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A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL IDEAS

EVADING THE TRUTH : ABOUT AFRICAN, MIDDLE EASTERN AND COMMUNIST REGIMES.

NISSIM EZEKIEL

For more than a year, Iraq and Iran have been engaged in a war. Both countries have dictatorial, fanatical, and cruel regimes, their societies in a state of barbaric religious fundamentalism.

Most of the other Middle-Eastern countries are in the same regressive condition. There is little or no democracy, freedom and social justice to be found among them. Values and attitudes are largely mediaeval. Dissenting individuals and groups have a hard time surviving.

Some Middle-Eastern dictators are not satisfied with the absolute power they exercise over their own unhappy people. They have wider political ambitions, ranging from direct territorial control to hegemony and influence in the style of the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. The most obvious example of this is the dictator of Libya for whom "revolutionary justice" means killing those opposed to him. He has announced this conviction in an internationally circulated journal.

The Middle-Eastern countries belong to the "non-aligned" movement. No resolution can be passed at meetings of that movement against their oppressive, ruthless, narrow-minded and dogmatic practices, which violate all the norms of modern liberalism and humane modes of thinking. Fair play, compassion and human rights have been wiped-out in this part of the world.

At the movement's latest meeting in New York, it accused the United States of committing aggression against Libya. How was it committed? Attacked over international waters, two American planes shot down the Libyan planes that were doing the attacking. Were the waters international? Of course, but Libya had staked a claim to an extension beyond the distance hitherto considered legitimate.

Bravo, Libya! Bravo, 93 nations of the non-

aligned movement! Bravo, the third world!

What else? Ah yes, there are those Israeli excavations in Jerusalem. And there was the South African rugby team's tour. Surely they must be condemned. What about the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan? Silence! Better to have another shot at the Camp David agreement.

So it goes with the peace-loving, non-aligned movement. Never would it dare to take note of Poland. When it comes to Namibia or Angola it located the villain effortlessly, i.e., literally without making any intellectual effort to grasp some of the less obvious implications, such as the discovery of Soviet arms and advisors among the rebels.

Does it not mean that being non-aligned requires ignoring Soviet presence and intentions, actions and threats, while being sensitively critical of even the most minor gestures of resistance by any other involved and concerned forces? In fact, there ought to be no such forces!

India has appealed in the Commonwealth conference in Melbourne for an end to "Big-Power confrontations". It has asked the Commonwealth to use its influence on the Big Powers "in quiet ways", to ensure "restraint and conciliation". It sounds very reasonable and sensible, until one reminds oneself how it is spelt out in practice.

Why and how does a confrontation take place or threaten to between the two Big Powers? India and most of the third world including the non-aligned nations are not interested in this basic question. It is the greatest source of weakness in their understanding of the contemporary politico-ideological problem. They refuse to recognise the fact that it is the avowed policy of the Soviet Union and its allies to expand their hegemony. They are restrained only by the other Big Power and its allies.

The restraint and the accepted constraint are all a part of over-all Communist strategy. Not to know this is to live in an unreal world.

So, if Big-Power confrontations are to be prevented, through Commonwealth and Non-aligned influence, they can only be by allowing Communist expansion inch by inch.

A VARIETY OF COMMENT

K. S. VENKATESWARAN

I. THE ANTULAY SCANDAL

IT speaks volumes for the instinctive inclination of our countrymen to ignore the obvious, that the chorus of indignation following the shocking revelations in l'affaire Antulay should fail to bring out what is demonstrably the most valuable lesson of all history, namely, the inherent perverse potential of excessive state power.

The rich mass of documentation on the sordid affair has doubtless revealed the limitless mendacity of our elected representatives; but more, it has also highlighted, no less strikingly, the savage consequences of allowing an excessive concentration of power — political and economic — in these vile, self-seeking men. To the extent that all of us have, as free men, acquiesced in the latter process of abdicating our precious freedoms, we must bear the blame. The sagacious Pogo put it well: "We have met our enemy and they is us."

Pause for a moment and consider why those of our otherwise decent brethren (as, for instance, the gentlemen belonging to some of the more enlightened business houses in India) should join the cringing and the craven in ingratiating themselves with Antulay's lot. What is it that deflected these worthy persons from their straight and narrow path?

Truth to be told, had it not been for the enormous power wielded by our wily politicians — powers of an all-embracing nature, whether it be to issue licences and permits, grant subsidies, offer contracts or shower other types of largesse — we can reasonably assume that the chances of our witnessing the sickening spectacle of industrialists aiding and abetting the odious Mr. Antulay in his nefarious activities would have been extremely remote.

That, however, is not to absolve these gentlemen from the blame that should inevitably attach to their questionable actions. After all, who can claim that the "interested sophistry of merchants and manufacturers", about which Adam Smith spoke two centuries ago, is no longer with us?

2. THE PAVEMENT-DWELLERS

Although few tears deserved to be shed on the shattering defeat suffered by the Government of Maharashtra in the Bombay High Court over its abortive attempt to demolish the unauthorised pavement huts in the city last July, it is rather difficult to appreciate, much less applaud, the unusual outburst of sympathy contained in the Supreme Court's recent order in the matter.

On a petition filed by an activist journalist on behalf of the pavement-dwellers much later than, and quite independently of, the Bombay initiative, the Supreme Court has, besides ordering the status quo to be maintained, directed that the Government be restrained from taking any action in pursuance of its pavement clean-up plans even later than October 15, thereby extending indefinitely the embargo placed by the Bombay High Court.

What makes the latter initiative particularly ominous is the reported claim of the petitioners that they have a **fundamental right** to continue occupation of the manifestly unauthorised constructions put up on footpaths, pavements, roads and other places having a public right of way — a claim which was expressly excluded in the Bombay petition. In fact, in the course of heated arguments before the High Court at the preliminary stage, the presiding judge pointedly asked counsel for the petitioners whether their case was based on any claim of a fundamental right, to which counsel, fairly enough, answered in the negative.

