

Living in fear of stalking

The Delhi doctor could've been saved with timely intervention

There is every indication that had the authorities concerned acted in time, the life of the young doctor killed by his stalker who was a colleague in Delhi could have been saved. But the fact that despite complaints, the matter did not receive the seriousness it deserved reveals the general attitude to stalking – in this case perhaps also because the stalker and victim were both male. Last week, in UP a young girl's hand was cut off by a stalker.

The police are often reluctant to take action in stalking cases because the victim is cannot claim physical harm until often it is too late. The ambiguity in the law helps offenders get away with the crime. The first offence of stalking is bailable which means the offender need not actually be produced in court. It is a subsequent offence which becomes non-bailable but then again that is up to the discretion of the court. After the gang rape in Delhi in 2012, the Justice Verma committee had recommended that stalking be made a non-bailable offence but it was opposed by the then home minister and several members of the opposition on the rather specious plea that this would be misused against men. Many of our law makers seem to confuse stalking with some form of romantic overture – in many Hindi films the hero's persistence in forcing his unwelcome attentions on women is often finally rewarded by her giving in. The message that should go out unequivocally is that stalking is a crime and that there is nothing remotely romantic about it.

National Crime Records Bureau data shows that at least 18% of all stalking cases take place in Delhi. The woman's lack of resistance is seen as encouragement by the stalker to increase his attentions until it becomes physical threats or assault. In the doctor's case, though he had actually been assaulted by the stalker the institution where he worked seemed to have been remarkably lax in allowing the offender back on the premises after first suspending him. A similar apathy on the part of the police has meant that thousands of women live in fear of stalkers across the country every day.

In Nepal, focus on an inclusive constitution

New Delhi must assure Sher Bahadur Deuba that it is an all-weather friend

India has multiple and at times contradictory goals in its relations with Nepal. One is to bring political stability to South Asia's poorest and arguably most divided country so that it does not slip back into civil war. The overriding element of this goal, at present, is to ensure Nepal's fractious leadership does not pass a Constitution that creates a polity that is permanently biased against its Madhesi population. Its other goal is to persuade the several political elements of Nepalese politics to work together to produce a reasonably functional government and allow India to help the country's economic development. Finally, and publicly unstated, is New Delhi's desire to limit the degree to which Pakistan — which has used Nepal as a conduit for terrorist attacks on India — and China are able to have an influence on the country.

State visits by Nepalese dignitaries, the most recent being that of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, bring the complexity and intimacy of the Indo-Nepalese relationship into focus. The Deuba government has promised to pass the two constitutional amendments that would ensure Nepal does not marginalise the Madhesi and other terai groups. However it is highly doubtful his coalition government will be able to muster the necessary votes.

New Delhi has urged the Madhesi parties to end their boycott of coming provincial elections, calculating that the loss of political clout outweighs the gains from pressing a gridlocked Kathmandu. The focus of policy has instead switched back to finishing the numerous connectivity and power projects that are still pending between the two countries. These have become more important given China's enormous Belt Road Initiative and its implicit use of infrastructure to change the geopolitics of South Asia. Still, India must remain clear about the overriding priority of ensuring the Nepalese constitution is genuinely inclusive.

straightforward

SHASHI SHEKHAR



Shayara Bano deserves a salute

Indian women are demonstrating that they can pave the way for social reforms on their own

Urge those intent on perceiving instant triple talaq only as an issue about the rights of Muslim women, to look back at the history of India. I am sure they will find the answers to many of their questions there.

Let me begin with an example that predates both Christianity and Islam. When Chandragupta Maurya, born in an ordinary family, assumed power in 321 BC by unseating the Nanda dynasty, which force was at work? It wasn't just the handiwork of Chanakya, who had arrived from faraway Taxila. Believing this theory will be a case of poetic sentimentality. Indian history is replete with examples of changes in government through the instrument of people's power.

As far as social change is concerned, without going very far, let us begin by discussing sati. A vocal advocate for ending this regressive practice and launching a movement in this direction was Raja Ram Mohan Roy. His initiative couldn't have been successful had he not got the backing of the Hindu majority. The British rulers were aware of the contradictions within our society. They were interested in everything that could divide Indians on caste, communal and parochial lines. Despite that they agreed to create a law to abolish the practice of sati since they realised

that sooner or later, the majority of the Indian population was bound to boycott it.

The question is, is simply making a law enough to banish social ills?

No, the prevalence of the dowry system is living proof of this misconception. Despite an anti-dowry law existing for a long time, the heinous practice continues even today. And leading the battle against this social ill are not the guardians of our Constitution but ordinary women. You must have read that a number of brides have turned back the marriage parties of those grooms who were asking for dowry. Of late, in the past few months, we have also read reports where girls have refused to get married if the groom's home did not have a toilet. Clearly, Indian women are demonstrating they are capable of paving the way for social reforms on their own.

