

GIRISH KARNAD  
697 Fifteenth Cross Road  
J P Nagar Phase II  
Bangalore 560 078 India

15 March 10

Dear Zafar,

I thought you might find the attached  
article from the London Review of Books  
diverting.

How are you both?

With Best Wishes for a Happy 'Tugade'  
to Laeng & you,

Yours ever  
Girish

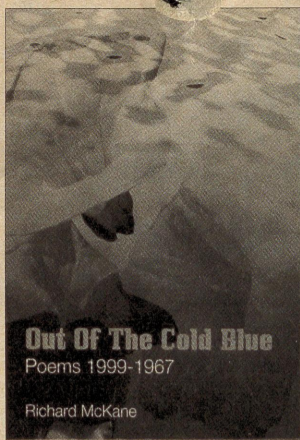
22/3/10

Dear Rasheesh

I hope all of you have  
settled down to LIFE without FATHER

We hope to go to Kihim on 2<sup>nd</sup> April  
health permitting

Zafar



These original poems of Richard McKane stretching back from the millennium to 1967 amplify and vastly expand his first book *Amphora for Metaphors* (Gnosis Press, New York, and Diamond Press, London, 1993). Peter Levi's words in his

**Out of the Cold Blue**  
Poems 1999-1967

Richard McKane

introduction to that collection still old true: 'Richard McKane's arrival has been long delayed, but now he steps into the rather crowded ranks of the most brilliant poets of the last twenty years or more.'

This collection is a companion volume to *Poet for Poet* (mainly translations) also published by Hearing Eye and chosen by Helen Bamber OBE as her book on BBC Radio 4's *Desert Island Discs* programme.

Richard McKane is a *poet of the people* despite a certain valuable odd quality, possibly brought on by his living in Turkey in the 70s and his immersion in Russian poetry since his studies at Malborough and Oxford.

1989 saw the republication in an expanded version of his *Selected Poems of Anna Akhmatova* with Bloodaxe books. From 1988 to 2006 he also worked as an interpreter, at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, from and into Turkish and Russian.

'Continue, continue, continue: your work adds to the sum of human values' from a letter to the author from Isaiah Berlin

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**Diary**

FROM the first time I first looked through a pair of binoculars, aged seven, I wanted to be a bird-spotter, even though I'd picked the binoculars up because I was a bird-lover, intrigued by the ways birds' paths crossed with mine. Nowadays bird-spotters are known as birders while bird-lovers are more commonly called birdwatchers. In terms of etymology and ornithology, there is barely a difference, but it matters greatly to those involved. It's easy to distinguish between the two types. Birders are the green-clad, kit-festooned action men of blasted headlands, sewage farms and reservoir causeways. They take pelagic trips and dribble a bucket of rancid bouillabaisse behind a boat to entice rare petrels: this is called 'chumming'. What is crucial for them is the moment between sighting a bird and identifying it. There is a potent second or two (this can extend to hours if a tricky rarity is glimpsed) when the bird is wrested from a backdrop of wind or sea or marsh, or singled out from a cloud of lookalikes, and then named. In their itch to tag the wild, birders travel through the world as if they were closing it down.

For most birdwatchers – a far more numerous category: in Britain, the million-plus members of the RSPB, as well as anyone anywhere who notices a bird and consciously looks at it – birdwatching is a more occasional occurrence, an activity which doesn't usually require binoculars and which happens whenever a bird asserts itself by its presence, beautifully or intriguingly or annoyingly. Birdwatching offers a kind of sentimental education, permitting a momentary entry into a bigger world, even if only to gawp. To the birdwatcher, the wish to name matters less than the delight at the fizzing otherness of the thing, its flying or singing: a grey heron gobbling a live eel, swifts mating on the wing, arctic terns dive-bombing intruders above their nesting beach, a feral pigeon jumping onto a District Line train at Edgware Road.