Much as one sympathises with the lot of the hapless pavement-dweller, it would nonetheless be wrong both on principle and in practice to accept the astounding proposition that trespassers have a fundamental right to indulge in what is plainly an illegal act. It is one thing to appeal on humanitarian grounds that these pitiable folk be given a reprieve; it is quite a different thing to assert for them a legally-enforceable right which is clearly not theirs.

Even without being particularly clairvoyant, it is easy to foresee the perilous consequences that would flow from such an assertion. Viewed in this light, the sponsors of the Bombay petition

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deserve to be commended for their remarkable restraint which, one hopes, will ultimately prevail when the matter comes up for hearing and final disposal before the court.

3. BABY FOODS

Starting from the publication of the controversial report entitled **The Baby Killers** many years ago, to the successful effort recently to block one of the most important cabinet appointments in the world's most powerful democracy, the crusade against manufacturers of infant milk foods has progressively intensified and, in the process, gathered enormous political clout. Whatever the merits of this crusade, it is difficult to escape the feeling that much of the outpouring in India, as perhaps elsewhere, is based on conjecture, *a priori* conviction and firmly-held ideological positions.

It has been contended, over and over again, for instance, that the most vulnerable target of the baby food manufacturers is the illiterate and gullible rural poor. However, according to one estimate which has not been controverted, two-thirds of the total quantity of milk food substitutes produced in India get consumed in the top nine cities and in towns with populations of over a lakh.

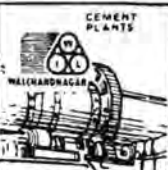
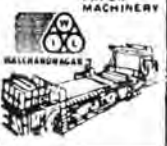
In rural areas, the consumption is a bare 4 per cent, accounted for mainly by rich farmers as distinguished from penurious farmhands or other manual labourers. What is more, the consumption of branded milk foods on an all-India level is confined, according to the estimate, to

only 4.7 per cent of the babies and, of these, only 1.9 per cent use a foreign brand.

Indeed, the share of the foreign sector in infant food sales has been grossly exaggerated. With the entry of the milk co-operatives nearly two decades ago, there has been a sharp decline in the market-shares of the multinationals, as is reflected by the fact that whereas Amul, for example, has consistently held sway over 50 per cent of the market, the share of Glaxo recorded a sharp fall from over 29 per cent in 1971 to around 11 per cent in 1978.

The assumption about the deleterious effects of infant food sales on breast-feeding habits in India has also been disproved by a survey conducted in 1978 by a leading research group which concluded that 93 per cent of the mothers in India breast-feed their babies for at least some time. Besides, it is common knowledge that the tendency to continue breast-feeding even longer than two years is widespread in the rural areas.

While there can be no two opinions about the superiority of breast-milk over branded substitutes, it would be foolish to turn a blind eye to situations where mothers are, for legitimate medical reasons, unable to feed their babies themselves. Besides, it is seldom realised that in a vast majority of the cases, disease in bottle-fed children owes its origin to poor hygiene or non-observance of directions in the preparation of branded foods by mothers, especially in tropical countries. The remedy, surely, does not lie in imposing a total ban on baby foods, for which some of the propagandists have been clamouring.

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Threats to Liberal Democracy

Y. SIVAJI

"Long Live Liberty" is still the war cry of the liberals everywhere. It may seem strange that this slogan has to be raised in several countries after the attainment of national independence. It is astounding when raised in the communist countries 55 years after the Russian Revolution. It may appear paradoxical when the same idea is reflected in the public opinion of countries wedded to a democratic form of society. The undeniable fact is that this question has been confronting freedom-loving people of all cultures and climates.

Lovers of freedom in the colonial and semi-colonial countries fought for independence in the hope that it would necessarily lead to freedom and democracy. The second world war has resulted in the emergence of several Asian and African Countries as independent sovereign nations. Yet the people of those countries are still denied their just human rights. Many heroes who fought for national independence and thus symbolised the aspirations of the people became or supported dictators. They set themselves up as "Father figures" in their respective societies. Their rule is paternalistic in nature, and they promised to dole out freedom and guide democracy. Sukarno of Indonesia and N'kruma of Ghana may be cited among many who illustrate this process.

The people that came to power in many a country in the continents of Asia, Africa and South America have no ideological, moral and philosophical convictions about democracy. Their glib talk of it seems to be motivated by their anxiety to continue in power. For this purpose the slogan of Socialism has come in handy to them.

The toiling people at one time looked at socialism as a panacea for all the ills of society. Many of them are now disillusioned. But ideas die hard. Therefore they hug the word even though it has lost its pristine purity. To them it now means something vaguely connoting social justice. It is no wonder that the rulers of these countries call themselves socialists.

Another factor that promotes talk of socialism by dictatorial rulers arises out of the plan of the communists to work in united fronts with the so-called socialist rulers of the countries that attained independence recently. Communism and Communists are easily identified by the people, and hence it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to operate under their own name. Therefore they resort to the strategem of masquerad-

ing as socialists and thus work in United Fronts with the opportunistic "Socialist" rulers of these countries.

The concept of United Fronts of the Communists is well known to lovers of freedom. The support of the Communists to the non-Communists in the United Fronts was compared to the support of the noose to the hanged. The Communists seek to eliminate the opportunistic socialists in the long run. But in the process of United Front tactics they successfully eliminate genuine Liberals as well, and Democrats too.

It cannot be gainsaid that there are some well-meaning Liberal Democrats who wish to do good to the masses of their countries. Naturally, they are pained at the economic backwardness of their people. Freedom will remain an empty slogan unless the physical needs of the people are satisfied. To put it in other words, political freedom cannot exist without economic freedom.

In their anxiety to increase the standard of living of their people, the genuine Liberal Democrats have chosen the path of economic planning of society. But here they have made a fatal blunder. There are two types of planning. Planning for democracy is one and planning for totalitarianism is the other.

