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SANJAY'S DEATH—& AFTER

NISSIM EZEKIEL

Sanjay's death has not so far led to any knowledge of Mrs. Gandhi's public and private relation to him. It is a mystery, like that bunch of keys which Mrs. Gandhi remembered and took possession of before she began to mourn for her son.

The court of inquiry was cancelled soon after it had been announced. There is an increasing flow of facts about the circumstances of the accident, from which we know for certain that Sanjay died as he had lived, breaking all the rules.

Ought one to admire him for this, an expression of the adventurous spirit, of courage and heroism, of superior human capacities and the personality that makes for leadership? Not at all.

When Sanjay failed, as student, as mechanic trainee, as business entrepreneur, it was always rationalised and obscured. The list of irregularities, illegalities and extra-constitutional actions became steadily longer. Scandal accompanied Sanjay like a shadow, wherever he went. Most of the charges against him he did not even bother to refute. His mother objected to the mere mention of them.

Only a few days ago Mrs. Gandhi was indignant because Maruti was associated with a reference to Sanjay. "There was nothing wrong with Maruti," she said, one of her routine lies as a public figure.

When Sanjay was successful, as in his rapid political rise, he used the same methods, created a similar fog of high-mindedness, preferred the devious and the cliqueish.

This man received four aeroplanes as gifts. Without an official position, he dismissed the Director of Civil Aviation. That was an awe-inspiring example of his ability "to get things done". What would be considered criminal if attributed to any one else, in his case was described by his deluded admirers as proofs of superman at work.

And now, all those impotent slaves want his brother Rajiv, want his widow Menka to inspire and organise them. Empty of self-respect, lost and helpless when faced with the problems of social transformation, they seek another idol to worship, a new tyrant-magician whose *mantras* they may blissfully repeat.

These people try hard to create a Sanjay Cult, the only effect of which will be to pollute the atmosphere,

already thick with illusions and false assumptions about how India's main problems can be solved: poverty, national integration, educational reform (Sanjay's only reading was the comics) and independence in international affairs.

Consider, for a moment, only that last item. Mrs Gandhi has needlessly recognised Kampuchea, and returned recently to her first response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Once again she echoes the hollow propaganda of the totalitarian Soviet government that its military action against a neighbour is at least partly to be explained by the conduct of other powers in the region.

"Soviet factor part of overall crisis: P. M.", says *The Times Of India* headline to a report on talks with the Pakistan foreign minister. Here we have the characteristic idiom of dissimulation. Military might is muted into "factor". A neighbouring government not favourable to the Soviet government becomes "overall Crisis".

The Prime Minister, the report informs us, told Mr Agha Shahi that "the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan could not be seen in isolation..." Nothing can be seen in isolation, dear P.M., and what is related to the Soviet invasion here is a militant, aggressive, expansionist, totalitarian State which has killed more of its own citizens than those of any other country. Don't see the Soviet move "in isolation" from that, Mrs Gandhi.

Sanjay's followers, with or without his lead, are in no position to assess Mrs Gandhi's "non-alignment". They are as hazy as he was about communism and socialism and Big-Power conflicts, capitalism and the role of free enterprise in it, multi-national corporations and nationalisation of industrial enterprises.

What interested Sanjay most was Power, and the ruthless Will to use it beyond the wildest dreams of his mother. The correct, precise description of his politics is covered by the single word "crypto-fascist". Given the opportunity, he would have ruled like Stalin without Stalinist economic and social practices. In other words, concentration camps and mass murders along with a mixed economy.

Sanjay's government would have combined the worst features of leftist and rightist dictatorships.

The point in criticising a dead Sanjay and a living Indira is that in different ways they represent certain kinds of politics. I am sure it is not democratic politics they represent. ★

AMNESTY'S INDICTMENT OF SOVIET SAVAGERY

K. S. VENKATESWARAN

IN November 1975 Amnesty International published a Report entitled "Prisoners of Conscience in the USSR: Their Treatment and Conditions." It described in graphic detail the gross violations of basic human rights, and made detailed recommendations to the Soviet authorities on the law and practice relating to detention conditions, incarceration of political dissenters, the forcible confinement of citizens to psychiatric hospitals, and related matters. Predictably, the Report did not find acceptance with the Soviet authorities who instinctively dubbed Amnesty's efforts as actuated by "anti-Soviet" motives.

Following the exponential increase in the reprehensible violation of human rights in the Soviet Union during the last four years, Amnesty International has recently brought out a revised and enlarged edition of the Report. It merits close consideration, for it tellingly documents the swiftness underlying the Soviet government's attitude towards its own citizens.

Reiterating that "the abuses documented in the first edition of this report have remained part of official practice in the USSR," the Report states that "dissenters in various categories have been arrested and imprisoned for non-violent exercise of their human rights and sentenced to imprisonment, frequently under civil legislation which explicitly restricts the non-violent exercise of human rights."

The Report, based on incontrovertible evidence obtained both from officially published materials and accounts by prisoners themselves or their relatives and friends, examines with remarkable objectivity, first, the legislation and practices pertaining to the arrest and sentencing of persons in the USSR, and, secondly, the conditions in penal institutions and penitentiaries. A separate chapter deals with the blatant abuses in psychiatric practice which makes horrendous reading.

The official intolerance of dissent in Russia has been institutionalised in the Criminal Codes enacted in each of the 15 Union Republics, on the basis of the Fundamentals of Criminal Legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics, which came into force in 1958. Article 58 of the RSFSR Code of 1926 which preceded the present Code, for instance, "provided blanket charges against anyone even remotely suspected of representing a threat to the survival of Bolshevik rule." What is worse, "some provisions of the 1926 Code made legal the arrest and sentencing of people who were known to have committed no crime."

The justification for this brutal disregard of natural justice was provided by the leading Russian jurist, A. A. Piontkosky: "...sometimes for...considerations of a political nature, it is necessary to apply compulsory measures to people who have not com-

mitted any crime but who on some basis or another are socially dangerous."

Between 1929 and 1953 this Code underwent several amendments, so as to make it increasingly repressive. Although the 1960 Code which replaced it is a sequel to the violent public reaction to the unmitigated terror of the Stalin era, it is the opinion of Amnesty International, fortified by concrete evidence of current practice, that "both the written Soviet law and its application are still subject to considerations of political 'expediency' which often dictate that legal and constitutional principles must be sacrificed to current political goals."

Two examples are sufficiently illustrative. Balys Gajankas was tried by the Lithuanian Supreme Court in April 1978 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment and 5 years internal exile for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". According to the Court judgement, Gajankas' offence consisted of "storing anti-Soviet literature (principally volume 1 of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's book *Gulag Archipelago*), storing and distributing literature relating to the Lithuanian partisan movement of the late 1940s and early 1950s and compiling lists of prisoners. "Most significant from the legal point of view," says Amnesty International, "is the fact that the court judgement includes no proof of the 'false, slanderous' content of the literature listed in the charges against Gajankas. . ."

