

of the market and are also the biggest suppliers to the catering trade.

But their ice cream sections are only offshoots, and do not publish separate financial results. Traditionalists are thereby tempted to suspect that the large processing combines disguise poverty of ingredients with lavish packaging and relentless promotion.

Mrs Beeton's recipe for ice cream (sufficient for eight) included a pint of cream, two egg yolks and half a pint of milk. Modern industry is more economical. While most people allow that butter and cream enhance the flavour, almost 90 per cent of British ice cream has no dairy content, save the protein and mineral substances that are left behind when skimmed milk is dried. Dairy ice cream has 5 per cent fat from the cow, but scarcely any commercial ice cream contains any cream at all.

On the other hand, it does not contain tallow, grease, hair oil, rendered-down pig's trotters, or whale blubber either, as popular myth has it. Ice cream does occasionally include fish oil, but by far the greatest quantity of fat used is palm or nut-kernel oil, refined to perfect tastelessness.

It was the Chinese who invented ice cream (making it by mixing fruit with snow), but the modern inspirations derive from Italy and America.

In the United States, ice cream parlours are important social centres. People are said to be reluctant to move house unless their new home has a good ice cream parlour nearby. By a quirk of international conglomeration, the most successful chain of exotic ice cream shops in America, Baskin-Robbins, belongs to Joe Lyons.

Their parlours are temples of ice cream, selling at any one time 31 beautifully-flavoured, irresistibly-named flavours from a total catalogue of nearly 500 recipes. The company opened its first British parlours in 1976 (though they were beaten onto the scene by Dayville's, a British-based imitation, who go one better and sell 32 different flavours at a time).

So far Baskin-Robbins, with 2,500 outlets around the world, have only 28 in Britain. Dayville have reached 80, but economic necessity has forced them to duplicate their franchises with hamburger or soft drink operations for cold days. Despite these checks, the parlours should help put an end at last to the dreary domination of vanilla, a flavour whose popularity in Britain foreigners have always associated with a national addiction to custard.

The parlours' best-sellers sound infinitely more delicious and adventurous—chocolate fudge, burgundy cherry, pralines and cream, coconut, mango, English toffee and caramel almond crunch. Or you might be tempted by blueberry cheesecake, peanut butter and jelly, or Rocky Road, a mix of chocolate, marshmallow and almonds.

A greater success dating from 1976 is Walls' Cornetto, a pre-packed cone backed by jokey television commercials with a catchy tune and Italian settings. Every time the commercials are re-run, Walls expect a 10 per cent boost in sales. The whole of



Battle of the lolly giants: will Lyons Maid's "Superman" (top) beat Walls's "Incredible Hulk" (centre)? Or will newly launched "Funny Feet" walk over the opposition?

their £750,000 advertising budget is going on Cornetto. They sold £10 million worth last year, and hope for £20 million in 1979.

Walls had twice tried to launch pre-packed cones in the 1960s and flopped both times. The third time round they gave up trying to go it alone, bought rights to a continental recipe and followed it exactly. The British imitations had suffered because the cones tended to develop droop and messy leaks in their passage from factory to the consumer's hot hand. "What we learnt from the continentals was how to keep our sugar cones crisp," says a Walls man. Part of the answer is to line them with chocolate.

It is on technological advances like these that the ice cream man has come to rely, since he has learnt from bitter experience that he cannot rely on the weather. This season's "real breakthrough," also from Walls, is Berry-Split: "as near," they claim, "as man is ever likely to come to putting fresh fruit and cream on a stick." This lolly is intended to appeal to adults, who are increasingly important as the declining birth rate deprives the ice cream companies of young customers.

To sell to the children, though, the companies call in formidable allies. This season Walls are battling for the lolly market with The Incredible Hulk, a pink strawberry model topped with bright green sugar strand, and King Kong, a toffee-centred snowcream lolly coated in chocolate dip. Lyons Maid have held over the Star Wars lolly, a chocolate water ice spangled with sugar balls, and have signed up Superman, as a cola lolly, whose plastic sticks feature comic strip heroes and villains.

The marketing men say such products are "heavily conceptualised," which means the packaging and promotion is all designed to tie in with a popular film, television show or other craze. Superman, as a lolly, is not unlike Skateboard Surfer, which Walls were selling last year.

Even more is Lyons Maid's Happy Days, tied to the television show, like their own previous product, the Lolly-Gobble Choc Bar. Indeed, it is exactly the same thing, repackaged—a bar of chocolate in the centre of cream ice, coated with hundreds and thousands. Lyons wanted something to latch onto the fashion for the fifties, and as a spokesman for the company explained: "You couldn't have a lolly called Grease."

