



A Sour View Of the Subcontinent

JOHN KENNETH GALBRAITH

THE HEART OF INDIA, by Alexander Campbell. Alfred A. Knopf. \$5.

Like most other people, Indians take themselves seriously, and unlike most people they take other people seriously as well. In these circumstances the pompous and the pious are rarely if ever described to themselves, and as a result there may be no other country in the world where so many bogus characters enjoy such formidable security. If one can illustrate by an example that somehow comes to mind, Mr. John Foster Dulles has lasted longer in high office in the United States than many would have wished. Yet we may take some comfort vis-à-vis our Asian friends from the fact that had he been born in the right caste and under the right stars in India, his view of himself as an abnormally holy man would be completely commonplace. Indeed, he might have some worshipers.

Mr. Campbell has undertaken to crack the bogus crust in Indian political and religious life, and in a way he has done it very well. His book is a tightly edited (and, one assumes, rather selective) account of his travels around India and into East and West Pakistan. He was then a Time Inc. correspondent in India, and his book shows traces of what

some Indians might consider a slightly bogus Timestyle, including an excessive search for dramatic historical effect that depends, among other devices, on an artificial use of tense. Still, Mr. Campbell has a talent for description and an ear for conversation, and he is a lean and talented writer. His account of the police investigation of the murder of some Socialists in Uttar Pradesh, of his encounter with a lonely and excluded Anglo-Indian in Agra and Gwalior; his tales of double talk and fancy perquisites in the Congress Party, of a party stalwart who (literally) combined politics with the promotion of his patent medicine, of his brief encounter with Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the collector of land for redistribution, and of his journey to the Portuguese enclave of Goa to watch a nonviolent march over the border—all these are good and even fascinating. Although Indians will not like much of what he says, they will find him, perversely enough, one of the more effective defenders of their position in the Vale of Kashmir.

YET I would not want to leave too favorable an impression. Mr. Campbell has shown that a book can be competent and bright and even intelligent without being good. As a

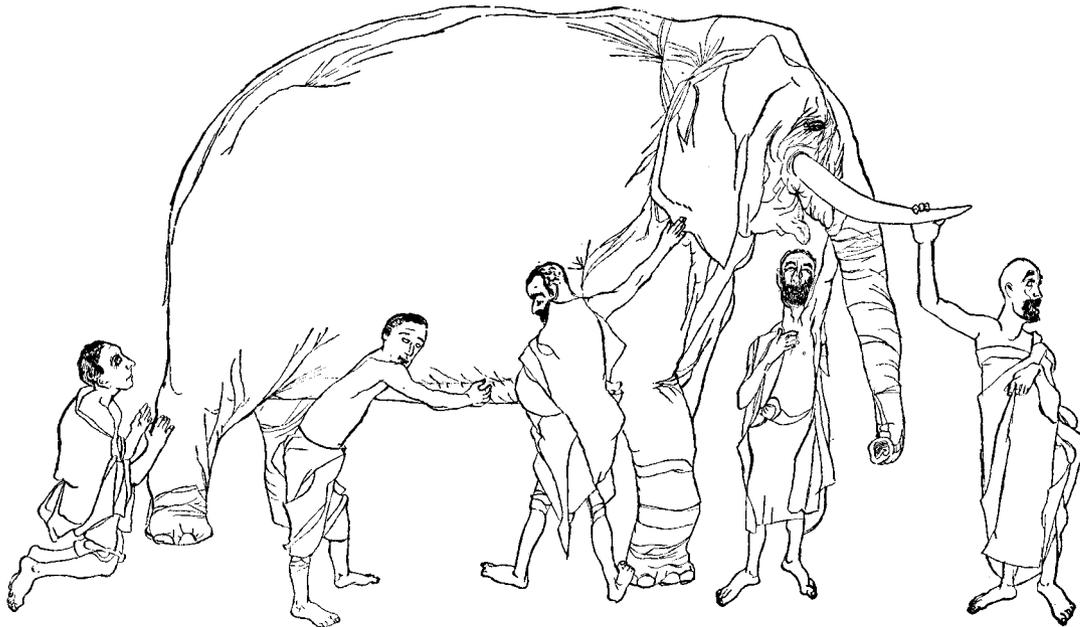
minor point, his tales are rather too miraculously rounded and complete. They all seem to come out rather too well. When he visited a Gujerat leader in Bombay just before the riots in that city, his devout host rebuked him for killing a mosquito only moments before he rebuked him for failing to see the need for killing a few Maharashtrians if that were necessary to put them in their place. When he talked with Moslems and Hindus, Congressmen and Communists, Pakistanis and Indians, each set up the problem in precisely the fashion that best brought out the particular conflict. Often during these conversations there was some incident or slip that very conveniently exposed the cant of which the speaker was guilty.

Also, since Mr. Campbell reported only on those villages and cities where something was going on, one gets the impression that his journey was one of the most stirring hegiras since the princely tour of Edward VII. He is at no pains to minimize this impression.

HOWEVER, there is a more serious defect. It is that the book is devoid of anything that even remotely could be called compassion. Mr. Campbell knows that India is struggling, in some ways hopefully and in some ways hopelessly, with problems of incredible magnitude. He is interested in this struggle principally because of the odd behavior that it evokes.

Much of this behavior, by his own standards, the author finds exceedingly naïve. He does not reflect that history until recently denied Indians—all but a tiny few—even the chance to be naïve. If some of the manifestly voluble Indian self-expression is erratic, it is partly because an exceptionally large number of Indians are partaking of the rare and unusual delight of expressing themselves. This is not unimportant. And maybe it is inevitable in any considerable intellectual revival.

That India is having such a revival is the most important thing that Mr. Campbell missed. And in the enthusiasms of such a revival it is too much to expect that one will have only seemly and strictly logical as well as sophisticated and unheretical thoughts.



To get the whole truth you have to get the whole picture

THE BLIND MAN who touched the elephant's head said "An elephant is like a water pot." The one who felt his ears said "like a basket." Another fingered the tusks and said "An elephant is like a plow." Feeling the legs, a fourth said "like a post." And the blind man who touched the elephant's belly asserted "An elephant is like a granary."

It's the same way with the news. You touch a part and you think "This is how it is"—*but you may be wrong*. Even when you understand one or more parts of the news perfectly, you may still put the parts together incorrectly, you may still base an inexact over-all picture on them. To get the whole truth, you have to get the whole story.

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