

The Midnight Knock

K R Malkani

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K.R. MALKANI



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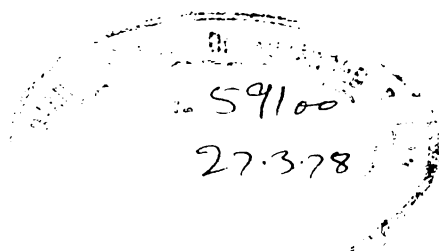
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Preface

Within a fortnight of my detention, my diary was stolen by the police in collusion with jail authorities in Hissar. I did not keep another diary in jail, being afraid that they could always steal it. This is not, therefore, a jail diary.

And, having been in prison, I have no first-hand knowledge of what was happening outside—what the government was doing to the people, and how the people were reacting. So this is neither an account of the Emergency as such.

But here is a sidelight on the Emergency. It is an account of what a detenu saw, heard, thought and felt in jail. To that extent it might be the autobiography of any detenu—or the quintessential autobiography of all detenus—for the period of detention.

Many of the chapters in this book were written as essays in jail. But I had no idea at the time that they would be compiled and published in book form. I wrote at a time when there was little prospect of any printer or publisher touching it. And yet I wrote because, I suppose, a writer must read and write—or he will perish, spiritually. There is something compulsive about it.

I only hope that the “shades of the prison house” do not fall too heavy on the pages that follow. I hope, too, that they will produce more smiles than tears.

K.R. MALKANI

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The Midnight Knock

“Malkani Saheb! Malkani Saheb!”

I woke up sleepily, wondering who was calling me. The night was warm and I had gone to bed only a short while ago, having sat up late to edit a report of J.P.’s historic 25 June speech. So I was not yet in a deep sleep when there came that unusual knock and that untimely call.

Who could it be? The *taar-wala*? I did not welcome the prospect. Too often a midnight telegram brings news of death or disaster. It was with some apprehension that I got up to face the situation. However, unlike the *taar-wala* who just gives you a receipt to sign, I was asked to open the gate. On doing so I found that there was not one man but many.

“You are Malkani Saheb?”

“Yes.”

“You are wanted in the *Thana*.”

In a flash the whole thing became clear; it was not the feared death of any individual; it was the near-death of the entire democratic system.

I asked my callers to come in. The officers walked in, the constables stayed out. It was too early for a bath; too early even for tea. As I began to get ready they suggested that I pack up a few clothes and not forget my tooth-brush. This was a polite hint that I should not expect to be back soon. I started putting a few books and clothes together in a handbag. But my

wife Sundari was agitated. She asked me, and she asked them, what it was all about. When I told her I was obviously under arrest, she went up to them with a volley of questions about the why and wherefore of it all. But they told her rather coolly, "Malkani Saheb knows."

When I was ready to go at about 1.30 A.M. I asked for the warrant of arrest. But they had none. How could I surrender myself to people who had no authority to take me? For the preceding few months I had been afraid of an attempt on my life. Mysterious persons had started visiting me in my office for no ostensible reason. I had sensed danger. The Ridge Road used to be my favourite route to and from office; but I had started avoiding it after sunset. And now, fearing danger to my life, I expressed my inability to go with them without a proper warrant. But they insisted that I go and speak to the officer concerned at the police station. As a compromise it was decided that I shall not go with them alone. Sundari opened the back door to call a good neighbour who knows something about the law and the ways of the police. As she opened the door she found a clutch of policemen infesting the backyard. Evidently they had surrounded the house on all sides to make sure I didn't run away!

At this stage I asked the police if I could use the phone. When they didn't say either yes or no, I went ahead and rang up the office. I gave them the news and told them to inform RSS, BJS, PTI and UNI immediately. This call, I understand, acted as a timely warning for many who consequently managed to escape the police dragnet. It seems I was the first person to be arrested in Delhi that night. *The Motherland* writings had gone home!

As I prepared to leave, Sundari wanted to wake up the kids but I didn't want the little ones to face such a situation, so she awakened only the eldest, Arvind, 17, who was quite dazed by the proceedings. As I bade them goodbye and started moving out, I was not sure I'd ever be back home. I thought of stepping back and planting a kiss on the foreheads of my daughter, Sindhu, 10, and son, Vikram, 8. But lest it be viewed by the police as a sign of weakness and sentimentality I went ahead and seated myself in the jeep. As the jeep started, another group of policemen emerged from our side lawn where they had been

evidently guarding more exits. It had been a siege operation. So far I had only read about midnight knocks in Russia. Now I had experienced it—in India!

When Sindhu and Vikram woke up in the morning they promptly armed themselves with a stick each. I'm told they were marching up and down the little house all day, waiting to beat the lady who had taken away their daddy. Their wish was fulfilled, though only 21 months later, with even toddlers smattering "*Janata Palty Jindabad!*"

When we reached the New Rajendranagar Police Station, there was nobody else except for a police officer. It was almost another hour, about 2.30 A.M., before Dr Bhai Mahavir, Vice-President, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, was ushered in. I was relieved to see that I was not alone. I thanked the good neighbour who had accompanied me and bade him good-bye. We waited for some more time. Later, police parties came and reported that the two other "wanted" persons in our area were not to be found. We were then driven down to the Defence Colony Police Station. Here we found numerous other persons who had been arrested like us. Most of them belonged to the Jana Sangh and Anand Marg. There was also one Marxist. Here, ironically enough at 4.20 A.M., we were served with MISA warrants.

It was still dark when we were moved to the Civil Lines Police HQ. There we found a galaxy of political leaders. Every few minutes a ranking leader was ushered in. Soon we had Biju and Piloo, Raj Narain and Chandrashekhar, and scores of others. Before sunrise ten of us were put in a police van. Apart from myself and those already mentioned there were Samar Guha, MP, Ramdhan, MP, Dr Mahavir, ex-MP, Maj. Jaipal Singh (CPI-M) and one Sardar Bakshi. Soon Raj Narain spread himself on one of the three long planks in the police van, using his hold-all for a pillow. When it rolled down, he quietly picked it up and went to sleep again. At Bahadurgarh we were served a reluctant cup of tea. Even here we were not told of our destination, until we reached Rohtak Jail.

The authorities took some time to open the gate. We persuaded our unwilling escorts to let us get down for some fresh air. When word came that we could enter, we were told to get into the van. We, however, preferred to walk. They didn't like it, but they couldn't do anything about it. As I looked back, I found

each one of us followed by an armed constable. Obviously the authorities credited us with the power of flying, if not of evaporating altogether.

After the preliminaries in the Deodi—the jail entrance complex which houses the offices—we were taken to the community hall—the *Manoranjan Kaksh*. As we stepped in, somebody said we'd be out in a week. Another put it at a month. Biju Patnaik put it at "the rest of our life." When someone contradicted him, he said, "Well, then, you can make it 10 years." He added: "I know her. I know how ruthless she can be." We all agreed that he knew her better than the rest of us.

As we entered the hall, we found a dozen cots, all chained together. We were in jail.

Half an hour later we were joined by Ashok Mehta and Sikander Bakht. Soon after the radio announced that national emergency had been declared. Emergency? We wondered why there had to be another emergency when the one declared at the time of the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971 was still on. It took us some time to find out that there can be not only two emergencies, one external and another internal, but also a third—financial! None of us had anticipated this situation because we had assumed that Government would play the democratic game according to the democratic rules; and there had been no violence anywhere even to justify the imposition of Section 144. Although Government made a song and dance about the "situation" in Gujarat and Bihar, the fact was that Gujarat had already held a peaceful poll and settled down to a popular regime. As for Bihar, Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra had said only three days before the Emergency that all was perfectly peaceful in that State!

At the joint meeting of the National Executives of Congress-O, BLD, Socialist Party and Jana Sangh in Delhi in June 1975, Samar Guha had spoken of the dangers of martial law etc., but even he had not imagined the possibility of an emergency. We thought he was being unduly emotional. As it turned out, we got something more than martial law; we got an absence of all law, the law of the jungle.

And now day by day, barrack after barrack began to overflow with detenus and DIR victims. Most of the latter—many of them lawyers and teachers—had been charged with

conspiracy to derail trains and loot wheat stocks! At one get-together we found that there were as many as seven editors and 20 lawyers among us!

One evening we heard the sudden report of a few rifle shots. What could it be? Police firing on protesting people? Hardly. A local detenu explained that it was quite common in Haryana to fire shots in the air as part of marriage celebrations!

This absence of popular reaction was a bit disappointing for some who expected the people to rise against the Emergency. But most detenus had no doubt that the people were paralyzed under a reign of terror; they could not be expected to stop work, leave home and court arrest, just like that. But these detenus had no doubt—as later proved to be true—that the people were biding their time and that they would strike when the situation was ripe.

Everybody was calm and relaxed. As a romantic friend put it rather picturesquely: "When rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy." I don't know whether we enjoyed it, but we certainly relaxed. Piloo took to volley-ball and most others to books or cards or chess. Raj Narain sprawled himself for massage and regaled us with *chaupais* from Tulsi Ramayana. Chandrashekhar draped himself in *gerua kurta* and *dhoti* which he had got from Swami Indervesh. In the face of all that blitzkrieg of lies and calumny, we laughed our way through jail, entertaining one another with stories of a life-time.

How did the lady get that controversial mink coat? Her version was that once while in London she felt very cold and hired a mink coat. When "Papa" saw it he decided to buy one for her. Now, a mink coat costs anything around Rs 50,000. Does this item of expenditure occur anywhere in Nehruji's tax returns? If not, why not? How could he arrange the necessary foreign exchange? Or does the Madam not know the mink coat was a gift? If so, from whom? And for what consideration?

Is it also a fact that on one of her trips to Russia with "Papa," Khrushchev presented her with a rare sable coat? Is it a fact that the coat had the additional merit of belonging to the last Czarina? And is it true that it was worth some Rs 50 lakhs? Where, incidently, is that coat today? Or are the two coats kept in the custody of furriers in London? If so, what are their annual keeping charges?

On one of Mrs Gandhi's visits to Arabia, King Saud had given her a very valuable necklace. Dr Lohia had raised the issue in the Lok Sabha. It was given out that the necklace had been passed on to the Toshakhana (the Government's Gifts Department) after some time. Lohiaji had said that what had been deposited might be only an imitation of the original necklace. What are the facts? Is it a fact that the necklace deposited in the Toshakhana was sold for a paltry sum of Rs 12,000 only? Is it a fact that this figure was never made public for fear that Arabia may protest that what it had presented was very much more valuable?

RAW as we know it today was organized after the Chinese attack in 1962. Its first major task was to split the Communist movement. About 160 CPI leaders and workers were paid an average of Rs 1750 a month. It was these gentlemen who helped divide the CPI into CPI and CPI(M). Some of these gentlemen still occupy the highest positions in the two parties.

Here was material enough for a hundred news stories. But the newspapers were dead; there was no longer any news in them.

Most of us had come away with a few clothes, enough only for a week-end. We were eager to inform our families that we were in Rohtak, alive and well. And so our local friends arranged a courier to take our letters and see our people in Delhi. The following day we got our things—and letters. There was a bonus for me—the rumour in Delhi that I was dead! There were so many telephone calls politely inquiring about my "health" that Sundari had actually gone looking for me in the casualty wards of different hospitals. It sure feels good to get a second life—without losing the first one!

We also learned that the one-sheet post-emergency supplement of *The Motherland* had sold for anything upto Rs 20. *The Motherland* closed down under forcible police occupation of the premises, but not before it had let off the biggest bang of its dramatic career. It was the only paper in India to announce on 26 June the imposition of the Emergency, arrest of leaders and the wave of national shock.

The Emergency was on. But the story of *The Motherland* supplement convinced us that, Emergency or no Emergency,

people cannot be kept curbed for long. The story made stirring reading.

Before leaving for home on 25 June, Chief of Bureau Arvind Ghosh had told Chief Sub Bhan to give him a ring if there was anything big any time in the night. At 1.40 A.M. he got the news of my arrest. By 2 A.M. he was in office. By 3 A.M. the new front page with the arrest stories was ready for flonging.

Suddenly the lights went off. There was a groan of despair all round. It was clear that this black-out in our office had something to do with the arrests; for lights were burning bright in the offices of the adjoining CPI Hindi daily, *Janyug*. These fears were confirmed when some press workers went out to investigate. They were met by policemen who told them: "*Akhbaar ka daftar hai na? Bijlee nahin ayegi, chale jao yahan se.*" (Isn't that a newspaper office? You won't get any current. Go away.)

We had been cheated of the morning edition of 26 June. Only *The Hindustan Times* was able to carry some news of the night's developments; it was a small item reporting my arrest. All other arrest news had come too late to be covered by its—or any other paper's—morning edition. But then suddenly at about 10 A.M. the power connection was restored. There they were, Assistant Editors D.N. Singh, Dubashi and Raje, News Editor Jayaram, Chief of Bureau Ghosh, Chief Reporter Batura, *Organiser* Editor Bhatia and our old friend Virinder Kapoor who had come from *The Financial Express* to lend a helping hand. It was decided to come out with a Special Supplement.

While some of them started working feverishly for the Supplement, some others went to my place. As they later reported to me, my wife told them of my arrest without any nervousness and made anxious inquiries about the situation in *The Motherland*. They went back to office, they said, "spiritually fortified."

And then at 11 A.M. the teleprinters carried the ominous message: "*Flash! Flash! Flash! Censorship imposed: Flash! Flash! Flash! Censorship imposed.*" They read the message, tore it to pieces and trampled upon it. "No censorship for *The Motherland*, come what may," was the unanimous reaction.

The whole staff knew that this might be the very last issue of *The Motherland*. And every minute that passed heightened the danger of power cut. But they were lucky. Whether a friendly person had restored power or an inefficient hand had forgotten

to keep it switched off, we will never know. Or maybe it was deliberately restored to let us come out with an uncensored edition, later using it as “violation” of the emergency rule, and so, as an excuse to seal our offices. But whatever it be, all that day the Press turned out tens of thousands of copies of the Supplement that took Delhi by storm. Never did hot cakes sell hotter. The police beat up hawkers and customers alike. But that only sent up the value—and the price—of the Supplement. Although the two-page Supplement was priced at ten naye paise, it sold for anything up to Rs 20. One diplomat paid Rs 14.50 for one copy of that historic edition. It was only late in the evening that the police caught up with us.

At about 10 P.M., after the Dak Edition of 27 June—with Dubashi’s tell-tale editorial “For Whom the Bell Tolls”—had been despatched, the SHO Paharganj, Shri Bakshi, arrived. He confronted Ghosh and Batura, who were coming down the stairs to go home, about who was in charge, and whose was the responsibility for the “illegal” Supplement. He was told that the editor was in jail and no one else was in charge. “Don’t try to fool me,” the SHO thundered and he told Ghosh and Batura that they were under arrest. As they started siezing copies, the lights went out. Press Superintendent Malik and his staff took advantage of this second darkness to destroy all original copies bearing the writers’ names. That night the police took an office lock to seal our office.

As an after-thought, warrants of arrest under DIR were issued against four senior persons on the staff—D.N. Singh, Senior Assistant Editor, Brij Bhushan, Printer and Publisher, Baldev Malik, the acting Circulation Manager and V.P. Bhatia, Editor *Organiser*. To justify the sealing of offices, the four persons were declared absconders and the press was shown as their property!

2

Rumblings

I must say that 26 June was a complete surprise. When Samar Guha mentioned some such possibility at the meeting of the four-party National Executives, he was smiled away. Not that anybody could have done anything about it; but the point is, it was considered out of the question.

I had heard possibilities of some such action more than once. But I had never given much credence to them. The whole thing sounded so very extreme and improbable. And yet the apparently impossible happened.

I shouldn't be surprised if the plan of this operation had been in the files for years past. The Partition Plan is believed to have been born some time before World War I. Operations like these are one of a number of contingency plans. Given a particular situation, a matching contingency plan is put through.

Why did Operation 26 June materialize? Because the Government's position had become untenable. It had deteriorated beyond its limits of tolerance. Its position had eroded more grievously than perhaps the Opposition realized. By-elections in Amritsar, Delhi, Rori, Meham and Jabalpur had given a body blow to the Congress. The two verdicts of 12 June—in Allahabad and in Ahmedabad—completely destroyed the credibility of the Cong-I Government. On top of it came the meeting of the national executives of the four major opposition parties. Suddenly, a formidable alternative to the Cong-I had materialized. It was

there for the people to pick up any time. The Government felt utterly insecure. It knew that in any reasonably fair election, it could be routed. It was to forestall this fate that it decided on the pre-emptive strike of 26 June. The very extremism of its action betrayed the extremity to which it had been reduced.

It was a peculiarly feudal response to a wholly modern democratic situation. The Mughal princes used to think in terms of *Takht ya takhta* (either the throne or the gallows). And the “progressive” government of “Mataji” also decided to “kill or get killed”—rather than part with power peacefully.

Had I ever expected this kind of situation? I must say, never. I had never imagined that a Government could impose an emergency when none in fact existed, and destroy the rights and liberties of the people at a mere whim. Indeed, a few months earlier, when the Deendayal Research Institute proposed—and subsequently held—a high-power seminar on Emergency, I wondered what all the pother was about, since the emergency which had continued since 1971, had not done anybody any harm. It was only when Appa Ghatate, the up and coming Supreme Court lawyer, explained to me the position, that I saw the grave potential dangers of that Emergency. But even so, we had so much come to accept the democratic system as our permanent political framework, that I had never given credence to reports of impending political disaster. Whenever I heard reports of impending dictatorship, following which nothing really happened, I dismissed these fears.

Early in June 1974 I heard that some Congress leaders were toying with the idea of liquidating J.P. and some other dissenters. I was horrified. *The Motherland* reported the news in a front-page box on 7 June 1974.

Our worst fears seemed to be confirmed by the firing on J.P.’s procession in Patna on 12 June, from the HQ of the “Indira Brigade.” While Congress President Sharma denied that the Indira Brigade had anything to do with the party, we came to know that it was a RAW outfit!

And that made this super-secret intelligence agency as suspect about political murders in India as FBI and CIA are in the USA.

After Mujib’s dictatorial coup in January 1975, I smelled danger in the air. When Mrs Gandhi and the President hastened to congratulate Mujib, I got the feeling that the coup had been

staged in consultation with her. On 28 January 1975, *The Motherland* carried the tell-tale report: "Dacca is a rehearsal for Delhi."

In my anxiety I met a retired Army general friend to find out what he thought of the situation, whether she might do the same thing here and whether the Army might go along with her. He explained that the Indian Army was non-political, that Martial Law was a very orderly law and that, under it, generals were neutral between politicians. Strangely enough the Government came to know not only of the meeting—which was open enough, in my own office building—but also of our talk. Indeed the Madam protested to a BJS MP about it, as though it was a crime for a journalist to meet a retired general. I was worried about the intelligence tentacles which were menacing life and liberty. But even so I did not expect an emergency to engulf the country.

On 26 January 1975, at the Republic Day reception in Rashtrapati Bhawan, H.D. Malaviya warned me—and Professor S. Swamy—of dire consequences for what we were saying and doing. As a communist Congressman, and brother of Minister K.D. Malaviya, he obviously knew what was coming. But at that time I wondered in my innocence what they could possibly do to me, save prosecute me under the law—or refer me to the Press Council!

Soon after, however, another hanger-on of the establishment, Vishwabandhu Gupta of *Tej*, mentioned *The Motherland* boxes as news hits and wondered if they were all true. I said that if any of them were untrue I would certainly have been hauled up in court long ago. He thereupon said: "The decision is that you will not be sued." I wondered aloud: "Is that because they know that in a court room we can only come out with still more damaging facts?" He did not say anything in reply.

On 30 January, Atalji rang me up late in the evening. What was I doing? he asked. When I told him I was preparing to go to bed, he said anxiously: "Now forget about that sleep and come right here straightaway." When I reached his place I found many other friends already gathered there. We were told that plans were ready to arrest J.P. and many others, ban the RSS, seal *The Motherland* and do many other terrible things. I went straight to the office at that late hour and filed a story on the subject. The report, datelined New Delhi 30 January, read:

The Government of India has decided to ban the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). It has also decided to arrest Shri Jayaprakash Narayan.

The RSS is expected to be banned on the night of February 2-3 and Jayaprakashji is expected to be arrested as soon as he lands in Patna on February 3.

Shri Gafoor was only announcing the PM's decision when he said: 'I will go to any length.'

The two decisions were taken by the Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet earlier this week.

Shri S.S. Ray, Chief Minister of West Bengal—who used to draft the midnight missives for the PM in 1969—also lent his hand at drafting the ordinance.

The ordinance repeats the oft-told lie that the RSS is a secret organization which does not believe in non-violence. And it attributes Shri L.N. Mishra's murder to the 'climate of violence' generated by the RSS and J.P.'s movement.