For their next trick, Walls have launched Funny Feet—a pink strawberry ice in the form of a human foot. "We put some deep psychological research into this one," they say. "One of babies' earliest intuitive actions is to suck their feet as they lie in the pram. We are building on that. The nice thing is that it works at different levels for different ages."

"We have a big range of foot jokes for older children, like 'Get your Funny Feet out of the fridge,' or 'This shopkeeper has Funny Feet,' and that sort of thing. The attraction is that it is not too specific in terms of targetting."

Let's hope it keeps fine for them.

# The Asians of Leicester: a story of worldly success

Mihir Bose, himself an Indian, looks at a community which is devoted to entrepreneurship and hard work.

Harbans Singh Ratoo is telling us a story. There was this Sikh, you see. He could not write English and Ratoo would write out his home address on his letters to India for him: 63 Lackborough Road. The Sikh was a regular letter writer and would send two or three letters a week—but there was never any reply. Neither Ratoo nor the Sikh could understand this at all. One day the Sikh invited Ratoo back to his place and that evening Ratoo, with the Sikh as a pillion guide, weaved his way through Leicester to 63 Lackborough Road. When they reached the house, Ratoo burst out laughing. The Sikh asked what he was laughing at. Don't worry, said Ratoo—now you will get replies to your letters. For 63 Lackborough Road was really 63 Loughborough Road, a house that Ratoo knew well.

In 1954—the date of Ratoo's story—it was one of only two Asian houses in Leicester. "In those days if the postman saw Indian names or strange names they could not understand, they would just throw away the letters," says Ratoo, laughing.

Ratoo, of course, can afford to laugh. He has come a long way from those dim distant days of the fifties and sixties when, in many a hotel and pub, he was told, "Shove off you coloured bastard, we don't serve you lot." Or when visiting an engineering firm in search of business, the receptionist reluctantly took his card only to return it torn in two bits—the managing director could not believe that Indians could be engineers.

Today Ratoo has a successful engineering business himself, is planning to open a disco in the city centre—opposite the Grand Hotel, where he was once refused admittance—sends his children to public schools and is a prominent member of the city's Labour Party.

Superficially, Leicester is already a multi-racial city that works. In 1972, the council took space in Kampala newspapers advising Ugandan Asians not to come to Leicester: it was overcrowded, there were too many immigrants, another "flood" would cause enormous problems. Nevertheless, they arrived and are now confirmed business successes. They own factories—both textiles and engineering—run innumerable shops and find the two branches of the Bank of India insufficient for their needs. In 1976, the National Front polled nearly 30 per cent in the council elections, with one Front man—Barry Carver—getting within 60 votes of a council seat. But determined multi-racial action by various groups, like Unity against Racism, stemmed the National Front tide. In 1979, the National Front polled 4.8 per cent at the council elections.

The week I visited Leicester seemed as typical as any for the community. The local

Bank of India had a strike because an apprentice had been sacked; three Muslim boys who had refused to wear ties were still excluded from school classes; but thousands of Asians looked forward to BBC Radio Leicester's weekday evening show devoted to Asian music, talk and discussions. It was a community aware of its problems yet confident that they can be solved.

But beneath the surface there are tensions. The Asian community is badly split into various groups: there are over 90 Asian organisations, three Hindu temples, three Sikh Gurdwaras, four mosques—and no recognisable leader. The community itself is split along sectarian, communal, age and class lines. The Sikhs are split into innumerable sects and castes. Eight Sikh organisations belong to the Leicester Community Relations Council—though only a handful are active and many of them are unknown even to the Sikhs. As Soraj Seth, of the Asian Ladies' Circle puts it, "It is a reflection of Asian life. We are all segregated in India as a result of the caste system. There are so many Asian organisations that I lose track of them."

Leicester has always attracted immigrants. Its early industrial growth made it the most prosperous city in England and the second most affluent in Europe.

In the 17th century, the hosiery industry started. In 1851, Thomas Cook began to manufacture boots by riveting soles to uppers instead of stitching them. In the 19th and 20th centuries, engineering arrived. Today Leicester has a diversified industrial base. Some 60 per cent of its manual workforce is skilled and its location is ideal—the M1 is on its outskirts, London is just over an hour away by train and it is near enough to Birmingham to cater for its overflow visitors.

