

SPECIAL SURVEY

FREEDOMS WE MAY LOSE

2313

By M. R. MASANI

"Let's stop somebody from doing something!"

Everybody does too much.

People seem to think they've a right to eat and drink,

Talk and walk and respire and drink.

Bicycle and baffle and such.

"So let's have lots of little regulations."

Let's make laws and jobs for our relations.

There is too much kissing at the railway stations—

Let's find out what everyone is doing.

And then stop everyone from doing it."

I WAS often reminded of this jingle by A. P. Herbert during the last couple of years of the life of the Lok Sabha that was dissolved at the end of 1970 when I watched with concern the disturbing trend

What was even more disturbing was that the Treasury Benches, far from dealing with these manifestations with a firm hand, either retreated before the attack or actually joined in cheerfully. These trends have, with the change in the composition of the Lok Sabha, become much more obtrusive. There is hardly a sphere of intellectual or cultural activity, including education and sports, where this undesirable process of politicisation is not in evidence.

We in India are proud to have a free press of good quality. It is natural, therefore, that the press should attract the evil eye of those who do not believe in the freedom of the press and would like to harness it to their particular ideological purposes. Their point of view has been well expressed by Mrs. Nandini Satpathy, the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, and her colleague, Mr. Raghunatha Reddy, the Minister of Company Affairs, whose plea that the concept of monopoly should not be understood in its classical sense becomes understandable when

The Bill maintaining the supremacy of Parliament to change any Article of the Constitution has recently been passed by the Lok Sabha. This may lead to the loss of other liberties, says M. R. MASANI, such as a free press and the right to cultural freedoms. While social change is desirable, continues the writer, it should go hand in hand with individual freedom, and must be free from ideological leanings.

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ABOVE: A monopolistic press? The largest daily in India commands only 8.69 per cent. of the total newspaper circulation—well below the figure cited by the U.K. Monopolies Commission which classifies a newspaper chain under the term 'monopoly'. Yet Indian newspapers may be one of the first victims to the proposed amendment to the Constitution. This picture shows newspaper editions rolling off the press.

that was in evidence which represented a queer combination of chauvinism, jingoism and xenophobia on the one hand and a Mrs. Grundy-like priggishness and self-righteousness on the other.

