

# ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE

Patriotism Redefined



## What goes on behind bars

**FACE TO FACE**

Vijay Nair, OML

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**

Bengal's *little Europe*

Great Indians: Major General K. Zorawar Singh, MC / Narayan Desai / Namdeo Dhasal

**MORPARIA'S PAGE**



E-mail: morparia@hotmail.com

# Contents

MAY 2015

VOL.18/10

## THEME:

### Prisons



<b>Morparia's page</b>	2
<b>The prisons of convenience</b> <i>V. Gangadhar</i>	5
<b>Reforming the prisons</b> <i>Sul Khan Singh</i>	6
<b>Nirvana behind bars</b> <i>Kiran Bedi</i>	9
<b>Colours of the Cage</b> <i>Arun Ferreira</i>	12
<b>Imprisoned bodies, free spirits</b> <i>Tushar Gandhi</i>	15
<b>7 Sazaa - e - Kaala Pani</b> <b>Where dreams went to die...</b> <i>Akul Tripathi</i>	18
<b>Youth Voice : Nayanika Nambiar</b>	21
<b>Know India Better</b> <b>Bengal's little Europe</b> <i>Rangan Datta</i>	23
<b>Face to Face</b> <b>Vijay Nair:</b> <i>E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan</i>	38
<b>Features</b> <b>Who should I meet if I fall sick?</b> <i>Dr. Sujeet Rajan</i>	40
<b>Busting the bindi myth</b> <i>Shoma A. Chatterji</i>	42
<b>The story of Ram</b> <i>Kanak Rele</i>	44
<b>Transformational HR</b> <i>Amrita Nair</i>	46
<b>E-learning and teacher education</b> <i>Dr. Ravindra Kumar</i>	47
<b>What's on the menu, India?</b> <i>Dr. Jamuna Pai</i>	49
<b>Book Review</b>	51
<b>Column</b>	52
<b>Rural Concerns :</b> <i>Bharat Dogra</i>	
<b>Economy :</b> <i>Anuradha Kalhan</i>	
<b>Young India</b>	54
<b>Great Indians</b>	56



23



38

Vijay Nair



Major General K.  
Zorawar Singh, MC



Narayan Desai



Namdeo Dhasal



**Managing editor**  
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

**Editor**  
Anuradha Dhareshwar

**Assistant Editor**  
E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan

**Design**  
H. V. Shiv Shankar

**Marketing**  
Mahesh Kanojia

**OIOP Clubs**  
Vaibhav Palkar

**Subscription**  
Nagesh Bangera

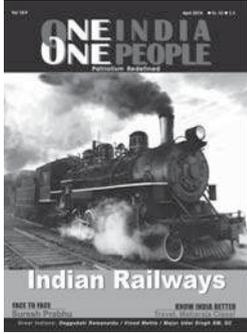
**Advisory board**  
Sucharita Hegde  
Justice S. Radhakrishnan  
Venkat R. Chary

Printed & Published by  
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for  
**One India One People Foundation,**  
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,  
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,  
Mumbai - 400 026  
Tel: 022-2353 4400  
Fax: 022-2351 7544  
e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com  
oiopsub@fouressindia.com

Printed at:  
**Graptone (India) Pvt. Ltd.**  
A1 /319, Shah & Nahar  
Industrial Estate, S. J. Marg,  
Lower Parel (W)  
Mumbai - 400 013  
VISIT us at:

**www.oneindiaonepeople.com**  
[www.facebook.com/oneindiaonepeoplefoundation](http://www.facebook.com/oneindiaonepeoplefoundation)  
[oneindiaonepeople2020.blogspot.com](http://oneindiaonepeople2020.blogspot.com)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



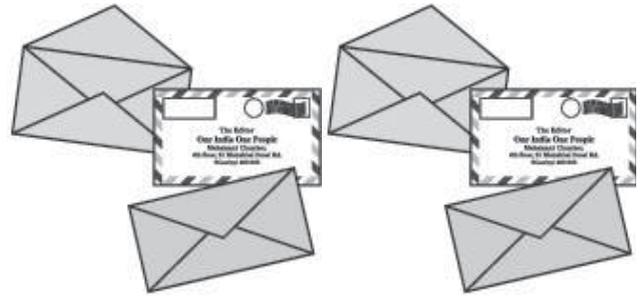
### "Set history on the right track"

I have been a regular reader and subscriber of your esteemed magazine for more than a decade. I have to pen with pain that an article published named "A British Legacy Still on Track" written by Mr. Rajendra Aklekar, has omitted the names of the first two Indian Directors on the Great

Indian peninsular Railway, Mr. Jagannath Sunkersett and Mr. Jamshedji Jijibhoy. In fact, the first office of the Indian Railways was opened in Jagnanath (Nana) Sunkersett's bungalow (Wada). Mr. Sunkersett and Mr. Jijibhoy's bust were erected on the Central Railways main building now known as Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminals (Boribunder- VT).

My article "Nana Sunkersett Founder of Cosmopolitan Bombay" under the caption of Great Indian was published in your magazine *One India One People* in November 2000, and had mentioned his contribution to Indian Railways. I request you and your team to include the facts and set the history on the right track.

Nana Sunkersett as the director of the Railways was the co-passenger in the first train travelled from Mumbai VT to Thane on 16 April 1853, and he was holding a golden pass given by



the British Government. I hope you will take due cognizance of the omission and in next issue you will give the correct reference on such a good subject.

– *Bharat D. Hate Special Executive Officer, Maharashtra Govt.*

### "Excellent issue"

The Railways issue was excellent and what I enjoyed the most was the interview with the Union Railway Minister Mr. Suresh Prabhu. I am not going into the merits and demerits of the Railway Budget, but what definitely comes across about him is his simplicity and earnestness. We surely need more ministers like him. May their tribe increase! I enjoyed reading the rest of the magazine too. Some of the human interest stories were very thought provoking and hilarious too! It will be nice to see some more general interest articles, especially about health and lifestyle.

– *Nandini Pawar, Pune*

Letters should be addressed to  
The Editor, One India One People Foundation, Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor, 22, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai - 400 026  
Tel: 022 - 2353 4400 Fax: 022-2351 7544 e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com / oiop@vsnl.net www.oneindiaonepeople.com



**WORLD CLASS  
QUALITY MEDICINES  
AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

**BLUE CROSS LABORATORIES LTD.**  
PENINSULA CHAMBERS, LOWER PAREL, MUMBAI - 400 013,  
INDIA.

# The prisons of convenience

*Overcrowding in Indian prisons is a reality. But not if you are a “VVVIP”, when the prisons will follow your diktat, says V. Gangadhar.*

**N**OW that Spring and April have arrived in England, the English poet can well sing, ‘O to be in England, now that April is there’. We being poor Indians see nothing special in Indian summer and Indian April which is only less hot than May. Of late, weather Gods are unkind to India. Floods in April, heat wave in Mumbai during March, summer in winter, winter in summer and so on. Where does prison and prison life fit into all this?

Indian democracy is a wonderful thing; it treats everyone and everything as equal. We have unmanageable crowds everywhere, on the streets, railway stations, bus stands..... they all groan with people. Those of us who have been lucky to have gone inside jails, not as residents but even only as visitors, will find the same situation there too. Milling crowds, unmanageable rush and so on. Inside and outside it is the same. The media occasionally covers prison stories. Tihar, supposed to house 45,000 prisoners groans with 95,000. Gone is the time when people did not mind a short sojourn in jail to avoid crowds, but now the prisons are more crowded than the outside world.

Prison life has the same VIP culture as the outside world. Our inimitable TV anchor Arnab Goswami talks on his channel about VIP culture in every corner of India. Money talks and you can have doors opened for you and you are entitled to VIP treatment even in prisons. If you are a political leader particularly in states like Haryana, you can walk in and out of prison as you wish, despite the severity of your sentence. Political clans like the Chautalas or D.P. Yadavs are sentenced to long prison terms for serious crimes. But they don’t bother. Within hours they are favoured with medical certificates which transfer them to prison hospitals or posh clinics where they enjoy long spells of ‘treatment and recuperation’, before they are summoned again by the honourable court .

Prison life teaches the VIP convicts many escape routes. Parole, furlough, imaginary illnesses and so on, all of them meant to hoodwink authority. But you should know how to make use of these tricks. The Chautala or D.P. Yadav family

members convicted for long terms in prison are constantly out enjoying life because they can claim as much parole as they want, being “VVVIP” prisoners. Don’t ask me what items are passed from hand to hand to facilitate such exchanges. But you won’t find these details in any prison manuals.

Let us forget the VIP aspect of prison life and find out how involved ordinary citizens including teachers, striking workers, students, ordinary protestors and the like are. The easiest thing in India is to get arrested, spend a day in the lock up and emerge as a hero. This happened to me a couple of times when I was a student and later an industrial worker. We went on strike, I don’t know for what, and scattered when the cops chased us. A tough cop caught hold of my collar and threw me into the police van. It was morning, we were driven to the local magistrate’s court. The honourable magistrate shot a couple of questions, I mumbled a couple of answers and we were in custody till evening. By that time, the prisons had become crowded, there was no space for the latecomers and we were let out. And I emerged ‘Prison Returned’!

You know, Bollywood would not exist without court scenes and prison scenes. Watching movies for the past 50 years, I have wondered if prisoners would ever change uniforms (than the present striped ones) to make them more modern. If heroes like the Khans can change costumes ten times in a movie, why can’t the poor hero-prisoner wear different uniforms. Finally, I like the American way of sentencing felons. In a state which had abolished death penalty if the guilty man had kidnapped, robbed, raped and killed a girl, the judge would sentence him to 70 years in jail for crime 1,

40 years for crime 2, 80 years for crime 3, 95 years for crime 4 - all sentences to run concurrently. The man would be spending around 800 years in jail, don’t ask me how! But he would definitely become an expert in prison life. ■



The writer is a well-known satirist.

# Reforming the prisons

*Our prisons are not just overcrowded, but also inhuman. With low budgets for food and clothing, and an overburdened justice system, it is indeed a pitiable situation especially for women prisoners. Sulkhan Singh examines the system and suggests measures to reform it.*

Is there a need for Prison reforms? Let us see what two of the greatest of men had to say about prisons:

*"It is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside the jail. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones."*

– Nelson Mandela

*"As an old and experienced prisoner, however, I believe that Government have to begin the Reform. (One will have to) first undo the mischief done in prisons where the environment hardens the criminal tendencies, and in the case of innocent persons, they learn how to commit crimes without being detected. I hold that humanitarian effort cannot cope with the evil wrought in the Jail."*

– Mahatma Gandhi

**O**UR prison systems were designed by an alien ruler who considered Indians as below them, as sub-human. It is unfortunate that we in free India have not given due consideration to reforms in our prison system. India has a large prison population of 4,11,992 (as on 31.12.2013). This means, for every 1,00,000 of our population, 34 persons are in prison, which comes to 0.034 percent of the population. In the words of Supreme Court of India, jails cannot be turned into anthropoid zoos. The conditions in our prisons are pathetic.

## Some hard facts

Let's examine some realities of our prison system:

- Total prison population is 4,41,992, while total capacity is 3,47,859. Thus, overcrowding is a serious problem.
- Health services are in shambles: Prison life is very harsh, inhospitable and depressing. This by itself gives rise to many diseases, especially skin allergies, which is further aggravated by overcrowding.
- Work and wages: All prison services are run by prisoners exclusively, except security. In the matter of security too, a large number of convict prisoners play a significant role. Yet, they are paid ridiculously low wages.

- Remissions: Remission is the relief that is granted for good conduct, industry and such other positive behaviour. However, there is a tendency to exclude certain laws like the NDPS Act, from remission.
- Paroles: During currency of detention, a prisoner is allowed to go home for certain purposes. This is variously termed as parole. There is a tendency to deny even this.
- Life imprisonment: The worst case is of lifers. They are at the mercy of all and sundry in the power structure of the criminal justice system. If they are pleased, he/she may be released after 14 years; otherwise, the prisoner languishes in jail for 30-40 years.
- Old persons: Geriatrics are especially sensitive to harsh prison life. A year in jail takes unduly heavy toll on the physical and psychological health of an old person. Yet, no care is being taken in this regard.
- Women: Prison life is especially harsh and severe on women. Many women have their children with them while entering the jail. Our system does not make any allowance for these young innocent inmates. In the year 2013, our prisons held 1,925 children captive for no fault except that they happened to be the children of those unfortunate mothers.

## History of Indian prisons

Prisons have existed since time immemorial. But upto the first millennium, imprisonment was generally reserved for political prisoners. Imprisonment as a punishment was not used. On account of this, systematic prisons were not designed. People were confined in forts and castles.

Even England continued with cruel and uncivilised punishments like whipping of men and women, dragging them through the streets in a cart's trail, public hanging of thieves and other felons, etc. Towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, change of sentiment occurred in England, which had its echoes in India too. Around 1790, the punishment of mutilation was forbidden by law in India and in its place, imprisonment as punishment was prescribed. This required establishment of more jails and more modern notions

regarding the treatment of criminals began to prevail.

In 1834, a regulation was passed for the improvement of prison discipline and a measure of prison reforms was initiated at the instigation of Lord Macaulay. Thus came the first Prison Commission in 1838, which inter alia suggested that:

- Convicts be put to labour in large central prisons.
- Adequate arrangement be made for classification and discipline.
- Labour be enforced by “machines which render the working at them a dull, wearisome and disgusting exertion.”
- One or more prison inspector be appointed for each province.

But when Sir John Lawrence reviewed the system in 1864, not much progress had been made. Thus came the second Prison Commission.

Their report was on the lines of the first commission, but it laid down a systematic prison system which is broadly in force even today. Separate Acts were passed for the regulation of prisons in Madras, Bombay and Bengal, and these resulted in considerable difference in practices being followed.

In 1876, Lord Lytton appointed a third Commission, but not much was done by way of follow-up. Lord Dufferin appointed two officers of experience and their report submitted in 1889 dealt with prison discipline and management in all its aspects. In a follow-up, a general Prisons Act for the whole of British India was passed as Prison Act 1894 (Act IX of 1894). Regulations were issued under it by the Governor General-in-Council and local governments.

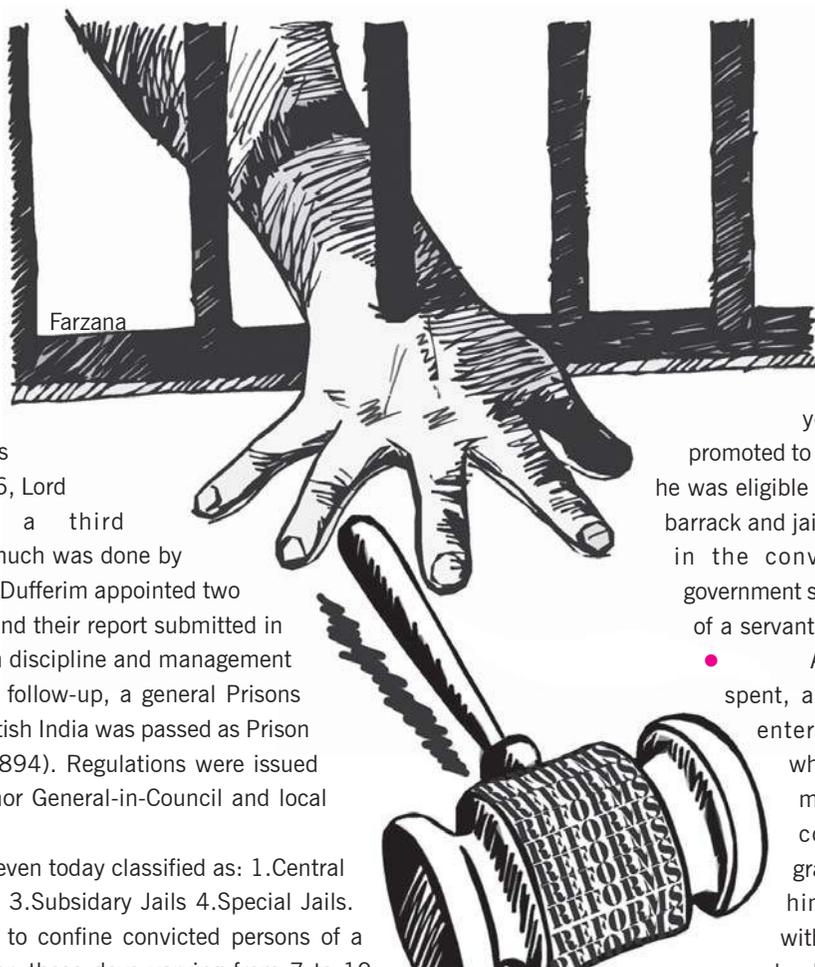
Jails were and are even today classified as: 1. Central Prisons 2. District Jails 3. Subsidiary Jails 4. Special Jails. Central Jails are used to confine convicted persons of a certain term and higher, these days varying from 7 to 10 years in states. Other convicts and under-trials are kept at district jails. Subsidiary jails are extensions of district jails in the interiors of the country.

The infamous “Kaala Pani” merits mention in jail history in some detail. Transportation as punishment was prescribed by Bengal Regulation 1797. In 1838, Singapore, Penang,

Malacca, Tenasserim and Mauritius were being used as transport destinations. This was approved by the Prison Commission of 1838 on the ground of “terror inspired by a distant and unknown land”. By 1903, Port Blair in the Andaman Islands was only a penal settlement. It was first used in 1858 for the prisoners of first war of Indian Independence. In 1863, it was opened to general convicts. According to the Imperial Gazetteer of India 1907, in 1902-03, the average convict population was 1,12,182 men and 740 women. It derived its name of “Kaala Pani” because of the deep sea that was traversed to reach this largely un-inhabited island.

### Five stages in the life of male convicts

- The first 6 months were spent in the Cellular Jail.
- The next 18 months in association in an ordinary mainland jail.
- The next three years as convict of the third class kept to hard labour by day, and confined in barracks by night.
- Having thus completed five years, the convict was promoted to the second class where he was eligible for various posts in the barrack and jails, and for employment in the convict police or other government service or in the capacity of a servant to a private resident.
- After five more years so spent, a well-behaved convict entered the first class in which he laboured under more favourable conditions, or was granted a ticket entitling him to support himself with the grant of a plot of land, build a house, maybe call his family or marry a female convict.



### And the female convict

- Females were kept separately on intra-mural work for three years and under strict jail discipline.
- Next two years they were subjected to lighter discipline.

- At the end of five years they were allowed to support themselves or marry a male convict.

Punishment for not following jail discipline was reduction to a lower class, withdrawal of indulgences, transfer to a punishment gang or ward with extra hard labour and penal diet, solitary confinement and corporal punishment (in case of males only). Females were liable to have their hair cropped and to wear a refractory dress.

Ordinary male convicts were released if they behaved well, after 20 years. Thugs and professional prisoners were never released. Well-behaved female convicts were released after 15 years and in case of a local marriage, both husband and wife were released at the same time.

### The prison scene post Independence

Post 1947, there was a general concern among the local governments about prison reforms mainly because most of the chief ministers and ministers had been in prison during British rule. Most states, especially Uttar Pradesh, started open jails, camp jails and model jails. Convicts were allowed to work for various projects and they camped at the sites. They were engaged in construction of dams and reservoirs, digging of canals, cement factories etc. It may be of interest to note that despite a very large number of prisoners being in camps/tents, escapes were few and criminality zero. The experiment continued for almost two decades and then owing to the disinterest shown by the governments, slowly lapsed. The reports of the A.N. Mulla Committee (1980-83), Justice Krishna Iyer Committee (1986) and Kapoor Committee (1987) may be mentioned here. It also shows that at the national level, no systematic enquiry was made after independence till the 80s. Even now, some experiments are being made by individual officers or ministers, but it is sad that a systematic working has not been implemented.

### The challenges today

Presently our prisons are facing multiple problems. Some pressing problems are:

**Overcrowding:** This is the most serious problem confronting our penal system and has a direct bearing on human health and dignity. Today the capacity of Indian prisons is 3,47,859 but it is holding 4,11,992 persons. This is an overcrowding of 118.4 %. Maximum overcrowding is in Chhattisgarh at 261%, followed by Delhi at 216.8%. However, this does not convey the true picture. In certain jails, the overcrowding is three times or more.

**Poor health services:** Health services are very poor in jails. Total deaths in 2013 were 1,597, out of which 1,482 were natural and 115 not so. Fifty-five female prisoners died in 2013. A typical spending on health is just 1.5 to 2 percent of prison budget.

**Food and clothing:** Typically, only about 25 percent of the budget is spent on feeding the prisoners. Very poor and deficient clothing is another serious problem.

**Female convicts:** Conditions of jails are especially harsh for females. Some women have children who of necessity remain in jail with them. At the end of 2013, there were a total of 1,594 female prisoners with 1,925 children, which shows that many had more than one child with them. Women convicts are often neglected by their families. It is an eye opener to note that in Central Women's Prison in U.P. (Nari Bandi Niketan) in the year 2007, as many as 81 out of 161 women prisoners were not visited by anyone in that whole year.

