



## Whose privilege?

Legislatures must not invoke power to punish for breach of privilege

The Karnataka Assembly's resolution imposing a one-year prison sentence and ₹10,000 fine on the editors of two tabloids is indefensible and deserving of unsparing criticism. The Constitution confers certain privileges on legislative institutions with the idea of protecting freedom of speech and expression in the House and ensuring that undue influence, pressure or coercion is not brought on the legislature in the course of its functioning. Unfortunately, breach of privilege is invoked for the ostensible reason of protecting the image of the House on the whole or its individual members; too often, it is a thinly disguised mechanism to insulate elected representatives from criticism. Without a law codifying the legislative privileges, there is little merit in subjecting anyone, leave alone a journalist, to penal action for allegedly breaching a legislator's privilege, unless there is a move or attempt to obstruct the functioning of either the House or its members. The articles concerned were published in *Hi Bangalore* and *Yelahanka Voice* and were referred to the Privileges Committee in 2014. Whether what Ravi Belagere and Anil Raj, the editors of the two tabloids, published was fair comment or unfair criticism is not germane in this case. What matters is that by no stretch of the imagination could the articles have impeded the independent functioning of the three legislators who had complained against them. If the members felt defamed, they could have opted to pursue an appropriate judicial remedy in their individual capacity.

The legislature must use the power to punish for contempt or breach of privilege sparingly, invoking it mainly to protect the independence of the House and not to take away the liberty of critics. Legislators are in a position to clarify facts and refute misconceived criticism. There is no reason for them to seek imprisonment for contempt. There are many unsettled questions about the very nature of legislative privileges. The absence of codification gives the House the freedom to decide when and how breach of privilege occurs. Even if it is conceded that the House has such a right, a moot question is whether the legislature, through its Committee of Privileges, should be a judge in its own cause. Whether the legislature's power to punish for breach of privilege extends to handing down a prison term is still an open question. The time has come for the legislature to codify privileges and for the higher judiciary to lay down the limits of penal action for breach of privilege. The Karnataka government must consider the public odium it would attract if it acted on the resolution. If the Chief Minister and the Speaker take the lead in getting the Assembly to rescind the resolution, that would better safeguard the dignity of the august House.

## Being smart

Any attempt to improve our cities depends on how data are compiled and shared

The Centre would like us to believe that the Smart Cities Mission will transform urban life in the agglomerations that enter the elite club. With the latest inclusions, there are 90 cities in the list, each of which proposes to turn 'smart', utilising core funding from the Centre and other resources. By all accounts, the provision of basic services in urban India has been worsening, and this is clearly reflected in the winning city proposals: 81 of the selected plans seek funds for affordable housing, new schools and hospitals, and redesign of roads. This is at best a partial list, and there are many more aspects to achieving inclusivity. There is a high-visibility campaign around the Smart Cities Mission, but there is little evidence to suggest that State and local governments have either the fine-grained data or the capability to analyse them in order to understand the evolving needs of their communities. The Centre has apparently decided to skirt such a fundamental problem by adopting a 'managed urbanisation' approach in the chosen cities, with the powers of municipal councils delegated to a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV), under the Companies Act, that will act in its own wisdom. Given that this is the model adopted by the two-year-old Mission, the Centre must present a status report on what the SPVs have achieved so far.

Any serious attempt at improving the quality of life in cities would depend on how governments approach data. It would be smart, for instance, to use sensors to estimate the flow of vehicles and pedestrians, and create smartphone applications for the public to report on a variety of parameters. Making such data open would enable citizens' groups to themselves come up with analyses to help city administrators make decisions, boost transparency and make officials accountable. There are several international examples now, such as the Array of Things sensors being installed on Chicago streets, which let people download the raw data on air quality, transport, pedestrian movement and standing water. Although India's Smart Cities Mission has identified more than 20 priority areas, interventions by the respective agencies are weak. Access to special funding should make it mandatory for all public transport providers – city bus corporations, Metro Rail and suburban trains – to provide real-time passenger information in the form of open data, an inexpensive global standard that raises both access and efficiency through smartphone applications. Making street-level waste management data public would lead to a heat map of the worst sites, compelling managers to solve the problem. Clearly, there is a lot of low-hanging fruit on the road to smartness, and a nimble policy approach can tap this quickly. More importantly, the ideology that guides the plan should recognise that the vibrant life of cities depends on variety and enabling environments, rather than a mere technology-led vision. Pollution-free commons, walkability and easy mobility, with a base of reliable civic services, is the smart way to go.

