

Horrendous howlers

by Suchita Malik

CORRECTING answer-sheets of the college students, otherwise a cumbersome and tiring routine exercise for any teacher, can be a hilarious experience also at times. Not only does it expose the general I.Q. level of our "lost generation", it is also a reflection of the teaching standards and perhaps methodology of "us", the "prodigal guiding spirits" of the "hopes" of our nation. Come exams and the otherwise "fertile" imagination of our dear students goes berserk, vertically and horizontally.

On one such marking "spree" in the college, while all of us were sitting in the staff-room, looking quite crestfallen under the weight of bundles, some such horrendous but hilarious howlers gripped our attention that certainly lifted the veil of boredom and

"enlivened" the atmosphere.

Alfred Tennyson's famous Lady of the Shallot had become the name of an island and bias (prejudice) was interpreted to be the name of a river in Punjab, (meaning Beas). "Hoarse" meant an animal of "long race" whereas teacher was seen as "tea ko charne wala". "Adhyapak was referred to as "Adha-paka" while Death was defined to be a great "traveller" instead of "leveller". The legendary Shakespeare became "Sheikh-Peer" and also 'Sex-Peer' for some and the poor pilgrim was reduced to a mere "Panchnama".

However, it was the translation that evoked much laughter with its literal connotations and interpretations. It was even more than a lesson in transliteration. "Rabindra Nath Tagore loved his

mother tongue" was translated as "Rabindra Nath Tagore nu apni Maan di jibh badi pyari si". "*Desh wich anni chhayi hoi hai*" was translated into English as "our country is ruled by a blind woman". "Films exercise an influence on our youth" was seen as "film ek kasrat hain." The most comic came in this form: "Woh aik garib Brahmin tha" was translated as "He was a poor Sharma!" While completing the sentence. "Make hay while...." the student stumbled upon to...(I lay the bricks).

Needless to say, there were so many more of such howlers that could certainly generate laughter but at the same time, we had our heads down with shame at the ever-deteriorating educational standards of the non-professional colleges where students came just for a "time-pass" and our own

"inability to stem or check the "rot"

Coming back to the comic relief, my mind went back by a decade or so to an interactive session of our trainee students with a journalist (I forget the name) where he was talking about the role of a sub-editor in a newspaper set-up. Talking about the "copy" and the significance of a catchy, crisp headline, he gave an example that sets me laughing even now and which I would like to share with my readers. The story was about the death of an M.P. and the trainee, after much thought, had come up with the headline, "From Lok-Sabha to Parlok-Sabha". Of course, the headline was "killed" finally but not before it had served its purpose.

Comparing the two situations, I sat wondering if it was a fall from "creativity" to "ignorance". ■