Another example is afforded by the case of the poetess Yuliya Okulova. She was one of the several Leningrad residents subjected to criminal investigations after slogans appeared on the walls of many public buildings in that city in 1976, calling, among other things, for the freeing of the prisoner of conscience, Andrei Trevdokhlebov. She was eventually charged not with participation in the slogan writing but with "systematically writing and distributing in written form fabrications known to be false which defame the Soviet State and social system."

Among the documents named in the indictment was a collection of poems and drawings which, according to the official text of the indictment, "contained the deliberately false fabrication that freedom of speech, the press and creative art are absent in the USSR." Yuliya Okulova was tried and sentenced to 5 years internal exile in 1978.

It is a revealing comment on the fairness and impartiality of the Soviet administration of justice that "in no case known to Amnesty International has a Soviet Court acquitted a defendant brought to trial either specifically or in disguised form for his political or religious activity."

The reason is not far to seek. "Trials in such cases more closely resemble 'show trials' than serious attempts to determine guilt or innocence, the correct application of the law or the proper degree of punishment. Furthermore, only in rare cases is there any evidence to suggest that the courts or other judicial agencies with a supervisory capacity have attempted to effect remedies of manifest illegalities in political cases."

No less disturbing are accounts of the conditions relating to the maintenance of prisoners in Soviet jails. In the language of studied moderation adopted by Amnesty International, "the physical conditions in which convicted people serve imprisonment in the USSR inflict greater physical suffering and degradation on them than is admitted or condoned in the law and official literature on the subject."

Apart from the subjection to severe suffering during transportation of detainees or the deplorably unhygienic conditions in prison cells, it is heart-rending to read accounts of wilful denial of food to detainees. "Not only is hunger an essential part of most of the punishments which are regularly imposed on prisoners, regular diet is also such as to cause hunger and malnutrition," reports Amnesty International.

A moving description is offered by an anonymous account from the Mordovia special regime camp of the diet there: "Day after day we eat the same fodder; in the morning five days a week we get 55 gm. of fish—rotten fish—and a bowl of watery gruel; at midday 21 gm. of rotten *sboi* (the entrails, head and legs of a slaughtered animal) or lard, some watery, smelly soup of some borsch made of spoiled cabbages; in the evenings smelly soup. We get damp bread with (illegible in the original AI note) the thickness of a finger. We do not in practice get any of the vegetables authorised for our rations."

The dehumanising effects of such feeding practices are not difficult to imagine. According to the Amnesty Report, it is not uncommon for prisoners to resort to eating grass, wild flowers, nettles and the like in order to compensate for the deficiencies of their diet.

It is a measure of the human urge for freedom that despite their constant under-nourishment, prisoners of conscience frequently resort to hunger strikes as a means of protest.

Perhaps the most searing indictment by Amnesty International is reserved for the unconscionable and callous disregard for medical ethics. This has become an inseparable aspect of the Russian penal system. The woeful inadequacy of access to medical facilities for prisoners is compounded by the irresponsible readiness of doctors and paramedica to acquiesce in official brutality.

Vladimir Bukovsky narrates in his memoirs a conversation with a prison doctor who had no compunctions in saying: "It's a prison you are in, I don't intend to give you serious treatment, and anyway you

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are our enemies. I am not about to spend my time on turncoats and traitors."

Even more shocking is the perfunctory procedure governing psychiatric practices. According to a directive issued on 26 August 1971, "mentally ill" people may be confined to a psychiatric hospital without their permission or that of the family if they are an "evident danger" to themselves or those around them. The directive lists a number of symptoms of "mental illness" which are so obscure and devoid of medical precision as to confer wide and unguided discretion to forcibly confine peaceful citizens who may express views unpalatable to the powers-that-be.

The vice-like grip of State authorities in psychiatric confinement cases is as sordid as the debasement of professional ethics by the personnel manning such institutions. The historian Mikhail Bernstam narrates a dialogue which took place when he went to meet Dr. L. D. Fedoseyava, the deputy chief doctor of the psychiatric clinic where a well-known dissenter (Ponomaryov) was confined for writing protest letters. The dialogue deserves to be reproduced at length if only to illustrate the utterly depraving effect a repressive regime can have even on the more respectable professions:

Bernstam: What sort of letters were they?

Dr. Fedoseyava: Neither I nor the doctor treating him has read the letters, but we know the contents. They are the letters of an ill man. They aren't anti-Soviet but in them he expresses a low opinion of the Soviet government and in general writes cynically about our leaders.

B: If you haven't read the letters, how do you justify Ponomaryov's hospitalisation?

Dr. F: We possess the information and an evaluation from the competent authorities.

B: Which authorities do you mean?

Dr. F: Surely you understand.

B: Nonetheless.

Dr. F: Well, officials of the KGB.

B: You said the letters were a symptom of an aggravation of the patient's illness. But are KGB officials really competent to make such judgments?

Dr. F: They make a political judgment and phone us, advising us to intern Ponomaryov. For us to make a medical diagnosis it's enough simply to know of the existence of anti-government letters. There's no need to read them. ★

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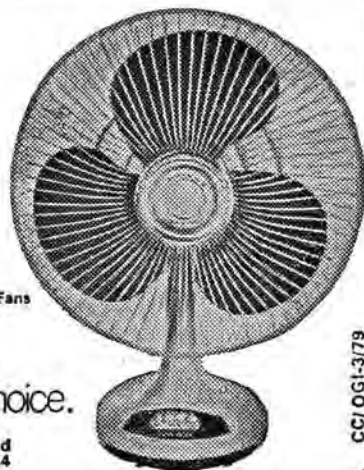
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An Open Letter To Chancellor Bruno Kreisk Of Austria On Khomeini's Tyrannical Theocracy And The Flaunting Of Human Rights In Iran

JUNE 12, 1980

Excellency,

News of your trip to Iran and the propaganda use made of your presence in Tehran by the usurpers now holding our country hostage has come as a deep shock to all progressive Iranians.

That international opportunists should reach out to lend credence to a tyrannical theocracy might be understandable in the narrowest confines of cynicism. But for you to be seen giving your stamp of approval to a Medievalist regime defies imagination.

There is, perhaps, no need to remind you of what the present dictators of Iran think of modern civilization, of which Socialism is one of the progressive vanguards.

More than 1,200 people from all walks of life, including pregnant women, have been executed without anything resembling a fair trial. Our compatriots in Kurdistan, Khuzestan and the Gorgan plain have been bombed with napalm and are still being subjected to military raids and outright murder of their leaders. There are more than 50,000 political prisoners. There are 160,000 people on the official "black list" who cannot travel abroad or retain their positions in the administration. There are more than 1,500,000 Iranians living in exile in Europe, America and the Gulf states.

The recently published Amnesty International report on Iran would give you the true picture of Iran's theocracy, which is built and is being maintained by the rule of force.

