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#Swachh Bharat

A campaign to clean India

**When we gotta go,
where do we go?**

What a waste!

Hey Ganga!

KNOW INDIA BETTER
Gulbarga and Bidar
The lament of the Bahamani

FACE TO FACE
Dr. P. S. Vivek

MORPARIA'S PAGE

GAALI GALOCH!



VALLEY BALOCH!



NO HELMET, NO PETROL IS O.K...



BUT NO BRAINS, NO TWO-WHEELERS, IS WHAT'S REQUIRED.

NOT PLASTIC ... THE POOR COWS THERE SUFFER FROM EATING TOO MUCH

LATEX!



RATU'S FATHER IS DAMN WEAK AND SUPERSTITIOUS. PETER'S FATHER IS DAMN LAZY AND SICK.

MY DADDY STRONGEST!

ESSAY TOPIC "MY FATHER"

STICK TO JUST YOUR FATHER, OK?



ZAKIR NAIK: THE EARLY YEARS

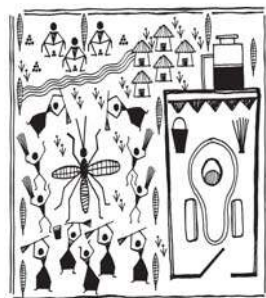
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General Arun Kumar Vaidya, PVSM, MVC



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Managing Editor
Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde

Editor
Anuradha Dhareshwar

Assistant Editor
E.Vijayalakshmi Rajan

Design
H. V. Shiv Shankar

Marketing
Mahesh Kanojia

OIOP Clubs Co-ordinator
Vaibhav Palkar

Subscription In-Charge
Nagesh Bangera

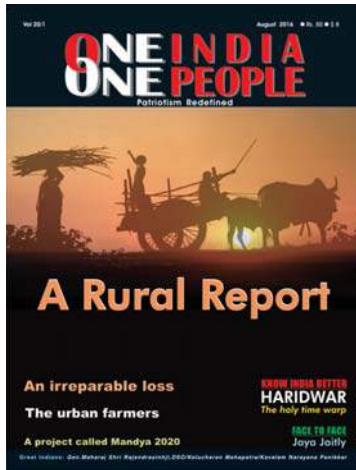
Advisory Board
Sucharita Hegde
Justice S. Radhakrishnan
Venkat R. Chary

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Mrs. Sucharita R. Hegde for
One India One People Foundation,
Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th floor,
22, Bhulabhai Desai Road,
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Fax: 022-2351 7544
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oiopsub@fouressindia.com

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



“High standard of journalism”

I am a long-time subscriber and avid reader of OIOP. A salient feature of the magazine is the apt selection of themes, month by month, over the years. This reflects a high standard of journalism. For the August issue, the choice of topic ‘A Rural Report’ is very

appropriate, considering the present-day crazy urbanisation. Two articles appearing in the issue viz., *Mandya 2020 Project* and the satire column – *The country calls*, deserve special mention. The write-up on *Mandya 2020 Project* is well-documented, with a fairly wide coverage of the selfless efforts of a pioneer in the field of organic farming. The visionary zeal

and dedication of the reformer have been nicely brought out and described in flowery style. The satire column is a master piece written in a cogent and erudite style, covering a wide spectrum of rural activities. It is comparable to the smooth flow of a calm river, with an undercurrent of subtle humour. It is heartening that the gamut is condensed in one page, underlining the adage, ‘Brevity is the soul of wit’. It presents a picture of the art of picking flowers and making a garland.

Congrats, keep it up!

S.N. Rao

Retd. Dy.Gen. Manager

Reserve Bank of India.

Thane.

Letters should be addressed to

The Editor

One India One People Foundation

Mahalaxmi Chambers, 4th Floor,

22, Bhulabhai Desai Road, Mumbai - 400 026

Tel: 022 - 2353 4400 Fax: 022-2351 7544

e-mail: oiopfoundation@gmail.com

WHO AM I?



Your nose in my soup!

We Indians like to pry. It's in our nature to be curious about everything, especially about our neighbours, whether it concerns us or not. V. Gangadhar marvels at this quality.

WHAT's in a name? We all wonder. But along with surnames and names of parents, Indians are the only people who are asked to fill in dozens or even hundreds of names in various application forms, right from birth to death. These days we find it easier to fill in application forms, asking for all sorts of details, some of them quite personal and intimate. Such applications forget one major fact – curiosity killed the cat and soon may not spare you.

Indians are immensely curious about everything happening to them and their neighbours. This was more so in the villages, where I grew up. We expected a lot from our neighbours, not just bowls of sugar or spices or salt, but even cash. I remember events when my father ran around the house desperately trying to locate new hiding places for cash or kind which were sought out by inquisitive neighbours, who had inquisitive fingers to lift various items on our tables. These could be eatables, easily portable provisions or vegetables. Many of such neighbours had what we called 'X-ray eyes', which were able to penetrate even thick envelopes and discover what was inside. Was it a divine gift, your guess is as good as mine. A particular neighbour would lift a packet of fragrant flowers freshly bought, bring it close to his nostrils and inhale deeply, of the flower's fragrance. This happened all the time, putting an end to our regular flower purchase, though I can't estimate how much the family saved by cutting out so many purchases, some needed, others not, from obstinate hawkers.

This could happen to anyone. Some slick handiwork, nimble fingers, quick appearance and disappearances. We are careless people, we clutter our houses with unwanted goods, which cry out to be whisked away without anyone's knowledge. We are intensely curious about guests to our

neighbours' homes, particularly those who arrive with large suitcases and plenty of cash to throw about. We reached our own conclusions drawn from popular film scripts, these men could be smugglers. Underworld Dons or lucky winners of huge lotteries. Well, we drew our own conclusions as the neighbours moved in and out.

There were other taboos... on where one came from or where one was going to. Certain places were taboo while we were in school. There was a line drawn, which youngsters were not to cross. Even the simple village *paan* shop usually patronised by the village elders. The boys of my age group (6-14) were not allowed anywhere near the shop. Even an accidental discovery of our presence led to some severe caning at home. The logic of such a violent reaction was that it was just one step away from those despicable addictions like tobacco and liquor, and worse. All these conclusions were drawn from misinformation, rumours and suspicion.

A policeman may have just taken a casual round of the village and being tired, halted in front of your house for some shade and rest. This was enough to set off rumours that the police were seen inside your house, some seen carrying suitcases filled with gems from king Solomon's mines! Within an hour all types of rumours would be floating around! The same would be the case if you were seen coming out of a police station. It will be wise to study



a recent judgment of the Punjab and Haryana High Court stating that merely being called to the police station regarding a complaint did not amount to criminal defamation. But how many of us pay attention to such information? ■

The writer is a well-known satirist.

Indians are immensely curious about everything happening to them and their neighbours. This was more so in the villages, where I grew up. We expected a lot from our neighbours, not just bowls of sugar or spices or salt, but even cash.

Where we squat

*A pioneer of the sanitation movement in India has been **Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak**, who invented Sulabh Shauchalaya, the low-cost public toilet system, which freed many manual scavengers of their degrading, inhuman work. Here, he talks about his idea which changed where India defecates. While lauding Prime Minister Modi's campaign of achieving an open-defecation-free India by 2019, he cautions that a lot still needs to be done.*

WHEN we talk about cleanliness, sanitation, and the need to make India free from open defecation and manual scavenging (that is, cleaning of human excreta with bare hands), the name of Mahatma Gandhi surfaces in our mind. It is because Gandhi set a personal example of cleanliness throughout his life, and he regularly and passionately wrote articles on sanitation.

Gandhi walked the talk

In 1901, when he came to India from South Africa to attend the Congress annual conference in Calcutta (now Kolkata), he did not allow the scavengers to clean the makeshift toilets, instead he himself took a broom, a shovel and a trowel, and cleaned the toilets. As Gandhi took the lead in cleaning the place and toilets, the Congress volunteers followed him. While leading the fight for the country's freedom, he would insist that people should clean their own home and toilet, and give up the practice of engaging untouchables to do such drudgery. He also asked fellow Indians to use trench latrines as far as possible to stop manual scavenging, and he wanted that the bucket toilets (which had to be cleaned by the untouchables), should be converted into sanitary toilets. The Mahatma thus had a wish to end manual scavenging and make India clean even before the Independence of the country. After Gandhi, many attempts were made by the Government and social organisations to solve these problems, but they could not find effective solutions.

I joined the Bihar Gandhi Centenary Celebration Committee in 1968, as I was inspired by the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi. I would like to briefly narrate two incidents to make my point. While I was a child, I touched an 'untouchable' woman, and for that my grandmother forced me to swallow a mixture of cow dung and cow urine, and bathed me in the Ganga water in the chilly winter to purify me. After joining the Centenary Committee, I was living in a colony of untouchables in Bettiah town in Bihar, and here I encountered an accident in which a boy wearing red shirt was attacked by a bull. The people rushed to save him but somebody shouted



Prime Minister Modi cleaning the Assi Ghat at Varanasi

from the crowd that he was from the untouchables' colony, and the people left him in the injured state. We took him to the hospital, but the boy died.

At that point, I took a vow to fulfill Gandhi's dream of sanitation and liberation of manual scavengers. To cut a long story short, I strove and invented the technology of two-pit pour-flush ecological compost toilet, popularly known as Sulabh Shauchalaya. Had I not invented this technology, there was no chance of ending the practice of open defecation and manual scavenging. This technology facilitated conversions of the bucket toilets into sanitary ones, and emancipation of the scavengers from the odious job of cleaning nightsoil. This technology paved the way for women getting easy access to toilet, girls going to school, and children being saved from diseases like diarrhoea and dysentery.

Today, my endeavour is to work as a bridge between Mahatma Gandhi and the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi. After Gandhi, the present Prime Minister is the first national leader who has seriously taken up the cause of making India clean and free from open defecation. He announced from the Red Fort on 15 August 2014, that India should be free

from open defecation by 2019. He himself took the broom in his hand and cleaned dirty places in Delhi; he also cleaned the Assi Ghat in Varanasi and that place has now become a place of attraction for locals and tourists.

Nothing is impossible

No doubt, to make India open-defecation-free (ODF) is a herculean task, but it is not impossible. To achieve this goal, we have to construct nearly 12 crore toilets. As I have explained on many occasions, India has 686 districts, 6849 blocks, 2.51 lakh panchayats and 6.46 lakh villages. So to create the infrastructure to achieve the target, one youngster from each panchayat will have to be trained in motivation, education, implementation, maintenance and follow-up, and that youngster will work as a change agent. We have named him a Sulabh Fellow and this change-maker with the help of two masons and four labourers can construct 20 toilets in a month, 240 in a year and in three years 720 toilets. One change-maker in one panchayat can build 720 toilets, so if 2.51 lakh panchayats can opt for this, they can build 180 million toilets. We require about 120 million toilets, so even if the performance or speed of work is less than expected, even then we can easily construct 120 million toilets in three years.

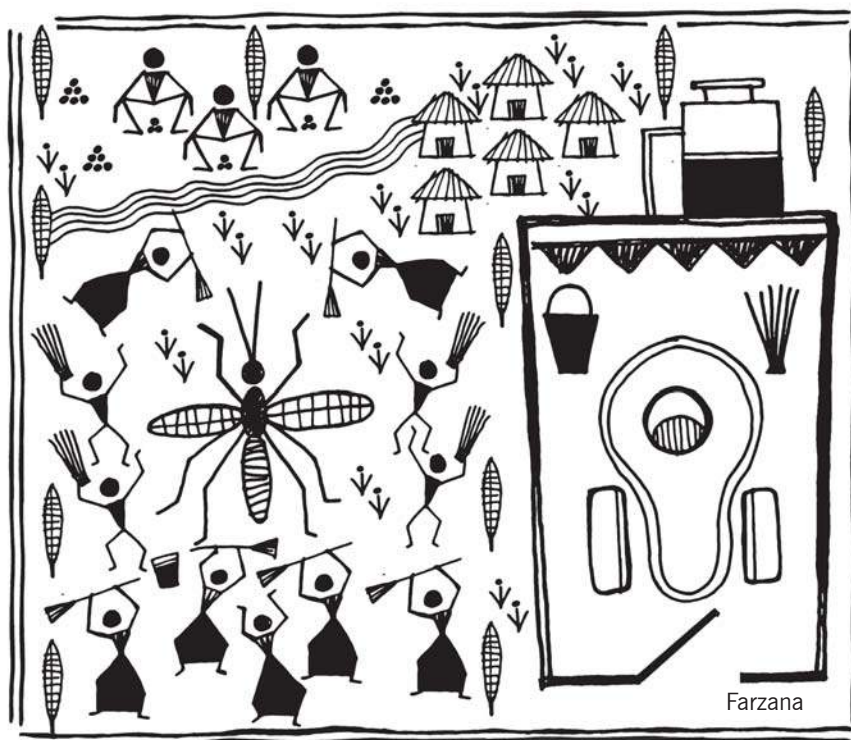
The cost of a good quality toilet is roughly ₹ 30,000. The Government of India is giving ₹ 12,000 at present as subsidy, and rest of the amount can be given by the banks as interest-free loan to be recovered in easy installments. Better still, the Government should enhance the subsidy to ₹ 25,000 and the bank should give ₹ 5,000 as a loan to the beneficiary. I am suggesting some loan to prevent the misuse of money: If the amount is less than 100% subsidy, there is lesser chance of misuse of money.



World's largest toilet complex at Pandharpur, Maharashtra (Sulabh has constructed a cluster of eight mega toilet apartments comprising 1,417 toilet units, in the vicinity of the temple in Pandharpur in Maharashtra, which is used by over 1.5 lakh persons daily)

There is another option. We have 16,057 companies with a net profit of more than ₹ 500 crore, and we have 1,000

companies whose profits are more than ₹ 10,000 crore. So if these companies are persuaded to take responsibility of making one district open-defecation-free, they can provide the money for the construction of toilets in the district. The Bharti Foundation of the Airtel Company is doing this for the district of Ludhiana in Punjab. There is no reason why other rich companies cannot



do this for all the 686 districts of India. Yet another option is that the Government reaches out to the Non-Resident Indians, who are about 20 million in the world, and persuade them to give money to build toilets. If this happens, we can build 120 million toilets within the stipulated three years.

(Continued on page 10)

When we gotta go, where do we go?

The truth stares at our face, sometimes literally – more than half of India's population doesn't have access to a toilet. Thus, open defecation is the norm. This unhealthy habit is responsible for the spread of many diseases, apart from causing great indignity to the poor. Dr. P.S. Vivek writes about this unsanitary reality, and the nascent, but laudatory efforts being made to address it.

HERE's the stinking truth. More than half of the 1.2 billion people in India live without toilets. Nearly 60% of the world's open defecation occurs in India. They squat on roadsides, in agricultural fields or at railway tracks, and defecate in the open. This, despite the Indian government spending close to ₹1,250 billion on water and sanitation projects in the last 20 years.

In a world filled with uncertainty and unseen risks, the dream of a cleaner and healthier country is the best way to live a better life. The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan may not be a maiden attempt at cleanliness, but was resuscitated by the Government of India (GOI) in 2015, in keeping with Mahatma Gandhi's quest for a clean India.

The menace of open defecation, manual scavenging, severe shortage of proper drainage systems in rural and urban areas, and resultant outbreak of epidemics of malaria, dengue and viral diseases like diarrhea, affect a majority of Indians. According to a latest UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) report, around 595 million people defecate in the open in India, leading to health and environmental issues.

The condition of Indian public toilets is known to everybody. They are in such filthy conditions that people normally don't care to use it. And whoever uses it in an emergency, may end up with some serious infection or disease. These toilets need to be monitored to be kept clean. 'Even if we construct toilets, there is no proper sewage mechanism to support it, there is never any running water. The toilets require daily cleaning, but the maintenance never happens', said a member of a Local Residents Welfare Association (LRWA) in Mumbai.

The sorry state of affairs has been confirmed by the latest baseline survey under the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, earlier, Total Sanitation Campaign, under progress across the country. The survey figures collected so far, mention that 54.7 percent



Defecation in the field, a sad reality in rural India

households in the country are without toilets. The number is likely to go up sharply, considering that data is still being collected. So far, only a fraction of the total 252,824 gram panchayats in the country have been covered under the survey.

The urban story

The Census 2011 provisional data had revealed a similar grim picture, mentioning that less than 31 per cent of the Indian population has access to sanitation facilities. The figures had caused huge embarrassment to GOI as the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation had claimed more than 57 percent sanitation coverage.

Many urban residents use toilets wherever sanitation access is available. Most often, these are not connected to underground sewerage networks. It is estimated that 75-80% of water pollution by volume is from domestic sewage. Only 160 out of nearly 8,000 towns have both sewerage systems and a sewage treatment plant.

It is pertinent to note that only 13% of piped sewerage is

currently treated. Additionally, treatment capacity is highly uneven, with 40% of India's total treatment capacity located in just two cities - Delhi and Mumbai. Even when there are sewerage networks, much of the waste fails to reach wastewater treatment plants.

Even a UNICEF report mentioned that the national Indian average of sanitation, hygiene and water safety is a mere 34 per cent. For the urban population it is 58 percent, whereas for the people in the rural areas, it is just 23 percent. The situation is endorsed by the Joint Monitoring Programme report, which establishes the fact that at least 40 percent of the people from poorest background have barely benefited from sanitation facilities meant for them in the last decade.

On failing to keep its promises made in the past, the GOI extended its deadline to achieve the targets. Now under the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, the government has kept 2017 as the year to declare the country free from open defecation and for ensuring hundred percent safe disposal of fecal waste.

Concerned by the situation, about 40-odd civil societies working on various issues, have come together on a joint platform to demand that the government 'keeps its promises'. A pressure group is emerging through the campaign to press the government to look at the marginalised population of the country, which is still not getting any sanitation facilities.

Flush with new ideas

India's Ministry of Urban Development launched a comprehensive policy on urban sanitation in 2008 called the National Urban Sanitation Policy (NUSP), designed to address the sanitation problem and anticipate the country's growing needs. Foremost, the NUSP calls attention to urban sanitation by noting that it is distinct from rural sanitation and water supply issues. In this context, the sanitation technology paradigm is under review.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation stimulated this review with its launch of the Reinvent the Toilet Challenge (RTTC) in 2011, promoting the development of radically new innovations to address the sanitation challenge on a large scale. The RTTC is focused on reinventing the flush toilet, a breakthrough public health invention that has not changed substantially since the first flush toilet patent was issued in 1775.

The RTTC comes at a time of growing awareness within the Indian government of the dire need for sanitation reform. This is crucial because many actors have traditionally devoted insufficient resources to the urban dimensions of the sanitation problem. The NUSP sets out goals to increase awareness of India's urban sanitation issue.

It calls for all cities to be 'open-defecation-free', and promotes comprehensive approaches to sanitation reform. Under the NUSP, the central government is also responsible

for providing technical assistance and helping to fund sanitation plans through schemes such as the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission, which has dedicated funds for urban development.

Other national programming provides alternative funding options for water supply and sanitation projects. For example, the Rajiv Awas Yojana initiative was launched in 2012 to bring urban slums under formal city management, thus improving prospects for urban service provision, although many implementation hurdles require immediate attention.

Sanitation is primarily the responsibility of urban local bodies, according to the Constitution of India. They are the fundamental administrative units in charge of infrastructure and service provision at the municipal level. As of 2014, 29 out of 35 states are engaged in preparing state sanitation plans, and 158 cities are developing city sanitation plans.

However, there is a growing recognition that these plans are highly uneven in their quality, and there is a significant gap in funding and execution of the sub-national plans. Despite these, the NUSP has fallen short of driving investment into municipal-level plans to enable their execution. More guidance and funding are needed to ensure consistency and quality of state and city level sanitation reform.

Options and models

India's extreme need for urban sanitation, combined with the decentralised nature of current policy developments, makes the country a particularly conducive place to experiment with innovations in sanitation technology and management. External funding sources are also looking to stimulate innovative sanitation solutions with enterprising cities. Although the private sector has not traditionally played an active role in sanitation, the advent of the NUSP and the increased attention from external stakeholders are gradually encouraging the private sector to become more involved.

The World Sanitation Programme (WSP) estimates that the Indian sanitation market will be valued at over US\$152 billion (between 2007 and 2020), representing a significant business opportunity for innovators and service providers. This convergence of interests presents India with a unique opportunity to stimulate change, and makes India a particularly good place to pilot the Foundation's reinvent-the-toilet technology.

A number of new models are worth noting. One example originating in the state of Kerala illustrates that private sector innovation is piloting new solutions. Eram Scientific Solutions is a private sector firm driving a new technological and business model to deliver sanitation in congested public places in India's mega-cities. Eram's eToilet is a pay-per-use model now being deployed in four states, with over 430 units installed.

The technological features of the toilet include automatic payment collection, doors, and washing mechanisms; a water tank for onsite water storage; general packet radio service (GPRS)-enabled controls for remote monitoring of the unit through the Web or mobile phones; and a solar panel to generate additional power. The toilet is designed to display advertisements on its outer shell, serving as an additional source of income.

Other developments are also unfolding to spur demand and generate new enterprises to provide sanitation services. The nonprofit organisation 'Water for People' is implementing "sanitation as a business" model for household and community toilets, and is investing in building entrepreneurial capacity in the sanitation sector. The programme also aims to strengthen the sanitation supply chain and develop sanitation providers that offer an increased array of choices in technology options.

Similar smaller scale pilots for providing public sanitation are occurring in many parts of India, bringing a community or commercial approach to operation and maintenance, with sales of advertising space, helping to underwrite the toilet facilities. Other programmes are applying stakeholder design consultations to test and enhance features and business models for public toilets, such as the work of the design firm Quicksand in Orissa. RTI International, an RTTC grantee, is looking to field test its standalone toilet in India in 2013.

