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The Indian Parliament

**Indian Parliament –
end the paralysis**

**Rolling on the floor
with laughter?**

Women in Parliament

KNOW INDIA BETTER

To Kipling's Kanha: a road trip to remember

**Velas on the Konkan coast:
the perfect weekend getaway**

FACE TO FACE

Sreemoyee Piu Kundu

Great Indians: Mrinalini Sarabhai / Dr. M.A.M. Ramaswamy / Bahukutumbi Raman

MORPARIA'S PAGE



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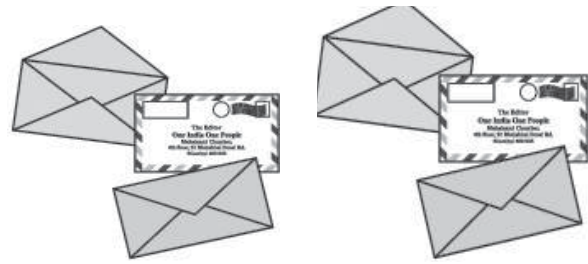
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"A highly controversial issue"

With reference to your March 2016 issue (*Stree*), the issue of temple entry (*Stop! No entry!*) is a highly controversial issue. All citizens must have entry to every public space, and yes, that extends to temples too. Discriminating on the basis of gender is ridiculous and this cuts across religions. I don't know how much success those agitating for temple entry will get, but I do hope they succeed in full measure. The Know India Better feature (*Art at your feet: the story of a swadeshi tile company*) is excellent! Who would have thought that there was a story behind something we tread on every day! Kudos to One India One People for publishing this feature. The tile company has been able to keep pace with modern times only because of their quality and because they have managed to keep pace with the changing times. Innovation is truly the name of the game and many others can learn from this company. I must also compliment you on the quality of photos published in the travel section and the layout of the magazine. Both are outstanding. Keep up the good work!

– Kavita Rajan, Pune




"Good tribute"

The tribute to Aroon Tikekar (Great Indians, March 2016) is very good. He was a great man and his contribution to Mumbai was signal. Those who knew him and his work were fortunate, as he was a tireless chronicler. Those who knew him will surely miss him. Kindly continue to carry such tributes for the deserving people of this country. The rest of your magazine has very relevant articles. I liked the piece by Malini Chib (Why no access?) Who thinks about the disabled at all? Time we woke up to some realities.

– Nandini Deendayal, Mumbai

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To Parliament, with love

The most vigorous and noisy Parliament in the world, the Indian Parliament, makes more news than other legislative bodies. V. Gangadhar who has attended, covered and commented on the activities of the Indian Parliament, defines and covers its various activities...and non-activities!

Adjournment: To take a break for any reason or for no reason whatsoever. It is vital for the proper functioning of Parliament, it reignites and rekindles the energy of the members and improves their lung power.

Bombast: Utter nonsense spoken in the House using words and sentences which make no sense. Often spoken in a very loud voice, scholars use the term 'Stentorian' to indicate strength of the voice. In aviation lingo, this kind of noise is capable of 'breaking the sound barrier.' It is the main language of Parliament.

Cacophony: Loud, noisy chatter more associated with females or the stage. Tends to go on and on, ultimately makes no sense and described by William Shakespeare (a great dramatist, but so-so speller), as an essential human trait 'full of sound and fury', signifying nothing.

The Devil: The Bad guy. Villain. Lives deep in the Underworld, cursed by God and Angels but would not give up easily. Gods with multiple limbs are unable to get rid of him, once and for all. Normally supposed to reside in Heaven, but after the victory of the Modi government the majority are rumoured to have entered our world.

Elba: Island where Napoleon was imprisoned by the English from where he sent the despairing message "Able was I ere I saw Elba".

Filibuster: Members of the US Congress who are allowed to speak on endlessly and disrupt House proceedings, till they fall down dead. So far the Congress has not found a strategy to stop them, though thriller writer Dan Brown (author of *The Da Vinci Code*) has finalised a strategy which he will reveal in his next book which he threatens to publish if Donald Trump is elected US President.

GOP (Grand Old Party): To be published with earlier book if Trump gets elected under the title 'Trump's Trumpet'.

Hindu: One who constitutes the Hindu vote bank, the largest in India, if not the world. Unbreakable, unwooable.

India: Largest democracy in the world. We hold elections...

just like that... and enjoy doing so. Remember the time when the US messed up an election enabling defeated George Bush to be the winner and real winner Al Gore, to become the loser? We do better than that.

Jhumritaliya: One of the many unpronounceable constituencies with a hugely musically appreciative electorate. Unless you sing, you don't get elected from here.

Kissa Kursi Ka: One of the major themes of Indian elections, used in films.

Lotus: Hush, can't say anything against it unless you want to be jailed.

Modi: Same as above. Never underestimate the teamaker!

Naroda Patiya: Its field was strewn with bodies. They set out on a pilgrimage and returned as corpses.

Om: Just two letters! But so much power, even the lotus trembled before that.

Parliament: O thou art powerful, thou art great, thou create kings and Gods, are you worth all that?

Queen: O, mighty Queen Tulsi Irani, thou hast missed out on mighty Yale, but that is more than enough for the havoc thou hast let loose on poor JNU and academics. Saraswati, spare her, trembles before thee, thou hast done enough.

Ram Dev: The nation is inundated with my cookies, *chavyanprash*, do not buy poison from drug stores. Modi is immortal because he believes in me.

Smriti: Yes, he is immortal. Let anyone go around him once, they acquire and imbibe all knowledge, become *brahaspati*s.



This is a lucky nation. Our Parliament ends here. No need for T, U, V, W, X, Y Z! ■

V. Gangadhar is a well-known satirist.

Indian Parliament – end the paralysis

The Indian Parliament, when in session, often attracts ridicule as it is marked by pandemonium and chaos, with very little business transacted. Much to the frustration of ordinary citizens, who see representatives they have voted for, achieving very little on their behalf. How does one make the Parliament count? Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan addresses this vital issue.

THE mayhem and paralysis in every session of Parliament and state legislatures drive most citizens, commentators and observers to despair and cynicism. Almost every session is marked by noisy scenes, chaos, cacophony, disruption, repeated adjournments, obstruction and paralysis. This pattern repeats itself in almost all state legislatures and Parliament, year after year.

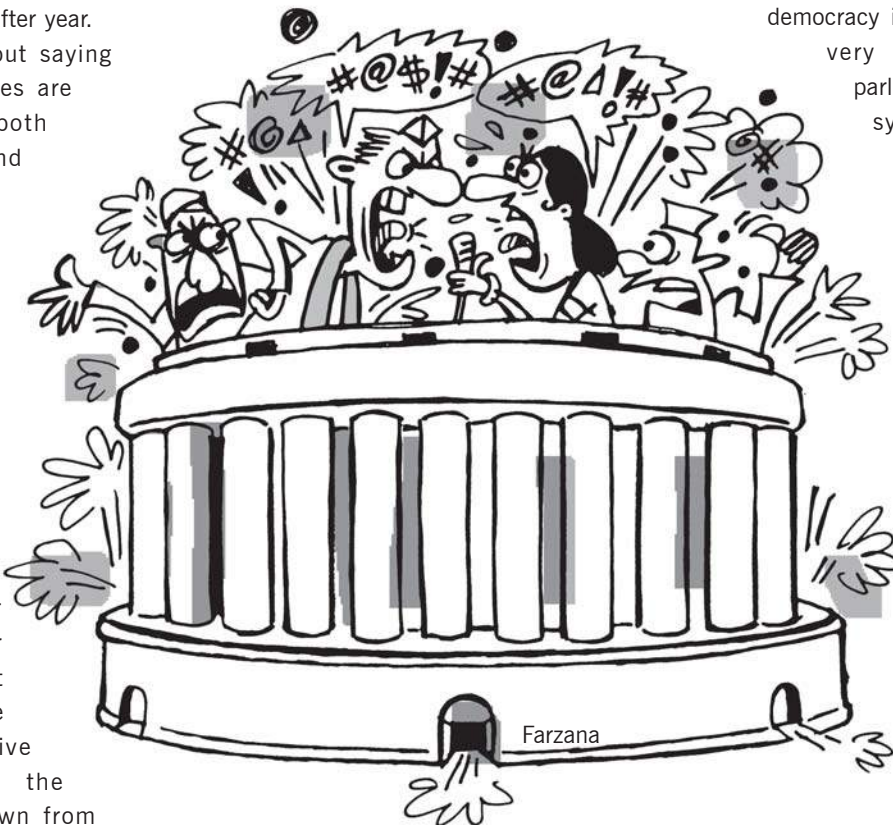
It goes without saying that if legislatures are paralysed, both governance and democracy are undermined. This is particularly true in our parliamentary executive system of government, where the executive is drawn from legislature and commands a majority support. The singular benefit of our system is that there will not be any legislative paralysis, and the government drawn from legislature and enjoying majority support will get budgets approved and laws enacted. Compare this with the United States where there is clear separation of powers and the President is directly elected, independent

of the Congress and cannot be voted out by the legislature. We often see legislative paralysis, and sometimes the government is shut down as budget is not approved by the Congress. While budgets are habitually approved in our system, if legislature cannot function and civilised debates are not conducted and laws cannot be made, governance suffers and democracy is undermined. The very rationale of parliamentary executive system collapses if legislatures continue to fail.

Bedrocks of democracy

Irrespective of the system of government we elect – parliamentary, executive or presidential – legislatures are deliberative bodies to reconcile conflicting interests. Calm deliberation and peaceful reconciliation are the

very essence of democracy. Democratic system works only when two conditions are fulfilled. First, while individuals, groups and parties disagree and articulate their points of view, they



must not question the motives of their opponents and vilify them. Accepting the genuineness of your opponents and trying to persuade them or willing to be persuaded by facts and logic is the essential condition for democratic governance. Second, only in very rare fundamental issues of liberty, human dignity and constitutional rights, there can be only one truth. In most other situations, there must be willingness to compromise and find the middle ground. 'My way' or 'no way' cannot be the operating principle in democratic societies. Each group always reserves its right to persuade the people to its point of view and get a definitive mandate on any issue in the next election; meanwhile, adversaries must have the capacity to resolve disputes and reconcile conflicting interests. Only when both these conditions – respect for the genuineness of the opponents, and willingness to compromise – are fulfilled, can elections, democracy and debate serve the purpose. If these conditions are not met, elections become a means of grabbing power without purpose, power becomes a means of personal aggrandisement, and Parliament becomes a forum for grandstanding, obstructionism and paralysis.

Clearly, our legislatures are increasingly dysfunctional because neither of the two conditions for harmonious, purposive democratic discourse and governance is fulfilled. If we wish to address this central challenge of our polity, we have to understand the causes underlying it. The cynical way is to assume that elected legislators are useless, bad or worse; somehow, the system has thrown up people incapable of rational public discourse or reconciliation of conflicting interests. But such a cynical view is both wrong and unproductive. We have many talented and public-spirited legislators in all parties, though they are in a minority and their numbers are on the decline. The pragmatic, sensible approach is to recognise that there are objective reasons why elected legislators behave the way they do, and remove those causes so that we can get the best out of our representatives. There are two fundamental causes of legislative disruption and failure of democratic discourse. We need to address each of these.

Reasons for legislative failure

First, the nature of parties, their internal functioning, and the oppressive power party bosses enjoy, is at the heart of

the problem. Parties should be platforms for political engagement of citizens – allowing participation, organisation, crafting of a political agenda, identification and promotion of competent, public-spirited leadership, offering a vision to the electorate, obtaining a mandate, and translating the agenda into action. Sadly, in India, most parties have become private fiefdoms and family estates, with no rights for members, and no internal democracy. Candidates are chosen arbitrarily or for wrong reasons, and often for a price. Massive vote buying, polarisation on caste, religion or region, or short-term freebies have become the staple of electoral politics.

There is a huge entry barrier against those citizens who refuse to compromise on these unholy practices. The party bosses decide the fate of any aspirant or leader, and not the members or the people. In effect, all leaders are captive slaves of the incumbent party bosses. On top of this, the Tenth Schedule of Constitution (anti-defection provisions – 91st amendment) made legislators completely voiceless and helpless. A law meant to prevent the cynical *ayaram-gayaram* culture has ended up enslaving legislators. Members cannot voice dissent or vote according to their judgment even on ordinary law or policy not involving the budget or no-confidence motion.

In effect, Parliament has become something like Afganistan's tribal council – the 'Loya Jirga' – where the chiefs call the shots, and numbers at their disposal dictate everything, not the judgment and views of legislators. Given this reality, and the desperate need of legislators to curry favour with party bosses to retain their seats in the next election, disruption, paralysis and unruly behavior at the behest of autocratic bosses has become endemic. As all parties resort to similar tactics and condone ugly behavior, disciplining members in the House is simply not possible, whatever the rules say, and however much the presiding officers lament.

The second major cause of failure of legislatures is over-centralisation. Almost all power is concentrated in the hands of the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers. Even ministers in most cases are ornamental. Local governments are enfeebled and are largely inconsequential. Even the simplest matters – local road, water supply, drainage, sanitation, and electricity – are outside the reach of local governments.

(Continued on page 10)

How was our Constitution drafted?

The Constituent Assembly met for the first time in New Delhi on 9th December, 1946, in the Constitution Hall which is now known as the Central Hall of Parliament House. Those who adorned the front row were Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Smt. Sarojini Naidu, Shri Hare-Krushna Mahatab, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Shri Sarat Chandra Bose, Shri C. Rajagopalachari and Shri M. Asaf Ali. Two hundred and seven representatives, including nine women were present. On 29th August, 1947, the Constituent Assembly set up a Drafting Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to prepare a Draft Constitution for India. The Constituent Assembly took almost three years (two years, eleven months and seventeen days to be precise) to complete its historic task of drafting the Constitution for Independent India. During this period, it held eleven sessions covering a total of 165 days. Of these, 114 days were spent on the consideration of the Draft Constitution. The Constitution of India was adopted on 26th November, 1949, and came into force on 26th January, 1950.

Rolling on the floor with laughter?

Humour, except for the rare exception, seems to fail our parliamentarians. When used adroitly, humour can be a politician's best weapon. E. Jayakrishnan raises quite a few laughs as he recounts parliamentary humour from India and abroad.

"Humour and wit are gradually fading away from parliamentary proceedings as members are worried about what colour the 24x7 media will give to even a simlie."

– Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

THE prime minister has got it right. Indian *netas* may have a cupboard full of skeletons, but it is bare when it comes to humour or political invective.

This author, in research for this piece searched high and low for what may pass off as parliamentary sauce, but came up with some gems but alas no treasure trove.

That cutting remark, that wry aside, the subtle verbal knife that turns, the ultimate putdown, is remarkably absent from the scabbard of Indian political and parliamentary discourse.

This absence of humour in the parliamentary arena is surprising since Indian literature and mythology especially the indigenous cultures are rich in humour and satire. And since Independence, we have had a rich heritage of editorial cartooning – sharp, witty and even acerbic – which continues to grow and flourish.

It is difficult to think of a news-based publication today which does without an in-house political cartoonist, who provide a daily or weekly dose of political satire and comment.

Humour which doesn't tickle!

The website of the two Houses of the Indian Parliament has a section entirely devoted to wit and humour. One glance will underline the proposition that when it comes to what passes as humour in the hallowed portals, it just scrapes the bottom of the barrel, or worse.

Sample this verbatim account from the Rajya Sabha: "While Shri Tathagatha Satpathy participating in the discussion on the Indian Economic Council Management Bill, 2012, on 4.5.2012, the Chairman interrupted him and this is what transpired later (*sic*):

Shri Tathagatha Satpathy (Dhenkanal): Sir, do you not

want me to speak?

Mr Chairman: You can speak but you will have to be short.

Shri Tathagatha Satpathy: Sir, I am very short. I would actually like to be six feet and two inches, but I am very short!"

The whole House burst into laughter.

Or take another instance:

"While participating in the Short Duration Discussion on Global Warming on 8.5.2007, Hon'ble Member Dr. K. Dhanaraju was making a long speech and the Chairman (Shri Varkala Radhakrishnan) was asking him to conclude. When he went on speaking, the Chairman remarked that Global Warming is applicable to the House also and that there should be limit on the time taken by Members. In response to that, the Hon'ble Member in a quick repartee said, "Sir, we should warm up for a war against Global Warming", and the House burst into laughter. (*sic*)"

This is what goes under humour in our Parliament. We are surely not "bursting into laughter".

This coyness of our *netas* in Parliament to tickle the funny bone is inexplicable.

There have been a few gems, though,

Even cultured and erudite leaders like the Mahatma and Jawaharlal Nehru, while not lacking a sense of humour, didn't even scratch the surface. Even gems like Gandhi's quip "a good idea" when asked what he thought about Western civilisation; or his tongue-in-cheek, "His majesty had on enough for both of us", when questioned about the appropriateness of his attire of a loincloth and a shawl when meeting the King-Emperor at Buckingham Palace, are rare.

Nehru did come up with "one should not visit America for the first time", when asked about his first foray to the United States as the Prime Minister of India in 1949.

But of the other luminaries who have strutted across the Indian political firmament, not many of them have used humour to embellish their political narratives.

Of course, there is a Laloo Prasad Yadav who has often

raised laughter and merriment. But his performances are more in the nature of insolence, invective and mimicry, which does not lend itself to be classified as humour, however engaging it may be.

Of course, there are a few gems; when the men, or women, in khadi did hit mid-season form.

One of the earliest and the memorable ones came from the original nightingale of India Sarojini Naidu. In response to Governor General Lord Mountbatten's comment about Mahatma Gandhi's frugality, she purred, "You will never know my dear Lord Louis what it costs the Congress party to keep that old man in poverty."

India's first High Commissioner to Britain, Krishna Menon, caustic at the best of times had said to an English woman who complimented him on his command over the English language, "My English, Madam is better than yours. You merely picked it up. I learned it."

Then, there is this one of former Prime Minister Vajpayee, then Jana Sangh MP (Member of Parliament), characterising Indira Gandhi's move to extend the life of the Lok Sabha by an ordinance under the Emergency in 1975 as "*Parlok Sabha*" - *parlok* being the Hindi equivalent of hell.

Indeed, Vajpayee was a rare leader who used the felicity of language to send a political message. The memory of his *insaniyat ke daire mein* (bound by humanness) phrase, when asked if the talks with the Kashmiri separatists will be "bound by the Indian Constitution", still linger. This was a masterstroke and provided him the political space to hold parleys with the Kashmiri groups, most of whom were loath to confine their wish list to within the four corners of the "Constitution".

The Swatantra Party leader and MP, Piloo Mody, was one of the few among the Parliamentarians who was known for his wit. Rotund as they come, Mody once found himself being reprimanded by the Speaker for turning his back on him while addressing the House. He shot back with some justification, "I have no back or front. I am round." Enough to raise a laugh, but not quite in the top draw when it comes to humour; if you know what I mean.

A recent example of political wit is the one by the effervescent Congress MP from Kerala Shashi Tharoor. Forced to fly economy class during one of his many trips between constituency Thiruvananthapuram and the national capital to adhere to his party's unwritten *diktat* to keep the appearances of austerity, he shot off a tweet. "In cattle class", he said, "out of solidarity with all our (Congress) holy cows".

Clever, very clever, but proved too clever for his party bosses who weighed in with a censure and a reprimand.

Then there is the leader who puts himself for unintended comedy, usually at his own or her own expense. While the only one, the most glaring and recent example is the Congress

scion Rahul Gandhi.

Hard to beat Rahul's "Last night I got up in the morning" or his "Politics is everywhere. It is in your pants and your shirt".

Humour from here and there

However, the honour of the best gaffes will unquestionably go to the US ex-President George W. Bush. His felicity in the department of mutilating the English language remains unparalleled. Apart from his famous "you misunderestimate me", there are a legion instances of his unintended humour which has enlivened many an American discourse.

"Our enemies are innovative and resourceful", he once said in Washington, "and so are we. They never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." Or, "Rarely is the question asked: Is our children learning?"

Try working this out from the President. "I know what I believe. I will continue to articulate what I believe and what I believe – I believe what I believe is right."

Do we Indians, and our men in *khadi*, take ourselves too seriously precluding the light touch, the hallmark and prerequisite of humour? Or, is it that humour is collateral victim of the general lowering of the standards of debate and the raucous functioning of the Indian Parliament? The jury, like humour in our Parliament, is out.

This is in sharp contrast to the fertile ground of humour and invective that animates the proceedings of the other democracies of the world.

American President Abraham Lincoln had a barbed tongue which he used to devastating effect on his opponents. On a political colleague he despised he shot off this missive which is hard to beat in its invective: "He reminds me of the man who murdered both his parents and, when sentence was about to be pronounced, pleaded for clemency on the grounds that he was now an orphan".

Once accused of going back on an election pledge he countered, "Bad promises are better broken than kept". Must be the envy of politicians today, given the penchant for exacting standards of political correctness these days.

At the turn of the last century, President Theodore Roosevelt was not only known for his stinging political barbs, but was also the creator of some of the most memorable phrases which now are part of the political lexicon. The most remarkable among them being: "The lunatic fringe", "weasel words" and "pussyfooting".

President Harry Truman not only coined the term "the buck stops here", but gave what some parents would regard the most sagacious advice ever given on how to handle their progeny. "I have found that the best way to give advice to

their children”, he said, “is to find out what they want and then advise them to do it”.

Once reminded of his humble background, he shot back, “My father was not a failure. After all, he was a father of the President of the United States”.

