A tribute to the memory of Vasudev Salgaocar

FARE FORWARD, VOYAGER...

BY FRANK SIMOES

Builders of Indian Economy Series : 3

THE A.D. SHROFF MEMORIAL TRUST

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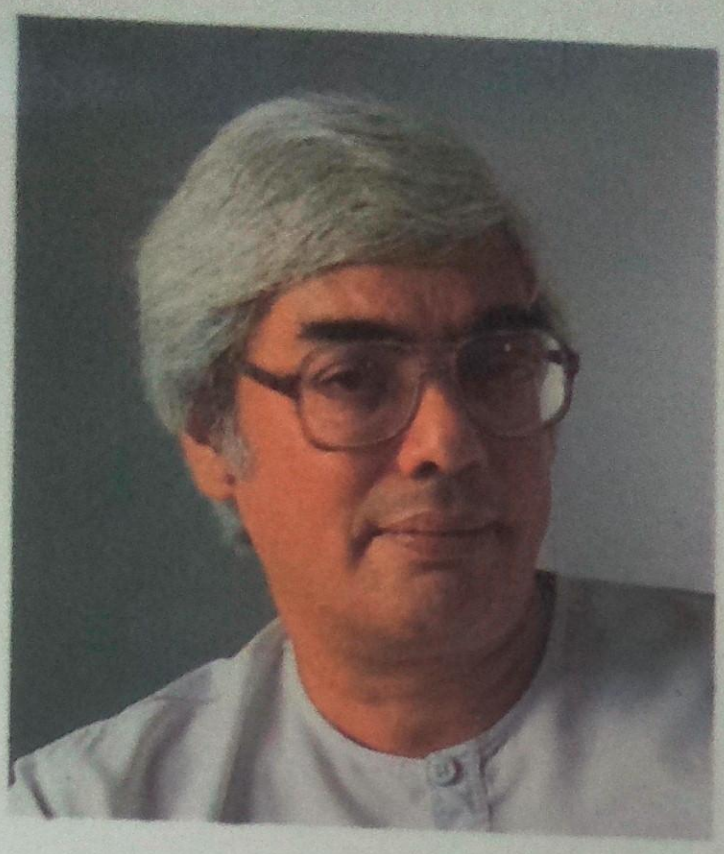
FRANK SIMOES



Frank Simoes, one of India's leading authorities on mass communications, is a writer and photographer who has been published extensively in India and abroad. Of "Fare Forward, Voyager" he says, "I have never worked harder on a project, or felt so rewarded."

A Goan himself, and partisan to a degree, the book was a journey of discovery taking him back to his own roots. His research took him from Cabinet Minister to mine labourer, from Goa's industrial and professional elite to small shopkeepers tucked away in the most inaccessible recesses of Margao's marketplaces, from the harsh, desolate landscapes of the mining areas to elegant, aristocratic homes on the heights of Altinho in Panaji. What emerged – from reams of desk research, one hundred and fifty interviews, two hundred hours of tape recording – was a democratic consensus, a moving, vivid portrait of the life and times of "a great Goan".

Art Director: Gita Simoes
Printed by VAKILS

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BY FRANK SIMOES

That a poor young boy, a vegetable seller at the age of eight, should rise to become one of the greatest industrialists of his time, is rare, but not without precedent. That he should do so, in the words of a close friend and major competitor, "without compromising his sense of honour" is rarer still. But what set Vasudev Salgaocar distinctly apart and above his contemporaries was a singular combination: talent and drive, compassion and foresight, and a deep, abiding love for Goa and its people that would not be denied expression.

He was Goa's first true renaissance man. Pioneer industrialist, financial innovator, leading humanitarian and philanthropist, in the autumn of his life he transcended all labels – benefactory or otherwise – and in his fight for Vasco, the city he loved above all others, he stood virtually alone, becoming in the process public standard bearer of a vox populi that would finally be heard.

His was a life of high adventure lived with passionate commitment. His untimely death at the age of sixty-seven was mourned the length and breadth of Goa, but in his passing, he left an enduring legacy to the people and the land he loved so well. A legacy for all ages.

Vasudev M. Salgaocar
Born: 13.05.1916
Died: 13.10.1984
married to
Hirabai
nee Indira Shetye.
on
07.02.1939

- *Anil* (1940) married to *Laxshmi nee Patkar* (1948)
  - *Sameer* (1969)
  - *Chandana* (1971)
  - *Poornima* (1972)
  - *Arjun* (1975)
- *Sulabha* (1945) married to *Dr. Kautilya Mehta* (1945)
  - *Aneesh* (1976)
  - *Amit* (1978)
- *Jyotsna* (1948) married to *Dilip Bhandarkar* (1943)
  - *Shilpa* (1978)
  - *Nikhil* (1983)
- *Dattaraj* (1957) married to *Dipti nee Ambani* (1961)
  - *Vasudev Vikram* (1984)
  - *Isheta* (1987)
- *Sukanti* (1943) married to *Dr. Madhav Kamat* (1938)
  - *Ashish* (1970)
  - *Sanjeev* (1975)
- *Suchan* (1946) married to *Jawahar Kudchadkar* (1945)
  - *Reshma* (1974)
  - *Vishal* (1978)
  - *Vijay* (1981)
- *Shivanand* (1954) married to *Ranjana nee Karnik* (1954)
  - *Swati* (1982)
  - *Vivek* (1986)

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of Vasudev Salgaocar

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SIMOES

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This book is not for sale, but for free distribution, till stocks last, to schools, colleges and other educational institutions; to public libraries and organisations concerned with youth or economic development of the country.

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The A.D. Shroff Memorial Trust which has published this Biography for public education, especially of the younger generation, is not responsible for any statements or views expressed therein.

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"Not farewell
but fare forward voyager."
— Krishna to Arjuna

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EPILOGUE

PROLOGUE

NOT FAREWELL, BUT FARE FORWARD VOYAGER

1

IT is five in the morning and the town of Vasco da Gama sleeps. If history is prophecy of a sort, Vasco's future is prefigured: the historical port town on Goa's southern coast is deceptively peaceful at this dark hour before dawn's turning. The scars of unbridled urban growth are hidden under a canopy of stars; the writing is on the wall even if thus far Goa has been spared the brutalities to the environment which have made running sores of large tracts of Bombay, Calcutta, and a host of lesser satellites. The temples of Vasco, the churches and mosques, the columned boulevards and gardened squares, palely etched by starlight, prompt distant memories of a gracious, leisurely past, lost forever in the tumult and rush of history: conquest, reconquest, liberation, always in the name of some overweening symbol: the Sword of Islam, Christian God, Manifest Continental Destiny, yet in Goa the lion invariably lay down with the lamb, until the last quarter of this, the most violently turbulent of all of man's centuries. The inexorable pressures on land and lives, brought about by the tidal forces of human immigration, commerce, industry and simple greed, have brought Vasco to the edge of abysmal decision.

It is cause for grave concern to a man who begins this day, as he has since childhood, at the hour before dawn, in a mansion on the plateau of Chicalim high above Vasco. He wakes with care, not wishing to disturb his wife asleep at his side, or his children and grandchildren on other floors of this magnificent home. His admirers, and detractors, look upon this residence, set like a jewel in exquisitely landscaped acres, as a symbol of a long and hard career, suitably or unfairly rewarded. But he regards it as merely a roof over his head, no more, no less. And just as he did not, at the age of nine, permit the terrible deprivations of his environment to intrude upon the purposes at hand, so too now at the age of sixty-eight, he will not allow the luxuries of money and

power, or the deceits of pomp and circumstance, to hinder for a moment the real needs of the day. Though, as a distinguished leader of thousands of people in his employment, and as a public figure actively involved in many of the concerns of the day, he has a fine understanding of the needs of ritual, and respects, indeed follows the protocols of such rituals to the letter.

He wanders about the garden in his pyjamas, taking his time about brushing his teeth, measured by the minute, fifteen in all, sole concession to contemplation of the day ahead and its complexities. It does not promise to be an easy day. There are problems, seemingly intractable, between the Mormugao Port Trust and the iron ore industry. He must seek compromise with the powers that be, in writing, without quibble, sustained by facts and figures, by reasoned argument of sufficient legal density to give pause and due consideration. His thoughts turn to labour. A frown creases the brow of a face set in sculpted, brooding introspection — his labour has begun to make unreasonable demands. He has known each of them, man and boy, for more than a decade, and no matter how hard he strives to be objective, he cannot reconcile the sense of personal injustice, with the imperatives of industrial history. Then a smile makes nonsense of the seriousness of the moment, disperses years in as many seconds, his eyes light up with joy remembered. Before noon this day he must send a telex message to his favourite grandchild, Vishal, in Pune, "I have just bought you two ocean-going ships, but since Pune remains obstinately landbound, I just can't find a way to get them to you. . . ."

Back in the house, he completes his ablutions, performs a solitary puja at the household shrine, takes tea, dresses in impeccable taste — the tie and jacket are de rigeur — and makes a dozen phone and wireless calls across the length and breadth of Goa: to the mines where his Managers are roused, tousled, from an early bed, and made to answer leading questions — what were the production figures for

the day before? To the export department — what quantity of iron ore was loaded at the port and ship? Were there any barge shortages?; to Fernandes, Bene and Kavlekar, friends, colleagues, and, in a way, functional alter egos, loyal companions these many decades — animated conversations, ranging far and wide, from international dollar exchange rates and how best to take advantage of fluctuations in the company's favour, to the appointment of a Chief of Surgery for the new medical centre in Chicalim, to the meetings for the day, and the disposition of certain urgent files he had carried home. Files which he had cleared, working late the previous night, with a finicky eye for the significant detail, a swift analysis of the problems presented, and decisions quickly taken.

In these hours before daylight, he has made the time to catch up on his reading: the Tex Report, the Financial Times and the Economist from London, skimming through Time, Newsweek, and Fortune, making notes, marking passages, seeking the facts which would open up options so that swift action could be taken this very day. There is a miners' strike in Brazil and it may take three months to reconcile. The shortfall from one of the world's largest producers of iron ore might mean a quick windfall for Goa. Note. Discuss. Early frost has attacked the Russian grain harvest. Very well. They will have to spend a fortune in foreign exchange buying wheat from the Americans. How will this affect the price of the dollar? Should he gamble on freight rates on bulk carriers going up? What were the charter times on his fleet of bulk carriers? The timing was delicate. Note. Discuss.

He had learned his skills as a child, in the rough and tumble of Vasco's marketplaces, disenfranchised as only a Goan Hindu could be, without a formal education, under harsh colonial rule. His response to the needs of this day, in manner if not entirely in substance, could be seen in one light as the adult keeping faith with the irreparable dues owing to a younger self. He knows that time is short, that

the sands of his life are at an end, running thinly through the hourglass of his being, yet Vasudev Salgaocar begins the business of a new day with all the joie de vivre of his very first.

CHILDHOOD'S END

NO man is an island. The strengths and follies of past generations come together in each of us. We are repositories and guardians of the past, and our stewardship of this heritage is the only sustaining legacy we pass on to generations yet unborn. Vasudev Salgaocar carried the burden of generational achievement and present failure. He was born in 1916 to a family of Goud Saraswat Brahmins in the village of Raibander, situated on a promontory of the Mandovi where the river sweeps along a gentle curve to the ruined bastions and great Cathedrals of Old Goa. As Brahmin Hindus, persecuted by the Portuguese for centuries for their religious beliefs, they chose to stay, nurturing an iron tradition of courage in adversity unlike many others who fled to Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala, contiguous border areas of British India, where the East India Company's belief in commerce before God, colour or creed, was still firmly in place, and a mood of indifferent tolerance prevailed to worship, so long as it was not seditious to the Crown and taxes were paid on time.

He was born to a family which had seen great wealth and was now, a few short years after his birth, to witness a rapid and degrading decline into poverty. Vasudev's father Mahadev and a single female cousin were the only progeny of four brothers. They enjoyed all the privileges of the landed gentry, and grew up in the gilded luxury of the age. Salgaocar pere travelled exclusively in a carriage drawn by two horses, a distinction flaunted by the aristocracy, the Portuguese "fidalgos". In order that he avoid the heat of the sun and the dust of daily journeys to and fro, he was schooled at home by private tutors, and when his cousin was betrothed, her dowry was counted in gold mohurs equivalent to forty thousand rupees, a princely fortune for the times.

This was par for the course in Raibander in the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the very name, 'Rai' from the Indian root nobleman, 'bunder' for ward — the place of the noblemen — was apt if rather baroque description for a style of life which saw the Portuguese nobility living in palaces, travelling by horse-drawn carriages or palanquins carried by slaves, feasting on five course banquets served on Limoges china. Church and State made peaceful bed-fellows in Raibander. The palace of Joaquim Mourao Gracez Palha, Count of Raibander still stands, unkindly treated by the unforgiving years, hinting of former glory in ruined cornice and crumbled battlement. For decades, Raibander played host to the ceremonial seat of the Archdiocese of Goa.

The Portuguese nobility whose word was law, the landowners with property stretching as far as the eye could reach, holding absolute fief over the lives of thousands of illiterate peasantry, the landed gentry with immense inherited wealth . . . all were bound by common beliefs in the vulgarity of working for a living, the righteous and awful justice of the Hand of the Lord, and their inalienable right to be served, finger to forelock, by a population of slaves, peasants and artisans.

They were not, alas, students of the natural order or purveyors of history, oblivious to the fact that the creation of fortunes and empires carries the seeds of eventual decline and fall. It was the lot of Vasudev's father to pay bitter service to this end; in his lifetime the family's fortunes would come full circle to the point of deprivation and despair. His first marriage ended in tragedy with the death of his young wife in childbirth; the infant died as well. Stricken, he embarked on a course of befuddled philanthropy — unhinged, they said, by grief or worse — liquidating his holdings as the years passed, encouraged by fair weather friends, cheated by some, made callous use of by others, eventually abandoned by all, and when he decided at the

age of fifty to marry again, the grim harbingers of the future had arrived for all to see.

His wife, Gangabai, was a child of eleven, and the man who had once travelled in the style of the fidalgos was reduced to the demeaning role of a grocer, selling provisions from a tiny shop in Raibander, living out of two rooms at the back, growing mangoes and coconuts in the last of the huge family landownings, a small plot nearby. It was a precarious and unhappy existence. At fourteen his child bride gave birth to her first baby; it was stillborn. Gangabai would have six children and only three would survive.

The elder Salgaocar was not born to trade. Inclination and background conspired to deny him the skills essential to survival. The shop failed. The coconut and mango grove was sold. With his family and meagre belongings he made a journey by canoe, down the Mandovi, along the widening estuary, leaving Raibander and a vanquished legacy behind forever, a slow and heart-breaking passage, carefully negotiating the choppy waters of the headland, up and along the broad, placid reaches of the Zuari, to the riverfront village of Cortalim. Here the family attempted to lay roots, but the sojourn was brief, even, if that were possible, less successful than the shop at Raibander. A year later, emotionally and physically a broken man, he moved his family once again, by canoe and "match-box", a miniature covered wagon drawn by bullocks, to Vasco da Gama.

In this port town of ten thousand people, the Salgaocar family found humble residence in two rooms behind the marketplace, prophetic synchronicity, for it is in the markets of Vasco that Vasudev Salgaocar would take the first tentative steps towards the great trials and rewards that would face the man. His father ended his years as a petty clerk in Burmah-Shell earning seven and a half rupees a month. He died when Vasudev was five years old, and such was the state of the family's finances, that his widow, Gangabai, was hard

pressed to find the money for the wood for the ceremonial pyre. . . .

By all accounts she was a woman of extraordinary character, with a will that would brook not the slightest deviation from her purpose in life. That she loved and cared for her three children was never in question, but her guidance was firm and her authority was final, as it had to be. Still a young woman, barely past her teens, she realised instinctively that she had to combine the roles of father and mother, find a means to earn a living, no matter how humble, look after her children and bring them up with the only legacy she could dispense: the principles of justice and fair play; by her precept and example the ability to work long and hard hours; the imperatives of compassion, kindness, generosity, loyalty and affection; responsibility to family and community; courage and steadfastness in adversity; above all an abiding and secular faith in God.

The odds, such as they were, did not offer cause for cheer. In Portugal, the golden age of the Republic was long gone. The brave promises of a new democratic era reached the colonies as empty words, shorn of influence, bandied about without meaning by administrators unable or unwilling to give them judicial life. The cabal which held the mass of the Goan population in near-bovine captivity could look with encouragement to signs of a new awakening in the Fatherland; all over Europe the first bloody symptoms of fascism sought violent expression.

In Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, unholy alliances were being forged between politics, industry and the armed forces. They would see the irresistible rise of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco, and the emergence in Portugal of a fanatical right wing dictator, an iron-fisted Doctor of Economics who went by the name of Salazar. He would make a mockery of the Republic's good works. With ruthless efficiency he would dismantle the slender scaffolding of liberal political thought and action built so painfully over the

years. Political parties would be outlawed; the press castrated by surgical censorship; public liberties and fundamental human rights suppressed; the rights of assembly and free political dissent banned and Parliament reduced to rubber-stamping Salazar's rules into the law of the land.

His Minister of Colonies would oversee the far-flung outposts of empire with an attention to detail and uncompromising rigidity worthy of his mentor. The Colonial administrators, in situ, offered Goa over the centuries a mixed bag of efficiency, corruption, liberalism, orthodoxy, repression and religious (but let it be said) never racial prejudice. Thus it came to pass that while many Hindus achieved prominence in various walks of life, the official bias was clearly in favour of the Catholics; while Konkani was the lingua franca in village and city, between tenant and landlord, among Hindus and Catholics, for four hundred years it had never been taught in a school in Goa. Indeed, the use of Portuguese in education, politics, cultural affairs and society at large was as natural to the ruling elite — Portuguese, Catholic and Hindu alike — as the use of elaborate European place settings at dinner, a selection of foreign wines and liquers with their meals, ritualised habits of dress wholly unsuitable to the climate (ruffs, crinolines and hooped skirts for the ladies; stiff collars and cutaways common formal dress for the men) and all the other appurtenances long, easy colonial rule assimilated over the centuries.

The ruling classes used Portuguese as a first language in conducting business affairs, in the social and cultural whirl, and at home. They spoke Konkani to the menials, the servants, handymen and peasants who, by their unquestioning servitude and labour, made life in Goa a remarkably pleasant experience. The irony lay in the fact that this use of language to distinguish and erect barriers between classes was never deliberately elitist. It was centuries old, part of the mores, always so, never questioned, *never even thought about.* The

concept of language as social definition was as much a part of the entrenched attitudes of the time, as the hierarchical pecking order.

At the very top of the heap were the colonial administrators, Portuguese and Goan, the clergy whose presence was telling felt from the Archbishop's splendid palace on the heights of Altinho in Panjim, to the meanest hamlet in a forgotten corner of the New Conquests; next came the landed gentry (consisting largely of wealthy landlords) who paid homage to their peers while carefully distancing themselves from the trading community (social castaways to be used when necessary but never encouraged), while at the base of this carefully structured and maintained social pyramid lay the peasantry without whose silent, long-suffering acquiescence, the entire structure would have long since collapsed.

Vasco in turn presented a microcosm of the larger picture, with some concession to the fact that it was Goa's biggest port. Strict hierarchical divisions were maintained by physical distance. The elite — officials in Government, the Port Trust and the Railways — lived in lavish bungalows in landscaped estates on the heights overlooking the town; the landowners enjoyed even greater luxuries on huge farming properties; the peasantry lived in small thatched huts surrounded by the crops they tended for their masters, while the tradespeople were no better off in hovels in the densest, least salubrious part of town.

This was Vasudev Salgaocar's world at the age of ten. The Government would declare him literate only if he were able to "paint his name" in Portuguese. The disadvantages of his religion and the lack of wherewithal to acquire a Portuguese education barred him from a future in the socially accepted areas of Government, the professions, law, education, or administration in sister colonies. He was left with a single course of action; he would have to plough a lonely furrow, looking to every

opportunity as it came along, by the sweat of his brow and the labour of his body.

His primary education left much to be desired, a statement which, in the light of current educational norms, seeks dismal explanation. In order to learn to read and write, Hindu children at that time had no option but to study at private Marathi schools. The language was the only cultural link with India and if (as was the case with thousands of Hindu Goans) the child sought a future outside Portuguese territory, in Maharashtra, a working knowledge of the language was essential. In actual practise, the system was hopelessly inadequate. Proper school houses were non-existent. Classes were held in private homes, in open verandahs or the dingiest room in the house. Students sat on jute gunny sacks laid on the floor if they were fortunate, more often than not on planks of wood. The teachers were neither trained nor qualified. Young men and women, who had barely scraped through the 5th or 6th standard in Marathi set up shingle as teachers, taking a part of the children's tuition fees as monthly wages. Certificates of primary education in Marathi were issued arbitrarily by the teacher, and countersigned by a known patron or senior citizen of the area. If the pupil sought further education in English or Portuguese, the years of Marathi tuition came to nought. He had to re-enlist at the level of the first standard in a Government lyceum where trained teachers dispensed the knowledge of the empire in the language of the rulers, free of cost. This calculated discrimination worked at levels of professional education as well. A medical degree in Goa could only be had by way of tutorials conducted with the aid of antiquated French texts and graduates were only allowed to practise medicine within the territory.

Vasudev Salgaocar, at the age of seven, going off to school, presents little cause for optimism. He wears loose, white, ankle-length pants, held up with suspenders crossing over the chest and back, a short-sleeved shirt

and a cap, white most likely (few Hindus flaunted the red velvet cap of defiance, worn as a sign of revolt against the Portuguese when their white headcloths were banned). The school was miles away near the jetty at the seafront and Salgaocar would leave the house at six, walk the distance, return at eleven for a quick and frugal meal, and make the entire trip again on foot. From all accounts, he was a diligent student, quiet, given to introspection. His single indulgence at that age was to football; he had a passion for the game and excelled at it, playing at every opportunity (many years later the team that carried his name would win national honours; Salgaocar players would find prominent places on the international Indian team). His education however was short-lived. A few years of primary schooling in Marathi and Portuguese were all that the family could manage for him. At the age of ten, Vasudev Salgaocar began to work for a living. His father's death saw the family without any source of income. To make ends meet, Gangabai Salgaocar started a small 'khanaval' where she served daily meals to a dozen or so employees in the Railways and Post and Telegraphs. On this modest income, she attempted to feed and clothe her family. They were years of extreme hardship. The family slept on straw mats, subsisted on 'canji' a watery gruel made with boiled rice and eaten with pickles; sometimes they had vegetables and, on red letter days (few and far between) fish curry with rice. An income of ten rupees a month did not stretch far and all of the family members would pitch in to make papads and pickles, even scarves and handkerchieves from old saris, which they would then try to sell.

It is not recorded whether an entrepreneurial gleam was observed in young Salgaocar's eye at about this time, but he had come to his first business conclusion. There was no dessert after meals for his Mother's guests, so Salgaocar decided to provide some at a price, and at a profit. He bought bananas by the dozen, and sold them one and two at a time to grateful diners, discovering in the process the

essentials of an equitable business transaction: all parties to it must profit in cash or in kind. Vasudeo Salgaocar was ten years old, and he was in business.

He was soon to find a considerate and helpful ally. Bhicu Bhonsule, a postal clerk, was a regular customer at the Salgaocar table. He became a close friend of the family with a particular fondness for young Salgaocar (the first of many childhood friendships which Salgaocar would foster throughout his life); Bhonsule was friend, mentor, and, from time to time, financier to the family, aiding and abetting Vasudev in the risks of entrepreneurship and these were now considerable, for the boy had decided to set up a vegetable stall in Vasco's crowded marketplace, cheek-by-jowl with fierce adult competition. Bhonsule's counsel was very welcome indeed.

On his first business day, Vasudev Salgaocar is esconced opposite the fish market. In front of him, empty tea crates have been upturned, and are now covered with an assortment of vegetables bought from local wholesalers, with a careful eye to variety, freshness, popularity and price. More than anything else — price! For Salgaocar had decided to price his provender a notch or two above the marketplace, but to offer unqualified value for money. He had arranged the display with as much artistry as was given to him: cabbages and green chillies, nearly bunched and tied, rubbed shoulders with bouquets of radishes and mounds of tomatoes, the elegant angularities of ladies fingers and french beans were set off by massed cauliflowers and symmetrical displays of eggplant.

It was a long hard day (as every day of his working life was to become) started at the break of dawn in the wholesale market, where he picked the day's produce with care, bargained with vigour for the best possible prices, negotiated credit when cash was short, then transported and arranged his goods on the tea crates. He worked throughout the day, greeting customers with a smile, a few words,

exchanging pleasantries, never forcing a sale. A short break for lunch and he would be back, working the slower afternoon crowd, and at seven in the evening when the other stalls closed, his working day would continue by candlelight or kerosene lamp, till ten or later, for he had observed that there were many late shoppers who even if they had no intention of buying vegetables, would do so on seeing fresh vegetables for sale from a solitary stall, thus saving a trip the next morning. A fresh business principle was defined: look to the original opportunity, and when found seize and exploit it at once.

He began to cultivate a habit that would last a lifetime. He would ask questions of everyone. Where did the wholesalers buy their produce? From how many centres, and at what distances from Vasco? How did they travel to and fro? What transport did they use for their merchandise? What prices did they pay? Were they allowed credit, and if so, for what length of time and at what cost? Before long, Vasudev Salgaocar reached a rueful conclusion: his upturned tea crates with their modest offerings represented the last and least profitable link in an extended chain between producer and consumer. Whereupon, with the vigour and speed which would become characteristic of all his adult activities, he decided to buy wholesale and sell retail, eliminating the middlemen entirely.

Once again the good Bhonsule came to his aid. As a postal employee he was involved, on a day-to-day basis, with the transport of mail between Vasco and the rest of Goa. This was done by train, and Goa being then, as it is now, an extended neighbourhood of family and business connections, Bhonsule was on friendly terms with the train drivers and stokers who made the daily journey between Vasco and Belgaum. Courtesy Bhonsule, Salgaocar took to the rails, travelling in the engine driver's cab, watching the stokers slave hours on end in the heat and smoke of the open boilers, shovelling coal into the insatiable depths of the great

furnaces. It was, for him, one of many truly formative experiences. In all the years and seasons of his life, he would respect the labour of a man's body, no matter how simply applied, whether in the fields in the time of the harvest or in the pitfaces where, in the infancy of the mining business, ore was manually extracted and, at the river points, transferred from truck to barge by human headload.

He carried the lore of the railways with him all his life. Once, well into his sixties, he had to travel urgently to Bombay. The airport there was closed to traffic owing to a sudden fire and there was no option but to travel by train. It was a long journey, from Vasco to Londa, where he had to change for a connection to Poona, and transfer again to the Deccan Express for Bombay. At the Londa Railway Station he chanced upon a business acquaintance, Mohandas Naik, whose company represented Telco for the sale of trucks throughout the territory. They had once done good business together. Salgaocar had purchased eight trucks from Naik, in a decision which took him just ten minutes across the table. Latterly, the relationship was strained and Naik confesses to have been at a loss for words when they met. But Salgaocar greeted him with warmth and affection, and insisted that they make the journey together.

As the train gathered speed, and the small talk withered, with both men valiantly trying to keep their ends of the conversation going, Salgaocar went into a reverie and Naik recalls that all of a sudden he smiled, and began talking about trains. With the enthusiasm of a child, he explained the significance of the whistlestops, the changing engine noises which signalled gradients, the lessening of speed as the train approached a level crossing; when the smoke thickened past their window, he said, "Did you see that? The fireman is stoking faster, we shall now pick up speed". And indeed they did. He explained the significance of the various signals they passed en route, and the mysterious stopovers in the middle of nowhere, illegal but entirely understand-

able, when the engine driver hoisted friend and baggage, hitching a ride, into his cab. And when Naik, consumed with curiosity, asked Salgaocar where he had learned so much about trains, Salgaocar replied, "Between Belgaum and Vasco when I was buying and selling vegetables. . ."

He would buy huge quantities of vegetables at Belgaum, load them on to a bullock cart at the wholesale market, and make a slow, plodding journey to the railway station, load his goods on to the train and begin the long trip back to Vasco. It was effort well spent for now, in a small but encouraging manner, he had begun to be known and, after a fashion, had even started to prosper. A greater variety of vegetables now graced the crates, and he had expanded his line of goods to include laddus, sweet potato chips, chaklis and kanda bhajis, appetisingly displayed in clear glass jars. His younger brother, Ramkrishna (soon they would be known as Salgaocar & Irmao) had joined him, and helped with the selling while Vasudev was away on his buying trips. Over the months and years, these increased in frequency, until Vasudev Salgaocar could well make claim to being one of the best travelled tradesman in all of Salcette.

The first requirement of a seasoned traveller in those days was patience, followed by an abundance of stamina, and the right sort of stomach for unruly seas. He was now transacting business wholesale across the length and breadth of Goa; he travelled to Panjim and Sanquelim, Mapusa, Banastari and Margao. Every journey was a small adventure, for the roads were poor and in parts non-existent while transport by waterway was primitive and hazardous. In the fair season, between November and May, he often used a launch known as a 'vapor' operated during the working week by the grandly named Navegacao da India Portuguesa. The company which claimed to undertake the navigation of Portuguese India did so with launches of prehistoric vintage; they laboured mightily with much sound, fury and smoke,

making slow and reluctant passage from Dona Paula to Mormugao Harbour and Vasco da Gama where they unloaded one hundred and sixty-five passengers who always seemed to depart from the pier with much greater enthusiasm than when embarking on the voyage.

During the monsoon, when Goa was lashed by storms and heavy rains, and most of the roads were waterlogged and, in parts, washed away entirely, he travelled by a minibus called a "caminhao" which ran between Agasaim, Cortalim and Vasco. A lively assortment of passengers — fisherfolk, farmers, merchants and traders, officials and commuters — were crammed into these ancient Fords, with scant regard for the sanctity of life, limb or the law of the land. Their goods were piled high on top of the bus, where baskets of live chicken, fish, fruit, salt, vegetables and the occasional pig, squealing and hog-tied, were slenderly held together by coir rope lashed over and under the carrier on the roof.

Here again Vasudev Salgaocar made friends. He would often be seen riding in the cab with Luti Juvarkar of Goa Velha, owner-driver of Ford Caminhao No. 666 or Datta Pai of Santa Cruz whose Caminhao No. 824 was painted fore and aft in blazing crimson letters. It was a privileged seat, by the driver's, and could be obtained only by friendship and mutual regard. The fare of half a rupee entitled one, more often than not, to standing room only. It was a gruelling journey. Salgaocar would leave early in the morning, spend the better part of the day making his purchases in Panjim, and take the last bus back at six in the evening. On reaching Agasaim at seven-thirty, he would wait till all the passengers had ferried across and then load his vegetables into the last "odi", a small wooden vessel in which he could barely sit once his provisions were put in. Once more a friendship was formed. The bus often arrived late and when this happened, the few odis waiting around were quickly booked, but one odi operator would make a special trip, no matter how late,

just for Salgaocar. Years later his son would work for the Salgaocar organisation as a bargeman.

Vasudev Salgaocar had yet to celebrate his fifteenth birthday, but he was already a familiar and popular figure in the marketplaces of Goa. The stocky boy in white pyjamas, long-sleeved shirt, wearing a black coat with big pockets, the traditional "jidi", striding confidently through the bazaars, striking deals with his elders, lifting, carrying and loading baskets of vegetables, was beginning to earn a reputation: his word was his bond; he never bought or sold shoddy goods; he would rather lose money than let down a partner in a business deal, by the same token if he was owed he would make it a point to collect; he never reneged on payments (if, on occasion, he was not able to meet a creditor's deadline, he would call personally, explain the difficulty, work out a new payment schedule and keep to it faithfully); and best of all, he was a good lad, cheerful and friendly, who worked long hours without complaint, and was always willing to lend a helping hand.

And while he worked, he learned. A family in Vasco had undertaken to teach him English and even if his lessons — complicatedly verbal and infinitely trying — were still at the very basic level of, "What is your name?" "My name is Vasudev Salgaocar", it was a beginning, supplemented by whatever texts he could lay his hands on. He would apply himself to the business of learning English with relentless concentration, bringing all of himself to the task, as he would in later years, to other languages, so that eventually he would be fluent in English, Portuguese, Konkani, Marathi and Kannada, and able to hold his own in boardroom and village, with Portuguese bankers and Maharashtrian Ministers of State, using language as an emblematic lever to promote mutual understanding and goodwill.

The family was now seeing better days. Still held together and guided by the formidable strength of Gangabai Salgaocar, the three men in the family, Vasudev, his brother

Ramkrishna, and their uncle, now worked as a close and well-knit team in the vegetable markets. At long last, Vasudev Salgaocar was making money: fifty rupees a day, at times a hundred, when luck and circumstance were with him, as much as two hundred; by the way money was reckoned with in those days, a tidy sum indeed. Up to this time he had never known unfair competition, he had never been singled out for unprovoked attack, and when a rival happened upon the scene, an older man, determined to put Salgaocar out of business, his first reaction was one of confusion and bewilderment. In the long years ahead, he would learn and hone the skills of defence and attack, and would never again be so vulnerable. But now he was unable to cope.

The man set up a stall near Salgaocar's, roughly the same size, sold an identical selection of vegetables, and began cutting prices to the bone, so that Vasudev's stocks remained unsold, and often rotted through the night. He would hurl abuse and mockery at the boy before customers, and began a whispering campaign in the marketplace: Salgaocar was profiteering; he sold substandard goods; his debts to the producers were staggering and he was on the verge of bankruptcy. When none of this bore fruit, he began resorting to sly violence. If Salgaocar's stall was unattended even for a few minutes, he would return to find his baskets rudely overturned and his vegetables scattered all over the place.

"You will not retaliate", Gangabai Salgaocar told her son, at one of the family conclaves urgently called to discuss ways and means of defusing the situation, "Do not speak to the man, do not answer him back if he abuses you, and no matter how badly he behaves, you must not raise your hand in violence against him". She would then perform a puja with her entire family before the household deities, Sharvani and Vetal, and in the murmur of enjoined prayer, the fragrance of incense, and the holy worship of deeply felt and shared

beliefs, Vasudev Salgaocar resolved to keep peaceful counsel in the face of all provocation.

He also kept his prices unchanged, depending for survival entirely on his reputation for fair practise, and on the goodwill he had built up with the community. The policy paid. Within six months, his rival was bankrupt; he was selling at a loss and had sold himself into the ground, and with his abrupt exit from the scene, there came into Vasudev's life one of many benefactors, who was to extend the hand of friendship and guidance, with no ulterior purpose, and no thought of profit. In course of time, favourable happenstance such as this would mark Vasudev Salgaocar's career, so much so that the business environment in Goa would coin a phrase, "Salgaocar's luck" and build it to mythic proportions.

The name of this good samaritan was Milku Pereira, and he was very successfully engaged in the business of providing all manner of provender to ships in the harbour. He was a shipchandler, and more than any other influence on Salgaocar's life, he was to clear the way, and show the path, to the exciting and tumultuous future that awaited the boy. Among the wholesalers in Vasco, supplying goods to the shipchandlers was prime business subject to intense competition, because the margins were good, the quantities large, and the business steady, month in, month out, not subject to seasonal fluctuations, or the vagaries of domestic income which dwindled rapidly as the month progressed. But there were pitfalls. The ships which bought provisions flew the flags of many nations and were accustomed to the very best of goods bought in ports around the world. First class quality was demanded and obtained as a matter of course, and shortchanging of any kind was a swift and certain route to commercial disaster.

When Milku Pereira bestowed his considerable patronage on young Salgaocar, speculation among the trade was rife, unfavourable, and prompted not a little by sheer envy.

Why was Pereira risking his business by bringing in an outsider? Barely in his teens at that? This was not market-place selling, this was *business* and Salgaocar would receive a well-deserved comeuppance. Perhaps — and the whispers began to spread — there were kickbacks involved, unhealthy rebates, bribes in cash or kind. Pereira paid little heed. He was a shrewd, tough operator, tempered by years of roughhouse competition in the cut and thrust of ship-chandlering, and his altruism in regard to Salgaocar was measured by a hard-headed appreciation of the boy's ability, success and reputation for making and keeping good bargains.

For Salgaocar had gone far beyond the purchase and sale of vegetables. On his trips to Belgaum he noted — with the keen eye to the unexploited chance which was to keep him, in all of his career, a few steps ahead of his competitors — that the one way trade could be successfully reversed. There were goods produced in Goa, unavailable in Belgaum, for which markets existed, ready to be tapped. Quickly, without fanfare, he turned the idea into action and within months had secured new sources of good, steady income. Closer to home, he began to examine the profit-making potential of various aspects of his operation. Nothing was too small to escape his attention. He undertook contacts to clean the cargo holds of vessels in port for a pittance, on condition that he retained the sweepings free — a few bags of wheat or rice — which he sold for a good price retail.

His sister recalls how he would personally examine the produce he purchased, in this remembered instance, limes, scrutinising each of hundreds in turn, separating the first quality from the rest. The former would be sold to Pereira and in the market; the latter made into pickle for which there was much demand all over Goa. Similarly, young, green mangoes would be bought in large quantities, pickled carefully in brine and sold far

and wide, Goa's favourite appetiser at the mid-morning *canji* break.

So when Salgaocar and Milku Pereira began doing business together, much to the chagrin of the trade, each knew exactly what he was about. But there were initial difficulties. In his zeal to put together a consignment quickly, to meet the needs of a ship about to put to sail, Ramkrishna included a parcel of provisions which were not quite upto the mark in quality or freshness. The lapse did not escape Pereira's eagle eye. The consignment was returned. Salgaocar was summoned peremptorily, given a severe dressing down and an ultimatum: one further mishap and he was out!

It was not in his nature to indulge in recrimination or apportion blame. On returning home, he called the family together, explained the situation and told them that from now on he would supervise all aspects of Pereira's provisioning personally. Thus, in addition to the travel and purchasing, the financing and collections, the supervision of the wholesale and retail trade, he would now work till midnight each day, sometimes later, examining each consignment of provisions, supervising the packaging, taking the inventories, so that the goods could be delivered the following morning in apple-pie order.

He was fifteen years old and while his working day never began later than five in the morning, it always extended well past midnight. He had no time for the pleasures which childhood takes for granted: games, friendship, books, picnics, holidays, all these were alien to his youth, but as far as we know he had no regrets or expressed none. Friends, such as they were, appeared in the course of business. They were entertained over a cup of tea. Salgaocar's first words of greeting were, then, as throughout his life, "What's new?" They discussed business: goods, prices, new developments in the territory, the gossip of the marketplaces; they debated the chances of pushing new lines of goods in Vasco, the implications of the influx of port labour from Maharashtra

and the burgeoning new market this influx represented; they analysed the reasons for the growing shipping trade, and the fortunes being made by the shipchandlers.

He had studied every aspect of Milku Pereira's operation with great care: the range of goods, sizes of orders placed, purchase and sale prices, and extrapolated from monthly to annual turnovers. From the port authorities he obtained figures of the number and kinds of ships which had visited Goa in the past few years; from these he worked out the annual increase, and how this figure might be expected to move ahead over the next few years. In short, he went about the study of shipchandlering with precision, thoroughness and complete absorption, attributes he would bring to bear in the years ahead in every activity he was to undertake, from the creation of a College of Law to the erection of Goa's first modern beneficiation plant for iron ore. The diversity of needs of a floating community intrigued him — butter, cheese, eggs, whiskey, vegetables, medicines, beer, cigarettes — the list was virtually endless, yet all of the companies involved in shipchandlering seemed to deal in the same provisions. They were takers of orders, and this, in Salgaocar's view, showed a distinct lack of the spirit of enterprise. He had decided to enter the business himself, with Milku Pereira's tacit approval, but he needed an edge, a distinct advantage, a unique selling proposition.

His solution to the problem was as simple as it was elegant. He noted that fresh provender was first on the list of priorities in a ship's order book, unsurprisingly, since most of the provisions were canned for month-long hauls at sea between ports. Salgaocar reckoned that if he could supply goods, fresh goods, which the other shipchandlers were unable or unwilling to offer, he could make an original niche for himself in the trade. And it turned out that he was absolutely right. But here again success did not come easily.

He began supplying rėlative exotica like pumpkins, cucumbers and squashes, vegetables which were not

available even in Belgaum. To acquire them he had to travel to Sanquelim, an arduous twelve-hour journey to Panjim by canoe. The return journey, slower yet because the canoes were now low and heavy in the water with the weight of cargo, made the whole trip a matter of twenty-four hours; sometimes, when he had to search for what he wanted, two entire days. It was effort well spent, for he now began to earn for himself in shipchandlering a reputation equal to his earlier success as a vendor of vegetables, and as the years sped past, he was able to accumulate a modest amount of capital.

Better still, in his contact with seafarers of many different countries, he was exposed to the world's manners and mores, and his endless curiosity always found an encouraging response. It was here that he received a first tantalising introduction to international trading, the strong arm of commerce that crossed frontiers and bridged diverse cultures, and again he sensed that there lay in this area an opportunity that must be explored.

At the age of eighteen, risking all, he invested in a brand new shop in Vasco's marketplace. The name on the board above the shop bore the proud legend, "V.M. Salgaocar & Irmao Ltd.," Vasudev and Ramkrishna had taken their first step into uncharted country. An act of faith which was to see the little shop in Vasco become the nucleus of the vast Salgaocar empire as it stands today.

THE SUNDAY CLUB

SHORT of piracy on the high seas, traders in Goa in the thirties threw ethics to the wind. Cables were routinely intercepted, garbled and distorted. The addition of a single "zero" would convert a profitable order of a thousand into a ten thousand item disaster. Agencies were blatantly solicited and filched. Undercutting of commissions was rife. Shipping clerks in rival houses were suborned by cash or kind to reveal trading secrets. The greasing of official Government palms among authorities engaged in the lax supervision of imports, custom's clearance and warehousing, was par for the course. Fortunes were made and lost overnight. Traders lived dangerously, along a knife edge of excitement, corruption and greed, taking appalling risks, gambling huge sums of money on the whims of erratic, unstable markets. Nothing was certain. One month's profitable demand was the next month's unsold stocks, accumulating costly demurrage in Government warehouses. Goods might arrive hopelessly damaged; insurance cover was at best cause for months of uncertain litigation, most often non-existent. Ships were delayed, creating huge artificial shortages; then they arrived en masse and market gluts caused ruinous losses. Trading called for steady nerves, a keen sense of timing, financial buoyancy to sustain the sudden loss (and there were always losses even for the most successful traders), a web of connections for gathering intelligence and, above all, meticulous planning.

Salgaocar's stationery and provision shop was doing well. He now employed three clerks to attend to customers, while spending most of his time catering to the needs of the shipchandlering business. Salgaocar & Irmao had flourished in the trade and their roster of customers included exclusive vessel contracts with such blue-chip agencies as Killick Nixon, the Bombay Steam Navigation Company and Volkart

Brothers. At a time when a man's wages were half a rupee a day, and a maid could be employed for three rupees a month, he paid his people generously. One of his clerks, Kishore, recalls Salgaocar's many kindnesses to the staff. He arranged for tea breaks twice a day, was solicitous and understanding when it came to genuine problems such as absenteeism owing to ill-health or personal matters and helpful about advances in salary. They worked long hours in the shop, less out of a sense of discipline or need, than by a barely understood desire to follow the example of a man who never asked out of them more than he would willingly give of himself.

When Kishore left to join the army, Salgaocar did not stand in his way, but discussed the pros and cons with him at length, then wished him well. They kept in regular touch till 1965, then went their separate ways for fifteen years. They did not meet or communicate till 1980 when Kishore, now a major, and his family returned to Vasco. He had left the army, fallen upon hard times and was jobless. The family got off the train destitute: they had no money, no place to shelter, the immediate concern was the next meal. Leaving his family at the railway station, Kishore went off on foot to find the Salgaocar offices. It was not difficult. The first person he approached gave him accurate directions, and when he came upon the building he thought, at first, that some mistake had been made, for this was a huge office block on three floors, humming with activity. He approached the reception with diffidence, but minutes after he was announced he was ushered into the Chairman's panelled and carpeted offices. Salgaocar, who now employed one way or the other, thousands of people, greeted him warmly, sat him down, gravely heard him out. Then he said, "Not to worry" and buzzed for Fernandes. That very day, a new vacancy was created in the company, Assistant Establishment Officer, and Kishore was once more part of the Salgaocar organisation.

Salgaocar was never to turn his back on old loyalties, and these would — in the happiest of ways — find reciprocity. Now, about to plunge headlong into the turbulent waters of the Goan trading scene, he turned to friends of earlier years in the Port Trust and the Customs. As always, he tempered enthusiasm with caution, study and meticulous preparation. While the stores had done well, Salgaocar had till then purchased his goods from established importers, selling over the counter, placing new orders on the basis of movement of stock off the shelves. The risks were minimal. Now he planned to import directly from overseas manufacturers. The risks involved were much greater, as was the finance required, while the profits — if all went well — would be proportionate to the same degree.

Most traders worked by hunch and intuition, rough rule-of-thumb assessments of markets and their potential, and a process of trial and error when it came to new products. Salgaocar would have none of it. For weeks he pondered the difficulties of market and commodity quantifications. In Goa, in those days, statistical market analyses was a science whose future had yet to arrive. After much cogitation, Salgaocar worked out a method of forecasting which replaced uncertain instinct and wishful thinking with hard facts and figures which made commercial sense.

He contacted friends in the Port Trust and at the Customs, and managed to gain access — perfectly legally — to the cargo manifests of ships calling at Mormugao Harbour. These were complex documents yielding to intelligent analysis information of great value and significance. All imported goods were covered by Bills of Lading issued at the ports of embarkation. Individual consignments were thus documented in detail. And the ships' manifests listed the contents of each bill of lading; the weight of the consignment, number of parcels, description of contents and packaging, the person or company in Goa to whom the shipment was consigned, the terms of cartage —

free on board, cost and freight, with or without insurance cover. Invaluable data, and since a copy of every ship's manifest had, by law, to be permanently filed with the port authorities, Salgaocar had at his disposal — virtually at his fingertips — the entire history of Goa's import trade, going back for years, in the greatest possible detail.

It took weeks of careful analysis, of assembly and collation, before a clear picture emerged. He now had the facts he sought, the figures by which he could take decisions. He extrapolated future trends, as he had earlier when he entered shipchandlering, and made a short-list of the goods he should import, the prices at which he should buy, the countries with which he should trade, and the manufacturers who would offer him the best trade-offs between tenure of relationship, quality and price.

He was in a new business once again.

And once again it was far from easy. The physical environment remained difficult and obstructive: there were few cars, and those were privately owned by the very wealthy or belonged to senior officials in Government. There were scores of villages where a car had never been seen, and the passage of a vehicle through the lanes of such a hamlet was an occasion for awe. The villagers downed tools wherever they were, and ran after the car, making, en masse, as much commotion as the primitive internal combustion engine of the vehicle (usually the ubiquitous Ford) of the thirties. The children would leap on and tumble merrily off the mudguards while the village animal life — a lively assortment of pigs, dogs, goats and chickens — would scatter in the vehicle's path. An occasional buffalo would refuse to give right of way, squatting complacently in the middle of the road, till forcibly evicted by a platoon of the stronger village males.

The rare taxi in Vasco was exorbitantly priced, used exclusively by the very rich, never hired casually but ceremoniously *arranged for* the previous day when negotiations on

hire charges, distances to be covered, the timing and nature of the driver/owner's meals and other matters of import would be settled. It is unlikely that Salgaocar, prudent as always with money, would have indulged in a nonsensical luxury of this nature so long as he could walk. And walk he did, miles every day, to and from the port, to the marketplaces and back, to the new house at Baina he had acquired for the family, to the Portuguese bank to raise the considerable amounts of finance he needed for the new trading venture.

He was not long in the business before he discovered the wry truth about the casual, often careless, manner in which import orders were placed by Goan traders. In his analysis of ships' manifests an inexplicable pattern had emerged: huge quantities of commodities came in for which there was no conceivable demand in Goa, no matter how he worked out the configurations in his statements, by season, distribution pattern or district sales. Goa's population of a few lakhs could, in no circumstances, consume the massive numbers of watches which were imported every year or afford the relatively high prices of imported liquor which arrived in such overwhelming abundance. There were similar trends in many other product lines. He began to make discreet enquiries and soon came to learn that truckloads of goods and laden fleets of countrycraft left Goa every night for far-flung destinations in British India. This daily exodus of goods, supplemented by the frenzied purchasing power of tens of thousands of Goans from India, Africa, Portugal and Macao, holidaying in the territory, accounted for most of the sales of imported products.

The major portion of the goods which were imported into Goa — perfectly legally, it should be said — went over the borders into India, surreptitiously, as contraband. The British, concerned with their own political difficulties — civil disobedience, the antics of a loin-clothed South African Indian lawyer loved and blindly followed by the masses, the

increasingly organised efforts of the Indian National Congress to give power and meaning to the term *vox populi,* the threat of conflagration and war in Europe for which they were wholly unprepared — turned a conveniently blind eye to this clandestine trade, bestirring themselves now and again to make the occasional cosmetic arrest.

The Portuguese believed in *laissez-faire* economics as an article of faith; fascism in politics and profits in private made contented bedfellows; restraints, if any, were encountered more in the breach than in the observance. There were no taxes on income or profits. Business houses did not have to maintain, audit or submit books of accounts to the authorities. Markets were free and open. A small annual tax was levied on every business, no matter how big or small. The tax was the same for all, and had to be paid irrespective of whether the company was making profits or losses. On this issue, despite repeated representations from the less fortunate sections of the business community, the Portuguese, with the involuted logic that often added a bizzare touch to colonial rule in Goa, were firm, and would not equivocate.

Salgaocar took to trading as though his life thus far had been merely an extended education for this absorbing new vocation. In a few years he made an indelible impression on the markets and had accumulated what was considered in those days a sizable fortune. And it was in trading that the legend of Salgaocar's luck took hold. A number of instances of his outstanding good fortune are remembered till today and still told, somewhat embellished in character by the fine art of Goan raconteuring, but correct in all essential detail.

He had taken a calculated gamble on sugar, ordering a huge consignment worth many thousands of rupees. Sugar was a favourite import item with Goan traders and speculation in the commodity was rife. Many other traders had placed large orders at the same time and, in the normal course, these orders would be realised over months,

staggered with the monthly arrival of one or two ships from Africa. On this occasion, it so happened that all the shipments arrived in a bunch. Warehouses were filled with sugar, quaysides overflowed with hundreds of bags, piled high, in imminent danger of contamination by sea water. Demand slipped overnight. Panic set in. Traders began distress selling. Huge losses were taken. The quick, ugly repercussions of a commodity glut engulfed the markets. Sugar could be had at throw-away prices, virtually for the asking.

Salgaocar refused to panic. He reasoned that the many burned fingers in the trade would give long and careful thought before placing new orders for sugar. He warehoused his huge consignment, paying the demurrage and sat tight. To a man — his competitors regarded this action — as they would other seemingly inexplicable decisions he would take in the future — as prideful folly of the first magnitude. Salgaocar paid no heed, kept his fingers crossed, and simulated patience on a monument. The weeks passed and the news was not good. The arrival of the next two steamers was in doubt. One was delayed, the other cancelled. Goa's proverbial sweet tooth was, once more, beleaguered. Still Salgaocar did not sell. Only when the markets reached near starvation, and prices had risen beyond the highest point that had been reached in the past year, did he unlock his warehouse. Then he sold his sugar, without qualm, for every last paise of profit that the markets could give him. Never in his life would he confuse business with philanthropy, and if he was excellent in the practice of the one, he would create history in Goa in exercising the prerogatives of the other.

On another occasion — and here, surely, the hand of providence may clearly be seen — he invested in a large stock of a rare tea. Posterity has not recorded his reasons for doing so, and no amount of speculative hindsight finds an adequate explanation. The tea had never been sold in Goa

before. It was a rare variety of Darjeeling, with a flavour so subtle as to be discernible only to the most sensitive of palates. Nowhere in Goa could these be found. Thousands of rupees worth of this superlative tea languished on the shelves of Salgaocar's shops and in his godowns. The marketplace sniggered. Would Salgaocar consider selling his tea to China? Losing face in the trading arena was not a pleasant experience. The Goan merchant community was small, predominantly Hindu, well-knit, serviced by a grape-vine where the speed at which news was transmitted seemed to be in inverse proportion to its lack of cheer. All of Goa, it appeared, was enjoying a quiet chuckle at Salgaocar's comeuppance.

Then, out of the mists of an early morning, a ship appeared on the horizon and docked at Mormugao. It unloaded that rarest of commodities, a Chinese crew. They sauntered about the town, as crews will, taking their pleasures where they found them, until one of the Chinamen passed Salgaocar's shop and chanced upon a forlorn packet of the infamous Darjeeling (the rest had been decently interred in the warehouse). It was bought, taken back, sampled on board. The rest is legend. The crew descended en masse and cleared every last packet of Salgaocar's tea, now, happily come into its own. He sold, naturally, for double the original price.

There are few incidents which better illustrate Salgaocar's extraordinary luck at the time than the case of the hapless, "Ehrenfels" and her three sister ships of the German merchant fleet. Incarcerated in Mormugao Harbour by British blockade, the Germans had run out of money, were hard put to it to pay for provisions and were refused goods by a number of traders before Salgaocar put together a consortium to spread the risk and began supplying the vessels on credit, a calculated business gamble, but no more hazardous than many others that the trade routinely took.

But there happened to be a much greater risk attached to dealings with the "Ehrenfels" of which Salgaocar and his friends were blissfully unware. She was a spy ship, the lynchpin of a network which began in Bombay, in the innocuous person of a junior shipping clerk in the Port Trust offices. He had access to vital information regarding allied shipping using the Arabian Ocean sea lanes to India, merchant tonnage of crucial importance to the war in Asia, carrying troops and supplies to replenish hard-pressed British Indian armies on the Burmese and Malaysian fronts.

Lists of ships' names, cargoes, armed frigate and destroyer protection, details of whole convoys, speeds, dates of embarkation, routes, and the best interception points were clandestinely duplicated and sent by special courier to the German master spy who ran the network in Vasco. The British had given him the codename Trompeta and set him up as a prime target for assassination. But Trompeta was wily and elusive. The information he gathered from Bombay was taken aboard the "Ehrenfels" at night, where a special radio operator, using a powerful transmitter, encoded the data and sent high frequency, short-burst messages to the Wolf Pack, the German fleet of attack submarines on constant search-and-destroy missions in the Indian Ocean. The network proved devastatingly lethal. For months, the British had been losing shipping and lives at the rate of a vessel a day. Trompeta had to be stopped.

A regiment of short-order commandos, raised, surprisingly, from the ranks of ageing British civilians in Calcutta, was rushed into combat training in Meerut, licked into fighting shape, and put into action. They embarked at the dead of night from Calcutta on a motorised barge laden with automatic weapons and high explosives, under the command of the only regular soldier among the lot, a Colonel of Infantry. The boxwallah's destination: Mormugao Harbour via the storm-wracked waters of Cape Comorin. Codename: the Sea Wolves. Objective: to blow the "Ehrenfels" out of the water.

The rest is a piece of vivid Goan history, now embroidered in folklore and myth. The "Ehrenfels", her transmitter and a number of her crew were destroyed, the other ships were badly damaged. In a parallel operation, a commando squad kidnapped Trompeta to British India. He was never heard from again. True to their word, the British had come silently, by night, blown the "Ehrenfels" out of the water and slipped away under cover of darkness, performing an outrageous act of war incognito in a neutral harbour.

Appalled, shaken, glad to have been of service, happy to take their losses, well out of the mess, Salgaocar and the consortium of traders were relieved that all they stood to lose was money. The day after the "Ehrenfels" met her watery end, they were summoned by the German Consul General in Panjim. Post-haste and with some trepidation, they presented themselves in a body. The Consul was a badly shaken man. The Germans had never expected a British raid in a neutral port, and the High Command were in a quandary as to British intentions: did they mean to break with international law altogether, defy the sanctity of neutral harbours, and risk the wrath — worse — the possible entry into the war of countries hitherto uninvolved, and that, too, against them? It seemed unlike the British, but the Germans were taking no chances. Fearing a second attack on the remaining vessels at Mormugao, sitting ducks, unarmed, vulnerable, even their possible seizure and piracy by the British, the Germans had decided to scuttle the ships. They would never be allowed to fall intact into enemy hands. It was an act of panic and despair.

In view of their generous help in the past, the Consul enquired gravely, would the consortium care to buy the cargoes? At whatever prices they wished to offer.

Once again a small fortune had fallen, unasked, into Salgaocar's hands.

The years of trading experience were to define, and hone to a brilliant edge, yet another characteristic which was

to serve Salgaocar well in the years ahead. He would ask for no quarter in business and, unless he had decided on a certain largesse before hand, he would give none.

In 1947, after India achieved independence from the British, the groundswell of popular resentment against Portuguese rule rose to the level of organised resistance, peaceful and armed, both within the territory and beyond its borders in India, where the Government, encouraging Goan freedom fighters in every way, thought it expedient to close the frontiers. Sudden shortages were the order of the day, and one such occurred with a single, but indispensable, item of stationery — pencils. By this time, V.M. Salgaocar & Irmao Ltd., had wholesale and retail establishments well beyond Vasco, in virtually every major consuming centre in Goa — Margao, Panjim, Sanvordem and Mapusa. They kept a close finger on the pulse of Goan markets and were well placed to anticipate shortages before the competition learned of them.

When he was made aware of the impending shortage in pencils, Salgaocar ruthlessly worked out what may best be described as a scorched-earth strategy. We may speculate on his motives — had the rest of the trade been particularly unkind? Did the denigration attendant upon the episode of the rare Darjeeling tea still rankle? Was he settling old scores? Did lessons — once and for all — have to be learned? We shall never know. He had decided to rap the trade across the knuckles, and he went about it with controlled ferocity.

He placed telegraphic orders for tens of thousands of rupees worth of pencils, wherever they were available, specifying the quickest possible mode of transport, costs be damned. Pencils poured into his warehouses; they came from all over the place; hundreds of gross of pencils were even flown in from Karachi at prohibitive airfreight charges. The consignments were quickly broken down and transported with urgency to wholesale and retail points all over

Goa. There they were sold at enormous profit, with specially lucrative deals worked out with bulk buyers — schools, offices, Government establishments. In a few short, hectic weeks, he had virtually liquidated all of his stocks. Then the trade woke up, realising that there was an unprecedented run on pencils. They began placing huge orders, at a premium (the suppliers had caught on as well, and jumped on the bandwagon), with instructions for urgent delivery by the fastest transport available.

