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'You who will come to the surface
From the flood that's overwhelmed us and drowned us all
Must think, when you speak of our weakness in times of darkness
That you've not had to face'

Bertolt Brecht wrote these lines during Nazi Germany optimistically assuming that the coming generations would not have to face the same age of darkness that the world faced during 30's and 40's of the last century. Little he had anticipated that the same age of darkness will return in different forms. By bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki even though the Second World War was already won, the United States of America had already served the warning and showed its intentions. Once the cold war was over after the disintegration of Soviet Union, the USA and its stooges shamelessly unfolded their plans of conquering the world through most violent means. The whole world has today become the playground for the war mongers. Invasions after invasions in the name of 'destroying WMD's and nuclear weapons, attacking, occupying and colonising countries in the name of war against terror, demonizing a particular religion and community by branding it as terrorist and creating an atmosphere where every individual all over globe from that community is seen as potential terrorist. Yes, we are living in the age of darkness. **Bertolt Brecht**, the great literary icon and fighter against fascist and Nazi forces, never gave up the fight. His words and action spoke and became source of strength for millions. Today we need many like him otherwise the floods of all round war will most certainly drown us all. Yes we are living in times of darkness. Yes, we are made to face it. And yes, we shall fight, we shall win.

To Those Born After

To the cities I came in a time of disorder
That was ruled by hunger.
I sheltered with the people in a time of uproar
And then I joined in their rebellion.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

I ate my dinners between the battles,
I lay down to sleep among the murderers,
I didn't care for much for love
And for nature's beauties I had little patience.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

The city streets all led to foul swamps in my time,
My speech betrayed me to the butchers.
I could do only little
But without me those that ruled could not sleep so easily:

That's what I hoped.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

Our forces were slight and small,
Our goal lay in the far distance
Clearly in our sights,
If for me myself beyond my reaching.
That's how I passed my time that was given to me on this Earth.

II

You who will come to the surface
From the flood that's overwhelmed us and drowned us all
Must think, when you speak of our weakness in times of darkness
That you've not had to face:

Days when we were used to changing countries
More often than shoes,
Through the war of the classes despairing
That there was only injustice and no outrage.

Even so we realised
Hatred of oppression still distorts the features,
Anger at injustice still makes voices raised and ugly.
Oh we, who wished to lay for the foundations for peace and friendliness,
Could never be friendly ourselves.

And in the future when no longer
Do human beings still treat themselves as animals,
Look back on us with indulgence.

Not What Was Meant

When the Academy of Arts demanded freedom
Of artistic expression from narrow-minded bureaucrats
There was a howl and a clamour in its immediate vicinity
But roaring above everything
Came a deafening thunder of applause
From beyond the Sector boundary.
Freedom! it roared. Freedom for the artists!
Freedom all round! Freedom for all!
Freedom for the exploiters! Freedom for the warmongers!
Freedom for the Ruhr cartels! Freedom for Hitler's generals!
Softly, my dear fellows...
The Judas kiss for the artists follows
Hard on the Judas kiss for the workers.
The arsonist with his bottle of petrol
Sneaks up grinning to
The Academy of Arts.
But it was not to embrace him, just
To knock the bottle out of his dirty hand that
We asked for elbow room.
Even the narrowest minds
In which peace is harboured
Are more welcome to the arts than the art lover
Who is also a lover of the art of war.

The spirit of Bismillah Khan is the spirit of Varanasi, an irreducibly composite city.

Living Legacy : Bismillah Khan, the Icon of an Inclusive Tradition.

In a delicious paradox that can only be Indian, the man who best embodied the spirit of the holy Hindu city of Varanasi was a Muslim. Although he was born in Bihar, Bismillah Khan moved to Varanasi as a young man, and lived there until he died, spending some seven decades in an old, crumbling *haveli*, surrounded by his shehnais, a large extended family, and an even larger circle of hangers-on.

Sense of Belonging

Bismillah came from a family of musicians who had traditionally been employed by the Kashi Viswanath Mandir in Varanasi. His own identification with the city went beyond that. He went here and there to perform, but always returned to the soil, the air, and the water that nourished him and his craft. As he liked to say, he was a worshipper of both Allah and Saraswati. Once, a rich American university invited Bismillah to be their musician-in-residence, and asked him to state his terms. Negotiations were abruptly concluded when the musician replied that he would only come if he could bring his beloved Ganga with him.

That a Muslim musician personified Kashi so stuck in the gullets of Hindu bigots. Not that the orthodox Muslims had much time for Bismillah either. In the wonderful documentary that Nasreen Munni Kabir made of him — whose title I have stolen for this column— Bismillah explains how for some *mullahs*, music is the work of the Devil, *haram*. “*Harraam*”, he repeats, and then cackles delightedly. Then there was the little earring Bismillah wore, this in violation of some versions of Islam yet a mark of the catholicism of his own, uniquely inclusive, spiritual tradition.

A Personal Debt

I personally owe Bismillah Khan a great deal, owe him my interest in classical music in fact. As a schoolboy I listened to film music and Western pop music, and nothing else. Awake one night owing to an attack of asthma, I was fiddling with the radio when I chanced upon the music of the shehnai. I listened, at first with boredom, and then with an increasing enchantment. Within minutes I could tell that this was altogether superior to the stuff I used to hear on the BBC’s “Top Twenty” or Radio Ceylon’s “Binaca Geet Mala”. As the bronchodilators took effect and my breath eased, I immersed myself in the music. When it ended half-an-hour later, the announcer informed us that we had just heard Raga Durga, played on the shehnai by Ustad Bismillah Khan.

So, that was my first experience of Bismillah — listening to him between 2.30 and 3 a.m. on the

General Overseas Service of All India Radio. I graduated to listening to him in the more conventional way — by going to evening concerts where he played. In the five years I spent in Delhi University, I must have heard him play on at least four occasions. The one I remember best was at the Kamani Auditorium, where he played before the interval and M.S. Subbulakshmi sang afterwards, a true “dream team”, indeed, of two great musicians who were also great human beings — one man, one woman, one Hindu, the other Muslim, one North Indian, the other South Indian, and both born in the same year, 1916.

Twenty-five years after I first heard Bismillah, I was able to repay — in small measure — a debt that had by then accumulated beyond all repayment. A friend who was a high official asked me to write a piece for the press urging that M.S. Subbulakshmi and Lata Mangeshkar be awarded the Bharat Ratna. I accepted the commission, since I likewise believed that it was past time that India’s highest honour was rescued from the politicians, and returned to the artists and scholars for whom it was originally intended. However, when I wrote the article I strayed somewhat from my friend’s script, and added the names of Ravi Shankar and Bismillah Khan to the ones he had given me. All four, I am happy to say, were awarded the Bharat Ratna in due course.

Like so many other readers of *The Hindu*, my life has been lived to the music of Bismillah Khan. We all have our memories of where and when we first heard him play. And we all have our own favourite compositions. The Bismillah melodies that I especially love are his Durga, naturally, but also his Shankara and his Kedar, and his Chaiti and his Pahadi *dhun*.

Citizens’ Tribute

On Bismillah’s death the Government of his home State, Uttar Pradesh, announced that it would set up an Academy to honour his memory. As it happened, a better and more enduring memorial to Bismillah had already been set in motion. I refer, of course, to the magnificent response of the citizens of Varanasi to the bomb blasts that rocked their city earlier this year. Intended to set Hindu against Muslim, the blasts instead reinforced the ties that bind the two communities in this irreducibly composite city. In affirming their trans-religious solidarity, the residents of Varanasi took heart from the example of their greatest fellow townsman, who had himself refused to celebrate his birthday in protest against the terrorists. For, the spirit of Bismillah is the spirit of Varanasi, and, the rest of us willing, the spirit of India too.

Courtesy : The Hindu

Our Heritage and the Present

Dr. Lal Bahadur Verma

Allahabad, India

The lack of proper scientific perspective has tended to make the question of Heritage controversial in almost all the societies. Not only the lay people but also people who should know are apt to confound the issue. The reason appears to be the lack of appreciation of different connotation of heritage according to its context-individual or social. As individuals we inherit many things including our appearance, behaviour, attitudes and may be an old, dilapidated ancestral home and of course, the liabilities. Whether we like them or not we cannot protest but meekly accept whatever is handed down. However, in the case of social inheritance the position is slightly different. There is a scope for selection. For example, we might have been born in any country, religion, sect or tradition. That is our heritage. We may accept part of it or reject part of it. In the present Heraclitean (ever-changing) society people tend to leave the confines of their country and community and settle in another place and among other people. They may even change their faith. In short, they change their inheritance and adopt a different one.

This sometimes leads to a very piquant situation. The society having a common heritage gets divided and from here begins a talk of two heritages. This may as well come about on account of differences in the nature of the political power or even in the interest of the ruling classes. Such divisions and sub-divisions may at times become so confusing and conflicting that we are led to think that there should be a common heritage for the entire humankind. This is precisely in the interest of humanity. It is a scientific reality. However, at present there do not appear any propitious indications on the horizon for this to come about.

On delving a little deeper we will not fail to see that heritage is essentially linked to culture and history. But in the present society actuated by economic and political considerations, while every other person appears eager to utilise culture and history for selfish considerations, nobody seems to be too enthusiastic to appreciate its essence and to take it to higher inclines in the interest of mankind. In fact, majority could be seen singing in unison with the American capitalist Henry Ford the dirge of denouncing history as of little or no consequence. Their argument is simple, "What does time gone by is of any use for those who are concerned only with the here and now? The past is already dead and gone." It would be different if it could be shown that the past has a utilitarian value. Consequently, the time gone by and

the heritage are test-weighed on the scales of profit and loss. According to them the opportunistic philosophy of considering End justifies the Means of the 16th century Italian thinker Machiavellee or his forerunner our very own political thinker Chankya has universal application.

In short, that alone is useful which brings in returns. In fact Machiavelee had gone, as far as to say that Italian history must contribute to the building up of the nation. If it does not it should be suitably remoulded. Even to this day many a people adopt this Machiavellian concept of history.

Infact, the entire history is our heritage, positive as well as negative. All the achievements, all the failures, all ambitions and social limitations, all humanness and the inhumaneness are our heritage. Let us clarify this with a few examples.