All birders were birdwatchers once. At eight I was smitten by a yellowhammer in Surrey; by nine I was hardcore. Since then I have had periods of being a birder and periods of retirement from active service. Now I think of myself as somewhere between the two, an inveterate namer (you cannot unlearn the habit) but motivated primarily by the otherness of birds. Most birders are hatched in their teens and become full-fledged only if they remain teenagers in spirit well into adult life. Almost every book written on birders is alive to their peculiar cast of mind: the comedy of the nerdish pursuit has been told and retold. Several hundred men and their telescopes in a supermarket car park in Kent watching the first North American golden-winged warbler to be recorded in Europe, a few grams of yellow feathers blown across the Atlantic: the anoraks and their obsession are weird but recognisably British. If

birding is associated with the comedy of teenage gawkiness it also has the intensity of first love. For some men, nothing else – human or otherwise – will mark their lives to such an extent.

Jeremy Mynott's *Birdscapes: Birds in Our Imagination and Experience* is an attempt to put birdwatching back into birding, to reconnect the obsession with rarity and listening to a world that thinks more humanly about birds.\* Mynott is unquestionably a birder. He keeps a list of birds seen in Central Park on business trips to New York (where he was once asked to identify a vagrant tufted duck); he has singled out a copse in East Anglia where he fully expects to see a red-breasted flycatcher one coming autumn day. The jacket photo shows a bearded man partly concealed by a reedbed, wearing binoculars and a green cap, standing to a curious half-attention. It is like a picture of a first meeting with a member of a previously unencountered tribe, a birder fresh from the bush.

My most memorable youthful twitch was in the autumn of 1975. I was 14. At Breydon Water in Norfolk a greater yellow-legs had been found, a very rare North American wader, like an attenuated red-shank, with thin straw-yellow legs, a delicate long bill and washed-out grey-green plumage. I'd never seen one; few people in Britain had. I was offered a place in a car travelling from Bristol and eagerly accepted. My bird-listing years, long dreamed of, were about to begin. The four of us spread out along the bank at Breydon between 20 other observers and stared at the mud. I was schooled in the awful disappointment of the 'dip': the absence of the main attraction, the spreading slump infecting the whole crowd.

We waited. The tide shifted and someone spotted the bird. I borrowed a telescope and down the end of the long brass tube saw it, far away, jerkily stepping through rising water. It was wonderful – a bundle of specialness, a bird from America that had flown across the Atlantic Ocean, and had been seen by only a few dozen people in Britain before – but though I remember a sensation of relief I can recall little else about it. Human behaviour that day was more striking. My friend Anthony had wandered further along the bank and missed the wave of excitement. As he came back he saw us intent on our scrutiny and panicked, ran and slipped, tumbling into the mud with flailing arms, his binoculars spinning around his neck like a slingshot. Our driver, Roy, grew tired on the long road back to Bristol and stuck his head – ginger beard and curly hair – out of the window of his black Austin A40, yawning and moaning into the autumn night as he steered along the motorway.

Surprisingly little has been written recently about birdwatching. For Mynott, the image of the old lady paying her sub to the RSPB, hanging out fat balls and talking to the robin in her back garden can't do the subject justice. His book is dense

\* Princeton, 367 pp., £17.95, March 2009, 978 0 691 13539 7.

with evidence of the penetration of birds into our lives and vice versa. It is interested in American sports team mascots and Homer's eagles, in Victorian feather hats and musical imitations of birdsong, in Sumerian ornithology and birds in pub names. His intention is to see beyond birding as extended adolescence and describe what it means to be a birder in late middle age. What did these ancient mariners coming back into port actually see? What did all that chumming add up to? How thrilling were the pre-dawn starts, the boring days when not much was about, the packed lunches and freezing fingers, the lack of female company, the rain and worse, the humiliation of zip-off trousers and missed birds, of identification mistakes made in front of other men, the pathos of chasing after exhausted vagrants at death's door, or counting smaller and smaller numbers of formerly common birds around the same patch? And what of the compensations? Being kick-started into every day by clocking the swifts above you, noting the spread of buzzards from the red soil of your West Country childhood to the grey sand of your East Anglian retirement, mourning lost redpolls but finding solace in siskins, watching lapwings mopping at a wet sky, or hearing a woodcock grunting its love song overhead at dusk, or feeling redstarts tug you in pursuit of them by quivering their rusty tails?