For the blackest of humours, almost predictably, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill takes the cake. Bessy Braddock, an MP with a reputation for toughness in the House of Commons is known to have told him where he stood with her. “Winston, if I were your wife, I would have put poison in your coffee”. “Lady, if I were your husband, I would have drunk it”, was Churchill’s reported retort.

One of the most devastating use of humour and invective in parliamentary history was provided by Geoffrey Howe, Britain’s deputy prime minister, against his prime minister Margaret Thatcher. On the floor of the House of Commons, Howe, derided his boss’ tendency to undermine her colleagues saying her conduct was “like sending your opening batsman to the crease only for them to find, the moments before the first balls are bowled, that their bats have been broken before the game by the team captain”.

“The time has come”, he continued, “for others to consider their response to the tragic conflict of loyalties with which I

have myself wrestled for perhaps too long”. The speech was considered the beginning of the end of Thatcher’s iron grip on her party and British politics, coming as it was from one of her closest confidantes.

A similar instance in the history of Indian Parliament is hard to come by, where humour and invective was used to make a telling and cutting political point. One example that comes to mind is the United Front prime minister Deve Gowda’s “man in a hurry” resignation speech, in which he assailed the then Congress President Sitaram Kesri for bringing down his government. But even there, the comedy, if at all, was situational rather than wit and humour.

Our *netas* in khadi clearly have a long way to go before they measure up to the exacting, and exciting, standards of their Western counterparts. ■



E. Jayakrishnan has reported and commented on national politics for the better part of two decades. Until recently he was the Managing Editor of MSN.com and oversaw the editorial content on Windows Apps. With an M.Phil from JNU on international studies, he currently devotes his time teaching journalism and upgrading himself in the world of strategic affairs and social marketing in Bangalore.

Indian Parliament – end the paralysis

(Continued from page 7)

The legislator whose loyalty is needed for sustaining the government is rewarded with the unwritten executive powers at local level – transfers, postings and informal control over local bureaucracy and executive decisions. Opposition members or dissenters find no place in this patronage system, and will use the legislature to give vent to their frustration. In any case, legislators have become de-facto local executives, and there is neither interest nor energy to focus on real legislative work. Everything is reduced to patronage, power and ineffectual delivery at the constituency level.

A democracy works only when the citizens are enabled to understand the link between their voting choices and consequences in terms of public good. In a centralised system such a link is missing, and taxes are divorced from public services. Vote in the next election is often a visceral response to the resulting frustration from failure or glacial pace of improvement in living conditions, or endorsement of populist short term freebies. While such a vote is a blunt instrument that brings about change of governments, it does not allow refined judgment on the performance of the legislator. Only when parties are democratised do people have a say in the choice of candidates nominated by a party. Only then

legislators are liberated from the clutches of party leaders and people can utilise vote as a refined tool to assess individual legislators. Only when local issues are addressed locally with people’s participation in an accountable manner, will voters understand the opportunities and limits of power and learn to distinguish between the panchayat and Parliament. Once people learn to utilise the vote as a refined tool like a surgeon’s knife, and once parties and legislators realise that they will be held to account for their behaviour and outcomes, the legislative process will undergo a dramatic transformation.

Legislative failure is an outcome of a larger political failure – unaccountable, autocratic parties and a corrupt electoral system; and over centralisation of powers, making legislators de-facto, ineffective local executives. Both these are also the root causes of our governance failure. If we are serious about



India fulfilling her potential, we must end the current shadow boxing and address these fundamental challenges. Palliatives will not do. ■

Dr. Jayaprakash Narayan is the founder of the Lok Satta movement and Foundation for Democratic Reforms. He can be reached at: drjploksatta@gmail.com

Women in Parliament

*What has been the role of women parliamentarians in India? Women politicians may have begun with great promise, especially during the freedom movement, but has their role evolved with time? **Shoma A. Chatterji** reviews the record of some of the current parliamentarians and comes to a conclusion.*

THE debate on the participation of women in the political process beginning from popular grassroots movements has raised several questions about awareness, impact, leadership, priorities, and so on. It has also led to many analyses on the nature of a political struggle, on mechanisms of mobilisation, strategies and perspectives on micro issues in relation to larger political processes, and ideological dimensions.

Some scholars have argued that political participation of women depends largely on the historical tradition of women's participation in political and social movements, and on the political milieu. To understand the political behaviour of women and the constraints of their participation, it is important to define both the concept of *political status* and *political participation*. 'Political participation' is understood generally as the voluntary participation in political affairs through the act of voting, membership and other activities related with political parties, legislative assemblies and socio-political movements. 'Political status' has been defined by the *Committee on the Status of Women in India* as "the degree and equality of freedom displayed by women in the shaping and sharing of power and in the value given to women's role in the society."

Annie Besant, the pioneer

Indian women have been contesting elections from the pre-Independence era. Annie Besant, who accelerated the process of women's association in 1914 with her entry into Indian politics, was the first woman to be elected as President



Annie Besant, the first woman President of INC

of the Indian National Congress. Sarojini Naidu too became active in the Indian national movement. In the 1930s, Jawaharlal Nehru made Uttar Pradesh a showcase province for women's active participation in politics. The Legislative Council and the Legislative

Assembly had 16 women members. The most prominent among them were Begum Aizaz Rasul, the deputy speaker of the Legislative Council, and Vijayalakshmi Pandit, who held a cabinet post. But one must note that both these women came from highly politicised, elite families, who had no first-hand knowledge of the political situation and were not in touch with the masses. After the first general elections in 1937, almost every province had a sprinkling of women legislators.

Every election from 1967 to 1984 in the post-Independence era was dominated by the towering personality of Indira Gandhi. Till 1984, among the 28 women members of the Lok Sabha, two-thirds came from well-known political families and had no independent base of their own. Now, one finds that the family connection has percolated down to regional politics also in quite a big way. Not all of them are elite or Western educated, but the filial connection is too obvious to be brushed aside.

One unique aspect of high-profile women in Indian politics is their political family background. Women not necessarily from elitist backgrounds, such as Ahilya Rangnekar, were from politically conscious families. A few women like Mrinal Gore came directly from the grassroots. Political power for most Indian women who rose to prominence in politics, such as Indira Gandhi, Shalinitai Patil, Jayalalithaa's proximity to Tamil



Indira Gandhi dominated Indian politics till her death in 1984



Jayalalithaa's proximity to Tamil matinee idol MGR benefitted her



Maneka Gandhi, a beneficiary of 'widow-crazy'?

S u c h e t a K r i p a l a n i , Jayalalithaa and Laxmi Parvathi is the direct outcome of their c l o s e relationships with p o l i t i c a l l y important men. In journalese, we often call this

'widow-crazy' or 'daughter-crazy.' All these women have successfully extracted emotional mileage from these relationships. The situation has remained the same. Examples are – Sonia Gandhi, Maneka Gandhi, Meera Kumar, Supriya Sule, Agatha Sangma, Shruti Chaudhary, Jyoti Mirdha, and the list goes on.

A relatively recent addition is the introduction of celebrities from the film, sports and cultural worlds into Parliament. They already have fame, popularity and money. So why do they fight the elections? It gives them a sense of power their work fields do not permit indefinitely. It offers them a dream to pursue, the dream of participating in the developmental growth of the nation at first hand and to test their charisma among their millions of fans across the country.

The star presence

Hema Malini, contesting for a Lok Sabha seat for the first time on a BJP ticket from Mathura, moved around in a white



Rekha has an abysmal attendance record in Parliament

Audi with an orange umbrella and a lotus in her hand! Yet, in a recent interview, she said her complexion had completely changed because of the rallies. Do these people have the faintest idea about 'development' for the masses? Has Hema Malini returned to Mathura to take care of its "bumpy roads" that have given her "back pain"? Hema Malini

defeated the Mathura incumbent Jayant Chaudhary (JLD) by 3,30,743 votes, and was elected to the Lok Sabha.

Actress Rekha, nominated to the Rajya Sabha, records a below-average attendance of 5 percent, which other MPs objected to. She was sworn in as an honourable member of the Upper House in 2012. Her highest attendance at the winter session was a mere 10 percent, and she did not release any statement in her defence.

Hema Malini's cup of woes

The underbelly of g l a m o r o u s parliamentarians was exposed when the media on January 30 reported that the M a h a r a s h t r a government has given a 2000 sq m plot in Andheri's Ambivli area to the Natyavihar Kala Kendra, a trust run by the actor-dancer (and



Hema Malini

BJP MP) Hema Malini, to build a dance school, for just ₹70,000; the market price for a similar plot in the area is around ₹ 50 crore. On February 2, the media dropped another bombshell reporting that she has been accused of destroying mangroves on a plot allotted to her in the 1990s.

Quoting an RTI reply provided by the Mumbai Suburban District Collectorate, activist Anil Galgali on Tuesday said the actress was allotted a plot measuring 1,741.89 square metres in Versova village and possession was granted on April 4, 1997. "She had even made a payment of ₹10 lakh, showed a bank balance of ₹22.5 lakh in the accounts of Samta Sahkari Bank Ltd. and given a project cost estimate of ₹3.7 crore," Galgali said. However, a year after the allotment, the collectorate slapped a show-cause notice to Hema Malini, asking why the allotment should not be cancelled for violating Coastal Regulatory Zone (CRZ) norms, he said.

Hema Malini sought to make a clean breast of the issue by denying allegations of any 'land-grabbing' and claimed that all rules and regulations were duly followed "I ran from pillar to post for this. It's not been easy. The government has given it to me, I have not gone and grabbed it," she countered. Following Galgali's RTI revelations last week, opposition parties including the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party demanded a probe into the land allotment, as well as its cancellation.

Elected in 2010, the Samajwadi Party member Jaya Bachchan is an exception, as the actor is seen taking her role as an MP (Member of Parliament) more seriously than the other celebrities. As per MP track by PRS Legislative Research, Jaya Bachchan has a 58 percent attendance record from



Jaya Bachchan is a regular in the Rajya Sabha



Sushma Swaraj

2010-2013. Her attendance has improved greatly over the last three years. She has even spoken up for raging issues like the Delhi gang-rape of December 2012 and the 26/11 terrorist

attacks in Mumbai. She has also spoken up vehemently about her reservations about the working of the Ministry of Women and Child Development on the floor of the House in August 2014. But whether she actually worked towards the goals is not recorded.

Sushma Swaraj and Smriti Irani, now high level ministers in the Central Cabinet of the BJP government, are famous (infamous) more for their high decibel voices on the floor of the House and media interviews than in action. Irani specially, rises on every occasion to counter every allegation made against her ambivalent comments in public space, and is less interested in the working of her Ministry of Human Resource and Development, where she confines her actions to interfering in every high-powered educational institution in the country.

Maneka Sanjay Gandhi is the Union Minister for Women and Child Development. But she continues to focus on her role as a leading environmentalist, animal activist and a crusader for vegetarianism. She entered active politics in 1984. Since then she has won parliamentary elections six times starting with the Janata Dal, and has served as minister in four governments. However, she is often criticised for her explosive comments on important issues. Recently, responding to the Supreme Court's observation on the need for harsher punishment for child rapists, she ruled out chemical castration as a form of punishment, calling the step "regressive" and a form of "revenge", rather than punishment with a view to reform the offender. She was also pulled up for her proposal to record the

sex of the foetus and monitor pregnancies, by several civil society groups opposed to the idea, who felt this would lead to a terribly negative impact on the girl child in the country.

To the world outside, women in India might appear to have total freedom and opportunity to participate in nation-building activities, politically speaking. But is this a true picture? For every Mrinal Gore, Maneka Gandhi, Sushma Swaraj and Smriti Irani, there are thousands of faceless, anonymous women with political aspirations, who are losers in the political race even before they have arrived on the political landscape. The road to political success for women right across the world, one must admit, with their merits and demerits, is paved with thorns.

According to Anuradha Chadha's *Political Participation of Women: A Case Study in India*, (OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development 2014), "Today, there is considerable increase in the percentage of women as voters. The participation of women as voters is almost equal to men. But the political participation (as a whole) of the women is not equal to men. They are still not able to get a share equivalent to men in organisations that require decision making. Still, politics is dominated by men at every level of participation, and women have not been regarded as a significant part of the political arena." ■



Smriti Irani, high-decibel, but can she be high-impact?



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Food for thought

The Parliament canteen which was for long offering highly subsidised food to hungry parliamentarians and visitors, has since 1st January, 2016, hiked the rates. Of course, this move seems to have come after criticism of the earlier subsidy. So a vegetarian thali which earlier cost ₹ 18 has now been hiked to ₹ 30. Similarly, the non-vegetarian thali has been hiked to ₹ 60 from the earlier ₹ 33! A three-course meal now costs our parliamentarians ₹ 90, up from the earlier ₹ 61. And a masala dosa will now cost ₹ 15, up from the earlier ₹ 5! This rate revision has come after six years. And the point to ponder is this; despite this hike, the food is still quite cheap. But we don't grudge our parliamentarians their food now, do we?

Indian Parliament - its best, its worst

*Our Parliament has witnessed speeches of greats like Jawaharlal Nehru, and the crass mud-slinging and disruptive behaviour of members as in recent times. Describing some of the highs and lows, **Dr. P.M. Kamath** rues the falling standards of the Indian Parliament.*

If we divide great men who participated in the national freedom movement, survived to see a free India, and participated in drafting a Federal, Democratic Republic with parliamentary form of government, they can be sorted into two broad categories: One, those who thought within the inherited 'box-thinking', and second, those who always thought 'out of the box'! I say this because men of great abilities belonging to the first category drafted the Constitution as they were a majority. This group included Pandit Nehru, K.M. Munshi, Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar and many others.

These men generally believed in what they knew with their short-time participation in the parliamentary system as the better option to organise the governance of India, than the other systems, mainly presidential that they didn't know. But a few equally competent great nationalists but accustomed to think out of the box, said that to govern India we needed a stable executive that the Presidential system alone can provide. These were men like Prof. K.T. Shah, H.V. Kamath and a few others.

The Indian Parliament has been in operation since 26 January 1950, celebrated by the nation as Republic Day. For the last 66 years, India has seen a parliamentary democracy in operation. The Father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi was critical and used un-parliamentary terms to describe the working of it in the UK in 1908. Intellectually oriented Indian Prime Ministers (PMs) in the past have expressed their frustration with the working of the parliamentary system in India; thus for instance, former PM, Atal Behari Vajpayee had said that democracy in India had "become a hollow shell" with "elections reduced to a farce."

Some other PMs have also expressed a need for a stable executive that is similar as provided by the presidential system – that is not necessarily as in the US, but providing for a

stable, effective and performing government. PM Manmohan Singh had been critical of a coalition government; similarly, former President A.P.J. Kalam had also favoured a presidential system. I tend to agree with S. C. Kashyap, who wrote: "The framers of the Constitution neither had time nor the interest to conceive of a structure that kept in mind the future of India..."

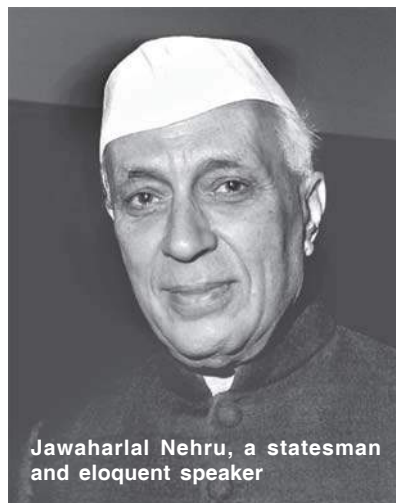
Best moments, best parliamentarians

Given the above background, Indian Parliament had its moments of glory bringing out the best from the responsible Members of Parliament (MP). Hence primarily, the Parliament

is made of people – MPs, who are elected by the people to represent them for a given time, normally for five years. Thus, it is the quality, calibre and commitment to the institution of the Parliament and its working that really makes or mars the name of the Parliament. The word Parliament comes from the term parley; it is a talking shop, a place where all aspects of a policy proposed by the Executive are debated before it is finally adopted. The Parliament, since inception had highly talented, highly educated men and women as they came from a class that deserted their lucrative profession to

devote themselves to the national movement. But no one can expect today the Parliament of that calibre; that is true of all legislatures in comparison to the composition soon after winning Independence – one can make a study of the US legislature or of South Africa to support the point.

Yet, early best adherence to sense of individual responsibility and political accountability was demonstrated in December 1956 when Lal Bahadur Shastri was Railway Minister. In September 1956 at Mahabubnagar, Andhra Pradesh, in a railway accident when 112 persons were killed, he offered to



Jawaharlal Nehru, a statesman and eloquent speaker

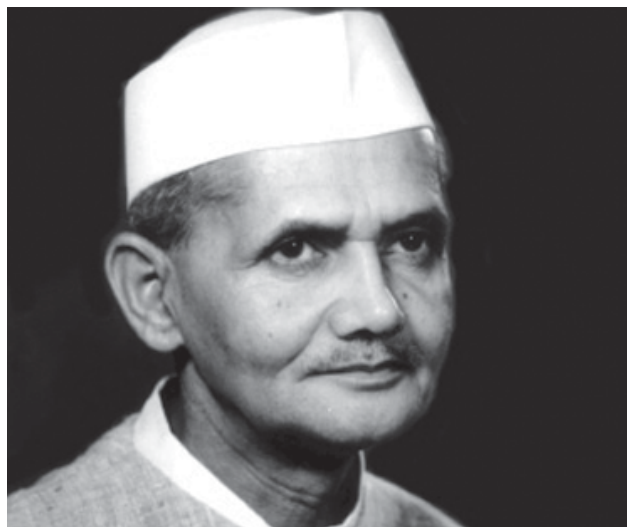
resign but PM Nehru did not accept it. In December 1956 when another accident occurred at Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu, Shastri resigned accepting moral and constitutional responsibility. Nehru speaking on the incident lauded Shastri's integrity and commitment to high ideals. Nehru added that he was accepting the resignation not because Shastri was responsible for the accident in anyway, but he had set an example in adhering to constitutional propriety.

Now often we hear politicians saying that if a minister is to resign owning up responsibility for a disaster, nobody will be left out to accept ministerial responsibility! That is just the politicians' moral unpreparedness to resign!

What comes to mind in mentioning as examples where responsible persons could have resigned are: the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984 in retaliation to Mrs. Gandhi's assassination – as though it was a community conspiracy to assassinate Mrs. Gandhi! The then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi or Home Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao should have resigned owning responsibility, instead of justifying the massacre by stating that when a huge Banyan tree falls, it is bound to shake the Earth! Similarly, the Bhopal gas tragedy, (in December 1984, Madhya Pradesh) which killed over 5000 people and left nearly 50,000 with various disabilities. None owned up any political responsibility either at the Centre or at the state government level. Instead, much time was spent in the Parliament and the state assembly debating over the escape of Warren Anderson, who was the CEO of Union Carbide at the time of the Bhopal disaster. A somewhat similar situation is now being witnessed with the escape of Vijay Mallya, not merely an industrialist but a sitting MP, to the United Kingdom. He has gone out of India using his diplomatic passport! Were any anticipatory steps taken by the government? Why not hold a detailed discussion on how different nationalised banks went on lending him money and fix ministerial and bureaucratic accountability? In the meanwhile, expel him from the Rajya Sabha.

The worst moments

In the process of democratic mobilisation of voters, there has always been a peripheral role played by the criminal elements. A study of 'goonda' files in Kolkata has shown that "West Bengal's illustrious Congress Chief Minister, Dr. B. C. Roy had close links with a notorious goonda of the city, Gopal Mukherjee". After Nehru, set in the Parliament. One feature that is



Lal Bahadur Shastri, one of the most upright and moral leaders of India

increasingly disturbing to the watchers of democracy in India is the growing stranglehold of corruption and increasing number of MPs with criminal charges within the halls of Parliament.

Corruption was known even during the Nehru era. Until the 1980s, the criminals and the corrupt supported politicians, providing money and muscle power; but since the 1990s, these elements have gained entry into the houses of Parliament as members. The best example would be the election of the late Phoolan Devi, an ex-dacoit, on a Samajwadi Party (SP) ticket to the Lok Sabha in 1996. Former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, late P. A. Sangma had said during the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Parliament that there are 40 sitting MPs and 700 sitting MLAs facing criminal charges including murder. He had called for a "second freedom struggle" to free the country from internal contradictions!

MPs on sale!

Narsimha Rao was the first non-Nehru-Gandhi Congress PM from 1991 to 1996; his government did not enjoy even a simple majority in the Lok Sabha to begin with. In 1993, when the opposition introduced a no-confidence motion against his government, Rao had to

literally buy six more MPs to survive. And these were purchased from Jharkhand Mukti Morcha! The Congress MPs who helped him to carry out the Survival Operation Success (SOS) were well rewarded.

Narsimha Rao was the first non-Nehru-Gandhi Congress PM from 1991 to 1996; his government did not enjoy even a simple majority in the Lok Sabha to begin with. In 1993, when the opposition introduced a no-confidence motion against his government, Rao had to literally buy six more MPs to survive. And these were purchased from Jharkhand Mukti Morcha!



