

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE EMINENT

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Great Lives
Series

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By the same author:

THE CREATION OF WEALTH

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE EMINENT

R.M. LALA

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To
Mackie
father and friend

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Preface

There are moments in a nation's life when greatness abounds in its leaders and something of that greatness descends on people who live in their shadows. India had such an hour during her Independence struggle and a while thereafter. As the years rolled on, the tall cedars fell and all that remained seemed to be of mediocre heights.

Some of these tall cedars abided with us for 20 or 30 years after freedom came. They grew and gained strength in the climate of freedom. Men like Rajaji, Jayaprakash Narayan, Vinoba Bhave, Acharya Kripalani and K.M. Munshi lived well into the 1970s. Blessed with long lives these giants have enriched India. Read together their lives weave the pattern of an era. For those who have lived through their era, this book may be a welcome refresher. For those who have not, perhaps their lives may provide some inspiration.

I have gone beyond the political field and have included those distinguished in sport, music and industry. Any selection of this nature is bound to have its handicaps. The criterion I have used for selection is personal acquaintance of the individual. To know is to understand and this book is an attempt at understanding. I have not

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attempted a critique of their respective careers. Rather I have sought to bring them to life as people. In introducing them to the reader I would like to share with others the good fortune I have had in meeting and knowing so many interesting people.

In 1948, when a lad of 19, journalism claimed me against the attractions of Law. Over the years and specially during the decade I was Editor of *Himmat* magazine—from its inception till 1975—I met a number of personalities in public life. Many I enjoyed meeting, some I got to know well, and to a few I was devoted. In turn I was the recipient of their friendship, and at times of their confidence. To those who are fortunately with us still, this joy of friendship abides.

The book is entitled 'Encounters with the Eminent'. The word 'Encounters' could imply a confrontation but it could also mean 'a meeting face to face'. And it is in the latter context that I have selected the title.

In the thirty years since Independence though many a dream has faded, it is good to know there has been much decency and goodness among those who touched heights of distinction in their respective spheres. It gives one faith that a country like that has got the right to dream again, to endeavour, and perhaps to learn.

BOMBAY
MARCH 17, 1981.

R.M.LALA

Vinoba Bhave

I have come to rob you with love.

A MAN WEARING only a loin cloth and a green peak cap was squatting on the ground pulling out weeds. He was told the next visitor had arrived. He rose to walk into his sparsely furnished room.

Crude pieces of wood nailed together made up his bed. Only a piece of cloth lay on it and a couple of thick volumes. There was no pillow but the bed was slightly inclined, so he could rest and read.

Vinoba Bhave was Gandhiji's favourite disciple. Known the world over as 'the walking saint', between 1951 and 1968 he collected 4.2 million acres of land from 600,000 donors, to be distributed to landless families. By 1968 Vinoba had helped to distribute more land than the combined state governments of India.

For 18 years he walked 10 to 12 miles a day from village to village. At his evening meetings along with *bhajans* and prayers, he spoke to thousands. Some walked many miles to see this holy man. Others came in bullock-carts, with their families, to have a glimpse of him. To those



gathered he often said, 'I have come to rob you with love. I want you to change your heart and part with your surplus land so those who haven't any can get it.'

People signed papers saying that they would turn over their land. Sometimes whole villages gave up their property rights and decided on communal farming. His 2000 *Sarvodaya* workers followed through his programme.

I asked him, 'If you had to live your life all over again would you do the same?' He answered: 'I know no other technique but love for I do not believe in force. The results are much better than the effort I put in. I have served God little but He has rewarded me bountifully. If I go again I can only ask with love.'

Since 1968 Vinoba has withdrawn from active life although he advises the Sarvodaya movement. He stays at an *ashram* in Paunar at Wardha with about 30 other inmates, mostly women who have decided to remain celibate. He spends his time walking, reading and cleaning up the place.

At all his meals he has papaya, jaggery (unrefined sugar) and milk curdled with sour lime. In between he drinks water about every half-hour. He is quite fit except for occasional attacks of vertigo which is connected with his ear trouble.

Vinoba has found the way out of being bothered by letters. He answers no mail. If anyone wants to see him the place to go to is Paunar.

There was a twinkle in his eyes when I met him at Paunar Ashram one morning in 1972. He lifted his dark glasses to read my questions. He is now stone deaf, so all questions are written down. He insists that they reach him in the Devanagiri script. He feels that English as well as

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other South Indian languages should be written in the Devanagiri script because that will 'unify India'. 'I am a faddist and I have found a new fad.' He goes on to explain it.

'Europe has a common market but it first had a common script (Roman). In India we do not have a common script although 80 per cent of the words in the four languages of South India are the same as in the rest of India.'

His assistant pulled out a Telugu book in the Telugu script and a Telugu book in Devanagiri script. Vinoba got me to compare the two and added, 'Baba (as he calls himself) learnt English and French in school but soon picked up German and Latin and Esperanto because the script was the same.' If a common script is evolved, it will be easier for an Indian to learn any language of his country.

Vinoba Bhava was born of a Brahmin family in Maharashtra in September 1895. From childhood he showed a remarkable lack of interest in worldly affairs and gave up his college studies because the education he received did not fulfil the hunger of his spirit. So he went to the holy city of Benares to study Sanskrit and Philosophy and to lead a life of contemplation and *brahmacharya* (celibacy).

He was torn between two urges. One urge was to work for the freedom of his country as an active terrorist. The other urge drew him towards the Himalayas, the traditional home of spiritual seekers. While still undecided Vinoba came in touch with Mahatma Gandhi, who in his own life synthesised the urge to fight for freedom and to live on a spiritual plane.

Vinoba was among the first to join Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad. He was not too widely known in India till 1940. Gandhiji wrote an article entitled 'Who is Vinoba Bhave?' to introduce him to the country.

Gandhiji envisaged not only a free India but the creation of a new social order, different from capitalist, socialist or communist systems. It was to be a society based on love and human values; decentralised, self-governing, non-exploitative. Its name, *Sarvodaya*, meant 'Uplift of all', a society for the good of all. When Gandhiji died Vinoba decided to fulfil that dream. Its practical evolution he sought in the Bhoodan movement. Jayaprakash Narayan called it 'the first attempt in history to bring about a social revolution and reconstruction by means of love.'

J.P. added: 'Vinoba is not a politician, nor a social reformer or revolutionary. He is first and last a man of God. He endeavours every second to blot himself out, to make himself so empty that God may fill him up and make him His instrument.'

To visit him in the *ashram* is a humbling experience. Apart from the distinctive personality of the man and his humanity which comes through, it is an amazing experience to go through books that have been produced as a result of his speeches, lectures and study. The breadth of his knowledge is astounding for he has studied and published a series of books on the essence of the great religions. For his study of the *Koran*, he learnt Arabic. Perhaps his best known work is *Talks on the Gita*.

One of his close colleagues, Shriman Narayan, later the Governor of Gujarat, said, 'I do not have a shadow of

doubt that even when the traces of his Bhoodan movement will be hard to detect by research scholars, his discussion on the *Gita* would shine out for centuries to come as the glittering jewels of a great rishi who lived in flesh and blood on Indian soil.'

The commentary on the *Gita*, of which over half a million copies have been sold in Indian and European languages, were talks given to prisoners when Vinoba was in jail between February and June 1932. On 18 successive Sundays he delivered discourses to give faith and knowledge to the prisoners.

His *ashram* has two periods of the day when he and his inmates sit together and meditate for 15 minutes. Some write down their thoughts and others do not. 'I like silence very much. God gives his *bhaktas* (disciples) direction through the inner voice.' Absolute purity, he says, 'is God's'.

Although he knows so many European languages Vinoba has never been abroad. Sometimes one mistakes his loin-cloth, his ways and his appearance for that of a man belonging to an ancient era. But in many ways he is more up to date than most.

J.P. had once related the meeting between Vinoba Bhave and Mrs. Martin Luther King: 'When Mrs. King was introduced as a great singer and a friend suggested that she should sing a Negro spiritual for Vinoba, everyone was delighted. I looked at Vinoba and wondered if he knew what Negro spirituals were. We were all startled, most of all the Americans, when Vinoba, as if in answer, raised his ever-downcast eyes towards Mrs. King and intoned softly, "Were you there, Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" When

Mrs. King sang that song it had an added poignancy for us.'

Vinoba cannot hear at all, but on the day I was with him the renowned South Indian singer, M.S.Subbulakshmi, was also there at prayer time—10.30 A.M. With the other ladies in the *ashram* she sang *shlokas* selected by Vinoba. Lost in worship, as Subbulakshmi sang, Vinoba tapped his hands merrily on his knees and thigh, to keep time.

'How can he keep rhythm when he cannot hear?' I asked myself. A deaf Beethoven had to bang at his piano. To my amazement Vinoba knew exactly when the *shlokas* came to an end, and folded his hands in homage to God.

B. P. Chaliha

If the North-East disintegrates it will be lost to India.

FOR 13 YEARS B. P. Chaliha wielded power as Chief Minister of Assam. As one of the senior-most Chief Ministers of the country his voice was respected in Delhi and in the higher echelons of the Congress Party. He retained his qualities of grace and humility till the very end. What is more, he continued his personal quest of applying certain principles to his public life.

He felt responsible for the 12 million people spread across the plains, the hills and the forests of India's North-East, from West Bengal to Burma.

In Assam meet the great strains of the human race—the Dravidian, the Aryan, the Mongoloid and the Austro-Asiatic. One feels that Providence has a rich plan for this whole area where the brown and yellow races meet. It can be the bridge between India and South-East Asia. This varied assortment of people are a potential asset, but when Chaliha came to power many tribes of the area were restless. They were searching for an identity.



In 1960 Chaliha had to face language riots staged by those who wanted Assamese as a State language. But when it was introduced the people of the hilly areas—later to form the state of Meghalaya—reacted with a demand for a separate state of their own.

Chaliha's term spanned the process of the reorganization of the North-East. When he came to power, Assam was a much larger state than it is today. But to meet the aspiration of its varied peoples he agreed to areas like Mizoram and Meghalaya being made into separate states. Nagaland was carved out earlier. 'We are going through an experience of parochialism—hundreds of tribes in the North-East want to assert their rights and we must understand their desires, but any reorganization of the area should not be piecemeal. We have to plan for the long-term and foresee what will happen in the years ahead. When the Naga Hills were formed into a separate state I said it would not solve the problem and it hasn't. It has been a stimulus to other difficult situations and, if we are not careful, Assam will be torn to pieces.' He emphasized, 'If the North-East disintegrates, it will be lost to India.'

Later Chaliha defined integration to me. 'Integration does not mean moulding people into one pattern. It means mutual respect and understanding—a process of fusion.'

Because Chaliha had this understanding and respect for others he was trusted by the Naga underground leaders. When I met the 'Vice-President of the Naga Federal Government' and its then 'Home Minister' in the forest of Chedma, they said, 'We can respect Chaliha.'

Along with Jayaprakash Narayan, Chaliha was part of the Naga Peace Mission.

Tall and dignified, Bimala Prasad Chaliha was a thoughtful man, keen to listen, slow to talk. He was born in a tea-planter's family in Sibasagar, not far from the Burma border. While studying for his inter-science in Calcutta, he left his studies to join the freedom movement.

When arrested in 1932 and jailed for six months, he invented an automatic spinning wheel and obtained a patent for it. Gandhiji encouraged him to take further training in handicrafts and sent him to Bihar. He soon became the Secretary of the All-India Spinners' Association branch in Assam. After another spell of two years in prison during the Quit India Movement he became a member of the Assam Assembly and a Parliamentary Secretary in the Assam Cabinet. In 1952 he became the President of the Assam Congress and was elected to Parliament. In 1957 he was brought back into state politics to become Chief Minister.

Chaliha took a great deal of interest in the tribal people. Against the advice of some of his colleagues he tried to go the extra mile and satisfy the restlessness of the Mizo people. His plans misfired. He was hurt by his failure and by the remarks of other men who dared nothing and achieved nothing. 'When I first saw him, a senior administrator of Assam advised me not to raise the Mizo issue with him as he was very sensitive to it. But as I got to know him better in later months I asked him about it. 'Sometimes when you try to do good it may look like a failure but I am confident that no good work ever fails. Its fruits come, even if they come late.'

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These words rang true when the news of his death came. At a condolence meeting for Chaliha in Western India a Mizo whose family home was burnt during the disturbances in the Mizo hills, then a part of Assam, rose to pay tribute to Mr. Chaliha: 'We felt he cared for us. When many Mizos suffered during the insurrection, it was Mr. Chaliha who arranged for the education of hundreds of uprooted Mizo students and he granted each one of them Rs.80 a month for studies.'

A Naga lady who was in public life recalls meeting Chaliha at New Dehi Airport in April 1968. She was flying back home. Chaliha was in the lounge. Tea was ordered and when the waiter was bringing it in Chaliha took it and offered it to the Naga lady himself. Then, as the plane was called he went to the counter. He purchased three bars of chocolate and gave them to the Naga lady for her children. Later this Naga lady, Mrs. Rano Shaiza, was the only member of the Lok Sabha for Nagaland.

Chaliha came to power at a difficult time. He could have held to the status quo and the North-East would have gone up in flames around him, but he was a sensitive man who saw the signs of the time. Mr. Kakati, who was editor of the *Assam Tribune* remarked that Chaliha was 'unafraid to experiment'. 'He is always searching out new ways. Sometimes people fail him, but he continues. He is slow in coming to a decision but once he does he has the courage to see it through.'

The Assam he left behind him was territorially smaller than the one he inherited in 1957. But it was a more secure state because of the new-found relationship between the plains and the hill people of the area. In the

creation of this trust Bimal Prasad Chaliha played a significant role.

In his last four years as Chief Minister, several tribal leaders changed in their attitude to him; some apologised to him for their ill-will—though retaining their political convictions. Chaliha was a big enough man to give them his hand in friendship. He saw a new factor emerging in the North-East and was quick to grasp it. He held MRA primarily responsible for this new attitude. In 1970 he said: 'Moral Re-Armament has transformed the climate of Assam. This is a fact. I speak as an administrator.'

There was an intrinsic humility in the man and a refreshing honesty. In the last profound talk we had in January 1969 he remarked: 'In politics sometimes one knows what is right but what if one finds it difficult to do?'

In October 1969 when the Congress Party was splitting, Chaliha, as the senior-most Chief Minister, made one last effort to keep the party intact. He attended the Working Committee sessions of both the opposing groups and called for an end to the 'unseemly quarrel'. If he failed it was not for want of trying.

Already Chaliha was a very sick man but he continued in office till a few months before his death. He should have resigned much earlier. He paid the price with his health and ultimately his life. When he died of cardiac asthma, his wife and four of their children were by his bedside, as was his sister, Dr. Nirmala Chaliha, who gave him devoted medical care.

The six-kilometre funeral route from his residence to the riverside for cremation was thronged with people from all over Assam. They had gathered for a last

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glimpse of their beloved leader.

Chaliha had his share of successes and failures but in a world of expediency he was bold enough to act according to his moral insight. And in so doing he made the name of Assam shine in the rest of India.

Morarji Desai

My father's death when I was fifteen, was also a blessing...because I would have never ceased to be a coward if my father had not gone.

OF ALL THE personalities featured in this book, none has suffered from my pen as Morarji Desai has. Thirty years ago, when he was the Home and Chief Minister of Bombay I was a young journalist in my early twenties. For five years I had attacked him with verve and vigour. To my knowledge the facts I had gathered were correct but my sharp comments were geared to wound him. After seeing a play of Moral Re-Armament called *The Real News* I wrote a letter of apology to him for the personal hurt I had caused. Taken aback, he told the then Mayor of Bombay: 'See what these journalists are! The man attacks me in public, and apologises to me in private.' Fortunately, my Editor, D.F. Karaka, to whom I had sent a copy of my letter, wrote a two-column editorial criticising me for my apology. Soon after Morarji Desai wrote a courteous letter back, in which he said, 'I hope you will agree with me that criticism to be effective



should aim at the deed and not at the doer.'

We were not to meet till eight years later when Morarji accompanied Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in 1962. I rang him from the foyer of London's posh Claridges Hotel one morning.

'You won't remember me; my name is R.M. Lala,' I said.

'I remember you very well,' came the prompt reply.

'I wonder whether I can see you some time.'

'Come up to my room,' he said.

I opened the large doors of his V.I.P. suite. As I surveyed the vast sitting room, every chair was empty. For a split second I thought I had come to the wrong place when a voice came from the far end. Morarji Desai, the Finance Minister of India, the man expected to succeed Nehru, was squatting on the floor at a distance, spinning away. He is perhaps the first and the last man to spin at Claridges.

I continued to see him occasionally over the years. When I saw him one afternoon in April 1980 at his residence at Marine Drive, Bombay, the offices of Home and Chief Minister of Bombay, of Union Finance Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Prime Minister lay behind him. At 85 he sat erect against the mattress writing letters by hand. On the table beside him lay a bottle of almonds and rock sugar. In the intervening years between meeting at Claridges and Marine Drive, his fortunes had dipped twice and twice did they revive. Neither the fury of his colleagues and opponents, nor the accident of a plane crash in Assam, nor the crumbling of his Cabinet, seemed to have made any difference to his

unflappable ways. That afternoon India's most enduring politician recalled his years of Prime Ministership and of his childhood. From one he flashed back to the other, drawing some links between the two. His Cabinet, he claimed, 'had functioned very well'.

'Then why did it break up within 2½ years?' I asked.

'It is inherent in the nature of this country,' he replied. 'We have inherited for centuries a fear complex. When a man is afraid he does many wrong things to save himself. From fear comes lies, from fear comes deceit and selfishness. We are afraid of every little thing, even to tell one's friend that he has done something wrong because he will take it ill... Unless you give up fear, you cannot be truthful. And unless you are truthful you cannot give up fear. Once you master fear and untruth you give up selfishness. Lies go with fear; truth with fearlessness.'

'Is that why you often speak of fearlessness?'

'I have done that because I have suffered from fear as a young boy till I was 16. I was afraid of every little thing.'

'What happened to change your life?'

It happened that Morarji Desai's father was a impoverished but principled school master of Bulsar, Gujarat, who earned Rs. 40 per month. He was not given promotion for seven years but he was too proud to flatter anybody to gain it. One evening as the family settled down to their dinner waiting for their father to join them, they heard a thud in the distance. They ran to the well to discover that their father had committed suicide.

'The whole burden of the family came upon me at 15 because I was the eldest. No income and a family of nine to maintain. And I was in the matriculation class. At that time I resolved not to beg from anybody and not to incur

any debt. And this gave me fearlessness.'

'How did you support your family?'

Morarji related that his maternal grandfather was of some help. Morarji was awarded a scholarship to G.T. School in Bombay which looked after his boarding, lodging and studies and gave a monthly allowance of Rs. 10 (worth at least Rs. 100 today). Morarji gave tuitions to earn extra money, never used public transport and walked everywhere he had to travel. He saved each *paisa* and sent it to his family. This experience was the making of the man.

'When I went to college at 16, I think in the very first year I lost fear. This has enabled me to pass through all kinds of difficulties. You see, my father's death was also a blessing from that point of view because I would have never ceased to be a coward if my father had not gone. What God does we never know. We must take it as a blessing, whatever he does.'

'Were you very fond of your father?'

'He was also fond of me. He gave me the strength of independence of spirit.'

At Wilson College, Bombay, Morarji says he was 'very sensitive and very poor'. At that age he was not above playing tricks. He remembers with affection his Principal, Rev. Dr. Scott. Affection, however, did not prevent Morarji from getting the better of the learned Scotsman. 'We had compulsory Bible study in the first hour and we were marked present just before that. Dr. Scott used to take that class. It was a big room on the second floor with a platform at one end and I always sat at the other end. Both had exit doors and I was the nearest to the exit at the far end. One staircase was near the Principal's plat-

form and the other at my end. When the Principal prayed he used to close his eyes and that was the moment for me to slip away. One day he must have seen me so the next day he opened his eyes as I moved out. He jumped from the platform and ran down two flights of stairs to catch me. But I saw him jumping so I went back to my seat. Dr.Scott ran down the stairs and came up out of breath to find me sitting undisturbed in the classroom! What could he do?' chuckled Morarji.

In college Morarji got high marks. He badly needed a job. A professor friend of his filled an application form for the Provincial Civil Service and got him to sign it. Another dear friend helped him along, and in this friend's borrowed clothes he went for the interview.