The Irish came to Leicester in the 19th century, followed by the Jews; then, at the turn of the century, the east Europeans. The second world war brought evacuees from London and the south east and later Poles, Ukrainians, and some Greeks and Italians. The fifties brought Jamaicans and Leeward Islanders—there are some 6,000 of them—and the first of three waves of Asians. These

Worldly success: window shopping in Leicester's Belgrave Road



photos by Jürgen Schadtberg

were Punjabis from India, who were willing to work in the factory industry vacated by white workers—who had used the economic boom to move to cleaner, more lucrative industries. From the mid-sixties, the East African Asians began to arrive as a result of "Africanisation." Finally, in 1972, in the wake of Idi Amin's policies, some 5,500 Ugandan Asians arrived.

There are no reliable figures for the number of Asians in Leicester. The latest estimate, working from names in the 1978-79 electoral register, is that there are between 44,000 to 49,000 Asians—broken down into Gujaratis (70 per cent), Punjabis (16 per cent) and Muslims (12 per cent). But this estimate, as the Leicester Council for Community Relations concedes, is crude. A man with a Gujarati name could be a Muslim: and these figures include those born here.

Turn left outside Leicester's London Road station, walk for ten minutes up Sparkenhau Street, and you are in Melbourne Road and Earl Howe Street. Here is the community relations office and the centre of Highfields—the original main settlement and still the area most populated with Asians. Once lived in by Victorian gentry, it is the classical immigrant area: railway lines to London and the midlands on one side and, on the other, a row of Victorian and Edwardian terraced houses. These often have outside lavatories, dark passageways leading to a backyard filled with drying clothes, garrets and cellar basements. Now the bleak area is overlaid by Asian shops, Asian houses and exotic colours.

A walk down Melton Road, near the station, proves that those stories of immigrant success are just the tip of the iceberg. The East African Asian is alive and well and, in just over half a dozen years, has converted a decaying street earmarked for demolition into one of the most prosperous high streets in this country. It begins at Harish Patel's Abbey Park Motor Spares shop; it ends with the Ramon Brothers Nataraj cinema complex. In between there is a whole host of shops, restaurants and even a bank—nearly all Indian-owned. When I spied the odd English shop, my guide said with a shrug, "Oh, he is an old man, he must have just carried on."

#### Middle class success

Harish Patel arrived in Leicester from Kenya in 1967, studied for a couple of years at the Leicester Polytechnic and started in business in 1972. Last year, his sales reached a million pounds and he converted what had been a partnership between him and his wife into a limited company. Today he exudes all the authority and air of the entrepreneur made good: business is booming, credit is no problem for him. He imports spare parts and motor accessories from France, Germany, Italy—and even India; and exports to Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia—but not to Uganda while under Amin. And as his English secretaries busied themselves with serving coffee and doing the office chores, he quietly ticked

off the marks of middle class success: a £9,000 Mercedes car, a £15,000 freehold house in Clarendon Park, Oadby—one of Leicester's posher suburbs, where he is surrounded by equally successful white businessmen or professionals—his children in public schools and a hectic business life that leaves little room for leisure.

A few shops away, Mailal Parmar is less successful—but only when judged by Patel's standards. He arrived here from Nairobi four years ago, where he had three shops dealing in traditional crafts. Today he can afford a comfortable home in a middle class village, just three miles from Melton Road, and his two sons have opened their own shop just around the corner from his.

