

Sun Changes Its Spots

NOT since Brutus has there been such a stab in such a back. No wonder Indira Gandhi was so "absolutely livid" and her daughter-in-law Maneka so studiously low-key. The culprit: Maneka's mother Amteshwar Anand, who last fortnight fetched Mrs Gandhi a resounding snub by selling her chintzy, down-at-heel magazine *Surya India* and its Hindi counterpart to two prominent members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Dr Jinendra Kumar Jain and Sardar S.C. Angre. The Congress(I)'s raucous mouthpiece had bitten the hand that fed it—and the plaster was finally peeling off the ruling family's imperious facade.

"It was designed to embarrass the prime minister," fumed an insider at 1 Safdarjung Road, "out of sheer spite. Why else would Mrs Anand choose to sell to Mrs Gandhi's political opponents?"

It was also clear that the glamorous and hard-bitten publisher had rid herself of an enterprise that had lately been wallowing in red ink. Once a symbol of its owner's proximity to the power centre, the magazine had, after Sanjay's death, been consigned to the doghouse. Matters were not helped when Anand tried to propel daughter Maneka into political orbit in the post-Sanjay period, and both were firmly put in their places. In January last year, Maneka switched to the role of 'consulting editor' and eventually cut herself off completely five months later.

Convenient Vehicle: Throughout its life under the stewardship of Anand, *Surya* had more than once embroiled itself in controversy. It was launched with fanfare in October 1976. While it served as a convenient vehicle for Maneka's head-strong brand of journalism, its economic survival was ensured by advertisers eager to exhibit their loyalty to the Gandhi family. Mrs Gandhi's defeat in March 1977 was a serious blow to *Surya*, but the mother-and-daughter team doggedly continued to publish the magazine.

The contacts that political power brought helped feed in a steady stream of reporting that could at best be called scurrilous. In June 1978, for instance, the magazine carried a nasty little item on lawyer Rani Jethmalani in its gossip column. In

October of that year, *Surya* carried the gory details of the Suresh Ram-Sushma escapade—with reproductions of Polaroid prints of the couple's antics. Two months later, in a report titled 'CIA Agents in India', *Surya* unabashedly named 25 senior journalists alleged to be on the intelligence agency's payroll. Protracted legal battles with Jethmalani and journalist Prithvis Chakravarty eventually ended with the magazine having to apologise for its brashness.

Even the fiercest critic of the magazine concedes that it exhibited an unusual gutsy aggressiveness during the Janata period. All

TODAY that the decision had been made for her by her doctor and auditor—an unusual explanation, even though Anand suffers from chronic asthma.

Financial details of the sale remain closely guarded, with both sides maintaining a stiff silence, but sources in the magazine said that Anand had had to sell at a loss. Although the magazine's parent company, Youngmen Printers and Publishers, had been set up with an authorised capital of 50,000 shares of Rs 10 each, its records only show that Anand and her partner Indira Dhody were allotted 1,250 shares each when the magazine was launched. Curiously, the magazine never filed its financial returns after 1977, when it made a profit of Rs 31,872.45, and failed to register itself with the Indian and Eastern Newspapers Society (IENS).