We have been bequeathed with the heritage of treating all the living beings like ourselves (Atmvat Sarv Bhooteshu) But there are human beings who on account of their birth, over which they have no control, are untouchables and are constantly insulted and humiliated. We have inherited yet another gem of a message "*Yatra narastu poojyante ramante tatra devataa*", the God inhabits there. It signifies that the God inhabits there where woman is worshipped. However, the harsh reality here is that even *Seeta*, declared as the Ideal of Womanhood, had been insulted and oppressed. We have also received ancient wisdom in the saying "*Vasudhaaiv kutumbam*", the entire world is a family. However, reality is that there is prohibition on people leaving the confines of their dwelling places and even on crossing the seas on penalties of excommunication. Even as late as Gandhi's life time this prohibition ruled. We inherited the essence of Sufi Movement in the teaching of Universal Brotherhood. It was also the aim of *Akbar's* administration. Despite this distance between man and man has kept on widening with the resultant conflict. Last but not least we had the Buddhist teaching 'Be your own guiding light.' However, far from undertaking an expedition in search of enlightenment we do not even feel the enveloping darkness from the West entering within us.

Under these circumstances it becomes imperative to accept the entire inheritance as it is bequeathed to us and the force of our right to selection as well as the capacity to choose alongwith the deepening of understanding of our common heritage. This freedom of choice is a double-edged weapon. It has the

potentiality of both development as well as degeneration. It is not that choice is always for better. If it is dictated by ignorance, backwardness and self-interest it would lead us to wander aimlessly through blind alleys.

We can further understand this by taking some examples from physical and social sciences. Even to this day there is a raging controversy over whether it is the subjective genetic factors or the objective environmental ones which have a decisive effect on human lives. Rather than enter the *chakhrvyooha* of these arguments why not take the middle path since both lend a hand in human upliftment? But then how can we overlook the fact that the process of evolution of man from the natural environs and the fulfillment of the consequent growing needs could not have come about except with such an intervention? History tells us that a change in the circumstances and conditions of living can transform not only the individuals but also the communities. The most positive and creative evidence of this can be had from the experiments

and findings of Paulo Freire and Bhatare whose experiments proved that not only the man changes but he can also be changed.

In conclusion we can only say that the taking stock of heritage should be a continuous process. We must go on with it and obtain encouragement and empowerment for making the world in transformation more people-friendly, just and human. He/she alone would be considered the rightful successor who enriches the heritage and passes it on to the next generation.

Consequently, we cannot claim that there is any pre-determined relationship between Heritage and the Present, which can be expressed in terms of a fixed equation. That is to say that their mutual relations are essentially dialectical and dynamic. A democratic and creative society must consider heritage as a life-giving power and engage in ensuring its present but also the future so that every Present can enrich it and pass it on to the next generation in a better form.

Translated by Subhash Gatade

Says *E. H. Carr.....* “What, then, do we mean when we praise a historian for being objective, or say that one historian is more objective than another? Not, it is clear, simply that he gets his facts right, but rather that he chooses the right facts, or, in other words, that he applies the right standard of significance. When we call a historian objective, we mean, I think, two things. First of all, we mean that he has a capacity to rise above the limited vision of his own situation in society and in history—a capacity which, as I suggested in an earlier lecture, is partly dependent on his capacity to recognize the extent of his involvement in that situation, to recognize, that is to say, the impossibility of total objectivity. Secondly, we mean that he has the capacity to project his vision into the future in such a way as to give him a more profound and more lasting insight into the past than can be attained by those historians whose outlook is entirely bounded by their own immediate situation. No historian today will echo Acton’s confidence in the prospect of “ultimate history.” But some historians write history which is more durable, and has more of this ultimate and objective character, than others; and these are the historians who have what I may call a long-term vision over the past and over the future. The historian of the past can make an approach towards objectivity only as he approaches towards the understanding of the future.

When, therefore, I spoke of history in an earlier lecture as a dialogue between past and present, I should rather have called it a dialogue between the events of the past and progressively emerging future ends. The historian’s interpretation of the past, his

selection of the significant and the relevant, evolves with the progressive emergence of new goals. To take the simplest of all illustrations, so long as the main goal appeared to be the organisation of constitutional liberties and political rights, the historian interpreted the past in constitutional and political terms. When economic and social ends began to replace constitutional and political ends, historians turned to economic and social interpretations of the past. In this process, the sceptic might plausibly allege that the new interpretation is no truer than the old; each is true for its period. Nevertheless, since the preoccupation with economic and social ends represents a broader and more advanced stage in human development than the preoccupation with political and constitutional ends, so the economic and social interpretation of history may be said to represent a more advanced stage in history than the exclusively political interpretation. The old interpretation is not rejected, but is both included and superseded in the new. Historiography is a progressive science in the sense that it seeks to provide constantly expanding and deepening insights into a course of events which is itself progressive. This is what I should mean by saying that we need “a constructive outlook over the past.” Modern historiography has grown up during the past two centuries in this dual belief in progress, and cannot survive without it, since it is this belief which provides it with its standard of significance, its touchstone for distinguishing between the real and the accidental.

E.H. Carr “What is History”

Language Profile : A Mix of Composite and Plural

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Dear Reader,

Wherever you find expression like ‘Linguistic Survey of India’ or Language of India, they all have reference of pre 1947. Hence these linguistic surveys and languages include all region of sub-continent. This our composite history does not belong to any single nation.

Language scenario of South Asia is unique in many senses. On the one hand India is easily the most plural society linguistically speaking, yet this plurality contains, and has contained historically, remarkable interconnections. To begin with, let us try and get a sense of the extent of India’s plurality.

According to the mammoth *Linguistic Survey of India* done in the first two decades of the 20th century (prepared by Sir George Abraham Grierson and spread over 19 thick volumes) India was a land of as many as 179 languages which covered 544 dialects. Around the same time the census of 1921 put the total number of Indian languages at 222. The census of 1961 recorded a total of 1652 mother tongues that were classified into roughly 200 languages. More recently, the census of 1991 has put the total number of languages in India at 111 and 216 mother tongues. The great variation in the number of recorded languages is the result, not of any significant change in the language scenario over the last eight decades, but of different methods of classification. This confusion speaks volumes about the enormously complex landscape of South Asian languages which has defied attempts at an accurate and scientific enumeration. Likewise, the usage of the terms like language, dialect and mother tongue should also be seen as an unsuccessful attempt to comprehend the complexities of South Asia’s linguistic profile.

The important thing about South Asia’s linguistic plurality noted by the linguists was a remarkable unity among all the languages at the level of phonetics and morphology. This unity was a result of plenty of mutual borrowing among all the major languages through ages. Moreover all the South Asian languages could be traced back to four roots or families: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan and Austric. These four language families could be said to have generated all the South Asian languages.

It was pointed out that South Asia’s great linguistic diversity was the product of waves of human migration

into India from very early times. Leading linguist Suniti Kumar Chatterji elaborated the linguistic implications of these migrations. In a paper presented at the Oxford University in 1943, he called India “a great clearing house for various people” and languages. The following is a summary of his narration of the successive arrival of various linguistic groups. The oldest settlers in South Asia were a Negroid or Negrito race from Africa, who died out leaving very little trace, they survive with their language in the Andaman Islands. They were followed by the Proto-Australoids who came to India probably from the west and spoke dialects from which originated the languages of the Austric speech family. Following the Austrics came the Dravidian speakers sometime before 3500 B.C. who supplied the Dravidian family of languages (four cultivated languages of Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam and a number of uncultivated speeches). Then came the linguistically most important group of the speakers of Indo-European languages from the Eurasian tracts south of the Ural mountains, via northern Mesopotamia and Iran into India. These migrants developed the Indo-Aryan languages. The Aryan speech came in various waves from the west, and it spread over the Punjab and the Ganges valley, Dravidian and Austric speeches receding before it, so that gradually the whole of north India, including Assam and a good deal of the northern Deccan, became Aryan in speech.

The Aryan speech developed in three distinct stages – Old Indo-Aryan (OIA), Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) and New Indo-Aryan (NIA). The Aryan speech in its earliest phase in India (OIA) is represented by the language of the *Rig Ved*, compiled probably in the 10th century B.C., but portions of it is much older. A younger form of this Old Indo-Aryan speech in India became established as Sanskrit, the great religious and culture-language of Hindu India, by 500 B.C. The later spoken forms of the Aryan speech, in the stage known as *Middle Indo-Aryan*,

are represented by the various Prakrits (including Pali) and Apabhraṅsas of the period 600 B.C. to A.D. 1000, after which these develop into the *New* or *Modern Indo-Aryan* languages of the present day. Sanskrit became the great vehicle of ancient Indian culture, and it spread into the lands of 'Greater India' Burma, Indo-China, Malaya and Indonesia, and Serindia or Central Asia of ancient times – and was studied in Tibet, China, Korea and Japan also. It has been the natural feeder of Indian languages, whenever new words were required, for the last 2500 years. And finally came the speakers of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages from their primitive home in north western China and settled, through Himalayas, in the north eastern terrain of India. Of the four families mentioned above, the Indo-Aryan covered the largest area and a majority of the people (around 75%) followed by the Dravidian family (around 22%). Indo-Aryan also contained speech communities that were large in size. The Sino-Tibetan (or Tibetan Burmese) by contrast have small speech communities but their number is the largest among the four.

This linguistic scenario sketched above is indicative of a remarkable linguistic continuity along with plurality. Few societies in the world can boast of such a continuous linguistic flow for the last three thousand years. Changes with continuities has been an important part of South Asia's linguistic development. The same process has continued in the last millenium.

From about the 10th-11th centuries begins a fairly smooth and uninterrupted process of the development of NIA languages and continues till the 18th century. One major feature of this process was the development of a single composite linguistic tradition that reached out to cover a very large part of India (north, centre with parts of south India) and developed a strong literary tradition. This single language has been called by different names but Hindavi, Hindi or Hind were the most commonly used names. Amir Khusro (1253-1325), a leading Persian poet from Delhi, probably coined the name Hindavi (meaning thereby the language of Hind). In his famous Persian epic *Noor Sip-har* (Nine Skies) written around 1318, Amir Khusro identified the various languages spoken in India and linked them all to Hindavi: "Sindhi, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, Gujarati, Tamil, Assamese, Bengali, Awadhi have all been known as Hindavi since ancient times..."