Compared to a conventional toilet, which is made out of bricks, the Magic Genie EcoTech Toilets is made out of stainless steel, making it more potent, sturdy and also portable. Since it is completely automated, it requires no manpower to clean or maintain it. The toilet has automatic flush systems

and has automatic floor cleaning too.

The company behind this innovation is A2Z Group, which started to innovate and find a way to solve India's sanitation problem. The toilet cleans itself after every use, hence guaranteeing hygiene. It does not require extensive monitoring for maintenance and due to their automatic cleaning system, they are free from infections. Not only does it not require water, but it also does not need any sewer lines or septic tanks.

Conclusion

Globally, inadequate urban sanitation is a significant problem that we can address with innovative programming. India's sanitation needs are acute and, if left unmet, carry major consequences for the country and its people. Investing in sanitation is highly cost-effective. Although the sanitation challenges in India are particularly complex, several developments in sanitation policy and awareness have recently converged, presenting an opportunity to create large-scale change in the sanitation sector. Moving forward, it will be important to explicitly connect India's sanitation policies to technological innovations, to close the urban-rural sanitation gap. ■



Dr. P. S. Vivek has been a teacher of sociology for the last 30 years. Currently, he is the Senior Professor of Sociology at the University of Mumbai. He is involved in socially relevant academic research, like, *Sociology of Spitting and Problems and prospects of Kalee-Peelees (Taxi trade) in Mumbai*. He has presented academic research papers at various conferences in India and abroad. He has authored ten books, the *World of Garbage and Waste* being the last one published in 2015.

Where we squat

(Continued from page 7)

I would like to suggest that the amount should be given to the beneficiaries by the banks to save the misuse of money, and prevent the possible problems between the Central and State governments.

However, there should be only one nodal NGO at the national level to monitor the progress of work by various Government agencies. The Government can help generate resource mobilisation, monitoring and supervision, but the motivation, education, communication, training, designing, estimation, implementation, maintenance and follow-up should be done by NGOs at the apex level. They will ensure that the change agent at the panchayat level effectively works as a link between the banks and the beneficiaries, and get the toilets constructed. The change agents will also follow-up for two years to ensure that the toilets are

functioning well and being used properly by the people. If a toilet has some problem, it will be the responsibility of the change maker to rectify it. If we are able to take this course, I think that within three years, the dream of the Prime Minister Modi to make India open-defecation-free by 2019, can be realised. ■

Dr. Pathak is a winner of several national and international awards for his work on sanitation, like the Padma Bhushan, the International Saint Francis Prize for Environment, the Stockholm Water Prize and so on. More recently, he was selected by the *Time* magazine as one of the Heroes of the Environment for the designer's low-cost toilet that has helped the planet, improved



sanitation for millions and freed countless scavengers from a life of cleaning human waste. He is ranked by *The Economist* (November 2015) amongst the World's Top 50 diversity figures in public life along with US President Barack Obama, Angelina Jolie and Bill Gates. He has also contributed in the areas of bio-energy and bio-fertiliser, liquid and solid waste management, poverty alleviation, and integrated rehabilitation programme for the liberated scavengers.

What a waste!

*For managing our waste, we still depend on big agencies with their mega machines and budgets, whereas a lot of waste sorting and recycling can and is done by the ubiquitous rag pickers. It's time to incorporate them into the system, says **Dr. Sanjay K. Gupta**. He believes we should think small and local, rather than big.*

EVERY day, urban India generates more than 200,000 tons of municipal waste at a minimum 300 gram per capita per day, and anticipated to catch up with developed countries at 600 gram or more by 2020. Some cities have already crossed 500 grams per capita daily, of which 85% is unceremoniously dumped without processing and treatment in open dumps, including the Ganga, Yamuna, Brahmaputra and many more rivers and seas. This 85% of open dumping and burning causes public health hazard, deteriorates the environment and causes climate change.

Near 6% of GHG (Green House Gas) emission happens due to open dumping and burning of mixed waste. Nearly 15% of this waste is recovered by a green army of informal sector recyclers numbering more than one million today across the country, called waste pickers or rag-pickers. In most megacities, this green army of recyclers is despised, threatened, arrested, harassed by our municipal system for recovering waste from road side, containers and open dumps, and they remain largely untapped of their potential in mainstreaming them in waste management and recycling. They save more than one million US\$ every day or around (400 USD a year) for municipalities, and create recycling business opportunities of 8-10 million dollars every day. If the MSW (Municipal Solid Waste) Rules, 2016, are implemented in letter and spirit, it has the potential to create more than nearly one million sustainable jobs in door to door collection and recycling chain.

Corruption at the core

So, if our municipalities have enough resources and technological solutions available in the country, why is the situation going from bad to worse with every passing day? Here are the reasons. There is a gross lack of political commitment from the elected representatives at the municipal level along with will power among the administrative head – the Commissioners. This often becomes more complex with a lower level staff, which lacks adequate training and exposure. In India, most number of training sessions are conducted for Commissioners and engineers, but seldom for collection staff



A rag picker at a garbage dump; can she become an agent of change?

or sanitary supervisors, who actually perform the work. The conundrum of mismanagement of waste has further been engulfed in various kinds of myths like:

Myth 1: More money, more staff required

Most municipalities in India as well as other developing nations often argue that there is a need for more financial and human resources to cater to the growing urban waste problem. But were these cities any cleaner when the rapid urbanisation had not occurred? No. But if we look at the top five clean cities of India at different points of time, did they do it because they received a lot of money or had lots of resources? No. Surat, Suryapet, Namakkal, Nagpur, Latur, more recently, Warangal, Salur, Mysuru, Bobbili, Coimbatore and Alappuzha, made their cities cleaner and recycled more than 30% of their waste without much additional resources. In all of these, either the Mayor or the Commissioner took the leadership and they got their act together and made the cities clean. It was and is sheer power of what I call – commitment, honesty, will power, passion for cleanliness and the high moral values of the commissioners and mayors who took on the leadership role. Many of these cities and towns are relatively still cleaner than other cities of India.



The Deonar dumping ground in Mumbai

Myth 2: State-of-the-art technology or the magic solutions

Our experts from municipalities and the crony consultants, and large waste management companies will often argue vociferously in favour of high end technology and massive industrial type processing of waste, with investment of billions of dollars. The bigger and the more so-called sophisticated state-of-the-art technology or the magic solution it is, the higher the chances of failure both for collection and processing for countries, particularly processing and treatment. And the reason why they want compactors, tippers, waste incineration, pyrolysis, and plasma arc plants, is clear; all these require big investments which translate into bigger commissions. Currently, any agency which has received a contract from a municipality, needs to bribe anywhere between 5-30% to get their bills approved. The failure of “Bigger is Better” technology in India is so conspicuous – Timarpur, Okhla and other RDF (Refuse Derived Fuel) plants of Andhra Pradesh, bio-methanisation plant of 300 ton capacity in Lucknow, all have failed, but the idea of magic solution still mesmerises many municipalities because of the sheer money and the resultant crony benefits to some. There are no magic solutions to waste problem and certainly not burning mixed waste in incinerators. The required investment in these technologies is often exaggerated by 3-4 times. The solution for India lies in strengthening the existing system and integrating the informal sector in collection and recycling. The informal sector can remove more than 60% of inorganic waste from dumpsites with little investment, and save more energy through recycling

that can be generated through mass burning of waste. Two such beautiful systems of Latur and Pimpri Chinchwad of two pickers’ cooperative were sabotaged because the waste pickers’ cooperative could not grease the palm of elected and administrative officials. The municipality wanted to push a large private contractor at a much higher cost to just collect and dump. One such example of waste pickers’ cooperative in Pune is still serving 400,000 households, providing livelihood to 4,000 waste pickers, though often under great duress. There are other several small initiatives like this but not scaling to city level due to waste governance deficit. Hasirudala, another waste picker cooperative in Bangalore has over 3,500 waste pickers and recovers more recyclables than the entire municipal staff engaged in collection and transportation, at a much lower cost.

In the last few years, there has been a spurt in setting up of the so-called state-of-the-art incineration/RDF plants. My prediction is that very few of these will see the light of the day, and even if it becomes operational under political fuel, it will damage environment, public health and the recyclers of informal sector, the concrete evidences of this already has emerged from various surveys. The Okhla plant in Delhi is a live example of this. Dumpsites in almost all cities are already handling more waste than they can hold, and finding new landfills near cities is almost impossible due to public protest and bad management of dumpsite or even landfill sites by both municipalities and private operators. The solution lies in decentralised processing, and developing regional landfill sites.

Myth 3: Big contractor, local or multi-national, can help solve the problem

In the name of providing integrated solid waste management, there is often an inclination to call tenders which favour large companies including putting certain harsh conditions, which keeps the small but good players out. None of the cities figured in the cleanest city of the country when it employed these large companies in the last one decade. They relied on good local players, including SHG (Self-Help Groups) of women, waste picker cooperatives or even local NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) and small contractors. In Hyderabad, the cost of SWM (Solid Waste Management) per ton is less in the areas where very small private sector participated, compared to the areas serviced by municipality or big private sector elsewhere. In Mumbai, it is found that the cost of per ton of SWM is US\$35 with community participation and local NGOs, US\$41 with public private partnership (PPP) and US\$44 when done by municipality on its own. It is even lesser with waste pickers' cooperative working in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad at US\$28, with higher recycling rates and consequent higher waste diversion from dumpsites. Hence, community participation and involving local players trained in SWM is the 'least cost option' solution, and hence there is a strong case for comprehensively involving the informal sector waste pickers in it. The informal sector actually makes a difference in climate change mitigation through GHG reduction by recycling 15-20% of waste with no cost to the municipality. When you recycle more you nearly save more than half of the energy than if you would have to do it through extracting natural resources or produce it by burning waste in incinerators. India now also has many improved bio-methanisation system which can produce one MW of clean energy from 80-100 tons of separated organic waste or 230-240 cylinders of cooking gas at constant temperature from the same. And the cost of this is one third of any incineration plant. The investment cost can be recovered in 4-6 years time by selling the gas or the energy.

One of the key reasons for failure in delivering even a decent level of SWM services is lack of a separate division within the municipality, making it unaccountable for the mess. There are just a few exceptions to this like Surat, which has relatively much better SWM systems than any other city of India.

Are citizens responsible?

Lack of municipal by-laws or enforcement of penalties regarding littering and non-segregation are the two worst forms of waste governance deficits that happen in India. If you do not enforce it, you can never keep your city clean for long time, the reason being that there will always be in

every society those who litter. Developed countries like Singapore, Switzerland, USA or Nordic countries are not clean only because its population is very educated or disciplined, but it's also the fear of heavy penalty that makes it work. It is the best form of awareness, for making the public understand the value of work done by the municipality. It is important that people must learn to pay for SWM services. The provision for payment for waste services are there in the laws but are not enforced because of objections by politicians. An informal survey carried out strongly indicates that people will pay and do segregation if there are systems in place and the laws enforced. The reason citizens are reluctant or raise objection to service fee is that municipalities have never provided that kind of efficient and quality services, that one can go and ask for service fee for SWM. The efficiency and quality of services is directly linked with willingness to pay or not, by the citizens.

Myth 4: Corruption has no connection to cleaner cities

Look at the top ten cleanest cities of the world, to name a few, not necessarily in the same order, Calgary, Honolulu, Helsinki, Kobe, Oslo, Adelaide, Brisbane, Wellington etc., and the corruption index. Is there a link between cleaner cities and corruption free cities? That certainly seems to be the case. These are the cities from the same countries which also figure in top 20 least corrupt countries of the world. There is a close link between good waste governance, cleaner cities and corrupt and filthy cities.

There is a huge need to reform municipal governance along with building capacity of the lower staff of the municipal systems. The Swachh Bharat Mission will not succeed as long as we do not see a much better commitment from Commissioners and Mayors working with the same goals of Swachha Mission. Political rivalries are killing a lot of initiatives at the municipal level. More than two years of Swachh Mission has not produced any desirable results due to the huge governance deficit that plague our municipalities. ■

Dr. Sanjay K. Gupta has a professional background in Water, Sanitation and Waste Management. He has worked extensively on Policy Research and Advocacy with hands on implementation in waste management, water and sanitation, recycling value chains and integration of informal sector in developing and transitional countries. He prepared the National Strategy for Integrated Solid Waste Management for Bhutan along with revising its National Waste Management Regulations. He regularly speaks at international conferences and contributes to waste management research. He is also a repeat speaker at TEDx – the most well known platform for people who have made an impact in the world. His recent contribution has been on Global Waste Management Outlook and Rapid Assessment Tool for Waste to Energy Offers.



Hey Ganga!

The Ganga River is in deep distress. Despite more than three decades of plans and huge budgets to rejuvenate the river, it's still in the doldrums. What will it take to clean up this revered and controversial river? Dr. Gopal Krishna analyses all the Ganga rescue plans and tells us what will most likely work.

THE Ganga River system epitomises all that has gone wrong with our rivers. Under the Indian Constitution, water is the responsibility of the states, while the central government provides planning and funding. But this has historically led to no one being responsible for managing our rivers, let alone adopting any holistic approach for long term sustainability. With the shifting onus of responsibility and skewed planning, the question is – will the Ganga and our other rivers survive the threat from banks, companies, contractors, politicians, embedded scholars and religious leaders? The BJP-led NDA government has set up an Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission – *Namami Gange* – for the rejuvenation of the Ganga and its tributaries. Will it work for the river and its people?

Ganga cleanup – a pipe dream?

Rejuvenation of Ganga has been in focus since the last 30 years. The revival of Ganga is one of the litmus tests which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set for himself and his government. The Ganga basin spreads over 239 parliamentary constituencies comprising 80 seats of Uttar Pradesh, 40 of Bihar, 40 of West Bengal, 25 of Madhya Pradesh, 16 of Rajasthan, 12 of Jharkhand, eight of Haryana, five of Uttarakhand, four of Chhattisgarh, two of Himachal Pradesh and seven of Delhi. Ganga's catchment area falls in four countries - India, Nepal, Tibet-China, and Bangladesh. Yet, the planning and action viz., the river betrays a rather fragmented vision and approach.

Uma Bharti, Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation has pointed out the “large gap between sewage generation and availability of sewage treatment capacity”. The PM has chaired the meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) and called for an “uncompromising mission-mode approach” to stop further pollution of the Ganga. He said the task at hand could not be accomplished without *jan-bhaagidaari* (people's participation).

The issue of *jan bhaagidari* can only be understood in relation to *sarkari bhaagidaari* (government participation), bank *bhaagidari* (participation of banks), company *bhaagidari*

(participation of companies), *thekedar bhaagidari* (participation of contractors), *siyaasi bhaagidari* (participation of political parties), and Ganga *bhaagidari* (participation of Ganga). But the meeting confined itself to the quality of water of the Ganga River alone. And even with regard to water quality, it did not address all the water sources in the Ganga Basin and its relationship with soil pollution.

Given the fact that the Ganga and its basin have been divided into a large number of ongoing and proposed projects that focus on water quantity and include diversion of rivers for the Interlinking of Rivers Project; NGRBA could have paid attention to how depletion of water due to extraction in myriad ways has deteriorated the river's water quality. Incidentally, *jan bhaagidari* is never discussed while endorsing and approving projects which pollute and degrade the Ganga! BJP's (Bharatiya Janata Party) 2014 election manifesto referred to *jan bhaagidari* as it promised to “Ensure the cleanliness, purity and uninterrupted flow of the Ganga on priority. Massive Clean Rivers Programme across the country driven by people's participation.” But the survival of the river and its basin hardly seems to be a priority.

The Ganga plans

The efforts in the aftermath of the submission to the government of the 217-page Ganga River Basin Management Plan (GRBMP) dated January, 2015, along with eight mission reports and many thematic reports, assumes significance. This plan has been prepared by a consortium of seven IITs (Indian Institute of Technology) and other institutions. The plan provides a draft of a 36-page National River Ganga Basin Management Bill, 2015, which proposes a National River Ganga Basin Management Commission (NRGBMC) and a National River Ganga Basin Tribunal (NGRBT). As per the draft Bill, the NRGBMC is “to serve as a custodian of the Ganga Basin and to work for its upkeep and improvement on the premise that the health of the National River Ganga is a key indicator of the health of NRGB (National River Ganga Basin) as a whole.” It is starkly evident that this “whole” of “National Ganga” is structurally actually only a part of the ‘international Ganga’, but the plan fails to accommodate this reality.

The plan is likely to face massive opposition from the residents of the Ganga Basin states because it recommends, in effect, that Ganga should be nationalised now that it has been declared the “National River Ganga”, disregarding the universal truth about its evident international character. In due course, the plan is likely to face criticism from the Ganga Basin countries as well.

The plan document states it categorically that “no concerted effort has been made till date on the legislative front against exploitation of rivers in various ways. Many issues concerning river management do not fall within the present legislative frame, such as maintenance of environmental flows, protection of a river basin’s ecology and biodiversity, maintenance of ground water table, consolidated plans for diversion of river waters in different stretches, discharge of sewage, obstruction to river flows and loss of connectivity, use of floodplains and active floodplains, etc.” Having said that, the plan goes on to suggest “an integrated river basin management plan approach that focuses on maintenance and restoration of wholesomeness of rivers of the Ganga Basin”. It is interesting to note that the plan document reposes its entire faith in “the proposed Ganga River Basin Management Act” for fulfilling the aim of prohibiting and regulating “activities that affect the wholesomeness of rivers.” It does not seem to realise that undemocratic economic enterprises and their activities are beyond regulation, because they are donors of political parties who expect a quid pro quo response in lieu of their donations.

Himalayan concerns

The plan document further underlines, “The Himalayan glacier-fed head-streams of National River Ganga, as also her many Himalayan tributaries, bring in considerable water, sediment and nutrients into the river almost round-the-year, thus ensuring perennial life-giving flow in the river and fertility to her floodplains. The Himalayan connection thus plays a significant role in the basin dynamics.” Notably, the plan admits the land building function of the river which is generally ignored by the government and project proponents. It states that the Ganga River network not only conveys water, but also transfers enormous amounts of eroded Himalayan sediments to the sea. The alluvial deposits of the basin constitute large and highly productive multi-aquifer systems in NRGB, which are a major storehouse of groundwater.

Now, the challenges facing the Ganga’s restoration

There remains a structural flaw in the conceptual design of initiatives for saving the Ganga, which spreads across northern and eastern India and neighbouring countries, from the Himalayas to the Bay of Bengal. The plan recommends

“research to determine ecological limits, thresholds and interconnections of NRGB’s water resources and river flow health assessments within the framework of ecohydrology.” This is a virtual admission of ignorance in the face of massive land use changes and exploitative economic activities in the basin.

The plan has recommended control and restriction of geologically hazardous activities including deep groundwater withdrawals, underground excavations, explosions, tunnelling, mining, fracking and operation of large reservoirs. It recommends region-specific restrictions on geomorphologically harmful land-use practices such as deforestation and construction activities on hill slopes and in floodplains, excessive agricultural tillage, sand and gravel mining from river beds and river bank modifications, besides drainage improvement of low-lying areas and stabilisation of disturbed areas.

The blueprint

Four ministries – water resources, transport, environment and tourism – met to discuss the road map for the Ganga. The IMG has proposed to construct 11 terminals on the banks of the Ganga’s Varanasi-Hoogly stretch for freight movement, along with barrages every 100 km. As per the blueprint, it is proposed to conduct dredging to provide a width of 45 m and for a 3 m draft (depth) to enable transport of passengers and goods between Varanasi and Hoogly on the River Ganga in the first stage of its development. Such a proposal without a proper cumulative environment impact assessment leads to serious doubts. Meanwhile, a 2012 Parliamentary Committee report revealed that so far ₹ 39, 225.95 crore has been spent on cleaning of the river under various schemes or projects. As of now, it can only be hoped that the initiative of the Modi government will chart a new course.

What the World Bank and the UNESCO say

These deliberations need to be looked at in a context. A World Bank document of 2009 titled *United Nations World Water Development Report 4: Managing Water under Uncertainty and Risk*, published by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) states: “The National Ganga River Basin Authority in India, with the financial support of the World Bank, launched a programme in 2009 to clean the Ganges, to ensure that ‘no untreated municipal sewage or industrial effluents would be discharged into the river by 2020. Previous action plans did not improve the health of the river, in which almost 95 per cent of the pollution is caused by sewers and open drains. This time the governmental approach has moved from a town centric approach to a broader river basin approach.”

But the UNESCO report's treatment of the Ganga Basin, the largest river basin of the country, leaves a lot to be desired. The report fails to list any achievement of the Ganga River Basin Authority that was set up in February 2009. It does not scrutinise whether or not the promised 'broader river basin approach' has indeed been adopted. It does not dwell on the split personality of the World Bank either. The Bank has been undertaking contradictory projects in the Ganga Basin. It depletes water quality of the Ganga by supporting dams upstream, and it provides loans for improvement of water quality in its downstream.

If the Bank knew that the Ganga Basin is an international river basin but it chose to refer to it as 'national', accepting its faulty description by the government, the UNESCO report, like the Bank, failed to comprehend that the Ganga, like the Mekong, is a trans-boundary river of the Himalayan watershed.

The Basin approach

While the commercial benefits of damming rivers have been talked about a lot, the in-stream and off-stream monetary and non-monetary benefits and advantages of flowing rivers have not been assessed so far. Doesn't the basin approach mean undertaking that assessment?

One can refer to initiatives under the Ganga River Basin Authority as the Third Phase of Ganga Action Plan (GAP-III), which promised a river basin approach which could have affected the quality and quantity of surface water, groundwater and the survival of natural flow of the rivers in the basin. GAP-I, which was to be completed by March 1990 was extended till March 2000 when it was declared complete, but Phase I of the Plan is not yet fully complete. GAP-II which was to be completed in 2001 was extended till December 2008. This too remains incomplete.