Three English I.C.S. Secretaries interviewed him. At the end of the interview one of them said, 'Well, 'young man , if you are not selected how would you feel?' Morarji replied, 'India is vast. I am young. Who knows, I may get something better!' Many years later Morarji was told that his reply greatly impressed the panel and though all the vacancies had been filled they created an extra post for him. Morarji resigned from the service of the British Government after about 12 years when he was a Deputy Collector in 1930. He threw himself into the national movement. Between 1937 and 1957 many high offices came his way. He was Revenue Minister, Home Minister and Chief Minister of the undivided and huge state of Bombay. Nehru took him to Delhi in 1957 and less than five years later, Morarji as the Finance Minister was Number Two in the Cabinet. Under the Kamaraj plan of 1963 he tendered his resignation along with others and, to his surprise, Nehru accepted it. When Nehru died a

year later Morarji made a bid for premiership. Congress President Kamaraj took a consensus and outbid him by appointing Lal Bahadur Shastri as the Prime Minister. When Shastri died Kamaraj proposed Mrs. Gandhi for leadership of his party. This time Morarji insisted on a contest. He stood and he lost.

In March 1977 on the crest of the Janata wave the office that had eluded him for more than a decade came his way. The premiership, when it came, was not a bed of roses. 'When did the trouble first start in the Cabinet?' I enquired.

'It started from the very beginning but I patiently went on. Charan Singh told me, "I made you Prime Minister and you are not doing this..."'

'If you had a chance all over again, would you do anything differently?'

'I should not have taken Charan Singh back into the Cabinet. I knew I should not but when my colleagues were of the view...'

'So you yielded.'

'Warning them that it would have a disastrous result. And it did.'

In a lighter mood he added that when he became Prime Minister he was 82 and they thought 'I would pass away and some of them would succeed me. Then President Sanjiva Reddy told them, "He will survive you all." That took away the patience of Charan Singh!' Morarji laughed heartily at this point.

'Did you expect your resignation would come so soon? Was it escalated?'

'No, I expected it would come any time.'

'What was your greatest disappointment as a Prime

Minister?'

'I take things as they come. I don't run the world, the world is run by its Maker and not by me and it follows certain irrevocable laws. The results are according to those laws. One must make one's best effort to get results.'

I have seen Morarji Desai in high office and at times of defeat. In defeat he is dauntless. In success, some have felt the lash of his arrogance. The time when I got to know him well was between 1964 and 1966, when he had missed the Premiership twice. I can picture him in those years in his modest New Delhi home seated on a mattress on the floor, with his back to the empty fireplace, surrounded by his books—rather bulky volumes of Vivekananda. His tiny white transistor broadcast a cricket commentary while his hands were busy at his spinning wheel. He was in the political wilderness then. 'It is good for me,' he then said. So said his opponents too!

Throughout the years, Morarji has kept up his discipline. He is up by 5 o'clock every morning and before the city stirs, he has had his bath, recited his *Gita* (which he knows by heart), and finished his exercises. He is a man of prodigious energy, considerable achievement and an opinion on every subject. He can be witty, wise and philosophical, drawing upon his considerable knowledge of the Hindu scriptures. Sometimes he appears subdued, almost morose. At other times he will entertain you to a lively discourse. He is quick at repartee, and, at times, tends to be abrupt to the point of rudeness. If Dale Carnegie refined the art of winning friends, Morarji has refined the art of losing them.

The statesman who can take things so calmly and philosophically is a strange mixture of a tough worldly

politician and a seeker of the things of the spirit. As a politician he threw out the Chief Minister of Gujarat from office. The other side of him is a person endeavouring to be a spiritual superman. He told me last time we met, 'Even physical pain does not bother me. I can smile with that pain.' When I remarked it was easier to say than to practise, he replied, 'You have to pay a price for it. I know it is not easy; I have taken years to achieve it.'

Many of his friends sometimes wish that he would allow himself to be more human and frail. If he did that, India's most enduring politician could also be endearing.

Zakir Husain

The problem is not of this community's or that community's survival. It is the choice between civilized human life and barbarism.

IT WAS APRIL 25, 1968.

Seven rugged-looking characters from the ages of 17 to 60 entered the gates of Rashtrapati Bhavan for an appointment with the President of India. Among them were former purse-snatchers, confirmed drunkards, as well as gamblers who had changed their ways and become responsible citizens. They were some of the *harijans* who lived in a *bhangi* (sweepers) colony, New Delhi. 'I hear a lot of things are going on in your area,' the President said. 'I would like to know about them.' Sensitively he drew out from them how they had stopped gambling, drinking and quarrelling with each other and how they were cleaning up their colony. At the end their spokesman said to the President: 'We are honoured to meet a great man like you.'

The President replied, 'I am very fortunate in meeting men like you this afternoon. One does not meet this sort



of experience often in a life time. Just as evil catches on, so does good, and I have caught a lot of it from you this afternoon.'

Dr. Zakir Husain accorded these men the same courtesy he would have shown to heads of state. He meant it when he said, 'The whole of India is my home. Its people are my family.'

Dr. Zakir Husain was born in Hyderabad in 1897. His father, Fida Husain, a successful lawyer, died when Zakir was eight years old. His mother returned to her father's home in Uttar Pradesh and put Zakir in a school at Etawah. When Zakir was 14-years-old, bubonic plague killed his mother and all the family died, except for two brothers.

Shortly after, he came under the care of a distant relative, a Sufi by the name of Hasan Shah. After completing his schooling young Zakir went to Aligarh University. As a student he was a good debater and contributed to the college magazine. He would walk to the railway station to get the first copy of the daily paper and would read it aloud to his friends, adding his comments. He continued to be a voracious reader.

In 1920 when Gandhiji called for non-cooperation he asked students and professors to leave Government-sponsored educational institutions. Zakir responded to this call. 'It was the first conscious decision of my life. Perhaps the only one I have ever taken. The rest of my life has but flowed from it.'

Gandhiji was keen to start national educational institutions of which some like Kashi Vidyapeeth were set up. Zakir and his friends set up the Jamia Millia Islamia—the Muslim National University—first in Aligarh and

later shifted it to Delhi.

In 1922 Zakir went to Europe and studied economics at Berlin University. He worked hard and earned his Ph.D. He found a love for classical Western music, and for the German language, which he read almost daily for the rest of his life. He wrote a book in German on Gandhiji. He returned to India as Dr. Zakir Husain and observed humorously: 'When I sometimes go to my native village I am asked to give medical advice. The designation of doctor attached to my name is impossible to explain away!'

From 1926 to 1948 Dr. Husain struggled to put the Jamia Millia on its feet. Its twin aims were to provide education along Islamic precepts and to inculcate nationalism in its pupils.

Funds were scarce and as Vice-Chancellor Dr. Husain had to bear the brunt of raising them. He had a passion for cleanliness and himself picked up the pieces of paper and rags, littering the premises, as an example to his pupils. He inspected the kitchens every week.

At this time he got interested in Gandhiji's concept of basic education which meant teaching pupils through manual labour. He grew in stature as an educationalist. He stuck to education when others were drifting into the vortex of politics. He defined an educated man as one who 'has no blinkers.... is not conceited, is not a hard-boiled egg, is not an internally dissipated busybody.'

Remaining aloof from politics did not mean that he remained aloof from national life. In a stirring Convocation Address in 1935 he told the graduates:

The country to which you will go from here is a very unfortunate country. It is a country of slaves, of illiterates; a country of injustice and oppression, of

cruel customs and ignorant worshippers; a country of fraternal hatred and of disease, of laziness, of poverty, of despair, of hunger and of calamities. In short, it is a cursed country. But, after all, it is our country. We have to live in it and die in it. That is why this country will be a challenge to your abilities, and the test of your love.

He warned the students that they may be tempted to seek to destroy the society which permits such a state. 'I believe that destruction will not ease our work. Destruction is there already in abundance. The country needs not the spurt of your blood but the steady flow of your perspiration at all times.'

The years of 1940-47 were difficult ones for nationalist Muslims like him. They had to face the ridicule and verbal assault of the Muslim League which called them 'traitors' to their community.

When the Congress proposed to put his name forward for a Cabinet seat in the Interim Union Government of 1946, Dr. Husain declined unless he was unanimously wanted by the Muslim Leaguers as well — which he was not.

Dr. Husain lived in his times but was no part of its sordidness. He fought the communal hatred that was engulfing the sub-continent. At the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Jamia Millia he got together on a common platform with M.A. Jinnah, Jawaharlal Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan, Maulana Azad and C. Rajagopalachari. He spoke with anguish:

The fire of hatred is burning in a noble humane land for God's sake sit together and extinguish the fire of hatred. This is not the time to ask who is

responsible for it and what is its cause. The fire is raging. Please extinguish it. The problem is not of this community's or that community's survival. It is the choice between civilised human life and barbarism. For God's sake do not allow the very foundations of civilised life in this country to be destroyed.

A year later at Ludhiana station in the wake of Partition he would have been killed but for a Sikh and a Hindu who rescued him. 'It is intolerable to me,' said Gandhiji, 'that a man like Maulana Sahib (Abdul Kalam Azad) or Dr. Husain should not be able to move about in Delhi as freely and with as much safety as myself.' A few days later Gandhiji was assassinated.

Aligarh, Dr. Husain's old university, had come under a cloud of suspicion and he was urged to become its Vice-Chancellor. The years 1948-50 were difficult ones for him.

In 1949 he had his first heart attack. He was advised by his doctor to sit in the sunshine, and as he did so he watched the gardeners tend the roses. His love for roses stayed with him till he died and he often tended them himself in the mornings at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

In 1952 and again in 1956 he was elected to the Rajya Sabha. He was not a very vocal member. When Dr. Husain was India's delegate to UNESCO, Nehru offered him—and he accepted—the governorship of Bihar, and in 1962 the Vice-Presidentship of India.

In 1967, Mrs. Gandhi backed him for the Presidentship which he won with a sizeable margin. He took no credit for this. 'My choice to this high office has mainly, if not entirely, been on account of my long association

with the education of my people.' He added, 'I shall do my utmost to take our people towards what Gandhiji strove restlessly to achieve— a pure life, individual and social, an insistence on the means being pure as the end, an active and sustained sympathy for the weak and downtrodden, and a fervent desire to forge unity among the diverse sections of the Indian people.'

On one occasion when I called on him in 1967 he spoke with concern about the growing division in the country. 'We are witnessing the atomisation of our country. Our human material has not kept pace with our development.' The last time I saw him he spoke with sadness about the 'bad blood being created within the Cabinet' by the ambitious schemes of certain people.

One area which concerned him greatly was the strategic North-East of India. He told me in 1968, 'If we offer one solution to the Hill people of Assam they won't take it and if we offer another, the Plains people won't accept it. What are we to do?' He heard, visibly moved, of how a leading Hill leader had apologised to Assam's Chief Minister Chaliha for fomenting hatred. Soon after when Dr. Husain met this Hill leader he said, 'If you can multiply this spirit among your colleagues, your state* can be the pioneer state of India.'

His last tour was to the North-East of India. It was there that he showed signs of exhaustion. He requested that his programme be cut down but was persuaded to go through with it. On returning to Delhi he died of a heart attack.

To those who had the privilege of knowing him he was

* Later to be formed and called Meghalaya.

a warm friend. He gave his friendship selectively but once given he never took it back. When sitting with friends he relaxed, tipped his white cap over his forehead, and spoke of what he really felt. In the Presidential election campaign some of his opponents spared no barb, a few communalists even questioned his loyalty. He was human enough to be hurt, but too noble to hate in turn.

By making him President, India honoured herself.

Kamaraj

Regionalism is going up; nationalism is going down.

IT WAS A simple village wedding in Salem district. There were only 50 guests. The Chief Minister's car rolled up and out stepped Kamaraj. The bride's father, an impoverished Congress worker, had invited but least expected the Chief Minister to attend.

Kamaraj had a leisurely breakfast with his friend, and talked of old times. 'We were prisoners together once. We are still friends,' said Kamaraj. He took the coconut respectfully offered to him, entered his car and drove on. A minute later he asked the driver to stop 'his car. He pulled out his cheque book, wrote out a cheque and asked the driver to give it to his friend. Seeing a four-figure sum, the Congress worker's eyes welled with tears.

Kamaraj's stature was the product neither of his high ideals nor his personality. It came from his remarkable touch with the people, and his unconcern for financial rewards. There was hardly a Congress worker in Tamil Nadu whom he did not know personally. He never forgot



a face.

The man who enthroned two Prime Ministers of India, lived in a barn of an old house and dressed simply. He wore the usual white *lungi* and *khaddar* shirt. The shirt's distinctive feature was its half sleeves—twice the width of normal half sleeves. The sleeves grew progressively larger, like a trumpet and were obviously designed to keep him cool.

For his tall and large frame, his head was quite small. Welles Hangen in his book, *After Nehru, Who?* says: 'Kamaraj, beetlebrowed, taciturn and impassive, looks like the captain of a pirate ship.'

It was Kamaraj who provided the answer to the question, 'After Nehru, Who?'. On Nehru's death in 1964 senior friends in the Congress Party suggested that Kamaraj should be Prime Minister. He declined and chose Lal Bahadur Shastri. On Shastri's death he selected Mrs. Indira Gandhi to stand for Prime Ministership. As captain of the Congress, he steered the Party with considerable skill for five years before it split in 1969.

Kamaraj enjoyed absolute power in Tamil Nadu for well nigh 15 years. He practised socialism more than he preached it. When divisive tendencies bubbled up in Madras over the language issue, he kept his vision of united India.

Kumaraswamy Kamaraj came from a caste of toddy-tappers (*nadars*). He was born on July 15, 1903 in the village of Virudhanagar in Ramanad District, Madras State. His father, died when he was 5 years old and his mother, Sivakami Ammal, brought him up. He had only 6 years of schooling and worked thereafter in his uncle's cloth shop.

The turning point in Kamaraj's life was when he heard Gandhiji speak at Madurai. That moment the desire to enter politics got hold of him. He had started a shop in Trivandrum but left it in a few months. His first political activity was to offer the salt satyagraha in 1930. He was convicted for two years. As a young volunteer who waved flags and marched in processions, he came under the influence of Madras leader, Satyamurthi, who groomed him for future leadership of the State Congress. Kamaraj attained this in 1939. He retained the Presidentship till 1954 when he became Chief Minister of Madras State.

Prime Minister Nehru observed that under Kamaraj, Madras was 'the only State which gives me hardly any headache'. In all routine matters Kamaraj left the decisions to civil servants. Though he would be quite willing to collect large funds from industrialists for the Congress Party, he would refuse to interfere on their behalf in administrative matters unless there was a case of real injustice. Otherwise he would say '*Parkalam*', ('Let us see') and move on.

He left his fellow Ministers in charge of day-to-day work to free himself to tour his State 20 days in the month. He was a good listener. He went on the spot, heard people's problems and tried to resolve them. He was easily accessible and anyone with a problem could walk into his house till the late hours of the night.

Once torrential rains hit Madras and the slum areas were flooded. Though he was a Chief Minister, he walked one and a half miles through knee-deep water, organised relief and stayed with slum dwellers overnight. People remember that. He introduced mid-day meals for poor school children. In the twilight of the Nehru rule,

Kamaraj's star was on the ascendant.

Some of the Congress leaders formed a plan which came to be known as the Kamaraj Plan. Kamaraj spelt it out himself as Congress President : That top leaders of the Congress organisation should periodically exchange positions with those in the administration. 'If Congressmen voluntarily accept this free interchange of personnel...the tendency to form groups in the organisational and legislative wings will be greatly reduced.'

Kamaraj then glowingly referred to the excellent response from senior Congress leaders who offered to withdraw from ministerial positions which demonstrated, he said, that the spirit of sacrifice and service was not dead. Nehru had earlier accepted the Plan. In the axe that 'voluntarily fell' six Chief Ministers and six Union Ministers, including Morarji Desai and Lal Bahadur Shastri, were 'released for organisational work.'

The plan did not result in any organisational pick-up and created much heart-burning among those who were axed. But it did establish Kamaraj as a force in the Congress Party.

On Nehru's death, Kamaraj deftly handled the unanimous election of Lal Bahadur Shastri as Prime Minister. There was no contest, no strife, no regional pulls. The Congress Party had unanimously elected its leader. Those who had known him were aware that his loyalty to the Nehru family was so strong, that after Shastri's death in January 1966, Kamaraj would advance Mrs. Indira Gandhi as his candidate. He did.

Kamaraj was a consummate political chess player but when the DMK wave struck Tamil Nadu in the 1967 elections, he was defeated by a 29-year-old student leader.

Kamaraj was a shaken man. The second blow came to Kamaraj in 1969 when Mrs. Gandhi, whom he had installed as Prime Minister, split the Congress. The third blow fell on him at the promulgation of the Emergency.

Although Mrs. Gandhi claimed after his death that Kamaraj wanted to bring his party close to hers, evidence of others contradicts this statement. Those who knew him report how deeply pained he was that many of his old comrades were imprisoned. He died within a few months of the Emergency declared in 1975.

His rise on the all-India level showed that lack of both education and a command of English were no bars to growth in political eminence. Contrary to his public image, he could understand English and in private spoke short sentences. I was fortunate enough to hear one of his rare English utterances : 'Regionalism is going up; nationalism is going down.'

He died on October 2, 1975. A contemporary of his wrote : 'Kamaraj belonged to an era when a Congress volunteer was a heroic figure, a man of ideals and single-minded dedication. His patriotic saga began in his teens. He enlisted as a humble Congress Party worker, armed with nothing more than the Gandhian weapon of satyagraha to fight the imperial might. In course of a quarter century of struggle, he spent more than 3000 days in jail, emerging as a dominant and beloved leader of the then Madras State.'

A regional leader, he strode on the national scene, but by the end of his life retracted to his regional status where he was most at home. He died as he lived, a simple bachelor.

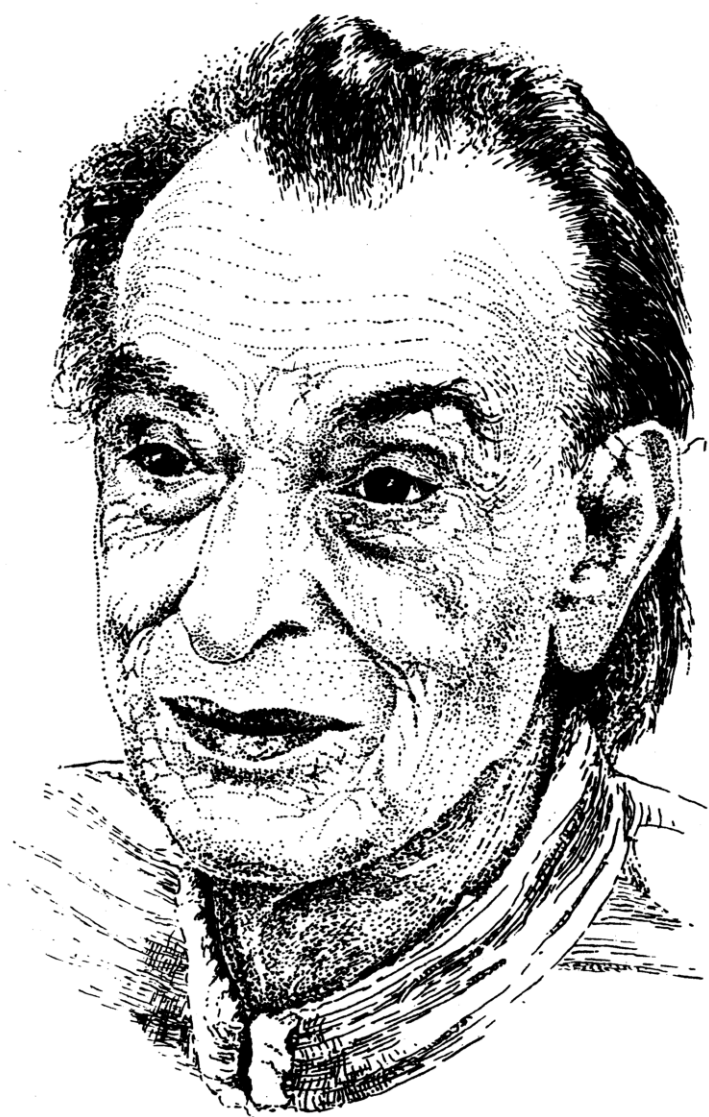
J.B. Kripalani

There is no greater courtesy in a man than to be non-violent.

FEW OF GANDHIJI'S associates would have claimed to have known him for longer than J.B. Kripalani. He met Gandhiji way back in 1915 at a party in Calcutta. 'I wanted to see this curious man, as I had heard of his achievements in South Africa.' Gandhiji had yet to make his mark on India.