Now Salgaocar played his trump card. He placed a second round of orders, if anything, even larger than the first, sat back, and waited. Thousands of gross of pencils descended on Goa, the markets were flooded, and now Salgaocar began to turn the screw. He monitored competitors' goods as they reached the marketplaces, then, with careful timing, he began a series of calibrated price reductions. He could afford to. The earlier bumper profits he had made could well cover distress selling, even below costs, leaving him with a generous overall margin, but this was only the first part of his strategy. He undercut with deliberation, watching, as competitors took a bath. Soon, they began selling below cost. They had no choice. Buying on credit, they were bound by contract to repay principal and interest within tightly specified periods, with no elasticity of negotiation. They began to take heavy losses and when Salgaocar began selling below *his* costs (after taking into account the economies of scale inherent in the size of the orders, his costs were generally lower than the trade's) the competition rushed to get out of the market. This indecent haste to cut and run, as far as Salgaocar was concerned, could not happen fast enough for his liking. No sooner had the competition disintegrated, then he starved the markets till demand picked up again, when he began to sell quickly taking prices up to the previous levels of near monopoly. It was a classic ploy, perfectly timed, surgically executed. He had made profits at both ends of the gambit, and as a force

on the Goan trading scene, he would never be trifled with again.

He was not beyond idiosyncrasy. Once Salgaocar struck a bargain, no matter in what vein, he expected the person across the table to live up to it. Chowgule remembers an instance when they took a bet for five thousand rupees, as far as he was concerned half in jest, on an issue so innocuous, so unimportant, that it quickly slipped his mind. Not Salgaocar's. Weeks later he returned with the facts, informed Chowgule that he had lost the bet, and collected the money he was owed. Yet it is equally true that his word was his bond even if it meant losing money that he did not — legally or otherwise — need to. In the heyday of his trading activities, he befriended a retailer, a Muslim by the name of Mohiddin, who lived near the Salgaocar residence in Baina. They became travelling companions to work each morning, and soon began to do business which, from small beginnings, developed to the point where Mohiddin became the most important retailer on Salgaocar's list. They now did business in daily lots worth lakhs of rupees, in a colourful miscellany of goods — pens and nibs, batteries, watches, bags of wheat and sugar, pearl buttons, crockery and cutlery, and a host of odds and ends. Prices would be agreed between them at the beginning of a working day (a 10% margin on retail prices for Salgaocar, for instance) verbally, with nothing more than a handshake to seal the bargain. If, between the morning's agreement and the afternoon's market movement, the prices had risen by fifteen per cent, Salgaocar would abide by the original margin, much to the amazement and protests of Mohiddin who, like a good businessman, looking to a long-term relationship of mutual benefit, would attempt to split the increased profit between them.

He extended interest-free short-term finance to Mohiddin as well, and never lost patience if the returns were slow in coming for Mohiddin had to collect the consignments off the ships, break them up into smaller

lots, truck them to retail outlets all over Goa and wait weeks, in turn, for his money to be paid by small shopkeepers all over the territory. Only then could he repay Salgaocar, in dribbles — fives and tens of thousands — till the debt was repaid. Never once in their relationship did Salgaocar press him for money. Years later, Mohiddin tried his hand at the mining business, acquired a few concessions, failed to exploit them adequately, lost a great deal of money and fell upon very hard times. Pride and a loss of face (a virulent Goan affliction which, till today, has caused many a man to deny weakness, humility and failure and thus forfeit a necessary part of his humanity) made him take to the shadows. He kept out of the way of old business colleagues, tried desperately to make both ends meet and, above all, went to great lengths to avoid Salgaocar.

But news in Goa, then as now, particularly bad news, spreads in the time it takes for two men to tell it, and Salgaocar came to know. His response was swift. He went to Mohiddin's home the same day. They talked for half an hour and Salgaocar would accept neither argument nor denial; indeed, he glossed over the past, told Mohiddin that he needed his considerable talents, presently and in the future, and had worked out a deal right up his street. Salgaocar rented him a shop, stocked with the finest foreign goods — French perfumes, imported soaps and toiletries, gift articles from abroad, rare whiskies and liquers, a range much sought after and highly priced in India. More pertinently, he informed Mohiddin that speed was of the essence. Two ships from Bombay — the "Sabarmati" and the "Saraswati" were due to arrive in Goa in the next forty-eight hours. There was business to be had. And it was all his. Go! Mohiddin had the good sense to accept.

Today he still recalls those early times; the tumult and scheming, the triumphs and failures, the hard strife and life-long friendships of the golden days of Goan trading, when a

man's honour was the only currency worth the name, and a bet was a bet!

* * * *

During the trading years, two men, Britto and Pascoal Menezes, were to play supporting roles — albeit entirely different ones — in Salgaocar's life. One would have been hard put to find stronger or more diverse personalities on the Goan scene. Britto is that rarity, a genuine Goan aristocrat. His Portuguese is old country, fluent and impeccably upper-class, and his English faintly accented with the mellifluous vowel tones of Iberia. The bank he worked for financed many of Salgaocar's deals, and he personally, came to be a force of influence in Salgaocar's affairs years later, when the winds of change were moving the company towards new horizons.

Pascoal Menezes is lively counterpoint to Britto's cool and unobtrusive presence.

The Chairman of Cosme Matias Menezes is the quintessential Goan, a man of huge and catholic appetites, now in his mid-seventies, still in fine, vigorous form. There is a youthful ambience about him, an aura of perennial well-being, that belies his years. Even now, the zest with which he devours the days of his life — in the affairs of business and society, or when merely taking his pleasure — has driven younger, lesser men into the ground.

When Vasudev Salgaocar opened his first shop in Vasco, Pascoal Menezes was a major influence on the Goan trading scene. Like Salgaocar, he started in poverty, worked hard from childhood onwards, and by dint of struggle and sacrifice, and an agile mind which quickly culled success from experience, had carved a strong niche for himself in the markets of Goa. He and his four brothers specialised at the time in the handling of exclusive agencies for the territory. Gilt-edged names — Ponds, Colgate, Johnson & Johnson, Gillette — had signed up with Pascoal, and his reputation for

shrewd, honest trading had earned him the goodwill and respect of both ends of the business — the retail trade which, increasingly, came to rely on him for a wide range of products, and overseas manufacturers seeking a reliable Goan agent for the territory.

He recalls his first impression of Salgaocar: a young man, barely out of his teens, in baggy white pants, long-sleeved shirt, a voluminous coat with large pockets, and the dark brown, velvet cap. He was serious and intent, engagingly *respectful;* without preamble or small talk he asked for both goods and credit. "On my next trip to Panjim," Salgaocar promised, "I shall pay you." He was as good as his word, and the first consignment of toiletries worth a few hundred rupees was promptly accounted for. Soon his orders ran into thousands of rupees at a time and if ever he was unable to keep up with payments, he would do a deal. Pascoal recalls, with a chuckle, the fertility of Salgaocar's proposals on credit, "If he owed me five thousand and wasn't able to pay, he would offer to pay four, and take additional goods worth six thousand extending his credit by another two thousand rupees. We both understood that this was a small ploy to get more goods and more credit but it never really mattered. His word was inviolate, a real bond, and he always paid up eventually." This was typical of Salgaocar throughout his life: he would use every trick of the trade — indeed, had even invented a few himself — to squeeze the last possible advantage from the business environment, while ensuring, often at considerable personal sacrifice, that his word was seen to be his bond. Many years later, when Salgaocar was widely regarded as first among equals in the mining industry, a cheque issued by V.M. Salgaocar & Irmao Ltd., held a cachet equal to a certified bank draft.

But it is unlikely that the young Salgaocar even remotely considered a future so exotically removed from the rush and hurly-burly of the present. Pascoal, older by five years and

vastly more experienced, and young Salgaocar became friends. They were as different in temperament as they were physically. Where Salgaocar was of medium height, stocky, deliberate in tone and movement, Menezes stood well over six feet in his socks and was proportionately wide; he couldn't utter a sentence without making it a royal declaration; his booming voice dominated any company he attended. His loyal and diligent brothers were overwhelmed by the strength of his personality, as, indeed, were most people who met him.

We shall never know how two such disparate characters became friends, and maintained their friendship well into the next half century. Perhaps Menezes saw in Salgaocar those qualities which would never be his: the ability to listen patiently without being conspicuously heard, to concentrate for days and weeks on end on a single task, without let or hindrance, to the absolute exclusion of the entertaining minutae of daily life, to seek challenges of a magnitude quite outside his past experiences, for which he was entirely unqualified and into which he plunged with an energy and dedication that simply ignored the possibility of failure. Qualities which Pascoal admired but did not seek, for he believed that life's sterner realities — the rigours of trading, the obstinacy of Portuguese bankers, the inclemency of the monsoon, the inevitability of dead stock — had to be balanced by its pleasures: fine food and drink, the company of witty and personable members of the opposite sex, particularly at Goa's famous balls where he would shake a glad leg with the best of them. It was this carefree acceptance of life's joys as happy antidote to its pains, that formed part of his attractiveness for Salgaocar.

For both men, the relationship was one of mutual and immediate benefit which went beyond the exigencies of business: they genuinely liked each other, and it was not long before Vasudev Salgaocar was invited to become part of

a select group which met once a week, and called itself, with quiet discretion, the Sunday Club.

The first point that strikes one about the Sunday Club is its unexpected sobriety. Unkind historians have suggested that one aspect of Portuguese subjugation was a deliberate and sinister plot to keep the Goan masses in a mild state of intoxication from generation to generation thus foiling any coherent attempts at political organisation or revolution. While one does not wish to do the memory of Portuguese rule an injustice as grave as this, there is no gainsaying the fact that no hindrance was placed in the way of the production or consumption of alcoholic beverages. The Goan population of a few hundred thousand was enthusiastically serviced in their alcoholic needs by the output of three thousand licensed pot-stills. 31,000 acres of date trees and 1,61,000 acres of coconut trees, supplemented by large tracts of cashew and mhowra, were under cultivation purely for this purpose, while well over 2,000 country bars and wine shops saw to it that the citizen's right to good cheer was never farther than a brisk's walk distance. "Besides this remarkable internal production," says the historian sternly, making his point irrefutable, "44,582 gallons of wine from Portugual, 3,546 gallons of foreign alcoholic drinks and spirits, and 46,079 gallons of beer enter the country each year for internal consumption."

The Sunday Club paid no heed and remained virtuously teetotal. Pascoal, the British Vice Consul, a few like-minded friends and Salgaocar met at about noon on Sunday mornings in a large room in Pascoal's offices. It had been made over into a semblance of clubdom with comfortable wicker chairs, coffee tables, Portuguese lithographs of sailing ships on the walls, and an elaborate tea centre. It was here, once a week, sipping nothing stronger than tea, that they discussed the affairs of the moment. As a junior member of the Club — and the least prosperous — Salgaocar was regarded as a youngster who showed signs of promise. His peers were

men who had worked very hard all of their lives, mature self-made men, who appreciated his diligence and modesty. He was always the last to arrive, spending the better part of Sunday morning completing his purchases for the following week from the Hindu and Khoja shops which remained open. The catholic traders and shopkeepers took the day of rest seriously, and by the time Salgaocar arrived, the Sunday Club was well into resolving the economic and political problems of the territory, organising the Port Trust once and for all, raising to permanently glorious standards the hopelessly deteriorating quality of caju feni brewed in the territory, working out the final solution to the thorny difficulties of road and rail transport; in short, swiftly putting paid to the problems of the territory which the Governor General and his cohort of slovenly Portuguese administrators so shamefully neglected.

After which, they would return to the serious business of the morning; the reading of the members' palms, for the study of palmistry, the arcane mysteries of line and curl, was the sole addiction the Sunday Club encouraged among its members. The palmist was an inspired amateur, a seer of hundreds of successful readings, with an uncanny ability to decipher paths of future probability from the hieroglyphics of lines on a man's palm, and while Pascoal today admits to a certain skepticism, his voice as he tells of it, loses its characteristic bonhomie, and assumes a depth of thoughtfulness which gives one pause. That they took the reading of palms seriously is not in question. Hours of a Sunday afternoon were devoted to the palm of a single man, every whirl, each curlicue was interpreted at length and discussed between them in the context of the subject's past and present affairs. The palmist began traditionally with the lines of head, heart and life, then examined each finger in turn, from tip to base, pressed the hand all over, learning its contours and measuring the height and breadth of the mounds (Venus being the subject of absorbed speculation); then he held both hands,

palms up, and joined them, the better to understand connections, moons, signs, contradictions.

Till Salgaocar's entry into the Sunday Club, Pascoal's hand was the most favoured, a firmly successful hand, provenly so, of which he was modestly proud. To varying degrees, the hands of the other members confirmed what each man knew but none would boast about: this was a select gathering, highly favoured by fortune and circumstance, and clearly superior to the Portuguese and other lesser breeds without the law. On the Sunday afternoon when Salgaocar's palm was to be read, the Club gathered around with more than normal interest. Would its pedigree remain unsullied? How would this new and neophyte hand measure up? The palmist went about his business with an air of high melodrama, at much greater length than usual, and seemed absorbed in a manner which they had not observed earlier. Then he made an announcement. In all his years, he had never seen such a palm as this. It was favoured with the firmest, strongest, cleanest lines he had ever read. There was success here, but of a rare order of magnitude, such as was found in great leaders of men. Salgaocar would achieve outstanding recognition in whatever he sought, in whichever direction his heart and mind set him to. The only limitations on the achievements of his life were the ones he would impose on himself. There was a small cloud of uncertainty on a distant horizon but that was many many years into the future, and of no immediate concern. It was a life to be celebrated.

To a man, the Sunday Club relaxed in their wicker chairs, well satisfied. A worthy new member had joined the ranks. In the pursuit of its truest pastime, this was, without doubt, the Sunday Club's finest hour. When you talk today, to the surviving members of the Club, beyond the remembrance of happy days past, of loyalty and kinship, and the nostalgia of an era long gone, there is still pleasant surprise when they recall the reading of Vasudev Salgaocar's palm.

But if the prophecies of the future were exalting, the present was plagued by small annoyances of one kind or the other; not the least of these was Salgaocar's daily tussle with the English language, in both written and spoken word. If only he knew it, he was in good company: the world's greatest exemplars of the word had been known to hurl quill from parchment in anguish and despair: lava flows of rich prose could dry up in moments, rose gardens of poetry wither as hand reached for pen. The muse was a jealous mistress, fickle and inconstant, demanding blind fealty, uncritical obeisance, the ardent wooing of a lifetime. In his own way, and for his own small needs, Salgaocar tried. He practised the language at every opportunity. The books on business correspondence he studied so assiduously urged him, among other things, to shun abbreviation. He never addressed a correspondent company as "Ms." when the more expansive "Messrs" would, as the book promised, make the appellation that much more worthy of the recipient. And he always ended his letters with the most cordial of good wishes. To his chagrin, the companies he wrote to never seemed to notice the difference, and replied, often brusquely, without thought to the niceties of business etiquette. He was often addressed as "Mr. Vasudev", and his surname was misspelt so often, it had long ceased to cause offence, beyond a worldly acknowledgement of the fact that the use of language in business was determined to some extent by one's position as buyer or seller. He read the classics, and poetry — somebody had given him Palgrave's Golden Treasury — and found little solace in the measured rhythms of the scanned line: Milton never had to write a business letter, or Wordsworth forced to turn his hand to a Memo to Staff!

A vast abyss of erratic grammar, fractured syntax, misplaced subjunctives and infinitives split beyond hope of repair, lay between the eloquence of Salgaocar's intentions, and their crumbled ruins as words took painful shape on

paper. It was a devilish language, filled with conspiracy, pitfall and contradiction. In one context, a headline in the drama columns of a newspaper announced, " 'Cavalcade' pronounced success!"; in another, "cavalcade" was pronounced very correctly as cavalcade, and meant, "a company or procession of riders, motor cars, etc.," And why should an "i" come before an "e" except after a "c"? Who on earth had conceived — conceived? — of these absurd rules? He took his problem to Pascoal, ventilating his grievances at the language at bitter length. How, he concluded, was he supposed to write excellent letters to foreign companies (all of whom dashed off letters to him drafted with a swift, insolent skill) persuading them to give him the best prices if the words he used refused to accommodate his meaning? "You need to talk to Mody," Pascoal said.

Mody was an employee of Cosme Matias Menezes, a clerk of Parsi origin, at that time as rare a bird as ever came to roost on Goan territory, reluctant heir to his community's symbiotic affinity with all things British: the manifest destiny of the British people, the rightness of British rule, the undying glories of King and Crown, the honour of British titles (so lavishly bestowed on his community, so handsomely prized wherever the sun refused to set on empire), the magnificence of the national anthem, God Save The King, that stirring paean to the immortality of Ruler over mortal subject, the virtues of the British public school, where it was de rigeur for rich Parsi sons to be schooled and taught to administer over the heathen for the greater glory of the flag, the symbolic nostalgia of Oxford Street at Christmas, the luminous imperatives of Kipling's prose, never forgetting the sterling goodness of prime roast beef and two vegetables!

Mody was not convinced.

He had decided to live in Goa because he liked the people, enjoyed the countryside, feni was cheap, the Portuguese lazy, inefficient and, best of all, tolerant

to a fault, and his single talent was in high demand: Mody could write like an angel. His business letters were models of dignified, restrained appeal; his arguments were an intelligent unfolding of logic, emotion, carrot, the merest hint of stick (". . . we have not entertained the many offers that have come our way, because we wish to do business with a company of equal stature, to the long-term benefits of both of our organisations . . .") and sheer good-natured friendliness which shone through every crafted syllable. Getting a letter from Mody was a ray of sunshine in a dour business day.

Salgaocar went through Mody's voluminous files of correspondence with care, marvelling at the man's extraordinary felicity with the written word. Cautious as ever, he made discreet enquiries as to their outcome. His expectations proved correct. Mody's gift for the language offered more than mere entertainment. It brought results; sellers responded with speed and generosity; Mody was money in the bank for whoever owned him.

He met Pascoal and got straight to the point.

"I will make Mody an offer," he said.

"You will not."

"Then can I have him," — precise as usual — "for an hour every afternoon from Monday to Friday?"

"No?"

"Can I ask for his help from time to time?"

"You may."

"I will pay him . . ." a fee? a salary? pocket money? Words, treacherous words, failed Salgaocar yet again.

". . . a small honorarium" Pascoal offered helpfully.

And so it was that Mody became consultant English scribe to the House of Salgaocar: he would be honoured, cherished and cared for all the days of his life.

* * * *

From time to time Pascoal was overcome with a feeling of disquiet, a psychic itch which, despite all attempts at dis-

traction, would not go away. Weeks of mounting irritation and discomfort would pass before Pascoal could identify the source of the malaise, and when he did it was always with a feeling of pleasant surprise, as though it was happening for the first time. Once again, as he had often in the past, Pascoal needed to take a foreign trip. He camouflaged these excursions to fresh pastures with the stern trapping of business duty about to be performed, and rationalised the perfectly natural need of a free spirit to fly the coop, with the trading jargon of the day.

"If," he explained to Salgaocar, arguing out loud to himself, "I do not visit my principals in Europe from time to time, they will consider it rude, and rightly so. Am I an ill bred man? No, courtesy demands that I call on them, meet their families, take small gifts, visit their factories, negotiate better terms. How can I do that drinking tea at the Sunday Club?" A fresh thought occurred to him, "We must be progressive in Goa. Can I sell the same old products for the rest of my life? I must be creative and original. Unless I go and see for myself, how am I supposed to find new and better products to sell? There is only one answer, Vasudev, I shall have to go to Europe!"

"I will come with you," Salgaocar said.

"You cannot," Pascoal was firm. "I attend many dances where I do the foxtrot and the waltz with foreign ladies. I go to night clubs in the evenings. You do not dance, and you have never been to a night club in your life."

"I shall go to the circus," Salgaocar said.

And that — not for nothing was his the strongest palm in the Sunday Club — was firmly that.

With Pascoal as guide, Vasudev Salgaocar made preparations for his first trip beyond Goan shores. Now that Pascoal had agreed to take him along, he assumed the role of kindly mentor, aiding and abetting with good-humoured enthusiasm, calling upon the educational resources of an indulgent sister and Salgaocar's known aptitude as a quick

learner. In the sitting room of Pascoal's house, subdued by his surroundings — heavy carved period furniture, brooding sepia portraits of generations of Menezeses. Salgaocar's higher education was taken in hand. Lessons were arranged in etiquette, table manners, the dubious western custom of dining with a confusion of forks, knives, wine glasses and napery. He was introduced to the intricacies of ballroom dancing to the accompaniment of music creakingly reproduced on an ancient phonogram.

The routine never varied. Pascoal's sister would lay a mock table on one of the carved occasional coffee tables. The place setting was correct to the last detail. A starched napkin, with the family's initials discreetly embroidered in a corner (a highly regarded duty performed by the ladies of the family who vyed with each other for the distinction) was neatly rolled and inserted into a silver ring. The plates were genuine Belgian china, so too the crystal glassware, a small glass with a plump bowl for the white wine, a fuller, taller bowl for the red, a companion glass for water. Three forks attended the left of the setting, nicely balanced by the same number of knives on the right, and a smaller set of dessert cutlery at the top. His dismay at being confronted by all of this paraphernalia for what was, after all, the simple act of eating a meal was somewhat allayed by Pascoal's sister's brisk opening instruction.

A few rehearsals later and Salgaocar's table manners would pass muster in the best of company. Alas, no such encomium could be made on his ability to dance. With sinking heart, Salgaocar would observe the painful ritual. A record would be carefully removed from a paper sleeve and placed on the turntable of the antique phonogram. It was wound with an angled brass handle which always offered stubborn resistance to the groove at the side of the machine into which it was apparently meant to fit. The table on which the phonogram sat shivered with each twist of the handle and when, after all this muscular preparation, the needle

of the S-shaped arm was placed on the record, Salgaocar never ceased to be astonished at the sound, the faintest of foxtrots, achingly off-key, emerged protestingly from a huge brass horn.

He could never get it right. The foxtrot, that simplest of three steps, was quite beyond him, and the four beats of the waltz would forever remain one of life's mysteries. Before long, it was obvious to all of them, most of all to Salgaocar, that the art of the ballroom dance was not among his gifts: looking at the truth straight in the eye, he had two left feet.

"Not to worry," — Pascoal always looked to the bright side — "your Portuguese is excellent. You can talk to the ladies while I dance. And there is always the circus!"

They were away three months. The journey took them first to Lisbon, then to Zurich and Geneva, Paris and London, and back to Lisbon before returning home. Business was not neglected. They visited the offices and factories of Ciba-Geigy and Cyanamid, Gillette and Phillips, wheeling and dealing as they went along. In Switzerland, Salgaocar placed a huge order for watches (British India was marking time), while Pascoal brought off two memorable coups. He acquired exclusive rights for Goa for all of Gillette's brands of blades and, by a stroke of marketing ingenuity, managed to position them as competitive products, each with distinctive properties. By the careful management of separate retail distribution, advertising and word of mouth propaganda, individual markets were created for "7 O'Clock" and "Blue Gillette", each with thousands of fiercely loyal adherents. Pascoal went to great lengths to maintain the fiction that the two brands were at war all over the world, and were produced by two foreign companies, daggers drawn, each, let it be noted, excellent in its own right.

He also acquired exclusive selling rights for Phillips gramophone records for all of Goa, a venture which the trade predicted would flop resoundingly. Then Salgaocar had an idea. It would be years before the people came to the

music, he told Pascoal, why not take the music to the people! Another landmark was set: touring vans took the music to the villages, stopping off at the *tintos,* playing records on vintage turntables with primitive speaker systems, which noisily mauled the inspired labours of Bach and Beethoven, and an entire chorus of eighteenth and nineteenth century composers. They sold hundreds of records on the spot. New labels — Capitol and Dell among them — were soon added to the inventory, together with a gaggle of noisy, second-hand vans, refurbished for their enhanced technical status. All over Goa, villagers were roused from their siestas by classical symphonies, mournful *fados,* grand marches and overtures, and musical hall ditties.

While business came first, they did not neglect to take their pleasures wherever they could find them, using native ingenuity when they needed to. In London they found that the rationing of food was in full force, even in the restaurants which followed strict instructions to limit the consumption of their customers to one or two stipulated items on the menu. Barely a year had passed since the conclusion of the Second World War, and the British were still a highly disciplined race, inured to regimentation and sacrifice, in strict accordance with Government diktat but good food — and lots of it — has always been regarded as a constitutional right by Goans. Pascoal and Salgaocar were not to be denied. Their lunch hour extended to two and more as they made a daily round robin of the restaurants near their hotel. Soup and fish in one, off to the next, roast chicken and a vegetable, around the corner for dessert, coffee and a cognac. Thus for days did they circumvent the democratic purposes of His Majesty's Government.

In Lisbon, they went to concerts. Salgaocar insisted on arriving and taking their seats early. He sat, in rapt attention, through entire symphonies, Chopin and Debussy, Rachmaninoff and Schubert, wholly absorbed in the grandeur of a musical culture he did not at all understand but

responded to fully in some deep and abiding aspect of his being. And, of course, they went to dances. "Balls" Pascoal preferred to call them, where Salgaocar played articulate wall flower to Pascoal's man about the floor, making fluent conversation in Portuguese with the ladies in the party. In their first few days in Paris, English got them nowhere. In the dance halls the reaction was one of ignorance or veiled hostility; did Waterloo still rankle? Pascoal mused aloud to Salgaocar; it was a trifling problem for two Goan adventurers who had so recently cocked a snook at the British government. They agreed that they should talk to French girls at dance halls only in Portuguese, while maintaining the forgivable fiction that they were rich businessmen from the Algarve with a penchant for dancing. It is questionable whether Portuguese succeeded where English failed, but Pascoal maintains that the ploy worked sufficiently well to break the ice, after which his incomparable skills, and Salgaocar's gentlemanly charm did the rest. They made many evenings of it.

There were moments of rue.

They had arrived in Lisbon on a Saturday to find that the barber shops were closed for the weekend. This would never do. As Pascoal says, "We were important visitors and a lot of Goans would drop in unannounced, on Monday, as Goans will. We had appearances to keep up." They decided that they were in urgent need of haircuts and summoned the room boy who was instructed accordingly. He returned an hour later with a barber, a taciturn individual, not given to small talk (this alone should have made them suspicious, but they were newly arrived, flushed with anticipation: Europe was waiting!) Before he laid scissors to lock, the barber announced, he had to have payment. In advance? Pascoal asked indignantly. The barber was adamant. In advance, it was the custom. He relieved Pascoal and Salgaocar of thirty escudos each and in fifteen minutes of casual snipping, he was done, packed and gone!

The results were less than encouraging and first thing Monday morning they attended a proper barber's shop to have the damage repaired. "It is not the usual haircut," the barber warned, "I shall have to charge you more. There is much delicate work that needs to be done." Wiser by the loss of 30 escudos each, caught by the short hairs, they gave glum assent. The man was an artist, he took his time. He used scissors, razor, clippers; he trimmed, shaped, thinned, stopping every now and then to pause, lean back, and critically observe his handiwork in the mirror. Eventually, he was done.

"There you are gentlemen," he said, "the best haircuts in Lisbon!"

The man had done a decent job.

"How much?" Pascoal growled.

Should he reach for his wallet or a cheque book?

"Ten escudos each senhor," the barber smiled pleasantly, "and since you seem so happy with your haircuts, I shall not refuse a tip of one more escudo if you care to offer it. Have a good day!"

But when it came to business they took no chances. Salgaocar was keen on acquiring an agency for Portuguese wines and towards this end he spent many days talking to wholesalers in Lisbon, sampling the excellent range of reds and whites they had to offer, looking to quantities, prices and ability to deliver, before he came upon a pleasing variety of Burgundy. It was produced by a family-owned vineyard in Almadores, a centre famous for wines, a hundred miles or so from the Capital. Salgaocar decided to pay them a visit. Pascoal could not accompany him as he was otherwise engaged, but he saw Salgaocar off at the station, wishing him bon voyage, and cautioned against hasty decisions.

The entire family owning the vineyard was at Almadores when the train drew up to the platform and the welcome they extended to Salgaocar was, in true Portuguese style, warm, intimate and personal. He was even offered the baby

to kiss! After a tour of the vineyards and a lengthy business discussion which left Salgaocar cheerful and optimistic — for these were honest folk, with generations of fine tradition, proud of their vintages — they invited him for what the lady of the house referred to, winsomely, as "a small repast." Ceremoniously ushered into the oakbeamed and panelled dining room of their country home, there, on a massive table of polished oak which could have comfortably accommodated a dozen large ploughmen, Salgaocar noticed that a groaning board had been set — magnificent, awesome, unnerving — lunch!

A huge cluster of wine bottles, of varying hues and vintages, at the table's exact centre, presented a slightly less formidable sight than the threatening phalanx of crystal glassware which, stem to crowded bowl, closely besieged each place setting. Why were there two white wine glasses? and three red? when Pascoal's sister had promised him that he would never have to cope with more than one of each at a time? There were strange glasses which looked like starved tulips, and balloon-shaped goblets which could serve no good purpose. As if this were not enough to strike terror in the heart of a proper Hindu Goan, at the corner of each arrangement of wine glasses, there squatted two ugly little miniature bowls, hardly the height of his thumb which would be impossible to engage in any sort of elegant passage between tablecloth and lip.

Did they honestly expect him to go through with it?

Panic seized Salgaocar. He pleaded sudden and violent indigestion. The pallor of his cheeks and the sheen on his brow gave clinical substance to this unpleasant affliction which, he explained weakly, came on with disgusting speed and no warning. He must leave at once. No, no, nothing at all, not a morsel, not the tiniest sip. With good grace and much genuine concern, the family saw him off to the station, but they were not to be denied. Later that evening two dozen bottles of wine, sherry, assorted liquers and a magnum of

champagne, individually gift-wrapped and packed in two wicker hampers, arrived at the hotel. Salgaocar tried to make light of it, but Pascoal insisted on a full account, drawing out of a reluctant Salgaocar, every last detail and nuance of his plight. Then, roaring with unseemly mirth, he insisted that they embark on a programme of bottle opening and tasting. "The honour of this noble family will be forever in question," he announced grandly, "if we do not sample at least some of the contents of each of these bottles." Thus a memorable evening commenced. It was to extend to the early hours of the following morning. Did they use the right glasses? Pascoal's lips are sealed. We shall never know . . .

The trip was a resounding commercial success. Pascoal had made good his promise to Salgaocar before they left: he had cemented old relationships and acquired an impressive collection of new agencies. Salgaocar had ordered goods in bulk all over Europe, made important new contacts for his trading activities and, most important of all, in his discovery of new places, people and activities, begun the unfolding of fresh talents within himself. He was a relaxed and natural negotiator, who listened attentively and never interrupted the company's flow of conversation. He went to a meeting thoroughly prepared, with facts and figures marshalled intelligently, with arguments worked out to the minutest detail, with plenty of leeway for compromise, but clear demarcations established where he must stand firm. It was a refreshing experience dealing with Salgaocar; there was no ambiguity; one knew exactly where one stood. He never forced a business issue to his exclusive advantage, even when he could, working always to the immediate and future benefit of both parties to the agreement, but once a bargain was struck, he was ruthless in ensuring that it was kept. His manners were impeccable: there was a touch of old world courtesy in the way he spoke and held himself, an inherent dignity, unexpected and welcome in one so young, that augured well for his future.

Much to his delight, he had discovered a burgeoning sense of the aesthetic, an appreciation of the fine art of living well. In the restaurants of Lisbon, Paris and Zurich, he had realised a palate for vintage wines and good food which he would cultivate for the rest of his life. He began to develop a natural instinct for the right clothes, a feeling for the weight, texture and fall of a well-cut suit, a balanced judgement for what was and was not appropriate to an occasion, though there would always remain a touch of the orthodox in his choice of colours and accessories. He would return to Goa with a love for music and theatre which would, over the years, evolve into a passion; indeed, even during the most hectic and turbulent period of his career, when the mining industry was in dangerous, near-terminal crisis, he would take time out to attend Marathi dramas or recitals of devotional songs. Much to his surprise, for he was introverted to a degree, he began to enjoy good company. He learned to host parties with an infinite care for the concern of his guests, respect for the conventions, a painstaking attention to detail, with no thought to time taken or costs incurred.

He was moving to maturity.

If there was a single failing in his personality, it was impatience. He could not tolerate hesitancy, prevarication, neglect or pusillanimity. "Get on with it!" became one of his favourite injunctions to executives and staff. No sooner did a business concept strike his fancy, it had to be taken swiftly to planning and execution. "He was a man in a great hurry," Pascoal recalls, "I would say, slow down, relax, enjoy, but it was something he could never willingly get himself to do. He never threw a party without a business purpose."

And he could not abide being cheated: alas, before their departure, Europe was to remind them one last time of the guile and chicanery of the species.

Rome was the last stopover. The flight home was delayed. They spent hours wandering about the city, much taken by the elegance of the Roman male, encountered,

apparently with no gainful occupation, in abundance in every piazza, bistro and ristorante. They lounged about, elegantly groomed, sipping espressos, smoking cigarettes, exchanging languid banter, casting a quick, appreciative eye at the curve of a passing skirt, the turn of a slender, high-heeled ankle. Pascoal and Salgaocar were seriously impressed. Italians, they agreed, dressed exquisitely. They must have some suits made up. But they would go about it with caution, even a hard cynicism, for they were still smarting from the wounding experience with the Lisbon barber.

"We shall visit three shops before we decide," Salgaocar said.

"Possibly more," Pascoal agreed.

Where, they asked the hotel concierge, were the city's finest tailoring establishments? Without a moment's hesitation, he said, "Mario's" and pointed them in the direction of the Via Veneto. Off they went, concealing smiles, for they knew a tout when they saw one! They were careful to a fault, visiting not three, but four shops. In each, after a decent interval examining fabrics, discussing colours, patterns and styles most appropriate for the less than Roman environment they would soon return to, they made discreet enquiries about prices before moving on. At the fifth shop they lingered for serious business (never for a moment remarking on the extraordinary coincidence of finding five tailoring establishments of such striking similarity all in a row), selected three suit lengths each, had their measurements meticulously taken and were told to come back the next evening. They returned to the hotel, well pleased with the morning work. All five shops had quoted more or less the same prices and when they went to collect the suits, trying (on Salgaocar's insistence) each suit in turn, they paid with good grace, even though the suits were anything but inexpensive. In fact, never had they spent so much money on clothes at one time. Laden with parcels, lighter by many

thousands of lire, pleasurably guilty, they decided to walk back to the hotel and asked a passerby if he knew of a quicker route. "Via Appia," he said. They took the short-cut and minutes down the road, Pascoal started as though bitten, swore in Konkani under his breath, and brought Salgaocar to a halt. Mutely, he pointed to the show window of a shop. It was a bespoke establishment for men's clothes, all gleaming brass and polished mahogany, where elderly, dignified men wielded scissors, measuring tape and T-square with the reverence of acolytes performing acts of serious worship. An antique sign said, "Sevariaus Clothiers since 1875." Behind a show window, tailors' dummies had been draped with perfectly tailored suits of stunning magnificence. Each carried a hand-written price-tag, precisely one-third the price they had paid for their suits!

Back at the hotel, they confronted the concierge, who shrugged nonchalantly and said, "Mario is expensive but he is the best. No tailor in Rome has his flair." And the corrupt fellow kissed his fingers to his lips. "But we visited five shops," Pascoal protested, "And their prices were the same."

"Yes, of course," — the concierge smiled a Roman smile, a smile of ancient duplicity — "Mario owns all five".

Goa's shrewdest traders had been had.

By the time they returned to Goa, a firm bond of friendship had been forged between Salgaocar and Pascoal Menezes. They had spent three months almost exclusively in each other's company. They had shared experience, fun and misadventure, done some splendid business deals, and, under Pascoal's tutelage, vistas of a brave and exciting new future opened up for the younger man.

As always, when he made a good friend, Salgaocar decided that he and Menezes should do business jointly, under one banner. Pascoal's initial reaction was not encouraging. He maintained, with good reason, that experience had taught him that this was one of the surest and quickest ways for friends to fall out. Business and friendship were best

kept at arm's length. He had never taken a partner, he pointed out, with the exception of his brothers and even there he had, at the outset, drawn up a legal agreement between them as to the division of the spoils: shares, profits, power and pelf had been carefully and equitably apportioned. There was never occasion for squabble, and dissension rarely occurred.

But Salgaocar was adamant. Their names and organisations, individually, had earned respect, gained enviable reputations and established access to large markets. Together, they would carry that much more clout. Their distribution networks complemented each other perfectly. The whole would be very much more effective than the sum of the parts. There was no need to set up a partnership firm. They could work together deal by deal, and since they liked and trusted each other, he saw no problems of personal rivalry or dispute coming between them. He was persuasive and insistent as only he could be when his mind was set on a course of action. Eventually, Pascoal worn out by argument, relented and suggested a compromise.

They would buy goods together, whereafter the ball was entirely in Salgaocar's court. It would be his business to sell the goods at the best possible price, arrange for warehousing and distribution, credit and collections. Pascoal would not be involved. Beyond the manufacturer's invoice and the signing of his share of the cheque, he would not even *look* at the figures of sales and profits. Whatever Salgaocar gave him as share of profit would be accepted unquestioningly. If the operation, for one reason or the other, collapsed, he would share the loss, again accepting Salgaocar's word for the amount.

It was a responsibility Salgaocar was loathe to accept, but Pascoal was adamant. This was the only way he was prepared to deal, so with good grace and some misgiving, Salgaocar agreed. They imported ten thousand pens — Parker, nothing but the best would do for their first joint

venture. The bank and shipping documents were handed over to Salgaocar, and Pascoal put the entire matter out of his mind, but not without troubled second thoughts. At the best of times, fountain pens were slow movers and Parker, the most expensive brand, was difficult to sell. It was Salgaocar's decision however, and Pascoal decided to abide by it.

Weeks later, at a celebratory meeting at the Sunday Club, Salgaocar, grinning broadly, handed Pascoal an envelope. It contained a cheque for Rs. 65,000/-.

Their first joint venture had been a phenomenal success. It was the last time they were to do business together, for they were to reach a serious parting of the ways soon after. An infant industry was, literally, breaking ground in Goa: the good earth held iron ore. Some of the larger and more far sighted houses had already sought concessions from Government, and begun working them. Bandodkar, Chowgule, Dempo, Timblo and a host of lesser names had realised the potential of the red gold in the ground, and had begun exporting ore to Europe. Salgaocar approached Pascoal with his second business proposition: they would get into the mining industry together and make real fortunes. "Millions" he said, "millions from a single deal!"

Their disagreement on this issue was fundamental, and would prove to be irreconcilable. Salgaocar argued that Goa's huge deposits of ore could be profitably tapped for the next fifty years. The Second World War was fast depleting reserves all over Europe and the Far East. At war's end, whole nations would need to be rehabilitated. Entire economies would have to be virtually rebuilt from the ground up. There would be a great, global hunger for steel, and steel could only be made from iron ore. Now was the time to move in on the industry. Speed was essential. They had to act swiftly or be left hopelessly behind. Pascoal remained unconvinced. He saw himself as a manufacturer, the proud owner and operator of factories, buildings and machinery bought and

paid for that he owned, where materials went in at one end and neatly packaged goods — essential goods — emerged from the other, where he was in total control and if ever the workers went on strike, he could negotiate a single agreement and ensure peace and productivity for years.

Over the next few weeks, all other topics of conversation at the Sunday Club gave ground to Salgaocar's obsession. Heated discussion was the order of the day. Members hurled argument and rebuttal at each other. Facts and figures were brandished, denied, worked and reworked, in feverish attempts at persuasion and rejection. The Sunday Club was divided as never before, and looked to remain so indefinitely until Salgaocar, at his wit's end, made the Sunday Club an offer it could not refuse. "Has anybody here seen a mine?" he asked. "How can we sit around and destroy the future of an industry, when we don't even know what a lump of ore looks like?" Abashed, the Sunday Club remained silent; for the first time in weeks, no voice was raised in anger or anguish. Then Salgaocar made a suggestion. Let the Club, inviting family and friends if so desired, make a picnic to the mining district, and see for itself. A picnic! The evidence of their own eyes! Smiles. Chuckles. Right on.

No sooner said than done. Cars were hired. Hampers of food and drink made ready. With much excitement, suitably suppressed, for these were men of affairs, who refused to show unseemly emotion at a matter so mundane as the possibility of making a lot of money very fast, the Sunday Club set about its momentous expedition. Even today, in the best of seasons, the journey to the mines is not a salubrious experience. Heat and dust do their best to dampen enthusiasm. Supple constitutions are needed, particularly at the nether regions, to cope with the woeful condition — more often than not the entire absence — of road surfaces. Domestic and wild animals contest your right of way. Lengthy, bumpy detours over small hills covered with tough, unyielding

scrub, and down steep ravines, crevassed for violent injury, are commonplace. In the middle of narrow roads, trucks tear around blind corners, threatening to annihilate your vehicle; at the very moment, your driver decides, mano a mano, to contest right of way, swerving with an oath at the last second before terminal confrontation. Whoever said that profits are earned the hard way in the mining business knew exactly what he was about.

The ancient Fords which carried the Sunday Club to its destiny in the hills of Northern Goa had not been built for the hazards of passage to the mining district, and Pascoal's misgivings as they went along were soon given substance and form, when, with a loud bang, one of the Fords punctured a tyre. With a sigh, the car settled at an acute angle on the wheel's rim which, in turn, promptly attempted to burrow as deeply as possible into the road's rutted surface. They piled out in confusion. The heat was stifling; whirlwinds of dust raised by the Ford's abrupt termination made them sneeze. Thick jungle, doubtless full of hostile wildlife and unfriendly reptiles, crowded in on this apology of a road. A thought crossed Pascoal's mind, "If this was an introduction to the mining business, what a barbaric way to earn a living!" With awesome reluctance, the driver went about repairing the tyre, disappearing with a friendly brown bottle, roughly corked, ever so often, to partake of libations behind the bushes, only to return, cheerful and talkative and more inept than ever. After what seemed hours, roughly patched but functioning, the Ford proceeded on its way. The road became narrower, if such a thing were possible, the jungle thicker and the wheezing of the Ford's engine distinctly more laboured. Just when it seemed that the Sunday Club would disappear without trace, the driver applied the brakes without warning, jerking the Club rudely to attention, "There," he announced, pointing to a thick, dark barrier of shoulder high scrub, "behind that, is the mine." There was a note of proprietorial accomplishment in his voice as he

politely refused to accompany them to the motherlode of fame and fortune.

Never did food and drink seem such a burden. Shouldering the hampers, stumbling over rock and clumps of weed, torn by thorn and stung by insect, led by an enthusiastic, ebullient Salgaocar, they finally emerged upon — drawing back so as not to fall into — the lip of a huge area of bare, sunken earth. "This is a mine?" Pascoal asked, astonished. Indeed it was, for the evidence lay before their eyes: dozens of workers, clad only in loinclothes, sweating profusely under the blazing sun, swung huge iron picks at the ground; streams of women, like lines of worker ants, filled baskets full of the rock and rubble thus unearthed, and moved off in single file into the impenetrable jungle. To a man, the Sunday Club shuddered, and looked quickly at the hampers for refreshment and revival. Salgaocar too was moved beyond words. He waved away food and drink and walked briskly down the mine face. There was awe in his eyes; he was descending on the promised land; the future had, at last, arrived.

Pascoal was not impressed.

Doomsday prophecy informed his vision of mining's future: he saw the mine owners struggling with trade unions, monsoons, the Government, uncertain foreign markets, at the mercy of cartels of ruthless bankers, mortgaged to the hilt in order to raise the huge amounts of money needed to succeed in an industry which devoured capital intensively. He saw strife and disruption at every turn — at the mines, with the independent rivercraft and barge owners at the points where the ore was moved on water, with the workers at the docks employed by Government over whom the mine owners had absolutely no control. These were not the comfortable risks of buying and selling, not even the calculated risks of manufacturing. This was high danger. Ore was a politically sensitive commodity. National governments in importing countries were directly involved, and between

Governments anything could happen. A diplomatic sneeze on an ill wind and lorry loads of mine owners in Goa would collapse with pneumonia!

Manufacturing was the only place to be.

He was right.

So was Salgaocar.

He saw a fully integrated mining process, where he would own mines, barges, transhippers, even — dare he look so far? — his own fleet of ocean-going bulk carriers moving hundreds of thousands of tons of Salgaocar ore to the far corners of the earth. He saw an organisation of thousands of people, working with energy and purpose towards a common end: prosperity and a good life for all; schools, hospitals, places of worship and play, where the young would be offered a future and the very old find compassion and succour, where all of the needs of a thriving community would be met by the good earth on which it was raised. Finally, he saw Goa coming into its own after centuries of rape and subjugation, with an industry which would change the very face of the land, transforming an uncertain agrarian economy, dependent on the caprice of monsoon, the ravages of pest and the table-droppings of conquerors, to a strong and independent economic force, using ore and the wealth thereof to build a diversified industrial way of life for all.

Goa would never be poor again; Goa would find its place in the sun.

THE GOOD EARTH

IN 1939 Vasudev Salgaocar took a wife.

He would know no other woman in his lifetime. For the next forty-five years she would be staunch friend, loyal companion, a source of love and joy, compassion and solace, temperate in his moments of high triumph, comforting in the face of disaster, helping him to look upon both as ephemeral imposters, to be dealt with calmly, then swiftly left behind in favour of the abiding values of family, friends, community and work. Hirabai Salgaocar would bear her husband seven fine children, and the home she created for them was a haven of serenity in times of crisis, a repository of all the principles she held so dear: love, respect, loyalty and affection, strong and deep kinship, and the worship of God, who gave all and to whom all eventually must be returned. When he completed sixty, the age of a man's maturity, many private and public functions were held to congratulate him on this auspicious birthday, and at the conclusion of this tumult of praise, laudatory speech and accolade, when he rose to thank a vast audience, he paid tribute to Hirabai, "She is much more than a good wife," he said, "she is a source of endless strength. To a great extent, my success is hers."

The long minuet of their courtship proceeded at the leisurely pace of the day. Hirabai's paternal uncle suggested the proposal to the Salgaocar family when she was fourteen, the proper age at that time for serious consideration of a maiden's betrothal. Gangabai Salgaocar agreed to give thought to the offer, and in the year that followed it was doubtless the topic of careful discussion within the family, for the marriage of the eldest son in a Goud Saraswat Brahmin family was then — as it remains today — a momentous occasion, when the proud lineage of generations finds itself at a crossroad, and great perspicacity is brought to bear on the event by both families, so that generations yet unborn may be worthy of the heritage. We may take for granted that

discreet enquiries were made concerning the girl's mein and manners, her talents, God-given and entrained, most particularly her disposition — was she amenable to taking her place as daughter-in-law? With kindness, obedience, humility and respect for her new familial peers? Her intelligence and health too, would be areas of searching enquiry, together with such domestic and cultural accomplishments as there might be: was she skilled with thimble and thread? Did she sing, play an instrument, cook well above the average? Virtues apart, were there concealed flaws? In short, all of the important minutae which normally precedes marriage, and we may speculate, with some certainty, that investigations of a similar nature had already been made earlier by Hirabai's family, concerning the young man, and he had not been found wanting.

A year went by. The conventions had been observed to the letter; the Salgaocars received a communication. Perhaps the young couple could now meet, chaperoned of course, in the very near future. This meeting, it must be understood, was not intended to test the compatibility of the young couple in each other's physical presence (that had been firmly decided by their elders), but to ensure against the rare occurrence, known to happen even in that day and age, of an instant and unbridgeable antipathy between the two.

Hirabai was fifteen and Vasudev was twenty-two when they formally met. On the Salgaocar side, an elderly male friend of the family, Vasudev Sarmalkar, was present, together with a gentleman by the name of Kamat who was married to Salgaocar's aunt. Hirabai was chaperoned only by her uncle. They met for three hours, sipped tea, nibbled politely on an elaborate selection of sweets prepared by the women of the house days before the event. While the adults made insignificant small talk, Hirabai and Vasudev stole sly glances at each other, without a word being said. Such was the custom. Three hours of critical observation — albeit

inconspicuously; it would never do to stare uncouthly — seemed to have sealed the preliminaries of the previous year. There were no impediments; indeed, a distinct enthusiasm was very much in evidence.

Vasudev and Hirabai were married soon after in Margao. A year later they had their first child, a son, and for the next few years Anil Salgaocar was the light of their lives.

It was 1939; the fate of the world, and the life of Vasudev Salgaocar were never to be the same again. In Europe, Yeats' "rough beast" was risen once more from the ashes of the First World War. A comic book tyrant, with a Charlie Chaplin moustache and a wildly improbable cowlick, would bring bloodshed and terror to Europe on a scale never before witnessed in the history of the species. The Panzer armies of the New Germany brought violent upheaval to the strategy of war: Czechoslovakia was annexed in weeks; Poland fell like a house of cards; Britain and France declared war, only to see their fortifications crumble and their armies reduced to the pitiful wreckage of abject defeat — broken, abandoned machines; fleeing, ruined men. The Maginot Line and Dunkirk would join the ranks of history's great, infamous debacles.

In Italy a stocky Roman named Mussolini had made the trains run on time, a trumpeted symbol of the new, resurgent tide of fascism that held the land of the Ceasars in thrall. His armies invaded North Africa, went on a rampage in Ethiopia and established a ruthless presence from King Solomon's mines to the desert wastes of the Northern Sahara. In the Far East, Japan's Hirohito raised the terrible sceptre of the Shogun, and his samurai generals took war, carnage and devastation to China and, in an act of supreme savagery, made war without warning on the Americans: Pearl Harbour was added to mankind's list of great acts of treachery.

They were the worst of times; they were the best of times. British India was at war. Essential goods, services and

provisions were diverted, en masse, from civilian consumption to the use of the armed forces. But war abhors a vacuum, and vast blackmarkets flourished in goods smuggled across the borders. Virtually any size of premium asked for was granted without argument, and while profits were enormous, the risks were proportionately greater. Ships arriving in Goa had to run the gauntlet of hostile naval action from both antagonists; it was not enough to run up a neutral flag; indeed, to some of the captains of the armed raiders, this constituted immediate provocation. It was common practise for Portuguese and Spanish vessels to be intercepted on the high seas, boarded, searched and, if discovered to be carrying any kind of material which might be construed as aiding an effort of war, seized without further ado. Insurance cover was either non-existent, or so steep as to make a nonsense of the economics of the import trade.

Merchant ships were routinely torpedoed and sunk along the trading routes; many neutral vessels suffered the same brutal fate. Goods were in constant short supply, and Goan trading faced a period of high trauma. There were baleful forces at work on the face of the earth, and no man could tell, from one day to the other, when fate would reach out and strike him down. Many good companies went to the wall, crippled by a single blow of ill-fortune; others left the business altogether, retrenched their resources, invested in safer returns at home, and marked time. A few large houses kept their heads, took their chances, and prevailed. A distinguished company, taking the risks and rewards of war at full flood, they amassed enormous fortunes in the five years of strife, and were now set forever apart from the herd. They were Goa's elite, formidably endowed with the virtues of fortitude, endurance and courage, with proven skills of attack and defence, with strong, well-knit organisations; they were to become, and remain till today, the vanguard of Goa's emergence as an economic force.

In this honour guard, V.M. Salgaocar & Irmao was accepted as first among equals. They were the largest import house in Goa, operating throughout the territory. Huge distribution networks, with warehousing facilities in all the major town centres, took their goods to small hamlets in the most remote regions of the New Conquests. And they enjoyed considerable financial muscle. A signature on a cheque could bring into force one of the largest private fortunes in the territory. But beyond the ability to deploy impressive resources of manpower, influence and capital, they had at their command an asset on which no price could be placed: the honour of the Salgaocars was a byword in Goan business circles. The word was the bond and would never be violated. Yet the future would see history turn against them. Goa would be liberated. Vasudev Salgaocar would divest himself of every last memory of the turbulent years of trading, for he had taken a momentous decision, risking all that he had created till now on a gamble of monumental proportions. His future lay in iron ore, in the bounty of the good earth, and he would work the land as no Goan had before or since.

* * * *

While it is true that the Goan mining industry assumed economic significance only in the early fifties, the manual exploitation of mining prospects had begun almost a generation earlier. Indeed, a reference to the potential of the territory may be had as early as the 16th century, in the journals of the Dutch traveller, Linschotten, "in Goa can be found stone containing iron." He notes wryly that the Portuguese Government of the day would not allow it to be taken from the ground and used for commercial ends. In 1905, manganese ore was discovered in the North of Goa in the "New Conquests," yet another grand Portuguese euphemism for a few districts brought into the colonial fold in recent times. Attempts were made to exploit this source of newfound

wealth with the establishment of an Office of Mines and Industries. The Government were invariably short of funds, and private enterprise was sought. A Portuguese company, "Compagnie de Mines de fer" promoted the first of many well meant — but woefully inept — measures to improve the efficiency of what was, so far, a painfully slow manual operation. They submitted a grandiose scheme to Government, the construction of thirty miles of railway line, from Bicholim where the ore was extracted to the port of Mormugao. We shall never know why it took four years to negotiate the details, but when World War I broke out in Europe, the project, still on paper, was abandoned with unseemly haste; the records show no regret.

1923 was a red letter day in the history of the industry, for it commemorates the year when iron ore was consistently taken from the ground. The records tell us that 350 tons were mined at Siolim, 222 tons at Khandepar near Ponda and 300 tons at Surla. A quarter of a century later, we find that the progress made offers little to enthuse over: 5,000 tons of iron ore and a little over 4,500 tons of manganese were exported in 1948. Mormugao harbour was overwhelmed by the resulting congestion and chaos! The Portuguese, who had, as usual, not anticipated any such thing, now made hasty attempts to correct this unfortunate situation — lengthening and widening the quays, levelling dumping sites, dredging and deepening the mooring points. And while all of this feverish activity no doubt helped, for the following year's export figures take a quantum leap (48,000 tons of iron and 11,000 tons of manganese ore) the figures and the difficulties attendant upon their realisation, merely serve to illustrate the primitive conditions in which the industry struggled to survive. For nothing had materially changed since 1923.

Geological surveys looked as much to luck as they did to the assaying of samples, and much in the manner of today's water diviners, a handful of fortunate individuals had the "power." Concessions were obtained from the Government

without trouble; indeed the Portuguese went out of their way to encourage local entrepreneurs to develop the industry. But concessions were, more often than not, large blank spaces on the local survey maps; just locating them in the first place was an enormous problem, let alone testing and, if successful, exploiting their potential.

There were no roads to the mining concessions. One went by jeep as far as the vehicle could travel, and then trekked, literally forcing passage through scrub and jungle never touched by human foot. Mile upon mile of the hardest terrain, guided by rough map and compass, seeking guidance from indifferent, often hostile villagers at remote hamlets, plodding along under a murderous sun, until jungle gave way to ore country — low hills covered by thick bush and waist-high grass, with an occasional cashew tree, spread low to the ground, providing a few minutes of blessed relief from the blazing heat. The dangers were very real; the hills were infested with poisonous snakes; wild animals — buffalo, marauding panther, aggressive wild boar — abounded. On one excursion, Salgaocar's team heard a snarling behind a cluster of wildgrass, the sound a large, angry cat might make. When he insisted on investigating, which they did warily with a noticeable absence of enthusiasm, they discovered a panther cub, weeks old, wounded, lost and starving, and brought it back to Vasco. They used pick axes to prise a few samples of rock from hard, unyielding surfaces, selecting points carefully worked out along grid patterns miles long and equally demanding in width. Many a night was spent out at a concession, in pitched tents, with Petromax lanterns burning till dawn to keep wild animals and snakes at bay. And when they returned to Vasco, with canvas sacks loaded with samples, it was often to the bitter disappointment of discovering that the effort had been in vain; the concession was commercially worthless.

To say that they persevered would be a serious understatement. They went about it like men possessed. Thus, in

the great Californian gold rush, in the Klondike and the diamond strikes in South Africa, must men have raged against the obstinacy of the earth to give swiftly and easily of its riches. When, finally, after weeks of back-breaking effort, a concession yielded high grade ore, of sufficient quantity to be reckoned commercially viable for years, it was merely the beginning, a small first step in a journey of ten thousand miles.

Weeks of arduous planning lay ahead. How best should they exploit the concession? Where should they attack first? Argument, dissent, decision! Should they transport by truck to the railheads, or by country craft along the Mandovi and Zuari rivers at Mormugao. Trade-offs between money, time, labour and ship's timetables were worked out, in what seemed to be an infinite series of permutations and combinations. Trucks were expensive. At Rs. 8,000/- to Rs. 10,000/- apiece, petrol-driven (the truck run on diesel had yet to be invented), with poorly trained drivers, they had to travel over makeshift roads, unsurfaced, literally hacked out of hill and jungle and levelled by hammer and hand. In days, they were reduced to rutted, rubble-strewn paths which played havoc with tyres and vehicles. Petrol depots had to be set up at regular intervals, carefully safeguarded against fire and theft, and replenished to a critical schedule. And if the difficulties of terrain and distance made this equation unworkable, other, even more troublesome options had to be explored.

One of these was the movement of ore by head load (the literal carrying of baskets of ore on the heads of women labourers, who chanted in metronomic unison as they walked in long crocodiles to the river loading points miles distant). Paths did not exist and had to be found by trial and error. This was done by first navigating the river and locating suitable mooring points for the country craft; gently shelving, pebbled areas of the shoreline were best as the shallow-drafted boats could then be drawn up to plank's distance

(the adjective is used deliberately for, by walking the plank while balancing a laden basket on her head, was ore carried from shore to boat's hold); here again, a working compromise had to be made. The shallower the craft, the closer to land the boats could be brought; the deeper the craft, the greater the amount of ore loaded. Trade-offs were the order of the day.

Once such a number of loading points were identified, Salgaocar and his people literally walked off into the jungle to find the best possible footpaths to the mines. These lay anywhere between five to ten miles inland, and the path-breakers did not have an easy time of it. They had to take into account — and compensate for — distance, terrain, gradient, the weight of individual loads and the strength and speed of the women who carried the loads to the river loading points. Once paths were established — a matter of weeks of work and preparation — labour contracts had to be negotiated separately with each of the villages contiguous to the concession from where the men would be recruited to work the mine faces, with the gangs of women labour who would carry the head loads and, finally, with the individual owners of the country craft, ebullient personalities, strong-willed rivermen, who bargained with tide and wind and weather to earn their daily bread, and were not about to take any nonsense from the mere owner of a mine!

The negotiations were complex. The men who worked the mine faces were as full of guile, suspicion, greed and resentment as only simple peasants could be, faced with the prospect of earnings beyond anything their previous agrarian experience could ever offer, on ancestral ground moreover, for generations considered theirs by proximity, forever beyond their ability to exploit, now the domain of strangers. It required bottomless reservoirs of patience on the part of men to whom time was at a premium, to allay their fears, ignore their insolence, win them over and negotiate rates which were compatible with the needs of all concerned. So

to with their womenfolk, rates were worked out by load, by journey, by season; idle time was discounted (the mine owners who worked the concessions were as hard-boiled as the labour who worked for them!). Not a detail was overlooked by either party to the agreement: the paid holiday per week, the daily work breaks, again fully paid and serviced with refreshments (though it was understood that most of the workers would disappear for a good half hour, returning, revitalised by a *copito* or *two* of good feni, for the next work shift) the separate, often unwritten agreements, with the gang foremen, peer leaders in the villages, who were notorious for working both ends against the middle.