You should also know that all progressive parties, including the League of Iranian Socialists, the Union of National Movement Socialists, the Iranian Workers' Socialist Party, have been banned and subjected to ruthless repression. So far 37 Socialists and Social Democrats, including five women, have been executed by the theocracy's judges. The list of Iranian Socialists and other progressists held in prison without even being charged would provide a very long roll of honour.

As a progressive group we feel it our duty to remind you of what your comrades are suffering in Iran because we believe that the future of our country can only be saved through an alliance of all progressive forces. Such an alliance would represent the 20th century against the 12th century, freedom of thought against pseudo-religious obscurantism, and liberty against enslavement in the name of Divine Will.

Thus to see you, together with the Hon. Olof

Palme and Mr. Felipe Gonzales, with the present rulers in Iran, cannot but leave a bitter taste of disappointment for all those who have admired the Socialist International for its rejection of Machiavellian politics so far.

If the Socialist International truly wishes to gain an accurate picture of the complex situation in Iran today, this cannot be done by a brief visit. A commission of inquiry into the crimes of the present theocracy could be organized and given adequate time and resources to make an extensive study. Such a commission would be able to meet representatives of all political groups in Iran, from the extreme Left to the extreme Right, and passing through the many democratic and progressive groups that fight in our country.

Such a commission would be able to talk to the man in the street in Tehran and the provinces and to study the political repression and the material hardship the Iranian working people are suffering.

Such a commission would find out why the theocracy has been unable to hold a single legal and fair election while even failing to complete the general election for the Islamic Assembly.

It would find out why more than 2,000 newspapers, weeklies and other publications have been banned, with many of their writers and editors thrown into prison without charge.

It would find out why the theocracy is closing down all Iranian universities and colleges.

It would find out why people's homes are raided nightly and people's property is confiscated by marauders.

It would find out why corruption and embezzlement have become an integral part of the theocratic system in Iran.

Mr. Chancellor: Please do not stop at the appearances. We appeal to you to use your influence with the Socialist International for the purpose of creating a commission of inquiry so that you can have the whole picture and, through you, the world would be able to hear the cry of the Iranian nation for justice and freedom.

Yours sincerely,

THE IRANIAN COMMITTEE FOR DEMOCRATIC
ACTION & HUMAN RIGHTS
P.O. BOX 48, KELLY BLDG.
5826 SOUTH UNIVERSITY AVE.
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637.

VOICES 1

MYTH OF CAPITALISM AND INFLATION

It would be a fallacy to assume that capitalist-oriented economies are by nature prone to inflation, and that socialist or centrally planned economies on the contrary are not.

While it is generally true that in capitalist economies profit is the indicator to entrepreneurs as to the choice of industry, it must not be disregarded that utility ultimately is a greater motivator. Utility is the greatest guide to enterprise whether the economy be capitalist or socialist, however wicked or callous it may be.

Priorities in any society are generally guided by utility, and utility commodities comprise of essentials such as food, clothing, shelter, etc. for which demand will be inelastic, unlike for luxuries.

Because of the high inelasticity and consequent priority for them, the motor-car manufacturer will have to wait till the basic needs of the community are satisfied before he launches on the manufacture of cars or other such goods. In actual experience that is what has happened in the Western capitalist economies that are denounced as reactionary, malavolent and iniquitous.

In developing countries, which are largely societies affected by economic insufficiency, and still incapable of providing themselves with the basic needs of the people, the economic forces that come into play may not be the same as in the capitalist economies of the West or even the socialist economies. There, the basic needs of the people have been satisfied due to a more generous and liberal attitude, and a sense of charity towards the neighbour generated through a Christian outlook.

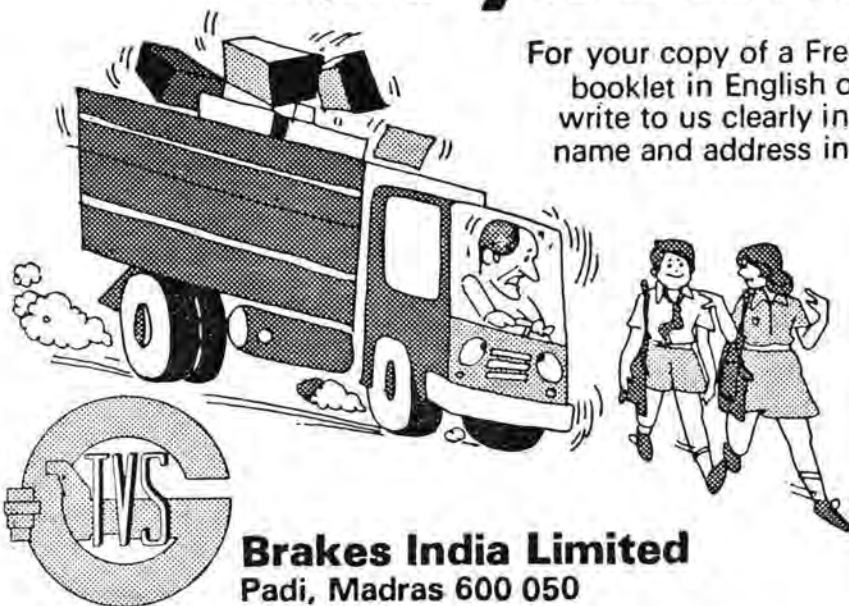
Such a liberal outlook led to the industrial revolution. Most Asian countries, except for Japan and China, have not had the strong impact of an industrial revolution that has enhanced creativity, invention and production. As a result they still confine their attention to agricultural production, and that too with archaic methods. Any investment of capital and development of capitalism has been limited mostly to agricultural production. The high profits that some entrepreneurs seek would thus come from the production of essentials, and inflation is a result of high prices.

In the Western economies, inflation is a result of a high level of production of luxury goods, and other goods higher in the scale of preference. Such inflation is not so intolerable as in some Asian countries, such as Ceylon, because basic needs in those countries are already satisfied.

Capitalist enterprise, which is largely private enterprise, is not wasteful or careless or inefficient because of the diligence of the entrepreneur. In societies that are completely capitalist, state revenue is largely

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dependent on the profits of the entrepreneur and profits are generally the indicator of industrial efficiency.

In such societies, where both industry and the administration are efficient, capitalism becomes a myth. To suppose that capitalism is evil and reactionary in a truly democratic state amounts to a delusion.

In advanced countries like Britain, Canada, U.S.A. and Japan, capitalism far from being a failure has been a great success. The infrastructure for agriculture and industry, and the general amenities flowing from them, have been the result of capitalist effort.

In most of those countries, railways, electricity, gas supply and the telephone systems have been the outcome of private capital investment. Often, a broad section of the community participates in such investments. Capitalism in these countries reflects the ambition for progress and development, and is generally a desirable social system.

A. E. GUNAWARDENA

President: Ceylonese Liberal Party

VOICES 2

THE ROUTINE JOB

The combination of a post-graduate degree in English literature and a Diploma in "Executive Secretaryship" was responsible for my landing a "prize" job. I agreed I was lucky, and had visions of myself as Girl Friday to my Executive—being here there everywhere, answering the telephone, screening and greeting callers, making appointments, drawing up itineraries...