P. V. Narasimha Rao was a maverick politician and parliamentarian

There were critics in the media of the SOS, but not much criticism was heard within the Parliament. Fifteen years later, another SOS was played out. This time it was for the Manmohan Singh-Sonia Gandhi-led government in July 2008, seeking parliamentary approval to the India-US Civil Nuclear Deal after the CPI (M), that was providing outside prop to the Congress-led UPA government, withdrew its support. The case in brief of buying MPs for SOS, known as 'cash-on-table', indicate that the Congress Party deployed Samajwadi Party's then General Secretary, Amar Singh to implement the deal. Three BJP MPs were offered three crores each in cash help the Congress. They were told that the government is sure of survival, but they were requested to abstain from voting to make it a guaranteed SOS. But the BJP MPs brought the cash into the House and wads of ₹ 1000 were liberally demonstrated for the media to record the drama! The national Emergency declared by Mrs. Indira Gandhi in June 1975 must rate as the worst moment in the annals of the Indian Parliament so far. Mrs. Gandhi aimed to reduce the Parliament to a rubberstamp in the hands of the Prime Minister – proclaimed as the only man in the Cabinet by her coterie of yes-men! Prominent leaders of the opposition were even imprisoned by her and many political voices stifled.

Conclusion

Increasingly, many serious students, analysts and even former PMs and Presidents within the Indian parliamentary system, have come to believe that the current system can only further deteriorate since it is not a suitable form of government for a highly pluralistic society. It is better for India to gain advantages of a stable government elected for a fixed term as in the US. Even in the US, the President tries to buy SOS - not for survival but to implement policies when he doesn't have requisite support in the Congress. But support is secured by promising projects in the constituencies of the opposing senators or the Congressmen. It is not corruption, in any way; it helps the elected members to nurse their constituencies. But buying of MPs in India is generating black money, discrediting the polity and the economy.

It is pointed out that in many other democracies too, elected members indulge in corruption and disruptive behaviour by throwing microphones to hurt others as it happens in democracies like Taiwan, Ukraine or Somalia. But it is a highly fallacious argument, because Indian democracy is looked upon by the developing world as a model for them.

Hence, there is an expectation of better behaviour from our MPs inside the Parliament. The main political parties – the BJP and the Congress who have used disruption as a device to promote party interests can today resolve that under normal times, disrupting the working of the House is a non-parliamentary device. Yet, everyone who wishes better conduct on the part of the MPs need to know: When Cromwell dissolved the House of Commons in 1653, he is reported to have said that "no dogs barked" at his action. That made former Vice Chancellor of University of Ceylon, Ivor Jennings to write: "Better, dogs bark inside, outside they may bite." ■



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Did you know?

The Parliament House is one of the most magnificent buildings in New Delhi. The building was designed by two famous architects — Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker - who were responsible for the planning and construction of New Delhi. The foundation stone of Parliament House was laid on 12th February, 1921, by His Royal Highness The Duke of Connaught. The construction of the building took six years and the opening ceremony was performed on 18th January, 1927, by the then Governor-General of India, Lord Irwin. The cost of construction was the princely amount of ₹ 83 lakhs! The Central Hall of the Parliament House is a place of historical importance as the transfer of power on 15th August, 1947, from British to Indian hands took place in this Hall. The Indian Constitution was also framed in the Central Hall.

The permanent house

Often, the Upper House of the Indian Parliament, the Rajya Sabha, seems like an indulgence. But there are historical reasons behind the setting up of the Rajya Sabha and it is expected to play a very important role in our democracy, says Prof. Avinash Kolhe, as he explains the Rajya Sabha's context.

THE winter session of the Parliament ended on Wednesday, 23rd December 2015. Compared to the monsoon session, this session was more productive in terms of the Bills passed. The Lok Sabha passed 14 bills whereas the Rajya Sabha passed 8 bills, and together these houses passed 8 bills. In terms of clock hours put in, the Lok Sabha worked for 115 hours, an hour more than the original schedule. The Rajya Sabha worked for 60 hours, but lost 47 hours to disruption.

Rajya Sabha under review

Despite this level of productivity, the Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley commented that the role and powers of Rajya Sabha should be reviewed as it enjoys powers on par with Lok Sabha, which is a directly elected body. What he said in fact expresses the ground reality in the Parliament. Today, the BJP has an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, but it does not enjoy a similar position in the Rajya Sabha. In the Rajya Sabha, non-BJP political forces like Congress, BSP, SP, etc., have more numerical strength than the BJP. This is precisely why the BJP could not get many important bills like the GST passed as it has no majority in the Upper House. No wonder the big guns of the BJP are talking about reducing the powers of the Rajya Sabha. Interestingly, the Left forces have been asking for this for many years.

Arun Jaitley is an eminent Supreme Court lawyer and knows what he is talking about. This is why it is all the more surprising to see his suggestions to reduce the status of

the Rajya Sabha. In fact, the Rajya Sabha has been deliberately given an important status in our scheme of things. There was heated debate in our Constituent Assembly about the role and powers of the Rajya Sabha. Mohammad Tahir representing Bihar said on 28th July 1947 that 'the Upper House is a creation of imperialism' and argued that independent India did not need it. To which the mover of the debate Gopalswami Ayyangar, replied that 'the role of the Upper House is merely to delay legislation which might be the outcome of passions of the moment until the passions have subsided'. It was obvious to the great minds of India that the Lower House (Lok Sabha) can fall prey to passionate rhetoric and thus felt the need to

have a 'House of Elders' (Rajya Sabha) to instill calm. The powers of the Upper House to delay and oppose legislations passed by the Lower House were recognised and enshrined right from the very birth of the Rajya Sabha. This is an important role given to the Rajya Sabha in our Constitution. So, to

argue that the Rajya Sabha is being obstructionist for merely opposing legislation of the Lower House, is a flawed argument.

Is the Lok Sabha truly representative of the people?

Also the argument that our Lok Sabha is a body directly elected by the people who are the sovereign powers, is equally lop-sided. In our 'first-past-the-post' system of elections, a candidate can win even if he gets only 30% of the total votes polled, which itself could be only 60% of the total eligible voters in the constituency. In other words, in our country, minority can easily get elected since we do not yet have a



The Rajya Sabha in session

well-developed 'two-party system' like USA and UK. Given this ground reality, can any MP/MLA (Member of Parliament/ Member of Legislative Assembly) claim to be the true representative of majority opinion?

Let us take a quick look at the practice in other developed democracies like USA and UK. Both these countries have a second house of the Parliament, albeit with a world of difference. The UK has the 'House of Lords' which is a house of nobles where one gets nominated. Even today, many stalwarts like the economist Dr. Meghnad Desai get elevated to peerage. The UK has a second house for historical reasons. The USA has a very important and very different second house known as the Senate. It is a federal country which has 50 constituent states and the USA is a product of an agreement between these states. The Senate is created to protect the interests of the federating states.

The raison d'être of the Rajya Sabha

Like USA, India too has a federal system and today we have 29 states which are members of the Union of India. To protect their interests we have created the Rajya Sabha which is also known as the 'Council of the states'. Each and every MP in Rajya Sabha represents a state of the Indian Union unlike an MP from Lok Sabha who represents a constituency. In other words, for our federal polity, we must have a Rajya Sabha.

This is why each state of the Indian Union has representation in the Rajya Sabha in proportion to its population. For example, big states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra have a big number of MPs in the Rajya Sabha. The most important feature of the Rajya Sabha is that it can't be dissolved, and it is a permanent house. Each MP of the Rajya Sabha enjoys a term of six years and every second year 1/3 MPs retire and that many get elected from its states. Since it is a permanent house, India always has a House where the Council of Ministers has to appear and face the MPs. During the Kargil War in 1999, the Lok Sabha had already been dissolved and the new Lok Sabha was yet to be elected. But since we had the Rajya Sabha, Prime Minister

A.B. Vajpayee could go to the Rajya Sabha and explain our position.

This also brings into discussion the other dimensions of utility of the Rajya Sabha. Rajya Sabha is a body of election-shy and elderly people, free from political prejudices and passions. It acts as a brake upon the Lok Sabha which on occasion might seek to push Bills through Parliament with undue haste and without adequate consideration and debate. The cool and sane voices in the Rajya Sabha can act as a leash on the Lok Sabha.

Another practical dimension of the issue is the north-south divide of our country and the attendant uneven spread of MPs. In terms of numerical strength, North India is way ahead of South India.

Another practical dimension of the issue is the north-south divide of our country and the attendant uneven spread of MPs. In terms of numerical strength, North India is way ahead of South India. A political party can come to power by winning 272 seats from the North, West and East India. Such a party can easily ignore the interests of South India. It is the Rajya Sabha which ensures that all the states of the Indian Union are represented and heard.

Let us also not forget that when it comes to passing money bills, the Lok Sabha has been given absolute powers. A money bill passed by the Lok Sabha does go to the Rajya Sabha, but only for discussion and comments which are not binding on the Lok Sabha. Most important, a no-confidence motion against the government of the day can be moved only in the Lok Sabha and not in the Rajya Sabha. It simply means

the fall of the government could take place only in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha has no role here.

Given this, it is quite clear that the Rajya Sabha has an important role in our polity. We must understand and respect this. If a political party ruling the country shows grace and



magnanimity to take everybody on board, many bills could be easily passed. Sardar Patel used to say 'never blame your tools, blame yourself for your inability'. We should keep in mind these words of that great son of India. ■

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An interesting fact

The Parliament library is the second largest in India, after the National Library in Kolkata. The Parliament library was temporarily used as a courtroom by the Supreme Court after Independence, till a separate building was assigned to it. Both the English and Hindi versions of the Constitution of India, originally calligraphed by the members of the Constituent Assembly have been preserved in nitrogen-filled chambers within the library.

Dr. Ambedkar and parliamentary democracy

*At a time when Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's name is being repeatedly tossed up by dissenting students in various universities, and the government plans to celebrate his 125th birth anniversary, the fact that he never supported an armed revolution and always favoured parliamentary democracy is being overlooked by all - the leftists, the rightists and the political opportunists, says **Rakshit Sonawane**.*

ON January 26, 1950, India became a republic by adopting a Constitution based on the foundations of liberty, equality and fraternity. It was not just a transition from a fractured polity, a stratified majority and a highly unequal socio-economic society. It was a historic metamorphosis towards the evolution of mankind in this part of the world, towards a civilised society – a society which would strive for the welfare of all citizens and resolve differences through peaceful dialogue, instead of by the sword.

The ultimate panacea

The founding fathers of this nation, including Dr. B. R. Ambedkar – who was the chief architect of the Indian Constitution- favoured parliamentary democracy and hoped that it would be the ultimate panacea for the problems of the nation. There were, of course, some apprehensions, considering the country's multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-religious ethos along with a huge socio-economic void.

In his word of caution while presenting the draft constitution in the Parliament on November 26, 1949, Dr. Ambedkar had said, "We must begin by acknowledging the fact that there is complete absence of two things in Indian society. One of these is equality. On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principle

of graded inequality in which we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty. On 26th January, 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril. We must remove

this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has to labouriously build up."

He had faith in the values enshrined in the Constitution, but was apprehensive about the implementation of the provisions

made in the statute by future generations. "I feel, however good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good



Dr. Ambedkar's painting was finally unveiled in Parliament in 1990

lot. The working of a Constitution does not depend wholly upon the nature of the Constitution. The Constitution can provide only the organs of State such as the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The factors on which the working of these organs of the State depends are the people and the political parties they will set up as their instruments to carry out their wishes and their politics.”

Advocating peaceful means of transformation and settling of differences, he said, “The first thing in my judgement we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives. It means we must abandon the bloody methods of revolution...These methods are nothing but the Grammar of Anarchy and the sooner they are abandoned, the better for us.” He was opposed to the concept of an armed revolution and any kind of dictatorship, even the dictatorship of the proletariat propagated by the Communists.

He was for peace and progress, even at the cost of the pace of development. “Progress by peaceful means is always a slow process and to impatient idealists like myself it is sometimes painfully slow. In an old country like India, with no tradition of collective action and no trace of social conscience, progress is bound to be slower. No one need be disheartened by this. For to my mind what matters is not so much the rate of progress as the nature of the outlook,” he said in his speech as a member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council at the first session of the Plenary Labour Conference in New Delhi on September 6, 1943.

In the same speech, he counted the advantages of having a parliamentary democracy. “In Parliamentary Democracy there is the Legislature to express the voice of the people; there is the Executive which is subordinate to the Legislature and bound to obey the Legislature. Over and above the Legislature and the Executive there is the Judiciary to control both and keep them both within prescribed bounds. Parliamentary Democracy has all the marks of a popular Government, a government of the people, by the people and for the people.”

To the critics of parliamentary democracy, he said in his speech while delivering the draft constitution, “The Communist Party want a Constitution based upon the principle of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. They condemn the Constitution because it is based upon parliamentary democracy. The Socialists want two things. The first thing they want is that if they come in power, the Constitution must give them

the freedom to nationalise or socialise all private property without payment of compensation. The second thing that the Socialists want is that the Fundamental Rights mentioned in the Constitution must be absolute and without any limitations so that if their Party fails to come into power, they would have the unfettered freedom not merely to criticise, but also to overthrow the State.”

He wanted the country to be run on the principles enshrined in the Constitution on the basis of liberty, equality and fraternity, with checks and balances to avoid dictatorship or excesses of any kind. He wanted the country independent from the British rule not just politically, but for delivering socio-economic justice as well through peaceful means.

Whither the statesmen?

Sixty-six years later, the country seems to be living in extremes as professional politicians obsessed with capturing and retaining power have been indulging in power politics, at the cost of the principles enshrined in the Constitution. These professional politicians are from different political hues and are just politicians, not statesmen. As a consequence, while implementing the provisions of the Constitution, personal ambitions or political considerations of a party have taken precedence over the principles of parliamentary democracy on various occasions. At times, these have culminated in disturbance of communal harmony and unnecessary bloodshed of innocent citizens.

The reasons for the state of affairs are many. After becoming a republic, the country faced a mammoth task of nation building as a result of the huge backlog of socio-economic development. On the pretext of addressing the backlog, the rich and the powerful took large plots of government land on nominal leases. Numerous schools, colleges, hospitals, cooperatives (in sectors like sugar, dairy and credit) etc., were created with additional help from the government in the form of tax concessions, additional FSIs, etc. Eventually, these became hubs of political activity and/or money-spinning centres for professional politicians. Some minorities, who took special favours as religious or linguistic minorities, set up educational institutions, which today refuse to follow the provisions of the Right To Education (RTE) Act in admitting students from poor families, flashing their minority card.

The rich and the influential, due to their proximity with the people in power, received favours in return. In a changing

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country, the erstwhile princes, *zamindars*, *munims* and British bureaucracy were replaced by powerful politicians and educated Indians. The age of professionalism set in and politics became the most lucrative one. One in which you could not just live on public money but also become powerful, with the help of like-minded bureaucrats, and captains of industry.

Since the country has been ruled by the Congress for a major period than any other party, the major part of the discredit, including the excesses during the emergency clamped in 1975, goes to it. Incidentally, Dr. Ambedkar was always a bitter critic of the Congress party, for which he was marginalised and defeated by Congress candidates at the hustings. The only time he worked with the Congress was as the law minister in the first union cabinet headed by Jawaharlal Nehru, as an independent member. The Nehru cabinet included non-Congress members too, like Dr. Shyamaprasad Mukerjee of the Jan Sangh, apart from Dr. Ambedkar.

Acknowledging Dr. Ambedkar, at last!

Installing a portrait of Dr. Ambedkar in the Parliament took 40 years as a result of the hostility of the Congress towards him. It was done in 1990 by Prime Minister V.P. Singh, who broke away from the Congress. Subsequently, the Congress as well as the Communists have appropriated him.

Now it is the turn of the BJP to follow suit. Whether it is the Congress, the left or the right, each one of them has selectively picked up bits and pieces from Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts as per convenience. This is irrespective of the fact that Dr. Ambedkar never supported the communist theory of an armed struggle to bring in the dictatorship of the proletariat. He was also a bitter critic of the evil practices in Hinduism and had sought its cleansing by suggesting a formula in his *Annihilation of Caste*.

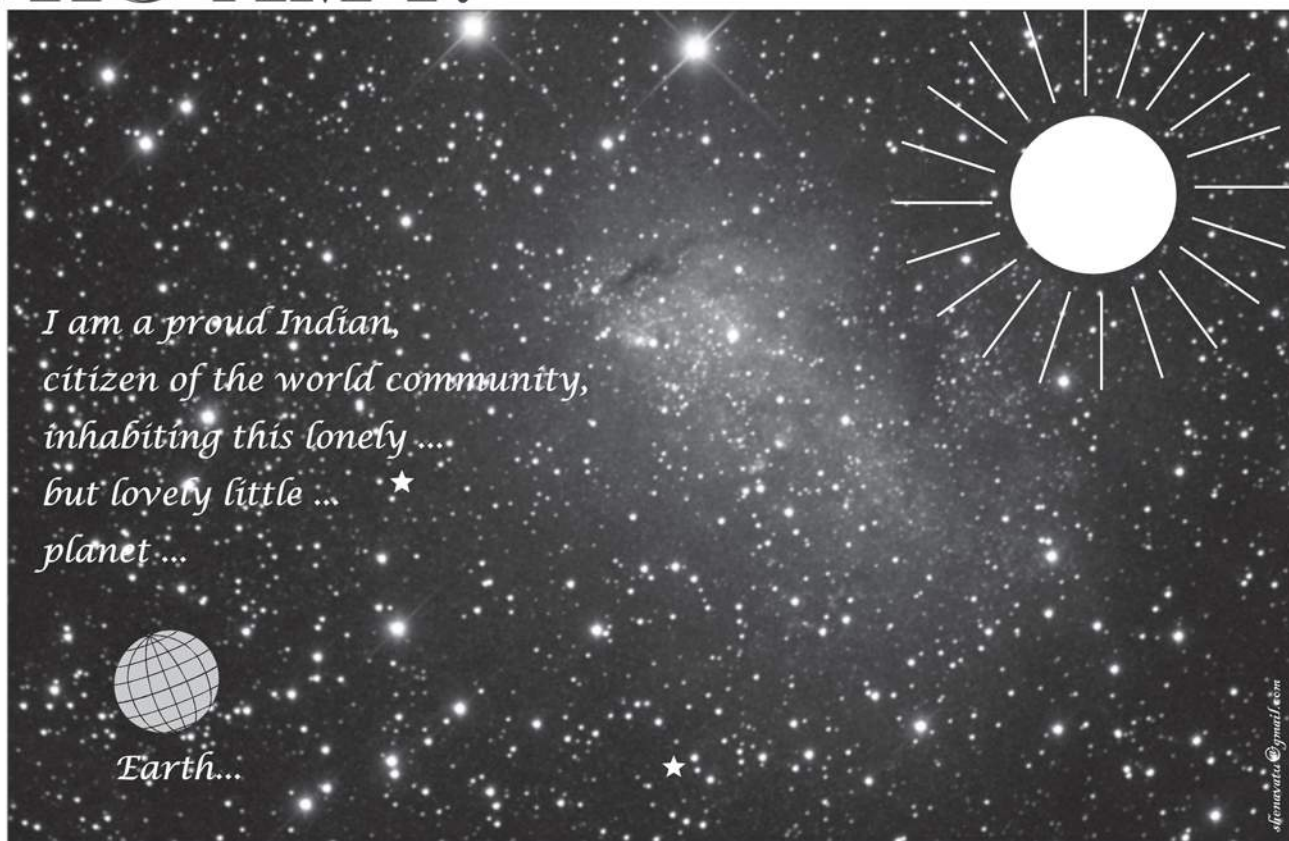
He always considered politics as a means to serve society, not an end in itself. So, when the Hindu Code Bill moved by him in the Nehru cabinet for women's rights was shot down, he resigned as the law minister.

As the country celebrates his 125th birth anniversary, his thrust on parliamentary democracy is much more relevant than ever, considering the state of affairs in the country.■



Rakshit Sonawane started as a factory worker at L & T's Powai factory in 1975 and then supervised cargo operations in the Mumbai docks before becoming a journalist. He has worked in *Mid-Day*, *The Indian Express* and *The Times of India*. He holds a masters degree in literature and is currently a freelancer.

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To Kipling's Kanha

a road trip to remember

There are road trips where one goes straight to the destination, the journey is incidental. Then there are road trips, where the journey is as important as the destination. One stays to savour the pit stops, look up rarely visited sights, marvel at the road or the lack of it, and take in the wonders of the Indian countryside. From the concrete jungle of Mumbai to the lush greenery of a real jungle, this road enticed and beckoned this traveler with the allure of the unknown.

Text & photos: Anuradha Rajan



The Bibi ka Maqbara in Aurangabad, a Taj lookalike, but with a grace of its own

A road trip from Mumbai to Kanha National Park sounded daunting, but my family and I set out nevertheless, armed with suggestions, tips and tons of warnings. The distance is 1100-odd km and takes about nineteen hours by road. One can also do this trip by flying to Nagpur or taking the train and driving down to Kanha.

The Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh came into existence in 1955 and forms the core of the Kanha Tiger Reserve created in 1974 under Project Tiger. The Park's landmark achievement is the preservation of the rare hard ground swamp deer (Barasingha), saving it from near extinction. Stringent conservation programmes for the overall protection of the Park's fauna and flora, makes Kanha one of the most well-maintained national parks in Asia.

We as a family have done a lot of travelling southwards, since we hail from there. This was our first road journey eastwards and we didn't know what to expect, especially the pit stops and the loo breaks. But the most important thing to remember is the presence of the sun. It seemed to be an omnipresent pain for the front seat passengers. Thankfully, it was December, so it wasn't too hot.

