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Don't censor historical fiction

Political parties must be open to criticism of their leaders

We in India love our cinema and wear the film critic's hat with ease. That's a good sign of the freedom of speech and, at times, even reflects the maturity of the audience we are. The problem is when some take the job of the censor board upon themselves and judge

whether one of the other film should be shown or whether a scenes or words

should be deleted. Or indeed, whether the whole subject is unsuitable. This is one of the many problems filmmaker Madhur Bhandarkar is facing these days. His film *Indu Sarkar*, based on the 21-month Emergency imposed by then PM Indira Gandhi, has run into opposition from the Congress, which is demanding that the film be screened first to them before it is sent to the censor board. Party members are concerned about the depiction of their leaders in the film, and thus the disruption of the film's press conferences. So much for freedom of expression.

Why is it that organisations — cultural, religious, and especially political — or even governments are so sensitive when it comes to the depiction of its leaders? Why is it that they are so thin-skinned? India has had many tall leaders and yet why is it that a true depiction of them is missing from popular culture? Why is it that concealing the shortcomings of our leaders is encouraged? Mahatma Gandhi, with his unquestionable contribution towards the formation of modern India, was not a perfect human being. And, some argue, that it is those shortcomings that enhance his greatness. Why is it difficult for many to realise that their leaders are/were also human, with all the accompanying frailties? This hypersensitivity that stymies true depictions of our leaders must stop. On the contrary, we often resort to hagiographies that give a distorted recollection of history.

Movies are not necessarily accurate depictions of individuals and events — for that we have documentaries. But where such movies become important is that they recreate events, and open leaders and events to discussion and debates. And it is through such debates that posterity attains a better understanding of history. We cannot, and must not, block any attempt that leads to it.

Federer is the new gold standard in tennis

The eight-time Wimbledon champion is in a super-league of his own

With his eighth Wimbledon title on Sunday, Roger Federer has 19 Grand Slam victories under his belt, the most by any player in tennis history. World No.2 Rafael Nadal, with whom Federer has enjoyed a legendary rivalry, has won 15 titles including 10 French Open victories. At Wimbledon, he stands tall — one title more than Pete Sampras and William Renshaw (who've won seven each). But Federer isn't what Ivan Lendl would've called a one-trick pony ('Grass is for cows,' Lendl once famously said). Federer's feat of reaching 29 Grand Slam finals bears testimony to this. He is also the only one to win three different Slams at least five times. The sheer weight of career statistics is good enough for Federer to live up to what Boris Becker, the youngest ever Wimbledon champion calls him — the Greatest of All Time (GOAT).

But there's more to back Becker's claim than just records. Think longevity. At a time when younger athletes ranked higher than him by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) are breaking down mid-tournament, the 35-year-old Federer won Wimbledon without dropping a set or displaying any sign of wear. In 2003, when Federer won his first Wimbledon, Novak Djokovic was a gawky teenager, Atal Bihari Vajpayee was India's prime minister, the Concorde was about to make its last commercial flight and Saddam Hussein was in hiding.

Since 1973, when the ATP first began compiling rankings, Federer's 302-week reign as world number one is the longest ever. Many a sports writer has raved about the thing of beauty that Federer's backhand is. But when the iconic Ken Rosewall, the oldest player to win a Slam in the Open Era, says he won't be sorry to see his record go to someone like Federer and "I'd like to be compared to Roger," you know it isn't just another backhanded compliment. Roger Federer is indeed the new gold standard of tennis.

comment

Doklam will change India-China ties

While efforts to de-escalate should continue, national security concerns must predominate



JAYADEVA RANADE

The ongoing flare-up at Doklam and China's actions and statements have far-reaching implications for the future of India-China relations. It has brought into sharp definition the thinking among China's senior leadership echelons about India and their intentions into the open. It will take long for the threats issued by China's official media to recede from public memory. India's foreign and security establishments will have taken cognisance of the articles published by China's state-owned media.