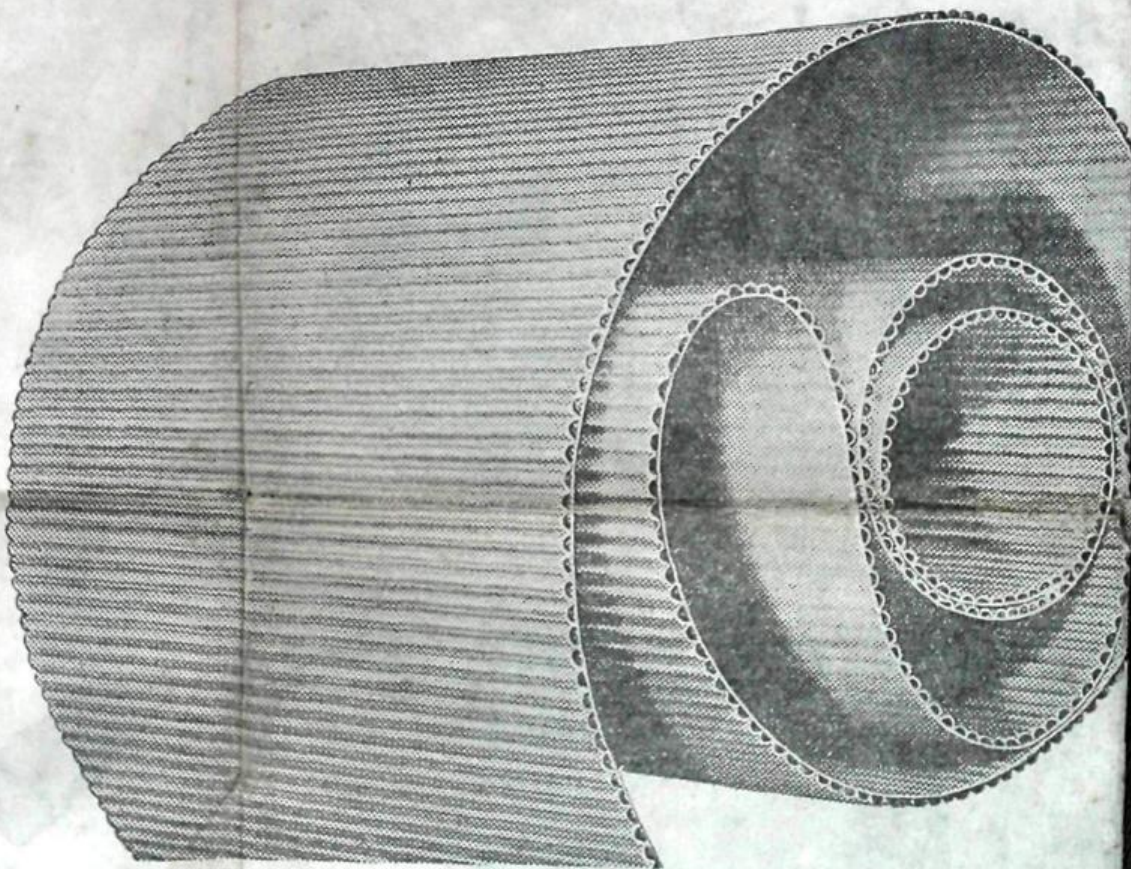
August 15, 1971

we examine the facts to ascertain if there is a monopoly of the press in India.

In the West German Constitution, it has been laid down that there will be deemed to be no monopoly unless the percentage of circulation of any particular chain of newspapers is at least 20 per cent. of the total circulation; while in the U.K. the Monopolies Commission has found that circulations covering 24.7 per cent. or 23.8 per cent. of the total circulation are not so large as to be considered monopolistic. The facts about the Indian press set out in the Report of the Press Registrar show that there are 360 small papers, 80 medium ones and 40 large newspapers.

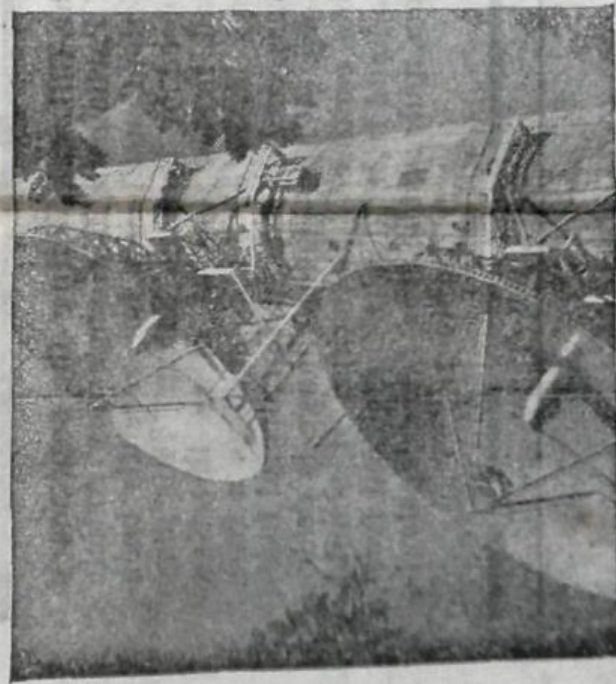
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ASHVARAJ KRAFT PAPER FOR CORRUGATED



CONCEPT-AR-107

SPECIAL SURVEY



(Continued from page 5)

and the biggest among the dailies in India commanded only 8.69 per cent. of the total circulation in 1969!

Where then is the rub? The trouble appears to be that there are sections of the Indian press which do not toe the line of the present government in Delhi. This was made clear by Mrs. Nandini Satpathy's statement, early in July, on the floor of Parliament when she threatened some Urdu newspapers for not following what she described as "the national policy on Bangla Desh."

LEFT: Shape of things to come, though still a long way off: the parabolic reflectors of a modern TV station. Although India has half a million villages, hardly 20,000 sets are produced annually. But TV programmes, geared to social objectives, could do much good. For instance, a TV lesson in any vernacular could reach a million children.

Writing on 10th July, the *Hindu* *Times*, in an editorial, pertinently asked: "The Minister's statement gives rise to a host of awkward questions. What, in a democracy, is the national policy? And who is to determine it? ... Mrs. Satpathy's reply smacks of the kind of 'national guidance' that is appropriate to a controlled society."