The Dakhani Taj and a crater enroute

Aurangabad was our first stop. We decided to conserve our energy and not do the Ajanta-Ellora rounds, which we had already done on a previous trip, but decided to have a quick look at the



The orange-dusted dirt road on way to Kanha



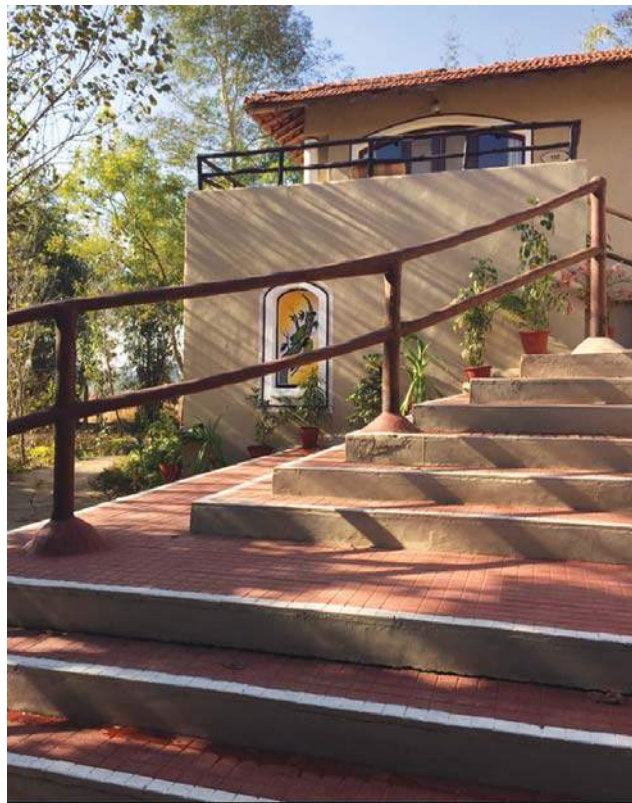
The Lonar crater lake, the world's largest hyper velocity crater

Bibi ka Maqbara – which I had always thought to be the Black Taj. This knowledge was also imparted to my kids who were looking forward to it and we were deeply disappointed when we realised that Bibi ka Maqbara is actually quite pale, and not black. I am not even sure now where I had got that information from!

Bibi ka Maqbara is a smaller, slimmer, paler version of the Taj Mahal – but a replica nevertheless. We spent some time at this monument, which despite the comparison to its more illustrious cousin, is still worthy of more than a *dekko*. Built by Azam Shah, son of Aurangzeb, this monument is also called the *Dakkhani* Taj (Taj of the Deccan) and was built by Azam Shah in memory of his mother Dilras Banu Begum. It is a very graceful monument and we were glad we had stopped awhile here.

The next day, bright and early, we set out for Nagpur, but decided to do a detour and check out Lonar's famous hyper velocity meteorite crater. In my opinion, this is not to be missed! The crater was much more than what we expected. It was huge, with greenish waters that almost seemed to froth around the edges. There was one very informative guide who was hanging around, trying to entice tourists to listen to his harangue. After rattling off a bunch of statistics and impressive scientific facts about the

Bibi ka Maqbara is a smaller, slimmer, paler version of the Taj Mahal - but a replica nevertheless. We spent some time at this monument, which despite the comparison to its more illustrious cousin, is still worthy of more than a *dekko*.



The tranquil Chitvan Jungle Lodge at Kanha

crater – he told us to subscribe to his YouTube channel! Impressive!

The whole place looked neglected and abandoned, with hardly any tourists. The guide told us proudly that the folks from NASA had visited the spot a couple of times. Trust American validation to fuel Indian patriotism. The lake itself has formed from an underground spring and there are no fish in it – only blue-green algae. I fail to understand why nobody is interested in marketing this site better. It is the world's largest hyper velocity crater- created 50,000 years ago. Numerous temples surround the lake, most of which stand in ruins today, except for the temple of Daitya Sudan at the centre of the Lonar town, which was built in honour of Vishnu's victory over the giant Lonasur. Vishnumandir, Wagh Mahadev, Mora Mahadev, Munglyacha Mandir and Goddess Kamalaja Devia are the other temples found inside the crater. Lonar has one MTDC hotel with some kind of lunch which is essential pit stop, as there is nothing else around for miles.

The rest of the journey to Nagpur was smooth after a point, with a wonderful highway and wonderful roads. The next day we left for Kanha National Park – expecting this stretch to be the shortest of the lot. But it took forever as the route we took had no roads, but just an orange dirt track. The track



Safari success! Spotting a tiger was one of the highlights of Kanha



Children enjoy themselves cycling and walking around this verdant resort

was lined by trees that looked like the maple trees in the fall. Soon a state transport bus passed by us and a fine orange dust settled on everything- uncovering the secret of the 'maple leaves'!

Kipling's Kanha

Finally we reached Kanha late in the evening. With hardly any eating places on the way - it would be a good idea to pack some food for this leg of the journey. Kanha is beautiful and green and we stayed at the quaint Chitvan Jungle Resort. It has been ranked number one on trip advisor with glowing reviews. Half my family went for the morning safari huddled in jackets and monkey caps bought at the lodge and for extra protection the jeeps are loaded with blankets too. My son and husband were lucky to spot the tiger within fifteen minutes of their safari! Their thrill and excitement was palpable when they returned to the resort. The morning safari is of five hours duration and breakfast is served at the reserve. The afternoon safari is only three hours long. When we went in the evening there was no sign of a tiger. But the reserve itself is large and beautiful, with a lot of animals and birds populating it.

One can clearly see why Rudyard Kipling got inspired to write the Jungle Book here. The resort was full and has a lovely fruit vegetable and herb garden with a horticulturist to show you around. Just one suggestion to certain groups – it may be a jungle out there, but please leave your wild side out



The horticulturist at the Chitvan Resort takes you around on an educative tour

in the cities! There are very strict rules about not playing loud music at night so as to not disturb the animals (especially the ones who've had a long car journey- let them sleep!) All the jungle resorts make every arrangement for you to have a successful safari and even serve you refreshments at the reserve.

We felt sad leaving Kanha and heading towards the so-called civilised parts of the country. We took a longer route through Gondia to avoid the orange roads and stopped at Akola on the way. The hotels here are nothing great, but Nasik the next day was lovely. The drive from Nasik to Mumbai is very smooth through the beautiful Igatpuri. We reached Mumbai to one question asked by all and sundry, and some. "Did you see the tiger?" Even though

I personally didn't, I felt that the whole experience of being in the jungle, which boasts of about 90 plus tigers and varieties of birds, reptiles, and trees was awe inspiring and makes it difficult to fall in love with the jungle I have come home to (the concrete one). The only thought I now have in mind is that next time, I'm doing that morning safari for sure! ■



The writer is a mother of two, with a passion for road trips, cooking and food presentation. In an earlier avatar she was a high school teacher of English and Environmental Science.

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Velas on the Konkan coast *the perfect weekend getaway*

Text & photos: Disha Shetty

Get out of Mumbai and one always hits pay dirt. This particular destination is about seven hours from the metropolis, a tiny village called Velas on the Konkan coast, where at the beginning of every summer, the turtle festival takes place. Eggs of the Olive Ridley turtles are sheltered in hatcheries and released into the sea when they hatch, all supervised by the locals, a heartwarming sight. Even otherwise, there are a zillion reasons why one must visit the Konkan coast – sun, sand, clean air, rejuvenating treks and food, being among a few of them.

IMAGINE this – You are in Mumbai, have a weekend off and want to go on a trip that involves sightseeing, good food and maybe even a little bit of trekking. But here's the rider: You want to do it in under ₹ 3,000. If you think that you need to prune your long list of demands to be able to do so, then hold on, because the Konkan coast is just what will work for you. It is cheap, scenic, a haven for your taste buds and a great place to soak in the nature.

Velas – the fishing village

Yes, Konkan is a large area and there is only so much that can be covered in one weekend. So to help you sort out the confusion of where to go along this coastline, I would recommend going to Velas first. It is a small village in Ratnagiri district famous for its turtle festival during which newly hatched Olive Ridley turtles are released in the open waters.

The coastal village offers an unrestricted view of clear water



The Velas beach

that seems to stretch on forever. Most of the narrow but well maintained roads lead to the beach that is frequented by tourists. The destination is also famous among groups of bikers and cyclists who travel the around 220 km distance from Mumbai to Velas to soak in the sun and sand. You will spot men on Harley Davidson and Royal Enfield kick up a storm in the bylanes of the village as they zoom past.

You can leave Mumbai on a Friday night and be back by Sunday evening. All in time to get to work refreshed, on a Monday morning. Here's how.

Reaching Velas is fairly simple. Take an overnight bus from Mumbai on a Friday night. The journey takes around 6-7 hours depending on the traffic. There are several tour groups that offer package tours around the turtle festival in the months of March and April as well. You will be in Velas at the crack of dawn, breathing fresh air.

Living like a local

Once you reach Velas, the best option is to live at one of the homestays in the village. The stay will cost you merely a few hundred rupees but you will be treated to the warm hospitality of the locals, coupled with sumptuous and fresh

home cooked food that will leave you asking for more.

A breakfast of hot *poha* and tea later, you can stroll down to the beach and watch the turtles hatch, return for a lazy lunch that will be rounded off with butter milk and catch up on some much needed rest while you are here. There is also a short visit to the Bankot beach that can fill the evening.

Of course, you cannot leave Velas without doing some star-



The village of Velas offers warm hospitality and sumptuous food



The panoramic view from Bankot Fort

gazing. After your dinner, just walk outside the village and plonk yourself down at the side of the road. While the sky above will be studded with thousands of twinkling stars, let the rhythmic sound of the waves crashing against the shore serenade you.

Hatching of baby turtles, a sight to behold!

The Velas turtle festival is the reason tourism in this village shot up in the past few years. A local NGO Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra has joined hands with Kasav Mitra Manda (Velas), the

gram panchayat and the forest department to ensure that the eggs of the Olive Ridley turtles that are found on the beaches of this village and along the coast are conserved.

The NGO members collect the eggs laid by turtles and let them incubate away from predators, in a common hatchery which is barricaded from all sides and is guarded throughout the day. They are covered with a basket and left. The incubation time for these eggs is between 45-50 days. Every day at 7.30 am and 6 pm during the nesting period, the NGO volunteers open the basket to check if the eggs have hatched. If they have, then you have



The protected hatchery where the turtle eggs are kept



the chance to witness their journey back to the open water, tracing the same path their mothers had taken.

While you are there, also clean the beach

So you think you can throw plastics on the pristine beach of Velas and walk away? Well, not so easily. The NGO members will politely ask you to be a part of a beach cleanup and with hundreds of tourists present, all it takes is 15 minutes for the beach to be cleaned and the garbage neatly piled up in a corner. Congratulations! You have just done your little bit for the ecology of the place and set an example for the young kids watching you.

A breathtaking view from the Bankot Fort

You thought nothing could beat the view of the sea like

Velas is the Bankot Fort. It is a small fort that you can walk around in a few minutes, but the view from each and every corner of the Fort will make you want to spend hours just gazing into the horizon. Clear water as far as your eyes can see and blue sky to match. As the view fills you up with awe, breathe in some much needed fresh air.

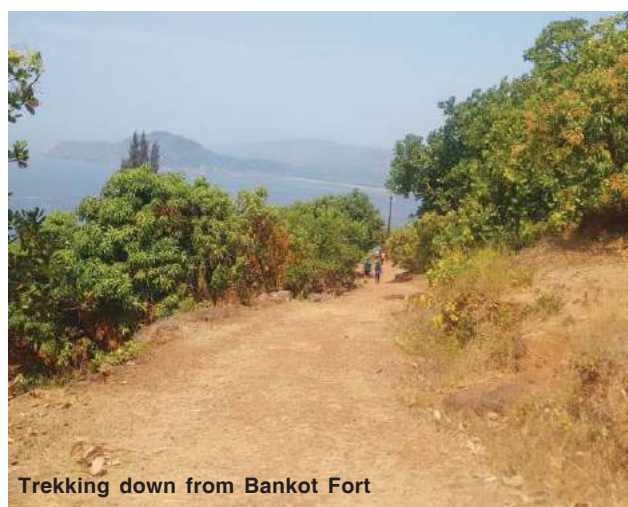
While the Fort's history is still not clear, it is over five centuries old and has witnessed several rulers. Inside the fort are several trees and most visitors rediscover the small joys of climbing trees in here.

Time to trek along the shore

While the return to the Velas village is just a short bus journey away, for the trekking enthusiasts there is another path – longer and certainly prettier – that holds more attraction.



At the Bankot Fort



Trekking down from Bankot Fort



The rocky shoreline of Harihareshwar temple

I was one of those who ditched the bus and decided to settle for an hour long downhill trek.

The path took me through dense foliage, a walk on the road along the sea shore, and finally the sandy beach itself, as I made my way back to the village with fellow trekkers.

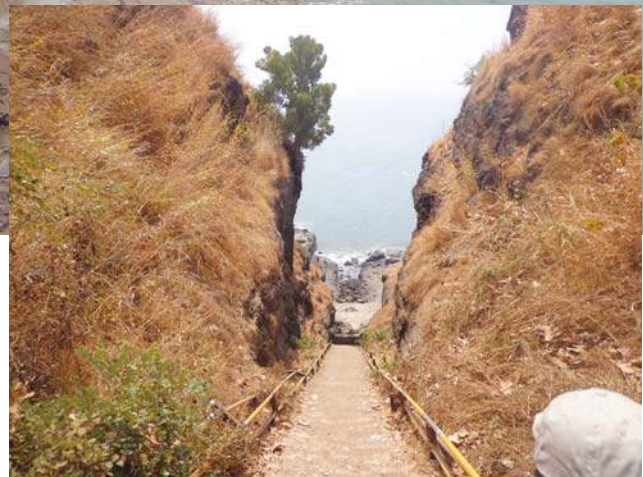
Where else can you boast of having trekked along such a diverse terrain? Mind you, neither are we very far from Mumbai, nor did we shell out a bomb to enjoy this piece of paradise. Makes you wonder why the place is not teeming with tourists but I also quickly say a silent prayer, “Thank God this place is not teeming with tourists.” In essence that is the beauty of the Konkan coast.

Next stop – Harihareshwar

We have spent a day in Velas. What? All of the above in just a day? Well, yes. So on Sunday it is time to visit the Harihareshwar temple that is nestled alongside, what else, but the coast.

Temples need not always be cramped spaces with thousands of devotees swarming for a glimpse of the deity. Some like Harihareshwar are places of worship blending into their natural surroundings – come here not just for a spiritual journey but also a visual treat.

After offering prayers to the deity devotees can take climb up a narrow trail that first leads uphill and then downhill to a rocky bed. As your eyes adjust to the brightness, you see massive waves crash against the rocky shore – the perfect place to



The downhill trek near Harihareshwar temple

lose yourself. You thought you had come here to worship a deity, and end up impressed with Mother Nature instead. This is a place where you can take that perfect picture to remind you of the trip later, as soon it will be time to go home.

But wait, there's more Konkan food to be had!

The MTDC resort of the Maharashtra government is a five minute walk away from the temple and also the best place to catch up a sumptuous lunch before beginning the journey back to the city.

The resort offers both a perfect vegetarian and a non-vegetarian spread with authentic items from the region. What's a trip to a new place without tasting the local fare? So go ahead and binge on hot chapattis, spicy chicken and *sol kadhi* among others, that will leave you salivating long afterwards. The trip back to Mumbai will take about seven hours on a Sunday evening. The memory of the Konkan trip will take a lot longer to fade! ■

Disha Shetty is a young journalist who likes travelling and writing.

The day the music died

With the shutting down of the iconic music store Rhythm House, South Mumbai has lost a glittering jewel of its rich heritage. But this is a sign of the times and all we can do is celebrate the good times while it lasts, says **Narendra Kusnur**, as Rhythm House organised a last musical session for its fans.

ON February 28, a group of music lovers got together at the Rhythm House store in Kala Ghoda, South Mumbai's cultural precinct, one last time. A surprise music session had been planned to bid farewell to the place which had played a huge role in everyone's musical upbringing. Flautist Rajeev Raja, singers Subhash Kamath and Mihir Joshi, guitarist Hitesh Dhutia, percussionist Anuradha Pal and violinist Sunita Bhuyan joined the party. Actor Jackie Shroff was seen in the crowd.



Inside Rhythm House, a popular haunt of music lovers for many years



Before Rhythm House finally shut down

The following day, February 29, the store officially shut down. For 68 years, it had been the favourite spot of Mumbai's music era, right from the era of vinyl records through cassettes and compact discs. Later, VHS tapes, VCDs, DVDs and Blue-Ray were added to the list.

From music equipment to Blue-Ray

Rhythm House has been in the music retail business since 1948. It was founded by Suleman Nensey, but eventually Mammoo Curmally became a partner. Initially, they sold music equipment, but soon got into vinyl records. In the mid-1970s, Mammoo invited his brother Amir to help him run the business, who heeded is called and left his advertising job in Kolkata.

Ever since, Amir handled the store with Mammoo's son Mehmood Curmally, who was Managing Director. Explaining the reason for closure, he says: "Everyone in the store has been around for the love and passion for music and movies. We had to take this decision because of the way things have been going on in the music retail business. This has been the situation internationally too, where major music stores have been shutting down. Here, we couldn't struggle and keep the economics going."

According to Curmally, the store has been thinking of winding up for the past year and a half. "The way the physical music business is headed, we might have done so earlier.



A jam session on the last day with Rajeev Raja on flute, Subhash Kamath on vocals and guitar, Hitesh Dhutia on guitar, and Anuradha Pal on percussion

Because of online retail and downloading, sales of compact discs and DVDs have dropped. The only physical segment which is doing well is that of vinyl records, but that's a small part of the business."

The place has its own history. Many customers visited the place when they came to Fort or Colaba. Those working in Nariman Point sometimes dropped by on their way back home. Some clubbed it with a visit to the Jehangir Art Gallery, or with lunch at Trishna, Wayside Inn and Chetna.

A haunt for celebrities and music lovers

Well-known personalities also visited the place. Lata Mangeshkar would come often. Even today she calls Mehmood Curmally if she has any specific requests. Actor Shammi Kapoor, advertising guru Alyque Padamsee, and music directors Laxmikant, Pyarelal, Kalyanji and Anandji were regulars. Singer Usha Uthup, lyricist Gulzar and tabla player Anuradha Pal launched albums. The group 'The Other People' launched their song *Christmas Is Here*.

Kathak legend Sitara Devi, *ghazal* maestro Pankaj Udhas, santoor player Rahul Sharma and sitarist Anoushka Shankar visited often. Composer A.R. Rahman dropped by a few times. Rock band Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson, members of the band Police and pop star Peter Andre have also visited the place.

"I used to visit Rhythm House even when I was in college. Little did I know that my own music would be displayed there," says Pankaj Udhas. Adds Mahesh Tinaikar, guitarist of the band Indus Creed: "I would come after college as I stay close by. I would spend hours checking out the records, though very often I wouldn't have enough money to buy them."

Anuradha Pal says that whenever she attended a concert at the NCPA in Nariman Point, she would drop by to pick up some music. "I loved the place so much that I decided to launch my albums there. At times I would play at the Wayside Inn next door before the launch," she recalls.



Actor Jackie Shroff pays a last visit

Mehmood Curmally says because of space constraints, it was not possible to have shows here. But the album launches drew good audiences. Usha Uthup was the first to release her album *Scotch And Soda* in the late 1960s.

The store also had a lot of autograph sessions. Reminisces Curmally: "Even today, customers recall the visit of Jethro Tull's Ian Anderson in 1993. There was a serpentine queue outside, and people waited in line for an hour," he reminisces. Adds Udhas: "We did the first such session when I released my album *Shagufta* in 1987. I remember we had even printed a newspaper advertisement. The response was huge."

It changed with the times

The listening booths were a very popular part of the store. Music industry professional Parag Kamani, a regular visitor, recalls: "We got the chance to listen to various albums that have all been part of our growing years. And nobody rushed us if we took a little more time."

Curmally says the booths had to be shut when cassettes arrived in a big way in the mid-80s. "We had to display them in the store and not keep them in the back office. The only way out was to remove the booths. It was sad we had to do that, as they were really popular, especially among the younger lot," he says.

The ticket counter was a huge success story. Those who wanted concerts, plays or other cultural events would often come here and book. "It was an idea mooted by Alyque Padamsee to sell tickets for his plays. He and my father were good friends. They sent their own people and we gave them space and a phone line," Curmally recalls.

Soon, Rhythm House extended the ticketing to other events like the Jazz Yatra and classical music concerts. Says Curmally: "It added value to the store. Our name would appear in the newspaper ads. It also led to increased sales. However, with online booking now becoming the norm, fewer people come for that."

(Continued on page 37)

*“My earlier two novels, **Faraway Music** and **Sita’s Curse** were strong, bold, feminist centric books, with the latter being India’s first feminist erotica”*

Sreemoyee Piu Kundu made her literary debut with *Faraway Music*, (Hachette) in 2013. Sreemoyee’s second book, *Sita’s Curse* (Hachette)– an erotic fiction, launched in May 2014 was a national best-seller, widely covered in *Vogue*, *Times of India*, *Indian Express*, *Open* magazine, *Femina*, *Mail Today*, *Mid-day* and *Hindustan Times*, amongst other leading publications. The ten-city launch drew huge audiences and was well-publicised with Sreemoyee earning the epithet, ‘Erotica Queen,’ by *DNA*. Sreemoyee’s third novel *You’ve Got The Wrong Girl* (Hachette) breaks new ground as a woman writer foraying into the realm of lad-lit in India. The book was out in January 2016. Sreemoyee talks to **Shoma A. Chatterji** about her writing and her third novel.