Unfortunately some formal Democrats who have been ruling the newly liberated countries followed the path of economic planning of the Soviet type with its strong emphasis on heavy industries and neglect of consumer industries. This process when once it started with the blessings of the Soviet Union is gradually leading other countries to totalitarianism.

The role of the Public sector is being enlarged without corresponding increase in efficient production and utility. The Private sector is positively discouraged. Huge amounts of money are wasted on public enterprises. Many ruling groups have put curbs on incentives for the formation of capital. Thus they neither allow private capital to flow into industry nor do they produce wealth in the public sector.

This situation leads to unprecedented price rise, corruption, misuse of power and prestige, and immorality in public life. As these rulers proclaim themselves also to be "Democratic", the word Democracy loses its credibility with the people. The climate is prepared for dictatorship.

Concentration of economic power inevitably leads to concentration of political power in the State. Therefore the rulers that control the State,

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if not own it, wield the entire political and economic power in their hands. Thus they become dictators.

Mrs. Indira Gandhi of India, Mrs. Sirimavo of Ceylon, Ne Win of Burma and others of their ilk are the products of the process begun by well-meaning democrats like Nehru and U Nu. Thus the threat to Democracy and Liberty has become real in these countries.

There was a time when the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union were the super-powers. Hence the policy of non-alignment evolved by the neutral countries had some significance. But now the situation has changed. Communist China has emerged as a third super power. Due to its antipathy to the Soviet Union it has come closer to the U.S.A. The upsurge of forces in the U.S.A. supporting dictatorial regimes in Asia, Africa and South America, the Soviet Union riding roughshod over the peoples of Hungary and Czechoslovakia literally through aggression and brutal repression, and Communist China's friendship and pampering of Fascist regimes in Pakistan and elsewhere are the most disquieting factors that endanger liberty on the international plane.

The question that demands an answer is, "What is the method and manner in which the threat to Liberal Democracy has to be met?" Poverty, illiteracy, superstition and ignorance are objective factors that are likely to contribute to the rise of totalitarianism. These evils of society can be eradicated only through planning for democracy. It will encompass political, economic, social and cultural sectors.

In the political sphere, decentralisation of power has to be encouraged. In the economic field, private capital shall not be smothered nor shall the public sector be encouraged when it is wasteful and inefficient. The concepts of capitalism and communism do not remain static. They too are the victims of time and evolution.

The days of cartels, combines and monopoly capitalism no longer prevail in the U.S.A. Communism in Poland and Yugoslavia have partaken of the nature of Liberalism to a limited extent. To swear by the concepts of the nineteenth century, even in the twentieth, may not be wise.

Liberation has attained new dimensions in our time. The evils of capitalism and communism have to be shunned in the economic planning of a Liberal Democratic society. Neither private capital should be allowed to thrive at the expense of individual Liberty, nor the state permitted to reduce the citizens to robots, depriving them of their political and civic rights. A society firmly based on an admixture of private initiative and public weal, leading to genuine Liberal Democracy, can alone save the world from the impending catastrophe of totalitarianism.

OCTOBER 1981

Peasant Nationalists in Gujarat

Kheda District 1917-34

DAVID HARDIMAN

Kheda District was a major centre of rural nationalism in early twentieth-century India. To explain this phenomenon, the author investigates the complex grass-roots politics of Kheda at that time, analysing relations between the Congress Party, Gandhi, and the peasants, as also between sections of the peasantry. He contends that the Kheda peasants were not really led by either Gandhi or the Congress, but rather they mobilized the countryside for their own reasons, using the Non-Cooperation movement as an additional source of strength. Rs 110

Domestic Roots of India's Foreign Policy 1947-72

A. APPADORAI

This book by a well-known political scientist analyses the significance of specifically indigenous elements in the formation of India's foreign policy during the Nehru era and eight years following it. The vitality of the Upanishadic traditions, the socialist bias of Congress leaders, the requirements of a pluralist and democratic society and of a newly-developing industrial nation, are closely studied and shown to make non-alignment and Panchsheel a fundamentally practical as well as idealistic policy. Nehru's charismatic personality is analysed in a concluding chapter. Rs 80

The Mappilas of Malabar 1498-1922

Islamic Society on the South Asian Frontier

STEPHEN FREDERIC DALE

Descendants of Arab merchants who intermarried with and converted members of the area's Hindu population, the Mappilas of Kerala comprise the oldest Islamic community in South Asia. This book analyses the reasons for the turbulence which has characterized Mappila history during the past four and half centuries. In doing so it focuses on the relations between the Mappilas and the non-Muslims of Kerala, especially on the confrontation with the European colonial powers on the one hand and the dominant Hindu castes on the other. The analysis begins by showing the far-reaching and violent consequences of Portuguese attempts to destroy the Mappila control of the Kerala spice trade. More particularly, the book explains the pre-British origins of the agrarian violence which racked areas of Northern Kerala in the nineteenth century and demonstrates how this agrarian problem interacted with the long history of conflict between Muslims and Europeans to produce the Mappila Rebellion of 1921-22. Rs 180