# New colours of the White House

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will have an opportunity to shape President Trump's basic views on Pakistan



SHASHANK JOSHI

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepares to meet President Donald Trump for the first time, today in Washington, there is a sense that the favourable winds that carried the India-U.S. relationship over the past 10 to 15 years may be changing. In its first six months, the Trump administration's radical and nationalistic approach to international affairs has already touched India in important areas, from visas for skilled workers, to climate change, to Iran policy. After an era in which successive American Presidents were persuaded to forego short-term pay-offs for longer-term economic and diplomatic investment in India, we now have an incumbent whose foreign policy imperative is to secure a pound of flesh – and to do so in the here and now. "The world is not a 'global community'," noted two of Trump's advisers in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed this month, summarising the President's worldview, declaring that they embraced "this elemental nature of international affairs". This undoubtedly throws up new challenges for India. Yet there are three important things to keep in mind when looking at the path ahead.

### Three indications

First, the India-U.S. relationship has its own mass and momentum. While the grand gestures of the past decade may be more difficult to achieve, the relationship is likely to remain robust. While the whims of the President and his most radical advisers will buffet particular



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areas – such as trade, immigration, and climate change – more pragmatic cabinet ministers are not without influence. Most significant here is the so-called Axis of Adults, comprising Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defence James Mattis, and National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster.

While this trio has been under-cut more than once – sometimes quite brutally, as when Mr. Trump removed a crucial reference to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's collective defence clause from a major speech – they continue to exercise power over their own domains, on issues that do not necessarily rise to presidential attention. This is especially true of the Pentagon, which is vested with considerable executive authority, but also of weaker departments. The State Department's decision to authorise the \$2 billion sale of nearly two dozen predator drones to India, significantly augmenting the Indian Navy's unmanned aerial capability, is an important signal in this regard. Such a sensitive platform might have been used as leverage to secure Indian concessions in areas where the administration was seeking a change in India's behaviour – say, Iran – but the positive trend in defence sales looks set to continue. Progress in the joint working group in aircraft

carrier technology, which involves much more far-reaching technology transfer, will be an important test of this over the medium term.

### The record so far

Second, there is now a template for how foreign leaders can manipulate Mr. Trump to their own ends. We have two useful illustrations of this: China and Saudi Arabia. China, criticised in vituperative terms by Mr. Trump on the campaign trail, persuaded the President not only to swallow the bowdlerised history that Korea "used to be a part of China", but also that Beijing was making every effort to address North Korea's nuclear programme. In doing so, it induced Mr. Trump to soft-pedal on the South China Sea – the administration blocked at least three requests by the U.S. military's Pacific Command to conduct freedom of navigation operations, before the first one was allowed to go ahead in late May – and delay arms sales to Taiwan. On June 20, the President declared that this policy of relying on China "has not worked out", but expressed gratitude to Beijing for trying. It's too early to conclude that the Chinese approach to Mr. Trump has entirely succeeded, because a sixth North Korean nuclear test could clearly upend this détente. However, China has man-

aged to dramatically moderate Mr. Trump's hostility and buy a period of calm. Another, even more stark, example comes from West Asia. In recent weeks, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have persuaded Mr. Trump to enthusiastically tweet his support for their economic and diplomatic assault on Qatar, a country which hosts more than 10,000 American troops and the forward headquarters of Central Command, over its policies towards the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. Mr. Trump was persuaded of this despite the State Department's urging that the dispute be settled quickly and amicably, and the risk to disruption of U.S.-led military operations against the Islamic State at a crucial time in the battle.

These two cases have a few things in common. For one thing, they involve foreign leaders personally cultivating Mr. Trump. "After listening for 10 minutes," Mr. Trump declared following his April meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on North Korea, "I realised that it's not so easy." Mr. Xi achieved the best of both worlds: persuading Mr. Trump that Chinese influence was limited, thereby insulating China from the consequences of failure, but also securing Mr. Trump's goodwill for his efforts. Mr. Trump's meetings with Saudi Arabia's King Salman, and now Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh in May were also likely to have been important in winning his subsequent backing for the campaign against Qatar.

Mr. Trump is credulous, impressionable, and narcissistic. China and Saudi Arabia succeeded in framing their behaviour as being, first and foremost, an effort to address one of the President's personal priorities – North Korea in the first instance, and terrorism in

the second. By contrast, the U.S.'s allies in Europe and Japan have struggled to craft a similar narrative.

### The South Asian matrix

Third, more important than what President Trump does for India may be what he does not do. The Qatar crisis has shown that he cares little for shibboleths such as regional stability, mutual restraint, and dispute resolution. He respects power and those who wield it, oftentimes regardless of the end result. For better or worse, this may open up new space for India's posture towards Pakistan, which has over the past year evolved in a significantly more coercive and risk-acceptant direction. The Obama administration's sympathetic approach to last year's so-called surgical strikes showed that U.S. policy was anyway shifting in the direction of giving greater latitude to New Delhi. As the ceasefire on the Line of Control collapses and the Kulbhushan Jadhav crisis festers, the prospect of a militarised Indian response to another terrorist attack rises.