That list is mine; every birder will have their own. To me ducks seem hard to love while thrushes are easy. Some birders in recent years have chosen to spend their free time at landfill sites watching gulls scavenge our stinking rubbish. Great rarities have been identified. Glaucous-winged, Caspian and Baltic gulls have been added to the British bird list. Mynott believes that even observations made in fetid places by the few persistent devotees who annotate the feather detail of such freakish species (medium large gulls are among the toughest of all bird families to separate in the field) inevitably become part of the mosaic of British birdlife, and can over time become part of our wider sense of nature, moving into our imaginations, our dreams and our culture. Since I was a child birdwatcher the little egret has done just this, while the red-backed shrike, now all but extinct as a British breeding bird, has done the opposite. In the last 20 years the raven and the peregrine have come back from the mountainous edges of Britain to the heart of the country and have come back too into our minds. Mynott argues that any bird can do the same. But while he writes fluently about real birds his energy is reserved for the thoughts these birds prompt in him.

Birds are not easy to recall, unless you look hard and then work at the remembering. Every how-to book tells you to keep notes. Many birders instantly recognise most British birds but would struggle to describe the arrangement of blue and yellow on a blue tit, or the wing pattern of a chaffinch. Birds' elusiveness

mouth opens – almost like a startled infant – and out comes a very physical ‘Ahh’ or ‘Oooh’. The spectacle disrupts the normally involuntary and unconscious process of taking a breath.

Bollas pities those who dislike their surroundings. They are ‘in a sad state of disrepair, for they are denied the vital need for personal reverie.’ (I remember living in a town I didn’t like. Waiting at a red light, I would think: ‘How many more times before I die do I sit in front of this light?’) He uses the term ‘aesthetic dejection’ to describe not merely a person’s inability to make evocative use of surrounding objects, but a form of depression which they know can’t be resolved. About a bad marriage he writes:

Such couples can plough on in a state of aesthetic dejection until they die, with nothing in common but shared misery and hatred – something that can be remarkably binding. Although each will no doubt point to endless shortcomings in the other, if they are to escape from their predicament they will need to understand that their dejection does not derive from personal failures. They are simply not a match, and the despair they feel is due to an irresolvable dejection.

In a therapeutic situation, one tends to see such couples late in their lives. There is clinical truth in the well-known punchline, ‘We wanted to wait until the children died.’ As Bollas puts it: ‘Ageing has a strangely sobering effect on the omnipotence of any conviction.’

THESE BOOKS are themselves evocations: they evoke a sensibility, the feel of psychoanalysis. They are not meant to convince a sceptic. Rather, they are for those who are already interested in psychoanalytic ideas and would like to know how they are expressed in a clinical setting and in everyday life. Call it preaching to the choir if you will, but I’ve always thought the choir a good place to direct one’s efforts. Presumably they know something about music; and, whatever their doubts, they have at least made it to church. My problem with these books lies elsewhere. Because Bollas is so good at drawing us in and encouraging a sense of trust, I find it all the more irritating when he makes claims that simply aren’t true. He says, for example, that Freud was never able to decide whether every dream was a wish-fulfilment. But in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud came to recognise that a significant class of dreams – those ‘which occur in traumatic neuroses, or ‘which bring to memory the psychical traumas of childhood’ – should not be thought of as wish-fulfilments.

Bollas also says that ‘Freud’s error was to confuse mental content with mental form.’ But in an important footnote about the dream-work, added to *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1925, Freud says:

I used at one time to find it extraordinarily difficult to accustom readers to the distinction between the manifest content of dreams and the latent dream thoughts . . . But now that analysts at least have become reconciled to replacing the manifest dream by the meaning revealed by its interpretation, many of them have become guilty of falling into another confusion which they cling to with equal obstinacy. They seek to find the essence of dreams in their latent content and in so doing they overlook the distinction between the

latent dream-thoughts and the dream-work. At bottom, dreams are nothing other than a particular form of thinking, made possible by the conditions of the state of sleep. It is the dream-work which creates that form, and it alone is the essence of dreaming – the explanation of its peculiar nature.

