

**KAISER HUQ** talks about grisly slayings beneath 'leafless maple boughs,' then wonders about the monsters within us and the redemptive powers of art. And if you peer closely into its murky depths you might spot a poem in the rough, waiting to be prised out and cut into facets.

Letter from **London**

My chum Fakrul Alam emailed me his piece on the vanishing bookshelves in Dhaka's libraries that appeared in this page, which I read with avid interest. I'll have something to say on that subject-but at the end of this letter.

Let me start with a most hair-raisingly dramatic experience during my current London stint. It was over the last holiday season. You know how northern winters get you down. It's not so much the cold as the short days, the paucity of light. The Xmas & New Year festivities can be seen as society's attempt at collective therapy. Asian expats too get in on the act & there are lots of 'dawat's' that do not break up before midnight.

After one such 'dawat' on Sunday, 29 December, we had to take a lift from the son and daughter-in-law of our host. It was already the small hours of Monday 30 December, and the tube had shut down for the night. As we pulled up at the council block in Camden, where we are staying in the flat of a deshi family, and said our goodbyes, I was struck by an eerie silence beneath the leafless maple boughs. Ah, I thought, the mid-winter blues were on us again.

The next morning our landlady woke us up to point out a cordon of police tape around garbage deposit points and stretches of pavement. Several officers were about. They said body parts had been found in bin bags but weren't very forthcoming as there was a news blackout till the following day, which was new year's eve. And so as the kingdom was preparing for a festive night the evening papers splashed the story.

At 6:30 am on Monday 30 December a tramp locally known as 'the cowboy' because he always wore a Stetson was rooting in the garbage bins in a lane off Royal College Street when he came upon two human legs. He took them to a nearby hospital (what a bizarre touch of black comedy) and the Police were alerted. By 6:55am the Police were on the scene and the neighbourhood garbage deposit points were cordoned off. Within minutes they found a second bin bag containing a young woman's torso. At 4pm the lower part of the same woman's torso was found in another bin just round the corner. At 4:14pm Police entered a ground-floor flat in the building behind ours and found the torso of a second woman. They also found a hacksaw and an electric jigsaw and quickly put up tarpaulins to keep out prying eyes.

On New Year's Day the Police announced at a news conference that they were looking for the flat's missing occupant, Anthony Hardy, an unemployed mechanical engineer. The next day papers carried photos of Hardy, a grinning 52-year-old six-footer with a shaggy, greying beard. Another photo showed a wall inside his flat; it was covered with garish paintings, done by Hardy himself, of Celtic crosses. 'Bizarre!' commented the tabloids and readily nicknamed the suspect 'the Bin Bag Ripper', thus ranking him alongside 'Jack the Ripper', the turn-of-the-nineteenth-century psycho who had terrorised the East End, and 'the Yorkshire Ripper', who had butchered thirteen young women over five years and was finally caught in 1979.

I was doing my PhD at Warwick when the Yorkshire Ripper was caught in Leeds, if I remember rightly. Now I was on my second extended visit to England, and yet another Ripper had struck in my neighbourhood, right next door in fact. It's enough to make me vow not to leave home for

long periods.

A Sherlock Holmes fan since my early teens, I naturally tried to apply reason to the case at hand. When our nervous landlady first told us about the body parts found in bin bags, I confidently assured her that the murderer couldn't be one our neighbours. Why would the killer dispose of the bodies close to where he lived? No, no, little chance of that... Of course I was soon proved wrong. Then, when the Celtic crosses appeared in the paper I said 'Ah ha! Elementary, my dear you-know-who'. Here was another religious loony. The killings had apparently taken place over Christmas. It figured: the women had been sacrificed at the altar of the Celtic crosses.

But the Ripper ruled out the religious angle. They said Hardy had a history of mental illness and had already had a brush with the Police, but he was not a religious loony. Well, I won't let go of my theory yet not until it has been conclusively proved wrong.

With the Ripper at large, the neighbourhood felt creepy. None in our flat had ever seen him in the flesh, which made things worse: he might not be readily recognizable, especially if he shaved off his beard. The Police warned citizens that he could be dangerous. Women and children were terrified. The grinning Ripper appeared in their nightmares and threatened to take them hostage. That very night he was caught at a hospital on Great Ormond Street, where he was asking for pills for diabetes. He had shaved off his beard and donned a baseball cap. Camden heaved a sigh of relief.

