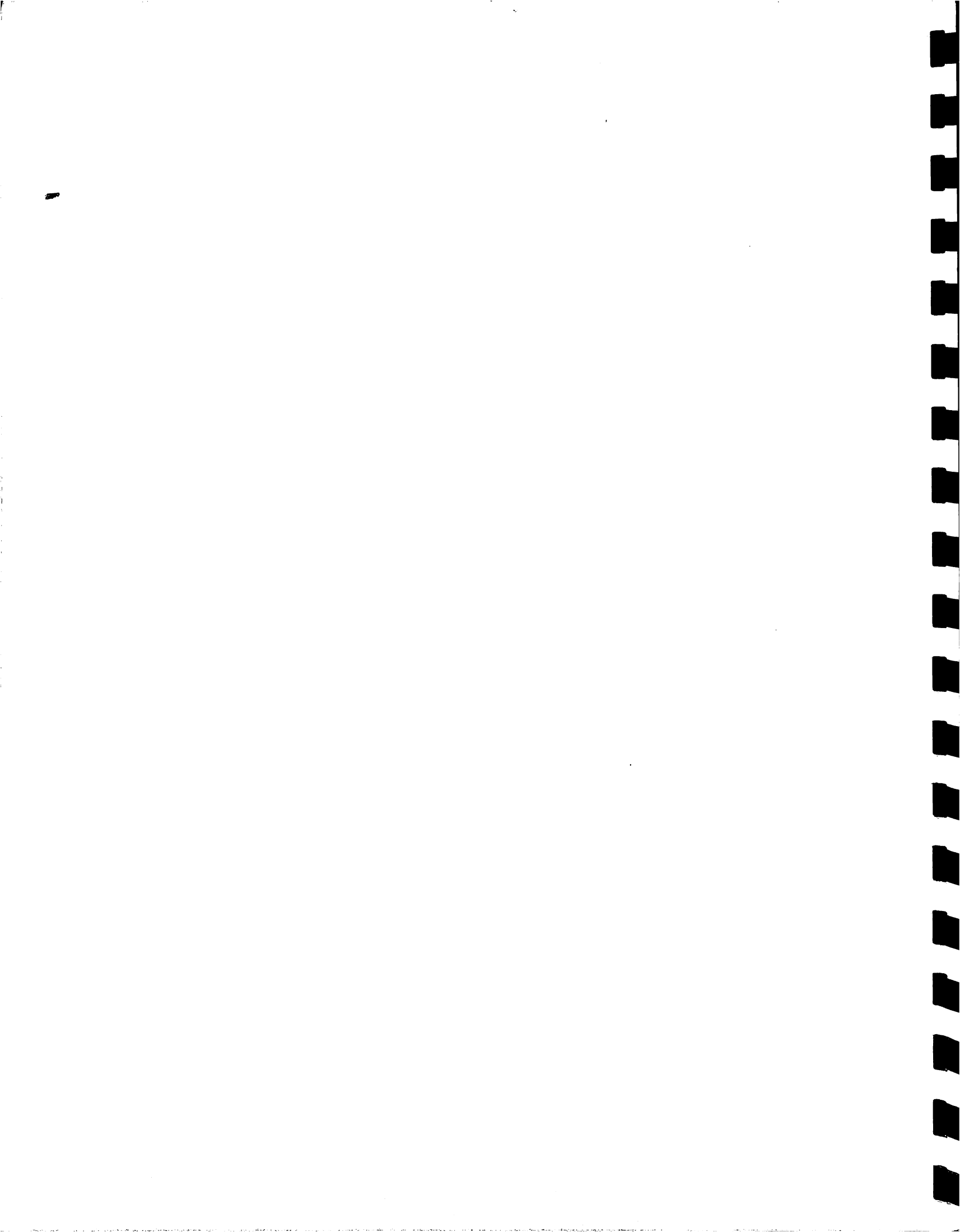


"THE GOD-MAN"



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Adapted from "Ramjoo's Diaries"
a published diary
by Ramjoo Abdulla

An Original Screenplay

By

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Twelfth and Final Draft
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Registered W.G.A.

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THE GOD-MAN

Against the black screen appear in silence, the following words:

Men are born and die and are reborn; until they die into the Deathless and are never born again. But one Man, being birthless and deathless, takes birth again and again because of the cry of the world for relief from the burden of living; and to mirror himself in the tears of his lovers.

This Man is the God-Man:

In January, 1925, Meher Baba, an Indian spiritual Master re-established his ashram near Ahmednagar, India at the age of 31. Seven months later he gave up speaking and commenced silence. In 1927, the extent of his activities broadened to include a free boy's boarding school, which was opened in a deserted British military station nearby. The aim of this unique school was to teach spiritual principles as well as standard academics, to all castes and creeds, an unprecedented goal in the caste-torn British-occupied state of India.

The words fade to black and we...

FADE IN

EXT. HILL TOP DAWN

It is iridescent dawn in the firmamental far-Eastern landscape. There is no sound. There is no movement. There is only sleepfulness, nay, an aching wakefulness. Flat hills of yellow sand without wind. Primeval, primordial. Five separate shots reveal barrenness. Then we reveal a compound, long shelters made of stone, wooden scantlings and tin. We move from one to the next and then.....



ANGLE HUT

A small structure, six feet by four feet, stone and bamboo walls, a tin roof, archaic construction. A "prison," with windows. We circle the hut, exploring its sides, its stone, its stained tin, ...its bamboo matting...to the door...and we come to rest. The door opens. A man walks out through the door. He is MEHER BABA.

The man stands erect. He is not tall but imposing, dimly lit against the dawn sky. Clad in a white cotton sadra reaching almost to his sandals. White cotton trousers hang beneath his sadra and above this is a coat, black and patched, nay, it is a collage of patches, hand-stitched to form a quilt of multi-sized squares. At the top is a face that is bright and well-moustached. Penetrating deep brown eyes give his face further emphasis. Around his face is a mass of long chestnut brown hair, matted and tangled somewhat. He has a week's growth of beard. He could be a romantic hero or a wanted desperado. He walks quickly from the hut.

EXT. HUT

We hear only his feet GRINDING in the red earth and his soft breathing. He walks toward one of the compound buildings. From the first building appears another man holding a lantern; it is MASAJI, the night watchman. He is old, his head wrapped in a scarf. His feet are bare. As the walking man approaches him, Masaji holds out the lantern. The first man takes it and walks on to the next building.

INT. DINING ROOM

It is a long hall with a dung floor and several tables set with metal plates and flatware. The man walks through the hall carefully inspecting every detail and then passes into the next room.



INT. KITCHEN

There are three giant copper pots on a floor-level wood stove. Food is cooking. CHHAGAN, a cook, is stirring one of the pots. He looks up at the moustached man and smiles. The lantern is hung on a hook from a low beam. The moustached man removes a lid, smells the food and makes an expression of great pleasure. His eyes and cheeks speak. His lips do not move. He reaches to a shelf for a spice, drops a dash into the pot, hands the spice to Chhagan and makes a gesture of perfection.

CHHAGAN (*is slim & tall*)

Baba, it is now fourteen days! You will become weak if you do not eat.

Baba smiles and leaves through a back opening.

EXT. BACK KITCHEN DAY

There is a water pump outside the kitchen opening. Baba pumps water from the pipe and splashes his face. The pipe SQUEAKS and the water dies to a TRICKLE.

CHANJI

(o.s.)

Baba, ...I thought you would want to see this telegram. It came this morning.

ANGLE CHANJI

He is tall, ~~stocky~~ ^{*slim*}, bespectacled and young, about 29. He holds a telegram in his hands.

ANGLE MEHER BABA

Baba doesn't answer but with his right hand he gestures to Chanji to read the telegram.

BACK TO MASTER SHOT

They begin to walk away from the pump toward a third larger building, a fortress of stone. As they walk toward the fortress, the sound of BOY'S VOICES begin to become audible. The boys are singing strange words to a haunting melody. A series of seven sacred sounds. They repeat the chant over and over. Chanji adjusts his glasses and begins to read as he walks with Baba.

CHANJI
(Reading)

Very hopeful obtaining boys in Persia...

The two men now see a line of boys walking from the fortress out across the hill. EIGHTY BOYS in school uniforms, early teens. Some younger.

ANGLE BOYS

A platoon of boys walk toward the "prison" hut. One hundred yards from the hut, they stop walking and start CHANTING toward the odd structure. The sun has begun to cover the horizon. The sky is on fire.

CREDITS BEGIN

INT. DORMITORY -- (FORTRESS)

Baba and Chanji enter the stone building. The long room has many small beds in long neat row that stretch back into the splashing dusty light of the room. They walk past every bed. Baba stops for a moment to pull one of the blankets tight. Chanji is quiet until they leave the room.

EXT. HILL

Baba looks at the boys, then claps his hands loudly. The singing stops and the boys run to the dining hall. Baba and Chanji begin to descend the hill as the boys run past them.



INT. DINING HALL DAY

The boys take their seats without ceremony, just boys. There is a lot of talk in many languages, mostly Hindi and English. Two small boys, LOBAJI and PUNDIT, stand out.

PUNDIT

We will certainly win at cricket today, because we have the best team.

LOBAJI

Not if Baba plays with us.

PUNDIT

You dreamer, Baba is much too busy with his work.

EXT. HILL DAY

Chanji continues reading the telegram as he and Baba walk.

CHANJI

(Reading)

Some delays, will continue in Persia unless requested to return. Your servant, Baidul.

CREDITS END

The two men continue to descend the hill. At the bottom of the nearly treeless decline is a railroad track, beyond the track are several crude buildings including a small post office and a large compound building. Another man is walking up the hill quickly to meet them. It is AFSERI, the school manager, ^{tall} more stocky than Chanji and about the same age.

AFSERI

(Calling from below the hill)

Baba, more books have arrived and the license from Bombay University.

Afseri, who has been coming up the hill, joins them and turns to walk along side them. Baba seems to be in a hurry.



AFSERI
(Continued)

Baba, there's a man here to see you, he wants a job, he says he will take anything. But Baba, I think you should be warned. He doesn't look like he can be trusted.

WIDE ANGLE past foreground "prison" hut of the three men continuing to the railroad tracks at the base of the hill.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE DAY

Baba, who is a step or two ahead of Chanji and Afseri, is followed by PADRI, PENDU and RAMJOO, three more men about the same age and appearance. They enter an office with an open door facing the hill. Windows without glass face two directions in the long sparsely furnished office. Three additional men and a newly-arrived student fill the room; it is cramped now. One of the other men, KARIM, looks disheveled and out of place. His face is unshaven, his hair oily and uncombed. Bare feet scratch one another. Karim flinches anxiously when Baba and the group enter the room, his dark eyes searching Baba's and then turning aside.

An ashram supervisor, RUSTOM, sits behind a cluttered desk, along side is an antique typewriter. He gets up as Baba and the others enter.

RUSTOM
Baba, the advertisement for the London papers is ready to go out. This photograph accompanies it to the Bombay press this morning.

Rustom hands the advertisement copy to Baba, who reads it silently.

ANGLE ON KARIM

He is looking about the room, watching silently; something is troubling him. Baba points to one phrase in the advertisement copy. He picks up an alphabet board from Rustom's desk. It is black with English letters painted in white. He spells out a sentence.



His fingers point from one letter to the next with amazing speed. Karim seems mystified by this. Chanji interprets from the board as Rustom quickly jots on the page.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
Religious scruples are strictly respected.

As the sound of the typewriter begins to HAMMER, Baba turns to Karim.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
Why do you desire to work here?

KARIM
I am in search of work to support my family...
(unsure of himself)
...that is why I came.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
I know why you came! Will you obey my orders?

KARIM
(Confused by Baba's directness)
I will obey, yes.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
Food, clean clothes and a bath will await your pleasure.

KARIM
(Shocked, but enthusiastic)
Thank you. You are most kind.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
After you have refreshed yourself, go to your home and settle your affairs. If you return here in seven days, a job will await you.

Karim is speechless, Baba looks at Afseri and nods his head to the left a little, indicating the door.



AFSERI

Come with me Karim, better enjoy the hospitality while it lasts, you will soon enough have to obey the rules.

There is laughter among the men as Afseri leaves with Karim. Rustom indicates ABDULLAH, the new student.

RUSTOM

This is Abdullah, our first foreign student from Persia.

Baba's gaze softens as his eyes take in the new arrival. Abdullah is tall, thin and about seventeen. His hair is short, English-style and he wears casual clothing. He has great round eyes that give the impression of life experienced beyond his years. He is both polite and assertive, innocent yet wise.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Welcome Abdullah, we have been awaiting your arrival. Are you tired from your long journey?

ABDULLAH

A little. The train from Bombay was very crowded.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Why have you travelled so far to come to this school?

ABDULLAH

Since my parents died, I have been seeking a school that would provide me with a higher level of education. I intend to study seriously and advance myself by every means possible, so that one day I may make something of myself.



BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)

First, you must refresh yourself with breakfast and then rest. You will be examined later to determine which grade will be most suitable for you. Try and be diligent, I shall make pure gold from you.

With a quick double palming of the hands across each other, Baba indicates that business is over and leaves the room followed by Chanji.

EXT. BOMBAY SIDE STREET DAY

SUPERIMPOSE LOCATION TITLE--BOMBAY--1927

Two fourteen-year-old Muslim boys, ALI and AHMED, play tug-of-war with a bicycle wheel. The tire is old and patched. Both boys wear wrinkled and stained white cotton shirts, shorts and sandals. Ali is the taller of the two and his features are the more striking, but the two olive-skinned brown-eyed friends look very much like brothers.

GRUNTING, STRAINING and LAUGHING, they mug at each other playfully. Suddenly, Ahmed lets go of the bicycle wheel. Ali staggers and falls.

Ahmed grabs another wheel lying nearby and starts rolling it toward the road.

AHMED
To your father's tea shop!

AHMED
(Cont'd., over his shoulder)
If you lose, you get me a sweet bun!

ALI
And if I win?...

AHMED
(Stopping)

If you win?

(beat)

You get half the bun.

Ahmed whirls and takes off, rolling his wheel onto the road.

ALI
I will win! I always win!

Ali grabs the other wheel, swings it behind his back and heaves it over his head with both hands, using his body as a catapult. The wheel lands, bouncing and rolling toward the road as Ali dashes after it.

The boys race away in the background, rolling their wheels down the road into a denser part of the city. It all passes in a blaze of garish colors and NOISE.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Ahmed passes a mendicant who stands motionless on one foot.
- B) Ali zig-zags through the crowd.
- C) A vendor barely gets out of the way as Ali, "beeping" like a horn, cuts between the vendor and his customer.

The boys pass a British garrison, a platoon of soldiers marches slowly, virtually taking up the entire road. Ahmed and Ali race up behind and have to slow to the pace of the soldiers. Frustrated, but still rolling, they look for a way around. Only a tiny strip of road is clear on either side of the platoon. Each getting the same idea, Ahmed takes the left side, Ali takes the right.

As he gets about two-thirds of the way past, Ali loses control of his wheel. It wobbles, then careens into the leg of a SOLDIER.

SOLDIER
Watch it, coolie!

Embarrassed and angry, Ali picks up his wheel and continues rolling it very carefully and this time making it past the troops. Ali gradually gains on Ahmed who is far ahead as they head into a shop district.

EXT. TEA SHOP DAY

Neck and neck, the boys are near the end of their race. At an intersection, a bullock cart is just beginning to turn. Seeing the cart, Ahmed veers his wheel to go behind it, while Ali makes a split-second decision, gives his wheel a mighty shove and sprints straight ahead in front of the two bullocks. The bicycle wheel, passing under the noses of the bullocks, spooks them. They balk and veer to the side, overturning the cart and DRIVER, spilling sacks of rice into the street, the whole scene causing a general melee.

ANGLE WINDOW OF TEA SHOP

Karim and three wizened Moguls (Muslims) peer out at the wreckage, Karim yells back into the shop.

KARIM

Haji! Come see what your son has done.

ANGLE SHOP FRONT WITH WRECKAGE FOREGROUND

Haji MOHAMMED, an imposing, somewhat grizzly man, emerges from the shop wiping his hands with an apron. He sees the overturned cart. The driver seizes Ali and is about to strike him with a stick when Haji rushes forward and grabs the stick before it can fall.

Haji

Stop! That's my son.

DRIVER

(Speaking in Hindi)

Your son has just wrecked my cart.

The driver releases Ali, who then approaches his father. Haji turns so the driver cannot overhear. He holds Ali tightly by the back of his hair.

Haji
(Under his breath)
What's all this? What have you done?

Ali
We were racing...and I ran in front of the cart.

Haji
In front!....Why?

Ali
To win the race.

Haji
To win a race you run in front of a cart?

Haji glances toward the shop to see the many Moguls staring at him from the windows and the shop steps. He then turns so the driver can see his face and hear his voice.

Haji
(Cont'd, loudly)
You upset this man's cart!

INT. TEA SHOP

Karim and HUSSEIN, another Mogul, are sitting at a table engaged in a heated discussion. Hussein is a meaty man in his fifties, with a coarse commanding voice, a man who could command influence if he wanted, for better or for worse. He holds an empty glass in his hands, THUMPING it on the table from time to time.

Karim
I've seen this Baba with my own eyes.

Hussein
But he's a Zoroastrian.

CLOSE ANGLE on Ahmed outside, as Hussein looks out the window.



HUSSEIN

(Cont'd)

Look at my son, he's festering here and always in trouble. He needs schooling and Muslim schools cost money.

KARIM

If you send him to the free school, I can watch him for you- - - - -for a price!

Hussein is intrigued and tries to get the upper hand. He removes some rupee notes from his pocket and holds them in front of Karim.

HUSSEIN

Twenty rupees to be my eyes and ears and more if this school is good for Ahmed. Now you work for me.

EXT. STREET

Haji has let go of Ali and is walking around examining the damage. The driver is one step behind. A crowd has gathered, but no one attempts to pick up the mess, including the driver, who is enjoying being the center of attention.

DRIVER

(In Hindi)

You will pay for this.

The driver turns to the people around him and gestures to the rice.

HAJI

Ali! Ahmed! Come over here.

Haji indicates the cart with a nod of his head. The boys rush over and the three of them heave, straining to lift the cart. Haji glares at the driver from his strained position.

HAJI

Come, you can help.



The driver ignores the plea and lets the three lift the load without him. The cart falls onto its wheels with a THUD.

INT. ALI'S ROOM EVENING

Ali lies on his bed staring at the ceiling of his small room. A pebble flies through the window and CLATTERS across the floor. Ali turns his head in the direction of the sound.

ALI

Ahmed?

Ahmed boosts himself halfway over the window sill.

AHMED

Ali, what are you doing?

ALI

Thinking.

Ahmed climbs the rest of the way in.

AHMED

Come on, the bazaar...I have two rupees!

ALI

I can't, I have to help my father.

AHMED

He is still mad with you?

Ali wobbles his head from side to side, in the Indian version of a shrug.

AHMED

(Cont'd, excitedly)

My father has said yes! I am going to school.

Ali faces Ahmed squarely.

ALI

Your father has money?

AHMED
(Shakes his head, "no")
Going to Ahmednagar.

ALI
(Wide-eyed)
The free school?!

INT. DORMITORY NIGHT

Baba's figure fills the doorway. His white sadra glows momentarily with the light from a hanging lantern.

Further inside, two rows of beds line each side of the long room. About eighty boys are asleep. Baba walks slowly down the aisle and looks at each boy, his gaze thoughtful, sensitive, compassionate. At the end of the room, on the right, lies Abdullah, moonlight from the window touching his face, his left arm hanging limply to the floor. Next to his hand an open book (CALCULUS) stands on end. Baba picks up the book and sets it near other books on a small trunk beneath the window. Baba's face is tinged with sadness, as he gazes at Abdullah. Then, looking across the aisle, his expression becomes more focussed, more concerned.

He steps across the aisle to the last two beds. They are empty. He walks to the window and looks out at the moon.

INT. HAJI'S TEA SHOP NIGHT

The moon is shining in another window and Ali is gazing up at it as he dreamily wipes a tea cup and places it on a stack with others. Behind him, the chairs are all on tables and Haji sweeps the floor with a tired, yet determined pace.

HAJI
If you keep going so slow, we'll be here when the sun comes up.

Ali looks back at his father, then back out the window.



ALI

I wish I were up there and could look down here...

Haji laughs as he takes a cup and starts to help Ali dry. He glances out the window at the moon.

HAJI

What do you see up there, my young mister moon man?

Ali is silent for a moment, looking at the moon, thinking, but more than thinking, feeling something the moon evokes, something he can't quite express. He is silent a moment, staring off, a wistful look on his face, then he turns to his father.

ALI

(Suddenly)

Are you happy father?

Haji stops wiping, momentarily at a loss for words.

HAJI

Happy? I have you...and your mother and this shop...I have as much as I can have.

His tone is unconvincing and elicits from Ali a look of compassion. They look at each other for a moment, then Haji takes the cup Ali has been wiping and inspects it closely.

HAJI

(Cont'd)

Everything has a price. For everything you must pay.

He stacks the cup.

HAJI

(Cont'd)

If you want a lot of happy, you must pay a lot of sad.

(Looks at Ali)

You understand?



He sets another cup with the others. Ali just stares at him and Haji's eyes become moist. Putting a hand behind Ali's head, he draws Ali nearer and kisses the top of his forehead.

HAJI
(Cont'd)

Remember the price...better not to want too much.

Ali has a faraway, determined look.

ALI
I want to go the free school.

Haji is caught off guard. He stares at Ali, not comprehending.

HAJI
But why? There's nothing there. It's far away.

ALI
It's not! It's a good school! They teach everything . . .
language, history, numbers . . .

HAJI
I know about that place! You want school? All right.
Muslim school! When I get money, you go
here in Bombay to Muslim school. Not one
run by some Zoroastrian holy man.

ALI
(Pleading)
It's for everyone!

Haji throws up his hands in mock exasperation. Then, becoming a little angry, he throws the dish towel on the counter.

HAJI
(Roaring)
You are a Muslim!

ALI
(Wiping away a tear)
Ahmed's father lets him go.



Haji SLAMS his fist on the table, RATTLING the cups.

Haji

Hussein! He can send his son to a dung heap, I don't care.

Ali bites his lip to stop the quivering. Haji begins pacing, then stops and turns, scowling, but also because of the tone in Ali's voice, expectant, fearful, seeing his son draw himself up and assert himself.

Ali

(Assertively)

It is free. You would not pay one rupee.

Haji

Remember what I said! The price. Always there is a price.

Ali

(With conviction)

Father, I don't want to be a shopkeeper.

Haji slaps Ali. Ali burst into tears, but falls into his father's arms. Haji embraces him and in his face we see regret and sorrow. He pats Ali's back which is heaving with sobs and throbs.

Haji

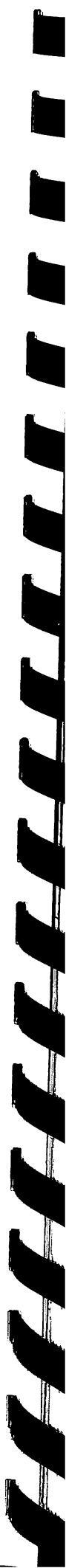
(Softly)

Alright, go. Be something. Be something better than a shopkeeper.

Ali kisses his father's hand and hugs him. Haji strokes Ali's hair. A tear courses down Haji's cheek.

INT. DORMITORY LATE NIGHT

Abdullah gets up from bed and walks to the dormitory doorway. He reaches up, removes the glowing lantern from its latch and quietly retraces his steps back to his bed.



Turning the lantern light down somewhat, he places it on the small trunk and makes himself comfortable on the bed, his back arched against the wall. He picks up a book (CALCULUS) and commences to read.

INT. MEHERJEE'S ROOM NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE LOCATION TITLE--PUNE

MEHERJEE, a square-jawed Indian Parsi* in his late teens, sits in concentration at a small table, working out chemical equations with a pencil and paper. Someone KNOCKS. Meherjee ignores it, trying desperately to finish the calculation. The KNOCKING comes again, LOUDER. Meherjee grabs the top of his head with one hand and grimaces as he strains to finish. No use, the distraction is too great. He throws the pencil down as he gets up.