It is not surprising that GAP-III also failed, because it applied only to 79 percent of the Ganga Basin, which is in India. It did not include 13 percent of Ganga Basin that is in Nepal, 4 percent in Bangladesh and 4 percent in Tibet. It did not factor in its relationship with the river systems of the composite Ganga-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin and its consequences. More than 30 years have passed, but admittedly no "concerted efforts" have been made to alleviate the suffering of the Ganga. The efforts underway do not qualify to be a holistic effort towards that end.

The fourth phase for the protection of the Ganga (GAP-IV) has been initiated by the Modi government. It is evident that this phase is simply a continuation of the previous phase with greater advertisement blitzkrieg. The fact remains that unless measures for protection of the river are situated in the policies of industry, power, agriculture, urban development, health and environment by the central government, the governments of

11 Ganga Basin states, neighbouring countries, industry bodies, political parties, contractors and religious organisations, this phase too will meet a similar fate.

The government will have to examine and deploy the relevance of the Ganga River Basin Approach because the river channels have been amputated from the flood plains, besides the amputation of the river channel itself. If the Ganga Basin approach is indeed adopted, then as per Comptroller Auditor General's audit reports, there is a need to strengthen the environmental clearance process which is being weakened with each passing day. The blind enthusiasm about mega projects like Ganga Water Expressway and 'interlinking of rivers' scheme must factor in the fact that the Ganga, an inter-generational heritage of our civilisation is more important than development, and the ecological entity of the river basin is non-negotiable.

Meanwhile, the government has set up an Integrated Ganga Conservation Mission called *Namami Gange*. The central government has given its approval for establishment of the Clean Ganga Fund (CGF). The Cabinet set up CGF with voluntary contributions from residents of the country and Non-Resident Indians/Persons of Indian Origin. Domestic donors are eligible for tax benefits as applicable in the case of the *Swachh Bharat Kosh*. This Fund finances activities outlined under the *Namami Gange* programme for cleaning of the River Ganga.

Amidst institutional constraints emerging from irrational budgetary allocations, as a consequence of the Plan, the NGRBA has been structurally compelled to adopt a truncated approach, though it claims to adopt a river basin approach for comprehensive planning and management. It covers only 79 per cent of the basin that lies in the Indian territory and does not even represent all the 239 parliamentary constituencies and all the states in the basin.

Here is a litmus test for the government vis-à-vis protection of the Ganga. Pursuant to the Cabinet note on the Ganga, the Prime Minister could issue an enforceable order banning discharge of industrial effluents and domestic sewage into the Ganga, its tributaries and the groundwater aquifers of its basin, besides banning projects like barrages on it. It can demonstrate its political will and its commitment for saving the holy river and its basin, to begin with. ■



Dr. Gopal Krishna is Editor, *ToxicsWatch*, and a public policy analyst. He is also convener of Ganga Bachao Samiti and is a co-petitioner in the National Green Tribunal for Ganga's protection.

A toilet is not the end product

Indian corporate houses – both in the public and private sectors - have long been spending a part of their profits on community development. However, the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan has given an added opportunity to India Inc to be part of the systematic and visible change envisaged by the government. Mangala Chandran writes about how corporates can participate in this social transformation.

TODAY, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encompasses concepts like triple bottom line, corporate citizenship, strategic philanthropy, shared value, corporate sustainability and business responsibility.

Sustainability is a core principle of CSR. In India, CSR tends to focus on what is done with profits after they are realised. On the other hand, sustainability is about factoring the social and environmental impacts of conducting business, that is, how profits are really made. Globally, the notion of CSR and sustainability seem to be converging.

Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR needs to be addressed in a larger perspective. Every profit making organisation holds responsibility to contribute not only to the development of people or community immediately connected to its activities, but also to the overall national vision of bringing in a total societal transformation. Though large organisations have been spending money on healthcare, education, skill development etc., the government's initiatives under Swachh Bharat has opened up opportunities for public-private partnerships (PPP), and also to look at the objectives with a pan-India perspective. The focus has also to be in areas like budget allocation, involvement of top management, communication tools, sensitisation at work place, and a strategic approach to create partnership and infrastructure.

As part of the Companies Act, 2013, companies have to spend at least two per cent of their net profit on CSR. Schedule VII under the Act clearly spells out areas for intervention that corporates can take up. These range from promotion of education, health care, employment generation, etc.

The government expects to generate close to ₹ 2 lakh crore by mandating 30% of the companies' spend on CSR. The government has announced that the corporate spending on SBM (Swachh Bharat Mission) and Clean Ganga will be counted as CSR spend. 'Swachh Bharat Kosh' and 'Clean Ganga Fund' have found place in schedule VII of the Company Act.

It is estimated that ₹1.96 lakh crore will be required to make rural India 'Open Defecation Free' (ODF). There are various ways by which the corporates can spend a part of their



Corporates can help fund toilets like the one above

CSR funds: sanitation activities, undertaking 'Information-Education-Communication' (IEC) & 'Behaviour Change Communication' (BCC) activities, or by facilitating waste management processes. There is ample scope for the corporate sector to innovate and undertake a range of activities under CSR. Yet, it has been reported that the number of companies which have come forward to support the programme, and the overall spending on SBM in rural areas, is small.

But all corporate houses may not agree to this. In an interview with *Clean India Journal* last year, Rajiv Dubey, Group President - HR & Corporate Services, and Chairman – Group CSR Council, Mahindra & Mahindra had stated, "Under the Swachh Bharat initiative, we have constructed over 4,500 toilets in schools spread over 13 states, mostly in deep rural areas. However, construction of toilets is just the beginning. The problem has been the upkeep and use." He said the company was trying to create an eco-system that will ensure better maintenance and hygiene standards. This also comes with the sense of ownership. "Until the users of the toilets understand this, the change will not take place."

A. Sudhakar, Sr. Executive Director, Head - Global Human Capital & CSR, Dabur India Ltd., said during an interaction that though many companies have joined Prime Minister Modi's call and are committing investments towards building

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Out of class

*In this increasingly digital and uncaring society, incorporating children in hands-on social campaigns like Swachh Bharat is a master stroke, says **Charu Nautiyal**. She narrates her school's participation in this campaign and how it benefits the students and the society.*

BEING an educator is a unique experience, because one never stops learning. As teachers and administrators, almost half of our life span is spent in the school. Every day is a feeling of being schooled again. If your teacher was able to make a profound impact on you, there is a very good chance of the baton being carried forward. Schooling involves a certain sense of dynamism where constant interaction with bright young minds keeps the educators charged every single day.

At Dunne's Institute we believe that it is not so important what a child brings in to the school with him in the morning, instead what he takes back with him in the afternoon forms the skeleton of the entire teaching and learning process. Children learn less by instruction and more by action. In their formative years if we instill the right values, it goes a long way in evolving conscientious citizens of tomorrow, who are ever eager to return to the society, more than what they received.

Children as responsible citizens

Socially useful productive work is an important part of education at Dunne's Institute. Children are made to understand that there is more joy in giving than receiving. Our chief focus areas are cleanliness, the girl child, education and the stray animals who have no one to turn to for help. Since 2015, the school has participated whole-heartedly in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'dream project' of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. The school on several occasions has participated in community cleanliness projects. Both the teachers and students went to different colonies in Colaba and physically cleaned some areas. They were appreciated by Colaba residents as well as the people of the locality where the cleanliness drive was undertaken. We were also part of 'My dream Colaba' project of 2013, where the students worked with experts from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), Boston. Two of our students did commendable work and their maps were put up in two prominent government offices.

Children require continuous physical, emotional, and social encouragement to overcome various challenges of life. It is the responsibility of the school to inculcate initiative, leadership, and vigour in a child, to undertake projects which



Students of Dunne's Institute take part regularly in social service campaigns

are outside the classroom. They must be encouraged to look for solutions to problems which have a wider angle. In my long teaching career, I have observed that children enjoy the feeling of being assigned special tasks. The idea of being the chosen one pushes up the self-esteem of a child. He walks that extra length to prove that he or she is both bankable and dependable. School too benefits from different co-curricular and social activities because we are able to develop a balanced individual with a greater outreach to different aspects of life. Children, once aware of their special talents, can nurture them for better career prospects in future. Schools are the real nurseries where synergy between vocation and avocation can be created to secure a child's future.

Our children both from the Primary and Secondary travelled to Sassoon Docks on several occasions to convince the fishermen and women to keep the area clean, and send their children to school instead of employing them from a very young age. They also visited the slums of Cuff Parade on a door-to-door campaign to request parents to send their children to school, especially the girl child. Dunne's Institute offers special scholarships to the girl child. The cost of their education is borne by the school. We have also had some film shows in school sensitising our children towards stray animals. Compassion learnt in formative years goes a long way in creating a peaceful society which shuns violence in all forms.

Charity begins at home

Like charity, cleanliness too begins at home. Dunne's Institute is proud to be housed in a Heritage building. We try and keep our school spic and span including the washrooms. Children deserve a clean and healthy space to grow and progress. Cleanliness is after all Godliness. A big thank you to our Prime Minister for undertaking the Swachh Bharat mission at the national level, which hopefully will turn into a movement and refurbish the image of our country in the eyes of the world. It will attract more tourists giving better economic opportunities to the locals. Here, I would like to make a mention of the good work being done by our local Corporator, Mr. Makrand Narvekar. He has worked hard to improve the civic amenities in Colaba. He has been a true friend of both the school and the community. He has taken a number of initiatives to clean up a number of localities, including the slums. We are happy to have teamed up with him for many cleanliness and tree plantation projects. He has got the main road both in the front and back of the school repaired twice, and has put speed breakers for the safety of our children, in the last five years.

As the Principal of Dunnes Institute I see tremendous scope in collaboration of local communities with the schools of that area. The community can take the lead in identifying both civic and social problems with the help of elected

representatives. The next logical step would be to work for solutions with the support of residents, as well as the school children. Children are quick learners and are ever eager to explore the creative avenues outside the classroom. For them, it is a welcome break from routine classroom learning, to learn something more exciting and challenging. Children have a knack of coming out with novel and innovative solutions. Through both social and civic projects, we give them an opportunity to look for solutions rather than handing them one. At a very young age, if we instill right values, it will make them conscious of both rights and duties. Ours is a country of a billion people with, perhaps a billion problems. Even the most efficient government will not succeed to solve it for us. Solutions must come from citizens. We must also allow our children to bear a small torch. Together, we will find our way. ■



Charu Nautiyal is Principal, Dunne's Institute, an ICSE school in Colaba, Mumbai. She is a versatile educator since the past 25 years and being an Army wife, has travelled and taught in several schools across the country. Her special endeavour at Dunne's Institute has been to promote inclusive education by integrating children with special needs. She also likes to write articles and plays. She has also attended many workshops and leadership training courses around the world.

A toilet is not the end product

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toilets, not much thought was given to the maintenance of these. "So we have been taking cautious and calculated steps in our CSR programmes which are aimed at sanitation." Along with building toilets in several rural villages, the company is also developing a sustainable model for regular maintenance. "We have decided to financially support the poor households in construction of toilets, and also to educate them about proper use and regular cleaning of toilets and the need for washing hands. Working through Self-Help Groups (SHG), holding awareness meetings, empowering women, holding demos for hygiene practices, cleaning of roads, providing treated water, cleaning equipment or waste bins, and even getting public places cleaned can add to the CSR agenda.

Kiran Majumdar Shaw, CMD (Chairman and Managing Director), Biocon, also agreed that the construction of a community toilet is not an end in itself. Maintenance is very crucial." "We gave the management of the community toilets to the local people and paid their salaries. We also have to ensure uninterrupted water supply." The government should encourage the private sector to come up with very innovative toilet design. That will ensure better use of CSR money. CSR money could also be used for building effluent treatment plants. "It can be a PPP project where the government provides the funds to build toilets and the business houses construct sewage

treatment plant, and make sure that all the lines are properly connected to the treatment plants."

The real challenge of maintenance

If we are serious about making India open-defecation-free, we should look beyond numbers both in terms of funding and toilets constructed. It can be said that the real challenge is not in building toilets but what comes after that. The possible areas for corporate involvement could include adoption of villages or public places, bringing about behavioural changes, funding technology inclusion, training of masons, plumbers etc, and scientific waste management.

CSR can be a game changer. Investments can produce social benefits in the areas of cleanliness, hygiene and sanitation. The original concept of CSR involving maximisation of bottom line has now been re-written. CSR is one of the ways by which organisations can demonstrate their involvement and commitment to the society they belong to. In a way, this gives opportunities to share the burden of specific civic departments that need advice and a push. ■



Mangala Chandran is Editor-in-Chief of magazines *Buildotech* (Building Technology, Sustainability, Design and Maintenance), *Clean India Journal* (Cleanliness and Hygiene practices, sanitation, facility services and technology), and *Trafficinfrotech* (Traffic management/infrastructure, ITS, urban transport, safety/security, etc.) She has over 35 years of experience of in-depth writing, reviewing and communication.

A tale of two countries

*Why does India have so many sanitary challenges, while countries like Singapore have managed to set up and maintain excellent facilities for their citizens? **Shivani Ekkanath** explains this and tries her best to be upbeat about the Modi campaign of Swachh Bharat, which promises to end open defecation, with toilets for all.*

CLEANLINESS is Godliness', has become one of those platitudes that we never pay much heed to. But when one hears rather appalling facts like India accounts for nearly 60 percent of open defecation in the world, that phrase suddenly comes to hold grave significance.

Thus began Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in the year 2014. The Swachh Vidyalaya Abhiyan and Rashtriya Swachhata Kosh were imbibed in the movement.

Modi's vision for the future is now a recurring concept in many of his endeavors. It is an attempt to not only inspire more confidence within voters, but is also a sincere move to evolve India's perception and support the impoverished. Swachh Bharat thoroughly encompasses this, as it is one of the most decisive initiatives undertaken at such a large scale. Swachh Bharat is a commitment to the people of India. To summarise, I see it as an impetus for change.

Hearing stories about how the Navlewadi village has been equipped with 35,000 litres of water tanks, the missions in Rajasthan, Chaura's spring clean-up, the Swachh Bharat tax, and the eradication of waste in the Puzhakkal village in Thrissur, Kerala, would make one feel that these developments will pave the way for a clean India.

But when I compare the size, issues and mindsets of the people in both Singapore (where I study), and India, I do think that achieving Modi's goal for a clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2019 is an astronomical ambition.

The Singapore legend

Living in Singapore, sanitation has never crossed my mind, as it has never been an area of concern. Consequently, I have perpetually heard the statement 'clean and green country', be it from a tourist, resident or citizen.

But after living in a place with varying degrees of absolutely pristine bathrooms and immaculate pavements, I still find it incredibly difficult to decipher how Singapore has maintained such steady footing on this particular path.

However, writing these words down has not only made the mélange of thoughts in my mind clearer, but I have



A clean and green Singapore; the citizens are very much invested in its cleanliness

somehow developed a diverse outlook with regards to Swachh Bharat when I contemplate Singapore's progression over the years with regards to sanitation. In my opinion, Singapore's resolute and dedicated attitude after it attained independence from Malaysia (then Malaya), played a pivotal role.

The government instilled the concept of guardianship among the people. This remains a common ideal that every citizen here adheres to, till this day. The excise duties and taxes that are levied due to littering are some common regulations. Bins are almost ubiquitous. Probably even more than trees. With such compliances, many have developed the unconscious wisdom within them to keep the environment clean.

The inception of the Deep Tunnel Sewage System after 1965 led to the eradication of the hated pit latrine – the primary contributor to all manner of disease. Moreover, funds were spent on improving public housing, as the government saw it as a top priority to address.

Ten years were entirely spent on cleaning up the Singapore River. The establishment of the NGO, World Toilet Organisation, introduction of the NEWater plant and Marina Barrage, soon followed. This greatly enhanced the nature of the intensive pursuit towards cleanliness.

There is one fact which is quite clear here. Prioritisation.

And the India story

Unfortunately, India has fallen very short in this regard. Even though I am a proud Indian who shows off the Ashok Sthambh on her passport, it is almost as though our indifference has exacerbated the issue. Granted, our recent history has been tumultuous. But Singapore unlike India has always seen sanitation as a key priority in their policies and goals.

Without beating around the bush this is the truth. The pestilential virus that has pervaded the system here in India is corruption, along with other inefficiencies, as funds have not been allocated effectively. Bringing up some of the questionable actions of local authorities, public corporations and middlemen, will highlight this.

The monsoon rains of 2011, for instance, comes to mind while discussing this matter – the government was not decisive enough to help local slum dwellers in Mumbai combat the issues that were brought about by the sudden leakages in pipes. Many people contracted various water – borne diseases. Similarly, the building of toilets that were planned in Kunti, Jharkand, never yielded much progress in overcoming open defecation. India being a developing, but thriving economy, has an array of problems to address. 'Swachh Bharat' is becoming one of them.

This debilitating crisis has affected many sectors and institutions. Swachh Bharat now has to work its way through each. Winning this long and overwhelming crusade is especially hard due to the number of institutions and establishments that would need to be integrated and involved.

Unlike Singapore, India's complicated and intricate system makes the situation all the more complex. Not only will there have to be a lot of private sector participation, but settlements like slums, roads, railways and other services will also be significantly affected. The ideology is nothing but a microcosm. Its implementation in these services and establishments is what is the big picture.

This is predominantly because Swachh Bharat faces a massive hurdle, as generations have been deprived of clean and sanitary toilets. The toilet is not an ordinary gizmo to all of us. It has reached a magnitude where ensuring that people acclimatise well, is in itself a bigger obstacle than the provision

of the toilets! An NSSO (National Sample Survey Organisation) survey confirmed this last year. We face this rather ironic situation as people have defecated and urinated out in the open for decades and this is what they have grown accustomed to. This is the truth. They may see the toilet as an intrusion into this practice.

Let's face another fact. Singapore is a nation with a population of a few million, while India has a population of more than a billion. The political systems and nature of control between the two societies is highly contrasting. Steering the nation in the right direction is an overwhelming crusade to fight. Transcending a message of positive cohesion is unfortunately too measured a process.

It is vital for everyone to realise that sanitation on its own is a massive feat to achieve. It is progressive. Some speculate that the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is going more slow, rather than steady. That is where I beg to differ. No country has it easy. Singapore did not. Supply side policies and movements like this always take long periods of time to set in.

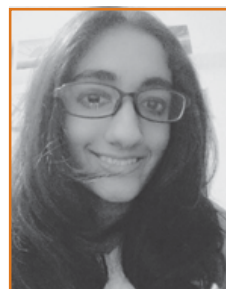
Conclusion

'Swachh Bharat' is more than a campaign. It is an ideology. As Indian citizens, this ideology needs to be etched in our minds. In Singapore, it has been built into the ethos of the minds and ideas of the people. Changing our perception towards it is vital.

If you see a change, or notice a distinguishable change - express it. Just like how we marvel at the 7.6 percent growth rate our economy has achieved, showcase that attitude when you see the progression of Swachh Bharat.

I see one toilet built as a real change. With over 31.83 lakh toilets built, massive public sector undertakings and avid participation, I do have complete hope and trust in this pioneering campaign. Let Swachh Bharat be the symbol of an 'open defecation free' India.

Yes. I am an idealist. ■



Shivani Ekanath is a 16-year-old Indian student living in Singapore. Her passions are writing and visiting India every year.

Gandhi's ideal village

"An ideal village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation...The very first problem the village worker will solve is its sanitation," he wrote. "If the worker became a voluntary scavenger, he would begin by collecting night soil and turning it into manure and sweeping village streets. He will tell people how and where they should perform daily functions and speak to them on the value of sanitation and the great injury caused by its neglect. The worker will continue to do the work whether the villagers listen to him or not".

A monumental problem

*Some traits like pride in one's country and cleanliness are inherent. These drive citizens to maintain their cities and preserve their monuments. **G. Venkatesh** rues the bad state of some of our monuments and wishes that the Swachh Bharat tax is used to rehabilitate these treasures of India.*

ON my visit to India in July 2016, I happened to visit the Hawa Mahal in Jaipur. As the name suggests, it is known to non-Indians as the Palace of the Winds. Hawa Mahal is over 200 years-old at the time of writing (not so old some would say, if one compares it to other much older structures of historic importance) – having been built by Maharaja Pratap Singh in 1799. From the outside, it is essentially a pyramid-shaped structure with 365 windows (as gathered from the information board outside the Mahal). Supposed to resemble the crown on top of Lord Krishna's head, the Mahal has five so-called 'temples' – one of which, the Hawa Mandir, lends its name to the whole structure. As the picture shows, it is made of red sandstone – and is one of many buildings constructed with this rock in the Pink City. The unique architecture of the Hawa Mahal allows cool air, courtesy the venturi effect, through the intricate lattice pattern of the building, to cool it in the hot summers which are characteristic of this part of India.



The Hawa Mahal, Jaipur: Will clean winds blow through these latticed windows?

Not so important?

One cannot help thinking how wonderful it would be if this cool air sucked into the Mahal were pure or as pure as it could possibly be? Of course, in addition to feeling comfortable, one would also want to breathe in clean air! I say this because the first impression I got about Hawa Mahal was that it was just another red-sandstone structure along a congested

highway linking Jaipur to New Delhi. This was not the case a few years ago. Hawa Mahal is surrounded by dozens of shops and not to forget, numerous vehicles plying to and fro, spewing their toxic fumes into the air – the same air which the venturi effect would suck in to cool the Hawa Mahal! Of course, in the days of Maharana Pratap Singh and for a century and a half after that, one can be certain that things must have been very different! I am not against closing down small businesses. No way. These form the nerve centres of urban economies, and also support a family or more in the process.

But won't it be possible to cordon off a few square kilometres (perhaps just 2 or 3) around such places of historic importance, as traffic-free zones – open to only

bicycles, horse carriages and camel-carts (the last two certainly likely to add to the touristic appeal of such places), but not fossil-fuel-powered vehicles of

any kind. Matheran to the northwest of Mumbai comes to mind. Perhaps, solar-powered vehicles would also be a wonderful idea (I guess Udaipur in Rajasthan has implemented this).

