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EDITORIAL

Fifty years ago, we the people boarded a bus called democracy. We put away our old things, packed our new bags and set off towards our destination.

We were not traversing unmapped terrain; our vision was clear, our passion had a colour — a tricolour. Our journey was not uneventful; there were some smooth roads, there were many rough ones. Our vision got clouded along the way; we seemed to have lost our sense of direction. Disha is our attempt to take that journey kickstarted by a free India fifty years ago.

Disha explores the direction we chose to set out in, where we are today, and the turn this journey could take tomorrow. The articles look both backwards and forwards in time.

'Looking Glass' reflects where we are heading with the institutions of democracy such as law, the press, health and the economy today. 'Rear Window' takes a detour from the beaten track of history and gives those who may have been swallowed by its grand narrative a voice.

"A sovereign socialist secular democratic republic" was our destination. Sometimes, it feels we have almost reached there, sometimes, it feels we are miles short of it. We may not have fulfilled the noble ideals enshrined in our Constitution. Yet, we chug on. Our belief that one day we shall reach our destination keeps us going.

Along the way we discovered that our burning desire for freedom may have died down, our passion may have faded. But, it still remains. As a bumper sticker puts it :

These colours don't run.

- The Editors

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something to take from him.” Prakash supports this view, “If they promise, the state loses control over them, loses the power to impose decisions. It’s a deliberate policy to keep them curbed.” Rajawade disagrees: “Because we are educated, we feel compassion for those who are affected adversely. A rule by the elite, a responsible and intelligent elite is the best way to rule this country.” But aren’t we already witnessing the rule of an elite class of a different kind, the kind which is seduced by liberalisation and glossy media presentations. Sighs Vidyadhar Date, Special Correspondent with *The Times of India* “Poverty is too boring. It is just not on the agenda for the media.”

The common man is our creation, our need to safely compartmentalise those who are “anything but us.” The common man gives the elite class a purpose to exist, so that they can safely and smugly say to themselves - “We are here to improve his lot.”

Predicts Rajawade, “I foresee for the common man, a system of guardianship; those who are educated can be his guardians.”

But why is it easier for the elite class to think of creating an educated elite rather than an educated common man? Damodar Yadav, a taxi driver, has his answer pat. “*Jiski lathi, uski bhaes*” (The person with the power has the voice). Has independence benefited only the elite? Have the British left behind their legacy — an English speaking elite Raj — which has totally lost touch with the common man? Yadav understands the tyranny astutely, “Under the British it was racial tyranny. Now it is economic tyranny - ‘*majboori ka dabav*.’” Social and economic democracy would not be difficult to extend to those like Yadav, if the men with the lathis are willing to try to allow democracy and power to trickle down.

Bhonsale expresses an optimistic opinion. “We have resisted the British and the Mughals. The common man won’t stay quiet forever. Some solution will arrive.” But the “some solution” option of a proletariat empowered miraculously in some distant future does not offer any way out of the dilemma. In our questioning of the situation in which the common man is spoken for by others, we find ourselves speaking on his behalf.

Is the man in the blue shirt the common man? Or is the woman in a khadi kurta a more appropriate definition of “him”. Perhaps, our balconies don’t give us a good view. Perhaps, the silent backs and unseen faces are no longer a satisfactory answer. Perhaps, if we merged into the mass of multicoloured shirts and kurtas that flow towards Churchgate, we would understand. But do we really want to? □

Democracy is based upon the conviction that there are extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people.

- H. E. Fosdick.

Age Cannot Stale Her (1933)

- preeta dutta

It was a cold winter morning, February 1933. All the children were trudging towards their respective schools. But, one group of young students had refused to go to school. They had organised a meeting outside the Town Hall in Guwahati to protest against the death sentence of Bhagat Singh and to mourn the death of Motilal Nehru. The police started to lathi-charge the gathering and the leader of the protest meeting, a fourteen year-old girl, was placed behind bars.

The young girl, Kanaklata Das was immediately expelled from school. Her mother was requested by the then Chief Minister of Assam, Sir Muhammad Sadulla, to write a letter to the school principal saying, "In future, I will see that my daughter does not take part in such activities." Kanaklata's mother refused to submit such a letter and said, "One can even gain knowledge without going to school if there is an urge for education. I do not want to teach her to develop a slavish mentality."

This was young Kanaklata's first revolt against the British and probably her first victory. From this point, her education would be carried out at home.

Kanaklata believes that her mother played a major role in her life and influenced her to a great extent. Her mother was a strong-willed and courageous lady who had always dreamt of a free India. She started

weaving khadi clothes for the entire family.

"I was initially hesitant to wear the khadi lest some of my friends laugh at the coarse cloth. My mother replied, "If anyone laughs at you tell them that a mother's gift of cloth, even if it is coarse, should be accepted as a blessing with a bowed head," says Kanaklata.

Later on Kanaklata joined an all women organisation called The Assam Pradeshik Mahila Samiti. She was only eighteen years old when she wanted to participate in the Quit India Movement and be a part of the "death brigade."

Initially she was not allowed to participate by the Party members as she was a minor but at her insistence and enthusiasm they gave in. Kanaklata was asked to lead the procession at Guwahati and hoist the national flag at the Town Hall. She still remembers the Congress Party President Jyoti Prasad Agarwala saying that she looked like a fourteen year old girl and so the police would not harm her. Unfortunately the British did open fire and Kanaklata was severely wounded. She fell to the ground but still managed to hoist the flag and do her "duty". She was rushed to hospital and given immediate medical help. The doctors were able to save her life, but she lost all sensation in her limbs and was paralysed from her hip downwards. Kanaklata remembers that

while in hospital an English tea estate manager who was anti-Congress came to visit her. He had witnessed the entire scene and was extremely moved. He said "Now I understand Gandhiji's non violent movement. It is difficult to kill someone who faces death with a smile."

To add to her problems Kanaklata lost her parents in an accident and was orphaned at the age of 20. Her husband, also a freedom fighter, was sentenced to life imprisonment at Alipore Jail, Calcutta, within two years of her marriage. She single-handedly brought up her seven-month-old daughter.

She worked from her wheelchair, spinning, weaving and collecting money in tin boxes for Congress funds. She even started a hand written magazine focussing on India's heritage and culture. Today, Kanaklata is 74 years old. Though she looks physically frail and weak one can see the strength in her gentle face. She was rewarded for her contribution to the country and received a Padma Vibhushan in 1971.

As I get ready to leave her house Kanaklata's 18-year-old grand daughter walks in. She tells me "My grandmother is an amazing woman. I wish I could be even a little bit like her. I am very proud to be her grandchild." She has every reason to be. □

The great hope of society is individual character.

Channing.

Walking Home from Burma

- louella rebello

In 1942, the Japanese invaded Burma. The Indian families living there had to come back. The men walked and the women and children came by boat. One lady recounts her experience of the journey she made from Burma as an eight year old.

"Don't listen to rumours — here's the news" said the radio on the 20th of December 1941 in Burma. The news was that "all was fine, the army was retreating to more strategic locations." The rumour was that the Japanese would attack on the 23rd of December.... they did.

Mrs. Felicity D'Souza (name change on request) was an eight-year-old girl then. Her father was a station master in a small town in Burma. Anticipating trouble, he had packed off his entire family to the border of China. The next day, the station where he worked was bombed. "When dad heard the planes coming, he dived for cover and our four dogs flung themselves over him, and so he was safe from the falling concrete. Our dogs died, but dad was saved." Her father suffered from shell-shock for years after the bombing. He managed to make it to the border where he joined his family to make the journey to India.... a journey that would test all their endurance... physical and mental.... a journey that would change their lives forever.

And so the Great Burma Walk began. Thousands of Indians fled from Rangoon leaving their property and their businesses, the very substance of their lives. The women and children were allowed to come by boat. The

men had to walk. Mrs. D'Souza was one of the few women who walked. She says, the British had cut a path through the forest for the Indian families. The first lap of the journey was by boat. However, there were no rations as everyone had left in a hurry. Her entire family was given one small boat as they sailed, they could see the bodies floating past.... bodies of those who didn't make it.

"We had to take water from the same river and drink it" she shudders. They survived for days on rice and water. Since travelling was impossible at night the *Sampans* (Burmese boats) had to be hauled up a bank and the journey would continue the next morning. This continued for several days and then the agonising walk began.

Mrs. D'souza belonged to a large family. They were ten children and as they walked through thick forests, progress was slow. "The rest of the convoy would be ahead and they would light brushwood to show us the way and frighten off animals." The British had arranged for provisions for the convoys. To organise food for 23 convoys at such a short notice was a feat. The next convoy, the 24th, was bombed.

Although food was available, hygiene wasn't top priority. At one place, everyone went down to the river to bathe, and almost all of them got malaria. It was a time when people were dying like flies. Cholera and diarrhoea were the prime killers. Mrs. D'souza considers herself blessed

to be alive, to be untouched by tragedy of loosing anyone close to her in that journey. It makes her think of all the times that God has been there for her.

She remembers going down a particularly steep path trying to help her little siblings. Her father was unable to offer much assistance as he was suffering from shell-shock still. "I don't know how we managed it" she says. There was a pregnant lady in the convoy as well. That journey for her must have been extremely difficult, when the convoy reached Calcutta. She went into labour, delivered her baby and died.

On that journey she says, everyone helped each other, but there were so many mishaps, many fell ill and died. It took them about a month to walk through the forests. "But I remember this distinctly : nobody wanted to give up" she says. Finally they reached a railway station at Dimapore where they had to take a train to Calcutta. The train journey however, is a blur in her memory.

It was in Calcutta that these refugees were given a change of clothes by the Red Cross. "I remember a man came up to us and gave us a tin of lard. It tasted bad, but we took it for the tin," she says. The journey changed her life forever. It taught her to appreciate the simple things in life and influenced her in a way 'no one can understand.' She feels blessed to be alive as she says "I don't want riches; I've got life." □

Wars keep people busy. As a rule the spectators are the busiest of all. Some keep busy helping armies with their business of murder and massacre, loot and rapine. Others are left with blood trickling their way and no choice but to join the flow or mop it up.

- Amitav Ghosh

The Exodus (1947)

In the spring of 1946, 16-year-old Sushila came to Lahore as a bride. She had assumed that Lahore would be her home, but little did she know that she was laying the foundation of a life that was not to be.

It was in the spring of 1947 that the unrest started. Sushila's husband Jagdish would come home with tales of fights between Hindu and Muslim students at the college in which he taught. The trouble ultimately reached their own street. One day, as she was putting clothes out to dry on the terrace, she saw a few Muslim boys belonging to her neighbourhood barge into her neighbour Gauri's house. They dragged the pregnant Gauri into the courtyard and started taunting her for being a Hindu. They slit her abdomen open with their knives, took out the foetus and threw it against the wall. Then shouting "kafir murdabad" they left. Sushila remembers the incident vividly.

From that day whenever her husband left the house, she would climb up to the roof above the terrace and crouch in one corner. She kept chilli powder and stones next to her for protection. "I died a thousand deaths everyday. I would beg my husband to take me to my parents' home in Ludhiana."

She and most of her friends were caught up in confusion at the increasing acts of terror around them. And then came another strange story. One that Sushila and her contemporaries could not quite comprehend, never mind believe: the

Two Nation theory. "We did not believe in the concept of making two countries out of one, and till the last day Mahatma Gandhi kept on saying that it would not happen, that he would not let it happen. Partition seemed unthinkable."

But people all around them were moving to East Punjab and other parts of the country. Though Jagdish refused to even think about going, Sushila took all her jewellery and tied it in a "potli." She hung it near the door in case they ever had to leave in a hurry so that at least she could take some valuables with her. It broke her heart to think that she might have to leave her house, her utensils, the lovely old furniture and everything else behind.

Yet, it wasn't just her belongings she was thinking about when they actually had to sneak out of their house to go to the railway station. They were running for their lives and Sushila's "potli" of valuables lay forgotten till she was safely in India.

The memory of the train journey to Amritsar is still fresh in her mind. Sushila and Jagdish clung to each other in the overcrowded compartment and prayed that the stories they had heard of trainfuls of people being stabbed or poisoned to death were not true. They thanked God they were together. Many others in their compartment had lost their dear ones in the sea of humanity that was crossing the newly chalked out "border."