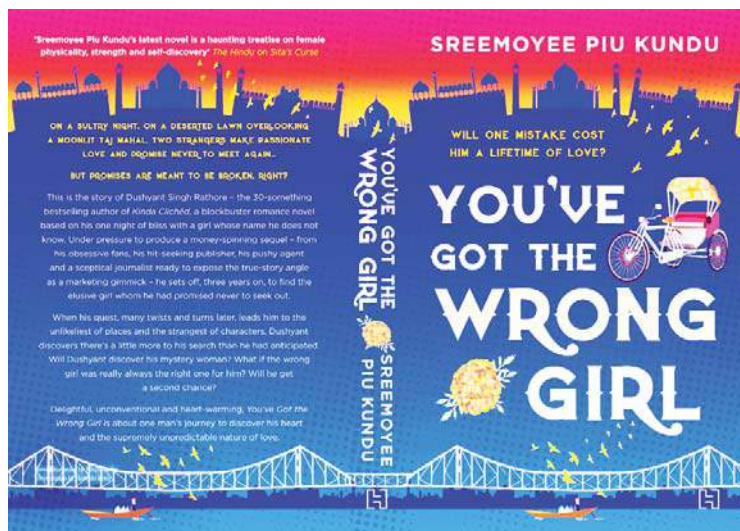
They are calling *You’ve Got the Wrong Girl* a lad-lit. What exactly is lad-lit?

Lad-lit, as opposed to chick-lit, is defined as “fiction about young men about their personal and emotional lives.” This, in common understanding, is expected to be written by a man who would be able to enter the head of a young man much better than a woman. But I wanted to think and write differently, to turn the tables of this genre by deciding to pen a novel with a male as the protagonist, and give him the first person voice in the narrative. I wished to break new ground as a woman

writer foraying into the realm of lad lit in India, made famous internationally by writers like Nick Hornby and Matt Dunn.

You have reversed the mythological tale of Dushyant and Shakuntala and relocated it within contemporary times. Can you explain?

I took it as a challenge to get into a man’s head, trying to understand the way he thinks about certain things on love, life, relationships and so on, and let me tell you it has been very difficult and also challenging to try and get under the skin



falling in love with Shakuntala after seeing her in the forest, love at first sight as he was struck by her beauty and grace, indulging in a passionate, timeless romance saga, making torrid love, composing love sonnets, having a *Gandharva Vivaha*, after which he must leave to take care of affairs in his kingdom. She is given a ring by the mighty scion, to be presented to him when she appears in his court so that she can then claim her rightful place as queen. But, cursed by the anger-prone sage Durvasa, Dushyant forgets her existence. The only way to make him accept her is for Shakuntala to show him the signet he gave her. She has to cross a river to reach him where the ring is lost. This is a clever twist in the tale, like in any Hindi film. When she arrives at

of my hero Dushyant Rathod. True that I reversed the mythological love story of Dushyanta and Shakuntala by setting Dushyanta in search of this lady he fell in love with at first sight, and had no peace till he finally found the girl he had spent a night of love and passion with, against the blurred backdrop of the Taj Mahal.

How did this strange idea occur to you in the first place?

Just before writing *You've Got The Wrong Girl* I was reading *Shakuntalam*, of Kalidasa. I remember asking myself, 'Why it is always the girl who falls in love hopelessly, then is forced apart from her lover by circumstance and fate, faces familial pressure, then decides to marry another guy (usually the villain/his son) and then in the last scene, dramatically there is a re-entry of the swashbuckling hero who rescues her and they live happily ever after?' I connected the film to the play and looked at King Dushyant differently, wondering if he was the typical, confused, apparently metrosexual man searching for true love in an age of instant hook-ups and easy sex. I wondered if Kalidasa's eternal romance could be seen as Dushyant's story instead of being identified with Shakuntala's search for the man she thinks is her husband.

What is your take on Dushyant, the King who forgot all about the woman he fell in love with at first sight, who also became pregnant with his child?

I began to look at Dushyant as the man who screwed up,

his court, Dushyant refuses to acknowledge her. Fortunately, the ring is discovered by a fisherman in the belly of a fish, and Dushyant also realises his mistake and there is a proper ending.

True that I reversed the mythological love story of Dushyanta and Shakuntala by setting Dushyanta in search of this lady he fell in love with at first sight, and had no peace till he finally found the girl he had spent a night of love and passion with, against the blurred backdrop of the Taj Mahal.

How did you map out the flow of the narrative in *You've Got the Wrong Girl*?

It is a multi city, roller-coaster, sometimes soulful, sometimes bittersweet, sometimes fun, sometimes family drama. It involves a whole bunch of motley, everyday characters drawn from the people we see around us. And since I was inspired by *Shakuntala* as told from the male perspective, the reader will be able to easily guess that it is a modern-day Dushyant who is in search of his forgotten love never mind if it was a one-time wonder. How he wins her back is the backbone of the story. But the setting I have built up is a very modern landscape and Dushyant is a best-selling, new-age romance writer.

Tell us about lad-lit you have personally liked very much since it is relatively unknown in contemporary Indian fiction in English.

Nick Hornby tops my favorites – *High Fidelity*, *A Long Way Down*. Then there is Mike Gayle with his incredibly witty, *My Legendary Girlfriend* and Matt Dunn whose contemporary romantic comedy novels, including *Best Man* and *The Ex-Boyfriend's Handbook* were shortlisted for the Romantic Novel Of The Year award. Steve Carter whose number one Kindle smash hit *Love, Sex, and Tesco's Finest Cava* reached number one spot in UK Humour and number one in Contemporary Romance in March 2011.

What is it that attracts you to their writing?

Everything – their style, their understanding of the male psyche that can be as vulnerable as the female psyche, their ruggedness, their innate, not in-your-face wit and the coming-of-age of the male ego. Their works have motivated me to change the rules of writing here in my own way. We have had an overload of chick-lit and because Indian publishing is mostly formulaic, there is the same story churned out, and frankly, I cannot suffer another! So why not change the rules now? Why can't a woman get into a man's head?

You've Got the Wrong Girl is being repeatedly labelled as lad-lit versus chick-lit. But I have often seen that the term chick-lit within the broader scope of fictional writing is used rather pejoratively. But you do not seem to be sensitive to the term. Can you explain?

There has been an explosion of chick lit in India in the last few years and lad lit sadly has not quite taken off. Most chick lits are now standard and follow a set formula - largely emphasising on the woman's coming-of-age saga and her search for Mr. Right. A man's emotional journey on the other hand hasn't quite been explored and that was my aim with *You've Got The Wrong Girl!* - to delve inside a man's head and heart and tackle the resultant travails - to be true to the voice of a man in love, searching for answers on who is his perfect soul match.

This role reversal in terms of gender has us hooked. Did you expect this massive positive response to your new work? How does it differ from your earlier novels? Please explain.

My earlier two novels, *Faraway Music* and *Sita's Curse* were strong, bold, feminist centric books, with the latter being India's first feminist erotica. This is different as it is penned entirely from a man's perspective. I think lad lit is an appealing genre because it is fresh and still an unexplored literary terrain. To view romance from a male angle is something a woman writer has rarely done and in that aspect the book breaks new ground. I hope the modern day Dushyant will appeal to a cross section of readers from both sexes, who can relate to his journey.

Some hints about your forthcoming books *Rahula* and *Status Single*?

Rahula is a political tragedy and will look at the life of the son of a large political dynasty in Delhi. *Rahula* was also Buddha's son – a character barely explored in Indian literature. *Status Single* is my first work of non-fiction that looks at what being single means in this country - a no-holds-barred book on singlehood in modern, urban India. ■

The day the music died

(Continued from page 34)

For many years, Rhythm House was the only store of its kind. In the late 1990s, other music megastores came up. Planet M was launched opposite CST station, and Groove at Eros building in Churchgate. Hi-Hat came up in Khar. Says Curmally: "Yes, some of our regular customers visited other stores because of their location. But the loyal ones kept coming back to us. It also helped us reanalyse our strategy."

Groove and Hi-Hat were the first to shut down. Planet M eventually went in for smaller stores, and shifted from music to mobile phones. Music World was huge in other cities, but stopped operations. Landmark and Reliance TimeOut specialised in books, music, gifts and toys. The former no longer sells music, and the latter has shut down.

Was it a conscious decision by Rhythm House not to set up other branches in Mumbai or other cities? Curmally replies: "We did think of opening other branches at one point, but realised it's not so easy to spread out. In a way, it was a wise

decision or we would have had other issues today."

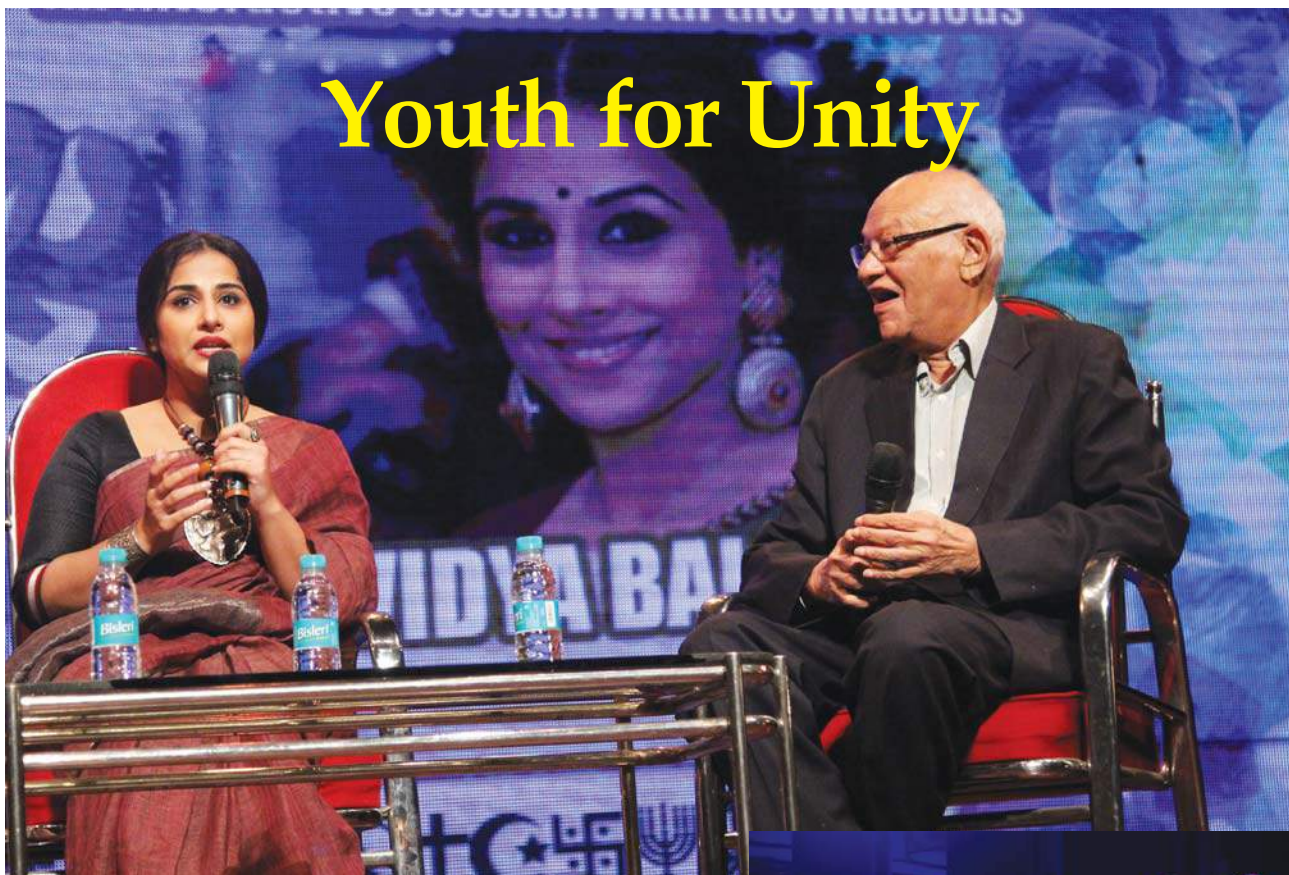
Asked whether Rhythm House will sustain the online retailing model or retain the vinyl records aspect as part of its future strategy, Curmally admits he has certain options in mind. "We still haven't taken a decision on anything. Let's see. Right now, we are feeling sad about leaving something we loved doing for years," he concludes.

The regulars and old-timers would be sad too. No wonder, one could see so much emotion overflowing at the musical event that Sunday. ■

The writer has been a music critic and columnist for over two decades. He has covered both Indian and international music extensively, and enjoys various genres like Hindustani classical, Carnatic, ghazals, old film music, regional music, western classical, rock, pop and jazz. He has also been involved with the music industry as a label manager with EMI Music India, and as a corporate trainer with Reliance TimeOut books and music stores.



Youth for Unity



Vidya Balan with J.F. Ribeiro, Founder, PCGT

HUNDREDS of students from One India One People member schools got an opportunity to attend the 'Youth for Unity' annual summit organised by the Public Concern for Governance Trust (PCGT) in Mumbai on 4 February 2016 at Shanmukhananda Hall. Celebrated actor Vidya Balan was the chief guest at the occasion.

PCGT was found to fight corruption and ensure good governance with highest standards in probity and integrity in public life. PCGT dialogues were initiated with an idea to bring distinguished personalities to interact with groups of students. The panelists are always carefully selected from fields like education law and public services. 'Youth for Unity through Entertainment and Sports' was therefore selected as the theme for 2016.

The event started with the *gotipua* dance rendition by Sevasadan girls who presented acrobatics, gymnastics and dance. Kabir café, the neo fusion band spread cheer with their Kabir infused soundscape. Neeraj Arya the lead vocal, Mukund Ramaswamy on violin, Raman Iyer the self-styled mandolin player, Viren Solanki the percussionist with Poubuanpou Britto on bass guitar blended together and performed hits like *moh ko kahan dhoonde re bandhe* – contemporary music infused with rock, pop reggae and fusion.

The formal function began with the arrival of Vidya Balan who gracefully took over the proceedings by giving away the prizes. Balan then dwelled at length about her involvement with social causes, especially the sanitation programme and female literacy mission. She said that her role for the sanitation programme was suggested by Jairam Ramesh who wanted to ensure that newsrooms, whose bandwidth is currently dominated by peripheral issues, don't lose sight of an important basic issue plaguing the nation. Cultural biases and general ignorance were attacked by three short TV advertisements, which stress on the importance of thinking. The slogan itself says, "*Jahan soch, wahan sochalaya*" (Wherever there is an application of thought, there should be toilets.)

Vidya Balan explained that one of the advertisements depicts a traditional marriage setting where she asks the bride's mother-in-law about the location of the toilet. On being informed that she'll have to go out in an open field for defecation, Vidya questions her belief saying how can a family, which expects the bride to keep a veil to avoid unwanted glares, allow her safety to be compromised by forcing her to go out in the open fields. The campaign also appreciates the women who walked out of their marital home because the groom's house didn't have a toilet. The third advertisement highlights the health benefits of toilets for children and how it can keep diseases at bay and ensure better productivity. She then spoke about her second cause, the *nanhi kali* initiative which was launched in 1996 by K.C. Mahindra Education Trust (KCMET), which has an objective of providing primary education to the underprivileged girl child in India. Education widens the horizon, gives the freedom to make informed choices. Education is not just literacy, education is knowing one's rights, priorities, nutrition and much more. The students of One India One People club schools who participated, came away much more enlightened and aware about these important issues. It was truly an event to cherish.

– Jayabala Girish, Teacher, Gurukul College of Commerce, Ghatkopar, Mumbai.



Neeraj Arya's Kabir café performing at the event

Speak no evil

Accusing a citizen of sedition is a very serious matter. Many Indians reacted with shock when some students at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University were charged with sedition for raising anti-India slogans, even after they insisted that the slogans at an event organised by them, were raised by outsiders. Why was there such haste to slap sedition charges on them? asks Prof. Avinash Kolhe.

THE whole JNU (Jawaharlal Nehru University) episode is important for one reason. It has forced us to think of nationalism, sedition and what should be allowed under the concept of 'free speech'. But for Kanhaiya Kumar, the president of JNU Students' Union, we would have not visited this issue, though it was discussed some years ago when scholars and activists like Dr. Vinayak Sen, Arundhati Roy, etc., were charged under the dreaded section 124 A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). But then Dr. Sen and Roy were senior people who knew what they were talking and doing. In the case of Kanhaiya Kumar, it is the case of university students and their right to protest against some policies of the state.

The JNU incident and what constitutes sedition

It is clear by now that the JNU issue is more about the nature of Indian nationalism and whether it can take in its stride different voices, or is it like any intolerant nationalism which is good at suppressing different voices? Some youngsters, whether students of JNU or not, had allegedly raised anti-India slogans in JNU campus. They were arrested by the police and slapped with section 124 A. The occasion for the students' gathering was the death anniversary of the hanging of Afzal Guru by the Indian state. Some students wanted to express their feelings about the "illegal" way in which the Indian



Kanhaiya Kumar in Delhi police custody

state hanged Afzal Guru. The organisers had openly expressed the purpose of this meeting. Consequently, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP) met the authorities of the JNU and requested them to cancel the meet. This request was accepted and the permission to hold the meeting was cancelled at the last moment. Yet, the organisers decided to go ahead with the meeting in which some anti-India slogans were allegedly raised. This is the sequence of events.

Now the police will have to establish who shouted those anti-India slogans and then move accordingly. That aside, at stake are deeper issues about our right to free expression and our right to hold different opinions about our government. And the most important,

what does sedition constitute in Republic India? The law of sedition was not part of the original IPC drafted by Lord Macaulay in 1860. It was added in 1870 by Sir James Stephen to deal with the growing unrest against the colonial power. This provision was invoked in the celebrated case of 'Queen Express v/s Bal Gangadhar Tilak' in 1897. Other stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi were tried under this section and were sent to prison.

Even before Independence, the British government realised that this section would be misused. Hence, the Federal Court made it clear in the famous case 'Niharendu Dutt Majumdar v/s The King Emperor' in 1942 that this section could not be used to stifle criticism. This view was reiterated by

our Supreme Court in 1962 in 'Kedar Nath Singh v/s State of Bihar'. The Supreme Court argued that section 124A is not violative of the fundamental right to free speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a). And this section should apply only to those activities involving incitement to violence or intention to create public disorder or cause disturbance of public order. Merely raising slogans cannot be treated as sedition. When former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated in October 1984, some people shouted slogans like *Khalistan Zindabad* and *Raj karega Khalsa*. The Supreme Court released the accused who were charged with sedition. Now in 2016, the Indian State is booking university students under this section for merely shouting slogans, if at all they have shouted, which is yet to be established. This needs serious discussion.

It is argued by many that the advanced democracies like USA and UK have taken such law off their legal system, then why not India? This is a specious argument as the conditions in USA and UK are totally different from India. These countries do not have to face separatist forces since its birth like India has been doing in Jammu & Kashmir, and the Northeast. Even today these threats have not subsided. On the contrary, thanks to the help from across the border, the separatists have been troubling the Indian State a lot more than before.

The Constitution makers decided in their wisdom to retain section 124 A in our legal system. For many years this section was rarely used. This does not mean that there has been unanimity about this section. The Law Commission in its report of 1971 recommended that the punishment under this section should be reduced to a maximum of seven years of imprisonment. But the Commission too did not recommend the abolition of this section.

Is freedom possible without dissent?

At the heart of the debate is the right to free speech and expression without which there could be no meaningful, genuine democracy. No freedom is possible without dissent. As a system we must encourage the 'nay-sayers', for without them the democratic model of governance loses its vibrancy. Free men, in exercise of free thought, will give vent in free speech. No matter how abhorrent the thought, or its manner of expression, a mature democracy will tolerate it, and even encourage its publication. Only totalitarian regimes suppress dissent and dissenters. Human history has progressed, thanks to those dissenters who questioned the prevailing and dominant ideas, and thereby paved the way for the progress of civilisation.

Free men, in exercise of free thought, will give vent in free speech. No matter how abhorrent the thought, or its manner of expression, a mature democracy will tolerate it, and even encourage its publication. Only totalitarian regimes suppress dissent and dissenters.

A few examples from modern India will also throw light on this issue. In October 1986, the Maharashtra police had arrested late Krishna Raj, the respected editor of Economic and Political Weekly (EPW). This was because in one article (not written by Krishna Raj) published in the EPW, the writer had alleged that there were atrocities by the army on civilians during 'Operation Blue Star'. The issue of arrest of Krishna Raj was brought

to the notice of Rajiv Gandhi who was the Prime Minister then, who promptly instructed the police to call off the action. Then there is another episode that took place in 2001. Some students of Delhi University had protested in front of US Embassy (9/11) in Delhi for the US attacks on Afghanistan. They were arrested by the Delhi Police and charged with sedition under article 124 A. This time too, the intervention by the then Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani saved the situation. Where are such leaders today who have that same magnanimity?

Let me also quote an incident narrated by Dom Moraes. Dom was a student in UK in the 1950s and 1960s, called the swinging sixties. Those days, the university campuses in many European universities were bursting with unrest and discontent. Dom was part of that milieu when the students were questioning everything: the education system, the government policies, etc. In due course, things settled down as they always do. Years later when Dom was in his 50s and was in UK, he called on his professor. Dom profusely apologised to his professor for shouting anti-establishment slogans in the 60s. The professor, now in his 80s, said to Dom which needs to be told today, "Dom, don't feel sorry. In fact your generation's protest forced us to revisit, rethink our position about the education system. You made us think all over again. This is how it should be. Each generation must challenge the wisdom of the earlier generation and thereby take the world forward. Thank you for being my students".