Sometime later Gandhiji wired Kripalani that he would stop at Muzzafarpur en route to Champaran, Bihar. Kripalani was then Professor of History at the Government College. Gandhiji later wrote of Kripalani, 'It was an extraordinary thing for a government servant in those days to harbour a man like me.' 'The professor downstairs,' chuckles Kripalani, 'was so frightened on Gandhiji's arrival that he packed his bags and ran away.'

When Kripalani told his students about the guest to come, they were enthusiastic to meet him. They insisted on coming to the station late at night and urged



Kripalani to receive Gandhiji with an *aarti**. The *aarti* required a coconut. The only coconuts available were on a nearby tree. 'So I climbed the coconut tree and pulled down a couple of coconuts,' recalled Kripalani. Noting my amazed look he added, 'I was pretty supple in those days!'

Gandhiji moved to Champaran to spearhead the peasant agitation against the landlord-planters of indigo. The name of Champaran and Gandhiji echoed through the land. The Collector ordered him to leave in 24 hours. 'I am not leaving,' was Gandhiji's prompt reply. India knew then that a new force had come on the national scene.

'Kripalani,' said Gandhiji in his autobiography, 'could not but cast his lot with us....He was my gatekeeper-in-chief. For the time being he made it the aim of his life to save me from *darshan* seekers (visitors). He warded off people by calling to his aid, now his unfailing humour, now his non-violent threats. At nightfall he would take up his occupation as a teacher and regale his companions with his studies and observations and quicken any timid visitor into bravery.'

'What was Gandhiji's impact on you?' I asked Kripalani.

'I had to change all my opinions, to re-read history in the light of non-violence. There is no greater courtesy in a man than to be non-violent.'

Jeewan Kripalani was one of ten children. His father was an executive officer of a sub-division in Sind. 'I had to revolt against everything,' says Kripalani. And his

* An auspicious welcome ceremony.

record of revolt is impressive. He quarrelled with the principal of Wilson College, Bombay, where he had studied. Later he could not teach for long in any institution because of his political views. He felt at home in Fergusson College, Poona, which was founded by dedicated nationalists.

'At what age did you become politically conscious?'

'In college I loved to enjoy myself. It was the time of the plague in Bombay. I would inquire how many plague deaths had taken place the previous day so that we might have a college holiday! Then one day, I picked up a paper called *New India* edited by Bipin Chandra Pal. I read it. It convinced me that the presence of Britishers in India was a sin that they had to be got rid of.'

His father, a Government servant, would hear no such views from his son. Frequently they clashed. Kripalani taught in some schools in Sind but 'I wanted no wrangling with my father, so I took the post in faraway Bihar. Father was a Persian scholar and lived up to 85.'

In 1918, Pandit Malaviya wrote and asked Gandhiji for the help of a young man in his project of setting up the Benares Hindu University. Gandhiji recommended Kripalani.

'In 1920 came non-cooperation and I left the University, and 25 students left with me. We started an *ashram* for village work.'

A year or two later a school with nationalist ideals was started to continue the education of young men who had left their studies unfinished in response to Gandhiji's call. Kripalani was one of its founder-teachers. Among his pupils was a rather small young man with large and eager eyes. His name was Lal Bahadur. On passing out of Kashi

Vidyapeeth, Lal Bahadur earned the title of 'Shastri'.

From those early days, what Kripalani is most proud of is the *ashram* he established. The *ashram* still helps villagers to manufacture and market home-spun *khadi* and has a turnover of a few crores.

In 1923, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel invited him to become the Principal of Gujarat Vidyapeeth, a National College which the Sardar had set up. It was there that Kripalani became known as 'Acharya', the learned teacher. In 1928 he left teaching. The national movement mounted in the thirties and reached its crescendo in the forties. Throughout this period Kripalani was at the heart of the struggle and in the inner councils of Congress strategy. From 1934 to 1946 he was General Secretary and then President of the Indian National Congress.

During this tenure he got to know the leaders of undivided India well. He has some interesting comments on his contemporaries.

On Jinnah and Nehru: 'In fact there was a good deal of similarity between Nehru and Jinnah. For one thing they were both, shall we say, self-centred?'

On Sardar Patel: 'He did not like anybody disagreeing with him. If he was angry with me he would begin his letters, "Dear Kripalani". Jawaharlal Nehru, on the other hand, although I opposed him till his last days, always wrote "My dear Jeewan". They were very different but Vallabhbhai was realistic enough to know that Jawaharlal had the backing of the masses more than him.'

'What struck you most about Gandhiji?'

'His utter sincerity and intensity of purpose. His love of the poor, his indifference to public opinion when he knew a thing was right...and his capacity to stand alone for

truth.'

Kripalani, too, learned to stand alone.

After Independence, Kripalani resigned as Congress President because he felt that Prime Minister Nehru did not extend to this august office the respect it deserved. In 1951, disillusioned, he resigned from the Congress itself and started the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party which was later merged with the Socialist Party. For a quarter of a century Kripalani fought against the Congress. His frail hawk-like figure would rise in Parliament and, pointing at the massive array of Congress benches, he would thunder at them or wither them with his sarcasm.

At over 90 years of age, he campaigned up and down the land for the 1977 elections. When engaged in this exercise, he cracked his collar-bone. Undeterred, he started again after a few days of rest. At the victory rally, Kripalani warned the people that politicians were men with feet of clay and should not be put on pedestals. His words were prophetic for the feet of clay showed up pretty soon.

After the Janata victory in March 1977, it was left to Kripalani and Jayaprakash Narayan to meet Janata MPs and decide on who should be Prime Minister. I understand that when Jayaprakash Narayan was inclined towards Jagjivan Ram, it was Kripalani who suggested it should be Morarji Desai.

When Kripalani was in his forties he married Sucheta,* 20 years his junior. The marriage was first opposed by Gandhiji and later though he gave his permission, he declined to give his blessing saying he could

* See next chapter on Sucheta Kripalani.

'only pray' for them.

Forty years later, Kripalani wrote: 'Gandhiji's prayers were enough, and with his prayers we lived a happy life.' In 1974 Sucheta died. They were devoted to each other. Kripalani says he expected to die before her, but the Almighty willed otherwise. When 91, Acharya Kripalani wrote movingly: 'It is the ambition of every Hindu that at the moment of his death, he should remember his God. That has been my ambition throughout my life. But it may not be. I am afraid even at that supreme moment, her memory and her image would intervene. I pray that it may not be so and at the supreme moment I may remember my Maker.'

Sucheta Kripalani

Gandhiji said if you remain unhappy it will oppress Kripalani; so you must marry someone else.

I WAS DARK, dull, agonisingly shy,' wrote Sucheta Kripalani of herself in childhood. The growth of this lady into a bold character who defied the Mahatma for her loved one and later rose to be the Chief Minister of the largest state of India, is an absorbing story.

Sucheta was educated at Loretto Convent at Simla. It is there that a teacher called Mrs. Roy praised and encouraged her, as a result of which Sucheta overcame her shyness and got to like her studies. From then on she decided to work hard and her performance steadily improved.

She came from a large Bengali family belonging to the Brahmo Samaj sect. Her father, a doctor, being in government service, could not take an active part in the freedom struggle but he and his children were heart and soul for it.

When Sucheta shifted to Queen Mary School in Delhi,



an incident took place of which she was ashamed for a long time. The girls in her school were asked to turn out in honour of the Prince of Wales. The Congress Party had called for a boycott of the Prince's visit. Sucheta and her sister Sulekha were quite upset at the idea of going out to honour the Prince of Wales and stand at the garden at Alipore Road. But they did not pick up sufficient courage to refuse to do so. 'After reaching the gardens, in the confusion we two made ourselves scarce and sat behind the bush till the whole thing was over, and then joined the girls to walk back to school. But this did not absolve our conscience of our feeling of shame. We both felt very small because of our own cowardice.'

Sucheta's later boldness may have had something to do with her anger at her own conduct at that early stage.

She was studying for her M.A. in history, when shortly before her examination her father died. In spite of the shock, Sucheta appeared for the finals and stood first in her subject. She was awarded the Gold Medal of Delhi University. To help look after her family she started working at a school in Lahore. Later she joined the teaching staff at Benares Hindu University.

A few years later Bihar was struck by an earthquake and it is there that she first came across stark poverty which shook her. 'One day we came to a small hut the size of a large kennel; the door was a small hole through which one could just crawl in and out. We could hear some sounds, but no one would come out. So I peeped into the opening and saw an old woman sitting completely naked. She could not come out even to beg as she had no clothes! We gave her the nicest sari we had. Her existence had already reached the rock bottom. She had lost

nothing on account of the earthquake!

Earlier at Benares, she had got to know Acharya Kripalani, twenty years her senior. As she got more involved in the independence struggle she saw more of Kripalani and they got fond of each other. Gandhiji could not bear the thought of 'losing his national worker' (J.B. Kripalani) to the charms of domestic life. He stoutly opposed the marriage, but chose to deal with the young lady rather than the older gentleman. After much persuasion, Sucheta decided to forego the marriage.

Next day, the Mahatma called her again. He said: 'If you remain unhappy it will oppress Kripalani; so, you must marry someone else.' At this outrageous suggestion Sucheta turned on him and told him in no uncertain terms that what he proposed was 'wrong, unjust and immoral.'

To make things more difficult for Sucheta, Kripalani's sister reacted adversely to the idea of her *sadhu* brother (he was far from one!) marrying in his late forties. Sucheta's own mother opposed the marriage because she wanted a life of security and comfort for her daughter and Kripalani was unlikely to offer either.

Fortunately for the couple, Jamnalal Bajaj intervened on Sucheta's behalf. Then Gandhiji called Sucheta and told her he had no objection to the marriage but he could not give his blessings. He could 'only pray' for them. The Acharya recalls how Sucheta won the heart of her husband's family who had opposed the marriage. In the years to come Sucheta would always bring his family gifts.

The Acharya could not fathom what Sucheta saw in him — a 'distinguished vagabound', as poetess Sarojini Naidu once called him.

Kripalani was then General Secretary of the Congress and stayed at Swaraj Bhavan. 'Sucheta brought some pots and pans from her Benares home to add to the meagre stock I had of them... She did not know much cooking. She learnt some of it from me,' notes Kripalani.

Sucheta writes how influenced she was in the early years of marriage by her husband. She first adopted his style of speaking and thinking but later she branched out on her own. And the credit for it goes as much to her husband as to her, for he did not seek to dominate or overawe her.

'Sucheta could have helped me in my work as General Secretary to the Congress. But I did not want her to do that. It would not have been the full utilisation of her talents, which at that time only I knew. I wanted her to follow her own bent in life and to grow.'

She was put in independent charge of the Foreign Department of the Congress Party.

In the Quit India days, Sucheta was not immediately arrested and had an exciting time helping with an underground transmitting station in Bombay. She had some hair-breadth escapes. Travelling on a train one day she realised she was being watched by secret service men who were waiting to execute the warrant of arrest pending against her. She took a lady passenger into confidence, shed her *khaddar*, donned a *madrasi* sari and gave the policemen the slip.

Her courage was staggering. In 1934 when she heard of the Mahatma's marathon fast when he was jailed at the Aga Khan's Palace in Poona, she was so stirred that she walked into the office of the Home Secretary of the Bombay Government and asked for permission to see the

Mahatma. The Home Secretary, H.V.R. Iyengar, was so impressed with her guts that he recommended the Governor to grant her request. The British Police Commissioner of Bombay was eager to arrest her. But his hands were stayed. She was not only given safe conduct but the Governor ensured she was not followed for 24 hours after the interview. The British 'played the game'.

Then came the communal orgy prior to independence in Bihar and Bengal. In the Noakhali area of East Bengal, women were being kidnapped and raped. Into that forbidding situation Kripalani and wife went to prepare the way for Gandhiji's historic visit. Kripalani soon left to report to Gandhiji, leaving his wife behind. Sucheta did not tell her husband then that she had procured some arsenic and kept it handy, in case she fell into wicked hands.

For eight months she stood her ground till the situation was brought under control. All the villagers out of respect called Sucheta — then hardly 40 — *mataji*.

On their return to Delhi, they found refugees were streaming in from the other side of India — the Punjab. Sucheta threw herself into relief work. She appealed on the radio for cooked food from Delhi citizens and the food came. At her own cost she had some old barracks painted up to house refugees.

She and her husband were both elected to the Constituent Assembly and in the first Parliamentary elections in 1952, as a result of her work with the refugees, she was elected to Parliament.

Just prior to the 1952 elections, the Acharya and Sucheta were disillusioned with the Congress and formed their own Party. The Acharya was never to return to the

Congress fold but five years later Sucheta again displayed her independent spirit. She felt she would be more constructive if she rejoined the ruling party.

Eight years later, in spite of Nehru's reservations, the Congress Parliamentary Board supported her candidature for Chief Ministership of Uttar Pradesh—the largest state of India. She was efficient and compassionate, sometimes to the point of weakness. A senior civil servant, K.K. Dass, who served her, gives a frank evaluation of her performance as Chief Minister from 1963 to 1967.*

Between 1901 and 1963, the irrigated area of Uttar Pradesh remained constant. In her three and a half years of Chief Ministership it was increased by 25 per cent through minor irrigation projects. On the debit side, her leniency towards Government servants on strike was to prove costly not only to her state but other states.

'Setting her weaknesses alongside her strong points, the mixture resulted in the best Chief Minister Uttar Pradesh has had; clear-sighted, honest and as firm as her humaneness would allow,' concluded K.K. Dass.

Till the Congress split in 1969, Sucheta remained in the Congress while her husband was a leader of the opposition. The Acharya had to face the charge: 'Even his wife does not agree with him.' Sucheta had to face: 'Even her husband does not agree with her.' In the last five years of her life they were politically united.

In April 1978 when I asked the Acharya whether their political differences ever affected their domestic life, he replied, 'No, in a democracy there are no such great dif-

* Sucheta - *An Unfinished Autobiography*: Navjivan Press, 1978.

ferences of ideology or conviction.' Perhaps it is more true to say that their affection for each other was greater than their political differences could ever be.

Sucheta was a kind-hearted lady, humble and attentive. Power never intoxicated her. Her husband relates how up to the end many came to her for help 'with all sorts of cock-and-bull stories of distress—Somebody was robbed in the train of his cash, his ticket and his luggage. He was given his railway fare... She would not deny help to anyone in need'.

When some of the supplicants would return for her repeated favours, Sucheta would get angry. At this point, the old Acharya would smile and say to her, 'Where else will they go to?'

The Acharya's orderly mind believed in organised charities and he and his wife organised charitable trusts to the tune of Rs.1,50,000. But Sucheta also gave a lot to individuals, which the Acharya opposed to. In the late evening of his life when she was no more, the Acharya admitted, 'I think she was right and I was wrong. It kept her heart soft and tender and responsive to human misery and suffering.'

Sucheta never remembered injuries done to her. She was a patron of the fine arts. Her only relaxation was an occasional film or an evening recital. She sang beautifully, especially Tagore's songs and on August 15, 1947, as Independence was ushered in, at the momentous session of the Parliament, she was one of the two to be selected to sing *Vande Mataram*.

Sucheta Kripalani was ever ready to serve. Even as Chief Minister she would insist on arranging the room for her guest. After a heavy day's work, she would wake up

twice at night to ensure that her husband — if ailing — was comfortable.

Those who had the privilege of being invited by the Kripalanis to their home in Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi, will long remember the fiery old man and the quiet gracious lady who served the tea.

Sam Manekshaw

I take orders from only two ladies...my wife and the Prime Minister.

THE JAPANESE WERE advancing in Burma in early 1942. Defending the Sittand Bridge was a 28-year-old Indian Captain. In a hail of machine-gun bullets the Captain fell to the ground and was left for dead by the retreating forces. His orderly, who had effectively hidden himself during the engagement, came out after the Japanese departed. He picked up his unconscious master and carried him on his shoulder the whole day, heading for the town of Prome. He hid the Captain in ditches during air raids. When Captain Manekshaw regained consciousness he told his orderly, 'Leave me now and go, for I am finished. You should think of your wife and children and save your own life.'

'So long as there is life in you, I shall not leave you, Sir,' said Mehar Singh. For most of the next night he carried Manekshaw, bringing him to a field hospital. In a tent by candle light at 4 A.M. an Australian surgeon operated on Manekshaw and removed six bullets from his stomach,



lungs and liver. Manekshaw was wrapped up in a blanket and sent off to Rangoon, on which the Japanese were advancing.

At Rangoon, Manekshaw was told his case was hopeless. There was a ship leaving for Madras. 'If you ask to be put on the ship at your own risk they might take you,' the officer advised. Manekshaw told the authorities, 'I am going to die in any case. I would rather die in India. It was a dangerous journey across the Bay of Bengal but the ship was one of the last to arrive safely in Madras harbour. Manekshaw was taken to the General Hospital where an operation saved his life. He was awarded the Military Cross and spent the rest of the war as staff officer at Quetta. It is a wonder that Manekshaw lived. Destiny had a role reserved for him.

Born in 1914, Sam Manekshaw is the fifth in a family of four brothers and two sisters. As a child he had a fascination for the army and his ambition was to join it one day. His father was a medical practitioner at Amritsar, which today is a few kilometres from Pakistan. He was educated at Sherwood College, a school at Nainital, from 1925-30. On passing his Senior Cambridge he joined the Hindu Sabha College in Amritsar where he finished his Inter Arts.

In 1932 he appeared for King's Commission with the hope of going to Sandhurst. He was accepted but, to his disappointment, from that year on Indians were not sent to Sandhurst but to the new Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun. Commissioned in 1934, like all Indian officers of that period, he had to join a British regiment for six months. On completion, he joined the Fourth Battalion of the 12th Regiment of the Frontier Force. He

spent his early career in the rugged North-West Frontier Province. Later on Manekshaw was G1 in the Directorate of Military Operations in Delhi. The G2 was an officer called Yahya Khan, who later became the President of Pakistan.

After World War II, Manekshaw held various assignments, one of the first being a tour of Australia to lecture on the Indian Army. In the years following Independence he was posted at the war front in Jammu and Kashmir and for some time was Military Advisor to the Indian delegation at the United Nations, when Kashmir was on its agenda.

He was sent to the Imperial Defence College in 1957 and returned to become Commandant of the Military Staff College at Wellington. When Indian defences cracked up under China's attack on NEFA (now Arunachal Pradesh), he was selected to become Corps Commander in that area. The morale of the army was at its lowest. He distinguished himself by raising the morale of the troops and once again gave them confidence in themselves and their leadership.

Manekshaw had a way with his men; they trusted him. He was easily accessible not only to his troops but to everyone. Manekshaw noted, 'I am the People's General'. From NEFA he was posted as General-Officer-Commanding Western Command and thereafter as GOC Eastern Command. On June 8 1969 he became Chief of Staff of the Indian Army.

Manekshaw is a man with a happy temperament. He loves life. Loyalty is a strong streak in his nature — loyalty to his superiors, his family, his nation. An Indian Defence Minister once asked Manekshaw, many years ago, for in-

formation on one of his superiors. Politely but firmly he refused to give it. He aroused the wrath of the Minister and at one time it appeared that his career was finished. When the Chinese struck in 1962 the Defence Minister (it was Krishna Menon) left in disgrace and it was Manekshaw who was called upon to save the situation in NEFA.

Socially Manekshaw mixes well. He has a lively sense of humour. As Chief of Staff under Mrs. Gandhi he used to say, 'I take orders from only two ladies—my wife and the Prime Minister.'

He is disciplined in his personal life and keeps remarkably fit. Every morning his bearer knocks on his door at 5 o'clock with a cup of tea, whatever may be the time he retires to bed.

Sam Manekshaw has a closely knit family and he is 'wildly devoted' to his brothers and sisters who are proud of him. 'He is a kind man and we love him because of that', says his brother Jan, 'and he has always got time for us.'

Although Manekshaw is not a conventional Parsi, 'he is a deeply spiritual type' according to one of his family.

When the first Pakistani troops were captured in East Bengal he immediately sent a message to his troops to treat them with dignity and humanely, in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

I first met Genral Manekshaw when he was General-Officer-Commanding Eastern Command. Fort St. William in Calcutta, once the hub of the British Empire in India, was the headquarters of the General. The modest but well-painted building was superbly kept, all the brass was polished and there was not a speck of dust

or litter anywhere. Its walls were tastefully decorated with sketches of Indian soldiers from days of old till today. From the orderly to the A.D.C., everybody raced around with zest although it was peace-time. He inspires that kind of devotion.