Dealing with a similar point of view advanced by Mrs. Satpathy's predecessor, Mr. I. K. Gujral, at a symposium organised by the Progressive Group in Bombay in July 1970, Mr. Sham Lal, Editor of *The Times of India*, had observed: "I don't understand how one single party which happens to be in a majority at a given time can arrogate to itself the position of being the conscience of the people."

It would appear that these objections are to be brushed aside and that one of the first victims of the proposed Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Amendments to the Constitution, which will deprive freedom of speech and expression of its fundamental character, will be the press and the freedom of choice of

the newspaper reader.

A similar bogey of U.S. "monopoly" is being raised in regard to the distribution and exhibition of cinema films in India. Once again, the allegation of U.S. monopoly proves on investigation to be baseless. Out of 4534 cinema theatres in India only 96 are devoted to the screening of foreign films. In Bombay, for instance, only 9 out of 87 theatres show foreign films. Only two per cent. of the theatres in India screen American films, and of all the cinema theatres in India only two, the Metro in Bombay and in Calcutta, are U.S. controlled. The owners of all theatres are free to show any film that they want to. Where then is the monopoly?

What is really being attempted by those interested in New Delhi is the destruction of the freedom of choice of the cinema-goer, already suffering from stupid censorship, and the imposition of a governmental monopoly which they will operate. So far, Indian films are mostly exported to the Soviet Union and the countries of West Asia, Africa and Southeast Asia.

The danger is that from now on the Indian cinema-goer will be compelled to see films either made in Communist countries or in the backward countries of the regions just mentioned whose films do not always stand comparison even with Indian films, under the plea that we should import films from those countries that take ours.

Important art

Lenin had once observed in 1919 that "the cinema is for us the most important of the arts" and it is quite obvious that, under the guise of selection, indoctrination and censorship of an ideological nature are sought to be imposed. Along with the prevailing vacuum of consumer goods and the other good things of life, we shall now be endowed with what has been well described as an "entertainment vacuum."

What is worse for the newspaper-

soon after you lose your heart...
lose it again to

NETS-A
FABRICS



for the radio-television gender. There monopoly is brazenly defended. The Report of the Chanda Committee has been brutally rejected and there is to be no autonomous corporation of the kind that the British enjoy in the form of the B.B.C. and I.T.A.

Mrs. Satpathy has sought to justify this monopoly by claiming that A.I.R. is "the voice of India" and must, therefore, be controlled by "the elected representatives of the people." Is it then suggested that anyone who is not a minister or a member of Parliament does not represent any section of the Indian people? Is it forgotten that India is a federation covering a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious people? Are the States, the minorities and the individual to have no say?

What Mrs. Satpathy's answers to these questions are is shown by what she said on 10th July, 1971, when addressing the annual convention of the A.I.R. Programme Staff Association in New Delhi. According to her, the programme policy of A.I.R. should be in line with Government's policy. She upbraided some of those present for not being sufficiently committed to what she described as "national policy."

Book censorship

The censorship of books and periodicals entering India has already been a sore point with intellectuals. Now Mr. L. N. Mishra, Minister of Foreign Trade, has threatened to set up a panel to "screen" books, journals, and magazines coming into the country and to advise him on banning them. Not many will agree with Mr. Mishra that his Ministry is qualified to pronounce on the literary or artistic merits of publications now happily imported into the country without the approval of ministers and M.P.s.

The hysterical aversion to even mild criticism of conditions in India which has recently been expressed in Parliament makes one fear that this additional intrusion of Govern-

(Continued on page 7)

August 15, 1971



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SPECIAL SURVEY

(Continued from page 6)

ment in the field of public morals is only going to make things worse.

In no instance does the narrow-mindedness of our ruling class, which suffers from an inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence, make itself so evident as in its preoccupation with restricting foreign travel by Indian citizens and contacts between institutions abroad and Indian organisations. Forgotten are the memorable words of Gandhi: "I want the winds of all cultures to blow freely about my house but not to be swept off my feet by any."

It is of course intolerable that any political party in India should receive funds or contributions from Governments or organisations abroad. Unfortunately, whenever Government's attention has been drawn to the manner in which certain subversive political parties have been receiving money over the last two decades from totalitarian governments abroad, New Delhi has taken no action whatsoever. Equally significant has been the refusal of the Government to publish a report prepared by the C.B.I. on this subject, presumably because the report would have shown that the only offenders in this connection are political groups on the so-called "Left" which are very close to the present Government.

xist challenge to what are described as 'formal' freedoms as opposed to what are described as 'real' freedoms. The 'formal' freedoms are the freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of thought, freedom to practise one's religion, freedom of movement, the right to choose and change one's vocation, the right to possess property, the right to form trade unions, and the right to strike, the right to dissent and the right to oppose.