*Sindhi-o-Lahori-o Kashmiri-o gar
Dhur Samandari Tilgi-o-Gujar
Maabri-o-Gori-o-Bengal-o-Awadh
Dilli-o-Pairamkash Andar Hamaahad
Ein Hamaa Hindvist zi Aiyyam-e-kuhan
Aamma Bakaarast Bahar Guna Sukhan*

Amir Khusro can actually be considered the first enumerator of the major Indian languages, many centuries before Grierson. Khusro also mentioned Sanskrit but distinguished it from Hindavi: "Apart from these there are some other languages also among which the language of Brahmins has a very special place. It is called Sanskrit since ancient times but the common people are not familiar with its intricacies."

*Lek Zabaanist Digar Kas Sukhna
Aanast Guzin Nisd Hamaan Barhamnaa
Sanskrit Naam zi Ahad-e-kuhnash
Aamma Nadaarad khabar Az Kun makunash*

He also compared Hindavi with Persian and Turkish and considered it more popular because of its "pleasant sounds".

*Isbaat Guft Hind Bahujjat ki Rajehast
Bar Parsi-o-Turki Az Alfaaz-e-Khushgawaar*

Hindavi, as it existed and flourished through the medieval times, was not a language in the strict sense of the term. It was more of a communication amalgam. It had a great geographical spread and accommodated various speech communities and dialects within its fold. It was a language primarily of communication, market and literature. Sanskrit continued to be a language of rituals and Persian of administration. Hindavi's literary creations ranged from romantic to devotional to allegorical and these were written in both the Nagari and the Persian script, apart from also being circulated orally. For its vocabulary, it freely borrowed words from the classical Sanskrit and Persian in addition to a number of local speeches. At no stage however its lexical dependence on Sanskrit and Persian entail the possibility of Hindavi submerging into either of the two classical literary streams. As a language amalgam Hindavi encompassed a number of dialects some of which (Braj and Awadhi in particular) developed a rich literary tradition. Because of its distance from the classical languages of Sanskrit and Persian, it also came to be employed by the medieval Bhakti and Sufi movements. Kabir (writing simultaneously in Khari Boli, Braj, Awadhi, Bhojpuri and Rajasthani), Tulsi Das (Awadhi), Sur Das (Braj), Bandanawaz

Gesu Daraz (Dakhani), Vidyapati (Maithili) and Mirabai (Marwari or Dingal) were some of the most popular poets of the Hindavi tradition who wrote in different styles. Given the absence of standardization, this language was known by different names in different areas. Apart from Hindavi, it was also known as Dehlavi (after Delhi), Dakkani or Dakhani (after Deccan, the south), Bhakha or Bhasa (literally meaning speech) and many more. Tulsi Das, in his epic *Ramcharitmanas* called his language Bhakha.

Given its reach across different regions and religious communities it also provided a powerful medium for syncretic literature. Poets like Kabir, Malik Mohammad Jaysi and many poets from Belgram (in eastern U.P.) wrote on themes of religious harmony. It was however with the poetry of Nazir Akbarabadi (1740-1830) that the Hindavi tradition reached its climax. Nazir, commonly known as “the great poet of common man” wrote on a whole range of themes concerning the everyday life of his city, Agra. He wrote on fairs and festivals (Eid, Holi, Krishna Leela and local fairs), gods and saints (Krishna, Ganesh, prophet Mohammad, Nanak), local sports (Kabaddi) and ordinary people (artisans, craftsmen, prostitutes, street vendors, shopkeepers etc.) as well as on universalist themes like youth, old age, death and man. Nazir imparted not only a new dimension to Hindavi literature but also vibrancy to the language.

The growth pattern of Hindavi demonstrated the uniqueness of India’s linguistic landscape very well. A single language pervaded large parts of India through the medieval times. Unlike the Hindi spoken today, the Hindavi (or old Hindi) of medieval times had its supporter and lovers spread all over including the southern parts of the country. A good example of the vibrancy of this language is 16th century poet Mian Mustafa from Gujarat who considered one Syed Mohammad Mehdi of Jaunpur (d. 1504), well over a thousand kilometers away, as his guru-saint. Mian Mustafa was apparently not very happy with the contempt with which the Persian poets looked upon Hindavi, and so wrote a poem in defence of Hindi, sometime in early 16th century:

Do not taunt one for using Hindi.
Every one explains the meanings in Hindi.
This Qur’an, the revealed word of Allah,
Is ever explained in Hindi.
Hindi was used by Mehdi [the poet’s guru-saint];

It was on the lips of Khundmir [another contemporary poet];

Several *dohras*, *sakhis* and sayings
were pronounced openly by pious saints.

Mian Mustafa [the poet himself] also uses it
What to speak of others, then?

The major strength of the poem is its language. Although written well over four centuries ago, its language can still pass off as the *bazaar* Hindi of the 20th century. Instances of this kind can be easily multiplied. It would not be difficult to find many literary creations from the 12th-13th centuries onwards whose language would find remarkable resemblance with the spoken Hindustani of today. Hindavi, it may be useful to point out, provided not only the linguistic unity but also contributed to much of the cultural unity and continuity of India through the centuries.

Yet another unique feature of South Asia’s language scenario is the presence and development of important minority languages in an area marked by one dominant language. South Asia has been called linguistically plural or plurilingual not only in the sense of the presence of many languages in it, but also in the sense that language zones, surrounded by the dominant languages, have remained intact over the centuries without merging into the dominant languages of the area. Such is the case of Saurashtri in Madurai, Marathi in Tanjore, Urdu in Mysore and Madras, Bengali in Benaras, Tamil in Mathura, Malayalam in Mumbai and many more. This uniquely South Asian phenomenon is completely unlike the European pattern where minority languages tended to disappear over centuries.

To sum up, South Asia’s linguistic profile is unique for its plurality, syncretism and continuity. Its composite character lies in the interconnectedness among all the languages. There has also been a remarkable continuity through the centuries in the sense that the new changes did not create any displacement. The linguistic development took place more in the form of old accommodating the new rather than new displacing the old. This unique compositeness of South Asia’s language tradition can be understood with the help of many common phrases used in *bazaars* that are actually borrowed from diverse linguistic roots. Common usage terms like *dhan-daulat*, *dharam-iman*, *sag-sabzi* represent a popular and innovatively created synthesis between Sanskrit and Persian literary traditions.

The Keithel, the traditional market run and managed by women in Manipur, is under attack again...

STACKS of bright hand woven “Phaneks” (wrap-arounds) adorn the small benches in the market. The reflection of the hanging lamps falling on the coloured clothes make them look all the more magical. This is the women’s market in Imphal, Manipur, a market totally run and managed by women, historically and culturally crucial, tinted with layers of memories.

So, how did it all begin? As Apanbi, trader of traditional clothes, says, “this market has an age-old history. It has been there from before the colonial period. And always women had played a major role in promoting trade and indigenous products. Hence the name ‘Ima Keithel’ (market run by women).”

They’ve always faced challenges from rival markets, controlled by men. Sometime in 1948-52, some local male merchants even tried to demolish the existing shed. Another major incident occurred in the early 1990s, when the women received an eviction notice from the State urban development authorities.

Targeting a Way of Life

An assault on the “Keithel” is not just an assault on a system of trading, it is a systematic attempt to destroy a way of life. All over the Northeast, forces of globalisation and privatisation, backed by the State’s hegemony, are ousting indigenous women’s markets and production centres. Poverty is being created, intensified and deliberately entrenched. In its new avatar, it is feminised poverty that is being sought to be perpetrated.

The global market is neither abstract nor intangible as it is often projected. It can be demarcated by real space: physical, economic and cultural. Where such space is already occupied by traditional and indigenous systems and practices, it must be cleared to make possible a smooth entry for the global market.

In Northeastern India, women have traditionally been managing trade and commerce. They are also producers of many goods for consumption, local exchange and even for regional markets. They are the most active conservers of biodiversity (agro, wetland and forest), both through their farming practices, and through their active promotion of the local gastronomic cultures.

These markets are an example of this sophisticated system of trade. The term “market” is highly inadequate to describe what a Keithel is and the role that it plays in the local economy, culture and society. It is a site for the affirmation of women’s control over the production, use and management of

consumption patterns. It represents the attempt of communities to assert their food sovereignty, economic self-determination and cultural diversity. It is for this reason that the Keithels of Manipur have been under attack through history. Without control over the Keithel, the subjugation of communities that live around it can never be complete.

Ironic Turnaround

During the famous “Nupi Lan” (wars) of Manipur, on three celebrated occasions during the 19th century, the women confronted artillery of the British forces with sticks. The colonial power recognised that this system had to be brought under a more pliable economic system that could be more easily infiltrated. Ironically, the struggle has been acknowledged by the Government of India, which has built a memorial dedicated to these women. Yet it has not hesitated to replicate the tactics of its predecessor.

Sorojini, another veteran craftsperson says, “The incomplete flyover has been one of reasons for the government to oust the women traders. We were forced to shift to the new market premises.” The reasons for the State onslaught are primarily because many sites devoted to these markets are located in the centre of towns. Soaring real estate prices make them vulnerable. For neo-liberal market forces, it is difficult to see the land as anything other than a piece of real estate, waiting to be “developed” into shopping malls. They cannot see these as not just hubs of commerce, but also of socio-political processes.

Living Legend

Starting July 13, 2003 the women of “Ima Keithel”, the second largest women’s market in Asia, maintained a 24-hour vigil to defend the Keithel from demolition. On November 24, 2004, the State Government of Manipur demolished the old district Hospital to pave the way for construction of a multi-storied complex. The women of the three markets located next door were shifted to the hospital premises temporarily for construction of the new market complex under financial assistance from the Union Urban Development Ministry.

The cry to preserve the Keithel as a museum has gone unheeded so far by State authorities. The “market woman” of Manipur is a living legend, an inimitable figure of Imphal city. Is she a petty trader, as classified by the municipal authorities? Could she have started two wars against the might of the British if she were merely a petty trader?

Courtesy : The Hindu

A Kind Stranger

Prem Irshad

CSC, Rawalpindi, Pakistan

It was another ordinary day of November 1966, when we received the tragic news about the death of my sister who lived in Hoti, Mardan. Upon receiving the sad news, my entire family along with close relatives left for Mardan. I had just found a new job following my marriage and therefore thought it inappropriate to request for leave. However, I somehow managed to arrange with my colleagues to take care of matters at the office and told my wife to be ready, as we would be leaving for Mardan by the three 'o' clock bus.