For the next few days the papers retailed all they could about the case. Then it became stale news, other murders hit the headlines, and the Police carried on outside the limelight with the painstaking job of preparing a case for trial. But in the gloomy winter evenings I would often muse on the dark side of human nature and its sudden, terrifying, unpredictable manifestations.

Hardy had a normal life for at least half the biblically allotted two-score-and-ten years. He married, had four children, emigrated to Australia. Then his marriage fell apart. His wife and children returned to England, and though he followed shortly after, he has had no contact with them since the break-up. He moved into a council flat, lonely, unemployed, given to excessive drinking (cheap cider). Neighbours found him grumpy and steered clear. When the bathroom in the flat above his sprung a leak and water seeped down, he went up and poured acid through the letterbox. The Police had to be called.

In January 2002 the dead body of a prostitute was found in Hardy's bed. He was arrested and then released after the coroner declared that she had died of a heart attack. But now it seemed that she had literally been scared to death. In February the chopped-up remains of another prostitute, minus the head, were found in a bag in the nearby Regent's Canal, but there had been no headway in the investigations until Hardy was caught. The heads of the two recent victims were not found either, but they were eventually identified, one by her breast implants; both were prostitutes.

It's barely forty yards from the rear window of our living room to Hardy's flat. We might have been watching TV over the holidays when the women were being chopped into pieces. What was going on in Hardy's

'foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart' as he went about his gory deed? Will the trial give us any startling insights into the mind? I think not. Maybe the wretched man had a childhood trauma; maybe he felt betrayed by his wife; maybe he craved vengeance on womankind; maybe he had bursts of insanity when he committed those horrible deeds. Whatever the psychological or sociological explanation, it is banal. Yes, wickedness is banal. Madness is banal. That is why they are so baffling, so terrifying.

And that is why when we find that there are varieties of ladders leading upwards from the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart, we rejoice. Also forty yards from our flat is 8 Royal College Street, a nondescript terraced house beside whose door a plaque announces that the French poets Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud lived there for some months in 1873. Their verses redeem the foul human heart, as do the novels of Charles Dickens, whose first London home was at 16 Bayham Street, just a hundred yards away.

That brings me to the subject of books and libraries, which both Khademul Islam and Fakrul Alam have written about. Like them I lament the decline of the USIS and British Council libraries, both of which I used to haunt from my school days till quite recently. The first library I visited, though, was yet another 'foreign' one: the British Information Service library, which occupied a rather romantic wren bungalow on stilts in Purana Palta, beside what used to be the local Freemason's Lodge. I was five and my father took me along one evening. I was fascinated by the colourful magazines, which I avidly leafed through.

Soon after the Suez War broke out, and an irate mob torched the place. The government had to pay several lakh rupees as compensation. I was furious with the government for giving in to the imperialist aggressors. Today, my sympathies would still be with Nasser, but I wouldn't side with the arsonists.

Libraries, sadly, are under threat everywhere. I have seen public libraries in Britain do away with the Poetry section, because there isn't much demand for poetry among readers. Needless to say, the problem is much worse in Bangladesh. But, what can be done about it?

The prices of books are going up every day, so an institution like Dhaka University cannot afford to buy more than a handful of new titles each year. The 'foreign' libraries are not going to go back to their old state. The Americans used to see the USIS libraries as useful propaganda tools during the Cold War; now they are no longer needed. And the British Council, which has become a commercial venture, does not find books as profitable an investment as, say, videos.

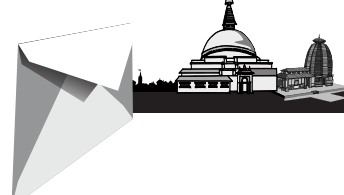
The only solution to the problem is to read the great libraries of the world online so that they can be accessed by readers worldwide. A small fee can be charged for looking up books in copyright, and the writer can be paid a part of the amount. The cost involved won't be even a fraction of the military budget of the world's only mega-power.

With this wise thought, I take my leave for now.

Kaiser Huq is Bangladesh's foremost English-language poet. He is currently at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies, London.

**Bela Malik** reviews *Gita Hariharan's In Times of Siege* (Viking/Penguin, Delhi, 2003, viii+206), a novel about a mild-mannered history professor suddenly, and dramatically, face to face with a revisionist Hindu fundamentalism.