When I saw him that day he was dressed in grey flannels and a tweed coat. As we talked over tea the only two others within earshot were his two dogs, one a huge Alsatian who sniffed at me from time to time, and the other a smaller canine. The General gave a biscuit each to the dogs as he sipped his tea.

Manekshaw is a first-class Field Commander, as well as a good strategist, a combination which is not common. His height, daring and zest, remind one of General Montgomery. Unlike Montgomery, he is a good listener. His complexion is clear, his dark brown eyes are steady and his enthusiasm is infectious. As Chief of the Army he gave the impression of a man in command of himself and well in command of the men of whom he was justly proud. And his men were proud of him.

Manekshaw has the highest respect for the fighting qualities of the Pakistan Army and refuses to accept the theory that they did not fight the Bangladesh war vigorously. At one of his visits to a Pakistani prisoners-of-war camp, his officers wanted to accompany him for security. 'I am in my own country, I don't need protection,' he replied. He went in with only his A.D.C. He enquired of the Pakistanis whether they were comfortable, whether they had any complaints. He inspected their bunks, washrooms and kitchen. He spoke fluent Urdu which made the Pakistanis feel at home. He treated them as if they had never lost the war and as if they were his

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own troops. As he shook hands with the Pakistani Subedar Major, the Subedar said in Urdu, 'We now see why you are such an excellent fighting force. I have been 25 years in the Pakistan Army but no General has ever shaken my hand.'

A year after the famous Bangladesh victory Manekshaw was addressing a Rotary Conference in Kottayam, Kerala.

There is much joy on this day but there is also much sorrow. In 1943 a beaten and a shaken Captain Manekshaw first spoke to the Rotary. Today I command an excellent army. I have many nightmares. My army fought a gallant and tenacious armed force. Although the war lasted only 14 days three thousand of my men were killed and over 8,500 wounded. I am glad fifty per cent of the wounded have been cured and have rejoined. But the remainder are maimed for life. Some will never walk, some will never see, some will be bed-ridden for life.

He appealed for help for the war widows and for employment chances for the soldiers and officers who get retrenched each year. A true soldier's war is never over.

Manekshaw has two daughters; one is married and settled in England, the other in South India. Since retirement he has become an avid gardener at his home in Coonoor. According to his wife, he is so impatient for results he hardly allows the plants time to grow!

Vijay Merchant

My philosophy is learnt from cricket: the better batsman takes care of the weaker one if your side is to win.

VIJAY MERCHANT'S batting average in first-class cricket stands next only to that of Don Bradman. Bradman's average is 95.14 runs and Vijay's 72.74. Now well-nigh 70 years of age, I expected to find in him a man nostalgic about his past. Instead I found a man looking forward to the future. 'I am interested in what happens next. The past is only important in so far as I can learn from my mistakes.'

Many fondly remember that stylish batsman who played with such zeal and precision at Brabourne Stadium, Bombay. He has now found a new zeal but before we come to that, let us first dwell on cricket.

Vijay Merchant is perhaps the greatest name in Indian cricket between the age of C. K. Naïdu and the era of Gavaskar. The tall and impressive C. K. 'concentrated on the game as nobody does, and he inspired me,' says Vijay. C.K. was obsessed with physical fitness 'and it was as an



athlete that we first heard of him'. The discipline of C.K. created a profound impact on young Vijay, whose career was opening as C.K.'s was closing.

'Who among the foreign cricketers impressed you? What about Bradman?'

'Our paths never crossed. But I did play against Hammond twice, in 1936 and 1946.'

'What impressed you about Hammond?'

'He was a classic batsman; he was consistent.'

Vijay's two spells against England established him in the world class of cricket. In 1946 as Vice Captain during a wet summer he knocked 2,385 runs (74.53 average) with two double centuries— 242 not out against Lancashire and 205 against Sussex. But the journey to the first steps on this ladder to fame were taken at the school nets in Bombay.

Vijay was educated at the Bharda New High School, Bombay, and started playing cricket at the age of nine. He remembers gratefully the interest taken by his Joint Principal Kaikobad Marzban who came to the nets daily with the boys. But there was no formal coaching as at present. Vijay observed minutely and picked up the game. 'I avoided bad habits at the nets—I never gave away my wicket, did not try fancy strokes, concentrated on the ball one hundred per cent, did not lift the ball in the air and generally batted most seriously.'

To these guidelines he added one more—to cultivate at the nets, practice against bumpers and beamers. This is what he says :

Playing against bumpers and beamers at the nets made me realise that even more important than hitting those balls was developing the art of getting out

of the line of the ball, so that, that particular ball would be absolutely innocuous. When I realised that, in order to bowl that kind of a ball the bowler had to exert three times the energy he would spend in bowling a normal ball, it made me concentrate more on the art of leaving such a ball than playing it. Thus both the ability to leave the ball and the ability to hit a bumper came to me most emphatically at the practice nets itself and, since my match-play was always an extension of what I did at the nets, it made me feel absolutely comfortable against that particular kind of bowling.

After finishing school Vijay took Commerce at Sydenham College and joined his family concern of Thackersey Mills. He played the Ranji Trophy where he hit his highest score of 359 runs again at Brabourne Stadium. He played in the Quadrangular (between four communities), the Pentangular, and in the test matches. To Vijay the game of cricket was the pursuit of excellence. 'An innings by Merchant grows : it sprouts. No exotic bloom but its construction is perfect to the last detail,' wrote John Arlott.

Rusi Modi, who opened the innings in India against England in 1946, says that the nearest approach to Vijay's style was Sir Len Hutton :

Vijay had no apparent weakness. In an innings by Merchant every fine point of batsmanship was on view to evoke admiration. The latest of late cuts and the finest leg glance came naturally to him. Merchant was a rhythmically disciplined batsman. I was indeed lucky in having Vijay as my partner on several occasions. He made the bowling look easy.

This inspired great confidence in me. Vijay went out of his way to help his contemporaries and each one of us played better in his company.

Vijay is the only Indian so far to score 2000 runs in an English Season. His average in first class cricket of 72.74 runs in 221 innings is excelled by his own average of 98 runs in 47 innings of the Ranji Trophy. His first class career was made up of 12,876 runs and 43 centuries.

Most batsman of his day tried to model their play on Vijay's classic and correct style, but few attained his standard. It is said, 'The style is the man.' Vijay had taken the trouble to streamline his entire life to one goal.

'I had to remain at all times perfectly fit—light on my feet, supple in my movements, quick in my reflexes, supple on my toes...For this purpose I had to run long distances, skip a thousand times a day, play gruelling games of squash and build my stamina for extensive innings at the crease.'

For mental alertness he refrained from smoking and drinking. To keep his weight he avoided greasy and starchy food.

A batsman has to judge a ball travelling at a speed of 80 miles per hour. It pitches 15 feet from the batsman who has just that split-second to decide whether to play it (aggressively or defensively), or let it pass, or get out of its way, if it is a bumper.

Reflexes depend on the eye and then on the brain. To keep his eyes peeled he never wore coloured glasses when off the crease. He saw as few films as possible and avoided reading except under adequate lighting. For his general fitness he followed the adage 'early to bed and early to rise...' Cricketer Rusi Modi recalled that in 1946

on the eve of the final Test between England and India, at Kennington Oval, he went to Vijay's room for a chat. After talking to him for a couple of minutes, Vijay said, 'I want an early night as I must score a century tomorrow.' Modi ventured to suggest that his chances of scoring a hundred were not too bright as he would have to encounter Bedser on a rain-affected wicket. With a smile over that deep cut in his chin Vijay retorted, 'So what?' As things turned out, Vijay did score a magnificent 128 in this Test.

He retired from first class cricket at the age of 41. Till he was 64 his long sight was a perfect 6/6. 'Just as bad habits do not leave you, good habits also do not forsake you.' Good habits, he believes, train your reflexes and even when concentration occasionally fails, say in car-driving, your reflexes automatically do the right thing.

And was he ever nervous before going to the crease?

The answer is 'Yes'. Many years ago he confided to the great cricketer Duleepsinghji that he had a feeling of tension before a match right upto the point he went to the crease and the umpire gave him the guard. Only when the bowler started his run did nervousness leave Vijay. Duleepsinghji assured him it was not 'nervousness' but 'nervous tension' that gripped Vijay and added that every great sportsman must have that nervous tension to build up the concentration so necessary to succeed. Those who feel confident are the people who fail to concentrate 100 per cent and miss out.

In *The Complete Who's Who of Test Cricketers* C. Martin-Jenkins writes of Vijay Merchant : 'His cutting, both square and leg, was brilliant, and he hooked, drove

(especially the fast bowlers) and played the ball off his legs with masterful certainty...There was something feline about him at the wicket...'

Vijay's cricketing career lasted from 1929, when he was only 18, till 1951. When that period ended he moved happily to the next phase of his life, just doing good to people.

'Life,' he says, 'is my great teacher. I have never read a book except on cricket. My social welfare work is learnt from people.' A man from Satara district told me of the help Vijay Merchant had given. One day a village girl collapsed at his doorstep. He took the girl to the local doctor who diagnosed very advanced T.B. The good samaritan hardly knew Vijay but nonetheless appealed to him for help. Vijay moved with lightning speed and cabled him that the girl's admission to a T.B. hospital was secured. He cared for her progress over months. When she was well on the way to recovery he still corresponded about her rehabilitation. He is not a formal social worker. People with their pains and sorrows walk into his heart and there they abide as he wrestles for a solution to their problems, be it a physical disability or a family problem.

Vijay feels he is blessed and owes something to the less fortunate. He has wealth and in his family's Hindoostan Mills he has a welfare centre well equipped with a health officer and a social worker and he uses these facilities with the full support of his family members. Twice a week he is available to anyone between 11 and 1 in the mornings. If a blind person comes and Vijay finds he or she is competent enough to sell cloth door to door he encourages them to go into business initially with cloth worth Rs.100 from

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the sale of which they can earn Rs.19.

If they do not have the initial Rs.100 the mill advances the cloth. Seven out of ten blind people do not return for the next instalment of cloth. 'But if three out of ten get rehabilitated, I am satisfied.'

Vijay gives total care, the kind of which even the British Health Service would hesitate to extend. Once a blind or deaf person is under his umbrella he will even consider their matrimonial needs and in the compound of his mills marriages are performed between two blind people or two deaf ones. Occasionally he has even found the couple a room to stay. Once moved by a blind couple when the wife cooked him a meal, he managed to get a hard-to-get Burshane stove and cylinder donated. He remembers the names of their children. They are his larger family.

'Have you been able to enthuse others in your circle of friends to do the same work that you do?'

'They give donations but do not share the same objectives.'

It is not a small thing to take people into your heart. Once Mrs. Nasrullah, a Sheriff of Bombay, asked him to give shelter to a girl of 18 as her father had behaved brutally with her. He first said 'No, I'll give money but not shelter.' When he heard the story he arranged for a senior lady to take charge of the girl. The young girl began to help at his Health Centre, giving milk to those workers in the factory who suffered from T.B. She, a Hindu, fell in love with a Muslim. One day she came to Vijay and told him of her affection for this worker. It was a delicate problem. He involved Mrs. Nasrullah again. The Sheriff advised the couple to wait six months and, if

their affection for each other still endured, to take the step of marriage. At the end of six months they said they still loved each other.

To be accepted by the boy's family and community the girl had to become a Muslim. She did. When Vijay wanted to arrange her marriage at his factory, he was advised by some not to do so. 'If I cannot do then my whole philosophy of life has failed.' He went ahead with the plans. A Muslim *Kazi* came and performed the marriage and asked Vijay to sign as the girl's father. Vijay, a Hindu, flatly refused at first. He realised that for all practical purposes the girl had no father and so he signed the Muslim register. 'They have two lovely children now,' he says proudly.

'Why do you do this kind of social work?' I enquired.

'My philosophy,' replied Vijay, 'is learnt from cricket: the better batsman takes care of the weaker one if your side is to win.' For example, he added, 'I would like my son to marry a poor girl, not a rich girl.'

'Secondly, God has been so good to me. How do I repay his debt? I am not religious, I never go to a temple. But my faith in God is strong.'

'Has it always been so?'

'From the beginning, but naturally it develops. I feel what I do for people is my worship to God.'

K. M. Munshi

*I have climbed no doubt strenuously, but laughing,
playing, running.*

K M. MUNSHI was a litterateur, educationalist, lawyer and statesman. His early novels not only captured Gujarat by storm, but regenerated its literature. At the height of his career at the Bar he commanded fabulous fees. He went into the sphere of education and founded the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan with its 26 constituent colleges and branches. As a statesman he was at the heart of affairs for forty years.

In the evening of his life at 82 his mind was sharp as a razor; his cupped ears were alert to catch every word. His reading was wide and up to date. He wrote articles and books; presided and spoke at public occasions wherever possible.

Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi was born at Broach on December 30, 1887. Though the son of a Government official, his friends got him interested in the Congress Session of 1902. 'All my friends were volunteers, but my father would not permit me.'



'I eat the salt of the British Government and I cannot be unfaithful,' said the father. Cockily the 15-year-old lad replied, 'The salt they give is from our land.' Someone gave him a volunteer's uniform and let him slip into the Congress pandel.

A couple of years later Russia's defeat by Japan gave a spurt to nationalism in India. In 1905 at Baroda College he came under the influence of Professor Aurobindo Ghose, whose ardent nationalism fanned the flame in Munshi's heart. Aurobindo at that time believed in terrorism and some of Munshi's young student friends encouraged him to join in the making of bombs. Munshi had hardly started when a crude contraption burst and wounded one of his friends. Munshi promptly decided bombs were not his business. 'I was too much of a coward to go along with it.'

'From 1902 to 1916 I was poor, terribly poor,' he recalled. 'My whole life has been a steep climb; from an eating house costing Rs. 5 a month—to comparative luxury; from complete obscurity to some recognition. God has indeed been good. I have climbed, no doubt strenuously, but laughing, playing, running.'

In the early years of this century he stayed in a *chawl*, read voraciously, worked hard at the Bar and began writing.

'People say that you have given a new birth to Gujarati literature. How did you do it?' I asked him.

'I knew neither the grammar nor the syntax of the language, but I knew English well and a little Sanskrit. To it I added my Broach idiom and the result was a vigorous style freed of classical heaviness.'

'What did you write about?'

'About social problems. One of my early novels, *Kon-no-Vaak* (Whose Fault?), was about a child widow's life. I wrote about the caste system, of inter-marriage, problems not so important now, but vital in those days.'

Some of his historical romances like *Prithvi Vallabh* (The Darling of the Earth) have been filmed.

Munshi delved into classical history and the lore of the Puranic period and wrote with feeling. He wrote a series of volumes on Lord Krishna, to make him come alive for the present generation.

Not satisfied with advocating social change, he practised it in his own life. A Brahmin, he married a widowed Jain lady. 'My caste elders were worried. They had looked up to me greatly; when I took such a step they didn't know what to do. To save them embarrassment I wrote out a resolution excommunicating myself — which they sadly accepted... But I did see the miracle of change in my orthodox mother. She was shocked, but she was so fond of me that she took to my wife, Lilavati.' Mrs. Munshi, who survived him by six years, was herself a well-known novelist and social worker who participated fully in her husband's social and educational endeavours.

In 1914 Munshi entered public life and soon joined Mrs. Annie Besant's Home Rule League.

In 1919 he decided to devote himself to legal practice and in the years that followed he rose to be one of the top lawyers of this land. During these years he played an active part in the freedom movement and was jailed frequently. A close friend of Sardar Patel, he became the first Home Minister of Bombay in 1937. Early in the 1940s when he saw the movement for Pakistan being launched, he campaigned up and down the land for an

'*Akhand Hindustan*' (United India). The Congress officially did not support his movement but 'Gandhiji blessed me and asked me to work for what I believed, outside the Congress. In spite of my vagaries he was very kind to me.'

When the Constituent Assembly was formed in 1946 it was Gandhiji who suggested Munshi's name for it. The four years that followed were among the most interesting in Munshi's life. One of the chosen seven, he took to the drafting of the Constitution with zest and thoroughness. Alas, he lived to see men talk lightly of it. Munshi believed in the honour of the pledged word and the sanctity of the Constitution.

Few men I have met have had such a passionate love for India. His great contribution to preserve India's cultural heritage, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, was born out of this love. For him India meant not only the narrow streets, the crowded houses and the long queues of undernourished bodies with large anticipating eyes. His India had the grandeur of Emperor Ashoka who spread the message of love throughout this land and beyond; it was the India of the *Mahabharata* with its deeds of glory. For Munshi preserved till his last day the dreams of the Broach lad who dreamt of Lord Krishna. He had a great faith in Hinduism which he did much to revive, but his mind was open to the truths of other faiths.

The offices he held were many—including Union Food Minister and Governor of Uttar Pradesh—but it was he who adorned the offices, not vice versa. He was a man of unusual discipline and had a phenomenal dedication to his task.

One Monday evening at about 7 P.M. I went to him

somewhat hesitantly to request him to write an article on a topical constitutional subject for *Himmat* magazine by 12 o'clock next morning. It seemed an unfair demand to make on the time and energy of a man of about 80 who, I knew, always retired at 8 P.M. and woke up not too early. Next morning his secretary rang up at 11 o'clock. His article was ready an hour ahead of schedule!

When I inquired how he managed to do it he said that though with advancing age he slept for long hours, while awake he 'lived intensely every moment'. On the last occasion when I met him in September 1970 in his study, he was 83. He had before him for correction a manuscript, typed in treble spacing. In the course of his active life he wrote about 100 books and pamphlets in English and Gujarati, ranging from novels to his authoritative work, *Pilgrimage to Freedom*.

He was a tree that yielded rich fruits. Those who were privileged to have his friendship could find shelter under his shade. His wisdom was always at the disposal of his friends and he was eager to learn to the very last. Voracious as a reader, he was prolific as a writer.

Some will remember him for his part in drafting the Constitution, some for the giant organisation which he established, the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, some will remember him as a lawyer, a minister or a governor. But those who knew him intimately will remember him as a friend and will miss his warmth and friendship. In his younger days he was ambitious and haughty but he mellowed to become in later years, a humble and an endearing person. Perhaps this change took place over the years as he grew from a man of intellect into a man of faith. He was generous of spirit and kind of heart.

Jayaprakash Narayan

My interest is not in the capture of power but in the control of power by the people.

MY WORLD LIES in shambles around me. I shall not see it put together in my lifetime.' So begins JP's *Prison Diary* on July 21, 1975. On March 21, 1977, by the dramatic results of the elections, the Indian people put the world of JP together again. It took JP's own colleagues a couple of years to shake and almost shatter JP's world again.

Just a month before the March results, when election fever was at its height, I was ushered into his room number 1918 at Jaslok Hospital, Bombay. Wrapped up to his neck under a white sheet lay JP. I was shaken to see him after a lapse of some years. The skin which had been a rich tan now appeared like a dark and withered leaf. Only the warmth and twinkle of his eyes plus the ever-charming smile reminded me of the JP I knew.

He was stretched out surrounded by large grey drums which purified his blood and pumped it back. As his kidneys hardly functioned, JP had to undergo this seven-



hour ordeal every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. They were marked in his diary as D day — D for Dialysis. On the days when he was not taking this treatment he flew up to a thousand miles, addressed public meetings, gave press conferences and returned for treatment by the following morning.

Though it was election time we exchanged a few words on his future plans. He was eager to go round the country after the elections and educate the masses so that democracy would be strengthened from the village level upwards. In a faint voice he said, 'This is very important'. But fate willed otherwise.

A year later he said: 'If I had not fallen ill immediately after the March 1977 parliamentary elections, the scenario might have been entirely different. The political situation was explosive at that time; there had been a massive release of the people's pent-up feelings; and they were determined not to lose the opportunity by default. It would not do to deny, I am not being immodest when I say this, that I could have helped canalize all this into what might have opened up a path eventually leading to the restructuring, mind you, basic restructuring, of society. That was not to be, for God had it ordained otherwise.' He did not always speak of God, in that vein.

The public life of JP spans half a century's struggle. Born in 1902 in the family of a minor official in a Bihar village, JP was 17 before he saw a tramcar. Three years later he was sailing for the United States where he studied Natural Science, Economics and Sociology at various universities including California, Iowa, Wisconsin and Ohio. He worked on farms, in factories and washed dishes in restaurants for a living.

On his return he was invited to stay with his wife at Nehru's ancestral home, Anand Bhavan. Till the end of his life Nehru was addressed by JP as *bhai* (elder brother). Nehru's wife Kamala used to confide in JP's wife.