We got on the bus at Liaquat Bagh. This was our first trip together after our wedding, and that too, under the tragic circumstances of attending a funeral. It was bitterly cold and our faces were reddened by the lashes of frosty air. As soon as we left the bus stop, I felt as if we had entered a factory due to the rattling of the engine, glass panes and seats. Added to this, was the noise of the passengers, thereby creating a disturbing atmosphere.

Nearing Tarnol on Peshawar Road, the bus jolted to a sudden stop and those waiting on the roadside began to rush in.

"Shaba Zarkavai,"¹ [Hurry up!] shouted the conductor in Pushto, as he hustled the passengers on to the moving bus.

"Astaza Zai,"² [Let's Go] he called out again while standing in the doorway, and with a jerk, we were on our way again. The noise of the passengers inside increased with that of the speed of the bus as it ran on the rough road.

My wife whispered, and inquired, "Why are they fighting?"

Despite my grief, I smiled at her simplicity and innocence. Except for both of us, there were all Pathan travelers on the bus, so I eased her agitation and explained,

"They aren't fighting, but conversing in order to pass time as they journey."

She was already terrified on having noticed the pistols strapped on the chests of most of the passengers. As we reached Hassanabdal, the driver stopped the bus at a corner and got off. The rest of the passengers followed suit. Besides my wife and I, there were a few other youngsters who remained seated in the bus. Again my wife queried anxiously,

"Where have all the passengers gone to?"

"To offer prayers," I answered.

"Will you have some peanuts?" I offered her detecting a boy carrying a large bag pressed to his side.

"No," she replied.

"Tea, tea!", shouted a disheveled boy as he entered carrying a teapot and a couple of drinking glasses in a rack.

The driver arrived and blew a few loud horns. The passengers quickly rushed in, seating themselves.

There was some difficulty in starting the bus and after a few jerks it came to a halt. The driver exchanged a few words with the conductor, who in turn jabbered something to the passengers. The next moment, a few of them got down and began to push. Finally, it started after a long hard push.

The black exhaust of the bus added to the darkness of the evening and I could notice the anxiety and tension in my wife's expressions.

Thus picking and dropping passengers on the way, we diverted on to the Mardan Road where the bus came to a stop, never to start again. The conductor had no other option, but to go to Nowshera and return at 9:00 p.m. along with a half asleep mechanic.

The dust and the fog at dusk had created an eerie atmosphere and the crime incidents reported in newspapers kept haunting me.

"Chirta Zaiy?"³ [Where are you going?] inquired a Pathan seated behind me.

"Hoti," I answered shortly.

He uttered something in Pushto.

"Pushto Na Pooi,"⁴ [I can't speak Pushto] I answered trying to discourage any further conversation.

"Whom are you going to see in Hoti?", he persisted further in Urdu.

"My sister has passed away and I am going to her house," I answered quickly again.

"Even if the bus is repaired soon, it will only go up to the main stop. How will you go further from there?" he questioned.

I felt as if the darkness outside had suddenly crept into the bus.

"Lag Gadhe Kho Astat O Kooli Astaza," [You can try and start the bus] uttered the mechanic while

closing the bonnet.

The driver tried the ignition and in the next moment with a tremendous noise, it started. Everyone had a smile on his face.

Yet, we both were worried as personally, I realized that I was visiting Mardan after a very long time. Moreover, it was 10:25 p.m.

The bus sped on towards Mardan, passing Risalpur Sugar Mills and the Main Market Road. Suddenly, a cross atop a steeple came into view alleviating all my worries and anxiety. It was 11:10 p.m. and quickly I decided to get off at the Church gate.

“Get ready, we’ll get off near that church ahead,” I told my wife.

She wrapped herself properly with her warm shawl.

“Aren’t you going on to the stop?”, asked the inquisitive Pathan sitting behind me. Apparently, he had overheard our conversation.

I have a friend living here and we’ll go to him first,” I explained quickly.

He said a few words to the conductor in Pushto who gave us a momentary look and told the driver to stop near the Church. The bus stopped with a jolt. The driver was evidently in a hurry. I bid farewell to my curious Pathan friend, grasping my wife’s hand and got off.

We were welcomed by the fog, dust and frosty air. We hurried towards the main door which was bolted from inside. I gave a few loud knocks but there was no answer, yet, the light in the Vicar’s room was lit.

“Pastor, Pastor,” I continued as my frantic cries echoed in the darkness.

When there was no answer, my wife spoke, “Why did you get off here? We were supposed to get off at the station.”

“If we had got off at the station, going further would have been very difficult for us at this late hour. I thought it better to spend the night in the Church and set off for Hoti early in the morning,” I explained to her.

“But the Vicar isn’t even opening the door,” she agitated, shivering.

“Pastor, pastor!” I repeated knocking at the door again with a stone this time. The knocks echoed in the silence of the night while the range of my fears, which had abated earlier on sighting the cross, began to rise.

I tried to console my wife, “Don’t worry, it is possible that the Vicar is praying.”

I made yet another attempt, but it seemed that the knocks had frozen in the frosty air. Suddenly, the lights of the mansion in the street next to the church were lit. The windows of one of the rooms on the top floors opened and closed quickly.

A tingling sensation of fear began to rise in me and I started knocking like a man possessed.

Meanwhile the gates of the mansion opened and a rather tall figure of a man wrapped in a blanket bearing a torch approached in our direction. As he got closer, his fair complexion and long beard was clearly visible despite the foggy atmosphere. The streetlight revealed him carrying a rifle in the other hand.

My wife horror - struck, clung to me, saying, “He’s got a rifle.” She was shivering with fear.

“Pastor, pastor,” I called out again as my cries of anger and fear echoed in the still air.

“Assalam-o-Alakum,” (Hello) the stranger greeted pointing the torch in my footsteps.

I returned his greeting with composure despite my fear.

“Who are you? You’ve been knocking at the door for quite a while,” he asked as he neared us.

“We are from Rawalpindi and thought that...”

He cut short my sentence and said in one breath, “No one will open the door at this late hour. Furthermore, how long will you continue knocking in this intense cold? My house is close by where you can spend the night if you wish.”

Shedding our fear, both of us looked at each other. My wife nodded in acquiescence with slight hesitation.

“We would not want to trouble you at this time of the night and further...”

He cut me short again and putting his arm around my waist guided me towards his house. We automatically walked with him and looking at the cross, I uttered a short prayer as we made towards the house.

The three of us entered through the main gate. Crossing a wide verandah, we reached the entrance door. There was a light inside.

“Bakhtawarey,” he called out in a low voice as he neared the door. A graceful lady appeared at the door and greeted us with a shower of questions. Our mysterious host kept answering her queries.

Meanwhile, we kept on looking at the stranger

and at the lady. By then, the warmth of the room had diminished our fears to some extent.

“This is my wife, Bakhtawarey and I have made her aware of your difficulty. She can speak a bit of Urdu,” he said introducing us to her.

We greeted her and the latter embraced my wife, kissed her affectionately, and then drew away from her abruptly saying, “Sister, you are a block of ice. Hold on, I will just get you something hot to drink.” So saying, she went in through another doorway.

“Have you had anything to eat?”, he asked anxiously.

“Yes we had something on the way,” I lied.

“Come I’ll lead you to your room,” and he guided us to an adjoining room. Here the soft carpet and a large comfortable bed with velvet bed-cloths immediately alleviated our exhaustion. We took off our shoes seated ourselves on the carpet while he spread a rich warm blanket on our feet.

Soon Bakhtawarey returned with scalding cups of tea, which looked extremely welcoming. I actually longed to drain the cup of tea in one gulp.

“Now tell me what exactly is your problem?”, he asked setting the cups down in front of us. I took a sip and began relating our tale.

“My name is Prem Irshad and this is my wife, Gulzar. We were on the way to attend our sister’s funeral in Hoti when our bus broke down thus resulting in a delay. So we decided to get off at the church hoping to spend the night there and continuing our journey early the following morning, but...”

“Are you Christians?”, asked Bakhtawarey quickly. I didn’t speak, but nodded in the affirmative quite sure that we would be turned out of the house with immediate effect.

“My name is Haji Khushal Khan. You are not to worry anymore. My car driver will take you to Hoti, but unfortunately, I regret that I have to leave early in the morning on some urgent business or else I would surely have taken you to Mardan myself.

He continued politely, “You are our guests and this lady is like my sister. It is late now and you must have a long rest. I will wake you up in the morning.”

Soon after they took their leave.

“Make sure to latch the door from inside,” advised Bakhtawarey as she left looking back over her shoulder.

“Alright,” returned my wife giving her a look of gratitude.

Before retiring for the night, both of us prayed

and thanked the Lord for this haven, for Bakhtawarey and Khushal Khan. Later, we felt as if some mother-like comforting feeling had put us into a deep slumber free from all anxieties.

My eyes opened when Bakhtawarey’s maidservant knocked gently at the door, saying politely, “Begum Sahib [Her Ladyship] awaits you in the main room.”

We quickly washed up and reached the main room where Bakhtawarey had spread a hearty breakfast consisting of fresh cream, nans, curry and everything delicious one could think of.

“You have been very kind to serve us with such a lavish breakfast,” I said looking towards the dining table.

“I could clearly detect that you hadn’t eaten anything since last night and furthermore, meals aren’t always served on time at funerals. Please partake of some breakfast. Haji Sahib’s driver is waiting for you,” she uttered sweetly with love and affection.

“We are extremely grateful and obliged to you because you provided us with food and shelter, otherwise, spending the night in this strange place would have been really difficult for us. All of our hopes were inclined towards the church where no one even bothered to open the door...”

“We gave quite a number of knocks,” I said interrupting my wife.

“Never mind. At such times hundred other doors open up if one remains shut. Only what we can do is, to help to each other. It is only man who comes to the rescue of others at these moments. You were worried so Haji Sahib made up his mind to help you. It is indeed a matter of great respect and honor for us that you spent the night at our house instead of the church. Next time, if ever you come to Mardan, you must pay us a visit and stay with us. This is Haji Sahib’s wish,” Bakhtawarey said with a great concern.

Walking out, I glanced once more at the cross, and then at Haji Khushal Khan’s house, which had truly served as a home.

Footnote :

1. Pushto Dialect
2. Pushto Dialect
3. Pushto Dialect
4. Pushto Dialect

Irom Sharmila : 'Iron Lady' of Manipur Black Law, Unique Resistance

Subhash Gatade

Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head, Pretending he just doesn't see ?