*(NOTE: Parsees are a sect of Zoroastrians of Persian descent, usually of lighter complexion than the general Indian population.)

MEHERJEE
(Shouting)

All right! Who is it?!

He opens the door to reveal Chanji.

CHANJI
So! You are still alive!

Meherjee turns and goes back to his desk. Chanji follows him in, shutting the door.

MEHERJEE
(Exasperated)
Yes, Uncle, I'm still alive.

CHANJI
Your father wanted me to make sure. Almost a month, - - - - - no one hears from you.

Meherjee jumps up, gesturing at all his books and papers.



MEHERJEE
I'm here! I'm studying! No mystery!

CHANJI
You study too much.

Meherjee smacks his forehead with the heel of his hand and paces around the room.

MEHERJEE
(Deliberately)
Try to understand this. Try. Final examinations are next week. If I do well, I hope to go to Germany to study. This also is no secret.

(beat)
It is not important really, except that my entire future depends on next week.

CHANJI
(Placating, but with a twinkle)
Of course, study. Study! But, Meherjee, you will do better if you also have some relaxation.

Meherjee starts to protest. Chanji sits on the bed.

CHANJI
A little! Only a little!

MEHERJEE
I am sorry, but now is not the time...

CHANJI
Listen to me!
(Like a hypnotist)
Sunshine. . . Remember? Still there. Waiting.

CHANJI
(Cont'd)
Waiting and asking, . . . asking for you. "Where is Meherjee?" Fresh air, - - -the countryside, . . .now, your cousins and I are to go for a little outing tomorrow.



SMASH CUT TO:

INT. / EXT. DILAPIDATED OLD BUS DAY

The driver leans over the steering wheel, concentrating as he negotiates the bus over the safest part of the road, the center. A car approaches from the opposite direction, its driver apparently operating on the same principle. As the vehicles draw dangerously close, the bus driver lays on the HORN until at the last possible second, both swerve and pass each other. The passengers are jolted and thrown against each other as the bus sways and jolts on the shoulder, then swerves back to the center of the road.

The interior of the bus is an overcrowded frenzy of jam-packed overhead racks, bags hanging and swinging crazily, a veritable horde of Indians talking, eating and gesticulating madly.

In the midst of all this, midway back in the bus, sit Chanji, two little NIECES, their MOTHER and Meherjee, packed tightly together. Meherjee SHOUTS angrily at Chanji, above the DIN.

MEHERJEE

Dirty trick! I agreed to a picnic. Yes! But not one with your favorite spiritual Master. I want no part of it.

He opens a book and tries to read, but the ride is too bumpy. The mother deftly pours a cup of lemonade and hands it to Chanji who accepts it with a sly twinkle.

CHANJI

Here, nephew, some lemonade. It will calm your nerves.

Meherjee looks balefully at Chanji, but accepts the drink as Chanji hands it over with consummate skill.

CHANJI
(Cont'd)

You need this little outing even more than I thought.



The last straw! Meherjee is about to explode when unexpectedly the bus hits a large bump, sending the lemonade flying onto Meherjee's face and all over his shirt.

The two little girls laugh with hysterical glee. Their mother covers her face to hide her tittering. Chanji's laughter starts low and builds. Meherjee fumes, practically apoplectic. He looks at them. They look at him. Finally, Meherjee laughs.

EXT. LOWER ASHRAM LATE AFTERNOON

A few simple buildings form a small compound alongside a rural road. Some boys have just arrived with their belongings. Staff members lead them across the road toward another cluster of buildings at the top of the hill.

LOWER COMPOUND

Chanji stands a little to one side as Meherjee, the two nieces and their mother stand outside the main building. Facing them is Baba, looking playful in the afternoon sunlight. His face looks relaxed; his well-shaped nose and brown eyes give further emphasis and draw attention to, his Persian ancestry.

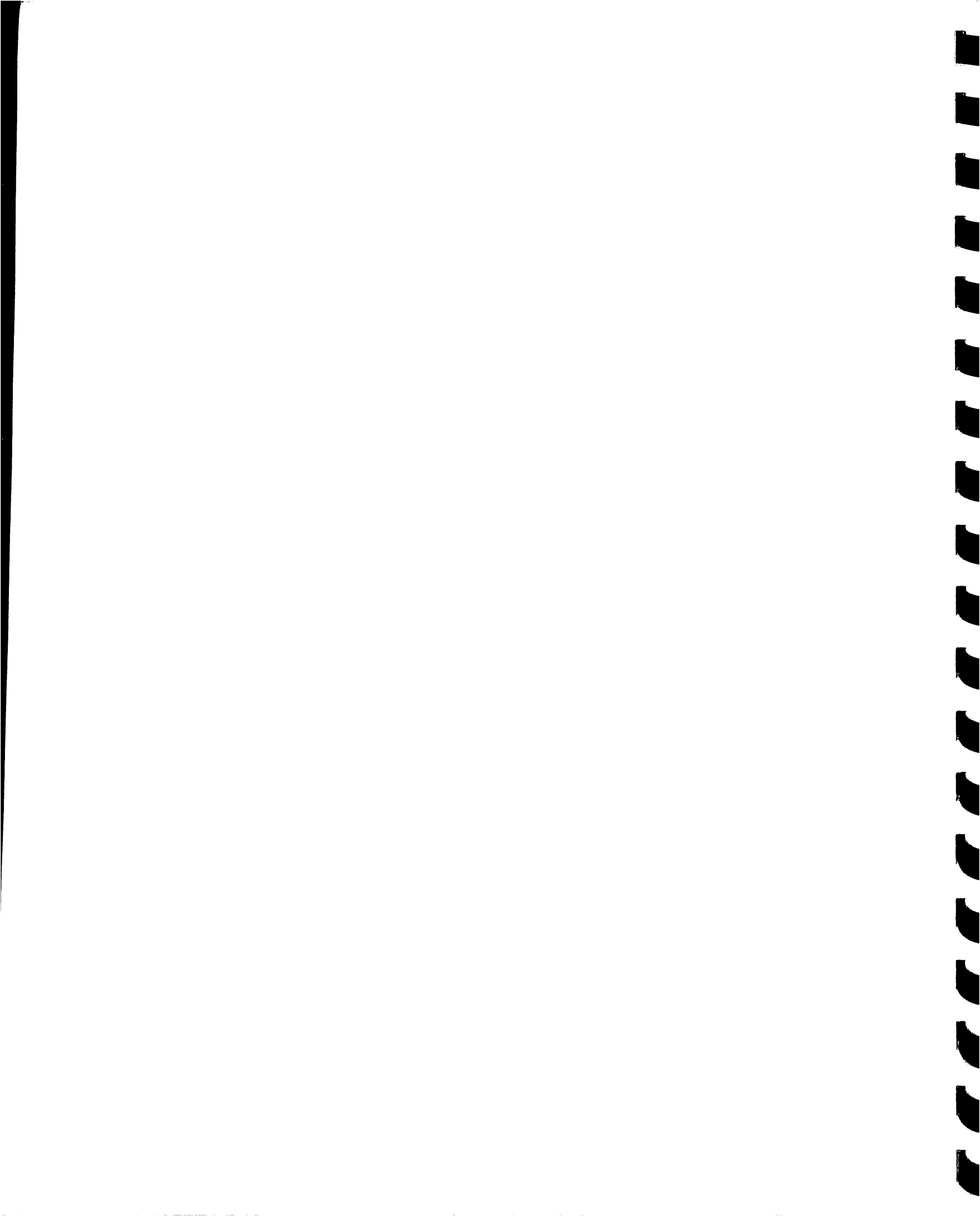
An old bus BEEPS as it pulls to the side of the road and stops.

Baba CLAPS his hands twice rapidly, gives the children and mother a hug and pinches the children's cheeks playfully. Meherjee appears ill-at-ease, not sure how to behave. Baba looks at him quizzically, then extends his hand. Relieved, Meherjee shakes hands. Baba removes his alphabet board from his sadra and rapidly spells out a message to Meherjee.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

How would you like to teach here in sciences?



MEHERJEE

(Taken aback)

Shri Baba, . . I am honored, but I am prepared for examination next week. After graduation, I go to Germany and study chemistry.

Baba smiles and nods his head casually, then continues with the alphabet board. The driver BEEPS.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

If you change your mind, you have a job here.

Baba gestures that they should hurry to catch the bus. The driver BEEPS again. Baba waves at him.

As Chanji walks Meherjee, the girls and their mother toward the bus, he points across the road to the top of the hill.

CHANJI

Up there are dining hall and sleeping quarters.

MEHERJEE

Very nice, but I am going to Germany.

EXT. RURAL ROAD DAY

Haji, Ali, Ahmed and his father Hussein sit in a tonga (a horse-drawn taxi) driven by a wizened old Indian wearing a turban.

EXT. MEHER ASHRAM SCHOOL

The tonga pulls into the lower compound and stops. The excited boys jump down. The fathers climb down and pay the driver who then drives around in a circle and heads back the way he came. Little puffs of dust rise from Haji and Hussein's clothing as they dust themselves off and look around the compound. They are met by Afseri, who has been expecting the visitors. He greets them warmly and starts showing them around the school and ashram facilities.



AFSERI

My name is Afseri. I hope your train ride was not too tiring? I'll show you around our facilities.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE DAY

The fathers and Afseri enter the small office, where they are greeted by Chanji. Karim is also in the office, but leaves right away. Ali and Ahmed are seen through a new glass window talking with other boys from the school who are wearing the school uniform.

CHANJI

Gentlemen, I trust you found our facilities to your satisfaction.

HAJI

I have seen. . . everything is in order. . .very clean. . . very nice.

Hussein walks the room, examining everything. Without looking back, he speaks with a bloated disdain.

HUSSEIN

How many Muslim boys have come here?

CHANJI

(Proudly)

Twenty-seven. We also have forty-five Hindus, from all castes, five Parsees, three Bahai and one Christian boy.

HUSSEIN

Now you have two more fine Muslim boys.

Chanji walks past Hussein to his desk and picks up the official enrollment book and two forms. He opens the book.

CHANJI

So, if everyone is satisfied.

He glances at Hussein.



HUSSEIN

Yes... yes.

CHANJI
(Continuing)

... I would like you both to read this agreement and if it is to your liking, to sign it. . . it states that you will leave your sons here for at least five years and not interfere in any way, whatsoever, with their schooling.

Chanji hands both fathers the forms to read and sign.

INT. LIBRARY DAY

Baba, looking almost like one of the ashram workers, with his sadra sleeves rolled up and wearing a bright red bandana headband, walks with Abdullah into the library. Each is carrying a large carton of books. The room is large and airy; half-filled bookshelves line one wall. Two long library tables are surrounded by an assortment of non-matching chairs. They set the cartons down, tear them open and begin to pull out a new supply of books; then they begin to stack the shelves. Afseri arrives carrying another carton.

Chanji comes in followed by Ali, Ahmed and their fathers, Haji and Hussein. Chanji holds the signed documents above his head.

CHANJI
Baba, two new boys. Papers all signed.

Baba looks at the boys and their fathers for a moment, then shakes his head "no" and turns his attention back to the books. Chanji, looking bewildered, but without losing a beat, turns to the shocked newcomers.

CHANJI
(Cont'd)
Gentlemen, I am sorry. . . we cannot accept your applications. They are invalid.

Chanji tries to return the papers to Haji and Hussein, but they refuse to take them. Ignoring Chanji, Haji steps forward and addresses Baba.



HAJI

Sir, will you not explain? Why we are refused? We signed our names. How can that be invalid?

Baba glances at Hussein past Haji's shoulders, a penetrating stare and picks up an alphabet board. Chanji steps quickly to his side. Abdullah and Afseri watch from close by as Baba quickly points to the letters, spelling out his message.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

In this case, a signed agreement will not suffice.

Baba lets go of the board and immediately returns to sorting the books. In a kind of mute panic, Ali and Ahmed look at their fathers who take this apparent insult in shocked silence. Controlling his disappointment, Haji finally speaks.

HAJI

I give my word before Allah! I will keep this agreement I have signed.

Baba looks up, regards Haji impersonally for a moment and again shakes his head "no."

During the course of this heated discussion, Ali fidgets nervously, looking all about, here and there at the books on the shelves, at Ahmed, at his father and finally at Baba for a sign that things will turn around. He bravely endures what appears to be his fate.

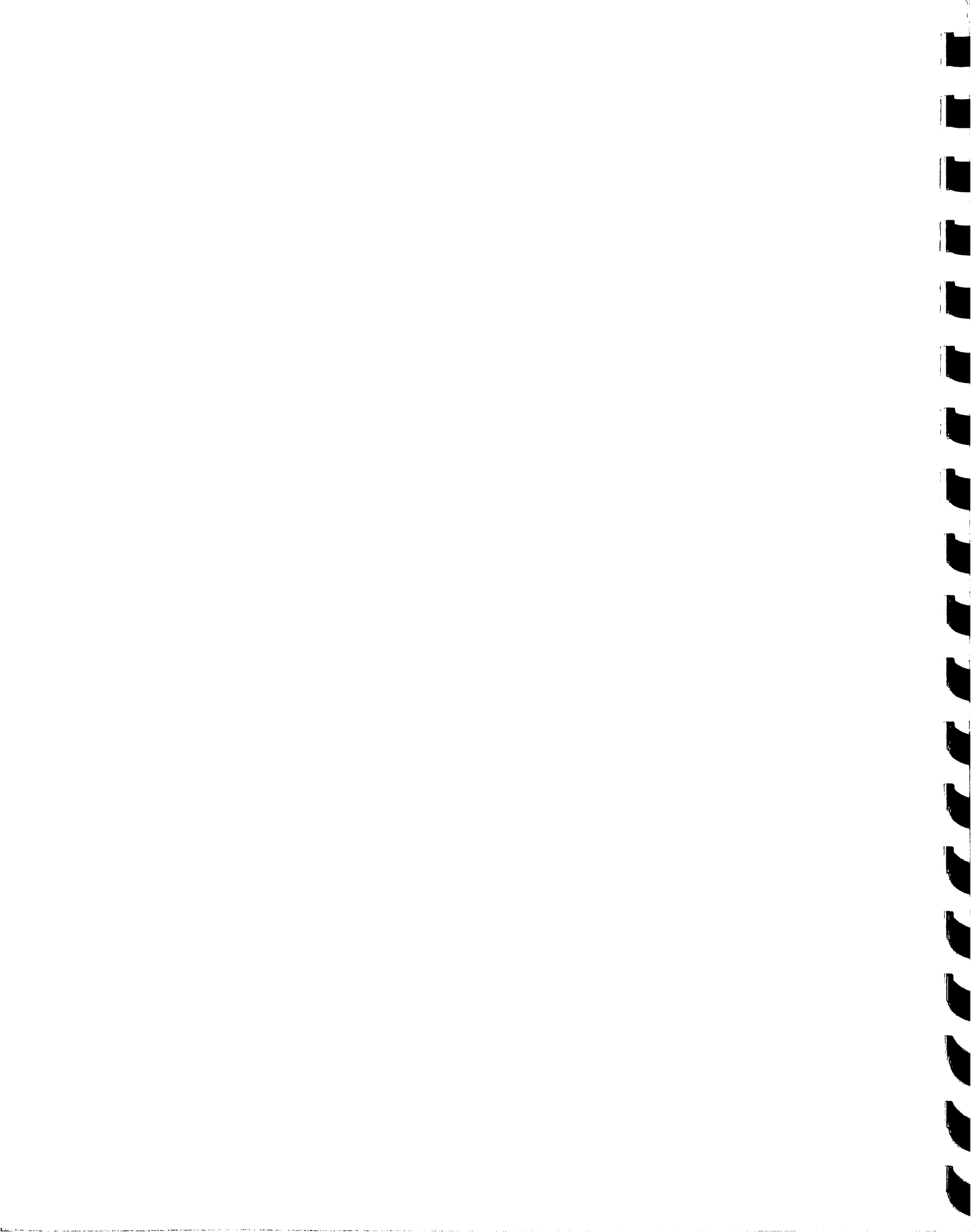
Hussein rushes forward and pulls Haji out of the way.

HUSSEIN

(Yelling at Baba)

So what is your word? All castes and creeds?
Open to everyone? But not to the Shiah
Muslim! . . . We go.

Hussein whirls, takes Ahmed by the arm and starts to pull him toward the door.



AHMED
(Pulling back)

No!

Ali runs up to Baba.

ALI
(With conviction)
Shri Baba! My friend, Ahmed and I, we very much
want to come to your school. Our fathers only want
what is good for us, please. I give my word.

There is a pause as all look to Baba for a response. Baba looks at Ali for a long time. Then Baba looks at Afseri. Afseri's eyes reveal his own torment. He has been moved by this courageous display from Ali.

AFSERI
Please Baba. These are good boys.

Baba reaches into his pocket and produces two small pin-on picture buttons. He hands one to Ali and the other to Ahmed, then quickly nods "yes." He looks back at the books and lifts several more from the carton.

CHANJI
(With gradually increasing certainty)
Yes! . . . Yes! . . . Gentlemen, your boys are officially
accepted.

Ali takes a couple of steps backward, a budding smile creeping on his face.

CHANJI
All right! Settled.

Chanji motions the fathers toward the door. Haji still seems injured by the ordeal, nods a slow confirmation. Hussein walks out, skillfully hiding his seething anger.



Ahmed and Ali bound out the door. Through the open door we see them break into a fit of jumping around, patting each other on the back. Haji slowly exits, passing the boys, following Hussein. Karim and another MAN enter the room with more cartons of books. Work continues. Chanji walks out.

INT. DORMITORY DAY

Ali and Ahmed enter and find several other boys already engaged in trying on the school uniform, which consists of a plain round black cap, khaki shirt and pants.

Two long rows of beds fill the otherwise sparse room. Near each bed is a small steel trunk. They walk down between the two rows of beds looking for their names and easily find them. On their beds are their uniforms, one towel, handkerchief, waistcloth, blanket, bedspread, pillow and two sheets.

The boys quickly take to trying on the school uniform, which in some case is too large or too small. Laughter erupts as they swap and trade with the other boys to try and find a perfect fit.

EXT. LIBRARY DAY

Outside the library windows near one of the main buildings, about a HUNDRED STUDENTS pose in three tiers for the school photograph. Baba sits in the center of the middle row, between Ali and Abdullah. He drapes his right arm around Abdullah's shoulders and with his left, he reaches out encircling Ali and drawing him close.

PHOTOGRAPHER
(Loudly, in Hindi)

Hold still!

There is a PUFF of flash powder.



INT. HALLWAY OF FERGUSSON COLLEGE (PUNE) DAY

SUPERIMPOSE LOCATION TITLE--PUNE

A crush of students are gathered around a bulletin board jostling for glimpses of examination results. Forlorn and looking dejected, Meherjee pushes his way through the crowd away from the bulletin board. A FRIEND joins him at the edge of the crowd.

FRIEND

Still going to Germany, Meherjee?

Meherjee shrugs. They continue walking slowly down the hall.

FRIEND

(Cont'd)

Not chemistry?!

MEHERJEE

(Shaking his head)

Physics. Chemistry was fine, I failed the physics part.

FRIEND

Well, don't worry. You'll pass it next time.

MEHERJEE

Next time?! How do I tell my father?

FRIEND

Maybe you better find a job before you tell him.

INT. MEHERJEE'S ROOM DAY

Meherjee is sitting in a chair, eyes downcast. His father, a Zoroastrian priest, is lecturing his son. The mood is tense.

FATHER

How could you have failed in the examination? You studied day and night. Unless you've been lying to me.



MEHERJEE

Father, in the physics examination I studied optics and the test was on another topic. I did, however, attain a distinction in chemistry.

FATHER

A real distinction would have been if you had passed the examination.

MEHERJEE

I've been offered a teaching position just outside Ahmednagar. It pays forty-five rupees a month with free room and board. I'll be happy to send you money to help support the family.

The father looks suspiciously at his son.

MEHERJEE

(Cont'd, reaching for conviction)

I'm told it's a school with the highest ideals and isn't that what India needs?

FATHER

Will ideals pay for a son's education? You are not a boy anymore, you're part of a family and for us Parsees that means something. A son has duties and responsibilities and you are my eldest son.

MEHERJEE

(Pleading a little)

Father, it pays a good salary and I'm bringing my chemistry books. Meher Baba, the head of the school, has given me permission to continue my studies.

FATHER

Very well, but remember, it has taken me years to accept your going to Germany. You must pass your examination with distinction and embark on a respected career.

INT. LIBRARY DAY

Meherjee is studiously examining the books in the library, shelf by shelf, book by book, a careful inventory.



He pulls out a book, scans the pages, smiles to himself and replaces the book on the shelf. Abdullah enters, carrying a carton of books. He places it on the table. Seeing Meherjee, he walks over to him.

ABDULLAH

My name is Abdullah, Baba said I would find you here.

They shake hands.

MEHERJEE

(Surprised)

Meherjee Karkaria. Tomorrow I start as the new teacher in sciences.

ABDULLAH

I too was a teacher.

MEHERJEE

(Surprised)

You were?

ABDULLAH

For one year in Persia I taught the first, second and third grades to young children, I was very happy.

MEHERJEE

Why did you stop?

ABDULLAH

I read about this school in the newspaper and wrote requesting admission. When I received a favorable reply, I stopped teaching and came here.

Abdullah starts putting away the library books.

MEHERJEE

(Cautious)

Next year I go to Germany to study chemistry Did Meher Baba say anything else?



ABDULLAH

(Smiling)

He said we both study too much and that I should show you where ping pong is played.

MEHERJEE

(Incredulous)

PING PONG? I came here to study, not to play idle games!

Abdullah laughs, while quickly finishing with the books.

ABDULLAH

I too prefer to study! But I must obey the Master's order. Come, I will show you the ping pong area.

EXT. LIBRARY DAY

Meherjee and Abdullah leave the library and walk in the direction of the playground. Meherjee is carrying two books.

FOREGROUND SHOT

Boys are seen playing seven tiles, an Indian game, with gusto. Some ashram workers are watching.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Meherjee and Abdullah are passing the playground area where a cricket match among the boys is ongoing with much excitement. A number of boys are heard CHEERING their respective sides. Some teachers and ashram workers are also enjoying the game. A loud CHEER arises from the crowd. Meherjee points to the game.

MEHERJEE

I suppose this is considered a vital part of the school's curriculum.

Abdullah is silent. They walk on.



MEHERJEE

(Cont'd)

Please don't misunderstand me. I don't dislike sports activities. I just haven't found much time to indulge myself.

Another CHEER of excitement ignites the crowd.

MEHERJEE

(Cont'd, probing)

Tell me. Do you regard Meher Baba as some kind of saint?

An intense faraway look comes over Abdullah. Meherjee looks for a reply, but none seems forthcoming.

MEHERJEE

(Cont'd)

I'm told he has been silent for over two years, but that hardly makes him a saint.

ABDULLAH

(Still faraway)

More than a saint. Something more.

MEHERJEE

(Taken aback)

What I mean is, he's your teacher.

(beat)

That's what you're here for.

ABDULLAH

Yes, he is my teacher. also my book. It is his silence that teaches me.

EXT. PLAYGROUND DAY

A rudimentary ping pong court is set up in a small cleared area. It consists of a large table with a net of white cotton gauze stretched across the middle and secured at either end.

A match is being played by Baba and Lobaji, a small boy, against two older boys. There is much amusement from Ali, Ahmed and a group of onlookers as Lobaji repeatedly misses his serve and return play.



SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Baba hits a strong serve, which is ably returned by his opponent.
- B) Lobaji misses repeatedly as he tries to serve.
- C) From far behind, Baba returns a difficult serve that Lobaji misses.
- D) Baba showing Lobaji the correct way to play.
- E) Lobaji finally gets off a good serve.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE DAY

The school office is crowded, filled with the entire teaching staff and ashram workers, including Karim. Baba is standing intently engaged in spelling out an urgent order on the alphabet board. Meherjee stands off to the side, nervously taking it all in. Chanji reads the alphabet board.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

From today, all boys enrolled in the school are strictly forbidden to speak with anyone, except amongst themselves and the ashram authorities.

Baba glances up momentarily to watch the response to his order. His eyes take in Meherjee, Karim, Chhagan and Rustom with a resolve of purpose and conviction.

