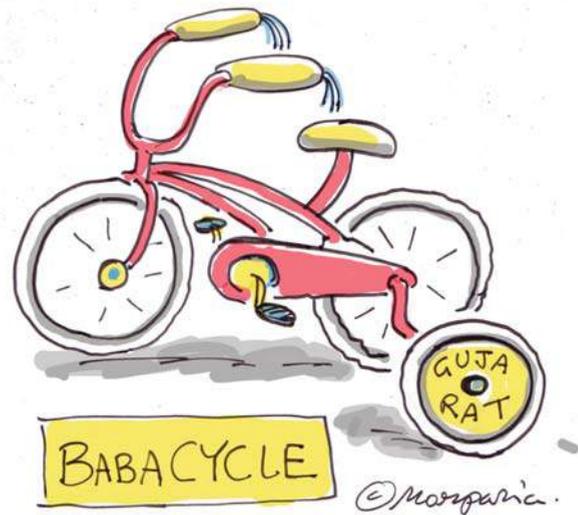




# MORPARIA'S PAGE



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JANUARY 2018

VOL.21/6

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Printed & Published by

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# Right of Social Media?

*While our Constitution guarantees us many freedoms, the rise of the social media and its accompanying conundrums, has presented a set of challenges, which is uncharted territory for the government. Gajanan Khergamker discusses this scenario.*

**F**REEDOM is, arguably enough, the most cherished right of mankind. And, among all the freedoms guaranteed by the Indian Constitution under Article 19, it's the freedom of speech and expression that affects all Indians at the onset. Why, even the exercise of dissent towards the violation of any freedom pivots upon the most basic of them all...speech and expression.

It is this very freedom that primarily guarantees the media, the right to express. Despite being popularly misunderstood, the media in India has no special rights to express as distinct from the others, yet exercises it in myriad ways, tempered with a typical boldness symbolic of the Fourth Estate.

## Media and freedom

It is this freedom that empowers the Fourth Estate to hold its own in face of opposition from a powerful legislature, a hard-nosed executive, or a rigid judiciary. If the 'press', as media was popularly known in the yesteryears, did not exercise the freedom of speech and expression with such alacrity, millions of human interest stories speaking reams of oppression, exploitation, even trysts with freedom struggles and unlawful regimes, would not have seen the light of the day.

It isn't that the press in India has the freedom to write about anything or report on any issue in any manner they like. Like all other freedoms, the one of speech and expression isn't without fetters. Article 19, that guarantees the freedom, also lays down restrictions to the same. So, any act in the exercise of one's freedom of speech and expression is restricted

if it compromises the sovereignty and integrity of the state; security of the state; friendly relations with foreign countries; public order; decency and morality; contempt of court; defamation and incitement to an offence.

And concurrently, the showdowns that members of the media have with the law and polity are triggered by the restrictions whose reasonableness too aren't open to generic interpretation, but are to be examined by a judiciary which alone is qualified to do so.

## The emergence of social media

While the press aka media for all practical purposes had its role chalked out and demarcated for legal purposes, the emergence of the social media, the range of associated tools, and its sporadic use across platforms, has spawned an entirely new and rapidly burgeoning generation exercising the all-pervading freedom of speech and expression, often even without realising the implications of it.

Oddly and not surprisingly, the restrictions to the freedom of speech and expression mostly exercised by the traditional media were peppered with

a sense of logic, equity and common sense, more than the understanding of any lofty jurisprudence, was lost on the new entity – the social media.

The emergence of social media comprised not just the easy availability of platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Tumblr and others, it was a lot more.



These being new entities, the rules of practice and associated pitfalls weren't exactly known and, instead, evolved along the way. Now, as Social Media raced ahead almost concurrently beyond borders working their ways in legal structures, they provided no relief for the Indian state to avail a point of reference. Also, with the range of diversity in reach and use, an Indian context, say in Gujarat, was drastically unique in comparison to a Californian one in the United States of America, and in, say, the county town of Dumfries in Scotland. It was, like they say, each to its own.

So, countries across the world developed their own trends, and concurrently emerged leaders in social media, who laid the foundation for others to follow. Also, their reach and influence spread swiftly and cheaply to the farthest corners of the world. It isn't difficult or far-fetched for a Russian writer now to be influenced by the processes of logic laid down by say a Saudi influencer, and vice versa.

That said, the laws of freedoms, particularly that of freedom of speech and expression too face challenges that they were simply not geared for. The threats to national stability and incitement to violence come now from quarters that are way beyond jurisdiction or control.

So, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria popularly known as ISIS began to 'source and recruit' in Indian states through social media, breaking the law here, but remaining safely beyond legal censure or apprehension owing to their physical position. Now, while the State may not have a law to apprehend a situation that's distinctly unique and sudden in threat, it can bring about an Ordinance or a Bill to address an issue that threatens the democratic fibre of the nation, or simply addresses a legal lacuna. Like the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2013 that came into force following the national outrage after the New Delhi gang rape that occurred on 16 December 2012.

Stalking, even online, attracted penal attention. Now, its reach as an offence could be construed as a violation of the accused's 'freedom of speech and expression'. Social media's scope being overwhelmingly comprehensive and increasingly expansive following the surge in 'shared rights' and 'implicit terms,' the violation too gets shared and extended to parties often even unaware of the extent of their legal liability.

Also, the freedom of speech and expression is directly at risk when organisations, particularly so, publications and media companies, explicitly prevent their employees from posting

anything adverse or against company policy on social media platforms. That said, the best kept secret in the industry isn't really opposed, contested or even resisted for obvious reasons. And, just for the record, the 'bullying' isn't purely an Indian occurrence: Detailed editorial guidelines of the BBC, CNN even *New York Times* lay down the rules for employees in what could be considered a direct violation of one's freedom of speech and expression.

Never in India has there been such a surge in dissent and polarisation across industries. If one were to take social media platforms seriously, there is extreme lawlessness across India where all freedoms also, for all, are flouted almost as a rule. Every second social media post in the last three years has been peppered with fears of censorship, government interference in day to day lives, and an autocratic leadership at the Centre. That said, following every election that everyone in the social media touts as 'the turning point' and 'posed to shock' the government in question, a single party comes to power in overwhelming terms.

This only went on to indicate at the very onset, and now, underline clearly, that social media and most of its players seem sadly oblivious of the electorate's views. There is a sharp disconnect between Social Media fears and the position at the grassroots. While the freedom of speech and expression is said to be curbed and destroyed by the Centre, the allegations towards the same are preposterously, ear-splittingly loud and vitriolic across platforms, defeating their own premise. If the fears were true, there would be silence. The reality across social media is, today, the most belligerent and for politically motivated reasons. Whether it's the murder of a Gauri Lankesh, the stalking of

a Varnika Kunduor the rape of an Indian nun in West Bengal, the social media has exercised in excessively vitriolic manners, the freedom of speech and expression, making wild conjectures and insidious allegations towards a select section, even without basis.

The Centre maintained a silence even while the blames fell flat, and its stand was vindicated by the truth that eventually tumbled out, as has been the case. ■

Gajanan Khergamker is an independent Editor, Solicitor and Film-maker. He is the founder of the International Think Tank DraftCraft.

**The emergence of social media comprised not just the easy availability of platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, Tumblr and others, it was a lot more. These being new entities, the rules of practice and associated pitfalls weren't exactly known and, instead, evolved along the way.**



# Anti- social media?

*Women and children are the most vulnerable to abuse like stalking, bullying, trolling, and offers of friendship via fake profiles, on social media. Manu Shrivastava outlines the dangers.*

**F**OR a very long time now, social media platforms have been in the news for all the wrong reasons. Impersonation, fraud, stalking, blackmailing, identity theft, trolling, pornography, harassment, cyber bullying, violent games, videos of rape and murder, are only a handful of such reasons.

Invariably, these crimes are targeted towards those weaker in the societal hierarchy, mostly women and children, across strata. With more than 196 million social media users in India in 2017, the magnitude of victims and potential targets is concurrently huge.

The last decade and half has witnessed the emergence of some of the most popular social networking and data-sharing services such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, etc. These social media platforms were created to facilitate sharing of information and ideas by means of online communities and social networks.

## The other side of the social media coin

As useful as these services might be, they have concurrently led to a sharp increase in the range of cyber crimes and offences perpetrated against women and children, owing to the anonymity afforded by the virtual world.

The most abused of all social media platforms was the erstwhile Orkut, which has now been replaced by Facebook. The large reach, popularity and anonymity the service provides, makes it very easy for a stalker to trace and harass his prey. Quite recently, a 25-year-old marketing firm executive in Mumbai was arrested for stalking and sexually harassing a 28-year-old bank manager on Facebook. The accused had even created a fake profile to stalk the victim. What had started as a regular harmless conversation soon led to the accused posting lewd posts and obscene pictures on the woman's Facebook profile. He was arrested.

In another instance, in Udaipur, things turned pretty ugly



The smorgasboard of social media sites

for a 17-year-old student when she received an anonymous message on Instagram carrying her morphed pictures – her face on a naked body. Her ordeal did not end there. When she finally managed to file a complaint after shuttling between police stations, the police officer rebuked her asking why she had put up her photos on social media in the first place, and that she should delete her accounts to be safe. It's important for the police too to be apprised of the law and the freedom of women to post what they want online, without the fear of being stalked or attacked. Merely deleting accounts and hiding one's profile doesn't solve the issue. In this instance, the victim's sister – a journalist by profession – intervened and the police had to act. The risks of personal information and images being misused by such offenders is only increasing with every passing day.

## The curtain of anonymity

It is important to understand that cyber space is never completely disconnected from the real world, and all information one puts on social media accounts can and is used to stalk in the real world. Left unaddressed, stalking leads to rape, murder, acid attack and other gruesome crimes. Trolling, which is a recent phenomenon, is growing fast, and from what starts as criticising a woman for her views and

opinions has now snowballed into threats of rape, murder, acid attack not just limited to the woman, but extends to her family too. Cyber bullying is a testimony to the crude chauvinist mindset towards vocal and opinionated women, fuelled by the anonymity provided by social media.

Stalking is not the only crime made easy by social media. Often, perpetrators create fake profiles to impersonate as 'acceptable' profiles to get in touch with young girls and women. Facebook is the most widely misused platform for impersonation and fraud. Gullible and trusting women often reveal information in conversation with imposters, making themselves more vulnerable.

The information a person decides to put on his/her social media account is never verified. This means a fraudster may put any information without being caught. If a girl or woman is not vigilant or aware of the risks of interaction with strangers on social media, she may easily be fooled by misleading and fraudulent profiles. Social media communities and groups such as those masquerading as music groups, education groups, self-help groups, are rife with self-proclaimed 'experts' offering their 'guidance'. It isn't a matter of surprise that neither are the 'experts' authentic nor is their intention to 'guide'. The targets almost always are girls from distant towns who once entertaining discussions of 'topics of mutual interest' are conveniently misled and fooled into entering nefarious associations. The fear of social exposure and loss of reputation ensure they remain in a quagmire. There is an acute need to expose such elements and prosecute them by laws which need awareness and application.

Matrimonial websites that provide 'social networking' services for a niche group of users i.e., those seeking a partner or spouse, are ripe for felons creating fake profiles and impersonating recklessly. In these cases, fraudsters – often married, divorced and elderly – create profiles mostly as 'Single NRI' men looking for a suitable bride, and gain the trust of women with the promise of marriage.

The women are then duped for money or tricked into entering physical relationships. Such incidents have been increasing at an alarming rate. In Pune, for example, the first six months in 2017 registered 54 such cases of duping through matrimonial websites. Parental and societal pressure for marriage and the prevalent notion of single women being loose and 'available' often push them into believing such men and fall victim.

## Need for stricter laws

In the absence of stricter laws and awareness, it will always be risky to put information, images and videos on social media. Most women do not see the risk or think of the possibility of a 'friend', 'mutual friend', 'relative' or even 'family' stalking them. The latest Facebook feature of 'Profile Picture Guard' only prevents downloading of the profile picture. Privacy settings may prevent access of data especially images to 'public' but do not stop a 'friend' from downloading the images.

This access to personal images puts a woman at risk in situations of discord with family or discontinuation of a romantic relationship. An 'ex' may conveniently use personal photographs to blackmail a woman to establish physical relations, continue with the relationship, or prevent her from moving on. This is what happened with a 22-year-old woman in Noida whose ex-boyfriend posted their intimate photographs on Facebook after their breakup.

Stalking by one's family is a lot more common than what statistics suggest. Because of the fear of victim shaming and lax attitude of authorities calling stalking by one's family as a 'personal matter', most women do not talk about or report harassment by family members. Instances of broken families posting 'family' photographs to project normalcy despite loud and public objections by the woman, are commonplace occurrences. This is done to mislead extended family, relatives and friends, often to the discomfort of the woman who

may have severed ties with a dysfunctional family.

While most cyber-crimes are committed through social media and are targeted towards women, children are prime targets too. In 2015, the NCRB data stated 1,540 cases of online child sexual abuse had been registered between 2013 and 2015. A Chennai-based NGO fighting against child sexual abuse reported that 99% of cases it received had an online component.

A major obstacle in the implementation of law is the hesitation among victims and family members in reporting cases, arising from social stigma and an acute distrust in the enforcement agency and legal processes. ■



Manu Shrivastava is a Media Legal Researcher with Draft Craft International, and co-convenor of 'The Woman Survivor' initiative that documents abuse of women and children within families.