—Bob Dylan

Irom Sharmila (Age 34). Does that name sound familiar ?

Well, like most of us this youngest daughter of Irom Nanda and Irom Sakhi Devi has many identities. For sister Vijayanti or brother Singhajit she is their dearest sister who had the 'never say die' spirit ingrained in her since childhood. For some of her dear friends she is an Yoga enthusiast who at times also dabbled in naturopathy. For literateurs of Manipur, she is a budding poetess who has written hundreds of poems but till date only one of her collections 'Imadi Khongdai Setlaroi' has been published. And for the vast majority of Manipuris, she is not Irom Sharmila Chanu rather she is the 'Iron Lady of Manipur' who has challenged a callous and apathetic government and its regime of draconian law with her unique struggle.

Interestingly, despite plethora of TV channels and a boom in the print media, not many of us from 'mainland' India would be able to tell what made this young girl from a lower middle class family who could not even continue her education after 12th, a legend in her own lifetime.

It is difficult to believe the saga of struggle of Irom Sharmila Chanu

In fact it will be nearly six years that she would be on her hunger strike. She has remained without solid food since then, demanding withdrawal from her state, of one of the most draconian laws in the statute books called Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA).

At present she is lodged in AIIMS, New Delhi where she is being 'nasal fed' by a team of doctors.

Her reaching Delhi from the environs of Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital, Manipur where she was kept in judicial custody and was nasal fed was another saga of her glorious struggle. Taking advantage of the release from custody after serving a 'yearlong custody' at the hospital, her supporters literally smuggled her out of Imphal to reach Delhi to turn her "regional" campaign into a "national" one. Her first stop in Delhi was Rajghat, where she laid a wreath at Mahatma Gandhi's samadhi. Later she told a journalist

"I want to tell the people of India that if Mahatma Gandhi were alive today, he would have launched a movement against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. My appeal to the citizens of the country is to join the campaign against the army act," (The Telegraph, October 05, 2006)

* * *

Ofcourse, the historic fast launched at Malom was no planned affair. There was a firing by security forces at Malom bus stand, which is nearly 15-16 kilometers from Imphal, on 2 nd November 2000. It saw blood of ten innocents spilled on the streets. Ofcourse it was not the first event of its kind, the streets of Manipur had been witness to the killings of innocent citizens umpteen times before.

Mother Irom Sakhi Devi had no inkling of what was in store of her youngest daughter Sharmila. She merely sought her mother's blessings to work for 'betterment of humanity' and left. Sharmila straight away went to the very spot where the bloodbath had occurred and started her fast unto death. Her demand was simple to articulate but for the powers that be difficult to implement. She demanded repeal of the draconian law. Initially for the residents of Malom or adjoining areas it was difficult to fathom the idea of the peaceful resistance put up by this young woman. For a handful of them she was an object of ridicule also. And none of them had even imagined that she would persist in her determination in such a way that there would be uproar all over the state in support of her demand. By 21 st November the administration was forced to give her a 'nasal feed' in a hospital in Imphal.

The maximum sentence which a court can give for 'trying to commit suicide is one year' and Sharmila has endured many such turns in all these years. She is released after this one year judicial detention and immediately rearrested and put in the same ward. and the cycle continued . This year also the government expected the same. Embarrassed police officials later admitted that they had no inkling of the plan to "smuggle out". Chief minister Okram Ibobi Singh pleaded ignorance, too.

Iron Sharmila's legendary struggle for human rights has become an important symbol of the resistance of the Manipuri people who are fighting their present day suffering at the hands of policy makers. This has meant 'excessive militarisation of the region' and the 'promulgations of many a black laws like AFSPA at the cost of the life and liberty of the people of this region.'

It is a sad commentary on the state of affairs that the rest of the world came to know about Sharmila's unique struggle only two and half years ago. It was in the aftermath of a militant struggle launched by Manipuri people demanding the abolition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958 and punishment to the Assam Rifles people for killing Thangjam Manorama on 11 July 2004

This upsurge of the Manipuri people was marked by the way in which women played a leading role in furthering the movement. It was on 15 th July 2004 that around dozen elderly and respectable Manipuri women marched to the area headquarters of the Assam Rifles and stripped naked and waved a banner which read as : "Indian Army Rape Us", "Indian Army Take Our Flesh". The naked march of these women electrified the masses and within no time the protests against the army reached new heights.

The conspiracy of silence which had surrounded Iron Sharmila's solitary struggle can't be called an exception. It is part of a general silence which surrounds developments in northeast which for all practical purposes exists on the 'borders of our consciousness'. A report brought out by a *National Campaign Committee against militarisation and repeal of AFSPA* had rightly observed a few years back : 'Armed militancy, intercommunity killings, 'encounters' with security personnel ... conversely, pretty girls and boys dancing in traditional costume. The north east has always been a collage of the most contradictory images, that only reflect how little is known of the reality that lies behind them.'

* * *

There is no doubt that if the atrocities at the hands of the security forces as are witnessed in north east would have taken place in any part of 'mainland India' then it would have become a cause for national uproar. But for all those areas which are under Armed Forces Special Powers Act all such acts by the security people are 'covered under the infamous act' itself. As the provisions of the infamous act make clear the security forces have been given unlimited

powers and even if they committ atrocities (which is not exception but the rule) people have no right to approach the courts.

This 'draconian law' which has generated tremendous anger in the minds of the people and is in many ways worse than the infamous POTA empowers the security people in many crucial areas. It empowers the government (governor of the state, or the administartor of the union territory, or the central government) to declare any area a 'disturbed area' if it reaches a conclusion that 'the whole or any is in such a disturbed or dangerous condition that the use of Armed Forces in aid of civil power is necessary,' the concerned authority may 'declare the whole or such part of such a state or union territory to be disturbed area.'

Section four delienates the powers sanctioned to any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer, in a disturbed area.

(a) If in his opinion, it is necessary for maintenance for public order to fire even to the extent of causing death or otherwise use force against a person who is acting in contravention of an order prohibiting the assembly of five or more persons or the carrying of weapons or of things capable of being used as weapons.'

(b) If in his opinion, it is necessary to do so, then to destroy any arms dump or fortified position, any shelter from which armed attacks are made or are 'likely to be made', and any structure used as training camp for armed volunteers or as a hide out for armed gangs or absconders.

(c) Arrest without warrant any person who has committed a cognizable offence or against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he has committed or is likely to commit a cognizable offence and to use whatever force is necessary to affect the arrest.

(d) To enter and search without warrant any premises to make an arrest or to recover any person wrongfully confined or to recover any arms, ammunition, explosive substance or suspected stolen property.

Section 5 makes it mandatory for the army to hand over a person arrested under the act to the nearest police station with least possible delay.

Section 6 lays down that prosecution, suit or other legal proceedings can be instituted against a person acting under the act, only after getting previous sanction of the central government. (Ref: The Illusion of Justice : Supreme Court Judgement on the AFSPA,

May 1998, People's Union for Democratic Rights, Delhi).

The existence of this law on the statue books has thus meant disallowing the people the right to protest, the right to legal redress or right of any lawful democratic activity. Ordinary people who want to live a life of peace and tranquility, can thus easily be framed as 'terrorists' and 'suspects' linking them to banned organisations. Democratic rights activists who merely document the excesses by the Army or an end to army rule have also been picked up, tortured and killed. The continuation of this law since last 48 years has effectively meant that under a formal democratic set up 38 million people residing in north east are forced to live under an undeclared emergency or defacto military rule.

Brigadier Sailo who served in the army for 31 years, in a letter written nearly 30 years ago to Ms Indira Gandhi, the then prime minister of India, said," The feelings of the entire villages and population of Mizoram are now totally alienated by the denial of all decencies of human rights and any picture which may have been painted to you to the contrary, is totally false." (Quoted in Where 'Peacekeepers' Have Declared War - :Report on violations of democratic rights by security forces and the impact of the AFSPA on civilian life in the seven states of North East - National Campaign Committee against Militarisation and Repeal of AFSPA, 2000, Delhi). It can be said without any iota of doubt that what Brigadier Sailo said about Mizoram can be applied to the whole of north east today.

* * *

One cannot say with certainty what will happen next. Hunger strike by Irom Sharmila continues unabated. If earlier the venue was the dingy rooms of the Jawaharlal Nehru Hospital in Imphal, today she lies in a similar position in a private ward in AIIMS, New Delhi where she is forcibly fed liquids through a nose-pipe. It was only last month that BBC (Tuesday, 19 September 2006, 09:46 GMT 10:46 UK) had carried a report on this marathon fast wherein it had mentioned the deteriorating condition of her health : "Doctors say her fasting is now having a direct impact on her body's normal functioning - her bones have become brittle and she has developed other medical problems too."

As far as the repeal of the black law is concerned, things seem to be going nowhere. It is being said that the Justice Jeevan Reddy committee appointed by

the Prime Minister in 2004 in the aftermath of the militant protests in Manipur has recommended repeal of the legislation AFPSA itself. According to reports in a section of the media, the 146 report submitted by the Jeevan Reddy committee talks about "The act is too sketchy, too bald and quite inadequate in several particulars". According to the report "the act, for whatever reason, has become a symbol of oppression, an object of hate and an instrument of discrimination and high-handedness" (The Hindu, October 8, 2006).

According to few analysts a careful reading of the report also creates an impression that the Jeevan Reddy panel merely wanted the prerogatives of the armed forces transferred wholesale onto another law, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. If this holds true then we will have a situation where the dreaded black law AFPSA which is basically applicable to North East and Jammu-Kashmir may be scrapped forthwith while the revised ULP act 1967 which incorporates all the necessary provisions of AFPSA would come into force. It would mean the whole of India may come under the ambit of a substitute of AFPSA.

In any case this cannot be tolerated at any cost. All those people who yearn for a life of peace, justice and progress for the broad masses of people would have to come together to defeat the machinations of the powers that be.

While talking to the BBC correspondent Irom Sharmila had mentioned "My fast is on behalf of the people of Manipur. This is not a personal battle - this is symbolic. It is a symbol of truth, love and peace,".

It is worth mentioning that while Sharmila is waging this unequal battle against the Indian state, many of her dear and near ones have stood solidly behind her. We are also told that not only her brother lost a government job, because he preferred to remain on her side always but the family had also to go bankrupt since it gathered lot of loans during this period.

