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How To Destroy The Unity of India

NISSIM EZEKIEL

If some one had predicted thirty years ago that by 1980 India's population would double, our response can be imagined. But it has happened, and by the end of the century, another shock of the same kind is likely to face us.

Suppose we say now that the disintegration of the country has begun, and will continue relentlessly, shall we be believed? The ominous signs are all around us; yet pointing to them and appealing for appropriate policy changes are regarded as alarmist exercises in futility.

First, there is the communal problem for which division of the nation was supposed to be the solution. Now there is news of the largest minority thinking in terms of enlarging its numbers by converting a section of the majority community. Oil money is said to be available in support of this nefarious strategy. The upheaval it will cause is certain to endanger the nation's unity.

The terrible prospect of a civil war seems to be opening up.

Secondly, demands are heard for new separate states, and sometimes even for independence, i.e. for nations carved out of Indian territory. The special status granted to Kashmir is interpreted by the Sheikh himself as a possible step towards full nationhood if "the people" decide they want it that way.

The picture that emerges of what was once the Indian sub-continent is this: Pakistan (Muslim), Bangla Desh (Muslim), Kashmir (Muslim) and no stable, secure majority for the Hindus in India. The refugees are always Hindu.

In addition, if minority Hindu castes, and other groups neither Hindu nor Muslim (for example, Nagaland, which is Christian), dream of separate statehood followed eventually by "national" independence in order to establish their "identity", India will undoubtedly break up in the next twenty or thirty years.

It is one thing for India to struggle with problems of poverty, social and civic backwardness, political disharmony, caste and communal conflict, etc. It is quite another for India to become a diminished, insignificant entity among other entities once included in the pattern of its ethnic and cultural multiplicity.

Nor is it a real solution to the economic and other problems of the peoples who inhabit the territory. The final outcome of the present tendencies will be disastrous for all of them.

Extreme situations, unfortunately, evoke extreme responses, which in turn exacerbate those situations. The advantage of an early warning system is that we can think out the answers and experiment with them in practice instead of reacting blindly. Let us decide that appeasement and placating of separate groups, for the sake of their votes, will never save us from the dangers we have foreseen.

We must make it clear that separatism is a political crime against the unity of India. The valid issues raised by it should be discussed only on the assumption that the framework never to be touched is Indian national integrity.

If that is challenged, in the name of democracy, freedom of speech, secularism and socio-religious or ethnic identity, it must be indicated firmly that these are associated with the preservation and not the destruction of India's nationhood, in the minds of the Indian people as a whole. Surely they have never envisaged the destruction of India as a price for allegedly practising the principles evoked.

In fact, we suspect that those principles will be jettisoned soon after the separatists achieve their real objectives.

The Reservation Trap

ARVIND DESHPANDE

It is true that we are in a trap. But we can find a way out if we take into account certain harsh realities.

First, it must be recognised that no law can succeed unless there is acceptance of it on the social as well as moral planes. To-day, there is an almost complete disjunction between the authority system and the power processes at the base of our society. It appears as though the authority that can legitimately regulate the violence unleashed by deep feelings of economic insecurity has been paralysed. Nor is there a moral authority of either tradition or charisma or ideology that enjoys legitimacy in the eyes of both the upper castes and backward classes.

Those who frame policies and monitor the power process, i.e. the politicians, bureaucrats, professionals and the intellectuals in the cities have a role in the creation of social conflict. But the consequences have to be faced by the so-called beneficiaries or the vulnerable sections. While the intelligentsia lives in the world of policies and strategies, the poorest in the villages have to live in the thick of deprivation and the play of raw and ruthless emotion and power.

In such a situation, if we think that age-old prejudices and fears can be suppressed by force, we will be confusing a temporary victory with success. That is like opting for winning a battle only to lose the war.

Similarly, the upper castes must realise that this is not a question of a civil war between all of them on one side and the scheduled castes and tribes on the other. In the first place, there can be no long-lasting war between two such unequal parties. Secondly, we cannot believe that all the work done by our great leaders in developing a social conscience, right from Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vivekananda, Ranade, Gokhale, Phule, Gandhi, Nehru, J.P., Dr. Ambedkar et al has been in vain. As in Lincoln's America, a civil war, if it comes, will be between those who wish India to remain one, with certain ideals and values, and those who have short-term goals, and work to perpetuate communal prejudices.

As for the leaders of our weaker sections, they must remember that Dr. Ambedkar always asserted there can be no substitute for self-respect, pride and dignity. Their problems cannot be removed by legislation or by condescension on the part of the upper castes. Like Martin Luther King in the United States, they too will have to sing, "We shall overcome", through their own forbearance, patience, tolerance, self-respect and support of the enlightened from the upper castes.

It would be better if we had a National Round-Table to take into account these realities and review our public policies. Since it is obvious that reservation

in higher educational institutes do not make an impact on the poverty of these sections, both the State and the private sector might consider making a special effort to create a million jobs every year for the next ten years, for the scheduled castes and tribes.

A country that could take care of a crore of refugees (on a basis of crisis management with special taxes) should not find this an impossible task. What is needed is free and compulsory education, the spirit of entrepreneurship, love of self-employment and effective organisations, to lift millions out of poverty, rather than the creations of a small counter elite. As Robert Browning says, "Make no more heroes of Gods; only elevate the race."

The dead cannot protest

Have Mr. Sanjiva Reddi and Mrs Gandhi suddenly discovered virtues in the philosophy and principles that Rajaji espoused? Have Messrs Yeshwantrao Chavan, B. D. Jatti and S. B. Chavan at long last recognised the validity of JP's movement for total revolution? It would appear so if the participation of these Gentlemen and the Lady in the Rajaji Centenary Lecture and the proposed Memorial Panel for JP are any indication.

Of course not, you would say. And you would be right. They continue to be as far away as before and, were Rajaji and JP alive today, they would have continued to be highly critical of the present situation and those responsible for it. But then, this is typical of the manner in which political mileage is sought to be extracted by our politicians even from dead men with whom during their life time they had so little in common.

Mr. James Callaghan, a life-long socialist, is invited to address the Second Endowment Lecture in memory of a man who devoted the last two decades of his life to explode the myth of socialism. And the way JP was treated by Mrs Gandhi or Mr. Y. B. Chavan is recent history. By what logic or excuse, if you please, has Mrs Gandhi the moral right to head a panel to honour JP? It will not be surprising if somebody thinks of a JP Memorial Lecture and decides to invite Mr. Bansi Lal to deliver it!