### What are the policy changes needed?

Soft or harsh, the penal/retributive approach to punishments has not made much difference to criminality in any society. Most European nations now follow a greater liberal approach. India with its tradition of compassion and forgiveness must adopt a better approach. Certain immediate policy imperatives could be:

- Overcrowding should not be allowed.
- Trials have to be expedited.
- Decent clothing in adequate quantity should be provided.
- Number of kitchens must increase to say, one for every 500 inmates.
- Health facilities should be improved.
- Very old persons of say 80 years and above must not be kept in prisons.
- Remissions for good conduct must be given even in cases of NDPS Act.
- Pregnant women or women with children below say seven years of age, should not be kept in jails. Release on probation or domicile much away from scene of offence may be resorted to.
- Imprisonment for life should be replaced by a term of say 25 years to 30 years.
- Fair wages must be paid for prison work.
- Prisoners must be allowed to cast their vote through a postal ballot. It is pertinent to mention that a conference of prison ministers (25 April 2008), had agreed to this. ■

The writer, who is DGP, PTC, Unnao, U.P., has graduated in civil engineering from University of Roorkee (now IIT Roorkee) and has done a PG diploma in structural engineering from IIT Delhi. Thereafter, he joined Indian Railways Service of Engineers (IRSE), which he left in 1980 to join the Indian Police Service (IPS). He headed U.P. prisons from 2008 to 2010, which gave him a totally new and different view of crime, criminals, human rights and civilised society. He also completed his LL.B. from Lucknow University in 2008.



# Nirvana behind bars

*No talk about prison reforms in India can be complete without mention of the outstanding contribution of **Kiran Bedi**, India's first woman officer of the IPS (Indian Police Service). The reforms and transformation she initiated in Delhi's Tihar Jail have gone down in the annals of prison reforms as a worthy, to-be emulated model for prisons in India and worldwide.*

**S**HE was renowned for being a tough, no-nonsense police officer, who earned the respect of her peers and a grateful country for the way she dealt with very challenging situations. Kiran Bedi, 66, who joined the Indian Police Service (IPS) in 1972, was its first woman officer. She started her career as a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in Chanakyapuri area of Delhi, and won the President's Police Medal in 1979. She served in Delhi, Goa and Mizoram. In a career spanning 35 years, she made a name for her campaign against drug abuse, for her tough action against Delhi traffic violators (earning her the sobriquet "Crane Bedi"), and most of all, for her reforms at the notorious Tihar Jail, which also won her worldwide acclaim and the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1994.

In 2003, Bedi became the first woman to be appointed the United Nations civilian police adviser. She resigned in 2007 to focus on social activism and writing. During 2008-11, she hosted a court show *Aap Ki Kachehri*. She was one of the key leaders of the 2011 Indian anti-corruption movement, and joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in January 2015.

Kiran Bedi has written several books, and runs the 'India Vision Foundation'. One of her most acclaimed books is *It's Always Possible* which documents vividly Tihar Jail and its transformation from criminality to humanity. The book is a result of the Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship awarded to her in the year 1994. It was published by Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., and describes the concentrated efforts of Kiran and her 3 C model (corrective, collective and community based), which resulted in success of an enormous task — transforming the mindsets of human beings.

The book focuses on Tihar, one of the largest prisons in

the world. It has three sections, the first being, 'What existed', which describes the conditions which prevailed in Tihar, when Bedi took charge. The second section, 'What evolved', describes the holistic transformation of the prison system which put Tihar on the road to reforms. 'What emerged', the third section of the book, is a graphical representation of the methodology followed for changing Tihar



The book has a foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Released in September 1998, the book has entered its seventh reprint edition. Bedi has traveled widely in order to share her model of correction depicted in the book. It has had many city releases in the country. The book has already been translated and published in Indian languages, Hindi, Marathi and Urdu, and also foreign languages including Italian and Spanish. *It's Always Possible* has been released in eight cities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and at the International Book Fair at Harare, Zimbabwe.

This rare documentation of a candid account is accompanied by a CD-ROM (produced by India Vision Foundation)

with selected excerpts from the book, supplemented with powerful visuals, ranging right from the historical Vipassana Meditation Program wherein over a 1,000 inmates sat for ten long days in meditation to their festivities, educational programmes and visits from NGOs. This has been further complemented by the prisoners expressing their feelings on camera, their written petitions, poetry, paintings, art and craft, besides the statements of the staff. A graphical portrayal of the holistic process - a metamorphosis from criminality to humanity - was achieved within the same legal framework.

Kiran Bedi has offered excerpts from her book to *One India One People*, which we carry in the following the pages.



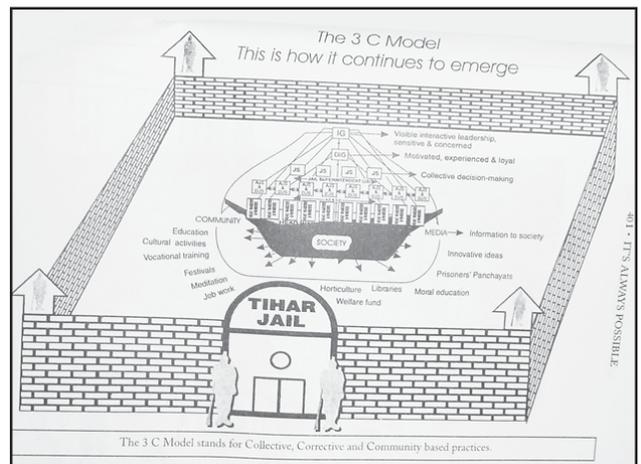
A meditation session in Tihar Jail

### The Tihar transformation

Crime and delinquency is a thought-action product. It is intertwined. In order to correct action, we cannot ignore treating the thought process. Hence, crime correction has to take the thought-mind-intellect route to reach its goalpost of crime-free living. This basic understanding ought not to be uncommon. But, unfortunately, it is. Still, once it is understood, it knows no bounds. It has the capacity to break free in any physical or mental state.

When we, as Prison Administrators, initiated the spiritual journey, based on non-denominational spirituality in the Tihar Jails in 1993, the route map was clear. We knew that the journey was to be continuous. Also known was the role of prison administration, to be enabling drivers and co-travellers. Without being anxious for the far future ahead, we got on to the starting line and took off. The results were immediately visible. Recall the over 1,000 prisoners who joined in the Vipassana Meditation Programme. It created history and still remains a mystery, for the Western world in particular. I have addressed innumerable conferences and international forums

### The 3 C Model



**The 3 C model stands for Corrective, Collective and Community based practices. This is based on the principle of transforming the human mindset towards a more positive, engaging and productive track. This model has worked very successfully in Tihar Jail and is functioning well in a few other prisons in India.**

across the seas, to explain the why and what of it all. The documentary film on it by Karuna Films, called *Doing Time Doing Vipassana*, is being screened in many overseas prisons where Vipassana courses are going on and in hundreds of Vipassana Centres, all over the world. The film went on to win the Golden Spire Award in San Francisco. It has already become a subject for intense research and interest. The film motivates individuals all over the world to learn and practice Vipassana, for it changes lifestyles and way of thinking.

I received one such letter from Leo Sande Gasneir the Norwegian convict prisoner. It says it all. I am encouraged to reproduce the letter in his own handwriting:

### A day in the life of a model prisoner (Bedi's India Vision Foundation works with the inmates of this prison)

My name is Govind Singh Lakki. My father's name is Kishenlal. I am a resident of Delhi. For the last 7 years and 5 months I have been lodged at the Bhondsi District Jail. I have been booked under IPC 395, 397 and 120 B. My routine in jail is this: I am woken up every morning at 4. Once I have washed up, I start on my job of helping in the kitchen, which is making *rotis* for the rest of the inmates. This goes on for about 4 hours. After that I finish the washing up and eat myself. By 10 a.m. I reach the Centre where the India Vision Foundation organises daily activities like dancing, jute classes, art, music and painting for the prisoners. I participate and also help to conduct dance classes. I have nearly 24 students whom I help to teach. This goes on from 12 noon till 4 p.m. After this I wash up and go back to my kitchen duties. The jail roll call is taken by 7 p.m. By 8 p.m. we are back in our barracks. By 9 p.m. I go to sleep. If I don't get sleep, I read or watch News or play carrom. This is my daily routine. Thank you.

– Govind Singh

## The Experience of Vipassana in Tihar

As I went through my first Vipassana ten-day course I realized that as long as there is going to be pleasures in life there will also have to be pain. Learning how to handle my pain just through sitting for ten days was my most difficult experience ever. Vipassana taught me how to smile when I'm sad and how to be happy without becoming hysterical.

Vipassana is creating perspective. Seeing things as they really are. That all phenomena are ephemeral, and there is of no use clinging or craving towards them. Better to just accept the external world as it is learning how to see with eyes of wisdom from an internal viewpoint. Just observing one's physical sensations and mind, realizing how it's all connected. How every action has a direct effect, Karma, and learning to act instead of merely reacting.

That it is possible to be sitting for these courses while serving time in jail is very beneficial. Not only for the individual meditators but also for society as a whole. Time for reflection and meditation should be obligatory in every jail as it gives the word reform a new meaning. To me Vipassana is a tool of reforming myself, improving my ways of life. It's the real thing as it doesn't mix religion or sectarian rituals with the art of meditation. It is simply a scientific instruction on how to live in the present, more aware, and more awake to see reality, as it is.

It is my deep wish, and I hope from my heart that as many as possible will benefit from the precious teachings of the Buddha, the enlightened one, the Dhamma and the Sangha, the community which now even arises inside jail. May the flower of dhamma grow bigger and higher in order to benefit all beings. May all be happy!

Yours faithfully,  
Leo Sande Gasneir, Convict

## THE EXPERIENCE OF VIPASSANA IN TIHAR

As I went through my first Vipassana ten-day course I realized that as long there is going to be pleasures in life there will also have to be pain. Learning how to handle my pain just through sitting, for ten days was my most difficult experience ever. Vipassana taught me how to smile when I'm sad and how to be happy without becoming hysterical.

Vipassana is creating perspective. Seeing things as they really are. That all phenomena are epheral, and there is of no use clinging or craving towards them. Better just to accept the external world as it is learning how to see with eyes of wisdom from a

398 • IT'S ALWAYS POSSIBLE

internal viewpoint. Just observing one's physical sensations and mind realizing how it's all connected. How every action has a direct effect, Karma, and learning to act instead of merely reacting.

That it is possible to be sitting for these courses while serving time in jail is very beneficial. Not only for the individual meditators but also for society as a whole. Time for reflection and meditation should be obligatory in every jail as it gives the word reform a new meaning. To me Vipassana is a tool of reforming myself, improving my ways of life. It's the real thing as it doesn't mix religion or sectarian rituals with the art of meditation. It is simply a scientific instruction on how to live in the present, more aware, and more awake to see reality, as it is.

It is my deep wish and I hope from my heart that as many as possible will benefit from the precious teachings of the Buddha, the enlightened one, the dhamma and the Sangha the community which now even

arises inside jail. May the flower of dhamma grow bigger and higher in order to benefit all beings. May all be happy!

Yours faithfully

Leo Sande Gasneir  
Convict

# Colours of the Cage

*Human Rights activist Arun Ferreira who was implicated in false cases and arrested under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2004 recounts his horrific ordeal at the Nagpur Central Prison, where he was jailed for nearly five years. He was later acquitted of all the charges. But the physical and mental torture he was subjected to, will take time to fade.*

**P**OST 9/11, in the background of the American led “war on terror”, States throughout the world started viewing people’s movements as a threat to their security. It became imperative that such movements be crushed, organisations be banned, opinions be criminalised and social activists be branded as terrorists. India too, promulgated the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) which was soon enacted (as POTA). The radical left or Maoist movement was also developing into a formidable force in central India. The then PM Manmohan Singh was quick to respond and assert how Naxalism was India’s biggest internal threat.

This was the background of my arrest on May 8 2007 at Nagpur. I was waiting to meet some social activists when around 15 men surrounded me. I was bundled into a car; blind folded, kicked and punched while the car drove away at high speed. I had been detained by hefty men in civil dress who whilst repeatedly bashing me also threatened to kill me in a false encounter, or extra-judicial execution.

Around midnight on the very same day, I was formally informed that I had been arrested by the Nagpur police.

My ordeal had just begun. I spent that night in a damp lock-up cell in the station with a hole in the ground that served as a urinal. I was served with a plastic bag consisting of dal and rotis, which were almost impossible to chew due to the swollen jaw I developed after the repeated punches on my face. The next morning I was woken up for another round of questioning. To make me more amenable to their interrogations, the police officers would stretch out my body completely. My arms were often tied to a window grill high above the ground while two policemen stood on my

outstretched thighs to keep me pinned to the floor. All such torturous acts were calculated to cause maximum pain without leaving visible injuries. Despite these precautions, my ears started to bleed and my jaws began to swell. The next day, I would later learn, these images made the front pages of



newspapers around the country. The press was told that I was the chief of communications and propaganda of the Maoist Party. When I was produced in the court, I was shown to be arrested with three others - Dhanendra Bhurule, a journalist; Naresh Bansod, the Gondia district president of the Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti; and Ashok Reddy, a former trade union organiser from Andhra Pradesh. We all were accused of hatching a plot to blow up the monument of Bhimrao Ambedkar at Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur and charged under provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2004 (UAPA).

The Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967 had been amended in 2004 and was made the principal anti-terror legislation by the Parliament due to a public outcry against the misuse of POTA. Earlier anti-terror laws like TADA and POTA had sunset clauses enabling them to lapse after a certain period. However, the new law did not have any such provision - it was enacted to be enforced permanently. Draconian chapters in POTA dealing with so-called terrorism were merely added to the newly amended UAPA. Like its predecessor, UAPA also allowed for the determination of guilt on the basis of ‘Association’ and ‘Ideology’- provisions that are inconsistent with existing constitutional freedoms of expression, ideology or association. The Act contains a list of organisations, deemed to be banned. The question whether a person is a member of

such a banned organisation is determined by the articles he reads or the books he possesses. It translates to a criminalisation of an 'Ideology'. The other aspect of determination of guilt is by 'Association'. Existing law allows for 'abettors' and 'conspirators' of an offence to be made culpable. However, UAPA further stretches this interpretation of who is an abettor or co-conspirator by mere association. Thus those booked under UAPA find themselves slapped with these charges, without concrete grounds of them being involved in a specific offence or an act of violence. Such determination of prima facie guilt is even more dangerous as it causes a person to be detained for years on end. A week after my arrest, pediatrician and human rights activist, Binayak Sen was arrested in Raipur under this same legislation.

### The cycle of torture sessions

In police custody, every morning, the four of us would be transported to the Police Gymkhana for interrogation sessions that lasted late into the night. The torture techniques varied in intensity. I would be kept awake for almost 36 hours at a stretch or made to stand for long periods with my arms raised by my side, parallel to the ground. At times, a group of constables would descend and force me to sit on the floor with my back against the wall. Both my legs would then be forced wide apart and a cop would stand on my thighs so that I couldn't bend them. All this resulted in immense pressure on my torso and groin. Sometimes my interrogators would pinch me or pull my hair or pierce the skin under my nails with pins. The pain of the piercing, forced positions, stretches, hair pulling and the like would be sharp and intense. This cycle of torture sessions would continue for hours, until finally I'd collapse on my back from exhaustion.

My first brush with social activism began as a student at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai in the early 1990s. I had organised camps in villages and welfare projects for the underprivileged. Through such camps I became exposed to the harsh realities of India and the inequality in power relations between rich and poor. The communal riots of 1992-1993, the demands of the urban poor to the right to housing, exploitation of workers, all fired my imagination to work for the poor and the under privileged. I joined one such revolutionary student organisation, the Vidyarthi Pragati Sanghatana (VPS), which had branches in several colleges. While in the VPS, I had the opportunity to meet with youth from diverse backgrounds, especially from the working class and lower castes. Many of them inspired me with their talent and zeal to change society. We organised many struggles against fee-hikes and against a proposed University Bill that would do away with elections to student unions and select representatives based on academic merit. We organised annual 'go-to-the-villages' campaigns in Nashik, Ratnagiri and Gujarat. After college I joined the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, an

organisation which was at that time organising slum-dwellers to resist the eviction drives of the municipality. Looking at all these struggles up close made me aware of the true potential of peoples' movements as agencies of change. These struggles showed me how the state was the principal tool of oppression. The violence it perpetrated crushed any dissent of the masses. Those of us Marxists who worked to organise tribals or the oppressed were easily labeled as left-wing extremists. While some were eliminated in false encounters, others like me were arrested under UAPA, tortured, implicated in false cases with fabricated evidence, to be locked away in prison for several years.

### Here the *lathi* and violence rules

The days spent in Nagpur Central Prison exposed me to the underbelly of the criminal justice system. Like the prisons throughout the country, the Maharashtra prisons too face a chronic problem of overcrowding. Though official figures of occupancy rate released by the government in Maharashtra prisons mention marginal overcrowding, in reality, prisons and barracks are occupied to more than twice and sometimes almost thrice their capacity. The problem of overcrowding does not merely affect a particular inmate regarding his space in prison, but also overloads existing facilities of water, latrines, sanitation, ventilation, etc. Night latrines and water storage facilities in barracks regularly cause foul odour to dominate the air throughout the day. Water supply in barracks for the purpose of drinking and latrines become highly inadequate. Such unhygienic conditions become fertile ground for water and air borne contagious diseases. Due to corruption, pilferage and inhumane timings, the quality of food provided by the prison administration is often substandard and unfit for consumption.

In prison, timely and adequate medical treatment of prisoners is an extremely important issue. First, prisoners do not enjoy access to medical expertise that free citizens have and secondly, because of conditions of incarceration, inmates are exposed to more health hazards than ordinary citizens are. However, prison administration pays lip-service to the formality of ensuring medical treatment. Another problem is the irregularity or sometimes absence of production of an undertrial before his trial court. Inability to do so constitutes a serious violation of his Civil Rights and may prove detrimental to his defense and stay in prison. However, in practice, on the pretext of insufficient guards, many under trials are not produced before the courts.

However the biggest problem the Indian Prison faces is its dependency on violence as a method of administration. From the moment of entry into prison, an inmate is faced with abuse and aggression. He is coerced and compelled to 'accustomise' himself to the inhuman prison conditions of overcrowding, substandard food, shortage of water, etc., by threat of the *lathi*. Daily floggings of prisoners by the staff is

the established practice for successful prison administration. In such a culture of submission and violence, attempts to patiently persuade, counsel and reform prisoners are absent.

By 2008, a total of nine cases under UAPA were slapped on me - one in Nagpur, six in Gondia, one in Chandrapur and a case of attempting to commit suicide for participating in a 27-day hunger strike while in prison. After being denied bail, I was left with no other option but to remain in prison until I would be absolved of all these cases. It took almost four years for all the Gondia and Nagpur cases to be done with. While acquitting me, the judge had concluded in almost all the Gondia cases that there was "absolutely no evidence against the accused" and that the prosecution had "miserably failed to prove guilt of accused beyond reasonable doubt". The last Chandrapur case concluded with my acquittal in September 2011. However on the morning of 27 September, just as I stepped out of the prison gate, I was abducted by police personnel in civil dress and dumped into an unnumbered vehicle. My mother, brother and advocates, who had come to receive me, were pushed away by the authorities. After about three hours, I was taken to a police station in Gadchiroli where the police showed me rearrested in two more cases related to Naxalite attacks in 2007. I was once again produced before a magistrate, who sent me back to the Nagpur prison.

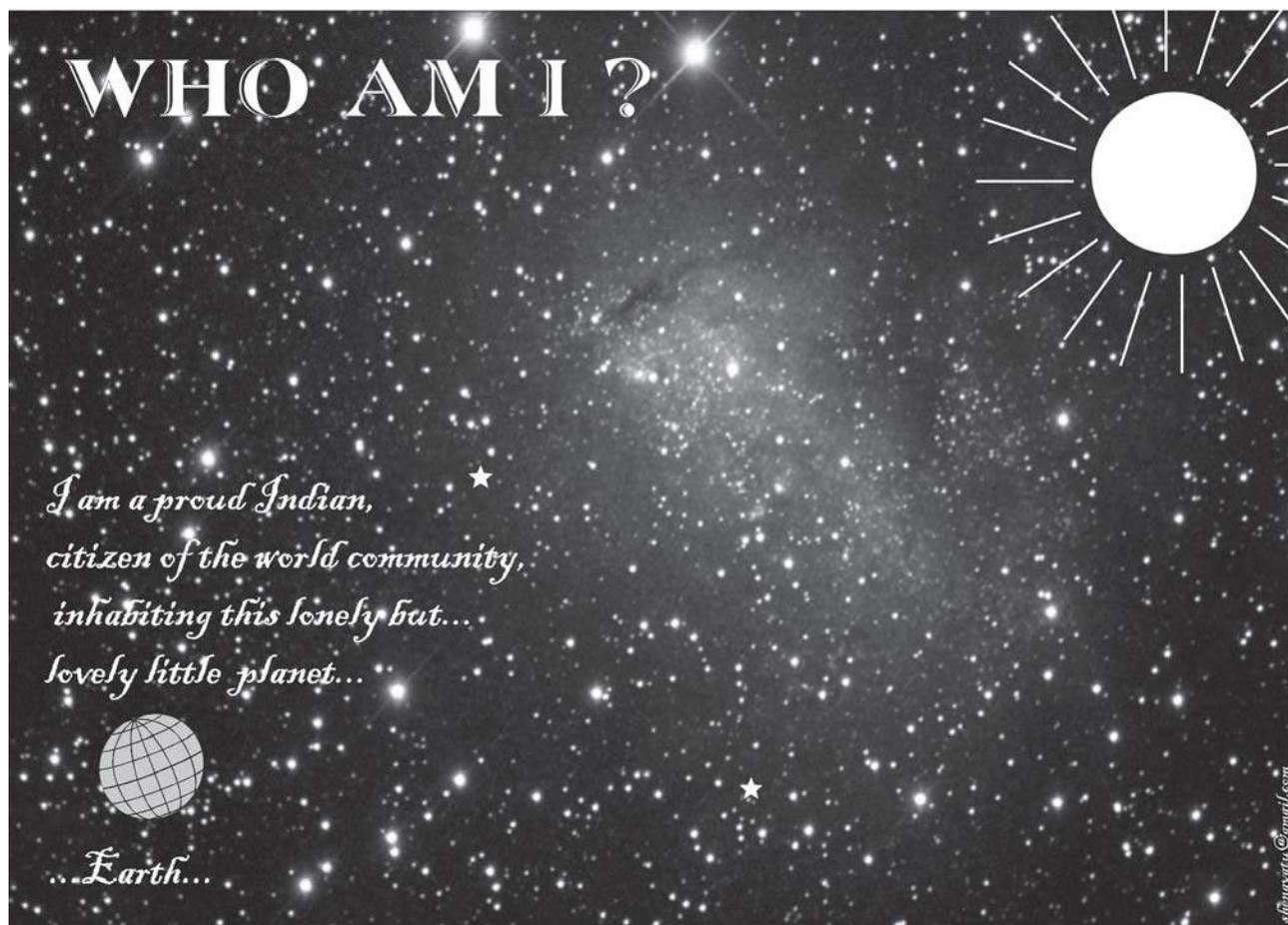
### The walk to freedom

Despite my disappointment, my re-arrest in 2011 had a silver lining. I became the face of an unjust system. It brought the issue of my incarceration back into focus. Family, friends, media persons and civil rights activists who campaigned for my release started receiving overwhelming support. This time I was luckier. I was soon acquitted in one of the two rearrested cases and granted bail in the other. On 4 January 2012, I once again walked out of prison doubting whether another re-arrest awaited me. However this time finally, after 4 years and 8 months, I walked out of the prison to freedom. The last and final case took another two years for completion and acquittal in January 2014. ■

The writer is a political activist and a regular cartoonist.