Just three days back it was noted in these columns that 'what has happened in Bangladesh is only a rehearsal for what is expected to happen in India. And now it is already a decided fact. There is a method in Government's madness. It has been completely unnerved by Congress-I defeats in Kasturbanagar, Govindapuri and Jabalpur. And it has been shaken to its roots by the massive response to JP's movement all over the country. By its blitzkrieg action against the opposition, Congress-I hopes to destabilize the people's movement and terrorize the electorate into voting for it in another two months.

The Communists who have been long wanting a share in the power in the States and at the Centre on the Kerala pattern, are very much in the act. Their god-fathers, the Russians, want the Indira Congress to join hands with the CPI and crush the people's movement.

Installation of Comrade Barooah as Congress President was a step in that direction. Declaring a war on RSS and J.P.'s people's movement is a big leap in that dark direction.

Comrade Rajeshwar Rao had threatened 'civil war.' And now the Indira Government has decided to declare it.

When days passed and nothing happened many thought I had only cried wolf. In February 1975, a couple of Delhi BJS cor-

porators were seduced by the ruling party with promises of profit and blood-curdling threats of impending catastrophe for RSS, BJS and others.

At midday on June 25, I had a strange visitor who introduced himself as the General Secretary, New Delhi Congress Committee. He sounded more like an intelligence man than a Congressman. He asked me if I knew that martial law was to have been declared the preceding night. I told him I had heard some such thing. In the course of an hour-long talk he told me—not once, nor twice, but thrice—that I could give him a letter for the PM in a sealed cover, and that he would be able to hand it over to her personally. I told him I had nothing to say to her. However, when he persisted, I said that if she consented to a special interview, I would gladly put in a formal request. Evidently the Government was trying to see who would knuckle under the threat of violent action.

A few days before the Emergency was clamped, a senior leader detained in Rohtak Jail was called to see the Prime Minister. The lady asked him to support her in her bid to have “the same powers as Nasser,” to be able to build up the country.

“But you already have all the powers you need to build the country,” this leader told her.

She said she needed more powers and that she would not stand any nonsense from the Opposition.

The visiting leader begged to be excused. As he was coming out, Shri Haksar said to him that if men like him did not help the PM in her new enterprise, the whole operation would miscarry and “there would be trouble.”

There was—a whole lot of it.

A few days after the Emergency, a mysterious character, close to the Nehru family, saw Sundari on three different occasions. He wanted her to go with him to the PM, obviously to plead for me. He said the Madam was particularly unhappy with our 14 June 1975 Biblical advice to her in the editorial: “Woman, go, and sin no more.” But Sundari refused. “I have no business with her,” she firmly told him.

Stranger than Fiction

I understand that I was the first person to be arrested on the night of 25-26 June, 1975. And I was released only after the elections were over and the Emergency was lifted. Apparently at 2 A.M. on the morning of 26 June the P.M.'s House telephoned a top police official of Delhi to make sure I had been arrested. Since I was at the small Rajendra Nagar Police Station, the IGP could not answer with certainty. The P.M. expressed annoyance over the possibility that I might have escaped the dragnet.

Why this much animus against one armed with nothing more than a pen?

I think it was something more than intolerance of dissent. It was the hurt felt by the utterance of truth. And the truth about the *Dhede Sarkar*—the government by one and a half, as Babuji picturesquely described it—was stranger than fiction.

Right from the start *The Motherland* had exposed the rotten clay feet of the Government. And even before *The Motherland*, the *Organiser* had done that duty. When the Nagarwala scandal broke, we dug into it deeper than anybody else. And at a time when others were trying to “ride” Maruti, we showed that it was a car that will never run on the road. However, the last one year before the Emergency saw the explosion not of one or two scandals but of scores of them.

The Indira Brigade fired on J.P.'s procession in Patna on 5 June injuring 21 persons. Two days later we reported that it could well have been a conspiracy:

At the time of the last Congress working Committee meeting, just before the meeting was called to order, a senior member remarked that the party had to handle J.P. carefully.

A Union Minister thereupon remarked 'J.P.? Who is he? He can be finished in five minutes.'

A senior Chief Minister said: 'Well you can shoot down a hundred persons—and J.P. will be one of them. Then all will be quiet.'

A fourth member said: 'If we shoot down J.P. there will be so much reaction we may need to shoot down two crores.'

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was present and listening. She did not utter a word. She looked vastly amused and kept smiling.

On 12 June, we wrote of the "Plan to Murder Jayaprakash." This report stated how certain Congress leaders of Bihar had decided to do away with J.P. on 5 June when he was leading a massive procession at Patna demanding dissolution of the State Assembly. It was believed that this plot had been hatched at the residence of one of the leaders of Congress who was very close to the ruling clique.

But the sudden change in the route of the procession upset the plans to murder J.P. It is said that the police got wind of this and had hurried consultations with Shri Narayan on the route he was to take. Police, probably without disclosing the plot to the Sarvodaya leader, succeeded in convincing him to change the route of the procession.

On 13 June 1974, we carried "The Mysterious Story of Indira Brigade." Among other things it gave the Chairman of Indira Brigade, Musheer Ahmed Khan's statement that the organization had 14 State units and not just six, as claimed by the Brigade's "National Commandant"; that Musheer Ahmed, a former Congress-I MP, hailed from Etah, UP; that he was Chairman, Modern Bakeries, a Government of India undertaking and that his house in South Extension, New Delhi, was the Brigade HQ. It said:

"The Bihar unit of the Brigade was not unauthorized. It was launched in Patna two years ago in Lady Stiphus Hall. The founding function was presided over by Kedar Pande, then Chief Minister of Bihar. Among those present was Shri Ghafoor,

present Chief Minister of Bihar. The inauguration of the Indira Brigade in Patna was done by L.N. Mishra, right-hand man of the Prime Minister." Brigade men attended both the 1972 as well as the 1973 AICC sessions in Delhi, distributed free literature and made their presence felt. The report added:

On two occasions in recent weeks, the Chief Secretary, Bihar Government, withdrew Rs 7 lakhs and Rs 3 lakhs, respectively. The withdrawal was in the name of Intelligence. However, the entire amount of Rs 10 lakhs was handed over to Indira Brigade, Bihar. . . .

It is reliably learnt that, to begin with, the Congress was financing the Indira Brigade. Later the responsibility was taken over by Shri Kuldip Narang, sugar magnate and close friend of Sanjay Gandhi.

Last year, however, the Indira Brigade was unofficially taken over by the mysterious 'Research and Analysis Wing' headed by the mysterious Shri Kaw of the Cabinet Secretariat, directly working under the Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister.

The Indira Brigade, therefore, was not only Indira's in name but also in fact. That, perhaps, explains why the Prime Minister neither dissociated herself from it nor denounced its outrage of 5 June.

Then came Mishra's mysterious murder. In the course of our 4 January report "Who Killed Mishra?" we stressed the fact that while there were many theories about the how and why of this crime, it had to be agreed that it was a well-planned, expert, inside job. According to intelligence sources, the area around the dias for VIP function becomes "out of bounds" for "unauthorized persons" at least 24 hours in advance. Therefore only somebody connected with the security arrangements could have planted the time bomb that blew up the dias.

While mentioning the possibility of aggrieved railwaymen or a Naxalite hand, we also feared what some others felt—that it was a case of "government by assassination." Shri Mishra had become an embarrassment to the government. His letter of resignation, (acceptance of which would have confirmed the guilt of the government) was an open secret. And in addition, an

embittered Mishra might have blurted out the whole truth, involving persons more important—and more guilty than he. His liquidation, then, was quite possible, the greatest beneficiary of it being the government. Mishra is known to have told friends: ‘If I have to go, many others will have to go with me.’ Obviously he had proof of complicity of many others in his corruption. Then there was the mysterious fact of the grenade thrower himself being killed. It brought to mind the assassins of Kennedy and Liaquat Ali.

On 13 January *The Motherland* revealed that Mishra had insured himself for rupees three lakhs—the policy covering even death by murder—and wondered who was paying the premium which equalled the minister’s entire monthly salary.

On 19 January, we reported about “The mysterious Ram Bilas Jha” and his strange movements before and after Mishra’s death.

While on my way to Ahmedabad for the BJS Working Committee meeting there in the fourth week of January, I accidentally ran into Dr Bhalla, the railway doctor at Samastipur who had attended on Mishra after the explosion. He told me the whole story as he knew it but requested me not to mention his name since a departmental inquiry was pending against him. I used it on 23 January in the third person. Among other things he told me that the Minister wanted to leave Samastipur immediately. He was convinced that since he had escaped the first bomb blast, another attempt would be made to kill him unless he escaped quickly. His hunch seemed to be right. The other bomb was found in the house next door to the Railway Medical Hospital. Obviously somebody was waiting to make a second attempt on his life if he went to the hospital. When Mishra didn’t go there, the assassin just threw away the grenade, which was picked up by a railway accountant’s son.

A few days later I met a member of the Mishra family. What he told me only confirmed my suspicion that it was a case of cold-blooded political murder. He told me of the mysterious Mastana Baba of Awghar in Muzaffarpur district, Bihar. The Baba was supposed to have been doing *japa* for Mishra, but when the latter was injured by a grenade, he told Ram Bilas Jha: “*Yeh saalaa ab nahin bachega*” (now this rascal will not survive). Later the Baba was found missing. We wrote :

Is it a fact that Mastana Baba is in Delhi? Is it a fact that he is in illegal confinement? Is it a fact that he has suddenly developed some mysterious ailment?

Is it a fact that he is afraid that he will die soon? Why is his skin splitting open like in leprosy? Is he being slowly poisoned to death? If so, by whom?

The Government has appointed the CBI, a medical team and now a judicial commission to probe Mishra's mysterious death.

Perhaps if the Government produces Mastana Baba, the country would know more about the mystery. . . .

None of these reports was denied, though they rocked the capital every other day.

Then came the "report" of a "gunman" in the Allahabad High Court, when Mrs Gandhi went there to give evidence. Our reports of 27 March, 17 April and 2 May established conclusively that the whole thing was a stunt—comparable to the bogus "firing" on Sanjay on election eve in March 1977.

In March 1975 we published a series of six articles on Maruti, Sanjay's "super-scandal." While Maruti Ltd., in which Sanjay had invested only Rs 100, was losing millions, his pocket companies like Maruti Technical Services were getting millions in fee from Maruti Ltd., though MTS's total assets were instruments worth Rs 1,200. The whole thing, we said, was "worse than Mundhra." The reports revealed that the Central Bank had loaned Rs 10 lakhs to Maruti against "future machineries" and PNB's loan of over Rs 1 crore was altogether unsecured.

Maruti had promised 10,000 cars by 1 October 1973. On the basis of this and subsequent announcements, it had collected Rs 2.2 crores in Sales Agency money. The dealers got neither the car nor their money back, nor any interest on these "deposits." When Dinanath, a dealer of Orissa, demanded his money, he was detained under MISA. These reports showed that the young man's assets were admittedly "nil" in 1970, but crores now. He was given a car licence when the same was denied even to State Governments. This young man had an investment of only one hundred rupees in Maruti, but he was the Company's "permanent" Managing Director. Bansilal had fraudulently displaced peasants to allot 400 acres of excellent farm land to

Sanjay at only one-tenth the market price. The company was losing heavily but its shares continued to be bought by big businessmen for some dubious consideration. Meanwhile, Sonia and her children had become big share-holders too, with no hint of the sources of their sudden wealth.

When the Government opened fire on Jama Masjid demonstrators, we showed how the Imam was right and the police wrong (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, Feb. 1975). The Government felt most uncomfortable about Hindus and Muslims joining hands on the Jama Masjid issue. But it could do nothing. Muslim support for Janata Party in 1977 was only the fruition of the seed planted in Hindu and Muslim hearts in February 1975.

On 16 April we revealed that Government was spending Rs 100 crores a year on spying.

The fact that Government never challenged these reports either in a court of law or before the Press Council, only went to establish their truth.

Lord Buddha has said: "A friend warns; an enemy strikes." Instead of heeding our friendly warning to mend matters, the government decided to strike terror in our hearts as if we were the enemy. But the pen proved mightier than the sword!

The month of April closed with an interesting controversy about the film "Aandhi." On 13 April we said the film was based on the life and loves of Indiraji. Three days later her Information Adviser denied the report. So on 20 April our film critic gave the piece "Aandhi, PM and *The Motherland*" which included the letter of denial.

In his letter No. PMS-5886 dated 16 April addressed to the editor of *The Motherland*, Shri H.Y. Sharada Prasad, Information Adviser to the Prime Minister wrote:

Dear Sir,

The Motherland of April 12, 1975 has published a most astonishing report on the front page dragging the Prime Minister's name in connection with a film which is now being publicly exhibited.

You say: 'It is learnt that a green signal was obtained from the Prime Minister by author Kamleshwar.'

This is wholly untrue.

You say: 'On March 26 the Prime Minister herself saw the

film at Rashtrapati Bhawan.'

This is untrue. The Prime Minister has not seen the film nor did she see any other film on March 26 at the Rashtrapati Bhawan.

You say that the parallels between the heroine of the film and the Prime Minister stand out. If you can believe that you can believe anything.

No person familiar with current history will see any resemblance between Shrimati Indira Gandhi's life and the story narrated in the film. There is no similarity either of substance or of peripheral detail. If the heroine wears a streak of grey in her hair or takes part in an election, it does not become a parallel. The heading that you have chosen for the report makes it clear that any insinuation is good enough for you to malign the Prime Minister.

Yours faithfully

sd/- H.Y. Sharada Prasad

It is astonishing that the PM's secretariat should have sent us this letter.

Whether the PM saw the picture and okayed it is not terribly important. Here we can only quote a leading Urdu film magazine *Chitra* which, in its issue dated 11 April, published a box item saying:

Indira Gandhi has also appreciated Suchitra Sen's acting. On March 26, Shrimati Gandhi saw producer Om Prakash's film 'Aandhi' in the Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi. After seeing it she said Suchitra Sen had acted very well.

Asked on phone where he had got the news, editor V.P. Puri said: 'I got it from the horse's mouth....'

Not to mention the report in the *National Herald*, or K.M. Amladi's in the *Hindustan Times*, or Debu Majumdar in the *Indian Express* and last but not least, *Blitz*.

The month of June 1975 saw the climax in the *expose* of the PM. The day after the Allahabad High Court Judgement our front page editorial indicated very plainly that Mrs Gandhi should resign. When the lady showed no signs of going, we carried on 14 June an editorial note which said:

Shrimati Indira Gandhi—we need not call her ‘Prime Minister’ any more—was scheduled to leave for Mexico this week. But the High Court Judgement had ruled that out. She can orate to hired captive audiences, but she can hardly show her face abroad without first resigning here. And so she is all dressed up—with nowhere to go.

The lady seems not to know whether to go or stay. Perhaps she needs somebody to tell her: ‘Can’t you go? Must you stay? ...’

And without mincing words we pointed out the absurdity of the claims that she has been unseated and disqualified “only on technical grounds” and that, therefore, she need not resign; that the law does not deal with the great issues of morality and propriety; it deals with legality. And on this count she has been found guilty—just like Kairon and Al Capone.

This does not mean that she, in fact, is guilty only of misusing the services of Yashpal Kapoor and police constables. The country, for example, is convinced that her use of military planes, caravans of Government cars, battalions of officers and lakhs of policemen makes the election contest utterly un-free and unfair. People are also convinced that the election symbol of cow and calf is calculated to exploit the religious feelings of the masses. Thus in the eyes of the people, the lady already stands convicted on hundred and one charges. But the court has held her guilty of only two charges because evidence on these counts is conclusive even in the eyes of law. Her actual sins, of course, are legion ...

In our issue of 20 June we convicted her of contempt of court, saying how legal circles in the capital were appalled at the way she had committed contempt of court in getting a stay on one ground and using it for an opposite purpose.

A day later we answered all her arguments for not going with the editorial “Niagara of Nonsense”:

Listening to the lady at the Boat Club we wondered whether she had not lost her mental balance. She looked upon the Allahabad verdict and the consequential ~~Opposition demand~~

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for her resignation as a 'conspiracy.' She said the Congress was a party of Kisans and Mazdoors, which had 'allowed' Opposition parties to function inside Parliament and outside. She said India's prestige in the world was at its highest today. She complained of 'character assassination' and said she had never done any wrong. She said there was no danger to the power structure as it existed and added: 'If this power structure changes, there will be communal violence....'

The lady thought the country's prestige was the highest today. Is it 'higher' than what it was even under her father? While we leave it to the father and daughter to compete for the honours, people have the distinct feeling that they were happiest under the Little Great Man that was Lal Bahadur Shastri.

She thinks that the Congress is the party of Kisans and Mazdoors. People think it is a party of *chors*, *dakoos* and *khoonis*.

The lady complained of 'character assassination.' We wish she had not mentioned the subject. What is the character of a woman accused of Nagarwala and Maruti scandals? You cannot assassinate a character that does not exist!

Her reference to the power structure could only mean that she is not going, whatever the judgement of the Supreme Court. And it would seem that she would not hesitate to start Hindu-Muslim riots to divide the people, so that she can stay on.

Generations yet unborn will hang their heads in shame that we had a foolish and dangerous woman like this as Prime Minister of our country. She wants to serve and save the country. The people have only one prayer: 'Oh God, save us from our saviour!'

Finally, our 27 June editorial in *The Motherland* entitled *For Whom The Bell Tolls* was not a little scathing in its criticism.

Shrimati Gandhi has at last declared war on the people. Her hysterical outbursts were meant to serve notice on the country that the rule of law was a fiction as far as the ruling Congress was concerned. She has now come out in her true

colours and done what we had always warned she would do when forced into a corner: discard the rule of law, muzzle the press and dump the Constitution into the waste paper basket.

For the first time since independence, this country is without a lawfully constituted Government. After the Allahabad and Supreme Court verdicts, Indira Gandhi and her so-called cabinet have been reduced to nothing less than a bunch of usurpers who have ceased to have any moral or legal right to their posts. The declaration of the emergency and other legal artifacts are merely a cover for what is, to all purposes, a takeover of the state by a ruthless political junta...

Let there be no illusions about the latest turn in Indira Gandhi's sinister manoeuvres. She is fighting desperately with no holds barred, for her own survival and that of her wretched family. Shrimati Gandhi ceased to be Prime Minister of this country, and her Government ceased to be a lawful Government, on the morning of June 12, when she was charged with corrupt practices and unseated. The bells have been tolling for her ever since and they will continue to toll as long as she is there.

What the Stars Foretold

It was the evening of 8 July, about 6 P.M. I was chatting with friends in the Central Jail lawn when the Superintendent called me aside. I had been transferred, he said.

“Where?”

“To Delhi,” he said.

I found it difficult to believe that I had been singled out for the favour of transfer to my home town. I was told to get ready quickly and to make sure I took my meal.

I thought it very strange. Delhi was less than two hours away. Why could I not go and have my dinner in Tihar? But the Superintendent was particular that I should take my meal before leaving. As I took my pre-dusk dinner a senior friend gave me a small note for J.P., requesting him to contradict the Madam’s allegation of incitement to the defence forces. It was thought easier to contact J.P. in Chandigarh from Delhi, than from Rohtak.

By 7 P.M. I was in the Deodi. Here I was told that Delhi Police had brought orders for my transfer to Delhi but that these days there had been cases of the transfer orders indicating a particular destination while the prisoner was actually taken to another. Soon after I was escorted out of the Deodi and put in a police lorry with half a dozen armed constables sitting all round me. Evidently they were making sure I did not squeeze myself out through the expanded metal netting covering the windows. They did not speak to me and I sensed that I was not

expected to exchange one word with them. As soon as the bus turned west I knew we were not going to Delhi. When it kept moving steadily westwards, I knew we were not going to Ambala either, which lay north. After about two hours of driving we stopped on the outskirts of a town. Here a car met us. After confabulations between the two parties, I was transferred to the car which had obviously brought some police officers in plain clothes. When I asked the car driver, now alone, what place it was, he said he also did not know. Evidently he too was a trained intelligence man. When I asked why my baggage was not being transferred to the car, I was assured that it would reach me alright. The whole operation was mystifying. Soon I found myself in the little Fiat, squeezed in by two hefty gentlemen on either side. After about ten miles we stopped in front of a building marked "Rest House Main." Later I learned it was the Baropal Canal Rest House. I had been told that if the person under interrogation here proved intractable, they threatened to shoot him and throw him in the Canal, telling him: "We will announce that you had to be shot because you escaped from police custody." Incidentally, that was precisely how Sunder was liquidated.

As I was ushered in I found a table and chairs, and also a nice bed, and thought to myself that it was a nice place to spend a night in. A senior MP at Rohtak had been saying that if at all we were to be arrested, we should have been put up in a decent Rest House and not in a district jail. I thought his prayer had been granted. But I wondered why I alone had been favoured with this special treatment; there was room enough in the bus for all of us, I said to myself in my continuing innocence.