Note would certainly have been taken of the nearly 20 articles in the state-owned 'Global Times', warning India of a repeat of the 1962 war, that China will reverse its agreed position on Sikkim, start an international campaign questioning the close India-Bhutan ties, stir up trouble in the northeast and send People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops into Kashmir at Pakistan's ostensible behest. An image of a People's Daily edition of 1962 was also in circulation on the popular Chinese sites Weibo and WeChat on July 12, 2017. The articles and statements by official spokesmen would have been approved at a high level in

the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and reveal the thinking of the senior echelons of the CCP about India.

China's state-owned media is tightly controlled by the CCP's powerful propaganda department which often issues thrice daily 'advisories' on how and what to print and prominence to be given to any particular subject. Articles relating to neighbouring countries are especially vetted. Since the CCP central committee (CC) propaganda department issued Document No. 9 in August 2013, progressively stringent restrictions are being imposed on the media and social media. Document No. 9 unequivocally declares "that the power of leading the press and media is always controlled by the hands of those who are at one with the central committee of the Party with comrade Xi Jinping as general secretary".

The threat about China's intention to reverse its recognition of Sikkim as part of India, repeated by Chinese diplomats in New Delhi, underscores the remark by a Chinese vice-foreign minister to the visiting Indian external affairs minister in 2008 that the issue of Sikkim remains unsettled. The warning about promoting insurgency in the northeast, after Deng Xiaoping reversed Mao's policy of "exporting revolution" in 1979, has as backdrop the clandestine links maintained by Chinese Intelligence over the years with India's northeast insurgent groups. The warning can well impact on the proposed Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Corridor. Incidentally, China was allowed a



There can be little doubt that China is exploring options including military ones

consulate in Kolkata though it has refused to permit India to reopen one in Lhasa. The article attempting to draw a parallel between India's action in Doklam in support of Bhutan and a possible Chinese intrusion in Kashmir ostensibly at Pakistan's instance, brings into focus China's links with Kashmiri separatists and the growing collusion between China and Pakistan and the pronounced military content of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

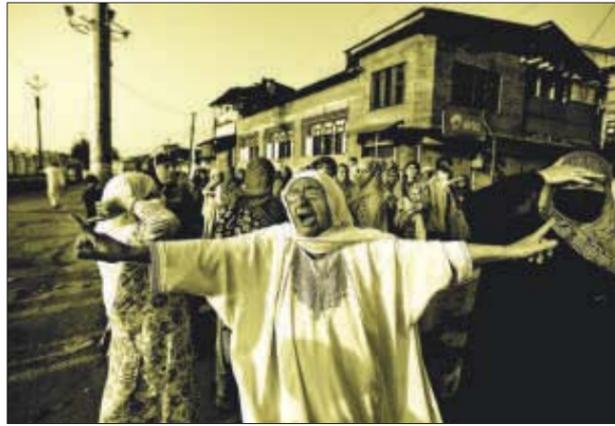
In the course of the ongoing face-off at Doklam, there can be little doubt that China is exploring various options including military. The area of the face-off falls within the operational jurisdiction of the PLA's Shigatse (Xigaze) military sub-district subordinate to

the western theatre command. The present commander of the western theatre command, 62-year old General Zhao Zongqi, is one of the few serving PLA generals with experience of battle, having fought in the Sino-Vietnam war in 1979, where he also operated under cover in enemy territory. He has two decades of service in Tibet and is familiar with the area and terrain. Fang Jianguo, the incumbent PLA commander in Shigatse, similarly has a promising career ahead. He has been described by the PLA headquarters as a "pacesetter and outstanding commanding officer of the PLA" while the Chengdu military region called him an "excellent commanding officer of the whole army". Both anticipate further promotions. The present political commissar of the Shigatse (Xigaze) military sub-district, PLA Colonel Xu Qingming is also familiar with the area having earlier served as political commissar of the Lingzhi Military sub-district. All three would view the ongoing face-off as a setback to their operational plans and likely argue in favour of strong action to dissuade India.