To take another example, Bollas claims that Freud ‘failed to see . . . something quite simple: any dream fulfils the wish to dream – thus every dream is a wish-fulfilment.’ This is a non sequitur. Even if a dream is the sort of thing that would fulfil a wish to dream, it does not follow that every time there is a dream there is an antecedent wish to dream that it fulfils. And when it comes to traumatic dreams, the idea that they fulfil the wish to dream is like saying that my wish to stop sneezing is fulfilled when someone punches me in the nose.

Elsewhere, Bollas suggests that the first psychoanalytic interpretation in Western culture is given by Tiresias when he says to Oedipus: ‘Creon is no hurt to you, but you are to yourself.’ Obviously, Sophocles’ Oedipus tyrannus has been psychoanalytically suggestive. And there are occurrences in psychoanalysis – remembered dreams for instance – that are experienced as though they were oracles. But not just any oracular utterance is psychoanalytic. For Tiresias’ interpretation to be psychoanalytic there would have to be some reason for thinking it was based on his insight into Oedipus’ psychodynamics, rather than his own spiritual, supernatural powers or his better knowledge of the social context. On a more mundane plane, there have long been self-pitying drunks, people who get enraged at imagined slights, people who trip themselves up in romantic quests, and oafish tyrants who destroy their own kingdoms. And there have long been observers who tell them that they have nobody to blame but themselves. That communication alone does not make them psychoanalysts. Bollas gives no textual support for his claim that Tiresias’ challenge is a psychoanalytic interpretation, and I don’t believe there is any.

For all that, the large-scale themes of these books ring true, the clinical writing is beautiful and Bollas raises one issue in particular that deserves further thought. He says that dreaming is a form of thinking: the form of unconscious representation. This fits well with Freud’s claim that repressed unconscious mental activity proceeds in its own peculiar way, which he called the primary process. This is a restless activity in which associations between ideas appear – from the perspective of conscious thought – weird and uncanny. These unconscious processes respect neither the law of non-contradiction, nor the constraints of time. And they regularly express themselves in and through the body: Freud called it ‘organ-speech’. If we take seriously the idea that conscious and unconscious thinking really are different forms, then it would seem that psychoanalytic therapy ought to understand itself as facilitating communication between these forms. But then what is the formal unity of that process? The answer to that question would tell us what psychoanalysis is. It would also help us to understand what we are talking about when we speak of the psychic unity of a human being. □

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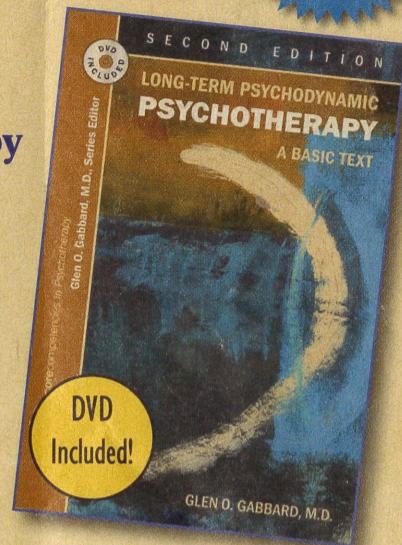
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is a considerable part of their appeal: they are hard to capture, harder still to hold. Their flightiness is intrinsic to their meaning, and for this reason the simple recording of numbers and names has seemed the best approach. In 1798, the *Lyrical Ballads* added the nightingale to the Somerset county list. 'In Nature there is nothing melancholy,' Coleridge says, then proceeds to make an exquisitely melancholy poem full of fresh observations and received ideas about nightingales. But for birders 'The Nightingale' could seem – as it did to me – extravagant, wordy and possessive. I would have preferred something plainer, and thought of naming and dating as somehow closer to the truth. The austere prose of county bird reports, the abbreviations of field guides, the mapping of feather details in handbooks and the hush of observation hides, with their muted whispering: these are the appropriate modes for writing about nature. Watch, name, count, and then shut up.