Soon I found myself seated at a table with five others. I was to be interrogated! Now I knew why I had been told repeatedly to take my meal. As questioning started, I protested: "I don't know who you are and what you are and whether you have any authority to hold me here and question me in this manner." A brief silence fell on the room. At last one person, who, I understand, was the Senior Superintendent of Police. Hissar, said: "Mr Malkani, we will ask the questions and you are expected to answer them." Another gentleman added: "And if you don't cooperate we'll use other methods." I looked at the brute, told him he was no gentleman, and avoided answering any of his questions. From then on till 1.30 A.M., for some four hours, they ask-

ed me hundred and one questions about myself, about newspaper organization, newspaper policy, special correspondents, roving correspondents, about Maruti, about the Mishra murder and what have you. I answered their questions in the manner of a press conference. It was clear that the whole thing was being taped, because the leader of the team kept going to an adjoining room every half an hour or so, obviously to tend the machine. It would be interesting to hear those tapes now.

Soon it became clear that their main interest was the 26 January 1975 astrological report from our roving correspondent in Ahmedabad. It was captioned: "Indira's fall in early 1976 forecast." It read:

Ahmedabad Jan. 25. We are passing through uncertain times. In a situation like this the temptation is great to hear what the stars foretell. Here is a chat with Pandit Varahmihira, a well-known astrologer of India, who would like to remain unidentified.

Q: Soon after the Congress split astrologers were very free with their predictions of impending doom for the Prime Minister. However, these predictions did not come true. Would you like to say what went wrong?

A: One possible explanation would be that the astrologers were wrong in their calculations. However, it is difficult to see how all the astrologers would be wrong simultaneously. Another possible explanation would be that Indiraji's horoscope that we all have been seeing, is not the true horoscope. Family astrologers like Raj Gurus to many princely houses know that always two horoscopes are made of all royal children—one for private use and another for public consumption.

Q: If Indiraji's known horoscope is taken, how can you answer any questions about her?

A: Questions about the Head of Government can be answered on the basis of what the stars foretell about the country. If, however, the horoscope is correct then the astrologers erred in applying the horoscope for the country.

Q: Things have been going from bad to worse for the country. What's the matter?

A: Since 1969 the country has been going through a plane-

tary cycle like that of a period of seven-and-a-half years of trying time. This period will come to an end by the middle of 1976.

Q: Do you expect elections to be held this year?

A: I don't. Moreover, the next elections will be marked by irregularities, lawlessness and violence and whether the elections are held this year or the next, the Congress will have only a bare majority if any, and Indira will go out of power sometime in early 1976. It is the $2\frac{1}{2}$ months period on either side of the transition of Shani into Karkata (Cancer) that will bring the turning point in Indira's political pattern.

Q: If the Congress is in trouble in the elections due next March how can she possibly go on till June.

A: I don't expect her to resign quietly. When she loses her majority she will try to stick to office. She might do it by declaring an artificial emergency with Communists' support when there will be large-scale arrests of political workers and total suppression of peoples' liberties or she might try to rule with military support. She will try to drag down the country with her but I don't see how she can go on after June 1976. I don't expect a natural death for her. She might die in a mysterious way. Meanwhile, things will only get worse. There will be another major split in the Congress. The precipitate decline of the ruling party began with the near complete lunar eclipse of November 19, 1974. Till recently whatever she did went well at least for her but now whatever she does will go wrong. Saturn is transiting to the watery son of Karkata or Cancer. Brihad Samhita has described the situation as *Rajyasya Bhangam Nripteshcha Bhangam Kshayo Jananam Bahuduhkhakari* (The breakdown of Kingdom, the breakdown of kings, large-scale destruction of the people and full of sorrows). This indicates *Rajkiya Parivartan*—a political transformation in the country within 18 months of that eclipse.

Q: What is this political transformation and when will it come?

A: The period from June 1976 to December 1978 will be one of many trials and tribulations for the country. There will be sudden death of a VIP. Things will stabilize only in the winter of 1978-79 when the country will have a stable and patriotic government. The attempt on her part after the elections to

take over the country as a dictator would be strongly counter-acted by a people's movement in 1976.

As passages were read out to me I marvelled at the accuracy of many of the forecasts. For example this report said that when her position became untenable, she would stick to office "by declaring an artificial emergency with communist support, when there will be large-scale arrests of political workers and total suppression of people's liberties." How very true! Although astrologer "Varahmihira" was not sure when the whole thing would happen—he thought it might start in March 1976, when the next elections were due—he gave 21 months as the time of troubles, before "a stable patriotic Government" was established in the country. Interestingly enough the emergency lasted precisely that long, though it came—and went—nine months ahead of Varahmihira's schedule! My astrologer friend also saw unnatural death for the Madam. The interrogators seized on that remark to imply that it was not a bonafide astrological prediction, and that I had published it by way of a conspiracy to create a climate for the Madam's liquidation. This was a serious insinuation and I decided that I had to put the record straight. I told them that I myself had written the report after a talk with Dr Vasant Kumar Pandit, MLC, Jana Sangh leader and a well-known astrologer of Bombay, whom even the PM had consulted through Yashpal Kapur. That punctured their conspiracy theory. And so they neither interrogated Dr Vasant Kumar nor arrested him until he himself offered *satyagraha* in November, 1975.

They then asked me what I meant when I wrote that the country will have a stable and patriotic government only after two years. Was not the present government patriotic? "No," I said, "the present government depends for support on communists and the like. I do not consider it a patriotic government."

Again and again they would ask me who had done a particular story about Maruti or Mishra. And again and again I pleaded ignorance. They would ask me the names of my staff. I could not pretend not to know their names. So I would name one or two seniors and then say, "Look, the complete list of staff is there in the office. And the office is in your occupation. Go and see." They would ask the address of my PA and other collea-

gues. Again I told them to go and see the office records if they must.

They began to press me about some Mishra stories. I told them there was nothing very special about them. We just put two and two together and got an excellent story. For example, we knew that Mishra's younger brother, Jagannath, wanted to be Chief Minister of Bihar. *The Hindustan Times* reported that Mishra's life insurance policy for Rs 5 lakhs—which covered murder—had lapsed. And we had learnt that Mishra had an up and coming son. Our hunch was that in a bid to assuage the feelings of the Mishra family, his son would be made a legislator—he was made MLC—his brother would be made Chief Minister and his widow would be given Rs 5 lakhs from the LIC. And that is exactly what happened! It was not a confidential report; it was an intelligent guess.

Then they came to "Maruti." Who had given us all those March 1975 reports? I said these reports were published months ago; nobody would remember who wrote them. As for sources, information, I said, come from the Income Tax Department, Company Law Department, Industry Ministry, local residents, of Gurgaon, Maruti shareholders and dealers, police officers and private individuals. I was thus able to put them off the scent.

Now that the long night is over, I must thank the intrepid Shri Kanwarlal Gupta, MP, for supplying us that information.

At the end of it all they sheepishly explained that they were only doing their official duty—and that they did not mean any offence. I told them that we were as concerned about the security of political leaders as anybody. The authorities could have reassured themselves about the authenticity of the forecast as soon as it appeared. They did not have to stage this midnight drama six months later.

At about 1.30 A.M. I was put back into the car. When it stopped after a while I found myself in front of the District Jail, Hissar. This was the first time I realized I was around Hissar.

Two Unforgettable Days

At about 2 A.M. I found myself being escorted into the "Approver's Ward." That word pained and surprised me. Was there a conspiracy? Was I part of that conspiracy? And had I turned approver? It was a chilling thought. I asked the escorting jail official why I was being put into that kind of ward. He replied coolly: "Because all other wards are closed and everybody is asleep." That was some assurance. But I still felt uncomfortable in that solitary ward, all alone with a constable watching over me. I told the officer that I got up around 5 A.M. and that I must be shifted to the regular MISA ward first thing in the morning. When he turned up at five, I jumped out of bed, having been more than half awake all the time. I now followed him into another ward.

This other ward was another world. It had only dangerous criminals, all of them in fetters. The only ones not in fetters were a bunch of lunatics. Was I also to be put in fetters? I wondered. I even began to work out how I would sit, stand, sleep and walk in those fetters. Was this the free India we had worked for? Was India under Indira worth living in? Old memories began to float before the mind's eye: the cavalry charges in front of Hyderabad Central Jail in 1930-32; the 9 August 1942 police firing in Poona; the 1942 warrant of arrest that had pursued me from Hyderabad to Poona back to Hyderabad and Karachi.

I was told that a cell would soon be cleaned and got ready for me. I protested. But the that officer excused himself and said

he'd be back in 20 minutes. He returned after three hours. This time he was accompanied by his superior. All this while I sat under a *neem* tree, reading the great Sindhi poet, Shah Abdul Latif. I declined tea because I had not yet brushed my teeth; and I was not inclined to brush my teeth till my accommodation problem had been solved.

The superior jail official indulged in a great deal of prevarication. I was not being put with other MISA detenus, he said, because there were none left. "They have all been released." Next I was told that I had to be in that ward only briefly—till the Borstal Jail was ready. Since the Borstal Jail was almost ready, I said, I could be put there while the finishing touches like white-washing, etc., went on. But no, I was told, it wasn't quite all that ready yet. So wasn't there any other room in the entire jail, I asked. Well, there was, he said. Would I mind putting up in the *Phansi* (hanging) Ward? He even proceeded to show it to me across the connecting gate. But there was no covered space there, he said, on second thoughts, and turned back. I said I would rather sit in the shade of a jail tree under police guard than in that murderous ward. But the great official would not relent. I told him I was not a sack of potatoes to be deposited anywhere. Now at last he spoke the truth: Delhi had ordered that I be kept alone and aloof till further orders. That left me no choice. As I moved into the cell, I gave him a telegraphic message to inform my wife about my transfer, so that she did not go to Rohtak for an interview the following morning and be disappointed. I offered to pay for it, whereupon he expressed surprise that I had any money on me and took from me the little I had. The first thing I now did on entering the cell was to destroy that message for J.P.

The cell had no fan, and a commode came only in the evenings. In the morning I was told that shops had not opened yet to buy a fan for me. In the evening I was told that tenders had been called for the fan. The following day they put a lifer called Nathu, a fruit-seller from Ambala, in my cell to fan me. I didn't feel too reassured about being left alone with a convicted murderer; I was too new to jail to know anything about its inmates, particularly the harmlessness of most murderers. In any case it was embarrassing to have a man fanning me all the time. I taught him to turn the fan round, so that we both got the breeze, and I told him to keep sitting and to rest every few minutes.

For lunch I got *dal* and *roti*. But I could take neither one nor the other. There was too much sand in the *roti*. And supposing it was poisoned too? A government which closetted me with double murderers would not be beyond despatching me to heaven or hell! These two days all I had by way of a meal was a glass of milk and an egg, plus tea morning and evening.

In the evening a jail official turned up to say that my telegram had not been sent. He wanted the wording changed. It was only later that evening that the reworded telegram was finally despatched. Sundari got the telegram the following morning just when they were all preparing to leave for Rohtak.

I was invited to sleep outside. But I was not enamoured of the idea of sleeping out in a ward swarming with murderers and resounding with the orations of lunatics. And the incessant clang of fetters was more than I could take. Later, as I got used to it, I began to discern a certain rhythm in it. I suppose one could even sing to it!

I wrote out a letter to Sundari asking her not to worry about me. I quoted Shah Abdul Latif: *Dukha Sukhan ji soonha, ghorya sukha dukhan re* (Sorrows are the ornaments of joys; I would gladly forego joys if they came without any sorrows). The official came back with the letter to say that it could not be sent; the Sindhi line could be a dangerous message in code language! I had to strike it off.

The following day I drafted a telegram for the President, with copies to the Press Council and the Press Institute. The message read: "Strongly protest solitary confinement among murderers, lunatics, Hissar." Soon after I was called to the Deodi "for a minute." I left my things, as they were, open. In any case I didn't have a lock on my suitcase.

In the Deodi I was interrogated by the same old SSP and the Jail Superintendent. They wanted to know what day, and by what train I had left for Ahmedabad and returned to Delhi. I remembered neither. I told them they could check with the Railways or see my diary in my sealed office. Then they wanted to know whether I had sent the political predictions report by post, telegram, teleprinter or telex. I told them we did not have the latter two facilities. And I didn't remember whether I used the postal or the telegraphic wing of the P & T. Had I gone by Western Railway or Central Railway? Again I did not know.

That was the first time I realized there were two routes to Ahmedabad. But I did remember one thing: there had been a derailment on that track on our return journey.

Sure enough they told me at the third interrogation what day and by what train I had left—and what day and by what train I had returned. They even told me of the exact location of that railway accident. I wonder what they got out of that. Perhaps they wanted to make sure that I had actually been to Ahmedabad and met “Varahmihira” and that I had not cooked up the report in office.

Meanwhile the Jail officials and the SSP were carrying on furtive consultations. One of them had gone, ransacked my things and removed my diary—which had some juicy stories—some other papers and small coins. It was now announced to me that I was being shifted to the MISA ward. It was the evening of 10 July.

At my second and subsequent interrogations I was served *gulab jamun* and *namkin* with tea. After that four-hour midnight grilling in a solitary spot I was rather wary of the State apparatus. What if my *gulab jamuns* had been injected with poison? I hesitated for a while. At this stage the Superintendent said that the SSP had fallen in love with me. I said: “God save us from our friends.” As we all laughed, I relaxed and took my *gulab jamuns*.

At my third interrogation I was again questioned about Maruti and Mishra. I dodged the questions as before. But I felt that at the next interrogation they might torture me in a bid to make me speak. That evening I quietly went to the canteen and told important RSS-BJS workers of the DIR ward about my apprehension.

When the authorities came to know that I had been to the canteen they were horrified. They gave a dressing down to the wardens in charge. After that the ward was kept literally locked day and night. None of us was ever again able to visit the canteen. We were not even supposed to stand at the gate and see the waving *bajra* crop outside. The only time we could go out was when there was an interview—or an interrogation. The iron wall had descended on MISA detenus.

At my fourth interrogation I was kept waiting in the Deodi for

a whole hour before the great SSP arrived. I felt so bad about it that I refused to talk to him when he did arrive. Was I not well? Did I have any problem? Was anything the matter? Had anybody offended me? Could he of any help? I refused to answer any of his questions. I was therefore led back to the ward.

At the following interrogation he wanted to know where "Madhu Ram" or "Madho Ram" was. He of course meant Shri Madhav Rao Muley, General Secretary of the RSS. I was surprised to see that even high police officials did not know the correct name of one of the top-most RSS leaders. And how could they apprehend men whose very names they didn't know?

A few days earlier I had been visited by my friend and legal counsel, Appa Ghatate. In the course of the talk I had asked him how Madhav Raoji was. And he had said he was in Yervada. I don't know whether he mistook me as inquiring about Balasaheb Deoras or deliberately gave incorrect information about Madhav Rao to put the CID inspector off the scent. But the inspector seems to have got the name and communicated it to his higher-ups. When I was again asked about Madhav Rao I told him in all innocence that he was a Government guest in Yervada. Later I realized that I should never have made any enquiries about the welfare of Shri Madhav Rao or any other leader. For I later learnt that Shri Madhav Rao was out and underground—and very much on the wanted list.

In the course of this series of interrogations, the SSP became so free that on one occasion he said that Sanjay was the biggest security risk for his mother.

I asked him if he could get me *The Sunday Times* of London and some other foreign papers, which had carried reports about the Emergency. He promised to get me the same but conveniently "forgot to bring them" the next time. I suppose the policeman in him got the better of the "friend" in him.

On one occasion I asked him why he had entered the Police Force with its dirty tricks. He wished he had become a professor of English but regretted that it was too late.

Three Jails

Hissar Jail was something of a pain in the neck. Things were so very wooden. Rs 3 a day brought little more than *dal-roti* or *gheea-roti* with an occasional onion or *gur* piece thrown in. You could only starve on that kind of diet. In the four-odd months that I was in Hissar, I lost more than 13 kgs.

The cots were chained to the steel door, just in case we used them as ladders to scale the wall. The bathrooms had no doors, and the latrine doors had no bolts. In any case neither of them had any lights. We bathed from a trough of water normally meant for horses. When we gave a send off to Chaudhry Inder Singh, now MP from Hissar, we were solemnly told by a senior jail official that we could not raise slogans. (Later this major domo told us that as per the Jail Manual we were not even supposed to laugh in Jail.) When I asked to see the Jail Manual which prohibited slogans, he said "I say it." One of us told him: "You are not god." This hurt his *amour propre* and he said: "You are shouting slogans during martial law." Martial Law? Could it be true? Had the Madam been replaced by a General? Well, not quite. In his anger the major domo had just got his ideas and his vocabulary mixed up.

From the middle of August—after Mujib's murder—till late September, I didn't get any letter; nor did Sundari receive any of mine. After that, letters took an average of twelve days to travel between Delhi and Hissar. We named it the *chitthi-chor sarkar*

(the letter stealing government). In vain some detenus sang: *Chitthi mere dhol nun panhuchaiye kabootra*. (Oh ye pigeon will you please deliver my letter to my beloved.) I was confidentially told that letters were being censored in Hissar, Chandigarh and Delhi before they were posted.

Sundari sent a telegram, inquiring after my health—in the absence of any letter for six weeks—but I was not even informed about it. When the matter came up at the next interview, and I asked why the telegram had not been given to me, I was told by a mealy mouthed officer: “Because it was not addressed to you.”

At the first two interviews the children were allowed to see me only after some delay—and that too as a “favour”—since the permission was only for “two persons.” Of course the authorities in Delhi had refused to name the children in the permit on the ground that they were “free!”

Every single article was opened and turned upside down and inside out, to make sure that not even a scrap of paper was slipped in—or slipped out. On one occasion Sundari brought for me the text of Roona Laila’s Sindhi song *Jhulay Lal*. She had got it specially transcribed in Devnagri script, to make sure it was not refused on the ground that it might be something secret in the unfamiliar Sindhi script. I was told that I would get it only if, and after, Chandigarh okayed it. I decided to send it back.

On one occasion the fat CID officer interrupted the interview to put a table between Sundari and myself, so we spoke loudly enough for the dull fellow to grasp the conversation. I nick-named this Baijnath as Bailnath (the bull-man). Sindhu improved upon it and called him “Bad Nath” (the bad man).

However, Hissar was not without its plus points. Everybody could have a cell to himself. For the first month or so it was so quiet, all you heard was the railway whistle and the DCM siren. It was a welcome relief from the aggression of sound.

Every morning the detenus speculated whether the inauspicious *kotree* had chirped the preceding night over the *chakki* of A, B or C—and who might, therefore, next expect a transfer. (A jail cell is still called a *chakki*, after the ancient wheat grinding contraption that used to adorn all these rooms before the electric grinder took over.)

RSS-BJS friends from the DIR ward—they had never met me

before—sent me fruits and sweets and nuts with much affection, till the humourless authorities ordered them stopped. As the monsoon set in, many detenus sang: “*Teree do takiyan di naukri, mera lakhon ka sawan jaye*” and added, rather originally: “*Hai MISA ki majboori*.” (Thanks to your twopenny job—and the compulsion of MISA the romantic rainy season is going waste for me.) MISA was widely defined as Maintenance of Indira and Sanjay Act.” One detenu had his youngest puppy named “Misa.”

They told me stories of Bhiwani in general and of the genesis of many of the big Marwari business houses in particular. Rao Ram Narain Singh, erstwhile Secretary Haryana State Electricity Board told me all about the fraud that was Bansi Lal’s much touted electrification of all Haryana villages.” The stories would be interspersed with yarns. One of these was that the peahen was impregnated through her eyes by the peacock’s tears. It may not be true but it was sure interesting. Another, which sounded like a yarn but was testified true by an iconoclastic Arya Samajist, made strange hearing. This gentleman—Ram Pratap of village Bapora, Bhiwani—once came across a wandering *sadhu* from Mathura. Asked to show a miracle, this *sadhu* reluctantly covered himself with a blanket and after a few minutes produced a plateful of Mathura’s famous *pedas*; his legs were miraculously covered with the slush and mud of the rainy season! The local school master actually tasted a *peda*, after which the *sadhu* again covered himself and the plate of *pedas* with that blanket. When he re-emerged, there was no plate and no *pedas*!

As month followed month, I began to wonder how the family was pulling along. I remembered that I had left behind a bank balance of about Rs 300 (I now find that it was a grand total of rupees three hundred and thirty-two only). Although Sundari wrote soon enough that I did not have to worry about them on that score, I could not help wondering how they were managing things. But I hated to ask about it in the presence of the CID inspector. It was therefore only five months later, on 19 November, in Delhi High Court, that I learnt how friends had come to the family’s rescue.