**The information a person decides to put on his/her social media account is never verified. This means a fraudster may put any information without being caught. If a girl or woman is not vigilant or aware of the risks of interaction with strangers on social media, she may easily be fooled by misleading and fraudulent profiles.**

# Addicted for life!

*When we live and breathe social media, and our reason to get up and get through the day is to attain social media nirvana, er, attain the most 'likes' for our posts and photos, then surely it must be encouraged, says Nivedita Louis, somewhat tongue-in-cheek. Or, is she serious?*

**R**UBBING your eyes, you are trying to bring into your focus the world around you. As always, your eyelids continue their non-cooperation movement, rolling out of focus. When you finally open your windows to the world, your system gets booted slow, but steady. Your fingers slip under the pillow trying to get hold of your lifeline that plays hide and seek. You scan the bedside table and find your window panes- ah, that set of glasses. You can curse poor self for falling bait to the words of the optometrist- "Ma'am, you know...you look like Mia Khalifa when you wear these glasses". Once the glass is ready, perched fine on your aquiline nose, the hunt for your 'lifeline' continues. You finally spot it under your cot, must have fallen down your sleepy form the moment you shut eye, after your 'adventurous' day.

## A digitally enhanced day

You key in the password to freedom on the touch screen. Why should passwords always be the wedding day, your honour? That's actually a ploy to remember your anniversary, simple! Your day begins as you pout for the "early morning-not brushed my teeth, yet gorgeous" selfie. Posting it in Instagram and Facebook, you wait for hearts to show up on the screen. The more the hearts, the brighter will be your day! The art of winning hearts in 'insta' is a cake-walk, all you have to do is scroll up and down your feed and keep pressing the heart icon for anything under the sun posted by your peers. Ufff...the preen peer pressure! Fifty likes in Facebook and fifty hearts in Instagram later, you brush your

teeth like mad and join the run for the mundane.

It is cooking, packing lunch, waking the children, getting them ready to school and seeing them off in a record time, as you keep flitting online now and then. "Whatever happened to Gujarat elections?", "Why Mrs. Sharma isn't online this morning?"



**One of the dangers of our obsession with social media! Look where you go!**

kind questions pop up in your subconscious as you chop the potatoes. The next ritual is the "Good Morning" motivation. You google for GIF images where sun rises, birds sing, flowers bloom and send it as a broadcast message through Whatsapp. You forgot to add your bank manager's first cousin's second daughter to the list that you remember now and

dutifully add her, as the potato gravy on the stove has turned to roasted potatoes with a dash of charcoal!

Your commute to office is filled with songs from Saavn.com. Your headphones are glued to your ears as you cross the road to your office, oblivious to the world around you. In the process, you have created a traffic jam for half a kilometer, either side! Of course, your lifeline dangles in your hand, your eyes scanning for the latest Rahman hits. The office conundrum gives you the creeps as you hang your head down and scroll for more 'juicy' information. Files may come and files may go, your eyes are there only for your lifeline. You admire the cookery sites, watching Hebbar's Kitchen for umpteenth time wondering where the poor girl might have learnt cooking. Probably she didn't have a smart phone! As you read fashion magazines online and start adding to cart plus sized lingerie from random sites, you imagine you are indeed Megan Fox. Alter ego, guys, alter ego!

Your “office tea time” selfie which you edited and photoshopped has brought in a hundred likes by lunch time, and your lunch box photo has 20 comments on “How to make it?” The poor husband now in front of his lunch box would be wondering “How did she cook it?” or rather, “What did she cook?” Your evening commute is again filled with musical notes as you post status on “Who is the better composer? Rahman or Burman?” World War #3 ensues on your Facebook wall and boy, you are happy to have kick started a #save burman campaign. It is again *chapatti-s* and *dal* (overcooked - as you were busy reading the gossip columns of the day)

Children? Ah...what do they do? Do they ever listen to the mother? All they are interested in are their video games and PS4. Their love for PS4 always tops the chart, followed closely by temple run. They hole up in their rooms as you yell and shout ‘dinner time’. The dining table is filled with clicks of four mobile phones – of everyone in the family. Poor *dada* and *dadi* will be munching the ‘super soft’ *chapatti-s* with disdain. Post dinner is the time for ‘night songs’ and ‘good night’ messages on Whatsapp groups. Whatsapp groups, did I say? If there must be another World War in this world, it must be because people have taken WA groups seriously and have accumulated nuclear power in their backyards to fight in the ‘alumni’ groups! School groups are the funniest of groups, because everyone there still feels they are in V Std C section, waiting for the teacher to arrive and say a sing-song “Good Morning”, thumping chests and hitting each other in a free-for-all! Maturity exits the moment you enter one such group. Sanity leaves you the moment you start two topics – one, religion, and the other, politics. The war between religions in random Whatsapp groups can give the crusaders a run for their rusty blades.

Being a member of 1499 groups, you can really wonder at the time of the day ‘Good Mornings’ are being sent all across the globe. Your American Silicon Valley dream guy will be ‘good morning’ (yawning) at your dinner time. The faux Aussie would be wishing you a good night as you roll your *chappati-s*. So far, yet so near. Post a meme on economic reforms and all hell will break lose in the group with you

wondering- “Hey Ram”! You love the antics of the groups so much that you place all 1499 of them under MUTE option for a year, to give you piece...oops, peace of mind. One on one communication has become a rarity, you feel like you are ‘performing’ to an audience, rather than ‘speaking’ to someone close.

And oh the language you use - ‘How are you?’ and ‘What the hell?’ brings a leer in the social media. Know it or not, like it or not, it is hru, wth, idk, brb. Remember you are always the ‘in’ girl, not the 30-40 something mother of two when in social media. Posting pictures clad in wranglers, sporting Ray-bans and free hair roaming all over the place like tree branches and roots of exorcised trees isn’t going to help you or your 40-plus friends! Keep the STB on. Ahem...that’s ‘Scratch The Back’ of your friends. It’s a mutual exercise where you try to lose weight scratching each other’s back for ‘likes’ and comments. She might well look like a meringue in a wedding gown sporting her Anarkali. Do NOT scroll. STOP. Look. Or don’t even look, hit the like button and post a drool emoji. That about does it. She remains your dogmatic angel, hitting likes and posting ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’ at the mere wagging of your finger!

Social media is here to stay. So are we the three to four decade vintage women here! We will be posting our cookery debacles, our make-up antics and party tragedies. You better like them, get used to them. Rain or shine, it is Facebook and Whatsapp all the way! We are rediscovering ourselves – painting, hand work, art, writing – all those hidden dreams slowly emerge from under the haziness. Playing it safe and sound, I wish all my 30-40-something friends, a happy time in social media. Learn the ropes, enjoy your stay here and cherish the new found ‘lifeline’ to happiness. Tweet happily, without inhibitions, and forward carefully. It is after all our life, babes! ■

**Your “office tea time” selfie which you edited and photoshopped has brought in a hundred likes by lunch time, and your lunch box photo has 20 comments on “How to make it?” The poor husband now in front of his lunch box would be wondering “How did she cook it?” or rather, “What did she cook?” Your evening commute is again filled with musical notes as you post status on “Who is the better composer? Rahman or Burman?” World War #3 ensues on your Facebook wall and boy, you are happy to have kick started a #save burman campaign.**



Nivedita Louis is a writer, blogger and social activist by choice. Bitten by the travel bug, and smitten by nature, she loves travelling and cooking. She blogs at [www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com](http://www.cloudninetalks.blogspot.com).

# The challenge

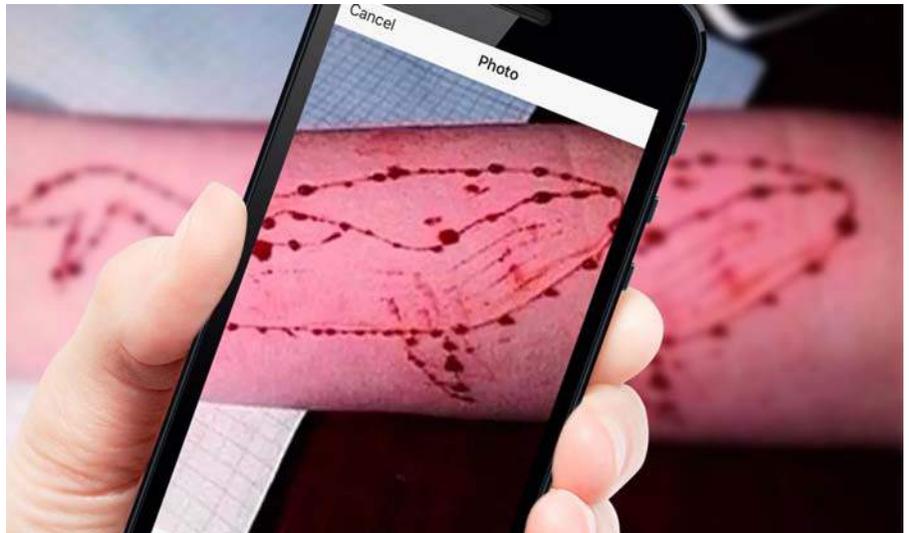
*Social media is a double-edged sword, which must be used with caution, says **Karn Ragde**, while discussing the online game Blue Whale Challenge, which endangered so many young lives across India, and the world, last year.*

I happened to read an interesting article a few days ago which was an excerpt of an interview by the father of the 'String Theory', Stephen Hawking, who very beautifully enunciated the grave dangers that the human race will face if 'Artificial Intelligence' (AI) takes over. Well, to put it bluntly AI has already started making its mark on people, compelling them at times to act in an inhumane, uncivilised and ignorant fashion. I find no difference between AI and social media. For one, they ask whether the biggest boon or bane of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is social media?

For youngsters like me, who grew up in the cross-over period of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century can safely say that we spent many an hour in front of video games which went on to become computer games and then mobile games, but never did we have this unsettling urge of wanting to build our lives around these digi-toys.

While Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn have taken over every segment of the market may it be research, information, marketing, projections and goals, networking, it is also a fact that the social media has become a curse to today's generation. With applications like Blue Whale and other such life threatening apps created by intelligent-psychopaths, it is not long before there will be a mass genocide in the name of social media.

While we have a right to speech, we forget we have a duty to respect every individual's personal and professional integrity. Social media has gone ahead and wiped that slate of rights and duties clean, leading to



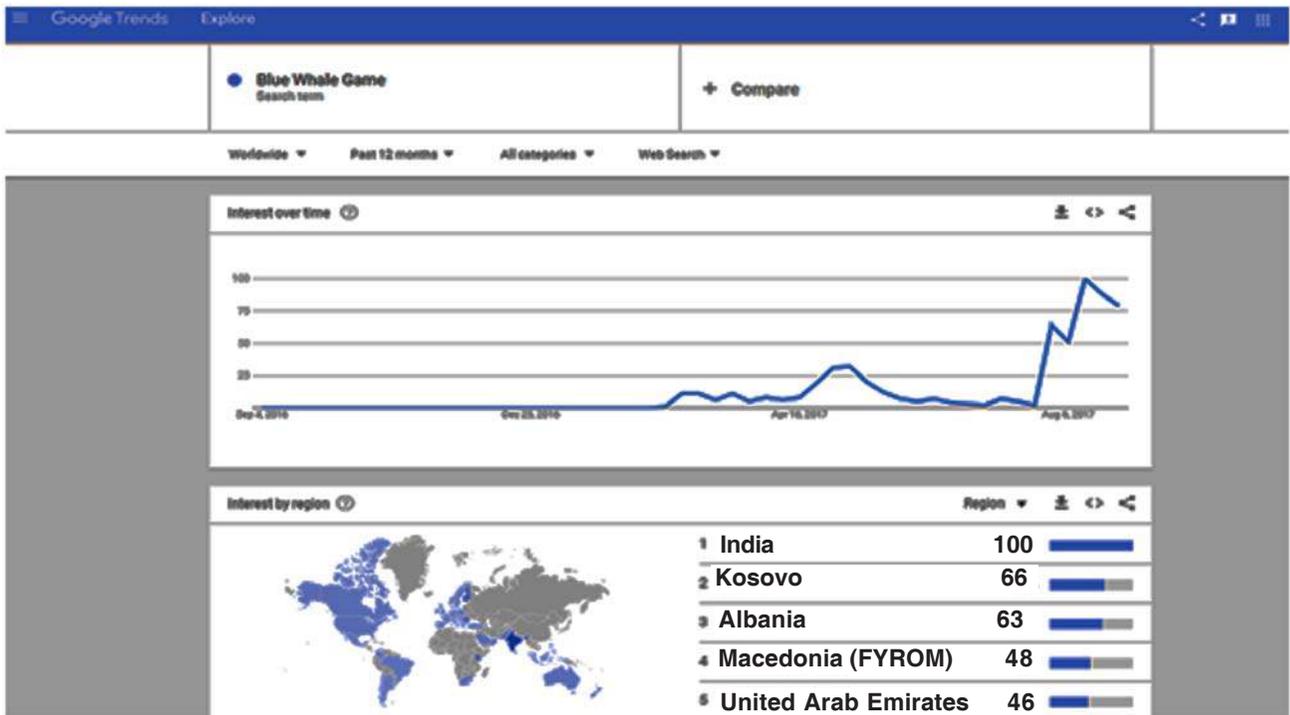
**The Blue Whale Challenge, a horrific online game targeted at youngsters**

**While Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn have taken over every segment of the market may it be research, information, marketing, projections and goals, networking, it is also a fact that the social media has become a curse to today's generation. With applications like Blue Whale and other such life threatening apps created by intelligent-psychopaths, it is not long before there will be a mass genocide in the name of social media.**

derogatory remarks being made against one another openly on a platform, on which people probably broadcast their most miniscule moves and activities.