The Girl Friday image is beginning to recede under the onslaught of innumerable letters to be filed, postal orders to be entered and dozens of registers to be maintained. Where, I wonder, is the "challenging" work I had been promised, the opportunity to "write" and to participate in what was being done?

I console myself by saying things will change soon. But am I deluding myself like thousands of others all over Bombay? Am I deluding myself that I will "rise" soon. Other people have been working as stenographers over a period of ten, even twenty years. If they "prove" themselves, they will "rise", I am told.

Some have risen. They are now no longer Stenographers or even Personal Assistants, but Assistant Executives. They earn a little more (though they take home a lot less, as they can no longer claim overtime): they still throw harassed glances at the clock in an attempt to complete their twenty or fifty letters a day.

Naturally, there is no time for work of a different nature. They still have to call out two or three times

to the nearest peon—with one significant difference: the leisurely reply carries in its body the word *saheb*.

The ladies rise to top secretarial posts. They have a room to themselves. The typewriter occupies 95% of their time. When there is not much typing, they are relatively free. The peon and the intercom connect them with their executives. They watch my enthusiasm with sad, wise faces. They had the same dreams fifteen, twenty-five years ago. I realize that teaching or journalism pay less but perhaps give more.

Why this dichotomy into "jobs that are challenging but don't pay well" and "routine jobs, but pay is good"? Is it too much to ask of the Management of a liberal company to devote a small per cent of its time to apportioning work so that a person gains pleasure and a sense of having created something worthwhile with at least *some* portion of the work he is doing?

Why is so much trouble taken at an interview to gauge whether the candidate, a graduate or post-graduate, of course, is conversant with the latest trends in Business Management, Marketing and Sales, knows the political scene inside out, and has a high level of intelligence, dependability, initiative and integrity, if he is trusted with nothing more than totting up row after row of figures, or preparing reports or churning out printed facts over the telephone?

I cannot pin-point the cause of this depressing state of affairs. The fault lies partly with our educational system with its impossibly theoretical base. A graduate or post-graduate cannot hope to employ in his work more than a meagre fraction of the knowledge he has supposedly imbibed. On the other hand, he is hopelessly ignorant of basic office skills and would tremble if called upon by the Director to cancel a reservation or get some information over the telephone.

This creates the bewildering feeling of being both "too good" and "not good enough" for the job. It creates the best climate for criticism from more weathered seniors who insist that "in our time" a particular thing was done a particular way, period.

The worker's apathy and indifference to the job he is doing help keep the ball of monotony rolling. The functioning of his department, leave aside his firm, is a mystery to him. The sole realities are the pay-package, bonus and holidays. The "higher ups" can break their heads over what the firm deals in and why. Only the *chamcha* and the fool invite extra effort.

There are no pat formulae to ease this feeling of human waste and alienation. If a victim surfaces, people are quick to attribute his "success" to luck, if not to more nebulous causes. I think *awareness* of his plight, of the disparity between the dream and the reality has often been the first step. Awareness, coupled with the courage it takes to become a **SOMEBODY**.

HUTOXI MEHENTI

THE WEEK IN PARLIAMENT

Report in *The Daily Telegraph*.

"Five Nobel prize winners were reported yesterday to have given sperm so that specially selected women can be artificially inseminated in the hope of producing exceptionally bright children."

Scenes of unprecedented disorder and uproar were witnessed in Parliament when the P.M. read out the above report.

Mr George Fernandes banged the bench in front of him with his chappal and proceeded to chew it before he could bring himself to blurt out, "Six hundred and fifty million people and not one Nobel prize winner who could donate a sperm." He was led out sobbing.

"This is a plot by the Western block. Genetic blackmail," thundered the veteran parliamentarian Bhupesh Gupta who was being allowed to attend through force of habit. "Third World countries are being outmanoeuvred, outnumbered and outspersed by the Imperialists."

The P. M. explained patiently that there was nothing political about the matter at all. Even President Carter had not been asked and was actually feeling somewhat hurt by it. The Californian businessman, 74-year-old Robert Graham had specifically printed on top of his Fertility Bank questionnaire, "Only Nobel prize-winners need apply."

"What about our film stars?" chirped the irrepressible Mr Piloo Mody who was being retained to provide a bit of comic relief. The P. M. ignored him and went on. Other biographical details on the questionnaire include information about the donor's weight, height, age, IQ, eye colour, skin, hair and whether the candidate had already had normal children.

The women, specially selected for their intelligence, were bright and white, the report went on to mention, and were allowed to choose any one of the questionnaires without being told the name of the prospective test-tube specimen. Though in this case, the P.M. continued, the sperm were kept in a radiation-proof lead container.

The debate took an unexpected turn when a member inquired sarcastically whether lead containers were beyond the capacity of Indian manufacturers.

The Industries Minister made a long report on the position of lead supply, and remarked that but for the Railways not doing their bit this country would have been in a position long ago to meet all its lead requirements.

"Is the honourable Minister deliberately misleading the House?" roared Mr Piloo Mody in his usual way. "Are we debating the supply of leads or beds?" The House dissolved into laughter.

During all this time a small but vociferous group

were shouting something in Punjabi. It was a little while before it emerged that they were shouting for "Khurana, Khurana..."

"He is a Nobel prize-winner," they claimed.

"But he is not an Indian," objected some members.

"Isn't he a son of the soil?" countered his supporters. This led to the usual breaking of chairs, fainting fits, and wrestling bouts that are the staple of Parliamentary behaviour, until the Speaker announced that there would be a short recess for lunch.

At the post-lunch session Mr Jagjivan Ram raised an objection that almost brought the debate to a standstill. "What about the scheduled classes," he asked. "I submit to this House that 33% of the sperm that is being sent for this noble and humanitarian cause should be reserved for the scheduled classes." A wave of depression filled the Parliament. Nobody had given a thought to this aspect. Now the Minorities, the Adivasies, the Nagas, the Assamese would all want to get into the act.

Fortunately, the AIDMK leader, who was known as the Rudolf Valentino of the South, suggested a compromise formula. "Why not select a candidate from this august assembly?" he asked. "Are we not the true representatives of the Indian people? Whoever wins the maximum support shall be the Indian representative to the Fertility Bank." He was cheered so loudly for his unerring democratic instincts that he was about to swing from his place to the Speaker's desk, and take a bow, but his deputy reminded him that such actions were always done for him by his stuntmen in the South.

At the same moment the Charan Singh faction started chanting. "Who is it who tills the soil, draws the furrow and SOWS THE SEED? The farmer, Jai Kisan." Mr Charan Singh modestly stood up and said. "Nobody in this House knows the difference between barley and oats the way I do, so I will humbly take this task that the nation has entrusted to me. When do I go to California and meet the young ladies." His aides whispered that that would not be necessary. Everything had been mechanised these days.