One good leads to another

Maintaining the appeal of such historic sites like the Hawa Mahal, could be the primary goal on the municipal or state or national government's agendas (I guess all three have a say here?), accomplishing which could fulfil one or more secondary purposes. What comes to mind at once is a possible

(Continued on page 39)

KNOW INDIA **BETTER**



BIDAR & GULBARGA

The lament of the Bahamani

All of India is a lament. To know India better is to simply become familiar with its many laments. Laments that are catalogued by names of various points in its geography. What, then, is the true nature of these places? Are they just destinations to visit, to know? The Deccan, especially, is one such place where the laments of many dynasties can be heard, where strands of history and royal armies have converged, battled it out and left many, many vestiges and versions of themselves. Discovering and delighting in these wispy strands, here, Bidar and Gulbarga, is in itself, a journey, either just begun, or just ended.

Text & Photos: Akul Tripathi



The stone keep of Bala Hisar, Gulbarga Fort

THE strand of stories from which emerge the laments that my trip to the plateau land of the Indian peninsula brought forth, itself emerges from a rope of yore. What remains on the physical plane are the fragments which once hung on a wisp that too came undone, and off it were born legends which are their own. Legends we keep so close to our heart – that of Shivaji and his Marathas, of the Gol Gumbaz and the glittering heart of Bijapur, of Vijaynagar and its glories, of Malik Ambar and Chand Bibi. But just like the human DNA is built on that which was once all ape, these legends wouldn't have come to pass, were it not for all who went before and achieved all that has come to pass in that geographical region we know as the Deccan.

From the unknown to the known

What once existed at this point on the third rock from the sun can best be guesses and innuendos. The most ancient lore of the Deccan is of when the earth erupted and hot magma raised it to its current form. This happened around 70 million human years ago. Over the course of the last 2000 years – about the only time that once can speak of with any authority and conviction, it was home to some of the greatest dynasties of Indian history. The Cholas, the Pandyas, the Cheras, the Pallavas, Chalukyas, Satvahanas, the Rashtrakutas, several others and their vassals ruled over this downward pointing raised triangle.

Somewhere along this time, the conspicuous geographical entity assumed the sobriquet of *dakkhin* in the Prakrit language, inspired from the Sanskrit *dakshin*. Anglicisation led to another

phonetic change – the Deccan. Strands from several yarns of people and places combine to form the cord that is the comprehensive story of the Deccan. On a highway that is at least 200 km from the nearest major Indian city of Hyderabad, one such strand – a short one, even by human standards. In the state of Karnataka, on the outskirts with its border with Telangana, sit the medieval city of Gulbarga and Bidar, which string a lament from what are amongst the oldest surviving relics of the Deccan.

The last decade of the 13th century saw the arrival in the Deccan of Malik Kafur and his army. The Delhi Sultanate and its ways poured in with them. Only a few decades later, Daulatabad – near present day Aurangabad, became the co-capital of Muhammad Tughlaq. However, after this failed attempt at relocating and consolidating power over the subcontinent from a central position, the power of the Tughlaq dynasty in the Deccan began to wane. Taking advantage of this, Zafar Khan, the commander of Tughlaq's army in Daulatabad declared independence, and under the title of Ala-ud-Din Bahaman Shah founded the Bahamani Empire.

The birth of Gulbarga

It was on 3rd August 1347, that in the Friday prayers at Daulatabad, Zafar Khan became the first king of the Bahamanis. The story of Zafar is as interesting as it is steeped in controversy. One version proclaims him to be the servant of a Brahmin called Gangu (Gangadhar Shastri Wabale) of Delhi, who taught him, educated him and helped him become a commander in the court of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. Passed



A view of Gulbarga Fort and Jami Masjid from Bala Hisar

on as a popular legend narrated by the 16th century poet Ferishta, the legend claims that Zafar's original name was Hassan Gangu, and he named his line as Bahamani in memory of his Brahmin patron. While there are no official sources to confirm this slave to king legend, there are some records that claim his descent from a great king called Bahaman of Iranian lore and legend. That Zafar was of Turkic descent is quite widely accepted, however regarding the method to his becoming king – perhaps both versions have some truth in it?

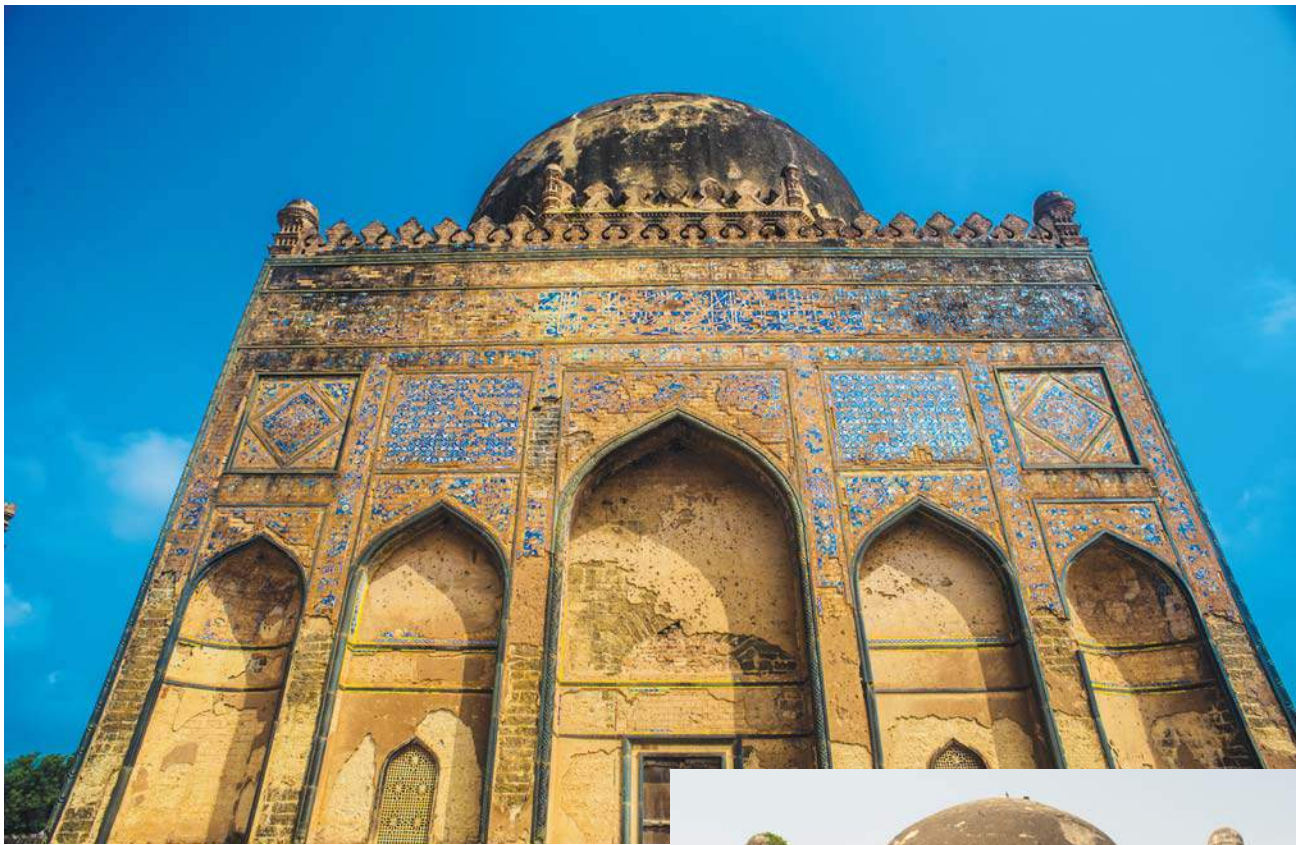
Once king, Ala-ud-Din Bahaman Shah shifted his capital from Daulatabad to Asahanabad and named it Gulbarga - the garden of flowers, severing in this one step all ties from the times of the Delhi Sultanate, and beginning the carving of his own independent story in the black stone of the Deccan. It is from this seat in Gulbarga that the Bahamanis would reign for 75 years.

The Bahamani Sultans were patrons of the Persian language and culture, and they maintained ties with the Persian court. Their patronage towards art and culture was also generous, and the reign oversaw an unprecedented blend of North Indian, South Indian and Islamic art, which matured in the coming centuries and the signs of which remain sprayed across the Deccan. The times of the Bahamanis would also come to be synonymous with the travails of the conquest of the Raichur doab – the tract of fertile land between the Krishna and the Tungabhadra River – which resulted in a series of wars with the neighbouring Vijaynagar Empire to the South. This began in the reign of Ala-ud-Din Bahaman Shah, and continued through the times of Gulbarga.

The rule of Ala-ud-Din Bahamni and later his son Muhammed Shah I, who is credited as the real maker of the Bahamani institutes, saw the blossoming on the Deccan of an unique empire in the heart of India. With powerful kingdoms in the north and south, the Bahamanis expanded east and west, and at the peak of their power, came to touch the ocean on both sides with trade ports on the Bay of Bengal and on the Arabian Sea. The kingdom was divided into four parts for administration (*tarafs*) and their reigns of able administration and smart warfare lay the foundation of a prosperous state.

The years were however, not without their own fair share of intrigue, which began in startling proportions at the demise of Muhammed Shah II in 1397. Muhammad Shah II had no sons and he adopted two sons – Firoz Shah and Ahmad I from his uncle Ahmad Khan, a son of Ala-ud-Din Bahaman Shah. However, later a son was born to him and on his death bed, he wished that his own biological son be made king after him. His son Tahmatan Shah succeeded him without any trouble.

At the time of Tahmatan's reign, there was an influential Turk Tughalchin, who by some accounts wanted to become prime minister. Tahmatan, then seventeen years of age, was infatuated with Tughalchin's married daughter and desired Tughalchin to have his daughter divorce her husband and marry him instead. Tughalchin is said to have declined this request, which angered the king, and Tahmatan plotted for Tughalchin's death along with his daughters and her husband. Tughalchin seems to have discovered the plot and instead, blinded and deposed Tahmatan, raising to the throne, his younger brother Shams-ud-Din. As the prince was a minor, all power rested in

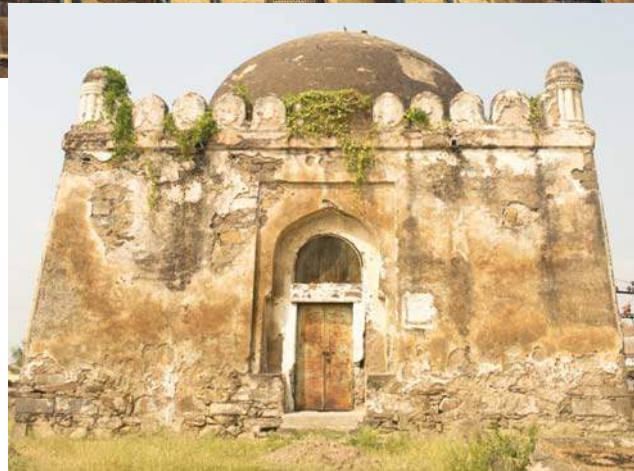


The tomb of Allauddin Ahmad Shah

the hands of Tughalchin. Another version narrates how Tughalchin, wanting to become prime minister, used the beauty of his daughter and Tahmatan's desire as a lure to assassinate him and the high nobles to secure his position as prime minister.

In the period of Shams-ud-Din's reign, the intrigue continues with accounts of Tughalchin being wary of the adopted sons Firoz and Ahmad and was moving to have them imprisoned or executed. Getting wind of this, both brothers fled from Gulbarga and after marshalling resources led an attack in which Tughalchin and his son were killed and Shams-ud-Din was deposed.

The reign of Firoz was one of monumental importance to the Bahamani kingdom. It first brought a period of stability after the few months of turmoil with Tughalchin, which was done with what might have been an extremely crafty move. In 1397, Firoz ascended the throne and was having to battle neighbours who were moving to take advantage of the unsteady state of affairs in Gulbarga. In 1398, Timur (Tamerlane) had conquered Delhi. Firoz sent an embassy to Timur and secure from him a decree bestowing on him the Deccan, Gujarat, Khandesh and Malwa. While this turned the neighbours hostile, the savage destruction of Delhi by Timur and the threat of being sandwiched between Timur and Firoz might have delayed any designs of the neighbours to attack Gulbarga, giving Firoz, an unintended ruler, time to consolidate his rule. Firoz, too never made any efforts to claim these states. Bravado turned mellow or just a cheeky diplomatic move? Perhaps no one will ever really know...



The tomb of Ala-ud-Din Bahmani

Firoz himself was an extremely educated man and regarded as an intellectual of his age. He was a calligrapher and a poet, and made many grants towards arts. It was in periods of relative peace and prosperity like these that contributed to cultural advances in the Deccan. One such major advance was the emergence of a language peculiar to the Deccan, modelled after Urdu and gaining as much prominence as Persian and Arabic. This language, called Dakhani Urdu or just Dakhani, differed from north Indian Urdu in three distinct aspects. It retained more of the Punjabi that north Indian Urdu eventually lost, it absorbed much more from Sanskrit while north Indian Urdu had borrowed more extensively from Persian, and words from Persian and Arabic were modified to match local pronunciation patterns.

The culture and administration, undeniably, remained much closer to Persian tastes than traditional Indian ones. In the reign of Firoz arrived at Gulbarga the celebrated Chisti saint

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The grave of Firoz Shah

Jamaluddin Hussain, commonly known as Hazrat Khwaja Syed Muhammad Gesu Daraz or Gesu Daraz, who built a hospice in Gulbarga and came to be venerated by both Hindus and Muslims, and whose missionary efforts attracted a lot of converts. Firoz's brother Ahmad Khan became a disciple of the saint and in a moment of ecstasy, it is said that the saint bequeathed the kingdom to Ahmad.

Now, while Ahmad had always duly and faithfully served Firoz, this prophecy alarmed him and he deposed Ahmad who escaped from Gulbarga with some of his trusted men. Gathering support with the help of a rich merchant, he returned and in battle, he cleverly defeated Firoz in 1422, who was left with no option but to abdicate in favour of his brother. The prophecy clearly manifested, but was this the intended way?

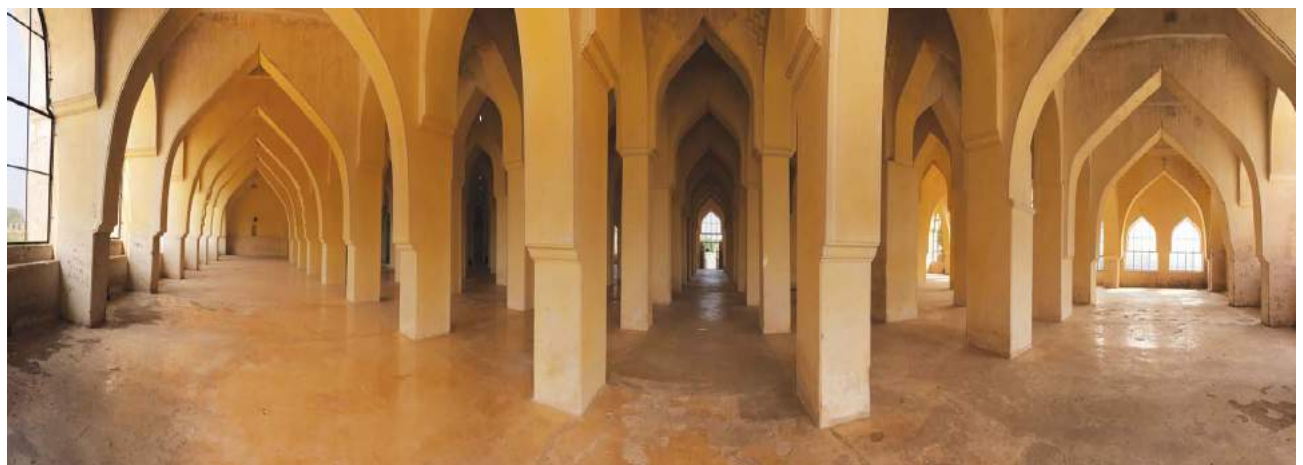
The story of the Bahamanis takes a turn from this juncture,

with Ahmad shifting the capital further east from Gulbarga to the town of Bidar, where would play out the second stage of the Bahamani lament.

Gulbarga

Before whatever did come after, one must pause and realise that it is Gulbarga, which is the spout from which it all emerged. Save some odds and ends, all that remains in Gulbarga of the dynasties and rulers that came before are memories. The Gulbarga that stands on the map today, sits still on the shoulders of the Bahamanis.

When Ala-ud-Din Bahamani shifted his capital from Daulatabad to Gulbarga, the then earthen fort of Gulbarga became home to the Sultans. This fort, now an elaborate stronghold, remains the most imposing structure of the city.



Inside Jami Masjid, Gulbarga Fort



Steps up the Bala Hisar structure

The stone, however, is from the 17th century, and during Bahamani times, only the gates would have been the stone features of the fort. It is within these walls that some of the earliest and most important ceremonial structures were built by the Bahamanis.

A moat surrounds the fort and on entering from the East Gate the most imposing structure that dominates the interiors is the free standing stone keep of Bala Hisar. A floor below the roof would once have served as the audience hall of Muhammad Shah I and his successors. A locally manufactured cannon still remains on the roof of the fort.

Within the fort premises, the largest building is the Jami Masjid, a congregational mosque, which was originally an audience chamber built in 1367. It has an austere appearance, and various architectural elements point to successive periods

of remodelling. There is within the premises a ladies mosque as well, and a smaller mosque known as *chota masjid*. From here is the access to what was once the royal market street – a wide avenue lined with square chambers that is now occupied by squatters. Two unidentified buildings and several *baolis* (water tanks) are also situated within the fort walls.

Amongst the main remnants in Gulbarga of the Bahamanis are their tombs. To the west of the fort, hidden inside narrow bylanes of residential quarters and one lane markets are scattered the tombs of the first three Bahamani kings. Quite bereft of care, these unadorned structures of monarchs – including the founder of their house – who built the city up from black stone, lie more forgotten than the rest of the Bahamanis, who are buried together in a complex to the east of the city, known as Hafta Gumbad or Seven Tombs.



The Hafta Gumbad or Seven Tombs, where the Bahamanis are buried



The audience chamber of the palace at Bidar Fort

The Hafta Gumbad is basically a royal funerary complex that consists of several mausolea set in perfect alignment across a short lane, that would once have ended at a small lake that is now dried up. In this line of tombs, there are a couple, which include a new architectural style that incorporates two domes. It is in this complex that lie buried the other early Sultans including Thamatan, Shams-ud-Din, upto Firoz Shah. The complex also contains the much smaller tomb of Firoz Shah's son and one unidentified tomb. Not far from the Hafta Gumbad is the *dargah* and tomb of Desu Garaz, who is perhaps the most respected of the Deccani saints, and the site is visited by many pilgrims.

The city of Gulbarga has also the *dargah* of Sirajuddin Junaidi, who was the spiritual adviser to the early Bahamani kings, until his death in 1380. Near this *dargah* is the Shah Bazar mosque built by Firoz Shah and the Langarki or kitchen mosque, whose *mihrab* is the most elaborately decorated of the Bahamani period. Surrounding Gulbarga are other smaller satellite settlements of Holkonda, Firozabad and Sultanpur that contain traces of the Bahamanis.

On a hill about a kilometre away from the city of Gulbarga is a structure known as the Chor (thief) Gumbad, which is not a tomb, but considered to be a monument built by Ahmad Shah to commemorate his victory over his brother Firoz Shah. A local explanation of the name is that it was once the hideout of unsavoury elements from which it gets the name. Or perhaps it was because while designed like a tomb, it is not one and it

is this trickery that earns it its name? And maybe, in having it built far from the city was Ahmad's way of symbolically preparing for a shift of capital from Gulbarga to Bidar?

The story of Bidar

Tales of Bidar begin with the Mahabharata and it is believed to be the place where Vidur lived, and hence the place was called Vidurnagara. It is also associated with the ancient kingdom of Vidarbha. Edicts from the time of Ashoka attest to this region to be the southern part of the Mauryan Empire. Ruled successively by various dynasties, it too fell to the Delhi Sultanate, being part of Tughlaq domains. When Ala-ud-Din Bahamani Shah renegaded Tughlaq and set up his own independent kingdom, Bidar became a part of it. Also known in history as Muhammadabad, it shot to national prominence when Ahmad Shah shifted the Bahamani capital here in 1432, and remained the capital till the extinction of the Bahamanis 116 years later.

Very soon after his victory over Firoz Shah, both the former king and Ahmad's spiritual adviser Gesu Daraz passed away. Ahmad Shah also defeated Warangal, and the Bay of Bengal became accessible due to the annexation. The shift in capital achieved for Ahmad Shah some significant economic and political goals. Bidar was closer to rich agricultural and mineral resources, and strategically posited on the trans-peninsular trade routes between the eastern and western coasts. The shift also took the court away from the political hotchpotch that Gulbarga



had become with the Sufi sects wielding considerable authority in well-established networks. Bidar, in many ways gave the Bahamani rulers a fresh start.

Ahmad Shah also invited from Iran the venerated Shah Nimatullah to become his spiritual guide at Bidar and possibly also to counter the might of the Gesu Daraz faction. While the Shah himself could not come, his family accepted the invitation and made Bidar and grants in the surrounding areas their home. Perhaps it is because of his close association and patronage of the sufis, that Ahmad Shah is considered a saint himself.

While the opportunity at Bidar to start something big and beautiful was bountiful, the mettle that made kings was just not the same to match those that had set up Gulbarga. However, in the reign of Ahmad Shah's grandson Humayun, a despicably cruel maniac, fortune visited and stayed with Bidar in the guise of the learned and world renowned scholar Gawan. Gawan hailed from the village of Gawan in Persia, and had traveled to sit at the feet of one of Shah Nimatullah's descendents. Eventually, Gawan became the prime minister of the kingdom and ably served under three rulers for over two decades.

The time of the Bahamanis with Gawan as the prime minister is essentially a tale of his achievements. After the early death of Humayun, there ascended, in short time, two minor princes and Gawan along with Humayun's dowager queen, and another minister carried out the affairs of Bidar. Of his many achievements, the crowning glories would definitely be the capture of Goa and the port of Dabhol on the western

coast from arch-enemies Vijaynagar, and the very astute administrative reform of dividing the existing four provinces into two each, making for eight smaller provinces so that no provincial overlord (*tarafdar*) could get too powerful. He also retained the ownership of various forts by making the governor of the forts a central government employee.

The Gawan period of Bahamani history would be the last years of peace and prosperity. Arts and scholarship flourished, and some like Bidriware – a unique metalwork that originated in Persia and was developed into an ingenious and distinct local fare renowned for its craftsmanship, remain testimonial to the patronage of the Bahamanis.

The popularity of Gawan was such that it is said that even the king Muhammad Shah III, whom Gawan was serving since the boy king ascended the throne as a minor, was jealous of his popularity. In a classical example of medieval politics and incompetent leadership, the other nobles envious of Gawan's power forged a letter between Gawan and Vijaynagar and claimed it to be proof of Gawan's treason. Despite his absolutely outstanding record of achievements for the Bahamanis, Muhammad Shah III ordered the execution of the 78-year-old Gawan in 1481. Without doubt, it was the execution of Gawan that heralded the decline of the Bahamanis.

One of the many efforts of Gawan was managing the rift between the Deccanis or Mulkis (the earliest Muslims who emigrated to the Deccan), and the Afaquis or Pardesis (Muslims who came later). Immediately after Gawan's and Sultan



The Bidar Fort stretches out pleasantly

Muhammad's death, in the reign of his son Mahmud, these disputes flared into civil war. At the court, power was captured by the leader of the Mulkis Hassan Nizam Shah while the leader of the Pardesis Yusuf Ali Shah retired to the *taraf* of Bijapur and declared his independence in 1498. In 1490, Hassan Nizam Shah was assassinated, and his son Ahmad Nizam Shah retired to Ahmadnagar and declared his independence. Taking cognisance that the independent states of Bijapur and Ahmadnagar had come to stay, Imadul Mulk, the Governor of Berar also declared his independence.

Meanwhile, the court of Bidar was the most exciting one in India at the point. A minister Qasim Barid held the king in thrall, and this Sunni minister of a Shia Sultan caused sectional differences along with the existing Deccani-Afajqi rift. Qasim Barid died in 1500, and was succeeded by his son Ali Barid, who came to be regarded as 'the fox of the Deccan' for his cunning. Continuing from his father, he did not allow the king to use any authority whatsoever. When Mahmud Shah died in 1518, he had been a puppet king for 36 years. Immediately

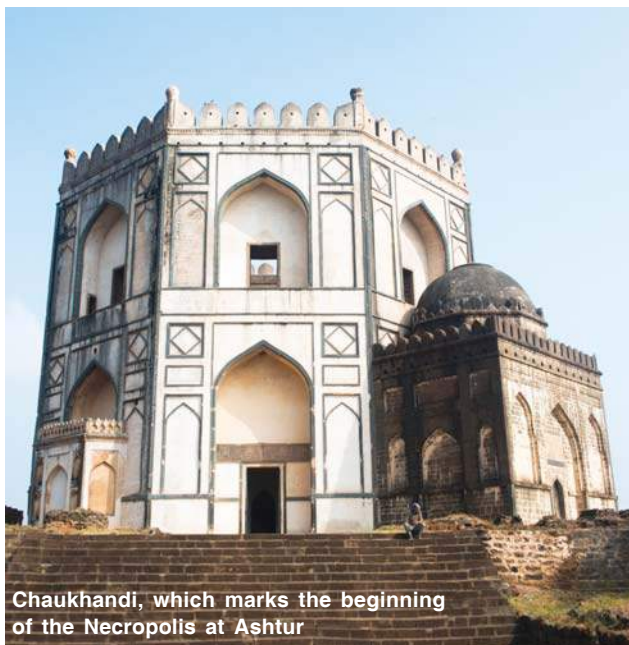
after his death, the Governor of Telangana Qutb Quli Shah declared his independence at Golconda.

Mahmud's son was a prince of spunk and chafing under the authority of Ali, planned his assassination. However, Ali foiled the plot and had the king deposed and executed. Mahmud's other son was then made king who went the same route as his elder brother. Another brother was made king by Ali Barid. It was now 1526 and it marked the stupendous arrival on the Indian stage of the Mughal Emperor Babur by overthrowing the Lodhis with sheer genius and gunpowder in the First Battle of Panipat.

Perhaps emulating his ancestor Firoz, who sent a mission to the then conqueror of Delhi Tamerlane, Bahamani King Kalim Ullah sent a secret embassy to Babur for help in ridding the Bahamanis of Barid. Though Babur received the envoys with courtesy, he expressed his inability to come for help until he settled the affairs of north India. The existence and purpose of this mission was leaked on their arrival and fearing death, Kalim Ullah fled his kingdom, first to Bijapur where he was



The damaged *madrasa* of Mahmud Gawan, which borrowed heavily from the Timurid traditions of Central Asia



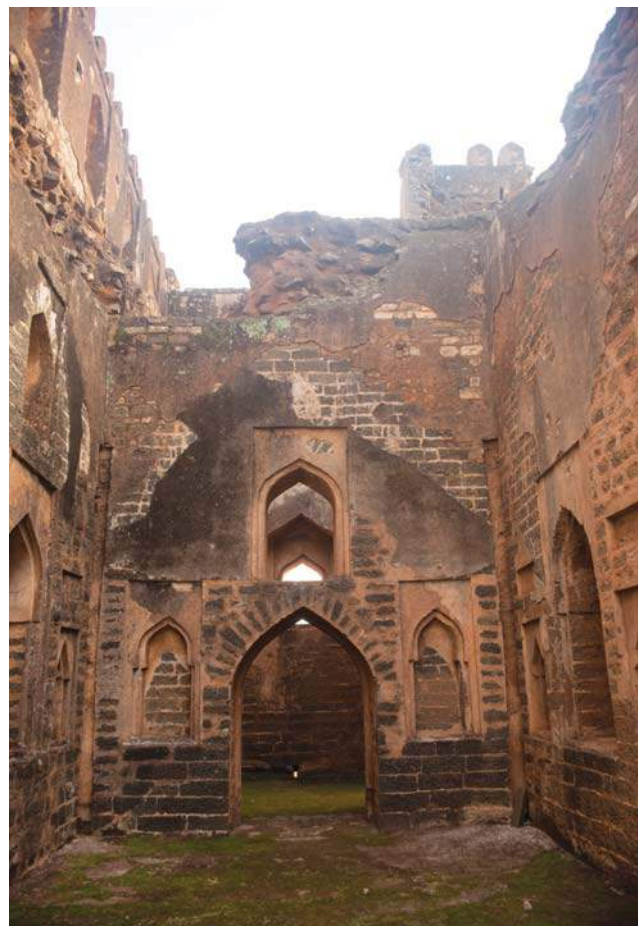
Chaukhandi, which marks the beginning of the Necropolis at Ashtur

not welcome, and then to Ahmadnagar where he was treated with due deference and then executed a few months later. With him ended the line of the Bahamani kings. Barid declared independence, and the erstwhile Bahamani kingdom gave birth to the five Deccan Sultanates of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golconda, Berar and Baridi Bidar.

The Baridis ruled a Bidar of very limited power for close to a century, bolstered through this time by the most significant event of 16th century Deccan – the defeat of Vijaynagara at the Battle of Talikota in 1565 by the combined army of the Sultanates of which the Baridis were a part.

The relics of Bidar

Like Gulabarga, the single largest relic of history is the gigantic



The ruins of the palace inside Bidar Fort

Bidar fort with its walled moat and protection by a glacis – an artificial slope to keep assailants under fire. The construction and fortifications are more elaborate and stronger than the Gulbarga fort, primarily due to its continuing importance in history during the era of gunpowder and artillery. A large part of the fortification was undertaken by Mahmud Gawan, and then further



The lightning struck tomb of Humayun the Cruel



A closer look at the *madrasa* of Mahmud Gawan

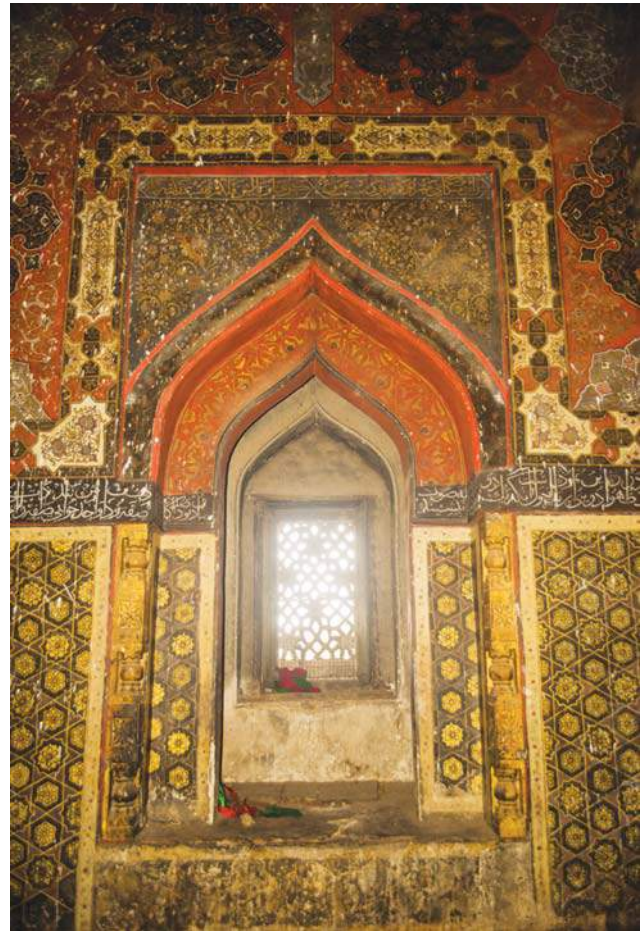
improvements were carried out by the Baridi dynasty.

Within the walls of the fort are several palaces, audience halls, elaborate gates and other buildings of administration and storage. Some of these are very well preserved and restored admirably. Of these, the Rangini Mahal deserves special mention for the absolutely exquisite wood work, and serve as an indication of the artistic delight that the buildings of Bidar must have been at their peak.

The fort with its various zones and residences remained occupied for many years after the fall of the Bahamani kingdom. With continuing improvements and embellishments, it is now largely conjecture that determines how it would have been during the times of the Bahamanis. Near the archaeological museum is the area where horses and elephants were once stabled and also within the walled confines are extensive granaries to store rice, millet, oil and other provisions necessary to supply the fort and the city. It is in these structures that the true wealth of the kingdom lay.

The other highlight in Bidar is the *madrasa* of Mahmud Gawan, which besides being a testament to his statesmanship and vision, is significant due to its borrowings from the Timurid architectural traditions of Central Asia, making it unique in India. The decorations, very few of which remain, were most likely executed by immigrant craftsmen from Uzbekistan or Iran.

Bidar was a planned city of the Bahamanis and remained an important city under subsequent rulers. The various remnants from these times, mainly in the form of tombs, lie scattered all around Bidar, and its suburbs of Nimatabad, Humnabad and Kamthana. Yet, even in death and decay, it is the Bahamanis whose tombs stand tall and are handsome even 600 years after their construction, and through half a millennia of their neglect.



Inside the tomb of Ahmad Shah I at Ashtur

The Necropolis of Ashtur

To the north east of Bidar, roughly three kilometres away, lie perhaps the most surprising monuments of Karnataka – a set of mausolea, the royal necropolis of Ashtur, which has tombs of the erstwhile Bahamani sultans and their spiritual advisers, the Nimatullahs.

Chaukhandi, a four-storied building, marks the last resting place for the descendants of Shah Nimatullah and the beginning of the necropolis. From here, the eternal blessings of the saints flow outwards to bless the deceased kings who dwell in their tombs 500 metres away.

In a 200-metre stretch, are a handful of imposing tombs placed in the middle of rolling fields as if dropped in from the air like pieces in Lego land. Some broken – dramatically at that – and others complete with tantalising remains of the grandeur they must once have exhibited, the tombs of Ashtur are a mirror to the fortunes of Bidar. Grand, oversized and then steadily diminishing in size, from that of Ahmad Shah I.

Outwardly, the most striking of the tombs is the tomb of Humayun the Cruel, which seems as menacing as the Sultan is described to be. Struck open by lightning and a broken cross section, grinning malevolently even in his afterlife. Folklore says the lightning is heaven sent as a punishment for his evil ways. It is however the inside of Ahmad Shah I's tomb that one encounters the glory the tombs were built to be.

As soon as the eye adjusts to the darkness of the tombs



The dome of Ahmad Shah's tomb at Ashtur, which reflects lights and colours, like a jewel box

spacious innards, one realises one is standing inside a veritable jewel box. In what seems like technicolour when compared to the monochrome exteriors, the tomb comes ablaze with shades of gold, vermillion, cobalt, azure bring to life floral motifs, geometric designs and Quranic verses. Still venerated as a pious, saintly king, the tomb is frequented by believers on his Urs, and also colloquially known as the Ashtur *dargah*.

The lament of the Bahamanis

And it is in this interring of the descendent of Ala-ud-Din Bahamani that one can often meet Khaleel Shah Bahaman, who claims to be a direct descendant of Ahmad Shah, and it is in this 12th generation descendant, a wood trader and cultivator of a small patch of land with modest means, found sitting at the Ashtur *dargah*, that the lament of the Bahamanis is most deafening.

The lament shrieks in the windswept silence of Ashtur, but

only till the time we fall for the lure of seeing it as an ending. For what on a grand scale might represent a tragedy is just the sum of many parts, which are in fact, happy stories with several joyous happenings before, during and following the milestones that are headlined as 'Bahamanis of Gulbarga and Bidar'.

In reality, no story is ever over. On the grandest of measures, on the scale of infinity, every story begins at *an-aadi* (before a beginning) and ends at *anant* (forever). Such it is with Gulbarga which was renamed Kalaburagi in 2014, but which will carry the garden of flowers within its headline for all who care to know. Through this prism of forever, India, suddenly, is no longer a lament. ■



The writer is a media professional and freelance writer.

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“Now look at the psyche of a city dweller. Every Mumbaikar wants garbage to be thrown outside the periphery of the city”



Professor (Dr.) P.S. Vivek, teaching in the Department of Sociology, Mumbai University, is a well-known sociologist with most of his work focussing on sweepers, scavengers and sociological genesis of urban detritus. He recently wrote a book *World of Garbage and Waste: A Socio-generic Investigation*. Dr. Vivek, in conversation with **Prabhat Sharan**, spoke about

the socio-economic reasons that have led to the mushrooming of the problem of garbage in recent times, in the towns and mega-cities of India.

Garbage has always been a major issue in our urban milieu, and though there has been a lot of talk on the issue of garbage, ironically, it remains one of the least understood phenomena. How does one define garbage holistically?

Lay persons usually refer to garbage as anything that is left over and not useful to individuals. In the view of a lay person, garbage comprises discarded items like food, clothing, materials consumed by individual households. But this is an incomplete definition, as it refuses to take into account industrial waste, agricultural waste and sewage sludge which form a major chunk of garbage in present day cities.

Can you specify as to the kind of waste that saturates urban spaces?

Studies have found that the wastes inundating a majority of the cities, both here and abroad, usually comprise non-durable goods, containers and packaging food wastes, yard wastes, inorganic wastes emanating from residential, commercial, institutional and industrial sources.

What about Indian studies? What do they reveal?

Indian studies clearly show that towns and cities have primarily three categories of waste, viz., household waste that is primarily leftover food, cartons, empty packages, glass shards etc. industrial wastes which are effluents and so on, and hazardous e-waste, bio-medical and debris arising from construction business.

In most urban areas, the civic bodies segregate and manage the disposal of the waste. Presently, the trend is to either dump garbage in a land field or destroy it through incineration. However, recent times have witnessed the popularity of garbage disposal via composting and vermiculture. But the problem will not be solved by confining or concentrating on finding solutions to the mode of garbage disposal.

Where does the problem lie? Is it at the disposal end, or does it run through the entire chain starting from consumption or production itself?

Most policy makers influenced by the present-day economic



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structures, tackle the issue in isolation. It is like six blind-folded individuals trying to describe an elephant. The problem is embedded in the chain of social anomalies intrinsic to recent socio-economic developments that have made garbage a gargantuan problem. And you can see the result in Mumbai, one of the dirtiest cities in the country.

In Mumbai, the civic body seems to be totally helpless, despite going on a buying spree every year purchasing all kinds of futuristic looking garbage disposal gadgets and sophisticated appliances.

That is the point. It is like going on administering medicines to people suffering from dysentery...but not stopping or plugging the release of industrial effluents into drinking water. And to top it, urging people to put up water filters, which in the long run leads to more accumulation of non-organic garbage.

Now look at the psyche of a city dweller. Every Mumbaikar wants garbage to be thrown outside the periphery of the city. The land field dumping, a traditional garbage disposal method is alright in villages where the quantum of waste is less with minimal hazardous material; but in urban areas it has led to the degradation of land resources, which in turn affect the ground water supply, and throws up noxious gases up into the environs.

A case in point is the far-flung north-west Mumbai suburb; we found that a corporate call centre complex constructed on a dumping patch, is now facing severe pollution of toxic gases. So the problem is not just at the end, but through the entire social dysfunctional chain, beginning from consumption and ending at disposal. And urban areas are the worst affected by this 'garbage syndrome'.

Is the garbage syndrome a recent phenomenon? And why is it found more in urban areas?

Several factors have led to the growth of the garbage syndrome. One of the key factors lies in the haphazard developmental policies that are being shoved onto the people of this country, resulting in massive 'internal diaspora', which means an increase in population density. And then add to this...the consumerist ideology saturating the very urban air...nobody realises or even bothers to take into cognisance the changed life style of urban dwellers.

The cancerous development of garbage has its social roots in the consumerist life style, where concepts of saving, reusing and alteration have been replaced by the ideology of use and throw of goods that are mass produced. Coupled with this is the move to allow predatory nations from the West to dump their hazardous and toxic effluents producing industries here.

Going by the researches, your conclusions indicate a very dark dystopian future for city dwellers. So what kind of future do you envisage?

Nobody wants to talk about the dark matter waiting to explode. The present urban populace is touching 300 million in 5,000 odd town and cities, and the demographic projection is that by 2021, the urban population will be around 551 million. Concomitant with population explosion is the projection that the per capita waste generation will increase by 1.3 per cent per annum, with an overall increase of 5 per cent annually.

Now, take Mumbai for example. It is one of the international mega cities...and the city produces 500 grammes to one kilo of garbage per individual per day...every day the civic body disposes around 8,500 tonnes of household garbage. Apart from this, it has to tackle 2,500 tonnes of debris, 530 tonnes of e-waste with its 30,000 strong force, of which 10,000 are daily wage workers. And here let me remind that these figures do not include industrial waste.

Then you also have around one lakh rag-pickers who usually pick up recyclable garbage, which is reported to be having around ₹ 900 million annual turnover.

So the issue is multi-dimensional?

Certainly the problem is not simplistic. And it would not get sorted out by resorting to simplistic solutions like buying some mechanical contraptions or doling it out to some private firms and then bask in a feeling that 'all is well.'

But what about the garbage management schemes touted by business houses?

As I said earlier, most of the schemes smack of blind-folded approach. And just look at the kind of solutions business houses have come up with. Privatisation of civic services, imposition of waste management tax, conservancy tax, toll tax (tah bazaari) penalty against littering, bulk garbage collection charge, buy back recycled product charge etc.

Across the world these myopic approaches have shown negative results. Of course for business houses these methods add to their profit kitties, irrespective of the fact that their methods have an adverse impact on indigenous communities. Let me cite an example. The much lauded disposal methods touted by corporates involve dumping garbage into the sea. This disposal has already resulted in more havoc because 'garbage patches' have come up in seas...affecting the marine life and the livelihood of fishing communities.

But there must be some way to untangle or cut through this Gordian knot?

As of now there is no foolproof method. Not just in India, but across the world. Due to lack of understanding of the system, one sees everybody jumping the gun and putting the onus on civic authorities...but whether it is civic bodies or private companies, the disease will not go away and the symptoms will keep on manifesting in different forms. ■

A monumental problem

(Continued from page 22)

reduction in the number of kilometres covered by fossil-fuel-driven vehicles (aggregated, this will amount to several) and thereby, on the quantities of carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere. I say 'possible' here, as a consequential analysis, as far as vehicle-owner behaviour goes, is difficult. Planting more trees around such historic sites to add to the cooling effect in this case, would add to the benefits – also enabling the capture of carbon dioxide in the process.

Someone mentioned the Swachh Bharat Tax (SBT) to me recently and also despaired, "No perceptible improvement will happen, sir. They just keep on levying taxes." Now, this is an added source of revenue to the government – a tax levied on almost everyone for that matter, for it makes a whole lot of purchases, a wee bit costlier than before. Within the Hawa Mahal, I noticed several red betel-leaf stains – courtesy the spitters who are ubiquitous in Mera Bharat! Apt in the pink city...albeit a different shade? Then I saw foreigners take photographs, mindless of the fact that when magnified, the betel-leaf stains would show in the pictures they would be sharing with friends and relatives around the world. I wondered whether the income from the SBT could be directed to cleaning up – directly or indirectly – the walls of these historic sites. Penalties and fines are difficult to levy and collect in a corrupt society, so the SBT serves, in a way, as a way around this impasse. But surely, the bulk of the proceeds has to be directed to solid waste management first – sorting, recycling, composting. In Mumbai, a good start has been made, seemingly. Separation of wet organic waste from the dry recyclable fractions has been implemented *de rigueur*! But how can one destroy the spitting and wall-scribbling ('I love so-and-so' and 'I was here') mentality that is so hard to eradicate...seems deeply ingrained in many of us, I must say. This behaviour has resulted in some internal cordoning-off restricting access to some places within historic sites. This is a foreign tourist's loss...courtesy the stupidity of some of us Indians!!

It is utterly cheap to charge the foreigners a high fee for entry to such sites, and then restrict their access in this fashion. I would have to agree of course, if some *smart alec*

Indian researcher told me that there is no clear correlation as such, between the cleanliness of a historic site which is an attraction to tourists and the number of tourists who flock to the same, braving everything. I do feel proud when I see tourists from abroad visiting India, but I also feel a little ashamed, helpless, angry and sad.

Test-beds for sustainable development

Historic sites provide the perfect test-beds for sustainable development. The cultural aspect is treasured; trees are planted and artificial lakes created in the acres of land around them. A small ecosystem – birds, little mammals and insects flourishes as a result. Businesses – shops, big and small – are moved away by a few kilometres (maybe just one or two would do), and exposure thereof to tourists visiting the historic sites is not affected. Many benefits at once, with a little effort. It is just an awareness of the existing possibilities and the desire to conserve, preserve, maintain and sustain, that are needed. But that is easier written about than accomplished.

...and more

And on the day of writing, I visited the wholesale vegetable market close to where my parents stay. The picture enclosed – which shows rotting vegetable waste – made me wonder if the municipality could think in terms of well-managed on-site composting, which would generate fertilisers that could be trucked back to the same farmers who sell the vegetables to the cities of the country. Perhaps, this is being done in some parts of the country. If yes, perhaps that is worth replicating? Using the SBT again?

We like saying and writing '*Mera Bharat Mahan*'. But



how many of us really think so? If we do, of course, it is every citizen's duty to make it '*mahaan*'. ■

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.

Mawlynnong - Asia's cleanest village

Asia's cleanest village is in India! It is a small village in Meghalaya called Mawlynnong. This tag was given to it by the Discover India magazine in 2003. And the village has continued to earn this sobriquet. Mawlynnong is located about 90 km from Shillong. Visitors to this village come away impressed by the lack of any garbage littering the public spaces and a community which takes its cleanliness very seriously. This village of about 500 residents of the Khasi community has 100% literacy too. The chief occupation of the people here is agriculture. What is amazing in this village is how involved and invested the children are in their village's cleanliness. They are responsible for emptying the rubbish bins and separating organic waste from trash which can be burnt. It's alleged that an outbreak of cholera more than a century ago caused the villagers to maintain cleanliness at all cost. Mawlynnong has also completely eradicated the habit of open defecation, a very common sight in rural India.



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AFSPA – a necessary evil?

Irom Sharmila has changed tactics. Ending her fast of 16 years in protest against the dreaded AFSPA Act in force in the state of Manipur, she has now decided to stand for elections. Prof. Avinash Kolhe explains the significance of this. He also dwells on the genesis of this conundrum.

ON 9 August 2016, Irom Sharmila (46), decided to break her 16-year-long fast and also announced her decision to contest the 2017 Manipur Assembly elections. She has also announced her decision to get married. She was on fast for the last 16 years, and she had become an iconic symbol in the fight against the controversial Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). Her 800-week fast created history by being the world's longest hungerstrike, and, perhaps, the most talked about democratic protest by a lone individual.

The decision to fast

Before we get into the implications of her decision, let us quickly look at the genesis of Irom's fast. On 2 November 2000, 10 civilians who were waiting at a bus stop at Malom, near Imphal, were killed by the Assam Rifles soldiers. It was one of the most shocking incidents, but the security establishment contested the claim that the deceased were civilians. This alleged cold-blooded killings led Sharmila to launch a hunger-strike on 5 November 2000. Since then, she never broke her fast, though the government force-fed her with nasal drips for years. The authorities charged her with attempt to commit suicide. This is how she was kept alive at the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences in Imphal.

Soon her fast became international news, and Sharmila an icon. Her pictures were often flashed all over the world by wire agencies. In between, she was released and rearrested by the police.



Irom Sharmila broke her fast in Imphal after 16 long years

A black comedy

The drama around the release and re-arrest of Sharmila had all the ingredients of a black comedy. She was released by a local court in Imphal on 19 August 2014. She stood exonerated, as the charges of suicide against her filed under section 309 of IPC (Indian Penal Code) (attempted suicide) were scrapped by the court. The moment she was released, she declared that she would continue with her fast-unto-death that she started on 5 November 2000. This announcement put the Manipur government in a tight spot. If something were to happen to her, the Manipur government would be hard pressed to defend this. This was because while releasing her, the court in Imphal decreed that her protection and well-being was the responsibility of

the state government. If something were to happen to her, the state government would have to face the flak. In that case, it would be better to arrest and force-feed her than let her roam free. This was the logic behind her arrest. Equally interesting is to note that she was arrested for attempted suicide, something she was released of by the court. Strange are the ways in which the government functions!

If at one level the whole drama appeared to be a black comedy, at a deeper level, it showed the compulsions of running a system and dealing with a faceless enemy like separatism. Irom has been protesting against the dreaded (AFSPA) Act of 1958, which has turned Manipur into a police state. This Act was passed in 1958 to deal with the insurgency in Nagaland when

the Nagas were agitating for a separate state of Nagaland by vivisecting Assam. The Union government had realised that it did not have any powerful law to deal with this new enemy which aimed at breaking the Indian Union. Hence, the AFSPA was passed in 1958, and soon was extended to some parts of Manipur too.

As of today, almost all democratic countries in the world have similar or perhaps more draconian laws. After 9/11, the US passed the Patriot Act, 2001, to deal with international terrorism. If one were to compare the details of the AFSPA and that of the Patriot Act, our Act would appear mild. Even the UK, the mother of all democracies, passed a similar Act when it found that the terrorists are operating freely on its land. Why blame the Indian state alone, which has had to deal with separatism right from its birth? The Indian state has been dealing with forces keen to break its territorial integrity in the North, as well as in the Northeast.

This, however, does not mean that the activities of the armed forces under AFSPA should go unchallenged and uninvestigated. Far from it. In fact, there is machinery that deals with and investigates charges of excesses on the part of the armed forces. If the person is found guilty, there is adequate punishment to the offender. No one is spared from this. This again does not mean that all is well in Manipur state and Irom Sharmila was barking up the wrong tree.

How valid was Sharmila's demand?

There are reports galore of excesses by the armed forces in Manipur. The demand should be to speed up these inquiries and punish the guilty, and not to scrap the AFSPA. This amounts to throwing the baby with the bath water. It is one thing to demand proper inquiry into excesses, and quite another to

demand the scrapping of the AFSPA.

The standard and at times rather groundless argument against the AFSPA has been that it has not been able to end the activities of the separatist forces. This is like arguing for scrapping of the police force as it has not been able to stop crimes, or scrapping the UNO (United Nations Organisation), as it has not been able to stop wars in the world. What kind of social life can the Manipuris expect if the armed forces were to be withdrawn and civilian rule is allowed to prevail? The answer is too scary to even imagine. Today, at least thanks to the presence of the armed forces in Manipur, some semblance of law and order and discipline is maintained. Without armed forces in Manipur, the well-armed and well-trained separatist forces would roam free, spreading mayhem.

Today, all over the world, democracies have had to find new ways to combat terrorism. Even France had to pass a law to ban Muslim women from wearing the *hijab* in public places. This is because the French authorities realised that the *hijab* was freely used by terrorist groups to carry bombs and other materials of destruction. Similarly, Indian authorities have witnessed many such techniques used by terrorists. In such cases, the provisions of the AFSPA come handy while dealing with such people.

But on the other hand, time has indeed come for the Indian state to review the efficacy of the AFSPA. There are too many complaints and too many commission reports suggesting its withdrawal. There was the Upendra Commission set up by the Manipur government to investigate the custodial death of Thangjam Manorama. Then there was Justice Jeevan Reddy Commission appointed by the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government to review the working of the AFSPA. Though the Commission

submitted the report in June 2005, the findings are yet to be made public. Finally, there is the Santosh Hegde Committee set up by the Supreme Court to investigate six separate cases of possible AFSPA abuse in Manipur. The Hegde Committee found that five out of six killings were fabricated 'encounters'.

These details show us that the working of the AFSPA is not above board. Hence it is necessary to set up some mechanism to bring it to book without allowing it to lose its primary responsibility of fighting separatist forces in the state of Manipur. The critics of the AFSPA should note that there is broad concurrence about the AFSPA among our major political parties. Like UPA, even the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) would be reluctant to initiate debate on this dreaded Act. Similarly, the CPI-M government in Tripura allowed the extension of this law for six months. This decision was announced only last week.

These contradictory details force us to accept that the time has indeed come to take a fresh look at the AFSPA. Even the Supreme Court is not very happy with this Act. On 8 July 2016, the apex court ruled that the members of the armed forces cannot simply shoot to kill militants engaged in internal disturbances by treating them as 'enemies'. The court also said armed forces members would face criminal prosecution if found using excessive force even in areas where AFSPA is in force.

Here, nobody is a hero or a villain. However one must ensure the territorial integrity of the country by crushing the anti-India forces. ■



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

Can Pakistan dismount the terror-tiger?

Pakistan is playing a singularly dangerous game of riding the tiger of terrorism. As the recent visit of Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh to Pakistan showed, that country seems to be playing a double game, which will in the end, only hurt it the most.

Dr. P.M. Kamath explains the intricacies of our neighbour's various intrigues.

ON 4 August 2016, India's Home Minister (HM), Rajnath Singh, was in Islamabad to attend the seventh HMs' meet of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations in Islamabad. Violating all norms of diplomatic protocol, Pakistan allowed anti-Singh demonstrations on the streets of Islamabad during his visit. The threat of demonstrations against the visiting Indian HM was publicised days before his visit, and these were held by none other than Hafiz Saeed, the founder of *Lashkar e-Toiba* (LeT) and *Jamaat-ud Dawa* (JuD), his so-called charity organisation. Both these groups are declared as terrorist organisations by the UN (United Nations), and the US has placed a bounty of \$10 million on the head of Saeed.

The reason for the demonstrations given by the LeT chief was: 'Rajnath's hands are reddened by the blood of Kashmiris'. Ironically, that came from a person who was directly involved in spilling of blood of 166 people in Mumbai attacks (26/11) eight years ago. Though he is declared a terrorist, and internationally banned, he roams freely in the streets of Pakistan and his organisation grows in strength. Yet, Rajnath had gone to attend the SAARC making it clear that his security was Pakistan's responsibility.

India's message

Normally, in the SAARC meetings, member nations aren't supposed to raise bilateral issues. Singh was in Islamabad for twin purposes: One, to appeal to the Pakistani ruling elite to accept the fact that terror is not a remedy to resolve any issue affecting the region, and second, to appeal to Pakistan to ratify SAARC convention against terror, which has prevented regional cooperation on terror. Hence, the Indian HM alluded to the terror attacks faced by nations like Bangladesh and India. He was obviously referring to

peace and prosperity, terrorism is the biggest challenge. Towards increased prosperity of Region's people, India has already implemented "Business Card Scheme" under which, eligible businessmen from any SAARC country can visit India to promote business interests.

Directly aiming at Pakistan but without naming it, Singh said that prosperity will be hampered if terrorism is not checked by every country. Mere condemnation of terror, but permitting it on member-state's soil is just not enough. It is only an example of doublespeak.



Rajanath Singh's recent visit to Pakistan was marred by hostile demonstrations

Patronising terrorists as patriots is unacceptable. One country's terrorist cannot be a patriot of another country. Singh made it clear that terrorism cannot be glorified and patronised. No one can distinguish between 'good' terrorism and 'bad' terrorism. Nawaz Sharif in his heart must have felt that Rajnath was stealing his words uttered at the all

cowardly attacks in recent times – the Dhaka attack in July, 2016, at Holey Artisan Café in the diplomatic enclave patronised by foreigners, in which of the 20 killed, 17 were foreigners, and in Mumbai, the cross-sea attack of 26/11 and the Pathankot Airbase attack in January 2016.

Singh made it clear that for regional

party conference summoned by him in his country soon after the December 2014 ghastly terrorist attacks on a military school at Peshawar, in which 148 mainly children lost their lives!

Singh also called upon Pakistan to implement SAARC Regional Convention on suppression of terrorism in pursuit of 'our common fight against terrorism.' He

also asked member-states to implement additional protocol on terrorism as it includes effective measures to prosecute and punish terrorists; also if necessary, extradite terrorists to stand trial in countries where cross border terror has occurred. These important measures have not been ratified by Pakistan so far. One need not remind discerning readers how Pakistan has avoided all action to prosecute internationally acknowledged persons involved in Mumbai attacks of 26/11 like Saeed and Lakhvi.

Singh also called upon the member nations to realise the gravity of the misuse of digital technology in committing terror attacks and evading arrest and appealed to his counterparts to explore all avenues to deal with growing cyber crimes. He also urged member-states to implement the SAARC decision to create a terrorism monitoring desk.

Back home, Congressmen excelled in criticising the Home Minister's visit and his successful efforts to highlight Pakistan's perfidies and doublespeak in reducing recourse to terrorism. Mani Shankar Aiyar went to the extent of charging Singh of turning SAARC into an "Association for Regional Confrontation (instead of Cooperation)." He failed to note the insults heaped on the visiting HM. Singh was not appropriately received by his counterpart in Pakistan. The Pakistani Interior Minister hosted a lunch for visiting members, but he did not show up; thus forcing Singh to forego his lunch. Pakistan's government also denied access to Indian journalists to cover the event.

Conclusion

Pakistan's elected civilian government or its democratic façade faces two crucial issues. These will directly affect India's 'neighbourhood first' policy. First, Pakistan itself has been facing internal terror attacks. Number of such attacks inside Pakistan has become deadly; it was illustrated by the terrorist attacks by

a suicide bomber at Quetta Civil Hospital on 8th August, in which over 74 were killed – mostly lawyers, who had gone to condole the death of the President of Quetta Bar Association, who was earlier gunned down by terrorists. This was soon after Rajnath Singh's fervent pleas to shun terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy.

The responsibility for the carefully executed terror attacks was taken by the Islamic State (IS) and a faction of Pakistani Taliban. The stated reason for the attacks is worth pondering. An unidentified spokesperson, on behalf of the group stated that their "objective is to establish a caliphate and diminish the basis of democracy in Pakistan which we consider an infidel system." He further added: "Lawyers were on our hit list...." They were "considered as custodians of Pakistani democratic system."

But there was a free-play of blaming India. Baluchistan's chief minister, Nawab Zehri and the mastermind of Mumbai attack, Hafiz Saeed, blamed Indian intelligence agency RAW for the attacks. This was similar to Musharraf and Saeed blaming India for killing innocent children in the military school in December 2014. This is somewhat similar to Mrs. Gandhi in the 1970s blaming whatever went against her policy towards India on American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In Pakistan this trend had started prominently in March 2009 when the visiting Sri Lankan cricket team was attacked by terrorists in Lahore.

Second, Pakistan's elected civil government is at crossroads. It has to decide whether to continue to permit military-ISI controlled and maneuvered international terrorist groups to operate freely against India or call the bluff by its all-powerful military. Pakistan is today riding a tiger called terrorism; it is easy to mount on it but difficult to dismount! That could lead to another military take over and face another period of military dictatorship.

India has done well in firmly asserting our disgust with Pakistani use of terror to force India to handover them Kashmir on a platter. India's HM did well to reiterate that no force on the Earth can take Kashmir away from India. We have done well to support democratic forces in Baluchistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). But we also need to support democratic forces in Pakistan to balance the Army. We need to remember that it is for the first time, Pakistan in 2016 began to share intelligence with India on likely terror attacks against Indian assets. It is also worth noting that after listening to Rajnath Singh on the need to control all terror, Nawaz Sharif reiterated his commitment to fight against terror.

In the context of the December 2014 attack on a military school, a member of Pakistani parliament belonging to the Pakistan People's Party, Farhatullah Babar had said: By releasing Lakhvi, the Mumbai terror-brain, Pakistan "sent a message that some militants are more equal than others." Nawaz Sharif has to decide whether his fight is only against anti-Pakistan terror groups or that includes anti-India terror groups as well. That will decide the future of democracy in Pakistan! That will also create in Pakistan necessary prodemocracy forces which will finally enable Pakistan to dismount from the Terror-Tiger! ■

Dr. Kamath is a former Professor of Politics in Mumbai University, and currently is the Chairman and Director, VPM's Centre for International Studies, affiliated to Mumbai University. While in University, he guided a thesis on Terrorism as an Instrument of Foreign Policy with special reference to its use by Pakistan in Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir. Since then, he has



published several articles on the subject in various newspapers in India, and peer-reviewed articles in various national and international journals.

A battery of thoughts

*It is important for citizens to be responsible and alert about their environment. But the government must also make it easy for citizens to follow rules, says **G. Venkatesh**, talking specifically about the disposal of e-waste in India.*

I got my Acer laptop from Sweden to Mumbai for a battery replacement. Having replaced the battery, I enquired at the shop in Vashi (in New Mumbai), whether the shop had some kind of system whereby electronic waste (in this case, the used battery) could be given to them by customers who make purchases at the shop, for safe and responsible delivery to recycling units. The salesman told me, '*Nahin Sir, aisa tho kuch bhi nahin hain.*' (No Sir, there is nothing like that.) I then asked them what is generally done to e-waste by the citizens of New Mumbai. He responded, '*Pata nahin...aise hi phekh dete honge.*' (I do not know. They may just be throwing them away).

I asked around and a friend told me that despite a lot of claims made to the contrary, the situation leaves a lot to be desired. Another friend provided me with some contacts on WhatsApp to two e-waste recycling centres. One of these was based in western Mumbai. I called up this office and was told that I could come over with my e-waste across the city to the western suburbs and hand it over there. The respondent was kind enough also to tell me that I could also visit a particular shopping mall in Thane (to the north of Mumbai city), and drop off the e-waste at a collection point there.

Being responsible

Well, I thought I need not have made these enquiries in the first place. I was on vacation and was spending time with my parents in New Mumbai, watching cricket and movies, chatting and helping out with daily chores. But I



Mumbai's first e-waste collection centre at Vile Parle

teach industrial ecology and sustainable development back in Sweden and I need to practise what I preach and teach... even if that would mean going a little out of the way to accomplish. 'Going out of the way'....this started niggling me. Why must responsible citizens be made to go out of the way to do something which is beneficial for the hoi polloi and the environment? If the government wants citizens to be responsible, it has to create the infrastructures to enable them to do so.

Well, we will come back to this later...I was not happy with the status quo and decided to take the used battery and an old cellphone (not smartphone) back with me to Sweden where I could easily dispose it off as electronic waste at dedicated centres, and return home with a clear conscience, having given it a responsible and decent 'end-of-life.' I remember having done this to an old laptop I had with me in New Mumbai for a long time, at an electronics/home appliances shop in Norway two

years ago, to the delight and glee of the shop attendant.

The government's role

Why do things seem so difficult in big cities in India? So many things which are so well entrenched and maintained and sustained and more importantly, respected and appreciated by the citizens, in the northern European countries? Scale is surely not an issue. Governments ought to set up a string of dedicated collection centres for different types of e-wastes (rather, e-recyclables or e-reusables). The status quo does not make any sense anymore. One may say – Well, Norway and Sweden are small countries and all this is much more easily manageable there. Really? And you also talk about scale? Where would the scale effect be a stronger factor? In cities with 10 million to 20 million people or countries which are much larger than these cities in terms of surface area, but house less than 10 million each?

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Don't trash, just upcycle

Move over recycling, upcycling is the new idea on the block! Usha Hariprasad tells us about this new trend, which is slowly acquiring its own followers. Get ready to turn your trash into attractive pieces of art and decor, with minimal energy consumed. It is also one of the most earth friendly initiatives in recent times.

A few months back, I attended a flea market sale in Bangalore, and one of the stalls there caught my attention. Funky, decorative accessories grinned colourfully from every nook and corner of the stall. I was in a trance, for they were so beautiful. And when I realised they were made from disposed PET bottles and caps, I was hooked. The stall incidentally, was from 'Silver Nut Tree', Bangalore. And this was the first time I came across the term upcycled products, and saw their transformation- from ugly plastic, to decorative art ware.

Upcycling, the new mantra

Upcycling is giving a new purpose to trash. Creativity, imagination are the watchwords here as old items are repurposed and given new life. Old clothes, plastics, glass, tyres, ceramics, furniture, CDs – imagination is the limit when it comes to upcycling.

Upcycling is different from recycling. In upcycling you don't change the composition of the product, it is not destroyed, just recrafted to form a better product, say a plastic bottle turned into a planter. The important factor for upcycling products is the design. This is not the case with recycling. Generally, the materials are broken down, the raw materials extracted to form new products, say recycling newspapers to get new paper, or recycling PET bottles to get raw materials for a range of products. Upcycling, when compared to recycling, is less energy intrinsic, generally uses less resources, and



Upcycling uses minimal energy to transform trash into pieces of functional art

makes the product more desirable, thereby preventing its early dumping in landfills. Most of the things that we buy can be upcycled to our advantage. How? Here are few pointers.

Upcycling cans: Beverage cans are a frequent sight in landfills, rivers and rock beds. They are not only a sore sight, but also have a huge environmental impact. Consider the activity that goes behind making of every new can-mining, drilling, air and water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions etc. When a can goes to the landfill, it is dangerous to birds and animals. So what can you as an individual do? Upcycle whatever you can. Cans can be easily turned into vases, candle holders, night lamps, kitchen organisers, bird feeders etc. The

metal can be reused to make coasters, magnets, book marks etc. With a bit of spray paint, tools like knife and drilling, you can do wonders with a soda can.

The same goes for plastic bottles. Considering that we are one of the top 20 countries dumping plastic waste in the oceans, it becomes all the more important. Plastic bottles have been used as vertical gardens, drip irrigators, napkin and ribbon holders, jewellery stand etc. Plastic bags have been used to make beads, flowers, crochets etc. Similarly, CDs too can be turned into sculptures, coasters, clocks or wall art.

Why leave furniture behind?: Old and damaged furniture can be easily repurposed to suit your home décor. The old shutter or door can be easily

painted and made into a work of art. Consider using them as wall art or head boards above the beds to give them that extra height. Cabinets can be used as bathroom vanity, door handlers can become knobs, and damaged tables can be converted into side tables or corner tables. Sandpaper them, paint them, and any old furniture looks as good as new.

Go for sustainable brands: Fashion industry is one of the big polluters in the world today. The eco footprint is large right from production of raw materials to the end product; think chemicals used, the water discharged, the dyes, fabric waste, transportation etc., in its production cycle. Certain companies are doing their bit towards lessening this impact by creating sustainable brands. 'Doodlage', a brand that creates

garments out of waste fabric, 'House of Wandering Silk', 'KaSha' by Karishma Shahani, 'Pero' by Aneeth Arora are generating waves through their upcycled products. Some use leftover fabric in their projects like 'No Nasties', that upcycles fabric waste in their 'Cotton Sense Project'.

Purchase upcycled products or start your own: There are passionate individuals who have come up with products entirely upcycled. Paper, cardboards are very easily upcycled in to funky jewellery by 'PaperMelon', disposed PET bottles are turned into beautiful jewellery and home décor items by Silver Nut Tree, disposable pens are upcycled into furniture by 'PenPals' etc. Some of the stores ask for your old recyclables too like the Golisoda store that creates a range of products from

old things. 'ScrapShala' is another store that reuses scrap items to get attractive home, party and office décor.

There are plenty of things that you could do to reduce waste going into landfills. You just need to have the heart and head to do it. There are no dearth of websites, apps and video tutorials on the net to give you a boost in this direction too. So check them out, get inspired and clean out your trash in the process. ■

Usha Hariprasad is a freelancer who is fond of travelling, discovering new places and writing about travel related destinations around Bangalore at Citizen Matters. Currently, she works in a trekking organisation.



A battery of thoughts

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'Swadeshi' is fine. Or rather only the good aspects of it. If there is muck and inefficiency in my country, I do not want to label that 'swadeshi' and hold on to it! Mahatma Gandhi preached 'swadeshi', yes. But he also preached many other things as part of 'swadeshi'! Do we include all those when we use this word time and again? But what if we learn from the western nations and seek their help to set up new systems, maintain, manage and sustain them?

I am sure several thousands of tonnes of metallic recyclables/reusables may have languished in dumping grounds and gutters (choking sewer pipes and causing familiar trans-systemic challenges in the monsoon months) in the past, and am certain that this still happens all over the country. The need of rag-pickers is always posited as a convenient excuse for not making it easier for responsible citizens to ensure that e-wastes are

given the right end-of-life treatment – recycling in other words. You cannot tell a responsible citizen, 'So you are responsible, right? And you do not mind going the extra mile to hand over your e-waste to responsible collection units? Then, just go 25 kilometres from here and you will find a recycling centre where you can drop off the waste'. Here it is not the extra mile per se, but 17 extra miles! In a densely populated city like Mumbai/New Mumbai, one must not be made to go through all this trouble!

People want to, if awareness is created, be more responsible. Governments need to make it easier for them. In the fast-paced, stressful lives which people lead, for instance, in Mumbai city (which unlike the national capital, is not automobile-dependent, and expects the vast majority of the population to tune their day to train and bus timetables), citizens will appreciate

a little ease in this regard. Will the Swachh Bharat movement or the scores of 'Swachh Urban movements' we read about, actually accomplish something substantial, or just end up in a whimper?

We, who live and work abroad and visit India to meet parents and friends, are proud of our heritage. We feel pained when we are back home, to see that things are not what they could be or should be. We wish to help. In whatever way we can...to take all that is great in the western world, and incorporate it into the great aspects of Swadeshi which need to be preserved. Our anguish may please be understood. ■

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.



No smoking, please!

*Let's face it – smoking has always had a tad glamorous aura about it, especially in films. Icons like Rajnikant have raised smoking to the level of an art, influencing many youngsters in the process. **Shoma A. Chatterji** writes about cinema's lasting love affair with tobacco, and what kind of checks and balances will likely work, without interfering with creative freedom.*

RAJNIKANT is revered like a God figure by millions of his fans spread across the world. His most famous stunt is contained in his cigarette scenes. It has become a famous style statement tried by hundreds of young men who may have been able to copy him, but could not reach anywhere near his style. Among several tricks with the cigarette, the most famous is the one in which he flips the cigarette right into the air and it comes right back between his lips. No one thinks about the evil effects of smoking when they are watching a Rajnikant film, including his latest blockbuster *Kabali*. Late actress Nadira's tantalising style of holding the cigarette at the end of a cigarette holder, and taking a puff from time to time in Raj Kapoor's *Shri 420* (1955), set the trend for female stars smoking on screen, probably borrowed from the celebrated style statement established by Marlene Dietrich, many years ago, in several Hollywood films.

Cinema's smoking tradition

Indian cinema has been glamourising the portrayal of tobacco use through its icons since the 1950s. Ashok Kumar, Dev Anand, Raj Kapoor and Pran were often shown smoking cigarettes and cigars in films. Over the years, smoking within films has spilled over to smoking by young men and women in real life. The linkages they seem to have made with mainstream films are that of style, romance, tragedy and rebellion, too

tempting for youngsters to resist imitating, either in order to seek closer identification with their favourite stars, or, to gain peer acceptance, or both. How much has Indian cinema contributed to the portrayal of smoking in films, both in qualitative and quantitative terms? What is the extent and quality of its impact on the youth? How has it affected smoking in general, and smoking among the youth in particular? These questions have been recently addressed by an interesting study that also sheds considerable light by offering quite a few significant answers to the questions raised.

Bollywood – Victim or Ally, is a study on the portrayal of tobacco in Indian cinema undertaken by the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Strategic Mediaworks for the Tobacco Free Initiative in 2003. The aim of the study is to encourage the production of "Tobacco-Free Films", calling upon film and fashion industries to stop promoting tobacco, which kills one in two regular users. WHO is supported by the American Medical Association, the Los Angeles Department of Health and the 'Smoke Free Movies' project at the University of California in its call to the film industries to rid films of their tobacco-promoting role.



Rajnikant, who has virtually patented his particular style of smoking a cigarette

The report is the outcome of increasing evidence of tobacco companies turning to the film and entertainment industry to market their deadly product. One example of this is the bravery award given to Preity Zinta, a noted actress, by Red and White, a big tobacco company owned by Phillip Morris. As a clever marketing strategy, disguised as a boost to the entertainment industry, tobacco companies have also been sponsoring ticketed shows like the Annual *Filmfare* awards telecast live to reach 32 million people.

The summary reveals that tobacco portrayal is common in 76% of the films that fell under the period under review, namely, 1991 to 2002. Indian mainstream cinema is the largest producer of films in the world, accounting for more than 900 films released every year in more than eight languages. Indian films target an estimated 250 million youngsters in India alone. In addition to this are the

millions of Diaspora Indians in South Asia, the Middle-East, parts of the UK, USA, Africa and Europe. There are more than ten film channels that telecast films round the clock, in addition to the 12,900 cinema halls, where 188 million viewers a year buy around 5,000 million tickets.

Goswami and Kashyap discovered that instances of showing smoking/tobacco use in movies had increased significantly to 89% of all movies released in 2004 and 2005. The brand placement has also increased by nearly three folds. Tobacco brands now appear in 46% of movies having tobacco scenes. Cigarette companies have almost all the tobacco product placements, with two companies accounting for over 90% of the brand visibility. Association of tobacco with glamour and style has also been established. Almost 75% of movies having tobacco also showed the main/lead character consuming tobacco.

Checks and balances?

The Indian government banned all forms of direct and indirect forms of advertising, promotion and sponsorship, through a legislation called “Cigarette and other tobacco products Act 2003”. Despite that, many surrogate forms of advertisement continue till date. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) also warns about such nefarious designs in its preamble itself and recognises the “need to be alert to any efforts by the tobacco industry to undermine or subvert tobacco control efforts”, and “the activities of the tobacco industry that have a negative impact on tobacco control efforts.” The increased use of tobacco in Indian films backed by the soaring level of tobacco brand visibility in recent films state that after the ban in India on tobacco advertisements, tobacco companies began using motion pictures as a vehicle of clandestine promotion and advertisement of tobacco products in

both generic and branded forms.

The findings of various global surveys on tobacco use and determinants led Indian Health Secretary Naresh Dayal to admit: “The control of tobacco consumption has become a major public health challenge in India due to the burden of non-communicable diseases. The overall tobacco consumption has increased over the past five years despite strong government initiatives in adopting the FCTC and enactment of the Anti-Tobacco Law, 2003. Ignorance among medical and dental students, too, is a matter of concern.” With present smoking patterns, about 500 million tobacco users will eventually die. More than half of these will be today’s child and teenaged smokers. This is where, the campaigners feel, our film stars can help.

The then Union Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss appealed to Amitabh Bachchan and Shah Rukh Khan to give up smoking on screen. The minister, in his efforts to check tobacco imagery in films, had earlier brought a law to regulate such scenes. This move was challenged in the court by filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, with support from the Film Certification Board chairperson Sharmila Tagore. Tagore shared Bhatt’s view along with other film personalities (including Aamir Khan and John Abraham) that such a regulation would amount to putting curbs on creative freedom and artistic expression. In 2005, the rules were further refined to combat smoking in films, since it was felt that surrogate advertising through films had gone up since the 2003 ban. It included measures that have been pushed now – no character to be shown smoking, older movies to



Pran, the eternal villain of Hindi cinema blows smoke rings here, which was his trademark

have health warnings, etc. Bhatt filed a petition challenging the last notified Act banning smoking in films. On the basis of that petition, the Delhi High Court in 2009 struck down the ban on smoking in films.

The final policy?

The situation has changed since August 1 this year. According to a news report in *The Indian Express* (August 1, 2016), in a relief to film producers, the Shyam Benegal expert committee on film certification has recommended doing away with the current system of carrying disclaimers during each smoking scene and has instead suggested that there should be just one anti-smoking static warning at the start of the film. The suggestion by the eight-member panel is based on the need for “smooth viewing of films” which, it has said, is currently disturbed by showing the static warnings in every smoking scene.

The panel recently submitted the second part of its report, pertaining to anti-smoking warnings and use of animals in films, to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. On the issue of anti-tobacco/ smoking warnings, the report says, “A meaningful static disclaimer in the beginning of the film with standard visual background approved by the Ministry of Health

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A friend in need

What is friendship? Who is a good friend? A. Radhakrishnan tells us why friendships are important, and how they keep us sane.

THE best mirror is an old friend. A true friendship, like a good marriage, endures through ups and downs, gratification and compromises. A friend is someone with whom you can be yourself without any pretence.

Plato said 'similarity begets friendship'. Aristotle opined, 'We love those who are like ourselves'. Popular adages also include 'birds of a feather flock together' or 'friends are the family we choose' or 'a man is known by the company he keeps'.

The best kind of friendship is with people with whom you can sink into with comfort and trust, who give you unconditional support, are non-judgmental, and have the time to hear you out and give you your due regard, and those who do not put on an act.

Choosy about friends

Many are choosy about friends, but some just let friendships happen to them. Therein lies the difference between a life well lived, and one barely lived.

Unlike blood ties, (remember the notorious quote, 'We make friends by choice, and relations by accident!'), we have the option of choosing friends. Research proves that humans and animals strike friendships with those who have traits similar to their own personality, build, and general looks as well. Scientists allude that there is a genetic pattern to our friendships too. Friends are supposed to share one per cent of our DNA!

To others however, friendships are more of a reciprocal nature, based on mutual benefits. Such a choice also charts the course of our destiny to some extent, and hence a good support



Yeh dosti, hum nahi todenge*, the ultimate paean to friendship, from the blockbuster movie *Sholay

system of friends can become one's greatest strength, while weak friends can be a disaster.

The United States Congress, in 1935, proclaimed the first Sunday of August as the National Friendship Day.

Since then, it has become an annual event; the idea of honouring friends caught on, and it has now become a hugely regular festival of sorts.

Friendship Day earlier meant an exchange of cards or a quick message on your mobile, but now there are a whole lot of paraphernalia at greeting card shops, gift stores and a few supermarkets. While a majority of the customers are college students, happily, there are adults as well, who have had the longest friendship.

A true friend is like a mirror

You are blessed if you get real friends, the ones who you know from way back, who've seen you through the pimples, marital disorders, and anxiety attacks. They are alternately mean and loving, but they usually tell you the truth. They may have absolutely nothing in common with you, but they are always around when you need them.

Permit me a contrarian view too. I step out and befriend people in my environment, without waiting for them to reach out to me; neither do I really scout around and identify whom I really would like to know. This is because I believe in the dictum, 'Few friends and more acquaintances.' I am content with friends whom I can count on my fingers, and confess most others are frenemies or people with agendas to serve themselves. I regularly unfriend many on Facebook and Twitter too. Friendship, hence, does not come with a guarantee.

Producer director Subhash Ghai a veteran of over three decades in Bollywood is on record stating, "One doesn't have true friends in the film industry as people stick to one another for only mutual interests. Bonds get stronger only when a film clicks, and if it fails, it fades out".

Some are loners at heart having spent growing years with themselves. They have seen more lows than highs in life.

In the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, we have the hobbits Sam and Frodo setting out on their epic journey that tests their friendship at every step.

On the other hand, singer Demi

Friendship ahoy!

Need a friend? Text me.
Need a Laugh? Call me
Need Money? This number is no longer
in service.

A five year old boy asked his friend,
"What is friendship?"
He replied, "Friendship is when you
steal my chocolates everyday from my
bag...and yet I keep them in the same
place".

A touching line before a death..
Don't bury me immediately after my
death/ My friends have a habit of
coming late."

Friends buy you lunch/ Best friends eat
your lunch!

Lovato is fascinated by ghosts and feels a strong connection with the afterlife. In fact, her Texan house she says, was haunted, and she was friends with a closet ghost that she named Emily. Hollywood actresses Salma Hayek and Penelope Cruz have been the best of

friends since their careers began. In fact, they almost died when the plane taking them to a set, nearly crashed, but their friendship grew stronger since.

Thus, there are powerful men and women who forged enduring friendships that have stood the test of time. Surrounding yourself with confident and motivated people, is a secret to success. Always planning, but never executing? A good friend here will motivate you into getting down to the task. It is the key to longevity and better health in old age.

Do not be the pleaser and don't bully your friends, but be assertive about your choices and know what you want, rather than going along and maintaining the balance in any situation. You should not just live out good friendships, but rather live them up, but they need constant airing and working on.

Sometimes friends become lovers. A friendship can turn out to be a match

made in heaven. When you enjoy spending more and more time and your companion's presence lightens up your day; that is when you know that the relationship you share is not mere friendship. Some couples spend years as friends before they decide to hitch. Others realise their feelings only after they part ways. Their compatibility is quite evident. Not every friendship might turn out to be the kind of romance we expect it to, but friendship often forms the basis for deep love.

Above all, however, friendship with oneself is most important, because without it, one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world. ■



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune-based freelance journalist, who writes on all subjects under the sun and moon, a short story writer and a poet too.

No smoking, please!

(Continued from page 48)

may be shown for a minimum period, along with an audio backing it." It has also said that the film industry should contribute by producing small films on the issue using popular actors, for screening in cinema halls and on TV channels. So much for governmental support to ban smoking! The film industry is happy. But what then, is the use of inserting just one warning? Will it have any impact on the audience against smoking? "The government has failed to meet its international obligations on tobacco control. An empowered group of ministers presided over a technical matter involving pack warnings, though without commissioning any study, and justified its decision to weaken health warnings, saying a million jobs were tied up in the tobacco industry," observes an 'Indian Medical Parliamentarians Forum' policy brief on the subject.

An interesting real-life anecdote is

related to the film *No Smoking* directed by Anurag Kashyap. Released in 2007, the film focussed on a surrealistic story that shows how a man joins a course to kick his addiction. He finds the course a bizarre, horrific journey. Sadly, the film did not do well commercially and flopped miserably at the box office. The film also had two major song numbers called *Phoonk De* and *Jab Bhi Cigarette*, the title track. Both songs were rendered by Rekha Bharadwaj who had also belted out the *Beedi Jalaile* number in Vishal Bharadwaj's *Omkara*. This points out to the use of 'smoking' in lyrics, songs and song picturisations in Indian films. The interesting behind-the-scenes story is that the film's hero John Abraham does not smoke in real life. But to make the character convincing on screen, he smoked up to 90 cigarettes a day during the shooting to give the film a more believable look. Later, when the film

was complete, Abraham went for an X-ray and found his lungs were heavily damaged. Though *No Smoking* went to several festivals in India and abroad, on hindsight, the film seems to have done more harm than good through its so-called campaign against smoking for its audience. Interestingly, the two early contenders for the role later played by John Abraham were Shah Rukh Khan and Saif Ali Khan respectively, both known to be heavy smokers in real life. But they declined the film. ■

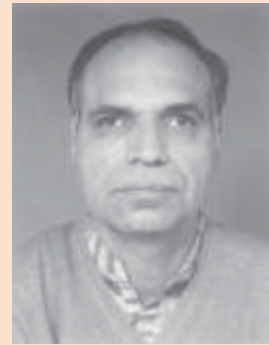
The writer is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author. She has authored 17 published titles and won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema, twice. She won the UNFPA-Laadli Media Award, 2010 for 'commitment to addressing and analysing gender issues' among many awards.



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

A Himalayan crisis

The traditional farming practices of the hill people which have sustained them for generations, should be taken into account before new policies are implemented. There is much wisdom in these practices.



Bharat Dogra

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

IN the apple-belts of Himalayan villages, resentment has been building up against the recent decision of the government to facilitate the import of apples. While earlier, the import of this much cherished fruit was permitted from only one port, now import of apples can take place using many ports as well as land and air routes.

At the same time, however, some other farmers and farming activists in Himalayan villages say that for them apple orchards are not the main issue. They assert that from the point of view of ordinary Himalayan farmers, what is of much greater importance is to protect and nurture the traditional mixed farming systems which have evolved, keeping in view the needs of the people and the natural resource base of villages. The millets, legumes and oilseeds provided by these mixed farming systems are very basic to the food and nutrition needs of the hard working hill people. The special needs and suitability of traditional mixed farming systems for meeting these needs are often not appreciated by government officials, and they tend to ignore very important needs as well as assets of Himalayan villages. In such a situation, sometimes even well intentioned help ends up creating more problems than solving them. The way forward is to extend help which is based on understanding of local needs as well as assets and capabilities.

Himalayan villages are particularly suitable for ecologically protective and organic agriculture. It is nice to know that Sikkim is already fully committed to this and governments of some other Himalayan states have also expressed their inclination towards this.

At one stage, the beautiful *barahanaja* or twelve-grain system of Uttarakhand faced almost an assault from government officials, although now there is better understanding at the government level also of the great value of this system. This mixed farming is based on growing 12 or more millets, legumes and oilseeds together. This system

gives very nutritious food on relatively less fertile land, using very little water. This is possible as crops have been selected for their complementarity with each other, and in numerous ways, these crops support each other's growth.

This is a beautiful example of traditional wisdom, but initially, government officials just could not comprehend it and wanted to uproot this system and replace it with soyabean monoculture. This would have been an unmitigated disaster, but fortunately such a folly on the part of the government was avoided by the strong opposition of several activists and social organisations, particularly the Save the Seeds Movement (SSM) or *Beej Bachao Aandolan*.

The SSM activists, many of whom were earlier active in the famous Chipko Movement, held widespread consultations with farmers including women farmers, who play a very important role in Himalayan agriculture. They also organised several foot marches or *padyatras* to take this consultation to more villages, including very remote villages.

This consultation with many farmers not only confirmed the great value of traditional mixed farming systems, but in addition, the overall superiority of traditional wheat and paddy varieties compared to the new green revolution varieties grown with high doses of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The SSM activists looked at not just the production, but also the economic and ecological costs. They also sought information on neglected questions like how much fodder is obtained, which crop varieties are regarded as more tasty and nourishing, which paddy variety gives more rice, and which is considered more suitable for special preparations like *khichdi* or *kheer* relished by local people. The SSM was convinced that the rich diversity of traditional varieties was certainly more useful. Therefore, the movement devoted a lot of its efforts to collecting seeds of different varieties from various villages, growing these and sharing the growing stock of seeds with several other farmers. ■

A herringbone stitch

Will the unified GST and the MPC solve our economic woes, or will it just edge the poor out even more?



Anuradha Kalhan
is an independent researcher. She was earlier a Fellow at NMML, Teen Murti.

It's a stitch frequently used to secure edges. Two policy moves are underway – the formation of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) and Goods & Services Tax (GST), both likely to have far reaching effect.

Amendments to RBI (Reserve Bank of India) Act for MPC and connected rules have been notified in June. Once the MPC is in place, an old convention whereby the Central Bank of India took all decisions pertaining to interest rates, exchange rate management entirely on its own (based on internal process of periodic assessments of the economy), will come to an end. The MPC will consist of six members – of this, three will be appointed by the central government on the basis of recommendations made by a search committee headed by the cabinet secretary. Only half of the committee will consist of RBI (Reserve Bank of India) members including the Governor who will be the ex-officio chairperson. The Governor will have a casting voting right in case of a tie.

The mandate of the committee is to bring value and transparency to monetary policy decisions. This decision comes in two contexts worth mentioning, one, of reported conflict of interest between the government and the RBI governors on interest rate movements. With the RBI more focused on using interest rates for inflation control in accordance with its traditional mandate, and the government fixated on either growth or inflation depending on election cycles. The tension between the RBI and the government has been palpable. The MPC committee will meet four times every year and publicise its minutes and decisions. Such a mechanism is used to synergise monetary policy with fiscal policy. The other milieu in which this decision comes is the much admired doctrine, in India, that low interest rates will stimulate growth, access to finance will determine growth hence the financial sector itself should be liberalised and boosted by lowering interest rates. With political forces aligned behind this doctrine, it is not unreasonable to

speculate that the pressure on interest rates to decline may have an edge they did not have before.

In August the Indian Parliament has cleared a constitutional amendment that will make it possible to introduce GST. Once the unified GST is in place, India will have only one tax on goods and services all across the country, creating a single market for goods and services, with no taxes like octroi, or sales tax on entry to different states. States lose the right to impose VAT and the Centre loses the right to impose excise and service taxes, but will share the revenue generated by GST, which is expected to be greater than the earlier system of multiple and cascading taxes.

Once GST is in place, 29 Indian states will lose flexibility of fixing their own indirect tax rates according to the needs of the local economy. Neither does it allow the state's elected government to decide which goods are relatively necessary, beneficial or harmful in the local context. As the revenue generating options of states decline, so will their options of expenditure. This, usually damages states that have higher social sector-oriented spending.

A uniform tax on commodities and services irrespective of who is consuming the goods or where – developed or backward states, wealthy or poor individuals – is not an egalitarian policy, even if it promotes some form of efficiency in the amount of tax collected. As it is, taxes on goods and services constitute the bulk of tax revenue in India. Political forces are aligned against it. Henceforth, in case of revenue deficits it would be easy to raise GST and collect. (Already there is talk of it moving beyond an 18% limit, and no cap has been decided.) This will edge the policy against the weaker sections.

Both policy moves are stitches, which will reduce policy flexibility with possible benefits and likely drawbacks. ■



SPOTLIGHT

Literacy empowers you!

You may not believe it, but in developed countries like the U.S., which boasts of a literacy rate of 99%, there are still millions who don't have functional literacy (the ability to read and understand simple instructions - like filling out a form or reading medicine and food labels.)

September 8 is
International
Literacy Day

HERE is a moving story of an elderly couple in Canada for whom literacy became a matter of life-and-death.

Dorothy Silver was 20, married, and a mother, when she decided to go back to school. She had left school at 15, but without having learned to read, write or do maths. In her second attempt, the teacher ridiculed her daily in front of 8 to 14 year olds. Dorothy decided that she was never ever going to school again.

Then her husband, who was also illiterate, had a heart attack. Because she could not read the doctor's instructions or the label on the medicine bottle, she ended up giving him too many aspirin tablets. He almost died.

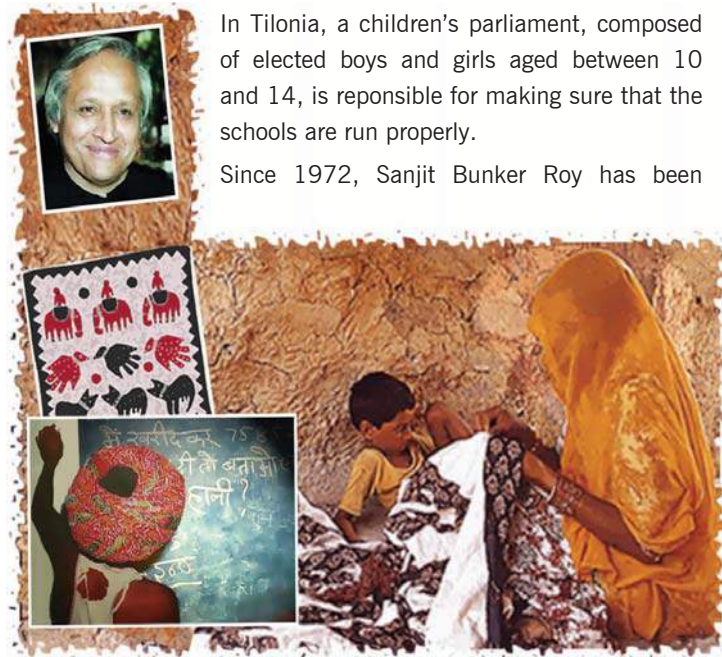


A few years later, he was in hospital again. This time, doctors suspected that he had cancer of the voice box so they didn't allow him to speak. The nurses handed him pen and paper so that he could communicate. He did not know how to write and Dorothy, out of shame, did not tell them that he couldn't!

Fortunately, he recovered. Dorothy and her husband decided to master the skills of reading and writing, come what may. It took them ten years but it led to a dramatic change in their lives.

Dorothy is now an active campaigner for literacy, gives lectures and has authored three books!

The Barefoot College



In Tilonia, a children's parliament, composed of elected boys and girls aged between 10 and 14, is responsible for making sure that the schools are run properly.

Since 1972, Sanjit Bunker Roy has been

living in Tilonia, a village in Rajasthan where he founded the Barefoot College that trains villagers without any formal education to become health

care workers, solar engineers, handpump mechanics and teachers. Today, the Barefoot College operates in 1300 villages in 80 countries worldwide, impacting over 2 million people.

Education here goes hand in hand with development. Local artisans enhance skills handed down through generations, at special workshops. Children, 60% of them girls, attend night school after spending their day grazing cattle and helping their parents. Their teachers are villagers who have had at least 8 years of schooling – among them farmers, policemen and gram panchayat officials.



STORY

The money bag



RAMDAS lived in a village. He was a trader. He bought groceries from town and supplied them to shops in the village. He earned a tidy sum but he was a miser. He spent very little money and put aside a considerable sum from his earnings every month. He kept his savings in a bag and was always worried that he would lose his money. He went to a wise man in the village, told him about his fear and sought a solution. The wise man told him to spend all the money in a good way — build a house or a temple and form a trust to help the needy. But Ramdas would have none of it. He was in fact annoyed with the old man for his 'unfair' suggestions.

Ramdas thought he had to help himself. He took his money bag and went to his field. He then dug a pit under the mango tree and buried his treasure. He kept a small stone on it just to mark the site so that he would have no difficulty in finding it. Every day he would go to the field and check if the stone was in place. One day Ramdas was

shocked to see that the stone was missing. He dug up the earth to find the money bag missing as well.

He sat under the tree and wept bitter tears over the loss. The wise man passed by. Seeing the trader crying he paused to find out what troubled Ramdas.

Ramdas then told him that he lost his money which he had buried under the tree.

The wise man asked him if he needed money urgently.

Ramdas replied, "No."

"Would you require the money in the near future?" the wise man asked.

"Oh, no!" said Ramdas.

"In that case fill the earth and just keep a stone on the spot. Imagine that the money is safe under it. The money which is not going to be spent is of no use."

Ramdas hung his head in shame.



CURIOSITY

Do identical twins have the same fingerprints?

Identical twins form when a single fertilized egg splits into two. Therefore they have the same genetic make-up and their DNA pattern is indistinguishable. Their

fingerprints have similar patterns of whorls and ridges but there are slight differences.

This is because genetics is not the sole determining factor in the development of fingerprints. Fingerprints are determined by the interaction of an individual's genes with the environment in the womb and factors such as nutrition, position in the womb and the growth rate of the fingers.

No two persons can have the same fingerprints.



SPARKLER

Man of Few Words



Calvin Coolidge who was President of the United States in the 1920's was so uncommunicative that he was known as 'Silent Cal'. One day a visiting governor said to him: "You get so many visitors, Mr. President but you always manage to finish with them by dinner time. I never finish with mine till well past midnight..."

"Yes", said Coolidge, "that's because you talk."

SYED HAIDER RAZA

Artist par excellence and creator of the *bindu* (1922-2016)

SYED Haider Raza, popularly known as S.H. Raza, is a real Indian mascot from the art world, who gave a right direction to Indian art by imbibing modernism, while anchoring on age-old Indian cultural roots. He was one of the pioneers of the famous Bombay Progressive Art group during a period when India had just become a free, independent country.

It was not a very easy task to throw away influences of European modernism and search our own cultural roots through visual art, but F. N. Souza, M. F. Husain, K. H. Ara, H. A. Gade, and S. K. Bakre continued their search, and S.H. Raza was one of the individual artists who dominated the movement. Though Raza left Mumbai to live and work in France since 1950, he maintained his ties with Indian art by visiting and organising shows of his art works.

As an artist he carried his early childhood impressions of village Babria in Madhya Pradesh, its rivers, hills, forests, which found their marks in his growth as an artist of international repute. He mostly worked in oil or acrylic, and developed his own individual style as an abstractionist. His early work was mostly landscape from his native place, which slowly evolved into a landscape of abstract form, but still identifiable as close to landscape.

His work is distinct with its use of very rich vibrant colours, replete with icons from Indian cosmology, as well as touching the horizons of Indian philosophy. Though he has created a lot of art during his long career, he will be most remembered for his work revolving around the *bindu*, his trademark.

He never looked back after holding his first solo show in 1946 at the Bombay Art Society Salon, for which he got the silver medal of the society. After shifting to Mumbai from Nagpur, he had begun shifting from landscapes to cityscapes capturing the essence of city life. Once he shifted to Paris, his cityscape changed drastically, bold lines became blurred, and colours also became lighter. He was very much interested

in the bucolic countryside of rural France, and used them in his modernist abstract paintings. From real landscape and cityscape, he slowly evolved and explored impressionistic landscapes and cityscapes. However, he was not satisfied, and through his abstract works he explored spaces of inner mind, realising the strength of *adhyatma*. He always tried to experiment new ideas and forms and explored his inner mind or *antaratma*.

He had become restless and had begun searching for new symbols, when he suddenly discovered the *bindu* somewhere in 1980s. Once he was asked why he kept on playing with the *bindu* which had become his landmark.

He explained that that one *bindu* is a fountain of possibilities; it can be a seed, it can be a sperm, it can be a star giving life to new ideas. In fact it so happened that as a student, he found it very difficult to concentrate on his studies during classes. One of his teachers observed it and drew a big *bindu* on the blackboard and asked him to concentrate on that spot. This *bindu* was ingrained in his memory. His work on the *bindu* explored his deep thoughts and brought forth his Indian ethnography on his celebrated canvas.

Even after exploring the *bindu* with all possibilities with bold colours and geometric forms, in 2000, he began dwelling on Indian spiritualism by creating works based on the Kundalini, Nagas and the Mahabharata. By then, his use of gestural brushstrokes and a heavy application of paint had become his insignia. His love for his country was beyond any doubt. Despite living in Paris for decades and marrying a French artist, he maintained his links with his motherland, and returned to India. He was honoured with the Padma Vibhushan in 2013. He was also conferred with the highest French civilian honour, the *Commandeur de la Legion d'honneur* in 2015. With his iconic *bindu*, Raza will remain an inspiration for generations of artists. ■

– Prakash Bal Joshi is a Mumbai based journalist and artist.



GENERAL ARUN KUMAR VAIDYA, PVSM, MVC AND BAR

Valiant commander (1926-1986)

General Arun Kumar Vaidya was born on 27 January 1926, and was commissioned into Deccan Horse in 1945. He took part in the Second World War and was Commandant of the Regiment in the Indo-Pak war of 1965. India and Pakistan had a confrontation in February-April 1965, and both the countries concentrated their forces on the Western Front. It was resolved through the good offices of the Prime Minister of UK and in good faith, India moved its army back to peace stations. On the contrary, Pakistan infiltrated about 30,000 militants into Kashmir. The operation failed. Pakistan did not give up and 10 Infantry Division of Pakistan launched an offensive into the Akhnur sector of Jammu. It threatened India's lines of communications and India moved its forces back to the Western front. Deccan Horse under command of Lt. Col. (later General) Vaidya was allotted to 4 Mountain Division, and joined it the day it moved out of Ambala to its operational area.

India launched an offensive on the western border in order to relieve the pressure in Akhnur. 4 Mountain Division was tasked to attack in the Khemkaran-Kasur sector. The attack got blocked due to the well prepared defences of the Pakistan Army, who responded by a counter-attack by their Armoured Division on 8 September. Deccan Horse engaged two squadrons of enemy tanks and dispersed them. It was decided to carry out a tactical withdrawal to Asal Uttar area. Deccan Horse was detailed to cover the withdrawal and redeployment of the Division. It fought a series of actions against the technically superior Patton tanks of Pakistan. Vaidya displayed outstanding leadership, moving from sector to sector with disregard to his personal safety. He played a crucial part in the raging battles at Asal Uttar and Cheema. He was awarded the MVC (Maha Vir Chakra).

He was Commander of 16 Armoured Brigade, when war broke out in 1971 between the two countries. Insurgency had long been raging in East Pakistan when Pakistan carried out an air strike on Indian airports on 2 December. India responded by an offensive on the eastern and western fronts. 54 Infantry

Division with 16 Armoured Brigade under command was given the mission to advance to the line Zafarwal-Dhamthal, and then capture Mirzapur from there on. The line of advance lay between Karir and Basantar Rivers. The force came against a mine field on 6 December. Under the direction of Brigadier (later General) Vaidya, the units crossed the mine field and deployed in time to meet the attack by Pakistan armour in the Chetra-Dahiran sector.

The next major battle occurred at Basantar River in Shakurgarh Sector from 13 to 15 December. Two regiments of enemy armour counter-attacked on 14 December, and in the ensuing fire fight, 10 enemy tanks went up in flames in no time. No men could be spared to escort the prisoners, and they were secured on top of the engine deck of the tank. Sixty-two Pakistani tanks were destroyed, and the battle witnessed many acts of valour. Major Hoshiar Singh and Lt. Arun Khetrapal were awarded PVC for courage, tenacity and determination. Vaidya had displayed superb combat leadership and courage, and was awarded MVC again. The deadly fight came to an end on the afternoon of 18 December.

He went through the staff and command appointments and took over as GOC-in-C of Eastern Command in June 1983. He tackled the insurgency problems in a praiseworthy manner and was awarded PVSM in 1983. He took over as Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on 1 August 1983. Punjab faced a severe terrorist campaign from 1984 onwards and the militants had converted the Amritsar Golden Temple into a stronghold. The Army was tasked to liquidate the terrorists in the Temple. General Vaidya had expressed his reservations about the armed action at the Temple, but it could not be delayed due to Intelligence reports of sedition. He described it as the most painful decision of his career. He retired and went to live in Pune. He was assassinated by Khalistani terrorists on 10 August 1986, and was posthumously awarded Padma Vibhushan. ■

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)



MAHASWETA DEVI

Revolutionary litterateur (1926–2016)

BORN in 1926, Mahasweta Devi who passed away in a Kolkata nursing home on July 28, was one of India's foremost literary personalities, a prolific and bestselling author in Bengali, of short fiction and novels; a deeply political social activist, who worked ceaselessly with and for tribals and marginal communities like the landless labourers of eastern India for years; the editor of a quarterly *Bortika*, in which the tribals and marginal people themselves documented grassroots level issues and trends; and a socio-political commentator whose articles appeared regularly in *The Economic and Political Weekly*, *Frontier* and other journals.

Mahasweta Devi made significant contributions to literary and cultural studies in the country. Her empirical research into oral history as it lives in the cultures and memories of tribal communities, was the first of its kind in India. Her innovative use of language has expanded the parameters of Bengali as a language of literary expression, by imbibing and interweaving of tribal dialects into her writing.

"It is not new for my literature to spring from a fight for the rights of these oppressed and downtrodden people. The tribal revolt against the British at the turn of the century formed the backbone of *Aranyer Adhikar* (Rights of the Forest), which the Sahitya Akademi singled out for their awards. My social activism is the driving force of all my literary activities, be it literature – which brought me into the good books of Jnanpeth (which bestows the highest literary award in India for outstanding work in Indian languages over a sustained period of time to a single writer every year) – my newspaper columns or the journal I edit with writing of members of different tribes. The lives of the bonded labour provided me with a character like Dopadi", she said.

In all her major works in the sixties – *Rani of Jhansi*, *Bibek Biday Pala*, *Romtha*, *Andhar Manik*, *Amrita Sanchar* – she described the common people and their plight. *Andhar Manik* describes the coastal tribal rebellion against feudal chiefs who they considered to be outsiders. She always tries to see society and judge history from the grassroots level, from the people's point of view. This is true even of her first book, *Rani*

of Jhansi. This process eventually took her to the tribals and other marginalised non-tribal people. She has written not only fiction, but also hundreds of newspaper reports on them, particularly on the so-called criminal tribes notified by the British as 'criminal tribes' in 1871.

Her reference to Dopadi links itself to *Drapadi*, one of her most electrifying pieces of work. The story is about Dopdi Mejhen, a tribal revolutionary, who, arrested and gang-raped in custody, turns the terrible wounds of her breasts into

a counter-offensive. In another story, *Breast-Giver*, a woman who becomes a professional wet-nurse to support her family, dies of painful breast cancer, betrayed alike by the breasts that for years had been her chief identity, and the dozens of 'sons' she suckled. In *Behind the Bodice*, migrant labourer Gangor's 'statuesque' breasts excite the attention of ace photographer Upin Puri, triggering off a train of violence that ends in tragedy.

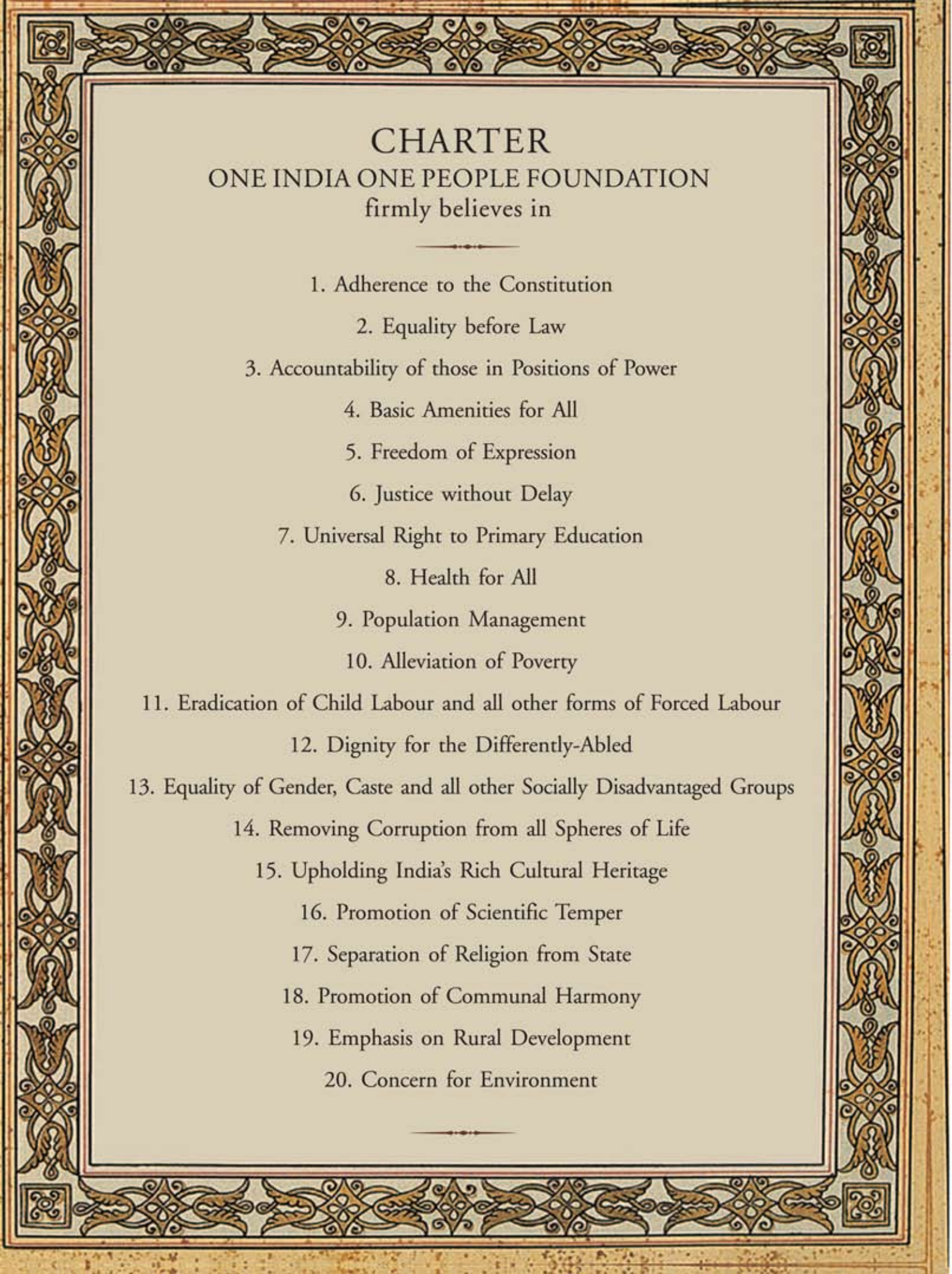
These three stories are encapsulated in a beautiful translation (by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak) called *Breast Stories*, brought out by Seagull Books, Calcutta. Though she categorically states that she looks at class and not at gender, many of her stories do deal with women oppressed by a patriarchal system. *Rudali* is a powerful short story that revolves around the life of Sanichari, a poor, low-caste village woman, is an acidly ironic tale of exploitation and struggle... *Bayen* (The Witch) is about a fair-skinned, light-eyed woman born into the community of Doms (very low-caste people who work as cremators of Hindu dead bodies), who is killed because her own people consider her a witch because of her different 'looks.'

She lived, ate and learnt the language of the Shabars, the Lodhas, the Kheria-Shabars, the Mundas, the Santhals and the Oraons, all of them tribal communities impoverished by virtue of their race and caste, and State apathy to their plight. "I don't make up stories. I go on making notes, jotting down dialogues, incidents...." she once said. ■

– Shoma A. Chatterji is a freelance journalist, film scholar and author, who has won the National Award for Best Writing on Cinema.

(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