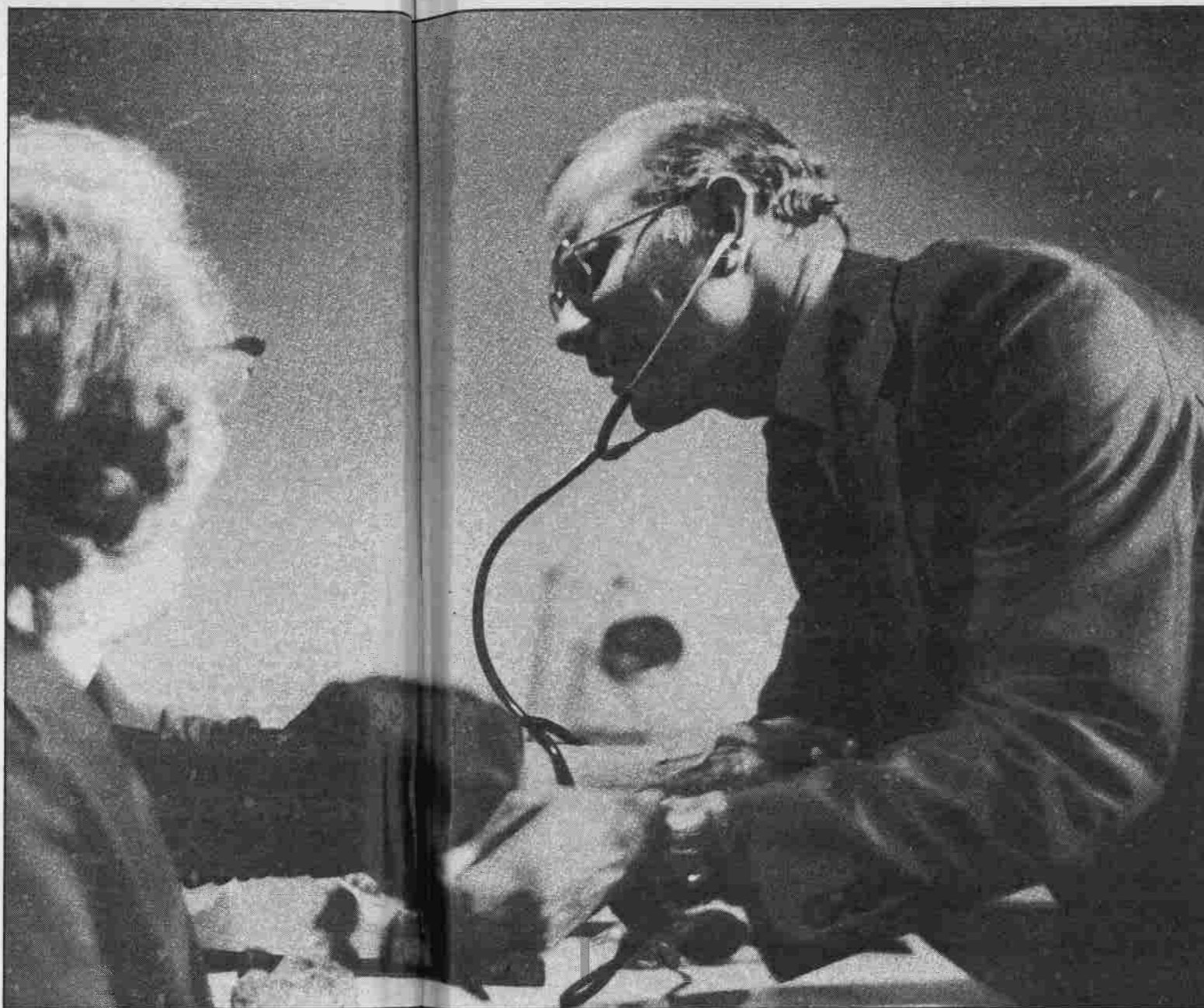
Perhaps the most characteristic success story is that of Bhagwanji Lakhani's Bobby Restaurant. He was one of the Ugandan Asians who came in 1973. In Leicester he abandoned his lifetime experience of wholesale business and set up as an ice-lolly manufacturer. When that failed, he opened Bobby (named after a hugely successful Hindi film) and is today the proud possessor of the inscription, "Specialists in pure vegetarian food, the best in all Europe." It is a family enterprise, with his daughters and sons helping out and Mrs Lakhani herself doing the cooking—though an old English lady helps with the cleaning.

#### Iddlies and pakodas

As we sat on the first floor of the restaurant, surrounded by Hindi film posters and other Gujarati vegetarians taking their fill of samosas, iddlies and pakodas, Mrs Lakhani explained her interpretation of vegetarianism: no eggs, no garlic, not even onions—as pure as vegetarianism can get. In a characteristic Gujarati-Hindu mix of business and service, she says, "I'm very religious-minded. But I can't give direct service to the community. So we do this. We are not after money. We want to give something in return. We like Leicester. We meet hundreds of people—Asians, whites. Sometimes the restaurant is full of whites."

But out of this service the Lakhani's have done quite well. Their five-bedroomed house is valued at £45,000 and they have just celebrated their daughter's wedding, where 1,500 guests were invited and "a lot of money was spent." At this point, Lakhani said, "Why are you interested in all this? It's best not to write about how much money is spent." This reticence runs right through the richer Asians. It is particularly marked with Raman Parmar.

Parmar arrived from India in 1964, has had no formal education and was most reluctant to talk about himself. It required all my guide's persuasion to prise out the details. His business activities extend into finance and insurance broking, but his most impressive success is the construction of the half million Nataraj cinema complex. Parmar, I understood later, had reason to be reticent. When the Nataraj opened, he was interviewed on television and rather rashly spoke about his and his family's wealth: soon he received a visit from the Inland Revenue—and Parmar was not amused.



Opened in 1974, the Nataraj was meant to be a twin-theatre cinema, with a couple of discos. But the council refused to sanction the discos and Parmar has only managed to open one of the two theatres which show a continuous diet of popular Hindi films. He is however, planning to open a select club—a highly respectable place where rich Indians could bring their wives and not feel uncomfortable. Parmar says that all the existing places are only for the single males. "Where our Indian ladies will go there must be a nice atmosphere; they cannot go to those crowded and noisy places."

