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*Come travel with me!*

*Travelling with me you find what never tires.*

WALT WHITMAN



I GO SOUTH  
*with*  
PRITHVIRAJ  
*and his*  
PRITHVI THEATRES

BY  
PROF. JAI DYAL, M.A.



PRITHVI THEATRES PUBLICATION  
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RUPEES FIVE & ANNAS EIGHT .

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**The Author 1949**

TO  
THE  
THEATRE

“Theatre humanises. India needs it.  
The world needs it.”

N. R



## Acknowledgment

*Mrs. Richards has never seen Prithvi but belonging to his world of Theatre she is deeply interested in him. It was for her sake that I kept a diary on tour — she had expressly asked me to do so that she might share the experience with me and get a first hand impression of Prithvi and his work. There was no idea of publication but one day Prithvi caught me in the act, and asked what I was writing — I owned up and he asked if he might see it — gladly. Gradually, the idea of publication took form and at long last the script found itself type-written in the hands of Norah Richards who was delighted with it and right-away volunteered revision. She has revised it — and more — for in parts she has even re-written it and we have become collaborators on the printed page. If it reads well it is due to her labour of love.*

*I shall be failing in my duty if I do not mention here the names of Shri Dwarka Prasad Sewak of Nalanda & Bharatvarsh Publications and Shri Manik Kapoor who went through the tiring job of proof reading and compilation of this publication. If it looks well it is due to their labour of love.*

9th January, 1950.

J. D.



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## FOREWORD

I have made bold to try and set down my impressions of Prithviraj, the actor and his great talent. It is not only a privilege and a pleasure but a matter of pride for me — a privilege because he is a really great actor, a pleasure because he is an old friend, a matter of pride, because he happens to be an old pupil of mine and my favourite in his college days. Time has travelled and years have passed. His affection has known no ebb. It has become deeper and has mellowed. These impressions of mine may appear weak and faint. I admit that there are many men — and may be, ladies, too, and they, perhaps, in larger number, who are better qualified than myself to describe how he affects them, takes them along with him, carries them off their feet, and makes them his strings to play his feelings and emotions upon, but none could be more deeply affected by his acting than myself. I am under his spell.

It was in 1922 and at Peshawar that a friend brought his son (a fresh Matriculate) with him to consult me regarding his further studies. That boy was Prithviraj Kapoor. There was something in his chubby handsome face that drew me towards him. It was a case of a liking at first sight. The lad was keen on taking up Science and we had no Science classes at our college. I accompanied him to get him admitted to the Islamia College, rather reluctantly, hoping all the time that better counsels would prevail and that the lad would not insist upon going in for Science. I encouraged the boy to take the arts line in his studies and pointed out that it is the Arts and not Science that minister to the mind and that warm the heart. Where



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Science *knows*, Art *feels*. The encouragement went home. Arts won and Science lost. By what a frail thread does our destiny hang? He might have been an engineer by now and what a loss for the theatre! On a watershed what determines the fate of a falling drop of rain — a faint breeze and lo! destination of a rain-drop may change from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal. He was wavering between Edwards College and Islamia College. Who can say what his career would have been if he had joined the latter? And yet I wanted him to join the former simply because I liked him, though we had met for less than half an hour. I was in charge of the College Dramatic Society and here in him was a good material. Why should I lose it? Could it be that my will power had drawn him to our College? He was on the rolls of our College now. I did not let the grass grow under my feet for I straightaway yoked him for dramatics. We had a triple bill—three One-Act plays: *Dina Ki Barat* — an original Punjabi play by R. L. Sahni, a promising young writer of plays, *Spreading the News* by Lady Gregory, and *Riders to the Sea* by Synge. They were ready for public performance in a month's time. Rehearsals are always a very pleasant time — they are a headache but the Director positively enjoys such headaches. And Prithi (our pet name for him) acquitted himself well. Had he been born a girl, his face would have been his fortune. He had a personality, too. I utilised his face and figure by making him play a lady's role on the stage. He won spontaneous cheers and the College wide praise, in his first performance. He had a natural bent for the stage. He became the Secretary of the College Amateur Dramatic Club and nothing kept him more pleasantly occupied than rehearsing and preparing for the plays. He became my right hand man — I should say right hand boy — for he was

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then but fifteen, and I wonder if our Society could have been so popular with the elite of Peshawar without him. He had in him what an actor needed — personality and a good stage presence, but above all undoubted genius for acting. He forgot himself in the person that he was impersonating. He left Prithvi behind him in the green room. He had become Dina himself or Mrs. Fallon or Norah. He was successful time after time in every part he played. He was an all-rounder. If he felt at home on the stage, he was no less so on the soccer and hockey fields and the tennis lawn. Tennis was his forte. The Chief Commissioner, Col. Keen, and his daughter enjoyed playing tennis with him and invited him many a time to Government House. Prithvi has a group photo of the Champions of the Col. W. J. Keen Tennis Challenge Cup, who represented Edwards College that year. The game was highly exciting. It was two sets all and the final set was being played. Prithvi's partner became nervous. But Prithvi rose to the occasion and played up. By sheer grit he won the set. He loves playing against odds and he enjoys putting up the last ounce of fight that is in him. I am reminded of his wedding day. That very afternoon we were playing the University Football match against the Islamia College. Prithvi was one of the main props of the Eleven. He had a valid excuse for keeping away — but he would not have been Prithvi if he had done so. Half an hour before time we see him dashing along in his car, clad in Frontier bridegroom's clothes — coloured Bokhara Silk Salwar and Shirt — both feminine garments, his pink turban showing his happy role. Such incidents show the man. Here was a person who would never let any one down. We lost the match but in Prithvi we found a man. Time is always ticking and one cannot put one's finger on the spokes of its wheel to stay it from revolving. Even-

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tually he became a graduate and the time for parting drew near. We had become intimate, thus the wrench was painful when saying good-bye. I am constant in friendship. So far I have lost no friend. I knew that Prithvi would stand the test of time. The year 1927 carried me off to Dharmsala, and took Prithvi to the Law College, Lahore. Frontier casts its spell on all who have lived there. Its water is sweet and its air invigorates. The Frontier grips you. Peshawar is the nerve-centre of N.-W.F.P. Peshawar with its nights of fond delights is a dream of the past! Did Peshawar ever exist? And was I ever there?

Well, the seed of Dramatic art had germinated in Prithvi. He thought of nothing else but acting and dreamed of nothing else but stage or screen. He came of a very respectable family of the Frontier who had also their roots at Samundri in Lyallpur district of the Punjab; and the top and upper middle classes looked askance the stage or screen as a profession. It was a case of losing caste if respectability dared to appear on the stage. Aye, there was the rub. He does not bother very much about what Mrs. Grundy would say. But his own people — how would they take it? He hesitated to throw a feeler, for he knew that his proposal would be opposed and ridiculed. It took him a year to make up his mind. Law was too uninspiring a thing for him. "To be or not to be" — that was the question for Prithvi. Luckily he did not procrastinate. Blow breeze, blow wind, he must take the leap. He was prepared to take his chance. I think it was in the winter of 1927 that we were together at Dharm-sala for a short space of time. We had a most enjoyable holiday. He talked to me what he had been thinking — taking up acting as a profession. I encouraged him in this idea and with what alacrity did he accept my encouragement! The die was cast. The so-called respectability lost

and the better side — Art — won. After a stiff struggle the Theatre claimed him — for its very own.

Art is a hard taskmaster and success is not easily won. If it is easily come by, then it is easily lost. For Prithvi it was an uphill climb — fatiguing and wearisome, but his courage never failed him. He fought — and fought hard — but he won the battle. The character that he had built for himself in his college days, stood him in good stead. He was one of those students who would never say die. He held with Browning that we sleep to wake, and fall to rise. His success was not a windfall — he plucked it with his own hands. When he was touring in Anderson's Theatrical Company in India, many a time he had to go short of food, living mainly on parched gram. But his ardour was not damped, nor did his enthusiasm slacken. His success was not of mushroom growth. Behind the acting of a great actor is a long succession of laborious days and sleepless nights.

Seven long years elapsed before my eyes fell on Prithvi's face again. It was in 1935 that I came from Jhang to meet Prithvi at Lahore. I had come for the week-end only. Two days, and even then I only saw him twice at a two hours' stretch. And how reveal oneself in four short hours? We had hardly gone beyond the formalities of 'how do you do' when we must part. Had I lost Prithvi? We had no time to thaw and we had had no chance — the gulf of seven years was not bridged.

Fourteen years role by. Separation may be the death-knell of friendship. Out of sight, out of mind. A few of these years were short, many of them were long — but in the last two years there was eternity. Freedom had come but at what a cost? The volcano was in eruption and moulten lava flowed in a scalding stream of communalism. Prithvi had felt it coming and raised his voice

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in the theatre. But who heard? It was a voice in the wilderness. Nevertheless, the voice was raised in one play after the other. The call was for unity. We must iron out our differences and understand each other. So far he has five plays in his repertory — four dealing with one aspect or the other of the country's need. He has not limited his activity to Bombay, but has toured far afield. C.P., U.P., Delhi, Rajasthan and the Deccan have welcomed him with crowded houses. I had been longing to see these plays. As if Prithvi had felt my yearning, there came an invitation — gladly accepted. The South was a far cry from Dharmasala, yet love can bridge any distance. Before I knew where I was, Prithvi was in my arms at Hyderabad (Deccan) on the 5th of June 1949. The mist of intervening years had lifted. We might have stepped out of the year 1927. In an instant we were at ease. Friends had met.

Success and fame are dangerous concomitants of life. More lives are spoiled by success than by failure. The former often turns our heads while the later is a stimulus to greater effort. Prithvi's success as an actor has not harmed him as a man. On the other hand he remains courteous and humane. He has broad sympathy for all — both high and low, both big and small, both clown and villain — for laughter and for tears. He makes no distinction of caste and creed, of status nor of rank. Once he has given you his hand, it will never be withdrawn; it will help and support you as best as it can. He does not broadcast the shortcomings of others — he glosses them over. Rather does he magnify their good points.

He is generous to a fault having no money sense. It flows like water in a running brook, for the necessities of his art or the entertainment of his friends. It flows in a perpetual stream for the relief of those less fortunate than

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himself and of those who have suffered from the Partition and their number is legion. After every show he spreads his *Jholi* before the people who come to see his plays. He appeals to them in the name of humanity for voluntary donations which range from a few annas to quite big sums. Once a generous and appreciative donor put in the *Jholi* a diamond ring, expressly wishing that Prithvi should keep the ring. Prithvi believes that whatever is put in the *Jholi* belongs to the *Jholi*, so he returned the ring. That gentleman sent next day a sum of five thousand rupees. He has collected huge sums of money (aggregating to three lakhs and more!) for the Bengal (Noakhali) sufferers, the Bihar sufferers, and for the I.N.A. Since partition he has been extending a helping hand to the refugees, whose demands are far greater than his *Jholis* can collect. He himself lives a simple life — khaddar is his usual wear. Most of his earnings have gone the way of charity to one person or the other. And yet his left hand does not know what his right has given.

Drama is an old love of mine. I have acted and directed on the College stage. All along I have been dreaming of an Indian theatre — a theatre that will record the pulse-beats of the people of the country. I had hoped that an actor-manger would appear who would bring about a revolution in the minds of men by his plays and his acting, who would hold the stage to the people as a mirror in which to behold themselves, one who would have the courage to say to the people: "This is YOU!" This was my dream. It has found fulfilment in Prithvi.

Woodlands,  
ANDRETTA  
8th December 1949.

JAI DAYAL



## FOREWORD

“You shall not heap up what is called riches...  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or  
achieve”.

*Walt Whitman*

Jai Dyal is a wanderer, a vagabond and a dramatics enthusiast, as what more natural than that he should have accepted with alacrity the invitation of Prithviraj Kapoor, his erstwhile pupil at Edwards College, Peshawar, to join his theatrical troupe on tour. The Diary speaks for itself and puts before us a vivid picture of Prithvi whom I have never met nor even seen act and not being a film-goer neither have I seen him on the screen. Jai Dyal, however, brings Prithvi to my very door.

Letter-writing and diary-writing have their fascinating place in literature, but whether literary or not they are a vivid means of self-revelation and of capturing the fleeting day. Jai Dyal is not a diary writer by habit but when he went on tour I asked him to form the habit and keep a diary so that I could eventually share his experiences on tour with Prithvijji. During his absence on tour I received but two miserable post-cards that conveyed nothing whatsoever, not even that he was writing a diary, so I felt very much *out* of it when I had wanted to be very much *in* it.

I am deeply interested in Prithviraj Kapoor, a theatre man in a theatreless land. Fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kin and I too am that sort of ‘man’



in a land where is no Theatre. Prithvi is a theatre architect but the building of an actual theatre of bricks and mortar is beyond his financial resources. He earns quick and good money on the Screen to spend it as quickly on the Theatre. He spends also in general all-round benefactions, lavishly. Having the happy-go-lucky temperament of the vagabond actor he snaps his fingers at the bare idea of saving up. I dare venture that his bank balance is low but where the 'Theatre not built with hands' is concerned I dare swear his bank balance is high. It is this intangible theatre that emerges from the diary of Jai Dyal and that will emerge from the life of Prithviraj whether or not he is ever the happy possessor of a material theatre of his own.

Very many years ago, when Jai Dyal was posted at Dharamsala in the Kangra Valley, he was my 'near neighbour' for then I lived in a cottage at Banuri right on the motor road, three miles from Palampur which is another nineteen by bridle track to Dharamsala. For Jai Dyal I was a 'week-end cottage' so I saw a good deal of him. The Mandi Hydro-Electric Scheme was under construction at that time, with which I had close personal ties. Together Jai Dyal and I planned a strolling players' tour to the Hydro-Electric area and to Mandi proper. We brought it off with flying colours. It was an experience that deserved literary record. We collaborated in a special topical prologue for it, and our first show\* was given at Brot Headworks under the eager patronage of Major R. N. Aylward, R.E. the uncrowned king of Brot, to be followed next day by the unforgettable hillside show on the other side of the

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\* The programme was of two one-act plays in Punjabi *Dulhan*, by T. C. Nada and *Dina ki Barat*, by R. L. Sahni.

