

FOURUM FIVE



moment; but as soon as I put paper in typewriter, a knock on the door. A middle-aged man (like myself, though on the thinner side - so thin indeed!) The regular tale: no job, no food, hungry children. I'm averaging two a day begging for work - and I can give no work. The best I could do was listen. Then I came back to my typewriter, flicked on my cassette (I have Satchmo on - and I bet some of you will never forgive me for that! But the man has always been one of my life's inspirations: sang and trumpeted his way out of poverty and misery, gave so many people so much joy, and never a trace of bitterness. Not altogether inappropriate "patron saint" (for someone up to his neck in India's sea of poverty). Anyhow, what did Satch sing at me?

Life is bare
Gloom and misery everywhere
Stormy weather.
Yes - just can't get my poor self together.
I'm weary all the time,
Yes, Lord - so weary all the time....
All I do is pray the Lord above
Will let me walk in the sun once more.

That'll do nicely - until I can find a certified text from Job. But (relax!) I'm not going to write about the impossible problems facing us right now. You may have guessed that when the "oil kings" kicked you in the shins, they kicked us in the teeth. The rice ration has been cut twice; food prices are for our poor a sicker joke than Marie Antoinette's "why don't they eat cake" ever was; gas is \$4 a gallon; flour and butter have disappeared; and cooking oil is so adulterated that arsenic would probably be safer. But no more of that! I'm going to write you a letter about (of all things!) - a singer!

Some of you might even remember him. I wrote a letter about him - way back in 1963! I remember the year because I went to see him - then a boy of twelve - just a day after Kennedy was shot. Up on the wall of their shack, I saw a picture of the goddess, Kalee, cheek-to-jowl with a picture of JFK! The boy was then in Class 6. He had been helping his father white-wash the house for the "pujans". He tossed some lime into a bucket of water and it exploded in his face - blinding him. We took him to a doctor; but no hope. Then he went over to Kalimpong, learned cane-work in a school for the blind run by the Scotch Presbyterians (God love them!) - and we

lost track of each other. He became a Christian and I was delighted when he, and a few of his Presbyterian friends, showed up at our hosue this year with our parish carol party. Altogether we were about thirty in the room, crowded but cozy that cold December night. They sang our regular lilting Nepali carols - and a few new ones. Then someone said: "Let dajoo sing some of his own songs". For the next hour, the crowd of us sat like disciples at the feet of an Indian "guru"; learned what truth is, and joy and sorrow, and a little bit about the meaning of life. He sang of the simple things that give any man joy.

"Your own home is your heaven,
Even it it's only a shack,
cramped and damp.
Your own home is full of light.

Even if you have only a small, smokey oil-lamp.
If I could make the world hime, and even the sky above.
It wouldn't be nearly as precious as my own mother's love.

If I can eat with joy, today and tomorros,
Even my potatoes and my "shishnoo" will nourish me.
If I must eat with anxiety and sorrow,
Even succulent pork will poison me.

-I sing to my friends.
The TRUTH, sing I.
It alone will never die,
Even though the world ends."

He sang of the confusion of man's beliefs.

"What kind of a world is this?
What kind of men live in it?
I try to understand in more and more.

I find I understand less and less.
-Surely God is only One,
But who can count all the religions under the sun?
What a crowd of gods and goddesses!

-A pure heart alone give God adoration,
Then, why all these rites, these strange oblations?
Some offer Him flowers; some offer blood.

But can a God who likes the scent of flowers
Also like the stench of blood?
-How can you know when a man is speaking the truth?
How can you know when a man is telling a lie?
Who knows what it is to live?
Who knows what it is to die?
What kind of a world is this?
What kind of men live in it?"

With zest, and a lot of humour, he sang about our Westernized youth.

"Go-go" has made everybody "ga-ga"!

The hair they wear
Would do credit to a Himalayan bear.

It's all a mess,
You can't tell a boy from a girl

The way they dress.
He does a foolish thing,
Gets bell-bottom trousers
To ring ou his name
And bring him some fame.

And she? She wante to be free.

So she turns herself into a "he"!

The world has gone quite mad:

The plains of Siliguri are flatter than flat

But they had a landslide, What do you think of that?

Darjeeling is 7000 feet up on a hill,

But now it's all buried in mud,

Honest to Pete, they had a flood.

