



**A thought for today**

All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others

GEORGE ORWELL

# Law Of Exclusivity

MPs oppose flying bans, show symptoms of VIP culture

Rajya Sabha deputy chairperson PJ Kurien's observation that airlines cannot ban anyone from flying contrasts starkly with the evolving consensus on unruly passengers. Kurien was responding to SP leader Naresh Aggarwal's demand that flying bans on MPs should be met with breach of privilege notices. Their grouse stems from the bans imposed on MPs Ravindra Gaikwad and JC Diwakar Reddy for misbehaviour with airline staff. Two issues – VIP privileges and business obligations – militate against this political hankering for immunity.

After banning red beacons, Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted an "atmosphere of hatred for VIP culture". But MPs and MLAs do not seem to get that message. They reserve for themselves the right to review and hike their own salaries instead of delegating the task to an independent pay commission. When denied first class seats (Gaikwad), or refused boarding (Reddy) because departure gates had closed, an ordinary passenger would have cursed his/her luck. Gaikwad and Reddy behaved as they did precisely because of their VIP status.

Condoning such behaviour can have a disastrous effect on the aviation business. Airlines have a tough job ensuring timely operations besides aircraft and passenger security. Every sector has its own laws. For example, SEBI bars violators from trading in various markets. The civil aviation ministry has floated a draft Civil Aviation Requirement amendment allowing airlines to ban unruly passengers immediately. Suspensions ranging between three months and two years or more can be awarded by a panel later. Kurien wanted the "law of the land to take its course". A law formalising the no-fly list is taking shape and makes no exceptions for MPs. Thursday's Rajya Sabha session leaves some doubts: were the discussants aware of this draft's existence or were they pressuring the government to withdraw it?

# Hurricane Harmanpreet

She powers India into the World Cup final

On Thursday, Harmanpreet Kaur, vice-captain of the Indian women's cricket team, blew everyone else out of the water with her 171 off 115 balls performance in the World Cup semi-final. Sportspeople often talk of being 'in the zone' – where you perform at your peak, when everything else recedes. At one point, when she got mad at Deepti Sharma for almost running herself out, she directed that intensity at the opposing side. She played like a woman possessed, and yet with perfect control – leaving the Australian bowlers with no choice as she hit 20 fours and 7 sixes. Despite an injury that made her limp, she scored arguably the greatest World Cup innings since Kapil Dev's 175 not out in 138 balls against Zimbabwe during the 1983 World Cup.

How did Harmanpreet set the field ablaze? For one, she knew her opponents, having played the Women's Big Bash League. India's T20 captain, she was picked by Australian scouts precisely because of her aggression. She has also signed up with England's domestic T20 tournament, the Kia Super League. Although she is one of the most sought-after female cricketers on the international scene, Kaur like her team is underappreciated and often condescended to in India.

But nothing succeeds like success, and while Thursday's avenging-juggernaut performance should be enough to convince anyone of the sporting excellence of the Women in Blue, there is one way they can clinch their case – by bringing home the Cup from Lord's.

# Mob Rule Ushers Anarchy

'Sab ka saath sab ka vikas' must also include 'sab ki suraksha' as logical corollary

Manoj Joshi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi's supporters say that despite the somewhat uncomfortable figures on economic growth and jobs, his government's great achievement has been systemic reform in a slew of areas from bankruptcy code to GST and delivery of public services. But in recent times worries have grown, even amongst them, that all this will come to naught if the country's political and social fabric is ripped apart by the growth of public disorder and vigilante violence, condoned, if not encouraged, by some of the party faithful.

In the best of times India has hardly been a paragon of peace and virtue. In the 1970s and 1980s there were a succession of communal riots in UP, Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra, with Muslims being killed in disproportionately large numbers; there were the Sikh massacres of 1984. The rise of the Mandal parties saw a sharp deterioration of law and order across UP and Bihar.

But the nature of the violence now gripping the land is different. It is more seemingly random and anarchic. Rupa Subramanya has plotted a line chart of total incidents of mob violence beginning January 2011. Her data show a clear rise of incidents per month till June 2017. When she further deconstructed the data she found a distinct upward trend ever since BJP came to power in 2014.