But all rules of inter-party negotiation broke down when it came to the men who owned and sailed the country craft. They were prima donnas, talented sailors, with an uncanny ability to decipher the confusing dialogue between wind, tide, cargo and sail. They loaded their sailing boats with sixty or seventy tons of ore, loosely bottomed down in a single hold, and manoeuvred the graceful vessels along the rivers, through the treacherous estuaries where mud and silt forced change of course every other week, steering around the headlands, performing feats of brave navigation in the choppy vagaries of the open sea in craft which had sailed these waters unchanged for centuries, finally making straight as a gull's flight for Mormugao, paying little respect for the motorised vehicles in their path, not giving an inch in right of way till they reached the port. The journey took eighteen hours. No corporate agreement was possible with this purposefully unorganised, fiercely independent band of seafarers. Time-consuming deals had to be struck with each of them. There were never enough country crafts, and one could not be certain, even after firm assurance and irrevocable handshake, that they would appear at the time and place agreed, for they often took, on the spur of the profitable moment, illicit trips along the coast, hugging shore, cliff and

bay, playing hide-and-seek with tide and cover, carrying contraband cargoes to the bottomless markets of British India at war.

And as if this was not enough to confirm Pascoal Menezes's grim prognosis for the future of the industry, there was the monumental confusion of the Mormugao docks, compounded yet by the well-meaning inefficiency of its Portuguese administrators. Here, hundreds of workers — not even Goan! an alien, uncommunicative lot from across the British Indian borders — attempted to work under the directions of their Portuguese peers, under extraordinary pressure from individual mine owners, each of whom was entirely unconcerned with, and often actively conspired against, the considerations of the other owners. The quays were piled with hundreds of tons of ore; dog ate dog, and the devil in the shape of unrequited, unshipped ore, took the hindmost.

The buyers in Europe and Japan were awesomely distanced from all of this frenzy. They had negotiated firm contracts: tonnages, rates, dates of shipments, and were protected by those iron-clad legal and financial instruments of international trade: the bill of lading and the letter of credit. The former guaranteed the terms of the contract — the nature of the goods ordered, the prices agreed, the final date of which the goods had to be shipped, the name of the vessel and her ports of call en route, all of which had to be confirmed by Government Port Trust and Customs Stamp. On presentation of the Bill of Lading, duly discharged to the bankers, the Letter of Credit was encashed by the bank in favour of the exporter, when an unsavoury balancing act took place between the swift siphoning off of profits and the payment of sundry dues. The entire onus of this laborious transaction fell on the overburdened shoulders of the Goan mineowner, who had also to contend with the monsoon, when everything, except interest payments, came to a wet and steamy halt.

Nobody shed an unnecessary tear for them, though, for they were recognised as a breed apart. Born of the hard school of international trading, tempered by the fires of war, honed to a fine, hard, fighting edge by decades of struggle and strife, rich beyond the imaginations of lesser men, they were overwhelmingly possessed of the wherewithal to prevail — by application, organisation, guile and threat, and incredibly hard work — not merely to overcome, but to prevail by their own reckoning, and according to their own terms. In the next two decades, the Houses of Salgaocar, Chowgule, Dempo, were to lead a delegation of lesser names in the thorough exploitation, and vertical integration of Goa's mining industry; in the process, they would do valiant battle with some of the world's greatest iron ore producers, and become household names to the steel industries of a score of countries.

But Vasudev Salgaocar was to take none of this for granted. Once more, as in times past, he had to learn a new business — the only way experience had taught him — in this case, literally from the ground up.

* * * *

The urbane Britto now came into his own. A senior and highly regarded executive of the Portuguese bank, he wielded considerable influence in the mercantile community in Goa. He and Salgaocar had been close associates for many years. The relationship had begun with simple banking transactions during the trading years, where Britto, as the bank's senior credit authority, was equable and fair-handed, processing loans with speed, efficiency and a minimum of paperwork, putting valuable data at Salgaocar's disposal, pointing him, now and again, in the direction of good sources of new business, reworking loan repayments from time to time, and advising him of the fluctuations of rates of international exchange. Indeed, he functioned very much as today's merchant bankers do, looking well beyond the

primary banking needs of his clients — lending money! — to offer a full banking service: guidance and counsel whenever sought, in areas as far removed as the complexities of bill discounting to the hard-nosed credit ratings of potential business partners.

He was much taken by Salgaocar's originality and enterprise, and recalls an incident that initially caused him, as a prudent banker, more than a little alarm. Salgaocar had ordered a consignment of five hundred wrist watches from Switzerland and opened a Letter of Credit for the amount of cost, insurance and freight, in the shipper's favour through Britto's bank in Vasco — a perfectly routine transaction which would have disappeared without trace or comment into the company's books, had it not been for a major error committed by Salgaocar's ordering clerk and overlooked by the exporter. Through sheer negligence, the clerk had ordered 5,000 watches instead of 500, and these were already on the high seas when the shipper discovered the error, and cabled Salgaocar and Britto in panic. Who would pay for the additional watches — a considerable sum? Would Salgaocar, as a very special favour, accept them, and arrange for an additional Letter of Credit? The shipper was over a barrel. If Salgaocar wished to stay within the legalities of the situation, he could have well blamed the shipper for monumental carelessness in despatching goods without checking documents, and refused to accept the additional shipment.

"What will you do?" Britto asked him.

There wasn't a moment's hesitation.

"It's our fault as well," Salgaocar observed calmly, "If you lend me the money, I'll buy the extra watches."

"But how will you sell them?"

"No problem."

Britto, concealing large doubts, agreed to loan him the sizeable amount of money required, and began to process the export documents, while Salgaocar went off to the marketplaces of Goa to exercise his favourite talent: wheel-

ing and dealing. He returned to Britto the following day, brandishing, with a broad smile, a sheaf of order forms. "All the watches have been sold," he said, "are the documents ready for signature?" Britto admitted ruefully that they were not. The episode had an even happier epilogue. The grateful Swiss manufacturer wrote Salgaocar a glowing letter of thanks and offered, as a measure of gratitude, a large amount of credit for all future transactions, a sum of money exactly equivalent to the CIF value of 5,000 watches!

"He had great powers of persuasion," Britto says, recounting yet another incident of Sisyphian persistence, "and once his mind was set on something, he would never give up."

Through many years of Portuguese rule, flour was always in intermittent supply, today a glut, next week a shortage, with dozens of small traders dealing in the commodity. It was, to Salgaocar's critical eye, a wholly unsatisfactory situation and one which called for swift, cleansing and profitable action. Why should Goa not have a strong, steady supply of first rate flour from a single reputable source at a reasonable and stable price?

"Because it will constitute grossly unfair trading practice," Britto pointed out "and the Government will not allow it."

"I will try," Salgaocar said.

It was a problem after his own heart. He did a survey of households and discovered much discontent with the commodity. The quality varied from week to week, so did the prices, and one could never be certain of the supply position. Often this happened days before a festival when the preparation of cakes, sweets and pastries suffered accordingly, and the citizenry howled in protest — in print, by petition and often in the person of an irate pastor, from the pulpit! The wholesale and retail trade as well was disaffected: there were too many people in the business buying from different overseas sources. It was difficult to keep track

of quantities, quality and pricing. Profits were a matter of luck and happenstance; losses were unpredictable and heavy. Clearly, there was a case to rationalise the trade, and when Salgaocar petitioned the Government for the exclusive import of flour into Goa, it was not in the manner of a trader attempting to monopolise a commodity, but as a distinguished and honourable business house which desired to perform a community service, on behalf of the Government, of great benefit to the common man. He had a detailed plan, and the figures to prove that all parties to the agreement would profit by it. His homework, as always, was faultless. He had prepared the ground carefully with the wholesale traders and persuaded them to agree to buy flour at fixed rates, and under guaranteed terms of delivery. He had chaired a lengthy meeting, in the course of which Goa's markets for flour were apportioned equitably among the leading wholesalers, thus securing for each, tenure of business, equality of price and profits, and generous periods of interest-free credit.

He had engaged in voluminous correspondence with overseas flour producers, procured and tested sample consignments, and finally decided on an American blend, but not before analyzing a random selection of the manufacturer's Annual Reports (several recent years' Balance Sheets had been closely studied) and obtaining detailed information from his foreign banking correspondents, on the reputation, resources, production facilities and general well-being of the company he intended doing business with. Thus armed with a commercial and social portfolio of unassailable virtue, he approached the Portuguese Government in Goa for exclusive import rights to flour.

"But how will you finance this extragavant venture?" The Portuguese Chief of the Economic Department of Government was genuinely non-plussed. Never had a trading house put forward a proposal of this kind, and even though it appeared to be — looked at from every angle — favourable

to all concerned, the whole concept smacked of implausibility. It had never happened before, and the setting of precedents by Government, then as now, was occasion for lengthy debate, long-winded dialogue, the painful unravelling of miles of redtape, and true grit and persuasion of the highest order on the part of the petitioner.

"I have consulted with my bankers," Salgaocar replied in Portuguese and they have agreed to extend the necessary credit." With a flourish, he turned the portfolio to the page where the bank's letter to that effect (obtained by irrefutable argument and evidence) lay neatly filed.

"But the trade . . ."

". . . have agreed in writing."

Now Salgaocar played his trump card. "Just think how happy the people will be," he suggested gently, "when they come to know that the Government cares enough for their basic needs to give them flour — very good flour I may add — at a price they can afford."

The administrator smiled and reached for pen, ink, seal of office.

Salgaocar had cornered the market for flour.

If only mining were as simple. He knew the rudiments, but now wished to follow and study, at first hand, the movement of ore from mine to ship's hold. This was easier said than done, for impenetrable veils of secrecy shrouded the workings of the men who were pioneering the mining business in Goa. The infancy of any new industry demands experiment, innovation, ingenuity in the creation of process, the raising of funds, the opening up of markets, the management of labour. Legislation is a long way into the future. A frontier spirit prevails. No holds are barred in fighting for advantage on the ground and here, as elsewhere, information often provides the winning edge. Salgaocar set about obtaining as much as he could: the productivity of competitive mines, the quality of the ore taken from the earth, the reports on concessions where fresh testing was underway,

Government decisions on the release of new tracts of land for mineral exploration, the detailed "confidential" reports (only theoretically under lock and key!) of Government and private geologists on new land surveys; the terms and conditions of contracts signed with foreign buyers over the last twelve months, those under present negotiation and future trends in prices. Crucial facts or inconsequential minutae: all was grist to his mill.

But without the physical experience, the knowledge was so much paper. It was his immediate, absorbing concern that he should find out what went on, on the ground, with all possible speed and accuracy. Good fortune smiled. A British Indian national had successfully sought and commissioned an iron ore concession in Goa from the Portuguese Government (this was allowed) and negotiated his first shipment with a European buyer. The contract had been signed and he approached Britto's bank to advance him working capital — of which he was desperately short — on the strength of the documents in hand. The Portuguese had a rule that any non-Goan seeking financial aid from the bank must find a Goan to stand guarantee to the transaction. The co-acceptance of commercial notes, for a consideration, was common practise in trading circles. Indeed, factoring had been taken to a fine art. This had emerged out of the financial habit of the day: at any given moment, Goan traders kept vast amounts of ready cash at home, in huge antique safes or small, windowless rooms, double- and triple-locked. It was commonplace to have ten, fifteen lakhs or more lying in the house. Burglary was as divorced from the environment as bank interest on private deposits: there wasn't any. So traders became their own and each other's bankers. If one was short and another flush, the latter would countersign a bank note for the former. They played the game by the rules. It was not merely bad form to cheat; it was fatal; a dishonest borrower (as distinct from one who fell on bad times) was simply kept out of circulation.

Yet the rules were far more complex than the casual observer might suppose. On one occasion Salgaocar stood guarantor with a bank in Bombay for a very large consignment of goods imported by a Goan trader. The goods arrived and could not be sold. The debt went sour. The bank foreclosed. The importer was — as he bluntly stated to the bank's Chairman — flat broke, and if the bank wished to recover (the bank official was clearly an unpopular man!) he had a few suits, of vintage cut but serviceable, mothballed in a wardrobe in his bedroom — sorry! his wife's bedroom. The house belonged to her, so too the property, the moveable goods and all their worldly possessions. He would pay as and when he could.

The Chairman summoned Salgaocar to Bombay. Never one to duck an unpleasant duty, Salgaocar promptly went. At the bank's offices he was vetted by various functionaries: peons, receptionists, secretaries, finally, a veritable monsignor of an executive assistant. Then he was made to wait a good half hour in an anteroom, without so much as the offer of a cup of tea or a glass of water, before he was escorted to the presence. The executive assistant, who performed this function in worshipful silence, closed the door soundlessly behind him. The Chairman wasted no time on preliminaries. He picked up a docket with the offending documents and hurled it across a baize-lined table, long and broad enough to accommodate a game of ping-pong.

"When do you intend to honour your debt?" he asked.

Salgaocar decided to play it strictly by the book.

"My debt," he asked mildly, "what debt?"

"The debt to the bank you guaranteed for your Goan friend. He can't pay. Perhaps," — this delivered with weighty sarcasm — "you have not been informed of the fact."

"Oh, that debt," Salgaocar smiled. "He's down on his luck, poor fellow. But it isn't my debt as yet."

"Your signature is on the documents. My people have written you several letters. You refuse to pay."

"I have never in my life refused to pay a debt," Salgaocar pointed out mildly. "If you care to read the small print in the agreement, you will notice that the bank has first call on the goods imported under my guarantee. First legal call. I shall use all of my good offices — unofficially of course — to help you realise the best auction prices for the goods. If there is a loss, I shall make that good. If, however, you make a profit, I shall accept a bank draft for the difference."

"You shall hear from our lawyers," the Chairman snarled.

A snarl at a Salgaocar! Tut, tut.

"My lawyers shall reply," Salgaocar promised, bade the man a polite farewell and left.

The bank backed down and auctioned the goods. True to his word, Salgaocar settled the difference, took a small loss, and fulfilled the terms of his guarantee.

The new factoring opportunity introduced by Britto was exactly what Salgaocar sought. The Indian owned a good mine, with fine ore, and had managed to land an iron-clad contract with a European buyer. Now he found himself strapped for cash, a depressingly familiar situation which mine owners in those days, working on shoe string budgets and a prayer, often faced. He had approached Britto for working capital and, since he was new to Goa with few contacts, he had asked Britto to find him a Goan guarantor.

Salgaocar agreed on three conditions. First, as he was putting a sizeable amount of his own capital at risk, he wished to be physically present at every stage of the operation to ensure smooth and quick execution of the order. Second, it must be part of the legal agreement that he be allowed first refusal to factor the next *three* orders the mine owner obtained. Owners did not look gift horses in the mouth, or question their motives. The condition was promptly accepted. The third rider, the mine owner realised with a modicum of relief, had only to do with the making of a little more money for Salgaocar, and that too at the difficult

ends of the business. In each subsequent order that he would underwrite, Salgaocar wished to undertake one of the subcontracts put out: first, ore retrieval from the mine face; next transport to river point by head load or to the railhead by truck; finally, for the last contract, the stevedoring concession to load the ore on the ship. The mine owner gave him a distinctly peculiar look, but made no comment. The deal was struck. They shook hands on it.

Salgaocar stuck like glue to the letter of the first contract. He became the mine owner's shadow, trailing after him wherever he went. He kept full working days — first at the pitfaces where ore was manually extracted by pickaxe — persistent with his questions, acute in his observations. He made mental notes of the working shifts of the labour, the number of men to each shift, the amount of ore retrieved in rock and in rubble. After the day's work was over, he visited the homes of the gang foremen in the villages, forever asking questions. How much were they paid? Were wages adjusted for additional production? Did they get paid for time off? How did they negotiate contracts? Was the foreman's word true and binding on the labour? Were food and drink offered free by the contractor, subsidised or sold at a profit? Or did they bring their own food to the sites?

He followed the ore to the river points, tagging along behind the crocodile of chanting women, observing the weight of each basketload and the speed at which the line went, working out rough calculations in his head as he walked: if the loads were lighter, would the turn-around be quicker and more ore loaded at the end of the day? If three or more gangs of women were placed equidistant from mineface to river point, would the lower fatigue factor find compensation in much greater carrying capacity, and would the extra cost of the gangs be justified in terms of overall savings in the entire process? If the old women — and there was evidence of geriatric disorder in every gang — were kept out, would the loading and moving go faster? How

would the labour react to the suggestion? It was sensitive ground; enquiries would have to be made discreetly; the older women might be given compensatory tasks perhaps like the preparation of food, or looked after in some other way, for it was very clear to Salgaocar, even at that early stage, that the goodwill and cooperation of the labour counted for everything. With their loyal commitment all was possible, without it, disaster was courted at every turn.

At the river loading points he noticed that the width of the planks on which the women walked before flinging the contents of the baskets into the hold, was the crucial determinant to the speed at which the country craft was filled with ore. The crocodile collapsed at the loading points, and dozens of women milled about aimlessly, squatted on the ground, smoked, quarrelled, gossiped, all purpose lost. Perhaps the answer lay in wider planks and more of them; one could shore up a greater length of bank parallel to the boat, so that both were aligned on a longer, more even keel; planks might then be placed from stem to stern with whole gangs of workers crossing and recrossing at a time. The notion, with hundreds of others, was jotted down in the pocket notebook he was never without. He made friends with the men who sailed the country craft, just as in his childhood he had gained the goodwill and help of the train and caminhao drivers. Both groups were cast in the same mould: he discovered brave individualists committed to the spirit of free enterprise, proudly self-reliant, a law unto themselves. No collective negotiations could work here, only ribald personal give-and-take over a bottle or two before a bargain was struck. He sailed with them often and never failed to be enchanted by the land of his birth — the beauty of flowing river and azure bay, thrusting headland and sunlit escarpment, the emerald stretches of ripening paddy rippling to the very walls of sparkling white churches whose spires thrust high above the swaying palms. The intimacy and bustle of the crowded riverbanks along the river's early

path gave place as the day wore on to a serene, sun-flecked expanse of sea as they traversed the mile-broad estuary out to the ocean to begin the long, curving haul to Mormugao port. He broke bread with these seafarers, ate and drank with them, and made close friends, taking care never to overstep the bounds of convention, unwritten, unstated, but scrupulously observed. He realised that in the present, and any future relationship, he might be offered, hospitality, respect and the firm handshake to a deal consummated, yet he would be regarded merely as first among equals.

On the second contract, a fresh mine was being worked. The roads were passable and here ore was transported from mine face to railhead by truck, and loaded into wagons for the journey to Mormugao harbour. He was less than impressed. The trucks were antique vehicles, expensive to run (they worked on petrol only) prone to sudden, terminal collapse, and driven at maniacal speeds by owner-drivers who were paid by the number of truckloads moved in an eight-hour shift. They were a different breed from the men who sailed the country craft, offering allegiance to no traditions other than that of the fast buck; sullen heirs to the heritage of a sellers' market. Trucks were in short supply, and rates fluctuated from day to day, depending entirely on the needs of carriage over a twenty-four hour period. It was not uncommon for a truck driver to negotiate the following day's terms, strike a better deal between sunset and nightfall, and fail to turn up the morning shift. Each day began with frantic bidding and the highest price won the most trucks.

But while his first reactions were harshly critical, over a period of time he felt a certain sympathy for the men who moved these ungainly machines at high speeds over terrible ground. They had saved, sold ancestral fields and borrowed to buy their vehicles, often paying usurious rates of interest to the village money-lenders; petrol was scarce and expensive; the cost of spare parts and the wages of mechanics prohibitive. Indeed, repair facilities were in even shorter

supply than the trucks they were meant to service, and the owner-drivers, in turn, had to suffer in silence under the inexorable law of supply and demand, unscrupulously applied. They had just seven months — November to May — to provide for their families throughout the year, for the onset of the monsoon brought the trade to a complete halt: the open-faced pits were flooded, the roads transformed into impassable tracks of deep mud and mire, and the heavy tides made the rivers unnavigable. Salgaocar was seized with the intractable, contradictory nature of the problem. For the moment, it seemed beyond solution. It would take him many years, a huge amount of capital and the application of a revolutionary concept before the problem would find resolution. His plan would make capitalists of thousands of villagers, secure the interests of the mine owners, please the bankers and the truck manufacturers enormously, and forever change the road transport equation in the territory.

The last stopover on this voracious odyssey was the docks. Here, ore transported by country craft and rail was off loaded and stacked on vast open air sites, roughly levelled, where small mountains of the material awaited shipment. Expensively, it might be added, for the Mormugao Port Trust levied a hefty daily demurrage — rental for the site — and while a mine owner, by dint of foresight, cajolery, the payment of overtime and downright bribery, might have managed to get his cargo to the docks, it was another matter altogether to ensure that it was loaded without delay. At the docks, the protracted delicacies of negotiations with the Port Trust and Customs could make the difference between a large anticipated profit and its meagre realisation.

For Salgaocar it was old and familiar ground. He was among the friends of his shipchandlering and trading days, and the respect he had gained with them stood him in good stead now. He was greeted warmly by officials he had not met in many years, and again, the questions he asked — serious investigations conducted in depth over many hours,

right across the board — from the Chairman of the Port Trust and the Commissioner of Customs to the workers who loaded the ore and with whom he conversed fluently in their native Marathi — led him to formulate the beginnings of a policy. It was not to be given substance or form however till he had undertaken the bottomline guarantee on the contracts he had signed with the Indian mine owner.

Contract by contract, over a period of months, he undertook one or other specialised portion of the export order. First, the extraction of the ore from the earth, where he insisted on two additional clauses: a penalty clause against his own Company for failing to deliver to agreed daily norms (when his rates to the mine owner would be proportionately reduced) and a performance award for production over and above the contractual obligation. Then, before proceeding with the recruitment of labour, he put the entire proposition to them. He had worked out a deal, he said, with the owner of the mine. If they produced more, they would, earn more; if they produced less, all would suffer. If they were not agreeable, he would be happy to renegotiate, and revert to a fixed wage per shift irrespective of production norms, though he sincerely would not recommend this course of action. By gearing production to earnings, all of them would benefit. Thus did Goan mining labour, for the first time in its chequered history, discover the profit motive. The villagers agreed, and worked with a will; every additional rock wrested from the ground meant money in the bank. Ingenuity of a similar order was applied to later contracts — the transportation of ore by head load to the river loading points, by truck and train from railhead to port, and by river craft. They were original inventive financial arrangements which left all the parties to the deal well satisfied and keen to do business together again.

From this hard won experience, the principles of the next two decades were distilled. Two key considerations would determine success or failure. The first had to do with

coordination and timing. Contracts specified periods of time in which the order had to be executed. Ten thousand tons in two weeks for instance; if the shipment was made before the fortnight was out, the mine owner won a financial award; if the contract period was extended he paid a penalty. It would not do to send the ore to the site too early as it would then attract additional Port Trust charges. Yet, the stevedoring gangs which loaded ore on to ship were unpredictable. One could never be certain that all the gangs requisitioned would be there, and even less sure of the speed at which they would load a single shift. A minor dispute between owner and foreman, an altercation between foreman and workers, and all work would stop for hours. So, first of all, careful planning was essential. The precision of a battle order had to be employed. Hour by hour calibration of the elements of the entire process — mining, transport, loading — was crucial to the success of the operation, as was monitoring, so that decisions could be quickly taken and implemented at every point along the feedback loop. Short-wave wireless communication was the only answer.

The second aspect of critical importance was the quality of the ore. Most mine owners extracted and shipped — as fast as they could manage — paying scant attention to the screening of the ore, with the result that the steel mills in Europe were forced to examine every ton carefully before using it. They had begun to resent the imposition. Word was gaining ground that dealing with Goan mine owners was a tricky business; one had to watch out for sharp or careless practise. Fully aware of the situation, Salgaocar was determined to build a reputation for quality. He set up a special section to ensure standards; all ore was carefully screened for size, weight and quality before being moved out of the mines. Yet, in spite of this fierce concentration of time, money and effort ("He talked of nothing else," Britto recalls, "except ore, every minute of the time, ore!") it took him thirty-five painstaking days to complete his first shipment of

16,500 tons, and at the end of that year, 1952, all he had to his credit was the meagre export figure of 50,000 tons.

This would never do.

He would travel to Europe at once and meet the steel producers personally.

Salgaocar embarked upon his second European adventure, this time with Britto in tow with a degree of circumspection for, as far as the competition was concerned, it was always open season: dog devoured dog, as in trading, but here the stakes were infinitely higher, and the tactics employed considerably more savage. They attempted discretion. To no avail. Word quickly spread in the mining community, and two leading mine owners planned a spoiling tactic. They would leave for Europe earlier, meet the buying agents and steel producers, and preempt Salgaocar's bid for supremacy. The grapevine came to their aid however and word got back. Salgaocar, ever the fox, put it about that he was leaving in a month. He swore Britto to secrecy, then, with much fanfare, he made travel bookings through Goa's leading agency, knowing full well that the itinerary he had loudly amended half a dozen times would be in the hands of his rivals before the day was out. When they came to learn that Salgaocar's first port of call would be Nice, the most beguiling watering hole in all of the Riviera, to a man Goa's mine owners grinned. Nice was good for at least a fortnight of high living, precisely the sort of undisturbed recuperation which prepared one so wonderfully for serious business discussion. His rivals decided to leave a fortnight earlier. The next morning, by dawn's first light Salgaocar and Britto left by car for Bombay, travelling in the Wolsley he had recently bought — his first vehicle — and one of which he was modestly proud. There they took ship stealthily for Europe: they would make directly for Amsterdam and negotiate personally with the great steel producers of the Ruhr.

Salgaocar prepared the ground for discussion. He made an exhaustive study of the backgrounds of the companies

he would meet, the experience and personalities of the executives in charge, the protocols offered and expected — all of the formal paraphernalia of European business convention. "Not a single fool among them," he said, to Britto "as you'd expect. They drive hard bargains, but once a deal is made they keep to their word." Salgaocar was pleased. How could there ever be any other way?

There is a letter on file today in the Salgaocar offices at Vasco, addressed to his sons, Shivanand and Dattaraj who so ably guide the fortunes of the conglomerate. It has been written by Mr. K.E. Panofsky of M/s. H.V. Noord-Europeesche Erts — En Pyrietmij, Amsterdam, one of Europe's largest traders in iron ore. It reads in part,

> "For a statistical purpose, I may mention that according to our records we shipped during the years 1950/1952 about 50,000 tons of ore from Goa from other suppliers. In June 1953, after the visit of your father in Amsterdam, the first steamer with Salgaocar ore arrived in Rotterdam and at the end of 1953 already 130,000 tons of Goan ore had been shipped by your firm."

Mr. Panofsky's company was one of two trading houses Salgaocar decided to sign exclusive contracts with. They had met several, and he was correct in his assessment. This was a wholly different order of businessman from the Goan traders and mine owners Salgaocar was accustomed to dealing with. For one thing, they knew their business thoroughly and came to meetings awesomely prepared, thus avoiding many unnecessary preliminaries. They were remarkably knowledgeable about the Goan mining scene: the owners and their financial status, the quantities in the ground, the quality and the prices. They were sympathetic about the problems, did not seek to play one owner against the other or gain unfair leverage owing to the difficulties that the industry faced. Their attitude was one of intelligent compromise; indeed they were keen to work jointly with Goa's mining community, helping wherever they could. But it was clear

that they could not be manoeuvred. They were certainly prepared to be flexible, ready to forfeit part of present profit for future gain, but they politely refused to be coerced in any form or manner. They were, in short, very much men in Salgaocar's mould.

Once he reached agreement with the two companies he would trade with in the future, the Dutchmen put all their cards on the table. Nothing was kept away. They produced lists of Europe's steel producers, past figures of consumption or iron ore and extrapolations for the next couple of years. They cautioned Salgaocar regarding competition from Australia and Brazil, still at a grave disadvantage owing to the huge freight rate differential, but a potential threat nevertheless, because the Governments of both countries were determined that the industry should flourish, and were subsidising the business on the one hand, and encouraging entrepreneurs on the other with tax and other concessions. Prophetic words but, for the moment, far into the distance. Of immediate concern was a trip they planned to take with one of the Amsterdam agents to Germany, where Salgaocar would meet the end user, the producer of steel.

The German steel mills were a law unto themselves. The great blast furnaces of the Ruhr had been steel makers for generations to all of Europe and a good part of the world. They had built an unassailable reputation by the application of the code of the Kaisers, good old-fashioned Prussian values: hard work and discipline, skilled, dedicated teamwork, no compromise under any circumstances on the quality of the product and a virtually fanatical commitment to contractual obligation — all of this burnished by a pride bordering at times on arrogance.

The reception afforded Salgaocar by the manager of the steel mill was correct but guarded. Goan ore, his manner seemed to indicate, was at best a dubious commodity. It was only when the Amsterdam agent made clear that the few consignments of Goan ore that had met the mill's stringent

standards had come from Salgaocar's mines earlier in the year, that the Manager smiled. Large steins of German lager were distributed and convivally consumed. A distinct cordiality began to make its presence felt and there were hearty laughs all around when the manager said, "You are famous in Germany Mr. Salgaocar — the only Goan mine-owner who manages to convince us to extend a two-month loading contract into three, and then loads in a month, earning lots of extra despatch money!" A Salgaocar ploy that had been usefully introduced to other contractual areas as well: the grade to be shipped, for instance, could be negotiated over a given spectrum, from a rigid bottom line, the lowest acceptable quality (which guaranteed a certain profit) to a much higher grade (which, as a largely unattainable carrot, offered very handsome returns indeed). Most Goan mine owners were content to achieve the bottomline, Salgaocar's screening methods ensured that his quality was very much higher and his profits proportionately greater. Thus, his cash flow per shipment worked out much more favourably than the competition. He was in a position to plough back much more into new mines and concessions, screening for high grade ore wherever he put his money.

Now that the ice had been broken, they began to talk serious business and in the course of the morning Salgaocar secured a huge contract, over the long term, on first-rate conditions. He was well on his way, but he had one last concession to ask for — a scheme of fetching ingenuity — which he had worked on late into the previous night. He sensed however that the moment was not propitious; enough was sufficient; he would not push his luck. They had one more celebratory stein to seal the deal, and the German readily agreed to Salgaocar's suggestion that they meet the following morning to work out the small print.

The small print contained one or two large surprises. Salgaocar had shrewdly concluded that the Dutch agency and the German mill, committed as they were to the

purchase of hundreds of thousands of tons of ore over the next few years, would be anxious to secure the speed and tenure of supply by whatever means possible. He put forward a beguiling proposition. The greatest delays, he pointed out, occurred at the loading quays, a stage where they had the least control; no matter how carefully they worked deliveries to the docks, it was a virtual free-for-all. Leaving aside for the moment the notorious inefficiency of the port authorities, and the indiscipline of the stevedoring gangs entrusted with the loading, all of the competition and their shipments collided head-on at the docks. The brutal realities of first-come, first-served ruled the day.

For both Salgaocar and his European buyers time was money, a factor which dominated everybody's contracts — from the village labour working the pitfaces to the customers of the steel mill in Germany. Here was a workable solution. If the agent and the mill could put together a deal whereby they supplied Salgaocar with eight motorised, ocean-going barges, each capable of carrying hundreds of tons of ore per load, the back of the problem would be broken for all time: the barges could take on ore with their own cranes at the river loading points and proceed directly to off-load into steamers in mid-stream, bypassing the docks altogether. There was a small difficulty. The barges represented a capital investment of Rs. 20 lakhs.

Salgaocar got to the hub of the problem.

"We do not have the money," he admitted ruefully, "but we do have a proposal."

If they put up the money for the barges, he would reduce the price of his ore by 50 cents a ton, provided he was allowed to liquidate the debt over the entire three-year period of the contract. He was quick to point out that the lower price would not just cover the cost of the barges, but the amortised interest as well. He would be able to ship to schedule and they would receive the ore on time. He would, of course, have to own the barges outright; they could not

stand as collateral, as the ore in the ground and the long term contract for it was surely mortgage enough!

The Amsterdam agent sighed. There was a prolonged silence as he scribbled calculations on a pad. Salgaocar was free of qualms. He had worked the same sums the night before, and was secure in his homework. It was a good deal. Everybody did well out of it, and the men across the table from him were no fools.

"Very well," the agent said, "it's a deal. On one condition though. We place the order for the barges with Dutch builders, to our specifications, and under our supervision."

"I was about to make the suggestion myself," Salgaocar replied.

He asked for one last concession.

"You know far more than we do," he conceded, with a humility that was clearly unfeigned, "about mining and the quality of ore and how to get the best from the ground. Could you loan us one of your mining engineers for the period of the contract. We could share the cost."

This, too, with good grace, was granted.

The barges proved a boon beyond the expectations of this meeting, for after a year and a half, there was an economic slump in Europe and the Amsterdam agent and the German buyer could not lift the remaining ore. Payments on the barges automatically ceased. The ore was shipped to new markets in Japan and since the barges were not bound by an exclusivity contract, they were profitably employed. It was a full six years before the cost of the barges was defrayed.

Salgaocar never seemed to have trouble when it came to raising finance, nor would he allow arm-twisting of any kind from his creditors. On one memorable occasion, the steel showed through. The Portuguese bank in Goa enjoyed a monopoly which bordered at times on the dictatorial. It was often unfair and arbitrary in turning down requests for funding. Clients were faced with a flat refusal, without reasons why, and if this happened during the busy season, the

results could be catastrophic. During the years when his trading activities were at a peak and overlapped with the real growth of his mining business, Salgaocar found himself facing a difficult cash flow situation. He was importing huge quantities of food products and groceries, wheat flour for the entire territory, toiletries and cosmetics, fountain pens and wrist watches, industrial goods such as compressors, heavy-duty pneumatic pumps, mechanised earth-moving shovels, car and truck spares and a range of mining equipment. He also had export orders on hand for hundreds of thousands of tons of ore. He drew up a careful application for a substantial increase in his credit limits and sought a meeting with the Director of the bank. This was a new appointee, an arrogant Iberian who, without greeting or any other sign of the relaxed informality so characteristic of Portuguese officials, waved Salgaocar curtly to a chair, flipped through the inch-thick applications file and threw it across the table.

"Everybody seems to need money these days," he said, "sorry, I can't accommodate you." And called for his next visitor.

Without a word, Salgaocar got up, took the file and left.

If he ever lost his temper, it never showed; he believed that emotions in business should be under careful control at all times, that unbridled anger or greed clouded judgement, making fools of the best of men. But now he was in a cold rage. "I will teach that man a lesson he will never forget," he said. True to his word, he went about it with quick, cold efficiency. That very day he sent an express cable to a contact in London, the manager of a bank, seeking a meeting. He received a cordial invitation the next morning, and set upon planning a short trip to Europe. One of the bank's largest clients happened to be a supplier of mining equipment to Salgaocar, and he was known; indeed, he was wholly unaware of the fact that when this company first looked to doing business with Salgaocar, the bank had undertaken a

discreet, but extremely thorough investigation of his business and commercial credentials, and his general credit-worthiness. They were impressed with what they discovered and reported back to their client accordingly.

Salgaocar's import and export transactions were now worth many crores of rupees annually. Only convenience made him route the bulk of this business through the Portuguese bank in Goa. Trading was unrestricted and there were no exchange limitations. Deals were concluded in currencies of all kinds, moving freely in and out of the territory. Nothing prevented Salgaocar from working through a foreign bank, and this was precisely his intention. When he and Britto arrived in London, they made straight for their hotel, checked in and phoned the bank. An appointment was arranged that very afternoon. After a quick lunch, during which Salgaocar was quiet and preoccupied and Britto thought it prudent not to push the conversation, they set off.

In the manager's office, Salgaocar came quickly to the point.

"I would like to route all my import and export bills through your bank," he said, handing over a thick file, "here is a complete record of all our financial statements for the last three years, together with firm order book positions for this year. When can I have an answer?"

"Could you possibly come around tomorrow morning, Mr. Salgaocar," the banker suggested. Salgaocar agreed.

They were quite unprepared for the red carpet welcome awaiting them the next day. The moment they announced their names at reception, the manager, who had obviously been close at hand, made an appearance.

"My managing director would like to meet you sir," he said. They were ceremoniously ushered down a panelled corridor into an impressive office, where a distinguished, elderly Englishman with a touch of grey at the temples, got up from a swivel chair behind a large mahogany desk,

crossed the room and shook hands with each of them in turn. They did not sit at the desk, but on deep leather sofas arranged around a coffee table. "It is a great pleasure meeting you Mr. Salgaocar," the bank's Chief Executive said, and that set the tone for a conference which lasted a good three hours, and terminated with an excellent, leisurely meal at the Managing Director's club. "We know all about you, Mr. Salgaocar," he said over the port, "and would consider it a privilege to do business with your organisation."

"You have seen the papers?" Salgaocar asked.

"We understand the requirement and are fully prepared to put up the credits, according to the usual terms, as and when you might need them."

A letter to that effect, beautifully drafted (Salgaocar made it a point to draw critical attention to the precise, yet elegant handling of the language) on heavy, crested bond paper, was hand-delivered to Salgaocar's hotel room before the day was out. Salgaocar spent some hours drafting a letter of acceptance of suitable graciousness, and when this was finally completed to his satisfaction, it was delivered with a small but tasteful gift to the Managing Director's residence. A neat au revoir.

Back in Goa, Salgaocar did not hide this new and shining golden light under a bushel, but let it be known, en passant, that he had secured a huge source of new financing. A short, brisk letter — in which, even reading between the lines, no evidence of cordiality or regret could be discerned — was sent off to the director of the Portuguese bank, terminating all transactions forthwith.

"I will accept no phone calls from the bank", Salgaocar instructed his secretary. A copy of the letter had been thoughtfully despatched to the bank's Chairman in Lisbon, a close friend of Salgaocar. The cat was well and truly among the pigeons. Within days Salgaocar's office was besieged by call after frantic phone call, a flutter of nervous letters,

personal visits from the bank's executives — all to no avail. Then one of his executives suggested a compromise. "Good idea," Salgaocar said, "you tell him."

The Director of the bank was summoned to meet a senior Salgaocar executive. His apologies fell on unsympathetic ears. Could he, perhaps, have a few words with Mr. Salgaocar today — or any time at all — entirely at his convenience.

"Mr. Salgaocar is indisposed," he was coldly told, "and likely to remain so for the near future."

"I understand from Lisbon . . ."

"We have new bankers."

"But we've worked together for years . . ."

"British bankers, who have agreed to all of our terms."

"Did you have to sever . . ."

"Oh that," the executive smiled, "we merely wish to change the nature of our transactions. All our bills will go through the London bank. From you we want a clear, unsecured overdraft of forty lakhs of rupees. We are not interested in anything else."

The Director winced.

"I do not have the authority" he protested, "I shall have to refer this to Lisbon."

"By all means do, my dear chap."

The executive was the very soul of good fellowship as he showed the despicable man the door.

They got the overdraft.

At this time, the nature of the future had become clear to Vasudev Salgaocar: there was no question about it, and no hesitation in his belief the future lay in mining, and towards this end, the House of Salgaocar was taking new form. Operating mines were brought, leased or put under production contract; concessions were applied for and granted; loyalties were pledged and forged into bonds that would grow from strength to strength over the next ten years — with the village labourers who worked the mines, the owner-drivers

of trucks, railway officials, firemen, engine drivers and wagon loaders, with the independent country craft sailors, still extensively used to supplement the capacity of the motorised barges. Mining engineers and geologists were brought into the fold; skilled administrators were inducted; an abundance of clerical staff provided underpinning. The foreign buyers had been contracted for the next few years. The ore was in the ground. The money was there. The future was at hand.

In the year 1954, Vasudev Salgaocar made another trip to Europe to secure further contracts. This time, not — and never again — as a supplicant. He was known to be a leading mine owner, a man of substance, honour and acumen. The business links with the Dutch agents had blossomed into close friendships, based on mutual trust and respect. The steel mills of the Ruhr had come to take for granted the uniformly high quality of ore from Salgaocar mills. Back home, he was well on his way to becoming the patriarch he was eventually to be: Anil, his eldest son, now a bright, articulate twelve-year old, had company — four sisters Sukanti, Sulabha, Suchan and Jyotsna — and would, within the year, have a younger brother, Shivanand. A clan was in the making.

Hundreds of Goans could make proud claim to being Salgaocar employees. They were among the best paid people in the territory and, in the days when the welfare of staff was unknown, never asked for, rarely given, and the word "union" had not entered the lexicon of labour, Salgaocar had begun to build new housing for his workers at the mines and had established medical facilities — in the form of fully equipped clinics with trained staff — free, for them and their families. Senior management — a nucleus of loyal comrades-in-arms — offered direction and leadership. Like Salgaocar, they knew the mining business thoroughly from pitface to the small print on the overseas contracts. They had learned the trade the hard way, from the bottom up, and

many of them are still with the organisation, running key departments of the Salgaocar operations today.

Vasudev Salgaocar had arrived, and while evidence of his maturity was to be seen at every turn, he still took risks which made the industry blanch. One such gamble was the speculation in rates of freight. When contracts with buyers of ore were signed, three considerations were taken into account — the cost of the ore, the insurance on the cargo, and the rate of freight charged by the shipping company. The safest way — and one most favoured by Goan mine owners — was to agree all three with the buyer at the time of signing the contract. The net profit was then a known factor and remained unaffected if freight rates suddenly went up, as they tended to, erratically and without warning. The buyer had to pay the difference. If, however, one wished to take a gamble on freight rates going down, a free-on-board contract was negotiated. The stakes were high and the risks prohibitive. Contracts were signed months in advance of shipment; if, in the meantime, freight rates went up, the shipper had to absorb the difference, stood to lose much of his profit and even — more often than anybody liked to recall — faced serious loss; on the other hand, if rates on cargo went down, he stood to gain handsomely. It was a form of behaviour severely frowned upon by established members of the mining fraternity.

When Salgaocar signed a huge forward contract for ore with a single buyer on a free-on-board basis when freight rates had been leap-frogging at an alarming pace over the past six months, the trade was appalled, prophesying disaster or worse. Even Chowgule was distressed, and worried for his friend. But against all odds, the rate of freight slumped at the time of shipment, and Salgaocar made a killing. The trade claimed it was luck, but a careful examination of the facts proves otherwise. Salgaocar's predilections as an industrialist — careful preparation, a detailed comparison, one against the other, of all foreseeable options, the

obsessive collection of every last bit of data available, swift action, all point to one inescapable conclusion — luck, in this instance, is an euphemism for foresight. It is known that he kept a close track of the movements of international currencies, shipping, major global commodities, new tonnages under construction, short- and long-term charter and general cargo rates of freight, economic trends and forecasts in countries as far removed as the United States and Japan. Perhaps the FOB contract was no gamble, but a calculated risk, looking at all of the factors involved, and the changing patterns of tonnage availability and world trade over the next six months. It is known that in later years, even in times of volatile and unpredictable currency fluctuations, Salgaocar would invariably emerge from the melee a few percentile points ahead of the market.

He could also prove a source of exasperation to his senior management. Once a week they would sit together to review the debt situation. Overdue accounts received hard-eyed scrutiny. "This one's good," a colleague would point out, "but I would recommend foreclosure on these two, cutting our losses and suing for recovery" Salgaocar, with a pensive expression, would swivel in his chair, and look out over the placid, tree-lined avenues of his beloved Vasco, lost in the pastures of distant recollection. Then he would smile, and tell of some incident or other in the early trading years when, with depressing regularity, he was strapped for cash and unable to meet his bills with the wholesalers. "People who barely knew me, went out of their way to help," he'd say, "without them we would not be sitting here today, my friends, I know how difficult it can be. No, we will not foreclose. We will not take them to court. Get them to meet me next week, and we can come to an arrangement."

To his executives' unsurprise, the bad debts stayed bad for months on end and Salgaocar never seemed to mind. They would find it difficult to reconcile the contradiction:

generosity to the point of carelessness in the one instance, and a positively Levantine ruthlessness in striking a very hard bargain in another. Salgaocar refused to discuss the issue or explain his behaviour in any coherent fashion beyond the maddeningly abstruse concession, "At times one needs to be flexible." To the concerned observer, uninitiated into Salgaocar's formative years — and there were many such — the apparent contradiction in his acts would give false substance to a legend of idiosyncrasy. Here was the executive chief of thousands of Goans, turning over crores of rupees a year, at eight in the evening of a very hard day, questioning a junior executive sharply over what he considers the unwarranted petty cash expenditure of a few dozen rupees, while at the same time subsidising small mine owners who never repaid their debts or fulfilled their contractual obligations, forcing the organisation to sustain on-going outstandings — and the interest on — lakhs of rupees. Despite all entreaty by his senior management, he would not foreclose.

One does not need to look far to reconcile motives so patently at cross purposes. They are different sides of the same coin, minted in childhood, in the years of terrible poverty and high purpose. True friendship and succour were the only safeguards against a hostile world. Loyalties born out of suffering were never to be denied. When he was down and out, the hand of friendship had led him often out of the darkness of despair. Could he do less today? He looked at the small mine owners, hopelessly out of their depth, undercapitalised, ill-equipped, and saw a younger self struggling to rise above the brutalities of Vasco's vegetable markets. He recognised clearly — and would never forget all the days of his life — that he would never have been able to do so without the unqualified help of good people, help offered at considerable sacrifice, without condition or ulterior motive — the caminhao drivers with whom he sometimes piled up debt, the "odi" boatman who would wait till midnight, if

necessary, to take him across the Zuari; the engine drivers who gave him and his baskets of vegetables free rides in the cab when he could not pay.

He could not explain all of this to his executives for he was by nature a reticent man, reserved and unforthcoming, who never gave free rein to emotion. If he could not foreclose on lakhs of rupees, it was for reasons determined by his sense of the rightness of certain things. Yet, by the same token, he knew the value of a rupee better than most men, and would wear a worthy adversary down to resigned signature in extracting the last paise of rightful profit from a contract. And he abhorred waste, whether of talent, money or time. Woe to the self-indulgent, shirking or dishonest employee. If Salgaocar's generosity was often confusing, his wrath was strikingly without ambiguity.

As his staff at the mines were soon to bear witness to.

Mohamed Shafi is, today, one of the oldest members of the Salgaocar organisation, a highly regarded foreman of the Caterpillar Tractor division. When he first came in contact with Vasudev Salgaocar, he was merely one of hundreds of anonymous technicians who, in the early days of the mining industry, performed mechanical wonders with primitive tools, by the application of grass-roots originality and intelligent, if rough-hewn innovation.

Salgaocar was, at the crack of dawn, at the Vagus plot, a remote pitface just beginning to be developed, when he saw a Michigan loader drawn up at a distance. "Why is that machine not working at the mine face?" he asked the mine's superintendent, who was not caught unawares, for all of his field staff were by now accustomed and prepared for their Chairman's instant reaction to the smallest of deviations from the working whole; the awkward incidental detail which would escape the most professional eye was brought to the immediate attention of those responsible; searching questions were asked, for which knowledgeable answers were expected as a matter of course; every effort was made

to work out solutions on the spot. The word "no" was banished, by Chief Executive fiat, from the vocabulary of Salgaocar's supervisory staff.

"It broke down during the last working shift sir," the superintendent explained, "we are short of spares. Vasco has been informed. We should have the loader repaired and back in operation in a few days."

"I want it done this morning," Salgaocar said.

This was not as arbitrary a command as it seems today, for heavy duty equipment machinery at the mines at that time was in critical short supply. The disability of a single loader could seriously hamper operations at the pitface. The superintendent had genuine problems, and he was careful to keep these from Salgaocar — the plot was located in thick jungle; the roads were very bad; there wasn't a single workshop in the entire area. "We shall try," he promised Salgaocar and passed urgent word to his people. They scoured the area for a mechanic and finally located Mohamed Shafi who was working at the adjoining Kale mine, owned by Bandodkar and under contract to Salgaocar. He was made to down tools and brought by jeep to Vagus. The Chairman took him personally to the offending loader.

"Can you repair that machine?" he asked.

Shafi swiftly assessed the damage.

"Yes," he said.

Salgaocar turned to the superintendent, "See that he gets all the help he needs, and let me know when the job is complete."

With a technical agility and skill that was to bring him modest fame in later years, Shafi set about the task. He had brought a set of tools along with him, and the rudiments of what might have been loosely described as spare parts — makeshift, roughly soldered odds and ends which bore not the slightest resemblance to the gleaming machinery laid out, row upon glittering row, in full colour, in the pages of the Michigan loader servicing manual. No matter. Shafi

could, if called upon, start a fire with twigs. In an hour or so the job was done and the Chairman informed of the fact.

Salgaocar, mightily pleased, as much by the fact that the loader was operating, as by the pleasant revelation that he had discovered a man who got things done! Nothing made him happier. He asked Shafi to take tea with him. They walked some way along a jungle path and, in a small clearing, came upon a rude shack — plank benches, a long wooden table, roof thatched with dry palm fronds, a huge dekchi of tea in a corner bubbling over a wood fire — set up by some quick-witted rural capitalist to service the needs of the workers.

Very sweet, steaming hot tea was served to them in earthernware bowls.

"How long have you been working for us?" Salgaocar asked.

"Three months Shet."

"Very good, now tell me . . ."

Gently, as one friend to another, he drew Shafi out, asking after his experience — how had he learned his trade? how many years had he been at it?; where did he live? how did he manage his finances? what difficulties did he face in his job? He enquired, with much tact, after Shafi's family, his wife and children, were they well looked after and how did the children do at school? (Years later, Shafi, a Muslim, would plan a second marriage and approach Salgaocar for a loan. This was given with a chuckle and a mild dig, "How soon will you come around a third time?") Now he attempted to answer Salgaocar's questions as best he could. They had a second cup of tea and talked for the better part of an hour. Impressed by the transparent honesty of the man, and his genuine love for the job, Salgaocar increased his salary on the spot by a hundred rupees a month and gave him a promotion.

"You will now have increased responsibilities," he told Shafi, "I have the agency for American Caterpillars for all of

Goa. You will be in charge of repairs and, from time to time, you will have to travel to other mines to service and repair the machines. Agreed?"

Beaming, Shafi nodded assent.

He went about the new job with a will, even if the Caterpillar repair division consisted, at the outset, of a man (himself!) a boy (an inexperienced lad, a bit thick, who fetched, carried and asked unnecessary questions) and a Jeep station wagon which had seen better days. The work was hard — as Salgaocar had promised — for they had to travel at all hours of the day and night from mine to mine carrying out emergency repairs. Even though the Caterpillars were excellent machines, they were operated under horrendous conditions. Shafi's journey cycles conducted in the station wagon loaded with spares and tools, could never follow a logical sequence based on the shortest road distance between two mines, for they were limited by the carrying capacity of the vehicle, and the fact that a large central garage and stores depot serviced all of the Salgaocar concessions. They had to return to it frequently for replenishments.

"Lakhs of rupees worth of material were stocked in that single storage point," Shafi says, "fuel pumps, engine and mine bearings, parts for hydraulic equipment, hundreds of gear differentials, spring leaf absorbers and heavy-duty axles. After a few months, I noticed that the inventory levels were much more than we required, yet fresh stocks kept coming in daily. Something was seriously wrong."

Indeed it was. The engineer in charge of the workshop and spare parts depot had conspired with four senior mechanics to run a highly lucrative and wholly illegal business on the side. They were siphoning off expensive parts from stock, fiddling the books to hide the tort, and had established a freelance repair operation, offered to all comers. Cash on the barrel and no questions asked. Adding insult to serious injury, this illicit activity was carried out at

night, by shaded petromax lamps, in Salgaocar's own workshop! Shafi's Boy Friday now came into his own. Deputed to spy on this blatant example of the free enterprise spirit at its worst, he spent many uncomfortable nights hidden in the bushes, recording the comings and goings of vehicles in need of repair. The magnitude of the operation soon became clear; Salgaocar was being cheated on a scale running into thousands of rupees a month. Shafi deliberated agonizingly on his course of action. The engineer was a senior member of Salgaocar's mining staff, and suspicion (even if based on damning circumstantial evidence!) was not legal proof. Yet Salgaocar had given him strict instructions to report back to him personally at Vasco if any problems arose which required management intervention. Shafi took a hard decision. Swearing his young assistant to secrecy, he made the long trip to Vasco, and sought an interview with the Chairman. He remembers that he was made to wait only ten minutes.

Salgaocar heard him out in silence.

"You are sure?" — was all he said.

Shafi was prepared to swear by the Holy Book.

"Go back to your work and tell no one," Salgaocar said, "I will make my own investigations."

The door had barely closed behind Shafi when Salgaocar sent an innocuous message to the Mines Superintendent. They were applying for additional loan facilities and the bank required a stock appraisal. Could he rush the inventories to Vasco as quickly as possible. When these arrived, Salgaocar studied them with great care, comparing figures of stocks on the ground with head office records. A week later he made a surprise visit to the mines, turning up one morning at seven without warning to anyone. To the Mines Superintendent he merely said, "I thought I'd take a look." Commandeering a jeep, they visited the mining sites; not by look or phrase did Salgaocar betray his feelings; he talked with the workers and foremen; at the new concessions he

discussed ore samples with the geologists in their tents and the potential of different sites; back at Vagus, he suggested that they take a look at the repair workshop. He made the rounds casually, asking questions of the engineer in charge, which were no more than routine, oblivious to a marked nervousness on the man's part when they walked past the stocking areas. Then, thanking them all, he returned to Vasco.

There he took stock of the situation. His accountants had sorted out the figures and uncovered what was without a shadow of doubt a massive fiddle. Spare parts worth thousands of rupees could not be accounted for each month. No matter how they worked the costs and quantities, relating them to the needs of their own mines and concessions, there was a short-fall — a consistent percentage moreover — every thirty days. Salgaocar called in two of his trusted senior aides and explained the situation in the strictest of confidence. "Make the necessary enquiries," he said, "I want a report in a week." The mining grapevine was an instrument of swift precision. Bad news and good travelled at a speed which put wireless and telegraph to shame. It brought news, gossip and the latest speculation to every point in the mining district where men assembled to work or live. Drawing on a fifth column which ensured that the only good secret was an open secret, no activity — no matter how clandestine — could stay hidden for long. Not only did the Salgaocar organisation have easy access to these valuable conduits of information, they could be considered (with one or two other leading mine owners) founder members of these excellently conducted networks. It took Salgaocar's aides exactly forty-eight hours to establish the facts of the matter beyond any doubt. They returned with names, dates, details of equipment and the sums of money which had changed hands.

"No one else must know," Salgaocar said when they brought him the news. He asked for the personnel files of

the engineer and the four mechanics, called in his secretary, sent out a "No disturbance" signal to the switchboard, and got down to work. He dictated five letters. Each contained one sentence. The Accounts Department was instructed to issue five cheques. He sent a red message to the Mines Superintendent: "Most Urgent. I want a meeting at Mines Headquarters tomorrow morning at seven with all executives — I repeat, all executies — and these five men (they were mentioned by surname only). Ensure confidentiality."

He arrived at the mines the next morning half an hour earlier than planned. Nobody was about. He got the peon to rearrange the conference room furniture into the configuration he thought was best suited to exercise cauterising company discipline. The conference table was removed; his desk was brought in; five straight-backed armless chairs were placed in a single close line three paces from the edge of his desk. Twelve other conference chairs were positioned in a crescent well beyond this central assembly. Salgaocar took his seat and waited.

At seven there was a knock on the door. The Mines Superintendent put his head in.

"Send those five men in first," Salgaocar said.

The engineer of the stores and repair shop and the four mechanics filed in. Without expression Salgaocar pointed to the chairs before his desk, and when they were seated looked into each man's eyes in turn for long moments till the other looked away; when he turned to the engineer there was contempt and utter dismissal in his gaze. A knock on the door announced the entry of the twelve senior mining executives. They sat where they were told to, in the half circle of conference room chairs. Something was seriously amiss. Why were they here? The Chairman had never called such a meeting before; it resembled nothing so much as a trial, a mediaeval inquisition; they looked at the wall across, at the floor, no one would catch Salgaocar's eye. No man spoke.

With an arctic desolation in each word, Salgaocar opened the meeting, "These five men have betrayed a trust, and brought public dishonour to our company . . ." Then he spoke without pause for a full half hour, and as the sentences unfolded, and the conspiracy was made plain, as the facts were brought forward and the figures announced so all should know the extent of the financial slander, the dismay of his executives gave place to shame, deep regret, then anger, but each man kept his counsel. "This will never happen again," Salgaocar concluded. Addressing the five men before him directly for the first time, he said, "You will leave this room, go to your quarters, pack your belongings and get out of my property before nightfall."

He pointed to the five envelopes on his desk, stood up and left the room, walked out of the building, got into his car and returned to Vasco. His executives, without a word of approbation or farewell, followed. Five men had ceased to exist for the House of Salgaocars; five careers were crippled. The engineer opened his envelope. It contained a cheque and a letter on which a single line was typewritten, "As of this day, your services to the House of Salgaocar are dishonourably terminated."

Before the week was out, all of Goa knew.

And yet, before the days of the month were at end, another episode occurred; the industry was hard put to reconcile a termination so surgical with this latest evidence of sheer good-natured charity, as vividly and avidly put about. On a visit to the mines, a few weeks after the traumatic conclusion to an affair which was to rankle with him till the last of his days, Vasudev Salgaocar had arranged to meet his mining executives to explore an important concession, recently granted by the Government, and opined to be the most important piece of ground allocated to the organisation thus far. It was many miles distant from the land he had under his control, and the Mercedes 220S in which he travelled could take him no nearer than ten miles from the new acquisition.

They transferred to a jeep. Four of his executives, Salgaocar and the driver crammed into the sturdy little vehicle, and made their way, at snail's pace, along a rutted jungle path, little more than a natural footpath made by the villagers, until they came upon the site. They spent a couple of hours exploring the new concession, speculating upon its possibilities, and trying to iron over the disagreement that soon became evident. The geologist and mining engineer were of one mind: they wished to begin exploration at the far northern end of the concession where surface tests had been promising; the rest of the party were less determinant, at odds with the evidence, while Salgaocar made no comment. He left the group and tramped the concession on foot, under the blazing sun, oblivious to all else, for an hour, then he paused at a spot and said, "Here we will excavate." His executives were highly vocal in their disagreement (he allowed a definite expression of individual opinion in all of his dealings, particularly when it came to the opinions of experts) but now, for the very first time, he was adamant to the point of obstinacy; he would not be swayed by evidence or argument. "Here we will dig," he said, "get on with it".

There was no further discussion. They walked back to the jeep, took the long painful journey on what passed for a road and when they reached the junction, Salgaocar took their leave, formally, as was his custom, shaking hands with each man. He got into the Mercedes. The car started, went a short distance, stopped and reversed. It came to a halt beneath a mango tree where an old man took shelter from the sun. He was a very ancient party indeed, bent over a stick and a bundle of belongings, attired in the tattered remains of a langote and a loose shirt. His colleagues looked on in astonishment, for Salgaocar had now left the car and was walking across the road to the old man. They exchanged words, but were too far distant to be overheard; then Salgaocar put his arm about the other's shoulders and

together they walked to, and — wonders would never cease! — got into the Mercedes together and drove off.