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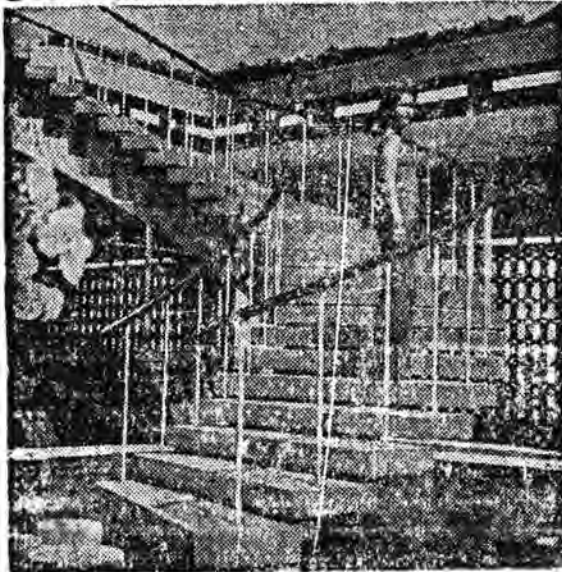
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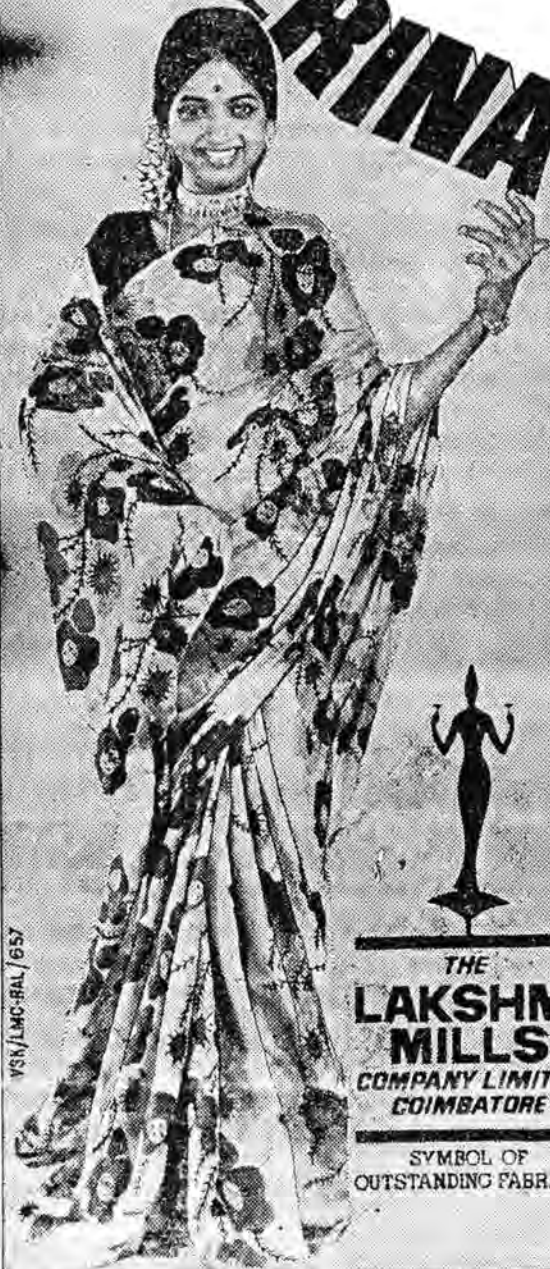
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VOICES—I

THEATRE GREATNESS

Review of **Buried Child**, a play by Sam Shepard, produced by Trinity Square Repertory Company, Rhode Island, U.S.A., at the Tata Theatre, Bombay, on 24th September, 1981.

If one could detect a unifying theme between the three Acts of so surrealistic a play, it would be that of degeneration and regeneration. It haunts the play covertly and overtly. Ostensibly, the play relates a sequence of events in which a third-generation American boy, Vince, comes to an old, ramshackle farmhouse in Illinois, in the company of his girl-friend Shelly, obeying some primordial urge to re-unite with the fount of his family after an absence of six years.

What Vince encounters is the shock of realising that none of his family members recognises or remembers him. He faces a situation in which each member is caught in his own disoriented orbit: Grandpa Dodge, sick and lonely, utterly dependent on whiskey and TV for survival; Grandma Halie who has lost all communication with Dodge as well as with her grown sons, Tilden and Bradley, and who seeks companionship through a liaison with Father Dewis, the Protestant Minister; Tilden, the man whose mental powers have atrophied after a mysterious spell in New Mexico, and who Vince believes to be his father; and finally, Bradley, whose leg has been amputated and who exults in cutting his father's hair while asleep.

Exploiting all the tools of his trade, like suspense and comic mystery situations, Shepard injects an undercurrent of shock and laughter and mystery through a deceptively simple dialogue. This is the unique flavour of the play; we are kept guessing throughout about the identity of the buried child, of Vince's birth, and about the connection, if any, between the two — though there are sinister leads. The disaffection among humans, growing like a canker, is often referred to:

Tilden: (to Dodge) You're not worried about me, are you?

Dodge: I'm not worried about you.

Tilden: You weren't worried about me when I wasn't here — when I was in New Mexico?

Dodge: No, I wasn't worried about you then either.

Tilden: You shoulda worried about me then.

Dodge: Why's that? You didn't do anything down there, did you?

Tilden: I didn't do anything.

Dodge: Then why should I have worried about you?

Tilden: Because I was lonely.

Later, Dodge echoes this feeling of alienation when he says to Shelly, Vince's girl-friend:

Dodge: (to Shelly) You know what'd be good for me?

Shelly: What?

Dodge: A little massage. A little contact.

The healing touch of contact, of communication, eludes the entire circle caught in this crazy cross-fire of accusations and counter-accusations.

Through all this, Shepard seems to say, the mystery of life-reassertion remains a force. When Vince proclaims at the end, after Dodge's death, "I just inherited a house", he reiterates this eternal verity. There are also ritualistic scenes like the one in which Tilden covers the sleeping Dodge with corn husk, the Indian symbol of fertility.

The entire cast feels and choreographs the internal structuring of the play in a remarkable fusion of roles. Into the texture of decadence induced by Dodge's slovenliness, Halie's garrulity, Tilden's emasculation and Bradley's hectoring come Vince and Shelly, like threads of gold, only to be tarnished by the pervading dessication.