BABA

(Cont'd, spoken by Chanji)

Schoolteachers are instructed not to talk with any of the boys after school hours. These orders must be obeyed and have to do with my inner work, which is unfathomable and cannot be explained. It is better therefore not to reason or to try and fathom what my real work is; you can help by simply continuing to love and obey me.



CHHAGAN

Baba, I am happy to obey your orders, but please consider your health. A cup of milk-tea once a day is not enough. You must eat too!

A number of the men nod to each other, acknowledging their agreement.

RUSTOM

Baba, Chhagan is right, it is now thirty-one days! Break your fast and let Chhagan cook you a nourishing meal and with your permission, I will take on your fast.

For a moment, there is silence. The entire room is focussed on Baba and written on each face is the level of each man's commitment. Baba's eyes take it all in slowly, face by face, an eternal audit of the Beloved/lover relationship. His face grows more relaxed, more revealing; it mirrors a deep inner strength mixed with compassion. He looks finally at Rustom and spells out his reply on the alphabet board.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Your love touches me most deeply and makes me happy. But remember, it is my love that has drawn you here; my fast, which is solely for the benefit of others, must continue. This work will soon produce a unique spiritual outburst, the like of which has never happened before. Your own eyes and hearts will bear witness.

Glancing at Chhagan, he continues.

BABA

(Cont'd, spoken by Chanji)

See that the children's food is always prepared properly. Do this well and you will be obeying my orders.

Afseri enters as the meeting ends. The men begin to exit, some come up to Baba and kiss his hand, others he hugs in a quick embrace. Chhagan steps forward and is warmly embraced by Baba. Love is evident on both of their faces.



AFSERI

Exciting news, Baba! Baidul and fourteen boys from Persia have just arrived.

Baba beams his delight at the news and begins to leave the room. As he passes Meherjee he stops and quickly spells out a message on the alphabet board.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

You are excused from today's orders. At all times be relaxed and natural and speak with whomever you wish to.

Meherjee is visibly surprised at this gesture from Baba and is at a loss for words. Baba gently pats him on the back and leaves.

EXT. MEHER ASHRAM SCHOOL DAY

BAIDUL, a tall stocky man in his late twenties, waits beside a group of FOURTEEN Persian children of various ages. Another man stands nearby. They are watched from a distance by Ali and Ahmed and some other boys who are carrying books. They watch the new arrivals with keen interest. Placed nearby the Persian group is their entire luggage, which consists of a small bundle of bedding and an earthen water jar. Baba walks toward Baidul, his pace is quick and urgent. They meet and embrace warmly, then Baba in turn embraces all the boys and the other man. Ali and Ahmed move in closer for a better view. Meherjee stands near Chanji, who is carrying the alphabet board. Excited conversation erupts in Persian from the group. The schoolbell RINGS; Ali and Ahmed and the rest of the boys turn and head in the direction of the classroom. A group of SCHOOLGIRLS, neatly dressed, pass by on the roadside; Baba waves to them, they wave back.

SERIES OF SILENT VIGNETTES WITH MUSIC

Baba, standing on the hill, throws his arm up in the air as if to signal a beginning.



The school bell RINGS, boys grabbing their books and running out of the dormitory.

A workman is building an addition as boys rush by. Things lifted. Things set down.

A teacher lecturing animatedly to a classroom of boys, Ali at front row. Abdullah and Ahmed near the back.

Baba walking briskly with the boys around him, jumping up playfully and teasing him. Baba happy, extremely tolerant.

Another classroom, another teacher.

Baba climbing into a hand-drawn-rickshaw (a two-wheeled cart in this case) and pulled through a sea of chasing boys. With a gesture from Baba, Ali gets up into the cart with Baba. The rickshaw swerves across the hill toward and then away from the camera. The sight lingers.

EXT. FIELD DAY

The boys are playing a spirited cricket match. Baba watches from behind the wicket keeper. The batsman misses and is caught out by the wicket keeper, amidst CHEERING and HECKLING from some of the boys.

The batsman hands off to Baba, who stands up, taking the bat, grinning from ear to ear, he points like Babe Ruth to a distant spot.

The bowler turns and looks at Ali out in the field. Ali gets ready, a look of intense determination. The bowler turns back, sets and hurls.

Baba SMACKS a long fly ball.

Ali turns and runs deep; runs like his life depended on it. He looks up as the ball is coming down, just out of reach. He launches himself and catches the ball as he "pancakes," skidding on the ground. He lies there, writhing with the wind knocked out of him, as his teammates rush toward him.



Ali gets up slowly, smudged with dirt, a trickle of blood running from his right knee and a big smile breaking across his face. He holds the ball up high and looks down the field at Baba while his teammates hoist him onto their shoulders.

Baba beams back a smile and gestures his pleasure.

INT. DORMITORY NIGHT

Ali and Ahmed are lying on their beds facing each other. Ali's arm is tucked under his neck.

ALI

(Whispering)

Baba was so happy when I caught that ball. I don't ever want to leave here.

AHMED

Me too, but next time I want to catch the ball.

MONTAGE ABDULLAH

- A) Baba sits under a tree, dictating on the alphabet board with Chanji at his side. Abdullah sits staring in the forefront of the boys who listen at Baba's feet.
- B) Abdullah watches a bug crawl slowly on his hand.
- C) Abdullah stands alone on the hill at sunset gazing at Baba's "prison" hut.
- D) Ali and Meherjee sit across from Abdullah in the library, watching with wide-eyed interest as Abdullah turns the pages of his book without even looking at them.
- E) Alphabet board and Baba's finger pointing rapidly, pointing to various letters.
- F) Abdullah sits in a classroom with his eyes closed and a smile on his face.
- G) Alphabet board and Baba's finger moving.
- H) Abdullah takes a bite of food, bursts into tears and pushes his plate away as Ali, Ahmed and Meherjee watch.
- I) Alphabet board and Baba's finger.



- J) From his dormitory bed, Abdullah stares at the moon and cries.
- K) Meherjee and the boys listen to Baba's discourse under the trees at sunset. Abdullah watches and listens intently.

. Interpreting Baba's message, Chanji's VOICE OVER is heard throughout the montage.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

The only real knowledge is that God is the inner dweller in good people and in so-called bad, in saint and in so-called sinner. Try to make others happy with brotherly feeling for each one. Harm no one in thought, word, or deed, not even those who harm you.

We TRACK in very slowly, first past several listening boys, then CLOSE IN on Abdullah. His eyes seem vacant.

BABA

(Cont'd, spoken by Chanji)

. . . and by striving in a natural way, children, the mind will become a clean mirror, reflecting the truth. When the impressions of good and bad both disappear, the mind perceives the soul. This is illumination. . . . Love me and you will find me.

We hear the other boys get up slowly around him, as we continue CLOSE ON Abdullah. In SLOW MOTION, Abdullah rises from his sitting position, his stance is unsteady and his eyes are faraway. He is pale. He begins to shudder and shake and MOAN. His eyes tilt upwards; his head rolls back....

ABDULLAH
(Screaming)

ALLAH!

He falls back unconscious.



INT. DORMITORY DAY

Ali sits on his cot, examining a rash on his arm. Chanji enters. Ali looks up startled and tries to hide his rash as Chanji approaches.

CHANJI
(Sternly)

Ali. . . . come, let me see.

Chanji takes hold of Ali's wrists, sees the rash.

CHANJI
(Cont'd)

Why haven't you gone to the dispensary? You know the rules. Ali, this is Baba's order.

EXT. HUT DAY

Baba sits on the ground, vigorously grinding grain between two stones. He looks up questioningly as Chanji and Ali walk up to him. Ali hesitates, then shows his arm. Baba looks up at Chanji.

CHANJI
Eczema. And he is refusing to go the dispensary.

Baba picks up the alphabet board and fingers a response.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
You gave me your word to obey the rules. Why do you break it?

ALI
If I go, I will miss your talks. . . . I won't be able to see you.

Baba spells out another message.



BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

I will help you to keep your word by giving mine.
Obey my order and I will come and see you.

INT. DISPENSARY NIGHT

A small Indian dispensary, with six beds. Ali, Abdullah and Lobaji are on three of the beds; Baidul sits near Abdullah's bed. Baba enters carrying towels and bandages, followed by Chanji and Padri carrying hot water and supplies. Ali is seen sitting on his bed at the end of the room. His right arm is bandaged. He glances up from his book to watch Baba wash Lobaji's leg, inspect his wound, and administer some iodine and a clean bandage.

Two beds down is Abdullah, his eyes open wide with the irises turned upward. He is seeing beyond the gross. Baidul is on watch near his bed.

Baba finishes with Lobaji and moves down and close to Abdullah's bed. With his right hand, he closes Abdullah's eyelids, leaving his hand for a moment to cover them. He pulls the covers around Abdullah and nods affirmatively to Chanji, who in turn hands Baba the alphabet board.

ANGLE ALI

As he watches Baba with great interest.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

I have fulfilled my promise to Abdullah. It is his real love for me that has freed him temporarily from the gross plane, allowing him to experience higher planes of consciousness. This is his reward. You cannot even imagine the bliss he is now experiencing.

Baba looks at Baidul.



BABA
(Cont'd, spoken by Chanji)
Continue to watch over him and report to me of any
apparent change in his outward condition.

Baba next walks down to Ali's bed, unties his bandage, places some ointment on the rash and affixes a clean bandage. He glances at Ali, reopens the book that Ali was reading and hands it to him. Then with a loving pat to the head, he turns and leaves.

TIME LAPSE

We see the passage of time through a series of slow disjointed shots of Ali, Abdullah and Baba.

- A) Baba carrying a lantern, walking through the dispensary at night, stopping at Ali's and Abdullah's bed.
- B) Ali at Abdullah's bed, silently watching him.
- C) CLOSE UP of Abdullah who is still motionless.

INT. DISPENSARY DAY

Ali stands near Abdullah's bed, staring at him, trying to understand his condition. Meherjee and Baidul stand close by, watching intently. Suddenly, as if to witness their concern, Abdullah opens his eyes and looks up at Ali. Just as quickly, his irises turn upward again while the eyes remain open but vacant.

ALI
Abdullah! Can you see me?

ABDULLAH
We see with different eyes, Ali. You cannot imagine what I see.

ALI
Then what do you see?



ABDULLAH

I see Baba!

ALI

Where do you see Baba?

ABDULLAH

Everywhere.

INT. CLASSROOM DAY

Meherjee stands in front of a science class of about twenty-five students. Ali, his arm now healed, sits in the front row near the window. Ahmed sits three seats back.

MEHERJEE

Yesterday we learned that vegetation grows more thickly in tropical regions. So, then, why do we not cut down some jungle and make farms?

(beat)

Who can tell me?

Ali raises his hand immediately. Meherjee ignores him and chooses ALI-AKBAR, a boy in the back.

MEHERJEE

(Cont'd)

Ali-Akbar?

ALI-AKBAR

The jungle is too thick and damp. Too hard to cut down.

Ali and Ahmed raise their hand simultaneously.

MEHERJEE

Ahmed?

Frustrated and disappointed, Ali drops his hand.

AHMED

Because the soil is not good for crops?



MEHERJEE

Can someone tell me why?

Ali's hand goes up and his body with it, halfway off the seat.

MEHERJEE

(Amused)

All right. Ali? Since you are halfway, why don't you stand?

A few boys titter as Ali stands.

ALI

I believe you said that in a tropical forest, when a leaf falls, it will decay very fast and the minerals are immediately absorbed by other plants. The soil has not time enough to keep enough minerals. So, if you take away the jungle, you are left only with bad soil.

MEHERJEE

Excellent! Did everybody understand this?

Ali sits down, smiling proudly.

EXT. HUT DAY

A small group of destitute villagers and some small children approach Baba, who is sitting on the ground, vigorously grinding grain. Near him are Chanji, Rustom and Meherjee, who form a loose assembly line, in packing, securing, and tying into a cotton fabric various-sized bundles of the ground grain. The poverty of the villagers is self-evident in their tattered rags that serve for clothing.

When enough bundles are ready, Baba stops grinding and with his right hand gives a bundle to each family. While doing so, he touches the receiver's bare feet with his left hand and then quickly brings the hand to touch his own forehead. With the departure of the last family, Baidul is heard (O.S.) calling out to Baba.



ANGLE BAIDUL

As he comes rushing over to Baba and the group with a cup of rice in his hands.

BAIDUL
Baba. this rice is poison.

Back to MASTER SHOT and CLOSE ON Baidul.

BAIDUL
Chhagan has spoiled the rice. He has cooked it improperly. The children will suffer.

ANGLE BABA

Baba looks at Meherjee and quickly spells out on the board.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
Bring Chhagan here.

Baba inspects the rice, giving a small portion to Chanji to eat. He chews the rice for a long moment and then swallows it.

CHANJI
Not cooked enough!

Meherjee arrives with Chhagan.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
Do you want to kill my children? That you cook this rice this way? Is this how you follow my orders?

Chhagan is silent, his head bowed in shame.

BAIDUL
He should be punished, or sent away.



BABA

(Spoken by Chanji,
addressing Chhagan)

What would you have me do?

CHHAGAN

Baba, it is my fault. I deserve to be punished. Please
don't send me away.

Baba CLAPS his hands four times, indicating the punishment and Rustom
leads Chhagan away.

BAIDUL

With respect, Baba, why only four strokes of the cane?
Will this be enough to teach him a lesson?

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

You have done your duty. Now learn forgiveness. I
order you to watch his punishment and be on guard
that you, too, don't break my rules, or it may be you
that I send away.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE DAY

Rustom is seen giving four strokes of the cane to Chhagan as Karim, Afseri
and Baidul watch in silence. The punishment, being light, is received by
Chhagan without any apparent pain. When concluded, he extends his
right hand to Rustom and they shake hands; it is a mutual gesture of
acceptance and understanding. He then turns to Baidul and embraces
him. There is evidence of sadness on Baidul's face as Chhagan quietly
leaves the room.

EXT. HUT DAY--LATER

Baidul and Rustom have joined the assembly line as Baba, now barefoot,
continues to give out bundles of ground grain to more destitute villagers.
An old MENDICANT dressed in an ocher robe and carrying a begging bowl
and a wooden staff has joined the waiting villagers.



As his turn approaches, he slowly commences to prostrate his entire body in front of Baba, finally placing his head on Baba's feet and kissing them. Baba gets up and helps the old Mendicant stand up, then he embraces him warmly, kissing the old man on both cheeks. He then spells out a quick message.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Have you obeyed my order and begged for your food in silence?

MENDICANT

Yes, Baba, a full year as ordered. And by your grace, I never went hungry.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Your obedience makes me very happy. You are now free of all orders and restrictions.

They embrace again and separate, then Baba loudly CLAPS his hands twice and quickly spells out an order on the alphabet board.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Find Chhagan immediately!

With the exception of the old Mendicant, all leave and go searching for Chhagan.

MONTAGE OF SCENES

- A) Chanji runs into the kitchen and dining hall, but fails to find Chhagan.
- B) Rustom enters the library, but finds only teachers and boys reading.
- C) Baidul looks in the sleeping quarters, but finds no one.
- D) Meherjee joins Afseri in checking the classrooms; they leave and head in the direction of the storeroom.



INT. STOREROOM DAY

Meherjee and Afseri enter the large storeroom to find Chhagan with a barber's razor in his hands, almost at the point of cutting his throat. Afseri quickly catches hold of Chhagan's hand, takes the razor from him and hands it to Meherjee.

AFSERI

Chhagan, have you totally lost your senses? Do you have to break all the rules, all at once?

Afseri leaves with Chhagan, whose face is now wet with tears; Meherjee quickly follows, while examining the razor as if it were a loaded gun.

EXT. HUT DAY

Ali, Ahmed and Lobaji are with Baba and the old Mendicant as Afseri, Chhagan and Meherjee arrive. They are quickly followed by Baidul, Chanji, Rustom and some other men.

AFSERI

Baba, I found Chhagan on the verge of trying to kill himself with his razor.

Meherjee hands the razor to Baba, who in turn hands it to Rustom.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

What right have you to take your life? Have you not surrendered your life to me? Does your life not now belong to me?

Chhagan is totally filled with remorse and is unable to answer.

ANGLE ALI

Ali looks at Baba, his silent lips begging mercy and forgiveness for Chhagan. Baba immediately walks toward Chhagan and takes him in his arms, embracing him warmly and compassionately.



EXT. DISPENSARY NIGHT

Two men approach the dispensary from different directions. They both carry a lantern; as they near the lighted dispensary entrance, their faces become more visible. Baba is the first man to arrive. He hangs his lantern on a hook and waits for the other man, Chhagan, who quickly arrives carrying a glass of milk with a saucer and spoon on top.

CHHAGAN

Hot milk and a spoon, Baba.

Baba nods and takes the glass, saucer and spoon from Chhagan and enters the dispensary alone.

INT. DISPENSARY NIGHT

Abdullah is sitting up on his bed with a glazed, faraway look in his eyes. Baba is feeding him the milk from the glass with a spoon, much like an adoring mother would do for a sick child.

P.O.V. ABDULLAH

The same scene as viewed by Abdullah plays out much differently.

He sees all around him a radiant glow, quivering and flowing in space. In the center of this glow, he perceives Baba as totally engulfed in brilliant hues of white and gold, his eyes emanating pools of golden light. Everything is alive and pulsing with energy. The glass is now a shimmering object, holding a white translucent liquid. It is the milk of the gods and it is being offered to him. He accepts it willingly, knowingly.

We pull back to see that he too is engulfed in light.



QUICK DISSOLVE TO

EXT. HUT DAY

SUPERIMPOSE DATE--December 20, 1927

41st Day of Fast

The entire ashram staff and teachers are gathered outside the hut; expectancy hangs heavy in the air. Baba appears from inside the hut at his window, alphabet board in hand. Chanji, who is outside the hut, comes closer to the window and begins to read the board.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Today marks the beginning of my confinement and seclusion work. All boys in the institution must not even be touched with the hand by anyone, including all the teachers and the school and ashram authorities. All must obey this order. The work that is to follow is for the heart alone and cannot be interpreted by the mind.

EXT. HUT EVENING

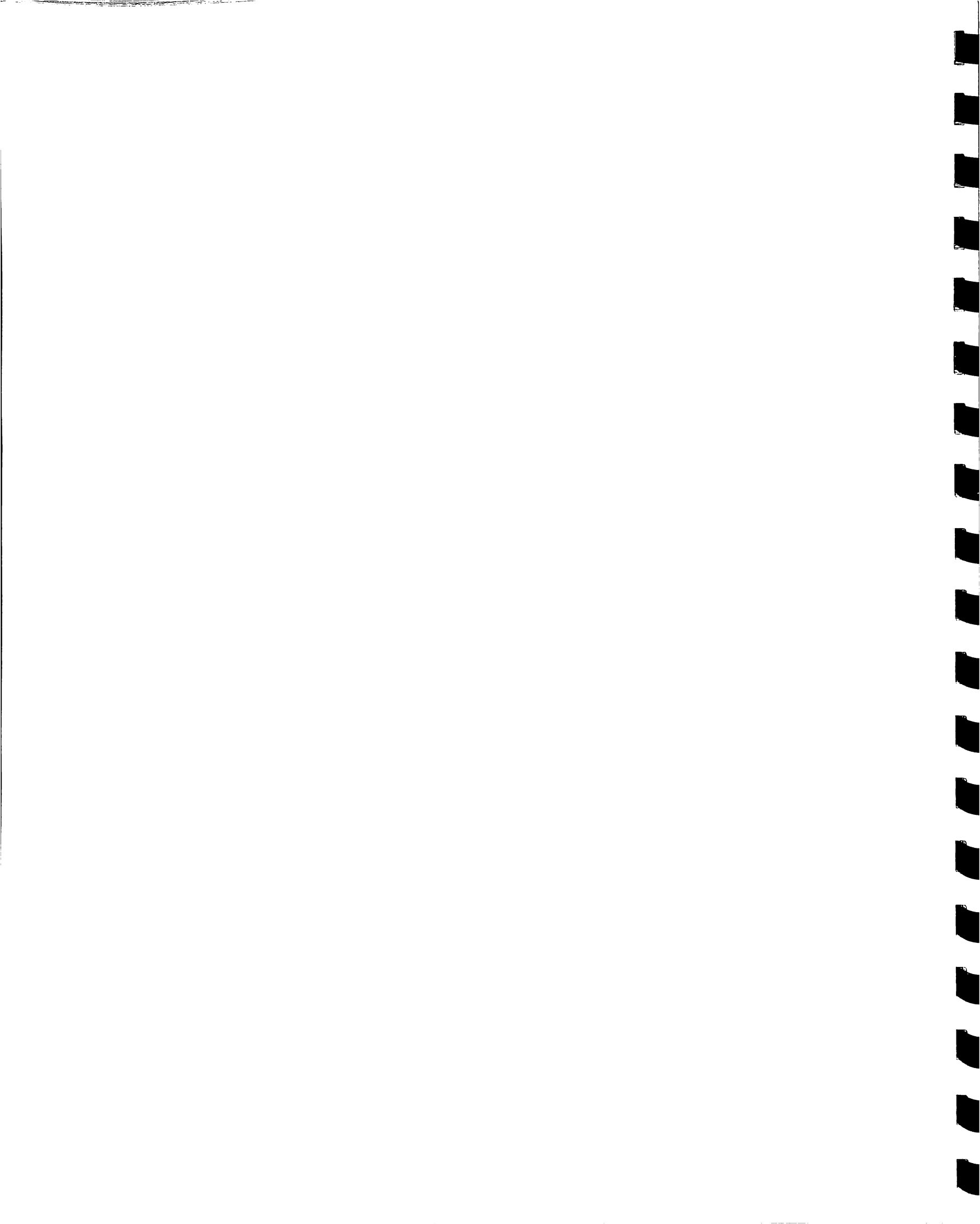
TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE DENOTING SEVERAL EVENINGS

Baba sits on the window sill with his feet dangling outside. Beside the window is a small table resting on the ground, its surface just beneath the level of the window sill. On the table is a 1920's wind-up Victrola with a record sitting motionless on it. The whole school is assembled. The boys sit massed on the ground as close to Baba as they can get. The teachers and staff stand behind the group of boys.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Before creation began, nothing but God existed. One day God had the passing whim to ask, "Who am I?"



The boys listen intently. Ahmed and Ali sit next to each other in the front, watching Baba as he quickly fingers his words via the alphabet board.

BABA
(Cont'd,
spoken by Chanji)

This whim of God to know himself was like a whiff of wind stirring into infinite evolving forms. First, there were gas-like forms, then stone, metal, vegetable, worm, insect and reptile. Fish, bird and animal. But the human form was to manifest God's form; Consciousness would then be complete. The kangaroo, for example, has such small front legs, because it is the first animal, in which the soul incarnates, after passing through the last bird form. The last step, which helps the latent human form, to complete manifestation of God's form, is the monkey. Children, always remember that love is the law which pervades and governs the entire creation.

Baba puts down the alphabet board and reaches down to the Victrola handle. He gives it three winds and the record begins to whirl with a SCRATCHING HISS. Then the VOICE of Paul Robeson pipes out singing, "Get On Board Little Children" - - - an American Negro spiritual.

PAN BOYS' FACES

The wonder of a new experience is expanding their consciousness. They are open to it and easily get caught up with the exuberance of the singer and the song.

The record ends. Baba claps his hands to indicate the lesson is over and moves from the window back into the hut. Chanji removes the Victrola arm from the record, lifts the Victrola off the small table and hands it to Meherjee.

The boys get up and stretch. Crickets, one after the other, begin to CHIRP. From the bottom of the hill comes the mournful HOOT of a whistle as a train "CHUG-A-PUFFS" past.



INT. DORMITORY NIGHT

Ali sleeps fitfully, illuminated dimly by ambient moonlight and the soft spill from an exit lantern. His facial muscles twitch and his eyelids move.