After his release from prison, he continues to be active on issues of political prisoners, prison reforms and democratic rights. He is presently pursuing his degree in law and is also involved in research on the history of the democratic rights movement in Mumbai. His book about his prison ordeal *Colours of the Cage – a Prison Memoir* (Published by Aleph, Price:Rs.295), was released recently.



# Imprisoned bodies, free spirits

What was it about prisons that brought the best creative work out of our leaders like Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru and Patel? Did the prison sojourns give them the reflective space necessary for deep introspection? **Tushar Gandhi** analyses the cause and effect of these prison stays on our freedom movement.

**P** RISONS are also called Correctional Facilities, meaning where a flaw in a person is detected and it is corrected, while that person is kept in isolation from society. Many a times, this is true only in philosophy; in reality, prisons, due to their inherent brutality, harden and criminalise more than they reform. Some jailors are known to boast that it's their duty to punish criminals, not reform them. Yet, there are instances where criminals have used their time in prison to learn, educate, introspect, and come out as better humans, than what they were when they entered the Purgatory.

## Creativity in exile

There have been many political prisoners in India, during British colonial rule, who used their time in prisons to let their creative and spirituality evolve. Wajid Ali Shah, Emperor of Awadh was dethroned by Robert Clive and exiled to Calcutta. In those days exile was as good as imprisonment, since it cut one off from one's land and people, severed one's roots and set one adrift without a rudder, sail, or anchor. Expressing his anguish in the only way he knew best, Wajid Ali Shah penned the immortal ballad about his love for his lost land and the pain it caused him; even today when *Babul mora naihara chuto ri jaye* is sung or recited, the love of Wajid Ali Shah for his land and his anguish at having been exiled from it, fills the hearts of listeners with pathos. Although Wajid Ali Shah wasn't imprisoned, exile in his time was as good as being incarcerated; he used it to hone his creativity.

After the first battle for freedom in 1857, the last Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar was dethroned and exiled to Rangoon, Burma, and spent his days there in captivity and isolation. He was an accomplished poet and an expert calligrapher. The British, in their own brand of civilised cruelty, denied him writing material. It is said that for those with a poetic bent, adversity and sorrow enhances

their creativity and they render some of their best works in that frame of mind. Bahadur Shah Zafar was no different. Using a sharpened stick, he inscribed some of his most renowned works on the walls of his prison, *Lagtâ nahîñ hé jî mērâ ûjaø'é dayâr méñ, kiskî banî hé âlam-e-nâ-pâyedâr méñ'*, is one of his most passionate lament scratched on the walls of his prison.

If neither Wajid Ali Shah nor Bahadur Shah were exiled and imprisoned, literature would have been deprived of these gems. It was their banishment and incarceration that must be credited for these master pieces.

## Political prisoners produced sterling work

Closer to our times, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was prosecuted for seditious and provocative writings against the Crown. Tilak was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for six years. From 1908 to 1914, he was imprisoned in Mandalay in Burma. While in prison, Tilak Maharaj utilised his time to acquire more knowledge and to hone his idea of *Swaraj*. He wrote his seminal work *Gita Rahasya* from his prison cell.

The revolutionary V. D. Savarkar was arrested in London and transported to India on charges of inciting violence against the British Crown. He was sentenced to serve two consecutive sentences of 20 years and transportation to Kala Paani. The British had built a prison on the island of Port Blair in the Andamans for prisoners, and subsequently used it to send political prisoners away from the mainland to be incarcerated in complete isolation, and to suffer barbaric treatment without reports reaching the mainland. Andamans itself was considered to be a Penal Settlement and the Cellular Jail was designed to psychologically torture political prisoners and dehumanise them. Each cell was isolated and apart from hearing sounds and voices, the prisoners could not see anything else but the

**If neither Wajid Ali Shah nor Bahadur Shah were exiled and imprisoned, literature would have been deprived of these gems. It was their banishment and incarceration that must be credited for these master pieces.**



**This is where Savarkar honed his ideology of Hindu Nationalism and the idea of a Hindu *Rashtra***

blank wall of the wing of the jail in front of their cell, and a bit of sky while they were locked up in their tiny cells. Other prisoners were allowed to mingle with fellow prisoners while they were forced to do slave labour, but Savarkar was kept in complete isolation. While in his tiny isolated cell of the Cellular Jail, before his spirit was broken and he surrendered to the British and sought pardon from them, Savarkar honed his ideology of Hindu Nationalism and the idea of a Hindu *Rashtra*. In a state of frustration at being thus confined to a solitary, isolated existence, Savarkar the poet flourished and he scratched some immortal verses of his ballad *Kamala* on the walls of his cell. After he was pardoned and transported back to the Indian mainland and confined to the town of Ratnagiri in the Konkan, other prisoners saw Savarkar's verses scratched on the walls and memorised the verses. It was due to this that the nation read this ballad penned by Savarkar. The British plastered the walls of his cell and his writing was lost for eternity. Savarkar the firebrand revolutionary was broken and destroyed in Kala Paani, but the poet in him flourished and the verses he penned there were poignant and filled with his longing and his desire to soar unfettered in the heaven of freedom.

### **Barrister Gandhi's imprisonment and evolution**

Barrister Mohandas K. Gandhi endured many insults and much injustice as a person of colour in South Africa. Right from the time he arrived there to represent an Indian merchant in a business dispute, he was thrown out of a train for daring to travel in the "Whites Only" first class compartment of a train. He was called by derisive and prejudiced terms like 'coolie' and 'kaffir'. Unable to take any more humiliation and

injustice, and upon witnessing the kind of abuse and injustice suffered by Asians in British South Africa, Gandhi decided to fight for equal rights as citizens of the British Empire. He challenged the colonial government and launched a series of agitations and movements. He was abused, beaten up, prosecuted and imprisoned. South African jails were not easy, during his earlier imprisonment Gandhi was kept with criminals and suffered much humiliation and brutality. He did not allow this to break his spirit. On a couple of occasions he was imprisoned in the notorious Johannesburg Fort Prison. This was known to be one of the most brutal prisons, and a hell hole created by the empire to break criminals and political opponents alike.

On one of his imprisonments, Barrister Gandhi was marched from the railway station to the Fort Prison by foot, handcuffed and fettered. In the prison he was made to strip and sit in the compound along with other prisoners for hours. He was subjected to body cavity search and many such traumatic indignities. This could have broken many a person, indeed many were broken, but Barrister Gandhi suffered this brutality and beastly treatment to learn, understand and empower. Every insult, every indignity inflicted on him strengthened his resolve to fight for justice, dignity and equality. He planned his future strategy, he forced the prison officials to treat the prisoners according to the rules and regulations of the jail manual, not only for himself but for all his fellow political prisoners, and he utilised the time in the prisons to enhance his knowledge and his spirituality. After 22 such years, Gandhi left South Africa and returned to India on 9 January 1915, on the advice of his political *guru* Gopal Krishna Gokhale. After obeying his master's advice and travelling through India, understanding the land and its people, Gandhiji entered the political arena and became active in the Indian National Congress. After the deaths of Gokhale and Tilak, the Congress was adrift and ineffective. Gandhiji took up the issues of the farmers and the unjust taxes imposed by the British, and the brutal manner in which they collected the taxes. He was requested to visit Champaran in Bihar and witness the plight of the landless farmers of Champaran, where farmers were forced to grow indigo, and inhuman taxes were imposed on them. It was here that Gandhiji first waged a war for justice against the colonial administration and forced it to concede. It was here that he was for the first time detained by the British in India.

### **Gandhiji and his stay at the *mandirs***

After that, apart from his *ashrams*, prisons became his alternate residence. He was sentenced to six years in jail on charges of sedition, and was imprisoned in the Sabarmati Jail

in Ahmedabad and then in Yervada Prison in Pune. Gandhiji used to call the prisons he was locked up in as *mandirs* or temples. So Sabarmati Jail was called Sabarmati Mandir and Yervada Prison became Yervada Mandir. While in prison and even when he was released prematurely from the prison for the pendency of his sentence, Bapu refrained from participating in political activities and worked for social reforms. During many of his imprisonments, Bapu read and wrote profusely. Many a times he was imprisoned along with his associates and other political leaders. After the Dandi Kooch when Bapu and the entire senior Congress leadership was arrested, Bapu, Sardar Patel and later, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were imprisoned in Yervada Jail. Mahadev Desai, Bapu's secretary for 25 years has written about the time in the prison and the interactions between Bapu, Sardar and Panditji. They would discuss the movement, languages, food habits, their vision for independent India and its history.

During one of his imprisonments Bapu translated into English the multi faith prayers, the verses from the *Gita* and the many *bhajans* sung during the morning and evening prayers in the *ashram* and wherever Bapu was, every day of his life, for the benefit of his British disciple Madeline Slade aka, Meera *behen*. He fine tuned his belief in *Gram Swaraj*, the need for an education system that not only educated, but empowered the millions in India's villages, his belief in equality for people of different castes and between the genders, and his ideology of *antyyodaya*, the uplift and emancipation of the poorest of poor and the weakest of the weak. For Bapu, imprisonment never meant inactivity, for him imprisonment was spiritual and an opportunity to empower and introspect.

### Patel and Nehru benefitted from their prison stays too

Sardar Patel utilised his many imprisonments to network with other freedom fighters and to strategise for the battle for freedom. Pandit Nehru was imprisoned several times too; during one of his stints in prison he wrote a series of letters to his daughter Indira Priyadarshini explaining the history of India and its civilisation from ancient to contemporary times. This correspondence between father and daughter was so astute and scholarly, and yet it was narrated in such a simple manner that later it was published as a collected tome called 'Discovery of India'. One could claim that had he not been in prison, Panditji may have never written such a passionate, true and vividly descriptive account of a nation and its people.



**For Gandhiji, imprisonment was spiritual and an opportunity to empower and introspect**

### The legendary Nelson Mandela's 22 year isolation

Away from India's shores too, many leaders have utilised their time in prison to educate and empower themselves. Nelson Mandela, the liberator and architect of the Rainbow Nation, South Africa, started as a militant revolutionary who did not believe in non violence and professed that only a violent revolution could liberate his people. He was arrested for conspiring to blow up the racist parliament of South Africa and for inciting violence. He was transported to the infamous Robben Island Prison and incarcerated with his comrades in isolation for 22 years. It was here that Madiba Mandela discovered non violence and Bapu. In his memoirs Madiba said that in his solitary cell in the Robben Island Prison he was never alone, Gandhi was in his cell with him. His imprisonment, brutal, and dehumanising, transformed the fiery revolutionary into a mature, peace loving statesman and on release, Madiba ensured that the transition to freedom for his nation would be peaceful and devoid of bitterness and hate. This may not have happened if Madiba was not imprisoned for such a long time and spiritually discovered a mentor in Gandhi, whose methods he had earlier contemptuously rejected.

These are the stories of people who achieved greatness, who did not allow adversity to destroy them, but utilised the opportunity to educate, empower and spiritually awaken themselves. People of creative abilities who used the experience and isolation to produce some of their best works. Titans who transformed prisons, purgatories into Correctional Facilities, in the truest meaning of the word. ■



The writer a social activist, is the great grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and the Managing Trustee of Mahatma Gandhi Foundation, Mumbai.

# Sazaa - e - Kaala Pani

## Where dreams went to die...

*This was a prison set in the most idyllic of places, an island with swaying palms, surrounded by deep blue waters. But the prison, the Cellular Jail of Andaman islands, set up by the British was a hellhole where the Indian inmates – mostly revolutionaries of the freedom movement, were brutally tortured. Akul Tripathi tells us why the very air we breathe is that much more free and precious, as it was wrought by revolutionaries such as these.*

I remember growing up with my grandmother and other members of the extended family talking about relatives and family friends who were in jail during the independence movement. As I grew up and realised the social taboo that is the jail and imprisonment, the enormity of the task accomplished by our freedom fighters struck home. The leaders of our independence struggle had, in my opinion, performed something of a *coup d'etat* of perception by taking the symbol of punishment and defame, and converting it into the epitome of pride and sacrifice.

And it was gleefully that I gloated at this masterstroke that went a long way in you and I breathing this free air. The times of the people in jail, over countless tellings of the story had become tales of bravado, honour, courage, resilience and to be honest, it had started seeming like it was a party in there. I had never visited a colonial jail, you see. Then I went to one, confident and with my chest puffed up, I entered on a fine spring day and it wasn't long before everything I had imagined, constructed and enacted several times in my head fell to pieces almost instantly as the very air was simultaneously sucked out of me. The jail was the Cellular Jail of the Andaman Islands. Notorious in the freedom struggle as the dreaded *Sazaa - e - Kala Pani*.

Why 'Kaala Pani', you ask? The romantic notion is that monsoons would make the seas appear black and hence the

'black water' sobriquet. Yet, the more befitting derivation for the name is the word *kaal* in Sanskrit that means time or death and since only the luckiest ever returned, the name was a fitting description.

The context of the creation of an incarceration facility in the Andaman Islands stemmed from the First War of Independence in 1857.

The charge for the profitable province that was India was taken up directly by the British Government and the holdings of the East India Company became an imperial colony. The first act that was deemed necessary was to display a firmness of resolve against any who rose against the Empire. The East India Company had tried making a colony in

Andaman in 1789 but had abandoned it in 1796 due to outbreak of disease. However, after India's First War of Independence, the British thought it imperative to have a penal colony away from the mainland for the 'hardcore' elements.

Transporting the freedom fighters of 'The Great Outbreak' would serve as a terrible punishment to them. As per Hindu customs, crossing the sea would make one an outcast. This *saagarolanghan* or *samudraolanghan* wipes away the *varna* status and crossing the sea would make the sepoys, who were mostly Brahmins and Kshatriyas, to lose their caste, so precious to every Indian and the very thought of it would serve as a crippling psychological fear.



The Andaman Cellular Jail



**The infamous Cellular Jail**

### Introduction of the 'chain gang'

At first, Ross Island, just off the coast from Port Blair became the administrative headquarters of the British. The prisoners brought from various parts of the mainland, while bound in iron chains cleared the forests and built the colony at Ross Island. The prisoners were put on the hardest labour in the settlement. They had to work about nine hours a day in the tropical climate and dense forest. They were engaged not only for clearing thick tropical jungles but also employed in digging wells, cutting earth, filling swamps, cooking and constructing huts. Convicts were handcuffed together in pairs and these handcuffs were never opened. During working hours the worst characters were taken to sea beach, and an iron bar being passed through the fetters of a number of them, they were thus fastened to the earth, and made to do what they could in a sitting posture. After the buildings of Ross Island were completed, the prisoners were moved to nearby Viper Island. With the occupation of the Viper Island on 8 October 1858, a new form of punishment called the 'chain gang' was introduced. The prisoners who were sentenced to undergo this punishment by the Superintendent's Court, were chained together and locked up at night by a chain running through their legs through the coupling of irons. Solitary cells, lock-ups, stocks and whipping stands characterised the Viper Jail which was built between 1864-1867. In effect, this was the first jail on the Andaman Islands. It also housed a gallows atop a hillock.

**Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the jails at Viper Island were complete and functional. They were also overcrowded as the freedom struggle had intensified on the mainland and more prisoners were being sent to the Andamans.**

The early days of building Ross Island headquarters and the Viper Jail were very torturous. There was a lack of building material. There was no accommodation and place to stay. It got very bad, especially in the monsoon months. The temporary thatched roof tents leaked and several freedom fighters and heroes of the first war of independence died due to disease and lack of food and other basic amenities. As per many accounts, at least in the early days, there were no last rites performed for the convicts who died. They were either buried in shallow graves on the sandy beaches or taken for a burial at sea.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the jails at Viper Island were complete and functional.

They were also overcrowded as the freedom struggle had intensified on the mainland and more prisoners were being sent to the Andamans. Ironically, after the worst of the initial conditions were bettered, the quality of life as a prisoner was considered good here and prisoners preferred to come to Andamans than other Indian jails. For these reasons, the British decided it was necessary to build a more severe penal facility for the offenders sentenced to Kala Pani which could hold them in solitary confinement.

### The Cellular Jail of Andaman

The Cellular Jail started being constructed at Port Blair in 1896 and was completed in 1906. It is a three storied structure shaped like a large starfish. Seven wings radiate from a central watch tower and 698 people could be kept in solitary confinement. Each cell was just 13.5x7.5 feet wide and at a height of 3m was the sole ventilator in the cell. The central tower had a large bell to raise an alarm in case of any eventuality. The cells were designed such that the face of a cell in a wing saw the back of cells in another wing making communication impossible. Due to these cells of solitary confinement the incarceration facility got its name - Cellular Jail.

All measures were taken by the British to ensure that political prisoners and revolutionaries were isolated from each other, made to work like beasts to break their resolve and humiliated at the slightest pretext. The prisoners daily work included peeling coconuts and extracting oil from them. A daily minimum quantity of oil (30 pounds of coconut oil and 10 pounds of mustard oil) was fixed for each prisoner, extracting anything less was punished

by flogging. Prisoners were put in yoke and made to go round and round like bullocks to extract oil. Outside they were forced to clear the jungles and trees on hillside levelling marshy land. Refusal to do any of the tasks would result in flogging. Rebellion would incur beatings, often till death and complete stoppage of food. Rain water, infested with worms was the normal drinking water. Often, wild grass would be boiled and served as food.

Prisoners are said to have been routinely tortured and experimented upon by British army doctors. The army doctors would give certificates stating that the prisoners were fit enough to be flogged. There were secret pharmaceutical trials. One being the drug Cinchona alkaloid made from the bark of the Cinchona tree imported from Peru. The quinine made from the distilled bark would one day make for a natural anti-malaria drug. However during the trial phase, with the rough preparation and dosage, the British noted a higher suicide rate amongst inmates.

The list of people incarcerated here knows no boundary of religion, language or state. It reads as a list of the greater heroes of the freedom struggle. Batukeshwar Dutt, who along with Bhagat Singh bombed the Assembly in Delhi, the Moplah Rebels, the revolutionaries of the Chittagong Uprising, Gadar Party revolutionaries, those named in the Alipore Conspiracy Case. And the most famous one of them all, Veer Savarkar who was sentenced for 50 years in 1910 but released after 11 years, in 1921.

### Tales of horror

Accounts and tales of people incarcerated in this dreadful cauldron of human suffering would break the strongest heart. Bankim Chakraborty called Indian jails a Begum's paradise compared to Andamans. He says - "I was trussed up out in the yard. Flogged until our skin split. Or we were half-drowned, bound like chickens and dunked in salt water until we were gasping. In 1935, I was hung for weeks at a time from a peg, high above my head, my face pressed against the bricks." Another freedom fighter Chattar Singh was suspended in an iron suit for three years. Baba Bhan Singh had been beaten to death. Ram Raksha had starved himself to death as a protest at the removal of the sacred Brahminical threads from around his chest. Of the several jailers and other officials and attendants at the Cellular jail, one that stands out particularly is David

Barry whose tales in all accounts are one of a person completely devoid of any moral fibre or stand of humanity and ready to subdue all with vile abuse and crude violence.

The conditions at this inhuman facility continued till the 1930's when a massive hunger strike began call to attention

to their suffering. The British on their part tried their best to conceal the news of this uprising in the Andamans itself. They also tried force feeding the inmates on hunger strike. A mixture of milk, sugar and eggs was forced down a catheter inserted from the nose. Mahavir Singh, an associate of Bhagat Singh from the Lahore Conspiracy case, where Assistant Police Superintendent Saunders had been murdered, was force fed this way and died as the 'food' entered his lungs. He was tied to a stone and thrown into the sea. The first hunger strike was quelled this way.

In 1937, another hunger strike was called, though people knew full well the fate of Mahavir Singh. Soon 230 people joined in this hunger strike. The news spread like fire

through Bengal and the country got behind the prisoners. A telegram arrived from Gandhiji - "Nation-wide request to abandon the strike... trying best to secure relief for you. MK Gandhi". In September 1937, following the protests, the first group of prisoners was repatriated. The Cellular Jails were forced to empty in 1939 and two years later, the Japanese seized the islands transforming them into a prisoner of war camp where, in a perhaps deserving twist of fate, the warders became the prisoners.

An eternal flame - the second in India - is lit at the jail. The first one is at Jalianwala Baugh. Ironic isn't it? That the place of such torture and strife is amongst the most sought after leisure destination within the country? And about my day-dreams of how glorious it would have been to be ailed?

