oup kitchen in York never has any
ılty in obtaining adequate financial
out an inquiry into the causes of
y enlists little support." Oxfam has
d that its growth as a charity is limited
e public's consciousness of the prob-
with which it is trying to grapple.
ee years ago, there was a vigorous
al debate over whether Oxfam should
a large part of its resources into out-
ıt political propaganda; a large section
fam, including its then deputy direc-
colas Stacey, thought it should become
or national lobby for the Third World,
ıg the government to liberalise its
policies and to increase its overseas
locations. That would have meant a
changeover in the whole nature of
ı, as well as its style and organisation.
fter much discussion the change did
ome about. Stacey moved on, and
of the newer recruits who had been
iastic about a new politicisation of
drifted elsewhere. Oxfam has re-
l firmly dedicated to its role as an
ıarity; despite constant controversy
its ranks—and despite the advice of
of its expert advisers—it has main-
a policy of keeping its administra-
sts below 20 per cent of total income
no donor may complain that more
ne fifth of his money has disappeared
lvertising, propaganda or administra-

ough the results of public appeals has
away (except for specific disasters),
enue from Oxfam's shops has made
difference. People will spend where
ill not give and there are now over
Oxfam shops, bringing in about
000 a year; they provide a valuable
ervice within poorer areas of Britain
l as a safer commercial basis for
overseas.

of the paradoxes with which public
s have to grapple is that the public
ot like giving to successful charities.
w perspective of Oxfam necessarily
s explaining to the public that
ı-term development is as important
of charity as the relief of imme-
arvation. "If a donor hears that the
he has been giving to is a success
eving its objects, he tends to move
ther charity"—is the conclusion of
f Oxfam's professional advisers.
give out of gratitude, compassion,
ıey give out of a desire for repara-
assuage unconscious guilt, and since
lt is never assuaged, they continue
Oxfam wants to tell the public in
about a kind of economic and social
ment that can work in the Third
by building on local community
Neither the recipients of that aid nor
fam officials are keen any longer to
the only imagery which is unerringly
ul in raising the cash required, the
of helpless dire hunger. Yet to tell
lic straight the benefits their money
vide, and why, seems the surest way
e their generosity. Perhaps Oxfam's
touches the roots of the confronta-
ween the Third World and the west.

Bhushra's life

Brian Spittles

Bhushra is 16, an Asian from East Africa. She works as a hairdresser, which brings her into vicarious contact with a wide social life. She resents not being allowed to participate in it. But all her social contacts outside work are controlled by the acting head of the family, her elder brother Ghenti.

This control might well seem annoying, but probably nothing more. In fact its implications are far-reaching: a profound schism exists between the "private" and "integrated" lives of a girl like Bhushra. The direction of the whole life of Bhushra and many (of both sexes) like her is determined by a contractual marriage. That is, a marriage arranged by the heads of families, taking into account finance, status in both the English and Asian communities, and expectations.

The defenders of the system are not necessarily simply authoritarian feudalists. Bhushra's elder brother, for example, speaks excellent English, plays cricket in a racially mixed team, enjoys a pint of bitter, and has been known to eat fish and chips. He acknowledges that conflict exists between Bhushra and himself, but he sees himself as preeminently a practical man, rather than as a tyrant. On, for instance, the difficult question of diet, Ghenti has no qualms about abandoning old attitudes: "This forbidding of things, it's tied up with religion; it's practical where we come from—but not here. I don't think it's practical here." He adopts this view on pragmatic grounds; he defends some of his traditionalist attitudes on similar grounds. On contractual marriage, he says: "Some of our marriages are not good. But in England your free choice leads to many many divorces. All around you see divorces and troubles. Our way gives as much chance of happiness."

You could argue that much Asian marital unhappiness is hidden from view, that there is a great deal of latent misery. Ghenti doesn't subscribe to this view; and discussion ceases there. It is not possible to accuse Ghenti of hypocrisy. His own two year old marriage was arranged in the traditional way. Bride and bridegroom did not meet until shortly before the wedding. Yet both Ghenti and his wife display all the signs of mutual happiness.