While in Hissar, I gave up referring to the then PM by her name and started calling her “Mai,” which can mean anything from mother to woman in the different Indian languages. Her name was too polluted to be mentioned. Our Haryana friends,

of course, normally used an unprintable word for her, beginning with R....

Many wondered when things will get back to normal. I used to tell them: "Just as democracy was suddenly switched off one day, it will be equally suddenly switched on one day." But that day seemed to be far off.

Many prisoners in Hissar Jail believed they would be released on 15 August or 2 October or 14 November. I assured them that what had happened was much too crooked to be straightened out as an Independence Day gift or Gandhi Jayanti bonus or a Nehru Jayanti windfall. However, I argued that since the Emergency had been imposed to save the lady's chair, it would be lifted soon after the chair was secured by the Supreme Court, duly fortified by the many ex-post facto amendments of the electoral law. However, I was to be proved wrong in this.

Soon after the judgement it was announced that she would make a broadcast to the nation. Many of us thought she would announce massive releases, if not the lifting of the Emergency itself. It was a cool evening brightened by an almost full moon. We sat out in the open in a big circle. However even before she had finished, it became clear that she did not mean business. As a perceptive listener remarked at the end of it, "She talked about everything under the sun and the moon except, perhaps, the *gobar* gas and of course, the detenus." It became clear that our detention would be a long-drawn affair.

People are under stress and strain in jail, being forcibly cooped up together. This goes counter to the "territorial imperative," namely, a living creature's minimum requirement of space and privacy. And yet I must say that most detenus were able to transform their stress into smiles. The whole thing had the atmosphere of a picnic. Only, it was a picnic that went on too long.

When news came that I was to be produced in Delhi High Court on 20 November, I welcomed the prospect. There is nothing like home; and even the jail in your home town is better than jail elsewhere. The *jyotshi* had forecast good news for me by 19 November. And precisely on this day—which happens to be my birthday—I was transferred to Delhi, albeit in handcuffs. How could I protest the insult? I decided not to exchange one word with the police guard during those four long hours. I refused even to take tea with them on the way. I hope they understood.

Inside Tihar, the checking staff took away the little cutlery,

I had, consisting of a knife and a fork; evidently they thought it lethal weaponry. The superior staff passed the cutlery; but they would not let me keep my little radio. Radios were permitted in Haryana, but banned in Tihar. Inscrutable are the ways of the bureaucracy.

The following day in the High Court was memorable. Nothing happened in the court. But it was great fun outside. For the first time in five months I met the kids beyond the immediately evil eye of the CID. From the half a dozen MPs who came to see me, I learned more about the political situation in half an hour than I could have learned in a whole year in isolated Hissar.

However, when evening came and Shri Charati Lal Goel, advocate, and myself were asked to clamber up on all fours on to an open truck along with a large party of alleged smugglers, a certain sadness came over me. Here we stood, like so many heads of cattle, swaying this way and that as the truck speeded away. What would the children think of their daddy being driven away like a common criminal?

But that humiliation apart, I got the glad tidings that Intelligence had reported that 74 per cent of the population had turned against the Government. Every detenu had become a hero; the longer she kept us, the worse it would be for her. There was, therefore, no question of elections on the due date. The people were quietly against her. When I once asked the kids how everybody was, Vikram put it succinctly: *Sab theek hein, lekin koi khush nahin hai* (everybody is alright but nobody is happy). She had lost the March 1977 elections on 26 June 1975.

Right from the start people left no doubt about their disapproval of the Emergency and sympathy and support for its victims. My monthly newspaper bill at home before the Emergency used to be about Rs 100. However, the vendor refused to bill us for the month of June 1975. I know of detenus whose landlords refused to accept rent from them. In another case the headmaster of a public school insisted on not accepting the fees of a detenu's children.

However, to be back in Delhi, if only in Delhi jail, was to feel at home, feel good. It was the best birthday celebration I could have had. The old familiar faces, the happy community

living, the weekly interviews, and the whole thing presided over by the venerable Lala Hansraj—he looked every inch his historic community predecessor, Raja Agrasen—what more could one ask for in jail?

The MISA ward was crowded like a third class compartment. There was no space between the cots, so that if one man turned, friends on both his sides felt the movement. Many were living in tents on those cold November nights. The latrines could not be flushed and the bathrooms had neither running water nor lights nor latches. You kept the bucket against the door to prevent somebody inadvertently opening it. The only arrangement for hot water was a single immersion rod in a whole ward of over 200 detenus. And there was no place to wash your clothes. As for food you got everything in kind; and so there was too much cereal and too little—and too bad—vegetables.

Later, another ward—which had earlier held Raj Narain in solitary confinement—was occupied by us on condition that movement between this Ward 1, and the neighbouring Ward 2, would be free throughout the day. The new ward had five *chakkis*. But even here we were three to a *chakki*, eight feet by twelve feet!

However, while there was little room in the ward, there was infinite room in the detenus' hearts. We played and chatted and gorged ourselves on the delicacies sent to *bichare bandis* (poor detenus) like we had no care in the world. All of us felt that we took more sweets and fruits here than at home. Many of us got up soon after 5 A.M. to the hilarious railway-station-style shouts of *chai, garam chai! paan bidi!* Lalaji who heard of our cakes and puddings and *kababs*, smilingly described our ward as Ashoka Hotel. We started the day with *pratah smaran* (*Karagare vasate Lakshmi*) but we also spent hours playing “sweep.” It was humorously dubbed as *samagra kranti* (total revolution). And it sure was a total change from the work-a-day world outside!

In Tihar, MISA detenus were distributed in five wards. We had youth leaders, students, teachers and journalists in Ward 1; Lala Hansraj Gupta, Jagannathrao Joshi, MP, and S.S. Bhandari, MP, in Ward 2; Shri Charan Singh and Sardar Badal in Ward 14, Surendra Mohan and others in Ward 15 and Nana Deshmukh and Jamaat-i-Islami men in Ward 17.

We had long demanded facilities to meet at least once a week.

On 8 February 1976 our request was conceded for the first time. We all lunched together in an atmosphere of great enthusiasm. Later we met in *chakki* 1, in Ward 1. Here we exchanged notes. Shri Charan Singh urged immediate and unconditional merger of the four parties and prompt announcement of the same on BBC. That, he was sure, would make a qualitative change in the situation. All others agreed. Nanaji said that once approval had been secured from leaders in various jails, getting the news broadcast would be no problem.

The following Sunday we met in Ward 14 with Shri Charan Singh and Shri Badal as hosts. Here again the leaders met in conclave. Shri Surendra Mohan said the RSS should also join the new party. It was pointed out to him that RSS was a non-political cultural movement which could not be expected to join a political party.

On this occasion we met the alleged Tantrik who was supposed to have been doing *pujas* at Bahugunaji's instance to see the Madam out. He was a quiet unassuming man. He denied being a Tantrik. But he seemed much interested in Ayurveda and astrology. Many detenus consulted him on health problems. And even jail officers touched his feet and got their family horoscopes read by him. It was learnt that he drank only Ganga-jal and the same was brought to him by his devotees every day.

The Sunday after we met in Nanaji's ward and here we were served the best food in our jail life—and heard excellent music too.

After that we met in Ward 1 when we celebrated Morarji Bhai's birthday—29 February—with songs and speeches and sweets.

I hope nobody thinks so well of jail as to get started for one. It must be realized that a jail is a jail. It gives you perspective and deepens your insight into men and matters. But it also amounts to a partial death of the man inside you. Many of us recited the *Hanuman chalisa* for delivery from the pain of incarceration. We also had an elaborate and solemn *Akhand Path* of the *Ramayana* in our ward.

Things are particularly tough for lady detenus who may number only one or two in a given jail. The lonelines can be very trying. At least in some jails, MISA detenus do get permission to stroll about outside their ward. Women detenus are locked up all day

and night.

The men don't have to live with any convicts except for the few working as their servants; the women are locked up with criminals, since there is only one women's ward in any jail. It would seem that not only women detenus but their families too suffered more than the men.

The detenus, though stunned, stood their ground. Hardly any of them bent before the storm. This was a source of inspiration to the people outside. But much of the credit for their firmness goes to the support of those outside. The handful of detenus who became *Bees Sootri* and went, soon discovered that they were shunned like the plague.

I cannot forget the dialogue between a detenu and his mother who had come to meet him. This gentleman was rather ill at ease in jail. But his mother told him to stand firm. When the son said that his business was suffering, she quickly retorted: "Business? What work do you do outside? In any case your brothers are taking full care of that." She added: "Ever since you came to jail, the family prestige has gone up. I say, you stay here as long as necessary."

Simultaneously it was the people outside who helped maintain the families of detenus. At one time the number of families being helped exceeded 40,000. Also, it was the people who gave shelter, and extended support, to the thousands of underground workers pursued by MISA warrants. It was a heart-warming experience.

Whenever DIR undertrials were taken to court they shouted slogans all the way. People on the way would stop to listen. Every time they shouted "*Indira Gandhi Murdabād!*" their faces would brighten up. A scooter-driver was heard telling his passenger: "It is such a relief to hear that slogan once again!"

At one of the weekly interviews in Tihar, Sundari told me that according to a friend whose hobby is astrology, I should be back home sometime between 16 March and 16 April. I did not get back home; but I certainly got back to my second home during the Emergency, Rohtak Jail.

For the second time the *gyotshi* had proved right—or almost right—about me. I was transferred on 23 March—along with Jagannath Rao Joshi, Surendra Mohan and some others. It happened like this.

Hawa Mahal

Holi of 1976 dawned in happiness. It was spring time and we had *gulal* and *halwa* and endless laughter and, if I may betray a secret, a camera, to celebrate Holi from ward to ward. In the evening we were enjoying pop music when suddenly a siren began to wail. Could it be from the Hanuman temple nearby? No, in the temple they ring bells, not sirens. Soon the warden locked the door with the alarming news that some one dozen convicts had dug their way out of the jail. Evidently they had been digging a tunnel for months, to escape on a day when the staff is scarce and probably drunk.

What followed was a siege operation. All wards were locked day and night. The only time one of us could go to the other ward was at 5 AM. to collect our quota of the day's milk. Flood lights went up all over the jail. And an armed constable stood guard 24 hours in the watch-tower overlooking our ward. If he went mad he could shoot us just like so many sitting ducks. Actually on one occasion he shouted to a guard lazing in the alley below that if he did not keep moving, he would shoot him.

On 23 March when we were lunching, four of us in Ward I—and many more in the other wards—were told to get ready and report in the Deodi by 2 P.M. for transfer. We were not too pleased to break company and go, God and Government alone knew, where. One of us, Shri Suresh Upadhyaya Guru, President IIT Teachers Association, New Delhi, ended up in

Fatehgarh Central Jail, about which he wrote: "I couldn't have known hell till I came to Fatehgarh." It had no electricity and the prisoners were locked up in their cells at 6 P.M!.,

We were bundled in a police bus which, after long halts, dropped us at the station where we were huddled in a third class compartment of Punjab Mail, which in turn deposited us in Rohtak at midnight. On the way we had to pay for food, drink and coolies ourselves. When we made it to the jail, we had our pockets searched by a mean little one-eyed constable, as though we were just out of underground, still carrying grenades on our person. (Incidentally this one-eyed constable was the only warder-voter in jail who said in March 1977 that he might vote Congress. All others vowed by their children to vote Janata.)

I was happy to meet old friends once again in Rohtak. When I mentioned the astrologer's prediction about this transfer to a (second) home, Jagannath Rao recollected that the day we were transferred, an earthen pitcher had fallen from his hands and broken, and he had said: "My days in Tihar are over." They were.

It would seem many others had similar interesting experiences with astrologers. Ashok Mehta showed his crushed thumb. He said that Dr Vasant Kumar Pandit's father had forecast an accident to his person on a certain day and told his aunt about it. Of course he didn't bother about it, left for Nasik by car and met with an accident—on the predicted day!

Piloo said when he was a child an astrologer had predicted that he would build lots of houses. He had thought at the time that he would become a big landlord. As it turned out, he has built a whole lot of houses, but not for himself: he has built them for others, as an architect!

Bhairon Singh said he had been warned of a serious accident during a particular week. He religiously kept indoors for the duration. On the last day there was a big BJS meeting in Jaipur and he had to attend it. Conscious of the prediction, he arranged to leave the house only by car. When, however, after the meeting he walked a few steps for *paan*, he was hit by a racing tonga which smashed his leg to smithereens. He only narrowly escaped amputation.

Jagannath Rao Joshi had an even more interesting experience to tell. He was serving in the Military Accounts Department

during World War II, helping the family financially and considering marriage proposals. At this stage a visiting astrologer predicted: "This man will not marry. He will be no use to the family. He won't keep his job. But he will never starve." The prediction seemed to fly in the face of known facts. And yet within months it had come wholly true. He was transferred to Poona, where he resigned his job and became an RSS *pracharak*. He gave up thought of marriage, ceased to be of any use to the family. But as an RSS *pracharak*, his lodging and board were assured; they had become RSS responsibility!

Some time in April 1976 Maharani Patiala visited Bangalore, when she dropped in on the Sai Baba. The latter enquired after Ashokji. When he was told that he was not keeping good health, the Sai Baba gave some *bhabhooti* for him and said he should be back home by 15 May. And Ashokji was released in the early hours of 15 May.

The stay in Rohtak was memorable for the company it afforded. Half an hour with Ashok Mehta was a liberal education. The enthusiasm of Biju was infectious. Surendra Mohan was a walking library. Major Jaipal Singh was a landlord-cum-army officer-turned Marxist. Piloo helped everybody laugh his way through the prison bars. All of them were impressed with the size and quality of the RSS contingent of *satyagrahis*. One day a senior leader said: "Give me the RSS and I'll change the face of India." Thereupon Bhairon Singh told him: "In that case why don't you join the RSS?" The former laughed and returned: "Nothing doing. If I join the RSS, they'll swallow me!"

Shri Balwantrai Tayal, the old freedom fighter of Hissar, fed us with the fondness that a mother reserves for her little ones. His cousin-brother, Shri Baldev Tayal, leading lawyer of Hissar, was one of those gems thrown up by the Janata Sangharsh. Prof. Prem Sagar was an aesthete. Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, MP, was full of romantic stories of Rajas and Ranis of Rajasthan. Samar Guha was known as *Dau Dau Phat Phat* because of his fiery childhood. He sang as sweetly as only a Bengali can—though the singer and the hearers could not always agree whether it was *Malkaus* or *Malhar* that he sang. Sikandar Saheb regaled us with his favourite Urdu verses. And how beautiful they were! I still remember a few.

*Hawaadas-i-rozgar, meri Khushi se kya intiquam lengi;
Ki zindagi woh haseen zid hai jo be sabab muskara rahi hai.*

—Adam

(What can the accidents of life do to my happiness? Life is that beautiful and everlasting Ye that goes similing on.)

*Hawa jahaan tez chal rahi thi wahan ch'ragh-e-wafa jalaya;
Shikayat is mein nahin kisi ki, shikar hoon opni sadagi ka.*

—Jamil Muzahri

(I lighted my lamp of love where the wind was the strongest; I have no complaint to make, having been a victim of my own simplicity.)

'PM'—as Piloo Mody was popularly called—has a peculiar allergy to mice. If he saw one, he could not relax until he had seen it go into its hole or, better still, caught and killed. When some one remarked: "But why are you afraid of a mouse? After all it is not a lion?"

"A lion?" asked Piloo archly. "who is afraid of a lion?" Everybody roared with laughter.

I suppose Piloo is not alone in his fear of another creature. I'm so afraid of dogs, my hair stands on edge if a dog barks!

Many late summer evenings were spent chatting on the masonry stage in the central lawn, humorously christened "Hawa Mahal" in honour of Shri Bhairon Singh's Jaipur. Sikander Saheb was full of the most interesting stories, true stories, of course. There was the story of a Muslim lady he knew, who had her kidney stone removed in a flash by a *sadhu* who did it without so much as touching her, but leaving a long mark on the side; the lady still has that stone and Sikander Saheb has seen it!

Did you know the two most trying moments in Babar's life? They were his fight with a cobra and his refusal to scratch even when he was suffering from acute itching. Sikander Saheb told us that Babar had said that his itch was more trying than either the cobra fight or the first Battle of Panipat.

Bhairon Singh told us of an old lady he had met in a Jodhpur village, who has not taken any food or drink for more than thirty years now, following the death of her husband. Except that every few weeks she goes into a swoon for couple of days, she works normally.

And of course Jagannath Rao Joshi wisely considered it time wasted unless he could cut a joke every other minute. There were his many encounters with the planchette. When somebody asked him why he was listening to the *Bhagvad Purana Katha* regularly he quipped: "With politics banned, maybe we will now have to make our living by turning professional *katha-vachaks*." He laughed and laughed as he told us what an Akali MP had once told the House: *Nehru ne nehren khudwai; Shastri ne shastra chalaye; Indira ne indiri katwai.*" (Nehru dug ditches, Shastri took up arms and Indira had the organs cut.)

While everybody—except the diabetics—enjoyed sweets, Samar Dada and Shyam Babu enjoyed them more than anybody else. On one occasion the quantum of sweets was rather limited. Shyam Babu took some and put it on his plate. Seconds later Biju asked for his plate; he wanted to put some more. But Shyam Babu did not want to take any chances. What if Biju took away the little he had taken? So he held his *ladoo* in his hand and passed on the empty plate to Biju. Everybody laughed—except Shyam Babu.

Dada would go for his bath only when everybody else was seated for lunch. However, the surest way to get him out in minutes was to tell him there were *rasagollas* or fish to be served! Doctors had advised him to cut his sugar intake. But *rasagollas* had to be the exception. He would quote Sri Ramakrishna as saying that a *rasgolla* was like the Governor; even as all traffic made way for the Governor, all other foods made room for *rasagollas*.

As 26 June 1976 approached, detenus decided to observe the day with a fast. As soon as some officers came to know of it they tried to break the fast by getting a dubious detenu to organize a feast, complete with *kheer*. They made foodstuffs and fuel freely available to this detenu from the jail store. They even used their familiarity with some detenus to persuade them to join the feast. Had they succeeded, they would certainly have got a big pat on their back from higher-ups. But resentment against official attempt to abort the mass fast became so intense that the feast flopped; almost everybody fasted.

There was much amusement about Government's claim about the "gains" of the Emergency. It would, however, seem that the only "gain" of the Emergency for the ruling party was complete freedom from the shackles of power and prestige. For the detenus

there was one significant “gain” of the Emergency; the house telephone never went out of order. They were so intent upon tapping it that they never let it go out of order. Every time you gave or received a call, you could distinctly hear the ticking of the tape recording!

It was the victims of the Emergency who gathered the gains, all unintended. By putting all political opponents together, Government united them. Before the Emergency, the parties were only slowly coming together. The jail acted as a pressure cooker. Within a few months even those who had all along been for “hastening slowly”—I must confess to being one of them—came out for “merger here and now.” Indeed the whole thing was reminiscent of the British Government’s joint trial of three INA officers—one Hindu, one Sikh and one Muslim—which had united the whole country at least on the INA issue, and made their conviction impossible. By keeping together the various shades of dissent, Government only helped them rub off their angularities and unite in defence of democracy.

Marxists in many places were particularly pleased with the experience. Till then they had looked upon the democratic opposition as “capitalists,” now they knew better. “We never knew that there were such good men in the Jana Sangh,” they would say. Muslims were another section pleasantly surprised by their jail experience. When they saw RSS workers at close quarters they became their greatest admirers. In Delhi they gladly led the *shloka* chanting at the start of every meal.

In any mass movement, all kinds of opportunistic and weak elements creep in. Some of them had got into the J.P. movement too. The Emergency acted as a severe test. It eliminated all these elements, who promptly became *Bees-sutri* (twenty pointers). This *agni-pariksha* purged the Janata movement of much dross.

Throughout the Emergency period, newspapers became non-newspapers. The only things that interested me were Abu’s cartoons in the *Express*, and the births and deaths column in the *Times of India*. AIR became the butt of ridicule. All India Radio had long been All Indira Radio; now it also became an Anti-Indians Radio. “Akashvani” became “Paataalvani” (the voice from hell). As Chaudhri Charan Singh pointed out in jail more

than once: "No other Prime Minister in the world speaks any lies. But here the PM speaks nothing but lies." And a servile radio dished out these lies as "news."

The only source of news for leaders and detenus no less than for workers and farmers, therefore, was the BBC. Some of us switched on radio news with the bet that the very first words would be "Prime Minister." We always won! It was a measure of national no-confidence in the government that people believed a foreign radio and not their own. It was exactly like East Pakistan in 1971, when the Banglas switched on not Radio Pakistan, but BBC, for news of their freedom movement. If there is one journalist who deserves a prize more than any one else for performance during this period, it is BBC's Ratnakar Bharati.