It's by no means certain that Mr. Trump will take a hands-off stance in such a scenario. After all, Israeli leaders have been unpleasantly surprised by the interest that he has taken in the Israel-Palestine dispute, despite his broadly pro-Israel stance. But Mr. Modi will have an opportunity to shape Mr. Trump's basic views on Pakistan, and at a formative moment for his administration's Afghan policy. This may well be where Mr. Modi chooses to focus his efforts, leaving thornier subjects for the coming years.

Shashank Joshi is a Senior Research Fellow of the Royal United Services Institute in London

## Last wicket stand

The failure to make a visible impact on how cricket is governed in India is extremely worrying



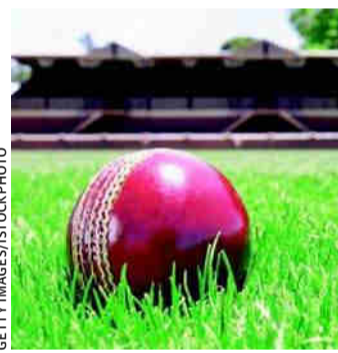
DESH GAURAV SEKHRI

The Supreme Court's move to appoint a committee of administrators (CoA) in January this year to govern and reform cricket was expected to salvage a sport, which despite its national team's on-field success, has devolved into a mess – one where there are conflicts of interest and lapses in ethics. Now, six months later, it is the CoA that is making news for the wrong reasons, compounded by the controversy between the coach and the captain, and the explosive resignation of one of its administrators, Ramachandra Guha, earlier this month. What's most disturbing about the spate of recent controversies is that the objective of the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee's recommendations – the basis on which the Supreme Court had made its historic ruling – to tackle the breakdown in ethics caused by potentially compromising conflicts of interest, remains unaddressed.

The CoA's challenges, and at times helplessness, have been exacerbated by the initially stolid defence of the State bodies, now replaced by open defiance. A case in point is the presence of none other than N. Srinivasan at the special general meeting of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on June 26 on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association, with the CoA having said that it is not mandated to decide on anyone's eligibility to attend meetings. With one administrator, Mr. Guha, already out, and another, Vikram Limaye, due to leave shortly, Indian cricket now faces a crisis of leadership and confidence. And the real work has not even begun.

### Lost purpose?

The 'superstar culture' aside, the priority category of individuals for whom the Lodha Committee reforms were set into motion – the players and former players – ironically may be worse off. The long-awaited, and staunchly resisted by the BCCI, players' association is expected to come into being shortly, but logistics and its actual purpose will be far more complicated than merely putting the construct into place. There is also the issue of whether or not it will be supported, both financially and practi-



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cally, by the BCCI and the State associations. There is also the prickly issue, and one referred to in the resignation letter by Mr. Guha, of the CoA deciding not to increase the overall remuneration percentage for domestic cricketers from 26% of the BCCI's revenue. The hovering conflict of interest, ambiguity and insinuations that led to the controversy of a 'superstar culture', also dragging in the duality of roles with the Indian Premier League as mentors, haven't helped matters either.

### A domino effect

There is a much larger impact that the CoA's success or failure can have than just on cricket. The future of reform in sports governance and administration in India is dependent on the outcome of

cricket's overhaul. The Supreme Court is already mulling a petition across numerous sports, asking for the Lodha Committee reforms to be adopted across federations. It has sent a notice to the Central government on the basis of the petition. But there will be reform elsewhere only on the basis of this precedent. If the CoA fails, then so may any future reform in any Indian sport. Endless delays and ineffectiveness will also stall the momentum of an imminent, revised national sports code and a vital national sports law. If a direct mandate from the Supreme Court putting the CoA in charge of the BCCI is unable to make any headway towards better governance and player representation, then the code or statute will be even further away from implementation.

### Difficult stretch ahead

The Lodha Committee recommendations became the beacon for reform across sports in India, championing the cause of sportspersons, transparency, and ethics. The failure to make a visible impact on how cricket is governed, and instead finding itself in a myriad controversies stemming from how little has been achieved is extremely worrying. The pressure is already increasing, with the

Central Information Commission now asking the CoA for transparency in the BCCI's affairs.

Instead, the bickering over the 'acceptable' reforms continues with the State associations as if a negotiation is actually possible within the reforms. Another hearing before the Supreme Court on July 14 may set aside any further legal recourse for the State associations. Perhaps the CoA can then flex its muscles more effectively. But for now, the only casualty in the hotly debated move to reform the BCCI and set a pattern for ethical governance across sports in India is the hope of actual reform. Instead of ambiguity about its mandate and role, the CoA needs clarity of thought and resolve, and must focus on its prime objectives – the universal adoption of the Lodha Committee's recommendations, making cricket transparent and protected from potentially harmful conflicts, and restoring cricket to its players and fans. With a finite specified tenure and mandate, and a clear path to eligible elections, much can be salvaged. It's vital, because a lot hangs in the balance of the outcome.

Desh Gaurav Sekhri is a sports attorney and author

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters emailed to letters@thehindu.co.in must carry the full postal address and the full name or the name with initials.