Mynott knows this, but he's a birder who wants to talk. He dedicates his book to his wife, saying he has 'never yet succeeded in persuading her to take the slightest interest in birds'. In a chapter on birdsong, after a 3.30 a.m. start to listen to a Suffolk dawn chorus, he comes out of the jungle once more: 'I brush the dew from my beard and head home.' In these moments we seem to glimpse Mynott the quiet man; and both moments run counter to his repeated assertion that there is more to be said, and his hope that someone will listen. A lone man who has been sitting silently in a hide watching tufted ducks and is now walking back to his car in the half-light is garrulous because everything is interesting when you haven't been able to speak for hours, when there is no one to talk to, when there are only birds that mustn't be disturbed.

*Birdscapes* is built around groups of questions: why and how do birds make us think and feel, and what do our thoughts and feelings say about us and the birds? The book is full of such questions, panoramic in its scope and liberal in its interpretations. Each chapter starts with a birder's account of a place and its birds. We travel to Delphi, the Volga Delta, the Scillies and the Flannan Isles as well as Mynott's home patch in Suffolk. The scenes and species have been picked to establish the theme of the chapter ahead: why are we attracted to birds, why do we like to identify them, why are rarities appealing, why do some birds seem more beautiful than others, why does song sound like music, why does the place where we see a bird add to the effect, why do we seek to manage nature, why are we drawn to naming it, why have birds flown through our lives as symbols for as long as they've flown about us? Mynott scarcely begins to answer any of these questions before another occurs to him and he rushes us off, via the Ponzo illusion and the Kanizsa triangle, the naked women of the Windmill Theatre and the neuroscience of V.S. Ramachandran – all invoked to challenge the objectivity

of birding – to another conundrum. Allusions come thick and fast and often I wished for less, wanted more birds, fewer words.

The antecedent of *Birdscapes* is James Fisher's still unsurpassed *Shell Bird Book* of 1966. Fisher seemed to know all there was to know about birds and had much to tell us on subjects ranging from the fossil avifauna of Britain to John Clare's poetic bird tally. A naturalist and conservationist, he had previously written the most detailed biography imaginable of the fulmar; was one of the editors of the *New Naturalist Library*; and regularly appeared on the BBC. The *Shell* book covers ornithology, bird archaeology, art history, literary criticism, the lives of great birdmen and much else in a monologue of immense confidence, capturing a moment when the passionate enthusiasms of an amateur could coexist, in a single person, with the ambitions of the rapidly professionalising scientist.

Mynott probably knows just as much, but times have changed and he is nervous of coming to such firm conclusions. Fisher's hauteur and confidence is replaced by a more generous, perhaps too generous, inclusivity. In his chapter on birds' names a mention of Shakespeare prompts a reference to Plato, followed by John Stuart Mill, with George Orwell and Lewis Carroll bringing up the rear. Then come ten sections on the naming of birds, the ninth dealing with those named after people. He mentions my favourite of these, the ground-dwelling forest cisticola with a rufous face, throat and breast called Mrs Moreau's warbler, a vulnerable (i.e. rare and restricted) Tanzanian species in a monotypic genus that is named for Winifred Moreau, the wife of the great ornithologist Reg. But Mynott is keener on the Isabelline wheatear and the Isabelline shrike. He says that the word *isabelline*, meaning 'sandy coloured', is derived from Isabella, the archduchess of Austria and daughter of Philip II of Spain: 'He laid siege to Ostend in 1601 and in a moment of filial loyalty she vowed not to change her underwear until the city was taken. Unfortunately the siege lasted until 1604, by which time the garments were the colour in question.' There follows a footnote and then a note on the footnote:

The *Oxford English Dictionary* reports this anecdote only to refute it by pointing out that the word was first used to describe this colour in 1600. But as Michael Quinton suggests in his 'World Wide Words' note on the internet, the reference may well be to another Isabella and another siege, the siege of Granada by Ferdinand and Isabella that ended in 1492 (this one lasted eight months – quite long enough for the purpose). A more prosaic derivation could be that the word comes from the Arabic *izah* meaning 'lion-coloured', but the Isabella story deserves to be true.