- tulika singh

"I was dead scared but relieved and grateful at the same time," Sushila says with tears in her eyes. She could not believe that they had made it alive and unharmed to Amritsar.

Post-Partition, they started their life afresh. Jagdish started teaching at the Punjab University at Hoshiarpur. They had five children. Life fell into a regular routine. Raising her children, supporting Jagdish in his career, attending social functions, she became busy enough not to ponder over the horrors of 1947.

Today, when she sits with her beloved grandchildren, memories unlock themselves, and she recounts stories of her adventures during Partition.

She is able to remember it all without searing pain today. She has made peace with all her nightmares as she has seen people destroy their lives with the memory of their pain. Sushila is grateful to have survived and has no regrets about what could have been.

What saddens her though, is the fact that the Partition wasn't able to solve any problems or provide any answers. People went through so much pain and suffering and loss and it all seemed so futile. Sushila has seen fifty years of two countries hating each other, two religions trying to vanquish each other. □

The tyranny of a multitude is a multiplied tyranny.

- E. Burke.

A Bitter Pill to Swallow

- nandini ramnath and aesha ahsan

Intent on winning the womb war, the government has wilfully ignored the reproductive rights of Indian women.

"If some excesses appear, don't blame me.... you must consider it something like a war. There could be a certain amount of misfiring out of enthusiasm. Whether you like it or not, there will be a few dead people."

Dr. D. N. Pai, Harvard- educated former director of family planning in Mumbai on his plans for compulsory sterilisation (*New York Times*, 1976), quoted in *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs* by Betsy Hartmann.

In 1952 the Indian government embarked on something like a war.

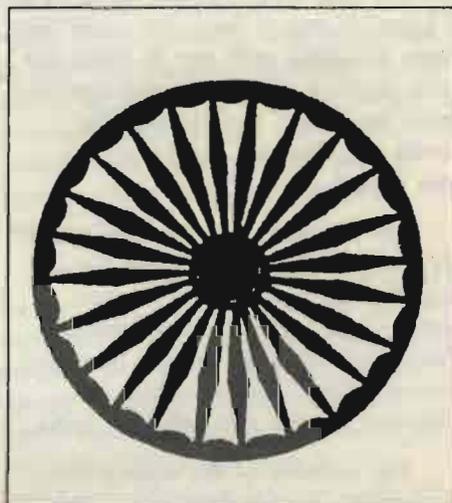
The government has not managed to keep many of its pledges, one of which is to keep the growth rate of the population in control. Today, as India approaches the one billion mark and threatens to take over China in at least one respect, it seems that family planning has been a failure after all.

The government's response to this has been to intensify its efforts, pump in more resources, personnel and funds — a great deal of which is external aid — into the programme. In Mumbai alone, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation recently concluded the India Population Project 5 with a little help from the World Bank. Given newspaper headlines like "Mumbai hurtles towards a population disaster", it is likely that family planning efforts are likely to continue on a war footing, leaving quite a few victims in their wake.

"The policies were not geared to women's health nor did they challenge the status of women nor did they address themselves to the question of sexuality... Everything to do with women's health was geared to family planning," says Ammu Abraham of

the Women's Centre, Mumbai. She contrasts the lack of treatment of reproductive tract infections with the incentives offered to a woman for sterilisation.

In fact the so-called 'cafeteria approach' the government is proud of, offers little or no choice to the



woman. Among the various methods offered like the pill, Intra-uterine Contraceptive Device or Copper-T, operative procedures like abortions and sterilisation and now injectable hormonal contraceptives like Depo-provera, Norplant and Net-en. The preferred ones are Copper-T and sterilisation.

And why wouldn't they be? Unlike the other methods including natural barrier methods, these methods are permanent and permit greater control over fertility. As Dr. Patil, medical officer, Family Planning at the Cama Albless Hospital puts it, "Sterilisation is the only permanent and guaranteed operation." Women with more than one child are

"persuaded" to opt for sterilisation in keeping with the targets set by the government.

This "*bacche bandh karne ka operation*" is targeted more towards women than men. Males who were scared off by forcible male sterilisations during the Emergency period were almost never wooed back; the onus fell on women who traditionally have little or no control over their bodies, and who repose their faith in the government to address their health needs.

"The government wants to use methods where they do not have to interact with women so often," says Chayanika Shah of the Forum for Women's Health. In keeping with this indictment, the government plans to reintroduce Depo-provera, an injectable hormonal contraceptive, a single shot of which when administered every six months can prevent pregnancy. Being an injection Depo can be administered easily. Its merits end here. Its side-effects include menstrual disorders like irregularity of menstrual cycles or heavy or intermittent bleeding, skin disorders, tiredness, nausea, depression, hair loss, loss of libido and delayed return to fertility.

Yet, Depo was incorporated into the programme in the 70's and partially withdrawn only because of vociferous protests by women's groups. Today it silently hovers at the sidelines, waiting for official approval. The J.J. hospital in Mumbai administers Depo. This in spite of a statement by the special officer for family planning BMC that they do not use it. And certain health groups would welcome its return. Says Dr.

Patil of Cama hospital, "We would definitely use Depo if it were to be approved."

However some groups are not completely convinced of its benefits. For Leena Joshi, director of Apnalaya, a health group for women which works in the Tardeo slums, the family planning programme is "one of coercion. It looks at a woman only when she is going to be a mother." She points out that other health needs like treatment for Sexually Transmitted Diseases and infertility are neglected in favour of population control measures. She feels, "The family planning programme does not need a separate budget; it should be included in the general health programme."

Apnalaya has succeeded where others may have failed because its priority is the overall health of a woman and the community rather than just controlling her fertility. Concepts like maternal and child health, reproductive health, and family welfare have always been integral to its approach; the government on the other side of the fence seems to have just woken up to this idea. "Old wine in a new bottle," says Ms. Joshi dismissively.

Do we need a state-sponsored family planning programme at all? "We do not need American money to tell us how many children we should have," says Annabel Mehta of

Apnalaya. Smaller, community-based efforts which focus on female education and overall health have always stolen the march over top-down bureaucratic programmes. Then, as Leena Joshi puts it, "family planning is a by-product."

"Family planning has to shift to talking of different ways in which women and men relate to one another," says Chayanika Shah. A tall order for a government bent on achieving targets and winning the womb war. □

So live that you can look any man in the eye and tell him to go hell.

- H. L. Mencken.

The Death of the Mahatma (1948)

by vijaya s. george

"The light is out and darkness pervades everywhere." The whole country stilled to listen as news of Gandhiji's assassination was aired on the radio by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. This was no formal condolence — it was not said simply because it would be the expected thing to say in the event of a political figure's death. He was not the kind of man the country could erase from its memory by saying, "Well, he is dead. We can't do anything about it, let us get on with our lives." Gandhiji's death was a personal bereavement for most Indians, not just for those who had worked in close proximity with him but for several others, who felt motivated by his words to join the freedom struggle.

Many felt the way G. B. Newalkar, an 82-year-old freedom fighter, then a young man, did, when he heard of Gandhiji's death. "Bapu was like a father to me. I had never cried the way I did when he died. Not even for my own father's death." Several Indians may have asked the same question that Newalkar asks even today, "A man like Gandhiji -

how can he possibly die?" For Newalkar, who had been to Gandhiji's meeting in Bombay and even received personal letters from Gandhiji asking him to take up individual Satyagraha, for a man who had been tortured for months in the Thane prison and suffered irreparable damage to his eye and hand, for a man who strongly believed that India would soon be a free nation, the death of the Mahatma came as a terrible blow.

More so, because Newalkar thought he could have averted it. Newalkar was well known in the political circles, unlike his close friend, Jagdish Chandra Jain, a professor at St. Xavier's College. Jagdish Chandra used to frequent Newalkar's house. He was later called to be the main witness in the Gandhiji assassination case.

"A big thing is going to happen," Madhavlal Pahwa a pavement book seller whom Jagdish bought books from warned him. On 22nd January, 1948 when the first attempt was made on Gandhiji's life and Madhavlal Pahwa's photograph

was flashed all over the papers, Jagdish Chandra tried to get in touch with the higher officials and warn them that the first attempt on Gandhiji's life was not going to be the last. He was not wrong. Seven days later the assassins struck again. This time in the form of Nathuram Godse. Jagdish Chandra believed that the whole attempt could have been averted if someone had listened to him. Newalkar never understood why Jagdish Chandra didn't seek his help.

But that wasn't the issue anymore. The fact remained that Gandhiji had died that nothing could resurrect him. Years later it has become fashionable for many to condemn Gandhiji for the way he handled the freedom struggle. If anybody is capable of moving millions of Indians the way Gandhiji did, if anyone can faithfully follow the principle of non-violence to the last, if any man can achieve freedom for us in such a manner, then let him be the first to cast a stone at Gandhiji. □

For us patriotism is the same as the love for humanity.

* * *

Civilisation is the encouragement of differences; civilisation thus becomes a synonym for democracy. Force, violence pressure or compulsion with a view to conformity is both uncivilised and undemocratic.

- M. K. Gandhi.

From Behind the Firing Line (1949)

- samira singh

8.00 a.m. November 15 1949. A man was executed in Ambala Jail. The whole of India celebrated the execution. Nathuram Godse was more than just a murderer — he had, by firing at Mahatma Gandhi, assassinated a spirit of freedom and unity that held millions of Indians together.

Since then, Godse has been buried in history, fossilised in condemnation — no one knows very much about him.

One man troubled himself to see Godse's point of view even if he did not wholly agree with it. M. V. Kamath, veteran journalist, has had a glimpse into the silent life behind the ossified mask.

Kamath was one of the few journalists present at Godse's trial in New Delhi. "There must have been about six to eight people covering Godse's trial at the Red Fort. There weren't too many papers in those days. I was sent to Delhi by *The Free Press Journal* to cover the Second Asian Relations Conference when the trial began and I stayed on to cover it."

"I remember Godse was standing with two policemen on either side while the Judge, sitting on the platform, read out his indictment. When he finally came to the last sentence and said, "...to be hanged until dead," for the assassination of Gandhiji, Godse did not even bat an eyelid. He gave a small salute and walked away."

"I was impressed by his stand. I hated him for his having killed

Gandhiji, and on the other hand, felt great admiration for his total fearlessness and his conviction."

The next day, Kamath wrote a report for *The Free Press Journal* which was translated into Marathi for the sister-publication, *Navshakti*.

"Apparently, Godse read every paper to see what they said about him." All of them denounced him while Kamath gave an objective report, noting the man's convictions. "My editor came in waving a letter, which he called, "a certificate from Godse." "The letter said that mine 'was the best report of all.' What struck me," says Kamath, "was Godse's firm conviction, however misplaced it was."

Godse declared, "I did not have anything against Gandhiji, but he stood for partition and I hated him for it... My confidence about the moral side of my action has not been shaken even by the criticism levelled against it on all sides".

In a democracy, journalism is supposed to be objective and non-partisan. Kamath feels he respected that spirit by presenting the other side.

Godse died believing he had committed no sin. In his will he implored that his ashes be immersed in the river Indus only when Hindustan and Pakistan were one again. The last of his ashes are still in Pune.

Years after the execution, Kamath received a copy of Godse's account of his life. *May it please your Honour*

by Nathuram Godse is a book that was prevented from being published by a government ban. Gopal Godse, Nathuram Godse's brother, printed a few private copies and circulated them. One of the recipients was Kamath.

"I never met the man but my report of the trial may have shown how moved I was. Godse's will is also really touching. Maybe Gopal Godse sent me the book because he saw that I could see the other side (their side) even if I was against it completely."

The book begins with a note from Godse. An excerpt is printed below -

"I am prepared to concede that Gandhiji did undergo sufferings for the sake of the Nation. I shall bow in respect to the service and to him. But even this servant of the country had no right to vivisect the country by deceiving the people.

"I do not desire any mercy to be shown to me. I do not also wish that any one on my behalf should beg mercy towards me.