For the next few days the man of the hour was the driver of the Mercedes. Buttonholed wherever he went — for the story of Salgaocar and the ancient wayfarer had spread throughout the mines — he was pestered for the truth of the matter until, swearing his listeners to secrecy for Salgaocar took unkindly to indiscretion among his personal staff, he told them what had happened: Salgaocar had approached the old man and asked him in Konkani, "What on earth are you doing in the middle of the jungle in the heat of midday?" It was the month of May, a few weeks before the monsoon and the mining districts broiled in the heat and humidity.

"Waiting for a bus."

"The bus stop is fifteen miles away."

"I am resting; soon I shall begin walking again."

"Come with me," Salgaocar took him by the arm and when he felt an awkward hesitancy, put his arm about the man's shoulders and led him into the Mercedes. He directed the driver to take the fifteen mile detour to the bus stop. Once the car was underway, Salgaocar, asked,

"How old are you?"

"Eighty-five, eighty-seven, God knows. I am an old man and do not remember things too well."

"Why are you alone?"

"My son does not care for me and his wife has no respect. I am going to Sanvordem to live with my daughter."

"Does she know you are coming?"

"No."

"Do you have any money?"

"Ten rupees."

Salgaocar sighed. There was silence, then the sounds of movement, the rustling of paper on paper. The driver glanced quickly into the rear mirror and caught Salgaocar in the act of rolling a few hundred rupee notes into a neat tube

and placing it in the pocket of the old man's shirt. The act was performed with a quick embarrassment. Then he spoke softly and persuasively, in the manner of a younger member of a family addressing, with firm respect, a very old relative, "It is very dangerous for a man of your age to walk miles in the sun, and alone at that! What if you catch sun stroke and collapse? Who will get you to a doctor? Now go and visit your daughter, and if you ever have to travel a great distance again, and do not have the money, enquire among the villagers. There is sure to be a truck or van going your way. No Goan will refuse a village elder a ride. Will you promise me that?"

The old party responded with a cheerful, toothless smile.

"May God be with you Shet," he said.

"Forget the bus stop," Salgaocar told the driver, "we will take him to Sanvordem."

They dropped him off at his daughter's house. The old man hobbled across the road with his bundle and stick, and the driver observed in the wing mirror that he did not enter the house immediately, but stood on the road, waving at the car till it was out of sight.

And if this incident was cause for amazement, a few days later there was awe in the mines. The engineers had struck a rich lode of iron ore in the new concession, a few feet below the surface, precisely where Salgaocar had insisted they dig.

* * * *

In the next few years Salgaocar found himself as hard pressed as he would ever be. The mining boom had begun to ride a parabolic curve and he was determined to be the first at the crest. With speed and efficiency his organisation pursued the priorities he had worked out. Production took precedence over all else and towards this end, he acquired new mines and concessions, contracting when he couldn't buy, leasing when he was not able to buy or contract, leading the

competition in complex manoeuvres involving Government, the banks, the village labour, transport — at breakneck speed, invariably a short-head before the others — always with a view to producing more and better ore, and shipping it out faster. He ploughed profits back as quickly as he made them in pursuit of his second priority: the acquisition and employment of the very latest technology and the most experienced talent.

A state-of-the-art transformation began. Pneumatic drills, mechanical shovels and tipper trucks, and scientific blasting methods helped considerably in speeding ore retrieval at mine sites. Foreign technicians and geologists explored new areas for mining potential and maintained strict control on the quality of the ore exported. More motorised barges were imported from Holland and Germany till the Salgaocar fleet became Goa's largest. Hundreds of trucks and dumpers moved ore and waste swiftly to loading points and dumping sites.

The work force now numbered thousands and this, the third in Salgaocar's list of priorities, was given very special attention. It was not enough, in his view, to provide clean, commodious and cheap housing, local schools and play-grounds, fully-staffed and equipped medical clinics offering free services, co-operative shops making a veritable cornucopia of household provisions available at subsidised rates, places for worship and play — it was equally if not more important to extend the hand of honest friendship, take labour into true partnership, extend the concept of family and community to the thousands who had taken shelter in the Salgaocar fold. He, as their acknowledged leader, must set precept and example. No visit to the mines was complete unless he spent hours with his people, moving from village to village, house to house, till "Papa," "Shet" or "Vasudevbab," as he began fondly to be called, became a familiar figure, informed with affection and authority in equal measure, approachable by the humblest of his people.

No one who asked to see him was ever turned away. No genuine request for help went unheeded, and old loyalties which not even his closest aides were aware of were renewed, with a sense of splendid invigoration.

One morning a man turned up at the central offices in the mining district, a figure of such monumental decrepitude that the watchmen at the main gate refused him entry. With an arrogance quite at odds with his appearance, he demanded a meeting with Vasudev Salgaocar. The gate keepers were incensed at the insolence of this tramp. Despite a jaunty dignity that wore rather well, he did not inspire the least bit of confidence. His clothes had seen better days, and while clean, had been patched carelessly in the most improbable places. He had walked a considerable distance to get there for the bottoms of his trousers were rimmed with the red dust of the mining district. The chappals he wore had been through the wars; bits and pieces of leather had come loose and now flapped about his feet as he shuffled indignantly at the gate, asking with authority for Vasudev Salgaocar. He wore an ancient straw hat with the brim turned down and it was clear that he had not shaved for three days at least. The watchmen could have told him (but couldn't be bothered) that the stubble alone was sufficient to deny him audience with their Chairman.

"Who are you?" they asked through the bars of the gate.

"A friend of Vasudev's!"

This vagabond, this insolent vagrant, referring to the Chairman by his first name! This blot on the fair soil of their mines! He was told off, without words being minced, in Konkani, a language among whose many virtues may be found the most delightful varieties of abuse. The man refused to budge; indeed he raised his voice, offered scorn for scorn with a fluency that brought the blood rushing to the watchmen's cheeks, and demanded to talk with an officer of the company. An *officer!* This was too much. Either he leave forthwith or the keepers of the gate promised to perform the

task physically, assisting his passage with boot and danda as far down the road as they could. The confrontation had by now reached classic Goan proportions: everybody within the radius of half a mile were made painfully aware of the proceedings. A Salgaocar executive, annoyed at having his work interrupted, decided to investigate. He silenced the watchmen with a look, and asked the man, "What is it you want?"

"I would like to meet my old friend Vasudev."

Something about his manner gave the executive pause.

"How do you know him?" he asked.

"We go back a long way."

An executive decision was taken.

"Mr. Salgaocar has not arrived yet, but is expected any moment. Come with me."

The gatekeepers, with bad grace, and a physical reluctance that an untutored observer might have put down to terminal arthritis, went about unlocking the gate. They made much of it; the vagrant was unperturbed; he waited patiently till the gate was opened, inch by slow inch, till there was a narrow gap barely sufficient for him to pass through. This he did with an easy grace and nimbleness of foot, and thanked the watchmen with elaborate courtesy. They stared at the ground. Chappals flapping he followed the executive into the main building, and was asked to wait at the reception.

Word spread. The Chairman had an unusual visitor. Curiosity got the better of prudence and streams of Salgaocar personnel passed casually up and down the reception hall, casting quick glances at this exotic visitor who, now, one ankle comfortably cocked on the other knee, sipped at a cup of tea and looked about him with a relaxed confidence. A car drew up at the gate; the reception stood to instant attention; the visitor smiled and lit a beedi. The Mercedes swept down the drive and drew up before the building. An executive rushed forward, whispered

deferentially in the Chairman's ear and pointed in the direction of the stranger.

The moment Salgaocar entered the office, the man leaped to his feet and said, in a voice ringing with familiarity and claim, "Vasudev!" The reception held its breath. Salgaocar hesitated for a second, then he smiled, a smile that vanquished years, "Vasant," he replied and held his arms out. The men embraced warmly, parted, held each other at arm's length while (with a touch of anxiety perhaps) they looked fondly for signs of change, for the scars of time and experience, then embraced once more, for the essentials were still whole and honoured. Arm in arm, Salgaocar and Vasant, the "odi" boatman of his youth whom he had not seen or heard from in twenty-five years, went into the Chairman's office. The door was left ajar, an unusual lapse on Salgaocar's part, but hardly comparable to what happened next. With the reception to a man (and a girl) wide-eyed and disbelieving, the Chairman made Vasant sit in his own high-backed, brass-studded leather chair, and took a seat opposite the desk. Both men burst into laughter.

That day Vasant's son joined the Salgaocar organisation as a bargeman.

On the one hand, incidents such as this — and there were many — enhanced the legend of Salgaocar's generosity and loyalty to mythic proportions; on the other, plain for all to see, and brutally antithetical to his qualities of heart, was the man's obsessive dedication to the job — more than to his career, his public image, his increasing influence beyond the confines of the industry, his financial stature — to the bare bones of the daily grind. He visited the mines twice or thrice a week. Well before his departure from Vasco — often as early as five in the morning — he would begin a round of phone calls to various mining locations: to the engineers in charge of individual mines and concessions, then to the Mines Superintendent at his home, to the executives responsible for the screening plant and the river

loading points, to the foremen in charge of the motorised barges and finally to the manager supervising the loading of the ore onto the steamers at Mormugao port.

Of each of the men he would make three sets of detailed enquiries. The first concerned the previous day's operations. How much ore had been taken from the ground? What quantities had been transported to the screening plant? How many shifts had the plant worked and what were the day's figures? He would check with the barge foremen on the quantities shipped, and with his port executive on barge arrivals, gang workings and final steam loading quantities for the day. And he was full of incidental questions: had there been any machinery breakdowns? Any problems with labour? spare parts? or diesel oil shortages? The second line of enquiry had to do with the plans for the present day. How much of yesterday's retrieval still lay uncleared at the mines, unscreened at the plant, awaited loading at the river points? What was the schedule for the day's shifts? Lastly, he would try and cull from them similar information regarding the competition, in as much depth as possible, so that he ended up with a reasonably accurate summary of Goa's mining activities for the past twenty-four hours, and the day at hand.

It took him an hour to get his phone calls done. At first blush it would seem that much of the time was wasted, for he repeated the same questions to different executives, but it was merely his way of getting at the facts. As an acute observer of human nature — and fully experienced in the ways of the species under duress — he knew that his people were wont, on occasion, to tell him what they felt would please him most, stretching or obstructing the truth as the case might be. Thus the checks, double-checks, counter-checks, so that when he got into the Mercedes at five-thirty or thereabouts, he was reasonably satisfied that the information he had acquired was as accurate as human effort could make it. The trip to the mines took him an hour and a half,

and he was often accompanied by one or two head-office executives. It was not a silent journey, for Salgaocar would comment at length on the environment; everything was grist to his ceaselessly enquiring mind; Einstein's 'holy curiosity' would stay with him till the end.

As the car wound through Vasco's streets, a shadow would mar his mood. He would draw their attention to the first symptoms of urban decomposition and decay: the tin roofs of embryonic shanty towns; the unkempt squares (once exquisitely gardened plazas); the overflowing garbage collection centers; the rapid acceleration of population and, in inverse proportion, the swiftly declining quality of the civic services. He would address the problem in later years with decisive courage, braving the wrath of Minister and MLA, shrugging off the censure of his fellow industrialists and the urgings to tact and caution from his colleagues and family. But that was far into the future, and as the Mercedes crested the rise of the plateau and began the winding, picturesque descent down the hill, along the broad, serene estuary of the Zuari, the early morning sun catching the tips of the waves, making carpeted patterns of dancing golden crystals, his mood would visibly mellow, for this was the Goa he loved and cherished and would strive all his life to preserve.

The conversation took sudden flights of fancy. A lone trawler silhouetted in dark outlines against the pearl horizon where sea and sky met in seamless opalescence, would prompt a long, intelligent and lively discourse on the potential of organised fisheries along the deep, sheltered harbours of Goa's coastline. He would surprise his executives by a comprehensive grasp of the subject, a catholic knowledge of the problems and promises the industry offered: the nature of the catch in terms of quantity and quality of fish; the seasonal biases in the hauls; the costs of canning; the requirements of foreign markets, prices and potential profits; the employment possibilities. "Perhaps we should look into this

some day," he would say. Then the car would shudder over a bad stretch of road, and his thoughts would suddenly take off on another tangent.

Cynical contractors, working hand in glove with corrupt Government officials, were the basic reason why Goan roads did not last more than a single monsoon, and off he would go, explaining why road construction was poor, a detailed exposition of the technical and raw material considerations which made for smooth, strong, long-lasting surfaces: the levelling of the land; the composition of the underlay, the thickness of the tar and macadam surface. How these factors had to be determined by a careful study of road traffic: the numbers of vehicles, loads, tyre widths and depths; the frequency of natural hazards such as floods; the annual rainfall and the intensity of the showers the roads had to withstand; all of the many aspects of the problem which had to be studied in conjunction, analysed and understood, before the engineers could work out specifications and tender notices put out. And then, crossing the spanking new bridge over the Zuari, he would notice canoes moored on the far bank, still used to ferry the poorer villagers across, and this would prompt happy reminiscences of his early trading days: he would recall anectodes, extraordinarily rich in detail, with a sharp eye for the dramatic and a droll sense of the humorous, laid over with a certain wistful regret at the passing of an age which had brought him much happiness. When they approached the mines, his face took on a taut seriousness, as though the harshness of the landscape was reflected in his thoughts. He became quiet, absorbed with the activities of the day ahead and by the time the Mercedes drew up at the gates, all memory of the journey had gone; Goa's first mining professional was about his business.

The Mercedes was parked. No time was wasted on pleasantries. Salgaocar and the Mines Superintendent got into the first jeep. His executives piled into the next and they were off.

The first stop was at the screening plant, a unit built along the major river loading point at a cost of a crore of rupees. The industry — placing convention and immediate profit before investment and future gain — sorted manually at mine sites, dumped huge mountains of waste, and shipped the rest. They were of the highly vocal opinion that the expenditure of a crore on a mechanical screening unit would take top place on the list of Salgaocar's follies. But he had, as always, looked a few years ahead, to the time when the foreign buyers would insist on better, more uniform grades of ore, and he was proved right again. The screening plant performed the task very rapidly — eight hundred tons per hour — and with an accuracy impossible to human hand or eye.

Years later, a project requiring much greater technical virtuosity would be undertaken by Salgaocar for the purpose of upgrading the quality and quantity of ore retrieval. It would be built at the cost of five crores of rupees and would be called the "Beneficiation" Plant, a rather lovely qualifier, owing familial allegiance to the Latin root "bene" meaning good, and to such engaging siblings as "benefactor," he who does good, and "benediction," to bless with goodness, to purify. At first appearance, an unusual name to find in an industry as down to earth as mining but, as we shall see, the beneficiation Plant was created to live up to its antecedents.

Iron ore, like coal, oil and other minerals, is a non-renewable asset; indeed, all of Goa's known reserves are reckoned to last, at current levels of production, for not more than another fifty years. Goa's mining industry had, in the earlier stages, taken the line of least resistance, sorting and shipping high grade ore and creating, in the process, million ton hills of low grade rejects. While in its infancy, this posed no greater problem than finding dumping sites (and these were close at hand and numerous), however, as the industry grew to maturity overseas, and steel plants began converting to newer and more efficient technologies the

demand grew for purer grades of ore. As time passed, for every ton of ore exported, one and a half tons, then two, then three of rejects were cast aside; dumping sites became scarce; worse still, the ore was leaving the ground faster than new mines were being developed.

Salgaocar's beneficiation plant employed the latest, most cost-efficient and scientific methods of purification of rejected material into high usable grades, and while the competition scoffed again, he began yet another pioneering activity which was to pay quick, satisfying dividends. Today, around fifty percent of all Salgaocar exports are obtained from beneficiatory low-grade ore, with two direct advantages: the profits are considerably enhanced, and the assets in the ground are employed that much more slowly. When, years later, an environmental investigation team sponsored by the World Health Organisation descended on Goa — much to the industry's alarm! — to examine and report on the damage caused to the ecology by mining and its processing facilities, they visited Salgaocar's Beneficiation Plant and were pleasantly surprised. Effluents were being purified at considerable cost before being released into the surrounding water tables. When samples were tested, the treated effluent was found to be purer in every particular than the natural water in the environment. Congratulated by the team leader, Salgaocar quipped, "Perhaps I should bill the Government for improving the public water supply!"

Now at the screening plant, he would discuss the day's production with the manager, satisfy himself that enough run of mine was available for meeting the production schedule, that all of the other parameters of the operation — power, parts, people — were in efficient position, and then move on to an examination of every one of the river loading points. Here, nothing escaped his attention; the minutest flaw — the correct alignment of the barges, for instance — would find Salgaocar delivering a curt reprimand, and instructions for immediate corrective action. He would, in

the course of this activity, ask endless questions of the people he met. Did the bargemen anticipate a diesel shortage? What was the tyre position? How long would stocks last? On an earlier visit, the new excavators were having problems with the transmission; had this been sorted out? His executives were expected to have adequate answers ready. If not, he wished to know why? They knew better than to tender excuses, and they could not prevaricate, for his knowledge of mining was encyclopaedic.

On one of his trips, he was waylaid by an aggressive truck salesman, who had been told that Salgaocar was particularly conducive to a sales proposition when he was on home ground. The salesman spread handfuls of colourful, expensively printed literature on the table; Salgaocar ignored them. "All the best mines have placed orders," the salesman said, "Chowgule, Sesa Goa, Timblo . . ." Salgaocar made no comment. "And the prices are subject to a cash discount of . . ."

"Give me the facts," Salgaocar interrupted, "what is the diesel consumption?"

"Easily ten kilometres to the litre," the salesman beamed.

"For what length of time, over what road gradients, with what kinds of loads?"

The salesman began scribbling furiously on a pad with, Salgaocar noticed, an expensive fountain pen.

"The width of the tyres? How soon do the treads wear? What is the life of the tilting mechanism?"

The salesman pleaded ignorance.

"Have any of your trucks done trial runs in the mines with full loads and if so, for what period of time?"

Considerably chastened, the salesman admitted that they had not, terminated the interview and departed with alacrity and a visible sense of relief; emotions which were not, Salgaocar commented dryly to his executives after the man had left, at all in evidence when he arrived.

At half past one, they returned to the mines office for a quick lunch, and ignoring requests that he rest for a while, they were off again in an hour. It would be a long, hot, dusty, tiring afternoon; they travelled from mine to mine, examining one pitface after the other; his eye for flaws was unerring. When he noticed a truck which seemed to move faster than the others, he would have it stopped and the contents examined; if it was found to be carrying low grade, lighter ore, or happened to be underloaded, it would be sent back and the mines manager and driver hauled over the coals. At every mine he would climb down to the deepest levels, often to the water table, where very expensive, specialised equipment extracted ore under water, then climb to the highest point above the excavation where dumper trucks would be disposing of the waste. Machinery fascinated him, even though he was not mechanically inclined, and his questions were intelligent and knowledgeable when it came to the functioning of mining equipment — the huge tractor-shovels, the heavy-duty pneumatic drills, the massive pumping set systems which enabled the mines to be worked below the water shed. And when, finally satisfied with the situation on the ground, the day's work was yet undone. They would return to the central office at dusk, and chew the fat over a bottle of premium scotch, invariably his favourite, "Black Label" which Salgaocar never neglected to bring with him in the Mercedes.

They would exchange gossip, comment, suggestion, run through the problems they had encountered and the solutions that might be profitably applied, and work out the following day's programme. To the occasional guest, it was a fine example of institutional democracy at its working best. The day's strenuous physical activity and the mellowing effects of the whiskey made for an easy, relaxed informality. Each man spoke his mind. The give-and-take was free and constructive, and not without an earthy humour, for these were rough-hewed men who made their living by working

the land. When they broke up at about nine at night, and his colleagues saw Salgaocar to the Mercedes with jovial good wishes, it was clear that on this day, and in this company, if he stood first, it was by common consensus and among equals.

Yet there were times when they worried about him and despaired at his lack of prudence. A monsoon storm had broken over the mines on a day when Salgaocar was scheduled to visit. It was a storm of a severity never before witnessed in Goa. In eight hours ten inches of rain had inundated the land, caused rivers to overflow their banks, washed away minor bridges, brought down telephone and power cables. Even the wireless ceased to function. The mines simply stopped working. The rain fell in thick misty streams, vertical rivers of rushing water and visibility was reduced to a few yards. Just when they had decided that Salgaocar's Mercedes could never make it, the watchmen announced the approach of a vehicle. They hurried to the gate, huddling under umbrellas in the downpour. A pair of headlights — too large to be a car's — could be dimly seen, fogged and diffused in the haze, as it attempted, waywardly, to negotiate the curving road, in imminent danger of losing the steep shoulder and toppling over. They could see the wipers moving furiously, to little avail, and the driver struggling to move the steering against the thick slush. Then they let out a collective sigh of relief. With a lurch and a controlled skid, the vehicle managed the last curve and drove slowly up to the gate. It was the latest and largest of the heavy-duty trucks, a Thorneycroft, with the highest road clearance in the fleet. Yet signs of its passage through the storm gave clear evidence of the hazards of the journey: marks of mud and slush could be seen as high as the cabdriver's door and the windscreen was covered with scores of dead insects. Then they noticed a figure crouched on *top of the cab* with a raincoat over its head. The coat was raised; a familiar voice called out, with a chuckle, "What's new?"

Salgaocar had arrived.

The storm did not abate. He spent hours discussing damage control with his people and left later in the day, by the same vehicle and in the same fashion.

Those were the years of other, if less risky, triumphs. The expansion of the Salgaocar organisation into various lines of activity, though over-shadowed by the dramatic achievements and breakthroughs of the iron ore division, began as far back as 1954, when Salgaocar's pre-eminence in trading was given further underpinning by the opening of branches and showrooms — carefully phased over the years as the investment in premises, stocks and staff was considerable — in the towns of Mormugao, Panjim, Sanvordem and Mapusa. Sole distribution rights were acquired for a range of products manufactured overseas — automobile and truck spare parts, earth-moving and excavating equipment, road-making machinery, construction and building materials, wines and liqueurs, household goods of all kinds.

At the same time, the company moved into the entertainment business, bought over or leased a string of theatres, and began distributing films in bulk (a boon to the mining villages where touring vans showed the latest films on makeshift screens under the stars). Vasco's first hotel was built by Salgaocar, a sorely needed amenity and, for the first time in the city's history, bulk catering was undertaken on a professional footing. An insurance company — Goa's first — was added to the list of what was fast assuming the proportions of a young, lively conglomerate. The shipchandlering business had blossomed into a mature stevedoring operation. Salgaocar secured the agencies of a number of international maritime houses and handled the loading and unloading of all ships in Mormugao carrying their flags. A civil engineering department undertook the construction of commercial buildings and Government works, paying very keen attention to the roads it built!

This spectrum of activity served three important objectives: it gave Salgaocar a safer and wider base of operations. The Salgaocar reputation for honesty and good value was now established, equally effectively, with the man in the street and the highest echelons of business, Government and the foreign trade. Perhaps most vitally for the organisation, it saw the creation of a highly skilled, perfectly motivated management team, a group of able, trusted senior executives. "A perfect example of national integration," Salgaocar would say later, "they come from all over India!" Indeed they did, for chauvinism was not one of his failings and all through his career he would choose the best man for the job, irrespective of caste, creed or community, and if he was a steady family man as well, how could one ever go wrong? The management team eventually came to embody the highest calibre of talents ever assembled under one roof in Goa, in areas as diverse as mining and entertainment, barge building and insurance, trading and hotels. There was a single common denominator; it had been forged in the incandescence of Vasudev Salgaocar's personality, and now stood poised to meet any challenge, fine-honed, loyal and wholly committed. In the years to come it would establish beyond any doubt Salgaocar's undisputed leadership in the iron ore industry. The company would achieve vertical integration in its mining operations to a degree unmatched in Goa or India.

Today, the organisation works five mines and is developing two new concessions. A fleet of 45 heavy duty dumpers and 250 trucks transport 25 lakh tons of ore each year over a network of roads, bridges and jetties (much of it built by Salgaocars) to four huge mechanical river loading points, 15 barges, capacities ranging from 750 to 1750 tons transport the ore in two transhippers, self-loading and discharging ore carriers of 15,800 dwt capacity. These, in turn, are capable loading bulk carriers of over 60,000 dwt moored as far as five miles out at sea at a rate of 15 to 20,000 tons daily. Taking the

process to its ultimate conclusion, the Damodar bulk carriers flies the flag of Salgaocar bulk carriers, carrying Salgaocar ore from Salgaocar mines to countries around the world.

Many records were established en route. Salgaocar pioneered the handling of ore in bulk from pitface to port of shipment. The all-time loading record in the port of Mormugao — 24,871 tons in 24 hours — is a Salgaocar first, still unbroken. Another record of 4,37,000 tons in 30 days was achieved at the river loading points. The two largest bulk carriers ever handled in Indian ports were loaded by Salgaocar, the m.v. "Bellary," turned around in a record twelve days in Mormugao in March 1974, and the 1,50,000 ton m.v. "Turcoman," a high water mark: it was the largest single shipment of ore to Europe ever made, established Indian credentials for all time, and opened up European markets on a regular intensive scale. Salgaocar also established a shipyard for the construction of barges, and pioneered this vital ancillary industry in India; today it is capable of building barges of 1,000 ton capacity with wholly indigenous talents and materials.

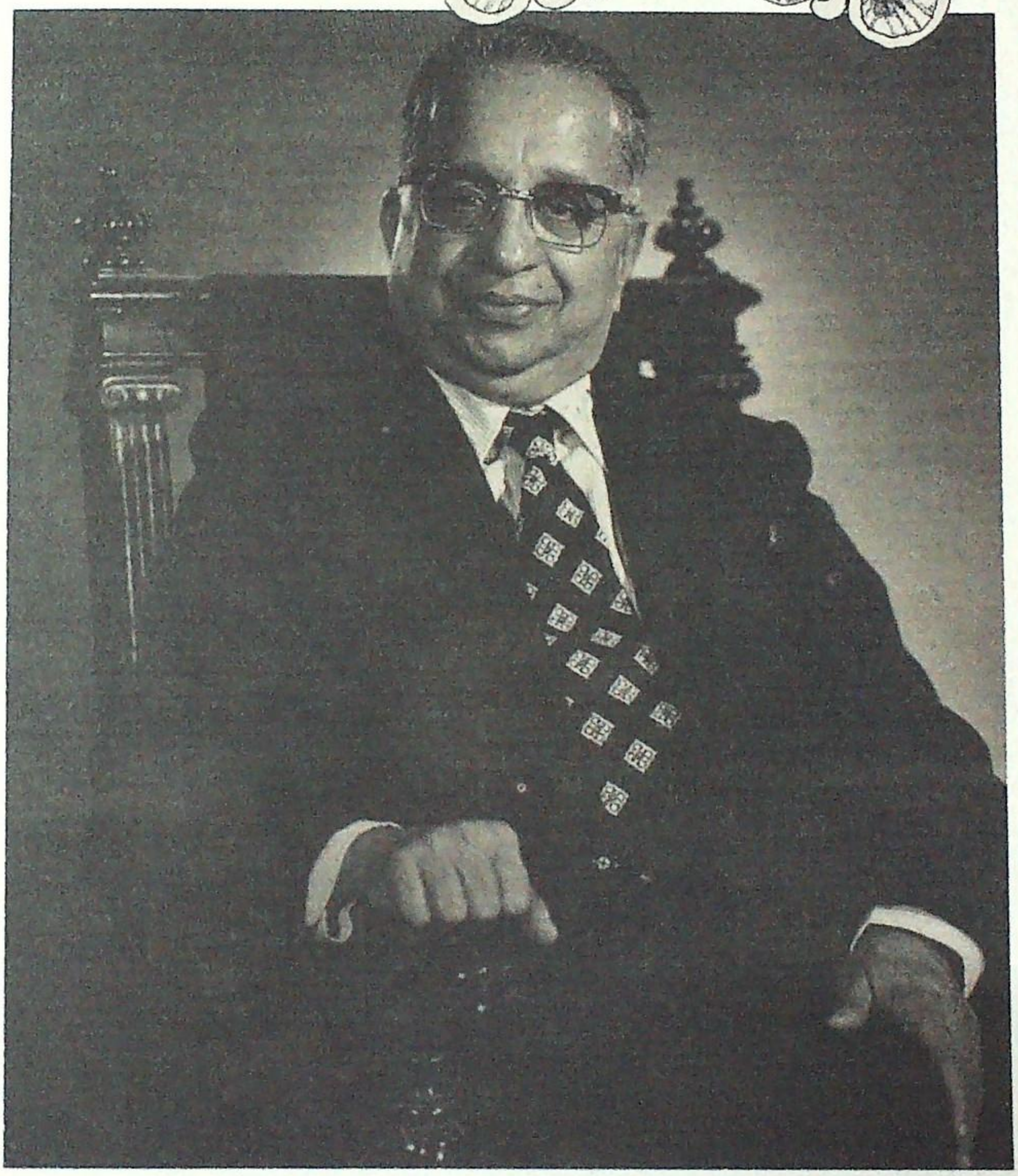
In 1957, Salgaocars exported one million tons of ore, 18% of the territory's production, and a Goan record.

The domestic front was not neglected.

He was leaving the office one morning for the hospital where Hirabai had delivered their seventh child, a son, seventeen years after their first, when he met the Director of the Portuguese bank, who congratulated him warmly. With a twinkle in his eye, Salgaocar replied, "You know how it is in my business, production always comes first!"

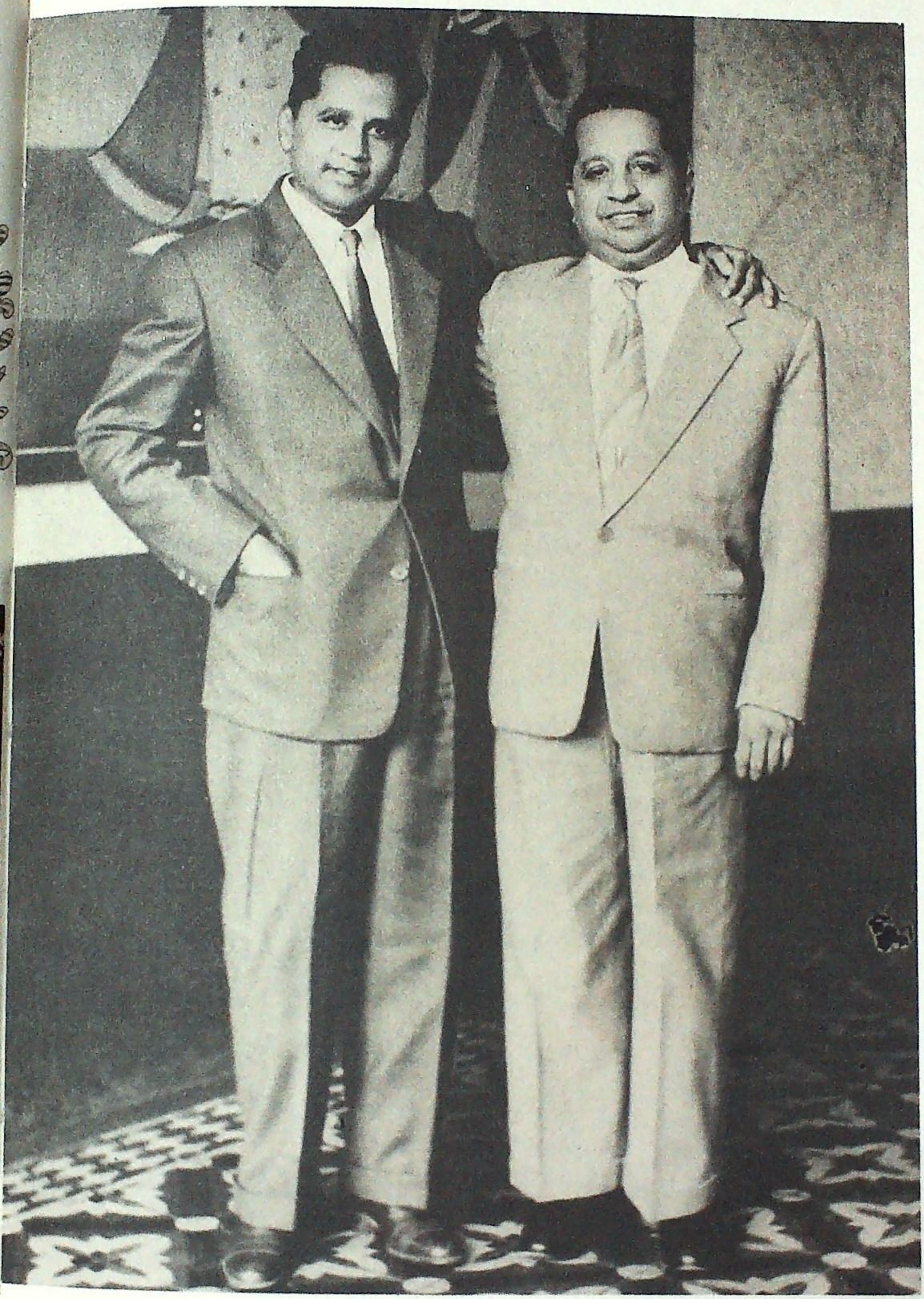
Vasudev Salgaocar

Right: the young, successful international trader in 1940. Bottom: the Goan patriarch, industrialist, philanthropist, humanitarian, a legend in his lifetime.

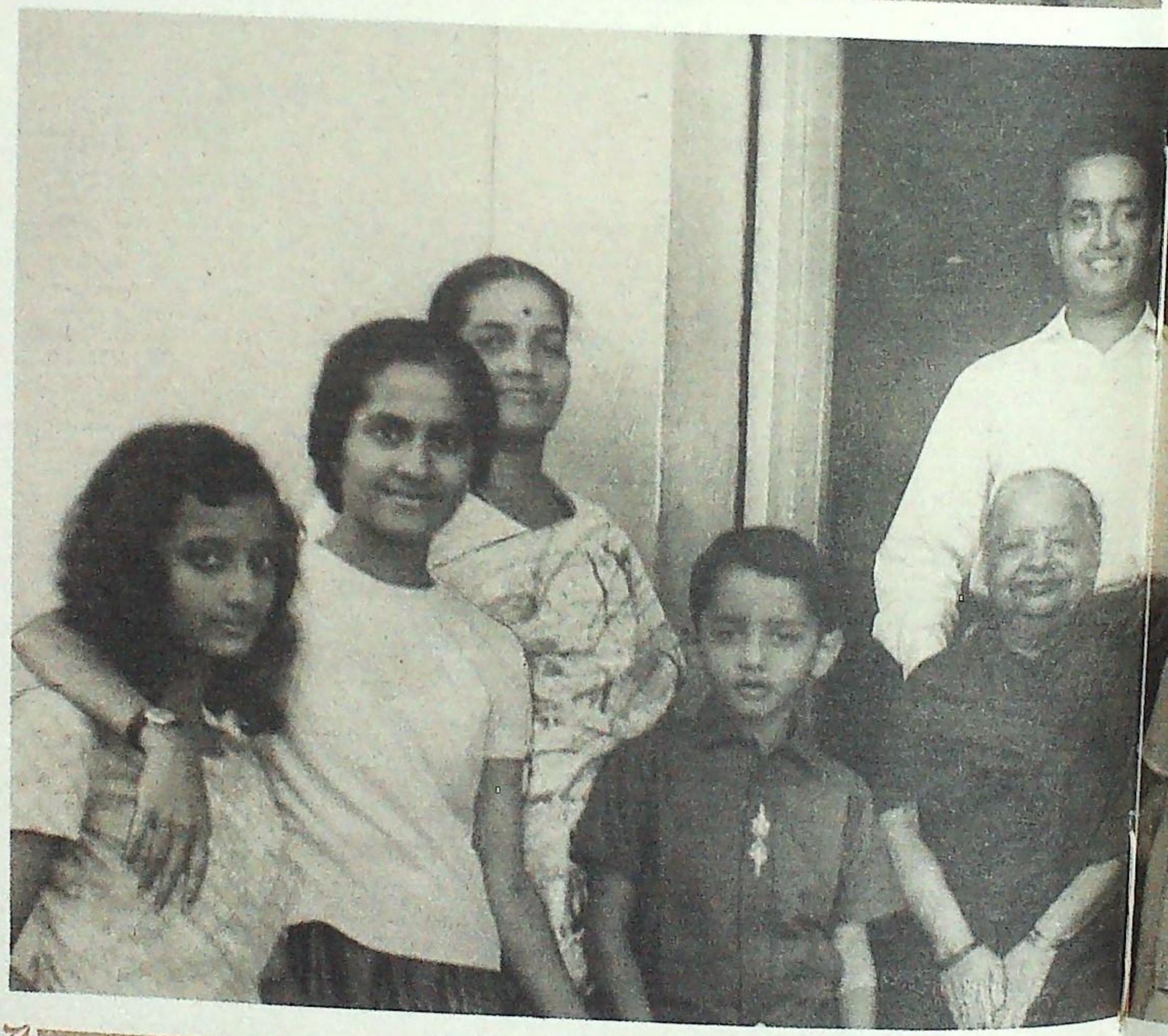


50's

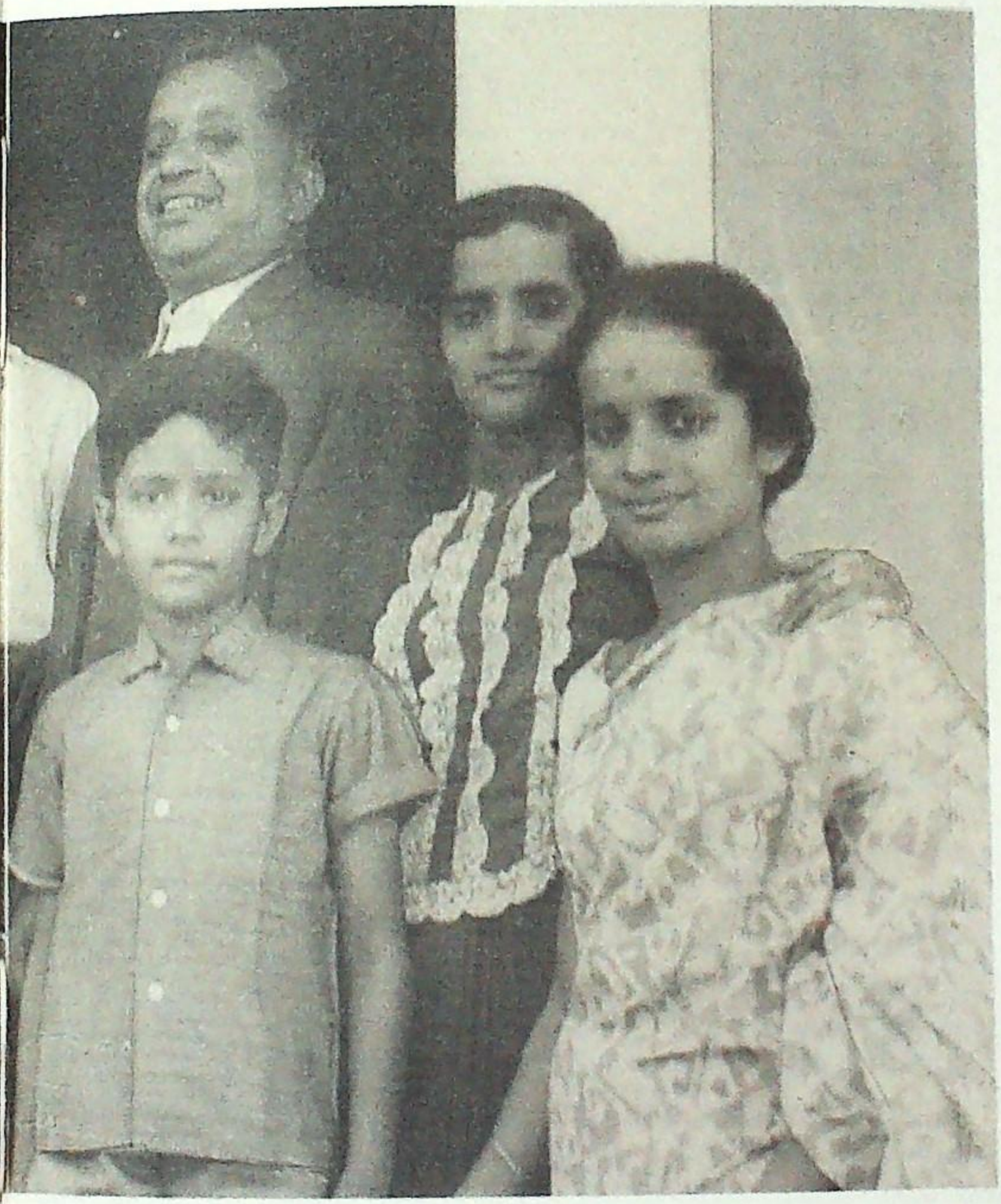
Clockwise from top: Vasudev Salgaocar's first home, the house in Baina. With his brother Ramkrishna. At a factory inauguration with the Portuguese Viceroy Gen. Paul Bernard Garaes.



60's



Clockwise from left: The Salgaocar building. At the wedding of his eldest son Anil. The patriarch with his mother, seated, and the growing Salgaocar clan.



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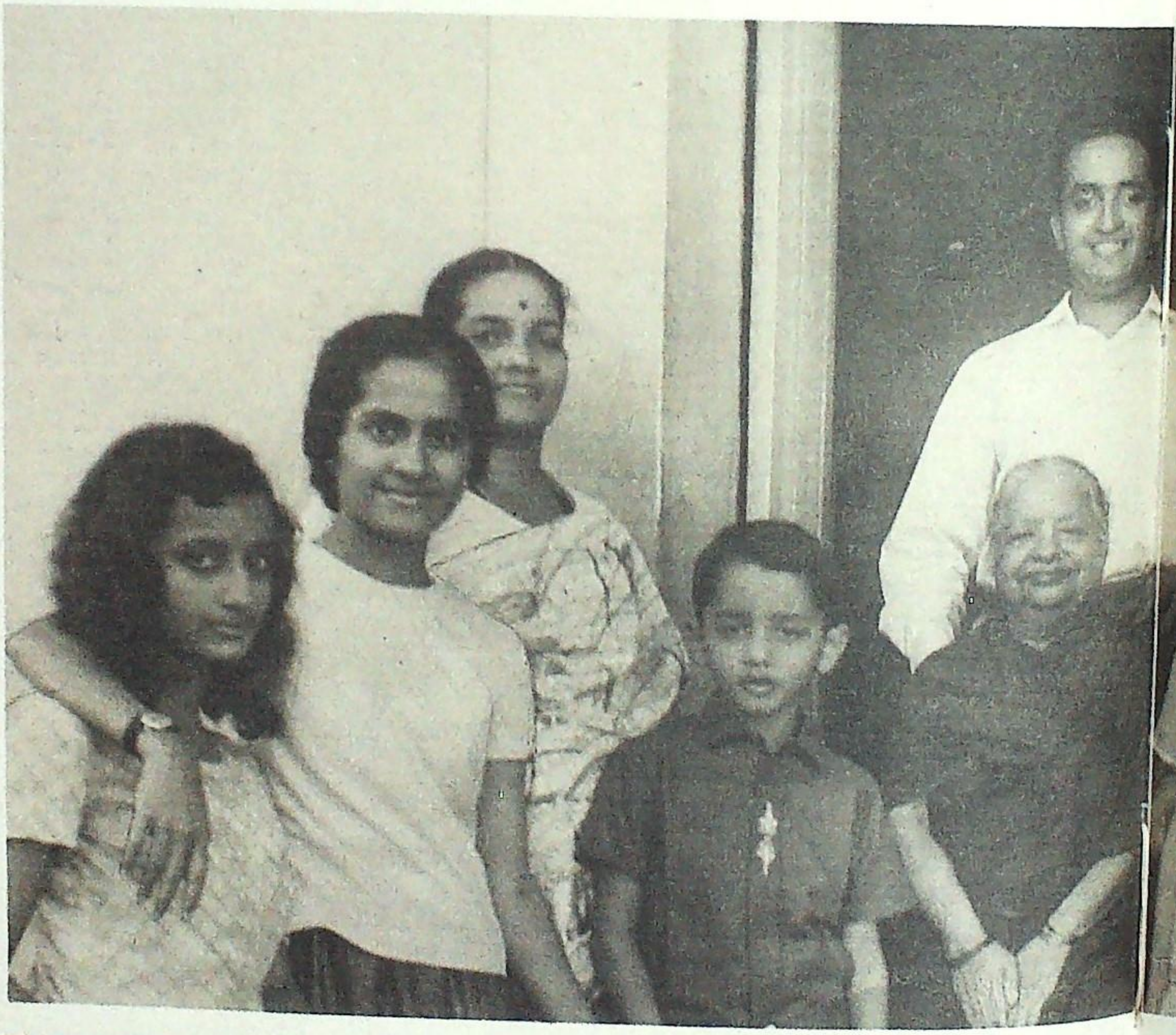
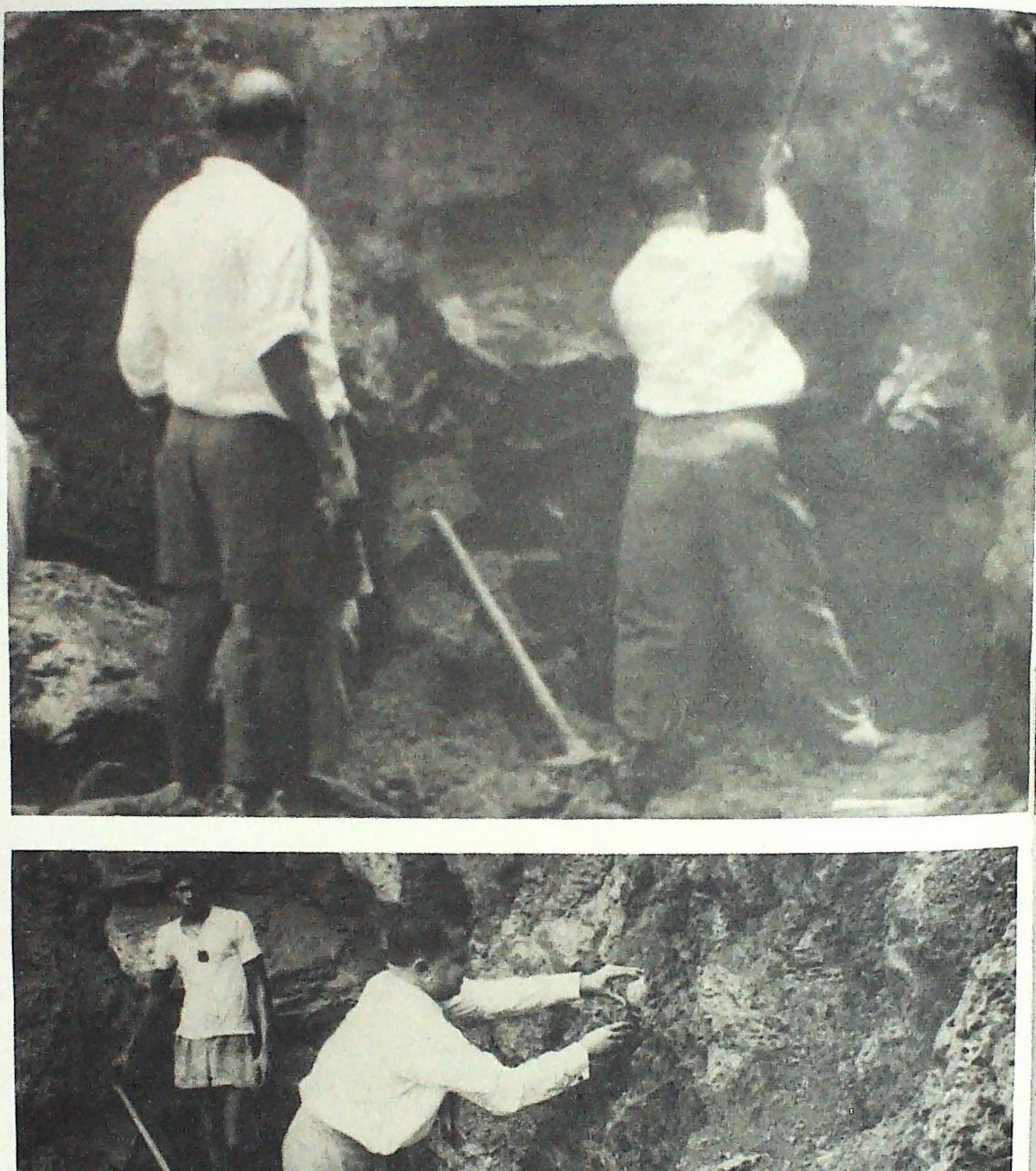
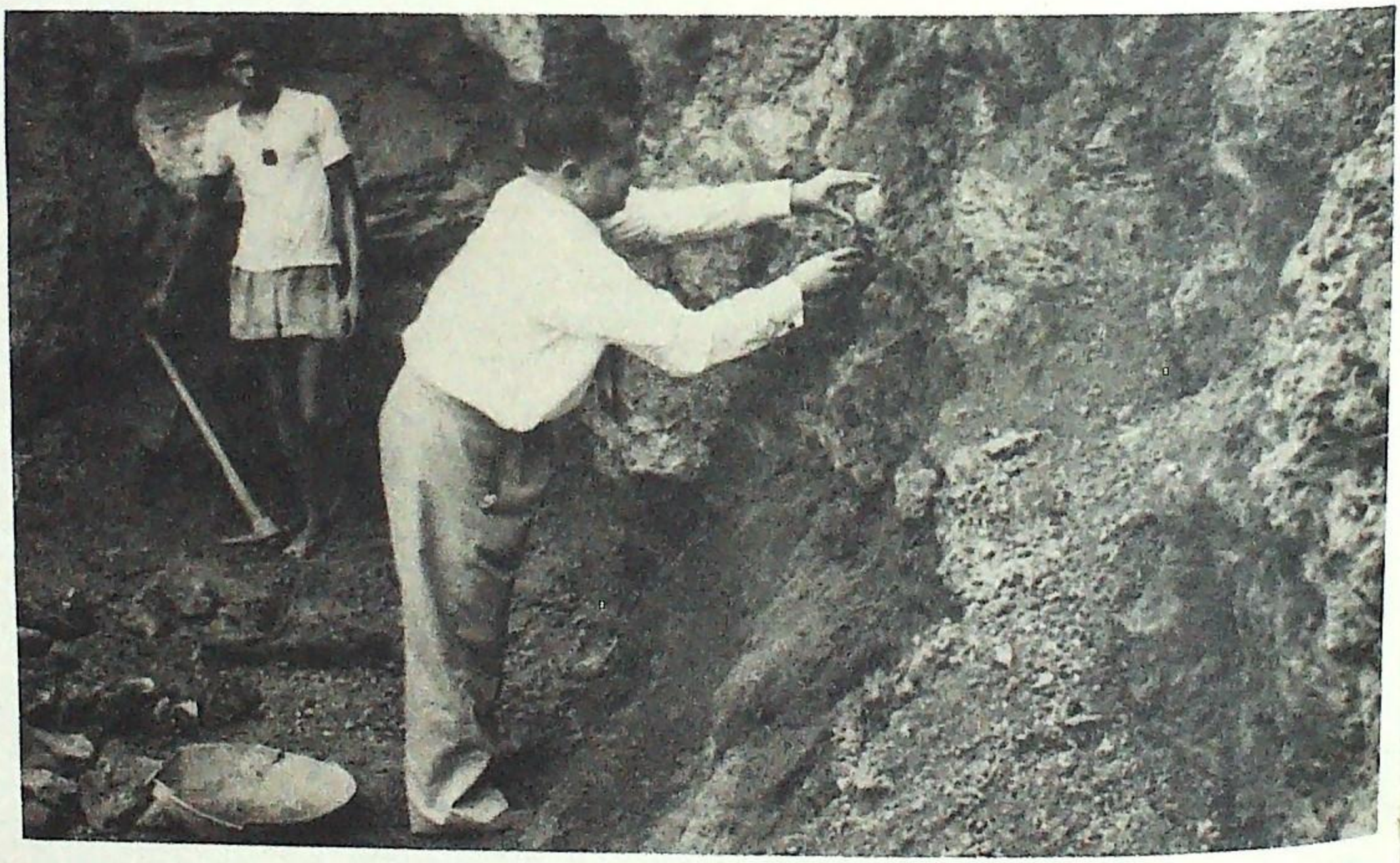
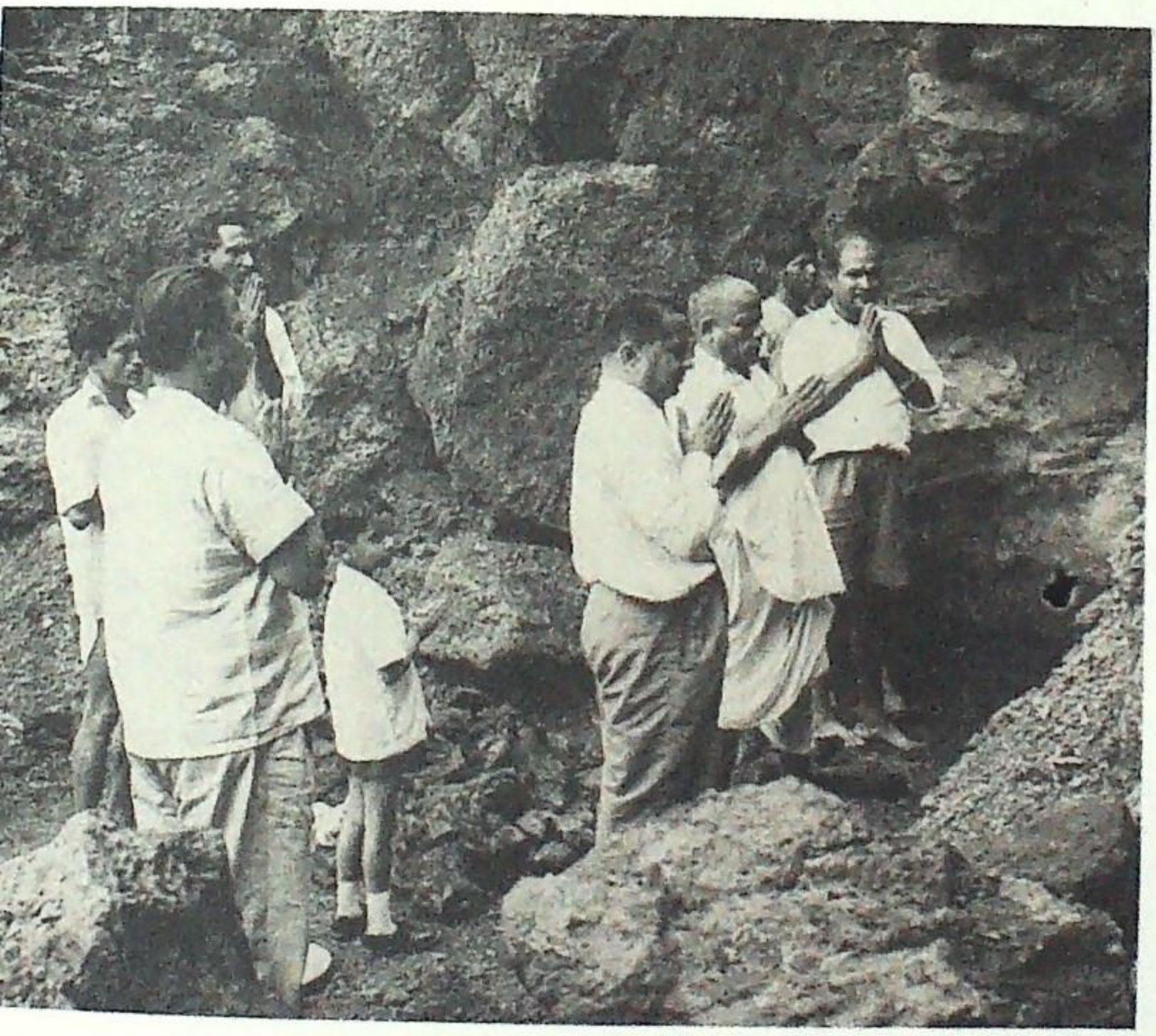
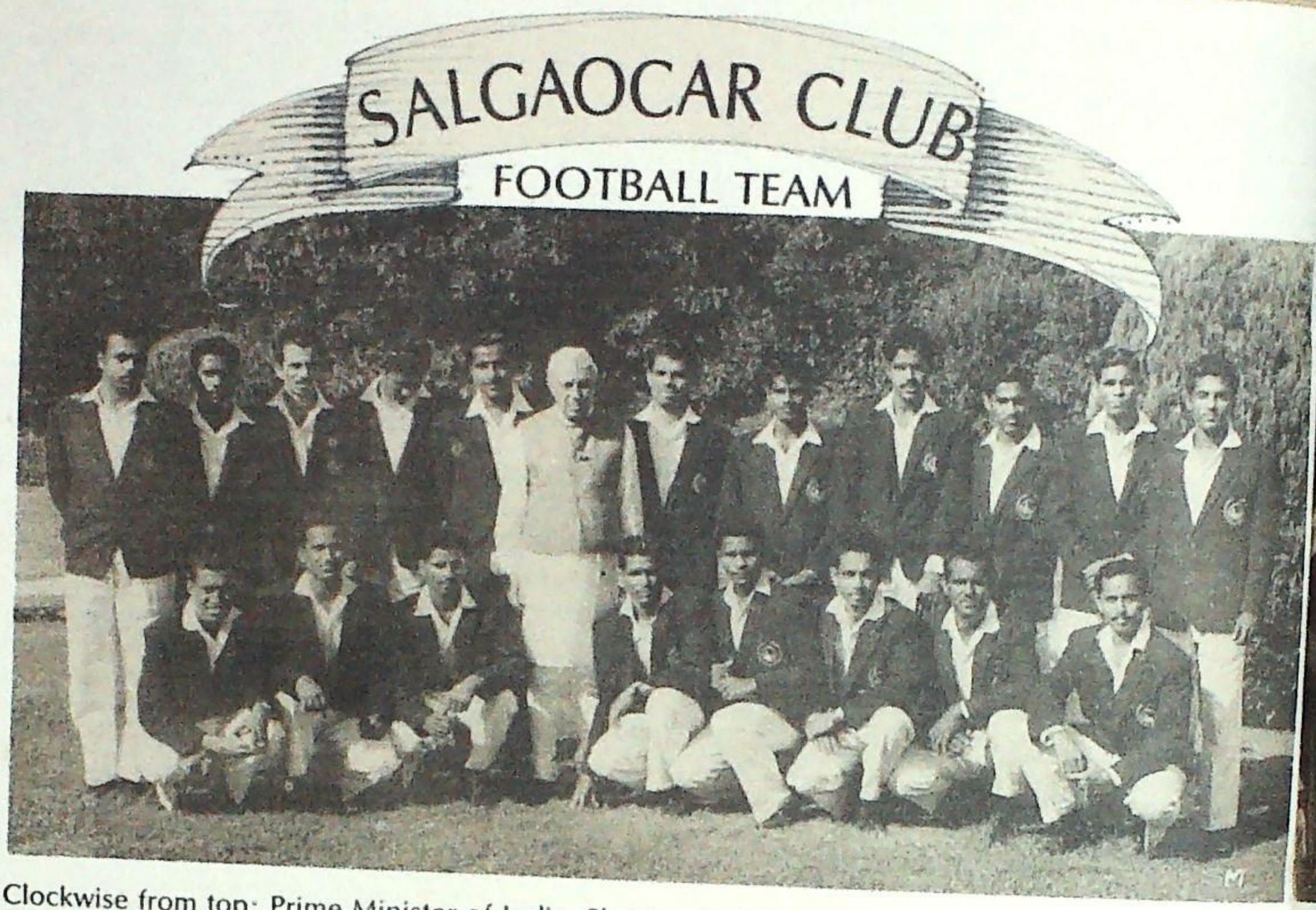








Anticlockwise from top: Vasudev Salgaocar breaks ground at the inauguration of a new mining concession. Performs a puja, and with his colleagues offers prayers.