JP was a colourful figure of the freedom struggle. He stirred many hearts during the Quit India movement. Captured by the British, he scaled the walls of Hazaribagh Prison by tying one dhoti to another, and escaped to fight underground. As the machinery of the British Raj tightened to trap him, excitement grew in the nation. JP became a legend.

Earlier in 1934 with some other bright young men, JP founded the Congress Socialist Party. He spent hours in discussion with Gandhiji about ends and means, about Marxism and God. Gandhiji was in no hurry. 'One day this man will speak my language,' he said, and Gandhiji was right. Four years after the Mahatma's death, JP did.

A Hindu, he had given up his religion to embrace Marxism in America in the 1920s. It was not till 30 years later in 1952, that at the end of a three week fast in Poona, he bade goodbye to Marxism.

'I came to reject the philosophy based on Marxism because it did not offer the answer to the question, "Why should man be good, or why should anyone be good?"' JP articulated his new-found philosophy in an article he entitled 'Incentives to Goodness', in which he stated:

'Materialism of any sort robs man of the means to become truly human. In a material civilisation man has no rational incentive to be good...I feel convinced, therefore, that man must come beyond the material to find the incentives to goodness...The task of social reconstruction cannot succeed under the inspiration of a

materialist philosophy'.

Later in prison during the Emergency, his faith was to sustain him. He had jotted down in his *Prison Diary*: 'Last night while offering prayers to Goddess Bhagwati I had asked for a way out of this darkness and I got it this morning.' He continued:

'After Prabha's (his wife's) departure I had lost interest in life. Had I not developed a special aptitude for public work I would have retired to the Himalayas. My heart wept within but outwardly I followed the routine of life. My health too was deteriorating. It was in this hour of dejection that something unexpected happened which lit my inner self. My health also started improving and I experienced a new energy and zeal.'

After Independence JP saw Congressmen run after office. He shrank from it. He never offered to stand for any election though in the 1952 elections he helped in the campaign of his Socialist friends. Although aloof from direct involvement in elections, his stock was so high that in the early fifties the Indian press called him 'Nehru's rightful heir'. But by that time JP's thinking had moved to other fields of endeavour. The ideas of Gandhiji and Vinoba Bhave had captured his thinking.

He saw in the Bhoodan movement of donating land to the landless, the first attempt in history to bring about a social revolution and reconstruction through love. In the years to come JP became a familiar figure in the towns and villages of India. The dust of India covered his feet and his head as he appealed for land to be donated. And as he marched through the land he loved, he took up various causes — some lost causes and others that proved popular. To him the struggle for freedom in Hungary or

Bangladesh was as important as that for his own country. He emerged as a rare public figure for three reasons:

First, he wanted nothing for himself. Second, though polite to all he feared no man. Third, he cared for people and had the humility and patience to listen to them.

One day a strapping rustic character from Madhya Pradesh walked in to see him in Patna and asked if he would guarantee the security of the dacoits if they decided to surrender as a result of a 'change of heart'. The rustic revealed himself finally as the leading dacoit Madho Singh with a price of Rs.1,50,000 on his head. This encounter resulted in 443 dacoits laying down all their machine-guns, rifles and mortars at JP's feet some months later.

Shortly after the dacoits surrendered, JP was asked by his friend Minoo Masani, about what he felt regarding the suggestion that Madho Singh should stand for Parliament. Masani said 'It is not such a bad idea after all. He would be in good company.' JP promptly replied, 'He would probably *not* be in good company, because he is a reformed dacoit.'

With all his activities JP kept up his reading of poetry, drama and political affairs. Until his kidney ailment shook his health, he looked a distinguished figure as he stood in his white *kurta*. His broad chiselled jaw indicated his granite determination. He always spoke in slow, clear and measured tones, as a good teacher would speak.

One sensed a spaciousness about JP. Like Tagore, the windows of his mind were open to winds that blew from all quarters.

JP was every inch a gentleman. Prabhubhai Sanghvi, who was a close colleague in his later years, recalls an oc-

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casion when he was invited for lunch to JP's home in Patna.

'He asked me to take a seat by his side and ordered his servant to serve special dishes prepared for me. He had instructed his servant to prepare *khichri* and *kadi* as he knew that Gujaratis like those dishes at dinner. He was served non-vegetarian food as per doctor's instructions. But he asked our permission before eating the non-vegetarian food. Such was his respect for others even in ordinary matters. For him democracy was not a political dogma but a way of life.'

JP was fond of simplicity but he was also a great connoisseur. He wanted everything artistically done. His shirt and pyjama should be sparkling white and properly ironed. If he wore a *sherwani*, the colour of his cap would match that of his *sherwani* and he would hold a matching stick in his hand. In his study, the books would be neatly arranged and the periodicals kept at fixed places. When he went for treatment to Seattle, U.S.A., his secretary, Abraham, used to rush every morning to the hospital to shave him before the doctor arrived.

JP was fond of flowers. He had a small terrace garden at his residence in Patna. A vase of flowers was always by his side.

In early 1974, JP was asked to lead the Bihar movement. He wanted more than the removal of the old order. He wanted a remaking of our institutions, our practices and even our national character. In 'total revolution', he said, everything has to change. Man has to change first of all, which is the most difficult part of the task. He put forward specific proposals, for example, on electoral reforms.

After the 1977 electoral victory of the Janata Party when tributes were showered on him he simply said:

'No leader in history, no matter how great, whether it was Lenin, Mao or Gandhi, made a revolution. Revolutions happen. All that the leader does is to give it direction and control it. Otherwise it dissipates itself and there is a reaction...All I can take credit for is that I did recognise that a revolutionary situation had arisen and something had to be done.'

At the height of the Bihar movement JP said, 'My interest is not in the capture of power but in the control of power by the people.' JP himself shunned power and yet wielded tremendous power.

His last months were sad. He wept as he saw the men he put in power break up the party he had forged. But he had perceived beyond immediate problems to the need to change India's institutions—and above all the character of man himself, 'the most difficult task' he called it. Those who take on this struggle will be the true heirs of JP.

Nani Palkhivala

Surely something is basically wrong with our economic philosophy and political ideology if Indians are able to enrich foreign countries but are not allowed to solve the problem of poverty at home.

THOUSANDS HAVE GATHERED on the spacious grounds of Bombay's Cricket Club of India to hear Nani Palkhivala on the Budget. Half an hour before the meeting, portly Marwaris and lean Parsis have occupied strategic positions. The latter, who belong to Nani's tiny community, do not appear of the kind who have much to worry about in the Budget. Nonetheless they turn up in strength to hear *apro Nani* ('our Nani'). Parsis usually have two or three personalities in a generation to whom they attach the fond prefix *apro*. In the old days Queen Victoria was *apri Rani*. Dadabhoy Naoroji and Jamsetji Tata are still called *apra*.

There before an urban audience Nani starts speaking. 'Every budget,' he says, 'contains a cartload of figures in black and white—but the stark figures represent the



myriad lights and shades of India's life, the contrasting tones of poverty and wealth, and of bread so dear and flesh and blood so cheap, the deep tints of adventure and enterprise and man's ageless struggle for a brighter morn.'

He reels off facts, figures and statistics—decimal points and all—without any notes. He punctuates his oration with quotations from Shakespeare, Lord Acton, Jawaharlal Nehru and C. Rajagopalachari. The audience cheers him as he assails the 'boneless wonders' and the 'bumbling bureaucrats' of Delhi. At the end of the oration of *apro Nani*, his admirers brace themselves and stride out—fortified to fight another day.

Constitutional lawyer, tax expert, economic developer, diplomat, author, Nani Palkhivala has adorned all that he has touched in life. He was born on January 16, 1920, in the home of a small businessman. Money was short in the family, but Nani's hopes were high. As a young boy he devoured books. Samuel Smiles' work, *The Secret of Success*, inspired him. From Tutorial High School he went to St. Xavier's College, Bombay. By the time he was 16, he started earning by giving tuitions. At College he read English Literature and won the Chancellor's Medal in his M.A.

From 1943 to 1946 Nani read Law, standing First Class First at the LL.B. and Advocate (OS) examinations. He was soon appointed professor at the Bombay Law College and was honoured with the Tagore Professorship of Law at Calcutta University. He first won distinction by producing an authoritative work on income tax law, in association with his senior, Sir Jamshedji Kanga, in whose chambers he started his career.

The flame of achievement burned in him. He fought case after case of national importance. His victories at the Supreme Court were impressive. He fought and won the Bank Nationalisation Case. In 1971 he had struck down the Government's order to take away the Privy Purses of Princes by unconstitutional methods. He argued the famous Fundamental Rights Case (1973), heard by 13 judges of the Supreme Court over a period of five months, in which the Supreme Court ruled that Parliament cannot so amend the Constitution as to alter or destroy its basic structure.

He argued successfully for the Fundamental Rights of minorities to administer educational and religious institutions of their choice, and to choose the language in which education should be imparted.

Princes and impoverished priests felt confident that they could count on his sympathies. Most cases of public importance he fought without fees. Although he was for many years a vociferous critic of Congress governments, a succession of its Law Ministers invariably honoured him by giving him briefs for India at international tribunals, like the International Court at the Hague.

The foremost practising lawyer of this country at one time, he netted a gross half-million rupees a year, even after foregoing his fees in many cases. Over the last two decades, he has come to the conclusion that he would rather participate in the economic development of the nation than defend litigants in matters like taxation. He came into Tatas as legal adviser to the House, got more involved in industrial development and after some years attained the position of Deputy Chairman of the two largest companies in India—Tata Steel and Telco.

Nani is also Chairman of A.C.C. the cement combine. What is it like to work with him on an industrial Board? Kamaljit Singh, who headed the Indian Oil Corporation (the first in turnover throughout the country) later joined A.C.C. as Managing Director. He lists Nani's qualities as 'the ability to grasp a problem quickly, and the ability to take quick decisions. In my forty years in industry, I have never encountered an individual who combines the qualities of integrity, compassion and concern for human relations with the ability to take firm and even unpleasant decisions to the same extent as Palkhivala.'

Opportunities in business provide him the space to exercise his qualities of the heart that go way beyond the intellectual gymnastics that Law demands. And to complete the picture, Nani supports movements that enrich the spirit of man, be it of the late Sri Aurobindo's or Satya Sai Baba's. For him life is larger than law, business or politics. It is amazing he finds the time to devote to each of these interests.

Associated with big business he tries to inject into its policies his sense of 'old values and sincerity of purpose' as a colleague puts it. He is not interested in the controversy over public and private sector. 'There are only two sectors,' he says, 'the efficient and the inefficient'.

Though a critic of Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, he accepted her Election Appeal brief in the Supreme Court because he felt she had a good case and that every litigant is entitled to his or her choice of a lawyer. On June 24, 1975, Nani obtained an interim judgement permitting Mrs. Gandhi to remain Prime Minister but not to vote in Parliament. On June 26, the Emergency was announced, and within hours Nani returned Mrs. Gandhi's brief 'con-

sistent with my lifelong convictions and the values I cherish', he told me.

Through most of the Emergency Nani was silent but in December 1975, at the height of the Emergency, when the Government sought to compel the Supreme Court to review its decision in the Fundamental Rights Case, Nani put on his gown and convinced the Supreme Court such a review was unnecessary. Due to strict censorship his victory was little known.

Sometime after the Janata Party assumed office, he was offered the Indian Ambassadorship to the United States. He travelled extensively in that vast country, delivering in less than two years 200 major speeches presenting India before the American public. Universities like Princeton gave him honorary degrees and impressive citations.

The President of the 20,000 strong Associations of Indians in America, said of Nani's term as Ambassador, 'For the first time we got a feeling that Indians were welcome at the Embassy and today we can get our passport in 24 hours and a visa in a couple of hours.'

For Nani himself the American experience was an eye-opener. 'All over the United States—from the Boeing workshop in Seattle to Texas Instruments in Dallas, to the Institute of Technology at Massachusetts—Indian talent is employed and the men in charge expressed to me their gratitude to India for giving them such remarkable human resources. Surely something is basically wrong with our economic philosophy and political ideology if Indians are able to enrich foreign countries but are not allowed to solve the problem of poverty at home.'

He brought with him a list of highly qualified Indian scientists willing to assist in India but, alas, the

bureaucracy did not move at his speed to take advantage of their offer.

Nani returned to India before time because his heart was in his own country. 'There is so much to do here,' he said. Almost immediately on his arrival the Janata Government fell, and in the ensuing confusion the hopes of many were focussed on Nani entering public life.

The elections of January 1980 gave him the opportunity, but he declined. He chose instead to support with vigour, men of integrity who were standing for Parliament and who he felt would help to shape the India of his dreams. 'Will anything small or circumscribed ever satisfy the mind of India?' he enquires. He yearns to work with men who can harness the immense economic potential of this land—men who will harness the river waters and employ the 40 million idle hands in productive work. He is impatient with laws and rules that stunt our industry and our nation.

The public expects much from Nani. I accompanied him to the Dr. Ambedkar Law College in Bombay, where students crowded into a lecture hall and waited with eager faces as he entered to address them. 'One thing I would recommend,' Nani told them, 'is poverty in young age. It makes you appreciate human values—like love at home.' When later I asked him if he did not at times feel over-awed by the hopes people rested on him, he replied, 'Yes, sometimes one does feel inadequate.'

If Nani is asked how he graduated from literature to law, from law to taxation, from taxation to economics, he looks lost. 'There is nothing conscious about it. No human being can plan these things. What are we puny mortals? I believe in a Higher Force.'

'Do you believe in a personal God?' I asked.

'No, but I do believe in a Divine Force,' he replied.

Distinguished men who have influenced him are his senior, Sir Jamshedji Kanga, Rajaji, and more recently Jayaprakash Narayan, but if you are looking for the secret of his success you have to look elsewhere. The most important thing for a person—as for a nation—he feels, is productive use of time and energy, and Nani endeavours to fill every moment of his life productively, whether he is handling a legal case, an industry meeting or an interview. He is a man in a hurry, often quite restless in a private interview but supremely composed while addressing a gathering of 10,000.

The second secret of his success is something he urges his younger friends to attain. There is a difference between learning and knowledge. 'Knowledge comes when you begin to interpret facts, and to do that you have to combine knowledge with imagination.'

Perhaps the ability of India's best-known lawyer lies in his ability to interpret the Constitution, or any law for that matter. He brings to bear upon complicated legal issues his lucid interpretation, but with it comes a spaciousness of mind and a generosity of spirit which lifts the issue way beyond legal niceties. For example, when there were reports that the Nobel Prize of Mother Teresa may be subject to taxation by the Law Ministry, he flooded the bureaucrats not only on the issue of law but on the question of their meanness. Promptly the bureaucrats back-pedalled.

He brings to bear upon any task he handles, the qualities of earnestness and perseverance. For example, his tome on the income tax—on which he works with his

brother Behram—covers 3000 pages, enough to deter anyone from carrying it, leave alone reading it.

He works constantly on successive editions or supplements which take a good deal of his time when not engaged at the Tata headquarters at Bombay House. Apart from his incisive powers of criticism, Nani possesses a creative mind and one hopes that he can use it to present to India alternative measures like a new Income Tax Code for the consideration of the authorities. He has got what it takes to write one.

A vigorous sixty, one feels Nani's best years are still ahead. At a time when the nation's confidence is shaken in its political leadership, many look up to him to bring back standards into our public conduct. In a nation that has lost its old giants and awaits the debut of the new, Nani's light shines brightly, waiting for others to light their torch so that a nation may be illumined.

C. Rajagopalachari

We must fight to restore India to India. As far as I am concerned this battle is a moral conflict, not a matter of mere politics.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY 1972, one of India's last vital links with her freedom struggle snapped when Rajaji died. Rajaji's was a many sided personality. He distinguished himself as lawyer, author and elder statesman. He fought a gallant battle unto the last. As he struggled for his life at a Madras hospital, the President, the leaders of India, as well as the ordinary man filed past to have a glimpse of him. When he left these earthly shores he took with him a part of our history — and of our hearts.

One of my first recollections of Rajaji was at Egmore Station in Madras in 1963. The platform was studded with people waiting for a train from Delhi. Rajaji had come to receive some of his relatives. He was then 85. His Chief Ministership of Madras and his Governor-Generalship of India were laid down long before. Alone, the stooped figure with a walking stick was making his



way up the platform. As he strode forward slowly, people caught sight of him, whispered to their colleagues and made room for him yards ahead. It was the respect of a people, proud that one like him lived and walked amongst them.

As I got to know him better I realised that in his frail body was a will of steel and the heart of a lion. He was great because he feared no one man but only his Maker.

Few men of this century have plunged so intimately into the day-to-day issues of their country and of the world as did Rajaji. Whether on Vietnam or nuclear tests, on the language issue or the internal politics of Madras, Rajaji had an opinion and made it known. Till the very end, when he was 94, he wrote for his paper *Swarajya*.

Behind this man of the moment were the resources of a lifetime of reading and culture, of a rare strength of character and integrity founded on eternal values. These values he held high throughout his life and they in turn upheld him. Involved in immediate issues he brought to bear upon them the breadth and space of his wide knowledge and immense wisdom.

On one occasion when arrested by the police during the freedom struggle days, he hurriedly took with him to jail four books—the *Mahabharata*, the *Bible*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Shakespeare*, and the works of *Plato*. He could quote as movingly from the *Bible* or the *Koran* as from the *Gita*. He translated into English the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, because these two books were a part of his being.

Remarkable in his discipline (he washed his own clothes till he was 90), he was also instant in his despatch of work. Rajaji enjoyed the simple things of life. When he

once came to our home for supper he savoured the *rasam*, and called for the South Indian cook who had prepared it and complimented him. It was the high point of the cook's life.

Rajaji loved children. To him they were a source of joy and he objected to birth control because, he said, it robbed families of this joy. He loved good books and once told me what a beautiful edition of Burke a friend had got for him from Oxford. If a neatly-typed letter was posted to him, he was capable of complimenting the secretary who typed it. His powers of observation were super-sensitive as were the powers of his intellect.

He was concerned about humanity as a whole and therefore crusaded for the banning of nuclear tests. More important, he was devoted to scores of individuals in this land and they in turn gave him their unstinted loyalty.

He was distressed at the way the country was going under Nehru. That is what prompted him to start the Swatantra Party. To him India was the home of Ashoka and Akbar, and he was intolerant of many who were 'ruling from the once imperial capital, Delhi'.

'Freedom,' he said, 'was gained in 1947, but we lost it within a few years to the permit-licence Raj which was mistaken for a superior kind of freedom. We must fight to restore India to India. As far as I am concerned this battle is a moral conflict, not a matter of mere politics. I consider that the subjugation of the human personality to state direction is a dangerous experiment.'

One of the most moving interviews I had with him was soon after the conclusion of the Indo-Pak war in 1965 when his outspokenness was frowned upon by the authorities. The then Chief Minister of Madras had even

threatened him with imprisonment for his views. But Rajaji was undeterred. He was at peace—it was the peace of a man who had spoken his mind fearlessly.

He was seated in his little office in the gardens of *Kalki*. He was not well. He opened a bottle of mixture and gulped down a dose directly from the bottle. And then quoted from his favourite author Edmund Burke, that one can rob a man of any material possession but not of the freedom to express his mind, for that is his most precious possession.

Earlier in 1942 he resigned from the Congress Working Committee because he disagreed with his colleagues on the occasion of the Cripps Mission. A seer among statesman, he foresaw as early as 1943 the break-up of India and he tried to avert it by working out with Mr. Jinnah a loose federation for the sub-continent. He was the object of attack by some of his own party. He steered through these patches of unpopularity and when freedom came he became Governor of West Bengal and soon after Governor-General of India.

Earlier in the 1920s, writing his Jail Diary he foresaw the future where *Swaraj* (independence) would come. 'Elections and their corruption,' he said, 'injustice and the power and tyranny of wealth and inefficiency of administration will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination.'

After stepping down from the Governor-Generalship he became Minister without portfolio in the Union

Government and later Union Home Minister. In his late seventies he made a comeback to state politics as Chief Minister of Madras. But these offices which came to him were not the result of his efforts to seek them. His career is a study in true leadership. He was a highly successful criminal lawyer who perceived the greatness of Gandhiji when Gandhiji was still in South Africa and raised money for his struggle. He gave up his lucrative career to participate in the freedom struggle. When Gandhiji wanted *khadi* and spinning to be propagated, he left the comfort of his home and car and settled in a remote village, a three-hour bullockcart journey from the nearest station. There with 150 dwellings he tried his experiments propagating *khaddar*. His *ashram* supplied cotton and paid for the spun yarn. Two thousand people, mostly women, earned a livelihood. Old wells were cleaned up for fresh water. He propagated the policy of temperance from the rear of a bullockcart—village to village.