In some ways the current spate of violence linked to cows is merely a subset of the lawlessness that exists in parts of the country, especially the north. Throwing the head of a cow or a pig in a religious place of Hindus and Muslims has been a time-tested recipe for triggering communal violence. India Spend, which has analysed data since 2010, found a spurt in bovine related violence since Modi's government came to power. In 2017, 20 cow related attacks have already been reported, more than 75% of the figure for all of 2016.

There are many reasons for this. Urbanisation is occurring at great speed and more people are living cheek by jowl in poorly policed and ramshackle urban and semi-urban sprawls. There has been a massive proliferation of weapons, including desi firearms, among the populace. But for the current uptick in violence it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it is being used as a systematic strategy to coerce the minority community and Dalits.

As the man in charge of running the country, PM Modi needs to worry about the unravelling of the fabric that knits the nation together. India was rent apart in 1947. This time around the danger is not from one big event like Partition, but an overall attrition. Since 1947 certain values have shaped what was a collection of provinces and princely states into this Republic. Foremost among these is the importance of the safety and security of every citizen and their equality before the law. There is a distinct impression these days that some sections close to the ruling party feel that, perhaps, not all citizens are equal in this country.

Modi has called on states, who are constitutionally responsible for law and order, to act against vigilantes of all kinds. But his admonitions, few and far between as they have been, lack his customary authority. It is difficult to get over the suspicion that the coercion of India's largest minority is intrinsically linked to an electoral project. If so, there is danger ahead. Reducing a significant proportion of citizens to second class status is neither feasible, nor compatible with the India Modi says he wants to build.

Sustainable economic growth must be accompanied by a deepening of the republican and democratic promises of the Constitution. You cannot have a society where law and order is coming apart, and the economy is growing. Reversing the growing anarchy, especially in the northern part of the country, is a precondition for the economic transformation of the region and the country. Modi's slogan – sab ka saath, sab ka vikas – needs to include "sab ki suraksha" as well.

# Take Away Nihalani's Scissors

CBFC should limit itself to certification and relinquish its blundering attempts at censorship

Pavan K Varma



Amartya Sen must have written 'The Argumentative Indian' before he came across Pahlaj Nihalani, the chairperson of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC). For, while Sen believes – or believed until now – that India is a country where arguments flourish because people have the right to hold different opinions, Nihalani appears to consider such a right quite unnecessary, even subversive.

There could be three possible reasons why the esteemed guardian of what our cinema can show or not show thought it right to keep out the words 'Gujarat', 'Hindu India', 'cow' and 'Hindutva view of India' from economist Suman Ghosh's documentary on the Nobel laureate, which was to be launched on July 14, but is now awaiting CBFC clearance. Firstly, this could be a reflection of his personal beliefs of what can – and cannot – be spoken of in cinema. Secondly, he may believe that those who appointed him would like his censor's scissors to snip in such a way. And, thirdly, he could be acting under instructions, spoken or indicated, that this is what his job should be.

Each of these three possibilities raise further questions of great relevance to the foundational tenets of our democracy. Do a person's individual beliefs empower him to impose them on others? Is what is permissible, or not permissible, to be decided solely on personal bias, or even worse, on a person's political affiliations? Once a person assumes an office where he is expected to work with impartiality and fairness, can he with impunity take decisions only in accordance with a political agenda?

The possibility that Nihalani acts on instructions of his political masters is even more worrisome, for it involves the subversion of institutions. Ultimately, democracy is not only about periodic elections; it is equally about the robustness of institutions that ensure democratic practice. To be fair, the



subversion of institutions is not the monopoly of the BJP dispensation. It began earlier, and has only reinforced itself over the years. But, whether it happened before, or is happening now, the fact that it is happening is wrong, and cannot be condoned.

Personal bias or institutional partisanship is particularly dangerous in the creative field. In this case it is about cinema, but freedom of expression is equally vital in literature, theatre, academia and the arts. True, nobody – not even artists – can claim absolute freedom of expression – and our Constitution, while guaranteeing this freedom also admits reasonable restrictions. But in a vibrant democracy such restrictions must be the rare exception. Moreover, a civilisation like ours, whose foundations are dialogic in nature, cannot be forced to become monochromatic only to suit one particular point of view.

There could also be another way to understand Nihalani's actions.