"If devotion to one's own country amounts to a sin, I admit to have committed that sin. If it is meritorious, I humbly claim the merit thereof.

"I have no doubt that honest writers of history will weigh my act and find the true value thereof some day in future."

- (Nathuram Godse) □

What is truth on one side of the Pyrenees is error on the other.

- Pascal.

The First Republic Day Parade Down Rajpath (1950)

- preeta dutta

It was six a.m. in the morning — a typical cold and foggy January morning in New Delhi. It would have been just another ordinary winter's day, but it was not.... It was the 26 of January, 1950, when India celebrated her first Republic Day as a sovereign democratic republic.

The Agarwal family had decided to leave their house as early as possible and go to Rajpath so that they could occupy well located seats. He remembers, "There was a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm in the air; every patriotic household was moving towards Rajpath that day.

"At that time no tickets were issued and everyone was allowed in free. Hours before the parade began people-old, young, wrapped up in their woollens had come and occupied the seats." He recalls that the entire area was choked with people. The population may have been less, but the number of people who came to see the parade was considerably larger than today. The entire area from Rajpath all the way upto Connaught Place was full of people."

"In a way, the entire atmosphere was like a mela, with a great deal of festivity and camaraderie. The balloon men, the *chanawalas* and all the other hawkers were having a field day selling their goods." Through all the festivity and frolic there was an all-encompassing feeling of togetherness and belonging.

"There was a sudden rush when the President came in a horse-driven carriage with all his guards following behind. Dr. Rajendra Prasad then took the salute, and not a sound was heard amongst the millions of people who were there." For Mr. Agarwal the best part of the entire parade was that "everything was so informal, there were no rehearsals before, the army parade was less refined; yet the feeling of patriotism could not have been greater."

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister would walk around the enclosures, mingling with the people, talking with them. "I remember clearly when he came up and picked up our son Neeraj and started talking to him. It was a small gesture, but one that

made everyone feel united."

The parade itself was very different. There was no deployment of the air force and the navy. Nor were there any cultural tableaux or heavy artillery. The entire parade was a much smaller affair with less fanfare and probably carried on for an hour.

"The crowd would cheer and clap loudly for the army contingents as they marched by. The Delhi police and the Gurkha regiments got the maximum applause."

46 Republic day parades later, Mr. Agarwal feels that the entire political atmosphere is very different from what it was then. "One felt very patriotic and proud to be an Indian. When the parade ended, everybody slowly walked towards their respective homes — a historic and memorable moment for each one. As they walked out, one of the tunes played by the band kept ringing in their ears "*Sare jahan se achha Hindustan hamara...*" □

We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens:

Justice: social, economic and political;

Liberty: of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

Equality: of status and opportunity;

Fraternity: assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

In our Constituent Assembly, this 26th day of November 1949, do hereby adopt, enact and give ourselves this Constitution.

- The Preamble of
The Constitution of India.

Stop Press !

- samira singh and auditi guha

The press in India has played a crucial role in transiting India from an autocracy to a democracy. Today, the press seems to have assumed the role of the oppressor itself with exclusive control over information. A look at the role of the press during its transition during the last 50 years.

Information is power. Autocracy concentrates power, hierarchy ensures exclusive rights to information, thus ensuring exclusive power.

A democracy guarantees its participants equal rights which include the right to equality of opportunity. This can obviously only exist if information is decentralised. Purveyors of news assume a vital role in keeping any democracy breathing. The press therefore becomes critical in ensuring decentralised power.

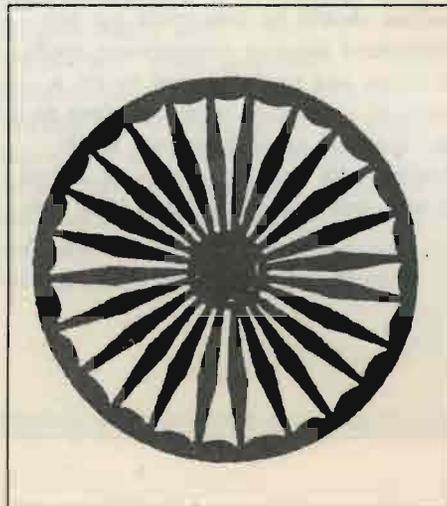
India has, in the last 50 years, transited from being under the autocratic British to building and maintaining a democracy. Colonised information has given way to liberalised information. The press has played a crucial role during India's transition into democracy.

Indigenous reportage began with India's struggle for freedom. The press in India was inextricably linked with her burning desire for freedom. Both grew together, feeding each other in a symbiotic relationship.

Says M.V. Kamath, ex-editor of *The Free Press Journal*, the nationalist manifesto of the time, "The press represented the nationalist viewpoint. We reported speeches of leaders like Gandhi, Nehru and Patel in great detail. Everything we wrote aimed at building public opinion and it reflected our desire for independence."

However, Anil Dharker, ex-editor of *Debonair*, *The Sunday Mid-Day* and *The Independent*, discounts the role of the press in mobilising or fuelling the freedom struggle. "I do

not think the press had a significant role to play in the freedom struggle. It was a mass movement which developed its own momentum. There was such a huge surge of patriotism that I do not think the press could really have helped to create it or help



it in any major way. It merely reflected it."

Kamath disagrees, "It is not fair to say that the press was not important because if there were no papers, the momentum would not have been publicised. It was an action — reaction phenomenon or better still, the chicken-and-egg question."

At a time of divisive rule, the press played a unifying role. "Our goal was independence. We were committed to it", says K. N. Prabhu, veteran journalist.

The goal was achieved in 1947 when India won her independence from colonisation. The national

struggle had given birth to an emotionally charged press. The new order required a more objective stance. "The role of the press in any democracy is pretty well defined," says Dharker. "It should inform, comment and analyse in an objective, factual way preferably without interpretation as that should be the reader's privilege".

Few papers play such a non-partisan role, however.

In India, the press has never functioned as an objective viewer. During the freedom struggle, it was either strongly pro-or anti-the British. Today, it is either pro-or anti-those that can meet its needs best. "At least then they had a common ideal. Today there are just fragmented personal objectives that determine the stance of a paper," says Dharker.

"Earlier, journalism meant conviction, today it is a career, a business with its own pulls and pressures," says K. N. Prabhu while M. V. Kamath analyses the role of the press today as being "money oriented, not principle oriented. Earlier there was a mission, a vision, now we are all consumers. The ads in a paper are more important than the news in it." He asks further, "Can you imagine that a newspaper today writes about what to eat in which restaurant? You write about a dish that costs Rs.400/- when your average reader cannot possibly afford it. It is absurd. There is absolutely no sense of direction or purpose anymore."

Gandhiji once said, "The true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock it with

wanted and unwanted impressions." Today, as Prabhu Chawla (ex-editor of *The Indian Express*) says, "Facts are the first casualty. When facts don't support their objective, journalists tend to remould them."

One example of how the press stocked the public mind with 'unwanted impressions' is its coverage of the Mandal Commission Report which sought to reserve 27 per cent of government jobs for the backward classes. Prem Shankar Jha, former advisor to V. P. Singh, analysed the role of the press in 1992 when he said, "The press highlighted certain parts of V. P. Singh's speeches, edited some and quoted some out of context. *The Times Of India*, other Delhi papers and *India Today* had their front pages and cover full of pictures of Rajiv Goswami, the student who attempted suicide, burning, without a thought to the possible consequences of such an act.

The press ceased to act in the public interest, it acted in the interest of a class."

N. Ram, editor of *Front Line*, said (*The Indian Express*, 14/6/92), "The coverage of the agitation by a good part of the influential media was definitely biased and did whip up mindless violence. Unfortunately, a number of editors jumped into the fray and spewed inflammatory reports. Such kind of campaign journalism glorifying reactionary attitudes did mislead the students."

Dileep Padgaonkar, ex-editor of *The Times of India*, said (*The Indian Express* 22/11/92) "Reporters and editors should be concerned but not committed because commitment spells activism and you're bound to get a form of journalism which is close to the spirit of pamphleteering. While dealing with sensitive issues, it is best if reporters and editors first look into

their own minds to root out traces of bias, ignorance and prejudice."

One common goal has given way to fragmented goals as colonialism has given way to democracy. Today the press seems to be moving back into colonialism. 50 years ago "swadeshi" was the spirit of nationalism. Today liberalisation demands that India let in foreign media. While most journalists, Dharker, Kamath and Prabhu included, see their eminent entry as non-threatening and feel the competition will be good for Indian newspapers, it is good to remember that information is a resource and a very valuable one at that. The pen is mightier than the sword and by letting go of the pen, are we, by 'liberalising' information, letting in our colonisers again?

Information is, after all, power. □

It would be folly to argue that the people cannot make political mistakes. they can and do make grave mistakes. They know it, they pay the penalty; but compared with the mistakes which have been made by every kind of autocracy, they are unimportant.

- Calvin Coolidge.

May Day! May Day! The Birth of Maharashtra (1960)

- dimple mohan

Today's Hutatma Chowk, yesterday's Red Square. Even though the embers of India's struggle for Independence had cooled down, there was unrest and chaos in the Presidency of Bombay, as it was known then.

Mr. M.V. Rajadhyaksha, retired Professor of English at Elphinstone College, Mumbai, just 20 at that time, seethed and fumed yet chose to remain a silent spectator to the events. "It was not that I was scared. I was working and studying at the same time. I knew I would be jeopardising my job and my family if I joined the movement."

The events that finally led to the bifurcation of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujarat have long been forgotten. Rajyadaksha however recalls the Hutatma Chowk massacre

clearly. 105 people were killed after Morarji Desai, the then Chief Minister of the Bombay Presidency, gave orders to open fire. It was a mini-Jallianwala Baug massacre. He opposed the proposal put forth by the Samjukta Party's Maharashtra leaders. Ego hassles I guess."

After the State Reorganisation Act to divide the Indian provinces into linguistic states was passed, Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, insisted on the reorganisation of Bombay Presidency. "I suppose it is possible that a man of such competence could also make mistakes. Bombay was bilingual with Marathi and Gujrathi speaking people and it was difficult to identify the areas," says Rajadhyaksha. Added to this was the demand put forth by the Samjukta Party leaders that Bombay be made into an independent state.

The rally at Hutatma Chowk had been organised to support this demand. Yeshwant Rao Chavan and Mrinal Gore were active participants in this movement.

"Nothing however came out of this rally; lives were lost and families displaced, and finally the Bombay Presidency was divided and Bombay made the capital of Maharashtra." In Maharashtra, the bifurcation took place on May 1, 1960; an event in history which is comparably minor to that of India's independence, yet frighteningly similar to the pain and struggle that took place. Rajadhyaksha feels "Ironically, today, even after 30 years of bifurcation we are not sure whether certain areas like Daug are theirs or ours. The bifurcation is an illusion. I still feel that Gujarat and Maharashtra are one and the same state." □

*With Best Wishes
from :*

Solo

Liberating The Spirit of Goa (1961)

- aparna mathur

Commander Shankar (fictitious name), a retired naval officer, lounges in his easy chair sipping beer, as he reminisces about the 1961 'naval action in Goa.' "An Indian naval ship, INS KARWAR (fictitious name) was dispatched for action two days after action on land had been completed." Taking another swig of beer, he recalls "INS KARWAR was under refit at the naval dockyard in Bombay, sorry, Mumbai now, forgive me I'm an old timer" (He adds with an apologetic smile), "and therefore was not really ready for action. Her crew was raw, and had not seen any action.

"As the ship arrived at Marmagoa harbour, it ran aground. She therefore had to be anchored off Anjadieu island for minor refit. After necessary repairs she was to patrol off the

island and to capture Portuguese troops based on the island."

A naughty gleam twinkles in his eye as he refills his beer mug and proceeds with the story. "During the day, the ship would bombard the island to enable the hidden troops to come out of the jungle and caves. At night she would land the sailors on the island to capture the Portuguese troops, if they came out of their hide outs."

He rubs his hands together, laughs loudly and says, "Now comes the best part. The Portuguese had hidden a lot of country liquor on the island. In the morning, when a new search party would be landed on the island, they would find our sailors merrily drunk on the liquor they had found, but with no Portuguese troops to account for!

"This went on for about a week. Bombardment of the island at night and search parties in the morning. At last one Portuguese soldier was caught. The others had, of course conveniently escaped."

After a hearty laugh, Cdr. Shankar leans forward and almost whispers "In case you're wondering about the Portuguese soldier, well, he was interrogated both on the ship and ashore, but hardly any secrets were uncovered.

"The ship returned to Bombay after seven days with no Portuguese warships sunk or damaged in action, nor any troops captured. But with a good stock of country liquor."

This naval action has therefore had not found mention in any naval dispatch! □

Red Vox (1963)

- vijaya susan george

"It was a peaceful demonstration," Sharada Sathe, active communist and feminist recalls. Perhaps that accounts for the minimal coverage that the issue got in the media. It's often said that if you want something to be splashed all over the papers, you should break into violence. "But you can't discount the agitation of an entire peasant force in our country as insignificant," she protests.

It was after the Indo-China war, and India seemed to have regained some semblance of normalcy. But far too much money had been poured into towards the war chest and prices shot through the roof. "We had to do something," says Sathe, her voice filled with remembered urgency. "And the Communists took the initiative."

Sathe vividly recalls the six

months of hard work before the demonstration. "I worked hard along with the others to urge people to participate in the demonstration... After class, I'd go campaigning, return to college to play basketball, then go campaigning again."

The students were motivated largely by Comrade S A Dange, the founder of the Communist Party of India. "We went from house to house campaigning, distributing pamphlets, conducting study circles to brief other students, collecting Re 1 from each sympathetic family to pay for train tickets..."

In November 1963, the demonstration was held outside the Parliament in Delhi. "Several people came from different parts of the country to participate in it, and 10

million signatures were collected," declares Sathe proudly. "People became aware of their rights. This was their movement. The Communists were only the catalyst."

Dange began the first demand: "Down with the 75 Monopoly Houses" decrying the private sector conglomerates that had a strangle-hold on the country's economy. The people demanded "fair price shops" and the abolition of the zamindari system and that gas oil and banking be nationalised. "It was a peaceful demonstration," she reiterates. "We are a Gandhian race. We wait patiently, but meanwhile we protest non-violently."

"In those days, Communists were campaigners, now they're leaders," she concludes with a laugh. □

She works hard for the money...

- aditi jagannath and swaroopa iyengar

The Indian woman is playing a new role today - that of the career woman. Her role may have changed, those of the supporting cast certainly haven't. The career woman still faces many problems today.

Lying in hospital Sheila started to think a great deal about her family. She had been ignoring her daughter and had not seen her husband in the past month. They are more important to me than any job or promotion. When Ravi came to see her that evening she told him of her decision to stop working — and watched his face light up. "Welcome back." he said.

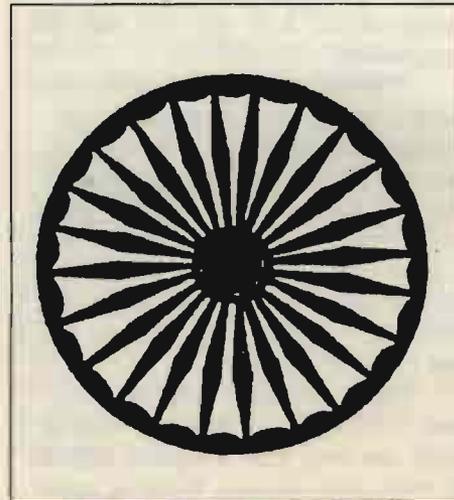
Does this sound familiar? Magazines like *Woman's Era* — the extract above has been taken from one of their short stories — which claim to cater to women and deal with their problems 'sensitively' publish innumerable stories along these lines. The impression created by such stories is that a woman cannot successfully juggle both her career and home without 'dire' consequences. Both the children and the family are sacrificed in the process. The more 'enlightened' media (for which read upmarket) perpetuate another kind of myth — that a woman should be able to successfully cope with both at the same time.

Sheila, we are told, could afford to quit her job. But there are thousands of women who need to work, if for nothing else, to supplement their husband's incomes. They are working women as opposed to career women. The difference may seem semantic but it is real.

All working women are not career women. The former is only interested in augmenting her family's income while the latter is genuinely interested in her job and generally enjoys doing it. She wants to make her way to the top; she is a person who looks ahead. Both are interested in the paychecks they get at the end of the month but

for a career woman it is more than just a matter of money, it is also the satisfaction she gets out of what she does.

It has been 50 years since India gained independence and it is as good a time as any to take a look at where working women are today. Women



have always played an important role in the country's development. Before independence, women were actively involved in the freedom movement. After independence they were marginalised perhaps because patriarchy resented the equality which they had achieved when they faced British *lathis* with their husbands, sons and fathers.

The husbands, sons and fathers seem to have demanded that their women go back to playing the traditional roles of wives, sisters and mothers. Women taking part in the freedom movement were "doing it for the country". Women claiming the right to work were seen as "being selfish", as "neglecting their time

honoured roles as nurturant mothers". This thinly disguised male rhetoric may have concealed the fear that the economically independent woman would be the empowered woman.

Despite these restrictions and hurdles, women have made some headway. For every Kiran Bedi who makes headlines for reforming Tihar jail, there are countless khaki sari clad women who frisk passengers at airports and control the crowds at Mahila Dharnas. For every Tarjani Vakil who makes important decisions every day as head of Exim Bank, there are thousands of women who are dipping their toes tentatively into the male dominated waters of finance. They are stepping out of their homes and entering professions like the defence forces which was unthought of even 25 years ago. Male dominated occupations like management and journalism are being stormed by determined and ambitious women who function on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

Says Vijaya Manerikar, Director of Jamnalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies, "We do not have a special quota for women in our college, neither do most other management institutes in India. Students get in solely on the basis of merit — but, yes, the number of women applying has risen in the past few years. Then again, wanting and getting in are two different things."

Society has slowly and unwillingly begun to accept the phenomenon of a working woman, it has to. Economics rules, okay?

Families with both partners working have become increasingly common. It is not unusual to see advertisements in matrimonial columns

where men actually want to marry working women. Working women, mind you, not career women.

"My mother-in-law told me that my wife would be bringing home her dowry every month", says John Maria, free lance journalist "it seems that society has managed to co-opt women's economic independence into the patriarchal system of thinking."

The cost of living has gone up considerably. It is now almost essential for women - especially those coming from middle class families to work in order to make ends meet.

"I do not have much of a choice, I have to work. I've been doing it ever since I got married which was five years ago. I do not have any job satisfaction. There is no creative input involved. I am hoping that my husband gets a promotion so that I can quit my job," says Rina Mittal who works as an operator for a market research agency.

Part of the problem lies in how the money is spent. Although the woman may be contributing equally to the family income it is her husband's needs which are placed first. As she continues to juggle both family and her job, priority is given to buying her husband a motorbike so that he can commute comfortably to work. A washing machine, which could ease her work load at home, comes a distant second.

On the surface, society seems to accept the working woman. However, underneath this acceptance, there are various conditions that are imposed on her. Firstly, she must not allow her work to take first priority. She must earn, because needs must be met, but she must see her job only as a means to an end, not an end in itself. And finally she must join a respected profession, such as teaching, even if it pays less. But heaven forbid that she

should hope to join the media ! Loose morals are supposed to abound in advertising agencies, or so the head of the management faculty in an institute maintains.

"I am very apprehensive when my women students work as client servicing executives in advertising agencies because of the loose morals people have there. You have to deal with so many clients there, you never know what you may have to do." he says, preferring anonymity.

It is interesting that he should want to remain anonymous. Were he truly convinced about his stand, he would have no qualms about allowing us to use his name. However, he wishes, no doubt, to be seen as "progressive". And very few men are progressive.

"I would never want my wife to work", says Chirag Shah, an as yet unmarried businessman. "As long as she has me, why should she work ? She can have an easy lifestyle, sit at home, watch television, eat well, have a good time." A pause and then the real reason "What will society say if I allow her to work ? They'll say that I can't provide for her."

This is always a problem. Men find it difficult to "allow" women to work and they find it equally difficult to work with women. Working under a woman ? That's agony for the hot blooded real male.

"My boss wanted me to take over as branch manager in Mumbai," says Rishika Lakhan, a senior sales manager with Olympia Electricals Limited. "I decided against it because I felt that I was too inexperienced and needed more time to handle such a responsibility. So a man was brought in over my head. I didn't resent that as much as he did! All the dealers were used to speaking to me and would ask him where I was if calls

were routed to him. He couldn't stand this, he saw it as an attack on his position. He began to harass me, insulting me in front of the dealers. Finally, I quit."

Lakhan's story is not new. Men do not find it easy to take orders from a woman. But there are other strange details to her story. For instance her job is a well kept secret among her family and community. "My parents feel that it would impair my chances of getting married," she confides. "So if you ring up and ask where I am, my mother is likely to say that I am out, not at work." After marriage she will not work. Or if she works it will be with the permission of her husband. "Not very likely," she shrugs. "No woman in my community works. I don't think I'll be lucky enough to find the one liberated man who will allow me to continue working."

And even where liberated men "allow" their women to work, there is always the fear that the aforementioned management faculty head voices, "If more and more women come out of their houses and work what will happen to the man? They'll be unemployed."

After 50 years it is difficult to believe that anyone, let alone the head of a reputed management institute where women are also educated should be able to express such regressive thoughts.

Women may have come a long way in the last 50 years but there are miles to go before she sleeps the sleep of someone who competes on a level playing field, earns the same amount as her male colleagues, is treated with the same respect, and is provided with the infrastructure that will allow her to develop her potential. □

A sufficient measure of civilisation is the influence of good women.

- Emerson.

Jai Prakash Narayan, Bihar and the Famine (1966-67)

- priyasri prasad

"As far as I can remember, the famine of 1966-67 was the worst ever experienced by the people of Bihar," says Mr. M.K. Sinha, a 77-year-old gentleman who retired as the Inspector-General of the Indian Police.

Dressed impeccably in a dark blue suit and bright tie, Sinha recounts his experiences of the relief work that followed the famine.

"The monsoons had failed that year and famine hit the four districts of Bihar-Palamu, Bahua, Nawada, Gaya. About 30-35 lakh people were affected," recalls Mr. Sinha.

"It was basically a socio-economic crisis marked by drought, flood and widespread crop failure. Traditional irrigation systems had been neglected for a long time. Streams and lakes which were the main sources of water had fallen into disuse. Political instability, the changes in the tenural system and consequent unsettled conditions in the rural areas all contributed to the famine.

"The prices of cereals rose, and even when food was available, few had the money to buy it. Dacoity at grain stores and petty thefts increased. Though the signs of famine were apparent by 1966, the Government refused to acknowledge that they had a problem on their hands until 1967, except one bold IAS officer, Dr.

Kumar Suresh Singh, District Commissioner of Palamu, who announced that the famine had hit Palamu. The government, of course, was furious with him for admitting it," reminisces Mr. Sinha.

He recalls how he got involved in the relief work. "I had just retired from service when my son suggested that I join the Bihar Relief Committee headed by the dynamic leader, Jai Prakash Narayan. I joined the committee in 1967. Jai Prakash Narayan was the President while Ganga Charan Singh, the treasurer.

"The relief work made Jai Prakash an international figure. Foreign agencies especially German, donated crores of rupees. The Central and State governments also gave substantial monetary help," adds Mr. Sinha. "Free kitchens were set up at Rajgiri, Gaya and Palamu to feed about four lakh people daily. I was in charge of looking after the visitors from overseas," he adds.

Recollecting the contributions made by Mr. Narayan, Mr. Sinha says, "He was a committed man who would walk miles looking after the victims. He set up youth camps to distribute food and clothes. Developmental work was also carried out side by side. Jai Prakash hired 100 surface percolation pumps and had water pumps installed in Palamu and Rajgiri. He worked for hours

together sacrificing his health in the bargain. His wife, Prabhavati Devi would stand at the door with his medicines but Jai Prakash would not have the time to take them from her. He repeatedly declined several offers from Indira Gandhi to join politics and instead put all his energies into social work."

Mr. Sinha recalls how people were cheerful even in times of such distress. "They had full faith in the government machinery, and the government on its part did all it could to alleviate their suffering.

"This incident taught me a lot. I saw people from all quarters coming in to help and it felt as if the world were one big family," remarks Mr. Sinha. "Even after the famine was over the Bihar Relief Committee continued to function and I became, and still am, its President," says Mr. Sinha.

When asked about the situation now in Bihar, especially in Palamu, thirty years after the calamity took place, Mr. Sinha shakes his head in despair. "There has been marginal improvement. The districts of Palamu and Gaya are still dependent on the monsoon for irrigation. No monsoon still means no crops, therefore the danger of yet another famine still looms large over Bihar." □

The greatest human duty is to feed the hungry.

- Buddha.

The First Drop of Saffron (1969)

"Why don't you come for sports day?" The newly married Ms. Flavia Italia (name changed on request) readily agreed to her cousin's request, and informed her husband that she would be back by 8 p.m.

As she was returning, to her surprise, she got into an empty bus. "I was damn happy," she laughs, "because it was so unexpected!" The bus had hardly left Byculla and reached Lalbaug when the first stone hit the bus. "I was frightened," she recalls. "The conductor told me to rip off the seat of the bus and put it against the window." It wasn't just sports day. It was the day a tiger cub, named the Shiv Sena, petted and nurtured by bigger political parties like the Congress, let the whole of Mumbai hear its first roar.

The bus was stopped by a group of rioters at Lalbaug, who "gave us a chance to get off" and then calmly proceeded to add the bus to a growing line of burning metal.

Ms. Italia was now right on "the

street of violence." Her primary concern was to reach home- "I was newly married; you never know what he'll think." She ruefully adds "I'd bought a lot of tomatoes and my canteen chap had given me cheese, but I had to throw everything away."

As she inched her way forward among all the burning and stone-throwing, ducking in and out of buildings, an incident occurred which still burns in her mind's eye." An old Parsi couple had alighted from their jeep, and had hardly walked into the building when the jeep was set on fire."

She constantly sought shelter in the chawl-type houses which, she gratefully recalls, was never refused to her. "People kept forcing me to eat." Ms. Italia, her mind on the clock and her husband, kept refusing.

There was a row of parked taxis, all of which refused to ply, much to her frustration. "In such times, I would not bother to know if they are good or bad. There are two types of

- nandini ramnath

devils- the men and the other violence." She finally managed to persuade one driver to at least drive her out of the area; as it turned out, he dropped her right at her doorstep. "He was a thorough gentleman, he asked no funny questions." He even refused any money from her. By now it was about 3.a.m.

Mr. Italia was predictably annoyed, and delivered homilies on the irresponsibility so typical of women who go to meet their sisterfolk. "They don't even bother to hear your side of the story," she wryly remarks. "When he finally did he felt sorry for what he had said."

Ms. Italia was the only woman present at that time in Lalbaug fighting her way through rioting by "a boisterous lot." As an individual, she's never felt unsafe in Mumbai. But her 8.p.m. to 3.a.m. rendezvous with the riots has made her a tougher person. As she says, "It could not have been worse." □

The tyrant grinds down his slaves and they don't turn against him; they crush those beneath them.

- Emily Bronte

A Tryst with the Emergency (1975)

- aesha ahsan

"The Emergency was an exciting time. One day was normal and the next day everything had changed. I was scared but gave no one's name away."

Gene Kargulkar recalls her tryst with the Emergency. 1975 — 20 years ago and her memory of it is fresh as ever.

Gene graduated from Sophia college in 1955, and now lives with her husband in a cosy apartment at Mumbai Central. She runs a charitable hospital which helps the poor communities in that area.

Politically inclined towards the Left parties, Gene was actively involved with them during the Emergency. Her house was used for anti-Emergency meetings, where debates and discussions were frequently held. Gene's involvement with the Teacher's Union of Mumbai and the Left Parties attracted police attention. "Times were such that no one could be trusted." One of her friends who was arrested gave her name away.

Gene was called to the police station and after a couple of hours of interrogation, she was arrested. Her 'crime' was that her house was being used as a meeting place for anti-Emergency purposes.

Being jailed was quite an experience. "The Saat Rasta lock-up was much better than the other jails in the city," says Gene. After the first week however, Gene was moved to Nagpur jail.

"Nagpur jail was full of political prisoners. Most of them were from the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh. During those days every political prisoner had a criminal prisoner assigned to her or him. These criminal prisoners were made to cook and clean for the political prisoners.

"The Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh women really exploited these poor criminal prisoners. They used to get the ingredients from outside and make the criminal prisoners make laddoos for the Makar Sankranti festival. They forced them to wash their clothes... it was terrible. Women

put into prison for petty crimes were beaten and tortured. The crimes they committed were to keep their body and soul together. These poor women were brutally punished, while the real criminals went scot-free," Gene says vehemently.

Gene then asked for a transfer to a Pune jail in order to be closer to her family. Here, she was permitted more visits from her husband and children, which was "a great relief."

The transfer proved beneficial in other ways too. Says Gene, "The jail in Pune was very different from the one in Nagpur. The political prisoners of the Left parties did many great things there. They set up a library for the prisoners. Educational movies focusing on health, personal hygiene and family care were also shown. The prisoners really cared about improving the quality of their lives."

Gene recalls nostalgically, "I was released after a three month jail term. It was an experience that made me grow... I cherish it till today." □

Authority is never without hate.

- Euripides.

The Summer of '47

- louella rebello

The summer of '47 was a summer that decided the destinies of millions of Indians. The horrors of the aftermath of Partition are so great that most survivors would rather not talk about it. However, the price the common man paid is too great to be erased from memory.

*"It is not what they built,
it is what they knocked down
It is not the streets that exist,
it is the streets that no longer exist"*

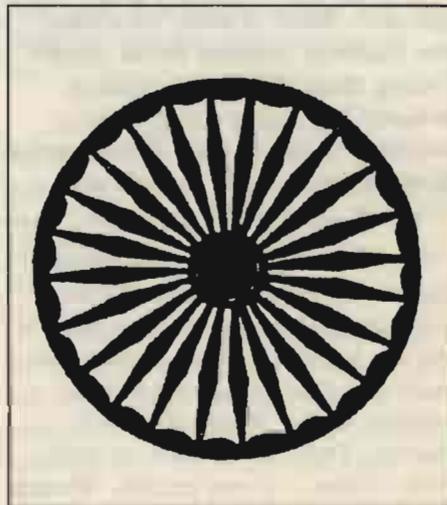
- James Fenton

The Partition of 1947 involved dividing India with almost surgical precision into two. Much blood flowed in the process. The levels of forced migration, persecution and systematic butchery are still difficult to accept. Hindus and Muslims blamed each other. But, as Khushwant Singh in *The Train to Pakistan* states, "Both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped."

Mr. P. Choudhary sits in his living room and shudders as he recollects the horrors of his days as a volunteer for the Red Cross during Partition. "The manholes used to be filled with dead bodies; dead women and children were dumped into them in heaps." He feels that the exchange of population was a colossal mistake. Thousands fled in the relative safety of the night, bidding goodbye forever to homes where their ancestors had lived for centuries.

People were being killed on the basis of their religion. "After a while you get immune to seeing so many dead," says Choudhary. He remembers seeing a man staggering into the refugee camp with his head bleeding profusely, only to die there. "At a time

like this, religion had become poison," he says. He considers himself lucky to have survived the Partition when thousands were being mindlessly slaughtered. Seeing suffering and



death at such close quarters has distinctly changed his attitude to life. "It is the situation which makes a man ."

Religion can be used adroitly to provide a highly emotionalised and sanctified rationalisation for actions that are selfishly motivated. As Nehru stated, "Religion which was supposed to encourage spirituality and brotherly feeling becomes the fountainhead of hatred, narrowness, meanness and the lowest materialism." Although over the centuries, Hinduism and Islam have borrowed rites, customs and doctrines from each other, the difference

between them is very wide. Islam contains many ideas and customs opposed by Hindus and the reverse is also true.

Is it also true that people who have lived in harmony as neighbours for decades suddenly turn against each other only because they share different faiths? "Definitely not," says Ms. H. Sinha, who came to India as a six-year-old during the Partition. Her family came to India carrying all they owned in just one suitcase. "We had to leave in the middle of the night with what we could grab within minutes. Life was so uncertain." She would rather not relive the horror of the journey. "We only knew the day ahead," is all she has to say.

She distinctly remembers her mother telling her about Hindu families giving shelter to Muslims in their homes... Muslims who had been their neighbours for as long as they could remember. People risked their lives, giving shelter to others. There have been instances where Hindus have been escorted to the refugee camps by their Muslim friends. The best and the worst that man can be made itself apparent during this time.

As she looks back at the Partition, what she remembers most as a six-year-old then is that "before we left, the Hindus in the village had all gathered in one big house to protect themselves. They would blow conch

shells on the terrace from time to time." A fact seldom given enough emphasis is that the Muslims and the Hindus in Southern India did not actively participate in such happenings.

When the documents creating Pakistan were signed, none of the parties responsible for Partition foresaw the scale of human suffering they were to produce. Within six

months of independence, Partition had created at least ten million refugees and possibly more. It was responsible for the most extensive and miserable uprooting of human beings in modern history.

As India reaches her 50th year of independence, the millions who died are mere statistics, and there are thousands who are not even counted in these statistics. The fear, the

horror, the anguish, the human courage in the face of all odds and the pain; the price we had to pay for independence has all been forgotten.

"It is not your memories which haunt you... it is what you have forgotten, what you must forget. What you must go on forgetting all your life."

German Requiem
- James Fenton □

*With Best Compliments
from :*

A WELL WISHER

A Stricken City (1982)

"I used to work two shifts a day," says Dhondkar, a wisened old watchman of some 58 summers. They sit heavily on a face that have seen many changes, from the boomtime in the mill district of Lalbaug when workers swarmed to the factory gates when the whistle sounded... to the doovertime of today when no whistles sound and no workers come to the factory any more. "I never got tired," he continues sadly, "Never felt the strain. But during the strike, I found that having no constructive work is really tiring."

Dhondkar has fought two battles: one with cancer of the kidney and the other, the Bombay textile workers strike of 1982.

The strike began in January 1982 and marked a watershed in the history of the city. Urban historians have pointed to it as the moment at which the slow deceleration of the city began. Planners see it as the moment at which slums began to proliferate and the mill area began to decay. And economists see it as the moment from which Bombay changed from a productive economy to a speculative economy.

But behind the far-reaching consequences there is Dhondkar and others like him. "By the fifth month of the strike those who had land went back home. Only some of us who had nowhere to go stayed behind." says

Dhondkar. He still believes that what Datta Samant, the leader of the strike did, is right. "We followed him because we believed in him, because he had done so much for us. We got better terms of service, bonus, and other facilities because of him. We believed that he had done the right thing but it was the wrong time, and you cannot get the right results at the wrong time."

He remembers the hunger, the fear, the pain of unemployment vividly. He remembers the early optimism, the feeling of camaraderie... and the slow dissolution of hope as workers began to trickle away.

"When people began to leave, began to go home, I knew somewhere in my heart that the strike had failed, that the workers had lost. Because as long as we were together, there was some feeling that we were together and that there was hope..."

On the other side of the managerial line, is Jhaveri (name changed by request) who has his share of memories. His was one of the first mills that was hit by the strike. "They wanted bonus and they struck work. They needed support for the strike and they approached Datta Samant for help. That was the mistake they made. The strike spread to seven to eight companies and by 18 January, 1982, the strike was complete."

- varsha daiya

Jhaveri has a completely different view of the strike. He remembers the reports of violence that made them afraid to enter the company. Some parts of the company were functioning, and the workers tried to stop these workers from entering the mill. "I remember sleeping here," he gestures around his office, "I remember how some workers would come together in groups and try to enter the mill. When they did enter there was no way to get them to work because a mill cannot be run by a few hands, everyone has to do his or her bit to keep things running smoothly."

"The company was my *anna-datta*," says Dhondkar, "It was terrible to watch it collapse."