Melton Road is a symbol of Lohana success, one of the most enterprising of the Hindu business communities. Nobody is more aware of this than my guide through the road, Ratlal Ganatra, president of the Gujarati Hindu Association.

In Leicester he has the reputation of being the "Mr Fix-it" of the Gujarati community. Recently, the city had made

posher Leicester suburbs, he propagates the beliefs and the philosophy of Jainism. This is based on the four principles of *ahimsa*, non-violence; *aenktawad*, every coin has two sides; *aparigraha*, a state of non-acquisition, and *karma*, destiny is shaped by past deeds and present actions. It is the third of the religious movements—the others were Hinduism and Buddhism—to have originated in ancient India. Most Indian historians see it as the final link in the transformation of Aryan Vedic Hindu ritual, through Buddhism and Jainism, into a revived Brahminism. But Shah argues that Jainism is as old as Hinduism.

#### School tie dispute

For a time, in the 6th century, it was probably the most important of the religious movement in ancient India, and today there are no more than five million of them—many of them rich, all of them strict vegetarians. Its belief in non-acquisition has not prevented Jains from becoming, as Shah's own literature puts it, top of the list in trade and commerce and "adventurous businessmen, bankers, merchants, lawyers, doctors and accountants." This neatly illustrates how a non-worldly philosophy coexists with a very worldly perception of money and its value.

When I asked Shah how rich the British Jains were, he laughed and said: "We are not very rich here—all right, not rich. We are very rich in India and Antwerp." It was here, last November, that a day and half's fund-raising trip by Shah netted £15,000 for the Jain temple and centre that is being planned in Leicester.

The Islamic Foundation is equally well endowed. It was set up in 1972 as a research and education organisation with generous help from Islam's friends in the Middle East. It has its own building in Leicester's London Road, which it claims is the centre of Islamic studies in this country. Over the last seven years, it has researched into the purpose and meaning of Islam. The foundation provides the correct Islamic interpretation, as a current dispute shows at Moat Boys School in Highfields. Last September, six Muslim students at Moat Boys school were sent home for not wearing ties. The boys claimed the tie represented the crucifixion of Christ and the Koran prohibited wearing a symbol of an alien religion—particularly as the event probably never took place.

In this case, the foundation advised that there was nothing specifically in the Koran about the wearing of ties, though in the prophet's traditions it is said that Muslims should not wear anything resembling the traditions of other religions. Since then, four of the six have returned to school wearing ties. However, two brothers—now joined by a third boy—are still at home, faithful to the interpretation of Koranic belief propounded by the father of the two brothers, who is an Imam of one of the Muslim mosques.

*This is the first of a two-part article. Next week, Mihir Bose looks at emerging class and generational differences among Leicester Asians.*

an appeal for funds to buy a body scanner. "We had a drama in aid of this appeal. The Lord Mayor came. I appealed to the people for this is for a noble cause. We collected the money in five mins." How much? "£176 in five mins. It is social service."

Yet social service for Ganatra means social service for the Lohanas. Just as Prabhulal Jadhavji Shukla and Natvarlal Shah represent their own particular communities.

The different communities are not warring: they meet, occasionally fraternise, but never integrate. I met Prabhulal Jadhavji Shukla, a retired pensioner and leader of Leicester's Brahmins, at Bobby's restaurant. He was proud of the Brahmin Samaj's recently acquired premises in Melton Road. This £40,000 complex will cater to the 1,200 Leicester Brahmins' social needs, house its youth leagues and provide recreational facilities for men, women and

*Prominent citizens: on the cover is Soraj Seth, of the Asian Ladies Circle; above is Dr Natvarlal Keshavlal Shah, with a patient*

children. It will soon acquire its own caretaker and car park. "All communities require their own organisation," says Shukla. The best illustration of this philosophy is in the growing influence of two organisations that, in their philosophical differences, reflect the polarity of the community: the Jain Samaj and Islamic Foundation.

Natvarlal Keshavlal Shah, a Bombay born GP, is President of the Leicester Jain Samaj. He has helped set up a nationwide umbrella organisation for the 1,200 British Jains and Vaniks (Vaniks are part of the Hindu Vaishnava sect but, through intermarriage, have come close to Jains). Earlier this year, Shah organised a successful Vanik youth forum attended by over 500 people—mostly young Jains and Vaniks.

When Shah can get away from his patients, most of whom are English from the