**Perhaps Nihalani is a secret admirer of Amartya Sen, and has deliberately created an entirely unnecessary controversy to ensure that more people hear what Sen has to say**

Perhaps he is actually a secret admirer of Amartya Sen, and has deliberately created an entirely unnecessary controversy to ensure that more people see this documentary and hear what Sen has to say. This is the inevitable and invariable consequence of ill-advised censorship, be it a book or a film. We have seen this in the case of the films Uda Punjab and Lipstick under my Burkha. In this sense, it could be possible that the censor board chief believes in the Freudian dictum that an obstacle is required to heighten

the libido, and that prohibition only increases desire.

Moreover, there is the genuine question of whether the 'few corrections' in Ghosh's film that the CBFC has made are, in today's cyber age, actually implementable. For instance, Ghosh put up a 101 second trailer of his hour long documentary on YouTube that went viral within minutes. That has only whetted the appetite of a much larger audience to see the full documentary, and there is no way to prevent it from finding an accessible platform for viewership in cyber space irrespective of the length of CBFC's scissors.

The truth is that the time has come to revisit the report submitted by noted film maker Shyam Benegal in 2016, which recommended that CBFC should limit itself to certification and relinquish its blundering attempts at censorship. It has been over a year since this report was submitted, but the government has yet to take a view.

The time has also come to review the entire Cinematograph Act that dates back to 1952. India has moved on; societal values have changed; technology has undergone a revolution. Censors of the old school live in a world whose foundations have collapsed.

There is a larger issue too: why is Nihalani, and BJP that appointed him, so brittle about any dissenting view? The way Amartya Sen, an internationally respected scholar, has been treated by the current government – such as when he was removed from the chancellorship of the Nalanda University so abruptly – merely because he does not agree with BJP about everything, is certainly in bad taste. Perhaps Nihalani, and BJP which makes no secret of its desire to resurrect the memories of ancient India, should read some of the basic Hindu texts to understand how much dissent and debate was an intrinsic part of that period. Then, perhaps, they will take the scissors away from Nihalani's censorious hands before he further embarrasses both himself and the government.

The writer is an author and member of JD (U). Views are personal

# China's grip over the vast Indian market shows how the onus is on China to pursue peace and reconciliation

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If China initiates a war against India, New Delhi should have no problem convincing the world that Beijing started the firefight. After all, everything is "Made in China" these days! Jokes about Made in China have proliferated ever since the manufacturing superpower whipped its billion strong workforce into assembly lines. Here's a naughty one: Everything is made in China, except babies; they are made in vachina. And then there's the guy who goes to the optometrist: "Read the last line, please..." "Made in China".

On a serious note, China pretty much owns the world, mainly on the strength of its manufacturing for the rest of the world, particularly the US, and including India. So when one hears all the war-talk and sabre rattling coming from Beijing, you have to wonder: How come India has allowed China to have a run of its cellphone market? How come Indians are lapping up Oppo and Vivo and OnePlus (all three from the same Chinese

company BBK) and other Chinese gizmos?

If you don't know about BBK Electronics Corporation, now is a good time to find out. Founded in 1995 by a Chinese engineer-entrepreneur named Duan YongPing, it is now the world's second largest maker of mobile phones after Samsung, having overtaken even Apple in its hot run.

Hell, BBK pretty much owns Indian cricket now! You heard that right. A country that can't

**Vivo shelled out more than Rs 2,000 crores for IPL rights till 2022. How long before Virat Kohli's bat sports a "Made in China" logo?**

wield a bat for nuts has suddenly made deep inroads into this colonial game that India has embraced with a passion. Earlier this year, Oppo ponied up more than Rs 1,000 crore to sponsor the Indian cricket team for the next five years. And Vivo shelled out more than Rs 2,000 crore for IPL rights till 2022. How long before Virat Kohli's bat sports a "Made in China" logo now that Oppo jerseys have



already made their debut?

At first blush, this can be deeply disturbing. Some folks might ask – how can you expect our soldiers to guard our borders when the national team is sporting Oppo jerseys and using Vivo phones modelled by Ranvir Singh? One way to look at it is to see what's happening to the US. Almost everything in an American home is now Made in China; China still owns more than a trillion dollars in US debt.

Owning US Treasury notes helps China grow its economy by keeping its currency weaker, exporting goods to American consumers addicted to cheap

goods, and creating millions of Chinese jobs. Selling debts or T-notes to China also helps the US economy to grow, keeps interest rates low, and gives American consumers cheap consumer goods.