MONTAGE - - DREAM SEQUENCE

- A) We are immersed in an infinite, shimmering wetness, suffused with a pale pink glow. A sitar DRONES a single low-pitched "OM" which gradually segues to a moaning WIND.
- B) We are on a boundless pink ocean under a pitch-black "sky." As the WIND becomes louder, a wave forms in the background and rushes toward us, bigger, faster, . . . until it CRASHES into a howling crescendo, spraying slow-motion droplets into the blackness.
- C) The droplets rush away and become a spiral nebula.
- D) The surface of the sun passes in a fiery arc.
- E) The gleaming half-orb of a planet in space.
- F) The volcanic upheaval and lava-flow.
- G) Jagged arctic ice-cliffs.
- H) Barren parched landscape.
- I) A torrential rain falls in a primeval fern-jungle.
- J) A tidepool with insects.
- K) Ocean and breakers crashing on a rocky shore.
- L) Fishes swim.
- M) Water fowl rise from water into the air.
- N) An eagle soars.
- O) An ostrich runs.
- P) Kangaroos raise their heads in alarm.
- Q) A herd of cattle stampedes.
- R) A dog stands on its hind legs.



- S) A great ape climbs onto a higher branch.
- T) Breakers crash on a beach.
- U) Sphinx and Great Pyramid.
- V) A radiant, golden eye shines out of a black void as again we hear the "OM-DRONE" of the sitar. FADING IN now we hear the CRASH of breakers. . .
- W) A group of boys from the school stand on a deserted beach and stare at the ocean as the SOUND of the sitar once again segues to that moaning WIND, doubling and re-doubling until it sounds like a PRIMAL CHOIR.
- X) BOYS' P.O.V. - - breakers CRASHING as the WIND howls. And now, out of the foaming whiteness charges a magnificent white stallion ridden by a white-robed Rainbow Warrior. They gallop straight toward us as though across a great distance. Closer. . . closer . . . the warrior is Baba.

INT. DORMITORY NIGHT

Ali sits up in bed, wide-eyed, breathing heavily. He rubs his eyes, yawns, draws his knees up to his chest, rests his chin on them and rocks gently.

EXT. HUT DAY

Groups of boys are gathered on the ground within fifty feet of the hut. They are huddled up and engrossed in silent meditation. Ali and Ahmed sit cross-legged and a little apart from the nearest group. They sit within ten feet of the hut's shuttered window. Ahmed's eyes are closed while Ali stares straight ahead at the closed shutters. He waits impatiently for a glimpse of the master. His faint, almost silent repetition of Baba's name and some stray tears are the sole evidence of the pain of his separation.

We hear the school bell RING. The boys begin to get up and walk away. Ahmed opens his eyes and uncrosses his legs. From a kneeling position he bows down, touching his head to the ground in the direction of the hut. Ali rises, walks a few steps closer to the shuttered window and repeats the same bowing down action.



The school bell RINGS again (O.S.) and Ali, not content with his bow, pushes himself into a full body prostration, his fingers reaching the edge of the hut just below the window. Ahmed waits in silence close by.

EXT. HUT NIGHT

The hut is isolated on the hill. Pendu goes to the hut, carrying a cup of milk, passes it through the window slot and secures the shutters from the outside. Nearby, Masaji, the night watchman, carries his lantern and a staff which he THUMPS on the ground, looking for snakes.

EXT. HILL DAY

SUPERIMPOSE DATE--January 1, 1928

52nd Day of Fast

12th Day of Confinement

The boys all gather near one another for the morning chanting. They stand randomly and on different levels, SINGING up to Baba's hut. Their wind-whipped hair and clothing and their shadows angling sharply on the barren hillside evoke a feeling of ancient ritual, a primal supplication. A hundred clear voices CHANT in unison seven sacred names of God.

BOYS VOICES

Hari, Paramatma, Allah, Ahuramazd, God, Yezdan,
Hu...

CLOSE ON BOYS' FACES

As they SING, they seem tired, emotionally starved somehow. An expression of pain is etched on Ali's face. His lip quivers. The corners of his mouth turn down. Tears course down his cheeks and over his lips as his CHANT becomes a wordless keening MOAN.

BACK TO MASTER SHOT

The boys "catch" the same strange affliction, adding voices until the hillside is filled with the HOWLING.



EXT. LOWER HILL

From another building, Chanji, Afseri, Meherjee, Ramjoo and the kitchen help come running. Others run up from the bottom of the hill.

Karim runs out from the men's sleeping area buttoning his shirt, his hair disheveled. As he comes up the hill, mind-blown by the bedlam around him, he sees Chanji comforting VASANT, one of the boys. Karim approaches them.

CHANJI

Vasant, what is the matter with you? What is this?

Vasant doesn't seem to see or hear Chanji, he only writhes and GROANS on the ground.

KARIM

(Dumbfounded)

What is this?

CHANJI

Don't touch any of the boys. . . remember the order.

KARIM

(Whirling on Chanji)

Order! These boys have gone mad! I want to know what started it.

CHANJI

They were singing their morning devotional chant, . . .
. . . then this!

Near the top of the hill, Ali crawls toward the hut, WAILING Baba's name over and over. The other boys take up the call, crawling to the summit. . . .
CALLING "Baba!"

Twenty or thirty villagers and farmers from the surrounding area swarm up the hill. Some of them SHOUT.



ANGLE KARIM

Karim stands alone, watching the bedlam around him.

BACK TO MASTER SHOT

The other boys have reached Ali. They clutch each other, a hundred boys staring at the hut and WAILING.

Everybody gapes in disbelief at the spectacle. Karim scowls angrily. He stalks up alongside the boys, keeping his distance, but searching for someone.

Three boys behind Ali, Ahmed rocks back and forth, KEENING. Karim's eyes fill with anger as he stares at Ahmed.

The WAILING reaches a crescendo as Ali, engulfed in hysteria, claws at his breast and ROARS out his soul at the hut. Suddenly, a weathered window board SLIDES aside and Baba appears. He looks drawn, weary and exhausted.

Miraculously, as if the flame were removed from some giant teakettle, the horrible WAILING subsides, becomes a MURMUR. . . . then silence.

Some of the boys begin to laugh with relief. Others wipe away their tears, breathing heavily and gazing at Baba. Ali just stares, a slight smile forming, but his tears continue to roll silently.

Chanji kneels in the dirt, his lips moving silently. Karim stands beside him, visibly shaken as he looks at everyone, then turns abruptly and walks away.

ANGLE LOWER HILL

Karim is descending the hill swiftly on foot, alone.



INT. DISPENSARY DAY

Abdullah is sitting up, his feet over the edge of the bed. He seems tired, but his strength is coming back to him. A dispensary WORKER walks into the room and crosses it to Abdullah. He is carrying Abdullah's clothing, pressed and folded across his arm.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE DAY

Meherjee and Chanji are having a heated discussion. Chanji is seated behind a desk, trying to type. Meherjee paces the room.

MEHERJEE

I don't understand. . . . why they were so distraught
and what caused them to lose control.

CHANJI

Try. . . . try to understand. Not with your head, but
with your heart.

Chanji stares straight ahead, a half-typed sheet of paper in the typewriter. In the background, through the window, some of the boys walk up the hill to the dormitory. Meherjee walks over to the window and looks out, watching the boys LAUGHING and chatting as though nothing had happened.

EXT. HUT DAY

A meeting is ongoing at the window between Baba, Rustom, Chanji, Padri, Pendu and several other ashram workers. Meherjee is also present, but is more of a passive observer.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

A fresh bonded agreement must be secured from the
parents and guardians of all the boys, giving their free
consent and promise to leave their children
undisturbed for at least five years.



PENDU

Five years is too long, Baba. We should ask for two years, then try and renew the agreement.

RUSTOM

The original agreement was for five years. We should stick with the terms of it and pray for a favorable outcome.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Whatever the outcome, throw your whole heart and mind sincerely into this work. Don't do anything half-heartedly, nor leave anything half-done. If your conscience is satisfied that you have done your duty properly, that is enough. It is the best judge.

ANGLE AFSERI

Afseri is seen approaching the hut, waving some documents. He arrives a little out of breath, but with a huge grin on his face.

AFSERI

Baba, the school examination results have just arrived from Bombay.

Grabbing the attention of everybody, he makes the most of his announcement.

AFSERI

(Cont'd, proudly)

Each and every boy has passed. Some did so well, including Abdullah, they will have to be promoted two grades next term. It's all here....

(Waving documents)

Our school is an unqualified success.

Afseri hands the documents to Baba, who shows pleasure at the results. He scans the documents briefly, then looks up and points to Meherjee.



BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

You have a question?

MEHERJEE

(Somewhat hesitant)

My mind has not resolved the question of the children's outburst of crying.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

The crying of the children reflects the spontaneous release of love, awakened in them by me, and is but the natural response of each child's own effort at developing love for me. It is love, not questioning, that brings one to God.

MEHERJEE

And Abdullah, what of his condition?

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

His condition is one of knowing consciously that which is unknowable and which far surpasses mere intellectual knowing. The progressive conquest of the unconscious, by the conscious, culminates in consummate consciousness, which is unlimited.

Meherjee is stunned and troubled by Baba's direct answer to his questions.

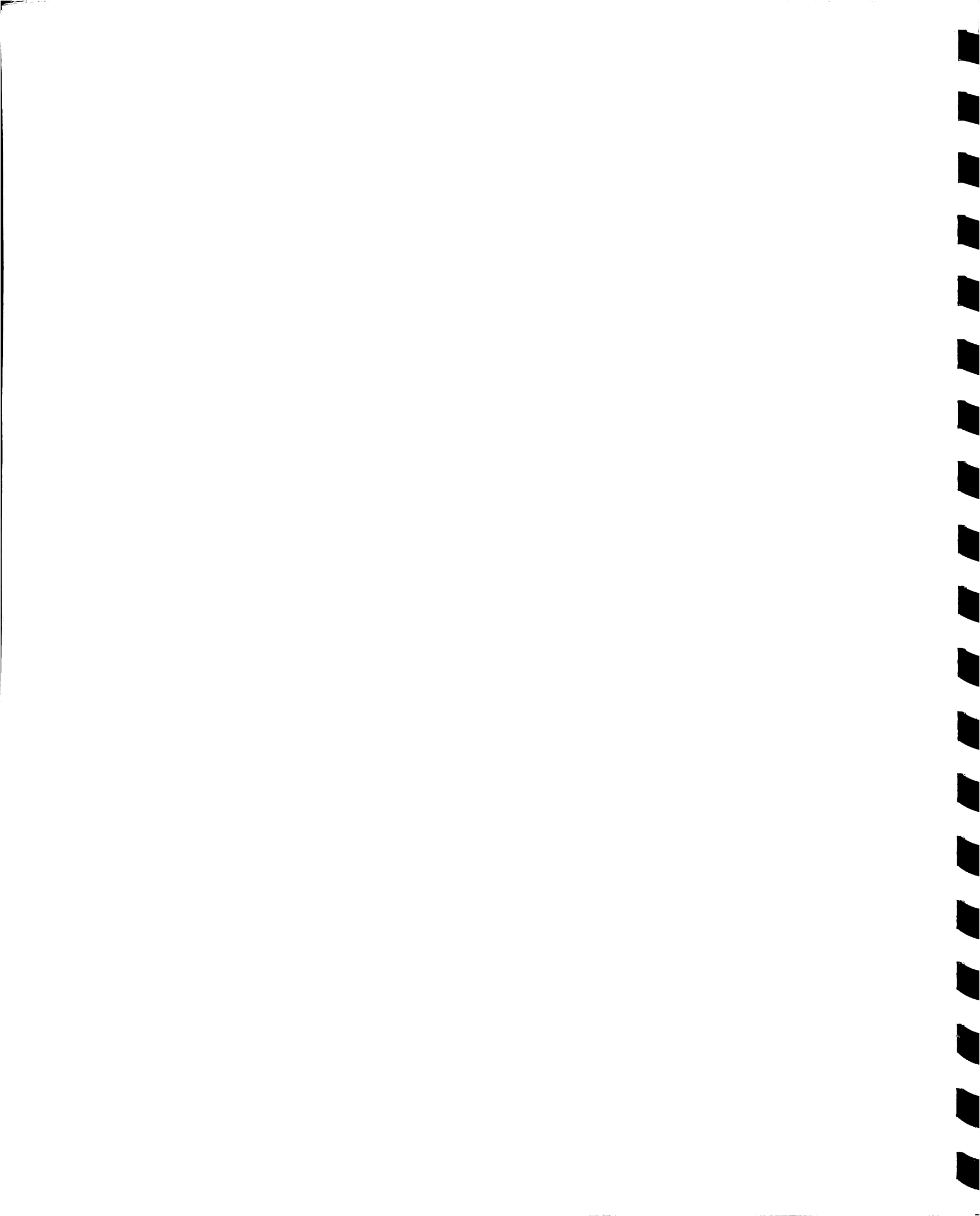
AFSERI

Karim has left. I am convinced he will make trouble for us.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Do not worry. Even those who oppose me unwittingly help me by thinking of me. All orders pertaining to the children are cancelled. From today on, I will remain on water only.



EXT. LOWER HILL DAY

EXTREME WIDE SHOT without dialogue.

A wagon pulls up. A boy is put in and it drives away.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE

At his desk, Chanji makes a note in a ledger.

EXT. HILL DAY

Four more boys are taken away by Tonga.

Ali is watching this sight. Meherjee walks past him, withdrawn and disturbed, leaving Ali to watch the distant sight alone.

INT. HAJI'S TEA SHOP NIGHT

A few customers sit scattered about. Haji sits with his bills spread out before him. Hussein and Karim sit across the table from him.

HUSSEIN

Our sons were tearing their clothes and crying out this
Baba's name.

HAJI

(Shaking his head)

No, I don't believe this.

HUSSEIN

Karim has seen it.

Haji looks questioningly at Karim.

KARIM

It's true. Many people have seen it.

Haji takes a deep breath and grips the table as though he were trying to crush it.



HAJI
(Stonily)

I must finish my accounts.

Outraged, Hussein leans back with both fists on the table.

HUSSEIN
You want to sit here? Then you too are mad! I take
the first train to get my son back!

Hussein stands up, giving Haji a withering look.

HAJI
(Tormented)
Allah is our witness. We both swore to leave our sons
in school. I'll keep my word.

HUSSEIN
Words be damned, Haji! Your brains are dead! I'm
getting my son!

Hussein storms out followed by Karim. The customers gape. Haji just
stares blankly.

EXT. LOWER ASHRAM DAY

SUPERIMPOSE--99th Day of Fast
59th Day of Confinement
26th Day of Water Only

A tonga pulls in off the road. Before it even stops, Hussein jumps out and
rushes in to the school.

INT. SCHOOL

Hussein bursts in. The twenty boys in the room look up from their studies.
Hussein looks them over quickly, then stalks out.



A HALLWAY

Still searching the place, Hussein turns a corner and comes face to face with Chanji.

HUSSEIN
(Roughly)

Where is my son?

CHANJI
(Concerned)

Is something wrong?

Hussein storms out the door. Alarmed, Chanji rushes around the corner and down the hall.

CHANJI
(Calling)

Afseri! Rustom! Baidul!

EXT. LOWER HILLSIDE

Hussein crosses the tracks and starts up the hill. In the background, Chanji, Rustom, Afseri and two others head after him.

UPPER HILLSIDE NEAR THE HUT

Ali and Meherjee sit on the same ground where the boys were crying. A book is open in Ali's hands, but his focus is on the hut.

MEHERJEE

What happened out here?

(Indicates the expanse of ground)

A hundred boys running around crying! I need to know.

Ali takes a penknife out of his pocket, opens it carefully, inspects it, then closes it and puts it back in his pocket.



ALI

(Points to the hut)

I was feeling the pain of missing Baba. It is painful not to be able to see him.

Meherjee looks at the hut.

MEHERJEE

When he opened that window, you all stopped crying.
Why?!

ALI

We see Baba. . . he is home. . . and we are happy.
Very happy.

A voice CRIES out from somewhere below. Meherjee and Ali turn in the direction of the voice just as Hussein drags Ahmed out of the dormitory.

Ali is off like a shot toward the dormitory. Meherjee runs after him.

EXT. DORMITORY DAY

AHMED

(Crying)

No! Please, I don't want to go!

Hussein SMACKS Ahmed to the ground, then jerks him up again just as Chanji's group and Ali converge from opposite directions. Hussein raises his hand to strike again.

ALI

(Shouting)

Let him go!

Holding Ahmed's collar, Hussein glares at Ali.

HUSSEIN

I am sorry your father is not here; that is his business.

Meherjee, the kitchen staff and some other boys arrive from different directions.



HUSSEIN
(Cont'd, to Chanji)
I will send for his things.

He starts to pull Ahmed away.

AHMED
(Pulling back)
No! I want to stay!

Hussein SLAPS him. The group reacts.

CHANJI
Do not hit your son!

HUSSEIN
(Roaring at the group)
He is mine! I'll do as I wish!

ANGLE HUT

The shutters open and Baba looks out. His face is drawn and weak.

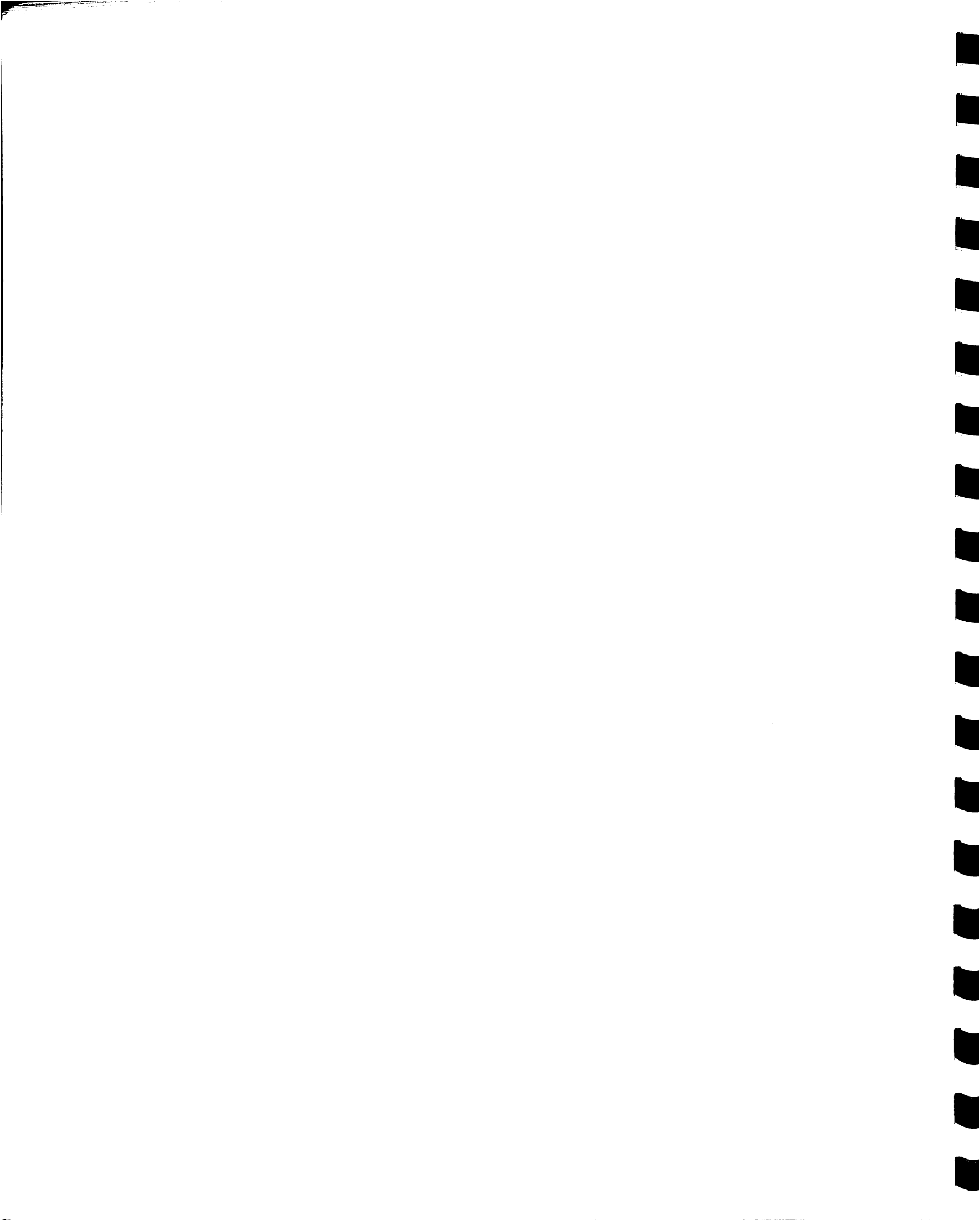
Suddenly, strangely, like a wave rolling through, everyone turns and looks up at the hut. Baba looks at them from the window. Even Hussein is momentarily spellbound.

Ahmed suddenly breaks free and sprints for Baba, with Ali hard on his heels. Hussein goes after them with Chanji, Meherjee, Ramjoo and Afseri close behind. The rest of the crowd, which is now much larger, closes in behind.

EXT. HUT

Ahmed is on his knees beneath Baba's window, with his palms together. Ali drops to his knees, just behind Ahmed. Inexplicably, Hussein stops about ten feet away. Everyone stops.

Baba bends down, leans out of the window and places his hand on Ahmed's head for a moment, then beckons him to rise.



Ahmed gets up and Baba embraces him, stroking his head and patting him reassuringly. He then turns Ahmed around firmly by the shoulders and gives him a gentle push.

Ali gets up and watches as Ahmed walks stoically toward his father.

AHMED

Father, I wish to stay here.

Ignoring Ahmed's plea, Hussein turns to glare at Baba, then spits on the ground. The crowd begins to move in on him. Baba CLAPS loudly. Everybody freezes.

HUSSEIN

He is mine. I am taking him from this madness.

Hussein takes Ahmed roughly by the arm and they start down the hill. The crowd parts to let them pass.

With tears in his eyes, Ali turns to look at Baba. There is a deep sadness in Baba's face, the sadness of a father losing a son. His eyes, too, are moist. Ali, head bowed, walks off in another direction, alone, sobbing silently.

EXT. SCHOOL

The tonga driver sleeps slumped on the seat with a piece of cloth draped over his turban and eyes. The horse swings his head around, ears forward and looks toward the road.

Ahmed and Hussein cross the railroad tracks, followed by Meherjee, Chanji, Baidul and Afseri. As they approach the tonga, Ahmed turns and looks back at the hilltop. Hussein jerks him around roughly.

HUSSEIN

No more!

He SMACKS Ahmed backhand across the face. Ahmed tries to pull away, then lets himself fall, dead weight.



Behind him, the horse jumps about nervously, its hooves pounding up little dust clouds, while the rudely awakened driver tries to calm the animal.

CHANJI

Stop this, sir! Ahmed, get up!

Hussein raises his fist to strike Ahmed. Baidul steps in and grabs Hussein's wrists. Hussein straightens up. The two are face to face, inches apart.

BAIDUL

Your son deserves much better treatment.

Hussein jerks his arm free, grabs Ahmed and bearhugs him into the tonga, stabbing his finger on something in the process. He shakes his hand up and down, then fumbles around with Ahmed's clothing and comes up with a pin-on button. He throws it into the dirt and climbs into the tonga. The driver CRACKS the whip. The tonga CREAKS into motion.

ANGLE ON BUTTON

We see the button face up as the wheels roll past it.

Afseri shakes his head slowly as he and Chanji watch the tonga head down the road. Meherjee bends down and picks up the button. Chanji watches him dust it off and put it in his pocket.