A large number of women from the Muslim community, who publicly celebrated the verdict on instant triple talaq, are symbolic of this shift in mindset. During this time, we also saw a number of men who came out against the practice of triple talaq. Listening to the statement of a father on television made me emotional. He is the father of five daughters. Two of them are divorced and the other three are not finding suitors because their elder sisters' marriages have broken down. Shayara Bano



■ A file picture of Shayara Bano MINT

has emerged as a beacon of hope for such tormented women.

Even for those opposing the talaq verdict, our Constitution has the provision of a review petition. If even that is rejected, they can file a curative petition. I am not sure about the stand that the judiciary will take, but changes such as these are like a deluge — once they take shape it is impossible to control them.

Consider the examples of Bihar and UP. Within hours of the verdict being delivered, a

case was filed in Kanpur against a former woman MLA and five others for deserting a woman and proclaiming triple talaq when the demand for dowry wasn't met. Similarly Patna's Atiya Fatima, whose doctor husband allegedly divorced her over the phone, has filed a police complaint against instant triple talaq. How many verdicts with such an immediate impact have you seen in the country?

Why don't the few people still making uncharitable remarks about the verdict look at Pakistan and Bangladesh? These are Islamic nations. Pakistan divorced instant triple talaq in 1961 itself. Bangladesh hasn't even bothered to adopt it since the country's genesis. Clearly, these practices were nurtured thanks to the insecurities created by our politicians. The self-appointed custodians of religion supported them for selfish gains but the women of India have given them a reality check by winning the judicial battle. It is important to clarify that the first country to say no to instant triple talaq was Egypt. In 1929, after a few amendments, it was discarded. The 22 countries that have placed restrictions on it include many Muslim nations such as Turkey, Iran, Tunisia, Algeria and Malaysia. Although the verdict in India was delayed, but it was appropriate.

I salute women like Shayara and others trying to bring in social reforms in the country. Their juggernaut will be unstoppable now.

Shashi Shekhar is editor-in-chief Hindustan Times

CAUSE EFFECT



■ Anganwadi workers during a protest in Delhi, August 4

SAUMYA KHANDELWAL/HT

Frontline health workers shouldn't be short-changed

It is in the interest of young children and mothers that the issue of the salaries of anganwadi workers is resolved

DIPA SINHA



For almost 60 days now, anganwadi workers (AWWs) and helpers (AWHs) in Delhi have been on strike protesting low wages. They have won a partial victory with the Delhi government announcing a doubling of their salaries from ₹5,000 to ₹9,678 per month for AWWs and ₹2,500 to ₹4,839 per month for AWHs. However, the workers' union continues to be on strike demanding to see the Gazette Notification on wage increase as well as immediate payment of wages.

The workers' concerns need to be addressed urgently, not only for their sake but also for the sake of the children and women who are beneficiaries of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme.

Anganwadi workers are responsible for providing a number of vital services, including pre-school education, supplementary nutrition, nutrition counselling, growth monitoring, and so on. Anganwadis are part of the ICDS, a centrally-sponsored scheme, and costs are currently shared on a 60:40 basis. Although AWWs/Hs perform some of the most important services, the Centre has always maintained that they are 'voluntary'

workers and so what they are paid is an 'honorarium' and not a salary. The honorariums were revised last in 2011 to ₹3,000 for workers and ₹1,500 for helpers. Many states make additional contributions to this amount. Experts and activists have highlighted the plight of these workers: AWWs/Hs also work under hostile conditions: Infrastructure is poor; the supply of food is irregular and of poor quality, education material is inadequate, honorarium is delayed and so on. In such conditions, services for young children, pregnant and lactating women are affected.

The issues that the workers are raising in Delhi are relevant to all states. While a number of states have recently increased workers' wages, this is not enough. The Centre needs to step in and ensure that the workers are paid at least minimum wages. Since 2015, the central budget for ICDS has been stagnant and decreasing in real terms.

It is in the interest of young children and their mothers that the issue of salaries is resolved. India has among the highest child malnutrition rates in the world and poorest learning outcomes. Both these need sustained efforts in improving early childcare services, which the anganwadi centres provide. AWWs/Hs are the backbone of this system and their role needs to be acknowledged. The first step towards this would be to remunerate them adequately.