The world has gone quity mad, but I love it still.

But he sang most about his own life's tragedy.

How do I survive?
I drink my own tears.
That's how I keep alive.

I cannot see.
I've fallen, fallen
Into blackest misery.
Who can know
The storms, the hurricanes that blow
In my dark heart?

My mind is full of fears
My life's history is written in tears
I grope along thy lonely road
Crying for someone to share my load.

My agony.
Crying for someone to love me
And be loved by me.

And again:
My life is loss heaped on loss,
sorrow heaped on sorrow,
care heaped on care
pain on countless pains.

Mountainous waves of despair
Thunder through my veins.
To me the snow is black,
The sun and moon are darkness,
To me the sky is as the land.
To myself I am a stranger,
I cannot see my own hand.

But with laughter, I hide my tears
And with songs, I hide my fears,

I pray for courage
My life I embrace
I kiss sorrow in the face.
Truth and friendship and wonderful dreams are mine.
Only one thing is missing. I am blind.

He sang too, to Christ,

editorial

Public Relations needs support

A review of the university's public relations function comes at a crucial date in the university's history. Without public support, pleas from the university for more government funds to ease the effects of inflation will be fruitless. The public relations office is the link in the chain of communications between the university and the media, a major source of information to the public at large.

The University of Alberta is a difficult beat for a reporter to cover. It is a small community of more than 20,000 transient students and employees held together by a complex structure. News stories exist, but knowing whom to talk to is a problem. The University of Alberta public relations office has been a big help in this regard and has provided invaluable background material for articles. This is certainly preferable to taking a highly-paid administrator away from his work to answer a long list of tedious questions. Staff at the public relations office have spent hours tracking down information and giving advice. Without it, quite frankly, it would have been difficult to give any coverage to the board of governors, general faculties council and other university bodies.

You can't account for much of this leg work. It may show up as one paragraph that lends understanding to a news story. Or it may prevent a mistake on a sensitive topic which could lead to a misunderstanding. Contrary to professor Burke Barker's assertion last fall, you can't measure the output of such an office by counting the number of press releases.

Another incalculable plus for the U of A's public relations office is its attitude to the news media. After being warned of the double talk and halftruths of public relations, I was surprised with the honest, straight forward approach of the office. From what I can gather from talking to members of the news media, the office is respected for taking such an approach. In re-evaluating the role of public relations, I hope the university decides not to opt for a sales-pitch approach. Newsmen tend to react adversely to a sales-pitch. They won't be used as a platform to sell the benefits of the university to the public.

Brian Tucker

with the simplicity and intimacy that made Paul say: "I live; now, not I; but Christ lives in me."

What shall I offer you Christ?
What have I to give?

I offer myself,
I offer you all that is me,
all that is mine.

You are the joy in my heart,
You are the peace in my mind,

You are the Truth, the answer
To the questions that plague me so,
You are my Yes; You are my No.

And I am yours,
And you are mine.

As I've typed, I've been listening to these songs again on my trusty cassette; and I feel frustrated. There's no way I can catch the spirit of his poetry, the poignancy of his music, the power of his voice. Even less can I get HIM into words. He is someone special. We were a mixed crowd: boys and girls, men and women, young and old; but we all listened to him as if we were alone, in a deep silence that was almost a trance. His songs had the uncanny power that

Christ's words have. Has anyone ever really listened to them and not thought: "He is talking about me! He is talking to me!" Chin Dey, who was sitting next tome, said in a kind of awed whisper when his last song was sung: "Ah-chum-bah, Amazing! If he hadn't gone blind, he would never have discovered himself; he would know as little about life as I do!" And it's only now that I understand why I felt I had to write this letter. This blind boy embodies the paradox that India has always been for me. Poverty, misery, rotten injustice; patience and peace. Many articles, even some letters I'm getting from home, sound panicky: the inflation, the unemployment, the energy crisis, the pollution. Are we in for another depression? I'm sure not foolish enough to say this would be good; but neither an I foolosh enough to say it would be bad. This boy's blindness taught him how to see. We are surely "a perverse generation". Perhaps there's no other way. Perhaps we have "to lose our life to find it."

Your Brother in Darjeeling,
Father Abraham,S.J.

The Gateway

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