While efforts to de-escalate the situation to mutual satisfaction should continue, national security concerns must henceforth predominate. Open for review would be India's foreign, economic, education and other policies towards China, including the operation of Chinese telecommunications companies, two of whom earn over 4 billion dollars in clear profit each year and potentially render India's mobile communications network vulnerable.

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GROWING DIVIDE



A Kashmiri woman at a funeral in Srinagar. The electronic media by its irresponsible actions is widening the chasm between the Valley and the rest of the country (File Photo) REUTERS

Stop humiliating the people of the Valley

TV news debates are increasingly jingoistic, at times seeming to take decisions for the government



MP NATHANAEL

In the last one year, the unending cycle of violence (including the cross-border ones) and protests in the Kashmir Valley have given prime time television news anchor a lot of fodder. Unfortunately, very few have taken a professional, matured and balanced approach on these issues; instead, they have assumed an overtly aggressive (read nationalist) posture. Things have come to such a pass that they themselves are deciding whether the Centre should impose president's rule in the Valley or not.

Some of the television channels seem to be devoted to the Indian Army; they behave as if they are part of the forces and fighting the battle on the ground along with them. Every action of the Army is eulogised, howsoever reprehensible such a stance may appear to its viewers. These channels have been joined by a band of former Indian Army officers who are invited to the studios just for one reason: They happily toe the channel's nationalist line.

On the opposite side, there are the retired Pakistani army officers. They are first invited to the studios to discuss a matter of bilateral importance and then insulted thoroughly. In the process, their voices are rarely heard. Unfortunately, the Indian Army chief Gen-

eral Bipin Rawat has also been in the news in stark contrast to his reticent predecessor. No one grudges him the publicity he gets from the media but it is not appropriate of such a senior army officer to get embroiled in controversy.

We are elated when TV news shows that the Indian Army has destroyed posts across the border. The other side too brags about inflicting heavy casualties on us. It is becoming increasingly difficult to understand who is telling the truth.

I know Kashmir well because I have served in the Valley between 2006 and 2009 as DIG (operations) of Srinagar and I have no hesitation to add that the electronic media by its irresponsible actions is widening the chasm between the Valley and the rest of the country. They must stop humiliating the people of the Valley. If they continue, even those who don't support violence will be forced to review their stand. As it is the lynching of Muslims in different parts of India is affecting the Valley.

If New Delhi is serious about changing the scenario in the Valley, the security forces, the administrative machinery and politicians need to factor the sensitivities of the people.

The government and the security forces must be firm with those who break the law, but it must also remember that a large number of people in Kashmir want peace and normalcy, and rebuild their destroyed lives.

These people are on our side, let us not alienate them. If that happens, India will find it difficult to contain the disaster.

MP Nathanael is former inspector general of police, CRPF. The views expressed are personal.

How the NDA is denying the minorities their rights

The allocation of funds meant for the welfare of these communities has consistently declined since 2014



K RAJU

PUSHPARAJ DESHPANDE

In the last three years, despite constitutional and statutory guarantees, prejudice and discrimination against minorities has gone up. Driven by MS Golwalkar, the chief ideologue of the Sangh parivar, regressive elements antithetical to the idea of India have argued that non-Hindus in India can "claim nothing, deserve no privileges...not even citizen's rights". Consequently, the legal guarantees have been systematically undermined.

This exclusionary ideology is also visible in governance. For example, consider how the current dispensation has methodically diluted all policies related to the welfare of minorities. For example, the NDA has starved Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 15 Point Programme (PM-15PP), which was designed to bridge the development gap between minorities and the rest of society by earmarking public resources equitably, of funds. First, the allocation for minority welfare have consistently declined since the time the BJP assumed office in 2014. It has dropped from ₹27,172 crore in 2012-13 to ₹9,930 in 2016-17. In percentage terms, it has come down from 1.93% of the budget (2012-13) to 0.50% in 2016-17.