### Rapid descent

The lynching of Mohammed Ayub Pandith highlights the dangers that the police in Kashmir face today, whether from gun-wielding militants or locals disgruntled with the Indian state ("Killing of officer a sign of things to come in Kashmir", June 25). That policemen should be the targets of terrorists is a well-known strategy but people joining in the lynching of someone, on one of the holiest days in the Islamic calendar, is self-speaking evidence of how far the dehumanisation of Kashmir has proceeded. In the past three decades, more than 1,600 police personnel have sacrificed their lives in Jammu and Kashmir. Isn't it the time for all 'conscience-keepers of Kashmir, particularly separatist leaders and clerics, to stem this rot which threatens to tear apart an already overstrained social culture of tolerance'?

K.S. JAYATHEERTHA, Bengaluru

■ The turbulent situation in the Kashmir Valley is showing no signs of

abatement as the mistrust between the public and the State is widening with every passing day. There seems to be no concrete action plan as claimed by the Home Minister umpteenth times. Managing the Kashmir Valley should not be construed as the responsibility of one government or party alone. It is a national problem and the BJP government needs to call for an all-party meeting to chalk out a strategy.

V. SUBRAMANIAN, Chennai

### A wave of waivers

The agrarian crisis has reached its zenith largely due to climatic change and economic factors. The wave of crop loan waivers are not a permanent solution. Several structural measures such as attention to pricing, procurement and public distribution are called for. Money has to come from somewhere and in the long term, loan write-offs will come to bite all of us in one way or the other in the form of unpredictable costs.

KIRANPAL SINGH, Khurdan, Nawanshahr, Punjab

■ The waiver of agricultural farm loans does not make any financial sense. We do not seem to be diagnosing the issue as well. What is it that is making these farmers suffer and resulting in them being unable to repay the loan? Does it have to do with the unscrupulous middleman consuming the farmer's fair and rightful share of his profit? The government needs to step in and encourage farmers to work for their rightful share of profit and their daily bread by mercilessly removing all middlemen from the system. Agriculture needs to be recast in a radical way.

K.S. RAMACHANDRAN, Chennai

### Border crossings

It is appalling to know that children in the border villages on the Indian side go to schools in Bangladesh and study books prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh (Magazine - "Villages without borders", June 25). It would do immense good for the country if the Border Security Force, instead of

concentrating on stopping the smuggling of items such as "one kilogram of salt", establishes a primary school and a basic health centre for each group of villages on the border. It must ensure that Indian education is imparted to these children and the medical needs of the border population taken care of. This will earn the BSF the respect and the goodwill of these villagers and ensure that the local people cooperate with the security forces in times of need.

K. CHANDRAMOULI, Hyderabad

### Planned privatisation

One is bemused if somewhat dismayed at the veritable "glee" with which most of the media have greeted the news of Air India's proposed privatisation. Nearly all the talking-head policymakers and economists are cheering the government on to expedite the matter. All this should seem, in the eyes of an informed and sensible citizen, far too illogical and opportunistic. First, amid the din to egg the government on to sell the airline, the voices of its

harrid workforce have been largely muted. Air India is gaining a number of new passengers with its convenient West-bound flights and on account of recent problems afflicting Western and Gulf-based carriers. Second, if the experts are asking the government to structure the "deal" so that the investor gets the plum portions and the government holds the debt, why not indeed offer the same package to the airline? If that is done, it will

be back in the black in no time. The experts – for whom privatisation is the panacea that solves all public ills – ought to look at the mismanagement of British Rail after being privatised or how British Airways and Lufthansa are not exactly covering themselves with glory even after a brief spell of post-privatisation growth.

I. SINHA, Philadelphia, U.S.

MORE LETTERS ONLINE: www.hindu.com/opinion/letters/

### CORRECTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS:

A report about medical counselling in Tamil Nadu (June 25, 2017, some editions) erroneously said in the headline that the counselling was to start on July 27. It should have been July 17.

The headline, "Revoke DMK MLAs' suspension" (front page, some editions, June 24, 2017), should have read: "TN Assembly Speaker recommends against suspension of 7 DMK MLAs".

Errors in the report "Spurt in dengue cases cause for concern" (June 24, 2017): The reference to the National Health Policy – February 2016 announced to eliminate malaria by 2010. It should have been by 2030. There was a quote that said: "Dengue virus bites during day time." It should be dengue mosquito and not virus.

The second deck headline of a Business page report, "Software export growth set to slow: Nasscom" (June 23, 2017), erroneously said the domestic market may touch \$26.5 billion in fiscal year-2018. It should have read \$26.5 billion.