The 'real' freedoms, by contrast, are the right to work, the right to economic security, and the aspirations to a better material life and economic equality. The claim is made that, when the 'formal' freedoms come in the way of 'real' freedoms, they must give way and be sacrificed. An interesting illustration of this was provided only the other day when Mr. Frank Anthony was speaking in Parliament opposing the Amendments to the Constitution that would destroy Fundamental Rights. A member of the New Congress Party interrupted him with the remark that "Fundamental Rights are a bourgeois concept."

The failure of 50 years of the denial of freedom in the U.S.S.R. to provide a "society of the free and the equal" or even a normally prosperous society should surely have proved even to the most dull-

and artists will have to give concrete evidence in the months and years to come if they are not in course of time to face the fate of their counterparts under totalitarian dictatorships.

True goal

Perhaps there is hope to be found in the younger generation and their critical faculties. Indeed, while the vandals in the Free World are out to destroy the freedom of choice of the writer, the artist, the consumer and the worker,

it is encouraging that, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, the youth, whether in Czechoslovakia, Poland or the Soviet Union, demand what they have come to realise are the real freedoms—freedom of thought, speech, the freedom of the press and the rule of law. It is precisely those who have been in the concentration camps of the Soviet Union who are speaking up for the fundamental freedom which so many perverse people in our country and in the West are ready to surrender.

One of those who has punctured

the myth that a high degree of economic development in itself ensures freedom is the young Yugoslav writer, Mihajlo Mihajlov. In his articles in the *New York Times* in July 1971 (reproduced in the *Times of India*), Mihajlov has rejected the thesis that "the goal is scientific-technical progress, and freedom is only a means," and has made the resounding declaration that "Freedom is the goal. It cannot become a means for anything."



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THE ACTION ROMANCE ADVENTURE MAGAZINE
50 MILLION READERS
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ABOVE: Going to the pictures is the favourite recreation of the masses as this scene outside the Metro, Bombay, shows. India has about 4,534 cinema houses of which only 96 show foreign films. A ban on the import of western films may create an entertainment vacuum among millions of foreign film enthusiasts.

Recently, however, a note has been circulated outlining the principles regarding some proposed legislation regarding foreign travel and the receipt and utilisation of funds from abroad, a look at which makes it clear that legislation on these lines will only hamper open and honest communication and co-operation between people abroad and in India while doing nothing to stop the machinations of political parties with extraterritorial loyalties.

Any one of these developments could perhaps be explained away as some kind of aberration but, when they are all taken together, a common pattern emerges. What we are now seeing is the spilling over of Statism from the economic to the cultural sphere. What is behind all these attacks on different manifestations of freedom of thought and expression is the Mar-

witted that the choice "Freedom or Bready" is a false dichotomy and that bread can only be got in and through freedom. Can it be that those in authority in New Delhi have either not learnt these lessons or that they represent a "New Class," *a la* Dadas which is consciously setting its feet on the path to an authoritarian or totalitarian regime for the furtherance of its own political and economic aggrandisement?

How are these threats to cultural freedom to be met and while there is still time? We in India possess a wealth of real freedoms of which, alas, many of us are no longer conscious. These everyday freedoms are so natural that many forget their very existence. They are like the air we breathe. We must call a halt to the threat of asphyxiation. Let us say to those in power, like Dr. Marin, who recently defeated President Allende's candidate in a by-election in Chile on the slogan: "We want social change but with personal freedom and without Marxist sectarianism."

There is need, even now, for arousing the non-conformist conscience, which is always weak in a backward country. Of this spirit of dissent, the spirit of Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn, Indian writers

August 15, 1971

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TIMES WEEKLY PAGE 7

REPORT

Lone Crusader for the Flag

During the last 12 years he has brought 600 cases of improper use of the national flag to the notice of the authorities.

TWENTY-FOUR years after India gained freedom, the tricolour will fly for the first time from today (August 15) on Rashtrapati Bhavan and Raj Bhavans in different States in the country.