Mrs Moreau's opinion of her warbler is not recorded.

Tim Dee

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### Iain McGilchrist 18 March at 7 p.m.

In *The Master and His Emissary* (Yale), Iain McGilchrist argues that left-brain thinking – categorical, precise and decontextualising – has usurped the role of the holistic, contextualising and creative right, with pernicious consequences for modern society. While his argument has its roots in neuroscience, McGilchrist is also a student of literature and philosophy, and freely accepts that this left/right divide may be less real than metaphorical (and metaphor is one of the many things which the left brain is unable to grasp).

### Julian Bell and Peter Campbell 24 March at 7 p.m.

Julian Bell and Peter Campbell have both worked as painters and written about art – Bell most recently in *Mirror of the World* (Thames and Hudson), Campbell in *At...* (Hyphen Press), a collection of his contributions to the LRB. They will talk about things that painters can and can't do, in particular about the relationship painters have had to old art and the limits and opportunities that arise from the society they work in, its technology and its institutions.

### Edinburgh Book Festival: A Discussion 30 March at 7.00 p.m.

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### Jim Crace 1 April at 7 p.m.

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10/12/10

Dear Rasheesh

Sometimes old  
memories are  
interesting & so I  
send you these —  
related to IOC

Glad you had such  
a good time in  
Jamnagar

Mystified about Rs 28000  
Hope Navarin will  
clarify. Zatar



# British Red Cross

Cover image:

A painting of a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse  
in a garden by the artist Arthur J. Lyons.

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*Bombay Natural History Society*

HORNBILL HOUSE, ( MUSEUM COMPOUND )  
SHAHEED BHAGAT SINGH ROAD,  
BOMBAY 400 023

Ref: 977/90/

17th March 1990.

Mr Zafar Futehally  
'Moitaka'  
Bear Shola Road  
KodaiKanal - 624 101.  
Tamil Nadu.

*3 4/7/90*

Dear Mr Futehally,

Thank you very much for your kind note of 10 March concerning the proposed book by Penguin on Indian Birds.

I will be delighted to be of assistance in writing a piece on Endangered birds in India. I will also find out suitable photographs to go with the article.

We need to initiate a campaign to revive the Indian National Section of ICBP. The matter was put before the Maharashtra Pakshi Mitra Sammelan in Pune in January as well as the Bird Watchers Society of Andhra Pradesh Seminar at Hyderabad last month. I have requested Madras Naturalists' Society to initiate moves to hold an ornithological meet in Tamil Nadu. Similar meet is due in Karnataka and Kerala (with NGO's there). All these can culminate in a Southern Regional Ornithological meet jointly organised by "Newsletter for Birdwatchers" BNHS and Major NGO's of South and have such meets as a regular feature. One of the immediate outcome would be establishment of ICBP National Section operated by NGO's.

You should take the lead and give guidance. We will do the donkeys work.

Please let me know.

Thanking you,


*With warm regards.*

Yours sincerely,

S A Hussain  
Senior Scientist

*30 22/3/90*

SAH/ng



14 December 1990

Dear Zafar,

I wrote to you from Christchurch but I could not read the finished product myself (have a good scapegoat now -the computer!) so decided to spare you the agony and did not post the letter.