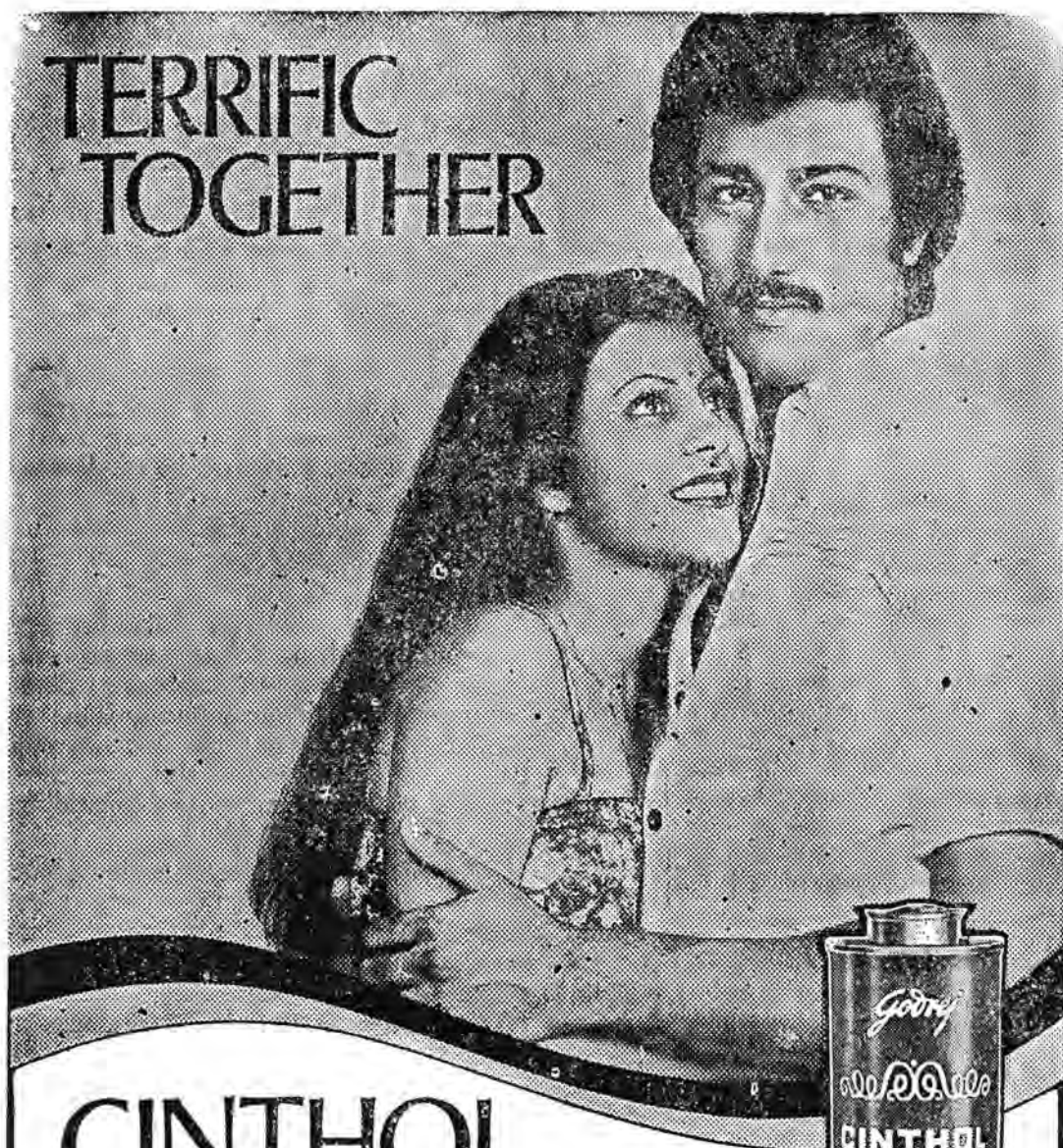
It would be difficult to single out an outstanding performance: they were uniformly excellent. David Jones, through a single scene, created the definitive Protestant minister, Father Dewis. Richard Kneeland, with his ape-like gait, induced an illusion of simian regression. Tim Daly as Vince is the handsome all-American boy-god, and Amy Van Nostrand, as the young but invulnerable Shelly projects an inner calm and sanity through the zaniness surrounding her.

In 1974, Shepard wrote "The idea of dying and being reborn is really, an interesting one. It's always there at the back of my head — I was brought up an Episcopalian. But that was another prison to get out of. You have this personality, and somehow feel locked into it, jailed by all your cultural influences, and your psychological ones from your family ... so what it means to die and be born again I've wanted to get into, but I've never really found how to make it work in my plays."

Perhaps in 1979 with his Pulitzer Prize-winning play **Buried Child**, Shepard has at last found the answer.

INDU SARAIYA

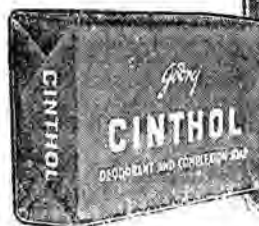
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MERITOCRACY?

A passage from C. Northcote Parkinson on the short list for selection goes like this: "Little time, by contrast, was wasted on the man who admitted to having been educated at Wiggleworth. 'Where?' the chairman would ask in astonishment, and 'Where's that?' after the name had been repeated. 'Oh, in Lancashire,' he would say at last. Just for a matter of form, some member might ask, 'What games do you play?' But the reply, 'Table tennis for Wigan, cycling for Blackpool, and snooker for Wiggleworth' would finally delete his name from the list."

I have just read a report by the sociologist, Anthony Heath, on the flawed working of a semi-meritocratic society, and another by the psychologist, Miles Hewstone, on how boys from public schools and comprehensives view one another. The whole business of public school boys bypassing the normal channels of selection and promotion of a meritocratic industrial society, and of "upward mobility" and "counter-mobility" is a disturbing revelation.

The spectrum of British schools ranges from the major public schools (members of the Headmasters' Conference) to the direct grant schools (such as Westminster, Dulwich), grammar schools, minor public schools, comprehensives and the secondary modern at the other end.

In his "Anatomy of Britain Today", Anthony Simpson maintains that the differences between the public schools and the grammar schools have been eroded by the common threat of the comprehensive (twenty years ago, we had the neighbourhood schools in our bonnet) schools. That would mean that Eton, Winchester, Harrow and Marlborough have adjusted themselves to the demands of the more meritocratic postwar Britain.