Clockwise from top: Prime Minister of India, Shri Jawaharlal Nehru with the Salgaocar Sports Club Football team. At Margao, focal point of the anti-merger movement – protest rallies and meetings. Uday Bhembre addresses one of many public gatherings in South Goa. On the dais is Dr. Jack de Sequeira, one of the movement's prominent leaders.

ASSOLNA
असोळणे

LOUTOLIM
लोटली

VELIM
वेळ्ळी

VARKA
वारके

NAVELIM
नावेली

KOLVA
कोळवे

KURTORIM
कुरतरी

VERNA
वेर्णे

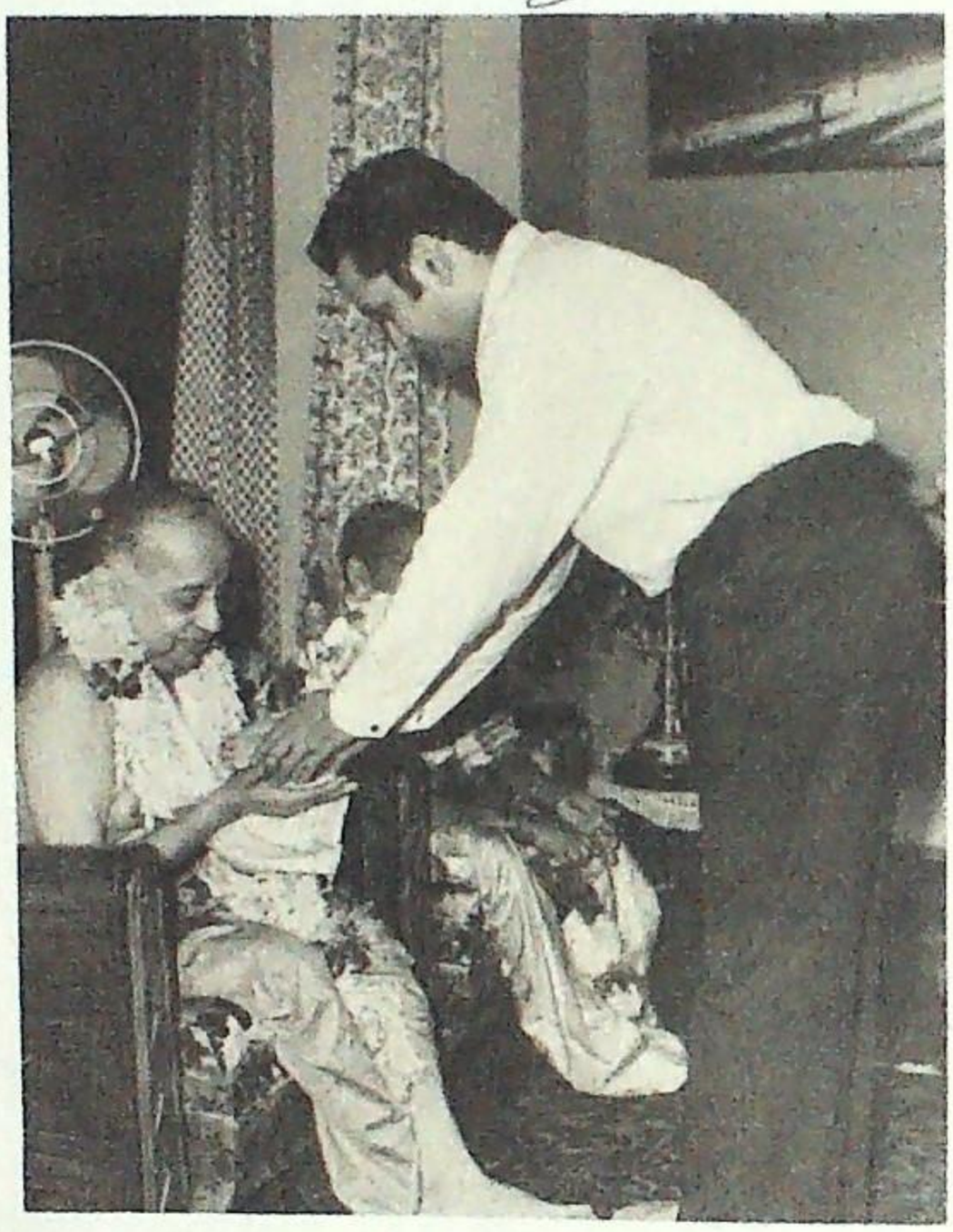
भायली कोल्हां
हाडूं नाकान
हांगा घोशी
घालूं नाकात

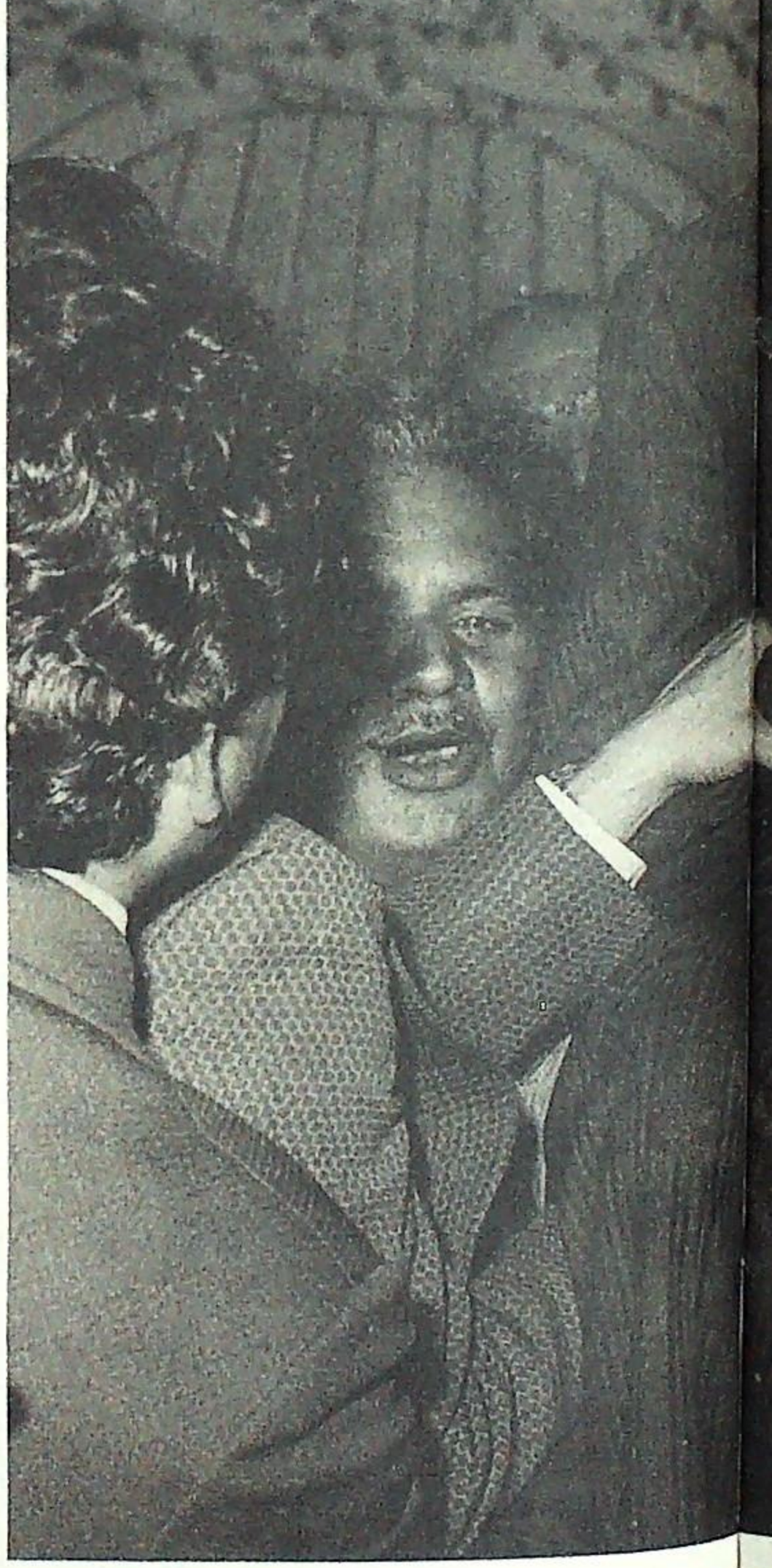
KONKNNI BHAS AMCHI MAI
AMCHI BHAS AMKAM ZAI

70's

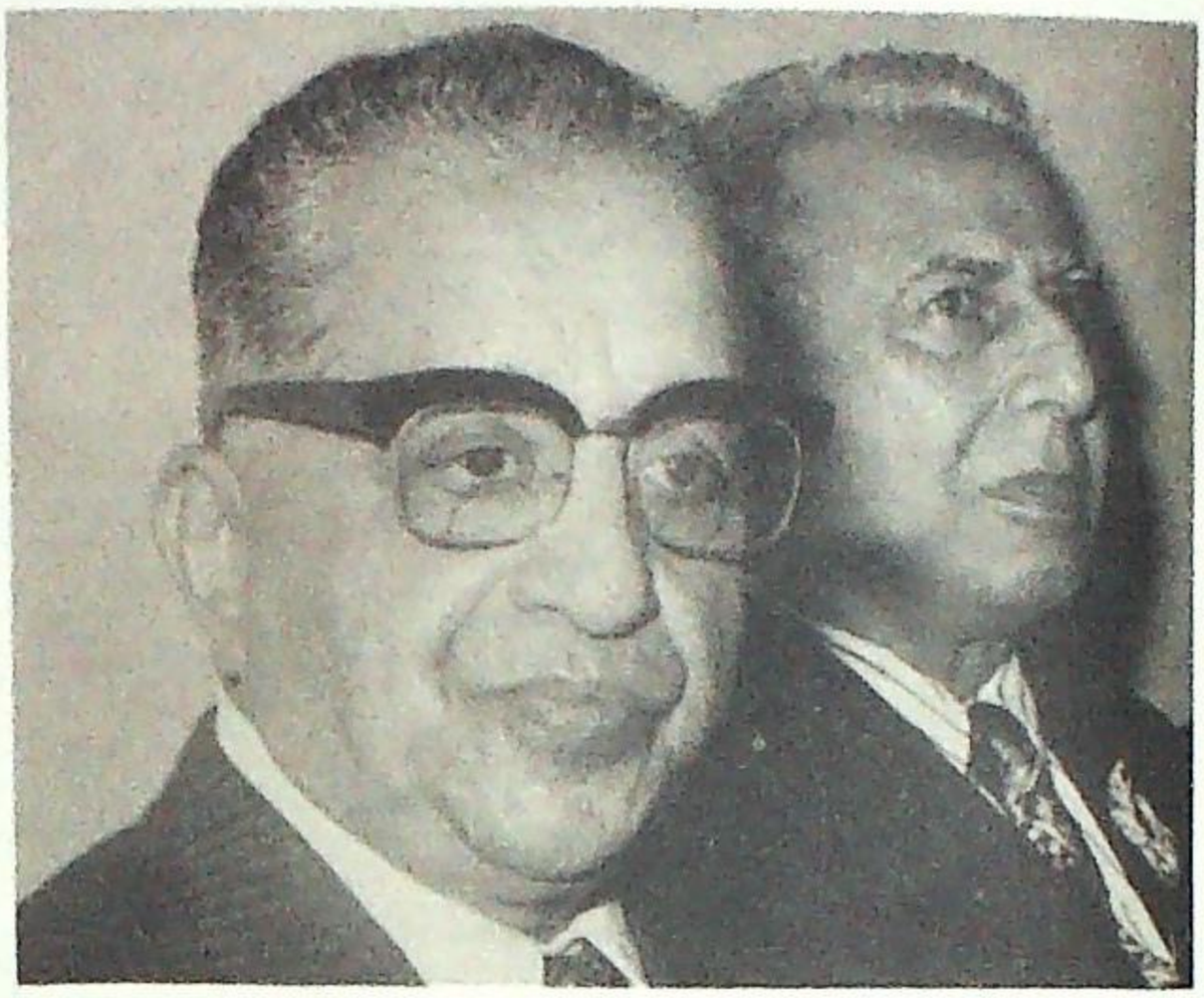
Clockwise from bottom: A deeply religious person and caring family man, Vasudev Salgaocar began each day with a puja at his home before the family deity and made it a point to spend time with his grandchildren.

12:5:76





Vasudev Salgaocar's auspicious 60th birthday celebrations. Bottom: Chaired by exuberant colleagues and friends. Left: felicitations from son Anil.

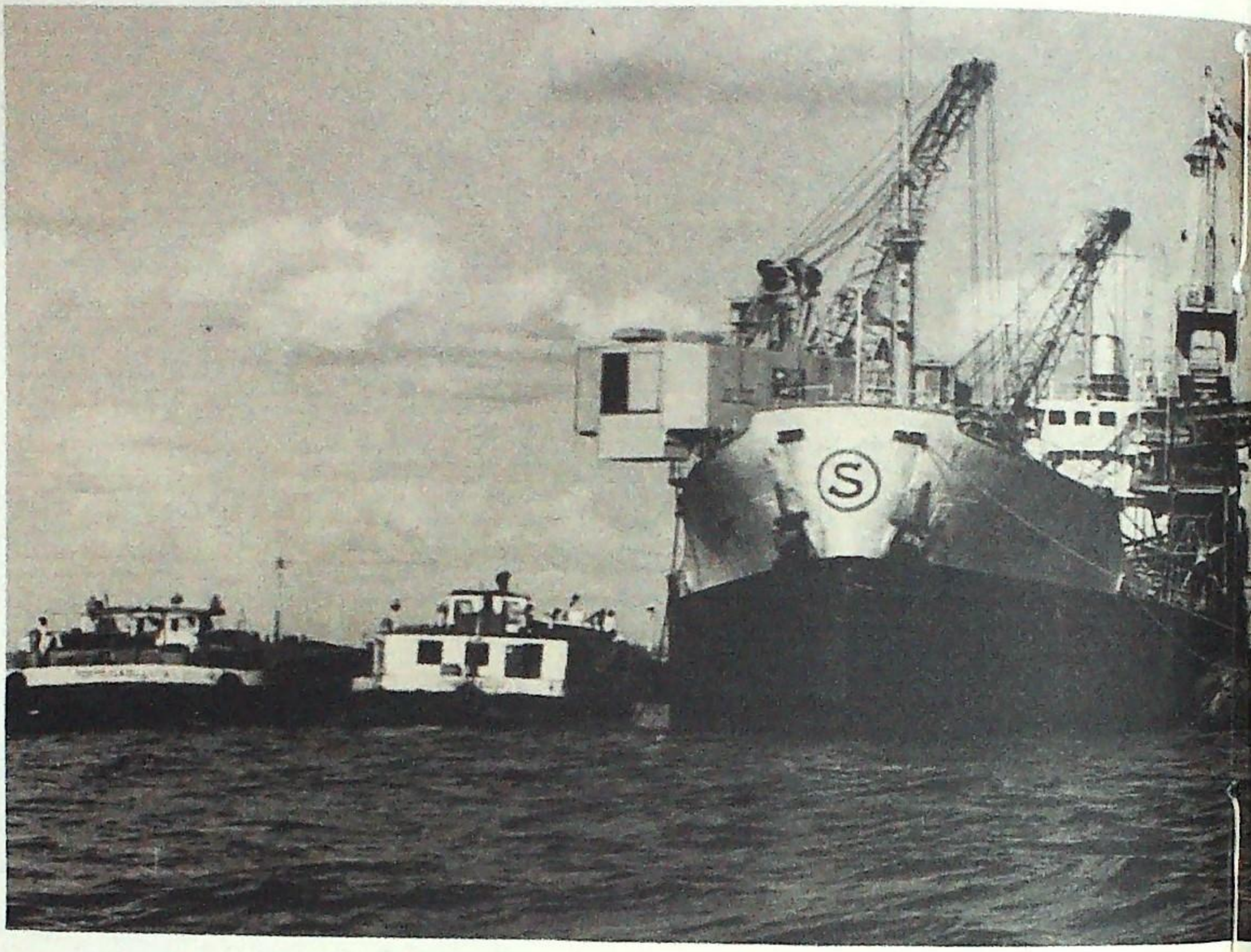


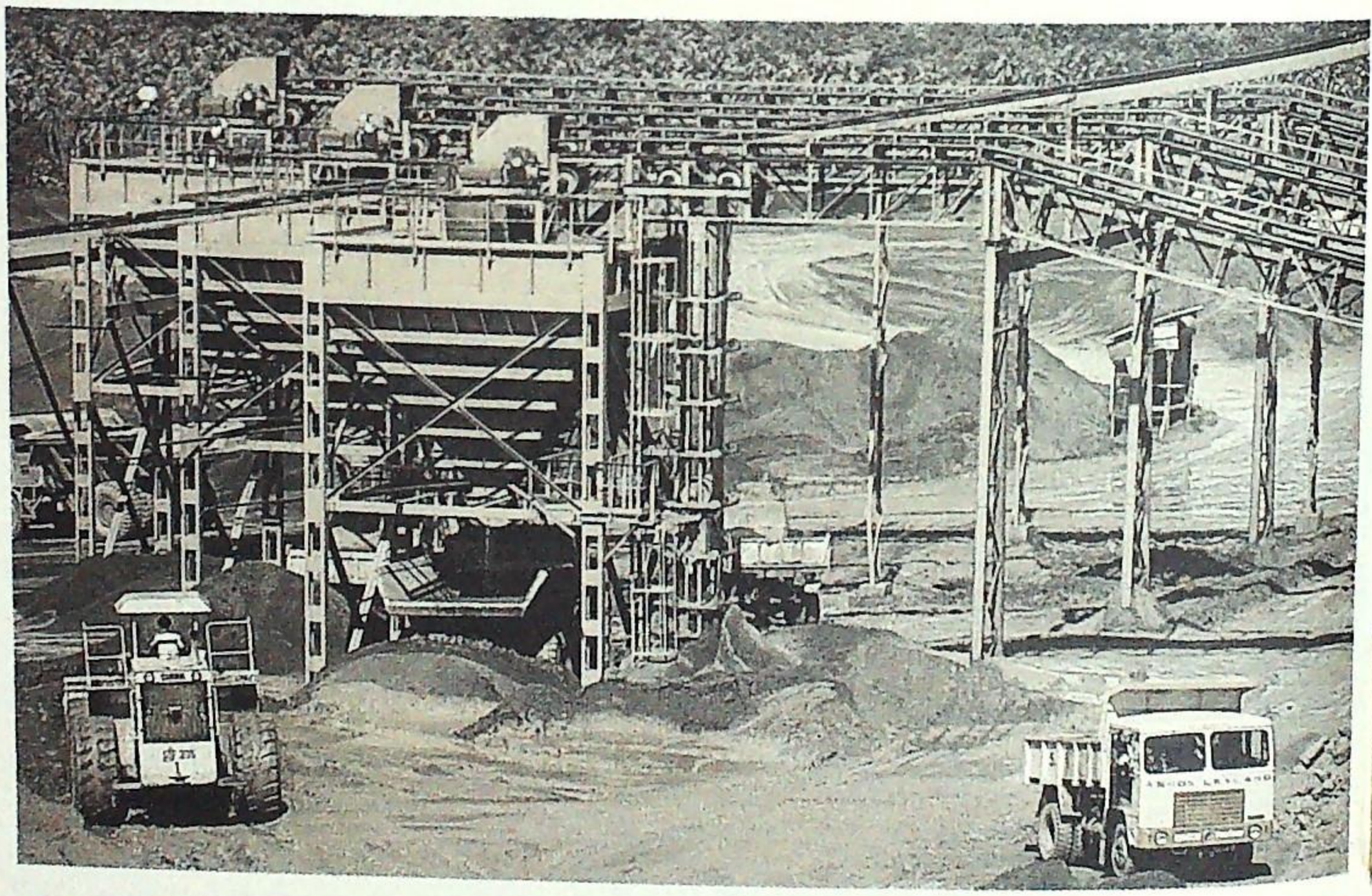
Vasu
SHAS
વ
દિપ્ત્યા વર્ધસે
Shri H.V.SAI GAOCAR
Shri T.A.PAI
Shri Y.D.CHO

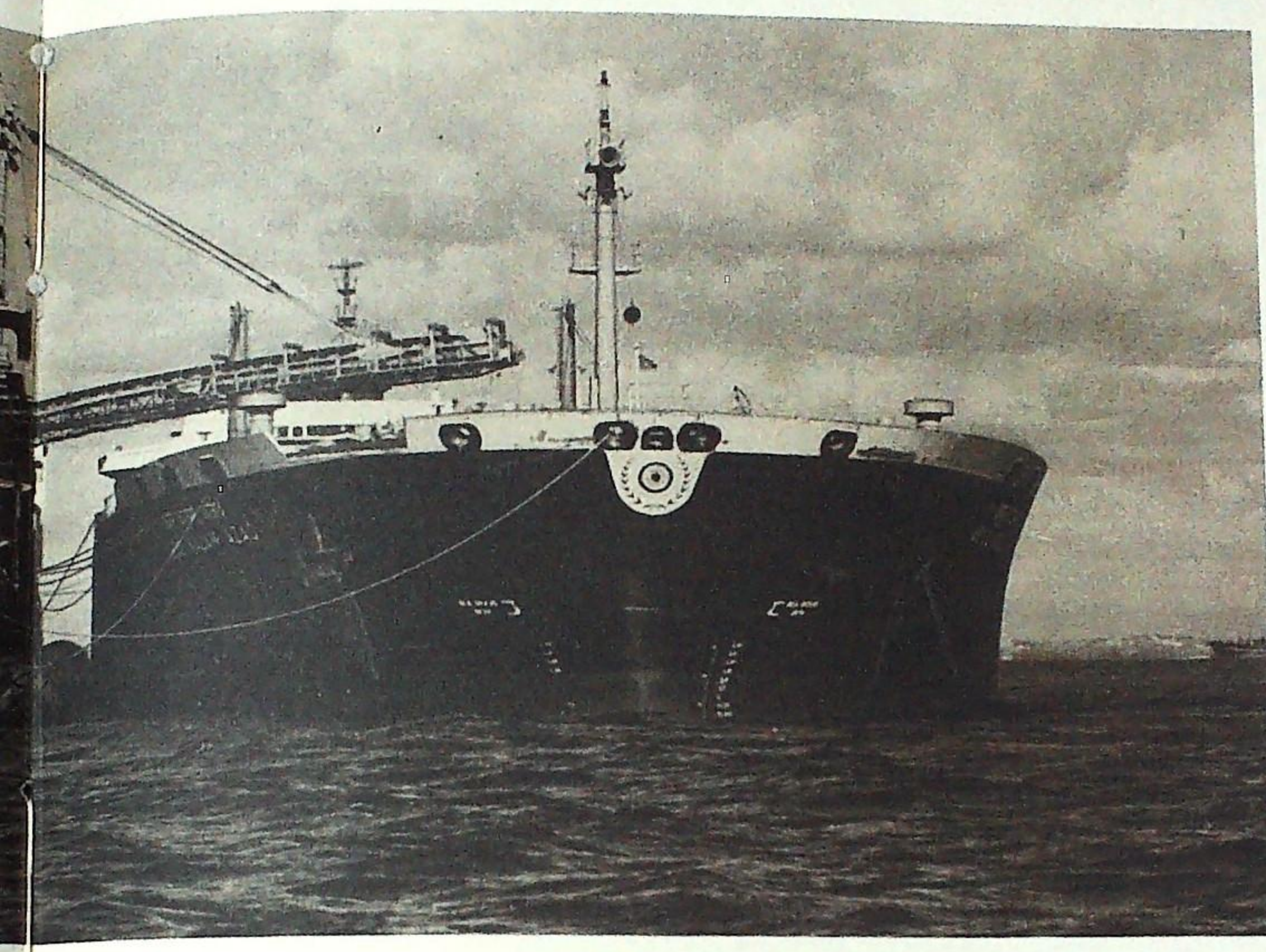
Clockwise from far left: With Shri Naval Tata. Accepting a scroll from Shri T.A. Pai, Union Minister. Shri Naval Tata addresses the distinguished gathering.

With Gen. T.J. Park, Chairman, POSCO, Republic of Korea.

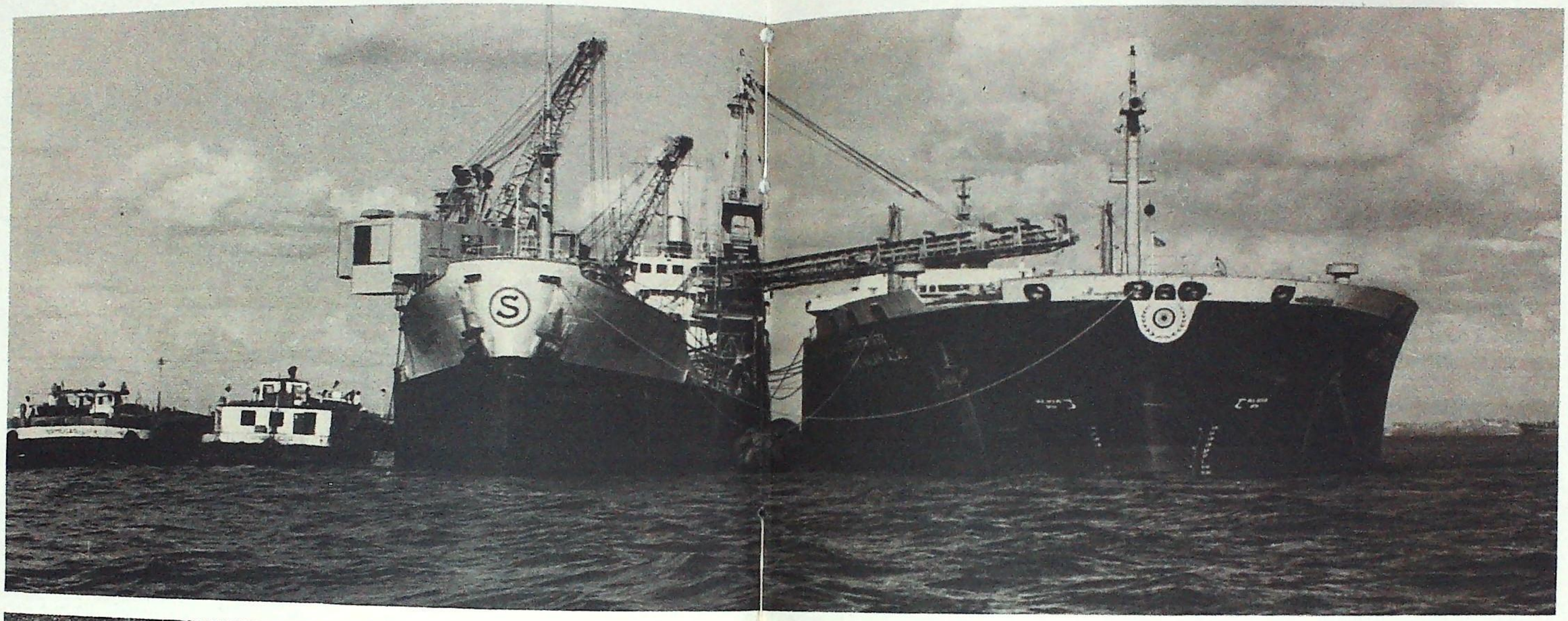
Laying the foundation stone of Sameer Screening Plant with his wife.

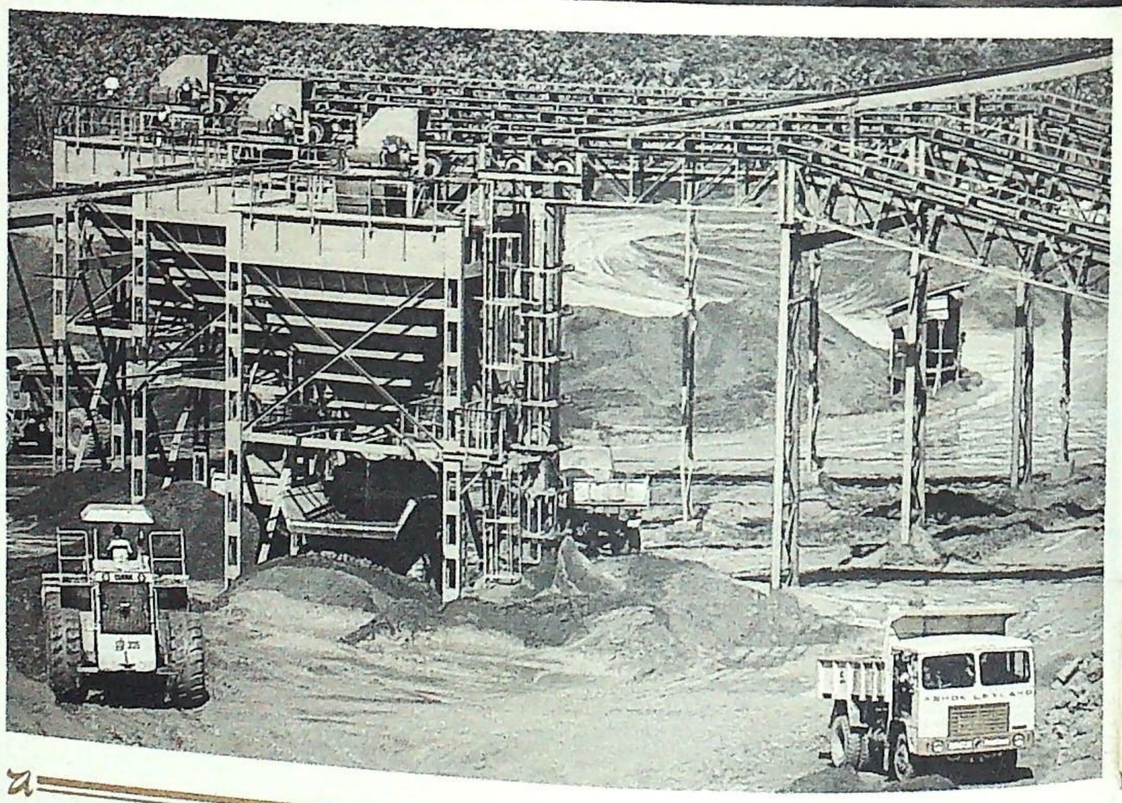






Clockwise from top: Red-letter day. Salgaocar's first transhipper, "Sanjeevani" loading in mid-stream. With the Lt. Governor of Goa, Shri Bannerjie on his first visit to the Salgaocar mines. The beneficiation plant at Vagus — first of its kind in Goa in the Mining Industry to upgrade low grade ore.

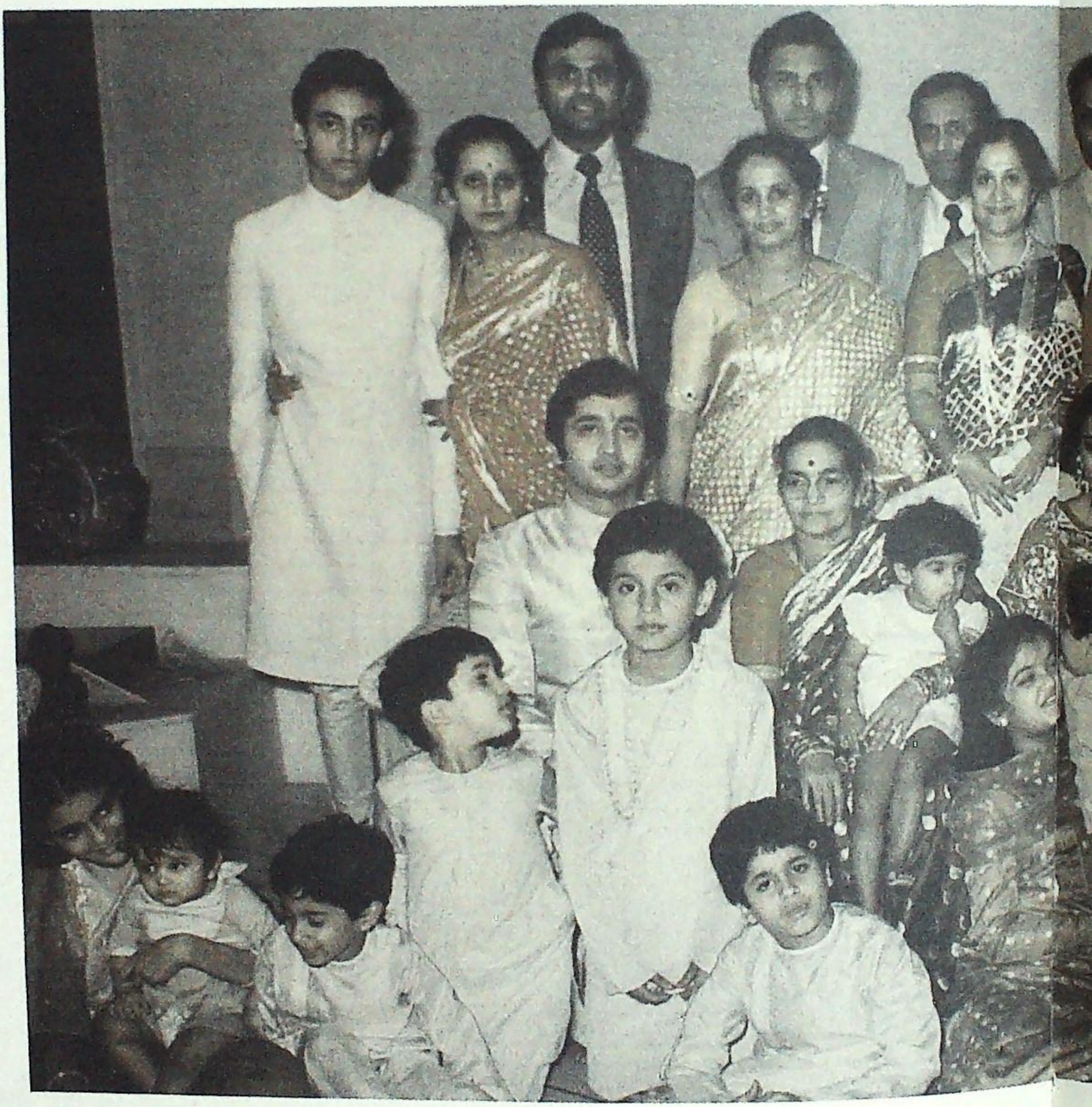




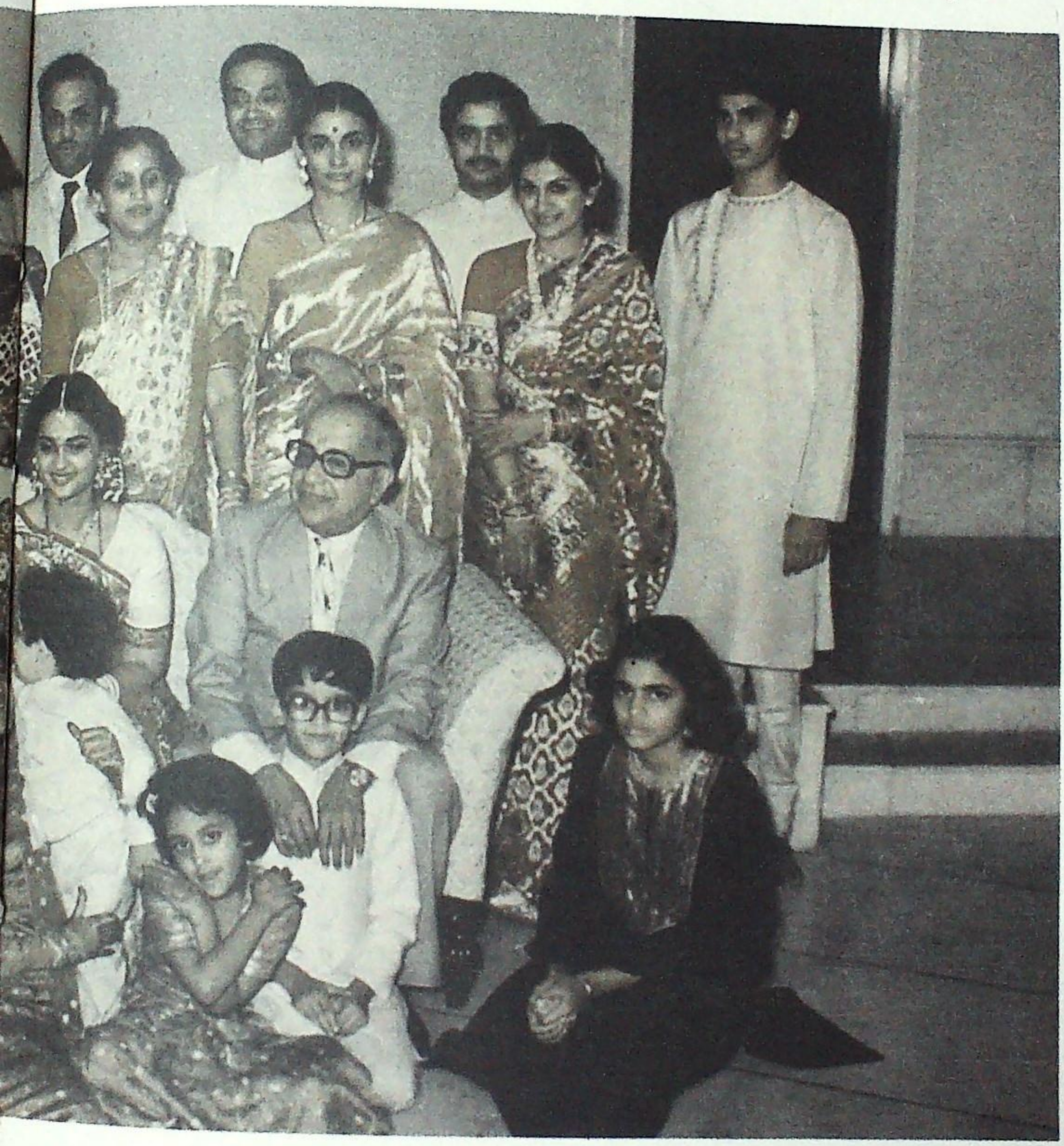
Clockwise from top: Red-letter day. Salgaocar's first transhipper, "Sanjeevani" loading in mid-stream. With the Lt. Governor of Goa, Shri Bannerjie on his first visit to the Salgaocar mines. The beneficiation plant at Vagus — first of its kind in Goa in the Mining Industry to upgrade low grade ore.

80's

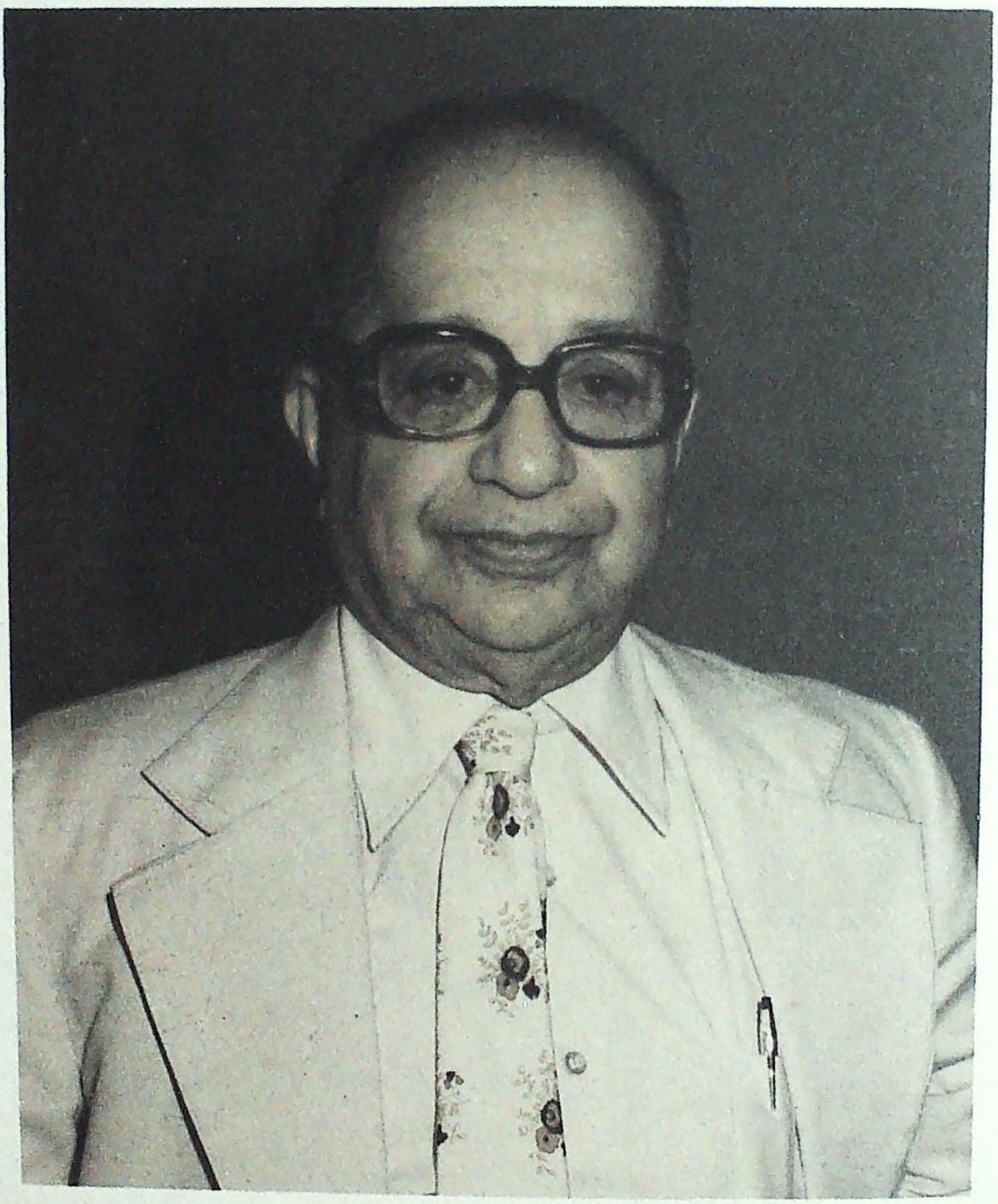
Clockwise from top: At the inauguration of a Chapel in 1982. On the same occasion with Archbishop Raul Gonsalves. As Chief Guest, flagging off the first train on the new Vasco-Miraj line.



Clockwise from far left: At Seoul along with Mrs. Salgaocar, son Shivanand and his wife Ranjana, on the occasion of the wedding celebration of General T.J. Park's daughter in 1981. At the wedding of Dattaraj and Dipti, very much in the spirit of the occasion, dancing the Dandia Ras with Dipti, while the bride's father, Dhirubhai Ambani looks on approvingly. The formal family portrait at the wedding.



One of the last photographs taken of Vasudev Salgaocar.



A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

AT 8 pm on December 18, 1961, at Betim, a Goan priest, Reverend Monsignor Magno Antao, handed over a letter to Major Shivdev Singh Sidhu, of the 7th Light Infantry. It was a brief but monumental postscript to four hundred years of history, and carried the signature of an executive of the Portuguese Military forces in Goa.

CITY OF GOA
18-12-1961

The military commander of the city of Goa states that he wishes to parley with the Commander of the Army of the Indian Union regarding the surrender. In this connection, the Portuguese troops will cease fire forthwith and the Indian troops should do likewise in order to avoid the slaughter of the population and damage to the city.

The Commander
(Sd) Accacio Terneiro (Major)

For Major General K. P. Kandeth, G.O.C., Commander of Indian forces in Goa, speed was of the essence. Invading from the North with thirty thousand troops, heavy artillery and armour and Canberra fighter-bomber air support under the command of Air Vice-Marshal E. Abreu Pinto de Rozario, the Indian forces had made a lightning blitzkreig into Goa. A thoroughly demoralised force of 3,000 Portuguese and African troops, lightly armed, made a rapid 'no-contest' of the encounter. They fell back upon Panjim in disarray, blowing up a few bridges and culverts as they went in a vain attempt to stall the Indian advance.

The Portuguese were playing for time. For weeks Salazar's diplomats had manoeuvred furiously in Western Capitals and hoped, even in the face of defeat, to mobilize a

resolution in the United Nations calling for an immediate ceasefire. To slow, if not stop, the Indian advance was imperative. Salazar, the Portuguese dictator, had recently said, "We will have Goa Portuguese, or we will have Goa destroyed." Indeed, weeks before the invasion, he had sent a secret message to General Vassalo e Silva, the last Governor-General of Goa. If the Indians won, they could wave their tricolour over scorched earth. Goa would be put to the torch. All bridges and public buildings were to be dynamited; ports and reservoirs destroyed; the road systems obliterated. Goa would be defended to the last man, from house to house, with a final defiant stand at the Governor-General's palace. But General Vassalo e Silva, to his eternal credit, chose treason before dishonour. When Indian squadrons of Canberra fighter-bombers, in two swift raids, took out the undefended airport tower at Dabolim and the Portuguese wireless station, all communication between Goa and Portugal ceased. "Operation Vijay" came to a triumphant conclusion. As advance units of General Kandeth's forces raced through Panjim, along the wide boulevard flanking the Mandovi River and finally raised the Indian tricolour from the ramparts of the Governor-General's palace, General Vassalo e Silva stayed true to the land and the people he had come to love. Apart from a few, minor bridges, Goa entered the Indian fold with four centuries, and more, of history preserved.

General Silva was detained in a comfortable private residence in Ponda and treated with honour and respect by the Indian authorities. In a gesture as touching as it was deserved, his was the only portrait not removed from the ranks of previous Portuguese Governors which adorned the walls of the residential palace. On his return to Portugal, he was tried, stripped off his rank and imprisoned and was released only after Salazar was overthrown from power. Many years later, as an unknown civilian, he returned to Goa for a visit. A handful of old friends had gathered at the

airport to meet him, and one of the first to step forward and take him by the hand was Vasudev Salgaocar.

It says much for the Goan character that retribution directed at Portuguese fellow-travellers and quislings was hardly in evidence. On the day of Panjim's liberation, an exuberant crowd dragged Salazar's statue off its pedestal in the municipal gardens, harnessed it to a rope and dragged it through the city streets to cries of "Jai Hind". The only Goan official on record to receive rude treatment at the hands of the lumpen was Joao Quadros, a Goan who so identified himself with the more repressive qualities of his rulers that he was appointed Attorney General of Portuguese India and, in recognition of the ruthless zeal with which he performed the task, was awarded the "Exalted Order of Tower and Sword" for outstanding service to the Fatherland. Recognition of a different but perhaps more appropriate kind was unceremoniously bestowed one morning when he was dragged from his bed, thrashed soundly on the streets and made to carry the Indian tricolour along Panjim's more sophisticated boulevards until rescued by an Indian army contingent and bundled off — for his own safety of course — to the local jail!

It was a time of high drama and low farce. A thousand Portuguese families were evacuated a week earlier on a ship belonging to the "Companhia Nacional de Navegacao". The Commander of the Indian Navy Flotilla, quickly informed of the fact by the excellent Indian fifth-column in Goa, and more pertinently, that the evacuees were mainly Portuguese women and children, allowed the ship to sail unharmed. Many of the departing Portuguese gifted their most prized family heirlooms to staunch Goan friends. By all records, the performance of the Portuguese ground forces was conspicuous by its modesty with a notable exception. Nobody had bothered to tell Captain Cunha Aragao, the Portuguese Commander of the only armed vessel in the bay, that discretion was the better part of valour. In pathetic, but brave

defiance he turned his guns on the Indian aircraft carrier, the "Vikrant", the cruiser "Mysore", the frigates "Trishul", "Betwa" and "Beas". Within minutes his vessel received a direct hit midship; he died in the next few seconds as another shell struck the bridge, whereupon his second-in-command and the crew lowered the flag in surrender and abandoned the sloop. And while General Silva's betrayal of his country's flag for the imperatives of his conscience was widely regarded by conqueror and conquered as an act of surpassing integrity, hundred of other unworthy citizens were playing fast and loose with the flags of both countries.

Vaman Sardesai, now Indian Ambassador to Angola, was at the time in the enviable position of privileged observer. Involved in the freedom struggle for many years, he and his wife operated a clandestine radio station. "The Voice of Freedom" which, in the days preceding liberation, began transmitting valuable information to the Indian battlefield commanders massing troops on the border. Sardesai recalls how hundred of Portuguese flags flying from public and private buildings and residences in Panjim weeks before the Indian army action, were hastily pulled down to be replaced by white flags of surrender, or the Indian tricolour, as the first Indian army contingents reached the suburbs of the city.

By and large, Goan industry was not unduly perturbed, though Sardesai recalls with a wry chuckle incidents of lightning resilience to changed circumstances which caused much amusement at the time. Most Goan businessmen had never come within hailing distance of a dhoti — tie and jacket were the order of the day. Yet, when General Kandeth's helicopter landed in the grounds of the Panjim Gymkhana with the First Indian Administrator, G.K. Handoo and he began a round of introductions to prominent Goans, more than a few Goan businessmen met him, utterly transformed, in spotless white dhotis and Gandhi caps; with folded hands and lowered eyes, they murmured, 'Namaste'.

General Kandeth was heard to comment later, "A wonderful lot, these Goans!" Forgivable perhaps, but not entirely accurate, for the quick-change artists were not at all representative. Most of Goa's businessmen were patriots; they loved the land and cared for its people, but history had immobilized them in a cleft stick. They had no choice but to work for an alien administration which, secretly, they would have been far happier without. In the event, the closer and more harmonious the ties, the more they were able to do for the territory. One such, a Hindu Goan, much loved for his integrity, skills and success, had been elevated to the pinnacle of political honour, a seat in the Portuguese National Assembly in Lisbon as a Member of Parliament. All of Goa applauded for here was a true patriot who, if anybody could, would sup with the devil for the good of his people. His record, upto the time of liberation, was unblemished and he resigned his seat moments after the Indian flag was unfurled over Panjim. The military Government that took command in the interim under General Kandeth set about the difficult task of administering a restive, insecure populace. The need of the hour was calm reassurance, a steadiness of hand and purpose, clear and just policy, firm and resolute administration. Above all, like justice, it must not just happen, it must clearly be seen to be done. It was decided that a Council of Prominent Citizens be formed immediately to advise the General. Many candidates were subjected to close scrutiny. Most were rejected. When, finally, a list of names was agreed, the Hindu industrialist, so recently a Member of Parliament in the Portuguese National Assembly, featured prominently and was unanimously endorsed. A formal invitation was sent off, under the General's personal signature. A few days later a carefully worded reply returned. While grateful for the honour, it had to be regretfully declined. It would be decidedly improper, the industrialist declared, for him ever again to take up public office of any kind in Goa. He wished the administration well in all of its endeavours.

General Kandeth is said to have remarked, "Give me more Goans like this one!"

Incidents such as these were few and far between. The Goan business community had been aware of the inevitable for many years. The Freedom Movement had established a clandestine but remarkably effective fifth column in Goa. Drawn from the ranks of immigrant workers in the mines and docks — thousands of itinerant labour from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala — making full use of the extensive smuggling networks, creating cadres of sympathetic Goans from all walks of life, the espionage system kept the Indian authorities fully informed of all vital activity within the territory. Spying made for strange bedfellows. The Indian Police turned a blind eye to *certain* kinds of smuggling activities (drawing a firm line at diamonds for some unknown reason) provided the smugglers offered a quid pro quo: the distribution of propaganda material, for instance, or hard information regarding Portuguese police outposts — numbers of guards, arms, location, fortifications . . . information which enabled the militant wing of the Goa Liberation Army in India, the Azad Gomantak Dal, to plan and execute armed raids into Portuguese territory; the Portuguese, in turn, imprisoned, tortured, mutilated and often killed freedom fighters in the cellars of their fortress jails, in an ever accelerating and increasingly futile spiral, a self-fulfilling prophesy which would come true on the night of December 19, 1961.

The Goan business community, led, as always, by the mine owners, was cannily attuned to every slight turn of events. Over the years, many of them had worked actively to protect their flanks, walking a difficult tight-rope between the Portuguese authorities on the one hand and influential contacts in Delhi and Bombay on the other. They had succeeded in establishing strong and generally favourable links with the mandarins in the Indian Government while maintaining a position of undeniable power and authority in Goa.

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Even so, they had reason to fear for the future. Many of them held long-term contracts with the Japanese, the formidable axis power only recently defeated in a world war. From a situation where they paid no taxes to the Portuguese they would, literally overnight, be brought into the punitive fold of the Indian corporate tax structure. Then again, the export of minerals in free India was a Government monopoly under the exclusive aegis of the MMTC. Would Goa follow suit? Would the mine owners be able to retain their traditional sovereignty? At the very least would they be granted tax and other reliefs which they felt — and rightly so — were owed to them by their labour, huge investments, large committed work forces and the imperatives of historical justice? Finally, they felt threatened at the most fragile centre of their world — their position of status in Goa. They were not merely businessmen; they were powers to be reckoned with — in commerce, socially and culturally, in public service; would all this change overnight?

Shortly after the Liberation, Sardesai and Handoo, the Chief Indian Civil Servant, were given a confidential brief by Delhi: visit the leading mine-owners and businessmen in Goa unannounced and send back, urgently, a detailed attitudinal analysis. Be brutally direct, unnerving, if necessary, catch them off their guard and give us the facts. As strategy, it was sound. The issues which had been of so much concern to Goa's business community in the preceding years were no longer matters for conjecture and speculation. The days of decision were upon them. The hour was at hand. They lobbied furiously in Goa and Delhi making a cogent, intelligent case for extension of the status quo wherever it would be heard. They marshalled fact and precedent, reams of statistics, appointed official spokesmen. Only to be met by an impenetrable veil of official silence.

Then one morning, two visitors arrived without an appointment at the Salgaocar Head Office in Vasco and demanded an immediate meeting with the Chairman.

Sardesai admits frankly that the intention was to surprise, to startle, to provoke spontaneous reaction; they sought the unguarded moment; they looked to hesitancy, fluster, the slightest evidence of prevarication or deceit. As seasoned interrogators they knew the efficacy of the sharp, pointed question, the sudden change of direction and pace, the modulation of tone from transparent sincerity to near-brutal accusation.

Salgaocar was unfazed.

The last few weeks had taken a toll, but he remained calm and objective; there was no tension in his response, only a quality of deep reflection. He might just as well have been alone, weighing the pros and cons in his mind.

When asked, what of the future of the Goan mining industry now that Goa was in the Indian fold, he replied without hesitation. The Goan mining industry had been the mainstay of the economy for many decades, he said. Goan mine owners had worked against formidable odds wresting value for the people from the good earth. They were pioneers in the true sense of the word, opening up virgin land without benefit of experience or technology. They had learned the hard way, the only way, from trial and bitter error. Armed with nothing more than optimism and the will to succeed they had travelled the world, opening up markets for Goan ore in the face of stiff international competition, and in the process won a worldwide reputation for quality, efficiency and business integrity. Nor had they rested on their laurels. Vast amounts of money and energy had been ploughed back into mechanisation and high technology. Tens of thousands of ordinary Goans could look to the future with courage and hope. The mining industry had given them permanent homes, social and medical benefits, education, secure retirement. Thousands, by way of ownership of haulage equipment — trucks, barges, — had become well-to-do entrepreneurs in their own right.

Then he sounded a few cautionary notes.

Four hundred years of an insular culture, based on a European language, zealously guarded against influence form the sub-continent by zenophobic rules motivated solely by colonial self-interest, strongly conditioned by Christianity, had, in a matter of weeks, been forced to confront revolutionary change. And this, no matter how right, had brought economic and cultural trauma to the territory. The need of the hour was sensitivity not just to the broad repercussions of liberation, but to its more subtle, less apparent symptoms. There was fear, he said, among Goan businessmen, fear born of uncertainty. What would the future hold? On the one hand they were massively committed to the mining industry in terms of capital, people, long-term contracts. They had, all these years, functioned in a laissez-faire environment, with a minimum of Government interference (or, for that matter, Government help!); they had paid no taxes; there were no foreign exchange regulations; they were free to do business in any currency, anywhere in the world. India must understand. As a great nation, born out of adversity and heroic struggle it must extend a sympathetic hand, it must, as an article of faith, ease the painful transition of a fledgling territory from an obscure colonial footnote in history to part of mainstream India.

Six hundred thousand Goans, he said, had, overnight, become a tiny minority among six hundred million Indians. In terms of higher education, the average Goan could function effectively only in Portuguese. If the economic lingua franca was immediately converted to Hindi or Marathi, the fulfilment of a generation's hopes and aspirations would be brought to nought. Looking far ahead, he pointed out that powerful states, strong economic entities with huge land areas and populations, flanked Goa North and South. Granted the most benign of intentions, their influence and polarizing demands would inevitably tell on Goa in ways which were difficult to predict, but were sure to cause some degree of agitation. Prophetic words.

"How do you see the future?" Handoo asked. Both men were thoughtful now, for Salgaocar, like no other industrialist they had met had talked honestly of matters which, hitherto, had been glossed over or left unsaid.

"There is only one answer," Salgaocar replied, "Industry".

He talked of the immediate need. Goa should build on what she already had. The groundwork should be laid at once for ancillary units to feed the mining industry; small, *clean* factories to produce spare parts for trucks, tractors; barge building facilities; distribution networks for diesel oil. Units which were labour intensive, thus offering as many new job opportunities as possible, yet low-technology, so that manpower could be recruited and trained locally with the smallest expenditure of time and money. In the long-term, he felt that Goa's future lay in soft industries. Pollution was not, then, a dirty word in the economic lexicon. But Salgaocar's love for the beauty of the land was legendary. He was known to order his mining engineers to leave undisturbed a particularly lovely grove of mango or stretch of paddy located, much to their chagrin, at the heart of a prime mining concession. Sardesai was hard put to it to conceal a smile as Salgaocar explained, somewhat heatedly, that Goa's natural beauty, with the possible exception of Kashmir, was second to none in all of India, and industry must be located in the interior away from the green valleys, the verdant paddy-fields and the sparkling, unspoilt beaches of the coastline.