On the other hand, one finds that men who were closely associated with these two illustrious personalities are nowhere in the picture. In JP's case at least they had the grace to include Mr. Achput Patwardhan, but even such a solitary exception is missing where Rajaji is concerned.

This jumping on the bandwagon of dead men of eminence is not only hypocrisy of the worst kind but symptomatic of the total lack of values that passes for Indian politics. Unfortunately for Rajaji and JP, 'dead men cannot protest'! But we can and do record ours.

A CORRESPONDENT

FREEDOM FIRST

Gandhian Socialism

SMITA BANKESHWAR

Gandhian Socialism is a contradiction in terms. It is as ridiculous as capitalist communism.

In the first place, Gandhiji was opposed to socialism as — pure and simple — it stands for abolition of private property and advocates ownership of all means of production. He was opposed to Government monopoly. He stood for competition, as consumers are the beneficiaries in a market economy.

Twenty five years of our "Socialism" has brought 50% of our population below the poverty line. Full Socialism will be ushered in when our entire population is brought below the poverty line in the next 25 years, unless "reactionary" groups sabotage the programme.

Gandhiji believed that Socialism in any form (he never thought that one day his own people would conjure up a theory of Gandhian Socialism) must end in complete regulation of life, and the total subordination of the individual to the State. Gandhiji said: "With economic control by the state, the freedom of thought and freedom of culture also disappear. Under Socialism, the citizen is doomed to be swallowed up by the State. If the economic life of our people is brought under state regulation, the state will obtain a 'willing' obedience to such regulation by moulding the brains of the citizens and by indoctrination."

"The root of action is in thought, and if action and behaviour are regulated by the state, thought and culture must be shaped by it. No administration can achieve an escape from evasions by statutory compulsion," said Rajaji.

"Total economic control must inevitably lead to more deadly control of thought and opinion, and ultimately control of soul," Gandhiji said.

The most developed countries in the world are moving away from the disastrous path of socialism, Japan and Singapore in Asia, West Germany, France and the U.K. in Europe, for instance. However, we in India, still cling to this outdated concept, debating only over the adjectives to distinguish one from another. In fact, there is no difference in substance in so far as the socialist programmes of different parties are concerned; the difference is only in emphasis. No National Alternative is in sight yet, nor is it going to emerge unless a party opposed to socialism emerges.

It is infinitely sad that a fine mind like Atalji should hawk about Gandhiji's outdated theory of Trusteeship as though it is its own recommendation, and nothing so sordid as the tests of reason or experience should soil it! Behind the muddled logic of his theory of non-attachment, non-possession and wantlessness, there is a shrewd self-contained logic of its own!

Very different views, both about human beings in the mass and about human beings who are rich, have been expressed by men by no means inferior to Gandhiji. Hobbes, who thought he had arrived at universal truths concerning human beings, held that men in the mass are naturally and fundamentally selfish,

quarrelsome, power-hungry, cruel, perverse. He relied on countervailing forces in an organised society.

Atalji is not a bit concerned to explain what he means by trusteeship, why he believes the rich to be possessed of the altruism demanded of them and, since the rich have always been with us, why they did not show this altruism in the past and are not showing it now, or why they are supposed to do so at the flash of a signal from Samtanagar. Since the rich are in all shapes and sizes, who among them are to qualify for trusteeship?

Everything central to the question of how, why and where the trusteeship concept can operate in practice is evaded by taking them all for granted! We are all led straight to the promised land and told to contemplate how it is a better alternative to capitalism and communism, how it avoids violence, regimentation and suppression of individual liberty.

Under "Trusteeship", the felicities are on tap! They just gush! The hoarding wholesaler, the grocer who mixes sand with sugar, the tax-dodging, publicity-angling industrialist, who transfers a third of his shares to a self-created charitable trust, the blackmarketeer, the dacoit, the smuggler, the corrupt bureaucrat, artisan and technician, poet, peasant and priest, will all excel each other in disgorging themselves of all they have, wealth, gifts, talent and expertise at the altar of public good.

The self-deception is in the fact that having started by expressing a wish that the rich should behave thus and so, the rest of the argument concerning the doctrine of Trusteeship is carried on as if the rich do in fact behave thus and so! Atalji does not tell us where the transition from "ought" to "is" takes place!

Does the Trusteeship theory proceed from any view of human nature or human behaviour in the mass? Does it rest on premises whose truth can be assumed a priori? Does it correspond with the observed facts and experiences? The Trusteeship theory has a far longer lineage than Gandhiji, and at bottom it stems from the same ethico-humanitarian religious tradition in India as alms-giving, cow-worship, and so on.

Atalji has not set out the premises upon which the Trusteeship theory rests, nor has he defined the operative terms of a mechanism which by definition is voluntary, and hence outside the pale of regulatory legislation or accountability. In sum, what Atalji offers is a kind of happy providentialism, a Panglossian vision of the world which calls for no effort, no reformist energy and, above all, no thinking!

If the Geeta or the Sermon on the Mount has failed to change the structure of industry or our society, I wonder how the concept of Trusteeship could. The whole approach is anti-intellectual.

Trusteeship recommended as a means of getting round the coercive apparatus of the state, and the legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth are mutually antithetical.

No ideology is going to solve our problems. Only reason, science and technology are reliable. Nothing is static in this world, and every "ism" becomes outdated in course of time.

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VOICES 1

Crucial Roles

It is the fate of the intellectual and the artist to be at odds with their times. Throughout history, a stable cultural institution has remained an ideal. It is this instability that gives rise to works of art, and the role of the intellectual becomes significant. Today, when civilization is threatened with extinction due to nuclear stock piling, the intellectual has a key role to play. It is he who can be dispassionate and impartial. It is true that most intellectuals have their political affiliations. Most find it easy to swim with the main stream. Only a few learn how to swim against the current.

It is magazines like "Partisan Review", and "Encounter" which give free scope for intellectuals to express their opinions. From a rebellious offshoot of communist literature to a stable cultural institution was an enormous distance negotiated with great difficulty by "Partisan Review". What enabled it to do this was continuity of concerns in editors like Rahv and Phillips.

In Russia, the intellectual life is regulated by strict political controls and art is controlled by the State. That is why eminent Russian writers have often sought refuge in other countries.