This is the policy of The Hindu to correct significant errors as soon as possible. Please specify the edition (place of publication), date and page. The Readers' Editor's office can be contacted by Telephone: +91-44-28418297/28576300 (11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday); Fax: +91-44-28552963; E-mail: readerseditor@thehindu.co.in; Mail: Readers' Editor, The Hindu, Kasturji Buildings, 859 & 860 Anna Salai, Chennai 600 002, India. All communication must carry the full postal address and telephone number. No personal visits. The Terms of Reference for the Readers' Editor are on www.thehindu.com

# Restricting protests, stifling dissent

A combination of coercive and non-coercive means is being used to silence criticism



ZOAYA HASAN

Opposition by major political parties against the Bharatiya Janata Party's plans to establish its total dominance of the electoral landscape is still quite feeble. But public protests have surfaced to challenge its social and political agenda and the attempt to impose an exclusionary Hindu identity. More importantly, the economy is in distress. There is hardly any job creation for the 12 million people who enter the workforce annually. This would surely be a source of disquiet for the middle classes who form the core support base of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Even supporters have begun to complain that despite the government loudly trumpeting its achievements, key policies have simply not delivered *acche din*.

## In the air

Discontent is in the air, it is palpable in the growing protests and the appearance of non-sectarian mass movements in different parts of the country. Farmer protests have broken out in several States; Dalits are a disenfranchised lot and have taken to active protests, from Una to Saharanpur, despite the systematic attempt to woo them; the ongoing student protests in universities highlight the continuing resistance against assaults on the autonomy to think and the right to engage with ideas the ruling dispensation disapproves of. Even though these protests are not pervasive and do not pose a serious challenge to the BJP's winning spree in elections, they have nonetheless invited the wrath of the government.

At a broader level, dissent has been curbed through a combination of coercive and non-coercive means. These include reducing the remit of Right to Information (RTI), curbs on foreign-funded NGOs, criminalisation of dissent through sedition provisions of the penal code, and the hounding of human rights activists and civil society groups. One can add to this list the recent CBI raids on NDTV which many people have rightly read as a message to the media in general to fall in line, if they



haven't already done so. This is similar to the way in which the Jawaharlal Nehru University and the Film and Television Institute of India were targeted earlier with the express purpose of eradicating important sites of dissent. Each of these institutions is perceived as a threat to the ideological agenda of the regime, raising inconvenient questions that the regime feels needed to be silenced.

Recent experience shows a concerted effort by the government to dampen anti-regime protests either by remaining in denial and dismissing protests, or more often by using police powers to discourage people from protesting. Three protests in the past few months exemplify this trend. Farmers in Madhya Pradesh began protests over low prices for their crops on June 1. Mandsaur became the nerve centre of the protest, resulting in five deaths in police firing. After that, demonstrations and rallies were not allowed under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, and these restrictions remained in force for several days.

Likewise, in Saharanpur, the police and administration imposed Section 144 to restrict assembly after a man was killed in a clash between the Dalit and the Thakur communities. Here too, Opposition leaders were denied entry and the police prevented people from reaching protest sites or using them for organising protests.

In the third case, the police arrested a handful of Lucknow University students earlier this month for blocking the convoy of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Adityanath and showing black flags to him when he was on his way to attend a programme in the university. Students arrested for breaching security of the Chief Minister were later denied bail. The State

government justified its harsh actions by branding everyone who protested as 'anti-nationals' or 'Naxalites' when actually such branding can be termed as a diversion from the social and economic discontents occurring in reality.

Curbs on protest are not new, but there is a sense in which these negative trends have accentuated or sharpened over the past three years, marking an unprecedented attack on the politics of opposition. The previous government too made things difficult for protest movements. The 'India Against Corruption' movement is known to have had difficulties in getting permission for centrally located places to organise their anti-corruption protest. The midnight arrest of Baba Ramdev by the Delhi Police at Ramlika Maidan in June 2011 when he was carrying out a protest against the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's inaction on the black money issue is a clear case of government overreach.

The Supreme Court had pulled up the UPA government and Delhi Police for the crackdown. It said the right to protest or join a protest is an essential part of free speech, and upheld the right to assemble. Additionally, it argued that it is an obligation of the state to make this effective and not restrict it by imposing restrictions on assembly. Not surprisingly, Arun Jaitley, then Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, welcomed the landmark order, but criticised the charge of "contributory negligence" (an obligation on the protesters to obey every lawful order which in this case is Section 144) against Baba Ramdev, which he argued amounts to a surrender of the right to protest. In other words, if protesters are within their right to protest, they are equally within their right not to ac-

cept an illegal order denying them the right to protest.

## Times have changed

But the same lofty principle doesn't seem to apply to protests organised against the current dispensation where citizens are compelled to abdicate the right to protest because the state arbitrarily decides to throw the 'anti-nationalist' label at anyone who questions the government and protesters are regularly accused of disturbing peace to stop them from reaching protest sites.

The police in Haryana recently booked 15 Dalit protesters on sedition charges in Karnal; they had demanded the release of four Dalits arrested for a murder committed during a clash between castes at a village in Ambala three months ago. These men had met the Haryana Chief Minister on April 24 to demand a fair probe into inter-caste clashes. In effect, by charging them with sedition the police action has declared that it is now illegal to criticise the government or gather people for a protest.