## **A horrific challenge**

In the wee hours of 2017, we witnessed what was nothing less than a cataclysmic series of events strung together by a thread called 'Blue Whale', an online virus infecting, undeletable, game for android users, which challenged a person to 50 tasks, most of which were unimaginable, including the challenge of etching a blue whale on one's arm using a blade, and ultimately, committing suicide. Astonishingly, this curse of an application took the lives of nearly 150 children across the world. On 21<sup>st</sup> August 2017, *Times Now* reported an article which showcased that India



A table showing countrywide download of the Blue Whale game

(Source: <http://indiatoday.in>)

ranked 1<sup>st</sup> for the highest search of Blue Whale worldwide as stated by Google Data. Below is an excerpt of the news report along with a chart which depicts the Blue Whale download in India:

*“Until recently, Kolkata was leading the list of world cities that sees the highest number of Blue Whale Challenge related searches. Right now, Kochi has taken over the top position, with Kolkata moving down to Number Three and Thiruvananthapuram at Number Two. The most grim news of all is, of the top 50 cities in the world where the highest number of Blue Whale Challenge related searches are done, the top 32 positions are held by Indian cities. At this point, the list begins with Kochi (which is seeing a 100 per cent surge), and has cities like Indore, Delhi, Gurgaon, Mumbai, Bhopal, etc. up to the 32<sup>nd</sup> position. Dubai comes in on 33<sup>rd</sup> position, followed by Bucharest, Abu Dhabi, Helsinki, etc”- Times Now*

**Access 24/7!**

Another key feature of using social media is unlimited access. People can send as many messages as they please and stay connected 24/7. We only have to pay a fixed rate (either monthly or annually) for the internet connection. For instance, companies such as Rogers provide high speed

internet connections for the lowest possible prices. Whereas, we have to pay a fixed rate per minute if we contact people by cellular phone. Thus, social media is less expensive. On the other hand, social media has changed the definition of privacy. In the past, mankind was careful not to share any private information over the internet. But now we have become so accustomed to social media that we provide all our private information to our loved ones across the internet. This can lead to an identity theft which can pose a serious problem in our lives. Strangers can steal your money, property and other assets in an instant. Therefore, we must be careful not to disclose our private information on the internet.

All in all, we have to weigh the pros and cons of social media and decide for ourselves whether we wish to use or misuse social media. ■



**Karn Ragade is an English Language and Literature Facilitator and Examiner at the international baccalaureate. He is also a social activist who enjoys writing on various subjects in his free time.**

# Truly fake

*There is news, and then there is ‘fake news’ today, the lines between them often blurring. How does one distinguish between the two, especially when fake news comes so authentically packaged? We have to be alert to the source and check the veracity, especially when the news concerns outrageous claims, says **Ketaki Nair**.*

**N**EW is supposed to be fact. It's meant to be recently discovered, factual information. So then, isn't the very existence of fake news a strange paradox? And it doesn't merely exist; it's omnipresent, spreading through the world like an epidemic.

And this is no exaggeration. Fake news can be just as deadly and infectious as a widespread disease. For instance, earlier this year in May, a WhatsApp message spread through Jharkhand, warning people about kidnappers and advising them to inform local authorities if they saw any strangers around, as they could be members of this apparent kidnapping gang. Many villagers readily believed what they'd seen on their phones, and went about lynching strangers. Seven innocent people died.

This incident reveals how very dangerous fake news

is, as well as how today social media works like steroids for it. The concept of fake news has always existed, hasn't it? But in the past, it was limited to whispered rumours and gossip. However, now with WhatsApp and Facebook and Twitter and Instagram, it has platforms on which to flourish. The disinformation can spread like wildfire. At the click of a button, it flows from cell phone to laptop to tablet to computer.

## **We believe what we see**

And we believe it. When we see it typed up, complete with Photoshopped images, it automatically gains some degree of credibility in our eyes that can make us believe it and even continue to spread it. The results of this are often bad, if not catastrophic like in the case of the Jharkhand lynching. It could persuade us to consume something that actually

deteriorates our health, purchase faulty goods, or vote for a corrupt politician. Sometimes it's merely an annoyance, like during cyclone Okhi in India. Messages on Facebook and WhatsApp came flooding in, claiming that various roads and highways were blocked, when they were actually perfectly accessible.

The negativity of these kinds of messages also makes us believe them quickly. This might quite possibly be due to our brains' negative bias. We're wired to be more sensitive to

unpleasant news, so that we're able to notice danger more easily, and thus escape it. This means that if we hear that the new 2000 notes have GPS chips embedded in them, we tend to believe it. This means that if we receive the appalling news that Milwaukee County



Sheriff David A. Clarke is a member of the Klu Klux Klan, we tend to believe it. This means that if we get sent a chain message on WhatsApp claiming that batches of Pepsi have been contaminated with cancer-causing human blood, we tend to believe it. And so we thoughtlessly share this news, and let it circulate and reach millions. We don't pause to think and realise that this piece of news has not cited any sources, or really given any indication of being accurate. When we are in real danger, this sort of impulsive reaction is meant to benefit us. If we find ourselves staring in the face of a starving, bloodthirsty lion, leaping into action could save our life. But in the case of being sent a ridiculous defamation of something or someone, leaping into action and forwarding it without a thought, is really not the best idea.

Since it's known that we respond to negative news in this

manner, it's pretty clear why these chain messages are created. In the case of the cancer causing Pepsi message, it could have been cooked up by a rival soda company or someone else trying to drag down Pepsi sales. In politics, fake news is fabricated to destroy a political candidate or beef up the reputation of another.

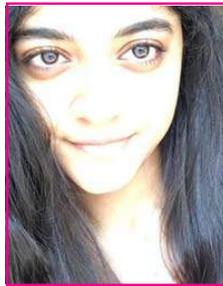
And so President Donald Trump has latched on to fake news as his method to dismiss any reporting that he does not care for. People are aware of the existence of fake news, aware that it circulates quickly and constantly. So it's quite convenient and easy to claim that a piece of news *is* fake. Thus in more than a hundred of his tweets so far, the President of the United States has referred to fake news and attempted to insult numerous media outlets. And he is not the only politician to use this epidemic to reduce the credibility of any article, etc., that portrays him in a negative light. Observers have accused the military in Myanmar of attempting to conduct a genocidal campaign against the Rohingya Muslims, but a security official told *The New York Times* that it was fake news.

And this month, *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party, dismissed important reporting on the increasingly authoritarian Beijing as fake news.

### Combating this trend

Fake news needs to be combated on a war footing. Not only will this prevent any other horrific incidents like the one in Jharkhand, but it will also rid politicians of their new favourite method of undercutting accurate, unbiased media coverage. Not to mention, it would mean no more painful WhatsApp forwards. And honestly, isn't that reason enough?

Luckily it isn't too difficult to find out if what you're reading is fake news or not. If an article or message seems to be a bit too outlandish, check its sources. If they're unreliable or nonexistent, the story could well be fake. And check its author, see if she or he is reputable, or even real. Finally, check how old the story is. Sometimes websites try to make dated, controversial news masquerade as current in an effort to get clicks. If you manage to



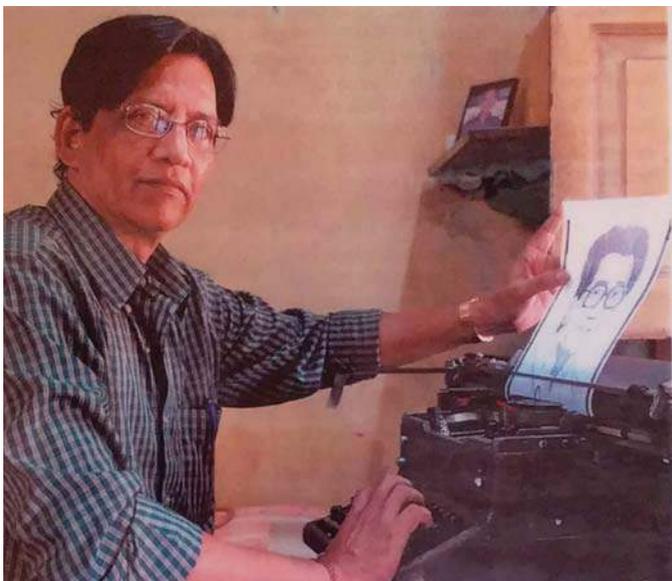
discover that a piece of news is fake, bury it. Don't let it circulate. Otherwise the world will remain a place where people are thoroughly convinced that Kim Jong Un was voted Sexiest Man Alive! ■

Ketaki Nair is a student in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade at the Cathedral and John Connon School, Mumbai. Words are her weapon of choice, and she enjoys writing on subjects varying from socio-political and cultural behaviour, to fashion and make up.

# WHO AM I?



*“Of course, you require a lot of patience and concentration when you are doing a picture on the typewriter. One wrong stroke and your picture is gone.”*



The 102-year-old typewriters, along with vinyl records and vintage synthesisers, have continued to retain their nostalgia-fuelled resurgence in the digital age, through artists who are rescuing it from oblivion, by drawing with it! Mumbai-based **Chandrakant Govind Bhide**, 70, is one such exponent of this innovative art. Drawing on the typewriter might be painstaking, yes, but it is a labour of love for him. He spoke to **A. Radhakrishnan** at length.

**Tell us about your career so far.**

After S.S.C. in 1963, financial constraints deprived me of the opportunity to join the J.J. School of Art. Heeding my father's advice, I learned stenography and typing and acquired typing speed of about 90 wpm (words per minute) with accuracy, in a year and a half. Joining the Esplanade Court as a typist in 1965, I then joined Bombay University and finally in 1967, joined Union Bank of India, from where I took voluntary retirement in 1996 after 30 years.

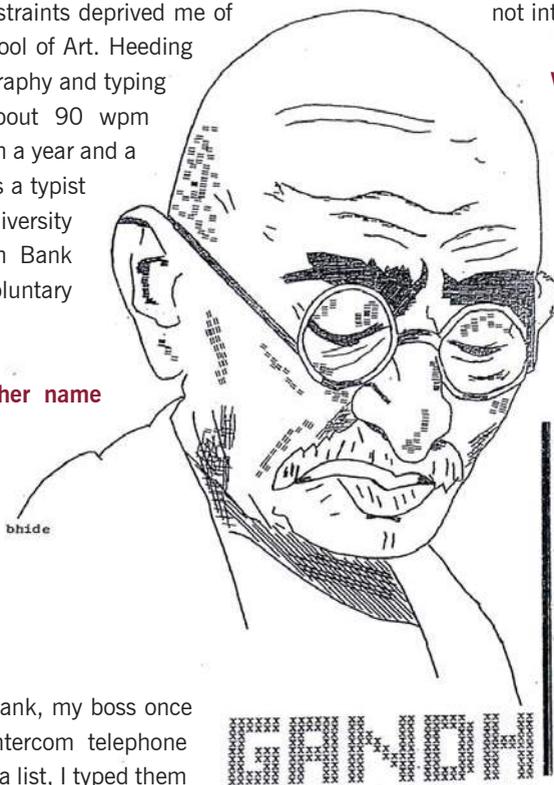
**What is typewriter art? What other name would you give it?**

Drawing pictures/portraits/designs on the manual typewriter using different keys is my forte. You can call it 'Typography'. In Marathi, it is known as *Tankachitra*.

**How did you get into this genre?**

In 1967, after I joined the Union Bank, my boss once instructed me to type a list of intercom telephone numbers. Instead of typing them as a list, I typed them in the shape of a telephone instrument. This inspired me and made me realise that through this medium, I

could develop this art and become an artist. I am not into any other genre of painting or art.



**Who influenced you to take up this art seriously?**

My father encouraged me saying, 'Chandrakant, you wanted to join the J.J. school of Art, but couldn't. Forget the past and get deep into this art form. You will be vindicated'.

**Is there any typewriter artist you look up to?**

No, I don't know anybody following the art form in India, though possibly there might be many.

**What typewriter do you use? What is your typing speed? Any history behind it?**

I am using a Halda typewriter for the last 50 years. I don't know my speed now, but in 1966

it was 90 wpm, with absolute accuracy, like Sunil

Gavaskar's batting! The life of the ribbon depends on the use of typewriter, but it lasts for a minimum two months. Prior to taking VRS, I approached our administration department and requested them to let me purchase the typewriter at any price, as I had used it for so many years. But I was told it was government property. A day before my VRS, I met our Chairman and confided in him my sorrow. As Chief Guest at my farewell function, he mentioned our conversation and said, "Chandrakant, we are allowing you to purchase this typewriter, but for that you have to pay rupee one". I think that was the greatest gift I received in my life. Now that typewriter is like our family member.

**Apart from personalities, do you type draw landscapes or abstract images?**

I have done a few landscapes and greeting cards, as also Olympics signs, the Filmfare trophy, R.K. and Raj Kamal (V Shantaram's) studio emblems, etc.

**Where do you derive the patience to indulge in this art?**

Where there is a will there is a way! Of course, you require a lot of patience and concentration when you are doing a picture on the typewriter. One wrong stroke and your picture is gone. There is no delete key available like in a computer.

**How long does one painting take?**

It takes about 4 to 5 hours, though not continuous, and with many breaks. It is very painstaking. For instance, Dilip Kumar's picture took about six hours.

**Do you do it black and white or also in colour?**

**How many pieces have you done so far?**

Usually the cotton ribbon is in black colour. Silk ribbon is in black and red. I have done some pictures/designs/greetings in black and red colour too. Till date, I must have done more than 150 pictures/portraits/designs/logos.