But none of the sacrifices can match what Irom Sakh, Sharmila's 75 year old mother has endured all these years. She has never met her daughter since she blessed her on the momentous day when she undertook her fast. Irom Sakh, with tears in her eyes told a correspondent : It is just possible that my getting emotional on seeing her may weaken her resolve. And I do not want that my daughter lose in this battle which is for the betterment of humanity.

Books as Crime — A Case of India

—Subhash Gatade

‘So you are the little woman who wrote the book that made this great (American) civil war’

—Abraham Lincoln to Harriet Beecher Stowe,
author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*

Bruno Fulgini, a non-descript employee at the French Parliament, would not have imagined in his wildest dreams that his tedious and boring job at the Parliament library, would lead him to treasure hunt of another kind.

Today he finds himself metamorphosed into an author and editor, thanks to the sudden discovery of old files of the Paris police, which provided details of its surveillance work done way back in 18th century. In a report filed by AFP, Mr Fulgini tells us that ‘Beyond criminals and political figures, there are files on writers and artists. In some cases, they go far in their indiscretions.’ (The Statesman and The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 26th September 2006)

An edited version of these old files, focussing themselves on the writers of those times, has recently come out and is making waves. The said book ‘Writers’ Police’ gives details of the way in which greatest writers of late 18th century who were living in Paris at that time were kept under surveillance.

Definitely even a layperson can understand that the whole exercise was not part of wreaking of vengeance by a frustrated writer who had joined the police force as some senior officer. Neither the police was keen to understand the impact of the actual lifestyles of the writers on societal mindset nor did it care how a particular author would help unleash a new hairstyle on the block.

In fact the Parisian police had a very specific agenda.

It was clear to these protectors of internal security of a tottering regime that the renowned literati then viz. Victor Hugo, Balzac or Charles Dickens, might be writing fiction, but their sharp focus on the hypocrisy of the aristocrats or the livelihood issues of ordinary people is adding to the growing turmoil in the country. They knew very well that they might be writing fiction for the masses but it is turning out to be a sharp political edge that hit the right target and is becoming a catalyst for change.

While the Parisian police was engaged in tracking down the daily movements of the writers, its present day counterparts in Maharashtra especially from the Chandrapur-Nagpur region have rather devised some

‘easier’ and ‘shortcut routes’ to curb the flow of ideas. And for them it is also immaterial whether the writer in question was alive or dead.

The recent happenings at a book stall put in by a well known publisher ‘Daanish Books’ at the Deeksha Bhoomi of Dr Ambedkar in Nagpur are a case in point. A random list of books which the police perceived to be ‘dangerous’ and which it duly confiscated from their book stall makes interesting reading. According to a widely circulated email :

“The books seized by the police for containing dangerous, anti state material include books like Marathi translation of the Thoughts of Bhagat Singh, Ramdeen Ka Sapna by B.D. Sharma, Jati Vyavastha-Bhartiya Kranti Ki Khasiyat by Vaskar Nandy, Monarchy Vs Democracy by Baburam Bhattarai, Nepali Samargaatha: Maowadi Janyuddha ka Aankhon Dekha Vivaran (The Hindi edition of eminent American Journalist Li Onesto’s celebrated book Dispatches from the People’s War in Nepal, Translated by Anand Swarup Varma), Daliton par Badhati Jyadatiya aur Unka Krantikari Jawab, Chhapamar Yudhha by Che Guevara and books on Marxism and Leninism and people’s struggles. “

One gathers that if by their sixth sense these police personnel perceived that the writers scribblings may lead or add to ‘social anarchy’, they had no compunction in even confiscating such books even though such books are freely available in the market and have not been banned or declared offensive by any state agencies

The Chandrapur-Nagpur police did not remain content with mere confiscation of legally available books but saw to it that the owner of the publication Ms Sunita was put to three days of intense questioning by the Anti—Naxalite Special Task Force. It is clear that if friends around the world had not put in tireless efforts and pressure would not have been exerted by international community on the Maharashtra State Government, Ms Sunita would have been sent behind bars under some draconian provisions of the ‘Unlawful Activities Prevention Act’.

As the email further adds, the whole incident raises pertinent questions about . “Our rights vis a vis

the State, as an individual citizen of a 'free country', as publishers and finally as readers?"

Ofcourse as an aside it may be told that while the Maharashtra Police considers selling of books as 'crime' it has no qualms in protecting perpetrators of communal elements or for that matter quite a few 'dirty Harrys' in its midst. It is the same Maharashtra police which preferred to look the other way when RSS-Bajrang Dal activists were killed in a bomb blast in Nanded and a well knit conspiracy to instigate communal riots was exposed.

Coming back to the 'Writers Police' , it is clear to

everyone how all those meticulous efforts put in by the police to curtail the free flow of ideas proved futile. And how French revolution of those times emerged as a beacon of hope for thinking people across the world. Rather it could be said that all those efforts at surveillance became a precursor to the storming of the Bastille.

Can it then be said that India is on the verge of similar transformatory changes and the Maharashtra polices' efforts at 'criminalising writing' are an indication that ruling elite of our times is fast losing ground.

Sufi Saints : Composite Heritage of South Asia

Bullhe Shah

Bullhe Shah was born in (1680) a family of landowners. Bullhe Shah received thorough education, and became a sufi under the impact of circumstances obscure as yet, and against the will of his kinsfolk. According to implications in Bullhe Shah's poetry, their main objection was that his selected master was from a low caste. About one hundred and fifty verses and several small epics were written by Bullhe Shah, mostly written in kafi genre, and one in the barahmah genre. Many of his poems refer directly or indirectly to his times, in which he finds little indeed to please his heart.

*Punjab had fallen on bad days,
Those (who claimed to be) supporters, have teacherous,
Something is saved if I tell a lie,
If I tell the truth, the flames burn stronger.*

He calls his time upturned, mourns the injustice that reigns throughout the hares have devoured the falcons. This pessimistic note is not ungrounded; Bullhe Shah was a contemporary of Aurangzeb, Gobind Singh, Banda Bairagi and Nadir Shah. His was a time of contradictions, of bitter battles and of tragic events. The poet was never able to adjust himself to the prevailing conditions.

For Bullhe Shah, Chandal or Chanan (river Chenab) is a symbol of love because the romance of Heer-Ranjha happened here. Like Ranjha, the word Dhola has been used for God. The murshid is also called Kala (wine-seller). One who strikes at the gong (ghariali) symbolizes time. The seeker (Salik) is called the bakra (he-goat). The letter meem added with Ahd (Nirguna/Transcendent Lord) or a dot placed under Ain are symbols for the Immanent Lord (Saguna). Ahd with meem becomes Ahmad or Nur-ul-Muhammadiyah (the light of Prophet Mohammad). The man of the world is called

a Saudagar (trader) and the world itself is a Sarai (a caravan sarai or an inn). Death is symbolized as a crow, who may suddenly snatch away the cotton-thread prepared by the virgin. A deer is also a symbol for death. Whereas the word Kahn has been used for God, the word Gopi is meant for the seeker and the sound of flute for the spark of love. The murshid is symbolized as a weaver, who gives shape to the cotton-thread in a warp (tani), which has been prepared by the virgin (seeker). Such are the images which are dominant in the poetry of Bullhe Shah.

Bullhe Shah holds a place of distinction in the history of Punjabi prosody. No poet before him had shown such virtuosity in manipulating all the current poetic forms, none had achieved such organic fusion of the devices used in Arabic and Persian versification with those known to Punjabi prosody. Rhyme, though not new to Punjabi poetry, acquired new qualities in his verse. He favoured inner rhyme even in so laconic a genre as the kafi or the dohra, thus demonstrating the infinite possibilities of poetic expression inherent in the Punjabi language. He died in the year 1758 and is buried in Kasur where his death anniversary(urs) is celebrated every year.

*Let the prayers go to dust and fasts to the mud,
Kalima proved to be useless,
Bullha found the Beloved in the heart,
People are ignorant, they are wandering disoriented.*

*As I learned the lesson of love,
I ran away from the mosque,
Burn the prayer carpet and break the clay pot,
Toss away the rosary, bowl and cudgel,
Oh sisters, I removed the veil and danced,
Wither I glance I see Him,
I say in Thy name, there is no one else.
Courtesy : Overseas Pakistanis Foundation*

Formation of Composite Heritage in Medieval South Asia

—Institute for Social Democracy
New Delhi, India

When Turks and Mughals made India their home – they introduced many new things which they had learnt from the Persian, Arabic and Turki traditions. The rulers who came as conquerors were hostile to the native kings and religious practices initially. Sometimes they destroyed temples too. However, once they settled down they tried to negotiate with the native princes and priests. There is an interpretation that kings and emperors of the Sultanat or Mughal period promoted Islam and persecuted Hindus. While this might hold true regarding a few rulers, it is untrue in most of the cases. These kings were here to rule. If some Islamic law prevented them from getting more taxes or getting more power they were quick to revoke those laws. What is equally important is the fact that these kings needed the help of Hindu princes, merchants and landlords to collect revenues and run the administration. That is why they had to ally with these groups. These Hindu landlords became the officials of the Turks and Mughals because it benefited them. Turks and Mughals could exercise power because they got the support of the Hindu landlords. The landlords in turn became more powerful because they were supported by the powerful armies of the Turks. These Hindu landlords effectively became patrons of Hindu traditions. Many Rajput kings who allied themselves with Mughal kings gained more power because they got lucrative positions in the Mughal bureaucracy. They built a large number of temples. For example, the Kachwahas of Jaipur built many temples in Amer.

Many Muslim rulers of smaller kingdoms patronized local language and cultures. For example the Ramayana and Gita were translated in the Bangla language under the patronage of a Muslim ruler.

Formation of a composite culture

Rulers ruled. However, apart from the rulers many other people migrated to India too. There were saints, merchants, scholars and common soldiers. There have been two strains of Islam: one, the rigid canonicdoctrines of the Quran and Hadees, and the other of mystics, sufis and saints. It is the latter strain which proved to be their guiding principle. Once they settled down they had to make a living. This meant

finding food and clothing. They had to build homes to live in. They had to get married to raise their families. They had to interact with the people. All these things together led to the emergence of a new tradition. Place names like Ghazipur or Muzaffarpur indicate the spirit of the age. While the words Ghazi and Muzaffar have Arabic origin, Pur is a Sanskrit word. New food habits, new buildings, new languages and new religious traditions came into existence. In fact, most of the rulers were unable to understand these changes. They were deeply suspicious of these changes. They sometimes punished Muslim or Hindu preachers for heresy. They looked down on the Indian Muslims. However, the popular culture formed by the needs and visions of common people were too powerful for the rulers. We shall discuss some of these developments.