At this point, when uncritical nationalist fever is running high in the country, such arbitrariness will make it more difficult to exercise the right to protest which is an integral part of constitutional guarantees.

So, where does this leave the issue of democracy? This is precisely the space in which dissent and democracy make their connection. Freedom of expression and its concomitant, the concept of dissent, are essential for democracy. It is a concept that contains within it the democratic right to object, oppose, protest and even resist. In the end, keeping dissent alive is to practise what Edward Said called "speaking truth to power" in his penultimate 1993 Reith Lectures. Or as he put it, "No one can speak up all the time on all the issues. But, I believe, there is a special duty to address the constituted and authorised powers of one's own society, which are accountable to its citizenry, particularly when those powers are exercised in a manifestly disproportionate and immoral war, or in a deliberate programme of discrimination, repression, and collective cruelty."

Zoaya Hasan is professor emerita, Jawaharlal Nehru University and distinguished professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi

## FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

# Rancour is no substitute for due diligence

Editorial judgment tells whether a story is worth publishing while due diligence is used to scan it for journalistic rigour



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

When I referred to the article "How genetics is settling the Aryan migration debate" (June 17, 2017) by Tony Joseph in my column "Sting journalism is not investigative journalism", I had no inkling that the article would become a subject of debate. All criticisms against the article flow from a rejoinder written by Anil Kumar Suri, a materials scientist.

These reproaches are akin to what the editors of the literary magazine *Granta* said about the state of the British literature in the 1970s, which was "neither remarkable nor remarkably interesting" and had "a steady, uninspired sameness, a predictable, even if articulate prattling of predictable predicaments."

I use two tools, which are related to each other but also remain independent, to evaluate criticisms against this newspaper: editorial judgment and due diligence. Editorial judgment informs a newspaper whether something is worth publishing. Editors try to get an affirmative answer to a set of questions. Does it have a public interest component? Is it relevant? Is it pushing the boundaries of our understanding? Once an idea crosses the editorial judgment threshold, editors commission the story. They then deploy due diligence to scan the copy for journalistic rigour before it is put out in the public domain. The public interest component of Mr. Joseph's article is self-evident and, hence, my inquiry is going to be only about due diligence.

## Objections to Tony Joseph's article

Let us look at some of the key elements of Mr. Suri's counterargument. One, its exploration starts from the premise that Gyaneshwer Chaubey, among the 32 authors of the study which Mr. Joseph cites in his article, "was shocked by the drift of the article that appeared eventually, and was extremely disappointed at the spin Joseph had placed on his work, and that his opinions seemed to have been selectively omitted by Joseph". However, there is not a single direct quote from Dr. Chaubey in Mr. Suri's article to validate his disapproval of the study. Further, the idea of not being happy with the drift of

the story does not prove or disprove any of the arguments of the 2015 study on R1a haplogroup. A close reading of Mr. Suri's article does not throw up a single specific objection of Dr. Chaubey either to the study of which he is a part, or to the extensive interview with Peter Underhill that was cited in Mr. Joseph's article.

Mr. Joseph was prudent to go through the chronological order of the ongoing research in genetics to map the human migration and stick to only respected, peer-reviewed journals. He takes care to mention that most of the significant papers, prior to 2010, did not have the same findings. The focus of his article is about the avalanche of new data that compelled many scientists to change their opinions. This includes Dr. Underhill himself.

The crux of Mr. Joseph's argument lies in Dr. Underhill's assertion that there is no comparison between the kind of data available in 2010 and now. "Then, it was like looking into a darkened room from the outside through a keyhole with a little torch in hand; you could see some corners but not all, and not the whole picture. With whole genome sequencing, we can now see nearly the entire room, in clearer light," was the direct quote from Dr. Underhill's interview to Mr. Joseph.

Mr. Joseph's interview with Priya Moorjani of the Harvard Medical School holds another key to understand the evolving nature of this discipline, and the breakthroughs that have happened over the last few years. It is important to remember this section of Mr. Joseph's article: "She [Priya Moorjani] also said the authors of the new study had access to ancient West Eurasian samples 'that were not available when we published in 2013', and that these samples had provided them additional information about the sources of ANI ancestry in South Asia."

I am not going into the apparent contradiction of the critics, who accepted the initial deductions that could not prove the migration into South Asia, and now question the very idea of this scientific endeavour. However, I have no reservation in saying that one cannot cite earlier papers, when the discipline was at its formative phase, to disprove the contemporary findings when the discipline has become robust with substantial amount of additional data and analytical tools. This repudiates the basic rules that govern science and knowledge production.