"They should not be allowed to harm the environment," he said, and when pressed to explain, he cited his own industry, mining: the hills of rejects, he said with not a little regret, had been dumped regardless on land adjacent to the mines and, if he was to be fair about the matter, to the considerable detriment of the surroundings. But the situation was not beyond correction. Cashew, that tenacious, fruitful tree, grew vigorously on slag and he was looking at a plan for

reafforestation for his own mines. As far as Goa's economic growth was concerned, there was scope for agro-based industries, canning, fish and fruit farming, exports; soft industries such as pharmaceuticals, hotels of which there was a sorely felt need in all of Goa's major cities.

"He also mentioned electronic goods," Sardesai adds, with a smile, "at a time when the word electronics was not even a gleam in the eye of India's industrial planners!"

They made to take their leave, but Salgaocar offered them yet another cup of tea and now expressed his last thoughts on the subject. The words came slowly, hesitantly. "Goa must remain Goan," he said. "A great deal has been spoken about our unique culture, our heritage, the beauty of our land, and the harmony in which our people live and work and play. But there is more. Thousands of years of conquest and reconquest have forged the Goan character on the anvil of history. We have prevailed as a good and gentle people, a singular people. For us, the future of the land and of our children is the most important reason why we live our lives the way we do. We must be a proud and useful part of India, yet we must be distinctively ourselves".

"What then of the rumours," said Handoo, "that the house of Salgaocar plans to relocate out of India."

"No truth to it," Salgaocar said firmly, "we stay."

It was a decision he had finally taken, not without much troubled heart-searching, in the tension and uncertainty of the weeks gone past. A close associate of Vasudev Salgaocar's during those critical days was a German, Dr. Hermann Jung of Duisburg in West Germany. He had been a mining engineer in the Salgaocar organisation for many years; he was an engineer of the highest calibre and he brought to bear to his assignment in Goa years of hard-won experience in many countries. There was a strong bond between Salgaocar and Dr. Jung born of mutual respect. Dr. Jung had made many Goan friends in all walks of life and

he and his wife were popular social figures in Margao where they lived.

The earliest harbingers of imminent liberation were the commando teams of freedom fighters infiltrated into Goa under cover of darkness with orders to probe the Portuguese defences and engage in acts of sabotage against strategic installations. Staunch Goan friends of Dr. Jung informed him of the secret forays at night as early as the end of November 1961. In turn, he passed the news on to Salgaocar who called a meeting of his senior executives. There should be no panic, he said, they should watch and wait and make whatever preparations were seen to be necessary. On December 9, the impending invasion was an open secret. The Portuguese began evacuating women and children. The next day thousands of Indian infantry were massed on Goa's borders. On the night of December 13, freedom fighters attacked a power station within a stone's throw of Jung's house. The ensuing fire-fight was short and vicious; within minutes, the station was in flames. As a highly visible foreigner who could have easily been mistaken for Portuguese, Jung was particularly vulnerable to the turn of events. His Goan friends insisted that he leave his home and, stealthily, under cover of darkness, in the early hours of the 14th his family shifted to the house of close friends, Louiza and Vivian Coutinho. The day broke to panic in the streets. The price of gold shot up; the value of the rupee trebled in twenty-four hours. Speculation was rife. When would the Indians invade? Would the Portuguese defend Margao; their artillery emplacements surrounded the city; Portuguese commanders talked of fighting from house-to-house, to the last man.

The Coutinhos occupied a classic old Goan house in Margao, built on solid foundations, with walls at least a foot thick, built strong and well, built to be bequeathed to generations. They decided to weather the storm under its sturdy roof. On December 17, Vasudev Salgaocar, with two of his

senior executives, Parkott and Unni, arrived at Coutinho's home. They made a recce of the surrounding gardens, a generous half-acre well-planted, enclosed by a solid laterite wall the height of a man.

While expecting, indeed looking forward to a swift cessation of hostilities should they begin, Salgaocar and his team prepared for the worst. A month's supplies of provisions were brought in by truck, never forgetting, of course, two cases of Black Label Scotch. The list had been personally vetted by Salgaocar and Jung recalls that his scribbled marginalia included smoked salmon, his favourite starter, and such minutae as six jerry cans of drinking water in case the Coutinho's well received a direct hit. Six huge dumper trucks, with inch-thick metal sides, were driven into the garden and placed in a protective circle around the house to guard against shrapnel, mortar fragments and small-arms fire.

On the night of the 17th, sipping Scotch, they reviewed the situation. They had done everything that was humanly possible in the circumstances. With great foresight, Salgaocar had packed into two large suitcases, some treasured family heirlooms and a considerable sum of hard cash in the shape of bundles of hundred rupee notes. These, with a loaded rifle, were given to Jung's safe keeping. Salgaocar, calm as ever gave them some parting advice. "In a day or two at the outside," he said, "the Indians will invade. Keep calm. Don't leave the house. The supplies include emergency medical aid. Go down to the cellars at the first signs of bombardment. Local gangs may begin looting. If you have to fire do so above their heads, only as a warning. It will be enough to frighten them off. Do not resist any attempt by an Indian patrol to enter the house. Greet them politely, offer them every co-operation and," he chuckled, "give them some whisky!"

Jung remembers that Salgaocar's calmness helped them all settle their nerves. He only showed concern

when he talked about his family. He planned to drive them himself the next morning to Loutulim, and then return to Margao. Formally, he shook each man's hand in turn and wished him luck. Then, at about midnight, he left for Vasco.

The dumpers and the rifle did nothing for Jung's peace of mind. He was conscious of the suitcases under the bed and he spent a restless disturbed night. At six in the morning he was woken from a fitful sleep by a terrible explosion: the bridge at Borim was down: the invasion had begun. The first explosion was quickly followed by others, by the boom of heavy artillery, the high-pitched whine and sharp bursts of mortars; steady small-arms fire in the distance became more pronounced as the morning wore on and the Indians advanced inexorably towards Margao.

Salgaocar's calculations had gone awry by a day. He drove at high speed from Vasco, and when he arrived at the house at Margao, skidded through the gate into the garden. Jung and Coutinho rushed Salgaocar and his family into the cellars. He had decided to stay in Margao, he told them, and send his family to the relative safety of Loutulim. "My place is here with you," he said firmly and would brook no argument. They tried hard to persuade him to change his mind, but he was adamant. The family was packed off to Loutulim, and Salgaocar quickly reverted to a role reassuringly familiar to his executives. He was the senior manager in command during yet another crisis. It was imperative, he said, that the ledgers and bills of exchange, vital records of the company's transaction and orders, were brought back from Vasco. Two cars were despatched forthwith, the lead vehicle driven by one of Salgaocar's oldest and most loyal drivers, Caitan. Much later in the day, Caitan returned, staggering through the gate, bruised and bloodied, a canvas bag with the vital documents slung over his shoulder. The road to Vasco was under heavy artillery bombardment by the Indians, deeply cratered every hundred yards. They had to abandon the cars and take to the footpaths, diving for cover every few minutes

as a shell whined overhead. At the outskirts of Vasco, a mob of lumpen, drunk, armed with staves and sickles, out to loot and pillage, blocked the road. Caitan had to fight his way through; he lost his companion driver in the melee, took a few blows, and was able to avoid worse injury only by running and hiding in thick underbrush. Eventually he made his way to the Salgaocar offices and returned to Margao, hitching rides when he could, walking when he could not.

Salgaocar embraced the man without a word.

Throughout the day, the sounds of battle were all about them. They stayed indoors. Jung admits to fear and to prayer. Salgaocar paced up and down, absorbed in his thoughts. That night, like the last, was fraught with tension. Before they turned in, Salgaocar said to them, "Tomorrow we shall be Indians."

The next morning, they made a cautious recce at the garden gates and there, cycling down the road towards them and waving joyfully, they recognised a senior Salgaocar executive, — for the first time in his life, in a white dhoti! They knew, without asking, that it was all over. At ten they watched from the upper verandah of the house, as a regiment of troops of the Indian Union, in full battle dress, marched in impeccably disciplined formation down the street towards the town square. Salgaocar, his eyes misting, recalled the words of the poet, "Last year's words belong to last year's language; next year's words await another voice."

Uncertainty was swiftly followed by resignation, a sense of deep and unshakable anti-climax. Pockets of wishful thinking remained, however, and one such, swiftly organised a month after the liberation, gave itself the grandiose title, "All Goan Congress". It was anything but. An untidy assembly of lawyers, doctors, educationists, a few mine-owners, society figures with newly discovered pretensions for politics, they were united, if at all, only by their desire to remain Goan which, turning the face of the coin, was in

reality a deep-rooted fear of becoming Indian. From the distance of a quarter of a century, it is easy to be amused by their rationalisations, but given the circumstances at the time, a degree of sympathy seems to be in order. Why, they said, shouldn't Goa be an independent state? There were precedents — Luxemborg, Monaco, Hong Kong. Goa was financially viable: 6,00,000 people earned 70 million dollars in foreign currency each year from the export of ore alone. Enough, surely, to finance the economic future of the territory. Lastly, there was the evidence of their eyes. To a man, they had visited India often, and what did they see? Beggars, when Goa had none. The homeless sleeping on the roads, when not a man, woman or child in Goa was without an adequate roof over their heads, crime at every street corner, when there had not been a single murder reported in Goa in years. Garbage and filth piled up uncleared on the roads; had anyone seen a dirty street in Goa? Food shortages, rationing, hunger . . . no Goan ever went without a square meal! And so, in wishful self-delusion, on.

India remained massively unimpressed.

In 1962, the Indian Parliament passed the 12th Amendment Act to the Constitution whereby Goa, Daman and Diu were integrated with the Indian Union from the day of Liberation and were included in the first schedule of the Constitution as Union Territories.

It would be less than honest to record that Vasudev Salgaocar had no misgivings; indeed, it would do a great injustice to a man who never took a major decision without weighing the option in the light of his experience and needs. And options there were; he was a very wealthy man by any standards, anywhere in the world. Portugal, Brazil, Hong Kong, the free trade areas such as the Canaries and the Bahamas, Macau, all offered a comfortable haven for the Salgaocar family. But he decided to stay on, and while he never spoke of it, surely it was his love of the land and its people that finally tilted the balance.

He was never to regret the decision in its major implications. The next two decades were to see Vasudev Salgaocar move far beyond the business of making and managing money. He would establish a permanent place in the history of the territory, blazing trails in areas as far removed as politics, health, education and public service. Yet finding the time and the affection, in a normal business day which began at six in the morning and ended fourteen hours later to exchange telex messages with his beloved grandchild, Vishal:

MY DEAR PAPA

HOW ARE YOU PAPA? YOU BOUGHT TWO CARS FOR RAJUMAMA AND ONE CAR FOR SHIVANANDMAMA, BUT YOU DID NOT BUY ANY FOR ME. ALL ARE TEASING ME AND I AM NOT TALKING TO YOU. YOU DON'T LOVE ME THAT'S WHY YOU DO LIKE THIS. IS IT CORRECT.

LOVE VISHAL

MASTER VISHAL SALGAOCAR

I HAVE NOTED YOUR TLX MSG STP RAJU MAMA AND SHIVANANDMAMA HAVE PURCHASED CARS IN DELHI FROM STC IN AUCTION SECOND HAND STP THEY ARE OLD CARS AND NOT NEW CARS STP WE ARE GOING TO GET NEW CARS SHORTLY AND I WILL INFORM YOU STP PLS LET ME KNOW WHETHER WATER IS THERE IN POONA SO THAT I CAN COME WITH STEAMER SO THAT EVERYONE CAN SEE AND ADMIRE YOUR SHOP ST

LOVE PAPA

* * * *

In the eventful years following liberation, two major events occurred in Vasudev Salgaocar's life; the first would permanently alter the path of his future; the second — the famous Opinion poll — would see Goa take the

first tentative steps towards self-determination as an independent State of the Union.

In 1963 Vasudev Salgaocar suffered a stroke, diagnosed in the medical terminology of the day, as a Transient Ischemic Attack. It was not entirely unexpected. The pace with which he lived, the relentless pressures of a business life carried on at nothing less than full cry, had been aggravated in recent years by hypertension and diabetes. He turned a deaf ear to pleas from his medical advisers and family to ease the pace, and as for the strict diet prescribed by his physicians, he would not, he declared, forgo the single minor vice begun in the halcyon days of the Sunday Club — sweets, most particularly, vanilla ice cream with chocolate sauce. As for his hypertension, it would have to learn to live with his passion for the salt content of imported smoked salmon.

But the stroke was not to be taken lightly, and he agreed, albeit with some reluctance at having to leave the business unattended for some weeks, to travel to Bombay with his eldest son Anil, and seek the best medical opinion. He was extensively examined by Drs. K. K. Datey and Ginde, respectively India's most eminent heart specialist and neurologist. While all seemed to be in order, with no permanent damage to the vascular system and heart muscle, further tests were needed in order to eliminate the last vestige of doubt. The facilities for these in the early sixties were only available at the Texas Heart Institute, Houston, in the United States, where the world's most famous heart surgeon, Dr. Debakey was pioneering new and innovative surgical techniques to repair damaged hearts.

He stayed in America for three weeks with his wife, Anil and Dr. Ginde, who had very kindly agreed to accompany them. A battery of tests culminating in the painful but unavoidable carotid angiograph confirmed that there was no obvious neurological trauma, but on his return to Bombay, there was another setback. His pressure, high at

the easiest of times, shot up and he was hospitalised under Dr. Datey's care. In March 1964, in relatively stable condition, he returned to Goa, exactly ten weeks after he had left.

Dr. Datey had put him on a strict regime, with no allowance for indulgence of any sort. He was told, under pain of relapse or worse, that he would have to maintain a punctual drug regime; he was prescribed so many hours of rest a day, so many hours of work, so many miles of travel a week; to cap it all he was placed on a diet of utmost severity. He would, Dr. Datey said, have to follow this regime for the rest of his life.

Naturally, apart from the drugs, Vasudev Salgaocar chose to ignore his condition. He threw himself with renewed vigour into the business of reordering his many activities for the brave new future which lay ahead. But even then there were storm-clouds on the political horizon. Goa's northerly neighbour, Maharashtra, was a monolithic nation-state, sixty million strong, with a land area larger than France, all of Goa would fit comfortably into just half of one of Maharashtra's districts. It was the lodestone in the Indian industrial firmament, accounting for more than half of all taxes paid to the national exchequer; the Marathas were a proud race, militant, ambitious and successful.

The affinity between Goa and Maharashtra went well beyond geography and the influence and assimilation of the Maharashtrian way of life in the northern Goan villages. Marathi was widely spoken throughout the territory, second only to Konkani; Marathi newspapers were popular; Marathi drama, dance-forms and literature were enjoyed at every level of society; Maharashtra's commercial and political ramifications in Goa went far beyond the superficial. There were strong ties between many Goan leaders in politics, business, commerce and public administration and their counterparts in Maharashtra. Indeed, the House of Chowgule, first among Goan business houses, was Maharashtrian.

But deeper still was the unshakeable belief of the ethnic Goan in the exclusive singularity of his land and his people, a singularity anchored in language, closely followed by custom, culture and ritual. The first words uttered by a Goan child to his parents were in Konkani. When in 1965, two years before the Opinion Poll, the Home Minister of Mysore, R. M. Patil said, "Konkani is the language of Goa." He merely held up a mirror image to the work of generations of Goan scholars who had unearthed, among many intriguing historical gems concerning the language, the fact that, in 1556 the Portuguese installed Asia's first printing press in Goa. Some of the first books ever printed in an Indian language were cathecisms in Konkani. In 1563, the seminarian Andre Vaz, the first Goan to be ordained a priest by the Portuguese, prepared the first Konkani grammar; a work made famous, by its later elaboration, by the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens between 1568 and 1617. It was to become Konkani's earliest formal grammatical text.

The Portuguese did not encourage Konkani. It was not taught in the schools; it had no official status or recognition. They realised, with a degree of prescience, that it had the potential to become a potent force for Goan unity and revolutionary change. But accommodations between the languages were inevitable. Given names in Portuguese were rapidly Konkanised, "Conceicao" became "Koinsamv", "Francisco" transliterated to "Foransik" while Konkani place names were, similarly Lusitanised — Kuttalli (Cortalim); Moddgavn (Margao).

Yet, there was a school of thought, as thoroughly entrenched, and convinced that Konkani was no more, no less, than a dialect of Marathi. The conferences that were organised in Panjim and other centres, pro and con, and the war of words which inevitably followed, became a cause celebre, enthusiastically fanned by warring segments of the press, significant straws in a wind that rose from the North and bore dark tidings.

The issues were clear, unclouded by complexities, and utterly opposed to reconciliation or compromise. The Bandodkar Government, which swept to power in Goa in 1963, was in favour of merger with Maharashtra, and certain unkind critics of the Government laid a great part of this clearly stated inclination to the harsh treatment Bandodkar received at the hands of the Portuguese, which included a term of imprisonment. While intriguing to contemplate, this does the man less than justice. He was a Goan patriot before anything else, and when he looked to merger with Maharashtra, he looked to the immediate patronage of one of the most powerful states within the Union! Massive financing, industrial and technical skill, far greater clout with the Centre, a huge market for whatever Goa produced, an intensely active cultural milieu. The Maharashtra Government, in turn, saw Goa as a potential jewel in the crown. A green and pleasant land, with a thriving iron ore export business, huge foreign exchange earnings each year, the acquisition of which would extend the hegemony of the Marathas to the Northern limits of the deep South.

To Goans opposing merger, the issue was emotional rather than rational. They were in no doubt that, in time and with the proper support from Delhi, Goa could achieve a viable degree of economic self-sufficiency. This was not in serious question. The real issue was: should centuries of self-sacrifice and struggle come to naught; had Goa achieved freedom only to exchange one set of rulers for another? Enter a determined and militant group which included such stalwarts as the poet B. B. Borkar, Uday Bhembre, Laxmanrao Sardesai, Ravindra Kelekar, Dr. Manohar Sardesai, Shankar Bhandari, Anna Sarmalkar, Arvind Bhatikar and Chandrakant Keni — some of the earliest architects of the Konkani renaissance. Working with the research of centuries, the group had come to the irrefutable conclusion, since confirmed beyond any argument, that Konkani

was an original language. Any points of familiarity with Marathi, or, for that matter, contiguous South Indian languages, was the result of bastardization. They had traced the historical migration of Konkani to various parts of South India and had even discovered a pocket of pristine, original Salcete Konkani in Cochin!

The groundswell in favour of Marathi was gaining momentum in Goa and the Konkani group decided to put its beliefs to the public test. A Marathi conference was held in Panaji, ostensibly literary in its terms of reference; in reality a platform for merger propaganda with Maharashtra. A resolution was passed with the disingenious conclusion: because Konkani is a dialect of Marathi and because Marathi is the language of Maharashtra, the territory of Goa should be merged with Maharashtra. The Group protested and sought to move an amendment. After much table-thumping, one of the militants was allowed to state his case. He ascended the dais and began speaking on the resolution in Konkani, the first words in that language to be spoken all evening. There were cries of protest and outrage, a few the speaker noted in satisfaction, in Konkani! But he raised his voice above the din and made the point, "If Konkani is merely a dialect of Marathi," he shouted, so that his voice was heard across the hall, "as your resolution claims, why should I not use it?"

In the hushed silence that followed, the group staged a dignified walk-out.

In the next few months, the controversy took an ugly turn. If you were truly a nationalist and anti-Portuguese, you had no choice but to be pro-merger. Those against merger suffered from a secret hankering for the colonial past. Bad enough, but worse was to follow. The emerging polarization was clearly demarcated by religious sentiment: Catholics were increasingly perceived as being anti-merger, while Hindus were gathering in their tens of thousands around the merger banner.

The pro-Konkani lobby, now a strong and vocal movement, represented all over Goa, sought political influence and financial support for the struggle which would, they were certain, arrive at a denouement in the not too distant future. In the course of this search for leverage, they met and put their case to Vasudev Salgaocar.

He had, as usual, given careful thought to the issue, and he admitted, with candour, to a personal difficulty. All his life he had felt a deep empathy for Marathi as a language. He enjoyed Marathi dramas and music recitals; many of his religious rituals were conducted in that language. He had never — in all of his experience — suffered hostility or unfriendliness at the hands of Maharashtrians. Indeed, his many friends from that community, including that honourable competitor Chowgule, had been steadfast and supportive over the years. Maharashtra and Goa should always have close and fruitful ties.

But what had disturbed him enormously, he said, and swung him in favour of an independent Goa was the Hindu/Catholic schism, now out in the open and, unfortunately, encouraged in the basest sort of way by unsavoury political elements and segments of the press on both sides. He was convinced that Goa could prevail only if Goans were united; Goans could only be united if Catholics and Hindus thought and felt as one; for generations there had been one natural bond between them — Konkani. He would support Konkani as the lingua franca of Goa; he would put all of his considerable authority, influence and money towards the cause of a united Goa, a free Goa.

He attended street meetings, public gatherings, read extensively on the subject, even the meanest and most inept pamphleteering. All the while, discreetly, he gave and canvassed support for the movement, and while this met with some small success — there were encouraging signs of organisational cohesion and a common point of view — he felt it was sorely inadequate. The fledgling anti-merger

movement was under savage and massive attack. The opposition was bringing to bear formidable armoury — all of the communication resources of the Governments of Maharashtra and Goa — the administrative machinery, the manpower, the money, the influential Marathi press in both territories, the considerable leverage with authorities in Delhi.

Moreover, the language of merger had become coarser. Whether at a street corner harangue or in the editorial columns of leading newspapers, all objectivity had been lost to wild, violent and unprincipled attack. Goans who wished to remain independent of Maharashtra were accused — publicly and often by name — of being closet quislings of the Portuguese, secret colonial sympathisers, agents of Karnataka, conspirators in a vast scheme to keep Goa Catholic-controlled and anti-Indian, with the Hindu population subservient and repressed. It was rabble-rousing at its most repugnant and, even more dangerously, it was beginning to have effect.

"If you tell a lie often enough and loud enough," Salgaocar told the group assembled in the Conference Room of the company's headquarters in Vasco, "people will believe it as the truth."

The leaders of the anti-merger movement in Goa had sought an urgent meeting with Salgaocar. They reported that they were losing ground; they feared that the opposition would win the day unless they were confronted where their weapons were most potent — in the territory's press.

And so, Rashtramat came into being. Later, when the anti-merger movement was at its height, Keni took over as editor and, under his uncompromising editorship, it became the public voice of the movement against merger, honest, unafraid, intelligent, the rallying point over the years to ever increasing numbers of Goans who, in their tens of thousands, heeded its call. It would be no exaggeration to say that the outcome of the Opinion Poll in 1967 was crucially

influenced by the role played by Rashtramat. Salgaocar, his partners and the Editor had decided, in the newspaper's infancy, that they would forgo shrill polemic for reasoned argument and objective deliberation, with a watchful eye always kept to the authenticity of researched material and the verification of fact and quoted statement. Keni recalls that Salgaocar gave him a free hand, and, was, in fact, the ideal publisher. "Never once," says Keni "did he force my hand. We worked very closely together and I never ceased to be amazed at the fertility of his contribution. Nothing, not even the smallest ripple in the territory, escaped his notice. Virtually every other day he discussed the newspaper with me, either personally or over the phone. And he was full of new ideas, suggestions for editorials and articles, lines of possible enquiry and attack. Without his commitment, drive and unstinted financial support, Rashtramat would never have become the force it did."

There were, as in the fortunes of the best of papers, moments of crisis. Keni recalls an occasion when he attacked the Bandodkar government in his editorial columns with more zeal perhaps than wisdom. He expected retaliation of some sort but was quite unprepared for the violence of the response. There were phone calls from irate Government officials threatening litigation and worse. Anonymous letters promising assorted kinds of mayhem and retribution; an escalation which took off rapidly in the next few days and which, in Keni's considered view, was clearly orchestrated. It culminated in a personal phone call from Bandodkar to Salgaocar. To this day, nobody knows what they said to each other. They were old friends and, occasionally, keen combatants, neither giving an inch. To both men, this latest fracas was a minor hiccup in a long and stormy relationship. Keni admits that he feared Salgaocar would buckle under and compromise. He had much at stake and if Government so chose, life for the Salgaocar organisation would have been made very difficult indeed.

Salgaocar asked Keni for his sources for the offending editorial and began checking the facts independently. Keni passed the week with not a little trepidation. Then Salgaocar phoned, "You did right," he said briefly. "Keep up the good work."

While Rashtramat continued to give good service to the anti-merger cause, it also served notice to the powers that be that Vasudev Salgaocar had decided to move far beyond his traditional role of senior industrialist. He would involve himself in whatever area he felt to be of concern to the territory's present and future well-being. He would, from now on, have his finger in many political pies. And while he would prove flexible and compromising in order to achieve what he considered useful ends, he would fight the good fight when necessary even if he did it alone. In the decades ahead he would draw many sympathisers to the Salgaocar banner. They worked for him, first among equals, tirelessly and with total dedication in achieving their objectives.

Years after the battle was won, and the tumult and shouting little more than a memory, Salgaocar attended a Konkani literary conference in Mangalore which attracted twenty thousand participants, a massive gathering for the time and place. He stayed on after that addressing smaller groups personally. On to Cochin, much feted by the Konkani community, Salgaocar publicly admired the unsullied purity of the language and congratulated them on keeping the faith.

* * * *

Salgaocar's enemies — and he made his fair share, as do all successful men in public life — are unanimous in the respect they felt for him. Often vehement in their opposition to Salgaocar's actions and behaviour, they concede to a man that even when he did things they considered brutally wrong, they were for the right reasons. In short, his

integrity and his abiding love for Goa and its people were never in doubt.

The years that led to the Opinion Poll were eventful ones for the Salgaocar organisation. A new screening plant at the mines, set up at the cost of half a crore of rupees, was the forerunner of a steady expansion plan which soon saw a new company, Sallitho Ores set up to explore new concessions at Pale. Eight more motorised barges were added to the fleet.

Three new companies were set up. The first, Salgaocar Industrial Gases, was a significant diversification move into a hitherto unexplored area of industrial activity. A new shipping company was floated in collaboration with one of the world's largest — the P. & O. Group in the U.K. Salgaocar's first step towards a blue-water fleet of bulk carriers. In a more populist vein, the Salgaocar cinema halls were refurbished and plans put in action for a chain of similar theatres in all of Goa's major cities. The diversification plan gained fresh momentum with the setting up of Curti Chemicals to manufacture potassium permanganate and potassium carbonate.

Just when it seemed that nothing could stop the exponential growth of the Salgaocar organisation, Delhi conceded to the pressures of the Governments of Maharashtra and Goa, and announced a date, a few scant months ahead, for an Opinion Poll to be held in Goa, Daman and Diu. It would determine, by public plebiscite, the merger of Goa with Maharashtra and Daman and Diu with the state of Gujarat. Vasudev Salgaocar's finest hour was upon him.

Fernandes and Kavlekar were seconded for the duration. Margao, that perennial hotbed of political activism was, once again, headquarters for both factions. "In the House of Salgaocar for the next few months," Fernandes says wryly, "business took a back seat." Salgaocar and his task force prepared a detailed plan of action. A separate office, fully staffed and equipped, would be set up in Margao. The task

force was split up into individual components each with specific responsibilities — transport (where Salgaocar's fleet of trucks was pressed into action) public opinion among peer groups (Fernandes and Keni were to organise) meetings in villages and rallies in the larger towns (Kavlekar, the guiding spirit) propaganda (with Keni and Rashtramat at the fore while drawing upon the considerable talent of the internationally famous Goan illustrator and cartoonist, Mario Miranda, and the brilliant young advertising professional, Sylvie Da Cunha from Bombay) finance (a portfolio which Salgaocar with his Finance Director in Vasco ensured was hugely liquid at any given point in time).

It was decided to print all publicity material in Bombay, where quality and speed were guaranteed. This was essential. A swift printed response to rapidly changing tactical situations on the ground often carried the day. Daily courier services were established between Bombay and Goa with vans tearing down the national highway at hair-raising speeds. A centre was established at the Salgaocar headquarters in Vasco, which coordinated swift liaison contact between Margao, Bombay and the rest of Goa. A barrage of publicity material was designed, printed and delivered in a matter of days. Thousands of letters for individual mailing, pamphlets and folders for distribution at rallies; tens of thousands of posters which, put up secretly at night by volunteers across the length and breadth of Goa, would see Goans awake one fine morning to a provocative slogan in Marathi:

Nako amhala Shrikand Puri
Amchi Xit Codich bori
(I don't want Shrikand Puri
Give me my own rice and curry!)
All of Konkani Goa laughed.

Salgaocar, though, had no illusions. The situation was fraught with uncertainty. Speculation was rife, impossible to verify, that Government was offering handsome rewards, in

fiat and favour, to individuals and organisations who garnered the most votes for the cause of merger. To those who opposed, there were veiled threats of economic sanction, or worse. The strategy was not without results, despite the derision from certain quarters in the pro-Goan camp. A few of the less prominent financial backers of Rashtramat dropped out. No matter. Salgaocar promptly took up the slack, increasing his contribution proportionately. A number of prominent business and social leaders who had offered support became, overnight, silent and unavailable. Others decided that fence-sitting offered the position of best advantage and began, secretly, financing both mergerites and anti-mergerites. They would not lose, they reckoned, no matter who won.

Salgaocar worked.

Now was the time for action. The next few weeks would determine, once and forever, Goa's destiny, and he plunged into the fray, Keni remembers, like a man possessed. Not a single meeting went by, not a rally, when Salgaocar's presence was not felt, never, though, on the dais, always in the first couple of rows of the crowd. Promptly at six each morning, he phoned from his home in Vasco, and he wanted to know everything: how many meetings had been held the day before, where, under what aegis, to what effect? How many pledges had they obtained? What opposition had they faced? Were there any new tactics employed by the other side? If so, what measures had been taken to neutralise them? Keni, Fernandes and the rest of the task force were soon to put together late at night, often working beyond midnight, a thoroughly detailed summary of the preceding day's events. These, meticulously detailed, were presented to Salgaocar at the crack of dawn the following day. At eight, he would make an appearance at Margao, look to the agenda for the day, and make his plans for personal appearances, private meetings and any other activities which might support the cause.

Never once, says Keni, did he falter in his resolve, or show signs of anything beyond the expectation of victory. Reservations, if at all, were never expressed, though, in hindsight, we know that these were serious and critical. Salgaocar had put the entire corpus of his organisation, its weight and influence, behind the anti-merger movement, and this was publicly known, resented and opposed with all of the power of the establishment.

Keni maintains to this day, and so do others, eye-witnesses and active participants to the turbulent events of the era, that Salgaocar's involvement was critical to the resolution of the issue. Here was a prominent Hindu industrialist, patriarch of an illustrious organisation, prepared to stand by his belief for a Goa unfettered with the full weight of his organisation and its wealth, when most other Hindu industrialists either maintained a studied neutrality or supported merger. The fact that Salgaocar did not give personal and public voice to his belief did not matter. In fact, in Keni's opinion, it enhanced his stand. The thousands of workers in the Salgaocar organisation, the labour in the mines, spread the good word. "Vasudevbab" was against merger; he wanted Goa for the Goans. The rest of the Hindu population, torn on the one hand between appeals to secretarian prejudice; on the other, their basic instinct for self-realisation and self-renewal, found in the Salgaocar icon, a symbol for belief in the exclusive qualities of their Goanness. And this, in the final count, transcended the politics of the moment. It went beyond the confrontation of languages; it was of greater import than the issue of religion; it found final and conclusive expression in the results of the poll, when Goa voted triumphantly against merger, as did Daman and Diu, for protection as Union Territories under the direct control of the Centre.

There are three incidents peripheral to the event, directly involving Vasudev Salgaocar, which are well worth recounting. The first occurred six months before the Poll,

the second in the last vital weeks, and the last fourteen years later.

Chowgule, who was firmly and without any ambiguity, on the side of merger, let it be fairly said, not because of his Maharashtrian origins but because he believed, as an article of impassioned faith, in the rightness of this course of action for Goa's future prosperity, had debated the issue, long and hard, with his friend and fellow industrialist, Salgaocar, on many occasions. But Salgaocar, as Fernandes often remarks, once he had made up his mind on an issue was as unbudgeable as the rock of Gibraltar. Chowgule's arguments fell on deaf ears. Salgaocar was never an apologist; he believed that well-marshalled and executed attack was the only possible means of successful defence, but in deference to their long association, born of mutual difficulty, slender beginnings, hard labour and eventual triumph in the same business, he merely voiced a polite dissent, until Chowgule called for a special meeting. The Maharashtrian Minister of Industries wished to call on Salgaocar to discuss merger. Would five pm do? Salgaocar agreed, summoned Fernandes, and asked him to have a splendid tea prepared, with typical Goan sweets, (only Goan), and to be present at the occasion. Chowgule and the Minister from Maharashtra were received with a rare degree of protocol. Salgaocar himself met them at the reception and escorted them into his office. The niceties of good behaviour were observed to the letter. Only after the sumptuous Goan tea had been served, duly and comprehensively sampled, did his guests broach the topic.

Chowgule let the Minister take the lead.

He was a Senior Member of the Maharashtrian Government, Fernandes recalls, a competent and honest Minister who had performed brilliantly in that Cabinet. He had done his homework thoroughly, and the case he presented to Salgaocar for merger, was based exclusively on economics, finance and politics. He talked about

Maharashtra's tremendous revenue realizations, its powerful resource base in terms of money, labour, infrastructure, its industrial base seeking feeder industries for which Goa was ideally suited, its per capita disposable income, and in each particular, what this would mean to Goa in terms of merger. In passing, he mentioned that the Centre's annual financial allocations for administered territories was less than overwhelming, and that Goa, as a part of Maharashtra would benefit from an enormous annual budget, distributed with an even hand. Not, he added swiftly, that Goa was incapable of a high degree of self-sufficiency. It was a question of the availability of resources over time. Goa, on its own, would take generations to achieve what could be attained in a few short decades as part of Maharashtra.

He paused and Salgaocar said mildly, "But then we wouldn't be Goans any longer, would we? All of us would become Maharashtrians."

The Minister let this pass. He had not, he said, sought the interview to offer Salgaocar a golden carrot; it would be an insult to a great and honourable House. No, he had come to appeal to Salgaocar's love for Goa and to ask him, honestly and objectively, to see where Goa's future lay, a prosperity not fifty or a hundred years ahead, but within the grasp of every living Goan family. All he wanted out of Salgaocar was the public expression of his support for merger. No committee memberships, no appearance, no financial contributions, just a simple statement to the press in Goa and Maharashtra that he supported merger.

"In terms of immediate benefits," Salgaocar said, weighing his words, for he knew that he spoke to an honest man who believed in the sincerity and logic of every syllable he had uttered, "you may be right. We may be more prosperous in the very short term, but we would lose our identity and, in time, Goa as a concept in the heart of Goans, would no longer exist. How my people have struggled! For thousands of years, much before the Portuguese, we have

been Goan. I am a Goan first and last, a Saraswat next, an industrialist by choice. I cannot ask my countrymen to betray their heritage for a pocketful of money where the gain will never measure up to an irretrievable loss."

He was soft-spoken but adamant. They left knowing that he had not spoken merely for the record, but had expressed a belief upon which he would act with all of the power in his possession.

So it proved to be.

Ulhas Buyao, a Konkani poet and singer, would be the beneficiary of the same well-spring of belief, expressed in a different and lower key perhaps, but no less eloquently.

In the last days before the opinion poll, at five in the evening, in the town square near Cine Vasco, a public meeting had been organised to protest against merger with Maharashtra. Fifteen thousand Goans assembled and after the speeches to which the huge crowd cheered in one voice, Buyao and his troupe of performers, the Jai Gomant artistes' Group embarked, to the joyful approval of the multitude, on a series of propaganda songs which he had written and composed in Konkani. At the end of the recital, a prominent social worker from Vasco, Vittu Lotlikar, approached him, pointed to a man at the front of the crowd, and said, "You have a new admirer. Do you see that man clapping so loudly? That's V. M. Salgaocar."

Salgaocar, at that moment, caught Buyao's eye, smiled and waved. He then indicated that Lotlikar should come down from the dais and meet him. Buyao lost them in the small group that gathered about him and his musicians. Garlands of mango leaves were placed about their necks (two mango leaves joined at the stems was the symbol of the anti-mergerites). After the extended good-byes and lingering farewells Goans are so prone to, Buyao packed and was about to leave the grounds when Lotlikar handed him yet another garland. "This is from V.M.," he said, smiling

broadly. The garland was made of one hundred rupee notes. Many hundreds of them. Buyao looked around, but Salgaocar had left. The troupe was desperately in need of funds; indeed, they had to meet their expenses from personal and meagre resources.

"He had brought the garland with him," Buyao says, "he could have sent it with one of his executives. No. He had it made and brought it himself when he was under great pressure with not a moment to spare. I shall never forget the gesture."

Shortly after the Opinion Poll, he put Vasudev Salgaocar's largesse to a personal test. The career-making break all Goan musicians work towards came his way in a phone call from the agents of His Master's Voice in Bombay. They wanted him on their catalogue on one condition: he had to guarantee that at least three hundred records would sell in Goa; this caused much concern, but to compound grievous worry, he had to pay his own expenses and his troupe's from Goa to Bombay and back. With great difficulty, by scrimping on what they considered essentials, such as the cashew feni which ably assisted the evening rehearsals, they managed to scrape together nine hundred rupees. The shortfall of two thousand rupees was beyond the limits of self-sacrifice, ability or contacts. Then Buyao remembered the generosity of the man who gave him a garland of hundred rupee notes. He put it to his musicians; it was, they decided, worth a try, so off he went to Vasco without an appointment — such is the way of Goans on a mission — and presented himself at the Salgaocar headquarters. "I would like to meet Mr. Vasudev Salgaocar," he said, in a confident tone of voice which quite belied his feelings. He was made to wait precisely three minutes, then escorted to Vasudev Salgaocar's office where he was greeted with a warmth which took him completely by surprise. They exchanged pleasantries, then Salgaocar said, "What's troubling you?"

At a sudden loss for words, exasperated by his inability to express the urgency of his need, he talked about the problem in abrupt and wholly inadequate form.

Salgaocar uttered two of his most remembered words, "No problem," he said, pressed a buzzer, called for Fernandes, said in Konkani, "He needs some help, make out a cheque for two thousand rupees." Within minutes the cheque book was on his table, his signature on the cheque; Buyao was wished the best of all possible futures and led to the door which Salgaocar personally opened for him.

When the musician moved to Curchorem, a village with many devotees to Sai Baba, a proposal was raised at the Panchayat to erect a temple in the Saint's honour, but funds were scarce, and Buyao brought the matter to Salgaocar's attention. "The village has money," Salgaocar said briskly, "or can raise it in a short time. If they really believe in Sai Baba and want a temple they must collect the money for it. But worship may never be postponed. I will lend the Panchayat the money, interest free, provided they pay it back in two years."

The offer was accepted and honoured.

Many years later, when the weight of family problems, apparently irreconcilable, lay heavily on Salgaocar's shoulders, when his health had deteriorated beyond hope of recovery, when his beloved Vasco was beleaguered by slums, vice, crime and worse, the chicanery of politicians who lived only for power and the pelf of the moment, Buyao, now with a modest reputation of his own, met Salgaocar to give him a gift of his latest cassette "Goyenchi Mati". Salgaocar accepted the cassette and promised to listen to it that evening at his home. "Sing to me now," he said, pointing to the recording, "sing your songs from there." Buyao, sans troupe, without accompaniment, bereft even of his beloved guitar, in the confines of Salgaocar's austere office, began singing in Konkani:

These are our people
Our beloved people
This is our land
Our Goan soil
Large-hearted are we Goans
Knock on the door at any time
You will find no grudges
This is our Goan land

He paused, and Salgaocar asked, with a faint smile, "Do such people still exist in Goa?" and Buyao was emboldened to answer, "I stand before one, sir." The smile became wistful and reflective, "Is that all?" And Buyao sang the last verse.

Anything goes in Goa now
One kills another now
One Goan betrays the other now
This is not our way of life.

There were tears in Salgaocar's eyes as he stood up and held out his hand. "Is there any future for Goa," he asked.

They were to meet on one last occasion, Salgaocar's sixty-third birthday, when his health, now in terminal decline, was cause for concern to thousands in the territory. Buyao had composed a special song, more exactly a prayer, which ended with the exhortation, "Pray God grant our Vasudevbab a very long life." Before he left, Salgaocar clasped Buyao's hand in both of his and said, "Thank you Buyao, but I won't die so long as there are people like you to pray to God to grant me a long life. My will is strong. I will not die."

Mohan Kavlekar provides the last footnote to the days of the Opinion Poll. A few years after the Poll Salgaocar resigned from the partnership which ran the Marathi daily, Rashtramat. The paper was on a sound financial footing; its circulation was growing; Keni was established as an editor of acumen, talent and drive. Salgaocar's patronage, in money, time and advice, was no more required. As in so many busi-

ness deals in the past, he had done his bit, the venture was off and running, and the people in charge were committed to its future. All went well with Rashtramat till 1981, when the most important managing partner of the paper met with a financial crisis. In indifferent health, beset by personal and business problems which he found intractable, he approached Salgaocar. Would he take over the paper, with all of its assets and liabilities, together with the purchase of the press which printed the paper? Salgaocar agreed on a hand-shake; no documents were signed. Then the senior partner died, and it was discovered that the printing press was wholly inadequate for its task. It was outdated, in utterly dilapidated condition, and incapable of meeting the printing requirements of the paper. A massive infusion of capital was urgently required to upgrade the printing facilities. Salgaocar's advisers were opposed to any involvement. They pointed out, and quite correctly, that it would take years and a large amount of fresh capital, to turn the situation to their advantage. But Salgaocar was adamant.

"I have given my word," he said.

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The year after the opinion poll saw the Salgaocar family well on its way to becoming a clan. On May 9, 1968, Salgaocar's eldest daughter was given in marriage to Dr. Madhav Kamat, and this memorable occasion was followed shortly thereafter by the wedding of Anil, Salgaocar's first son, to Laxmi on December 8 of the same year. The House of Salgaocar would soon be known unto the third generation.

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At the age of fifty-three, in his prime and at the peak of his powers, Vasudev Salgaocar was not — it has to be admitted — the easiest of Executive Chairmen. The demands he made of his executives would have been the

ruination of lesser men. He expected nothing less than total, unwavering commitment to the organisation and its goals. He expected intelligence and hard work as a matter of course; he admired grace under pressure, innovative thinking, independent judgement. The men at the helm of Salgaocar affairs had to be self-starters, big enough to accept blame for a mistake committed and learn from it; men who offered him not just advice but argument, counterpoint, fresh and original contribution. In turn, he cared for them with a generosity that was often overwhelming, not merely in terms of material benefits, but in what he gave of himself. He became — to executives such as Fernandes, Kavlekar, Bene and many others — friend, confidante, mentor, staunchly supportive in times of crises. He took a keen and helpful interest in their families for he genuinely thought of them as larger extensions of his own. He was meticulous about remembering birthdays, anniversaries, feasts, special occasions, and the cards he chose personally and sent by the thousands each year to colleagues, staff, friends and business associates always carried his personal signature and, more often than not, a special message in his large and not very tidy hand.

As in his own life, he expected his executives to function to an ethical code of the highest propriety in both their professional and personal lives. Short shrift was given to moral turpitude of any kind. He was once heard to say of an executive he had dismissed, "A man without honour is not worth the time it takes to sack him." Yet when they had, at times, to take brutally hard decisions for the sake of the organisation, once he understood that it was inevitable, he backed them to the hilt. For a man who began his business day at six in the morning and ended it never earlier than eight in the evening, it was understandable that he should abhor clock-watchers and shirkers of any stripe. If you were a senior Salgaocar executive, it was your whole life even if it meant clambering out of bed at five in the morning to drive one and a half

hours in blinding rain to attend to a crisis in a mine. To Salgaocar, such a minor exercise was par for the course. But in all fairness, it must be said that he asked nothing of his executives that he did not demand twice-over from himself. Among the senior staff there was never any resentment, just a burning desire, expressed only in performance, to emulate Salgaocar in deed and in word, while worrying a trifle about the cavalier fashion in which he treated the state of his health. He never spoke of it and discouraged comment and advice from others in the matter.

"He would have made a great psychologist," Kavlekar says. He and Fernandes often sat in on interviews of prospective executive candidates which Salgaocar chaired, subtle exercises in probing interrogations of the nicest possible kind. "A curriculum vitae," Salgaocar would say, "may give me the facts but it tells me nothing about the man." He would urge his executives not to be taken in by externals. While a suit was the only appropriate form of dress for an interviewee, in his view, it had to be right for the occasion, not too sober, not too sharp, just right. ("Did the man think he was attending a wedding?" he once remarked as the door closed on a departing candidate.) He made a careful note of first impressions: the quality, colour and cut of the suit. Were the tie and socks as complementary as they should be? And what of the shoes? He harboured a deep suspicion of men who walked on rubber soles. ("You can hear the sound of leather on a floor. It's a good, honest sound!) Without seeming to, he noticed how the man sat, held himself, used his hands, shifted in his chair. "Body language can tell you a lot," he used to say, "about a man's confidence or lack of it. You can tell if he's nervous, impatient, perhaps a little aggressive." Not that he considered aggression a negative trait; in the cut-and-thrust world of business, aggression and confidence were natural allies, essential prerequisites for success in any endeavour. Indeed, a palpable lack of confidence was immediate reason for an interviewee to

fall out of favour. The questions he asked, in a friendly, conversational tone, had little to do with the candidate's cv, but everything to do with his feelings, attitudes, behaviour patterns and general outlook on life and work. His questions were never direct but elliptical and he discovered more in the unstated, in the hesitancy, in the casual throwaway remark, than he did in the studied, deliberately couched reply. And all the while he watched the eyes. "Eyes never lie," he would say.

If the interview went well and, depending on the seniority of the position sought, the candidate was subjected to a final acid test: he was asked out to lunch. A liquid lunch, for the object of the exercise was to discover if he would hold his liquor like a gentleman, or become garrulous and indiscreet with a few of the best under his belt. The latter was cause for immediate disqualification.

This meticulous appraisal never ceased. Once a Salgaocar executive, you were expected to live by the code. At times it could be exasperating. The manner and kind of dress was spelt out in no uncertain terms. All executives had to dress neatly and be punctual at office. A frayed cuff or dirty collar would never go unremarked. Scuffed shoes, if observed, brought a quiet reprimand. The reception, open areas and private offices had to be spotlessly clean, with freshly cut flowers wherever appropriate. Salgaocar made a personal round of inspection when he arrived each morning; it began with the peons' uniforms and ended with his own personal place of work. This scrupulous attention to detail extended to other areas as well. No letter was to be left unanswered for more than twenty-four hours. A friendly, well-written letter was the only way a Salgaocar letter was drafted. When carbons of the more important outgoing mail was brought to him daily, Salgaocar read each letter personally and never failed to point out a grammatical error, a less than polite tone of voice, a termination where good wishes had been neglected.

This penchant for thoroughness was never more in evidence than in the Company's social affairs. Dinner parties were given often. It was understood that the Salgaocar executives invited would wear dark suits with black shoes with a tie of a corresponding sobriety. On one occasion, a new executive turned up in a sports jacket; he was politely asked to go home and change. Food, drinks, linen, china, the wine service, all would be personally vetted by the Chairman. He was a keen enthusiast when it came to the pleasures of the table and his favourites — Black Label, Smoked Salmon, Lobster Thermidor, Vanilla Icecream with Hot Chocolate sauce — invariably featured on the evening's list. While he believed that food and drink should never be ostentatious, he was equally of the opinion that choice and variety were of the essence; so to the freshness of ingredients, and the care and talent applied to their preparation.

If we probe beyond the superficial — the apparent symptoms of sybaritic indulgence — we find that what really motivated Vasudev Salgaocar in these and other matters was his innate sense of the rightness of certain forms of behaviour. If one gave a dinner party, it had to be done correctly. Similarly, according to Chandrakant Keni, on his first visit to the ramshackle Rashtramat offices, Salgaocar was appalled at what he saw. "I want these offices redone at once," he said, "Spare no expense. Get the best. Employ the services of a good interior decorator if you have to." It was not right for journalists, creative people who were forced to meet stringent deadlines every day, to work under any but the most congenial of circumstances. His belief in right action as a personal article of faith prompted many acts on his part which most people attributed to impulsive generosity. Kavlekar and Salgaocar paid a visit on one occasion to a retired cashier, who was known to be ailing. The man was old, living alone, and clearly in need of help. Salgaocar, who always made it a point to keep in touch with loyal employees honourably retired, drew a chair to the man's bedside and

talked with him for some time. "Thanks to the contribution of people like you," he said, "we have grown rapidly." Then we went on to describe the organisation's current activities and future plans, with as much enthusiasm as he would have displayed at a meeting of his Board of Directors. He asked after each of the man's children by name, now adults, married and dispersed and before he said goodbye he promised to visit again. Back in the car, he told Kavlekar, "When I leaned on his bed it almost collapsed. See that he gets a new set of furniture."

If Salgaocar's enemies were sometimes to remark that he never forgave, even they would be the first to admit that he never forgot. Modi, the brilliant scribe of his trading days, whose services had been loaned to Salgaocar by Pascoal Menezes, was known to be in terminal decline, living out of a single room in Panjim. That Salgaocar visited him at regular intervals, by himself, always leaving behind enough money to tide Modi over till his next visit, would never have come to light, until one day illness prevented Salgaocar from making the trip, and rather than have Modi's needs unattended to for a month, he made Kavlekar deputise for him. When Kavlekar said, "The Chairman has sent me. He asked me to give you this", and handed over a thick envelope, Modi smiled and said, "He has been visiting me for years."

Honourable disagreement never stood in the way of Salgaocar and personal friendship. He and Chandrakant Keni eventually came to a serious parting of the ways, and Salgaocar, for reasons other than this, decided to end his relationship of years with Rashtramat. The two men remained friends. Keni sought Salgaocar's advice whenever he felt he needed it, and Salgaocar reciprocated in generous measure. "He was very cordial whenever I met him, and gave me all the time I needed," Keni says, "but I always felt that something was missing." And he then tells of an incident which made him realise that the lack, if at all, was on his side. Keni married late in life; financial strain, partly generational,

owing partly to the career he had chosen, had forced him to postpone the decision. Shortly thereafter when his wife conceived, Salgaocar sent him an invitation to tea at Vasco. This was unusually formal and, intrigued, Keni arrived on the dot. It was an elaborate tea and when they had finished, Salgaocar congratulated Keni. "You will soon be a father," he said chuckling. "I thought this might help." He gave Keni an envelope and made him promise he would open it only when he got home.

Keni opened the gift in his wife's presence and counted out fifty of the crispest one hundred rupee notes he had ever handled. "They were fresh from the bank," he recalls, "and I was very touched. He was the only man I know of that stature who genuinely helped people he cared for without asking for anything in return."

This concern for value systems came into sharpest focus when Salgaocar encountered the flame of entrepreneurial zeal, no matter how dimly flickering, in others. He set many young men up in small businesses of their own and over the years, this sporadic activity, came to form a major plank of policy in the Salgaocar organisation. No doubt his own entrepreneurial instincts biased the decision. His eye for opportunity was tempered by ingenuity to the needs of the moment. Engineers at the mines recall how, in the days of severe tyre shortages, he led the way in adapting aeroplane tyres to wheel-loader use. The mechanised shovels used to pick up ore by the hundredweight for loading onto trucks suffered from a severe defect; the teeth points wore out very soon and had to be replaced at the expense of much money and time as they were seldom available when needed. He worked out another ingenious scheme whereby heavy armoured vehicles were purchased at auction from the Indian Army's disposal stores and their steel bodies, many inches thick, cut, shaped and reworked to form tooth points for his mechanised shovels. The scheme worked beyond anybody's expectations.

Now he applied his mind seriously to a problem which had vexed him and the other mine owners for many years: truck transport. The trucks which transported iron ore to ferrying points were, by and large, privately owned and operated. They were in short supply and their owner-drivers were a mercurial lot, with a fine contempt for the small print on a contract. Unreliable at the best of times, when the peak season was on they bartered their wares from day-to-day with an eye to the best bargain over the next twenty-four hours. The mine owners, hard put to meet loading deadlines, had no choice but to enter into fierce bidding contests where the highest offer won the day. Until the next, when the unsavoury business began all over again.

To Salgaocar, whose word was a law unto itself, unethical business behaviour of this nature was anathema. Attempts had been made to little avail, to break the stranglehold of the owner-drivers. When the mine-owners attempted to assemble fleets of their own, hiring drivers was a problem, for they were in short-supply and demanded wages out of all proportion to the existing salary structures, causing much resentment among other sections of labour. Moreover, they handled the vehicles roughly and the wear-and-tear bill each season was enormous. The owner-drivers were, themselves, under considerable strain. They had to borrow money for their vehicles, often at usurious rates, from local money lenders; they had to maintain, provision and ply their vehicles while hiring garage space for the unproductive monsoon months when all mining activity ceased.

Clearly any scheme which Salgaocar devised had to be based on his first principle of a good business deal: all parties to it must prosper; nobody should be seen to be taking undue advantage of the others. What were the essential prerequisite for a reliable, profitable trucking infrastructure? First, of course, a constant source of financing. Second, a profitable source of income for the men who manned the

vehicles. Lastly, a uniform, standardised, well-maintained fleet which the mine owner *knew* would be at his exclusive disposal.

A tall order but not one beyond solution.

For months he grappled with the issue, working out capital costs, rates of depreciation, spares, petrol, maintenance, the wear and tear on tyres and their replacements (a matter which years later, would leave him no choice, but to enter into public battle, alone, with India's largest tyre companies). The thorniest problem of all — and one that seemed the most intractable — had to do with the men who plied the vehicles. They, two, were part of the business deal; they, too, must benefit from it beyond the wages of the day. Then one morning the solution came to him; he was pleased by the elegance of its simplicity.

He broached the idea to his Board of Directors in two words, "Hire Purchase." Here again, he had anticipated a commercial instrument which was only to be discovered by the business community a good quarter of a century later.

Mohandas Naik, who owns the Telco dealership in Goa, and from whom Salgaocar purchased over the years more than two thousand trucks, was first-hand witness and collaborator to the scheme. As he tells it, Salgaocar's concept was the first to break the stranglehold which the independent owner-drivers had over the mining industry. And to do so, moreover, with no broken bones. "The crux of the deal," Naik says, "was the shortage of good trucks and the escalations in truck prices. With inflation and the shortfall in production, even after five years of use a truck could fetch more than its original price on the second-hand market." This, indeed, was the key.

When Salgaocar outlined the details of the scheme to his Board, it had been worked out to the last paise. The owner-drivers he pointed out had to borrow locally, at back-breaking rates of interest with the vehicles mortgaged

to the hilt to local money-lenders. His scheme freed them from all financial burden. They would get a truck for a fraction of the price, a paltry ten or fifteen thousand rupees, together with a firm haulage contract guaranteeing fixed income for the four or five years during which the vehicle was mortgaged to the bank. The bank's loan would be guaranteed by Salgaocars; out of the income from the truck, deductions would be made for repayment of loan and maintenance charges, the balance would be to the free credit of the hire-purchasee. When the sums were done, it proved to be a golden opportunity for hundreds of Goans.

Salgaocar had, of course, checked the basic figures with his bankers and tested the temperature of the water with a handful of potential owner-drivers, and found the response more than encouraging. The truck manufacturers he had sounded through Mohandas Naik were as enthusiastic as the bankers. With very good reason. They had a one-source commitment in terms of financial security: the house of Salgaocars was solid; it did not over-extend; it had a track-record which was impeccable in financial terms; indeed, bankers competed to do business with the Salgaocars. For the owner-drivers chosen to participate in the scheme, it was a bonanza without precedent in the history of the mining industry in Goa. After all costs, the residual income was more than enough for their needs and the welfare of their families; indeed, they were able to save a fair amount over the period of the contract, at the end of which they owned an asset which commanded a hefty premium in the market over its original purchase price. And for Salgaocar, the truck bottleneck was, forever, at an end.

Mohandas Naik remembers those days with a touch of awe. "Prices of trucks were going up two to three hundred percent in four or five years, and I knew of scores of drivers, cleaners and mechanics who owned two or three trucks and became relatively wealthy men in their villages because of the scheme. One of the incidental bonuses was a sharp

reduction in breakdowns and maintenance costs. Because the trucks had to be maintained by the men who eventually owned them, it was in their interests to look after the vehicles, which they did. Not only were the maintenance bills drastically reduced virtually overnight, the trucks were on the roads with a thirty to forty percent increase in haulage time."

In the long-term, the Salgaocar Organisation began releasing advertisements such as this:

Golden Opportunity for Owner-Drivers of Trucks. We offer under our Service Contract Scheme a unique facility for owner-drivers of trucks who will be completing their existing service contracts with us by 30th June or 30th September 1982, to apply again for a new truck now.

Very few Tata Mercedes and Ashok Leyland trucks are available on first-come first-served basis. Guaranteed work throughout the year including transport of rejection. Supply of tyres, if available, payment of insurance, road tax etc. and all other facilities will be completed and the truck will be delivered on the spot by the first week of July 1982. Preference will be given to contractors who had earlier availed of this scheme and completed their commitments subject to their disposing the vehicles and utilising the sale proceeds against deposit payable to the new truck.

Reading between the lines, two facts become clear. The scheme was now so widespread (more than a thousand truck-owners were involved) that it had become necessary to advertise to them; secondly, Salgaocars were so confident of the scheme's success that they now insisted that existing trucks be sold before owner-drivers could qualify for a scheme, thus ensuring a perennial supply of new trucks for the mining operation. There is one more

indication of the success of the venture. It was soon extended to other areas as well. In a few months an advertisement was to appear in Goa's leading newspapers, under the headline:

"New Entrepreneurial Opportunities from Salgaocars."

Running to well over five hundred words, it offered ground-breaking opportunities in the area of repair of heavy vehicles, the setting up of automatic weigh-bridges, and other areas complementary to mainstream mining. There are two points worth noting in the advertisement. It says, ". . . the proposal is essentially to encourage Goan entrepreneurs to establish themselves as small scale industrialists and develop their performance as there is ample scope for further growth," and the seriousness of the entire proposition lies in its conclusion. Those interested may approach in person on any working day from 1st August to 7th August 1983 between 10.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. preferably by prior appointment:

Mr. V. M. Salgaocar
Chairman and Managing Director
V. M. Salgaocar & Bro. Pvt. Ltd.
Salgaocar House
Vasco-da-Gama

No one who knew Vasudev Salgaocar would believe that his signature on an advertisement would have been placed there without his personal approval; no one who knew Vasudev Salgaocar would have believed that within the space of little more than a year his second son, Shivanand Salgaocar, facing the most traumatic moment of his young life, would light his father's funeral pyre.

* * * *

But he had promises to keep and many miles to go.

Today, his friends and colleagues, when they talk about his involvement in education, tend to trot out the mandatory cliches. "He was born and brought up in Goa and prospered here, so he had to repay his dues to society." "Never having had a proper education himself, he was determined to ensure a higher education for young Goans." He always had an academic bent of mind, and it was natural for his philanthropic instincts to lead him in that direction."

