any stretch of imagination among the bobbing heads before me. My heart began to thud. A sickening sensation enveloped me as visions of being hauled off to the police station in ignominy and shame, filled my eyes. A cab to my destination was out of the question. Certainly not for a destitute hostelite.

I frantically began working out a plausible strategy. I appealed to the most approachable looking woman on the bus with my story, with the aim of evoking a sympathetic response in the form of bus fare. She hummed and hawed and I made my way to an empty seat, my faith in humanity completely shattered. In retrospect I marvel at my idiocy.

A long way to go and no sign of divine intervention. The collector was drawing closer so I turned to a mousey looking man seated beside me and asked outright for the outrageous sum of Rs. 3. The man was shocked; more so when I asked for his address. The intention was to assure him that the amount would be duly returned by post but he obviously thought it was a ploy to raid his home! By now explanations had become extremely convoluted. The man behind us had overheard and obligingly rose to the rescue of the damsel in distress. As a result when the collector finally reached us, two men were paying my fare!

Once the collector realised that I was a penniless waif at the mercy of the big, bad world, he took command of the situation, gave me a ticket, and overlooked the fare. The commuters all watched this dramatic episode with unblinking and an awestruck gaze. I felt like quite a performer that day!

I got off with a sigh of relief and a resolve to equip myself with adequate finances, even at the risk of going bankrupt. My dear friend in the meanwhile had got on to the wrong bus in her enthusiasm. She reached her destination an hour later. Such are the ways of the SCM world.

- Anupama Mandloi.