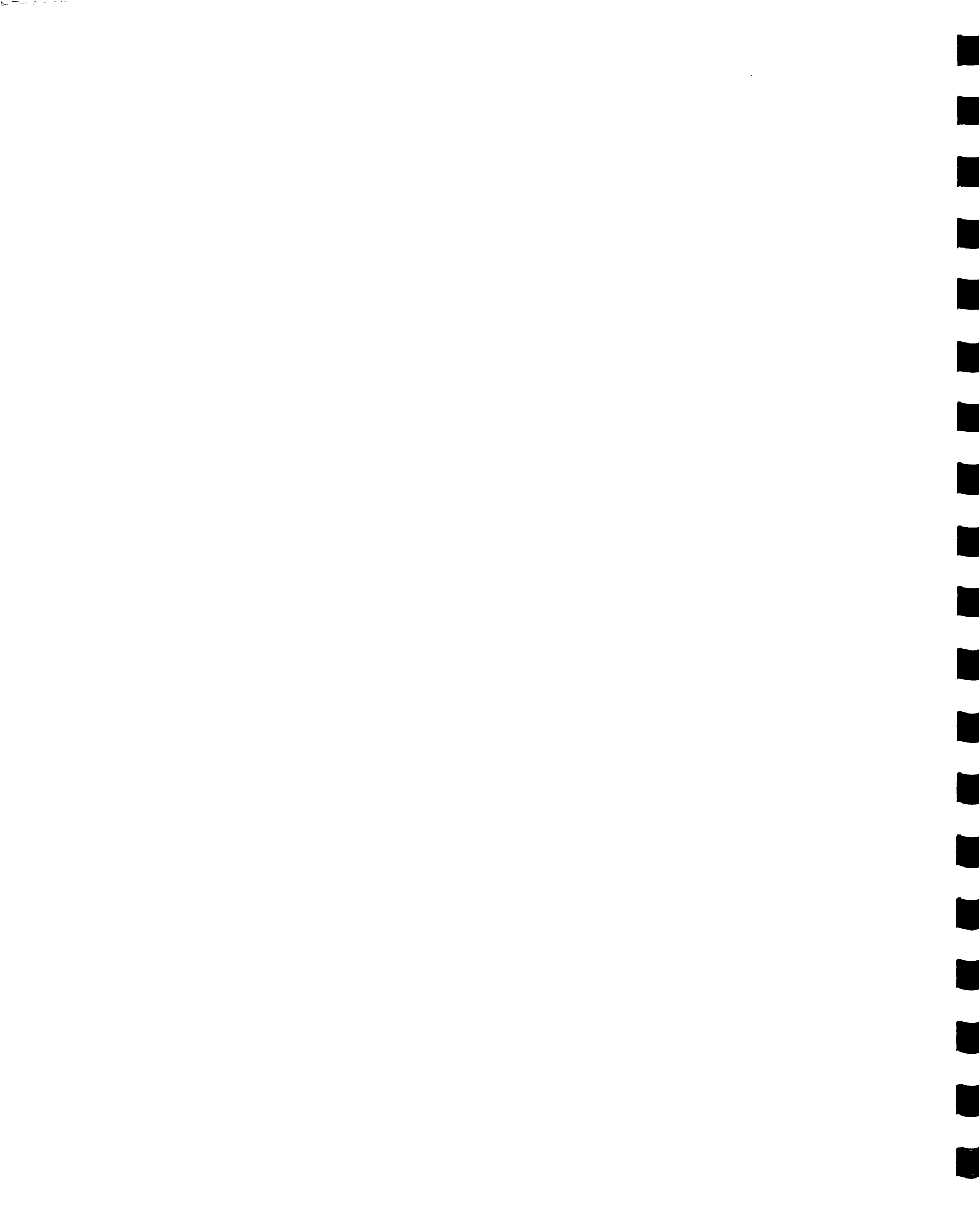
INT. HAJI'S KITCHEN NIGHT

A weary-looking Haji and his wife, RABIA, are cleaning up. Haji wipes cups and puts them on a shelf. There is a KNOCK at the back door. Surprised, Haji goes and cautiously opens it. Hussein stands there looking beaten and afraid.

HUSSEIN

(Entering, dazed)

He is mad. My boy is mad.



Haji
(Concerned)

What do you mean?

Hussein sees Rabia and nods deferentially, managing a sickly smile. Haji bolts the door; he catches Rabia's eye and with a slight pursing of the lips and a gesture of the head, sends her from the room. Haji sits on a stool and looks questioningly at Hussein.

Haji
(Pats a stool next to him)

Here. . . . sit.

Hussein ignores the offer and paces around the kitchen.

Hussein
He will not eat. Baba, Baba is all I hear! Allah is my witness, he prays to that Zoroastrian!

He covers his mouth with his hand and pulls at his face, as though afraid he is going mad himself.

Hussein
(Cont'd)

We will be outcasts!

(Approaches Haji)

I come to warn you. Get Ali! Before it's too late, get him.

(Leans in, whispering)

Haji! He will steal your son. Like he has stolen mine!

CLOSE ON HAJI

As fear takes control.

INT./EXT. HUT DAY

The inside is clean and barren, except for an old chair and a thin mattress which lies on the floor with some coverings. Baba is at the window. Gathered outside are Chanji, Afseri, Ramjoo, Rustom, Pendu and Padri.



Baba holds the alphabet board in his hands outside the window. The toll of the long fast is clearly evident in his face.

RAMJOO

Haji Mohammed has arrived and is demanding his son.

AFSERI

Baba, we have a signed agreement allowing us to keep the boy.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Remember my earlier words. . . . a signed agreement will not suffice. . . . if Ali goes, everything goes.

RAMJOO

Baba, we will reason with Haji and convince him to change his mind.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Ali is the link in my work with these children. His heart is pure; if he is taken away, he will suffer much and my work will be undone. Do your best.

EXT./INT. DORMITORY DAY

Meherjee steps into the entrance. Inside, he leans into the room and RAPS on the wall. Ali lies on his bed, playing with his penknife.

MEHERJEE

Ali, why are you not with the other boys?

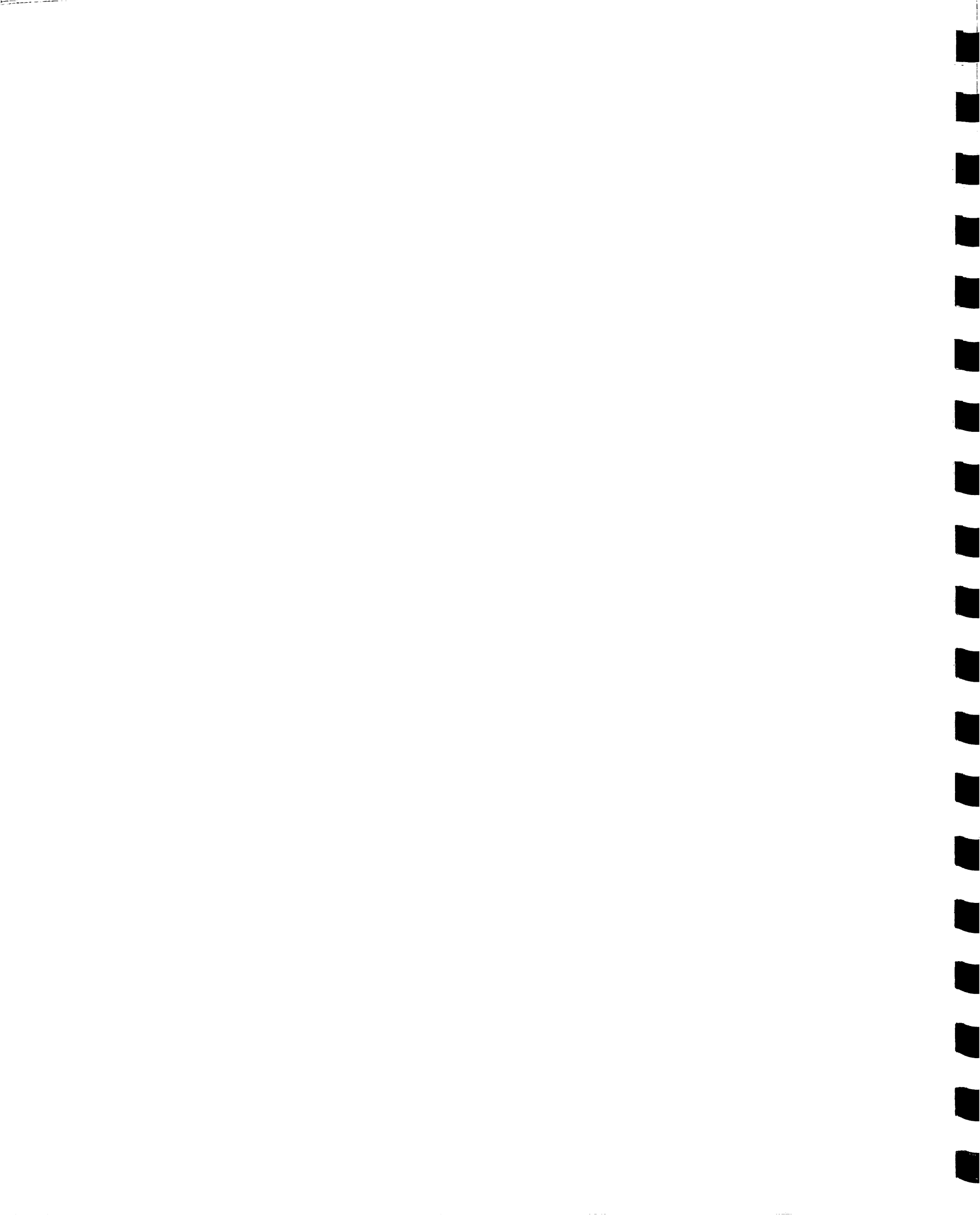
Ali puts his penknife away. Meherjee approaches the bed. Ali makes no response.

MEHERJEE

(Cont'd, softly)

What is it? Feeling sad?

Still no response. Meherjee sits at the foot of Ali's bed.



MEHERJEE

(Cont'd)

I have something for you.

He reaches in his pocket and pulls out the button, glancing at the picture on it.

MEHERJEE

(Cont'd)

It's Ahmed's. It fell on the ground.

(Offers it to Ali)

I think he'd want you to have it.

No response. He puts the button in Ali's hand.

ALI

(Staring at the button)

My father has come

CLOSE UP OF BUTTON

The button has a picture of Baba's face on it.

Ali holds the button up and stares at the picture. His face contorts and his eyes close, squeezing out the tears, waiting there. He clutches his chest as though it might relieve some terrible ache.

MEHERJEE

Come, Ali. Have you considered your duty to your father? I mean, perhaps he needs you at home.

Ali pushes himself up, leaning close to Meherjee.

ALI

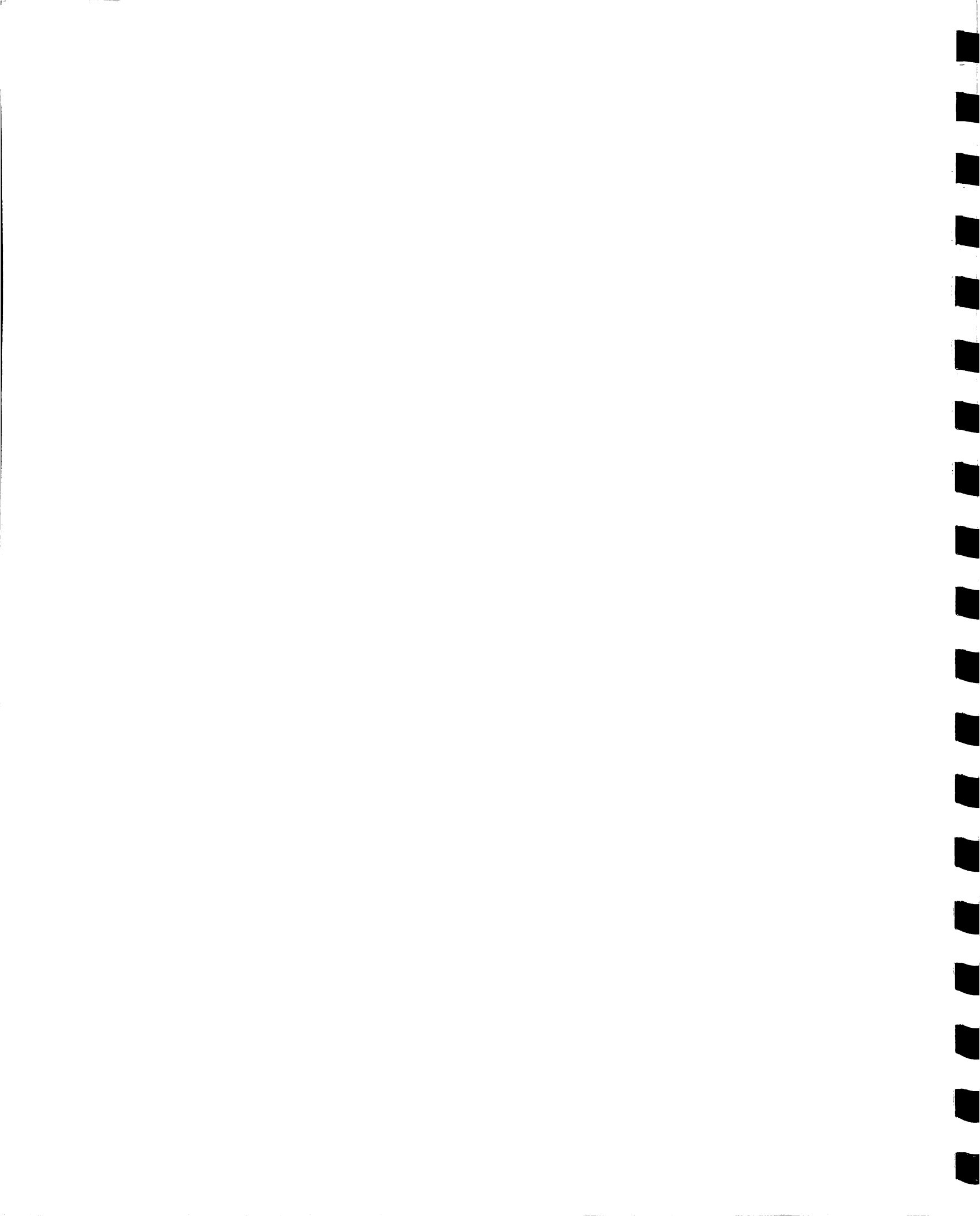
I am home, Meherjee! Why you cannot see?

MEHERJEE

(Taken aback)

I can see that you don't want to leave.

Ali pulls out his penknife and opens it.



ALI

This will be my final argument.

EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE EVENING

Meherjee, Afseri and Haji walk together outside the school office.

MEHERJEE

Ali is a very good student.

AFSERI

In all his classes among the best. And, of course, a good student from here will qualify for Bombay University.

HAJI

(Agitated)

Yes, yes, I am believing his studies are fine.

Afseri appears worried.

AFSERI

Then what exactly is the problem?

Haji exhales sharply, folding his arms and looking down at his feet. Meherjee pauses with his hand on the doorknob and looks at Haji.

HAJI

If my son stays, I will be an outcast.

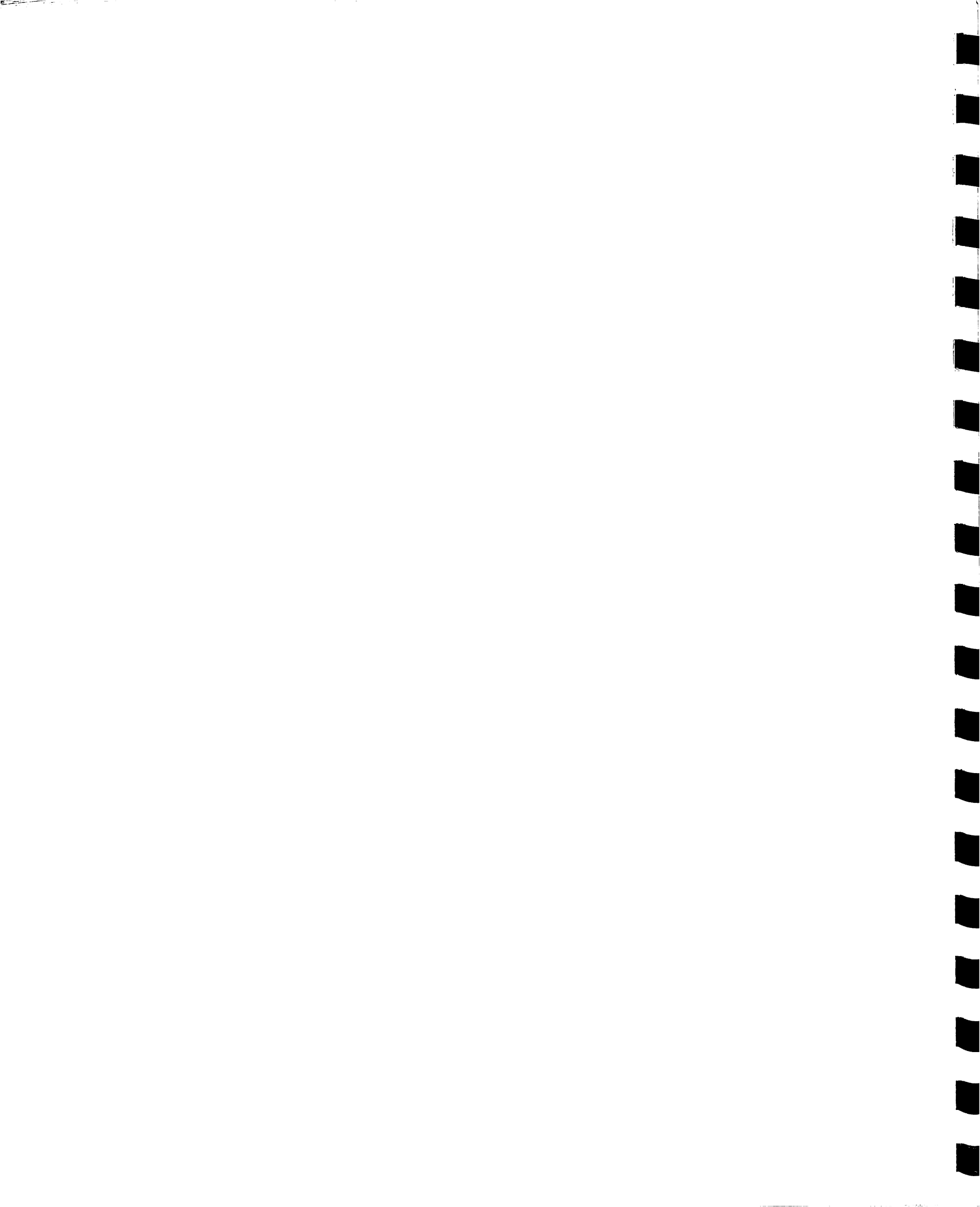
AFSERI

What?

Meherjee opens the door.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE EVENING

Chanji is busy typing at his desk. Ramjoo and Rustom stand close by. They all look up as Haji enters, followed by Afseri and Meherjee, who shuts the door.



HAJI

(Addressing Chanji)

In Bombay, the Muslims are very angry. They say our sons bow down to your Baba and have been driven mad.

CHANJI

(Quietly)

Absurd! Sir, no one has gone mad here. The boys spend their time acquiring knowledge, good behavior and good character.

HAJI

(With rising anger)

Who takes charge? You are Parsees! Zoroastrians!
My son is a Muslim.

RAMJOO

With respect, sir! I, too, am a Muslim, and in the name of God most gracious, most merciful, I tell you that the only madness taught here is Meher Baba's regular instruction of love for God, spiritual understanding and selfless service.

HAJI

(Defensively)

Where is Ali? I want to speak with my son.

RUSTOM

I'll find him.

Rustom opens the door and leaves.

CHANJI

If you wish, Mr. Mohammed, we can hire a Mullah of your choosing, and at our expense, so Ali can have his orthodox religious instruction.

Haji looks dubious.

HAJI

Why would you go to this trouble?



Chanji rises and leans on his desk.

CHANJI

(Slowly, with determination)

It is Baba's order that these boys, no matter what caste or creed, should have the opportunity to advance themselves here. . . . free of prejudice . . . in harmony together.

A tonga is heard pulling up outside.

CHANJI

(Cont'd, giving it one last try)

Sir, I implore you . . . would you deprive your son, a most willing and ardent student, of this rare opportunity . . . and need I add, at no cost to you?

There is a KNOCK. Exasperated, Afseri opens the door. ABDUL, another Muslim, nods and walks in, glancing at them suspiciously.

ABDUL

I have come for my son, Yusef.

Haji motions for Abdul to join him in the hall.

HAJI

(To Abdul as they go)

They say they will hire a Mullah for our sons.

Chanji plops back into his chair, sighing.

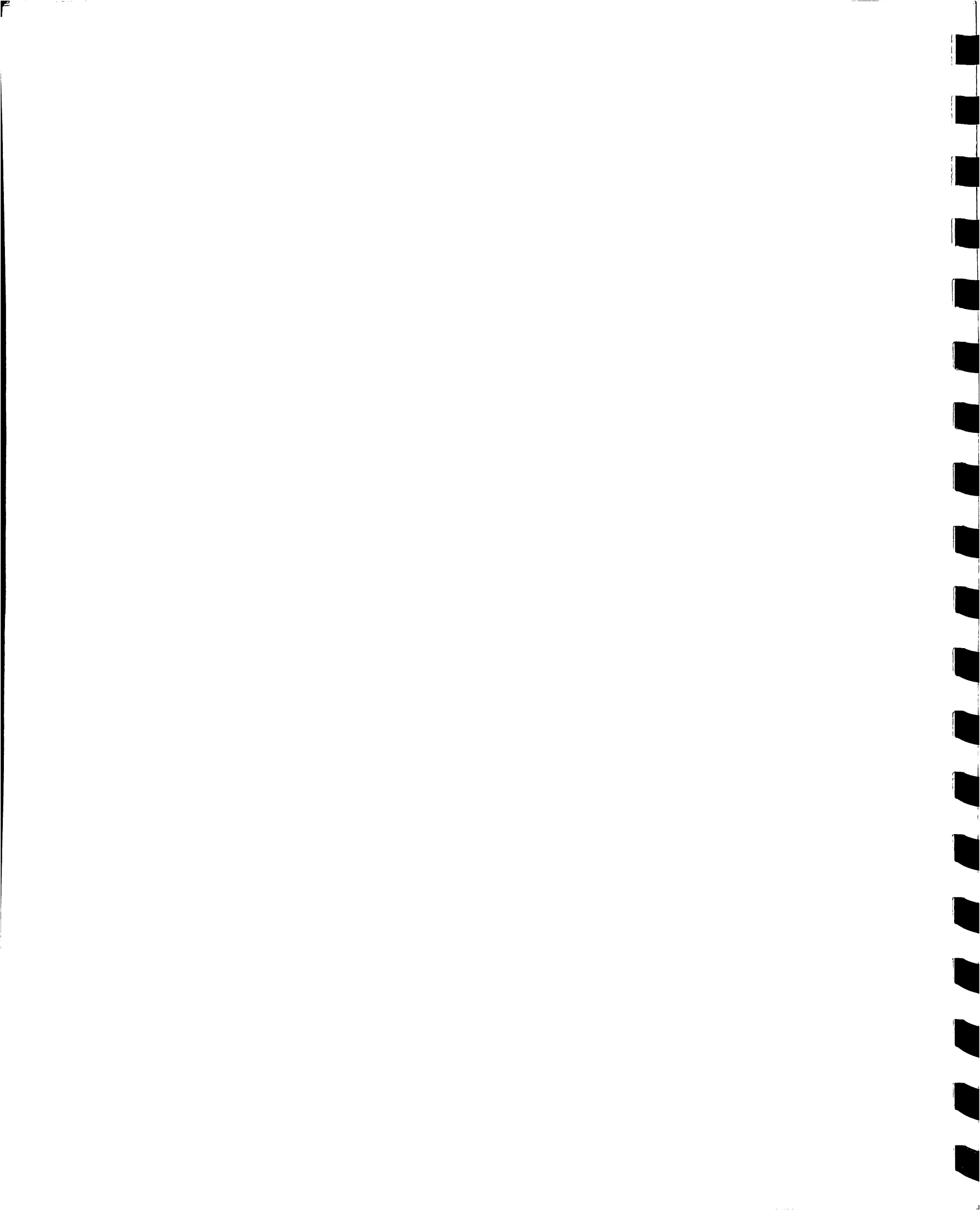
AFSERI

(To Chanji)

You don't know if we can get, let alone afford, a Mullah!

CHANJI

We must do our best!



EXT. BABA'S HUT DAY

Ali is in front of Baba's window. Abdullah stands nearby, a colorful shawl draped around his shoulders. His hair is somewhat longer and he looks quite normal. Ali KNOCKS gently at the window. It opens at once, revealing Baba, whose face conveys a terrible sadness. . . . a sadness that appears all the more poignant when he sees Ali.

ALI

(Fighting the tears)

Baba, my father wants to take me away!

Baba reaches out and quickly embraces Ali. He motions Abdullah closer to read the alphabet board.