Feast of Thought

After breakfast, lunch and dinner, we would sit around and chat a while. There would be much information and more entertainment at this virtual round table conference three times a day.

One day the newspapers announced that the Emergency ban on strikes had saved so many man-hours. Quipped a friend with a statistical bent of mind: "And how about the loss of crores of man-hours by the detention of one lakh adults for more than a year?"

Another time the Press reported the unearthing of Rs 1313 crores of black money. Nobody was impressed. The figure was not only doubly unlucky in its '13s'; according to the Wanchoo Committee on Direct Taxes, black marketing transactions amounted to Rs 7000 crores each year. And according to Shri Rangnekar of *The Economic Times*, this figure was as high as Rs 14,000 crores. So what the Government had got was chicken-feed.

Ashokji told us of a number of offers received by him as minister, concerning oil and minerals from Iran, Algeria and elsewhere, which the Government failed to accept. Many of those offers, he pointed out, were being entertained now after much loss of time and money.

One day the papers reported the impending discovery of a secret Rs 300 crores gold hoard in Jaipur. Of course nothing came of it. It was pointed out that much of the more valuable

jewellery had already left the country under the diplomatic protection of some VIPs. How nice it would have been if we had set up a Jewel Palace in Delhi, Bombay or elsewhere, displaying the wealth of our princes! It would have excelled even the Crown Jewels in wealth and beauty. The entire jewellery could have been insured by the Government. And princes could have been allowed to sell pieces which were historically unimportant. The idea would have fired the pride and patriotism of our princes, who would have gladly displayed their jewellery in such a Palace.

Talk turned again and again to the Madam. She said her father was different; he was a "saint." Was she conceding that she was a sinner?

Who, I was once asked, had written that interesting piece, "Women Rulers are Dangerous," in the *Organiser* in 1969? Now that he was no more I could confide that it was Dr Girja Mukerji, old associate of Subhas Chandra Bose and long-time Professor of International Affairs at the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

Interestingly enough women rulers themselves have realized their unsuitability for high office. For example Tzu-hsi, the last Empress of China, said before her death in the second decade of this century, that no woman should again ascend the Dragon Throne of China. Who knows, Indiraji may also come to the same conclusion after all that has happened? Surprisingly enough she has always looked upon herself as an Indian version of Joan of Arc. She forgets, said a friend, that Joan was burnt on the stake as a witch. As it turned out, the Indian Joan was roasted alive in the ballot box.

Another obsession with her is Napoleon. She wanted to be famous as Napoleon! Of course she did not come anywhere near Napoleon—except in her suppression of the Indian Press. And, incidentally, that was the biggest single mistake of Napoleon, not excluding his invasion of Russia. Napoleon knew that with the Parisian Press free he "could not rule France even for a week" as dictator. He therefore subjected it to pre-censorship. Before starting on a campaign he would call editors, actors and artists and tell them: "Qucte me. . . Sing, praise and paint me. . . . I will buy you at your own price, but you must be purchased."

They did all that. But at the end of it all, the French papers were hardly readable. In any case there was no news in them. He had to smuggle in English and German papers for world news! As for the French papers, he would say: "Pass over all that. They say only what they think will please me."

Many Frenchmen never learnt that they had lost the Battle of Trafalgar! It was just like millions of Indians not being told about the massacre of Turkman Gate! In either case, suppression of news hurt the dictator more than the people.

Turkman Gate reminds me—a few days after the incident a delegation of local Muslim leaders called on the President. They complained about the excesses committed on the people. The President wondered what he could do. One visitor stood up and said: "You could have done one thing."

"What?" asked the President.

"You could have taken poison," returned the visitor.

When the son began to talk anti-communism, a Swatantra leader thought he was talking sense. "He is not talking sense; he has only stolen some of our ideas," was my reaction.

Another friend revealed that when the Industrial Licensing Committee met to give him licence for Maruti, it met in Sanjay's bedroom! He was supposed to be sick!

When Borooah referred to him as a modern Vivekananda, the general reaction was that he was an anti-Vivekananda—even as Mrs Gandhi was anti-Gandhi. Here was a man who complained that girls were not attending his rallies. Why should he want the girls? And why should the girls avoid him? The whole thing was an eloquent commentary on the character of this pretender to the throne. Shaw was right: "A Prime Minister should have no children."

Often we would discuss the prospects of merger. How could Jana Sangh merge with Congress-O, which had long been part of the Congress, and had been denounced by it? Simple, I said. Jana Sangh had denounced the Congress for its corruptions. It had nothing against Congressmen as such. As Shri Sitaram Kesari, then PCC President Bihar, had told me in 1974: "There are more Jana Sanghis in the Congress than in Jana Sangh."

Early in 1950, Congress Working Committee had, by a resolution, invited RSS workers to join the Congress. It was Nehru who, on his return from London, vetoed the operation of that

resolution. In now coming together, Congress-O and Jana Sangh were only implementing an old Congress resolution, I said.

News came of demolitions in Delhi and elsewhere. Whole cities seemed to have suffered an earthquake. Karol Bagh in Delhi, we learnt, appeared to have been bombarded. Next only to one's body, one is attached to one's place. We had no doubt that in tampering with men's bodies—through vasectomy—and with their places of work or residence—through demolitions—the Government was committing suicide.

One day there came the news of the President of World Council of Churches, Mr Potter, denouncing the Indian Emergency and demanding restoration of civil liberties. We were delighted. And we wished the World Muslim Conference would take a similar line. Evidently that was expecting too much of an organization controlled by kings and other autocrats. But the Government more than made up for that. By making war on Muslims in Delhi, Muzaffarnagar and elsewhere, it estranged Muslims more than any World Muslim denunciation of Emergency would have.

One day the talk turned to the contrasting history of India and China. In China the Central Government has been the rule, in India it has been the exception. Why? One of the more credible explanations was that whereas China has only two major rivers, India has over a dozen. Rivers have always been the cradles of different mini-cultures and autonomous power-centres. In addition the two major Chinese rivers—the Yangtse and Hwang Ho—have for over a thousand years, been joined by a canal. In India no two rivers are joined in this way. And, because China has two major rivers, and so two cultures, it also has two languages—Pekingese and Cantonese. It is the written pictographic script of China that has provided the bridge for the two languages. And so the decoction known as “Cha” (our *chah*) in one part and “tay” (our tea) in another, are represented in writing by the same symbol. India has the advantage of neither one script nor of few languages.

Even so, over the ages, India with its decentralization had not been any worse off than China with its centralization.

As the Emergency continued month after month after month, and people seemed to take it all lying down, the question arose if we had any tradition of freedom. Many thought that we had

always been a servile people, ever bowing to the autocrat, whether he was Greek, Scythian, Mongol, Turk, the British or the Nehrus. But friends better versed in Indian history thought otherwise. India, they said, had a consistent record of fighting for human freedom. The tradition of dissent had been very powerful in India.

Religious issues were predominant long before political and economic ones arose. But the ancient world gave man the fullest freedom to speculate about god. Even those who honestly believed that there was no God, were respected as *Rishis*. And the *Rigveda*, the oldest book of mankind, frankly wondered about "whence are we and why are we," and concluded that "God alone knows, or, maybe, even he knows it not." Gods, said the Vedic seers, were born after men!

Freedom of thought and expression were a matter of course in the ancient world. The Sabha and Samiti governed by Dharma, were more important than the King with his crown and sword. Freedom of thought was so well established, and so effective, even in historic times, that philosophers took the lead in mobilizing resistance to Alexander's invasion. The invader, who was otherwise known to respect philosophers, was so piqued that he had a whole lot of them arrested. He had some of them killed; the rest he took home to teach him wisdom!

At the time of coronation, a King's subordination to the moral law (dharma) was emphasized again and again. The King said "*Ahandyosmi*" ("I am the sovereign"—none can punish me) three times. And every time the *purohit* hit him on the head with the *dharmadanda*, and said "No, the law is sovereign."

Indeed the Mahabharat laid down that a king who violated *dharma* (moral law) could be killed like a mad dog.

Chanakya deals at length with the seamy side of politics. He has a lot to say about spies. But there is no mention of censors to seal people's lips. Freedom of speech was an established fundamental right of the people. Indeed this freedom of expression extended to all the arts and sciences. While "modern" England imposed a ban on D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterly's Lover* before World War I, and lifted that ban only in 1960, nobody in India looked upon the *Kamasutra*—or Khajuraho—as obscene. It was the art and science of sex, pure and simple.

The ancient man was not afraid of any aspect of life, or any insight into life. All nature, from man to moth, was a mystery; and he explored it with divine passion. All knowledge was *Darshan*—a view of Truth as God.

Nor was dissent snuffed out during Muslim rule. Hindu mass resistance to Muslim misrule is well enough known. But Muslim resistance to Muslim misrule, though not widely known, was not any the less real. If the *Qasida* (ode) in praise of the king was common, the *Hijwa*, a poetical denunciation of a bad king, was not uncommon. And society fully accepted it and made it part of a poet's works. Firdausi denounced Mahmud Ghazni in a *Hijwa* that is part of his *Shahnama*.

We all know about Mohammed Ghori who invaded India. But there was Hussain Shah, his younger brother, who had settled down in Delhi and learnt Sanskrit. When his brother attacked India, Hussain Shah raised a force of 10,000 from among the Muslims then living in and around Delhi and fought shoulder to shoulder with Prithviraj. He died fighting for India.

In the thirteenth century eastern U.P. gave birth to the reformist Mehdavi movement. Thousands of Mehdavis died resisting the orthodoxy of Balban and Allauddin. Nizamuddin Auliya criticized Sultan Ghyasuddin Tughlaq for his oppressive rule. Haji Mullah rose in revolt against the bigotry and tyranny of Tughlaq. He was set upon and murdered, and his head was tossed about in the streets of Delhi. Khafi Khan, the historian, fully exposed the follies and crimes of Aurangzeb. Sarmad, liberal Sufi saint, became such a thorn in the side of Aurangzeb, that he got him murdered.

Early in the nineteenth century, Ahl-e-Hadis, Muslim purists, united with Gwalior in a bid to end British rule in India. They never accepted money from the rich; they collected a handful (*Mutthi*) of *atta* from common households. A century later, Surendranath Banerji recommended their *mutthi* system (*mushiti-daan*) for the national movement.

Shivaji did not suppress himself even in the Mughal court in the overawing presence of Aurangzeb. And Guru Gobind Singh addressed his defiant "Zafar Namah" (the Declaration of Victory) to Aurangzeb even when the latter had all but destroyed his forces. Thus not only ancient India but even mediaeval India had a glorious tradition of freedom. And then came the British

with their own tradition of freedom.

People wonder why the lady called elections. There were obviously many reasons; but more than any other, she called the elections because she knew she had to. People were scandalized when she jailed more than one lakh persons, imposed censorship, banned papers, sealed presses, even arrested editors and closed down the Press Council to hand over No. 10 Janpath, the official residence of revered Lal Bahadur Shastri, to her son's "Youth Congress." They saw that the Rowlatt Act, enacted by the British in their angriest mood, was not only innocuous compared to MISA, it was not used even once. By contrast, the lady's conduct struck the people as revolting in the extreme. She knew she was sitting on a volcano. Indeed the lady was so scared of assassination that she had all military officers of the rank of captain and above watched. The scared officers in turn stopped drinking in Army Clubs for fear of blurting out something under the influence of drink. Many of them stopped frequenting clubs altogether. The madam knew all this and her fear grew greater all the time. She had to hold the elections at a timing of her choice, if she wanted to avoid an eruption. The announcement of the elections thus was a triumph of our ancient and continuing tradition of freedom. It was a reassertion of our will not to be suppressed by the tin gods of the day.

Through all that period, Abu's cartoons in *The Indian Express* came as proof that people might be bloodied but they were unbowed. *Express* Editor Narasimhan's special article that New Delhi was spreading the red carpet for tin-pot dictators but keeping the opposition representing crores of Indians in jail, was a whiff of fresh air in an otherwise suffocating atmosphere.

And then came news of the immolation of Shri Prabhakar Sharma, painter, outside Vinoba's Ashram. It was clear that "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" And it was not!

Life Inside Jail

In Rohtak we were distributed over as many as five wards. There was Dr Kamala Verma in the Women's Ward, Shri Hardwarilal in "Approvers' Ward" and a few of us in the Library block. But most of the Haryana detenus were in "Munda Khana" (children's ward) and most of the Delhi detenus in Manoranjan Kaksh (Entertainment Hall). We provided each other with much entertainment. Birbal Gupta of Narwana ably assisted by Raghbir Singh Huda of Rohtak was virtually our Birbal; he did not entertain us any less than his historic namesake had entertained Akbar.

But how was the jail staff? Well, I'd say it varied from jail to jail. It was good in Rohtak, bad in Hissar, indifferent in Delhi. Even in a given jail, it is the individual who makes all the difference. In Tihar one officer was so casual that Jagannath Rao Joshi, then M.P., stormed out of his room: "Even the President stands up to greet us but this gentleman does not have the courtesy even to ask us to take a chair!"

Some sychophants of the Congress were scared when the Janata tide mounted high. "What will happen to us?" they wondered. The more reasonable would tell them: "Be neutral and you'd not be in trouble."

Although one should have a relaxed relationship with officers in jail, it is best not to be chummy with them. Here are people who are "Government servants." They would like to report your

conversations to higher authorities and win some reward. I know of an officer who chatted with a senior visiting lawyer and reported to the authorities the line the latter would be taking in Raj Narain's case. His report was found useful enough to earn him a cash reward of Rs 1500, twice his monthly salary!

I remember how eagerly an officer questioned me the day Mujib was bumped off. He was not satisfied when others gave their reactions. He wanted to know what I thought of it all. I did not oblige him.

I would even go so far as to say that there should not be uninhibited talk between detenus. When elections were announced some non-political detenus were called to the Deodi to find out what names we were discussing for what constituencies. Perhaps Bansilal would not have announced his candidature from Bhiwani if he had known in advance that Chandrawati would be fighting him.

And how about the jail doctors? If you fall ill in jail, you've had it. Illness away from home can be a nuisance. But if you did fall ill, what happened? Rohtak was no problem; the jail has a government doctor and the city has a first class Medical College and first class hospital. The doctors are able and sympathetic. But Hissar was different. It had a junior doctor who was so nervous, he always kept his left hand in his pocket. The poor fellow was short of even ordinary Vitamin B tablets.

However things were even worse at Tihar. Here you normally did not see the doctor. I saw one only twice in four months. What is worse, he did not look like a doctor. With his cheeks bulging with a permanent *paan* on one side, he looked more like a *paan bidi wala*. You could never be sure he would give you the right medicine. Most of us did without any, and that, I guess, didn't work out too badly.

In jail after jail, the authorities did not know how to treat us. What really was our situation? In Delhi, the Government had not so much as framed any MISA rules. In a two-line communication, it had instructed the authorities long before the Emergency to treat "MISA detenus" as "undertrials." But whatever else we might or might not have been, we were clearly no kind of "undertrials." No trial against any of us was contemplated. In Rohtak the opinion was that we were some kind of "civil prisoners." Because of this confusion we had the worst of both,

an undertrial and a civil prisoner. In Tihar Jail we got no magazines. Although Haryana MISA rules 16(2) required the authorities to give all facilities to students to pursue their studies and take their examinations, orders were issued there and elsewhere barring all student detenus from appearing in their respective exams. Thousands of students all over the country lost one or more years of their education and not even one in a hundred detenus got any family maintenance allowance.

However a jail is meant mostly for undertrials and convicts. What are they like? I would like to stress the fact that the inside of a jail is not very different from the outside world. Most of the faces you see in jail are similar to those you will find in any farm, factory or city street. Very few of the convicts are criminals by nature. Most of them are law-abiding citizens.

Convicted murderers would be presumed the worst of criminals. And yet most of them are nothing of the kind. Very few of them are hardened criminals. Many "murders" are unintended; they start as quarrels over land etc. In the *lathi*-fight that follows, it is an accidental hit that breaks a head and produces a "murder."

Then there are many cases of one man murdering another on grounds of "honour." Too many murders are motivated by honour (*izzat*) and not by any criminal tendency.

I came across many cases of men convicted of murder, who were entirely innocent of the crime. It seems to be the practice in villages that when one or two men commit a murder, all their close adult male relations are named in the F.I.R. Most of them find it impossible to establish their alibi. And so if a dozen are named in the F.I.R., half a dozen may easily get convicted for murder. There are too many innocents languishing for years in jail.

And then there are thieves who steal more for the fun of it. Life is too dull for some people, who seek excitement in picking pockets, having a gay time, and then having an innings with comrades in jail. I met a thief whose father has a cloth shop. He said it was too boring measuring cloth all day long; he found jail more entertaining!

I am convinced that even if 50 per cent of the inmates are freed, there will not be even a 5 per cent increase in the crime rate.

And it is ridiculous to keep “lifers” in jail for varying terms. Too often they have to spend thousands of rupees bribing the police to recommend their release as soon as they have served ten years. After ten years in jail even an actual murderer is a broken man, unlikely ever again to commit murder. Commonsense, therefore, demands, automatic release of all those who have put in ten years. To leave the matter to the discretion of police is an open invitation to systematic corruption.

Also Government would do well to implement the jail Reforms Commission Report which has been gathering dust for more than ten years now.

Inside jail, the jail alone is real: the world outside appears unreal. The jail is your world; and the world outside is *Maya*. Back in the world, the jail stands out as a nightmare. It is a thin line that divides the real from the unreal. It would seem nothing is real or unreal in itself, but only thinking makes it so.

Is the jail hermetically sealed from the outside world? Well, not quite.

Interestingly enough, you do get most of the news in jail. At times you get more news in the jail than you can conveniently get outside. We knew for example, what happened when Bansi Lal tried to take Sanjay into a meeting with the three Service Chiefs. We knew all about P.C. Sethi's lunatic tantrums. We also knew what was done to P.C. Lal (later Shri and Shrimati Lal specially flew from Calcutta to Delhi to cast their vote!) Whether it was the jail breaks in Bengal, the transfer of dozens of High Court Judges or the mysterious death of the Alwar Prince, we invariably got the news, sooner rather than later. The *Satya Samachar* was quite a mine of information, eagerly looked forward to

Some of these original reports were so good they could have been compiled into a book. But there was a slip. When a report about police atrocities reached us there was so much excitement that word of it reached the authorities. They now wanted the report and we had no intention of obliging them. Just in case there might be a sudden and simultaneous search, we decided to make a bonfire of all our papers. I'm sure we got our dinner much hotter that day!

The Turkman Gate massacre news reached us in Rohtak the

next day. Congress (O) General Secretary, the Rajmata of Patiala, who came to see Congress (O) President Ashok Mehta reported that her servants had brought the news of "serious trouble." After a couple of days Sundari confirmed the news. How many had been killed? "A truck load," she said. Could it be true? A third interview confirmed the news and showed the incident to have been even more serious than we thought. Sikander Saheb had no doubt that the incident would have the most disastrous consequences for the Congress especially where the Muslim role was concerned.

We were aware of the trauma *nasbandi* was causing. The country was as agitated about it as it had been in 1857 over greased cartridges. But in this matter the jail was quite a sanctuary. The authorities knew that if the convicts felt in danger of being operated upon, there would be an overnight jailbreak.

I myself saw in the Rohtak Children's Ward a 14 year old boy, Ganesh, from Dhuri, Punjab, originally hailing from Karnatak. Ganesh had gone to Hardwar to sell balloons at a fair. He was promptly seized by the police on 16 September 1976. They took him to one Dr Verma of Canal Hospital, Mayapuri, Hardwar who entered Ganesh's age as 25 and vasectomized him.

While there was much resentment against forced *nasbandi*, most of the educated people seemed to accept it as "good for the villagers." However, the villagers didn't think so. For one thing they find a large family very useful in labour-intensive agricultural operations. For another, they know from experience that they can never again work hard, once they are vasectomized. One DIR man who had got himself operated upon voluntarily some five years ago, said he suffered from a permanent pain in the waist. Some others felt they had lost their mental alertness after the operation.

I asked a jail doctor what he thought of the physical and psychological consequences of vasectomy. He didn't think there were any. He explained that semen consisted of four parts—three fluid and the fourth, sperm, solid. The sperm came from testicles and its passage alone was cut. The three fluids which came from elsewhere, continued to be discharged as "semen." The sperm, he said, were absorbed in the system. Did this absorption have any effects—adverse or otherwise—on man? He did not know. Perhaps research could be conducted to show

what the absorption of sperm did to the human body and mind. Also the country would like to know why no other country in the world is using *nasbandi* as a birth control device, if it is all that inexpensive and harmless?