"It was terrible to watch it collapse," says Jhaveri, in an inadvertent echo of one of his workers. "It was terrible to watch good machinery begin to rust, debts pile up, export orders stand cancelled. The other dependent industries also began to be affected, the chemicals and dyeing industry, the *mathadi* workers.. it was slow death and we seemed to be presiding over it, like some gruesome undertakers."

What Jhaveri says also refers to what life is about. Co-operating, helping each other, keeping things going, understanding each other... □

The forces of a capitalist society, if left unchecked, tend to make the rich richer and poor poorer.

- Jawaharlal Nehru.

The Second Partition (1984)

"On the thirty-first of October, 1984, rumours that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had been assassinated began to spread. Few believed it. From that point of time till the next day, arson and violence began in Delhi."

Vikas Chhabra recalls, "Originally we are from Sind. My father had migrated from Lahore in 1947, and then moved to Delhi in search of better prospects. My father had always told me about his harrowing experience of the Partition riots. But at that time I could not empathise with him, because I could not imagine the scene." He had always wondered what it must have felt like. However, he soon got a feel of things when the same scene was repeated in front of his eyes. The main difference between 1947 and 1984 according to him, was that the Partition riots were between Muslims and Hindus, and the 1984

riots were between Sikhs and Muslims.

"Those images are still in my mind. The violence continued to spread, and increased in intensity and barbarity. The men were dragged out, beaten badly and burnt alive. Then the houses and shops were systematically looted and set on fire," he describes it as though it is happening right in front of his eyes.

There were five Sikh families, who lived in his colony, one of whom started celebrating the news of Ms. Gandhi's assassination. Then the mobs came to his area at about 9.a.m. on the first of November and began stoning his Sikh neighbour's house. Despite his wife's plea for mercy, they killed him, burnt him to death, and took his wife's gold ear-rings and bangles away. After a few days she shifted out with her daughter. "With

- seema dubey

that incident, I lost my friend forever," says Chhabra.

An indefinite curfew was imposed. To save their lives, Sikhs were forced to cut their hair and hide their religious trappings, which were on the walls and entrances of their homes, by putting bedcovers over them.

"I clearly remember how my younger sister used to fearfully ask my mother, "*Chaiji, kya hume bhi log marne ayenge?*" Nobody had imagined that the riots would happen. Says Chhabra, "The riots changed my whole perspective. Everything is normal now; the Sikhs have rebuilt their houses. But what about those who lost their near and dear ones? Till today I know nothing about my friend. Where is she living? What is she doing? It is the riots which made me ask these questions..." □

History books begin and end; but the events they describe do not.

- Source Unknown.

Walk On The Wild Side (1986)

- vibha thakkar

24 September 1986, Gibbeo (Italy). The first day of a 77-km long walk from Gibbeo to Assisi. Sudhakar Solomon Raj was one of the pilgrims representing India at the World Wildlife Fund - Interfaith ceremony. 1986 was the 25th birth anniversary of the WWF, which was initiated in Switzerland in 1961. It was in 1986 that the WWF changed its name from Worldwide Fund for Nature to World Wildlife Fund. Assisi, the place of celebration, is the hometown of St. Frances, the patron saint of ecology.

"It was a celebration of various perspectives," Sudhakar Solomon Raj says. "There was action at various levels - deliberations and discussions between businessmen, Non-Governmental Organisations, environmentalists, Interfaith dialogue where leaders of all religions shared the perspectives of the Scriptures and activists and enthusiasts joining in on a pilgrimage walk from different parts of Italy."

"News of my nomination was a pleasant surprise. It was an honour for me to be a part of the pilgrimage. I was involved with the Conservation Education Movement and was therefore nominated. Twenty-seven countries were participating in this event. A special status was accorded to the developing countries."

"Each pilgrim was given a tabard (sleeveless vest), with the Conservation symbol of St. Frances of Assisi's Brother sun and Sister Moon emblazoned on it. Each country had its own colourful banners and flags. The Indian banners were the colour of the national tricolour - with the tiger on green, the peacock on white and the Bodh tree on saffron, symbolising our forest heritage. Our slogan was '*India cares for her Wildlife.*' "

Raj continues, "Indian banners were chosen to lead over all the groups, in recognition of India's contribution to the Conservation

campaign at the ceremony held at the end of the three-day pilgrimage and presided over by Prince Philip at the St. Frances Basilica. The Interfaith ceremony was the grand finale of the event, where a liturgical service was held. About a thousand rakhis were tied in the Indian tradition of *raksha bandhan* with a vow to protect Sister and Mother Nature."

Friendship, warmth, pride and fraternity were a few emotions Raj experienced while attending this event. His fondest memory of the event is of the Indian flag being carried upside down when the Indian contingent led the ceremonial walk! "For three whole days the flag was carried upside down and none of us twelve nominees noticed it, not even the Secretary General of WWF India — Major General D'Souza — or even the two Press Trust of India members!" □

*All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful
The Lord God made them all.*

- Source Unknown

Women And Legal Reform : The Law on Trial

- shefali srinivas and preeta dutta

Legal reforms do not necessarily change the status quo of women. An analysis of the contradictions in Indian law.

"We are female human beings poised on the edge of a new millennium. We are the majority of our species, yet we have dwelt in the shadows. We are the poor, the illiterate, the invisible and we vow : no more.

We are the women who hunger - for rice, home, freedom."

In India, every twenty-six minutes one woman is molested, every fifty-four minutes one woman is raped and every hundred and two minutes one woman succumbs to a dowry related death. Acts of violence have increased in the past few years, despite legislation designed to eliminate these practices.

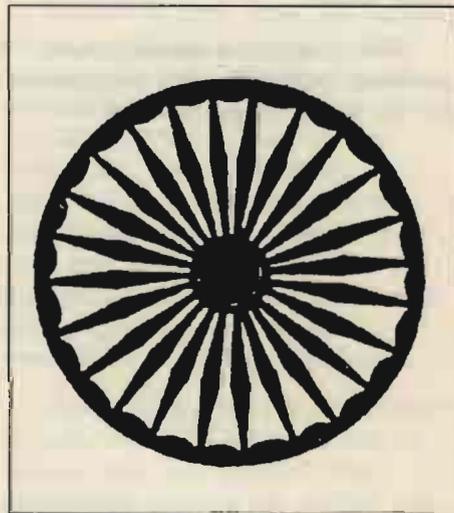
According to Flavia Agnes of Majlis, a legal help cell for women, "If oppression was to be tackled by enacting laws, then the last decade (1980 to 1989) could be declared as a 'golden era for Indian women,' when laws were given on a platter, and every single issue concerning violence against women resulted in legislative reform." Ironically, the enactments convey a positive picture of achievement, but the statistics reveal a different story.

The rape cases registered in the year 1989 numbered 108 — there was only one conviction. 97 % of rape cases are either cancelled or sent back as untraced by the police. In Mumbai alone, there were 143 reported cases of domestic violence under the Dowry Prevention Act in 1990 as compared to 41 in 1986.

26-year-old Radha was subjected to regular physical abuse by her husband, a well-to-do man. In May 1996, after three years of constant

abuse, she finally registered a complaint with the police. However, her husband was not convicted, as she could not prove violence 'beyond a reasonable doubt' as is required by criminal jurisprudence.

In October 1996, Ratna Devi was blinded by her in-laws and husband



because of her failure to obtain a colour T.V. from her parent's house apart from her dowry. The case is still pending. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 laid down a very narrow definition of dowry which excludes presents in the form of cash, ornaments, clothes and other articles from its purview.

15-year-old Mangala was forced into prostitution by her mother to settle her family debts. Like her, numerous rural women are lured into the flesh trade of Mumbai through the exploitation of their fragmented religious beliefs and their poverty. The government was forced to distinguish between women in

prostitution, and of prostitution as an institution. The institution is therefore sought to be controlled or suppressed by either arresting and penalising the women who are prostituted or by rescuing them and 'rehabilitating them' such that they become 'decent members' of a civil society. In either case, it is the women who become objects of either punitive measures or reform, while the real violators — the brothel owners, the agents, pimps, clients and local officials are ultimately never held responsible.

Law has played a prominent role in the most recent wave of the women's movement. Major campaigns were launched to reframe rape and dowry laws in the late 70's. In the 80's the FASDST (Forum Against Sex Determination and Sex Pre-selection) initiated the movement against amniocentesis, and women continue to press for further amendments to sexual assault and property laws in the 90's. Yet, during this period, the women's movement has increasingly questioned the role of law in the struggle to improve women's status.

In the early 19th century, however, social reformers believed that law had a role to play in bringing about a change in attitude and customs that would be required to eliminate these social practices. The demand for legal rights was sparked off by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who fought for the abolition of Sati. Behran Balasari and Ranade took up the issue of child marriage during the latter half of the century. Theirs was not an easy struggle, because campaigns to reform social practices were repeatedly met with protests of 'religion is in danger.'

The struggle for legal rights was continued during the independence movement by women like Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Sister Nivedita and Dr. Annie Besant. The Women's Indian Association took up the Age of Consent issue, and sought legislative reforms in Inheritance and Marriage laws in the 20's. Sexual equality was accepted by the Indian National Congress in its 1928 report. Over the years a number of legal reforms have been initiated by the women's movement. Mr. Batliboi, a criminal lawyer in the city, says, "Women are enjoying better privileges these days and demanding legal rights towards property, employment, divorce and maintenance."

But, these legal victories have not done much to better the status of women over the last 50 years. Sonal

Shukla, a feminist, says, "The mere passing of laws does not guarantee justice. These laws are formulated by men, and are based on customs and tradition. How then can laws alone bring about social change?"

Veena, a practicing advocate with Majlis, holds the view that, "It is true that law is informed by and often serves to reinforce patriarchy, but we are constantly negotiating within the system to divert it in our favour."

"We have to learn to move out of the realm of viewing law as either oppressive or liberatory. Instead it should be part of a radical programme to improve the status of women," says Sonal Shukla.

This programme should involve providing gender-sensitive programmes for the police, magistrates and

advocates. Lack of awareness about law is one of the major factors in the gap between formal rights of women and their continued inequality. "We need legal literacy programmes and forums to help women," says Sonal Shukla.

In her struggle for legal rights, the Indian woman has borne the brunt of oppression, as well as rejoiced in her legal victories. She has faced the frustration of watching these victories turn into mere paper tigers. The victories, however have given the women's movement optimism to continue the struggle. Women no longer plead for the right to speak; they are speaking... □

There is a point beyond which even justice becomes unjust.

- Sophocles.

Woman Woman Burning Bright (1987)

Geeta Seshu, a young journalist, witnessed the rebuttal of a time-tested adage, 'the lull before the storm.' This is because the tempest that hurled womanhood back to a medieval era left a deathly stillness and conspiracy of silence in Deorala. Forty years after Indian women burnt with a passion for freedom, one woman was consigned to the flames of oblivion.

Roop Kanwar was burnt as a *sati* on the funeral pyre of her husband, Maal Singh, on the fourth of September 1987. Between the twenty-fourth and the thirtieth of September, Geeta Seshu and two colleagues representing the Women and Media Committee of the Mumbai Union of Journalists, went to the towns of Sikar, Deorala, and the not-so-pink city of Jaipur on a fact-finding mission. Seshu covered this for *The Indian Express*.

Her memories of the *sati sthal* are crystal clear. "It was like any other Hindu pilgrimage centre. The path to the *sthal* was lined with hawkers selling eatables, toys, tassels, incense sticks, coconuts, and crudely superimposed framed photos of Roop Kanwar and Maal Singh on the funeral pyre." She equates the scenario she witnessed nine years ago

with the waiting parlour of an opera house.

The trio camped at Jaipur and reached Deorala by a jeep provided by the Sati Dharam Raksha Samiti, but only after reassurances that they did not belong to any women's groups. "The actual platform was made of brick with a saffron canopy covering it. In the centre was a form with a red and gold *chunri* draped over it, curiously resembling the figure of a woman."