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

## SINGLE FILE

# Madness in his method

Daniel Day-Lewis will be remembered for his relentless pursuit of characters

SUDIPTA DATTA



The story goes that when Daniel Day-Lewis, who announced his retirement from acting last week, was preparing for the role of Abraham Lincoln in Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln*, he started living in character long before the first day on set. He sent messages to his co-star Sally Field, who played his wife Mary Todd in the film, signing off with 'Yours A'. As Jessica Winter wrote in *Time* magazine, in 2012, Day-Lewis changed his sonorous voice to a "gentle tenor, reedy and slightly cracked... Plenty of performers can change their accent, posture or waistline to suit the part. Day-Lewis alone seems capable of remoulding his larynx and vocal chords." The part earned him his third Best Actor Oscar, the most any male actor has ever won. This relentless pursuit of character has marked every role he has played.

## Giving everything to the craft

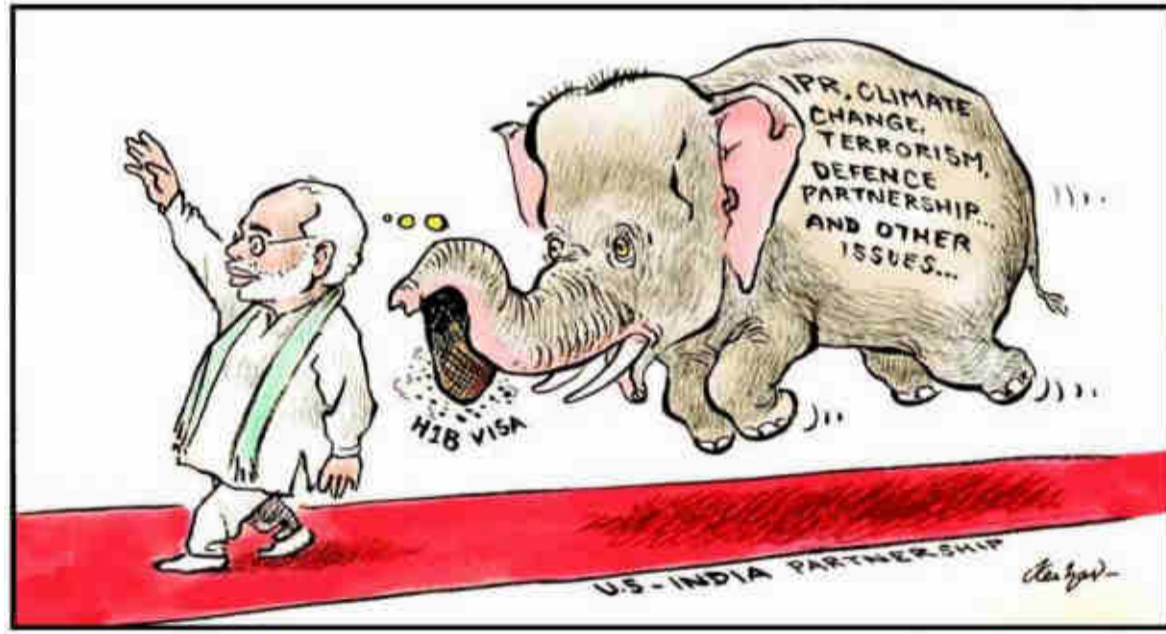
His father, poet laureate Cecil Day-Lewis, who was editorial director at publishing house Chatto & Windus, wrote a poem, *Newborn*, to announce his birth: "We time-worn folk renew/Ourselves at your enchanted spring,/As though mankind's begun/Again in you."

For Day-Lewis, every part he acted seemed to give the craft an "enchanted spring". His turn as Irish writer and painter Christy Brown, an artist with cerebral palsy who could only move his left foot, earned him his first Oscar in 1989. Day-Lewis has been famously difficult to pursue for a role, but once he was convinced, there was no stopping him. Remember the first scene in *My Left Foot*? Christy takes out a record from its cover, puts it on the turntable, then picks up the needle and puts it down again, all with the left foot. It took him many weeks to perfect that, and hours spent with cerebral palsy patients. For the entire duration of the shoot of this Jim Sheridan film, he stayed on a wheelchair. Much like Al Pacino for *Scent of a Woman*, where, playing a blind man, he refused to blink when he fell down in a thorny bush, and was injured.

## American characters

Day-Lewis has played many American characters, directed by the best American directors – from Martin Scorsese (Newland Archer in *The Age of Innocence* and Bill the Butcher in *Gangs of New York*, for which he learnt to throw knives sometimes between takes) to Michael Mann (*Hawkeye* in *The Last of the Mohicans*) and Spielberg.

He bagged his second Oscar for Paul Thomas Anderson's historical drama *There Will Be Blood* (2007) and his last appearance will be in the director's next, *Phantom Thread*, which is based on the fashion world of 1950s London and will release this Christmas. The actor, who quit the stage in 1989, mid-performance while playing Hamlet, has taken time-outs after every film – including by being a shoemaking apprentice in Italy in the late 90s. So may we hope against hope that there isn't a sense of finality in his agent's statement when he says: "Daniel Day-Lewis will no longer be working as an actor?"