Letter from **Kathmandu**



*In Times of Siege*, covering the period 31 August to 1-15 October 2000 in New Delhi, follows the controversy that stalks the protagonist, Shivmurti, a professor of history at the Kasturba Gandhi University (obviously a pseudonym) of the Indira Gandhi National Open University in New Delhi). Shiv's historical preoccupation is with the ancient city of Kalyana, where, in the twelfth century, there lived a poet-visionary, Basava, whose chief claim to attention was his attempt to organise an egalitarian society, which met with the same fate that often attends such efforts. Those who stood to lose by the creation of an equal society instigated a counter-revolution that led to social upheaval and culminated eventually in Basava's disappearance. Until the opening of the novel, nothing dramatic or noteworthy has happened to Shiv in either his personal or professional life.

Two events disrupt the life of the ageing pot-bellied liberal Shiv. One is the entry of Meena, a twenty-four-year old studying sociology at Kamala Nehru University (evidently Jawaharlal Nehru University, complete with bus no. 615 from the railway station), who comes to stay at his house. The relationship between Meena and Shiv moves beyond that of 'ward and guardian'. Meena is refreshingly free of the angst and pretension that usually diminishes the intel-

lectual capacity to live life with both clarity and verve. Her conviction and strength of character are appealing precisely because they do not sit on the high horse of oppressive virtue.

The second 'incident' that disturbs the even keel of his life is more political. The 'Itiha Suraksha Manch', a Hindu right-wing fascist body that lays claim to singular, monolithic truths of its own manufacture, takes exception to a passage in one of the BA history modules on Basava prepared by Shiv. The Manch quite naturally has a vision of a Hindu past unadorned by caste differences. They revere Basava, exalt to mythical status, and render him sterile so that his radical ideas and politics can be safely consigned to oblivion. The Manch cannot brook Shiv's history module that has a much more nuanced understanding of Basava. The organisation wants the 'offending' booklet withdrawn, amended, and passed by a 'committee' of historians of dubious distinction nominated by it. *Suraksha* (protection) is going ahead full throttle.

These two 'events' in the mild professor's life are interwoven deftly, and the account delves into the ordeals faced by Shivmurti. His own uncertainty in taking a steadfast stance is pushed aside by Meena, who helps to organise campaigns against the fundos (fundamentalist)

munchies (members of the Manch). Events beyond his control take him to arenas beyond his customary ambit. We find Shiv in the make-up room of a TV studio, in a panel discussion with a fundoo bigwig, and at dharnas, rallies and meetings. He has taken a stand. Somehow momentous events of the recent past that passed Shiv by (among others, the demolition of the Babri Masjid, the attack on a Kannada playwright who dramatised Basava's life some years ago, the attempt to rewrite history textbooks, the assault on M.F. Hussein for daring to paint Hindu god-

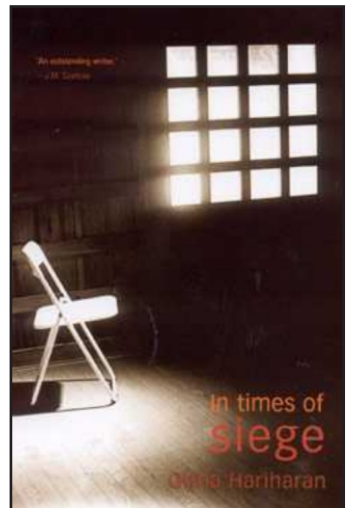


esses in the nude and the hullabaloo raised over the filming of widows in Banaras) unpredictably knock at his door. In this tornado over the contest of representation of a segment of India's vast and varied past, the reactions of individuals are brought out with sympathetic realism, and we encounter the usual line-up of strong lefties, waffling liberals, 'muppies' (Marxist yuppies) and rabid rightists (now in power at the centre). We know Mrs Khan, who feels the threat, Dr Arya, the 'Hindu' historian, and the well-meaning liberals. The response of the university

**"To the extent that it is possible for many people to be 'liberal' because they are not directly, painfully affected by the oppression of the authorities they are critical. Recent experiences -- Gujarat for example -- show that the times of siege we are talking about have stripped the cushioning of even this usually comfortably placed class. The liberal in the novel, Shiv, says in some desperation when he sees the 'opposition' is not as united as they need to be: 'Forget your little arguments, the enemy is almost at our heels! If this can happen to an ordinary, cautious man like me, what about you ideologywallas?' But the novel is also saying that when pushed to a point where a choice has to be made, many of those we think of as 'just ordinary, decent people' will speak up for the fundamental values that hold their world in place -- peace and harmony so that everyone in society can go about their business, as well as the basic freedom to think, speak, and ask questions. This is what happened during the Emergency, after the demolition of Babri Masjid, and after the Gujarat carnage." Gita Hariharan**

administration is familiarly inscrutable: is it merely playing by the book, or is it promoting the distortion of the past?