Do I need to say anything more? ■



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

Women riders of Mana Pass

Meet these seven gutsy women who are adrenalin junkies, seeking the toughest challenges on their motorcycles. Their recent trip to Mana Pass, the first by women riders, exposed them to some serious risks, but also to soul touching adventure. Surekha Kadapa-Bose reports.

THE blue sky above, the muddy brown earth below, the gushing wind, the crunching gravel and groaning motorcycle engines – these rather stark sights and sounds are imprinted in the hearts and minds of the seven women from Maharashtra, who recently undertook a tough expedition to Mana Pass on the India-China border in Uttarakhand. Professional rider Sheetal Bidaye, software design strategist Kanchan K. Tamhankar, fitness expert Trupti Sarmalkar, advertising professional Shubhangi Manjrekar, interior designer Shalaka Zad, business consultant Bhavana Issar, and insurance agent Sneha Joshi hopped on to their bikes and made their way from Dehradun, the state capital of Uttarakhand, towards the highest motorable pass at 18,399 ft above sea level. The rare air, bare surroundings and bitter cold may have tested their endurance, but the group has made some unforgettable memories.

“Absolute focus, supreme determination and an utmost desire to beat the odds and reach our destination was what kept us all going,” shares Bidaye, 39, of Mumbai, who rode a Hero Impulse 150cc bike. But this isn’t the first time they have undertaken such an arduous trip. Bidaye and her group, which was formed in 2011, have previously enjoyed the challenge of riding through dense forests, treacherous mountains roads and lonely stretches of desert. From the north to the south and from the west to the east, some of them have covered every nook of the country including the difficult



The women hopped on to their heavy-duty motor bikes and made their way from Dehradun, the state capital of Uttarakhand, towards the highest motorable pass at 18,399 ft above sea level

Leh-Ladakh-Manali and Spiti regions. This, however, was their first successful attempt to reach Mana Pass.

The Mana Pass from India to Tibet

Mana Pass, known as Mana La, Chirbitya and Dungri La, connects India and Tibet within the Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve in the Zaskar mountain range. It is 27 kilometres north of the revered pilgrimage spot of Badrinath. An ancient trade route between Uttarakhand and Tibet, the Pass remained a minor trade route until its closure in 1951 by the Chinese. On April 29, 1954, India and China signed an agreement granting pilgrims and indigenous travellers the right to go between the two countries

through the Pass.

“Even now we need permission from the Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Indian Army to visit the Pass,” informs Bidaye. The Pass can be reached from the south by an extension of National Highway (NH) 58, which connects Delhi with Badrinath. According to the women, though it is relatively easier to ride up to Badrinath, as the roads are well-marked and well-maintained, beyond this point it is the prevailing weather conditions that govern how one proceeds to Mana Pass. The gravel road has been weathered by frequent landslides and though every year the Border Roads Organisation does try and maintain the tracts, there

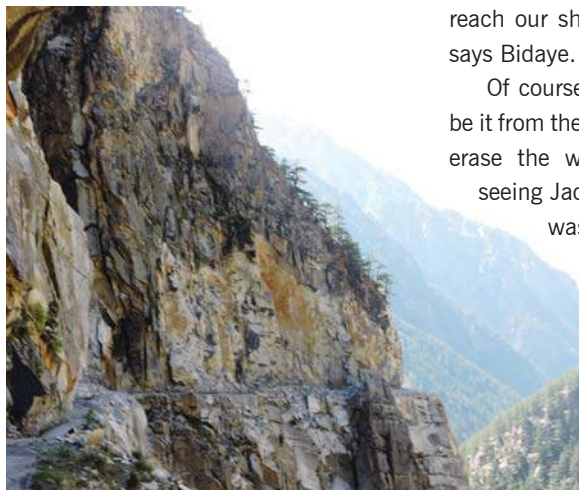
are rarely any clear roads. "In a sense, it's just you and the narrow winding path, with stone mountain walls on one side and the steep valley on the other. One slip can be dangerous. But then that's the challenge, isn't it?" remarks Bidaye, who clearly enjoys a good dare.

Naturally, this audacious gang of seven had gone prepared and properly geared. Their expedition was sponsored by DRIVOL, a leading German manufacturer of premium lubricating oils and greases, and powered by the Bluechem group. The necessary riding gear and accessories were supplied by Wrangler Denims. The ride was organised and supported by The Vagabond Travel Ideas and Sambhaavna group. For 15 days, they travelled through the picturesque yet rough terrain of Nelang valley and Jhadung village before reaching Uttarkashi from where they went onto Tilwara, Badrinath, and finally to Mana Gaon, the last village in the Indian territory.

"No one is allowed to go alone from this point as the road is both incredible and terrifying. One not only needs the group, but also the expert guidance of the army," elaborates Issar, 41, who rode the Thunderbird 500cc.

Challenges galore

If the low oxygen levels, precarious



For long stretches it was just narrow winding pathways, the mountain on one side and the steep valley on the other. One slip could prove to be dangerous



The seven women who undertook the tough expedition to Mana Pass on the Indo-China border in Uttarakhand, with the Indian flag

highways and the anxiety of being in absolutely unknown territory were just some of the real problems the women encountered at Mana Pass, all the while they were anticipating another difficulty – that of coming face-to-face with local wild dogs. "We had been warned of these dogs by the ITBP personnel and this was one of the main reasons why we made sure we reached a village before nightfall. The problem was particularly acute in Nelong valley as we were going to Harsil on our way back. The wild dogs are bigger than our largest domesticated Alsatian dogs and their hairy appearance and big size is quite intimidating. Fortunately, we only saw them from far and managed to reach our shelter for the night safely," says Bidaye.

Of course, no amount of dangers – be it from the weather or wildlife – could erase the wonder and excitement of seeing Jadhung, a small hamlet that was completely destroyed in the bombing during the 1961 India-China war. "It was an incredulous feeling to see the dilapidated buildings and the then chieftain's home. Obviously, no one stays there at present," says Bidaye.

Another amazing experience the women remember was the night they spent at the ITBP barracks. In fact, as they were slowly reaching the border, the ITBP jawans and officers were thrilled to welcome the daring women to the sub-zero climes. "They couldn't believe that we had made the journey within a day and without any major breakdowns!" says Issar. Add the others in excited tones, "It was so cold that day and the cook graciously fried up some crisp 'pakoras' (vegetable fritters) for us! Imagine eating piping hot pakoras at Mana Pass in the barracks. We spent the night there in sleeping bags although even that couldn't really save us from the freezing cold!"

Next morning the police escorted them to the pristine Lake Deo Tal, which is the source of River Saraswati, where the women bikers halted to take a drink of the holy waters. "The water was unbelievably clean and tasty, not like anything we've ever had in the cities. That feeling of being near the source of the sacred river, so close to nature is indescribable," say the women.

Having achieved the near impossible, they proudly inform that "our feat shall be featured in the Limca Books of Records". ■

(© Women's Feature Service)

Opening seed systems

*India's seed economy has mostly been informal and open. But it will soon be neither, if we want to protect our small farmers who have traditionally kept their seeds accessible and free for use. Is protecting these seeds under Intellectual Property law the only way, or is there another way out of this conundrum? asks **Shalini Bhutani**.*

THE word 'open' has acquired a very specific meaning when it comes to the economy. Opening up in that context implies liberalising and allowing for foreign players – particularly corporate entities, to come and produce or market their products and services in the country. This is also the thrust of the policies of the current Central Government.

The country is slowly reaching a situation where the seed sector is open, but farmers' seeds may no longer be. They may either legally belong to a farmer or a group of farmers who have chosen to register the plant variety under an intellectual property (IP) law. Small farmers who have otherwise remained

staunchly against privatisation of seeds, are now being encouraged to claim IP over their seeds before anyone else can claim exclusive economic rights on them. This pushes farmers down the IPR route, even if to pre-empt their plant varieties from being claimed as someone else's innovations. Yet, IPR runs counter to informal seed systems.

Two contrasting conceptions of 'open' are currently playing out in the seed sector. One that opens, further liberalises the seed industry. The second and more interesting is a civil society initiative to keep them uncovered from any IP rules or (re)open seeds and extract them from IP rules, where they have been so registered.

First, a look at the prevalent seed systems:

Formal – Public scientist/plant breeders/seed researchers and private seed companies.

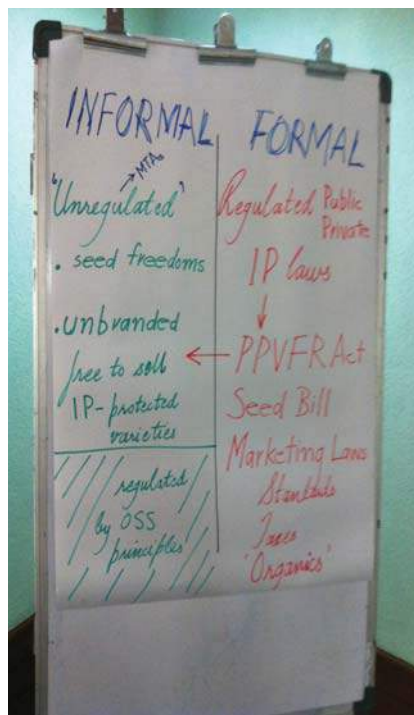
Informal – Small and marginal farmers, peasant communities, tribal groups, forest dwellers, etc. We will discuss this at length, since our main concern lies here.

The informal seed system of India

The informal seed systems in India have traditionally been 'open'. Local customary laws in farming communities have kept seed accessible and free for



'Open' seeds of the informal system



Formal v/s Informal seed systems

use; in other words, seeds and planting materials have not been closed or blocked for access. Though in them being so 'open', seeds have been equally insecure. Farming communities innovate together as they develop crop varieties, relying on each other's shared seed and planting material and know-how. This is the openness that many in the informal sector want to keep alive. This very basic social phenomenon and local fact needs better legal recognition and policy support.

However, the law and policy environment has been relatively more conducive for the formal seed sector that has undergone a different kind of



A campaign for seeds out of IP protection

'opening up'. India's biggest hybrid seed company MAHYCO was set up in 1961. In the 1980s, the Government of India also moved to open up the sector. The 1988 New Policy on Seed Development further liberalised the seed sector, much before the 1991 economic reforms. In the 1990s, global trade rules worked as external pressure to introduce IP rules in the agriculture sector.

IP on seed is not something that small and marginal farmers in the country, or in any other country for that matter, asked for. The demand for IPR came from developed countries and the MNCs they foster, through the World Trade Organisation (WTO). India became a member of WTO in 1995. The WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) requires a member-country to provide for patent or patent-like economic rights on all products, including on life forms such as seeds.

This requires governments to legislate for the grant and enforcement of such rights when IP-protected seeds are introduced in the market. The bundle of rights usually associated with IP on seed includes the right to produce, sell, market, export, import and distribute the

said variety. These rights are granted for a fixed term, usually up to a maximum of 18 years in case of PVP, and for 20 years under a patent.

Yet, farm-saved seed (FSS) and farmers who want to stay out of the IP system have not got similar policy support. FSS is competition to the seed industry – public sector or private companies. If farmers' seed systems are not promoted, there are implications for not only small and marginal farmers, but agriculture and societies at large:

- the possibility of less diversity, as standardised seed products are made the norm by law and its practice
- the less on-farm innovation by farmers having lesser access to seed and planting material, and less legal and strategic control over seed
- the cost of paying to access and use IP-'protected' seed varieties, increasing cost of production
- economic disparities between large institutions as well as corporate, and the grassroots farmers on the other side

Openness with respect to seed takes on a specific meaning in the context of enclosures that IP and other related seed laws create. Seed has been regarded,

Yet, farm-saved seed (FSS) and farmers who want to stay out of the IP system have not got similar policy support. FSS is competition to the seed industry – public sector or private companies. If farmers' seed systems are not promoted, there are implications for not only small and marginal farmers, but agriculture and societies at large.

at least by peasant communities, as a 'community resource' carefully bred, conserved and evolved over several thousand years. The formal system is slowly closing in on the informal seed systems as well as closing up for unhindered access.

Yet, in different parts of the world there is a new wave of exploring other ways to protect farmer seed exchange, encourage on-farm plant breeding and conserve seed systems. There are ideas being drawn from the application of 'open source' principles in other sectors in the country as well, such as health and software.

It is thus interesting that the only law in the country for farmers' rights is an IPR law - Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act, 2001. Shortly after, a national-level PPV&FR Authority was established in New Delhi. The Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, through the Plant Authority attempts to bring more and more farmers and more farmer-breeders into the fold of the PPV law. About 600 farmers' varieties have been granted IP under this law since 2007 (out of the total registrations of 2,068 through 2007-2015), when the applications for PVP began to be accepted for processing by the Authority.

Open source seeds

The idea to (re)open seeds, in making them free from restrictive IP rules, draws from two other realities:

- The ethos of sharing that has existed in peasant agriculture.
- The application of 'open source' principles in other sectors.

The five 'open' principles that the OSSSI (Open Source Seed Initiative) members adhere to are:

- Share with no exclusive claim, non-commodify the seed and planting materials.
- No genetically modified or other proprietary technologies in the seed sector.

The OSS network

- Keep the scale of seed operations small, whether local or regional (dismantling the idea of big seed corporations).
- Keep creating new varieties together, consult with other small farmers and maintain a peer production model.
- Ensure quality – with own locally relevant values and locale-specific standards of value for cultivation and use (VCU), such as the Participatory Guarantee Scheme of the Organic Farming Association of India.

The worries about IPR on seeds

Why is there so much debate around IPR on seeds? There are several reasons for it:

- Seeds form the basis of our food and farm systems.
- If farmers and public scientists lose access to seeds, then the control of the seed and with it the control over food systems passes on to corporates.
- Being aware of your food sources gives you control over your diet and nutritional needs and a say in the food supply system.
- Thinking beyond your own kitchen and what is on your and your family's plate and making active

Farmer stories from the ground

DADAJI Ramaji Khobragade is a known farmer-breeder from the Nanded District in Maharashtra. The paddy developed by him is used not only by many farmers, but also by agricultural scientists in the public sector, to develop new varieties. The National Innovation Foundation is also trying to get his varieties commercialised through a private company.

One of his rice varieties – 'Dadaji HMT' was granted the PVP certificate in 2012 by the PPV&FR Authority under the farmers' variety category. But real and meaningful benefits as an innovator are yet to accrue to him. He may have earned quite a name in the farming circles, as well as received awards and recognition from various agencies, but his economic condition is yet to improve. There are others like Shri Prakash Singh Raghuvanshi, who likewise has his wheat variety – Kudrat 9, registered as a 'farmer variety' under the PPV&FR Act. He is content with using the system to simply getting an IP to exclude any seed company from staking a claim on his high yielding variety.

Meanwhile, farming communities that have been growing common varieties across states and regions within the country, find themselves on either side of a PVP. Kalagoda (Registration No. 92 of 2014) is grown by traditional farmers across northern Odisha, south Jharkhand, north Chhattisgarh, being a variety of upland rice popular in the Chota Nagpur Plateau region. However, it has been registered under the name of one particular farmer group from Odisha.

This shows how the IP system on plant varieties is unable to accommodate shared knowledge systems. Granting a plant variety certificate to a group of farmers does not really solve the problems or its spin-offs. In such situations, Section 29 of the PPV&FR Act, 2001, ought to be invoked. It clearly states:

"Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, no registration of a variety shall be made under this Act in cases where prevention of commercial exploitation of such variety is necessary to protect public order or public morality or human, animal and plant life and health or to avoid serious prejudice to the environment."

The irony is that many voices were raised against IPR on life forms when patents were being granted on basmati, turmeric and neem by foreign patent offices. But when the same system has begun to grant IPR (in the form of PVP on farmers' varieties), then there is an eerie silence. Farmers' groups themselves are in a dilemma on whether to avail of the only so-called 'protection' being granted by the state to their varieties through the IPR system, or stay out of it. It is in this context that the idea of 'open source' seed was developed.

choices to encourage local foods, helps the informal economy.

- Supporting local seeds means supporting local small farmers and assisting the crisis-ridden rural society.
- IPR on seed and planting material may put unreasonable restrictions on both small farmers and public scientists.
- Large companies asserting their IP rights over seeds are able to demand high prices for their seed products.
- Without seed sovereignty you can neither have self-sufficient food communities, nor just societies.

Shalini Bhutani is a legal researcher and analyst based in Delhi. She works and publishes on a wide range of issues including how free trade and its rules impact communities and conservation. She was a faculty member at the Centre for Environmental Law, WWF-India, and is now guest faculty on legal and regulatory affairs at various universities. She is the legal counsellor for the Apna Beej network and supports the Indian Alliance for Seed Sovereignty. Previously



she has worked with several NGOs, both national (such as Navdanya) and international (GRAIN). She can be contacted at: emailsbhu-tani@gmail.com

Oh God, my headache is killing me!

Most of us have experienced headaches in some form in our lives. Ever wondered about the severity and kinds of headaches? A. Radhakrishnan gives us an account of the diverse, painful world of headaches, and some home cures for it.

The escalator was broken, and the only way out of the airport was up a flight of stairs. I had a big suitcase and a sore knee.

I began dragging my bag and was making a loud thud on every step when a man behind me grabbed it and carried it to the top.

"That was so chivalrous," I gushed, thanking him.

"Chivalry had nothing to do with it," he said. "I've got a splitting headache."

— 'An End to Chivalry', courtesy of Reader's Digest

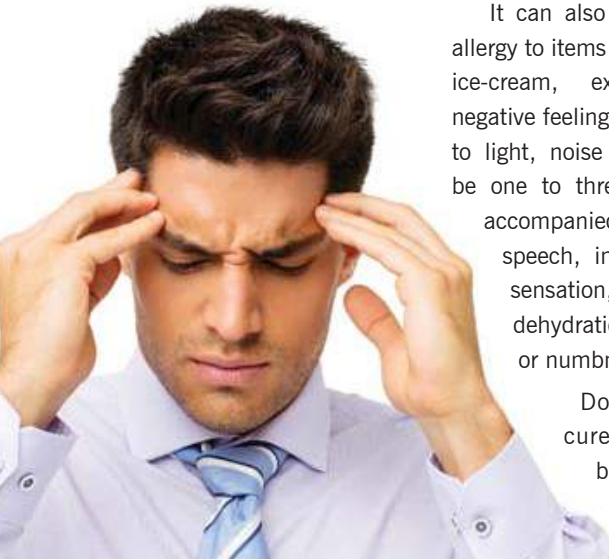
IT bewilders you, it intimidates... there is this throbbing pain and your head hurts for no apparent reason. It can be debilitating and it doesn't go away. What is it?

Cephalalgia or headache is the symptom of pain anywhere in the region of the head or neck. It occurs as migraines, tension-type headaches, and cluster headaches. Frequent headaches can affect relationships and employment and increases the risk of depression in many cases.

To elaborate, the pain originates from the tissues and structures that surround the skull or the brain, because the brain itself has no nerves that give

rise to the sensation of pain (pain fibres). The thin layer of tissue (periosteum) that surrounds bones, muscles that encase the skull, sinuses, eyes, and ears, as well as thin tissues that cover the surface of the brain and spinal cord (meninges), arteries, veins, and nerves, all can become inflamed or irritated and cause a headache.

The pain may be a dull ache, sharp, throbbing, constant, intermittent, mild, or intense, and may be benign or more serious.



A headache can bewilder and intimidate

Three types of primary headaches exist — headaches caused by environmental factors (like migraines), headaches triggered by food or sleep, and headaches triggered by stress. I will

focus more on the debilitating migraine headache.

Migraine, its causes and effects

A migraine is a severe, painful headache that can be preceded or accompanied by sensory warning signs such as flashes of light, blind spots, tingling in the arms and legs, nausea, vomiting, and increased sensitivity to light and sound. The excruciating pain can last for hours or even days.

It can also be triggered off by an allergy to items like tea, coffee, alcohol, ice-cream, extremes of weather, negative feelings, etc., with an aversion to light, noise or odour. There could be one to three attacks in a month accompanied by muddled or slurred speech, including dizziness, cold sensation, pain in the sinuses, dehydration, loss of concentration or numbness in hands or legs.

Doctors have yet to find a cure. A migraine is caused by the vaso-dilation or expansion of blood vessels in the head while a headache is caused by the constriction of blood vessels.

A headache could be also triggered through lazy posture, i.e. slouching or stooping causes pressure on the neck

and scalp muscles; leisure, which is a combination of triggers include stress, lack of sleep, missed meals and oversleeping.

Some even get dull headaches after a visit to the hairdresser. When the neck muscles are awkwardly positioned, a mechanical failure develops. Bottling up anger too makes you susceptible to headaches more than even depression or anxiety. People should learn ways to lengthen their fuses.

Sex affects men more than women. A dull ache at the back of the head intensifies with sexual excitement! A diet of processed food and poor drink choices, along with the lack of exercise mean a sluggish colon, which leads to self-poisoning of the system. And of course, drug misuse.