Personal work followed propaganda. The instance of the cobbler Veeran, who, when drunk, had beaten his wife, showed Rajaji's flair. Importuned by Veeran's wife, Rajaji sent for the man who denied drunkenness. 'But you were drunk last night and hit your wife' he insisted. 'No, sir, it is not true,' repeated Veeran.

Acting on a brain-wave, he placed in Veeran's hands a pair of *chappals* the cobbler had made and dared him: 'Swear on these chappals that you are telling the truth.'

His defences broken, Veeran fell at Rajaji's feet, owned up and vowed never again to touch liquor. Nor did he, till he died. Well before his death Veeran was given charge of the *ashram's* footwear unit, for which Rajaji, fair himself at using the awl, often had helpful ideas.

This experience held Rajaji well in future. Leadership to him, was the pursuit of causes not of chairs. He was as happy to be in office as out of it. And when out of it, he avidly pursued his writing of books and articles. As his biographer and grandson Rajmohan Gandhi so well put it, 'He had an ear for other tunes besides freedom.'

If one searches for the roots of Rajaji's strength one comes to the conclusion that it lay in his faith in God and his clean family life. He was devoted to his wife Manga and nursed her with tender care in her ill-health. She died when he was 37 leaving him five children. It was normal for men in his time to remarry but he refused to, and put aside all interest in that subject. When he was in his 80s, at a reception in Punjab the Chairman of the meeting referred to the fact that Rajaji's strength of personality lay in his being a *brahmachari* (one who abstains from sex). Rajaji said nothing in public. After the meeting he turned to the Chairman and remarked: 'You may have a point in that.'

Steeped in scriptures himself he searched for a renewal of his faith as he went through life. In 1968, he once asked, 'If God is all attentive, why did He permit 20 years of misrule in India?' I chipped in, 'Could the point be that we were inattentive rather than God?' 'Yes, that is true' he humbly nodded.

Rajaji was quick at repartee and delighted in giving unexpected answers. When someone congratulated him on his 81st birthday he replied: 'No need to congratulate me. You have only to start early enough.'

In 1939 in the Congress Working Committee meeting Ram Manohar Lohia, a socialist, strongly attacked the conservative stand of the Congress, saying, 'I don't care a

tuppence for this.' Instantly Rajaji shot back: 'Lohia, you should swear in Russian currency — not British!'

He had a great sense of history and an amazing disregard for his own part in it. On two occasions I ventured to propose that he might write his memoirs for the sake of future historians. On both occasions he dismissed it firmly. 'Let them find out,' he chuckled. A year before he died, when he was 93, Sadasivam, his close associate, requested him to at least jot down the important events of his life. Rajaji replied that even great sages had not done so, and who was he beside them? 'Man must do his duty and disappear', so saying he clasped Sadasivam's hand, drew him close and said, 'Sadasivam, after I pass away none need remember me.'*

During his last illness, when a drip needle was inserted in his left hand, he was uncomfortable and frequently touched it with his other hand. When the doctor chided him not to, he acquiesced, 'You mean the right hand should not know what the left hand is doing?' Forty-eight hours before he died, when his condition was critical, the doctor lent forward and asked him how he felt. Rajaji replied, 'I am very happy.' These were his last words.

* Later Rajmohan Gandhi undertook to write the biography of his grandfather, Vol. I of which entitled 'A Warrior from the South' was published by Bharathan, 1978.

Lal Bahadur Shastri

This is my country's call, please do not ask me to ignore it.

THE OCCASION WAS the laying of the foundation stone of Benares Hindu University. Present on the occasion were a vast concourse of people, including princes who had donated to its funds. Invited to lay the foundation stone was a lawyer returned from South Africa who was just making his mark upon the land — M.K. Gandhi. He spoke of the shame of a nation suffering under foreign yoke and went on to assail the props of the British Raj and especially the princes. One by one the princes rose and walked out in protest. Officials of the Raj were the next to make their exit. Undeterred Gandhiji went on. Finally, even the Chairman abandoned his post. Gandhiji observed that as the Chair was empty it was time to conclude his address.

Gandhiji lost the princes and the Chairman but he won for life a youngster of 11 who one day was to wield authority greater than that of all those princes. A few years later Gandhiji issued the call for non-cooperation



with British rule and asked students to leave their studies. Lal Bahadur Shastri responded to that call. He was now 16. His guru Mishraji tried to persuade the young man not to take this hasty step. He appealed to Shastri to think of his widowed mother and sisters. Shastri gently told him: 'This is my country's call. Please do not ask me to ignore it.'

Shastri next went to his mother. 'Please tell me frankly if my action is wrong.'

She put her hand on his shoulder. 'I believe in you, son. I also believe that you have not acted in haste and have given good thought to it before taking the step...Think well before you decide on a course of action, but once you have taken the step, do not retrace it.'

Equipped with this assurance Shastri joined the agitation and was first arrested in 1921.

Shastri's mother, Ramdulari Devi, must have had some sense of destiny about her son. When he was a baby of four months, she and her husband went to Allahabad—the holy city of Prayag—for a dip in the Ganges. Crowds pushed and jostled and in this mass of surging humanity the teenage mother lost grip of her child. And in a flash he was lost. The baby had tumbled, unknown, into the basket of a milkman. As he was praying for a child, he thought it was an answer to his prayer. Fortunately the baby was soon located and returned to the mother.

About a year later Shastri's father died. It was his maternal grandfather Hazari Lal who showered affection on Shastri who was fondly called *Nanhe* (small). He grew up in Mogulsarai, not far from Benares. Too poor to afford a football, he and his friends played with a ball

made of *khajur* flowers wrapped in cloth. A small ball similarly made was hit with L-shaped branches—their hockey sticks.

After he left studies at Benares University to join the non-cooperation movement, Shastri joined a national university started by Gandhiji's disciples—the Kashi Vidyapeeth.

On finishing his four-year course, at the Kashi Vidyapeeth, he joined the Servants of the People Society for the uplift of masses in 1926. His salary was Rs.60 per month.

At 23 he married Lalita Devi. They had four sons and two daughters. Though in later years she travelled with him to Nepal and Soviet Union, Mrs. Shastri maintained, 'My place is in the home.'

In the 1920s and 1930s Shastri participated in all the activities of the Independence movement and in the inevitable round of jails. Times were hard. He knew the value of money and even as Prime Minister, when he left the room, he would make sure that the lights and the fans were switched off. It was part of his thorough make-up, which, coupled with an eye for detail and the ability to win people, was responsible for his rise in the Congress hierarchy.

The 'iron in his soul' was nowhere more evident than when he once came home on a week's parole from jail as his four-year-old son was down with typhoid. When the time to return to jail came, the child's temperature had reached 106 degrees. The child whispered 'Babuji, please don't go.' Tears rolled down Shastri's cheeks. He suddenly shook his head, folded his hands to greet everyone, and marched back to jail.

During the Quit India period he was underground for some time, cyclostyling leaflets at Anand Bhavan, Allahabad. He would possibly have escaped detection had he not announced a public meeting, switched the venue and, perching on a tonga, tried to harangue a crowd against the British Government. It was not Shastri alone who paid the price of jail-going. With precious little money his wife Lalitadevi bravely tried to bring up a family. She neglected herself and soon contracted tuberculosis. She reassured Shastri, then in jail, that all was well. When word reached him about her health, he was shaken. He wrote to a good friend who attended to the needs of Lalitadevi and she got better. Shastri meanwhile had lost a lot of weight too. It was a happy reunion when he emerged from jail.

Shastri was soon elected MLA and then appointed a Minister in the Government. Now the pinch of poverty on the family was released. He became at various times Minister for Police, for Transport and Parliamentary Secretary to Pandit Pant, the formidable Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. As a Minister he attacked his work with vigour and soon Pant recommended him to Nehru to take charge of the Central Election machinery of the Congress for the first General Elections in 1951. So successful was he that he was appointed for the next Elections too. By 1962 he was, along with Nehru and Indira Gandhi, one of the three members of Parliamentary Selection Board. As Minister for Home Affairs he was close to Nehru. When under the Kamaraj Plan* many senior Ministers

* See the chapter on Kamaraj.

were removed, Nehru reluctantly accepted Shastri's resignation. Not to have done so would have laid him open to the charge that Nehru was favouring him.

Some months later Nehru had a stroke. Shastri was called to see Nehru and the Prime Minister appealed to him for help in disposing his papers. In fact he became Nehru's closest aide as Minister without Portfolio. In May 1964 when Nehru died, Shastri was a strong contender for the most powerful office in the land. And by a consensus he was selected by Kamaraj as leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party and then elected, Prime Minister.

As Prime Minister he handled ably the language agitation in the South, India's relations with her neighbours, and the war—and subsequent peace—with Pakistan.

When Tamil Nadu was agitated over the imposition of Hindi, Shastri, coming from the heart of Hindi-speaking India assured them that Hindi would not be imposed and English would continue as an associate language.

His visits to Nepal helped to heal a rupture between India and the mountain kingdom. He went to Sri Lanka to discuss the problems of plantation workers of Indian origin and settled the issue. Next he visited Burma.

But the dominating issue was relations with Pakistan. Perhaps mistaking his gentleness for weakness, President Ayub Khan of Pakistan probed the Kutch frontier with India and some months later threw in the full weight of the Pakistan army into Kashmir. Pakistan was confident India would not cross the international border into the Punjab. Shastri took them by surprise and approved of the Indian army's plan to cross the international border. Within no time the Indian army was on the outskirts of Lahore and Sialkot. During that short war, the tiny

Indian-made Gnats proved more successful than the less manoeuvrable though large U.S. Sabre jets. At a rally in Bombay before a crowd of almost a million, Shastri spoke with a light touch. Looking diminutive as he stood on a high podium, he told the rally about the Gnats, adding 'These days it seems, it is the little things which prove more effective!' The audience chuckled as the little man said those words.

The war over, Shastri told his Cabinet colleagues, 'Now we must preserve peace with the same vigour with which we pursued the war.'

Four months later at the famous Hall of the Sessions at Tashkent, under the aegis of Prime Minister Kosygin of the U.S.S.R., a historic declaration was signed. The two nations agreed to withdraw from all territories occupied during the war and agreed not to resort to force to resolve problems. Both reiterated their stand on Kashmir but no more.

That night at 10 o'clock Shastri rang up his family to find out the reaction in India to the agreement. A couple of hours later as he was unwinding after the strenuous negotiations of the previous days, he was struck by a heart attack. Before the doctors could help he was no more. At his finest hour, the hero of India had fallen.

Next morning a sorrowing nation received his body. Millions felt that one of their own family had passed away. Shastri had none of the glamour of Nehru, the terrific mass-appeal of Gandhiji, and yet he had in 18 short months endeared himself to the nation. How did he manage to do it?

He had the common touch. Shastri had no fanciful thoughts. He touched no heights of oratory. He was of the

earth. He had an art so rare among politicians—the ability to laugh at himself. His great joy was to play with his grand-children and he is once reported to have complained. 'I am so small that nobody likes to play with me. I therefore turn to children.'

In 1958 when he was Union Railway Minister, I went to see him with some young men of India who had decided to set their lives right for the nation's sake. He looked tiny seated in that high chair. One of the young men spoke of how he had stopped travelling in public transport without tickets. The Railway Minister of India bent forward and said quite simply, 'You know, I too used to do the same. I had no money as a young man and at one time I used to journey daily in the train without a ticket!' He recalled that the distance he covered was about 18 miles a day. When the young men stepped out of his chamber, they felt that they had met a man who could understand them.

That gift of understanding he brought to his statesmanship. He was never harsh or dogmatic but he had a mind of his own. 'There is more iron in his soul than appears on the surface,' commented former U.S. Ambassador Professor Galbraith. 'He listens to every point of view, he makes up his mind firmly, and once he has made them, his decisions stick...He is the kind of man who is trusted.'

Shastri had that rarest of qualities among politicians, the ability to love even those who disagreed with him. Even the opposition did not relish attacking him personally.

His friend and biographer D.R.Mankekar in his biography of Shastri, wrote of him:

When he spoke, his large soft eyes looked into you; and his soothing voice at once put you at ease and spoke to you as a brother man and not as a superior person—no self-conceit, no vain glory, no egocentricity, the most common failing in a political celebrity. Shastri was the most human personality this writer ever came across. For after fashioning Shastri, Nature would appear to have broken the mould. There is none other like him.*

Those who had met Shastri would agree with this assessment.

**LAL BAHADUR SHASTRI* by D.R. Mankekar, Builders of Modern India Series, Publications Division, Government of India, 1973.

M. S. Subbulakshmi

Any raga has the purpose of directing the minds of the listeners towards God and his manifestations.

WHO AM I, a mere Prime Minister before the Queen of Song!' said Jawaharlal Nehru after a performance by M.S. Subbulakshmi.

To hear M. S. Subbulakshmi sing is an ennobling experience; to meet her is a humbling one. Few have greater claims to be proud; yet, for all her attainments, she is a model of humility. There is a secret about this 'enchanted singer with an enchanting voice', as Sarojini Naidu called her. Wherein does her secret lie?

At 65 she remains the most renowned artist of India. She started her singing career 47 years ago when as a young woman of 18 she sang before the Madras Music Academy. Experienced singers were quick to acknowledge her talent. Six years later, in 1940, she married T. Sadasivam. Soon after she acted in her one and only film, *Mira*. Through that film, it is said, she 'aroused the dormant spirituality of millions in South and



North India'.

Since then she has given concert recitals throughout the length and breadth of India, from coast to coast in America, in South-East Asia and in the capitals of Europe. She has sung at the Edinburgh Festival in 1963 and at the U.N. in 1966.

In 1974 she was given the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service. The citation spoke of her as a 'spiritual singer to many millions in India' whose exalted rendering of devotional songs has supported numerous public causes in India for four decades.

'M.S.', as she is called, has raised for charities funds between rupees one and two crores. Her husband told me that the only money she accepted for herself was Rs.20,000 for her role in the film *Mira*. This she handed over to him and with it he bought Kalki Gardens which became their home and seat of the magazine *Kalki* that enthralled thousands for four decades. 'All that she has with her now,' confided Sadasivam softly, 'is the jewellery she brought with her when she married me.'

Thanks to my colleague Rajmohan Gandhi, a close family friend of theirs, I too was invited to stay at the Sadasivams' Kalki home in 1966. It was an old home with large rooms and a spacious verandah. Often one heard the *veena* being played and M.S. had her disciplined time of practice. She owes her interest in music to her mother who was a distinguished *veena* player. At a young age she accompanied her mother.

I got to know them both better in February 1978 when she came to Panchgani after a recital in Pune. Even in the leisure and quiet of that place her serenity stood out. Over meals she spoke little. When questioned she often

looked at her husband with a smile and witty Sadasivam was never short of words. As they were leaving someone asked her to sign in the Visitor's Book. The celebrity said, 'My husband should sign first.' 'I owe my all to my husband,' she says. 'By his loving care he is my parent; by his unerring guidance he is my preceptor.'

He is also among her most ardent admirers. It is an experience to hear M.S. give a concert but a double treat to sit in the second row behind her husband! He lives rapturously every moment of the recital, and occasionally signals to his daughter Radha, seated next to M.S., if an impromptu number or encore is to be given.

When Subbulakshmi makes her debut on the dais she does it reverently. She is no prima donna. She does not want to attract attention to herself. She settles down with her daughter and her accompanists as they take their time to tune.

Then the voice that has thrilled millions is heard. First you drink in the appealing timbre of her voice, then you marvel at her technical virtuosity. Thereafter you get absorbed emotionally and as the programme continues you feel that the pettiness and the struggle of life around you is lifted and you are on another plane. In her devotion and charm she has carried you nearer to the Creator.

M.S. once explained: '*Bhakti* is nothing but the devotion that we show to the Divinity that resides within us. Once we regard the Divinity within us with devotional fervour, we are bound to develop the same affection towards everything outside. The reason is that the same Divine Truth runs through all things. When the devotee has attained this state, service to the world becomes his creed. Tyagaraja has given a convincing illustration of

this truth in his composition *Sukhi Evaro*. He lays down that the man who sings in praise of God is he who upholds truth, who is always at the service of humanity, to whom all gods and goddesses are the same and who sings with an impeccable voice. From this we understand that truth, service and impartiality should go hand in hand with a sweet voice. The poet Bharati says that "if there is radiance in the heart, there will be radiance in the voice." A pure mind and a sweet voice cannot be separated from each other.'

C.V. Narasimhan, former Deputy Secretary-General of the U.N., who has known M.S. for forty years, says:

To understand her as a musician, one has to know her as a person. The qualities of humility, simplicity and dedication that mark her personal life, are abundantly reflected in her music. I believe that the key to great music is humility to the point of self-effacement. The singer then becomes a pure vehicle, an interpreter rather than a virtuoso showing off his own talents.

She enjoys being with her accompanists and keeps time with their instruments, tapping her hand. She looks affectionately at them as their fingers flutter and the drummers conduct a lively dialogue with each other. Because she has lost herself in the Creator she has all the time for other people and interest in them.

Her life is of one piece. As she is on stage, so she is off it. Her accompanist, Vinayakram, speaks of the love he gets from M.S. and her husband. Because they give sacrificially, he says, he likes to work with them.

'Any *raga*,' says M.S. 'has the purpose of directing the minds of the listeners towards God and his manifesta-

tions.' Devotion inspires her singing. '*Bhakti*,' she says, 'should go hand in hand with a virtuous mind. Those who wish to take to the fine art of music must be good people. It may not be easy to be a good person. There is, however, a great advantage. There is no time bar to becoming good. There is no question of becoming a doctor, an engineer or a lawyer after a certain age. But there is no age limit for anyone to become a good person. In the mind of a good person *bhakti* (i.e. devotion towards God) is an instinctive growth. God Himself makes His home in such a mind.'

In her Presidential Address to the Madras Music Academy in 1968 she observed:

Students of music should devote their attention to the acquisition of purity in voice and *sruti*. To achieve this, it is essential that they should practice voice-culture assiduously. One should not be content with possessing a sweet voice; in the manner in which land is ploughed to yield a good crop, the voice should be cultivated in order to get the best out of it. The voice should be made to traverse the three octaves with felicity, curbing the tendency to branch into a falsetto. Knowledge of the exact position of *swaras* is most important. This cannot be learnt from notation or written tests. If learnt in that way it will remain only as theoretical knowledge and will not blossom into the art of music. The manner in which the *swaras* are woven into the various *ragas* in our Karnatic music can be best studied by playing them on the *veena*.

The *veena*, which can be heard in the sanctum sanctorum of a temple, was not only her mother's instrument.

M.S. is accomplished at playing it herself. Everyone, she believes, should study music as they study history or geography or arithmetic. For we live in a restless world and a world of violence. As the violinist Yehudi Menuhin says, if peace and good conduct are to prevail in the present-day world, it is essential that the appreciation of music grows in a big way. 'Let there be less of speaking,' says Menuhin, 'and more of music; and periods of silence when the music also has to stop.'

M.S. echoes these words.

J.R.D. Tata

I do not take myself too seriously.

A CONVOY OF cars and buses speeds along a highway in Sweden with motorcycle escorts on either side. A helicopter constantly hovers over it for the cargo is precious. In this convoy are men of finance and industry who between them control billions and who could be held up for vast ransoms. Every six months they meet either in America or in Europe under the aegis of the Chase Manhattan Bank. Among them are Dr. Giovanni Agnelli, President of Fiat; the President of Ford Motors; the biggest ship-builder in the world from Hong Kong; a member of the House of Mitsubishi; David Rockefeller, President of Chase Manhattan; and Dr. Henry Kissinger, Rockefeller's friend and adviser. The most carefree among this select company is J.R.D. Tata from India. He assures his friends: 'Nobody will kidnap me, for nobody will want a ransom in rupees.'

When not on one of his travels in India or abroad, he stays with his wife in a bungalow that has defiantly stood its ground when skyscrapers have soared all around it.



The sprawling home is an island of shady trees, a vestige of a bygone era of space and leisure. One room in that home is allocated for a workshop and a gymnasium which J.R.D. proudly shows to his visitors.

He prefers to spend a good deal of his time in his modest library. There is a whole shelf of books on aviation, another shelf of books on military ventures and warfare, another on sports cars and motor racing. He likes to read crime fiction and lighter books like David Niven's *Bring on the Horses*. He has read all the books by Louis Lamour. J.R.D. is not just a collector of books but he is a reader and an enthusiastic one at that. After an interview at his home I returned with three of his favourite books including one by Alexander Woolcott, which J.R.D. was keen I should read.