In the fight between 'us' and 'them,' the 'us' are the democrats while 'they' are the fanatics. The battle is against the proposition that only one nation, with one voice, one language, one culture, and one religion can be allowed to exist. While the 'other' is clearly spelt out in the book, Hariharan also talks about the 'we,' a broad front against the 'thought-police,' and does not hesitate to point to the problems with the positions



A Jailhouse Story

by **SUBHASH MUKHOPADHYA** (translated by Farhad Ahmed)

I was returning  
after a walk through grass birds fields piers markets  
When suddenly from behind  
Somebody hailed me.  
'Comrade D!' 'Comrade D!' he yelled.  
I turned to see a familiar face  
A face I would spot at meetings and marches  
Bristle-bearded,  
Hollow-cheeked, rail-thin and skinny,  
Plain khaki half-sleeved shirt, a short dhuti.  
When I drew close I realized with a start  
That once upon a time  
All of us had been in the same jail,  
His features I remembered well  
His name for the life of me I could not recall.  
Oh, what fate,  
All those photos in memory's album  
And each name erased.  
We sat on a bench  
Almost instantly arrived two cups of tea  
We set the warm glasses on the rickety table  
And with relish squeezed every drop out of the tales  
Of those bygone days,  
Those days of sitting with gritted teeth  
With nothing to eat  
Of barricaded stairs, water stored for the teargas  
In the verandah, the flocks of bullets the entire night--  
Yet, just think, yes, how wonderfully had passed  
Those days of our lives.  
And tears rose to our eyes as we talked,  
Their faces floated up and we recalled  
Probhat-Mukul-Shumote.  
Then came  
Talk of the present.  
Who is where,  
Who is doing what--all that. We discover  
How contagious is fear  
Both of us fell silent, both unwilling to let things shatter.  
Who is where on which side  
Of the fence--as soon said,  
A giant wave right then  
Roared in  
Picked us up with both hands  
And slammed us on to the sand.  
In front of us was a wall,  
And grasping iron bars,  
Outside stood the dark.  
I looked, saw both of us back again in our neighboring cells.  
Imprisoned in nets of our own making.

the chaos of small pictures that seemingly have no systemic connection. In the process they refuse to admit that protest, while acknowledging differences, has to find the links between different problems if united action is to be possible and effective. The dissipation of the opposition into narrow agendas allows the vigilance squad unfettered freedom in reducing the past to a digestible capsule, merging it to the exigencies of the present, painting all the while an alarming monochrome vision of the future.

*In Times of Siege* is more than a novel. It is a chronicle, register and a journal, with entries that are frighteningly actual. It is a skilfully constructed work that moves effortlessly between epochs with authentic characters playing out roles that they had to perform when there were not enough people who understood what was happening

or enough of those who, though aware, did not feel the need to mobilise themselves and others into doing anything about it. The story picks up precisely the person who optimised the it-won't-ever-happen-to-me' persona, and makes it happen to him. Shiv is a non-Muslim, non-Christian, non-Communist and he is subjected to harassment over an issue that is seemingly so innocuous as to ever contain the possibility of attracting fundamentalist attention. In the Indian context, it is religious fundamentalism; in other contexts it could be any other closure of democratic space. 'Speak up before it is too late!' is the fervent message of this work which hovers between the 'imagined' and the 'real' with disturbing assurance.

Bela Malik is a book editor and well-wisher of The Daily Star literature page. She is based in Kathmandu.

TAXES ON BOOKS IV: everywhere the smell of grease and frying fat

**KHADEMUL ISLAM**

**A. In Dhaka, as we all know, the chase after money prevails over every other consideration.** There are hustlers everywhere: the sons of the powerful making a killing, police on the take, academics on political payrolls, whole pyramids of politicians living off government tenders, student mafias, the superbly organized pay-off system in the lower courts, the graft-wielding peons and clerks in the state banks, the ever-profitable NGO business, the government officials with their chunks of newly-privatised industries to sell (fabulous fortunes to be made here), the crooked corridors of power, everywhere the smell of grease, of frying fat, of rotting oil, the knowing wink and smile, the fat soft palms, the network of phone numbers, the unstated assumptions, the velvet laughter of the well-connected; heh heh heh heh, life can be soooooo good!