Even so, Ghenti's pragmatism can be challenged. If he is asked what the objections are to marriages between Patels and Chauhans—to broach but one such taboo—he simply replies that there are reasons. However, he does not elucidate them. In Bhushra's opinion, not expressed in her brother's hearing, the reasons are out of date here, too. It is hard for the outsider to intrude in such debates. But conflicts over these issues do range within immigrant communities. More of us should be aware of what is happening, even if we do not participate in the arguments.

There is another factor we ought to be aware of. Underlying the frustrations of Bhushra and her contemporaries at not being allowed to live in western style in a western situation, is the feeling of loss that almost all East African Asians appear to suffer. When asked point blank whether they prefer to live in Africa or Britain, the vast majority, in my experience, answer, "Africa." Until the pressures were applied, life there was certainly sweeter. The only aspect of life in Africa that is consistently criticised is the business of sharing the country with Africans. There is a legacy of mutual dislike, perhaps hatred, that has deeper roots than the comparatively recent expulsions. I have often heard the indigenous Africans referred to as "cheats," "lazy," "dirty" and "liars." It is tragic to hear Asians describing Africans in words similar to those used against immigrant Asians by many of the native English.

However, one description of black African personality—as seen by Asians—even their severest critics rarely apply to Indians of any type: "aggressive." Remembrance of how Mau Mau terrorism in Kenya was directed even more ruthlessly against Asians than against Europeans, partly explains this. But the reaction goes much deeper, and spreads wider than Kenya. Even the mild-natured Bhushra, who left Africa at the beginning of her teens and had little contact with Africans and no terrorist memories, has hard-line attitudes towards them: "You see these Africans begging in the streets, and when you don't give them nothing they're spitting on you. In shopping they push you all about, and kick, and—go like this." She illustrates the point with aggressive thrustings of the elbows. The action is funny when she does it, but it obviously contains much menace for her.

The antipathy towards blacks is so profound that Asians frequently bring it to Britain with them, where it gets diverted onto Britain's black population, who are chiefly West Indians. Asians are often—though not completely—quiet, rather retiring people. Caribbeans are not infrequently boisterous and extrovert. And the partly irrational connection between East Africans and West Indians comes to take, in many Asian minds, a logical and definite form. So our own society in Britain today is further complicated by a factor all too often not understood even by people actually engaged in social and inter-racial work: *the brown anti-black prejudice*. And the reasons for, and roots of, it are rarely understood by the recipient West Indians. The resultant bewilderment can develop into distrust and dislike and resentment.

One of the paradoxes of the integration process is that the further it goes, the more it reveals how much farther away complete integration remains. Surface calm, in many cases, covers a plethora of complexities and problems within and between immigrant communities.

Unnumbered problems

David White

'Innumeracy' doesn't get quite so much attention as illiteracy. But, on whatever definition, there is still a lot of it about.

When Sir Alec Douglas-Home admitted that he did his sums with the help of matchsticks, he unwittingly illustrated the different attitudes society has towards different types of learning. To be unlettered, to be able neither to read nor to write, is a condition so shameful that the illiterate do their utmost to conceal it. But to be "unnumbered," to have "no head for figures," is a matter for (at worst) mild regret and (at best) a sort of pride. The pride is perhaps a leftover from patrician arrogance. When state education began in this country, arithmetic was a discipline fit merely for shopkeepers. The gentleman, with no need to earn his living, had no need to bother himself with it. The regret is to be found in the belief that "innumeracy" is somehow pathological; that the computational skills, along with an understanding of chess, computers and Bach, are gifts withheld from some and bestowed on others.

It is therefore not surprising that no one has yet thought it worthwhile to number the unnumbered. Illiteracy is a far hotter potato. Yet the way in which even illiteracy was identified as a problem illustrates another social attitude, seemingly at odds with pride or mild regret. That is, an overweening respect for quantification.