J.R.D. Tata is a product of two continents. His father, R.D. (Ratanji Dadabhoy) Tata was a cousin of Jamsetji Tata, who gave India the steel and hydro-electric industries. R. D. Tata, then in his early 40s, had differences with Jamsetji's crown prince Dorab Tata and decided to start his own business in Paris dealing in precious stones from the Far East. To equip himself in business in France R.D.Tata was taking tuitions in French from one Madame Briere. It is to Madame Briere's daughter that R. D. Tata proposed and they were married in 1902. Their marriage created a sensation because R. D. Tata not only married outside his Parsi community but took the revolutionary step of having his European and Christian wife converted to the Zoroastrian faith. Suzanne Briere changed her name to Soonu.

J.R.D. remembers his mother as a very resourceful, intelligent and adaptable lady, who—first with two, then

three, four and five children—packed up her house in France and came to India to be with her husband and went back again year after year. J.R.D. remembers his grandmother as a very formidable lady. Her husband was a humorist and after some time with her, says J.R.D., the gentleman 'ran away as anyone would have, had he been married to my grandmother.' Perhaps J.R.D. inherited a sense of humour from his grandfather on the French side.

J.R.D.'s early years were divided between Bombay and France. In France he studied at one of the three top public schools called Janson Besailly. He would study one year there and the other year in Bombay at the Cathedral High School. After the Russian Revolution had taken place in 1917, he recalls that most of his history teachers in France were communists.

As a young boy J.R.D. associated himself more with France than with India, partly because he was not good at English while he had won a prize at French composition. Secondly, as a growing young man, he felt angry that India was not free. After school he was drafted for a year into the French Army and assigned to an Algerian regiment in France.

Bleriot, the first man to fly across the English Channel, had a house on the coast of France near R. D. Tata's house. Bleriot's pilot who used to land the small plane on the beach, once gave J.R.D. a joy ride. It was then that the 15-year-old J.R.D. decided that one day he would fly.

In 1929 J.R.D. passed out with No.1 on his Licence as the first Indian pilot. A year later he competed for the Aga Khan Trophy. It was offered for the first Indian to fly between India and England and India. When he landed at Aboukir in Egypt, he found that Aspy Engineer, the

other contender, who was flying from London to Karachi, was stranded for want of a spark plug. J.R.D. sportingly parted with his and they continued their journey in opposite directions. Aspy beat him by a few hours. 'I am glad he won,' says J.R.D., 'because it helped him to get into the Indian air Force.' Later Aspy was to be the second Indian to be Chief of the Indian Air Force. J.R.D. was to have a few other adventures. In the early 1930s a daring Englishman called Nevill Vintcent came along to India offering joy rides. He suggested to J.R.D. that they start an airline. That was J.R.D.'s dream. But Sir Dorab Tata, then Chairman of the Houses of Tatas, was not interested. J.R.D.'s mentor, a retired I.C.S. official, persuaded Sir Dorab to agree and so the Tata Airlines was launched as a division of Tata Sons.

One October morning as the sun rose on the eastern horizon, a single-engined Piper plane took off from Karachi with a load of mail from Bombay. As the plane hummed and rose the pilot said a word of prayer. India's first airline was inaugurated with J.R.D. at the controls. 'How did flying in those small planes affect you when you were alone in the plane, without radio, without instruments and without ground aids? Did you feel there was a Creator?'

'The fact that you find yourself totally alone in the immensity of space made you very humble and made you see of what little consequence you are. And then you identify God with the immensity of nature. These are the only times when I felt totally alone and was conscious of that loneliness.' He said that he shared the experience of the writer-pilot Saint Exupery which is so well expressed in the book *Night Flight*.

When asked whether he did any stunt flying he said he did and in one case he was within ten seconds of disaster. His saving grace was that he was respectful enough to go up to six thousand feet before he started descending. His instructor 'did a criminal thing in releasing me to fly solo without teaching me how to get out of a spin and how to get into a spin. Fortunately I read about it. When you are in a fast spin with full engines and you want to pull out, your temptation is to draw the joy stick close at you and if you do that, the plane is plunged further into spinning. The thing to do is to centralise the joy stick and then even off.' Fortunately for him, after he had dived from six thousand to one thousand feet he remembered what he had read, centralised the joy stick, and the plane evened off. When he landed J.R.D. was furious with his instructor for releasing him to fly solo without essential instructions. 'To be a safe pilot you must know how to spin,' remarks J.R.D.

The airline he pioneered blossomed into Air-India and in 1948, in a joint venture with the Indian Government, J.R.D. launched Air-India's first international route to London. The first office of Air-India at the airport at London was in a caravan. For the next 30 years, J.R.D. nursed Air-India and with his flare and efficiency made it one of the world's great airlines. For almost 30 years he spent about half of his day working for Air-India and the other half for the vast industrial enterprises of Tatas. To Air-India he gave his services as a labour of love. Among the Tata companies, closest to his heart is Tata Steel with which he began his career in 1924.

J.R.D. came out to settle in India from France at the age of 20. By the time he was 34, the then Chairman of

Tatas died suddenly. All the senior directors met together and turned to young J.R.D. to be the Chairman of the parent company, Tata Sons. When I asked him why they selected him at such a young age, he replied modestly: 'Perhaps they thought I was hard working.' It was the normal practice of the Tata Chairman to head all the Tata companies. J.R.D. discontinued that and kept in his charge those companies where he felt his hand was essential. When asked: 'What has been the most satisfying experience of your life?' J.R.D. replied: 'The flying experience has dominated and no other can equal the excitement of the first solo flight. Next is Air-India where I had the freedom to do what I wanted. In a way it was the really big thing that I started. While Tatas have achieved the reputation they have and success, what reputation they have is not just due to my achievement though I may have had some part in its success.'

He continued, 'What success I may have achieved in business I owe to one man, John Peterson, a burly Scotsman and a retired I.C.S. official. It is from him that I acquired my love for English and my love for poetry. He was remarkable in so far as he would be very polite to Indians and went out of his way to help them but he could be quite rough with his own people. When my father took me to him and asked him to train me as he was the Managing Director of Tata Steel, Peterson put a desk in his room and for the next four or five years every paper that came to him went through me and every paper that went out went through me. He included me on every discussion and interview he had. It is from him that I acquired many qualities.'

'Have you trained anyone else as he has trained you?'

'You know I have never had a great opinion of my ability, possibly because I am not academically qualified, and I feel I do not have the right to train people; but I have ideas and I have learnt never to take anything for granted.'

J.R.D. mentioned how one day he had invited a certain Bengali gentleman to join the Board of Tata Steel and dictated a letter for him. But when the secretary gave the letter for signature it was addressed to another man with exactly the same name and a different address. 'Fortunately, I caught it otherwise I would have been in a very embarrassing situation, having invited one man and appointed another! I may have had to have two directors instead of an additional one!'

J.R.D.'s other rule for business success is: 'Strive for perfection and you will reach excellence.' I once asked him what the secret of his success in business was. He replied, 'No secret, it is long hours. I used to put in 70 to 75 hours a week of work.' He then added rather mischievously, 'You know something? I do not like work. I like to be interrupted.'

At 76 J.R.D. is erect and well preserved. He is keen on physical fitness and he has taken the trouble to exercise all his life. Till recently he played tennis regularly and now plays golf and skis three weeks a year. As a young man he loved fast cars and raced round Bombay in his red Bugatti. If aviation had not claimed him, he would have competed for the Grand Prix, which incidentally he seldom missed seeing.

As a young man too he was hot-headed and felt irked at being ruled by foreign power. This emerged at an encounter he had in January 1930 with the cavalcade of a

Governor of Bengal. In those days it was fashionable for fiery Bengali rebels to take a pot-shot at the British Governor or the Police Commissioner. So the authorities had to be pretty careful. On a bitterly cold day, J.R.D. was driving down with his wife from Darjeeling to Siliguri after their honeymoon. For almost an hour the police halted their car. Other cars too lined up on the road in chilly weather. J.R.D. and his wife decided to register their protest. They planned that when the Governor's car came, Mrs. Tata would step in front of the Governor's car while J.R.D. would give His Excellency a piece of his mind. It worked. Mrs Tata stepped in front of the Governor's car, while J.R.D. shouted: 'Who the hell do you think you are keeping five hundred people, women and children, in the cold for an hour? You damn fool!' Unfortunately Mrs. Tata also wanted to give the Governor a piece of her mind, and rushed to the car window. In the process, the Governor's car shot off. Among those shivering in the cold was a British Anglican priest in his white collar. He came up to J.R.D. and with all the dignity he could command, said: 'Sir, I do not approve of your language but I certainly approve of your sentiments.'

It is instances like these of arrogance that drove J.R.D. even closer to Jawaharlal Nehru and the national movement. Motilal Nehru stayed with R.D. Tata in Bombay. In his younger days J.R.D. was a hero-worshipper of Nehru. He recalls that at Independence, when he was 43, he was much enthused. 'I had tremendous dreams and expectations of cooperation between the private sector and the Government.' But his dreams did not come true.

With more than 50 years of leadership in management, he has developed his own philosophy and method. 'One

of the qualities of leadership is to assess what is needed to get the best results for an enterprise. If that demands being a very active executive chairman as I was in Air India, I did that. On the other hand, in one of our other companies where I know that the managing director likes to be alone and will get the results that way, I argue with myself and decide that it will be stupid for me to come in the way when the other person has a capacity for focusing his genius and producing the results. Often as chairman our main responsibility is to inspire respect.' And then he added: 'Don't forget, I like people.'

Although he never says so publicly, he actually runs Tatas with an inner core of advisors. He respects them as his equals and encourages them to speak out—which some do. When asked how he could get high-powered and strong-willed men like Sir Ardeshir Dalal, Sir Homi Mody and Mr. A. D. Shroff to work together in Tatas, he replied that the thing to do was to give people definite and clearly marked responsibility and then if they ever crossed each other's path, to keep them apart.

Repeatedly Tatas have presented schemes to the Government that would have benefited India but, because they are large and because J.R.D. will not stoop to certain means, the schemes have been turned down or put in cold storage. The man who has done so much for India is like a Prometheus bound—and frustrated. He mused, 'Even if Nehru (a good friend) had wanted me to join Government 30 years ago, I think I would have been caught and frustrated.' He warned Nehru at Independence that to succeed India must curb its population growth. Nehru was angry. 'Our population,' said Nehru, 'is our strength.' Time has proved J.R.D. right.

J.R.D. has been the first public figure to propose as early as 1968, that a presidential system is more suited to India than the parliamentary system.

In office J.R.D. always appears restless. He either fidgets with his pencil or with his spectacles. He loves to press the various telephone switches and will laboriously take the trouble to work out his figures on his little calculator. It was only in his study at home that I found him relaxed. 'Although I appear agitated with my hands,' he explains, 'inside I am relaxed.' This inner peace has taken him through difficult days and allowed him to face great crises and to carry vast responsibilities.

The remarkable quality about J.R.D. is that he has not permitted time, age or habit to dull his sensitivity to human suffering and to the subhuman conditions in which many of his fellow citizens exist, as in the slums of Bombay. He yearns to be a fountain of living water to those less fortunate than himself.

If you look into the steady eyes that gaze behind the questioning brow, you perceive sometimes a touch of mischief, at other times earnestness, and sometimes sadness. His saving grace is: 'I do not take myself too seriously.' Those long lonely flights in the immensity of the Universe have given him a perspective that has lasted him well on *terra firma*. The wordly power and glory that came to him as Chairman of Tatas and of Air-India, he has used with sensitivity and care. To many in the House of Tata and outside it, he may be an epic figure but to those who know him, he is all too human.*

*Further material on J.R.D. Tata's style of management, is available in *The Creation of Wealth: A Tata Story*; IBH, 1981.

Mother Teresa

If you judge people, you have no time to love them.

THE BLUE AND white stripes of her sari framed her lined and smiling face. She stood in the corridor outside her chapel in Lower Circular Road, Calcutta, shorter in height than I had imagined her to be. A coachload of tourists were crowding around her and she had a word for each one. They were pushing currency notes into her left hand and flicking their cameras. She was unfazed by both. She was more interested in the people who crowded in front of her. Every time she had even a brief word with one of the tourists her eyes seemed to dwell entirely on him or her. As the tourist guide gave the call that they should leave for the airport, she gently asked, 'Would you not like to spend some time with Jesus in our chapel?' Meekly they trooped in. She looks upon herself mainly as a channel that takes people to God.

Agnes Gonxha Bejaxhiu was born on August 27, 1910, of Albanian parents. Of peasant stock, they had settled in Skopje, Yugoslavia. At the age of 12 she wanted to



become a nun, and at 18 she joined the Order of Loretto nuns. At the age of 19, she arrived in India. When asked what influences shaped her life she simply replied, 'Love of parents and the Gospels.' When I pressed the question, asking if any book or perhaps any Catholic saint had particularly influenced her, she shook her head.

'Why did you choose India for your service?' I asked.

'Because India was a missionary country like the countries of Africa,' she replied.

For fifty years India has been the arena of her life and work. She became an Indian citizen in 1948.

'Do you have any relatives at home?'

'No,' she replied, 'only a brother.' Some sentiment seemed to sweep over her. She visibly pulled herself up at that stage and requested me to change the subject.

'I love teaching most of all,' she says, and she gave 17 years of her life to teaching. At one time she was Principal of St. Mary's High School, Calcutta. Many of the girls who joined her in the early years of her mission of mercy were her pupils there. The girls in the school came from well-to-do families and were neatly dressed. She saw them a good part of the day, but when she came to her room she saw on the other side of the wall the horror of the Moti Jheel slum. The squalor made her spirit restless, and in her many retreats she sought an answer to this restlessness.

One day in a train speeding to Darjeeling she heard the answer to her prayers. 'I heard the call to give up all and follow Him into the slums, to serve Him amongst the poorest of the poor.'

'You accepted what the Inner Voice asked of you?' Malcolm Muggeridge once enquired of her.

'I knew it as His will,' she replied, 'and that I had to follow Him. There was no doubt it was going to be His work. But I waited for the decision of the Church.'

'You never doubted that it was God's calling,' I questioned her. 'But how does a person know for sure what his or her calling is?'

She replied, 'Deep down in our heart we know exactly what our calling is—if we are humble and sincere. God cannot deceive us. He created us to love and to be loved. He created us for deeper things. There is some hand, some purpose, behind our being.'

The decision of the Church took almost a couple of years. When she got the Pope's permission she left the neat lawns of Loretto and the life she knew for the rigours of the unknown way. She exchanged the habit of the nun and donned a coarse sari with blue striped borders. She first went to Patna for a three-month intensive course in nursing. Then with Rs. 5 and plenty of faith she launched out into her work. She visited the homes of the poor in Calcutta. She saw the need of a school for the children and started with five children. They were grown-up kids but she had to begin with the Bengali alphabet. There was no blackboard, so she wrote the alphabet in the dust.

Next day two or three girls from Loretto came to help her with the children, and so the work started. They found one room to live in, in the home of a generous family. But soon they needed two rooms. And so the work grew.

The first woman that Mother Teresa picked up from the streets was half eaten by rats and ants. The hospital admitted her only because Mother Teresa refused to budge. On the same day she found other people dying on

the streets. She went to the municipal authorities for a place. They offered her a rest-house for pilgrims who came to the Kali temple. It was an empty building and Mother Teresa was delighted to receive it. Within 24 hours she had patients there, and since then she and her nuns have picked up about 30,000, of whom about half have died.

'We help the poor to die with God,' she says. 'We help them to say sorry to God. It is between them and God alone. Nobody else. Nobody has the right to come in at that time. We just help them to make peace with God. We live that they may die, so that they may go home according to what is written in the Book, be it written according to Hindu or Muslim or Buddhist or Catholic or Protestant or any other people. There are societies that collect their own dead. We have never had any trouble.'

She called her first home for the dying *Nirmal Hriday*, meaning 'place of the pure heart'. Nobody there has died feeling unwanted or unloved. She calls that home 'the treasure house of Calcutta'. Some who are dying ask for Ganges water, others for a prayer, some ask for an apple or a cigarette. Others simply want somebody to sit with them as they go.

As she launched upon this work a group of young people were going round threatening to chase them out. The nuns were naturally frightened. Some of the young people had earlier convinced the Police Commissioner of the need to chase Mother Teresa out of the locality. On arrival the Police Commissioner found the Mother cleaning the sores from a wound infected with maggots. The stench was unbearable. He went back to the young people and said, 'I have given my word that I will push this lady

out, and I will keep it. But before I do you must get your mothers and your sisters to do the work she is doing. Only then will I exercise my authority.' The crowd melted away, but the attacks continued.

One day she confronted these wild people: 'If this is the way you want it, kill me. I will go straight to Heaven. But you must stop this nonsense.' After that the attacks stopped.

Today from that one Home have sprung up 62 Homes for the dying destitutes around the world, run by the Missionaries of Charity.

Mother Teresa's second mission of mercy was towards abandoned children. She has an open door for children, whether they are hopeless cases from hospitals or jails, or whether they are infants whose cries are heard from a dustbin. To her abortion is not only a murder; it is man or woman putting himself or herself in the place of God, deciding whether life should survive. 'Our way is to preserve life; the life of Christ in the child.' Today the Order runs 48 Homes for abandoned children. One of the toddlers whom her sisters had picked up was asked what he would become when he grew up. He confidently replied, 'I will become Mother Teresa.' When he reached a certain age the Mother sent him for training in priesthood.

The third great thrust of her work is for the lepers. In 1957 five lepers came to her Home. Fortunately a Bengali doctor called Sen joined her in the work. At one time there were 10,000 lepers under the case of the Missionaries of Charity. Her Sisters are specially trained in leprosy work, and many are able to find a cure if they came early enough. When she started her first Home in

Calcutta for lepers, a municipal councillor objected, because it was situated near his home, and he turned the Municipal Corporation against her having it there. Mother Teresa had a bright idea; instead of having a fixed centre could she have a mobile dispensary? She turned the obstacle into a stepping-stone. She told the objector, 'Bless you, Councillor, you have increased our efficiency a hundred times.' Today there are 425 mobile dispensaries run by the Missionaries of Charity. In addition there is a spacious colony for lepers at Shantinagar ('Abode of Peace') on land given to her by the West Bengal Government.

What is it that makes it possible for her and her Sisters to do the kind of work nobody normally volunteers to do? Frequently she quotes the words, 'I was hungry and you fed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was homeless and you took Me in. Whatever you did, you did it to Me.' On this motivation her work is based. 'O beloved sick,' she once prayed, 'how doubly dear you are to me, when you personify Christ and what a privilege is mine to tend you.'

When I observed to Mother Teresa that it could be said that she deals with the manifestations of poverty, but not the root, which is the selfishness and cruelty that creates the poverty, she replied without a moment's hesitation, 'Poverty is man made and not made by God. That is why Jesus became man to experience it. But for those who are consecrated (to the work), poverty is a joy and a freedom. If you talk of cruelty you are judging others and meanwhile someone who needs help may die in the next two hours. If you judge people you have no time to love them.' For a journalist trained to judge and write, these

are strong words that have rung in my ears ever since.

It dawned on me that behind this woman of action lies a whole value-system that could be the structure of a new civilisation. Her scale of values is so utterly different from the world's, and yet the mighty and the affluent fall for her because she symbolises the inner life we all hunger for. While philosophers at best write books, she has raised a force of people spanning the globe, applying cheerfully in action her beliefs—and at a price to themselves.

She has thought profoundly on matters of life and death. Unlike many of us, in her value system there is no gap between words and action. They are all of one piece. Her power comes from an integrated personality.

If she attacks abortion, she does not stop at just attacking abortion as 'a terrible sin'. She will go to the dustbin, collect the little one and struggle for its survival. If her mission is to serve 'the poorest of the poor' she has equal love for rich Westerners. One could see it in her eyes as she was talking to the tourists. If the poor feel unwanted, so do the affluent. The loneliness of the Westerners touches her as much as the loneliness of the dying destitute on the streets of Calcutta. Hers is a conscience finely tuned to the world's suffering.

To her, material acquisitions are for one purpose only, to relieve suffering and bring people closer to God. Passing by the marble grandeur of the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta, with its statue of Queen Victoria at one end and of Lord Curzon on the other, she sighed longingly and mentioned how wonderful it would be if she could use this monument for her poor.

According to her the biggest disease in the world today is feeling unwanted, and the greatest evil is the lack of

love and charity; and the terrible indifference towards one's neighbour. 'Love begins at home,' she says. 'Families that pray together stay together. Unless you stay together you cannot love one another, and unless you love one another you cannot love anyone else.' She says these words with an earnestness. The break-up of the family in the West is of the greatest concern to her. 'True love hurts,' she says, 'it must be painful to love someone; you might have to die for them.'