BABA

(Spoken by Abdullah)

Even if he breaks his word, be always obedient to your father.

ALI

(A tear rolls)

Baba, you are my real father.

BABA

(Spoken by Abdullah)

Whatever happens, be brave and happy, and leave the rest to me. Remember, I am always with you.

Ali nods "yes" and wipes his tears. He removes the penknife from his pocket and hands it to Baba. Baba takes it, reaches out his arms, and again embraces Ali.

INT. SCHOOL OFFICE

Haji and Abdul walk back in from the hallway. Chanji is sitting behind his desk, talking with Meherjee, Ramjoo and Afseri. Abdul draws himself up and makes his announcement, staring directly at Chanji.



ABDUL
My son will stay, if Baba goes.

CHANJI
(Firmly)
What you ask is impossible!

Haji heads for the door.

HAJI
(Shouting)
No more talk! I want my son now!

EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE

Haji barrels out of the entrance and stops in his tracks. Ali, dressed now in his regular clothes, stands alone in the middle of the yard with a duffel bag beside him. With a contented face, he turns and walks to the tonga, which is parked close by. Haji follows, looking troubled.

Chanji and Meherjee step from the entrance and walk after them.

THE TONGA

Ali climbs in. Haji looks around suspiciously, then climbs in next to Ali. The whip CRACKS. Ali's gaze is on the hilltop as the tonga pulls away. Meherjee stands near, watching while Chanji waves goodbye.

MEHERJEE
You mounted an impressive plea for Ali's being
allowed to stay

(beat)
. . . . but why all the fuss over just one boy?

They turn and start walking back toward the school.

CHANJI
All the boys are important, but Ali was the link in
which the other boys could imbibe love.



MEHERJEE
(Not comprehending)

Imbibe love?

CHANJI

Yes, love. . . . Baba has said that "those who do not have it will catch it from those who have it." Each one gets to have as much as he can hold. Do you understand?

MEHERJEE
(Softening a little)

I'm trying to.

CHANJI

What you don't know is that unless Ali is returned in seven days, Baba will close the school.

MEHERJEE

What?

They stop for a moment. It is quite apparent that Chanji is deeply saddened by the loss of Ali. He turns to Meherjee.

CHANJI
(Firmly, but hiding his pain)

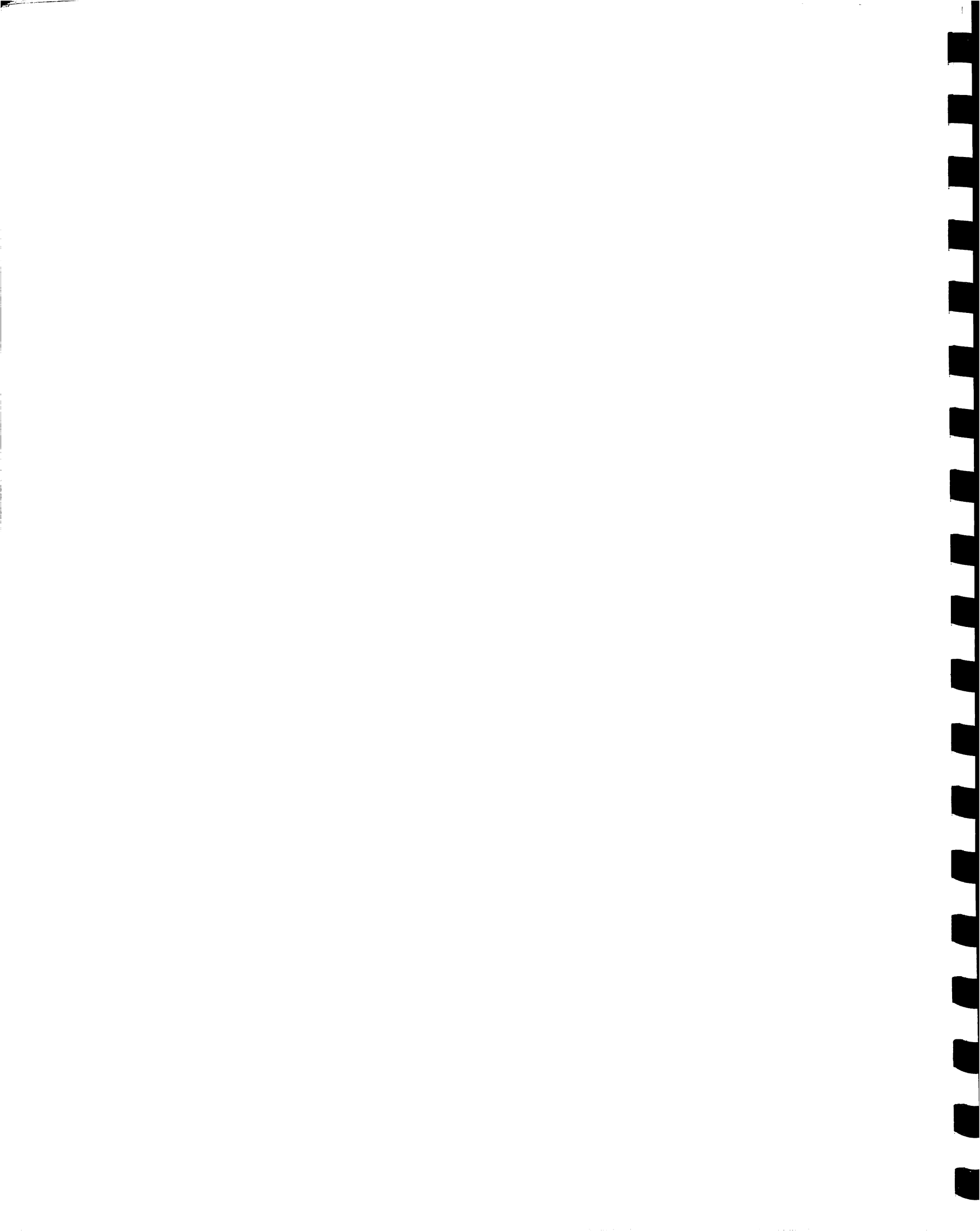
There are higher laws, Meherjee! What this school stands for is not an unrealistic vision it is not an impossible dream

MEHERJEE
(Defensively)

I certainly hope the school remains opens. I do enjoy teaching these children.

CHANJI

I know you haven't totally grasped it yet, but someday you will realize that these children are truly blessed, for they see with an unclouded vision. They are, I believe, the advance guard of a new humanity. A new world order will someday be born from their efforts.



INT. HAJI'S APARTMENT DAY

Haji, Rabia and Ali sit on colorful pillows around a low round table. Haji is about two scoops away from finishing his bowl of rice and stew. As he and Rabia eat with gusto, they look over at Ali who has not touched his food. Ali's cheeks are a little sunken, and he has dark circles under his eyes. He holds out his cup to his mother.

ALI

Please, more water.

Rabia looks plaintively at Ali as she reaches for the pitcher.

HAJI

Eat, your mother has made very good stew.

Muffled VOICES come from the tea shop kitchen. Haji glances anxiously at the door.

HAJI

(Cont'd)

Two days, Ali! Please! You must eat and forget this
Baba.

Ali pushes his plate away.

ALI

I will not eat.

Hussein, pushing Ahmed in front of him, enters with Karim and two elders from the kitchen. They stand at the side of the room. Ahmed looks badly bruised and beaten. His hands are tied together in front. Hussein stands to the side, holding a whip.

HUSSEIN

Haji, it is time.

As the men advance, Ali suddenly bolts, but is caught and held down by Karim. Hussein pries his mouth open. Other hands thrust an egg at Haji, who takes it hesitantly. He breaks the egg on the table, bends, and pours the liquid egg into Ali's mouth. Ali twists and gags.



EXT. VIEW FROM HILL NIGHT

A train is moving slowly through the landscape. The horn BLOWS long and faint.

EXT. BABA'S HUT NIGHT

The teachers, ashram workers and most of the remaining boys stand outside, motionless.

ANGLE BABA'S FACE THROUGH OPENING

Baba repeatedly taps the palm of his left hand with Ali's penknife in a slow rhythm.

INT. WOMEN'S COMPOUND DAY

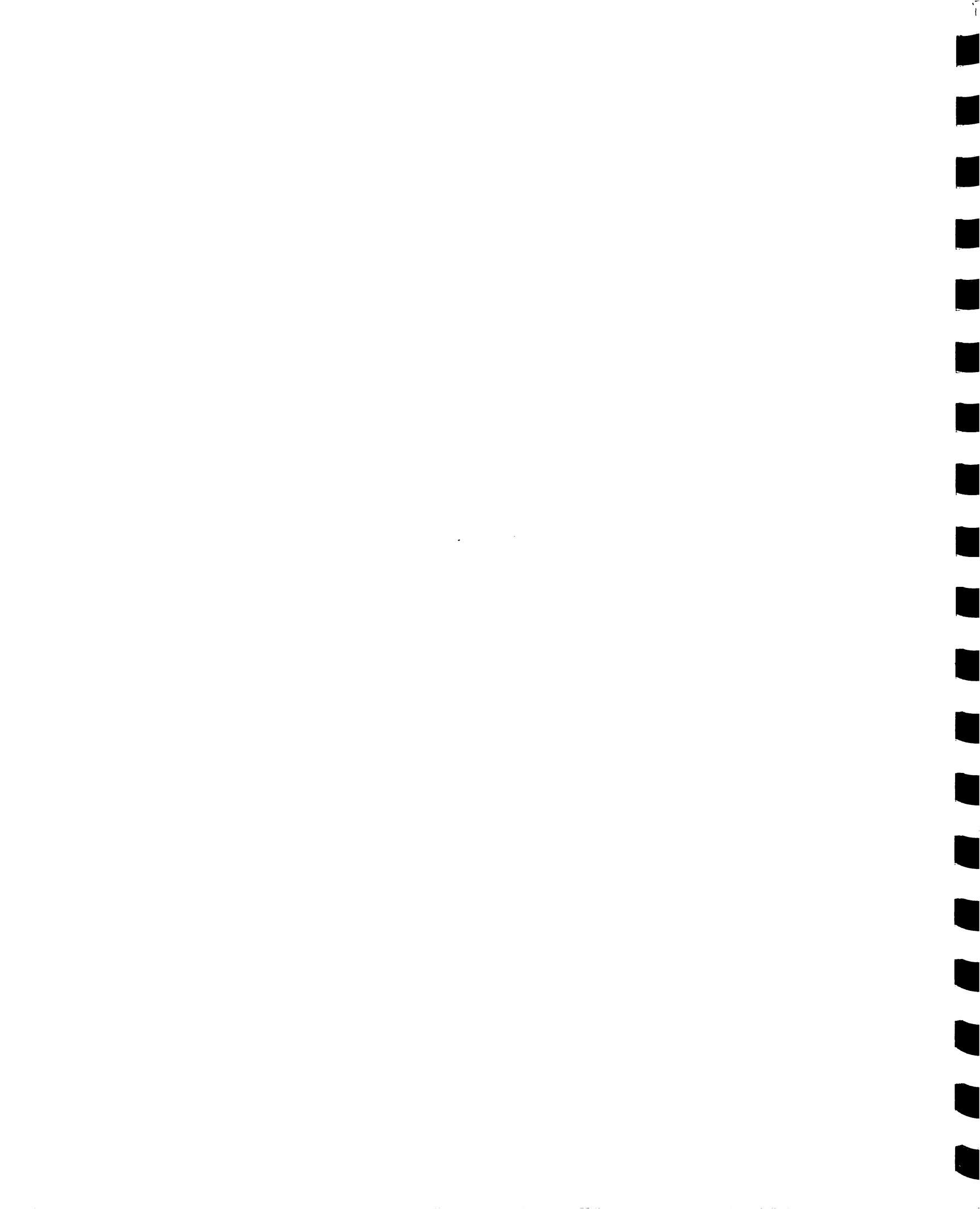
A group of four women stand together near the entrance to the women's compound, which is down the hill and completely separate from the other ashram buildings. They wait patiently, expectantly. MEHERA, age 20, is holding a garland. Her mother, DAULATMAI, together with NAJA and KHORSHED, who are a few years younger than Mehera, make up the rest of the group.

Their gaze is focussed on a small building in the heart of the compound. Beyond this building is a bamboo fence, that totally surrounds the compound, making it self-contained.

Baba emerges from the building looking freshly groomed and shaved. He is resplendent in a new white sadra, which somewhat offsets his lean, emaciated appearance. He strides quickly toward them.

NAJA

Baba, we miss you so much. Please come more often and do end your fast soon, so that I may cook for you again.



Mehera replaces the garland over Baba's head. He beams back a look of deep love and compassion for each of the women, nods "Yes" and opens the door to leave.

EXT. WOMEN'S COMPOUND DAY

Chanji is waiting outside.

CHANJI

Baba, the teachers have been advised that all classes are cancelled. Meherjee is concerned and wishes to speak to you. He's in the library.

Baba nods his head and they begin to walk up the hill toward the library.

INT. LIBRARY DAY

Meherjee is cramming as usual. Several books are spread on the table before him. He is intently engaged in his studies. Baba comes in followed by Chanji; Meherjee looks up.

MEHERJEE

Baba, even if you close the school, I seek your permission to stay on here without salary to complete my studies.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

I am well-pleased with your teaching work. Will you now obey my orders?

MEHERJEE

Yes, Baba.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

I want you to give your mind a rest with no time whatsoever spent on studying, and for one hour each day, silently repeat my name. Will you do this for me?

MEHERJEE

Yes, Baba.



BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)

For how long?

MEHERJEE
For as long as you ask.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
Do this well and I will see to your future.

EXT. HUT DAY

Meherjee is sitting alone on the ground about fifty feet from Baba's hut. His eyes are closed. His lips silently move. A mosquito is BUZZING around his head, determined, it would seem, to land on some part of his upper anatomy. He flails away with his right hand, trying to drive it off, but to no use; the BUZZING continues. He opens his eyes, gets up, and moves ten feet closer to the hut; he sits down, closes his eyes, and continues as before, silently repeating the Master's name.

INT. HAJI'S APARTMENT DAY

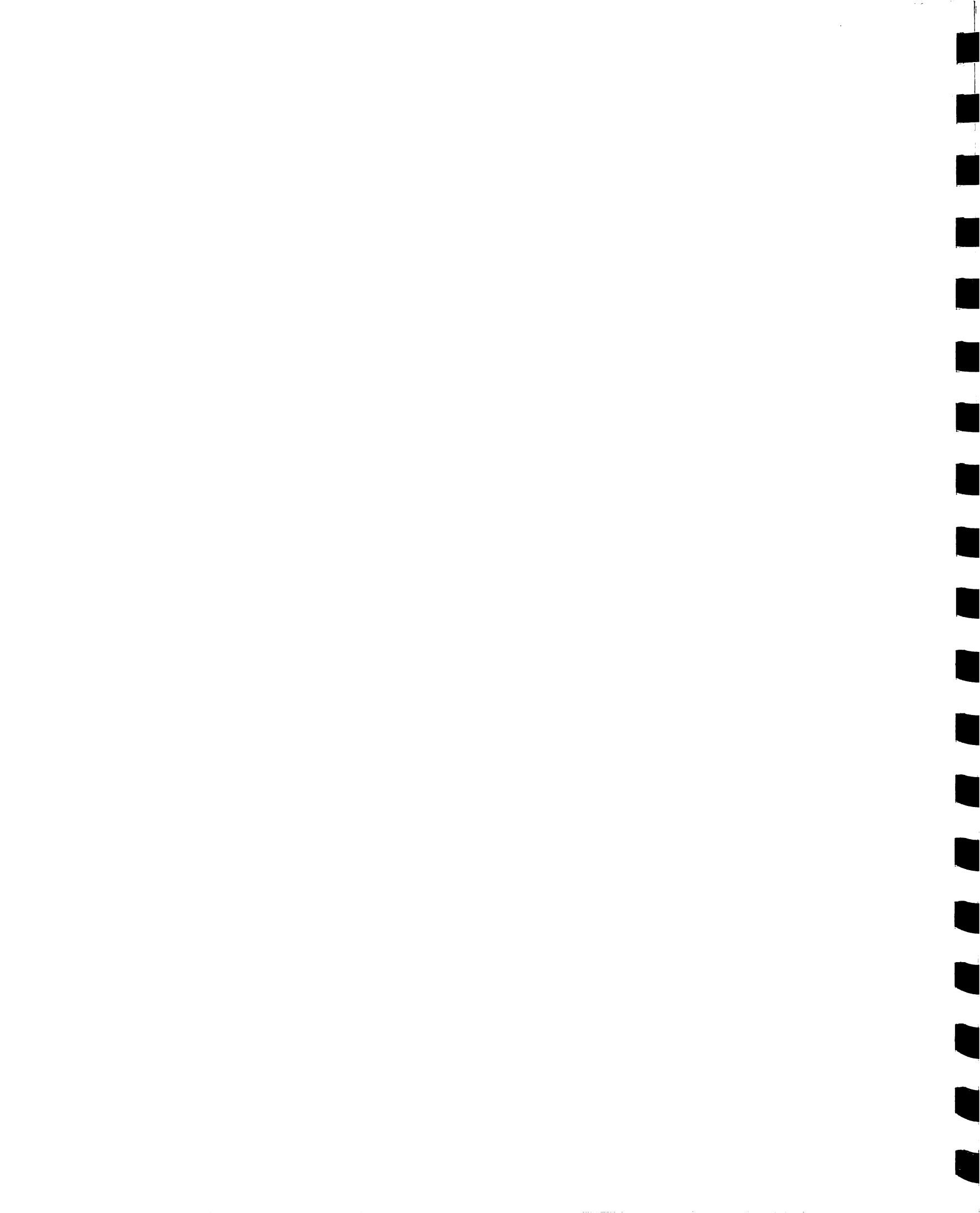
Haji and Rabia sit at the low table. She has been crying.

HAJI
(Solemnly)
Rabia, never again! I swear to you before Allah! That whip will never come in this house again.

He seeks to console his wife and purge his guilt.

HAJI
(Cont'd)
I should never have broken my word. Hussein be damned. I gave my word before Allah.

Haji looks up, startled as Ali comes into the room. He is barefoot, wearing only cotton pants with no shirt.



He comes to their table and pours some water into a glass from a pitcher on the table. He drinks it and then pours some more.

Haji

Drink, Ali, drink as much as you can, but eat too! Five days is too long to fast.

Ali

I want to see Baba! Tomorrow.

Haji

Ali, you must not ask me this. I have told you everything has a price. I cannot pay this price.

Ali turns and walks away, an angry welt is visible diagonally across his back. Rabia starts crying. Haji gets up and follows Ali.

Haji

(Cont'd)

Wait, Ali. You must understand.

Ali turns and faces his father.

Ali

It is you who does not understand. You broke your word before Allah. I am not your son anymore. I belong to Baba. He is my real father.

Haji is shocked, and raises his hand to strike Ali. Ali stands motionless. The blow does not fall.

Rabia

Please, Haji, no more.

Rabia walks to her son and gently enfolds him in her arms. There is a deep sadness in Haji's eyes.

MONTAGE OF SHOTS--NIGHT

A) Baba leaves the hut and walks down the hill toward the classrooms.

B) Rabia ducks around the side of Haji's shop.



- C) Baba strides across the yard and enters the school.
- D) Rabia walks quietly along the rear of the house. As she reaches a boarded-up window, she hears a NOISE and flattens herself against the wall, virtually disappearing in the shadows.
- E) Hussein steps out from a nearby house, lights a clay pipe, and takes a leisurely step or two toward Haji's house.
- F) Baba walks along a row of desks in Meherjee's classroom. He stops at Ali's desk front row, window and sits in it. He gazes out the window as the fingers of his right hand drum silently on the desk top. Meherjee comes in and sees Baba, but is too astonished to speak.
- G) Hussein knocks the ashes out of his pipe, breathes deeply, and goes back inside.
- H) Rabia emerges from the shadows, reaches up, and removes one end of the long wooden board that has sealed the shutters of Ali's window. She lowers the board, which now hangs by a nail, glances furtively around, TAPS lightly on the shutter, then starts back the way she came.
- I) The shutters CREAK open a little, then some more. We see Ali's face as he peeks out. The shutters CREAK closed again.

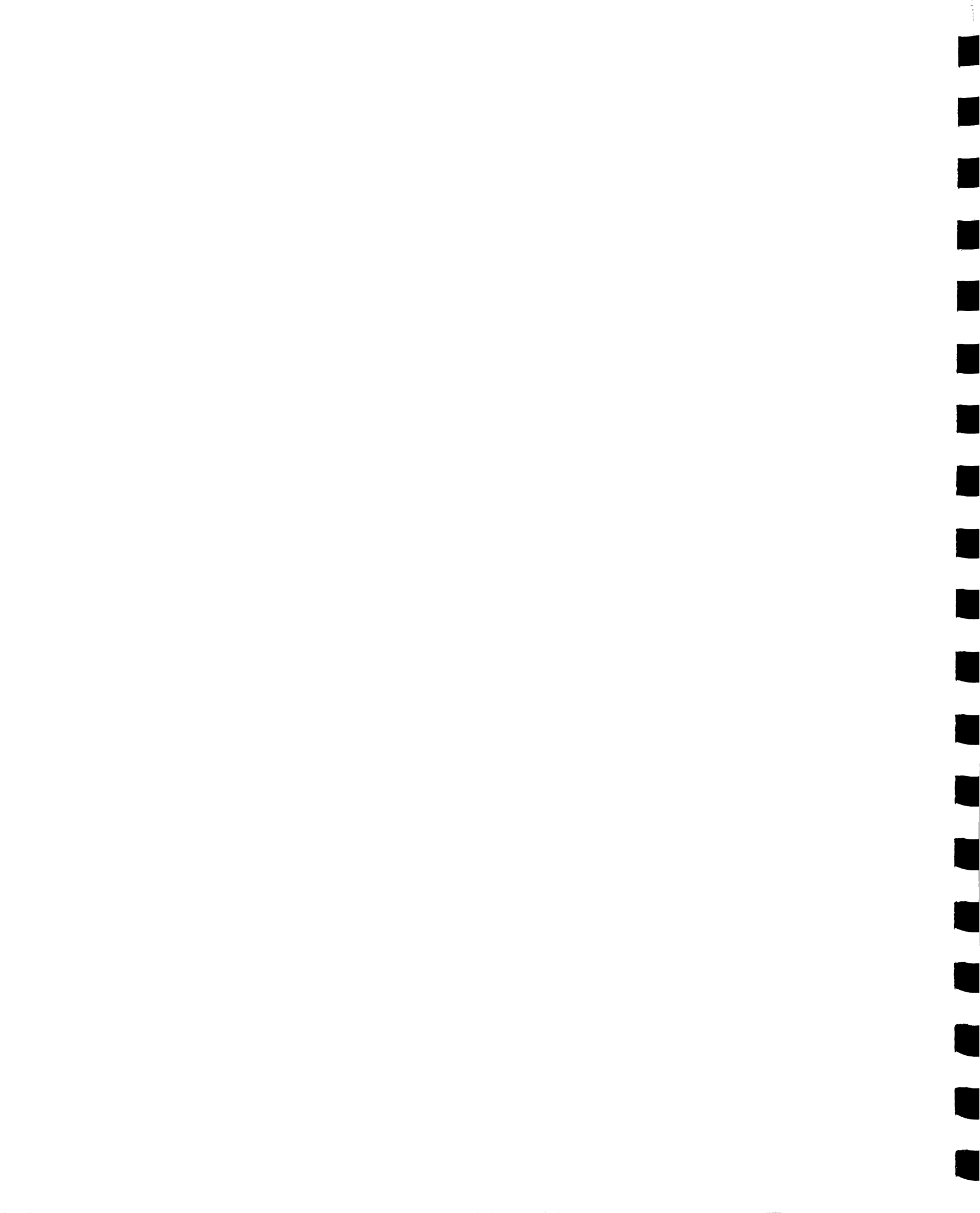
EXT. REAR OF HAJI'S HOUSE LATER--NIGHT

Ali's duffel bag dangles from a rope as it is lowered slowly to the ground. Ali tosses the rope out after it, climbs over the windowsill, and drops silently to the ground. He closes the shutters, affixes the board back into position, crouches, looks around, grabs the rope and the duffel bag, and hurries off.