But this is not borne out by the proportion of public school boys at Oxford and Cambridge, and in the City they say: "It doesn't matter **what** you know, but **who** you know." So that the old school tie still signifies, and the family connections still hold. Perhaps, the Wykehamist or the Salopian still scores because he has more competent teachers and because even a dawdler is made to sweat finally for his O levels.

In answer to a questionnaire, a public school boy wrote about the comprehensive boys: "They fail because they're stupid. We fail because we don't try." The other one said: "Public school boys succeed because they're lucky. We fail because we're unlucky."

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Nearer home, an old **pantoji** like me is worried sick by this whole idea of success and failure, and by the result-oriented system of admission to professional colleges. Today, I have received a letter from a very happy parent whose son, after spending a discontented year in the Polytechnic, has succeeded in getting a seat in the Poona Engineering College.

When the S.S.C. and H.S.C. results are published, there is a mad scramble for the science, medical and engineering courses, then for law and commerce, and finally for the arts. The gates are closed after the sixtieth student who has obtained an aggregate of 85 per cent marks (the topmost having secured 94 per cent) has gone through. If we had the O level or A level system here, perhaps the story would have been different.

How does the candidate get 94 marks out of 100? By ability and effort? By luck? Because he opts for his mother tongue as the medium? Besides being a regular student in his school, he also attends a coaching class and uses guide books? He never turns up for games in the evening, and he hasn't read two books outside the prescribed texts. Is that meritocracy?

Another means of passing an examination is copying. This has become such an art and such a common and acceptable practice that even the invigilators at a centre in Bombay have been known to aid and abet. Later in life, greasing a palm is yet another established principle of getting your papers sent up to the proper authority or having your bills passed. It is a frightening scenario.

An all-rounder, who is brilliant at studies on account of talent and a retentive memory, who has played football and trekked and climbed rockface, who has read widely and who thinks for himself, is a rare phenomenon. He would shine anywhere. If he has had the additional advantage of having gone to a school where art, music, debating and dramatics are encouraged, and where he has met teachers who have opened the windows of humour and imagination for him, god's in his very heaven!

But is the objective of education just upward social mobility, or success in career and life? Also, are only the advantaged to have all the chances? What about the average learner, the plodder, the student who scores 50 per cent marks, hasn't he a right to grow tall and happy and well-liked?

Haven't qualities of goodness, uprightness and fearlessness any meaning, any more? Will Socrates answer? Or will he just ask more questions?

N. L. KHANOLKAR

THE WORLD OF BOOKS

RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN INDIA by A. B. Shah. Somaiya Publications, Bombay. Pg. 227 Rs. 75.

A. B. Shah is a self-proclaimed atheist, but he qualifies that defiant noun with an adjective — "conscientious". In other words, while he has no use for religion, he has plenty for morality.

What distresses him in the baker's dozen of articles which make up this book is not the condition of our many religions but of what should be our one, only and indivisible society. Those who framed our Constitution were concerned primarily with creating a nation, not merely in a political or geographical sense, but also in an honest — if not an honest-to-God — social sense. We had paid a heavy price for past intolerances, whoever may have been responsible for them. The founding fathers hoped that now, with the Constitution they were making, everyone in the portion of the truncated sub-continent which was ours will start thinking of himself first and last as an Indian, not as a Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or whatever.

"He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth", said Coleridge, "will proceed by loving himself better than all". The importance of secularism lies in helping one to think and act as a human being, not a Hindu, Muslim or for that matter an Indian. The Western nations had their wars of religion, no doubt, but contact with ancient Greek literature and philosophy taught them the importance of reason as against faith, and the result was a renaissance.

For us in India too there was a renaissance in the 19th century as the result of contact with the west. But this renaissance was confined to the Hindus in the sense that the elite among them were bold enough to question things in their own culture in the light of what they took from the west; whereas the Muslim elite, for whatever reason, were much more circumspect and non-committal. Hinduism in India, Shah contends, had a renaissance; Islam did not.

This is not to say that the Hindu elite always acted in conformity with what intellectually they were willing to concede. It has been a tradition of the Hindu life that while thought is free, action is bound. Keshab Chandra Sen, most vocal in the Brahmo Samaj, who thundered against child marriage and the priest-ridden orthodoxy of the Hindus, married his daughter before she reached the age of consent to the aged Maharaja of Cooch Behar. The Vedanta philosophy is among the greatest of world views, but the treatment meted to widows and the filth and

corruption in the Hindu temples made Pandita Ramabai cry out against the horrors of that religion and invite the world's contempt for those who profess it.

It is in this context that one realises the greatness of Gandhi. Jinnah's propaganda that Gandhi was only a Hindu politician, and the singular inability of even a man like Wavell to see that the Congress was not a Hindu organisation, both stem from the fact that neither could appreciate the "total revolution" for which Gandhi stood. Whatever the Sastras might say, Gandhi insisted on treating the Harijans like blood brothers, and throwing all the temples open to them. As for cow-protection, his stand was clear and unambiguous. The Government of India had no more right to prevent cow slaughter in India by legislation than the Government of Pakistan would have to prevent one of its citizens from going to a temple. This is true secularism based on commonsense and reason.

Shah's contention is that there has never been in India a front-rank Muslim leader who would dare to disagree with the **Quran**, or subject it openly to the same critical examination that Gandhi, Vivekananda or even Tilak brought to their study of the Hindu scriptures.

Radhakrishnan's idea of secularism — equal treatment of all religions — strikes Shah as ersatz, taking the line of least resistance. If "in the next Five Year Plan, the Union and State governments together ... provide roughly Rs. 83 crores for the encouragement of Hindu religion, Rs. 11 crores for that of Islam, and so on for others", according to Radhakrishnan, such a policy would be perfectly secular. But would it, Shah would like to know, be consistent with the idea of a secular government?

This is not to be brushed aside as a merely academic question. Why is the government dragging its feet over the promulgation of a uniform Civil Code which the Constitution of India declares to be one of its Directive Principles? Why is the Aligarh Muslim University treated as a super-sacred cow which no one dare ensure yields the milk it was meant to, for the benefit of all the citizens of India and not merely the Muslims of Aligarh? Who will speak for the helpless minorities among the Muslims, those who would shake off the tyranny of the priest and of the male chauvinist? How can a Khaliullah Hussaini, President, All-India Taneer-e-Millat, be allowed to get away with a statement like this as late as 1968?