"But I am against mechanization. I am a believer in the Gandhian way," he protested.

There was an embarrassed silence amongst his supporters the moment he uttered these words. Gandhi's views on celibacy were only too well known. After prolonged debate, a consensus was arrived at. It was agreed that anyone over sixty would not be eligible for the Fertility Bank, as a mark of respect to the Father of the Nation's decision to embrace brahmacharya at that age.

The P. M. did not say anything; she was busy knitting. In a few seconds when the full impact of what they had agreed upon filtered into the consciousness of the five hundred odd members of Parliament, they looked with horror at the one candidate who had been seated in silence through the proceedings.

She's fooled us again," they gasped. It's a plot."

THE WORLD OF BOOKS

LAST DAYS OF THE MORARJI RAJ by *Barun Sengupta*, Anand Publishers, Calcutta. Rs. 35/-.

This is a "quickie" after announcement of the mid-term polls. Now, after the elections, there will be no doubt scores of such books revealing many inside stories of intrigue and corruption.

The author is the recipient of a Durga Ratan award for the best political analysis of 1973. He is a professional journalist. His book is an exposure of the various tin gods of Indian politics. It makes for painful reading. All moral values are thrown in the dustbin. Even common decencies are given short shrift. To attain power, no holds are barred. It is a murky play, staged in Delhi. The great dreams of Rajaji and Jai Prakash Narayan have proved to have no substance. Reality has taken its revenge on our illusions.

All the sophisticated analyses of our intellectuals have proved false. The simple truth that nobody likes anarchy was forgotten.

The first chapter, entitled "The Beginning of the End" gives us the background of Morarji's obstinacy. I am surprised that he did not keep himself posted with the happenings around him. What a blind politician he has been all his life! The second chapter describes the clever moves of Indira and Sanjay. It is notable for revealing new facets of Sanjay's character.

The next three chapters fully expose the villainy of the Socialists. Minoo Masani has rightly described them as the demolition squad of Indian politics. Morarji's exit was a pathetic one. It seems that nobody had a good word for him!

Charan Singh's dealings have been described in chapter six and seven. Chapter eight, "Kamal Nath's Diary", is political dynamite. It is a merciless exposure of the degraded character of our political leaders. Except for physical violence and assassination, every kind of wickedness was practiced in those days.

The achievements of Mother and Son form the subject of the next chapter. The author has given evidence of their shrewdness and manipulations. I do not agree with the analysis of the President's ambitions in the last chapter. But there is proof in the book that Sanjay was the architect of Indira's electoral victory.

The book is lucidly written and will be an eye-opener to many. Kuttu's cartoons are excellent and so are the photographs by Raghu Rai.

N. C. ZAMINDAR

RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN THE BRAHMA PURANA by *Surabhi Sheth*, Sterling Publishers. 341 pages. Rs. 100.

First among the eighteen great Puranas, the Brahma Purana in Sanskrit is a remarkable encyclopedia covering all aspects of Hindu life. It is a scripture, not composed by one author, nor at one place nor at one time. Scholars have given the date of its composition as ranging from the ninth to the twelfth centuries. There is as yet no knowledge of its various authors nor of the several dates nor of the different places where it was composed. The entire literature of the Brahma Purana is derived from the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Surabhi Sheth has here attempted a critical study of this Purana. Her book is divided into three parts. Part I deals with Puranic studies in general and the place of the Brahma Purana in particular. Part II deals with data on social structure, institution of marriage and of family with special reference to the position of women, as well as on the economic and cultural conditions of the time. Part III deals with the beliefs of the Puranic Hindus as described in the text.

The Brahma Purana contains, among other things, fascinating stories of Hindu gods and goddesses, sages and demons. These serve to illustrate the age-long belief of the Hindus in the grace of God, who intervenes in the daily life of the devotees and saves them in times of distress. The Hindus considered Brahma as the bestower of boons.

The incarnations of Vishnu mentioned in the text reveal that whenever there is a decline of law and increase of inequality, Brahma takes a new Birth. The sanctity of the institution of marriage is amply borne out in these writings. There are five universal duties as revealed in these scriptures. These may be summed up as those between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder and younger brother, and between friends.

There are very few books on Puranic literature. The author deserves to be congratulated on attempting to present the reader with a comprehensive study of this sacred scripture. It has however to be mentioned that the author could have devoted a chapter to ancient Hindu polity, on the basis of the information contained in this Purana. She would have done well also to deal with questions of its authorship on the basis of the literary style adopted in compiling this work. A major deterrent is the price, Rs. 100, which is high by Indian standards.

M. VENKATESWARLU

WE WILL SMASH THIS PRISON, by Gail Omvedt, Orient Longman. Pp. 189, Rs. 70.

How do Indian women really feel about being women? The author depicts the anger and frustration in conversations with agricultural labourers like Kaminibai, municipal street workers like Tarabai, union organisers like Leela Bhosle, Dalits, Adivasis, tribal women and working women in cities. Though all seem conscious of their rights as women, none except Tarabai, the municipal sweeper, has the guts to get rid of the binding archaic customs that keep Indian society, and particularly its women, chained down.

"A woman when young should be under the control of her father, when adult under the control of her husband, and when old under the control of her son," quotes Omvedt from Manu the Hindu law-giver. At the root of oppression, therefore, is the fact "that every major decision of her life is made for her, not by her."

As Tarabai and her once-despised but now much-sought-after sweeper colleagues prove, economic independence changes even the most prejudiced attitudes. But, in merely writing down accounts of events of the ten months from 1975 to 1976, which finally led to the formation of a United Women's Liberation Conference in Poona, the author does not provide the stimulus of an in-depth analyses of the special problems confronting Indian women.

Obviously very involved in leftist movements of the day, the author confines herself to Maharashtra, and women's uprisings within a leftist context. As she herself points out, initially, the linking together of class issues and women's issues are bound to relegate the latter to the background.