Sometimes the intellectuals' political compromises reflect their personal dilemma. The vulgarities they commit in the name of "revolution" show that a new kind of politics is required to accommodate their sense of alienation. A new radicalism may be demanded of the role of artist and intellectual. They should be no compromise with alleged revolutionary "necessity", but only confrontation with the special problems of our time.

The failure of the communist literary movement has become apparent. The function of the writer is to defend true values in the prevailing society, to safeguard the discoveries of Science and knowledge, to champion political movements which further the ideal of a just republic.

The role of the writer during war time has been widely discussed. During World War II many intellectuals supported the war effort, though they had doubts about it. The creative energy of the artist was carefully evoked by emotionally worded appeals to his patriotism. Whether the artist should be at the centre of culture and society or an "outsider" is a debatable point. I feel that the artist should be at the centre, yet free and obliged to create new forms of consciousness.

We are living on the edge of chaos and annihilation. What is keeping the balance in the world today is fear, not love. The fear that the other man is as strong as you, prevents you from launching the offensive. But how long will this critical balance last among the major powers? A time will come when one of the major powers grows stronger. How will the bal-

ance then be maintained? Will someone, a barbarian perhaps, press the button and start an atomic war that will bring an end to civilisation? Will reason prevail over brute force?

The creative power of the mind is great. In that lies the future of humanity. At no time in history has man's faith in his reasoning faculty been tested as it will be in the years to come. In such circumstances, the intellectual and the artist have a specific responsibility and their roles may well be more crucial than those of politicians.

C. RAJU

VOICES 2

On Pankaj Mullick

Guzar Gaya Wah Zamana is an anthology of autobiographical insights and contemporary assessments on Pankaj Mullick — the great singer-composer of New Theatre's era, a votary of Tagore music. The anthology is published by Pankaj Mullick Music Foundation. It is in Gujarati and has been edited and compiled by Shri Ajit Sheth, the well known singer-composer of Gujarati music and an ardent student of the late singer.

Though **Guzar Gaya Wah Zamana** is written in an autobiographical form, the book is not, wisely, an autobiography in its truest sense. Ajit has of course closely followed the two published autobiographical writings of the late singer in Bengali, one published in **Desh** annual during the life time of the late singer, and the other published posthumously in the **Jugantar** Pooja Number. Pankaj was a self-effacing man and reticent about himself.

Ajit has filled these gaps by doing a lot of research on the subject. Ever since he met the late singer in 1957, Ajit has meticulously collected information relevant to his enquiry from the singer as well as from different sources, in bits and pieces — a scrap here and a scrap there. With all these materials, Ajit has made an Independent analysis of Pankaj and his music. These cameos have been added by Ajit to the original biographical writings to make his book an anthology of insights and assessments of the great singer.

As is evident from the text, a great many people contributed their thoughts on Pankaj's works, loaned letters and gave interviews. Ajit himself has hundreds of letters written by the late singer to him. He has included extracts from these letters, published interviews and articles by various authors and musicologists, and tributes of many contemporary artistes and colleagues of the late singer.

Ajit has access to Kanan Devi's compelling account of her life and times in **Shobarey Ami Nomey**, autobiographical writings of Prafulla Chandra Mahal-

nobis and Hirendra Kumar Bose. He has also used a lot of reference material which he collected over the years for scripting the sponsored programme **Kohinoor Geet Gunjar** broadcast over Vividh Bharati.

Ajit had the opportunity of knowing Pankaj intimately. He and his wife Nirupama learnt Tagore music under him and accompanied the singer on many of his recitals in Bombay and Gujarat. This further helped Ajit to make a deep study of the late maestro's music. In the last two decades, he has written several articles on the singer. These articles lay scattered in the pages of Gujarati, English and Hindi journals and periodicals. With the invaluable help of his wife Nirupama, these articles written during the life time of Pankaj, read and approved by him, were retrieved and used in this book. It is divided into 16 chapters. Each one opens with a song from Tagore sung by Pankaj.

The mountains of information necessary for a study of this nature could not have been accumulated by Ajit without the help of the Pankaj Mullick Music Foundation. It proved to be a model sponsor for this project. It has in its possession all the old 78 rpm discs of Pankaj songs, old New Theatre's film literature carrying all lyrics, and a library of tape recordings of the late singer's stage recitals. All these were made available to Ajit while preparing the book.

This first well researched anthology is an extraordinary work on Pankaj, and deserves to be translated into Hindi and English for a larger audience.

YASHVANT TRIVEDI

VOICES 3

Macbeth in Bombay— Audience Response

It was with great expectations that we flocked to the Homi Bhabha Auditorium for the opening night of *Macbeth*, performed by the Cambridge Theatre Company of Britain. Great expectations, because it had scored a triumph immediately before with Brian Clark's *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, and because it is a special pleasure for Indians to see and hear Shakespeare in performance by his countrymen.

So many aspects of a play in production make or break a play: the imposing or unimposing atmosphere of the theatre itself, the director's vision of the play, the evocation of a spirit in the audience willing to be led away on the tide of a shared experience, and the composition of the audience itself.

The theatre, acoustically and visually, could not have been better. The director's projection of the play was a subject of lively debate in many reviews, and the cast of several characters played their parts with the anticipated excellence. Where the play suffered, perhaps, was in having a mix of an audience, part of it familiar with Shakespeare, the other forever out in the cold. Shakespeare's magic can be elusive unless one is at home in his language and his world.

Many of us in the audience, and some on stage,

I fear, gasped at ripples of laughter emanating from sections of the audience at the most cathartic moments. For instance,

Macbeth: (after the murder, to Lady Macbeth)
But wherefore could I not pronounce "Amen"?
I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"
Stuck in my throat (Act II, scene 2)
or,

Macbeth: (to Lady Macbeth after plotting the murder of Duncan)

Bring forth men-children only;
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males. (Act I, scene 7)

Painful as these mistimed sniggers were, they underscored an emergent danger in staging Shakespeare before unknowledgeable audiences. The sources of most of Shakespeare's plays have to be reckoned with because they fill in the gaps between the local allusions with which his plays abound. *Macbeth* is no exception, although its dramatic intensity is strong enough to carry the play through on its own.

For the action of the play, as is well known, Shakespeare borrowed heavily from Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577). Shakespeare's audiences were able to view the play in its historical context. We are not so fortunate, and many aspects of *Macbeth* which were clear in Shakespeare's day are less apparent to us.