"A single Muslim is nobler and higher than a thousand Hindus. The only need for him is to become awake and regard himself as a Muslim.

FREEDOM FIRST

He goes with Allah's blessings. It is a holy deed when his dagger rushes into the heart of aliens; and he is the victor."

The answer to such rant must come not from proclaimed anti-Muslim associations or fanatics, but from intelligent and responsible Muslims themselves. But as early as 1880, effective leadership of the Muslim community in India has, according to Shah, rested with the separatist element. Those who are not separatist keep mum.

It is the business of the non-political, honest intellectual to probe these questions and try and find answers for them. A man like Shah, or the late Hamid Dalwai to whom this book is dedicated, are such intellectuals, without ceasing to bother about the good of the community as did Schweitzer and Gandhi. A fervent belief in God has its mystical and poetical values which Shah does not deny. Only, the service of man must take precedence over the service of God.

But these are not the intellectuals who will be invited to the picnics and tamashas organised by our governments in the name of seminars and conferences to deal with the problems of our country. If by chance they are invited and accept the invitation, their voices will be drowned in the general hubbub of flattery and self-seeking. All the same, whatever their views on family planning, may their tribe increase and multiply!

P. S. SUNDARAM

MAHATMA GANDHI — A Biography. by B. R. Nanda. Oxford University Press, Bombay. Rs. 80/-

The setting was a temple court-yard in the tiny French settlement of Mahe on the Malabar Coast (now Kerala). The time, January 1934. Gandhiji was on a swing of the South to collect funds for his Harijan programme, and he had agreed to make a brief halt at Mahe at the behest of a Local Committee.

After explaining the objective of his tour Gandhiji requested the assembled gathering for donations. Since there was a large sprinkling of ladies in the crowd he shrewdly asked them to donate some of their gold ornaments.

Many of the ladies were taken aback, but one of them had anticipated the request and had collected jewellery from some of the more generous ladies present. She herself gave a gold chain and divested her daughter of her bangles! Gandhiji accepted the gifts with a broad grin, but characteristically asked: "only so much?"

I can vouch for the facts, since the lady who offered the gold ornaments was my mother.

Thus did Gandhiji inculcate the spirit of sacrifice and social service among the men and women of his native land. By that time, his name

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had already become a legend and people gathered on the road-side to get his **darshan**. He himself shunned all such publicity and concentrated on the multifarious programme of development which he had initiated. There was no field of activity which he neglected. All this is clearly delineated in the book here reviewed.

The biography which Mr. B. R. Nanda has brought out, first appeared in 1958. It was an instant success and was acclaimed by many. Its re-issue will undoubtedly be welcomed, as a work which has stood the test of time.

However, I wish the Publishers had attempted to up-date the book, as many publications have appeared since 1958 on Gandhiji and India's struggle for freedom. Such an exercise would have been worthwhile to counter some of the unfair and misguided criticisms which have been levelled against Gandhiji.

Having said this, I have no hesitation in hailing it as the most readable biography on Gandhiji one can find in India. As the Curator of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Mr. Nanda was eminently suited to write it. He has shown perseverance and erudition in narrating the story from Gandhiji's days in Porbander till he reached the pinnacle of fame as the Father of the Nation.

It was in South Africa that Gandhiji first came to prominence as a man who detested all forms of oppression and tyranny. It was there that he discovered and tested his political weapon, Satyagraha. Even in those days, discerning observers like Mr. J. J. Doke, the Baptist Minister of Johannesburg, had been impressed by Gandhiji's "quiet, assured strength, greatness of heart and transparent honesty".

Mr. Doke, who is Gandhiji's first biographer, also makes the point that it was the Sermon on the Mount that awakened Gandhiji to the rightness and value of Passive Resistance. The Bhagavad Geeta deepened the impression, and Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is Within You" gave it the permanent form. This much for the eclecticism of Gandhiji.

It was Gokhale who induced Gandhiji to return to India. Gokhale hoped that Gandhiji would succeed him as the President of the Servants of India Society, but destiny had other plans for Gandhiji. Willy-nilly he was pushed into the political arena, which he was to dominate for nearly three decades.

The author gives a succinct and competent account of the tortuous negotiations which preceded the advent of India's Independence. The British showed great ingenuity in delaying the process of transfer of Power at every opportunity, but good sense and statesmanship prevailed in the end.

Gandhiji, who entered the fray at the beginning of the First World War, had hoped that generosity on India's part to help Britain in the War effort would be reciprocated. He was disappointed when, at the end of the global conflict, Britain stuck to the earlier ploy of granting responsible government in "progressive stages".

It was during this time that Gandhiji went all out to forge an united front of Hindus and Muslims, but this happy situation was not to last long.

The inter-war years saw further progress towards a settlement. The Government of India Act of 1935 and Provincial Autonomy followed, but India wanted complete independence.

The situation changed dramatically after the outbreak of the Second World War. An exhausted Britain, under a sagacious leader, Clement Attlee, agreed to grant independence to India, but at a price: the establishment of a separate State of Pakistan.

This must have been a great blow to Gandhiji who had tried his utmost to prevent the partition of the country. It was a measure of his greatness that he accepted the inevitable, and eventually attained martyrdom in trying to ensure that Pakistan had a decent start.

K. V. PADMANABHAN

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FREEDOM FIRST

The Tragedy of the Tibetan People

BUCHUNG K. TSERING

Twenty-two years have passed since Tibet lost her independence. For all these years Tibetans have been staying in India and other countries of the world as political refugees. The Chinese first started arriving in Tibet around 1950, and then gradually overpowered it. First they ate the areas around Kham in eastern Tibet moving on to central Tibet, and by the end of 1959 they had subjugated the country thoroughly.