Food and Dress

Roti the most popular form of wheat bread consumed by the Indians, is a Turki word. This means that the most popular form of Indian food has its origins in the Turkish tradition. In North India the most popular breakfast is *Jalebi*, *Kachuari* and *Alu ki Sabji*. *Jalebi* was brought by the Turks, *Kachauri* was invented by ancient Indians and *Alu or potato* was brought from America by the Europeans. Our evenings are incomplete without Halwa, Samosa and a cup of tea. *Halwa* and *Samosa* were introduced by the Turks. Tea had been discovered by the Chinese. It was the British who introduced tea in India. *Paratha*, was invented by the Turks in India. *Biryani*, *Kabab* and a whole lot of non-vegetarian delicacies were introduced by these settlers.

Today, when a smart girl turns out wearing *Salwar Shamiz* and *Dupatta*, she represents the commingling of the two traditions. While *Salwar* and *Shamiz* are derived from the Turko-Persian traditions *Dupatta* is derived from the ancient Indian tradition.

Popular religious traditions

There are a number of people every human community who ask questions related to larger issues like “What is Life? What happens when one dies? What is goodness and evil?” These spiritual people give their own answers to these questions from time

to time. Generally, they have a small following. However, in certain phases of history in the life of a community these issues become critical to the concerns of a very large number of people. It is in these times that popular religious movements emerge. The North Indian Brahminical tradition after the first millennium was characterized by the hierarchical four caste structure. After the tenth century, very large areas were brought under cultivation. These lands had been reclaimed by the migrant Jat communities. In many areas, the forest dwellers too had taken to agriculture. They had a strong tribal tradition of equality. It was in the backdrop of these newly emerging peasant groups that new religious traditions emerged. Islam with its message of equality came to India during this period. The mutual interaction of the native traditions and Islam produced noble experiments in religion in this period. If we study the preachings of saints like Nanak, Kabir, Raidas, Dadu etc., they have one thing in common. They all emphasise the equality of humans. A study of their teachings shows that they were familiar with the Islamic tradition. Sikhism is the most well known among them. Guru Granth Sahab, the holy book of the Sikhs contains verses composed by well known Muslim saints like Baba Farid. Saints like Kabir are revered by the Hindus as well as the Muslims. The strong emphasis on equality seems to be derived from the Islamic tradition. On the other hand, their conceptions of god and Bhakti were very clearly derived from the traditions originating from the Tamil speaking areas in the sixth-seventh century. Thus, these saints represented a unique blending of two anterior traditions. The new peasantry with its strong tribal traditions of equality found the teachings of these saints attractive and they embraced these Gurus. It is this heritage of composite culture which is seen in popular worships like the *Satyanarayana Katha*. The *Katha* is inspired as much by the story of Narayana as by the story of Satiya Pir in East Bengal.

The Muslim saints who came here were equally keen to understand the native traditions of India. Moinuddin Chisti or Nizamuddin Auliya represented the Islamic version of the blending of Islam and the native religious traditions. Praying at the tomb of a saint is alien to Islam outside India. Hindus are familiar with the idea of burying saints and building temples around them. Songs in praise of Allah are alien to non-Indian Islam. Hindus have a long tradition of singing in praise of Gods. *Qawwali*, a popular form

of singing emerged in the Sufi places of worship. The tomb of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti in Ajmer at the time of his Death anniversary (Urs) becomes the centre of great *Qawwali* singing. In Delhi the tomb of Nizamuddin Aulia is another such centre. Songs are sung in Urdu but owe their lyrics to the Persian poetic literature.

In places like Kashmir, the most powerful tradition of Muslim saints is called the *Rishi Silsila*. *Rishi* is a Sanskrit word meaning a saint. When people visited these saints it gave them a spiritual fulfillment. It was immaterial for them whether the saint was a Hindu or Muslim. That is why Guru Nanak or Nizamuddin Auliya had followers cutting across religions and communities.

The *taziya* processions which embody the sacrifices of Hassan and Husain are completely unknown outside India. They are supposed to have derived from the Hindu traditions of chariot festival. Both the tazias of Moharram and the effigies of Ram and Ravana in the Ram Leela in Delhi are made by Muslim artisans. In Tamil and Kerala folk and traditional performing arts such as Terukuthu and Kathakali the participation of Muslim musicians hardly become noticeable as Muslims. The same is true of Swang, Khyal and Nach of Haryana, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, all of which have a fair sprinkling of Muslim singers, musicians, dancers and actors. The Langas and Manganiyars of Rajasthan present outstanding examples of excellence in their own fields of folk music. Yet they can hardly be distinguished from other Hindu tribal artists of Rajasthan in appearance, dress or language.

The Classical Tradition of Indian Music

The classical tradition of Indian music is one of the most creative gifts of the Indian civilisation to the world. It is in this tradition that we find the most beautiful blending of Hindu and Muslim identities.

Raag

Amir Khusro is credited with the invention of *Sitar* and *Tabla*. *Sarod* was invented by an *ustad*.

The most popular vocal classical music is called the *Khayal* form of singing. This form of singing came into existence in the sixteenth century. The earlier tradition of classical singing was known as *Dhrupad* style. The *Dhrupad* tradition was mostly used for singing songs in praise of God. Some families have retained this tradition of singing even today. The most well known singers of this tradition are Aminuddin and Moinuddin Dagar. Their songs in praise of *Shiva*

deeply affect listeners.

The *Khayal* tradition of singing emerged as a result of the blending of the *Dhrupad* and Persian traditions. At present there are various Gharanas who have distinctive styles of *Khayal* singing. These *Gharanas* function according to the *Guru –Shisya* (teacher- disciple) tradition. That is why we find that the two most well known exponents of the oldest *Gharana* of Gwalior are Pandit Krishnarao Shankar and Mushtaq Hussain Khan. The greatest exponents of the Jaipur *Gharana* are Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur and Rajab Ali Khan.

Light classical music derived from the classical forms, shows a similar intermingling. The *Kajri*, *Chaiti* and *Hori* (songs for Holi) of Rasoolan Bai are matchless. When one thinks of *Bhajans* Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's song 'Hari Om Tatsat' remains the outstanding song of its kind.

In the field of instrumental music Alauddin Khan's Maihar *Gharana* is outstanding. Alauddin Khan was taught the finer points of music by the exponents of Seniya *Gharana* of Rampur. The Seniyas claimed to be descendants of Mian Tansen, Alauddin Khan schooled Pandit Ravi Shankar in the art of playing Sitar. When one is listening to the *Sitar* of Ravi Shankar, *Sarod* of Ali Akbar Khan or the flute of Hari Prashad Chaurasia one is listening the composition of Seniya *Gharana*. One finds Hindu and Muslim singers in almost all the *Gharanas*. Songs generally begin with a prayer to the Goddess Saraswati. Alauddin Khan was a devotee of Krishna. Who can forget Bismillah Khan. The recordings of his *Shehnai* resonate in innumerable Hindu marriages.

Performing Traditions

Kathak

Kathak is the most popular dance form of North India. The word Kathak is derived from the word katha, or story. It has been primarily a solo performance art.

A unique feature of the dance is the relationship each artist develops with the audience through recitation and descriptive commentary. Wandering bards have narrated and performed mythological stories before village audiences in India for a long long time. Their tales are often taken from the great epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, as well as from stories of the Puranas - especially those of Lord Krishna and his exploits in his sacred land of Vrindavan.

During the middle ages, the Mughals brought this

dance into the court setting. Lavishly costumed and jeweled court dancers entertained kings and noblemen with poetic descriptions as well as technical virtuosity and refined beauty. *Kathak* is thus a fusion of the aesthetic ideals of both the Hindu and Muslim cultures.

In Wajid Ali Shah's court at Lucknow in the middle of the nineteenth century, *Kathak* reached its present form. On the one hand, the devotional ideals of the dance were brought to a new realization with the incorporation of the Krishna Lila (amorous exploits of young Lord Krishna) which could be performed with the accompaniment of the new light-classical vocal form, the thumri. On the other, the exquisite refinement of that court, with its formal dress styles, enhanced the quality of the presentation. As a result, *Kathak* became a subtle mix of Hindu and Muslim cultures, depicting stories from the original Hindu epics as well as themes from Persian and Urdu poetry.

Modern Indian Theatre Traditions

The credit for the revival of theatre in modern times goes to Aga Hasan Amanat. It was his *Indrasabha* written and produced in 1856 that sowed the seeds of theatre in India after a gap of several centuries. It is said to have been first produced at the court of Wajid Ali Shah in Lucknow, who was himself a poet, composer, creator of *Kathak* and an innovator in *Raas Leela*. In fact, Amanat's musical play written in verse form was inspired by the *Raas Leela* enacted regularly at Wajid Ali Shah's court.

The Parsi Theatre

Among the modern theatre movements in India, the pride of place belongs to the Parsi theatre movement. Beginning in the 1850s it experimented with various forms of theatrical presentation of Indian stories. It thrived till 1930s and then gradually merged into the Indian cinema. A whole batch of young Muslim playwrights cropped up around Parsi theatre. Raunaque, Betab, Ruswa, Hafiz Abdullah Talib, Hubab, Zareef, Aaram, Khurshid and many others were turning out successful plays often based on *Puranic* tales and the two epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. The most well known playwright of the Parsi theatre was Agha Hashar Kashmiri. His range encompassed Firdausi's Persian epic the *Shahnama* in his *Rustom-o-Sohrab* to Hindu religious legends such as *Bilwa Mangal* depicting the life of Surdas. These playwrights were particularly influenced by the French opera. However, they also carried with them copies of the *Natya Shastra*.

And when talkies came to be made, most of the

Parsi theatre actors and actresses took to films. The Indian cinema movement which made movies based on epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in many languages borrowed heavily from the Parsi theatre. Our notions of the way Gods and Goddesses, heroines and heroes used to dress in ancient times is entirely derived from this theatre movement. The same tradition continued in the television serials like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*.

Playwrights like Habib Tanvir represent the same tradition of performing arts. His list of plays include Sanskrit masterpieces like Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, Visakhdatta's *Mudra Rakhshas* and Bhavabhuti's *Uttar Ram Charita* apart from plays like *Agra Bazaar* and *Charan Das Chor*.