This is solely due to the crusade of one man who, during the past three years, has written a number of letters to the President, the Prime Minister, the Union Home Minister and others for the abolition of personal standards of the President and Governors. No fewer than 22 reminders were sent by him requesting them to give up the British

legacy of using these separate flags and replacing them by the national flag.

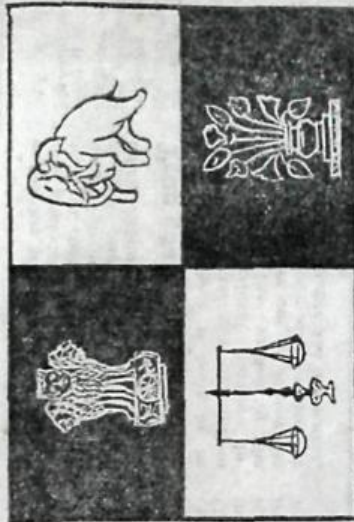
The crusader is C. V. Varad, an old Congressman and social worker of Bombay. He said he felt very proud and happy when the decision to do away with the practice of flying separate standards of the President and Governors was announced on July 4 this year.

"My mission has been fulfilled," Varad said. This will also set at rest the demand by some governments for separate flags for their States and strengthen the supremacy of the national flag.

Varad had first written to the President on July 18, 1968, request-

ing him that at least on national occasions like Republic Day, Independence Day and the National Week (which is observed between April 6 and April 13 in memory of the martyrs of Jallianwalla Bagh) the tricolour should be flown along with the personal standard of the President.

His request had one effect. It set the government thinking and for more than two years it made inquiries with foreign countries about the practices prevalent there. This revealed that of the 15 countries that replied, heads of five countries — Switzerland, France, Argentina, Yugoslavia and Austria — do not have a personal standard.



ABOVE: The personal standards of the President (left) and of the State Governors (right) will cease to fly from Rashtrapati Bhavan and Raj Bhavans from today (August 15), thanks to the persistent efforts of Varad.

while ten others, including the U.K., fly their separate standards. In the U.S., however, the personal standard of the President does not fly over White House, nor do the State Governors have personal flags over their official residences. These buildings fly the national flag.

Varad has another complaint: while most people hold the national flag in esteem, very few know the rules governing its proper use. "Leaving aside the common man, it is surprising that even many of those who are in Parliament, State Assemblies and Sachivalayas — the framers of our laws and their administrators — are equally ignorant about the use of the tricolour."

Where the minions of the law have failed, Varad has succeeded. During the last 12 years, he has brought no fewer than 600 instances of the improper use of the national flag to the notice of the State government. His campaign began when he noticed the national flag pinned to a wooden panel near the

flag and the emblem can only mean that they themselves do not look upon the nation's cherished symbols as anything better than decorative pieces.

When the new Sachivalaya was built in Bombay in 1955, the Ashoka emblem on the top floor of the building did not have the words "Satyamev Jayate" inscribed under it. It had escaped everybody's notice. It was Varad again who discovered the lapse and drew the attention of the government, which rectified the mistake in 1960.

Whereas the government is reluctant to admit it, the fact remains that for every 100 detected cases of misuse of the flag and violation of the Emblems Act, the police are responsible for only a few while the credit for the rest goes to Varad.

Varad shuns publicity. He is satisfied if action is taken against the defaulter, and his only desire is "to keep the country's flag flying."

Varad has also crusaded against malpractices by grain merchants and others. In 1951, when he was on the advisory committee of the "D" ward rationing department, he had the licences of at least 22 coal merchants suspended or cancelled when they cheated people by giving them short weight. As a result, he was stabbed one day by hired goondas while going along Queen's Road.

FORGING A PATTERN OF PERFECTION

Ours is a pattern of perfection when we forge. Give us the specifications. We have a most well



Part/190

age was introduced, many traders took advantage of the public igno-

of former Bombay State 13 years ago. Under the code of the flag, the tricolour must not be nailed to any object. The Speaker had this mistake rectified immediately when his attention was drawn to it.

Varad's campaign has earned praise from Finance Minister Y. B. Chavan, who once described him as a 'person who educates all of us about the correct use of the flag through his constant vigilance,' while Chief Minister V. P. Naik has called him 'an institution by himself.'