First, Congrats on your nomination to the International Ornithological Committee ! Although they have a rule that folks above 65 and those who have never attended a single Int. Ornithol. Cong. are not elected it was waived in your case. After all even though as an amateur (so was Salim Ali) you have contributed so much to the Ornithological awareness in the country running the single Birdwatchers newsletter of the country. Dr. Manjeet Dhindsa (Punjab Agricultural Univ. Ludhiana), Mr. S. Husein (BNHS, I would rather it was Asad Abdurahmani - but this Husein chap seemed so desperate to be a member -went around lobbying and also antilobbying among some southeast asian IOC members who recommended his name to me - I ofcourse promptly refused telling them I had you in mind. Eventually when I saw it was possible to have more than one person from India not only I let his name go but added Manjeet Dhindsa who was at the meeting -so there are four of us from India on the IOC. More the merrier! If we can generate some Ornithological activity in the country may be we can have more people representing India in the near future). They nominated me to the Executive Committee as well (I was a bit embarrassed because it constitutes of rather senior and leading Ornithologists !). You have to come to the next meeting in Vienna, 1994, Zafar. I shall send you the necessary preregistration forms etc within the month. The Indians should form a strong contingent now. I have told the IOC Office holders that you are the prospective President of our Ornithological Society of India! Yes, you are. And they expect you to write to them the moment the society is formalised. I shall be in Delhi on 2nd/3rd Jan. and in Bangalore on the 4th Jan. Anyway we can meet ? Also I want all four of us (Indian IOC members) to get together and decide upon an integrated effort to give a boost to Ornithology in India. The first step is the formalisation of this society (which exists as ad hoc so far). Secondly we organise a symposium (International - I have already talked to people who have confirmed participation) on Applied and Basic Aspects of Ornithology (at Dehradun or Srinagar - Nov 1991). There is so much to discuss. May be I'll write to Husein and Dhindsa to come upto Delhi on 3rd morning for a meeting and then convey to you the proceedings somewhere down south on 4th. What do you say ?! Lets see - its too short a notice actually.

About the manuscript. Don't bother. It gave me a lot of fun writing it. When you wrote to me of the quality of the stuff you had received I was a bit apprehensive. And frankly the response of Penguin guys is understandable with such varied treatment of the birds ! Why don't you ask the authors for

uniformity and let them expand their subject matter regionwise- I mean areawise but ecologically. For example I could expand the paper to Birds of Western Himalaya and write as well about the birds of Central Himalaya and Eastern Himalaya. Or may be it would be still better to deal with the Himalayan birds in one chapter. Luvkumar Khacher and I could do it jointly perhaps. Similarly you could divide the country - may be when we meet we could prepare a uniform guideline for all authors. If no one wants to do it you and I could go it alone and write up for the whole of India ! Sooner or later I have to do it. Lets begin now. As a matter of fact as I told you the I N S A asked me to write a popular book (high school standard) and I have got the title changed from 'Biological clock in birds' to 'Birds of the Himalayan habitats'- thanks to you who asked me to write about Himalayan birds.

Rest is fine. How are you ? We don't have STD facility in private phones here but we can go to the post office for the purpose- a formidable task for someone so lazy like me - but I shall perform it one of these days (once Alok ji comes to know of it he'll just dump me on the scooter and stop right in front of the post office phone -doesn't believe in letting grass grow under your feet! Hey - I better wipe this off after printing lest he might accidentally open this file -he uses the computer a lot !). Guess what ! We have finalised plans to adopt a baby (girl most likely - to begin with !) by February. It will be terrific fun although I am very apprehensive as to my abilities to be able to tend to a small thing which can't express its thoughts with words (thank heavens I can get my maji (mom-in-law) to come and help if I can't manage). I try to build confidence by reminding myself that I could only make omelette, noodles and fragrant rice, and roast meat (now we are vegetarians) before I got married - and now, not boasting but you have to see the long and varied 'Menu a la Asha' that Alok ji typed and hung in the kitchen ! I made 'Spirali con salsa de pomodoro e basilico' yesterday evening- Hey I'm not pulling a fast one - this dish does exist (cf. Julie Biuso, p.12 - a book of Italian cooking I picked up at the Univ. of Canterbury bookshop at the Conference venue in Christchurch) and I made it with genuine olive oil and basil though powdered amul cheese was a poor substitute to Italian Parmesan.

Gosh ! There is so much backlog to clear up. Ciao for the moment. Fond regards and lots of love to you and your wife from the both of us and wishing many many happy years of long life and happiness,

I remain, sincerely yours,

Asha