**Does this art not affect your fingers and general health?**

It's very laborious as you have to keep turning the page all the time to hit the strokes. You have to be very careful. I use my left hand to hold the paper and right hand index finger to type. My hand starts aching after about 15 minutes. It is not possible to make a picture at a stretch. For shading a picture, I make a light or hard touch on the keys. For that purpose, with the left hand you have



**Govind Bhide (right) with the late cartoonist R.K. Laxman**

to hold the rod tightly. Once the picture is ready, you forget everything.

**Doesn't the sound of the typewriter trouble your family?**

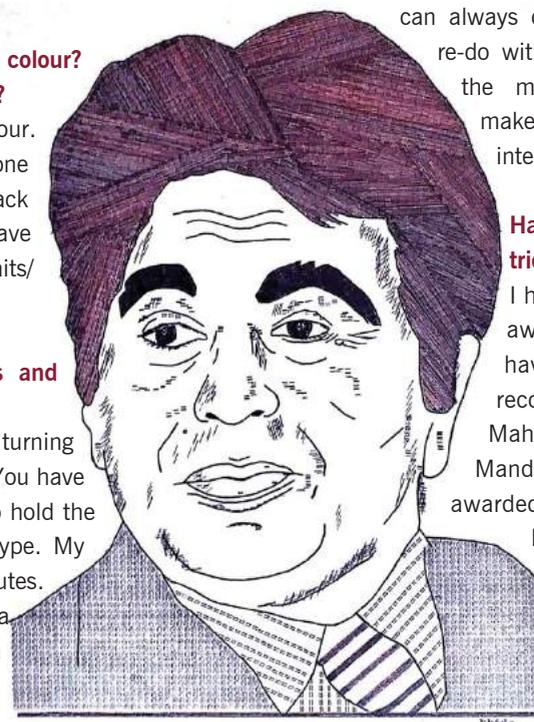
As far as I am concerned, I have been doing this for the past 50 years. No exaggeration, but I must have literally typed lakhs of pages on my typewriter and hence, I am used to this beautiful sound of typing. My family members have never complained about it.

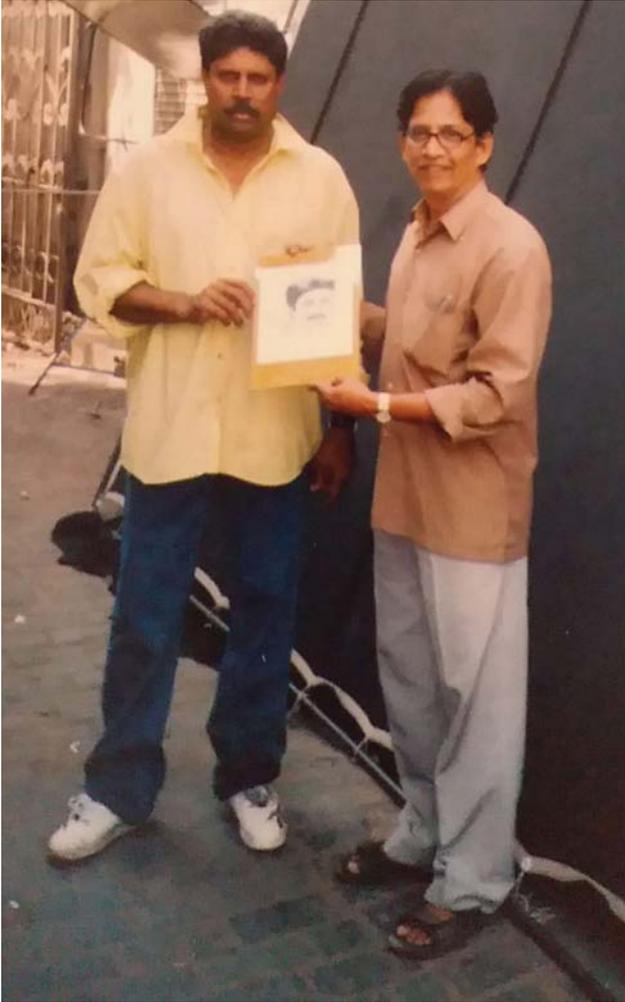
**Why have you not tried to draw on the computer?**

There is no problem in doing pictures with the help of computers, but then it would not be a challenge and so, not much satisfaction. A computer can do anything. You can always delete if you make mistake and re-do with it, but you can't do that with the manual typewriter. That's what makes my work on the typewriter so interesting.

**Have you got awards? Have you tried for Limca or Guinness records?**

I have got more than 20 state level awards for this innovative art. I have not tried for Limca or Guinness records, however. In 1985, the Maharashtra Kamgar Kalyan Mandal, Government of Maharashtra, awarded me "Gunavant Kamgar" Kalyan Puraskar. This award was given to me for outstanding work in the field of banking and for excellence and efficiency in the performance of work and other social activities.





**Govind Bhide with cricketer Kapil Dev**

**What has been the reaction from cartoonists and celebrities?**

Celebrated cartoonists like R.K. Laxman, Mario Miranda, Vikas Sabnis, Suresh Sawant, Prabhakar Bhatlekar, Mangesh Tendulkar, former Mayor of Mumbai Nirmla Samant-Prabhavalkar, and celebrities like Sunil Gavaskar, Bharat Dabholkar, compere Sudhir Gadgil, Dr. Savita Ambedkar, writer Pu La Deshpande, V.P. Kale, Babasaheb Purandare, historian, Behram Contractor (Busy bee) have appreciated my art work, and some have even inaugurated my exhibitions.

**Have you had solo exhibitions? What has been the response?**

Till date, I have had 11 solo exhibitions, four of them sponsored by the Union Bank. Seven were held in Mumbai (including one at IIT Mumbai's 'Mood Indigo' festival). I received tremendous response at all the exhibitions.

**What are your other hobbies?**

I have drawn about 800 Spell-O-Fun on computer with

different fonts. It is a CD prepared in the form of a slide show. On one page there are two words. Each page is displayed for seven seconds; then the next page appears again with two words. The 45 minutes CD has instrumental background music by my good friends, and favourite music directors Shankar-Jaikishan. I also have autographs of many famous personalities like actors, sports persons, etc.

I have also a collection of about 100 unique number currency notes e.g., 123456, 111111, 222222, 888888, 000001.1000000 and so on.

**Have you been interviewed by the media?**

Many newspapers and magazines have featured articles and interviews on me and my art. All India Radio, Mumbai, interviewed me after I received the "Gunavant Kamgar" Kalyan Puraskar in 1985, as also E-TV Marathi. Apart from other interviews, ABP Maza interviewed me live for about 16 minutes on the occasion of my 70th birthday on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2016.

**Any other information you would like to share?**

In the year 1993 on their Silver Jubilee, All India Bank Depositors' Association headed by the late consumer activist M.R. Pai honoured me publicly for outstanding work done by me in compiling exhaustive circulars/instructions/guidelines issued by the Government of India from time to time. In 1995, the Chairman, Union Bank of India, awarded me ₹11,000/- for outstanding work of compilation.

Godrej & Boyce Co. recognised my art by publishing an article about me in the book *With Great Regards – The Story of Typewriter in India*, edited by senior journalist Siddharth Bhatia. They have also included my interview in a short documentary film on the typewriter. Earlier, in 2010, the Union Bank recognised my work by including an article on me in the book titled *Bankers Beacon – The story of Union Bank of India* compiled by the late journalist M.V. Kamath.

**Anyone in the family who has taken to your art?**

No. Even my son is not interested as he is too busy with his job. ■



**A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short story writer who loves to write on anything under the sun or moon and make people happy.**

**KNOW INDIA BETTER**



Pic by courtesy : Rina Mukherji

## *Miniature clay craft of* **Krishnanagar**

Text & photos: Manjira Majumdar

The town of Krishnanagar in West Bengal is known for its potters who excel at miniature clay modelling. They lovingly carve out statues of goddess Durga, Jesus Christ, the nativity scenes, Bengal rural scenes, or just commonplace articles, with much exquisite attention to detail. But like most traditional crafts, this too is in danger of getting lost in the mire and urgency of modernity. Newer materials and designs are replacing clay, and yet another tradition is in imminent danger of being lost to the march of time.



**Vaishnavite devotees moulded in clay; a Krishnagore speciality**

**K**RISHNANAGAR, also spelt Krishnagore locally, is a small town, the capital of the district of Nadia, Bengal. The entire district witnessed an upsurge of the Vaishnavite movement in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal, due to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is revered among this sect of Krishna (considered an *avatar* of Lord Vishnu) devotees. Known largely for the sect's preference for vegetarian fare, the people of the region swear by milk products. An array of delectable sweets, *shorbajha* and *shorpuria*, made with milk, *chana* (cottage cheese) and cream are the area's unique specialities. During the reign of Maharaja Krishna Chandra Roy, (1710-83), art and crafts flourished, but today, the grand ruins remind us of his grander palace.

As the Krishnanagar local whistle stops at the busy station, the town bears the look of any congested small town of India. Phulia and Shantipur subdivisions within the district are better known for the Bengal cotton handloom *sari*-s. The ISKCON temple at Mayapur, dedicated to Radha Krishna, and where a sizeable number of foreign devotees in saffron robes, dance to the chants of *Hare Rama Hare Krishna*, is a 40-minute bus ride away.

### **A 'miniature' talent!**

Krishnanagar has a few hidden talents, gradually

vanishing with the passage of time. One of these is miniature modelling with clay by the community of potters or *kumbhakara*-s, to produce dolls and other figures. The potters as a community, are found all over the state, but in Krishnanagar, their artistry is collective as it is individualistic, and has been for generations. They are naturally gifted – the artistry passing from father to son and daughters too, except the latter, not unlike other artisans in Bengal, weavers included, help mostly in the miscellaneous work.

Exquisitely crafted, these mud dolls and figures in various sizes have delighted connoisseurs and layman alike, with their real life depictions of life around them. Figurines of gods and goddesses, Bengal rural scenes of thatched houses and palm trees, cobblers, priests, miniature eskimos, birds, animals, fruits, vegetables, etc., are replicated with precision and consummate artistry. The detailing of these figures, especially in their clothes and accessories are brought about by tools to create that single or double pleat, a crease here and there, and with a few strokes, life is infused into their eyes.

### **The tale of the putul**

*Putul* is what a doll is known as in Bengal, and motorised cycle rickshaws gaily painted in reds, greens and yellows take me to Putulpatti, for a price. It is late afternoon, so



**The grand entrance to Ghurni**

Pic by courtesy : Rina Mukherji

several of the shops are shut. The larger area is known as Ghurni. The few shops that are open are manned by ladies. As one of them, Shikha Pal, married to Subodh Pal, says, “My husband models items which we sell through this shop.” The shelves are somewhat crammed with figurines of all shapes and sizes. Not all have the perfect finish. I learn that sculptors are a class apart, and most of the bulk work is done by craftspersons from the same community, but down the hierarchy. But for that perfect finish, it is the pair of hands of the *mritshilpi* (*mrit* = mud and *shilpi* = artiste).

Another elderly lady in the shop next door says her son has gone to fetch her grandchildren from school, so she is minding the shop for him. No longer are the craftsmen, stripped to the waist, sitting behind the potters’ wheel. Over the years, many have moved away seeking employment in figure making or in other areas. One or two storied houses have come up in a small lane, with about 20 odd shops, located on the ground floor. Those who can afford have hired workmen to meet orders for different statues, which are crafted in what they refer to as their private studios. The life-size figures are made on the outskirts, in a place called Bhatjangla on the National Highway. There are a few shops scattered around the town, taking orders or supplying pieces to the few shops in the city, which continue to stock them in small quantities. If there are any exports no one wants to divulge any details.



**A nativity scene made in clay**

### **Blessed by the Pope**

The stone tablet in front of the Pauls, the anglicised version of the surname Pal, is engraved with the name Sambhu Paul, 1976 ‘papal blessed’ sculptor. He had depicted a Bengal village scene which was blessed by Pope John Paul IV. One would have thought it was for a statue of Jesus Christ, of which there are several in his shop. Stocked are various images of Jesus Christ on the cross, or just busts and complete sets of nativity. The nativity sets move well during Christmas. They comprise the famous Bethlehem scene – the stable depicted by sheep, the three wise men bearing gifts, and of course, Baby Jesus in a crib. Every detail, down to the mud and straw are so well etched. The paint gives the wonderful effect of clothes, hair etc.



**The lifelike clay figures are startlingly real**

Pic by courtesy : Rina Mukherji

Orders for figurines of Mother Mary, Jesus and Joseph used to be much more from the city, but now whatever orders come are from the churches in Bengal, for their grottos. Nadia is also known for its sizeable Bengali Christian population.

Images of Hindu gods and goddesses, especially the Radha Krishna pair, dominate, in addition to devotees in their light saffron garbs. However, goddess Durga, who is worshipped more as a community idol, are made by the same potter community, but are concentrated mostly in an area in north Kolkata called Kumartuli. The miniature Durga sets, 24 inches by 20 inches roughly, or even smaller, are time consuming, so they are made on the specific orders with individual potters. The prices vary according to workmanship.

Says Sashanka Paul, son of Sambhu, "Smaller craftsmen hired by many of us do the regular pieces or add the finishing touches, but for special order, the sculptors among us take over." Other gifted sculptors of the region are Subir Pal, Kartick Pal, Norottom Pal, among many others who have been national awardees for their craftsmanship.