EXT. HUSSEIN'S HOUSE NIGHT--EST.

EXT./INT. AHMED'S ROOM

Standing under a side window of the dilapidated little house, Ali passes his head and one arm through the looped end of the rope. He jumps, misses, jumps again, this time hooking his fingertips over the windowsill. He pulls himself up slowly, gets a better hold, pries the window open, and thrusts his head and shoulders in.



ALI
(Calling softly)

Ahmed?

Ali climbs into the room, wriggles out of the rope, and goes to the bed. Ahmed sleeps in a feverish delirium, sweating, shaking and occasionally MOANING or muttering parts of words.

Ali goes back to the rope, leans out of the window, and hauls in the duffel bag. He drags it over to the bed, opens it, and takes out a small towel and a canteen. He wets the towel and sponges Ahmed's forehead.

ALI
(Softly)
Ahmed, wake up. . . . it's Ali.

SAME SCENE - - LATER

Ahmed is propped up on pillows. A few small jars, tins, and little bags are spread on the nightstand and across Ali's lap, as he feeds Ahmed by spoon from a jar of soup.

ALI
You too can escape, but you must eat. You need to get strong.

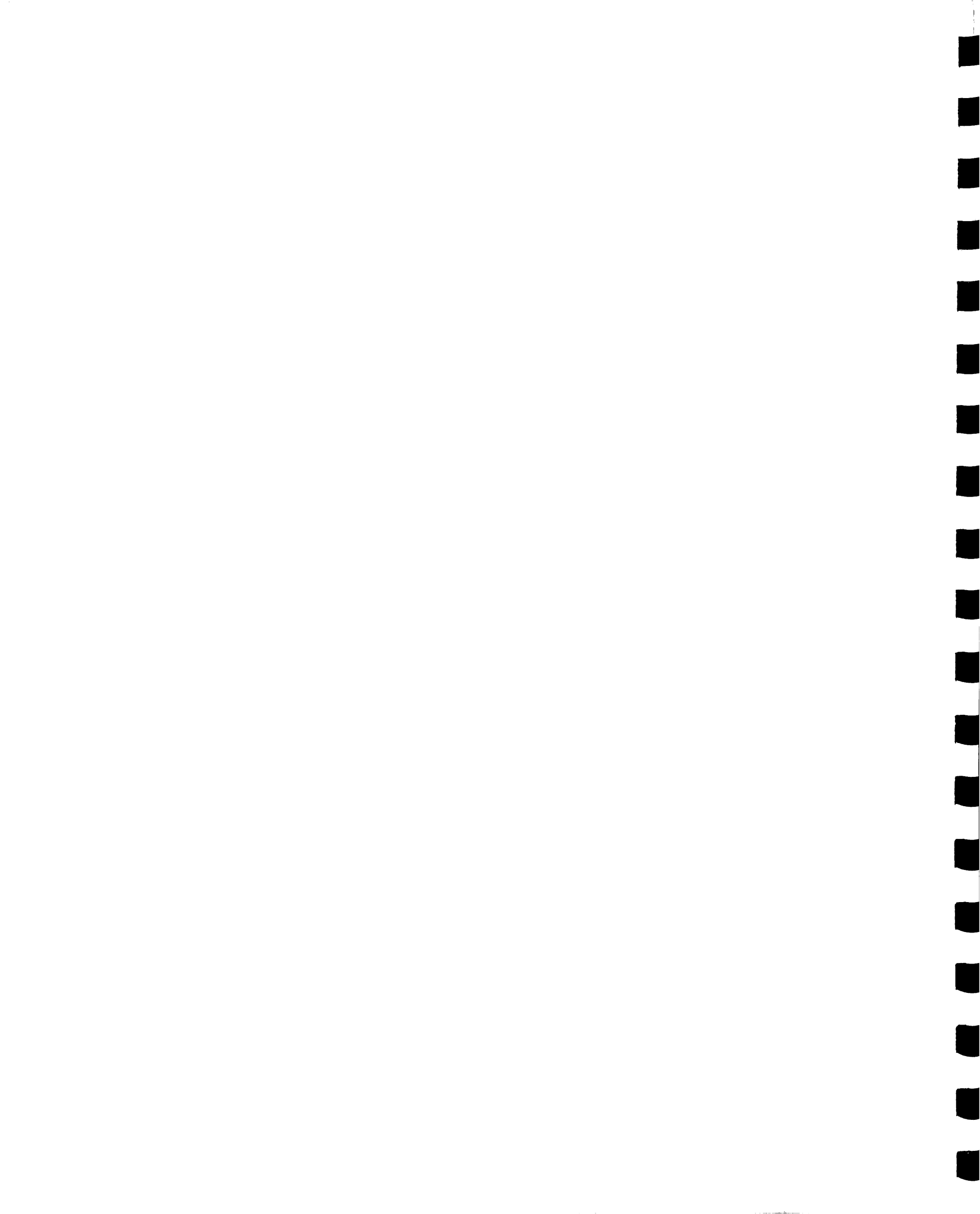
Ahmed nods as Ali puts down the jar.

ALI
(Cont'd)
Promise?

Ahmed nods again and COUGHS. Ali moves quietly to the door. Hearing nothing, he goes back to the bed.

ALI
(Cont'd, quietly)
I must hurry.

Ali pulls out Ahmed's button, which he shows to Ahmed.



ALI
(Cont'd)

Here . . . your button. Meherjee found it.

Ahmed nods drowsily. Ali stands, quickly gathering up the jars, tins, etc. and dumping them in his duffel bag.

ALI
(Cont'd)

Now, remember. Eat, . . . get strong. . . then you too can escape.

INT. TRAIN STATION (BOMBAY) -- NIGHT

A couple of British soldiers run onto the platform and stop, staring angrily at the train which is pulling out. Suddenly Ali bursts past them and chases it down the platform. He runs with all his might, hugging the duffel bag tightly against his body, drawing almost even with the end of the last car which seems to be bursting with a population far exceeding its capacity. Four or five young Indian men reach out to Ali, CHEERING him on in Hindi. Ali inches closer and thrusts his duffel bag into a pair of outstretched hands. One man leans out on the last step, stretching his arm out as far as possible. Ali sprints, grabs the hand, and the man pulls him aboard.

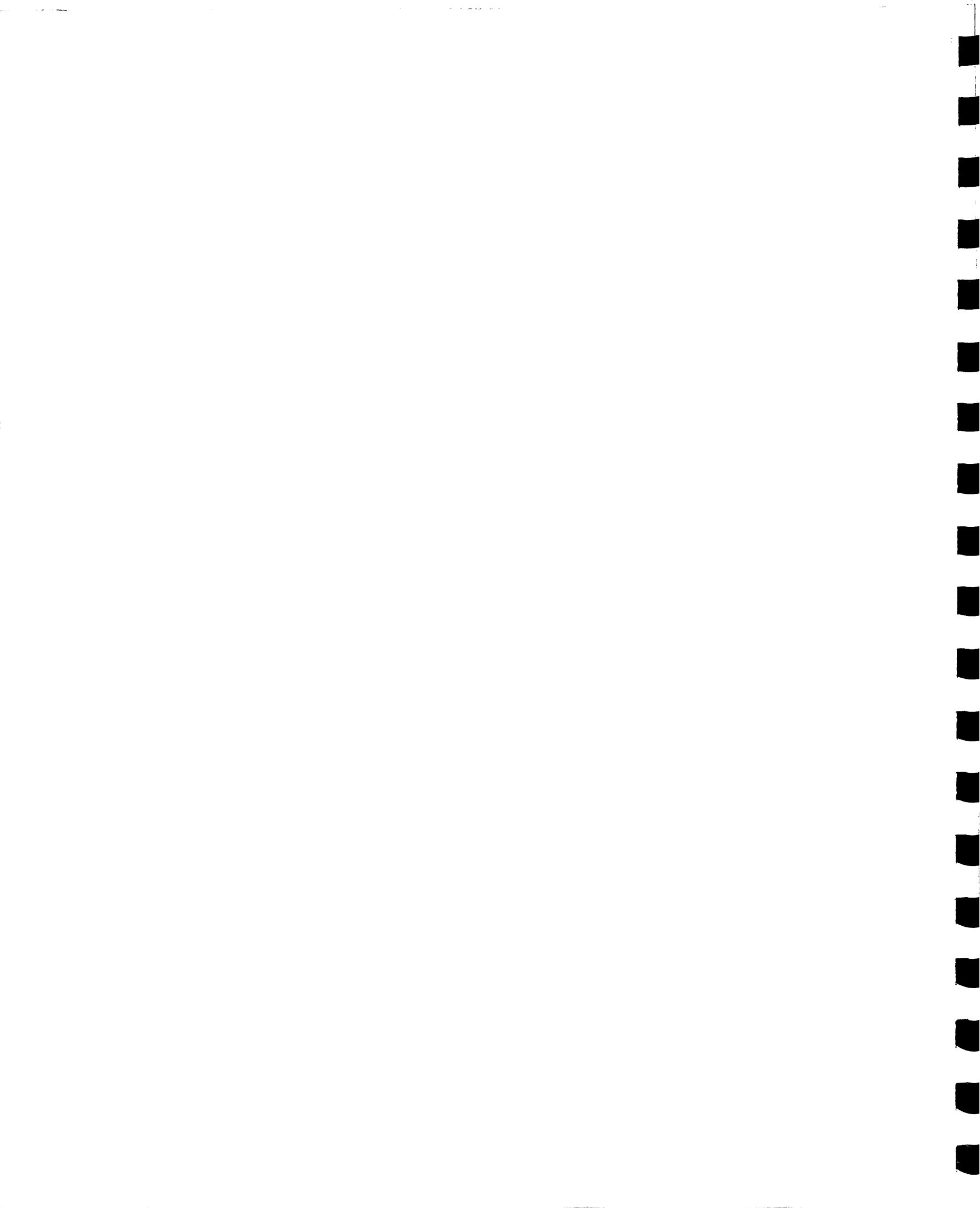
INT. TRAIN NIGHT

Soon, a dozen hands are pulling Ali into the overcrowded train car. Ali pushes through the men and finds a seat on the floor near the door.

The train slows to a stop at another platform. Steam HISSES loudly from the engine as it idles momentarily. Crowds rush out of the other end of the car, leaving it slightly less crowded before many more rush on.

EXT. HUT DAY

Baba is resting on a divan outside the hut. His left arm leans against three large colorful pillows. His legs, half-arched, lie in a comfortable position. His feet are bare. He gives the appearance of one who is truly at peace with the world.



Meherjee, Chanji, Afseri, Pendu, Rustom, Padri, Abdullah, a number of other ashram workers and some children, including Lobaji, gather close by. The mood is very relaxed and jovial. Baba gestures for questions; Meherjee responds.

MEHERJEE

Is there a future life, as some believe?

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Yes, the soul does not die. It goes on from life to life till it is merged in God.

MEHERJEE

When will you break your silence, and speak again?

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

When the word of my love breaks out of its silence and speaks in your hearts, telling you who I really am. You will know that this is the real word you have always been longing to hear.

Chanji looks up from reading the alphabet board and is startled to discover Meherjee's father approaching with three other Zoroastrian priests. Everyone turns in their direction. Meherjee looks extremely concerned. The group separates as Meherjee's father comes forward, leading the other priests.

FATHER

Which one is Meher Baba?

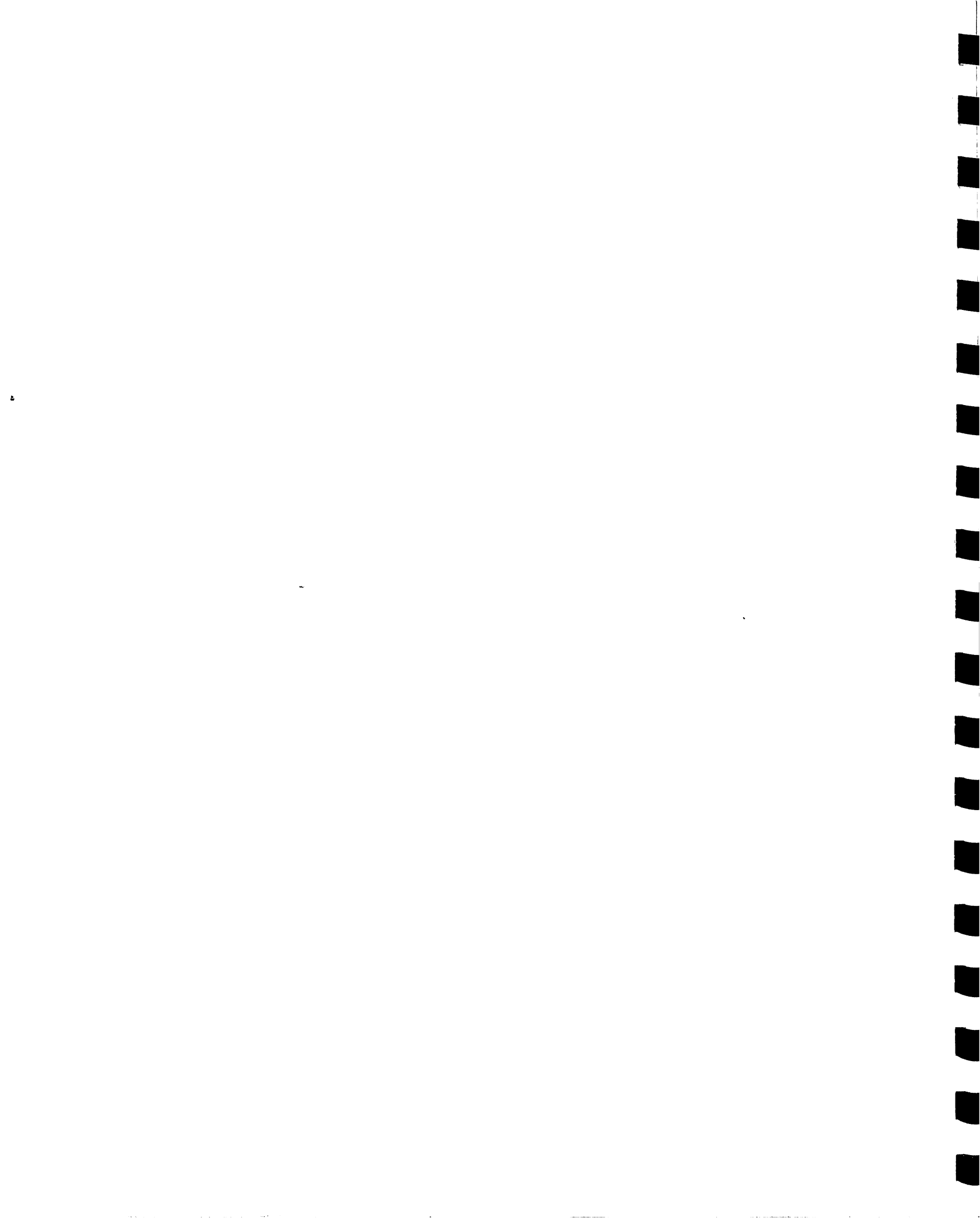
All eyes turn in Baba's direction. Baba's eyes take in the four priests, first with a look of compassion, which quickly changes to one of concern.

FATHER

I have come for my son. He is my eldest boy and I depend upon his assistance.

MEHERJEE

Father, I refuse to go.



BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)

You must obey your father, go pack your belongings.

ANGLE MEHERJEE

Meherjee is stunned by this sudden development. He hesitates a moment, unable to speak. His gaze darts back and forth from Baba to Chanji to his father. His eyes plead for another solution. He turns suddenly, and leaves, alone.

EXT. TRAIN DAY

The train passes through the open Indian countryside, past small villages and dry farms. Bullock carts plow before their red turbaned masters. Women scrub clothes at riverbanks. Children run after the train, CALLING out strange foreign greetings.

ANGLE TRAIN at a great distance

It passes so slowly as if not moving at all. Short BLASTS from the train's horn are muted in the distance.

ANGLE ALI

He sleeps lying against the duffel bag in the overly crowded train.

EXT. HUT DAY

All have left, with the exception of Baba, Chanji and Abdullah. Meherjee returns with a suitcase. He addresses Baba

MEHERJEE
I have done as you ordered. But I don't want to leave.
I don't understand why I must.

Baba gestures for Meherjee to come closer. He gazes at Meherjee with much affection.



BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)

Understanding has no meaning, love has meaning, obedience has more meaning, surrender has most meaning and is resigned to the will of the beloved, and seeks nothing.

MEHERJEE
Baba, I don't want to leave you. I want to stay with you.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
If you obey my order, responsibility for your future rests with me. Go with your father and leave everything else to me.

MEHERJEE
Baba, after all this, it is you who is leaving me.

BABA
(Spoken by Chanji)
Even if you leave me, I will never leave you.

Baba stands up and lovingly embraces Meherjee, then it is Abdullah's turn. The two men hug each other warmly. Finally Chanji and Meherjee walk off together.

INT. TRAIN DAY

The train slows and pulls into the station. Ali wakes with a start, rubs his eyes, and looks out the window. He takes a sip of water from his canteen, then reaches into his pocket, pulls out a small round picture button, and stares at it.

ANGLE BUTTON

It is Baba's face that we see on the button.



EXT. THE PLATFORM DAY

Ali walks in the crush of travellers along the platform, stopping at a vendor to buy some food. Returning to the train, he re-boards a third-class coach and spotting a vacant seat, makes his way toward it, holding the duffel bag in front of him. Suddenly, a man's hand snakes out and grabs the duffel bag. It is Karim. They stare at each other for a frozen second. Then, as Karim starts to get up, Ali shoves the duffel bag at him and rushes back toward the exit, squeezing past people as they crowd their way into the coach, almost falling on top of a woman who sits holding a baby goat on her lap. The goat BLEATS disconsolately.

THE PLATFORM

Ali jumps down onto the platform, which is at track level. He runs a few steps toward the terminal, but stops as Karim emerges from the other end of the car, blocking his path.

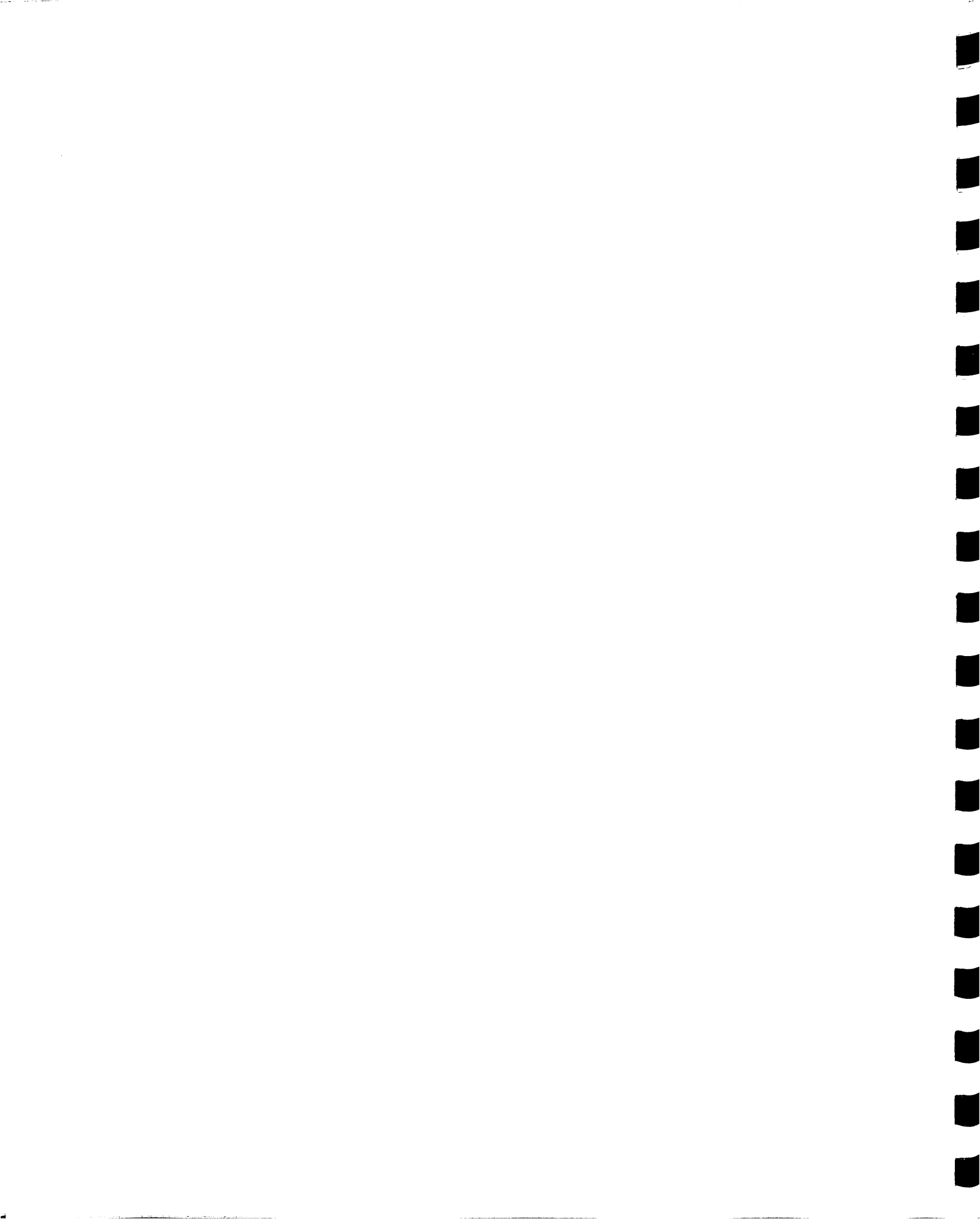
Ali starts to go the other way, then stops.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Ali drops and crawls under the train.
- B) Karim squats, bending over and looking under the train.
- C) On the other side, Ali scoots out from underneath.
- D) Karim's P.O.V. - - Ali's FEET running toward the terminal.
- E) Karim gets up and charges the terminal like a mad bull.

INT. TERMINAL

A middle-aged FARMER walks toward the platform gate, carrying a load of chickens in two wooden cages suspended from a yoke across his shoulders. Heads turn as Ali suddenly bursts in from the next platform and dashes past.



As the farmer turns to look, Karim barrels through, colliding with one of the cages, knocking the farmer off balance and sending the cage CRASHING to the floor, scattering the terrified chickens, which run in all directions. Pandemonium reigns in the crowded terminal as people run this way and that trying to chase down the chickens.