Stuff and nonsense.

He had seen the hucksters at work; they came into Goa set up educational bucket-shops, raped the youth of whatever money they could borrow or scrounge from family and friends, only to disappear overnight, sunk without trace into the vast oblivion of India's millions. Indeed, he had been instrumental in rooting out one such fly-by-night operation, and he did so with a ruthlessness which laid claim to confirming what all of Goa now knew: Salgaocar would act on his belief, no matter what the consequences.

It began with an item in the Indian Express, the South Indian edition, which spoke of a new con-game in the area of education. Hundreds of young students were being fleeced with promises of engineering and other diplomas — a hefty capitation fee in advance — classes to start by a certain date, by which time of course the promoters would have flown the coop. This struck a chord. He had heard that something of the sort was going on in Bicholim. Incensed, he told Fernandes to go to Bicholim posthaste and report back in detail. A team of three Salgaocar executives, led by an enthusiastic Fernandes stayed a few days in Bicholim. They made discreet enquiries among friends in the village.

There was truth to the rumour — talk of a Trust; of an engineering college; a panel of glibly persuasive Andhraites were recruiting students, taking large sums of money in advance. Fernandes and his colleagues, posing as elder

siblings seeking admission for younger brothers, decided to pay the establishment a visit. The college consisted of a room barely large enough to accommodate thirty students. That was it except for the presence of a plump, dark man, pleasant and well-spoken, who introduced himself as Professor Rao, ex MLA from Andhra and now Principal of the College. It was, he said, a non-profit endeavour under the aegis of a Trust. As men of the world, they would appreciate that no charitable trust was ever endowed with an embarrassment of funds, so a sizable proportion of the fees were asked for in advance. Yes, admission was still open though there had been quite a rush. Facilities for training? And here his eyes narrowed and he gave Fernandes a wary look. They were working towards that. Orders for equipment had been placed and they were negotiating a lease on a building which would, eventually, be able to take in hundreds of students. Faculty? Good question. Only the best. Negotiations were on, but naturally, such things had to be kept confidential until agreements were signed. They were at a preliminary stage. Now, if Fernandes and his friends wished to enroll their brothers, here were the forms, to be filled in duplicate please, and returned with cash or a demand draft. The trust could not, regretfully, accept cheques.

They returned to Vasco and reported to the Chairman. It was crooked alright but entirely within legal limits. Criminal liability could only be established if and when Rao and his cohorts cut and ran with the fees they had collected. "It would be too late then," Salgaocar said, picked up the phone and asked for a few numbers to be given to him urgently. He spoke, in turn, to a Cabinet Minister, the editors of two of Goa's leading papers, a high level contact in the police department. Then he smiled, "We shall harass them," he said, and instructed Fernandes accordingly. When Mr. Rao opened his daily newspaper a few days later he was unhappily surprised to read a less than

flattering account of Bicholim's latest foray into higher education. The following Monday he was visited without warning by a Deputy Commissioner of Police who made searching enquiries and took detailed notes. The official from the Education Ministry who dropped in soon thereafter was as polite as the DCP; he had come, he said ominously, merely to look into the matter of Mr. Rao's educational credentials. Another newspaper article followed, in greater detail, urging Goans not to be taken in. Mr. Rao could recognise straws on an ill wind better than most. When students who had enrolled clamoured for their money back, he quickly refunded *all* the advances he had received, quietly closed shop and departed for Andhra never to be heard of in Goa again.

Entirely self-taught to a degree of effectiveness which never ceased to astonish his professionally trained colleagues, Vasudev Salgaocar was nevertheless acutely aware of his lack of a formal higher education. He would make it a point to encourage all of his children to take their studies as far as they wished and Dattaraj, his youngest son, remembers well the regular phone calls and long, detailed letters he received from his father in Goa while he studied business administration at Wharton in the United States. Salgaocar would make enquiries about his progress, suggest areas of reading or additional courses which might help, never failed to ask if he was well or in need of anything and invariably ended the conversation by telling Dattaraj to take good care of himself.

Now he observed that options for specialisation were conspicuous by their absence in Goa's higher educational facilities and while his own personal career had been that of an inspired generalist, he was aware from his experience that the specialist was always gainfully employed. He had made it a point, wherever necessary, to appoint in his own organisation specialists with the highest degrees of qualification. A policy emphatically vindicated over the years. In 1972

he set up a Trust, the Devi Shreevani Education Society to provide higher education to Goan students. Companies of the Salgaocar group financed the trust. But he was still uncertain as to its direction; then the need was crystallised by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Bombay, Principal Tope. What Goa lacked most in the area of higher education, Tope said, in a speech at a seminar, was a College of Law. He made a cogent and persuasive case, and Salgaocar was convinced. But he made no claim to expertise in the area. "An ignorant man," he remarked to Kavlekar, "needs counselling." He went about acquiring it with characteristic thoroughness. Help was solicited from eminent figures in the Judiciary, the Bar and Education. To a man, they agreed to contribute. In June 1972 a committee was convened to prepare a working paper for Goa's first Law College. In 1973 the Mahadevrao Salgaocar College of Law sought and secured recognition from the University, and opened its doors to a modest start in the Lyceum building of the college. The response exceeded the most optimistic expectations. In the first year alone 900 students enrolled for the LL.B. course.

The temporary premises soon proved inadequate and Salgaocar promptly applied to the Government for a grant of free land. The requirement: one hundred thousand square metres. The Society's formal application was accompanied by an eloquent and personal plea by Salgaocar to Goa's Chief Minister, Bandodkar. But when, rather late in the day the Government responded, it was to the bitter disappointment of all concerned for the land offered for the project lay across the Mandovi bridge on the high and desolate plateau of Porvorim.

"This will not do," Salgaocar said, "a number of our students work during the day and enroll in the evening classes. How will they and the lecturers get home late at night?" He pointed out that the bus service from Mapusa to Panjim via Porvorim ceased well before the college closed at

night; that most of the students and, indeed, the lecturers could not afford personal transportation, and he was particularly concerned about the women who would have to travel long distances, alone, on foot and in the dark, along deserted roads.

The Government was adamant: take it or leave it. Salgaocar chose to go his own way. He decided to finance the new law college himself, by way of massive donations from Salgaocar companies to the educational trust. No sooner thought than done. After examining and discarding a number of options, a suitable stretch of land was located at Miramar and the freehold purchased outright at a cost of five and a half lakhs of rupees. Another eighteen lakhs were spent to build the College, a structure much praised, for its perfect balance between form and function. Salgaocar had worked closely with the Principal, faculty members and architect on the design concept, and though he was the first to admit that he was no expert, his industrial experience in the accommodation of hundreds of employees at massive offices in Vasco and Surla, the mining headquarters, was of great help.

A facade of imposing authority housed large, airy classrooms, an assembly hall, private reading rooms for professors and students and a comprehensive library which, in addition to servicing the needs of faculty and pupils, became a valuable reference source for members of the Bar at Panjim. The Law College, under the benevolent supervision of the Department of Education of the Government soon established a reputation on India's West Coast out of all proportion to its size, and began attracting students from Maharashtra and the South.

Here again, Vasudev Salgaocar would not rest content with having his name on a building. He participated keenly in all of the college activities, social and academic, sat in on Governing Council and Managing Committee meetings, often attended faculty brainstorming sessions, and never

ceased to marvel at the ways of academicians. Minutes and memos, documents and dissertations, a veritable flood of paperwork; hour upon hour of keen argument and discussion well into the night; sets of foolscap instruction for every last bit of minutae, until it all got a bit too much for him and in a moment of exasperation he remarked to Kavlekar, "If only they would talk less and do more!" But he did not — as he so easily could — assert his authority in the matter. He had developed a wry understanding of the nature of the academician, and an even more acute appreciation of the highly fragile sensitivities of the breed; thus, he counselled gently, working always within the difficulties of those directly responsible for the College.

He was meticulous in giving the Dean and faculty a completely free hand in arranging the curricula, in the appointment of staff, in the invitations to guest lecturers. When asked, he would give his opinion, no more no less; it was only in the area of management and administration that he urged them to follow a hallowed principle: less is more. Less paperwork, more personal communication. "Do not put it in words," was his favourite injunction, "if you can say it in person."

Associates of his from these days, actively involved in full-time careers in education, recall that his attitude to the college was gently paternal. He understood, innately, that the business of academics and the business of business required different guiding palimpsets, and while the latter called for strict accountability in terms of the bottomline, a tough corporate code of discipline and commitment, the former was better handled with flexibility, compromise, constant encouragement and the gentlest of guidance for it was, above all, a creative endeavour, where sensitive rapport between teacher and pupil must supersede all other considerations, where the needs of inspired scholarship must take precedence over the grosser demands of the commercial ethos.

It was, for Vasudev Salgaocar, the beginning of a new philosophic outlook on those aspects of life that did not directly concern his business. And it may be summed up in one sentence: in all of his extra-industrial activities — social, cultural, philanthropic — he treated the men and women he worked with as he would members of his own family.

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The friendships he made over the years were strong and lasting, and always transcended the original deed. He maintained, as an article of unshakeable faith, that the person was more important that the purpose of the relationship. One of his closest friends, General T.J. Park, the Chairman of The Pohang Iron & Steel Co. Ltd., Republic of Korea, recalls his first meeting with Salgaocar in Goa in April 1972. He had come, with some trepidation, to negotiate a contract for the purchase of ore for his fledgling company, POSCO. He did not reveal his misgivings, and there were many, for international scepticism had greeted Korea's announcement to build the country's first integrated steel mill. "We were," says General Park, "totally deficient in technology, capital and experience." To get reliable suppliers to put faith and capital into Korea's future in steel was no easy task. Salgaocar took the long view, signed the contract and put his seal on a friendship which was to grow from strength to strength till the end of his life. As a tribute to his regard for his friend, Salgaocar named a new bulk carrier, launched at Emden in West Germany, the Damodar General T.J. Park. "It was a singular honour for me," says General Park, "and a clear signal to the world's steel community that Vasudev Salgaocar had complete faith in my country's future."

Among the hundreds of friends he made in the international steel community, there was a special place in his

affections for the Japanese; indeed, he was often to say that Japan had played a leading role in the success of the House of Salgaocar. And here again he made lifelong friends.

Takashi Imai, now an Executive Vice President of Nippon Steel, recalls that the personal element in Salgaocar's business relationships with the Japanese was of prime importance in their dealings with him. He was flexible and innovative. "He was the first Goan mine owner," says Imai, "to build a transshipper, and this alone accelerated the shipping process to such an extent that our annual contract with Salgaocar increased from four hundred thousand to over a million tons."

A singular honour was the creation of the Salgaocar Cup Golf Tournament at the Takanodai Country Club near Tokyo. Among Japanese steel Executives — golf addicts to a man — it was an occasion not to be missed. M. Yoshida, an Executive Counsellor of Nippon Steel will never forget the year a massive earthquake almost caused him to miss play. Main discharging berths had been seriously damaged by the quake and he had to arrange the urgent diversion of many vessels. He arrived at the tournament just in time to tee off with the last stragglers, played 18 holes and won! Years later he led a Japanese delegation to Bombay in July, the most fierce of the monsoon months, and was surprised and deeply touched to find that Salgaocar, then terminally ill, had flown from Goa in treacherous weather to meet him.

But there was always reciprocity in full measure. R. Miyagawa, a General Manager of C. Itoh, now retired, made a special journey from Bombay to Goa just to visit Salgaocar, whom he had never met. There was no airline service at that time and the journey took him fifty-four hours in a small steamer, sea-sick all the way, from British India to Portuguese Goa, only to encounter, on arrival, a Customs Officer who viewed his abacus with deep suspicion. Miyagawa had to perform a seven figure addition to convince him that it was a traditional calculator. The visit bore fruit:

C. Itoh, today the world's largest trading company, started its raw materials division with the import of iron ore from the Salgaocar mines in 1952. Many years later Miyagawa gave his good friend Vasudev Salgaocar a gift of one of his most treasured possessions — his first Passport, No. 7414, issued by authorisation of General Douglas MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief of US Forces in Occupied Japan.

Another close friend, S. Tanabe, Consultant to Nippon Steel, remembers his joy at the invitation which arrived at his Tokyo office one morning. It would be the privilege of Vasudev Salgaocar if Mr. and Mrs. Tanabe would agree to be the guests of honour at a Yugoslavian Shipyard for the launching of the 40,000 dwt bulk carrier, the ss "Damodar Tanabe".

* * * *

MASTER VISHAL SALGAOCAR

MY DEAR VISHAL

AS YOUR BIRTHDAY GIFT WHICH I PROMISED YOU, I AM BUYING FIRST CLASS LAND BETTER THAN WHAT YOUR MUMMY AND DADDY GOT AND YOU WILL GET PLENTY OF MANGOES, PINEAPPLES, JACKFRUITS AND OTHER THINGS BESIDES GRANITE AND SAND WHICH ARE VALUABLE MINERALS SO YOU WILL BE BIGGER THAN YOUR DADDY STP PLS KEEP THIS SECRET AND DO NOT TELL ANYBODY I AM BUYING THIS IN YOUR NAME HENCE PLS CONFIRM

LOVE PAPA

MY DEAR PAPA

I RECD YR TLX MSG OF 20TH AUG AND THANK YOU. I DO NOT WANT ANY HILL NEAR CHANDOR AS A PRESENT BUT I WANT A TYPEWRITER. WHEN YOU GIVE ME A TYPEWRITER I WILL SEND YOU LETTERS TYPED ON THAT

LOVE VISHAL

* * * *

To his family, his wife, his children and grandchildren, Vasudev Salgaocar was a very special person. He once said of his children, "Money is the least of the things I can leave them. It is not important. If they are intelligent, honest, hard-working and educated, with God's grace, they can make their own fortunes. If they grow up to be good and useful human beings, I will have succeeded as a father."

His sons and daughters-in-law were brought into the same paternal fold and it is worth examining in some detail the relationship he so carefully nurtured with Dipti Ambani who was to marry his last child, Dattaraj. They met in the sunset of his life, 1983, when he was sixty-five and Dipti barely twenty-two. His first words to her were, "So you are Dipti and you are going to be my daughter-in-law." Dipti admits to butterflies; in the first place she had expected to meet Dattaraj's mother, and was taken by surprise to meet Salgaocar, who greeted her with a smile of singular charm, an old world courtesy and a natural friendliness which quite belied his years.

She and Dattaraj came from very different backgrounds and this too was cause for an anxiety she was careful not to reveal. She was a Gujarati, the daughter of the great industrialist Dhirubhai Ambani, who, in blazing a meteoric trail through the industrial firmament, had virtually rewritten the book of rules. She was marrying into a family of Goan Goud Saraswat Brahmins, led by a man who had become a legend in his lifetime. Yet, in hindsight, it does not seem surprising that this difference in cultural backgrounds should have mattered not at all to Vasudev Salgaocar, or for that matter, Dhirubhai Ambani who had, in his own right, accepted Dattaraj as a member of his family with great warmth and not the slightest reservation.

Both were self-made men; both had started from humble beginnings (indeed, Ambani had begun his career as a clerk in a shipping office in Aden); both had reached the pinnacle of success in their lifetimes, and both, in their

organisations, were deeply committed to secular liberalism. The senior executives in their companies were drawn from all walks of life, all of the country's religions and regions. Performance and loyalty were the only creeds practised. They had much in common and in the short time left to Salgaocar, they became good friends spending long hours together, over Campari and bhajias (an unlikely combination which they enjoyed) at Usha Kiran in Bombay where they maintained apartments.

Before Dipti and Dattaraj were formally engaged she flew to Switzerland to spend four months in a finishing school.

Two weeks after her arrival she received a letter postmarked Goa. It was from Vasudev Salgaocar; he would continue to write to her regularly till her return. The letters were long; they ran to two to three pages of single spaced typescript. They were informal, friendly and she came to look forward to them. "He used to write longer letters than Raj," she remembers, chuckling. "And he would tell me everything about Goa." The political situation, a detailed update about the family, what was happening within the company; he would describe festivals and birthdays, recount amusing or dramatic anecdotes and, in each letter, without fail, talk about Dattaraj, how well he was doing, how his responsibilities were increasing within the organisation.

At first, Dipti admits that her replies were stilted and awkward, but soon she found herself wholeheartedly in tune with the nature of his correspondence and she would write to him as though they were conversing in a drawing room. On her return to Bombay, Dattaraj came down with a bad attack of jaundice. Dipti flew to Goa every week to visit him, and invariably stayed a couple of days. Salgaocar was always at the airport to meet her and nothing she would say could dissuade him from doing so. She recalls an occasion, much after she married, when she was pregnant and leaving for Bombay for her delivery. Salgaocar was asleep. The

previous day had been a hard one for him and Dattaraj and Dipti decided not to wake him to say goodbye.

They had passed through security and were in the airport final departure lounge fifteen minutes before flight time when they heard a familiar voice — raised in mock indignation. "Nobody gets away from Vasudev Salgaocar!" and there he was, impeccably dressed in a dark suit, striding through security with the guards at attention. He escorted them to the plane, and he said to Dipti, "Bring back a baby boy." Those were the last words he would ever say to her.

"During my pregnancy," Dipti says, "He used to look after me like a mother." He instructed his wife on special additions to Dipti's diet; he made it a point to walk with her in the garden each day, and when Dattaraj made one of his frequent trips out of Goa, Salgaocar went out of his way to keep Dipti entertained: one evening a drive to Panjim, the next a music recital; dinner with friends perhaps; or they would watch video together — a favourite pastime.

"He was always full of enthusiasm and high spirits," Dipti recalls. "We were forbidden to say a word about his illness in his presence. He behaved as though he was perfectly fit. And the energy he had!" At the Gujarati Dandia Ras held before the wedding, couples dance with sticks, in movements of hand, foot and body, to a rhythmic beat that makes strenuous demands on one's stamina and agility. Salgaocar saw everybody dancing and decided to join the fun. He picked up two sticks and said to Dipti, "Come on, show me how." The video cameras have recorded the incident for posterity. We see Salgaocar moving with grace, tentatively at first, brow furrowed as he picks up Dipti's steps while clashing his sticks with her's to the rhythm of the beat, moving faster as the ritual becomes familiar, then, with the zest of a young man, smiling broadly, in full and happy cry.

Perhaps being with Dattaraj and Dipti brought back memories of a younger, carefree self; perhaps he felt that

only by example and precept could he show them that life was meant to be lived, to be celebrated. He accompanied them on forays to small roadside eating places in Bombay. He had a weakness for dosas (carbohydrate, strictly banned from his diet); so did his son and daughter-in-law, and one evening they decided to eat at Dattaraj's favourite place, a rough-and-tumble wooden kiosk set up each evening on the pavement of a small lane behind Grant Road. When he saw them getting ready to leave, Salgaocar wanted to know where they were going. With great reluctance they told him. They had reason for the hesitancy. Now that Dipti was in the last quarter of her pregnancy, Salgaocar was even more concerned about what she ate, and where, and how late they stayed out at night. But when he heard that they planned a dosa dinner, he smiled and said, "Somebody has to keep you out of trouble. I shall accompany you!"

They got in the car and went off. As the streets got darker and narrower, Salgaocar became uneasy and when they finally reached the dimly-lit lane with a kiosk lit by a thermax lantern, he said sternly, "I am not sure I approve of this." "But Papa," Dattaraj said, "It's very clean; the dosas are cooked in front of you. Everybody I know eats here."

"Very well," Salgaocar said, "I shall try one first." He ordered a paper dosa, chewed on a bit and said, "This is very good."

Then he made a meal of it. With his second dosa, he commented, "Even better than the Taj or the Oberoi," and when he asked for a third, and they protested, he brushed aside all argument. "I will have another," he declared, "and a Thums Up with it!" He finished his Thums Up, standing on the road, the only man in sight dressed in a suit, examining the operation of the kiosk with satisfaction, drinking straight from the bottle.

On the way back, he said, "That man knows his business."

Later that evening they went to his eldest daughter Sukanti for dinner. Salgaocar confessed to a lack of appetite and the truth had to be told. He took his daughter's scolding like a man!

Salgaocar and his wife often engaged in friendly argument over Dipti's confinement. It would be a boy, Salgaocar would say with quiet conviction. And what, his wife would reply, if it were a girl? Your eldest daughter is a doctor and I — with a chuckle — have had my uses. But Salgaocar would have none of it. He had decided on a boy and it would be so. Dipti remembers a flower ceremony of the 7th month where Salgaocar was the only man among a hundred women. Completely at ease, he watched keenly as the high point of the ritual took place. A tray of covered sweets, variously prepared and shaped, and covered with an opaque cloth, was offered to Dipti who had to select one sweet from beneath the cloth. She picked a modak; the symbol of male fertility. Salgaocar smiled; he had known all along it would be a son.

He was right; the baby was a boy, born in Bombay exactly thirteen days after his death. He was named Vasudev.

There is an epilogue, as touching as it is revealing. A month later a postcard arrived at the Ambani residence at Usha Kiran. It was from the Ratan Tata Institute in Bombay, and said that a parcel for Mrs. Dipti Salgaocar was ready for collection. Dipti went to the shop the next day. There was more than one parcel; several in fact, each large and gift-wrapped. Unable to contain herself, she asked that they be opened then and there, and as the saleswoman carefully unpacked each parcel, so as not to tear the wrapping paper, tears came into Dipti's eyes, for before her lay an entire wardrobe for a baby boy. Clothes, booties, caps, shawls, night dresses, linen, pillow covers, soft fluffy towels, exclusively designed and made, delicately embroidered in white.

All in blue.

Made to order, weeks earlier, by Vasudev Salgaocar.

All of his children pay tribute to this facet of his personality. He was truly a caring father in the most positive sense of the term. Shivanand, his second son, vividly remembers festivals, not necessarily Hindu — Diwali, Xmas, New Year — when Salgaocar would take the children to Margao, from shop to shop, buying crackers, sweets, decorations, gifts. And when the children, as children will, became wilful, impatient or overly excited, he understood and controlled them with the lightest of reins.

Dipti was a vegetarian and vegetables in Goa, then as now, were not to be found in any great variety. "No problem." Salgaocar personally took the car to Belgaum every Sunday morning and returned with enough vegetables to stock a small shop. Five kilos of everything, an abundance which saw every refrigerator in the house pressed into service. When she developed an insatiable desire for cucumbers early in her pregnancy, Dattaraj recalls, "There were cucumbers everywhere even though it wasn't the season. You couldn't walk into a room without tripping over one!"

Shivanand confirms this trait of his father's and goes an understanding step further, "I think he needed in some deep sense to compensate for the deprivation of his childhood." It is true that he bought impulsively, in huge quantities, whenever he went shopping. Friends of his trading days who still own stores in Margao tell of Salgaocar, now a force to be reckoned with in the territory, dropping in unannounced, with the greeting that never changed, "What's new?" drinking a companionable cup of tea and then saying, "I have to pick up a few things." He would walk around the shop and indulge in a spree of acquisition. A dozen of everything: soap, toothpaste, canned goods, tea, chocolates, apple juice, anything that took his fancy. When Dipti happened to remark one day that she missed a

particular magazine published from Bombay, he ordered dozens of magazines and newspapers to be delivered to the house, even — a typical Salgaocar gesture — publications in Gujarati, Dipti's mother tongue.

Hand in hand with extravagance of this magnitude went a proportionately massive sense of order. He would be the first to go to bed at night, whether he spent a quiet evening with the family or entertained a hundred guests to dinner. The routine never varied. He would see to it that the bar was cleared, the bottles kept, row upon orderly row, in the correct places; similarly glasses, cutlery, crockery. He would make the rounds of the house, easily a half-hour chore in itself, making sure that doors were closed and windows securely fastened. Then, and only, then, would he retire. Here, too, Shivanand's reading of the situation is acutely perceptive. "He locked the house up at night not from a feeling of insecurity but out of a sense of responsibility. He was made responsible to his family at an age when other children are tucked into bed at night, and I mean really responsible, for earning the family's living, for running the house. Even as a child, he was literally the last person to get to bed, often as late as midnight, after working the day's accounts and preparing for the next."

While they saw their father only briefly during the week and that too at dinner, weekends were family affairs. Salgaocar would take the children to Colva or Calangute beach where they might hire a bungalow and spend the night. He looked forward to this break in a hectic business week with as much enthusiasm as his children. How did they spend their time? Long walks, games in the sand, friends might drop in. "Mainly," Shivanand remembers, "we used to talk to him and he used to listen. It was the only real time we had to take his advice, discuss our problems, we never felt inhibited with him though he tended to be reserved, and I remember at that age we all thought of him as an older friend, a true friend, to whom we could go to in times of

trouble, whom we were free to talk to about anything at all. There were no taboos."

Disagreements, if any, were minor, for Salgaocar never sought to impose by parental fiat, only to guide, by word and example. If he was adamant about anything on these weekends, it was compulsory attendance at a good football match and here his obduracy found full and unqualified family support, for they were all, like their father, ardent fans of the sport. It was the only game he was able to play in his childhood, and it was to remain a passion right through his life. The Salgaocar Sports Club which he founded in 1956 was a real boon to the territory, particularly to the youth, for football, played on the beaches, on dry fields, on deserted streets, is to a young Goan boy what the sky is to a bird, a medium of infinite wonder and potential.

The Salgaocar football team — Goa's first to be exclusively sponsored by an industrial house — would win laurels far beyond its native soil. It has won many major all-India tournaments including the country's premium trophy, the Federation Cup twice. Four Salgaocar players have donned national colours, and one, the ace goalkeeper, Brahmanand Shankwalkar, captained India in 1983. Today, Salgaocars spend lakhs of rupees annually on their football team. It is considered a privilege, not an expense.

So football over weekends, bonfires at night on Goan beaches and the chance to communicate in familial and exclusive intimacy were privileged moments for Salgaocar and his children. As far as they recall, he had never, in all of his working life, taken a proper month's — not even a week's — holiday. Only once, in Shivanand's memory, did the family take a vacation together. Under much pressure from his wife and children, Salgaocar, with some reluctance, and voluminous instructions to his senior executives on how they should manage affairs in his absence, finally embarked on a North Indian odyssey in 1962 which would cover a

respectable itinerary — Bombay, Delhi, Agra, Kashmir, Calcutta and Jamshedpur. But it turned out to be a business-man's vacation, for Salgaocar's fertile mind saw commercial opportunities at every turn: in Kashmir, trading in gem stones and carpets where, never one to let others do his homework for him, he visited dozens of carpet factories, gem dealers and cutters. So involved did he become that he stayed behind in Kashmir while the family went off on pony-riding treks to Pahalgam. It was the same story, all over again in Calcutta, where he discovered barge-building facilities which absolutely had to be investigated, in all of their potential, at once.

"He lived for his work," Shivanand says, and recalls two incidents which throw a great deal of light on this aspect of Salgaocar's character. They had flown together to Delhi on a business trip and, after three days, the work at hand completed, Shivanand decided to return while Salgaocar planned to stay on for a few days more. While packing, Shivanand noticed a pile of his father's clothes which had been used, lying uncleaned on a chair, and thought he'd do his father a good turn by packing them in his own suitcase and taking them back to Goa. When Salgaocar returned to Goa, he reprimanded his son, gently but firmly. "Never do that again," he said. "I might have decided, on the spur of the moment to take a business trip to Calcutta or Bombay. What would I have worn?" Shivanand, at that moment, felt it prudent not to reply.

On another occasion, after a hectic business trip to Japan, where they had packed in twelve hour working days without a break, they flew back to India via Delhi. The flight landed at 2.30 in the morning and when they reached their hotel it was half past four and dawn was breaking. Shivanand exhausted, announced that he was going to bed, and would rest a day before flying home. Not Salgaocar. He caught a flight to Bombay the same day, waited at the airport two hours for his Goa connection, landed at Goa, got into his car

and went straight to the office where he put in six hours of solid work.

"I will never know how he did it," Shivanand says. "He was sixty-five years old at the time and had suffered three heart attacks. I don't know if it was courage or obstinacy, but the fact is that he never gave in to fear."

As a child, shortly after liberation, Shivanand recalls his own fear, as a mob, three or four hundred strong, surrounded the family house in Vasco, and began shouting slogans. It was all very confused and had vaguely to do with the rates of admission to Salgaocar's theatre at Vasco, a cinema hall whose modest earnings were barely sufficient to pay for its upkeep. The mob was in no mood to see reason. For them, as in other parts of Goa, the immediate results of liberation was a vacuum in which the Military Government had yet to institute some semblance of law and order. They took to the streets, creating grievances where there were none and, invariably, on such occasions, the ire of the mob turned on those of the citizens who were clear and visible icons of Goan success in the Portuguese regime. And even though many in the crowd that now stoned, and hurled bricks at Salgaocar's home were friends, and at least three out of ten nodding acquaintances, they were blind to the ties of the past, or the justice or lack of it in the issue. They were out for violence and worse.

Salgaocar gathered his family into an inner room and told them not to worry. The police had been sent for; they would arrive shortly and all would be well. It was seven-thirty in the evening. As time wore on, and the police made no appearance, the temper of the mob worsened, the stoning became a barrage, window panes smashed, the stray slogans were lost in indistinguishable cries of rage. When Salgaocar appeared on the verandah, with his arm raised high, the crowd roared, then fell silent.

"You and you and you," Salgaocar shouted, pointing at men he knew who led the mob, "are friends of mine. Do you

truly wish to harm my wife and children? Right now, in your home, your own families wait for your return. Do you want blood on your hands?"

Silence. The mob retreated. A voice was raised, "We will not pay your prices!" taken up by another, followed by a third with a round of vicious abuse. Salgaocar stood his ground. "If you have a grievance," he said, "this is no place to discuss it. Come to the office tomorrow morning."

Shivanand peering through a window, heard every word, saw elements in the crowd shift and surge, like a huge beast undecided whether to attack or retreat and, to this day, he remains uncertain of the outcome, for, at that critical point, the police vans arrived, and the crisis was over.

Weeks later, as happens in Goa, when the hubbub had died down to less than a whimper and Vasco was near normal again, Salgaocar summoned Fernandes and asked to have a look at the rate admission structure of all his cinema theatres. They studied the figures.

"Perhaps they are a bit high," he said, and when Fernandes protested, he continued, "in any case I think a gesture is in order. Lower the rates by ten percent." "He need not have done it," Shivanand adds, "but he had an inherent sense of fair play, and this was never more in evidence than in the mining villages which he loved very much. The villages and the people, he would do anything for them. If an over-zealous engineer happened to damage private agricultural property during a mining operation, my father used to insist that adequate compensation be given whether a protest had been registered or not. This could take the shape of a cash payment or kind — a job with the company for one or more of the family members, or a truck on the self-ownership scheme. Unlike some mine-owners I know who go to the courts at once knowing full well that the villagers haven't the financial clout for extended litigation, and then settle out of court for a pittance, my father gave strict orders that we would not

resort to legal measures, that we would be absolutely fair, no matter what the cost. And this had nothing to do with public relations. The villagers had no power; in fact they depended entirely on us for their livelihood. My father was just being responsible to his own code of fair play."

It was to see him fight the good fight till the end of his days. He would take on, alone and in the face of opposition from friend and foe alike, cartels of tyre manufacturers, politicians, Government authorities. Neither defeat, nor victory, swayed him from his purpose: to see that justice was done. Even in his last years, when a family problem beyond even his powers of resolution brought him great and abiding unhappiness, when his health was dependent on no more than his will to survive, he took up his final cause — the fate of Vasco, the city he loved so well.

* * * *

On his sixtieth birthday Vasudev Salgaocar had reason to look back on a life well lived. He was the proud founder of an industrial dynasty. Fifteen thousand of his fellow Goans looked to him for the bounty of their lives and the future of their families. The generosity that fate had bestowed on him he passed on, with open hand, to the land and people he loved. He had accepted and discharged public duties with the same quiet efficiency he applied to private responsibility.

For him no appointment was ornamental. Thus he contributed in full measure as Trustee on the Board of Mormugao Port Trust, member of the Indian National Shipowners' Association, the Executive Committee of the Goa Mineral Ore Exporters' Association, the Indian Technical Committee of the American Bureau of Shipping, President of Devi Shreevani Education Society and of the Salgaocar Medical Research Centre. A singular honour, and one which spoke highly of his ethical standing as a

businessman in South India was the invitation by the Government of Karnataka to become a Member of the Income Tax Tribunal, the final body of arbitration of tax disputes in that State.

Now to felicitate him on the completion of the most important year of his life — his 60th birthday — the Vasudevrao Salgaocar "Shastyabdipoorti Satkar Samiti" Committee was constituted, chaired by no less a person than his old friend and keen competitor, the industrialist Y. D. Chowgule. Under his able guidance, a group of Goa's most eminent citizens planned to pay tribute to one of her famous sons. The keynote function — first among a score to be held all over Goa was a public celebration at Tilak Maidan, in Vasco.

The organisation of this elaborate function — the guest list extended to thousands — would (if he had known of the details) have gladdened the Chairman's penchant for meticulous planning. An action list of fifty-one essential activities included such thoughtful provisions as 20 garlands and bouquets specially ordered from Bombay, fire-fighting equipment and a standby generator, a specially raised dais for photographers and technicians from All India Radio, and while a crackers-and-fireworks display had been specially designed for a grand finale, proper first-aid arrangements had not been neglected.

The Lt. Governor of Goa, S. K. Banerji had agreed to preside. An invitation to the Hon'ble Union Minister for Industries & Civil Supplies, T. A. Pai, to be the Guest of Honour had received a swift and gracious acceptance. Naval Tata, an old friend, would make one of many speeches while it was left to Chowgule to deliver an eloquent keynote address. The Chief Minister of Goa, Shashikala Kakodkar would release the souvenir specially published for the occasion. Goa's elite were represented in strength, drawn from all walks of life — politics and business, social, cultural and religious. Messages of felicitation poured in from India and

abroad. The President of India, Dr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed sent a warm personal letter congratulating Salgaocar on "carving a niche for himself in the cause of the industrial development of Goa and for his notable contribution to educational and social reform". The first in a host of similar accolades from the Vice President, the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Union and Chief Ministers. J. R. D. Tata led the tribute from leading industrialists in India and overseas. Yet, to this day, no one knows who gathered the bunch of wild flowers, tied them with a ribbon and sent them to Salgaocar's house with a message scrawled in Konkani, "May God bless and keep our Vasudevbab."

To commemorate the occasion, the Salgaocar organisation made two important announcements. An annual award would be instituted in the territory for the most outstanding contribution made by a Goan in any area of human endeavour — science, arts, medicine, literature, music, justice et al. And crores of rupees were earmarked for investment in a Medical Research Centre and 200 bed hospital which planned to make the latest in surgical techniques and health care available to the community, free to those who could not afford to pay for them.

After the event, members of the press corp, a hardened lot fully accustomed to public eulogising of one kind or another, were known to have commented on the occasion with a degree of surprise. For the speeches, while honorific, were personal and anectodal, informal and above all, leavened by a sense of great camaraderie. It seemed as if Vasudev Salgaocar's success belonged to Goa as much as it belonged to him. He was one of them, individually part of what each of them aspired to, and to a greater or lesser degree, sought to achieve. He had, in sixty short years, become a symbol of all that was great and good in the collective Goan psyche and, on this day, they gave public voice to this immutable fact. Salgaocar's golden hour was as much Goa's as his.

This undercurrent of feeling, stated, implied in varying degrees of warmth and eloquence, was, finally, given full voice by Yeshwantrao Chowgule. The tone was set at the beginning of his speech, where, in using the personal pronoun, he established more than a personal relationship. You, Vasudev Salgaocar, he seemed to be saying, are, with honour, courage and generosity, one of us. From the briefest of chronologies he drew vivid conclusions. "You, Sir, were not the inheritor of a great fortune. What you are, what you made, is what you wanted to be. What you wanted to make."

"An English poet, writing with Lord Nelson in mind, asks: "Who is the happy warrior?" and answers:

"It is the generous spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, has wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his childish thought."

He went on to talk about Salgaocar's childhood, the undying influence of his mother, Salgaocar's commitment to their ideals and the back-breaking labour that brought him his earliest success.

"Business success," Chowgule said, "is not invariably an unqualified boon. But, in your case Sir, the commercial genius was carefully planted and nurtured in you by your widowed mother. So, we have reason to admire and acclaim in you, not the successful man of business only, but the character and personality behind that success. There is a cry in the most industrialised countries of the West to humanise industry, to humanise progress itself. We are glad and proud Sir to see that you have already achieved what they are still trying to do. The history of commerce and industry is, often, the history of ruthless competition, of fraud, of exploitation. Not the worst of your enemies, Sir, will dare to throw these words in your face. From your earliest days, when you carried your entire shop in your coat pocket, your ascent may have been gradual, but your record has been clean. You have given consistent proof that behind the great entrepreneur there has always been a man. You have

obtained the whole-hearted cooperation of your large staff because your essential humanity called to theirs. You have been not only obeyed; you have been respected and loved. People have been happy to obey you when obedience was a courteous invitation to service. They have been happy to work for you, because you too were working for them. They had a share in all you did; they had, so to say, a share in you. You have been not only the head of a large establishment, you have been, above all, the father of a large family."

He went on, talking of Salgaocar's career with the depth and understanding only a colleague and honourable competitor who had also made his own, hard way in life, could bring to bear on another's, and terminated on a note as eloquent as it was true.

"To sum up, Sir, your sixty-year old life has been a luminous journey between two visions. At the start the vision of a grey world with its fearful challenge and your courageous response; at the other end the vision of a sunny prospect, where it is you who challenge and the world meekly responds. At the start, a society that bade fair to submerge your nascent hopes and natural urges; at the other end, a society that acclaims your achievement and which you can to a great extent ask to do your bidding. At the start, grim struggle; at the other end, sympathy towards those who are still struggling . . . Your success, Sir, acquits the world of its blackest stain, for you have shown that it is possible to succeed in great business and yet remain good and honest; that it is possible to command and be loved."

Visibly moved, Salgaocar rose to reply. He thanked his friends for being with him on that day, and for the good things they had to say. As for himself, he owed an unpayable debt to his mother and his wife; his mother for setting an example of courage and good humour in adversity which he never forgot; his wife for being boon companion all these years, mother to his children, friend, confidante, loyal in

success and disaster. From them he had learned, without need of teaching, that one must give in equal measure to what one acquired. He owed a debt to society and he would never cease making reparation.

No man is an island, he said, and indeed, the generous harvest of his life would never have been possible without the help of friends, colleagues and family. He mentioned them by name, his brother, Ramkrishna, his son Anil, his nephews, Prakash and Dilip, paying special tribute to "an able and dedicated colleague on the Board in the person of Mr. Epifanio Fernandes, who has stood by me firmly, throughout, as a member of my family."

"And," he concluded, "may God grant me the will to go on."

A moment of silence. Prolonged applause.

He would go on, of course, as he always had, but the years ahead were to be stormy, difficult ones; they were to test the mettle of the man as never before.

THE GATHERING DUSK

"HE was a Type A personality," says Dr. G. V. Naik, the Goan specialist in Margao who attended on Vasudev Salgaocar throughout his illness, from first attack to last, "in the classical definition of the term. A compulsive worker who thought nothing of putting in ten, twelve hour days for months on end, under great stress and tension. In addition, he had all the traits of the Type A personality. He was an utter perfectionist, every detail of everything he and his organisation did had to be just right. And, like all perfectionists, he had to be in complete control at all times. This might have been possible in the early days, when he was trading, but in later years when he ran a vast organisation with thousands of staff, it was very difficult. Yet he insisted, stretching himself to the limits. Even in the last months, before he left the office at night, he made it a point from time to time to personally examine the day's petty cash vouchers, hundreds of them!"

In 1970 Vasudev Salgaocar had a second heart attack, and was hospitalised in the intensive care unit of Breach Candy Hospital in Bombay. Dr. Datey was, again, the attending cardiologist. He was the only physician Salgaocar was truly in awe of, and when Datey lectured him on the virtues of moderation in all things, Salgaocar never interrupted but agreed in subdued tones, like an abashed truant school-boy, to follow instructions. With his other physicians in Goa, he argued back with a conviction and logic that was difficult to deny. "A man must work," he used to say, "if that is his destiny. I have worked very hard all the days of my life and I have enjoyed every one of them. Do you want me to become a vegetable? The quality of my life is more important to me than the fact of my death. I know my strength and I shall go on. When I die, it will be at my desk with a pen in my hand!"

He made a joke of it, Naik recalls, but no matter how centred and determined the mind, the body has its limitations. His third attack at the mines was more serious than the first two. He started to sweat profusely, complained of a clutching pain in the chest and collapsed. Two doctors rushed to the site, made an examination, diagnosed left ventricular failure, and removed him at once to the Cosme Menezes hospital in Panjim, but his condition did not stabilize; the vital signs were weak and erratic and the next day, accompanied by his wife, his cardiologist, Shivanand and Dattaraj, he was flown to Bombay where he was admitted into the intensive care unit at Jaslok Hospital.

He was to remain there for a month. He was discharged on condition he stayed on in Bombay, resting under the strict supervision of his physicians in the apartment at Usha Kiran. With good grace he complied. He was, Shivanand remembers, obedient as a child, taking his medication, keeping religiously to his diet, resting the prescribed hours each day. When it was time for him to return to Goa, Datey paid a visit to the house with Dr. Munshi the resident cardiologist at Jaslok Hospital.

They read Salgaocar the riot act.

Dr. Datey did not mince words. Salgaocar's life, he said, was in his own hands. There was no cure for his illness. He suffered from ischaemia heart disease with the additional complications of diabetes and high blood pressure and the trauma of three heart attacks. It was only the essential robustness of Salgaocar's constitution that had seen him through. But this was his Rubicon. At best — regular exercise, medication, diet, rest — his physical condition might, with luck, become stable. The matter was not, Datey concluded, in Salgaocar's hands any longer. He had no choice; he had run out of options.

Salgaocar paid no heed.

"His heart muscle was in good shape," Naik says, "but his left coronary artery was almost completely blocked. And

I was worried most about his high blood pressure. When it shot up, the artery was unable to take the sudden rush of blood and he'd get anginal pains and shortness of breath which he would control with nitrate-based drugs and beta-blockers. This would relieve the pain, but did nothing to help the basic condition."

Salgaocar's blood pressure was now being monitored thrice a day, the other physiological parameters every other week. Naik began to notice a definite correlation between Salgaocar's emotional state and the blood pressure indices. And he noticed too that Salgaocar seemed less able to handle tension. Here was a man known for calm deliberation, graceful in the most severe business crises ("He would keep cool," Dattaraj says, "while everybody else were losing their heads,") who never used a harsh word when a moderate one would do, now showing signs of increasing short temper. The smallest provocation would prompt anger out of all proportion to the cause. Where once, he was the most cheerful of men despite his illness, there now seemed to be, from time to time, a certain sadness about him, even a sense of bitterness. Often, after his examinations, they had long conversations. Doctor Naik would tell Salgaocar that he had achieved in a lifetime what most men only dream of; he had won his laurels with honour; he had about him men of great capability, including his sons, who would carry the flag forward. It was time to rest, to remove himself from day-to-day minutae, to assume the role of elder statesman, to advise and guide, no more. Salgaocar listened patiently but, watching his eyes, Naik could see his thoughts wander. Once, he spoke of disloyalty and betrayal, then quickly, as though he had thought better of it, kept silent. Naik did not press the point.

Salgaocar was never blind to the failings of the species. Better than most he knew that human beings could be tricky and specious and before he held out the hand of friendship and trust, he had to satisfy himself beyond the shadow of a

doubt that the recipient was deserving. Perhaps the only exception to this rule was the staff he employed. For nearly half a century, from the days in the Vasco marketplace where he had a handful of helpers, to the present, where he presided over the lives and fortunes of fifteen thousand people, he regarded himself as merely first among equals. The affection he felt for his people was deep and genuine. And in return for all he had done for them it could be fairly said that they loved him.

Scores of them, still with the organisation, in positions of seniority, refer to him, with no affectation as "Papa." Indeed, one of the speeches at his sixtieth birthday celebrations, was entitled "Papa Amidst Us" and delivered by a member of his secretarial staff. This filial affection, to which it must be admitted he responded in the manner of a patriarch, found joyful expression on May 13 each year, Salgaocar's birthday and, officially, "Founder's Day."

It began, literally at the crack of dawn, with a group of troubadors, appropriately dressed, drawn from the rank and file of the Salgaocar workforce, known for their musical ability, with their instruments tuned for fun and festivity. Precisely at five in the morning — for it would be a long day — they would knock on the door of the Salgaocar mansion. Not a sound from behind the great teak panels betrayed the fact that the family had woken up at four, that the kitchen had been busy putting together a splendid breakfast, and that Salgaocar himself, dressed in suit and tie, and the family, were ready with a traditional welcome.

The troubadors entered. One by one, with any semblance of formality belied by broad smiles, they wished Salgaocar happy returns of the day. Then, forming a half-circle before him, they made their instruments ready, and began to sing for their breakfast. "Happy Birthday" naturally, followed by a selection of the more merry of the *mandos* and when, in appreciation, Salgaocar clapped and asked for an

encore by way of a special request, they responded with much enthusiasm, and sang a few more for good measure.

Later in the morning, at eight, Salgaocar put in an appearance at special High Mass in celebration of the day at the Church at Vasco, attended by the Catholic staff. This was followed by a puja at the Damodar Temple in which he participated with great reverence. These functions of prayer and ritual were organised by the staff at their own expense, with individual contributions of five and ten rupees accumulating to thousands. Wholly unsolicited they were planned weeks ahead, with great attention to every detail, so that this of all days in Salgaocar's life would begin with flawless memories.

It was de rigeur that lunch would be held at the mines. Here, the Salgaocar management took over. Hundreds of packed lunches, suitably beveraged, were transported to Surla by van. Selected members of the staff made speeches and while Salgaocar was wished well, some small liberties might be taken in the shape of a few jokes made, good-naturedly, at the expense of management, and accepted in the happy, uninhibited spirit of the occasion. If production faltered somewhat at the mines in the course of the day, it was the only occasion in the year when nobody — Salgaocar particularly — took notice.

Back in Vasco in the afternoon, he presided over the most favoured event of his birthday — the sports meet. This was taken with great seriousness and athletes from various Salgaocar companies, professionally refereed, competed in the 100 metre sprint, in the 200, 400 and 800 metres races. Teams which had practised throughout the year, whenever weather permitted, participated in fiercely contested relays. Even those events conducted in a lighter vein — the tug-of-war between management and workers, the sack race, the two-legged, egg-and-spoon race for ladies — were keenly fought and lustily encouraged by partisan groups in the stands.

The prize distribution was held at the Nataraj Theatre in Vasco. Salgaocar personally handed out the trophies, and the cultural programme which followed was accepted with good grace by an audience somewhat subdued by the excitement of a strenuously enjoyable day.

For Salgaocar, though, the day was approaching its happiest conclusion. That evening at his residence in Vasco, a grand dinner party was held. All of his family and friends were there, a glittering assembly of hundreds of Goa's elite. They had a strong bond in common: no matter what the individual bias — politics, law, education, culture, business — they had come together this evening to wish their good friend Vasudev Salgaocar the best of all possible futures.

But times were changing in Goa, with a rapidity and lack of foresight that bore ill for the future. Fernandes and Kavlekar who kept sensitive fingers on the industrial pulse, had sensed the mood months earlier. They had watched the emergence of a violent, agitational labour movement in Maharashtra where new-found muscle was flexed to no good purpose, and confrontations forced with managements on issues of negligible worth. It was as though labour, incorporated as unionised force, finding an infantile identity, was passing through a phase of child-like irrationality, where reason and fact were lost in emotional defiance of all symptoms of authority or restraint.

They had warned Salgaocar of the impending organisation of labour in Goa, but he was unperturbed. "I have given my people more than any other industrialist in Goa," he asserted, "without any sort of pressure. They did not even have to ask." It was true. From free housing and medical care to educational grants, hire-purchase schemes and company stores where they could buy provisions at cost and interest-free credit, the welfare structure was the best in Goa and, indeed, surpassed anything that unionised Maharashtrian labour had been able to wrest from their managements.

So when the head office staff at Vasco decided to form a union, Salgaocar's reaction was, at first, a slightly annoyed neutrality. He decided to ignore the issue, until, one morning, he arrived at the office to find his people — his very own people! — out on the street outside the Salgaocar building waving red flags and banners, and shouting slogans proclaiming a one-day token strike, the first in the history of the organisation. As his car slowed down, the crowd ceased all agitation and parted to let the vehicle through. Salgaocar stopped at the entrance to the building and turned to face them. No one would catch his eye. In a rage, barely able to contain himself, he turned on his heel and strode to his office.

Chastened, three of the union leaders entered the building and made their way to Fernandes's cabin, where they apologised. They meant the Chairman no personal harm, they said. In fact, his staff — drivers, peons, secretaries, — had been excused from the strike for it had never been their intention to inconvenience Salgaocar in any way. In starting a union they did not seek confrontation, but merely a united front, to conduct a valid dialogue with management over the years, to smoothen out anomalies, to regularise terms and conditions. They would forever respect Vasudev Salgaocar for what he had done for them.

Fernandes, with no hope for the situation, repeated what he had been told.

Salgaocar gave him a bleak, stricken look. In a voice shaking with hurt and anger, he said, "From now on there will be no more Founder's Day."

He was as good as his word.

* * * *

It was his first personal betrayal; it would not be his last. Defeat he could take in his stride; it depended on the way the dice fell in the game of life. There had been occasions —

some of them monumental — when they went against him. Shortly after the Opinion Poll when Salgaocar emerged, triumphant, vindicated, with his personal reputation enhanced beyond any previous measure, fresh elections were called in Goa.

Government had been dissolved shortly after the poll, and the ruling political party, under the formidable leadership of Bandodkar, made ready for the electoral battle ahead. The main opposition party, the United Goans, was split into two opposing factions. The fledgling Congress Party was a non-starter, an embryonic reflection of the great national party which ruled the country from Delhi. Nevertheless, Delhi was concerned and a trouble-shooter called Joshi was despatched posthaste to Goa to investigate and report back on the situation.

From all accounts Joshi was an experienced and astute grass-roots political worker. He travelled the length and breadth of Goa, incognito, visited all of the major towns and villages, testing the temperature of the water as he went and, by the time he returned to Panjim, he had discovered what most Goans could have told him all along. As things stood, the fragmented opposition had no chance; Bandodkar would lead the MGP to an overwhelming majority.

There was a slender possibility, though, of retrieving the situation. If the two warring factions of the United Goans Party could be made to come together, and were persuaded to make common cause with what the Congress had to offer, a new party could be formed, backed by all of Delhi's considerable resources. But there had to be a focal point, a figure of stature throughout the territory, successful and respected by Hindu and Catholic alike, a visible symbol of the new party, a man who could rally all these dissident factions together under one banner.

When Joshi put the proposition to Salgaocar, he was accorded a warm, positive response. For while Goans had been drawn to their common roots in winning the opinion

poll, once more, sectarian differences were being exploited to no good purpose. MGP politicians made no bones of the fact that, since Hindus were in numerical majority, this domination must be reflected in the Cabinet and Assembly. Spokesmen of the United Goans, overwhelmingly a Catholic party, were equally vehement in asserting that the Catholics were in imminent danger of becoming second-class citizens in their own land. To Salgaocar, both positions were radical and repugnant. He believed that Goa would only find its place in the sun when every single Goan in the territory thought of himself as a Goan, first and last, all else being personal and incidental. He was prepared, moreover, to act on this belief.

He agreed at once to Joshi's suggestion that an attempt be made to form a new party, bringing all of the opposition under one banner, though he warned Joshi that the warring Catholic factions of the United Goans and the Hindu leadership of the Congress Party would make uneasy bedfellows. "But we shall try," he said, and once more, as in the days of the Opinion Poll, he put his own immense prestige and the full weight of his organisation behind the effort. He began the campaign with private meetings. He met alone and separately with Jack Sequeira, one of the two leaders of the United Goans, with Furtado who led the other splinter group, with the standard-bearers of the Congress movement in Goa, and to each of them he put the proposition in plain and simple terms. Alone, they would surely fail; if they joined forces, agreed on candidates and the components of a coalition Government, they stood a good chance of success.

What was far more important, in his view, the Hindu-Catholic polarisation that had so plagued Goan politics ever since Liberation would, once and for all, be permanently at an end. He appealed in equal measure to nationalism and self-interest, dangling yet another carrot, Delhi's unqualified patronage should they win the elections.

His powers of persuasion carried the day. At a meeting which began at six-thirty in the evening and ended at four the following morning, representatives of both factions of the United Goans made a reluctant peace; the Congress participants agreed to aid and abet. A new party was formally announced. It was named, rather awkwardly, the "Goa Organised Alliance" in order to arrive at the acronym, GOA, and its manifesto promised a clean Government, a united Government, a coalition Government.

In seeking support from his fellow industrialists, Salgaocar was able to enlist the aid of a number of large business houses and more importantly, their public endorsement of the new party. He made sure that they were seen to represent the basic tenet of the party — Hindu-Catholic unity — thus Cosme Matias Menezes took equal pride of place with Timblo. Professional flag-bearers of the Opinion Poll battle rallied to the new political flag. Mario Miranda and Sylvie Da Cunha joined the fray. Epifanio Fernandes was appointed Chief Coordinator, Chandrakant Keni masterminded the publicity campaign. Senior Salgaocar executives were made responsible for transport, distribution of funds, the political headquarters at Margao.

But the fine orchestration of all the desperate elements that win elections was suddenly put in jeopardy over the allocation of seats to be contested. The United Goans sought a virtually exclusive majority. Congress objected. Salgaocar attempted to mediate. Long hours of heated debate proved inconclusive. He worked out the arithmetic for them. The numerical majority lay with the Hindus; if GOA fielded candidates who were, by and large Catholic, they would lose. The Congress were weak on the ground. As a predominantly Hindu party they would lose out to MGP candidates. The Congress were simply not strong enough to win seats independently; they did not have the tenure, or the organisation and the Hindu vote was not with them. There

had to be a balance, weighted by vote-getting influence and nothing more. He might as well have talked to a stone wall. The United Goans were adamant. Most of the Congress backers of GOA resigned, deciding to fight alone. It was too late to do anything in the matter. The elections were weeks away. A truncated GOA, now predominantly United Goan, decided to contest every seat. Salgaocar put aside his misgivings. The die was cast. He could not back out now. "Let us get on with it," he said to Fernandes, "let us give Bandodkar the fight of his life!"

That they did, in full measure. Touring vans and cars, equipped with powerful loudspeakers, perambulated through Goa's towns, villages and highways, proclaiming the new party's creed. Hoardings and posters came up overnight throughout the territory, from Panjim's main square to the most humble village in the far North. The press carried articles, interviews, the results of public debates, paid advertisements by the score. Rallies were organised in Vasco, Margao, Panjim, Mapusa, Ponda, in all of the major villages. A massive direct mail campaign saw tens of thousands of Goan households deluged with propaganda. All to no avail. Salgaocar's worst misgivings were to be proved true.

Goa went to the polls.

And GOA lost every seat it contested.

It was an honourable defeat. Political commentators in Goa and the rest of India, so often prone to being wise after the event, reported on the elections, almost to a man, with a sense of regret. The results had been a forgone conclusion, given the rift between the United Goans and the Congress, and perhaps it was best for the territory that a known quantity, a successful party moreover — Bandodkar and his MGP, was back in power. Yet, the one chance Goans had to bury their sectarian hatchets had been lost for at least a generation. No truer word was written. To this day most Goans, no matter what lip-service they may pay to secularism, are

aware of, and to greater or lesser degree segregated by, the great Hindu-Catholic divide.

Salgaocar was never made bitter by the defeat, nor did it tarnish his personal reputation. He took it philosophically, saying, "You can't win them all" and, indeed, continued to be actively interested in politics and politicians. Nor did he abandon his crusade against injustice. When he came face to face with examples of its miscarriage, he was swift to take action. As a Trustee of the Mormugao Port Trust he did not treat his position as a sinecure, but took up cudgels on behalf of shipowners and mineowners no sooner he felt that their legitimate interests were in danger of being unjustly and arbitrarily violated. Similarly, when decisions by local or Central Government went against the basic interests of industry in the territory, he made personal representations to Government contacts in Goa and Delhi, took the lead in moving Chambers of Commerce & Industry in voicing protest, and went out of his way, at considerable expense of personal time and money, to ensure that a powerful lobby was created and put to work. Never, though, in a vacuum or armed only with platitudes. He insisted that a thoroughly incisive case be made, with well marshalled statistics, with logic and conviction, with a detailed analysis of the implications of the proposed legislation, over the short and long term. If he ever lost out over an issue it was never for lack of trying.

* * * *

But there was one battle he feared would find no resolution. The rift within his own family showed no signs of healing. It widened into open hostility, legal separation and worse. For the first time in his life, his powers of mediation and persuasion, good sense and objective counselling, failed abysmally, when it was utterly crucial that they should not. Nothing he did helped. Every course of action, no matter how compassionately and fairly charted, ended in strife,

bitterness and recrimination. Many of his close friends and colleagues noticed a marked change in Salgaocar's personality during those last few catastrophic years.

He withdrew into himself. His temper, at the worst of times, equable and calm, now flared up at the most innocent of provocations. Where, once, he was conscious of the fact that he should look after his health, and tried to, admittedly in a somewhat left-handed fashion, now he took the sort of chances which defied providence. He would listen to no one. Dr. Naik was reduced to the role of hapless observer as Salgaocar, throwing all caution to the winds, tramped up and down his beloved mines, swallowing nitrate pills indiscriminately whenever anginal pains and breathlessness overcame him. The relief — temporary and specious — gave him a false, and instant sense of recovery, and on he went again. A shadow fell across his business dealings as well. In the old days, he would take major decisions in a matter of minutes. Mohandas Naik once sold him three hundred tipper trucks across the desk in a quarter of an hour. Now the sale of five or ten vehicles meant a half-dozen trips to Vasco and endless discussions with Salgaocar and his executives. He called for tenders, examined competitive vehicle specs, pored over the fine print in contracts again and again. It seemed as though the last and final betrayal within his own family had made him lose all trust with the world about him. The enemy within became the enemy at large.

In a metaphor elegiac in its poignancy, Dattaraj, his youngest son, says, "We have a saying in Konkani about our coconut palm. A single, slender trunk rises to the sky. How does it support the sunburst of palmfronds, the weight of coconuts, the rats, crows and lizards that make a home in its leaves? It prevails over the heat of the May sun, drought, flood, monsoon gales. Other trees fall, but for a hundred years and more the palm thrives. Only disease from within can destroy a palm tree before its time."

"In the worst years of the business, when international ore prices were crashing, and the Goan mining industry was virtually certain that it would have to close shop, taking enormous losses, with scores of companies, perhaps, going into liquidation, my father never mentioned a word of this at home. He was as calm and unruffled as I've always remembered him. Business problems never really bothered him. He would call all of us, his senior executives, into the conference room whenever a real crisis was on and say, "Let us do our best. The rest is in the hands of God."