In each of their visits, she recalls six to seven Rajput youths sporting rusty swords and acting as sentinels, chanting slogans like *Sati Mata Ki Jai, Sati Ke Pati Ki Jai, Ek, Do, Teen, Char, Roop Kanwar Ki Jayjaykar*. In sharp contrast to the near deserted town of Deorala, the *sthal* was swarming with people. On their third visit there they got stoned, so they got back into the jeep provided by the Raksha Committee.

Seshu vividly remembers her visit to Roop Kanwar's in-laws' house in Deorala. She was 'blessed', she sarcastically remarks for peeping into Roop Kanwar's chamber. "The room was darkish and was adorned with huge photos of various gods." A gold-bordered red and green *chunri*

- *uttara asthana*

hung on the wall. According to a by-stander, Roop Kanwar had worn it just before her death. Seshu still recalls the one symbol of modernity that stuck out like a sore thumb in the room's medieval ambience — a television set. Seshu opines, "The room reflected the myth that is in the making — that Roop Kanwar was a modern woman and also a God-fearing devoted wife."

Seshu and her colleagues met members of the Sati Dharam Raksha Samiti (later rechristened the Dharam Raksha Samiti), the most prominent of which was the State Janata Party President, Kalyan Singh Kalvi. He said, "No one can interfere with these rites," but to appease the journalists he added, "I am against *sati* as a practice... but once it is done what is the point of harassing innocent people?"

Now, when all the accused, eighteen in all, have been acquitted, Seshu not only feels "dismayed" but equates it with "one step backward for a woman, a giant leap backward for human kind."

Yet, unlike Roop Kanwar's ashes, this witness account has not been consigned to dust. □

Delay of justice is injustice.

- W. S. Landor.

Mandal Burning (1990)

Never had the nation witnessed such a passionate movement by the students. Over 70 suicides by the youth all over the country, for one cause — to protest against the V. P. Singh government decision to reserve 27% jobs in the government for the backward classes.

Priyasri, an ex-student of Lady Shri Ram College, New Delhi, recalls it as the most turbulent year of her student life. "We were furious and frightened by the impact of the Mandal Commission. Initially, we participated in peaceful rallies to protest, but the students' passions were set aflame when Rajiv Goswami, a

Delhi University student, set himself on fire. Soon, there was more news of such cases of self-immolation and suicide from other parts of the country.

"We realised the threat to our future. Our chances of employment would be bleak if the criteria was reservations instead of merit! In protest, we made a human chain near Akashwani wearing black t-shirts and bands. Even the teachers and doctors backed us. On the other hand, the backward class students marched in favour of the reservations.

"There were incidents of violence at some places, and some students

- gitanjali tandon

were arrested too. Troops had to be called out in Ambala, Chandigarh and Delhi. The police even arrested some of us who were marching peacefully. There were some helpful families who gave us food and water to beat the September heat and humidity. Even the rain didn't dampen our spirits as we chanted slogans in chorus against the Mandal Commission.

"There was a massive and widespread student protest all over the country, crossing all barriers of class and sex. Finally, our voice managed to reach the government, the Prime Minister had to give in, and consented to talk to us." □

Scam Success (1992)

"I sold my ACC shares when they touched Rs. 9600/-. Everyone told me that I was making a big mistake, because they expected them to touch Rs. 18000. I didn't want to be greedy, so I cashed in on my luck before it ran out," says Mrs. Rajni M. Doshi who bought ten shares of ACC at Rs. 100/- per share, early in 1988. She sold them during the peak period of the artificial boom of the Stock Market in 1992.

Rajni Doshi's is an example of one of the Scam transactions. There are hundreds like this, according to stock broker Sailesh Patel. "This man I know, invested Rs. 7000/- and purchased shares. At the right time, he sold them and bought a Maruti 800 at the back of which he wrote : "GIFTED BY HARSHAD MEHTA".

Rajni Doshi, a 60-year-old widow had always longed to visit Europe, but could not, due to financial constraints. The 1992 Stock Market boom made it possible. "Harshad Mehta kept purchasing shares and designing

liquidity in the market. In the interim, because the shares were bought at a very high rate, many people made a colossal sum of money," says Mrs. Doshi. According to her when there is a boom, or one created by speculation — in this instance by Mehta alone, people confidently buy shares that are not really worth the purchase price. "When the market crashed suddenly all these people lost money," she says.

"I was lucky to get out of it when the going was good. When I got the money, I went straight to Raj Travels to buy my ticket," laughs Doshi who travelled all over Europe for three weeks. Doshi credits Mehta for being instrumental in making the Stock Exchange Index cross the 4500 mark; while acknowledging that investors paid an unduly high price, for the banking system in the country.

"Banks employed many methods to inflate their profits. In the process, one bank has used the funds of another, the third bank the funds of

- aarti aiyar

the fifth, and so on, in the hope that all the banks would report bumper profit. In the process of these conversions, banks used the services of the brokers, and the Stock Markets in turn boomed. The only fault of the Stock Market was that it was at the most visible end of the whole cycle, and has been victimised," she adds.

Mrs. Doshi feels that in recent times, a "Casino scene" has emerged on the various stock exchanges.

"I would caution every investor not to dream of fast money. Because I won a lottery and travelled, I was happy, but I know people who were counting on the boom to get their daughters married, and have now lost everything," she says. She cautions those who await the return of Harshad Mehta, to revive the abysmal condition of the Stock Market. "In a way I feel that I went to Europe on somebody else's money, but that's life I guess, you win some, you lose some," she concludes. □

Before Babri (1992)

A precursor to the final act, the foundation of what was going to happen on the sixth of December, 1992 - the demolition of the Babri Masjid. This was the Ram shilanyas puja that was performed on the thirtieth of November.

Mohan Bane, presently a photographer with the *The Indian Express* group, was freelancing at that time and had been asked to cover that event by the paper.

"There were three of us covering it together, two of my journalist colleagues and I. We reached Lucknow on the twenty-second of October, the same day that L.K. Advani was arrested. A total bandh had been declared. There was no movement on the streets. Sporadic demonstrations took place all over the city. The atmosphere was very tense. We stayed in Lucknow for a couple of days and then went to Chitrakoot to cover the arrest of the Rajmata." They returned to Lucknow on the twentieth-ninth of October, the day Atal Behari Vajpayee was going to court arrest. "It was like going back to the Emergency. The atmosphere was tense, but there was an expectant air all around — of finality, of an occurrence that would leave its mark on the history of India."

Bane attributed this to the "aggressive stance taken by Mulayam Singh Yadav, then Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, of not allowing any Puja to be performed at the site. His oft repeated words were "*Parinda bhi pankh nahin marega.*"

"The temperature added to the tension. It was very cold, around 6 to 7 °C. A strong people's support could be felt. Most of the homes had hidden supporters of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh."

On the day of the event he says, "After spending the night at Faridabad, four to five kms. away from Ayodhya, we started for Ayodhya at six in the morning. We had to travel by foot. At every kilometre there was a check-post. All you could see was khaki-clad policemen — no common man could be spotted anywhere."

On reaching Ayodhya, they decided to approach the Babri Masjid mosque from the other side of the Sheryo river in the Gowda distict, a stronghold of the Bhartiya Janta Party.

"People by that time had slowly started trickling in. A tangible excitement could be felt. People clad

- priyanjali sarraf

in saffron clothes, waving banners, and chanting mantras could be seen in large groups. It was a very hypnotic atmosphere — it was very difficult to remain neutral.

"However the police were everywhere using every rule in the book — from lathi charge to the use of tear-gas, to firing. They were even dumping people in the river. It was like a stampede, and people were scurrying in all directions. But the tempo never slackened or stopped."

Indicating his own wound which he got while trying to save his camera, he says, "My brother, also a photographer with *The Times of India* had his bag snatched. The police snatched it... their regular habit of terrorising and beating up journalists.

"The tempo reached its peak around 12:30 p.m. with the arrival of Ashok Singhal, the VHP head. Seeing him the public came out of every nook and corner shouting slogans and singing bhajans. They got very aggressive and pushed the police aside. Ten to fifteen of them climbed on top of the mosque to plant flags. By the time we left at around 1 p.m., the puja had started." □

I consider myself a Hindu, Christian, Moslem, Jew, Buddhist and Confucian.

- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Tri-Cola

- moushumi bhuyan, sunita ram, nivedita ghosh

*After 50 years of independence, India prepares to get recolonised all over again.
Will the cola takeover the tri-colour?*

*"Riches more than mind can picture,
wheat and barley, oats and hay
cloves beans and mangle-wurzels
shall be yours upon that day."*

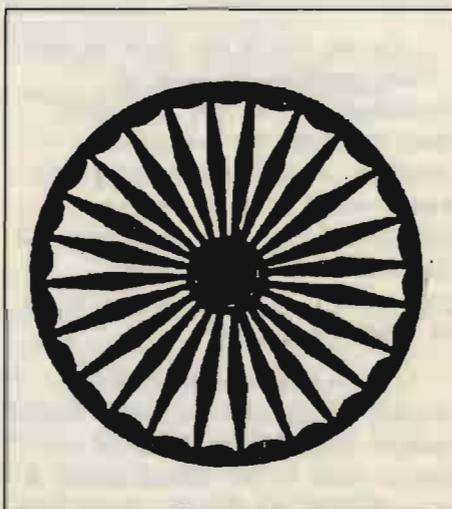
*ANIMAL FARM,
- George Orwell*

It was for this mission that millions of Indians had sacrificed their houses, families, and livelihood day after day, year after year. After independence, this vision of a few, who wanted to provide food, shelter and education, and make distant the memories of famine and drought, began to take shape. India was proclaimed a mixed economy with a socialist bent. The first Five Year plan aimed at boosting the agrarian economy. From the second plan, the focus shifted to the industrial sector.

It is ironic to note that a country, the majority of whose population resides in rural areas, and where agriculture provides livelihood to almost two-thirds of the population, has set out to industrialise itself. During the next three decades, a gradual shift can be seen from socialism to capitalism. The 1990's saw the liberalization of the Indian economy, and the advent of the Transnational Corporations (TNC) and Multinational Corporations (MNC) in India. Mr. Shashi, Vice-President, Finance, Housing Development Finance Corporation says, "The coming of the MNCs or the white-collared executives has changed the face of the Indian economy. There is very fierce competition and a high degree of uncertainty. You could be a high flying executive today and a nobody tomorrow." And this race within the economy has assumed so fast a pace that many indigenous industries are bowing out, unable to

withstand the pressure.

On the other hand, to ensure peaceful co-existence of countries, military occupations of another country are internationally condemned. Colonialism in the traditional and political sense is now almost a thing of the past. However, powerful nations



still seek to spread their domination and control over other nations. They still seek to ensure that their domestic interests are served, regardless of the needs of weaker nations and people.

The strategy has merely changed, this new strategy of 'covert action' is based on the use of economic strength. This in turn is based on technological domination combined with control of the international information structure.

Many people believe that the world's rich nations are helping the world's poor ones to overcome their poverty and underdevelopment through aid, loans and technical assistance. What they do not realize is that

through the workings of present international economic arrangements, wealth flows almost all the time from the poor 'developing countries' of the Third World like India, to the industrialised countries. It flows from the primary producers to the industrialised countries, from the ignorant to the knowledgeable.

Foreign entrepreneurs originally came to India because her manufacturers had a big market in Europe. The chief business of the British East India Company in its early days was trade with Indian goods in Europe — a very profitable trade yielding enormous dividends. So efficient and highly organized were Indian methods of production and such were the skills of Indian artisans and craftsmen that they could compete successfully, even with higher techniques of production which were established in England. As it happened foreign political domination came and this led to a rapid destruction of the economy India had built up. The East India Company represented both British political power and British vested interests and economic power. The underlying guiding factor for the British in conducting their business in India was the repatriation of profits to their land. The concept remains the same. Only now, the number of players among whom the spoils are to be divided has increased. The industrialised countries like the U.K., U.S.A., Germany and France among others, are constantly attempting to restructure and refashion the rules of the international trading system, to make the environment even more favorable to their interests and concerns in keeping the Third World countries poor.

Jimmy Gazdar, member of the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICI) and Chairman of the Socio-economic Foundation, says "This kind of parallel is simplistic and we are no longer subordinates. People are comparing MNCs to British rule, and I don't think it is the correct view. MNCs and TNCs exist in European nations and they have faced the competition."