They died a brutal death in mere seconds and will never compare even in the wildest of imaginations with the brutal lives lived by those to whose sacrifices we owe, and will owe till the day we die, every free breath we take... ■

The writer is a media professional and freelance writer.



A 'cell' at the Cellular Jail



# Leave the net alone

What is net neutrality? Why is the cyber community and even Rahul Gandhi up in arms over this? **Nayanika Nambiar** gives us the lowdown.



**B**EING a professional couch potato and spending most of my time on the Internet, I was offended when I realized I was woefully uninformed on the war being waged on net neutrality. Since I am a part of the generation that grew up with a computer, I spent my days with my fingers crossed hoping that those nostalgic robotic noises of our dial-up Internet would bring me connectivity. And cursing the landline when it didn't.

The one thing I took for granted though, was the Internet itself. The fact that my (and your) internet service provider let you access all content at the same speed as everyone else is not something I considered a privilege, but a right. Until now.

Now to explain the issue, I should probably begin by saying that we DO in fact, pay to use the Internet, but after we pay for a certain amount of data at a certain speed, we can do whatever we like with it. That is, your service

provider will not discriminate Internet speeds or data allowance you've paid for, no matter what you're doing on the internet. This could range from marathon-ing all 10 seasons of FRIENDS to doing research for your next academic paper (sure you are).

So telecom companies have realized that services like Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Twitter, etc., use the Internet to provide their services to us, and are in turn earning money. In other words, these are known as Over The Top services (OTT). These telecom companies want to have a cut of their revenue, which they think they have a right to, and they have duly informed the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) of their grievances. If you've been following up till now, you've probably realized that this makes absolutely no sense. We pay for the internet *already* to use these apps, and telecom companies are therefore seeking to make some sort of *double* profit by striking deals with these said apps, so that (hypothetically) Company A can provide, say, WhatsApp, at faster speeds than other companies, or at a zero rating policy, thereby making Whatsapp a sort of rite of passage for those users, since we'd have to pay extra to use any other messaging service at the same speed as WhatsApp, or we'd be at a disadvantage if Whatsapp costs less and we decide to use something else. And while Whatsapp is my preferred messaging medium, I'd like to have the choice, thank you very much. I thought we were way past Orwellian universes and authoritarian control over

all our choices.

Something that really makes the Internet unique is how it's an equal playing field. E-commerce, small entrepreneurs, small-scale businesses are all given a chance at the wide variety of consumers. It's completely illogical to take parts of it and monopolize and monetize it. Because frankly, telecom companies didn't invent the Internet. To quote my favourite entrepreneur/video blogger/musician Hank Green, great economies aren't made by profit, they are made by competition. And while certain companies can provide some apps free of cost and compare it to a toll free number, they fail to realize that they are network providers and the Internet is not their business model. 'Internet.org' and other services of its kind may be noble in their intention to provide free internet access to everybody through these platforms, but it is however wrong to influence consumer decisions by large, wealthy corporations picking and choosing the apps we use.

In the light of social media backlash, many of these corporations are pulling out of these deals and embracing the Net Neutrality campaign. I only wish it wasn't social media backlash that made them do it, but their own foresight about the state of the Internet. The Internet is a massive economic, social, and technological force that is to be used only for GOOD, and is the great leveler of our times. ■

The writer is an Arts student at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai. She is a voracious reader and enjoys writing and working on her blog.

# JOIN THE MOVEMENT



## SUBSCRIPTION FORM

**Yes, I want to join the movement. I want to subscribe to One India One People**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> One Year [12 issues]<br>Rs. 500   US\$ 50 | <input type="radio"/> Three Years [36 issues]<br>Rs. 1400   US\$ 125 | <input type="radio"/> Five Years [60 issues]<br>Rs. 2200   US\$ 200 |
|---|--|---|

I am enclosing a Cheque/DD No. \_\_\_\_\_ drawn on: \_\_\_\_\_

dated: \_\_\_\_\_ favouring **One India One People Foundation** for Rs. / US\$. \_\_\_\_\_

Mr / Ms: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation / Designation: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M/F Qualification: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Pin: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: (R) \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: (O) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Sign: \_\_\_\_\_



## GIFT SUBSCRIPTION FORM

**I want to gift a subscription of One India One People**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> One Year [12 issues]<br>Rs. 500   US\$ 50 | <input type="radio"/> Three Years [36 issues]<br>Rs. 1400   US\$ 125 | <input type="radio"/> Five Years [60 issues]<br>Rs. 2200   US\$ 200 |
|---|--|---|

To: Mr / Ms: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation / Designation: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M/F Qualification: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Pin: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: (R) \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: (O) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

From: Mr / Ms: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation / Designation: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: M/F Qualification: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Pin: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: (R) \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: (O) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Sign: \_\_\_\_\_

I am enclosing a Cheque/DD No. \_\_\_\_\_ drawn on: \_\_\_\_\_

dated: \_\_\_\_\_ favouring **One India One People Foundation** for Rs. / US\$. \_\_\_\_\_

(For multiple gifts, photocopy this form or attach a list)

### ADDRESS TO:

**One India One People Foundation**, Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 22, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai - 400 026, India. Tel: 2353 4400 Fax: 91 22 2351 7544 E-mail: oiop@vsnl.net/oiopfoundation@gmail.com

KNOW INDIA **BETTER**



# Bengal's *little* Europe

The European settlements of West Bengal, mostly along the Hooghly river, are perhaps the state's best kept secret. The Portuguese, the Dutch, the Danes, the French, and of course, the British, have all left an indelible mark here, as evident from the churches, cemeteries, mansions and clock towers which bear mute witness to almost 400 years of European presence. While most of these structures have been preserved, some have been lost forever, especially the brief presence of the Germans and the Austrians. But the physical presence apart, this slice of Bengal's European history is a treasured eulogy to the changes and assimilations that took place here, and the culture of a region which got irrevocably impacted by this.

**Text & Photos: Rangan Datta**

**A**LMOST a century after Vasco da Gama landed on the West Coast of India (1498), the Europeans started making inroads into Bengal and rest of East India including the present day Bangladesh, using the Hooghly River, a major distributor of the Ganges, as the main source of navigation. As trade flourished, the European powers started building store houses, which were soon fortified, resulting in fortified settlements along the Hooghly River. As settlements grew, churches and other places of worship came up, so did the cemeteries. The local traders joined the European powers in trading activities and soon started making a fortune. They started building palatial mansions in European style. Long before the British East India Company turned Kolkata into a major business hub and a leading trading centre of the world, other European powers set up their own business hubs along the Hooghly River.

The Portuguese were the first to arrive and settle in Bandel. They were followed by the Dutch

in Chinsurah, Danes in Serampore and the French in Chandannagar. The Germans and the Austrians were not far behind and they settled in Rishra and Halisahar, though sadly nothing remains of their colonial presence in Bengal.

### **Bandel** *the Portuguese stronghold*

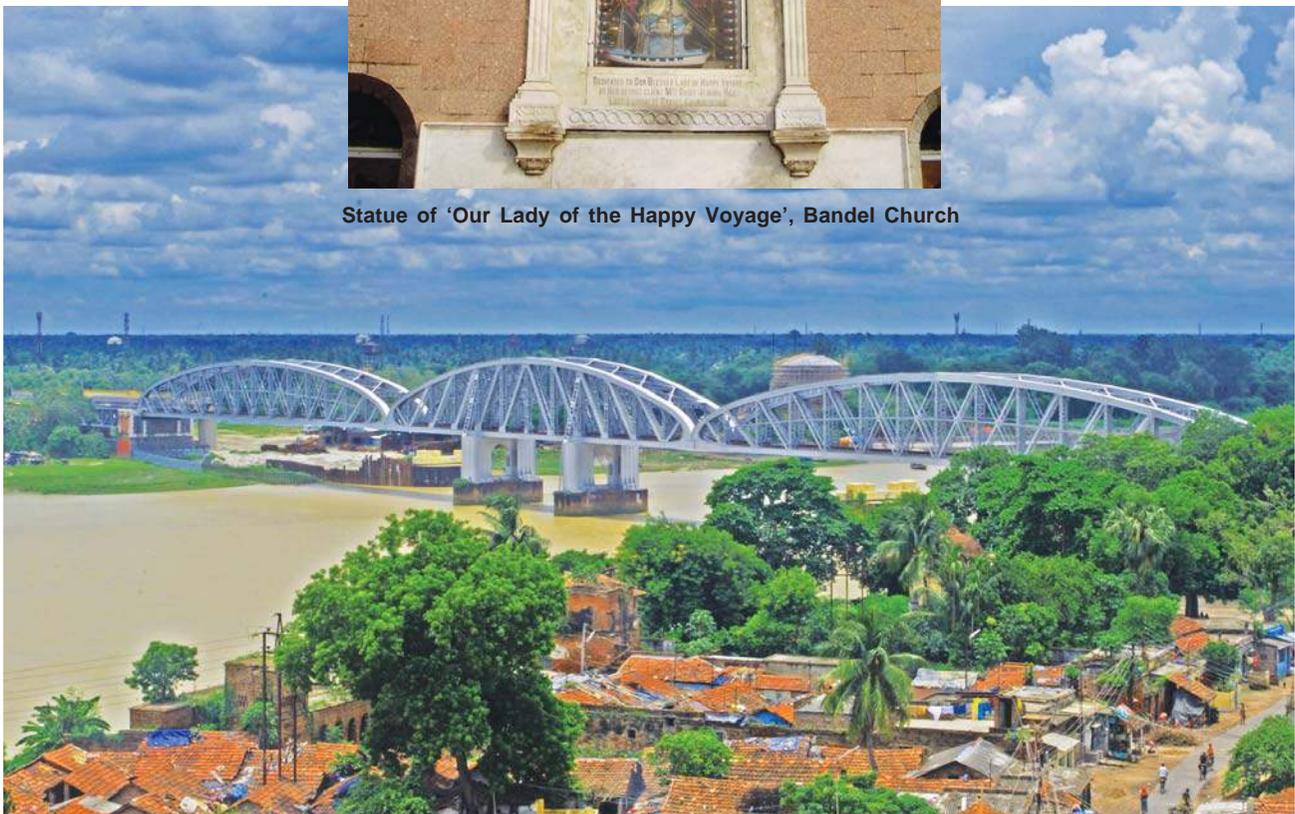
Like the West Coast of India, the Portuguese were the first

Europeans to arrive in Bengal. They soon started trading from Bengal without the formal permission of the Mughal Emperor in Delhi. The trade flourished and the settlement grew.

The Portuguese were soon in need of a place of worship and a church was built in 1599. It is the oldest church in undivided Bengal (West Bengal and Bangladesh combined), and one of the oldest in the subcontinent. Sadly, the days of the Portuguese in Bengal were numbered, and they were soon overthrown by the British, and the Bandel Church is today the sole remnant of



**Statue of 'Our Lady of the Happy Voyage', Bandel Church**



**The Jubilee Bridge, Hooghly River**



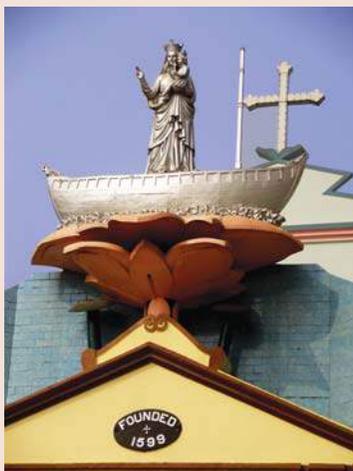
**The Bandel Church**

Portuguese rule in Bengal.

Today, Bandel is located about 50 km north of Kolkata and is on the other side of the Hooghly River. The church, with its clock tower, has been modified largely over the years, and nothing much remains of its past structure.

The entrance is through an arched gateway on the banks of the Hooghly and is crowned with a statue of Mary with baby

Jesus, on a boat. After entering the church, take the stairs to the top balcony where devotees light candles in front of 'Our Lady of the Happy Voyage'. The balcony also provides spectacular views of the Jubilee Bridge spanning across the Hooghly. The Jubilee Bridge built in 1887 on the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign, is one of the oldest operating rail bridges in the world.



**Mother Mary on a boat, Bandel Church**

### The story of the Bandel Church

In 1632, the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan attacked the Portuguese settlement which also had a small fort. The Portuguese were soundly defeated and their fort and church were reduced to ruins. Several Portuguese and local Christians were killed. Father Joan De Cruz was taken prisoner to Agra, where he was thrown in front of a ferocious elephant. But the rogue elephant instead of trampling the priest to death, lifted him by his trunk and placed him on his back.

The miracle impressed the Emperor to such an extent that he not only set the priest and his followers free, but also provided tax free land for the construction of a new church. The church was reconstructed in 1661 and the miracles continued. It was during the siege that a local Christian by the name of Taigo, in a desperate bid to save the statue of Mary dived into Hooghly, and was never seen again. Strangely, on the day of the inauguration of the church, the statue appeared on the banks of the Hooghly. The statue was re-established and came to be known as 'Our Lady of the Happy Voyage'.

When the celebrations of the inauguration were in progress, a Portuguese ship with tattered sails appeared on the river bank. It transpired that the ship had encountered a terrific storm a few days ago and the crew was lucky to be alive. During the storm the captain of the ship had promised to offer the main mast of the ship to the first church he sighted. The captain kept his word and the mast can still be seen in the compound of the church. The Portuguese word for mast is *bandel* and the church came to be known as the Bandel Church, and the locality surrounding the church also came to be known as Bandel.



**The Imambara Clock Tower**

Get down from the balcony and head for the main altar housing the statue of Our Lady of Holy Rosary. The other two altars on the side contain a statue of Jesus and St. John Bosco. The entire complex contains several statues dedicated to different Christian saints. Apart from the Church, Bandel has other things to offer, and the Imambara is on top of the list.

**The Imambara:** Imambara literally means the residence of the Imam, but in the Indian subcontinent the word stands for a house or an assembly hall built by the Shiites for observing Muharram. Built in memory of the great philanthropist Hazi Muhammad Mohsin, the imposing structure took 20 years to build and was completed in 1861.

Designed by architect Keramtulla Khan, the two-storied building is centered around a rectangular courtyard, decorated with fountains and pools. But the prime attraction of the Imambara is its 85 feet high twin towers. The two towers are respectively reserved for men and women and each contains a set of 152 stairs, and they offer spectacular views of the Hooghly including the Jubilee Bridge. The three-storied structure connecting the tower contains a clock on the top floor, while the lower floors contain the bells and the clock machinery. However, these are out of bounds for the public. The room at the far end of the courtyard contains beautiful



**The Sun Dial at Imambara**

chandeliers and is decorated with religious artifacts. The courtyard at the back contains a sun dial. But sadly, the Imambara is in a rundown state, the fountain has long stopped working, and the crystal clear water has turned green. Incredibly, the Imambara still stands and its clock still strikes every quarter of an hour marking the passage of time, and reminding one of the glorious days of Bandel.

## **Chinsurah** *let's go Dutch*

Chinsurah or Chuchura has an interesting etymology. According to some sources, the word derived from a special cane called *chinchira*, while others opine the word was derived from the Bengali word *chura* (spire), as Chinsurah had several churches and temples with tall spires.

The former Dutch colony (1615–1825) was once considered the most beautiful town of Bengal. Today, Chinsurah is just like any small town of West Bengal, crowded, unplanned, with chaotic traffic. In 1825, the Dutch exchanged Chinsurah for the island of Sumatra with the British. So Chinsurah houses an interesting mix of Dutch, British and indigenous heritage.

The prime attraction of Chinsurah is the British built clock tower. It was constructed in 1914 in honour of the British Emperor Edward VII. It is an elegant piece of metallic architecture with four dials and lamp shades in every corner. The clock tower also contains two medallions of Edward the VII and two plaques giving a brief history of the structure.

Before the handover of Chinsurah to the British, Chinsurah was a flourishing town with the Fort Gustava dominating the river front. After the British took over Chinsurah, they demolished the fort and used the material to build several buildings.

Several of these buildings exist to this day and are put into adoptive reuse. The District Court located just south of the



**The Chinsurah Clock Tower**

clock tower once served as an army barrack. It is a very long building with a long corridor, considered as the longest in India. Next to the court is the Hooghly Madrassa with several cannons scattered in its compound.

Next to the Madrassa is an elegant colonial garden house, which once served as the residence of the Dutch Governor of Chinsurah. The original buildings have long been demolished and the British constructed a building at the same place, which serves as the residence of divisional commissioner of Burdwan. The original building was built in 1744 and was named



**The Commissioner House**

Welgeleegen. The new building contains a plaque with the inscription VOC (Vereenigde Ostindische Companie, meaning Dutch East India Company), 1687. The compound of the Commissioner House still houses two VOC canons. The canons pointing out toward the Hooghly River are the only reminder of the days of the Dutch Fort Gustava.

Just in front of the court and the Madrassa is a huge open space. It is known as the *maidan* and serves as a sporting arena of different sports for the residents in and around Chinsurah. During the Dutch period this open space served as a vegetable garden and the British kept it open to keep an eye on approaching enemy soldiers. Luckily, the open space survived and is still in use.

The *maidan* area contains several pillars with the letters CBT and a number. The letters CBT stand for Cantonment Boundary Pillars and the pillars were set up by the British to mark the boundary of the demolished Fort Gustava. At the far end of the *maidan* stands the Dutch Villa. Only a small portion of the villa has survived the test of time and is today flanked on either side by box like flats.

Beyond the Dutch Villa was the Dutch Church, with its octagonal bell tower. Sadly, the Dutch Church was demolished in 1980 and a circuit house constructed in its place. Next to the circuit house is the Hooghly Mohosin College, which once



**The Hooghly Madrassa**

served as the palatial mansion of French mercenary Perron. Today the Circuit House and the Mohosin College both overlook the Hooghly River.

Further down the river are palatial mansions belonging to the Bengali families who traded with both the Dutch and the British. The Sil family mansion with its huge courtyard is still in excellent shape.



**The Bande Mataram House**

At the southern end of Chinsurah is the Sandeshwar Temple complex, housing the towering Sandeshwar Temple along with several minor temples and shrines. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the temple houses two brass drums, which were gifted by the Dutch Governor. They are taken out for public display on the last day of Bengali New Year.

At the northern end of the town and on the banks of the river Hooghly is the Bande Mataram House. It served as a residence of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and legends say that the song *Bande Mataram* was first sung in this very house. Today, it serves as a museum.

Chinsurah also has its share of Islamic heritage with the beautiful Moti Jheel Mosque, which is located next to the huge water body of the same name.

The attractions of Chinsurah or Chuchura are not restricted only to the Hooghly River front. Located in a very congested part of the town is the Dutch Cemetery, an Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) protected site. The cemetery contains an



**The Sandeshwari Temple**



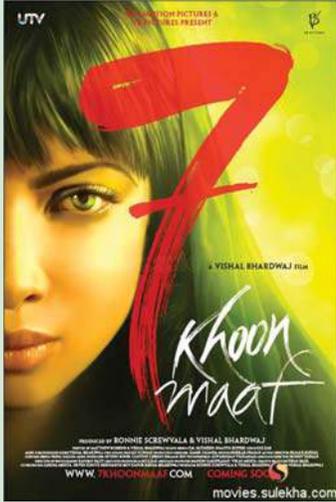
**The Dutch Cemetery, Chinsurah, which has graves dating back to 1743**

assortment of graves scattered under the shade of ancient trees. The oldest grave dates back to 1743, while the newest one to 1840; this cemetery contains the graves of three Dutch Governors and many well known people.

Apart from the Dutch Cemetery, Chinsurah also houses an interesting grave along the Grand Trunk Road. The towering grave of Susana Annamaria is an architectural beauty. (see box: The Bollywood connection)

Apart from the Dutch and the British, the Armenians have left their mark on the history of Chinsurah. The Armenian Church of St. John the Baptist was built in 1692 and happens to be the second oldest church in undivided Bengal (next to Bandel Church). Today the church is in great shape and every year in January, the Armenians of Kolkata make a pilgrimage to the Armenian Church of Chinsurah.

The Bollywood connection



Historical records say Susana Anamaria married twice. Her first husband was a Dutch official Bruce, while her second husband was a British official Yeats. Legends say she married seven times and murdered all of them inspiring Ruskin Bond to write the story "Susan's Seven Husbands", which was turned into the Bollywood movie *Saat Khoon Maaf* with popular actor Priyanka Chopra playing the protagonist.

### Chandannagar *a slice of France*

Unlike the Portuguese, Dutch and Danes, the French were never driven out of Chandannagar by the British. In fact, the French rule in Chandannagar continued well after independence and Chandannagar became part of the Indian union only in 1950!

Being a French colony for almost 275 years (1678–1950), it has a distinctive French touch and French colonial architecture



**Susana Annamaria's tomb**



**The French Revolution emblem at the Chandannagar entry gate**

is scattered all over the city, but the largest concentration of colonial buildings is along the Hooghly, and the area is known as the Strand.

Chandannagar is located 33 km north of Kolkata and both its northern and southern ends were marked with gateways. Inaugurated on 14 July 1937, in memory of the fall of the



**The Sacred Heart Church**

Bastille, the gate contains the slogan of the French Revolution *Liberte, Egalite & Fratarnite* (Liberty, Equality & Fraternity). Sadly, the North Gate no longer exists, but the South Gate still stands, reminding one of the French heritage of Chandannagar.

The Sacred Heart Church is located a short distance away



**The Duplex Mansion**



The Nandadulal Temple

from the Strand. Inaugurated in 1884, the two-storied church contains twin towers. The interiors are decorated with beautiful stained glass windows and coloured relief panels.

The Strand is dominated by the pavilion dedicated to Durgacharan Rakshit, the recipient of the French award of Legion d'honneur. Built in 1920, the elegant looking pavilion consists of slender columns with decorative stucco works consisting of elephant's head and floral designs.