She has thought deeply on issues like sin. 'Sin is nothing but slavery. When I choose evil, I sin. It's where my will comes in. When I seek something for myself at the cost of everything else, I deliberately choose sin. Very often in a desire to get something there's greed, there's jealousy, there's destruction. We cannot see God then. It is an obstacle...To be clean of heart means obedience, that complete freedom.'

The most favoured word of the Mother is 'beautiful'. When a writer meets her she asks him to do 'something beautiful for God' through writing. She has a vision for each one. For her, to do something beautiful for God is what life is all about. To shape beauty out of stark human misery is her remarkable work.

There is something so relaxed about Mother Teresa, who is one of the busiest woman of the world. And it comes from a complete trust. She believes in 'accepting whatever He sends you and giving Him whatever He takes from you'. The latter could include a loved one.

She does not worry. 'It is not my business to think about myself,' she says, 'it is my business to think about God. It is for God to think about me.' This freedom from self makes it possible for her and the nuns she trains to make

herculean demands on their frail bodies. They all wake up between 4 and 4.30 A.M., have meditation and prayer for half-an-hour, attend Mass each day, wash, clean, cook and then are out on the streets or on their jobs at 7 A.M. It is a gruelling schedule. They take time off for evening prayer, and each night they have an hour of adoration.

'I could not do for a day what I am doing,' says Mother, 'without attending Mass and having this time of contemplation and prayer. Our work is the fruit of our prayer. For 24 hours as we work we are teaching Christ. The more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life.'

'Love to pray,' she says, 'feel often during the day the need for prayer, take the trouble to pray. Prayer enlarges the heart. Work doesn't stop prayer and prayer doesn't stop work. It requires only that small raising of mind to Him. "I love You, God, I trust You, I believe in You, I need You now." Small things like that, they are wonderful prayers.'

From time to time she feels the need to withdraw herself and in those quiet moments with God to recharge her spirits.

What classes Mother Teresa above some contemplatives is her motivation. 'We must become holy not because we want to feel holy, but because Christ must be able to live His life fully in us.' The two commandments of Christ were, 'Love the Lord thy God and love thy neighbour as thyself.'

How many of us stop at the first because we seek holiness for ourselves? Even our good actions are often motivated by self-interest. Mother Teresa has broken out

of that box of spiritual solace. She makes you measure your life against hers, your selfishness with her sacrifice; your over-busyness with her sense of peace and calm in the midst of her merciless schedule. A British V.I.P. came in a three-piece suit to visit her and saw her work. When he left and was about to step into the grand limousine of the British High Commission, he said to his neighbour, 'This suit burns me up.' In different ways she has the unconscious gift of making us relate our lives to hers. And in that process people change. A non-practising Christian journalist, Desmond Doig, wrote a fine biography of her. Neither he or his camera crew were the same afterwards. Doig concluded: 'She taught me to see, not merely to look; to appreciate, not merely to understand.'

She mentioned that her order extended to 98 homes in India and 60 outside, and recruits were flooding in everywhere. As she spoke on the first floor, in the courtyard below figures in white moved at a vigorous pace. Many were preparing to leave with their bedding and buckets—which were all their worldly belongings—for some other centre. Another line of nuns was passing each other buckets of water, starting on the ground floor and going up the steps. They were busy as ants and as well organised.

Mother Teresa has taken the trouble to give profound training to her Sisters. For the first six months they observe the work that is being done and search if this is what God wants them to do. In the next six months they are given intensive spiritual training. Then they are put to work.

The Sisters are naturally happy because they have

found what they are looking for. Mother Teresa has also started an Order for men looked after by a Jesuit priest from Australia who has been released to do this work.

When I asked her, 'Do you think your work will continue after you?' 'Oh yes,' she replied with an emphatic turn of the head, 'if He finds someone even more helpless than me He will still continue. God has been just wonderful.'

C. N. Vakil

I learnt the art of dealing with students not only in their academic work, but also in their personal lives and career.

TWO GENERATIONS of India's economists passed through his hands and in an active lifetime of almost 60 years he affected the economic thinking of the nation. Dr. V.K.R.V. Rao, Dr. R. N. Hazari, Prof. M. L. Dantwala, Dr. D. T. Lakdavalala, Prof. P. R. Brahmananda, names to reckon with in the world of Indian economics were all his pupils. And he was their affectionate teacher.

On August 1, 1921 in a corner of the Royal Institute of Science, Prof. C. N. Vakil was given a table and chair by the Registrar of Bombay University, and asked to establish the first University Department of Economics in the country. 'There was no precedent,' Prof. Vakil was to observe later, 'there was no one to tell me what I should do. I had to think and plan the work. The structure that I could evolve there was accepted by senior colleague Prof. K. T. Shah who joined in November 1921.' The founda-



tion of postgraduate teaching and research into economics in India was laid by C. N. Vakil. It was to evolve later in a school of economics and only in 1950 was the Delhi School of Economics founded by Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao.

'I learnt the art of dealing with students not only in their academic work, but also in their personal lives and career,' said C. N. Vakil. He taught at a time when students' minds were aflame with the struggle for freedom and he often had to persuade them to finish their studies. M.L. Dantwala was in jail with his thesis unfinished. Prof. Vakil ensured that the right books and instructions reached him in jail so that he could complete his thesis. Vakil was known as a rightist economist and among his pupils was B.T. Ranadive, who became a leading light of the Communist Party. Again when Ranadive went to prison it was Vakil who got permission to visit him in prison and discussed the thesis in the presence of the jailor. He got Ranadive the facilities for research and the chapters Ranadive wrote there were vetted by the jailor lest some incendiary writing was smuggled out by the fire-brand.

Getting students to complete their thesis was not the end. He recalled:

Research was not understood, not even known in those days. Students who did successful research work and got research degrees had to be placed in suitable work. The best means of doing so was publication of the thesis. This was difficult as no publisher would undertake the work, as such publications had no market.

Arrangements were made with Longmans Green

& Co. to publish theses recommended by me on a commission basis. The cost of production would be advanced by them to be recovered from the sale proceeds. If a book was not successful in the market and the publishers could not get back their advance, they had to be reimbursed. For this they wanted a guarantee— I was the guarantor, with very little money in my pocket. The authors became known and they got suitable jobs and were appreciated—some of them occupy high positions in life.

The Research Department of the Reserve Bank of India recruited research trained economists. In the early days, they gave preference to graduates from Cambridge and Oxford. When I found that a well qualified Ph.D. from the School was rejected, I approached the Governor and informed him that I had to close my shop or factory of manufacturing research trained personnel, as he, the consumer, was on strike. He saw the point and the door was opened.

After 35 years with Bombay University Prof. Vakil laid down the reins and went to Calcutta as Director of the UNESCO Research Centre and commissioned research studies on the socio-economic impact of industrialisation on South-East Asia. After three years of this assignment he returned to Bombay and pursued with vigour his writing and spoke at various forums, propounding his economic theories. In the evening of his life, when 70 years of age, he was asked to start as Vice Chancellor, of the University of South Gujarat. He did it with distinction. He also started a Department of Rural Studies where boys from the villages who understood rural life could apply

themselves to benefit their people. Till he was 83 he was active. The day he died he had dictated an article for the *Commerce* magazine. And in his file was the draft of the letter to Nani Palkhivala about a friend, I had introduced to him, called Dr. J.N. Mukherjee. Vakil said in the draft letter that Mukherjee had propounded such views in his book *Forward with Nature** that if it was Vakil's choice he would award Mukherjee the Nobel Prize for economics. A few days before he died he also sent me the draft of this letter.

I mention this to show that Vakil was a builder of men. There is no shortage in this land of those willing to make themselves famous and those who are equally ready to fend off those who may provide a challenge to them. C.N. Vakil was different. He was a true leader, for through him a host of economists came on the Indian scene—some as tall as himself. And Vakil rejoiced. The monument to his life is the quality and the work of his students whom you will find in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, in the Reserve Bank of India and what delighted him the most, in several companies that engaged their services. He did not have to run an 'employment exchange' in his later years.

It was at the London School of Economics that he met his mentor Dr. Edward Cannan. Cannan was a crusader against inflation. The wartime British Government had followed inflationary policies and to bring it to its senses, Cannan filed a law suit against the Chancellor of the Exchequer to prove that he was being robbed of the value of his money by the Government! The case became a sensation.

* Popular Prakashan, 1979, Rs.60.

His student Vakil had to deal at home with a foreign government and was wise enough to steer clear of Law Courts. But he did publish during World War II a book that created a sensation and put the British Government on the spot. The little book was called *The Falling Rupee*. There were rumours he would be arrested but his wife says he told her then not to worry. 'I know how to write.' In his book Vakil stuck to his economic case, but another economist, J.C. Kumarappa, quoted extensively from Vakil and spiced it with his political comments. For his labours he was prosecuted and sentenced to be His Majesty's guest for two years.

Chandalal Nagindas Vakil was born in Rander, Gujarat in 1896 and came to Bombay when he was five years old. He recalled those days with nostalgia when horse-trams ran in the city and gas-lights burnt. 'The trams took a little longer (than buses) but you never felt tired and exhausted (with fumes) as you do today.' When a pair of horses were not sufficient to haul a tram, up Sandhurst bridge, another pair was stationed to be hitched to it. For four horse-power scores of people could travel *sans* oil, *sans* pollution!

'You know one could easily recognise a person from his dress. Parsis wore pants with their coats along with caps, while Hindus wore dhotis and turbans or topi.' The Chowpatty beach, he recalled, was almost monopolised by Parsis.

'People in those days were more straightforward and more simple. Life was frugal, parental authority more strict. And people did not come out (of their houses) so much.'

Prof. Vakil studied at Elphinstone School and Wilson College. He stood 1st Class first in B.A. in 1916 and top-

ped the list again in his M.A. He did his M.Sc. from the London School of Economics.

He always equated economics to the social context because he was interested in people. 'Economics is a subject which touches the life of everyone and an understanding of the essentials of the subject is essential.' His crusade against inflation touched a high point in 1974. Jointly or singly, Prof. P.R. Brahmananda (who was devoted to him) and Prof. Vakil addressed over a hundred meetings to mobilise public opinion. When under Vakil's leadership, 140 economists from 50 universities submitted to the Union Government a plan of action to curb inflation. As with his earlier book, *The Falling Rupee*, in this case too, 'there was no public appreciation of the effort from the Government,' said Vakil, 'but in both cases, the main ideas were quietly accepted by the Government in the form of anti-inflationary ordinances.'

Vakil had considerable foresight. At partition time when Dr. Rajendra Prasad stated that Pakistan would not be fiscally viable, Prof. Vakil disagreed with him and was proved right. Further Vakil predicted that the conflict in the economic interests of Pakistan's two wings would lead to a separation. He made this prediction in his book *Economic Consequences of Divided India*, published in 1949. Twenty-two years later Vakil was proved right.

Behind his profound learning was a warm-hearted man. In 1966 I requested him to write at some speed on the Budget for the *Himmat* magazine. He did. For the next decade and more, each year he wrote on that event and many other subjects. He wrote in all 30 books and pamphlets. He was a man of discipline who had his regular walks at Marine Drive, Bombay, and he rejoiced

to have a companion on his exercise.

On his 81st birthday he was given a felicitation dinner by distinguished citizens and his pupils. In giving his reply he spoke of those to whom he owed most in life. One was Chandra Shankar Bhatt, known as the Gyan Yogi of Rander with whom in the early years he studied the *Gita*. The other person was Shastriji Pandurang Athavle who survives him. He told his admirers that evening, that among the many defects in our educational system is the absence of the 'teaching of moral and ethical values or religion, and the want of familiarity with our own civilisation and culture. It was fortunate that I had the opportunities to make good this gap.'

At home he participated fully in the activities of his family. When he married he was about 23 years old and his wife's age was only 15 years. They celebrated the diamond jubilee of their marriage in 1979. When she cooked, and placed the sweets in a *thali* it was the learned professor's prerogative to cut the sweets into pieces. It was his responsibility to remind her to take her medicine and later on in life he once travelled with her from Kerala to Switzerland to affect a cure for a complaint she had.

It was a privilege to pay him my respects at his funeral. He died full of years. Loaded with glory and flowers the body was taken down the stairs of his Marine Drive home and they laid him at the gate awhile. Then as they lifted him for the last journey my eyes fell on his life-companion. It was a moving sight to watch her dignified face, eyes brimming with tears, hands folded in a *namaste*, as she had a long last look at the companion she had lived with for so long and so happily.

Biographical Briefs

BHAVE, Acharya Vinoba, b. 1895

At the age of 10 he took the vow of celibacy and dedicated his life to the service of the country. He joined the Sabarmati Ashram of Gandhiji in 1916, became the head of the new *ashram* at Wardha and later started another hermitage at Paunar near Wardha. Originator of the *Bhoodan Yajna* movement to donate land to the landless poor. A linguist, he made a profound study of all religions and published books on different faiths.

CHALIHA, Bimalaprasad, 1912-1970

Chief Minister of Assam from 1957 to 1970.

One of the longest serving Chief Ministers of India. As a young man he left his studies to join the freedom movement. He invented a mechanical automatic spinning wheel. Gandhiji deputed him for training in *khadi* and he became the Secretary of the All India Spinning Association, Assam. In 1946 he was elected as an M.L.A., and in 1953 became an M.P.

DESAI, Morarji Ranchodji, b. 1896

Prime Minister of India from March 1977 to July 1979.

After graduation he joined the Bombay Provincial Service in 1918. He resigned to join the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. After holding several offices in the Gujarat Congress and in the Bombay Cabinet—including Chief Ministership (1952-1956) he went to the Centre. From 1956 to 1958 he was Union Minister for Commerce & Industry and from 1958 to 1963 he was Union Finance Minister. He resigned under the Kamaraj Plan and returned as Deputy Prime Minister in Mrs. Gandhi's government from 1967 to 1969.

HUSAIN, Dr. Zakir, 1879-1969

President of India from 1967 to 1969.

Educator, author, statesman, Dr. Zakir Husain was a Ph.D. of Berlin University. His major life work was to establish the Jamia Millia, an education institution for the uplift of the Muslim community. He was its Vice-Chancellor from 1926 to 1948. From 1957 to 1962 he was Governor of Bihar. He became Vice-President of India, 1962 to 1967 and was President of India for the last two years of his life. He was a writer in Urdu, English and German and translated into Urdu Plato's *Republic*.

KAMARAJ, K., 1903-1975

He entered public life at the age of 16 and was convicted for two years during the Salt Satyagraha. President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee from 1939 to 1954 he became Chief Minister of Madras from 1954 to 1963. Originator of the Kamaraj Plan to revitalise the Congress organization, he became President of the Congress in 1964 and consequently the kingmaker of two Prime Ministers.

KRIPALANI, Jeewan B, b. 1888

General Secretary of the Indian National Congress from 1934 to 1946, he became its President during 1946 to 1947. He organised the Gandhi Ashram at Benares and started *khadi* and village work from 1920 onwards. He was a member of the Constituent Assembly of India and one of the first senior Congress leaders to break from the Congress Party in 1951. Chairman of the Socialist Party in the 50s, he has been a prominent parliamentarian.

KRIPALANI, Sucheta, 1908-1974

Chief Minister of UP, 1963-1967.

Teacher of history at Benares Hindu University, she was a social worker during the freedom movement. She later married Acharya Kripalani, twenty years her senior. She worked extensively for relief during the partition disturbances. The first lady to be Chief Minister.

MANEKSHAW, Sam Hormuzji, b. 1914

Chief of Army Staff 1969-1973.

Commissioned in 1934 and awarded the Military Cross in 1942. From 1959-62 he was Commandant of the Defence Services Staff College in Wellington. From 1963-64 he was GOC, Western Command; and from 1964-69 GOC, Eastern Command. The highlight of his career was the Bangladesh War. In recognition of his services he was awarded the baton of Field Marshal in January 1973.

MERCHANT, Vijay Madhowji, b. 1911

He is best known as a cricketer whose average in first class cricket stands only next to Don Bradman's. Textile industrialist and social worker, he was Sheriff of Bombay 1969-70. He is actively associated with the National Association for the Blind and the National Society for the Handicapped.

MUNSHI, Kanyalal Maneklal, 1887-1971

Born at Broach, Gujarat, he joined the freedom movement at an early age. He studied for the Bar and wrote a number of popular novels in Gujarati. He was Home Minister in the first Congress Government of Bombay Presidency. One of the architects of the Indian Constitution, he became Union Food Minister and Governor of U.P. He is best known as the Founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

NARAYAN, Jayaprakash, 1902-1979

Born in Bihar, he studied in the United States and became Founder Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party in 1931. Jailed several times during the freedom struggle, he led the underground movement against the British 1942-43. He left active politics in 1954 and worked for the Bhoodan Movement. A champion of the cause of the under-privileged, he took up the cause of Tibet and the liberation of Bangladesh. In 1974-75 he led a people's movement which became known as the Bihar Movement. He unified the democratic opposition and inspired the formation of the Janata Party which came to power in March 1977.

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PALKHIVALA, Nani Ardeshir, b. 1920

Jurist, author, and economic developer. He was Indian Ambassador to the United States from September 1977 to July 1979. He is a Director of Tata Sons and other Industrial enterprises.

RAJAGOPALACHARI, Chakravarti, 1878-1972

Governor-General of India 1948-1950.

Called to the Bar in 1900, he joined the Non-cooperation Movement in 1920. He became the foremost deputy of Gandhiji in South India both in social work and in political action. He became the first Premier (Chief Minister) of Madras Presidency in 1937-39. In April 1942 he resigned from the Congress because of his differences. He joined the first Interim Government of Mr. Nehru in 1946 and became Governor of West Bengal in 1947. A Union Minister till 1951, he returned to Madras State politics as Chief Minister from 1952-1954. He was the author of a number of books.

SHASTRI, Lal Bahadur 1904-1966

Prime Minister of India, June 1964 to January 1966.

Educated at the Kashi Vidyapeeth, he joined the Non-cooperation Movement in 1921. Held offices in the UP State Congress and twice elected an MLA in 1937 and 1946. In 1951 he became the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress and was elected to the Rajya Sabha. Election Chief of the Congress party in 1957. Union Minister for Railways, Communication, Commerce and Industry, and later Home Affairs. In early 1964 he became minister without portfolio under Nehru.

SUBBULAKSHMI, Madurai Shanmugavadivu, b. 1916

She became a leading musician before she was 18. She has sung at various international forums and festivals including the Edinburgh Festival and at the United Nations. Proceeds of her concerts are given to charities. She is the recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award and the Padma Vibhushan.

TATA, Jehangir Ratanji Dadabhoy, b. 1904

Founder of the first airline in the country, he was Chairman of Air India for almost 30 years. At the age of 34 he became the Chairman of the Tata Sons, promoters of the foremost industrial enterprises of India and has been head of the House for over 40 years.

TERESA, Bojaxhiu, b. 1910

Born in Yugoslavia, she is of Albanian descent. She came out to India at the age of 18. She taught at a Calcutta school and started her own order of the Missionaries of Charity. Her services for the poor, the weak and the handicapped, received wide recognition both in India and the world. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1979.

VAKIL, Chandlal Nagindas, 1896-1979

Educator, founder of the Bombay School of Economics and Vice-Chancellor, University of South Gujarat. Two generations of economists studied under him. He influenced economic policies of the government.

Intimate glimpses into the lives of men and women who have shaped our times:

Vinoba Bhave
B.P. Chaliha
Morarji Desai
Zakir Husain
Kamaraj
J.B. Kripalani

Sucheta Kripalâni
Sam Manekshaw
Vijay Merchant
K.M. Munshi
Jayaprakash Narayan
N.A. Palkhivala

C. Rajagopalachari
Lal Bahadur Shastri
M.S. Subbulakshmi
J.R.D. Tata
Mother Teresa
C.N. Vakil

'To know is to understand,' says the author, 'and this book is an attempt at understanding. I have not attempted a critique of their careers. Rather I have sought to bring them to life as people.' In the context of his encounters he puts into perspective little known facts of their lives and career and how they attained eminence.

**Some comments on
R.M. Lala's previous bestseller,**

The Creation of Wealth

'The book stands out like a jewel in more ways than one ... A writer of the calibre of R.M. Lala invests the entire narrative with simplicity, dignity and elegance.'

—Financial Express

'He has flair. He has facts. He writes with feeling.'

—Economic Times



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