Some severe medical issues, such as meningitis and stroke, can also cause headaches. If you experience any of the following symptoms, be sure to call your physician immediately:

- An abrupt, severe headache
- A headache with fever, stiff neck, seizures, difficulty speaking, rash, weakness, or double vision
- Headaches following a head injury
- If experiencing headaches for the first time after the age of 50

Simple ways to cure headache/migraine are:

- Squeeze the juice of a lemon in a cup of hot black tea. Sip slowly.
- For a headache caused by heat, the crust of lemon can be pound into a fine paste in a mortar and applied to the forehead.
- Apply freshly pared-off rind of a lemon to each temple.
- Using your index finger and your thumb to squeeze the bridge of your nose while pressing down a little

bit. Try to massage your temples alternately, but not too hard.

- Have hot soup and try to take a nap. Darken the room and switch off all noise.
- Getting a hot water bath is known to cure headaches too.
- Above all, have a proper attitude to life. It is the panacea for good health.

The art of headache

Did you know there is also migraine inspired art? Some historians believe Vincent Van Gogh had visual auras, accounting for some of the artistic techniques evident in his work. Migraine-related hallucinations may have inspired the surreal, imaginary world

Did you know there is also migraine inspired art? Some historians believe Vincent Van Gogh had visual auras, accounting for some of the artistic techniques evident in his work. Migraine-related hallucinations may have inspired the surreal, imaginary world of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

Claude Monet was a painter whose works were thought to have been inspired by the bright colours he saw when he was having migraines. His paintings were full of light and are some

of the most sought after by art collectors.

Sarah Colwill suffered from migraines, which left her with a Chinese accent or a 'Foreign Accent Syndrome'. While others are left speechless with pain, here the disturbing impact of a chronic migraine has left her voice unrecognisable to family and friends. She has a condition which damages the part of the brain that controls speech and word formation. She was diagnosed as having rare sporadic hemiplegic migraines which cause blood vessels in the brain to expand, resulting in stroke-like symptoms such as paralysis on one side of the body.

Only around 60 recorded cases are there in the world. Other victims include BBC World Service broadcaster Anne Bristow-Kitney whose crisp English tones were replaced by a broad Scottish accent after she suffered a stroke and brain haemorrhage in 1996. Wendy Hasnip, a special needs teacher from Yorkshire began speaking with a French accent after a stroke in 1999 and Lynda Walker, a university administrator, born in Newcastle Upon Tyne woke up after a stroke to find her Geordie twang replaced by a Jamaican accent!

To end, a unique cure...

"I have a bad headache. I'll visit the doctor."

"Don't do that. Yesterday I had a headache, so I hurried home, gave my wife a big kiss and the headache disappeared. Why don't you try it?"

"Good idea. Call up your wife and tell her I'll be right over."



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune-based freelance writer, poet and short story writer, who loves to interact, make friends and encourage people to laugh.

Gharkul – a lesson for us all

*Each of us has a responsibility toward the society we live in. But often, we tend to forget this. **G. Venkatesh** and **Chandra Govindarajan** visit a school in Mumbai for mentally challenged children called Gharkul. They come away inspired and impressed by the children's efforts, and the passion and commitment of the founder and staff there.*

It is a Friday afternoon and we are at a song-and-dance session organised at a school in Santacruz, Mumbai, called Gharkul, at which music therapist Ashish Kasbe, aided by volunteers and staff members, is keeping the children engaged. The children are mentally challenged, and an effort is being made to improve their cognitive abilities with the aid of music. A young man, Sanket, volunteers on the keyboard every Friday (a hobby which is being put to the best use!) and plays for a little boy who has learnt to sing songs in English (Jingle Bells), Tamil/English (Why this Kolaveri Kolaveri Kolaveri Di?) and Hindi/Marathi (Singham etc.)

This is followed by an open invitation to the class to dance. Five students take the dance floor and the energy is unbelievable. The confidence and the absence of stage fear is inspirational (for the first author, who even though he is a senior lecturer at a foreign university, does get pangs of stage fear from time to time). Strange and ironical that the 'mentally-unchallenged' often experience stage fear!

After 45 minutes, Sharad Kale, the Principal requests silence and they obey instantly. We are honoured (this would stand right at the top for us, as far as demonstrations of appreciation are concerned) and we feel touched. Tears could have trickled down but are held back. Two greeting cards crafted by some of the children at Gharkul, are presented to us, by a little boy and a little girl. The girl is happy when she is shown her photograph on the smartphone screen – visibly delighted and gleeful!



A Gharkul class, where kids are confident, uninhibited and happy

We first heard about Gharkul on the television channel STAR TV's *Aaj ki Raat hai Zindagi*. Gharkul is a Mumbai-based public charitable trust operational since 2007, under the presidentship of Sunil Satpute, a diminutive individual whose small frame belies his infinite zeal and incomparable enthusiasm to accept challenges, persist and be a force for good, in modern India. Well, Gharkul is a school for mentally-challenged children, who may evoke sympathy in the minds of the ordinarily-good, but who are veritably 'Taare Zameen Par' in the eyes of people like Satpute.

True calling

Kasbe, a computer scientist by training, is now a music therapist and he believes firmly that he has found his true calling. Helping disadvantaged people in distress/need is something which gives him immense satisfaction at the end of every working day. He has worked with cancer patients in Chennai as well, and

believes that music has tremendous potential to heal, when one considers that it communes directly with the soul. And as readers know, the one thing which binds us to God is the soul.

Post-retirement, people either continue working for themselves or simply become home-bound and inactive. They can all take leaves out of the books of Shejwal, a retired gentleman who worked with Indian Oil till 2011, and for the last five years has been dedicating himself to social causes, alongwith his wife. He also, like Kasbe, believes in the power of music to heal and change for the better. He uses the word 'evolve' and says that everything to do with Gharkul is an evolution; not a revolution. The former, as we know is slow like the tortoise of the fable. The latter is like the hare from the same fable. We all know how the fable ends. Smiles on the faces of the children at Gharkul, he says, is his reward. We are told about the inexplicable delight the

children felt when they saw a lot of water in a swimming pool for the first time – at the Shangri-la resort in Bhiwandi (north of Mumbai) – and learnt about the joys of swimming. Water and its amazing healing power,quite like music.

First things first – no cart before horse, please

Kale has been with Gharkul for four years now. He specialised in ‘special teaching for the mentally challenged’ while pursuing his B.Ed degree. While he is originally a post-graduate in economics, he too, like Kasbe, found his true calling in what he is doing currently at Gharkul. He stresses on the fact that such children need to be taught basic skills first – wearing clothes, shoes, eating food in the right way, toilet manners, combing their hair etc. – before one can even think in terms of literacy and numeracy. This, he tells us, is often lost on many parents and educators alike. Having taught them the basics, it would be worthwhile unlocking their hidden talents – painting Ganesh idols, making paper bags for use in groceries, crafting original



Chandra Govindarajan receiving a gift from a student



Gharkul staff with one of the authors, Chandra Govindarajan (in centre)

greeting cards etc. Satpute tells us about Mahesh, an alumnus of Gharkul, who is now trained to be an auto-mechanic! None will disagree with the conviction of the staff members that it is necessary to think long-term about the future of such children. Just ‘abandoning’ them to their parents when they attain the age of 18 years will be a job half done or done improperly. Equipping them with self-help capabilities and skills which can help them to work and earn (like Mahesh) is a ‘sacred goal’ – rehabilitation in other words.

We enquire if the products the children make – greeting cards for instance – can constitute a steady supply to a market outside in the city where demand can be created, at first from sympathetic Mumbaikars keen to be of help. Satpute likes the idea but would like to ponder over ‘scale issues’. The outflow needs to be sustained to make the idea meaningfully implementable. We enquire if bank accounts can be opened for each child into which their earnings (if the aforesaid idea strikes root) can be channeled. This will provide them with small but growing individual funds, which they can avail of later on in their lives. ‘Good idea’, quips Kasbe, while the others concur with him and agree that this can be done. Citizens of Mumbai, you can volunteer to constitute the steady demand. An unwritten contract. What do you say?

Misconceptions need to be ironed out

Shejwal informs us that ‘mentally challenged’ is not synonymous with ‘mentally ill’. The former is like being physically challenged and having to use crutches, wheelchairs and avail of ramps to enter premises. Being mentally challenged, entitles one to the availability of care, compassion and love. This is what Gharkul supplies...in abundance!

We generally pine for college degrees so that we can rise to the top of the pack, or closer to the top rather, in terms of earning potential. Quite like rats racing up to the pinnacle of the garbage heap, to use a metaphor first employed by George Bernard Shaw. Satpute has three degrees against his name. His full time job is at an NGO which works with street children. Gharkul is a passion he has committed to, in addition. He grew up, buffeted by adversities and always tried to find opportunities to learn from them. He knows pain, experientially. He has lived it, endured it and learnt from it. He uses his empirical knowledge to allay pain in society. To build, brick by brick, a wall of order and care, love and hope. A kind of a relentless *Tamasoma jyothirgamaya* pursuit. The taller and wider this wall becomes, society will take on a more colourful hue. At Gharkul, Satpute is ably supported by his team comprising,

(Continued on page 51)

Polio free!

India, which has already been declared polio free by the World Health Organisation, will now launch a new phase of the polio programme on 25th April, also called the National Switch Day. What does it entail and how did India manage to eradicate polio? Dr. Roopa Vernekar tells us about this success story.

VACCINATIONS are a boon to mankind, the invention of vaccination has led to the eradication of various life threatening diseases. Vaccinations are antigenic material injected to stimulate the immune response of an individual towards a disease. The first documented use of vaccination is from China and India in the 17th century. The powdered scab from infected people with small pox was used to produce immunity against small pox. With the invention of vaccine for smallpox and its implementation globally with the support of WHO (World Health Organisation), smallpox was completely eradicated, which was declared by WHO in 1980.

Understanding poliomyelitis

Poliomyelitis is another such disease that has to be eradicated. Poliomyelitis is an infectious disease caused by the Poliovirus. It is an RNA virus (Ribose nucleic acid) and there are three stereotypes of the virus poliovirus – type 1(PV1), PV2 and PV3. All the three types are extremely virulent and cause the same symptoms. The word poliomyelitis is derived from the Greek words polios-grey and myelos-marrow and itis – inflammation, referring to the inflammation of the grey matter of the spinal cord.

Poliomyelitis is transmitted through the fecal-oral route by ingesting contaminated food or water and is the most common mode of transmission. The virus particles are excreted in the

feces for several weeks following an infection. It is sometimes transmitted by the oral-oral route too. Poliomyelitis mainly affects children below five years of age.

The major symptoms caused by the poliovirus are paralysis causing muscle weakness and poor control over



muscle. This happens when the virus enters the central nervous system. In severe cases, the virus can infect the brain tissue causing encephalitis, which leads to seizures and spastic paralysis. Once infected, there is no cure for the disease. About 2%-5% of children and 15%-30% of adults die of poliomyelitis.

Prevention is better when there is no cure

As it is well said “prevention is better than cure”, prevention against the disease is the only measure to minimise the damage caused by the disease, as once infected there is no cure for the disease. The incidence of the disease has decreased since the invention of vaccine against Poliomyelitis. The vaccine is available in two forms:

- IPV – Inactivated Polio Vaccine which is injected. It was developed

by Jonas Salk in 1955 and is also known as the Salk vaccine.

- OPV – Oral Polio Vaccine is given orally by mouth, it was developed by Albert Sabin in 1961 and is known as Sabin vaccine.

The polio vaccination is given to an infant at 2nd month, 4th month, 6th -18th month and 4 years. The vaccine given is the IPV (Inactivated Polio Vaccine). Research showed that the three dose of the vaccine was not enough to protect the child against the poliovirus and the ministry of health and family welfare recommended eight to ten dose of the vaccine to provide immunity towards the disease. Hence, the pulse polio campaign was started by the government of India to provide mass vaccination to all the children below five years of age, even those residing in the remote areas, to eradicate poliomyelitis.

The use of these vaccinations has led to the decrease in the incidence of polio. The vaccine acts against all three types of poliovirus. In 1988, the WHO launched the Global Polio Eradication Initiative for worldwide eradication of poliomyelitis. By the effort of the WHO and other supporting organisations like UNICEF, Rotary International, Bill and Melinda Gate Foundation, the number of polio cases have fallen by 99%. Only two countries in the world – Pakistan and Afghanistan remain Polio endemic. In 1994 the WHO region of America was certified polio free, followed by the WHO western pacific region in 2000, WHO European region in 2002, WHO

South East Asian region in 2014. The last polio case in India was reported in 2011. On March 27th 2014, India achieved this historic land mark and India was certified polio free.

The switch

Among the three types of the polio virus the type 2(PV2) has been completely eradicated and hence there is no need to incorporate the type 2 virus in the oral polio drops. So as a part of next stage, India along with the other countries of the world, is removing the type 2 virus strain from the polio drops, leaving the oral polio vaccine (OPV) with two types of polio viruses - type 1 and 2.

This switch on from topv (trivalent oral polio vaccine) to bopv (bivalent oral polio vaccine) is coordinated globally and in India The National Switch Day will be on 25 April 2016, when topv will be completely withdrawn and replaced by bopv, in both private and public sectors. Only bopv will be used after this

switch in both routine immunisation and polio campaigns. The primary health care workers in the rural area and the pediatricians in the urban area are the two main important sectors involved in providing immunisation. Efforts are being made to create awareness among the healthcare providers about this switch on and to consider the surplus topv as biowaste and discard it accordingly. Communication with the health workers is in progress about the dangers associated with the continued use of topv.

While the oral polio vaccine is used for global eradication, its continued use is associated with the circulating vaccine-derived polio viruses (cVDPV) and sporadic occurrences of vaccine associated paralytic poliomyelitis (VAPP) cases. The inactivated polio vaccine does not cause cVDPV or VAPP, but has to be injected and is more expensive. Hence, the combined use of OPV and IPV schedule is more efficient in polio eradication.

Myths hindering complete eradication

Polio vaccine causes impotency in male children is a myth prevalent mostly in Pakistan. Polio virus should not be given to children when sick is another myth.

Overcoming such myths and hindrances, the world is fighting as one towards global eradication of poliomyelitis. India has achieved a landmark in eradicating poliomyelitis and is now proceeding to the next stage of switch on to bOPV from tOPV. India starts a new innings on the National Switch Day. ■



Dr. Roopa Vernekar is a dental graduate and a writer. She likes to write articles on medical and dental topics, as well as travel.

Gharkul – a lesson for us all

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in addition to Kale, Shejwal, Sanket and Kasbe, six women – Vice Principal Anuprita Edhate, Special Education teachers Vanashree Panchal, Perna Pal and Anita Upadhyay, and support personnel Jayashree and Sadhana.

The modest need to be honoured first

Sunil Satpute is a modest man - a highly-educated, capable administrator, manager and communicator, and above all, a great human being. He believes that dedication to one's work and commitment to service are their own rewards. Often, those who do truly great work, tend to be humble and modest. That is the way it has always been in the world. We therefore, take it upon ourselves – just like *Aaj ki Raat hai Zindagi* did, and some newspapers have also done in the

recent past – to present Gharkul and the wonderful people who work there to readers of One India One People.

One of the staff members asked us, 'Why is that people do not want to care for others these days?' I pass the question on to the readers. Why are we self-centred and insecure? Are we scared? Is 'being busy advancing one's own selfish interests' an acceptable excuse? What does enjoyment mean? All the staff members at Gharkul told us that when they return home in the evenings, they experience a great feeling of satisfaction. How many of us, having plum postings in the private or public sectors, and earning over a lakh of rupees every month, can say honestly that we are genuinely satisfied with our lives?

If this article has managed to convey to readers what we intended to convey,

that will be the only reward we expect. Further, if after reading the article, some of you are motivated to browse www.gharkul.org, and contact Sunil Satpute at ssatpute980@gmail.com offering to help and show an interest in visiting Gharkul, that would be tantamount to golden feathers in our *tops*! ■

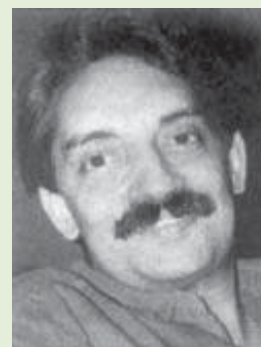
G. Venkatesh is a senior lecturer at the Department of Engineering and Chemical Sciences at the Faculty of Health, Science and Technology at Karlstad University in Sweden.



Chandra Govindarajan is a retired municipal school teacher (having worked in Mumbai for over two decades), who stays in Navi Mumbai. She is G. Venkatesh's mother.

Colonial India

We gave importance to dams, factories, chemical agriculture and plantations after Independence, instead of focusing on conserving our natural environment. Unless reversed, our future generations will pay heavily for this lack of foresight.



Bittu Sahgal
Editor, Sanctuary magazine

SO you thought colonial rule in India was over? When the British departed from Indian shores, the fact is they left behind the tools of colonial trade. New masters thus began to wear old jackboots. The brown *sahebs* of urban India soon began to colonise rural India. This is how the proverbial rich got richer and the poor poorer. Meanwhile, the Pinkheaded Duck, Mountain Quail and Asiatic Cheetah met their end when India's once-vast forests began to retreat under the combined assault of timber merchants and the teeming millions, who Jawaharlal Nehru exhorted to clear forests to till new land.

Soon, tea and coffee estates began to replace pristine forests in the Nilgiris and the Northeast at a blistering pace. Terai grasslands and forests gave way to sugarcane watered by dams that had wreaked their own independent destruction elsewhere. Coal mines opened up a wide swatch in central India. The sandalwood forests of peninsular India became almost as prized as gold. All this was great news for Indians with their eyes on thus-far-denied riches. Jawaharlal Nehru was actually sympathetic to the cause of nature protection. But he rationalised the destruction of vast forests to give Indians the development, he believed the British had denied them. For all his sensitivity, therefore, he was the architect of the destruction of natural India.

The instruments of Nehru's destruction were large dams, which are still being financed by the World Bank. Nehru called them the temples of modern India. Associated with such mega-projects were coal mines and thermal plants, both largely established in the heart of forested and tribal lands. For the millions who were displaced by such projects and who had to migrate to live in the squalor of urban slums, they were doom machines. Nehru died before he could correct these flaws, which even he recognised were the Achilles heel of his utopian industrial dream. But no visionaries emerged to alter India's flawed developmental course.

Though Indira Gandhi provided the political support that enabled Parliament to enact virtually all the legislation that

protects our forests and endangered wildlife today, her concerns did not extend to the protection of our rivers, soils and air from industry. Dirty factories therefore fouled sacred rivers and pure lakes, wells and streams that are even now used as sewers to dump lethal toxins. As Indians prepare to face the years ahead they must confront one very stark fact. Each one of us has only half the water that was available to our parents in 1947, and supplies are plummeting. What is worse, even the precious little we have is being polluted by industry, chemical agriculture and careless municipalities. In places like Kutchh, water tables have fallen by hundreds of metres. Coastal aquifers are becoming saline in every Indian state. Streams and rivers are running dry because of deforestation. A vicious corollary of this tragedy is the death of our soils. Long fed on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, vast areas of Punjab, Haryana and Western U.P. cannot any longer support crops.

It should become the purpose of all development in India to restore health to our ravaged land, to restore quality to the water we drink and productivity to our soils, before we are forced by nature to take such protective action. The sooner we start the long climb back to environmental sanity, the better. Unfortunately, despite the frequent elections, not one political party seems interested in leading our nation away from the environmental nemesis looming large. Not one recognises that good ecology makes for good long-term economics. Future generations will, therefore, have to spend huge sums to clean up the mess we are bequeathing them – nuclear reactors and their waste, toxic aquifers, ruined lakes and rivers, deforested slopes and flood-and-drought-ravaged plains.

There is still time to take advantage of nature's self-repairing mechanisms. But we must contend with the fact that horizonless planners – who want to build nuclear reactors on tiger forests, highways through wetlands and chemical complexes in fish breeding mangroves – will not see the light till it is too late. If they prevail, we can be sure of one thing: history will not forgive us and our children will not remember us well. ■

With us or against us

The debate over 'intolerance' was one of the defining issues of last year. Dissent and criticism are necessary pillars of democracy and there should be no attempt to stifle that.



C. V. Aravind

is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

IN the latter part of last year, the word 'intolerance' was freely bandied about and it even took on the connotation of a taboo word as whoever dared to mouth it found himself or herself being pilloried on social media sites and in some extreme cases, were even exposed to physical assaults and penal action. The great 'intolerance' debate has now been given a decent burial as the focus has shifted to 'nationalism', and here again a narrow definition of a nationalist has emerged by which only those who toe the government line can make the cut.

So in a sense, your level of patriotism is measured by your allegiance to the ruling party and your kowtowing to all its *diktats* without even a squeak of protest. Everyone else is deemed 'anti-national' and this definition cuts a very wide swathe; and includes inter alia, certain sections of the student community that professes an ideology totally at variance with what passes muster for the political masters, the media, both print and visual that takes potshots at the government and highlights its foibles and the shenanigans of its leaders, and last but not least, the opposition parties that go hammer and tongs at what they perceive are acts of omission and commission of those in power that compromise the interests of the nation as a whole.

While one is at a loss to fathom as to how all those covered under the aforesaid categories can be termed as 'anti-national', the objective of the government appears to be crystal clear. The Narendra Modi government has often been accused of meekly following the *diktats* of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), of affording plenty of leeway to the fringe elements that constitute the Sangh Parivar and of pursuing the objectives of these outfits which are

pushing a saffron agenda in diverse fields but primarily in education. The main motive of the BJP seems to be to turn the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student body affiliated to it into a belligerent outfit and arming it with enough muscle to take on other unions, notably the ones which have a leftist slant. This has been resented by large sections of the student community and they have now come under the government scanner and by acts of subterfuge, like doctoring of videos as it happened at the Jawaharlal

Nehru University, student leaders have been dubbed as 'anti-national'. This is a rather alarming situation as it is evident that even if there is not a shred of evidence to buttress the charges against you, you can still be dubbed as 'anti national' and be subject to vicious physical attacks by the goon brigade baying for your blood.