Also along the Strand is the mansion of the former French commander Duplessis, now turned into Chandannagar Museum & Institute. The institutes offer French courses, and the museum houses a rare collection of French artifacts, including the personal collection of Duplessis.

Though all the artifacts displayed in the museum are French, the museum contains blood stained glasses of Jogendra Nath Sen, a resident of Chandannagar who died fighting for the allied forces



The Chandannagar Court which once housed the French hotel 'Hotel de Paris'



The French Cemetery which also houses the grave of noted English meteorologist Henry "storm" Piddington



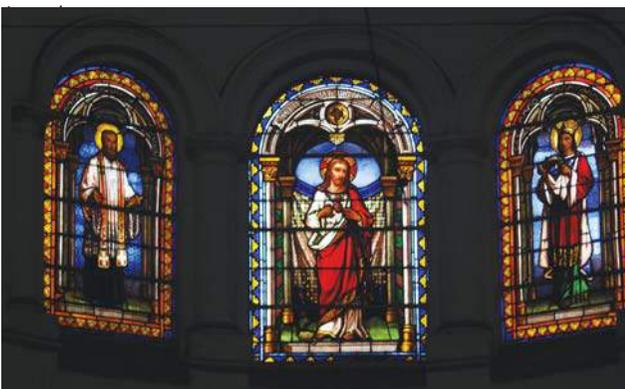
**The Danish Governor House**

during World War I and is buried in a war cemetery in France.

Just in front of the museum is an elegant mansion called the Patal Bari (Underground House), as a portion of the house is submerged by the Hooghly River. The Patal Bari, with its beautiful wooden sunshades and decorative water outlets, has a long list of distinguished visitors including Rabindranath Tagore and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Also on the Strand is the Chandannagar Court, which once housed the luxurious French hotel, 'Hotel de Paris'.

Located on the Grand Trunk Road and opposite the pond called Lal Dighi is the French Cemetery. The cemetery contains more than 150 tombs, many of which have beautiful ornamentation. It is the resting place of many rich and famous residents, not necessarily French, including Duplessis. It also houses the grave of Henry "storm" Piddington, a noted English meteorologist, known for his study of tropical storms.

The heritage of Chandannagar is not restricted to French architecture only. The town also houses several temples, including Nandadulal Temple. Standing on a rectangular base of 52 feet by 21 feet it is the largest *do-chala* (double sloped roof) temple of Bengal. Sadly, apart from a few lotus motifs it totally lacks terracotta work, which is the trade mark of Hooghly



**Stained Glass, Sacred Heart Church**



**The Serampore College**

### **Serampore** *a Danish delight*

Serampore is located about 20 km north of Kolkata and like Bandel, Chinsurah and Chandannagar, is located on the right bank of the Hooghly River. Serampore was a Danish colony from 1752 to 1845, and was known as Fredrick Nagar after the Danish King Frederick VI. In 1845, the Danish authorities sold Serampore to the British East India Company.

Serampore is known for the Danish missionary trio Joshua Marshman, Willaim Ward and William Carrey. These missionaries who arrived in Serampore in the early part of 19<sup>th</sup> century, took up the responsibility of spreading education and reforming the society.

In 1800, Carrey established the Serampore Mission Press, introduced the Bengali wooden types and published the Bengali translation of the Bible, the first book ever to be published in an Indian language. The Bengali version of Ramayana and Mahabharata were also published. The Serampore Mission Press soon came up with two newspapers - the *Friends of India* (English) and *Samachar Darpan* (Bengali). Between 1800 and 1832, the press printed 212,000 copies of different books in 40 different languages (mostly Indian languages).

Located on the banks of the Hooghly is the Serampore College, a brain child of Carrey, Marshman and Wards. The construction started in 1818 and was completed in 1821, and happens to be the oldest degree college in Asia. The building has a grand approach with a huge triangular pediment supported by massive pillars.

Apart from the main building, the Serampore College also houses several other buildings and large open spaces. It also houses the former residence of William Carrey, which has been turned into a museum housing old printing presses.

Along the river are several colonial mansions dating back to the days of the Danes, including the Baptist Mission Church.

The Baptist Mission Church once served as the residence of the three missionaries Carrey, Marshman and Ward. The church is still active but has largely been modified into a modern structure.

The centre of attraction in Serampore is Olave's Church. Built in 1805, it has a long slender spire and is approached by a long flight of stairs. The triangular pediment containing the monogram of the Danish King Frederick VI, is supported by four twin pillars. The Church is presently under repair and is funded by the Danish Government.

In front of the church is a small triangular park housing 15 Danish cannons. These cannons were once spread out in different parts of Serampore, and in 1940 the Serampore Municipality brought all the canons together for public display.

The Danish Governor House, presently in the court area, is located near the church. The grand residence of the Danish Governor has an extended portico crowned with the monogram of the Danish king. Just behind the Governor House is another small but elegant colonial structure, which served as a guard house for the Danish Governor.

Serampore houses two cemeteries dating back to the days of the Danes. The small cemetery located near the Grand Trunk Road is known as the Baptist Mission Cemetery and contains the family grave of Carrey, Marshman and Ward. The Danish Cemetery is located near the centre of the town and houses the mortal remains of several Danish officials.

The Waterworks Project on the banks of the Hooghly in Serampore houses two interesting structures - the Aldin House and the Henry Martin Pagoda. The Aldin (or Al-Din) House was probably built to promote Islam, but later it changed hands and served as a bungalow for the rich and famous Danish people in Serampore. Today it is all in ruins and overgrown with trees, but still overlooks the Hooghly River.

The other attraction of the Water Works is the Henry Martin Pagoda, originally a Hindu Temple with a unique twist of fortune. The huge two-storied Radhaballab Temple was



abandoned for some unknown reason. It was later purchased by the missionary Henry Martin and turned into a chapel and came to be known as the Henry Martin Pagoda. After the construction of the Church in Serampore it lost its significance and was abandoned once again. Later, for a brief period it served as an unauthorised brewery and produced the Pagoda Rum. Today it is in ruins and overgrown with vegetation. Sadly



**The Baptist Mission Cemetery**



**William Carey's grave, Baptist Mission Cemetery**



today, it serves as an open air toilet for the local squatters.

The Goswami family of Serampore made a fortune by trading with the Danes and the British. Several Goswami mansions are mute witnesses to the glorious days of European trade in Bengal. Sadly, most of the mansions are in a rundown

state as the family is not able to maintain them. In order to generate revenue they are being let out for film shootings and marriage ceremony halls. Despite all odds, the crumbling mansions of Serampore remind one of the once flourishing European trade in Bengal.

### Useful Information

Bandel, Chinsurah, Chandannagar and Serampore are all approachable from Kolkata by rail and road. There are very few good places to stay, so it is best to make a day trip from Kolkata.

**Option A:** All the places can be covered in a single day by car from Kolkata, a bit hectic, but very much possible.

**Option B:** This is an option for independent travelers who want to explore the place on their own. It is best to dedicate a single day for each place. Take the local trains, travel by cycle rickshaw, eat at local eateries, and explore and discover Bengal's own Little Europe.

### What the future holds

Presently, the West Bengal Tourism is working on proposals to develop tourism circuits covering the four colonial settlements of West Bengal. Also, funds have been arranged from the respective countries for the restoration of the heritage structure and overall development of the region. ■



A mathematics teacher by profession, the writer is a regular contributor in the travel columns of leading newspapers. To know more, visit his website and blog: [www.rangan-datta.info](http://www.rangan-datta.info)

## Our Last Six Issues

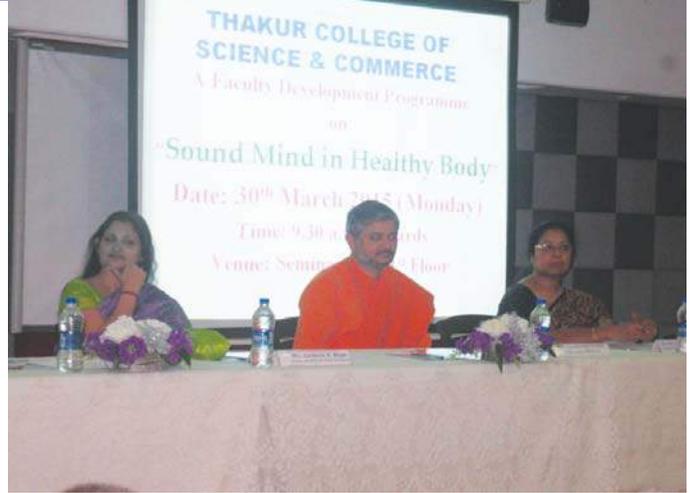
To order copies Call: 022-23534400 / E-mail: [oiopfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:oiopfoundation@gmail.com) / [oiop@vsnl.net](mailto:oiop@vsnl.net)

Indian Railways	The Northeast	The Northeast	Music	Human Rights	Foreign Relations

A Faculty Development Programme  
on 'Sound Mind in Healthy Body', Thakur College of Science and Commerce, Kandivali



Dr. Chaitali Chakraborty, Principal, Thakur College welcomes the gathering



(L to R): Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde, Trustee and Managing Editor, OIOP, Swami Swatmanandaji of Chinmaya Mission, and Dr. Chakraborty



Mrs. Hegde addresses the audience



A section of the audience

OIOP Club Activities in Mumbai

Value Education Workshops by PCGT (Co-ordinator-Ms. Suruchi Pawar)



St. Rock's School, Borivali



SPS Shree Mumbadevi Vidya Niketan, Borivali



G.S.B's Shri. I.J. Patel High School, Juhu

## OIOP Club Activities in Mumbai

### Value Education Workshops by PCGT (Co-ordinator-Ms. Suruchi Pawar)



Jnana Sarita High School, Mulund



M.K.E.S English School, Malad



Chembur Karnatak High School, Chembur



Modern English School, Chembur



Shree M.M. Pupils Own School, Khar



Anjuman-I-Islam Girls' High School, Bandra

### Disaster Management Workshops by Mr. A. Gopalakrishnan, Resource person for OIOP



Matunga Lions Pioneer English School, Matunga



Jnana Sarita High School, Mulund



Smt. J.B. Khot High School No. 2, Borivali



G.S.B. Shri. I.J. Patel High School, Juhu road, Juhu



Aspee Nutan English Medium School, Malad



Sneth N.L. High School, Malad (Gujarati Medium)

## OIOP Club Activities in Mumbai

### Disaster Management Workshops by Mr. A. Gopalakrishnan, Resource person for OIOP



Sheth N.L. High School, Malad  
(Hindi Medium)



S.P.R. Jain Kanyashala, Ghatkopar



Shri. Jamnadas Adukia Ballika Vidyalaya,  
Kandivali



Shri Jamnadas Adukia Adukla English School,  
Kandivali



Shri Vibhutarayan High School, Dahisar



Sheth V. K. Natha High School, Dahisar



Sadhana Vidyalaya (English Medium), Sion



Sadhana Vidyalaya (Marathi Medium), Sion



Chandrabhan Sharma College,  
Powai Vihar Complex

### First Aid Workshops by Dr. Annapurna Agarwal, Naturopath and Acupuncturist



M.K.E.S. English School, Malad



Khar Education Society's College of  
Commerce, Khar



St. Rock College of Commerce & Science,  
Borivali



Vijay Nair, CEO, OML

## **“Every time something like this happens, that becomes the new normal”**

In recent months, certain incidents have led us to question Indian society’s tolerance and openness. When the Leslie Udwin documentary ‘India’s Daughter’ was banned by the Indian government, it led to an outcry from the liberal sections of society. This documentary is based on reconstructing and analysing the horrific gang rape that took place in New Delhi on 16 December 2012. It was another matter that the filmmaker was given permission to meet and interview one of the rapists inside Tihar Jail by the Central Government, albeit the previous one. So it was not even a clandestine meeting. Then the AIB (All India Bakchod) Roast (a form of stand up act where those on stage poke fun at each other and the audience, often profanities are exchanged) ran into trouble after the show was staged. Ironically, neither those on the stage, nor anyone in the audience objected or filed a complaint against the show. The video of the show which was put up on YouTube was subsequently withdrawn.

Again, in a completely arbitrary act, the Mumbai performances of Jerry Seinfeld, the American stand-up comedian, actor, writer and producer, were cancelled in Mumbai as the organisers of the show, ‘Only Much Louder’ (OML) were denied permission at the last minute, just as Seinfeld and his team were boarding their charter flight in the U.S. OML was forced to cancel the show and inform Seinfeld’s team. They were subsequently granted permission, but by then it was too late. OML, which also organised the AIB Roast and is the pioneer music management company in India, has suffered huge financial losses, with figures of US \$2 million doing the rounds. In the past, OML which is

no fly-by-night outfit, has organised shows of internationally acclaimed comedian Russell Peters, The Weirdass Pajama Festival, where it is a minority partner with comedian and actor Vir Das, apart from managing AIB, a satire set up by comedians Tanmay Bhat, Gursimran Khamba, Ashish Shakya and Rohan Joshi, whose ‘Royal Turds’ show has been repeatedly sold out.

The only silver lining in these arbitrary times is that the Supreme court has scrapped a much misused cyber law (Section 66A of IT Act which made posting “offensive” comments online punishable with a 3-year jail term), that gave sweeping powers to the police to arrest anyone for posting annoying or “offensive” comments online.

This was based on a petition of 24-year old Shreya Singhal, a lawyer, who like a few others, moved court after two Palghar women were held for criticising the Mumbai shutdown following Bal Thackeray’s death. While this may not change things much, as posting defamatory and inflammatory content online is still punishable under the Indian Penal code, at least your comments on the social media won’t be subjected to this section anymore.

In a brief telephonic interview with **E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan**, the CEO of Only Much Louder, **Vijay Nair**, spoke about what needs to be done to ensure the Indian state doesn't act arbitrarily. He also spoke about the rising intolerance in India.

**Let me start by asking you about the AIB Roast aftermath. What are the broad, main permissions required to stage a show like AIB Roast?**

It's the same as any other event. We had to acquire a total of 15 permits which includes Traffic NOC, permits from the Fire Department, Police, PWD etc.

**Did you have to submit a script? It is being claimed that you didn't submit the correct script.**

Yes, we had to submit the script, which is a synopsis of the show and we did everything required.

**Did you have any inkling that this issue would blow up in such a big way?**

We didn't expect the scale of this controversy. We thought it would be something that would work well and would be popular. And it became very popular, but we didn't think it would become such a big controversy.

**Who made the decision to take it off YouTube? Do you think it was the right thing to do?**

Taking the film off YouTube was a collective decision made by the AIB people and us. I think it was absolutely the right decision.

**Where do you think is the line between freedom of expression and causing offense to someone?**

As far as I am concerned, there is no line.

**Are you aware of India's Daughter documentary being banned? What's your opinion about that?**

I don't see how banning it has helped. In fact, more people have ended up watching it! I am against such bans.

**Coming to the cancellation of the Jerry Seinfeld show, what were the main permissions required for that and did you have it in place?**

Yes, we had all the permits in place.

**What do you think really happened?**

There was an event on March 1 at the venue (Sardar Vallabhai Patel indoor stadium attached to the NSCI Club, Worli), which had resulted in a huge traffic pileup, and so the Police took the decision to withhold permits for events there on weekends. This unfortunately affected us.

**You have called your monetary loss as the single largest such loss?**

You have read the figures floating around.

**Aren't you taking any legal recourse?**

See, it is their discretion. There is a clause which says that they can withhold a permit as per their discretion. So we can't protest against that.

**Didn't you at any point feel helpless and frustrated and angry?**

Of course, yes. It was very frustrating, and I felt helpless. You aren't really prepared for such an eventuality. But getting angry and frustrated beyond a point wouldn't have helped the situation at all.

**Which have been your best venues among the metros?**

I would say Bangalore has been the best venue. It is very smooth, very organised, and works like a well-oiled machinery. After Bangalore, all the other cities including Mumbai come.

**What in your opinion does India and especially the metros which seem more intolerant than most cities, need in terms of bringing uniformity and accountability in this area? Or is that just a pipe dream?**

It is very easy to bring uniformity and accountability in organising such shows. There has to be a one-window clearance for licenses and permits. There are world standards and we can replicate it in India too. It will just take 30 days to replicate and put the procedures in place. We along with EEMA (Event and Entertainment Management Association, India's first apex industry body) have approached the Delhi and Maharashtra governments. We have already got the Delhi government's commitment on this.

**So, are we becoming an arbitrary society where we can't take anything for granted?**

Actually India has always been like this, but of late it has got worse. Everytime something like this happens, that becomes the new 'normal'.

**So will you try to get Seinfeld back to India?**

Sure. It will happen again. Not just Seinfeld, but other international artistes too. It will be more challenging, but more international events will definitely happen. ■

# Who should I meet if I fall sick?

*In this medical specialist-driven world, many of us miss having a GP or general practitioner to whom we can go for our ailments and even management of our chronic illnesses. What has led to the decline of the GP? Dr. Sujeet Rajan acquaints us with the reasons and tells us why it's time the GP made a re-appearance in our lives.*

**S**ANKARAN Pillai was always confused. Whenever he had a bad cough he visited his local GP (general practitioner), who gave him a cough syrup and tablets for a few days - he felt better, and remained better for the next few weeks. The diagnosis would vary from a bad throat to pharyngitis, to bronchitis (when he couldn't sleep at night because of the cough), to allergic bronchitis, and of late as it got worse, even *asthmatic* bronchitis.

## Visiting the GP

Sankaran Pillai accepted this as a way of life. At least one trip to the GP every month enabled him to work reasonably for the next few weeks. He worked as a salesman with a pharmaceutical company selling antibiotics. He believed (like many GPs do too) that the first thing to do when you have a bad cough is to take an antibiotic course. He never questioned his GP when he prescribed one, never questioned why he was falling sick every month, and never dared question his GP why the diagnosis was changing every month!

Sankaran Pillai's sleep was also disturbed by cough at least twice a week (if not more often), but could he ask his GP why this was happening? He mustered up the courage one day to ask this very question. The GP replied, "You work so hard, Sankaran. What do you expect? Relax and meditate a bit.

You will sleep better". Sankaran dared not ask more questions, but wondered to himself - does hard work cause insomnia? It was difficult to understand that. He thought the harder he worked, the more tired he would get, the better his sleep. But how could he question the learned doctor. *One more question* and the GP would have asked poor Sankaran to leave the room immediately. After all, there were at least a dozen more patients waiting outside, all looking so miserable, that Sankaran would have felt guilty to deny them *their time* with their 'trusted' GP.

Sankaran had a cousin Radhika, who had a different view altogether. Radhika detested doctors who didn't answer questions, and told Sankaran in plain speak, "You need to meet a specialist. Don't waste time with GPs. I only meet specialists for my health problems. They charge much more, but they give me the right diagnosis at least."

## Then the specialist

So a specialist was met.

The diagnosis was asthma. The treatment needed an inhaler. The inhaler contained steroid. It had to be taken regularly for at least 3 months.

Sankaran balked. Asthma?? Inhaler?? Steroid?? Regular treatment even when well???

No way.

But Radhika had her way. She got him to follow the specialist's advice.

Sankaran had never slept better in the past 10 years, than he slept the next 3 months. But when he went for follow up, the busy specialist told him, "continue the inhaler and come again after 3 or 4 months". "Or you can just meet your GP". Sankaran was confused. His GP had got it all wrong, and now he was to go back to him?

## And now back to the GP?

The specialist said, "Asthma is such a simple disease to manage. Approximately 100 million suffer from it in India. It doesn't need a specialist. I have so many patients with complicated lung conditions that I need to see, and a long waiting list for appointments. You can really follow-up with your GP, and if things get complicated in the future, we could possibly meet again. In all likelihood they won't. You should be fine."

For Sankaran and Radhika this specialist, for all practical purposes, was their new GP. But he wasn't agreeing to be so, easily.

This is where the problem lies. And a solution doesn't seem to be in sight.

I strongly believe that at least 50% of the patients I see in a specialist practice today can be easily managed by a competent GP. But it doesn't happen. Why?

Asthma is just one of the many diseases that can easily be managed by a competent GP. Others include diabetes, epilepsy, depression, migraine, COPD to

name just a few. Many of these diseases are believed to be specialist-diseases in our country.

There are fewer and fewer competent GPs setting up practice today. In South Mumbai itself (one of the better areas for health care in this country), the number of new GPs (trained in allopathy) setting up practice in the last 15 years has been close to zero. And the reasons are manifold:

- Who wants to be just a GP?
- You've spent a lot of capitation money (private medical colleges) and worked so hard. Now just a GP?
- How many diseases and guidelines are you going to update yourself on as a GP?
- I will always be a 'lower end' doctor, not the hospital-based specialist with the badge and white coat. People may not trust my opinion unless I am competent and good at communication. The latter is never (or rarely) taught in medical school in India. You learn what you hear. If you hear bad doctor-patient communication from senior colleagues/teachers, you learn that only.
- Medicine to an extent has become a glamorous branch. When I visited my daughter's school a year ago to counsel the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders on pursuing a medical profession (those who were interested), three girls were interested (and mind you all three) wanted to become cardiovascular surgeons only! Barring the fact that I am not aware of a single female cardiovascular surgeon in Mumbai (not that a female cannot become one), the issue remains – first the girl needs to get into a good medical school, then she needs to graduate, and while she graduates she could decide whether she is medically or surgically inclined, or not *clinically* inclined at all – maybe wants to work with a research organisation

or a pharmaceutical firm. If she is surgically inclined, she needs to specialise in general surgery, and after she post-graduates in general surgery, only then (and only then), can she start thinking about a seat (not always easy) and a career in cardiovascular surgery. I am not for a moment dissuading girls to take up this branch, but just to understand the road to cardiovascular surgery training.