Hill near the mid-way halt and change of cable of the Haulage Way — With Dorofief the H.E. Russian engineer of the audit section of the tunnel, as an enthusiastic and helpful supporter. At Jogindernagar we played at the Club House on a proper stage. Then we went on to Mandi where we gave a 'court' performance in the Durbar Hall to which the public were invited. As we passed through Jogindernagar on our way back to Banuri, we played at Sakroti, the clerks' colony, by special request. At Banuri we gave a wind-up village show. The actors were Jai Dyal's college students and members of his dramatic team. They had had a rare experience and so had Jai Dyal and I.

Much water has flowed under the bridge since those happy carefree days. Jai Dyal became posted at Jhang and then to Multan. In the crack-up of 1947 he, like so many other professors, had no academic home at all. Fortunately his domestic home was established at Woodlands Estate as a disciple in Drama of myself. Then, his final academic post before retirement was once more at Dharamsala. Characteristically he spent his leave before retirement on tour with his old pupil and friend Prithviraj Kapoor. It is mainly his wanderlust that took him to the South and his affection for Prithvi plus the desire to see what sort of man he had become. He found and discovered another Prithvi than the one had known — a larger Prithvi both in size and reputation. His Prithvi was now a big man in his own sphere and Jai Dyal unresisting got drawn into his theatrical net.

Not long after his return to Woodlands he triumphantly presented me with a copy of his diary that he had left behind in Bombay to be typed. I felt that it was worthy of publication so we spent every

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possible moment until yesterday in pulling it together. Today it goes off to Bombay in search of a publisher.

There is no need for me to say more than that I am a happy woman who can now say with fervour "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace..."

The Hermitage  
Woodlands  
(Andretta, Kangra)  
11th January 1950.

NORAH RICHARDS

I GO SOUTH  
WITH  
PRITHVIRAJ  
AND HIS  
PRITHVI THEATRES  
FOREWORD





**The great profile**



28th May 1949 - Dharmsala - Kangra Valley

Prithvi and the South are calling. Prithvi is on tour with his troupe — wants me to join them at Hyderabad (Deccan). Am I willing? Am I not? Meanwhile, the students here are overwhelming me with farewell parties — they are so sentimental, so young, so unsophisticated, but their affection does me good... Imperceptibly have two decades passed and it is almost a shock to find myself at the open door of retirement. Superannuation! Lucky at this moment or I could not have responded to the call of Prithvi and the South. I am a Punjabi and a Frontier man and when I become also a man of the South, I shall proudly call myself an Indian. Superannuation! What will it feel like? With a lifetime of past experience one cannot be at a loose end for ideas nor for work. To young man their future; to us, middle aged, our retirement — it may be to a backwater, but at least there would be peace and contentment. Peace and contentment? No — not for my feet that have the wander-lust — a *Chakkar* in them, as an astrologer once told me. So far they have taken me to the Himalayan verdant valleys and bleak heights and now they would take me to the soft South. I come, my Prithvi — today I leave for Hoshiarpur on my glad way to you.



## I GO SOUTH

*May 29 - Hoshiarpur*

Not a bit hot — rain threatens — they have had a drizzle — met several friends.

*May 31 - Simla*

Delightfully cool — but what a tedious journey.

*June 2-3 - Delhi*

Friends to meet me at the station. N. L. let me use his car for two days, so good of him. Met M. C. K. late of Peshawar on the afternoon of the 2nd — not so bright and strong as before. “J. D.” he said, “I have no regrets” — his looks belied him — he was brooding over the past — sorry he had lost his beautiful summer-house at Murree — he had watched it as it was being built and he had made a nice job of it. “When an enemy strikes it is at that which you most love and value”... Will sanity between Muslim and Hindu ever return? — a hard question to answer. That they will forget and forgive is wishful thinking. Rivers of blood flow between them and such rivers are hard to cross.

*June 5 - Hyderabad (Deccan)*

Prithvi at the station — affectionate as ever — gone a bit stout, but the same old Prithvi in smile, laughter and disposition ... We sat and chatted. Evidently he has spoken of me in flattering terms to all his hosts. He had had a good programme yesterday — pity I missed it. He took me to the rock palace of Nawab Mehdi Yar Jung — a delightful person — he and his Begum so hospitable, and they and their two sons so courteous. The Begum and her daughter-in-law (full of wit and charm) did the honours of the table — tables that were groaning under their load of dainties. Mangoes most delicious — enjoyed them greatly. The Nawab has had some rooms hewn out of the rock and given others a rock like appearance in structure and colour. I admire the brain behind it. Imagine — a swimming pool overhead — longed for a swim in it. The Nawab asked me to stay for some days. I should have loved to but now I am one of Prithvi's troupe and must move on with them. The Nawab told me that the invitation would stand and that I could come any time that suited me. It was so kind of him and I am sure some day I shall avail myself of the welcome that awaits me there. The visit to Hyderabad has been short and sweet. Hyderabad! The Razakars, Police action and all — come and gone. The people are now leading a

## I GO SOUTH

normal life — roads good, houses good and the city hums with activity.

*June 6 — In the train on way to Bangalore*

Lovely scenery though the hills are dwarfish — they become one in an undulating plain. The land is rocky — big stones with small ones resting on them as if superhuman giants had been at play, placing stone upon stone at a game of house-building as little human children do in making mud huts and cattle sheds. At a great distance a towering statue appears but when the train draws us nearer, it turns out to be but one stone balanced on a much bigger one. The soil is both red and dark — very fertile. Water is easily drawn out from the sub soil and one sees many of such kaccha wells. Paddy, sugarcane, jawar, bajra and millet are the main crops grown — while bananas, mangoes and papita are the common fruit — mangoes delicious and of so many kinds. And yet there is talk of food scarcity in Madras — possibly because more fruit is grown there than food grains. Groves of palm dot and beautify the plains. These palms do not yield dates but a more precious thing called *tári* that provides cups that cheer as well as inebriate. It is a pleasure to look out from both sides of the train — for all around is beautiful — Nature

## WITH PRITHVIRAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

mixes her colours well and monsoon clouds are a sight to behold. The rain never pours in these parts — it only drizzles. The clouds come and they go. We reached Bangalore at 8.30 P.M.

### *June 7 - Bangalore*

A beautiful city — asphalted roads, most of them avenues of dark green waving trees that lead away from the bazars that are extensive and wide. We went the round — much cloth and so many Bangalore saris. Prithvi's father, Dewan Bashesar Nath Kapur, is travelling with us. He is good company and practises on his servant his full Frontier vocabulary in Pushtu. I shall see *Deewar* to-night.

### *June 8 - Was thrilled by it*

The show was timed to start at 6.30 P.M., but there was a hitch — a fuse, man-made or accidental? Who can say? The audience began to whistle and cat calls echoed in the Hall. Prithvi appeared before the curtain and spoke to them. He has become quite a good speaker. He told them of the difficult conditions under which he had to work — strange place, strange language,

## I GO SOUTH

no proper theatre and so on. He has the knack of humouring his audience both by talking down to them and talking up to them — above their heads. In this he resembles our Jawaharlal Nehru, who, when worked up by an excited crowd, wrestles with them. Prithvi soon won the first round — cat calls ceased and they hung upon his words. He appealed, mollified, rebuked — both in English and Hindustani. His voice became hoarse, and why not? Nevertheless, he should spare his voice — he uses it too much. Also, he smokes too much. In the interest of us all and of Art and of the Theatre he should moderate both his speech making and his smoke. He has set himself a Herculean task to create Theatre in India. In our days together at Peshawar at College drama who could imagine that we were laying the foundation of a professional actor's career? What Florence Nightingale did for hospitals and nursing, Prithvi is doing for theatres and acting. In spite of the maledictions and the forbidding attitude of his circumstances he set off for Bombay to try his luck as a professional actor — a profession heartily disapproved of by society of that day. Prithvi has a will of iron.

Although Bangalore is quite two thousand miles from Peshawar and although 27 years bridge the gulf between today and 1922, my thoughts can span both distance and time. I re-live those years of joy — when I was yet young and Prithvi but a stripling. Prithvi is

## WITH PRITHVI RAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

the same old Prithvi and, I hope, I am the same old Jai Dyal. We were hand in hand then, we are hand in hand now. In the worldly vortex of power and of money-getting few keep their feet but Prithvi stands, a rock of granite, resistant to the temptations that beset him. I am watching his conduct and scanning his way of life. For him money in itself is no lure, it is but the precious metal essential for the development of dramatic art and Indian Theatre. There are no pompous nor dictatorial airs about Prithvi. He does not make his superiority felt. He is superior-head and shoulders above the average in most things. He is an ideal communist or let us say socialist, since the Indian communist earned a bad name and so is in bad odour just now. Nothing, however, can obliterate his communistic principles. Prithvi feeds on the fare of his actors. To him his troupe is community — a one-world. He goes to the refectory and shares pot-luck with them. Last night, after the show (1.30 A.M.) we had joined the second batch for supper with well-filled *thals* before us, ready to break our long fast — no heavy feeding in Prithvi's company before the play. A clerk was sitting hungry-eyed without a *thal* before him. Prithvi had his own *thal* taken and placed before him — to the clerk's embarrassment. It is such simple acts as these that bring him the devotion and love of his own theatre people. They accept him and he accepts them. He has his rivalling enemies — who has

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not? Success must pay its penalties. What matters? With his wife, a ministering angel, beside him, and around him the protective circle of his devoted and loyal players, he can snap his fingers at the outside world.

Fourteen long years since I last saw Prithvi — he has four children, the eldest a boy Raj (a famous film star, and happy husband and father), then comes another boy, Shami, then a girl, Uma, and the youngest Shashi is 11 years old — a boy, sweet and chubby, like his father in appearance, also in talk and voice. The girl, too, has taken after him, but Shami is his mother's son, except in height — for he is tall but both are slim. Mrs. Prithvi is the unseen support of Prithvi's throne. Prithvi is idolized by his actors — a devoted band. He is all attentive to them and affectionate — feeds them as he would his own home guests — his hospitality is of Frontier fashion — of his old Frontier home. He has a good set of actresses amongst whom are Begum Uzra Hameed and Pushpa.

Mrs. Prithvi accompanies him on his tours alleviating the sting of venomous tongues and sharing the players' vagabondage. One wonders how her frail being withstands the jostling of journeys and the happy-go-lucky life of the strolling player. Last night seated in her small chair, in the wings she was alert for any emergency. This frail creature is Prithvi's mainstay. Actors have appeared on the silver screen and gone the way of

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meteors — Prithvi has appeared on the solid stage with constant, and invisible support behind the scenes. He has come to stay. The strain for Mrs. Prithvi must be great — long may she be spared to bear it with fortitude and help to keep the Prithvi's flag flying.

\* \* \* \*

### *The Plays*

So far the Prithviraj repertory consists of four plays — *Deewar*, *Pathan*, *Ghaddaar* and *Shakuntala*. (He has recently added one more — *Ahooti* of which more anon. December — 1949).

### *Deewar*

'Deewar' is a play with a purpose in three acts. The purpose was to prevent Partition. In this it failed but made good as a popular success. Wherever it is played it draws big houses and audiences are deeply moved. It is nearing the completion of its 450th performance. *Deewar* means wall. The point is to break down this wall of hatred, misunderstandings, and calumnies that keep apart brothers, neighbours and communities. In this play the dangerous prospect of disintegration looms large. Prithvi broke new ground in



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Theatre by being courageously contemporary. He anticipated the volcano that burst into eruption in Partition days, both before and after the fatal August the 15th. *Deewar* was prophetic of the inconceivable communal holocaust in store for his Motherland. The curtain falls on a chorus, the refrain of which is "*Ham ek the, ham ek hain, ham ek rahenge.*" (*We were one, we are one, and we shall remain one*).

### *Pathan*

The term Pathan is not understood by the people living in parts of India distant from the N.-W. F. P. To them a Pathan is invariably a Muslim, most probably an armed chaukidar (as in the South) or a grasping money-lender (as in the East) — forbidding types. Whereas, as a matter of fact, a Pathan is simply one born and bred on the Frontier and the trans-border. Prithvi having been born and bred on the Frontier considers himself a Pathan, though he belongs to a Hindu family. In this play he shows that Hindus and Muslims can be friends if they are not religious fanatics, and are left alone by power-seeking politicians. It is a tale of heroic friendship between two families — one Muslim and the other Hindu, on the trans-border. Therein the Muslim Khan deliberately sacrifices the life of his only son so that the life of the

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son of his erstwhile Hindu Dewan (killed in a tribal feud) may be saved. Neighbourly ties on the Frontier are as strong as bonds of brotherhood.

### *Ghaddaar*

'*Ghaddaar*' means traitor. This is a political chronological play in four acts. The time of the play covers the years from 1921 to 1947. It was during these years that the Muslim League was on the war path. The play depicts Muslim society in the U.P. which was both communal and national — the Muslim Leaguers considerably outnumbered the nationalists. A forceful Indian nationalist in the play falls victim for a time to Muslim League mentality. Eventually he wavers and returns to his former loyalties to India as a whole, but is killed by his co-religionists as a traitor to their cause.

### *Shakuntala*

'*Shakuntala*' as played by Prithvi Theatres is a modern version of the classic play of Kalidas. Its beauty has been preserved, but Prithvi has made extensive alterations and additions to make it playable. The form of the classic is dramatic but not the technique. The theme

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is the familiar love story of King Dushyant and Shakuntala — a simple hermitage maid. Even as written by Kalidas centuries ago, the play was modern in tendency, dealing with humans rather than with gods. It is this human quality that has made it so compelling. Kalidas did for Indian Drama what Euripedes did for the Greek — he humanised it. There have been other modern versions of the play but that of Prithvi makes a good stage-play, popular in its appeal.

Prithviraj, the film actor, started his theatrical career by putting on this play. It was an auspicious beginning, and has led him from success to success.

### *June 17 - Bangalore*

Bangalore is a Pensioners' Paradise, expanding horizontally in widespread spacious plain. There is no overcrowding in this garden city with its area of about 25 square miles. A pensioner needs a sense of privacy in his retired existence however friendly and sociable he may be in his off hours which are now his life. They do not begin to live until they are 'on the shelf.'

The Punjabi Association of Bangalore gave Prithvi a grand tea party. He was in great demand. Bangalore has many 'associations'. She also has a lively press — journalists and writers beset him. His playing

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of Sikander on the silver screen had popularised him. He is Greek in appearance and much admired for his fine features, his strong physique and his beautiful body. May he never grow any stouter!