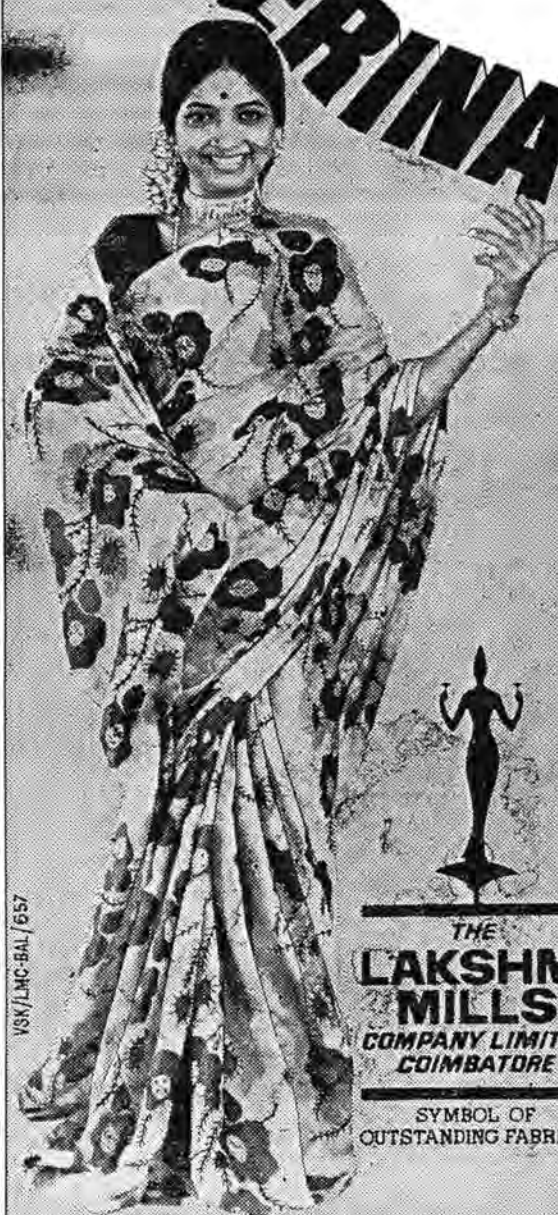
"Women's issues are distracting from the basic concept of class identity. Why discuss women's oppression as a special topic when there is so little time"? However, despite the continuous failure of various women's demonstrations, morchas and conferences to identify with a universal women's movement against oppression, rather than as a part of a party programme and despite the "pattern of subordination of political women", she reiterates that a women's movement to have any impact should associate itself with a class movement!

By confining herself to "class" struggles, the author fails to recognise that a women's movement cannot have real impetus without over-all backing—women from all strata of society should heed the call to arms. The very failure of the women's movement lies in not recognising the fact that women are oppressed regardless of class and caste, and not because of it. "The slaves themselves are given the job of protecting slavery."

This symbolises the tyrannical mother-in-law, suppressing her daughter-in-law, and thereby preventing the entire female sex (including herself) from achieving liberation. Moreover, inequality of the sexes, as she herself writes, is more marked in the

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middle and upper classes, on account of the "traditional servitude inside the home". Those who work outside the home out of economic compulsion or otherwise, enjoy more "social independence and near equality with the men."

"We are all One!—Whether agricultural, tribal, municipal workers or working women, is the theme of the Dhule discussions. I wonder why the author fails to include intelligent, articulate middle and upper class women in her study. "Young middle class girls should come forward, but do not." Did she fail to elicit any response from them, or did she think that in spite of their freedom from the oppressive housework of their sisters, they were actually birds in a cage, mute and immobile?

"Rural women," she writes, "are the base of any storm." And tribal women, unhampered by traditional Hindu servitude to the male, feel freer than their sisters. What of the educated middle-class women, who should be more conscious, to help mobilise and organise women? Is class such a divisive factor that it divides women against women? The lack of answers makes this book a mere journalistic account rather than a sound study of what is possible.

"We will smash this prison," she proclaims most encouragingly, but the initially interested reader gets depressed that at the end of it all, there is no real solution in sight for women's manifold problems of being women. The organisation of women, Omvedt writes, is difficult because of "the form of oppression" that prevents women stepping out of the four walls to voice their demands in public.

Despite emphasising that women's strength lies in unity, and stressing the need of a grass-roots organisation of women, the author keeps harking back to the necessity of involving leftist movements with the women's movements.

The question posed by the author, "Is there a women's movement in India?" is irrelevant when applied to the average Indian woman, eking out her miserable individual existence in the face of varying forms of oppression.

Taking the reader through a bewildering and somewhat disconnected description of her experiences, Omvedt is unconvincing in her lop-sided research about smashing any prison!

PREETH I. BIDDAPA

THE DUE PROCESS OF LAW by Lord Denning. Butterworth and Co., London 1980. Pg. 263 £ 11.25.

"It is all very well to paint justice blind, but she does better without a bandage round her eyes. She should be blind indeed to favour or prejudice, but clear to see which way lies the truth; and the less dust there is about the better."

So opined Lord Denning pithily in *Jones v National Coal Board* while commenting on the conduct of a judge "who talked too much."

The Due Process of Law, which is a welcome sequel to his earlier book, *The Discipline of Law*, is a

fascinating work by one who is the Chief Judge of the Civil Court of Appeal in England.

This is how he explains the title of his book: "By 'due process of law' I mean the measures authorised by the law so as to keep the streams of justice pure: to see that trials and inquiries are fairly conducted, that arrests and searches are properly made; that lawful remedies are readily available, and that unnecessary delays are eliminated."

Lord Denning meticulously examines several interesting aspects of the law in eight parts which consist of: contempt of court, inquiries into the conduct of the judges, ministers, directors and the powers of the police in making an arrest, the delicate question relating to illegal immigrants into England, the law relating to divorce, the deserted wife's equity and the various reforms—judicial and legislative—for the improvement of the wife's share in the matrimonial home.

Perhaps one of the most significant cases in recent years has been the one concerning Thalidomide. It is to the credit of Lord Denning that he upheld the claim of the *Sunday Times* to expose the Distillers whose drug had created what he calls, "a national tragedy." The legal question which confronted the court was whether the publication of any article by the *Sunday Times* which urged the Distillers to "take a fresh look at their moral responsibilities" would amount to contempt of court. There was private litigation pending between the parties.

Lord Denning held: "If the pending action is one which, as a matter of public interest, ought to have been brought to trial long ago or ought to have been settled long ago, the newspapers can fairly comment on the failure to bring it to trial or to reach a settlement. It is active litigation which is protected by the law of contempt, not the absence of it."

The House of Lords reversed this decision but the *Sunday Times* took it to the European court of Human Rights which held in favour of the newspaper.

Lord Denning has introduced through his judgments, various reforms in English law, notably the Mareva Injunction, which consisted in the creditor seizing the property or assets of the debtor before the judgment was delivered against the debtor. But this judgment has been reversed by the House of Lords.

Similarly, the "deserted wife's equity" which gave the deserted wife the right to stay in the matrimonial home, even though the house stood in the husband's name, was a welcome remedy formulated by Lord Denning, but again reversed by the House of Lords.

What struck me most poignantly in the book was the eloquent Epilogue—an autobiographical masterpiece in itself. Lord Denning records his 80th birthday celebrations in 1979 and the "memorable evening at Lincoln's Inn," during which he recollected with anguish the death of two of his brothers during the War.

RAMNI TANEJA

THIRD WORLD AVERSION TO BAD NEWS

JONATHAN FENBY

LONDON—Constructing theoretical mountains on factual molehills is a time-honored political art. It is also a brand of fakery for which the news media have, unfortunately, too often shown a weakness, and the posture of outraged virtue which the press sometimes adopts when under attack can smack of anything from outright hypocrisy to unintended comedy.

But it is still somewhat alarming to find wide and largely unquestioned acceptance of unproved propositions about news coverage being taken as a basis for judgement and action and being given the automatic imprimatur of organizations from Unesco down.