- Finally, the cost of real estate in metropolitan cities has soared in the past years. It is hard for a GP to earn an income even close to that of a specialist, unless his overheads are really low, and/or he owns his own laboratory/investigation facility. Income and expenditure – it always boils down to that.

The result of the above issues is that we have a number of specialists in various branches of medicine, both in the hospital, and in post-graduate courses across the country. But show me the number of graduate doctors in allopathy actually expressing a desire to be a good GP, or to be a geriatric physician (someone who looks after only elderly patients > 60 years of age – another badly under-represented specialty in India), and I'm sure the numbers will be really low. 10.2 % of the world's population is expected to be above the age of 60 by 2025. India's ageing population has significantly increased as well in the past few years, and we are really ill-equipped and poorly trained to look after these patients well, as Atul Gawande has so elegantly brought out in his new book, *Being Mortal*.

I believe that things can change in the future if the following occurs:

- Hospitals encourage GPs to manage their out-patient departments (OPDs) to a certain extent. That way the GP will be enthused to be a hospital-based GP – adds importance to his regular general practice too.

- More GPs do courses in family medicine practice – that brushes up their knowledge, and permits them to add-on a degree, for good reasons. Their value is more appreciated as well.
- GP groups are formed which focus on a motto "how to keep you away from a hospital". Preventive health care becomes the focus, with GPs actually helping their patients to lead better lifestyles – something we know leads to less morbidity, and less hospitalisation.
- Lay people, patients and the media ask doctors more questions about common diseases. In India the doctor is often God incarnate - someone not to be questioned too much. This ideology needs to change. We need more responsible media. Today, it's more *sensational* media, sadly.

With Corporate Hospitals mushrooming across the country, I wouldn't blame the specialist for not (and often at times) over-utilising the facilities of the hospital he works at. After all, it is a business, like anything else, when a management that doesn't understand medicine runs it. So a bad GP could make you keep coming back without proper guidance, improving his 'business', and a bad specialist can make you spend loads of money to maintain the bottom-line of the hospital he works at.

What matters in the end is not your diagnosis, or the number of investigations and treatments you received. What matters is how well you lived your life. And your doctor should help and guide you live it better, in the most sensible

way possible. That's all that matters. ■



The writer is a Respiratory Physician at Bombay and Bhatia Hospitals in Mumbai.

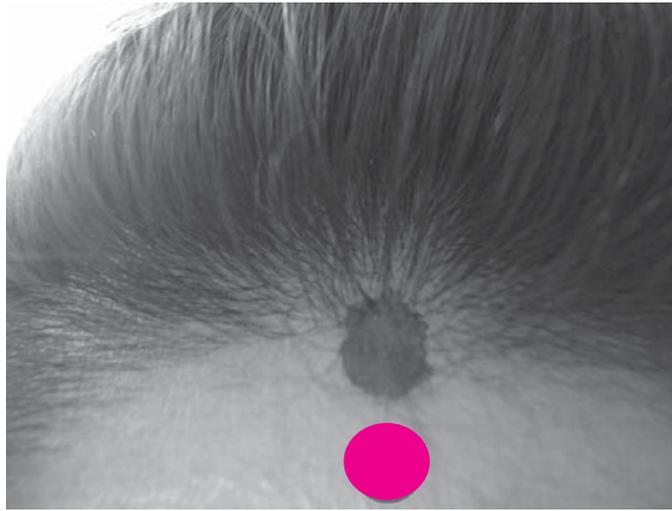
# Busting the bindi myth

*The bindi is the ubiquitous Indian, predominantly Hindu symbol of caste, marriage and now, fashion. It has undergone many changes and Shoma A. Chatterji chronicles these changes and what the symbol has meant over the years.*

Is the *bindi* a fashion statement, a caste mark or a marriage symbol? It is all three. History shows that men of royalty, priestly families and of high caste, all sported a mark in the centre of their forehead because it was a mandatory cultural custom. It also symbolised whether a man belonged to the Shaivite community or the Vaishnavite school of philosophy and religion. Hinduism is believed to

mainly consist of two sects - Vaishnavites and Shaivites. Those who worship Mahavishnu and are born into the Vaishnavite sect are called Vaishnavites. Those who worship Shiva are called Shaivites. A Vaishnavite would wear the religious symbol vertically on the forehead, like a "U". The Shaivites draw three horizontal parallel lines marked with a vertical centre. Though Lord Rama is one of the ten avatars of Lord Vishnu, he is said to have descended from the Sun, and wore a mark in the centre of the forehead depicting the Sun. He was therefore called Suryavanshi.

Children in Hindu families wear a dot of curd on the forehead as an auspicious sign before a job interview or an examination for good luck. In a Bengali marriage, the forehead of both the bride and the groom is marked with a decorative *bindi* drawn out of sandal paste (*chandan*) to signify the auspicious event. A traditional custom among Hindu



The *bindi* adorning a forehead

married woman generally from the West, the South and the East is for a married woman to greet another married woman with a *bindi* as a welcome sign and the one so greeted returns the ritual.

## On the dot

*Bindi* is derived from the Sanskrit word *bindu* or drop, and suggests the mystic third eye. The spot where the bindi is worn, between the two eyebrows, is a major nerve point in the human body. This spot is the sixth *chakra* known as the *agnya*, meaning, "command". It is the seat of concealed wisdom. It is the central point where all experience gets concentrated. According to *tantrik* philosophy, during meditation, the latent energy (*kundalini*) rises from the base of the spine towards the head, and this *agnya* is the probable outlet for potential energy. It is also the central point of the base of the creation, symbolising auspiciousness and good fortune.

Also loosely known as '*tika*', '*pottu*', '*sindoor*', '*tilak*', '*tilakam*', '*teep*', '*kumkum*', a *bindi* was originally a small or a big, eye-catching round dot made on the forehead as a facial adornment. The *bindi* remains one of the most beautiful and fascinating facial adornments that add grace and femininity to women. In Maharashtra, Gujarat, the Punjab and some southern states, girls choose to wear a *bindi*, while in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and

Assam, it is a mandatory practice of the married woman, though unmarried girls can also wear it. The same applies to married women in Nepal.

A red dot on the forehead is an auspicious sign of marriage and guarantees the social status and sanctity of a married woman. The red *bindi* on the forehead of the Indian bride is believed to usher in prosperity, and grants her a place as the guardian of the family's welfare and progeny. Earlier, the *bindi* came in powdered form in different shades of red, from orange to vermilion to brick red to maroon. Limited options were taken with black. With time, the powder was replaced with thick colored paste sold in plastic capsules. This went away with the popular sticker bindi that comes in every imaginable shape, colour, size and design. Crooner Usha Uthup uses the first consonant of the Bengali alphabet "*kaw*" like a *bindi* as an expression of her love for Kolkata.



**A traditional container of kumkum**

Ingenuous jewellery designers hit upon the bejeweled *bindi* in precious and semi-precious stones. Bindis decorated with stars and sequins are very popular for festivals and parties. Youngsters now wear these *bindis* in different parts of their body in place of tattoos! There was a phase when not to wear a *bindi* was considered a fashion statement that did not stay for long.

### The role of Indian TV in the evolution of the *bindi*

Television is responsible for the resurrection of the *bindi* and for giving it a new identity as a fashion statement. The journey began with *Shanti* on Doordarshan where the young and naïve Mandira Bedi in the title role attracted everyone with her strikingly original *bindi*, an arrow in reverse instead of the normal red dot. This was followed by Neena Gupta's mega-serial *Saans* where the title logo was a red *bindi* underlined with a black line, a beautiful metaphor for the commitment of a modern wife and mother to her family. Ekta Kapoor's serials brought about the radical metamorphosis of the *bindi*. Says Sudha Chandran who made the zig-zag parting of her hair in Ekta Kapoor's *Kahin Kissi Roz* a fashion statement, "My *bindis* were more memorable than my performance in the serial". The round red *bindi* is reserved for the *sati*

*savitri* housewives in *saas-bahu* serials, while all kinds of squiggles, triangles, question marks, often in black, decorated with sequins and stars, depict the *femme fatale*.

Ramayana, the late Ramanand Sagar's epic serial, showed Rama sporting

the mark of the sun with rays spreading out on the forehead to signify that he was *Suryavanshi*, a descendant of the Sun God. Every God from the Hindu pantheon wears this mark on the centre of the forehead. The same applies to all serials based on Hindu mythology where even widows don a white *bindi* of sandalwood paste.

### The *bindi* – the silent protagonist of our films

The large screen lost its love affair with the *bindi* since Meena Kumari's big red *bindi* in a hundred different films followed by Hema Malini and Rekha. The *bindi* faded out with the entry of stars like Sridevi, Karisma Kapoor, Madhuri Dixit and Priyanka Chopra sporting foreheads completely stripped off the *bindi*. *Bindiya chamkegi* remains one of the most memorable songs framed around the *bindi* from the hit film *Do Raaste* (1969). Hindi mainstream cinema thrived on the *bindi* as signifier of many things between 1959 and mid-seventies. The blurred *bindi* suggested rape of the protagonist Radha in *Mother India*. It stood for loss of virginity upon marriage in umpteen films, while wiping it out when a *suhaagan* becomes a widow was also an oft-repeated metaphor. In Basu Bhattacharya's *Anubhav* (1971), the blurred *bindi* suggests reunion between a couple

after a phase of misunderstanding. Make-up artist Rajesh Patil blames the Westernised look of Hindi mainstream cinema's female characters for the fading out of the *bindi* from cinema. But Sanjay Leela Bhansali brought it back in black, decorated with sequins and stars, depict the *femme fatale*.

*Kunku* (1937), a Marathi film directed by V. Shantaram, was about Nirmala, a young orphan, married to a widower old enough to be her father. The director placed repeated stress on Nirmala's half-afraid and half-defiant act of putting on *kumkum* every morning. Her rebellion is a conscious one, a tragic irony on her sham of a marriage. Her act of looking in the mirror repeatedly stresses her introspection and her fear of her uncertain and dark future. Till the end, she refuses conjugal rights to her husband who, from a sense of deep guilt, commits suicide. Asha Hariharan who runs a beauty salon in Mumbai, echoes this stating that the *bindi* represents liberation. Young girls who happily wear the *bindi* now often worn as a tattoo, temporary or permanent, with their sweatshirts and jeans flaunt the 'unwritten' code that the *bindi* tattoo goes only with Indian attire. Women in the West go gaga over the *bindi*. The *bindi* today signifies different things to different people. For women in South East Asia and even Europe, it is now a fashion statement and a symbol of changing culture in a globalised world. ■

The writer is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues'



among many awards. She is currently Senior Research Fellow, ICSSR, Delhi, researching the politics of presentation of working women in post-colonial Bengali cinema 1950 to 2003.

# The story of Ram

*The story of Lord Ram may be ubiquitous in India, but the theatre based on his life called Ram Leela is an annual event to which people look forward to with equal fervour every year. Mainly staged during the Dussehra festival, this folk theatre is truly by and for the local communities where it is staged, writes **Kanak Rele**.*

**I**n autumn, when the monsoon rains have finally ceased and the nights are cool and crisp, North India celebrates Dussehra, the great festival of Ram. In villages, towns, and cities over a period of ten to thirty consecutive nights, episodes from the play – the Ram Leela – are enacted. Among all the traditional theatre genres of India, the Ram Leela comes closest to being a national drama, for it is performed over larger parts of the country than any other single form.



Actors from a Ram Leela play

## The pan-Indian popularity of Ram Leela

During this great festival, there are probably few residents who are not within walking distance of a Ram Leela performance. Nearly every village and town has a place for large public gatherings, and this is commonly known as the Ram Leela grounds, for the Ram Leela is the occasion for the largest and most important assembly held in the locality. It is a national drama also because it has been the vehicle for promoting the story of Ram and Sita, whose images have powerfully moulded the Indian ideals of manhood and womanhood, and whose mythical rule has come to exemplify the ideal Indian state.

Through the Ram Leela, a mass education takes place which annually renews in the collective Hindu mind, a notion of the integrity of Hindu society and a vision of what the national life

might be. The effectiveness of the Ram Leela rests partially upon the fact that it is folk theatre – theatre done by, for and through the support of the people of the local communities where they are performed. For that reason, the style,

**During this great festival, there are probably few residents who are not within walking distance of a Ram Leela performance. Nearly every village and town has a place for large public gatherings, and this is commonly known as the Ram Leela grounds, for the Ram Leela is the occasion for the largest and most important assembly held in the locality.**

length, and organisational support vary according to local traditions. The Ram Leela, true to its origin as a community creation, is played on the fairgrounds and in the market place. It belongs to all of the people and is enacted where the entire community may gather. The players enact Ram's well-known episodes before large and frequently noisy crowds, and sometimes they must compete with the cries of vendors hawking their wares. The Ram Leela therefore conveys the impression of a folk theatre in a religious guise.

## The provenance

In Varanasi there is an established belief that Megha Bhagat, a disciple of Tulsidas, first started the Ram Leela at Assi by staging the *Ramcharitmanas* of his master around the year 1625. Although there is no documentary evidence at present to support this claim, it seems quite creditable, for

fragments of evidence suggest that a Ram Leela type of drama existed before Tulsidas wrote his great work. In the *Ramcharitmanas* itself, there is a reference which suggests that Tulsidas in his childhood was familiar with performances like the Ram Leela. Also, the biography of Chaitanya, the great Bengali religious leader records an incident during his autumn stay in the city of Puri, in which scenes from the epic of Ram were acted out. Chaitanya's death and his biography both preceded Tulsidas's writing of his epic. Finally, a *Ramakrida* is listed among the minor forms of drama which suggested an early form of theatre dealing with the acts of Ram.

### A ten day, all-male theatre

The Ram Leela, part of the autumnal Dussehra festival in most places, lasts for a period of ten days. Although from region to region it is celebrated in different ways, the Dussehra festival is interpreted everywhere to symbolise the triumph of good over evil. Dussehra means the worship of Ram and the reenactment of his heroic deeds. Here the ten-day cycle is devoted to episodes from the *Ramcharitmanas*. The choice of episodes is left to the organising committees. The tenth day, however, is universally celebrated as the day of victory, and the defeat of Ravan is depicted both in stage plays and processional pageantry.

The actors playing Ram, Sita and Ram's brothers are costumed and made up in a ritual which ends with their crowning. They are then accepted by the spectators as embodiments of deities. The actor lies on the floor while one or more specialists stencil designs on his face and apply makeup. The basic coat of makeup is derived from a soft stone which, when moistened and rubbed, produces a pinkish-white lotion like makeup. The designs which are then stenciled on the face are abstract.



A scene from a Ram Leela performance

**The Ram Leela, part of the autumnal Dussehra festival in most places, lasts for a period of ten days. Although from region to region it is celebrated in different ways, the Dussehra festival is interpreted everywhere to symbolise the triumph of good over evil. Dussehra means the worship of Ram and the reenactment of his heroic deeds. Here the ten-day cycle is devoted to episodes from the *Ramcharitmanas*.**

The entire act of costuming and makeup takes about one hour. The final act in the process is the investing of the boys with the crowns of the Ram Leela and the bows which are the distinctive symbols of Ram and Laksman. Now as divine embodiments they are carried on the shoulders of their costumers and makeup artists through the crowds that have been waiting outside the temple enclosure for a darshan, a glimpse of the deity, and are placed in the

conveyance which will take them to the Leela grounds.

The actors in the Ram Leela are all amateurs, though some roles, such as Hanuman, may be played by the same actor year after year. Those who play the five principal roles or *svarupas* (the divine embodiments of Ram, Sita, Laksman, Bharat, and Shatrughna), however, are young boys, usually below the age of fourteen. They may play these roles for three or four years but yield when the onset of puberty is signaled by the sprouting of a moustache. With some scattered exceptions, the *svarupa* roles are always played by boys from respectable Brahmin families.

The all-male cast is trained to speak clearly and audibly, and they do so in a declamatory style which is matched by broad, dramatic gestures. The acting generally is unpolished, but some stylisation is usually apparent in dueling scenes; here the action is smoother, closely approaching dance. ■



The writer is Director, Nalanda Dance Research Center and is a recipient of Padmabhushan award, Akademi Ratna (Fellow of Sangeet Natak Akademi)

## Transformational HR

*Most companies have a Human Resources (HR) department, but with a limited role. Mature is the management which can make the shift to a larger context and meaning for its HR department. Called Transformational HR, this ensures that HR actively helps script a better growth, environment and prospects for the company, says Amrita Nair.*

**T**HE human resources (HR) department has existed since the First World War though under different names like Personnel Administration, Industrial Relations, Labour Relations and so on. They denoted the different areas that required special focus which were all related to workers. As it stands today, HR definitely has evolved with the changing social and business needs of the organisation. All the transactional activities like succession planning, employee compensation, recruitment etc., are accomplished smoothly. It's these transactional activities that the HR is usually associated with. However, their deep potential of becoming a business partner is largely ignored by many organisations today, in fact we can say that HR hasn't been given any better position than for fulfilling the routine processes. It's been side marginalised by the top management easily.

### What is Transformational HR?

The HR department being a crucial link for managing the employee-employer relations, it actually has a much greater role to play in businesses today. HR must develop from just carrying out the transactional activities, to becoming a strategic partner in the organisation. To develop into an 'Internal Consulting Organisation' is important for HR to maintain its relevance. Transformational HR means becoming a change agent in the organisation. HR must focus on measurable business outcomes through innovative employee engagement activities and help businesses to earn measurable increase in revenues and profits.

Being a strategic business partner calls for a shift in focus to the customers, market growth and the entire stakeholders of the company. Understanding the company well and its culture can help the HR department to formulate effective strategies for helping the organisation meet its goals. At a time when companies are embracing newer opportunities for growth, it is highly important for the HR department to become more creative in its ways and methodologies for equipping the employees with the right set of skills. It needs to push its boundaries to bring in greater employee engagement which is necessary to retain precious talent in the organisation. HR must not just be reactionary in nature, but should be able to anticipate changes in the business and propose solutions for meeting the changing challenges of business concerns.

This kind of an approach will make HR practices more relevant and move it to a position of an Internal Consultant Organisation. The modern organisations today are embracing this transformational role of HR. For example, the retail giant Future Group is revamping its HR strategy to meet the changing expectations of the 'customer's mindsets and behaviour'. It plans to integrate the online and offline retail models so as to make buying more convenient at a time when e-commerce companies are flourishing, and it faces immense competition in this field. It plans to hire from top IITs for carrying forward the new strategy by training and developing them once inducted. HR programmes that graduates undergo, however do not talk much about this transformational practice. The much needed skills for this change is also lacking among newcomers.

While the skills required for the smooth accomplishment of the transactional activities can be developed, an initiative has to be made to push HR to becoming a guide to the company, including advising it on the feasibility of new projects.

Nevertheless, the transactional part of the job cannot be undermined since it does help the organisation in reducing costs and keep them up to standard with the statutory compliances of business. According to a report in the Hackett Group on Best Practices in HR (2004), companies that followed world class HR, showed that they spent 27% less on employees annually, 31% less on total labour, had 35% fewer staff per thousand employees, and 61% experienced fewer voluntary turnover. Integrating the performance management techniques with what the company requires, rather than imitating the best practices followed is crucial in building credibility for HR. An effective communication system, good interpersonal skills, and commitment in meeting the goals will prove important for putting HR in the front row. The transactional activities can be outsourced, while the more value adding internal consultant role should be internally sourced. The human resources departments have to move towards becoming trusted advisors internally, with realistic solutions for changing social and business environments. ■

The writer is currently pursuing a Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management from Symbiosis, Pune. She loves writing articles on her subjects Economics and HR.



# E-learning and teacher education

*E-learning is here to stay. While it is still evolving as a tool and platform for learning, equal attention has to be paid to teacher education and the need for values and accountability, avers Dr. Ravindra Kumar.*

*"We become just by the practice of just actions, self-controlled by exercising self-control, and courageous by performing acts of courage"*

–Aristotle

E-learning can precisely be termed as the use of electronic educational technology in learning and teaching, both. Meaning thereby, it is connected to both – a learner (student) and a teacher.

## Defining e-learning

As it is well within our reach, e-learning is a concept associated with, or synonymous with instructional technology and educational know how. Which know how or technology? Definitely, the one that emanates from the ongoing process of development, as per the demand of time and space, with the objective of making the process of education comprehensive, meaningful, quick, accessible for all, and indeed, result-oriented. This is not a new thing before the world. Rather, it is a dimension in the learning process. In this regard, I endorse to an extent Paul Nicholson, the author of *A History of E-Learning*, who says:

"In many contemporary sectors, e-learning is often regarded as a 'new' form of learning that uses the affordances of the internet to deliver customised, often interactive, learning materials and programmes to diverse local and distant communities of practice".

We are well aware that the emergence of computer and computer science has played a vital role in this

regard. It has undoubtedly accorded a distinctive dimension to the process of education and learning. E-learning is an outcome of this, and that is why, besides instructional technology, information and communication technologies in education, learning technology, multimedia learning, computer-based instruction, internet-based training, flexible learning, web-based training, online education, virtual education, or learning platforms of virtual learning environments are associated with e-learning.

## E-learning and its impact on education

E-learning has made education, especially the process of education

**E-learning has, as mentioned already, accorded an unprecedented dimension to the process of education. Along with enlarging the scope of the process, it has made people's reach or the association with programmes related to it, possible. Further, e-learning has made the process more dynamic. In the process of connecting everyone it has affected and mobilised all other spheres of life.**

– gaining knowledge and teaching comprehensive and dynamic. It has undoubtedly extended the range of the process making it elaborate and open. It is for this reason that Bernard J. Luskin, a pioneer and an eminent figure in the field of educational technology, put forth that "the core of e-learning should be interpreted to mean exciting, energetic, enthusiastic, emotional, extended, excellent, and educational in addition to electronic".