In fact Mr. Kartik Kumar, Vice-President, Rediffusion DYER says, "MNCs recognise Indian expertise, intellectual ability and entrepreneurial drive to face the competition posed." However, as Mr. Gazdar says, "While the advent of the MNCs cannot be avoided, there should be certain protections for the existing Indian industries, because we are being compared to them at an infancy stage." At present, the mergers and acquisitions' market in the country are booming, and transactions are taking place in an unregulated market. A probable solution to this, according to Mr. Gazdar is, "a takeover code formulated by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

that ensures transparencies in mergers and acquisition deals. This kind of national control is desirable so that the people who are coming in are not at a disadvantage, and also those who already exist."

At the end of it all, it's just three P's that loom large in the mind — politics, poverty and population that hold the answers to India's development. The poverty elevation programmes of the Five Year plans have obviously not yielded the desired results. It has, in turn, heightened the disparity between the haves and the have nots. The booming industrial sectors and the Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) seem to be a big facade. The FDIs are being channelised into not so urgent areas, thereby promoting consumerism. All these are clearly related to the lack of a stable government at the Centre. The worst form of government that a developing country can have is a coalition government, especially when every party joins the coalition to promote its own vested interests. As Kartik Kumar rightly says, "We are being colonised by a bunch of money

grabbing and incompetent politicians." What is shocking is the overwhelming rise in population that has been further aggravated by these factors. It is yet more frightening to know when Mr. Vasdar says that, "by the year 2025 the Indian population will become the highest in the world, a staggering 1200 million, four times of what it was in 1951. This is something which needs to be seriously dealt with. Because with the control of population and deficit financing, India can become the fifth largest industrialised country in the world."

Caught in the whirlpool of reforms as we struggle to undo the past, the rest of the world marches into the future. We carry on with hope, working on these reforms...

*"Friend of the fatherless,
foundation of happiness!
Lord of the swill bucket! Oh how my
soul is on fire when I gaze at thy
calm and commanding eye,
Like the sun in the sky."*

ANIMAL FARM
- George Orwell □

The path to civilisation is paved with tin cans.

- Elbert Hubbard.

“The Worst Riots In History” (1992-93)

by payal kapadia

(This survivor does not wish to be named for security reasons.)

“This is my house, and I can’t be kicked out like this,” thought Mohammed Khan (not his real name) as he watched most of his neighbours pack up and leave the Bombay Central locality where he lived. “It almost seemed like a crusade against us,” remembers Mohammed, a 27-year-old freelance journalist.

“I read about the demolition of the Babri Masjid in the newspapers. The Government said that it would not stand by such fanaticism. But ironically, it was left standing, wasn’t it?” remarks Mohammed grimly. “At first my area was fairly safe except for stray incidents of buses being stoned. But a few days later, four or five jeeps began to enter our locality regularly.”

“The jeeps filled with men would burn anything in sight. We have a fruit market, which is a ten-minute walk from my house. All the Muslim stores were gutted. The provision store, where we bought our supplies, was ransacked. When we heard that a Muslim doctor in our area had been stabbed, my mother and sister left for

my aunt’s house at Nepeansea Road. I stuck it out stubbornly.”

Mohammed’s voice grows noticeably tense as he remembers the night attacks. “The jeeps would return at night. Men brandishing chains and flaming torches would attack buildings, forcing their way into the houses. Many of the occupants had already vacated their homes, but those that remained were beaten up badly. I would sleep in the day and keep watch through the night. One can’t wake up and find one’s house on fire.

“People seek out their own forms of protection,” says Mohammed bitterly. “My friend’s father ran out with an old sword, crying, ‘Either they die or I die.’ The attackers fled. My friend’s cousin, a teenage boy, ran out to stop the fights, and returned with a bullet in his leg.”

“During one such attack I picked up the telephone and dialled the number of the Agripada Police Station, which is close to my house. It kept ringing. An hour or two later, the cops turned up. The attackers escaped, but a bullet was fired from one of the neighbouring Muslim buildings. The police raided the building. At that time everyone lived in darkness, because someone

downstairs might fire at us. I watched the lights switched on, one by one, as the police invaded the flats, rounded up the young men randomly, and threw them in the lock-up for a couple of days. I saw one of these youngsters a few days later. He was in pretty bad shape.

“Finally the military moved in, and snipers kept watch from the roofs of the buildings. A sense of security settled in again. But it was difficult and still is, to forget those nights when our houses were plunged in darkness, and we kept watch from our balconies, when we were totally home-bound and relief organisations distributed basic supplies, when the daily newspapers didn’t reach our doorsteps and we felt cut off from the rest of the world.

“My family has been through riots before,” explains Mohammed, “but these were the worst in history. Waiting for the attack, night after night, knowing there are no cops to help, and knowing that you’ll use that kitchen knife if you have to. The riots are over, but life doesn’t seem the same anymore, and home doesn’t feel like home. One doesn’t want to stay in a country where you are hounded and attacked personally for your faith.” □

What difference does it make to the dead... whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy?

- M. K. Gandhi.

The Bombing of Mumbai (1993)

by bhavna thadani

"We heard the news around lunch time," says Priya Kapadia, former employee of the Singapore Airlines ticketing office in Mumbai. "I could hardly believe my ears when they said that there was a bomb blast at the stock exchange building. My fiance Amol's office is right opposite the stock exchange. I wanted to leave to look for him immediately, seeing my state of panic a colleague decided to accompany me."

It was the twelfth of March, 1993... the day Mumbai's fragile peace was shattered after two months of communal riots. Two hundred and five people died, and more than a thousand people were injured in a series of bomb blasts that ripped through various parts of the city.

On her way to Amol's office, Priya was horrified to see the sight of strewn bodies, blood and upset

hand-carts. "It was a terribly gory sight, I have never seen anything like that before. I started to panic even more. I just needed to know that Amol was safe." Priya's relief, when she saw that Amol's building was intact, was overwhelming. "I found that Amol had left for home a little before the bomb blast. I cannot describe how I felt when I knew he was unharmed."

Priya and her colleagues returned to their office only to be confronted by an even more horrifying experience. The Singapore Airlines ticketing office situated in the Air India office building was also a site for the blasts. "At the signal near the building, we watched in utter disbelief as we saw the huge explosion. There was glass flying everywhere, the noise was deafening. I wondered what was happening to the city."

Priya was devastated, she thought all her colleagues were dead. She was therefore amazed to find that every one of them had been spared, and that only two were injured. "It looked a lot worse from the outside. The layers of false ceiling in the office were a blessing as they did not do much damage. The after-effects of the blast were more dangerous because it was hard to be sure of safety any more."

In hindsight, Priya feels that such incidents are forgotten with time. "It has not left much of an impact. If your loved ones are safe, it is easy to move on and forget. Unfortunately, that is how it works in Mumbai. One tends not to be shocked about anything for too long." □

When moral courage feels that it is in the right, there is no personal daring of which it is incapable.

- Leigh Hunt.

A Summit Of Their Own (1995)

by fouzia hamza

It was dismissed as 'a futile exercise.' The media mocked it as an exclusive, elitist jamboree. For the 30,000 women who attended the Beijing Conference however, it established a feeling of solidarity. The issues discussed ranged from liberalisation, communalism violence against women, rape as a weapon, unpaid labour, sexual rights of women, empowerment in the political sphere, health, education, economics and environment to agriculture as well.

For Ms. Chhaya Datar, general secretary of the Indian Association of Women's Studies and head of the unit for Women's Studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences feels that the fourth World Women's Conference held from the fourth to the fifteenth of September at Beijing meant more than just a conference. Having participated in the conference made it so much more meaningful for her.

Datar found that China was progressing rapidly on the economic front, in spite of their not being a democracy. "I noticed no beggars on

the roads, and found the number of working women very encouraging. I was also impressed by the efficiency of Chinese organisation. The Chinese government provided for accommodation, as well as a contingent of nearly 10,000 students to assist delegates."

Though the media bombarded the Chinese government for its militaristic behaviour, Datar found that it had really not been regimental, considering that China had never really opened up before. She feels "India could also have hosted the conference, though maybe not of such magnitude."

For Datar however, who began as part of the Kapad Kamgar Sanghatana, the outcome of the Beijing Conference is rather questionable. Having done extensive research on rural women, and having worked with Adivasi women, she feels that though the conference benefited each one at a personal level, it had, in many ways, been left incomplete. She feels that issues relating to the effects of globalisation like low-paid jobs, or

competition within the organisation had not been discussed at all nor was the setting up of watch-dog committees to see that decisions made at the conference were executed. Women were still a long way from completely accepting globalisation.

Important issues like building up local economies were not tackled effectively, according to Datar. She also feels that women in the public sector are being marginalised, and a global analysis of this phenomenon had been left out at the conference.

"Feminists today are confused; they did really look for alternative options for women, but spoke more of contentment than going forward. Considering that the role of the United Nations has been reduced substantially, and the next conference itself is doubtful, a start for women's rights would be to start the reorganisation of the village economy. It is only with the stabilization of the rural economy that the role of women can be analyzed and improved at a global level." □

The people who exercised the power are not always the same people over whom it is exercised.

- John Stuart Mill.

With No Reservations... (1996)

by samira singh

"Merit should be the only test...It would be a dangerous thing to insist on membership on the ground merely of sex. Women...should disdain patronage. They should seek justice, never favours..."

"Seeing however that it has been the custom to decry women, the contrary custom should be to prefer women, merit being equal, to men even if the preference should result in men being entirely displaced by women."

- Mahatma Gandhi, *Harijan*.
April 7, 1946

"In 1992, I did not have a problem getting a party ticket - my ward was reserved for women. Now, elections begin on the 25th of February and I still don't know if I can stand for elections. Now that my ward is an open one - who will give me a ticket? Why should any one bother?"

Ms. Annie Shekhar, Municipal Coporator of Ward No.1, Colaba, for the past five years, had no problem winning the BMC (Bombay Municipal Corporation) elections in 1992.

An active social worker for the last 30 years, Ms. Shekhar had already created a niche in people's hearts. The residents of Colaba had been seeing her fight for garbage

clearance and for basic amenities like water and electricity ever since she started living in the area, well over 30 years ago now.

Colaba resident, V. Chawla says "When there was a bus strike in 1956 Ms. Shekhar used to take the fisher people and the slum dwellers to hospital in her car. Her commitment to the people here cannot be doubted, she did not need politics to begin social work."

Ms. Shekhar did turn to politics however, in 1971, when she joined the Congress party. Today, she is Vice-President of the Mahila Congress, Mumbai Wing. Despite her active involvement in Colaba and in politics, Ms. Shekhar feels that the only way she is where she is today, is because of the Maharashtra Act No.XIII (1990) which proposes that 30 per cent of the total number of seats to be filled by direct elections are to be reserved for women.

She fulfilled Gandhiji's criterion of 'merit being equal' then, and she does now too, five years later. Nikhil Gupta, Colaba resident, says, "This is such a posh locality but I got clear drinking water for the first time, in 1992. We have no complaints with Ms. Shekhar, in fact all of us residents have an attachment to her. She has done a good job."

Despite the positive feedback, Ms. Shekhar may not contest the February elections. The policy of ward rotation makes hers an open ward. "When the party can put a male candidate, why will they take me?" she asks.

"I believe in reservation. Men are not bothered about women, this law forces them to be concerned. All these years men have been sitting on all the seats. It should change, even in Parliament. Women are doing a lot of work, they are sincere. If they are capable of channelising this into politics it is unfair not to allow them. And no one will allow them unless it is a law.

"Women can speak to women frankly, whatever the problem. Working in the Mahila Congress and the BMC has taught me that women need to strengthen their voice and their bond. Reservation at the corporation level is a good thing, it should be in Parliament also."

At a time when the Reservation Bill is under hot debate in Parliament and outside, it is wise to consider Ms. Shekhar's case. She could have been just another voice, just another member of the 'weaker sex' if it were not for reservation. □

It is the mark of the cultured man that he is aware of the fact that equality is an ethical and not a biological principle.

- Ashley Montagu.

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