For the past decade, Western journalists have reacted to the debate conducted in and around Unesco on the way they report the world with a mixture of incomprehension, suspicion, sympathy, self-doubt and scorn. They do not, by and large, feel like mercenaries in a neo-colonialist army of cultural imperialism which is spreading alien values and distorted reporting as it moves through the developing world.

UNBALANCED

On the other hand, the physical weight of the argument brought against them—by governments, international meetings and media critics—has undoubtedly had its effect. Sometimes this is because the criticisms are well founded. Equally often, it seems to be the result of endless repetition of a few basic propositions.

One of these, which has worked its way up to the status of a generally accepted assertion over the years, concerns what is known in the shorthand of the news coverage debate as "bad news." It is central to the argument of those who accuse the Western media of giving an unbalanced picture of the developing world.

It holds that the Third World is being singled out for a negative portrait through emphasis on natural disasters, coups, strife and other problems—and that this portrait is being relayed back to the developing world through the Western news agencies as well as being distributed to the news audience of Europe, North America and Japan.

The easy acceptance of this proposition is shown almost every time media experts—real or self-appointed—meet. Thus a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization expert group which met in Paris last autumn referred automatically to "the present coverage of Third World countries with its coup d'etats, famine, disasters and so forth" while the founding chairman of the alternative, Nonaligned News Pool explained that his organization was needed because "what is given (by the major Western agencies) is mostly 'destructive' news such as military

coups, ethnic strife, terrorist acts and natural calamities."

LUMPED

Until this year, much of the factual basis for the "bad news" argument was based on sporadic, and often partisan, examinations of coverage of individual events, and on a study done for Unesco in the mid-1970s. After analyzing a few days' files of three of the Western news agencies, this study concluded that news consumers in the West tended to receive "a picture of the Third World based on disproportionately high levels of attention to what can in general terms be called 'bad news'." In this category, the study lumped together political and military violence with murder, robbery and kidnapping, which immediately shows up the problems inherent in trying to separate news into good and bad categories. By the classification adopted in the Unesco study, the liberation struggles in Mozambique, Angola and Rhodesia together with the overthrow of Somoza, Amin and the Shah were presumably "bad news."

While doubts about classifying news in this way at all must remain, the "bad news" argument has now received a serious knock from a study carried out by a team at the University of North Carolina. This study, which is much wider than the earlier Unesco analysis, started out as one of a series of investigations of national images as presented in the media of various countries organized by the International Association for Mass Communications Research. Originally, the North Carolina team was to deal only with the United States, but it widened its scope to cover 35 newspapers, broadcasting stations and news agencies in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa. What it found was striking.

"The negative topics of disasters and accidents get very little attention in the media of any country in the study," the North Carolina report concluded. News of disasters and accidents in the Third World accounted for an average of about 3 per cent of news carried in the media studied and "we could find no evidence that more attention was paid to this category in news in the Third World than in any other part of the world." What did dominate the news, the study found, was politics, and "newsmakers seem to be mostly political leaders."

CONFLICT

Politics, inevitably, involves conflict, and political conflict in the developing world is often of a more immediate and violent nature than it is in the developed world which has had more time to develop institutionalized, if often equally brutal, ways of settling differences. Thus, the study found, that "a significant part of Third World coverage does deal directly or indirectly with war, political disruption and social

instability. This varies from country to country, but a large—perhaps inordinate—part of news from the Third World does deal with disruption.” To which it quickly adds that “without arguing the justification for this state of affairs or attempting to fix blame, it can be argued that the reporting from the Third World reflects the political situation in that part of the world.” And even the strongest critics of Western reporting styles would find it hard to argue that journalism should ignore unpleasant events simply because they are unpleasant. The long arm of public relations has not reached quite that far—yet.

The North Carolina study is all the more valuable because it combines data from both developing and developed countries and from different media. This enables it to make forcefully a point which journalists have sometimes stumbled across themselves, but have rarely been able to feed into the minds of those conducting the debate on international news.

Speaking of “bad news” from the developing world, the North Carolina report notes what should be obvious to any newspaper reader, radio listener or television viewer from Nairobi to New York—“when similar events erupt in the West, they, too, get heavy coverage both in the Western media and in the Third World. Terrorism in Italy and West Germany, religious antagonism in Northern Ireland and, of course, racial violence in the United States, these all get at least as

much coverage as comparable events in the Third World. The irony is that Third World complaints about Western media emphasis on violence and social disruption could be mirrored by complaints about coverage of the West in Third World media.”

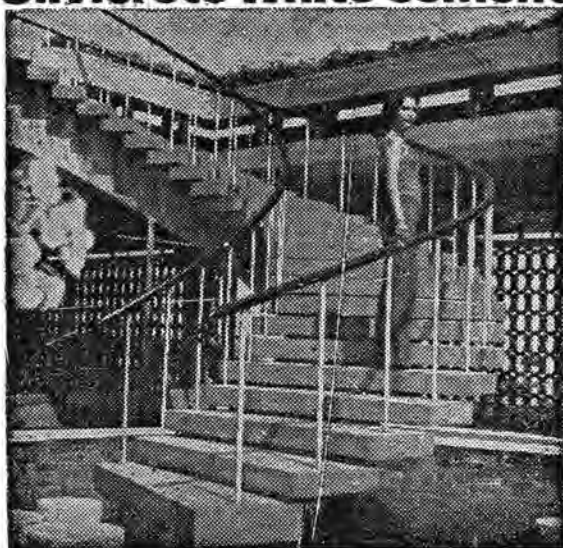
COMPLAINTS

As this indicates, the argument really runs much deeper than can be acknowledged by those who focus their complaints exclusively on the reporting of the Third World's troubles. Their complaints are shared by those in Britain who have blamed the nation's problems in part on an excess of news about strikes and violence. They were being articulated, in only slightly different form a few years ago, by that unlikely soul-mate, Spiro Agnew.

The question of why the crash of one train is news, while a thousand safely arrived trains merit no attention at all, is certainly worthy of debate as is the whole matter of how representative the media can be in its reporting. But to believe that the Western media is only interested in train crashes in the Third World is not just mistaken. It only serves to cloud further an already exceptionally confused debate.

The writer, a former editor of Reuters' World Service, is working on a study of international news agencies. He wrote this article for the International Herald Tribune.

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INVESTIGATIONS

PATTERNS IN HIGHER EDUCATION 1

S. K. OOKERJEE

After a fairly long spell of dozing and, for the last six years, slumbering soundly, the University of Bombay has suddenly woken up to its responsibilities. It has told the affiliated colleges that henceforward the students will be required to attend at least 3/4 of the lectures during each of the two terms and also to "complete to the satisfaction of the Principal...the course of study". Accordingly, the colleges have decided to take undertakings from their students that they will carry out the university's requirements, otherwise their terms will not be granted and they will not be allowed to appear for the finals.