Not only this, due to its all-embracing nature, Eric Parks, another eminent scholar in the field has in one of his worthy write ups titled, *What's the 'E' in E-learning*, suggested that the 'E' from e-learning should be referred to as "everything, everyone, engaging and easy".

E-learning has, as mentioned already, accorded an unprecedented dimension to the process of education. Along with enlarging the scope of the process, it has made people's reach or the association with programmes related to it, possible. Further, e-learning has made the process more dynamic. In the process of connecting everyone it has affected and mobilised all other spheres of life.

## The role of the teacher in e-learning

Despite being an advanced method of learning, or even after the addition of an unprecedented dimension like e-learning in the routine education, which has made the learning so easy and accessible for all age groups anytime anywhere, the role of a teacher

not only remains intact in the whole system, but in my view, multiplies many folds. A teacher stays not only as the backbone of the entire process, but his responsibilities increase to a great extent, much more than ever in past. That is why the role and contribution of e-learning in teacher education is being discussed widely.

From this viewpoint, e-learning must become the basis of developing a friendly attitude and excellence in the behaviour of a teacher. This should lead him/her to thoughtful decisions based on evidences and experiences. We know it well that in teacher education, from meaning or purpose viewpoint, it can be included to design policies and procedures to equip future community of teachers with the attitude, behaviour, knowledge and skill, which they acquire to perform

their tasks effectively in the classroom, schools-colleges and community-society. Without a doubt, the role being played by e-learning, in these days of rapid globalisation in the process of education, is well before all of us. But, even in this situation, if values are not connected with it, no concrete and satisfactory results can be expected. It is because in the absence of values the desired spirit of responsibility cannot grow.

It is, therefore, necessary that from the viewpoint of developing the moral-ethical dimension of teaching, values should be made an integral part of e-learning. It must be a predominant element in the initial teacher education, to repeat, for developing the spirit of responsibility – the moral dimension of teaching in each practitioner. Moral values and their acceptability

are vital to this process and is, in fact, the pressing demand of time. Not only this, behaviour, practice, or action is also necessary accordingly, keeping in mind the message of Greek philosopher Aristotle quoted at the commencement of this talk. Without this, any debate, deliberation or dialogue cannot be worthy and meaningful in this regard. ■

The writer, an Indologist, is a former Vice Chancellor of CCS University, Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. He is also the Editor-in-Chief of Global Peace International Journal. This



piece is based on a keynote address of the writer at an international seminar organised by RHPG College, Kashipur (Uttarakhand) on 2 February 2015.



**WORLD CLASS  
QUALITY MEDICINES  
AT AFFORDABLE PRICES**

**BLUE CROSS LABORATORIES LTD.**  
PENINSULA CHAMBERS, LOWER PAREL, MUMBAI - 400 013,  
INDIA.

# What's on the menu, India?

*In this excerpt from 'No One Has To know: Smart Anti-Ageing For Indian Skin' well-known dermatologist **Dr. Jamuna Pai** elaborates how eating right can slow down ageing and guarantee good health. Whereas all the foods that taste oh-so-good are, in fact, oh-so-bad for the system, a diet that is all about moderation is the right way to feel good and more energetic.*

**F**OOD can age you. So many things you eat, depending on how it gets digested by your body, can prevent or hamper the supply of essential nutrients to the skin and other organs, ageing you both from within and without. And it's not just about the calories or whether you lose or gain weight. Depending on what you eat, food can tire you and nutritionally deprive you. It can also energize you. And cure you. Never underestimate the impact of what you eat and drink on how you look and feel. Food has the power to transform. Food has the power to heal.

## Food that upsets your acid-alkaline balance ages you

It was my husband's diagnosis of terminal cancer that really drew my attention to the acid-alkaline balance of our bodies. A very dear friend of mine insisted on giving me a jar of something that was believed to have completely reversed the advanced-

stage breast cancer of her friend's mother. Before she dropped it off, I was envisioning this high-tech bottle with complex compounds listed on the label. When I actually saw what she brought me, there was no label and it was barely a bottle; it was a small unassuming container of amber liquid – not even 50 ml – that cost a whopping 15,000 rupees. This reversed advanced-stage cancer? I thought to myself.

But, by now, I had heard of the doctor who was selling it and, frankly, I was ready to try absolutely anything to alleviate my husband's suffering.

Before giving it to him, I tried a tiny drop of it myself. It tasted like honey with a little bit of soda but I didn't pay too much attention to it. At about the same time, recipes were coming in from



suddenly it hit me: these recipes for cancer patients were all trying to alkalize the system.

What we eat either has an acidic effect on our body or alkaline. The body needs to be more alkaline than acidic for us to feel and look both young and healthy. The more you alkalize your system, the more you prevent the further spread of diseases like cancer and the greater your ability to combat ageing. It all started making sense: why wheatgrass shots are given to cancer patients, why so many of my doctor friends gave us liquid chlorophyll or soda bicarb. The chlorophyll, the wheatgrass, the soda bicarb, all this was helping to alkalize the system. Then I started thinking: What if we do this before the disease and the premature ageing have a chance to invade our bodies?



all over for my husband. One such recipe included adding baking powder to maple syrup (without sugar) when the syrup reached a particular temperature. And then

### So how do you make your system more alkaline?

Western diets are notoriously more acidic in nature as they include coffee, tea, meat, wheat, sugar, dairy, pastries, pizzas, pastas, cakes, bread and other foods that have refined flour as their base. All of these are acid-producing. Chinese food is pretty acidic as well. As a nation, we are also slowly being inducted into the acidic hall of fame, as we are increasingly more influenced by Western fast food diets.

### So which foods are more alkaline?

Lime is alkalizing. Though it's ironically acidic to the taste, it gets assimilated as alkaline in the tissues. The same holds true for other citrus fruits. The innocuous nimbu is a master alkalizer.

Second, I never step out of the house without my glass of green juice: it's spinach and water mixed in a blender and seasoned to taste. I tank up on antioxidant-rich, chlorophyll-rich spinach everyday. It's my green drink.

What's on the menu?

You can start this NOW:

### The daily lemon shot

Choose four healthy medium-sized limes, squeeze them and drink the juice immediately. Do not add water. Avoid contact with your teeth and throw it straight to the back of your mouth. This should be taken on an empty stomach first thing in the morning or, alternatively, after a heavy meal.

### The daily liquid chlorophyll alkalizing smoothie

Take a bunch of coriander or broccoli or spinach or anything that is green and put about a glass of water in a blender. Blend it and strain it. Drink immediately because the moment you let it wait for more than two minutes, it is exposed to the air and gets oxidized thereby becoming dead juice with no nutritive value.



### You can reduce this now

#### Sugar

Sugar is one of the most ageing foods that exist and an overload of refined sugars or foods containing sugar (pastries, cakes, sweet beverages and the like) trigger disease and ageing. Before buying or ordering, study food labels extremely carefully. Sugar isn't always listed as sugar: it can manifest itself in various forms like fructose, dextrose, high fructose corn syrup or anything ending in -ose like glucose, sucrose and more. And that's just one avatar of this deadly ingredient. Do a little research

before you step into a supermarket the next time. Even sugar substitutes need to be dodged. Like the plague.

#### Salt

An overload of salt is also incredibly unhealthy and ageing. And the worst part is that it creeps up in packaged goods, processed foods and in so many other products that you would never think would have salt in them. Again, read your labels. Try to choose foods lowest in sodium. Unless otherwise specified by your doctor, 3 grams of salt per day is enough.

#### Later

Increase 'colour' in your diet over the next few months. Deeply coloured, vibrant food products, fruits and vegetables have been known to give a tremendous boost to antioxidant activity as compared to other foods. ...

The best thing about making dietary changes is that they start showing results in a comparatively short amount of time. There's nothing indicated in any of the above that won't do wonders for your health in general. Food for thought. ■

(Excerpted from *No One Has To Know: Smart Anti-Ageing For Indian Skin* by Dr Jamuna Pai, published by Harper Collins; Pp: 244 Price: ₹ 299)

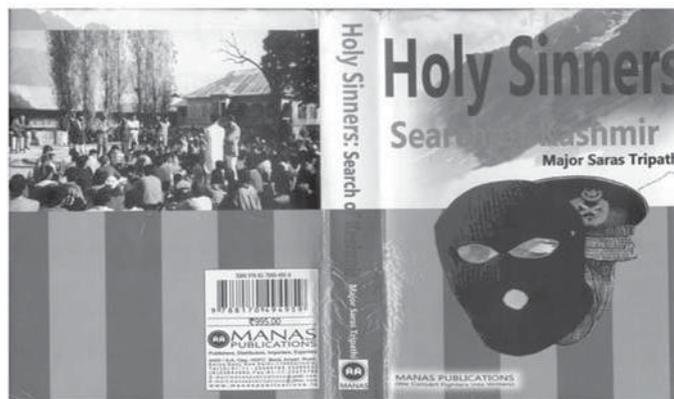
(© Women's Feature Service)



# Holy Sinners

## Search of Kashmir

Author : Major Saras Tripathi  
 Publisher : Manas Publications, New Delhi (2015)  
 Price : ₹ 995  
 pp. : 375



**T**HIS is an intriguing name for a book, especially when its contents are the observations of a recently commissioned young army officer on his first posting to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in the midst of a raging proxy war. The combination of passion, curiosity and professionalism is rarely seen in one so young, but Major Saras Tripathi of 6 Maratha LI (then a young lieutenant) has succeeded in doing so. Many books have been written on the proxy war being waged in J&K that has now entered its third decade, and there is seemingly no end in sight. While 'Holy Sinners' is all about the proxy war, two aspects that are different stand out. Firstly, it is down to earth and as realistic as possible, as it deals with what I call the 'business end of counter insurgency (CI) and counter terrorist (CT) operations', viz., sub-unit and small-team operations. The focus is more on the planning and conduct of such operations, about which very little has been written. The reason is that most writings about the problems and the on-going proxy war in J&K are penned by persons far removed from the action, and most touch on issues at the historical, policy and strategic levels. Secondly, the events or rather episodes covered relate more to the human aspects rather than to a war-fighting perspective, which of course is what one usually reads about in newspapers, magazines and books.

It is also not a book regarding the rights and wrongs of the continuing struggle, but looks at the turmoil in the minds of the three dramatis personae. These three are 'the army and other

security forces', who are bravely fighting a difficult battle; 'the highly motivated and indoctrinated insurgents/terrorists' and the 'majority of people of J&K', who find themselves caught in the middle.

The book is in two broad time-zones. The first is during the period 1992-94, when the insurgency was at its height in the Srinagar Valley and the author was involved with 'search and destroy', 'raids', 'area domination patrols', 'screening suspects' et al. The second period relates to his tenure on the Line of Control (LoC) in one of the forward most picquets in the Uri Sector during the period 1997-99, when he was an experienced company commander, albeit still with only six/seven years of service under his belt.

There are a total of 14 chapters in the book, of which 12 deal with operations against insurgents, and only two relate to the management of the LoC. Each chapter is self-contained, dealing with a particular episode from beginning to end, containing actions as well as observations of a young army officer. Some of these are highly profound.

The first chapter is about five hard core terrorists, who were killed in a chilling and long encounter. The other episodes of note are the bravery and sacrifices of two brave soldiers, Sepoy Roundal Bajirao, later decorated with Shaurya Chakra; and Havildar Shivaji, later decorated with a Kirti Chakra, both posthumously; and chapters devoted to a hapless mother yearning for her son; the cunning 'Salafi Baba' and a simple grandmothers' dilemma. As the author writes in the prologue – 'the book is a

strange mix of the love bestowed on him, alongside the undeserved hate thrown on him for doing his duty, along with the pain of the Kashmiris'.

Inevitably, the importance of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) is highlighted, along with the self-imposed restraints by the army hierarchy to ensure that fair play prevails and only minimum force is used. The episodes described bring out these aspects clearly, as opposed to those who though far removed from the scene, pontificate on the removal of this enabling law, without understanding it.

There are two common threads between the two periods. The first is the perfidy of Pakistan, whether through insurgents trained in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) or through Pakistani Army personnel posted on the LoC. The second is the human aspect of the tragedy of Kashmir, and how the common people are coping.

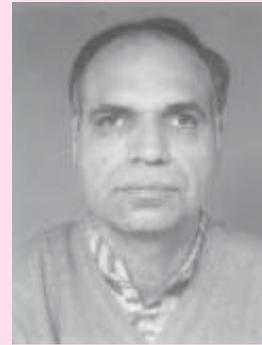
This book needs to be read not just by soldiers or the people of Kashmir or analysts and political leaders, but all right thinking persons who appreciate the bravery and courage of the men and women of our military, especially the humble jawans and young officers involved in a thankless job for the nation, and who empathise with the people so cruelly caught in the vortex of violence.

This book was released on 12 January 2015 by Gen. (Dr.) V. K. Singh, Minister of State for External affairs and Overseas Indian Affairs, and (IC) Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Implementation. ■

– Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi

# Unfair cuts

*The cuts in social sector spending in the recent Union Budget have flagged many concerns. It is expected that the individual state governments will pick up the slack as their share of Central taxes has increased. But whether this will really happen, remains to be seen.*



**Bharat Dogra**  
is a Delhi-based freelance journalist who writes on social concerns.

**T**HE Union Budget for fiscal year 2015-16 introduced very high and unprecedented cuts in high social priority programmes like the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services), mid-day meals, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (school education), Indira Awas Yojna (rural housing) and women's welfare.

The cut-back in RKVY from ₹ 8,444 to ₹ 4,500 crore is particularly unfortunate as this scheme has been used as an incentive for state governments to motivate them to increase their own allocation for agricultural development. Hence, this scheme had an impact on agricultural development, higher than what is indicated by the budgetary allocation alone.

The need for according more importance to dryland/rainfed agriculture has been widely emphasised. The Department of Land Resources is responsible for this to a significant extent. Compared to the Revised Estimate for 2014-15 of ₹3,759 crore, this department's allocation has been cut to ₹1,637 crore, which is very unfortunate.

The ICDS budget has been cut from ₹16,000 crore to ₹8,000 crore, the mid-day meal budget from ₹13,000 crore to ₹9,000 crore, while the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan budget has been reduced from ₹28,000 crore to ₹22,000 crore. There are reductions also in drinking water, health and family welfare schemes. The Union Budget (2015-16) has allocated ₹30,851 crore for SCSP and ₹19,980 crore for TSP. This falls much short of the officially accepted requirement of allocations in proportion to population share.

As the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR) and Dalit Arthik Aadhar Andolan (DAAA) says, "However, as per the SCSP/TSP Guidelines, the SCs should be allocated 16.6% of the Plan Outlay, which amounts to ₹77,236 crore towards SCSP and the STs should be allocated 8.6% of the Plan Outlay, which amounts to ₹40,014 crore towards TSP. Dalits, therefore, have been denied a total of 61% of the due amount under the SCSP, and 53% has been

denied to Adivasis under TSP."

Further, the allocation for schemes meant specifically for SC and ST women is shockingly low. As the NCDHR-DAAR review says, "Out of the total allocation of ₹30,850 crore under the SCSP, the allocation for women specific schemes is a meager sum of ₹73 crore – which amounts to 0.23% only! Are Dalit and Adivasi women not in the gamut of 'Sabka Vikas'? The scenario is much the same when one looks at the Budget allocation under TSP - a paltry sum of ₹40 crore i.e., 0.20% only! The only small streak of hope is the allocation of ₹50 crore for SC Girls' Hostel."

These and other cuts were introduced in the assumption that increasing responsibility for these will be taken up by the state governments as they now have a significantly higher share of the Central taxes (raised from 32% to 42%), as per the recommendation of the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission.

However, some crucial questions remain. Will the extra resources accruing to the state governments prove adequate to enable the state governments to make up for the entire cuts in some crucial programmes? Even assuming that they have enough extra resources, will all the state governments have the necessary social commitment to ensure that these resources are used only for social priority programmes?

While more definite answers to these crucial questions will be available only after some time, it appears the cuts imposed by the Central Government may not be made up entirely in many state budgets. Hence the net effect is likely to be that the overall budget available for several high social priority programmes will be less than the previous years.

Any cuts in high social priority programmes like nutrition and housing aimed at meeting the basic needs of vulnerable sections will prove very costly in human terms. Even at a later stage, these cuts should be re-considered so that any tragic consequences for weaker sections can be checked in time. ■

# What's the plan?

*The Planning Commission of India has been replaced with the 'Neeti Aayog' and its CEO and members have been announced. But there is not much clarity yet about the role of this new entity, and also how it will manage the altered fiscal dynamics between the Centre and the states.*



**Anuradha Kalhan**  
is a Fellow at Teen Murti, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML).

**T**HE New Year began with an announcement that the 65 year old practice of planning the economy will be discontinued; the process and even the principle of planning have ostensibly become unnecessary in the project of 'development'. The first eight Plans allegedly inspired by socialism for nation building were promoting the public sector, investing in basic and heavy industries, besides allocating for the social sector. They were using resources to influence expenditures of the state governments so as to promote chosen objectives in line with planned national priorities. The state level plans dovetailed into national plans. Centrally Sponsored Schemes in the social sector urged states to change in certain ways with central assistance. The plans were made with inputs from economists, elected representatives and bureaucrats in a relatively open and consultative manner. They survived governments and maintained consistency in methods of recording plan and non-plan expenditures, and continuity in policy. Planning survived liberalisation and economic reforms of the 1990's, but by the Ninth Plan in 1997, the emphasis on the public sector had become less distinct, it was fashionable to suggest that planning in the country must change, the plan should be of an act of indication and facilitation, not direction. By 2015 it has now become politically feasible to wind down the Planning Commission entirely.

The process of setting targets, harnessing resources, allocating them among sectors, states and reviewing performance is indeed dispensable if the share of public expenditure in all sectors (including social sector, welfare, poverty alleviation) is slated to shrink rapidly, making space for 'free market', 'social enterprise' and random 'growth'. Now in place of the Planning Commission is a Neeti Aayog. Three months later not much is known about its methods and processes, but what is known is that the Neeti Aayog has a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) from America, it has leaders

of 29 states and seven union territories as its members who may meet occasionally (they seem to have met soon after it was announced), it has experts who form a core that reports to the PM directly. This set of thinkers is set to transform India. We are not debating how that is going to happen yet, except the occasional catch phrase 'Cooperative Federalism', 'Make in India', 'Smart Cities' and 'Jan Dhan'. There is no hurry to discuss the names, credentials and experience of the worthy thinkers in the public space.

To add to the list of changes is the recent announcement of the Fourteenth Finance Commission. It recommended a 10% increase in the states' share in the Union taxes to 42%, which has been accepted by the Centre and will give the states an additional ₹1.78 lakh crore in 2015-16. The report of the Commission, headed by former RBI Governor Y. V. Reddy, also recommended a grants-in-aid of ₹48,906 crore for 11 revenue deficit states, including Andhra Pradesh post division, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir, for 2015-16. The total devolution to the states in 2015-16 will be ₹5.26 lakh crore, as against ₹3.48 lakh crore in 2014-15, representing an increase of ₹1.78 lakh crore. The total devolution to states during the five year period up to 2019-20 will be ₹39.48 lakh crore (by then the 12 plan period would have ended). This is being described as an unprecedented bonanza.

Will this allocation eventually compensate states for the loss of revenues from indirect state taxes once the GST is rolled out? Will there be a 13<sup>th</sup> Plan? What will be the cumulative effect of states spending this amount without a plan? What is the Neeti Aayog going to do, particularly in distributing planned and non-planned expenditures between states? Are we heading for federal cooperation or just unplanned competition between states that shower fiscal incentives on investors? The first casualty of an unplanned future may be exactitude. ■



## IMMORTAL COMIC CHARACTERS

## The Phantom

Deep in the African jungles, he is known as the Ghost Who Walks. The Phantom, as generations of readers all over the world know him, hails from a long line of crime-fighters; he is actually the 21st Phantom, who has vowed, like the others before him, to fight greed, piracy, cruelty and injustice of any kind.

The Phantom first appeared in a newspaper comic strip way back in 1936. Even then, stories of masked crime-fighters like Zorro were popular. However, the Phantom was the first masked hero to appear in a comic strip. He was also the first to wear a skin-tight costume and a mask with no visible pupils. This became a model for later super-heroes like Batman and Spiderman.

Unlike other super-heroes, the Phantom has no super-human powers. He relies on his own wit, strength and skill to fight crooks. The mountain-wolf Devil and horse Hero are his faithful companions in most adventures. Guran, a pygmy belonging to the Bandar tribe, and Rex King, an orphan boy, are the Phantom's loyal aides. Diana Palmer, his wife, and twin children Kit and Heloise, are very much a part of the

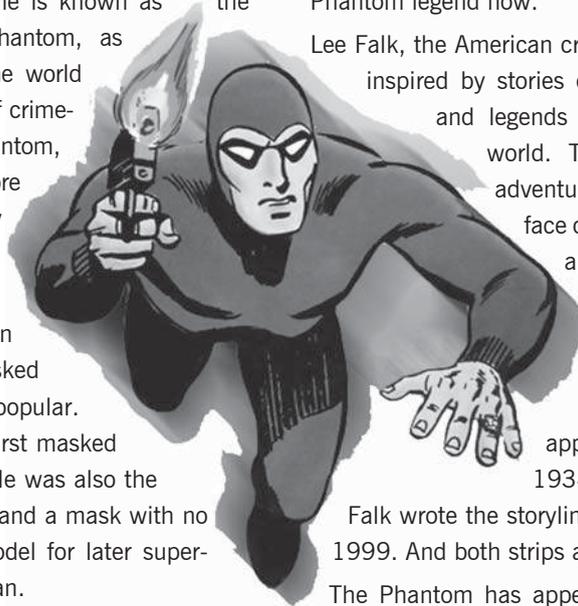
Phantom legend now.