For instance, the succession to the Scottish throne after Duncan was a ticklish subject. According to old Scottish law, were Duncan to die before his eldest son Malcolm came of age, the throne would have to pass to Macbeth as Duncan's nearest adult kinsman. Both Duncan and Macbeth were aware of this, and each, in his own way, tried to ensure that the crown would pass to him or to his progeny — Duncan, by pronouncing Malcolm Duke of Cumberland while yet a minor, and thus making him heir apparent; Macbeth, by plotting Duncan's murder before Malcolm comes of age.

For audiences unfamiliar with these facts, the actors, directors, and indeed the whole troupe are twice put upon to convey deeper meanings into the whole action of the play, and the deeper meanings are what one missed in this production as a whole. As explained, Macbeth succumbed to human temptation in murdering Duncan, but he became inhuman in his subsequent murders. If Brian Cox as Macbeth had conveyed the additional dimensions of urgency and aggrievement in his otherwise strong portrayal, and had he built up a crescendo of desperation with each successive murder, he would have achieved a more moving end.

The role of Lady Macbeth is the second pivotal role: as played by Gemma Jones, it was conceived as a character in totality. The scenes of the Weird Sisters were most effectively done, and were given the due importance that Shakespeare intended, in keeping with the widespread controversies which raged in his time about supernatural influences on human actions.

INDU SARAIYA

FREEDOM FIRST

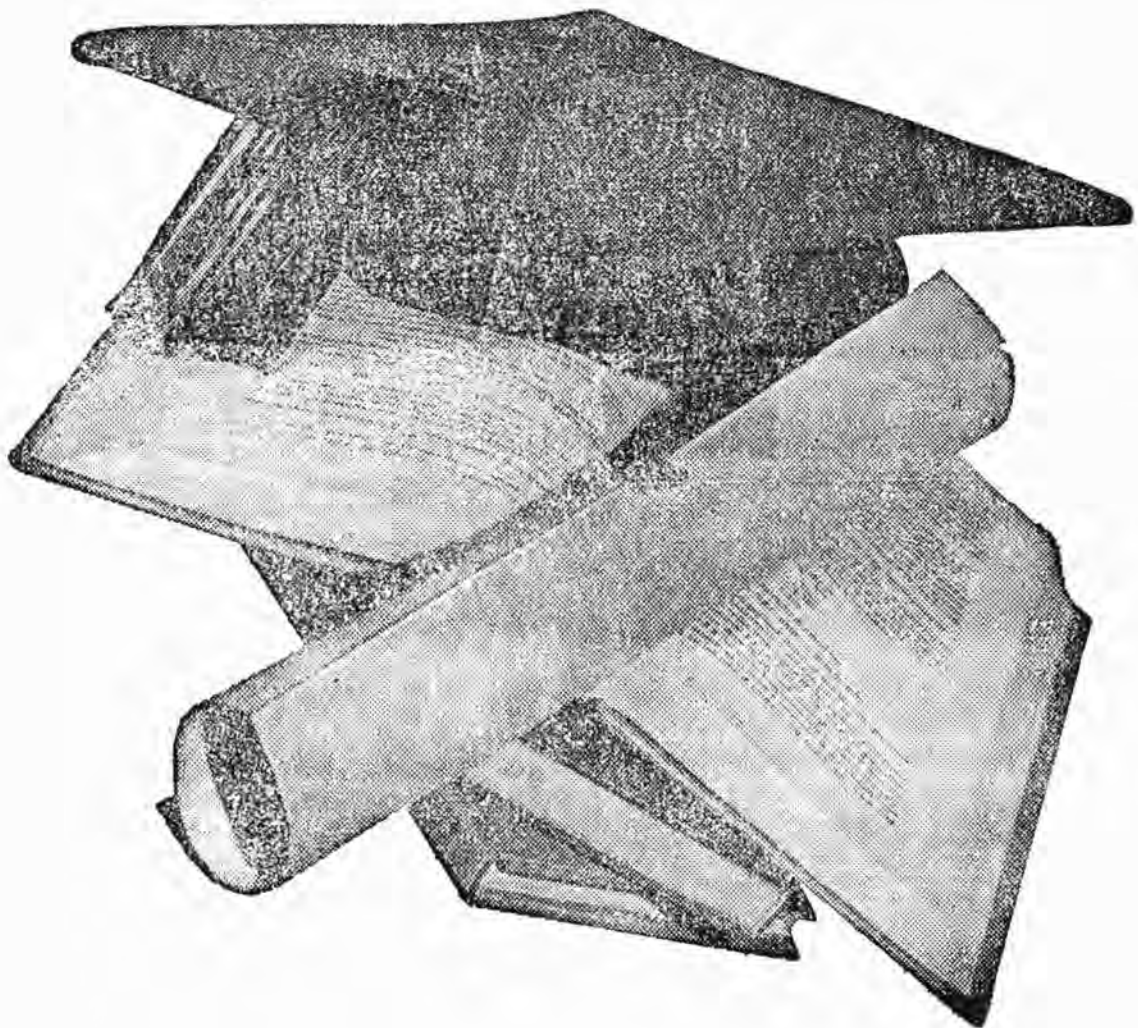
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TATA ENTERPRISES



WANTED: A new broom for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

MEHRA MASANI

New brooms are supposed to sweep clean but Mr. Sathe, Minister for Information and Broadcasting, seems set to make our broadcasting system muddle along much as before.

Since assuming power, Mrs. Gandhi has declared that Radio and TV are organs of the government and will remain so. Mr. Sathe had perforce to say the same but, once again to soothe angry protests, he has appointed yet another Advisory Panel to suggest how to restructure the Radio and TV services and improve their working. The Chanda Committee and the Verghese working group had already made all the required suggestions!

The newly appointed Advisory Panel under the Chairmanship of Mr. G. Parthasarathy, a distinguished figure in Indian public life, has members drawn from literature, the arts, and journalism. It even has four old broadcasting hands. But no matter how sound and far-reaching their recommendations may be, they will prove of no avail in improving the service because they will not succeed in one essential — persuade the Government to get off the backs of the broadcasters.

The Panel must perforce restrict the scope of its recommendations to the Government's ideas of how to improve our broadcasting service; and what, if any might those be?

Mr. Sathe has stressed two items for progress. He says he wants to inject professionalism in the working of the two media and he expects to do so by the grant of "Functional Autonomy" which, he hopes, will improve their performance and make them effective tools of national development.