"The problem in the family was the cancer within. He never got over the shock of it. It wouldn't be fair to say that he lost the will to live. He worked as hard as ever, and continued to fight for what he believed in — the business in Vasco for instance. I just think he wasn't concerned any more with his own personal future. While he had worked all his life for an orderly succession, for a family united over generations of Salgaocars, a clean division of responsibility and the great wealth and organisation he had created, he knew now, that it would never be so. He believed in his heart that the litigation which brought him so much pain and anguish, would never be reconciled in his lifetime."

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The thought often occurred to Dr. Tito D'Souza, the general practitioner who ran the Salgaocar medical clinic at the mines, that if he had known what he was in for, he would have specialised in gynaecology, for he seemed to spend most of his time delivering babies. They were usually astonishingly healthy specimens for the villagers in the mining areas were a sturdy lot. He reckoned that he must have smacked well over five hundred new-born bottoms in his time, but now he was not very sanguine; he had, for the first time in his life, helped a woman in labour to deliver quadruplets. They were barely alive, tiny, each would fit into the palm of an outstretched hand, and despite the fact that

the clinic was well-equipped, with all the services of a mini-hospital, he was not prepared for a situation such as this.

As he went about examining the infants, he remembered that Salgaocar was due to make his monthly visit to the clinic, and recalled their first meeting barely a month after he had joined the organisation. He had taken charge of a dispensary, nothing more, and had quickly realised that, in many areas, the facilities were inadequate for the medical needs of the mineworkers and their families. He worked out an elaborate scheme for upgrading the clinic and sought a meeting with Salgaocar in Vasco.

He explained his plans in detail. He would, he said, erect an army-type dormitory, with wooden sub-divisions, and create within its walls a small, primary, fully self-sufficient hospital centre. It would have a separate examination room, two wards, of four beds each, for male and female patients, a delivery room, an operation theatre for minor surgery, a section for out-patients and a pathological laboratory. He pointed out that the capital costs could be partially defrayed by a Government grant from the Labour Welfare Fund. "No problem," Salgaocar said, gave his approval on the spot, and issued instructions that an adequate sum of money should be made available immediately. They applied for and got the grant — the first such unit in Goa to do so — and the centre became a model for other mining companies.

Salgaocar took a keen interest in its activities. He spent at least an hour at the hospital on his monthly visit, and would enquire after each patient, his illness, the medication and prognosis. When he made his rounds, from bed to bed, he talked and joked with the inmates, often sitting at the bedside. He was a stickler for cleanliness. All of the linen had to be freshly cleaned and pressed, walls and floors swabbed with disinfectant. "If a bottle of pills was found opened," Dr. Tito remembers with a smile, "he would bring it to my

attention, and make it a point to call the nurse in charge and give her a talking to." When any follow-up treatment was indicated after a patient was discharged — vitamins, a course of injections, major surgery at one of Goa's general hospitals — this would be provided free of charge.

On this visit, Salgaocar was a little surprised that Dr. Tito was not at the entrance to greet him. It was unusual, and when he was told that the doctor was handling an emergency in the delivery room, he went there at once. The quadruplets made a pathetic sight and Salgaocar was visibly moved. "Will they live?" he asked. "Two of them just might," Dr. Tito replied, "but there's no hope for the others. The mother was very weak and undernourished. She's had three children already. Besides we have no facilities in Vasco for incubation. They need to be kept in a sterile atmosphere, under controlled temperature and humidity, with intravenous feeding if necessary. I'm afraid there's not much hope." "Well do what you can," Salgaocar said, cut his visit short, and left.

He stayed overnight at the mines and that evening, as was the custom, hosted a small dinner party for his executives at the guest house. He was not his usual self, lost for long moments in deep introspection, clearly troubled by the event of the morning. After dinner, he took Dr. Tito aside and told him of another incident which had occurred recently and had disturbed him a great deal. One morning, while leaving for the office, he noticed a body lying supine on the side of the road. There was blood on the pavement and a small crowd had gathered. Salgaocar stopped the car and went over to investigate.

The young man who lay on the road was unconscious; his breathing was laboured and he bled profusely from the mouth. He had been knocked down by a car; the driver had raced off in a panic. Nobody knew what to do. "Do not touch him," Salgaocar ordered, "I think he has internal injuries. We should get a doctor." He sent his driver off, posthaste, to

summon his own physician, Dr. Desai, who lived nearby, but Desai was out on a call. After some time they managed to get another doctor and an ambulance. The doctor made a quick examination. "He's very badly injured," he told Salgaocar, "there is severe internal trauma. Vasco has no facilities to handle this sort of injury. He'll have to be taken to Panjim."

It was too late. Three days later the boy died. "We could have saved his life," Salgaocar said, "if there was a proper hospital in Vasco. Let us build one."

The concept was not as quixotic as it seemed, and, certainly, the two incidents — the quadruplets and the accident victim — were not the only reasons which prompted Salgaocar's decision. Apart from the absence of proper medical facilities in Vasco to deal with serious emergencies (a situation he was determined to correct), there was a complete dearth in Goa of advanced health technology. The research and investigative environment was barren. Goans in need of specialised diagnostic, surgical and therapeutic facilities had to travel to Bombay, Bangalore or Vellore. Many could not afford to do so and remained untreated.

Never one to let an idea languish, he summoned Tito to a meeting at Vasco which Fernandes and Kavlekar also attended. The need, Salgaocar told them, went far beyond basic medical facilities. They would have to apply the first tenets of good business management. The Medical and Research Centre which he proposed would have to be planned, equipped and staffed to meet the specific health requirements of Goans in the mining areas and other parts of the territory. So the first objective should be research. Doctors and field staff should conduct surveys on patterns of health and morbidity among Goa's population of one million people. To do so, it was necessary to recruit at once a senior medical officer with the right experience and a good track record in this sphere. There was much to learn. Why, Salgaocar queried, was rheumatic fever such a serious problem among Goan children? Why were diabetes and anaemia

so widespread? "Let us do a survey among doctors," he said, "to find out what specific ailments send Goans to Bombay and other centres for treatment. If we can work up some statistics, we shall have a much better idea of what needs to be done."

He also suggested that other medical centres in India, with more or less similar environments, and excellent reputations, be visited and inspected thoroughly. The Baptist Hospital in Bangalore, for instance, and the complex at Vellore which had attained national stature. Responsibilities were allocated. Fernandes and Kavlekar would visit and report back on hospitals beyond Goa's borders. Dr. Tito would institute an immediate search for a good senior medical officer who could organise field research and, with a chuckle, he should also find a replacement for himself, for Dr. Tito D'Souza was now being transferred to Vasco, on a major promotion, as Administrative Head of the new project. As for himself, he would read extensively on the subject, make his own investigations, and begin negotiations for the donation or purchase of communidade land on the plateau of Chicalim near Vasco for the new hospital.

They went about it with zeal and energy, and all of the enthusiasm normally associated in the higher echelons of the organisation with the acquisition of a new mining concession rich in ore. Salgaocar ordered books on medical management and research from Europe and the United States; the World Health Organisation was approached for papers and information on health problems in developing countries; he met and discussed the situation in Goa with officials of the Ministry of Health and, privately, with doctors and specialists of his acquaintance from all over the country. His own physicians, Drs. Kamat, Naik and D'Souza met with him, individually and together, over hours of intense discussion. Fernandes and Kavlekar returned from their fact-finding missions with detailed reports, and complete unanimity in their recommendation: the Salgaocar Medical

Research Centre could do no better than model itself after the Baptist Hospital in Bangalore. They had worked out the funding, the staffing, the equipment requirements and the logistics of building the centre. Salgaocar would put in well over two crores of rupees, but even with the best will in the world, it would take a couple of years before the first phase of the project could be completed. "Too long," Salgaocar said, "like justice, it must be seen to be done." No sooner said, than a nodal unit was set up in 1977. The Salgaocar Medical Research Centre began with a modesty that gave not the slightest indication of its future potential. A team of doctors, nominally assisted, began working out of a small laboratory at Vasco. They used a mobile van, both as transport while conducting research in rural areas, as well as a first-stage medical unit. It was to provide yeoman service to the community by conducting landmark studies in patterns of disease and morbidity in Goa, and would provide invaluable feedback to Salgaocar and his team who were now engrossed in working out plans for the medical centre.

In June 1981, their efforts came to a meritorious conclusion with the inauguration of SMRC's hospital complex at Chicalim. A long, low, white building, with two floors and clean, uncluttered lines, it opened with one hundred beds, and offered the finest range of medical facilities and staff to be found under one roof in Goa. Salgaocar, himself, had contributed a thoughtful finishing touch. Making the rounds days before the official opening, he paused at the lounge and reading room for patients, then said to Fernandes, "Get them a colour television set. A 27 inch model."

From the location to the facilities, not a single detail had been overlooked. The Centre was situated just 3 km away from the railway station at Vasco, 2 km from the airport; a regular bus service stopped just across the road. The equipment — state-of-the-art, ordered from Switzerland, Japan and West Germany — included an intensive care unit

with every monitoring facility, the very latest orthopaedic and neurological diagnostic and surgical equipment, sophisticated investigative tools such as an ultrasonic diagnostic liner scanner, electro-encephalographs and ventilator respirators. The two major operating theatres were capable of handling the most complicated brain and heart surgery. Steps were well under way to set up a radio immuno-assay laboratory and an allergy clinic under the supervision of an expert trained abroad.

A team of full-time specialists, selected from a comprehensive range of medical disciplines, was supported by an experienced corps of permanent Resident Medical Officers; together, they offered a 24-hour medical service, assisted by a cadre of highly experienced nursing staff, second to none in the territory. In order that no Goan should ever again have to travel outside Goa for the best in medical opinion, Salgaocar had engaged the services of the country's leading specialists from centres as far remote as Bombay and Delhi; they visited the SMRC complex on a regular schedule, and many of them were on call for emergencies.

Meanwhile, the SMRC Research Wing, which had given the Centre its embryonic start many years earlier, had flourished. It had moved swiftly, beyond need-based, fact-finding surveys to many other areas. In collaboration with Government it had established several "out-reach" health programmes, training community workers in the application of primary health techniques; it was working actively in the area of preventive medicine, designing educational formats for rural propaganda in terms of basic hygiene, diet and life-styles. It had begun working hand-in-hand with Government in the promotion of major public health and welfare schemes such as family planning, vaccination and immunisation. Close and fruitful collaborations had been established with research institutions in Goa and other parts of India and the results made available to the pharmaceutical and medical professions. Under its aegis, national and

internationally acknowledged experts in various disciplines were invited to Goa to conduct seminars in the current state of their arts. It could be said without any exaggeration that the Salgaocar Medical Research Centre had more than fulfilled the keenest aspirations of its founders. One would have thought that Vasudev Salgaocar could now, at last, rest content, leaving the second phase and the future in the good hands of his senior colleagues on the Managing Committee, particularly in view of the fact that Delhi had bestowed on the SMRC the final official accolade. It was appointed to head a short-list of medical facilities for use in emergency for visiting Heads of State of the Commonwealth at their annual conference, held in Goa for the first time, and chaired by the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

If Salgaocar was pleased, he did not say; he was absorbed in the planning of the second phase of the SMRC. Another hundred beds, highly advanced diagnostic and therapeutic equipment to match the latest in the West: whole-body CAT scanners, highly complex machines for hemo-dialysis, transplant and ophthalmic laser surgery. At the same time, he kept a weather eye open for experts in these areas and, whenever he found them, had no qualms in soliciting their services personally.

He wrote directly to manufacturers all over the world, listing his requirements and calling for quotations. One such enquiry, addressed to Hitachi of Japan, running to three pages of closely packed typescript, is worth excerpting. Among other things, he asked for:

(a) A detailed description of the equipment and components comprising the unit.
(b) Terms and conditions of the offer.
(c) Deferred payment facilities.
(d) Rate of interest applicable on deferred portion of the cost price.
(e) Period of delivery.
(f) Facilities for training of Doctors and Technicians.

(g) Installation details covering power requirements, air-conditioning and other inputs.
(h) After-sales services offered in India either directly, or through duly authorised and trained agents.

The letter was dated June 14, 1984, when he was terminally ill; four months were all that remained of his life. That he was aware of his condition is not in doubt; that he could, in physical travail, apply himself to detail such as this was, for the man, par for the course; but that he could, at the same time, fight the battle of his life, alone and unaided, against the Government of the day, for the sake of his beloved Vasco, is truly cause for awe.

After the debacle of the elections following the opinion poll, Salgaocar's interests in politics did not diminish, but became honed, and focussed on individuals rather than parties, on people as opposed to policy. He realised that if good men governed, the labels they carried would, at the end of the day, be vastly less important than the services they would render to the territory, even after taking into account the obeisance they must pay to party, grass-roots politics and the machinations that kept them in power. Thus, he isolated and supported individuals, often at the nadir of their political fortunes, because they were, in his view, able and honest men, who, in the final analysis, loved the land and the people. That he would, in his last years, face them in a bitter and protracted confrontation, was, perhaps, the final irony of his life.

Pratapsingh Rane, now Chief Minister of Goa, recalls that his first introduction to Salgaocar could have occurred in happier circumstances. Salgaocar and Rane's father had done some business together. Several of Salgaocar's ore concessions had been leased from the Rane properties, and the relationship between the two men was a good one, based on mutual respect and trust. Then Salgaocar, a firm believer in the shortest distance between two points, approached Rane for the purchase of large tracts of coconut

groves flanking the river, through which he intended to construct a road in order to move his ore more expeditiously from mine to riverhead. Rane said no. Not in the least put off, Salgaocar persisted, finally making an offer he felt Rane could never refuse: cash on the barrel, vast amounts of it, much more than the property was worth. But this was cherished ancestral land, and Rane loved his coconut groves. "Nothing doing," he said, and that was that. Salgaocar took the rebuff with good grace.

Pratapsingh had been inducted into politics by the legendary Bandodkar; he was a Minister in both the Bandodkar and, later, the Kakodkar Cabinets. Rane, much to the disapproval of his friends and political associates, resigned from the ruling MGP party in 1977. He found himself in a political limbo; fair-weather friends disappeared without trace; alliances dissolved overnight; his isolation seemed complete. But not quite, for a few days later, on May 13, he received a telephone call from Vasudev Salgaocar. "It was his birthday," Rane recalls, "the official Founder's Day of the organisation, yet he found time to call." "You have done the right thing." Salgaocar said, "I will help you in any way I can."

He was as true as his word. A few months later, Rane joined the Congress party; the general consensus was that he had taken leave of his senses. The Janata party was in power in Delhi. Conventional wisdom held that the death-knell of the Congress had rung; it was a spent force, done with, finished. But Salgaocar stood firm. He backed Rane to the hilt, met him often, aided and abetted in a hundred and one ways, and showed no reluctance in offering Rane advice, whether solicited or not, on every aspect of the governance of the territory. "Play the game of politics if you have to," he said, "but work honestly for the good of Goa." He did not hesitate to criticise, when he felt censure was in order, and at times, he could be brutally harsh. "Some of the politicians took exception to his manner,"

Rane says, "but none of us ever questioned his integrity or his motives."

He had a habit of dropping in unannounced and at the oddest of hours. When the Congress came to power in 1980 and Rane took charge of the Government, he moved to the official residence of the Chief Minister at Altinho in Panjim. A police contingent stood guard at the gate of the house, while two others sat on a bench at the main door. One morning at eight, Rane opened his front door to find, much to his surprise, Salgaocar, sitting on the bench with the constables, having an animated discussion. He had arrived an hour earlier, he said, taking the first ferry as he had a busy day ahead, and so, he presumed, had Rane. "But why didn't you wake me?" Rane asked. Salgaocar smiled. "Anybody who runs this territory," he said, "needs a good night's rest."

He had come to make a serious complaint in person about the new abbatoir at Usgao, where animals were being slaughtered in the filthiest of conditions, with offal being dumped indiscriminately, polluting the environment. But before he went into indignant detail, a ritual had to be performed. Mrs. Rane recalls that it had become a regular custom. Salgaocar would take out of his pocket, a flat packet, wrapped in brown paper and hand it over: two bars of Cadbury's Milk chocolate for Rane's children. She used to tease him about it. "What will people say? Goa's leading industrialist at eight in the morning giving the Chief Minister of Goa a thick brown paper packet exactly the size of a hundred rupee note!" "I always make sure," Salgaocar replied, "that no one else is about."

He hid his light under a bushel in other ways as well. When Mrs. Rane decided to organise a ladies football team in Goa, Salgaocar, whose love for the game was well known, helped in every possible way, but always behind the scenes. "It wasn't just the money," Mrs. Rane says "but his constant encouragement and his deep sense of involvement, in the minutest detail, even to the colours of the uniforms." When,

two years later, Goa's ladies football team won the finals on the National Tournament, Salgaocar sent her a handwritten note, with two words on it, "Well done!" He never sought the limelight, but was a force to reckon with when it really mattered. Mrs. Rane recalls an incident when Salgaocar's clout was put to swift use. She had set up a knock-out football tournament of Goa's leading men's teams in Vasco in order to raise funds for the Family Welfare Association she chaired. At the eleventh hour, one of the teams dropped out. She got the news late at night; the match — a key fixture — was scheduled for the following afternoon. The stadium was sold out, and Mrs. Rane faced the unhappy prospect of explaining matters to a crowd of thousands of irate Goans to whom football was sacred, and the cancellation of a match easily provocation for a riot on the grounds. Fervent appeals to the recalcitrant team met with stone-walled refusals. Somebody had neglected to include the team's name in one of the souvenir programmes, though it had been widely advertised elsewhere, and this lapse was being used as an excuse to give Mrs. Rane her comeuppance.

Late at night, she phoned Salgaocar. "I was very agitated," she says, "and went on at some length, not very coherently I'm afraid." He heard her out patiently. "You will not cancel," he said, "or give in. Phone me tomorrow morning at six."

She phoned. Salgaocar had arranged for a substitute team, every bit as good, if not better, than the team that had dropped out.

The lasting impressions she carries of Vasudev Salgaocar are his sense of fair play and integrity. "He went out of his way to see that justice was done," she says, "And he could not abide a dishonest man. Many men pay lip-service to the notion, but for Salgaocar his word was truly his bond."

Harish Zantye, former Minister for weights and measures in the Goa cabinet, confirms this view. Many years earlier when he was involved in the family business, with no

interest in politics whatsoever, he had dabbled in film distribution, and made a killing. Salgaocar was a family friend and the Salgaocar theatres were extensively used in the screening of Zantye's films. Then a megahit came onto the market and Zantye asked Salgaocar if he would like a share of the action. "Count me in for a lakh," Salgaocar said casually. No contract was signed; they merely shook hands on the deal. The megahit flopped dramatically. Zantye took a bath. He hadn't the heart to mention the matter to Salgaocar, let alone ask him to share in the disaster. After all, no contract had been signed; it had been the briefest of conversations. He decided to take the entire loss. But in Goa, as elsewhere, nothing travels faster than news of misfortune. One morning, unannounced as usual. Salgaocar turned up at Zantye's office. "Why didn't you tell me?" he said, and gave Zantye a cheque for a lakh of rupees.

It is five years now that Zantye has occupied positions of power and influence among Goa's top political brass. "Never once," he says "did Salgaocar or his executives approach me for favours for the organisation. He was very correct; they always went through official channels. But when it came to Vasco, it was another story altogether. Vasco he loved, I think, more than himself."

Fate plays strange games. A politician Salgaocar was close to was to become his prime antagonist in his last cause celebre — the crisis of Vasco. Shaikh Hassan, former Minister for Industries, Law and Revenue, has his political base in the tumultuous, chaotic vitality of Vasco and its port, Mormugao. He had known Salgaocar since 1966, well before he launched on a political career. Hassan was practising as an advocate, and had undertaken several assignments for the Salgaocar organisations — with notable success — and the basis of a lasting friendship between the two men had been established. When he decided to enter politics he first asked Salgaocar "for his blessings" and received considerably more than that for Salgaocar, as in the case of Rane, put

the full weight of his organisation and his personal name behind Hassan's campaign. The 1977 elections saw the MGP once more in power but Hassan, contesting a seat for the Congress, won, and was duly appointed an MLA. He remembers that the first man to vote at the polling booth, accompanied by his entire family, at eight in the morning, was Vasudev Salgaocar. As an MLA, dedicated to the task at hand, Hassan addressed himself to Vasco's many problems, and these, as we shall see, were legion. He sought Salgaocar's advice whenever the need and the opportunity arose; they were both sons of Vasco's soil and each, in his own way and in his light, had the welfare of the city at heart. But one was a politician and had, of necessity, to work his way through the labyrinth of ward politics, rival pressure groups, ethnic and religious divisions, while the other was free from such strictures and could look at the problems of Vasco as a macrocosmic whole.

When the next elections approached, the Congress had put together a powerful grass-roots organisation which cut across religion, caste, community and geographical barriers. The MGP was in for a crucial battle, and its high command, fully aware of the implications of the situation, sought to suborn to its cause a handful of leading Congress MLAs in key Goan constituencies. Hassan came under severe pressure to defect. By now he had a large and loyal following in Vasco, had forged strong alliances, was — by his performance for his people — capable of mobilizing tens of thousands of votes. It promised to be a very close election and if he and a few other Congress MLAs crossed the floor, it could mean defeat — and perhaps permanent subjugation — for the Congress. For Hassan, it was the moment of truth: he pondered long and hard, and today he says that Salgaocar's advice at the time helped to show him the way.

"Stay true to yourself," Salgaocar said, "and your party. If you win, you go on to greater things; if you lose, it will be

an honourable defeat and you, personally, can still carry on your work. But if you betray everything you have worked for these past few years, you will have let down thousands of people in Vasco who believed in you and the Congress. And you will never again believe in yourself."

Hassan stayed the course. Elections were called. At eight in the morning of the day, once more, Salgaocar and his family were the first at the polling booth. The Congress won with a thumping majority, and Hassan was appointed a Minister in Rane's first Cabinet.

"He was a remarkable man," Hassan says "He spoke perfect Goan Urdu — the language which my community uses — as well as I did. He was very fond of my family and would drop in at the house without any warning at about noon and say to my wife, 'I am staying for lunch. What have you cooked today?'"

But he was never familiar; in matters of protocol he kept a careful and official distance. In his capacity as Chairman of the House Committee for mining projects, Shaikh Hassan often led groups of MLAs to visit the mines on fact-finding tours. None of the other mine-owners thought it necessary to meet the groups personally, leaving the task — a gruelling business from all reports — to executives in their organisations. Not Salgaocar. He received the delegations personally, according Hassan and his MLAs the respect that was only their right as members of Government, and when some of the younger Assembly Members — a rambunctious, irreverent lot — began asking searching questions about pollution, the dumping of waste, environmental damage, Salgaocar did not attempt to evade any of the issues, nor did he leave it to his executives to provide answers. He fielded the questions himself, showing an astonishing grasp of the technicalities involved. He pointed out that the waste water from the mining operations was purified to a point where it was cleaner and safer than the natural watershed into which it was eventually released. He spoke of his correspondence

with the forestry departments of Governments in Brazil and Australia — two leading iron ore exporters — regarding the suitability of various types of plants for converting residual dumps: into green areas, adding with a chuckle, "Our cashew tree is still the best bet for this purpose." By the time he was through with his conducted tour and his small lecture, he would escort Hassan and a group of rather subdued MLAs to their official cars and wish them a courteous goodbye.

But when it came to Salgaocar's ideas of Hassan's duties to the constituency which had elected him, his ministerial status was put aside without a second thought. On one occasion, a family from Vasco lost several children in a bad car accident at Porvorim, Salgaocar called on Hassan the very next day and asked, "Have you condoled with the parents?" and when Hassan admitted that he had not, Salgaocar said, "We shall go together. Now. This is as much your duty as attending an Assembly debate." From the look in Salgaocar's eyes, Hassan knew better than to argue. They went to the bereaved household together and made their condolences.

Rane, Zantye, Shaikh Hassan, Shashikala Kakodkar (a former Chief Minister whose father Salgaocar had been instrumental in releasing from a Goan prison during the Portuguese regime), Khalap, present leader of the Opposition (whom Salgaocar had known man and boy, helped in his political career and reprimanded in his role as Chairman of a co-operative bank for lending indiscriminately to clerical and factory labour), these and scores of other politicians valued Salgaocar's friendship and patronage. Above all, they respected him, even in the last, terrible years of his life, when he turned on Government with a violence they had never witnessed before. They would have destroyed a lesser man. Salgaocar they praised, while they engaged in bitter and public battle, for they knew, to a man, that he fought for Vasco, not for himself. And they knew that he was right.

There are many early warning symptoms of a decaying environment, and one of the earliest is the condition of the roads. Because of the chicanery of contractors and the corruption of municipal officials, road surfaces in Goa, even when freshly laid, were never to contracted specification. This, together with the severity of the monsoon and the rapidly increasing heavy vehicular traffic, played havoc with the surfaces. They were uneven and rough, in patches they sank and cracked; in turn, traffic hazards multiplied, accidents and fatalities increased. Traffic police were conspicuous by their absence; at night illegally parked trucks and straying cattle compounded the problem. Goa's highways, difficult at the best of times, were now positively dangerous. When he heard that more than one hundred people had died on the roads in the previous twelve months, Salgaocar felt it was time to act. Not that his concern had gone unattended earlier. His own executives and the various associations to which he was committed had taken the matter up strongly with individual municipalities and Government departments, with little effect. It was only when Salgaocar wrote personally to the Lt. Governor, K. T. Satarawala, that action was taken. There was a flurry of activity; for a few months, the situation improved, then settled back into a morass of indifference.

There were other, more ominous signs of thoughtless, haphazard Government planning. The meat complex at Usgao was a notorious example. Located on a busy highway with very heavy traffic, the abattoir's waste from slaughtered cattle was indiscriminately released into the adjoining Khandepar river, polluting a major source of drinking water while severely offending the religious sentiments of the Hindus in the area. The stench was so appalling, many cars, including Salgaocar's, took a long detour to avoid driving past the abbatoir. The villagers were not so fortunate; they had to live, day and night with a faint odour of rotting flesh. Here again, when appeals to the Municipal authorities fell on

deaf ears, Salgaocar wrote strong letters to the Lt. Governor and the Chief Minister, but the complex had come to stay. A small cosmetic attempt was made to curb the pollution, nothing more. These and other glaring examples of government negligence disturbed Salgaocar, but what finally aroused his unbridled wrath was the deteriorating state of Vasco.

In his youth, he had known it as a green and pleasant garden city, where a population of no more than fifteen thousand lived in spacious houses, enjoyed its tree-lined boulevards and squares, and spent their evenings at Baina's exquisite beach, a stretch of clean, white sand with groves of coconut palms unmarred by any human dwelling. Now, one hundred and thirty-five thousand people jostled for living space. Twenty-five thousand of them existed in unbelievable filth and squalor on Baina beach; one was hard put to see the sand for the slums; a sprawling, ugly shanty town, given over to smuggling, prostitution, bootlegging and gambling, the personal fiefdoms of ganglords who collected protection money — two lakhs a month — from the wretched slum dwellers and cocked an insolent snook at the Municipality. Their writ was law.

And it seemed as though the malaise of Baina had insidiously undermined all of Vasco's civic integrity. The city's wags made cynical fun of the situation. There was only one good road left in Vasco, they said, Swatantra Path, but you can't use it in the monsoon because it's under water. Another bitter joke made the rounds. How do you get into the timber business? Become an MLA! With depressing regularity every monsoon, choked drains overflowed, streets were flooded, mosquitoes bred in swarming clouds, malaria was rife. Another serious health hazard made an appearance. Whole streets of the city were being used as open lavatories by hordes of itinerant vegetable and fruit vendors who blocked entire thoroughfares with unauthorised stalls. Municipal laws were flouted with impunity, never so

notoriously as in the construction business. Building regulations were simply ignored. Corruption had become a way of life. MLAs made fortunes in the illegal felling of wood, denuding large tracts of forest, openly stockpiling crores of rupees of prime timber.

No more than lip-service was paid to garbage disposal. Dumps overflowed, uncleared for days on end. People had begun to dispose of their waste on the nearest available street corner. Rats, crows and scavenging dogs fed off the refuse. Law and order had become a mockery. Burglaries were commonplace, and you took your life in your hands if you visited Baina alone after dark.

Vasco's personality had changed in the process. A large percentage of the labour force was from outside the territory, from Kerala, Karnataka, U.P. and Maharashtra. They came in thousands, hired by Goan contractors to work in the docks, on construction sites as casual labourers. Since the industrial growth of Vasco seemed to ascend a dizzying parabolic curve without end, they settled wherever they could find open ground and build shanty towns. They became permanent residents, at the lowest levels of society, and were deeply resented by native Goans who regarded them, rightly or wrongly, as usurpers of their traditional rights. Living in clusters, gradually assuming the proportions of a sizable, and significant voting bloc, largely illiterate, they were ripe for political organisation and exploitation. Some of the less scrupulous MLAs swiftly took over, forming an unholy nexus with the ganglords in a cynical quid pro quo: votes for criminal licence.

It was a classic case of Government by default, and Vasudev Salgaocar found the situation intolerable. He met MLAs he knew to be honest, competent and reasonable men, and put the case to them as forcefully as he knew how. It was not too late, he said, to correct the situation, but time was running out; in a matter of a few years, the situation would be hopelessly out of hand and Vasco would

go the way of Bombay, where the sheer power of the institutionalised slum, and the millions of voters who lived in them, made impotent puppets of even the most honest of MLAs and municipal officials. He made his argument on the ground, where the rot was eating into the city's vital services, personally escorting MLAs around Baina and Vasco. He always received a sympathetic and considerate hearing, but nothing was ever done. There were any number of excuses, but he had heard the arguments before and had rejected them out of hand.

Government apologists pointed out that two hundred crores of rupees had been sunk by Delhi and Goa into the industrial/naval/civil airport and port complex centred on Vasco embracing Mormugao, Chicalim and Dabolim. This, in turn, had opened the floodgates to tens of thousands of labourers hired — it was pointed out — by Goan businessmen, contractors and industrialists who had not lifted a finger to provide housing or other amenities, and, at the first opportunity, had cynically dumped the entire problem into the lap of Government. And this was not new. Decades before liberation, Vasco had been a lodestone, attracting migrant labour from well beyond the territory's borders, originally to build the railway line, later, to develop the port, building wharves and warehouses, then as workers loading iron ore manually, finally as labour for the booming construction trade, an industry whose runaway growth showed no signs of abating. Nothing Government did — and a great deal had been done — seemed to make a dent. The civic need had monstrously outgrown the Government's financial ability to service it.

As an argument it had merit only in description for it was fundamentally specious; Salgaocar had no hesitation in exposing the lie. Two hundred crores of public investment, together with the deployment of hundreds of additional crores of private funds, meant, in turn, tens of crores of annual revenue for Government. It had been realised from

Vasco's blood, sweat and tears. Where had the money gone? Why was the greater part not ploughed back? What of the corruption — an open secret — whereby a handful of MLAs had made crores of illegal, undeclared wealth at the expense of the tax-paying citizen?

He made one last attempt to move through official channels. He wrote once more to the Collector and the Lt. Governor, to Rane and Shaikh Hassan, and he did not spoil the argument by sparing the word. The letters were scathing; no more, no less, than a corrosive indictment of what he believed to be a corrupt and inefficient Government which only took action, if at all, for a single, sordid motive: to keep votes and power at all costs, and to foster within its ranks those of its members — no matter how unethical, cynical or nefarious — who could promote this objective. "You and your colleagues," he wrote to Rane, "will soon reduce Goa to the level of a large bustee." The Government, he charged, had become an indifferent spectator, "a silent onlooker to the most vicious rape of Goa." It was not self-indulgence, or an improper perception of his power, that made him use language of this kind. He honestly felt that where courtesy and reasoned argument had failed so signally, strong words might prompt action. In the event, he was proved wrong. All of his letters went unanswered.

It was time to take the battle into the enemy's camp, to attack where it would hurt most, to go to the people who had voted them into power. He began his campaign on a low key, sending a letter carrying his personal signature to the editors of Navhind Times, Gomantak and Rashtramat. The opening paragraph made his intentions perfectly clear and set the tone for the one-man crusade he was to undertake:

". . . The filth and squalor surrounding what was once the beautiful Baina beach must be seen to be believed. It is a saddening sight to see prostitutes lining up all along the road where housing colonies of the Port Trust, Chowgule's and Salgaocar's and Housing Board flats are located. The entire

stretch of seashore here now reeks of filth . . . a den for gamblers and smugglers."

He made public accusations against the MLAs who had lined their pockets at the expense of the people, going as close to the bone as he could without naming names, mentioning figures, in crores, of illicit wealth accumulated by these alleged servants of the public in the illegal felling and sale of thousands of jungle trees, and the equally criminal collection, at night, and sale of tens of thousands of tons of fine white sand, much in demand for purposes of construction.

He ended on a note of regret. It was a sad state of affairs, he observed, when an industrialist had to take up the cause of the people when duly elected representations sought to suborn the very citizens who had brought them to power. His motives should not be misunderstood. If he led a public denunciation of Government today, he believed that he was only giving legitimate voice to the repressed feelings of tens of thousands of his countrymen. He had no personal axe to grind, but, he promised, he would not give up so long as Government did not mend its ways. The battle lines had been drawn; the die was cast; Vasudev Salgaocar was in the fray for the duration.

All three papers published his letter in full — it ran to well over two thousand words — and without editorial comment. The storm burst the following day. All of Goa was agog; an angry hornet's nest had been well and truly agitated in Goa's political and administrative establishment. The Salgaocar officers were deluged with phone calls, fielded with tact and restraint by Fernandes and Kavlekar. Most of the calls were congratulatory. At last, someone in power had spoken out! Government officials and administrators with whom Salgaocar executives worked closely, day in and day out, phoned by the dozen, perplexed, angry, disturbed and enquiring by turn; business and commercial contracts wanted to know what was going on?

"What," a senior industrialist asked Fernandes, "is the old man up to now?"

Indignant MLAs — and a group of citizens, coached by their political mentors — put together a carefully orchestrated response, and letters, in varying degrees of intensity and tone, began appearing in Goa's press, supporting the Government and condemning Salgaocar's stand. They ranged from a polite "let's not wash our dirty linen in public; the need of the hour is to pull together," and straddled the spectrum to, "What right does a mere industrialist, who's made his millions with Government support, have to turn on the hand that fed him?"

But there was also a wave of support. It poured in from all quarters and was not merely sympathetic, but vociferous in demanding change for the better. It was not as though the facts Salgaocar had put to the people were unknown. He had made common knowledge public. But his voice was one of authority, known and respected throughout the land; a voice which would be heard. Rashtramat was the first paper in Goa to put the full weight of its unqualified support to Salgaocar's cause. In a leading editorial published weeks after Salgaocar's letter to the press, it said,

". . . the people of Goa expect, as their right and due, that the representatives they elect to Government act honestly and sincerely on their behalf. Alas, in large measure, this has not proved so. Personal and selfish motives have often pushed into the background the greatest good of the greatest number. When Mr. Vasudevrao Salgaocar, Goa's most famous industrialist, made his courageous public appeal, our MLAs should have applauded and stood in solid rank behind him. Instead, they have attacked him. In point of fact, Mr. Salgaocar has done yeoman service to the cause of Goa in coming out openly with the truth."

Time was running out, the editorial continued; so was the patience of the people. It did not matter a wit if a few MLAs held public meetings protesting Salgaocar's stand, or

wrote letters to the press, or tried to distort the issues to their constituents. The facts could not be denied. Vasco *was* decaying; the rest of Goa *was* rapidly following suit. Salgaocar's "Save Goa Campaign" was not merely timely, it was critical. He must lead it. All of Goa would flock to his banner.

Now Salgaocar increased the tempo of his attack. He began to write articles, personally signed, on various aspects of Goa's governance; more precisely, the lack of it. The press gave them unusual prominence. "Goan Politics — Strange Notes of Dissension" appeared, two thousand words in length, as the lead article on the editorial page of The Navhind Times; the same paper carried a second article a few weeks later, "Playing the fiddle while Goa burns?" Regular articles carrying his by-line began appearing in the Konkani and Marathi press as well. But he was careful not to appear didactic, strident or grossly unfair. When a dissident movement threatened to topple the Government of the day, he spoke out forcefully against the MLAs in question, pointing out that the Chief Minister Rane, Senior Ministers Hassan and Zantye and many others, were honest, capable men, scrupulously ethical in their personal dealings, hampered by the indecision that so plagued Goa's politicians, and which had its roots deep in the complexities and corruption of the political machinery at ward levels. What was most needed was the will; there were a sufficient number of people of good, stout heart to lead the way. But he was merciless in exposing incidents of bribery and corruption, nepotism and blatant injustice. And he had no hesitation in pointing the finger of accusation at those responsible, no matter how high they stood.

The political base acted predictably, howling for blood, and the High Command felt it advisable to heed the call. At a public meeting held on the occasion of the Sanjay Gandhi week, Shaikh Hassan made a speech in which he openly rapped Salgaocar over the knuckles for interfering in issues

which were none of his concern. "Good," Salgaocar said when he read the press report the next day, "it's getting to the top!" He responded by calling a press Conference where he announced the formation of a "Save Goa Forum" consisting of leading Goans from all disciplines and walks of life. Adding trauma to injury, he then conducted the journalists on a guided tour of Vasco's slum areas, walking fearlessly into hutments and alleys, shouldering through groups of sullen residents whose hostility was barely concealed. He took the press through Vasco's meaner streets, where the evidence of urban decay and neglect could be seen all about them. Deliberately, he led them down a thoroughfare through which they could pass only with difficulty; it was packed wheel-to-wheel with the carts of illegal vendors, and when they came upon open areas used as public latrines, he produced, with slow deliberation, a clean white handkerchief and held it over his mouth and nose!

Goa's press applauded.

There was a flurry of editorials, not just congratulatory or supportive, but urging Goans vehemently to get up and act! Shaikh Hassan was roundly condemned for taking Salgaocar to public task. He was widely quoted as saying, "Every citizen should help the Government in order to achieve progress of the territory." If so, the press asked, why was he attacking Salgaocar for trying to do just that? The more irreverent of the publications had a field day. The Goan, an English Weekly, covered three columns with a picture of the slums at Baina, captioned, "If the Government needs money why doesn't it promote Baina beach as an international tourist resort?"

Clearly, Government felt that the situation was getting out of hand. The groundswell of public opinion was beginning to cause agitation even at Panchayat levels. Subtle pressures were applied to Salgaocar from unexpected quarters. Overnight, or so it seemed, Goan industrialists seemed to fear for their relationship with Government. Salgaocar

received phone calls and visits at his residence from prominent businessmen and mineowners, asking him to tone down his campaign, to meet personally with the cabinet, to sort matters out across the table. If this carried on, it would permanently set Government against Industry, undo decades of patient bridge-building and disrupt cordial, fruitful ties. Shaikh Hassan and Salgaocar met privately, in angry and bitter debate, and parted with their positions totally antagonistic, and their friendship as firm as ever. Even Fernandes and Kavlekar expressed their misgivings, while Shankar, the organisation's public relations manager, was genuinely fearful for his Chairman's physical safety, for Salgaocar had now gone a critical step further and published the names of residents of Vasco who had built illegal constructions in the city and on the beaches. "These were very rough characters," Shankar says, "and I was truly worried about Mr. Salgaocar's safety."

But Salgaocar, "stubborn as a rock" did not budge, the pleas of his friends and associates, the entreaties of his colleagues, not even the threat to his own safety, nothing would move him. Undeterred, he pushed on and when his own sons Shivanand and Dattaraj pleaded with him, for the sake of his organisation and his family, if not his own, to cease and desist, Salgaocar quoted the words of the poet,

"I am only one
Yet I am one!
I cannot do everything
Yet I can do something!"

Then fate made a last farewell gesture to Vasudev Salgaocar. What had, so far, been a storm in a parochial tea cup, a minor brouhaha so far as the nation was concerned, became, overnight, a matter for national attention and scrutiny. To this day, nobody knows how the Bombay press got the story. But one afternoon the Daily, edited by Russy Karanjia of the Blitz, got hold of it. Under five half-columns, top-of-page, the first item in the prestigious section,

"Nation" ran the sub-head, "Authorities plead helplessness as . . ." followed by a banner headline across the page, "India's 2nd largest port decays," illustrated with the mandatory picture of the slums on Baina beach. The most telling point was the absence of Salgaocar's name, though every other aspect of the problem was thoroughly covered, including the intriguing fact that loans of upto twenty lakhs each had been given to certain MLAs, without guarantee or mortgage of assets, by the Saraswat Co-operative Bank. Investigative reporters from the national and financial press picked by the item, descended on Goa, and made their own enquiries. S. S. Mangaokar, a senior journalist of the Economic Times, published a report, four columns across, with the headline, "Gambling dens, hutments mar Goa Govt.'s dreams," and the — by now — notorious photograph of Baina's slums. Salgaocar was quoted at some length, ". . . unless a process of planning for orderly development of this town is initiated and set into motion right now, it would not be in the too distant future that we find Vasco — all of Vasco — reduced to a place of filth and squalor. The town is living with all the problems of a slum area with no solution apparently in sight."

But it was only when The Times of India, in all of its national editions, took up the cause — "One-man crusade against Vasco's degeneration" — and cited Salgaocar, chapter and verse, that the mandarins in Delhi sat up and took notice. Goa? Impossible! This would never do. The trunk call lines began humming. Shaikh Hassan remembers that time well. "It was the final straw," he says. "Salgaocar was right in certain ways, wrong in others. While Vasco and the environment did generate a great deal of revenue for the Government, the rest of Goa hardly measured up, yet our funds had to be distributed evenly where they were most needed. That is democracy. But the pressures from Delhi could not be ignored and it gave me the leverage to put the matter squarely to Rane, "Give me the

money," I said, "and we shall try and do the best we can for Vasco."

In the event, the impossible began to happen. Slowly, virtually imperceptibly, Vasco began to show signs of improvement. Nothing dramatic; nothing happened overnight, but people noticed that the herds of unattended cows, straying along the streets at night, were no longer there. (The Municipality had begun impounding them, and stiffly fining their bhaiyya owners.) Traffic islands made their appearance suddenly, over weekends. The public lighting system was upgraded as dramatically. Fresh paint was applied to bus-stops; roads were cleared of vendors so that pedestrians and traffic could pass unimpeded. But what was far more important, the improvements were maintained, and, over the months, incrementally enhanced.

At last, somebody had taken notice, and taken action. But with the beginnings of Vasco's renaissance began the ultimate decline of Vasudev Salgaocar's health. His physicians who monitored all of his physical parameters with metronomic regularity and efficiency were pessimistic about the prognosis. He suffered from advanced arterio-sclerosis. The blood supply to his left leg was indifferent at best; to the other even worse. Three of the big arteries to the heart were blocked; one almost completely; the others partially. Yet he maintained the relentless pace of his business life, swallowing pills whenever pain took hold of him. Now, in addition to taking pressure readings thrice a day, Dr. Tito also took a cardiograph regularly, much to Salgaocar's displeasure and annoyance. One morning, Salgaocar said, "You must promise me Dr. Tito, that if I happen to be in a bad way, you will not alarm my family. I will take my pills and get better. Give me your word?" Tito, holding back tears, for he had come to love the man, lied, and gave his promise.

Salgaocar's family was less pliable. Now very greatly concerned, they closed ranks against him. They had been corresponding at length with Salgaocar's daughter in the

United States, Sulabha, a doctor, and had sent her the medical reports and latest test results. Sulabha wrote a long and impassioned letter to Salgaocar, pleading with him to travel to the US for an examination. At a family conclave to discuss the issue Salgaocar found himself, for once, in an exclusive minority. His wife and children would brook no argument. He would have to go. With great reluctance, he agreed.

The American cardiologists confirmed what his physicians had known all along. A cardioangiograph in Oklahoma proved beyond doubt that he suffered from triple-artery heart disease. All three arteries feeding the heart were blocked, one almost completely. But there was a good sign. The filling and pumping capacity of the chambers of the heart were first-rate. Salgaocar was a very good candidate for a coronary bypass, with a 99% chance of success and an eight to ten-year prognosis of good health thereafter.

Immediately two days after the angiograph, Salgaocar went to New York to meet some of his old friends, Henry Pole of Associated Metals now fallen on bad times and the legendary Ludwig Jesselson, Chairman of Phillip Brothers whom he has known since the fifties.

He stayed a fortnight, debating the issue with his daughter, Sulabha, his son Dattaraj and then announced that he would return to India to "finish some pending matters" before taking a decision. No amount of persuasion from Dattaraj and Sulabha to stay and get it done with, was of any help. Salgaocar offered no reason: he just had to return to Goa. In Bombay, they met Dr. Datey, who was firmly against the operation. None of his patients, he said, who had taken the bypass, had been relieved of their symptoms. As for the prognosis . . . Datey shrugged. Back in Goa, his physicians, Tito and Naik, were in complete agreement on the bypass. Tito even drew a detailed diagram of Salgaocar's heart, sat him down for an hour, and explained why and how the bypass would work, citing tens of thousands of successful

precedents for the operation, worldwide. But Salgaocar was still not convinced, or pretended not to be. Yet, he gave every semblance of being the cooperative patient. When the eminent American heart specialist Dr. Mathur, deputy to Dr. D. Cooley visited Bombay, the family used all of its influence to seek an appointment and eventually were able to obtain one. Salgaocar agreed to go with Dattaraj and his physicians.

Mathur studied the case history, the reports, the most recent American tests, then conducted a lengthy physical examination himself, at the end of which, he said, "Your heart's in good shape Mr. Salgaocar. In my considered view you're a first-class prospect for a triple-bypass. I would advise you to have the operation without delay."

Salgaocar refused.

JOURNEY'S END

"I WILL not have the operation," he said in the car. "That is final. None of you will ever talk about this coronary bypass again. The topic is over." They asked him to rest in Usha Kiran for a while. He refused, returned to Goa, and plunged into work. Once again he began his gruelling early morning trips to the mines. He spent a whole morning at Surla, from seven till noon, moving in the heat of the afternoon sun, issuing crisp instructions about the operations, the maintenance of the machines, the loading schedules. Ever so often he would order the jeep stopped, get out and clamber over rock to make a detailed inspection of something which had caught his eye. He returned to the guest house for lunch when, without any warning, he began to sweat and the sudden pain, greater this time than he had ever known it, caught his chest in a vice. His breathing became laboured. With difficulty he managed to reach a chair, and place three nitrate pills under his tongue. They worked, as they always did, within minutes, and the crisis passed.

"I will continue the afternoon's programme," he said, brushing aside the objections of the Manager of the mine and his senior executives. But they had already taken the precaution of phoning Fernandes in Vasco. He rushed to the mines with Kavlekar and Dr. Tito. They ignored their Chairman's protestations, bundled him into the car and raced back to Vasco to have him hospitalised. When they reached Mapusa, he ordered the driver to detour. He had, he said, to see a man about some tyres, and now he asserted his authority with angry insistence. Kavlekar thought it best not to provoke an emotional outburst in his state; reluctantly, he agreed. It was eight at night when they got home. Salgaocar refused to go to the hospital. He would, he said, see Dr. Naik at the house. Naik admits to a sense of great depression. He knew the problem: he knew its resolution.

He made a thorough examination, advised complete rest in bed (since Salgaocar still refused to go to hospital) followed by a complete examination at Jaslok Hospital in Bombay. Salgaocar agreed to the check-up, on one condition, his daughter Sukanti should not be told of what had transpired at the mines. "I do not want her to worry," he said. As for the week's rest, there was too much work to do. The next morning he was back at his desk at the office.

Dr. Tito accompanied Salgaocar to Bombay, and when their car reached Usha Kiran, Salgaocar insisted that Tito remain where he was; he would go up, he said, on his own, and send a suitcase down with the driver, which Tito should take back to Goa with him. Tito saw through the transparency of the ploy at once; it was clear that Salgaocar did not want Tito and his daughter to meet; knowing Sukanti, she would extract every last detail of Salgaocar's attack at the mines. The strategy failed. Sukanti, wise to the wiles of her father, sent Salgaocar off to his bedroom, took the driver aside and asked him who had come along with her father from Goa. "Dr. Tito," the driver said. "Get him up at once!" She took Tito into the hall, sat him down, and said, "Now Dr. Tito, you will tell me everything."

It was a question of his Chairman's life and Dr. Tito was not about to dissemble; he told the truth to the last detail, and added that he, personally, and Salgaocar's other physicians in Goa, were of the opinion that his condition was very serious. At that moment, Salgaocar entered the room, took the situation in at a glance, and lost his temper. It was a short; sharp and very violent outburst. Sukanti was close to tears. Salgaocar became silent, said he was sorry, and left the room.

He went through the ritual at Jaslok Hospital the next day with patience and resignation, without saying a word, while the doctors took his cardiograph and pressure, blood and other samples, and they were only able to confirm Dr. Naik's instructions in Goa: he had to cut down on work

and tension, rest, diet. It was the old, weary litany, the prescription for the life of an invalid. Salgaocar did not bother to even pay lip-service to this dismal view of what remained of his life. Only because Sukanti insisted, he stayed with her at Usha Kiran, for ten days or so then returned. It was the last flight he would take from Bombay to Goa.

Sukanti, with her husband, Dr. Kamat, and their children, had planned a vacation in Kashmir, a short break over Diwali. Travel and hotel bookings had been made, friends at Srinagar alerted. But as the day approached, Sukanti became uneasy; she could not put her finger on it — intuition? — premonition? — till today she does not know. She cancelled the Kashmir holiday and took the first available plane to Goa. She arrived on a Friday to find that Fernandes, Dr. Tito and Dr. Naik, had paid Salgaocar a surprise visit, and, much to his disgust, conducted yet another examination, and taken the umpteenth cardiograph. "This is Raj's doing," Salgaocar grumbled, "he's always calling in doctors when I'm feeling fine!"

Kamat stayed behind for a while. He and Sukanti made a large and not very artistic poster, on which they had written down, in big coloured capitals, a series of instructions, each beginning with a huge "R":

REST IN BED
REDUCE SALT
RESTRICT DIET
REMEMBER NOT TO LOSE TEMPER
RELAX WHENEVER YOU CAN

and so on. They scotch-taped the poster in a prominent position on the wall opposite Salgaocar's bed. He was touched, smiled and said to Sukanti, "I must remember."

It was Saturday, October 13.

In all of these past years, he had never been without immediate access to physical and medical assistance — cars, drivers, one or other of the members of his family, his

executives and doctors, his own hospital, the SMRC a short way down the road from his house. Yet, on this of all days, the last of his life, fate intervened.

He woke as usual, early in the morning, had a cup of tea without sugar, and talked to his wife. He looked pale and indisposed and seemed worried. At seven he phoned Fernandes. "I'm not feeling very well today," he said, "I won't be attending office," and reminded him to distribute the departmental mail, to phone if there was an emergency and added, in a voice weak with fatigue, that he might attend the Board Meeting scheduled for the morning. Much to everybody's astonishment, he turned up at the office at 9.30 am, spruce as ever, but he had forgotten to bring his briefcase, the first such lapse in his entire career. He summoned Shivanand and Dattaraj and told them that he would attend the Board Meeting. "Why don't you go home and rest Papa." Shivanand advised, and Salgaocar pointed out with a smile, that the most important item on the agenda concerned the family litigation over a mine (a situation which, now, to his great sadness, led the gossip in Goa's boardrooms). "I have to be there," he said.

He emerged from the Board Meeting shaken and pale; it was eleven-thirty in the morning; he told Fernandes that he was going home to rest, and issued an instruction which he had never given before in his life, "Please do not send me any mail or cheques to sign. I really need to lie down and sleep." He had a light lunch at home, but his physical distress was now more than he could contain. The pain was diffused, he said, in his stomach, aggravated by cramp; and in his head. Dattaraj tried to get hold of Naik, but he was not available; Tito too, by a strange quirk of fate, had gone off to attend a wedding. By a stroke of good fortune he managed to get hold of Dr. S. N. Desai, a cardiologist from Vasco attached to SMRC. He was free, arrived within minutes, took Salgaocar's pressure and cardiograph, examined him generally and found that the previous day's parameters were

unchanged. He decided to enforce at least a few hours of rest by chemical means, gave him a Calmpose injection and left. The tranquilliser took effect instantly, and for a few hours Salgaocar slept.

When he woke at three he was refreshed and his buoyant self again, Master of Ceremonies at tea, which he took with his wife, Sukanti, Shivanand, Dattaraj and Fernandes. "None of you," he declared, "must alter your plans for the day. I am fine, just fine." Dattaraj would leave for the airport at once, for Bombay, where Dipti was due to confine at any time. Shivanand would deputise for his father at the annual puja at the temple at Zambaulim. "Don't forget to bring back some prasad," Salgaocar said. He told Fernandes to send the mail and cheques around no sooner he got back to the office. After a short nap, he went to his study, signed the cheques, read and marked the mail, attended to some guarantees, returned to bed and, with every sign of good ease, read the local and national newspapers.

At seven he had a light dinner — a cup of vegetable soup — and retired to his study; his wife and Sukanti joined him, with her son Sanjeev. The doorbell rang. It was Mohan Kavlekar, anxious about Salgaocar's condition, and vastly relieved to find his Chairman apparently in the best of spirits. Kavlekar, like Epifanio Fernandes, was a de facto member of the family, and able to take liberties with Salgaocar which few others could. Now, in his gentle, affectionate manner, he attempted to explain to Salgaocar the importance of his life to the people around him. "All of us," he said, "are only vehicles for the illumination of the spirit. You have been singularly gifted. The light in you has shown the way to thousands of Goans. You must cherish that light, guard it and protect it. You owe it — not just to yourself or your family — but to all of us, to care for yourself."

Salgaocar smiled, then quickly changed the subject, "Do you know what day it is? he asked, "The feast of Our

Lady of Fatima. I remember going to Fatima once on the 13th of October. It is a long drive from Lisbon and when we arrived, it was dusk and getting darker by the minute. The altar to Our Lady had been built at the end of a deep valley. Millions of people were gathered before it; they held candles up, lit, and waved white handkerchiefs. A whole valley of candlelight, white from the cloths they held. You could not see the people, only this, and their voices raised in holy song. I was told that at night, they held a carnival, as they do in Goa, where they ate, drank and made merry," — he laughed —"That's where Fernandes and his family have gone tonight, to the feast of Our Lady of Fatima."

He seemed so relaxed and so much at peace that Kavlekar was reluctant to talk business. But there were problems on insurance which were pressing and, as briefly as he could, he cleared these with Salgaocar, and left.

Salgaocar wandered into the lounge where Sukanti's son was watching "Oh Zindagi," on television with total absorption. "Why," Salgaocar asked him, "aren't you watching the one-day international? There should be a replay," — glancing at his watch — "right now." Without taking his eyes off the screen, Sanjeev replied, "That's tomorrow." And Salgaocar, commenting wryly on the astuteness of the newest generation, joined Sukanti and his wife in the lounge.

The attack came without warning. One moment he was talking to them; the next he was in agony gasping for breath. They half-carried, half-lifted him to his bed. He had lost consciousness but was breathing and Sukanti rushed to the phone. Frantically, she called the SMRC and managed to get Dr. Desai, but before she could tell him anything, the power went off. She returned to her father's side, groped for the bottle of pills, fumbled for the cap, spilled some on the ground and managed to put a few under his tongue. His breath now came in uneven rasps. Sukanti ran to the front door to call a driver, but both cars had gone. One of the

drivers was out to dinner and she remembered that the other had been sent on an errand.

In utter desperation, she began running down the road to the SMRC Centre. She met Fernandes and Dr. Desai a few metres from the house; in moments they were at Salgaocar's bedside. "Get back to the hospital at once," Desai ordered Fernandes, "and bring the portable resuscitator." But by the time Fernandes returned, it was too late. Vasudev Salgaocar had taken his last breath.

* * * *

Vasudev Salgaocar's body was cremated at 5.30 pm on Sunday, October 14, 1984, on the open ground before the Salgaocar Medical Research Centre.

To this day, no one can explain how word could have spread so quickly. But they came, the people of Goa, in the heat of the noonday sun, singly, in twos, threes, small groups of ten and twenty, then in their hundreds until well over fifteen thousand mourners stood silent and unmoving, paying their last respects. They came from the southern mining villages and the far-flung hamlets of the north, from town and countryside, by road, rail and bullock-cart; fisherman and farmer, priest and politician, bargeman and shopkeeper, friends of his youth and trading years, compatriots of his pioneering ventures into Goa's virgin mining territories, powerful colleagues and associates from his time of fame and fortune, drawn from the very summit of Goa's elite. Never in living memory — not since Bandodkar's death — had so many Goans gathered together in prayerful silence to pay homage to one of their own. To hundreds, with tears in their eyes, it was a death in the family.

Shivanand, in this, the most despairing moment of his young life, blood shaking his heart, sought his father's courage even as he put flame to pyre and destroyed his mortal remains.

EPILOGUE

29th March, 1984.

My dear Vishal,

It gives all of us here great pleasure to send you some of your best photographs. I am sure you will not have a single photograph in your album so beautifully taken and dressed up, with such a kingly posture. Therefore you can make out that you are really Vishal Salgaocar.

You can see on your face that you will be the Chairman, exactly as you have printed on your cards. So, being a Salgaocar, you must come to stay with us during your holidays and give Ayi and all of us your company. Please tell Mummy that as soon as your holidays start, to pack up your bag full of nice clothes and come to Goa.

Swati is asking for you very often and missing your company. Therefore, please hurry up, otherwise she will get married to another charming boy. Please write to me when you are coming and how you are faring in your studies and exams.

I am sending enclosed herewith the photograph of Maharajah Vishal Salgaocar.

With love to you, Reshma, Vijay, Mummy and Daddy,

Yours affectionately,

Encl. as above
Master Vishal Salgaocar,
'Resham', 7/79 Baner Road,
Near Sindhi Housing Society,
Aundh,
Pune-411 007.

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Vasudev M. Salgaocar
Born: 13.05.1916
Died: 13.10.1984
married to
Hirabai
nee Indira Shetye.
on
07.02.1939

- Anil (1940) married to Laxshmi nee Patkar (1948)
  - Sameer (1969)
  - Chandana (1971)
  - Poornima (1972)
  - Arjun (1975)
- Sulabha (1945) married to Dr. Kautilya Mehta (1945)
  - Aneesh (1976)
  - Amit (1978)
- Jyotsna (1948) married to Dilip Bhandarkar (1943)
  - Shilpa (1978)
  - Nikhil (1983)
- Dattaraj (1957) married to Dipti nee Ambani (1961)
  - Vasudev Vikram (1984)
  - Isheta (1987)

- Sukanti (1943) married to Dr. Madhav Kamat (1938)
  - Ashish (1970)
  - Sanjeev (1975)
- Suchan (1946) married to Jawahar Kudchadkar (1945)
  - Reshma (1974)
  - Vishal (1978)
  - Vijay (1981)
- Shivanand (1954) married to Ranjana nee Karnik (1954)
  - Swati (1982)
  - Vivek (1986)