The flag code prescribes that when a flag is damaged by wind, rain or otherwise, it should not be flown. One day Varad's hawklike eyes detected that the tricolour flying on Maharashtra's Sachivalaya had been torn and subsequently stitched. He had it replaced. However, he was surprised and pained when an under-secretary to the government wrote to him that when flags 'are slightly damaged by wind or rain, it is the practice to mend them carefully before they are flown again. In the interest of economy they are not discarded if their appearance is presentable.'

This became an issue and a number of questions were raised by Opposition members in the State Assembly. It was disclosed in the House that the expenses incurred for mending the flag had come to Rs. 899, while the actual cost of the flag was Rs. 250.

Varad is equally vigilant where the sanctity of the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act is concerned. Since 1956, he has come across 900 cases of the commercial use of portraits of Mahatma Gandhi, Shivaji, Pandit Nehru and the President on calendars, match boxes, sarees and even visiting cards.

Once a member of the Bombay Assembly produced in the House a wide assortment of articles showing the levity with which the national flag and emblem were misused as decorative designs. He remarked: 'The failure of the government to protect the honour of the



ABOVE: C. V. Varad who, besides his campaign for the Flag Code, is equally vigilant against the commercial use of the State emblem and portraits of national leaders.

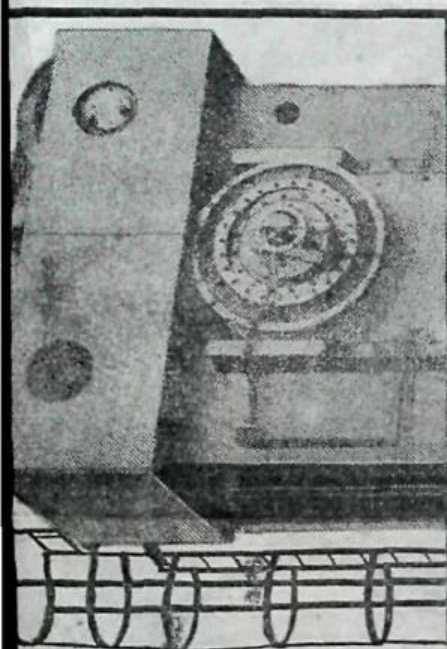
rance and cheated them. Even the BEST bus and tram conductors did not lag behind. The BEST tickets were in the old denominations and, in the process of conversion, the conductors did not pay back to the commuters correct change. Varad took upon himself the task of exposing this racket and succeeded in bringing 200 conductors to book.

Born in 1904 in former Nizam State, now part of Maharashtra, Varad has courted arrest seven times during the freedom movement since 1930. In all he has spent four years in jail.

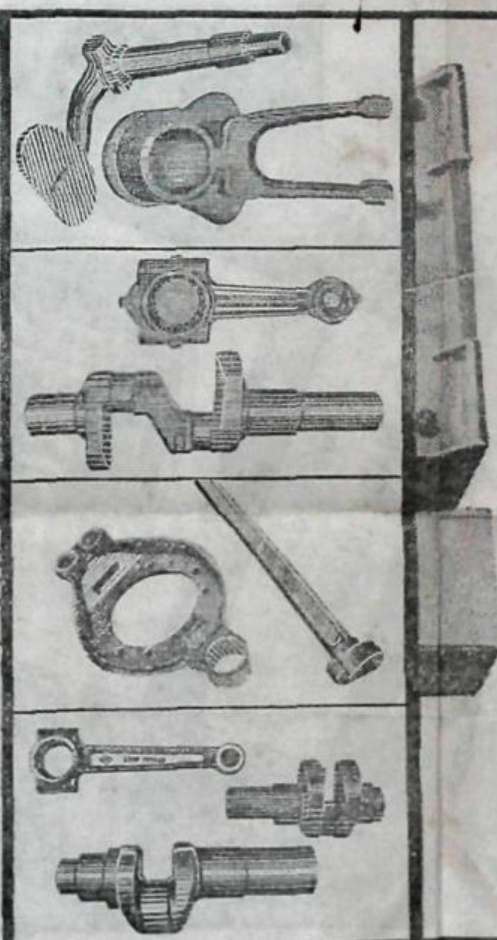
A teetotaler, he neither smokes nor drinks coffee or tea. He is a bachelor, living a simple life on a monthly salary of Rs. 100 from a private firm.

Bhishma Desai

August 15, 1971



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