The Kanada Literary Parishad put up a show for him in which a girl of fifteen or so danced most beautifully — what has not the future in store for her? Even now she has charm — her movements were gentle and artless. Somehow, she made me think of Wordsworth's Solitary Reaper:

“The music in my heart I bore  
Long after it was heard no more”.

This young girl only danced but I still see her tripping on the stage. One of the items on the show was the speech of a journalist and play writer (A. N. K.). He spoke of great actors of those parts — Vardhacharya, and Raghvacharya, also of Mohammed Pir “one who had taught us how to speak our mother-tongue”. Bangalore has a romantic atmosphere conducive to the development of Drama. It can boast of three theatres in which the shows from the Mahabharata and Ramayana are frequently, almost exclusively played. They play in Kanarese. Prithvi's plays are in Hindustani — a language not intelligible to the main community of Bangalore and yet the community flock to see the plays, evincing their love of theatre.

It is difficult to be an early riser in Bangalore — a

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lotus land! You do not feel like leaving your bed at all. Gentle and cool breezes lull you to sleep and you open your eyes to close them again. Perhaps that is why offices and schools do not open until 11 A.M. Green grass spreads everywhere — broken only by serpentine roads. Rain in Bangalore is gentle, so it is never muddy. The expansive Cubban Park is beautiful and in its centre plays a fountain that in the evenings for a couple of hours is irradiated by coloured lights — a spectacle that draws a large gathering of the people, among whom are hawkers and ice cream vendors. When the breeze blows, the spray that reaches you does not wet you — it is delightfully cooling.

Two miles away from Cubban Park there is Lal Bagh with its spreading banyan and its peepal trees, its glades and its avenues — a large pond too, upon which rears the proud head of the lotus. Then the ground-grown flowers — motia, tube rose and jassamine! Many flock to this lovely urban 'wood' in the evenings.

Garlands! Prithvi is loaded with them. Can there be a more lovely gift? The giver gives with gracious ease and the recipient receives in a passive glow of pleasure. These floral offerings are not only for the hero Prithvi but for the heroic cause that is his. The Prithvi Theatre is a pioneer in our theatreless land, and when there are many such a National Theatre will rise in majesty on the Indian horizon where supremely well-acted and well-

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put-on good plays will reveal the genius of India — a contribution to World Theatre.

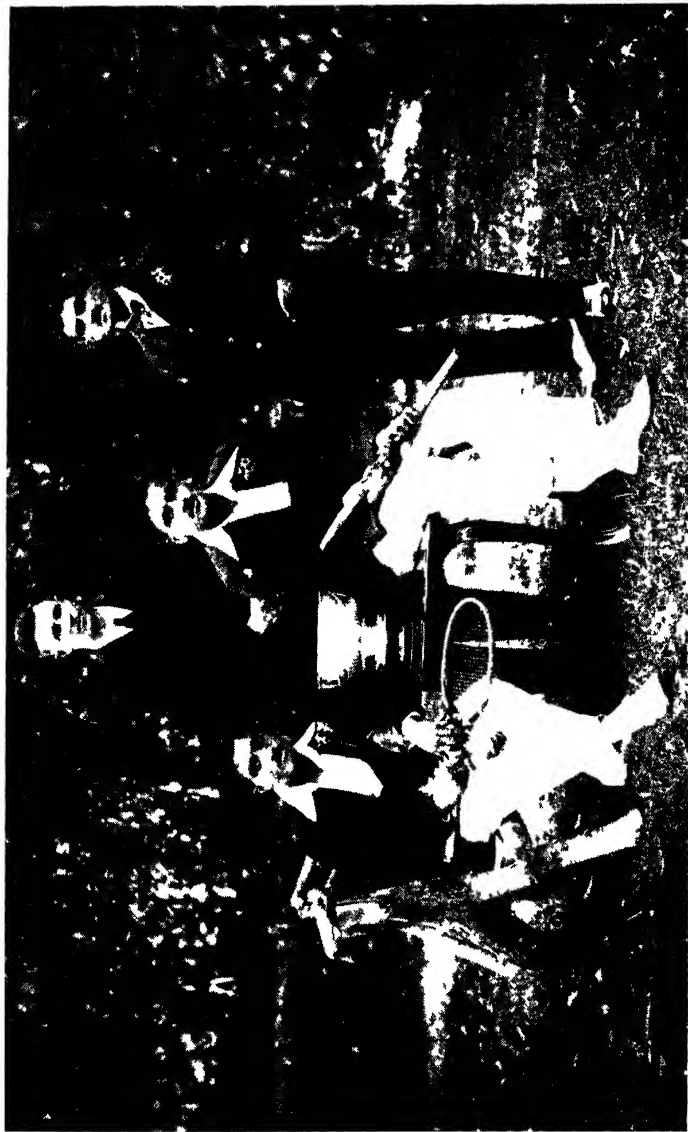
In the Punjabi Association of Bangalore is a live wire — one H. L. Kapur, of the Imperial Tobacco Agency in the Russel Market, a Bangalore domicile who hails from Jhelum — father of 8 sons and 3 daughters of whom he makes a dramatic team. He was friendly — drove me to his home and thence to the West End Hotel to attend a Rotary meeting — One Major Oakley spoke on seisal fibre. The talk was good but the audience poor. Then to his home again where I had a spot of dinner — having made a heavy tea — then he dropped me at the State Cinema to see *Shaheed* — produced by an old Multan student of mine to whom in 1941 I had given a chit to Prithvi who took him on. The picture is quite good — a sentimental one — it reviews recent political history in the same way as does *Deewar*. The appeal is patriotic and has a bias for Ahmisa — shows various milestones on the march to freedom. The film has scored a hit — a political one. The public being in a political mood have eagerly responded. I met another young man Nikam — a Hindu dealer in ivory and sandalwood products — and his friend (Mirza), a nationalist Muslim who asked if he might garland Prithvi on the occasion of his last performance in Bangalore. He did so. These young men are good friends — the Muslim perhaps has the greater capacity for friendship ... There is a big

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Public Library, well stocked on all subjects, but not many new books — a masonic Lodge, too. Enjoyed heartily my happy visit (of twelve days) to Bangalore and its suburbs. It is such places that create an urge in you to live on. In such environment one can sing lustily Hey! nonny no! A man is a fool that wants to die.

*June 21 - Mysore*

This is a city of lights, of palaces and broad roadways. We arrived last evening at 8 P.M. Our first sight as we emerged from the train was a long line of lights on the top of a hill — it looked like a new constellation of stars. They were the lights of both Temple and Palace — the former is dedicated to the goddess Chaumundi of whom the Maharaja is an ardent devotee. It is situated on a hill (called Chaumundi Hill) about 800 ft. high and a thousand steps lead up to it or, if not on foot, the ascent can be made by car — zigzagging for nine miles at an easy gradient. How religion has dominated the mind of man and how in India priest and raja have conspired in unholy alliance to keep man down — to keep him lowly and humble. The Palace shelters and preserves the Temple and the Temple does the same to the Palace — so the all-mighty Chariot of 'Church and State' rolls on and many pedestrians on their common highway.



Hans, Principal Noble, Prithvi & Author — Edward's College ---Peshawar 1927





are crushed under its Juggernaut wheels. Such is life — but, need it be? Prithivi's plays say *no* — though he has not been explicit about the temple — or the Mosque. His reactions to 'Church and State' are shown in his detestation of communalism and his passionate plea for Unity — for the divine right of Humanism.

The Maharaja does his *parkarma* (round) morning and evening and honours the presiding deity who in her turn, blesses him and bestows upon him the divine right of Kingship ... The Temple is of the old Hindu Type with lots of gods and goddesses carved in stone and it rises higher and higher, some eighty feet, till it ends in a pinnacle from which shines a red light as it does from the pinnacle of the Palace. Palace and Temple have equal status, and the temple from the hill top and the residential Palace, towering above the City dwellings, shine red — above the heads of the populace.

The Palace (Shish Mahal) on the hill commands a grand view of the lights of the Town below. The Milky Way appears to have come down from the high heavens and alighted upon the Earth.

“Like a glow-worm golden  
In a dell of dew —  
Scattering unbeholden  
Its aerial hue”.

So Shelley.

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Simla with its myriad lights and even Nainital's many lights reflected in its Lake shrink in comparison. Thousands of Earth-stars twinkle — clusters of them, lines of them and still further off they jumble together and look faint. Time will surely come when a Star — the Star — the Star of Humanity will radiate from an unseen pinnacle — higher than the pinnacles of the Temple and the Palace — beyond them far beyond — in which Temple and Palace will be no more. Each country upon which it shines will owe allegiance to itself alone though it will be an integral part of the great whole — the whole that is Mother Earth.

There is a legend of the goddess of the sky-high temple of Chaumundi that is reminiscent of the Greek fable where dragon's teeth sown would result in a harvest of fully armed fighters. Before the demon is killed, his blood must not redden the ground, otherwise his every drop of blood would result in the birth of a thousand demons. The goddess Chaumundi covered the whole earth with her tongue — thus to lick drops of blood that may drop anywhere. Legends are much the same the wide world over — evidence of our common humanity.

The Chief Minister Mysore has given the State Guest House for the Prithvi Company to occupy and the Town Hall for the theatre.

*June 22*

Bicycles can be hired here for two annas an hour — and they are as good as new. It is a pleasure to ride round and about, not caring where, on the asphalted roads of Mysore — parks in plenty, lovely trees, green lawns and towering white buildings. In the afternoon we went to see Lalita Palace — about three miles from the Guest House, situated on an extensive mound — most of it of marble with lovely domes — bearing the stamp of Mughal architecture. The Rajas have done well to preserve the beauty of Mughal palaces and to open their doors to the public. The South is soft and captivating, the North hard and rugged. South is inviting, North forbidding — yet both are irresistible. There is a marble statue of the last Maharaja covered with a beautiful marble pavilion. There is a Zoo — but a bird in a cage is not a pleasant sight. Here also is a big Technical Institute, home of the arts and crafts of Mysore — a Chitrashala in which beautiful paintings give one a peep into the hoary past. We talk much about art in these days but in olden days we practised it. The past has always a glory absent from the present. One must be far enough, away from our times to see them in perspective and to appreciate them.

It was here in the South that the doom of primitive but old-fashioned India had its inception and a modern

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State conceived — the hand was mainly the hand of the British, but the mind was entirely the mind of the Time Spirit. Englishmen dug their toes into Madras and gravitated towards Seringapatam where Hyderali and his son Tippu Sultan held the fort, within which was a small town but a very big mosque — 130 steps led to its minaret from which can be had a grand view with Chaumundi Hill to the South-East.

### *June 23 - Seringapatam*

We motored to the Daulat Mahal (Pleasure House) of Tippu — in a beautiful and well laid-out garden. If walls could speak what tales could they not tell of heroic deeds, of suffering and sorrow — of pleasure and of joy — in fact of the chequered pattern of life. Life has *to be* — there is no escape from it — we can but meet it with courage, our only shield ... Also a little distance removed (just as Death is from Life) from Daulat Mahal is the Mausoleum of Tippu Sultan, on it is written :

Na shádí dád sámání - Na gham áwurd nuqsání  
Badín jánbáz sultání - Ki ámad shud chun mehmání

(For this great one mere comforts of life brought no happiness and losses no sorrow. A king, he looked upon himself as a passer-by in the world of shadows).

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He lies beside his father, having put up a heroic fight to the bitter end. A stone marks the place where he fell. Nearby is the fort gate that leads to the Ghat.

*June 24*

A grand 'at home' was given today to Prithvi by the management of the Navjyoti in their Studio. The address was read in Kanada language. I was impressed by one of the speakers (F. C. Dev Raj) — a 'young' man of 69 — retired secretary of the last Maharaja — had been with him six times to Europe and U.S.A. — a well-informed person with first-hand experience, and therefore knowledge, of the West. He was all praises for Prithvi. When the reception was over, the Assistant Director Radio *Akashvani* interviewed Prithvi, who gave his replies with self-confidence, pleasing me greatly. He is also a good speaker and as far as I know, all his speeches are extempore. He speaks fluently, without effort and without notes.

*June 25*

Another 'at home' to Prithvi. This time by the City Corporation in their Council Chamber. The public buildings of Mysore are beautiful — have dignity and style about them. Afterwards we were taken to their

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great dam of Krishana Raja Sagar, about twelve miles away. The dam is one of the biggest in the world. It is 13 feet high above the river bed and about  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles long, impounding the waters of the Cauvery to form a lake with a water spread area of 50 square miles. It is pierced with several large sluices, electrically operated. The Irwin Canal, taking off at the dam, is one of the biggest irrigation channels in India. Below the dam are situated Brindavan gardens — the best illuminated terraced gardens in India and 'one of the finest gardens in the world'. The exquisite fountains, flower beds and white foaming cascades charm the eye — the gathering gloom in the evening makes them look like things in a fairy tale. From a large Hotel situated high up one gets a grand view of the Brindavan gardens that rival even those of Kashmir. I wavered in my admiration — actually preferring Brindavan to Lahore's Shalimar and Kashmir's Nishat and Nasim. According to Rabalais there are as many good fish in the sea as ever come out of it ... We spent a most enjoyable evening in the gardens after a refreshing tea at the Hotel — run by the government with Mr. Tajamul Hussain in charge — a good fellow.

*June 26*

Yet another reception of an unusual character. It was given by the Radio Staff Recreation Club of Mysore

at the Radio Station. It started off at 3 P.M. with a broadcast of *Shakuntala*. The company enjoyed speaking their lines without the necessity of make-up and movement. The transmission was successful — Tea at 5 P.M. — After tea, speeches — good words about Prithvi and Dramatic Art for which he stood — Prithvi heartily reciprocated and returned their compliments.

*June 27*

To the Chitrashala to see the paintings and the arts and crafts of Mysore — a fine collection. Arts and Crafts flourish in the South. I particularly liked three pictures of girls — in one of them the girl was holding a lamp in her hand protecting it with the other from breeze — a gentle radiation on her chest and shoulders and her head in dimmer lights. In the second picture a girl was seen at her devotions — peaceful and serene. The third a vigorous action picture — three girls going to the river for water with pots on their heads and in their arms ... Coffee at Indra Bhuvan. Both in Bangalore and Mysore Cafes are very popular — thousands have afternoon refreshment in them. Sweetmeats here are delicious. I shall miss them — wish I could stay longer.

My heart will be sore  
At leaving Mysore!



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I have seen rehearsals of two acts of Prithvi's new play — *Ahooti* — a refugee play in 3 acts. It is a love tragedy concerning a girl of Rawalpindi who was betrothed before Partition and made much of by her future in-laws. Partition changed all this for she was abducted by a Pakistani, though eventually restored to her people by a friendly Muslim. The 'in-laws' found their way to Bombay. The erstwhile happy and eager acceptance of the girl by the parents of her betrothed turned to gall and bitterness. The father refused to soil the name of his respectable family by bringing into it an abducted girl. It was a case of true love and the unhappy girl put an end to her misery by taking poison. Her self-inflicted death drives her lover mad and he does not survive her for long. The play depicts an all too-common tragedy of abduction — so easily preventible by human acceptance of that which was no fault of the victim.

The play should prove a hit — dealing as it does with a prevalent tragedy that could easily be avoided if only more humane understanding was shown and more compassion practised. Prithvi should have put this on a few months ago — having topical value. It should do well, with a good run. Prithvi could become a rich man if he struck to the Screen but the Stage is his first, his true and his only love — he allows the Screen to provide him with money for her maintenance. He is a devoted lover with a warm heart vivifying his patriotism. And then —

his acting! Has he in India his equal? I think not. He appears to be head and shoulders above any modern Indian actor. May his life be long for it is a life of creative service. His country needs him.

Last night I had my first Gujarati meal — at the Amins — silver service and tasty dishes galore — Mrs. Amin is a very good cook — if cooks may be judged by the dishes they concoct. I enjoyed my dinner immensely.

*June 27*

To the Maharaja's Palace — Who would not be a Maharaja to live in a palace? ! and such a palace as the one we saw yesterday — filled with treasures of art in picture gallery and museum, a lovely private Durbar Hall — but the Durbar-i-Am beats anything — its exquisite ceiling is supported by a hundred pillars and covers a vast expanse of marble flooring. The Hall opens into a wide plain with broad and wide steps leading down to it and the eye travelling meets the entrance to the Palace grounds. Everything about the palace is grand and on a very large scale — the time to see it would be at Dussehra — lit up with myriad lights. Alas — that Rajas now must quit! and even if they retain their palaces — their pleasure in them will be gone for who can find pleasure in a 'white elephant'? For what are they fit but

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for the aggrandisement of a monarch? They are certainly not fit for a People's Palace — to invite the labourer who with bent back and toiling hands built them, to amuse himself in them would be to invite trouble ... Mansions of the rich and palaces of rajas are both built and lived in at the expense of the poor — the world is a world of contrasts — most particularly is this so in India — *All-India*, before Partition. For all time will India, All-India, be a land of extremes — heat and cold, mountain and plain — rains and drought — but of rich and poor *NO* — nor of palace and hovel. These must go — they *will* go, they *are* going — but life is wide and varied — where even the extremes of mansion and cottage fit into their own niches — but for the hovel of the labourer there can be no niche at all — it shames our manhood, our humanity. Labour *builds* and a decent dwelling is its due.

Prithvi works like a galley slave to raise the Indian stage to the high level and dignity that is its due and let us hope, its destiny. Prithvi is a giver — he gives far more than he receives, but that is always so. A giver does not count the cost in giving — he simply and gladly *gives*. His troupe have to a fair extent reciprocated his enthusiastic effort. At the very least he has made of them a good team, but he wants them to share his vision too — of Theatre and its dynamic power for good. Prithvi is an intellectual, though an artist to his finger-tips. This

happy combination in one person is rare — but when it does happen, as it has in Prithvi, that person becomes a human dynamo.

Theatre art has until comparatively recently been looked upon as the Cinderella of the arts, but now in every country, a prince is seeking her for his bride to raise her from her lowly position to his own rank and stature — In India that prince is Prithvi. The right person in fairy tales appears at the right moment. It was her fairy godmother that led to the appearance of Cinderella at the Prince's ball, where he first beholds her.

Prithvi as actor-manager has his terrible aspect. At rehearsals he does not come down on the heads of individual actors like a sledge-hammer, rather does he woo them — cooing as gently as a dove; but woe betide the transgressor on the stage — to whom Prithvi has been known to hiss from the wings 'Blast ye!' Off the stage he is the loving and beloved chief, but *on* the stage he is the inexorable presiding deity, beyond himself as a human .....

After the *débauché* through which our unhappy country has recently passed, the means of creating mutual understanding and therefore mutual love, that is harmony, can be effected by the stage rather than the platform. The platform appeals to the reason in man but the stage to his feeling — one cannot dispense with either. India needs her Jawahars

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and Patels but she needs no less her Prithvies. Prithviraj Kapoor had taken the pulse of his country. Before the politicians and statesmen had fully imagined what was coming he had actually seen the wall of Partition arise. *Deewar* had been rehearsed in 1944 and saw the light of day in 1945. In those days the stage, financially, was a touch-me-not affair, but Prithvi did not flinch. A greater hurdle in Prithvi's path was the barricade set up by militant fanatical communalism, pitted against the love of country in preference to the love of a separative community masquerading in the garb of religion. No dissenter was safe — swift death was in store for him — Prithvi knew this but carried on with his public thrust against the unmitigated evil of communalism. Prithvi struck and struck hard through *Deewar*. He raised no uncertain voice against partition, that voice became a cry — a cry in the wilderness. The doom of Partition fell, taking its deadly course in an unending sea of trouble and general unhappiness on both sides of the communally created border ...

The ears of the people had been plugged with cotton wool — Prithvi shouted until they could hear. Their hearts had been hardened — Prithvi wept and they were softened. He blazoned before them luminous characters and words of sanity and wisdom — but neither statesmen nor politicians heeded the writing on the

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wall, intoxicating themselves with the dope of false security until the crash came and overwhelmed them. The prophetic voice of an artist-patriot had dinned into their ears the horrors that awaited the country if it was split into two — but the leaders having ears heard not and having eyes they saw not. Wisdom came, as it often comes — too late.

Prithvi played *Deewar* fearlessly through thick and thin and recognition of the play as a powerful force came at long last from high up leaders. Sardar Patel sat the play through, though he had come merely to put in an official appearance. *Deewar* drew from him laughter and tears, and after the fall of the final curtain, a half-hour speech — repercussion of which was exemption for Prithvi Theatres of the Entertainment Tax. Prithvi's primary and fundamental need of a theatre of his own is yet a dream which, when realised, will release his unbounded faith in Theatre and his relentless activity therein. Meanwhile, for theatre shows, he but fills a gap in a Cinema House in Bombay, the Royal Opera House — a title that betokens its erstwhile existence as a theatre proper. Prithvi is limited to three performances a week and these in the morning — true *matinees* and all to the good for the populace if they occur on weekly and public holidays. Meanwhile he has embarked upon systematic touring, carrying on his self-imposed mission.

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In press conferences all over the country Prithvi states his aims and objects in clear and precise terms. There is no mistaking these in his utterances. He means and feels what he says and says it with the force of conviction. His *Deewar*, *Shakuntala* and *Pathan* have been acclaimed by the press — both Hindu and Muslim — but diehard Muslim League press objected to *Ghaddaar*, since therein the policy of the Muslim League is discussed threadbare and Jinnah, their idol, is held responsible for the holocaust that preceded and followed partition. There is no place for him in the hearts of Muslim India. All this is plain and simple, it is obvious. Fanaticism, however, deliberately blinds itself and others and did a leopard ever change his spots? Hyderabad is yet a stronghold of the diehard kind. In his plays Prithvi is another Patel — obstacles but make him all the more doggedly persistent and they burst open the doors of his mind releasing a torrent of eloquence. Many Muslims dammed *Ghaddaar* without seeing it! This was as a red rag to the bull in Prithvi who gored them right and left. Muslims, he said, had gloried in the title of Iconoclast but they themselves had now become idol-worshippers. For sophisticates to worship a living idol was worse, far worse, than for the ignorant and the superstitious to worship images of clay. They had made a god of Jinnah and in this and all their disintegrating acts they were un-Islamic. They were

making a noose for their own necks. Communalism is the reverse of the democracy they so proudly claim as the pivot of Islam — brotherhood — universal brotherhood ... Communalism is self-love of a despicable kind and will hang itself with its own rope. The rope given by Partition is long enough for the purpose. The Jinnah two-nation theory and its implications cannot hold water in a modern State and a modern world in which the only possible goal is Unity — *One-ness* — for *all*, not only for Muslims among themselves nor for Hindus in their exclusive fold. If they held fast to Jinnah and his two-nation theory, they had no foot-hold in the domain of democracy. If they clung to the idea of a Theocratic State they could not belong to the secular state of India. That Muslims might live happily in the Indian Union, a great Hindu was the victim of foul murder by a lesser Hindu. Hinduism and Mohamadanism are to be welded in India into a life principle that is greater than either. If they believe in Jinnah's two-nation theory they must, of their own free-will, decamp to the land this 'beloved leader' created, nay grabbed for them. A Hindu Padshahi stepping into the shoes of the old-time Congress would send them packing on a forced march across the desert of Rajputana to the second nation of the deliberate choice of their beloved leader and idol — to Pakistan. How many would reach their destination, who could say? Prithvi dug into them hard and did not



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mince matters. The two-nation theory had brought wholesale Death and Destruction and India would not touch it with longest possible tongs. The India of tomorrow will be formed and shaped by Indians, and not by Hindus and Muslims, as such. There is no place in the Secular State of India for Muslims who are religious fanatics, for Muslims who exploit their religion for political ends. This exploitation will drag Mohamadanism — and, if practised by Hindus, Hinduism, in the mire fouling the fair name of both Muslim and Hindu. ... This plain speaking did the Muslim pressmen good — they changed their attitude of defiance, whether through policy or clearmindedness, who can say? The Muslims of India will be wise not to pin their faith in an outmoded theory of separatism, if they would survive in a One World — trying their paces first in a One-India ...

*June 28*

A visit to the Zoo — a sorry sight. Poor beasts how awful it must be for them to be set up for show in cages away from the wide freedom of their natural habitat. A bird in a cage is not a pleasant sight — nor a refugee, whether in India or Pakistan.

Later we paid a flying visit to sandal oil and silk factories. Mysore is rich in natural resources. So far as

I know no other part of India exports sandal-wood curios and products. I saw packing cases, quite a number of them, each containing oil of Rs. 3000 worth — awaiting shipment for London. Sandal-wood oil sells at Rs. 50 a pound and the sandal tree wherever it may be is the property of Mysore State. I did not see it growing, but I hear it has somewhat the form of a cocoanut palm. Silk is another rich vein of State revenue — saris from Rs. 50 upwards and expensive piece-silk help to fill the coffers of the State. In these parts, restaurants are a popular feature of life — numbers of them, all doing a roaring trade.

This evening we are to entrain for Hubli, reaching tomorrow in the afternoon.

*June 29 — Hubli*

Such a small and quiet place — we are lodged at the Shri Ganesh Boarding House quite near the theatre. The inhabitants of Hubli are devotees of Saraswati and we came across several artists. The people here have a great flair for dramatic art — the whole house for *Deewar* tonight has been booked in advance — 933 seats all gone — imagine!

## I GO SOUTH

June 30

*Deewar* played to a packed house — of Rs. 3534 — a very great achievement for such a small place, bespeaking the popularity of Prithvi Theatres, and proving Hubli-ites theatre lovers. There was a hitch in the show — a disturbing interruption caused by one of the audience, who shouted 'Speak louder', roused Prithvi's wrath. He had the curtain rung down on the scene and stepped before it. Demanding pindrop silence he told the man, point-blank, who had set the commotion going that he had no manners. It was a tornado of rebuke in true Prithvi style — the audience took it like a lamb and gave no further cause for a cloudburst from Prithvi. All went merrily like a peal of marriage bells. We play for 3 nights more — with two shows on Sunday. (By a curious coincidence, at this point in reviewing my diary I read in a press cutting "Uproar at *Ahooti* in Bombay" — the Hubli trouble over again but repeating itself on a bigger scale — Prithvi equal to the occasion as usual. December 15, 1949. J. D.) Bombay Province has passed a healthy regulation that all entertainments must cease by 12 midnight. Wives in the homes must be blessing authorities.

*July 4*

Hubli, financially, has been a success but as a place to visit, it is hopeless. One wonders how such an unromantic place can produce packed houses, the average yield of which in hard cash has been Rs. 3,200 a night — a mystery.

In Hubli lives a live wire — a medical man who many years ago went to America to study. There he met and came under the sway of the political exile Lajpat Rai (popularly known as the Lion of the Punjab) — returning to his homeland as a Servant of the People — his name is Hardekar. In Hubli he has little time for his profession — otherwise so active, in his Service. He has a large and loving heart and very great regard for Prithvi whom he lionizes. His high praise is richly deserved. Through his thought-provoking plays, Prithvi is instrumental in making the people think — he also, like Dr. Hardekar, is their Servant. The money he earns he lets go again. If he has no bank-balance, his heart-balance is high. The people adore him and hang about in the vicinity for a mere glimpse. I have seen them waiting long after the show was over, at 2 A.M. or even later in the night, knowing that Prithvi would pass their way. As he does so, they draw near to him — they cannot help themselves. He has the patience of Job. With folded hands and a smile

## I GO SOUTH

flickering over his face, he greets them and they are bowled over again, rooted to the spot until he disappears within closed doors for his well-earned 'night's' rest. Here in Hubli he walks to his lodging — his admirers know this and they wait just for the thrill of walking behind him. Unconsciously they worship the art in him as one consciously worships the divine in a god-head. Mere money could not buy for Prithvi a fraction of the happiness that is his day and night in close communion with the People of whom he is the Servant. Art is the very breath of his nostrils and it is this breath that invigorates and vitalises the common man whose eyes get glued to his fine Aryan face. Men call him a philanthropist but he says that he is merely an intermediary between donors and receivers. In his life he lives the Gita — he does not look for nor expects result of good deeds — they take care of themselves. ...

Prithvi's politics are level-headed. He stands for Congress and its underlying principles for which he fights tooth and nail. He has passionate love for his country — a patriot rather than a nationalist. His utterances on the stage have the ring of true coin — he minted them himself. His plays are written in collaboration with a chosen writer and when he 'speaks his lines' he sometimes enriches them with luminous sentences — while in ecstasy. They are noted by the scribe and fixed. This is *writing* for the stage and this is *acting*. Inci-

dentally it demonstrates the fourth-dimensional quality of the actor's art — claimed for it by Norah Richards.

Prithvi is a poet, though he writes no verse. He lives poetry. His every movement is rhythmic and his every word is music. Compact of compassion — a greater thing than love — he is in himself a foundation of rock for the edifice he is building. He has unflinching magnetism — I was myself irresistibly drawn to him 27 years ago at first sight. Though in the form of man, he mothers his troupe. Both man and woman are in his spiritual make-up — this combination in man or woman, A. E. Wodehouse claimed as the fundamental attribute of what he called the "spiritual thoroughbred". It is apparent in Prithvi ...

"The man who is too busy to worry in the day time and too tired to lie awake at night will grow old gracefully". How these words (read casually yesterday in a weekly) apply to Prithvi — Prithvi, the pioneer — discoverer of new land in ancient India — settling down in it, making of it his Home. This is Prithvi — can one wonder at his magnetism. A man who *IS*, is irresistible.

In ordinary life his small talk has subtle humour and his ways are winsome. Had he taken a woman's form, many a heart would have been broken. At it is, he makes broken hearts whole — both of men and of women.

## I GO SOUTH

July 4

We had a bus ride this morning to Dharwar — 12 miles away — district headquarters of Dharwar District — a cultural centre. They have a Bharat Natya School — of music and the Dance. We had a varied feast of both. More than 24 boys and girls danced the first round. As Prithvi, the actor, put it “The greatest lesson of the Dance for us is the co-ordination of harmonious movements”.

A young girl, Vimla by name, daughter of a sub-judge, was conspicuous. She had been in the group of Maneka and promises to become a great *danseuse* — her movements so graceful, gestures so rhythmic, expression so vivid and her timing — perfect. May good luck attend her.

Prithvi has his own way of introducing each one of his troupe. He is proud of them all and his good word for each of them is a stimulus to a higher reach. If Prithvi asked any one of them to bring the moon to him they would comply and then simply ask “What next?” I too came in for a share of praise and was flattered when he attributed his talent and achievement to me — whereas both are his very own. He was born with talent and it is he himself that has achieved success. As in the old words about Caesar “he came, he acted and he conquered”, but by what hard work, grim

determination and persistent perseverance, few know. My heart goes pit-a-pat as I write about him — I am glad it does, for I experience by it unparalleled pleasure — I *feel* Prithvi as Prithvi *feels* his parts — otherwise he could not act — in the real sense — nor could I write. Through Prithvi, Theatre in India will appear sooner than most of us expect.

Prithvi *dreams* and his first and fundamental dream is a very solid one — of bricks and mortar — Prithvi wants a theatre — not a theatre in the air but a solid structure on solid soil — a Home of his own. What houseless refugee but is with him heart and soul. That word *home* has gained in significance by widespread homelessness. Drama in our country is homeless. If government cannot relieve Prithvi's situation the People themselves should contribute their mite and give him, as actor, a home.

Yet another dream is Unity — actual annulment of partition.

Still another — a Caravan Stage — a gipsying to the villages, *government sponsored and financed*. Such a dream, they say, has materialised in New Russia — then why should it not in New India?

That these dreams may come true is the ardent wish and fervent prayer of theatre-lovers, Prithvi-lovers and lovers of their country.

This afternoon we have a crowded programme —



## I GO SOUTH

tea at the Film Exhibitors' Association, another tea at the Journalists' Association, Address to students at the Town Hall — such a crowd of them — already they are surging on the roads and have collected here and there like clusters of bees, ready to swarm into the Hall when the doors are opened. Then — a talk to the Hubli Art Circle ... Poor Prithvi, nay, lucky Prithvi! These engagements will take him upto 11.15 and at 11.45 P.M. we are due at the station to entrain for Kolhapur at midnight.

On looking back at the Hubli visit I realize how true it is that good things are often wrapped in small packets. There have been no grandiose sights to see here, but the reception and response to Prithvi, his plays and to Theatre itself has been everything.

Goodbye and Good Luck, little Hubli. Thank you for your welcome of Prithvi and response to all he stands for — a happy and a fruitful visit as well as a paying one. We will come again. *Au revoir.*

*July 6 — Kolhapur*

Arrived here in the afternoon, having missed our morning connection at Miraj. Almost immediately Prithvi and I set off on bicycles. We had a jolly ride —

## WITH PRITHVIRAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

through bazars, past a statue of Shivaji, skirting the Town Hall and its nice garden. Prithvi knows Kolhapur well for he had once lived here for six months at a stretch. Then for his film work in Valmiki and Karan he had come monthly on ten days visits. So Prithvi's cycle led and mine blindly followed. He dashed ahead, confidently expecting that the circular road would lead us back to our starting point — to the Palace Theatre near which we were staying. On and on we cycled and one of Prithvi's tyres went flat — we pumped it up. For about an hour and a half we had been pedalling and no Palace Theatre loomed into view. On making enquiries we discovered that Prithvi had taken a left turning instead of one on the right — there is always trouble when one crosses the floor from right to left ! Turning back we took the turning that we had missed. It had been a wild goose chase but we had enjoyed it. Prithvi needs such physical diversions for his work taxes him.

Kolhapur! — and its Maharaja, its *Chatrapati* — Vikram Sinha Rao Pawar! Lovely memories are roused by the very sound of this name — memories of my blissful student days at Lahore, when I knew Prince Vikram, then the Yuvraj of Dewas Senior, C.I.

There had been domestic trouble at Dewas and a feud between the States of Dewas and Kolhapur. The mother of Prince Vikram, separated from him, was of the House of Kolhapur. Circumstances conspired to place

## I GO SOUTH

the Yuvraj under the guardianship of Professor and Mrs. Richards at Lahore. Mrs. Richards was to mother him, to bring him up and teach him and Prof. Richards was to be his guardian. The link that had joined the Richards home and the House of Dewas was Mr. Malcolm Darling (now K.C.I.E.) who had the implicit confidence of the Maharaja of Dewas. "Vikky" as they called him was the delight of his foster parents — naughty as a spirited boy and Prince can be. It was in the spring of 1917 that Mrs. Richards was to receive him and his retinue at Dalhousie, where the Malcolm Darlings were also to spend the summer. She could not bear leaving her husband — it was their first, and only, separation — and I was to live with Professor Richards in her absence to care for him, which really meant to safeguard his quiet and to be companionable when he was in the mood — and what a companion! Sparkling wit, deep feeling, subtle humour and an unfailing stream of wisdom clothed in choice but very simple humorous language. In my College days Richards was a name to conjure with — students loved him, as a teacher, a speaker and some lucky ones — as a friend. I was among the lucky ones ...

Letters about "Vikky" came in quick succession from "Wyke", Dalhousie, telling us about his winsome ways, and longing for our arrival there for long vacation. That summer for me is a memory of pure joy.

“Vikky” was warp and woof of it and I was thrilled at the idea of meeting him in Kolhapur as its Maharaja — but alas, disappointment was in store, for he was absent in Dewas. The merger plan has given the one-time rulers of States greater latitude of movement. So it is not altogether an ill wind for them, but for me it was a very ill wind that had blown the Maharaja of Kolhapur to Dewas while I was here ...

The 4th of June 1920 is a date far removed, but Philip Ernest Richards who on that day left us to mourn him is with us still. Nothing can obliterate the living and vital memory of him in our minds and hearts — an expression of his genius is any one’s for the asking. Mrs. Richards has edited some of his voluminous writings. “Indian Dust” a book of letters of the Indian period of his life contains an entrancing picture of “Vikky” (as — “Kishen”).

Land of the Mahrattas, with Kolhapur as their stronghold — the *gaddi* of Shivaji. Shivaji — who must have turned in his ‘grave’ in recent years. With fierce anguish he had looked down upon the smouldering ashes of cities laid waste by the cruel agents of Aurangzeb. He had seen red and his warrior blood arose to crown the mission his mother had marked out for him. He was to have been a Hindu of the Hindus. He had become steeped in Hindu lore and tradition, imbibed by stories heard at her knees. Her son was to go forth and be a

great Hindu — he went forth and became instead a great warrior, for as a warrior India of that day had need of him. He saved the South from Mughal hordes and put the fear of God into them. He stemmed the tide of the British. For all time he stands out as one who saved India of the South. What might a modern Shivaji not do — could such a one arise? India has need of him now as never before — not so much as a saviour-in-arms but a saviour-in-spirit. The spirit of India, which is the Spirit of her 'ancient wisdom' lies dormant. So far this spirit is more evident in the thinking outer world than in India — a paradox. Here in India Hinduism has led to communalism but in the West Hinduism has led to Indianism and in our country the crying need is just this. Could we but *be* the India that the word sees in us! Buddhism refracted a purified Hinduism, retaining its kernel but rejecting the hard shell that had encrusted around it. Budhists are now of every nationality and yet in India, the native land of Gautam Sidhartha, its founder, Buddhism is comparatively rare. A modern Shivaji, however, could not be a Buddhist — for such a one could not be a quietist — a warrior is called for, but a warrior armed with the spirit of India. What a play could be written on this theme and what a Shivaji have we in Prithviraj! ... My dream goes further — what a centre for the radiation of such a play could be Kolhapur?!

## WITH PRITHVIRAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

A Hitler arose in Europe — shouting from the house tops, hissing from the cellar his dogma of Race Superiority and his possessive 'Kultur' — sequel, World War II with horrors and devastation such as dwellers on our planet had never faintly imagined could be. Politics of the power order was in the saddle — the steed bolted, throwing the rider into a ditch to die. We have our Indian parallel.

\* \* \* \*

Kolhapur has its black and fertile soil, its temperate climate, its cooling monsoons. It has rippling streams, sugar cane fields, its parks and gardens, its palaces and temples, its States of Shivaji, Sahuji III, Rajaram and side by side a humble musician — Akram Khan. Above and beyond all these in my eyes — is its theatre. Prithvi says it is the best he has ever played in. A love of Art is in its air — without undue striving and ostentation in the matter. Kolhapur could become a cultural centre and it has had succession of enlightened rulers to illumine the way.

Kolhapur theatre! — a unique structure — comfortably seating 1,000 and a grand stage. Its upper gallery opens back into an open air stage and also a wrestlers' ring enclosed by an amphitheatre to seat thousands, with high walls all round. There is also an arena

## I GO SOUTH

for elephant fights — popular in the days of the Moghals. The enclosure is dug deep about 15 feet below ground-level, and looks like a dry tank. In the centre are four circular bastions with four small gates into which *mahouts* can dash for safety from the fury of the elephants. I should like to see an elephant fight, it must be very entertaining — horrible too and inhuman. The infuriated beasts gore one another with their tusks ...

Kolhapur has had its Yol Camp — it was set up for Polish Refugees of war, and now it is a refuge for Hindus that fled from Sind. It lies six miles distant from Kolhapur town, and at its station small boys press upon railway passengers lemon drops and almond sweetmeats. Poor mites — victims of Partition — eking out the precarious and wretched existence that had been so wantonly thrust upon them.

*Deewar* drew full houses on the 6th and 7th i.e. tonight we play *Pathan*. I say we — for I am now part of the company and who knows but I may one day also be part of the show! A theatrical company had stolen a march on us, putting on Marathi plays. Prithvi thought that they had taken the cream and we should only have skimmed milk — that was not so. He is as great a draw here as anywhere though Kolhapur is so near his stronghold, Bombay. The founder of the Marathi company is Bal Gandharv (Narain Rao) with forty three stage years to his credit. He is now 61 and

his popularity has not waned. During all these years he has played the leading lady and does so still — a tribute to his art, but both Prithvi and I feel that he should now give up playing young girls.

Yet another aged artist, of 80 — a musician, Rahmat Khan by name, and an old Sitar teacher of Prithvi, who had been invited by him to make music for his troupe. I had wondered what we were in for — the old musician looked so frail and his fingers so feeble, but no sooner had he touched the strings of his instrument than he became transformed — his sightless eyes twinkled, his wrinkled face lit up, his nostrils widened and from his toothless mouth he breathed forth melody, his deft and nimble fingers flitting up and down awakening the dormant strings. Music filled the air now soft and slow, now loud and resonant — a feast for us. His son, Ghulam Kadir, plays second to him and plays it well. Rahmat Khan is one of the many who have received benefaction at the hands of Prithvi.

In an after-play speech, Prithvi exhorted the people of Kolhapur to honour and support artists while yet they were with them in the body. The tragedy in India, as also elsewhere, was that though eulogies after death were sung and often busts raised and portraits painted to perpetuate the memory of his physical appearance, the artist himself and his work are too often not fully realised in his life-time and even the sordid



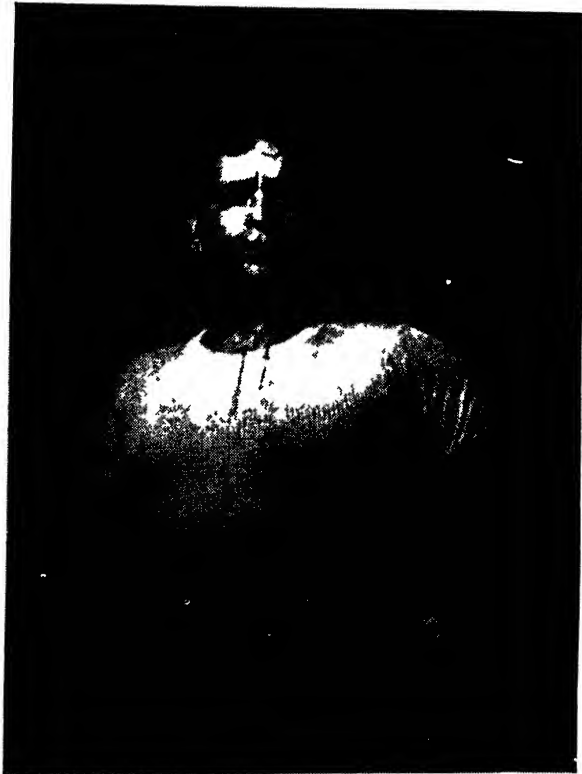
## I GO SOUTH

struggle to keep body and soul together is often great, whereas the non-recognition of his art is heart-breaking

Great artists should be subsidized, as Goethe was by Germany. Goethe came to receive a mere pittance of £ 95 a year, but that pittance was regular and constant, and saved him from the soul-stunting struggle of grappling with the next meal or starvation. Creative art is a very great boon to the people and an asset for their country. Appreciation, encouragement and recognition of the individual artist in his lifetime would enable Art itself to rise to greater heights, shedding light far and wide to light up the lives of the common man, nations and, it naturally follows, the world.

*July 9*

The shining lights in Prithvi's troupe are Uzra and Sajjan — My fervent prayer is that Sajjan will not succumb to the Screen — already he has tasted its silver sweets, and the momentary temptation is great. Incidentally, Prithvi acts as a supplier of film stars, his son Raj, being one. Uzra has many offers but turned them all down — may she continue to be adamant in her constancy to the stage and Prithvi. Uzra's sister Zohra is a valuable member of the company and



**A rock of granite**



also little Pushpa, the youngest of the actresses. Indu and her sister from Indore are also acquisitions. The times in India are changing fast and that recruits for the stage can be found fairly easily from good families is a happy augury — of course they have family opposition to contend against, but that happens in all countries. Uzra is highly educated, Indu is also educated but little Pushpa made a straight dash for the stage and before secondary education of any kind had claimed her, she offered herself to Prithvi's Theatre — this young girl may go far. She is excellent in the parts she has so far played. Zohra, as did Uzra, graduated for the stage through their apprenticeship with Uday Shankar abroad — their Shankar 'degrees' being of more value to them than academic one through University. Education is of course an asset from the cultural point of view. Of University men in England who have done yoemen work for the Shakespeare stage F. R. Benson is outstanding.

As for Sajjan — not only is he a first rate actor but has it in him to direct. He is in fact Prithvi's right hand and takes rehearsal when Prithvi has to be absent. This is seldom but is significant. Of the next best men are Shri Ram, Vyas, Dhawan and Prem. Of these Shri Ram is a refugee from old Punjab, whose ill wind has blown him good. Dhawan and Vyas are excellent character actors and Prem, I fear, is earmarked for the Screen.

## I GO SOUTH

For small parts Prithvi's two younger ones are enrolled. This is as it should be — the beginning of theatre-bred families, who take to the stage as ducks to water. Prithvi's one daughter is at the moment in her mother's hands who is not keen on her going on the stage, but if talent is in her blood, it must be, it will not be easy to hold her back. Prithvi has founded a Theatre family, who will carry on the Prithvi tradition glorying in their ancestry. For all time Prithvi the Prince will be the gallant who found Cinderella to wed her and raise her to his own stature — to the dismay of her proud sisters for whom she but crouched at the hearth handling cooking pots and preoccupied with cinders. Prithvi has made and is making New Theatre history.

Then Prithvi himself — his commanding personality makes of him the unquestioned head of the new profession he is creating in Bombay, is a perfect medium for the sweeps of passion that his present plays do not fully provide. They do not give him enough escape for tragic power — *Ghaddaar* has great moments and Prithvi seizes them with the directness of truth. He narrates some of the ghastly happenings on both sides of the partition border with such fire and eloquence that he carries the audience with him as in a rushing torrent. *Ghaddaar* is a tragedy of thought, whereas *Pathan* is a tragedy of action and the part in it that Prithvi plays fits him like a glove, for he in himself, a Hindu, is a pucca

## WITH PRITHVIRAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

Pathan of the N. - W. Frontier — a true Pathan — one who knows how to live and how to die, whose hand once extended in friendship is never withdrawn, straight in character and out-spoken in speech and when he makes a supreme sacrifice, its effortlessness raises it to the supramundane sphere and is sublime ... All his plays show evidence of inspired direction that has resulted in very good individual acting and in acting as a team.

There will always be a big gulf between Stage and Screen — The actor with his 'living' audience has magnetic powers unknown to the actor on the sets. When all is said and done, film-acting, though usually over-done, is a cold-blooded affair — feeling is forced and exaggerated — subtle touches go for nothing on the screen but on the stage a mere whisper or a tense silence tells. The Screen brings better money for fewer hours of work, but where dramatic art is concerned it is only Theatre proper that can contain it — the Cinema after all is but a make-believe theatre and there are signs in every country on the globe that the people are yearning for that which the Screen is powerless to give.

Bombay is the Mecca of all young hopefuls of the Screen — Don Quixotes pursuing their Dulcinea (Heaven of film stars). Many go but few are chosen — penury and starvation drive them back upon themselves to find a less showy mode of livelihood.

## I GO SOUTH

### *To Panala For The Day*

Panala! Could your ruined bastions and ramparts but speak, what stirring tales of heroism and chivalry would they not pour forth! Shivaji is writ large on every fallen stone. About 12 miles from Kolhapur, Panala is easily about 1000 feet higher — a one-hour bus ride. One crosses the Panch Ganga bridge on the way. Panala is one of Shivaji's hill fortresses and three sides of it are of precipitous rock. Its only access is the Teen Darwaza Gate (Three-door gate), built in 1052 A.D. by Adil Shah and blown up by General Dalmote in 1844. Other sights are the Wagh Darwaza (Tiger gate), Sambhaji Temple and the lights pillars with their projections like the stumps of tree branches to hold little lamps of clay. A conspicuous monument is the Sajja Kothi, built by Maksud Aga in 1602, in the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah II. It was from this stronghold building that Shivaji so skilfully escaped in 1667 when it was being beseiged by Sidhi Johar. Here also it was that Shivaji imprisoned Sambhaji — his own son. The times were such that father could not trust son nor son father. The hands of Aurangzeb were dyed in the blood of his brothers — his father was spared, though made a captive. Shivaji had feared that his son would yield to the machinations of the Moghuls and thus help to bring about the disintegration of Maharashtra. In his youth

Sambhaji had given cause for such a suspicion, but when at Shivaji's death he ascended the throne, he rose to the occasion, adding lustre to the glory and prestige of Maharashtra.

Panala could be made into a lovely Hill Station, but the Ministry of Kolhapur are disinclined, since hill stations are preserves of the rich who in our days are not to be pandered to. Be that as it may, it is a thousand pities that such a lovely dwelling site should not be developed. What about letting loose the Sindhi refugees now at the old Polish P. O. W. Colony — to create a new post-partition town. They would make a good job of it.

We had taken our lunch with us to Panala and the whole troupe were in holiday mood. It has been a most enjoyable day.

As we crossed the Panch Ganga bridge Prithvi was reminded of his ordeal as Valmiki. He laughed heartily as he told me about it, but it was no laughing matter at the time. As Valmiki Prithvi had to swim across the river in full stage kit — deer skin, clinging dhoti, wig, beard and all. How he could have done it was a marvel. The water was cold — his garments impeded him, particularly the dhoti that made swimming almost an impossibility — his garments became heavier and heavier and the dhoti clung and twisted itself into every kind of leg obstruction. Wading in was nothing but when



## I GO SOUTH

out of his depth, the trouble began. He felt like turning back before he got half way across — but to go back would be as bad as to go forward — so forward he went and reached the other side of the by no means narrow stretch of water — it was a very near shave. The technicians on terra firma were in no great hurry, but poor Prithvi stood shivering in his wet clothes while they comfortably deliberated as to whether they would shoot it again. Such is the life of a film actor ... Even now Prithvi has to undergo film work to pay for his theatre enterprise. Just now (17th December 1949) he is working on the sets of Shantaram's "*Dahej*" (Dowry). Uza, his leading lady, paid him a surprise visit in the Shantaram's Studio and in a letter received yesterday writes to me thus: "What a difference watching him (Prithvi) on the stage and then on the sets. I told him it was like having seen a lion in the jungle and then watching him perform tricks in the circus." Prithvi had a good laugh over it and said, "I really feel that way. When I go on the sets, I put my tail between my legs and jump into the cage".

July 10

This will be the busiest day of our stay in Kolhapur — two shows — *Deewar* and *Ghaddaar*. My heart goes out to the actors — it is no joke to put on two plays in one day, particularly for Prithvi, but Prithvi (touch wood!) is made of steel — and that too, everbright and rustless. What a man — with Atlantean shoulders! His buoyancy and magnetism irradiate his troupe who one and all glow as does everything that his magic touches.

July 11

The plays went well and Uzra as Begum in *Ghaddaar* was superb at the fall of the last curtain the death scene of her husband. This scene seethes with emotion — the “traitor” dies but the woman lives to see the havoc she had made in converting him to her way of thought — the League way. There is symbology in this. ‘Be your cheeks wet’. He touches them with his fingers and puts the salt drops to his lips. The hearts of the audience beat in tune with hers — they weep — both men and women — unashamedly. She did not suffer alone. The magic of her art

## I GO SOUTH

had broken down all barriers — they felt as she did, they suffered even as she did — were filled with the same remorse and above all were suffused with the same love that can dissolve hatred and strife — that persists even beyond death, destruction and defeat. In *Ghaddaar* both artists and audience are brought close in the embracing fold of life — but life enhanced, reflected by the actor's art. Modern Theatre is said to reveal truth rather than to creat illusion. The plays of Prithvi do verily reveal truth — in this he is modern to the finger-tips and he carries everything before him.

Today at the invitation of Mr. R. M. Lohia, we visited the Sugar Mill of which he is the Manager. It was a pleasure to go round — a revelation in the new sympathetic turn that Capital is taking towards those upon whom their wealth is built. The owner of the mill is spending liberally on good dwellings, a club, a school, a common room, reading room, library and amenities for the good of his workers ... Good labour will respond in giving a better output.

Bhalji Pendharkar! 'a Studio owner', as described to me. Bah — an owner of himself — a Cromwell among men — with a round head like Cromwells, bloody like Cromwells — but equally unbowed. Briefly, he had gone to Panala, to his lovely summer retreat to spend some time in idleness and peace. But his enemies were busy below. They burnt his 'Studio' to the ground and left

not a stick. This was a blow — his beautiful 'studio' cinder and ashes! But he himself with his wife and son was safe and sound — sound enough to join again in the fray, snapping his fingers at his stupid enemies. Nothing daunted he rebuilt a 'studio' on new and improved lines, and rather thanked his stars that the old one had been burnt to the ground to enable him to do so — a process of destruction that might have made even a Cromwell quail. This "Maharatta Studio owner" is a potential Shivaji in filmland. And — this Cromwell's, this Shivaji's wife! — very nearly his better half ... tall and slender like a lissome bamboo sapling — her hair grey but not with years, her face the face of a child — innocent and winsome, and with a twinkle in her eyes. The accents of her voice are gentle and fall on the ear like the murmur of gurgling water. As dependent and submissive as clinging ivy, yet obviously the support of her oak of a husband. These two are well-married and surely happy, joying in one another. They treated us — Prithvi and me — to a sumptuous lunch which had it been spread on a table, instead of the more solid floor, would have made it groan — the cemented flooring, however, bore the weight without a tremor.

This is the last day of our tour and none of us are too happy. We look back wistfully and wonder if days to come hold again for us the joys that are now so swiftly slipping away. This afternoon we are to wend

## I GO SOUTH

our way to the railway station and entrain for Bombay. So many of the troupe have been looking forward to the day they would be returning to their own people and yet instead of smiling face at the prospect of our to-morrows there are long ones at the loss of our yesterdays. There is no return on the fast-flowing river of life and the sand that has run through its glass, has run forever — we cannot reverse it to make it run again. We have our memories and that is all — yet it is much. When alone in idle and pensive mood, we re-live them and joy in our hidden treasure as a miser gloats over his hidden gold. Far from prying eyes of the insensate crowd we can count and re-count our wealth as indeed shall I in the recesses of my valley home in Kangra. Like those in Prithvi's troupe who look forward to their Bombay, I too look forward to my Valley — but we all share the same regret at the closing of our happy-go-lucky strolling players' days — a continuous moving on and on to dramatic pastures new.

No account of Prithvi's tour would be complete without a special tribute to Dewan Basheshar Nath — his father — one of us. In him a true Pathan has stepped out from Frontier Trans-Border Territory — a territory which by its geographical situation and its superb unity in diversity has deep significance for the disrupted land we live in — the greater India that now contains a Pakistan. A Pathan is both Muslim and Hindu, and yet

## WITH PRITHVIRAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

he is neither — he is simply and solely a Pathan, personified for us at the moment off the stage, yet within its charmed circle, by Dewan Bashesar Nath, whose build, searching eyes, commanding voice and martial gait bespeak his origin. Withal his manners are suave — polished as a courtier's and his hospitality, characteristically unbounded. He is the centre of gravity of the whole troupe who flock around him for he is playful and merry as a schoolboy. Years have sat upon him lightly neither burdening his body nor damping his spirit. He has a joke and a nod for well doers but a shake of the head and even a rod for delinquents. A man of diverse interests he can read a book on Homoeopathy with the same gusto as one that recounts romantic and stirring tales. He is a proficient amateur in culinary art — his dishes would have made the fortune of any professional cook. He is affable and generous, taking the keenest pleasure in sumptuously feeding others though he himself is content with the simplest of food. In fact, Dewan Sahib is very good company, always having an incident or episode from his wide and rich experience of life ready to 'point a moral or adorn a tale'.

## I GO SOUTH

*July 13 — Bombay*

Bombay! — with its thronged roads and its close-crowded labyrinthine ways, its mansions and its slums, its *one* miserable theatre and its many palatial cinemas, its trams and buses, beaches and palm groves, parks and gardens — and its present weather — down pour or drizzle ... Bombay has its special odours, its special capitalists and labourers, its special flats, chawls, electric trains and contrasting horse-drawn victorias, its special chimneys and factories — it has in fact a teeming multitude that it swallows whole at night to emit again in the early morning. Having seen Bombay I have seen one of the world's great cities — too big for accommodation and comfort — paradise for the rich but hell for the poor. In my innocence I had thought that city people every where were gripped by a 'back to the country' movement, but in Bombay is no sign of it — it is the city of a 'madding crowd'. Nevertheless Bombay has its natural beauties as well as its painted glamour — the Juhu and Mahim beaches are but two of them. (It was on Mahim beach that I met a well known film couple — one so tall and bulky and dusky, and the other so gentle and fair and sweet. It must have been a case of violent attraction that the opposites have for each other. I was over and over again reminded of Othello and Desdemona. Let us hope there is never any cause of jealousy for Othello — otherwise God help

Desdemona). The Sea! — first glimpse of it by an inland man — the broad expanse of endless water affected him as did the towering height of mountains — both of them grand and awe-inspiring, submerging him in their beauty. Here, on the Juhu beach, gusts of sea breeze invigorate and refresh the clouds float on a huge expanse of open sky above the level — the dead straight line — of the horizon, the wet sands make a soft foothold, advancing waves break in creamy froth on the shore, the cocoanut palms wave, the sunset suffuses glory, *and* oh — the delicious drinks of cocoanut milk enjoyed revelled in, delightfully companioned by host and hostess — the beloved Prithvies — setting upon me the seal of deep impression — never to be obliterated. The shadows lengthen and as balmy eve slowly fades in eerie ghostly light, one seems to be in an unearthly fairy land with the sea making soft moan. The car honks and brings us to earth. ...

Bombay is a place of distances, but its transport system is tip top. The Marine Drive and Chaupati have attractions of their own. Then there is Malabar Hill and also Pherozeshah Mehta Gardens, where the Naz, a small hotel, invites you invitingly to tasty cheese straws (the Parsee proprietress called them cheese cigarettes) and delicious hot cocoa. From its top terrace one commands a grand view of the sea by day on the one hand and on the other, myriads of city lights by night fall. Pherozeshah Gardens, in which it stands, are beautifully laid out — velvety



## I GO SOUTH

lawns, mossy ways and many 'lovers' lanes. Here is Nature, but Nature harnessed and moulded by the hand of man.

Prithvi would have me stay on — but what about his poor over-worked car? — a very old friend of his and therefore thoroughly dependable. It has let him down but once — and that was when he wanted it to swim across monsoon floods in a downpour, but was the fault Prithvi's? Rather was it not the fault of the maker of his car who had not made it amphibious? Poor car — for me she had to wade through shin-deep waters, career along bumpy roads, wait in queues at the noon-day crush, plough through mud and sands, and that too, at any hour of the day or of the night. May be she is member of some Social Service Corps, of some Sewa Samiti, and finds joy in the service of others. She purrs gently like a cat, runs smoothly without hissing or noising. If she gives an occasional sneeze — what of that! — but this only happens once in a blue moon. No — though Prithvi would have me stay on and though I should love to, I must go — and his old and trusted friend will be once more entirely at his service without the handicap of propelling another friend here and there. That friend am I — our friendship has been cemented, nay bound with hoops of steel by the sharing of his strolling player's experience. We know now that we are friends for life, that neither disparity of years nor separation in the body can affect our friendship. ...

July 17

How arduous is the role of the Producer-Director-Actor — he wears a triple crown of thorns — three theatre hurdles, when one of them alone is enough to challenge the spirit of the most aspiring. Prithvi has this 'vaulting ambition' of this Three-in-One, and he goes even a step further, for not only does he produce, direct and act: he is the inspirer of his own plays — chooses their subject, constructs their story and engages a writer for the dialogue. He goes even still further for much of the dialogue also is his own. He visualizes a scene, gets caught up in its action and the feelings that possess him, cause words to bubble up and escape his lips like a stream of limpid water — words his writer would never dream of — words that well up from the feeling heart of the actor, ultimately to sensitize the feelings of his audience.

A producer goes from the whole to the part and a director goes from the part to the whole. Producing is a simple equation of the mind while directing involves both heart and mind. There are directors who think of their task in terms of the *lathi* — believing that to spare the rod is to spoil the actor — not so Prithvi. His rehearsal is on and the actor flounders — enunciation bad, gesticulates wrongly, feeling nowhere, nor abandon, ... The strong hands of Prithvi clap — there is instant stoppage on the stage and complete silence, broken by his dulcet

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tones in setting matters right. The actor is asked to try again. He does so — the same old flaws. Once more a clap and correction and the order to go ahead — and be *himself* in the part — not Prithvi. The last thing Prithvi wants is mimicry — the actor is himself to gauge the dramatic situation, to *feel* it and to act according to his own reading of the part in line, of course, with the intent of the dramatist for the elucidation of the points of his play. ... It will be seen what an all-round person is Prithvi — but can even he withstand the strain involved? If he is to do justice to himself, he must one day choose which Prithvi is to have full sway — producer — director or actor? He can least be spared as actor, and that is his staggering problem for until he finds his producer and director — he must undertake the triple task himself. Thus Three-in-One is as it *should* be, but *can* it be? At the moment are there producers and directors that could satisfy the leading actor who is no longer satisfied by being a mere star in a feeble setting? The actor is not for himself alone, but for the whole — team work is essential in the theatre as on the play-ground if goals are to be scored. A producer is one who must have a sixth sense to divine the hidden faculty and power of the actor, and his imagination must be in full flower discerning and enhancing the imagination of the dramatist. In fact and in brief, theatre art is composite and quite beyond the capacity of a single man to bring off in full manifestation. Prithvi

is doing his bit — a pretty large bit, but even he cannot be the whole that is Theatre ... As a pioneer potter, Prithvi is giving shape to his vessel that it may serve its purpose — without which a vessel is useless — a mere jew-jaw — a trifling mantelpiece ornament, encumbering even the self it stands upon.

Do Prithvi's acting troupe realise how lucky they are? Prithvi's is the real School of Acting not in the same street as mere academics of acting. The stage itself is the true school of dramatic art — but art itself must play a much bigger part in ordinary schooling before human material makes good clay for the Master Potter's hand. Prithvi is creating Theatre in the land that is India — even Greater India — but he needs the human material and he needs — a Theatre — a theatre — of brick and mortar. ...

*July 19*

Prithvi and I — hardly have our finger tips touched when our hands are to be torn asunder. These days — these happy days, are slipping out of my grasp. Romance floats like a bubble on the surfy waters of life, to be burst by the next advancing wave. So be it, Prithvi — we must part — you going your way and I going mine —

## I GO SOUTH

but with a common goal. It was our interest in College plays that brought us together at Peshawar and a common interest, nay more, a common passion for Drama that has linked us during these years. Had I not gone to Peshawar, I had not met you — and had I not known Prof. Richards, I might never have gone to Peshawar. It was my first Professorial post, and the warm letter of recommendation sent by P.E.R. worked wonders. I was taken on immediately — to meet you. What a strange concatenation of circumstances — was it destiny? *Is there that which shapes our ends despite our own rough hewings?* Is it for nothing that P.E.R. and N.R. are in *our* picture yet so very much out of it — and also Vikram of Dewas? Here we are in Kolhapur of which their foster child Maharaja — what though Kolhapur is now merged, a Vikram, to be worthy of that name, has other Kingdoms to rule...long ago N.R. told me a pretty story of Vikram as a child. All that I can remember of it was that at an Indian history lesson with her he was struck by the sound of Vikramaditya. “But that is *my* name! *I* am Vikramaditya!” So he might be — as N.R. at the time told him. ... Kolhapur has been the highlight of our tour and Kolhapur has the best theatre that Prithvi has so far played in — a solid theatre in our theatreless land with a Vikram enthroned! He might make of Prithvi a “gem” of his court and he could easily repeat history and make history by adding

to this gem eight more. ... The bare idea of a Vikramaditya the Second stirs me to the depths and at this moment I feel that *destiny* is no empty word. ... Be that as it may — I am to depart, losing the sight and the sound of Prithvi but ever conscious of his presence in the New India that is in her birth throes — a New India whose centre of dramatic creativeness might well be Kolhapur, reigned over by a Vikramaditya. Am I dreaming? ... dreams sometimes come true. May this be one of them! ... The inexorable present frowns on the inevitable future — for we must part — Prithvi and I — and though our souls may be hungry, our bodies must sit at the same dining table and the shadow-play of serving the dishes and helping oneself must go on — soul hunger is not so easily satisfied. Eyes of those who are thus hungry tell their own tale though they may be looking merely at the ceiling or the floor, through a window at the restless movement of the sea with its waves ceaselessly breaking on the beach — on pattering drops of rain, on the distant horizon or the nearby road. Though they look at these things, the soul-hungry see nothing but themselves and each other. They cannot speak — there is no need. A cyclone may rage within — yet words concerning but the weather and the outer world rise to their lips. Looks are more eloquent than words, for when the heart is full the tongue is silent. ... Are we mortals but fate-ridden and fate-driven? None

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but life can answer this question — but life says “forward” even if it be to part, “for the goal that has been named, cannot be counter-manded. ... What beckonings of love you receive can only be answered by passionate kisses of parting. You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their reach'd hands towards you”. Thus Whitman in his *Song of the Open Road*.

*July 20*

Uzra combines qualities rarely to be found coupled — she is both emotional and intellectual. Though there is a dreaminess about her and in her speech a faint lisp, she is level headed, has a straight back and a well-poised carriage. By no means goody-goody, she is good — and her friendships are deep and abiding as are most friendships of men. There is, in fact, something rather manly about her in spite of her charming femininity. She is rationalistic in outlook so her words are well weighed — not over-talkative in society as are so many emancipated Indian women. She is more prone to listen than to speak. She possesses an ease and a poise that is so often absent in the transition of woman *confined* to woman *free* — may be her travels in Europe and America in Uday Shankar's company have

contributed to this. And her hospitality! — Yesterday Prithvi and I lunched with her and her husband in their marsonette in Soona Mahal overlooking the sea. Uzra's artistic touch makes of her living room a joy to behold — the lunch table was adorned by a single flower, but that flower well-chosen and set up in a simple vase at a captivating angle with its foil of leaves — profusion is not in Uzra's vocabulary of living. Her seascape window is unobstructed — an insensitive woman might have succumbed to the temptation of placing a sofa as a window seat, with its back turned to the view — not so Uzra, whose every home touch is lovely.

As we entered, there she was, in her own setting, with her husband Mr. Hameed (both are Muslims — her sister Zohra is married to a Hindu) and a friend who is a Hindu — her husband is a U.P. man but in appearance he might have been a Frontier man and I took to him immediately — this was our first meeting. His humorous and pleasant talk and his rich laughter were delightful. Their friend was somewhat aloof and even Uzra's, the lunch and the talk were well-balanced — if make him thaw — he could not have been a theatre man. As for Hameed, another trait in him that put me in mind of a Frontier man was his keen relish of a good meal — they enjoy good things to eat and make no secret of it — Frontier people are hearty and eat heartily. At Uzra's, the lunch and the talk were well-balanced — if



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the one was manna, the other was nectar. She has added to the sweet memories I shall cherish of Bombay. ...

\* \* \*

*July 25*

If you want to see Prithvi, never let it be in Bombay — for if you love him, your labour will be lost. In Bombay he is never left alone and what is the use of meeting an intimate friend if you cannot be alone with him. Either a scenario-writer has his car, or it may be his Secretary that is distracting his attention, or it will be time for him to rush off to rehearsal for the play to be staged tomorrow, or a deputation of refugees who want him to be their spokesman to the government or for he himself to be their benefactor. Always there is one thing or another — be he in his office or even at his home. I was more than sorry when we reached Bombay for I had lost Prithvi. I was with him all right and for all time, but it was all the more tantalising for we were so near in body yet so far apart in intimate talk. And then I had not had a hike for a matter of eight weeks. Prithvi talked to me about a summer retreat, called Khanda, and I suggested that he should build himself a weekend cottage there to enable him to slip away from Bombay. He liked my idea but laughed at it too and

said, "That is all very well — but others would over-run it and I should simply be footing the bill — no, week-ends in hotel would be better. If only there were inns — as the once were in England!" Anyhow, I proposed a visit to Khandala, we went as far as Lonavala which is three miles beyond and then walked back to Khandala. So we each got our longed-for hike — he gets no exercise whatsoever in Bombay. But, alas, characteristically, he began inviting his friends to accompany us on the hike. I trembled in my shoes lest any one of them should accept. It was practically my last day and I wanted Prithvi all to myself. Whenever he started talking about it, I would furiously ogle him — but without effect. Luckily we chose a very early morning train and luckily, too, it was drizzling — so none of those to whom the invitation had been extended — turned up — perhaps the real reason was the trudge of those miles on foot — but until the train moved, I was uneasy in my mind. When it whistled and started, I cried 'Hurrah for the clouds', 'Hurrah for the early morning hour' and 'Hurrah for the brown open road' that had kept away the undesireables. For the whole day we were to be together — just Prithvi and I — with no tedious visitor to come between us. Today was to be the crowning dish to cap all the good things (as dessert after a very good meal) that had been mine during the itinerary. Another bit of luck — we were the only two in the compartment.

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Prithvi was in a communicative mood — he talked and I listened. Dash it — Electric trains move too fast — before we knew it, we had reached Lonavala! Our train was the Poona Express on the Bombay to Poona Service — what a contrast to our dear old Kangra Valley Service, whose trains one and all move at a snail's pace. Romance makes one languid and in no hurry and Kangra Valley is redolent of romance. On the other hand Bombay is 'redolent' of commerce! In commerce time is money and communications must speed up. We got down at Lonavala and wended our way to the lake. We had no defence against rain — the clouds found it out and stole a march on us — Clever clouds! But we faced up to them. The drizzle had become a downpour. We got wet through but it did not dampen our spirits. Luckily I had a felt hat on my head — not that I was afraid of wetting my top hair (though I have now got very little to boast of!), but being a barnacled person it saved my spectacles and also acted as the thatch that was now missing. The road had become a running stream for us to wade through. Splash! Splash! Happy we! People sitting in their wayside shops — high and dry, grinned with amazed amusement as they beheld us. On our part we pitied them for what they were missing. They must have taken us for tramps — down and out — who could not even afford an umbrella! It was high time for breakfast. Prithvi had been at Lonavala before and was sizing up

the roads for a Hotel, looking out for some pedestrians to ask — it was just pouring and not a soul was about. But soft — what is that placard showing? Hurrah! Hamilton Hotel. We danced for joy and went padding inside the compound and into a large verandah upon which reposed a couple of inviting easy chairs. We shouted '*Koi hai?*' No response. Prithvi went right in to beard the lion in his den and out came a lanky poker-faced Sindhi — not much of a lion to look at — who had taken that Hotel on contract some years ago and had done well. But now he had lost much custom for most of the Englishmen had quitted. Could he give us a first class breakfast, cost no question? He measured us from top to toe — perhaps thinking we were better than what we looked and said, Yes — he could. Off went our shoes from our feet — bare and unstockinged. Off also went our coats, our shirts and our vests with only our wet trousers left on us — Luckily the season was warm. The Sindhi proprietor solemnly took our wet clothes and had them spread before a fire to dry. We talked and laughed and wondered if the heavy breakfast should turn out to be an austerity feast. But no — the Sindhi proved himself to be a jolly good cook and fairly soon he served us with delicious hot coffee and cream, with scrambled eggs, toast, butter, marmalade and also with honey. Prithvi is a real Frontier man where eating goes. He made short work of the jar of honey — al-

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lowing me my not inconsiderable share. How we enjoyed that meal! Hunger served as a good sauce. Breakfast over and our clothes now dry we were ready for another wetting. The Sindhi hardly knew what to make of us. Perhaps he thought of us as escaped lunatics — which indeed we were! We had our hike back to Khandala yet in the offing. But the monsoon clouds behaved a goodly part of the way and not till we were near Khandala did they make their appearance. We snapped our fingers at them. We went to see the cottage owned by Vanmala. Vanmala had played Prithvi's opposite in the film *Sikander* — which had brought him great fame. All cinema fans love him in the role, and as he goes along the road — people recognise him and say 'There goes *Sikander*'. Here is a story about Prithvi who has the habit of sitting before a large mirror, fully dressed for a part. He would sit and gaze at himself, detaching Prithvi from Prithvi, getting into the skin of his part. Vanmala noticed him doing this every time he was to go on the sets in *Sikander*, and one day as she passed him she ejaculated "Narcissus"! He retorted with "Echo"! Near Vanmala's cottage is the big estate of "*Shikari mem*" as they call her. She keeps a zoo on a small scale on her own premises, and has plots of land for sale. Her terms for a building site were reasonable. We were not long with her as we had to catch the train which came shrieking in as we arrived at the platform, where there seemed

to be unusual excitement and something for a crowd. A compartment attracted our notice for it was beflagged and decorated with garlands. Prithvi was curious and pushed through the crowd in his forceful way and I could but follow. Who was receiving all this attention? It was none other than Mr. Golwalkar — the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh Chief, who had recently been let out of jail and was now moving about the country and getting ovations from his followers. His lieutenants recognised Prithvi and greeted him warmly, introducing him to their chief in flattering words for the work he was doing in the field of art. Prithvi introduced me to him and we were invited into his carriage for a talk, but what with the crowd and company inside, the jolting and noise of the train and the noisy throng of followers and their vociferous slogans at every halting station, no sustained talk was possible. Nevertheless, Prithvi got in a word or two about the political turmoil. “There is only one chair”, he said, “and so many want to sit in it. There is such a scramble for it that not only will many bones be broken but the chair itself will be smashed. In politics discipline was absolutely essential and yet our crowds were witness to the utter lack of it.” He asked Mr. Golwalkar to control his followers and to give the right lead in these critical times. Mr. Golwalkar has long hair and a bearded face upon which a smile constantly plays. He has the care-free ways of a school-boy and is very

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informal and friendly with his companions. At every halting of the train tea-trays were thrust into the compartment and the last ones taken out, occupants of our compartment had seen to it that tea-pots, sugar-basins and milk-jugs were returned quite empty! Flowers came in to stay. And it was lovely to have the compartment laden with them. We had a very good ending to a very good day.

That day of ours, however, did not end with this incident. There was another item on the programme — Dinner at Didi's — a Bengali artist — Sati Devi by name and in name only for everybody calls her affectionately "Didi" (sister)! I thought it would be a small and intimate affair — but Didi does not believe in small affairs. It was a big party — many familiar faces but a sprinkling of new ones, too. And the dinner — so many courses! It was lucky (for Didi's sake) that no rationing inspector came that way for she would have been hard put to it to explain her cook — more — food campaign. It was a Bengali dinner — so said Didi, in justification of her spread — it made me wish I had been born a Bengali — a West one for choice.

July 26

Why will friends wait to invite you to a meal till the eve of your departure from their midst? Yesterday I received three invitations to dine out from which I selected as my host S. Jugget Singh of the Customs Department — old friends of Prithvi and family. It was quite a big party. He is a Frontier man and we were sure of chicken *Pulao* and chicken curry — two inevitable Frontier dishes. Earlier S. Jugget Singh had shown us round a large cigarette making factory that turns out thousands of cigarettes every day. Lady Nicotine is a prime favourite in India and is the open sesame to many doors unlocking confidences that flow from one to another with the blue smoke of their puffs. Jugget Singh, however, is impervious to the charms of Lady Nicotine or for the matter of that to the charms of any other lady except Mrs. Jugget Singh. His wife runs the house in a manner that is worthy of a model housewife. If morning shows the day, a dinner shows the lady of the house — the dinner that evening took me back to the good old days in old Peshawar when chickens were plentiful and rice not rationed. The company was lively and Raj Kapoor (Prithvi's eldest son) — the liveliest of them all. He was at his best that night. Perhaps the finishing touches he had given to his film *Barsaat* had lightened his spirit. I had never known him so animated. While he talked so



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well, his wife sat quite with a smile playing on her chubby face and enjoyed his jokes. Raj started on the stage with Prithvi but later went over to the silver screen where he is doing very well and is among the top-most film stars. What made him leave the stage and go to the screen? Was it money? I do not think so. May it not be that Raj felt that on the stage he would always be overshadowed by his father. He does not want to shine with reflected glory nor that the people pointing to him should say "There goes Raj Kapoor — the son of Prithvi." In the exuberance of youth he would prefer people to exclaim, "There goes Prithviraj — the father of Raj Kapoor". Nothing would please Prithvi more than triumphal achievement of his son. But Raj is young — and his best is yet to come.

*July 27*

I was to leave Bombay by the B.B.&C.I. At 5 P.M. in train, so Prithvi took me round to call on friends. Met Sajjan and Manik Kapoor (Prithvi's Secretary — a sincere and silent worker) at Malad, Ramesh at Filmistan, Indar Raj Anand, the brilliant young writer of 'Ghaddaar' at Juhu and at Ville Parle Nand Kishore Kapoor (Prithvi's cousin brother and Prithvi Theatres' Manager).

## WITH PRITHVIRAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

Prithvi has two managers — both his cousin brothers — Nand Kishore Kapoor and Pran Nath Khanna — both devoted to Prithvi and his Prithvi Theatres — with them at the helm of the affairs Prithvi does not have to worry about the business side of his work which is always a headache and a problem for an artist — Pran is an old Edwardian from Peshawar who like Prithvi annexed the Col. Keen Intercollegiate Tennis Challenge Cup for his College not once but twice. Like all other Prithvi Theatres Workers his Managers are there because of their love for him and his work and not for the little silver which they get in return as any day they could command better wages in any of the Film concerns.

It was well past lunch time but there was one more call to make and one always rounds a meal with a 'sweet' - that 'sweet' was Uzra. We had had an early breakfast but no lunch — Prithvi usually goes without lunch at Bombay — but my experience is that the sea-breeze makes one hungry. So as we were shown in, my eyes were food-seeking. Uzra sensed it. Mr. Hameed came out with an offer of coffee — it was to be made by himself and too good to be refused. Prithvi pointed to the hands of his watch — but which should one choose if the choice lies between coffee with eats and the mere catching of a train — one was immediate gain — the other but a possible loss. Ay, take the cash in hand and let the credit go. Uzra comes forward with chunks of bread thickly

## WITH PRITHVIRAJ & HIS PRITHVI THEATRES

spread with cream and marmalade — two weaknesses of mine and Prithvi's too! The tiresome train is forgotten — we arrived at the station in the very nick of time and I caught my train by the skin of my teeth. There was Ramesh with a basket of fruit, wondering if I was leaving at all. But for the conductor's courtesy Prithvi would have had me on his hands for yet another day! Well, if Richard could sell his kingdom for a horse, if Jacob could sell his birthright for a mess of pottage, could I not miss a train for delicious hot coffee and bread and marmalade — with cream to boot!...The train moved off — our paths had parted — Prithvi going his way and I going mine — but towards the same goal.



Father, son & the ministering angel



**At Home with his family  
Standing**

**Prithvi & Raj (son)**

**Seated**

**Urmilla (Daughter)**

**Mrs. Prithvi, Dabbu  
(Grandson)**

**Mrs. Raj Kapoor, Shashi  
(youngest son)**

**absentee—Shammi (son)**



**Prithvi & Mrs. Prithvi**

**"They also serve who stand and wait"**



With the author at Serangapatam



Prithvi Theatres' inaugural 1944



**Shashi & Prithvi as Bharat & Dushyant in Shakuntala**



**Kumud, Uzra & Pushpa in Shakuntala**



**Sajjan & Prithvi in Deewar**



**Sardar Patel addressing the house after the "Deewar" show  
16th December 1945**





**Pran—Kiran—Zohra—Prithvi—Didi—Uzra—Shammi**



**Prithvi—Uzra—Pushpa—Sajjan (Deewar)**



**Sudershan, Prem, Kanwal, Prithvi, Naidu (Deewar)**



**The Aftermath of Partition (Deewar)**



**Frithvi in Pathan**



**Prithvi & Raj Kapoor in Pathan**



**Shami, Uzra, Satidevi, Zohra & Prithvi in "Pathan"**



**The Finale (Pathan)**



**Prithvi in Ghaddaar**



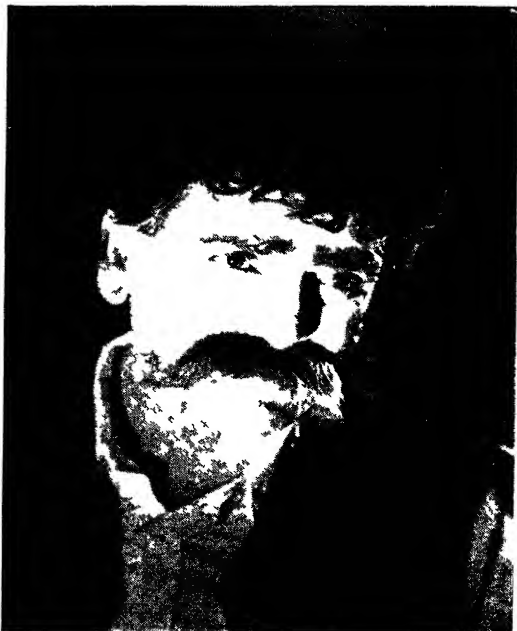
**Prithvi & Uzra in Ghaddaar**



**Kamal, Vyas, Sajjan & Prithvi in Ghaddaar**



**Zohra, Prithvi & Uzra in Ghaddaar**



**The Homeless (Ahooti)**



**The Wandering Refugee (Ahooti)**

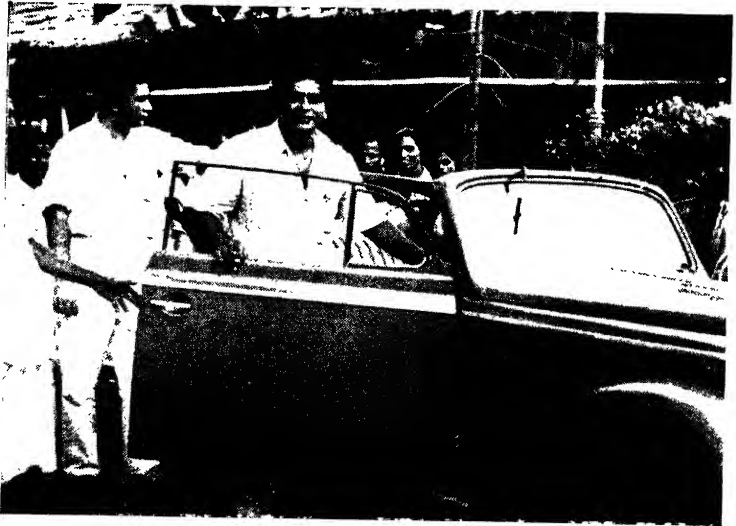


**Pushpa & Prithviraj in Ahooti**





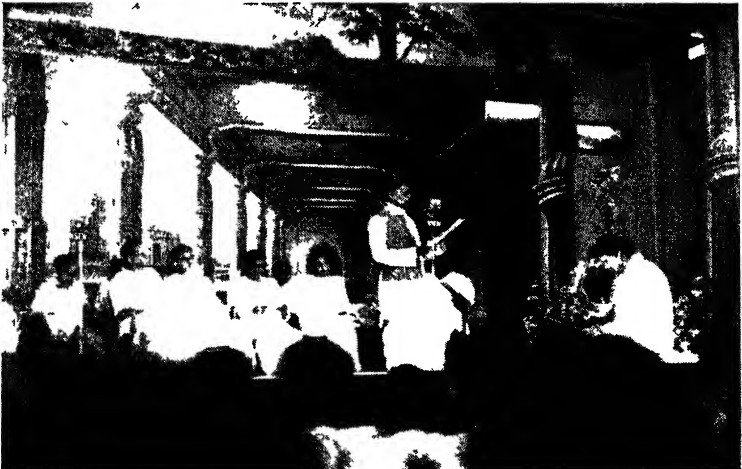
**His "Jholi"**



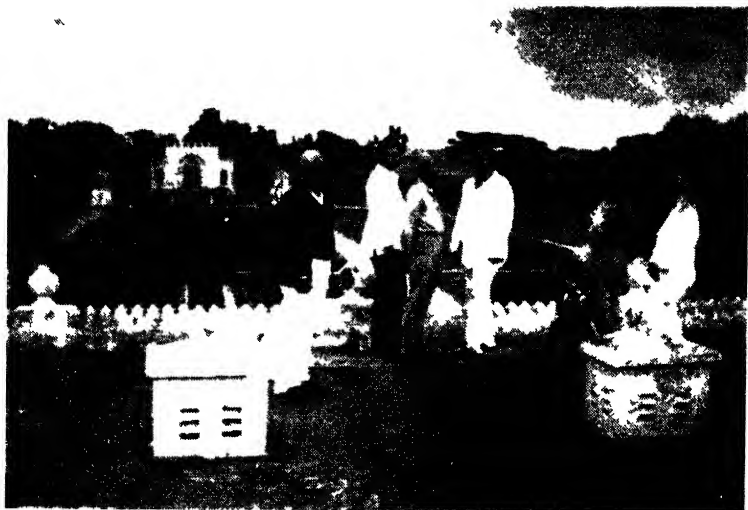
**His Opel—Eleven years old and still going strong**



**At Mysore standing for the National Anthem.  
Mayor, Prithvi, Mrs. Prithvi, J. D. & Deewan Sahib**



**Receiving an Address**



**With the author at Brindaban Gardens—Mysore**



**Prithvi Theatres "A Happy Family"**



**At play**



**They love to walk with him**



**Garlands ! More garlands !!**



**Prithvi with his managers—Pran & Nand**