In the summer of 1976 news reached us that Vinobaji had decided to go an indefinite fast over the issue of cow protection. Most of us knew him as "Sarkari Sadhu," who had violated his vow of a year-long silence to welcome the emergency as "an era of discipline." And now every other detenu looked at me inquisitively as the "cow-boy" in that jail since I was associated with the RSS and BJS, which had repeatedly asked for complete ban on cow-slaughter. They wondered why the Baba could not fast for the MISA detenus rather than for the emaciated cows. One of them wondered what his pedigree dogs would eat in the absence of beef.

I held no kind of brief for the Baba. Indeed I still remembered with disgust his pre-Emergency advice to Jayaprakashji to flee from the field of battle against the Madam and become "Ranchor," even as Lord Krishna had fled from battle with Jarasandha. But I made it clear that I was not at all apologetic about complete ban on cow-slaughter. I told my dog-loving friend that we did not have to kill any cows for his dogs; perhaps they would be happy enough with buffalo meat. However, I hoped that Vinoba was only using the cow issue as a tactical peg on which to hang the more urgent Emergency issue. Had not Gandhiji also launched the freedom movement in 1921 in the name of *charkha*—and the same again in 1930 in the name of "salt?" Maybe Vinobaji also wanted to fight the Emergency through the cow. But to the amusement of us all, before long he hailed the then PM as a cow-lover, on par with Lord Krishna. The poet among us promptly dubbed him *baingan* (brinjal). The name stuck; and not even Vinoba's Gita-lovers could put in one word of defence for him after that. The step from the sublime to the ridiculous is short indeed!

Any experienced political worker in jail was struck with the size and quality of political resistance to dictatorship. By imposing the Emergency and yet suppressing all news of the reign of terror that followed, Government stunned the country and made all political activity impossible. There was also the danger of people being detained for an indefinite period and sent to undis-

closed destinations. More people went to jail in 1975-76 than in all our freedom movements of 1921, 1930-32 and 1942 put together!

No less remarkable was the quality of the *satyagrahis* and detenus. The number of lawyers, students, professors, journalists, trade unionists and old freedom fighters had to be seen to be believed. Apart from the VIPs, there were in Tihar Jail alone, O.P. Kohli, President, DUTA, Arun Jaitley and Hemant Vishnoi, President and Secretary, respectively, of DUSU, and Suresh Upadhyaya, President, Delhi IIT Teachers Association, all of them gems of men. In Hissar we had Pitamber Goel, a gold medalist of Delhi University. He was arrested along with his father, grandfather and uncle just because his uncle had dared to work as Devilal's election agent against Bansi Lal in Tosham in the last assembly elections. Interestingly enough, while the Haryana Assembly Congress Party did not have a single man who ever went to jail in the freedom movement, many old stalwarts of 1942 and earlier movements could be seen in jail. These included in Rohtak Jail alone, Pandit Sri Ram Sharma, Shri Moolchand Jain, Shri Balwantrao Tayal and Shri Devi Lal.

And notwithstanding all the prosecution of the Government, morale was so high that very few people kunckled under. It was a proud chapter in the proud history of a proud people.

Indeed morale in jail was so high that even non-political detenus stood firm. In the single small town of Sohna, District Gurgaon, seven persons were detained under MISA. One unruly young man had misbehaved with a girl. He was bailed out but three of his relations were detained under MISA because of his misbehaviour!

Two neighbours had a petty dispute over some rain water drain. Because one of them had a relation working in Maruti factory, he managed to get four persons of the other side detained under MISA!

When one of them was released on parole he approached Sanjay for revocation of his detention orders. But he was told to get himself vasectomized. When he refused, on the ground that he had only two daughters and no son, he was sent back to jail. He was released only after the Emergency was lifted.

Sometime towards the end of 1976, Id was celebrated. About

a dozen Muslim convicts were found offering prayers on the lawn. Later when they came round to greet us, Shri Bhairon Singh and Shri Baldev Tayal offered them sweets. This moved them to tears because they knew that Bhairon Singh and many other detenus were RSS men. A few days later all of them were transferred to Ambala. Evidently somebody had not liked Hindus and Muslims coming together.

Muslims—A New Perspective

The long months in jail afforded me an excellent opportunity to do much and varied reading. For the first time I read Shaw and Shakespeare at length. I also now completed Will Durant's 10-volume *Story of Civilization*. I did not dare to tackle Toynbee's 12-volume *Study of History*. But I did the next best thing; I read his excellent summary. Durant's *Pleasures of Philosophy* and Aldous Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy* became my constant companions. And now Riencourt gripped me with his *Sex and Power in History*. Also for the first time I read the two rare volumes of Keyserling's *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*. The vast *Anthology of World Poetry* was a feast of literature. Hans Zinsser's *Rats, Lice and History* made fantastic reading. Olander and Schroeder's *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* revealed a whole new world of psychokinesis. David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* provided an intimate account of the Kennedy Administration with all its glow and glitter.

However, while enjoying all this feast of literature, history and philosophy, I never lost sight of the core problems of India like caste and community. As a student of public affairs I've probably read more about the Hindu-Muslim problem than about any other Indian problem. Now I read even more about it, starting with Elliot and Dawson's multi-volume *History of India as Told by its Own (Mediaeval) Historians*. All this study,

pondered over in the solitude of the jail, began to throw a new light on an old problem. Suddenly there appeared a solution. I now realized that history, as taught in our schools is not "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." A complete history can only be a complete enumeration of all the significant facts and even these are selective, according to the taste and judgement of the compiler. In this sense all history is subjective; even the best histories are only partial aspects of the historical reality. History can sometimes be the instrument of policy—a strategy—as in the case of Todd's *Annals of Rajasthan* which was written not merely to flatter and befriend the Rajputs but also to pit them against the Marathas. Toynbee's study emphasizes the paramount importance of religion in general and Christianity in particular.

Histories are written not only to guide and to inform but also to advise, to warn and to inspire. In the course of my reading I came to realize that the Hindu performance in the face of Muslim invasions was nothing to be ashamed of; on the contrary it was something to be proud of: and I became progressively convinced that the peaceful and fruitful coexistence of Hindus and Muslims in India is possible. I realized that people don't remember or resent civil wars as they do wars with neighbouring societies *which are still their rivals today*. Orissa bears no resentment against Bihar for Ashoka's bloody invasion. But India still remembers Ghazni. The reason: Bihar and Orissa are sister states of the Indian Union; Ghazni is outside India, and Mahmud the hero of Pakistan.

Today the Hindu-Muslim problem, and the Indo-Pak problem are not what they were in 1947. Sooner than many of us realize, these problems may cease to exist in any serious form. And then these "old unhappy far off things and battles long ago" may appear to us in a very different light. We may not be very much more resentful of Mahmud Ghazni than, say, England is of William the Conqueror.

As and when the Hindu-Muslim problems abate, there will be forgetting and forgiving and understanding. We know Mahmud Ghazni as an idol-breaker who reportedly refused an offer of crores to spare the idols in Somnath and carried on his destruction saying he was a "*but shakan*" (idol-breaker) and not a "*but farosh*" (idol-seller). The report is incorrect. According to Al

Biruni, Mahmud's historian, as quoted by Utbi of *Tarikh Yamini*, there were no idols in Somnath, only a Shiva linga. Mahmud even carried an image of Lakshmi on his coins. His currency otherwise just would not have become current coin in India.

Mahmud's ancestors were Saivites; and so their coins, as well as those of their successors, carried Shiva's bull, Nandi!

Babar on his death bed counselled Humayun to keep cow-slaughter banned if he wanted the empire to endure; and it stayed banned—till Aurangzeb reversed that policy. Akbar even went completely vegetarian, saying that "my stomach is not such a useless place that I should build a tomb for dead animals there." Shah Jahan was three-fourths Hindu by blood, his mother, Man Bai, being Hindu, and his father, Jehangir, being Akbar's son by Jodha Bai.

Aurangzeb was an insufferably bigoted tyrant. But when his tyranny is forgotten by the solution of Hindu-Muslim problem, we will remember him as the Chakravarti Raja of Delhi, whose writ ran from South India to Central Asia!

According to Humayun Kabir, there have been more wars between Muslims and Muslims in India than between Hindus and Muslims.

Pakistan would be presumed to be an inveterate foe of everything Hindu. And yet when the Government of Pakistan commissioned Sir Mortimer Wheeler, archaeologist, to write a history of "Five thousand years of Pakistan," it was recognizing its Hindu heritage. Pakistan can no more disown Porus and Dahir than Egypt will disown Pharoahs and Cleopatra; it's just a matter of time. Already evidences of this awareness are visible to anybody who will see them.

Mohammed Qasim had invaded Sind through Debal, a port at the confluence of the Indus and the sea. For the first time, only after Partition, archaeologists in Pakistan identified the site, excavated it and proudly publicized the Shiva Lingas found there!

The last Hindu king of Sind, Raja Dahir Sen, was not hero even to Sindhi Hindus before partition. "Dahir" had come to mean funny fool in Sindhi. (Like the Egyptian Pharoahs before him, and Napoleon Bonaparte after him, he had married his own sister). But nowadays Sindhi Muslims regularly celebrate

a Dahir Day to maintain their separate Sindhi identity in a Muslim Pakistan.

Not long back, Punjabi students in Lahore—all of them Muslim—said that “Vaisakhi” was their national day. This was their way of maintaining their Punjabi identity in Muslim Pakistan. It is only a matter of time before Pathans in NWFP discover in all pride that Alexander was defeated by Porus, king of Takshashila, now Taxila. Afghanistan has already claimed its Aryan origin and named its airline “Aryana.”

Soon after 1971, refugees in Karachi and elsewhere were having a tough time with local Pakistanis. About the same time Idi Amin of Uganda had made war on “persons of Indian origin” and the Government of India had gone to their help. The refugees in Pakistan thereupon made the plea that Government of India should care for them, too, since they too were “persons of Indian origin.” And I dare say they were not far wrong.

Henry Ford was wrong to say “history is bunk.” And anybody would be wrong to think it is something that concerns the dead past. History is a live force. It is basically the story of that part of the past which is relevant to the present. History is the reflection of the past on the present. If politics change, history will change with it. The question is: how to change politics, and resolve current problems?

Before we seek a solution to current problems, the Hindu has to be cured of his sense of grievance—and the Muslim has to be cured of his sense of guilt. Both seem possible now.

The Hindu has an acute sense of grievance against the Muslim for subjecting the country to centuries of murder, loot and rape. The rape of India rankles in his heart. He is as ashamed as he is shocked that a handful of Muslim invaders should have sacked the country.

However, both Hindus and Muslims, need to know how and why it happened, need to see things in their perspective, before they can put the animus out of their system.

Although the Central Asian invasions of India are one of the saddest chapters in world history, there was nothing unique about them. The Mongols, the Tartars, the Turks and other tribes—which we might all cover by the generic term “Turk”—

living in Central Asia were, for centuries, a menace to all countries around them, including China, Russia, Iran and, of course, India. The barbarian can always get the better of the settled civilized man for a variety of reasons.

For one thing, as Cyrus, Emperor of Iran, put it more than two thousand years ago, soft countries invariably breed soft men; and hard countries breed hard men. The “flesh pots,” whether of Egypt or of India, soften the locals and, after a while, the invaders too!

For another, the invader attacks at the time and place of his choice. He can always surprise and overwhelm the defender. It is a military axiom that every general is prepared for the last war. However, the invader, who takes the initiative, can always introduce a new factor in his strategy and/or armour, and surprise the defender.

Thirdly the invader enters alien, unfamiliar territory. If he loses, he is doomed. So he fights like the devil. The defender is on home ground. He can generally run away to safety. Being civilized, when in mortal danger, he prefers life to property. He trades space for time—and lives to fight another day. And so, for example, deep down in Madurai, you can still find a large Gujarati community which got there during one of those innumerable invasions of Gujarat! Strategic retreats are an accepted part of military tactics. Nobody need be ashamed of them. The Britishers were wise to retreat from Dunkirk in the summer of 1940. Hitler was foolish not to let his field commanders retreat to a better line of defence and communications on the Moscow front in the autumn of 1941. It is often better to bend today than to break tomorrow.

A fourth factor in these Central Asian human explosions was the horse. For ages it had been harnessed to chariots; but the use of the horse for cavalry purposes is barely one thousand years old. That is when the little iron stirrup was invented; and without the stirrup you could hardly balance yourself on a horse—and fight! The introduction of cavalry gave a big advantage to these invaders against their victims. They not only had the best horses in the world; from their very childhood they lived, moved and had their being among the horse. You could no more imagine a Mongol without his horse than you can imagine a modern American without his car. We no doubt had the advan-

tage of the elephant; but the horse proved more mobile and, therefore, more lethal. The horse was faster; the elephant was not only slower, he provided a big target for naphtha arrows etc. It was just like our little Gnats taking a heavy toll of Pakistan's huge and deadly American fighter-bombers in 1971. The horse upset the military balance.

A fifth factor was the proverbial wealth of India. When Timur was thirsting for loot and murder, he asked his court whether he should attack India or China to become a "Ghazi," since both of them were "infidels."

They all agreed that India was the better defended with its "five large rivers," dense forests, brave soldiery and elephants who, "lifting with their trunks a horse with its rider, and whirling him in the air, will dash him on the ground." But they unanimously decided to fight the stronger country, because it was also the richer one. Prince Mohammed Sultan clinched the issue when he said: "The whole country of India is full of gold and jewels, plants which produce cloth, aromatic plants, sugar cane. And the whole aspect of the country is pleasant and delightful." Nobody said a word about either the wealth or the defences of China. It was the proverbial wealth of India that attracted them all. According to Timur, when he entered India, his "army became more numerous than the tribes of ants and locusts." As Timur put it bluntly; "Plunder in war is as lawful as their mothers' milk to Musalmans who war for their faith."

It is true that Indians did not always face the invader unitedly. There were Jaichands who, from time to time, aided and abetted them. And that made matters worse. But many of these invaders waited for no invitations; they invited themselves.

Also it must not be forgotten that the size of the country and the state of communications in those times rendered an all-India defence physically impossible. The enemy would be upon you before you had even informed the whole country. Even so, during Ghazni's sixth invasion, troops collected from as far away as Gwalior, Delhi, Ajmer, Kanauj and Kalinga to fight under the banner of Anangpal. Women donated their jewellery to help finance the war. But our troops from the plains found the Khyber area climatically as trying in the eleventh century as NEFA in the twentieth! Basically therefore, it was only our frontier people facing the invader.

In the case of India, the Turks—a generic term for the Central Asian “barbarian”—and Islam overwhelmed India. Not only were the Muslims with their firm faith in “One God, One Prophet and One Holy Book” less digestible than the pagan Huns and Scythians, India’s power of digestion also seems to have been weakened by the Buddhist interlude. In the words of Swami Vivekananda: “Buddha ruined us as Christ ruined the Romans.” But even so these fanatical hordes could not destroy India. The wonder is not that we were defeated; the wonder, rather, is that we were not destroyed.

We can understand the nature of this scourge better when we realize that the less barbaric Muslims also viewed these Central Asian Muslim barbarians with horror. For they not only knocked at the gates of Vienna in Central Europe, they crossed all North Africa and overran Spain and could, with difficulty, be stopped by Charlemagne from annexing France and Germany! They not only destroyed Iran as an empire, and captured Constantinople, the seat of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Byzantine Empire, but grabbed the Caliphate itself and subjected all Balkans and all Arabs to the Turks for five hundred years! Here were the “blond beasts” of Central Asia sacking not only Baghdad and Delhi but also Moscow and Peking! Alexander had overrun the same area a thousand years earlier in eleven years; now the Arabs only repeated the trick in twelve. Both were cases of human explosions, of which nobody need be either proud or ashamed.

Indeed even the Mughals settled in India were scared of the fresh waves of barbaric Mughals. That was why the capital was repeatedly shifted from Delhi to Agra—to use the Jamuna as yet another line of defence! Earlier even Amir Masud, son of Mahmud Ghazni, fled to India to escape the onrush of Seljug Turks, with the explanation: “The astrologers have declared that my star is not propitious during this winter.” All Afghanistan was pillaged as a result.

The Hindu, therefore, has no reason to be ashamed of his performance before the invader. I would go farther; he has every reason to be proud of his performance. While partly retreating and partly fighting, he partly joined the conqueror to share in his power, on the principle that “If you can’t fight them, join them.” Within 50 days of Mahmud Ghazni’s death, his son Masud

commissioned Sewand Ram and his Hindu troops to save him from rebel nobles who were backing his younger brother. Five years later one Tilak, son of Jaisen, barber, commanding the Hindu troops of Ghazni, was sent to punish the Pathan Nialtigin, Ghazni's Governor in Lahore. Yet another Hindu commander of Masud was one Sundar. When Barbar invaded India, he had to fight Rana Sanga more than the Lodis. And the Afghan Commander against Akbar at the second battle of Panipat was Hemu, a Hindu, *teli* by caste.

While the resistance role of Rana Pratap was superbly heroic, the role of Man Singh of Jaipur had nothing ignoble about it. He honestly felt that the Mughal could not be defeated. He therefore decided to support him for a price. Jaipur became the pillar of the Mughals; and the Mughal became dependent on Jaipur. In the process the Mughal was tamed; Jaipur tried to control Delhi itself. But for Jehangir's surprise murder of Abul Fazl, which prematurely broke Akbar's heart, Akbar and Mansingh had decided to supercede Jehangir and install the minor prince Khusru as king, with Man Singh as Regent and real ruler, after the death of Akbar.

While this particular plan miscarried, Jaipur continued to be the power even behind the throne of Aurangzeb. The latter dared not liquidate Shivaji, much as he desired it, for fear of antagonizing Jaisingh, who had given word of honour to Shivaji.

And this policy of cooperation paid its dividends even as the policy of non-cooperation and confrontation did. It was just like Gandhi and Tilak non-cooperating with the British, and Sapru, Jayakar, Srinivasa Shastri and Malaviya cooperating with them and the joint efforts of these two and of the Rana Prataps of our revolutionary movement, producing the Independence of India.

It is a performance of which any country and society can be proud. Indeed, with the exception of Iran—which broke up in the process—all the other attacked countries emerged stronger from the holocaust. The Hindus in India—like the Christians in the Turkish empire—reacted to aggressive Muslim militarism by going militant themselves. The result was Shivaji and Guru Gobind Singh and their free states in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Arya Samaj in the nineteenth century and the RSS in the twentieth.

Today, as a result of our multiple strategy and orchestrated

response, we have ridden the storm that seemed to overwhelm us after the thirteenth century. After centuries of Turkish rule, you can't find one Turkish family in India. Only one-tenth of the country has opted out of India on "Islamic" grounds. And even this one tenth is much closer to Hindu India than to any neighbouring Muslim country. The triumph of India against its invaders is near-complete. We have ridden the storm successfully.

We, therefore, don't have to spend the rest of our lives nursing mutual animosities and registering wrongs, real and imaginary. A human volcano erupted over our heads. But we have survived it in excellent condition. That's something to be proud of. The only irritant are some ill-informed Muslims lionizing the invaders of this country. A proper teaching of history should cure them of that malady, and begin the possibility of a strong Indian nationalism.

I now applied my mind to the specific issues between Hindus and Muslims. And it was clear that these issues were quite soluble.

It is my conviction that this task can be undertaken today in a big way. The time is propitious for the effort.

Muslims had asked for Pakistan and got it. But they soon discovered that it was a sour fruit.

In the first flush of their pyrrhic victory, they had shouted: *Hans ke liya Pakistan, Lar ke lenge Hindustan*. Today Pakistan itself stands partitioned; and they know that if they persist in the old aggressive policy, Pakistan will just disappear into the thin air, from which it had materialized in the first place.

The time is propitious because the wars of 1965 and 1971 have put Pakistan in its place. There is now an increasing recognition of the true facts. The Hindus know they cannot wish away the Muslims; and the Muslims know they cannot wish away the Hindus. The "Dawn" of Pakistan which, for years referred to Hindus contemptuously as "*Dhoti-wearers*" and "*Papad-eaters*" is latterly quite scared of the "terrible" Hindus.

A Muslim friend of mine once said that the psychology of the Indian Muslim is that of a man on the railway platform. He is waiting for a special train of his own imagining, to take him to an all-Muslim India, a train which never turns up and never can.

The Khilafat movement made him feel that India is Dar-al-Harab i.e., a land unfit for Muslim habitation since it was dominated by Hindu heathens and ruled by Christian heathens. Later the Muslim League demanded "Pakistan," giving him the impression that India is *na-pak*, unholy. This has psychologically alienated many Muslim Indians from India. The important thing is to make him feel at home—and to make him love India as his motherland and a sacred land, even while Mecca continues to be his holy land. How is that to be done?

The problem is twofold. The Muslim thinks he is descended from the successful Muslim invaders. He thinks that he has ruled India for a thousand years. He thinks his religion alone is true, and that while non-Muslims will go to hell, Muslims will go to heaven. The average Hindu looks upon the Muslim as unclean personally, unreliable politically and intolerant religiously. He looks upon him as the historic enemy.