Lee Falk, the American creator of the Phantom, was greatly inspired by stories of Tarzan, Kipling's Jungle Book, and legends and fairy tales from around the world. The Phantom stories are full of adventure and one man's daring in the face of impossible odds. Their simplicity appeals to the young and old alike.

Lee Falk also created Mandrake the Magician, the illusionist who fought international crime in his own way. In fact, Mandrake appeared on the scene as early as 1934, two years before the Phantom.

Falk wrote the storyline for both strips until his death in 1999. And both strips are still running!

The Phantom has appeared all over the world in comic strips in newspapers and magazines, in comic books, albums, video games and in the movies. At Fantomenland, or Phantom Land, in Sweden, you can visit the Skull Cave and other places from the stories. In India, the Phantom is a household name, as the comics are available in many regional languages. It does look as if the Ghost Who Walks will be around for ever.



## HALL OF FAME

## Gerald Durrell

Gerald Durrell was one of the world's most famous naturalists. He was born in Jamshedpur, India, in 1925. His family went back to England after his father's death in 1928.

When Gerald was ten, they moved to the Greek island of Corfu. It was an idyllic time for the young boy who was schooled at home and so he spent a large part of his time observing and collecting all the curious animals he came across.

Scorpions in matchboxes, reptiles in bathtubs and turtles under the bed — there was never a dull moment for his mother and older siblings!

England in the 1940s, Durrell landed a job as a student keeper in Whipsnade Zoo in London. In 1946, at the age of 21, he inherited some money and started his animal-collecting



expeditions to remote corners of the world. He sold the animals he brought back to zoos in England.

Durrell adopted collection methods that were far ahead of his time. He provided only the best food and housing for his specimens after closely studying their habitat and diet. He was against capturing them only for their display value. He was genuinely interested in captive endangered species.

In 1958, Durrell realised a long-standing dream when he founded the Jersey Zoological Park in the island of Jersey off the English coast. By the time of his death in 1995, the zoo had become a pioneer in breeding endangered species and had trained over a thousand biologists, vets, zoo architects and naturalists at its International Training Centre.

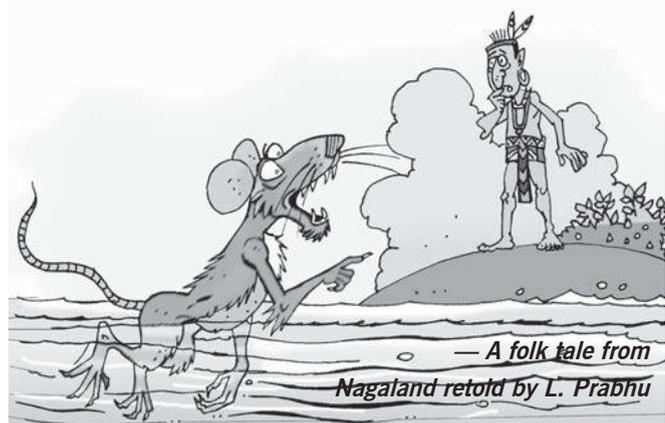


## STORY

## What a Rat!

Nagas believe that rice was introduced to Man by the rat. Back in the days when Man lived on roots and fruits, a rat accosted a Naga and made a deal with him. "I'll show you something that is good to eat," said the rat, "but you will have to promise that when I die you will give me a decent burial." "I promise, I promise, I promise!" said the Naga. "Show me this food!" The rat took him to a place where wild rice was growing. "Learn to cultivate it and you will never go hungry," said the rat. "And remember your promise." Man began to grow rice, and his life took a turn for the better. One day, the rat that had made the deal with the man decided to test his honesty. Seeing the man coming, it lay down in his path and pretended to be dead. "Farewell, my friend," said the man when he saw the seemingly lifeless body of the rat, and going up to the animal

kicked it unceremoniously into a nearby river. "So this is how you keep your promise!" spluttered the rat, swimming out of the river. "I'll never forgive you for this! Any rice you grow I'll eat as much of it as I can, and whatever I can't eat I'll contaminate with my droppings!" And that, they say, is the reason why rice godowns are always infested with rats and why rat droppings constitute such a high percentage of the contaminants in the grain.



## ART BEAT

## Liquid Notes

Have you ever heard water producing the gentle tinkle of musical bells? It is possible only on a unique ensemble instrument called *jal tarang*. It is used mainly in light Hindustani classical music and as an accompaniment in Kathak performances.

'Jal tarang' literally means 'waves in water'. A set of china bowls is filled with water and struck softly with a wooden stick on the rims to get sound. Adjusting the volume of water in each bowl controls the pitch. Large bowls produce low notes while smaller bowls emit high-pitched sounds.

The number of bowls used depends on the melody being played. Artistes normally use sixteen bowls that are arranged in a half circle in front of the player.

Dr. Ragini Trivedi is India's most famous *jal tarang* player.



## MINDBENDER

## Find Out

Eva, Alisha and Abhay study in Class 7, but in three different divisions. All three have got the marks of their History Test. Find out the marks each one got, their surnames and the names of their teachers with the help of the clues below.



- Their marks are 100, 80 and 30.
- Their last names are Mendonza, Baig and Mehta.
- Their teachers are Mrs. Patil, Mrs. Shanmugham and Mr. Jaswal.
- Abhay has failed and his teacher is not a female.
- The student with the last name Mendonza has scored 100 marks and is not a boy.
- Mrs Shanmugham enjoys having Alisha in her class but is happy that Mendonza is not in her class.
- The student with the last name Baig is a girl.

Mrs Shanmugham; Abhay Mehta - 30 - Mr. Jaswal  
Eva Mendonza - 100 marks - Mrs. Patil; Alisha Baig - 80 -

**Answer:**

© 2015 Amrita Bharati, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan

## MAJOR GENERAL K. ZORAWAR SINGH, MC

Exemplary leadership (1920-1994)

**K**UNWAR Zorawar Singh was born in Jaipur on 14 February 1920. His father, Maj. Gen. Bharion Singh of Jaipur State Forces was a keen player of polo. Zorawar studied at the Royal Indian Military School (RIMC) and then joined the Indian Military Academy (IMA). He graduated in 1941 and was awarded the Sword of Honour and commissioned into 16 Cavalry. He was keen to take part in the war and was transferred to Central India Horse (CIH), which was then deployed in Italy. He was posted as second-in-command of B squadron under Major (later Lt. Col.) Gordon Laverick. The regiment went through rigorous training and was allotted to 4 Indian Division for reconnaissance and patrolling tasks. His thirst for action was soon to be satisfied. He took out a patrol on 3 August 1944 towards Casale Vecchia, North West of Arezzo. The area lay between the two frontlines and the objective of the patrol was to determine the location of the German troops. They encountered a German reconnaissance force. The sharp engagement resulted in two enemy dead and three taken prisoners. Zorawar Singh was awarded the Military Cross (MC) for his dashing leadership. In October 1944, the division was moved to Greece to stabilise the situation caused by the withdrawal of German forces. There he met and fell in love with Maria Trichipolous and married her later.

After the war, CIH moved to Ahmednagar and was re-equipped with Stuart tanks. He was promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel and took over the command of the regiment. One squadron was moved to Jalandhar in Punjab for the protection of refugees and quelling of riots. They carried out the duties without any communal discrimination. In October 1947, a large number of tribal warriors from Pakistan supported by their army attacked Jammu & Kashmir. Immediate airlift of Indian Army troops to Srinagar saved the Kashmir Valley. Large tracts of land were lost to the raiders in Naushera- Poonch region. By end February, Kot and Jhangar were liberated after fierce battles and repeated attacks on Naushera were beaten back. CIH was concentrated in Naushera for liberating Rajouri. The 28 miles long fair weather road from Naushera to Rajouri had

been badly damaged by felled trees and boulders. Sections of the road had been narrowed. The diversions were mined. He undertook a reconnaissance by air along with an Engineer officer and concluded that clearing the road would take an unusually long time. Zorawar Singh decided to advance along the River Tawi which was parallel to the road. He carried out a reconnaissance by wading through four feet deep ice cold water and located several crossing places for the tanks.

The advance commenced on 10 April and Chingas, which was half way to Rajouri was cleared by 11 April. Lt. Rane was awarded the PVC for clearing the road blocks and mines under enemy fire. The enemy attack at 5.30 pm was beaten back and Zorawar Singh resumed the advance next morning with one company of 1 Kumaon under his command, and with support of the Indian Air Force. The column reached Rajouri by 5.30 pm. The enemy was confused and bewildered by the arrival of tanks. In the gruelling six hour drive, the tanks had to cross the river eight times. Rajouri was soon cleared. Even our own brigade HQ found it difficult to believe that Rajouri was in our hands now and the message had to be repeated twice more. Whatever could be burnt had been torched. Zorawar Singh had carried out a brilliant tank operation by using the river as an axis of advance. He was the youngest commandant of the regiment and it was to his credit that he demonstrated how mobile and flexible these light tanks could be in a difficult terrain.

In 1948, he was detailed on the Command and General Staff Course at Leavenworth, USA, and after the course, was posted as instructor at the Defence Services Staff College at Wellington. His next assignment was as commander of the tactical wing at the Armoured Corps Centre, and school at Ahmednagar. Upon promotion to the rank of Brigadier, he was appointed military attaché in France. He commanded 20 Mountain Division and the IMA with distinction, and retired in 1969. He passed away on 24 December 1994. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



# NARAYAN DESAI

Simple and dedicated Gandhian (1924-2015)

**N**ARAYANBHAI Desai as he was fondly known as, died on 15 March 2015 in his village Vedchi in Gujarat, at the age of 90. His father was the legendary Mahadev Desai, permanently associated with Mahatma Gandhi as his faithful personal secretary.

When Desai senior died on 15 August 1942, Nayarayan spent his childhood and youth in the Sabarmati and Sevagram ashrams. Gandhi who had famously said that Mahadev Desai became his guru, having first started off as a disciple, treated the young Narayan with a great deal of love. He married Uttara Chaudhury, who was the daughter of freedom fighters Nabakrusha and Malatidevi Chaudhury. The couple moved to Vedchi (some distance from Surat), and began a 'Nai Talim' school. Gandhi had put forth his views on 'Nai Talim' or 'Basic education for all' in 1937. He had observed that mere literacy does not amount to education and that Indian children were not getting a holistic education, subjected as they were to a piecemeal and desultory approach. Physical labour along with academic pursuits, and the teaching of spinning and weaving were all part of 'Nai Talim'.

His close association with the Mahatma led to Narayanbhai using his natural talent as a story-teller to spread the former's message far and wide. He began the "Gandhi-Katha" discourses which ran for a week in Gujarati and English, and were interspersed with music and songs. He held over 100 programmes all over the world, and the Ahmedabad Management Association published the English version in 2011. His work *Maru jivan ej maari vaani (My Life is My Message)*, which is a biography of the Mahatma in four volumes, was translated by another well known Gujarati writer, Tridip Suhrod. Narayanbhai wrote nearly 40 books, his memories of Gandhi driving him to

share them with as many people as he could. His other well appreciated work is *The Fire and the Rose* - a biography of his father, Mahadev Desai.

Narayanbhai participated in Vinoba Bhave's 'Bhoodan Movement' and was also a supporter of Jayaprakash Narayan's 'Total Revolution' (*Sampoorna Kranti*) movement.

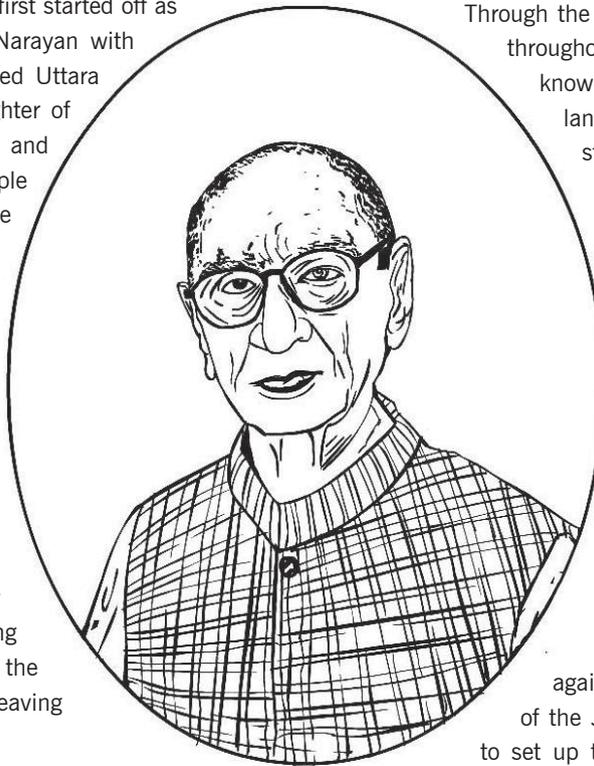
At all times, it was Gandhi and Gandhi's ideas and views that he tried to disseminate and bring to fruition.

Through the Bhoodan Movement he travelled throughout Gujarat on foot, getting to know it intimately and also collecting land for Vinoba's campaign. He also started a magazine to popularise the Bhoodan message called *Bhoomiputra*. As head of JP's (Janata Party's) 'Shanti Sena' (Peace Brigade), he taught young people and volunteers how to carry the campaign far and wide. He later set up the 'Peace Brigade International' and was also elected Chair of the 'War Resisters International'. He went on to win UNESCO's International Peace Prize.

He was an ardent protester against the Emergency and was part of the Janata Party movement going on to set up the Institute for Total Revolution in Vedchi. His admirers pointed out that he fought against all violence - not the just the physical manifestations like riots and wars, but also economic and social violence.

Like his father, he made it his life's mission to popularise the Mahatma's ideas and messages. But unlike his father, he was granted a long life and he used it to the best possible advantage, taking part in the movements and campaigns that shaped and formed India in the past decades. ■

– OIOP



# NAMDEO DHASAL

Revolutionary literateur (1949– 2014)

**I**N the end, it is Namdeo Dhasal's poetry that defines him, defines his political initiatives and actions. Though without the fire that raged in him about the life and conditions of not only Dalits, but also the working class of Mumbai, his poetry would not have throbbed and disturbed the way it did. Reading him was never and is not an experience to calm the nerves, reading him is to be left shaken and provoked, perhaps to even have many of your fond illusions brutally shattered. He did that with great style and sophistication; make no mistake, his poetry might be about subjects no one had considered "poetic" before, but it was nuanced, the thought process complex and at all times, it forced you to engage, to feel, to be involved.

His family (belonging to the *Mahar* caste) moved to Mumbai from Khed, Pune (Maharashtra), when he was six years old. His father Laxman Dhasal worked in a butcher's shop and the family lived close by in Kamathipura, the red light area. Dhasal grew up among those who lived in the direst circumstances, and it gave him an insight into human nature that enriched his poetry. He drove a taxi for a living for some time, formed the 'Tiraskrit Naari Sanghatana' (Association of Loathed Women), and later as his voracious reading grew, got interested in politics. Along with other young men, he formed the 'Dalit Panthers'. The latter galvanised the Dalit movement in Maharashtra that had stagnated under the burden of self serving leaders. This group (many of them poets and writers too), breathed new life not only into the Dalit movement, but also "Dalit literature". Their anger at the misery of the marginalised and the shunned fired both, their writings and their political acts.

Dhasal married Mallika, the daughter of Maharashtra's beloved poet Shahir Amir Sheikh. She is a poet and writer

too, and though their marriage was a turbulent one, they remained together until his death.

Entirely self-taught, Dhasal read and interacted with Socialists and Marxists and politicians of the other parties in Maharashtra too. After his poetry (translated into English by friend and poet, the late Dilip Chitre) got national and international acclaim, he was interviewed and written about extensively. V. N. Naipaul wrote about him as did a number of

Western journalists, fascinated by what he and his poetry represented. Dhasal's political career took some turns which were controversial and as would be obvious, he had a lot of critics who did not mince words while talking about him.

But as mentioned above, it was as a literary genius that Dhasal will be remembered as, even though his politics nurtured his literary work. *Golpitha* (1972) created an upheaval that is rarely credited to a poem. The language shocked many, but with it began Dhasal's use of Marathi as the language had never before been used.

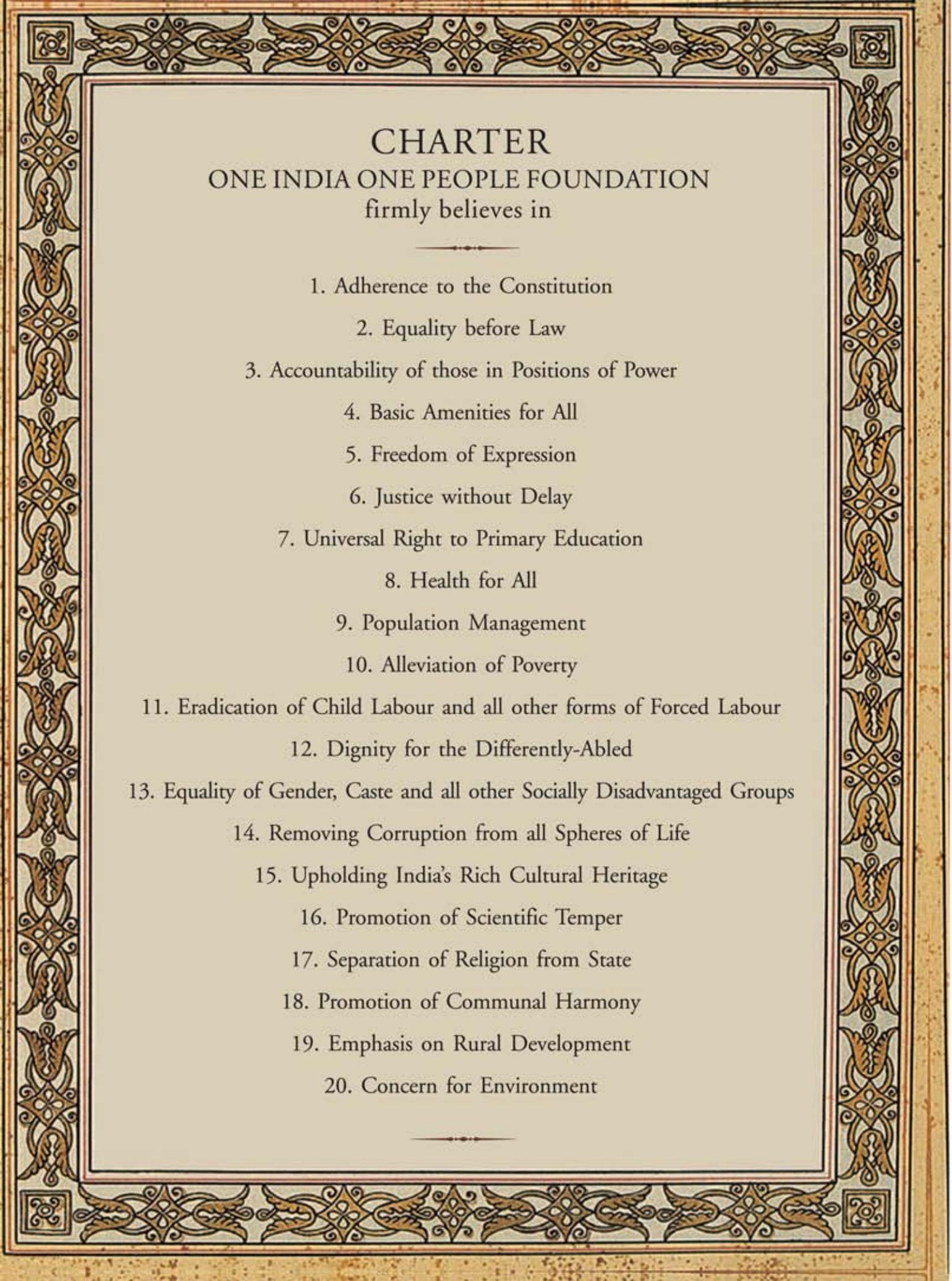
No clichés, no nice-sounding phrases - instead, as has been said, it exposed the "underbelly" of Mumbai as the elite had never before experienced. It made his reputation and other works followed: *Golpitha* (1973), *Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi* (1981), *Khel* (1983), *Moorkh Mhataryane dongar halvle*, *Ya Sattet Jiv Ramat Nahi* (1995), *Mi Marale Suryachya Rathache Sat Ghode*, *Tuze Boat Dharoon Mi Chalalo Ahe*. He received a lot of recognition and awards and was also awarded the Padma Shri.

Dhasal lost his long battle with colorectal cancer at the age of 64, but not before he had thoroughly shaken up the comfortably entrenched literary traditions. ■

– OIOP



(Sketches of Great Indians by C.D. Rane)



CHARTER  
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION  
firmly believes in

---

1. Adherence to the Constitution
  2. Equality before Law
  3. Accountability of those in Positions of Power
  4. Basic Amenities for All
  5. Freedom of Expression
  6. Justice without Delay
  7. Universal Right to Primary Education
  8. Health for All
  9. Population Management
  10. Alleviation of Poverty
  11. Eradication of Child Labour and all other forms of Forced Labour
  12. Dignity for the Differently-Abled
  13. Equality of Gender, Caste and all other Socially Disadvantaged Groups
  14. Removing Corruption from all Spheres of Life
  15. Upholding India's Rich Cultural Heritage
  16. Promotion of Scientific Temper
  17. Separation of Religion from State
  18. Promotion of Communal Harmony
  19. Emphasis on Rural Development
  20. Concern for Environment
-

# WHO AM I?

- Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?*  
*Am I a youth/senior citizen first or an Indian first?*

*In all cases you are Indian First, Last and Always.  
Be a Proud Indian. Make this country Great, Strong and United.*



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1930 – February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE