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WHITHER MEDIA!



Playing blame games

Not a blanket freedom!

When Media called out India's scams

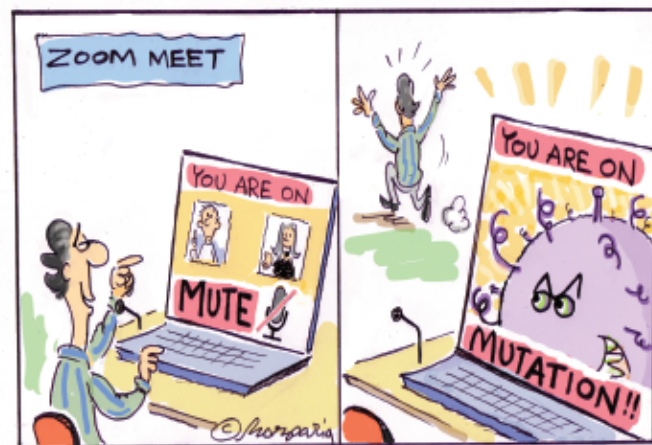
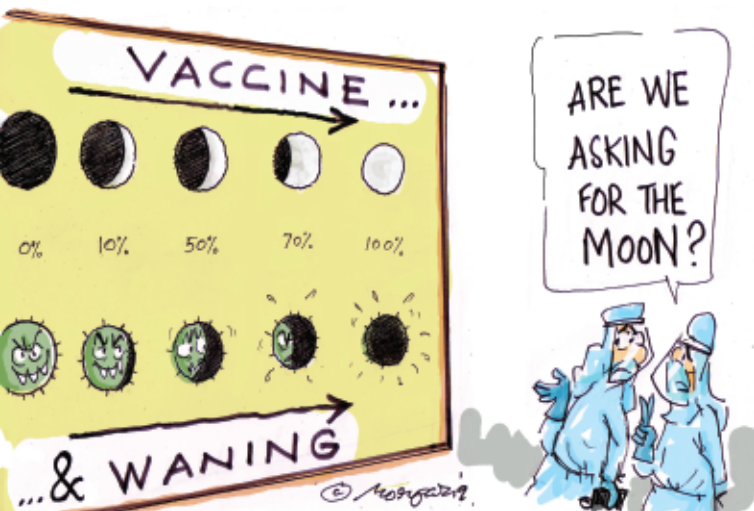
Know India Better

Quick getaways

from Kolkata

Face to Face

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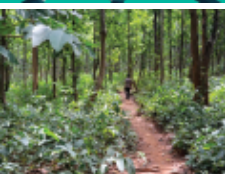


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Playing blame games

*We are in the numbers game now. 'Influencers' on the social media with million-odd followers are sought after instead of authentic media platforms. Political posturing, bias, sensationalism and fake narratives are here to stay as also the expletives and cuss words. **Gajanan Khergamker** takes a critical look at the New Age Media and says “no one gives a damn”.*



The barrage of expletives and cuss words hurled on the 'media', to an arguable extent, is misplaced yet convenient. The media in India has never vouched against indulging in such acts; a self-righteous public considers an anomaly or an illegal diversion of sorts. As for the bias and sensationalism, the readers asked for it. It is the very basis of New Media.

Over the ages, Media, primarily Print, that went on to metamorphose into TV and then Online, exploded into the colossal Social Media that engulfed the rest. Social media, over the turn of the millennium, transformed from secretive chat platforms for the nubile, underexposed few provided by selectively-public forums like Orkut and Yahoo, into 'discussion' fora.

Rabid, staccato quipping need of the hour

The public discussion fora, some open for all while other few for closed 'like-minded' sorts, gave way to public opinion platforms where the opinionated could voice their bits, however skewed. All that was needed was a rabid staccato quipping of sorts.

Most in the media industry died a swift death crumbling under the weight of their collective ego, exposing in

ruin, the fallacy of the much-tomtommed 'readership' of numbers that seemed magical at the onset. The magic of numbers did its disappearing act. And then came the resurrection of sorts.

The 'Find Love Or A Lover' platforms got mature and developed sheens of sorts that ranged from News to Opinion, Expert Advice to 'Groups' of select 'Loves' - Of 'common' goals and potential 'careers'. News as such was relegated to just another 'Interest' like 'Travel' or 'Music.'

Journalism retired in time

Erstwhile careers of proofreaders who could comb out errors in the copies of the senior-most journalist with unassuming ease came to an end. The proof reader died overtime with the profession. Today, mistakes are commonplace occurrences, and nobody cares a fig.

The editor who refused to let his copy go to print unless it was whetted by the proof reader, almost always a senior of his ilk, too died over time. Today, editors are mostly self-styled with no journalistic experience as a rule. The senior reporter, who retired as such after more than thousands of bylines generated at the speed of two stories per day, as was the mandatory need of the hour in the good ol'

days, was relegated to a swiftly-dwindling memory. Today, anyone and everyone with an opinion is a reporter if not an 'editor'.

Mistakes made in print were grievous but only to the extent of 'spelling', 'dates' or 'terminology', and the reporting or editing perpetrator would be pulled up for having committed murder. Today, the errors are dangerous and risk changing the entire narrative intended, but nobody cares.

Risk of losing job was real

The risks of losing his/her job were high and the infamy associated with the faux pas spread like fire across the industry - threatening career and a future in one clean sweep. It didn't matter if you were male or female. What did was that you had messed up and would 'have' to pay: If not with your job then with a cut in your annual 'increment' for the slip. Now, retaining your job depends on how you further the employer's narrative and not the credibility of your work. Professional memory would retain the news of errors in 'News' for years together and, if you were the perpetrator, you would mostly go underground, read 'on leave' or simply lie low and hope for people to forget: Not that they would. Nobody would.

The reader would react faster than ever. The 'erring' scribe, then, would refuse to show up to office the next day professing some medical condition no-one would believe. Now, a reader cannot as much as reach a reporter on phone, leave aside meeting him.

Media out of reach now

Almost always a few readers would land up at the newspaper office with the copy in hand demanding a refund of the price of the newspaper and answers from none-less-than the editor. Then, the public had access to the newspaper office and the editor was always accessible. Unthinkable today!

Over the years, ethics and equity succumbed to the numbers game. The demon of 'readership' gave way to the dragon of 'views' and 'likes' as Twitter, Instagram and Facebook took over public interest.

Sadly, today everyone with a smart phone has turned into a 'publisher' of sorts. They generate news, opine on it, distribute it widely, attribute it to all the wrong entities and act on it without any thought. If and when things go wrong, which almost always do, if not sooner than later, they blame the media.

And, the media too, on their part, has, owing to the complete absence of checks and accountability, lost the plot. To notch eyeballs and win the Numbers Game, they give the usual 'mandatory' checks, the convenient miss.

So, substantiating reports, checking sources for authenticity and conflict of interest, weeding out bias and ensuring there isn't backlash or a law and order problem are

processes of the past and, now, relegated to text books. This is the reason, we find innumerable media reports of people testing positive for Covid-19, even 'after' taking the vaccine, suggesting that the vaccine would completely protect you from contracting COVID-19 or that taking the vaccine was, in effect, useless. Now, protected by the Freedom of Speech and Expression and spurred by the need for eyeballs and the time-tested sensationalism, the media continues to post such dangerous stories. If they don't, few will visit their portals, if they do, they are charged with being sensational.

My way or the highway

Governments and the Who's Who began dealing directly with 'Followers' through personal and official social media accounts. If they didn't wish to deal with you, they'd 'Block' you. It's either My Way Or The Highway. Everything in the media and Social Media has been restricted to posturing and has a dedicated fan 'following' whose numbers are taken very seriously.

For a media today, whose numbers are taken seriously and attributed a respect wholly misplaced, considering the numbers themselves are falsified and procured through dubious means, bias is a given. For a reader, who 'follows' a media house because it matches his ideology or belief, any diversion from the narrative is 'fake' news or 'biased'. And why not? It just doesn't suit him. But, that he chose to 'follow' it when it suited him, was an endorsement of his bias, is conveniently glossed over.

Numbers game all that matters

We are in the numbers game now. Now, 'influencers' on the social media with million-odd followers are sought after instead of authentic media platforms. And we all know why influencers 'influence'.

The discerning lines between media houses, social media players and influencers are blurred with the viewer oblivious of the difference.

Why, of late, everyone with a Smart Phone takes the double ticks, blue ticks and 'status' on WhatsApp with utmost seriousness now. They are the new Publishers who decide what to publish and who should read what they publish. Journalists with their decades of experience be damned.

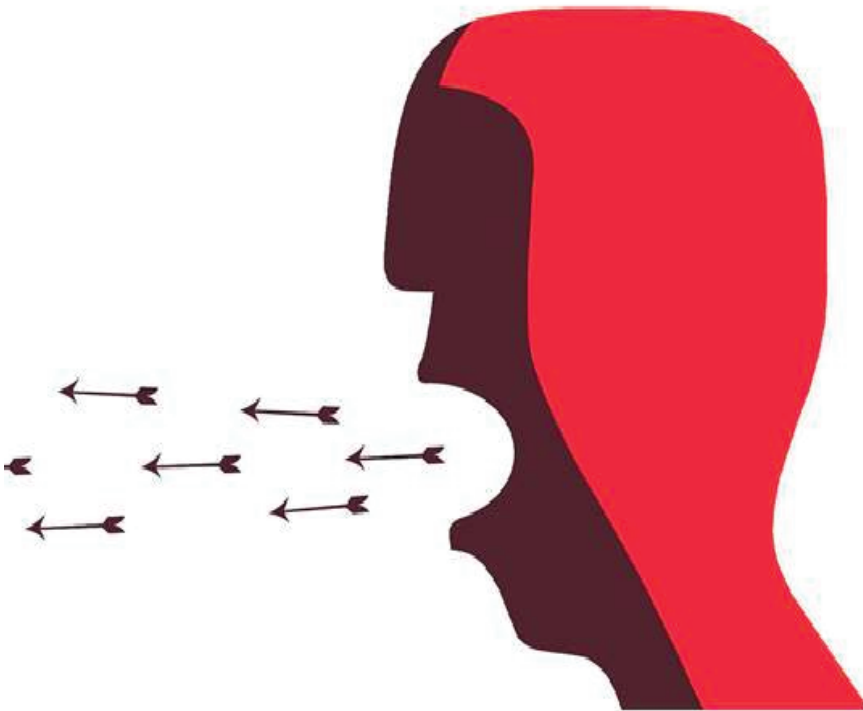
Political posturing, bias, sensationalism and fake narratives are here to stay. And so are the expletives and the cuss words. Like they say: You win some, you lose some.



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

Not a blanket freedom!

Freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed by the Indian Constitution but this right, more often than not, is observed more in breach than practice in the guise of creativity. While the conventional and legacy media is usually known to draw a line, the new age social media and the OTT should learn to exercise restraint, feels
Manu Shrivastava.



'Right to Express' under this very fundamental right available also to every citizen of India. Contrary to popular notions, in India, the media – the Fourth Estate - does not enjoy any special or exclusive rights to do what it does. That, however, does not prevent the media from toying with the freedom in myriad ways and forms. It's in the reach of the freedom that sets the media apart from the common man.

As the fourth pillar of democracy, media has to exercise certain roles and it's this freedom of speech and expression that enables it to question the other three pillars - judiciary, legislature and the executive. Also, in times of opposition from the other pillars, it's this very freedom that empowers the media to stand its ground and question the powerful and the mighty.

Laws governing traditional media

Earlier this year, when the web series Tandav found itself mired in controversy, once again bringing to fore issues of freedom of speech and expression and the need of censorship by the authorities, the Indian government finally decided to address the long-pending issue. The Constitution of India guarantees all citizens of the country the Fundamental Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the constitution. It's the most valued and concurrently the most misused right given to a citizen. The Freedom of Speech and Expression not just affects all Indians, it also forms the basis of any act of dissent towards the violation of any other freedom guaranteed by the Constitution.

Media's right to express

The media industry rests primarily on the freedom of speech and expression. It's here that there are constant tussles between the fundamental right and the restrictions associated. The Press aka the Media is guaranteed the

The media in India is arguably free and has the freedom of expression but subject to certain 'reasonable restrictions' as laid down in the Indian Constitution. The right granted under Article 19 is not an absolute right and can be restricted. Clause (2) of Article 19 of the Indian constitution imposes certain restrictions on free speech that come into effect under the following situations: Security of the State; Friendly relations with foreign States; Public Order; Decency and Morality; Contempt of Court; Defamation; Incitement to an Offence and Sovereignty and Integrity of India.

These apart, there are several other laws that govern various aspects of media. The Newspaper (Prices and Pages) Act, 1956 empowers the Central Government to regulate the price of newspapers in relation to the number of pages and size and regulate the allocation of space to be allowed for advertising matter.

Under the Press Council Act 1978, the Press

Council was reconstituted (after 1976) to maintain and improve the standards of newspaper and news agencies in India.

The Copyright Act 1957 defines 'copyright' as the exclusive right to commercially exploit the original literary, dramatic, artistic, musical work, sound recordings or cinematographic films as per the wishes of the owner of copyright subject to the restrictions imposed in the Act. The Act also makes it a cognizable offence for anyone to sell, hire, distribute, exhibit, possess or view any unauthorised recordings and prescribes severe penalties, including imprisonment, fines as well as confiscation of the equipment used for the purpose of such recording and exhibition.

Challenges with Social Media

The Freedom of Speech and Expression exercised by the traditional media and the complementing restrictions too have been ineffective when it comes to media's youngest avatar that started to emerge at the onset of this century – Social Media.

When social media platforms, social networking sites and intermediaries penetrated in the country, no one had imagined how far they'd manage to affect the Indian population. So, what started with engaging the young soon expanded to people from all age groups, backgrounds and today notches a formidable reach of content circulated to millions of users across India.

Appropriate laws have been introduced over time and amendments made to the existing ones but the fast-evolving social media scenario needs more attention and faster response time.

Films and Censorship

Films have been the most closely associated with censorship and cuts. Where public responses to a film are concerned, they have little to do with the film-maker's Freedom of Speech and Expression. Every year, there are films that trigger a violent response from the public. This, inevitably, brings the freedom vs censorship discussion to the fore: Where does the freedom of expression of a film-maker end and at what cost?

Films such as Padmaavat, Fire, Kai Po Che, The Attacks of 26/11 and many more have incited violence in the country and raised the question on the freedom of expression. In most cases, the retorts associated with these films comprised anger and disdain towards the film-maker's treatment of real issues or distortion of history or facts, etc. The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), a statutory film-certification body in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is tasked with 'regulating the public exhibition of films under the provisions of the Cinematograph Act 1952.' Often, CBFC decisions are questioned by film-makers who cite their freedom of speech and expression and poetic license i.e., the freedom of an artist or a creator to change or distort facts in order to create a work of art, as their defence.

Regulating OTT platforms

In February 2021, the Government of India announced the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 to tighten its control over digital media and Over The Top (OTT) video streaming platforms that have flooded the Indian digital space in the last five years.

OTT platforms such as Netflix, Zee 5, Amazon Prime Video, Voot, ALT Balaji, Jio Cinema, Sony Liv, MX Player, etc. are screening 'unchecked' content at unprecedented rates given the sheer size of the Indian audience and the fast-growing market for OTT services.

"The idea is to create a level-playing field for all media, since print and television already worked under certain restrictions," said Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Prakash Javadekar as he announced the guidelines.

With the new rules, the government is introducing a three-tier mechanism termed as a 'soft-touch regulatory architecture' where the first two tiers bring in place a system of self-regulation by the platform itself and by the self-regulatory bodies of content publishers, the third calls for an oversight mechanism by the Centre.

Publishers of news on digital media will be required to observe norms of journalistic conduct of the Press Council of India and the Programme Code under the Cable Television Networks Regulation Act, so far followed by print and TV respectively.

Freedoms vs restrictions

Without the freedom of speech and expression, the media could not have churned out the millions of human interest stories, document oppression, injustice and unlawful administrative practices.

The media in India has the freedom to write about anything or report on any issue in any manner they like. However, just like all other freedoms, the one of Speech and Expression isn't without restrictions that must be respected to maintain the dignity of democracy and uphold the Constitution.

The role of traditional media has chalked out over the years. It's the emergence of social media, associated platforms and, now, OTT platforms that have spawned aggressively in the last decade that need to be moderated in national interest.



Manu Shrivastava is a media legal researcher with DraftCraft International, and co-convener of 'The Woman Survivor' initiative that documents abuse of women and children within families.

Media as catalyst of positive change

Renuka Goel traces the history and evolution of Indian Media that has survived numerous trials and tribulations in the pre and post-independence period. After the economic reforms of the 90s, the country witnessed a technologically-driven Media revolution with foreign players entering the race.



Media has come a long way in India and continues to remain one of the most powerful tools of change and sensitisation in the Indian society. Among the older professions in the world, journalism has remained a strong pillar of democracy in most democracies, including India. The history of media in India is very old and interesting, to say the least.

Indian media has evolved and diversified very fast post independence. Today, it comprises myriad types of communication including newspapers, magazines, television, radio, web portals, etc. Media is a very effective weapon in catalysing change in society, ensuring accountability and protecting rights of the people.

Today, more than one lakh newspapers and magazines are published in the country. In terms of broadcast media, more than 400 channels in India show 24-hour news coverage which is also the highest in the world. Even social media or new media users in India have surpassed several nations with 56 crore social media users today.

State of Media before Independence

The story of media in India began in the late 18th century, before the nation gained independence. It was

James Augustus Hickey who started The Bengal Gazette, the first newspaper in India, in 1780, under the British rule in India. Also known as the Calcutta General Advertiser, it was seized in 1872 for criticism of the government. Soon after, several newspapers and journals started publication including Bombay Herald, Calcutta Chronicle, The Bengal Journal, Madras Courier, etc.

Founded in 1822 by Fardunjee Marzban, Bombay Samachar is Asia's oldest continuously published newspaper. Now called Mumbai Samachar, it is published in Gujarati and English. The newspaper was a weekly publication till 1832, became a bi-weekly later and since 1855 became a daily newspaper. It finally became one of western India's premier newspapers read by Gujarati-speaking people in India and outside India too.

Founder of Bombay Samachar, Fardunjee Marzban was a visionary. He initiated several other Gujarati-printed literatures and founded the first native press in 1812. In 1814, this press brought out a Gujarati calendar. Udant Martand (meaning The Rising Sun) was the first Hindi newspaper published in India in 1826 in Calcutta.

The Bombay Samachar played a crucial role in India's independent movement as it became a pedestal for

freedom fighters to reach out to the masses. Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Pandit Nehru and more would often be quoted in this newspaper. Eventually, the papers came to be owned by the Cama family in 1933 that continue to remain its present publishers.

After India's first war of independence in 1857, several local language newspapers mushroomed in the country but their reach was not deep enough to transverse to all the corners of the country. However, a few newspapers in the UK did publish reports on India's first spell of freedom struggle in 1857. At the time, such news would first be delivered to Bombay and then to London and it would be several weeks before the news would make it to the newspapers. For example, India's first war of independence that started on 10 May 1857 appeared in the British newspaper The Illustrated London News on 13 June.

On 18 July 1857, UK newspaper Illustrated Times carried a lengthy article about the first freedom struggle of India. Soon after the 1857 revolt, as more newspapers started being published by Indians, the British government started tightening the noose around them by enforcing censorship.

Media in Post-Independence India

After independence from the British in 1947, several English language newspapers continued to remain in circulation and enjoyed popularity in India. Several reasons contributed to the phenomenon including the fact that typesetting speed was much slower in Indian languages as opposed to the English language.

At the time of independence, there were over 200 daily newspapers in the country. Soon after, media charted a growth path in sync with that of the nation. When India's High Commissioner to Britain VK Krishna Menon signed a deal 'to buy some old Jeeps for the army for Rs 80 lakh' in 1948, he did not take the government's permission for the same. It was independent India's first tryst with a 'scam' and was widely reported by the media then.

In 1975, when the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed the emergency in India, she snatched away the freedom of the press in the process. More than 3,800 newspapers were confiscated, hundreds of journalists were jailed and government advertisements were withdrawn from several newspapers. At the same time, accreditation of many foreign journalists was cancelled and several were denied entry into the country.

A few editors from Delhi though, despite the curb on the freedom of the press, supported the Prime Minister's move of emergency and the ensuing censorship on newspapers.

Present status of print media

Indian media is among the oldest in the world. Today, most media houses are controlled and owned by large, profit-driven corporations and groups.

As of 31 March 2018, over 1,00,000 publications registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI). Office of the Registrar of the Newspapers for India, popularly known as Registrar of Newspapers for India, is a Government of India statutory body of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for the registration of the publications, such as newspapers and magazines, India. It was founded in 1956 on the recommendation of the First Press Commission in 1953 and by amending the Press and Registration of Books Act 1867.

Other media platforms

Radio broadcasting initiated in India in 1927 and was soon taken over by the government. In 1937, it was called All India Radio and since 1957 it has been called Akashvani. Television programming began in 1959 with limited duration broadcast in the beginning, followed by complete broadcasting starting in 1965. It was television channel Doordarshan that was the only broadcaster at the time. Doordarshan is an autonomous public service broadcaster founded by the Government of India in 1959.

Doordarshan was part of the national broadcaster, All India Radio till 1976 when it transited to become a separate Department in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, though still serviced by All India Radio, especially for its news. In the decades to follow, audio-visual media were used extensively by the government for mass education especially in rural India. After the economic reforms in 1990s, foreign satellite television channels such as BBC, CNN, and CNBC entered India and in 1993, Rupert Murdoch entered the Indian market too. At the time, 47 million households in India had a television set at home.

In the 90s, during the time of some of the biggest scams in India such as the Bofors scandal, the stock market fraud and the fodder scam, it were the newspapers reporting on the scams mostly. The monopoly soon diffused with the introduction of private satellite channels in India. Zee News was India's first private channel that came into existence in 1995 and soon after many other joined the brigade.

It was in November 2006 when Indian government released the community radio policy allowing agricultural centres, educational institutions and civil society organisations to apply for a community-based FM broadcasting licence. Around the same time, starting 2000, online and digital publishing gained stronghold in India. Several print publications introduced digital versions in order to keep pace with the fast-evolving and technologically-enabled media industry.

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Legal nuances of Defamation and PILs

Truth may not be a defence every time when it comes to Defamation. The risk of a court failing to find the statement for the 'public good' is too high for comfort.

Gajanan Khergamker explains the provisions of law relating to defamation and the role of PIL as a tool of justice and means to settle political scores.

comfort. Here, instead of making the plaintiff prove the accused made a false statement, Section 499 gives the accused the burden of proving the statement was not only true but also made for the public good.

Also, a person can be prosecuted under Section 499 even if he or she has not made any verbal or written statement at all. In a particular case, a magistrate issued criminal process solely on the allegation the defendant conspired with the person who made the allegedly defamatory written statements. There is nothing in Section 499 that protects a person who has not made any statement at all from being charged with criminal defamation case purely on the allegation of having conspired with someone to make a defamatory statement.

Why, even an ironical statement can amount to defamation. “An imputation in the form of an alternative or expressed ironically,” may amount to defamation. Also, Section 499 applies to any imputation concerning any person. This means anyone can file a criminal defamation suit under Sections 499 and Section 500 even if that person is a public official holding high office. Section 499 expressly states that “making an imputation concerning a company or an association or collection of persons may amount to defamation. Therefore, public institutions too can file suit for defamation,” according to the explanations provided under Section 499 of Indian Penal Code.

PIL dismissed to uphold Fundamental Right

The dismissal of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by advocate K.L.N.V. Veeranjanyulu, who took exception to a particular chapter in a book written by Writer and Social Scientist Kancha Illaiah, came as a breather. The Supreme Court dismissed the petition to uphold the fundamental Right of Free Speech, “keeping in view the sanctity of the said right and also bearing in mind that the same has been put on the highest pedestal by this court”. The judiciary’s stand on the issue couldn’t be clearer. It will not permit an individual or group to curbing a fundamental right

The Freedom of Press isn't an absolute right and does not immunise you from the processes of law particularly if your Freedom borders on either Defamation or isn't for Public Good.

Now, where defamation is concerned, particularly for the media, it must be noted that there are broadly two kinds of defamation. One being a civil defamation where truth is a defence and, if proved, can lead to the defamation suit being dismissed. The other, as is in question here, being a criminal defamation suit as laid down in Sections 499 and Section 500 of the Indian Penal Code, where just the truth isn't a defence.

Statements made or Public Good

Here, even if a person has spoken the truth, he can be prosecuted for defamation. Under the first exception to Section 499, truth will only be a defence if the statement was made 'for the public good.' And that is a question of fact to be assessed by the judiciary. While these sections have been debated for years now, particularly in the Subramaniam Swamy Vs Union of India case where the 'arbitrary and over-broad rule,' becomes a huge deterrent to those making statements, regarding politicians or political events, even which they know to be true. The risk of a court failing to find the statement for the public good is too high for



through a motivated PIL.

“Any request for banning a book of the present nature has to be strictly scrutinized because every author or writer has a fundamental right to speak out ideas freely and express thoughts adequately. Curtailment of an individual writer/author’s right to freedom of speech and expression should never be lightly viewed,” a Bench of Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra, Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud recorded in the order.

Under the guise of representing the Public, politically charged or personally motivated individuals have been misusing the PIL tool for their skewed ends. Now, however, the judiciary has been calling their bluff with heart-warming alacrity.

In a nation, where masses are hugely illiterate and have poor little access to legal aid otherwise easily accessible to the middle class and the moneyed few, Article 32 of the Indian Constitution provides a tool to a member of the public to file a suit through judicial activism. That member can be a non- governmental organisation, an institution or an individual acting on behalf of the aggrieved parties.

PIL: A panacea for social ills

It started in the late seventies, when Senior Advocate Pushpa Kapila Hingorani produced two pages to the Apex Court, detailing the deplorable condition of undertrial prisoners – men, women, children, lepers and mental patients – languishing in jails in Bihar ignored by the state and asked the court to intervene and give orders to release them on bail. The-then appalled Supreme Court bench headed by the-then Justice Prafullachandra Natwarlal Bhagwati went on to release 40,000 prisoners from various jails across India! The case, better known as Hussainara Khatoon Vs Home Secretary, Bihar, was India’s first PIL.

Over the three decades that followed, PILs grew from being a far-reaching tool of justice for a vibrant judiciary and a socially- inclined activist media to getting reduced to a juicy byte ensuring a moment of fame by the media and legal professionals alike. It’s only now that the judiciary has, in a strategic display of judicial activism, identified and isolated the scourges at play.

Locus Standi is a must

Look at the stand the Apex Court took even against the surge in populism: Despite tempers running high across India with regard to the Varnika Kundu case, wherein the ‘politically powerful’ were accused of stalking and attempted abduction, a Public Interest Litigation filed by human rights lawyer Ranjan Laxhanpal, seeking judicial supervision of the probe into the incident, was promptly dismissed by a division bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Citing a 1991 apex court judgment, the division bench of Acting Chief Justice S.S. Saron and Justice Avneesh Jhingan maintained that court would have no difficulty taking up the case if Varnika herself approached the High

Court. They ruled, “In a criminal case, only the aggrieved persons have a right to file the PIL,” citing the landmark 1991 judgment on maintainability of a PIL in which the Supreme Court had ruled that “even if there are million questions of law to be deeply gone into and examined in a criminal case... it is for them [aggrieved parties] and them alone to raise all such questions and challenge the proceedings initiated against them at the appropriate time before the proper forum and not for third parties under the garb of public interest litigants”.

This ruling examined the issue of locus standi and underlined the tendency for private individuals under the garb of public interest to file PILs and thereby load the already-buckling legal system. It was an incisive ruling that put to rest everybody’s interest in an issue that was primarily a private one. This, now, becomes a precedent for similar private motivated motions being masqueraded as litigations of public interest.

Soon after, came the Delhi High Court dismissing BJP leader Subramaniam Swamy’s plea seeking court-monitored SIT probe into the death of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor’s wife Sunanda Pushkar through a PIL.

When a PIL is 'Political'

Terming his PIL as a “textbook example of political interest litigation,” the Delhi High Court bench of Justices S. Muralidhar and I.S. Mehta said the petition by Swamy cannot be entertained as a PIL. It said that from what was placed before the court, it was unable to be persuaded that the probe, being carried out by the SIT, is botched up or under the influence of any party.

“Although Subramanian Swamy claimed he has not concealed any data or information, when asked specifically about the basis of his allegations in the petition, his response was to seek time to file affidavit thereby clearly showing that what was to be disclosed at the first instance was not done,” the court said. The bench maintained that “Courts need to be careful that judicial process is not used by political persons for their own purposes”. “This is not to say that political persons cannot file PILs, but courts have to be extra cautious when allegations are made against other political persons,” the bench added.

This ruling examined, once again, the issue of locus standi and underlined the tendency for politicians, under the garb of public interest, to file PILs and thereby use the legal system to level grudges. It was a strategic ruling that publicly identified political parties’ interest in PILs and will serve as a precedent for stopping similar future misadventures.



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

Reining in the social media

The social media is a double-edged weapon. While on the one hand it empowers the common man, it also comes with attendant risks. Popular though because of its accessibility and reach, it also can pose a menace and calls for guidelines that can bring transparency and accountability to its practitioners. Mukti Chawla weighs the pros and cons.



milestone in young India's digital trajectory. The rules have been framed in exercise of 'powers under Section 87 (2) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 and in supersession of the earlier Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011.'

So, following the guidelines, now WhatsApp will have to identify the 'originator of unlawful' messages. Also, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube will have to 'take down such messages within a specific time-frame, set up grievance redressal mechanisms and assist govern-

ment agencies in investigation.'

On 25 February 2021, Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice, Ravi Prasad and Communications, Ravi Prasad and Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Minister of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, Prakash Javadekar announced new, stricter social media guidelines at a press conference.

The guidelines were announced after extended deliberations and in response to the fears that social media platforms lack transparency and accountability. When social media entered India's digital space, no one would have imagined its growth, potential and the risks it poses in present day. The guidelines also attempt to address concerns of the rights of users regarding digital media. In a way, social media has finally come of age and it's time that it becomes more responsible and accountable.

Monitoring and Regulation of apps needed

The formulation of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 is a

The evolution of social media platforms

Social media forayed into India just a few years behind the entry of internet in the country. Although internet was introduced in India by 1986, it was on 15 August 1995 that state-owned Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) launched India's first publicly available internet service making the now-quintessential service open to public use. By 2002, the first generation of social media platforms had entered digital space, creating a niche space among the young internet users. Among the first were MySpace, hi5, Friendster, Orkut, Flickr, even Facebook's original and much simpler version that was introduced in 2004.

This was followed by the entry of Reddit and one of the most popular and still growing platforms YouTube in 2005. Officially founded in February 2005, YouTube has over two billion active users today and 42.9 per cent of all global internet users access YouTube monthly. Twitter came in 2006 followed by Yahoo's microblogging and social networking website Tumblr founded in 2007 by David Karp. WhatsApp came in 2009, Instagram in 2010 and

Snapchat in 2011. More recently, Tik Tok - video-sharing social networking service owned by Chinese company ByteDance - was launched in September 2016. However, Tik Tok was banned in India by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology on 29 June 2020, along with 223 other Chinese apps stating the apps were “prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of state and public order.”

Digital boom has helped social media growth

The social media movement has empowered the common man in a big way. India's digital boom enabling penetration and access to mobile phones, internet, etc. has undoubtedly helped the exponential growth of social media platforms and apps in India, across all age groups.

Presently, some of the most-used social media applications have a significant user base in India. This includes WhatsApp with the highest number of users at 53 crores, followed by YouTube at 44.8 crores, Facebook with 41 crores, Instagram 21 crores and micro-blogging site Twitter has the lowest user base in India at 1.75 crores.

Social media platforms getting popular

According to analytics firm App Annie's 'State of Mobile 2021' report, Facebook followed by WhatsApp Messenger and Instagram were the most downloaded apps in 2020 in India. In terms of overall time spent, YouTube was the number one streaming app at 26.5 hours per month on average, followed by MX Player, Hotstar, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. Interestingly, YouTube saw up to six times increase in time spent per user vs the next closest app, and its consumption was up to 38 hours a month, globally.

Till mid-2019, WhatsApp, now owned by Facebook, had more than 400 million users in India as opposed to close rival YouTube's users that stood at 260 million at the time, according to App Annie. However, in December 2020, YouTube had 450 million monthly active users on Android phones and tablets in India while WhatsApp had 422 million monthly active users on Android. On iOS devices, WhatsApp has 459 million active users in India as opposed to YouTube's 452 million users.

The risks of social media

With the advent and proliferation of social media across Indian society, the common man has been empowered. “I think internet and social media are great levellers. They have given the power to an ordinary citizen to connect with anyone, anywhere in the world. In fact, the common man can now directly connect to his elected candidate, a union minister, even the Prime Minister of the country,” offers Mumbai-based media student Swagata Ghosh.

On the other hand, social media and its ‘unchecked’ use have led to events and consequences that have only grown over the past few years. And, it's not just in

India. Many countries and the international community at large are trying to find solutions to the risks and the problems posed by social media platforms.

“There have been so many instances that show the ugly side of social media. Fake news, online abuse, stalking, trolling, fraud and cheating, defamatory content and content inciting unrest and religious disharmony ... these are just to name a few. It's time we come together as a civilised society and address the risks of social media and find legal and social solutions for the same,” feels Lucknow-based law researcher Ritika Singh.

Women and children, in particular, are at high risk when using social media applications. “I am scared of using any social media app. Everyday, I read about cases where a jilted lover or a pervert misuses social media to share morphed images of innocent girls and women. This is a direct threat to a woman's dignity. And, what about video clips that show molestation even rape of girls... it's preposterous and someone must be held accountable when such content emerges,” says a furious Ritika.

Fake news menace must be tackled

Of all the perils of social media, Fake News has caused the most damage and continues to bleed the country from within. Anti-social elements, anti-national groups and separatist entities within India and beyond actively use social media to spread fake news. Fake news has become a modern-day tool for circulation of inflammatory content that causes disharmony in the society, communal violence and disorder.

India's new rules for social media aim to create transparency, establish stricter checks on the content circulating on social media and make the social media intermediaries put robust grievance redressal mechanisms for the users. ‘Social media intermediaries are no longer limited to playing the role of pure intermediary and often they become publishers. In respect of news and current affairs, publishers are expected to follow the journalistic conduct of Press Council of India and the Programme Code under the Cable Television Network Act, which are already applicable to print and TV’ said a release by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

India's new social media rules are garnering global attention too. They come at a time when the US, the UK and Australia are pushing Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, etc. to take responsibility for content on their platforms.

Mukti Chawla is a legal researcher working with The Media Matters Project – A DraftCraft International Initiative to investigate into functional issues of the media – traditional, social and legal; ethics within borders and bias, inherent and doctored.

Media, private ownership and future prospects

Post economic liberalization of 1990s, the media industry has grown exponentially. Market dynamics apart, the growth has downsides. It's a big market controlled by influential few. Add to that the phenomenon of Cross Media Ownership that has altered some basic principles of journalism and has compromised the integrity of media. Pragati Mohan provides facts and figures.

The media industry in India is a formidable force and unparalleled in the world. By a few records, the industry is growing faster even than the country's economy. After the economic reforms in the 1990s, the media industry boomed and grew exponentially to be where it is today.

According to the 2018 data released by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Indian Media recorded a cumulative growth of 13 per cent in 2017 to reach USD 22.54Billion (INR 1.50 trillion) and it expects the sector to cross a volume of USD 30.06 billion (INR 2 trillion) by 2020 at a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 11.6 per cent, which is faster than the country's GDP growth.

The growth of this industry is being attributed to several factors, but primarily to the growing privatisation and increasing control by large corporations. Since the economy opened up three decades ago, there has been a gradual corporatisation of the media industry in India.

Understanding the market dynamics

As per the India Brand Equity Foundation's (IBEF) latest report on India's media and entertainment (M&E) industry, it is expected to expand at a CAGR of 3.24 per cent between 2019-20 and 2021-22 to reach USD 25.56 billion by 2021-22 due to acceleration of digital adoption among users across geographies.

The television, print and digital and OTT platforms stood at Rs 778 billion (USD 10.66 billion), Rs 306 billion (USD 4.19 billion) and Rs 218 billion (USD 2.99 billion),



respectively in FY20. These mediums are projected to reach Rs 769 billion (USD 10.53 billion), Rs 296 billion (USD 4.05 billion) and Rs 338 billion (USD 4.63 billion), respectively, by Financial Year 2022.

In FY20, the Indian digital segment grew by 35 per cent due to upsurge in paid subscriber base across all OTT platforms. In 2020, India's television market size was Rs 778 billion (USD 10.66 billion) and is estimated to reach Rs 769 billion (USD 10.53 billion) by 2022. TV broadcasters witnessed a growth of 13 per cent in FY20 to reach annual revenues worth Rs 420 billion (USD 5.75 billion).

Additionally, the share of the subscription revenues in the overall revenue of broadcasters rose from 32.4 per cent in FY19 to 37.7 per cent in FY20.

Industry forecasts for the Indian market seem positive according to the Media and Entertainment Outlook 2020 that says India is 'likely to emerge as the world's sixth-largest OTT (over-the-top) streaming market by 2024.' The market is expected to post a CAGR of 28.6 per cent over the next four years to generate revenue worth USD 2.9 billion.

Big market controlled by a few

The sheer size and expanse of the media industry with all its components – print, radio, television, digital and social media – is a force to reckon with. In India, there were over 1,18,239 publications registered with the Registrar of Newspapers (RNI), including over 36,000 weekly magazines too as of 31 March 2018.

According to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, there are over 880 satellite television channels in India, of which 380 claim to be television channels broadcasting ‘news and current affairs.’ Ministry information also reveals that there are more than 550 FM radio stations in India. And, the number of news websites and portals simply cannot be accounted for.

The generation and production of content as well as its distribution and publication have gradually, over decades, passed on to the hands of a few in India. According to the findings of research project called Media Ownership Monitor (MOM), ‘58 media outlets enjoy the largest audience shares in India.’ In the print media market, that happens to be extremely concentrated, four major media houses capture 76.45 per cent of the readership share i.e. three out of four readers in the Hindi language market. The media houses include Dainik Bhaskar, Amar Ujala, Dainik Jagran and Hindustan.

The market for vernacular or regional language media is big and expanding. A Google report estimated that Indian (vernacular) language internet users had surpassed English language users by about 201 million. Google expected the number of Indian (vernacular) language internet users to reach 536 million by 2021 at a CAGR of 18 per cent, compared to just 3 per cent for English content consumers.

The findings of the study revealed that in each of the vernacular market segment, ‘the respective top two newspapers concentrate more than half of readership shares or more.’

Few families controlling media

In India, most of the media houses are owned by a few proprietors, big corporations or large conglomerates. In most instances, these groups are still controlled by the founding families that have simply diversified investments over time.

The First Press Commission of 1954 had then expressed concerns over the ownership concentration and the Second Press Commission that submitted its report in 1982, advocated the free functioning of the press.

Many such corporate groups, according to the study by Media Ownership Monitor India, ‘promote the content property in one sector through another sector while the audiences remain the same.’ So, Femina Miss India contest gets publicity and coverage through The Times

Group’s several electronic and print media entities such as The Times of India, Times Now and Zoom TV. Also, the India Today Conclave is promoted and televised through Aaj Tak, TV Today, etc.

According to some industry players, this kind of cross-sharing has altered some basic principles of journalism and has compromised the integrity of media in several ways.

Is private ownership good for media?

With the increasing control of a select few entities over a large share of the media industry, the professional has taken a backseat giving way to the harbingers of the business model. Mumbai-based media professional Nandita Joshi says, “Over the last few decades, the media industry has seen a big shift in how it operates especially in media organisations owned by big corporate groups. Editors often lose their key journalistic role to that of being a manager and it’s the CEO or the owner that make journalistic decisions too. It has affected the industry in a bad way.”

Apart from print media, even in television and radio, several private players have stepped in since liberalisation. In the radio sector, the state-controlled broadcaster All India Radio (AIR) – the largest radio network in the world - has a nationwide monopoly on radio news. Private broadcasters who run FM radio stations are prohibited from producing news. They have the license to provide music and entertainment content only.

Foreign media industry not too different

The phenomenon of majority ownership of media houses in the hands of a few and powerful is not unique to India. It’s no secret that only four companies namely Walt Disney, Comcast, Time Warner Holdings and 21st Century Fox/NewsCorp supply 90 per cent of the media content worldwide.

The trend is visible beyond the entertainment sector and in the news arena too. Australia-born American media mogul Rupert Murdoch, through his company News Corp, is the owner of hundreds of local, national and international newspapers, publishing outlets, television broadcasting channels and production houses around the world. This includes The Wall Street Journal, The Sun, Fox News, book publisher HarperCollins, etc.

So, during the Gulf War, his publications played a crucial role in developing public opinion as ‘all of the 150 newspapers of his NewsCorp supported the American invasion of Iraq.’

Pragati Mohan is a researcher working with The Media Matters Project - A DraftCraft International Initiative to investigate into functional issues of the media – traditional, social and legal; ethics within borders and bias, inherent and doctored

When Media called out India's scams

*The Fourth Estate has stood true to its sobriquet of a “watchdog” by exposing a number of scams since the country attained Independence. Despite the threats and baits thrown at it the Media has taken on the establishment and the powers that be to uphold their duty of exposing wrongdoings, says **Nikita Shastri**.*

Recently, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said, in Rajya Sabha, that fugitive economic offenders Vijay Mallya, Mehul Choksi and Nirav Modi will be coming back to India and face the law of the country. Liquor baron Vijay Mallya, also owner of the now-defunct Kingfisher Airlines, has been accused of committing fraud and laundering the Rs 9,000 crore he took as loan from several Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) banks and with no intention to return. Concurrently, Mehul Choksi and Nirav Modi, the prime accused in India's largest bank fraud - the Rs 13,600 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam - left India in 2018. The duo has been involved in the scam involving fake guarantees in the name of the state-run lender to secure loans overseas.

The Indian media, since independence, has uncovered several high-profile scams and scandals over time, without fear or trepidation. No one can forget the Bofors Scam that exposed the top political tier of the country or the Fodder Scam the extent of which shocked the nation. Media has played an important role in keeping the masses informed and in keeping the executive, legislature and judiciary in check. Journalists have time and again questioned the powerful despite the threats, attacks even fatalities and many continue to do so upholding their duty as the Fourth Estate.

The big scams that shook the nation

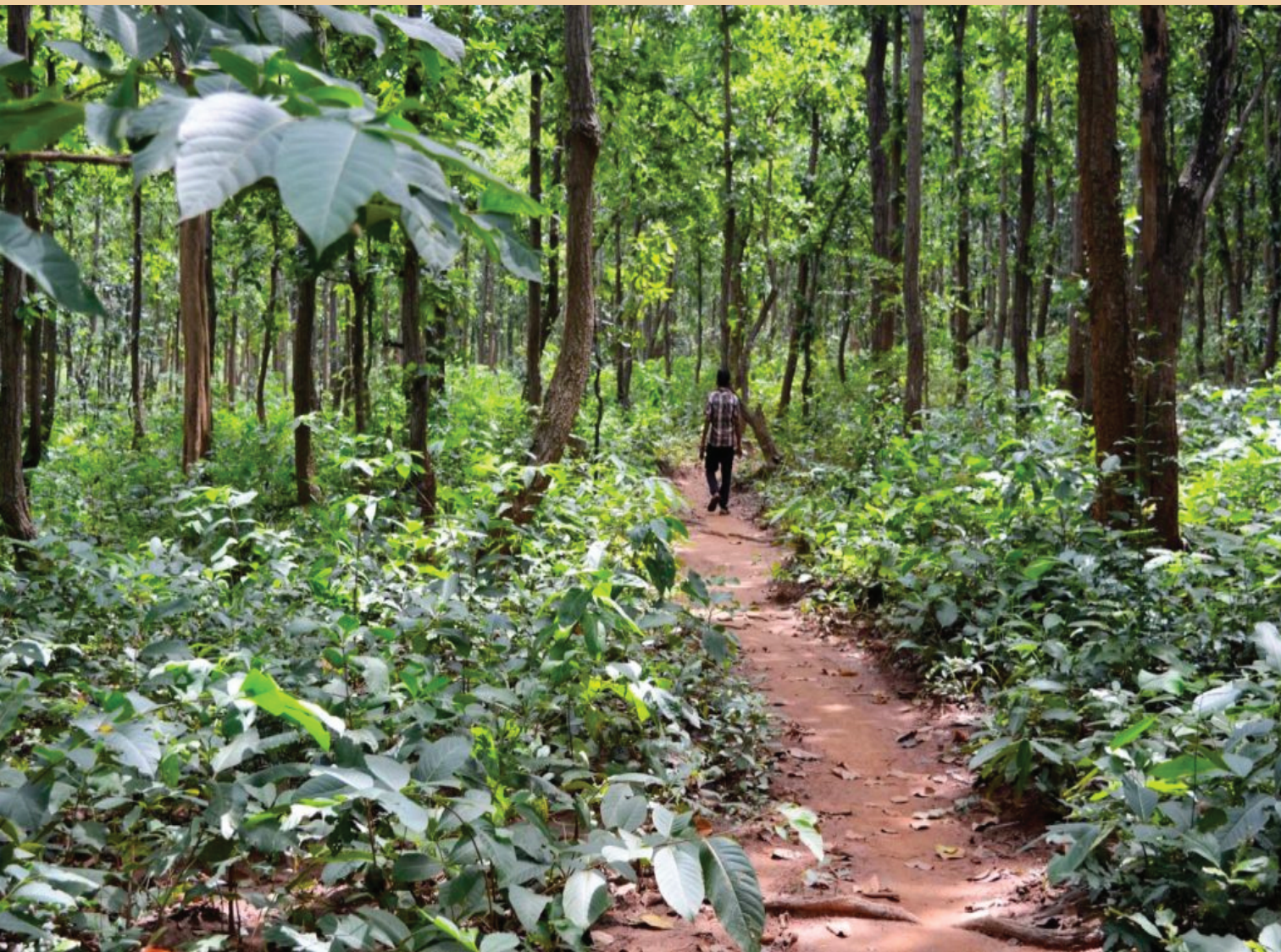
In the last three decades, with the privatisation and the diversification of media, many more scandals and scams involving powerful politicians, industrialists, celebrities, etc. have been exposed by the media. The Bofors Scam, a weapons-contract political scandal involving India and Sweden and initiated by members of the political party Indian National Congress was one of the first scams that made national news. The scam went on to involve several



powerful politicians from Indian and Swedish governments including Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. They were accused of receiving kickbacks from Swedish arms manufacturer Bofors AB for winning a bid to supply to India their 155 mm field howitzer guns. It was a report in The Hindu by N Ram and Chitra Subramanian that exposed the scam. As many as 350 documents relating to the weapons deal, the kickbacks to flout the law and illegal bypassing of due processes pertaining to the deal were exposed too.

The Fodder Scam was a corruption scandal involving the embezzlement of INR 9.4 billion (equivalent to INR 39 billion or USD 540 million in 2019) from the government treasury of the state of Bihar. The scandal was exposed by journalist Ravi Jha working with the Asian Age in Calcutta at the time. Among those implicated and arrested were the-then Chief Minister of Bihar Lalu Prasad Yadav and the former Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra. The scandal also led to the end of Lalu's long reign as Chief Minister. On 23 December 2017, Lalu Prasad Yadav was convicted by a special CBI court while Jagannath Mishra was acquitted.

(continued on page 30...)



Quick getaways from Kolkata

Weekend getaways are godsend for the citizens of Kolkata as they seek to break free from the gradually easing pandemic situation and find solace, fun-filled holiday in the exquisite laps of nature good enough for a visit almost round the year. Manjira Majumdar and Snigdha Goswami take you on a virtual trip with a graphic description as they explore these spots.

Text: Manjira Majumdar

Photos: Manjira Majumdar & Snigdha Goswami



Front view of Itachuna Rajbari in Hooghly district

With restriction on travel gradually easing, citizens of Kolkata are taking those wandering footstep, albeit gingerly. The winter gave some respite; when weekend getaways from the city saw hordes of travellers driving out to these for a couple of days or so.

Any weekend, any time of the year, can work out. For instance, in summers if you drive down very early mornings and return after only sunsets, it makes sense. Monsoons are good enough in ecological resorts though maybe not close to rivers. The months from October to March are the best. Many getaways from Kolkata are not as much about forts and monuments as they are about nature, or heritage. Some tourism spots have been artificially developed after being beautifully landscaped, beautiful cottages built, with all modern facilities; some being close to modest sea beaches and foothills of the mountains in tea country.

Itachuna Rajbari – Bargees or Maratha plunderers

The countryside, at one time, had old zamindari style houses built by the rich and converted into weekend resorts.



Royal Bengali thali meal served at Itachuna Rajbari



Baranti Lake, Purulia

One such is Itachuna Rajbari belonging to the Kundus of Itachuna, who were the local businessmen with land and property spread over the region. The film "Lootera" was shot in this Rajbari and today it's a place that many escape to during the weekends. The vintage Rajbari has a history.

Located in the Pandua district of Hooghly, it is also known as Bargee Danga. The Bargees were once a notorious community of Maratha warriors who gained infamy by demanding one-fourth of the chauth (tax) that was to be paid to the Mughals by the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. This was during the 1740 and 1750, when Aurangzeb's power was on the decline.

The Itachuna Rajbari was built by the ancestors of Bejoy Narayan Kundu, the name Kundu being derived from Kundan, a faction of the same Maratha community that was led by Raghuji Bhosle and Bhaskar Pandit who terrorized the region. The Kundu family came into prominence during the British Raj and made much of their fortune by securing contracts of constructing railway bridges.

This is a fascinating vintage Rajbari laid out over beautiful lawns. It speaks of an elegant class of a bygone age. Forced to make this into a home stay to "meet the huge maintenance cost," according to Dhruv Narayan Kundu, the present owner.

The property boasts of well-appointed rooms that

transport you to a leisurely life. The architecture of the Bengal Rajbari is usually of the Paanch Mahal design: 5-layered - Andar Mahal (inner quarters); Bahir Mahal (outer quarters); Bagicha Mahal (lawn/garden); Kachari Bari (office) and Thakur Bari (small temple).

The main attraction though is the gorgeous inner courtyard or thakurdalan, which in this case is the houses the deity of Shreedhar Jeeu. One can enjoy traditional meals served on shiny kansha or bell metal plates, local cultural programmes and a visit to some nearby green wooded spots promising a lovely weekend. You can also travel to Itachuna by local trains on the Bardhaman line. It is steeped in history but it is just the thing that the urbanites need, from time to time, to recharge their batteries to put behind the frenzy of city life.

Purulia – Land of Flame of the Forest

Purulia is rugged terrain dotted with hillocks, sharing the santhal tribal land with neighbouring Jharkhand. The best time to visit is mid-March, when the flaming palash blooms. The scientific name notwithstanding, suffice to describe this tree as the Flame of the Forest when it blooms during the advent of basanta/spring

In mid-March, ten of us – men and women - boarded the Chakradharpur a special train from Howrah station to reach Barabhum station the next morning at 7 am. You can

also get down at Purulia in case your destination is straight to Ayodhya. But we planned to visit Matha Pahar adjacent to Ayodhya to enjoy the local cultural festival of Chou dance and pre Holi or dol as it is known in the eastern region organised by Malgudi Resorts and caretaker Girish Ghosh. By road it would take about seven hours or so. .

Malgudi Resorts at the lap of Matha Pahar was just half an hour's drive from Barabhum railway station. The resort has around six hut-shaped AC rooms surrounded by palash and shimul trees in full bloom. After a pure Bengali breakfast of luchi (poori), aalu sabzi, and special jalebis, and a fun selfie session we ventured out.

We headed towards Ayodhya Pahar, lower and upper dams, Khairebera and Bamni falls. The weather was just right to roam around and after working up an appetite, we returned to Matha Resort in time for a sumptuous lunch of dal, aaloo bhaji, and a choice of fish/egg/ or bon morog chicken (jungle fowl) curry or a portion of all!

All along the journey, we simply enjoyed the pristine beauty of nature lined with various shades of green, blue water bodies and of course the orange and flaming hues of palash and yet more palash that almost resembles a forest on fire, beating the fall colours of the west.

A mini nap later we were at the Charid village

known for masks used for chau dance recitals. Every home in the village belongs to an artisan who eke out livelihood by making masks that are also exported..

Last year and this year too, the business is low due to the pandemic. Few artisans were also working on dokra art. The WB government is promoting Purulia as a tourist destination, but they also need to spare a thought for helping these artisans before their mask-making craft is snuffed out forever. However they do have a museum where the tribal crafts of the region are displayed.

After enjoying a beautiful sunset behind the Matha Pahar we were back to the resort to enjoy the cultural evening of local Chou dance and some baul artists. The sunrise next morning was a sight to behold. After breakfast we checked out from Malgudi Resorts and started on our drive towards Muruguma Lake. This road meandered through winding bends lined up with the orange hue of palash touching the blue sky.

Muruguma Lake is the best scenic location in Purulia with a wide natural water body and a dam. A few resorts are also available at this site. Our next destination was Garpanchakot Forest Resort, two hours away by road and where we had daal bhaat, aalu posto, fish curry and omelet in gravy for lunch. There was just about time to rush to Baranti Lake to watch the famous sunset. The Sun sets



Muruguma Lake, Purulia



Danish Tavern in Serampur/Serampore (old name), Hooghly district

over the lake behind the hills around reflecting the shadows on the lake. It's a picturesque view that remains etched in our minds. The return journey from Baranti took us to a few temples here and there, such as Jai Chandi Pahar being the best atop the hill.

The area is beautiful with the Ras Mandir being the only construction which has stood the test of time though the terracotta on its walls is sadly missing.

Half an hour at the site and we were on our way towards Asansol. This took us around two hours where we also had our lunch at an wayside restaurant and then boarded our Volvo which brought us back to Kolkata in exactly four and half hours.

European vintage - Frederiksnagore

From 1755 to 1845, Serampore was administered by Denmark under the name of Frederiksnagore. The main trade was in fabrics and the Dane established trading posts in parts of Andhra Pradesh and on the Malabar coasts, as well. The flourishing trade attracted merchants and many of them built their European villas along the banks of the river. With money comes a desire to leave behind footprints in grand buildings and churches. St Olav's or Olaf Church of Denmark and Norway, was built here almost 200 years ago.



A mask displayed at the Mask Museum, Purulia

A part of the "Serampore Initiative"-launched by the National Museum of Denmark (NMD) in 2008, the restoration of the Church, A Lutheran Protestant Church in ruins, began in 2015 and was completed in 2016. The Church known for its bell tower clock and is consecrated to Christian vii, the then King of Denmark. It is believed that Serampore's grandeur was even more than Chandannagore. Well-heeled residents built villas on the river banks and the town attracted tourists who stayed at the tavern. It was in 1786, a British gentleman opened 'The Denmark Tavern and Hotel'. From an advertisement in Calcutta Gazette in 1786 printed: "Gentlemen passing up and down the river maybe accommodated with breakfast, dinner, supper and lodging, and may depend on the charges being very reasonable....also liquors sold by the single dozen, for ready cash. A good Billiard Table and Coffee room with the Newspapers etc."

An hour-and-a-half-drive from the city takes you to Serampur; the routes are well delineated from the different points of the city – south, north, east and west.

It is a small town like any other, with narrow roads, but the little Danish corner with St Olav's church and a few other colonial edifices, reminds you of the European footprints.

Today Serampur is known for its block prints, a place where William Carey set up its first printing station to

print the Bible into Bengali! The best place to have a meal during your visit is at the Tavern itself. There is an eatery run by The Park or better still, book a room in it, to spend the weekend. You get the view of the Ganga for free. There several are river trips which trundle past these heritage buildings, beautifully lit up at nights, to give you another perspective of a trading centre connected by not sea but a river route.

Deulti - The writer Sarat Chandra's abode

You cannot have Bengal without taking out its poets, painters and philosophers. One such is the abode of the famous writer Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyaya known all over India for many stories made into films. Devdas, Parineeta, Srikanta are some examples.

You reach Deulti by driving from Kolkata along the Vidyasagar Setu, or the 2nd Hooghly Bridge. It is on the Kona Highway which is en route to NH 6. You drive past Uluberia. Kolaghat, a place known for excellent hilsa fish is nearby. The village of Deulti lies at a short distance from the Deulti railway station.

Deulti is located on the banks of the River Roopnarayan. The adjacent village called Samtaber was the house of the late author. There are various resorts to spend the weekend in we had researched from before, so you can take



Sunset over a holiday cottage, Purulia (left); A lodge on stilts in Forest Jhilmil, Bankura (right)





Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay's restored home, Deulti

your pick from Nirala, Prantik, Rupashi. Or make a day trip for there are various plazas along Kolaghat, which offer multi-cuisine. The serene village on nature's laps is abloom with a variety of flowers in winter and is a riot of colours amid various shades of green. A panoramic view of the natural surroundings, the lilting calls of the different kinds of birds early in the morning almost lift you spiritually that only nature can! Crisscrossing emerald paddy fields, can take you to the banks of the river. There is a beautiful temple of Radha and Madangopal (Krishna), beautified with terracotta decoration and the atchala or eight-roofed temple was constructed in 1651 AD by the local zamindar, called Mukundaprasad Roychoudhury.

There are specific timings at which the author's house is open to the public. The restored house incorporates some Burmese house styles because it was there that the prolific writer, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay had spent much of his influential years. However, this particular kuthi or house is held in great respect by his fans because the above mentioned works and more were penned here. Deulti brings heritage and culture together in an idyll setting.

Jhilmil – the Ecology Resort

Imagine waking up in a tree house to the chirping of birds, a stillness that comes with time halting for there is nowhere you have to go, or no deadline you have to meet. For that you have to travel to Jhilmil forest in the district of Bankura.

But first, a few words about the district of Bankura, located in the south-western parts of state, has a history. Known for its stylized Bankura horse, the region can be traced back to the Mahabharat, when it was known as Sumhobhumi. It is said that Veer Hambir was the 49th king of the Malla dynasty and Veer Bankura was one of his two sons. Whatever, maybe the past, today the Cottage Tree House - Rimil - amid the lush green tribal villages, yet with all modern amenities.

Rimil Eco Tourism Center is a government guest house with all its amenities, clean bathrooms and simple yet tasty meals. It is located in Jhilmil forest range. By train it takes about three-and-half-hours to reach Jhilmil area. By



Jhilmil Forest, Bankura

road double that time. Once there the green foliage, season birds and river, literally means sparkle in Bengali. The road from Ranibandh to Jhilmil has dense forests on either side, the micaceous soil flickers with sun beams at daytime.

Till we travel long distance or overseas, this is a good enough time to discover some gems in our backyard. All within the state, all it takes is some quick planning to

book beforehand, comfortable transport and a weekend with friends or family to enjoy the simple pleasures of life.



Manjira Majumdar is an independent journalist & researcher. She combines writing with teaching journalism and is the author of three children's books.

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“Once you have the brush touching the paper, the Almighty paints...you merely witness a piece of art coming up.”

An architect by profession, a professor by choice and a watercolourist by passion, who croons too, **Tushar Manohar Shetty**, a Dahisar, Mumbai resident, talks about his fervid passion for watercolour painting with **A Radhakrishnan**.

What's your background?

Since childhood, I have been always keenly interested in drawing as an art form and explored various subjects in the field. Very much at home making graphite and pencil sketches, I have travelled to many places to nurture this realm of art.

My choice of architectural studies was paramount in my mind as it couples technology in tandem with art and moreover is a sure field of creativity.

How did you get into painting?

Drawing and painting were my choicest subjects at school and I loved to plumb many vivid subjects of interest, ranging from object drawings, figurative, portraits, landscapes and memory drawings. Exploring drawing and design has been an indispensable part of my journey as an architecture student.

However, from 2016, I chose to concentrate more on the watercolour art as a medium of expression.

I owe gratitude to many good watercolour artists who time and again guided me with their demos, practice works, books and outdoor excursions and mentored me, instilling in me the importance of practice, a very crucial aspect of this art. I am still constantly mastering the smaller details of this art.

Why did you choose watercolour as your medium? Did you experiment with other mediums? Is it difficult or easy to care for?

Well, frankly I was aware of this medium being the most easily available with regards to materials needed. Further it gave quick results with easier handling techniques.

Though initially this medium had disappointed me, exploring further, I loved its fluidness, transparency, flow content, texture, body, and correctness of hue. Being into sketching art, I found watercolours give a very nice sketchy feel that extracts out the abstract component of the subject.



It leaves the viewer mulling over the abstracted values of the real subject in a very convincing manner. It creates a unique magic as colours get to blend in one another, resulting in newer shades and hues of the original colours. This when coupled with water, adds more charm to the painting.

I experimented with different mediums such as oil, dry pastels, acrylics, but found I was more at home with water colours. The medium has water as the base, which by its own character cannot be much controlled. Hence the trick is to control the behaviour of water and tame it to the right use in the painting. Though handling becomes difficult at the outset for beginners and new enthusiasts, it can be managed once you understand the pulse and tricks of the medium. Again, practice is the only key.

It is a boundless ocean of joy to explore once you get the basics right in place.

What are watercolour paints and how they work and can they be permanent? What is the most challenging part about it?

Watercolour paints are hues of colours that are water soluble and can be applied on specific papers, made especially for watercolour art.

There is a wide range in quality watercolour paints available in the market, to suit one's budget. Gelatin in these paints



gives them the required lustre and glow once applied to paper. Being water soluble, it blends into other colours making them unique and appealing.

These may fade away after a certain period of time (say around 8 years) depending upon the brand of colour used. There are less chances however, if good quality of paper and colours are used.

The painting needs to be mounted in a glass frame, without exposing the paper, once you decide to exhibit it on the wall. Care should be taken avoid moist walls, water content areas, or seepage walls.

The entire episode of watercolour painting is a challenge right from selection of colours, making the right blend, use of right water and of course the brush. The medium being irreversible one has to think 100 times... but paint only once. This is the secret that the art teaches.

The act of thinking about the rightness in the approach of making a painting is the biggest challenge in this art.

What was the strongest influence you had when you were growing up (artists, movies, cartoons, comics etc.)?

Nature was the strongest influence. She has always shown magical changes with regards to colours, texture, feel. Her ever surprising changing face fascinated me and I had always had a dream to capture the pulse of the moment through a painting.

I have been regularly following the works of artists Chandrakant Mandre, Milind Mulick, Aditya Chari in my formative days and adored their style of bringing in the charm of Nature through their works. Their use of colours and textures mesmerized me, eventually leading me to get closer to their style.

I have also been following and learning through many international as well as Indian artists like Alvaro, Joseph, Vikrant Shitole, Prafull Sawant, Vilas Kulkarni, Aniket Mahale, etc.

Slowly with practice, I could manage to develop my own style in the art which I believe is very important.

What's integral to the work of an artist? What role does he have in society?

Dedicated practice and new creations are integral. He must constantly explore and achieve newer dimensions of art through his own style and be able to convey the uniqueness of the subject through his works. An artist is a mirror for society. It's his creative realm that would convincingly show the world its true image.

Does art in itself contribute to a person's overall consciousness and mindfulness?

Of course yes. Art is the sure image of who and how you are. It silently speaks volumes of your mind, character, belief, personality in many ways. The prepositioning of art to a subject itself is a proof of the contribution it offers to the consciousness and mindfulness that artists possess.

What is the hardest part of creating a painting? How much time does it take? How do you know when a painting is done?

The hardest part is not believing in it as 'being created'. The much harder part is not approaching the painting at all, though, you are convinced that it could turn out to be a good art piece. Once you have the brush touching the paper, the Almighty paints...you merely witness a piece of art coming up.

It can sometimes take years for your truest emotions and concerns to emerge on the canvas as an art piece. Or sometimes it is in a wink of a moment that you express it. A quick caricature or a detailed art work are the two spectrums we all know. Though, for a good sized watercolour work, it takes around 4 to 5 hours.

Your painting is complete when you are aware of what you shouldn't do more to what you have done. A painting is done when your soul and body are in sync with the pleasure of your eyes. There is no further definition to this feeling.



Do you mix styles of art? How important are titles to your paintings?

Yes. Mixing of styles like abstract to surrealism, realism to pseudo are different explorations I love to do. Of late I have tried to caricature subjects with a touch of realism, a wonderful way of exploring.

Titles bring out the poetic mind of an artist. Also it displays your wit for the subject which may coincide with situations and events of daily life.

Do you use photo references? Do you listen to music when you're painting?

Yes, photo references are immensely useful to associate while composing the drawing and studying colour schemes.

Music too is a soothing trance one gets, when you paint.

What is the biggest hurdle you have encountered in your art?

The lack of urge to paint at times when you are in two minds whether to paint or not to...laziness is the biggest hurdle I must say.

Aside from being an artist, you also have held numerous workshops? How has this experience been?

Sharing some unique techniques and enquires of art you know with curious learners has always been a very nice experience. When you teach, you learn twice.

Few words on being an architect and teaching.

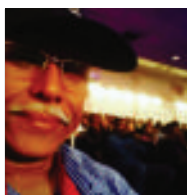
I am very thankful. Architecture gives a constructive and creative thought line, very well explored in watercolour art. Teaching has also been my passion as I believe I can give and touch more souls. In a way I am very happy I create good souls along with creating good paintings.

Talk about your love for trains and the book you have written.

I have been a rail fan from childhood and always had an urge to do something on the Indian railways. Coupling my watercolour art with information, I have compiled a book titled 'Whistles and Chugs' on Indian Railways, scheduled for publication, documenting the railway engines in watercolours.

Other hobbies? You sing too?

As an ardent Kishore Kumar fan, I try to grasp and sing the depth of melodies his songs offer. I believe singing and music are very closely related to watercolour painting. There you have a voice and music and likewise here you have water and colours. I also play the mouth organ and guitar. Besides these, I occasionally play Badminton, Carrom and Chess.



A. Radhakrishnan is a Pune based freelance journalist, poet and short story writer, who when not enjoying is favourite cup of kaapi, loves to make people happy.

When Media called out India's scams

(continued from page 16..)

The financial scam that affected all

The 1992 Securities Scam involving stock broker Harshad Mehta was exposed by journalist Sucheta Dalal. The scam amounting to Rs 1,000 crore severely disrupted the Indian stock market.

The scam was a market manipulation masterminded by stockbroker Harshad Mehta and involving other bankers and politicians. Mehta who was considered superstar of the Indian stock market was then banned from the stock market after the scam came to light.

Harshad Mehta used techniques that included fake cheques signed by corrupt officials, misusing market loopholes and public manipulations to drive the prices of stocks up to 40 times their original price. Through interbank transactions, Mehta and his associates had reportedly managed to siphon a huge amount of money.

Harshad Mehta had identified loopholes and irregularities in the banking system, due to which the stock traders started making good returns by fraudulently obtaining unsecured loans from banks.

In April 1992, when the scam was discovered, the Indian stock market collapsed. The scam was the biggest money market scam ever committed in India tuning to the amount of approximately Rs 5000 crore. After the scam exposed loopholes of the Indian financial systems, a complete and total reformation of the system of stock transactions was undertaken including introduction of online security systems

Interestingly, the stock market scam was dramatised in the 2020 web series Scam 1992 created by Hansal Mehta. Actor Pratik Gandhi played Harshad Mehta and Shreya Dhanwanthary enacted the role of journalist Sucheta Dalal. The series was adapted from Sucheta Dalal and Debashish Basu's 1992 book 'The Scam: Who Won, who

Lost, who Got Away.' Released in 2021, Hindi-language film The Big Bull featuring Abhishek Bachchan is also based on the related scam. The storyline of the film is based on the life of Harshad Mehta, played by Abhishek, a stockbroker, involved in financial crimes over a period of 10 years, from 1980 to 1990.

Media coverage ensured timely action

Not only do journalists expose scams revealing individuals and entities scamming the common man and the nation, the constant media coverage of scams also helps in keeping public memory fresh and building pressure on the authorities to act in a timely fashion. The scam involving flamboyant industrialist Vijay Mallya aka 'King of Good Times' has been one of the largest financial scams in the country. Liquor baron Vijay Mallya absconded from India and took shelter in the UK in 2016 after reports accusing him of fraud and money laundering surfaced. Vijay Mallya allegedly owes, till date, various banks over Rs 9,000 crores, which he'd taken as a loan to keep his now-defunct Kingfisher airlines from failing. He was recently declared a fugitive economic offender under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act.

Talk of scams would be simply incomplete without the mention of Abdul Karim Telgi who was believed to be at the center of the Stamp Paper Scam of 2001. A native of Khanapur in Karnataka, Telgi was a child when his father died. The family sold fruits, vegetables and peanuts to passengers in

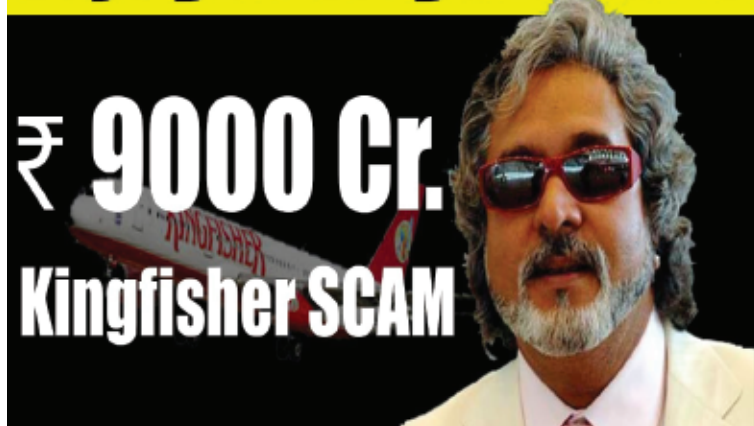
trains.

Telgi completed his schooling, pursued a B.Com degree from a college in Belagavi and moved to Mumbai to earn a living. After spending some time in Mumbai, he left for Saudi Arabia to look for better prospects and upon return to Mumbai started his 'business' of selling fake stamps and stamp papers.

Telgi became a travel agent and began forging several documents and stamp papers to send manpower to Saudi Arabia. He came under the radar of the immigration

Not only do journalists expose scams revealing individuals and entities scamming the common man and the nation, the constant media coverage of scams also helps in keeping public memory fresh and building pressure on the authorities to act in a timely fashion.

Vijay Mallya Scam



HARSHAD MEHTA

*Largest Stock Market
Scam In* **India**



www.FinnovationZ.com

authorities in 1993 and was jailed for cheating and forgery at the MRA Marg police station in South Mumbai. Here, Telgi met Ram Ratan Soni, a government stamp vendor operating from Kolkata and decided to commit bigger scams.

More recently, the Punjab National Bank (PNB) Fraud Case involving Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi rattled the nation's conscience. The scam relates to fraudulent letter of undertaking worth Rs 11,356.84 crore (USD1.4 billion) issued by the Punjab National Bank at its Brady House branch in Fort, Mumbai, making Punjab National Bank liable for the amount. Organised by jeweller and designer Nirav Modi, it involved other members of the family including uncle Mehul Choksi. Nirav Modi and his family absconded in early 2018 just before the news of the scam

broke in India and in March 2019 he was arrested in the UK.

On 1 March 2018, the government approved the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill to deter economic offenders from evading the process of Indian law by giving powers to the government to confiscate assets of a fugitive, including Benami assets of absconding loan defaulters.

Nikita Shastri is a researcher with The History and Heritage Project – a DraftCraft International Initiative to document details, analyse facts and plug lacunae generated by oversight or to further national or foreign agenda in History and Heritage Across India and Beyond Borders

Fruits of lateral thinking

Like truth, Mother Nature cannot be trademarked. Nature nourishes all. Sadly, en route in a rat race to the top of the proverbial garbage pile, university degrees, fat pay-cheques and unimaginable extents of affluence, tend to make one forget this truth, laments **G Venkatesh**



Silver bullets and panaceas do not exist. At least not on the material plane of existence! Yes, yogis, by communion with the Oversoul and the realisation that 'Man is Soul occupying a Body and possessing a Mind' do manage sometimes to find one – a cure for human misery and a ticket to eternal, untarnished divine bliss. On the material plane, one does, off and on, come across initiatives undertaken towards a primary goal, which have spillover positive effects – intended secondary goals or unintended benefits. We sometimes refer to such effort-rewards combinations in Indian

languages, as 'One stone, two mangoes' or rather 'One stone, many mangoes', as the case may be. Talking of mangoes, that seems to be an apt metaphor, to move from, to outline an idea, which yours sincerely came across on the Facebook-timeline of a friend – Sharlet Fernandes recently, which actually is simple and doable prima facie, but may seem 'fantastic' and 'idealistic' to those who may focus on all the obstacles first. Adversities and pain bring epiphanies – all good and noble things have emerged from pain. The pain which we have witnessed of late, in India and the world over, owing to the

pandemic, has thrown up many good ideas, lying dormant in the minds of men and women, who have woken up to the challenges looming large over humankind. Those who just see the obstacles and get cowed down by the thought of them, are like cats sitting on the fence, looking left and right at the enclosed gardens on either side, guarded fiercely by the owners thereof. These gardens may house fruit trees, to which the owners would stake sole claim. Everything in the garden, even if the product of accidental pollination facilitated by Mother Nature's Wind or Bees automatically becomes the property of

the owner. Gardens are good. In the cities they are like its lungs – soaking in carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen to enrich the polluted troposphere over cities. The products thereof may be out of reach to others. Let that be so, unless the owners themselves are not driven by a philanthropic, do-gooder energy, Insha'llah.

Recalling Dr Kalam

The said picture (also included herewith) reminded me first and foremost of our incomparable teacher-scientist-philosopher-philanthropist President Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, who dreamt of planting 1 crore (10 million) saplings in India, and visualised that as a vital strategy in combating global warming – a useful contribution, he envisaged by India to humanity. His dream was partly fulfilled by the eco-friendly Tamil actor Vivek, and when he reached the 35-lakh (3.5 million) mark, he was summoned by God too, into the afterlife. The only good way to honour the dear departed is to carry on their legacies, and keep the lamp alit, and the candle illuminating the darkness even amidst gusty winds.

Municipal corporations and national/local authorities in charge of roads, railways and highways have done their bit here and there in India, by planting trees along the partitions on roads, and also beside pavements, on the strips which separate pedestrians from the traffic. But one often sees a lack of foresight and planning when one comes across some coconut palms and tall trees with relatively thinner trunks, which have been the causes of tragic deaths during the monsoon months. Dr Kalam – the brilliant mind that he possessed and the lateral thinking that his spiritual accomplishments had gifted him with – advocated the planting of jatropha along railway tracks. At once, sequestering carbon dioxide, releasing oxygen into the atmosphere and being a source of bio-diesel which would supplant a part of petroleum diesel and contribute to increasing the degree of self-sufficiency for the country, as far as transportation fuel requirements are concerned. This has been partly implemented by Indian Railways, with the biofuel angle being

highly praiseworthy.

Any addition to the flora in the biosphere (urban or otherwise) is a positive step ahead. However, mindless implementation of environmental goals may come in the way of immense possibilities which could be uncovered courtesy spillover benefits. The picture referred to suggests that fruit trees could be planted instead of the ones which are being prioritised now. It goes without saying that these would surely need greater care – in terms of provision of nutrients and water. Nature's bounties growing in these 'urban orchards' will be freely available to our homeless and hungry brethren. Even if those who are affluent wish to eat the fruits of these trees, it need not be looked upon as an intrusion. With time, they would realise – thanks to some of their well-meaning friends – that the fruits are best left to the homeless and hungry who cannot afford to buy them from the fruit market. In Sweden, where this author works, people staying in big houses with gardens housing fruit trees (apples and plums and berries usually), either donate the fruits to church charities or place them in refrigerators in supermarkets dedicated to feeding the hungry refugees and asylum seekers, or at times, sell them at nominal rates to supermarkets which sell them forward to consumers, at little or zero profit.

CO₂, O₂, food and biodiversity

Well, what one may overlook conveniently, is the possible contribution of fruit trees to biodiversity. Covid-19 has suddenly introduced many of us in cities to hitherto-unseen and hitherto-unheard birds. In my living memory, I do not recall having seen so many squirrels in New Mumbai. Fruit trees will be a haven for birds and squirrels. Some of them with thicker and wider branches and denser foliage will also be attractive nest-building sites for some birds which otherwise have to look for nooks and crannies in anthropogenic constructions for that purpose – surely not the best locations for their young ones to commence their lives from.

Do not trademark Mother Nature

Like truth, Mother Nature cannot be trademarked. Nature nourishes all. Sadly, en route in a rat race to the top of the proverbial garbage pile, university degrees, fat paycheques and unimaginable extents of affluence, tend to make one forget this truth. Awareness comes by itself. Trendsetters are discouraged and scoffed at. Those who keep on keeping on, do find support from likeminded individuals. Well, planting fruit trees along city roads cannot really be an individual enterprise, inasmuch as it falls under the aegis of the local government. But governments represent the will of the people. Petitions can surely be put forth. Once most of the stakeholders (not possible to get all) are on the same page, the initiative can get going. Till then, the rich and affluent that have fruit trees in their gardens can set an example by doing something novel and unprecedented. Donate, and spread the word. Food, water, blood, money, knowledge and physical labour – there are multiple ways to help fellow humans (and by extension, often, animals and birds too).

Perhaps, Jackie Shroff may be interested in motivating people, as he has been doing for quite some time now. Yours sincerely will be more than happy to assist in whatever way he can...

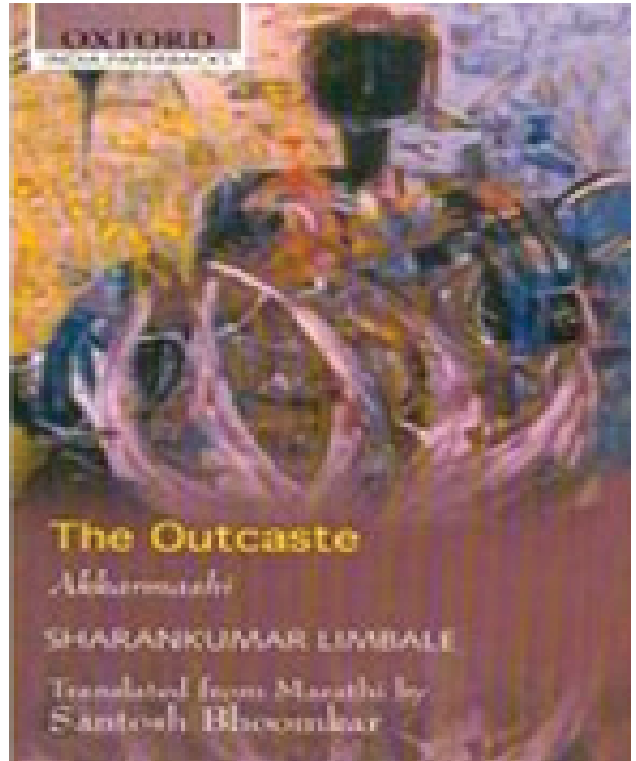
Acknowledgements: To Facebook friend Sharlet Fernandes, for the lead picture used in this article, which inspired me to pen this piece.



G. Venkatesh is Associate Professor, 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. The author has set up Varshita Venkatesh Girls' Education Fund with Plan USA in memory of his wife. ...

A perceptive scholar

Saraswati Samman winner Sharankumar Limbale's literary flourish is so evident in the 40 books that he has written, but his work on Dalit critical study has been influential and won acclaim. Prof. Avinash Kolhe sketches the man and his work.



Sharankumar Limbale (born 1956) Marathi novelist, poet, critic and short story writer, was selected for the 2020 Saraswati Samman, a prestigious literary recognition conferred annually by the K K Birla Foundation. The news took not only him but entire Marathi literary establishment by surprise. Before Limbale, Vijay Tendulkar got this in 1993 and Mahesh Elkunchwar in 2002. Apart from the citation, the award carries a plaque and award money of Rs 15 lakhs.

The 30th edition of the award, the highest recognition in the field of Indian literature in our country, was given to Limbale for his Marathi novel 'Sanatan' published in 2018. Sanatan is an important social and historical document of the Dalit struggle, said the K K Birla Foundation. It further said that the author has written this novel by creating many imagina-

tive characters and space and weaved the story with history.

The Saraswati Samman is an annual award for outstanding prose or poetry literary works in any of the 22 languages of India listed in Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India. It is named after an Indian goddess of Knowledge. It was instituted in 1991 by K K Birla Foundation. The candidates are selected from literary works published in the previous ten years by a panel that included scholars and former award winners. The first award was given to Dr Harivanshrai Bachchan for his four-volume autobiography 'Kya Bhooloon Kya Yaad Karoon', 'Needa Ka Nirman Phir', 'Basere Se Door' and 'Dashdwar Se SopanTak'.

Limbale's novel 'Sanatan' was selected by a committee of scholars and writers headed by former secretary general of Lok Sabha Dr

Subhash Kashyap. The selection process was three-tiered and involved deep and intense comparative study to locate an outstanding work of literature from 22 Indian languages.

Born in Solapur district of Maharashtra, Sharankumar completed MA in Marathi literature and later PhD on 'The Comparative study of Marathi Dalit literature and American Black literature' from Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He worked with the Yashwantrao Maharashtra Open University, Nasik from where he retired as a professor and director.

Till today Limbale has penned over 40 books, but he is best known for his autobiography 'Akkarmashi', which is translated in many Indian languages as well as in English. The English translation was published by the Oxford University Press with the title 'The Outcaste'. Limbale is well

known for his contribution to Dalit critical studies. His book 'Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature' published in 2004 is considered amongst the most important works on Dalit literature.

It is necessary to locate Limbale in the history of Marathi Dalit literature. Dalit Literary conference began from March 1958. The Dalit literature got real boost in 1972 when a group of firebrand young Dalit writers like Namdeo Dhasal, Raja Dhale and J V Pawar launched 'Dalit Panthers' on the lines of American 'Black Panthers'. The driving force behind these Panthers was the works and philosophy of Dr B R Ambedkar who believed that literature should not only promote social and human progress, but also foster values. A literature that supports inequality is not only unacceptable to him; but in his views, there must be a mass movement against such literature.

Limbale's autobiography

'Aakramashi' (The outcaste) published in 1984, was well received by readers and scholars alike. Limbale was born as an illegitimate son of upper-caste Patil and a poor untouchable mother. 'The Outcaste' records Limbale's miserable life of an untouchable, half caste person. It brought to surface the dirty side of Indian society.

Limbale's next important work was novel 'Hindu', published in 2010. Scholars argue that Limbale's 'Hindu' depict modern conflicts in India. This novel is set in a village in Maharashtra where Panchayat elections are due. Tatya Kamble influenced by Ambedkar's thoughts, stands up for self-respect and participates in political process. Under the rules of reservations, the post of sarpanch goes to reserved category and a Dalit candidate is fielded by his upper-caste employer. This sets a cat among the pigeons. What happens to caste relations, political power dynamics is painted dispassionately. Slowly, though violently, political consensus

emerges in the village which is delineated extremely sensitively by Limbale.

As a perceptive scholar of Indian literature, Dr Limbale argued in his 'Towards an Aesthetics of Dalit Literature' that 'an ancient and modern Marathi literatures do not portray the actual life and struggle of Marathi people: rather, they reflect the influence of erotic and romantic aspects of Sanskrit and English literature'.

Limbale got this prestigious award for his sterling contribution to Marathi literature.



Prof. Avinash Kolhe retired as Associate Professor in Political Science from D.G. Ruparel College,

Mumbai.

WHO AM I?



The perils of “forwarding”

*Most of the “forwards” on social media are a menace. They are divisive and meant to stir up trouble. We need to be sensible and responsible while dealing with messages that have abuse of propaganda written all over them, counsels **Rashmi Oberoi**.*

There are days when you end up getting so many ‘forwards’ that you are forced to just click the delete button in annoyance and in one swift move get rid of a whole lot of trash. Well most forwards are as good as ‘garbage’ and some are even worse that shouldn’t even be given a few seconds of significance but unfortunately end up being given undue importance and this leads me to my point that needs immediate attention. My sincere advice: Please check the contents of any message that you receive before you hit that ‘forward’ button. Earlier, ‘forward messages’ floating around were restricted to receiving them via email but now you get them via SMSes, WhatsApp, Signal -- social media platforms etc. I agree that social networking sites and services have their charm and importance but they also have a sinister side to them with harmful effects.

I have read forwards that are so full of absolute gobbledygook. Half-truths and ramblings of dimwits! The worst are the ones that instil or stir-up communal hatred, anti-national feelings and religious tensions. Emotions get triggered in a negative manner leading to hostility.

Recently my cousin was sent a forward on WhatsApp through a group made up of friends and acquaintances. It was communal and full of lies that upset her no end. On questioning the person who had sent it as well as updating the group on such falsehood being circulated, she was told the message was forwarded without even reading it! That is being patently irresponsible and one should be held accountable for disseminating incorrect information.

I have been sent forwards and messages and videos through family and friends just to enlighten me

and point out on the kind of recklessness and blasphemy that circulates. A sensible and intelligent person may ignore but majority don’t. Imagine the havoc such colossal spread of wrong information could cause.

Issues get blown out of proportion and escalate into needless fracas. The most hazardous are those that ignite communal passions. Portraying Hindus as hating other religions, the frenzy of ‘Love Jihad’, the paranoia about all Muslims being supporters of terrorism and Christians forcing conversions are some striking examples.

This is a collective responsi-

bility. Each one of us has to ensure that the social media does not become a platform for abuse and propaganda. Any propensity towards such divisive thinking should be nipped in the bud. It is not an impossible task if we employ our good conscience.



Rashmi Oberoi, an army officer’s daughter is passionate about writing and has authored two story books for children – My Friends At Sonnenshine and Cherie:The Cocker Spaniel.



NAIK JADUNATH SINGH PVC

Hero of the Naushera attack (1916-1948)

Jadunath Singh was born on 21 November 1916 in Khajuri in District Shahjahnpur, Uttar Pradesh. Son of Birbal Singh Rathore, a farmer he was the third of eight children. He became the wrestling champion of the village. For his character and sporting achievements, he was called Hanuman Bhagat Brahamchari.

He joined the Indian Army, on 21 November 1941 at Fatehgarh Regimental Centre. On completing his training, he was posted to the regiment's 1st Battalion. The battalion was part of the 47th Indian Infantry Brigade deployed in the Arakan Province in Myanmar. In 1942 and early 1943, the Brigade advanced up the Mayu Peninsula towards Donbaik to recapture Akyab Island. In early April, the Japanese counterattacked. The 47th Brigade became cut off and eventually split off into small groups to fight their way back to Allied lines.

In 1945, his battalion was assigned to the 2nd Indian Infantry Brigade for the defence of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The islands had been partially occupied by the Japanese forces, who surrendered on 7 October 1945. After returning to India, Singh was promoted to the rank of Naik. After the partition, the 7th Rajput Regiment was assigned to the Indian Army. Immediately after Independence and Partition, Kashmir State acceded to India. Pakistan tried to annex Jammu and Kashmir state by inducting a large number of raiders in October 1947. Besides attacking security personnel, they indulged in widespread rioting, plunder and violence. India reacted by sending the Indian Army to restore order and push the raiders out. The Rajput Regiment which was attached to 50 Parachute Brigade was ordered to secure Naushera and establish a base at Jhangar in mid-November.

On 24 December, Jhangar, a strategic position in the Naushera Sector, was captured by the Pakistanis giving them control over the communication lines between Mirpur and Poonch. Indian Army soldiers were deployed in small groups on possible enemy approaches. Taindhar was such an approach and on 6 February 1948, the Pakistani forces

opened fire at 0640 hours. Naik Jadunath Singh so used the small force at his disposal to outfox the enemy. Four of his men were wounded but Naik Jadunath Singh reorganized his battered force. The men rallied and were ready for the second attack which came with greater determination and in larger number. A wounded Naik Jadunath Singh personally took the Bren gun from a wounded gunner. Disregarding his personal safety, he egged his men to fight. His fire was so devastating, that what looked like impending defeat was turned into a victory, forcing the enemy to retreat



With this example of leadership and determination, Naik Jadunath Singh saved the post from the second assault. By this time, all men in the post were casualties. The enemy put in his third and final attack to capture this post. Wounded grievously, he single-handedly fought the third time. Against the advancing enemy who was taken by surprise and chose to fled. Naik Jadunath Singh, however died gallantly when two bullets hit him in the head and chest. He saved the whole picket from being overrun by the enemy at the most critical stage in the battle for the defence of Naushera. He was posthumously awarded Param Vir Chakra [PVC] for gallant leadership and courage. A memorial for him has been constructed at Taindhar Top near Naushera. J&K. His statue has been installed at Param Yodha Sthal, National War Memorial, New Delhi.

The Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), under the Ministry of Shipping, named fifteen of her crude oil tankers in honour of the Param Vir Chakra recipients. The crude oil tanker named MT Naik Jadunath Singh; PVC was delivered to SCI on 21 September 1984. A sports stadium in Shahjahanpur, the town near the village where Singh was born, was named as "Param Vir Chakra Lance Nayak Jadunath Singh Sports Stadium" in his honour.

– Brigadier Suresh Chandra Sharma (retd.)

ASHOK DESAI

Legal luminary par excellence (1932-2020)

One of India's foremost Supreme Court lawyers, Ashok Desai was born on the 4 June 1932. After his early schooling in Bombay he moved over to Pune and enrolled in the famous Ferguson College from where he completed graduation. He shifted back to Bombay to pursue his law degree at the Government Law College and completed his course passing out with flying colours in 1952. Desai also graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics from the prestigious London School of Economics (LSE) in 1956. While at LSE he had the distinction of being one of the first students from Great Britain to be invited for a study visit to China during the summer of 1955. He was called to the bar from Lincoln's Inn, London and participated in the Harvard International Seminar in 1967.

Ashok Desai began practice as a lawyer in the Bombay High Court in 1956 and was designated as a senior lawyer on the 6th of August, 1977. As an advocate he appeared in several high profile cases in the apex courts. He took up cases involving issues of accountability in public life and transparency in governance. In many of these cases landmark judgments were delivered catapulting Desai as one of country's leading lawyers. He was also known to argue pro bono in several cases and one protracted case often referred to as the 'Salwa Judum' case lasted all of twelve years. The Vineet Narain case on the powers of the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Central Vigilance Commission and the P V Narasimha Rao case on Parliamentary Privileges were some of the famous cases argued by him. He also argued pro bono cases for the LGBTQ groups leading to a historic Supreme Court judgment decriminalizing homosexuality defined in Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

Desai specialized in cases relating to freedom of speech and expression of which he was a keen votary. During the Emergency in 1975 Ashok Desai steadfastly stood for the civil liberties of the jailed and challenged abuse of power. He also had a keen interest in academia and served as Professor of Law in the Bombay Law College and later as a Lecturer in Law in the Bombay School of Journalism from 1967-1972. Ashok Desai was also associated with a media organization

as its Legal Correspondent from 1963-69.

The leading lawyer also served as Chairman of the Committee on Administrative Law of the International Bar Association between 1986 and 1988 and was a Consultant to the Commonwealth Workshop on Administrative Law at Lusaka, Zambia in 1990 and later in 1997 presented India's report to the United Nations Committee on Human Rights in Geneva as the country's Attorney General. In 1998 he led the Indian delegation to the UN Preparatory Committee on Money Laundering Bill in Vienna. In recognition of his meritorious contribution in the field of law, he was appointed as the Attorney General on 9th July 1996 and served as AG up to 6th May, 1998. He had earlier served as Solicitor General from 18th December, 1989 to the 2nd December, 1990.



Among the laurels that came his way was the Padma Bhushan conferred upon him in 2001. Desai was also conferred a honorary Doctorate for his contribution in the field of law and jurisprudence by the North Orissa University in September 2009. He was the recipient of a Supreme Court award in recognition of his contribution to the development of Constitutional Law in India in 2016. The legal luminary also served as the Vice President of the Supreme Court Bar Association and was President of the Inns of Court (India) Society.

Ashok Desai passed away in Mumbai on the 13 April, 2020 leaving the legal fraternity in the country bereft of a strong voice.

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

ANIL DHARKER

Liberal voice of the middle class (1947-2021)

Anil Dharker was a journalist, writer, columnist, voice of the liberal Mumbai middle class in his five-decade-long illustrious career.

Slight in build, Dharker was a giant in persona. He built great teams, encouraged dissent, and ensured that everyone was heard, irrespective of age or experience. He gave them the freedom to write what they wanted. His leadership style had nuance. A man of conviction, he used humour as weapon. A raconteur, he evinced keen interests -- from cinema to single malts and tennis. He wrote fluent English, but also spoke a poetic Marathi.

Armed with a Mathematics degree from India, he did Mechanical Engineering from the University of London and then joined the academic staff of the University of Glasgow, specializing in Building Services Engineering. Upon return, he became a Senior Consultant to Pheroze Kudianavala & Associates where he pioneered the concept of fire safety in multi-storied buildings, then a much-neglected field in India. His extensive writing on cinema caught the attention of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which took him on the Advisory Board of the Film Censor Board, where he drafted a liberalised and simplified censorship code adaptable to changing times and moral values, eventually forming the basis for the official film certification code.

Later, as a promoter of New Cinema in India he was in charge of Scripts and Production, and then headed the National Film Development Corporation (then Film Finance Corporation). Many young film-makers, now household names, launched their first oeuvres with NFDC, like Govind Nihalani, Saeed Mirza, Aparna Sen, Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Ketan Mehta, Gautam Ghose, etc. He also enabled co-production of Richard Attenborough's multiple Oscar winning film Gandhi. Instrumental in opening the Akashwani Auditorium in South Bombay as an art movie theatre, he was also on the selection committees for India's International Film Festivals. He was also a member of the NCPA theatre committee and a columnist for its monthly magazine,

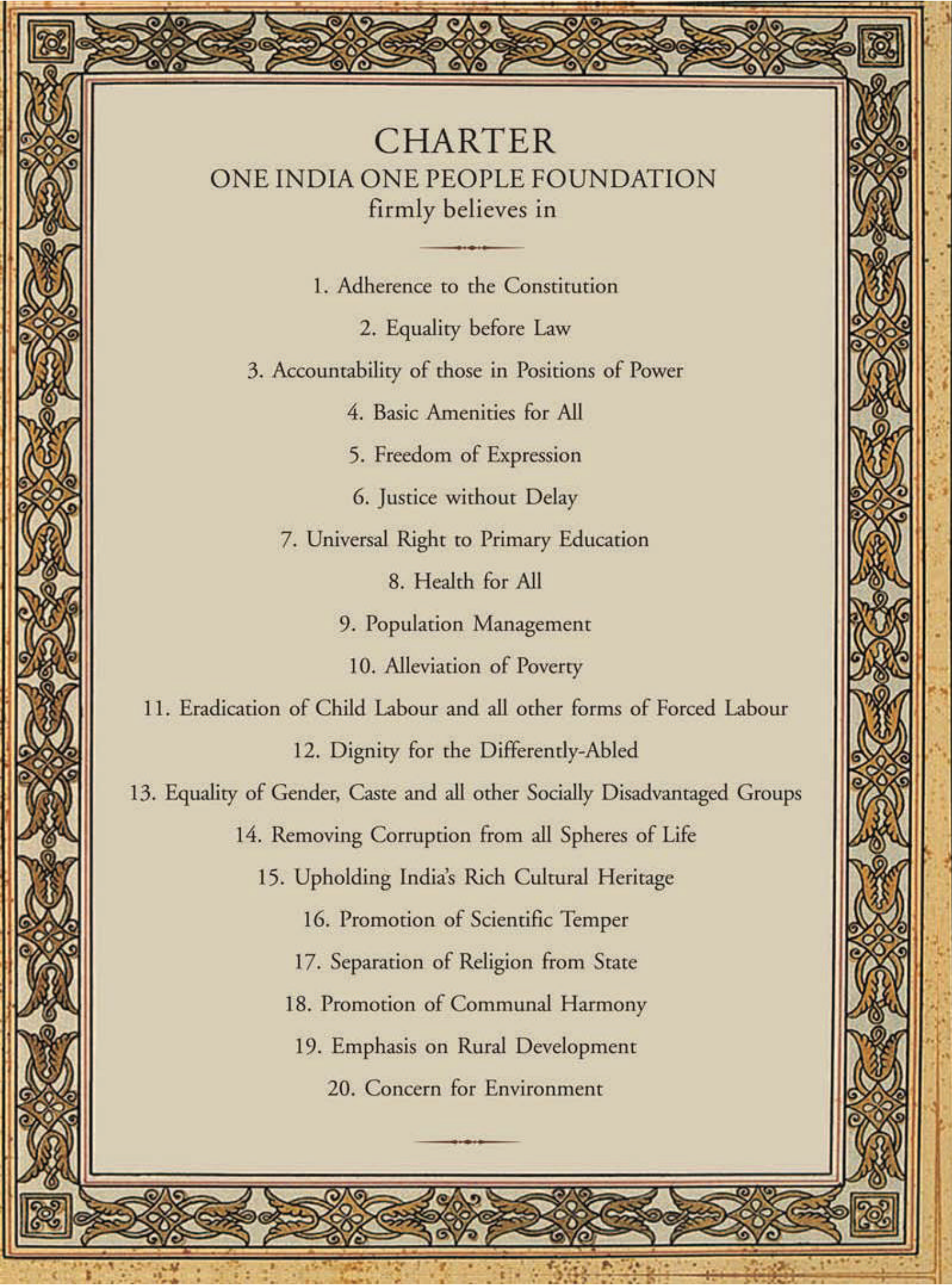
'On Stage'. He even modelled for Editors' Choice tea and had his own line of 'kurtas' at the boutique 'Mélange'. He was also on the Advisory Boards of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), Doordarshan, the Children's Film Society of India, etc. Further, he was the Founder and Chairman of the Single Malt Club of Bombay and the Chairman of Citizens for Justice and Peace, a Mumbai-based NGO fighting for redressal in miscarriages of justice. He was also the founder and director of both the Mumbai International Literary Festival, held annually in November, and of the annual Tata Literature Live.



Editor of several publications starting with Debonair (a monthly); Mid-Day and Sunday Mid-Day (evening papers); The Independent, a morning broad-sheet from the Times of India group and The Illustrated Weekly of India, he was one of the few editors who wanted to know what you wanted to say. Dharker's interest in the television medium led to him becoming President of Dalal Street Journal's channel India TV. Later he was Creative Director of the Zee Television Network. He then returned to full-time journalism as a free-lance columnist for major Indian and foreign publications. He was also a versatile sportsman and captained the teams of London and Glasgow Universities.

Dharker authored 'Sorry, Not Ready: Television in the Time of PM Darshan'; 'The Romance of Salt' about Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March; 'Icons: Men and Women Who Made Modern India'; 'Man Who Talked to Machines' (a biography of industrialist O P Jindal), 'The Possible Dream: The Story of the Mumbai Marathon' and a coffee-table book on Goa. He died of cardiac arrest at Mumbai aged 74. He is survived by his ex-wife, poet Imtiaz Dharker, their daughter actress Ayesha his partner, the editor and writer Amy Fernandes, and two sisters.

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



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
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WHO AM I?

Am I a Hindu first or an Indian first?

Am I a Muslim first or an Indian first?

Am I a Christian first or an Indian first?

Am I a Buddhist first or an Indian first?

Am I a Brahmin first or an Indian first?

Am I a Dalit first or an Indian first?

Am I a South Indian first or an Indian first?

Am I a North Indian first or an Indian first?

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

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

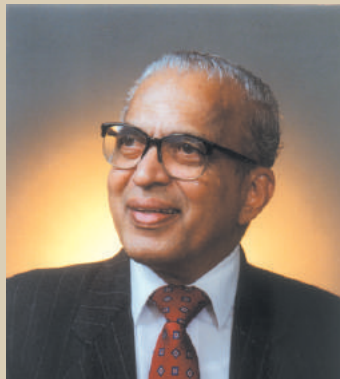
Am I the Commander-in-Chief first or an Indian first?

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

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

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

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



Sadanand A. Shetty, Founder Editor
(Mayober 9th 1930 – February 23rd 2007)
ONE INDIA ONE PEOPLE