What the Minister does not know, and what his new committee will have to bring home to him, is the impossibility of introducing professionalism as long as the media are under Government control.

What does greater professionalism imply?

The staff must be selected for their special aptitude for broadcasting and must treat it as a vocation. This is not possible when they are selected by the Union Public Services Commission as civil servants.

Inevitably, broadcasting becomes a career, like any other in the government, and not a profession. It has also not been possible to attract the best available talent on the low salaries which government service offers.

The staff must also be trained for specialized work of different kinds and allowed to seek excellence in their respective fields. How can they when, as government employees, they are shunted about according to the short-term requirements of manning posts which fall vacant, and promoted according to the demands of a hierarchical service?

Professionalism involves a sense of responsibility for one's work. How can this be reconciled with the dependant position of an employee of the government?

Trained broadcasters find that their professional judgement has to be set aside if it conflicts with their position as civil servants, which, in authoritarian countries like ours, means projecting the personality of the "leader" and adjusting news values to those of the government.

Broadcasters can hardly set professional standards and see that they are maintained if, every now and then, these standards have to be abandoned under instructions from the government.

How does a broadcaster reconcile with his professional ethics the obligation to broadcast the Prime Minister's speeches, as President of the Congress (I), not in the news bulletins but as special feature items? There is no distinction between the party and the Government. AIR and Doordarshan have no written charter which would enable them to resist political pressures.

What does the Minister's gracious agreement to grant functional autonomy mean? It *should* mean that the news staff must report events objectively, and the entire staff must be able to decide in what manner and to what extent publicity should be given to government's activities and policies. Unimaginative and heavy-handed use of the media have to be avoided.

The heads of AIR and Doordarshan must be given more administrative and financial powers to improve their services, and to recruit the right kind of people to man them. The present control by bureaucrats in the Ministry of Finance, and of Information and Broadcasting leads to unbalanced budgeting, leaving very little money for programmes. Directors of the two institutions also need greater powers to modernize their equipment.

Is there any basis for assuming that such "Functional Autonomy" will be granted? Is it conceivable that a news editor, who is an employee of the government, would dare to omit from the news bulletin an insipid and repetitive speech by the Minister on the grounds that listeners would not be interested? Could a news commentator possibly analyse the government's inability to govern? Such freedom for broadcasters is only possible if broadcasting is regarded as a public service, and not as an instrument of propaganda for the government.

The Minister's anxiety that the media should play an effective part in the development of the nation is commendable. In fact, all his predecessors have claimed that broadcasting is intended to aid in the process of social change and development. But as tools of the government, Radio and TV lack the credibility and the efficiency to do so. The wrong policies followed by the government over many years have retarded their growth.

Let us start with Radio. There are approximately 25 million radio receivers, of which almost 20 million are in the cities. The 5 or 6 million in the countryside are

with the rich farmers and land owners, government officials posed in the districts, and so forth. Even if we concede that all the receivers are with the farmers, this works out to one receiver per 100 persons.

Community listening is now dead. There were at one time about 80,000 community sets in the villages, but State Governments were incapable of maintaining them in working order and as many as 50% were out of order on any given day. So, after 40 years of organised broadcasting, the Radio serves the middle class and the rich in the cities and does not serve the farmer in the village.

As for TV, there are 700,000 sets all of which are in the cities. Most of these have been bought by the rich at Rs 3,000/- per set for watching Hindi films, which are shown regularly. This is a pattern found all over the Third World. The governments of these countries find it politically more rewarding to concentrate their publicity and propaganda in the urban areas.

Why are there not more radio sets in the countryside? Because the poor farmer cannot afford to buy the set, but also because the one-hour rural programmes broadcast from the big cities are of no use to rural listeners.

Programmes are broadcast on a single channel from most stations, and all the different types of programmes have to be crowded into the twelve hours or so for which the radio stations operate. TV stations function for only three or four hours. Time has to be allotted to programmes for women, for children, for schools, for farmers, for minority linguistic groups, and for others, while providing news, comment and entertainment for the general public. Small wonder that everyone feels cheated of his due, and that the least vocal group like the rural listeners should get the least favoured treatment.

The case for local radio was made as far back as in 1967, when the Committee on Broadcasting and Information media argued that this alone could meet the needs of development. It was pressed again by the working group on Autonomy for Broadcasting in 1978. The Government of India, like others of its kind, does not favour decentralisation of authority, of transmission, of programme planning, and so on. In the sixth plan, only 5 local stations have been approved, although the Planning Commission now realizes that only through such stations is communication with rural India possible!

But the item of progress which Mr. Sathe has talked of most is the introduction of Colour TV. On assuming office he declared that he would have a community colour TV set in each of India's 850,000 villages! Later he modified his ambition to the introduction of colour TV in the existing TV Centres, which serve only some urban areas. But most recently he has somewhat sadly concluded that only a commercial TV Channel could afford Colour TV. For this belated wisdom we must be thankful.

The views of some scientists opposing the introduction of colour TV on various grounds, and the

awareness of the enormous cost of the venture made the Minister scale down his original plans.

Is all this muddled thinking? What can we look forward to? Nothing much. Mr. Sathe himself has complained of the very meagre funds allotted to his Ministry. Therefore, no improvement in programmes, no increase in fees for artists to attract the best available talent (only 6% of AIR's meagre budget is spent on artists), no extension of the service to reach rural listeners, and radio and TV will continue to churn out the unimaginative routine programmes to which most people are reconciled. TV will continue to depend heavily on the Bombay film industry for its "popular" programmes. Wanted: A new broom for the Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

Free Inquiry

BOX 55, KENSINGTON STATION, Buffalo, New York 14215 — Published By The Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism.

We are pleased to announce the publication of a new journal, *Free Inquiry*.

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In recent years the world has witnessed a massive resurgence of fanatical doctrines. The fundamental premises of the modern world and the Enlightenment — the commitment to scientific evidence and reason, the value of individual freedom, and the view that superstition can be eradicated by increased education — have often been replaced by positions which are blatantly irrational.

Evidence demonstrating the extent of this intellectual myopia can be found in the rapid growth and popularity of Christian fundamentalism, faith healers, and charismatics in the United States, nationalistic and Chasidic Judaism, the expansion and fervor of some Islamic sects, the growth of Asian cults, and the new fascination with bizarre paranormal beliefs.

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THE WORLD OF BOOKS

NIRAD C. CHAUDHURI by Chetan Karnani, Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1980. Pp. 140.

This remarkable book on Nirad Chaudhuri discusses the controversial writer who presently resides in Oxford. It gives a thorough insight into the personality of a Hindu who is regarded as a Hindu-baiter and has a contempt for everything Hindu, philosophy, art, etc.

Nirad, whose egotism is difficult to tolerate, ranks with V.S. Naipaul and others in being unsympathetic commentators on India. Discussing the Hindu's European Soul in Chapter 4, Dr. Karnani laments, "It is a pity that both Chaudhuri and Naipaul are attracted to things that smell foul". Nirad always appears to be looking for denunciatory things to say about Indian life. He comes down heavily on Konarak and Khajuraho but is silent on Indian music and dance since he does not have anything harsh to say about them.

Quoting from Prof. Ezekiel on *The Continent of Circe* the author is extremely critical of Chaudhuri's "defective literary sensibility". He adds that he is determined to parade his learning, quoting from Shakespeare, Pope, Kipling, and makes statements, "which are only superficially relevant in their context." Karnani is caustic about Nirad's cavalier attitude toward Indology, which shows that though the British Empire has disappeared from India, its ghost still survives.

In the chapter titled "To Live or not to Live", the author refers to Chaudhuri's series of four articles titled "Why I hate Indians" where he alleges that Hindus cannot believe men and women may meet for purposes other than sex.

Chaudhuri is orthodox in his attitude to working women. In the West, one loves and then marries, in Hindu Society, one marries and then loves. However, he contradicts himself by denouncing the Western system of marriage as frivolous and ridiculing their divorces. Though Chaudhuri expressed dissatisfaction with the Indian system of marriage in his first work, he makes a truce with it later in *Passage to England*.

In the chapter *Between Tradition and Modernity*, Karnani chastises Chaudhuri for his double standards in many matters. To cite an example, in submitting manuscripts to a British publisher he is exacting and meticulous, for the Indian he is careless and slipshod.

Chaudhuri has a poor opinion of those writers who express themselves in the regional languages, saying that they do not make any impact which can be called intellectual. He has retracted from this in a recent article in the *Times of India*.

Scholar Extraordinary is a brilliant portrait of Max Muller which Karnani calls a painstaking piece of research, at the same time calling it dull reading in parts. Characteristically, Chaudhuri indulges in polemics in one of the chapters in this book too.

Karnani's book does not cover Nirad C. Chaudhuri's book published in early 1979 titled '*HINDUISM: A RELIGION TO LIVE BY*' (B.I. Publications, New Delhi, Rs. 80/-).

Karnani mentions in his concluding pages that though Chaudhuri was a passionate partisan in the Indian nationalist movement, he had no liking for the methods of Mahatma Gandhi.

K. BALASUBRAMANIAN

TRAVELLING IN A CAGE. By Dilip Chitre. Clearing House, Pp. 83. Price Rs. 20/-

This is the first volume of poetry in English by a noted Marathi writer. It is divided into three sections. Section I was written in the U.S.A., II in Bombay, and III is one long poem, "Ambulance Ride". What is puzzling is the unequal quality of these poems, as disparate as the worlds they represent.

The opening section explores the theme of alienation from which the title derives. One's first impression is of flaccidity, a lack of poetic tension which occasionally makes the free verse indistinguishable from prose:

I am homesick, which is stupid of course,
I was never a famous chauvinist back home,
Nor is America not beautiful. But I am terrified
Of such glowing youth, such exquisite innocence...
("Poem in Self-exile")

This passage exemplifies another weakness: instead of being shown the quality of an experience we are merely told, "I am homesick... I am terrified". Sometimes this degenerates into a hortatory tone that is irritating

".....I will teach you

Other ways of growing old, other ways of dying". Dying being so personal a matter, the reader can be forgiven for wanting to do it in his own way. And the "I" obtrudes like a nagging presence in too many of these poems. Chitre disdains the use of a *persona*, thus limiting the scope of his meaning.

It is further limited by the vague cosmic imagery he prefers. Planets, galaxies, the universe are beyond the imaginative scope of mere mortals. Ideas imaged in these terms, having no concrete focus, spread like chocolate cake on a hot afternoon:

What remains is the clear knowledge of the night
Into which the mouth of your birth has opened
The universe continues to fall like rain
On the earth of your being furrowed by its own
waiting....

(Poem 15)

A tendency to overstatement is apparent in the use of repetition which appears to have no poetic function other than to fill gaps in rhythm or impose a mechanical pattern. For example, the weakest poem in the collection, "Ambulance Ride", consists of a series of pointless verbal variations:

"Remember... I remember... I can only remember
...I even remember... Do you remember" and so on.

This elegy on the death of a friend is further flawed by lapses of taste. What, for instance, is one to make of the following conceit?

And I want the calm
Awareness of details
The syntax, the structure
The subject, the verb

And the object of your death...

And the interrogative, the subjective, the accusative? One could go on like this indefinitely without any pretention to poetic talent. Rhyme is used sporadically, with unhappy results:

There is an april in every year
And there is a sunday in every week
And there are fewer friends every year
And life is bleak

The facile sentimentalism of these lines would be appropriate in a school-girl's autograph book, but it is hardly so in a book of serious poetry. Banalities such as these point to a lack of genuine feeling.

To turn to the Bombay poems is to move into a new poetic environment. The ubiquitous "I" is not so evident as the titles of these poems show ("The View from Chinchpokli", "David Moore Ascends Heaven", "Panhaha"), and where it appears it is cut down to size. The change is apparent in the first poem itself. No longer is the poet "Krishna playing his flute/ Unrecognised by cows and the people of Vrindavan" (Poem 14). He is warmly human.

At Chinchpokli.....

I plot seductions and rapes, plan masterpieces
Of evasion. The loudspeakers blare at me.
Bedbugs bite me. Cockroaches hover about my soul.

Mice scurry around my metaphysics, mosquitoes sing among my lyrics.

The tone is self-deprecatory, almost sardonic. The poem signals another change. The entire paraphernalia of planets and galaxies is discarded. Life is here in its concrete actuality, and what a relief! A relief on another level too, to be back in the familiar world of full-stops and commas, of which there is a marked paucity in Part I and a total absence in "Ambulance Ride".

These are poems about people, places, poems of gentle mockery, of nostalgic remembrance of the past. The poet's eye is constantly on the object, which he depicts with integrity. There is no shrinking of unglamorous detail, no effort to sentimentalise. Nor does Chitre make a cult of obscurity for its own sake as some Indo-English poets appear to do.