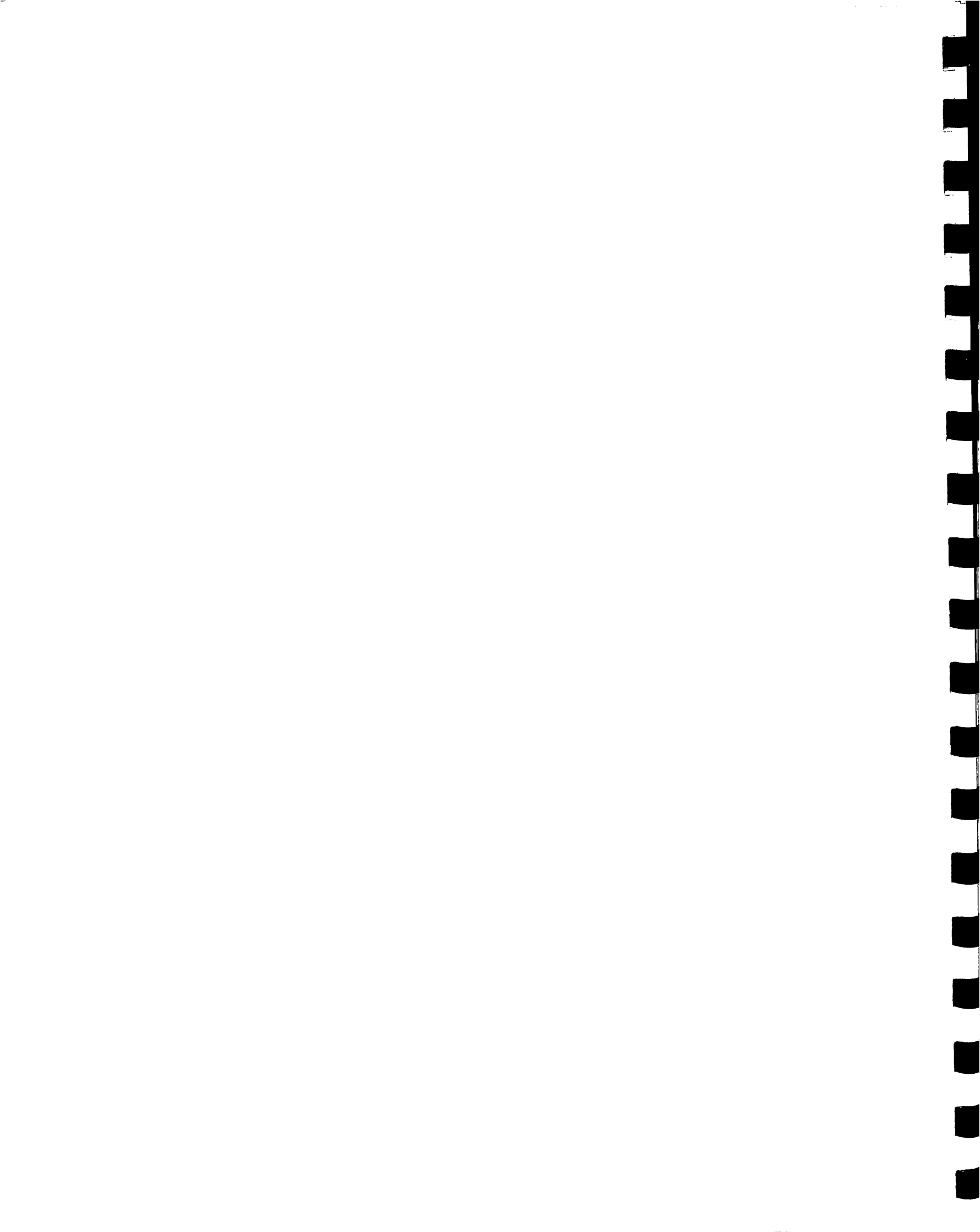
In the midst of this chaos, Karim stands single-mindedly scanning for a sign of Ali, whom he finally spots dodging people near the main entrance. As Karim starts to run, the farmer lunges and comes up with a chicken which SQUAWKS loudly in his grasp.

In the entryway, Ali runs into a small horde of travellers which virtually chokes off all access. He looks anxiously over his shoulder as Karim approaches, then frantically tries to fight his way through the jostling bodies. In desperation, he drops to his hands and knees and crawls into a sea of legs, causing considerable consternation to those around him.

Karim wades in, shoving people out of his way and making good progress until he suddenly faces a towering Sikh, replete with enormous dagger in his waist-sash. Karim steps aside, allowing the Sikh to pass.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Ali runs through the doorway and down the street, where he quickly blends in among the pedestrians and bullock carts.
- B) Karim looks disgustedly up and down the street outside the station. He walks off slowly in the same direction Ali took.
- C) Nearing an intersection, Ali runs across the street.
- D) Karim squints at something far ahead and walks faster.
- E) Ali runs around a corner.
- F) Karim breaks into a run down the street toward the intersection.
- G) In the midst of a crowded bazaar, Ali drops a few coins on the table as a dry goods VENDOR hands him a folded-up white cloth. Ali glances over his shoulder, then ducks around between the dry goods stall and the next one, quickly removing his shirt. He squats and rubs some dirt from a nearby small puddle of water into a dirty paste.



- H) Karim walks along a row of stalls, scrutinizing them and peering into the little alleys between them, almost with the air of a dog that has lost the scent, but knows his prey can't be far off.
- I) Seated amid the refuse between two stalls, a somewhat dirty-looking half-naked beggar boy touches both hands to his forehead and bows his turbaned head low. A coin lands in the ground just in front of him.
- J) Karim looks at him and walks away.
- K) A smile full of white teeth breaks across the grime-smeared face of the beggar, Ali.
- L) Karim stops, turns around, and makes a complete half-circle, coming out behind the beggar-boy. He pulls the turban from his head and grabs Ali.

EXT. HILLTOP DAY

Baba is being pulled in the hand-drawn rickshaw by some of the older boys. Lobaji and a number of small boys push from behind. The rickshaw gains speed as the boys head down the hill. Suddenly the lead older boy stumbles and falls, and the speeding rickshaw overturns, tossing Baba to the ground. Padri and Pendu rush to his assistance. Baba picks himself up, and appears none the worse for the accident. Chanji comes rushing over to comfort Lobaji, who is crying. He brings the boy over to Baba, who bends down face-to-face with Lobaji and dries his tears. Then he quickly signs on the board as Chanji translates.

BABA

(Spoken by Chanji)

Tell me what you want. Now is the right moment.
Ask for anything and I will give it to you.

LOBAJI

Baba, I want for your suffering to end.

INT./EXT. BUS DAY

Ali sits at the back of the bus next to a half-open window. His wrists are tied tightly together with a coarse thin rope. Karim sits next to him, with the remainder of the rope encircled around his right hand. The bus jolts and bumps along a dusty road, while Ali peers dejectedly out the window.

KARIM
(Sneeringly)

Why so gloomy, Ali? You will soon be home.

SAME SCENE - - LATER

The bus enters a village and pulls to a stop. The passengers start leaving. Karim gets up and stretches, dragging Ali up with him. They start to leave. Karim turns and stops.

KARIM

No! You stay.

Karim unwinds the rope from around his right hand and pushes Ali back to the window. He then ties his end of the rope to the iron bar that runs horizontally across the window, tugs on it to test the knot, examines Ali's tied wrists, and then smacks Ali across the head with his hand.

KARIM
(Cont'd)

That will teach you to run away.

He gets up and leaves, closing the bus door on his way out, and walks into a nearby tea shop. Ali plays with the slack of the rope and works it over to the edge of the window, where, with a to-and-fro motion, he works desperately at freeing himself. Piece by piece, the strands of the rope give way and, encouraged by the results, he tries harder by applying more friction. Finally, by pulling with all his strength, he breaks the last remaining strands. His wrists still tied together, he picks up his new white cloth (turban), bends down, and crawls up the aisle as passengers start coming back aboard the bus.

Reaching the last row of seats that is vacant, he quickly places first his feet, then the remainder of his body, out the window, and with great courage, heaves himself totally out, landing with a PLOP on the ground. Quickly picking himself up, he runs and is soon out of sight.

INT. BUS DAY

CLOSE ON Karim's face, as he gets on the bus and sees Ali is gone.

EXT. INDIAN ROAD DAY

Ali is running for his life, puffing, his hands still tied, his white cloth trailing in the wind.

Karim is running along the same road in the same direction, but Ali is nowhere in sight. He looks exhausted. He stops when he sees a bike laying beside the road and looks around, but sees no one.

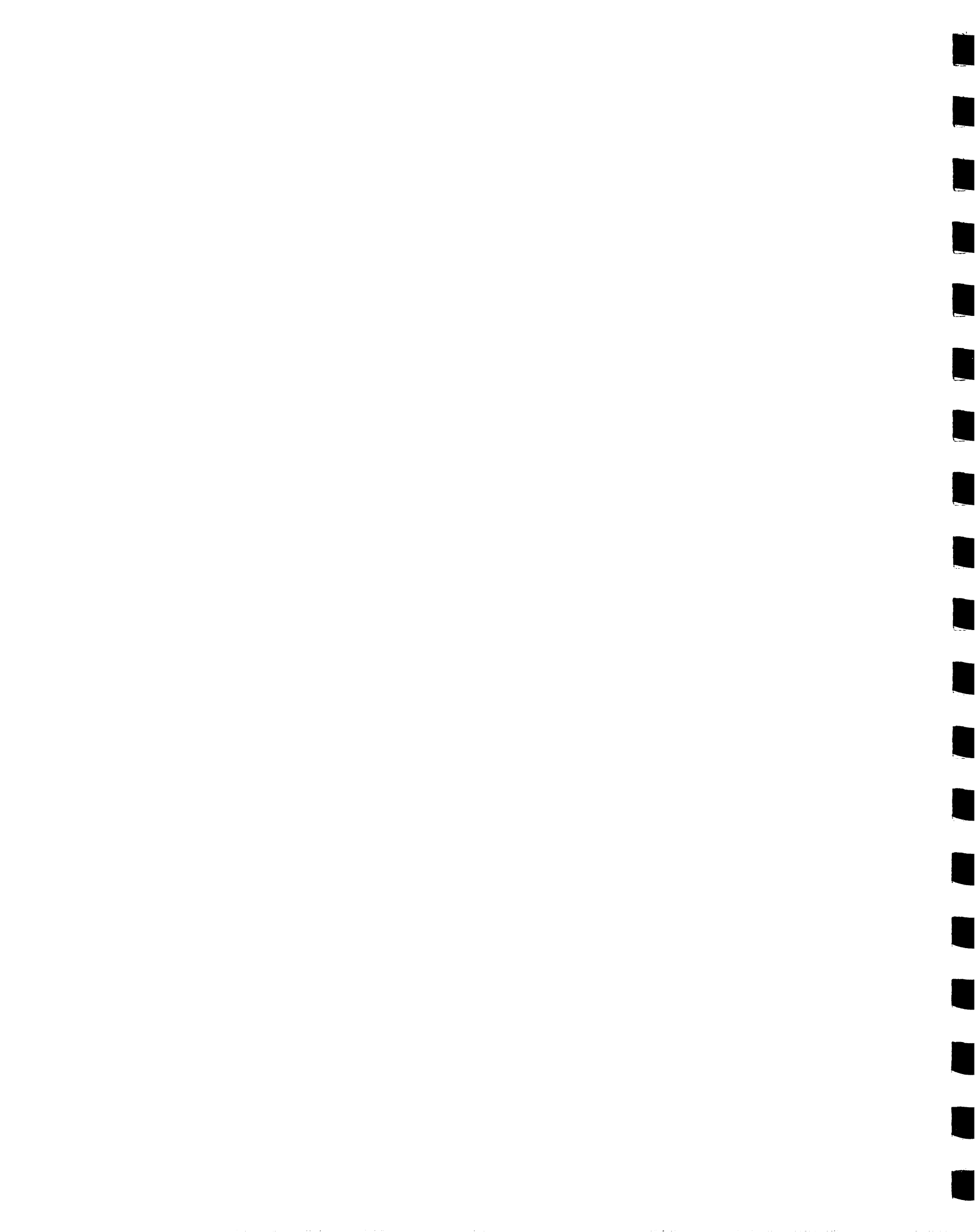
A man comes from behind a tree, zipping up his pants. He looks for the bike, then he looks up the road and sees Karim peddling off in the distance.

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE AFTERNOON

A bakery VENDOR puts three buns on top of his cart. Ali, his hands now untied and wearing the turban, reaches into his pocket, hesitates, then pulls out a coin and lays it on the cart. The vendor puts one bun back and hands Ali the other two.

MONTAGE

- A) Ali bites off a piece of the bun and puts the rest in his pocket as he walks along a rural road through a sparse, dry landscape.
- B) The afternoon sun blazes down, as Ali, drenched with sweat, walks on.
- C) Ali walks slowly, drooping. He has untied the turban and now wears it like a shawl over his head, around his neck, and down his back.
- D) Stopping, Ali wipes his face on his sleeve, then walks on as a bullock cart approaches in the background behind him.
- E) Bullock cart plods along. Ali rides in the back.



EXT. RURAL ROAD NIGHT

Ali trudges wearily in the moonlight. He stops, draws the white cloth tighter against the night chill, and looks around. The road, the fields, the hill. . . . everything seems deserted. He pulls out the last bun and chews on it as he walks into a field, to a huge spreading tree where he sits down to rest.

EXT. FOGGY RURAL ROAD NIGHT

Ali sleeps, propped against the tree, as a distant CLUNKETY sound approaches. As it gets LOUDER, he wakes up and tries to get his bearings. He sees headlights. He runs through the field, trying to cut an angle ahead of the car, and reaches the road just as pre-1920 automobile RATTLES by. Waving his arms and SHOUTING, he chases the slow-moving car. He trips and falls, then watches as it disappears in the fog. As the sound RECEDES, he gets up, brushes himself off, and trudges on.

EXT. FOGGY RURAL ROAD DAWN

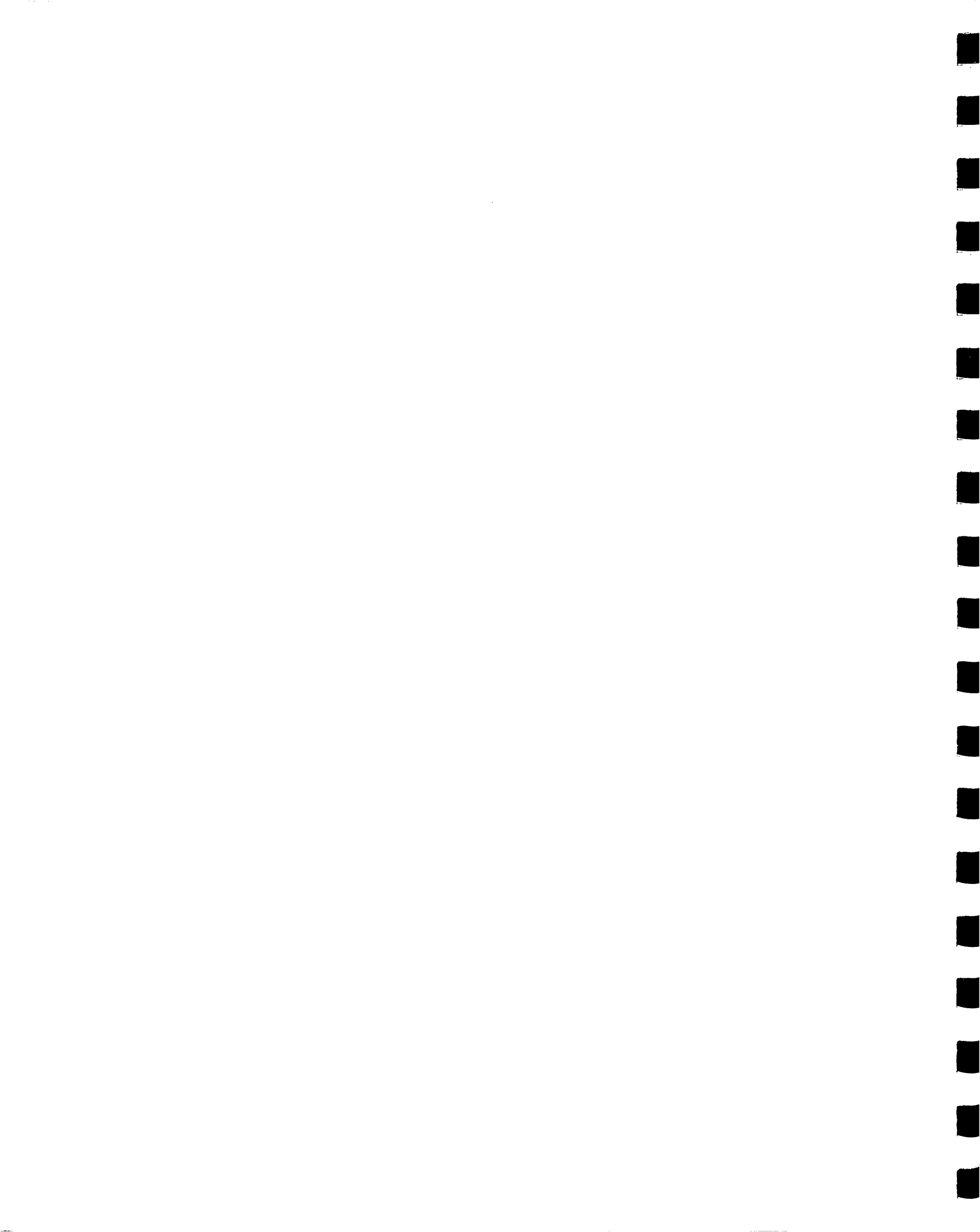
Karim is peddling wildly through the fog. Behind him, headlights loom and a lorry WHIZZES by.

EXT. RURAL ROAD DAWN

Ali comes into view as he walks quickly along the road. Ahead of him, life is stirring in the village. Women are walking with brass pots on their heads, farmers in bullock carts, cows, goats and children playing, vie for position on the road; families squat near outside fires beside mud-thatched huts. Ali passes all this without interest, his eyes focussed straight ahead. He casts one wary glance over his shoulder, then his pace quickens. He knows he is almost home.

EXT. ROADSIDE DAWN

Karim, looking very haggard, peddles along the road.



EXT. LOWER HILL ASHRAM DAWN

As Ali approaches, Abdullah is seen grooming a magnificent white stallion near a roadside fire. He looks up, sees Ali, and calls to him.

ABDULLAH
(Excitedly)

Ali, Ali!

ANGLE ALI

Ali waves a greeting. His eyes are on the hilltop. He is exhausted. Somehow he finds the strength. He runs over the train tracks and starts to climb the hill, where the distant STRAINS of the boys' morning devotional SINGING ring out.

UPPER HILLSIDE

ANGLE BABA

Baba stands at the top, watching, waiting. Suddenly he strides to a vantage point overlooking the lower hill.

The boys stand together on the slope as their SINGING ends.

Ali bounds up the hill past the startled boys and past Chanji, who stands outside the dormitory.

Ali runs. Baba spreads his arms, and they are together again. . . . a hug of hugs.

EXT. RURAL ROAD DAY

Karim is guiding his bike down a long steep hill, picking up speed. A horse-drawn tonga is some distance ahead of him. He quickly gains on the tonga. Some distance ahead a motor lorry is coming toward him. It takes up most of the center of the road. Karim has almost reached the tonga, and has sufficient speed to pass quickly.



Suddenly, one of his tires goes WHOOSH. He loses control of the bike and CRASHES into the back of the tonga. He winds up on the ground at the edge of the road. The front wheel of the bike is buckled and laying near him. The rest of the bike is bonded to the back of the tonga. The tonga DRIVER is furious and begins picking up sacks of rice that have fallen off the back of the tonga. He picks up what's left of the bike. throws it in the ditch, and starts loudly BERATING Karim in Hindi.

EXT. LOWER ASHRAM DAY

Haji arrives in a tonga. He quickly gets down and pays the driver. The driver takes the money and waits. Haji walks quickly to the school office.

EXT. SCHOOL OFFICE DAY

Chanji and Afseri are outside as Haji approaches.

AFSERI

Ali is here. He is with Baba. At least let him stay a few more hours.

HAJI

I want to see my son.

CHANJI

Have breakfast first, then I will bring him to you.

HAJI

As you wish, I am not an unreasonable man.

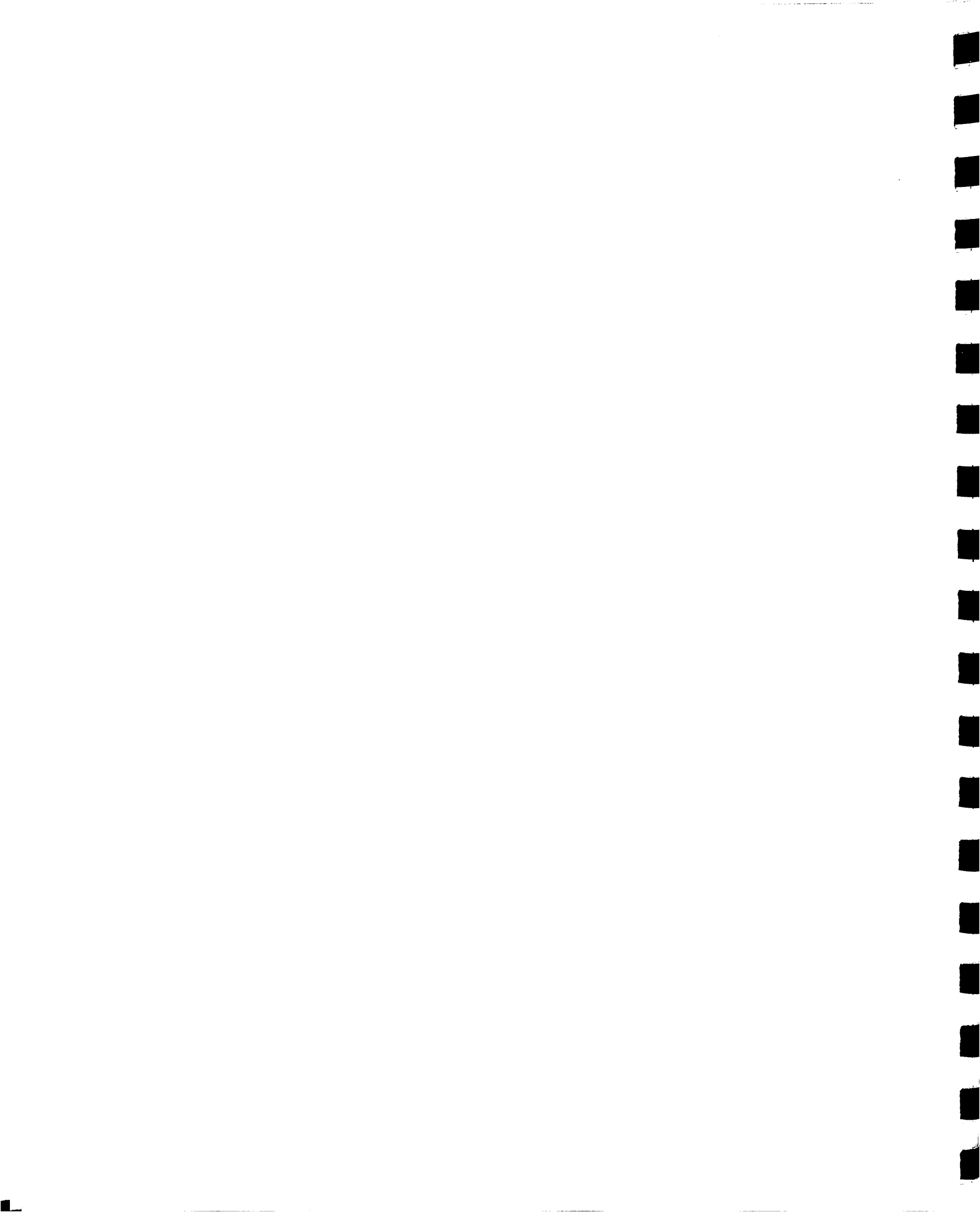
Afseri and Chanji look at each other, then at Haji. Chanji leaves and walks up the hill.

AFSERI

Mr. Mohammed. We keep no one here by force. Love and coercion can never go hand in hand.

HAJI

That is why I came. I am here to redeem my word.



AFSERI

Your word?

HAJI

Yes, my son Ali can remain. No need to sign papers.
You have my word. . . . my son has taught me this
lesson.

AFSERI

(Mystified)

Then why wait. . . . why not tell him now?

EXT. UPPER HILL

Ali, Chanji and Baba are walking down the hill. Baba has his arm around Ali's shoulder like a father would a son. Afseri and Haji are some distance below, coming up the hill. Baba stops, puts his arm under Ali's chin, and makes a big grin. He gestures, "Go see what your father wants." Ali holds back for a moment, uncertain. He looks down the hill at his father, who is coming closer, then back to Baba, who continues to smile as if everything is perfect. Then Baba gives Ali a little push and Ali walks off with Afseri to meet his father. They quickly come face to face.

AFSERI

Ali, your father wants to talk with you in private.
Breakfast will be ready in ten minutes.

Ali looks puzzled at Afseri's remark, as does Chanji. We see Chanji and Afseri walk off in the direction of the kitchen.

ALI

Father, please let me stay, at least for a few days.

HAJI

And where will I stay? I'm too old to go to school.

Ali looks confused; he hesitates a moment, then reaches out and kisses his father's hand. Haji pulls him close and hugs him. His eyes moist over. He looks at Ali earnestly, like a father who has regained a lost son.



Haji

I gave my word once; I will keep this word. You can stay. Be something. . . . be something better. . . . maybe it's not so bad to want so much.

Ali hugs his father and they walk in the direction of the kitchen. Haji puts his arm around Ali's shoulder like a proud father.

ANGLE BABA

Just above them on the hill, the lone figure of Meher Baba stands poised and relaxed.

FREEZE FRAME

FADE OUT