Everywhere, except, I had thought, in the world of books. Wrong! The other day I stumbled upon **Mohiuddin Ahmed's** book **Bangladeshai Prestak Prokashona** (University Press Limited, Dhaka, 1993) and was amazed to find him speaking out against the imposition of taxes on imported books. But why had Mohiuddin Bhai been doing it in 1993? The government had imposed this tax (of 21 1/2 percent) in July of last year. I read on to find that over the past decade a large coterie of local publishers and writers of Bangla books had been agitating for the imposition of taxes on imported books, targeting mainly novels and fiction from West Bengal, in order to net for themselves a captive market. Unable to write well, unable to

respond creatively to the challenge of superior writing from West Bengal, this protectionist racket is what they came up with, then lobbied powerful elements in the ruling party, and then last July must have finally succeeded in finding receptive ears. And this bunch, a venal, corrupt, greedy, anti-books, anti-people, anti-education, anti-national, anti-Muslim, anti-Islam, anti-Bangali, unethical and unscrupulous clique if ever there was one, never gave a damn for the consequences. Never thought for a moment that this tax would choke off all imported books, even in English, would deprive Bangladeshis of market choices, would promote piracy, would reinforce a notebook and learning-by-rote culture. Never considered the fact that books are not tins of baby milk powder, or a fat government contract, that good books, a bookreading culture and society, is the key to the growth and development of the nation's mind.

If ever in the long run things even out, if ever there is something like divine justice, if ever a true democratic revolution sweeps this country, one hopes this gang will be frog-marched to the countryside for some 're-education', forced to clean latrines from dawn to dusk, dragged through bazaars and spat upon. Writers and publishers indeed!

**B. "If a publisher produces with equal care a book by Sunil Gangopadhyaya and say, Mr. X from Bangladesh, and if the latter's book does not sell, whose fault is it?"**

(The following is an abridged version of a chapter entitled 'On The Free Import Of Books Into Bangladesh' It is a transcript of a speech delivered by Mohiuddin

Bhai in a seminar arranged by the National Grantha Kendra on book imports. Translated by Khademul Islam.)

Let me tell you about a friend's complaint. He had gone to the last Bangla Academy book fair to buy a good Bangla-to-Bangla, English-to-Bangla dictionary for his son. Couldn't find one. He complained: What kind of a book fair is this where you can't find a dictionary?

I gave him a publisher's address where there were Samsad dictionaries. And added: Tell them I sent you and get a 15 percent commission. Today I don't recall whether he actually went there, or bought a dictionary from a New Market store.

The publisher I had sent him to is a co-publisher of three Samsad dictionaries in Bangladesh, which everyone will agree is vital as an educational tool here. You can't find good dictionaries in our country. Yet if one were to import dictionaries to meet this urgent need, we would have to expend a large amount of our foreign exchange. So I leave it to your judgement whether by being a co-publisher of a standard dictionary, my friend is doing a service to his country. Now co-publishing ventures are under attack. That this is a recognized international business, that it saves us a considerable amount of scarce foreign exchange--this is something I don't hear from anybody at all...

2. How much takas' worth of fiction-poems-novels is imported by Bangladesh? As far as I know they constitute a fraction of the total amount of books imported into the country. And further decreasing

that amount is the fact that, because of co-publishing ventures, we are not importing fiction written by some of the bestselling and popular Indian (i.e. West Bengal) authors. So what is the truth behind the current hysteria being churned up in the publishing world?

3. I recently saw in a newspaper that a publisher had stated that the general standard of books from Bangladesh was extremely high, even higher than that of books from West Bengal. And yet just as our womenfolk have a fondness for Indian saris, so do our readers for Indian books. This is said not only by publishers, but insisted upon by our writers too.

Now let us judge this claim carefully.

Who is saying this? It is our, Bangladesh's, writers and publishers. And who are they? They are the producers, the sellers, of Bangladesh's books.

So let me ask you: is there anywhere in this world where the milkman says that the milk he sells is not pure and unadulterated?

I admit, the paper we use, the kind of four-color covers we design, maybe that is better than the books that are produced in West Bengal. But why don't folks buy our books, folks who do otherwise spend their hard-earned money on buying books? So should we come out and plainly say that the problem is not with design of paper or book covers, that the real problem lies in the quality of the writing? Our readers are not accepting of our writers. If a publisher produces with equal care a book by Sunil Gangopadhyaya and say, Mr. X from Bangladesh, and if

the latter's book does not sell, whose fault is it? Can we properly say it is the customer's? Is patriotism the sole monopoly of only the publisher and the writer? The book buyer who buys foreign books with his/her hard-earned money, should we say he/she lacks patriotic feeling?