The 1970-71 national survey of reading ability among 11-15 year olds, sponsored by the Department of Education and carried out by the National Foundation for Education Research, revealed that one in eight pupils leaving school at the age of 15 could not read or write at all. The British Association of Settlements, one of the few organisations in this country tackling adult illiteracy, did some quick arithmetic and came up with the figure of one million illiterate adults in Britain. Soon, reading experts like Dr Joyce Morris were doubling, even tripling, this figure. Newspapers picked them up and set them in bold headlines above their stories. One more "number game" was in progress.

Theodore White observes a similar numbers game in *The Making of the President, 1972*. But he sees its origin not in Malthus, Booth, or even Kinsey, but in the logistics of America at war; intellects defining, in the second world war, "by the most sophisticated digital and numerical analyses the way combat energies could be managed." After the war, "social scientists, too, became intrigued with numbers—numbers on crime, numbers on black/white classroom ratios, numbers on suburban change, numbers on housing square-footage, numbers on unemployment and manpower. Such numbers defined shortfalls of achievement or morality; and dollars could provide solutions. The underlying assumption of the best postwar American thinking was that with enough dollars and enough goodwill, and quantifiable goals, domestic problems could be solved with steady forward movement and a minimum of political discontent."

Again, do numbers, honest or not, measure the right things? (White believes that America may have an out-of-date system of social measurement.) The numbers game thus provides a paradox: a quantitative society which may not be able to define its own quantitative deficiencies—among which are the "innumerates," people who are no good at figures. A definition of "numeracy," does exist. It appears in the 1959 Crowther report, *Fifteen to Eighteen*, where it was coined "to represent the mirror image of literacy." Its meaning was intended to be broad: ". . . . by numeracy we mean more than mere ability to manipulate the rule of three. . . . When we say that a historian or linguist is 'innumerate,' we mean that he cannot even begin to understand what scientists and mathematicians are talking about."

But since the report is concerned with (among others) sixth formers, it defines a high "numeracy threshold": "It is perhaps possible to distinguish two different aspects of numeracy which should concern the sixth former. On the one hand is an understanding of the scientific approach to the study of phenomena—observation, hypothesis, experiment, verification. On the other hand, there is a need in the modern world to think quantitatively, to realise how far our problems are problems of degree even when they appear as problems of kind." This definition of numeracy/innumeracy among the minority who stay on at school is obviously unworkable when applied to the majority who leave at 16. The Crowther report was concerned with those who had passed general mathematics at o level. Yet until 1972, half of the early school leavers left without taking an exam in maths, let alone passing it.

How is the "numeracy" of this unexamined 50 per cent to be defined and measured? Currently a team from the National Foundation for Educational Research are studying, on behalf of the Department of Education, how to carry out a national survey of maths attainment among eleven year olds and 15 year olds. The team leader, Dr Ray Sumner, explains: "At the moment, we're looking at how it could be done, and what the problems are. We've enlarged the idea of a test. We're not concerned to assess individual children, so we said let's get away from the idea of one test and accumulate several. To make up several tests one needs a lot of items, and so we've set up two sets of 'item banks,' one for the 11-12 year olds, the other for the 14-15 year olds." Sumner believes that this method of measurement is sophisticated enough to tackle a very broad definition of numeracy—and one that became progressively broader as the feasibility study progressed. "When I first started, I must admit that I thought maths was going to be straightforward," he says. "It was not. There are now a various number of approaches, particularly dealing with slow learners. So one curious result of this is that, while at one time we'd have had a very confined view of numeracy, now we find we can hardly confine it at all."

But if a system of maths education is still largely a confined system, is it really possible to develop an "unconfined" concept of numeracy? In spite of practical methods of teaching, in spite of the "new maths," traditional maths still dominates Britain's schools. It has been estimated that 70 per cent of the pupils who take an examination sit a traditional