Language

Convergence has been the hallmark of the Indian tradition. The most obvious example of this comingling of diverse cultures is seen in the field of language. A simple sentence like "Mere chacha return kar rahe hain" (my uncle is returning) has words derived from Sanskrit (*Mere*) Turki (*chacha*) and English (return). The sentence structure of many Indian languages is such that it can integrate foreign words. The North Indian languages are a product of the evolution of last seven to eight hundred years. Many of the words used today can be traced to antiquity. For example the word for our holiest river Ganga is not derived from the Sanskrit language. It is derived from an unknown Mundari language. Same is the case with the word for rice '*Chawal*'. The important phase in the formation of these languages came after the thirteenth century. This can be related to the coming of Turkish rulers in north India. These rulers patronized Persian and Arabic languages. Since, Persian was the language of administration the native speakers also picked up this language. No wonder, the Marathas who fought against Aurangzeb retained Persian as the language of administration. It was the mutual interaction of these languages that led to the creation of Hindi. The first notable person who felt proud of the beauty of this language was Amir Khusro. The Hindi we use today has a structure like the Sanskrit language but its vocabulary is an amazing mixture of words derived from Braj, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Arabic and Persian. Let us concentrate on some of the words derived from Arabic.

Words Derived from Arabic

When we use the word *Aadami* or *Insaan* (human being) we are using words of Arabic. These

humans should read *Kitab* (book) and write with *Kalam* (pen) to improve ones *Aqal* (intellect). Such a human being should fight for *Insaaf* (justice) and never tolerate the *zurma* (crime) of *Zalim* (cruel person). We should promote *Muhabbat* (love) and never break ones *Vaadaa* (promise). *Sharaafat* (goodness) is always rewarded and *Gaddari* (betrayal) is always punished – that is the *Kissa* (story) of all the Hindi movies.

Time (*waqt*) and tide wait for none in this world (*duniya*). Death (*maut*) will come for one and all, there is no point in grieving (*gam*) about it. Nothing like a glass of *sharbat* in *saaf* (clean) water in the summers of Delhi otherwise one has to take *dawa* (medicine). The *amir* (rich) of this country are not bothered about the *garib* (poor). *Sabzi* is good for our health. So is walking in the open fields (*maidan*).

Words derived from Persian

Millions of Indians have uttered **Inquilab Zindabad** (long live revolution) after Bhagat Singh's famous slogan—least realizing that these words are derived from the Persian and Arabic languages. Revolutionaries would dream of a day when mother earth (*zamin*) would belong to us all like the sky (*aasamaan*) is ours.

In our homes we like to read newspapers (*akhbar*). However, prices (*kimat*) seem to rise every year. Thus poor people's income (*aamadani*) is their expenses (*kharch*). They are able to buy (*kharid*) less and less nutritious food causing sickness (*bimari*). One should take care of ones health (*sehat*). They are not able to buy proper clothing (*libas*, *jama*, *pajama*, *salwar*, *shamiz*) too. *Jhuggies* lacking open spaces (*maidan*) and clean air (*hawa*) become hosts to disease (*bimari*). Children (*bachhe*) are specially prone to sickness. That is why their condition (*halat*) is getting worse (*kharab*). However, rulers do not have the heart (*dil*) to feel the pain (*dard*) of the poor (*garib*). Times (*zamana*) will change if we come together and use our energies (*takat*) to break the chain (*zanjir*) of exploitation (*zulma*). What we need is a society based on friendship (*dosti*). Where there is will (*chah*) there is a way (*rah*). One has to ask these questions (*sawal*) to the rulers (*hakim*).

Life (*zindagi*) is not simply wealth (*daulat*), job (*naukari*) and rent (*kiraya*) for the landlord. If one were thinking of these issues morning (*subah*) and evening (*shama*), life will lose its magic (*jadu*). One should think of ones nation (*mulka*) too.

The mainstream Bombay cinema has played ever since its birth, and still does, a very crucial role in preserving, promoting and popularizing India's composite heritage in a variety of ways. In a way this contribution goes beyond preserving and promoting. Hindi cinema has also helped to create what might be called a pan-Indian culture which retains its composite character. In this sense popular Indian cinema does not just *cater* to a composite culture (by projecting it as a preferred and superior culture) but also *creates* it (by transporting regional cultural traits or patterns onto other cultural terrains with the help of its all-India network).

Here then are some of the ways in which Hindi cinema has popularized India's composite heritage.

1. By Depicting Mutual Acceptance as a Way of Life : Since its birth, inter-community mutual acceptance within the broad cultural context has remained one of its central thematic concerns. The importance of this mutual acceptance and its role in strengthening inter-community relationships - both at personal and social levels has been repeatedly brought out on celluloid. Placing and equating one's 'self' with 'others' - people belonging to 'other' cultural/ethnic/religious background - on a strong, humane and emotional plane has always been shown in our films as far more crucial in guiding human affairs than the narrow attitudes and hostility towards 'others'. Following are some of the important films in this direction: *Khuda Ki Shaan* (1931), *Padosi* (1941), *Hum Ek Hain* (1946), *Aar Paar* (1954), *Hum Panchhi Ek Daal Ke* (1957), *Char Dil Char Raahein* (1959), *Kabuliwala* (1958), *Saat Hindustani* (1969), *Nanha Farishta* (1969), *Pandit Aur Pathan* (1976), *Amar Akbar Anthony* (1977), *Saza-e-Kalapani* (1997), *Ghulam-e-Mustafa* (1997), *Lagaan* (2001), among many others.

2. Through a positive portrayal of community characters : Our composite heritage, as it has been constructed, has rested on the twin pillars of unity and harmony between/among various communities. Thus the portrayal of iconic figures from the minorities practising tolerance, compassion and goodwill and bringing comfort and solace to people

and society has been an important feature of our popular cinema. Important films in this respect are: *Baazi* (1952, Anglo-Indian character), *Garam Coat* (1952, Muslim character), *Boot Polish* (1954, Christian character), *Pyasa* (1955, Muslim character), *Dhool Ka Phool* (1959, Muslim character), *Anari* (1959, Christian character), *Zanjeer* (1973, Pathan character), *Anjuman* (1986, Hindu character), *Hathiyaar* (1989, Muslim character), *Miss Beatly's Children* (1992, English missionary), *Hukumat* (1997, both Muslim and Christian characters), *Sarfarosh* (Muslim character), among many others.

Yet another important feature of such films is that the roles of community characters are often played by actors and actresses from other community. And so, in *Pandit* and *Pathan*, the role of Pandit is done by Mahmud, a Muslim and that of Pathan by Joginder, a Hindu. This is true of most (though not all) community portrayals in our films. It is interesting to note that Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan in real life), an iconic figure of Indian cinema, almost never played the role of a Muslim character (except in a semi-historical film *Mughal-e-Azam* and that of a camouflaged Muslim in *Azad*) and the major roles in most of the Muslim socials made through the 1960s were played by actors like Guru Dutt, Ashok Kumar, Rajendra Kumar, Pradeep Kumar and Rajesh Khanna among others.

3. Through Historical Films Exploring the Tenets of Composite culture and Mutual Acceptance : In many historical films the tenets of India's composite culture have revolved around a positive portrayal of Hindu and Muslim protagonists. Epics like Sohrab Modi's *Pukar* (1939), Mehboob Khan's *Humayun* (1945), and K. Asif's *Mughal-e-Azam* were forerunners of this genre. Semi-historical film musicals like *Tansen* (1946), *Baiju Bawra* (1952), *Sangeet Samrat Tansen* (1959), *Rani Roopmati* (1960) and *Meera* (1990) set in the medieval period can be understood for their strong presentation of Indian cultural ethos during the reign of mughal emperor Akbar with the State consciously promoting inter-community cultural assimilation in literature, music, dance and narrative theatre.

Sharing Joys and Sorrows

Pervaiz Mohabbat

Cathe Foundation, Lahore, Pakistan

Sharing joys and sorrows is a very strong composite element of sub-continent which is still continued through various programs, activities and events. The Muslims send cards, cakes and flowers to Christians, Hindu's and Sikhs whereas; the same reciprocate on the Muslim feasts and religious events such as Ramdan and Eid etc. Peace groups consisting of men and women from all existing religions celebrated Diwali on 21st of October with Hindu Dalits in Kasur, Faisalabad and Lahore cities in their temples, lit the candles to enlighten the world with Peace and harmony. During Ramdan, these peace groups also invited Muslim communities for IFTAR parties, shared their views of how they are feeling being together at one platform.

Traditionally people of all religions were used to distribute sweets and other eatables to other religions on their feast, festivals and religious events. After some times when few people for their own interests

divided these communities into religious sects and groups, hatred took place but now these groups are coming together again as they have come back to their origin by sharing "joys and sorrows". We believe that composite Heritage still is very strong and is a major source of joining people in all circumstance either they are hatred sawn or conflict born.

A Muslim social leader Haji Yousaf said, "I am extremely enriched and amazed to see that a group of Hindu, Christian and Sikh friends has come to greet me EID and presented a beautiful card and cake. It has doubled their respect in my heart. I love them, as they are real saints. We must take a firm step to reduce hatred and create love and peace bearing environment".

"Peace and harmony can take place if composite elements are re-born and practiced faithfully in our surroundings" said Pervaiz Mohabbat (a Peace activist) in an Iftar party.

Initiatives by ISD on Composite Heritage (CH)

Institute for Social Democracy

New Delhi, India

Institute for Social Democracy (ISD) organised a workshop on Composite Heritage in Lucknow in August 2006. The workshop had representation from 4 states—U.P. Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand. Each state has its own context of conflict and at the same time they have distinct and unique elements of their Composite Heritage to intervene in the conflict. As we all know based on socio-economic, cultural, political and geographical conditions, the elements of Composite Heritage keeps changing shapes and forms. The workshop served as a platform where

participants from different states could analyse their conflict at the same time get sensitized towards the problems face by people of other states.

ISD, organised another workshop in Imphal, Manipur in the month of November 2006. In this workshop we tried to relate the concept of Composite heritage with Local Capacities for Peace (LCP). How Composite Heritage acts as one of the connectors in society. Some participants had LCP background and some had been part of our pervious Composite Heritage workshop.

Published by:
Institute for Social Democracy, New Delhi
For
Peace in South Asia

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