4. The principal reason behind the popularity of West Bengal writers are a few magazines and newspapers, especially the weekly *Desh*. Readers have become acquainted with Indian writers by reading these. The question naturally arises as to how many of their magazines/newspapers circulate in Bangladesh. Whereas several hundred weeklies and dailies are published and circulated locally. Why have these not generated popularity for our local writers? Has anybody noticed whether our magazines have even tried to make an effort in this direction?

And to those who raise the issue of export of Bangladeshi books to West Bengal I have a further question to ask: Why should West Bengal importers risk importing books from Bangladesh? Why should they work to promote Bangladeshi authors? What terms and conditions have we offered them that they should go about creating reader demand and leap at the opportunity to import books from us?

5. It is said that bookstores in Bangladesh are stuffed with books from India. But what proportion of these books constitute fiction-poems-novels? My own estimate is that it is negligible. And if booksellers do stock books from West Bengal it is because it is good business. They get a good deal from these

publishers, and these books sell. Otherwise why would they stock books from West Bengal? It is because they sell that these books are imported.

6. There is much talk that people buy books from India because they are cheap. So how true is this statement? Even if we allow for the fact that Bangladesh books are expensive because of the high cost of paper here, it is still a cost of doing business. But what about those publishers who own their presses, why can't they provide books cheaply? Why are they upping the production cost of books by providing books with four-tone covers? Books published in West Bengal do not display this same lavish multicolored spreads and covers.

7. There is talk about the flood of imported children's books, the fact that they refer to Hinduism in them. Well, Indian books will have that content, just as our books will have Islamic references. Children get these books from their school-teachers or guardians, and so this entry of 'foreign culture' into their lives is not totally forced upon them...but the most important question is, why don't our writers write books that parents will snap up of their own accord, so that there is no need for government control? What kinds of products have our publishers produced that children's books are imported from abroad? What is their standard?

I personally know, when I sit down to tutor my children, the strange books that they are forced to live with. Children's books here are in a dismal state, as are the books prepared by the textbook board.

8. And finally the thing I object to the most is this demand for regulating the market. How is it that all of us who talk loudly about 'free market' and 'no restrictions' are ready to forego it in the case of books? Those who demand that there should be taxes on books, don't they understand that book buyers will have to buy books at a higher price? And those whom we wish to control by taming them as cheap trash, they will capture the black market and like pornography simply create a greater demand for themselves. Do we wish for a regulated society instead of a democracy? Is the sword we have fashioned in our self-interest to fall on those who advance the cause of a free society?

9. Even self-interest must have a limit. Those who have read Alex Haley's 'Roots' will be loathe to read 'Chowranghi'. Are we supposed to sit back and applaud those of our writers who are intent on churning out books like 'Chowranghi'?

10. The real truth is that those of us who can't compete, they are the ones most loudly calling for the imposition of controls on foreign books. All these issues, of promoting our publishing industry, of protecting our culture and children, are being manipulated to cloak their own inadequacies and self-interest... I have joined the publishing trade because books are a mighty weapon in the promotion of democratic values. The idea of imposing controls on it is anathema to me. As it is, there are a lot of government-imposed controls on the industry, and the state does exercise an immense power over us. I cannot let a cowardly, anti-competitive, passive group of writers-publishers rob me of my free-

dom, of the freedom of choice exercised by my customers, the book buyers, the readers.

I have a further point to make. Which is that the real reason for the crisis in the publishing world is the acute shortage of readers. The reading habit has fled from schools, colleges, universities, homes and workplaces. We have to bring it back, do whatever it takes. So just as we have to restructure our education system so that it is based on libraries, we also have to produce the right kind of books. We can enact laws that may force libraries to acquire certain books but we cannot force readers to read them, or buyers to buy them. If a book meets the buyer's expectations and desires, only then will the price be right, only then will there be book promotion and appeal and growth in sales.

Who wants to do business with foreign goods at the expense of one's own, if one's own goods can put food on the table, a roof over one's head, if it meets one's ideals? Similarly, people buy foreign books for the same reason, that it fulfills a real need. A bookseller stocks such books keeping his customers' needs in mind...if booksellers cannot satisfy different tastes, different standards and aesthetics, even the present few customers will desert them. Which is my earnest plea here: come, let us produce books, create an atmosphere for reading again.

We should let go of illusions and join the real world. We should not be lazy. Now is the time to act. Let us not waste our time.