The style is bare, non-descriptive in the best sense, each detail being allowed to speak for itself. This results in a series of movingly evocative pictures: the house of his childhood, forlorn and empty; his father commuting homewards on the late evening train, his clothes soggy and mud-stained, his bag falling apart, "getting off the train/like a word dropped from a long sentence". Bombay is an obsessive theme with Chitre. "Dark city made luminous by our dying," with its filth, its jammed traffic, its paradoxes summed up in the genteel architecture of Victoria Terminus, "that gothic foundation of our modernity."

ZERIN ANKLESARIA

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Studying the problems of women

Pratima Asher talks to Neera Desai

Dr. Neera Desai, Professor and Head of the Dept. of Sociology at the S.N.D.T. Women's University, Bombay, is also the Hon. Director of its Research Unit on Women's Studies. Her special interests centre on the Sociology and Education of Women. She has authored and edited many books on this subject, both in English and in Gujarati. *Women in Modern India* (2nd ed. 1977) is one of them. Dr. Desai's most recent work which is in press, is entitled *Trends of Change: Studies in Media Response to the Women's Movements*. She has also published many research papers in professional journals and participated in national and international conferences and seminars on Women's problems. She holds several official positions in academic bodies, including the UGC, and is a member of the Board of Studies in Sociology in various Indian Universities.

On a popular level, Dr. Desai has written and lectured extensively on Women as well as participated in discussions on T.V. She is married to Dr. A. R. Desai, a fellow Sociologist, and they have one son.

In this interview, PRATIMA ASHER talks to her about the Research Unit she heads, in particular, and related subjects in general.

Q. Is the Women's Studies Unit headed by you the only one of its kind in India?

A. When it started functioning in 1974, it was the only one of its kind. Even the ICSSR cell for women's studies came into existence in 1975. A couple of other centres have come up since then.

Q. When the idea of this unit was projected, what role did you want it to play?

A. We had two or three ideas in mind to start with. As you know, the SNDT University has pioneered the cause of bringing women into higher education. We thought that it was necessary to analyse the whole problem of women's status in India in a systematic manner. We also felt that such a Unit should be the repository for information on Women. So we conceived the idea of a Documentation Centre where this information would be easily accessible.

Q. Have you succeeded in achieving your initial goal? Have you even felt the need to change your focus along the way?

A. Our initial goals have been achieved to a considerable extent. But we have changed our focus to some extent. Gradually, the unit has evolved into

a body which takes up action-oriented programmes too. After studying Women's problems for some time, we realized that something had to be *done* to improve the situation, some *activity* had to be undertaken, and we have attended to this. We are now not purely a research body, but a research-cum-action body.

Q. Can you mention some of the projects you have undertaken? How do you choose a project? Who does the work on it?

A. You see, ours is a very small Unit. We have meagre funds and, besides me, the permanent staff consists only of two other research associates. Extra people are hired as and when the projects come up. Ordinarily we have many commissioned projects. The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the ICSSR and the UNICEF are some of the bodies with which we have associated ourselves. Of course some projects are taken up independently by the Unit.

An Advisory Committee composed of experts from the field of women's studies and education meets every year to review the proposals put forward by the Unit, and makes recommendations on them. If some immediate action is to be taken, a smaller committee headed by the V. C. takes the decisions. Some of the commissioned projects we have completed are on Women in Science, Non-working women Science Graduates, the Impact of Urbanization and Modernization on Rural Women, etc.

On its own initiative the Unit has prepared a content analysis of regional journals, evaluated continuing education programmes, as well as studied the Image of Women in the Work of Women Writers. Recently, we have also taken up an action programme for integrated rural development in nine villages of South Gujarat.

Q. What exactly are these programmes like?

A. In a town called Udhwada, 100 km from here, there's a Women's Organization which has been working for the last 25 years. They have their own schools and educational institutions for tribal people. Associating ourselves with them, we surveyed the 9 villages, particularly their social conditions and needs. On the basis of their findings, we have undertaken a three-pronged action programme concentrating on Education, Health and Income Generation.

Our report revealed that the quality of teaching was not very good, so we had to consider the improvement of the entire teaching-learning process. There is rampant poverty in these villages and some means of bringing in additional income had to be devised. One of the villages, for example, is a fishing village where the tribal women make nets and baskets. We decided to assist them in improving the finishing of their products, and then marketing and selling them.

This is a time-bound programme—from Dec. '80, to Dec. '81. At the end of the year we'll be able to say whether it has been successful.

Q. Considering the fact that the Women's Studies Unit is attached to a Women's University, it is in a more or less ideal position. Its findings can be easily incorporated into the courses offered by the University, thus actually using the information to educate Women. Has the University made use of the Unit's resources in this way?

A. Yes. For one thing, the Unit has been able to generate an awareness of the need to study Women's problems. We have also helped frame courses in Women's studies for S.N.D.T. Ours is the only University which offers a full course on the Sociology of Women at the undergraduate level.

Q. Do you think a similar Unit would have been possible in an ordinary University, rather than in a Women's University?

*A. Even if it were possible, it would have met with a lot of opposition. As you know, most academic bodies are male-dominated and patriarchal in their approach. They would never realize the need for studying women *per se*... At any rate, so far as the initial programmes are concerned they would be possible only in a women's University, or in another University with a woman V. C.*

Let me give you an example. Kanpur University has a woman V.C. who has been associated with women's programmes and is planning a centre like ours, there. But I do not know how many male V.C.'s would contemplate such a step.

Q. In what other ways does the Unit disseminate the information it collects?

A. The Unit has a Newsletter. We hoped to bring it out every three months but are often behind schedule. We have been able to organize a number of seminars, and have also built up an international network of correspondence through our personnel and other agencies. We have affiliated scholars from abroad who use the centre's resources.