The BJP has also misused a shortcoming in the PM-15PP's design, which unlike the Scheduled Caste Sub Plan and Tribal Sub Plan, did not explicitly mandate that a percentage of the plan component of the budget be earmarked for minorities in proportion to their population (the policy says that "a certain percentage of the physical and financial targets will be earmarked for poor beneficiaries from minority communities"). Consequently, the NDA has not guaranteed targeted and quantifiable interventions in the 22 centrally sponsored schemes under the PM-15PP.

Second, consider the Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MSDP), which

IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THE DEVELOPMENT DEFICITS AND ASPIRATIONS OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE EXISTING GUIDELINES ARE MADE COMPREHENSIVE AND WATERTIGHT

is aimed at enhancing access to education, healthcare, electricity, drinking water, sanitation and employment. It is being implemented in 90 districts with high concentration of minorities.

Unfortunately, it is excluding 70% of the minority communities because of the manner in which it is being implemented. This is because the MSDP makes inclusion in the Below Poverty Line (BPL) list a prerequisite for availing of any benefits/services. It has been documented that a majority of Muslims are not counted in the BPL lists because of various reasons. Consequently, these funds are either diverted to non-minority beneficiaries or remain unutilised.

Responding to a question in Parliament (December 2, 2015), the Centre said in 2014-15, 4,70,165 projects were sanctioned for minority development but none were completed. In contrast, in 2013-14, when the UPA was in power, 52,698 projects were sanctioned and 16,967 were completed.

As the experience of the last three years has shown, weaknesses in policy design are being cynically exploited by the State to deny minorities their due. Even though it has nominally enhanced allocations for welfare schemes meant for minority development, the NDA has insidiously subverted them by deliberately (mis)using some of the lacunae. In order to check this, and to address the development deficits and aspirations of minority communities in a targeted manner, it is imperative that the existing guidelines be made more comprehensive and watertight.

This can be done if recommendations of the National Advisory Council and the Steering Committee on Empowerment of Minorities for the 12th Plan are followed. It would be expedient to mandatorily earmark 14% of the fiscal and physical outlays in the schemes under the PM15-PP for minorities.

In addition, to ensure proper monitoring of these schemes, a separate budget statement with details of targeted and non-targeted expenditure must be detailed. Finally, to accelerate development of minorities, the Centre must raise the budget (perhaps even threefold) from the current ₹4195.48 crore.

The government needs to be committed to extending equitable access to opportunities to all citizens. Keeping the historical and contemporary deprivations suffered by minority communities, it is imperative that the special provisions meant for their empowerment be secured and enhanced.

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innervoice
YOU GET THE BEST RESULTS WHEN YOU WORK WITH A QUIET AND CALM MIND

PP Wangchuk

Keeping quiet and calm when you are distressed is one of the surest ways to keep yourself sane. Any kind of aggression on your part will further put you in deep trouble. I have my own phrase for such occasions: Never raise your finger in anger. That is because when you are angry you are bound to go off your normal ways of reaction. And that worsens the situation.

By the time you are back to normal, your outlook would have changed altogether. In

fact, you would start thanking yourself profusely for saving you from a sure disaster. And that would be one of your proud moments in the rigorous journey of life.

US author Robert Greene had said, "Sweet are the thoughts that savour of content, the quiet mind is richer than a crown..." After all, what is a crown for if you are torn apart by ugly and regressive thoughts?

At times, it is by keeping yourself in complete solitude that you enjoy more than any other moment in life. Solitude gives us a cor-

rect perspective of life, and that enables us to see others in a manner that makes us work in tandem to achieve a common goal of peace and progress.

And lastly, in the words of American writer Rollo May, "In order to be open to creativity, one must have the capacity for constructive use of solitude. One must overcome the fear of being alone."

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