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The views expressed are personal

pulp-it

R SUKUMAR



Nilekani will be like a super CEO at Infosys

His designation may be non-executive chairman, but he is clearly in complete charge of the company

I think it was my first boss (Ramanujam Sridhar; and this was in advertising) who told me about this "really interesting" (Sridhar never used words like cool) company called Infosys in which he owned some shares. This was in the early 1990s — I discovered shortly after I quit advertising and became a journalist that Infosys was one of the first beneficiaries of India's first wave of liberalisation; the then finance minister Manmohan Singh had scrapped the Capital Controller of India (the predecessor of SEBI) along with all its antiquated restrictions; if that hadn't happened, Infosys wouldn't have been able to sell shares to the public.

Sridhar told me that a friend of his from the informal quizzing group they were part of worked for the company and had convinced him to buy the shares. Years later, I met two other members of the same quizzing group who told me that this "friend" was actually a co-founder of the company, Nandan Nilekani, and that he had actually toted around prospectuses and application forms in a battered black briefcase to the quizzing group's weekly meeting to pitch his company's shares. Most people in the group had bought the shares.

Nilekani makes friends easily. At Infosys, it was clear that he was co-founder N R Narayana Murthy's undesignated successor, and more importantly, equal. Many of the other co-founders, barring N S Raghavan, who left in 2000, worshipped Murthy — much like the company's young employees. All of them liked Nilekani. He was never Murthy's man, something everyone would do well to remember as he starts his second stint at Infosys. Here is a man who can't just stand up to Murthy, but also convince him — and with no unpleasantness.

Long-time friends and former employees — including the so-called 1 per centers, as insiders refer to early employees (those who joined soon after the seven co-founders) who

were given 1% stake each in the company — say that if Murthy was the soul of Infosys, Nandan was its brain. And much of the company's success can be attributed to the harmonious way in which its soul and brain (and, of course, its body) worked together. As a reporter covering Infosys, I was impressed by how everyone I met seemed to be reading off the same script. Sure, it didn't help my reporting any (and I'd have to reach out to old friends, or batch-mates from engineering school to fill in the gaps) but it was impressive to encounter a company where everyone didn't just speak in the same voice, but also used almost the same words — despite no obvious preparation or coaching.

The past few years at Infosys have been characterised by leaks and counter-leaks by share-holders, directors, and employees, all seeking to further their own agenda. Nilekani's entry should change that and will probably see more changes in the company's board, management, and the strategy it has pursued these past three years under Vishal Sikka. There has been concern in some quarters (including Mint's team of analysts) about Nilekani's ability to turn things around at Infosys. This is a legitimate concern because the IT services business today isn't what it was a decade ago (Nilekani stepped down as CEO of Infosys in 2007). But strategy and planning at Infosys was the strongest it has ever been between 2002 and 2007, when Nilekani was CEO. On paper at least, Nilekani seems to get it — as anyone who has listened to his recent talks on data and disruption will confirm — but it remains to be seen if he can translate this into a coherent strategy for the company, and then make sure this is implemented.

As Mint's Anirban Sen and Varun Sood put it, Nilekani's current designation may be non-executive chairman, but he is clearly in complete charge of the company, somewhat like a "super CEO". Hours after his re-entry, he had already appointed Egon Zehnder, a head-hunting firm that specialises in finding CEOs, to find one for Infosys. If Nilekani's past management style is any indication, in the time it takes, he will be hands-on with everything, but once a CEO is appointed, he will step back. In the two decades that I have known him, the thing about Nilekani that has struck me the most is his willingness and ability to delegate — usually to the right people.

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HE WAS NEVER MURTHY'S MAN, SOMETHING EVERYONE WOULD DO WELL TO REMEMBER AS HE STARTS HIS SECOND STINT AT INFOSYS. HERE IS A MAN WHO CAN CONVINCE MURTHY — WITH NO UNPLEASANTNESS



innervoice

THE FEELING OF LOVE, ONCE EXPERIENCED, STAYS WITH YOU FOR A LIFETIME

Janhavi Jagdale

Due to adverse circumstances one may experience dullness in life. Most human beings need an ignition to experience love, self-worth and the beauty of life.

For most of us, any person, event or place that creates a pleasant feeling can be described as love. However we must realise that in reality every being is full of love from within.

Without divine love, we wouldn't exist. For that matter, any feeling is an experience

we create within us as a result of external stimulus.

There is nothing like true or false love, it is just awareness of love or being unaware of it. The gift of love is always available in our hearts.

Even though that person, that event, that place doesn't remain with you, it does not matter. The gift they have unwrapped in your heart will always remain with you.

If you replace that positive emotion with the negative emotions of anger, sadness, hatred, loneliness then remember you were

not worthy of it and the gift gets hidden. Instead, be thankful for the transaction that occurred in your life. Express your gratitude and share the gift.

The way a gentle breeze can create ripples in a calm ocean and a spark can spread light till everything is bright, in the same way although the breeze is temporary but the ripples of love can improve the world around us.

(Innervoice comprises contributions from our readers.)

The views expressed are personal
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