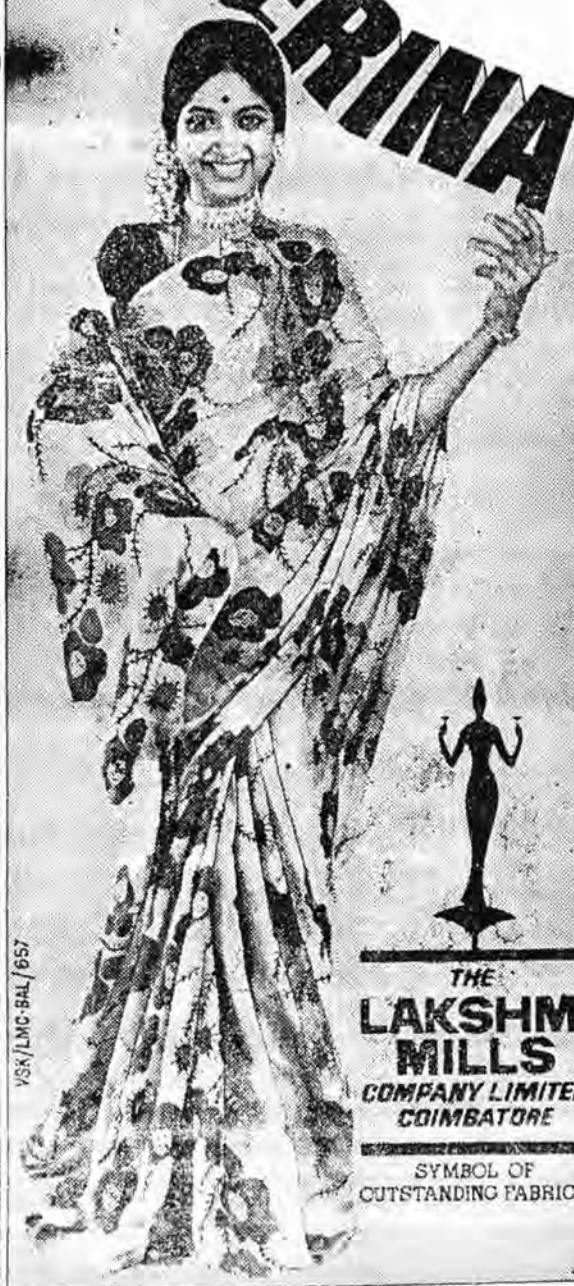
Q. What is the students' reaction to the Unit?

A. I do not think that a large number of students are particularly thrilled or even involved with the Unit. They are not really conscious of women's problems or feel anything should be done about them. But with frequent exposure to these problems at seminars and other programmes, some are gradually developing an interest. On their own course, they will take no initiative.

I would like to add an observation. When we revised our course on the Sociology of Women, we asked the girls for their reactions. They felt the course was good and should be continued. Some of them even had constructive suggestions to offer, and two of these were very pointed: (1) They would like to know more about rural women; and (2) They wanted some practical guidance which

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would help them if and when they confronted problems in their daily life.

Q. So the authorities have to do everything?

A. Yes, even if it means that we decide what's good for them all the time, which is not a happy state of affairs in a participating democracy. Nevertheless, it's a fact of life.

Q. Then I suppose it matters very much who decides these things?

A. You're right. It matters. Since the supplier determines the entire content of the material supplied, the only check can be to initiate more dialogues with students, experts and voluntary workers, so we may know that whatever we are planning is not unrealistic or biased.

Q. Do you distinguish between Women's studies and feminist studies?

A. Well, if we look at history, then the two are different. The feminist has a very definite thrust on the woman's point of view, and radical feminism is increasingly becoming "anti-man". Men sometimes face the same problems as we do, and unless we take the total perspective into account we may never understand the real situation.

Q. So the male is not necessarily the arch-villain of the piece. He has another role to play in women's studies?

A. We have two main problems — economic and social. In economic matters, I do not think that either the men or the women are at fault — the entire system has to be considered. As far as social attitudes are concerned, men need to change. Look at the way a boy is socialized in the family as its be-all and end-all, and the very sharp division of labour between the sexes. This image is imprinted on the boy's mind so well, that he cannot get rid of it even when he matures.

I think this patriarchal attitude has to change, and the male has to be its focus of attention. I visualize a women's studies programme which takes this reality into consideration.

Q. How accessible would such a programme be to the male if the ordinary University is unwilling to introduce it into the curriculum?

A. That's definitely a problem. Perhaps the courses could be introduced as part of a continuing or extension lecture programme, so that both men and women can attend.

Q. How many men would like to attend such a course?

A. Not too many, I suppose. Actually, a concentrated effort should be made to introduce these courses in co-ed Universities. We are making such an effort.

Q. You are keenly aware of women's problems. Have you as an individual faced any of these problems?

A. No. I have been rather fortunate. My parents were liberal and they did not impose any sexist roles on us. Even after my marriage, things did not change in that sense. My husband is even more of a feminist than I am. His family did not have traditional expectations from me, and they never really stood in my way. I came into women's studies from the outside, as it were, from an intellectual, rather than a personal level.

Q. You have a son. I'm sure he had an upbringing which was far from sexist. How does he react to women's problems?

A. He was not particularly interested, and thought more attention was paid to them than necessary. Perhaps it's a case of too much of a good thing producing an opposite reaction.

Q. Would this mean that 'upbringing' is not all that important?

A. Well, my son is a lawyer and since some time he has voluntarily been involved in women's problems. What I mentioned earlier was an initial reaction. He now takes up law cases connected with these problems — rape, for example. So, even if a non-sexist upbringing produced no immediate change in attitude, it definitely seems to have had an impact at some level.

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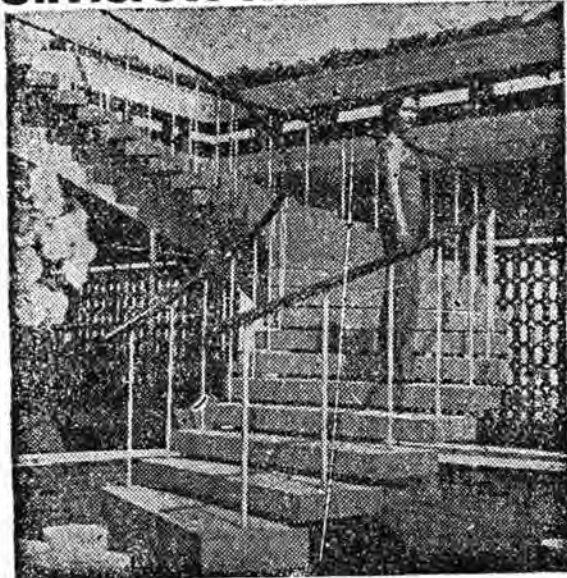
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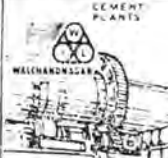
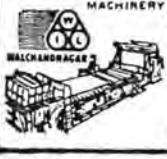
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