## CONCEPTUAL

### IKEA effect

PSYCHOLOGY

A cognitive bias that causes people to assign greater value to goods that they have created on their own either partially or from scratch. It was named after the Swedish self-assembly furniture goods manufacturer IKEA, by a group of American researchers, including behavioural psychologist Dan Ariely. One of the reasons cited for this bias towards self-made products is that people obtain greater pleasure in using a product when they have invested their own labour in creating it. Another reason could be that people like to justify the efforts that they have invested in a product, so they tend to like it more.

## MORE ON THE WEB

Bangalore Metro's new Green Line  
http://bit.ly/BloreMetro

## SHELF HELP

### Unpredictable brilliance

A short guide to the history of cricket in Pakistan

HARI NARAYAN

The 25th of March this year marked 25 years since the completion of the 1992 World Cup. Nearly three months later, the tournament's victor, Pakistan, stunned the international cricketing community by winning the Champions Trophy. The same day, a 15-year-old Pakistani became the victim of celebratory gunfire.

Unpredictable cricketing excellence on the field, predictable violence on the streets – these two factors have dominated the *Weltanschauung* of the Pakistani nation state. And nearly 70 years since its independence, its cricketing prowess continues to inspire appreciation and awe in the minds of an average cricket fan.

Peter Osborne's *Wounded Tiger* is an excellent primer to the cricketing history of India's conjoined twin to the west. Pakistan, whose creation was premised on the purported need for a separate homeland for British India's Muslims, was without a foundational document – a Constitution

– for more than a decade. However, this ran parallel to its progress on the cricketing front, where the foundations began to be laid immediately. Its three key architects here were a Muslim, a Parsi and a Christian – Khan Iftekhar Hussain, the Nawab of Mamdot; K.R. Collector; and Justice A.R. Cornelius.

## Initial Test wins

In 1954, punching much above its weight, Pakistan went on to draw its first Test series outside the sub-continent, versus England. By 1958, when Ayub Khan staged a coup, it had won six Test matches against five teams – the West Indies, Australia and New Zealand, apart from India and England. By contrast, in the same period, 1947-58, India achieved five Test wins and 15 losses.

Osborne's book gives an exhaustive list of references through which Pakistan cricket can be studied in its entirety. These include *Pride and Passion* by Omar Noman; *The Chequered History of Pakistan Cricket* by Salim

Parvez and Shuja-ud-Din; and *Cricket after Midnight* by Sultan Mahmud.

Osman Samiuddin writes in his book, *The Unquiet Ones*, that Javed Miandad's pursuit of success was rooted in his quest to achieve *izzat* – esteem and approval from the self and the world. The same can be said about the struggles and conquests of Pakistani cricket team.

In its 410 Tests, Pakistan has had a win rate of 32%. This has included 59 away wins (26%). It may also be added that this struggle has sometimes coincided with match-fixing scandals.

It is this pursuit of self-hood that has defined its approach to the game since March 2009, when a terror attack in Lahore made Pakistani territory a no-go zone for other teams. Out of its 73 Tests played since then, it has won 29. Its win rate, at nearly 40%, has exceeded its overall average. As the country got increasingly isolated on the international stage, its search for identity was taken in a positive direction by its exploits on the cricket field.

## FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO JUNE 26, 1967

### West Bengal CM warns Naxalbari extremists

The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Ajoy Mukherjee, described the trouble makers in the Naxalbari area as "a few men with swollen heads", who wanted to create a "free zone" within India. Mr. Mukherjee told newsmen before leaving for Calcutta last evening [June 24, New Delhi] that the State police would enter the five pockets, which were the strongholds of the trouble makers, if they did not surrender in a short time. The police had been asked to patrol the area and take action including firing where necessary, if any arson, looting or murder were being committed. If the trouble makers surrendered, the Government would not object to their being released on bail except in a few serious cases. Asked whether any further time limit was set for surrender, he replied in the negative.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO JUNE 26, 1917

### Compulsory education.

At the December meeting of the Bombay Legislative Council the Hon'ble Mr. V.J. Patel moved a resolution urging that an early beginning should be made in the direction of making elementary education free and compulsory at least within the limits of municipal districts. Most of the non-official members of the Council spoke in favour of it, but the resolution being put to vote was lost by 25 votes against 20. His Excellency the Governor remarked that it would be unfortunate if the Council endeavoured to pass a resolution which went straight in the face of the confirmed and decided opinion of the Government of India. Two months after this defeat Mr. Patel gave notice to the Secretary, Legislative Council, of his intention to move for leave to introduce a Bill to empower district municipalities to introduce compulsion in the system of elementary education.

## DATA POINT

### College spaces

The number of higher education institutions saw a sharp increase in the 1990s and the next decade, peaking in 2008 when more than 2,600 institutions were opened. However, since then, there has been a significant drop