Much of this thinking on both sides is based on half-truths and misconceptions. Muslims in India are about as much descended from Turks and Mongols as Indian Christians are descended from Englishmen.

"Muslim rule" in India was carried on from Delhi more with the cooperation of Hindu Rajputs than local Muslims. Mansingh and Jaisingh were pillars of the Delhi Sultanate in a manner in which no convert was indispensable to it. The converts had such a low position at the centre that they concentrated on the Deccani Kingdoms. And by way of maintaining their separate identity from foreign-dominated Sunni Delhi, the Deccani Muslim Kings went Shia.

As for the heaven-hell business, any intelligent Muslim will agree with Ghalib:

*Hamko mauloom hai janat ki haqiqat lekin,
Dil kay bahlane ko Ghalib yeh khyal accha hai.*

(We know the truth about this heaven-hell business; but the illusion is good for the heart.)

The Hindu resents that Muslim invaders looted the country and forcibly converted millions. They resent that Indian Muslims should look upon these invaders as heroes, and that they should have joined hands with the British to partition the country.

There is substance enough in this feeling. But what we all forget is that these same Turkish invaders gave hell to Arabs, sacked Baghdad and Damascus, and captured the Caliphate itself. Those were rough times everywhere. Interestingly enough, Chingiz Khan was not even a Muslim; his family had been actually Mahayan Buddhists!

The RSS has a very healthy attitude in this respect. While the excesses of invaders are not overlooked, it is emphasized that the whole thing was due to Hindu disunity. Why find fault with others? Why not look within for our weaknesses, and rectify the situation? If there is political low pressure, a cyclonic invasion is bound to follow.

It is true that force played a big role in conversions. But avarice did not play a small role. Men eager to share in the power and wealth of the rulers, rushed to their camp. Indeed at times the old Muslims resisted new conversions. The reason was simple: it meant fewer Hindus to loot—and more Muslims among whom to divide the loot!

Mysterious are the ways of history. In the Indonesian island of Bali, people were encouraged to remain Hindu, so they could kill pigs for the Javanese, who, as Muslims, were forbidden to do so!

The fact that distant Bengal and Malabar went Muslim while Delhi and Lucknow stayed Hindu, also shows that the weak state of Hindu society in certain areas had at least as much to do with conversions as the length and strength of Muslim rule. Buddhism softened up the Indian society more than is often realized. Its emphasis on celibacy led to a precipitate decline in population all over the north. Its emphasis on *ahimsa* immobilized us in the face of *himsa*. Caste was the best and biggest protection of Hindus in the middle ages; it was their castle. Buddhist neglect of caste left the Buddhist masses unprotected in a brutal world. A mere sixteen loafers from Central Asia burnt down the great University of Nalanda in north Bihar and butchered thousands of monks and scholars.

Yet another factor in conversions was the elemental appeal of Islam, which was as simplistic as it was universal. It was a big wave, in which different people wanted to swim for a variety of reasons. Such was the appeal of Islam till yester century that even Napoleon seriously considered embracing it along with his

entire army in Egypt. He was fully prepared even for circumcision. It was only the orthodox Muslim ban on drink that dissuaded the merry French from going Muslim.

As for the Muslims being pro-British, the position is not all that simple. In the three historic Karnataka wars, the British faced Muslim Nawabs. The Battle of Plassey was between the Nawab of Dacca and the British. It was Tippu Sultan who harried the British to no end and even invited Napoleon to join him in the war against the British. (Napoleon went to Egypt with a view to coming to India. But for his naval defeat at the battle of Abukar, he would have probably helped India throw out the British.) In the 1857 war of Independence, the Muslim was proportionately more prominent than the Hindu. The revolutionaries who stormed into the Red Fort carried the Muslims' Green flag with the crescent and star. In the 1921 movement the Muslim was not less active than the Hindu. Indeed the fact is that the British became anti-Hindu only after 1905, when they agitated against the partition of Bengal and demanded freedom for India. Before that they had been more anti-Muslim than anti-Hindu.

Indeed the Muslim could argue with some reason that the Hindu had used the British to purge India of Muslim influences. India had a thick layer of Muslim culture when the British arrived on the scene; even Shivaji's letter to Jai Singh was written in Persian. When the British left, all that was gone. Its place was taken partly by English ways and partly by Hindu renaissance. The Hindu renaissance itself owed much to Christian missionary research on ancient Hindu scriptures.

In the pre-British period, the land and the army were the twin bases of political power. The Muslim was prominent in both, as fighter and as land-owner. But during the British rule the Hindu became prominent in the army. This prominence grew further when modern fighting became something more than mere muscle power. And land began to change hands from the improvident Muslims to the pecunious Hindus. When Zamindari abolition came, it abolished proportionately more Muslim zamindars than Hindu zamindars.

Meanwhile, the British introduced democracy, a system of government which counts heads, and does not break them; and there were many times more Hindu heads than Muslim ones.

On top of this education and business became extremely important as sources of power; and in both these the Hindu scored high for historic reasons. The shift of power to Hindu hands was decisive. The Britishers had come and gone, but the process had effectively transferred the paramount power in India to Hindus.

Such is the play of history. And it is a play with many positive gains. Before Muslim rule we were so many castes and races and tribes. It was the Muslim who created the "Hindu" as such. Likewise it was the British who created the "Indian" out of a variety of castes, classes, communities, kingdoms.

Today, with all our differences, at any gathering outside of the two countries you'll find Indians and Pakistanis huddled together. We are two states—sorry, now we are three states—but we are one country and one people. The unities of our geography, our history, our culture and our blood, have stamped us as one people. We may not be very friendly to each other; but we are blood brothers; and not all our quarrels can counter that fact. Our effort, therefore, should be to find fraternal solutions for our domestic disputes.

Kalma, Roza, Namaz, Zakat and Haj are five essentials for the Muslim—and they have always been free to practise these Islamic disciplines. (There was an exception to this rule when Akbar banned Haj because of the hazards of the journey.) Circumcision shocks the Hindus—and polygamy frightens them, with prospects of eventual Muslim majority in India. A little thought—and effort—should sort matters out.

Circumcision is not Islamic; it is Semitic, being practised not only by the Arabs but also by their bitterest co-Semetic enemies, the Jews. During Muslim expansion, there were periods when circumcision was a must for conversion—and periods when it was not. (It depended upon whether they wanted fresh converts slowly or quickly.) Today circumcision is almost universal in the USA; new born infants are normally circumcized before they leave hospital. It is supposed to make for cleanliness—and more prolonged sexual satisfaction. Therefore, while it appears unnatural, it need not shock anybody.

Polygamy is different. It can have no place in a civilized society because it seriously violates the rights of women. And yet many Muslims in India have claimed it as part of their religion—and

strongly objected to the Government of India making any changes in it.

A way out is possible. Parliament should amend the Muslim Marriage Law along the same lines as in Pakistan, which will make for monogamy for all practical purposes. That will take the wind out of the sails of separatists, because it would be lawfully in consonance with Islam. India need not be more "Islamic" than Pakistan!

Hindus know so little about Islam, and Muslims know so little about Hinduism, that their familiarization with the subject will have to be organized. A representative selection of religious teachings—including the lives of great religious leaders—will have to become part of the moral education of our youth. It was the American school system that took in Catholic, Protestant and Jew—and Russian, Italian and Irishman—and produced the patriotic American citizen. There is no reason why the Indian school system cannot be made to do the same service for India.

For example a study of Ramayana and Mahabharat should be treated as a liberal education in Indian culture and not as something "religious," to be confined to a religious community. Ramayana and Mahabharat are to India what Shakespeare and Dickens are to the English-speaking world.

Hindu-Muslim marriages could conceivably help, though Mahatma Gandhi thought otherwise. For all these centuries, whether it was the boy or the girl who was Hindu, all children of mixed marriages were brought up as Muslims. Pandit Satawalekar, famous Sanskrit scholar, who died recently at the age of 100, used to say that from now on all children of mixed marriages should be brought up as Hindus. Since neither position would be acceptable today, mixed couples could be asked to declare in advance how their children shall be brought up. In addition they could celebrate the festivals of both communities and thus have the best of both religions.

The Muslim is thrilled by the "Green Flag of Islam." He is not impressed with the tri-colour. He does not know that the tri-colour is only an umpteenth imitation of the French revolutionary flag—and that it does not impress the Hindu either. The traditional Hindu flag from the days of Rama to that of Pratap, Shivaji and Guru Govind Singh, was the orange Bhagwa flag. Interestingly enough Prophet Mohammed knew nothing about

the green flag. Mohammed in his life time carried flags of different shades—including the Bhagwa—but never green. The National Flag Committee appointed by the Congress at its Karachi session in 1931, recommended unanimously the adoption of “Kesari or saffron” in place of the tri-colour. Its members included Nehru, Patel, Azad, Tara Singh, Kaka Kalelkar, Hardikar and Pattabhi sitaramayya. The Bhagwa, therefore, should be acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims.

Even at the risk of sounding superficial I must say that the externals divide more than the essentials; language divides more than the thought; name divides more than the thing. Would we have a Hindu-Muslim problem, if, for example, we bore the same set of names? I dare say, no! The poet asked “What’s in a name?” I can only say: *everything*—or almost everything. But we can no more ask Muslims to bear Hindu names than we can ask Hindus to bear Muslim names. One can only hope that just as Bengali names have spread among Hindus all over India during the last few decades Indian names with non-denominational import—e.g. Anil, Sunil, Moti, Gulab—will be increasingly adopted by more and more Indians. There are historic precedents for massive name-changing. German ‘barbarians’ invading Italy, quietly took Roman names. When the German stock went up in the middle ages, even Italians and Frenchmen took German names. In China, the Mongols Sinized their names to hide their barbarian ancestry. Already in many places pet names of Muslims are Hindu. We’ve all heard of “Mohan Mian” of East Bengal and any number of “Bachu Bhais” in Gujarat. And Indonesia, the biggest Muslim country in the world, is full of them.

The Muslim is attached to Urdu. But highly Persianized Urdu has no future in India. (According to Josh Malihabadi, the Urdu poet who migrated to Pakistan years after partition, it has even less future in Pakistan.) But there is no reason why quality literature in simple Urdu cannot be transcribed in Devnagri. Selections of these could be included in all ‘Hindi’ courses of study. Urdu can survive only as yet another variation of Hindi—like Avadhi, Magadhi, Maithili, Braj and Bhojpuri.

The tragedy of the Indian Muslim is that while Egypt and Iraq and Syria and Lebanon and Algeria and Turkey have been fast modernizing, he remains in a mediaeval Islamic ghetto. The

Egyptian Maulvis are surprised that "Hindi" maulvis—as Indian Muslims are known all over West Asia—should still be growing beards as an essential part of their "Islam." These same Indian Maulvis were shocked by two Daksha statues put up outside the Reserve Bank building on Parliament Street, New Delhi. They do not know that the Merdeka Palace, which houses the Muslim President of Indonesia, has, at its very entrance, a huge statue of Rama pulling the string of his bow. And they don't know that Indonesian Airways is "Garuda" and Indonesian National Bank, "Kubera," both Hindu mythical characters.

Nor do they know that the *Gita* is such a hot favourite with many Muslim revolutionaries in West Asia that recently Turkey banned it as "subversive" literature. (Later the ban was lifted on a representation made by GOI.) There are Syrian savants studying Vedanta and practising *yogasansas*. The Indian Muslim has to become a Muslim Indian—and take a more relaxed view of Islam and of India. The attitude of Indian and Pakistani Muslims amuses the Arabs. King Farouq of Egypt had a favourite joke. He would suddenly ask his surprised visitor: "Do you know when Islam was born?"—and tell him with a big laugh: "On August 14, 1947, of course!"

Indeed what we need more than anything else to solve our many problems, is humour—sturdy, clean humour, that will blow away the cobwebs of time and circumstance.

The Last Laugh

At the time of our arrest most of us were not for outright merger. We were for "hastening slowly". At this time a good friend enunciated what he called "the garbage theory." He explained that the Congress was one huge heap of garbage. We could counter it by putting together an even bigger heap of garbage. I wondered how one heap of garbage would be better than another and, in any case, I protested, "we are not garbage." The fact that we had stayed and suffered in the opposition, when we could have easily jumped on to the Congress bandwagon, shows that man to man, and leader to leader, we are better than Congress. We are not garbage; we are so many "guls" (flowers). I therefore suggested that he rename his garbage theory the "guldasta theory." He wanted to know what a *guldasta*, was. "A bouquet of flowers, of course," explained. And that is precisely what the Janata Party has become.

It is true that there was a time when sections of the BLD struck a somewhat discordant note. But reaction was so strong even within the BLD that there was no doubt that at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ of the four parties—BLD coming in half—would merge. Additionally even that note seems to have served the useful purpose of convincing the Government that the opposition would not unite. Perhaps elections would not have been held otherwise.

The 25 May 1976 announcement of Jaya Prakash about the merger of four parties sent a wave of joy through detenu ranks.

That day we had a joint dinner followed by comradely speeches. We all signed a statement vowing to join the new party and work for it with all our heart and soul. When this statement was published in *Janata* the Government was in a flurry. How had a statement from the jail got out? By way of punishment, they ordered Jagannathrao Joshi transferred to Ambala and a few days later, Samar Guha to Hissar. Their signatures had topped the list of signatories to the statement. While Joshiji went to Ambala, Shri Guha refused, on the ground that he was a heart patient and there were no proper medical facilities in Hissar. The authorities could not bodily remove an MP, and so quietly piped down.

Power not only corrupts, it also blinds. Congress just could not believe what they saw. They thought that the massive response to the call for *Sangharsh* was the doing of a few misguided men like J.P. and a few newspapers. It reminded me of the British conviction that pre-Independence Congress represented only a few agitators. Their argument ran: "The Muslims are not with them and the Harijans are not with them; the princes are not with them and the poor are not with them." So who was with them? Nobody, of course! It took the *satyagraha* of November-December 1976 to convince the government that the 1974-75 upsurge was not the doing of a few agitators. When it became clear that the lady had become a dictator, people inevitably compared her to Hitler.

In the summer of 1976, government relaxed restrictions on foreign correspondents. Did this not mean a relaxation of the Emergency? Many asked. I was not so sure. By physically keeping foreign correspondents out, the government was putting itself blatantly in the wrong. At the same time the more intrepid foreign papers were able to receive and publish furtive reports quite damaging to the establishment. By opening the doors to foreign correspondents, Government was trying to appear liberal. At the same time it was hoping to dine and wine the more manageable foreign correspondents, once they were available on the spot.

This is precisely what happened. More news about India began to appear in the west and less of it was now unfavourable to the government. So much so that when elections were announced, most of the biggest papers in the west predicted a

walkover for the lady. When the results were announced they were flabbergasted.

As months lengthened into years, we began to wonder, how long? What next? While many thought there would be elections in March 1977 I thought she would not hold the elections since she could not win them. The constitutional amendment, putting off elections by another year, seemed to confirm this view. But the release of Ashoka Mehta in May and that of Sarvashri Piloo Mody, Samar Guha and Maj Jaipal Singh (CPI-M) in October, November and early December, 1976, respectively, seemed to suggest that we would not be in jail either for life or for ten years. And then came the release of Shri Sikander Bakht, Congress-O General Secretary and Shri Ram Dhan, Secretary, erstwhile Congress-I Parliamentary Party, on the last day of 1976. Surely she could not let all these people loose and allow them much time to erode her position in the country. She was obviously releasing them to give them only the minimum time for electioneering. Suddenly early elections became a distinct possibility. And then came Kuldip Nayar's report of elections in March, 1977.

It was the evening of 18 January. We were relaxing after dinner when a lambardar from another ward came and reported that BBC had announced the release of Shri Morarji Desai and Shri L.K. Advani and GOI's decision to hold Lok Sabha elections. For the first time in nineteen months I gladly switched on the AIR for confirmation. And sure enough there it was, the PM announcing Lok Sabha elections. I had been proved happily wrong about the elections.

Now we thought we could be released any moment. Every time the big gate opened noisily, our ears became the antenna for possible report of the Jail Officer's approaching feet. After all if they could round us in one night, they could even more easily release us in one night. That's what the British had been doing. But we forgot one thing: the British, with all their faults, were gentlemen; the "Mafia" men of New Delhi in 1977 were not. And so releases took place only in ones and twos over many weeks. And they were not complete till after the "Mafia" had lost the election. The whole thing was lacking in grace. The more important question, however, was—and still is: Why did she hold the elections?

I think she held the elections because she had to: even dictators hold elections to give their regimes a semblance of popular support. Not to let men use the ballots is to force them to think of using bullets. The lady was therefore very eager that men should *not* lose all hope of changing the government peacefully and become desperate. It is significant that after every harsh speech she made a soft speech. She had to keep promising that Emergency would be lifted "as soon as possible." Some day or the other she had to keep her word.

Even so why did she pick on the spring of 1977? Because, I think, she feared a cyclical monsoon failure in 1977 after the two good monsoons in 1975 and 1976. Because the people were quiet, she thought that they were also contended. She forgot the ancient saying that man does not live by bread alone.

And then there were the Intelligence agencies telling her that she would sweep the polls. These agencies had come to realize that Government wanted to hear pleasant stories and not unpalatable truths. When, therefore, she seemed inclined to go for the polls, they all joined the chorus about her overwhelming popularity; none warned her of the impending disaster. During the Emergency these agencies had concocted any number of reports at the instance of some VIPs to damn their colleagues. The cheerful report about election prospects was only one more of such concoctions.

In the present case the issue was further clinched by Carter and Bhutto. The new US President expected a reference to the people. And once Bhutto had announced the elections, Indira could not afford to look worse than even Bhutto. She readily decided on elections because the flatterers surrounding her had assured her of the people's support. With all the tentacles of RAW, she was as ill-informed about the public mood as Marie Antoinette was on the eve of the French revolution when she told anti-price rise women demonstrators: "If you can't afford bread, why don't you eat cakes?"

When President Ahmed expressed himself against Emergency in a press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Reuter flashed the news all over the world, but Samachar here killed it. The PM had the President declared unwell—and recalled. What transpired between them before the President died suddenly and inexplicably, is still a mystery. But it was clear the lady's goose was cooked.

However, it was too late to do anything. As the cartoonist put it, even the astrologers had defected!

I have no doubt that she would have liked to rig the elections; but elections can be rigged by a dictator against political opponents only if he or she has large public support. Hitler and Mussolini had this support. Even this lady had this kind of support in 1971. But in 1977 the situation was entirely changed. The Government staff was as opposed to the government as other citizens. The prospective riggers refused to oblige. Even Sanjay's own security guard was using his off-time to tear down Congress posters.

It must be conceded that she could have done worse than she did. She could, for example, have ordered the elections without releasing a majority of detenus. In that situation she would have divided and immobilized the opposition, which would have found it as difficult to fight the elections as to boycott them. But it is possible that she released them for fear that if they boycotted it, she would be denied the very legitimacy for which she was going to the polls in the first place. And that would have opened up the possibility of a sudden explosion from an unexpected quarter. It is also possible that she released the detenus because her "Intelligence" had told her that the opposition would not unite in any case. But whatever the reason, the fact is that she did release the bulk of the detenus, though in dribbles. To that extent she exhibited a streak of morality in her mental make up, just like Ravana. Ravana, too, had detained Sita but not violated her. And that was something.

However, till it actually happened, we knew it would happen and yet could not believe ourselves. Could intelligence reports be true that Bansilal would get only 30 per cent vote—he actually got 29 per cent—and that Congress wouldn't exceed 200 seats? Wasn't it too good to come true?

Although we knew that Janata stood an excellent chance of winning the elections, it was the resignation of Shri Jagjivan Ram that convinced large sections. A jail officer was now so convinced of the Janata victory, he told me: "Now you can send your tormentors in. We'll take care of them." When election day arrived, for the first time in his life this Senior Officer went and cast his vote. Convicts held regular conclaves every night to assess the chances of rival candidates. Since they and their visiting

families came from all parts of the State, they told us in advance that Janata would get all the Haryana seats; and it did. Their refrain was *Hukumat taari hovegi* (It will be your Government).

As we heard the lies over the radio we wondered what impact they would have on the minds of the masses. Would the masses be able to see through this nonsense? They did. Even as a healthy body produces anti-bodies to fight an infection, the people circulated their own news to counter the *sarkari* news. "Rumour" became the real mass media in place of the *sarkari* radio and her *sarkari* press. And these "rumours" had more truth in them than in the *sarkar's* Samachar.

The Madam betrayed her nervousness when she wailed that all parties had combined to "stab" her. The fact is it was she who had stabbed the Congress in 1969 and divided it. The united opposition only "drowned" her—in a sea of votes!

When the Madam found the going rough, she asked the electorate to "forgive and forget." Only God can forgive her; and not even man can forget her and her works. Perhaps a more honest approach would be justice tempered with mercy. Crime must be punished—though it need not be punished harshly.