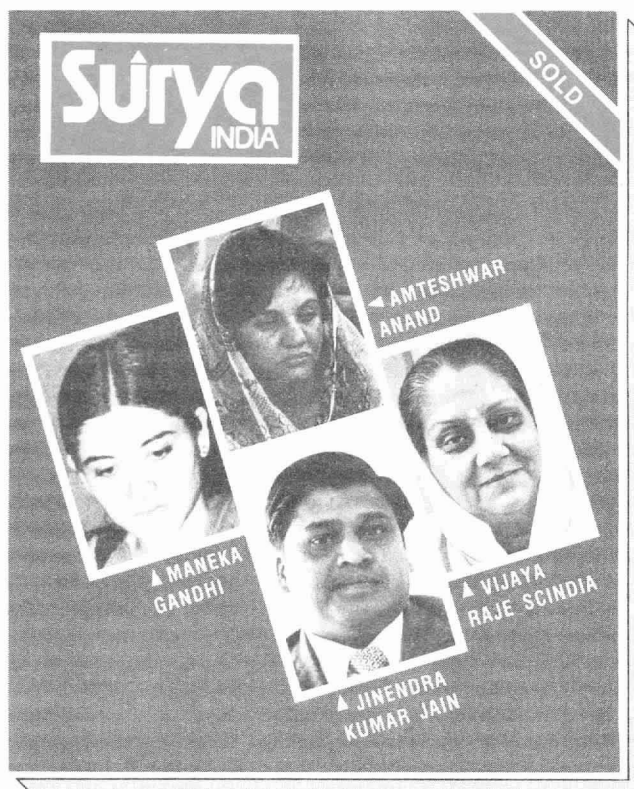
Nor did it bother to have its circulation figures verified by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC).

New Owners: Both the new owners of the magazine have interesting backgrounds. Dr Jain, 36, is a practising surgeon in Delhi; in a matter of eight years, he claims, he has built up an impressive clientele of "top bureaucrats, industrialists, politicians and journalists". His 15-bed nursing home in the South Extension area is equipped with "some of the most modern medical instruments in the country", and visitors are regaled with piped-in *bhajans* over a public address system.

But the podgy doctor has other duties. In 1977, he succeeded Subramaniam Swamy as secretary of the Deen Dayal Research Institute in Delhi. He is also a member of the BJP's national executive, and personal physician to Nanaji Deshmukh, the institute's chairman. As secretary, Jain is executive head of all institute projects—which include the 'Deen-dayalpuram' rehabilitation programme in Andhra Pradesh's flood-ravaged Krishna district, a massive integrated development project at Gonda in Uttar Pradesh, and recently-launched projects for 'rural development' in Orissa's Sundergarh district and Bihar's Singhbhum district.

Jain reinforces his rags-to-riches image by claiming an unusual affinity to the Lok Dal Chairman, Charan Singh. "I belong to Baraut town, which is Charan Singh's place too," he says. Obviously proud of his achievements, he claims that he was the youngest president of the Delhi Medical Association, and began practice with a loan of Rs 800 and a 'borrowed stethoscope'.

Friends of Anand, however, say that she



this, however, ended with Sanjay's death and the eclipse of his lieutenants, and the magazine's stock plummeted with that of its owners. Advertisers who had returned in strength to its pages after the Congress(I)'s election victory in January 1980 mysteriously disappeared—many of them reneging on contracts and leaving large bills unpaid—and circulation nosedived to a measly 14,000 according to insiders, although Anand claims that it was close to 40,000 when she sold it. As production and editing went into ragged decline and the editorial language took on a distinctly pidgin style, Anand began to look around for buyers. She told INDIA

was not really aware of the "political implications" of the sale, and that the decision was arrived at by Jain (who also happens to be Anand's physician) and the auditors. Although newspaper reports said that the magazine had been sold for Rs 10 lakh, the actual sum exchanged is less than Rs 1 lakh—although the liabilities amount to much more, and there is "an army" of defaulting advertisers.

The majority shareholder in the new set-up, however, is the portly Sardar S.C. Angre, who is private secretary to the BJP vice-president Vijaya Raje Scindia, Rajmata of Gwalior. Angre was a member of the Rajya Sabha between 1968 and 1974, and is a colleague of Jain's on the BJP's national executive. He has often been involved in controversy in Gwalior, and is alleged to be responsible for bringing the Rajmata over to the BJP fold and driving a wedge between her and her son Madhavrao Scindia.

Jain said that his auditors were at work unravelling *Surya's* financial mess. He admitted that the magazine was in bad shape, and that quite a few advertisers owed it money. He insists that *Surya* will not be sympathetic to any political party, but be a "responsible news periodical". Says he: "I cannot be bothered about the problems facing Mrs Anand, but we have asked her to continue cooperating with us until the takeover is completed." Significantly, the new management, in a press statement issued by Jain soon after the takeover, noted "the important role played by *Surya* in influencing the national political events in the past."