Under the concept of completing the courses to the satisfaction of the Principal is included the taking of all college examinations and tests, doing home assignments and "practicals", writing up the "journals" and fulfilling other requirements of the department. This belated awakening is a sequel to the recent Bombay High Court judgement that it was within the absolute domain of the principal of a college to withdraw the examination form of a student who did not keep terms and whose academic progress was not satisfactory.

It is almost certain that the various student unions will protest against this move, as they invariably do against any attempt to improve the quality of education. The Indian student has not only, long since, given up the habit of studying, but claims it as his right that he should not be asked to study. After all, he has joined the college "to enjoy" and/or get a degree, not to study. He is not likely to take recent university directives philosophically. It is to be seen, therefore, whether or not the university (and the colleges) will, in the end, hold out against "student power". Their past record (with some exceptions) in developing cold feet has been quite impressive.

Although regular attendance at lectures and satisfactory performance at college examinations and tests are necessary conditions of good higher education, they are, by themselves and unsupported by other equally necessary conditions, not enough. They will only be burdens (for students and teachers) without benefits. If our aim really is to improve the quality of higher education, we must somehow make the student co-operate in the endeavour. He must be brought round to realise that studying a subject can be a worthwhile and not unenjoyable experience. At present he does not feel this at all. He has not learnt to study (in the proper sense) because the examinations which he has

had to take do not require it of him and he does not see why he should unlearn his old ways and pick up new ones—always a painful exercise.

We must break the student's resistance to change. Since his disease, basically, is intellectual boredom, the cure must be brought about by injecting interest and enjoyment. Certainly, this is a very tall order, but not inherently impossible, provided we ourselves, who are custodians of higher education, shed some of our deeply entrenched prejudices and adopt a bold and far-sighted approach.

Insisting on attendance at lectures and satisfactory performance at college tests is a step in the right direction, but hardly goes all the way. The way is long and tricky, but if we push along, we may—who knows?—attain the top of the hill. Even if we don't quite reach the top, is that any reason not to climb at all? But let us come down to the plains again and see what else is required for the ascent.

If the purpose of a university examination is to test a student's grasp of his subject, then the type of university examinations we have long had to put up with completely frustrates that purpose. Even when opportunities offer themselves we cannot bring ourselves to cast off the essay-type answer, which is no longer a reliable indicator of a student's knowledge. I have said a good deal in the past about this.¹ Here I shall only reiterate that a better type of examination is possible, if we get down to it.

A thoughtfully and imaginatively devised examination would act as a challenge to the student and would make him less ready to accept passively what *to him* must be a mysterious mumo-jumbo which the lecturer pours out. It would give him intellectual independence and self-confidence—the most precious gifts that higher education can give.

Of course, the colleges are, so far, not compelled to follow the university pattern in their own internal tests, but so long as the finals continue to cast their deadly spell over the system and remain what they are, not many students will take kindly to any other style of examination. Many teachers also feel that the college examinations (particularly the "prelims") should give the students practice in standing up to their final Day of Judgement on which their future on Earth depends so much. There is something in this argument.

There is, however, a way of meeting the situation. Although our students find sustained "studying" over a long period unbearably taxing, they do put in, for two months before the finals, hard and intense study (after their own fashion). We should cash in on this propensity by breaking up the year's course into three semesters. What is learnt during the first semester would be tested at the end of that semester and done with, and the student would move on to the second semester; having finished with the second, he would tackle the third.

The student would thus be kept on his toes practically throughout the academic year; he may even get used to it; is it so impossible that he might even grow to like it? Those who come "to enjoy" may remain to learn. The examinations at the end of each semester could fruitfully be supplemented by class-tests and home-assignments.

Let us consider compulsory attendance. Lifeless dummies sitting in the classroom or restless souls fidgeting and distracting others are not likely to further the cause of higher education. If, as I have argued, the right kind of examination could generate in the student an interest in his subject, that interest could be further stoked in the classroom.

The unacademic attitude of the students depends on a number of factors, some of which lie beyond the control of those involved in education. But some of them can be looked into and corrected by the concerted efforts of educationists. I pick on three of them which seem to me most important.

1. *Cut the Coat according to the Cloth*

Most of the courses available today fail to interest our students. Radical rethinking should make it possible to work out, in each discipline, a number of courses which would so touch the life of the average student that, with a little intelligent and sensitive handling, his interest would be aroused. To devise such courses and not dilute their academic content—that is certainly a problem. One way to solve it would be to offer a large number of alternative courses, allowing each course to be flexible with regard to topics and reading material. This leads to the second important factor.

2. *Pedagogic Freedom*

The teacher must have ample scope to make the most of a course's flexibility. The teacher must be left considerably free to formulate his own courses and conduct them according to his expert judgement. We spoon-feed not only our students but also our teachers. The university wants to control everything and leave nothing to the teacher.

A competent teacher should be presumed to know how to find his bearings and trim his pedagogic sails according to the prevailing winds in the classroom. Or do we believe that our teachers, by and large, do not know their navigation? One reason why lectures could be boring is that one has frequently to teach big chunks of one's subject in which one has lost interest or in which one has ceased to believe.

The enthusiasm of a teacher who genuinely cares for, and believes the truth of what he teaches is bound to infect the student. I am old-fashioned enough to hold that college teaching does not have a "methodology" which can be mastered through a "teacher training programme". The following dialogue brings out the ideal of college teaching:

MENO. Socrates, even before I met you they told me that you... reduce others to perplexity. At this moment I feel you are exercising magic and witchcraft upon me... until I am just a mass of helplessness... My mind and my lips are literally dumb, and I have nothing to reply to you...

SOCRATES. It isn't that knowing the answers myself, I perplex other people. The truth is rather that I infect them also with the perplexity I feel myself... Nevertheless I am ready to carry out, together with you, a joint investigation and inquiry into what it (virtue) is. (Plato: Meno) ★

Announcing

THE J. P. AWARDS

The Yusuf Meherally Centre has agreed to administer awards entitled "JP Award for the Best Book on Democracy" and "JP Awards for the Best Articles on Democracy". The Awards have been instituted by Shri Anand Shankar Pandya. The Awards will be given for the best book and three best articles in English published between May 1, 1979 and October 3, 1980. The writer of the best book will be awarded Rs. 5,000/-. There will be three awards for the articles: the first will be awarded Rs. 1,500/-, the second Rs. 1,000/- and the third Rs. 500/-.

Justice V. M. Tarkunde, Justice A. J. Shelat, Shri S. M. Joshi and Acharya Ram Murti have agreed to adjudge the Awards. The institution of Awards was

blessed by J. P. in a letter dated July 7, 1979 and the names of the judges had also been approved by him.

The entries—if a book, then two copies and if articles then three copies—should be sent to the Convenor, J. P. Award Committee, c/o. Yusuf Meherally Centre, National House, 6, Tulloch Road, Apollo Bunder, Bombay—400 039 before January 31, 1981.

The decision of the Judges will be final.

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Rohit Dave
Convenor



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