As for my kids wishing to beat her on 26 June 1975—even when they finally put back their sticks in the store room, they never forgave the Madam for her excesses. None of them takes her or her son's name to this day. Vikram calls her simply and humourously *Bharat ki bhootini* (the ogress of India). Indeed any mention of her seems to send shock waves through their systems. Every evening as I reach home, the kids come out to carry my books or magazines or tiffin basket. The other day I handed a magazine to Sindhu to carry, but she refused to take it. I was surprised; it took me a few seconds to see why: the cover carried the lady's picture. Explained Sindhu: "I will not touch her."

Last year Vikram's teacher asked the whole class to do an essay on "I.G." Vikram would not write it. When pressed hard this sweet dimply boy said: "If you insist, I will do a piece against her." The teacher relented but only with a penal "white card" for "homework not done."

One day a neighbouring lady humorously told Vikram "You see, Jana Sangh is so bad, it has caused your Daddy to be sent to jail. You better join the Congress." Vikram came and confided to his mother: "Mummy, Aunty Shiela is not a good lady. You

better stop talking to her.”

The lady seems to have no idea of the psychological wounds she has inflicted on millions of children. The least she can do to try heal these wounds is to make an unqualified public apology to the detenus and their families and then fade away from public life. Nobody is quite eager to give her the option of the “Gwalior Room” or the “Jaipur Room” in the women’s ward in the great Tihar Jail.

I must confess that as polling day approached I found it difficult to sleep. Some Congress candidates’ threat that all Opposition leaders would be rounded up the day following the elections, sounded sinister. There were nights in March when I was wide awake till 3 A.M. What would we do if we lost? Would it mean endless imprisonment?

I noted down the songs I would like to hear on AIR the day Janata won. I wanted to give the list to my wife to communicate it to the persons concerned. But then I thought, better not. One does not have to rejoice over success; and one does not have to grieve over failure. A *swayamsevak* of the Sangha should be able to take both in his stride. And for a *swayamsevak* of the Sangha there can be no greater aim in the life than to be a good *swayamsevak*.

Came counting day—and the night. By dinner time it was very clear that the Janata Party was winning. Excitement was spreading all over the prison. I went to bed in my *chakki* after 1 A.M., only to be woken up by a colleague who came shouting from the hall *Mai haar gayee! Mai haar gai!* As I went to the hall, all four of us wanted to hear the news again “with our own ears.” Having heard it in the other language, we woke up the cook at that unearthly hour for a midnight celebration with steaming tea. Said Professor Prem Sagar a co-detenu: “I am so happy, I don’t know how to express my happiness.” We stayed awake till 4 A.M. to hear the news yet again—just in case there was a slip between the radio and the ear drum.

Having satisfied ourselves I went to bed again at 4 A.M. only to be woken up again at 5 A.M. with the shouts: “Emergency *ootth gayee!* Emergency *ootth gayee!*” I said: *Accha, phir ham bhi ootth jayen* (Okay, then let us get up too).

We had an extra early bed-tea. Soon the jail officers arrived

to congratulate us. We knew that we should be out before the day was done. We were—around 4.20 P.M. The long night was over. It had been one unending “four-twenty” business. But now it had ended at last. The officers gladly shared our sweets.

There were tears in all eyes—tears of joy no doubt, but also tears of sadness over the fate of this lady. I was sorry for her. I was sorry that a promising career had come to an inglorious end. I was sorry, too, that a black page had been added to our history. The only compensation was that a golden Janata page had also been added to that same history. The rest was silence—a silence more eloquent than words. India had proved itself worthy of its heritage. India which had been converted into another Uganda with an Idi Amin-type government, had suddenly become the cynosure of all eyes the world over. India could now confidently look forward to a future even greater than its past. We had gone through something that had never happened before, and survived in excellent condition. It was a great day for India, for Asia, for the world.

Everybody thought *nasbandi* and Jagjivan Ram had killed the Congress. There was truth enough in that statement, but not all that much. I was of the opinion that Congress would have been defeated even if there had not been a single case of *nasbandi*. Undoubtedly it was a sensitive issue. But I had no doubt that even if it had not been there, other issues like demolitions, arbitrary increase in land revenue and water tax and indiscriminate arrests, would have come to the fore and cornered the Congress. Indeed so many issues had piled up that Congress could have been killed many times over with them. It was like the American nuclear arsenal, which can destroy the world a hundred times over.

I was also inclined to think that Janata would have won even if Jagjiwan Ram had not crossed over. His coming over—a genuine protest against the tyranny of the “one-and-a-half sarkar” no doubt increased the Janata majorities. But obviously as an insider in the Government he knew the Janata was winning; and this knowledge must have considerably influenced his decision.

It must be noted that the Emergency was unpopular from the start, that the *nasbandi* programme got into stride only ten months later, and also that Congress was routed even in states

like Punjab, Bengal, Maharashtra and Orissa where there was little or no *nasbandi*.

In June 1975 she had the option to stay and face bitter criticism or go out gracefully. She decided not only not to go, but to stifle all criticism. In trying to have the best of both worlds she had only succeeded in getting the worst of both. She not only had to go out, she had to go out in disgrace. Where she could have chosen between “hundred shoeings and hundred onions,” as the saying goes, she now had got both. Incidentally, the astrologer had the last laugh. On 3 February the *Times of India*, Bombay, announced that I—and some others—had been released. One of my elder brothers, who is an amateur astrologer, when he read the news, said: “Good that he is out but, according to his stars, he should have been out only some two months hence.” As it turned out, the *Times* report was wrong and I was released only seven weeks later, on 21 March!

At the Feet of the RSS

When the Government clamped the Emergency and put over thirty thousand in jail, a large majority of detenus were found to be RSS men or BJS men with RSS backgrounds. Later when *satyagraha* was launched in November-December 1975, a vast majority of *satyagrahis* were found to belong to the same RSS-BJS group. What accounts for this pull of the RSS? What is it in the RSS that makes its votaries sweat and bleed for the country? Perhaps my personal case history could illustrate what the RSS does to an individual and what the RSS does for the country and how.

I still remember how it began.

It was the summer of 1940. The war had stirred men. Suddenly all kind of things were happening. In my home town, Hyderabad Sind, the war drums in West Asia could be heard louder than, say, in Bombay or Madras. There was a feeling of uncertainty and an air of lawlessness. The Hindus began to shift from the villages to the comparative security of towns. It was feared that the rising wave of lawlessness may not leave even the cities untouched.

At this stage it was learnt that there was a certain *sangh* giving training in *lathi*. Spirited young men felt it should be a useful craft in the developing situation. One evening, after dinner, I reached the spot and joined up. I was eighteen at that time.

I found that the friend in charge was a classmate of mine. But most of the trainees were younger boys. Towards the end there was a Sanskrit prayer which not many of us could then recite. After the class was over we stood around a while, chatting about men and matters. The whole thing was still in a formative stage. I went there for a few days and then dropped out. The *Shakha* had not yet developed into a magnet and I was not exactly the *lathi*-wielding type. It took me years to stumble on Bankim's "Ode to Lathi:" *Haye lathi tomar din giye chhe/Kintu sushikshit hastay pariye/tumi na paro aemon kay nai*. It took me years to stumble on Bankim's "Ode to Lathi:" ("Alas, Lathi! Your days are gone; but if you fall in the hands of the educated, there is nothing that you cannot do"—Bankim Chandra Chatterji) and appreciate the relevance of the *lathi* even in our atomic age.

In 1941, I was invited by Shri Jairamdas Daulatram, then member, Congress Working Committee, to spend my summer vacation with Gandhiji at Sewagram, but I showed no interest in the proposal. I was not on the Gandhian wave-length. Meanwhile, Shri Rajpal Puri, the outstanding young man from Sialkot, who had left his government job in Delhi to organize the RSS in Sind, had obviously been in contact with my eldest brother, Prof N.R. Malkani, a close lieutenant of Gandhiji since Champaran days. Every time Gandhiji passed through Muzaffarpur on his way to, or from, Champaran, he stayed with Bhai Saheb, who had been introduced to him by Acharya Kripalani.

In the last week of December 1941, as my brother and myself were returning from an evening stroll, Dada said we would go to the *shakha*. We did.

It was the playground of Nav Vidyalaya, which now houses the Sind University. And what I saw left me thrilled. Here were bright young men plying the *lathi*, playing nice Indian games and singing patriotic songs with a quiet discipline and a ready smile. The whole atmosphere was pure and elevating.

The following day they were going for a three-day winter camp and I was invited to join. Though half tempted to join them, I did not muster the courage to spend three wintry days out in the countryside at such short notice. But I was all the time eagerly looking forward to the end of the three-day period when they would be back and I would be able to attend *shakha*. That evening became a turning point in my life.

A few days later it was 26 January, I was a bit of a Congressman, having experienced mounted *lathi* charges in 1930-32 and joined Prabhat *pheris* off and on. I thought it necessary to go to Holmstead Hall (now housing Hyderabad Station of Radio Pakistan) where the Independence pledge was to be read. I was therefore late for the *shakha*. When the friend in charge asked me why I was late, and I told him the reason, he only smiled, but he left no doubt in my mind that attending *shakha* was more important than anything else.

A few days later I related this incident to my brother and said that Sangh seemed to be opposed to Congress. After a pause he said: "But Sangh teaches men to live and die for the country. Congress has failed to influence the youth. I would therefore like you to continue in the *shakha*." I did. The RSS was now more important in my mind than Congress.

One morning I joined many others in the local gymnasium for a 3-mile non-stop run. Most of us were unaccustomed to such long runs, but none of us stopped because "nobody else" was stopping! When I reached home I could hardly walk. In the evening I started for the *shakha*--a mere ten minutes away--almost an hour before time. Even so I could walk so slowly that I was late. There was no question of my joining the games that evening. Even so the regret remained that I was late.

A year later, when I looked back on my first day in the *shakha* I realized that I was a changed man. I had always felt a vague pull to serve the country. I had even fancied myself as the future President of Sind PCC. By way of a start I had resisted family pressure to go in for science and become an engineer, and had gone in for Economics and Politics instead. But now I was decidedly no longer a young man in search of a career. Young men at that age fall in love; I had fallen--and risen--in love with the Sangha. Being in the Sangha felt like having a purifying dip daily in the Ganga. My mental attitude was that of a devout novice with the prayer, *Sangham sharonam gachhami* (I surrender myself to the Sangha).

I have often pondered over what drew lakhs of promising young men to the RSS in the forties and kept them glued to it thereafter. The appeal, I find, was total. The Congress with its taboos and totems like *ahimsa* and *charkha*, was not considered a fit instrument for ushering in freedom. Only a massive and

militant movement could wrest Indian freedom from reluctant British hands. And the RSS seemed to answer the situation to a tee.

In addition the RSS alone could checkmate the continuing Congress ambivalence about Muslim communalism. It was an irresistible response to the challenge of the times. The RSS became the national rage from Attock to Cuttack, from Karachi to Kanya Kumari.

Nor was the RSS appeal confined to public issues. The appeal was, if anything, even stronger to the individual—what he was, what he aspired to be. The atmosphere of purity and integrity was a standing invitation to self-improvement according to one's lights. And so, some practised *asanas* to improve health. Others gave up meat. Some others foreswore smoking. Still others stopped seeing films. Of course nobody had asked anybody to do any of these things. But it was a voluntary effort at "self improvement" in an atmosphere that encouraged purity. At the end of it, all of them felt different, they felt better.

The weekly *baudhiks* (talks) introduced the *swayamsevak*s to history and culture, literature and religion. The RSS had a clear-cut, consistent and complete philosophy that lighted up many dark corners of the mind and explained things not clear till then. The *swayamsevak* had answers for all kinds of questions. A certain certitude filled his mind. This was a tonic for the soul. The Gita says: *Sanshya atma vinashyate*, persons full of doubt get destroyed. And here in the RSS there were no Doubting Thomases.

Apart from these national and individual aspects, RSS had a social impact. Normally a young man knows his cousins, classmates, close neighbours. But in the Sangha you met your seniors and your juniors, boys who lived miles away and men who, birth-wise and occupation-wise, were very removed from you. Almost overnight you found you had a kindred soul in every lane and by-lane of your town, and almost in every nook and corner of India. The whole thing had an integrating and elevating influence on the individual and the society.

The Congress had no quarrel with RSS till 1937, when it first came into power. And its real hostility began only in 1946 when it found that while it had the votes of the people, the RSS had the hearts of the people. And so it began to view the RSS as some kind of a challenge to its position. The RSS began to be

attacked by the ruling clique as “communal,” “fascist,” “reactionary” and what not.

It is true that Muslims are not admitted to the RSS. But this has had more to do with Muslim politics since 1921 than with anything else. Indeed the rise of the Pakistan movement reduced the Congress itself to an organization of Hindus, with, in the words of Jinnah, only a few “Muslim show boys.”

The whole emphasis in the RSS is on the seriousness of national disunity and the importance of national unity and strength. The RSS, therefore, finds more fault with Jaichand than with Mohammad Ghori. And it does not make any distinction between a Muslim invader like Mahmud Ghazni and a non-Muslim invader like Alexander. The RSS is not anti-Muslim, it is anti-invader and, even more, it is anti-quisling. It is the Muslim communal identification with Muslim invaders that has complicated Hindu-Muslim relations in India.

The Congress-controlled mass media have often accused the RSS of violence against the Muslims. In 1947-48 a large number of cases, including the Kandhla conspiracy case in Muzaffarnagar, U.P., were filed against RSS workers. All of them were honourably acquitted. When during the 1965 war, many police duties in Delhi were handed over to RSS, not a Muslim hair was touched. The educated Muslims have come to appreciate this situation. They point out that on the Muslim issue there is no difference between RSS and Congress, except that “the RSS is more honest.”

As for being “reactionary,” I suppose we all act in, and react to, situations. Nobody has a monopoly either of acting or of reacting. A functioning car has both, an accelerator and a brake—indeed two brakes. And so has a live organization.

Yet another insinuation is that RSS is a Brahmin-dominated organization. Any modern mind will judge an organization by its policies and not by the caste complexion of its leadership. The RSS is no more Brahminical than any other party. The fact that the communist movement in India has been dominated by Brahmins like Dange, P.C. Joshi, Ranadive, Namboodiripad, Ajoy Ghosh etc., does not make it a Brahmin party. And the fact that the socialist party was, till 1 May 1977, led by Madhu Limaye, Madhu Dandavate, S.M. Joshi and N.G. Gore, all Brahmins, does not make it a party of Brahmins.

I shouldn't be surprised if a section of the public has been influenced by official propaganda. One occasionally hears echoes of the Congress line in public conversation. But the same people are also heard banking on the RSS as the ultimate saviour in any emergency. Commenting on the RSS role during the 1965 war, a general said: "Punjab is the sword-arm of India; and RSS is the sword-arm of Punjab."

It could be argued that RSS did not participate in the freedom movement and that it could not prevent the partition of India. Here I am reminded of the *Gita*: "He who sees inaction in action and action in inaction, is intelligent among men; he is a yogi and doer of all actions" (4:18). Things are not always what they seem.

Dr Hedgewar, founder-President of the RSS, was active in the 1921 movement. Later he was General Secretary of Nagpur PCC. In 1930, when some RSS *swayamsevak*s expressed a desire for participation in the salt *satyagraha*, he, along with a batch of co-workers, courted arrest, but asked the rest of the workers to carry on the RSS work undisturbed. In 1942, the RSS neither supported nor opposed the movement. (Apart from the different analysis of the situation, RSS in 1942 was not a formidable enough force to make a decisive difference to the 1942 movement, which petered out in a few weeks). On the other hand, Nehruji and Azad privately, and Rajaji and Munshi publicly, opposed that movement, but nobody held that against them.

In retrospect it is clear that the 1942 movement was launched not with any hope of expediting swaraj, but just to silence the radicals—Forward Bloc and Socialists—in the Congress. Had the Congress followed a more mature policy during the war years, the British would not have been thrown into the League's embrace, leading to the partition of India.

The feeling was widespread in 1943 that freedom was off for decades—so much for the "success" of the Quit India Movement. Indeed, as the BBC pointed out at the time of the Bihar Movement, had the British tried to rule as unscrupulously as the Congress, they could have continued to rule for a few centuries more. It was the INA, the Naval mutiny, the RSS wave—all inveterately anti-British forces—that persuaded the British, who

had already returned a Labour Government in 1945, to quit India in favour of an anglophile like Nehru.

A successful movement was not possible as long as the war was on; and the British were smart enough to promise independence as soon as the war ended. It will thus be seen that a successful movement was not possible before 1945 and it became irrelevant after 1945. Even Gandhiji felt cheated of an opportunity to launch another movement, on which he had set his heart.

I guess the British had already decided to install Nehruji as PM. And so Subhas Chandra Bose was mysteriously disposed of. Things were hustled to prevent the RSS from coming on top. And Nehruji was named PM though not a single PCC had suggested his name for leadership. The British-owned *Statesman* had not earlier hailed him as "an Englishman" for nothing; and the British freely acclaimed him as "the last Viceory."

The whole truth of the transfer of power days is yet to come out. And if, as and when it does come out, the RSS role in mobilizing and radicalizing the millions, and thus hastening the departure of the British, will become abundantly clear. They also served who stood and waited, *lathi* in hand.

Partition was a political decision taken by the Congress and the Muslim League. The Congress was unable to stop partition and it was unwilling to take anybody else's help to stop it. It has always been monopolistic in grabbing power, capitalizing on other people's sacrifices like those of the revolutionaries. The RSS could have intervened only by taking the law in its own hands, which it wisely didn't do.

Perhaps partition had become inevitable in the fevered forties. But things are already tending towards normalcy. Geo-political forces work slowly but surely. East Pakistan has been liberated, and the liberation of West Pakistan may not be long behind.

Meanwhile it was the fear of RSS which put some fear of God in the minds of Pakistanis and thus prevented worse holocausts. And it was the fear of RSS reaction that Government invoked as the ultimate argument against a plebiscite in Kashmir.

A novel allegation against the RSS is that it is anti-intellectual, being uninterested in academic squabbles about socialism, capitalism, democracy and dictatorship. RSS is obviously not a

debating society. Academic disputations on these subjects are no more earth-shaking than the mediaeval question whether fifty or a hundred angels could dance on the head of a pin. By its commitment to nationalism, however, RSS has also deeply committed itself to democracy and social justice. Nationalism is nothing but democracy and socialism set to music. They are implicit in the nationalist commitment to “our country, our people and our culture.” For RSS, as for Sri Aurobindo in his Uttarpara speech, “Nationalism is God.”

The Congressmen who complain of unintellectuality in the RSS will remember that a library, big or small, is a must in a RSS *karyalaya*, which is more than can be said about most Congress offices. One could find in these RSS libraries anything from the Vedas to Vivekananda, including the great epics, histories and biographies. RSS *pracharaks* were invariably directed to continue their studies even while doing full-time RSS work.

Also there is the impression that the RSS somehow did not avail of its might to advance its goals. Even Veer Savarkar used to taunt: “The epitaph on the RSS worker’s grave will be—He was born, he joined the RSS, he died!”

Some socialist and communist leaders have also expressed the opinion that with only a fraction of the Sangh’s strength, they could have ruled the country. The inference drawn is that RSS had missed its opportunities.

I guess there is a gross misunderstanding about RSS goals. Politicians view everything through their political glasses; they can’t believe that anybody should want anything but power. In 1950, the Congress Working Committee even invited the RSS workers to join the Congress—under the impression that RSS would like to share power. But the *swayamsevak*s showed no interest in the offer. This RSS disinterest in power and politics has led to much misunderstanding about the RSS.

Fact is that RSS is *not* political. It is, if one may coin a word, “metapolitical.” It is not interested in power as such; but it is very much interested in the factors and forces that go into the making of a country’s politics. It is interested in the people and their character, in our culture and its integrity, in the country and its unity and strength. But it stands above and beyond politics, like some kind of an institutional Rajguru. Were it

interested in power, there was nothing to prevent its entry into politics as early as 1945 or even earlier. Its influence with the masses and in the administration right upto the highest rungs—there was an ICS *shakha* in New Delhi in 1947—could have been easily transformed into a formidable political force. But it chose otherwise. It looked beyond current politics to the future of India. It is time everybody accepted established facts and stopped fabricating “un-facts.”

Meanwhile those who think the RSS has missed the bus—or is it many buses?—need to remember that even today, after all the wars the Establishment has made on it, the RSS is the biggest single force in the country outside the Government of India. Its effect on men and matters is as extensive as it is enduring. It has politicized lakhs of young men, given the country cadres and leaders that are the envy of all parties. To-day some of the best thinkers, writers, orators, organizers, parliamentarians are to be found among RSS products. India with the RSS is very different from what it would have been without it. For the rest, history will judge.

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