In the long run, China's ownership of US debt is shifting the balance of power in its favour. But who cares about the long run? America has bet the shop, and its bottom dollar, on its consumption. Will it consume itself to... penury? oblivion? death? Or will it be China that will go under the weight of its credit built on hard work and slavish enterprise? Many

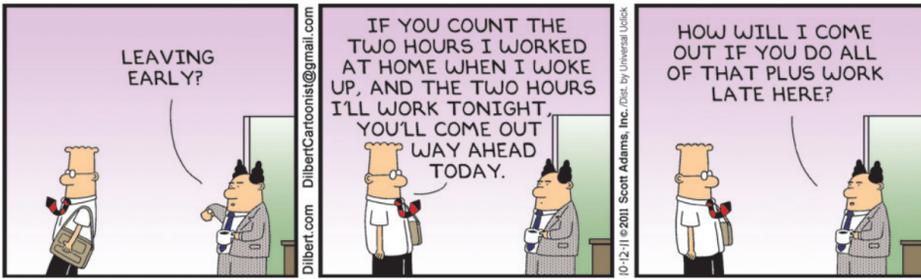
people have explained the conundrum with a familiar example. If an individual owes a bank a few thousand dollars, the bank will be after him to repay. But if the bank has lent the individual a billion (or trillion in this case) dollars, it is the bank that is under pressure and could go down the tube if the individual defaults (Indian banks and industries are all too familiar with this situation in recent years).

So inasmuch as China has the US on a hook as lender, the US too has China by the short and curls – as a debtor. The joke goes that when Americans got a cheque for \$500 some years ago so they could spend it and galvanise the US economy, the first thing they did was buy a "Made in China" flatscreen TV.

Of course, India is nowhere in the US league of indebtedness, not to speak of not having the greenback as the worldwide reserve currency. Still, the situation illustrates how vigorous trade can have unexpected consequences.

India's vast market, illustrated vividly by the advances made by Oppo and Vivo, shows how the onus is also on China to pursue the path of peace and reconciliation to keep its economy ticking and growing. The responsibility is not just India's.

# dilbert



# The Battle Between Spirituality And Apatheism

Jug Suraiya

The most formidable adversary that the spiritual life faces today is not the rise of a neo-atheism; it is apatheism.

Coined by social media, apatheism, as the word implies, means apathy, a total lack of feeling – one way or the other – as to the existence or non-existence of God, or indeed of any transcendent principle.

In the 1970s, media in the western world devised the term 'compassion fatigue'. What it meant was that ever-multiplying charity organisations and the demands they made for the sympathy of donors eventually blunted people's capacity to feel anything for the sufferings of others, whether it was starving children in sub-Saharan Africa or victims of civil wars in places with unpronounceable names.

Like an elastic band stretched beyond its capacity to expand further, the public's

sense of sympathy, the ability to feel for the plight of others, just snapped. People became disconnected from a sense of the common humanity we share with each other.

Today, compassion fatigue seems to have mutated to a more virulent form of spiritual ailment which could be diagnosed as 'conviction fatigue' and has been given the name of apatheism.

Contrary to common perception the atheist is not the true antagonist of religious belief, much less of spirituality.

Self-professed atheists more often than not are as passionate about their lack of belief in a Supreme Being as the most fervent of religious followers.

Indeed, to turn a famous aphorism upside down, if God did not exist, the atheist would have to invent Him in order to disinvent Him.

The atheist's firm belief in the speciousness of religious belief itself takes on the contours of a credo: avowed lack of faith itself becomes an article of faith.

Both believer and non-believer; the theist and the atheist have in common the intensity of their conviction. Both belief,

and the vigorous denial of belief, exercise and strengthen the sinews of the spirit. There is no sedentary flab, only a mentally muscular affirmation and a countervailing and equally rigorous denial. It's like a hard-fought tennis match.

The apatheist, however, is like the couch potato who doesn't even watch the exciting match on TV but aimlessly channel surfs to find something with which to distract himself from his own spiritually lethargic boredom.

Daily exposed to the toxic effluents of media reports – rapes, murders, scams,

# Sacredspace

Little Details

A mountain is composed of tiny grains of earth. The ocean is made up of tiny drops of water. Even so, life is but an endless series of little details, actions, speeches, and thoughts.

Swami Sivananda



the speaking tree