There was a time when dissent was considered the hallmark of a healthy democracy. Not anymore. Today any form of dissent is sought to be misinterpreted and construed as the handiwork of those who are inimical to the country's interests and are intent on working towards its destruction. This of course remains far from

the truth and is just a stick to beat those who do not dance to the government's tunes. The salutary feature in these developments however is that despite the strong arm tactics, the student community as a whole has put up a brave face. The same goes for the activists and the media, though certain sections of the media, keen on currying favour with the government have been acting as its handmaidens, denting the reputation of the fourth estate. There is an imperative need to correctly define 'intolerance' and 'nationalism' and to view them from the right perspective. ■

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YOUNG

SPOTLIGHT

Saluting the Braveheart

The biopic 'Neerja' salutes the brave flight purser who went far beyond the call of duty.

NEEERJA Bhanot was born on September 7, 1963 in Chandigarh and moved to Mumbai when she was 11. She began modelling during her college days and was later selected by the American airliner Pan Am as flight purser. Neerja was aboard the Pan Am Mumbai-New York flight which was hijacked by four armed terrorists on September 5, 1986. The plane was parked on the tarmac of the Karachi airport with 361 passengers on board. Neerja immediately alerted the pilots who escaped through an overhead hatch in the cockpit as per

the emergency protocol. This is done to preempt any attempt to forcefully fly the aeroplane to the destination demanded by the terrorists.

Neerja, who was to celebrate her 24th birthday two days later, was now the senior-most crew member on board. One of the terrorists asked the cabin crew to collect passports of all the passengers. When Neerja realised that the American passengers were the real target of the hijackers, she hid their passports, even discarding some through a garbage chute so that the travellers could not be identified by their nationality.

The hostage drama continued for 17 hours. Eventually, the plane ran out of its power supply and was covered in darkness. The frustrated terrorists opened fire and set off explosives. Neerja quickly opened the

emergency exit.

However, instead of sliding down the chute herself, she stayed back to help others. She was shot at point blank

range while trying to shield three small children in the line of fire.

The young braveheart had not only foiled the hijacking by preventing the plane from taking off, she also saved the lives of many hostages.

Neerja was posthumously awarded the Ashok Chakra — India's highest gallantry award for bravery in the face of the enemy during peace time.

Her parents instituted two annual awards in Neerja's name — one for an Indian woman who displays exemplary courage when subjected to social injustice, and the other for a flight crew member who goes beyond the call of duty in a difficult situation.



CURIOSITY

Why is the colour red used in danger signals?

LIGHT gets scattered as it travels through any medium composed of small particles. Of the visible spectrum, blue light which has the shortest wavelength is scattered — and hence weakened — the most, whereas red light which has the longest wavelength is scattered the least. Thus red light is able to travel the longest distance through fog or rain and can be easily seen from long distances.

Another reason for using red may be its intrinsic connection to danger! It signifies

heat and is also the colour of blood. Hence it is inherently perceived by humans to be linked to danger.



Some people may gradually begin to lose their ability to differentiate between colours as they age. But it has been observed that even old people have a very sharp perception of red colour on their retina which makes it the most effective choice for signalling danger.

JOKE

While on one of his daily rounds, the hostel warden walked into the dining room where the boys were eating.

"Any complaints about the food?" he asked the boys.

"My beans are as hard as rocks," complained one boy.

The warden took a spoonful of beans from the boy's plate and tasted it.

"They seem soft enough to me," he said.

"They would.

I've been chewing them for the past ten minutes,"

said the boy.



The test



ONE day a man was going to his sister's house in another village when he ran into a gang of dacoits.

"Who are you?" asked the dacoit chief, glowering at him.

"I'm a school teacher," said the man.

"A school teacher, eh?" sneered the chief. "And do you test your students regularly?"

"Yes," said the man.

"Well," said the chief, "it's time somebody tested you!" He picked up a large pumpkin and gave it to the school teacher.

"Guess its weight," he told the teacher. "The exact weight, mind you! We'll weigh it afterwards. If you're right, I'll let you go unharmed. If you're wrong you'll get a hundred lashes with the whip!"

"This pumpkin weighs exactly as much as your head, sir," said the teacher quietly, and gave the pumpkin back to him.

As some of the dacoit's men seemed keen to find out if the teacher was right and this they could only do if the dacoit's head was removed from his body, the chief laughed uproariously to show that it was all a joke and let the teacher go unharmed.



AMAZING LIVING WORLD

Toothy tusks

THE Babirusa or the Pig Deer is an extremely unusual and ancient member of the pig family that lives in Indonesia. It has pig-like habits such as bathing in mud, but there the resemblance to the domestic pig ends.

The babirusa has fearsome canine teeth in

both its upper and lower jaws that grow upwards and out of its mouth to form 'tusks'. The teeth grow to almost a foot or 30 cm in length. In males, the upper teeth curve so far back that they pierce the top of the snout.

This makes it impossible for Babirusa to nose around in the mud for food like most pigs, so they rely on eating fruits and leaves instead.

Indonesians revere the Babirusa and wear masks modelled on its face during ceremonial dances.



PUZZLE Mindbender

Five schools participated in an interschool football tournament. In the first round, every school played with each of the schools once with two points for a win, one point for a draw and zero points for a loss. If the final tally at the end of the first round is:

Don Bosco High School - 6, DAV Public School - 3, Universal High School - 2, Arya Vidya Mandir - 4, then

how many points did Modern School score?



Answer : There were 5 teams in the league, which means a total of 10 matches. Each game distributed 2 points to the two teams. Therefore, there were a total of 20 points available. The results shown add to 15, leaving the remaining 5 to Modern School.

MRINALINI SARABHAI

A life devoted to dance and social causes (1918-2016)

A doyen of Indian dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathakali, Mrinalini Sarabhai who passed away on 21 January 2016 at the age of 97, was revered during her lifetime as one of the pioneers and ambassadors of Indian fine arts and culture which she propagated and popularised all over the world. Born in 1918 in Kerala to illustrious parents, Dr. Swaminathan, an eminent barrister and Ammu Swaminathan, freedom fighter, social activist and Parliamentarian, Mrinalini had an equally famous elder sister Captain Lakshmi Sehgal, who served in Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's army, and an elder brother Govind Swaminathan, a leading barrister.

Mrinalini developed a flair for dance quite early in life and her supportive parents encouraged her to enroll at Shantiniketan where she had the opportunity to work closely with Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. Her Bharatanatyam guru Muthukumaran Pillai and Kathakali guru Thakazhi Kunju Kurup put her through her paces in the early years, and later she improvised and honed her talents further and eventually became an ace choreographer and went on to direct hundreds of dance dramas. Later she had the benefit of training in modern dance in Switzerland and the US, and on her return she established the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts in her hometown of Ahmedabad, an institution that has trained more than 18,000 students in both Bharatanatyam and Kathakali.

Mrinalini has to her credit more than 300 dance dramas and has also dabbled in other literary activities as well and has written novels, children's stories, plays and poetry. She travelled extensively with her dance troupe and performed in countries like US, France, South American countries, Japan and Australia, and wherever her team performed, they received accolades from the media.

The danseuse had an abiding interest in women's empowerment and also espoused several other social causes. Many of her dance dramas had themes related to oppression of the downtrodden and also dealt with social evils like untouchability. The dance drama *Chandalika* which she staged

in 1977 was based on Tagore's work and vividly sketched the spectre of untouchability and in those conservative days touched a raw nerve. Gurudev Tagore exerted a great degree of influence on the young dancer and she went on to stage dramas like *Mgyar Khela* and *Visarjan* based on Tagore's visceral works. Her dance drama *Ganga* highlighted the degradation of the sacred river and how mankind showed scant respect towards nature and environment. Mrinalini also held very strong views on communalism, caste based

discrimination, environmental degradation and never hesitated to raise her voice against intolerance and bigotry in any form. She loved nature in all its myriad forms and also served as a President of the 'Association of Friends of Trees'. She married India's pioneering space scientist Vikram Sarabhai after a courtship and the couple had two children, a son Karthikeya and a daughter Mallika Sarabhai. Mallika has inherited her mother's passion for dance and has earned a reputation as one of the country's best dancers. Quite like her mother, Mallika too has been a fiery crusader for social causes and hers has always been a strident voice against exploitation of any kind in society.

Mrinalini's autobiography *Mrinalini: Voice of the heart* encapsulated her life in vivid detail and was critically acclaimed for its literary merit, and for bringing out the various facets of a dancer's life at a time when society tended to frown on women who took up dancing as a career. A number of honours, both national and international came her way right through her dancing career, and the Government of India conferred on her the Padma Shri in 1985 and the Padma Bhushan in 1992. She was also a recipient of the prestigious Sangeet Natak Academy Award. Mrinalini Sarabhai who counted among her friends several leading scientists, philosophers and religious gurus of the time lived a full, rich life and has left behind not just a great body of work, but also a rich legacy in the form of her crusading spirit, which could serve as a beacon light to future generations as well. ■

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



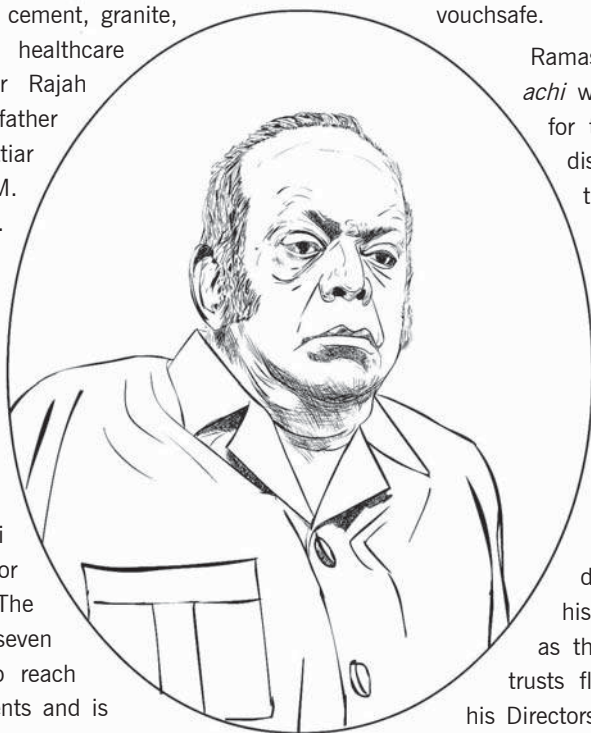
DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY

A man of many parts (1931-2015)

Dr. M.A.M. Ramaswamy (MAMR) who passed away in Chennai at the age of 84, was a scion of a family with a royal lineage, popularly known in those parts as the 'Rajah' family hailing from the small town of Chettinad in Tamilnadu. During his long and eventful journey through life, he wore many hats and was a business magnate, educationist, parliamentarian, philanthropist and a keen sports enthusiast and administrator as well. He was the brain behind the Chettinad group which had diversified interests across several verticals including cement, granite, engineering, logistics, minerals, healthcare and education. His grandfather Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar and his father Rajah Sir M.A. Muthiah Chettiar along with his uncles M.R.M. Ramanathan Chettiar and M.A. Chidambaram Chettiar built the Chettinad group from scratch and M.A.M. Ramaswamy who took over the mantle from them further diversified and expanded its activities, turning it into a multi-million dollar business conglomerate. As the pro-chancellor of Annamalai University, he earned laurels for developing the institution. The University which had just seven departments grew extensively to reach as many as forty eight departments and is today one of the leading institutions in the field of distance learning as well.

Ramaswamy had an abiding interest in sports including hockey, tennis and horse racing. He served as the President of the Indian Hockey Federation and his tenure was hailed as the golden period of Indian hockey when the national team won the World Cup in 1975. Many players who donned the nation's colours during his stewardship have gone on record to say that MAMR was a highly motivating leader who never hesitated to even utilise his own resources to ensure that the boys never had to forgo anything by way of facilities, allowances etc. But it was as a turf baron that he won laurels galore and also entered the Guinness Book of World Records for being the first racehorse owner in the country to win a hundred classics. Eventually his horses went on to win over

four hundred classics, and that is a record that is certain to stand the test of time. Hailed as the Bard of Racing in turf circles, Ramaswamy who is believed to have owned as many as a thousand thoroughbreds at one point of time was a revered and respected figure at race courses around the country and horses that sported his colours were the favourites of punters. Almost all the major trainers and jockeys worked for him at one point of time or the other and his knowledge of horseflesh was legendary, something that his contemporaries would vouchsafe.



Ramaswamy and his late wife Sigappi *achi* were well known in social circles for their benevolence and charitable disposition, and several welfare trusts floated by them have rendered yeoman service in the fields of poverty alleviation, ensuring educational facilities for the underprivileged and so on. The couple who were issueless had adopted a son, but after the death of his wife the relationship between the adopted son and the father soured, and events came to such a pass that he disowned his son and appointed his cousin, industrialist A.C. Muthiah as the administrator in charge of the trusts floated by him. MAMR also lost his Directorship in his flagship company and was designated as Chairman Emeritus, a post he held till his death. Although not actively involved in politics Ramaswamy got a ticket to the Rajya Sabha courtesy former Prime Minister and Janata Dal (S) president Deve Gowda, and served a stint in the Upper House from 2004 to 2009. Among several distinctions and doctorates that were conferred on him, he was also a recipient of the Padma Shri from the Government of India. The last days of the flamboyant business tycoon and racing baron were however spent in combating a series of illnesses culminating in his death. MAMR however has done enough in his lifetime to ensure that his good deeds will outlive him, and that those who benefited from his munificence will keep him enshrined in their memories. ■

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

BAHUKUTUMBI RAMAN

Ardent patriot and strategist (1936-2013)

Bahukutumbi Raman was born on 14 August 1936 and graduated in Chemistry in 1955 from Loyola College, Chennai. He studied journalism at the University of Madras in 1956-57 and joined the Indian Express as sub-editor in 1957. He qualified for the IPS (Indian Police Service) and was allotted to Madhya Pradesh. In 1957, he worked for a year in the Ministry of Home Affairs as internal intelligence analyst and then shifted over to the newly created Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) in the Cabinet Secretariat as external intelligence analyst. R&AW had inherited intelligence assets from the Intelligence Bureau (IB). The need to improve the external intelligence capability was realised in the 1965 war. Kao, Director of R&AW, was impressed by the complete commitment of Raman to work. Along with his vast knowledge, he had the ability to recall details of an event even after decades, which made him an ideal intelligence officer. Pakistan had been organising terror attacks by militants in Kashmir and providing arms, safe sanctuary and training camps in Chittagong Hills to Naga and Mizo hostiles. The population of East Pakistan had risen in revolt against the military regime of General Yahya Khan. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi decided to help the people of East Pakistan in their struggle.

Pakistan launched a brutal military campaign of suppression, particularly against the Hindus, intellectuals and politicians. Young students moved to India. Training camps were established to form Mukti-Bahini of these young students by R&AW to carry out covert actions. Para-military forces of East Pakistan deserted and joined the freedom struggle. Two members of the Jammu and Kashmir Front (JKLF) had hijacked an Indian Airlines plane to Lahore in January 1971. Consequently, India banned all Pakistani flights over India to East Pakistan. This greatly weakened the Pakistani Armed Forces. A provisional government was formed in Calcutta. These actions helped in the success of the lightning campaign by the military in December 1971. The Pakistan Armed Forces surrendered on 16 December and the state of

Bangladesh was born. Pakistani officers were smarting due to the ban on flights and paid a great compliment to R&AW by insisting that the hijacking was a master stroke of the R&AW and JKLF had nothing to do with it!

Raman was absorbed in the R&AW in 1984 and resigned from the IPS. He headed the counter-terror division of R&AW from 1988 onwards till his retirement on 31 August 1994. His main task now was to combat the terror attacks sponsored by Pakistan in support of separatists in Kashmir.

Added to this was the serious situation created in Punjab due to unrest amongst a section of the Sikhs. The defeat in 1971 had created an intense feeling of revenge amongst the Pakistani establishment. It found an opportunity to do so by providing arms to the Sikh militants. He felt riled by the pro-Pakistan attitude of the USA. Two detonators used in the Taj blasts in Mumbai were of US origin and at the request of USA were sent there for examination. The US authorities gave an unsigned report that these detonators were from the stock supplied to Pakistan during the Afghanistan war but it did not prove the involvement of ISI of Pakistan. It could be the work of smugglers. They did not return the detonators with the plea that during examination they

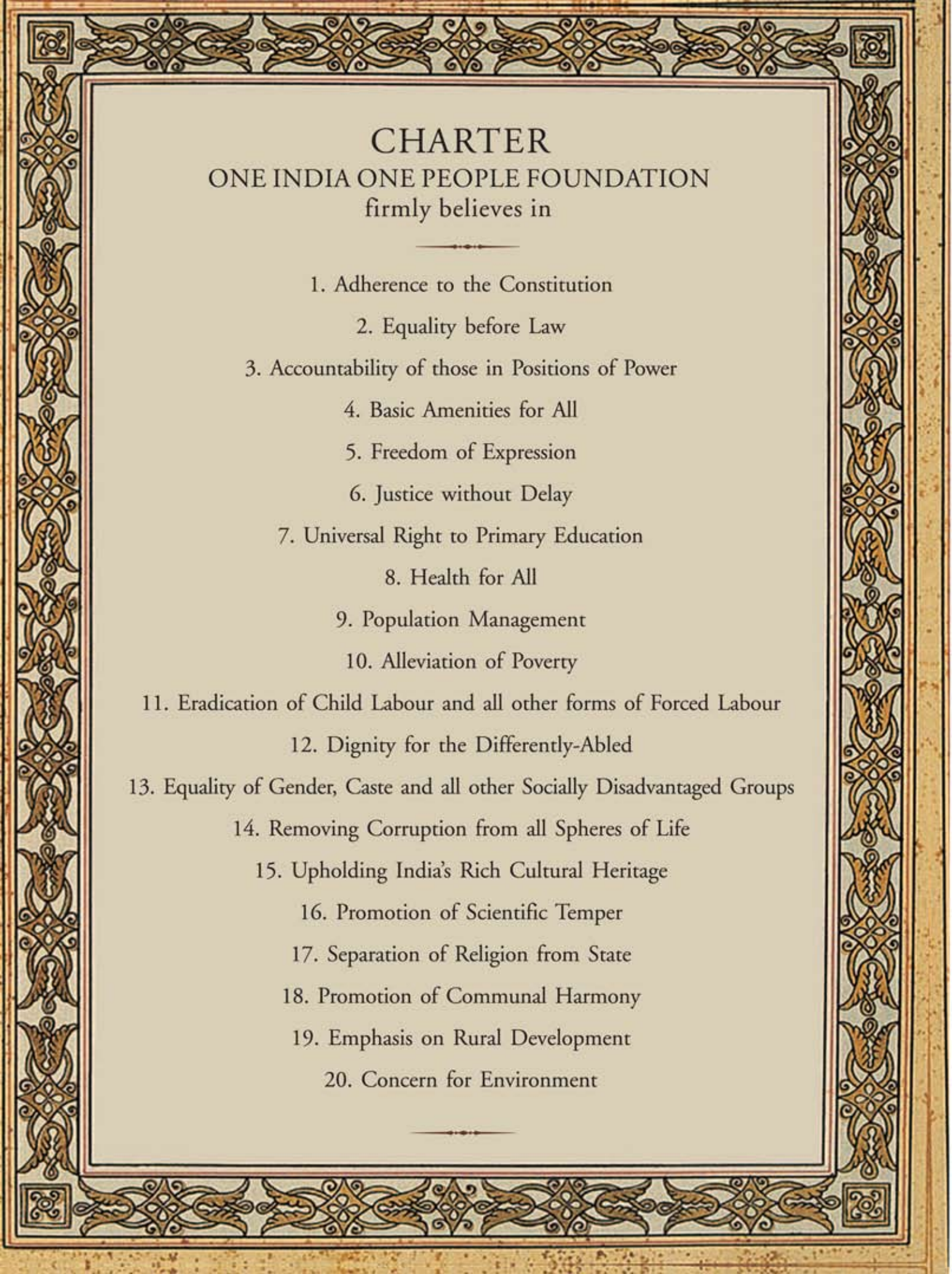
had been destroyed. India could not depend on US advice. For Pakistan, he recommended action just short of war. For China, he commented that India-Japan should make China's seeming strength its strategic vulnerability.

After retirement, he joined Observer Research Foundation as head of International Terror Watch Programme. He also contributed regularly to the South Asia Analysis Group. He was an authority on international terror and was guest lecturer on the faculties of many institutes. He wrote three books which have been well appreciated by the readers. He was a bachelor and passed away on 16 June 2013 after a long battle with cancer. ■

— Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd)

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





CHARTER

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE FOUNDATION

firmly believes in

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

WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I the President of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Prime Minister of India first or an Indian first?

Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

Am I a supporter of any 'ism' first or an Indian first?

Am I a white-collar/blue collar worker first or an Indian first?

Am I a youth/senior citizen first or an Indian first?

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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor

(October 9th, 1930 – February 23rd, 2007)

ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE