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Police Reforms

Why this delay in police reforms?

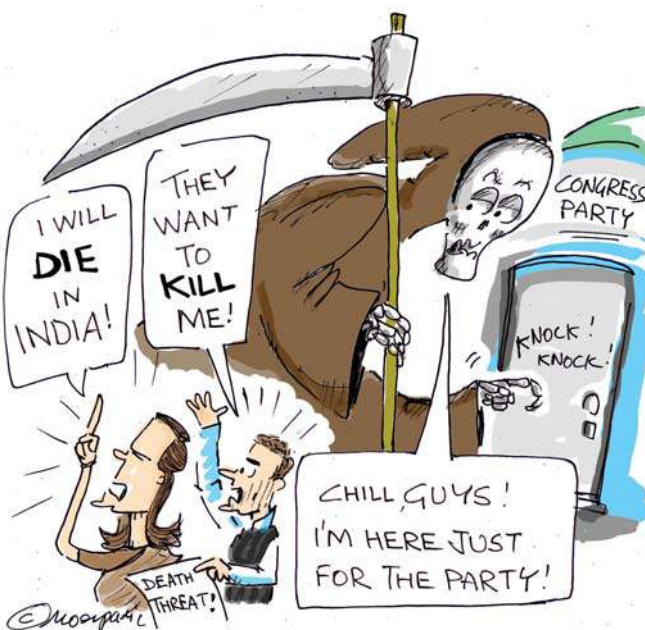
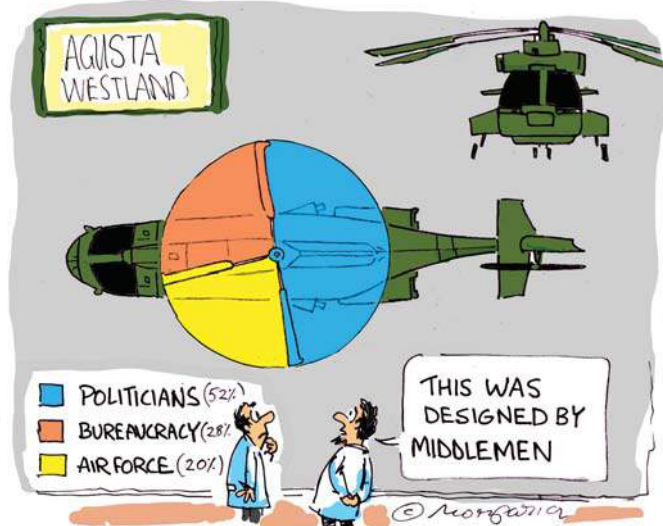
FACE TO FACE
Siddhant Sharma

Depoliticising the police force

No Gangotri this

KNOW INDIA BETTER
Mandu and Hanuwantiya:
A talent contest and a tale of adventure

MORPARIA'S PAGE



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Contents

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VOL.19/11

THEME:

Police Reforms



Morparia's page 2

An epistle from a policeman 5

Nivedita Louis

Why this delay in police reforms? 6

Prakash Singh

Depoliticising the police force 9

Julio Ribeiro

A spent force? 11

Dr. Harish Shetty

No Gangajal this 13

Prabhat Sharan

Darkness at noon 15

Prabhat Sharan

Is 'honest cop' an oxymoron? 17

E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan

Face to Face 19

Siddhant Sharma: Anuradha Kalhan

Know India Better

Mandu and Hanuwantiya: 23

A ruined citadel and a lake of adventure

Rangan Datta

This is my space! 36

Vandita Morarka

Features

Mahabharata, a metaphor for life 39

Prof. Avinash Kolhe

Debating Article 356 40

Prof. Avinash Kolhe

Akele hain, tho kya gum hai? 42

A. Radhakrishnan

A rose by any other name! 44

Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi

Solo Soleil 46

G. Venkatesh

Who was Gauhar Jaan? 48

Shoma A. Chatterji

Book Review : Manjira Majumdar 51

Column 52

Nature watch : Bittu Sahgal

Infocus : C.V. Aravind

Young India 54

Great Indians 56



Siddhant Sharma

19



23



Kalanidhi Narayanan



Shakuntala Devi



Wing Commander
Padamnabha Gautam,
MVC, Bar VM



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

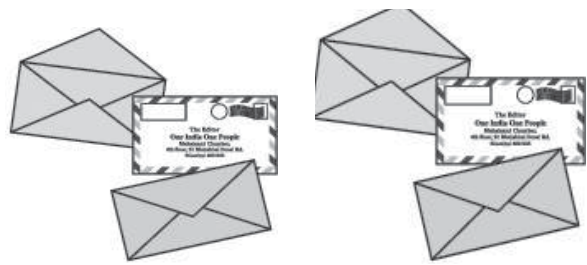
"A really good read"

With reference to your May 2016 issue (*India's Health*), I would like to say I really enjoyed the Face to Face interview with Dr. Sarada Menon. I am from Chennai and I know what a reputation she has there and in the world of mental health. The interview gives us a good glimpse into her unconventional world. A really good read. The travel feature (Know India Better) on Badami and Aihole was also very interesting. Good photos too. I must really congratulate you for giving so much space to these topics. Keep it up.

– Gita Mani, Mumbai

"Useful article"

The article by Dr. Sujeet Rajan on end of life care (*End of life care - an idea whose time has come*) was an eye-opener. He has explained very clearly what it means and I too believe that it's an idea whose time has come. India now has a large elderly population and palliative care is becoming a significant part of healthcare in our country. The Toastmaster's Club article (*A toast to the Speaker*) also made for an interesting



read. One didn't know of the existence of such clubs and it's heartening to note its history and activities. I also liked the article on waste (*Waste is...valuable!*) Ultimately, the responsibility for our planet lies with us. If Sweden sends only 1 percent of its waste to landfills, that's so amazing and certainly worth emulating. The recent Deonar dump fire should forcefully bring it to our notice that we don't have an alternative to ecological wisdom. It is a do or die situation. Ultimately, if our planet dies, who does it affect the most? Us! So let's gather our resources and react in a constructive manner. Before ending, I would like to mention that the laughter article (*Laughter is the best medicine*) was well-written and very good. It is true, laugh is indeed the best medicine for a lot of ailments.

– Vinay S., Vishakapatnam



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An epistle from a policeman

The cops' lot is very difficult. Too much hard work and revenue not commensurate with the effort put in, says a sympathetic Nivedita Louis!

Dear all,

POLICE. The very word evokes terror in the hearts of people all over the world – next only to Trump! Be it international or national, this is one force that is insurmountable. Being a policeman is of course not by chance or by luck. It needs sheer hard work and determination. You need a 56" chest (the most famous one, by now!), biceps and triceps Arnold would die for and despite sporting all these, they make us sit in the hot sun and write a godforsaken exam.

The day we pass out...oops...it is the day on which we encounter our Passing out Parade, the whole wide world welcomes us with stretched arms and toothy grins. We learn the caverns and crevices of a city, analyse the who's who and the list of do's and don'ts. This study is albeit more important than worrying about our waistline that starts to bulge. The list of do's definitely includes shining shoes for the boss, buying vegetables for the Mem Saab and ferrying their kids to and fro from school as our own children take the city bus to school.

The list of don'ts is longer than the "Guide to read a woman's mind – Volume 1" and includes impossible rules. Don't use Police jeep for personal errands (of course the Saab's story is different), don't have multiple pockets in your uniform (then how to carry every day's hard earned money, gentlemen?), don't be afraid of politicians (who is afraid – they carry berettas and can gun down an overtaking driver, and we the police are provided guns that were gifts of Hyder Ali to Tipu). Our guns are probably museum pieces and always fail at the right moment to fire at the opponent. But boy, they do have clinical precision and fire promptly, whenever we clean them.

Police Act, 1861. This is what governs the Police of our 'free' nation. There are all our woes, embedded in the difference of two centuries. Obviously, now we know why Policemen wear the dull *khakhis*, because *khakhis* were the 'in' thing in the late 18th century. Reforms must start right from the uniform. In some Union Territories, say for instance Puducherry, the uniform is a half slack trouser, a red fan

cap and a lathi. Ram Ram! Half trousers...so indecent for the police to wear. I am wondering why the moral police brigade is skirting the issue. Oops...it should be 'panting' on the issue.

Our cops need uniforms designed by Ritu Beri, like Railwaymen. The vests that are going to be 'bullet-proof', I wonder they ought to be named 'bullet-spoof' as they let the bullets pass as easily as sand through the sieve. Leave alone the vests and uniforms, the wireless and communication devices supplied to us are probably from Chor Bazar. They can be effectively used by NASA to track aliens from space and negotiate terms with them as only we the force have the bandwidth and wireless that can reach space!

The average Indian is too scared to deal with us for we are the *maa* of all *goondas*. You may be a thief, you may be a dacoit or you may be a bootlegger. To us, everyone has a price. Every check post, we stand day and night sifting for goods, taking the 'golden handshake'. Do you know that the 'revenue' earned is neatly divided and subdivided? For all those sweaty hours, all we get is a paltry sum. So why do we do it? Because dear

people, if we don't collect the 'police tax', you can't watch *Singham*, *Gayal* or *Shootout at Wadala*. All Bolly, Molly, Tolly and Kolly woods will squeeze out the juiciest of juicy police stories.

Remember, not every cop is lucky to sit in an air-conditioned cabin and relax in the revolving chair, drinking 'free' *chaai*. All said and done, reforms are imperative to keep the police force ticking, for we have to time travel to the

future, where you people are living and reading this.

– A desperate policeman ■



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

Why this delay in police reforms?

*It's not a secret that police reforms are long overdue in India. Though there have been serious attempts made, including directions from the Supreme Court, on-ground implementation has been tardy. These reforms need to happen now, states **Prakash Singh**, unequivocally.*

It would be no exaggeration to say that we would have been saved the trauma of several riots and massacres, scandals and scams which have rocked the country, if the police had not become a pliable instrument in the hands of the executive, as it has unfortunately become." This was stated in the petition on Police Reforms filed in the Supreme Court as far back as 1996.

The petitioner drew attention to several incidents when the police remained a mute spectator to lawlessness being perpetrated by rioters simply because they had the tacit support of the ruling party. It was mentioned inter alia that during the Delhi riots of 1984, the police did not take action against the organised gangs which massacred about 3,000 Sikhs in the capital, merely because they belonged to or had the backing of the party in power. The Supreme Court gave a landmark judgment in 2006 with a view to insulating the police from extraneous pressures. However, the states are still dragging their feet in implementing the judicial directions.

And now, we have had violence and destruction on a large scale in Haryana in February 2016, during the agitation for reservations. The state police and the bureaucracy, both of which had been politicised during the last decade or so,

either abdicated their functions, or at best, discharged their duties in a lackadaisical manner, giving a long rope to the agitators. According to an article published in *The Tribune* on 4 March 2016, "Not even the entire combined *jihadi* cadres of the Laksh-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad could have inflicted damage on this scale".

How many more tragedies is the country going to suffer

before police reforms are implemented in letter and spirit by the state governments? There are more than 20,000 police stations and posts across the length and breadth of the country, and their working impinges on the life of the common man from Srinagar to Kanyakumari, and from Ahmedabad to Aizwal, irrespective of whether he has a complaint or not. It is a sad commentary on our Republic that we have not been able to transform the police into an instrument of service upholding the Rule of Law and inspiring confidence among the people.

It needs to be emphasised that police reforms are absolutely

essential if India is to emerge as a great power. Economic progress cannot be sustained if we are not able to generate a safe and secure environment. The democratic structure may also crumble if we do not arrest the trend of criminals gaining ascendancy in public life.



Supreme Court's directions

The Supreme Court, in its historic judgment of September 22, 2006 on police reforms, directed the setting up of three institutions, namely:

- State Security Commission, which would lay down the broad policies and give directions for the performance of the preventive tasks and service oriented functions of the police.
- Police Establishment Board, comprising the Director General of Police and four other senior officers of the department, which shall decide transfers, postings, promotions and other service related matters of departmental officers and men, and
- Police Complaints Authority at the district and state levels, with a view to inquiring into allegations of serious misconduct by police personnel.

Besides, the apex court ordered that the Director General of Police shall be selected by the state government from amongst the three senior-most officers of the department who have been empanelled for promotion to that rank by the UPSC (Union Public Service Commission), and that he shall have a prescribed minimum tenure of two years. Police officers on operational duties in the field like the IG (Inspector-General) Zone, DIG (Deputy Inspector General) Range, SP (Superintendent of Police) i/c District and SHO (Station House Officer) i/c Police Station would also have a minimum tenure of two years.

The Court also ordered the separation of investigating police from the law and order police to ensure speedier investigation, better expertise, and improved rapport with the people. The Union Government was asked to set up a National Security Commission for the selection and placement of heads of Central Police Organisations, upgrading the effectiveness of these forces, and improving the service conditions of its personnel.

The aforesaid orders were to be implemented by the end of 2006. The time limit was subsequently extended till March 31, 2007. Seventeen states have passed bills/acts, but unfortunately these are not in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Court's directions. Actually, these were passed to circumvent the implementation of Supreme Court's directions. The other states have issued executive orders purportedly in compliance of the Court's directions, but in actual fact, they have amended or diluted the directions. The Thomas

Committee which was appointed by the Supreme Court to monitor the implementation of its directions expressed "dismay over the total indifference to the issue of reforms in the functioning of Police being exhibited by the States", in its report dated August 23, 2010.

The Justice Verma Committee, which was constituted to examine amendments to Criminal Law in the context of a gang rape incident which happened in Delhi on December 16, 2012, deplored that:

"The Supreme Court's judgment of 2006 in *Prakash Singh's* case giving certain directions for the autonomy and improving the quality of the police force remain to be implemented by all the governments. Action in this behalf does not brook any further delay."

The Committee urged "all states to fully comply with all six Supreme Court directives in order to tackle systemic problems in policing which exist today". It went on to say that:

"We believe that if the Supreme Court's directions in *Prakash Singh* are implemented, there will be a crucial modernisation of the police to be service oriented for the citizenry in a manner which is efficient, scientific, and consistent with human dignity."

The present position may be summarised as below:

- The Supreme Court issued seven directions on police reforms in 2006. Out of these, six were meant for the state governments and one for the Central government.
- Seventeen states have passed Police Acts which do not conform to the letter and spirit of the Supreme Court's directions.
- The remaining state governments have submitted affidavits of partial compliance. However, even these are not reflected at the ground level.
- The Central government has yet to pass the Delhi Police Bill.

The Government of India should, without any further delay, pass a central legislation on the subject on the lines of the Model Police Act drafted by the Soli Sorabjee Committee, incorporating therein the directions of the Supreme Court, and persuade the state governments to either implement the mandatory directions of the Supreme Court, or pass laws under Article 252 of the Constitution on the lines of the central legislation on the subject.

The Supreme Court's directions, it needs to be emphasised, are not for the glory of the police – they are to give better security and protection to the people of the country, uphold

The police-population ratio in India works out to 181 personnel per lakh of population, while the standard prescribed by the UN is 222 per lakh of population. What is worse, there are huge vacancies in several states. According to the BPR&D (Bureau of Police Research and Development), the actual strength of the police force was 16,60,666 against the sanctioned strength 22,09,027.

their human rights and generally improve governance. If sincerely implemented, they would have far reaching implications and change the working philosophy of the police. The Ruler's Police would be transformed into People's Police.

Where else are reforms needed?

Apart from the core areas identified by the Supreme Court, reforms are urgently required in some other fields also:

Manpower: The police-population ratio in India works out to 181 personnel per lakh of population, while the standard prescribed by the UN is 222 per lakh of population. What is worse, there are huge vacancies in several states. According to the BPR&D (Bureau of Police Research and Development), the actual strength of the police force was 16,60,666 against the sanctioned strength 22,09,027. The vacancies need to be filled up so that the police-to-population ratio improves and comes close to international standards.

Infrastructure: There are deficiencies in motor transport, communications and forensic support. According to the figures available, the police have slightly less than seven vehicles per hundred policemen. Communication-wise, there are 653 police stations in the country which have no telephone, 165 have no wireless, and there are 37 police stations which have neither telephone nor wireless. Forensic support is poor.

Housing: Housing facilities have a direct bearing on the morale of the personnel. These facilities are quite inadequate. The government is committed to providing accommodation to all the police personnel, but at present we have only 5.72 lakh family accommodations for 17.65 lakh police personnel. Housing facilities require substantial augmentation.

Training: This remains a neglected area. As recommended by the second Administrative Reforms Commission, the deputation to training institutions must be made more attractive in terms of facilities and allowances so that the best talent is drawn as instructors. Besides, training should focus on bringing attitudinal change in police so that they are more sensitive to citizens' needs.

Modernisation: Modernisation of the police force should get high priority. The Comptroller and Auditor General has,

in a recent report, revealed that progress in enhancing the mobility of the police and giving it sophisticated weapons and other equipment has been tardy. The process must be accelerated. The Government of India has approved the modernisation plan for the period 2013-14 to 2016-17. Priority should be given to: Cyber security, counter terrorism/insurgency, training and use of technology in various aspects of policing.

Registration of crime: This is a very sore point with the people. There is concealment and minimisation of crime on a big scale. To a large extent, politicians are responsible for it. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, for example, sometime back directions were given by the state government that crime figures be brought down by 70%, and quite a few senior officers who could not execute this *firman* were placed under suspension. Opposition parties also make a hue and cry to tarnish the image of the government if crime figures show an increase. The society as a whole should accept the inevitability of increase in crime with every passing year. Delhi Police has given good lead in this direction.

Conclusion

Looked at from any angle – security of the common man, survival of democracy, maintaining the trajectory of economic progress or tackling the major threats confronting the country – there is no getting away from the inescapable conclusion that we must have a reformed, restructured and revitalised police force. There has already been great delay. Police reforms are much too urgent to be delayed any longer. A professional police accountable to the people of the country and placing the highest importance to upholding the Rule of Law will provide the essential foundation for a progressive, modern India taking its rightful place in the comity of nations. ■



Prakash Singh, a recipient of Padmashri, was Director General, BSF, and also DGP, UP and Assam. He has been campaigning for Police Reforms.

You should know

How did the Indian Police Service or IPS come into being? Before our Independence, senior police officers belonging to the Imperial Police were appointed by the Secretary of State on the basis of a competitive examination. The first open civil service examination for admission to the service was held in England in June 1893 and the ten top candidates were appointed as probationers in the Indian (Imperial) Police. Apparently, around 1907, the Secretary of State's officers were directed to wear the letters "IP" on their epaulettes in order to distinguish them from the other officers not recruited by the Secretary of State through examination. In this sense, 1907 could be regarded as the starting point. In 1948, a year after India gained Independence, the Imperial Police was replaced by the IPS. Today, IPS officers are recruited from the state police cadres and from the rigorous Civil Services Examination conducted annually by the Union Public Service Commission. The training of IPS officer recruits is conducted at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy in Hyderabad. In 1972, Kiran Bedi joined the IPS, becoming the first woman IPS officer.

Depoliticising the police force

*An exemplary police officer talks about his own experience in the police force and why it is not difficult to be straightforward and honest. But **Julio Ribeiro** also bemoans the changed value system of the society, which is reflected in the falling standards of the police force. He tells us why it is of utmost importance to depoliticise the force.*

WHEN I joined the Indian Police Service sixty-two years ago in 1953, the British had just left our shores, and along with them the English officers who dominated the senior ranks of the police. But their legacy of integrity and justice continued for many years thereafter. Corruption, which is the biggest problem today that the country faces, did exist even in the days of the British, but it was confined mainly to the junior ranks. As far as the supervisory cadre of the Indian Police Service (IPS) was concerned, there might have been a few odd exceptions, and even in those rare cases there was peer condemnation, which made them cautious. Since the senior ranks were predominantly honest and just, the subordinates did not openly and boldly transgress the written codes for fear of the punishment that would automatically follow.

The changed values of today

These equations have changed now. The 'Get rich quick at any cost' value system prevalent among the young has spread like wild fire in the police force just as it has spread in all other spheres of public life and governance in the country. Many young entrants to the IPS, as in other services, join with the express purpose of amassing wealth by means that are far from legitimate. It is very fortunate that there still are officers of integrity and competence to whom people gravitate when rank injustice is perpetrated by elements, often patronised by political functionaries.

People ask me how I could enforce a measure of people-friendly policing thirty or more years ago. I reply that I was a leader, in charge of my own men, and I was responsible for their discipline and performance. No bureaucrat or politician interfered in my management of the force under my command. The politicians confined themselves to their role as the protector of the rights of the people who had elected them to office. If there was a miscarriage of justice or a rogue police officer out to make a killing, the politicians would bring it to my notice knowing well that I would carry out my constitutional duty of ensuring that the law is upheld and enforced, by disciplining of the officer who was misbehaving. Sometimes, a politician, eager to dispense

patronage and garner voter support, would take the side of the rogue, but if I stood my ground and pointed out to him that I was merely upholding the law as enacted by legislatures of which he was himself a member, he or she would sagely retreat.

The most frequent interference in police administration comes in the form of requests for postings and transfers of subordinates who approach politicians either through influential contacts who can be expected to deliver a sizeable number of votes at the time of elections, or by other means which the reader can guess, but is best not spelt out on paper. If a senior officer stands firm and does not surrender to such demands, he is ultimately respected and left alone, particularly if the general public has faith in his leadership. Politicians would hesitate to pick on senior officers who enjoy the backing of the general public and of their own subordinates. And such support would come if and when the senior officer practices what he preaches, is honest in his dealings, and does not take sides. Such officers are always noticed and respected. They enjoy immunity from political machinations.

In my days, the head of the police force was a very respected and admired official who represented an Institution. His was the last word in all matters of discipline, transfers and promotions. The Superintendents of Police (SP) in charge of districts and Commissioners of Police of big cities wielded the power of making and unmaking careers of the men under their command. If these senior officers were themselves men of integrity and honour, just and fair in their dealings as they are expected to be, without subjective biases, the administration ran smoothly. It was the duty of the political class, aided by the bureaucracy, to choose honest and competent police leaders at the cutting edge. In my early career, I noticed that the Minister and his Secretary went strictly by the advice and judgment of the Director General of Police, who knew each of his men and what each was capable of. It was only after the politicians started meddling in transfers and promotions with the active help and connivance of the bureaucracy that things went awry.

In the old days which people still remember with nostalgia, all transfers and promotions up to the rank of Deputy SP were

made by departmental superiors. The politicians did not interfere. Personnel issues relating to officers of the rank of SP and those belonging to the IPS were controlled by the government, which meant the Minister in charge of the Home Department, assisted by the Addl. Chief Secretary. Now, by law, this arrangement has been altered to enable the political class and the bureaucrats to decide, leaving the police hierarchy powerless and in shambles.

The political stranglehold

All recommendations of the National Police Commission on Police Reforms have been accepted, except the crucial ones curbing the powers of the politicians and bureaucrats to interfere in appointments, postings and transfers. But this is the real crux of the problem of command and control. If the subordinate ranks know that they can flaunt the decisions and wishes of their own bosses because the power to discipline them or even transfer them has been taken away, the whole gamut of police administration collapses like a pack of cards. This is exactly what is happening today!

People feel that policing today is in the grip of wide spread inefficiency, incompetence and corruption. I agree with the corruption charge. It has grown exponentially not only because of the fall in values widespread in society, but also because the grip of the senior officers on their own subordinates has loosened to such an extent that it will take years to reverse the trend. I partly agree about the inefficiency which is the direct result of corruption, though it must be admitted that those are times when the police has done very well even in difficult circumstances by rising to the occasion, particularly in law and order situations. I do not agree at all about the charge of incompetence. On the contrary, the officials and men today are of much higher caliber than in my days. They are better informed, better educated and better trained. They are also better equipped, and they have the clear advantage of advanced technology available for their assistance in all forms of policing duties. If they prove incompetent it is only because of the culture of corruption that has been allowed to take hold of a good institution because of the massive politicisation of that institution.

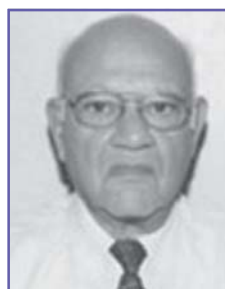
When I say that the entrants in the police force at every level today are better educated and informed, I must record a

rider to that statement. All these educated and informed aspirants may not really be interested in the job of policing as such. Many join because of the absence of alternative employment. Old police officers send the least qualified of their children for recruitment. Other sons who are better educated or smarter are employed in more lucrative assignments in the corporate world. It is essential therefore to test not only the mental and physical attributes of aspiring recruits but also their suitability for policing, their attitudes towards the poor and the weak, their attitudes to women, to children, to the depressed classes and the minorities. Presence of biases that are ingrained and not capable of being dispelled during training should disqualify the candidates. In fact, I would even advocate that a diploma in police science be introduced at the senior school level, and a degree at the university level to qualify candidates for policing jobs at different levels of entry.

It is of utmost importance to ensure that entrants at all levels are not required to bribe selectors to secure such jobs. Our experience with the State Public Service Commissions and even departmental bodies entrusted with recruitment has been wanting at most times, though with some very noticeable exceptions. People who are required to pay for securing jobs are going to prey on the public as soon as they don the uniform. This is a sure recipe for encouraging corruption, and merits a show of public displeasure to prevent it from happening.

The bottom line is that the police force requires top class leaders who are not only competent, but are also men and women of unimpeachable integrity. Great pressure has to be applied on political leaders entrusted with the task of making such top-level appointments. Once good people are selected and appointed, they should be given operational independence

to run the force, which includes appointments, transfers, promotions, punishments, as well as the prevention and detection of crime in accordance with the truth and the law of the land. About that there should be no compromise. ■



The writer is former Commissioner of Police, Mumbai

A braveheart called Shaktiman

Shaktiman was a mare which served the Uttarakhand Police force. Shaktiman was attacked by BJP MLA Ganesh Joshi during a protest rally organised by the BJP in Dehradun, against the Chief Minister of Uttarakhand. The MLA was later arrested over this brutal attack. This incident created a huge uproar from citizens, celebrities and animal rights activists worldwide. Once the video of the BJP MLA attacking Shaktiman was out in social media, experts across the world offered to help Shaktiman so that she could recover soon. Doctors in Dehradun, Uttarakhand treated Shaktiman and later her injured limb was amputated to save her life. A prosthetic limb was also fitted. But she died on 20 April 2016, after being sedated for a minor surgery.

A spent force?

*Ever wondered why our policemen come across sometimes as insensitive and cold? They are an overworked and underpaid force, says psychiatrist **Dr. Harish Shetty**, describing their work conditions, which directly affects their mental and physical health. And worse, dehumanises them too.*

WHEN Rocky, the son of a notorious history sheeter was arrested in Bihar recently for the alleged murder of a 19-year-old, one saw the police drag their feet. It took them approximately 54 hours to get him. Common sense says that delay in arrest also meant possibility of the disappearance of vital evidence necessary for the investigations. The state also responded casually. One politician stated that this was just an issue of road rage, whereas the Chief Minister announced nonchalantly, "How far will Rocky run, he will be ultimately arrested", instead of expressing a strong resolve that he will be booked at the earliest.

These responses display an attitude that reveals the mental state of the Police force. Low on numbers and completely politicised across the country, one is lucky if s/he gets any justice following a complaint. The minds, bodies and souls of the Indian cops are stretched by long hours of work, battered by dubious phone calls from the powers-that-be, and viewed by the general public as corrupt and inefficient. There is little sympathy for the Constable who stands on the streets guiding the traffic while inhaling all the dust and soot, thereby ensuring that we all reach our homes on time.

Insensitive and dehumanised?

A morgue attendant, for instance, treats the human body as an object for disposal, he displays no emotion; on the other hand, he looks for a bribe to hand over the bodies to next of kin and we get angry and disgusted. If one bothers to look beneath these behaviors the stories unfold slowly. Here is a man who has been working in the dingy morgue handling the dead for years, just like the workers who manage sewer drains. Ignored and distanced by the world around, he works

without recognition, appreciation, and amidst difficult conditions, where foul smell and mutilated bodies surround him day in and day out. Never have we bothered to view such groups with compassion or through a prism of responsibility and reform. Ignored and sidelined, such professionals are bitter and alcohol helps them to numb their minds as they go about doing their work day in and day out. The plight of our Constables, who manage our towns and cities, is the same. Festivals keep them on the streets and

V.I.P.s make them run for *bandobast* duties as they arrive in hordes, be it at a calamity or an event. The more they see pain and conflict without a break, the worse they get. The feelings dry up, the thought box in the brain moves like a machine, viewing every event as a burden, and every human being connected with it as a liability.

If the cops have to maintain sanity, they need

numbers, decent working hours and better salaries. Unless structural changes are initiated, cosmetic rejuvenating workshops by professionals like us makes no difference. The Police Act of 1861 still guides and governs our police system. The colonial mindset of the police, the distrust people had for the police in British India, has continued to date. Starting from the second Police Commission in 1902 headed by A.H.L. Fraser, there have been many commissions and committees formed to look into reforming the police in India. Prominent among them are: Gore Committee on Police Training, the National Police Commission, the Ribeiro Committee on Police Reforms, the Padmanabhaiah Committee on Police Reforms (summary), Prakash Singh Vs Union of India – SC directives for Police Reforms, and Soli Sorabjee Committee. The 22 September, 2006 verdict of the Supreme Court (SC) in the *Prakash Singh vs. Union of India* case was the landmark in



The police force is overworked, underpaid and it's not surprising that they come across as insensitive (photo for representational purpose only)

the fight for police reforms in India. Unfortunately, even the directions of SC have not been implemented by the states.

The Encounter Specialist

In my lifetime I have met many so called famed 'Encounter Specialists' across the country, informally and professionally.

A poem I wrote about fake encounters:

*"As the bullets left the barrel of the gun
The fingers that pressed the trigger were having some fun
As the young man collapsed in the drizzling rains
The guys around were sure of the future gains*

*A successful encounter screamed the morning news
The common man felt safe as he gleefully expressed his views
The family was shocked as they wiped their tears with so much fear
Tight lipped and in silence, the mother stared at the body of her son so dear
Fun loving and joyous he loved fast bikes
Stealing them for fun he picked them with lightning strikes
Was jailed at 18 for the wheels he ran
And in prison he met an interesting man
'Stop your juvenile acts hey boy' he shared
Can you carry weapons instead to the shooters', he dared
'You will get a salary for the task so small
And can buy your own bike and have a great ball'
The boy felt like a man as he was filled with joy
The weapons he carried to the shooters felt like a toy
And his salary boomed after every long trip
He wanted to go with his mother for a cruise in a ship*

*But this was cut short as the men knocked the door
They picked up the man and took him near the shore
That was the last time the mother saw her son breathing
She knew it all...standing in silence with her heart seething
Opening her palms she collected the belongings from his pockets
As she saw a photo, her eyes almost bounced off from their sockets
It was their GOD and surely it was crumpled and torn
With something scribbled behind on the paper so worn
'I am tired mom and I want to leave all this' it read
Honestly I want to earn my small little bread'
She sat in front of me with eyes so lost
The medals they will earn as the mum pays the cost
I sit on my chair as the storm builds in my blood
Helpless I felt as every cell experienced an emotional flood
As a small child I have heard of encounters so fake*

One of them used to always sport his revolver thrust under his belt (not in the regular holster). I wondered why, as most of those shot in encounters are killed in cold blood. Most of these cops have been transformed into hardened human beings, and there is little difference in the mental states of the hunters and those hunted.

'There is no choice', I accepted and that was my take

*'They are cleaning the air' was the constant rational refrain
As the moms so invisible buried their grief and pain
The medal gluttons never went near the dons so strong and big
Licking their wealth, so many danced a dirty long jig
Wealthy and rich they own big mansions and cars
The 'prizes' they display and they also own so many bars
The gangsters are finished, shouts the common man
Never realising that the real ones are the 'encounter specialists' who never faced a ban
Shooting is cheaper but an investigation goes deeper are the voices so sane
We don't want these killings on any street or even a small lane!
As the mother leaves, her appearance so frail
'My son was also wrong' she mumbles as the guns he gave left a murder trail*

*But it all began in the small little jail
The boy became a man before he got his bail
And I leave my rooms with my heart heavy and sad
With definitions and meaning so confusing of what is good or bad
But I am sure about the fact: That no one can shoot anyone to clean the air
The medal hunter is the guy whose acts we need to expose thread bare
As the day slowly comes to an end
One does not know which vehicle is turning the difficult bend
To dump a body on an unknown street
As the media vehicles rush to report in a fleet
One more headline and some words or bytes splashed here and there
We are all part of this great show and the 'cop-criminal' fair
Let us all raise our voices against the bullets and the gun
That destroys the peace of this earth so beautiful and full of fun
Prayers to all souls on both sides of the line
Let the guns rest.....for ever and all of us enjoy a life full of wine."*

(Continued on page 18)

No *Gangajal* this

The state of women in the police force is abysmal indeed, as they have to deal with fewer facilities at police stations and absolutely none while on bandobast duties. Add to this, long commutes and household worries, and the picture is indeed very grim, says Prabhat Sharan. Will this ever change?

SHE is not a *la* Priyanka Chopra in Prakash Jha's *Gangajal*, striding in starched clothes with a coiffure hairdo; she is the next door girl who has taken up a job to walk the mean streets of cities and towns in a uniform, but continues to remain trapped in the morass of moribund traditional roles at home as well as at the workplace called the police station.

Even before the first ray of the orange orb flecks the skies, she gets up and prepares breakfast for herself and her family members. She jumps into the packed train in order to sign the station diary at sharp eight am.

Then standing on the diesel and petrol fumes saturated grey gleaming dusty road with the harsh sun glinting on her bangles, she keeps a watch on a religious procession that takes hours to snake around the lanes of North-East suburb of Mumbai-Ghatkopar. Her breakfast box remains unattended in the police station.

The burning low sun slowly hides itself somewhere below the horizon glowing blood-red in the skies in the gloaming time, and the woman in uniform packs her uneaten breakfast box, goes to a changing room and hurries to a railway station to catch a train back to her home to prepare dinner for her family.

The roles a woman has to play as expected by a society that is dominated and influenced by patriarchal modes of thinking also spills over into the police force, and subtly manifests its biases and prejudices in day-to-day interactions.

The gender woes

A woman Constable (attached to a police station in Mumbai) says, as a matter of fact: "Police job is a demanding one there is no doubt about it, but then so are many other jobs with the same amount of stress. Nobody is complaining that the job is strenuous, but what is strange is the mindset of policy makers that refuses to come out of man-centric ideology when it comes to tackling issues in the police force."

Concurring with the woman Constable, a woman Sub-Inspector says: "If you had come to this police station (in the North East suburb of Mumbai) some years ago, then you would have found that there was a ramshackle changing room with sunlight peeping down from above...the room did not even provide an elbow space. Of course now, because the building



Actor Priyanka Chopra in Prakash Jha's *Gangajal* – the reality of the police woman is a tad different

has been reconstructed, we have a proper changing room as well as a separate resting facility, but in several places there are no separate urinals for women cops, and nor do they have a changing room."

She continues, "Then just think what happens to us during *bandobast* and patrolling duty which takes place every second day...don't you think there should be bio-urinals? Just imagine we have to stand for hours and we don't drink water so that we can avoid going to toilets. Given the kind of thinking our policy makers harbor, it is not surprising that they ever give a modicum of time to gynaecological issues.

"Take for example menstruation...everybody knows most women constables spend time out in the streets keeping a vigil on processions...don't you think it is the duty of the force to see that tampons are provided and also ensure that women cops be given station duty during their menstrual cycle? But this is not all. A woman cop in our police station is in the late stages of pregnancy...but you can see her everyday rushing in at the stroke of eight am to sign the muster...no doubt the station in-charge has given her soft work, but then that is purely an individual decision and as there is no pre-maternity leave facility, she can go on leave only on the day her labour pains start.

"Women strength in the police forces is on the increase, and the need of the hour is not just a total change in the

outlook but to dump biased and outdated policies into the dustbin for good. After all, like everybody else we also have 12 hours of duty which invariably many times gets extended to 14 to 15 hours.”

With a nearly 20 lakh strong presence of women in various police forces, coupled with a growing awareness of their gender rights, senior ranking women officials in a three-day national conference organised by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) held at Gurgaon, in January this year, raised not just the much tabooed topic of the biological challenges that women face while carrying out their duties, but also sought gender-friendly environment and equipment.

The conclave witnessed for the first time women cops seeking changes in infrastructural facilities like sanitary pad disposers and incinerators, hostels with exclusive spaces for women, mobile female toilet facilities as majority women while on patrolling or bandobast duty eschew consumption of water so as to avoid toilets, which results in urinary tract infections.

The issues of ergonomics

Apart from the changes sought for a gender-friendly environment, questions were raised about the modes of training and efficacy of the equipment provided to women while carrying out their duties.

Most women cops concur that gears like bullet proof jackets, helmet, fire-arms need urgent ergonomic design

changes that are suited to the woman's anatomy. A study of over 300 women personnel revealed that wearing gears provided to the forces are tailor-made keeping men in mind (<http://bprd.nic.in>).

According to women constables, it was not just the bullet proof jackets, which acts like straitjackets resulting in breathlessness and pain, even other body-protection gear like helmet, *lath*, belt, shoes and shield need to undergo ergonomic changes when it is to be provided to women personnel.

The study pointed out that in West it is mandatory to provide gender specific equipment like helmets which has space to accommodate long hair and hands free belt for firearms and attachments.

The impracticality of the man-centric equipment is not confined to body-gears, even shape of firearms need to be reworked as a woman's palms are small, many a time they are unable to have a full-grip with fingers on the trigger guard, the study pointed out, with a conclusion that an atmosphere which aggravates stress will adversely affect efficiency emphasising, “...and if a woman personnel spends 80 per cent of her time thinking of the uncomfortable environment and facilities, then how will she perform her duty?” ■

Prabhat Sharan is a senior journalist with an interest in social issues, working class problems, wildlife conservation, philosophical and literary studies.

WHO AM I?



Darkness at noon

The little-discussed, but much neglected aspect of the police force – police housing – plays a huge role in determining the morale and efficacy of the junior levels of the force.

Prabhat Sharan visited some of their dwellings and came away very disturbed.

Circa 1989 (Behind City Police HQ, Crawford Market, Mumbai): Waves of fetid squalor steamed out, piercing the nostrils. Gashes of light glistened on the puddles and congealed blue vapour crawled along the peeled cement of walls housing sodden, skeletal rooms with families of police constables. People hopped on the muck filled paths seeping with rancid gutter black liquid froth, and children played near these over-ground trenches amidst the shying skein of sunlight jostling with darkness on the doors looking like eyeless sockets. The scene was straight out of a kitchen sink literature.

The facade of the buildings were being white-washed to cover the tenebrous darkness and musty interiors that simmered with heat like a steady plasma torch. The reason: It was the quasiquicentennial year for Mumbai (then Bombay) Police Commissionerate. And the President of India was to be the chief guest for the occasion.

May 4, 2106 (Chandivli, in North East Mumbai): The burning sun sizzles on the grey asphalt roads and the hot air makes the eyes water. Life pulsates on the roads even as the garbage stench battles with the creeping auto rickshaw smoke flickering dust on people's slippers and on the millions of sweat drops that trickle down silently from foreheads.

The name-plates announcing the low-ceilinged water-soaked entrances to police constabulary residential quarters hang elliptically with alphabet and building numbers cowering in the dark, smoky splotches. An ectoplasmic darkness envelopes the empty ground floor rooms looking like gaping mouths of scorched skulls. The buildings jostle with each other in scorching pain as empty eyes look up and weak susurrations of light tip-toe on cat's paws while entering the floors in these housing tenements.

Inside the bowels of most of these houses, the sun hardly peeps in and once out on the lane, the sun explodes into the eyes like phosphorous on a dry bone in a graveyard.

The terrible stillness of stagnation

Twenty-seven years have elapsed and the darkness at noon refuses to wither away, and the police constable continues to live with hope that has become an abscess trickling inside the innards of his mind. Nothing has changed for a Constable



The police quarters near Crawford market; the living conditions are deplorable

or even a Sub-Inspector in India; neither in the 'Maximum City' Mumbai, nor in the dusty, ridged pock-marked roads of the hinterlands.

An officer holding a rank of an Inspector (attached to a police station in a North-East suburb of Mumbai), who has worked in all the branches of police including the establishment and buildings department, speaking on the condition of anonymity, asks: "Why do news reporters go and talk about our housing problems to ministers or IPS (Indian Police Service) officers? I really fail to comprehend as to how you will gain insight into the issues that plague us day and night? Ministers and IPS officers live in a different world...they live in stratosphere...not here on the mean streets...they are the gentry class who do not even have a modicum of empathy for the plight of the lower ranks."

Another officer interjects and says: "Two or three years ago, a high-ranking IPS officer from Mumbai Police Commissionerate desperately tried to usurp a plot of land earmarked for police constabulary and junior officer family quarters. The plot was near the Worli sea-side and since the

mid-eighties, politicians, IAS (Indian Administrative Service), IPS and other high ranking government officials, both serving and retired, have been eyeing this coveted sea-side ribbon. "Politicians and several sports personalities and retired IAS and IPS officials over time have managed to slice off a major chunk of the land that was reserved for police constabulary to construct houses for themselves....they all want to enjoy the sea-breeze in their twilight years, after all, they have spent all their working hours in air-conditioned offices and cars."

The IPS lobby, in face of massive protests and fear of being exposed after a lot of haranguing and berating the silently fuming constabulary, withdrew these plans.

However, the buck does not stop at just one place. According to a Head Constable, most of the police colonies or tenements provided to the constabulary or even lower-ranking police officers (Sub-Inspectors, Assistant Sub-Inspectors et al.) date back to the 1940s and 1950s. "These buildings do not even have proper power or water supply...they are like cattle sheds where our families share rooms with roaches and rats and spiders and dead birds. Come and see the way we live in Marol police colony and you will realise...or take a tour of police quarters at Wadi Bunder (South Mumbai) and you will see what it means to live in a place where even a slum dweller will shy away if given a chance to take up lodgings...they are like tombs."

But according to the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) the level of satisfaction for family housing quarters for constabulary has gone up at the national level. Most constables concurred with the findings on grounds that the satisfaction graph put up by BPRD, stems from the fact that at the constabulary level most recruits hail from the working class and lower income strata. "Check out any Constable's antecedents and you will find that they had spent their early lives slumming from one hovel to another...studying under a street lamp. Thus gaining an entry into a government service and then getting a concrete roof to live certainly comes as a respite to a youngster who has spent all his teenage years living in a house like a patchwork box of rags perched near gutter water. But then how many Constables manage to get family housing quarters?" they ask.

As per the Mumbai Police Commissionerate records put up on its official website, at present the total strength from inspector level to constabulary is 46,299. And out of this not more than 20 per cent manage to get a family housing quarters in the island city or suburbs. The rest have to ferret out cheap rental houses outside the periphery of city.

"So what we see in almost all police stations is that a police Sub-Inspector or a Constable spending around two to three hours travelling from the place of residence to the assigned police station. And it is a common sight in almost



Police quarters in a dilapidated condition at Naigaon, Mumbai

all police stations to see Sub-Inspectors and Constables packing their lunch boxes by 4.30 pm ...showing total disinterestedness towards people who troop in with their complaints...the travelling takes a toll and it shows in the fatigue that engulfs him or her by late noon...and just thinking of the two-hour return journey in a packed train is enough to infuse indifference in any human being," the Inspector from the North East suburb of Mumbai, remarks.

The mandarins sitting in Mantralaya and Sachivalaya, however, hold different views and most policy makers in Maharashtra even brought down the housing expenditure for state police from ₹ 25,481.60 (2013-14) to ₹ 19,164.72 (2014-15). (₹ in crores, citation: BPR&D official site: <http://www.bprd.nic.in>)

The oft cited reason by the policy makers, law makers and top-ranking IPS officials of not being able to provide adequate family residential quarters because there is a paucity of land does not find any takers amongst the police personnel.

They aver that the reason behind turning a blind eye to the police housing lies in the twisted priorities, coupled with an inclination towards doling out land to big land predators in the name of 'development' and industrialisation. "And wherever they acquire land...you find either there is a shoddy construction or the work moving at a snail's pace," the Head Constable observes.

In January this year, a PIL was heard by the Bombay High Court with regard to the collection of nearly ₹ 84 crore from around 7,000 constables to provide them with houses in Panvel (outside Mumbai). The court issued a notice to the Director General of Police (Housing) and ordered a probe. The probe continues and so does the darkness at noon. ■

Prabhat Sharan is a senior journalist with an interest in social issues, working class problems, wildlife conservation, philosophical and literary studies.

Is 'honest cop' an oxymoron?

Can honesty be passed on, like we pass on our other qualities to the next generation? Yes, says E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan, as she talks about what her father, an honest policeman, passed on to his children. She also attempts to deconstruct the honest mind.

MY father was an honest cop. The dyed-in-the-wool incorrupt type. He wore his honesty like a medal, like an invisible cape which always fluttered in my conscience if I ever contemplated doing a wrong when I was growing up. There was no room in his professional life for any kind of compromise or corruption. When he retired from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in 1988 as a Superintendent of Police, there perhaps wasn't a more straightforward and honest officer. My father is now no more, but his legacy of honesty lives on.

To my father, who was also in the Anti-Corruption Unit of the CBI, honesty was not just about doing his job well. It was a total package of almost rigid adherence to principles which he believed in. There was no room for any compromise. His family paid a price for it too as he was frequently 'rewarded' with transfers. My childhood was spent between the cities of Chennai and New Delhi. In the coldest days of Delhi's winters, my mom was often left to struggle with three young children in musty, draughty Central government quarters, while my father would be away in Amritsar (at the height of the Sikh troubles in the early 1980s) or Calcutta, for months.

All this translates into legacy, a very difficult one, which he has passed on to his children. I have had my fair share of transgressions, been sheepishly party to petty bribes. I know for a fact that he would never have condoned it. Many called my father arrogant. It was the arrogance of an iron will which will not compromise.

Often I have tried to analyse; what made him such an infallibly incorrupt officer and human being?

He came from a landed Nair family in Kerala. But instead of falling back on his family's wealth (which was also badly mismanaged by his family), he chose to work away from Kerala and made his way up the police force. Right from the time he was a Sub-Inspector and then an Inspector in the Tamil hinterland, he was a terror of wrongdoers. He became known for being a cop who brooked no corruption and wrongdoing. The same continued when he went on deputation to the CBI.

Handling sensitive cases, he was offered bribes. In those days of low governmental salaries, any extra income would have made a huge difference to our lives. But not for a moment did he contemplate accepting anything but what was due to him, and sometimes not even that. We grew up on a steady

diet of these kinds of stories. There is an oft-repeated story in the family about how my father held the collar of a prominent senior officer who wanted him to toe the line. He refused to submit paeans to himself, which was a necessity to be awarded service medals. He maintained that doing his job to the best of his abilities was his duty, and there it ended, police medal or not! I was wonderstruck by him.

It's only after I grew up that I realised how subtly his personality had come to shape mine. Neither he nor my mother, who was herself a very straightforward person, ever lectured us about honesty. All they did was live their lives as they knew best, and the rest followed.

I chose to become a journalist. And being my father's daughter I took it on with missionary zeal. Journalists in Tamil Nadu, especially the vernacular press, were notoriously underpaid two decades ago. Maybe the situation has changed today. But most scribes were expected to 'make their own way'. This meant that reporters haunted press conferences in the hope that they would be 'rewarded'. And they were. It was very common for organisers to hand out little gifts at the end – in cash sometimes, otherwise in kind. These 'gifts' were eagerly taken. I would often be the only journalist who refused these gifts. The organisers would get affronted, they would insist. I would firmly refuse. You see, my father's legacy was making itself known!

What is honesty?

What makes a person honest? What contributes to a person's integrity? After some time spent on analysing this trait, here is what I think. Being honest is *being* honest even when you know that no one will ever know if you were dishonest. It's about being honest in your own head first. It's about being honest for yourself, first and last. Is one born with this kind of integrity embedded in the DNA, or can one be taught it? Is it nature or is it nurture? I believe that nurture does play a huge role in the person you shape up to be. Yet, often, children born of the same parents end up having differing moral compass. Doesn't it then mean that one is born with certain things already coded into the genes?

Now, how does all this impact, for instance, our police force? We know that corruption is endemic in the force. It has become a part of the system so much that we don't even

notice it anymore. How does one address it? Increasing the salary scale, providing better infrastructure and facilities to the force will indeed go a long way in addressing some of the corruption issues. But it won't address all the issues. The entire force is not corrupt. But the bad apples will not stop being bad just because they get a better salary. Systemic flaws don't go away with small gestures.

Then how does one alter a well-entrenched mindset? At the time of Independence, for instance, I am certain there was a lot of honesty and transparency among both politicians and bureaucracy. Why is it any different seven decades hence? Does the flaw lie in the way we train our people, be it in the police force or other government departments? Or is it that as a society we don't have a common cause anymore and it's each to his own?

My father sometimes used to talk about corrupt colleagues and officers. His tone was always matter of fact, never holier-than-thou. To my regret, I never asked him why he was this incorrupt or what made him eschew the endemic corruption. Born as he was, in pre-Independence India, perhaps service to the nation was coded into him. The cause of the nation rated far above everything else.

Perhaps, after the euphoria of Independence, as a nation we no longer had a cause to rally around. Materialism became the order of the day and money became of paramount

importance. Somehow, there was no one in public life who could moderate and temper our surge towards materialism. The changes in society will always be reflected in its people and services they offer. As we are finding out today.

I worry about the next generation. They are a generation driven by material goals. Will this make them even more easygoing about values and integrity? I once described Gandhiji to my then 7-year-old, who listened open-mouthed. After the story, he wanted me to rewind to the part about Gandhiji eschewing even his clothes in favour of a loin cloth! He made me repeat many times how Gandhiji went striding up to meet the King of England who was "wearing clothes enough for both of us", as Gandhiji later described. My son was and is truly intrigued about how one can give up all material things!

The time has come to teach our youngsters that money has its uses, but peace of mind can be achieved only by living a blameless, honest life, with integrity and fairness. This basically means, we ourselves try and live a life where material pursuits don't overwhelmingly consume us. A tall feat? But a worthy one, you will agree. ■



E. Vijayalakshmi Rajan is Assistant Editor, One India One People.

A spent force?

(Continued from page 12)

It was in the late 70's when notorious gangsters were shot dead by the cops rather than arrested in Mumbai. This was begun by a cop who reached the 'hall of fame' after his exploits against terrorists across the country. Many such police men suffer from anxiety and depression and cannot sleep without medications. I still remember one cop who narrated this story. When he was asked to shoot a gangster in cold blood, the latter screamed after the first bullet hit him, "I want more bullets, fire at me, fire at me." As the cop emptied his magazine into him, the 'reel' of the event is stuck in his mind and he stated getting up with nightmares. Suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, this cop will be on treatment for life.

Some years back I met a mother who was very depressed after her 21-year-old boy was shot dead by cops after being picked up from his home. He was stealing bikes when he met a gangster in the jail. Enrolled by him for carrying weapons for shooters, he was later killed in a so-called encounter (See box on page 12).

The symptoms seen among criminals and the cops are no different. Many cannot sleep, are irritable, depressed and also abuse alcohol and substances. You lose your peace and the soul is transformed into an iron ball once you shoot someone in cold blood, and not in a real encounter.

Conclusion

After the spurt of terrorist activities in recent times, families check on the cops more often; the wives are worried about the well-being of their husbands. Fear, anxiety and lack of sleep are common symptoms. Recently, suicides have also been on the rise. Some years back I saw the 14-year-old son of a cop very depressed. I erred by attributing this to study stress but realised that it was a value crisis. He saw unaccounted cash lying in his house and the bundles of currency disturbed him. The constabulary is the worst affected. With low salaries and long hours of work their neuro-endocrinological systems are damaged. The end product is a zombie who is indifferent or violently aggressive. An officer was shot dead recently in Mumbai by a Constable and such instances are not rare.

The profession needs a makeover and not sermons, it needs to be looked at with compassion and not hate, and last but not the least, it needs to be made independent and accountable. ■



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“I would recommend teaching to anyone in the world. Teaching is learning and testing what you think you know. It consumes every inch of you”



Teach For India (TFI) is an NGO and a movement that is working towards alleviating educational inequity by placing leadership Fellows in government and low-income private schools. Its vision is, “One day all children will receive an excellent education”. Siddhant Sharma

was my student at Jai Hind College (JHC) in Mumbai. He went on to volunteer in TFI from 2014 to 2016. I visited his school and attended the Forum Theatre recently in Ahmedabad.

Anuradha Kalhan in conversation with **Siddhant Sharma**.

Siddhant, when and how did you volunteer to be a Fellow teacher for TFI?

This is something that happened in my college days. I got an opportunity to volunteer in a school near Matunga in Mumbai. After college I would run down to the government school and help the tiny little, under-nourished, often foul mouthed children. I would listen to the teacher teaching passionately. After class, I used to talk to the teacher, she was so immersed in that world, she was so absorbed with what she did. She didn't care about what others were doing or about other problems. She was fully immersed in solving the problems that she felt were the root cause of student apathy. My experiences of those days sort of coined my desire to do the same Fellowship. It's a once in a lifetime chance to change some things around on your own!

And why did you choose to be a Fellow after you graduated from JHC, instead of any other kind of job?

I guess, I sort of already answered that! But look at the other

options available to a graduate. I was not a 21-year-old who feels fulfilled wearing a suit, tie and doing work that does not seem to impact anyone. I wanted a challenge that pushed me to evolve constantly. You realise that doing difficult jobs is one great way to grow. Working in a corporate sector job is not at all a bad thing, in fact, if done right, you can also change society. But at 21, you have an emotional need too, one that pushes you to want to do something bigger and better. So I picked this as a journey and a challenge at the same time.

Why did you choose a school in this impoverished community with a troubled history?

So the name of the school is Brighton School. It's in an area called Chandola in Ahmedabad, but locally known as the Bombay Hotel. This area is right in the city, yet is so isolated and disconnected. It is an area occupied completely by Muslims, who were sort of pushed into this land given the recent history of social discord and displacement in Gujarat. There is an entire garbage mountain or a dumping ground right here. Water



The Brighton School, which is located next to a garbage dumping ground

is a big issue here and the water they get has around 1800 TDS (total dissolved solids). You can practically see particles when you drink it. When I first came here, I literally broke down. I had never seen people live so miserably. Getting this school was completely by chance. It was the first time TFI was coming into Gujarat, and they were picking schools. Our City Director, Saahil Sood, chanced upon this school and the school's headmaster, Sarfaraz Sir, convinced him that TFI was needed in this community. There were logistical issues because there were no roads there and the rain made it hard to even reach there, so there were concerns about sending Fellows. But TFI decided to go for it, so they sent me, Irfan Lalani and Revanth here.

I can see the conditions around you and in the school. I can also see the difficulty of living and commuting on small salaries in our cities. What were the most demanding experiences you had in this school?

Money is a problem, but it is not the biggest problem, there are worse problems here. There is no clean water. There is so much pollution. There is an immense amount of garbage dumping, burning and recycling going on in the most unhygienic conditions, right here in the locality. There are ferocious street dogs that need to be euthanised. Till very recently, there were no roads and no drainage system. It is only over the last few months that some infrastructural developments have been made. But the dumping ground and its harmful effects are not

going anywhere. Anyone who comes here for the first time goes home with a headache. After being here for two years, I am sure our health has been compromised.

The thing that I notice here is that people are used to this kind of life. They are even used to having their children living in these conditions. These people don't have the mental freedom to even think about the future as they are so busy battling the present. Shortage of clean drinking water, absent health care, high morbidity, high unemployment, hunger, malnutrition, mental disorders, domestic violence are all pervasive in an interconnected web. Education is certainly a basic need, but other needs are equally pressing, if not more so.

How did you overcome those difficulties?

We all just stuck it out together. All of us decided that we will start by bringing changes in our classrooms, as well as take on projects for larger scale change within the school and community. Our Principal was most supportive and he gave us the thumbs up for everything. He is committed to improving the school. Revanth and Irfan, my co-Fellows are amazingly dedicated too. They have given up corporate offices to do something more significant. Today, if you see their classrooms and the amount of work they have managed to get done, you will be astonished.

You have been here for two years now. Tell us some of your experiences – about gaining the confidence of children, using multiple teaching and learning strategies to make a breakthrough?

Let me first tell you a little about my colleagues and their classroom work. Revanth started teaching his children Forum Theatre and they performed as a class in a place called Ahmedabad Haat. Everyone was there; the parents, the school staff, all of Teach For India, my professor from Jai Hind College came down at that point too.

Irfan, on the other hand, has really made Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg proud. He has taught children coding using the Scratch tool, and has been at it for a year. Imagine teaching and learning coding in Bombay Hotel zone. These teachers/Fellows are giving kids what private schools don't even dream of. This is what Teach For India can do!

I also tried different methods in the classroom. I have introduced football to my children; brought tools like the Abacus alive in the classroom and have also have started an after-school workshop. In the workshop, these kids play chess, make 500 piece puzzles (over time), build with blocks, make jewelry etc. With some motivated children, I have introduced the International Math Olympiad material, and they have finished multiple books on the same. Look, teaching is nothing but immersion. I have failed at immersing so many times and that's why I can tell you that more than the strategy, it's the teacher. When the teacher is there, these champions learn, because their souls are waiting to learn. There's a saying, "When the teacher appears, so does the student", and vice-versa.

What have you learned from your experience of working in the neighbourhood? What will you take away with you as you move on to pursue post-graduate studies in USA?

I will take away experiences of love, failures, joy, tremendous anguish, the battle against laziness, the passion, the inspiration. I have given myself to these kids and in return, they have given me their lives and their hearts. Both of us have reached the ultimate of giving – at least as Kahlil Gibran talks about giving. This is the most 'real' job I have done - I don't know if I will struggle so much again! A part of me is so tired, really so very tired, but then there is a part of me that is asking myself, are you really done? Is that all you have got to give?

Life is a journey, I am going to the US because that's my physical home, but I will never let go of these children. They will inhabit some part of my mind and heart mainly because for two years I thought of little else. They became part of my blood stream. I love them dearly and sometimes while applying to colleges for post graduate studies, I would weep. We are asked to describe our work experiences, but I felt that I didn't ever want to talk about what we do. It is more than can be put into words. It was not just work. It was a labour of love and hope and living in their eco-system, in the hope that love will make a difference to these children.

Any suggestions to strengthen school education among poor communities in India?

There need to be more such partnerships between local governments and NGOs. Often, there are also low-income private schools that are trying hard to ensure that students learn. Especially in communities where government schools do not exist, or do not function well, such private schools play a critical role. Like this school in Chandola where I have been teaching for two years. Partnership with such schools is also necessary. NGOs like TFI supply motivated young teacher volunteers with diverse educational and professional backgrounds on two year contracts. But to be honest, there is no short-cut. You need a large number of passionate, trained teachers, who can give themselves, over long spans of time to these children. NGOs can only play a supporting and stimulating role. If we make every empty room into a school or a classroom, we can make a big change. But we have to start with teachers. Strategies to change things like this are great to share, but not easy to implement on the ground. It takes time and social entrepreneurs like Shaheen Mistry (who heads TFI), who dare to enter this labyrinth.

Would you recommend this experience of teaching in under privileged communities to other young graduates?

I would recommend teaching to anyone in the world. Teaching is learning and testing what you think you know. It consumes every inch of you. Teaching well, can be very difficult. Teaching in such communities all over the world, is even more challenging. But when you accept that challenge, then suddenly that challenge grows on you. When you immerse yourself in it, you create and shape new minds, a new world emerges in the class room and you love it! So, I would highly recommend this experience. No two Fellows have the same experience, because it's all about what you create yourself.

Tell us about the Design for Change (DFC) award that your school got recently.

The award that Brighton School won was the Design For Change award. We won the top 5 stories for change! The DFC is a student-run problem solving process where children go along on the process of Feel-Imagine-Do, and share and solve their own problems. It builds leadership in children and makes them realise what they can do if they decide to become problem solvers. The 2015 Fellows at Brighton School – Amit Mishra and Hrishikesh Patil – worked with children and decided to solve the problem of the lack of proper toilets in school. They instilled a multi-pronged approach to solve this problem. The whole thing was done by children and eventually the toilets looked so beautiful and the younger children were trained so well, that within a week we all saw impact. ■

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KNOW INDIA **BETTER**

Mandu and Hanuwantiya

A ruined citadel and a lake of adventure

The state of Madhya Pradesh in the centre of Incredible India, has a lot to offer any visitor. From history and wildlife to culture and adventure sports, this is a state waking up to its full potential as a tourism destination. Visit the citadels and palaces of Mandu, soak in its culture and history, before you move on to try the varied adventure sports on offer at the invigorating Indira Sagar Lake in Hanuwantiya. Come, find Madhya Pradesh and revel in its diversity.

Text & Photos: Rangan Datta



Mandu



The Jahaz Mahal, as seen from the Jal Mahal

"I know of no other place that is as pleasant in climate and with such attractive scenery as Mandu in the rainy season."

– Tuzuk I Jahangiri

THE citadel of Mandu is perched upon a rocky outspur of the Vindhya Range, at an altitude of 634 m. It is separated from the main Malawa Plateau by a deep ravine – Kakra Khoh – which runs on the eastern, northern and southern sides of the Mandu hill. The southern slopes of the Mandu hill has a 305 m incline and it merges into the Nimar plain, which is fed by the mighty Narmada River.

The hill range is endowed with very attractive scenery, which attains its pinnacle during the rainy season, when on all sides, it is clothed in green with a number of brooks and torrents rushing down into the ravine. The vegetation is at its best and most luxurious in the monsoon, the beauty of which is further enhanced by more than a dozen lakes and ponds.

Thus Mandu, with its natural fortification and amazing beauty has been the favorite citadel of many a ruler for a period

spanning over a thousand years. For centuries Mandu has served as a frontier outpost for the north Indian rulers for their invasion into the Deccan, or to ward off invasion from the south. But most likely, it is the enchanting rugged landscape of Mandu that captured the imagination of many a king and emperor. The famous history writer John Keay describes Mandu as one of the most romantic sites anywhere in the world.

Over the centuries, the kings of Malwa region of central India, along with the Delhi Sultans and the Great Mughal Emperors, have made Mandu their abode. They have constructed mosques, pleasure palaces, hunting lodges, pavilions, tombs, gateways, inns and shops, all within the natural and man-made fortifications of Mandu. No wonder, the Muslim rulers called Mandu *Shadiabad*, meaning the City of Joy.

Today Mandu is a leading tourist spot in Madhya Pradesh, and attracts tourists from far and wide, throughout the year. But come monsoon, hordes of tourist will make it to Mandu in the footsteps of Humayun and Jahangir or the legendary Baz Bahadur, to enjoy the romantic beauty of the scattered ruins of Mandu with the lush green backdrop of the hills, and beneath the shadows of the dark monsoon clouds.

Today, the ruins of Mandu can broadly be classified under six categories:

- Royal Enclave
- Central Group
- Darya Khan Mosque Group
- Sagar Talao Group
- Rewa Kund Group
- Miscellaneous Monuments

The Royal Enclave

The fortified Royal Enclave, on the northern edge of Mandu plateau, is the prime attraction of Mandu. Spread over a large area, it covers a diversified assortment of ruins from stable to pleasure palaces, and from step wells to *hammam*, and even a mosque. This royal group of monuments was constructed by the Ghuri and Khalji dynasty spanning from 1320 to 1531. In these two centuries, Mandu experienced a unique blend of architecture, and came to be known as the City of Joy.

Jahaz Mahal: The Jahaz Mahal is not only the most prominent monument of the Royal Enclave, but also serves as the icon of Mandu. The elongated building is 360 feet in length and only 50 feet in breadth, and stands on a narrow stretch of land sandwiched between the two water bodies of Kapur and Munj Talao. The Jahaz Mahal towers above the two water bodies and in monsoon, the water reaches right up to the edge of the monument, giving it a ship-like appearance, and hence the name Jahaz Mahal.

Jahaz Mahal was probably constructed during the reign of



The first floor pool at Jahaz Mahal; note the 'blooming flower' shape of the pool

Ghiyathuddin Khalji (1469-1500) and happens to be one of the last major monuments of Mandu. The Jahaz Mahal is an ultimate place for fun, entertainment and pleasure. On the southern end of the two-storied building, a long flight of stairs leads directly to the terrace. The main entrance is through a marble archway on the middle of the eastern side. The views from the first floor balcony, on the western side of the Jahaz Mahal, are spectacular, with the gigantic Munj Talao and the royal palace on the northern end, and the Jal Mahal on the western end.

The northern end of Jahaz Mahal houses two swimming pools, each located at the ground and first floor level. A complex system of spiral aqueducts brought water to these pools. With no electricity, it was probably the Persian wheel which lifted the water from the *talao* to the first floor of the Jahaz Mahal. Both the pools are shaped like the open petals of a blooming flower and were a source of ultimate pleasure for the

emperor and his harem mates. A spiral water inlet brought water to the upper pool, providing an amazing jacuzzi-like experience to the emperor and his aquatic playmates.

The golden days of the royals of Mandu have long ended, and today the long elongated terrace is perhaps the most important attraction of Mandu's iconic Jahaz Mahal. A set of three pavilions each marks the southern and northern end of the Jahaz Mahal terrace. The central part of the eastern and western sides also contain pavilions, with the larger pavilion on the western side. The views on both sides of the elongated terrace of Jahaz Mahal are simply spectacular, especially during the monsoon, when the tanks are filled to their capacity.

The Jahaz Mahal also looks impressive from different parts of the Royal enclave, but the best view of the ship palace is from the terrace of Taveli Mahal, a former stable, which presently houses the



A pavilion of Jahaz Mahal, through one of its ornate windows



The Hindola Mahal, which was constructed during the reign of Ghiyathuddin Khalji

Archeological Survey of India (ASI) museum of Mandu. Sadly, visitors are not allowed on the terrace of Taveli Mahal.

Hindola Mahal: The Hindola Mahal is located north of the Jahaz Mahal. The T-shaped building with its sloping, buttressed wall was constructed during the later part of the reign of Ghiyathuddin Khalji (1469- 1500). The roof of the Hindola Mahal has long collapsed, exposing the massive pointed arches to the sky.

North of the Hindola Mahal are a series of scattered ruins leading to the Dilwara Khan Masjid. Built in 1405, this is the oldest surviving Islamic architecture of Mandu, and the only religious structure in the Royal Enclave complex.

Mandu Royal Palace: West of the Hindola Mahal and north of the Munj Talao is Mandu's Royal Palace complex. Although in ruins, the complex still has the grandeur of the golden days of Mandu. At the entrance of the Royal Palace lies the step well of Chanpa Baodi, which is in relatively good condition, although the railing has been added by the ASI (Archaeological Survey of India). A subterranean passage connects the base of the well to a labyrinth of vaulted rooms, thus keeping them cool through the blistering summer. North of the Champa Baodi is the Hammam complex. The star-shaped opening adorning the dome of the Hammam complex allowed natural light to filter into the *hammams*.



A panoramic view of the Royal Palace and the Jahaz Mahal, as seen from Jal Mahal



A view of Jal Mahal and the Royal Palace from the terrace of Jahaz Mahal

Jal Mahal: South-west of the Royal Palace and on the furthest end of the Royal Enclave is the Jal Mahal. Barely visited by tourists, it is one of the most enchanting parts of the entire Royal Enclave. During the height of the monsoon when the Munj Talao is full to its brim, a narrow passage connects the Royal Palace to the Jal Mahal. The passage contains three pairs of stairs leading to the water on both sides. A favourite of the Mughal Empire Jahangir, the Jal Mahal has its own share of architectural beauty complete with swimming pools, water passages and arched passageways. The Royal Enclave also contains several other monuments including Gada Shah shop, Andheri Baodi and Ujjawala Baodi.

The Central Group

The Central Group, as the name suggests, is located at the centre of the fortified city of Mandu. Much smaller compared to the Royal Enclave, the Central Group contains some of the most important and beautiful architecture of Mandu.

Jami Masjid: The principal mosque of Mandu was conceived and executed on a magnificent scale covering an area of 88 sq. m. The entire construction stands on a plinth of 4.6 m above the ground and is approached by a grand flight of stairs. The construction of the mosque began during the reign of Hoshang Shah, and was subsequently completed by his successor Mahmud Khalji in 1454. On the western wall of the Masjid is a decorative *miharb* and next to it is a raised marble pulpit, from where the Imam leads the prayer. The pillars and the arches, along with the intricate lattice works create an interesting architectural mix.

Hoshang Shah's Tomb: Behind or west of the Jami Masjid lies Hoshang Shah's Tomb, India's first marble structure and probably the inspiration behind the legendary Taj Mahal. The mausoleum stands on a square marble platform and is crowned by a gigantic dome. At the four corners are domed turrets. The interiors are beautiful with light filtering through the geometric and floral patterns of the intricate lattice work. At the centre



Inside Jami Masjid, the principal mosque of Mandu



Jami Masjid as seen from Ashrafi Mahal

lies the tomb of Hoshang Shah, and scattered on all sides are several other tombs.

Ashrafi Mahal: Ashrafi Mahal is located on the other side of the road and bang opposite the Jami Masjid. The exact purpose of the *mahal* is not known, but historians opine that it

served as a *madrasa*. Construction dates back to the reign of Mahmud Khalji (1436-69). The north-west corner of the Ashrafi Mahal once housed the victory tower or the *vijay stambh*, which was constructed by Mahmud Khalji on the occasion of his victory over the Rana of Mewar. The tower has long collapsed and the existing base reminds one of the flourishing days of



The Ashrafi Mahal, which perhaps served as a *madrasa*



The Darya Khan Tomb complex

Ashrafi Mahal. Behind the Ashrafi Mahal lies the tomb complex of Mahmud Khalji. The roof has long collapsed and only small sections of the wall still stand, guarding the tomb of one of the greatest rulers of central India.

The Darya Khan Mosque Group

This group of ruins are located south of the Central Group and is centred around the Darya Khan Tomb complex.

Darya Khan Tomb complex: Darya Khan was a minister in the court of Mahmud Khalji II, and today his tomb lies in a walled complex along with another tomb, a mosque, a pond and an inn. At the centre of the complex is the massive sand stone tomb of Darya Khan. The exterior was once decorated with colourful mosaic, but only traces of it remain today.

Hathi Paga Mahal: Literally meaning Elephant Leg Palace, the monument gets its name from the massive elephantine pillars at the four corners of the monument. These massive pillars are said to represent the leg of an elephant. It is located on the south-eastern side of the Darya Khan Complex, and is crowned with a massive dome. It was probably built as a pleasure resort, but later converted into a tomb. Next to the Hathi Paga Mahal is a small mosque.

The Sagar Talao Group

This group is located on the eastern side of the huge lake Sagar Talao, and south of the Darya Khan Group. A massive unknown tomb greets visitors to the complex. Just behind it are the scattered ruins of several tombs, gardens, mosques and inns.

Dai ki Mahal and Dai ki Behan ki Mahal: Although called *mahals*, these are actually tombs of a royal wet nurse and her sister. Nothing is known about this celebrity nurse or date of construction of the tombs. Both the structures are

crowned with gigantic domes. Both the tombs had extensive multicoloured mosaic work and traces can be seen to this day.

Caravan Sarai: *Sarai* means inn and since Mandu has been a trade centre for centuries, it attracted traders from far and wide. The scattered ruins of Mandu contain the remains of several inns or *sarai*. Out of these, the largest and the most well known is the Caravan Sarai, located bang opposite the Malik Mughith Mosque. It is an open courtyard with rooms on all sides, these rooms provided accommodation to traders coming from far and wide.

Malik Mughith's Mosque: This is the most significant monument of the Sagar Talao group. It was built by Mahmud Khalji's father Malik Mughith in 1432. The mosque consists of a central court enclosed by colonnades. The courtyard is surrounded by carved pillars taken from the ruins of Hindu temples.



The Caravan Sarai, which provided accommodation to visiting traders



Roopmati's Pavilion: Queen Roopmati was the favourite of the Sultan of Malwa, Baz Bahadur, and also triggered a war with the Mughal General Adam Khan

The Rewa Kund Group

The most enchanting and romantic of the Mandu groups, the Rewa Kund Group still speaks of the legend of Baz Bahadur and his consort Roopmati. In 1561 Adam Khan led the Mughal army against the Sultan of Malwa, Baz Bahadur. The two forces locked horns at the battle of Sarangpur. Baz Bahadur was no match for the mighty Mughal army and was soon defeated, inhumane plunder and torture followed as women were raped and children massacred. Adam Khan was prompted to conquer Malwa because of the beauty of Rani Roopmati, Baz Bahadur's favorite wife and well known singer. Although Adam Khan took possession of Baz Bahadur's harem, Roopmati committed suicide by consuming poison. Rewa Kund is an ancient artificial lake widened and rebuilt by Baz Bahadur. On the banks of the lake stands the palace of Baz Bahadur, and located on top of a nearby hill is Roopmati's Pavilion.

Baz Bahadur's Palace: Located on the banks of the Rewa Kund and at the foot of a hill lies the Baz Bahadur Palace. It was originally built by Sultan Nasiruddin Shah in 1509 and subsequently enlarged by Baz Bahadur. The palace is approached by a flight of stairs and the main part consists of an open courtyard with a floral shaped fountain in the middle.

To the north of the palace, beyond the colonnade, projects an octagonal pavilion with arches. The spacious terrace is crowned with two *chhatris* or pavilions and offers a grand view extending all the way to Roopmati's Pavilion.

Roopmati's Pavilion: Located on a hill top, Roopmati's Pavilion crowned with two *chhatris*, provide a grand view of the Nimar plains. It is said that on a clear day, the views can extend all the way up to the Narmada in the south. Today, Baz Bahadur's Palace and Roopmati's Pavilion stand as mute witnesses to the eternal love story of Baz Bahadur and Roopmati.

Miscellaneous monuments

The monuments of Mandu are so scattered that it is difficult to bring them under groups, so apart from the five above mentioned groups there are several scattered monuments all over Mandu, like the Lal Mahal and Neelkanth Palace. Mandu also houses the Lohani Caves dating back to the 11th–12th century. Mandu also contains some gigantic gateways including the Delhi Gate, Kamani Darwaza and Alamgir Gate.

So as the heat of summer sets in, it is best to start planning for your monsoon trip to Mandu. Follow the steps of Baz Bahadur and Roopmati, and lose yourself in the monsoon magic of Mandu.

Hanuwantiya



An aerial view of the Jal Mahotsav venue

The Jal Mahotsav

In order to promote tourism in the state, the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (MPTDC) hosted the Jal Mahotsav, a ten-day water festival on the banks of Indira Sagar. The festival was inaugurated by the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on 11 February 2016.

The objective of the Jal Mahotsav was to provide ample opportunities to tourists to explore and experience the colourful customs of Madhya Pradesh that was portrayed through art, craft, folk music and dance along with mouth watering cuisine.

But the main focus of Jal Mahotsav was adventure sports with special emphasis on water and aero sports.

The venue of this water festival was the Indira Sagar, one of the numerous artificial lakes formed by damming the mighty Narmada River. The lake named after former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who laid the foundation stone of the dam a week before her assassination, is the largest man-made lake in the country. Hanuwantiya, a small village on the banks of the lake played host to the Jal Mahotsav. The Hanuwantiya Tourist Complex run by the MPTDC houses five cottages facing the lake, each equipped with two luxurious bedrooms. The complex also houses a large lawn along with a boat house, providing speed boat rides in Indira Sagar throughout the year.

During the Jal Mahotsav held during 11-21 Feb, 2016, the area next to the Hanuwantiya Tourist Complex was turned into a tented city. The spacious air-conditioned tents, with attached baths, were an ultimate luxury for the guest. The reception area was designed as the Sanchi Stupa, while the conference and dining hall represented the Gawaliar Fort. The entire area was eco-friendly and golf carts and cycles were the only forms of transport within the tented city.



The Hanuwantiya Tourist Complex



A joyride in a hot air balloon

Adventure tourism at its best

The main focus of the Jal Mahotsav was to promote adventure tourism. Several adventure activities were brought under the same roof during the 10-day-long Jal Mahotsav. Since the Hanuwantiya Tourist Complex is situated next to a large water body, the primary focus was on water adventure activities. Speed boat rides in the Indira Sagar was the most popular among the water sports activities. The boats took tourists into the lake, providing a great view of the Hanuwantiya Tourist Complex. Those seeking an adrenalin rush could opt for the water scooter.

The banana boat was another option for adventure seekers. The banana boat consists of a powered inflatable boat consisting of two banana shaped tube. It can accommodate about 8-10 people and is towed by a speed boat. Water zorbing is another thrilling activity. Water zorbing consists of a cylindrical shaped inflated transparent container holding 3 to 4 riders. It floats in



The delights of para-motoring!

water and is rotated by the riders. But the ultimate water adventure activity was parasailing, where a person is towed behind a boat while attached to a specially designed parachute. Parasailing provides an amazing aerial view of the Indira Sagar Lake. Everything on water is not meant for the adrenalin junkies, there are activities for the faint-hearted too! The cruise ride in the blue waters of the Indira Sagar Lake should not be missed.

The massive dam on the Narmada River submerged over 90,000 hectares of land, half of which consisted of dense forests, and created the Indira Sagar Lake. Fortunately, a few pockets of land have survived as islands on the Indira Sagar Lake, which now has about 10 such islands, of which, Boriamal Tapu (Tapu means island in local language) houses a tented accommodation for trekkers and bird watchers.

These tents provide only basic amenities like sleeping bags, but they provide an opportunity of spending a night in the lap of nature. In the morning, visitors can opt for a trek along the



Adventure sports like parasailing are a big attraction of the Jal Mahotsav





The boat house on Indira Sagar Lake

undulating trails of the island, spotting birds and other forms of wildlife. The adventure activities of the water festival is not restricted to water adventure only. There are land adventure activities also, and include activities like wall climbing. A zipline connects the artificial rock to the banks of the lake, providing a thrilling ride for adventure seekers. Land parasailing is another interesting activity of the Jal Mahotsav, where the participant is pulled by a jeep and the parachute lifts the person into the sky. The kids also had their very own adventure zone within the tented complex. It had activities like Burma Bridge (a specially designed rope bridge), net walking and tyre swings.

The skies above the Indira Sagar provide the most popular adventure activities. The para-motor and hot air ballooning were the most sought after adventure activities in the entire Jal Mahotsav. Two to three hot air balloons operated in the Hanuwantiya complex, providing rides to hundreds of adventure seekers. But due to enormous crowd pressure the rides were shortened to a height of about 40-50 feet, providing a view of the tented complex.

A slice of Africa in the heart of Incredible India

Baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) tree, a native of Africa which gives the impression of having its roots upside down, is found in abundance in the Mandu plateau. Its fruit, locally known as the Khurasani Imli, produces a refreshing drink during the summer months. The flesh of the baobab fruit is dried and powdered. The powder is mixed in water with a dash of sugar to produce the juice. It's a sour drink, and especially refreshing during summer.

But the greatest aerial views were obtained from the para motor, which consists of a frame that combines the motor, propeller, harness (with integrated seat) and cage. The para-motor, which soared to a height of 300 feet, provided an unbelievable bird's eye view of the Hanuwantiya Tourist Complex. The para-motors and the hot air balloons were not the only flying objects in the sky above Indira Sagar, in fact the most colourful objects in the sky were kites, which came in every possible shape and size. The kites created a dramatic spectacle with the deep blue sky above the endless waters of the Indira Sagar. The kite flyers, who came all the way from Gujarat, were extremely friendly, and enthusiastic tourists were provided opportunities to fly the kites.

Necessary Information		
Rates of Adventure activities at Jal Mahotsav 2016		
1.	Para-motor	₹ 500
2.	Hot air ballooning	₹ 500
3.	Parasailing (water)	₹ 500
4.	Parasailing (land)	₹ 500
5.	Rock climbing wall	₹ 100
6.	Zipline	₹ 100
7.	Jet-ski	₹ 400
8.	Banana boat	₹ 150
9.	Zorbing	₹ 100
10.	Motor boat (3 persons)	₹ 210
11.	Cruise	₹ 150



Cultural activities at the venue

Jal Mahotsav was not all about adventure, and the leisurely tourist could settle down for a bullock cart ride. A street magician, with an amazing assortment of tricks, entertained the crowd in the tent complex area. Foodies had their own entertainment in the food court, while the shopaholics were

busy in the craft bazaar.

The evening had cultural programmes, where artistes from different districts of Madhya Pradesh performed on the stage. The first edition of Jal Mahotsav turned out to be a great success and the MPTDC wants to make it a regular annual activity like the Khajuraho Dance Festival. The Hunawantiya Tourist Complex will remain open throughout the year along with the speed boat rides on the Indira Sagar Lake. Here, double bed rooms are priced at ₹ 3,290 (breakfast included). The Hanuwantiya tour can be clubbed with Bhopal, Indore and Mandu. ■

Travel Information

Getting in and out: Indore (95 km) is the nearest airport and railhead. Direct buses from Indore to Mandu are rare, so it is best to break journey at Dhar. However, cars can be booked for the trip.

Places to stay: Mandu has several hotels. Madhya Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (MPTDC) operates two hotels in Mandu. There are several private hotels too.

Getting around: At least two days are required for exploring Mandu. The sites can be explored by car, which the hotels will arrange.

Best time to visit: Apart from the scorching summer, Mandu can be visited throughout the year, though monsoon is the best time to explore the enchanting ruins and natural landscapes of Mandu.



A mathematics teacher by profession, the writer is a regular contributor in the travel columns of leading newspapers. To know more, visit his website www.rangandatta.info and blog

Our Last Six Issues

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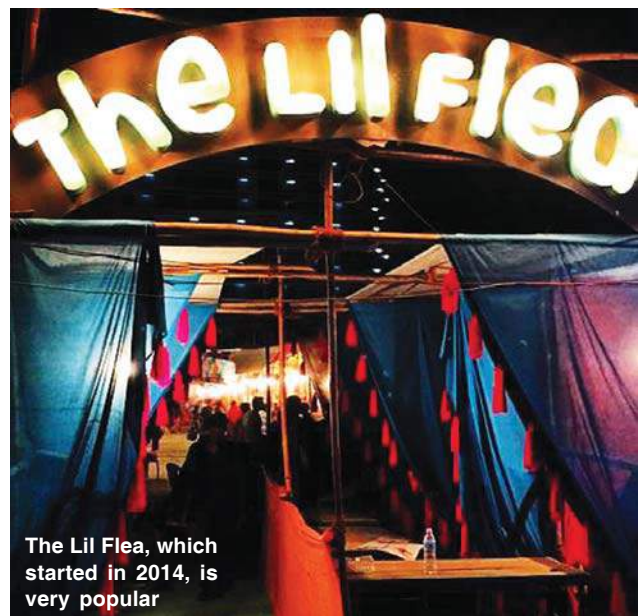
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Indian cities like Mumbai and Bangalore are today leading a movement, albeit nascent, to reclaim public spaces for their citizens. This is a much-needed reprieve for the people of these busy metropolises. **Vandita Morarka** reports on this welcome trend.

INFECTIONOUS. Vibrant. Warm. Glittering. Entrancing. Remind you of Mumbai? Jostled in the train. Almost got hit by a bike while walking on the footpath. Peak hour traffic. Overcrowded, congested. Still thinking of Mumbai? Public spaces in Mumbai have increasingly shrunk, reducing access to open viable public spaces for Mumbaikars. “Open spaces in Mumbai are often either inaccessible, offer only partial access or have been encroached upon,” Ashutosh Limaye, head of research and real estate intelligence service at Jones Lang LaSalle was quoted stating in the *New York Times*. But in a remarkable effort, organisations, businesses and communities have rallied to create and maintain newer forms of public spaces in the city. Mumbai city has witnessed immense growth in what can only be termed as a movement to reclaim and recreate public spaces. Public spaces have come up in the form of setting up of community centers, reclaiming traditionally closed off and congested spaces, community marketplaces etc. Spaces are transformed to become hubs of cultural activities and entertainment, drawing together participation from Mumbaikars across the city. What does this transformation mean for our city and its people?

A lot of this transformation started slowly a few years ago,



The Lil Flea, which started in 2014, is very popular

with the advent of marathons, midnight cycling rides, street flea markets and so on. In the past two to three years, this effort has been taking on a stronger force. There is in general, a larger call for more open, viable, public spaces.



Events and stalls at the Lil Flea attract large crowds of Mumbaikars



The Hive, The Lil Flea and what happens at Ballard Estate

The beginning of January 2014 saw the opening of a new cultural hub in Bandra: The Hive, which calls itself a creator and maker of space. Started off as a venture to create a new open space in the city, it has evolved and become a major center for events and activities, favored by the young and the old crowd. It hosts events across genres, from movie screening, discussions, to community festivals. Regular attendees of events at The Hive love the inviting vibe that the place carries and how it has managed to seamlessly create a niche space as a center for interaction in a crowded city like Mumbai. While The Hive is a structural community center, another such platform for interaction has emerged in The Lil Flea, which pops up periodically in popular locations in the city to cater to people who want something different in the spaces they explore.

Alankar Jain, Co-Founder of The Little Flea tells us that the idea for curating such an event was in part inspired from the lack of a space for creative integration in a cosmopolitan city like Mumbai. The number of attendees has also shot up from 12,000 at their first Flea in April 2014, to 30,000 in the

most recent one, showing how wonderfully the city is embracing such change. Antika, originally from another city, attended The Lil Flea in Mumbai recently. She tells us how the event helped her explore a new space in the city, a space to get together and create and connect with like-minded people over music and workshops.

While events like The Lil Flea and centers like The Hive create new public spaces, a growing trend is seen in reclaiming public spaces. What started off several years ago with the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival is now spilling over to newer events.

Started in January 2016, Mumbai's Ballard Estate Festival aims to provide the 'leisure starved island city' Mumbai, with an open venue for entertainment at the Ballard Estate. It has turned the Ballard Estate into something resembling a 'Special Entertainment Zone' over the weekends. It provides a one-stop destination for street food, games, music and an opportunity to interact with fellow Mumbaikars. It's a fun vibrant festival that has reclaimed a public space thought lost to the general public. It transforms it into an open inviting space that caters to the need felt in Mumbai for more open, viable public space.



The Equal Streets movement has reclaimed the roads from motorits, albeit for a few hours every Sunday



The Equal Streets is also commendable as it doesn't charge entry fees

When streets are equal

Another such movement repeating itself this year after its success in 2015 is that of 'Equal Streets'. While in the past year a 6.5 km stretch of road was declared as car free under Equal Streets on Sunday mornings to create access to open spaces for Mumbaikars, this year it's restricted to 2.2 km. Rishu Jain, Co-Founder of Equal Streets and member of Juhu & Lokhandwala Cycling Club, speaks of how the idea originates from when Renuka Tahiliani, presently a promoter of Equal Streets in association with the Khar-Bandra-Santacruz (KBS) Foundation, organised two car-free day events at Carter road. Rishu says that the response from people has been fantastic. Last year, Equal Streets had more than 50,000 people participating on each Sunday! 20% of Mumbai consists of roads and to start a movement to tap into the biggest open space that our city has, to reclaim and recreate it, is commendable. Attending an Equal Streets event is being part of a different kind of Mumbai, one that is open and congestion free. It gives you a glimpse of a more open city, with more space for activity, activism, community engagement and development. What distinguishes it from other events mentioned is that it is non-



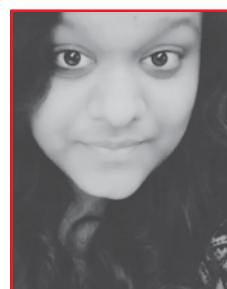
Happy citizens are those who feel the city truly belongs to them



commercial: Equal Streets charges no entry fees.

These events and activities are reimagining how we look at public spaces in the city. It is creating an invigorating and exciting atmosphere aimed at more openness and more choices for the residents of Mumbai. Similarly, several other cities in India have taken up such initiatives. Embarq India, a major player behind Equal Streets in Mumbai launched a similar movement in Gurgaon. It resulted in permanent infrastructure being built, including cycle lanes and walking tracks. An 11-km stretch of road becomes accessible open space for over 30,000 residents each Sunday here! Bangalore too has followed a similar trend. 'The Cycle Day' organised by the Bengaluru Coalition for Open Streets (BCOS) to be held on the last Sunday of each month, was started here in 2013. This citizens' movement is another one of the several claims being made across India to reclaim public space.

Residents of these cities have actively participated in events and activities to further the cause for better and more available public spaces. The strong support generated indicates a collective want for these spaces. Government future plans are also increasingly taking into account these demands as citizen groups emerge as strong pressure groups. Such public spaces lend beauty and soul to the city; it connects people and communities and builds connection between people and the city. These spaces act as places to relax, to network, to build new relationships and nurture old ones. These public spaces help facilitate better quality of life for the residents of a city. So head out to one of these public spaces this weekend or reclaim one! ■



Vandita Morarka is a Law and Public Policy student with special interest in gender and human rights issues.

Mahabharata, a metaphor for life

Peter Brook's Mahabharata had taken the world by storm when it was staged 30 years ago. His re-telling of the great story, especially of the philosophical last segment, has created the same ripples today. Prof. Avinash Kolhe reviews the play which was staged at Mumbai's NCPA recently.

THE internationally renowned team of Peter Brook, Marie-Helene Estienne and Jean-Claude Carriere together visited the great Indian epic *The Mahabharata* 30 years ago. That legendary production took world theatre by storm. The team had carved out a nine-hour-long play of the epic. Back then the team was young and full of hope for the future. Now Brook is 90 and the world has been witnessing brutal wars and civil wars in almost all parts of the world, be it Syria, Sri Lanka or Chechnya. Even Paris, Brook's home city was attacked twice in one year and nearly 150 people were killed. Perhaps this harrowing reality forced Brook and his team to re-visit the *Mahabharata* to see what lessons could be learnt from that epic war. The *Mahabharata* is an eternal story of how we live and die according to the principle of *dharma*.

The Battlefield

Brook wrote the new script with writer Jean-Claude Carriere and his long time collaborator Marie-Helene Estienne. She has been collaborating with Brook since the early eighties. Now Brook is 90 and Estienne is 72. The two have worked together for four decades and this passage of time has reflected on their new production. The group visited India in March 2016 with their new play *The Battlefield*, which is based on the last stage of the *Mahabharata*, when the epic battle is over and the remaining characters brood over the consequences of their actions. *The Battlefield* is the product of the eternal and enduring (and meaningless?) search for the meaning of life.



A still from *The Battlefield*

The nonagenarian director, who created the dazzling interpretation of the *Mahabharata* in the 1980s, with a multi-ethnic cast of actors (our very own Mallika Sarabhia played Draupadi) and musicians, has now shrunk a nine-hour epic to a 65-minute show. *The Battlefield* had limited shows in Mumbai and was performed at the NCPA (National Centre for Performing Arts), Mumbai. Three wooden poles, four sheets of cloth, a rope, four actors and one musician with a drum that is all that was needed to create *The*



Director Peter Brook, who has revisited *Mahabharata* after 30 years

Battlefield. This minimalist approach was felt necessary to evoke the epic *Mahabharata* on a stage set by Peter Brook and his team. In this play the Pandavas and Kauravas come to terms with the violence they have wreaked. Daunting themes of fate, free will and destiny are addressed through simple conversations, allegorical incidents and relationships between the characters.

Stark, frugal, contemplative

It basically is a highly contemplative play with practically no action. And yet, it's theatre of high quality. The stage was stark, covered in ochre, a colour that suggested an arid earth soaked in human blood. The props on the stage were sparse. It had only a scattering of sticks and a few lengths of colourful cloth, which were used to convey many things symbolically. For example, a river and a newborn baby Karna.

(Continued on page 41)

Debating Article 356

When the Uttarakhand High Court quashed the Centre's decision to impose President's Rule in that state, it brought Article 356 back in focus. Prof. Avinash Kolhe gives us the background to this controversial Article and the busy use it's been put to since Independence.

IN the last week of April 2016, the Uttarakhand High Court quashed the Centre's decision to impose Presidents' rule in the state. Not only this, the High court observed that such decisions amount to undermining the foundation of federalism in our country.

Though India has been practising the democratic model of governance, we are yet to imbibe the spirit of democracy. Consequently, no political party, be it the BJP or the Congress, can tolerate a state government of the opposition party. The ruling party at the Centre, whether BJP or Congress would find something or other to use the dreaded Article 356 and dismiss the democratically elected state government just to ensure that their party comes to power in the state. India has witnessed many Uttarakhands in the last 60-odd years.

It must be remembered that Uttarakhand is just a year away from Assembly elections and the state would be going to poll sometimes in 2017. In the Assembly elections held in 2012, Congress came to power. The BJP won 26 seats in the house of 70 seats and was the main opposition party. It tempted nine MLAs of Congress and staged a palace coup to topple the Rawat ministry.

The people of India are disappointed in President Pranab Mukherjee, a senior politician. He could have returned the advice of the Council of Minister. He has this power given to the President of India under the 44th amendment, 1978, which empowers the President to return the advice of the Council of Minister once. If the same advice comes

back a second time, he must act on it. Many presidents before him, have used this power often, and saved the day.

No more 'rarest of rare'

This also raises, once again, the question about the use of Article 356 which was expected to be used in the rarest of rare situations. And look at how we have used it over a hundred times after Independence. It is also necessary to recall that such an article was an important part of the Government of India Act, 1935. This act, on one hand, granted provincial autonomy to the provinces, but on the other hand, allowed the British or British-appointed Governors to dismiss the elected provincial governments. This provision was unacceptable to the Congress party which was set to form governments in many provinces. After a lot of haggling, Congress agreed to take power. The Congress ministries were in power for about 22 months and had resigned when the UK declared India's participation in the World War II without consulting Indian leaders. So the question of use or misuse of this article then did not arise.

When Article 356 was being debated in the Constituent Assembly, many members were uncomfortable with the highly undemocratic nature of the said article. Dr. Ambedkar however knew that in our country where linguistic, religious and ethnic passions could run high, some control over the state government is necessary. And he defended Article 356 but expressed hope that it would remain a dead letter one, never to be used. Unfortunately,

right from the Pandit Nehru government to the Atal Bihari government to the Modi government, all have used this article for narrow political ends. What surprised many in the 1950s was that a thorough-bred democrat like Pandit Nehru too succumbed to the pressure. He was under tremendous pressure from Indira Gandhi, the then Congress President and Govind Vallabh Pant, the then Union Home Minister.

The Non-Congress government of DMK in Tamil Nadu in 1969, the Left Front government in West Bengal in 1977 and the Akali Dal in its Anandpur Sahib session in 1973 had called for the repeal of this article as these non-Congress forces realised that Article 356 could be used against them. Then came Justice Sarkaria commission appointed by Indira Gandhi in 1984. The Sarkaria commission had observed that the article should not be dropped, but should be used in the rarest of the rare cases. But this too turned out to be just a fond hope.

Can we control the misuse of Article 356?

Now we are back to once again debating the Article 356. The real issue is the efficacy of Article 356 and how to control its blatant misuse. The Supreme Court decision given in the S.R. Bommai case in 1994 laid down some clear norms about the dismissal of a state government. It clearly stated that the floor test in the House is the only way to ascertain the situation about who has the majority support. Despite this, we still have instances like Arunachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. While

delivering the Bommai judgment in 1994, Justice P.B. Sawant extensively quoted Dr. Ambedkar to prove that the 'Emergency Provisions' including Article 356 were not supposed to be wantonly used by the Central government. In the Constituent Assembly debate Dr. Ambedkar had to pacify angry members as he wanted to retain article 356. He had said, "The article ought to remain a dead letter. If at all they are brought into operation, I hope the President, who is endowed with all these powers, will take proper precaution before actually suspending the administration of the provinces." Lofty ideals and words indeed!

In fact, the Constitution is clear about the use of 356. It can be only invoked if a 'situation has arisen where the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the

provisions of the Constitution'. But so far, defections were engineered, rebellions were created and state governments were reduced to an artificial minority to create an illusion of a Constitutional crisis, to get a hostile state government sacked. The usual ploy of the Central government is to create a situation wherein a state government is reduced to a minority and then sack it using article 356. In fact, the Constitution does not create an obligation that the political party forming the minority should necessarily have a majority in the legislature. Minority governments are not unknown. What is necessary is that the government should enjoy the confidence of the House.

Despite the Bommai judgment, the cases of misuse of Article 356 have not come down. This only shows that the Bommai judgement has outlived its

utility, and time has come to debate the issue afresh.

A provision like Article 356 is not to be found in the constitutions of democratic countries like the US. But then, India is a unique society in more ways than one. The purpose of Article 356 is quite laudable and valid even in 2016. We do need some mechanism to check the state governments in case they run amok. But Article 356 in its present form does not answer that need and neither is the Bommai judgement. Let us take this opportunity to start a

national debate and find some solution. ■



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

Mahabharata, a metaphor for life

(Continued from page 39)

To complement this, the actors were dressed in dark robes relieved by scarves and blanket shawls of lighter shade. They delivered their dialogues uninflected by emotion. All the while, all actions and discussions are accompanied by sound of the Japanese drum, extremely well-played by Toshi Tsuchitori.

The play opens when the Kurukshetra war is over. Enter blind king Dhritarashtra (Sean O'Callaghan). He asks himself why he allowed the war to take place. He feels that he could have said no and stopped the war. He had a hundred sons and now is left with none. He could not stop his son Duryodhana who wanted nothing but the war. Then comes Kunti (Carole Karemera), who had told Yudhishtira (Jared McNeill) about Karan, and also told him to perform the last rites of his half-brother. Then comes a point when she cannot

keep it bottled within her, and lets out a long howl of anguish which becomes representative of all mothers of all times who have lost a son in a mindless war.

Yudhishtira is loaded down with guilt for what he has done, and how he has ended being responsible for the death of tens and thousands of human beings. He sees carrion animals and birds hover around, waiting to pounce on them. Is this victory or defeat? How can one tell? And most important, what will come after this war? A wise man answers, 'Another war'.

Then there is Bheeshma (Ery Nzaramba), lying on his bed of nails waiting to die. He tells Yudhishtira that he must rule like a just king. Here questions of justice, guilt, moral responsibility, etc., are raised. And these are answered through some well-known fables. The most famous fable is of a worm desperate to escape the wheels of an oncoming chariot. What is its life worth? Nothing to the world perhaps,

but everything to the worm. The roles of worm, snake, etc., are played by actors. There is an arrogant snake that suggests that it is his destiny or *dharma* to attack the small boy and kill him as the boy happens to be in his path. Do we hold the snake responsible for the death of that boy? No, because Yama, the god of death has made him kill the boy. Is Yama then responsible? No, again. Time is responsible. These are the questions that have been debated in philosophy from time immemorial.

Fortunately, this is not how *The Battlefield* ends. It suggests the continuity and permanence of life. The Japanese drummer drums out the primal power of rhythm, which in the end rises to a crescendo, and then fades into silence.

This is the master's touch, which leaves the audience spellbound. Three cheers, Sir! ■



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

Akele hain, tho kya gum hai?

*What is loneliness? Is it a desired state of being? Many people confuse loneliness with solitude, says **A. Radhakrishnan**. Loneliness is a longing for social acceptance and friendships, whereas solitude is self-imposed and desired.*



LONELINESS is a feeling of emptiness inside you; a feeling of isolation or separation from everyone; cut off from those you would like to have contact with. However, you may also feel emotionally isolated, though surrounded by people; you have difficulty socialising with them.

Like it is in all emotions, people who are lonely might feel unwanted, unloved, undesirable, insignificant, insecure, or abandoned. It can make you feel empty, and you may wish to have someone in your life who will relieve the emptiness. Yet, loneliness may also exist when connections with others are fleeting, meaningless, or not what you consider to be consequential. Thus, you may have many friends, or be in a room filled with people, and still be lonely. This isolation, thus, can have a

serious damaging effect on one's mental and physical health.

As Paul Tillich puts it, "Language... has created the word loneliness to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word solitude to express the glory of being alone". Claire Danes is more forthright. 'I have a huge, active imagination, (and) I think I'm really scared of being alone; because if I'm left to my own devices, I'll just turn into a mad woman.' But a nonchalant Azgraybeby Joslan puts it matter of fact, 'If you're sad about being alone on Valentine's Day, just remember that nobody loves you on any other day of the year either'!

Analysing loneliness

Some prefer the inner world of their own mind rather than the outer world of

sociability. External stimulation depletes them and they thrive on reflection and solitude. The psychic opposites, extroverts, prefer small talk and social life, as it boosts their mood. Too much solitude bores them. Most of us though, share some extrovert and some introvert traits equally.

When you have a need and desire to be interpersonally connected and recognise that it's missing, you may become wrapped in the emotion of loneliness. It can be triggered when you're thinking of a significant relationship that has ended, if you realise that your relationships are not emotionally satisfying; if your access to social relationships has been altered because of a life circumstance, or you recognise that you are not truly known and understood by another.

Loneliness, like all emotions, creates certain perceptions. Your longing for closeness may, at times, lead you to believe that your situation might never end. It's understandable why people who are lonely might feel unwanted, unloved, undesirable, insignificant, despairing, insecure, or abandoned. Emotions do have a purpose, regardless of how unpleasant some of them can make us feel.

Loneliness can lead to self-involvement and a high sensitivity where you hopelessly avoid others, or desperately seek their positive affirmation. Feeling lonely is not the same as being alone. A person will always have a time when they choose to be alone. Instead, loneliness is the feeling of sadness about being alone. The amount of time you spend alone has little to do with being lonely. Many people find solitude a pleasant experience that allows one to think, be creative, rest, or simply pass time in solitary activity.

There are people in whom fear or anxiety is provoked when they are alone, but this is different than the experience of loneliness, as are situations where a person prefers to be alone in order to avoid the anxiety inherent in social activities. A prolonged loneliness can lead you to believe that you are depressed, or, in some circumstances, can lead to depression. 'Man is not an island by himself', is a famous adage. People who feel the threat of social exclusion are highly motivated to look for sources of acceptance, and their perceptions are in gear to find a friendly face.

However, one has to have a willingness to take risks socially, to be assertive, to self-disclose, and be responsive to others. Some strategies to defeat loneliness: Be more active, start a hobby, telephone someone you are missing who stays far away, write, e-mail or visit.

If you are lonely because you miss

Feeling lonely is not the same as being alone. A person will always have a time when they choose to be alone. Instead, loneliness is the feeling of sadness about being alone. The amount of time you spend alone has little to do with being lonely.

someone who has died, remember your happy moments with them, and knowing those memories can always be with you, can move you away from the lonely feelings. Being kind to yourself, allowing yourself to be you, and expressing your feelings to people who add to your life, not detract from it, shrinks loneliness.

When we stop expressing how we feel, we lose, not only all the vital connection to ourselves, but we also end up feeling lonely due to a lack of emotional connection with people who are theoretically in our Trust Circle. Drowning your feelings of isolation in alcohol or subjecting them to substances in order to forget is not what your emotions are telling you to do.

It's a vicious circle. When we determine that we're not liked, which may be more a statement of our perception than fact, it may skew unhealthy beliefs? In turn, low intimacy results in feeling lonely, and we then judge that loneliness and feel disliked.

It's tied to self-respect

Feeling sad is actually a cue to take care of ourselves – to be kinder to ourselves, to reflect, to seek support. Severing emotional connections doesn't help. That sense of loneliness and just feeling as if there's something wrong with you, distorts your feelings, especially

because in not giving yourself love, care, trust, and respect, any person not worth his salt will seem your benefactor, and so you'll feel increasingly reliant on this person.

Toxic people tend to also bulldoze through your existing relationships and commitments so that they can have more influence and control – it's how you end up feeling isolated, dependent, and shamed.

When we learn to be more self-compassionate and also recognise unhealthy people, and situations, it's a lot easier to get a sense of who the safe people are in our lives. Don't express your fears and worries to people who leave you drained and even use what you express against yourself, and don't waste your time trying to convince them of your position.

Know you are a person in your own right. Start allowing yourself the right to have and express your feelings and opinions. Respect and regard yourself as you do others. Stopping judging yourself, will free you of the burden of projecting your perception onto others, or taking what they do and say and seeing it as confirmation of negative beliefs.

Let me end with this evocative poem:

Silent Tears

shh...listen don't you hear
I'm crying but they are silent tears
I'm crying on the inside so you can't see
all the pain running through me
I cry for you I cry for me
I cry for the times I can't
so if you listen you may hear my silent tears.

- Amanda Smith



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

A rose by any other name!

The renaming of cities and towns has become a part of 'development agenda'. How does it help, except in increasing unnecessary expenses? asks Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi. While the names change, nothing much else does, he avers.

NAME changing of cities is a staple exercise of our political leaders, irrespective of their political affiliations. These are usually timed when an election is scheduled or is in the works. It is the turn of one more city to be rechristened, as the Haryana Government has decreed that one of its well known cities – Gurgaon is to be renamed as 'Guru Gaon'. While there is nothing new in such an action, as many other state governments have done so in the past, such changes are always carried out with political motives.

A frivolous exercise

By any stretch of imagination, this is a frivolous exercise, as there are many problems of administering cities that need attention. It is good administration and good governance that are needed, and not such cosmetic exercises as changing names. However, our political leaders appear not to think rationally at times, and name change is one of them.

Change is of course extremely important, as it makes us energetic, daring and perceptive, instead of staying cocooned in words and phrases coined centuries ago. However, change should bring about concrete advantages and should not be done merely for change. Although that famous literary person, William Shakespeare had stated in his play *Romeo and Juliet* that 'A rose by any other name will smell as sweet', I doubt whether the great 17th century bard had such name changes in mind when he had penned this verse!

Our political leaders revel in this type of in fructuous work, merely to gain

some brownie points. They apparently do so for two major reasons. These are, firstly, a convoluted thinking that such actions result in electoral gains, and secondly, when they want to divert the attention of the people, so that they get busy in arguing the pros and cons of such decrees.

I wonder whether the people of Gurgaon were asked for their views, for it is after all the inhabitants of the city who know best if the name of their city needs to be changed. Yet, it is leaders sitting in the state capital and their henchmen (read bureaucrats and sycophants) who have decided and issued a *firman*. May be it is all to do with the highly adverse fallout of the recent Jat agitation. The fact-finding team of the police, headed by the highly respected retired police officer - Prakash Singh - has already submitted its report.

It is for such political reasons that Madras, Poona, Bombay and Calcutta became Chennai, Pune, Mumbai and Kolkata, respectively. It has been reported that the state of Karnataka has had the maximum name changes of its cities in the last few years, commencing with the state capital, which has become Bengaluru from Bangalore.

According to reports in the media, there are major strictures against the Haryana Government, especially the partisan actions of the Haryana Police.

It is for such political reasons that Madras, Poona, Bombay and Calcutta became Chennai, Pune, Mumbai and Kolkata, respectively. It has been reported that the state of Karnataka has had the maximum name changes of its cities in the last few years, commencing with the state capital, which has become Bengaluru from Bangalore. The list goes on and on!

In the absence of any empirical data, it is difficult to say whether such actions achieved their aims and to what extent, or was it a change only for change's sake. Such major actions do have one benefit, which is that the leader can then boast that he is not a staid, run-of-the-mill politician, but one who changes the status quo!

Most people feel that it is one more idiosyncrasy of our politicians, as one has not heard of politicians of other countries resorting to such practices. Pakistan is of course an exception, but then Pakistan is not a country but a fiefdom of the Pakistani Army, and hence one can never take it seriously. Their recent name changes of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Northern Areas (in their adverse possession) seem to have been done for reasons that are vague and arbitrary. Since they usually copy what happens in India, that may well be the reason!

The reason for the name change, as stated by the Haryana Government,



Millennium City, Gurgaon, which is all glass and chrome, and the abode of the *nouveau riche*

is that during the era of the epic *Mahabharata*, the sage Dronacharya had his ashram here and he was the *guru* of both the Kauravas and the Pandavas. It may be a plausible reason for the *Hindutva* Brigade and sundry others like *sants*; pseudo god men and women; and of course, those worthies who are headquartered at Nagpur. However, there is apparently no gain for the inhabitants of Gurgaon. Every individual, shop, office and corporate entity will instead lose money in printing new stationary, putting up new signages and so on. The change of signages of state government offices, municipal corporation, other offices of the government and similar entities would cost even more to the exchequer. Is it a worthwhile exercise then?

While the residents of Gurgaon have apparently taken the name change in their stride, some more thought could have been given, so that the inhabitants benefit in some way. I have a suggestion that is perhaps bolder and better.

An alternate suggestion

It is well appreciated by the public,

as well as the governments at the state and local bodies' levels that our burgeoning cities need to be made smaller and more manageable. If this proposition is correct and acceptable, then it would be eminently suitable for the present Gurgaon to be split into two cities, with two different and independent municipal corporations and other services like utilities, better inner roads, lesser vehicular congestion and so on.

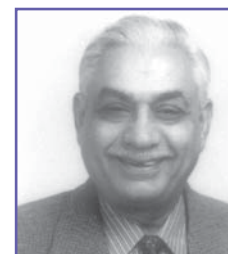
We already have two Gurgaons – the old Gurgaon or Gurgawan as it was known earlier, and which has existed for centuries; and the new one, known better as the Millennium City.

The older one is staid and laid back, with inhabitants tracing their histories back to many generations. The new one is all glass, aluminium, chrome, Italian marble and modular kitchens; wide roads, albeit encroached upon, and full of speed-breakers and potholes; and the abode of the *nouveau riche*. The residents include the progeny of farmers who had sold their lands to known and unknown developers and who are

now a menace, especially after sun-down, for the residents.

The old city can continue to be called Gurgaon or with the changed name of Guru Gaon, although in a few years, most people will forget the so-called connection with Sage Dronacharya. The Millennium City could be separated from the present Gurgaon and be given a new name, in consultation with the residents. The government would then be able to make it a new city not just in name, but one which will become a truly well planned and even a 'smart' city.

With both cities functioning well, residents of both will have stability and peace. Both cities would become better managed by their respective municipal corporations, and the respective district officials would be able to wield better



control over law and order as well as their administration. ■

Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi is a former Vice Chief of Army Staff.

Solo Soleil

*When the Sun beats down on us mercilessly, we curse it and talk about rains. But everything can be traced back to this powerhouse of energy, says **G. Venkatesh**. He gives us a succinct account of the philosophical-scientific basis of solar energy.*

THE first word in the headline is Spanish and the second is French. They, taken together, simply mean, 'Only the Sun'. The Earth is just a fragment of the Sun, a tiny one, which was formed after the Big Bang, and which subsequently over millennia, contracted gravitationally, went through several cycles of heating and cooling, to reach the unique combo of atmosphere+hydrosphere+pedosphere+lithosphere+biosphere it is today. And it is continuing to change...owing to climate change.

Lord Rama in the Ramayana, is said to have prayed to the Sun God, before embarking on his battle against Ravana in Lanka. It worked out well for Him... even an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, revered the Sun and was aware of its power and beneficence. A hidden lesson for us when we read Valmiki's epic!

Taking the Sun for granted?

Most of us take the Sun for granted. But up here in the northern latitudes, where this writer is based at the time of writing this piece, a series of cloudy days in the winter months creates angst, and when the Sun peeps out from behind the clouds for a few minutes/hours, everyone is out there to get his/her free dose of Vitamin D. We know very well what deficiency of Vitamin D can lead to. It is also said to be one of the drivers for cancer...Imagine what the absence of solar energy would do to plant life, and thereby to all the components of the food chain downstream, right up to us, Homo Sapiens. An acquaintance of my mother's once remarked, '*When the sky is cloudy, my mind seems to close too.*



Solar energy must be harnessed more, with such solar panels

Psychologically, I feel depressed.' There you have it then. The Sun's role in our physical, mental and psychological (read holistic) well-being. It gets even more holistic actually, if you factor in from a scientific and philosophical point of view the vitality of the Sun (its gravitation and its electromagnetic energy) for material well-being and economic prosperity.

Mankind has been thriving on the fossil-fuel trio – coal, oil and natural gas – for many years now. It has been quite like the Hindu Trinity – Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva – or the Christian one – The Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit – if I could try to invoke the religious aspect here; as this piece is not merely scientific, but rather metaphysical and spiritual. Now, evidently, the dependence on fossil fuels is bound to continue, though the talk is that slowly but steadily and surely (they say so), natural gas will displace more and more of coal in the

economy. Let us wait and see though, what actually happens.

If you flash back several millennia, and do a kind of a material flow analysis of coal, oil and gas (over time), you get back eventually to the Sun! Photosynthesis, carbon dioxide from the atmosphere (Lord Vayu there for you), water (Lord Indra with the rain and Lord Varuna with the hydrosphere sustained by the rain) and you had the organic matter (some of which was then fed on by the higher living organisms). When they, at the end of their lives, were subjected to high pressure and temperature, they metamorphosed into the fossil fuels you get to use now. A complex material flow analysis one would say...but surely puts things in perspective. And more important, makes the Sun even more prominent!

But now, Bhoomadevi (Mother Earth, or Gaia or Tellus) who has been

supplying humans with coal, oil and gas generously, is no Kamadhenu! She has Her limits. And within reasonable timeframes, coal, oil and gas are certainly not renewable resources. One could adopt Carbon Capture and Storage, for sure, but when these would yield fossil fuels in the distant future, would be hard to tell...and who knows what will happen to the human race. That makes me a cynic, I am sure; a doomsday prophet as many would say. Yes, those of us who belong to this camp know that we are poised inexorably on a watershed now. And those who counter us (Donald Trump, for example?), may call themselves techno-philic optimists. There are just these two camps...you belong to one of these, or you do not belong at all.

Take direct solar energy itself. Less than one percent of what is incident on the earth's atmosphere, is utilised by plants on terra firma (and that is how we have our biofuels – additives to gasoline and diesel – and biomass-energy (firewood essentially): the former in the richer world, and the latter has been sustaining the poorer inhabitants of Mother Earth for ages now. While 30 percent of what is available does not reach the Earth at all (gets reflected from the upper echelons of the atmosphere), the remaining 70% warms the oceans, the lower levels of the atmosphere, and the pedosphere itself. A great deal of this energy is then slowly radiated back to outer space, as long-wave infrared radiations. (Note that when these are trapped in the atmosphere by greenhouse gases, we have global warming).

The direct use of solar energy

We will see later how some of the solar energy which warms up the hydrosphere and atmosphere is being put to use indirectly. But the point here is to try to use the energy directly wherever possible. We have been doing

it of course, by installing solar heaters, availing of solar-powered devices and solar photovoltaics. Some countries have shown the way...trendsetters so to say, Germany standing out in this regard, as it has always done while setting trends in science, engineering and technology. Evidently, much more can be done. Else, the solar energy simply heats up things, and the energy is then re-radiated and lost to outer space...an increase of entropy without an attempt being made to use more of the exergy. We, in India, can do more and more of this 'solar energy harvesting', just as we have been trying to do 'rainwater harvesting'.

There was a reference in the previous paragraph to the fact that some of the 70% which warms the spheres of the earth is actually put to use, consciously. This is how it goes...through the wind energy and wave energy which we have been harnessing or at least trying to harness. We know very well that winds and waves (the former in the atmosphere which gets heated up by the Sun; and the latter in the hydrosphere which gets heated up by solar energy incident on it) are consequences of thermal energy additions from the Sun! Take tidal energy and you would, prima facie, feel that this has nothing to do with solar energy. Perhaps you are right. You would attribute that to the gravitational pull of the Moon (Lord Chandra – there you have another deity) on the waters of the Earth. It is said to make some of us loony (ask astrologers for explanations), but it surely provides us with a source of green energy if we are smart enough and resourceful enough to harness that. But yet, we know that the gravitational pull of the Sun also plays a small part here...so, it is not solar thermal energy but solar gravitational energy, if one may put it that way.

Geothermal energy, they say, like



nuclear energy, has nothing to do with the Sun. It is a result of the gravitational contraction of the earth which generated a lot of heat trapped deep below the earth's crust. And also due to the radioactive decay

processes happening in the core of the earth (very similar to a nuclear reactor). Yet, if we could trace back the genesis of coal, oil and gas to the sun, we could do the same for geothermal and nuclear as well...the earth after all, came from the Sun, did it not? And nuclear fusion, if that gets commercialised, we would simply be duplicating what has been happening in the heart of the Sun (the source of all the energy we have been thriving on)...

Those of you who chant the Gayatri Mantra, do recall the messages of this article, when you do so...for this is not just backward religious dogma...it is simply an expression of gratitude...which would follow after facts have been comprehended.

*bhr bhuvasva
tāt savitūr vāre(i)ya
bhārgo devāsya dhmahī
dhiyo yō naprachodāyt*

("Let us adore the supremacy of that divine sun, the god-head who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress toward his holy seat" – as paraphrased by Sir William Jones, an 18th century Welsh philologist.)

G. Venkatesh is Senior Lecturer, Department of Engineering and Chemical Sciences, Faculty of Health, Science and Technology, Karlstad University, Sweden. He is also a freelance writer for several magazines around the world.



Who was Gauhar Jaan?

*Gauhar Jaan was a Hindustani classical singer who was also the first Indian woman to cut a gramophone record. But her name, like many others, was lost in the mists of time, till the play *Gauhar* has once again introduced her to a new generation and audience, says **Shoma A. Chatterji**. She reviews the play and talks to the people behind it.*

VERY little is known about Gauhar Jaan, the first Indian woman to have cut a gramophone record in India in 1902. This is strange, because her life story could define the script of a powerful Indian film. Vikram Sampath, a young researcher in music history wrote an entire book titled *My Name is Gauhar Jaan – Life and Times of a Musician* some years ago. Taking this as his root source, Bangalore-based playwright Mahesh Dattani penned a play called *Gauhar* that is being staged across the country with great critical success.

The play is produced under the banner of PrimeTime Theatre Company and directed by Lillette Dubey, the founder-director of the company, which celebrates its silver jubilee this year, and that makes *Gauhar* all that more significant. But first, we need to know a bit more about Gauhar Jaan a woman who lived life and loved and sang exclusively on her own terms, never mind that her extravagant way of life led her to deep penury when she passed away in 1930.

Who was Gauhar Jaan?

Gauhar Jaan popularised light Hindustani classical music with her *thumris*, *dadras*, *kairis*, *bhajans* and *tarana renditions*, some of which can still be heard on YouTube and other music channels that offer a glimpse of the talent of this very unconventional *tawaif*; she redefined the very term *tawaif* which means prostitute, through her talent and her uncompromising lifestyle



A still from the play *Gauhar*

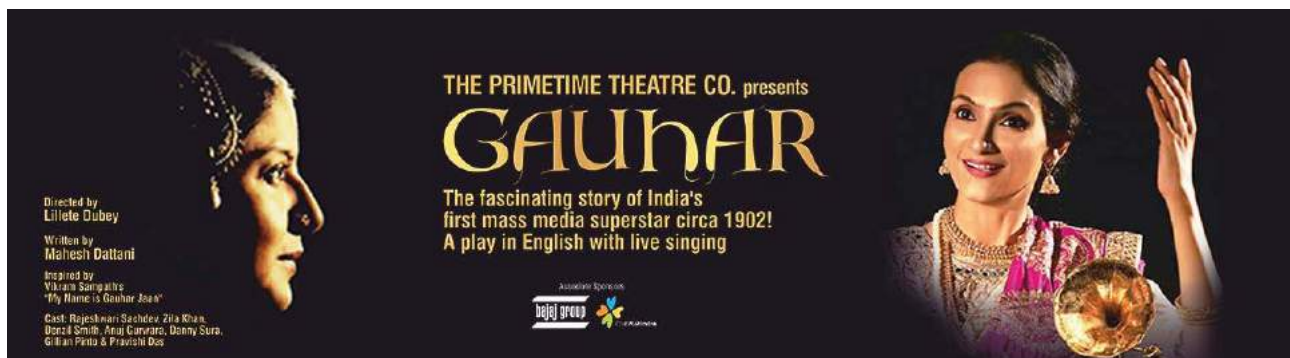
(Photo: Weavers Centre Studio, Kolkata)

that included her music. With her experience in recording songs where she introduced the novel style of announcing her name at the end of every song, she mastered the technique of condensing each song sung in Hindustani classical style to three and a half minutes that the recording technique demanded. Though initially she was shocked that a song had to be put through a 'machine' to

be heard by listeners, she warmed up to the technique, though many music maestros of the time criticised her for this. The play *Gauhar* brings across with lucidity, the passion that ruled Gauhar Jaan's life, forcing the audience to question how she has been practically wiped out of the history of Indian music.

Asked what inspired her to do this play on Gauhar and that too in English, Lillette says, "I had been presenting very serious plays and wanted to do something with music in it. Then, there was my passion to place woman achievers in the archive of Indian theatre and Gauhar Jaan most certainly deserves a prominent place in it. She was a pioneer because she cut the first Indian gramophone record. The subject has universal appeal because it is relevant to the struggles and the stigmas and social ostracism most successful women in

The play *Gauhar* brings across with lucidity, the passion that ruled Gauhar Jaan's life, forcing the audience to question how she has been practically wiped out of the history of Indian music.



(Photo: Weavers Centre Studio, Kolkata)

the field of music and media and cinema have to go through even today. Besides, as a singer, she is a legend by herself, though I have met many contemporary people from the music world who have never heard of her.

The play *Gauhar* sets out some important facts of Gauhar's life. Gauhar Jaan was not Muslim by birth. She was born as Angelina Yeoward in 1873 in Patna to William Robert Yeoward, an Armenian Jew, an engineer in Azamgarh and Allen Victoria Hemming, a Jewish Armenian lady. Victoria was born and brought up in India, and trained in music and dance. The marriage ended in 1879 when Angelina was six. Trapped in a no-exit situation of social ostracism and financial distress, mother and daughter migrated to Banaras in 1881 with Khursheed, a Muslim nobleman who

loved Victoria's music. Later, Victoria converted to Islam and changed Angelina's name to 'Gauhar Jaan' and hers to 'Malka Jaan.' In 1902, Gauhar Jan was asked by the 'Gramophone Company' to record a series of songs for them.

The play

Gauhar recounts the fascinating but sad personal and professional journey of Gauhar Jaan who sang in 20 languages and cut over 600 records. She is a part of India's recording history during the British rule and though she initially felt, as the play shows, that recording one's voice on a machine and then playing it back to be listened to was committing blasphemy on music. But she relented later going on to keep her voice on record for all time. Dubey adds that many from the world of theatre

and also music were rather sceptic of a play centered on Gauhar Jaan, but her choice has proved right because till date, more than a dozen performances across Indian cities have brought in not only full houses, but also good reviews in the media.

Lillete adopted the unusual strategy of casting two different actresses to portray the two different aged Gauhars in her play. The younger Gauhar is portrayed by Rajeshwari Sachdev, known for notable performances in many Shyam Benegal films and on television. This was an actress who had to rehearse and re-practice her singing for the play. The older Gauhar is being portrayed by Zila Khan, a trained Hindustani classic singer who had never acted till now. This was an experiment of sorts casting an actress who is a singer and a singer who has been called upon to act.

Rajeshwari says, "I had not even heard of Gauhar Jaan when Lillete first told me about this play. I felt very guilty and at once read Sampath's wonderfully researched book on Gauhar Jaan. Playing Gauhar was really difficult because I had to bring across the deep passion she felt about everything in life. It means a lot of emotional drainage for any actor especially since we were focussing only on the high points of her life. I had to live her life in my head. To sing like her was another challenge. It was just not possible to sing like her because I am basically an actress who can sing, and not a trained classical singer. But it all worked out in the end,



Rajeshwari Sachdev (right), has portrayed the younger Gauhar in the play
(Photo: Weavers Centre Studio, Kolkata)

For the singing portions, I relied on my own experience in singing and on the fact that over 10 to 30 performances, I would mature in my singing. The acting of course, I depended on myself and on Lillette.”

Zila Khan in personal life is the daughter of Ustad Vilayat Khan and is known for her music, trained as she is in Hindustani classical music. Responding to what attracted her to accept the acting assignment for the first time in her life, Zila says, “I would love to see tradition and history resurrected within the modern contemporary world we live in. What attracted me to play Gauhar is the fact that though she lived life on her own terms and paid a heavy price for her choices, she did not regret her choices at any point. She was made aware of her vulnerability through her betrayal by others. Towards the end of the play, she says that had she devoted the time to her music that she had devoted to seeking love, it would have produced sheer magic in music. What draws me to Gauhar is that she is as dynamic as she is vulnerable.” Zila also played Ruhani Begum in Sanjay Leela Bhansali’s recent film *Bajirao Mastani*. “The song I loved singing on stage the most are *Raske bhare tore nain* and *Kaisi ye dhoom macha*”, she sums up.

Gauhar was paid ₹ 3000 rupees per recording, an exorbitant price at that time. But she also spent huge sums such as ₹1000 as fine everyday for insisting on riding on a carriage drawn by four horses which was against the law; she flouted the law each day and paid the hefty fine!

From 1902 to 1920 she recorded over 600 songs in more than 10 languages. She became India’s first “recording star” who learned the value of the recording industry for advancing her career. You can still hear her *thumris* on YouTube where the name of the raga was carried on the label of the 78 rpm record and the singer had to end



Singer Zila Khan (right) as the older Gauhar (Photo: Weavers Centre Studio, Kolkata)

her song with her name. The play has an amusing minute when the younger Gauhar after recording a song into the conical microphone, tells the would-be listeners, “I hope you like the song.” Over the years, she developed a love-hate relationship with F. W. Gaisberg of the Gramophone Company which, however, remained professional. Denzil Smith gives a wonderful account of himself both as Gaisberg and Angelina’s father.

Gauhar’s travels through the country singing songs in the language of the region – Tamil, Gujarati, Bengali and so on, where the audience keeps cheering, are essayed beautifully. The play, a bit too long for any musical that also charts history and biography along with the dramatic elements of love, betrayal, success and tragedy, is dotted with tender situations of romance between Gauhar and her male companions who loved her and her music, but never married her. In the end, she was left all alone, coping with the loss of her beautiful and spacious home in Calcutta through a man she ostensibly married, and who cheated her, and another young man who claimed he was her half-brother! The time and place markers are delineated imaginatively

through screen shots on two sides of the stage and we get to know where she has been, opening with a suggestion of Calcutta and ending in Calcutta.

Both Rajeshwari and Zila Singh carry themselves with great poise and dignity despite their social positioning as a *tawaif* courted by Maharajas and *zamindars*, but shunned by mainstream society. The way Rajeshwari emerges as actress-dancer-singer getting under the skin of another singer-dancer of a different time and space is amazing. The younger Gauhar and the older Gauhar telescope into each other through time and in the end, deliver their swan song on stage, the younger one dancing as the older version sings – so beautifully. ■

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



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

Suchitra Sen

The Legend and the Engima

Author : Shoma A. Chatterji
Publisher : Harper Collins
Price : Rs. 350

SHOMA A. Chatterji's recent book on Suchitra Sen, who is considered a legend in Bengali cinema, informs and entertains. It also analyses certain aspects of gender identity, and the cinematic times. When conceptualising the book, the author admits that she stayed away from the gossip and controversies that often plague stars, and Suchitra Sen had her fair share of these. Her long and fruitful career notwithstanding, an unhappy marriage and later, self-exile and total withdrawal from public life for nearly three decades, added grist to the rumour mills. As part of the lead pair of Bengali popular cinema for nearly two decades, the other half being Uttam Kumar, the book brings into focus serious issues, which catapult this book from mere light reading to a welcome addition to our book shelves.

Old is always viewed as gold. In Bengal, life was unhurried in the fifties and sixties and this laid-back genteel life was well reflected in the films during those twenty odd years over the fifties to the mid-seventies. During this time, family stories were penned by well-known writers so much so that a film also came to be referred as *boi* or *book*. Out of this scenario emerged two stars, Uttam Kumar and Suchitra Sen, who because of their onscreen chemistry, became the leading pair of Bengali cinema during this period.

However, this exclusive book seeks to rectify the imbalance of a romantic jodi, always tilted in favour of the hero in India. It is not that there are books galore on Uttam Kumar, but the space he occupies in the public imagination is

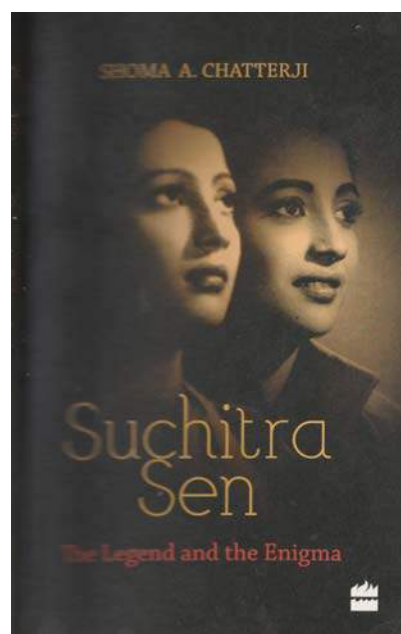
far greater by just being the mahanayak or super star who died at fifty-three.

Shoma Chatterji examines a number of related gender issues in two vital chapters 'From star to actress: the metamorphosis,' and 'Working women, Bengali cinema and Suchitra Sen' that deeply researches the "identity" of a celluloid actress trapped within an image.

What makes the book entertaining are the parallels drawn with actresses and films from Bollywood to reinforce her observations that strong characterisation of women do work, if given a chance.

Would Suchitra Sen's acting career have been more enriched if she acted in films directed by better known directors such as Satyajit Ray, Ritwick Ghatak or Mrinal Sen? After all, actresses Supriya Choudhury and Madhabi Mukherjee straddled both the popular and "arty" (for want of a better term), with ease. Ray, known to extract best performances, cast Uttam Kumar in a couple of his films, *Nayak* and *Chiriakhana*. Suchitra Sen, on the other hand, became the face of a certain kind of cinema and a diva to boot even when she defined feminism, grace and individuality. Within a limited space she gave her very best, in a very typical manner, unique to her and her alone. This was also reflected in two of her well-known Hindi films: *Devdas* directed by Bimal Roy in 1955, and *Aandhi* directed by Gulzar in 1975.

Suchitra Sen leaves behind a great number of films; some good, others indifferent. She was paired with other actors besides Uttam Kumar. In addition to facts and references to other published materials on the actress, Shoma Chatterji evaluates her "role"



in comparison with several talented actresses of her times.

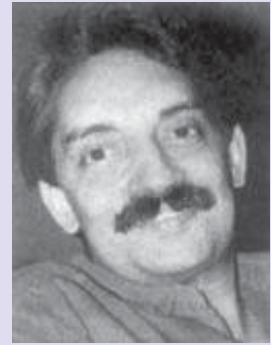
In trying to strike the right balance between a fan's eulogies which the author collectively embodies, and a search for that "cultural matrix and meaning and signification", the book initiates us into a different orientation as a reader. So used are we to reading trivia about film stars that it takes time to orient ourselves to a serious assessment of their contributions. Though a racy and gossipy book would have, no doubt, flown off the shelves faster, this is an author's tribute to the enigmatic actress' zealously guarded privacy.

The book will help those not too familiar with Bengali cinema discover a new world of films like *Deep jwele jai* (remade into *Khamoshi* in Hindi), *Saptapadi*, *Uttar Phalguni*, *Saat Pake Bandha* – a comprehensive list of her films is provided at the end. For a certain perspective, the reviewer concludes that while another Bengali actress Aparna Sen in a commercial Bengali film always gave the impression of 'oh-god-what-am-I-doing-here?' Suchitra Sen always portrayed a very rooted 'I-truly-belong-here' attitude, gelling with an era gone by. ■

Having worked as a full-time journalist, Manjira Majumdar today is an independent journalist combining writing with part-time college teaching and media advocacy.

Shells and molluscs

The next time you visit the beach, look out for shells, collect them and study them. They have many uses and many interesting tales to tell.



Bittu Sahgal
Editor, Sanctuary magazine

I'm sure that many of you like to go to the beach. An interesting and popular hobby that many young persons, and grown-ups pursue is shell-collecting. With each sweep of the tide, a huge mass of material comes up the shore, including shells, living things, dead wood, bits of plants, skeletons, bottles and the inevitable pile of rubbish! Looking through all this, or beach-combing as it is popularly called, can be fun!

The scientific study of shells is called conchology. Seashells are actually skeletons. Just as humans have skeletons inside their bodies, called internal skeletons, some animals like molluscs have their skeletons outside their bodies. This external skeleton serves to protect soft-bodied creatures from the strong waves, and from possible predators. The way in which molluscs grow shells is rather similar to the way humans grow nails. A fold of skin, called the mantle, builds up, layer by layer, until all the layers harden to form the shell. All shells are a mixture of horn and chalky crystals that remain intact even after the creature inside it dies. Special muscles hold the inhabitant and its shell together. As the animal grows, the shell grows with it. Shells grow fast if there is plenty of food available, the water is warm and conditions are generally good.

The best time for collecting and studying shells is during low-tide. You need nothing more than a notebook and pencil, spade, tape-measure, bucket, sieve, magnifying glass, net, plastic bags and boxes. If you are only interested in collecting shells, then you'll find plenty on the strand line or the high-tide mark. But if you want to be more adventurous and study molluscs too, then you must venture down to the low-tide mark and dig deep into the sand. Fill your sieve with sand and then wash the sand away. Chances are that you'll catch a variety of bivalves (two part shells) at the bottom. Make careful notes – measurements, colour and description. Observe how they dig back into the sand. It's far easier to

locate and study molluscs on rocky shores, because here they cannot dig themselves into the sand. They cling, instead, to crevices and cracks in rocks, or hide under them. When you remove them to inspect them, however, make absolutely sure that you replace them carefully and gently.

You can store empty shells, after washing and drying them, in boxes lined with cotton wool and covered with a thin sheet of plastic. Mark each box with the name of the shell and where you picked it up from. While a majority of the shells found on sandy beaches are bi-valves, rocky beaches abound in gastropods, where the molluscs creep up the rocks feeding on algae and seaweed by scraping them off the rocks with their rough tongues. When the tide goes out, they clamp down on to the rocks to retain and preserve vital body moisture. The molluscs of rocky shores (limpets, etc.) are hardy little creatures that can withstand the beating of the waves against the rocks.

Perhaps the most beautiful shells in the world are found in the warm waters of the Pacific and Indian Ocean, where they grow rapidly. The largest shell, the giant clam, is found here and also one of the rarest of all shells – the white-tooth cowrie. The most expensive shell is also tropical – the Bengal cone – for which a collector paid roughly 1,350 pounds! Shells have always been put to great use, both in days gone by and today. The money cowrie was used as money, as you can guess from its name; shells have been used to make jewellery; the Indian chank shell is blown at religious ceremonies and still others, like the mother-of-pearl, are used to make buttons. And, of course, the oyster is prized for its pearl. Certain bi-valves, like the noble pen shell, fasten themselves on to rocks with the help of special threads called byssus which were used to weave a very fine, silk-like cloth. Some molluscs produce a rich purple dye and, finally, large tropical shells in our country were once used for carrying water and even as babies' feeding bottles! ■

The lure of easy money

The continuous scams and cases of corruption being unearthed are signs of a country's deteriorating moral fibre. It is more easy today to be corrupt than honest. Where is India headed?



C. V. Aravind

is a Bangalore-based freelance journalist.

IN recent times, both houses of Parliament have been rocked by what has come to be known as the 'Agusta Westland' scam, which involved the purchase of VVIP choppers from a firm in Italy, with the kickback allegedly received by Indian beneficiaries for facilitating the deal. The scandal pertained to a period when the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) under Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh was in power, and a court in Italy has identified and nabbed the bribe givers and has thrown hints about people in India who have been the recipients of the money disbursed by the firm to clinch the multi-million dollar contract.

The deal however was later annulled and the firm discredited and blacklisted. The NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government and the Defence Ministry have promised to investigate the whole affair thoroughly and initiate action against all the guilty, however highly placed they might be. The Agusta Westland scam involves humungous amount; allegedly, politicians in power, air force officials who occupied the highest echelons, media representatives and middlemen et al have had their palms greased by the company. And with rumours rife of the company being allegedly allowed to indulge in espionage activities with the connivance of insiders, the whole issue has turned even more sinister. While scams are nothing new for a country which has earned sufficient notoriety for breeding criminals, what is significant is that corruption is fast turning into an epidemic with everyone who is in a position of power, be it a politician, bureaucrat or even a low level government official, keen and zealous to fall prey to the lure of easy money. For every scam that is unearthed thanks to new initiatives like the Right To Information Act and a vigilant media, hundreds continue to be buried deep.

A few years back there were reports in the media about an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) couple who had

allegedly amassed a fortune of over three to four hundred crores, an amount grossly disproportionate to their known sources of income. But even their 'achievement' pales into insignificance when compared to the exploits of a Deputy Commissioner of Transport in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, whose net worth amounted to over eight hundred crores! And the sleuths continue to unearth more! According to sources, his monthly income from bribes amounted to three crores. The Lokayuktas in several states have been conducting raids on bureaucrats and have inevitably stumbled upon huge fortunes amassed by officials whose pay packets could alone never be enough to finance such lavish lifestyles or investments in real estate.

The Bengaluru police recently busted a scam that centred around leaking question papers of public examinations, enabling the kingpin and his accomplices to make lakhs of rupees every time they were able to carry out their operations. With generous help from those in the establishment who too received their cut, the criminals managed to hoodwink the law and ply their trade, playing havoc with the careers of thousands of students. They landed in the net after they pushed their luck too far and leaked a question paper of a subject where a re-exam had been ordered. It is however a sad commentary on the state of affairs in the country, that in most cases involving criminal activities and corruption, the big fish often manage to slip away, while it is only the small fry that land in the net and are punished by the law. The situation prevailing now is such that it only requires an effort to be honest and straightforward. The present government under PM Narendra Modi has as one of its avowed objectives, the prevention of corruption in toto in all spheres of activity. Even if it is able to achieve a small percentage of success, it would be a major achievement in a land teeming with Mammon worshippers. ■



SPOTLIGHT

In search of Ramanujan

The Man Who Knew Infinity is a biopic on renowned mathematician S. Ramanujan.

SRINIVASA Ramanujan, undoubtedly one of the greatest mathematical minds of the last century, is not quite a household name in India. Not many of us know the inspiring life story of this great man, whose mathematical genius is helping fields as varied as computer science, astronomy and economics, a good century later.

The British movie *The Man Who Knew Infinity* is a fitting tribute to the Indian mathematician. It portrays the unusual relationship between two beautiful minds — S. Ramanujan who saw divinity in mathematics and G. H. Hardy, a Cambridge professor and atheist who refused to believe in what he could not prove.

Actor Dev Patel (*Slumdog Millionaire*-fame) essays the titular role of the self-taught math prodigy, while Jeremy Irons plays the Cambridge professor.

In 1913, Hardy receives a strange letter from an unknown man from Madras who

was working as a clerk in a shipping company. The 10-page letter contained astonishing formulae and

into the scholarly echelons of hallowed Cambridge.



The film sensitively tackles the psyche of a Tamil Brahmin man of the early 20th century and the pain he feels as he struggles to survive in a foreign land, battling prejudice.

Ramanujan stayed in Cambridge for five years. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and a Fellow of Trinity College, which was a rare honour.

Sadly, the climate and the food there did not suit him, and he fell ill. When his health improved, he returned to India in 1919. But he fell ill again and died the following year, leaving behind just three notebooks and several letters packed with mathematical insights that have deeply influenced human thought, and continue to do so.

He was just 32.

CURIOSITY

Seed art is a form of crop art in which images are created by gluing millions of seeds together.

The seeds required for the project are first collected. Then a piece of plywood or some other hard material is selected as the background. The design is traced onto the background with a soft pencil or graphite carbon and the seeds are glued onto it. The picture is then put to dry. Finally, a coat of varnish is applied to the finished picture to give it lustre.

Seed art



Cartoons, caricatures, slogans, portraits — just about any visual effect can be created using this art.

HA! To be or not to be

Omkar: A thief just ran off with my wallet.

Soham: But you are such a good athlete! Why didn't you catch him?

Omkar: I tried my best. I even took the lead but when I looked back, he had vanished!



A single drop of water



A young boy was sent by his family to study the way of the Zen in a monastery. It was run by a renowned Zen master, Gisan. Much of the boy's days were spent in prayers and learning the sutras. Other times, he was on the rice fields or doing chores around the temple.

One day, Gisan asked the boy to heat water for his bath. The boy did not realise it, but the water began boiling and it became too hot to be handled. Gisan instructed him to fetch cold water from the well behind the monastery to cool the water.

The boy lugged two buckets of water and began pouring it into the bath. One bucketful was not enough. As he poured the second one, Gisan dipped his finger in the bath to check its temperature. When he felt it was just right, Gisan asked the boy to stop.

There was still some water left in the bucket. Without a second thought, the boy threw out the remaining water on the ground.

"What have you done, you fool?!" snapped Gisan. "Could you not have poured the water on that tree or on the flower bed? You should not have wasted that water."

The boy's eyes brimmed with tears as the venerable teacher continued, "Child, there is no rain at this time of the year and water is not easy to come by. Even a single drop of water is precious."

At that moment, the boy gained a new understanding of Zen. He adopted the name Tekisui,

which means 'a single drop of water' and grew up to become a famous Zen teacher himself.

— A Zen Tale



CURIOSITY

What is a QR code?

YOU must have noticed advertisements in magazines, newspapers and posters sporting a decorative black-and-white patterned box lately. It is the QR code — the newest addition in the world of instant information. QR is short for Quick Response. It is a two-dimensional barcode, similar to those found on products at a supermarket. However, the QR code is more advanced as it can store a lot of complex information like text messages, websites, emails, symbols, etc.



The QR code was invented in 1994 by Denso-Wave, a Toyota subsidiary, to track vehicles during the manufacturing process.

Nowadays, smartphones come equipped with barcode readers. This has popularised the use of the QR code. The smartphone user simply scans the QR code printed on an advertisement, which then grants him access to the relevant information on the company website automatically.

The application is free and easy to use. Anybody can create his own QR code with the help of QR generators, which are available online.

PUZZLE

Biking Fun

Suresh, Dinesh and Mahesh have a contest to see who bikes the most distance. Together Suresh and Dinesh bike 21 kilometres. The combined total for Suresh and Mahesh is 19. Together Mahesh and Dinesh ride 22 kilometres. Who is the winner?



Answer:

Let Suresh be 'S', Mahesh be 'M' and Dinesh be 'D'.
 $S + D = 21$, so $D = 21 - S$
 $S + M = 19$, so $M = 19 - S$
 Substituting the values of D & M
 in $M + D = 22$,
 we get: $(19 - S) + (21 - S) = 22$
 $40 - 2S = 22$
 $18 = 2S$
 $9 = S$
 ∴ S = 9, M = 10 and D = 12
 ∴ Dinesh is the winner with 12 kilometres

KALANIDHI NARAYANAN

'Abhinaya' was her forte (1928-2016)

KALANIDHI Narayanan embarked on a career as a classical dancer at the age of seven, and was recognised as the first non-*devadasi* girl to perform in front of audiences in the 1930s. However, after an early marriage which was *de rigeur* in those days, she became a part of a conservative family and bid adieu to dance in the 1940s, although she had by then gained a lot of popularity in the field. A good three decades later she returned in 1973 as a dance teacher, and thereafter blazed a golden trail that ended only with her demise in February 2016 at the age of eighty seven.

Kalanidhi Ganapathy as she was known before her marriage, revealed a flair for dance even as a sprightly girl of seven, and was put under the tutelage of a number of *gurus* like Kamalakshi Ammai, daughter of the famous Veena Dhanam for *padams* and *javalis*, and Chinnayya Naidu, another teacher of repute. She trained in vocals under Manakkal Sivarajan, *nritya* under Kannappa Pillai, and picked up the nuances of *abhinaya* from Mylapore Gauri Ammal. She had her *arangetram* at the age of twelve and went on to perform in a number of concerts winning critical acclaim till she reached the age of sixteen, after which she had to hang up her anklets, as it was unthinkable in those days for married women to opt for dance as a career.

An accidental meeting with dance connoisseur and a patron of the fine arts Y.G. Doraiswamy proved instrumental in Kalanidhi Narayanan returning to the firmament of classical dance in her late forties, and at his instance she took on the assignment of teaching *abhinaya* to Alarmel Valli, a young, up and coming dancer, who needed a capable trainer. It was a challenging assignment for someone who had all but hung up her boots, and Kalanidhi had to pick up the threads all over again.

Backed by a strong will and an overwhelming desire to reach out to the world through the medium of Bharatanatyam, Kalanidhi took pains to reeducate herself and even enrolled for

a course conducted by one of her illustrious contemporaries Padma Subramaniam, to polish her skills and also fine tune her knowledge of dance theory. She soon became popular all over again, and in no time became the most sought after teacher, patronised extensively by those who were keen to hone their talents in *abhinaya*. Among her earliest students were Alarmel Valli, Malavikka Sarukkai, Protima Bedi and Pratibha Prahlad, all of whom went on to carve their own

niche in the world of dance. She established dance schools all over the world and continuously travelled abroad even in her later years to monitor the progress of the institutions and also to brief her senior students who functioned as instructors. A noteworthy feature of her dance schools was that the students were given a firm grounding in the dance form and were also allowed sufficient leeway to improvise.

It was in her second *avatar* as a teacher that Kalanidhi Narayanan touched the dizzy heights of fame and her glorious second innings saw her winning a number of coveted awards as well. She was a recipient of the Padma Bhushan from the Government of India in 1985, the Sangeet Natak Academy Award in 1990, and the prestigious Kalidas Samman in 1998. She also published and released several

CDs and DVDs on the various aspects of the dance form, and most of them contained live demonstrations by her, and these have served as valuable references to those interested in learning dance in its most pristine form. Many of her students and art critics paid handsome tributes to the late dancer, and a number of them recalled her mastery over the *navarasas* and how her expressive eyes and face could convey a wealth of emotions in a jiffy. A celebrated and honoured dancer who was ranked on par with greats like Balasaraswathi, Kalanidhi Narayanan has certainly left her indelible imprint as a teacher. ■

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



SHAKUNTALA DEVI

The human computer (1929-2013)

WHO can forget Shakuntala Devi, the 'human computer'? A writer, mental calculator and a child prodigy, she earned a place in the 1982 edition of *The Guinness Book of World Records*. Born on November 4 1929 in Bangalore, into a very poor Brahmin Kannadiga family, her father who instead of becoming a priest opted to be a circus artiste, could ill-afford her school fee of ₹ 2, and so she never attended school. However, the 3-year-old, accompanying her father to the circus, was mesmerised with his performances.

Later, he introduced her to the world of mathematics, teaching her interesting card tricks that initiated her love for numbers. Her ability to solve difficult mathematical problems soon spread like wildfire and she enthralled audiences with her wit and card-tricks, while her father entertained them with rope-walking.

She had her first major show at the University of Mysore at 6 years, where she displayed her mathematical prowess by solving arithmetical problems, mental math questions and finding out complex square roots and cube roots within a few seconds. At Annamalai University at the age of 8, she was finally acknowledged as a 'child prodigy'.

Never resorting to using any mechanical device, she shot to greater fame by mentally calculating one of the toughest mathematical multiplications 10 seconds faster than the fastest and the most efficient computer of the time. Her adept calculations and her confident demeanour won her plaudits. Albert Einstein, taken aback by her skills, called her a 'Mathematical Wizard'.

Through the 1950s, she toured the world and performed in a number of institutions, theatres and even appeared on television. On October 5 1950, at a BBC show, host Leslie Mitchell gave her a complex math problem to solve, which she did in seconds, but he contested her answer. However, on Devi's insistence, there was a re-check and the host conceded. This earned her the sobriquet of the 'Human Computer'.

The popular Bob Wellings of the BBC show, 'Nationwide' on Sept. 27, 1973, was stunned when she managed give the right answers to all the mathematical questions that he bombarded her with. In 1977 she received a standing ovation from an audience of erudite mathematicians, when she gave

the answer of the 23rd root of a 201-digit number in 50 seconds. The most powerful computer at the time took exactly 62 seconds.

Fortunately, unlike many other child prodigies, her mathematical skills did not wane in her teenage and adult years. Apart from being an unparalleled mathematician, Devi was also an astrologer, activist and a prolific writer, whose works inspired millions of people. Some of her best-known works are 'Figuring: the Joy of Numbers', 'Astrology for You', 'Perfect Murder' and 'The World of Homosexuals'. 'Puzzles to Puzzle You' is considered one of her best works for aspiring and budding mathematicians.

Among her awards included the 'Distinguished Woman of the Year Award' in 1969, from the University of Philippines, along with a gold medal; the 'Ramanujan Mathematical Genius Award' in 1988, conferred by then Indian Ambassador to U.S. and also enlisted in the '1995 Guinness Book of World Records' edition for her outstanding mathematical feat, where she beat the world's fastest computer at multiplying two thirteen digit numbers.

A month before her death, she was honoured with the 'Lifetime Achievement Award' in Mumbai, in 2013. She set up the 'Educational Foundation Public Trust' to promote mathematical, astrological and philosophical studies in Bangalore.

Married to Paritosh Banerjee, an IAS officer from Kolkata, in the mid-1960s, the couple however, separated in 1979 (due to his homosexuality). In 1980, she contested the Lok Sabha elections as an independent, from Bombay South and Medak, Andhra Pradesh, "to defend the people of Medak from being fooled by Mrs. Gandhi", but lost.

She soon began offering astrological advice to celebrities and politicians. Towards the end of her life, Devi grew frail. Her health soon began to deteriorate after her kidneys failed, and she breathed her last on April 21, 2013. On 4 November 2013, Devi was honoured with a Google Doodle for what would have been her 84th birthday! ■

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



WING COMMANDER PADAMNABHA GAUTAM, MVC, BAR VM

Courageous soldier (1933-1972)

PADAMNABHA Gautam (Bob) was the youngest of the three brothers who joined the Indian Air Force (IAF). He was born on 23 July 1933, and was commissioned on 1 April 1953. Flt. Lt. Gautam was serving in No. 5 Squadron, known as Tuskers, when the six Canberra planes of the unit moved to Congo in October 1961 to support the operations of the UN (United Nations) Forces. Wing Commander Soares was the commanding officer. The squadron reached Congo on 12 October and were immediately rushed into operations. Four F 86 fighters of Ethiopia also joined the UN Air Wing. On 5 December, the Canberra planes were given the task of attacking airfields at Jadotville and Kolwezi. Flying was highly risky as at some places, the clouds base was only 120 metres from the surface.

Soares led the attack on Kolwezi airfield and strafed two aircrafts parked on the runway. Flt. Lt. Gautam destroyed the Fouga aircraft which had been harassing the UN ground forces. He also shot up three Katangese planes parked on the airfield and neutralised the airport installations around them. Subsequently, he flew successful missions in support of the ground forces operating against the rebels. He was awarded the Vayu Sena medal (Gallantry). The rebel forces headed by Tshombe realised the futility of fighting against the UN Forces and recognised the unity of Congo. He signed the Kitona Agreement.

Squadron Leader Gautam was commanding Jet Bomber Conversion Unit (JBCU) at Agra in the 1965 War. The PAF (Pakistan Air Force) had moved the entire fleet of B 57 bombers to Peshawar, believing it to be beyond the range of IAF strike aircraft. PAF had supersonic F 104 Starfighters equipped with Sidewinder AIM 9B missiles and night intercept capability. It had received effective radar chain from USA for early warning. The target was at extreme flying range that limited fuel, payload and tactical routing. Against such odds, strike by Canerras was a suicidal mission. The IAF met the challenge as destruction of the B 57 bombers of PAF was a priority task. On 13 September, eight Canberras took off for Peshawar and stealthily approached Peshawar. The first

Canberra dropped flares to light up the airfield and then dropped the 4000 pound bomb next to the parked bombers. Bombs from other Canberras set the buildings and fuel dump on fire and returned. A lone Starfighter of PAF tried to intercept the retreating bomber force and launched a missile. Sqn. Ldr. Gautam saw a streak of flame appear in the darkness. Luck favored the brave and the missile exploded harmlessly, possibly due to its proximity fuse malfunctioning. All eight Canberras landed safely at Agra. It was the most outstanding feat of the 1965 War. Gautam undertook six more missions for close support and reconnaissance deep into enemy territory and was awarded MVC.

In 1971, Gautam was commanding officer of No. 16 Squadron (Black Cobras), located at Gorakhpur. Sqn. Ldr. K.K. Dutta was the navigation leader and Gautam gave him freedom to devise procedures to improve the operational efficiency of the unit. The usual procedure of fixed Time over Target (TOT) to the leading aircraft and others following at ten minutes interval helped the defenders to aim at the subsequent aircraft. Dutta introduced flexible timings. The unpredictability of TOT gave an advantage to the attacker. Gautam was informed on 7 October that his unit would be mainly employed for strikes on airfields at

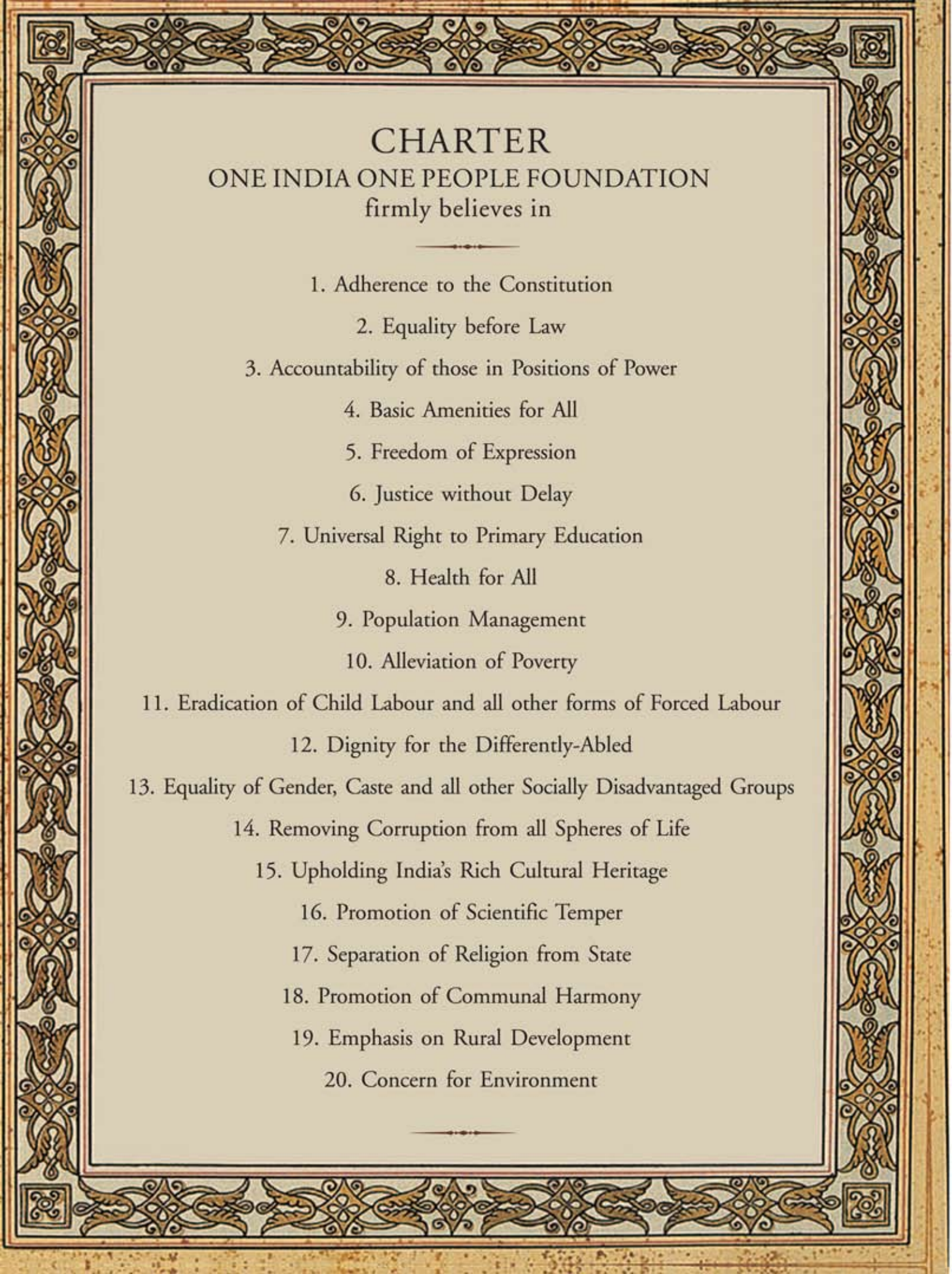
Tezgaon, Kurmutola, Jessore and Chittagong in East Pakistan with occasional missions into West Pakistan. Gautam divided the unit into two groups - one each for East and West. On 3 December, eight Canberras took off to Dacca and four to West Pakistan. On 5 and 7 December, Gautam led attack on Mianwali airfield, where they met intense ground fire. He displayed cool and clear planning and courage in the best traditions of the IAF. He was awarded Bar to MVC.

He died in an MIG 21 accident due to engine flame out on 25 November 1972, at Pune. He loved flying and was a legend in the IAF. He was one of the two officers in the IAF to have received MVC twice. ■

– 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