New Angle: However, Jain's claim that Anand had sold the magazine lock, stock and barrel seemed to be not entirely true. INDIA TODAY has learnt that the deal was in fact initiated by Vijaya Raje's daughter Vasundhara Raje, who happens to be a good friend of Maneka's, and at whose farmhouse Feroze Varun Gandhi's last birthday was celebrated. There is therefore a strong possibility, say insiders, that Anand continues to hold some *Surya* stock, that Jain and Angre were merely bailing her out of a financial crisis, and that Anand may eventually re-enter the scene. This is lent credence to by the fact that the sale deed reportedly contains an important clause: that *Surya's* new owners will not substantially change the magazine's "present form".

Although Maneka ostensibly dissociated herself from *Surya* last year, she has continued to take interest in the affairs of a magazine that once mouthed causes dear to her late husband Sanjay. In fact, during the tumultuous Janata days, *Surya* stood in the front ranks of the Youth Congress, and played no mean role in the return of the Gandhis. Unless she was left completely in the dark by her mother—which is hardly plausible—it is surprising that she should

have acquiesced to the passing of the magazine into the hands of those Sanjay loathed most fiercely: the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

Yet, one close friend insists that Maneka is, in fact, anxious to steer clear of the deal, for fear that Mrs Gandhi might be provoked into banishing her altogether from 1 Safdarjung Road. As the prime minister's intimates silently watched her towering rage, there was consternation in ruling party ranks—and unbounded speculation on the possible repercussions of so brazen an act.

Reliable sources privately aver that the main financier of the deal is in actually the Rajmata of Gwalior, and that Jain and Angre are merely the front men. Jain denies any such links. "Angre works closely with Mrs Scindia," he says, "but he is a very independent economic entity. And in running my clinic, and supervising the Deen Dayal Institute's projects, I have come to acquire considerable expertise in financial management." He says the *Surya* deal was a straightforward business proposition. "Angre and I were first made minority shareholders, and then the deal was finalised. I know we do not possess journalistic talent, but we are looking for good professionals. And we will not sack existing staff."

Curiously, when asked whether he is familiar with the magazine's poor shape, Jain says: "To tell you the truth I have not been a reader of *Surya*. My profession does not allow me much time to read magazines." The new buyers have formally undertaken that the magazine will not follow the line of any political party.

Vacant Post: Jain has already "informally" offered the editorship of the magazine to syndicated journalist Japardan Thakur and to cartoonist-columnist Rajinder Puri. Thakur says that he was offered the post, but will not be accepting it. Puri denies that he was "formally" offered the editorship, and says he cannot make hypothetical statements about whether he will eventually accept.

Meanwhile, Amteshwar Anand has withdrawn into a monastic silence, but the magazine's editorial office continues to function from a *barsati* atop her Jor Bagh residence. Maneka Gandhi is not available for comment, and spends most of her time working on an anthology of Indian poetry and peering at videotaped films in the library of the India International Centre. By all accounts, she remains unruffled by the *Surya* sale and continues with her life as if nothing untoward had occurred.

And there is palpable glee in the BJP ranks at the cheekiness of the coup. Says a media-watcher, tongue firmly in cheek: "It would be in the fitness of things if *Organiser*, the RSS mouthpiece, were now taken over by the Congress(1)'s *National Herald*."

—CHAITANYA KALBAG

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You see, the root of hair problems lies in the scalp.

Because, unless you look after your scalp and keep it well-nourished, it becomes dry and starved. And this leads to ugly, itchy dandruff.

To hair that keeps breaking all the time. To hair that looks dull and 'dead'.

And that, of course, is the end of your hair...

That's why (and not everybody realises this) you need to take very special care of your scalp itself. With the hair tonic specially formulated to fight scalp dryness...



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