How did this happen? How could a tiny peaceful country be shaken by such great violence, resulting in the unsettling of so many Tibetans? There were a few reasons why China could attach Tibet to its "Motherland" so easily.

LACK OF COMMUNICATION

Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, is known as "the forbidden city". But this was the situation throughout Tibet. Since ancient times it has had a self-sufficient rural economy. Due to this, and also because of heavy religious domination of the people's activities, foreigners were not allowed to enter the country. Only people of Tibetan origin like the Sherpas and Monpas were allowed free entry, while the rest were thoroughly screened.

Religious institutions of Tibet felt that if foreigners entered the country, then their religion would be contaminated. Thus there was a total lack of communication with people of other countries, which enabled the Chinese to deal easily with the situation. It is only to the credit of a handful of foreign historians and explorers like Sarat Chandra Das and Alexander David Neel who entered Tibet at the risk of their lives in the early part of this century that the outside world knew anything about it.

Even so, because very little is known about Tibet, many people think that it has always been under Chinese domination. And they have a case. While the Tibetans were engrossed in their internal chores even after the Chinese arrival, they on their part were using all the opportunities to proclaim to the world that Tibet was a part of China. While the Tibetans were busy chanting prayers for the welfare of the world, Radio Peking was busy broadcasting news of "our Tibet" and "our Tibetans". They carefully watched the activity of the Tibetan leaders.

When the Dalai Lama and the Penchen Lama visited India in 1956 (to celebrate the 2500 birth

anniversary of Lord Buddha) Chou-en-Lai was sent to New Delhi to pay a "friendly visit", while in reality he had been sent to note that things which would hamper their plans do not take place.

Even earlier when a Tibetan trade delegation which went on a business tour to Europe and USA in 1947-48 expressed a desire to meet the then American President, the Chinese representative in America objected saying that if they were to be given an appointment he would have to be present. The Tibetans did not want this, and so the visit was cancelled. Incidentally, this very trade delegation went on its trips carrying Tibetan passports which were accepted by all the countries that they visited.

When the Chinese began to show their true colours, the Tibetan government sent delegations to other countries as well as memoranda to the UNO. But then all these were ineffective. The world body did not want to touch a subject of which they only had meagre knowledge, while a country close to it supported or sponsored it. The Tibetans looked towards India for help, but India did not want to mar her new-found relationship with China. Thus the UNO did nothing, while Tibetan delegations only got lip sympathy. The Tibetan people started escaping into other countries, those who could, while the rest remained to suffer political domination and persecution.

A PAWN IN THE GAME OF POLITICS

A second reason why China could invade Tibet was the most detestable power politics. During the early forties Tibet was surrounded by three power-hungry giants. While Russia looked at it from the North and North East, China looked at it from the East, followed by British India in the South. All these countries were involved in a struggle for some sort of domination over Tibet.

Tibet at that time was involved more in spiritualism than in worldly matters. It is rich in minerals as well as precious stones. Some say the Chinese have even found Uranium there. Also, being in the centre of Asia, Tibet had a great strategic importance which all these countries wanted to exploit. Thus a gamble for Tibet ensued.

British-India tried getting control over Tibet by setting up trade agencies, missionary

schools and military outposts. They even tried a direct attack in 1904, but without success. The Russians tried by sending in their men overtly and covertly. China through her Ambans (representative) at Lhasa tried subtle tricks — that of alluring the illiterate masses through free “showers of Yuans”. Yet, Tibet proved a hard nut to crack and it was then that real bargaining started between British India, China and Russia. Many treaties and agreements were signed between them: The Anglo-Russian Treaty, The Anglo-Chinese Treaty, The Sino-Russian Treaty, etc.

All these treaties eventually led to Russia and British-India wrongfully admitting the so-called Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. Thus, while the fate of the country was decided by outsiders, the Tibetans themselves were not even aware as to what was happening.

THE SITUATION NOW

Even after 22 long years, under the rule of a “Socialist Paradise”, Tibetans in Tibet are not at all happy. This is corroborated by the reports of the successive delegations sent by the Tibetan government since 1979. The co-called policy of liberalisation which gave a shadowy freedom to the people does not seem to have pleased the Masters, and has been withdrawn. Reports come in of strict measures being once again imposed on all fronts, and the situation in a nutshell is “sickening”.

Many people ask me why we Tibetans have adopted such an out-dated mode as non-violence to attain our goal. They feel (and some of them are Marxist) that nothing can be achieved without action. They refer to the PLO and the attention that it is gaining.

Well, to be frank, whatever we do, the means that we adopt should be in harmony with the end that is to be achieved. I admire the PLO for its courage and determination, but we should see what it has actually gained. It is no doubt that you gain some attention by being violent, but we can gain it by other means too.

We have achieved something so far and still need to do more. The Tibetan government needs to pay more attention to publicising the cause, so that we may build up world opinion in our favour. Anwar, a Fijian friend of mine, tells me that he had not even heard of Tibet before coming to India. Such situations need to be rectified.

As the years roll on, many Tibetans will continue to live, work and be productive in various ways outside Tibet, while at the same time pursuing the cause of freedom for their country.

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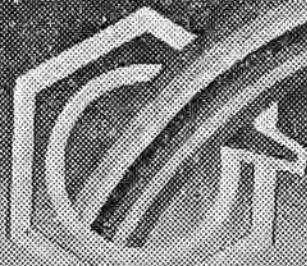


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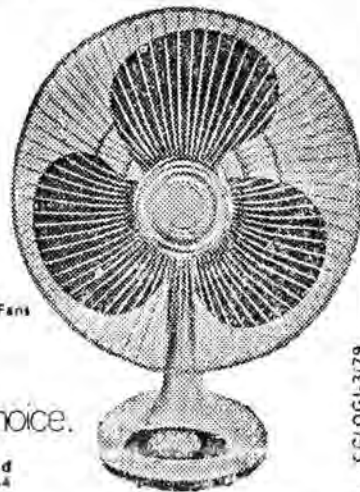
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