Clay and terracotta are the main medium of the general potters, and this is where their innate artistry takes over in crafting special images. The more popular stuff, in keeping



**An African woman in clay**



**This sculptor has depicted in marble dust his own community's obsession with the Durga idol!**

with the times are small teddies, dogs in a basket, and valentine mementoes, which jostle for space on the shelves with a barber shaving his customer, a priest doing puja, or even a coal smith – the tiny coals set to perfection. Fridge magnets are another emerging item. Today, apart from clay, various other materials are used such as fibre glass, marble dust and spray paints in place of natural colours.

Whether it is the string of religious mendicants so well known in the area or sculptures of African women, the replication is perfect. However, newer modern figures have edged out those foreign figures, once copied from picture books perhaps. Modernity has crept in by popular demand, but these are, as mentioned earlier, in cute little figures; similar to fibre glass or PVC type materials. In fact, fibre glass is gradually becoming the preferred medium of these craftsmen/sculptors for convenience, and though the common consensus among potters is that they do miss the malleable nature of clay, the former is less cumbersome to stock, shift around or pack.

### **Community of potters and sculptors**

The erstwhile *zamindar*-s of Bengal used to hire potters, naturally gifted with their fingers, to craft their idols for home puja-s, celebrated with due pop and gaiety. The potter usually took up residence within the *zamindar's* household, where the perks included food and lodging. The concentration of Pal(s) in Krishnanagar is difficult to attribute to any particular source. Story has it that the local king Krishna Chandra Roy is reputed to have started Durga and Jagatdhatri (another *avatar* of Durga) puja in his fiefdom, and brought potters from Dhaka and Natore of North Bengal, 250-300 years back. They were skilled in miniature clay modelling too, which he patronised. During British rule, various busts in Greco-Roman style and native art were in great demand, because not only were mansions decorated with these figures, but were considered great gift items too.

Shashanka Paul does not like to exhibit his wares in fairs that the government has popularised for artisans to sell

**Whether it is the string of religious mendicants so well known in the area or sculptures of African women, the replication is perfect. However, newer modern figures have edged out those foreign figures, once copied from picture books perhaps.**



**Goddess Durga is one of the most popular depictions. The above figures are made from marble dust which has replaced clay**

directly and without middlemen. Transporting these clay images is hugely risky and cumbersome,” he adds. “We take orders,” he adds, handing out his card.

### **The process**

The potters take the mud from the banks of River Jalangi that flows through the town. To this clay is mixed water and kneaded almost like flour. To the mixture materials like cotton, rice husk, loam or sandy soil are added.

At least for the bigger pieces, the figures are shaped and mounted on a wire framework, which supports them and bent accordingly, to get the right fluidity. But for the detailing, it is those fine hands that make or unmake a piece of art. Various tools are used like *basua* – a blunt tip tool that creates the crests and folds in clothing and different knives to scrape and smoothen out the edges till a perfect figure emerges, ready to be painted. But not before they are dried either in the sun or in the kilns or furnaces.

The colouring of these clay dolls and images are not understated; on the contrary, extremely bright colours are used – green, blue, purple, orange, and yellow among other bright shades. Accessories or jewellery are painted for which pigments, dyes and poster colours are put to liberal use. There is a technique of polishing, earlier done with a



**A clay bird, which looks almost real**



A scene depicting a *puchka* or *golgappa* stand marble dust; everyday scenes make up a big part of this craft

natural material like tamarind seeds, but kerosene is also known to be used. All these processes, though encapsulated in a few written sentences, are extremely laborious and time consuming.

### The threat to clay modelling

The threat to clay modelling has come from various quarters. The competition is most from other decorative objects that are today made with every possible material, adding to their versatility. Ceramic, terracotta, crystal, wood, stone, plastic, metal, resin; the list is indeed endless. Added to this are figurines coming from China as cheap replicas. But what matches and surpasses clay modelling today are figures made from marble dust. In likeness, it is difficult to tell them apart. "These are easier to maintain as they can be washed," says a boutique owner inside an upmarket mall in Kolkata.

Beautiful and more detailed miniature Durga images complete with scenes of "*sindoorkhela*" among women, who smear each other when the Goddess is taken away for

immersion on *Vijayadashami*. Some Durga images are on the boat or are depicted as being crafted. Other figures are the *puchkawallah* or seller of *golgappas/panipuris*. Priced between ₹ 2,000 and 4,000, these are competition for the poor clay potters, whose objects are more mundane, and may even cost as low as ₹ 50 for a pair of birds.

### What the future holds

Naturally, young children do not play with clay dolls in India any more or decorate their homes during *janmashtami* or Christmas. Decorative items have lost their appeal as ethnic crafts, but those with a utilitarian value, are preferred today. The importance of such a craft has increasingly gone down, with families of potters having dispersed to other parts of India. As Sashanka Paul, explains, "Continuing is a huge challenge." As his son returns from school, he is eager to show me some items; his father is not sure whether he should come into this profession of clay modelling. He says, "If he wants to move away fine, but if this is what he wants to do I have no objection. I would not also mind my



An exquisite work in marble dust

daughter taking up clay modelling.” By a rough estimate, with about 300 odd traditional potters/sculptors remaining in and around Krishnanagar, it is a dying art, which needs to be revived with modern design inputs, infusion of capital and more exposure.

Sanjay Sarkar, who trained under Subir Pal, explains, “The absence of a packing industry in the area is also responsible for the art to slowly die.” The state government has tried to help on and off he tells me, but the time has come to move on in the absence of any huge development in

this particular handicraft. Therefore, many such artistes are today crafting old and new images out of marble dust, fibre glass or some other materials to find new markets or simply to survive. ■



Having worked as a full-time journalist, Manjira Majumdar today is an independent journalist combining writing with part-time college teaching and media advocacy. She is also the author of 3 children’s books: Ten of Us, The Story of Anjana and Ghost Stories from Bengal & Beyond.

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# An actor for all seasons

A tribute by **Shoma A. Chatterji** to *Shashi Kapoor, the talented and charismatic actor, whose contribution to Indian theatre has also been most exemplary.*

It is indeed rare to find a handsome young man who is as sophisticated as he is grounded enough to reach out to his fans, his audience and other frills, if one attempted to reach out to him. This exceptional man who rose from being a child actor to one of the most smashingly handsome, romantic heroes in Indian cinema is none other than Shashi Kapoor (1938-2017), the youngest son of the late Prithviraj Kapoor and the youngest brother of Raj Kapoor. In a family surrounded by celebrities across the world of Indian cinema, he could easily have been sucked into a world of anonymity, given that he was not media-savvy, and neither did his persona and lifestyle generate the kind of gossip fans and the media are pulled by. Yet, he created a distinct image as actor, producer, performer and family man, creating his own style of acting and personality.

He did not run after roles and films. Producers and directors too, did not chase him the way they would chase an Amitabh Bachchan or a Dharmendra at their peak. Yet, he did not budge from living life on his own terms that extended to defining his career as an actor and a producer. It was his dignity that marked him out among both the Kapoors and the film industry he belonged to. He began his career as a child actor in Raj Kapoor's *Aag* (1948) and then in *Awara* as the younger Raj. He did his stint as child actor in several other films till he veered to theatre as he grew up. He did a child role in *Sangram* (1950) too.

## 'Lent' to Geoffrey Kendall

As he grew up, his father 'lent' him to his British friend Geoffrey



**Shashi Kapoor (left) in 1976; he was one of India's most talented and charming actors**

Kendall who ran his own theatre group Shakespeareana, which staged mainly English plays from Shakespeare to Bernard Shaw among others. He was just 19 when Shashi Kapoor joined the

**The story of his personal life began to write itself out during his tenure with Shakespeareana. He met and fell in love with Jennifer Kendall, the older of Geoffrey Kendall's two daughters, both an integral part of the group. The father, when he learnt of his prime performer's love for the young Indian actor with a bad English accent, he was furious.**

group in 1957 that took him through the rough road of polishing up his English, that demanded an impeccable command that happened slowly but smoothly. The story of his personal life began to write itself out during his tenure with Shakespeareana. He met and fell in love with Jennifer Kendall, the older of Geoffrey Kendall's two daughters, both an integral part of the group. The father, when he learnt of his prime performer's love for the young Indian actor with a bad English accent, he was furious. They eloped and got married in Calcutta much to the chagrin of Geoffrey Kendall, and the angry father accepted the marriage only after the first of the three kids, Kunal, was born. They were forced to hide out in Malaysia and Singapore to escape the wrath of Geoffrey, but were pathetically short of funds. Shashi's middle brother Shammi Kapoor and his wife Geeta, once a noted actress, came to their help when they

wished to come back to India. Thus began a love story that came to an end only when Jennifer passed away.

### His Bollywood journey

Shashi's successful career as a romantic hero in Hindi cinema was somewhat sidetracked by the fact that he played a parallel role in many films in which Amitabh Bachchan got the meatier role. This did not seem to queer his pitch and he went on, unabated, knowing fully well that his talents remained unexplored for a long time. It is indeed one of the ironies of destiny that the same young man who was constantly the object of ridicule for his 'terrible' English by his British father-in-law was the unquestioned choice for the lead role in many Merchant-Ivory films in which his brilliance outshone his own performances in films like *Deewar*, *Trishul*, *Shaan*, *Namak Halal*, *Kabhi Kabhie* and *Do Aur Do Paanch*. Shashi had the softer, romantic image, while Amitabh strode all across the screen as the angry young man who stole the show because his was the author-backed role. Even so, Shashi left tiny nuggets of his talent behind in a few scenes. This includes the memorable scene in the film *Deewar*. It is an exchange between the two estranged brothers who live separately. Bachchan asks Shashi Kapoor what has he (Kapoor) got in life being an honest cop – a job, a uniform, a government quarter and look at him (Bachchan). He has amassed much wealth, property. He has everything. Kapoor retorts, "*Mere paas maa hai*" (I have our mother with me), leading it to become one of the most iconic lines of Hindi cinema.

There is a scene in *Trishul* where Vijay (Amitabh Bachchan) deliberately hides the keys of Shashi Kapoor's two wheeler so that he misses his appointment with his lady love (Hema Malini). When he realises that he has been tricked so as to miss the appointment, he simply smiles quietly and does not comment at all. It was a



The iconic scene from *Deewar* – *Mera paas maa hai*

controlled gesture than gave away the low-key character he had to portray.

His was a career harmoniously balanced between significant films and commercial bonanzas. He walked the tightrope very well, and since he was not media savvy, he attracted the least gossip. His stint with good cinema began with James Ivory and Ismail Merchant films which opened with *The Householder* based on the novel by Ruth Praver Jhabvala opposite the beautiful Leela Naidu, in which they played a newly married couple trying to cope with the ups and downs of a newly formed relationship. The Ivory-Kapoor-Merchant relationship continued with many films such as *Shakespeare Wallah*, *Heat and Dust* (1983) and several more films. *Heat and Dust*, based on a novel by Ruth Jhabvala that won the Booker Prize in 1975, looks at the adventures of a woman (Julie Christie), who travels to India to find more about her step-grandmother in the days of the British Raj in India. They also worked together in *Bombay Talkie*. Another outstanding feature of his character was the resurrection of his father Prithviraj Kapoor's Prithvi Theatre which is taken care of by daughter Sanjana. He also produced some films without looking at the market risks involved, an one of them was, *36, Chowringhee Lane* directed by Aparna Sen.

Shashi Kapoor was one of the most romantic heroes in Hindi cinema whose smashing looks turned to be a deterrent for him so far as his acting talents went. So, it took many years till he finally got the National Award for Best Actor for his outstanding performance in Romesh Sharma's *New Delhi Times* where he excelled in the role of an honest and objective editor who is unwittingly caught between the political conspiracies of two bigwigs who use his editorial position for their own devious ends. It was a beautiful film that turned out to be a flop at the box office. He leaves behind his three children, Karan, Kunal and Sanjana, none of who followed their parents in adopting acting as a career.

Aseem Chhabra has written a beautiful biography of the actor called *Shashi Kapoor: The Householder, The Star*, published by Rupa Publications in 2016. ■

**Shoma A. Chatterji 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.**

# The likeness of beings

*Great literature transcends the barriers of language, geography, and even time. Nikhil Katara reviews some of Orhan Pamuk's stories and characters, mostly set in Istanbul, but could work well for Mumbai too. Whether the writer intended it or not, the readers' own experiences and the universality of the stories make it happen.*

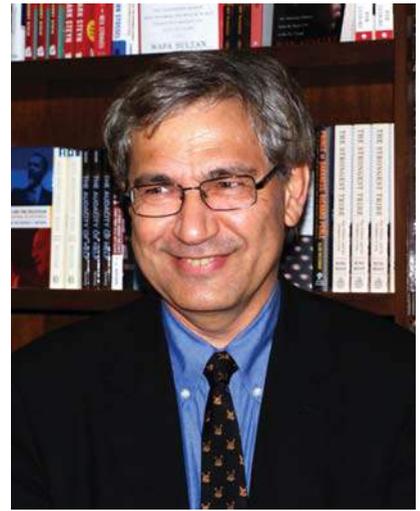
ORHAN Pamuk, is a weaver of words. But while going about his business, he also transcends being a writer, and opens doors into places, which were in another time. So does that make him, and thus us, a time traveler too? The world Pamuk takes his fellow travelers to, is set usually in Istanbul. But in a way it could be Mumbai too. What is beautiful about Pamuk's oeuvre is that it is not too far away from home, for us Indians, especially the ones born and brought up in Mumbai. For if you sit in Pamuk's time machine and travel into the past of Istanbul, you will see small glimpses of the Mumbai that was, and as you travel in his time machine into the future, you might just see your own story unfold.

In the essay, *The death of the author*, French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes had argued against incorporating the intentions of the author in the interpretation of the text. So, in such a situation, it is only the reader, his intelligence, that makes the text come alive. Even though Pamuk's works are in so many ways intended to be in the world of Istanbul and its many inhabitants, when it is read by an Indian, their intelligence transforms the space of Istanbul and relates it to their life story. That the streets of Istanbul, the vendors on its roads, and the culture of its people is so similar for an Indian back home, finding the necessary connections isn't that difficult.

## A pleasurable journey

Mevlut from 'A strangeness in my mind' is one such character. Mevlut sells Bosa on the streets of Istanbul. He carries it and screams out aloud the call of 'BOSA' for people to hear him. His life has been a long journey, where he has to travel from one place to the other with only street dogs to give him company. The transformation of Istanbul through its high rises, along with the many changes make Mevlut, a representative of the past that was. The Raki drinking rich-folk take interest in him because he reminds them of their history, he walks the streets and is a representative of the Istanbul that was. Mumbai itself has seen such a transformation, where the town has transformed, and their own Bosa sellers are slowly disappearing, if one were to hear a street vendor calling out to sell their goods, it would ring a bell somewhere in the corners of the mind, because there was once a time when these calls were a commonality in the streets.

Whenever Mevlut finds himself at the doorstep of one of his many clients, he finds it confusing whether or not to remove his slippers outside. For the old timers, it is an unwritten rule. But for the ones living in the new world of Istanbul, the tradition of removing the slippers is an unnecessary formality. Mevlut finds it a predicament to make that decision every time he is outside a door. The tradition of removing shoes and slippers outside a home, was a cultural etiquette for Indians as



**Orhan Pamuk's stories transcend time and geography**

well. Many times these days, Indians find themselves in similar confusions. How often is it that you enter a home and involuntarily remove your slippers and shoes at the doorstep only to find out that this culture is passé, and in the new times the people wear their shoes at all times. But every so often, you find yourself in a home where there is a nice little collection of shoes outside, and you remove your shoes too to respect the old unwritten rule.

CemÇelik in 'Red haired woman' is another one of the characters from Pamuk's books that lives in Istanbul, but often is seen in the streets of Mumbai. He is a successful businessman and has built an empire out of nothingness. Something haunts him in his past that occurred many years ago, while digging a well with

his master Mahmut. Celik's character is continuously influenced by two stories. One is Oedipus rex, and the other is 'Shahnameh', both being tragedies. An episode in Çelik's life makes him research the Shahnameh continuously, and eventually he even names his empire Sohrab (who is the murdered son in Shahnameh). In the background looms the city, where old times change to new, old streets find new names, and towns like Öngören are completely lost. Çelik and his wife themselves transition, becoming the new Istanbul, literally constructing a lot of it in the process. Mumbai's own grounds have seen the rise of the tall skyscrapers in the decade past, a quick revolution that coloured the city with malls and large structures. It was

not too long ago when the first mall had risen, but now they are a common sight. The people themselves have acquired the tastes of all this change and are somewhere hybrids between the old and the new. Many Çelik's live and breathe in Mumbai too, making it what it was, while holding on to what they had.

As Istanbul is recreated with Pamuk's words, the time travellers visit their own past, they go through a journey, which reveals a certain world that they themselves inhabited. It could be Istanbul, or it could be Mumbai. But because the stories that Pamuk has created have a specific ring to them reminiscent of the world that the East once inhabited, it works as a canvas, reflecting the images

that belong in the memories of these time travellers. The beauty of it brings it closer home, reminding us who we were, what we are, and where we live. ■

**Nikhil Katara initiated his journey as a writer with his own production titled The Unveiling, a science fiction drama in the year 2011. To strengthen critical learning he initiated an MA programme in 'Philosophy' at the Mumbai university with optionals in Kant, Greek Hellenistic Philosophy, Feminism, Logic and Existentialism. His play Yatagarasu opened at Prithvi Theatre**



**in 2016. He is a consultant facilitator at J's paradigm (a novel performance arts institute) and writes book reviews for the Free Press Journal.**

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# In irons

*Some plays make us introspect about our intrinsic relationships. One such play is Iron, which explores the complexities of a mother-daughter relationship, made more poignant by the fact that the mother is behind bars, says Prof. Avinash Kolhe. This is a play one can't miss, he insists.*

INDIAN culture holds motherhood in high regard. In fact, even today, more often than not, a girl wants to get married to enjoy motherhood, as it is projected as the highest form of joy for a woman. No wonder Indian culture and literature are full of glories of motherhood. Against this backdrop, when one comes across a play like *Iron* by Rona Munro that talks about the tortuous relationship between a 45-year-old mother and her 25-year-old daughter, it becomes a deeply revealing and disturbing experience.

*Iron* is a haunting play which tells the story of a mother-daughter relationship and how they try to break through the barriers of time, memories and prison, which separates them. Yes, prison. The mother whose name is Fay, is serving life-time imprisonment as she has killed her husband. She has a daughter Josie who was raised by Josie's paternal grandmother. Josie was 11-years-old when Fay was taken to prison, and was raised by her paternal grandmother. And now after 15 years, Fay has a visitor, Josie, her daughter. That is how the play starts, and it grips you, keeps you riveted in this psychological drama. The play was first performed at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh in July 2002.

## The plot

Josie is here to meet her mother. She has never seen a prison from inside. She is a lonely divorcee, and wants to connect with her mother. Her real intention is to rediscover her past, which



A scene from the play *Iron*

she has completely forgotten. *Iron* grips the audience from its very first scene which opens in prison. We get to know about Josie, her imprisoned mother,

***Iron* is a haunting play which tells the story of a mother-daughter relationship and how they try to break through the barriers of time, memories and prison, which separates them. Yes, prison. The mother whose name is Fay, is serving life-time imprisonment as she has killed her husband.**

and how Josie cannot see her mother without authorisation. According to the rules of the prison, a visitor is allowed to meet the inmate only if the prisoner so desires, not otherwise. The woman prison officer takes pity on Josie and finds a way in. The play begins on a high-suspense note. A daughter meeting her mother after a gap of 15 years! And that mother who has killed her husband, Josie's father? Why does Josie want to meet her *now*?

Like the audience, even Fay is unsettled when told about Josie wanting to meet her. Somehow, she reconciles with this reality and the meeting takes place, one of the many more that follow shortly, each meeting more unnerving than before. Each meeting between them unravels those hidden memories, secrets which they have not visited for

the last 15 years. Josie confesses that she does not remember much of her childhood and whatever she does, is in bit and pieces. Fay helps her put the picture together.

Slowly and steadily Fay gets to know the real intention of Josie's visits. Josie has been collecting information on her mother's trial. Josie gets to know that during the trial, her mother never defended herself, never uttered even a word. This intrigues Josie and she confronts Fay. Fay is most unwilling to talk about her past and the murder. Not only this, she does not like the way Josie is taking efforts to get her out of prison. To pursue this case, Josie has taken a part-time job in the same town and devotes most of her time perusing through old city newspapers. She also meets a top attorney and discusses the trial of Fay. All these are just unacceptable to Fay. She tells the prison authorities not to let Josie visit her. Parallel to this is a side-story of two prison guards, one middle-aged male and one single-mother female. The female prison officer has developed a special relationship with Fay and does not like much Josie's visit as it would loosen her grip on Fay.

The play is performed in the prison where two guards keep overlooking, overhearing the discussions between Fay and Josie. The very idea of setting the play in prison itself is quite novel as it brings the pathos, the walls, the bars, separation between human beings to surface. Imagine talking to one's mother with two prison guards eavesdropping all the time!

### The team

Light arrangement plays a very important role in a play like this. Light design and direction of this play is by Arghya Lahiri. He is quite competent with light design. He is fortunate to have an able cast to play the four characters. Shernaz Patel



Actors like Shernaz Patel (left) have lifted the play to another level

(Fay), Dilnaz Irani (Josie), Kenner Desai (male prison officer) and Meher Acharia-Dhar (female prison officer), are extremely talented actors. This team under the baton of Arghya Lahiri makes watching *Iron* a wholly enjoyable experience. The set of prison is properly designed so that in the minimum space maximum impact is achieved. The light design ensures

**The play is performed in the prison where two guards keep overlooking, overhearing the discussions between Fay and Josie. The very idea of setting the play in prison itself is quite novel as it brings the pathos, the walls, the bars, separation between human beings to surface. Imagine talking to one's mother with two prison guards eavesdropping all the time!**

the gloomy atmosphere inside the walls of a prison. Though the focus is constantly on relationship between Fay-Josie and rightly so, one also gets to see in flashes the relationship between Fay and the female prison guard. This woman is rather upset that Josie is constantly visiting Fay whom she thinks is completely under control giving her a sense of power. While watching *Iron*, I was reminded of Nurse Ratched played by Lousie Fletcher in *One flew over the cuckoo's nest*, the Hollywood movie of 1975. Ratched hates Randle McMurp (Jack Nicholson) as he constantly challenges her power in the mental hospital. Plays like *Iron* set us thinking about the human mind and its needs. Fay is always suspicious of Josie, her daughter. Josie too is more interested in knowing about her past that she barely remembers. Where is so-called true love between mother and her

daughter? Plays like *Iron* should not be missed. ■



Prof. Avinash Kolhe is Asst. Professor in Political Science at D.G. Ruparel College, Mumbai.

# That Very Important Person!

*As a society, we are inured to seeing our politicians being given extra privileges, symbolised by the ubiquitous red beacons on their vehicles. Will taking away these beacons alone, bring about any changes? Not really, says **Rashmi Oberoi**.*

“**T**HERE is no place for VIP culture in New India; Every person is important”, so says Prime Minister Narendra Modi amidst deep rumblings within his own party where many supporters don't seem to want to pay heed and are not happy with this chain of events. He is right of course, but just doing away with red beacons in India does not mean the end of the VIP culture. Our so-called 'important people' simply cannot do away with the privileges that come with their status and all the benefits attached to it. Sycophancy runs deep in their soul.



**Will doing away with the red beacons help in reducing the 'VIP culture'?**

## The VIP psyche

Delve into the psyche of our society and there roosts the VIP culture syndrome. This is certainly not going to disappear overnight, and neither is the mind-set going to change in a hurry. At ground level, our social and psychological programming is such that everything revolves around power. Our VIPs will continue to throw their weight around and walk around with a false sense of superiority complex. Preferential treatment for them seems to be their birth right.

The misuse of such power further leads to corruption, and the bottom line is that in all this, competence is lost in the power wielding haze, and only their arrogance shines through. Every known organisation is afflicted with this malady. The moment the higher authorities demand privileges, the longer the list for wrongful entitlements grow. The red beacon is only one perversion in the extensive list of false supremacy.

Now how will the ordinary Indian become special and feel on par with the high and mighty VIP? It cannot happen without a change in the social mind-set. But maybe a small start could be to do away with privileges and special treatment. And that platoon of armed security personnel encircling politicians seems to be a colossal waste of manpower. You take away these privileges, and then watch the egos come tumbling down.

We need a culture where our political representations and government officials are accountable to the public. There is no such mechanism in place presently. Official procedures in place are intimidating to say the least. We need the common man to feel at ease when he faces the dreaded bureaucratic red tape.

A few days back, while travelling to the airport in a cab from Gurgaon, the arterial road was particularly congested and jammed at 3 pm. Usually the

afternoons are a fairly decent time to move around in, and are devoid of jams. But that day was bad with traffic piling up and slow movement of vehicles. My cab driver and I had assumed it was due to an accident but it was only when we inched up further that we saw hordes of cops around and cars/trucks being pushed off the main road. "Aah, must be a VIP passing through," I had remarked, shaking my head. "No Ma'am, VIP days are over. Must be something else. The days of '*lal batti*' are finished," my cab driver had quipped. And that's when we had heard the sirens and a fleet of cars whizzing by. What a racket...no red beacons, but enough police escort, a cacophony of sirens, and a trail of dust making you wonder who the very important person was.

You can understand an ambulance or a fire brigade or a police car needing the help of a shrill siren to get people

**(Continued on page 33)**

# Is pride good?

*Pride comes before a fall, goes a wise saying. But has that prevented us from indulging in this emotion? asks A. Radhakrishnan, as he humbly describes it.*

**W**HEN Rajesh Khanna the original superstar was at his peak, a film journalist commented that 'his body weight and head weight will see to his downfall', and it happened.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, a novel by Jane Austen first published in 1813, the story charts the emotional development of the protagonist, Elizabeth Bennet, who learns the error of making hasty judgments, and comes to appreciate the difference between the superficial and the essential.

King James Version of the Bible, Book of Proverbs 16:18 mentions, '*Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall*'. An excess of pride will cause mistakes leading to a setback or failure.

## What is pride?

Pride is an inwardly directed emotion that carries two antithetical meanings. A foolish and irrational corrupt sense of one's personal value, status or accomplishments is the negative connotation, and the positive connotation, refers to a humble and content sense of attachment toward one's own or another's choices and actions. Thus, the corollary of pride is humility.

The word '*proud*' comes from Old English *prut*, and probably from Old French *prud*, which means "brave, valiant". It also encompasses pleasure, joy, delight, gratification, fulfilment, satisfaction, sense of achievement; self-esteem, dignity, honour, belief in one's worth, and faith in oneself.

Pride is sometimes viewed also

as corrupt or as a vice, sometimes as proper or as a virtue. Aristotle identified pride (*megalopsuchia*), as the crown of the virtues, distinguishing it from vanity, temperance, and humility.

Some world religions consider pride as a fraudulent form, a sin. St. Augustine said it was 'the love of one's own excellence', while to Meher Baba, it is 'the specific feeling through which egoism manifests.'

## Sometimes pride is good!

Pride in one's abilities is known as virtuous pride, greatness of soul or magnanimity, but when viewed as a vice, it is often known to be self-idolatry, sadistic contempt, vanity or vain glory. Pride can also manifest itself as a high opinion of one's nation (national pride), and ethnicity (ethnic pride).

In psychological terms, positive pride is "a pleasant, sometimes exhilarating emotion that results from a positive self-evaluation. Pride can be demonstrated by facial expressions and gestures like lifting of the chin, smiles, or arms on hips to demonstrate victory.

Pride can also be expressed behaviourally by adopting an expanded posture in which the head is tilted back, and the arms extended out from the body, an exhilarated pleasure and feeling of accomplishment. Pride can also be with positive social behaviours such as helping others, and outward promotion.

Exaggerated self-esteem is called "pride". Carl Rogers observed that most people "regard themselves as worthless and unlovable." Thus, they lack self-esteem. Hubris, an exaggerated form

of self-esteem, is sometimes actually a lie used to cover the lack of self-esteem that the committer of pride feels deeply down.

Psychologically speaking, pride seems to have sway over the sentiment of friendship, but it appears to acquire some reinforcement in the case of already existent enmity towards someone. It would, relatively speaking, increase with the achievements of the person and may be a continuous source of danger to the intellectuals and others in this regard.

Pride means different things to different people. In Germany, "national pride", often associated with the former Nazi regime is now considered poor taste. Asian pride originally fragmented, emerged prominently during European colonialism. Today, some Asians still look upon European involvement in their affairs with suspicion, while proudly remembering Asian empires. In the United States, 'black pride' is a slogan used primarily to raise awareness for a black racial identity, while white pride is a slogan used primarily for a white race identity. Gay pride refers to a worldwide movement and philosophy asserting that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals should be proud of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

In conventional parlance, vanity sometimes is used in a positive sense to refer to a rational concern for one's personal appearance, attractiveness and dress, and is thus not the same as pride. However, it also refers to an excessive or irrational belief in one's own abilities or attractiveness *in the eyes of others*, and

may in so far be compared to pride.

Anantanand Rambachan, Professor of Religion, Saint Olaf College asserts that religious traditions that survived the colonial experience have done so with a bruised and even battered sense of self. Colonialism undermined Hindu pride and the confident profession of a Hindu self-identity. Profound Hindu religious insights and ethical teachings were rarely commended. "I am proud," said Swami Vivekananda to his Indian audiences, "to call myself a Hindu."

Humility has deep theological roots in the Hindu tradition, in its sacred texts and traditions that free us from unfulfilling conceptions of self and enable lives of compassion, promoting work that aims to overcome suffering.

Prophet Muhammad considered pride a disease and the greatest sin in Islam. All human beings have the tendency to become proud. It could be so little that it becomes unnoticeable, and it could be in a large amount, which

is why we always pray to Allah not to make us among the proud and arrogant people.

In Sikhism, *Ahankar* (pride), or *hankar* in the Punjabi language, is considered to be a greater evil than the other propensities. Ahankar may arise from one's possession of beauty or power. Another cause could be that the individual becomes proud of his acts of charity or of some religious merit attained by him through pilgrimages.

Kabir says, "Thou thinks thyself to be great by tiny little deeds; but they who look upon others as small through words, thoughts, or deeds are cast in hell." As Kant says "There was a time when I despised the masses who know nothing. But this blind prejudice disappears. I learn to honour men."

In the teachings of Hatha Yoga, special attention is given to the eradication of pride. According to this school, "there is no friend higher than knowledge and no greater enemy than

*ahankar*." "Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend," said the late John R.W. Stott.

When pride diminishes and disappears, humility increases and looms large. Sri Chinmoy says, 'In human life when we have something, immediately pride, vanity and many other undivine forces enter into us. We extol ourselves to the skies. But let us think of the example of a tree. When the tree is in full bloom, when it is laden with ripe fruits, when it really has something to offer the world, the tree bows down. If we can become one with the consciousness of a tree, we will feel that. ■



**A. Radhakrishnan** is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short story writer, Facebook addict who loves to make people happy.

## That Very Important Person!

(Continued from page 31)

out of the way, but why all this drama yet again for that one 'VIP' who feels the need to flaunt his/her importance. And since the past few days even as the red beacons atop vehicles are being removed, new and innovative ideas are replacing these so that the insecurities surrounding our high and mighty are not given a shaking-down.

"Oh, looks like there will be no change Ma'am. That is so sad," the cab driver had said wistfully, looking at me in the rear-view mirror. My sceptical smile in return, said it all.

Our power-loving politicians are in any case known for their tantrums - be it at airports/railway stations and even hospitals. Their retinues are no less power hungry and create a nuisance wherever they go. Look around and you

will see that the VIP culture in India is omnipresent.

The honest tax payer's money is being used to flaunt status symbols of VIP power, and an attempt by them to get as many freebies as possible till the coffers run dry.

None of this hierarchy is from merit by the way. It is just that these very important people are made to feel special as we are a nation of hypocrites who allow a section of people to misuse power while we get denied basic rights.

**The VIP culture has proved to destroy the political scenario of the country so far. We as ordinary citizens need to change the system and bring out the real meaning of equality and justice.**

The VIP culture has proved to destroy the political scenario of the country so far. We as ordinary citizens need to change the system and bring out the real meaning of equality and justice. We need to make India a little more systematic and do away with the mind-set that is not allowing us to get out of the VIP syndrome! ■

**Rashmi Oberoi** an army officer's daughter, who was lucky to travel and live all over India, as also a few years in Malaysia and U.S.A. Keenly interested in writing for children, she wrote two story books - *My Friends At Sonnenshine*, which was published in 1999 by Writer's Workshop, Kolkata, *India and Cherie: The Cocker Spaniel*, which was published in 2009 by the same publishers. For a few years she moved into the corporate world of HR, but her love



for writing took precedence, and she pursued her passion by writing articles and middles for newspapers, print and online magazines, including a children's magazine abroad.



## SPOTLIGHT

### Honouring the Brave

THE National Bravery Awards were created by the country's first Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. Back in 1957, on 2 October, the Prime Minister was watching a performance at Delhi's Ramlila grounds. A fire, sparked by a short circuit, broke out in one of the *shamiana*-s. One of the boy scouts, heedless to the danger involved, daringly used his knife to rip apart the tent and saved the people in it. Inspired by this event, the Prime



Minister then asked the authorities to honour such brave children from all over the country every year. And, the awards were initiated by the Indian Council of Child Welfare (ICCW) in the same year.

The awards are given to the children by the Prime Minister on the eve of Republic Day. The President and several other dignitaries host receptions for the children, who then participate in the resplendent Republic Day parade on 26 January.

## DISASTERS IN HISTORY-6

### Banqiao Dam Disaster

WHEN natural calamity meets human mismanagement, a catastrophe is waiting to happen. That is what happened on August 8, 1975 when the Banqiao dam in China burst leaving up to 230,000 people dead in its wake.

The Banqiao dam was called the 'iron dam', built to withstand a 'one in a thousand years flood'. But Chinese officials seriously compromised on its safety features by building only five sluice gates instead of the recommended twelve.

On August 5, 1975, Typhoon Nina hit the Chinese mainland. Over the next three days, the land received 40% more than its heaviest recorded rainfall. Communication lines broke down and by the time orders reached officials to open the dam's sluice gates, it was too late.

The gates were blocked by sedimentation and could not handle the overflow of water. Shortly after midnight on August 8, the dam gave way. Someone cried hoarsely, "The River Dragon has come!"

The flood waters from the failed Banqiao dam and another upstream Shimantan dam caused other smaller dams to fail too – 62 dams collapsed before the night was out. A gigantic wall of water almost 10 km wide and 3-7 m high roared down the plains at 50 km/hr, flooding 2.5 million acres of farmland. Some dams had to be deliberately bombed to protect other dams from failure and to divert the flood waters.

At least 85,000 people died directly

after the dams collapsed. Another 145,000 died in the aftermath from disease and famine.

- The Banqiao dam disaster was hushed up as a state secret by the Chinese government for nearly three decades.
- China has built nearly half of the world's biggest dams.
- Many of the dams including both Banqiao and Shimantan have been rebuilt.

#### Doomsday in Morvi

With its beautiful parks and broad streets, the town of Morvi, Gujarat was dubbed 'Paris of the East' before torrential rain took its toll. In August 1979, the Saurashtra region received 7 times more than the normal amount of rainfall. Unable to cope with the pressure, the Machhu II dam burst, releasing a flood wave 8-10 m in height which submerged Morvi and nearby villages, killing 2000 people.





## CURIOSITY

### What is Globophobia?

THE word 'phobia' means 'fear'. Although globophobia sounds like it means fear of globes, it actually means fear of balloons! That's right — there are people out there who are afraid of balloons, the humble party adornment. The term 'globo' in 'globophobia' actually refers to the spherical shape of the balloon.

Globophobics (i.e. people who suffer from globophobia) are of two kinds. While some people are afraid of the loud sound a balloon makes when it pops, others cannot even stand the sight of a balloon. The root of the fear is believed to lie with some prior negative experience involving balloons, for e.g. if a balloon popped unexpectedly in a child's face, it could put her off balloons for good.



Many people admit to suffering from this irrational fear. The renowned talk show host and author, Oprah

Winfrey, is one of them. She claims that popping balloons make her really nervous because they remind her of gunfire.

## STORY TRAP

### The Dubious Diary



Something's not quite right here. Can you put your finger on it? It'll help if you know something about the history of cinema in India.

Young Bhaskar entered his father's office in breathless excitement. In his hands he carried what appeared to be a very old notebook. His father, a publisher of repute, looked up and said, "Well, what is it?"

"There's a man sitting outside and this is his priceless possession — the diary of his grandmother!" replied Bhaskar.

A few minutes later a timid-looking man was sitting opposite the publisher.

"I found this diary after my father's death," he said, "and while going through it realized it was a historical document. It is the diary of the heroine of the first Indian feature film, Raja Harishchandra!" "Read this," he said opening a page, "she's described the first day of shooting in great detail."

The publisher read a few lines and then politely returned the book to the owner.

"Thank you, my good man," he said. "But we can't publish it. It's a fake — it's not authentic!"

How did the publisher detect that the diary was not authentic?

## HA!

A young man agreed to baby-sit one night. At bedtime he sent the youngsters upstairs to bed and settled down to watch football on television.

One child kept creeping down the stairs, but the young man kept sending him back to bed.

At 9 pm the doorbell rang. It was the next-door neighbour, asking whether her son was there. The young man brusquely replied, "No."

Just then a little head appeared over the bannister and shouted, "I'm here, Mom, but he won't let me go home!"



**Answer:** In Dadasaheb Phalke's Raja Harishchandra, all the characters — male and female, were played by male actors.

## **BRIG. SANT SINGH, MVC AND BAR**

A tactical and brave officer (1921-2015)

**B**RIG. Sant Singh was born on 12 July 1921 in Faridkot. His father Sardar Arjan Singh was a farmer and Sant Singh studied in the village school. He served as a soldier for three years in the Corps of Engineers, and participated in the Second World War. He was commissioned into 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 14 Punjab Regiment on 16 February 1947 in the NWFP, and took part in the liberation of Junagadh, in the 1947-48 war in Kashmir, and the Indo-China War of 1962. He was later transferred to 5 Sikh Light Infantry (L I) Battalion, and took over as the commanding officer in 1964.

Pakistan had occupied OP Hill Complex in Mender sector in Rajouri area despite the ceasefire in 1965. The feature dominated the Meder-Balnoi road and isolated the administrative base of the battalion at Balnoi. The terrain was difficult. Anticipating an attack, the enemy had laid mines on the approaches to the objective, and had arranged heavy artillery fire. Attempts by the unit located there failed, and 5 Sikh L I was moved to Mender sector to clear this feature. It was a new battalion and the officers were young. There was only one company commander who had more than three years of service. Sant Singh personally led the attack before midnight on 2 November. He had selected an unexpected direction for launch of the attack, and it was an outright success. The morale of the troops was high and Sant Singh decided to exploit the success by clearing three more objectives which were to be cleared by another battalion. By midnight, the highest feature was captured. The hills reverberated with the sounds of "Reveille on the bugle".

He did not wait for any directions from the brigade commander and completed the capture of the entire hill in spite of severe opposition by the enemy, who had concentrated effective artillery fire. Each bunker had to be cleared by hand to hand fighting. Lt. Col. (later Brigadier) Sant Singh had made maximum use of local resources and was awarded the MVC. The battle honour "Chuh-i-Nar 1965" was bestowed on the regiment.

In 1971, he was commander of a sector in East Pakistan, and was part of the force under Major General Niagra. After liberation of Jamalpur, Sant Singh occupied Mymensingh on his own, and sent 6 Bihar to pursue the retreating enemy troops. The unit occupied Madhupur by 0800 hours on 12 December. The success of operations so far had acted as a spur for the advance to Dacca, and General Niagra called Sant Singh forward.

He was given the task to advance along Chandpur-Sabhar-Mirpur axis, and establish a road block at Nayarhat to intercept the retreating Pakistani soldiers. An additional battalion, 13 Guards, was allotted to him for the task. He achieved spectacular results with a mixed force of Mukti Bahini and one regular battalion. He advanced about 60 km to Madhupur in eight days. He had no engineer support and the enemy had blown off all the bridges. The advance was, therefore, mostly on foot. After establishing the road block at Nayarhat, 13 Guards contacted Sabhat in the early hours of 15 December. The Pakistani troops withdrew for fear of being outflanked, and Sant Singh secured the town by evening of 15 December.

A ceasefire was announced on 15 December and General Niagra accompanied by Sant Singh and Brig Kler moved to join 2 Para, the unit which had carried out an airborne operation. General Niagra sent his ADC to General Niazi to give up. For his inspiring leadership and courage, he was awarded the MVC a second time, and was one of the six officers to have received this gallantry award twice. He retired in 1973 and was president of the unique organisation - War Decorated India.

He passed away on 8 December 2015. A large number of officers led by former COAS General Malik and serving officers from the Western Command paid their respects to the outstanding warrior. A contingent from 5 Sikh LI, the unit that he had commanded, came to present honours to their former commanding officer. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



# DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY

A man of many parts(1931-2017)

CINGIREDDI Narayana Reddy or Ci Na Re to his host of admirers, who passed away on 12 June 2017, was a man of many parts. He was an acclaimed poet and writer with over 80 published works to his credit. These included inter alia poems, prose plays, lyrical plays, translations and *ghazal*-s. He was also a professor, a lyricist who penned around 3,000 songs for films, an actor and also a politician, who served a stint in the Upper House, the Rajya Sabha, to which he was nominated in August 1997.

The son of a humble farmer, Narayana Reddy who was born in Hanumajipet in Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh in 1931, pursued his education in Urdu, as Telugu was not available as a medium during the Nizam's rule. He went on to complete his Masters degree in 1954 and got his PhD in 1962, from the Osmania University. The subject of his thesis for his doctorate was 'Modern Traditions of Telugu'. He then served as a lecturer and later as Professor in 1976. His interest in the fine arts was honed further thanks to his association with Kavi Samrat and Jnanpith awardee Viswanatha Satyanarayana, who groomed him and put him through his paces. Dr. Reddy later became Vice Chancellor of the Telugu University in Hyderabad. His earliest poetry collections were *Navvani Poovu* (The Bashful Flower), *Vennala Vada* (Moonlight Town), *Jalapatam* (The Waterfall), *Ritu Chakram* (Cycle of Seasons), and *Duvvelu Muvvalu* (Candle Bells), all of which were well received. His magnum opus however was a compilation titled *Viswambhara* (The Earth) written in 1980, which won him the coveted Jnanpith Award. The work which was widely read and received critical acclaim was later translated into many languages. Reddy also authored a book of Buddhist epic poetry titled *Nagarjuna Sagaram*.

Among the litterateur's other contributions were his musical plays and his analysis of modern Telugu poetry. Narayana Reddy was a stickler for the usage of the language

in its most pristine form, and his adherence to the purity was amply evident in his works like *Matti Manishi Aakasam* (Man beyond earth and sky), a long poem that ran to over a hundred pages. He also chronicled his extensive tours abroad, and his travelogues were always an interesting read, and were best sellers as well.

It was the matinee idol N.T. Rama Rao who introduced him to Telugu cinema in 1952 as a lyricist, and the first film for which he penned lyrics was *Gulebakavali Katha* directed by none other than Rama Rao himself. All the lyrics in the film were written by Reddy, who was besieged by offers from the industry after the success of his maiden effort. He continued to entertain audiences with his lyrics for several films the last of which was *Inkenallu* released in 2011. Dr. Reddy was passionate about presenting and popularising Telugu language and culture among the younger generation. A polyglot, he was also fluent in English, Urdu and Hindi, and it was his fascination for Urdu that was instrumental in his developing an interest in *ghazal*-s.

The poet received several honours during his lifetime including the Sahitya Academy Award for his poetry collection *Mantalu Manavvudu* (Flames and the Man). He was also a recipient of a Sahitya Academy Fellowship in 2011, and the Kala Prapoorna Award from the Andhra University. Among other laurels was the Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1982, and the Rajalakshmi Award in 1988. The writer was also conferred the Pamda Shri in 1977, and the Padma Bhushan in 1992. He had a keen interest in encouraging women to take an active interest in literary pursuits, and instituted an annual award for women writers in his late wife Susheela's name. Dr. Reddy passed away on 12 June 2017. Rich tributes were paid to the writer by a number of dignitaries. In his demise, the literary firmament lost one of its most talented writers, whose works will serve as a beacon light for generations to come. ■

– C. V. Aravind is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.



# PANDIT NARAYANRAO BODAS

A genius music exponent (1933-2017)

**R**EVERED for his deep voice and expressive face among actor vocalists, senior Hindustani classical music exponent and vocalist Pandit (Pt.) Narayanrao Bodas of the Gwalior gharana passed away in Pune on 27 November 2017, aged 84, after a brief illness.

Born in Karachi into a family steeped in musical aristocracy, connected with a *gayaki* steeped in the traditions of Indian classical music of Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Bodas got his musical initiation at the feet of his father Laxmanrao, and subsequently from Pralhadpant Ganu.

Like his father and his uncle, Pandit Shankarrao Bodas, both of whom were disciples of the legendary Pandit Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, Narayanrao was also deeply influenced by the thought and musical vision of Paluskar.

The highlight of Gwalior *gayaki* is its simplicity in presentation. Lucidity is important to the Gwalior style that subscribes to the view that easy presentation is the simplest way to involve the listener. Here there is an emphasis on *raga-s* such as *Yaman*, *Sarang*, *Bhairav*, *Bhup*, *Basant* etc. These being *raga-s* which the listener can easily identify, ensures that they concentrate more on the finer nuances being displayed, rather than focusing their energies on identifying the raga and its basic form.

Beginning his career as an actor-vocalist in the play *Saubhagyarama* written by B.N. Purandare, he impressed senior actor and Indian theatre luminary Daji Bhatvadekar, who was spurring a revival of theatre in Sanskrit with his acting and singing skills so much, that he cast him in his Sanskrit play *Sangeet Sharada*.

With his thorough grounding in classical music, Pt. Bodas took like fish to water for Bhatvadekar's plays in Marathi and Sanskrit. Bodas went on to act in several plays of Bhatvadekar including *Sangeet Saubhadra*, *PatiGeleGaKathewadi*, *Buddha Tithe Harala*, *Sangeet Mrichhakatik*, *Sangeet Mahashweta*, *Sangeet Manapman*, *Sangeet Saubhadra* and *Sangeet Sanshaykallol*.

His dedication to conserving the heritage of classical vocal

music notwithstanding, Pt. Bodas devoted a considerable part of his career to the Marathi *natya sangeet*, acting in musicals on stage.

Pt. Bodas also remained devoted to the uncompromising art of Hindustani classical music — and promoted it in its purest form, spending a considerable amount of time in *riyaz* and coaching future vocalists, despite his work in films and T.V.

The state government conferred him with the prestigious Balgandharva Award for his outstanding contributions to music.

He retired from theatre in 1993 at age 60, after giving a final performance of *Sangeet Saubhadra* in Goa. He then taught graduate and post graduate students in Mumbai University for 12 years, till 2006, after which he taught music at Gandharva Mahavidyalaya in Vashi for free.

The rhapsodic reception at a concert of his pointed to a pent-up appetite for mature, uncompromising art music. Infact, so much was his passion that he gave a stirring performance at the 'Secret Masters Series' held at the Ravindra Natya Mandir in Mumbai at the ripe age of 83, to packed audiences, where peers and critics averred that Bodas "maintained

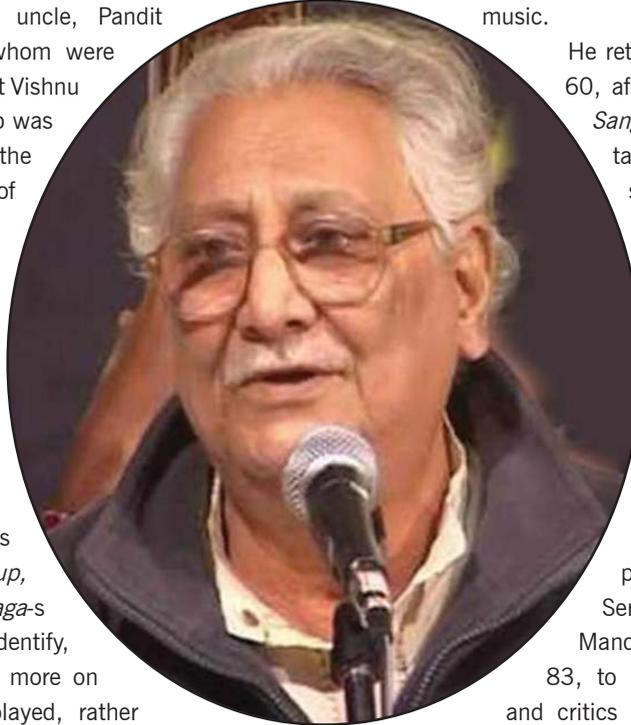
the purity of the raga-s and filled every *avaratan* (rhythmic cycle) aesthetically."

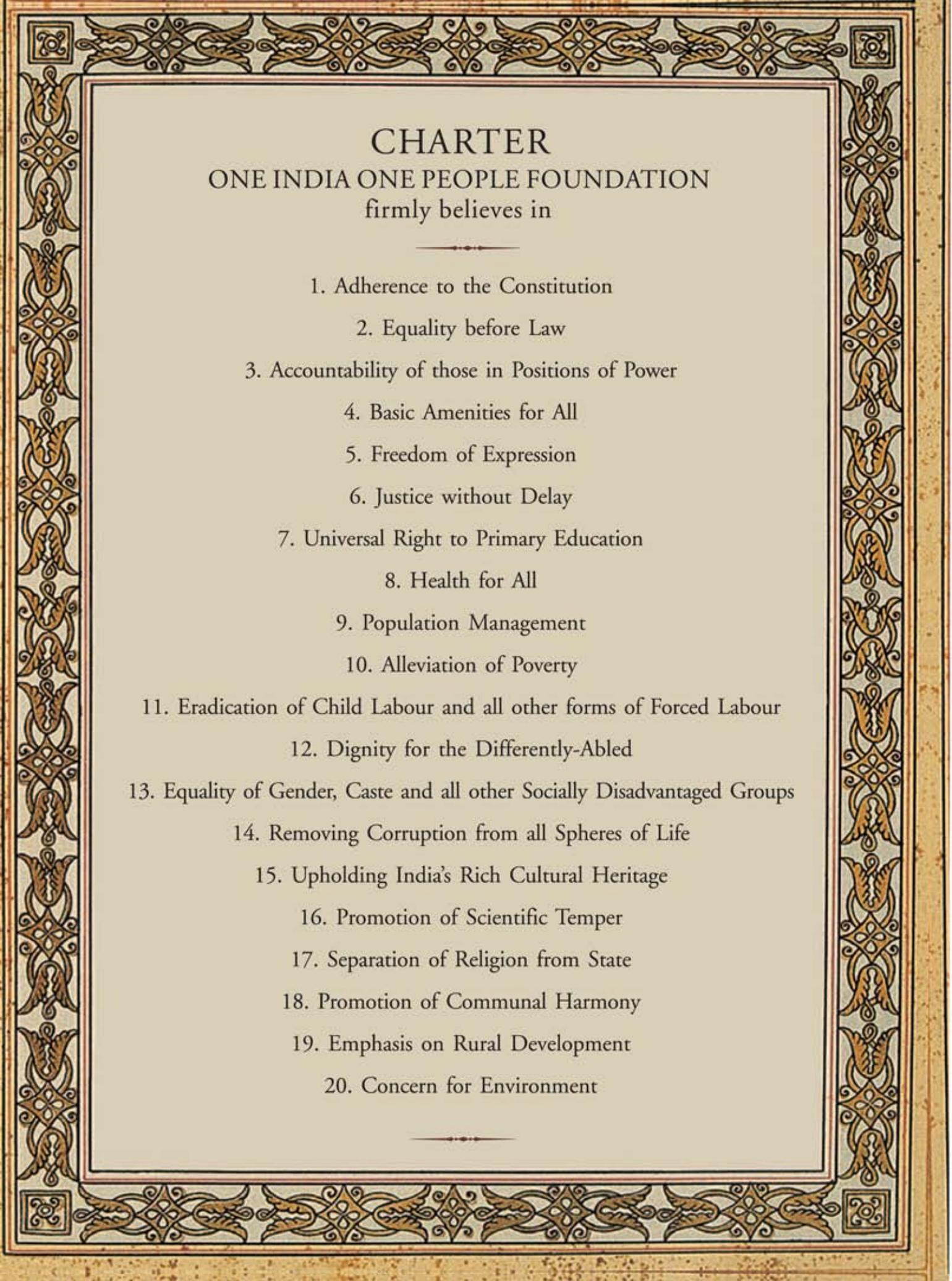
Opined a *rudraveena* player, "Narayanrao did not perform for an audience, but presented his art. It led him to take ample risks. It was thrilling to see how he pulled it off each time. His singing was a good example of how *riyaz* ought to be converted into great music."

Another said, "Narayanraoji's presentation was altogether a pleasing experience", while an inveterate concert-goer who was learning *dhrupad* said, "It was music that you remembered for a long time."

Pt. Bodas is survived by his family, including son Pt. Kedar Bodas, who carries forward his legacy and is also a luminary of the Gwalior gharana. ■

— A.Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet, short story writer.





CHARTER  
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION  
firmly believes in

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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
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# 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